

McCAIN SET THE BAR FOR McCAIN (8 YRS. AGO)

In February, 2000, presidential hopeful Sen. John McCain's campaign staff made phone calls to prospective voters in Michigan reminding the party faithful of candidate George W. Bush's visit to Bob Jones University. The message was as follows: "Bob Jones has made strong anti-Catholic statements, including calling the pope the anti-Christ and the Catholic Church a satanic cult." After first denying that these calls were sponsored by the McCain campaign, officials later admitted they were.

Catholic League president Bill Donohue saw the irony in this:

"Yes, Bob Jones has a long record of demonizing Roman Catholicism, but so does Pastor John Hagee. In 2000, on the website of Bob Jones University, they indeed called the pope the anti-Christ and Catholicism a satanic cult. Incredibly, Hagee continues to call Catholicism the 'anti-Christ,' a 'false cult system' and 'The Great Whore.' If McCain was right to slam Bob Jones in 2000, why is he letting Hagee off the hook now?

"In fact, when Bush did apologize for his visit to Bob Jones (he was explicit and forceful in his denunciation of the school), McCain criticized him for taking so long. He said, if 'you don't say anything until three weeks later, then you have—are—abandoning your role as a—as a person.' Well, it hasn't been three weeks since McCain has been apprised of his Hagee problem, but the clock is ticking.

"The day after I accepted Bush's apology on 'The Today Show,' February 28, 2000, McCain spokesman Dan McLagan said of Bush, 'He should be forced to address it [the issue] everywhere he campaigns.'

"I am not expecting McCain to have to address the Hagee endorsement everywhere he goes. Once he explicitly rejects the anti-Catholic baggage that Hagee carries, it will be enough to settle this matter once and for all. It is not Hagee's endorsement he needs to reject, it's the minister's anti-Catholicism he needs to reject. I can't get more specific than that."