

NBC said to ease up on Veggie Tales edits: More references to God included

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Fans of *VeggieTales* and its animated singing and talking vegetables may notice a change in the episodes aired in NBC's Saturday morning cartoon lineup: they are not so heavily edited.

"The last batch of episodes are airing with very little editing," *Veggie Tales* creator Phil Vischer wrote in an e-mail to Religion News Service. "Not none whatsoever, but very nearly none whatsoever. Much less than earlier episodes."

Originally, NBC had asked for changes in four of 13 episodes—mostly editing out references to God and the Bible. Vischer said he was not thrilled with the changes, but was happy to have the cartoons on network television.

Vischer said he had "no idea" why many recent shows have had fewer edits, but Paul Irwin, president of the American Bible Society, said his organization has sponsored "several hundred thousand" complaint letters to NBC and its parent company, General Electric. "NBC has learned that this is not a matter of casual interest to the people of this country," Irwin said.

However, Terry Pefanis, chief operating officer of Big Idea—the company that created *VeggieTales*—said NBC has been pretty consistent from the outset, and never asked for all God references to be taken out.

"God has been in the shows all along—just not as many references as in the original shows," Pefanis said. "When you watch a show like *Minnesota Cuke*, it's still clear Samson got his strength from God. You can tell it's the Old Testament story."

For its part, NBC said none of its standards have changed. The network still abides by an episode-by-episode review.

“NBC is committed to the positive messages and universal values of *VeggieTales*,” the network said in a statement. “Our goal is to reach as broad an audience as possible with these positive messages, while being careful not to advocate any one religious point of view.” *-Religion News Service*