

HAS BOB JONES UNIVERSITY CHANGED?

In 2000, the Catholic League criticized presidential contender Governor George W. Bush for speaking at Bob Jones University. At that time, the university had policies that were both racist and anti-Catholic. Interracial dating was forbidden, and the school's website labeled Catholicism as a "satanic counterfeit, an ecclesiastic tyranny over the souls of men," and the "Mother of Harlots."

After Bush extended an apology to the late John Cardinal O'Connor, Bill Donohue went on NBC's "Today" show saying the matter was over. Bob Jones dropped its racist dating policy and cleaned up its website, deleting the more egregious references to the Catholic Church. Officials at the university, however, could not bear to appear soft in their anti-Catholicism for long. One day after a reference by then-president Bob Jones III to Catholicism being a cult was removed from the site, it was returned to the web. Jones III told the media, "In order to leave no doubt in anyone's mind of the university's integrity and absolute commitment to its biblical principles, the article in question has been reposted."

Recently, Bob Jones University made headlines again when the Republican Senator from Arizona and possible 2008 presidential candidate, John McCain, was asked if he would consider speaking at the school. McCain, who was quick to criticize Bush for appearing there in 2000, was less than definitive, saying "I can't remember when I've turned down a speaking invitation. I think I'd have to look at it." He added, "I understand they have made considerable progress."

The Catholic League did not hesitate to urge the senator to exercise caution in his decision. While the school's website

is currently free of anti-Catholic rhetoric, we cannot be sure that hostility against the Church is a thing of the past at Bob Jones University. It is not our place to be the university's monitor, and Senator McCain would do well to find out for himself whether Catholicism is still the subject of vile insults and accusations at Bob Jones.

In addition, the league took the opportunity to implore all presidential hopefuls in both parties to refuse any invitations to speak at the University of Oregon. As we pointed out in the spring following an incident of a student paper publishing obscene and vulgar depictions of Jesus alongside tirades against Catholicism, the University of Oregon is today's hot-bed of anti-Catholicism.