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"Judaism is a Gutter Religion"

Jude Wanniski

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To: Jack Kemp
From: Jude Wanniski
Re: What Louis Farrakhan Really Said

Now that it's absolutely clear George W. will be the GOP nominee, I think you should have a talk with him about Minister Louis Farrakhan, of the Nation of Islam. You know better than almost anyone in politics that Minister Farrakhan has been unjustly vilified and demonized as anti-Semitic and even anti-Catholic, that while he has publicly taken issue with some of the *political* positions favored by the Jewish political establishment, he has never said a word against Judaism -- or Catholicism. Governor Bush last month said that as President he would include the Nation of Islam in his considerations for federal contracts as a "faith-based organization," he told *FoxNewsSunday* on January 30: "I believe that the folks -- the Muslims who accept, you know, love your neighbor like you'd like to be loved yourself, and whose hearts are set right to help a neighbor in need." Nobody paid any attention to this until Fox replayed it after John McCain won the Michigan primary on February 22. Remember, Jack, that when Bush spoke at Bob Jones University, McCain not only blasted Christian Coalition leaders Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell as "agents of intolerance," he equated them with "Louis Farrakhan and Al Sharpton," all four being men of the cloth.

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The first critical mention I saw of Bush's early positive comment about the NOI was in the February 24 Metro column of Joyce Purnick of the *NYTimes*,

a journalist for whom I have great respect. She wrote that Farrakhan once had called "Judaism a gutter religion" and called the Pope the "anti-Christ." I was surprised because while I had seen the NY tabloids make this error repeatedly, I'd not seen the *NYT* get into the act. In the days that followed, many journalists made the same attribution, including Martha Irvine of the Associated Press, Ralph Hallow of the *Washington Times*, and Don Feder, a syndicated columnist. In each instance, they repeated the assertion that Farrakhan had said "Judaism is a gutter religion." With Bush scrambling to turn the Catholic vote against McCain after the Michigan primary, he decided to blast away at Farrakhan in a March 1 speech in LA: "Louis Farrakhan preaches hate... Louis Farrakhan is a hateful person" who preaches an "anti-Semitic message."

What happened, Jack, was that Bush made the same "mistake" you made in September 1996, when you told a Harlem audience that you wished you had been invited to address the Million Man March in October 1995 -- and the roof came down on your head. I think you should bring this up with Bush and give him a clear picture of what has been going on. I've been trying to straighten out the press corps on the incorrect quotes, but the NOI has been trying to correct those errors since 1984 and they are still made by respected journalists. You may recall the several weeks it took for me to get former NYC Mayor Ed Koch to acknowledge he had been in error when he wrote that Farrakhan had called the Pope the "anti-Christ." It actually was Khalid Muhammad who did so in a 1994 Phil Donohue Show -- *one of the reasons Khalid was dismissed from his ministry at the NOI*. In other words, Farrakhan is still getting blamed for a hate message that he had condemned. When I first asked Farrakhan about the quote, he told me he *was specifically taught* by his mentor, Elijah Muhammad, to never say a word against the Pope. Quite the opposite, over the years Farrakhan has repeatedly and publicly praised Pope John Paul II for his good works on behalf of reconciliation among the world's nations and religions.

The "Judaism is a gutter religion" comment is carved in stone, as far as journalists and politicians are concerned. Governor Bush would be surprised to learn that the quote of June 24, 1984, when Farrakhan returned from a trip to Libya, never mentioned "Judaism" at all and did not use the word "gutter." He used the term "dirty religion" as he had in other speeches regarding Christians and Muslims who commit injustices behind the shield of their religion, thus making it dirty. This is from the website of the NOI's newspaper, *Final Call*: "Minister Farrakhan regularly teaches that 'Muslim sheiks who live in opulence [from the riches of oil] when their people live in squalor are practicing a dirty religion.' Christians that give the poor a Bible and then exploit their faith and take their natural resources, in the name of God, have dirtied that religion. Television

evangelists who thrive off of the faith of the gullible and ignorant, have dirtied the religion."

The exact 1984 quote was this: "...America and England and the nations backed Israel's existence. Therefore when you aid and abet someone in a criminal conspiracy, you are a part of that criminal conspiracy. So America and England and the nations are criminals in the sight of almighty God. Now, that nation of Israel, never has had any peace in forty years and she will never have any peace because there can never be any peace structured on injustice, thievery, lying and deceit and using the name of God to shield your dirty religion under His holy and righteous name."

Is Farrakhan saying there should be no state of Israel? No, Jack. He is not a "Zionist," but he has repeatedly said that only the injustice toward the Palestinians need be removed, with a Palestinian state living side-by-side with Israel. You are aware, Jack, that Farrakhan has recently struck up an association with a group of fundamentalist rabbis from Brooklyn who are not Zionists. The Anti-Defamation League (ADL), which has led the charge against the Nation of Islam over the last 16 years, has actually criticized Farrakhan for meeting with these rabbis as if he can only be considered "pro-Semitic" if he is accepted by *the right kind of Jews*.

The reason you are the man who should take responsibility to discuss this with George W. Bush, Jack, is that the same thing happened to you in 1996, when you were on the GOP ticket as Bob Dole's running mate... and had the roof fall in on you when you said some nice things about the Million Man March. It was because of you, after all, that I began to look into these issues and discover the great injustices being done to Minister Farrakhan. You know how I've introduced several of our mutual Jewish friends to Farrakhan and how they uniformly agree he is not what the media say he is. Like you, they are still afraid to have their names used to vouch for him, because the price to be paid for breaking ranks is so high. Joyce Purnick of the *NYT* told me she is doing some research now into this issue, after I raised the issue of her "gutter religion" quote, but individual journalists can't bear this burden. Their careers would end if they would take up a defense of Farrakhan. Heck, in 1998, when Tim Russert had Min. Farrakhan on *Meet the Press*, the ADL took out a full page ad in the NYT blasting Russert and NBC.

If you would have the courage to open this discussion publicly, Jack, the press corps would be able to come in as a *corps*, to set the record straight. There would be a lot of yelling back and forth, but in the end truth would be served... and it would be healthy for the country to go through the experience.