

CONSERVATIVE ACTIVISTS SEEK BAN ON QURAN

The Family Policy Network, a Virginia-based activist organization, filed suit in federal district court over the summer challenging the right of the University of North Carolina to require incoming freshmen to read selections from the Quran. The organization holds that the book, *Approaching the Qur'an: The Early Revelations*, should not be assigned summer reading because it infringes on the students' First Amendment right to religious freedom.

After the initial protest, the university agreed to make the reading optional (requiring students who object to write a one-page paper stating their objections), but this only infuriated the Family Policy Network.

The Catholic League did not agree with the conservative activist group and made a public statement to the media expressing our concerns. Here is the text of our remarks:

"There is a fundamental difference between indoctrination and education. It is the difference between proselytization and illumination. It is one thing to demand that students accept the teachings of a world religion, quite another to understand them. This is why the University of North Carolina is wholly within its rights in requiring students to read selections from the Quran: no one is being forced to yield his conscience to the Islamic faith.

"Professors who teach a course in Comparative Religions may rightly require students to read portions of the Old and New Testaments. They may decide to assign the Torah or selections from the Catholic Catechism. But according to the logic advanced by the Family Policy Network, this would negate the First Amendment rights of students. They have it backwards:

the First Amendment rights of students are abrogated when they are denied their free speech rights to read the actual teachings of world religions.

“When the University of North Carolina made the reading optional, the response from Family Policy Network president Joe Glover was to liken this to ‘something you’d see in Nazi Germany.’ This kind of hyperbole is the mark of a zealot. We’ll be glad when the university wins in court.”