

Remarks by
Commissioner James H. Quello
Federal Communications Commission

at the

NATIONAL RELIGIOUS BROADCASTERS ASSOCIATION
Luncheon
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Thanks for the generous introduction. I'm reminded of a response made some years ago by that great religious broadcaster, Bishop Fulton J. Sheen.

Upon being applauded when introduced he said, "Thank you for this act of faith. If I happen to be applauded in the middle of the speech, I would presume it will be an act of hope. And if you applaud at the end of the speech, it will have to be regarded as an act of charity. So I'm somewhat comforted that this compassionate audience has already conferred upon me one of the three great Christian virtues of faith, hope and charity. *... faith*
Please keep me in mind for the other two.

I'm delighted to revisit this esteemed group and update my message. I made my first appearance as a luncheon speaker before you over six years ago.

Much has transpired since that time. Many positive things have occurred for you and even for me. There have been two national elections, unprecedented progress in broadcast de-regulation and freedoms and continued growth and influence for the electronic church.

During this period, I was fortunate to receive two reappointments to the FCC. Since I have been living in Virginia for over ten years and I have 6 1/2 years remaining to serve on my present term, I decided to become a Virginian. My wife and I like it here.

I reviewed the history of Virginia and it is an awesome experience for a native Michigander. Michigan had its Fords, Romneys, Harts and Vandenberges, all of whom I know or knew. But Virginia is the historical birthplace of American greatness. The voice of the Revolution, Patrick Henry, was a Virginian. The pen of the Revolution, Thomas Jefferson, was a Virginian. The sword of the Revolution, George Washington, was a Virginian. The father of the Constitution, James Madison, was a Virginian. The author of the Monroe Doctrine, James Monroe, was a Virginian. A great Chief Justice of the United States, John Marshall, was a Virginian. And today, in a more contemporary

vein, a powerful leader and moral voice of the electronic church, Jerry Falwell, is a Virginian and a famous American whether you agree or disagree with all his doctrines.

On a more minor note, today a first generation Italian Roman Catholic, now a Virginian, feels privileged to share his deregulatory views with this prestigious and perceptive forum of religious leaders.

But first I want to again remind you of my personal experience with an impressive example of your success. It has a fascinating sequel. I mentioned I was Catholic, but my wife and I are the only Catholics left in the family. We Quellos are really ecumenical. My nieces and nephews are all Baptists, Methodists or Unitarians. Two grandchildren are Lutheran, one granddaughter is Jewish -- one of my sons was an agnostic until his deliverance. Six years ago he was miraculously transformed by a powerful positive religious force that made him see the light and brought him back to God. At the time I said I wanted Dr. Schuller to know we had a younger Quello, a family man, that's now a believer and loyal viewer to the "Hour of Power" every Sunday morning in Deerfield Beach, Florida. And you have a senior Quello here who is both grateful for this salvation and impressed with the positive power of persuasion of the electronic church with its inspirational home delivery service.

The very first dialogue began six years ago when I was visiting my agnostic son in Florida. Even though we are an unusually ecumenical family, I had always hoped that a Quello would somehow believe in God regardless of what particular gateway he chose to salvation. It was Sunday morning. My son, Dick, was tuning in some religious program. I growled "What have you got, the heretic hour?"

His wife answered "Oh no, Dick always watches Dr. Schuller. I can't talk while Dr. Schuller is on."

Dick looked up, "Certainly you have heard and seen Dr. Schuller?"

I said "I have heard of him but I haven't seen him." (I have seen him many times since.)

He was annoyed. "Isn't it your job to watch and analyze TV programs? This is great . . . if more religions could tell it like 'Hour of Power,' you wouldn't have to worry about heretics in any family."

I said, "It isn't my job to watch every program, but I'm delighted that you have finally seen the light -- even though it had to be delivered to your home."

The next sequence happened just this past year -- you haven't heard this before.

I got an early call from Dick. He said, "Dad, do me and yourself a big favor. I want you to go out today and buy a book 'Tough Times Never Last But Tough People Do' by Dr. Robert H. Schuller. Read it and please call me tomorrow night and tell me what you think."

I said, "Dick, we have thirty-two Commission items this week and I'll be lucky if I have time to read the top most contentious five."

He said, "Read Dr. Schuller's book first. You will do a better job at the Commission."

I couldn't quite accommodate my son's time schedule, but I did read the book. It is uplifting, inspirational and worthwhile. Read it before your next service and you will do even a better job at your ministries.

I was so impressed by the book's positive influence that I urged Chairman Fowler to make this book required reading before renewing any broadcast license. But as highly as he esteems evangelism, he told me it would be too regulatory. He would rather have the book sell itself on the open marketplace.

And speaking of powers of persuasion, we at the FCC are still unbelievably overblessed with the continual flood of letters protesting an issue that never existed.

The letters received by the FCC opposing atheism and pleading generally for religious freedom on the air totalled over 17,722,000 at the end of 1984! In 1984 alone we received 1,165,200! This unprecedented volume of mail continues to pour in unabated.

This is an overwhelming display of the power and influence of religion, electronic and mainline. This is especially true considering the mail was initially generated by a petition, not to keep God off the air, but requesting a freeze on applications by religious institutions for television or FM channels reserved for educational stations. The petition filed by two broadcast consultants was denied August 1, 1975. You won the war over nine years ago. But the letters still keep pouring in because the petition has somehow become misconstrued as an atheistic plot to keep God and religion off the air.

Believe me, we God fearing Commissioners have truly seen the light. We are impressed that in 1985 like in 1978 Jesus Christ

is still broadcasting's No. 1 super-star with an unbelievable all-time high mail count.

But, seriously, we have to again issue our regular counter-plea -- and this comes unnaturally to a former broadcaster like me. Please don't keep those cards and letters rolling in. We are not administratively equipped to handle them. More importantly, remember that those wonderful but misinformed letter writers have now spent over \$3,544,400 in postage alone! This doesn't count the envelope, paper, time and effort in mailing. This significant expenditure of money and manpower could be efficiently utilized for productive work and live issues.

Next, I want to share with you some thoughts about bigotry against evangelicals. In a recent article headlined Religious Bigotry of the 80's (Washington Times, November 9, 1984), American Enterprise Institute resident scholar and Catholic Theologian Michael Novak opined:

Thus, bigotry against evangelicals has remained the last permissible bigotry. Anti-black, anti-semitic, anti-Catholic, anti-woman, anti-handicapped, and other major forms of bigotry are easily spotted and publicly denounced. But even 'the best people' feel free to express bigotry against evangelicals.

In another paragraph, Mr. Novak further observed:

Somehow, we manage to accept evangelical Protestantism among blacks better than among whites.

Mr. Novak went on to conclude:

It is much better for this nation to have a 'Moral Majority' than a 'silent majority' -- better for two reasons.

First, by breaking their silence, the evangelicals have learned that they are not a majority, but only a significant minority. They also have learned that other Americans do not spontaneously admire their morality.

Second, by entering the national debate, they have been obliged to rethink their positions, develop larger sensitivities, expand their horizons, learn new forms of cooperation and civil argument. Entering the national dialogue has been good for them -- and for the rest of us.

Mr. Novak's points are excellent.

First, the bigotry against Fundamentalist Christians recently shown by many of "The Establishment" is insufferable. Even as fine a man as Walter Mondale -- who undoubtedly doesn't have a bigoted bone in his body -- fell into this latest trap of intolerance. During the last presidential election much rhetoric was made about the injection of religion into politics during the campaign such as:

If Ronald Reagan is re-elected, Reverend Jerry Falwell will pick the next two or three Justices of the Supreme Court.

I don't know of one member of "The Establishment" who denounced that prediction as suggesting religious prejudice, nor did "The Establishment" media.

But, suppose -- just suppose -- the Reagan campaign had declared:

If Walter Mondale is elected, Rabbi Alexander Schindler will pick the next two or three Justices of the Supreme Court.

Can you imagine the editorial "hue and cry" from "The Establishment" church and press.

I bring this up only to reinforce Michael Novak's point that we may be falling -- inadvertently -- far out of step with our highly cherished tradition of "tolerance." We must never forget that America exists primarily because the thousands of intrepid souls who faced the perils of the sea and the wilderness were desparately fleeing the religious intolerance of old Europe. The Huguenots were fleeing the French Catholics; the English Catholics were fleeing the Anglicans; the Calvinists and the Quakers were fleeing everybody. In the second "Great Migration," the Irish Catholics were running from Protestants and Jews were escaping the pogroms of the Czar.

So, today, I ask my American brothers and sisters of "The Establishment" or mainline churches: Let's tap some of our precious resevoir of religious tolerance for those with whom we disagree, and truly honor their right to practice and preach in accordance with their-understanding of God's way.

Michael Novak's second point -- and mine -- is that we should welcome the dialogue that follows the "intrusion" of church views into our secular society. I do not have to personally agree with all, or any, of the views of the Chicago Bishops on nuclear deterrence or on economic justice, to be glad

that they have spoken out. By ventilating their tentative views in the public forum, they have necessarily opened themselves up to the criticism of a larger universe, one which may not share those views or their moral judgments. And in the wake, views become qualified and modified before they are codified. By that process, we all absorb new points of view, and that is the essence of education and understanding.

The same is true of the "Moral Majority." I don't have to accept all of their views -- either sectarian or secular. But I do learn from them, as well as from the responses of those who disagree.

These robust, wide-open debates are the intellectual salvation of our unique country; and as an FCC Commissioner, I will fight to the last breath to make sure that our nation's broadcasting airwaves are open to all important views -- including the views of you out there today, delivering God's message direct to millions of American homes. Religious broadcasting has long been part of the great American mosaic -- as great a part of the fearless circuit-riding preachers of our pioneer past. And so I say to the religious broadcasters of America: You can count on the FCC to be prime protectors for the Constitutional guarantees of freedom of speech and religion.

However, religious broadcasters have the responsibility of maintaining the highest professional standards to merit continued respect and support. Unfortunately, you, too, must self-regulate and guard against the greedy, the unethical, the intolerant, the cultists and the fiscally careless.

The overall inspirational positive influence of your broadcast ministries must not be tainted by the indiscretions and intolerance of a very few.

I'm personally delighted to see you popularizing and glorifying God on TV and radio. You are attracting millions of Americans to religious faith and a better way of life who would not otherwise be reached or influenced. I'm glad to see the impressive public acceptance and support inspired by ministries who build beautiful monuments to God that will serve mankind for years to come.

In my opinion, the ultimate test for evangelical religious broadcasters as well as for mainline religions is: Does it inspire a loyal following to have faith in God and a belief in religious virtues that result in a better way of Life? Does it make for a more decent, better and stronger America?

My answer is a resounding yes! So, to the Schullers, Falwells, Humbards, Grahams, Roberts, the Moody Bible Institute and to all dedicated religious broadcasters here and in the hinterlands -- and to Ben Armstrong and Dick Wiley -- may your tribe increase and God bless you.