

# MEL GIBSON APOLOGIZES; CRITICS EXPLOIT THE MOMENT

In the early morning hours of July 28, Mel Gibson was arrested for suspicion of drunk driving. But what got him into the most trouble was his comment, "The Jews are responsible for all the wars in the world."

Our immediate response was to label Gibson's remark "indefensible," "anti-Semitic" and "irresponsible." But we also noted that "Fortunately, he has apologized for his bigoted outburst." Then we turned our attention elsewhere: "Unfortunately, his apology is being rejected by some who should know better." We were referring to Abraham Foxman, head of the ADL, who branded Gibson's apology "unremorseful and insufficient."

We did not hesitate to compare the ADL's reaction to the Catholic League's response to bigotry. "We have quite a file on Ted Turner at the Catholic League," Bill Donohue told the media. "Unlike Foxman, I have accepted every apology Turner has ever made for his anti-Catholic outbursts, all of which were made while he was sober. Indeed, I even went so far as to say that 'no one in his right mind' would ever put Ted Turner 'in the same camp with a Klansman or an inveterate bigot.'"

Donohue also noted that when radio shock-jocks Opie and Anthony apologized for their orchestrated anti-Catholic stunt in St. Patrick's Cathedral a few years back, he not only accepted their apology, he was the first guest on their new CBS radio show and welcomed their return.

"But Mel's enemies will never cut him a break," Donohue said. That's because "Their real goal is to discredit 'The Passion of the Christ,' and that is why their propaganda machine is in full gear."

On August 1, Gibson released a statement saying, "There is no excuse, nor should there be any tolerance, for anyone who thinks or expresses any kind of anti-Semitic remark. I want to apologize specifically to everyone in the Jewish community for the vitriolic and harmful words that I have said..." Gibson said he now wants to meet one-on-one with leaders in the Jewish community "to discern the appropriate path for healing."

Donohue responded by saying, "Mel Gibson's apology is a model of contrition, and it reflects the genuineness of his faith."

Regrettably, there are some for whom no amount of forgiveness will suffice (see p. 4 for some examples). That's because they are too busy exploiting the moment in an attempt to besmirch "The Passion."

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## MADONNA HITS ROME

Pop-singer Madonna took her "Confessions" tour to Rome on Sunday, August 4. During her song "Live To Tell," she wore a crown of thorns while suspended from a mirrored cross.

On several national TV shows, Bill Donohue labeled Madonna's latest stunt "an act of provocation." Had she gone to Venice on a Saturday, he said, the Catholic League would not have registered another complaint, but her decision to perform two miles from the Vatican on a Sunday was another matter altogether.

No wonder Jewish and Muslim leaders joined Catholic leaders in denouncing Madonna's trip to Rome—it was an in-your-face gesture that if tolerated would only have beckoned more attacks on religion. The Catholic League agreed with Bishop

Velasio De Paolis, a Vatican official, who compared her act to “Satanists [who] use religious objects for Black Masses.”

Donohue appeared on NBC’s “Today” show on August 6 to discuss this issue. He said Madonna’s portrayal of herself as Christ on the cross was “the functional equivalent of taking a middle finger and sticking it right in the face of Christians.”

The next day on CNN’s “Paula Zahn Now,” Donohue labeled Madonna’s mock crucifixion “gratuitous,” saying it had nothing to do with the song. He also wondered why “She always chooses my religion. We thought we got rid of her. If she chose Muslims she might lose her head.”

It’s time for this 48-year old to hang it up.

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## NICE TO KNOW WHAT OFFENDS HOLLYWOOD

**William A. Donohue**

Mel Gibson got drunk, got behind the wheel and was arrested. What he did was irresponsible. He then blurted out anti-Semitic comments to the arresting officer, who happened to be Jewish. That was indefensible. Next he apologized—twice—without qualification. Which is what he should have done. Case closed? Not on your life: Mel’s biggest critics smelled blood in the water and went for the jugular.

The Catholic League has never failed to accept the apology of anyone who has offended us. And this includes recidivists, the repeat offenders. When asked by reporters why we do so, I simply say “we have no other choice.” In other words, because

Catholicism puts a premium on forgiveness, we must accept any apology that appears to be sincere. It's too bad the rest of the nation isn't more Catholic.

The Mel Gibson who I know is a great guy. We became friends, of course, because of the controversy surrounding "The Passion of the Christ." The movie is a classic and nothing Mel did can detract from its excellence. What disappointed me, among other things, was the reluctance of those Catholic and Protestant leaders who had rallied to his side in defense of the film but were nowhere to be found once Mel fell. Isn't it the duty of Christians to extend a helping hand to those who have fallen, especially those whom we have come to embrace?

If many of Mel's friends abandoned him, it had the opposite effect on his biggest critics—they came crawling out of the woodwork. The gall of Christopher Hitchens to get worked up about Mel's remarks. This is the same man who likes to brag about his anti-Catholicism. Here is what he said when I debated him in 2000: "I might have to admit for debate purposes that when religion is attacked in this country that the Catholic Church comes in for little more than its fair share. I may say that I probably contributed somewhat to that *and I am not ashamed of my part in it.*" (My emphasis.)

Hitchens found out a while back that he is part Jewish and ever since he has become a watchdog for anti-Semitism. But not anti-Catholicism—that he likes. That he has paid no price for his bigotry tells us much about his friends on the right who welcome his anti-Islamofascist stance.

No one gets into any trouble saying Harlem is dominated by blacks or Chinatown is dominated by the Chinese, but to say Hollywood is dominated by Jews is somehow regarded as bigoted. But not always: it came in handy to make such a reference when bashing Mel.

On July 31, Keith Olbermann interviewed Hollywood reporter Tom

O'Neil on his MSNBC show, "Countdown." Tom wondered aloud whether Mel could come back from this incident, saying, "I don't know how Mel rallies from this, especially in Jewish Hollywood." Olbermann, ever quick to sense an odor, replied, "And let's clarify so nobody puts you on that list of folks who said things. When you said Jewish Hollywood, you meant the Jewish community in Hollywood, not 'Jewish Hollywood.'" O'Neil answered, "Oh yes, exactly. Yes, absolutely."

For the record, in my limited experience dealing with O'Neil, he does not strike me as any kind of bigot. My point is simply that when liberals say Hollywood is Jewish, it is understood as being descriptive; when people like myself say the same thing, we're branded as anti-Semitic.

On the same day as O'Neil's admission, the *Los Angeles Times* ran an article about the controversy wherein it was noted that "many of the town's senior executives are Jewish and Hollywood has a long history of supporting Israel and Jewish causes..." The next day, in the same newspaper, it was said that "Hollywood was largely founded by, and the studios are still chiefly run by, Jewish executives..." A week later, Ruth Marcus wrote an article in the *Washington Post* in which she commented, "By Hollywood I mean the entertainment industry, which—Gibson's paranoid rant...notwithstanding, is in fact dominated by Jews."

On the same day Mel got into trouble, a Muslim went into a Jewish institution in Seattle and opened fire on six Jewish woman, killing one of them. Unlike Mel's behavior, his was premeditated and committed while sober. And unlike Mel, his behavior led to no public outcry. That's because Mel was cast as the terrorist, not the Muslim maniac. Want proof? According to Arianna Huffington, Mel's remarks make him "psychological soul mates with the leaders of Hezbollah." That's what she said when I debated her on August 1 on CNN's "Showbiz Tonight." I denounced her for making a "despicable, obscene analogy," but there is no way to shame this lady.

In 2003, Roman Polanski, the convicted child rapist, received a standing ovation when he won an Oscar for "The Pianist." So nice to know what offends the Hollywood crowd. Good thing the pervert didn't say in his film that Hollywood is run by the Jews.

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## EDUCATION MYTHS

*By Jay P. Greene*

*The following article is an excerpt from a longer piece that appeared in the July/August edition of The American Enterprise (the flagship publication of the American Enterprise Institute) titled, "Education Myths" (Greene has published a book by that name).*

*Greene, who runs the Department of Education Reform at the University of Arkansas, and who is a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute, has written widely on the subject of school reform. Armed with persuasive evidence, Greene contends that there are many myths afloat about what ails education in the U.S. There is a "money myth," a "teacher pay myth," a "class size myth," a "certification myth," a "rich-school myth" and an "ineffective school voucher myth"; the latter two myths touch on Catholic schools and therefore were selected for publication in Catalyst.*

*Bill Donohue highly recommends Greene's book, Education Myths, and would like to thank both Jay Greene and The American Enterprise for giving us permission to reprint the following article.*

## The rich-school myth

A popular myth says that private schools do better than public schools only because they have more money, recruit high-performing students, and expel low-performing students. The conventional wisdom is captured in one Michigan newspaper's warning that "a voucher system would force penniless public schools to shut down while channeling more and more money into wealthy private schools."

There is no question that, on average, students in private schools demonstrate significantly greater achievement. For example, on the eighth-grade reading portion of the NAEP [National Assessment of Educational Progress] test, 53 percent of private school students perform at or above the level defined as "proficient," compared to only 30 percent of public school students. In eighth-grade math, only 27 percent of public-school students perform at the "proficient" level, compared to 43 percent of private-school students. Interestingly, twice as many private-school eighth graders go on to earn a bachelor's degree as their public-school counterparts, in percentage terms.

However: it simply isn't true that public schools are penniless while private schools are wealthy. In fact, the opposite is closer to the truth. According to the U.S. Department of Education, the average private school charged \$4,689 per student in tuition for the 1999-2000 school year. That same year, the average public school spent \$8,032 per pupil. Among Catholic schools (which educate 49 percent of all private-school students), the average tuition was only \$3,236. The vast majority of private-school students actually have less than *half* as much funding behind them as public-school students.

Some point out that private schools don't always provide all the services that public schools do: transportation, special ed classes, lunch, counseling. But in an analysis comparing

public-school and Catholic-school costs in New York, D.C., Dayton, and San Antonio, researchers found that excluding all of these services plus administration costs from the public-school ledger still left public schools with significantly more resources than Catholic schools. Besides, if public schools provide additional services, then those services should contribute to their students' educational outcomes. All spending is ultimately relevant to the question of a school's cost-effectiveness.

Just as lack of money cannot be blamed for poor outcomes in public schools, neither can differences in selectivity be held responsible. Surprising as it may be, most private schools are not very selective. A study of the nation's Catholic schools concluded that the typical institution accepted 88 percent of the students who applied. Other research in D.C., Dayton, and New York private schools found that only 1 percent of parents reported their children were denied admission because of a failed admissions test. Moreover, the academic and demographic backgrounds of students who use vouchers to attend private school across the country are very similar to those who don't.

Private schools don't significantly alter their student populations by expelling low-achieving or troublesome students, either. One study found that "Catholic high schools dismiss fewer than two students per year" on average. While it is true that every student is officially entitled to a publicly funded education, students in public schools are regularly expelled. According to the U.S. Department of Education, roughly 1 percent of all public school students are expelled in a year, and an additional 0.6 percent are segregated into specialized academies. That's more than in Catholic and other private schools. Moreover, public schools actually contract out 1.3 percent of their disabled students to private schools.

In any case, numerous studies have compared what happens when students with identical backgrounds attend private versus



public schools. And consistently, in study after study, the matched peers who remain in public schools do less well than children who shift to private schools. Higher student achievement is clearly attributable to some difference in the way private schools instruct—and not to more money, or simple exclusion of difficult students.

### **The myth of ineffective school vouchers**

When reporting on school vouchers—programs that give parents money they can use to send their children to private schools—the media almost always describe research on vouchers' effects as inconclusive. The *New York Times*, for instance, responded to a Supreme Court decision approving vouchers by declaring: "All this is happening without a clear answer to the fundamental question of whether school choice has improved American education. The debate... remains heated, defined more by conflicting studies than by real conclusions."

In reality, though, the research on vouchers isn't mixed or inconclusive at all. High quality research shows consistently that vouchers have positive effects for students who receive them. The only place where results are mixed is in regard to the magnitude of vouchers' benefits.

There have been eight random-assignment studies of school voucher programs, and in seven of them, the benefits for voucher recipients were statistically significant. In Milwaukee, for example, a study I conducted with two researchers from Harvard found that students awarded vouchers to attend private schools outperformed a matched control group of students in Milwaukee public schools. After four years, the voucher students had reading scores six percentile points above the control group, and standardized math results 11 percentile points higher. All of the students in this study (which is mirrored by other research) were low-income and Hispanic or African American.

In a study of a different program based in Charlotte, North Carolina, I found that recipients of privately funded vouchers outperformed peers who did not receive a voucher by six percentile points after one year. All of the students studied were from low-income households. In New York City, a privately funded school choice program has been the subject of many careful studies. One found that African-American voucher recipients outperformed the control group by 9 percentile points after three years in the program. Another analysis found a difference of 5 percentile points in math. A similar program in Washington, D.C. resulted in African-American students outperforming peers without vouchers by 9 percentile points after two years.

Every one of the voucher programs studied resulted in enthusiastic support from parents as well. And all this was achieved in private schools that expend a mere fraction of the amount spent per student in public schools. The most generously funded of the five voucher programs studied, the Milwaukee program, provides students with only 60 percent of the \$10,112 spent per pupil in that city's public schools. The privately funded voucher programs spend less than *half* what public schools spend per pupil. Better performances, happier parents, for about half the cost: if similar results were produced for a method of fighting cancer, academics and reporters would be elated.

### **Spread the truth**

Over the past 30 years, many of our education policies have been based on beliefs that clear-eyed research has recently shown to be false. Virtually every area of school functioning has been distorted by entrenched myths. Disentangling popular misconceptions from our education system—and establishing fresh policies based on facts that are supported by hard evidence—will be the work of at least a generation.

That work will be especially difficult because powerful

interest groups with reasons to protect and extend the prevailing mythology will oppose any rethinking. But with time, and diligent effort by truth-tellers, reality and reason have triumphed over mythology in many other fields. There is no reason they can't prevail in schoolhouses as well.

Jay P. Greene, *Education Myths: What Special-Interest Groups Want You to Believe About Our Schools and Why it Isn't So*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005. 280 pages

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## **BUYER BEWARE: DON'T PURCHASE THE THIRD SECRET**

Page 2 is usually reserved to promote books and publications that may be of interest to our members. But this month we are doing something different: we're advising against buying something. That something is the audio version of the book *The Third Secret*, by Steve Berry.

In August, The Most Reverend John Clayton Nienstedt, Bishop of the Diocese of New Ulm, Minnesota, was kind enough to send us a letter and the five-disc audio version of the book. While in a bookstore, he picked up a copy and was intrigued by what he read on the disc's jacket. He soon found out, however, that the work was as deceptive as it was pernicious.

In the May *Catalyst*, Bob Lockwood reviewed several Catholic-bashing books, including Berry's *The Third Secret*. Both Bishop Nienstedt and Lockwood were taken aback by the *Da Vinci Code* dimension to the book: it is based on utter falsehoods, yet it is presented as though it were at least plausible.

"In *The Third Secret*, Steve Berry has an intrepid couple

discovering that Church leadership had hidden the true revelation of the Blessed Mother at Fatima,” wrote Lockwood, “namely that birth control and abortion are fine, priestly celibacy is wrong and the ordination of women right, and that homosexual marriage is a noble thing.” Along the way, two popes commit suicide, a good priest is murdered and almost all of them are having affairs.

These lies will be seen for what they are by educated persons, but to many others they will be seen as containing at least a kernel of truth. What is particularly troubling about Berry’s work is that it is published by Random House, a premier publisher.

Our thanks again to Bishop Nienstedt.

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## MEL’S CRITICS SMELL BLOOD

Here’s what some critics said about Mel Gibson, following his arrest incident:

- July 30, agent Ari Emanuel in the Huffington Post: “People in the entertainment community, whether Jew or gentile, need to demonstrate that they understand how much is at stake in this by professionally shunning Mel Gibson and refusing to work with him, even if that means a sacrifice to their bottom line.”
- July 31, Christopher Hitchens in Slate.com: “I was just in the middle of writing a long and tedious essay, about how to tell a real anti-Semite from a person who too loudly rejects the charge of anti-Semitism, when a near-perfect real-life example came to hand.”

- July 31, *Village Voice* writer Michael Musto on MSNBC's "Countdown with Keith Olbermann:" "He doesn't work with anybody else, and his audience is already deeply anti-Semitic, so they're deeply proud of him after this."
- August 1, columnist Eugene Robinson in the *Washington Post*: "Gibson's rant sounds to me like classic anti-Semitism that goes beyond the country-club 'not our sort of people' brand of casual bigotry. He seems well on the way toward some sort of full-blown 'Protocols of the Elders of Zion' conspiracy theory of Jewish world domination."
- August 2, Joy Behar on ABC's "The View:" "He needs to be welcomed into the Jewish community by public circumcision."
- August 2, *The Jewish Week*: "The incident vindicates those Jewish leaders who had the backbone to call the film ["The Passion of the Christ"] what it was: an example of religious anti-Semitism...."
- August 2, Bill Maher in the Huffington Post: "Why, when Mels's [sic] id is released, its [sic] about the Jews f\*\*king everything up, just like it was with Hitler. Except Mel Gibson, when his id is in check, I believe, really knows how wrong that is, and how stupid. He, I believe, at least fights with himself about this. But he'll never win as long as he's so religious, because, I hate to tell you, the disease isn't alcholism [sic], the disease is religion."
- August 2, producer Merv Adelson in an ad he placed in the *Los Angeles Times*: "Let's make ourselves proud and not support this jerk in any way, just because he's a so-called 'star.' People like Mel Gibson give us all a bad name."
- August 2, Alec Baldwin in the Huffington Post, after watching "The Passion:" "And, as a Catholic, I'm thinking, here Mel has dug down deep to glorify JC, the ultimate provider of the forgiveness program. Killed the whole film for me. Who'd a thought? Mel Gibson... the Opus Dei buzz-kill."

- August 3, movie critic Michael Phillips in the *Chicago Tribune*: "It ['The Passion'] is the work of a true believer who has major, major Jew issues, and who hides behind source material when asked about his film's caricatured, subhuman Jewish rabble."
- August 3, Actor Rob Schneider in an ad he placed in *Variety*: "I, Rob Schneider, a 1/2 Jew, pledge from this day forth to never work with Mel Gibson-actor-director-producer and anti-Semite." The actor went on to say he had recently directed a movie in which there was a part for a Nazi gang leader "which apparently Mel would be perfect for."
- August 4, Anti-Defamation League national director Abraham Foxman took the opportunity to smear the "The Passion" in *The Jewish Week*: "Gibson had cherry-picked some of the most vitriolic passages from the four Gospel stories and combined them to produce his own distorted version of the trial and crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth nearly 2000 years ago."
- August 4, Paul Slansky, co-author of the book *My Bad: 25 Years of Public Apologies and the Appalling Behavior That Inspired Them*, in the *Los Angeles Times*: "As automatically as you think 'murderer' when you hear 'O.J. Simpson,' the mere mention of 'Mel Gibson' will forevermore make you think 'anti-Semite'.... And, finally, whatever else he does in the remainder of his life, expect to see a reference to the incident of July 28, 2006, in the first paragraph of Gibson's obituary. This one's not going away."
- August 6, Michael Grunwald in the *Washington Post*: "Linguists note that in Chinese, the character for 'opportunity' also means 'quagmire.' And 'Hezbollah' means 'Party of Mel Gibson....' Still, Gibson insists he is not an anti-Semite, blaming his tirade on his struggles with alcoholism and depression, and also on his hatred of Jews."
- August 7, Rachel Patron in the *Sun-Sentinel*:

“Investigating how Jews feel about you, I approached the most forgiving of them all: Jesus of Nazareth. When I uttered the name Mel Gibson, he choked on his milk-and-honey shake. It took him a minute to catch his breath and talk to us: ‘This guy tortured me more than the Romans. He never bothered telling people about all the good I accomplished during my short sojourn on Earth—his only interest was my bloody death. Again and again he made me relive my suffering. Now I am the victim of Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome, which is all wrong, because you’re not supposed to have nightmares in Heaven.’”

- August 11, Daniel Fierman in *Entertainment Weekly*: “That’s why official apologies and offers to meet with Jewish leaders aside—it’s impossible to imagine true forgiveness for a man who had done what Gibson has done.”

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## HAPPY ENDING IN ORLANDO

A significant part of what we do here at the Catholic League involves clearing up historical or theological errors believed about the Church. Some anti-Catholic canards (e.g. Pope Pius XII was “Hitler’s Pope,” the Church stifles scientific inquiry, etc.) we see time and again as they are held tightly by their proponents. Some of those who disseminate false or questionable information about the Church, however, are reasonable people truly interested in learning the truth.

So it was recently, when the Diocese of Orlando tipped us off about a situation at Universal Studios Orlando. We were advised that a list of prominent homosexuals was posted in the employee cafeteria of the theme park. Included on this list was the name of Pope Julius III (1550-1555).

Rumors about the late pontiff being gay have never been

substantiated. This being the case, we wrote to the head of human resources at Universal Studios and asked him to provide the evidence supporting the claim about Pope Julius III.

We received a cordial telephone response from Fred White, the director of diversity at the park. White stated that he was the one responsible for the list of homosexuals, which he displayed as part of a month focusing on gays and lesbians in society. (Each month, White posts information about a different group of people.) He apologized for the inclusion of the pope's name, and admitted that he posted the list, downloaded from the website of the radical homosexual-activist group LAMBDA, without first verifying its contents.

White stressed that he did not intend to offend anyone or present inaccurate information. After studying up on Pope Julius III's life, he pledged never to repost such a claim, and declared himself willing to meet personally with any Universal Studios employee who was upset by the flier.

The Catholic League is pleased with Fred White's handling of the matter and trusts that such an offense will not be repeated.

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## **HBO'S "LUCKY LOUIE" IS BARBARIC**

Blasphemy often follows obscenity, and HBO's sitcom "Lucky Louie" has been obscene from the first episode. So Catholics were due.

Here's a sample of the first nine episodes of the show:



- Louie, the main character, is found masturbating in a broom closet.
- Louie does not want to get his wife pregnant until they figure out a way for her to have consistent orgasms.
- Louie passes out at the kitchen table and awakes with the name "fag" painted on his back.
- Louie's friend wants to know why he spent \$300 on a Frankenstein doll that he cannot have sex with.
- Louie's wife, Kim, barges in on him while he is in the bathroom so she can get a stool sample.
- Louie uses an obscene term referring to the female genitalia and calls his wife by that name.
- Lucy, the daughter, tells her mother that the cake she made tastes like "poop" and the mother curses at her.
- A 16-year-old girl offers to perform oral sex on Louie.
- Louie gets drunk, almost gets into a car accident, and when he tries to trade places with his male friend, the two get stuck on top of each other.

In the tenth episode, which aired on August 13, Louie gets "absolution" from a priest in the confessional even though the priest knows he is not Catholic. Worse, when Louie is criticized for eating in church he says, "They are all up there eating Jesus, why can't I have this?"

The sacred and the profane are elements found in every society. In our society, the sexual and the scatological often constitute the profane, as in this show. Ironically, the sacred, which is Roman Catholicism, cannot be ignored, even by the depraved. But that is no excuse for this barbaric presentation.

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## MORE PHONY BALONEY

Ever since Dan Brown made a splash with the *Da Vinci Code*, the kooks have been coming out of the woodwork. The latest is Kathleen McGowan. In her novel, *The Expected One*, she claims to be a descendant of Jesus and Mary Magdalene. In other words, she is from the “sacred bloodline” that Brown made famous.

What proof does she have? None. We are expected to take her word. To do so means we would have to accept as true the vision she had of Mary Magdalene who suddenly appeared to her in 1997.

McGowan first tried to get her book published as non-fiction, but got no offers. That’s because the publishers knew this was phony baloney all along.

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## STEM CELL DEBATE GETS UGLY

The U.S. Senate passed three pieces of legislation regarding stem cell research on July 18. Two of the bills were non-controversial: one bans growing human embryos in a human or animal with the intent of harvesting stem cells, and the other promotes adult stem cell research. The controversial bill would have expanded federal funding for embryonic stem cell research. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), among others, was opposed to the controversial bill.

President Bush, a day after the Senate's approval, vetoed that bill.

Debate on the issue became ugly. Instead of making reasoned arguments, some advocates of embryonic stem cell research chose to play the anti-religion card.

Senator Arlen Specter, a strong supporter of abortion-on-demand and euthanasia-on-demand, found it necessary to make his case for unlimited stem cell research by dragging up Galileo and Pope Boniface VIII, casting them as Catholic victim and victimizer. He also managed to say that those who oppose embryonic stem cell research are on a par with those who once opposed rail travel, though he did not cite Vatican opposition to trains.

New York Senator Charles Schumer said that those who oppose embryonic stem cell research were "theocrats" who "want their faith to dictate what the government does." Senator Schumer needs to explain himself. Are those Christians who want the U.S. to back Israel at any cost (and invoke the Bible to justify supporting Israel) "theocrats" who—in the Senator's words—are using "their faith to dictate what the government does?"

At least one Catholic politician also managed to criticize opposition to the embryonic stem cell bill. Senator Tom Harkin denounced President Bush's vetoing of that bill. He asked, "Who set up the president of the United States, this president, as our moral pope? The president of the United States is not our moral ayatollah. He may wish to be, but he's not." Yet when Senator Harkin votes to allow doctors to kill babies who are 80 percent born, no one calls him a moral pope. But the Iowa Catholic was quick to drop the Taliban card on President Bush for vetoing a bill that was opposed by the USCCB.

The *Los Angeles Times* on July 18 blasted the Republican Party

for “allowing religious conservatives to stall medical progress for nearly five years.” But no one topped a new online group, The Campaign to Defend the Constitution (DEFCON): in a full-page ad in the *New York Times* on July 18, it blamed “a few religious extremists,” claiming they were “exercising undue political influence.” In other words, those who don’t support killing human beings *de novo* are theocrats that disrespect the democratic process.

Cardinal William Keeler, who speaks for the bishops on life issues, is correct when he argues that “Technical progress that makes humans themselves into raw material for research is in fact a regress in our humanity.” Everyone is free to disagree, but under no circumstances can Catholic baiting be tolerated.