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Bishop Williamson And 'Holocaust Denial'

Why the Uproar?

By Mark Weber

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The furor over the "Holocaust denial" remarks of Bishop Richard Williamson is not a controversy about historical truth, the role of history in society, anti-Semitism or "hate." This affair is really about power -- about those who really wield it in our culture, as well as about how and why that power is used.

Williamson is a 68-year-old English-born traditionalist Roman Catholic who has been fiercely criticized in recent weeks for his remarks about the Holocaust. In a Swedish television interview, which has been widely viewed on the Internet and quoted widely in the media, he expressed the view that no more than 300,000 Jews died in German concentration camps during World War II, and none were killed in gas chambers.

The uproar, which has received wide media attention, began several weeks ago after Pope Benedict XVI lifted the excommunications of Williamson and three other renegade bishops as part of an effort to heal a rift with a conservative Roman Catholic group that opposes liberalizing trends within the Church.

As the controversy grew, Williamson was expelled from Argentina, where he had been living, and German authorities announced that they might bring criminal charges against him. In Germany and some other European countries it is a crime to deny, justify or play down World War II genocide of Europe's Jews. German authorities claim the right to prosecute anyone, anywhere who makes "denial" remarks that can be accessed through the Internet. After returning to his native Britain, Williamson issued an apology for the "harm and hurt" caused by his remarks, but he did not retract them. Bishop Williamson holds unconventional views on a range of issues. He has repeatedly said that Nine-Eleven was an "inside job," and believes that the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks were organized by the US government. But no

one is demanding that Williamson apologize for charging that high-level US officials carried out mass murder of their own fellow citizens. Indeed, if the US government were to insist on such an apology, it would rightly be regarded as an act of arrogant effrontery.

Whereas Williamson's non-conformist views about crimes committed seven years ago are considered strange but inconsequential, his dissident views about the treatment of Europe's Jews more than half a century ago are treated as "thought crimes." Expressions of disbelief about "The Holocaust" are swiftly and fiercely punished. Holocaust "blasphemy" is routinely treated as more offensive than verbal assaults against the well-established religious beliefs and sensibilities of many millions in Europe and around the world. In short: Jewish feelings and sensibilities are regarded as more important than those of non-Jews.

In our society, "The Holocaust" is held up as an icon of virtually religious stature. Jewish leaders, supported by many non-Jewish political figures and much of the media, insist on everyone's dogmatic affirmation of this totem -- one that is used to further Jewish-Zionist interests.

Tony Judt, a Jewish scholar who serves as director of the Remarque Institute at New York University, has written:

"The Shoah [Hebrew term for Holocaust] is frequently exploited in America and Israel to deflect and forbid any criticism of Israel. Indeed, the Holocaust of Europe's Jews is nowadays exploited thrice over: It gives American Jews in particular a unique, retrospective 'victim identity'; it allows Israel to trump any other nation's sufferings (and justify its own excesses) with the claim that the Jewish catastrophe was unique and incomparable; and (in contradiction to the first two) it is adduced as an all-purpose metaphor for evil -- anywhere, everywhere and always -- and taught to schoolchildren all over America and Europe without any reference to context or cause. This modern instrumentalization of the Holocaust for political advantage is ethically disreputable and politically imprudent."

Norman Finkelstein, a Jewish scholar who teaches at DePaul University in Chicago, writes in his bestselling book, *The Holocaust Industry*, that "invoking The Holocaust" is "a ploy to delegitimize all criticism of Jews." He adds: "By conferring total blamelessness on Jews, the Holocaust dogma immunizes Israel and American Jewry from legitimate censure... Organized American Jewry has exploited the Nazi holocaust to deflect criticism of Israel's and its own morally indefensible policies."

In Israel, says Tom Segev, a prominent Israeli journalist and author, the Holocaust has become "an object of worship." Moreover, he writes, "the 'heritage of the Holocaust,' as it is taught in [Israel's] schools and fostered in national memorial ceremonies, often encourages insular chauvinism and a sense that the Nazi extermination of the Jews justifies any act that seems to contribute to Israel's security, including the oppression of the population in the territories occupied by Israel in the Six-Day War."

The Holocaust remembrance campaign reflects an arrogant view of Jews as a special and superior people. Abraham Foxman, head of the Anti-Defamation League -- one of the most influential Zionist groups - has declared: "...The Holocaust is something different. It is a singular event. It is

not simply one example of genocide but a near successful attempt on the life of God's chosen children and, thus, on God himself. It is an event that is the antithesis of Creation as recorded in the Bible; and like its direct opposite, which is relived weekly with the Sabbath and yearly with the Torah, it must be remembered from generation to generation."

The Williamson affair underscores a great social-political danger -- not the danger of dissent or of historical error, but rather of ruthlessly enforced orthodoxy. Far more harmful than Williamson's unconventional views about crimes committed, or not committed, more than 60 years ago is the well-organized global campaign, backed with the power of police and courts, that demands submission to an instrumentalized and dogmatically-presented view of one chapter of history. This campaign is an expression of a hypocritical double standard that makes a mockery of the pretensions of "democratic" states to uphold freedom of speech and expression.

A society's real hierarchy of values, and of power, is shown by what it prohibits. The Williamson affair underscores a well-entrenched Jewish-Zionist bias in the cultural life of modern Western society, and reminds us, once again, of the power behind that bias.

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