

IS BUSH TOO HOLY TO BE PRESIDENT?

President George W. Bush is being criticized both at home and abroad for the role religion plays in his life. At issue is whether Bush is too holy to be president. The Catholic League does not think so, but many others disagree.

It all began when Bush cited Jesus as his favorite philosopher during a presidential debate in 1999. From that time on Bush has been blasted for playing the religion card. The war in Iraq has provided new opportunities for Bush to mention his reliance on God. That this has upset some notables is an understatement.

"Nowhere does the Bible call for crusades," is how German President Johannes Rau replied when asked about Bush's understanding of religion. A similar remark was made by French Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin: "In no way can God be called on for a vote of confidence." A Swedish lawmaker was even more breathless when he said, "I've never seen anything like this before."

The head of the German Bishops' Conference, Cardinal Karl Lehmann, showed how thoroughly modern he is when he admonished Bush for his "careless way of using religious language"; the good cardinal advised that this "is not acceptable anymore in today's world." He did not say when the change occurred or why he thought President Bush should abide by the new code.

In the U.S., Barry Lynn of Americans United for Separation of Church and State says Bush is on a "divinely inspired" mission that is endangering our liberties. An official of the Utah chapter of American Atheists brands Bush's rhetoric as "divisive." Freedom From Religion Foundation chief, Annie Laurie Gaylor, opines that Bush is "the most recklessly

religious President we've seen."

To Presbyterian minister Fritz Ritsch, Bush thinks he's "theologian in chief." *Commonweal*, a magazine of the Catholic left, accuses Bush of the sin of "moral simplicity," one that is "a dangerous illusion." Time writer Joe Klein worries that Bush's faith "does not discomfort him." Protestant theologian Martin Marty frets that "Bush's God talk will set the tinderbox that is the Muslim world on fire." Muslim American Society official, Shaker El Sayed, warns that Bush "is claiming a divine mandate." Michael Cottle of the *New Republic* is upset that Bush "is charging into battle with the blind confidence that God will *of course* help him emerge victorious."

This is the way the Bush-fearing gang operates. They put words in his mouth and then denounce him for saying what he never said. In virtually every case, Bush's critics fail to cite a single statement the president has made that would substantiate their charges.

We pray the president continues to invoke God's name whenever he sees fit and does not yield to those who tremble when he does.