

SOFTWARE FROM MICROSOFT TAINTED WITH PREJUDICE

Microsoft Bookshelf 98, a software reference library, continues a pattern of prejudice against Roman Catholics that was evident in earlier versions of this software. In a search for "Catholic," there is a subsection of quotations that lists 24 comments by public figures, past and present, on Catholicism. Fully sixteen of them are very negative remarks, some of which are downright insulting. A check for "Protestant" turns up 7 quotations, three of which are negative statements about Protestantism (two from the same author); remarkably, there is an anti-Catholic quote in this subset. Under "Jew," there are no quotations about Jews or Judaism.

A letter registering our complaints, complete with substantiating documents, was sent to Microsoft Executive Vice President of Worldwide Sales, Stephen Balmer. William Donohue also released the following statement to the press regarding this matter:

"I don't know how much more proof skeptics need before they learn that prejudice against Catholicism is the last acceptable bias in America. To think that two-thirds of the Microsoft Bookshelf entries under 'Catholic' reveal an animus against Catholicism is startling. Readers who want to learn what radical feminists, embittered religious writers, rock stars and intellectuals think about the Roman Catholic Church won't be disappointed in accessing this software. A check under 'pope' and 'nun' demonstrate the same bias.

"It is a credit to Jews that they aren't subject to the same treatment; Catholics have a long way to go before they are afforded the same degree of respect. Fortunately, there are signs that Catholics are waking up, but it won't be anytime

too soon before the corporate world shoves its bigotry back in the closet where it belongs.

"We'll register our complaint with Microsoft. Perhaps someone there with a conscience will ask whoever is to blame for this outrage to explain himself. The answer, of course, will either be truthful or a lie. Either way, we hope he gets canned."

Among the quotes we found offensive was this one by Matthew Fox: "Today's Catholic church seems to reward authoritarian personalities who are clearly ill, sexually obsessed and unable to remember the past."

Feminist Robin Morgan's contribution was also noted: "Although every organized patriarchal religion works overtime to contribute its own brand of misogyny to the myth of woman-hate, woman-fear, and woman-evil, the Roman Catholic Church also carries immense power of very directly affecting women's lives everywhere by its stand against birth control and abortion, and by its use of skillful and wealthy lobbies to prevent legislative change. It is an obscenity—an all-male hierarchy, celibate or not, that presumes to rule on the lives and bodies of millions of women."

No Catholic-bashing compendium would be complete without a statement from the rock star, Madonna: "Catholicism is not a soothing religion. It's a painful religion. We're all gluttons for punishment."

Those who would like to write to Mr. Balmer can reach him at Microsoft Corporation, One Microsoft Way, Redmond, WA 98052-6399.