

PULPIT POLITICS IN HIGH GEAR; IRS COMPLAINTS FILED

The Catholic League has filed two formal complaints with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) alleging illegal pulpit politics.

The first complaint was made against a Miami Baptist church for allowing the church to become the venue of a political rally. On August 29, Bishop Victor T. Curry of Miami's New Birth Baptist Church welcomed Rev. Al Sharpton, who ran against Senator John Kerry for the Democratic nomination, and Terry McAuliffe, the chairman of the Democratic National Committee. Jamie Malernee of the *Sun-Sentinel* reported that Curry "made no apologies for turning his Sunday service into a political rally."

Rev. Sharpton, speaking from the pulpit, added to the politicized atmosphere by shouting, "We've got to win Florida." But no one was more partisan than McAuliffe: "Bush has misled us for four years and will not mislead us for the next four years. Get out to vote and we'll send Bush back to Texas."

The second IRS complaint was filed on September 15 against two Protestant black clergy groups from Pennsylvania. On September 13, the Pennsylvania State Coalition of Black Clergy endorsed Rep. Joseph M. Hoeffel, the Democratic candidate for U.S. senator; it represents about 800 churches. The next day, the Black Clergy of Philadelphia and Vicinity, a chapter of the Pennsylvania State Coalition, endorsed Arlen Specter, the Republican candidate and incumbent senator; it represents about 450 churches.

Regarding the matter in Pennsylvania, we noted that not one media outlet registered a protest about this blatant violation

of the law. We said to the press, “There is nothing benign about white liberal racism—racism is racism, and all expressions are equally offensive.”

The IRS *Tax Guide for Churches and Religious Organizations* says that “churches and religious organizations” are “absolutely prohibited from directly or indirectly participating in, or intervening in, any political campaign....” That would seem to settle the matter in both the Miami and Pennsylvania cases.

The Catholic League wants the clergy of all religions to engage in robust freedom of speech. What we object to is newspapers condemning Catholic bishops for threatening to deny Communion to pro-abortion politicians while looking the other way when the clergy of other religions literally endorse candidates for public office.

D.C. LOVES VOUCHERS

After years of debate, the District of Columbia now has in place the nation’s first federally funded voucher program.

The beneficiaries of the program are almost all non-white: African-Americans, Asians, Hispanics and African immigrants make up 85 percent of the District’s public school students. They may receive as much as \$7,500 a year for tuition and fees. All must come from low-income families.

It is a tribute to Catholic schools that more than half of the students have elected to go to one of the 22 schools run by the Catholic Church. A total of 1,011 students have been placed in 53 schools. Mayor Anthony A. Williams said, “The fact that so many families applied for and accepted these

scholarships shows the demand for quality educational options.”

It is no wonder families are flocking to Catholic schools. The public schools in D.C. are so bad that they have had five superintendents in nine years. Enrollment is down, and that is because more than 10,000 students have left for publicly funded charter schools. Violence in public schools is also endemic.

The voucher program gives priority to those students who have attended failed public schools. This is part of the Bush administration’s No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The demand for vouchers has been greatest at the middle and high school levels.

Opposing school choice have been the teachers’ unions and others committed to maintaining the near monopoly the public schools have enjoyed.

BELIEVERS VS. NON-BELIEVERS

Recent surveys on religion in public life reveal that America is still a vibrantly religious nation. But there is also evidence that the raging culture war is a reflection of the burgeoning disharmony between believers and non-believers. The believers are numerically stronger, but it is the secularists who staff the cultural command posts.

A recent Pew survey shows that 81 percent of Americans say prayer is an important part of their daily lives, and the same number report that there will be a Judgment Day for us all. When asked if they agree with the statement, “I never doubt the existence of God,” fully 87 percent said yes. In a *USA*

Today/CNN/Gallup poll, it was found that 78 percent of Americans favor prayer at school ceremonies, and 71 percent think it's okay for a monument of the Ten Commandments to be in a public area. Moreover, almost half of all Americans attend a religious service once a week or more.

All this is good news for believers, but it is also true that their ranks have dwindled. For example, in 1972 nearly 63 percent of the population was Protestant; today the percentage is 52 or 56, depending on the survey. Catholics are about a quarter of the population today, registering only a slight change from 1972. The percent who are Jewish has been cut in half, having dropped from 3 percent to 1.5 percent. The biggest change, proportionately speaking, has been among "other" religions and non-believers: only 2 percent belonged to the "other" category in 1972, but today 6-7 percent do; non-believers have increased from 2 percent to between 9 and 14 percent today.

So what's been going on and why does it matter? It is no secret that mainline Protestantism has been sidelined for the past thirty years. With the noticeable exception of evangelicals and fundamentalists, the big Protestant denominations have succumbed to the culture. To be specific, the Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Methodists and Lutherans have absorbed the values of the secular elites, thus forfeiting their once special status. All of the mainline Protestant denominations, for example, are pro-abortion, and in many cases aggressively so.

With regard to the "other" religions, there are more Muslims in the U.S. than there are Episcopalians, and it is debatable whether they have overtaken Jews (they will very soon, if they haven't already). The decline in Protestants and Jews is due mostly to their abysmally low birth rates, as well as to their tendency to join the ranks of the non-believers (there has also been an increase in the number of Catholics who have moved into this category, but Catholic immigration—largely

Latino—has pretty much kept pace); in the case of Jews, their intermarriage rate has also quickened.

It is the non-believers who are the problem. Not because they are non-believers—those without faith can certainly be good persons—but because this community has become increasingly hostile to religion in recent times. It is one thing to be indifferent to religion, quite another to bear an animus. Worse, secularists hostile to religion are highly overrepresented in those jobs that shape our culture: college faculties, the media, the book publishing industry, Hollywood, non-profit public interest organizations, the foundations—all are top heavy with men and women who don't look kindly on religion.

This divide is evident in politics as well. Unfortunately for John Kerry, the secular elites have stopped his campaign from reaching out to people of faith. According to Geoffrey Layman, a University of Maryland professor who has authored a book on this subject, "secularists have become an increasing portion of the Democratic electoral coalition and especially the party's activist base." Mike McCurry, former press secretary to Bill Clinton, explains why: "Because we want to be politically correct, in particular being sensitive to Jews, that's taken the party to a direction where faith language is soft and opaque."

It's not as though some Democrats working for Kerry haven't tried. "Every time something with religious language got sent up a flagpole, it got sent back down, stripped of religious language," said one Democratic operative. Kenneth Wald, a political scientist and director of the Center for Jewish Studies at the University of Florida, was just as blunt as McCurry: "There is a very strong tendency within the Jewish community to be worried about the people who are supporting Bush and Bush's tendency to promote Christian values from the bully pulpit."

Politics aside, the Catholic League has a dog in this fight. The secularists may be strategically positioned in the culture war, but we are not exactly without influence. And it is not in our constitution to ever run away from a fight.

THE SECULAR CRUSADE

By William Donohue

“It is no secret that the Bush administration is engaged in the most radical assault on the separation of church and state in American history.” When I first read that sentence, I wondered about the sanity of the author. Upon reflection, I still do.

Susan Jacoby, who penned that line last spring, is not ready for the asylum, but she is ready to find a home in the asylum’s first cousin—the academy. Indeed, there are few colleges or universities that wouldn’t be proud to hire her. And that is because she entertains a radical secular worldview, one in total harmony with the elites on campus.

The most complete exposition of Jacoby’s work is now available in *Freethinkers: A History of American Secularism*. For those who believe in nothing, the book is a virtual bible. For the rest of us, it is a useful glimpse into the mind of those who hate religion.

Jacoby would protest this description. She would say she doesn’t hate religion—it’s just the intersection of religion and politics that scares her. But her animus against religion, per se, is so deep that it exposes her hand. For example, it was Bush’s defense of the “sanctity of marriage” in his State of the Union address last January that led Jacoby to accuse

him of promoting “the most radical assault on the separation of church and state in American history.” It is fair to say that there is more than just hypersensitivity at play here.

Jacoby knows this country was founded by Christians, but she tries to spin the truth by asserting that the Founders were more interested in separation of church and state than they were religious liberty. In making her case, she entertains the fiction (one that is by now taken as truth by the nation’s most influential constitutional law professors) that there are two clauses in the First Amendment: a religious liberty clause and, its alleged opposite, an establishment clause.

John Noonan is one constitutional scholar who hasn’t accepted this fiction: “There are no clauses in the constitutional provision. Clauses have a subject and a predicate. This provision has a single subject, a single verb, and two prepositional phrases.” Therefore, no calculated disharmony between religious liberty and the establishment of religion was ever contemplated. There was one purpose: to prohibit government interference with religion.

Robert Ingersoll is Jacoby’s hero. Ingersoll was a 19th century agnostic who pioneered the secular humanist agenda in America. The son of a Presbyterian minister, Ingersoll took great pride in helping to achieve what he called one of the greatest victories of the American freethought movement, namely the “secularization of liberal Protestantism.” That he succeeded is disputed by no one, but that it is a plus for America is another matter altogether.

Jacoby’s book is replete with convenient dualisms: the enlightened vs. the indoctrinated; the liberated vs. the enslaved; the tolerant vs. the intolerant, and so forth. This explains her need to rescue the early feminists and the abolitionists from the ranks of the religious.

Jacoby reluctantly admits that the Grimké sisters, Angelina

and Sarah, were “deeply religious” 19th-century champions of women’s rights. But she hastens to add, however, that they were also “anticlerical.” Jacoby says the same about feminist Lucretia Mott and abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison. Her point being that it is possible to cast these religiously motivated freedom fighters as secular surrogates. Similarly, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, two of the most powerful women’s voices of the 19th century, are described as Christians with “unconventional” religious views. And the black abolitionist, Frederick Douglass, is seen as a “devout but unorthodox religious believer.”

In other words, much to Jacoby’s chagrin, the early feminists and the abolitionists were Christians, not so-called freethinkers. Indeed, her characterization of them as independent-minded persons also flies in the face of her stereotype of believers as nothing more than dupes.

This is not to say that some famous public figures cannot be claimed by the secularists. For example, there is the black author and activist, W.E.B. Du Bois, who fought Booker T. Washington in his early days and wound up a Communist at the age of 93. Walt Whitman, the poet and sexual degenerate, was a freethinker whose influence continues to this day; e.g., President Bill Clinton gave a copy of Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass* to Monica Lewinsky. Margaret Sanger, the ex-Catholic turned racial eugenicist and birth control guru, was a freethinker. Roger Baldwin, founder of the ACLU, was also a freethinker; he called himself an “agnostic Unitarian,” a description that would offend neither agnostics nor Unitarians.

It is not surprising that those who live a life in perpetual rebellion often wind up freethinkers. Angry at the human condition, they see oppression everywhere and salvation nowhere. Save for communism. Jacoby knows that many socialists and communists have claimed residence in her freethinking camp, and for this she is not particularly happy. For example,

she confesses that “nearly all socialists were atheists or agnostics,” as were the Social Gospel “Christians” of the 1890s, but she takes pains to distinguish between political radicals and committed freethinkers. The former, she maintains, see “religion as merely one pillar of an unjust society,” one that will collapse with the advent of a truly communist society. The latter, though, regards religion as “the foundation of most other social evils.”

Beginning in the period prior to the First World War, Jews became increasingly involved in radical politics and the secularist movement. Led by “Red Emma” Goldman, agnostic and atheistic Jews took up the cause of communism. Many of the same people played a major role in attacking any vestige of the nation’s religious heritage. To this day, the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress and the Anti-Defamation League are among the most fierce opponents of the public expression of religion in the U.S. All three are opposed to the words “under God” in the Pledge of Allegiance, though the American Jewish Congress, for purely pragmatic reasons, entered a brief in favor of the Pledge (it did so wholly because it feared a backlash among Christians that might spark the move for a constitutional amendment); the other two Jewish groups entered a brief to remove the words.

Jacoby also cites the role of secular feminists, many of whom are Jewish, in championing the abortion-rights movement. In 1972, in the first edition of Gloria Steinem’s *Ms. Magazine*, 53 feminists signed a declaration under the headline, WE HAVE HAD ABORTIONS; Steinem was one of the signatories. Today, Jewish newspapers like the *Forward* are radically in favor of every type of abortion procedure, including partial-birth abortion. Interestingly, one of the Jewish founders of the abortion movement, Dr. Bernard Nathanson, eventually came to his senses and gave up his practice as an abortionist. He has since become an outspoken foe of abortion and has converted to Catholicism (something Jacoby doesn’t mention).

What Jacoby has to say about Catholics is fascinating. She concedes that “in late-nineteenth-century America—for the first time in Western history since the Christianization of the Roman Empire—distrust of the Catholic Church’s intentions was far more widespread than distaste for religious Judaism.” And while she is correct to say that Protestants reacted in horror to the establishment of parochial schools, she fails to say that it was anti-Catholicism that drove Catholics to create their own schools in the first place. What she has a hard time admitting, for understandable reasons, is the role which her beloved freethinkers have played in fostering anti-Catholicism.

In the 1930s, it is fair to say that prominent Catholic public figures were quite vocal in opposing obscene speech. Indeed, the Legion of Decency was very active in monitoring the movie industry. But it is nonetheless striking to read Jacoby speak of “heavily Catholic” places like Pennsylvania, St. Louis, Chicago and New Orleans where obscene fare was challenged. She even goes so far as to say that these are “all cities with Catholic police officials.” One wonders what she would say if a non-Jewish author wrote about “heavily Jewish” places like Hollywood that make the offending movies.

And what are we to make of her claim that the Catholic Church labeled birth control “a communist conspiracy”? Her entire evidence for this extraordinary assertion is the statement of one person, whom she does not identify, who allegedly made such a comment before a congressional committee. Now it may be that some Catholic has testified that the earth is flat. I don’t know. But I know this much—if someone did, Jacoby would blame the Catholic Church.

What is perhaps most disturbing about Jacoby’s treatment of Catholicism is her unwillingness to condemn anti-Catholic authors and organizations. Paul Blanshard, for instance, wrote *American Freedom and Catholic Power* in the post-war period, a book so laced with anti-Catholicism that the *New*

York Times even refused to review it. This is not the way Jacoby sees it, however, which is why the best she can do is criticize the book for its “shortcomings.” Similarly, she cannot bring herself to condemn Protestants and Other Americans United for Separation of Church and State (now Americans United for Separation of Church and State), even though the organization’s roots are indisputably anti-Catholic.

It would be easy to simply dismiss Jacoby’s book as an attempt to put a rosy gloss on the history of secularism in the U.S. But it is more than that—it is a window into the way freethinkers see themselves and others. Their window, unfortunately, has been dirtied by ideology and made small by experience. Worst of all, theirs is a window that projects an incredible self-righteousness, one whose only cure lies in listening to the Word of God.

TREAT CATHOLICS AS MUSLIMS

Lt. Gen. William Boykin has made some remarks that have gotten him into trouble with his superiors. For example, Boykin has said that the U.S. is “a Christian nation” at war with “Satan.” He has also said that “my God [is] a real God,” as opposed to the “idol” that Muslims worship.

After the Defense Department investigated the matter, it concluded that Boykin had violated Pentagon rules, but it did not recommend any penalty; one official called Boykin’s offense “relatively minor.” Predictably, both the *New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times* went ballistic.

In an editorial in the *New York Times*, the newspaper called for Boykin to be removed from his current job. The *Los Angeles*

Times went even further, demanding that he be forced into retirement.

We sent out the following news release on the subject:

“General Boykin’s comments were as bigoted as they were stupid. Did he really think that a man in his position could get away with offending an entire class of people? What should be done about him was perhaps best expressed by Ibrahim Hooper, the communications director for the Council on American-Islamic Relations: he should be reassigned to a post where he cannot continue to harm America’s image in the Muslim world. But this isn’t the end of the issue—the selective indignation of the *New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times* is also an issue.

“In 1993, Dr. Joycelyn Elders was nominated by President Bill Clinton to be the Surgeon General of the U.S. Dr. Elders came under fire at that time from the Catholic League for her anti-Catholic remarks (e.g., ‘Look who’s fighting the pro-choice movement: a celibate, male-dominated church’; those who oppose abortion are ‘non-Christians with slave master mentalities’; the Catholic Church has either been ‘silent’ or done ‘nothing’ about social injustice). And what did the two *Times* newspapers say about Elders? They both gave her a ringing endorsement (the *Washington Post*, by the way, sided with the Catholic League).

“Catholics look forward to a day when the *New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times* treat us the way they do Muslims.”

FALSE ADVERTISING

A letter has been sent to President George W. Bush by ten Protestant teachers of ethics asking him to “respect the

integrity of all houses of worship.” We investigated who they are and then informed the press with the following news release:

“The ten signatories advertise themselves as ‘a group of prominent Evangelicals and moderate to conservative religious leaders.’ In their letter to President Bush, they say, ‘Whenever the church has engaged in partisan politics, it has compromised its moral authority.’ Thus do they sell themselves as centrists who eschew politics.

“The group is guilty of false advertising: most of them are actively involved in partisan politics—the politics of the Left. For example, three of them, James M. Dunn, George Hunter and Rollin O. Russell, serve on the national committee of the Clergy Leadership Network, the left-wing group recently headed by Brenda Peterson that was set up to defeat Bush; a fourth, Jimmy R. Allen, previously served on the committee. Peterson recently quit her job as the DNC’s Director of Religious Outreach after the Catholic League exposed her as a fraud: her name was on an amicus brief seeking to get ‘under God’ excised from the Pledge.

“Another signatory is Richard V. Pierard. In 1995, he signed the ‘Maston Colloquium Statement,’ an inflammatory attack on Christian conservatives that accused them of being ‘rabble rousers’; he is most known for his vociferous opposition to school vouchers. Tony Campolo, another ‘moderate,’ counseled President Clinton after his encounter with Monica Lewinsky, and more recently has written a book that claims that ‘evangelical Christianity has been hijacked’ by conservatives. And then there is Ronald B. Flowers, who, like Brenda Peterson, went into court to get ‘under God’ expunged from the Pledge.”

We have no beef with those clergymen, theologians and others who side with either President Bush or Senator Kerry. But we do have a problem with anyone who misrepresents himself.

CHRISTIAN-BASHING ON CAMPUS

The faculty at Black Hawk College in Illinois have rallied around sociology professor Bruce LeBlanc after an advisory committee said he violated the school's harassment policy. Though LeBlanc was not penalized in any way, the fact that the committee recommended he apologize to the offended student led him to challenge this decision through the school's collective bargaining agreement.

The professor, a former Catholic priest and admitted homosexual, is known for his practice of graphically describing homosexual acts in the classroom, and for his habit of mocking Christian beliefs. The last straw came last spring when a student, who claims he was harassed by LeBlanc because he is a conservative and a Christian, reported that LeBlanc wrote "F— God" on the blackboard. The faculty have defended LeBlanc on free speech grounds.

We immediately jumped on this one by sending out the following news release:

"There is a huge difference between academic freedom and academic license, the latter being a form of academic malpractice. Furthermore, academic freedom is not an end in itself, it is a means towards the discovery of truth. But in the mind of Professor LeBlanc, truth does not exist. Neither, obviously, does civility.

"Leave it to the faculty to protect themselves at all costs. For example, Professor Joan Eastlund, president of the faculty union, says that LeBlanc's blackboard creation was done to teach about 'the power of symbols in human culture.' One wonders what she would be saying now if LeBlanc had

substituted the 'N' word (pluralized) for God.

"After 9-11, Black Hawk College was awash with 'Hate Free Zone' bumper stickers, pins and magnets. But it did no good, for hatred of Christians is in vogue in LeBlanc's 'Hate Free' classroom. Similarly, the college's website touts the following Core Values: Appreciation of Diversity; Caring and Compassion; Fairness; Honesty; Integrity; Respect; and Responsibility. They need an asterisk at the end to say, 'Christians not included.'"

NO CHAPELS FOUND ON THIS HILL

The University of North Carolina (UNC) at Chapel Hill has accused a Christian fraternity of discriminating against non-Christians because the frat won't open its membership to students of different faiths. In reality, however, it is UNC that is doing the discriminating: it won't allow a Christian group to be Christian.

The fraternity, Alpha Iota Omega, is suing UNC over this issue. It is being assisted by the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE) and the Alliance Defense Fund. FIRE claims that "Freedom of association and expression mean little when student groups are forced to include people who disagree with the core beliefs of the organization." The fraternity refuses to sign a "nondiscrimination" clause that would forbid it from considering religion when determining "membership and participation" in the group.

There is something particularly obtuse about the UNC administration. Just two years ago, it accused the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship that it was guilty of

discrimination because it wouldn't allow non-Christians to join. After FIRE went after UNC, it decided to reverse its position. Now they've done it again.

UNC administrators should have learned what happened when gays tried to force their way into New York's St. Patrick's Day Parade under their own banner. They were told by the U.S. Supreme Court that they had no right to essentially veto the message of the sponsoring Irish-Catholic groups. Otherwise, neo-Nazis could force their way into an Israeli parade, etc.

Perhaps some white kids on the campus ought to apply for membership in an African-American club and see how the administrators react to them. In any event, perhaps it's time they stopped identifying the campus as "Chapel Hill."

RELIGION FRIGHTENS CELEBS

As the Republican National Convention was winding down, a counter-convention event was taking place in New York that featured composer Philip Glass. Glass told a room of celebrities that the U.S. is being "taken over by religion" and that the country is being "ruled by the Bible and not the Constitution."

It is not surprising that Philip Glass would sound the alarms over religion. A buddy to the late pervert/artist Robert Mapplethorpe, Glass is known for his Catholic-bashing opera, "Galileo Galilei." He is also the creator of "The Happy Non-Offensive, Non-Denominational Christmas," a highly offensive and scatological attack on Christmas.

Why is it that it always seems to be people like Glass who are

the most frightened by religion? They should try it some time. Maybe they'd like it.

MORE THAN HINDU RIGHTS AT STAKE

A New York State judge is being accused by the Hindu Temple Society of North America of violating the separation of church and state by injecting himself into the internal affairs of the religious body. The group has filed a motion in federal district court asking for injunctive relief.

The Catholic League is supporting the Hindus in their effort. At issue is whether the courts have a right to insist that the temple hold elections for its board of trustees. We think it is none of the government's business. That is why we signed a letter as *amici curiae*, along with several Hindu groups, to Judge Raymond J. Dearie of the Eastern District Court of New York in support of the Hindu Temple Society of North America.

Below is an excerpt from a letter which the Catholic League signed supporting the Hindus in this case:

In this letter supporting the Hindu Temple's request for injunctive relief, we seek to highlight two issues of grave concern to the religious liberty of not only Hindu Americans, but all Americans. The first issue implicates the right to free exercise as guaranteed by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. If the order of the Supreme Court of the State of New York (the "Supreme Court") is not overturned, an unprecedented state-sponsored intrusion into the religious autonomy of the Hindu Temple as well as the religious practice of the Hindu community will be allowed in patent violation of

the U.S. Constitution.

It is rather difficult to fathom the rationale, if any, the Supreme Court has exercised in its willful interference into the internal, sacred affairs of the Hindu Temple. The order mandating a state-sponsored referee to determine the method by which the Hindu Temple structures and governs itself; who qualifies as a member, an inquiry which potentially includes determining who qualifies as a "Hindu"; and imposing rule by a majority of state-approved members, absent any legal basis, appears punitive and represents a potentially hostile interference into the sanctity of the Hindu Temple.

It also clearly interferes with the Hindu Temple's ability to function, let alone exercise its religion, as the Board of Trustees, which as an entity has governed the Hindu Temple for the past thirty years, is no longer able to conduct its business including appointing, hiring and dismissing priests; exercising authority over the design and expansion of the temple grounds according to Hindu religious principles; managing the scheduling of religious services at the temple; deciding which divinities will be honored as well as the forms of devotion that will occur at the temple; controlling the finances of the temple; and all other aspects of religious and temporal activities associated with the temple.

Further, though the determination of the qualification of a "member" by the state-sponsored referee may appear benign, in the context of the faith at issue, it can and will be problematic. Traditionally, Hindu temples do not have a membership as understood by majority faiths. Indeed, a Hindu may frequent a particular temple, but he is not considered to "belong" to that particular temple. A temple is a sacred place of worship open to all seekers. And because Hindu temples, both in India and abroad, have not traditionally had "memberships," several communities in the U.S. govern their temples similarly to those in India and abroad, entrusting management of the temple affairs to a Board of Trustees.

However, regardless of the construct of self-governance used by any temple in the United States, this is a function that must be left strictly in the control of adherents of the particular faith and not in the hands of the government.

Today, more than 1,500 different religious bodies and sects co-exist and flourish in the United States. It is the secular ideals of our forefathers, including the separation of church and state and the right to free religious exercise, that have allowed religion to thrive in the United States while enabling peaceful coexistence among a plurality of faiths. The Supreme Court's order threatens these very ideals, as well as every law and precedent pertaining to fundamental, constitutional rights.

The second issue of concern invokes the Fourteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. Clearly in violation of the constitutionally guaranteed right to equal protection under the law, the New York Religious Corporations Law distinguishes between different faiths, providing legal benefits and custom-tailored laws to majority religious organizations, such as Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Roman Catholic churches, while minority religious organizations, such as Hindu, Muslim and Buddhist, are pigeon-holed into two ambiguous subsections referred to as "Free Churches" and "Other Denominations" where laws are not individualized to best fit their needs and in some cases, may impose legal disadvantages.

For the foregoing reasons, we strongly urge this Court to grant the Plaintiff injunctive relief.

The Catholic League's support has been gratefully acknowledged by the Hindu Temple Society of North America, Flushing, New York, and by the Hindu American Foundation in Tampa, Florida.