

FRIST IS WORSE THAN KERRY

Senator Bill Frist formally broke today with the Bush administration's opposition to embryonic stem cell research. Commenting on the break is Catholic League president William Donohue:

"Here is what Senator John Kerry said when running for president: 'I believe life does begin at conception.' Here is what Senator Bill Frist is now saying: 'I believe human life begins at conception.' They now agree on one more thing: They will do absolutely nothing to protect the beginning of innocent human life.

"Frist is worse than Kerry. Kerry, a lawyer, said his position on the beginning of human life was based on 'my Catholic belief.' Frist, a physician, says that while his Christian faith informs his position, there's more to it: 'But, to me, it isn't just a matter of faith. It's a fact of science.'

"And it's a fact of politics that Frist is such a hypocrite. His change of heart has nothing to do with any scientific breakthrough: there is no new evidence suggesting that the human embryo does not constitute human life, nor is there any evidence that embryonic stem cell research can be performed without killing embryos. What's changed is that Dr. Duplicity wants to be president.

"Frist still calls himself 'strong[ly] pro-life,' and says he gives 'huge moral significance to the human embryo.' Furthermore, he says the human embryo 'is nascent human life,' explaining that we should 'treat that embryo with dignity, with respect.' Which raises the question: If it's okay to snuff out the beginning of human life, how much dignity and respect may logically be accorded the dead?

"Frist says he is not going to run for senator of Tennessee

again. Now it's up to the Republican leadership to make sure he has no future role to play in their party. Who knows, if Frist becomes increasingly Kerryesque, maybe the Dems will draft him?"

DURBIN'S DIRTY WAR ON ROBERTS

Today, Catholic League president William Donohue criticized Senator Dick Durbin's attack on Supreme Court nominee John Roberts:

"After Senator John Cornyn laid to rest on Monday any concerns that Judge Roberts would allow his religious views to affect his rulings on the bench, we thought this matter was closed. We were wrong: Senator Durbin told a CNN correspondent yesterday that he 'needs to look at everything, including the nominee's faith....' Now match this up with what Durbin has said previously:

- Speaking about questions regarding the religious beliefs of a nominee for the federal bench, Durbin said on April 15, 2005, "By the Constitution and by law, we cannot even ask that question, nor would I."
- Yet on June 11, 2003, Durbin took umbrage at Circuit Court nominee William Pryor when Pryor merely noted the historical relationship between Christianity and the nation's founding: "Do you not understand," he said, that this "raises concerns of those who don't happen to be Christian that you are asserting an agenda of your own, religious belief of your own inconsistent with separation of church and state?"
- After taking flack for his remark, Durbin said on July

23, 2003 that members of the Senate Judiciary Committee ought “to expunge references to religion from this point forward.” He added, hypocritically, “This is beneath the dignity of the committee.”

- The very next day, July 24, he reversed himself, saying, “If Senator [Jeff] Sessions is suggesting that anyone who has a religious belief should never be questioned about it, even if it has political implications, I just think [that] is wrong-headed.”
- On July 31, he reversed himself again, this time having the audacity to co-sponsor a resolution saying, “It shall not be in order to ask any question of the nominee relating to the religious affiliation of the nominee.”

“Durbin’s duplicity is mind-boggling. But of greater concern is his determination to force Roberts to submit to a religious test.”

RELIGIOUS LITMUS TEST FOR ROBERTS?

Catholic League president William Donohue wrote the following remarks today on the prospects of creating a religious litmus test for John Roberts:

“The Senate Judiciary Committee will not hold its hearings on President Bush’s nomination of John Roberts for the Supreme Court for some time, but already there are signs that he will be asked to submit to a religious litmus test. The informal discussions Roberts has had with some senators last week are cause for alarm.

“To be specific, Senator Tom Coburn complained last week that Roberts was reticent when asked to explain how his Catholic religion affects his views; the senator said he intends to ask Roberts about this again at their next meeting. Also, in today’s *Los Angeles Times*, George Washington University law professor Jonathan Turley says that he has learned that Roberts was uneasy when Senator Dick Durbin pressed him on a related matter: when asked what he would do if the law required a decision that conflicted with his religion, Roberts reportedly said he would probably have to recuse himself.

“The Catholic League is angry at Coburn and Durbin for asking these questions, and at Roberts for his replies. On June 15, 1993, the *Boston Globe* ran a story on Supreme Court nominee Ruth Bader Ginsburg, wherein it printed a description of Ginsburg that was offered by a Georgetown law professor friend, Wendy Williams: she said Ginsburg had a strong ‘Jewish cultural identity,’ but was ‘not devout.’

“Ginsburg was never asked to explain why her identity as a Jew was mostly cultural. Nor was she asked how her secular identity might affect her rulings on abortion and church-state issues. Indeed, it would have been outrageous had anyone attempted to pursue such a line of inquiry. Why it is not seen as equally outrageous for Coburn and Durbin to go down this road is testimony to the double standard: Ginsburg was not asked to submit to a religious litmus test and neither should Roberts.

“If Roberts doesn’t defend himself on this matter, he will only feed the sharks. Playing it too safe isn’t cute: he’d better show some gumption.”

ROBERTS, CATHOLICISM AND ABORTION

Catholic League president William Donohue offered the following comments today on Supreme Court nominee John Roberts:

“In an AP poll just released, 52 percent of Americans said that Judge Roberts should give his position on abortion when asked by lawmakers. Whether he does or not is of little interest to the Catholic League, though it is important to recall that Ruth Bader Ginsburg positively refused to answer questions on gay rights and capital punishment, and she did so with impunity. What is of interest to us is the way some are trying to establish a cause-and-effect relationship between Judge Roberts’ Catholicity and his presumed position on abortion. Indeed, even his wife, who is avowedly pro-life, has been dragged into this debate.

“Let’s begin with the AP. In the story on the survey, it says, ‘While deputy solicitor general in 1990, Roberts, a Roman Catholic, helped write a legal brief’ that *Roe v. Wade* overturned. Now there is nothing in the AP style-book that merits mentioning Roberts’ religion in this context. For example, in today’s *New York Times*, it several times mentions that Roberts is a Catholic, but its use is entirely descriptive and biographical: it was not cited to imply a causal relationship with his presumed position on abortion. That’s not a small difference. To the unconvinced, imagine reading, ‘Ruth Bader Ginsburg, a Jew, helped write a legal brief’ for the ACLU upholding *Roe*? And keep in mind that every survey has disclosed that Jews are more uniformly in favor of abortion rights than Catholics are pro-life.

“AP is not alone. Yesterday, NPR’s Lynn Neary said of Roberts, ‘And he is a Roman Catholic, and that might affect

the way he views an issue like abortion, for instance.’ American University law professor Stephen Wermiel went one better, asserting, ‘It could make a difference. It could also make a difference in church-state separation issues.’

“These are more than red flags—these are the marks of bigotry, politely expressed. And these people consider themselves to be tolerant.”

WAS ROBERTS CHOSEN BECAUSE HE’S CATHOLIC?

The lead article in the online version of today’s *The American Prospect*, a magazine, says that President Bush’s selection of Judge John Roberts for a seat on the Supreme Court is evidence of his “Playing the Catholic card.” According to Adele M. Stan, Bush is “betting he’s bought himself some insulation—any opposition to Roberts, particularly because of his anti-abortion record, will likely be countered with accusations of anti-Catholicism.” She says this is a “timely pitch” to “conservative Catholic voters prior to the midterm elections”; she urges “liberal Catholics” and others to protest Roberts.

Stan goes even further on her blog, AddieStan, by saying “Rome must be smiling” at Bush’s choice. She asks that readers contact the Democratic Catholics on the Senate Judiciary Committee to reject Roberts.

Catholic League president William Donohue commented as follows:

“We had no idea that John G. Roberts, Jr. was a Roman Catholic until today. But when we learned of his religious

affiliation, we wondered how long it would be before his religion would be dragged into the debate. We didn't have to wait too long: *The American Prospect*, never friendly to Catholics, let Adele M. Stan do its bidding. Roberts, she says, was chosen purely for sinister reasons.

"Now let's apply this logic to President Clinton's selection of Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Steven Breyer for the Supreme Court. Did he do so because he liked 'Playing the Jewish card'? And did he do so because he wanted his critics to be seen as anti-Semites? For good measure, was Israel 'smiling' when Clinton chose Ginsburg and Breyer?

"The fact that Jew baiting did not accompany the nominations of Ginsburg and Breyer shows how this nation has progressed. Unfortunately, within 24 hours of Roberts' nomination, Catholic baiting has raised its ugly head. And the fact that it is coming from a mainstream liberal source is even more disconcerting. We hope this is not the beginning of an ugly few months."

BOSTON POLS VIOLATE CHURCH-STATE LINES

Three members of the Boston City Council, led by Councilor Jerry P. McDermott, are seeking a referendum on the operations of the Archdiocese of Boston. If they succeed in getting their motion approved, the following question will appear on the November 8 ballot:

"Do you agree, to date, the Archdiocese of Boston has failed to work effectively with Boston's neighborhoods to mitigate the impacts of Catholic parish and school closings on

neighborhood services; and that in the future the Archdiocese of Boston should be strongly urged to meet its institutional obligations to all of Boston's citizens, to neighbors, and to the city's agencies by cooperating before-the-fact, diligently and in good faith, for the difficult transitions?"

Catholic League president William Donohue commented on this today:

"It is disingenuous and downright dishonest of Councilor McDermott to say, 'We understand the separation of church and state, but we think it needs to be made crystal clear how the voting public feels.' Then take a poll, Councilor McDermott. No, the real purpose of this measure is to intimidate the Archdiocese of Boston by having an arm of the state whip the public into a frenzy about matters they have no constitutional business sticking their noses into. It not only smacks of total disrespect for the principle of separation of church and state, it smacks of bias: If the goal is public accountability of private organizations, why focus exclusively on the Catholic Church? Why not go for broke and get the Protestants, Jews and Muslims to answer to the public as well?

"Just imagine what McDermott would say if it were proposed by a group of concerned clergy that there be a referendum on the ballot asking the public whether it would be wise to mandate that all bills being considered by the city council first be vetted by the clergy? He'd be outraged. Which only shows his duplicity on this issue.

"This is sheer, unadulterated demagoguery. We will contact the other members of the city council to shoot down this preposterous measure."

CHRISTIANS DENY CATHOLICS ADOPTIONS

The Mississippi branch of Bethany Christian Services, an adoption agency affiliated with the Presbyterian Church of America, denies Catholic couples the right to adopt children. The agency receives monies collected from "Choose Life" license-plate fees, some of which have been collected from Catholics. More than 40 Catholics have complained to the Catholic League about this practice.

Responding today is Catholic League president William Donohue:

"It is just as important to have the right remedy as it is to identify a real problem. In this case, the right remedy is not to grant government more police powers overseeing faith-based institutions.

"Currently, the extra fees collected from 'Choose Life' license plates are given to a non-governmental body, Choose Life Mississippi. This non-profit organization then distributes the private donations to appropriate pro-life centers; Bethany is one of 24 centers that receives funding. In the interest of fairness, it would make more sense to allow those who pay the additional fee the right to decide which of the approved pro-life centers should receive their donation. This kind of menu is common practice in the workplace and would insulate Bethany Christian Services from government oversight without asking Catholics to subsidize its work.

"In short, this remedy would not only allow for freedom of choice, it would also allow for diversity without sanctioning discrimination. This is precisely what I am recommending to the Mississippi lawmakers."