

CATHOLICISM UNDER FIRE; BATTLES RAGE ON MANY FRONTS

This spring has been among the busiest of seasons for the Catholic League in some time. The media kept coming to us over and over about a range of issues.

The controversy over “Angels & Demons” swirled for weeks before it opened May 15. The decision to award an honorary degree to President Barack Obama at the University of Notre Dame triggered many sharp reactions. A hate crimes bill that has many troubling aspects to it was taken up by the Congress. The pope’s trip to the Middle East proved to be another ruckus, as some Jews and Muslims acted irresponsibly. And the appointment of a Catholic basher to a faith-based program drew fire.

In every one of these issues, the Catholic League stepped up to the plate. We led the fight against the movie; we sharply opposed the honor bestowed on the president; we fought the hate crimes bill; we denounced the vitriol of the pope’s critics; and we sought the ouster of an anti-Catholic. We did so with news releases and by appearing on TV. We granted interviews to radio shows, newspapers and magazines. We participated in a teleconference with the media.

While these were the big issues, we continued to fight the good fight on other fronts as well. Our media coverage was so great that we could fill many more pages of *Catalyst* with “In the News.”

We are the only religion that Hollywood continues to dump on. Fortunately, “Angels & Demons” was so absurd that Ron Howard did us a favor by effectively blunting the worst elements of Dan Brown’s work. Moreover, when Larry King asked Howard to respond to one of Bill Donohue’s charges, he totally dodged

the question. Even more disturbing was giving a champion of abortion rights an honor at a distinguished Catholic school; it was a slap in the face to the bishops.

Legislation that would force the clergy to tippy toe around passages of the Bible—so as not to offend gay activists—should never have been considered. Rabbis and imams who have an agenda are bad enough, but when they start insulting the Holy Father, it is enough to provoke a backlash. And naming bigots to a federal post is simply mind-boggling.

There is some good news. It's been a long time since the bishops have become collectively mobilized. Just as passivity is contagious, so is activism. It is no exaggeration to say that our bishops have been galvanized by recent events, the result of which is a more vocal Catholic Church. That's great news for our side.

HARRY KNOX MUST GO

On May 13, Bill Donohue participated in a teleconference with other Catholic leaders demanding the ouster of Harry Knox from President Obama's Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships; many from the media heard what was said. A letter signed by some two dozen Catholic leaders called on Obama to oust Knox.

Knox has had plenty of opportunities to take back his hate speech against the pope and orthodox Catholics, but refuses to do so. Among other things, he has implied that the pope is a liar and has called Catholics who oppose gay marriage "foot soldiers of a discredited army of oppression."

Also, people like Rep. Mike Pence have asked for Knox's dismissal. When questioned about Knox's appointment,

Democratic leaders like Nancy Pelosi and White House spokesman Robert Gibbs profess ignorance of his anti-Catholic record. This kind of stonewalling explains why the teleconference was called.

If all Knox had done was to criticize the Catholic Church on public policy issues, there would have been no problem. But he is not content to disagree: he must demonize the opposition. Moreover, football coach Tony Dungy was pressured to decline an invitation to serve on the same board, simply because he believes marriage should be between a man and a woman. But there's room for a bigot?

Justice demands that Knox be removed. To top things off, Knox, who is not Catholic, has a record of slamming the Catholic Church on internal matters that are none of his business.

OBAMA AND NOTRE DAME

When I first learned that President Barack Obama was invited to give the commencement address and receive an honorary law degree at the University of Notre Dame, I walked into McGeever's pub and told the boys that they would not believe which Catholic university was going to honor the president. "Don't tell me Notre Dame," Billy O'Connor said from behind the tap. When I confirmed his worst suspicion, all the guys at the bar were in a state of utter disbelief. Then came the anger.

Notre Dame is not just another Catholic school—it's named after Our Blessed Mother. Moreover, there is not a Catholic Irishman who doesn't root for Notre Dame every fall (save for those who are an alumnus of a Notre Dame opponent on game day). To top it off, Notre Dame is not Georgetown: it doesn't

have a reputation of taking down crucifixes from the classroom or putting a drape over the Greek name for Jesus when the president speaks on campus.

It is more than practicing Catholics who are up in arms—it's the nation's bishops. In the nearly 16 years I have been president of the Catholic League, I have never seen the bishops more exercised than they are over the decision of Notre Dame president Father John Jenkins to honor President Obama. This will have repercussions way beyond May 17: the bishops have set anchor in the culture war. Once a collectivity becomes energized, it is difficult to repair to the status quo ante—it's not like a faucet that can be turned on and off.

What broke? In 2004, the bishops issued a document, *Catholics in Political Life*, that plainly said, "The Catholic community and Catholic institutions should not honor those who act in defiance of our fundamental moral principles. They should not be given awards, honors or platforms which would suggest support for their actions." Thus, for Notre Dame to honor a pro-abortion radical like President Obama is a slap in the face to the bishops.

It would be impossible to find a politician who is more pro-abortion than Obama. When in the Illinois state senate he led the fight to deny health care to a baby *born alive* as a result of a botched abortion. He opposed the U.S. Supreme Court decision outlawing partial-birth abortion. He has overturned by executive order abortion restrictions put in place by President George W. Bush. He is a proponent of embryonic stem cell research. He opposes the conscience rights of healthcare workers not to assist in or perform acts they find morally repugnant. He has appointed one pro-abortion activist after another to his administration. He has a 100 percent approval rating from NARAL, the most extreme pro-abortion group in the nation. And he told Planned Parenthood he would gladly sign the Freedom of Choice Act, the most sweeping abortion-rights

legislation ever written.

Given Obama's credentials, and given what the bishops have clearly asked of Catholic institutions—to say nothing of Notre Dame's special status—it would have been remarkable if the bishops, as well as practicing Catholics everywhere, didn't explode. Moreover, Harvard Law professor Mary Ann Glendon, president of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences and former U.S. Ambassador to the Vatican, decided to turn down a prestigious medal on commencement day, so disappointed is she with Notre Dame's decision to honor her former student.

Abortion is not just another issue. Unlike the death penalty, which the Catholic Church presumptively opposes, abortion is “intrinsically evil.”

Archbishop Raymond Burke, who formerly led the Archdiocese of St. Louis and who now sits on Rome's Supreme Court, recently summed up the issue. “There is no element of the common good,” he said, “no morally good practice, which a candidate may promote and to which a voter may be dedicated, which could possibly justify voting for a candidate who also endorses and supports the deliberate killing of the unborn, euthanasia or the recognition of a same-sex marriage as a legal marriage. The respect for the inviolable dignity of innocent human life and the integrity of marriage and the family are so fundamental to the common good that they cannot be subordinated to any other cause, no matter how good it may be.”

People of other faiths who are opposed to abortion, as well as non-believers, fully understand why the bishops have laid down a marker: the time has come to hold up a big STOP sign to those whose concept of social justice doesn't extend to the unborn. What's at stake is the Judeo-Christian notion of protecting the least among us.

President Obama has every right to speak on any college

campus, including Notre Dame. He should be invited to speak at Notre Dame law school. He should be welcomed to participate in a symposium. He should be greeted as a panelist or a discussant on some contemporary issue. But he should not be honored. No one has a right to be honored, not even the president of the United States.

(This is a slightly longer version of an article that appeared on May 15 in the Washington Times.)

A NOTRE DAME WITNESS FOR LIFE

Bill McGurn

This article is an excerpt from a recent speech given by Bill McGurn to Notre Dame's Center for Ethics and Culture

Good evening...

The precipitate cause of our gathering tonight is the honor and platform our university has extended to a President whose policies reflect clear convictions about unborn life, and about the value the law ought to place on protecting that life. These convictions are not in doubt. In July 2007, the candidate spelled them out in a forceful address to a Planned Parenthood convention in our nation's capital.

Before that audience, he declared that a woman's "fundamental right" to an abortion was at stake in the coming election. He spoke about how he had "put Roe at the center" of his "lesson plan on reproductive freedom" when he was a professor—and how he would put it at the center of his agenda as president. He invoked his record in the Illinois state senate, where he fought restrictions on abortion, famously including one on

partial-birth abortion. He said that the "first thing" he wanted to do as President was to "sign a Freedom of Choice Act." And he ended by assuring his audience that "on this fundamental issue," he, like they, would never yield.

So tonight our hearts carry a great sadness. But we do not come here this evening to rally against a speaker. We come to affirm the sacredness of life. And we come with a great hope: That a university founded under the patronage of Our Lady might be as consistent in the defense of her principles as the President of the United States has been for advancing his. In a nation wounded by Roe...in a society that sets mothers against the children they carry in their wombs...we come here tonight because however much our hearts ache, they tell us this: Our church, our country, and our culture long for the life witness of Notre Dame.

What does it mean to be a witness? To be a witness, an institution must order itself so that all who look upon it see a consonance between its most profound truths and its most public actions. For a Catholic university in the 21st century, this requires that those placed in her most critical leadership positions—on the faculty, in the administration, on the board of trustees—share that mission. We must concede there is no guarantee that the young men and women who come here to learn will assent to her witness—but we must never forget that the university will have failed them if they leave here without at least understanding it. That is what it means to be a witness....

For most of her life, Notre Dame has served as a symbol of a Catholic community struggling to find acceptance in America—and yearning to make our own contributions to this great experiment in ordered liberty.

If we are honest, however, we must admit that in many ways we—and the university that nurtured us—are now the rich and powerful and privileged ourselves. This is a form of success,

and we need not be embarrassed by it. But we must be mindful of the greater responsibilities that come with this success.

For years this university has trumpeted her lay governance. So what does it say about the Notre Dame brand of leadership, that in the midst of a national debate over a decision that speaks to our Catholic identity, a debate in which thousands of people across the country are standing up to declare themselves “yea” or “nay,” our trustees and fellows—the men and women who bear ultimate responsibility for this decision—remain as silent as Trappist monks? At a time when we are told to “engage” and hold “dialogue,” their timidity thunders across this campus. And what will history say of our billions in endowment if the richest Catholic university America has ever known cannot find it within herself to mount a public and spirited defense of the most defenseless among us?

In the past few weeks, we have read more than once the suggestion that to oppose this year’s speaker and honorary degree is to elevate politics over the proper work of a university. In many ways, we might say that such reasoning lies at the core of the confusion. As has become clear with America’s debates over the destruction of embryos for scientific research, over human cloning, over assisted suicide, and over other end-of-life issues, abortion as a legal right is less a single issue than an entire ethic that serves as the foundation stone for the culture of death.

Twenty-five years ago, on a similar stage on this campus, the then-governor of New York used his Notre Dame platform to advance the “personally-opposed-but” defense that countless numbers of Catholic politicians have used to paper over their surrender to legalized abortion. Eight years after that, the school bestowed the Laetare Medal on a United States Senator who had likewise long since cut his conscience to fit the abortion fashion.

Today we have evolved. Let us note that the present controversy comes at a moment where the incoherence of the Catholic witness in American public life is on view at the highest levels of our government. Today we have a Catholic vice president, a Catholic Speaker of the House, a Catholic nominee for Secretary of Health and Human Services, and so on. These are America's most prominent Catholics. And they have one thing in common: The assertion that the legal right to terminate a pregnancy—in the chilling euphemism of the day—must remain inviolable.

For those who think this a partisan point, let us stipulate for the record one of the curiosities of the Republican Party. Notwithstanding the party's prolife credentials, at the level of possible Presidential contenders, the most prominent pro-choice voices in the GOP arguably belong to Catholics: from the former Republican mayor and governor of New York, to the Republican Governor of California, the Republican former governor of Pennsylvania, and so on. Notre Dame must recognize these realities—and the role she has played in bringing us to this day by treating abortion as a political difference rather than the intrinsic evil it is.

In his writings, Pope John Paul II noted the awful contradiction of our times, when more and more legal codes speak of human rights while making the freedom to deprive the innocent of their lives one of those rights. Several times he uses the word "sinister" to characterize the enshrinement of abortion as a legal right. And he states that all pleas for other important human rights are "false and illusory" if we do not defend with "maximum determination" the fundamental right to life upon which all other rights rest.

Maximum determination. Ladies and gentlemen, the unborn child's right to life represents the defining civil rights issue of our day—and it ought to be a defining civil rights issue on this campus.

Those who say that as Notre Dame engages the world, she cannot expect her guests to share all her beliefs are right. But that is not the issue. The issue is that we engage them. Think of how we would have treated an elected Senator or President or Governor whose principles and actions were given over to seeing that segregation enjoyed the full and unqualified protection of American law. We would have been cordial...we would have been gracious...we would have been more than willing to debate...but we would have betrayed our witness if ever we brought them here on the idea that all that divided us was one political issue...

...[I]magine the larger witness for life that would come from putting first things first. So often we find support for abortion rights measured against decisions involving war, capital punishment, and so on. All these issues deserve more serious treatment. But the debate over these prudential judgments loses coherence if on the intrinsic evil of abortion we do not stand on the same ground. What a challenge Notre Dame would pose to our culture if she stood united on this proposition: The unborn belong to no political party...no human right is safe when their right to life is denied...and we will accept no calculus of justice that seeks to trade that right to life for any other.

Let me end with a story about one of our family. His name is John Raphael; he belongs to the Class of '89; and he's an African-American who runs a high school in New Orleans. He's also a Josephite priest.

In his ministry, Father Raphael knows what it is like to answer the knock on his office door and find a woman consumed by the understandable fears that attend an unplanned pregnancy. He says that one of the greatest lessons he learned about how to respond to these women came from a friend of his, who had come to him in the same circumstances. The woman was an unmarried college student, and she told him what had surprised and hurt her most was how many friends greeted her

news by saying, "Oh, that's terrible."

"That young lady taught me something," says Father Raphael. "She taught me that what these women need first and foremost is to have their motherhood affirmed. For too many women, this affirmation never comes. We need to let these mothers know what their hearts are already telling them: you may have made a mistake, but the life growing within you is no mistake. That life is your baby, waiting to love and be loved."

My young friends, this night I ask you: Make yours the voice that affirms life and motherhood. Be to those in need as the words of our alma mater: tender...strong...and true. And in your every word and deed, let the world see a reflection of the hope that led a French-born priest in the north woods of Indiana to raise Our Lady atop a dome of gold.

I thank you for your invitation. I applaud your courage. And as we go forth this evening, let us pray that our beloved university becomes the Notre Dame our world so desperately needs: a witness for life that will truly shake down the thunder.

God bless you all.

William McGurn is a columnist for the Wall Street Journal, a former chief speechwriter for President George W. Bush, and a member of Notre Dame's Class of 1980.

STORM BREWS OVER "ANGELS & DEMONS"

Over the past couple of months we have been on the frontlines

addressing the controversy that surrounded the film "Angels & Demons." Before the movie opened on May 15, we made frequent appearances on TV and radio, issued numerous news releases and published a booklet all exposing the lies and hypocrisy of the Ron Howard flick. Indeed, a storm was brewing.

In a piece on the *Huffington Post*, Howard attacked Bill Donohue. Referring to the Catholic League booklet, *Angels & Demons: More Demonic than Angelic*, the director wrote: "Mr. Donohue's booklet accuses us of lying when our movie trailer says the Catholic Church ordered a brutal massacre to silence the Illuminati centuries ago. It would be a lie if we had ever suggested our movie is anything other than a work of fiction..." Howard also said that "most of the hierarchy of the Church" would enjoy the film; he also denied being anti-Catholic.

Immediately, we responded to Howard's article. In the book version of the movie, author Dan Brown says that the Illuminati are "factual" and that they were "hunted ruthlessly by the Church." In the film's trailer, Tom Hanks, who plays protagonist Robert Langdon, says "The Catholic Church ordered a brutal massacre to silence them forever." Howard concurs: "The Illuminati were formed in the 1600s. They were artists and scientists like Galileo and Bernini, whose progressive ideas threatened the Vatican."

All of this is a lie. The Illuminati were founded in 1776 and were dissolved in 1787. It is obvious that Galileo and Bernini could not possibly have been members: Galileo died in 1647 and Bernini in 1680. More important, the Catholic Church never hunted, much less killed, a single member of the Illuminati. But it hasn't stopped Brown from asserting that "It is a *historical fact* that the Illuminati vowed vengeance against the Vatican in the 1600s." (Our emphasis.)

Hypocrisy also marked "Angels & Demons." There was no Muslim assassin in the film as there was in the book, but of course,

Howard had no problem culturally assassinating Catholicism. And it isn't just Howard who is the hypocrite: co-producer Brian Grazer, and the production studio, Sony, are guilty of giving Muslims a pass while sticking it to Catholics.

After 9/11, NBC toyed with the idea of doing a mini-series on the events of that tragic day. Grazer was in line to produce it, but it never materialized due to its controversial nature. More important, Grazer said it was his goal to "humanize" Muslims, specifically denouncing any attempt to "demonize" them. Evidently, it's just Catholics who are worthy of being demonized.

Last year, less than four days before the release of the video game LittleBigPlanet, it recalled every copy before it hit the stores. Why? One of the background songs contained two Arabic expressions found in the Koran, and that was considered a no-no. "We have taken immediate action to rectify this and we sincerely apologize for any offense this may have caused." But there was no action to rectify the propaganda against Catholicism in "Angels & Demons," and there certainly was no apology.

Even India's Censor Board asked that a disclaimer be put in the movie saying that the film is a work of fiction. It also asked that certain scenes be deleted. It explained its position by saying, "It has its guidelines and its duty, and if it thinks a film, any film, disparages a religious community or hurts religious feelings, it should take action under its code."

We also asked that a disclaimer be inserted everywhere the film was shown. We noted that the disclaimer was needed because Ron Howard and Dan Brown alternate promoting their work as fact and fiction. Thus, to set the record straight we suggested they come clean and do in the rest of the world what they agreed to do in India—insert a disclaimer indicating its fictional nature; we did not ask that scenes be deleted

because that would be an infringement on the artistic rights of those associated with the film.

If Sony, the film's producer, and Howard have no problem putting in a disclaimer in India—which is only two percent Christian—they surely should be prepared to do the same wherever the movie is shown. When Sony released "The Merchant of Venice" it opened with a disclaimer condemning anti-Semitism. Howard opened "A Beautiful Mind" with a disclaimer noting how the film contains fictional aspects not found in the book by that name. Catholics, obviously, expected the same degree of respect but we weren't given it.

The Vatican apparently had a three track strategy to deal with "Angels & Demons": ban Ron Howard from filming on its grounds; low ball any negative comments before the movie debuted; and slam it for its stereotypical portrayals while conceding its cinematic value.

Howard was denied access to the Vatican because of his previous exploitation of the Catholic Church in "The Da Vinci Code." The Vatican also decided that reticence was the best way to handle "Angels & Demons"; it did not want Howard to use any negative comments it might make to boost sales. *L'Osservatore Romano*—the semi-official Vatican daily—weighed in saying that although the movie is entertaining, it is also filled with historical inaccuracies and "stereotyped characters."

That was exactly our goal all along: issue a big FYI about this movie. Enjoy it for the fun of it, but don't be seduced by Brown-Howard into thinking it is based on historical facts.

POPE'S TRIP NOT WITHOUT INCIDENT

As expected, Pope Benedict XVI's trip to the Holy Land in May did not run as smoothly as we would have liked. The Holy Father was criticized for his past—albeit forced—membership in the Hitler Youth. Also, his moving and heartfelt speech at the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial was criticized for being too soft.

The English and French news services, Reuters and AFP, flatly said that the pope “was a member of the Hitler Youth.” The U.K.'s *Timesonline* wrote that he “was in the Hitler Youth and enlisted with the Wehrmacht,” noting that “he had the excuse that this was standard practice for young German men at the time.” *Israel Today* magazine said many Israelis interpreted the pope's visit to the Holocaust Memorial “as a stunt to cover up his past as a member of the Hitler Youth movement during World War II.” The Associated Press mentioned that, “Benedict says he was coerced.” Similarly, CBS reported that “Benedict has said he was coerced.”

All of this was a despicable smear. The *New York Times* got it right when it said that the pope “was forced into the Hitler Youth and the German Army in World War II.” *Bloomberg.com* also got it right when it noted “the German pope's obligatory membership as a 14-year-old in Hitler Youth”; it said further that he “didn't attend meetings and he later deserted when he was drafted into the German army.” Moreover, his failure to attend Hitler Youth meetings brought economic hardship to his family: it meant no discounts for school tuition. None of this was a stunt. Furthermore, no one can deny that he was coerced into doing what the Nazis demanded of young men at the time.

We noted that even Bill Maher apologized when we blasted him for accusing the pope of being a Nazi and said that the guilty

media should do likewise and correct the record.

After the Holy Father spoke at Yad Vashem, the chairman of the Directorate, Avner Shalev, said that while the pope's visit was "important," he regretted that the pope never mentioned anti-Semitism nor the Nazis. Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau, chairman of the Yad Vashem Council and Tel Aviv's chief rabbi, said the pope's speech was "devoid of any compassion, any regret." Knesset Speaker Reuven Rivlin accused the pope of not asking for "forgiveness," noting that the pope's (coerced) membership in the Hitler Youth means he carries "baggage."

During his speech, the Holy Father said he had come "to stand in silence before this monument, erected to honor the memory of the millions of Jews killed in the horrific tragedy of the Shoah." Didn't Avner Shalev hear that? Or how about these words from the pope? "May the names of these victims never perish! May their suffering never be denied, belittled or forgotten!" Rabbi Lau, never one to miss an opportunity to say it's never enough, embarrassed his cohorts when he said that the pope's speech was devoid of compassion. As for Rivlin, he should know that it is not the pope who needs to apologize for the crimes of the Nazis—indeed he was victimized by them.

Following the pope's visit to Yad Vashem, Palestinian leader Sheik Taysir Tamimi forced his way to the pulpit at an interreligious event asking the pope to fight for "a just peace for a Palestinian state and for Israel to stop killing women and children and destroying mosques as she did in Gaza"; he asked the pope to "pressure the Israeli government to stop its aggression against the Palestinian people."

The Vatican quickly condemned Sheik Tamimi's hate speech, as it should have. Where were all the Muslim leaders condemning it? There is a time and a place for everything—and this was wrong on both counts. To exploit the pope's journey for peace by beckoning him to bash Jews shows how utterly futile it is to have an interreligious meeting with some people. Evidently,

Tamimi doesn't get what "Never Again" really means.

NEW YORK TIMES PROFILES DONOHUE

On May 13, *New York Times* reporter Paul Vitello spent most of the day with Bill Donohue. He even followed him to the Time Warner Center for a live interview Donohue did for CNN. The result was an article on May 15 that featured three big color photos of the Catholic League president in his office.

Donohue issued a news release about the article the day it was published. He asked for a retraction regarding two errors: a quote attributed to him about "Angels & Demons" was never uttered by Donohue; and Susan Fani, the director of communications, was identified as his "assistant." Fani is also a spokesman for the Catholic League (Vitello's article said Donohue was the only spokesman).

The article gave the impression that the Catholic League has no connection to the Catholic Church. Yet as Donohue pointed out to Vitello, we are listed in the *Official Catholic Directory*. The article also said we have 50,000 members when, in fact, Donohue said we have a base of 50,000 households as our most reliable donors, and hundreds of thousands of others who contribute here and there.

Some liked the piece, while others did not. One thing is for sure: the kind of publicity it gave the Catholic League is something every advocacy organization would be pleased to have.

HATE CRIMES BILL SPELLS TROUBLE

On April 22, the House Judiciary Committee marked-up a hate crimes bill sponsored by Rep. John Conyers. Serious questions were raised by religious leaders about this legislation, especially as it pertains to religious pronouncements against homosexuality. There are also concerns with the legislation regarding its language protecting pedophiles.

The idea of being prosecuted for reading Scripture may seem delirious, but it is just as crazy to think it couldn't happen. Consider the facts. When this bill was being considered in 2007, Rep. Louie Gohmert of Texas asked Alabama Rep. Art Davis (his amendment is in the bill) the following question: "If a minister preaches that sexual relations outside of marriage of a man and a woman is wrong, and somebody within that congregation goes out and does an act of violence, and that person says that that minister counseled or induced him through the sermon to commit that act, are you saying under your amendment that in no way could that ever be introduced against the minister?" Davis, who supports the bill, replied, "No."

In other words, if a deranged person hears a priest, minister or rabbi quote Leviticus 18:22, "Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is an abomination," and he then proceeds to assault a homosexual at a gay event—telling the arresting officer he was just following through on what he heard in his house of worship—the clergyman could arguably be charged with a hate crime. The very prospect of something like this happening should be enough to make any reasonable person wonder what is going on.

Bill Donohue addressed the media saying, "The problem in general with hate crimes legislation is that it invites the government to probe way beyond motive. And in instances like this, it trespasses on free speech and religious liberty. This is a road no defender of liberty should ever want to go down."

The bill—championed by gay rights and liberal groups—also included pedophiles under the rubric of sexual orientation. This was the ultimate confession: liberal Democrats think of pedophiles as indistinguishable from homosexuals.

When this subject came before the House Judiciary Committee, an amendment to the hate crimes bill that would have excluded pedophilia from the definition of sexual orientation was defeated by Democrats along party lines, 13-10. This was considered good news by gay organizations like the Human Rights Campaign, left-wing groups like the ACLU and various Jewish groups like the ADL.

The debate is over: for liberals, child molesters should be given the same rights as homosexuals. Moreover, they should be given more rights than pregnant women and veterans; the latter two categories were explicitly denied coverage under the hate crimes bill. Even worse, an amendment that would bar prosecution based in whole or in part on religious beliefs quoted from the Bible, the Tanakh (Judaism's sacred book) or the Koran was defeated by Democrats along party lines, 11-8. In other words, religious speech may be denied First Amendment protection.

This is why we are gravely concerned with the language of this bill: it denies the rights of pregnant women and veterans and may also infringe on religious speech. All of this while pedophiles receive protection under sexual orientation.

Surely there would be national outrage over the language in this bill if the media were to report on it and the public was allowed to weigh in. But the clock is ticking and freedom and

morality are hanging in the balance.

Unfortunately, a week after the bill was introduced, it passed the House. As this issue of *Catalyst* went to press, the hate crimes bill was sitting in the Senate Judiciary Committee.

WHITE HOUSE AVOIDS HATE CRIMES QUESTION

Following the U.S. House approval of the hate crimes bill, the official spokesman for President Barack Obama, Robert Gibbs, ducked a question on the legislation. Gibbs was asked by Baltimore radio icon and *WorldNetDaily* correspondent Les Kinsolving to address the legislation, but the spokesman had nothing to say.

The exchange between the two men follows:

Kinsolving: "The Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights president, William Donohue, noted, in the House Judiciary Committee, an amendment to H.R. 1913, the Hate Crimes Bill, which amendment would have excluded pedophilia, was voted down 13 to 10, while another amendment to bar prosecution based on religious beliefs was also defeated 11 to 8. And my question: Does the president believe pedophilia should be a legally protected sexual orientation, and that religious beliefs opposing homosexuality are not protected under our Constitution's freedom of religion?"

Gibbs: "I'm not familiar with the amendments."

Kinsolving: "Will you get back to us on that?"

Gibbs: "Alright."

Despite not being a Catholic, Les Kinsolving has always been a friend to the Catholic League and we are grateful for his service.

DONOHUE CONTACTS SENATORS KENNEDY AND LEAHY

A copy of the same letter was sent to Senator Patrick Leahy.



CATHOLIC LEAGUE

*For Religious
and
Civil Rights*

May 6, 2009

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The Honorable Edward M. Kennedy
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Dear Sen. Kennedy:

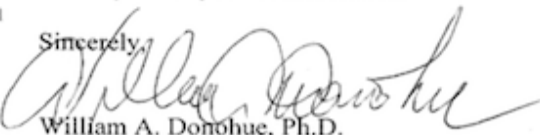
The driving force behind the Matthew Shepherd Hate Crimes Prevention Act is the desire to provide additional penalties to criminals who assault homosexuals because of their sexual orientation. Without commenting on the propriety of hate crimes legislation in general, the central problem with this bill is its chilling effect on religious speech.

To be specific, the bill would criminalize religious speech that was critical of homosexuality if it were linked to a crime against a gay person. How do I know this? Because when the bill was considered in the House, that is exactly what Rep. Louie Gohmert was told when he raised this issue. While assaulting anyone, independent of sexual orientation, is rightly considered a criminal offense, the prospect of criminalizing religious speech that proscribes certain sexual practices is beyond worrisome—it is downright dangerous.

The First Amendment protects freedom of speech and religious liberty, both of which are jeopardized under this bill. The chilling effect this legislation could have on the right of the clergy to address sinful behavior flies in the face of the spirit of the First Amendment. Surely there are ways to protect homosexuals from being singled out by anti-gay thugs without trespassing on the constitutional rights of priests, ministers, rabbis, imams and others. Accordingly, language that would accomplish this end should be included as an amendment.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,


William A. Donohue, Ph.D.
President