

BUSH APOLOGY SETTLES THE ISSUE

In a letter to John Cardinal O'Connor, Gov. George W. Bush said he deeply regrets not taking the opportunity to separate himself from the anti-Catholic and racially divisive views of Bob Jones University; a copy of the letter was also sent to Catholic League president William Donohue. Donohue discussed this subject this morning on the *Today Show* and issued the following remarks today:

"For the past few weeks, the Catholic League has criticized Gov. Bush for not apologizing to Catholics for the way he has handled his visit to Bob Jones University. Over the weekend, Bush apologized for not 'disassociating' himself from 'anti-Catholic sentiments and racial prejudice.' He continued saying, 'It was a missed opportunity, causing needless offense, which I deeply regret.'

"This settles the issue. Bush has now moved beyond perfunctory comments criticizing anti-Catholicism and is addressing this issue squarely, without reservation.

"A touchstone of Catholicism is forgiveness, the recognition that wrongdoers who are sorry for their offense should be forgiven. It would be inconsistent with our faith, therefore, if we as Catholics did not forgive Gov. Bush for this incident.

"Those who cannot let up and want more from Bush have now become the issue. We need to know what they want and whether they will hold all other candidates to the same standard. To needlessly politicize this issue any longer is a mistake and certainly does not have the support of the Catholic League."

BUSH, McCain AND ANTI-CATHOLICISM

Yesterday, it was reported that callers in Michigan were issuing a “Catholic voter alert” in an attempt to brand Governor George W. Bush anti-Catholic. Governor Bush accused Senator John McCain of paying for the ad. A campaign spokesman for McCain, Howard Opinsky, then denied any involvement.

This led Catholic League president William Donohue to criticize the phone message and to defend Bush against charges of anti-Catholicism. Donohue was critical of the Texas governor, however, for wrongly attributing to McCain the phone calls and for speaking at Bob Jones University, the anti-Catholic school where Bush launched his South Carolina campaign.

Now Donohue comments on the latest development:

“While the phone message was technically an FYI to Michigan voters regarding Governor Bush’s appearance at Bob Jones University, and his subsequent silence on the issue, the reality is that it was orchestrated right before the election to paint Bush as being anti-Catholic. Therefore, it was scurrilous: Bush is not anti-Catholic.

“Senator McCain has some explaining to do. First, one of his spokesmen denies any association with the phone calls, then McCain’s campaign manager, Rick Davis, admits that the McCain camp was behind the ads. Senator McCain needs to make a public statement on this issue without delay.

“Charges that the co-chairman of the McCain campaign is anti-Christian have also surfaced. Bush owes it to all voters not

to associate himself with those who are making this scurrilous charge; we await hearing from him on this matter.

“The Catholic League takes no side in this debate and owes no more allegiance to Bush and McCain than it does Gore and Bradley. But we do take sides in our battle against anti-Catholicism and will continue to address all the permutations this issue provides.”

ANTI-CATHOLIC CHARGES EXPLODE IN MICHIGAN

Michigan voters have been besieged by a flood of phone calls yesterday and today accusing Governor George W. Bush of being anti-Catholic. The callers, who identify themselves as issuing a “Catholic voter alert,” are accusing Bush of anti-Catholicism and are urging them to vote for Senator John McCain; the Arizona senator was labeled “a friend of Catholics.” This comes in the wake of Bush’s address at Bob Jones University in South Carolina, a school that still publishes anti-Catholic material.

Gov. Bush is reported as saying that “this is a campaign ad paid for by John McCain.” But his campaign office later said that McCain did not run the ads.

Catholic League president William Donohue spoke to this issue today:

“I have no reason to believe that George W. Bush is anti-Catholic and neither does anyone else. To be sure, I have questioned the propriety of launching the Bush campaign in South Carolina at Bob Jones University, a patently anti-

Catholic institution, and I continue to do so. But that isn't sufficient grounds to brand someone anti-Catholic.

"There is plenty of blame to go around. Those who are accusing Bush of being anti-Catholic are unjust and they are exploiting this serious issue for political profit. Indeed, we need to know who put these people up to this smear tactic. Bush, on the other hand, has not offered a satisfactory explanation why he began his South Carolina campaign at Bob Jones University and he is also wrong to accuse the McCain camp of orchestrating these phone calls when he now admits he lacks the evidence.

"A member of the board of directors of the Catholic League was also targeted with one of these demagogic phone calls. We look to both Bush and McCain to speak responsibly to this issue."

CATHOLIC LEAGUE'S 1999 ANNUAL REPORT ON ANTI-CATHOLICISM

The *Catholic League's 1999 Annual Report on Anti-Catholicism* is now available. The report offers evidence of anti-Catholicism drawn from events of 1999. It includes a preface and executive summary by league president William Donohue; the chapters cover various topical areas and there is a sample of offensive cartoons.

The chapters cover anti-Catholicism found in activist organizations, the artistic community, business and the workplace, education, government and the media; a miscellaneous section is also included.

We are mailing complimentary copies to many in the media and

other interested parties. Those in the media who do not receive a copy and would like to be put on our list should contact us at (212) 371-3191.

CATHOLIC-BASHING BOB JONES U. NOT AN ISSUE FOR BUSH

Governor George W. Bush, and his supporters, have been asked all week to explain his decision to launch his South Carolina campaign at Bob Jones University. At issue is the school's ban on interracial dating and its explicit condemnation of Catholicism. Bush and his defenders have disapproved of the school's racism but not its anti-Catholicism.

For example, on Feb. 13, Bush was prodded by Tim Russert on "Meet the Press" to comment on the school's anti-Catholicism and the best he could do was to say, "I don't associate with the thought. First of all, that was a 1982 quote by a man now passed away." He did not mention that the anti-Catholic quote is flagged on the school's web page in 2000, along with several other bigoted statements.

On Feb. 15, when given a chance to comment on this during his presidential debate on CNN, Bush let the opportunity go. On Feb. 17, he told CNN "I support people from all walks of life being able to date," but said nothing about the school's anti-Catholicism.

On Feb. 13, on "Face the Nation," Bush supporter Pat Robertson addressed the school's racism, but not its anti-Catholicism. Bush supporter Haley Barbour on Feb. 16 on "Crossfire" never condemned the school's anti-Catholicism when the subject came up. On Feb. 16, Bush supporter Rep. Jennifer Dunn on "Hannity

and Colmes" followed suit, as she did again the next night on "Hardball." Bush supporter Rep. J.C. Watts spoke against the school's racism on CNN's "Early Edition" on Feb. 16 and did the same thing on Feb. 17 on "Hardball" without ever addressing the school's anti-Catholicism. Bush supporter Rep. Tim Hutchinson, and his Bush-supporting brother Rep. Asa Hutchinson, in an AP story on Feb. 16 spoke against the school's position on race, but said nothing about the school's anti-Catholicism.

Here is what Catholic League president William Donohue said today:

"The evidence is in: Bush and his friends find it difficult to condemn the anti-Catholicism that marks Bob Jones University. We need to know why."

BUSH, GORE AND HILLARY STUMP IN CHURCHES

Yesterday, Governor George W. Bush took his campaign to Ebenezer Baptist Church in Florence, South Carolina; he is pictured speaking there on the front page of today's *New York Times*. On Sunday, Vice President Al Gore and U.S. senatorial candidate Hillary Rodham Clinton will speak at Wilborn Temple Church of God in Christ in Albany, New York; their talk comes at the end of a big weekend gathering of minority legislators.

William Donohue, Catholic League president, spoke to this issue today:

"Last week Al Gore was endorsed by Rev. Floyd Flake in Queens, New York, the result of which was a complaint filed with the

IRS by Americans United for Separation of Church and State. Barry Lynn of Americans United will now have to hire new staff to keep up with the latest round of First Amendment abuses.

“If Bush, Gore or Hillary were to speak at St. Patrick’s Cathedral, those who treat their current abuses with aplomb would go ballistic. What it all comes down to is this: politicians and candidates for public office can speak at Protestant churches, get endorsed in Protestant churches and even raise money in Protestant churches (Rev. Jesse Jackson did exactly that in 1988), and almost no one says boo. But let a Catholic priest give a sermon on abortion and everyone goes crazy. It doesn’t take a rocket scientist to know that what is at work is pure, unadulterated bigotry—bigotry by the name of anti-Catholicism.”

HOUSE CHAPLAIN ISSUE BECOMES HOUSE OF LIES

In yesterday’s edition of *Roll Call*, it was reported that Rev. Billy Graham “called the Speaker [Dennis Hastert] on Monday and urged him not to abandon the Chaplain candidate [Rev. Charles Wright].” The story said that Hastert was “under pressure from the Rev. Billy Graham” to stick by Rev. Wright.

Now an AP story today reports that Larry Ross, a spokesman for Graham, says that Rev. Graham’s “response was he did not and could not take sides on this issue.” He continued by saying “Any inference that he did take sides was a misunderstanding of a private phone call between Mr. Graham and the speaker.” The story also says that the minister was “only returning a call from Hastert and did not specifically weigh in on the

chaplain issue.”

To make matters more complicated, AP says that John Feehery, spokesman for Hastert, insists that Graham “did express support” for Rev. Wright and that Hastert never called Graham.

Catholic League president William Donohue addressed this latest controversy in the House Chaplain issue today:

“*Roll Call* did not err in its story. We know this because we independently learned that House Speaker Dennis Hastert’s office took great delight in telling their supporters that Rev. Billy Graham was lobbying for Rev. Wright. Now Graham denies this happened and even denies making the phone call in the first place.

“The Republicans have built a House of Lies. This latest fiasco is only one chapter in a book of lies that the Republicans have written on this subject. Just ask Father Timothy O’Brien.”

REV. BILLY GRAHAM WRONG ON HOUSE CHAPLAIN ISSUE

As reported in today’s edition of *Roll Call*, Rev. Billy Graham has entered the controversy over the new House Chaplain. He reportedly called House Speaker Dennis Hastert on Monday urging him not to abandon Rev. Charles Wright, the candidate who placed third in the selection committee balloting but was nonetheless chosen by Hastert, Rep. Dick Armey and Rep. Dick Gephardt as the nominee (Gephardt wanted Father Timothy O’Brien, the Catholic priest who was the top choice of the selection committee). Graham’s wife is a friend of Wright’s

wife and Hastert and Graham are graduates of Wheaton College.

Catholic League president William Donohue commented on Graham's entrance into the fray today:

"Everyone respects Rev. Billy Graham but he is wrong on this issue. The selection process for the new House Chaplain was seriously tainted, so much so that to start *de novo* would make more sense than to simply ratify what has been done. While anyone is free to enter the debate, everyone who does so is morally obliged to weigh the evidence and not simply offer support, or criticism, for the process.

"The Republicans brought this on themselves and by delaying the process they have only turned more people against them. The Catholic League favors neither Republicans nor Democrats and that is why we will not be persuaded by those who advance political arguments asking us to reconsider our position. Justice demands that the selection process be carefully scrutinized by every House member before a final vote is taken."

HOUSE CHAPLAIN MESS GROWS

John Feehery, spokesman for House Speaker Dennis Hastert, is reported as saying in today's edition of *USA Today* that neither Hastert nor Rep. Dick Armey knew that Father Timothy O'Brien was the top choice of the selection committee to be the new House Chaplain.

In another development, Auxiliary Bishop Richard J. Sklba of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee has written to Hastert asking the House leadership to "reconsider their conclusion." Bishop Sklba also said that "The rationale offered to explain your

final recommendation for House Chaplain is not persuasive.” Catholic League president William Donohue agreed:

“Bishop Sklba is right—a persuasive case to reject Father O’Brien has not been made. Here’s one reason why. We are to believe that neither Hastert nor Armey knew that O’Brien was the top pick of the selection committee. But on Dec. 2, the *New York Times* wrote that Rep. Pomeroy and Rep. Bliley (the co-chairs of the committee) said that all three—Hastert, Armey and Gephardt—knew that O’Brien was the top choice. On the same day, AP reported that officials in both parties ‘made it clear’ that O’Brien was first. On Dec. 3, the *Boston Globe* said that Rep. Anna Eshoo confessed that Democrats on the committee informed Gephardt of their preference and that they were certain he shared this with the others.

“On Jan. 10, *Roll Call* said that aides to Gephardt insisted that all three were aware that O’Brien was the top pick; it also said that when Pomeroy and Bliley met with Hastert and Gephardt, they told them that O’Brien was number one. On Jan. 12, Copley News Service said that Hastert and Armey knew ‘by word of mouth’ that O’Brien was first. On Feb. 1, AP reported that Pomeroy said all three knew O’Brien placed first; ditto Feb. 8. On Feb. 9, Gannett reported that Sue Harvey, spokesman for Gephardt, said all three knew O’Brien was first. On Feb. 12, the *Washington Post* wrote that Pomeroy said he orally conveyed O’Brien’s first place showing to Hastert and Gephardt. Moreover, Ted Van der Meid, Hastert’s counsel, counted the votes. None of this adds up.”

GORE ENDORSED IN CHURCH

Vice president Al Gore was endorsed yesterday by Rev. Floyd Flake inside Allen African Methodist Episcopal Church in Queens, New York. "I don't do endorsements from across the pulpit," said Rev. Flake, "because I never know who's out there watching the types of laws that govern separation of church and state." He then proceeded to endorse Gore anyway. "But I will say to you this morning, and you read it well: This should be the next President of the United States." Rev. Flake then put his arm around the vice president.

Catholic League president William Donohue commented on this today:

"A few weeks ago, Archbishop Justin Rigali of St. Louis was criticized for imploring Catholics to 'elect those who respect the sacredness of life.' But there were no howls of protest screaming separation of church and state when Rev. Floyd Flake endorsed Vice President Al Gore from the pulpit. Americans United for Separation of Church and State, the ACLU and People for the American Way profess to be great watchdogs of church and state, but they are apparently nonplussed by what happened yesterday. So, too, is the IRS. Is this because Rev. Flake isn't Catholic?

"The next time someone tries to intimidate a Catholic priest from speaking out on contemporary moral issues, we will be sure to bring this up. As for Gore, it would be interesting to know why his alleged interest in keeping church and state separate allows him to oppose school vouchers but doesn't stop him from accepting endorsements in church. Or, for that matter, from accepting money in Buddhist temples."