

# TV'S NEW SEASON BEGINS

Television's new season is about to begin and there are a few shows that bear watching—not from an entertainment point of view, but from the perspective of the Catholic League.

CBS is going to air a four-hour miniseries about Hitler. It will deal with his early life and rise to power and will also explore the social and political environment in which the Fuehrer operated. The miniseries is based on the work of historian Ian Kershaw. He has authored two volumes on the subject, one of which, *Hitler: 1889-1936 Hubris*, is the basis of the TV production.

We mention this only because we're leery about any portrayal coming out of Hollywood these days that may touch on the role of Pope Pius XII. If the CBS adaptation is a fair-minded account of Kershaw's book, we should have nothing to worry about. A review in *First Things* comments that "Kershaw assigns the churches only a minor role." We should therefore see little mention of Catholicism. But as we said, we're leery.

Sometime in the next year there will be a four-hour miniseries on CBS titled "Master Spy: The Robert Hanssen Story." We have two concerns: 1) will the show be used as a club to beat Catholicism? and 2) the show is based on a controversial source—a book of investigations by Norman Mailer and Lawrence Shiller.

*Into the Mirror: The Life of Master Spy Robert P. Hanssen* has been described as "a fictionalized retelling" that is "intellectually undemanding but still delivers some voyeuristic thrills." No doubt it does. In a recent account of the miniseries, it says of Hanssen that "For 22 years he was a loving husband, a devoted father of six, a deeply devout Catholic, a passionate anti-communist, a dedicated FBI agent and, at the same time, a traitor the likes of which the United

States had never seen before.”

This description is loaded. Now add to this the fact that Hanssen was a member of Opus Dei and the result is a script ripe for exploitation. Keep your eyes on this one but don't hold your breath for a show on Jonathan Pollard, the Jewish American spy for Israel. He's not colorful enough.

The fall lineup has an NBC offering, “American Dreams,” that is set in 1963. The show tells the story of a teenage girl who dreams of getting on “American Bandstand,” the ABC dance show that was hosted by Dick Clark. “She's a 15 year old from a good Catholic family with a stern dad,” says one review. The girl's father, the show reveals, initially banned her from dancing on the show. It makes us wonder why the family wasn't cast as Baptist.

The creator of “American Dreams” is Jonathan Prince. Here's how he characterizes the show: “We idealize the '60s. It wasn't more innocent. People were having sex. Catholic women were using birth control and not talking about it.” Now how about them apples! Is there anyone east of Hollywood who could improve on that? We'll be sure to tape this one.

ABC will air “Miracles” this fall, a show about a man who studies for the priesthood and leaves before taking his vows. From what we've learned, the seminarian is engaged in a personal search for God but found “the church is extraneous and even a hurdle in the spiritual quest.” Another report says the show is a “spiritual X-Files” where “the hero parts company with the church hierarchy because he feels its leaders do not really believe in miracles.”

“Good Morning Miami” is being released by NBC and features “an ultra-zany nun named Sister Brenda.” The good sister is the weathercaster on a local morning show. She opens her forecasts with such lines as, “I have it on good authority...” But there is also a dark side to Sister Brenda. When she learns that her

managers may let her go, she tells one of them to “blow it out your —.”

Brooke Dillman plays Sister Brenda. When she was reminded recently that the Catholic League made life miserable for ABC when it aired “Nothing Sacred,” she responded by saying that the nun character is “just a little feisty.” She then asked the reporter if he agreed. “Sure,” came the reply. “But then, I’m not the Catholic League.” Smart guy.

Perhaps there’s nothing to worry about and all will be fine. Nonetheless, the Catholic League is a watchdog agency and we have every intention of monitoring these shows.