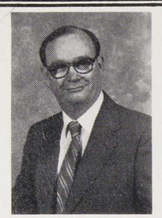

Columnist says I was right, but the future is in your hands

Donald E. Wildmon
Executive Director

Back in the early 1980s, syndicated columnist Richard Reeves wrote about me. His column, to put it mildly, was not flattering. In fact, Mr. Reeves really lowered the boom on me. With a few choice words he told his readers his opinion of me: the "new moral fascist" he called me, for my efforts to fight trash on television.

So I was somewhat surprised, yet not too much, to see his recent column which appeared in the *Charlotte Observer* and other papers on March 9. The column was about the current sorry state of television. Writing about me and others involved in the effort in the early 1980s, Mr. Reeves *now* says: "One of them, Donald Wildmon, who ran something called the National Federation for Decency, said then: 'The networks have displayed an arrogance and indifference rarely matched in the history of corporate America.' He was right, then and now."

Yes, I was right in what I said back then, and I'm right when I say it now. I make that statement without ego being one ounce of motivation. I say it because it is the truth.

Reeves said that he was against what we were trying to do back then because we "wanted to turn the medium into a Christian trumpet, giving [ourselves] veto power over what my children watched."

Mr. Reeves is wrong about that. My intent was not to turn the medium into a Christian trumpet, nor to have veto power. My intent then, as now, is to make the medium into the constructive force which it has the potential to be.

Mr. Reeves continued, regarding the boycott back in the early 1980's. "But they scared television executives back then—before they self-destructed by announcing boycotts that never happened. The networks waited them out and gradually moved back into programming for gut and groin. A few years later, with new owners, greedier corporate owners such as General Electric with no sense whatever of public service, the networks kicked away all restraints—seeing how far they could get before anyone stood up to them."

He closed the column by writing about the current protest of violent and vulgar programming: "Television people will take the high road now, waiting for a kinder and gentler time. Then they will begin pushing the limits again, seeing how low they can go."

Let me proceed to say something else I'm right about. The only way that television can be changed is through the pocketbooks of those who make the violence and vulgarity possible—the sponsors. The networks and most of the sponsors consider one thing and one thing only in the programs they air and sponsor—money. Their god is money, and they worship their god devoutly.

In late June or early July, Christian Leaders for Responsible Television will begin a one year boycott of one or more of the leading sponsors of sex, violence, profanity and anti-Christian stereotyping. For twelve long, hard years I have worked to prepare for the upcoming boycott. This is our last best hope to change television. This is it. There will not be another opportunity. If we are not successful with this boycott, then any opportunity to change television will be lost forever. Dramatic words? Yes. But true.

I don't believe the upcoming boycott will self-destruct. I believe it will be successful because it will have the support of millions of Americans. If I'm right, television will be changed for the good. If I'm wrong, then Mr. Reeves is right and the networks will begin pushing the limits again, seeing how low they can go.

The outcome depends on whether or not **you** will aggressively help promote the boycott. I'm staking my all that you will.

Don

Prediction on target

In 1957, more than 30 years ago, Harvard University Professor Pitrim Sorokin predicted: "The family as a sacred union of husband and wife, of parents and children, will continue to disintegrate. Divorces and separations will increase until any profound difference between socially sanctioned marriage and illicit relationships disappears.

"Children will be separated earlier and earlier from parents. The main sociocultural functions of the family will further decrease until the family becomes a mere incidental cohabitation of male and female while the home will become a mere incidental parking place mainly for sex-relationships."

White line in the storm

By Tim Wildmon
AFA Associate Director

Have you ever been through an experience that God used to teach you a spiritual lesson? The Lord Jesus used experiences of day to day living to explain many of the things of God. Today, we call those stories Jesus told *parables*. Well, I guess you might say a personal parable happened to me recently, and I'd like to share it with you.

Before I came on board here at AFA I worked as a sports reporter at a newspaper in Columbus, Mississippi, about 60 miles southeast of Tupelo. The job didn't pay much, but I enjoyed my work. I have always enjoyed sports and I have always enjoyed writing, so sports journalism comes naturally to me. Even now, I still moonlight covering sports events when I can.

One recent Saturday night I was leaving the coliseum after a basketball game; a strong wind was blowing and I could hear thunder in the distance. I recalled hearing a couple of other reporters talking about the stormy weather; one even said he would spend the night instead of trying to brave it.

As I reached the highway, I turned across the radio dial, stopping on a station that was giving the latest weather report. The announcer told of a severe storm moving through the area and began to describe how fast it was moving. I realized, with little doubt, that somewhere down the road I would intersect with that storm before I made it home.

Well, I got about half way home without much happening. However, I noticed a lot of lightening and nasty skies ahead of me as I drove closer to the storm. Why didn't I stop at that point? I don't know, except that the old male ego got in the way and I wanted to get home. By this time it was after midnight.

A few more miles down the road, and it hit: strong winds, loud thunder, near blinding lightening and the hardest rains I can remember driving through. I got a little scared; my heart beat faster as I realized the situation I faced. Folks, the rain was so hard that all I could see was the white line on the side of the highway. That was it. I could not

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AFA is a Christian organization promoting the Biblical ethic of decency in American society with primary emphasis on TV and other media.

New season continues sleaze, anti-Christian content

One highlight of the February sweeps (a time during the networks compete for ratings to entice future advertisers) was the February 19 Sunday night battle among the three networks with their three highly-promoted sleaze movies.

ABC offered PASSION AND PARADISE (a two-parter which concluded Monday night) written by Andrew Laskos and produced by Michael Custance and Ian McDougall. The four-hour special, filled with profanity and voodoo, was based on sex, infighting and murder among the very rich in the Bahamas of the 1940s. *TV Guide* described one scene: "Miko grabs a 'possessed' woman and performs a ritual exorcism: wrestling her to the ground, he hits her with leaves from a boiling kettle... As flames surround her, he takes the tape measure from his waist, estimates the size of the evil spirit and cuts it off."

The CBS candidate for "Sleaziest Sunday Fare" was THE FULFILLMENT OF MARY GRAY. Their ad for the movie read, "He can't give his wife a baby. So he's turning to someone who can...his brother." Set in 1910 Minnesota, it was the tawdry tale of Jonathan and Mary Gray. Unable to father a child, Jonathan grows increasingly obsessed with having a son. Eventually, he proposes that his wife have a son by his brother. His brother Aaron and Mary pretend to be incensed at Jonathan's suggestion, but as soon as he has to be gone for a few days, they can hardly wait to go to bed together. Incidentally, Jonathan Gray is presented as a Christian man—a man who reads the Bible and prays regularly.

Not to be outdone, NBC aired SWIMSUIT—little more need be said. The movie, a Robin Schiff script produced by Michael Lloyd and Rod Amateau, was nothing more than a showcase for flesh—following four scantily-clad women and two men through their rigorous training and "competition" for modeling jobs.

Among advertisers who appeared on all three sleaze shows were:

Chrm. John R. Stafford, **American Home Products**, 685 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017, Advil pain reliever, Anacin pain medication, Dimetapp sinus medication, Dristan decongestant, Robitussin cough medicine.

Chrm. L.A. Iacocca, **Chrysler Corporation**, Post Office Box 1919, Detroit, MI 48288, Chrysler, Dodge, Eagle, Jeep, and Plymouth automobiles

Chrm. Hamish Maxwell, **Philip Morris, Incorporated**, 120 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10017, Birds Eye foods, Celestial Season Herb Tea, General Foods products, Jell-O desserts, Kraft food products, Post cereals.

Kellogg, Sara Lee promote Christian buffoons on ABC

The February 17 episode of ABC's JUST THE TEN OF US continues the series practice of making a fool of the Catholic priest character. Teleplay was by Kate Boutilier; producer was Henry Johnson.

Fr. Hargis, head of St. Augustine School, asks Coach to host Carlos, a Spanish swim star who wants to train in California for the Olympics. The priest shows Coach a photo of a boy about 10 years old. The priest knows the boy, now about 17, will take to Coach's four over-sexed teenage daughters.

When Coach later confronts the priest with his ulterior motive, Fr. Hargis swears, "It never even occurred to me that you had daughters. If I'm lying, may lightening—" He stops in mid-sentence and glances upward fearfully. (A laugh track emphasizes the line.)

Fr. Hargis takes the boy to the pool to work out, and a parade of swim-suited nuns jog in to exercise at poolside. (Laughter)

"What the devil is this?" screams Fr. Hargis. (Laughter)

"The bride of Christ must develop her body as well as her mind," replies one of the nuns. (Laughter)

Other "plot" developments revolve around Carlos winning the hearts of all four teenager daughters, including the one who regularly carries her Bible and prays, and who asks Carlos to meet her at the barn during the night.

Among the advertisers were: Chrm. John H. Bryan, Jr., **Sara Lee Corporation,** 3 First National Plaza, Chicago, IL 60602, Bryan meat products, Hanes hosiery and underwear, Kiwi shoe polish, Rudy's Farm meats, Sara Lee frozen baked goods.

Chrm. William E. LaMothe, **Kellogg Company,** One Kellogg Square PO Box 3599, Battle Creek, MI 49016, Eggo Waffles, Kellogg's cereals, Nutri-Grain cereal, Pop Tarts, Special K cereal.

Boozing priest on show brought by RJR Nabisco, Pfizer

ABC's February 15 episode of GROWING PAINS featured a Catholic priest who was little more than a shallow, profane, party-animal buffoon. The episode was written by Tim O'Donnell; Steve Marshall, Dan Guntzelman and Mike Sullivan were executive producers.

The episode proved that the priest's major concern was having enough booze at the 20th anniversary party he was attending.

Dialogue included:

Priest: ...dam--t...

Friend: You look good, Padro.

Priest: Dam--t, I feel good. (Much laughter followed.)

Sitting at the bar, friends turn to the priest for a response in their conversation, and a silence falls over the room. The priest, oblivious to his friends, says to the bartender: "If you're out of marguerita mix, I'll have a pina colada." (Again, loud laughter follows.)

Helping to make a fool of this prime-time priest were advertisers:

Chrm. E.T. Pratt, Jr., **Pfizer, Inc.,** 235 E. 42nd Street, New York, NY 10017, Ben-Gay rub, Desitin skin products, Stetson cologne, TZ-3 athlete's foot ointment, Unisom, Visine eye drops.

Chrm. F. Ross Johnson, **RJR Nabisco,** Post Office Box 105642, Atlanta, GA 30348, Care-Free chewing gum, Del Monte foods, Grey Poupon Dijon mustard, Morton's frozen foods, Nabisco foods, Triscuit snack crackers.

Lever, Warner-Lambert promote anti-Christian skit on CBS 'comedy'

The February 11 episode of THE SMOTHERS BROTHERS COMEDY HOUR featured a "story teller" whose story included God cursing and numerous other slurs against Christianity. The episode was produced by Jerry McPhie.

The story teller says he and God run the universe. Once he was painting Mars "when all of a sudden, God comes up behind me and He says, 'What the he-- is going on!?'"

Later, the monologue continued, "God forgot once...He sent His Son down to the earth, then He took off to the Milky Way.... I heard all this commotion; I looked down at the earth and I thought, 'Jesus Christ! What the he--'s doing on down there!?' Well, they were tacking 'The Kid' up! They were banging nails in his hands. Well, so I sent word up to God, and I shot down there to help 'The Kid' out."

Among the advertisers were: Chrm. Morris Tabaksblat, **Lever Brothers,** 390 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10022, Aqua Net hair spray, Brut toiletries, Pepsodent toothpaste, Snuggle fabric softener, Sunlight dishwashing detergent.

Chrm. Joseph D. Williams, **Warner-Lambert Company,** 201 Tabor Road, Morris Plains, NJ 07950, Certs breath