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Portrait of a woman who supports the Vatican and opposes LCWR

Jamie Manson | Apr. 20, 2012 NCR Today

Last night, "PBS NewsHour" dedicated a segment into the Vatican takeover of LCWR. They interviewed two women of opposing views on the issue. Supporting LCWR was Jeannine Fletcher Hill, a professor specializing in feminist theology at Fordham University. Supporting the Vatican was Donna Bethell, a lawyer who serves as the chairman of the board at Christendom College.

Christendom College, for those out of the loop (and I was one of them until last night), is a liberal arts college founded 30 years ago "in response to the devastating blow inflicted on Catholic higher education by the cultural revolution which swept across America in the 1960s."

The college's website boasts, "Catholicism is the 'air that we breathe,' " and "Academic excellence takes the Magisterium as its guide."

Pope Benedict loves Christendom College. And Bethell spent her airtime discrediting women religious for not presenting the "full doctrine of the church" and not helping members "to understand it and to live it." But a web search of Ms. Bethell quickly reveals that some of her most deeply held convictions conflict significantly with Roman Catholic doctrine.

When Ms. Bethell isn't singing the praises of the Latin Mass and the curia, she is deeply committed to denying climate change. In addition to serving on the board of Christendom, she also serves on the board of the Sandia National Laboratories, a company that aids the U.S. with the development of nuclear weapons. No. 1 on Sandia's five-point mission is "ensuring the [nuclear] stockpile is safe, secure, reliable, and can support the United States' deterrence policy."

In addition, Ms. Bethell's husband, Thomas Bethell, who serves as senior editor of the *American Spectator*, spends his time not only denying climate change, but also denying evolution and, if you can imagine, the belief that HIV causes AIDS.

So, between Ms. Bethell and her husband, we have three significant conflicts with church doctrine on battling climate change, nuclear disarmament and evolution. And yet, Ms. Bethell gets awarded the post of director of the board at Christendom and is allowed to publicly defend the Vatican against nuns who supposedly contradict or ignore the church's teaching.

The Vatican's double standard on dissent is breathtaking.

Watch the interview or read the transcript [1].

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[1] http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/religion/jan-june12/vatican_04-19.html