

SEN. BARACK OBAMA'S REMARKS ON RELIGION

Senator Barack Obama spoke before a Call to Renewal conference today imploring Democrats to reach out to people of faith. "Secularists are wrong when they ask believers to leave their religion at the door before entering the public square," he said.

Catholic League president Bill Donohue commented as follows:

"There is much in Senator Obama's address that the Catholic League welcomes. For too long, many Democrats have viewed religion as a purely personal matter, having no legitimate public role to play. But like all public officials, Obama must be judged not on what he says but on what he does. It is on this score that he fails.

"Obama is opposed to school vouchers (though he sent his kids to private schools) and he is opposed to posting the Ten Commandments in government buildings. And then there are moral issues which, while not religious, per se, are nonetheless of grave interest to people of faith. On this score, Obama fails as well.

"Obama is a big supporter of abortion-on-demand; he thinks it is okay to intentionally let a child die who survived an abortion (that's the way he voted when he was a state lawmaker); he is a co-sponsor of legislation that allows for the intentional killing of embryos; he is opposed to a constitutional amendment that would define marriage as the union between a man and a woman; and he is against the Defense of Marriage Act (President Clinton signed it into law—it guarantees states the right to make their own choices regarding marriage).

"Until Senator Obama bridges the gap between his rhetoric and

his record, many will remain skeptical of his professed beliefs. Indeed, he should have taken the opportunity today to remind the Call to Renewal folks that no one will take them seriously if they continue to refer to the budget as a moral document while jettisoning any interest in the moral propriety of abortion. But given his own record, such comments would have been difficult to make.”

RELIGIOUS LEFT SEEKS TO SILENCE CHURCH’S VOICE

A coalition of religious leaders in Massachusetts who are pro-gay marriage has lashed out at Boston Archbishop Sean Cardinal O’Malley and other Catholic leaders for opposing same-sex unions. The coalition accuses the Catholic leaders of practicing “religious discrimination” and has requested that they stop campaigning for laws that protect the institution of marriage.

“We respect the Roman Catholic Church’s desire to speak in a public forum about this, but it has come to a point where the advocacy about same-sex marriage has come to impinge on our own religious practices, because not everyone believes same-sex marriage is wrong or sinful or against religious beliefs,” said the Rev. Tiffany Steinwert, a United Methodist minister who works with homosexuals. She added, “What happens when the Roman Catholic Church seeks to create public policy based on their religious beliefs is that they negate other religious beliefs that might be contrary to that.”

Catholic League president Bill Donohue responded as follows:

“It is important that the religious coalition stop practicing

religious discrimination against Roman Catholics and stop campaigning for laws that weaken the institution of marriage.

“We respect the religious coalition’s desire to speak in a public forum about this, but it has come to a point where the advocacy about same-sex marriage has come to impinge on our own religious practices, because not everyone believes that same-sex marriage is not wrong or sinful or against religious beliefs. What happens when the religious coalition seeks to create public policy based on their religious beliefs is that they negate other religious beliefs that might be contrary to that.”

GOV. EHRlich’S HANDLERS FAIL—ISSUE STILL ALIVE

Catholic League president Bill Donohue was a guest today on the “Ron Smith Show,” a WBAL-Baltimore radio show. The topic was the firing of Robert J. Smith, a Metro transit authority appointee, who offended Maryland Governor Robert Ehrlich last week when he said (on a cable TV show after hours), “Homosexual behavior, in my view, is deviant.” Smith added, “I’m a Roman Catholic.”

After Donohue discussed this issue with the host, callers were fielded for comment, one of whom was Robert Flanagan, Maryland’s Secretary of Transportation. It led to a heated exchange between Donohue and Flanagan. Here is Donohue’s account of what happened:

“The next time Governor Ehrlich’s handlers want to get someone to defend their boss, they’d better get someone other than Flanagan. After Flanagan commented that Ehrlich appropriates

money in his budget for non-public schools, including funds for textbooks in Catholic schools, I responded by saying that what Catholic schoolchildren learn about homosexuality is that it is 'intrinsically disordered.' Flanagan denied this was true, said he never learned it while attending Catholic schools and cited some priest whom he knows who doesn't teach this in church. To which I replied that it is in the *Catholic Catechism*. Flanagan said this wasn't true. Here is what paragraph 2357 of the *Catholic Catechism* says:

Basing itself on Sacred Scripture, which presents homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity, tradition has always declared that "homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered."

"The real issue here is the right of government employees to voice their religious convictions in public with impunity. Moreover, Robert Smith's remark is so innocuous that, up until recently, every sociology textbook on social problems listed homosexuality as deviant behavior. For wholly ideological reasons, there is an effort to normalize what psychologists have long referred to as inversion. In any event, Flanagan has certainly kept this issue alive. Hurrah for him."

MARYLAND GOVERNOR—FOE OF FREE SPEECH

Last week, Maryland Governor Robert Ehrlich fired Robert J. Smith, one of his Metro transit authority appointees, because Smith said that "Homosexual behavior, in my view, is deviant." Smith, who stressed he is a Roman Catholic, said that his characterization reflected his beliefs and were made after hours on a cable TV show. Ehrlich branded his remarks

“inappropriate, insensitive and unacceptable.”

Catholic League president Bill Donohue criticized Ehrlich today:

“Ehrlich is a menace to free speech and a hypocrite, as well. In 2004, reporter David Nitkin and columnist Michael Olesker, both of the *Baltimore Sun*, incurred the wrath of Ehrlich when Nitkin was blamed for an incorrect map he had nothing to do with and Olesker was blamed for writing about someone’s expression at an event he didn’t attend. On a scale of one to ten, most would put these infractions closer to one than ten. But not Ehrlich—he ordered all state employees not to talk to either man ever again. This merited a *New York Times* editorial blasting the governor for ‘promulgating an extraordinary ban forbidding tens of thousands of state employees from talking to two *Baltimore Sun* journalists whose coverage displeased him.’ And the *Sun* sued Ehrlich.

“Yet when it comes to Maryland Democratic icon William Donald Schaefer, Ehrlich discovers the virtue of free speech. Schaefer, who is comptroller under Ehrlich (the governor is a Republican), went bonkers in 2004 when he had trouble ordering food at a McDonald’s: ‘I don’t want to adjust to another language. This is the United States. They should adjust to us.’ Ehrlich defended Schaefer at the time. And when, in the same year, Schaefer hammered AIDS patients, Ehrlich refused to criticize him.

“The First Amendment protects religious liberty and free speech, and Ehrlich respects neither. To top it off, he exhibits a double standard that smacks of elitism.”

ABC NEWS REPORTS WOMEN “PRIESTS”

On the June 19 edition of “World News Tonight,” there was a report by ABC News correspondent Dan Harris that led viewers to think that eight women are about to be ordained as Catholic priests in the U.S.

The lead piece in this story, “From Priesthood to Bishops, Women Gain Ground in Christian Organizations,” covered the election of the first female presiding bishop in the Episcopal Church. Then came the following: “Most evangelical denominations and the Catholic Church steadfastly refuse to ordain women. However, that is changing. In late July, Joan Clark Hauk [sic], a grandmother from Pennsylvania, will be ordained as a Catholic priest, along with seven other women. It will be the first ceremony of its kind in this country, but one the Vatican will not condone.”

Catholic League president Bill Donohue responded as follows:

“Some at ABC News are obviously hyperventilating over the election of the first female presiding bishop in the Episcopal Church, and that no doubt led them to package this story with a bogus account about women being ordained as Catholic priests. Joan Clark Houk, and seven other women, will hold an ‘ordination’ ceremony on a boat in Pittsburgh on July 31, but no one save mad feminists will give it any credence. Indeed, this happens every day in the asylum: some actually think they’re the pope.

“ABC News also errs in thinking that this make-believe game has never been played before. In 1981, AP picked up on a story by the *National Catholic Reporter* which said a woman ‘has been ordained and has been performing the duties of a priest for the past year.’ In 1996, *Catholic World Report* ran

a story on a meeting of the Women's Ordination Conference (which supports next month's game) wherein four women dressed as Catholic bishops and then 'solemnly blessed the audience as they made their way to a stage that was filled with dancing women.' And just last month, Victoria Rue, wearing a white robe, appeared before a crowd in San Jose and declared, 'I am a Roman Catholic woman priest.'

"In other words, this madness is old hat. Nonetheless, I am asking David Westin at ABC News for an on-air clarification of this bogus story."

PG RATING FOR CHRISTIAN FILM: CONTROVERSY ENDS

Kris Fuhr, vice president for marketing at Provident Films (owned by Sony), was quoted by Scripps Howard on June 7 saying that she was told by someone at the Motion Picture Association of American (MPAA) that "Facing the Giants" was awarded a PG Rating because the film "was heavily laden with messages from one religion and that this might offend people from other religions." We immediately confirmed Fuhr's account with her and then contacted the MPAA. Not satisfied with what we heard, we decided to press the issue.

On June 13, Catholic League president Bill Donohue wrote to Dan Glickman, chairman and CEO of the MPAA, requesting that he investigate why an "overtly" Christian film like "Facing the Giants" merited the PG red flag; in a news release on the subject, we asked our members to e-mail Glickman about their concerns.

On the evening of June 16, we received a call from Joan

Graves, chairman of the MPAA ratings board. As it turns out, she was the MPAA official who spoke to Fuhr, but she has a different impression of their conversation. According to Graves, she told Fuhr that the PG rating was given because of mature issues, e.g., depression, matters relating to pregnancy and sports-related violence—not for being overtly religious.

Graves sent us a statement indicating their “long-standing policy not to comment to the press about individual films other than to give the rating and the rating reasons,” but owing to the “misunderstanding that this film received a PG rating for its ‘religious viewpoint,’” she felt obliged to respond. She added, “This film has a mature discussion about pregnancy, for example, as well as other elements that parents might want to be aware of. There are many religious films that have been submitted for rating, and they have garnered ratings from G to R, depending on the graphics and intensity of various elements in the film.”

Donohue is satisfied with this response and is delighted to know that the MPAA has no policy of giving a PG rating to movies dubbed “too religious.”

HAWKING MISREPRESENTS POPE JOHN PAUL II

Astrophysicist Stephen Hawking said yesterday that Pope John Paul II once told scientists that “It’s OK to study the universe and where it began. But we should not inquire into the beginning itself because that was the moment of creation and the work of God.” The news story says Hawking did not say when the pope allegedly made this remark.

Catholic League president Bill Donohue commented as follows:

"There is a monumental difference between saying that there are certain questions that science cannot answer—which is what the pope said—and authoritarian pronouncements warning scientists to back off.

"On p. 120 of Hawking's book, *A Brief History of Time*, he says that at a 1981 Vatican conference on cosmology Pope John Paul II said that 'it was all right to study the evolution of the universe after the Big Bang, but we should not inquire into the Big Bang itself because that was the moment of Creation and therefore the work of God.' Importantly, there are no quotation marks around those words and no citation is offered. Ergo, this is Hawking's impression of what the pope said.

"Here is what the pope actually said: 'Every scientific hypothesis about the origin of the world, such as the one that says that there is a basic atom from which the whole of the physical universe is derived, leaves unanswered the problem concerning the beginning of the universe. By itself science cannot resolve such a question....' The pope then quoted Pope Pius XII as saying, 'We would wait in vain for an answer from the natural sciences which declare, on the contrary, that they honestly find themselves faced with an insoluble enigma.'

"In 1988, John Paul said that 'Science can purify religion from error and superstition; religion can purify science from idolatry and false absolutes.' Hawking, who claims—without any evidence—that space and time have no beginning and no end, would be wise to refrain from positing false absolutes and learn to realize when he's out of his league. Most important, he should stop distorting the words of the pope."

“OVERTLY” CHRISTIAN FILM GETS PG RATING: PROBE REQUESTED

On June 7, Scripps Howard ran a story about a ruling by the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) awarding a PG rating to a new movie by Provident Films, “Facing the Giants.” The film, which opens September 29, received the PG rating because of its allegedly “religious” character. Over the past week, the Catholic League made several inquiries regarding this matter, and now its president, Bill Donohue, is asking MPAA chairman and CEO, Dan Glickman, to launch a probe:

“The Scripps Howard story quoted Kris Fuhr, vice president for marketing of Provident Films (owned by Sony), as saying that the MPAA ‘decided that the movie was heavily laden with messages from one religion and that this might offend people from other religions.’ Fuhr said that she was told that the movie was guilty of ‘proselytizing.’ The film includes answered prayers, a miracle and references to Jesus. We have confirmed Fuhr’s account with her, but we were unsuccessful in getting Gayle Osterberg, vice president of corporate communications for the MPAA, to address our concerns; her initial response was quite encouraging, but then she apparently got cold feet.

“The MPAA gives a PG rating for movies where there is some profanity, violence or brief nudity—not for being too religious. That is why we are requesting MPAA chief Dan Glickman to investigate what happened in this instance. We respect the right of the MPAA not to disclose why a movie marked with little profanity, violence and nudity receives a PG rating. Our interest is whether ‘Facing the Giants’ has occasioned a new objective category of thematic concerns.

“For the past several decades, Hollywood has turned out one Christian-bashing movie after another, and never has any of

these films been subjected to an MPAA red flag for its bigoted content. For the MPAA to flash its red flags at a Christian film—simply because those who are not Christian might be offended—is not something people of any religion should accept.”

Contact Glickman at dan_glickman@mpaa.org

OREGON LAWSUIT AGAINST VATICAN UPHELD

Yesterday, an Oregon judge ruled that the Vatican may be sued for allegedly conspiring to protect a molesting priest by moving him from Ireland to Chicago to Portland more than 50 years ago. In an unprecedented decision, the judge said that the Holy See does not enjoy foreign sovereign immunity in this case because the Vatican supposedly knew the priest had a history of sexual misconduct.

Catholic League president Bill Donohue commented on this today:

“The lawyer who sued the Vatican is Jeffrey Anderson of St. Paul, Minnesota. A former SDS radical who hates the Catholic Church, Anderson has made literally tens of millions of dollars suing the Church in sexual abuse cases. His hatred stems, in part, from the fact that his eight-year-old daughter was once abused by a former priest. I say ‘in part’ because the abuser was a psychotherapist: as *Newsweek’s* Ken Woodward once said, Anderson never decided to target the American Psychological Association, and that’s because the big bucks lay in suing the Catholic Church. Hate, mixed with greed, is a sick stew.

“Four years ago, sexual abuse charges were dropped against a former superintendent of the Oregon School for the Deaf because it was ruled that the alleged abuse against two girls occurred in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and thus were too old to prosecute under state law. ‘What stupefied me was that this [the abuse] was common knowledge’ in the school, said a disability counselor who investigated the matter. Yet the school did nothing about it. To its credit, the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, ran a story at that time on sexual abuse of deaf students nationwide and found that not only is sexual abuse commonplace in schools for the deaf, the states and the federal government do virtually nothing about it.

“Rightly or wrongly, up until recently the sexual abuse of youngsters was uniformly handled by private and public institutions as an in-house matter. What’s really going on here is an attempt to fleece the Vatican by a multi-millionaire with an agenda—it has nothing to do with justice. Look for Anderson to lose in the Supreme Court.”

ARE FOES OF GAY MARRIAGE BIGOTS?

The U.S. Senate will vote this week on the Marriage Protection Amendment, a bill which defines marriage as being between a man and a woman. Senator Edward M. Kennedy is quoted today as saying, “A vote for this amendment is a vote for bigotry pure and simple.”

Catholic League president Bill Donohue disagrees:

“A vote for the Marriage Protection Amendment is a vote to maintain the traditional understanding of marriage as it has

been accepted for thousands of years all over the world. To brand those who support this amendment as bigots is mud-slinging: it is analogous to those who would call foes of the amendment 'gay lovers.'

"In 1996, President Clinton signed the Defense of Marriage Act. It denies federal recognition to same-sex marriages and allows states the right to deny recognition of gay marriages that have been performed in other states. Only 14 senators voted against this bill, and Senator Kennedy was one of them. Thus, his proclaimed opposition to gay marriage is nothing but an empty gesture: he refuses to do anything that would protect the institution of marriage from legislative or judicial tinkering.

"In the last election, all 11 states that had same-sex marriage on the ballot voted against it, including states with a 'progressive' reputation like Oregon. Moreover, more than 80 percent of the states have passed Defense of Marriage Acts. Mr. Kennedy, who is Catholic, should know that the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops is in favor of a constitutional amendment. And Black ministers, like Bishop Harry Jackson of the High Impact Leadership Coalition, have rallied in favor of the amendment. Even in New York City, surveys show the people don't want same-sex marriage. Are all these people bigots, Mr. Kennedy?

"Reasonable people may disagree whether a constitutional amendment is the right remedy, but only fanatics will call those who support it bigots."