

I watched this one the day before the Oscars, unaware that it had even been nominated. When I discovered the next day it had in fact won best film, it was further confirmation that the entire circus that is the Hollywood Oscars is not worth two beans. This is a mediocre film by any standards. A typical Hollywood, good versus evil, righting injustice type of film that could apply to just about any type of injustice you could care to mention. Totally formulaic in its construction, without a hint of nuance or complexity. The characters are all one-dimensional, as is the script and dialogue. Of course the content of the film - the endless cover-up by the Catholic Church of paedophilia by its army of priests and bishops - is spot on. Anything that throws a spotlight on this high level corruption and criminality is to be applauded. But as a piece of film, I wouldn't recommend rushing off to see the thing and if you do then that don't be expecting too much. Compared to say the highly charged Magdalene Sisters, this film simply doesn't rate.

What is waiting to be written and developed into film is a definitive expose of the entire institution that is today's Catholic Church. Scratching around with the paedophilia phenomenon, important as that is, simply doesn't get anywhere near where we need to be. The whole Catholic Church institution is still stuck in the middle-ages, as is all religion, and this has created an institution that manipulates over a billion citizens to be trapped in a socially retarded mind-set. The disturbing prevalence of paedophilia within the Catholic hierarchy is almost certainly a result of its archaic diktat on celibacy for the priesthood. Get rid of this medieval nonsense and priests just might be able to stop abusing young children.

Of course the question of celibacy is itself part of a much wider issue; that of the Church's repressed and misogynistic attitudes towards women and towards sex generally. To put the matter in simple Freudian terms, the entire Catholic Church seems firmly stuck in the anal stage and has no idea of how to move on. Hence its repressed attitudes towards homosexuality, towards contraception and abortion, and towards women in general. The current Pope can probably be described as a progressive in terms of poverty and the causes of poverty, but he himself seems incapable of shedding his own

highly conservative attitudes when it comes to the human body. Of course, there is no evidence whatsoever that the early Christian adherents adopted any of this misogynistic drivel. On the contrary, the recorded teachings of Jesus were rather liberal and liberating in this regard. The hatred and hypocrisy towards women was grafted on to Christianity in the so called Middle Ages and was reinforced in Europe and its respective empires throughout the 18

and 19th centuries. The fact that the Catholic Church is having so much trouble in jettisoning these backward concepts is, I suspect, more about the power of social control than anything to do with the early Christian scriptures.

Things do change, though in the main, imperceptibly slowly. In the Church of England, itself torn between its more enlightened and bigoted and superstitious wings, there is a slow and begrudging acceptance of both the naturalness of homosexuality and the inherent equality of women. Why just the other day I walked into the foyer of a C of E Academy school to be greeted by an electronic notice-board celebrating the arrival of LGBT Month. With a large Muslim and Black student population that was a courageous and liberating decision on behalf of the school administration. I take my hat off to them. But how long will we have to wait to see a similar celebration of human diversity from the Catholic Church? At the current rate of progress I would suggest centuries rather than decades. Though as a one Karl Marx once observed; In fifty years history does not move a day and then in one day it can move fifty years. Perhaps film makers will have a significant contribution to that happy day but sadly 'Spotlight' can only be considered a minor contribution to that task. It's going to take a much cleverer screenplay to deliver that really powerful knockout blow. If and when it arrives it will truly deserve a hat full of Oscars and a whole load of other awards as well.

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