



THE CHURCH 1973 Fr. Andrew Greeley

This year I am going to give all my friends a subscription to the Wanderer. There is not enough humor in the world today; the editors and writers of this worthy journal have developed farce to a peak of perfection seldom matched in our era.

Consider: I am on their list of enemies — along with such an improbable collection of people as Raymond Brown, Eugene Kennedy and the cardinals archbishops of Chicago and Philadelphia, (sorry about that, your eminences!).

Since in the world of the Wanderer nothing happens without a plot or conspiracy behind it, the recent Newsweek article on the Catholic Right had to be the result of a conspiracy. Their enemies had to be behind that conspiracy. I was quoted in that article, therefore I had to be behind it. Understand? (I said some rather sympathetic things about a Catholic reaction to anti-Catholic sentiments currently quite powerful in certain segments of the American population.)

Well, if the gifted senior editor of Newsweek's religion section, Ken Woodward, was so foolish as to turn over some of his precious space for me to go after personal enemies, I would choose much bigger fish than the Wanderer clowns.

But Wanderer columnist Robert Burns (C.S.P.) is not content with seeing me stir up the witches' brew in Ken Woodward's pot. He has also discovered that I have been peeking into other people's bedrooms.

I'm serious — at least moderately so. A while back Dan Herr asked me to write a book on sex. My idea in doing so was that the one question Dr. Reuben was afraid to ask was what does sex mean? Humans are different from other animals in that they reflect on and interpret all their behavior, particularly that which is most challenging to the depths of their personalities.

Sex is necessarily religious because it necessarily calls forth, however implicitly, the basic world view of everyone. I think that the churches have made a mistake in merely telling people what they can't do — and more recently what they can do. A far more fundamental question is what illumination can a religious symbol throw on the dilemmas and ambiguities of contemporary sexual problems, particularly those of the relationship between a man and a woman who are more or less permanently committed to one another and where most sex occurs.

Whether the book is successful or not I must leave to the readers, who will judge it on its own merits, I hope, and not write it off on the grounds that a priest is the

Baptist Committee Opposes Amendment Banning Abortion

Washington, D.C. [RNS] — The Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs went on record here as opposing constitutional amendments that would prohibit abortion.

James E. Wood Jr., executive director of the committee that includes nine U.S. and Canadian denominations, said the action was based solely on the principles of civil liberties and religious freedom.

The committee took no stand on abortion itself. Discussion of the issue at the three-day semi-annual meeting showed there is no Baptist consensus on abortion.

author. But let me assure one and all that it is about as pornographic as the Chicago telephone directory.

However, Father Burns is profoundly shocked by one of my book's chapters which Redbook published. (Be of good cheer, Father, there are several more chapters to come.) He can't even refute it because to do so would necessitate quoting it, and that would put his readers in a proximate occasion of mortal sin. Can you imagine it — the Wanderer a proximate occasion of mortal sin?!

What's more, it is bad enough for a priest to write such things, but to do so in a journal that can be read by non-Catholics is even worse! Everyone knows how easy it is for non-Catholics to fall victim to proximate occasions of mortal sin!

How could I possibly know about the things I describe in the book? In his 35 years as a priest no one ever talked to Father Burns about such matters (small wonder!). Therefore it must follow that I am "imprudently prying" into people's sex lives. Note well the criterion: if something hasn't happened to Father Burns in his 35 years, then the only possible alternative is "imprudently prying." There are no other options. What he is saying, of course, is that the only way to find out the sexual problems of human intimacy is to pry into people's lives.

One can get very angry at this kind of narrow, self-righteous judgment of the integrity of other human beings. But anger should be wasted on better targets. A more appropriate response is laughter. The image of Father Burns, Wanderer in hand, peeking through a keyhole at me peeking through another keyhole is worth at least a week of chuckles. And that is worth the price of a subscription.

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Help U.S. Family Life, Catholic Office Urges

Washington, D.C. [RNS] — Two Roman Catholic officials have strongly urged a more active involvement of the federal government in supporting and strengthening family life in the country.

Msgr. Lawrence J. Corcoran, executive director of the National Conference of Catholic Charities, and Msgr. James C. McHugh, director of the U.S. Catholic Conference's Family Life Division, made their observations before the Senate Subcommittee on Children and Youth.

The subcommittee of the Senate Labor and Public Welfare Committee, under its chairman, Sen. Walter F. Mondale (D-Minn.), called the hearings to "seek to explore the influence that governmental policies have on families with children in areas such as work, mobility, institutionalization, welfare, taxes and housing," according to a subcommittee spokesperson.

Referring to current governmental policy, Msgr. Corcoran said:

"We have been discouraged by the constant efforts on the part of the present administration to cut social service and public assistance costs — efforts which will weaken family life in this country ...

"A strong and expanding economy designed for maximum employment opportunity with reasonable family supporting levels of minimum wage for all employes must become a consistent governmental policy," he asserted.

"Training for second careers, especially for women whose families are grown; designing strong neighborhood economic development strategies to halt the disastrous results of involuntary labor mobility, and guarantees of adequate income can substantially strengthen

family life," Msgr. Corcoran told the subcommittee.

Noting that the Nixon administration had "backed off from its previous strong stand for change in a health delivery system," the Catholic Charities official reaffirmed that "this nation urgently needs a universal health insurance system under the Social Security system and a greater orientation of delivery to see that the health needs of the poor are adequately met, and to insure that the emphasis is on preventive care rather than on the high cost resulting from major illness when preventive care is not available."

Msgr. McHugh outlined what he called "particular factors relating to the activity of the government and especially government policy" vis-a-vis the family:

—"A national policy should be

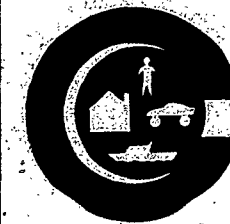
directed toward assisting the family to play its proper role as the family itself undergoes a radical transformation and renewal.

—"A family policy should help the family maximize its own strengths.

—"We should develop some capacity to represent and indeed advocate the concerns of the family in the formulation of social policy that directly or indirectly affects family life.

—"Government policy affecting the family should recognize and support the corollary efforts of churches, private foundations and agencies, and other family assistance groups.

—"Government policy should respect the pluralism of family heritages and family styles."



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