

# McCain Stands Fast on Hagee; Criticism Mounts

Mounting criticism of Sen. John McCain's refusal to denounce Pastor John Hagee's anti-Catholicism continued yesterday. In addition to the Catholic League, several other Catholic groups criticized the Republican presidential nominee. Joining in the criticism was House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, the Democratic Party of Georgia, columnists, bloggers and religious websites. Tonight Bill Moyers will air a show on the controversy.

When asked about this issue yesterday, McCain said the following: "Pastor Hagee endorsed me. That does not mean I endorse everything Pastor Hagee said. All I can say is lots and lots of people endorse me. That means they embrace my ideas and positions. It does not mean I endorse them."

Catholic League president Bill Donohue disagrees with this assessment:

"Ordinarily, what McCain said would be true enough. What makes the Hagee matter different is threefold: (a) McCain actively solicited the endorsement, appearing with the minister to accept it (b) Hagee is not simply guilty of a few throw-away lines—he has a long history of demonizing Catholicism, and (c) McCain blasted then presidential candidate George W. Bush in 2000 for not condemning Bob Jones University because of the school's anti-Catholicism (Bush eventually did), thus he has already dropped anchor on this issue.

"Fortunately for McCain, he did not shut the door and say this matter is over. But time is running out. We expect to hear a more definitive statement that explicitly rejects Hagee's anti-Catholicism. If we don't, criticism from many quarters will only escalate. It is one thing for a candidate to disagree with the Catholic position on certain public policy

issues, quite another to break bread with an anti-Catholic bigot.”