

# HATE CRIMES BILL SPELLS TROUBLE

On April 22, the House Judiciary Committee marked-up a hate crimes bill sponsored by Rep. John Conyers. Serious questions were raised by religious leaders about this legislation, especially as it pertains to religious pronouncements against homosexuality. There are also concerns with the legislation regarding its language protecting pedophiles.

The idea of being prosecuted for reading Scripture may seem delirious, but it is just as crazy to think it couldn't happen. Consider the facts. When this bill was being considered in 2007, Rep. Louie Gohmert of Texas asked Alabama Rep. Art Davis (his amendment is in the bill) the following question: "If a minister preaches that sexual relations outside of marriage of a man and a woman is wrong, and somebody within that congregation goes out and does an act of violence, and that person says that that minister counseled or induced him through the sermon to commit that act, are you saying under your amendment that in no way could that ever be introduced against the minister?" Davis, who supports the bill, replied, "No."

In other words, if a deranged person hears a priest, minister or rabbi quote Leviticus 18:22, "Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is an abomination," and he then proceeds to assault a homosexual at a gay event—telling the arresting officer he was just following through on what he heard in his house of worship—the clergyman could arguably be charged with a hate crime. The very prospect of something like this happening should be enough to make any reasonable person wonder what is going on.

Bill Donohue addressed the media saying, "The problem in general with hate crimes legislation is that it invites the

government to probe way beyond motive. And in instances like this, it trespasses on free speech and religious liberty. This is a road no defender of liberty should ever want to go down."

The bill—championed by gay rights and liberal groups—also included pedophiles under the rubric of sexual orientation. This was the ultimate confession: liberal Democrats think of pedophiles as indistinguishable from homosexuals.

When this subject came before the House Judiciary Committee, an amendment to the hate crimes bill that would have excluded pedophilia from the definition of sexual orientation was defeated by Democrats along party lines, 13-10. This was considered good news by gay organizations like the Human Rights Campaign, left-wing groups like the ACLU and various Jewish groups like the ADL.

The debate is over: for liberals, child molesters should be given the same rights as homosexuals. Moreover, they should be given more rights than pregnant women and veterans; the latter two categories were explicitly denied coverage under the hate crimes bill. Even worse, an amendment that would bar prosecution based in whole or in part on religious beliefs quoted from the Bible, the Tanakh (Judaism's sacred book) or the Koran was defeated by Democrats along party lines, 11-8. In other words, religious speech may be denied First Amendment protection.

This is why we are gravely concerned with the language of this bill: it denies the rights of pregnant women and veterans and may also infringe on religious speech. All of this while pedophiles receive protection under sexual orientation.

Surely there would be national outrage over the language in this bill if the media were to report on it and the public was allowed to weigh in. But the clock is ticking and freedom and morality are hanging in the balance.

Unfortunately, a week after the bill was introduced, it passed

the House. As this issue of *Catalyst* went to press, the hate crimes bill was sitting in the Senate Judiciary Committee.