

RELIGIOUS RIGHTS CAMPAIGN UNDER FIRE



Catholic League president Bill Donohue responds to critics of the statement on religious liberty that was released last week by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops:

We expect it when Barry Lynn of Americans United for Separation of Church and State accuses the bishops of seeking to “maintain their privileged status.” Similarly, we are not surprised when a left-wing blog, ThinkProgress, associated with the Center for American Progress, says the Catholic Church wants to “impose its public services” on the public. Rabid Catholic-basher Sarah Posner shocked no one when she said the bishops’ document was “even more pointed and hostile than previous statements.” It was laughable, but entirely predictable, that Stephen Prothero would use his CNN post to question the right of the bishops to speak for Catholics, while invoking the anti-Catholic front group Catholics for Choice as a legitimate voice!

What was most disturbing, however, was to see a Catholic media outlet, *Commonweal*, take after the bishops with a vengeance. An editorial on the subject said “the tenor of the bishops’ statement runs the risk of making this into a partisan issue during a presidential election in which the leaders of one party have made outlandish claims about a ‘war on religion’ or a ‘war against the Catholic Church.’”

This says it all. *Commonweal*’s first allegiance is not the defense of religious liberty—it is the defense of the Obama administration. But as Timothy Cardinal Dolan said so well, the bishops did not pick this fight. Nor did they pick the timing. Obama did.

Contrast *Commonweal*'s boilerplate response with that of *Commentary*, a Jewish publication. Jonathan S. Tobin called the bishops' statement "an important document that is neither partisan nor an attempt to inflame sentiments on divisive issues." He urged Jews to stand with the bishops. Too bad the Catholics at *Commonweal* can't find it within themselves to do likewise.