

# Censorship Hinders The Growth Of Goodness

By C. W. TARGET

Writer-in-Residence  
The Colorado Collegian

As we get older, the stairs seem to get steeper, and things are never the same as when the world was young all hours of the day and we and the stars were full of it most of the shining nights—and the sensible course is to climb fewer stairs and walk more sedately in the autumn sun.

But this general steepness and lack of singing, this first slow withering of the green leaf, this private process becomes, for some a cause of public lamentation . . . hence the almost continuous rumbling of the religious underworld about the Sins of Youth, Moral Declension, Sexual Depravity, Unspeakable Vice, and whatnot.

## INDIGNATION

The latest of these depressing attacks of ingrowing indignation is now hard upon us, louder in our ears than even genuine thunder upon Sinai: for Dr. Leslie Weatherhead has had a turgid letter published in *The Times*, one not conspicuous for original thought; and Sir Cyril Black has been gobbling again among the "sinister figures of homosexuality, marital infidelity, and violent sex crimes," and seems to be suffering from indigestion or something.

Now, in itself this pulp rumbling and ranting is not important—both men are still happily entitled to the expression of their opinions and to the excitation of the front row of the pews—except that such opinions do serious harm to the cause of

Christ, and merely confirm the unnecessary irrelevance of the Church to our "condition." (There is, of course, a sense in which the claims of the Church ought to be irrelevant—but not in this half-acre of shifting sand).

But, serious though this intellectual vandalism is, such men seem to hanker after even bigger crowbars, and to look longingly towards the bulldozer of legal compulsion to enforce the adoption of their opinions. For example, Sir Cyril Black has become the Chairman of the newly-formed *Moral Law Defense Association*, whose purpose is to "bring pressure" to bear on Members of Parliament to amend such legislation as the Obscene Publications Act of 1959, and, in his words, to "stamp out" the "sale of pornography" and to "elevate the tone of our literature, our films, our plays" by a "more rigid enforcement of the law."

Which, like the activities of most back-stairs pressure groups, could be dangerous for the democratic rest of us. And so it seems worth while to examine the pretensions of such an attitude, and to search among the platitudinous thickets, whether there be any lurking truth.

Being a writer, and to avoid a weariness of words, I intend to treat the censorship of books as a particular case of the general principle that a "more rigid enforcement of the law" will do any good to anybody except lawyers and the friends of Sir Cyril Black. . . . And will now dive in headfirst.

No Christian ought ever to censor any book, at any time,

in any place, for any reason.

## CREATIVE WORK

By "book" I imply use of every other possible word describing the free creative work of freely creative man: play, picture, poem, statue, novel, film, symphony, script, song, scenario, or whatever, "pornographic" or not—and by "censor" I imply all the possible methods of suppressing such a work; ban, expurgate, destroy, prevent, "stamp out," or in any way render unavailable to any man wanting free access.

I assert this knowing that the wickedness of man is still great in the earth, and that we live under a deluge of lies, filth, and viciousness such as the world has never been polluted with before. Not even the worst days of Imperial Rome or Victorian England could match what to us are the ordinary sights and sounds of everyday life . . . garish advertisements planned by highly-skilled psychologists to appeal to all our natural greed and selfishness, all our fears, frustrations, all our weakness, our pride, our covetousness, our feelings of insecurity, all that is evil continually within us . . . pornographic newspapers, all seven days of the week, including the one we are commanded to keep holy—news-papers filled with manufactured news, lies, misrepresentations, half-truths, gossip about the trivial doings of trivial people, reports stimulating every idle curiosity, stories pandering to every imaginable thought of diseased minds, articles catering for all our cupidity, ignorance and prejudice, and photographs so obscene as to leave little

scope for further degradation of the help meet created by God for man . . . films, including so-called "Bible Epics," indulging every lust and perversion from the flagellation complex to vicarious fornication . . . television programmes so silly as to be senseless, so superficial as to be unbelievable . . . popular songs so daft as to be moronic . . . and books—millions of them—detailing every kind of criminal violence and psychopathology, glorifying war and cruelty, satisfying every unhealthy interest in man's inhumanity to man, in concentration camps, torture and every possible brutality . . . detective stories in which the crime is always murder . . . "thrillers" in which sex and sadism mix in equal proportions to produce poison . . . foul, sinful, death-centered books

we could do without. A deluge, then, which threatens to destroy whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report. Yet I repeat, No Christian ought ever to censor any book.

## SUPPRESSION

And assert this, knowing that the history of ecclesiastical Christianity can be seen as a series of repeated attempts by men such as Sir Cyril Black to suppress everything of which they did not approve, a suppression usually carried out with all the severity of secular power. I assert it knowing it to be alien to what passes for Christian "thought" today and open to its swift condemnation. And I assert it because I believe that the arguments advanced to defend censorship are unsound, that in

any event censorship does not and cannot work effectively in achieving its ends, and because I believe that a positive response to the good is a more effective protection against the appeal of the bad than any attempt to suppress it.

These arguments for Censorship are ancient ones—wary horses lumbering around the shabby circus-ring of ideas.

In this place of wet sawdust the concepts of censorship and freedom are usually thought of as being in opposition—to censor implies the denial of freedom, whilst to be free implies the absence of censorship. But this apparent opposition depends upon two possible conceptions of the nature of freedom: the first, that to be free means to do as you please, right or wrong which is based on the principle

that no other man's ideas are valid for you unless you accept them freely; and the second, that to be free means to do right and shun the wrong, whether you please or not, which is based on the principle that only the good man is truly free.

And arguments both for and against censorship can be drawn from each concept.

For example, if truth and the good can be known, then error and evil can be equally known, and prevented on the grounds that no free man will surrender his goodness to either. And if truth and the good have no basis except in private judgment, then censorship is as right as there are private judgments willing to support it.

Conversely, if the discovery of truth depends upon free inquiry and the free communication of the results of such inquiry, then

no censorship can be good because it might be the suppression of the true before it can be known as truth. And if goodness depends upon knowledge of the truth, then censorship of the truth hinders the growth of goodness.

And whilst it is not logically so, the arguments for censorship tend to be based on the do-as-you-ought concept (or, rather on the particular set of "oughts" the would-be censors have in mind), and the arguments against tend to be based on the do-as-you-please concept.

In other words, censorship is usually proposed to prevent the degradation of whatsoever things are held to be true, honest, just, pure, lovely and of good report, and rejected as a danger to the freedom on which these things are held to depend.

## 1964 Crystal Ball



## Movie Review

# Humor Comes To Durham

By NINA KING

"The Suitor": Directed by Pierre Etaix; screenplay by P. Etaix and J. C. Carriere; produced by Paul Claudon. At the Rialto through Tuesday.

Jollity being the order of the season, the Rialto Theater in Durham has seen fit to devote the next two weeks to contemporary comic masterpieces. Starting Wednesday, a double bill of Peter Sellers' classics—"The Mouse that Roared" and "I'm All Right, Jack"—will be featured. This week, the Rialto is holding the Southern premiere

of Pierre Etaix's "The Suitor", the first full length film by a very clever, and very funny, little Frenchman.

The plot of "The Suitor" is slight indeed. A hollow-cheeked, intent young scientist (Etaix) suffers from his parents' desire for a daughter-in-law. Once the idea has been implanted, however, the young man becomes enchanted with it and sets forth in haphazard, but touchingly earnest, pursuit of femininity. The ridiculous mishaps which befall him in his search make up the "plot" of this charming bit of froth.

Etaix is a delight: he moves through his role with an almost deadpan face, but the merest flicker of his sad eyes or the faintest quiver of his narrow lips can express the most delicate of emotions. His form of comedy has obvious roots in the Chaplinesque tradition. It is composed largely of visual gags—ranging in quality from the most blatant pratfalls to cleverly contrived variations on the difficulties and nuances of light-feminine cigarettes. There is something, also, of the fantastic wistfulness of Chaplin—as when the newly converted "suitor" dances in delighted expectancy through the moonlit garden, only to discover his parents watching from a balcony.

Etaix's debt to the comic geniuses of the silent film has been perhaps overstressed, however. Even more important is the influence of Jacques Tati. Tati uses the minimum of dialogue and almost no "sound effects" as such. But, also like Tati, he is able to create incredibly funny effects out of the most banal of ordinary, everyday sounds—high heels on cement pavement, clinking glasses, the scratch of a match, etc. The supporting roles in "The Suitor" are perfectly cast. As his mildmannered, wistful father and his domineering but sentimental mother, Claude Massat and Denise Perrone strike a per-

fect balance between humorous exaggeration and heartwarming humaneness.

As the women in Etaix's new life, Laurence Lignerens, France Arnell and Karis Vesely are delightful to behold. Miss Vesely, as the wistful Scandinavian maid who can speak no French (even her subtitles are in Swedish) is a particularly enchanting discovery.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITORS

### Young Minds

Editors, The Tar Heel,

A few days ago, we discussed a few of the many dangerous books purchased by the taxpayers for our college and university libraries. Since that time, many friends have pointed out other dangerous writings which should not be handled lightly by immature youth, not yet sufficiently trained—in the school of experience—to have formed the proper ideas of our American Way and to be able to see the logical fallacies in them. For instance: a young person is very likely to misunderstand phrases such as "when a form of government becomes destructive to these ends (life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, it is the right of the people to abolish it (by force)."

These are controversial opinions, but in dealing with young minds apt to form the wrong ideas one cannot be too careful. directed toward an oppressive tyranny and certainly can never be applied to the greatest governmental form ever conceived. Perhaps it would be better if his writings were kept under lock and key; patriotic teachers can interpret them rightly for the young.

In another area: there is a crying need for a version of the Bible edited for minds in the formative stages. There are portions of books of the Old Testament fully as salacious as anything in Henry Miller, Tennessee Williams, J. D. Salinger, or Mark Twain. Moreover, phrases such as "love thine enemies"; "blessed are the peacemakers"; and "do unto others as you would have them do unto you" have been lifted from context and misused so often that it would be better for them to be taken out of harm's way. "The Devil can cite Scripture for his purpose," as the good Book says.

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Student Committee to Help Eliminate Invidious Subversive Speakers

## Quotes

By United Press International

NEW YORK — Sen. Norris Cotton, R-N.H., on the Republican party's presidential prospects as a result of the changed political situation caused by President Kennedy's death: "The Republican chances are immensely brightened. Men come and go—men die—but principles remain the same." Sen. Barry Goldwater is still the man to give the party character and direction."

SAIGON, South Viet Nam—South Vietnamese Premier Nguyen Ngoc Tho, accusing Saigon newspapers of sensational reporting and outright fabrication: "No country in the world could afford to allow the press to use its freedom to sabotage the foundations the prevailing government is building or to generate confusion . . ."

WASHINGTON — Rep. Adam Clayton Powell, D-N.Y., after a House and Senate conference committee agreed on a compromise measure to boost federal assistance to vocational education: "This will mean more progress in the field of education than the United States has seen in 100 years."

HIGH POINT, N. C. — Jimmy Jenkins, arrested with his brother for alleged counterfeiting, on the difficulties of getting rid of \$50,000 worth of bogus bills of too poor quality to use: "Trying to burn money is not easy. You have to hold one bill and use one match to burn it. You just can't take it out in the backyard and throw it on the bonfire."

## UNUSUAL COW

PHOENIX, Ariz. (UPI) — A five-legged cow has given birth to a normal calf. The cow, which belongs to Richard Sturges of Phoenix, Ariz., is normal in all respects except for an extra leg on his left-front side. The cow walks on three legs.

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## The Daily Tar Heel

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## A Gaggle of Geese And Pandemonium

This is a plea for somebody, somewhere, to do something about the spectacle of newsmen mercilessly engulfing people who, for one reason or another, find themselves at the center of public attention.

The most recent example of this abuse was the coverage of the Frank Sinatra Jr. kidnapping. Reporters were all over the place, completely undisciplined and disorganized, seeming more like a flock of rapacious vultures than the skilled craftsmen they supposedly are.

After being released unharmed and managing to get to his mother's home, young Sinatra consented to a brief news conference. He politely explained that he could not discuss the particulars of his abduction until he had conferred with the FBI.

Guess what he was asked in about thirty-five different ways? That's right, the particulars of his abduction.

It barely mattered, however, because he was not given the opportunity to answer anyway. Reporters were too busy shouting down each other's questions and staging miniature sword-fights in Sinatra's face with their battery of microphones.

There might be some excuse for this confused spectacle if it were an isolated example of press irresponsibility. The trouble is, it isn't. It happens day in and day out.

Why hasn't something been done about it? For the same reason that we don't know where to send this plea, or to whom. Sure there are plenty of news groups around: The Newspaper Guild, The American Society of Newspaper Editors, and others. But none of them seem to have any inclination to suggest any corrective measures for this situation. Yet it is imperative that something be done — something positive, and soon.

What makes the situation most upsetting is the fact that no informal organization exists to make arrangements for orderly coverage of the news in cases such as young Sinatra's kidnapping.

It is not too much to ask that all of the news organizations get together

and form some kind of a council whose job it would be to step in on a moment's notice and arrange for orderly coverage of events in cases of this nature.

It is quite evident that one or two experienced reporters, representing all news media, can do an infinitely better job of interviewing a person than can a gaggle of 50 or more screaming people. Maybe the one man doesn't think of all the questions that the 50 could come up with, but one man gets his questions heard, and the interviewee is at least given a chance to answer outside the atmosphere of pandemonium which now characterizes these encounters.

An example of this single-representative system was provided for us in the hospital interview of Governor John Connally several days after the assassination of President Kennedy. Because of the Governor's condition, doctors allowed only one reporter in his room, and NBC newsman Martin Agronsky represented all the news media in a tasteful, orderly and interesting interview of Connally. The contrast between this and the chaotic interviews of the Dallas Police spokesman and District Attorney serve to prove the point.

We do not feel that establishing this pool system to cover certain types of stories would in any way sap the zeal or inhibit the initiative it is so necessary for a good reporter to possess. For "scoops" do not come from mass interviews of persons caught up in the events which make news, but rather from discovering those events first. No newspaper is going to beat another newspaper in disclosing the outcome of the well publicized trial of a public official but the initiative of one reporter who digs tenaciously for facts can often result in that very trial, and at the same time provide an excellent scoop for that reporter's paper.

The responsibility of the press is a function of the freedom it enjoys, and we are sure the press could now go a long way in enhancing its stature and accepting its responsibility by working out a system that would put an end to the distasteful exhibit of reporters trampling over and out-shouting each other.

## Freedom To Learn

(From The New York Times)

J. Edgar Hoover has told a youth group in New York that he would bar Communist spokesmen from college campuses because their ideas can "win the allegiance of American youth."

We think that the F.B.I. director underestimates the intelligence of American students and seriously narrows the concept of academic freedom. The Communists have been notoriously unsuccessful in their campus recruitment. One reason may be that when students are permitted to learn about communism, its secretive glamour is stripped away.

American college students have invited and heard many repugnant persons and ideas in recent months. Racism, radical rightism and communism have been preached — and debated openly — at major universities. "If you expect a nation to be ignorant and free," Thomas Jefferson once said, "you expect what never was and never will be." That's what academic freedom is all about.