

Editorials

TV Vigilantes

Censorship, book-burning, and other such meddling with the First Amendment simply runs against the American grain. We are a nation of citizens steeped in the glow of the First Amendment — it is an integral part of the national fabric. We are addicted to freedom perhaps as no other nationals in history.

Therefore, when we hear about how this group or that is going to act in the public interest by removing these books from the shelves or by having that show banned, regardless of the situation, a little message pops up mentally, "Be careful!"

In this context, a group called Coalition for Better Television has been formed to monitor prime time television for the rest of the regular season and it "probably will urge boycotts of firms sponsoring the more flagrant violators," according to Religion Today writer Janene Gaynor.

Let's make it clear — we think most discerning viewers would characterize the bulk of television prime time fare as of low quality, with phrases such as "too much sex and violence" coming readily to mind. For a moment, let's disregard TV's sophomoric genuflection to titillation, its apparent infatuation with violence.

Forget content — the writing, plot development, depth of treatment are generally as faulty as the subject matter. It is not so much that TV is distasteful as that it most often seems to have no taste at all.

Naturally, we are writing in generalizations — there are exceptions — but they are few and far between. One highly successful diversion from the rule is CBS' "60 Minutes" — also very popular, we might add.

When individuals protest, as indeed they have done; when publications such as this protest, as indeed we have done — the stock answers from station managers run from "we have no say in network programming" to "but the ratings prove that that is what the people want."

Such milquetoastish reasoning is exactly what invited vigilante viewing groups. When the first station manager didn't have the guts not to air the likes of "Soap," the first step toward Coalition for Better Television was taken. When the first sponsor didn't have the sense to tell an agency, "We won't stoop to bad taste either in ads or sponsorship," the germ for outside reckoning was planted.

Sadly, the network reaction to CBTF is predictable — "Censorship," cry the people who have brought us "Three's Company," "Saturday Night Live" (lam-

pooning Mother Teresa) and that current collection of trash — the Benny Hill Show.

Gene Mater of CBS, who is apparently ready to go down with his boots on, says of the CBTF president Donald E. Wildmon, "He is saying that if there is a program he doesn't like, no one should watch it. He is substituting his judgment for yours and mine."

Pardon me, Mr. Mater, but he is trying to substitute his judgment for yours and yours, sir.

So, faced with rising grass roots disgust, in a death struggle with pay television, the networks will continue to tell us how our airwaves will be used. They have perhaps the greatest invention for reaching the masses, they have put satellites in space, they have lured the greatest advertising buck around, and they used all that to bring us "Soap." Talk about culture!

We reiterate, groups such as CBTF are disturbing — perhaps even they realize this. But the overriding point is that as long as the FCC allows program sponsors and ad agencies free rein, as long as television refuses to clean up and grow up, the clamor for change will continue.

We have tried it individually and been ignored. We have tried it organizationally.

and Opinions

On Capital Punishment

Editor:

This is a reply to the staff of the Southern Tier Office of Social Justice, Courier-Journal, April 1.

You say you are saddened by the violent act by the State of Indiana for the taking of Steven Judy's life — I strongly disagree. What do you call rape and murder? A woman has a flat tire, is raped and her three children murdered and you are sad for that "human"?

Capital punishment is not a deterrent to crime but at least we will know that Steven Judy won't commit another violent act.

I also would not vote for Governor Carey because of his opposition to the death penalty.

I also recommend your staff read — "Murder U.S.A., The Ways We Kill Each Other," by John Goodwin.

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Editor:

I write this letter as a follow-up to two recent letters that appeared in your paper. The subject of these letters dealt in some way with the reinstitution of the death penalty. Their logic, if I understand it correctly, is as follows:

If we reinstate the death penalty, then violent crimes will diminish. But why wait until these human beings (dare we remind ourselves that they are) have committed their crimes? Why not stop it at the source!

"Gentlemen," I propose that we start a bill that would make it law that parents must kill their son or daughter as soon as the son or daughter breaks one of our rules. I know that you will see the wisdom of legalizing this proposal, "gentlemen," as clearly as I do.

This proposal offers us at least three benefits. It would eliminate the need for prisons and their symbolic reminder to us of sin, prevent the needless taking of innocent human life, and would eliminate Jesus' foolish law of love and equally foolish

notion that people can change (repent).

Thank you, "gentlemen," for helping me to clarify my Christian values. I know now that to be a Christian (and institute the death penalty) the following are necessary:

To believe the value of human life is determined by a person's actions, not by the fact that we are made in the image of God; to know that we as human beings cannot change; to know that a select few of us are without sin; to know that these select few can play God; and to know that these select few can stand proudly in the Temple and pray to God, thanking him that we are not like those others (sinners).

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Budget Cuts Hurt Disabled

Editor:

As a parent of a handicapped child (legally blind), and as chairperson of the Monroe County Parents of Visually Handicapped Children, I am writing to express concern about the Reagan Administration's proposed massive budget cuts for education and the attempt to eliminate categorical programs like P.L. 94-142, Handicapped Children's Act, and to consolidate it into "block funding."

How these changes will affect handicapped children are of the utmost importance!

Given the block funding proposal it is impossible to determine the exact scope of such a cut-back since school districts would be relieved of all federal responsibility to spend any of the funds on compensatory or special education.

Help is needed now to save educational opportunities for handicapped and disadvantaged children. It is imperative that letters and/or telegrams be sent to local Congressmen Frank Horton and Barber Conable by all groups that are concerned with the welfare and education of these children, voicing your opinion.

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returns of inequality, the Church offers us, become more and more necessary.

Rejects Pluralism

Editor:

The recent clamorings for pluralism and egalitarianism spawned in the wake of the turmoil and dissent in the Church throughout the United States are really intended to weaken and undermine the authority of the bishops. Discerning Catholics recognize and reject these efforts as largely self-serving and expressions of defiance.

It would be extremely difficult to improve on these lines from C.S. Lewis on the subjects of authority, humility and obedience:

"Equality is a quantitative term and therefore love knows nothing of it. Authority exercised with humility and obedience accepted with delight are the very lines along which our spirits live. Even in the life of the affections, much more in the Body of Christ, we step outside that world which says 'I am as good as you'... We become lowlier when we instruct. It delights me that there should be moments in the services of my own church when the priest stands and I kneel. As democracy becomes more complete in the outer world and opportunities for reverence are successively removed, the refreshment, the cleansing, and invigorating

Those who would "cleanse" the Church via pluralism masked as dissent, in a spirit of defiance or disobedience, must recognize that the virtues of humility, obedience and acceptance are far stronger and will ultimately produce the appropriate fruits of true joy and love in service to Church and Maker.

William F. Schurz  
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Garbed In Courage

Editor:

Whenever I read a letter regarding nuns and clergy wearing religious garb I feel that the proponents are overlooking a very important issue. The issue essentially deals with courage. It takes courage and confidence in a role to be anonymous. Men priests and sisters in civilian clothes they must make their lives and even more Christ-like. It is what they do and not what they wear which demonstrates their faith commitment.

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Fr. Louis J. Hohman



The Open Window

'Inerrancy' Is Not An Issue

Dear Father Hohman

In response to your article, "Troublesome Differences," I would like to comment on some of the statements you made. I can't believe that you really believe there are other ways that one can be saved.

If you believe that the Bible is the inspired word of God, I cannot understand your article.

I believe that there is no other way to be saved but through Jesus Christ. I believe in the redemptive saving grace of Jesus Christ.

Jesus said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life, no one comes to the Father but by me. I am the gate."

If there were a better way that man could be saved, then Jesus died in

vain, and we all perish; thus we call God a liar.

Jesus said all will hear, so who will be guiltless? In Ephesians 2:6-8, the Bible says, That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works; lest any man should boast.

Verse 12, That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world; but now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

(Signed) R.B.

Dear R.B. I am simply going to quote to you from the Constitution on the Church from Vatican II which I think you believe with all of us is the official teaching

of the Catholic Church. (P.16) "Nor is God remote from those who in shadows and images seek the unknown God, since He gives to all men life and breath and all things (cf. Acts 17: 25-28) and since the Savior wills all men to be saved (cf. I Timothy 2:4). Those who, through no fault of their own, do not know the gospel of Christ or His church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart, and moved by grace, try in their actions to do His will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience — those too may achieve eternal salvation. Nor shall divine providence deny the assistance necessary for salvation to those who, without any fault of theirs, have not yet arrived at any explicit knowledge of God, and who, not without grace, strive to lead a good life."

You may read the rest of that section on your own. The quotations you cite from the Bible are not normative for all human beings, but merely for those who have heard the Good News and have deliberately rejected it. God loves every human being who ever was, is or will be, and will not exclude any of them from the possibility of salvation based on mere circumstance. Please try to believe this.



"APPARENTLY IT WAS A RELIGIOUS TEMPLE THESE ARE BINGO MARKERS."

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