

# CONNECTICUT LIBRARY CENSORS JESUS

Officials of Meriden Public Library in Meriden, Connecticut, banned five images of Jesus from display in the library. The paintings, all of which were reverential, were nonetheless deemed violative of a policy that disallows “inappropriate” and “offensive” fare. The Catholic League protested and won: the paintings were allowed to be shown.

The paintings portrayed a nativity scene, Jesus carrying the cross, His crucifixion, resurrection and a portrait of Christ with a halo. Children, library officials argued, might be disturbed to see these images. The rest of the exhibit, “Visions, Hopes and Dreams,” was declared acceptable, but artist Mary Morley canceled it when she was told to censor Jesus. Portraits of Pope John Paul II, Mother Teresa, Moses with the Ten Commandments, as well as the prophet Elijah, were deemed acceptable; the exhibit was to start December 1.

When we heard about this, we issued the following news release on December 3:

“In 1996, Meriden Public Library received a \$3,000 grant from the American Library Association (ALA) to fund a five-part book discussion on the values and attitudes that Americans bring to the workplace. One of those values surely is tolerance, yet for some reason this property never took root in the heads of the officials of the Meriden Public Library. In the name of protecting kids from seeing a portrait of Jesus, the censors are busy practicing intolerance. Perhaps they would have been more at home with a portrait of Lucifer.

“I am writing today to Keith Michael Fiels, Executive Director of the ALA in Chicago, to request that the ALA censure the Meriden Public Library for censoring Jesus. I will also ask

that the ALA refrain from giving the library any future grants.

“On a larger scale, what is amazing about this is that for the past several years, public librarians all over the country have furiously objected to any technology that would protect kids from accessing pornography on library computers. But it’s not as though they are value-free—what some of them can’t stomach is an image of Jesus Christ. So they do make value judgments after all.”

On December 15, the library’s board of directors voted unanimously to allow Morley to display her paintings of Jesus. Morley called the Catholic League to thank us for defending her.