

LOUISIANA DEMS GET IN THE GUTTER: ATTEMPT TO SMEAR CATHOLIC POL

A television ad put out in August by the Louisiana Democratic Party accused Republican gubernatorial hopeful Bobby Jindal of smearing Protestants; Jindal is Catholic. The ad said Jindal “insulted thousands of Louisiana Protestants. He has referred to Protestant religions as scandalous, depraved, selfish and heretical.”

To drive the point home, the ad flashed the following words across the screen: “scandalous,” “utterly depraved,” “selfish desires” and “leads to heresy.” On the screen, the ad cited the December 1996 edition of the *New Oxford Review* as the source of Jindal’s remarks.

The Democrats’ ad didn’t just take Jindal’s remarks out of context; it engaged in a smear job against him—one of the most scurrilous the Catholic League has ever seen. We set the record straight in an August 21 news release: when Jindal dropped the term “scandalous” in his article, we said, he was referring to the sad historical chapter that witnessed a division within the Christian house. To be exact, he made reference to the “scandalous series of divisions and new denominations” that marked the post-Reformation period.

Regarding the terms “utterly depraved,” “selfish desires” and “heresy,” Jindal was citing Calvin. It was Calvin who warned against random interpretations of the Bible. As individuals, Calvin instructed, Christians were burdened with “utterly depraved” minds and “selfish desires.” According to Jindal, what concerned Calvin was a “subjective interpretation which leads to anarchy and heresy.”

This was a fairly unremarkable exegesis. But to the twisted

folks who lead the Louisiana Democratic Party, this was proof of bigotry.

In our August 21 statement, we called on the Louisiana Democrats to remove the ad immediately; it is no longer available for viewing on the state party's web site. Jindal perhaps could have used the Democrats' TV spot in his own ads to educate the public about the truly depraved conduct of his competitors. Maybe if the Democrats had a credible gubernatorial candidate (they still don't have one), they wouldn't have had to get into the gutter.

Despite any intentions held for the commercial by the Democrats, Louisiana Protestants weren't susceptible to the smear job against Jindal. When asked by the *New Orleans Times-Picayune* to name Protestant leaders who would agree that Jindal's 1996 article was offensive, a spokeswoman for the Democratic Party failed to produce a single one. Indeed, the Rev. David E. Crosby, senior pastor of New Orleans' First Baptist Church, told the paper that "Anybody who reads [Jindal's] whole article and ends up angry just needs to grow up."

Further, the Interfaith Alliance, described by the *Times-Picayune* as "a Washington D.C., grass-roots group that was formed as a liberal counterweight to more conservative Christian groups," also condemned the ad. The organization's president, Baptist pastor Rev. C. Welton Gaddy, wrote to the state party's chairman and requested the ad be pulled.