

ACLU BID TO DEFEND CATHOLICS REJECTED

Copies of the Ten Commandments, along with seven other historical documents, were hung in the Iowa Statehouse yesterday. The documents, which include the Magna Carta and the Declaration of Independence, are being displayed to commemorate the moral and legal underpinnings of the United States.

The ACLU affiliate, however, complained that only one version of the Ten Commandments (the King James version) was posted, thereby excluding versions used by Catholics, Lutherans and Jews. The ACLU said this was divisive and showed “government favoritism” of one religion over another.

The display was donated by private sources and was approved by Iowa House Speaker Chris Rants. Rants said, “If somebody finds it offensive, I hope they will come and talk to me about it.” The legal arm of the Iowa Family Policy Center pledged to fight any lawsuit brought by the ACLU.

Catholic League president William Donohue said the ACLU’s fears were unfounded:

“It is so refreshing to learn that the ACLU’s opposition to the Iowa display of the Ten Commandments is motivated out of concern for Roman Catholics. All along we thought the ACLU was simply opposed to any display of the Ten Commandments on public property. While we hate to sound ungrateful, we really don’t need the ACLU to protect us in this instance. In fact, the Catholic League would like to see the display of the Ten Commandments in every statehouse, and it matters not a whit whether it is the Catholic, Protestant or Jewish version.

“I have written to Iowa House Speaker Chris Rants informing him of the Catholic League’s position; a copy has also been

sent to Chuck Hurley of the Iowa Family Policy Center.”

HOWARD DEAN HIJACKS CHRISTIANITY

According to a front-page article in today's *Washington Post*, Howard Dean said yesterday that his decision as governor to support civil unions for homosexuals was grounded in his Christian faith.

Dean elaborated by saying there is “overwhelming evidence” of a “very significant genetic component” to a homosexual orientation. “From a religious point of view,” he said, “if God had thought homosexuality is a sin, he would not have created gay people.”

Catholic League president William Donohue commented as follows:

“Howard Dean is entitled to his view that civil unions for homosexuals is a good idea, but he is not entitled to hijack Christianity to argue that homosexuality is not sinful. On Tuesday he couldn't answer a question that sought to tap how religion may have influenced his policy decisions, and on Wednesday he proclaims that Christianity sanctions sodomy. This isn't spin—it's stupidity.

“And talking about stupidity, that is the only term that accurately describes Dean's assertion that there is a gay gene. Everyone who has looked at this question seriously knows there is no ‘overwhelming evidence’ on the subject either way. That this comment comes from a doctor calls into question more than his politics.

“What is perhaps most disturbing about this is the manipulative way in which Dean is using Christianity. Just yesterday, I issued a news release defending his right to publicly discuss religion. But never would I defend anyone’s right to distort the religious beliefs of any religion. Dean obviously doesn’t know the difference between the innocence of a homosexual orientation and the sinfulness of homosexual behavior.

“If this wasn’t enough, consider that in the current issue of the *New Republic* Dean says, ‘My religion doesn’t inform my public policy.’ He not only has reversed himself (again!), he has managed to insult the 85 percent of the American population that is Christian.”

CENSORING RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION OF PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES

Catholic League president William Donohue addressed today the news release of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) on the religious expression of presidential candidates:

“The ADL has written to every presidential candidate saying, ‘Candidates should feel comfortable explaining their religious convictions to voters.’ No one could reasonably disagree with this statement. It goes on to say that ‘appealing to voters on the basis of religion is contrary to the American ideal and can be inherently divisive, wrongly suggesting that a candidate’s religious beliefs should be a litmus test for public office.’ Broadly understood, this is a defensible position. What worries the Catholic League, however, is what

prompted the ADL to act in the first place.

“The ADL finds it objectionable that Gov. Howard Dean recently said, ‘I’m pretty religious...I pray every day, but I’m from New England so I just keep it to myself.’ Was not Dean simply showing how comfortable (or uncomfortable) he is in explaining his religious convictions to voters? The ADL is also bothered by Sen. Joseph Lieberman’s remark that while he strongly supports separation of church and state, he emphasizes that the Constitution ‘promises freedom of religion, not freedom from religion.’ But this is simply a truism. Moreover, it is neither divisive nor suggestive of a litmus test for public office.

“The effect of what the ADL is doing is to create a ‘chilling effect’ on the free speech rights of presidential candidates. If any candidate is guilty of pandering to the electorate on religion, the voters will take due note of it. And if any candidate seeks to exploit religion in a way that is truly divisive, the voters will send an unmistakable message at the polls. But short of this—and there is no evidence that any candidate is guilty of such infractions—everyone who runs for public office should be encouraged to express himself as freely as he wants about his religious convictions. To suggest otherwise is contrary to the American ideal.”

REPORT ON BISHOPS IS ENCOURAGING

The Report on the Implementation of the “Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People” was released today by the Office of Child Youth Protection and the National Review

Board of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). Commenting on it is Catholic League president William Donohue:

“Good news for the Catholic Church is bad news for its adversaries. That is why today is not a good day for those who smugly pound their chests in fits of self-righteousness every time they read something damaging to the Church. For today is the day the National Review Board gave a decided thumbs up to most dioceses. Of the 195 dioceses, an audit was completed in 191 of them, and of this number only 20 were found to be lacking in implementing necessary reforms. Now if an audit were taken of public school districts throughout the nation, it is not likely they would receive such a glowing report card.

“The *Report* comes at a time when alleged victims are making claims about priests that go back more than 70 years. Not only are dead priests having their reputations dragged through the mud, adult men who have had sex with priests for decades are amazingly claiming victim status. And then there are the professional victims—those whom no reforms will ever satisfy. Their latest surge of anger is grounded in their disappointment at not being consulted by the National Review Board.

“And what will *Newsday* and Voice of the Faithful (VOTF) do now? No bishop in the U.S. has been more unfairly maligned by his local newspaper, or by a chapter of VOTF, than Rockville Centre Bishop William F. Murphy. Yet of the eight dioceses in New York State, only three received at least one commendation, and only one—Rockville Centre—received two commendations.

“The Catholic League is delighted with the *Report*. We’re also delighted that those who wallow in bad news are confounded by the evidence.”