

MAKING RELIGION A CAMPAIGN ISSUE

There is a game being played in this presidential campaign about religion, but the players are not the candidates—the culprits are the pundits and activists.

It started on May 3, when Chris Matthews asked Governor Mitt Romney during MSNBC's Republican presidential debate, "What do you say to Roman Catholic bishops who would deny communion to elected officials who support abortion rights?" The question was designed to get Romney to inject himself—as a prospective president—into the internal matters of the Catholic Church. But it didn't work. Romney made it clear that the bishops "can do whatever the heck they want."

Then we had CNN's Lou Dobbs trying to blame Romney for injecting religion into the campaign, simply because the Mormon candidate defended himself against the bigoted remarks by Rev. Al Sharpton. On May 9, Dobbs commented, "To hear a discussion, this early, in a presidential debate, about religion, one or the other, casting aspersions, or having aspersions cast against their faith when there are so many important issues. It is truly remarkable." What is most remarkable is that the person responsible for making Romney's religion an issue was sitting right in front of Dobbs—namely his atheist soul mate, Christopher Hitchens.

It was Hitchens who had attacked Romney's religion, provoking Sharpton to say, "Those who really believe in God will defeat him [Romney] anyways." Hitchens, following Dobbs, then tried to pretend that it was amazing to see "people of other faiths denouncing each other," as if the ones leading the charge against Romney's religion are Christians!

Now some are calling upon Romney to have "a JFK moment" and

explain why the public should trust a Mormon as president. In 1960, Catholic presidential candidate John Kennedy had to answer to anti-Catholic Protestants. Today, Romney is being asked to answer to anti-Mormon bigots, most of whom are secularists.

And these secularists call themselves enlightened, tolerant, inclusive and champions of diversity. They are anything but.