

HAS BOB JONES UNIVERSITY CHANGED?

In 2000, the Catholic League criticized presidential contender Governor George W. Bush for speaking at Bob Jones University. At that time, the university had policies that were both racist and anti-Catholic. Interracial dating was forbidden, and the school's website labeled Catholicism as a "satanic counterfeit, an ecclesiastic tyranny over the souls of men," and the "Mother of Harlots."

After Bush extended an apology to the late John Cardinal O'Connor, Bill Donohue went on NBC's "Today" show saying the matter was over. Bob Jones dropped its racist dating policy and cleaned up its website, deleting the more egregious references to the Catholic Church. Officials at the university, however, could not bear to appear soft in their anti-Catholicism for long. One day after a reference by then-president Bob Jones III to Catholicism being a cult was removed from the site, it was returned to the web. Jones III told the media, "In order to leave no doubt in anyone's mind of the university's integrity and absolute commitment to its biblical principles, the article in question has been reposted."

Recently, Bob Jones University made headlines again when the Republican Senator from Arizona and possible 2008 presidential candidate, John McCain, was asked if he would consider speaking at the school. McCain, who was quick to criticize Bush for appearing there in 2000, was less than definitive, saying "I can't remember when I've turned down a speaking invitation. I think I'd have to look at it." He added, "I understand they have made considerable progress."

The Catholic League did not hesitate to urge the senator to exercise caution in his decision. While the school's website

is currently free of anti-Catholic rhetoric, we cannot be sure that hostility against the Church is a thing of the past at Bob Jones University. It is not our place to be the university's monitor, and Senator McCain would do well to find out for himself whether Catholicism is still the subject of vile insults and accusations at Bob Jones.

In addition, the league took the opportunity to implore all presidential hopefuls in both parties to refuse any invitations to speak at the University of Oregon. As we pointed out in the spring following an incident of a student paper publishing obscene and vulgar depictions of Jesus alongside tirades against Catholicism, the University of Oregon is today's hot-bed of anti-Catholicism.

WHY IS MAHER UPSET WITH BOB JONES?

Few comedians are more anti-Catholic than Bill Maher, so it struck us as laughable that he would be upset with the policies of Bob Jones University.

Maher was recently interviewed by Larry King on CNN about a wide range of topics. In the course of the conversation, King noted that Maher liked Senator Joe Biden on the Democratic side, and then asked, "What about, are you still a McCain fan on the Republican side?" Maher replied, "He's losing me and a lot of people." Stunned, King questioned, "Because?" "Well," Maher said, "did you see what he said today about Bob Jones University?" To which King said, "No, what did he say?" Maher responded as follows: "Well, he said I might go to Bob Jones. This is the guy who in 2000 said George Bush to Bob Jones, I

would never go there. I would say to them, why don't you come out of the 16th century and come into the 21st century? Well, I don't think they've made up those 500 years since he last ran for president."

This is interesting on two counts. Number one, as we mentioned in the above article, Bob Jones University dropped its racist policy governing dating six years ago. Number two, that leaves its anti-Catholic rhetoric, to the extent it still exists. Now given Maher's long record of Catholic bashing, he couldn't possibly be upset with Bob Jones if the school hasn't changed. It is not likely that the school's Catholic-bashing matters to him either way.

So what's all the fuss about? Our guess is that Maher has no idea that the offensive racist policy has been dropped. Too bad he doesn't read the newspapers.

DONOHUE ACCEPTS HONORARY POST

William Donohue was recently invited to become a member of the Honorary Board of Governors of the World Congress of Christians, Jews and Muslims, a new interfaith organization. He has agreed to join. The World Congress aims "to harness the spiritual power of faith in the service of universal peace and tolerance."

The Congress will hold an inaugural two-day Summit on Peace and Tolerance in Kiev, Ukraine, in early 2007. Unfortunately, Donohue's schedule does not allow him to attend the summit, though he extends his best wishes to everyone involved.

ROSIE LOSES HER MIND

Rosie O'Donnell is no stranger to Catholic bashing, so when it was announced that she was joining the ABC-TV program "The View," we wondered how long it would take for her to start venting. The answer? Six shows.

On September 12, co-host Elisabeth Hasselbeck made the rather unexceptional observation that radical Islam is a threat. "Just a minute," thundered Rosie, "radical Christianity is just as threatening as radical Islam in a country like America where we have separation of church and state." Hasselbeck replied that "We are not bombing ourselves here in the country." Even Joy Behar, who usually takes aim at Christians, was forced to say that no Christians were "threatening to kill us."

But Rosie didn't get it. Like a Mac Truck out of control, she then accused the U.S. of "bombing innocent people in other countries." Of course, not only has the U.S. never intentionally killed an innocent person in Afghanistan or Iraq, it has gone out of its way not to hit civilians, as well as mosques. And in any event, none of this has anything to do with equating Americans who want to keep "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance with suicide bombers.

Looks like Rosie has lost her mind. She can't distinguish between Christian activists who want a voice in the public square and Islamic fascists who want to blow it up. Look for her to get dumped from the show.

SWAGGART'S BIGOTRY AGAINST CATHOLICS

Catholics may know preacher Jimmy Swaggart from previous accusations of anti-Catholicism directed at him. In 1983, two Atlanta television stations dropped his show after the Atlanta archdiocese complained that the evangelical preacher was slandering priests. The Associated Press reported in 1984 that Swaggart's show, in addition to being dropped in Atlanta, was also dropped in Boston. In a 1982 article titled "A Letter to My Catholic Friends," published in Swaggart's magazine *The Evangelist*, Swaggart wrote, "I maintain that the Catholic superstructure and organization is not really a Christian organization. Its claims are false."

More than 20 years later, some things never change. The *Evangelist* has been printing a series of articles titled "Catholicism: A Modern Babylon." Jimmy's wife, Frances Swaggart, writes the series. In the latest installment, which appears in the September issue of the magazine, Mrs. Swaggart writes that the Catholic Church's hierarchy is "outside the Biblical model," "Church law is a roadblock to the Cross," and that Pope Stephen claimed St. Peter descended from Heaven to deliver a handwritten letter. In the letter, St. Peter asks of aid for the Roman people. The article claims Pope Stephen then delivered the letter to the Frankish king Pepin. The supposed letter "from Peter" is included in the article. The article also compares St. Peter's appearance to "the countless apparitions of Mary and her messages from Heaven that people follow all across the world today! What's next?—UFOs and messages from aliens?"

In the May issue of *The Evangelist*, Frances Swaggart writes that "to this day, Mary-worship has not only been condoned by the Catholic Church, it has become one of her most predominantly practiced doctrines." Attacking the Church's

beliefs in the April issue, Mrs. Swaggart writes, “‘Purgatory’ has undoubtedly provided the Catholic Church with a very effectual means to rake heaping piles of money into its coffers.” We could go on with the many slanderous statements in this series of articles, but there is not enough room to recount them all.

The article in the September issue of *The Evangelist* appears to be part 15 of an ongoing series about Catholicism. We wonder how people who call themselves Christian can publish anti-Catholic nonsense such as this. Such slander does show that bigotry can come from all sides, but it must never be tolerated.

PUBLIC EXPRESSION OF RELIGION ACT

To amend the Revised Statutes of the United States to eliminate the chilling effect on the constitutionally protected expression of religion by State and local officials that results from the threat that potential litigants may seek damages and attorney’s fees.

– H.R. 2679

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), Americans United for Separation of Church and State and other well-funded groups of their ilk frequently sue local governments, Boy Scout troops or veterans councils over issues regarding the separation of church and state. When they are successful, these groups are often awarded large sums of money to recover attorney’s fees. As the taxpayers are responsible for such bills, fear often motivates those being sued to capitulate to

the demands of the plaintiffs, rather than face hefty legal fees.

Senator Sam Brownback of Kansas and Representative John Hostettler of Indiana are out to change this. Both lawmakers have proposed legislation called “Veterans’ Memorials, Boy Scouts, Public Seals, and Other Public Expressions of Religion Protection Act of 2006” (S. 3696) and “the Public Expression of Religion Act of 2005” (H.R. 2679). The bills would amend the Civil Rights Attorney Fees Award Act of 1976 in order to require that parties in Establishment Clause cases take responsibility for their own legal fees. Should these bills become law, well-funded advocacy associations would have a harder time intimidating local governments and less wealthy groups into removing such things as displays of the Ten Commandments or stamping out references to Christianity in public schools.

The Catholic League is pleased to support these bills, which are currently under consideration in Congress. The House Judiciary Committee has passed Hostettler’s act, and it will now be sent to the full House of Representatives for a vote. The Senate Judiciary Committee is still considering Brownback’s version.

We will be following their progress closely, and urge interested members to contact their senators and representatives to register their support for this legislation.

RESTORING PIUS XII’S GOOD

NAME

Members may recall that last November we ran an article in Catalyst, "Religious Intolerance in Education," that explained how National History Day had inserted a negative comment about Pope Pius XII into a flier regarding a student contest. We protested that it is slanderous to assume that it is historically true that Pius XII failed to oppose Hitler. It is a credit to the group that they listened and corrected the record.

Unfortunately, National History Day did not correct this misleading remark on its website. So we wrote to them again. We are happy to report that once again the officials in charge of this worthy enterprise made the necessary changes to clear the good name of Pope Pius XII.

The Catholic League extends our thanks to Thomas A. Horkan, Jr. and Peter A. Crowdrey, Jr. for bringing this latest matter to our attention.

THE POLITICS OF NATURE

Nature, a highly respected scientific journal, created quite a stir recently when it issued a press release about an article in its publication that claims to have found a way to generate human embryonic stem cells without destroying the embryo. The only problem with the news release was that it was false.

The author of the article, Dr. Robert Lanza, did not make such an extravagant claim; the problem lay with those who sought to hype the research. Indeed, Dr. Lanza was never shown the news release about his research.

The major media, of course, didn't bother to fact check the claims made in the news release. Thus did they disseminate false reports. Richard Doerflinger, a senior staff member of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), accurately branded the story a "sham."

Kudos to the USCCB for jumping on this from the get-go. They smelled a rat right away and said so. Too bad the mainstream media doesn't approach science the way Catholic officials do.

OUR LADY OF WEIGHT LOSS

A woman named Janice Taylor who considers herself a "weight-loss artist" runs a website called "Our Lady of Weight Loss." Taylor has also recently released a book by the same name, subtitled *Miraculous and Motivational Musings from the Patron Saint of Permanent Weight Loss*. Mixing in practical advice on losing weight and getting fit with artwork, the goal of "Our Lady of Weight Loss" is to help and encourage dieters.

Taylor's artwork is frequently centered around wacky and irreverent pictures of the Blessed Mother. In one, her halo is actually the dial of a scale. In another, the Virgin smokes a cigarette and says, "Darling, please excuse my oral fixation." The website boasts "The Ten Commandments of Permanent Fat Removal." One commandment is "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's plate." Our Lady of Weight Loss is quoted as saying, "Should you succumb to the Call of the Cheeto, dust the crumbs off and get back on the wagon. 'All is forgiven. Move on.'"

When we were originally notified about Taylor's website, we thought speaking out about it would only cause it to garner more attention. Now that Taylor's book has been released and

is available in bookstores, however, it is no longer prudent to ignore her. This is even more true because the popular shopping club Costco has featured Taylor in the September issue of its magazine, *The Costco Connection*.

Bill Donohue wrote to Costco and asked that the magazine discontinue promoting *Our Lady of Weight Loss*. Donohue stated, "Taylor's book and her images of the Blessed Mother merging with vegetables are not egregiously offensive. However, they do show a lack of respect for the Virgin Mary, whom Catholics revere. For Costco to feature Ms. Taylor's work is insulting to many Catholics, who do not like to see their faith treated as a joke.

"I know Costco has no desire to alienate customers of any religion. Therefore, I wanted to let you know how upset many Catholics were by the article and ask that you discontinue the dissemination of this book. We will notify our 300,000 members nationwide of your decision regarding this matter."

VICTORY IN PENNSYLVANIA

Occasionally, we learn of problems within private communities, where homeowner's associations inhibit the expression of individual Christian faith. The most recent case of such a situation was in Chester Springs, Pennsylvania.

John McMahon, whose family recently purchased a house in a new development called Byers Station, wished to display a 24-inch statue of the Blessed Mother outside his home. McMahon and his wife, Cindy, erected the statue between his front steps and a shrub, not thinking this would cause any controversy. (They had inquired about putting such a statue outside their home before purchasing, and were only informed that swimming pools

and basketball hoops were off limits.)

Shortly afterward, however, the McMahons received a letter from the Byers Station Homeowner's Association stating that if they wanted to keep the statue outside, they would have to submit a form requesting permission. The McMahons dutifully complied with the order and sent in the form. They were shocked by the answer they received.

A letter from the board of directors of the community association denied the McMahon's application for permission to keep the statue. The board's explanation was as follows: "Some homeowners in the community may take offense to a religious statue and therefore, the Board has decided not to approve this request. The Board is requesting the statue be moved either inside your home, or placed in the backyard so that it is not viewable from the street."

The McMahons saw the absurdity of the board's decision, and quickly contacted the Catholic League, as well as a number of other organizations and the local media (who jumped at the chance to publicize the story), to request assistance. Bill Donohue quickly fired off a letter to the Byers Station Community Association asking them to rescind the order that the McMahons remove the statue.

Donohue asked the members of the board: "Have you considered that this ruling is precedent setting? Are you prepared to enact this ban on religious items across the board? Doing so will mean barring menorahs during Hanukkah, crèches during Christmas and even small garden angels.

"I also wonder about your assumption that residents of Byers Station are so quick to be offended by symbols of religion. Is Byers Station a haven of intolerance? After all, no one save a bigot is bothered by seeing others express their faith."

Since being contacted by the league and being the target of a local media frenzy, the homeowner's association has decided to

drop the ridiculous ban on the Blessed Mother. The McMahons have been verbally informed that the statue can stay. In addition, another family in the community has placed a statue of the Blessed Mother on their lawn.