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Saturday, July 25, 2009

West Bend book banners still haven't gone far enough.

Hi everyone,

I suspect many of my Fundamentalist readers will miss the irony that I commit precisely the same act for which I'm criticizing them.... irony is the first casualty of Fundamentalism. And so it goes.

And for those of you with your own lists of favourites, my apologies. I'm limited to around 720 words and picked what came to mind.

[Saturday's column](#)

Overlooking library's most dangerous book?

Bored with the library flap? Me, too. But we're not done yet. The book banners have overlooked one mighty important book that must be removed.

Let's recap: a local group of fundamentalist Christians asks that a number of books be removed from the library's shelves on completely unconstitutional grounds. Another group of even more fundamentalist Christians joins the fray, demanding the books be burned and filing a law suit against the city for the damage caused to its members by the mere existence of these books. A well-educated local Library Board, relying on established case law and federal court findings and using constitutionally vetted guidelines from accredited national organizations, says "no." These local fundamentalists then claim West Bend is being victimized by "outsiders," as if the U.S. Constitution was a set of values being imposed from outside. Julaine Appling, whose [Wisconsin Family Council](#) seminars provided the Maziarkas with the organizing skills now costing us bad press and tax dollars, comes to their defense in a recent guest editorial. The complaints depend on smoke and noise because they have no legal basis on which to rest. America hears the noise and smells the smoke. Reports are filed. West Bend becomes a national spectacle, featured prominently at this year's meeting of the American Library Association and in all the major media outlets including, this past week, CNN's Web site. The fundamentalists vow to fight on.

So far so good.

Some people think all of this publicity is a bad thing. It's not. It's just a beginning. These morally righteous folks haven't got it wrong, they simply haven't gone far enough.

They need to go further with their demands and insist the library remove the most dangerous

book in the kids section, a book more hazardous to teenagers than “The Perks of Being a Wallflower,” and even more perilous than those dreadful biology books on sexuality (and evolution!) from the adult section; a book which is, arguably, the single greatest cause of spiritual distress and physical bloodshed in Western history: the New and Old Testaments of the Christian Bible.

Let me be the first then to ask the Library Board this question: Do we want our children exposed to a book that includes obscenities like the following?

1. Depictions of daughters getting their father drunk so they can seduce him in order to become pregnant with their own siblings? (Genesis 19:30-36).
2. Descriptions of a prostitute trading sex for a goat? (Genesis 38:13-24).
3. Suggestions that you have your friends killed if you want to sleep with their wives? (2 Samuel 11).
4. An encouragement to marry your half sister and then let her arrange for her maid to become your mistress? (Genesis 16 and 20).
5. A defense of slavery, so long as the slaves come from neighboring countries? (Leviticus 25:44).
6. The conditions for selling your daughter into slavery? (Exodus 21:7).
7. An insistence we kill any young entrepreneur who wants to deliver Sunday papers? (Exodus 35:2).
8. Forbidding playing football with the old pigskin? (Leviticus 11:6-8). 9. Shocking phrases like “She lusted after her lovers, whose genitals were like those of donkeys and whose semen was like that of horses”? I mean, at what age is this appropriate? (Ezekiel 23:19-20).
10. Lurid language comparing your lover’s belly button to a goblet overflowing with wine and her breasts to fawns? (C’mon, fawns?) (Song of Songs, Chapter 7).
11. Communistic values like selling everything you own in order to subsidize the poor? (Matthew 19:21).
12. The claim that spiritual development is only possible when you learn to hate your parents, siblings, wife, and kids? (Luke 14:26).
13. And, finally, do we want anything on the shelves that teaches children to reduce matters of profound spiritual development to unanswerable, existential questions? (Ecclesiastes and Job).

I say nay! Let’s get it out of the hands of children immediately. In fact, let’s restrict access to those who can actually read the thing in the original Hebrew, Aramaic or koine Greek. OK,

maybe we could allow people with classical (or even medieval) Latin to have a peek, too, but that's it. Anyone without these skills would have to rely on politically warped translations into less accurate languages, like English, and might come up with all kinds of cockamamie interpretations. Some people might even cherry pick this dangerous book in order to justify imposing their own personal tastes, and beliefs, on their fellow citizens.

Thank heavens the Constitution protects us from letting things like that happen, even in our little town.

They won't even let *me* decide what should and shouldn't be in the library. Ahem.