

have left me smiling, cozily corned-beefy. During the show's half hour no one is raped, slugged, hung by thumbs, kicked in balls, engulfed by tidal wave or struck by hideous, undefined brain fever. No non-white is patronized, ostracized, eliminated, elevated to sainthood or reduced to being a welfare bum.

The religious remarriage performed by a rabbi and Bridget's sexy brother-priest (How come this rich Right To Life family has only two kids and lets its handsome, smart only son go into celibacy rather than Wall Street?) was TV's closest prime time venture into ecumenism. My co-religionists are outraged by this sequence, but it was Bridget who was outraged at her father's attempt to con Bernie into signing the pledge to raise all children Catholic.

Some relevant family history

Long before *Bridget Loves Bernie*, or even TV, three of my mother's six siblings married non-Jews. After my mother died my father married a Catholic who reintroduced him to his religion and Jewish friends.

When I was a little girl and wasn't supposed to know what was going on I knew why a third cousin went into the garage and died. It would have killed his mother if he married that *shiksa*.

Three years ago a Reform rabbi married our daughter to a young man from an Episcopalian family, who found the ceremony "the most beautiful and sincere." Our son-in-law's father is studying Jewish religious philosophy and Hebrew, giving him more ecumenical marks than me. I gag at the manger scene erected with my tax dollars on municipal property and want to tear U.S. postage Christmas stamps off letters. Our son-in-law reads well when called to the *bimah* (synagogue platform; the pulpit) on High Holydays.

Bridget and Bernie were troubled that they wanted to marry a person not of their religion and so was our daughter. She and I reminisced about her parade of Jewish suitors, the one who wanted to get it for her wholesale and the smuggest, who became a rabbi. I said, "Remember what your father's father used to say, 'A good person is a good person.'"

Much ado about little

Can anyone believe that a just and good God would direct us to lock our daughter into her room (But, God, she's bigger than I am and besides her room is four hundred miles from where we live and she is entirely self-supporting.) and make nasty scenes because if she married this fine young *shegitz* she'd achieve what Hitler couldn't, The Final Solution?

Can my co-religionists believe that boycotting the pro-

ducts of *Bridget Loves Bernie* sponsors will illuminate the spiritual values of Judaism for our young people? Can they believe that every young person who sees the show is going to shack up with the first non-Jew he sees?

If the survival of the Jews depends on Jewish censorship of a program about the devotion of Jew to non-Jew, the devotion of non-Jew to Jew, then us Jews will neither survive nor deserve to. I have as much confidence in my private pipeline to God as those who find themselves commanded to censor have in theirs, and mine says God knows what he's doing in mixing us up a bit.

Defending ecumenism: bridget loves bernie

Richard L. Wagner

Because the Metropolitan Region of United Synagogue issued its excommunication ban on the show *Bridget Loves Bernie*, I brought this information before my Hebrew School class of sixth and seventh graders. In violation of the curriculum (and good manners) I decided that we could talk about religion in mixed company.

I quickly discovered that not only were my kids aware of *Bridget Loves Bernie*, but also they knew virtually every script by heart. They had watched an entire season of the show and had not been struck down by the plague. That in itself was a revelation. My education didn't stop there. The United Synagogue resolution which: "Calls on the CBS Television network to remove the show from the air immediately," was met by boos, hisses and various other unkindly remarks.

Playing the devil's advocate, I argued that any show that glorified intermarriage and which, in fact and theory, presents intermarriage as a value to be attained by all has no business in expecting the support of Jewish groups. Indeed, organized religious groups of the Jewish faith have the right as well as the responsibility to have their indignation go on record. If (as one of my teachers put it) being Jewish means wanting to have Jewish grandchildren, then *Bridget Loves Bernie* has got to go.

The counter arguments started slow. But when the kids started emerging from their shock ("What's a TV show got to do with Hebrew School?"), they began the onslaught. We like it because it's funny. We find nothing wrong with it because the stereotypes portrayed are entertaining. Most of the time, they

added, the scripts deal with universal inter-family problems which are presented in a humorous light. Funny, entertaining, humorous. NO! That doesn't deal with the point. It still glorifies something to which we are absolutely opposed.

It's a free country

One of the smarter kids in the class (who had sat back and watched the not-so-bright kids revel in the fact that here was a subject about which they could speak without sounding like dummies) now spoke clearly with tremendous cool: "If you don't like it," she said, "then don't watch it." The cogency of her statement left me dumb-struck. And the silence betrayed me. Because the kids knew that I could not disagree with such a basic argument.

We constantly remind ourselves about the blessings of "the ideals and institutions which are our country's glory." Corrupt though they may be, when are we, as modern Jews, going to stop thinking of everything in the ghetto categories of "good for the Jews" and "bad for the Jews!"? Do we seriously believe that removing such a show will stem the tide of inter-marriage? Do we have the right to determine that which is directed at the entire country? My class and I submit that we do not, and that it is high time to stop playing with words and to take the term "freedom" seriously.

The prison of vestigial ecumenism

Earl Kaplan

At the Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati, we get calls through the Student speaker's Bureau from all kinds of organizations. Thus, when Sister Bernadette of the St. James school asked for five rabbinic students to speak to the five eighth grade classes on, "The Persecution of the Jews," we were pleased to go.

Arriving at the parochial school, I spoke briefly with the principal, Sister Joretta who then blurted with pride, "Oh, we have one of 'your people' on our faculty. Would you like to meet him?" Although none of us expected this show of "tokenism," we felt the Sister meant well. As we walked down the hall Sister Joretta asked me, "What nationality are you people?"

"Sister Joretta," I replied, "Judaism is a religion and a culture. The United States is our home, so I guess you'd call us Americans."

"Yes, but to what nationality do you belong?"

"Sister, we are Jews and we are Americans both by birth and cultural ties. I'm no more foreign than you are!"

During my group's discussion, I found the participants to be the sensitive, warm students I'd encountered in other parochial schools in the city. When commenting on action to alleviate prejudice and persecution, one of the eighth graders said, "If one leads a good life, and cares about other people, one'll do a lot to end all kinds of hatred." There was nothing I could add.

Towards the end of the hour, I asked the kids if they wanted to know something that might not have been covered. Duane, the fourteen year old who had made the incisive comment before, asked, "Do you hate all Germans as a result of what the Nazis did?" I replied that all Germans weren't Nazis, and every man deserves to be judged on his individual merits and failings. "It's just like this filmstrip we saw," Duane added. "Only a small handful of Jews killed Christ. I don't blame you" Clearly, just as Duane had learned the meaning of peace and brotherhood, he had learned *in school* that the Jews had killed Christ – the lie that had bred hatred, torture, and murder for almost two millenia. I spent the next fifteen minutes talking about Pontius Pilate and the Romans who killed Christ.

On the trail of ancient hatreds

After the session I approached Sister Joretta to complain about this filmstrip. She referred me to Sister Caroline who accompanied me to the classroom. We asked the teacher about the filmstrip, and she said that it indeed mentioned that "a small number of Jews killed Christ." The teacher then asked me why in Mark it played down Pilate's role and played up the role of the Sanhedrin, as if this were an irrefutable rebuttal. I suggested that historical evidence normally supercedes theological redaction. The look on her face showed confusion and doubt. As we left, Sister Caroline promised to give me the name of the filmstrip and the name of the distributor.

Duane approached me on the way to the car. "I have one more question, okay? Why did the Jews who run the ACLU have our "parochi-aid" grant (some \$90 per student in Catholic schools) declared unconstitutional by the state court? Won't it hurt the Jews if we have to go to the public schools?"

"Duane, the church in Rome has 70 to 100 million dollars in assets (a figure, which I remembered from days in business administration, which some four years hence must be a conservative estimate). Wouldn't it be more fair for Catholic schools to receive financial