

POLITICS AND RELIGION 2000

Candidates for state and federal office, Republican and Democrat alike, have addressed the subject of politics and religion more this election year than in previous ones. Speaking to this issue today is Catholic League president William Donohue:

“Candidates for public office are often guilty of pandering to special interest groups, and that occasionally includes religious groups as well. But sometimes they are genuinely expressing their thoughts on religion, and that is why it is wrong to reflexively denounce them for doing so.

“Just as it is wrong to wantonly inject religion into politics, it is wrong to deliberately eject religion from politics. The current dispute on this matter between Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and Hillary Clinton is a case in point: he has every right to question those who want to limit the public expression of religion and they have every right to question him about his position. Indeed, it would be helpful if we had a national discussion on this subject, absent the kind of political posturing that often takes place.

“Pope John Paul II recently encouraged Catholics to become more participatory in secular affairs. On November 15, he said to Catholics ‘You must speak out on all occasions, in season and out of season...A secular society which is ever more silent about God needs your voice.’ The Catholic League has been doing just that, and we will continue to do so, without favor to any political party.

“To cite one example of our non-partisanship on this issue, take George W. Bush. We defended his right to express his reliance on Christ without having to succumb to the demands of those who want to censor such discourse from public life. And now we are critical of his decision to open his South Carolina

campaign at Bob Jones University, a school that is blatantly anti-Catholic. As the election year proceeds, the Catholic League will continue in this vein.”

HOUSE CHAPLAIN ISSUE GETS MUDDIED EVEN FURTHER

Remarks by Rep. Dick Armey yesterday have muddied the House Chaplain issue even further. A report in today's *Dallas Morning News* says that Armey did not know the denominations of the finalists for the job.

Catholic League president William Donohue picked up on this today:

“First Rep. Armey wanted us to believe that he didn't know that Father Timothy O'Brien was the top candidate as chosen by the selection committee and now he wants us to believe that he didn't know that Father O'Brien was a priest. This is strange. Did he think he was a Buddhist?

“In an AP story yesterday, Rep. Earl Pomeroy, co-chairman of the selection committee, said that Armey, Rep. Dennis Hastert and Rep. Dick Gephardt all knew that O'Brien was the top choice. This makes it all the more urgent for Armey to talk to Pomeroy about this. And then he can talk to all the other committee members who have said the same thing.

“Our favorite, of course, is the business of Armey not knowing that O'Brien was a priest. This is strange given the fact that on October 7, Rep. Pomeroy and Rep. Tom Bliley sent Armey a letter listing the three finalists as 'Rev. Robert Dvorak, Father Tim O'Brien and Dr. Charles Wright'; all three have

doctorates but O'Brien was nonetheless identified as 'Father.' Moreover, on December 2, it was reported in the *New York Times* that Arney had commented to O'Brien in the interview that where he grew up in North Dakota there was a lot of anti-Catholicism. A strange remark to make to someone whom Arney thought could have been a Buddhist.

"To make matters worse, on December 23 Arney accused O'Brien of lobbying for the job, the effect of which, he wrote, 'resulted in eliminating another Catholic priest who was endorsed by Cardinal James Hickey of Washington, D.C.' This is strange given that O'Brien could have been a Buddhist. It can't get any muddier than this."

HILLARY CLINTON—OFF ON THE WRONG FOOT

Hillary Rodham Clinton announced her candidacy for the U.S. Senate yesterday by sending the wrong message to Catholics. "I'll be on your side in the fight against school vouchers, which drain taxpayer dollars from our public schools," she said. However, on December 14, 1999, Mrs. Clinton told 100 Orthodox Jewish leaders that she would back certain "constitutionally correct" methods for government to help private schools. On December 17, Catholic League president William Donohue wrote to Mrs. Clinton asking for clarification but she never responded.

On another matter, just prior to Mrs. Clinton's announcement yesterday, her campaign blasted the song "Captain Jack" to the crowd at SUNY Purchase. "Your sister's gone out, she's on a date and you just sit at home and masturbate," is how the

lyrics read. Other lyrics put a positive spin on pornography and drugs.

William Donohue addressed what happened today:

“Bishop Mark Hurley recently criticized Vice President Al Gore for feeding anti-Catholicism by constantly maintaining that vouchers drain money from public schools. Now Mrs. Clinton is at it, only this time her ‘fight against vouchers’ campaign comes on the heels of promising to deliver on offering public assistance to private schools. She needs to make up her mind on this issue and she needs to do so without offending Catholic sensibilities.

“It cannot be argued that playing a patently offensive song prior to welcoming Mrs. Clinton was a mistake. No, Mrs. Clinton’s operatives wanted to send a message and they succeeded. It is mind-boggling that Mrs. Clinton’s campaign chiefs would want to flag a sexually irresponsible song as a way of introducing her to New York. Talk about getting off on the wrong foot.”

REPUBLICAN OPERATIVES CROSS CHURCH-STATE LINES

The Catholic League’s opposition to the selection process of the new House Chaplain has triggered outrage among Republicans. Some of the lobbying efforts have been improper and this is what Catholic League president William Donohue addressed today:

“If someone working for the Catholic Church, or for the Catholic League, were to call a congressman’s office and tell

his aide that 'You guys better come around on this,' it would be greeted with howls of protest. Not only would the congressman be screaming how this violated church and state, some would want to challenge the Church's tax exempt-status. Well, this just happened to us yesterday and the guilty party is Joe Eule, chief of staff for Congressman J.D. Hayworth, Republican from Arizona.

"The Catholic League is a thick-skinned organization that understands the legitimate right of everyone to criticize what we do. But it is wrong for the state to try to intimidate faith-based non-profit organizations: respect for church and state boundaries works both ways.

"Moreover, we don't need lectures from go-betweens for House Speaker Dennis Hastert telling us that we have stepped into the 'absolute major leagues of power politics,' and we are sick and tired of attempts to smear Father Timothy O'Brien.

"It is no wonder that more and more Americans are quitting both parties and becoming independents. But the bullies will not succeed and that is why we will not be deterred."

KANSAS CITY STAR SEX SURVEY GETS FAILING GRADE

The recent sex survey of Roman Catholic priests by the *Kansas City Star* has just been analyzed by two leading statisticians: David Murray, research director at the Statistical Assessment Service and S. Robert Lichter, president of the Center for Media and Public Affairs. They have independently posted their review of the survey at newswatch.org.

They said that “few survey researchers would consider a 27 percent response rate to be ‘very good,’” adding that in such instances “follow-up surveys” are typically conducted; this was not the case.

They also concluded that the survey’s margin of error of 3.5 percent was a “boilerplate description of sampling error.” They made this charge because it is not known whether “the minority who responded were unusually concerned about AIDS, differentially open to questions of personal sexuality, or even more likely to have a homosexual orientation than the 2,212 non-respondents.”

The survey’s most sensationalistic conclusion—that AIDS-related deaths among priests is about 4 times the general population rate—was also the source of Murray and Lichter’s harshest assessment: the survey compared priests to the general population, which includes women and children, and therefore offered a skewed comparison. When the rate of AIDS-related deaths among priests is contrasted with the rate among adult males, the difference disappears—they have the same rate!

Catholic League president William Donohue commented on this today:

“Murray and Lichter’s analysis of the *Kansas City Star* data demonstrates the unscientific nature of the sex survey. When coupled with the obvious political agenda of the survey, the only unqualified conclusion that can be drawn is that the *Kansas City Star* deserves the Maria Monk award for fabricating stories that demonize the Catholic Church.”

CATHOLICS URGED TO PROTEST SEIZURE OF RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH IN WEST BANK

At a press conference yesterday, New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani spoke against the seizure of a Russian Orthodox Church by Palestinian police in the West Bank. On January 15, the Jericho Garden Monastery was taken from the "White" Russian Orthodox Church and turned over to the "Red" Russian Orthodox Church; the "Red" Church is so-named because of its initial affiliation with the Communists who took control of Russia in 1917, and the "White" Church is the church in exile.

In Jericho, where the monastery is located, two "White" Church nuns, one of whom is the sister of former White House spokesman George Stephanopoulos, are protesting the seizure by refusing to leave the premises of the monastery.

In attendance at the press conference yesterday were two "White" Russian Orthodox priests, representatives from the ADL and Catholic League president William Donohue.

Donohue issued the following statement on this issue today:

"We are calling on all Catholics to protest the outrageous violation of religious rights committed by the Palestinian Authority. The Catholic League will do what it can to assist the White Russian Orthodox Church, the only legitimate voice in the Russian Church. We also note that Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat has thus far refused to bring justice to this situation, demonstrating once again that the Israelis are right to be wary of his demands.

"Mayor Giuliani has courageously confronted this issue and it is our hope that the Clinton administration will make this a priority. Moreover, it is time the presidential candidates in

both parties followed the lead of Mayor Giuliani in addressing this matter.”

KANSAS CITY STAR SEX SURVEY REVEALS PAPER’S BIAS

After reading the three-part series on the sex lives of Catholic priests in the *Kansas City Star*, Catholic League president William Donohue said today:

“An examination of the data shows that exactly one-half of one percent of priests have HIV or AIDS, and exactly 3.6 percent are critical of the way the Church has responded to this problem. What is striking about this is that the narrative offered in the series is written from the perspective that AIDS is rampant in the priesthood and that the clergy are furious with the way the Church has handled this problem. In essence, what could not be accomplished by citing the data had to be done by substituting anecdotal commentary drawn from a handful of angry priests *and* former priests.

“It is also striking that 70 percent of the priests said that changing the Church’s teachings on homosexuality would not prove effective in dealing with this problem and two-thirds said that changing the celibacy requirement would not prove effective. Yet the narrative states that ‘the Catholic Church’s condemnation of homosexual acts, its requirement that priests be male and its unique demand of celibacy make the issue all the more vexing for its followers.’ However, this conclusion is not supported by the data. Once again, the agenda is evident: by citing unnamed ‘experts’ who urge the Church to change its teachings, the editors invent support for

their position that their own data do not allow. And notice, too, that they even throw in a shot about the male clergy, as if that contributes to AIDS.

“It is also amazing that they cite the work of Richard Sipe. He previously reported that 2 percent of priests were pedophiles, yet an examination of his data showed that he was speaking simply of those who have such *tendencies*, and not actual behavior. Finally, the paper is correct to say that the Catholic Church has no policy on AIDS. A phone call to the newspaper revealed that neither do they; nor does either have a policy on diabetes. We await the results of their own in-house sex survey so we can make a ‘scientific’ comparison and then send the results to Howard Stern for analysis.”