



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

Cardinal faces further allegations over pervert priests



“Father” Michael Hill

The head of the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales, Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O’Connor, is accused of failing to act appropriately when dealing with paedophile priests in his former diocese of Arundel and Brighton, according to a BBC investigation. The Cardinal is also currently the subject of a police inquiry over claims that he covered up the activities of paedophile priest, “Father” Michael Hill.

An investigation by BBC Radio 4’s “Today” programme revealed that some priests had been allowed to continue their pastoral duties in the same diocese, despite serious allegations.

Resign

Calls for the Cardinal to resign have, not surprisingly, been rejected. The excuse that is being made is that the “compulsive and obsessive” nature of paedophilia was not generally understood in the 1980s, when the allegations emerged! Two years ago, the BBC revealed that, as Bishop of Arundel and Brighton, the Cardinal had allowed Hill to continue working even though he knew he was a paedophile. Documents showed that in 1981, Hill was sent to a therapeutic centre following concerns over his sexual behaviour.

According to the BBC, in letters seen by its reporters, the Cardinal describes the matter as “very serious” and questions whether Hill should have pastoral care of a parish. But a few weeks later Hill was allowed to conduct a baptism at a family retreat for disabled children. Witnesses have claimed that the Cardinal had attended the baptism and was seen with Hill.

Hill, 68, was jailed for five years in 1997 for a string of sex offences against boys before being freed on parole in 2000. He has been jailed for a further five years after admitting a series of sex assaults. He pleaded guilty to six charges of indecent assault on three boys aged between 10 and 14. Sentencing him, Judge Christopher Moss said he could not imagine a more serious breach of trust and called his crimes “disgraceful and disgusting”. The judge described Hill as “a practising and predatory paedophile who used the vestments of priesthood to disguise your true character”. Hill showed no emotion as he was taken to the cells.

The “Today” programme’s latest investigation received allegations against a number of priests in the Arundel and Brighton diocese. Reporters investigated four and found three had continued in their pastoral duties despite serious allegations. The fourth, Father Alan Love, admitted indecently assaulting two boys when he was a priest in Glasgow and moved to Arundel and Brighton. He was not convicted of anything but later received counselling. In 1996 the Catholic Church in Scotland, which sent him down to Arundel and Brighton, said the new parish was aware of Father Love’s history and he had the “full confidence” of its bishop, who at the time was Cormac Murphy-O’Connor.

Victims

The victims of alleged abuse, and their families, concede that the Church authorities appeared to follow the letter of new guidelines, but not the spirit. They say the police were informed, as recommended, but despite serious concerns the priests were allowed to continue working. A relation of one of the alleged



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

victims said: “There is no escaping the underlying impression of a Church exercising damage limitation policies.” Another said the Cardinal should admit what happened while he was in charge and show his integrity by offering his resignation.