
CANADIAN BROADCAST STANDARDS COUNCIL

ONTARIO REGIONAL PANEL

CITS-TV re *Sid Roth's It's Supernatural*

(CBSC Decision 10/11-0106)

Decided April 5, 2011

H. Hassan (Vice Chair), J. David, M. Harris, M. Oldfield

THE FACTS

Sid Roth's It's Supernatural is a program with religious overtones broadcast weekly by CITS-TV (CTS – Crossroads Television, Ontario) and hosted by Sid Roth. The host often interviews people who have experienced extraordinary healings, miracles and personal encounters with God. At the end of each program, the host, Sid Roth (a self-declared Jewish believer in Jesus) tells the viewers how they, too, can have intimacy with God. The show welcomes weekly guests to discuss and share a variety of revelations that they claim to have received directly from God.

During the episode in question, Sid Roth welcomed Joel Richardson, author of *The Islamic Antichrist* and producer of a DVD set entitled *Understanding the Times: Biblical Prophecy Series*. According to Roth, Richardson was “hand chosen by God [to] give a unique insight into end time prophecies.” Throughout the episode, Mr. Roth asked Mr. Richardson to describe the findings of his research regarding the biblical prophecies of end time and other matters. In replying, Joel Richardson shared his interpretation of various issues, including the *Book of Revelation*. The following is the transcript of the relevant portion of the September 14, 2010 episode of *It's Supernatural* that aired at 10:30 am.

Roth: In your studies, you found some fascinating things out about Islam. Uh, tell me some of the things you found out.

Richardson: Sure, well, you know for the past let's say fifty years, the majority, uh, of folks, Christians, and so forth, that have been studying the biblical prophecies have really had a very European Western-centric view. And, one of the things and of course when I say this, a lot of people say, "Well, of course, this is common sense!" Uh, but really what I'm, what I'm doing is showing people that all of the prophecies of the Bible and all the emphasis and the focus is really Israel-centric. And it's beyond being Israel-centric, it's Messiah-centric. So, if we simply try to boil down the essence, the basic big story that the Bible is telling, it's actually very simple and it's something that everybody can grasp. It's not nearly as complicated as a lot of people have made it.

Roth: But tell me about what you have found. I want you to summarize what is the Islamic mind set?

Richardson: Sure, well, there's many things when you look at the religion of Islam and you compare it to what the Bible says about the end time, uh, army of the, the Antichrist or the anti-Messiah, you see that the prophecies of the Bible and the religion of Islam fits hand in glove, that it, it fulfills it to a "T". [...]

Roth: Now, I-, let's go to that treaty.

Richardson: Sure, sure, the Treaty of Hudaibiya. This is a prime example. Uh, early in the career of Mohamed, he entered into a treaty with the largest, most powerful tribe in the region. They were called Quraish. And it was a ten-year peace treaty. Now immediately after this treaty, the next day, he had a, quote, revelation where he claims that Allah, his God *told him* that from that day forward anyone that joined what was at that time a small fledgling band of about a thousand men can now have a significant share of the plunder, the booty, the slaves, the women, etc. Within two years, this group of desert pirates became ten thousand strong. Then he broke the treaty, he turned and crushed the power of the Quraish. So the Muslims looked to Mohamed as the premier perfect example that they are to emulate. So now Muslims have as an example, this concept of breaking treaties.

Roth: So it's okay [turns to face the camera]. Did you get that? The precedent is: make a treaty when you're weak, but, when you're strong, break it! What did [Yasser] Arafat, when he was in, in, in power, uh, say secretly? We know what he said to the UN and uh, and, and, and to the world. What did he say behind the scenes, secretly?

Richardson: Sure, well at this time, there was a significant pre-, peace treaty going on between the Palestinians, headed by Arafat, in, in, in Israel. And everyone was very excited; they thought this was a major breakthrough. Well here was Arafat, at a group speaking in Arabic and he said to everyone, he said, "The Treaty that I've just entered into with Israel, is merely the Treaty of Hudaibiya and in the same spirit have I entered into it. And it is through this Treaty, that we will continue our march to Jerusalem." In other words, "I only entered into this so that we can gain power. Our goals have not changed. When the time is right, we will march militarily and take Jerusalem."

[...]

Let me quote, uh, Islamic tradition, that is the foundation for Hamas and the Palestinians. It says "The day of resurrection will not come until the Muslims fight against the Jews and kill them until there are only a few Jews left hiding behind a tree or a rock and the tree or

the rock will cry out and say "Oh faithful Muslim, there is a Jew behind me, come and kill him." Muslims believe it is their divine call to eliminate the Jewish people.

[...]

[...] And when we look at history, we see that the Roman Empire was the sixth Empire. The sixth Empire of biblical history that persecuted and tried to destroy the Jewish people. Islam is the natural successor that fulfills the pattern of all the other previous Empires. It is the greatest, most powerful anti-Semitic, anti-Yahwistic force that the world has even seen.

Richardson also asserted that all of the recent American Presidents since Jimmy Carter, up to and including Barack Obama (with the exception of Ronald Reagan), have received millions of dollars from Saudi Arabia, specifically from Prince Al-Waleed bin Talal, thus encouraging them, he said, to build more Islamic teaching and worship locations. As a result, Richardson concluded that these financial exchanges supported the idea of Muslims taking over America. Throughout the episode, Richardson made several other non-contentious comments regarding Muslims and Islam.

On the following day, the CBSC received this complaint:

I happened to hear a phrase that caught my attention the other day as I was flipping through the channels. I went back to our channel 2 which is the CTS station.

A discussion was taking place between a host, Sid Roth, and some sort of evangelist named Jack [sic] Richardson. I had never heard of either of these people. I have never in my life heard such a vicious attack on a huge portion of the world's population, namely, Islam. The hypocrisy of this person who seems to be presenting himself as a moral being is frankly unbelievable. The apparent goal of this man's message is to incite people to share his distorted view of Muslim people, especially Saudi Arabia, and claiming that God is following him right along in his hatred for these people.

He bases his argument on the old diatribes of the early Jewish writers whose business it was to foster hatred and fear of their sworn enemies, then he blames the whole argument on the creator of the universe, a god which he creates in his own image.

He is entitled to believe whatever he likes in his own church or home, but he must not be allowed to spread such vile propaganda on the public airways [sic]. The interviewer participated in this sham discussion and the broadcast organization apparently supports this kind of drive. It might be acceptable in the deep southern USA states but it is completely unacceptable in Canadian society.

I insist that this channel be investigated and that it be obligated to refrain from such false and malicious gossip.

This kind of radical, fundamentalist, radical and pseudo "Christianity" is closer to the radical and pseudo "Islamic" than it is to any form of the world's major religions. They are equally dangerous and great threats to world peace.

The broadcaster's Program Director responded to the complainant on October 14:

I have received your complaint concerning the broadcast of *It's Supernatural* with Sid Roth on CTS TV, September 14, 2010. I have carefully reviewed the program and offer the following comments.

This particular episode is a discussion with *End Times* author, Joel Richardson concerning biblical prophecy. Mr. Richardson has written several books on the topic of Islam and end times prophecy. In this program there is also some discussion around biblical history and the birth of Islam to support the interpretation of prophecy. Most of the program however deals with the interpretation of the Book of Revelation and end times. This type of discussion has occurred on many religious programs on CTS because end time prophecy is a very popular subject for many of our Christian viewers. It is typical for the discussion to lead to an interpretation of one of the most mysterious books of the New Testament, Revelation, and a comparison between prophetic events in Revelation and actual current world events. Mr. Richardson is factual in his accounting of current events and his interpretation of Revelation is consistent with Christian beliefs.

Your complaint is that this discussion incites hatred toward Muslims. CTS does not tolerate hatred and advises all program producers of Canadian Broadcasting Regulations and our own *Broadcast Code of Ethics*. Item A-3 of our Code states: *The tone and content of programming must not abuse, misrepresent or incite hatred against any individual or identifiable group.* In the factual account of world events and in the interpretation of Revelation, I do not find that the tone and content of programming abuses, misrepresents or incites hatred against any individual or identifiable group. You have not specifically identified what wording in this program you feel incites hatred towards Muslim people. The purpose of this program is an interpretation of end time prophecy and does not encourage the hatred of an identifiable group.

The complainant was not satisfied with the broadcaster's explanation. He filed his Ruling Request on the same day. He wrote:

concern: I am sure that all of the Christians I know would be offended by the content of this program, and the broadcaster's attempt to legitimize the content as "Christian" is nonsense.

I admit that I am not entirely objective about this matter as I do not accept biblical writings as relevant to current events or predictive in any way. I appeal to your having this program content analyzed by the CBSC panel, who I trust will give a fair and objective evaluation of the content, and an appropriate ruling.

THE DECISION

The Ontario Regional Panel examined the complaint under the following provisions of the Canadian Association of Broadcasters (*CAB*) *Code of Ethics* and the *CAB Equitable Portrayal Code*:

CAB Code of Ethics, Clause 2 – Human Rights

Recognizing that every person has the right to full and equal recognition and to enjoy certain fundamental rights and freedoms, broadcasters shall ensure that their programming contains no abusive or unduly discriminatory material or comment which is

based on matters of race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status or physical or mental disability.

CAB Code of Ethics, Clause 6 – Full, Fair and Proper Presentation

It is recognized that the full, fair and proper presentation of news, opinion, comment and editorial is the prime and fundamental responsibility of each broadcaster. This principle shall apply to all radio and television programming, whether it relates to news, public affairs, magazine, talk, call-in, interview or other broadcasting formats in which news, opinion, comment or editorial may be expressed by broadcaster employees, their invited guests or callers.

CAB Code of Ethics, Clause 8 – Religious Programming

Broadcasters should endeavour to make available to the community adequate opportunity for presentation of religious messages and should also endeavour to assist in all ways open to them the furtherance of religious activities in the community. Recognizing the purpose of the religious broadcast to be that of promoting the spiritual harmony and understanding of humanity and of administering broadly to the varied religious needs of the community, it shall be the responsibility of each broadcaster to ensure that its religious broadcasts, which reach persons of all creeds and races simultaneously, shall not be used to convey attacks upon another race or religion.

CAB Equitable Portrayal Code, Clause 2 – Human Rights

Recognizing that every person has the right to the full enjoyment of certain fundamental rights and freedoms, broadcasters shall ensure that their programming contains no abusive or unduly discriminatory material or comment which is based on matters of race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, marital status or physical or mental disability.

The Panel Adjudicators read all of the correspondence and viewed the challenged episode. The Panel concludes that certain, but not all, aspects of the broadcast violated the Human Rights Clauses, but not either of the other standards cited above.

A Preliminary Issue

The Panel recognizes that the complainant has characterized the challenged episode as “a vicious attack on a huge portion of the world's population, namely, Islam” and that he has concluded that the “apparent goal of this man's message is to incite people to share his distorted view of Muslim people.” Such sweeping generalizations are, however, insufficient to enable the Panel to find a breach of the Human Rights Clauses. In order to reach such a conclusion, the Panel *must* find *concrete* examples of abusive or unduly discriminatory content. The Panel also needs such concrete examples to enable it to conclude that any religious broadcast has conveyed an attack on another religion. A careful review of the challenged episode has revealed only two such examples, both of which are discussed below.

The complainant has also said that the host “is entitled to believe whatever he likes in his own church or home, but he must not be allowed to spread such vile propaganda on the public airways [*sic*].” It is of course absolutely correct that different rules apply to comments that are *broadcast* on a Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications (CRTC) licensed programming undertaking and those that are made elsewhere, whether in the home or in, say, a public park. There is no doubt that there are restrictions that apply to the airwaves and that is as it should be. After all, the airwaves are the property of the *public*; they are *licensed* by the CRTC; and not every applicant merits a licence. Some of the restrictions on broadcast-able content (to coin a word) are found in the *Broadcasting Act* or the various Regulations administered by the CRTC (relating to radio, television, specialty services or pay television services). Others are found in the Codes administered by the CBSC. The bottom line is that it is the responsibility of the CBSC to evaluate the challenged program by using the foregoing tools and that is the purpose of this decision.

Opinion re the Treaty of Hudaibiya

When the host asked his invited guest to tell the audience some of the things he had discovered about Islam, Joel Richardson mentioned the 7th century Treaty of Hudaibiya, which Mohamed had entered into with the Quraish, then apparently the largest, most powerful tribe in the region. Although it is of Islamic religious lore that the treaty was intended to be of ten years duration, it was apparently breached within a couple of years of its conclusion. There are no doubt issues of interpretation related to the motivation for the creation of the treaty, which side it benefited (i.e. the Muslims or the Quraish), who breached it, why it was breached, and so on. It is possible, if not likely, that different thinkers take different lessons away from the story of the treaty and that there may be disagreement, even material disagreement, on the conclusions to be drawn from the breach of the treaty.

One of the interpretations proffered was that of Mr. Roth’s guest, namely, that Mohamed, “as the premier perfect example that they are to emulate,” had set as an example “this concept of breaking treaties.” From that example, the host extrapolated the following principle: “Did you get that? The precedent is: make a treaty when you’re weak, but, when you’re strong, break it!” He theorized that, in the relatively recent past, when the late Yasser Arafat spoke to an unidentified (by Roth) Arab audience about his peace treaty negotiations of the day with Israel (which appeared to be on the verge of success), the Palestinian leader had subterfuge in mind. Since Richardson provided no authority for his conclusion about what Arafat said on that occasion (nor did he even identify the date of the meeting or the group being addressed by Arafat), and may well have been overreaching, the Panel finds that attribution to be, at worst, on the edge of

acceptability, or, at best, little more than idle speculation. His reference to the Palestinian leader's comments was as follows:

The Treaty that I've just entered into with Israel, is merely the Treaty of Hudaibiya and in the same spirit have I entered into it. And it is through this Treaty, that we will continue our march to Jerusalem." In other words, "I only entered into this so that we can gain power. Our goals have not changed. When the time is right, we will march militarily and take Jerusalem."

The question for the Ontario Panel is whether that discussion and expression of opinion was full, fair and proper, as required by Clause 6 of the *CAB Code of Ethics*. Needless to say, the Panel takes no position on the underlying issue of the interpretation of the significance of the Treaty of Hudaibiya itself, its origins, its breach or its lessons for today. The issue for the Panel is limited to the treatment by the broadcaster of those issues. On that limited subject, the Panel finds no Code breach. The host and his guest had an opinion, indeed several opinions. As is not infrequently the case (in discussions involving precepts of *any* religion), there were shadings of perspective by the host and his guest that may be criticized as more tenuous and sceptical. In the absence of materially misleading underlying content (see the CBSC precedents that follow for instances of that nature), the Panel considers that Messrs. Roth and Richardson were entitled to hold and to air their point(s) of view. There was not, as in the decisions of this Panel in *CKTB-AM re the John Michael Show* (CBSC Decision 92/93-0170, February 15, 1994) or *CILQ-FM re John Derringer's "Tool of the Day"* (CBSC Decision 02/03-1465, February 10, 2004), any underlying *factual* basis on which Roth and Richardson erred in formulating their common position. Nor was there, as in the decision of this Panel in *CFRA-AM re an episode of the Lowell Green Show (the Qur'an)* (CBSC Decision 05/06-1380, May 18, 2006), any misquoted or misattributed Qur'anic reference.

Interestingly, Mr. Richardson does not provide Qur'anic support for any of his arguments or positions. Indeed, there might not be any such link. Furthermore, the guest might have been relying on the Hadith, a collection of sayings and stories about the Prophet, which are themselves of varying weight and dependability in Islamic scholarship. While the ordinary viewer might *suppose* that the Qur'an was the support for his perspective, Richardson has nowhere alleged that foundation. In the result, even if he has rendered some of his argumentation more easily defeasible by a cleric or individual more expert in the Qur'an than he, he has not breached any codified standard by any weak, contentious arguments he has made. On that basis, and with the authority of the precedents cited immediately above, the Panel concludes that there is no breach of Clause 6 of the *CAB Code of Ethics* in the broadcast of the opinions relating to the meaning, past and present, of the Treaty of Hudaibiya.

Opinion re the Muslims and the Jews

The other specific assertion of the challenged episode was the guest's statement that "Muslims believe it is their divine call to eliminate the Jewish people." While that statement is, strictly speaking, an *opinion*, it is a pointed, barbed accusation that *all* Muslims consider that it is a divine or sacred responsibility to kill *every* Jew, even when there are no more than a "few Jews left hiding behind a tree or a rock." Even *if* that were a solid, uncontradicted principle established by one or another of the learned texts that are cornerstones of the Islamic religion, the Panel considers that such an accusation directed in such general terms against, in effect, all Muslims is an abusive or unduly discriminatory comment that violates the proscription against such comments in the Human Rights Clauses of the *CAB Code of Ethics* and the *Equitable Portrayal Code*. This Panel reached a similar conclusion in its decision in *CILQ-FM re the Howard Stern Show ("Poland")* (CBSC Decision 97/98-1186, February 3, 1999). In the broadcast that was the subject of that decision, the host said, in remarkably similar language (referring to the underlying principle, rather than the precise words used): "Polacks hate Jews. It's their natural enemy just like dogs hate cats. [...] Yeah! Poles hate Jews. There used to be a lot of Jews in Poland but they took care of that." In concluding that that accusation breached Clause 2 of the *CAB Code of Ethics*, this Panel said:

[T]his accusation of an entire people that *they* hate any other national group, contrary to generally accepted principles, is likely to bring opprobrium on the "haters" rather than the "hated". It is in this sense abusively discriminatory vis-à-vis persons of Polish nationality.

In a correspondingly similar circumstance, in its decision in *CKTB-AM re the John Michael Show (Middle East Commentary)* (CBSC Decision 01/02-0651, June 7, 2002), this Panel addressed the substance of two episodes of the *John Michael Show*. In the first episode, which is the episode relevant to the present decision, the topic was the conflict in the Middle East between the Israelis and the Palestinians. In the course of the dialogue, the host repeatedly suggested, among other things, that all Palestinians hate all Jewish people. An example of such a statement was "[the Palestinians] are making sure their children hate, they only mix with other people who hate, and they don't hate for any other reason except they're Jewish." The Panel considered that

John Michael's blanket condemnation of all Palestinians as hating persons of the Jewish faith and wishing to drive Israel out of existence is excessive. That *some* Palestinians hold such views is undoubtedly true. This does not, however, justify the host in his absolutist perspective.

[...]

There can be no denying that there are Palestinians living in Israel, Canada, the United States and other nations, as well as in Gaza and the West Bank who believe in the right of Israel to exist and of Jewish families to be as secure in their lives as they, the Palestinian families, would wish to be in their own. Consequently, to tar *all Palestinians*

with a brush of hatred constitutes, in the view of the Ontario Panel, an unduly discriminatory comment based on their national or ethnic origin.

This Panel adopts the principle previously espoused by it in both of the above-referenced decisions. It concludes that the accusation by Roth's guest broadcast by Crossroads Television that all Muslims consider it "their divine call to eliminate the Jewish people" constitutes an abusive and unduly discriminatory comment about Muslims and a breach of the provisions of the Human Rights Clauses cited above.

Finally, parenthetically, and without drawing any conclusion regarding the codified standards on this account, the Panel notes the apparently casual assumption of the host and guest making Muslims and Palestinians synonymous. While Palestinians today are predominantly Muslim, there is a significant Christian minority, which generalizations risk mischaracterizing.

Broadcaster Responsiveness

In all CBSC decisions, the Council's Panels assess the broadcaster's responsiveness to the complainant. In the present instance, the Panel notes that the broadcaster's Program Manager responded carefully, if briefly, to the complaint raised by the complainant. While that response did not deter the complainant from filing a Ruling Request, the Panel considers that the Program Manager had focussed directly on the issue of the treatment of Islam that concerned the complainant. It is of course the case that, when any complainant does not share the broadcaster's perspective and so advises the CBSC, the result is that the complaint file is referred to either the Secretariat or a Panel for adjudication. In the end, it is the thoughtfulness of the response that determines whether the broadcaster has met the CBSC membership responsibility of responsiveness, and the Panel considers that CITS-TV has met that membership obligation in this instance.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE DECISION

CITS-TV is required to: 1) announce the decision, in the following terms, once during prime time within three days following the release of this decision and once more within seven days following the release of this decision during the time period in which *Sid Roth's It's Supernatural* was broadcast, but not on the same day as the first mandated announcement; 2) within the fourteen days following the broadcasts of the announcements, to provide written confirmation of the airing of the statement to the complainant who filed the Ruling Request; and 3) at that time, to provide the CBSC with

a copy of that written confirmation and with air check copies of the broadcasts of the two announcements which must be made by CITS-TV.

The Canadian Broadcast Standards Council has found that CITS-TV's broadcast of *Sid Roth's It's Supernatural* breached provisions of the Canadian Association of Broadcasters' (CAB) *Code of Ethics* and *Equitable Portrayal Code*. By alleging that "Muslims believe it is their divine call to eliminate" another nationally identifiable group, the CBSC has found that CITS-TV aired abusive and unduly discriminatory comments about Muslims, contrary to the provisions of the Human Rights Clauses of the *CAB Code of Ethics* and *Equitable Portrayal Code*.

This decision is a public document upon its release by the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council.