

McCain REJECTS BIGOTRY; CITES HAGEE'S ROLE

After being pummeled by the Catholic League, Senator John McCain made a straight-forward denunciation of anti-Catholicism on March 7, explicitly citing Rev. John Hagee's role. He thus put an end to this issue.

The issue blew up on February 27 when the Republican nominee for president solicited and accepted the endorsement of Rev. John Hagee. Hagee, who is pastor of Cornerstone Church in San Antonio, has a long record of Catholic bashing. We posted a video of him on our website where he calls Catholicism "The Great Whore," a "false cult system," the "anti-Christ" and an "apostate church."

Hagee is a Christian Zionist who has given millions of dollars to Israel and to Jews seeking to return to Israel. He has also made a living out of demonizing Catholicism, wildly distorting the Catholic Church's relations with Jews. He does this intentionally so as to contrast himself favorably with the Jewish community. Hagee tried to say he wasn't anti-Catholic, but few believed him.

We hit McCain with ten critical news releases before issuing our eleventh one commending him for doing the right thing. Prior to our last news release, McCain had simply said that he doesn't necessarily agree with the views of everyone who endorses him. We labeled this response "pedestrian" and implored him to specifically cite Hagee in repudiating anti-Catholicism. He did just that, but not after some rumbling within his campaign on what to do about this matter.

The McCain campaign sought to arrange an "on-the-record" conference call between McCain, his advisors and Bill Donohue. Donohue said no. He said he would only agree to such a call

after he found satisfactory a statement by McCain denouncing anti-Catholic bigotry, citing Hagee's role.

Donohue did several radio and TV interviews, appearing on "CBS Evening News," CNN and "The Colbert Report." We kept hammering away, as it is our style, until we got what we wanted. McCain wrapped the issue up when he said, "I repudiate any comments that are made, including Pastor Hagee's, if they are anti-Catholic or offensive to Catholics." Donohue then said, "Sen. McCain has done the right thing and we salute him for doing so. As far as the Catholic League is concerned, this case is closed."

We never doubted that McCain was a good friend to Catholics. What we wanted was for his campaign to come together in distancing themselves from Hagee