

NBC DUMPS “THE BOOK OF DANIEL”

It was so bad that it began and ended in the same month. We're speaking about NBC-TV's monumental flop, "The Book of Daniel." The show portrayed a Christian family, with an Episcopalian priest, as morally bankrupt. It died an early death not only because there is no audience for such a show, but because the writing was horrendous.

After we confirmed with an NBC affiliate producer that the network had indeed cancelled the show, we issued a news release saying, "This is good news for Christians, and bad news for those who get their jollies trying to disparage them."

It should be known that we had two different reactions to "The Book of Daniel." Our first reaction was critical of the show's plot, but after we got a chance to preview, we simply decided to pan it.

Our first reaction was purely descriptive. Our news release read as follows:

"The father dabbles in drugs, the wife is a boozier, the daughter is a dope dealer, one son is a homosexual, the other son is a womanizer, the sister-in-law is a bisexual, the brother-in-law is a thief, and the father's father is an adulterer. Just your ordinary Christian family—in the eyes of Hollywood, that is. That both the fathers in 'The Book of Daniel' are Episcopalian priests is no coincidence: the desire to paint this Christian family as totally dysfunctional is the work of an embittered ex-Catholic homosexual, Jack Kenny.

"A self-described 'recovering Catholic,' Kenny is quick to dismiss the 'myths' surrounding Jesus, but is far less skeptical about Buddhist teachings on reincarnation. Regarding

heaven, Kenny—ever the deep thinker—opines that ‘I don’t know specifically what’s going on up there.’ It would be interesting to know how much time he has spent wondering about ‘what’s going on down there.’

“In any event, Kenny has a comrade in Aidan Quinn, the lead character who plays the Episcopalian priest: Quinn is another ex-Catholic Irishman. When asked if the TV show might offend some Catholics, Quinn lets his honesty, and his bigotry, shine through: ‘I really don’t care that much.’ Catholic viewers, by the way, are not likely to be enamored of Kenny’s treatment of a Catholic priest, especially if they’re Italian: Father Frankie has links to the mob. Kenny, by the way, says organized religion is ‘almost the same organism as the Mafia.’

“Here’s a real cultural marker: Christian groups are protesting ‘The Book of Daniel’ and the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) is encouraging its members to watch it. Not that this is altogether unusual given the way Christians, especially the clergy, are portrayed on TV and in the movies. Couple this with the almost uniformly positive portrayal of homosexuals, and the conclusion that Hollywood has an agenda is inescapable.”

The day after we issued this news release, we changed our tune. Why? Kiera McCaffrey, our director of communications, had an opportunity to preview the first two episodes. When asked by “Entertainment Tonight” what she thought of it, she replied that she “couldn’t be offended by it because it’s more moronic than anything else.”

It needs to be pointed out that our take on the show was not shared by many TV critics. For example, Salt Lake City’s *Deseret Morning News* called it “the best thing to hit TV this season.” The *Chicago Sun-Times* found it to be “well written and well-cast.” People labeled it “more entertaining than offensive.” *USA Today* branded it “wildly entertaining and superbly cast.” The *Detroit Free Press* bragged about the “fine

cast [and] clever writing." *Entertainment Weekly* said it was "refreshingly intelligent." And we said it was moronic.

In an interview with *Broadcasting & Cable*, Jack Kenny, the show's writer and producer, was asked whether NBC Entertainment President Kevin Reilly was going to stand by the show. "He [Reilly] has expressed to me complete faith in the show," said Kenny. Indeed, the day before NBC canned the show, Reilly told reporters that "the network stands behind its decision to air" the show. So much for loyalty.

Anyway, we got what we wanted.