

McCain BUDGES ON HAGEE

Senator John McCain was asked today about the criticism he has taken for speaking highly of Rev. John Hagee. His initial response was to say that he was “very proud” of Hagee’s “spiritual leadership,” noting, however, “That does not mean that I support or endorse or agree with some of the things that Pastor Hagee might have said or positions that he may have taken on other issues.” Now, in an official statement, he is saying that “in no way did I intend for his [Hagee’s] endorsement to suggest that I in turn agree with all of Pastor Hagee’s views, which I obviously do not.”

Catholic League president Bill Donohue responded this way:

“McCain’s latest response is helpful, if disappointing. I expected more from the self-described ‘Straight Talk’ presidential candidate. Why couldn’t he have spoken specifically to the Catholic-bashing record of John Hagee?

“Contrast McCain’s tepid response to what George W. Bush said in a letter to Cardinal John O’Connor regarding his 2000 appearance at Bob Jones University. Bush said he did not approve of ‘the anti-Catholic and racially divisive views associated with that school.’ He added, ‘Such opinions are personally offensive to me, and I want to erase any doubt about my views and values.’ Moreover, Bush opined that ‘I reject religious intolerance—because faith is defined by grace and hope, not fear and division.’ Right after Bush sent his letter, Cardinal O’Connor sought my response. I appeared on the ‘Today Show’ to say I was satisfied; this effectively put an end to this issue.

“McCain will have other opportunities to address this issue. He would be well advised to model himself on Bush’s Bob Jones response if he wants to bury it altogether. Meanwhile, it would be even better if Hagee would cease and desist from

demonizing my religion. And we would really appreciate it if McCain gave Hagee some 'Straight Talk' and told him to zip it."