

BOOK SELLERS JOIN ATTACK ON PIUS

First the Book-of-the-Month Club uncritically promoted John Cornwell's *Hitler's Pope* as if the thesis were undisputed, and now they're at it again doing the same for James Carroll's *Constantine's Sword*. The September catalog describes Carroll as "confronting the Catholic Church's historical hatred of Jews from the gospels to the church's silence during the Holocaust."

Another bookseller, the Internet company called Book Closeouts, is hawking *Hitler's Pope* in the same fashion. It says Cornwell "shows that, even before the Holocaust, Pope Pius XII was instrumental in negotiating an accord that helped the Nazis rise to unhindered power—and sealed the fate of the Jews."

Both booksellers are irresponsible. Whenever a controversial book is written, those involved in marketing usually make mention of its controversial nature. What they don't do is present a quarrelsome thesis as if it were gospel. And what is particularly galling about this issue is that both books have been taken apart by many informed reviewers for their historical misrepresentations.

We encourage all members to write to those responsible for these irresponsible ads. Write to William Byrnes, Book-of-the-Month Club, P.O. Box 6400, Indianapolis, IN 46206 and to Bill Vanvliet, Book Closeouts, 340 Welland Avenue, St. Catharines, ON, CAN L2R 7LP (overseas postage required—60 cents).

PRAY FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

Ray Flynn is the former Mayor of Boston and former U.S. Ambassador to the Vatican. He is also a proud and courageous Catholic who is not afraid to speak his mind.

Recently, when the *Boston Globe* launched another one of its missiles at Bernard Cardinal Law, Ray wrote a letter to the publisher taking the newspaper to task. His letter was printed but the word “pray” was deleted.

Ray had written, “I hope and pray you will try to change the *Globe’s* longstanding reputation of attacking a church and a religion that has contributed so much in helping to build this city.” This was changed to read, “I hope you will try....”

Now do these guys live in a prayer-free zone or what? To be sure, they need your prayers. But don’t let them know about it: they might just ask you to delete them from your list.

BILL ON CONFESSIONAL SEAL

Congressman Peter King of Long Island is introducing HR 751, the “Religious Communications Sanctity Act.” It is needed to protect the confessional seal from being tampered with by prosecutors. William Donohue endorsed the legislation and sent the following statement to Rep. King for dissemination among his colleagues:

“As president of the nation’s largest Catholic civil rights organization, I strongly endorse your efforts to pass HR 751, the ‘Religious Communications Sanctity Act.’ Without a legal guarantee assuring the confidentiality of the confessional,

overly zealous law enforcement agents and/or the courts may victimize both priest and penitent. In short, if religious liberty is to be protected, the sanctity of the confessional must be insulated from the authorities.”

Donohue ended his remarks by saying, “I applaud your commitment to religious liberty for every American, regardless of faith. Please do not hesitate to contact the Catholic League for support in this matter. We will do everything we can to assist you.”

WHY WE OBJECT TO “CORPUS CHRISTI”

[The following is a short excerpt of the remarks made by Catholic League director of research Robert P. Lockwood at Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne on August 14. His comments were made at an all day forum at the university.]

Terrence McNally’s play “Corpus Christi” is masked as some kind of clarion call for toleration. It’s not. The play is an attack on Christianity and Christian beliefs. Within the context of university life here at IPFW, the play is meant as an anti-Christian screed, a denial of Christians’ right to their own defined beliefs. “Corpus Christi” is intended to offend, not enlighten. As McNally himself explains, “The play is more a religious ritual than a play. A play teaches us a new insight into the human condition. A ritual is an action we perform over and over because we have to.” In McNally’s own words, the play is offering no new insights, or encouraging careful inquiry. No, it was meant to be an offensive screed and one that will be forced on community members whether they

like it or not. And at their expense. Isn't art grand?

Make no mistake – as stated in one of the last lines of the play, it is meant to offend that which so many in our community hold sacred – the Gospel presentation of the Good News of Jesus Christ. McNally's play purposely attacks Catholics and Catholicism specifically and Christianity in general. "Corpus Christi" is mean-spirited, vicious and, to utilize an old word that carried weight in the past, sacrilegious. Its goal is to offend the very core, heartfelt and basic Christian beliefs of many within the community. By depicting Christ and his apostles as sexual gadflies, by portraying priests as "fag haters in priest's robes," by making the Gospel story an ode to sexual hedonism, gay or straight, McNally's intent is simply to intolerantly offend those who have the temerity in modern times to believe with all their hearts in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

I do believe that if a student group wanted to sponsor a public showing of D.W. Griffith's "Birth of a Nation" the university would have responded differently. I think the university would have been highly sensitive to the feelings of those who would take umbrage at such a showing and I believe the university would have attempted a mediation at the very beginning that would protect academic freedom and freedom of expression yet, at the same time, have been highly responsive to the depth of hurt such a showing might cause. IPFW would have taken concrete action to respond to that hurt. With "Corpus Christi" the response was nothing. Nothing at all, until window-dressing was deemed necessary in the face of a lawsuit, increased public criticism, and strong questioning from elected officials. Critics were simply dismissed with nothing short of name-calling. The university, the student director, the *Journal Gazette* in particular among media, reacted solely with an attitude of condescension to the critics: superiors lecturing their inferiors. The lesson seemed to be that intolerant speech is fine as long as it is

aimed at those who deserve it: believing Christians.

We at the Catholic League did not lend our support to the lawsuit in regard to “Corpus Christi” because we did not accept the premise that there is a right to ban Christian thought and expression from university life. We certainly have every sympathy with those involved with the lawsuit. We understand and share their disgust at the hypocrisy of an educational and legal environment that will ban Christian expression at the drop of a hat, but begs tolerance for every possible anti-Christian expression. But one had to accept the premise that this is in fact correct constitutional interpretation in order to argue for the reverse. You have to accept that Christian views can be banned to argue that there is therefore no right then to present anti-Christian views. Our purpose is not to reduce the university even more than it has been reduced in recent years to a safe deposit box of murky platitudes. But what we do want is an even playing field. If the university demands “tolerance” and “diversity” then that tolerance should be extended toward Catholic and Christian ideas and viewpoints. If the university demands respect for all, then that respect, courtesy and decency extends to all, including Catholics and Christians. If the university demands freedom of speech, that freedom must extend to Christian and Catholic speech, Christian and Catholic practice and Christian and Catholic belief, as well as any faith-based belief system.

HOWARD

STERN

SLANDERS

PRIESTS; MILLER BREWING STANDS BY THEIR MAN

Howard Stern, no stranger to insult comedy, attacked Catholic priests in a vicious diatribe on June 30. Miller Brewing, one of Stern's biggest sponsors, told the Catholic League they were going to stand by their man. Here's what happened.

On June 30, porn star Rebecca Lord appeared on the "Howard Stern Show" on E! Entertainment Television. When she said she had a comment to make about religion, Stern gave her the okay. Lord said her complaint was with the Catholic Church for being critical of her line of work. At that point Stern jumped in saying, "Catholic priests are having sex with young boys."

Stern added that those who work in the pornography industry were healthier than Catholic priests. In an angry voice, he charged that priests show boys pornography so they can molest them. Then his companion Robin Quivers commented that the Catholic Church would like to stop Lord from practicing her profession. Lord then undressed on the show.

In a statement to the press, William Donohue noted that someone from the entertainment industry had called him at home to watch the offensive segment. Donohue was awakened at around 1:00 a.m. on a Friday night and was asked to please watch the show when it was repeated at 2:30 a.m. He did just that and then released the following comment to the media:

"What I witnessed was not a Mel Brooks comedic spot but a vicious segment that libeled all Catholic priests. Perhaps most revealing, the segment was wholly devoid of humor. This was not a colorful satire of priests—it was a hate-filled attack."

Donohue continued by arguing, "It will not do to say that Stern is not an anti-Catholic bigot because he is known for

targeting every group.” To drive the point home, Donohue said, “It is one thing to poke light fun at African Americans by playing ‘Black Jeopardy,’ quite another to trash priests in the vile way that he did on Friday. Moreover, if he goes too far with making fun of blacks, his sidekick Robin Quivers stops him.” He then asked, “Just who is around to stop Stern when he—and Quivers—attack Catholics?”

Knowing that it is virtually impossible to succeed by asking Stern to act decently, Donohue decided instead to ask Miller Brewing to drop its sponsorship of the show. Donohue wrote to Jeffrey C. Bible, the CEO of Philip Morris (parent company of Miller), requesting that he intervene. He refused. Then we were told that Miller would stick by Stern because the decision to sponsor the show is based on what “our customers are telling us they want to see and hear.”

At this point, Donohue decided to write to every bishop in the nation asking them to write to those responsible for this decision. We are grateful that many did. Now it’s time for our members to write. Here are the names and addresses:

Jeffrey C. Bible
CEO, Philip Morris Companies
120 Park Avenue
New York, New York 10017

John Bowlin
President and CEO, Miller Brewing Company
P.O. Box 482
Milwaukee, WI 53201

Bob Mikulay
Senior Vice President of Marketing
Miller Brewing Company
P.O. Box 482
Milwaukee, WI 53201

BELIEFNET PROVES BELIEVABLE

In the last issue of *Catalyst*, we ran a story citing our objections to certain questions posted in the Catholic section of Beliefnet. It was enough to have us complain to ABC about the newly announced partnership with Beliefnet, the Internet company that addresses religious issues from across all the major faith groups. The story ended saying that William Donohue has agreed to meet with the president of the company.

Donohue's meeting with the president and two senior officials from Beliefnet proved to be valuable. Most of the objectionable questions have been removed from their website. Moreover, all three of the officials were sincere, honest and cordial; they expressed interest in working closely with the Catholic League on various issues.

So impressed was Donohue with their forthrightness that he pledged to move from adversary to advocate of Beliefnet. Now if everyone we had a row with were this conciliatory, our life would be so much easier. But it may also be that much less exciting.

CATHOLIC-JEWISH COMMISSION CRASHES

Amidst charges and countercharges, the International Catholic-Jewish Commission studying the role of Pope Pius XII during the Holocaust crashed in July after two years of work. No one

is satisfied with the outcome.

The panel of three Catholic and three Jewish scholars began examining 11 volumes of Vatican archival documents in 1999 (the Catholic contingent was reduced to two when one of its members, Eva Flieschner, resigned). A preliminary report was released in October 2000 and was inconclusive. Why the process broke down over the summer is a matter of dispute.

The Jewish side, led by panel coordinator Seymour D. Reich, said the work was halted "because the scholars felt they did not get a positive response from the Vatican to their preliminary report, and they felt they had to suspend their activities." Eugene Fisher spoke for the Catholic side saying that the Catholic panelists believed more work had to be done on the 11 volumes. Neither Reich nor Fisher was empanelled to research the archival documents, but both acted as the titular head of their respective groups.

At bottom, much of the disagreement had to do with the desire of the Jewish participants to examine archival documents the Vatican said were not yet open due to the fact that they have never been catalogued. The Catholic participants stressed that this was known from the beginning and was thus part of the initial understanding.

When this story broke, some Jewish organizations and newspapers blamed the Vatican for keeping their archives secret. William Donohue replied to one of these charges made in a *Newsday* editorial. The editorial said, "the Vatican is skillful at keeping secrets but clumsy at recognizing the public relations impact of its actions—or inactions."

Donohue reminded the editorial board that everyone knew from the start that the 3 million yet-to-be-catalogued documents in the Vatican archives were off-limits. So to now complain was unfair. He also accused the newspaper of hypocrisy.

Donohue pointed out that in April of 2001, *Newsday* ran a story

on how Israel refuses to release documents collected since 1948 on the issue of the forced exodus of Palestinians from their lands during the Israeli quest for statehood. Those documents were to be released after 40 years and are still under seal.

“Now, perhaps Israel has a legitimate reason for this ‘inaction,’” Donohue said, “but it is doubtful that *Newsday* will make such a charge.” He concluded saying, “Even more remote is the possibility that *Newsday* will charge the Israeli government with a penchant for secrecy.”

The final chapter on this contentious issue is a very, very long way from being written. It is also one that the Catholic League will never abandon interest in and hopes will ultimately be resolved with justice to all. For more on this subject, see the splendid piece by Ron Rychlak.

HOSTILE HEALTH BILLS

An appeals court in California has ruled that Catholic Charities must cover contraception for its workers. A similar measure is pending in New York state. At stake is a central religious liberty question: To be exact, to what extent can the state dictate to religious organizations?

It has not gone unnoticed that this separation of church and state issue has been completely ignored by such prominent First Amendment watchdogs as Americans United for Separation of Church and State and the ACLU. Par for the course.