Humanism offered as humankind's savior

Wendell W. Watters, professor emeritus, psychiatry, at McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, writing in the Spring 1991 issue of *Free Inquiry*, a publication of the Council for Democratic and Secular Humanism, had this to say about Christianity and Humanism:

"In sharp contrast with Christianity, Humanism is an internally satisfying belief system, one that does not violate an individual's innate human intelligence. It is because the Christian belief system is so intellectually bizarre and unbelievable that Christians are so driven to proselytize. If a Christian can get someone else to buy into this psychotic world view, his or her deep doubts are momentarily quiescent. But because Humanists lack this internal, intrinsic need to proselytize, there is a danger that we will not be as helpful as we might to people who are struggling along the road from Believer to Humanist. We need to work out an approach to people who, while still affiliated to the Christian religion, are actually closet atheists and potential Humanists.

"...The Church changes its colors and adapts to society at large, but it does so extremely slowly; and it has been sticking its tongue out at human beings from the beginning.

"Humanists must stop being influenced by the glib slogans of Christianity. We must strive to understand its true nature, the harmful potential of its teachings and doctrine and the psychological and political strategies it uses to maintain its power in society. If we fail to understand these, we will continue to be hampered in our attempts to reach those potential Humanists who are still attached to Christianity like an infant sucking on a dry breast."

Advertiser pressure forces NBC to edit offensive scene

NBC, after pushing the opening scene of SISTERS for many months, announced just before the program aired that they were dropping the scene.

NBC spokeswoman Susan Binford said the decision to edit the scene was made based on feedback the network was getting from its "constituencies," among them sponsors. *Newsweek* reported that a major sponsor had threatened to cancel $500,000 worth of ads on the program if the scene remained.

The network's official statement on the matter said: "After much consideration, NBC has determined the need to edit the opening scene in order to respond to certain constituencies of the network that would find elements of the opening dialogue offensive."

"This is proof that AFA's efforts are having a major impact," said AFA president Donald E. Wildmon. "NBC could not find sponsors and were forced to edit out the offensive scene."

The program's producers were angry because advertisers were practicing their right to spend their money where they desired, and did not desire to help sponsor SISTERS if it contained the opening scene.

Anita Addison, one of the show's executive producers, accused the advertisers of censorship because they refused to help pay for the trashy opening scene.

The scene in question had three of the lead actresses in a sauna discussing their sexual conquests in vulgar terms.

L.A. Daily News, 5/10/91

Writer says television is anti-Christian

Howard Rosenberg, TV critic for the Los Angeles Times, recently said there is merit in the charge by AFA president Donald E. Wildmon that television is anti-Christian.

Rosenberg, who has criticized AFA's efforts in opposing sex, violence and profanity in the past, surprisingly agreed with Wildmon about the anti-Christian bias. "One can't blame Wildmon for being skeptical, however. A recent rerun of Lear's old series THE JEFFERSONS, for example, was brutal and mean-spirited in its ridiculing of a 'born-again' preacher.

"So, too, is there merit in the 'anti-Christian' charge that Wildmon makes against all of TV. There are exceptions...

"In the main, however, prime time has done to religion what dogs do to fire plugs, pouring on the ridicule, its prejudice nourished in recent times by the debacles of fallen preachers Jim Bakker and Jimmy Swaggart."

L.A. Times, 5/21/91

Pepsi endorses Dr. Ruth with commercial

PepsiCo has begun using free-sex guru Dr. Ruth as a spokesperson for Pepsi in one of their commercials.

Dr. Ruth has for years been urging youth to try promiscuous illicit sex. One appearance on a national TV program was typical of her approach to sex. On the children's show (MAINSTREET, NBC, March 1986, re-aired in prime-time June 16, 1986), Westheimer told an on-stage gang of about a dozen teens (age 13-16) that **adulthood (for purposes of sexual activity) occurs when it feels right**. Asked if there were a moral element to sex, she said, "...when there are two people who really care for each other—who really like each other—even if they do it on the kitchen floor, it's all right." Her subject was **teen sex** and her audience was children, some barely in their teens. The word "marriage" was never heard during the hour; neither was the word "abstinence."

PepsiCo now has endorsed Dr. Ruth and her irresponsible, hedonistic sexual attitude. On May 17, AFA president Donald E. Wildmon wrote Chrm. D. Wayne Calloway of PepsiCo asking that Pepsi drop the use of Dr. Ruth in the their ad. At press time (June 10), Mr. Calloway had not responded.

Several years ago Dr Pepper began using Dr. Ruth in their commercials, but dropped her when concerned people complained.

We suggest you contact your local Pepsi bottling company and Chrm. D. Wayne Calloway, PepsiCo, Anderson Hill Road, Purchase, NY 10577, phone 914-253-2000.

Gideons move meeting from Holiday Inn

After discovering that their local Holiday Inn carried in-room porn movies, the Hickory, North Carolina, camp of Gideons International decided to move their annual Pastor's Appreciation dinner to a local Lutheran college.

The local Holiday Inn told the group that they planned to remove the porn movies after a contract expired in two more years.

Holiday Inns is the leading retailer of in-room porn movies in America. More than 1200 Christian leaders have endorsed a boycott of Holiday Inns. Approximately 200 locally owned Holiday Inns have pulled the porn movies, but they are still shown in all corporately owned motels.

Concerned citizens can call Holiday Inns at 1-800-HOLIDAY. The address is: Chrm. Bryan Langton, Holiday Inns, 3796 Lamar Avenue, Memphis, TN 38195.

Disney cancels plans for lottery

The Walt Disney Corporation has terminated a contract for a nationwide TV lottery show. The action followed letters of complaint from many individuals, including several top Christian leaders.

The address: Chrm. Michael Eisner, The Walt Disney Corporation, 500 S. Buena Vista, Burbank, CA 91521.

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Cross examined

By L. Brent Bozell III
Media Research Center
April 24, 1991

A recent survey on the Lifetime network's GREAT AMERICAN TV POLL asked people to name the most important thing in their lives. Religious faith came in first, ahead of even good health or a happy marriage. But how does prime-time television treat religion? Almost always unfavorably .

In the Showtime network film, FLIGHT OF BLACK ANGEL, an ace Air Force pilot, who also happens to be a fundamentalist Christian, goes berserk, murdering his parents and brother and shooting down several of his fellow pilots in what was supposed to have been simulated combat. He is thwarted before he reaches his ultimate goal: to drop a nuclear bomb on Las Vegas. "I'm doing [God's] work," he says. "Everything [on Earth] must be destroyed...[I'm] bringin' the light of heaven [to] the diseased, the unclean, the corrupt, the liars." Before the pilot's final mission, he clutches a crucifix pendant.

Doing God's work was an excuse for smaller-scale psychotic behavior on the CBS series KNOTS LANDING. A character claims to have found God while serving time for vehicular manslaughter; once freed, he tries to discourage his ex-wife from marrying another man. "Our marriage [was] blessed by God," he tells her. "God does not sanction divorce. I will not disobey Him, and I won't let you disobey Him." When she turns her back, he kidnaps her fiance and attempts to kill him.

A custody suit on NBC's SHANNON'S DEAL is waged against an elderly couple who have kidnapped their granddaughter. The two are religious zealots, denounced as "Bible-thumpin' hayseeds." Their son, a murderer, is also "religious." "When I stood there looking at [my wife], holding that rifle, that was an act of God," he explains, attempting to justify his crime. "It was a flood. It was as unstoppable as a flood." Later, this devout Christian puts out a contract on the show's protagonist, a heroic lawyer.

At times, TV shows specifically target Catholics as oppressive and hypocritical. A recent episode of the new NBC drama LAW AND ORDER featured a violently fanatical leader of a pro-life group bombing an abortion clinic because one of her fellow pro-lifers was there to get an abortion. In the leader's view, the wayward girl deserved to die; asked if she considers herself guilty, the leader responds, "Not before God." On another episode, a hardcore Catholic pro-lifer is exposed as a wife-beater. In NBC's THE GOLDEN GIRLS, a woman who had been adopted as an infant discovers that her natural father was a monk who had a fling with a monastery cook.

At times, TV shows specifically target Catholics as oppressive and hypocritical.

The HBO movie JUDGMENT embellished the true story of a Louisiana priest who molested children. The film depicts the Church hierarchy as more concerned with its image than with the plight of the young children and their parents. There are no positive Catholic characters in JUDGMENT; Church leaders are portrayed as unresponsive and uncaring while the rank-and-file priests are deviants.

A crawl at the film's end stating that the Catholic Church can no longer get insurance against child-molestation claims is false, according to Mark Chopko, general counsel for the United States Catholic Conference. In fact, Chopko said, insurers "have had favorable risk experience with the Church [regarding child-molestation coverage], because we are doing a better job of...responding to incidents" than other institutions.

Anti-Catholic jabs make for good punchlines, too. On an episode of ABC's JUST THE TEN OF US, two children are selling candy to raise money for their Catholic school. A woman who buys a candy bar from the kids says, "I'm not Catholic myself, but I sure like a school system that breaks the spirit of young people." On CBS's MURPHY BROWN, a woman is asked if she's proud of being married for fifty years, and responds, "Not really. We're Catholic. We get married. We have kids. We get old. Then we die."

Television producers, always eager to promote their political agenda, have responded with a deafening silence when asked to defend their anti-religious bias.

Some series, such as NBC's AMEN and SISTER KATE and ABC's HAVE FAITH use religious settings as backdrops. However, religion plays little if any role in resolving the characters' problems, and the shows steer clear of endorsing or condemning religion.

* * *

Susan Norman of the Christian Broadcasting Network objects to television's portrayal of fundamentalist Christians, stating that the industry "portray[s] [us] either as boring people of below-average intelligence or as extremists who threaten the future of freedom-loving Americans. The truth is, we're neither."

Bishop Edward J. O'Donnell, Chairman of the Department of Communications for the St. Louis archdiocese, agrees with our findings regarding the portrayal of believers. "Deeply religious people," O'Donnell said, "not just Catholics, are shown as being narrow-minded [and] ignorant." Catholics, O'Donnell added, "have a particular problem with the way [abortion] is handled. I can't recall a single [prime time] episode that has treated abortion evenhandedly, and certainly none that have been pro-life."

Television producers, always eager to promote their political agenda, have responded with a deafening silence when asked to defend their anti-religious bias. When we called them, producers Dick Wolf (LAW AND ORDER), Diane English (MURPHY BROWN), Stan Rogow (SHANNON'S DEAL), Rob Hershman (JUDGMENT), Kevin M. Kallberg and Oliver G. Hess (FLIGHT OF BLACK ANGEL) and Paul Junger Witt, Tony Thomas, and Susan Harris (THE GOLDEN GIRLS) refused to discuss their depiction of religion.

A national survey conducted by the Graduate School of the City University of New York and released in April showed more than nine out of ten Americans identify with religion. That's over 90% of the general public who should be offended by Hollywood's assault on religion, and demand some changes.