

KISSLING BLAMES BISHOPS FOR AIDS

Frances Kissling, president of Catholics for a Free Choice (CFFC), announced after Thanksgiving that she was launching a global campaign to change the Catholic Church's teachings on sexuality. She wants to end what she calls "the Catholic bishops' ban on condoms." The ad reads as follows: "Catholic people care. Do our bishops? Because the bishops ban condoms, innocent people die."

Kissling went so far as to say, "The Vatican and the world's bishops bear significant responsibility for the death of thousands of people who have died from AIDS."

We released a statement informing the media what they need to know about CFFC. Here are the facts:

It has no members

- It wouldn't exist without the largesse of the Ford Foundation and other elites who hate the Catholic Church's teachings on sexuality
- Its president, Frances Kissling, long ago excommunicated herself from the Catholic Church for illegally operating abortion clinics overseas
- One of Kissling's longtime associates, Marjorie Reiley Maguire, has testified that none of those active in CFFC attend Mass and that the group is profoundly "anti-woman"
- Kissling has expressly stated (in a *Mother Jones* interview) that her goal is to "overthrow" the Catholic Church

- Catholic bishops have twice condemned the group for falsely posturing itself as Catholic

Regarding Kissling's latest tirade, we couldn't resist remarking that the bishops have found a way to stop the spread of AIDS: practice restraint. We added our own good advice: "only fools think condoms are foolproof." We are happy that Bill O'Reilly picked up on our news release, invited Kissling to defend herself, and then let her have it.

WESTCHESTER PRO-ABORTION UNIT PENALIZED FOR VIOLATING FEDERAL ELECTION LAW

In mid-December, Rye, New York attorney and Catholic League member Aldo Vitagliano was notified by the Federal Election Commission that he has prevailed against a pro-abortion group from Westchester, New York.

On March 1, 1999, Vitagliano filed a complaint against PROCHOICE VOTER, the Westchester Coalition for Legal Abortion PAC, and the Westchester Coalition for Legal Abortion, Inc., for violating federal election law. WCLA signed a settlement agreement and was fined.

Vitagliano charged that WCLA committed "gross and substantial violations of the Federal Election Law in the 1998 Federal Election cycle for the U.S. Senate in New York, as well as for Congressional races in the 17th, 18th, 19th and 20th Congressional Districts." Specifically, he was able to demonstrate that WCLA made 86,000 phone calls on behalf of

senatorial hopeful (and eventual winner) Charles Schumer. Vitagliano decided to file his complaint once WCLA executive director Polly Rothstein denied that any corporate funds were utilized by her organization.

When we learned of Vitagliano's victory, we drew media attention to the unethical behavior of Rothstein. Here is what we said:

"Polly Rothstein previously slandered the late John Cardinal O'Connor by holding him responsible for the killing of the Buffalo abortionist, Dr. Barnett Slepian. Never mind that Cardinal O'Connor always condemned violence—whether committed by abortionists or by violent pro-life activists. Moreover, the New York Archbishop explicitly denounced the killing of Dr. Slepian in a homily at St. Patrick's Cathedral. But none of this mattered to Rothstein. Now she has been caught not only violating elementary standards of decency, she has been caught violating the law."

"JESUS HAS TWO MOMMIES" COMES TO MASSACHUSETTS

On November 30 and December 1, the Somerville Theater in Somerville, Massachusetts, presented Faith Soloway's, "Jesus Has Two Mommies." It was also performed on December 21 and 22 at Boston's Copley Theater.

Called a "multi-media schlock opera," the performance features Ms. Soloway, who plays herself, and Christine Cannavo, who plays her pregnant Irish-Catholic girlfriend; the two women join in a "commitment ceremony." Ms. Soloway meets Jesus who assuages her fears about her non-traditional relationship: he

admits to having two mommies, Mary and Josephine. His mommies met at a dyke bar called "The Burnin' Bush."

When Faith Soloway was asked why a Jewish lesbian was staging a play starring Jesus, she replied that Jesus "is the most absorbed, he's like the icon of the Bible" and that around Christmastime he is "sort of the star."

We took note of the fact that she described her own work as "holding up my middle finger at some of our social constructions."

On December 7, William Donohue debated Soloway on the Fox News Channel show, "Hannity and Colmes." He told the audience that she had admitted that this play was her way of holding up her middle finger at the Catholic Church. When she denied this was true, Donohue called her a liar. He also said, "She's not putting her middle finger at Jews or African Americans or gays. We don't have a play called 'Matthew Shepard Had Two Daddies.' We don't have a play called 'Adolf Hitler Had Two Angels.'"

Supporting the attack on Christians at Christmastime was Daniel Gewertz of the *Boston Herald*. He could hardly contain his enthusiasm for the play saying it "Sounds like a lesbian revision of the nativity tale just in time for the Yule season!" To which we replied, "How observant." We then took issue with him for saying that the play is "the most audacious show on the Somerville Theater schedule."

We remarked that it takes no courage to bash Christians in Somerville. We know this because the town sports a "cultural index" (see the online site for Somerville) that is nearly twice the national average. In our comment to the media, we said, "it has been our experience that the more urbane the neighborhood, the more hospitable it is to anti-Catholicism."

The bigots in Somerville and Boston just can't get enough of this stuff. They love it whenever someone mocks Christ and

they take especially great delight when gays and lesbians are doing the bashing.

UNIV. OF NORTHERN IOWA HOSTS “CORPUS CHRISTI”

The University of Northern Iowa hosted the Terrence McNally play, “Corpus Christi,” December 12-14. The play depicts Christ having sex with the 12 apostles.

Catholic League president William Donohue jumped on this issue and made headlines in Cedar Rapids as a result. The public was largely on our side. Here is the text of Donohue’s remarks:

“The taxpayers in Iowa are being asked to give the University of Northern Iowa a Christmas present—a three day performance of the gay Jesus play, ‘Corpus Christi.’ While no student funds are being used to support the play, the fact remains that the university is proudly hosting this venture into hate speech.

“I saw ‘Corpus Christi’ when it opened in New York in 1998. The script is replete with sexual and scatological comments, as well as behavior that is downright offensive. It is particularly disturbing to witness the Christ-figure proclaim to all the apostles that they are divine and then exclaim, ‘F— your mother, F— your father, F— God.’ And when Philip turns to the Christ-figure and asks him to perform fellatio, it is enough to disgust even non-believers.

“To those who say this play has multiple meanings, I say they’ve been deceived. To wit: the play ends with the words, ‘If we have offended, so be it.’ McNally knew exactly what he

was doing when he penned those words. Which explains our response.

“The University of Northern Iowa has every legal right to put this play on but it has no moral right to do so. Its president, Robert Koob, has decided to take the easy way out by citing the legal right of the play to be performed. What he doesn’t say is that he has both the right and the duty to confront the offenders and let them know how divisive their behavior is. The timing of this play is particularly offensive: it comes in the wake of the events of 9-11 and less than two weeks before Christmas. We will inform the Iowa Board of Regents of this outrage.”

“JOHNNIE WALKER RED” IS NO CATHOLIC

A nominal Catholic brought up by irresponsible parents in a moral wasteland turns his back on his religion, converts to another, and commits treason. So in the eyes of the media, he’s Catholic. But not to us. Which is why we used this instance as a teaching moment.

We’re talking about John Walker, the American Taliban traitor. Bill Donohue calls him “Johnnie Walker Red.” The *New York Post* liked Donohue’s description so much they featured his news release on its celebrity page, Page Six.

Donohue was particularly peeved at the *Houston Chronicle*. In its December 4 headline on Walker it said, “Catholic teen molded into bloodied Taliban fighter.” It then commented on his “middle-class Catholic parents.”

"The first mistake," Donohue informed the media, "is in thinking that Walker's father is a practicing Catholic." Donohue then laid bare the truth:

- Walker told the *San Francisco Chronicle* (12/5) that he was "raised Catholic," suggesting he no longer is.
- Walker's mother converted to Buddhism years ago (*Sunday Telegraph*, 12/17).
- As for Walker himself, it is hard to see how he can accurately be called Catholic when his own mother trained him in Native American spirituality and Buddhism (*Boston Globe*, 12/10) and encouraged him to dabble in Hinduism (*Calgary Herald*, 12/9).
- A friend of Ms. Walker said of her that she "opened all doors for her kids" in contrast to "dragging her kids into Catholicism like she'd been dragged into it" (*Time*, 12/17).
- Shelby Steele in the *Wall Street Journal* (12/10) remarked that Walker's upbringing was anchored in the kind of "fashionable relativism" that "makes places like Marin County so cool."
- In terms of formal religious training, John Walker had none. Not until he traveled to Pakistan to attend an Islamic school in the village of Bannu, that is (*Washington Post*, 12/3).
- As a matter of fact, he was home schooled by his Buddhist mother (*Newsweek*, 12/17), then went to Kensington-Parkwood Elementary School in Montgomery County (*Washington Post*, 12/4) and finally graduated from an "elite alternative high school where students are allowed to shape their own studies" (*Newsweek*, 12/17).

"In short," Donohue exclaimed, "Johnnie Walker Red is no Catholic." So what is he? Here's Donohue's answer: "He was raised by flower children and wound up a confused filthy hippy

dippy treasonous lout.”

MAXIMUM PENALTY SOUGHT AGAINST ANTI-CATHOLIC TEACHERS

The Catholic League is seeking the maximum penalty against anti-Catholic teachers at Sharon High School in Massachusetts for their participation in an anti-Catholic event.

At the high school’s Halloween party, two male students dressed as pregnant nuns and another dressed as the priest impregnator. They were awarded first prize by a faculty panel: the offending students received the most comical costume award.

Catholic League president William Donohue commented to the media as follows:

“The Jewish community of Sharon prides itself on tolerance. Indeed, school officials have admitted that they were on the lookout this year for any anti-Muslim costume at the Halloween party. I guess anti-Catholicism is not on their radar screen. We envy the Muslims.

“Sharon school officials are now prepared to issue an apology to Catholics and are currently taking steps to see to it that this doesn’t happen again. This is a necessary but insufficient response. The offending teachers must be disciplined. We are formally requesting Dr. Claire Jackson, the school superintendent, to seek the maximum penalty against these faculty members. Section 26.07, part 2, of the

Massachusetts Department of Education regulations says quite clearly that ‘harassment or discrimination’ based on religion must be prevented and that ‘all public schools shall respond promptly to such discrimination or harassment when they have knowledge of its occurrence.’ Yet nearly a month and a half has passed and nothing has been done to discipline either the offending students or the offending teachers.

“The Catholic League is glad that the ADL has been asked to address the issue of intolerance at Sharon High School. But because this was an exclusively anti-Catholic episode, we find it disconcerting that no effort has been made to contact the Catholic League. After all, if there were an anti-Semitic incident at Sharon, would they call the NAACP?”

We sent the school’s principal 250 copies of the *Catholic League’s 2000 Annual Report*. His students, and especially his teachers, need to read it, digest it and reorient their thinking and behavior. They may preach tolerance but they practice anything but when it comes to Catholics.

RABBI HIER TWISTS THE FACTS TO INDICT PIUS XII

On November 14, Rabbi Marvin Hier, founder of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, issued a news release that was challenged by Catholic League president William Donohue.

On December 7, Donohue asked Rabbi Hier to substantiate the following italicized parts of his comments: “Prime Minister Churchill and Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden adamantly refused, *pointing out that the Pope had overstepped his neutrality by declaring himself ready to protest damage to*

historic buildings in Rome while remaining silent regarding the crimes of aggression committed by the Fascists."

Donohue asked: "At issue are two things: (a) that Churchill and Eden actually charged the Pope with 'overstepp[ing] his neutrality' and (b) that they also charged him for 'remaining silent' regarding the crimes of aggression committed by the Fascists."

After several phone calls trying to get Rabbi Hier to answer, finally he did. In his December 19 letter to Donohue, Hier directed him to pp. 245-46 of John Cornwell's *Hitler's Pope*, citing notes 8-9. Donohue branded Hier's evidence "wholly unconvincing."

Donohue wrote the following: "It is one thing to say that England did not agree with the pope's request, quite another to accuse him of 'overstepping his neutrality.' Cornwell, in fact, sympathetically says of the pope (p. 246) that 'As he was the bishop of Rome, it would have been strange had he not been anxious for the state of the Eternal City and had he failed to use all the influence in his power to secure its safety.' The question is why did you twist what Cornwell said about this event?"

Then Donohue unloaded with the following: "Even more disturbing, you charge that (citing Cornwell) Churchill and Eden accused the pope of 'remaining silent' in the face of Nazi aggression. Yet even Cornwell, who has been roundly condemned by *critics of the pope* for labeling Pacelli 'Hitler's Pope,' never says that the two English statesmen ever made such a charge. In short, there is no proof that Churchill or Eden criticized the pope for being 'silent,' precisely because they never did. Therefore, I ask you the same question: why did you twist what even Cornwell said about this event?"

Donohue ended his letter saying that it was "not too late" for

Rabbi Hier to retract his statement. Because Hier had made his comments in a news release, Donohue also made his comments available to the public, including the Jewish press.

HOLOCAUST LIBEL ENDS

As everyone who reads *Catalyst* knows, we adamantly reject the argument that Pope Pius XII was “silent” and did nothing to help Jews during the Holocaust. Indeed, our bottom line is that no one did more to help Jews. It is particularly offensive when young children are taught lies about Pius and that is why we quickly jumped on a tip given to us by Brother Duffy from St. Anthony’s High School in South Huntington, New York.

Brother Duffy alerted us to a Social Studies Activity Book on the Holocaust published by Mark Twain Media, Inc. The publication, called *Holocaust*, is used in grades 5-8. There was one paragraph in a section entitled, “The Nazi View of Religion and Race,” that greatly disturbed us. The topic sentence in the objectionable paragraph began, “Neither Pope Pius XI or his successor, Pius XII, did much to oppose Hitler or protest what he was doing to Jews.”

We protested maintaining that this is an extremely contentious point of view that many scholars regard as nothing but propaganda. In fact, we branded it “libelous.” No matter what, we said, it certainly has no place in what is supposed to be an objective account.

Members will be glad to know that the president of Mark Twain Publishing, Harry D. Emrick, has contacted us saying it will be deleted in the next edition. He apologized for what happened and has notified the author of his decision.

GUESS WHO'S BACK?

by Ronald J. Rychlak

Remember John Cornwell? In his last book, *Hitler's Pope*, he claimed that he was a loyal, practicing Catholic who had the highest regard for Pope Pius XII and wanted to write a book defending him. He said he received special access to secret archives due to his previous writings defending the Church. He said he spent months on end in a dungeon-like room studying the documents. Ultimately he was left in a state of moral shock and concluded that Pius XII was the ideal Pope for Hitler's evil plans. This claim was repeated in virtually all of the early reviews, and it helped make *Hitler's Pope* somewhat of a best-seller.

Before long a number of problems developed with Cornwell's story. First came a statement from the Vatican denying that Cornwell had been granted any special privileges. As he has since admitted, the archives that he saw were not secret. They were from the years 1912-1922 and therefore contained nothing about Hitler, the Nazis, or the Holocaust. Moreover, as he has now also admitted, Cornwell spent no more than three weeks doing archival work, not "months on end."

The rooms, by the way, are not dungeon-like.

It also seems that, contrary to his self-promoting claims, Cornwell was not really out to defend Pius when he started the project. He had previously written comments critical of Pius XII, calling him "totally remote from experience, and yet all-powerful—a Roman emperor"; and an "emaciated, large-eyed demigod." He had also written of "Pius XII's silence on Nazi atrocities." In fact, far from having defended the Church in

his previous writings, to the extent they dealt with religious matters at all, Cornwell's writings were critical of Catholic doctrine and the Catholic Church. Often he was openly hostile.

In 1989, Cornwell described himself as a "lapsed Catholic for more than 20 years." In 1993 he declared that human beings are "morally, psychologically and materially better off without a belief in God." He also said that he had lost his "belief in the mystery of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist." As late as 1996, Cornwell called himself a "Catholic agnostic," who did not believe in the soul as an immaterial substance. This undisputed evidence (which is never mentioned in *Hitler's Pope*) conflicts with his claim to have been a devout Catholic convinced of Pius XII's sanctity when he started that project in the early 1990s.

When commentators pointed to the numerous inconsistencies in his story, Cornwell ignored their legitimate arguments and instead played the part of a victim – a wounded, deeply offended Christian who has had his personal faith questioned. He elaborates on this response in his new book, *Breaking Faith: The Pope, the People and the Fate of Catholicism*. The book is an amalgam of personal theology, Church history, preachy sermonizing, and predictions about the future. Of central importance to the author, however, is his explanation that although he left the Church as a young man and became a serious critic, a "miracle happened" in 1989, causing him to return to his faith.

In the first few pages of *Breaking Faith*, Cornwell explains why it is so important to him that he be recognized as a bonafide Catholic. He is an acknowledged critic of the Catholic Church, and "there is a world of difference between an authentic believing Catholic, writing critically from within, and a 'Catholic bashing' apostate who lies about being a Catholic in order to solicit an unwarranted hearing from the faithful."

Although Cornwell assures us throughout the book that he is an “authentic believing Catholic,” his expressed faith is not in the Catholic Church of Pope John Paul II. He picks up where the last chapter of *Hitler’s Pope* left off: with an open attack on the papacy and the current Pontiff. One need go no further than the prologue to read: “John Paul is leaving the Catholic Church in a worse state than he found it.”

Cornwell argues that there has been a fundamental breakdown in communications between hierarchy and laity and that this was brought on by John Paul’s authoritarian rule. “Bullying oppression,” he writes, is driving people away from the Catholic Church. He blames virtually all of the Church’s modern problems on “the harsh centralized rules of Wojtyla’s Church.” He calls the Pope a “stumbling block” for “progressive Catholics and a vast, marginalized faithful.”

Cornwell warns that if a conservative Pope succeeds John Paul II, the Church could face a “sectarian breakup.” He argues that: “under a conservative pope the situation will deteriorate and expand rapidly, pushing greater numbers of Catholics toward antagonism, despair and mass apostasy.”

Cornwell’s evidence for a looming sectarian breakup is found in the decline in vocations and attendance at Mass, along with opinion surveys suggesting that many Catholics have difficulty with Church teachings on contraception, abortion, divorce, and homosexuality. In fact, he cites so many opinion surveys that at points it interrupts the flow of the book. The most serious problem with these surveys, however, is the way he uses them.

Consider, for example, the survey cited on page 254 of *Breaking Faith*. Here we are told that 65% of American Catholic respondents “hoped for a Pope who would permit the laity to choose their own bishops,” and 78% “supported the idea” of the Pope having some lay advisors. Cornwell ominously reports that “for such a large proportion [of American Catholics] to challenge the authority of the Pope is

remarkable.”

There is nothing remarkable here at all. These are innocuous findings. I have some priest-friends that I would like to see made bishops, and I assume that the Pope does listen to some lay advisors. Depending on how the survey questions were phrased (which is left unclear by Cornwell), my opinions might well have turned up in the numbers cited above, but I would certainly not be challenging the Pope’s authority.

Pope John Paul II is one of the most loved and respected men in the world, as opinion polls (unmentioned by Cornwell) continually show. Cornwell, however, uses only those polls suggesting that many American Catholics resist certain teachings. He interprets this as resistance to Papal authority, and the only solution that makes sense to him is to weaken the papacy and change the Church teachings. That, however, is not the Catholic way.

The very night that I finished reading *Breaking Faith*, I read an essay on John Henry Newman, one of the great Christian thinkers of the 1800s, who was made a cardinal by Pope Leo XIII in 1879. One passage of the essay seemed almost to leap off of the pages: “Newman would not have condemned any view more strongly than the one holding that opinion polls decide the truth. Nothing would have shocked him more than the thought that the faithful and not the Magisterium decide what is to be believed.”

Obviously, Cornwell is no Newman. He does not accept the Church as the repository of revealed truth. His prescription would turn the Catholic Church into a simple reflection of modern culture. What a sorry church that would be.

Regarding the current state of affairs in the Catholic Church, recent statistics suggest that the decline in vocations may be starting to turn around. Still, the problems identified by Cornwell do merit careful attention. A much better book

dealing with some of these same issues, but written from a truly Catholic perspective, is Joseph Varacalli's *Bright Promise, Failed Community: Catholics and the American Public Order* (Lexington Books). Varacalli concludes that the real problem is "secularization from within." By this he means that too many Catholic academics, intellectuals, and opinion leaders have been embarrassed by the Catholic subculture. His solution calls for us to embrace Church teaching, not change it. Too bad that his book has not been given the attention that Cornwell's books have received.

Finally, while I hate to involve myself in this story, I must do so in order to clear up a false implication about certain Vatican officials. When *Hitler's Pope* was released, my book, *Hitler, the War, and the Pope*, was at the publisher and ready for publication. Because of the controversy, however, we delayed printing the book until I could travel to Rome and review the documents that Cornwell said had left him in a state of moral shock.

Representatives of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints provided me with office space and the documents that Cornwell had seen. They asked me to determine whether he had been fair. As I explained in my book and in these pages, (*Catalyst*, Cornwell's Errors: Reviewing *Hitler's Pope*, December 1999), nothing in those files could lead an honest person into a state of moral shock. His claim was a fabrication.

Cornwell now writes that I spent my time in Rome studying – at the request of the Jesuits in the Congregation for the Causes of Saints – materials pertinent to *his* life. It implies that the Holy See has a thick file on John Cornwell, and that they shared it with me (their "favorite trial lawyer," to quote Cornwell) so that I could discredit him. That is so far from the truth as to be delusional.

The only information I have about John Cornwell came from his books, his articles, or interviews that he gave to the press.

I took those statements and contrasted them with what he was saying at the time to promote his book. There were so many inconsistencies that they could not have been the result of honest mistakes.

Today, even most critics of Pope Pius XII realize that they have to distance themselves from the deeply-flawed *Hitler's Pope*. Those who are honestly concerned about the future of the Catholic Church are similarly well advised to keep their distance from Cornwell's new book, *Breaking Faith*.