

OLBERMANN'S IGNORANCE IS APPALLING

On last night's edition of "Countdown with Keith Olbermann," the host claimed that Galileo was punished by the Catholic Church for "his belief that the earth orbited the sun and not the other way around." He also said that "the Church acknowledged errors had been committed in assessing Galileo's scientific beliefs. They did that in 1992."

Commenting on this is Catholic League president Bill Donohue:

It is not for nothing that Olbermann's new show is drawing such phenomenal advertisers like "Furniture Fix" and "Gyro Bowl." Indeed, whenever a show has to rely on junk products for revenue (the sure give-away is when they advertise that the buyer gets "two for the price of one"), it's an ominous sign. More than ominous is the intellectual acuity of Olbermann.

The fact is that the belief that the earth revolves around the sun was first broached by Copernicus, in 1543, and that was many moons before Galileo was even born. Copernicus not only did not get into trouble with the Catholic Church—he was a priest. Moreover, when Galileo first floated Copernicus' idea, he was bestowed with medals and gifts by Pope Urban VIII. What got him censured was his arrogance: Galileo argued that his hypothesis was a scientific fact, something which even the scientific community of his day scoffed at. It is instructive that Father Roger Boscovich didn't get into hot water with the Church at the time, and yet he also explored Copernican ideas.

It is false to say that in 1992 the Catholic Church acknowledged errors in dealing with Galileo. That happened in 1741 when Pope Benedict XIV granted an imprimatur to the first edition of the completed works of Galileo. What happened in 1992 was the release of a Pontifical Academy report on the controversy.

If Olbermann were simply wrong, that would be one thing. But it was his snide delivery that was really offensive. Glad we taped his new show—we knew it wouldn't be long before he threw a low-blow at the Catholic Church.

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