

PENN & TELLER EXPLODE; CBS AT FAULT

The August 27 episode of Showtime's Penn & Teller program will go down in history as one of the ugliest assaults on Catholics, or any other group, ever to air on television. Indeed, we know of no other show in the annals of television history that has even come close to this one-half hour of unrelieved hatred and bigotry. Because CBS owns Showtime, the subscription-based cable station, it must ultimately be held accountable.

It was right out of the Nazi playbook. The show, which was the season's finale, was defamatory, obscene and outrageous. Because we want as many people to watch it—just to see for themselves that we are not exaggerating—we put the video on our website. We also made a huge number of copies and sent the DVD to every bishop in the nation, as well as to other Catholics. Many non-Catholics, and select members of the religious and secular media, were sent the DVD as well.

The lies about the Catholic Church, to say nothing of the vile language used by Penn Jillette (the talking member of the duo), were positively astounding. Moreover, they never attempted to be comedic—from the beginning they advertised the show as payback for 2,000 years of alleged crimes. This was Julius Streicher, the Nazi propagandist, back from the grave.

The show blamed the Catholic Church for every evil in history. Jillette said the "intolerance, greed, paranoia, hypocrisy and callous disregard for human suffering" was the hallmark of the Catholic Church. Others on the show branded the Church an "amoral" and "power hungry" institution that is just worried about its "cash flow."

The show was strewn with incredible lies about the Catholic

Church. For a detailed debunking of these lies, see p. 7; see p. 13 for the ad we posted in *Variety*. We couldn't help but notice that many of these same lies were first aired on the ABC Show, "The View."

Spokesmen for Catholics for Choice and Dignity—two anti-Catholic groups that lie about their Catholic status—were in the show, as was a representative of the sue-happy professional victims' group, SNAP. All of them ridiculed the Catholic Church.

Bill Donohue spoke to a high-ranking CBS official about this matter. While the spokesperson was courteous and took the call seriously, it is not enough: CBS has to sever its ties to Penn & Teller once and for all.

Please write to Mr. Leslie Moonves, Chairman, CBS Television Network, 7800 Beverly Blvd., Rm 23, Los Angeles, CA 90036-2112. This cannot go unanswered.

PULLMAN'S OBSESSION

Philip Pullman will release a book next year, *The Good Man Jesus and the Scoundrel Christ*, that once again demonstrates his curious obsession with Catholicism.

Pullman's new book will attempt to show that St. Paul affected the Gospels more than anyone else. According to the English atheist, "He had this great ability to persuade others and his rhetorical skills have been convincing people for 2,000 years." So Pullman not only knows that St. Paul had a great delivery, he knows that what he delivered were fantastic stories of Jesus' godly abilities.

In the book, Pullman maintains that Jesus was a scoundrel. How does he know this? "Parts of it [the book] read like a novel, parts like a history, and parts like a fairy tale," he says. Our guess is he understates the latter.

Perhaps most revealing is Pullman's remark, "The story I tell comes out of the tension within the dual nature of Jesus Christ, but what I do with it is my responsibility alone." To be sure, no one else is likely to lay claim. But why is an anti-Catholic writer telling a story about a man whose dual nature undermines his own atheistic dogmatism?

In 2007, we successfully boycotted Pullman's Christmastime movie, "The Golden Compass," and we are doubly proud that we killed his prospects for a film based on the second volume of his anti-Catholic trilogy. His new book will be his Easter present to Christians in 2010.

Pullman is a curious kind of atheist. He just can't stop writing about Catholicism.

MOVIE CODE PETITION

Bill Donohue serves on the Christian Film & Television Commission's Board of Reference, the chairman of which is Ted Baehr; he publishes MOVIEGUIDE, a publication which monitors Hollywood from a Christian perspective. Baehr has asked his board members to support him in a petition drive aimed at curbing offensive fare in the movies. We urge you to participate.

Baehr is seeking to persuade the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) to tighten its film ratings system; it is all too evident that its ratings have been dumbed down in recent

years. Baehr has drafted a code of decency to reverse this trend.

The Entertainment Code of Decency

1. The basic dignity and value of human life shall be respected and upheld.
2. Restraint shall be exercised in portraying the taking of life.
3. Evil, sin, crime, and wrongdoing shall not be justified.
4. Detailed, protracted and overly bloody or gory acts of brutality, cruelty, physical violence, torture, and abuse shall not be presented.
5. Indecent or undue exposure of the human body shall not be presented.
6. Illicit sex relationships shall not be justified. Intimate sex scenes violating common standards of decency shall not be portrayed. Restraint and care shall be exercised in presentations dealing with sexual aberrations.
7. Obscene speech, gestures or movements shall not be presented. Undue obscenity and profanity shall not be presented.
8. Religion shall not be demeaned.
9. Words or symbols contemptuous of racial, religious or national groups shall not be used so as to incite bigotry or hatred.
10. Excessive cruelty to animals shall not be portrayed, and animals shall not be treated inhumanely.

If you agree with this petition, please write to Dan Glickman, Chairman, Motion Picture Association of America, 1600 Eye Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006. Let him know of your

concerns.

PROBLEM PERSONALITIES

Taylor Swift is a teenager who received an MTV Video Music Award in September. But rapper Kanye West thought singer Beyoncé should have won. This wouldn't have been newsworthy except for what he did: he walked on stage, grabbed the microphone from Swift and told the world that his favorite singer should have won.

When the line judge made a call that tennis star Serena Williams didn't like, she erupted in a string of expletives, threatening to kill the referee.

Congressman Joe Wilson is no fan of President Obama. Fine. But when he heard the president tell his colleagues something he believed was untrue, Wilson yelled, "You lie."

All of these people later apologized, though in each case it was clear that the apology was rather forced. They did what they did because they felt like it. In another time and day, they would have put the brakes on and never have exploded the way they did. But they live in a society where certain forms of incivility are tolerated. So they rant.

Worse than these examples is what Penn & Teller did. Unlike Williams and Wilson, who both acted impulsively (West's misbehavior was contrived), Penn & Teller planned their hit well in advance. Indeed, they bragged about it for weeks before their show aired. Not only that, their hit job was unrelenting, vicious and obscene. Beyond even that, they are serial offenders, having engaged in vile anti-Catholic performances for years. That's why they earned a place

in *Secular Sabotage*.

The hatred that Penn & Teller have for the Catholic Church is pathological. Indeed, they are very sick men. Jillette can say what he wants about me—he frequently attacks me without provocation—but his comments about Mother Teresa, Pope Benedict XVI, bishops, priests and nuns are so over the top as to warrant unqualified condemnation.

The incivility that Penn & Teller, and the aforementioned singer, athlete and politician engaged in would not exist if there were stiff penalties for their outrageous behavior. But such is not the case. Worse, no matter what they do, their fan base seems to stay intact. To top things off, when the only thing that forces such persons to apologize for their barbaric behavior is a loss of sponsors, then we know we're in trouble. Cash is no substitute for conscience as a moral anchor.

When it comes to problem personalities, it would be hard to beat Michael Jackson. Yet despite what everyone knows about him, almost 13,000 youths turned up in Mexico City recently to imitate his dancing feats: it was the largest assembly of its kind for Jackson, breaking the previous world record. Yes, it's understandable that we distinguish between professional contributions and personal wrongdoings, but at some point the latter should veto the former.

The celebrity culture that we live in brooks no limits. When an estimated 40 percent of professional basketball players have been arrested—the most common offense being an assault on a woman—then we are nourishing incivility. When the head of major league baseball knows full well that players are routinely cheating by taking drugs that enhance their performance, and he does little about it, the message sent to young athletes is pernicious. When actresses partake in behavior that gives sluts a bad name, and are still adored by legions of fans, then it is clear that cultural corruption runs deep.

We don't expect public personalities to be angelic, but is it too much to ask that they respect their position as role models? To the refrain that they never opted to be a role model, we need to remind them that the choice was never theirs to begin with: their fans, whom of course they cherish, make that decision for them. Thus, they are morally obligated to understand what it means to be a public personality.

Some of the problem personalities have fathers and mothers who have been training them, and exploiting them, from a very young age. All for fame and fortune. This is a form of child abuse that is rarely recognized, but that is exactly what the parents of people like Michael Jackson and Lindsay Lohan have done.

Bad as many of these celebrities have become, even worse are their backers. CBS is not some small fry organization: it represents the establishment. And when the establishment sponsors religious hatred and bigotry, it is even worse than the indefensible antics of the likes of Penn & Teller.

It does not appear that CBS will allow its relationship with Penn & Teller to snap. That's too bad. Just think how much goodwill it could generate if it did. By making a principled decision—drawing a line in the sand for everyone to see—CBS could really be a force for change. Not until those who underwrite religious bigotry decide to pivot will the coarseness in our culture turn around.

In the meantime, the Catholic League will do what it always does—put the media spotlight on the guilty. Public pressure works, even if it does not yield instantaneous results. The alternative is to give up, and since crying uncle is for wimps, we will be just as brazen as ever. Bet on it.

ABORTION HAUNTS HEALTH CARE REFORM

Over the past several months we have been jolted by the inconsistencies of the Obama administration regarding abortion in the health care bills. In the September issue of *Catalyst*, we noted that we were skeptical of the president's intention to exclude abortion funding in the health care bill. Later on, we decided to give him the benefit of the doubt following his address to Congress stating that abortion would not be funded in the public option of the bill. Finally, we noted that President Obama has all of the information he needs to make the right decision to back an amendment that explicitly rejects abortion funding in the health care bill.

When President Obama appeared on *BlogTalkRadio* to address health care reform he told the left-wing religious audience, "You've heard that this is all going to mean government funding of abortion. Not true." But we wondered why the House Committee on Ways and Means approved the America's Health Choices Act (H.R. 3200) but voted down an amendment, sponsored by Rep. Eric Cantor, that would have barred "government funding of abortion."

While addressing the audience, the president said that there "is a lot of misinformation" about this issue. But how could he say that knowing that an amendment specifically prohibiting abortion was defeated? Was he lying or was he misinformed?

When President Obama spoke to Congress about health care reform on September 9, we wondered if he would discuss abortion; to our surprise he did. We said that the rational thing for the president to do would be to drop abortion from the health care bills and support conscience rights for health care workers. Obama did nothing of the sort. Instead, he offered a one-sentence denial claiming that his health care

proposal would not result in federal funding of abortion; that simply was not true.

Even the *New York Times*, which strongly endorsed his speech, said in a news analysis that his claim that there is no federal funding for abortion “is not so clear-cut.” Indeed, it said, “the public and private money would all go into the same pot, and the source of money for any single procedure is largely a technicality.”

We noted that the president was playing a shell game. He defended the public option in his speech, and under that plan, the person in charge of deciding whether abortion coverage will be mandated is his Secretary of Health and Human Services, Kathleen Sebelius, the former pro-abortion governor of Kansas who never saw an abortion bill that she didn't like.

But Richard Doerflinger, a prominent voice for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops on life issues, welcomed Obama's pledge not to include abortion coverage in the health care reform bill. Doerflinger was joined by Sister Carol Keehan, the head of the Catholic Health Association.

On the other hand, people like Father Frank Pavone of Priests for Life maintained that the president's proclamations represent “bogus claims.” Also unconvinced were such organizations as the National Right to Life Committee and the Susan B. Anthony List, as well as pro-life congressmen like Rep. Chris Smith. Independent journalists like Dan Gilgoff were also wary of Obama's commitment, asserting that “On abortion—and for the moment—the White House isn't budging at all.”

This wasn't a split between social justice Catholics and pro-life Catholics, or between secularists and people of faith. This was a divide within the pro-life Catholic community. All of the aforementioned are men and women of sincerity, and all of them are well informed.

On closer inspection, the chasm isn't as wide as it seems. None of these leaders will support a bill that includes federal funding for abortion. The split comes down to the issue of trust: Can we expect the president to deliver a health care bill that excludes public monies for abortion?

On September 13, it appeared that we had finally gotten the promise we were looking for. Kathleen Sebelius appeared on ABC with George Stephanopoulos and told him that President Obama was committed to signing a health care bill that excludes federal funding of abortion. Although both Obama and Sebelius are rabid supporters of abortion-on-demand, fairness dictated that we take them at their word.

When Bill Donohue was asked by Ed Schultz on MSNBC whether the president was lying about abortion funding in the health care bill, Donohue said that if Obama was interpreted as saying that in H.R. 3200 there is no provision for abortion, then he was simply wrong. But Donohue gave the president the benefit of the doubt that he will put his imprimatur on a bill that excludes abortion funding.

We finally called for the president to back the amendment drafted by Rep. Bart Stupak and Rep. Joe Pitts, that would bar abortion funding from H.R. 3200. We noted that neither President Obama nor Secretary Sebelius minced their words on this subject. This is a critical juncture—the time has come for the president to deliver on his pledge. The Catholic community anxiously awaits his next move.

HEALTH CARE POLEMICS

The debate over what is and what isn't covered in the health care bills has triggered a slew of unfair misrepresentations.

For example, Planned Parenthood ripped the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) for its opposition to a bill that would provide funding for abortion. Also, a normally responsible *New York Times* journalist wrote a grossly distorted front-page article on Catholics and health care reform.

Planned Parenthood Rips the Bishops...

In an article found on the *Huffington Post*, Cecile Richards, president of Planned Parenthood, said, "Seems that, if the U.S. Conference [of Catholic Bishops] had its way, the national health care system would make American women second-class citizens and deny them access to benefits they currently have." And that's just the danger she implied the bishops were doing in the U.S. Abroad, she said that the bishops' "hard-line opposition to women's rights also endangers millions of women around the globe." Of course she could not provide an example of why these bishops have not been locked up.

Recently, Richards was summoned to the White House to discuss health care reform. Is this the type of advice she was given—to lash out at Catholic bishops? If not, she should have been reined in.

Richards was either ignorant or lying when she said, "comprehensive reproductive health care [is] supported by the majority of Americans." In fact, nearly two in every three Americans (63 percent) favor laws preventing the use of taxpayer funds for abortions. But no matter, data never convince ideologues such as Richards.

It's amazing that American people were called fascists by U.S. Congressmen because they oppose the health care bills on the table, and Catholic bishops are told by one of the leading proponents of health care reform that they are a threat to human rights.

New York Times Errs Wildly...

It was also amazing to read the error of David D. Kirkpatrick, a respected journalist, on the front of the August 28 *New York Times*. In a story titled, "Some Roman Catholic Bishops Assail Health Plan," Kirkpatrick did not cite a single bishop who supports the Obama health care bills. So why the qualifier?

The bishops, while supportive of universal health care, have said that they will not support any bill that provides for abortion coverage. Unfortunately, the bills being considered do exactly that; amendments to get abortion out of these bills have universally failed.

Justin Cardinal Rigali was identified as a bishop who is opposed to any bill that includes abortion coverage. What's wrong with this is that Kirkpatrick gives the impression that Rigali is just another Catholic voice: In fact, the Archbishop of Philadelphia speaks for the USCCB on pro-life issues.

Another problem was identifying Rockville Centre Bishop William Murphy as being sympathetic to the health care bills. Yet on his website, it explicitly stated that he "has never announced support for one particular version of health care reform legislation. To suggest otherwise is false."

The *Times* article said that "Catholic Charities and the Catholic Health Association endorsed the president's plan without reservation." Not true. On its website, Catholic Charities stated quite clearly, "Let there be no doubt, Catholic Charities USA does not support nor will it support any provision or amendment that fails to uphold the sanctity and dignity of human life."

Similarly, the Catholic Health Association (CHA) was equally clear: "CHA has not endorsed any of the health care reform bills, but our message to lawmakers is clear: health reform should not result in an expansion of abortion, and must sustain conscience protections for health care providers who do not want to participate in abortions or other morally

objectionable procedures.”

The newspaper accurately said that Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good supports Obamacare. But it failed to mention that the dissident Catholic lay group is a creation of George Soros.

All in all, this was the most distorted article to appear in the mainstream media on Catholics and health care reform. That a normally responsible journalist, like Kirkpatrick, wrote it makes it all the more disturbing.

BISHOPS SPEAK OUT ON HEALTH CARE REFORM

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has been the leading advocate for universal health care for decades. While initially supportive of congressional efforts to pass health care reform, the bishops withdrew their support in light of abortion being funded under legislative proposals. In addition, conscience rights were not being protected. As the debate unfolded nationally, many bishops spoke up about the proposed health care reforms. Below is a selection of comments from bishops on this subject:

- **Cardinal Justin F. Rigali of Archdiocese of Philadelphia, PA:** “At a time when so much good will is being shown to create an equitable, affordable and just health care system in the United States, it would be tragic if this praiseworthy end were corrupted by including an immoral means, namely provisions for abortion. This would not be health care.”
- **Archbishop Charles J. Chaput of Archdiocese of Denver,**

CO: “The whole meaning of ‘health care’ would be subverted by any plan that involves mandated abortion access or abortion funding. The reason is obvious. Killing or funding the killing of unborn children has nothing to do with promoting human health, and including these things in any ‘health care’ proposal, no matter how shrewdly hidden, would simply be a form of lying.”

• **Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann of Archdiocese of Kansas City, KS and Bishop Robert W. Finn of Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph, MO:** “Solidarity and the Promotion of the Common Good cause us to say that we cannot be passive concerning health care policy in our country. There is important work to be done, but ‘change’ for change’s sake; change which expands the reach of government beyond its competence would do more harm than good. Change which loses sight of man’s transcendent dignity or the irreplaceable value of human life; change which could diminish the role of those in need as agents of their own care is not truly human progress at all.”

• **Bishop Paul S. Loverde of Diocese of Arlington, VA:** “The truly vigilant realize that it is not reforming the health care system in itself that is wrong – in fact some reform is needed. Rather, it is the specific proposals included in that reform that could endanger the lives of the unborn, and the freedom of conscience of health care providers and citizens.”

• **Bishop Samuel J. Aquila of Diocese of Fargo, ND:** “In principle, the Church ought to always promote wider and more complete access to health care; however, that does not mean that in practice the Church ought to support each and every plan which is proposed by civil leaders.”

• **Archbishop John C. Nienstedt of the Archdiocese of Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN:** “Reform is needed. But the underlying question remains: What kind of health care reform do we want? Given the vast range of ethical and moral issues involved, this legislation will manifest in a clear and even remarkable

way what values we will hold or fail to uphold as a nation. In a very real way, this legislation will define our national character."

• **Bishop Blase J. Cupich of Diocese of Rapid City, SD:** "In the face of powerful pressures in a consumerist society, we should not overlook in this moment of health care reform the need to exercise moderation in a world of abundance. If we say that health care is a right rooted in our belief in human dignity, then we need to respect our own life and dignity by adopting lifestyles that enhance our health and well-being."

• **Bishop Thomas G. Doran of Diocese of Rockford, IL:** "Our federal bureaucracy is a vast wasteland strewn with the carcasses of absurd federal programs which proved infinitely worse than the problems they were established to correct. It perhaps is too extreme to say that competent government is an oxymoron, but sometimes it seems that way. The moral principal of subsidiarity implies decreasing the role of government and employers in health care when lower order groups can better serve individuals and families. We need to think of health care as more of a market than a system."

• **Bishop Robert E. Guglielmone of Diocese of Charleston, SC:** "It is quite evident that there is much discussion in many quarters about the proposed health care reform bills in the houses of Congress. There are many issues that people throughout our country are concerned about, but there are some issues that are critical for us as Catholics and it is imperative that our voice be heard."

• **Bishop R. Walker Nickless of Diocese of Sioux City, IA:** "First and most important, the Church will not accept any legislation that mandates coverage, public or private, for abortion, euthanasia, or embryonic stem-cell research. We refuse to be made complicit in these evils, which frankly contradict what 'health care' should mean. We refuse to allow our own parish, school, and diocesan health insurance plans to

be forced to include these evils. As a corollary of this, we insist equally on adequate protection of individual rights of conscience for patients and health care providers not to be made complicit in these evils. A so-called reform that imposes these evils on us would be far worse than keeping the health care system we now have.”

SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT: PENN & TELLER’S LIES

There can be no excuse for the vicious rant that Penn & Teller delivered against the Vatican in their season finale. The language and the tone were scurrilous enough to merit condemnation. However, our outrage is not simply directed at their style: the substance of their accusations is just as pernicious. Since Penn Jillette, as always, did the talking for the duo, we will focus on him; Teller, to be sure, is just as guilty.

Jillette spent a lot of time attacking the Vatican for its alleged attack on an Italian comedian, Sabina Guzzanti. He accused Pope Benedict XVI of seeking to throw “her sexy ass in jail,” and repeated this charge over and over again. Here’s what happened.

In July 2008, Sabina (as she is known) deliberately set out to slam the Holy Father. It was at a rally against the alleged interference by the Vatican in Italian affairs that she let loose. She predicted that “within 20 years the pope will be where he ought to be—in Hell, tormented by great big poofter devils, and very active ones, not passive ones.”

As described by the U.K.’s *timesonline*, Sabina remarked that

not only would the pope be sentenced to eternal damnation, he would be "tormented by homosexual demons." She told her audience that within twenty years, the power-hungry Vatican would be in charge of hiring all public school teachers in Italy.

Italian authorities initially considered reprisals against Sabina, but dropped the case almost as soon as it opened it. As for the Vatican, it never threatened any punitive action—it was all a lie that Jillette made up to discredit the Catholic Church. Moreover, one Jesuit scholar, Father Bartolomeo Sorge, said, "We Christians put up with many insults, it is part of being a Christian, as is forgiveness. I feel sure the pope has already forgiven those who insulted him on Piazza Navona." Indeed, the sharpest words delivered by the Vatican were a mild rebuke: it expressed "profound displeasure with the offensive words about the Holy Father."

The other big issue that Jillette seized upon was a 1962 Vatican document which he said was an organized cover-up of priestly sexual abuse. It was nothing of the sort.

The document that Jillette referred to never applied to sexual misconduct—it applied only to sexual solicitation in the confessional. The purpose of the document was to protect the privacy of the confessional while at the same time guarding against solicitation made by the priest. Not only was it not a cover-up, it provided for stiff penalties: a priest found guilty of sexual solicitation in the confessional could be thrown out of the priesthood. The penitent, for his or her part, was under strict guidelines to report any improper advances to the local bishop. In other words, not only did Jillette lie—he totally misrepresented what the document said.

Similarly, accusations that Pope Benedict XVI, in his role as Cardinal Ratzinger, was in charge of overseeing the matter of priestly sexual abuse are pure nonsense. As a matter of fact, he had nothing to do with this issue until after the scandal

became a major story in 2002, and then he moved with dispatch to deal with the issue in a serious manner. In other words, the pope's character was unfairly maligned by Jillette.

Not to be outdone, Jillette threw out old barbs about the Crusades, never indicating that the Crusades were a defensive response by Catholics against Muslim thuggery.

The Inquisition card was also played, and again the implication was that the Catholic Church's role was nefarious: the truth is that the Church instituted a system of justice to deal with an otherwise unjust campaign launched by civil authorities against suspected heretics. Abuses took place, but it is more the stuff of Black Legends to charge the Catholic Church with wholesale abuse.

Slavery, women and gays were other subjects touched on by Jillette. Too bad the viewers never learned that the first public person in history to protest slavery was St. Patrick. Too bad they never learned how women far outnumber men in attendance at Mass and as lay persons in service to the Church. Too bad they were never told that no private institution has a better record of servicing AIDS patients than the Catholic Church. But then again, the facts would have gotten in the way of Jillette's screed.

Even if half of what they said were true, there is still no defensible reason for CBS to allow these two hate-filled men to unleash their fury. No other group in American society is subjected to this kind of savagery. Let's face it: every group has its dirty laundry, real and contrived, yet CBS wouldn't dare give the green light to a thrashing of gays, Indians, Muslims, African Americans, Jews and others. Which gets to our bottom line: We don't want special treatment for Catholics—we just want to be treated as equals.

A few years ago, a CBS radio official called Bill Donohue in response to a complaint he made about Penn & Teller. They had

a productive conversation, and the official said he would speak to the two of them. When Donohue was asked if he wanted to meet with Jillette, he declined the offer. Just tell him to knock it off, he instructed. That obviously went nowhere.

Justice demands that Penn & Teller be canned. It is up to CBS to do so. Please write to Leslie Moonves.

DAN BROWN ADORES THE MASONS

Dan Brown's *The Lost Symbol* was published on September 15. This time the author of *The Da Vinci Code* and *Angels & Demons* decided to focus on the Freemasons.

Brown may loathe Catholics, but he just adores the Masons. "Brown goes out of his way in 'The Lost Symbol' to present the lodge as essentially benign and misunderstood," reported the AP the day the book appeared. The Catholic Church, of course, is seen by Brown as essentially wicked and misunderstood only by its followers.

"Masons are praised for their religious tolerance," the article said. Somehow Catholics failed to notice: so abhorrent were Masons in their thrashing of Catholicism that the 1917 Code of Canon Law provided for automatic excommunication to any Catholic who joined a lodge. The current stricture in the Church, following the 1983 revisions to the Code, doesn't mention Masons by name, but does retain excommunication for those who join anti-Catholic organizations.

In his new book, Brown defends the Masons against "unfair" portrayals. So kind of him. In real life Brown says he has "enormous respect for the Masons." Must be their historic anti-Catholicism that won him over. Showing nothing but

sweetness and light, the man who has made millions dumping on the Church says of his new work, "It's a reverent look at their philosophy. I'm more interested in what they believe than all their rituals and conspiracy theories about them." Now if only Brown had cut Catholics the same break.

Brown says his own religious beliefs are a "work in progress." Indeed, *he* is a work in progress. "I spend part of every day thinking about religion, spirituality and God—maybe more than people who go to church. By Sunday, I'm pretty tired." Good choice. The Lord said that was the day to rest. Maybe Brown will convert yet.

Ron Howard must be salivating at the thought of directing the film version. At least he won't have the Catholic League to kick him around.

YALE OPTS FOR CENSORSHIP

Yale University has disgraced itself. Even those with no connection to the prestigious Ivy League institution are rightly angry at the hypocrites who run the university. Here's what happened.

In 2006, a Danish newspaper printed some inoffensive cartoons of Muhammad. None was obscene and none came close to the kind of incredibly disgusting portrayals of Catholicism that the Catholic League has tackled. But some Muslims didn't like any depiction of their prophet. So they murdered and otherwise plundered innocent people around the globe; one was a nun who was shot in the back.

The western media, which reprints ugly, insulting pictures of Jesus and Our Blessed Mother in newspapers, and shows them on

television, decided to bury the cartoons. Quite frankly, they feared for their heads. So they opted for censorship. That was cowardly and duplicitous, but it was nothing compared to what Yale did.

Yale University Press, owned by the school, offered a contract to a female professor from Brandeis University for her book, *The Cartoons That Shook the World*. But there were some caveats: what a panel of experts told her about the propriety of publishing the actual cartoons in the book had to be kept a secret; and the cartoons themselves would not be reprinted in the book. The author, Jytte Klausen, did not agree to the gag rule but she reluctantly went along with the decision not to reprint the cartoons.

One of the experts who defended the decision to censor the cartoons is Fareed Zaharia, editor of *Newsweek International* and a host on CNN. To say his credibility as an independent journalist is shot would be an understatement.

How dumb is Yale? Did the savants who run the joint actually think there would be no protest over a decision to publish a book about cartoons *sans* the cartoons?

It's not just the panel of advisors at Yale who sold out—the faculty is just as much to blame. Can anyone imagine the reaction if Yale University Press decided not to publish anti-Catholic cartoons? Of course, it would never happen. It's just Muslims the phonies fear.

Was it really fear that motivated Yale to practice censorship? Maybe. But some are wondering whether it was a subtle form of bribery: it is no secret that elite colleges and universities are getting tons of money from Muslims overseas.

Whatever the reason, we don't ever want to hear a free speech lecture from Yale officials if they decide to host an anti-Catholic play or exhibition on campus. We know what they're made of and it's not a pretty sight.