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ABSTRACT

WHAT YOU SEE IS WHAT YOU GET: A MEDIA SEMINAR FOR THE RENEWAL OF CHRISTIAN VALUES

by

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Title: WHAT YOU SEE IS WHAT YOU GET: A MEDIA SEMINAR FOR THE RENEWAL OF CHRISTIAN VALUES

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Date completed: June 1992

Problem

North American Seventh-day Adventists who spend considerable time viewing television appear to be increasingly patterning their lives after those lifestyles portrayed on commercial programs, consequently experiencing some of the problems (e.g., divorce) that secular individuals experience, yet tend to reject those who question television, nor seek to understand the impact television viewing has on character development, spirituality, and lifestyle values.
Method

Using recent scientific research as a basis, a seminar was developed that was designed to inform church members of the impact that indiscriminate viewing of commercial television programs has on character development and personal lifestyle values.

Results

The seminar was presented three different times with an attendance of 83, which represents 22 percent of the published membership of the participating churches. Prior to attending the seminar, participants (1) viewed varied amounts of television, (2) did not necessarily exercise discrimination in program selection, and (3) were not completely aware of the principles and standards that can guide in program selection. Participants were unaware of much of the findings of recent research regarding the impact of television on the human psyche. Participants responded favorably, and responses on the final questionnaire indicated that participants (1) had either reduced or eliminated their viewing, (2) had begun exercising discrimination in selecting programs, (3) were following specific principles in their selection of programs, and (4) evidenced a greatly increased familiarity with the findings of recent research.
Conclusions

Television has been characterized as one of the most difficult subjects to address in the present-day church. It is also one of the most needed subjects. This project demonstrated that it is possible to successfully address television in a positive manner provided (1) there is a solid basis to what is being presented, and (2) presentations are made in a non-dogmatic way.
WHAT YOU SEE IS WHAT YOU GET: A MEDIA SEMINAR
FOR THE RENEWAL OF CHRISTIAN VALUES

A Project Report
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
John Glass
June 1992
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commitment are largely responsible for the successful completion of this project. Now that it is finished, shall we go play with Dad for a change?

Finally, I wish to express my gratitude for the guidance and help I received from a loving Heavenly Father who desires all of His children to improve themselves.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Project Task

The task of this project was to design a weekend seminar program suitable for assisting Seventh-day Adventist Church members in understanding the impact of television on (1) the formation of character, and (2) the spiritual life, including lifestyle values.

Justification of the Project

In the prayer recorded in John 17, Jesus prayed for His disciples and those who would believe on Him through their message: "They are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one" (John 17:14-15). Part of this prayer has been paraphrased to read, "We (Christians) are in the world but not of the world." The sentiments of this statement appear to depict the role of the Christian in society: present in, but not a part of society. This is a balance that appears to be difficult for individual Christians to maintain.

The Apostle Peter stated it this way:

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may
declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light (1 Pet 2:9).

Number twenty-one of the fundamental beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church reads as follows:

We are called to be a godly people who think, feel, and act in harmony with the principles of heaven. For the Spirit to recreate in us the character of our Lord we involve ourselves only in those things which will produce Christlike purity, health, and joy in our lives. This means that our amusement and entertainment should meet the highest standards of Christian taste and beauty. . . . we are to engage in whatever brings our thoughts and bodies into the discipline of Christ, who desires our wholesomeness, joy, and goodness.1

The Apostle Paul wrote, "And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory" (2 Cor 3:18). The principle inherent in these words is by beholding we become changed. For those who are conscious of personal sin and discouraged over the slowness of their personal growth away from it, these words convey hope: it is possible for sinners to become saints. We become changed into a likeness of God's glory by beholding that glory. However, if we behold something else, we become changed into a likeness of whatever it is we are beholding. This principle applies particularly to visual entertainment.

The most common means of visual entertainment and amusement present in North American Seventh-day Adventist

homes today is television. VCR systems, cable, and satellite dishes provide home access to practically everything produced by the entertainment industry. Although there are a number of viewing options that are compatible with the Christian faith (e.g., public and Christian channels), most program offerings, particularly those on commercial channels, tend to be inimical to Christian values.¹

Movies, particularly, appear to be antagonistic to the Christian faith. Take, for instance, the movies broadcast in the Salt Lake City market during the week of June 29-July 6, 1991. Of 606 movies scheduled for broadcast as printed in the Ogden Standard-Examiner, 123 were rated as depicting "adult" situations, 157 were rated as having objectionable language, 70 were rated as displaying nudity, and 111 were rated as showing gratuitous violence. Even those films ostensibly concerned with biblical themes were not necessarily appropriate for viewing by Christians: the film *King David* was listed with all four of the above ratings. Casually perusing this list of 606 movies from a Christian perspective leads to the conclusion that the number of films appropriate for viewing by Seventh-day

¹It needs to be remembered that thinking that is based on the evolutionary hypothesis is taken for granted in many public television productions, and Christian channels such as Trinity Broadcasting Network present programs with theology which Seventh-day Adventists consider to be in error.
Adventist Christians is very small. Many of the films were either innocuous or devoid of any real spiritual value. Most were contrary to Christian principles and values, and a number were blatantly so.

Careful discrimination is necessary in order to select those programs which will enhance the Christian faith in the mind and life of the viewer, rather than erode it. Personal observations led me to conclude that many church members, in particular the youth, were not only viewing regular commercial broadcasts in an indiscriminate manner, but were frequently renting videos of an objectionable character. Conversations that I overheard indicated a marked familiarity with recent film releases.

It appeared to me that these individuals were becoming progressively more integrated into society and less attached to the church. Their lifestyles and values seemed more in tune with that modeled on the screen than with that which is recorded in Scripture. My perceptions led me to believe that these members were consequently living spiritually emaciated lives in which they were increasingly experiencing the problems and heartaches that appear to accompany the values and lifestyle of the world. They were not just in the world--they were becoming of the world. Considering the richness of life available to Christians even in this life, I desired to see my members appreciating
and enjoying the superior lifestyle that was available to them.¹

Throughout the course of this project I have frequently heard the assertion (and its related sentiments) that television affects the individual in neither a positive or negative manner. These thoughts are akin to the old adage, "in one ear and out the other." However, this type of thinking is wrong at this point, for, as the prophet Jeremiah wrote, "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? 'I the Lord search the heart and examine the mind'" (Jer 17:9-10). David gave assent to this when he wrote: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psa 139:23, 24). Spiritual honesty is essential for correctly assessing the influence of the screen.

The fact that I had begun making these observations is undoubtedly due to my completion of a paper ("Television and the Church") for the Doctor of Ministry class, The Church and Society. My personal conclusion from that study

¹Fatness is one of the terms used to characterize the life of the child of God. For instance, "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips" (Ps 63:5, KJV). The NIV reads: "My soul will be satisfied as with the richest of foods; with singing lips my mouth will praise you." It is my personal observation that regular viewers are not noted for verbally praising God.
was that regular, indiscriminate television viewing did pose a serious challenge to the maintenance of personal Christianity by the individual church member.

I increasingly sensed a need for communicating a knowledge of the media's impact on spirituality to church members. Yet I observed that as voices were raised from time to time that were perceived as being unfriendly to the media, only a few appreciated those voices, whereas most immediately dismissed them as representing an extreme position. Was it possible to communicate information on this subject in a mode which would not be immediately dismissed out of hand or characterized as extreme?

As I reflected on the many hours I had spent in front of the screen, I was forced to admit that my personal experience attested to the truthfulness of homelitician Kevin Perrotta's assertions:

Most Christians find it difficult to develop a daily awareness of God as sovereign Lord who holds the initiative in his dealings with us. This difficulty is worsened as we immerse ourselves in the television view of the world, where there is absent an awareness of God's ability to work his will in every circumstance of life. . . . To spend many

---

1One example of this is the following: "The breakdown of morals really begins in the home and the church. The wicked, perverted principles of Satan have filled the minds of our boys and girls from their earliest years. How can one hour of Sabbath School each week counteract the twenty or thirty television hours of implicit (and often explicit) instruction in sin?" Joe Crews, Enemy at the Gate (Frederick, Md.: Amazing Facts) 1987, 98-99.

2For a summary of my personal relationship with television see Appendix A.
hours with television is to fail to love God. At some point between our turning on the television for a little entertainment after dinner and our turning it off at the end of the evening, we enter a receptive communion with the images and messages of a secular culture. We begin with relaxing, and end with loving the world.\(^1\)

The Doctor of Ministry degree requires the completion of a project designed to address a problem encountered in ministry. The problem I selected was that posed by the indiscriminate viewing of television. I set for myself the task of designing a seminar which would, as presented in the Purpose stated above, facilitate church members' understanding of the impact of television on character formation and spirituality. However, I did not wish to be perceived as representing an extreme position on the media with resultant lauding or criticizing. Furthermore, I desired to emphasize the unique values that make the Christian lifestyle so worth living and maintaining. I wanted seminar participants to appreciate anew the inestimable value of genuine Christianity.

Following the approval of this project by the Seminary Committee, I began my literature review. Occasionally I had the opportunity of sharing some of my initial findings with various parishioners and I found their interest and responses very positive. Every individual expressed a desire to learn more.

Description of the Project

The first phase of this project was a literature review of all pertinent published scientific material. A member of the Seminary Committee had asked how I would limit myself in this regard and I had answered in a rather nonchalant manner that I thought the material itself would suggest its own limitations. I wish I had focused more closely on this question; the literature review proved to be an enormous undertaking—there are several thousand published articles, reports, and books. A considerable number of researchers have been curious about television's impact and have been designing and conducting experiments in an endeavor to understand what is transpiring when individuals view the screen. The result of their research represents a large body of published literature. The research that this project represents is a rather general overview of the available literature. My suggestion is that the reader pursue any further interest within narrowly defined, specific areas.

The second phase of this project was a review of published Christian literature which not only examined the impact of television on the individual, but also addressed the challenge of the Christian's living in society without becoming of that society (with a consequent loss of distinctiveness).
The third phase of this project was a review of Scripture texts relevant to the impact of the visual on the character, the functioning of the mind, and Christian principles and values. These texts were then assembled and organized into a format similar to the "proof-text" method of Bible studies.

The fourth phase of this project was a review of the writings of Ellen G. White for comments relevant to this subject. Although television was nonexistent in her day, the theater and related amusements were in existence, and she considered them unsuitable for the Christian to attend. Many of her comments relative to these do have a direct application to television viewing.

The fifth phase of this project was the preparation of appropriate visual materials for seminar presentations and printed materials that would be studied during the seminar. Over the several years that I did my literature review I assembled several hundred pages of quotations from which I drew the main body of this project. From that body I selected those citations which I considered the most meaningful (see Appendix B). Each of these citations was then enlarged and prepared as an overhead transparency.

Early in the project, Dr. Sarah Terian, now of Columbia Union College, kindly assisted me in preparing a questionnaire (see Appendix C) to administer to seminar participants. Participants filled this out at three
different times: (1) at the beginning of the seminar, (2) at the conclusion of the seminar, and (3) three months following the seminar.

One of my initial ideas for the seminar was to present the film *So Many Voices*, produced a number of years ago by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. I also planned to prepare a number of short video clips of actual programs and advertisements which would serve to illustrate the various points that I would be emphasizing. As the seminar dates neared I discovered that this film had been withdrawn from general circulation. I also began to realize that time constraints and a lack of technical equipment and expertise were going to prevent me from preparing appropriate video materials.

In seeking suitable alternatives I learned that Word, Inc., of Waco, Texas, had just released a new video entitled *They Lied to Us*. Narrated by Rick Buhler, Christian author and pastor and host of the nationally syndicated radio program *From the Heart* (based in Los Angeles), this video presents interviews with a number of individuals (including Rick Stanley, one of Elvis Presley's stepbrothers, who is now a practicing Christian). The video examines the "gospel" of the media, such as the message of pleasure through sex or drugs, and through various interviews, points out that this gospel is false. I was delighted to find that the video included the sort of short
clips I would have prepared. The video concluded with an appeal for viewers to accept Jesus and the true gospel. The video was well done.

Next, I endeavored to interview individuals who had experience in making public presentations on television. Dr. Richard Fredericks of Columbia Union College provided invaluable insights and suggestions which enhanced my seminar.

The final phases of the project were the preparation of a seminar presentation outline and the conducting of the seminar in three different locations, an outline of which follows:

**Friday Evening: 7-9 P.M.**

Welcome and opening prayer
Introduction of seminar
Explanation and distribution of seminar questionnaire
Overview of the seminar program
Introductory overheads (#1-#13, Appendix B)
Division of participants into program preference groups
Writing of "classic" story line
Report to main group by groups
Video: *They Lied to Us*
Concluding prayer

The main group selected several different types of favorite programs such as westerns, soap operas, or quiz shows, the number being determined by the number of
participants. Participants then were divided into smaller groups, each of which would work with one type of program. Individuals joined the groups according to their personal preferences and then the groups were assigned to write a story line for a typical program of that genre.

This part of the seminar was enjoyed by all the participants and produced a good bit of humor. One example of a story line that was written by the group which enjoyed westerns, was, in my estimation, equal to anything Hollywood has yet produced: The program opens with a funeral for a rancher. The banker (crooked, of course) is in "cahoots" with a band of robbers and they attempt to swindle the widow (very beautiful, of course) out of her ranch. The widow suffers several financial reverses (engineered by the banker and company) and reaches a desperate situation where she does not know what to do. Complicating the situation is a sheriff (also very crooked) who is attempting to get the heroine to compromise her moral integrity in exchange for help in saving her ranch.

About this time a bounty hunter (very good looking, of course) drifts into town. He and the widow meet and become "friends." The jealous sheriff makes things very difficult for him. He learns of the situation and decides to rescue the poor widow. He contrives several dirty "tricks" which trap the banker, robbers, and sheriff. There is a big shoot-out resulting in the rescue of the widow and
her ranch. The story ends with the bounty hunter turning down the proffered love of the widow and riding off into the sunset to deliver someone else in distress during the next show.

The video produced an immediate quieting of participants and gave rise to some very serious reflection on personal viewing and relation to the media. Several older, long-established church members later voiced objection to the video. They felt that it focused undue attention on what they considered to be wrong values and activities.

Continuing the seminar outline:

Sabbath Morning: 11 A.M.
Sermon: "Dancing Phosphors" (see Appendix D)
Potluck and Fellowship: 12–2 P.M.
Sabbath Afternoon: 2–6 P.M.
Session One: "The Television Impact"
Transparencies #14–#54 and discussion
Break: 3–3:15 P.M.
Session Two: "Values in Conflict"
Dividing into program preference groups
Distribution and dividing up of Spiritual Counsel texts (see Appendix E)
Study of Bible texts for values by small groups
Small groups report in to large group
Listing of values on chalkboard
Analysis of story lines from perspective of values
Rewriting of story lines to reflect Christian values
Small groups report in
Discussion: How television supplants Christian values (see Appendix F)
Break: 4:30-4:45 P.M.

Session Three: "Television at the Practical Level"
Discussion: Successful viewing strategies
Suggestions from the experts (see Appendix G)
Overheads: #55-#79
Questions, answers, and comments
Bibliography distribution (see Appendix H)
Questionnaire
Seminar evaluation sheet (see Appendix I)
Conclusion and Closing Prayer

The seminar was conducted three different times.
The first time was February 22 and 23, 1991, at the Ogden Seventh-day Adventist Church, Ogden, Utah. The Ogden church is unique in having a Spanish-speaking congregation which regularly meets on the lower level of the church. Several members from the Spanish congregation attended, so in reality, four different congregations were involved. The second time the seminar was conducted was March 1 and 2, 1991, at the Elko Seventh-day Adventist Church, Elko, Nevada. The third presentation was March 15 and 16 at the West Valley Seventh-day Adventist Church, West Valley, Utah.
The seminar was announced via church bulletins, oral announcements on Sabbath mornings, and by personal telephone calls. Attendance was strictly optional.

The questionnaire was administered to participants three different times: first, at the beginning of the Friday evening session; second, at the conclusion of the Sabbath afternoon sessions; and third, by mail three months later on June 3, 1991. The questionnaire was designed to provide an indication of the frame of reference participants were approaching the seminar with regard to viewing preferences and habits and personal devotional patterns and habits. It was also designed to indicate the relative satisfaction or dissatisfaction that participants were experiencing in their daily lives. I expected that those participants who were heavier viewers would be experiencing a lessened quality of life in comparison with those participants whose viewing was lighter. This expectation was based on the work of Robert Kubey and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi.¹ I also expected participants would reduce their viewing times and become more discriminating in their program selections as a consequence of attending the seminar, thus experiencing an enhanced quality of life. This would be reflected not only in their reported

perceptions, but also in the amount of time spent in personal, daily devotions.

I also expected participants to become very aware not only of technical information relative to television's impact on the human psyche, but also to have learned specific principles that they could and would follow in relating to television in a Christian manner.

The Seminar Name

The original title for this project as listed in the Project Proposal was: "Media and the Good Life: A Seminar for the Renewal of Christian Values." This title expressed my personal concern for emphasizing the positives of the Christian faith and lifestyle, rather than the negatives of the screen. While making initial arrangements for conducting the seminar in Elko, Nevada, this title came under discussion in a telephone conversation between myself and the pastor of the Elko church, Greg Hamilton. His sentiments were that this title was not "catchy" enough. He suggested as a title the computer term WYSIWYG, What You See Is What You Get. This title struck me as another way of stating the foundation text and principle of this project: By beholding we become changed (2 Cor 3:18). Realizing the realities of marketing the seminar, I accepted his suggestion and renamed the seminar "What You See Is What You Get."
Comments on Project Resources

The reader will readily note in the succeeding chapters that there are a plethora of citations included in this report. These citations represent different types of authorities and have been included for different reasons. These authorities consist of:

1. Inspired sources, which include the Scriptures and the writings of Ellen G. White. I consider these to have divine teaching authority for the Church and individual Christian.

2. Published scientific studies of original research by reputable researchers, which have been cited for obvious reasons.\(^1\) Examples of these authorities include Albert Bandura, George Comstock, Aimee Dorr, George Gerbner, the teams of Robert Kubey and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Dorothy Singer and Jerome Singer, and Tannis Beth MacWilliams.


\(^1\)Please note that some of the citations included in this project refer to other studies in the A.P.A. style of listing only the researcher and date of publication. Complete reference information for each of these is included in the bibliography.
4. Publications representing investigative fact-finding (i.e., much of what has been done in this project). Examples of this type of resource include Marie Winn's *Plug-In Drug*, John Condry's *Psychology of Television*, and Frank Mankiewicz and Joel Swerdlow's *Remote Control*.

5. Single articles and collections of articles such as William F. Fore's articles, Douglas Cater and Richard Adler's *Television as a Social Force*, and Ben T. Logan's *Television Awareness Training*. Although the articles contained in these and similar publications represent more popular writing rather than strictly scientific literature, I consider the input these articles have to be insightful and meaningful to someone seeking to become more knowledgeable regarding the impact of television on the psyche. The authors of these sources can be categorized as television's critics.

6. Having been a preaching professional for over twenty years I tend to view things from a homiletical perspective. Several of the sources cited in this project are noted primarily for homiletical comment rather than scientific content. Examples of this type of resource include Mary Lewis Coakley's *Rated X*, Joe Crews' *Enemy at the Gate*, Don Feder's "For TV, Money Is the Bottom Line," and Brian Jones' and Kevin Perrotta's articles.

In reviewing one of the earlier drafts of this project the members of my doctoral committee suggested that
each chapter should have been written in such a way as to
clearly distinguish between these varied sources, which had
not been done at that point. For instance, scientific
studies should have been cited first, followed by critics'
comments. In subsequent revisions I have attempted to
specify the nature of the resources that I am citing, but I
may not have always achieved this objective. It is hoped
that the reader will be able to generally distinguish the
nature of the resource from the wording and context of each
citation.

One additional observation will perhaps assist the
reader in understanding this project: the resources that
have been cited in the body of this report have been
published over a span of perhaps thirty years. Although I
have attempted to give primary emphasis to the most recent
literature, many of the earlier resources cited still have
validity. Research in this field continues and, if
anything, serves to attest the findings of earlier research.

In chapter 1 we will take a cursory look at the
world of television found on the screen, and then in the
following chapters examine television's impact in specific
areas.
CHAPTER II

THE TELEVISION WORLD

General Information

In 1926 J. L. Baird of England first demonstrated true television by electrically transmitting moving pictures. Two years later he gave the first practical demonstration of color broadcasts. In 1932 the Radio Corporation of America (RCA) demonstrated all-electronic television, and in 1941 the United States began regular television broadcasting. Regular color broadcasts began in 1954.

Following the lifting of wartime restrictions in 1946, the sale of television receivers gave impetus to the development of television broadcasting as an industry. In 1949 there were one million receivers in use in the United States; two years later the number had grown to ten million. By 1959 there were fifty million sets in service. Color receivers began to be widely used around 1964, and by the early 1970s over twenty million color sets were in use. Today, virtually every home in the United States has at least one set, and many have several. One estimate is that more Americans have television sets than have refrigerators.
or indoor plumbing, with only about 2% of United States households being without TV.¹

Usually a new invention, especially as expensive an invention as a television set was when it was first introduced, takes time to catch on. This was not the case with television. More people purchased a set and in a shorter period of time than had been the case with any previous invention.²

Viewing

Time Spent Viewing

Not only have the number of television sets increased over the years, but the amount of time that those sets are on each day has increased. Research done in 1960 revealed that the average time that a television was on in a U.S. household of that time was five hours and six minutes. In 1972 this time had increased to six hours, two minutes. By 1984 the time had again increased to seven hours, eight minutes.³ Although the time spent viewing by each member of a household is substantially less than this, individual viewing time has also been increasing, which, as far back as

¹Kubey and Csikszentmihalyi, 24, 150.


1978 surpassed three hours per day. Depending on age and sex, the time people presently (1989) spend watching television averages about four hours a day.

Viewing begins in infancy and as early as nine months of age children are already watching the set as frequently as an hour and a half a day. Between the ages of eight and early adolescence viewing increases to nearly four hours a day, which levels off in the later teens at 2 to 3 hours per day.

Teenaged girls tend to watch the least of any group in the country, whereas women over 55 tend to watch the most. Very intelligent children tend to watch more than others, and in spite of back yards, suburban children average an hour a week more than city children.

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2Condry, 32, 33.

3Liebert and Sprafkin, 5.


5Liebert and Sprafkin, 5.

6Condry, 39.

channels that are available the more people watch,\(^1\) and the availability of video options also increases the total time spent with television.\(^2\)

As far as total time spent viewing is concerned, one estimate is that by the time a child reaches the age of 18 they will have spent more time watching television than in any other single activity besides sleep.\(^3\) The average high school graduate has spent 50 percent more time viewing television than attending school.\(^4\) Putting this in a different way, Americans have about five and a half hours a day of free or discretionary time, of which nearly half is being spent watching television.\(^5\)

### Viewing as Shared Activity

One question that has been raised by some researchers is: *How do people watch when they are viewing television? Is it an exclusive activity?* According to

\(^1\)Condry, p. 36.


\(^3\)Liebert and Sprafkin, ix.


\(^5\)Kubey and Csikszentmihalyi, xi, 1. According to these researchers, the total time spent by the world's population in viewing amounts to three and a half billion hours per day.
George Comstock, individuals have been filmed in their homes and these films show that viewers' attention varies with what is shown. He characterizes viewing with the terms "discontinuous," "nonexclusive," and "interrupted."¹ John Condry points out that from his review of the available literature (1989), the amount of time spent actually looking at the set is related to the age of the viewer and the content of what is shown on the screen.² One study of the time children spend with television reveals that five-year-olds look at the screen only 67 percent of the time they are in the viewing area.³

In 1962 Dr. Herbert J. Gans of Columbia University's Center for Policy Research studied working-class families of suburban Levittown and Boston's West End in an attempt to determine viewing behavior. He discovered that people generally left the set on, using it to provide background "company" much as a radio is used. Sets were usually left on even when entertaining friends, with everyone watching the first two minutes of a show, the two minutes just before what was then the middle commercial break, and the final two


²Condry, 149.

³Liebert and Sprafkin, 25.
minutes to see how the programs ended.¹ I did not find any research published since 1962 that would indicate that this viewing behavior has changed.

Tannis MacBeth Williams had the unparalleled opportunity of studying a community when television was first introduced to it. She concluded from her study that interruption of viewing and time-sharing with other activities were typical viewing patterns.² This, from a community in which television (because of its novelty) would be expected to absorb the attention of people far more than in communities where it has long been present.

Reasons for Viewing

In 1983 Irene F. Goodman noted that people were using television as a companion, a scapegoat (it is easier and less dangerous to fight over than more difficult, real problems), and as a reward or punishment.³ Television was being used to not only regulate peoples' environment, but


also in an attempt to control other family members.¹ In 1972 D. McQuail published a study² in which he concluded that the reasons people have for viewing fall into four broad categories: (1) to escape boredom, (2) to have something to talk about with others, (3) to compare their own life and experience with that which is seen, and (4) to keep in touch with what is going on in the world. During the course of this project I heard these same reasons expressed by some participants.

Of all the reasons given for watching television, however, the main one seems to be a desire to be entertained. George Comstock writes that this is the primary motive of most Americans. He cites two different studies which indicate that three times as many people watch for relaxation rather than to "kill time," and that favorite programs are almost invariably in the entertainment category.³ David Littlejohn comments that most people have

¹Ibid.


come to expect television to provide light entertainment.¹

There are individuals who claim that they do not enjoy viewing television, but studies have shown that they watch about as much as those who say they do enjoy it.²

Television began as an electronic invention but quickly became a consumer commodity. It has become a mass-entertainment medium that is now composed of part radio, part cinema, part theater, and part athletic event,³ which children love for

The passive pleasure of being entertained, living a fantasy, taking part vicariously in thrill play, identifying with exciting and attractive people, getting away from real-life problems and escaping real-life boredom—in other words, all the gratifications that come from having a superlative means of entertainment in one's living room, at one's command.⁴


In his book *Why We Watch Them: Interpreting TV Shows*, William Kuhns quotes the well-known news commentator, Edward R. Murrow, as saying (in 1954) that nothing that went over the screen could survive unless it entertained in some way.¹ Kuhns refers to what is called the Beverly Hillbillies' Law: "In commercial television, entertainment tends to drive out non-entertainment."²

Adding a negative note to these comments, Kuhns cites Gilbert Seldes³ who links being entertained with escapism. Seldes maintains that there is a tension in the American viewing public: we are supposedly the happiest people on earth, but we are also the most frustrated. He thinks that our happiness supposedly comes from our illusions of wealth, comfort, security, and convenience. Yet every so often reality breaks through these illusions and we become frustrated. And so we seek escape: usually parking ourselves in front of our television screen. Harlan Kleiman, a former avant-garde, off-Broadway producer now making programs for various pay-TV services, uses a


²Kuhns, 13. Italics his.

³Ibid., 33.
different term than "escape." He says, "People just want to be diverted. TV is chewing gum for the eyes."¹

Viewing and Guilt

Although most people enjoy being entertained and although television viewing seems to be an integral part of contemporary life, a number of researchers have found that television viewing produces a sense of guilt or shame in those watching. As far back as 1970 William Kuhns commented that he thought that one of the reasons for this sense of guilt lay in our Puritan ancestry and its strong work-ethic.² Commenting on this, John Condry (1989) points out that this sense of guilt may account for the discrepancy between the individual viewing time reported by people and that reported by survey companies: something on the order of two hours per day. He also thinks that guilt may be one reason that television is not officially discussed much in schools. He adds that guilt appears to be confined chiefly to the middle class.³

What happens to peoples' attitudes as viewing time increases? Michael Morgan writes that from the available data it appears that heavier viewers describe their lives as


²Kuhns, 6.

³Condry, 47.
being less fulfilling and more depressing. They report that their lives are not "pleasant," "secure," "peaceful," or "comfortable." Instead of "great," they are far more inclined to say that their lives are "lousy."¹

Robert Kubey (Rutgers University) and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (University of Chicago) addressed this question in their studies (1990). In one of their experiments they gave beepers to individuals who, whenever the beepers sounded, were to record in a log or diary (1) what they were doing at that moment, and (2) how they perceived their life. The beepers sounded eight different times each day (randomly selected by computer) over the period of a week. They found that viewers who were spending a lot of time in front of the screen were using television as a means by which they were ordering their experience and coping with negative effect. These viewers tended to perceive solitude more negatively than lighter viewers and used television to fill up their loneliness and burdensome idle time. They found watching less rewarding than viewers who watched less. Kubey and Csikszentmihalyi discovered that some viewers became dependent on (addicted to?) the "ordered stimuli" of viewing and became increasingly incapable of filling leisure time without external aids.

These researchers concluded that television offers an alternative life that could be very attractive, especially to those who "dislike their own inner experience." They concluded that the factors that contributed to greater, less discriminate viewing were: (1) loneliness, (2) availability of free time, (3) emotional difficulties, (4) youth, (5) low income, and (6) lack of education. They also found that greater viewing is far less rewarding and satisfying than light viewing and is related to reports of diminished challenge, skill, control, and alertness, as well as increased difficulty in concentrating.¹

Objections

Although being entertained is ordinarily an enjoyable experience, not everyone is pleased with the content of televised entertainment. Conservative critic Reo M. Christenson comments:

When the next Gibbon writes about the Decline and Fall of America, he won't be talking about communism; the entertainment industry will be the villain. It is winning America's heart while ravaging its soul.²

Christenson is convinced that the entertainment industry is the leading force in America in undermining essential moral

¹Kubey and Csikszentmihaly, 155-174, 135, 137-138.

values. Rather than strengthening our inner good impulses, its main interest is in making "fast bucks" by "appealing to our dark side—our fascination with violence and illicit sex."¹ I think he is right.

Martin Quigley, one of the authors of the Motion Picture Production Code, is cited as saying that without crime and sex as subjects, there would not be any popular entertainment.² Violence and illicit sex may be part of the real world that we live in, as well as being a part of the world of television entertainment seen every day. But is the world that we see on the screen the real world?

The TV World

A Professional World

For some, television is their reality. If it is not on the screen it is not quite real.³ However, the world of television does not necessarily accord with reality. For instance, according to a study done by George Gerbner,⁴ the world of television is very heavily peopled with five kinds

¹Ibid., 24.


of individuals: (1) policemen, (2) doctors, (3) lawyers, (4) judges, and (5) criminals. There are very few clerical workers, salespeople, artists, or engineers. Blue-collar workers, who comprise the largest segment of the real-world working force, are largely invisible. In addition to this, the lives of portrayed characters are far more exciting and glamorous than what the average viewer lives. "People in movies and television seldom pay bills, or go to the bathroom, or do the thousand ordinary dull things that the rest of us have to do in order to get through an average day."\(^1\) What kind of world do we encounter on the screen?

A Wealthy World

On the screen men appear to be concerned primarily with strength and performance ("What can my body do?") while women are concerned with beauty and youth ("How does my body look?").\(^2\) Although a number of recent programs portray individuals living at a lower or middle-income level, most dramatic programs still present their main characters as living in very luxurious surroundings. As Condry observes:

When the producers of television want to show an average middle-class person living in an average middle-class home, they rent the house of a

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\(^1\)Condry, 59.

millionaire in Beverly Hills or Brentwood, or one of the many wealthy neighborhoods in Los Angeles. For most people, however, this type of setting does not accord with their actual life situation.

An Intellectual World

Michael Novak writes that television is preeminently a world of intellectuals.

[For most people in the United States television is the medium through which they meet an almost solid phalanx of college-educated persons, professionals, experts, thinkers, authorities, and "with it", "swinging" celebrities: i.e., people unlike themselves, who are drawn from the top ten percent of the nation in terms of educational attainment.]

He notes that particularly in commercials, intellectuals are cast in the place of "experts" who are out to enlighten the unenlightened about such things as weather, aspirin, toothpaste, and the "correct attitudes to have with respect to race, poverty, social conflict, and new moralities." In contrast to these experts, of course, are the ignorant that are being informed in all those commercials. Real life, of course, is peopled with many different intellectuals and professionals. However, Novak's point is valid in considering the screen proportion of intellectuals to nonintellectuals.

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1Ibid., 70.

2Novak, 18.

3Ibid.
Although this study concerned itself primarily with commercial television programming, Novak's point is especially true for noncommercial channels such as public television and the "Discovery" channel: programs on these channels do involve a large number of highly educated individuals. The presence of these professionals provides an opportunity for ordinary individuals who may not have received a higher education to find real learning opportunities via the non-commercial programming found on these other channels.

A World of "Soaps"

One type of program presented on television whose content has come to be some people's reality is the soap opera. Studies of soap opera content reveal "a world in which characters are many times more likely than 'everyday people' to be involved in divorce, affairs, illegitimacy, and criminal activities... Relationships are precarious."

According to Tania Modleski, a typical story line goes as follows:

Will Bill find out that his wife's sister's baby is really his by artificial insemination? Will his wife submit to her sister's blackmail attempts, or will she finally let Bill know the truth? If he discovers the truth, will this lead to another

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nervous breakdown, causing him to go back to Springfield General where his ex-wife and his illegitimate daughter are both doctors and sworn enemies.\(^1\)

Commenting on problems dealt with by soap operas, particularly the show "Dallas," Ien Ang writes that in soaps conflicts and catastrophes assume grotesque shapes which are blown out to improbable proportions.

None of the following sensational problems has not yet occurred in Dallas: murder, suspicion of murder, marital crisis, adultery, alcoholism, rare disease, miscarriage, rape, airplane accident, car accident, kidnapping, corruption, psychiatric treatment, and so on.\(^2\)

He thinks that soap operas would not be able to exist without all of the above.

Although soap operas focus their story lines predominately on adults, occasionally babies are part of the plot. Rose Goldsen comments (1977) that if this is the case the child is presented as both threat (perhaps to the mother's life) and victim (the odds are that the baby will be weak and sickly). She comments that emotions are reduced "to the level of the cheery eulogies to Comet and big-machine Dash that interrupt incessantly."\(^3\)

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\(^2\) Ang, 60, 63, 76-77.

In spite of such obvious distortions of real life, some people immerse themselves in soap operas, which, distorted or not, thus become the world they live in. Soap opera characters become real people to these individuals rather than fictional portrayals. Occasional "urban legends" report that when the actors or actresses who play soap opera roles meet their viewers in real life, their viewers relate to them not as individuals but as the characters they play.

Neil Postman, Professor of Communication Arts and Sciences at New York University and editor of Et Cetera magazine, has noted this apparent molding of real life by screen portrayals. He writes:

How television stages the world becomes the model for how the world is properly to be staged. It is not merely that on the television screen entertainment is the metaphor for all discourse. It is that off the screen the same metaphor prevails. ¹

Marie Winn's *The Plug-In Drug* (1978) discussed research findings through the middle 1970s. Since then various authors have continued to discuss her book. She comments on the impact of television's distortion and unreality:

The mistaken notions arise from repeated viewing of fictional programs performed in a realistic style within a realistic framework. These programs, it appears, begin to take on a confusing reality for the viewer, just as a very powerful dream may

sometimes create confusion about whether a subsequent event was a dream or whether it actually happened. . . . once television fantasy becomes incorporated into the viewer's reality, the real world takes on a tinge of fantasy—or dullness because it fails to confirm the expectations created by televised "life." The separation between the real and the unreal becomes blurred; all of life becomes more dreamlike as the boundaries between the real and the unreal merge.  

An Unreal World

Dr. George Gerbner and his colleagues at the Annenberg School of Communication, University of Pennsylvania, have extensively studied the impact of television on its viewers. One of the questions they have been interested in answering is what happens to a viewer's perceptions of reality as a consequence of viewing? They analyze the content of television programming annually. Then, using the results as a guide, they present viewers with questions and a range of answers that present a choice between statistics approximating the real world and those approximating the world of television. (These statistics describe such things as the risk of falling victim to an assault or the number of people in society involved as law-enforcement professionals.) Their findings consistently show that heavy viewers select statistics more in accord

with television drama than actuality.\textsuperscript{1} Bradley S. Greenberg, Professor of Communication and Telecommunication at Michigan State in 1980, cautions that television series are not designed to inform the viewer about life. "The viewer is expected to invoke the caveat that it's only a story, make believe, not true to life."\textsuperscript{2}

A question that seems appropriate here is: Whenever people relate to television as anything other than entertainment are they misusing it? A second question that might also be asked is, Is it possible for viewers to compartmentalize what they view as strictly entertainment, without using it as a perspective from which to view real life?

Dr. William F. Fore, Assistant General Secretary for Communication for the National Council of Churches in the 1970s, was also a member of the Advisory Council of the National Organization of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. He likens television to both a window on the world, which, though it shows a piece of reality, actually shuts out sounds, odors and temperatures, and a filter, which may make the world seem real, when in reality it is nothing more than "bright phosphors dancing on a piece of

\textsuperscript{1}George Comstock, \textit{Violence in Television Content: An Overview} (Rockville, Md.: National Institute of Mental Health, April 1980), 44-45.

\textsuperscript{2}Greenberg, 138.
glass in a real room which looks quite dull by comparison."¹ Greenberg comments that if we did accept television's depiction of life as reality, the ensuing beliefs and social expectations would be distorted to the point of being "laughable, pitied, or scorned."² Caustic television critic Mary Lewis Coakley echoes his sentiments when she writes, "God preserve us if we form our ideas about America from TV!"³

Even the news has come under attack as not truly presenting reality.⁴ Although most newscasts attempt to present factual data, the economic realities of the medium (see chapter 5) require that information be presented in ways attractive to viewers, which leaves these broadcasts suspect as to just how skewed their information is in favor of entertainment value. I consider the MacNeil-Lehrer Report (available on most public channels) an outstanding exception to this.


²Greenberg, 183.


A World of Class Bias

Michael Novak comments on television industry personnel. He says that it is common for a great many of them to imagine themselves as "anti-establishment" and perhaps "iconoclastic." To him, their criticisms of American society come across as something like the complaints of spoiled children. For those individuals producing television it represents a world of high profit that is populated by persons living in a high-income tax bracket, and is a world that requires a great deal of travel and expense-account living. Their tastes prefer excellent service and high prestige. All of this, Novak says, seriously tints television's image of the world. It creates what might be termed a "class bias."¹ Novak's comments were written in the mid 1970s. Although more programs involving characters from the lower or middle classes are being broadcast today than were at that time, my perceptions of the media are that this class bias still exists.

A World of Entertainment

Neil Postman addresses the issue of entertainment in his book, *Amusing Ourselves to Death* (1987). In a sometimes rather amusing fashion (i.e., satire and sarcasm) he argues that as a new medium becomes the predominant medium of a culture, the ideas and forms of truth of that culture are

¹Novak, 21.
altered accordingly. In a print-dominated culture, such as America used to be, public discourse tended to be characterized by a coherent, orderly arrangement of facts and ideas. Today we live in a society dominated by television, which is "entirely devoted to supplying its audience with entertainment."¹

As far as Postman is concerned the problem is not that entertaining material is found on television, but that everything on the screen is entertaining. He writes that television has become the metaphor of the world we live in, and it reduces all public discourse, journalism, politics, religion, and education to the level of entertainment. The result of this in his view is that members of the television generation are treating everything as though it was television.²

Some object to the analysis that television is no more than simply entertainment. They maintain that television is a valuable source of information about the world around us. For instance, television provides a window on the world for invalids and children growing up in a deprived environment such as a ghetto, and programs such as

¹Postman, Amusing Ourselves to Death, 51, 87. George Comstock concurs with this: "Despite the public prominence of news and public affairs programming, it is primarily an entertainment medium." Comstock, "Television and American Social Institutions," 16.

²Ibid., 92.
"The Selling of the Pentagon" provide a valuable public forum for crucial issues. Nature and wildlife programs, they say, offer children unparalleled educational opportunities. Although these types of programs are available, it is the observation of this writer that very few individuals sit down to watch for this particular purpose. A lurking suspicion remains that those who raise this objection are attempting either to still the voice of conscience or to justify viewing that is at variance with inner values.

A World of Stereotypes

Bradley S. Greenberg points out that his analysis of people on television indicates that most represent certain main attributes, such as the white middle-aged male.¹ This, of course, is stereotyping, which appears to be a fact of television programming.

Sex-role stereotyping is very prominent in television programming. F. Earle Barcus addresses this issue in his book, *Images of Life on Children's Television: Sex Roles, Minorities, and Families* (1983). He writes that more than forty-five content-analytic studies have examined sex-role images of men and women in programs, most of them conducted since 1970. He lists the following trends:

(1) Traditional sex roles permeate children's television-program content.

¹Greenberg, 186.
Sex-biased images are common in children's programs. There are more male than female characters in both weekend and weekday children's TV.

Women are shown more often than men in family roles; men are shown in higher-status jobs.

Male characters are portrayed as knowledgeable, independent, and aggressive; female characters are shown as romantic, submissive, emotional, and timid.

Not all of the above are necessarily negative, however.

Regarding women, one book notes that television's role for women is that of serving, particularly in commercials (which portray stereotypic roles) and children's programming reinforces traditional sex-role behaviors. This is especially true for cartoons because many of those still being aired were produced when racist or sexist humor was still tolerated. Dr. Eli A. Rubinstein comments that to the extent that stereotypic roles are screened (one of his examples is that of older people being senile and burdensome), young viewers particularly are

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2Mankiewicz and Swerdlow, 139.


4Barcus, 61.

5Charren and Sandler, 176.
seeing a distorted image of the real world.\textsuperscript{1} Although the extent of stereotyping has lessened over the past few years, it is still very present in some programs.

Another type of stereotyping that is very prevalent on television that Barcus draws attention to is ethnic-stereotyping. He thinks that commercial children's television (or "kidvid" as it is called in the industry) is a major battle for recognition of and respect for our country's ethnic groups.\textsuperscript{2}

Stereotyping contributes to the problem of prejudice, and it appears that white children are growing up with feelings of prejudice while minority children are growing up feeling invisible.\textsuperscript{3} Edward V. Sullivan, Joint Professor of Applied Psychology and History and Philosophy in Education at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, the University of Toronto, observes that media people are becoming the "bards" of our culture.\textsuperscript{4} (He defines a bard as someone who mediates linguistic resources to convey a message or "myth" of identity to the members of a culture.)


\textsuperscript{2}Barcus, 115.

\textsuperscript{3}Charren and Sandler, 187.

If Sullivan is correct in this, and I believe that he is, then we all are being taught by television even if it shows a distorted, unreal world. We are learning in spite of ourselves to view others in the world around us through the eyes of the media, and we are learning to behave accordingly. Tragically, the media view is far from Christian.

Summary

This chapter has presented a brief overview of the world of commercial television. Almost all American homes own at least one set which is on for approximately seven hours each day. The typical viewer sits in front of the screen over three hours each day and often is involved in other activities at the same time he or she is watching. Viewers watch for a number of different reasons, the most common of which is a desire to be entertained. This produces a sense of guilt, particularly for middle-class viewers. When compared to people in the real world, television's people tend to be stereotypes which are skewed toward the upper classes.

In chapter 2 we will consider television's impact on various aspects of society such as socialization processes and education.
CHAPTER III

TELEVISION AND SOCIETY

John Condry writes that television would not have much impact if only a few people paid any attention to it. However, he says, the opposite is the case—just about everybody watches television. He uses the term "universal appeal."¹ For most of us a cursory look around would convince us of the truth of his observation. Because of this almost universal appeal, television has a presence in the life of almost all Americans with a consequent effect on society. What are some of the effects that television has on society?

An Agent of Socialization

Jon Baggaley of the University of Liverpool and Steve Duck of the University of Lancaster have observed that in normal social interaction we pick up cues that help us know how to deal with one another in appropriate fashion. The term for this is "socialization." However, television provides viewers with abnormal cues and so we consequently make distorted interpretations and behave in an abnormal

¹Condry, 4.
fashion.\textsuperscript{1} As George Gerbner testified in 1972 before the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, television "has profoundly affected what we call the process of socialization, the process by which members of our species become human."\textsuperscript{2}

We are more likely to depend on the media for information regarding how to function in society than on experts or other usual sources of information.\textsuperscript{3} Children, especially, appear to do this. A number of authorities have expressed concern over the fact that television is such a potent force in childhood socialization.\textsuperscript{4} Researcher George Comstock comments:

\begin{quote}
Television presents the viewer with a world that is at variance with the one he or she inhabits. This is particularly so for children, whose experiences and knowledge are limited. Thus, what television conveys often has no corrective in actual experience . . . . television by its very nature has the
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{1}Jon Baggaley and Steve Duck, \textit{Dynamics of Television} (Westmead, England: Saxon House, 1976), 73.


potential to supplement as well as conceivably to reinforce other agents of socialization.\footnote{Comstock, "Television and American Social Institutions," 22.}

Comstock cites a study done in the 1970s by Walter Gerson, a sociologist, who studied six hundred African-American and white adolescents in San Francisco seeking information as to how they learned to interact with the opposite sex. He found that African-Americans used the media (principally television) much more frequently than did whites, both to confirm their notions about appropriate behavior and to get new dating ideas. Among African-Americans, those who felt secure with their peers were more likely to rely on the media, whereas among whites, those who were excluded by their peers more often turned to the media. Among the whites, girls were the predominant users of the media, and among the African-Americans, boys. Gerson felt that the explanation for this pattern appeared to be "relative deprivation of information."\footnote{Comstock, Television in America, 94.} It appears that Gerson's study demonstrates that individuals, particularly those who might be categorized as being "deprived," do rely on the media to learn how to relate to others. In other words, television is an agent of socialization and is intentionally used in this way by some individuals.

In a study of fourteen-year-old girls done in the early 1980s, Palmer found that some girls used serial dramas...
to study social interaction, discuss it with their friends, and then relate it to their lives. On the basis of intensive interviews with forty girls, she developed the concept of a primer, which is a television program watched regularly with keen interest that has priority over alternative programs and activities, that "primes" or initiates girls into appropriate (and/or inappropriate) social behaviors.¹

Palmer's concept of "priming" appears to have validity. There seems to be abundant evidence that America's society has reached its present state as the result of several decades of gradual priming. Unfortunately, there is no nation comparable to America in existence today, devoid of television, which could be used as a control group in studying the impact of the past forty years of commercial broadcasts.

One of the reasons adolescents tend to rely on the media for their socialization appears to be the lack of serious adult-child interaction in their lives. Teachers occasionally report that at times students have commented that they have never had a meaningful conversation with an adult. Michael Novak mentions that he has been told many times by his students (from suburban environments in

particular) that they have either never or hardly ever had a serious conversation with adults. All significant human exchanges were mostly with their peers, and their images of how adults think and behave were mainly supplied by the various media, notably television and the cinema. Novak asks, "Where could most Americans go to find dramatic models of adult behavior?"\(^1\) The screen, of course. The astute reader will recognize a real opportunity here to influence young lives through personal interaction.

**An Individual Medium**

In the 1950s Arthur Godfrey was a very successful television entertainer. One of the things he credited his success to was an experience he had while recuperating in a hospital bed. While listening to the radio he heard the announcer say, "All you out there in radio land." "Why," he thought, "there is only one of me in this room." He later said that that comment gave him the perspective that although a broadcast signal reaches many people simultaneously, it reaches them individually. After that he always spoke on camera as though he was addressing a single individual. His resulting personableness definitely contributed to his success.

Mr. Godfrey's experience illustrates a little-realized fact of television: we consider it a mass medium

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\(^1\)Novak, 24.
because it has the capability of reaching everyone in the country at the same time with the same experience.\(^1\)

However, the signal reaches listeners individually. As Dick Ozersky puts it,

> The great surprise about television is that it is not a mass medium, but an individual one. It is communication from an individual (sponsor) to another individual (consumer).\(^2\)

Ultimately television homogenizes culture by erasing distinctions rather than by bringing people together.\(^3\)

George Comstock writes:

> Those whom television brings together in bodily presence it isolates through attention to the screen; however discontinuous is attention, the unfolding sound and images of television to some degree separate the viewer from others.\(^4\)

Television has a fragmenting and isolating effect in which viewers are separated from the social body they ordinarily function in. Viewers enter into an individualized transaction with the medium.\(^5\) Viewers may have access to many different televised events in common with millions of

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\(^3\)Ibid., 103.

\(^4\)Comstock, *Television and American Social Institutions*, 18. Baggaley and Duck also observe that the medium tends to divorce the individual from primary contact with his reference groups, 115.

\(^5\)Ozersky, 102.
other viewers, but they are left as private spectators to what they see.

Perhaps this is merely a reflection of what society is or is becoming. One or two individuals can be sitting at a table at a street-side restaurant or lying on a blanket on a crowded beach and be totally oblivious to others around them. Edmund Sullivan writes:

Television . . . is monological in form. . . . For each viewer or hearer it is a private and intimate event between the program communicator and each individual viewer or hearer.¹

As is the case with many inventions, the cost of television receivers has dropped appreciably over the years. It is now possible for most families to own several. With multiple sets in a home, viewing alone increases, which increases what Jerry Mander has termed the "privatization of experience."² He states that "television encourages separation: people from community, people from each other, people from themselves. . . . It creates a surrogate community: itself."³


³Mander, 133.
Television and The Community

The Community

Several years ago the television event Roots gained one of the largest audiences in the history of television broadcasting. Based on Alex Haley's semi-autobiographical novel about his family, it touched a national nerve: we all need to have roots, or someplace to call home. We derive our identity in part from our roots. Home is part of a community that provides us with a sense of belonging, which, in turn, cues us into our identity. Some writers sense that community is largely lacking in today's nuclear society, and it is this lack of community that they see television as being responsible for.

Back in 1965 Harry J. Skornia asked the following question:

By taking the citizen away from public affairs--town meetings, citizen councils, neighborhood groups, church and discussion groups--how many vital functions of our nation have been dried up by television?

The public affairs that Skornia referred to are local events. He thinks that television has hurt the local community by removing individuals from its various groups. Television has displaced some of these for some viewers


(viz., they stay home to watch a program rather than attend), which has impacted on the local community by distancing individuals from involvement in their communities; but other writers have pointed to our increased mobility as being responsible for the decline of the local community. Although television has kept some people viewing the screen rather than, say, attending church, it appears that television has supplanted the local community by linking viewers with the larger, national community, which complements the local. However, television has generated a "community" which does not correspond with reality.

Noted above, community provides an individual with a sense of identity. One of the elements that creates community is community stories, the epics that are told. In January 1989, the University of Rochester in Rochester, New York, sponsored a Conference on Power. One of their speakers was science-fiction author Orson Scott Card. His presentation was "My Lies Are Your Future."¹

In his presentation, Card stated that fiction can function in an epic sense. He went so far as to call it mythic, which to him meant that fiction is instructional as to what it means to be human (viz., socialization), or to deal with causal relationships. Fiction explains the actions of other people which, according to Card, is why we

¹His presentation was broadcast over University station WXXI. For a transcript of a tape recording of that broadcast, see Appendix K.
are so hungry for it. Speaking of the fiction writer Card commented:

To the degree that you and the audience believe in and care about the story, that fiction writer has the power to revise your sense of how the world works. That's more powerful than changing the epic. That's more powerful than revising your conception of the community. There's a power to change your values, or if you're young enough, to create them. If he can get you to care about a story and believe it. If. . . ."

In other words, according to Card, the storyteller has the power to create a community and its values through the stories they tell. In today's world the preeminent storyteller is television. As Card points out, the more a story is loved, the more that story has the power to create community. Some ask, What kind of community (and corresponding identity) is television creating?

Baggaley and Duck propose that television tends to "divorce the individual from primary contact with his reference groups" which, they say, puts a viewer at risk for susceptibility to unconscious influences. They write:

The argument regarding unconscious persuasive influences generally is all the more plausible when it is realized that there are well-established 'sleeper' effects observed in research on attitude change: that is, the influence of a communication upon attitudes is often not apparent until some considerable time after the communication itself has actually been forgotten (Aronson, 1973).²


²Baggaley and Duck, 115. Concerning influence, William Kuhns differentiates between two kinds of program content: obvious and latent. He writes: "Latent content, more than
Tannis Beth MacWilliams observes from her study of a community experiencing television for the first time that it had a "generally negative effect" on community activities at all age levels, but particularly among those aged fifty-six and older. She considered that this age segregation was greater in communities with television than in those without.¹

Condry states that from a psychological perspective it is best to think of television as an environment, although, he says, doing so greatly stretches the term, though "environment" may be more appropriate for this discussion than the term "community." There is a mutuality between the person and the real environment such that if you change the environment you change the person. This mutuality is lacking within the environment of television: we do not change it or "interact" with it; we "encounter" it.² Mander writes,

By unifying everyone within its framework and by centralizing experience within itself, television virtually replaces environment. It accelerates our alienation from nature.³

¹Williams, 272.
²Condry, 57.
³Mander, 349.
Mander writes from the viewpoint of a former media advertising executive who researched the available research. Although his book was published in 1978, his arguments seem to remain valid.

Earlier (see p. 50) I commented that I think that television has had a formative impact on American society becoming what it is today through gradual, unnoticed priming. Postman says that "Television has gradually become our culture."¹ I believe that he and I are saying the same thing. He is at heart an epistemologist still in love with the outdated print-dominated culture of pretelevision time, and he writes out of personal reflection on the relation of the printed page and the electronic media. To him, print provided a continuity with the past in which we could remember what had gone before. This, of course, is a form of "roots" or community. Television programming presents only segments that stand on their own; they are disjointed from anything that has gone before. There is no historical or time context, and we live only in the present. To remember, according to Postman, requires a contextual basis, which television does not provide. As such, we are being

¹Postman, 79.
rendered "unfit to remember."

1 We are living in a
"continuous, incoherent present."2

The Community Supplanted

Television has not just been creating its own
community for its viewers—it has also been isolating those
viewers. Mander's term for this is "privatization." This
loss of community would lead one to believe that viewers
would feel extraordinarily alone. Study shows that this is
not the case. In 1979 Elison and Paloutzian3 reported that
lonely individuals used viewing as a diversionary coping
method in an attempt to deal with their loneliness.
Earlier, in 1977, Rossman4 contended that the increase in
viewing has taken the place of relationships with people,
which is consistent with prior research.5

1One can not help wondering what this loss will do to
the human response to the divine command to "Remember the
Sabbath day."

2Postman, 137.

3Craig W. Ellison and R. F. Paloutzian, "Developing an
Abbreviated Loneliness Scale." Paper presented at U.C.L.A.

4M. Rossman, On Learning and Social Change (New York:

5R. S. Weiss, Loneliness: The Experience of Emotional
and Social Isolation (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1973);
and W. H. Jones, "The Persistence of Loneliness," in D.
Perlman (Chair), Toward a Psychology of Loneliness.
Symposium at the annual meeting of the American
Psychological Association, Toronto, August 1978.
Television viewing has reduced extensive interpersonal development, and it could be hypothesized that without this communication with others, individuals would experience intense feelings of loneliness. This is not supported by research. It would appear that people are substituting whatever mental relationships they have with television characters as substitutes for real relationships with real people. Yale psychologist and television researcher Jerome L. Singer writes that television "is, in itself, a small social world. It provides 'company' for the solitary viewer and peoples his or her world, at least temporarily." Frederick Koenig and Gloria Lessan write:

The regularity, predictability, and immediacy entailed in television viewing, plus the performer's characteristics of being attractive, trusted and friendly, make it possible for television personae to take on many functions of a companion. Their stated positions and responses to situations can be used for social comparison, and their "presence" can reduce loneliness and boredom for the viewer.

Unfortunately, (1) because the camera can focus so much more closely on a character than what usually happens

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in real life between people, (2) because actors have the ability of conveying so much more emotion than most people do in real life, and (3) because program scripts usually involve situations so much more intense and interesting than actual life situations encountered in typical daily life, after relating to program characters, relationships with real people tend to fall very flat.

Displacement

Television viewing, at least the continuous kind, requires time. As such it is primarily a leisure-time activity and is thus usually associated with cultures that have a socio-economic level sufficient to provide leisure time. America is such a culture. Bradley S. Greenberg cites the amount of time that the set was on in the average American home during the typical weekday (in 1980) and then states, "It's fair to say that the American decision has been to watch TV; that choice consumes one-half of our free time."1 Television viewing has taken the place of, or displaced those activities that once occupied that time.2

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1Greenberg, ix. Italics supplied.

2Cf. George Comstock, Television in America, 125, 126; and Condry, 13. Beentjes and Van der Voort point out that for children, research has shown that time for television viewing was found primarily by giving up time previously spent on other media. Johannes W.J. Beentjes and Tom H.A. Van der Voort, "Television's Impact on Children's Reading Skills: A Review of Research," Reading Research Quarterly 23 (1988): 394.
Reading suffers,\(^1\) as do family activities\(^2\) and religious practices,\(^3\) and this is true for every society that television has been introduced to.\(^4\) Naturally, as is the case with reading, the question arises as to whether the activity of watching television is of more value than the activities it has displaced.\(^5\) Television researcher Ben T. Logan observes: "These great chunks of time we give to TV and, thus, do not give to other activities, may well have a greater long-range influence on our lives than program content."\(^6\) Condry thinks that this displacement has resulted in people being less social and less literate.\(^7\) This is his opinion, of course, but my personal observations lead me to believe that he is probably correct.

\(^1\) Cf. Postman, 141; Beentjes and Van der Voort, 394; and Comstock, *Television and American Social Institutions*, 45.

\(^2\) Cf. Winn, 107; Perrotta, 17; and Schramm, Lyle, and Parker, 20.


\(^4\) Condry, 14, 19.


\(^7\) Condry, 15.
Desensitization

A number of years ago several news stories featured incidents in which people were assaulted as onlookers either turned away or watched in an abstract manner. Perhaps the most famous of those was the assault on Kitty Genovese: thirty different individuals ignored her cries for help as she was being raped. It was as though those particular individuals had no sensitivity to her need.

Researchers have raised the question as to whether television produces this lack of sensitivity in its viewers. They have found that television does produce passivity in its viewers.¹ This has been characterized as "the most damaging thing that television has done to us."² We turn the set on and watch: we do not watch television programs; we simply watch television.³ Perhaps that is because of the many appeals for attention that the media makes (e.g., commercials), and perhaps it is because those appeals are so stridently insistent, that it appears that Americans have developed an ability to "tune out" whatever they wish to.

¹Joseph R. Dominick, "Videogames, Television Violence, and Aggression in Teenagers," Journal of Communication 34 (Spring 1984): 138. Jerry Mander also comments on this: "The evidence is that television not only destroys the capacity of the viewer to attend, it also, by taking over a complex of direct and indirect neural pathways, decreases vigilance—the general state of arousal which prepares the organism for action should its attention be drawn to specific stimulus," 205.

²Withey, 28.

³Charren and Sandler, 148.
We "have been conditioned to not hear, even while listening, and not see, even while looking."¹

Unfortunately, it appears that we not only tune out commercials; we apparently are tuning out people as well. Because the distinction between the real and the unreal has been blurred by our interactions with the unreal, our sensitivities to real events has been dulled. We react more as spectators than people with genuine emotions.²

One of the subjects literature researcher and television critic Goldsen discusses in her 1977 volume *The Show and Tell Machine* is desensitization. According to her there is a large amount ("tons") of psychological and sociological reports that document the ease with which people can attach, detach, and reattach their emotions as a consequence of the "associations that images, dramatizations, and films, and even still photographs and passing discourse have released in the imagination."³ She sees television programming facing a continuing dilemma: human emotions need to be engaged to hold an audience. Yet as soon as the emotions are roused, the program then

¹Skornia, 178. This sounds very similar to the language of Ezek 12:2; "They have eyes to see but do not see and ears to hear but do not hear." I have noted that the impact of this on the church is that effective communication is a real challenge: announcements need to be made several times before members actually hear what is being said.

²Winn, 71.

³Goldsen, 13, 14.
delivers the viewing audience to a commercial that disengages those feelings. Thus they are "aborted at the moment of conception." This is very similar to a process called imaginal desensitization.

Mander (1978) points out that to respond to the imagery on the screen is absurd: we tend to repress whatever emotions are being aroused, which then sets up a vacillation between stimulation and repressed response. He sees this as a cause of hyperactivity, particularly in children. Condry (1989) also discusses this subject, pointing out that any stimulus has successively less arousal capacity. "With each repeated presentation, the degree of arousal will decline, until it reaches zero or below." Goldsen points out that systematic desensitization is accomplished with electrical shocks as well as with images. The procedure that uses images and fantasy materials to extinguish emotions and excise feelings is called imaginal desensitization.

This process works as follows: First, subjects are placed in a very comfortable, non-threatening situation in which they are completely relaxed, with no emotional arousal. Images known to elicit emotional arousal are then introduced; this results in the cessation of relaxation. At this point the viewing is interrupted for a period of thirty

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1Mander, 167, 349.
2Condry, 109.
to sixty seconds, which allows the subject to again relax. During this respite relaxation may be facilitated by eating or drinking. The image is again introduced and the cycle repeated.\(^1\) Kuhns says that Marshall McLuhan pointed out that one of the most important features of television is that the viewer is drawn toward reaction more strongly than to action.\(^2\) Call it "time out"\(^3\) or "escape,"\(^4\) it seems contradictory that the very action on the screen that is so hard to ignore\(^5\) is that which produces such passivity in its viewers.

One "urban legend" tells of the wife who breaks into tears while watching a particularly emotional scene in a program or film only to hear her husband scoff, "It's only a movie--why cry about that?" She dries her eyes and attempts to not get so emotionally involved next time. And so genuine human emotions are repressed.

Mander points out that the images we see on the screen are not real. Since it is "only a story," an emotional response is certainly absurd.

\(^1\)Goldsen, 11. (If you think this sounds like a typical evening in front of the screen, you are correct. Commercials usually are thirty to sixty seconds long, and for many they signal a time to get something to eat.)

\(^2\)Kuhns, 84.

\(^3\)Mander, 133.


The effect is a kind of sensory tease, to put the case generously. The human starts a process and then stops it, then starts it again, then stops it, vibrating back and forth between those two poles of action and repression, all of it without a purpose in real life.

It seems reasonable to conclude that sooner or later people lose their ability to emotionally respond to events in real life, or at least have those emotional responses somewhat crippled: their emotions have been repressed too many times with a consequent loss of sensitivity.

Other Societal Impacts

Several other impacts television has had on society are (1) a decline in the willingness of people to postpone gratification, (2) the acceptance of "loafers" or "idlers" in society, (3) assisting homosexuals to "come out of the closet," and (4) changing viewers into voyeurs of the sufferings of others—we have become "tourists amidst landscapes of personal anguish."

Television and Education

Presently a lot of comment is being made in the media regarding the nation's challenge to provide adequate

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1 Mander, 167.
2 Mankiewicz and Swerdlow, 169.
3 Skornia, 177.
4 Mankiewicz and Swerdlow, 144-145.
5 Michael Ignatieff, "Is Nothing Sacred? The Ethics of Television," Daedalus 114 (Fall 1985), 59.
education for America's youth. Even though some of the loudest comments are coming from politicians, this concern fairly represents the genuine desire that most American parents have for the proper education of their children. Michael R. Kelley writes, "Every hour a child spends mindlessly in front of the television is an hour of educational opportunity wasted."¹ Is his statement correct? What has research discovered as to the impact television has on education?

Passivity

Joseph R. Dominick states that television viewing is a passive experience.² Yale psychologist Jerome L. Singer thinks that television viewing gradually creates a certain passive lifestyle that can present serious problems in later life. One example of this is high school and college instructors complaining of students who demand entertainment.³


²Dominick, 138.

Some authorities feel that many young people have a serious attention problem, that may have been developed as a sort of protection against oft-repeated television commercials.\(^1\) The late Jerzy Kosinski taught elementary school for a while but later left feeling very depressed and discouraged. Regarding students' classroom behavior he wrote: "See how easily they are bored, how quickly they take up the familiar "reclining" position in the classroom, how short their attention span is."\(^2\) He attributed this type of behavior to television viewing.

One-Way Medium

Perhaps one of the reasons for this lack of participation is the fact that television is a one-way medium. Sullivan's term for this is "monological."\(^3\) One team of authors notes, "There is no way to provide individual feedback or to tailor presentations to individual

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\(^1\)Skornia, 159.

\(^2\)Jerzy Kosinski, Being There (New York: Bantam Books, 1972), quoted in Mankiewicz and Swerdlow, 169. As to a short attention span, William V. Shannon comments: "Children become accustomed to paying attention in half-hour segments or, even worse, in the six-minute intervals between commercials. The combined effect of passivity, of a shortened attention span, and of so much time devoted to entertainment is to subvert education and malnourish the mind." "The Network Circus," 171.

\(^3\)See page 53 of this study.
learning needs or histories."¹ As literature reviewer Winn writes:

It is a one-way transaction that requires the taking in of particular sensory material in a particular way, no matter what the material might be. There is, indeed, no other experience in a child's life that permits quite so much intake while demanding so little outflow.²

Although most viewers do verbally express themselves occasionally while viewing (particularly during exciting sports broadcasts), their comments are spoken into "thin air."

**Logic**

It would appear that the logic students use has also been affected by television. Traditional learning has been termed by some as "linear": the orderly, sequential presentation of facts and information. A good example of this would be most any history class. Dramatic presentations, however, tend to weave several story lines together in the same program, shifting back and forth between scenes. Michael Novak comments:

The systems of teaching which I learned in my student days--careful and exact exegesis proceeding serially from point to point . . . now meet a new form of resistance . . . . "Dialectics" rather than


²Winn, 4.
"logic" or "exegesis" is the habit of mind they (the students) are most ready for.\(^1\)

Verbal links between subjects are often not presented.\(^2\) The 1982 report of the National Institute of Mental Health reviewed research which clearly documents that first- and second-grade children are not able to follow a complex story line.\(^3\) Psychologists Dorothy G. Singer and Jerome L. Singer write:

> There seems ample evidence that preschoolers and early elementary-school aged children are confused by television and that their failures of comprehension are reflected not only in response to specific plots but in more general misrepresentations of the nature of reality and

\(^{1}\)Novak, 11.

\(^{2}\)Ibid.

\(^{3}\)Rubinstein, 821. Rubinstein comments further: "An important corollary of this finding is that young children are often unable to relate a series of complex actions to their final consequence. Thus, when industry spokespersons claim that their programs are fundamentally prosocial because good ultimately triumphs over bad, they ignore this important finding. The young child is much less likely to make the interpretive connection and, therefore, less likely to learn the moral lesson." Rubinstein, 821-822. Note also, "Recent research findings (Collins, 1978) indicate that young children from one socioeconomic status group fail to comprehend the images depicting members of other social class groups. This and related findings suggest that children can develop a distorted view of roles and events because of their inability to comprehend fully the storylines that accompany the images of many of the programs." Gordon L. Berry, "Children, Television, and Social Class Roles: The Medium as an Unplanned Educational Curriculum," in Children and the Faces of Television: Teaching, Violence, Selling, eds. Edward L. Palmer and Aimee Dorr (New York: Academic Press, 1980), 80.
fantasy or in distortions of facts about the "outside world."\textsuperscript{1}

Leland Howe and Bernard Solomon\textsuperscript{2} point out that developmental psychologists are learning that children develop the reasoning processes that allow them to arrive at value-judgments and moral decisions in several sequential steps. The earliest decisions children make are based on the immediate consequences of a choice they have made. As the children grow older their decisions are next based on what others think is right or wrong. Still later in life they decide based on the altruistic principle of what is the most good for the most number of people. What happens to this development process when these children are exposed to many hours of nonsequential commercial broadcasts? Howe and Solomon fear that children may not be able to progress to the next level of value-judgements and moral decisions. They consider the unrestrained viewing of television by children with laissez-faire parents, who have no interest in encouraging the evaluation of program values, as possibly inhibiting the natural development of a child's moral reasoning abilities.

\textsuperscript{1}Singer and Singer, "Television and the Developing Imagination of the Child," 383.

Classroom Decorum

Kosinski expressed his distress at the classroom behavior of students, and it does appear that this has been affected by television viewing. Mankiewicz and Swerdlow report that during college lectures it is not uncommon for students to talk rather freely and get up and walk out of the room in a professor's mid-sentence, returning later just as casually or perhaps not at all.¹ This behavior is typical of the kind of behavior exhibited while watching television.² William Glassner states that for younger children, it appears that there is no sense of social responsibility anymore. Students cannot cooperate in the necessary give and take of the classroom, and they often disrupt the class because they cannot settle down and listen.³ "When asked to become actively involved in learning (to read, for example), they are passive. Unused to thinking for themselves, they do not know how to put forth an effort."⁴

¹Mankiewicz and Swerdlow, 194.

²Neil Postman states that "television educates by teaching children to do what television viewing requires of them." Postman, 144.


Behavior Problems

According to the Singers, heavy television viewing combined with parental power-assertive discipline predicts more behavioral problems at school.¹ Their longitudinal data continue to suggest that the following television and family variables place a child at risk for problematic behavior by an early elementary school age:

(a) a home in which television viewing of an uncontrolled type is emphasized; (b) heavy viewing of television in the preschool years; (c) more recent heavy viewing of violent programming; (d) parents who themselves emphasize physical force as a means of discipline; and (e) parents whose self-descriptions or values do not stress imagination, curiosity, or creativity.²

There are also indications that television viewing may shorten the time children are willing to spend on finding an answer to the intellectual problems they are asked to solve.³ Another danger is that children may adopt the notion that there is, in fact, a correct answer to every question as is the case on the screen.⁴

¹Singer and Singer, "Psychologists Look at Television," 830.
²Ibid.
³Beentjes and Van der Voort, 396. Part of the reason for this may be the fact that television, as a teacher of expectations, speeds up the rhythm of attention. Anything else in comparison with the pace of television seems "slow." Cf. Novak, 21.
⁴Mankiewicz and Swerdlow, 180.
Learning Methods

Three ways of learning have been defined: (1) direct, via actual interchange with the environment, or by acting and experiencing the consequences; (2) observational, which comes from watching others; and (3) symbolic, from the use of language and symbols, written or spoken. Television teaches children primarily in the second, or observational, type of learning.

Alberta E. Siegel, Professor of Psychology and Behavior Sciences at Stanford, was a member of the noted 1972 Surgeon General's committee that studied the effects of violence shown on television. She states, "Young children learn primarily by observation and imitation. TV presents them with behavior to observe and imitate, in a form which they can assimilate." As was mentioned earlier, children learn from the models that are provided on the screen, be they social scripts as to how to relate to the other sex, or through an example of how human conflict is resolved.

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1Condry, 98.


3Alberta E. Siegel, "Televised Violence: Recent Research on its Effects." In Logan, Television Awareness Training, 177.

4See pp. 47-51 of this study.

5Alberta E. Siegel, "Educating Females and Males to Be Alive and Well in Century Twenty-one." In Logan, Television Awareness Training, 235.
Imitation

Referring to ten years (1970-1980) of social science research, Michael R. Kelly writes that data confirm what every parent knows instinctively, and what Aristotle said in *The Poetics* 2,300 years ago: "Imitation is a primary means by which all of us learn; from childhood through life, what we see, we tend to imitate."¹ Kelly says that the implication of this for parents and teachers is obvious:

Since children imitate the behavior and character traits they see on television, they should not be allowed to watch television indiscriminately and without close adult supervision. The risks are just too great.²

Logan writes:

Research shows that children are much more likely to imitate the behavior they see on the screen when: 1. The behavior is shown as successful in coping with some problem or need. 2. The behavior gets approval.³

Children who imitate what they see can be as young as infants. John Condry cites a set of experiments performed by Meltzoff (1988) in which both 14- and 24-month-old infants were able to imitate a television stimulus, both immediately and after a 24-hour delay. He concludes:


²Kelley, 6-7.

These findings suggest that exposure to television in the home may potentially influence the behavior of very young infants more so than was previously thought.

It appears that children have always constructed their world out of bits and pieces of the adult world, and large parts of the adult world that they see today, be they fact or fiction, are provided by television. Television is a "significant part of the total acculturation process" in which children look for information that is not available in their own environment. This is especially true for African-Americans and children from families of lower socioeconomic status.

It is interesting to note at this point that one of the world's most successful music educators, Shinichi Suzuki of Japan, encourages parents, as part of the overall music education of a child, to provide an enriched environment for the child to mature in.

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1 Condry, 37.


4 Rubinstein, 820.

5 Hoover, "Ethical Issues Await Us in the 'Information Age'," 23. Note: "One generally accepted tenet regarding content effects is that television's influence is greatest for viewers with least access to alternative sources of information (e.g., Comstock et al., 1978)." Williams, 276.
As far as specific learned behaviors are concerned, children emulate the behavior of specific television characters, which, as Skornia notes, includes lying. One of the perennial favorites of viewers is the situation comedy, or "sitcom." Often the humor of this type of program is derived from the situations characters find themselves in by lying. He notes that many educators and writers ask how we can condemn children for lying when they see it practiced daily on television.¹

Television as a Teacher

In 1978 Mankiewicz and Swerdlow concluded that whether we liked it or not, television had been admitted as a full-fledged faculty member in the children's academy. "Its addition to the curriculum is vigorous and carefully planned, and includes many subjects that parents and teachers might not have chosen."² In 1981 Logan pointed out the same thing, adding that TV education is doubly effective because we do not think of it as education, and bring little critical judgment-evaluation to what we see and hear.³

After stating that "television is an effective tutor, and that it functions as a source of information for children," Condry cites Nick Johnson, a commissioner of the Federal

¹Skornia, 158.
²Mankiewicz and Swerdlow, 202.
Communications Commission (FCC, 1975), as saying, "All of television is educational . . . the only question is: what does it teach?"\(^1\)

Many parents have expressed concern as to what their children may be learning from television programs. Marie Winn thinks that this concern is misplaced. She says that adults assume—wrongly—that a child's television experience is the same as that of adults. She points out that as adults view, they compare their viewing experience with present and past relationships, experiences, dreams, and fantasies. Children, however, do not have this backlog of real-life experiences. For them, viewing experiences become the backlog that they compare real-life experiences to. She concludes:

To a certain extent the child's early television experiences will serve to dehumanize, to mechanize, to make less real the realities and relationships he encounters in life. For him, real events will always carry subtle echoes of the television world.\(^2\)

Lack of Educational Supervision

Most responsible parents are concerned about their children's education. Some make a point of becoming personally acquainted with their children's teachers, while others become involved in the PTA. Many parents talk to their children about what is happening at school, raising

\(^1\)Condry, 102.

\(^2\)Winn, 9-10.
questions about what is being learned. However, few parents think to question their children about what they are learning from the screen,\(^1\) which their children are spending more time in front of than in the classroom.\(^2\) And, as Siegel points out, there is no board governing television education.\(^3\) Would it not seem wise for concerned parents to consider themselves their children's Television Board of Education?

**Need for Media Education**

There are voices calling for what could be termed media education to help children learn how to watch in order to learn positively, not just negatively, from the screen.\(^4\) Bruce A. Watkins, Aletha Huston-Stein, and John C. Wright suggest that parents and teachers can assist in this process by helping to explain what is viewed. They draw the analogy that few children would learn if schools had only books with no instructors.

Researchers and educators must be aware that the learning context, of which television is only a

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\(^1\) Cf. Charren and Sandler, 227.

\(^2\) Ibid., 162.

\(^3\) Siegel, "Educating Females and Males," 177. Cf. Logan, "Has Anyone Seen the Teacher?" 227.

part, is a combination of all its components and that all are necessary for efficient learning.¹ Kubey and Czikszentmihalyi suggest that although some may scoff at the idea of training people to be better viewers, a "public well educated in the nuances and methods of the visual media will both demand better quality, and be less readily manipulated by them."² They point out that if most children are going to continue watching one thousand hours of television per year for the rest of their lives, it is "absurd" for them not to receive a formal education in the medium.

Pro-social Concerns

In the section on socialization³ it was pointed out that television educates via the role models portrayed. This offers a very useful means of educating young people, but so many of the models and so much of their behavior is not pro-social. Parents tend to be concerned (rightly so) that their children may be influenced to act in antisocial ways.

Television does have the capability of teaching children pro-social behavior. However, George Comstock points out that violent portrayals are more attention-grabbing, while pro-social acts, in comparison, are more

¹Watkins, Huston-Stein, and Wright, 65-66.
²Kubey and Czikszentmihalyi, 214.
³See pp. 47-51 of this study.
muted with a more limited applicability. Lessons such as "cooperation, generosity, loyalty, and helping behavior" will be lost on many young viewers. He writes:

The implication that television is not limited to aggression in its influence on children is supported by several experiments in which prosocial behavior has been increased by exposure to a portrayal of such behavior (Bryan, 1971; Bryan and Walbek, 1970a, 1970b; Poulos and Liebert, 1972; Rubinstein et al., 1974; Yates, 1974).

Experiments show that when people see a display of helpfulness or generosity they report that they are often inclined to act that way themselves. Collins and Getz studied (1976) children's values of helping or hurting; those children who had seen models of constructive coping demonstrated a greater frequency of pro-social responding than those who were exposed to the aggressive resolution of

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1Comstock, Television and American Social Institutions, 26.

an interpersonal conflict.\footnote{Monroe M. Lefkowitz and L. Rowell Huesmann, "Concomitants of Television Violence Viewing in Children," in Children and the Faces of Television: Teaching, Violence, Selling, eds. Edward L. Palmer and Aimee Dorr (New York: Academic Press, 1980), 174. They note that rather than pro-social behavior, children are primarily instructed in a system of antisocial values. Rubinstein writes, "Both laboratory studies as well as field studies have consistently shown that such behavior as cooperation, friendliness, delay of gratification, and generosity can be enhanced by appropriate television programming. Furthermore, films and television can be used to help viewers cope with fears, whether those fears involve strange animals or fear of surgical procedures." Rubinstein, "Television and Behavior," 823.} Pro-social learning can occur, but not very often as a consequence of viewing commercial television. I suggest that the reader become informed as to various program offerings available from non-commercial sources (e.g., public television channels), and choose accordingly.

Effect on Maturation

Literature reviewer and television critic Winn discusses the impact of television on the development, or maturation, of children (1978). She points out several things:

1. The child needs to be liberated from dependency, which, as she sees it, television helps to perpetuate.

2. The child needs to develop the fundamental skills of communication in order to function as a social creature. Because it requires no verbal participation
(being monological), television does not further the development of those skills.

3. The child needs to discover personal strengths and weaknesses. Television limits the child's involvement in activities that would lead to these discoveries.

4. Winn believes that personal make-believe play gratifies a child's need far better than that offered on the screen.

5. The need for stimulation that a child has is met "infinitely better" by personal involvement than by passive watching.

6. A child needs to develop family skills to prepare for successful future parenthood, and these skills come as a product of functioning as a member of a family. She says, "There is every indication that television has a destructive effect upon family life, diminishing its richness and variety."¹

Winn thinks that children's normal maturation is impeded by viewing. She explains:

While watching television, the young child is once again as safe, secure, and receptive as he was in his mother's arms. He need offer nothing of himself while he watches, as he must do, for instance, when he plays with another child. He runs none of the small risks that his normal exploratory behavior entails: he won't get hurt, he won't get into trouble, he won't incur parental anger.²

¹Winn, 7.

²Ibid., 137.
An example of this is what happened to one child during an experiment conducted by Redbook magazine in New Milford, Connecticut, in 1975. In cooperation with the Family Resource Center and the First Congregational Church Co-Op Nursery, fifteen mothers agreed to monitor the shows their children watched and keep diaries of what happened as they limited their viewing.

One bright, well-behaved four-year-old named Susie was quite passive and very much a loner, usually refusing to either join in with the other children, or to work by herself with anything that took real involvement. During the first week of the experiment she was "moodier than usual, sitting and staring at the ground." During the second week she began asking her mother to invite a playmate home for the afternoons—something she had rarely desired before. Her teacher noticed that she seemed "happier and more talkative." By the end of four weeks she had changed to become a participant who played actively by herself or with a group of other students.

Four weeks later her mother allowed her to resume her normal viewing habits. A couple of weeks later when the girl's mother and teacher talked again, the teacher commented that "Susie was doing so well, but now she's off by herself alone again." Claire Safran concludes:

When the fantasies and adventures of television were taken away from her, Susie had felt a real need to reach out, to be involved, to find her own adventures. When they were returned, she withdrew
again. There seems to be a definite cause-and-effect relationship between Susie's behavior and her television watching, and her mother has put her back on a "television diet."¹

Varied Impacts

Scholastic Impact

What about television's impact on reading and scholastic achievement? Neil Postman comments that many reputable studies show that television viewing does not significantly increase learning, particularly inferential thinking.² In 1986 Gary D. Gaddy published a study which replicated the consistent finding of other studies, namely "a uniform and highly significant negative correlation between television and achievement."³ He writes:

Heavy TV viewing is negatively related to reading achievement for those of medium and high IQ but positively related for those of low IQ (Morgan, 1980), and the negative partial correlation between viewing and reading achievement increases across the elementary grades (Neuman and Prowda, 1982). . . . To whatever degree this study supports the hypothesis that television has no negative effect on achievement, it even more clearly supports the hypothesis that it offers no benefit. In other words, it suggests that the thousand hours a year high school students invest in television are, as Comstock (1982) put it, "scholastically unproductive".⁴

¹Safran, 167.
²Postman, 152.
³Gaddy, 350.
⁴Ibid., 347, 355.
Beentjes and Van der Voort consider that their studies show that "the arrival of television caused a slowing in the growth of reading skills within a fairly long period."\(^1\) Susan B. Neuman studied the reading scores of over two million students in eight states. She found that viewing between two to four hours per day did not seem to affect reading scores. However, reading scores diminished sharply for those students watching more than four hours per day. She concludes:

> Watching more than 4 hours of television per day appears to be strongly related to lower achievement scores in all statewide assessments . . . . Beyond 3 hours of television per day, achievement diminishes with increased viewing. Television viewing for 5 hours or more was consistently related to lower reading proficiency.\(^2\)

Neuman also concluded that elementary and intermediate level students who watched relatively moderate amounts of television (two to three hours daily) in general scored slightly higher on achievement for vocabulary, comprehension, and study skills.\(^3\)

Although Neuman's study showed that academic achievement was negatively impacted by viewing in excess of four hours, it is my opinion that high achievers tend to evidence more than high scores on academic tests: they also are involved in many other activities (such as music,

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\(^1\)Beentjes and Van der Voort, 406. Cf. Williams, 273.

\(^2\)Neuman, 423, 431.

\(^3\)Ibid., 423.
student organizations, etc.). Although test scores may not indicate it, I believe that a high-achievement lifestyle is negatively affected long before viewing reaches even three hours per day.

The Singers think fewer hours of television viewing during the preschool years is an important factor for good reading comprehension, but they add other considerations as well. They think that good reading comprehension comes from a combination of familial factors such as parental reliance on "inductive rather than power-assertive discipline," an orderly household routine including more hours of sleep, and a mother who thinks of herself as curious and imaginative.1

Effect on Play

One of the areas the Singers have studied is children's play. Referring to a study by Tucker (1975), they say that a growing child needs an increasingly complex vocabulary, an increasing ability to categorize materials, to retrieve words or images readily, and to generate sets of more remote associations or to recall details of verbally presented situations accurately. They believe that imaginative play is a major resource that provides an arena for rehearsing this material and assimilating it to a greater variety of preestablished schema. They write:

1Singer and Singer, "Psychologists Look at Television," 829.
Our own research and the increasing body of studies in this area suggest that play is an active process and one that depends to some degree on reinforcement, modeling, and general encouragement by parental figures (Dennis, 1976; Gershowitz, 1974; Shmukler, 1978; Singer, 1977).

Television is apparently having a negative impact on children's play: the data about very young children that are emerging suggest that television viewing seems to preempt self-play time and may impede creativity. Children do not seem to be stimulated in imaginative play by heavy cartoon viewing or other television fare. Safran comments, "Many veteran teachers report a definite sense that children's play is not as richly imaginative and spontaneous as it has been in the past." One of the significant things about make-believe play is that it is one area in which the normal balance of things is reversed: in play the child is in control rather than being controlled. The play world is a world in which the child has the power to act and affect people and events; this is precisely why Maurice Sendak's well-known book Where the Wild Things Are has been so popular with children.

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1Singer and Singer, "Television, Imagination, and Aggression," 5-6.
2Ibid., 387.
3Ibid., 379.
4Safran, 166.
5Cf. Winn, 82-83.
Mental Replay

Most adults enjoy a little reminiscing; the older they are, the more they do. Another term for this is mental replay. All individuals tend to do this while an event is in process. Teachers tend to reprove students for "daydreaming," encouraging them to stay "on task." For children, however, imaginative replay is important for assimilating what they have seen and heard. It requires time out (or a mental respite from the continuous flow of imagery or stimuli), though, and this time is what television's rapid pace does not allow for. The Singers write:

Television moves on too quickly to allow such private activity unless we forcibly withdraw our eyes from the set or have already developed our imaginative capacities so that we can tune out a moving stimulus in order to daydream a little (Rosenberg, 1977; Singer, Greenberg, and Antrobus, 1971).

In addition to the pace, imaginative replay is affected by television itself. Jerome L. Singer comments:

The very power of the television medium in stimulating imaginative potential is mitigated by its own demand-character, which prevents the child from breaking away easily and internalizing the imaginative possibilities as part of its own skill.

Winn reports an experiment that Harry Harlow performed in which he play-deprived monkeys. After eight

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2 Singer, "The Power and Limitations of Television," 56.
months when the deprived monkeys were exposed to normally reared monkeys, they proved to be significantly more aggressive in their social behavior than the others. They withdrew from most monkey games and initiated biting attacks on other monkeys at inappropriate times. They showed no fear of the others and displayed very little control of their aggressive instincts.\(^1\) One conclusion that seems to be valid here is that television's depriving children of imaginative replay, coupled with the deprivation of significant interactions with others that seems to characterize the life of many children, would tend to generate aggressiveness in them.

Programs that Teach

What is the value of television programs specifically designed to teach children? Although this project concerns itself primarily with commercial broadcasts, the best-known examples of these programs are those produced by the Children's Television Workshop (CTW): "Sesame Street" and "The Electric Company," which are broadcast over public television channels. Most parents have the impression that their children will learn to read as a result of watching these programs. Mankiewicz and Swerdlow quote Harvard psychologist Burton L. White (one of the nation's leading experts on the development of children

\(^1\)Cf. Winn, 84-85.
under the age of three) as saying that exposure to programs like these will have a modest impact on the child's level of language development. But, "rest assured if he never sees a single television program he will still learn language through you in an absolutely magnificent manner."¹

What White says is true, as is evidenced by generations of pre-television children who grew up able to use the English language in a very adequate manner. And it is becoming increasingly evident that the command those generations had of the English language was superior to what is being demonstrated today.

John Matthews, education writer for the Washington Star, says, "There is no doubt that 'Sesame Street' has had a greater impact on how and what preschool children learn and think than virtually any other teaching tool in this century."² I agree. But just what is that "impact"?

When evaluated, "Sesame Street" and "The Electric Company" have demonstrated that children can learn cognitive skills from these programs. Children as young as three (as well as disadvantaged children) have been effectively taught. However, these programs are not effective for teaching reading to elementary school-age children. Letter and number recognition are skills that are learned more effectively than other skills. As is the case with almost

¹Mankiewicz and Swerdlow, 187.
²Ibid., 176.
all television programming, learning is enhanced when supplementary materials are provided and when an adult is present to work with the child.\(^1\) This is not usually the situation when children view these particular programs.

"Sesame Street"

Marie Winn notes that the educational results of this program have been disappointing. Although children exhibit certain small gains in number and letter recognition, their language skills do not show any significant or permanent gains as they progress through school.\(^2\) Gains that are made seem to have only one year's impact, which evidences the fact that this program does not change its curriculum.

Like so much of television, "Sesame Street" produces a passivity in the viewer, and it was for this reason that the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) refused to broadcast the program.\(^3\) The program does not allow for mental replay,\(^4\) and as Mankiewicz and Swerdlow point out, the arguments made against the program are those best made against television itself: the passivity, the simplicity, the stifling of imagination, the behavior modification, the

\(^1\) Watkins, 56.

\(^2\) Winn, 33-34.

\(^3\) Ibid., 179.

\(^4\) Singer, "The Power and Limitations of Television," 54.
shortened attention span, and the training of viewers to be consumers.\textsuperscript{1}

Teachers think that children do learn from the program, but children also seem to pick up the idea that everything worthy of their attention must be entertaining. As Neil Postman says, "We now know that 'Sesame Street' encourages children to love school only if school is like 'Sesame Street.'"\textsuperscript{2}

One of the distortions evident on the program involves problem solving—it requires no unpleasant efforts. The cues will be visible and entertaining and always there. The answer will be forthcoming anyway, also in an entertaining way. The children are thus totally shielded from the need to master deduction, a process that may be more important to education than the correct answers to any set of questions.\textsuperscript{3}

Child psychologists and other specialists have long criticized the program for its rapid pace. The producers of the program have been sensitive to this criticism and programs produced more recently are much slower than those produced in the early years of the program.

\textsuperscript{1}Mankiewicz and Swerdlow, 183, 184.

\textsuperscript{2}Postman, 143.

\textsuperscript{3}Mankiewicz and Swerdlow, 180. An example of this is the game often played on "Sesame Street" which shows four objects, three of which are similar and one different: which one is different? A moment of silence passes and the answer is readily given.
In light of the need children have for significant interaction with adults, it is my suggestion that rather than relying on "Sesame Street" to teach a child to read, it is better for parents to sit down with their child(ren) and work with them in a one-to-one setting.

"Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood"

Whereas "Sesame Street" has received more negative appraisal than positive, one children's program that appears to have received consistently favorable reactions is "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood." The slower pace, the personal interest in the child projected by Mr. Rogers, and the pro-social emphasis of the program are some of the reasons that this program has received such favorable reception.

In one study kindergarten-age children who watched only four episodes of the program learned and generalized several themes: helping a friend, trying to understand another's feelings, knowing that wishes do not make things happen, and valuing a person for inner qualities rather than appearances. Task persistence increased, and children became somewhat more likely to follow classroom rules with adult supervision.\(^1\) Independent research studies show that after two weeks of watching, children become more willing to share with others, more cooperative in their play behavior, and more imaginative, as well as showing more positive

\(^1\)Mankiewicz and Swerdlow, 192.
emotional reactions to other children than children not watching.¹

The pro-social content of "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood" appears to me to be an excellent source for enriching a child's environment, and it is readily available. I therefore recommend the program for inclusion in a child's television curriculum.

**Television and the Family**

The foundation of society is the family. Michael R. Kelley of George Mason University writes (1983) that although many of us have grown up with television, few of us fully understand its effects on the American family. Sadly, he says, we have made far too little effort to understand and teach that understanding to our children. He thinks we need to apply the same analytical processes to television that we do to print or the theater. "The truth is," he writes, "television has surprised us all, establishing its preeminence in our homes before most of us began to take it seriously."²

Kubey and Csikszentmihalyi write:

The medium has clearly become an American institution, substantially altering and influencing every other institution and ranking with the family,

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²Kelley, 4-5.
the school, and the church as contemporary culture's prime forces of socialization.\(^1\)

In 1977 Goldsen characterized TV as a "family member."\(^2\)

Kirby points out that family conversation has been replaced,\(^3\) and Bradley S. Greenberg writes that the family's use of television may well have replaced dining room table behavior as a key to a "better understanding of whole family functioning."\(^4\) Television substitutes for communication between spouses,\(^5\) and, as Ben T. Logan writes, children are learning that it is fine if TV intrudes into the home completely.\(^6\) It is very easy for parents to use the set as a babysitter,\(^7\) allowing it to "tranquilize" children rather

\(^1\)Kubey and Csikszentmihalyi, 24.
\(^2\)Goldsen, 2.
\(^3\)Kirby, 139.
\(^4\)Greenberg, 421.
\(^5\)Perrotta, "Watching While Life Goes By," 17.
\(^6\)Logan, "Coping with Television in an Intentional Way," 12.
\(^7\)Arthur Asa Berger notes, "The genius of television, as a one-eyed baby sitter, is that it frees parents from having to be involved with their children, it gets kids out of their parents' hair. But what we do when we give our children free rein over the television set is to abandon them to the disruptive forces of their anarchistic impulses. Children need boundaries and limits, otherwise they feel 'lost,' allowing it to 'tranquilize' their children rather than having to deal with their squabbles--consequently adults and children are less involved with each other." Berger, *The TV-Guided American* (New York: Walker and Co., 1976), 97. This comment comes in his discussion (pp. 92-98) of what he terms "myths" about TV: (1) Children know best (they don't), (2) Television networks care (about money, yes), (3) Our government will protect us (not with
than having to deal with their squabbles. Consequently adults and children are less involved with each other.

Kubey and Csikszentmihalyi discuss the impact of television on family life and draw some rather interesting conclusions that are not as negative as those others have drawn. They found that those homes with VCRs and planned movie rentals experience an improved television experience, probably because most people feel better when they are with other people rather than being alone.¹ Nonetheless, they also found that the nature and quality of family experiences were altered by the presence of television in the direction of "less activation and cognitive activity."² For a family that wishes to be together, television offers an opportunity to share experiences, but in doing so those shared times in front of the screen are times when family members are far more passive with each other than would be the case in other activities such as swimming and hiking.

Kubey and Csikszentmihalyi think that television is used by many to structure their daily lives. "For many subjects, time spent with the family and with television

¹Kubey and Csikszentmihalyi, 97.
²Ibid., 111.
helps provide psychological order."¹ They say it should not be surprising that the removal of television is disruptive, especially for individuals who use it to structure a significant proportion of their experience.

But the disruption would be worthwhile, especially for people for whom television is an escape from interpersonal relationships:

It is certainly the case that some families, or some individuals in families, might profit by spending less time with television and more time in direct interaction with one another and engaging in more active, challenging, and creative pursuits either together or alone.²

Families used to have the presence of "extended" members such as aunts, uncles, and grandparents. For most families this is not the case anymore, and it appears that television is substituting for the basic functions of the extended family.³ Because of the cumulative amount of time children spend in front of the screen (the average child entering kindergarten has spent more time there than a college graduate spends in classrooms), television has become important as an additional parent and cue-giver.⁴

¹Ibid., 116.
²Ibid., 117.
³Kalva, 145.
⁴Mankiewicz and Swerdlow, 197.
Television programming has become the norm by which children judge themselves and their families.¹

Homelitician Kevin Perrotta is concerned about television's interposition between parents and children. He says it is the responsibility of parents to train their children, not let the screen do it.

While children are watching television they are not receiving training from us. They are not gaining experience in obeying their parents, relating to their peers, serving people, or anything else.²

Neither are they being trained in spiritual things.

The kind of family life portrayed on the screen includes stereotypes,³ and encourages a youthful rejection of proper parental authority. According to Dr. Alvin Poussaint, consultant to "The Cosby Show":

TV parents are more like pals with their children. They are overly permissive, always understanding. They never get very angry. There are no boundaries or limits set. Parents are shown as bungling, not in charge, floundering as much as the children. And that encourages kids not to see parental authority as critical or key.⁴

¹Messaris, 302.

²Perrotta, "Watching While Life Goes By," 17.

³Rubinstein, 823. See also, "In family-related children's programs, male and female parental-role portrayals tend to reinforce the traditional view of family relations with respect to male dominance and female nurturing. They also reinforce the traditional patterns of male work and adventure and female domestic activities. In addition, there is perpetuated the myth of the lazy, clumsy, and incompetent father." Barcus, 143.

⁴Alvin Poussaint, quoted in Kalter, 10.
Comstock points out that television has assumed the status of the children's medium where they are the "acknowledged resident experts." In addition to typical family decision-making processes, when it comes to television the young are "arbiters of household behavior."1 In other words, children, not parents, make the family's decisions. Charren and Sandler muse a bit on the impact of this modeling:

If children were to use TV characters exclusively as their guides, very few of our young people would ever get married at all. In the world according to television, marriage, particularly a successful marriage, simply doesn't offer enough plot entanglements.2

TV may pay attention to single-parent families, but current programming considerably over-represents them. And on the screen single-male-parent families outnumber single-female-parent families by two to one, whereas U.S. population figures show that single-female-parent families vastly outnumber the single-male-parent families.3

A normal, stable marriage is seldom portrayed on television. Instead, the message that is presented is if you are not finding "fulfillment", you owe it to yourself to look somewhere else.4 Satisfying love on the screen usually

1Comstock, Television and American Social Institutions, 19.
2Charren and Sandler, 55.
3Barcus, 153.
4Coakley, 69.
comes after marriage when you meet someone "new," even though doing so presents the problem of disposing of an unwanted, unloved spouse and marriage. TV critic Jeff Greenfield notes:

Marriage on television today is a cross between a bad joke, a bad dream, and a nostalgia trip. Finding a contemporary happily married couple on television is like finding an empty taxi in midtown Manhattan at 5 p.m.—possible, but not very likely.¹

Soaps, particularly, shatter the idea of the family as a safe haven in a heartless world.²

The episodes pick away at the notion that people in human families try to commit themselves to each other as deeply as their individual feelings permit. . . . They whittle away at the fundamental sense of trust every [real] human family tries to imprint on its members. . . . Soap opera people live in a world of fly-apart marriages: throwaway husbands, throwaway wives, and—recently—throwaway lovers.³

Romance is linked principally with premarital affairs or with someone else's spouse. "In fact, marriage appears to dampen romantic and love interests considerably. It is a social convention still endured, but with little glamor or enthusiasm."⁴

In addition to providing role models that adolescents pattern themselves after, television also

¹Jeff Greenfield, quoted in Charren and Sandler, 55.
²Ang, 69.
³Goldsen, 17, 22.
⁴Skornia, 155. He notes here, however, that "enough of the technique of love-making is shown in sufficiently alluring fashion to provide incentives for imitation."
provides negative role modeling of family relationships, supplanting again the role modeling that once came from real families or Biblical characters. According to Goethals:

For those believers who paid serious attention, human figures depicted in the sacred narratives provided examples to be admired and imitated. The notion that someone was able to cope or deal with life in an extraordinary and exemplary way brought inspiration and comfort to a bored and disillusioned existence. In the traditional icons, whether they were sacred personages mediating grace or humble persons receiving new life, the luminous figures held out a special kind of hope to ordinary persons.¹

Summary

In this chapter we have examined how television has had an impact on society. Television has become a major agent of socialization (the process by which individuals become human and learn how to treat other humans), particularly for children, who all too often are deprived of meaningful interaction with adults.

Television has affected our sense of community by focusing individuals away from their local area to the national community. Television's myths have generated an unreal community (or environment) which exists only on the screen, yet is very real to its viewers.

Television viewing has had an isolating effect on its viewers, who tend to substitute television characters for real relationships with real people. In line with this,

¹Goethals, 34-35.
television has displaced many other activities in the lives of its viewers who now watch rather than, say, read or enjoy hobbies.

Commercial television broadcasting vacillates between the program and commercials, which wreaks havoc with viewers' normal emotional reactions. Individuals tend to become insensitive and very select in the things they admit to their attention.

Television has a negative impact on the educational process by creating passivity in its viewers. This is attributable to its monological nature. Students' reasoning processes have shifted from analytical, sequential deduction to what teacher Michael Novak terms dialectical. Because of imitative learning, television could provide a valuable educational resource, and it does through noncommercial programs such as "Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood." However the behavior and character of most commercial broadcasts result in most children emulating behavior which is not pro-social. The pace of television interferes with imaginative play, and heavy viewing impacts negatively on academic achievement.

The screen has had an impact on the basic unit of society, the family. Not only has viewing displaced much normal family interaction, but it has interposed itself between family members. For some children, it has become their "extended family." Television presents a concept of the family which is not necessarily in accord with real
American families, including stereotypes, "in-charge" adolescents, and an overrepresentation of single-parent families. Television provides negative family role models that appear to be supplanting traditional icons.

It is my conclusion that television has had a very pronounced molding influence on American society, even though the members of that society have not generally recognized this influence. In chapter 3 we take a look at the first of two subjects that have received close scrutiny from researchers: television and violence.
CHAPTER IV

TELEVISION AND VIOLENCE

Over the years a very large body of research has been amassed regarding televised violence. What has been learned from all this research?

Early Nonviolence

Program directors have always relied on movies to provide part of the programming shown during the telecast day, and apart from whatever violence happened to be in those movies, early programming tended to be nonviolent. Examples of early family programs include "Father Knows Best," starring Robert Young, and "Make Room for Daddy," starring Danny Thomas. These programs were anything but violent. In contrast, television today has become, to borrow Marie Winn's term, a "hotbed of crime and mayhem." Why? One of the things that perennially attracts a viewing audience is action, and violence is very action-oriented. The more action a show has, the more people tend to watch it--and the ratings go up. In their quest for increased ratings, advertisers and producers continually give the

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¹For a summary of twenty years of research, cf. Liebert and Sprafkin, 135-161.
public more action (violence) in order to get more viewers. In this sense Marie Winn is right when she says, "People want violence on television."¹

Program Violence

In 1952 S. W. Head examined 209 programs selected at random from various network dramatic series for violent content. He found four acts of violence or immorality per program, and one hundred and one homicides in those programs, with the emphasis on the killers rather than the victims.² Dr. George Gerbner and his colleagues of the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania have been annually cataloging and recording the violence found in television programs. Although his work (in particular his 1972 report to the National Institute of Mental Health) drew attention to the increase in televised violence that had occurred since the 1950s, the first thirteen years of this project showed that the amount of violence measured remained essentially unchanged, in spite of the industry's claims to the contrary.³ In 1974 Gerbner found that eight out of every ten programs contained

¹Winn, 68.

²S. W. Head, quoted in Comstock, Violence in Television Content, 4.

³Condry, 66.
violence.\textsuperscript{1} If anything, research is showing that the frequency of violent acts is increasing.

\textbf{Verbal Aggression}

It is to be expected that crime and police shows will present violence, but in terms of verbal aggression, situation comedies (sitcoms) have been leading all programs: in a three-year study it was found that the average was over thirty acts per hour, and in the most recent year studied, nearly forty interactions per hour were insulting, rejecting, or verbally hostile.\textsuperscript{2} Usually all this is accompanied by either canned or cued (in the case of a live audience) laughter.

\textbf{Statistics}

It has been estimated that the average American young person will, between the ages of six and eighteen, watch 16,000 hours of television. In that time he or she will witness an estimated 18,000 dramatized murders.\textsuperscript{3} Exhorter Don Feder comments, "He will also become intimately acquainted with the sanguinary exploits of maniacal cops, bloodthirsty detectives, killer commandos, and sadistic

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{1}Siegel, "Televised Violence," 177.  \\
\textsuperscript{2}Greenberg, 117-118.  \\
\textsuperscript{3}Newton Minnow estimates this at 25,000. See p. 110 of this report.
\end{flushleft}
Presently, "If one wishes to see fifty-four acts of violence one can watch all the plays of Shakespeare, or one can watch three evenings (sometimes only two) of prime-time television."²

"Kidvid" Violence

Children's programming (better known as "kidvid" in the industry), particularly cartoons, appears to be the most violent of all programming. Condry records the following data based on a 1980 study:

Over the years, the Saturday morning children's shows are by far the most violent programs on television, with an average of 93.6% of the programs containing violence, and an average of 5.77 acts of violence per program (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, and Signorielli, 1980).³

Saturday morning cartoons have been characterized as the "most antisocial programs" presented on television, which are dominated by antisocial acts.⁴ Charren and Sandler think that the "laugh" track that accompanies most cartoons is a gimmick which trivializes violence. They think it is used to try to convince children that violence is funny. As they see it, most cartoons are "filled with

²Mankiwiec and Swerdlow, 7.
³Condry, 66.
⁴Greenberg, 124, 187.
the sounds of crashes, screams, and hysterical laughter.\textsuperscript{1}

Do kidvid programs need all that violence? Studies show that it is action rather than violent content that maintains children's attention. This suggests most violent content could be removed from programs without reducing audience interest.\textsuperscript{2}

\textbf{Violence in the Television World}

The television world appears to be a violent world that is "suffused with hostility,"\textsuperscript{3} "vastly more violent than the none-too-peaceful world of everyday reality."\textsuperscript{4} One study says:

\begin{quote}
Crime in prime time is at least 10 times as rampant as in the real world. An average of 5 to 6 acts of overt physical violence per hour menace over half of all major characters.\textsuperscript{5}
\end{quote}

Mankiewicz and Swerdlow quip that former Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Chairman Newton Minnow's famous quote about television being a "vast wasteland" should have been that it is a "combat zone," which they say

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{1}] Charren and Sandler, 176.
\item[\textsuperscript{3}] Sklar, 24.
\item[\textsuperscript{4}] Condry, 66.
\end{itemize}
idolizes violence.\footnote{Ibid., 42.} Minnow's speech at Columbia University on May 10, 1961, has become the most famous speech ever made on the medium. It outraged broadcasters but delighted news reporters. Minnow, who is now a Chicago lawyer and Professor of Communications Law and Policy at Northwestern University, was interviewed on the thirtieth anniversary of that speech by the Chicago Tribune. Instead of being concerned about television's impact on his children, he is now worried about how it will affect his grandchildren. He still considers it a vast wasteland, not barren of good values, but even dangerous to children, societal values, and the democratic process. He was quoted as saying that the degeneration of subject matter and language represents "a deterioration of standards." "Now," he says, "there seems to be a fascination with kinky sex, sadism and violence." Children's programming exposes the average youngster to "little more than violent cartoon strips and 25,000 murders by the age of eighteen."\footnote{"Update: TV Not Just a 'Vast Wasteland,' But a Toxic One," USA Today, May 10, 1991, 1A.}

Unreal Courts

The world of violence that television portrays is not necessarily like that encountered in the real world. Charren and Sandler point out that one of the obvious differences is that daily life to a real-life police officer...
is anything but glamorous. Also, in real life, private
detectives seldom solve crimes.¹

Televised courtroom scenes are usually dramatic,
with the real culprit, after much breath-taking drama,
finally breaking down in an emotional outburst, admitting
his or her culpability. In contrast, most actual courtroom
scenes are not dramatic but rather boring, as anyone who has
ever been present at one will testify. Furthermore, they
are very unemotional places. Other than those who plead
guilty, one seldom admits in court that he or she has done
something wrong—especially in an emotional outburst.
Attorney Walter H. Lewis writes, "I have never seen, nor
have I ever heard of, a defendant admitting his guilt in
court during a criminal trial."² Gerbner and colleagues
also point out that enforcing law and order in the world of
prime time takes nearly three times as many law-enforcement
people as all the other blue-collar and service workers
combined.³

As Gerbner's research has shown, the incidence of
crime on television is higher than it is in the real world.⁴
And, although the old adage "Crime does not pay" is upheld

¹Charren and Sandler, 63.
²Walter H. Lewis, "Witness for the Prosecution." In
Logan, Television Awareness Training, 184.
⁴See note 4, p. 102 of this study.
by most programs showing that culprits have to pay for their crimes, their paying is not really visible.

The Hollywood Connection

The television industry is closely connected with Hollywood. Movies and television programs are produced in the same studios with the same facilities and star many of the same actors. Presently a large part of television programming is movies or made-for-TV movies. This has had a pronounced influence on television, which, Leo Bogart says, was inevitable.

The illusional skills perfected by the film industry were applied to project realistic scenes of sadistic brutality and mutilation. . . . The relationship of television to films is not one-way. What happens in uncensored Hollywood directly relates to what happens on television.1

A School for Violence

Violence does teach. Literature editor Ben T. Logan writes:

Every time we watch we see people successfully resolving problems. Sometimes the solutions are creatively peaceful. More often, the solutions demonstrate how effective violence is in settling conflict.2

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Psychiatrist Frederick Werthem comments that television is a school for violence:

In this school young people are never, literally never, taught that violence is in itself reprehensible. The lesson they do get is that violence is the great adventure and sure solution, and he who is best at it wins.¹

Both good and bad characters use violence. The moral is "make sure that yours is the more effective use--make sure you use it last."² Mankiewicz and Swerdlow see commercial television's message as there is no problem which cannot be solved within an hour, especially if the solution is an act of violence.³

The screen is also quite instructional regarding specific types of violent behavior. In 1965 J. D. Halloran reviewed the article "Mass Media and the Public Attitude to Crime" authored by sociologist Bryan Wilson in which he agreed with Wilson's analysis of the media as an agency which provides ideas and technical knowledge of criminal activity "for those so disposed."⁴ It seems this perspective on the media was often expressed years ago, but of late is seldom expressed. Minnow's "25,000 murders by

¹Frederick Werthem, quoted in Logan, Television Awareness Training, 228.

²Mankiewicz and Swerdlow, 46.

³Ibid., 9.

the age of eighteen" includes explicitly graphic details of those crimes. What of all the other types of crimes portrayed in those eighteen years?

**Violence: A Method of Problem-Solving**

As has been noted above, televised violence has this harmful dimension: it teaches that violence is an acceptable, normal method of solving problems. Mankiewicz and Swerdlow write that in almost all programs with a violent content, peaceful options (such as patience, understanding, compassion, or due process of law) are not important so long as the right side wins. They cite the 1968 conclusion of the staff of the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence: "The overall impression is that violence, employed as a means of conflict resolution or acquisition of personal goals, is a predominant characteristic of life."¹ Although this conclusion dates back thirty years and the authors' comments fourteen years, I believe these to be completely valid today.

Skornia notes:

The implication is that the solution of basic problems is to be found in the use of brute strength. Courage is equated with the willingness to use violence. Courage which stands against violence is rarely shown and virtually never extolled. In all but the most exceptional cases, in

¹Mankiewicz and Swerdlow, 44.
order to survive, the heroes of American television finally have recourse to arms and violence.\footnote{Skornia, 171, 172.}

He points out that many programs (such as those featuring private detectives) even appear to promote disrespect for law and law-enforcement officers. Although Skornia's book was published in 1965, there is no evidence on the screen that this scenario has changed in the years since. What has changed, rather, is first, in addition to the traditional firearms, the weapons and devices that are often used have become high-tech, state-of-the-art; and second, the types of crimes depicted are more sensational and are depicted more graphically and explicitly.

**Impact on Heavy Viewers**

Television viewing affects a person's thinking, and the heavier (viz., more extensive) the viewing is, the more thinking is affected. As has already been pointed out, the world of television is not necessarily the real world. One of the marked differences is the amount of violence found; the TV world is far more violent than the real. Research has demonstrated that heavy viewers see the real world as a "mean and scary place"\footnote{Rubinstein, 823.} that is full of violence, danger, and evil.\footnote{Berkowitz and Rogers, 65.} Heavy viewers come to believe that the incidence of violence in the real world is higher than light viewers
117

believe.\(^1\) Heavier viewers tend to be more "mistrustful, alienated and apprehensive," more likely to describe their lives in "grim terms."\(^2\) Heavy viewers in general come to the place where they accept aggression as a socially acceptable way of solving problems, and they begin to think and act aggressively.\(^3\)

As Comstock points out, Gerbner and his colleagues have consistently documented an association between a more extensive use of television and pessimistic beliefs and perceptions.\(^4\) Gerbner and colleagues write:

> We have found that one lesson viewers derive from heavy exposure to the violence-saturated world of television is that in such a mean and dangerous world, most people "cannot be trusted" and that most people are "just looking out for themselves" (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, and Signorielli, 1980). We have also found that the differential ratios of symbolic victimization among women and minorities on television cultivate different levels of insecurity among their real-life counterparts, a "hierarchy of fears" that confirms and tends to perpetuate their dependent status (Morgan, 1983).\(^5\)

\(^1\)Condry, 123. Note that when viewers fill in questionnaires that have answers corresponding to real life and television life, heavy viewers tend to choose the TV answers whereas light viewers tend to choose real life answers. As Condry writes, "Apparently the 'facts' of the world of television tend to slip into the belief and value systems of individuals who are heavy consumers of it." Gerbner would call this "mainstreaming."

\(^2\)Morgan, 500, 504.

\(^3\)Ibid., 97, 118. Cf. Liebert and Sprafkin, 158.

\(^4\)Comstock, Violence in Television Content, 46.

Considering women who are extensive viewers, Condry writes that they are exposed to a double dose of distortion. First, they see more violence than those who view less, and second, women are more consistently victimized in the violence they see. He thinks the message they are getting is they should fear for their safety. Unfortunately, women are more often victims in real life as well.

**Increased Aggressiveness**

A number of studies show the association between the viewing of violent television and aggressive attitudes. Other studies also show that certain aspects of a violent portrayal increase the likelihood of aggressiveness. George Comstock lists these as follows:

(a) reward or lack of punishment for the perpetrator (Bandura, Ross & Ross, 1963b; Rosekrans & Hartup, 1967); (b) depiction of the violence as justified

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1Condry, 126.

(Berkowitz and Rawlings, 1963; Meyer, 1972); (c) cues, such as attributes of a victim matching those in real life (Berkowitz & Alioto, 1973; Geen & Stonner, 1972); (f) violence labeled realistic rather than fictional (Feshbach, 1972); (g) violence whose commission pleases the viewer (Ekman, Liebert, Friesen, Harrison, Zlatchin, Malmstrom, & Baron, 1972); (h) highly exciting content, violent or not (Tannenbaum & Zillmann, 1975; Zillman, 1971); and (i) violence that goes uncriticized (Lefcourt, Barnes, Parke, & Schwartz, 1966).

As was pointed out earlier, one of the reasons we are drawn to violence is that it usually is very action-oriented. Another reason is our own human nature.

We have in us urges to be violent that feed on screen violence. We carry around inside us attitudes that can make us willing participants in the sexism, racism, and other stereotyping found on the screen.

The biblical term for this is sin.

Imitative Violence

One long-standing criticism of television is that televised accounts of fictional crimes spawn identical crimes in the real world. On September 15, 1976, Martin A. Russo, Representative from Illinois and member of the Communications Subcommittee at that time, was quoted as saying, "Far too often the national press reports serious


2 See p. 98 of this study.

crimes that have remarkable similarity to fictional crime on television.  

The classic experiment here was performed by Albert Bandura, who placed a child's inflated plastic Bobo doll (about three feet tall) and a hammer in a room with playing children. When the children were shown a film of an adult hitting the doll with a hammer, they tended to mimic this behavior far more often than those children who did not view the film. In other words, the old adage "Monkey see, monkey do" appears to be applicable to the viewing of televised violence.

Adults

One particular film that seems to incite imitative behavior in some adults is the film "Doomsday Flight," in which an air carrier receives a bomb threat while a flight is in progress. While the movie was being broadcast a U.S. airline carrier received a bomb threat identical to that in the movie. Within twenty-four hours four more calls were received, with eight similar threats within a week. This was several times the usual number for a comparable time period according to the Federal Aviation Agency (FAA). The

1Martin A. Russo, Congressional Record (Sept. 15, 1976), quoted in Coakley, 111.

FAA publicly blamed the network and film for endangering public safety. When the film was first scheduled for broadcast in 1966 the Airline Pilots Association petitioned (unsuccessfully) the network the prevent the film from being shown. When the film was scheduled to be broadcast in 1973 then-FAA Administrator John Shaffer sent a letter to 500 different television stations requesting that the film not be shown.\(^1\) Prior to his death in 1975, Rod Serling, who wrote the story, told an interviewer, "Yes, I wrote the story, but to my undying regret."\(^2\) Kevin Perrotta comments:

> The accumulated evidence shows that an increase in violent behavior is the short- and long-term effect of seeing a lot of violence on television. This finding confirms a common sense supposition: what we see a lot of, we tend to imitate.\(^3\)

According to the theory of imitation, under certain conditions an organism will acquire a novel behavior pattern. Whether or not that behavior will be performed is then determined by other variables.

**Adolescents**

There have been several celebrated court cases involving criminal acts committed by individuals who

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\(^2\)Rod Serling, quoted in Mankiewicz and Swerdlow, 14.

\(^3\)Perrotta, 18.
allegedly derived their ideas from television. One of these cases was *Niemi v. National Broadcasting Co., Inc.* in 1978. During prime-time NBC presented the film *Born Innocent* in which the (simulated) rape of a teenage girl by several other girls in a reformatory was portrayed. Within a few days, an identical rape occurred in northern California. The attackers admitted getting the idea from the television show.\(^1\) The second time the movie was presented it was shown at 11:30 P.M. with the rape scene edited out.

Children

Scientific research indicates clearly that children do imitate the violence portrayed on television.\(^2\) Alberta E. Siegel indicates that the findings of Albert Bandura's classic experiment with the Bobo doll have now been

\(^{1}\) M. Malamuth and J. Briere, "Sexual Violence in the Media: Indirect Effects on Aggression Against Women," *Journal of Social Issues* 42 (1986): 75-92. The case was eventually dismissed by a judge without going to trial. Condry, 108. For a discussion of the legal issues involved cf. Daniel Linz, Edward Donnerstein, and Steven Penrod, *Issues Bearing on the Legal Regulation of Violent and Sexually Violent Media,* *Journal of Social Issues* 42 (1986): 171-193. It is interesting to me to note that NBC avoided prosecution because it could not be proven that their motivation in showing the film was malicious. When Ford Motor Corporation was successfully prosecuted for the "fiery crashes" of one of its models motivation was never considered: they were simply responsible for their products. Apparently this concept needs to be established as applying to all industries, including Hollywood. One of the attackers was sent to a federal reformatory for three years and the other three were placed on juvenile probation.

replicated by many psychologists. She notes that, at the time the Report to the Surgeon General was being prepared by his Scientific Advisory Committee on Television and Social Behavior, the Committee was able to list about twenty references to scientific papers on children's imitation of aggression.¹

Fictional television includes cartoons that are the most violent shows seen on television. Children are as likely to imitate the aggressive behavior of cartoon figures as they are real-life models, in spite of the industry calling it "fantasy."² ³ Liebert and Poulos point out:

As Bandura (1965a) has shown, a single exposure to novel aggressive actions portrayed on a television screen is often sufficient for children to learn how to be exact "carbon copies" of their exemplars, precisely imitating complex sequences of verbal and physical aggression. What is more, behavior learned in this way is often retained for long periods of time; after a single viewing many children can reproduce what they have seen six to eight months later (Hicks, 1965, 1968).³

¹Siegel, 176. Condry comments: "Most experimental investigations using children show that factual or real television has more pronounced effects on behavior than fictional television, especially in terms of the imitation of violence (Atkin, 1983; Feshbach, 1972, 1976; Sawin, 1981; Snow, 1974)." Condry, 167.

²Condry, 83, 101. He cites Bandura, Ross, and Ross (1963) here.

Mankiewicz and Swerdlow point out that newspapers contain frequent articles about the disastrous results of children imitating television life. "The fourteen year-old who hanged himself after watching rock star Alice Cooper . . . the nine year-old who strangled himself on his cape while performing Batman leaps." How tragic that even one youngster would die as a consequence of imitative behavior.

Suicide

Next to deaths caused from drinking and driving, suicide rates highest as a cause of teenage deaths. Periodically the industry presents a film on suicide as an "After School Special" in an effort to dissuade teenagers from committing the act. Statistics show, however, that each time such a film is shown, suicide rates are elevated above the norm. Statistics also rise following news coverage of the suicide of a well-known person.²

David P. Phillips and John E. Hensley write that, "At

¹Mankiewicz and Swerdlow, 53.

present, the best available explanation for the findings is that suicide stories elicit some imitative suicides."¹

Alexander Pope wrote long ago:

Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,
As to be hated needs but to be seen;
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.²

Research data supports Pope's quatrains.³ Televised violence does produce aggressive attitudes and behavior in viewers, and the greater the exposure, the greater the aggressiveness.

Dr. Leonard D. Efron, Professor of Psychology at the University of Illinois at Chicago, conducted a twenty-two-year longitudinal study of the habits of over four hundred viewers. He concludes: "There can no longer be any doubt that heavy exposure to televised violence is one of the causes of aggressive behavior, crime, and violence in

¹David P. Phillips and John E. Hensley, "When Violence Is Rewarded or Punished: The Impact of Mass Media Stories on Homicide." Journal of Communication, 34 (Winter 1986): 102. They found that the third day after the media gave publicity about prize fights and murder trials the number of homicides significantly increased (Cf. Condry, 108.). The number of homicides increases by 12.46 percent after a heavyweight championship prizefight, and an individual is much more likely to display aggression against a victim if the victim is similar to the losing boxer. Phillips, 104.

²Alexander Pope, quoted in Mankiewicz and Swerdlow, 50.

³Cf. Phillips and Hensley, 104; Condry, 93; Comstock, Violence in Television Content, 6; Television in America, 101, 103, 104; Rubinstein, 821; Liebert and Sprafkin, 155-156; Seymour Feshbach and Robert D. Singer, Television and Aggression, 108.
Huesmann and colleagues also did a twenty-two-year longitudinal analysis and found

A clear and significant relationship between exposure to TV violence at age 8 and the seriousness of criminal acts performed by these individuals 22 years later at age 30.

These conclusions are very similar to those drawn earlier by Gabriel Tarde in 1912, when he noted that national attention to crimes such as those of Jack the Ripper seemed to trigger similar attacks elsewhere.

Television Violence and Children

Special attention has been given by researchers to the impact of televised violence on children. As was noted previously, televised violence tends to make children more aggressive and give them ideas to imitate. One of the principal researchers on the Surgeon General's Commission, Dr. Robert M. Liebert, states:

As for relatively average children from average home environments, continued exposure to

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1Feder, 6.
2Liebert and Sprafkin, 153.
4Cf. Comstock, Violence in Television Content, 53, Television in America, 136; Lefkowitz, 168, 174; Liebert and Poulos, 202; Singer and Singer, "Television and the Developing Imagination of the Child," 111; Rubinstein, 820; Williams, 278; and Halloran, 24.
violence positively relates to acceptance of aggression as a mode of behavior.¹

Estimated Effect on the Population

Not only does all this televised violence produce aggressive attitudes and behavior in the viewers, be they child or adult, but other individuals are being hurt as a consequence. In 1978 Mankiewicz and Swerdlow estimated that if only one-tenth of 1 percent of a television audience was prompted to commit a crime, 85,000 violent acts would be added to the national total each night.²

Berkowitz and Rogers, like Palmer, use the term "priming" by which they mean televised acts that "prime" or incite similar actions in viewers.³ They also comment on the number of aggressive acts possible as a consequence of priming:

Even if the odds are only 1 in 100,000 that viewing aggression will result in open violence, in an audience of 10,000,000 there would be 100 acts of aggression!⁴

Mankiewicz and Swerdlow ask:

What about those who are raped, shot, bludgeoned, knifed, axed--by television imitators? What is the calculus of entertainment? Could those deaths and

¹Mankiewicz and Swerdlow, 25.
²Ibid., 19.
³See p. 50 of this study.
⁴Berkowitz, 76.
pain and grief be written off as merely a part of the price we pay to maintain art?\(^1\)

One of the more heinous crimes that have been committed in this century was that of the Tate-Labianca murders by the Charles Manson "family." One of the gang members is quoted as saying,

> We are what you have made us. We were brought up on your TV. We were brought up watching *Gunsmoke, Have Gun, Will Travel, FBI, Combat*. *Combat* was my favorite show. I never missed *Combat*.\(^2\)

**Arousal**

One of the psychological aspects of television viewing is that it causes arousal of the viewer,\(^3\) including the arousal or instigation of aggressive emotions and behavior.\(^4\) Comstock notes:

> The implication for which there is the greatest support is that exposure to television and film violence encourages the seeking of higher levels and more startling and shocking degrees of violence in the media by those who wish to continue to experience a constant degree of stimulation.\(^5\)

Condry expresses it this way:

> The more one sees, the stronger the next dose must be in order to attain the same level of response. In the view of many researchers and television

\(^1\)Mankiewicz and Swerdlow, 19.
\(^2\)Ibid., 34.
\(^3\)Rubinstein, 822.
\(^4\)Siegel, 179. Dr. Siegel also notes, "This finding holds for preschoolers, school-age children and teenagers."
critics, a trend in the violent programming over the last 20 years of television has been for the violence to become more graphic, more intense (Comstock et al., 1978; Murray, 1980; Winn, 1978; Zillman, 1982).

The more extreme forms of pornography portray acts of violence in an erotic setting. The fact that contemplating pornographic television programs or videos affects behavior is corroborated by the effect of pornographic literature. Convicted serial murderer Ted Bundy requested an interview with psychologist Dr. James Dobson, and this was granted the evening before his execution by the State of Florida. In the interview Bundy delineated how his involvement with pornography prompted him to seek ever-increasing degrees of visual stimuli that eventually resulted in his taking the lives of numerous human beings.

**Violence and the Psychologically Abnormal**

For most of us, existing social conventions and inner restraints prohibit our acting in an openly aggressive manner like what is so often seen on the screen. There are individuals, however, who do not share normal inhibitions. One team of psychiatrists and sociologists randomly tested people on the streets of mid-Manhattan. "Only 18.5 per cent

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1Condry, 114.

2For a tape recording, write: Focus on the Family, Boulder, CO, 80302.
were found to be 'well'; all others needed psychiatric care of one kind or another.¹

As detrimental as television is to the "normal" person, it is especially injurious to those who may be hyperactive,² maladjusted, neurotic, frustrated, or those with unsatisfactory peer group relationships.³ Skornia notes that children who tend to be particularly frustrated or brutal and aggressive can find televised violence particularly dangerous.⁴

Marie Winn raises the following question: Is it possible for disturbed children involved in the television experience to detach themselves from their antisocial acts? She believes it is possible and sees the problem as not lying with the priming effect of the screen, but rather that television:

Conditions them to deal with real people as if they were on a television screen. Thus they are able to "turn them off," quite simply, with a knife or gun or a chain, with as little remorse as if they were turning off a television set.⁵

¹Mankiewicz and Swerdlow, 19.
²Mander, 168.
³Halloran, 25, 26.
⁴Skornia, 167.
⁵Winn, 74.
Violence and Desensitization

Some "children" appear to be able to kill, torture, and rape with a sort of emotional detachment that leaves them without normal guilt or remorse. How is this so? Another aspect of the impact of the viewing of televised violence on viewers is the loss of normal emotions in connection with violent, aggressive behavior. One term for this is "desensitization."\(^1\) It appears that the more violence we see, the less sensitive we are to it. Don Feder states rather sarcastically, "Tens of thousands of hours viewing spectacles of death, with breaks for Lite beer commercials, does not heighten feelings of compassion."\(^2\)

Dr. Thomas Radecki, video watchdog of the National Coalition on Television Violence, states:

> I think we have become desensitized to violence. We've learned to use violence as a way to entertain ourselves to get an excitement. We haven't heard the message of the surgeon general and the recent U.S. Attorney's Task Force on Family Violence that the evidence is overwhelming that violent entertainment increases the tendency towards loss of temper and violence in normal children and adult viewers.\(^3\)

Condry uses the term callous and says, "With each presentation one becomes less and less aroused, less and

\(^1\)See chapter 2, p. 62 ff.

\(^2\)Feder, 6:

less interested.¹ Because of this, psychologically speaking, people need ever-stronger fare to achieve the same degree of pleasurable excitement.²

Dr. Bertram S. Brown, Director of the National Institute of Mental Health, testified before a Senate committee in 1974 that repeated exposure to televised violence can produce

Insensitivity to cruelty and violence because it gradually extinguishes the viewers' emotional responses and builds the feeling that violent behavior is normal and appropriate under some circumstances.³

Psychiatrist Frederick S. Wertham also warns that

Continuous exposure of children's minds to scenes of crime and brutality has a deeper effect on them than is generally realized. . . . people develop a toleration of pain and an accompanying indifference to it. And most frightening of all, they don't recognize this is happening.⁴

The Industry's Response

How does the industry relate to all this? First of all, the study committee that the National Institute for Mental Health established to study the violence issue became a political football. The list of proposed scientists was submitted to industry representatives for approval, and out

¹Condry, 112.
²Comstock, Television in America, 140.
³Mankiewicz and Swerdlow, 37.
⁴Ibid., 29.
of forty names only one was accepted. Alberta E. Siegel writes:

The fact that the television industry appreciates the implications of these findings is reflected in their successful efforts to blackball Professor Bandura from membership on the Advisory Committee.¹

Second, in response to the 1972 report of the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), the American Broadcasting Companies published a thirty-two-page critique called, "A Research Perspective on Television and Violence." Eli A. Rubinstein of the University of North Carolina offers the following view of their critique:

1. They made no reference whatsoever to the larger body of research within which violence was only one issue.

2. Their logic tended to be a bit questionable.

3. Their references were highly selective.

4. Nothing in their response refuted the findings and conclusion of the NIMH.

5. They attempted to contradict research conclusions by categorizing the studies as correlational, which, he says, "sounds remarkably like that of the tobacco industry in its position on the scientific evidence about smoking and health."²

¹Siegel, "Televised Violence," 176.
²Rubinstein, 821.
Leo Bogart summarizes the complaints against televised violence:

(1) The presentation of violent or aggressive acts is more emotionally arousing through the audiovisual media (motion pictures and television) than it is in either radio or print.

(2) Arousal may heighten awareness, involvement, or pleasure, but it also has the potential of being emotionally disturbing and consequently of evoking aggressive feelings.

(3) Media content that is perceived as literally real, or as resembling reality, is more arousing than content that is accepted as fictional.

(4) Children are more impressionable and more susceptible to arousal than are adults.

(5) People who are intellectually and emotionally disadvantaged are less capable than others of gauging the reality of media content and are more readily aroused.

(6) A single highly charged media episode can be perceived as intensely realistic by an emotionally troubled individual, with consequences that are threatening either to himself or to others.

(7) Even when it is presented as fiction or fantasy, a single media episode can provide a role model or suggest techniques of conduct to a troubled individual, with antisocial consequences.

(8) A single episode of media content may be sufficiently arousing to have emotionally disquieting aftereffects on many of those who have been exposed to it.

(9) Repeated exposure to media content that shows violence routinely used as a technique of handling interpersonal relations and enforcing social controls can lead to a more general acceptance of violence exercised by private individuals and by public authorities.

(10) Repeated exposure to media presentations of fictional violence might dull sensibilities to the horror of real violence.\footnote{Bogart, "After the Surgeon General's Report," 104-105.}

Most adults would consider that they are at the point where they can decide for themselves what to view.
Most responsible adults, however, do share a common concern about the impact of televised violence on children. Mankiewicz and Swerdlow summarize the danger that the viewing of televised violence presents to the health of every child:

--A happy home life, complete with loving parents and sound non-violent adult role models, does not mediate the effects of televised violence.
--Television violence can shape lifelong attitudes and behavior patterns. Heavy television watching during early childhood often correlates positively with violent behavior after graduation from high school.
--Children are more likely to model themselves upon what they have seen on film than they are to follow verbal instructions from a real, physically present person.
--Children exposed to violence on film retain the lesson learned from these films including the use of aggressive play, for months afterward, even if there has been no subsequent reinforcement.
--There is a relationship between the amount of television violence a child sees and the amount of violence in his behavior and attitude.
--Children model themselves after an aggressive film they have just seen, even if they are free at the same time to play with non-aggressive toys such as crayons or tea sets.
--Viewers of a violent film are more likely to administer an electric shock to "helpless" subjects than are viewers of a non-violent film.
--Exposure to only one violent cartoon can increase the aggressiveness of a child's play. This effect appears only minutes after viewing.
--Children who view a substantial quantity of television manifest signs of anxiety and irritability. Dentists report that these children frequently begin teeth grinding which requires professional attention.
--Televised violence can make certain children twice as aggressive as they were before viewing.1

1Mankiewicz and Swerdlow, 26-27. The administering of an electric shock is a reference to the celebrated experiment Stanley Milgram conducted in 1974 in which subjects were first shown a film and then were asked by
Former U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop once asked, "The real issue is this: Why on earth does anybody watch that stuff?" Logan writes that the demand "is placed there by producers, who feel it is placed there by advertisers, who feel it is placed there by viewers."  

Gans thinks that one type of viewer who enjoys violent television is the person who has been victimized either by crime or the fear of crime. On television shows most criminals eventually get their just deserts; in real life they do not. Perhaps one of the simplest answers is that given by Logan and already cited:

We have in us urges to be violent that feed on screen violence. We carry around inside us attitudes that can make us willing participants in the sexism, racism, and other stereotyping found on the screen.  

Late Research Findings

"scientists" to administer electric shocks to people as part of an "experiment" conducted by the "scientists." The subjects had the understanding that the shocks could cause heart damage or even death. Those subjects viewing a violent film were more prone to administer stronger shocks than those viewing a nonviolent film. Cf. Stanley Milgram, Obedience to Authority (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), 40ff.

1Beth Spring, "As TV Violence Grows, the Campaign Against It Alters Course," Christianity Today, November 25, 1983, 48.


3Gans, 61-62.

Both of the summaries published by Bogart and Mankiewicz and Swerdlow appeared in the mid-1970s. Since they appeared further research has only served to affirm them. At the May 1991 meeting of the American Psychiatric Association held in New Orleans, Dr. Brandon Centerwall, a psychiatric researcher formerly with the University of Washington, presented research findings which indicate that a dramatic increase in homicide and property crime rates occurs in the ten to fifteen years following the introduction of television into a society.

Focusing his research on reported homicide and property crimes for individuals of white European descent in the United States, Canada, and South Africa, he reported that from 1950 to 1975 white South African homicide rates were unchanged, with property crimes declining by 24 percent. During that same period the homicide rate in the United States increased over one hundred percent, with property crime up by three hundred percent per capita. From 1975 to 1985, however, the per capita rate in South Africa increased over 100 percent.

According to Centerwall, it is young children who are exposed to TV violence who later fuel the homicide and property crime rate increase. He told the press:

The evidence indicates that TV is a cause of both violence and anti-social behavior in general. Analysis further indicates that this effect upon the behavior of adults is caused by their earlier
repeated exposure as preadolescent children to television.\textsuperscript{1}

Centerwall concluded that: without the introduction of television violence there would be 10,000 fewer murders, 70,000 fewer rapes, 1,000,000 fewer motor vehicle thefts, 2,500,000 fewer burglaries, and 10,000,000 fewer acts of larceny in the United States each year. Crime rates would be half what they currently are.

At the same meeting psychiatrist Paul Kettle of Pennsylvania State University presented correlational data showing that the rates of teenage depression and suicide have also increased dramatically since the introduction of television. According to this research these rates more strongly correlate with television than with alcohol and drug abuse. Kettl stated, "Television must be included as a cause of youth suicide and depression."\textsuperscript{2}

\textbf{Chapter Conclusions}

The research and related literature that this chapter has reviewed leads to the following conclusions:

1. Commercial television programming has become increasingly violent over the years with children's programs being the most physically violent and sitcoms, the most verbally violent.


\textsuperscript{2}\textit{Ibid.}
2. Violence primes people not only for specific acts (such as murder and suicide), but also for an aggressive lifestyle in which violent acts are viewed as the solution of choice for handling problems.

3. When, for various reasons, some individuals do commit crimes as a result of priming, innocent individuals suffer.

4. Ordinary individuals become insensitive to suffering in others.

Let us now turn our attention to the second-most studied aspect of television: sex.
Two subjects in particular have been studied at great length with regard to their connection with television: violence and sex. We have reviewed the literature on violence; let us now consider what has been written regarding television and sex.

Hollywood Movies

W. W. Charters directed the Payne Fund Studies, which studied the film world of Hollywood. In 1934 his book *Motion Pictures and Youth: A Summary* was published. Relative to the films of that era he wrote:

> Sexual passions are aroused and amateur prostitution is aggravated. The fast life depicted by the movie characters on the screen induces desires . . . for such a life. . . . From all these data collected about the content of pictures the conclusion is inevitable that from the point of view of children's welfare the commercial movies are an unsavory mess.  

Much present television programming consists of Hollywood movies, be it morning, afternoon, or evening viewing time. The overall content of commercial feature films, as Charters

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pointed out, has not been very good. Since the 1930s the moral content of films has degenerated markedly.

The initial impact of television severely reduced the typical theater audience. In order to regain its lost crowds, Hollywood resorted to, among other things, increasing violence and sexual explicitness. Clark and Blankenburg (1972) documented that this change began around 1950, which was the time that television began to be popular.\(^1\) Because movies have been such a perennial staple of television programming, sooner or later just about every Hollywood feature film have found their way to the screen. Therefore, the increasing violence and sexual explicitness (Charter's "unsavory mess") of the movies has found its way into television programming and America's homes. With the advent of home video systems, it is now possible to rent movies within a relatively short time after they have played in theaters.

**Stereotyping**

One of the consequences of television's dependence on movies has been "stereotyping."\(^2\) Whereas society has

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slowly changed in its perspective on various groups such as women or minorities, older films do not reflect those changed attitudes. The showing of these older films (which is done all the time) perpetuates outdated perspectives and attitudes and slows needed societal changes.

Pushing the Limits

In contrast with its history of stereotyping, television now appears to be pushing the limit against cultural resistance to obscenities, some forms of sexual behavior, and various social relationships. Critic Mary Lewis Coakley writes:

All the four-letter words have been part of the proceedings at one time or another on NBC's late-night television. . . . Kay Gardella of the New York News Service wrote that "without question 'God' is one of the most abused words in television dialogue. 'Damn' and 'hell' are tossed around like confetti at a wedding."  

Notice what George Comstock has to say about this (1980):

Language and behavior that come close to offending some may coincide with the social and artistic goals of the people who make television . . . . Much of what is on television today would not have been considered acceptable by broadcasters 15 years ago.  

Author Orson Scott Card calls this "pushing the envelope." Referring to the showing of top nudity on L.A.

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Sex Roles 19 (1988): 312-313; and Barcus, 61, 115.

1Novak, 19.

2Coakley, 20.

3Comstock, Television in America, 80-81.
Law he comments regarding what he perceives was the attitude of the producers who put it on the screen:

"We can show this on L.A. Law. We got away with this. They can't tell us what to do. Ain't we cool?" And you can't for a moment pretend that anything else was going on there. There wasn't art. I mean the purpose wasn't artistic. The purpose was to push the envelope.¹

Card challenges the producers as to their responsibility for what they show by pointing to people who internalize the values which that show portrays.

Never on L.A. Law has anyone been attracted to another person and not gone to bed with them. Do you think that doesn't have anything to do with any 15-year-old girl hopping into the sack and getting pregnant? Do you think there is no one paying the price for the story that's being told? If you think that we don't live on the same planet.²

Certain types of programming have the ability to draw viewers because of their ability to arouse. Condry cites several studies which show that suspenseful drama, hilarious comedy, sports (particularly if you are rooting for one of the teams playing), and sex are all arousing.³

Comstock mentions television's heightening of public awareness of homosexuality. Mary Lewis Coakley writes that

¹See Appendix K.

²Ibid.

³"Sexually explicit erotic material consistently induces the most autonomic arousal in both sexes (Cantor, p. 111, Zillmann & Einsiedel, 1978; Donnerstein & Hallam, 1978; Levi, 1969; Zillman, 1971) whereas nature films consistently produce the least arousal (Levi, 1965; Wadeson, Mason, Hamburg, & Handlon, 1963). In fact, nature films often lower arousal below the baseline established before watching a film (Zillman, 1982)." Condry, 110, 111.
by the time we have seen episodes about homosexuality in a number of different programs, we begin to think that it is "as normal and as natural and acceptable as heterosexuality."¹ If Coakley is correct, television has been instrumental in creating a climate for "coming out of the closet"—as well as the use of profanity, immoral conduct, and a lot of other socially reprehensible conduct.

Most responsible parents object to the screening of nudity and increasingly prevalent and explicit sexual behavior. Television's portrayal of sex is much bolder now than a few years ago. In the 1970s the shows that caused the furor merely talked about it. Now, however, couples are seen in bed together, and unmarried intercourse occurs five times more often than married. "There has also been a willingness, both verbally and visually, to present sex acts that would have been absolutely taboo just a few years ago, including homosexuality."²

**Music Television (MTV)**

As was pointed out in the section on television and violence, the most violent programming on television is that of the kidvid, Saturday morning "cartoons." One of the newer forms of television, Music Television (MTV) in which rock songs are visualized, is watched more heavily by

¹Coakley, 13.

²Liebert and Sprafkin, 200-201. Cf. Sklar, 51; Malamuth, 91.
adolescents and young adults.\textsuperscript{1} MTV presents some violence, but is more sexually oriented than regular television programming.

Data reveal that there is an average of about four sexual activities per video as a norm, and the kind of sex portrayed is more demonstrative—kissing, hugging, and suggestive behavior occurs at twice the rate seen on conventional TV.

A content analysis of a random sample of 1984 MTV videos (Baxter, De Riemer, Landini, Leslie, & Singletary, 1985) revealed that 59\% of the videos portrayed sexual feelings or impulses, 31\% presented provocative clothing, 27\% showed dance movements of a sexually suggestive nature. Less frequent, but undeniably present, were the more discouraged sexual activities; sadomasochism appeared in 5\% of the videos and sexual bondage in 2\%.\textsuperscript{2}

Robert Pittman, developer of MTV, says that compared to conventional television which relies on a plot and continuity, MTV relies on "mood" and "emotion." "We make you feel a certain way as opposed to you walking away with any particular knowledge."\textsuperscript{3} The mood is obviously sexual.

The emphasis found here on "adolescent" sex in music television—long on titillation and physical activity but devoid of emotional involvement—echoes prior research in the popular music field. Results reinforce a trend in rock lyrics first noticed in


\textsuperscript{2}Liebert and Sprafkin, 201.

\textsuperscript{3}Denisoff, 241.
the late 1970s, toward sex, "without any emotional bond, without any commitment."

In this connection, a UPI release of May 15, 1984, cited then-Surgeon General C. Everett Koop addressing a southern medical school audience as saying:

Violence and pornography are at a crossroads now. One place they are crossing is in these rock video cassettes that have become so popular with young people . . . [they have become] saturated with what I think is going to make them have trouble having satisfying relationships with people of the opposite sex.”

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**Link with Violence**

Television sex today is frequently linked with violence. One rather prevalent theme is rape. James M. Wall writes that in sexual assault scenes the camera focuses on the victim's face, which places the viewer in the position of the rapist. He writes:

What now concerns the NCC (National Council of Churches) panel and its sponsoring agency, the council's Communications Commission is that a large number of Americans clearly want to identify with the powerful attacker in these films and television productions. This may or may not lead to imitative behavior, but it certainly offers viewers the vicarious experience of violence related to sex.

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1. Sherman, 91.
2. Denisoff, 292.
As was the case in *Born Innocent*, rape is usually presented without graphically explicit details. The lack of explicitness makes the impact of the film on the individual worse, as one experiment demonstrated. A group of college males viewed two films: one film depicted a rape in graphic and gruesome detail, while the other did not actually show the act. Physiological measurements showed that response to the film where imagination was needed to supply missing details was greater than to the film where they were present. Actual sexual violence portrayed was "zero" whereas violence imagined was "enormous."\(^1\)

Whereas the explicit portrayal of a crime is arousing, approaching that act in a suggestive way is also arousing. It would seem that avoiding seeing either way of depicting a crime would be the safest viewing choice.

Percy Tannenbaum and Dolf Zillmann use the term "arousal." George Comstock reports an experiment by which their "arousal hypothesis" was demonstrated:

College-age subjects were exposed either to a violent film, an erotic film, or an uncompelling and bland film. As in the Berkowitz experiments, the subjects first received mild electric shocks, saw one or another of the films, then had the opportunity to deliver shocks to the person from whom they had earlier received shocks. Subjects who had seen the violent and erotic films delivered a greater degree of shock; those who had seen the erotic film delivered a greater degree of shock than those who had seen the violent film.\(^2\)

\(^1\)Mankiewicz and Swerdlow, 195.

\(^2\)Comstock, *Television in America*, 93.
The American culture, according to Neil Postman, is a culture whose "information, ideas and epistemology are given form by television, not by the printed word." Postman points out that in days gone by everyone knew what Presidential candidates believed on every issue. Audiences could stand and listen to intricate, hours-long debates and perfectly understand them. However, they had no idea what the candidates looked like. In today's America it is quite the opposite; we all know what the candidates look like, but who knows what they really believe about anything any longer? Furthermore, who has the ability or interest to listen to the lengthy debates Americans once listened to?

Michael Warren terms our culture an image culture. He writes that our images are what we look at reality through. He writes, "Images we see, which we do not

\[^1\]Postman, 28. He writes: "The form in which ideas are expressed affects what those ideas will be," 31.

\[^2\]Ibid., 44 ff.

\[^3\]In this connection Dr. Gregor T. Goethals writes, "Television has become such an important part of political portraiture that the visual image becomes a basis for substantive judgments. It is no wonder that politicians are concerned about their good looks." Gregor T. Goethals, The TV Ritual: Worship at the Video Altar (Boston: Beacon Press, 1981), 111. Postman adds, "As Xenophanes remarked twenty-five centuries ago, men always make their gods in their own image. But to this, television politics has added a new wrinkle: Those who would be gods refashion themselves into images the viewers would have them be." Postman, 135.
question or which seem quite normal to us, appear so because they fit in with the images through which we see."\(^1\) Society has changed as a consequence of the images seen on the screen.

Personal Images/Scripts

Television's impact on role modeling includes sexual behavior. F. Earle Barcus affirms this:

Television programs for children have male and female characters available as role models, and it has been documented by a number of researchers that these characters teach children the appropriateness of sex-role behaviors through the use of modeling.\(^2\)

Every child needs role modeling and television has a tremendous potential here. However, the sort of characters and behavior that is modeled on the screen is of a morally lower character than most parents approve of.

Another term that can be used to describe this is sexual scripting. Jerry Mander expresses his concern:

Television's focus on the relationships between people may be far more important and have far more impact on the sexual scripts of children and adults than the portrayal of any particular nude scene or sexual act.\(^3\)

According to Irving Janis of Yale University, the images on the screen can induce personal scripts in viewers which

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\(^1\)Warren, 248, 251.  
\(^2\)Barcus, 21.  
\(^3\)Mander, 115. Cf. 41.
may unintentionally affect their personal policies that are carried out time and again for many years, perhaps even for the rest of their lives.¹

Commercials are frequently repeated, as are the varied images on the programs one watches. It is this repetitiveness that makes the images more "intimate" in your life. Ellis, Streeter, and Engelbrecht write:

Some researchers have found that television images become so compelling that they transfix many viewers (Caughey, 1978; McLeod et al., 1982). The television image is extremely sophisticated and is portrayed so realistically that it closely simulates the real world, even if the "accuracy" of that portrayal is suspect (Gerbner et al., 1980; Signorielli et al., 1982).²

In this regard, William Kuhns writes that not only is television far more real than the movies, but this is the main difference between watching something in a theater versus watching it on the small screen at home:

Whereas our eyes, through the flicker that activates them in a theater, are taught by films to accept the moving images as a technological fantasy, the opposite is true in television. We are psychologically conditioned to expect a basic reality rather than a basic fantasy over the television screen.³


³Kuhns, 7-8.
Seymour Feshbach and Robert D. Singer affirm the personal impact of television images when they write, "What has been read or heard or seen may become part of a person's private fantasy life."¹

By way of personal observation, whereas most adolescent girls used to be quite restrained (modest) in their conduct toward boys, many now seem to be very "forward," touching them freely. It seems reasonable to assume that this behavior is modeled after the sexual scripting television has provided. After all, is not that how women act on the screen?

Susan H. Franzblau observes that sex is most often found on shows that are supposed to be funny. She decries the fact that those shows which could deal responsibly with rape and abortion do not. Instead, they take only "infrequent and lurid glances" at these and related subjects. She writes:

Within these shows, sex tends to often become a tool, used by criminals of one sort or another to wield power over others. Rather than showing sex as a part of a more complete relationship, sex is displayed as the only aspect of a relationship. Thus, sex becomes pure exploitation and TV for the most part conveys the message that women are the exploited. The viewer sees a picture of sex as harsh, hurtful, and manipulative.²

¹Feshbach and Singer, 3.

²Franzblau, "Television and Sexuality," 112. Much of the laughter about sex on sitcoms is associated with sexual innuendo. Although innuendo is usually considered "adult," it has been demonstrated that twelve- to sixteen-year-olds understand these references. Cf. L. Theresa Silverman-
Sexual relationships ideally involve all dimensions of a relationship with one's spouse. Besides the physical dimension there are the mental, emotional, societal (marriage), and spiritual dimensions. When one or more of these dimensions are missing (as is usually the case with television), what is portrayed is not sex, but rather semi-sex. Franzblau writes that she is as concerned about what is not on the screen as what is. She continues:

On TV it tends to be all right to laugh about sex, but not all right to take it seriously as a natural part of a loving relationship. It is all right to show, quite explicitly, a woman being raped (presumably because the rapist is a criminal and the scene does not express approval of sexual behavior), but it is not all right to show a positive, loving sexual act.

Is that what we want television to teach us and our children about sex and sexuality?

Fantasy Images

One of the problems with television is that some individuals consider what they see to be real life when it is entertainment and not an accurate depiction of reality. As such, many (if not most) of the images portrayed on the screen offer a distorted picture of reality. Like the title of the program "Fantasy Island," just about all commercial programming is fantasy, or illusion. This creates a problem for some: "The intertwining of illusion with reality and the


1Ibid., 113.
frustration that results from not being able to alter the illusion."¹

Specific Images

Mankiewicz and Swerdlow note that television projects a view of the world that "as Dr. George Gerbner has said, helps change our image of ourselves."² Some of these specific images are good. For example, the poor boy who makes good,³ or that of a comfortable home surrounded by a white picket fence and broad lawns, with a crackling fire on the hearth.⁴ However, some of these images are bad. If you are a child with average American viewing habits, the chances are your images are, "violence works, heroes never fall, consumption is a desirable end in itself, and problems are always solved neatly and within an hour."⁵ Malcolm Muggeridge calls some of these images "fantasies of power,


²Mankiewicz and Swerdlow, 278.


⁴Sklar, 20.

⁵Mankiewicz and Swerdlow, 201.
of leisure, of carnality". For African-Americans, the television event *Roots* became a source of epic images of themselves: "where they came from, and where they are going." Peg Slinger writes:

Television has changed the daily rhythms of millions of people as it introduces and projects its own views of the world, its own images and symbolic forms, its own manner of interpreting reality.

**Summary**

Television has real potential as an educational vehicle, but unfortunately has become increasingly graphic and explicit in its portrayal of sexual behavior, and producers have tended to continuously push against the limits of what society is willing to tolerate. Television has not only encouraged the use of profanity and immoral conduct, but has also been instrumental in assisting homosexuals' "coming out of the closet." Often sexual behavior is linked with violence, as is the case with its frequent portrayals of rape.

Television's portrayal of sexual images script, or "program," young viewers with what is considered to be an appropriate mindset and acceptable behavior. This could be

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2Goethals, 58-59.

a very good thing, but the low level of commercial programs precludes this.

The industry has steadily maintained that commercial productions do not really affect viewers. They have termed research studies "correlational" in an attempt to discredit them, and have simply ignored many of the studies which show that televised violence and sex do impact on viewers, and this impact increases directly proportional to viewing time. The single most damaging argument against industry disclaimers is advertising, which we will consider in chapter 5.
While to most viewers television is enjoyable entertainment, to the industry it is business. The basic purpose of television is the making of money—lots of it! Money is made by selling an audience to an advertiser: the larger the audience, the more the advertiser will pay. This is the reason why ratings and market share are so important to the industry. Ratings indicate the number of people watching a given program (reported in the millions), and market share refers to the percent of total viewers at any given time who are watching a specific program.

Television programming serves as "bait" intended to capture the attention of an audience in order to watch

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1Siegel, "Television Violence," 176.

2Norbert Max Samuelson writes, "At present the only motive behind broadcasting programming is economic profits." "A Moral Critique of Television Values and the Role of Religion," Religious Education 82 (Spring 1987): 289. He writes from a moral/religious perspective and considers this motivation intolerable.


4Hoover, 48. Cf. Condry, 2, 23; and Mankiewicz and Swerdlow, 217.
commercials and satisfy the advertiser and manufacturer.¹
Jerry Mander terms television a "delivery system for
commodity life."²

Previously³ it was pointed out that television
distorts reality because its basic objective is to
entertain. Samuelson considers that the underlying motive
for distortion is financial: whatever misrepresentations
occur do so because television is catering to white, middle-
class eighteen- to forty-nine-year-olds because of their
purchasing power.⁴ The program needs to be interesting
enough to keep this group watching, but not so interesting
that it dominates the ads.⁵ Networks keep competing with
each other for viewers.

As one network slides behind, there is a tendency to
come up with something racier, sexier, more violent,
more taboo-shattering that will get the viewers back
from the competition.⁶

The industry is successful at making money. In 1963
networks extended the time of their national news shows from

¹Robert M. Liebert, "Your Prime Time--Or TV's?," in
Television Awareness Training, ed. Ben T. Logan (New York:
Media Action Research Center, 1977), 8. Cf. William F.
Fore, "Becoming Active Participants Rather Than Passive
 Receivers," Engage/Social Action 9 (December 1981): 23; and
Condry, 7.

²Mander, 132.

³See p. 41 of this study.

⁴Samuelson, 285.


fifteen to thirty minutes. This represented an additional five minutes of advertising time which earned them thirty six million dollars in one year.¹ In 1985 total advertiser expenditures on U.S. television were between nineteen and twenty billion dollars.² In 1987 CBS charged $600,000 per thirty-second spot during the Super Bowl.³ In 1988 television received 49.1 percent of the total dollars spent in America on advertising.⁴ Condry refers to several private sources who suggest that one minute of advertising time can range from $200,000 to nearly $1,000,000,⁵ which is a lot of money!

Money is also generated from the sale of programs to foreign markets. At a 1988 international meeting of television program buyers and brokers in Cannes, France, one estimate set U.S. television program sales to Europe at $2.7 billion dollars for 1992. This is a 1,200 percent increase since 1983.⁶

Although commercials may make a lot of money for the industry, they are the least-liked aspect of television

¹Shannon, 172.
²Liebert and Sprafkin, 23.
³Ibid., 24.
⁴Ibid., 22.
⁵Condry, 23.
⁶Kubey and Csikszentmihalyi, xi.
Most people develop a knack of screening them from their attention. Knowing this, the industry first attempts to make the commercials attention-riveting, and second, saturates commercial broadcasting with commercials that are screened repeatedly (How can you miss the point?). Between forty and fifty are broadcast in most two-hour segments. By the time the average American viewer turns forty he will have seen over a million commercials.

Market Research

Mankiewicz and Swerdlow pointed out in 1978 that commercials create demand for products by stimulating people to respond to needs they were previously unaware of.

Similarly Baggaley and Duck write:

Advertisements do not create needs in people: they accentuate and channel those that already exist, some of them at considerable depth below the surface (Packard, 1964). They have thus tended to concentrate less on the features or facts of the product itself than on promoting the associations, symbolic correlates, or images of the product in people's minds. . . . In other words, the function of the product is wrapped up by advertisers in a symbolic esoteric form that has greater appeal to the deeper and more self-acceptable needs of the viewer and potential consumer.

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1Comstock, Television and American Social Institutions, 77.
2Slinger, 30.
3Postman, 126.
4Mankiewicz and Swerdlow, 238.
5Baggaley and Duck, 118, 121.
The advertising world has thus shifted its focus from product research to market research. Kirby thinks that the selling of products is focused on wants rather than needs. Be they wants or needs, a lot of dollars are changing hands.

**Advertising Messages**

The underlying message of all advertising seems to be that viewers are consumers. According to the industry we have value only so long as we are consuming, so its goal is to keep us consuming. Sullivan writes, "The main cultural memory is that we have consumed yesterday and therefore have a right, indeed an obligation, to consume today." The advertising ideal is a world in which "whatever is bought is used only once and then tossed aside." "The car, toothpaste, or stereo that we bought yesterday are no longer adequate given the new line of commodities." The spender is extolled. Indeed, you are less than a complete person if you do not use a particular product. As Episcopal

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1 Postman, 128.
2 Kirby, 149.
4 Mander, 129.
5 Sullivan, 19.
6 Skornia, 151-152.
7 Kirby, 149.
minister Fred Rogers (of "Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood") stated at an ACT symposium:

Commercialism bombards us all, and all too frequently with messages that say you have to have something besides yourself to get along. . . . Your resources are not enough, so be sure to buy ours.¹

Americans are urged by the advertising industry "to devour a huge amount of . . . resources while millions of others drown in a sea of poverty."² As Logan characterizes it, "It's good for you to be self-indulgent."³

**Viewer Impact**

**Adults**

Although some people maintain that they really do not pay much attention to what they see on the screen, study reveals that most viewers are affected by what they see far more than they may realize. For instance, the brand of beer a viewer selects and defends is usually chosen because of the perceived personality of the people seen in that beer's commercials; they most resemble the personality a viewer imagines that they possess.⁴

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¹Fred Rogers, quoted in Coakely, 129, 130.

²Slinger, 35.

³Logan, "Has Anyone Seen the Teacher?", 229.

⁴Mankiewicz and Swerdlow, 243. Kuhns uses the word bond to describe this. He says it is the bond, not the product image, that sells a product. Kuhns, 43-44.
Beer, particularly, depicts the essential ingredients in modern maleness. Richard P. Adler describes one beer commercial:

The opening sequence: a weekend afternoon game of touch football in a city park. The players are in their late twenties and early thirties, probably in the professions. The game is good-natured but intense. A balding, nimble jock catches a pass and scores the winning touchdown. The game breaks up, the men gather around a cooler, toast themselves with cans of Schlitz beer, and the theme music rises. The end.

The style of this ad is typical of many currently on television. It makes no explicit claims for the product, nor does it offer any verbal description of Schlitz beer or its attributes. On one level, the commercial simply seems to present the product in a casual and attractive setting. On another level, however, the images suggest that Schlitz is an essential ingredient in the celebration of male camaraderie and virility.¹

Mankiewicz and Swerdlow pointed out back in 1978 that "it is precisely the validity of the claim that viewers will emulate the characters they see in commercials on which rests the entire financial empire of television."² Although some viewers claim that television does not affect them, the millions of dollars that companies continue to invest in television advertising, and the millions' worth of products sold, prove that television does affect the viewer—in particular, viewers' behavior.


²Mankiewicz and Swerdlow, 51. Italics theirs.
Children

One major difference between the way adults and children view television is that adults compare what they see on the screen with a backlog of real-life experiences, whereas children cannot do so because they do not have this backlog. Rather, children reverse the process when not watching, comparing real-life experiences with what they have seen on the screen. Commercials pose a problem here.

According to nutrition authorities, sugar should not be a major item in the diet. However, kidvid programming is heavily saturated with candy and cereal commercials. Most responsible parents desire their children to begin the day with a good breakfast, but most of the advertised cereals have such a high sugar content that some nutritionists term them "confections," which in their opinion, provide inadequate nutrition for children. Children are certainly not in a position to either evaluate or understand the importance of the contents of advertised cereals they may eat. According to Robert Choate, President of the Council on Children, Media and Merchandising,

Television today has produced an accelerated deterioration in eating practices of the world's most wealthy nation. Nutrition is human ecology and television is a master polluter.¹

With regard to toy commercials, Mander observes that advertising implants "internal movies, forever available for

¹Robert Choate, quoted in Liebert in Logan, 73.
For instance, what must a young girl think when she plays with "Barbie" and then looks in the mirror at herself? William F. Fore writes that these dolls are designed to "conform much more to the requirements of Playboy than playpen." 2 James U. McNeal of Texas A&M writes:

Many toys are designed in such a way that they will teach children such consumer behavior as brand awareness and retail store procedures. If toy marketers are in business for the long haul, they can stimulate children to buy a toy and that toy in turn can be designed to be instrumental in stimulating the children to want other products, even into adulthood. This is materialism in motion. 3

Children are thus socialized via advertisements for their role as consumers. 4 After all, companion products for Barbie include a beach house, Corvette, many different outfits, and Ken.

Commercials for beauty products appear to be quite effective in convincing adolescent girls that beauty is an important characteristic that is necessary to attract men. 5

1Mander, 132.


4Cf. Rubinstein, 823; Mankiewicz and Swerdlow, 203; Goldsen, 80; and Comstock Television in America, 114.

5Referring to an experimental study by Tan (1979). Liebert and Sprafkin, 193.
Use of over-the-counter drugs is positively correlated to heavy viewing of commercials by children,¹ and the most dangerous drug of all, alcohol, is advertised in commercials as well as being glorified in program content. As the Singers write,

> It is not necessary for liquor companies to foster interest in drinking when all of the good guys or heroines in fictional stories spend so much time modeling that indulgence.²

On March 12, 1992, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reported finding that smokers age 12 to 18 prefer the nation's three most advertised brands of cigarettes, Marlboro, Newport, and Camel—in this order. Earlier, on March 9, United States Surgeon General Antonia Novello called on the R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company, which makes Camel cigarettes, to pull its ad campaign featuring the cartoon character "Joe Camel." The CDC report concluded, "These data suggest that tobacco advertising may influence teenagers in their choice of brands."³

¹From a compendium of articles on "Television and Human Behavior" issued by the RAND Corporation in 1975, listing more than twenty studies evidencing this fact. Mankiewicz and Swerdlow, 241.

²Singer and Singer, "Psychologists Look at Television," 833.

Condry\textsuperscript{1} refers to a study\textsuperscript{2} which showed that the action and pace of commercials were associated with aggression in preschoolers.\textsuperscript{3} Citing the Singers once again:

No sane parent would present a child with a fire engine, snatch it away in 30 seconds, replace it with a set of blocks, snatch that away 30 seconds later, replace the blocks with clay, and then replace the clay with a toy car. Yet, in effect, a young child receives that kind of experience when he or she watches American television.\textsuperscript{4}

In 1977 Richard Adler compiled a summary of research findings for the National Science Foundation. He lists three conclusions:

(1) a large number of children eight years of age and younger do not understand the self-interested entrepreneurial motive behind commercials in the sense of being able to accurately define a commercial; (2) children learn brand names of products advertised on children's programming and consume large quantities of sugar-coated, fast-, and other food products advertised to attract them; and (3) children make numerous requests of their parents for advertised products, and in the phrase of the NSF report, "disappointment, conflict, and anger" are often experienced by the child when parents deny their requests.\textsuperscript{5}

\textsuperscript{1}Condry, 212.


\textsuperscript{3}Condry, 212.

\textsuperscript{4}Singer and Singer, "Come Back, Mr. Rogers, Come Back," 124.

Certain governments have refused to allow the screening of any advertising aimed at children. In light of the lucrativesness of this particular market it appears doubtful that America will follow suit.

Some educators are calling for the educating of children in regard to television advertising. One article suggests that children need to ask, "Will spending money meet my needs or yours?" It is suggested that children ask the following questions about a commercial:

1. What kind of people do you think the ad was aimed at?
2. What attention-getting devices were used?
3. What persuasive techniques were used?
4. What needs are met?
5. What are the claims that are made?
6. Is there are a hard sell?
7. Were you persuaded? Other suggestions are that children write a commercial and learn the difference between fantasy and reality as well as sponsor motives.

Warning: Advertising Is Hazardous to Your Health

Peg Slinger writes (1983) that viewing the hundreds of advertisements that fill every broadcast day poses a

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serious problem to the individual. According to her, viewing so many advertisements will lead viewers to actually believe that insecurity, unpopularity, lack of success can be corrected with V-O hair spray, Metamucil, Sealy mattresses, Miller Lite Beer, Toronados, and Kentucky Fried Chicken. The cries of the poor, the hungry, and the oppressed of the world are remote indeed when compared to the joy of finding the right shampoo.

Most Americans are rather materialistically oriented and in this country creature comforts have a high priority. However, although products ("things") may enhance daily life (for instance, riding in a car is nicer than walking there), they do not constitute the essence of life. Les Brown and Savannah Waring Walker put it this way:

Television was never really our window on the world, but neither was it our mirror, until now. . . . We have come to see ourselves today as television has always seen us—not as a national community, but as components of an economic system. Consumers.

Summary

The world of advertising tends to depersonalize us--it tries to reduce us to the level of consumers of products. The essence of life is reduced to the level of products which are portrayed as the solution to life's needs and wants. Spending is lauded as life's transcending activity and overriding objective. And the billions that

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1 Slinger, 32.

have been and are still being spent on advertising are expended because viewers are influenced by what they see.

Television has had a significant impact on humans. Just how much is probably impossible to determine because there is no equivalent society devoid of television that could be used in comparison studies. However, the world of commercial prime time is a world of stereotypes that are skewed toward the upper classes. Television has impacted on society as a major agent of socialization, particularly for children, and it tends to isolate viewers. It becomes the environment/community many viewers live in, and, depending on total time spent watching, displaces other activities in viewers' lives. More extensive viewing negatively affects educational achievement.

The television world is much more violent than the real world. Heavy viewers come to accept aggressiveness as an acceptable lifestyle and violence as the solution of choice for problems. Although occasional individuals act out the violence they have seen on the screen, societal conventions and inner restraints prevent most viewers from replicating the violent acts program characters regularly indulge in. Viewers tend to become insensitive to other people. Television's imagery has had a significant impact on the sexual scripting of viewers. In my opinion commercial programming has played a pivotal role in the lowering of the mores of American society.
It is my understanding that the media is most effective (75-100 percent) in gaining viewers' attention, somewhat less effective (50-75 percent) in gaining their understanding, still less effective (25-50 percent) in affecting viewers' attitudes, and least effective (0-25 percent) in influencing a change in viewers' behavior. Various businesses have invested huge amounts of money in advertising in the hope that viewers' behavior will be influenced by what is seen, and that they will purchase what is advertised. The fact that huge amounts of money continue to be invested in advertising is mute testimony to the success of the industry's premise that not only viewers' attitudes are affected by what they see, but their behavior as well.

In chapters 6 and 7 we turn our attention first, to television's values, and then to the relationship between television and the church.
CHAPTER VII

TELEVISION AND VALUES

The book *The Great American Values Test: Influencing Behavior and Belief through Television* addresses the subject of values. According to the authors of this book, every society has certain demands for competence and morality that are transmitted to succeeding generations. They suggest that the language used to communicate these demands is the language of values and they write, "It is these shared values that ultimately become internalized as the standards for judging one's own and others' competence or morality."1 Values, therefore, serve a dual purpose: they express (1) society's demands and (2) an individual's need for competence and morality. These authors think that the language of values transform individual needs into shared goals and behavior modes that can be justified, exhorted, defended, and transmitted to succeeding generations.

Although values are transmissible, they are not "set in concrete." Societies change, and likewise the

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1Ball-Rokeach, Rokeach, and Grube, 25.
values they espouse. The authors cited above point out that the values individuals have do not exist in isolation but are embedded within the value hierarchies of the societies where those individuals live.

Such references as John 17:14-19, Heb 11:13, and 1 Pet 2:9-11 indicate that although Christians live in this world, they are not a part of this world's society, including its values. In the words of the spiritual, Christians (like the main characters in John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress) are "poor, wayfaring strangers" who travel through life in this world as citizens of a better country (Eph 2:19).

As was pointed out previously, Christians have a difficult time maintaining the balance that being "in" the world but not "of" the world presents. The principle of 2 Cor 3:18 is that by beholding we become changed. Solid research has demonstrated that as individuals behold the screen they become changed into a likeness of what they see on the screen, and this includes adopting the screen's values. These values affect not only the formation of our identity and attitude toward ourself— they also guide in the formation of attitudes toward others.

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1One somewhat dated book that addresses this subject is Charles A. Weich's The Greening of America (New York: Random House, 1970).

2Ibid., 26.
Television, a Teacher of Values

Over two thousand years ago Plato asked in The Republic:

And shall we just carelessly allow children to hear any casual tales which may be devised by casual persons, and to receive in their minds ideas for the most part the very opposite of those which we should wish them to have when they are grown up?

Each generation has specific ideas or values that they wish to communicate to the next generation. Christians seek to convey their lifestyle and values to their children through overt teaching, and traditionally they have relied on the family, church, and schools to assist them in conveying these values. However, commercial television presents a real challenge in this regard.

Since the early 1950s, values have been taught by television as well as members of the older generation. Howard Beale, the "mad prophet of the airways," says:

There is an entire generation right now who never knew anything that didn't come out of this tube! This tube is the gospel! This tube is the ultimate revelation!

At one time I would have thought Beale was exaggerating in speaking of an "entire generation," however, I am beginning to believe there could well be more than one generation that has had its perspective on life greatly influenced by the

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2Howard Beale, quoted in Coakley, 131.
screen. The question raised by Plato is quite relevant here, particularly to Christians: Are the values being taught by television those values that the older generation really desires to have communicated to the younger generation?

Most authorities concur with the fact that television does teach children (all of us, really) values and beliefs. Logan observes that adults find images of themselves and others on the screen in a random mixture of positive and negative in a constant values conflict. His examples are violence versus peaceful solutions, importance of things versus persons, and sex as conquest versus sex as one part of a close relationship. "Over a period of years," he writes, "these negative and positive TV lessons can radically influence who we are, how we behave, what we expect of ourselves and others." Rose K. Goldsen terms television "the predominant inculcator of values." Charles D. Ferris writes that television is "shaping the values of our society." Sullivan contends that television is "the

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1Cf. Sullivan, 17; Liebert and Poulos, 105; Barcus, *Images of Life on Children's Television*, 4, 19, 20; Condry, 104; Berry, 12; and Ellison and Cole, 21, 30.


3Goldsen, 1.

4Ferris, 139.
most powerful instrument for value formation within our culture today."¹

Speaking on behalf of the screen, Liebert and Poulos suggest that although television usually teaches undesirable moral lessons, it can also teach positive, pro-social lessons, depending on what is shown.² Research³ has demonstrated that television does have this capability, but my observations are that most people's viewing selections preclude such a result. (Chapter 9 will address this in greater detail.)

In The TV Ritual: Worship at the Video Altar, Dr. Gregor T. Goethals points out that in years past the church was the source of values, myths, and visual symbols for society and the individual. For an increasing number of individuals and society, television appears to have taken over that function. According to my personal observations, television appears to be taking over this function for too many Christians, also. Through its easily understood and accessible images, television visualizes common myths and thus expresses and shapes our values and provides us with fundamental rituals and myths.⁴ Goethals writes:

¹Sullivan, 12.
²Liebert and Poulos, 205, 200.
³Cf. Mankiewicz and Swerdlow, 192.
⁴Cf. Condry, 120.
On a deeper level television mediates and reinforces public symbols; it also, however, can trivialize myths and ritual, reducing them to a kind of ornate emptiness.¹

Howe and Solomon comment that many young people lack the skills needed to sort through the various alternatives available to them—separating what is good from that which is harmful. "Children and adolescents," they write, "need training in how to make values decisions."² Observational learning is one way individuals are trained in discrimination.³ A number of studies done between 20 and 25 years ago showed that children will break an established rule if they have seen that rule repeatedly broken by a screen exemplar. Likewise, children will tend to keep an established rule when exposed to a live exemplar who keeps the rule, even when they are being tempted to break it.⁴

¹Goethals, 2.
²Howe and Solomon, 116.
³Mander, 222. Barcus writes, "Value orientations are seen in the goals characters seek and the means by which they attempt to achieve their goals." Barcus, Images of Life on Children's Television, 49.
Because of this, one suggestion that has been proposed is that programs be evaluated as to the values they present.\textsuperscript{1}

**Television's Values**

**Individualism**

Self-development, or self-actualization, is one of the essential ingredients necessary to give an individual a sense of fulfillment in life. For the Christian, self-actualization involves becoming increasingly effective and efficient in ministry to others. On the screen, however, self-actualization takes precedence over the concerns of the family and society—the "others" whom Christians view as being so important; it becomes a goal of life.\textsuperscript{2} This is seen even in commercials targeted at children, such as the G.I. Joe ads.\textsuperscript{3} Ellison and Cole use the term "individualism,"\textsuperscript{4} which they define as the desire to be independent, competitive, and self-reliant. Bloesch (1975) points out that the "modern preoccupation with self-imposed Standard," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 8 (1968): 166-171; and L. I. Rosenkoetter, "Resistance to Temptation: Inhibitory and Disinhibitory Effects of Models," *Developmental Psychology* 8 (1973): 80-84.

\textsuperscript{1}See Howe and Solomon, 25, 95; Hoover, 19.

\textsuperscript{2}Joanmarie Kalter, "How TV Helps Shape Our Values," *TV Guide*, July 23, 1988: 9; and Ball-Rokeach, Rokeach, and Grube, 169. The Army slogan "Be all you can be" is one of the media's terms for self-actualization.

\textsuperscript{3}McNeal, 99.

\textsuperscript{4}Ellison and Cole, 22.
contrasts with the biblical goal of the transcending of self in the service of God."¹ As Fore (1981) puts it:

The recognition that evil comes into the world through the self-centeredness of individuals is a strong corrective to television's frequent appeals to narcissism, to self-glorification and to instant gratification.²

Fore points out that the worship of anything less than God is a sin. This can include possessions, power, beauty and success. "Yet these are the very things glorified [worshipped?] in the television world."³ One way that this value is expressed is by the term "looking out for number one."

Materialism

Closely allied with individualism is materialism.⁴ Ellison and Cole observe that material status is tied to self-worth and existential well-being, with the "normal" standard of wealth on the screen being far superior to that of the majority of Americans. Television promotes materialism, and the resultant changing societal attitudes are contributing to, among other things, a rising divorce rate. Self and things mean more than others. "Television

¹Donald G. Bloesch, The Invaded Church (Waco, Tex.: Word, 1975), 42.
²Fore, "Becoming Active Participants," 22.
³Ibid.
⁴Cf. Liebert and Poulos, 74; Kirby, 149; and Skornia, 150-151.
encourages viewers to be concerned about the right car, the right clothes, and the right people."¹ They find that individualism does not correlate to the amount of viewing whereas materialism does: "This would suggest that one of the purposes of television, that is, to promote materialism, is indeed successful in its endeavor."² Ellison and Cole write:

Individualism and materialism are concepts that nearly all religions are philosophically opposed to. Individualistic and materialistic motivations are seen as reflections of immaturity, weakness of character, of misplaced priorities.³

Don Wildmon, director of the American Family Association and television critic, writes that "network television primarily endorses the values of materialism and hedonism, as opposed to Judeo-Christian values of love and compassion."⁴ One of the studies Ellison and Cole did was to compare the materialistic orientation of "ethical Christians," "born-again Christians," and "non-Christians" (their terms). They found that there was no significant

¹Ellison and Cole, 21. "Right" here means individuals who can be used to further a person's goals.

²Ibid., 28.

³Ibid., 23.

difference in the general materialistic orientation of these three groups: the desire to attain material wealth was a strong motivational value for all three. They note:

Christians and non-Christians do not appear to differ in this respect. Both watch comparable amounts of television and both have equal levels of the value of materialism.¹

It appears that if their estimation of the success of television's hucksterism of materialism is accurate, even church members have bought its philosophy and values.

Closely allied with materialism are its corollaries of consumerism² and self-gratification (narcissism), which, as Fore points out, are contrary to the Biblical injunction that a person must leave self behind, take up the cross, and follow Jesus. He writes:

Against the myths that we are basically good, that happiness is the chief end of life and consists in obtaining material goods, there are arrayed the affirmations that man is susceptible to the sin of pride and will-to-power, and that the chief end of life is to glorify God, and that happiness consists in creating the Kingdom of God within one's self and among his neighbors.³

Winning

The Chevrolet Lumina Z34 advertisement in the February 10, 1992 issue of Sports Illustrated contained the

¹Ellison and Cole, 29.

²Slinger, 32, 36; and Fore, "TV as Sacramental Substitute," 22.

following statement: "The Heartbeat of America is winning." The "Heartbeat of America" refers, of course, to Chevrolets. To read this in another way, however, America's heartbeat is winning, which is closely related to materialism: "Winning is the only thing."¹ Comstock puts it this way: "Television inherently presents winners, and winners represent values."² One type of programming that has contributed to the value of winning is televised sports: top athletes are accorded a "superstar" status.³

Power

Closely allied to winning is power,⁴ which Fore terms America's "most important value."⁵ He writes, "Power heads the list: power over others, power over nature."⁶

The program phenomenon "Dallas" coupled power with badness and immorality in the character J. R. Ewing, and then placed

¹Kirby, 147.

²Comstock, Television in America, 130.

³Kirby, 146.

⁴Comstock, Television in America, 123; Albert E. Siegel in Logan, Television Awareness Training, 178.

⁵Fore, "The Role of Mass Communication in Society," 248. It appears now that this image has been greatly enhanced by the success of Operation Desert Shield.

⁶Ibid., 248. Italics his.
him in contrast with others who lived constantly without power and thus were doomed to suffer.¹

Acceptability

"Arbiter of acceptability" is one of George Comstock's terms. In this role television tells us what what is acceptable and what is not. As such it has brought a universal validity to marketplace concepts of "success, affluence, private property, efficiency and competition, consumerism, and the 'advantages' of technology."² Fore writes that the media constricsts our experience and substitutes its world for the real world "so that we are becoming less and less able to make the fine value judgments that such a complex world requires."³

VIPs

Logan points out that children use television to help them decide who the most important people are.⁴ Many parents apparently do not occupy this position, at least for

¹Ang, 77. Although (usually) the bad eventually lose and the good eventually win, since young children are unable to follow cause-and-effect, the demise of the bad is lost to them.

²Cover, 44.


⁴Logan, "Coping with Television," 11. Comstock says that "popularity is the principal ruler." Comstock, Television and American Social Institutions, 12.
some children. As early as 1971 psychiatrists Heller and Polsky recognized a displacement of parents by the screen. They wrote at that time, "It is a matter of fact and concern that television has increasingly replaced parents as a definitive adult voice and national shaper of views."¹ Television presents a "restless, questioning attitude" that tends to undercut traditional institutions,² including the home. Children hear a message that "their parents are not necessarily the best guides." Jay Rosen, Assistant Professor of Journalism at New York University, says

> TV wants to sell children on a way of life that their parents may not want for them. . . . One way is to present kids who are independent, who have nothing to learn from their parents. . . .

Children who are smarter than their parents are one kind of media VIP.

Conformity

A corollary of acceptability (what is in) and VIPs (who is in) is conformity, which Skornia thinks is one of the screen's conspicuous values. "Viewers and listeners are urged to do as the person on the screen does."⁴ He says that market research proves that this type of motivation is very effective because people do as they are shown.

¹Cited by Liebert and Poulos, 197.
²Novak, 26.
³Jay Rosen, quoted in Kalter, 10-11.
⁴Skornia, 152.
The well-adjusted, happy individual goes along with the gang. He does not raise unpopular questions. If the craving an individual has is not satisfied by things, he is obviously a deviate. He who is not satisfied with what the media offer is obviously out of step. He is an enemy.1

Values Conflicts

J. D. Halloran agrees that television presents a set of values that stands in "stark contrast to the values entrenched in our existing social institutions--the family, the work-place, the school, the law courts, the church--and in our social relationships."2 His words are echoed by others,3 such as Skornia, who, writing back in 1965, saw at that time a conflict between the value systems taught by Christianity, the school, parents and the law of the land, and that of the mass media. As far as he was concerned, the conflict in values was creating a strain under which many people would break, leading to an increased national

1Ibid.

2Halloran, 28.

3See Stephen B. Withey and Ronald P. Abeles, eds., Television and Social Behavior: Beyond Violence and Children (Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1980), 27. They write that they would like to see "a married couple on TV who have some meaningful religious orientation in their lives--who make decisions based on some Christian principles, who pray, who even go to church!" Ibid. Reo M. Christenson, professor of political science at Miami/Ohio University asks, "Do you ever see persons in network TV drama, whether in the afternoon soaps, or on prime time, whose religious convictions restrain them from sexual irresponsibility (or greed, revenge, arrogance, or a ruthless quest for power)?" Christenson, 24.
incidence of schizophrenia.\textsuperscript{1} In my research I found no recent data to support his assertion. What I have observed is that most viewers have accepted the values of the mass media, and so there is no conflict.

Fore sees a need for the myths and values of society to be evaluated from a perspective transcending society. He suggests that the media is the place to do this. For him, however, media education, or double vision, is no good without a reference point that transcends culture. He writes, "The Bible makes it clear that God is on the side of the poor and powerless, and all that this implies."\textsuperscript{2}

Secularism

Television is a secular milieu.\textsuperscript{3} As such it tends to reach the lowest common denominator of most viewers' habits and lifestyles. Consider drinking, for instance, which is commonly portrayed on the screen.\textsuperscript{4} Retired Seventh-day Adventist evangelist E.E. Cleveland has accused Hollywood of being "the world's best bartender"—every time someone has a problem they tip the bottle and suddenly the answer comes! "Drinking doesn't clear your brain,"

\textsuperscript{1}Skornia, 165.

\textsuperscript{2}Fore, "The Role of Mass Communication," 249.

\textsuperscript{3}Cf. Wildmon, 26; Comstock, Violence in Television Content, 129.

\textsuperscript{4}Condry, 77.
Cleveland reminds us, "it clouds it!" Fashionable cosmetics and avant garde fashions so common on the screen\textsuperscript{1} are becoming more common in Christian churches, including Seventh-day Adventist churches, with a diminished distinctiveness between Christians and secular individuals. Even more significant, the Christian mindset is being supplanted by a secular mindset (see chapter 7).

**New Moralities**

Novak thinks that television has a vested interest in the new moralities.\textsuperscript{2} He is more gentle with his words than homelitician Brian Jones, who writes that the producers of the majority of programs peddle depravity to appeal to the fiery lusts of their viewers, most of whom are ravenous for moral rot.

> Violence, greed, lust, and competitive strife are the four principal elements of popular programming.\textsuperscript{3}

Beth Spring cites NCTV chairman Dr. Thomas Radecki (Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Illinois) as believing that television "fosters values hostile to democracy and to Judeo-Christian ethics."\textsuperscript{4} As long ago as 1960, evangelist Billy Graham stated in a sermon on

\textsuperscript{1}Skornia, 154. Cf. Denisoff's comments on the impact that MTV has had on fashions and children. Denisoff, 258.

\textsuperscript{2}Novak, 31.

\textsuperscript{3}Jones, "God's Peculiar People and TV," (1989), 12.

\textsuperscript{4}Spring, 49.
worldliness that the main themes of the media centered largely in "selfishness, materialism, revenge, greedy manipulation, and worldliness in all its phases, things with no spiritual, permanent value."¹ If anything, the state of the screen in this regard has only worsened since then.

Fore points out that no matter what your theological stance—conservative, middle-of-the-road, or liberal—"The whole weight of Christian history, thought and teaching stands diametrically opposed to the media world and its values." He contrasts specific values:

Instead of power over individuals, the Bible calls for justice and righteousness (Amos 5:23-24); kindness and humility (Micah 6:6) and the correction of oppression (Is. 1:17). Instead of power over nature in order to consume and waste, the Genesis story affirms the value of man's guidance and transformation of nature, in harmony with the whole creation (Genesis). Instead of the value of wealth, Jesus tells the rich young ruler to sell all that he has, and he says that the value of wealth in terms of the Kingdom of God is about the same value of a rope in threading a needle (Mt. 19:17-22; Mk. 10:17-21; Lk. 18:18-23).²

Summary

Commercial television portrays values which are in opposition to those values traditionally prized by


Christians. Although the following list is in no way exhaustive, it compares a number of specific values (in addition to those already discussed in this chapter) found on the screen with those of the Christian faith:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Television</th>
<th>Christianity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Glorifying self</td>
<td>Glorifying God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instant gratification</td>
<td>Patience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materialism</td>
<td>Spiritual realities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Power</td>
<td>God's power</td>
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<tr>
<td>Winning</td>
<td>Letting God win</td>
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<tr>
<td>Narcissism</td>
<td>Compassion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Solving problems via violence</td>
<td>Depending on God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holiness of beauty</td>
<td>Beauty of holiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleasure/self-indulgence</td>
<td>Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wasting leisure time</td>
<td>Redeeming the time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenge</td>
<td>Forgiveness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Celebrities and VIPs</td>
<td>Jesus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deceit is humorous</td>
<td>Deceit is sin</td>
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</tbody>
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Although Christians need to be aware of and sensitive to the world they live in (particularly people), they need to maintain a Christian distinctiveness which disallows integration into the world and its lifestyle and values and gives validity to Christian words and lifestyle. My observations lead me to believe that when Christians view the screen indiscriminately, particularly commercial programming, they run the risk of adopting the values of the
world, most of which are widely disparate from Christian values.

We will now look at Television's relationship to the Church in chapter 7.
CHAPTER VIII

TELEVISION AND THE CHURCH

There are voices calling for an infusion of new values in society. Ideally these values should come from the church. However, in too many instances church members are those individuals who have been socialized by television—their scripting and values represent Hollywood more than heaven. Through these members, television has indirectly placed the church at a disadvantage as far as being able to influence the world the way it could.

As has already been noted, for some people the screen tends to represent reality. It would seem that this would also be true for church members who have been socialized by the screen. However, Bruce Herschensohn calls the camera a liar. He says that it has preserved the visible on film or tape with the resulting assumption that truth is the visible. "It's not. The invisible is the greatest truth."\(^1\) For him, as for most Christians, the invisible things such as peace, freedom, love, and faith are truth, not necessarily the screen.

In this chapter I will first consider the mind and its functioning, for this is the locus of belief and the source of behavior. I will then consider television's impact on the religious experience.

**Television and the Mind**

**Hemispheric Specialization**

In 1972 *The Psychology of Human Consciousness*\(^1\) was published. Written by Robert E. Ornstein, a psychologist who had been doing electro-encephalographic (EEG) studies, the book presents the concept that the brain, having two hemispheres, is capable of two modes of thought: language and logic are in the domain of the left hemisphere, and intuitive thought is in the domain of the right hemisphere. Although the basic idea of the two hemispheres having specialized functions had been around for years, Ornstein suggested that Western educational processes had developed the analytical left hemisphere almost to the exclusion of the holistic processes of the right hemisphere, which tend to be developed in Eastern educational processes. He concluded that Western education was thus neglecting the development of at least half of the mind.

Nobel laureate Roger Sperry agrees with Ornstein's kind of thinking. He writes:

Our educational system and modern society generally (with its very heavy emphasis on communication and on early training in the three R's) discriminates against one whole half of the brain. . . . In our present school system, the minor hemisphere of the brain gets only the barest minimum of formal training, essentially nothing compared to the things that we do to train the left, or major hemisphere.  

Sally P. Springer and Georg Deutsch caution us that "many outlandish claims and misinterpretations have followed in the wake of Ornstein's book." One of the examples they cite is the equating of the evils of modern society with the left hemisphere.

Dr. Michael S. Gazzaniga, of Cornell University Medical Center in New York City, began his work as a psychologist under Roger Sperry. Like Sperry, Gazzaniga has done considerable study of split-brain patients (individuals who have had their hemispheres surgically separated) and the suggested hemispheric specialization of thought processes; he, too, considers that much of what is claimed for the two-hemisphere concept is not grounded in scientific fact.

Lauren Julius Harris agrees with Gazzaniga. He writes that many educators see a new educational message in the on-going discussion about right-hemisphere

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specialization. According to him, educators tend to blame children's educational deficiencies on overdevelopment of the left hemisphere and underdevelopment of the right.

The results of this thinking show all the signs of an educational fad favoring training the right brain, a fad even stronger than the older movement for training the left.1

T. F. Gautschl of Bryant College in Smithfield, Rhode Island, echoes the above cautions when he writes:

A myth has evolved that asserts that the left hemisphere of the brain alone controls all logic and language, while the right hemisphere alone controls all creativity and intuition.2

Gautschl says that although each hemisphere does have special abilities, contrary to popular thinking, they are not mutually exclusive.

There is a continuum. The left hemisphere is more active in some people, which tends to emphasize logical thinking, whereas the right hemisphere may be more active in others, which tends to favor spatial abilities. But no one is purely "left brained" or "right brained." Normal people have one differentiated brain with both hemispheres contributing.3

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3Ibid. Note, "There is little to support the notion that either one or the other hemisphere turns on to perform a specific task all by itself. Each of the measures we have discussed points to the involvement of many areas of the brain in even the simplest task. There are asymmetries in activity between the hemispheres to be sure, but they can be very subtle, a fact that should lead us away from thinking
He terms the right brain "imaginative" and the left "logical."

There is a large volume of literature in this field with a paucity of agreement among authorities, yet there is consensus on some points. It is generally accepted, for instance, that the two hemispheres control the body's basic movements in a crossed fashion (i.e., the left hemisphere controls the right side and the right hemisphere controls the left side).¹ It is also generally accepted that "the left hemisphere of most individuals is specialized for language functions and the right hemisphere for spatial and nonlinguistic tasks."² Springer and Deutsch explain the matter this way:

The left hemisphere has been found to be predominantly involved with analytic processes, especially the production and understanding of language, and it appears to process input in a sequential manner. The right hemisphere appears to be responsible for certain spatial skills and musical abilities and to process information simultaneously and holistically.³

Note that Springer and Deutsch have here spoken of two modes of thought: sequential and holistic. Sandra F.

¹Springer and Deutsch, 2.

²Rosen, Galaburda, and Sherman, 29.

³Ibid., 6. They also state that split-brain research has "dramatically confirmed that, in most persons, control of speech is localized to the left hemisphere," 42. See Gazzaniga, 39.
Witelson, Professor of Psychiatry, Psychology, and Neurosciences at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, and Janice A. Swallow, a research associate in the Department of Psychiatry at McMaster, point out that the working hypothesis that seems to have considerable consensus is that there are two major types of information processing:

The left hemisphere in most people appears to be specialized for processing stimulation as discrete items for which the temporal arrangement is important, and the right hemisphere appears to be specialized for processing information such that stimuli are synthesized and sustained over time to form a unified configuration in which the temporal aspects of the stimuli are superseded.¹

These authors cite a large body of converging data that support the hypothesis that the functional differences between the hemispheres are present from birth and are based on a preprogrammed neural substrate (viz., neuron arrangement in the brain), with no change in the degree of actual functional asymmetry between the hemispheres throughout life. What changes, according to them is the extent of cognition that the organism is capable of and which in turn is available to be processed more by one hemisphere than the other. In essence, the apparent increase in the degree of hemisphere specialization with age is an epiphenomenon of the increasing cognitive repertoire.²


²Ibid.
Dr. Jerome L. Singer of Yale University also discusses the hemispheric differentiation of thought processes. Due to the nature of our language system, one type of thought that we develop is the "sequential" process which handles groups of words in sequence. Singer considers the processing of visual images a parallel form of "holistic" or "Gestalt" thinking which handles information in "chunks."

Not being an authority in this field and in light of the varied disagreements and consensus of those who are, for the sake of this project I am simply concluding that for most individuals, common modes of thinking include analytical, sequential thought, which deals primarily with language, and holistic thought, which involves the visual, without paying regard to hemispheric differentiation. But, what has this to do with television?

Television and Thought Processes

Television tends to be processed through both ways of thinking: an unfolding plot and dialogue are analyzed logically in a sequential manner, whereas imagery is considered holistically. As is true with all visual imagery, whether scenes of nature or scenes from the screen, we are "susceptible through the constant representation of
visual material to storing a surprising amount of what is presented."\(^1\)

Mander applies the concept of two sides of a brain (viz., two types of thinking) to television viewing. He cites the work of a team of researchers at Australian National University at Canberra, headed by psychologists Merrelyn Emery and Fred Emery, who say that the evidence shows that humans can habituate to repetitive light stimuli. According to Mander, their research shows that if habituation occurs, the brain "virtually quits processing the information that goes in." Cognitive, analytical thinking tends to go into a sort of holding pattern while holistic thinking receives television images which "cannot be easily recalled or thought about."\(^2\)

Mander wants to make the point that the analytical processes can be overcome by the visual/holistic processes. Dr. William Miller of the School of Telecommunications, Ohio University, addresses this point, citing the speculation of Caren Deming, who presented a paper entitled "Two Dream Machines: Television and the Human Brain" at the Twenty-ninth Conference of the International Communication

\(^1\)Singer, 47; see 41-47. Also see Cater, 2. Singer and Singer write, "Visually presented material does largely appear to be processed more extensively by the right side of our brain in a global parallel fashion. Printed material or complex verbal or mathematical sequences seem to engage the left side of the brain more." Television, Imagination, and Aggression, 11.

\(^2\)Mander, 207.
Association in Philadelphia in 1979. Deming's speculation was that perhaps television can bypass conscious processing and implant images directly on the unconscious, thus "facilitating the redemption of right brain skills."\(^1\)

Thus we have the idea of the implanting of television imagery in the right brain by circumventing the left brain processes. The Emerys consider this occurring because of habituation to repetitive light stimuli. Deming speculates that it happens because of television viewing's producing an "alpha brainwave pattern state."\(^2\)

The idea of the analytical ("left-brain") thought processes being overpowered so that visual imagery can enter holistically ("right brain") into the mind in an unanalyzed manner is very similar to the concept of perceptual overload, or the "McLuhan Effect," so named after media bard Marshall McLuhan, originator of the media adage, "The medium is the message." Wilson Bryan Key, whose books on subliminal advertising (1973, 1976) have received some adverse criticism, writes that when our perception handling capabilities become overloaded,

It is impossible to consciously make sense out of what is going on. The audience's consciousness has been overloaded in order to bypass it into the unconscious, which easily processes very large


\(^2\)Ibid.
quantities of data, storing it for later feedback into consciousness.¹

As an example of deliberate overloading, Key cites the Coca-Cola TV commercials where as many as four different scenes are shown in a single frame, with different actions continuing in each element of the frame.

Other authorities agree that our perception handling capabilities can be overloaded. According to Dr. Gary Burlingame, Professor of Clinical Psychology at Brigham Young University, the sensory perceptual systems of the brain are what become overloaded from attempting to process too many sensory stimuli.² Michael R. Kelley comments that since television is such a relentless continuum of stimulation, "our mental circuits can become overloaded and overwhelmed."³ Jerome L. Singer comments that it is possible because of television's rapid pace of constant sensory bombardment for a person to be confronted with a situation in which too much information is being presented for processing, resulting in our system becoming "overloaded."⁴


²Gary Burlingame, Telephone interview by author, Ogden, Utah, May 1991.

³Kelley, 9.

In both *Subliminal Seduction* (1973) and *Media Sexploitation* (1976), Wilson Bryan Key avidly presents the idea of analytical thought being circumvented through subliminal techniques. It is interesting to note that even Condry (who offers the sharpest criticism of Key's statements, calling them "the most outrageous claims") acknowledges subliminal messages:

> It is possible to present material on television so fast or quickly that it is not detected by the human eye or ear. There is even some evidence that people have tried doing this occasionally, with or without FCC approval, over the years.  

In the conclusion of their book Kubey and Csikszentmihalyi insist that there is no substitute for learning to think for yourself. Here, they say, is where television viewing poses problems. As long as the viewing environment is benign and stable, spending hours in front of the screen in an enjoyable fashion is not a total loss. But if we admit that the viewing environment is not benign and stable, then we are in trouble, because we have forfeited self-discipline and related skills through viewing. We have also placed ourselves in a position where our own thought

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²Condry, 226. Several years ago "60 Minutes" documented the use of subliminal techniques (with FCC approval) by a Texas station in cooperation with police authorities who were seeking a wanted criminal.

³Kubey and Csikszentmihalyi, 207.
processes could well be overwhelmed by the screen's visual imagery.

A cursory reading of most any page of *TV Guide* indicates rather clearly that the commercial viewing environment is anything but morally benign. Because it is possible to overload the sensory perceptual systems of the brain, and because there is such a plethora of morally objectionable program material on the screen, in my opinion, it is extremely important to be very discriminating in what is selected for viewing.

**Similarity to Meditation**

In connection with the New Age Movement, meditation is presently gaining popularity in some social circles. Traditionally meditation has been differentiated into two types: Western and Eastern. In Western meditation individuals supply their own mental imagery, whereas in Eastern meditation, closely associated with Hinduism, the one meditating seeks to empty the mind of all imagery, or to become "detached" in the hopes of receiving ("channeling") a message from a spirit master.¹

Television viewing seems to be similar to both of these types of meditation, particularly Eastern. Although the rapid pace of most programs prohibits mental reflection

¹Note that Christians usually view these spirit masters as being evil.
on what is seen while it is being broadcast,\(^1\) most viewers tend to think ("meditate") some about what they have seen later on. This is similar to Western meditation. During the broadcast, however, mental imagery is being supplied from outside the individual. This is similar to Eastern meditation. Dr. Jerome L. Singer points out that television can for long periods of time substitute another's brain for one's own.\(^2\) As Mander puts it, "When you are watching television all categories of your own image-making capacities go dormant, submerged in the television image."\(^3\)

Most people's minds contain images from a variety of sources: the real world, television, and some self-generated. Individuals ordinarily can differentiate the source of their mental imagery, but sometimes they may not be able to. Tausk, one of Freud's colleagues, defined the schizophrenic as the individual who had not learned to distinguish between images of the real world and those that are self-generated and not rooted in reality.

Television images may not be rooted in reality either. To Mander, television is a world of images projected into a person's mind from outside--images the person does not generate or really control. He thinks that

\(^1\)See p. 88 of this study.


\(^3\)Mander, 204. See also p. 240.
if mental imagery blurs and imagination and reality merge, that we have lost control of our images, or minds.¹

Mander worked for fifteen years as a public relations and advertising executive in his own company in San Francisco. He writes that during that time he learned that it is possible to speak through media directly into people's heads and then, like some otherworldly magician, leave images inside that can cause people to do what they might otherwise never have thought to do.²

Bruce Herschenson writes:

Television images can mean life and death to someone. In a larger sense, those images can mean life and death to nations. Those images can be more powerful than a thousand armies--because armies can scorch only the skin, but television can scorch the mind.³

And so for example, when an adolescent girl finds a boy she likes, because of the sexual scripting she has received from television, she could well end up behaving toward him like so many actors on so many soap operas, instead of being a real person. Mander's observation is well taken: "Television is becoming real to many people while their lives take on the quality of a dream. . . . We evolve into the images we carry in our minds. We become

¹Ibid., 260.
²Mander, 13.
³Bruce Herschensohn, 27.
what we see."¹ His comment is startlingly similar to the principle found in 2 Cor 3:18: we become changed into what we behold.

**Purpose of the Church**

Several years ago a religious poll was taken in which people were asked: If you go to church, why do you go? About 80 percent of the respondents indicated that they went "to meet my needs." The polling organization commented that they could not help wondering what had happened to God—a number of years earlier the largest response to that question had been "to worship God." It would appear that church members at large have been shifting their attention away from God to humanity, which, unfortunately, is sinful. As theologian Donald Bloesch puts it, theology is presently being transmuted into anthropology.²

One evidence of this shift from theology to anthropology is the apparent loss of a sense of transcendence in favor of immanence. The problem with immanence is the temptation it offers to conceive of God in strictly human terms. Ps 50:21 says, "You thought I was altogether like you."

¹Ibid., 202, 239. "Television suppresses and replaces creative human imagery, encourages mass passivity, and trains people to accept authority. It is an instrument of transmutation, turning people into their TV images." Ibid.

²Bloesch, 25.
1 Pet 2:9 informs Christians that they are "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." Inherent in this text is the idea of the Christian belonging to God. This, of course, is a unique, privileged relationship, which should have an impact on the person in such a way that a distinctiveness, or separateness from the world results. References such as John 17:15-16 and 2 Cor 6:14-18 affirm this idea.

Christians, however, are not to live off by themselves, but are to function within the world in order to accomplish their specific mission. Isa 42:6 speaks of God's people being given as a "covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles." Jesus said, "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven" (Matt 5:16). Living in the world presents a continuing challenge to the Christian to not become part of that world. Fore states it this way:

The task of the Christian has always been to evaluate and understand the historical order in terms of the eternal order, to learn how to live within the present world and yet not be of it, to discern both the signs of the times and the signs of God's kingdom.¹

Seeking a similarity with the world has long been a temptation (e.g., 1 Sam 8:5) which God's people have

periodically yielded to. It would appear that recently the church has again been yielding to this temptation, which Donald Bloesch, for one, discusses at length in his book The Invaded Church. Bloesch writes that conservative evangelicalism

has a firm grasp on the fundamentals of the faith, but in many ways it has accommodated itself to the spirit of the world so that the real difference in being a Christian is obscured.¹

Bloesch, I assume, is not alone in thinking this way. No doubt he speaks for many others when he writes that today's need is for a confessing church that sharpens the distinctions between it and the world by actively confessing its faith. He thinks the real enemy of Christianity is a worldly faith which has accepted partially the values and goals of society. He writes that when secular values are uncritically adopted by the church, the result is a compromised version of the faith. According to Bloesch, Christian views of marriage and family life are presented on the screen as being totally out of date, with unChristian attitudes being taken for granted. "As a result, our lives are in danger of becoming less and less Christian if we do not take active steps to counter them."² The challenge is for Christians to think "Christianly" rather than worldly.

¹Ibid., 116-117.

²Bloesch, 16-17.
Belief and Behavior

An increasing accommodation of the Church to the world seems inevitable in view of the screen's emphasis on individuality and the Church's present grass roots "transmutation of theology to anthropology." My perceptions lead me to believe that the individual member has become more important in some ways than the doctrines of the church.

Another reason for this accommodation may be the contradiction that exists between the traditional beliefs of the church and the actual behavior of increasing numbers of church members. Examples within the Seventh-day Adventist Church that come to mind include adornment (although we do not believe in it, jewelry has become quite commonly worn, especially in institutional centers), marriage (although we do not believe in divorce, increasing numbers of church members are divorcing and remarrying without biblical grounds--without church discipline), and chaperonage. It could and perhaps should be asked, and I believe appropriately so, Do we really believe what we say we do? What about the increasing divergence between stated beliefs and the worldly lifestyle of members who appear to be taking their cues more from Saturday Night Live than Desire of Ages?

One reason for the loss of Christian distinctiveness is tied to 2 Cor 3:18: "And we all, with unveiled face,
beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another." The principle enunciated in this text is that by beholding we are changed. If we behold the glory of the Lord we will be changed into the likeness of His glory; if it is something else that we behold we will be changed into whatever we are beholding. What about television?

In His prayer recorded in John 17, one of Jesus' concerns was for the relation His disciples had with the world.

They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I do not pray that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. (Vss. 14-16)

Among other things, this means that in addition to a Christian lifestyle, the Christian should maintain a Christian mindset in which the values, perspectives, and goals of Christianity are maintained. Writer Kevin Perrotta cites a suggestion of Dr. George Gerbner that television is like Christianity in that it fashions our entire way of thinking. "But," he asks, "which shapes our thinking more? Christianity or secular television?"3

1This principle is rather delightfully illustrated in the early American story, The Great Stone Face, by Nathaniel Hawthorne.

2Say, as was said a few pages back, taking our cues from Saturday Night Live rather than Desire of Ages.

The screen ignores God. The realities of the Christian faith are basically invisible to the camera. Most Christians find it difficult to develop a daily walk with God. This difficulty is worsened as we immerse ourselves in the television view of the world, where there is absent an awareness of God's ability to work his will in every circumstance of life. On television, God never does anything.¹

Of course, no one really expects to find God on the screen. The media is inherently secular, and that is a surprise to no one. The question is, what happens to the Christian mindset when it is exposed in such a way to the secular?

Perrotta agrees with many others that God and evil both recede from view. It becomes very difficult to see what is "right about righteousness and wrong about wrongdoing." Moral confusion weakens a sense that any kind of behavior can be wrong, and Perrotta sees Christians as failing to develop a mature Christian mentality that views wrongdoing as a personal affront to God. The screen flattens sin into insignificance. A very strong secular current flows through television and Christians have a difficult time maintaining a Biblical worldview against that current.²

¹Ibid., 21.

²Bloesch, p. 16, says, "The task of the church today is to make people homesick for another world, to uproot their attachments to this world." Perrotta, "Television's Mind-
Not only has television brought the world close to the Christian's heart, but:

If heavy television watching gives viewers a skewed perspective on such aspects of the world as the composition and violence of society, it will have similar effects on their thinking about how powerful God's providence is, how wrong sin is, how important a personal relationship with Christ is, and so on.

Larry Gross, a colleague of George Gerbner comments, "Television certainly has replaced religion for a lot of people as the thing that tells them how the world works."2

**TVs Impact on Religious Experience**

Skornia writes, "Day after day, year after year, commercial broadcast media provide models and teach lessons which directly challenge or contradict the lessons taught by school and church."3 Ellison and Cole studied the impact of television on the religious experience of three kinds of individuals: non-Christians, ethical Christians, and born-

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2Larry Gross, quoted in Coakley, 136.

3Skornia, 160.
again Christians.¹ As far as expressed attitudes were concerned, they found no difference among these groups. All groups felt that television had no effect on satisfaction/dissatisfaction with life, relationship with God, feelings of loneliness, or value of materialism as related to religious commitment. Their study also showed that there was no difference in the amount of television viewed as a function of personal religious commitment.²

Emphasis on the Supernatural

Scripture opposes the occult in every way.³ However, for years the occult has appeared on the screen, usually associated with the supernatural, and has for years been a part of the screen scene. Samantha, the feminine lead in the sitcom "Bewitched," was a witch. Comstock elucidates:

In comedy and drama, for general audiences as well as for children, humans with supernatural powers, beings from outer space, witches, ghosts, and vampires have been frequent. Television's parade of little green men, like its procession of western and urban lawmen, is intended to divert and excite, but it also preys on doubts about the natural order of the universe, hopes for immortality, superstition, and ignorance. Superficially harmless, catering to the public's interest in such topics reinforces beliefs that there are those among us who are more or less than human, that there are dark and ominous forces at work, that rationality may be an untrustworthy guide, and that a select few are in


²Ellison and Cole, 28.

closer communication with the powers of the universe.¹

Loss of Distinctiveness

While Seventh-day Adventists tie their religious heritage to many different faiths, their closest tie is undoubtedly to Methodism. Edward M. Berckman, a Methodist, discusses the relationship that Methodism has had to the theater. Referring to the General Rules of the Methodist Episcopal Church, he enumerates the principal grounds of opposition to visual entertainment:

(1) such entertainment is a worldly distraction from higher things, and its effect is to dull spiritual sensitivities; (2) it is misleading and deceptive—terms which can refer to the illusion of dramatic representation itself but more often, now, imply failure to meet criteria of truth about human nature and destiny or criteria of seriousness about what is significant in life; (3) its content and/or influence is immoral—not only because the behavior shown may be lewd and indecent but because immoral behavior is presented as attractive and rewarding. A possible fourth reason is implied: the seductive power of such entertainment, a recognition of human vulnerability to the visual as "a charmer of the fancy."²

He borrowed his phrase "charmer of the fancy" from an 1825 Methodist editorial: "[The theater] is a charmer of the fancy, a stealer of the affections, a stifler of convictions, a seducer and leader to the ruin of hell."³

¹Comstock, Television in America, 83.
²Berckman, 196.
³Richard M. Cameron, Methodism and Society in Historical Perspective (Nashville: Abingdon, 1961), 218, 221.
Berckman says that the process of evangelical acceptance of movies has been gradual and hesitant, and while a lot of attention has been paid to the use of the media by religious groups, the increasing appreciation of secular entertainment by church members has gone relatively unobserved. The sense of distance between the church and the world—in particular the entertainment world—lessened, and now:

Protestant churches in general . . . no longer consider visual entertainment as Satanic diversion but are prepared to accept it as something to enjoy and learn from, an expression of the creativity which is a gift of God. This shift has occurred as the church and the world of entertainment moved closer to each other.¹

As long as there is a separateness from the world the church has power to affect the lives of human beings. But as that distinctiveness begins to wane, so does the power. Douglas John Hall discusses this loss of power in his book *The Reality of the Gospel and the Unreality of the Churches*. He thinks that the concern for numbers of members in North America is really a concern for power. He says the plain fact is that the church has no power, and yet she acts as if she did, which presents a ridiculous figure to the world.

In Europe the church conjures up the image of a proud, sad old lady, strutting about in a supermarket, dressed in the clothes of a bygone era, and calling peremptorily for the clerks to come and attend to her order. Here in North America the image has a more swinging character. But it is

¹Berckman, 304.
fundamentally the same, and the effect is just as unconvincing.¹

Hall says that the pity of all this is that by pursuing the sort of power represented by what some have called the "numbers game" (which he calls the "Constantinian assumption"), the church is cutting herself off from the power that is present in the situation—a power that would be available were the church to abandon her struggle for power and become "weak with the weak, afraid with the fearful, little with the insignificant. Humiliated!—as the whole race of man is being humiliated and brought low today."²

There needs to be a separateness from the world in the corporate life of the church, as well as in the individual lives of her members. Fore (and others) suggests that there needs to be "media education" in which Christians can learn just how to relate to the propaganda of the entertainment world.

The place least hospitable to such propaganda is where people regularly meet face-to-face in small groups. And this is precisely where the church has its strength. For all its failings, the church remains one of the few places in society where people regularly come together on a face-to-face


²Ibid., 93.
basis. Here is where media education can and must take place.¹

Michael Warren draws attention to the significance that religious traditions can offer. They are "powerful potential positions from which to discern that something is out of kilter."² He thinks that the church or synagogue will need to deal with specific transmitted images, showing how they work, analyzing the falseness of those it contests and helping its members find lines of resistance to this imagery.³

Use in Evangelism

One of the responses the church has had to television has been to buy time for the broadcast of its own programs. This is not a bad idea; rather than simply viewing, Christians should be producing programs. However, as Harvey Cox observes, televised religious programs need lots of cash to buy more time to send out more TV religion . . . somewhere along the line the original message gets lost and a blatant hard sell takes over. . . . The need for audiences who can pay for what they see through contributions to continue to purchase air time shoves the format more and more toward entertainment and consumer values.⁴

Edwin Diamond, head of the News Study group at MIT and a lecturer in political science thinks that the dominant

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²Warren, 254.
³Ibid., 257.
image of "God's television" is that of entertainment; a second image is that of "brisk, no-apologies materialism."\(^1\) Neil Postman has the same opinion:

> Everything that makes religion an historic, profound and sacred human activity is stripped away; there is no ritual, no dogma, no tradition, no theology, and above all, no sense of spiritual transcendence. On these shows, the preacher is tops. God comes out as second banana.\(^2\)

**Summary**

In this chapter we have taken a look at the relationship between television and the church. A church is mainly visible to society through its members, and here television has left its greatest impact: church members have viewed the screen and have been changed accordingly.

Mental sensory perceptual systems have been overloaded by the relentless stimulus of the screen, with the result that analytical thought has tended to be superseded by holistic reception of whatever imagery happens to be on the screen, most of which is inimical to the Christian life and values, and seems to make it next-to-impossible to form the character into a likeness to that of Jesus. The principle enunciated in 2 Cor 3:18 is by **beholding we become changed**. In the computer language of today, "what you see is what you get." Christians have

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\(^1\)Diamond, 83.

seen, and that is what they have gotten—in lifestyles, values, and characters. Regular viewers tend to have a worldly, not spiritual, mindset.

Television viewing is similar to Eastern meditation in which the thinking (imagery) of another is often substituted one's own thinking (imagery). Although viewers do not lose touch with their own imagery, very often their minds slip into neutral, which places them in a mental state receptive of screen images that are very inimical to the Christian faith. It would seem that this backlog of televised imagery could well prevent an individual from ever forming a character like that of Jesus. As the Apostle Paul wrote, "By beholding we become changed."

Because of this, individual church members have tended to move ever closer to the world with a consequent loss of distinctiveness from the world. The church's effectiveness in conveying to the world its message has thus been compromised. Rather than turning from the world with revulsion, commercial, prime time has helped us fall in love with the world.

Christians need to learn how to relate to television so that it does not result in destroying them individually or corporately. Television is a very powerful means whereby the world can be evangelized, which means that Christians need to be in front of the camera more than in front of the screen.
What should we do? I suggest that church members begin exercising much greater discrimination than has been evident in the past by selecting for personal viewing only those programs which are in harmony with the values of their faith. I suggest that the corporate church act in regard to television, first, by formulating and adopting a much stronger statement regarding commercial programming, and second, by developing resources similar to *Television Awareness Training* which members may use to educate both themselves and their children.

Chapter 8 will examine the writings of Ellen G. White for relevant counsel that is applicable to television viewing.
CHAPTER IX

INSPIRED COMMENTARY

The Role of Ellen G. White

Number seventeen of the Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists states:

One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is prophecy. This gift is an identifying mark of the remnant church and was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White. As the Lord's messenger, her writings are a continuing and authoritative source of truth which provide for the church comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction. They also make clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested.¹

Ellen G. White's ministry extended from the time she was seventeen (in 1844) to her death in 1915. Her writings fill more than eighty books, two hundred tracts and pamphlets, 4,600 periodical articles, and 60,000 pages of manuscript materials.² She has been termed the most prolific female author of all time. Church members who have sought a personal acquaintance with her writings have found their lives enriched, and church leaders who have a working acquaintance with her counsels have found them to be a superb resource for ministry.

¹Seventh-day Adventists Believe, 216. Cf. 216-229.
²Ibid.
Standards and Principles

Seventh-day Adventists attempt to implement the counsels found in the writings of Ellen G. White not only in the work of the church, but in their daily lives as well. The title of one of the works of the late theologian and philosopher Francis Schaeffer asks the question, "How should we then live?" His question is well placed: how does the individual Christian relate to society? Much has been written regarding this question, which the Scriptures address as does Ellen G. White. Very simply answered, Christians relate to society by implementing in their lives the principles found in Scripture. White constantly directed her readers to Scripture.

Whereas society tends to change over the years, the principles found in the Scriptures transcend society and remain constant. Those principles are embodied in the Ten Commandments (Exod 20:3-17). Conscientious application of these principles results in a quality of life far beyond that enjoyed by most nonreligious members of society. (An example of this is the happy, long-term monogamous marriage

1Francis Schaeffer, How Should We Then Live? The Rise and Decline of Western Thought and Culture (Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1976). This material was also prepared as a television series by the same title which was rejected by PBS (Public Broadcasting Service).

usually resulting from faithfully living the seventh commandment. In comparison is the heartache brought by divorce.) The church attempts to uphold these principles both in the lives of its members and in its outreach to society.

Standards are one of the ways the Christian church seeks to express these principles. However, as society tends to change, the standards by which Scriptural principles are expressed may need to be adjusted in order to allow the principles behind the standards to be relevance expressed in changing societies. ¹

Ellen White was born and raised in what has been termed "Victorian America," a society that no longer exists. As always, the church sought to express the principles it believed in by certain standards which were relevant to that society. Ellen White's writings assisted the Church in its expression of those principles of Scripture and their corresponding standards.

¹A classic example of this that is well known to many Seventh-day Adventists concerns bicycles. At one point Ellen White took a stand against the purchase of bicycles. (Cf. Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, [Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1948], 8:51-52.) At the time, bicycles were extremely expensive and those who purchased them were racing with them. When the fad passed, bicycles became very useful and former negative comments regarding bicycles were no longer necessary. The principle behind her words is to avoid exorbitantly expensive crazes.
The Christian and Television

The question this project addresses is how the individual Christian should relate to one very common phenomenon of present-day society: television. Although television was as nonexistent in Ellen White's day as it was in the times in which the Scriptures were produced, many of the comments she made, like those of Scripture, appear to be relevant to the question of how a Christian should relate to the subject of viewing the screen. These are especially relevant when we attempt to determine the principles behind her specific statements and the standards she expressed. Let us take a brief look at some of what both the Scriptures and Ellen White have to say that appears to apply to this subject.

Television in general portrays the visible as the real world. However, the Scriptures and Ellen White point clearly to the invisible as being the real world. Ellen White's five-volume "Conflict of the Ages" series\(^1\) tells the

story of the conflict described in the Scriptures that has continued behind the scenes (viz., the invisible) between Jesus Christ and Satan from the origin of sin until its future obliteration in the earth made new. This conflict, or controversy, provides much of the ideological framework of her writings. As the Apostle Paul wrote, "We fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen" (2 Cor 4:18).

The Christian Mindset

White sought to uphold in her writings both the principles of Scripture and the specific standards which expressed those principles at the time in which she wrote. Referring to her own work she wrote:

I was . . . directed to bring out general principles, in speaking and in writing, and at the same time specify the dangers, errors, and sins of some individuals, that all might be warned, reproved, and counseled.¹

The marginal reading of Prov 23:7 speaks of a man, who, "as he thinks within himself, so he is." In other words, it is not the clothes that make the man, but his thoughts. In this instance the one doing the thinking happens to be a wealthy man, who, though he invites you to eat with him, thinks as you eat, "How much is this going to cost me?" The consequence is his turning into what society would call a "stingy" person. Prov 4:23 counsels, "Above

¹White, Testimonies for the Church, 2:687.
all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life." In Matt 15:18-20 the Lord spoke of those things that are within humans that come out (e.g., evil thoughts, murder, adultery, etc.) and defile them. In Mark 12:30 Jesus cited Deut 6:4-5 which says to "love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." How much better to have a heart (viz., mind) full of love for God than a heart filled with evil.

The Apostle Paul wrote in Rom 12:2:

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

He wrote of the "enemies of Christ" whose "destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things." (Phil 3:19, emphasis supplied.) In Romans he also wrote:

Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. (8:5-8)

Regarding the thoughts, Paul wrote:

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. (Phil 4:8)
Earlier in the book of Philippians (2:3-8) Paul wrote what has become a foundational passage for Christology. The kind of mindset that Christians ought to have is to

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death— even death on a cross.

Ellen White's writings address the human mind and its thoughts: her concern is for mental purity. "The mind is to be kept clear and pure that it may distinguish between good and evil."[2]

If the thoughts are not properly employed, religion cannot flourish in the soul. The mind must be preoccupied with sacred and eternal things, or it will cherish trifling and superficial thoughts.[3]

In this connection she wrote:

You are responsible to God for your thoughts. If you indulge in vain imaginations, permitting your mind to dwell upon impure subjects, you are, in a degree, as guilty before God as if your thoughts

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1 The well-known King James Version translates this as "Let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus."


were carried into action. All that prevents the action is the lack of opportunity.

She encouraged control of the thoughts:

You will have to become a faithful sentinel over your eyes, ears, and all your senses if you would control your mind and prevent vain and corrupt thoughts from staining your soul. The power of grace alone can accomplish this most desirable work.

White's term "the avenues of the soul" refers to the senses. She repeatedly stated that these need to be carefully guarded because of the onslaughs of Satan. "All who name the name of Christ need to watch and pray and guard the avenues of the soul, for Satan is at work to corrupt and destroy if the least advantage is given him." We must, she wrote, "avoid reading, seeing, or hearing that which will suggest impure thoughts." If we do not, the "evils without will awaken evils within, and the soul will wander in darkness."

The Visual

The Scriptures contain specific comments about vision. Job 31:1 states, "I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl." Psa 101:3 comments, "I

1White, Testimonies for the Church, 2:561.

2Ibid., 561.

3White, Testimonies for the Church, 3:476.

will set before my eyes no vile thing." Psa 119:37 expresses the desire, "Turn my eyes away from worthless things." Potipher's wife was attracted to Joseph when she noticed how "handsome" and "well-built" he was (Gen 39:6). David's problem with Bathsheba began with visual lust (2 Sam 11:2). Isa 33:15-16 describes the righteous person as one who "shuts his eyes against contemplating evil."

Jesus spoke of the impact of the visual in His Sermon on the Mount:

You have heard that it was said, "Do not commit adultery." But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. (Matt 5:27-29)

Interestingly, Matthew quotes His comment a second time in 18:9.

Several of the apostles commented on the problem of the visual. Peter spoke of those who "follow the corrupt desire of the sinful nature and despise authority" as having "eyes full of adultery" (2 Pet 2:10, 14). John used the term "lusts of the eyes" (1 John 2:16).

Returning to the writings of the Apostle Paul, one of his statements is the foundational principle that television works on: by beholding we become changed.

And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. (2 Cor 3:18)
According to this text we are being transformed into the likeness of Jesus by beholding His glory. If the principle works in a positive way, it also works in a negative way: if we are not beholding the Lord's glory, then we are being transformed into the image of whatever it is we are beholding.

Reminiscent of the once-famous monkey sculpture, "Hear No Evil, See No Evil, Speak No Evil," Ellen White wrote:

Those who would have that wisdom which is from God must become fools in the sinful knowledge of this age, in order to be wise. They should shut their eyes, that they may see and learn no evil. They should close their ears, lest they hear that which is evil and obtain that knowledge which would stain their purity of thoughts and acts.1

This, of course, is completely in harmony with God's wishes that His children would avoid a knowledge of evil, which came through their sin of eating the forbidden fruit (see Gen 2:15-17, 3:1-24). Applying this principle to the viewing of television, it would seem that a Christian would voluntarily rule out all programming material having to do with the depiction of evil.

**Separateness**

White drew attention to the Biblical concept of separation. She wrote:

Ancient Israel were especially directed by God to be and remain a people separate from all nations.

1White, *The Adventist Home*, 404.
They were not to be subjected to witnessing the idolatry of those about them, lest their own hearts should be corrupted, lest familiarity with ungodly practices should make them appear less wicked in their eyes.¹

In this regard she commented that both Enoch and John the Baptist removed themselves from human society at times in order to preserve their sense of the awfulness of sin.

Writing to the Church, Peter indicates that

You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. (1 Pet 2:9)

The term "a people belonging to God" implies a uniqueness befitting no other people, which uniqueness sets the saints apart from the general population. One of the final messages that God sends to the world is an appeal to His people: "Come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues" (Rev 18:4). The Apostle Paul, exhorting the Corinthian people to be separate from the world, asked a series of questions so worded as to imply "no" answers.

What do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people. Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord, Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you

¹White, Testimonies for the Church, 4:109.
will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." (2 Cor 6:14-18)

Paul then appropriately concluded his argument by saying, "Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God" (2 Cor 7:1).

White wrote as follows: "He (God) invites you to leave those things which hinder your spiritual advancement."1

If we wish to be adopted into the family of God, to become children of the heavenly King, we must comply with His conditions; we must come out from the world and stand as a peculiar people before the Lord, obeying His precepts and serving Him.2

She also wrote:

There can be no union between light and darkness. God intends that His people shall be a peculiar people, separate from the world, and be living examples of holiness, that the world may be enlightened, convicted, or condemned, according as they treat the light given them.3

The saints are to be consecrated to God, soul, body and spirit. "In heart, in dress, in language, in every respect they are to be separate from the fashions and practices of the world. They are to be a peculiar and holy people."4 To Ellen White, conformity to the world was a sin

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1White, Testimonies for the Church, 4:112.
2Ibid., 4:110.
3Ibid., 2:689.
that saps the spirituality of the people, "seriously interfering with their usefulness."\(^1\)

Part of the reason for White's concern for the purity of our thoughts is the impact that all thoughts have on the soul. Consider the following words which echo texts cited above: "Impure thoughts lead to impure actions."\(^2\)

**The Character**

Of ultimate concern to Ellen White was the formation of character. She once wrote that character is "composed of that which the mind eats and drinks."\(^3\)

Many thoughts make up the unwritten history of a single day, and these thoughts have much to do with the formation of character. Our thoughts are to be strictly guarded, for one impure thought makes a deep impression on the soul. An evil thought leaves an evil impress on the mind. If the thoughts are pure and holy, the mind is better for having cherished them. By them the spiritual

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\(^2\)White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 2:408. By way of encouragement, the next sentences assure that "if Christ be the theme of contemplation, the thoughts will be widely separated from every subject which will lead to impure acts. The mind will strengthen by dwelling upon elevating subjects. If trained to run in the channel of purity and holiness, it will become healthy and vigorous. If trained to dwell upon spiritual themes it will naturally take that turn. But this attraction of the thoughts to heavenly things cannot be gained without the exercise of faith in God and an earnest, humble reliance upon Him for that strength and grace which will be sufficient for every emergency."

pulse is quickened and the power for doing good is increased.¹

Writing of the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, Rev 21:27 says that "Nothing impure will ever enter it." Evidently an impure character is disqualified from belonging there. Is the enjoyment of certain television programs worth sacrificing a pure character and Heaven? "Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness" (2 Tim 2:19).

Writing of the impact of varied images on the minds of children, White commented that if, in their tender years, children's minds were filled with pleasant images of truth, purity, and goodness, a taste for such things would be formed in them. Parents' comments can make a significant contribution toward this. However,

If the minds of the parents are continually dwelling upon low scenes; if their conversation lingers over objectionable features of character; if they form a habit of speaking complainingly of the course others have pursued, the little ones will take lessons from the words and expressions of contempt and will follow the pernicious example.²

It would appear that when parents subject themselves to "low scenes," it sets all the rest in motion. She commented further that she felt as though she wanted to hide the daily paper when it came because she thought that Satan was behind

¹Ellen G. White, Messages to Young People (Nashville, Tenn.: Southern Pub. Assn., 1930), 144.

the publishing of many sinful accounts. What would she say to the news reports of today?

In regard to imitation (Note: See p. 76) Ellen White observed:

Mere children in years are old in a knowledge of crime. They are incited to evil by the tales they read. In imagination they act over the deeds portrayed, until their ambition is aroused to see what they can do in committing crime and evading punishment.

To the active minds of children and youth the scenes pictured in imaginary revelations of the future are realities. . . . They are led to the commission of crimes even worse, if possible, than these sensational writers depict.

What would she say of television in this regard? The American Family Association\(^2\) regularly cites in its monthly Journal numerous instances of crimes committed in consequence of viewing pornographic material.\(^3\)

In light of our sinful nature, our greatest need is the eradication of sin, not its contemplation, which only augments our inner state of depravity. White put it clearly when she wrote:

The lust of the eye and corrupt passions are aroused by beholding and by reading. The heart is corrupted through the imagination. The mind takes pleasure in contemplating scenes which awaken the


\(^2\)American Family Association, Post Office Drawer 2440, Tupelo, MS 38803.

\(^3\)"The Lord will help every one of us where we need help the most in the grand work of overcoming and conquering self. . . . By beholding the character of Christ you will become changed into His likeness." *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 3:1164.
lower and baser passions. These vile images, seen through defiled imagination, corrupt the morals and prepare the deluded, infatuated beings to give loose rein to lustful passions.\(^1\)

Later in the same volume she wrote:

The mind of a man or woman does not come down in a moment from purity and holiness to depravity, corruption, and crime. It takes time to transform the human to the divine or to degrade those formed in the image of God to the brutal or the satanic.

By beholding we become changed. Though formed in the image of his Maker, man can so educate his mind that sin which he once loathed will become pleasant to him.\(^2\)

In another place she commented, "By familiarity with sin, they [professors of religion] become blinded to its enormity."\(^3\)

### Stories

Just about every television presentation tells a story. Exciting, frivolous stories and love stories are classed by Ellen White as being a "curse" to the reader through which Satan effectually deceives and allures.\(^4\)

Another expression that Ellen White uses is "foolish stories and idle tales." Such items so divert the mind and feed the imagination that "the brilliancy of God's word is eclipsed to them [the readers]. The mind is led

\(^1\)White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 2:410.

\(^2\)Ibid., 478, 479.

\(^3\)White, *Messages to Young People*, 398.

\(^4\)Ibid., 7:165. Cf. 7:64, 4:497 and *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, 132-135.
directly from God. The interest in His precious word is destroyed."¹ She wrote:

Parents would better burn the idle tales of the day and the novels as they come into their houses. It would be a mercy to the children. Encourage the reading of these storybooks, and it is like enchantment. It bewilders and poisons the mind.²

Most church members like television, and the suggestion that the set be turned off (or very carefully controlled) is usually met with an attitude of disdain.

The Christian's Use of Time

In Christ's Object Lessons Ellen White devoted an entire chapter to Jesus' parable of the talents (Matt 25:13-30). Her list of talents includes the gifts of the Holy Spirit, other gifts and endowments, whether natural or acquired, mental faculties, speech, influence, health, money, and time. She wrote,

The value of time is beyond computation. Christ regarded every moment as precious, and it is thus that we should regard it. Life is too short to be trifled away. We have but a few days of probation in which to prepare for eternity. We have no time to waste, no time to devote to selfish pleasure, no time for the indulgence of sin.³

¹Ibid., 1:125.
²Ibid., 135.
³Ellen G. White, Christ's Object Lessons, 342.
Time is to be used industriously\textsuperscript{1} in the work of saving souls,\textsuperscript{2} for developing character,\textsuperscript{3} and should be wisely improved in every way. To use time improperly includes spending it selfishly,\textsuperscript{4} frivolously,\textsuperscript{5} idly,\textsuperscript{6} or wasting it.\textsuperscript{7}

The "Victorian America" that Ellen White grew up in had a strong work ethic, which she shared. In her time hard work was considered essential to success, or the good life. The demands of life in Victorian America required that most people spend just about all of their time working hard. Since work consumed most available time, there was little left for leisure. But even that should not be idled away,\textsuperscript{8} but should be spent in such activities as Bible study.\textsuperscript{9} "Of no talent He has given will He require a more

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1}White, Testimonies for the Church 1:112.
\item \textsuperscript{2}Ibid., 9:38.
\item \textsuperscript{3}White, Sons and Daughters of God, 283.
\item \textsuperscript{4}White, Ministry of Healing, 208, and Testimonies for the Church, 7:204.
\item \textsuperscript{5}White, Testimonies for the Church, 2:186.
\item \textsuperscript{6}Ibid., 4:72.
\item \textsuperscript{7}Ibid., 2:499.
\item \textsuperscript{8}Ibid., 5:42.
\item \textsuperscript{9}Ibid., 4:588.
\end{itemize}
strict account than of our time."¹ She encouraged people to say firmly: "I will not spend precious moments in reading [seeing] that which will be of no profit to me, and which only unfits me to be of service to others. I will devote my time and my thoughts to acquiring a fitness for God's service. I will close my eyes to frivolous and sinful things."²

Today, most people consider entertainment and amusement essential requirements of daily life. The media present the good life on prime time as being predominantly leisure. We have become a leisure-oriented society with almost every home having some kind of media center. Most people's lives center around something other than the workplace. This would have been unthinkable in the Christian community of the late 1800s. White says:

"We are here to benefit humanity and to be a blessing to society; and if we let our minds run in that low channel that many who are seeking only vanity and folly permit their minds to run in, how can we be a benefit to our race and generation?³"

"We should," White wrote, "shun any amusement which so fascinates the mind that the ordinary duties of life seem tame and uninteresting."⁴

The discretionary time that is so common today would likely have been classed as "idleness" by an earlier

¹White, Christ's Object Lessons, 342.
²White, Testimonies for the Church, 7:64.
³Ibid., 513.
⁴Ibid., 514.
generation. It was reprehensible to White. Speaking of idleness, she wrote, "Idleness is a curse. It produces licentious habits."¹ "No person, whether rich or poor, can glorify God by a life of indolence."²

Many who through diligent labor might have been a blessing to the world, have been ruined through idleness. Lack of employment and of steadfast purpose opens the door to a thousand temptations.³

The Theater and Amusements

According to White, one of the devices Satan uses to bring a forgetfulness of God is the theater:

He [Satan] seeks to engross and absorb the mind so completely that God will find no place in the thoughts. He does not wish people to have a knowledge of their Maker, and he is well pleased if he can set in operation games and theatrical performances that will so confuse the senses of the youth that God and heaven will be forgotten.⁴

"Games" and "theatrical performances" were part of the Victorian America that Ellen White grew up in. Today, "games" have mushroomed into professional sports, and

¹White, Testimonies for the Church, 2:349. The context of this comment is self-abuse, or, as it is called today, masturbation.

²Ibid., 3:400.


⁴White, Messages to Young People, 214.
"theatrical performances" are far more widespread via television than they ever were in her day.¹

The opposite of amusement is recreation. Ellen White contrasted the two as follows:

Recreation, when true to its name, recreation, tends to strengthen and build up. Calling us aside from our ordinary cares and occupations, it affords refreshment for mind and body and thus enables us to return with new vigor to the earnest work of life.

Amusement, on the other hand, is sought for the sake of pleasure and is often carried to excess; it absorbs the energies that are required for useful work and thus provides a hindrance to life's true success.²

Ellen White considered the theater to be "in direct opposition to the teachings of Christ and the apostles,"³ having a "tendency to or at the very least the appearance of evil,"⁴ being a "species of idolatry, a sacrifice upon idol altars,"⁵ "demoralizing,"⁶ and a tool used by Satan to "break down the barriers of principle and

¹White, The Adventist Home, 512.
²White, Testimonies for the Church, 1:554.
³Ibid., 490.
open the door to sensual indulgence."¹ Theater going, she said, along with horse racing and gambling, stimulate every passion to intense activity. She wrote,

Among the most dangerous resorts for pleasure is the theater. Instead of being a school of morality and virtue, as is so often claimed, it is the very hotbed of immorality. Vicious habits and sinful propensities are strengthened and confirmed by these entertainments. Low songs,² lewd gestures, expressions, and attitudes, deprave the imagination and debase the morals. Every youth who habitually attends such exhibitions will be corrupted in principle. There is no influence in our land more powerful to poison the imagination, to destroy religious impressions, and to blunt the relish for the tranquil pleasures and sober realities of life than theatrical amusements.³

"Those who learn to love amusement for its own sake open the door to a flood of temptations."⁴

There is an old saying, "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy." Ellen White encouraged balanced living, urging families to take time off in the country for relaxation and rejuvenation. However, she cautioned:

There is great need of temperance in amusements, as in every other pursuit. And the character of these amusements should be carefully and thoroughly considered.⁵

¹White, The Adventist Home, 515.

²Take for instance, the theme song of the very popular, long-running TV program, "M*A*S*H," "Suicide Is Painless."

³White, Testimonies for the Church, 4:652-653.

⁴White, Christ's Object Lessons, 54, 55.

⁵White, Testimonies for the Church, 4:652.
Regarding amusements she wrote, "The true Christian will not desire to enter any place of amusement or engage in any diversion upon which he cannot ask the blessing of God."¹

"Any amusement which disqualifies them for secret prayer, for devotion at the altar of prayer, or for taking part in the prayer meeting is not safe, but dangerous."²

"Amusements that have a tendency to weaken the love for sacred things and lessen our joy in the service of God are not to be sought by Christians."³

Work

Although some might think that much of what Ellen White has written was rather negative, in reality her writings tend to be very positive. For instance, after discouraging theater attendance she wrote:

There are modes of recreation which are highly beneficial to both mind and body. An enlightened, discriminating mind will find abundant means for entertainment and diversion, from sources not only innocent, but instructive. Recreation in the open air, the contemplation of the works of God in nature, will be of the highest benefit.⁴

Most Americans desire to live "the good life."

Prime time's concept of "the good life" includes affluence (almost to the point of independent wealth) and all its

¹White, Messages to Young People, 398.
²White, Testimonies for the Church, 3:223.
³White, Mind, Character, and Personality, 1:314.
⁴Ibid.
trappings, and an incredible amount of leisure time. As far as work is concerned, the kind of work that most people are familiar with in day-to-day life appears much less on the screen than the legal, medical, or law enforcement professions. The typical life lived by any one of these individuals (e.g., private investigators) makes real life seem tame.

As was observed earlier, Ellen White shared the strong work ethic of her time. "Labor is ennobling,"¹ she said. "The discipline of systematic, well-regulated labor is essential, not only as a safeguard against the vicissitudes of life, but as an aid to all-round development."² "The physical, mental, and moral well-being of man makes a life of useful labor necessary."³ She pointed out that the work Adam and Eve were given was designed to enhance their happiness.⁴

¹Ibid., 4:590. White also uses the word "honorable." White, Child Guidance, 346.

²White, Child Guidance, 347.

³White, Testimonies for the Church, 3:400. See also, "Our happiness increases and our powers develop as we engage in useful employment." White, Child Guidance, 345; and "Judicious labor is a healthful tonic for the human race. It makes the feeble strong, the poor rich, the wretched happy. Satan lies in ambush, ready to destroy those whose leisure gives him opportunity to approach them under some attractive disguise. He is never more successful than when he comes to men in their idle hours." White, Messages to Young People, 215. Emphasis supplied.

⁴White, Child Guidance, 345.
The human struggle with sin makes work essential. "It was God's purpose to remove by toil the evil which man brought into the world by disobedience. By toil the temptations of Satan might be made ineffectual, and the tide of evil stayed."\(^1\) "Diligent labor will keep us from many of the snares of Satan, who finds some mischief still for idle hands to do."\(^2\)

White did not countenance sloppy work. "There is no excuse for slow bungling at work of any character."\(^3\)

Whatever our work, God is honored by wholehearted, cheerful service. He is pleased when we take up our duties with gratitude, rejoicing that we are accounted worthy to be co-laborers with Him.\(^4\)

She thought that we should study our work in order to learn how to do it more efficiently and well. Referring to those who work within the Church, she wrote, "Whatever we do, in whatever department of the work we are placed, He desires to control our minds that we may do perfect work."\(^5\)

"In every line of useful labor and every association of life, He [God] desires us to find a lesson of divine truth."\(^6\) She observes that one reason why physical

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\(^1\)White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, 513.

\(^2\)White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 4:590.

\(^3\)White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, 344.

\(^4\)Ibid., 364.

\(^5\)Ibid., 349.

\(^6\)Ibid., 26.
toil is looked down on is the slipshod way in which it is often done. "The worker puts no heart into it, and he neither preserves self-respect nor wins the respect of others." Eccl 5:12 states "the sleep of the laborer is sweet." Work, rightly done, enhances self-respect.

Wealth

According to Rom 3:23 we are all sinners before God. We are equally in need of His love, forgiveness, salvation and provisions. Although some are wealthy while others are poor, we stand equal in the sight of God.

One of the predominant values of television (like society in general) is wealth. On the screen, a person's worth is directly proportional to his or her wealth. This panders to our age-old problem of selfishness, which, White writes, is the "essence of depravity." White recognized what poverty does to an individual's social value.

In the eyes of the world a man's value is estimated by, "How much is he worth in property?" But heaven's books register his worth in proportion to the good he has accomplished with the means he has had entrusted to him.

James (2:2-7) upbraided the early church for showing "favoritism" based on obvious.

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1White, Child Guidance, 348.

2White, Counsels on Stewardship, 24.

White observed that "wealth means greatness and power; poverty little less than slavery," but she added, "This is an order of things God never designed should exist."\(^1\) In commenting on Jesus' parable of the rich man and Lazarus, she wrote that Jesus was seeking to reach His hearer's minds by framing His truths in terms of their preconceived opinions.

He used the prevailing opinions to convey the idea He wished to make prominent to all—that no man is valued for his possessions; for all he has belongs to him only as lent by the Lord. A misuse of these gifts will place him below the poorest and most afflicted man who loves God and trusts in Him.\(^2\)

She also wrote:

The wealth of earth dwindles into insignificance when compared with the worth of a single soul for whom our Lord and Master died. He who weigheth the hills in scales and the mountains in a balance regards a human soul as of infinite value.\(^3\)

According to Ps 24:1 everything belongs to God, who is the Creator who originated it all. Ps 50:10-12 says that He owns the cattle on a thousand hills, and that the world and all that is in it is His. "'The silver is mine and the gold is mine,' declares the Lord Almighty" (Hag 2:8). Whatever possessions God permits to come to an

\(^1\)White, *Evangelism*, 417.

\(^2\)White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, 263.

\(^3\)White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 4:261. She also wrote that "the poor have as much right to a place in God's world as have the more wealthy." White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 534.
individual are merely a trust to be used as wisely as possible. In other words, we are not owners, but stewards, or, to use a more common word, managers.

At times individual Christians have thought that possessing wealth was wrong. Possessions, however, are not the problem. The inordinate desire for possessions is where the problem lies.

People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. (1 Tim 6:8-10)

Loving money is one of the characteristics that wicked individuals will evidence at the end of time (2 Tim 3:2).

"Do not wear yourself out to get rich; have the wisdom to show restraint" (Prov 23:4), wrote Solomon, who also said, "Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income" (Eccl 5:10).

Jesus wanted His children to have permanent treasures.

Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Matt 6:19-21)

He also cautioned:

No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money. (Matt 6:19-24)
In Matt 6:33-34 Jesus said that if we would seek first His kingdom and righteousness, all the things (that we tend to worry about) would be added to us. "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow."

Luke 12 is another chapter in which Jesus addressed the subject of possessions. "Watch out!" He said, "Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions" (vs. 15). He then told the parable of the rich fool, which He ended by saying, "This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God" (vs. 21).

Later in Luke 18 the incident between Jesus and the rich young ruler is related. The problem the young man had was his attitude to his wealth, which was why Jesus instructed him to give everything he had to the poor. "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!" Jesus sadly commented when the young man walked away (vs. 24).

The Apostle Paul counseled Timothy to:

Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasures for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life. (1 Tim 6:17-19)

The ever-present temptation is to trust wealth instead of God.
Wealth is an uncertain thing. "Whoever trusts in his riches will fall." (Prov 11:28). "Cast but a glance at riches, and they are gone, for they will surely sprout wings and fly off to the sky like an eagle" (Prov 23:5).

Paul wrote that "godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Tim 6:6). He said that he had learned to be content in whatever circumstances he found himself (Phil 4:11-13). Heb 13:5 cautions, "Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.'"

Ellen White's attitude toward the accumulation of money is quite positive. "The desire to accumulate wealth is an original affection of our nature, implanted there by our heavenly Father for noble ends."¹ Money is a blessing of God when earned slowly through hard work, rather than being gained quickly through speculation.

"Wealth will prove to be a blessing if we regard it as the Lord's."² Money is a blessing of God that is intended to be used for the betterment of others (viz., "being returned with thankfulness to God"), rather than accumulated and used to show others that one is richer than others.


²White, Testimonies for the Church, 6:452, 453.
White's writings contain a number of rather pointed comments as to the purpose of material wealth.

Wealth is a power with which to do good or to do evil. If it is rightly used it becomes a source of continual gratitude, because the gifts of God are appreciated and the Giver acknowledged by using them as God intended they should be used.

Very similar is this: "The Lord is a God of benevolence, and through His representatives, to whom He has entrusted His goods, He would have all the needs of His creatures supplied." In other words, money is a vehicle by which the wealthy are enabled to assist others who are in need. In this way a true Christian looks at money very differently from the non-Christian.

Most Americans not only have discretionary time, they also have discretionary money. White cautions,

We should be on our guard, and not allow ourselves to spend money upon that which is unnecessary, and simply for display. We should not permit ourselves to indulge tastes that lead us to pattern after the customs of the world, and rob the treasury of the Lord.

She pointed out that it is God's purpose that rich and poor "shall be closely bound together by the ties of sympathy and

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1Ibid., 4:620.

2White, Counsels on Stewardship, 162.


4White, Counsels on Stewardship, 249.
helpfulness,\(^1\) and she observed that "true generosity is too frequently destroyed by prosperity and riches."\(^2\)

White held that our use of money is a test of our character and Christianity:

\[
\text{God tests men, some in one way, and some in another. He tests some by bestowing upon them His rich bounties, and others by withholding His favors. He proves the rich to see if they will love God, the Giver, and their neighbor as themselves. When man makes a right use of these bounties, God is pleased; He can then trust him with greater responsibilities.}^3
\]

As far as White was concerned, prosperity, not adversity, is what is dangerous to spiritual life.\(^4\) "The mind becomes engrossed with the cares of this life to such an extent as to shut out true godliness."\(^5\) "The greater the treasures laid up upon the earth, the more difficult it is for the possessor to realize that they are not his own, but lent him to use to God's glory."\(^6\) The greater a person's resources are, the greater the temptation to rely on them rather than God.

The entertainment world presents money and the things it can buy in a very alluring manner. In countless

\(^1\)White, Counsels on Stewardship, 161.
\(^2\)White, Testimonies for the Church, 1:482.
\(^3\)Ibid., 5:261.
\(^4\)White, Counsels on Stewardship, 148.
\(^5\)White, Testimonies for the Church, 2:183.
\(^6\)Ibid., 2:680.
television programs and movies wealth is portrayed in terms of positions of power, lavish homes, luxurious clothing and vehicles, with not a care in the world for the downtrodden. And such individuals are always striving for more. In contrast is the proper use of money as a means of unselfishly providing for the "have-nots" of society, with the affections of the giver firmly fixed on eternal interests. "God wants you to appreciate His gifts and use them to His glory. I entreat you to open your hearts to true and disinterested benevolence."¹

**Distinctiveness**

Television appears to be very inimical to Christian distinctiveness. Citing 2 Cor 6:17, Ellen White appealed to youth to "cut the finest thread which binds you in practice and in spirit with the world."² "The followers of Christ are to be separate from the world in principles and interests, but they are not to isolate themselves from the world."³ As Jesus said, we are the salt and light of the world (Matt 5:13, 14).

The Christian's distinctiveness is to be total. "In heart, in dress, in language, in every respect they are to be separate from the fashions and practices of the world.

¹Ibid., 4:621.

²White, *Messages to Young People*, 139.

³White, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, 323.
They are to be a peculiar and holy people."¹ The NIV translates the KJV's "peculiar people" (1 Pet 2:9) as "a people belonging to God."

There are many who have no intelligent hope, and are running great risk in practicing the very things which Jesus has taught that they should not do, in eating, drinking, and dressing, binding themselves up with the world in a variety of ways. They have yet to learn the serious lessons so essential to growth in spirituality, to come out from the world and be separate.²

Chapter 3 pointed out that television presents the concept of handling your own problems, usually through violence, or at least through seeking your own justice. (Another term for this is revenge). Programs often portray individuals (such as private detectives) taking the law into their own hands in the interest of seeking justice.

Scripture presents the opposite concept:

I will repay [says the Lord] . . . Rejoice 0 nations, with his people, for he will avenge the blood of his servants; he will take vengeance on his enemies and make atonement for his land and people. (Deut 32:35, 43)

"Do not repay anyone evil for evil," Paul says. "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." (13:17, 21) Jesus said to "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven." (Matt 5:43)

¹White, Fundamentals of Christian Education, 311.
²White, Life Sketches, 350, 351.
The writings of Ellen G. White have assisted the Seventh-day Adventist Church in expressing a belief in the principles of Scripture. She encouraged a Christian mindset and urged that the senses be guarded against evil to enable the formation of a Christian character.

The work ethic that she believed in carried over into the use of leisure time. In her view, certain amusements such as gambling and the theater not only unfit the participant for serious living, but also had a deleterious effect on the soul.

The theater of today includes the television screen. It is an avenue to the senses through which the soul can be corrupted. Television’s world is not spiritual. It is a world where wealth and leisure are the trappings of "the good life." In contrast, the Christian lives a life of service to others in view of Heaven, with wealth and time being means of blessing others. The Christian lives a life separate and distinct from the world. Regular viewing of the world on the screen lessens that distinctiveness.

In chapter 9 I will evaluate the seminar and present the conclusions I have drawn from this project, and in chapter 10 I will present suggestions for developing an appropriate relation to television.
CHAPTER X

SEMINAR EVALUATION AND PROJECT CONCLUSIONS

Seminar Data

In this chapter I will first discuss participants' responses to the three questionnaires that I used in the seminar. I will then evaluate the seminar.

Participant Data: Questionnaire One

Three questionnaires were distributed to seminar participants: the first just prior to the beginning of the seminar, the second immediately following the conclusion of the seminar, and the third three months after the seminar. The number of completed questionnaires received from participants numbered as follows: number one, 84; number two, 52; and number three, 33. Percentage calculations are based on these respective numbers.

Participant Data: Questionnaire One

The seminar was conducted at three different Seventh-day Adventist churches: Elko, Nevada, and West Valley and Ogden, Utah. The Ogden Spanish congregation meets on the lower level of the Ogden church, and several members from that congregation attended the Ogden seminar, so that members from four churches were actually involved in
the seminar. Membership of these churches as listed in the 1991 Nevada-Utah Conference Directory stands at forty-four for Elko, eighty-eight for West Valley, thirty-nine for Ogden Spanish, and 214 for Ogden, making a combined membership of 385. Participation from these four congregations was as follows: Elko, thirteen; West Valley, twenty; Ogden Spanish, seven; and Ogden, forty-four, making a total of eighty-four participants, approximately 23 percent of the total membership of these congregations. Actual attendance (not counted) was higher, but for the purposes of this evaluation, only those who filled out the questionnaire are included in numerical computations.

Ages of participants ranged from seven to eighty, with thirty-six (43%) between the ages of thirty and forty-nine, the primary ages for child-rearing. Thirty-five (42%) participants were male and forty-eight (58%) were female.

Education levels of participants ranged from grade two (one participant) to grade sixteen or more (five participants). Sixteen males and fifteen females had completed grades above twelve. Seventy-five participants indicated that they considered themselves professing Christians, six did not consider themselves as such, and two abstained from answering this question. Years of Christian experience ranged from six months to fifty-one years.

1See Appendix C.
Concerning religious perspective (question 6), participants (given in terms of percent) categorized themselves as follows (1 being very conservative to 10 being quite liberal): 16% placed themselves in the conservative columns, 18% in the liberal columns, and 65% in the middle of the road (See table 1).

TABLE 1

RELIGIOUS PERSPECTIVE OF PARTICIPANTS

Category: 1=Very conservative, 10=Very liberal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question seven asked for participants to rate their perception of the overall quality of their daily life. Answers were (1 being very poor to 10 being very good): 5% placed themselves in the poor columns, 18% in the good columns, and 77% in the middle of the road (See table 2).

TABLE 2

PERCEIVED QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS LIFE

Category: 1=Very poor; 10=Very good

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Those who rated their overall satisfaction as either very poor or very good tended to perceive themselves as being on the more conservative side of the scale given in question six.

Question eight asked which things in daily life dissatisfied participants the most. Fourteen left this answer blank, while sixty-nine listed specific concerns including problems at work, home, and school. The most common dissatisfactions were personal problems (twenty-seven), frustration over time constraints (twenty-two), and spiritual problems (eighteen). The children indicated they were most troubled by their personal behavior not being what they thought it should be.

Satisfactions (question nine) focused largely on family members and relationships, friends, personal piety and religious exercises, and creative activities such as sewing and gardening. Seventy-eight participants answered this question.

In answering question ten ("What would you change for the better?") the most common answers included a reorienting of time use (sixteen), improvement of personal circumstances (twenty-nine), and spiritual concerns (thirty-six). One nine-year-old wrote, "have wishep [worship]."

Time spent in personal devotions by participants is shown in table 3:
TABLE 3
TIME SPENT IN DEVOTIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time:</th>
<th>Responses:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Little or none:</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up to 15 mins./day:</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up to 30 mins./day:</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up to 45 mins./day:</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up to 60 mins./day:</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 60 mins./day:</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As to how much of this time was devoted to reading or study of the Bible, participants indicated:

TABLE 4
PERCENTAGE DEVOTIONAL TIME SPENT WITH BIBLE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category:</th>
<th>None 1/4</th>
<th>1/2</th>
<th>3/4</th>
<th>4/4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responses:</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sixty-eight participants (82%) came from homes with a television set and fifteen (18%) came from homes without a television set. The length of time that the homes with a television set had possessed one ranged from six months to forty-one years. The role that television occupied in these homes was characterized by participants as being everything from an "ornament," to being stuck out of the way in an upstairs room, to being "too prominent." Television was serving as a primary source of information, entertainment, and news for those families with television sets.
Regarding the impact television was presently having on their homes, seminar participants wrote that according to their perceptions television was "bad," "good," "breaks your relationship with God," is "detrimental to the individual," "takes too much time," and has either a major impact, some influence, or little or no influence. Twenty-four participants (29%) thought television had no real influence in their home. As to time spent in front of the screen, participants reported viewing time as shown in table 5:

**TABLE 5**

**WEEKLY VIEWING TIME BEFORE SEMINAR**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never or almost never:</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 2 hours per week:</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From 2 to 5 hours per week:</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From 6 to 10 hours per week:</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From 11 to 15 hours per week:</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From 16 to 20 hours per week:</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From 21 to 25 hours per week:</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 25 hours per week:</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question eighteen listed twelve categories of available programs. Unfortunately religious programs were inadvertently omitted from the list. Several participants commented that they viewed religious broadcasts exclusively. Participants' responses are listed in table 6. Percentages are calculated on the number of responses received for each program category.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Program</th>
<th>(Never)</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5 (Always)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sitcoms</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movies</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documentaries</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cartoons</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soaps</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Videos</td>
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<td>14%</td>
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In answer to question nineteen ("Do you turn the TV on to watch TV or to watch a specific program?") seventy-five responses were received, of which twenty-two (27%) indicated they turned it on just to watch, while fifty-three (64%) indicated that they turned it on to watch a specific program. The others did not respond to this question. This shows that the majority of participants were not just "watching TV," but rather were watching for a specific purpose.

Participants' responses indicated that the factors influencing their decision whether or not to watch a specific program included the moral quality of a program (twenty-one, or 25%), entertainment value (twenty, or 24%), informational value (fifteen, or 18%), and subject matter (ten, or 12%). Only thirty seven (45%) of the participants responded that principles or standards did come to mind in deciding whether or not to view a specific program. Principles or standards included offensive language, display of nudity, immoral behavior, violence, appropriate music, compatibility with the Christian faith, and moral teachings of the program (including spiritualism).

Only thirty participants (36%) responded to question twenty-two (evaluate "Hill Street Blues" or a similar program). Some programs that were commented on by participants included "Hill Street Blues," "Heat of the Night," "21 Jump Street," "Cops," "Matlock," "Perry Mason,"
"LA Law," "Dragnet," and "MacGyver." Responses indicated concerns for these programs' violence, immorality, objectionable language, insensitivity, and the portrayal of both crime and law enforcement in brutal ways. Commenting on one of these programs, one individual wrote simply, "It isn't fit to watch."

Other programs that were commented on included "911," "Bewitched," "Cheers," and "Amen." Comments on these programs were generally favorable, citing things such as truthfulness and the conquest of good over evil.

Most participants thought some changes should be made in their lives relative to TV, including less viewing time or dispensing with it altogether, and exercising greater discrimination in program selections. Participants' attitudes toward making these changes were fairly favorable. In several instances, participants indicated an eagerness to make those changes.

Participant Data: Questionnaire Two

The second questionnaire was administered to participants at the conclusion of the seminar. It was identical to the first questionnaire except for the addition of question twenty-five: "What specifics have you gained from this seminar?"

Attendance during the seminar varied, resulting in the loss of some seminar time for certain individuals. Each time, one or two individuals were unable to attend either
Friday evening or Sabbath afternoon. In some instances individuals needed to leave early. For several of these individuals, blank questionnaires were left with the host pastor to be given to these individuals, but none were returned. Only fifty-two questionnaires were received. Participants were asked to answer only questions eight through ten, fifteen and sixteen, and twenty-one through twenty-five the second time. These questions were designed to measure the immediate impact of the seminar on participants. The responses follow.

Perceived dissatisfactions listed in answer to question ten were very similar to those listed on the first questionnaire. Forty individuals responded to this question: eighteen (35%) listed time constraints, seventeen (33%) listed personal frustrations, eleven (21%) listed spiritual concerns, and seven (13%) listed frustrations with television.

Perceived satisfactions (question nine) were also quite similar to those listed on the first questionnaire. Responses included relationships with family and friends (thirty-two, or 62%), a relationship with God and His Word (twenty-three, or 44%), and doing for others (ten, or 23%). One individual wrote that he found real satisfaction in watching his children "make good decisions."

I had expected that seminar participants would desire to change their lives for the better by spending less
time in front of the screen, by spending more time with God and His Word, and by increasing time spent with their families. I was not disappointed. Twenty-five (48%) listed a desire for an improved personal piety and nine (17%) indicated a desire for improved family life. As was pointed out in chapter 2, television viewing sometimes displaces other family activities. Twelve (23%) indicated they planned to become more involved in activities other than viewing. Although I did not make a strong point of encouraging people to either reduce or eliminate their time in front of the screen, six individuals (11%) commented that they intended to either reduce or eliminate television.

My analysis of responses to this second questionnaire leads me to believe that answers to question fifteen ("Briefly describe the role TV occupies in your home.") were much more accurate than those reported on the first questionnaire. Only twenty-four (46%) answered this question, and answers were quite definite in comparison to a former vagueness. Answers ranged from little or none (five, or 10%), to moderate (twelve, or 23%), to a lot (seven, or 13%). One individual wrote that the screen "dominates and controls my home for six hours a day."

Answers to the companion question ("What do you think the present impact of TV is on you and your family?") ranged from "way too much," to "fairly major," to "minimal." Specific comments included, "It is programming us to deal
with life's situations badly," "It is destroying our family's spiritual life," and "It is the devil incarnate in our home." Only twelve individuals (27%) thought that television had no real influence in their home, compared to the first questionnaire (29%), although part of the reduction of that number can be attributed to a reduced number of questionnaires received. Also, some participants' viewing was very limited to begin with. One individual wrote that the only impact television had on their home was to keep their canary company. On a more serious note, one individual expressed concern about cartoon violence beginning to show up in their sons.

Twenty-one (40%) indicated that they felt television posed a very large, serious spiritual threat to their home. This corresponds exactly with responses given on the first questionnaire. Apparently I did not succeed in convincing participants who were not already of the mind, that indiscriminate television viewing is detrimental to the family.

Another area for which I expected an immediate impact was comprehension of specific principles for guiding program selection. Using the number of questionnaires received as a number to figure from, thirty-eight (or 73%) of respondents listed quite specific principles, in comparison with the thirty-seven (or 45%) who answered this question on the first questionnaire. This is a positive
The text that I had considered foundational for this seminar is 2 Cor 3:18. The text that was cited by respondents instead was Phil 4:8, one of the texts that was used in the group Bible study. In addition to the specifics of nudity, language, violence, and immoral conduct listed on the first questionnaire, values and character impact were listed.

Responses to question twenty-two ("Evaluate 'Hill Street Blues' or a similar show.") included the shows "Hill Street Blues," "LA Law," "Star Trek," "Matlock," "Night Court," and "30-Something." Only seventeen (33%) responded to this question, and responses were much more concise and clear than those given on the first questionnaire. Comments included "wrong values" and "does not portray Christian attributes." "Cosby" and "911" each received a favorable evaluation from one individual. One participant commented that he could not honestly think of one single show that strictly, consistently qualifies for Christian viewing. This same individual reported that the screen dominates his home for six hours every day.

During seminar presentations two points that I particularly emphasized were (1), the need to use discrimination in program selection, and (2), the importance of limiting viewing time. Both of these were listed by participants as changes they thought should be made in their viewing habits. Twenty (38%) listed using discrimination in
program selection, and seventeen (33%) listed curtailing time spent in front of the screen. Evidently I was successful in communicating these to seminar participants. One individual said that they needed to buy a lock.¹

As with the first questionnaire, eleven responses (21%) indicated that participants were very positive about making needed changes. One person wrote, "With God's help, the carnal man is going to lose!"

Participant Data: Questionnaire Three

Only thirty-three of the final questionnaires were returned, which represents 40 percent of the original eighty-three. One of the factors causing this low return was the inadvertent typographical error of reversing the first two numbers of my return address. My daughter discovered this after they had been distributed. The post office was contacted regarding this, but a reasonable assumption is that a number of questionnaires did not reach me for that reason.

Responses indicated that all but one of the participants considered themselves to be Christians. The one exception indicated on the first questionnaire that he considered himself a Christian, but this time wrote that he hoped to become one.

¹See p. 282 of this study.
Dissatisfactions listed were very similar to those reported on the earlier questionnaires. Personal problems seemed the most common, while time and spiritual concerns had become minimal. Only one participant listed television as a concern.

None of the participants reported that they were viewing shows like "Hill Street Blues." All but one indicated that specific principles and standards came to mind to guide in program selection. Responses included "Would Jesus watch this?" and "What is the effect of this program going to be on me?" Besides Phil 4:8, Ps 101:3 was cited; "I will set before my eyes no vile thing."

Table 7 lists a brief comparison of responses to questionnaires 1 and 3. Percentages are calculated on n=33.

| TABLE 7 |
| DATA COMPARISON OF QUESTIONNAIRES ONE AND THREE |
| Change in Religious Viewpoint: 17 (51%) |
| Those More Conservative: 8 (24%) Those More liberal: 9 (27%) |

For Those Becoming More Conservative:
Life better: 4 (12%) Life worse: 3 (9%)

For Those Becoming More Liberal:
Life better: 6 (18%) Life worse: 1 (1%)

| Change in Devotional Time |
| +45 min.: 1 (1%) +30 min.: 4 (12%) |
| +15 min.: 3 (9%) -15 min.: 8 (24%) |

| Change in Devotional Time with Scriptures |
| +: 8 (24%); -: 7 (21%) |

| Change in Viewing Time |
| +: 5 (15%); -: 14 (42%) |
Six (18%) of the participants indicated that they had changed their viewing habits from general viewing to viewing specific programs. This was very gratifying to me.

**Seminar Evaluation**

An evaluation sheet (see Appendix I) was filled out by seminar participants at the conclusion of the seminar. Comments were overwhelmingly favorable. Participants appreciated the information that was presented and especially that it was presented in a nondogmatic way. People like to make up their own minds. As Dr. Jon Paulien, Andrews University, wrote on the paper I turned in for his class, Theology and the Practice of Ministry, "Good research allows the reader to be moved by the weight of evidence." I believe this was one of the strongest points of the seminar.

Participants commented that they appreciated the strong Scriptural basis of the seminar. Several commented that for them the most enjoyable segment of the entire seminar was the group Bible study that was done on Sabbath afternoon.

On the negative side, participants reported that they experienced distress at trying to stay awake Sabbath afternoon after a potluck dinner. Several indicated they did not like the video and were not comfortable with
something of that nature being shown in the sanctuary.\footnote{My committee chairman, Dr. C. Mervyn Maxwell, raised the question of the appropriateness of having participants write out story lines during the Sabbath hours.} Several wrote that they thought the seminar was too long, while one individual thought it was quite concise. The truthfulness of the material provided the most difficult aspect of the seminar for participants to handle. The oldest participant wrote that she did not like "having to give up 'Murder She Wrote,' 'Matlock,' 'Columbo,' and 'Perry Mason.' But I did. I'm not hurting too bad."

Suggestions that were made relative to improving the seminar focused mainly on the need for more varied visual aids. Although I did not use all of the selected references (see Appendix B) in seminar presentations, I did present approximately fifty of them, and apparently this was a little heavy for most participants. One of the host pastors suggested that, in the interests of better visual clarity, I convert the transparencies to slides.

One suggestion that I received relative to content was a felt need to fit this material into an understanding of Christ's character. This was an excellent suggestion, and for future seminars I plan to add a final section on Sabbath afternoon in which groups will focus on Biblical material dealing specifically with Jesus' character.

My personal evaluation of the seminar was that I successfully achieved my objectives with those who attended.
However, since attendance was strictly optional (as it should be), most of the members of the participating churches were not involved. Considering the time constraints within which this project was done, of necessity I did not pay much attention to the need for marketing the seminar to participating churches. I believe that the attendance would have been higher had I given more thought to advertising. Further attention needs to be given to the best method(s) for promoting the seminar to the general Seventh-day Adventist membership.

**Project Evaluation**

As stated in the Introduction, the sheer amount of published literature in the field of television is overwhelming, and new publications become available on an almost monthly basis. The research that this project represents must be considered a general overview of available publications. Although this research base proved to be one of the most evident strengths of seminar presentations, it also represents one of the limitations of this project. Citations included in this report do not include literature published in the last year. For a seminar of this nature to remain up to date, the literature review needs to be ongoing.

Another (inadvertent) strength of this project from the perspective of participants was its Scriptural basis. This, however, represents another weakness: the Scriptural
basis of this project is quite superficial. Much greater study and exegesis needs to be done for each of the references cited in the project.

Other weaknesses included my lack of background in statistics and my inability to rule out "introduced bias" in the questionnaires.

**Conclusions**

One participant commented that they considered TV "the hardest subject in the church to address." What makes television such a difficult subject is the fondness most people have for it. We like it too well, feel guilty about what and how much we watch, and do not like to be questioned about or made to feel guilty about our viewing. Seventh-day Adventists are not immune from such feelings.

Unfortunately, the impact of the screen (viz., commercial programming) is highly inimical to spirituality. My research proves that what you see is what you get—in yourself; "Garbage in, garbage out." Although I have no documentation and know not how to arrive at any, it is my personal conclusion that because of the buildup of mental imagery in the mind, anyone who watches commercial television with any degree of regularity and with anything other than very careful discrimination, will find it either impossible or next-to-impossible to form a character in the likeness of Jesus' character. Because of our viewing, we will also tend to have a secular mindset. The screen
presents a self-indulgent lifestyle and I believe this is one of the main causes for the loss of a sense of mission and spirituality throughout the North American church.

As I wrote in the Introduction, I believe that the majority of members tend to view any voice speaking negatively about television to be somewhat fanatical and not worthy of serious attention. The attendance and response of participants at these seminars indicate that not all members have that perspective. Twenty-two percent of the members of participating churches were willing to take a serious look at something some of them had fondly made a large part of their life.

Not all Adventists watch the screen: eighteen percent of seminar participants came from homes with no television, compared to the national average of two percent. Not all Adventists are spending time in front of the screen: only seven percent reported that they watched regularly, while thirty percent reported that they watched either rarely or never.

As a general rule, I found seminar participants to be typical members of their churches, who struggle with the usual challenges and frustrations that beset most Seventh-day Adventists today. Although some had severely restricted their television viewing prior to the seminar, others had been struggling, unsuccessfully, with the screen. Almost all of the participants expressed appreciation at receiving
help that would enable them to handle television more effectively.

I also found almost all of the participants to be individuals with deep personal spiritual concerns. There was a marked spiritual vitality which should serve to encourage anyone who thinks there are very few spiritually alive Seventh-day Adventists today. The genuineness of the spirituality of participants impressed me.

I believe two things gave this seminar real strength: first, as indicated just above, the research that it was based on; and second, a nondogmatic presentation. The research is rather overwhelming and the obviousness of it all carried the day in participants' thinking. The implications of this for the teaching and preaching ministry are obvious: we need the authority which comes from deep study and a thorough knowledge of our subject. I believe many members are hungry for the Word. Second, we are living in a time that I would characterize as a time of theological immanence, not transcendence, a time when the church is anthropocentric rather than theocentric. This being so, people like to view themselves as being independant of any church authority and resent having someone tell them what is right or wrong. I was not seeking to convince people of my own conclusions but rather to communicate information to them by which they could draw their own conclusions. In my thinking they were free to conclude anything they desired.
This was favorably received by participants, suggesting that church leaders would be better cast in a position of being spiritual consultants than CEOs.

Seventh-day Adventists are very much affected by the world: in particular, by the world as seen on the screen. Scripture is true when it says (2 Cor 3:18) that we become changed by beholding. This entire project illustrates the truth of this single text. I believe that the single best decision we can make at this time of history is to pull the plug and open the Book. Not one single participant expressed regret at viewing less or not at all.

During the later stages of this project I involved one of my parish families in a little experiment: going "cold turkey" for six weeks. At the start their total viewing was in excess of thirty-five hours per week, with little or no discrimination in the selection of programs. Their two (younger) children exhibited all the classic hyperactivity researchers associate with heavy viewing.

This family did not attend the seminar, but they did eliminate all television viewing for the six weeks. Although the children complained of not being able to see TV, both parents commented that they rather enjoyed the change.

Today, the family is once again viewing the screen, but their viewing time is half what it once was and family members exercise much greater discrimination than
previously. The children's reading time and time outdoors have increased greatly, while their hyperactivity appears to have lessened appreciably. They do complain occasionally about not being able to view certain programs, but dad says, "They understand why."¹

One of the things that surprised me was to learn how much participants enjoyed group Bible study. Several commented that they wished the time for this had been much longer. This has implications for future ministry: such things as prayer meetings and Sabbath School classes should perhaps have a group study format rather than the traditional pastor or teacher doing all the presenting. It appears that a meaningful percentage of church members are very hungry for the study of Scripture.

The study of television can be a rather negative experience. There are many negatives associated with the commercial media. At times I did become quite depressed. However, I gained tremendous appreciation for the positives of the Christian faith and of Seventh-day Adventism specifically. God has sought and still seeks to convey to us values that are worth far more than anything this world has to offer. I am speaking of things such as an appreciation of God's forgiveness and love and His abiding presence and watchcare. I am also speaking of things such

¹It is my understanding that in the past year dad has tended to revert to his former viewing habits.
as the personal value God gives an individual. I began this project as someone who enjoyed television but would not view it out of principle. I completed the project having lost all interest in the commercial media: commercial prime time really has nothing desirable for someone bound for heaven.

The questionnaires reveal at least three things about the majority of the participants. First, they are very conscious of time constraints. The implication of this for future ministry is that whatever demands the church or its leaders place on the members should be worthy of the time members will invest in it. No more programs for the sake of programs. Existing programs should have "sunset clauses" (required periodic evaluation) attached, and time displacement should be a prime consideration in deciding whether or not those programs should continue. Second, participants value their families very highly. There is a pronounced felt need for the facilitating of better family relationships. Third, participants have deep (as compared to superficial) spiritual concerns for their own and others' spirituality. I conclude that members need direction and instruction in personal discipleship, not just doctrinal instruction.

In my early years of pastoral ministry my wife occasionally observed that I "shot from the hip" (her term); in other words, I was ill-prepared for sermons, prayer meeting presentations, Bible studies, and even funerals.
She was right. During the course of my D.Min. studies and the completion of this project we both have noticed that I no longer function in that manner. Today, I would never dream of making a presentation I had not thoroughly prepared. Because of the time we are living in, the worth and needs of church members, and the significance of that which we work with—the Word, I believe a pastor's integrity and call demand a commitment to the highest excellence he or she can attain to. I attribute this change in my perspective to the discipline this project brought into my life, and I conclude that I have grown professionally in many ways.

When I began my coursework I found that my reading assignments posed a real challenge; I would need almost half an hour to focus my attention on what I was reading, and when I finished a page I would ask myself, "what did you read?" without being able to answer. There were occasions when I needed to read material two or three times before I was able to understand it. As time passed I found that it was possible to focus my attention and understanding on assigned materials much more quickly and easily. I was forced to conclude that prior to entering the D.Min. program I had become intellectually lazy. It is my present conviction that, in the interests of excellence, all Christians, and pastors in particular, need to involve themselves continually in study that taxes their faculties
to the limit. Intellectual laziness should not be a characteristic of the Christian life. Furthermore, I have also found that a great deal of tenacity developed as a direct consequence of having to be everlastingly pursuing this project.

As I complete this project it is with a sense of relief: I no longer am plagued with professional guilt. As I worked on this project I felt guilty that I was not out visiting my parishioners or preparing sermons to feed them. And as I visited or worked on preparing sermons, I felt guilty that I was not working on this project. At times the pressure became almost unbearable.

What helped me through this time of guilt more than anything else was the example of a much respected "Father in Israel," Dr. Leslie Hardinge. I had been listening to one of Dr. Hardinge's tapes in which he described an incident that occurred during his Ph.D. studies. It suddenly occurred to me that he had completed his studies while continuing his pastoral ministry. I was seeking to do the same. I realized that during that period in his ministry, as with mine, there were times when "something" had to go, such as visits not being made. Although he never said it, surely he struggled with a sense of guilt resulting from this. There may have been an immediate loss, but the far-reaching consequences of his trading off a visit in order to study placed him in a position to make a greater
contribution to his church. Now that this study program has neared completion, it is time to begin making all those visits that have been deferred, but at the same time, to seek to make as great a contribution to my church as it is possible for me to make.

I conclude this project with a sense of professional growth: my writing skills have increased greatly, particularly in the area of formal writing. This growth has undoubtedly come to everyone who has ever done a D.Min. project. It has been a pleasure to work with both my adviser, Dr. Maxwell, and the Dissertation Secretary, (Mrs.) Bonnie Proctor: I received a real education as I watched these two individuals take my coarse colloquialisms and replace them with academically appropriate expressions.

I conclude that this project has not only been the most difficult and challenging that I have ever attempted, but that it has also been the most satisfying. This satisfaction, however, has come only near the end of the project, in which I have realized, largely through the input of my adviser, Dr. C. Mervyn Maxwell, the spiritual significance of this project for my church. I believe I have provided a significant service to those church members who chose to attend the seminar in giving them a greater expertise in handling the challenge to personal and family spirituality posed by the commercial media.
As far as the future is concerned, I sense a continuing need for this information to be communicated to Seventh-day Adventists. I desire to continue conducting seminars similar to those conducted as part of this project. I also plan to revise this report and submit it for publication.

Next, in chapter 10, the final chapter, I will present suggestions that I believe will enable anyone to develop a relationship to the screen suitable to the Christian life.
CHAPTER XI

SUGGESTIONS FOR RELATING TO THE SCREEN

Establish Control of Viewing

Irving Janis of Yale asks:

What can parents or teachers do to prevent children from acquiring or retaining erroneous personal scripts that could have an adverse influence on their vital decisions, including the ones they make currently or later in life?¹

For many parents an important answer to this question is to control the viewing habits of children. In 1983 James M. Wall cautioned that unless parents have extraordinary control over the set, PG- and R-rated films are liable to be watched by tots and teens.² Since that time the number of films with morally objectionable content that have been screened has increased markedly.

The need for control provides many parents with a prime source of frustration: they know they should control the set, but they also know that for one reason or another, they do not always have that control.³ Charles D. Ferris, ³Neville and Jensen of the University of Utah suggest that for those with absolutely no control a Sears Roebuck and Co. padlock #58531 be purchased and put through the hole in one prong of the plug and left locked until required

¹Janis, 179, 180.
²Wall, "Cable TV: Dangerous to Health," 1067.
³Neville and Jensen of the University of Utah suggest that for those with absolutely no control a Sears Roebuck and Co. padlock #58531 be purchased and put through the hole in one prong of the plug and left locked until required.
chairman of the FCC from October 1977-April 1981 verifies this lack of control when he points out:

The majority of US homes have few if any rules about children's use of TV. In a recent [late 1970s] study in California, only 25 percent of elementary age children could cite any rules about TV use.¹

According to Aimee Dorr, control can be made easier by:

1. Explaining why you do not want them to watch
2. Providing them with some engaging thing to do,
3. Suggesting other programs they may watch,
4. Being absolutely consistent in your regulation.²

I suggest that the first thing that needs to be done is for viewers to establish control over television, rather than to allow it to control them, as is the case for some people.

Kubey and Csikszentmihalyi suggest that the first step in gaining control over television lies with gaining control over when to start and when to stop. According to

contingencies are provided for. They write, "This easily monitored contingent television system may be widely utilized and should greatly increase the potential for powerful home behavior change programs." Melanie H. Neville and William R. Jensen, "The Inexpensive Lock: Key to the Television Reinforcer," Child and Family Behavior Therapy 7 (Fall 1985): 59-61, 60.


²Dorr, 162.
these authors, people need to recognize that when viewing goes beyond the limit originally intended it is an indication that there is a problem with lack of control. They also suggest that programs need to be immediately turned off if they become a waste of time. This, they write, "is one of the more difficult abilities to acquire."¹

**Turn the Set Off**

One suggestion for establishing control that has been offered by several authors is to turn the set off.² Some people do, and in general they report that they like the changes that come into their lives as a result.³ Others consider this course unsatisfactory.⁴

Mankiewicz and Swerdlow caution that banning television from the home, or even strictly limiting viewing, 

¹Kubey and Csikszentmihalyi, 213.

²For instance, Charren and Sandler, 197, 199. It has been suggested that for children under six years the set should be off except for special occasions. See Howe and Solomon, 58, and Duncan Jaenicke and Priscilla Jaenicke, "Married to Television," Focus on the Family, (November 1989).

³Cf. Safran, 169. During the course of this project I challenged one family to turn their set off for six weeks, which they did. At the end of that time they indicated that they liked the changes not viewing brought into their family life, and particularly in the behavior of their two young children. They said that they planned to permanently reduce the amount of time they spent in front of the screen. Since that time I have noted that the mother and children have adapted rather well to less viewing. The father has reverted to his former viewing habits.

⁴For example cf. Coakley, 33.
is to turn it into a tantalizing forbidden fruit that will either be sampled at a friend's home or fantasized over by children.¹ I have often heard words to this effect spoken by concerned parents. However, I believe that if parents and children have a good relationship and arrive at this type of decision in a proper manner, family members will not end up sneaking off somewhere to watch television, but will faithfully honor such a choice in their personal lives.

I believe that in order to protect and enhance the Christian lifestyle, an ideal choice for individuals to make is to discard all viewing. However, since there is no such thing as a vacuum in the natural universe, a replacement for viewing should be chosen. I suggest such things as active individual or family activities that tend to develop the person. Whatever replaces the screen should be the sort of thing one looks forward to. For preschoolers, painting, drawing, crafts, music, and a developing awareness of nature are recommended.²

Choose Noncommercial Programming

Short of discarding viewing altogether, I recommend that Christians eradicate commercial programming from their viewing. Non-commercial channels such as the

¹Mankiewicz and Swerdlow, 200.

Discovery channel or public television channels, are more appropriate for viewing by Christians. I suggest that news programs such as the "MacNeal Lehrer Report" are superior to network newscasts.

**Make Viewing Intentional**

Life should not be haphazardly lived; Christians are too close to the end of time and the coming of their Lord for that. Television viewing should be a planned activity in which specific programs or videos are selected and scheduled for viewing along with all other activities during the week. In other words, viewing should be intentional. For example, Christians should plan to use the screen at a specific time and day of each week to view a particular program that is appropriate for teaching their child Christian values and pro-social lessons through carefully selected programs and/or videos.

All programs need to be evaluated as far as possible before they are viewed.¹ As Fore suggests,

> Perhaps the first and most difficult thing we have to do is to spend a good deal more thought in understanding what the media are really saying to us and to help others understand it also.²

¹Cf. Janis, 175; and Charren and Sandler, 151. William F. Fore suggests that content analysis include theological analysis. Fore, "Becoming Active Participants," 21.

No matter what the source, if programs and/or movies do not uphold the Christian lifestyle and values, they should not be viewed.

Viewing this from a positive perspective, Philadelphia educators Leland Howe and Bernard Solomon suggest that particularly for children under the age of three, parents decide together which character traits they want fostered in their child(ren), and then choose those programs which promote these traits.¹ Samuel Ball, Patricia Palmer, and Emelia Milward, of the University of Sydney, Australia, affirm that:

Viewing of appropriate television programs adequately filtered by a sensitive family can have positive impact, both directly and indirectly, on the education of children.²

In this regard a VCR can be a useful device. Broadcasts can be recorded and previewed prior to showing to children. Also, there are a number of excellent videos available from a number of sources (including the local library) which can be shown in the home. It should be remembered, however, that it is possible to run out of

¹Howe and Solomon, 25. In chapter 2 (p. 95) I noted that in one study Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood had been successfully used to teach several pro-social lessons: helping a friend, trying to understand another's feelings, knowing wishes do not make things happen, and valuing a person for inner qualities rather than appearances. See Mankiewicz and Swerdlow, 192.

²Ball, Palmer, and Milward, 139.
appropriate videos surprisingly fast, which then presents the temptation to view less-than-ideal programs.

Is there such a thing as recreational viewing? I believe most people would say that their viewing is recreation (rather than, say, entertainment). However, in light of the power of the screen to influence thinking and behavior, I suggest that when the screen is to be used in a recreational way that extra care be taken in selecting only those programs which will enhance the quality of Christian life.

Rule Out Babysitting

Intentional viewing is antithetical to the all-American custom of using the screen as a babysitter. When parents do this they begin to lose control of the screen.1 Gloria Kirschner writes that the younger a child is, the easier it is to guide their choice of programs "as long as the parent does not use TV as a babysitter."2 Yale psychologists Jerome Singer and Dorothy Singer conducted a study in which various parental groups drastically curtailed their children's viewing. They found that the reduction of viewing was relatively unsuccessful because the babysitting

1Howe and Solomon, 26.

function of television was so attractive and pervasive for parents.¹

On occasion parents find themselves so busy or exhausted that it is almost a delight to allow their children to watch television without supervision. However, my observations are that very few children have the skills they need to guide them in making suitable viewing selections. To allow these children unsupervised viewing is to place them in a position that parents should be concerned. I suggest that parents actively take the necessary steps to provide their children with the discrimination skills they need. As Aimee Dorr says, one can then feel more secure in giving them greater latitude in choosing what and when they will watch.²

I suggest that the corporate church act in regard to the challenge posed by commercial television in two ways: first, by formulating and adopting a much stronger statement regarding commercial broadcasts, and second, by developing resources similar to Television Awareness Training which members may use to educate both themselves and their children.

¹Singer and Singer, "Psychologists Look at Television," 830.
²Dorr, 163.
Make Viewing Participatory

One very strong suggestion offered by several authorities is for parents to watch with their children. Charren and Sandler comment that the sense youngsters have of their parents' responses and attitudes helps them when viewing alone. They think that this places parents in a position to take advantage of the issues brought up on the screen and let their children know what they think is important. They suggest that parents and children talk over the programs that have been viewed. One of the benefits that accrues from parents watching with their children occurs when children, wanting to know more about something on the screen, ask their parents about it, providing an excellent opportunity for communication.

Children need their parents. One of the ways this need is met is when parents spend time with them. One way parents can spend time with their children is to participate in their viewing, but this viewing should never be allowed to take the place of talking with them, listening to what they say, and encouraging "their imaginative development by

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1 Dorr, 163; Harvey, 91; Charren and Sandler, 162, 179; and Comstock, "New Emphases in Research on the Effects of Television and Film Violence," 137, 138. Mary Lewis Coakley quotes Frank Orme, executive vice president of the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) in 1977, as saying (referring to watching horror shows), "A child watching television without a guardian is swimming with sharks." Orme, quoted in Coakley, 133, 134.

2 Charren and Sandler, 162.
telling stories, singing songs, or playing pretend games."¹ Participatory viewing should augment and enhance the parent-child relationship, rather than substitute for it.

Mankiewicz and Swerdlow raise what I think is a valid concern when they write about parents who do view with their children, but in a hurtful way. They write that when a child watches with their parents or other adults, what happens on the screen is legitimized in their thinking. In addition to this, children receive a definite message from what gives pleasure to their parents.

If the parents add a few choice "get 'em's" or "look at that, will you's" the program content is reinforced, just as their laughter helps to shape children's sense of what is humorous . . . . Even the parents who take the time--during a commercial or after a program--to explain what just went on, perhaps even disapprovingly, are doing too little too late. After all, they have just been sitting there and enjoying exactly what they are now trying to explain away. That enjoyment speaks louder than a whole moral lecture; besides time pressure--the next program is about to start--usually limits what can be explained or criticized.²

As Howe and Solomon express it, "Last but not least, set the example for the behavior you want your children to adopt."³ It is important to not only be highly selective in viewing choices and make sure the heart (viz., mind) is filled with

¹Singer and Singer, "Come Back, Mr. Rogers, Come Back," 127.

²Mankiewicz and Swerdlow, 49.

that which is appropriate for a Christian, but also to make sure that one's viewing behavior is also suitable.

Howe and Solomon discuss two different related approaches to television viewing by children. The first they call the *moralizing* approach in which children are permitted to view only those programs on an approved list. Whenever they happen to see a program not on the list (which would convey values rejected by the parents), the parents proceed to give a moral lecture about how wrong those values are. These educators feel that this approach is defective because it prevents young people from developing an understanding of people with different values than they have. They acknowledge that this approach may be effective with young children, but for adolescents, it promotes rebellion against parental domination.

A second approach is what is termed *values-clarification* in which children are exposed to programs presenting a wide range of values, beliefs, attitudes, and lifestyles, following which, "the parent takes an active role in helping the child or adolescent to think about the

1Ibid., 118, 119.

2Concerning rebellion against parents, it is true that each person is a free moral agent, and when personal choice is overruled, children do tend to rebel in order to prove their point. In this situation rebellion is merely the assertion of personal choice. Parents would be advised to assure their children of this personal right within appropriate age/behavior limitations (i.e., "When you're on your own you may buy a set and watch whatever you wish. For now, we appreciate your respecting our wishes").
consequences of holding and acting on these various beliefs, values, and attitudes."¹ This approach, I believe, is useful for parents, providing the beliefs, values and attitudes to which children are exposed are appropriate to their age and development.

"Problem Pose" Programs

Condry² points out that a lot of television's influence and its role in our lives depends as much on how we watch as much as on what we watch. It is possible to look at the same program from different perspectives and get different things out of it. One suggestion³ is to "problem pose" the media by asking questions such as what is left in and what is left out of a program, and who benefits. Christian parents could include the question: Which characters would Jesus identify with? Robin W. Lovin suggests that parents give consideration to the following five areas: (1) social realism, (2) moral values, (3) psychological values, (4) artistic values, and (5) cultural and symbolic values.⁴

Ted Baehr, movie reviewer for Focus on the Family's "Family News" suggests that the following questions

¹Ibid., 119.
²Condry, 49.
³Offered by Sullivan, 23.
be asked of any video prior to its rental: What is the
premise of the movie? Who is the hero? Who is the villain?
How is religion portrayed? How is love portrayed? How is
the family portrayed? Who is behind the camera? Would you
be embarrassed to sit through the movie with your parents,
your children, or Jesus?¹ His questions are appropriate for
any television program.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented a number of
suggestions that should assist Christians in developing an
appropriate relationship with the screen. It is possible
for Christians to control viewing and use the television in
a manner that is not incompatible with their faith. Note,
however, the point Kubey and Csikszentmihalyi make. They
write that the problem of controlling the screen resides in
the area of the use of leisure time. According to them
television viewing can contribute to personal growth if one
begins by realizing the finitude of life. They think
viewers need to ask the following question: If I have only
five years of life left, do I really want to spend part of
it in front of the screen?

The foundational text of this study is 2 Cor 3:18,
which enunciates the principle, by beholding we become

¹Ted Baehr with Bruce Grimes, "How to Pick a Video That
Won't Send You Back to the Store Screaming," Focus on the
Family, April 1990; 8-10.
changed. This study proves that this is a valid principle of character development which works both negatively and positively. Applying the principle positively, David wrote in Ps 101:3, "I will set before my eyes no vile thing."

Paul stated it even more positively:

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. (Phil 4:8)

Select for viewing those things which will reproduce in the beholder a character similar to that of the Lord Jesus.
APPENDICES
Childhood and Youth

My childhood home was a small town in Michigan, and our house was situated alongside one of the few town alleys. One day the folks who lived across the alley from us began erecting some sort of antenna on top of their house. It was not long until most of the neighborhood was involved in holding guy wires. This was the first television antenna in the neighborhood, and when it was up we all went inside to watch moving pictures on a screen on one side of a box in the corner of their living room. It was my first exposure to television; as a little boy I was not quite sure what to make of it. The year was 1953 and I was nine years old.

My father had a cousin in a neighboring town who was an electronics repairman. On a visit with my father one day I noticed a lot of different television sets in the front part of his shop. He was selling a brand by the name of Admiral, and I was fascinated by an offer the company was making: buy a new Admiral TV and get a free stage show set for your children. You could punch out a miniature Hollywood stage, backdrops and different sets from printed sheets of stiff paper. It even had scripts and characters
for several different children's television programs including "Sky King," the original flying cowboy.

One night after work my father brought home two stage show sets for my brother and me. We were delighted. Over the next month we played with them by the hour. Each had a long wand with a magnet in one end. The figures had metal weights on the bottom and by placing the wand under the stage we could move the characters around as we read through the scripts. We were excited at the possibility of getting a TV set but were not sure that we would since our father's cousin could have given him the stage show sets because we were relatives.

About a month later a twenty-one-inch deluxe floor model arrived. The cost was over five hundred dollars, which in those days represented a hefty investment for a factory worker. There was no antenna. We had to wait another two weeks for that.

The antenna crew showed up on a Saturday, which was our Sabbath. When they had finished the installation, they turned the television on to check our reception. The program was one of the old westerns where the good fellows wore the white hats and the bad ones wore the black hats. Mother made us turn it off as soon as the program was over. We could scarcely wait until sundown to turn it on again.
My parents were members of the local Seventh-day Adventist church and did not believe in attending theaters. Consequently, I felt left out whenever my public school friends talked about shows they had seen. When one of the other families in our church offered to take me to see the movie "Peter Pan," my mother said I could go if I wished but offered to buy me a toy truck if I chose not to. Knowing the truck would last longer, I decided not to attend, even though I really wanted to see the movie.

When a neighbor boy learned that we had a television set he commented, "Oh, you couldn't go to shows so your old man brought them home?" I responded, "You better believe it!" At last I could see some of the movies and shows my friends were talking about. The year was 1955.

Westerns were my favorite shows, but the gunplay they portrayed always made my mother nervous. She did not like her boys watching things like that. One show I regularly watched was "The Cisco Kid," which always ended with Cisco and his sidekick Pancho laughing uproariously at each other. I made a point of calling mother in as each show was ending so she could see the laughter and know it was not all bad, and hopefully we could watch the show the following week. Usually we were able to.

As I remember, it seemed that the tubes in our set kept going bad, and every few weeks my father's cousin had to make a service call. He always included in his bill an
additional twenty-five dollar charge for the "service call." When the picture tube finally went bad my father sold the set to the family next door for fifty dollars. Every time I saw it in their living room I felt cheated.

It was about this time that Walt Disney put the Mickey Mouse Club show on in the afternoons after school. I accompanied a friend to his grandmother's home to watch. Like most boys, I developed a crush on Annette, one of the Mouseketeers, and I eagerly looked forward to school being out each day so I could watch her.

Several years later my brother and I got together and convinced our parents to let us buy a used set. We bought a table model for thirty-five dollars, and I remember getting it hooked up one fall Sunday afternoon just in time to watch a football game.

Sunday mornings my parents enjoyed watching travelogues. When the cartoons came on immediately after, my brother and I were usually instructed to turn the set off and get to work. The first color sets were becoming available then, and I used to wish we owned one, but my father was not about to purchase another television set.

The crime shows, "The Untouchables" and "The Roaring Twenties," quickly became favorites of mine. Because my brother and I had purchased the set, Mother was reluctant to tell us to turn it off. But if the shooting and killing and noise were too much, she would usually ask us to change the
channel. I noticed that the sorts of shows I should watch were not all that interesting to me, whereas those that were interesting were the ones I knew I would have been better off not watching. (It seems it has always been that way.) I still liked watching the Mickey Mouse Club, and I still had a crush on Annette.

When I started high school my watching lessened considerably. I liked being able to discuss various shows with my classmates—I felt more a part of what was going on. In high school, classes were not center stage as far as student life was concerned. The school week usually began with a lot of discussion about the game the previous Friday night (and the big fight at the dance afterward). By Tuesday afternoon we were talking about dating relationships and television shows and movies that we had seen. By Wednesday afternoon we talked about our teachers and their "terrible" assignments and how poorly we were doing. By Thursday afternoon we were talking about the big game coming up the next night, and on Friday the team members and cheerleaders wore their jerseys and uniforms, and between classes the hallways would be full of cheering students. Usually the week ended with a pep assembly, which sent most of us out of the gym frothing at the mouth and shouting, "Kill the Enemy!"
Early Adulthood

When college started, my television viewing dropped to zero; I was too busy, and schoolwork was too important. However, the Dean usually rented a TV for the dormitory lounge during Christmas recess. He left a list of approved programs on top of the set, and if he found us watching any other program he shut it off for the remainder of the day.

The jobs I worked at in the summers took almost all my available time, and dating was far more interesting than what was happening on the screen. I had determined that watching television made me an observer of life, and I preferred being a participant. Ever since then, watching television has seemed to me like "sitting on the sidelines" rather than carrying the ball.

I remember coming home at the end of my junior year. My first evening home I decided to entertain myself, so I turned on my parent's set (the thirty-five dollar set had long-since been replaced with a nice color unit) and watched a show about a struggle between a beach bum and a small town sheriff. After the show was over I was upset about what I had seen: I felt as if whoever had produced the show had done all my thinking for me, and I did not like it. I was supposed to look up to the beach bum and down on the sheriff, who, as he was portrayed on the program, had some kind of psychological problem. Real life just was not like that.
While attending seminary I lived with a number of fellows, one of whom bought a new color set during exam week! I was frustrated because several comedy movies were being shown that particular week, most of which I wanted to see. But studying was more important. I did manage, as did the other fellows, to squeeze in enough time to watch one or two.

One of the fellows in our house (there were eight of us living there) began to spend a lot of time in front of the set. We all knew that he was having trouble with his girl friend, and several of us concluded that he was using television as a form of escape. Several years and a happy marriage later, he admitted that he had in fact been doing just that.

One day we discussed the standard that the church had about not attending movies. One of the fellows said that the church had been remiss in past years in simply saying, "Don't go to shows." He felt that the church should have instead taught principles of discrimination. In that way, when television made movies and other shows available in the home, most young people would have been able to choose more wisely than simply sitting down and watching whatever came across the screen. I could see the wisdom of that, and I realized the difference it would have made in my own life had I learned discrimination. (I probably would not have watched "The Untouchables, etc.")
If you have ever had your leg go to sleep, you know how it feels when it begins to wake up. About this time I began to feel as though my mind was beginning to wake up. I did not think that there was any psychological explanation available for what I was experiencing, but I did note it at the time, and I wondered if it were not a result of my having been away from regular television viewing for six or seven years. I decided that it was.

Family Life

Following marriage my wife and I weighed the pros and cons of having a set in our home. We preferred being without one, but because one of our elders was a television repairman, we ended up buying a used portable from him for twenty dollars.

One evening I stayed up to watch a science fiction "thriller." I had just returned from a very difficult business meeting in one of my churches, and I wanted to relax. My wife was already sleeping. After turning the set off at the end of the movie, I realized I had not spent any time in devotions that day. I reasoned that if I could stay up to watch a movie, I could also stay up a little longer to read the Bible and pray. I was shocked to realize I had no desire to. Over the next few days I did some serious thinking about how television was affecting me spiritually. It struck me that anything that would put me in a frame of mind where I did not care to read the Bible or pray probably
should not be a part of my life. When the set quit working we pitched it out.

Several years later, after moving to our second district, we again purchased a used set from our former first elder. We also purchased an exterior antenna, and this time we left the set in an upstairs room (ordinarily not heated). Placing the set in an out-of-the-way location seemed to help us control our viewing.

A year or so later we attended the annual Conference Ministers' Council. Upon checking into our hotel room I turned on the set that was in our room. As I did so I heard a very familiar still, small voice speak to me: "It is time to give it up, John." I realized that God was speaking to me, expressing His will for my life. The struggle I went through to terminate television viewing was a very real one. When we sold our home we left our television set in the upstairs bedroom.

Since then we have declined acceptance of a color television set from three different individuals. We have chosen to fill the vacuum left by the absence of television by listening to fine music and engaging in other family activities. Both of our daughters are studying piano and violin, and we enjoy recreational pursuits such as camping and skiing. We listen to public stations only, in order to take advantage of broadcasts of fine music, as well as to
keep abreast of current events through in-depth news programs.

Having completed a rather intense study of television and its impact on the human psyche, I have concluded that television can be a very useful thing, as well as highly entertaining and enjoyable. Usually, though, it tends to be inimical to personal and family spirituality. As far as our family's relationship to television in the future is concerned, I have concluded that it will depend on the following factors: (1) available finances, (2) available time, (3) occasional viewing of carefully selected videos, and (4) as with radio, limiting our viewing selections to those available on public, non-commercial stations.
APPENDIX B

The following list of selected references was distributed to all seminar participants. It should be noted that when, during the seminar, it became evident that time constraints were going to prevent my using all of these references, I abridged some and omitted others. Also, in the body of the report a few do not appear while others appear in an abridged form.

SELECTED REFERENCES

1. "Today, the thing hundreds of millions of humans most have in common with one another . . . is television. It has become our culture's dominant form of leisure and its most powerful means of mass communication. In four short decades it has become the primary channel for the information that we share as a nation and as a world. . . . More Americans now have television sets than have refrigerators or indoor plumbing . . . only about 2% of U.S. households are without TV. . . ." Robert Kubey and Mihaly Cszikszentmihalyi, Television and the Quality of Life: How Viewing Shapes Everyday Experience (Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1990), 24, 150.

2. "It has been estimated that by the age of 18 a child born today will have spent more time watching television than in any other single activity besides sleep." Robert M. Liebert and Joyce Sprafkin, The Early Window Effects of Television on Children and Youth (New York: Pergamon Press, 1988), ix.

3. "In the case of television, the average high school graduate has spent 50% more time viewing television than attending school." Data from the NIMH (National Institute of Mental Health), 1982. Cited by Susan B. Neuman, "The displacement effect: Assessing the relation between television viewing and reading performance," Reading Research Quarterly 23 (Fall, 1988): 416.

4. "For the great majority of the population, television viewing is associated with entertainment: it means relaxation, resting after the day's work. Entertainment belongs to the domain of leisure, and leisure is regarded in
the everyday experiential world as 'time for yourself,' as liberation from the chafing bonds of the official world of factory, school or office, or from the worries of running the home." Ien Ang, Watching Dallas: Soap opera and the Melodramatic Imagination (London: Methuen Publishers, 1985), 21.

5. "People in movies and television seldom pay bills, or go to the bathroom, or do the thousand ordinary dull things that the rest of us have to do in order to get through an average day." John Condry, The Psychology of Television (Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1989), 59.

6. "On television just about everybody is rich. Just about everybody drives a new car and wears new clothes. Just about everybody on television lives in a very expensive house, surrounded by beautiful things. When the producers of television want to show an average middle-class person living in an average middle-class home, they rent the house of a millionaire in Beverly Hills or Brentwood, or one of the many wealthy neighborhoods in Los Angeles." Ibid., 70.

7. "Will Bill find out that his wife's sister's baby is really his by artificial insemination? Will his wife submit to her sister's blackmail attempts, or will she finally let Bill know the truth? If he discovers the truth, will this lead to another nervous breakdown, causing him to go back to Springfield General where his ex-wife and his illegitimate daughter are both doctors and sworn enemies?" Tune in tomorrow, not in order to find out the answers, but to see what further complications will defer the resolutions and introduce new questions. Thus the narrative, by placing ever more complex obstacles between desire and its fulfillment, makes anticipation of an end an end in itself. Soap operas invest exquisite pleasure in the central condition of a woman's life: waiting." Tania Modleski, "Search for Tomorrow in Today's Soap Operas." In Understanding Television: Essays on Television as a Social and Cultural Force, ed. Richard P. Adler. (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1981), 183.

8. "... the world as given to us through television seems natural, not bizarre. ... It is not merely that on the television screen entertainment is the metaphor for all discourse. It is that off the screen the same metaphor prevails." Neil Postman, Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business (New York: Penguin Books, 1985), 79, 92.

9. "What has happened is that members of the television generation are treating everything as though it was television." Frank Mankiewicz and Joel Swerdlow, Remote
10. "... once television fantasy becomes incorporated into the viewer's reality, the real world takes on a tinge of fantasy—or dullness because it fails to confirm the expectations created by televised "life." Marie Winn, The Plug-In Drug (New York: Viking Press, 1977), 70.

11. "To the extent that television shows minority groups in demeaning roles, women in excessively passive and subordinate positions, older people as senile and burdensome, or an overrepresentation of doctors, lawyers, police officers, or other professionals, the young viewer—especially the heavy viewer—is seeing a distorted image of the real world." Eli A. Rubinstein, "Television and Behavior: Research Conclusions of the 1982 NIMH Report and Their Policy Implications." The American Psychologist 38 (July 1983): 822.

12. "Television presents the viewer with a world that is at variance with the one he or she inhabits. This is particularly so for children, whose experiences and knowledge are limited. Thus, what television conveys often has no corrective in actual experience. One long-term trend has been increasing liberality in the treatment of sexual relations, personal problems and crises, and various kinds of deviant—in the sociological sense of departing from the norm—behavior. The effect has been to remove from parents control over the introduction into the home of information." George Comstock, Television and American Social Institutions (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1980), 22.

13. "It has profoundly affected what we call the process of socialization, the process by which members of our species become human." Arthur Asa Berger, The TV-Guided American (New York: Walker and Company, 1976), 1.

14. "Almost any stimulus has less and less capacity to arouse us with each successive presentation. ... This lessened capacity for arousal is described psychologically as desensitization. If a violent scene arouses and excites the viewer ... then the next time it is presented that same scene, or one like it, will have less attention-drawing power, less capacity to arouse. With each repeated presentation, the degree of arousal will decline, until it reaches zero or below." Condry, 109.

15. "Go into any high school and see how limited students' perception of themselves is, how crippled their imagination, how unable they are to tell a story, to read or concentrate, or even to describe an event accurately a moment after it
happens. See how easily they are bored, how quickly they take up the familiar 'reclining' position in the classroom, how short their attention span is." Novelist Jerzy Kosinski, cited by Mankiewicz and Swerdlow, 169.

16. "... when asked to become actively involved in learning (to read, for example), they are passive. Unused to thinking for themselves, they do not know how to put forth an effort." William Glasser, *Ibid.*, 179.

17. "... young children are often unable to relate a series of complex actions to their final consequence. Thus, when industry spokespersons claim that their programs are fundamentally prosocial because good ultimately triumphs over bad, they ignore this important finding. The young child is much less likely to make the interpretive connection and, therefore, less likely to learn the moral lesson." Rubenstein, 821-822.

18. A child is at risk for problematic behavior at early elementary school age when the following variables are present: "(a) a home in which television viewing of an uncontrolled type is emphasized; (b) heavy viewing of television in the preschool years; (c) more recent heavy viewing of violent programming; (d) parents who themselves emphasize physical force as a means of discipline; and (e) parents whose self-descriptions or values do not stress imagination, curiosity, or creativity. . . . The children in our study who were reared in such a combined family and television environment seem to be making less progress cognitively, to be more frightened or suspicious of the outside world, and to show less imagination and more restlessness and aggression as well as poor behavioral adjustment at school." Jerome L. Singer and Dorothy G. Singer, "Psychologists Look at Television: Cognitive, Developmental, Personality, and Social Policy Implications." *American Psychologist* 38 (July 1983): 830.


20. "Both 14- and 24-month-old infants were able to imitate a television stimulus, both immediately and after a 24-hour delay. These findings suggest that exposure to television in the home may potentially influence the behavior of very young infants more so than was previously thought." Condry, 37.
21. "... the adult has a vast backlog of real-life experiences: the child does not. As the adult watches television, his own present and past relationships, experiences, dreams, and fantasies come into play, transforming the material he sees, whatever its origins or purpose, into something reflecting his own particular inner needs. The young child's life experiences are limited. He has barely emerged from the preverbal fog of infancy. It is disquieting to consider that hour after hour of watching constitutes a primary activity for him. His subsequent real-life activities will stir memories of television experiences, not, as for the adult watcher, the other way around. To a certain extent the child's early television experiences will serve to dehumanize, to mechanize, to make less real the realities and relationships he encounters in life." Winn, 9-10.

22. "While watching television, the young child is once again as safe, secure, and receptive as he was in his mother's arms. He need offer nothing of himself while he watches, as he must do, for instance, when he plays with another child. He runs none of the small risks that his normal exploratory behavior entails: he won't get hurt, he won't get into trouble, he won't incur parental anger. Just as he is beginning to emerge from his infant helplessness, he is lured back into passivity by the enticements of the television set . . . ." Ibid., 137.

23. "Before the Redbook study she was a passive child, a bit too quiet, very much a loner. During her mornings at nursery school she fluttered on the edge of things. Despite her teacher's urgings, she refused to join the other children or to work by herself with clay, paints—anything that took real involvement.

During the first week Susie had "fits of temper" over not being allowed to watch Batman. At nursery school she was "moodier than usual, sitting and staring at the ground." During the second week though she began to ask her mother to invite a playmate home for the afternoons, something she'd rarely wanted before. Her teacher noticed that she played more with the other children and seemed "happier and more talkative." By the end of four weeks, Susie seemed a different girl. She was no longer just an onlooker. Now she was a participant, playing creatively by herself or joining willingly in a dodge-ball game or a group project. To both her mother and her teacher she seemed a happier child.

During our study Susie kept asking when "the test" would be over. After four weeks her mother allowed her to resume her normal television habits. A couple of weeks after that, Susie's mother and teacher talked again. "Susie was doing so well," the teacher said, "but now she's off by herself
alone again." When the fantasies and adventures of television were taken away from her, Susie had felt a real need to reach out, to be involved, to find her own adventures. When they were returned, she withdrew again. There seems to be a definite cause-and-effect relationship between Susie's behavior and her television watching, and her mother has put her back on a "television diet". Claire Safran, "How TV changes Children" (Redbook Magazine, Nov. 1975). Reprinted in Television Awareness Training, ed. Ben T. Logan, (New York: Media Action Research Center, Inc., 1976), 167.

24. "Our data suggest that the best prediction of good reading comprehension by the 2nd or 3rd grades emerges from a combination of (a) familial factors such as parental reliance on inductive rather than power-assertive discipline, the mother's own self-description as resourceful (e.g., curious, creative, imaginative), and a more orderly household routine with more hours of sleep, and (b) television variables, specifically, fewer hours of television watching during the pre-school years." Singer and Singer, "Psychologists Look at Television," 829.

25. "... the educational results of "Sesame Street" have been disappointing. The expectation that a program—carefully designed by the most eminent and knowledgeable child specialists—would bridge the gap between middle-class children who have had ample verbal opportunities at home and those children deprived of such opportunities has not been realized. Poor children have not caught up with their more advantaged peers, nor even made significant gains . . . . Although children exhibit certain small gains in number and letter recognition as a result of "Sesame Street", their language skills do not show any significant or permanent gains as they progress through school." Winn, 33, 34.

26. "Indeed, the arguments made against Sesame Street are those best made against television itself—the passivity, the simplicity, the stifling of imagination, the behavior modification, the shortened attention span, the training to be an avid consumer, and the distortions that characterize all learning from television . . . the program is having only a marginally positive impact on basic reading and writing skills, while making a deep impression upon children's behavior." Mankiewicz and Swerdlow, 183, 184.

27. "If one wishes to see fifty-four acts of violence one can watch all the plays of Shakespeare, or one can watch three evenings (sometimes only two) of prime-time television." Ibid., 7.

29. "In the world of television, police and private detectives alike fill their days with devil-may-care car chases, shoot-ups, and amorous adventures. The real world is far less glamorous: police handle plenty of traffic violations and domestic problems, and private detectives chase debtors, look for missing people, and shadow straying husbands and wives. Television's private eyes regularly solve crimes and bring criminals to justice; most real private detectives have little to do with the actual solving of major crimes." Peggy Charren and Martin W. Sandler, Changing Channels: Living (Sensibly) with Television, (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1983), 63.

30. Walter H. Lewis writes, "I have never seen, nor have I ever heard of, a defendant admitting his guilt in court during a criminal trial." Walter H. Lewis, "Witness for the Prosecution," in Logan, 184. Italics his.

31. "On television the consequences of crime—as well as the consequences of violence—are rarely visible. . . . The short and long-range consequences of serious injury are never shown. . . . Death, in any realistic sense, simply does not exist on entertainment programs. . . . Even when death occurs, television sanitizes it." Mankiewicz and Swerdlow, 47, 29, 31, 30.

32. "...young people are never, literally never, taught [1977] that violence is in itself reprehensible. The lesson they do get is that violence is the great adventure and sure solution, and he who is best at it wins." Ben T. Logan, "Has Anyone Seen the Teacher?" in Logan, 228.

33. "In almost all the programs with a violent content—particularly those involving police or friendly private detectives—peaceful options such as patience, understanding, compassion, or due process of law are not very important—and often impatiently dismissed—so long as the right side wins up winning. Good guys, in fact, use violence—the same kind of violence—more of them than the bad guys, and the unquestioning, implicit approval that greets their actions teaches a powerful lesson. The staff of the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence concluded in 1968 that from television, 'the
overall impression is that violence, employed as a means of conflict resolution or acquisition of personal goals, is a predominant characteristic of life." Mankiewicz and Swerdlow, 44.


35. "We have in us urges to be violent that feed on screen violence. We carry around inside us attitudes that can make us willing participants in the sexism, racism, and other stereotyping found on the screen." Ben T. Logan, "Coping with Television in an Intentional Way" Engage/Social Action 9 (December 1981): 13.

36. "In attempting to contradict the research conclusions on violence—and by calling the evidence "correlational"—the ABC statement (a 32-page pamphlet) sounds remarkably like that of the tobacco industry in its position on the scientific evidence about smoking and health." Rubenstein, 821.

37. "As Bandura has shown, a single exposure to novel aggressive actions portrayed on a television screen is often sufficient for children to learn how to be exact "carbon copies" of their exemplars, precisely imitating complex sequences of verbal and physical aggression. What is more, behavior learned in this way is often retained for long periods of time; after a single viewing many children can reproduce what they have seen six to eight months later." Robert M. Liebert and Rita Wicks Poulos, "Television as a Moral Teacher," Moral Development and Behavior: Theory, Research and Social Issues, cited in Logan, 201.

38. "Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,
As to be hated needs but to be seen;
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace."
Alexander Pope, cited by Mankiewicz and Swerdlow, 50.

39. "[There is] a clear and significant relationship between exposure to TV violence at age 8 and the seriousness of criminal acts performed by these individuals 22 years later at age 30." Liebert and Sprafkin, 153.

40. "We are what you have made us. We were brought up on your TV. We were brought up watching Gunsmoke, Have Gun, Will Travel, FBI, Combat. Combat was my favorite show. I
never missed Combat." Charles Manson "family" member cited by Mankiewicz and Swerdlow, 34.

41. "(C)ontinuous exposure of children's minds to scenes of crime and brutality has a deeper effect on them than is generally realized . . . people develop a toleration of pain and an accompanying indifference to it. And most frightening of all, they don't recognize this is happening." Frederick S. Wertham, *Ibid.*, 29.

42. "—A happy home life, complete with loving parents and sound non-violent adult role models, does not mediate the effects of televised violence.

—Television violence can shape lifelong attitudes and behavior patterns. Heavy television watching during early childhood often correlates positively with violent behavior after graduation from high school.

—Children are more likely to model themselves upon what they have seen on film than they are to follow verbal instructions from a real, physically present person.

—Children exposed to violence on film retain the lesson learned from these films including the use of aggressive play, for months afterward, even if there has been no subsequent reinforcement.

—There is a relationship between the amount of television violence a child sees and the amount of violence in his behavior and attitude.

—Children model themselves after an aggressive film they have just seen, even if they are free at the same time to play with non-aggressive toys such as crayons or tea sets.

—Viewers of a violent film are more likely to administer an electric shock to "helpless" subjects than are viewers of a non-violent film.

—Exposure to *only one* violent cartoon can increase the aggressiveness of a child's play. This effect appears only minutes after viewing.

—"Children who view a substantial quantity of television manifest signs of anxiety and irritability. Dentists report that these children frequently begin teeth grinding which requires professional attention.


43. "It was once possible for a child to grow up unaware of homosexuality. Television has made that impossible, and has removed much of the power of the family, church, and community as guardians of knowledge." Comstock, 80, 81.
44. "All in the Family" may have an episode about homosexuality, the next week "Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman" may have one, the next week "Family," and so on until pretty soon homosexuality seems to us as normal and as natural and acceptable as heterosexuality." Mary Lewis Coakley, Rated X: The Moral Case Against TV (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House Publishers, 1977), 13.

45. "Fifteen years ago, ten years ago, even eight years ago, so much seemed delightful, refreshing, and full of fun. Today, by contrast, nearly all TV offerings are spoiled by an obsession with sex and a sneering attitude toward the traditional underpinnings of American society." Ibid., p. 12.

46. "The shows which could provide a framework for dealing responsibly with such significant issues [1977] as rape, abortion, prostitution, pregnancy and childbirth, or homosexuality seem to be lacking in any but infrequent and lurid glances at these issues. Within these shows, sex tends to often become a tool, used by criminals of one sort or another to wield power over others. Rather than showing sex as a part of a more complete relationship, sex is displayed as the only aspect of a relationship. Thus, sex becomes pure exploitation and TV for the most part conveys the message that women are the exploited. The viewer sees a picture of sex as harsh, hurtful, and manipulative." Susan H. Franzblau, "Television and Human Sexuality: Television and Sexuality," in Logan, 112.

47. "I am as concerned about what is not on TV as I am about what is there. "On TV it tends to be all right to laugh about sex, but not all right to take it seriously as a natural part of a loving relationship. It is all right to show, quite explicitly, a woman being raped (presumably because the rapist is a criminal and the scene does not express approval of sexual behavior), but it is not all right to show a positive, loving sexual act. "Is that what we want television to teach us and our children about sex and sexuality?" Ibid., 113.

49. "Television is becoming real to many people while their lives take on the quality of a dream. . . . We evolve into the images we carry in our minds. We become what we see." *Ibid.*, 202, 239.

50. "A real world which cannot be questioned has been submerged beneath a reconstructed, human-created world. We live inside the manifestations of human minds. Like the child seeking outside connection, we find only the projections of other humans. We . . . have lost control of our minds." *Ibid.*, 111, 112.

51. "Television images can mean life and death to someone. In a larger sense, those images can mean life and death to nations. Those images can be more powerful than a thousand armies—because armies can scorch only the skin, but television can scorch the mind." Bruce Hershenson, *The Gods of Anetenna* (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House Publishers, 1976), 27.

52. "[I]t is precisely the validity of the claim that viewers will emulate the characters they see in commercials on which rests the entire financial empire of television." Mankiewicz and Swerdlow, 51, italics theirs.

53. "... perhaps one of the most powerful effects of television has been to teach a national tolerance of falsehood, exaggeration, and distortion. Parents who ask their children to tell the truth must explain that of course a certain cereal will not transform them into great athletes, as the highly paid announcer says, nor will the drug mentioned really cure hemorrhoids, or cancer, or arthritis. The announcer is really lying. Nor will certain cosmetics or cars guarantee success in romance, as is implied. Somehow the parents must explain that truth is to be expected of the child individually, but that a huge industry can be based on falsity, exaggeration, and distortion." Skornia, 158.

54. "If your child is under three years of age, start regulating his or her TV viewing now. With your spouse, agree upon which programs your pre-schoolers can watch each day. Then, stick to your guns. One way to decide which programs are appropriate for your child is to think about what character traits you want to foster in your child, and then to choose TV programs which promote such traits. . . . If you are undecided about a show, watch several episodes to determine whether the show promotes positive values, like helping others, thinking things through before acting, and solving problems non-violently. . . ." Leland W. Howe and Bernard Solomon, *How to Raise Children in a TV World* (New York: Hart Publishing Co., 1979), 25.
55. "Children receive a very important and very fundamental message from what gives pleasure to their parents or other adults. If the parents add a few choice "get 'em's" or "look at that, will you's" the program content is reinforced, just as their laughter helps to shape children's sense of what is humorous. . . . Even the parents who take the time—during a commercial or after a program—to explain what just went on, perhaps even disapprovingly, are doing too little too late. After all, they have just been sitting there and enjoying exactly what they are now trying to explain away. That enjoyment speaks louder than a whole moral lecture; besides, time pressure—-the next program is about to start—-usually limits what can be explained or criticized." Mankiewicz and Swerdlow, 49.

56. In a comparison of "ethical Christians," "born-again Christians," and non-Christians, it was found that there was "... no significant difference in the general materialistic orientation between the three groups. The desire to attain material wealth is a strong motivational value for all three religious types. . . . Christians and non-Christians do not appear to differ in this respect. Both watch comparable amounts of television and both have equal levels of the value of materialism." Craig W. Ellison and Kenneth C. Cole, "Religious Commitment, Television Viewing, Values, and Quality of Life," Journal of Psychology and Christianity 1 (1982): 29.

57. "TV wants to sell children on a way of life that their parents may not want for them. . . . One way is to present kids who are independent, who have nothing to learn from their parents. Because then children have a right to consume the way they want to consume and parents have no basis in which to say no." Jay Rosen, cited by Joanmarie Kalter, "How TV Helps Shape Our Values," TV Guide 36 (July 23, 1986): 10, 11.

58. "It is commonly recognized even among television producers that the majority of their programs peddle depravity to appeal to the fiery lusts of their viewers, most of whom are ravenous for moral rot. Violence, greed, lust, and competitive strife are the four principal elements of popular programming." Brian Jones, "God's Peculiar People and TV," Self-Supporting Worker, 7 (1989): 12.

59. "Do you ever see persons in network TV drama, whether in the afternoon soaps, or on prime time, whose religious convictions restrain them from sexual irresponsibility (or greed, revenge, arrogance, or a ruthless quest for power)?" Reo M. Christiansen, "TV's casual attitude toward sex undermines society," AFA Journal (April 1988): 24.
60. "Thinking that is really hostile to a Christian outlook is often taken for granted in the media. . . . It easily invades the church. Christian views . . . are regarded as totally out of date. It is not so much that these things are actually attacked. It is rather that un-Christian attitudes on these and many other matters are taken for granted, and, by a sort of osmosis, our thinking, and as a result our lives, are in danger of becoming less and less Christian if we do not take active steps to counter them. Marital unfaithfulness, for instance, is taken for granted. . . . we need to have a Christian mind. . . . (and) be sure that we are honoring God in the way we think and live, and that we are not simply being 'squeezed into the mold' of the world around us in thought and lifestyle." Donald G. Bloesch, The Invaded Church (Waco, Tex: Word, 1975), 16, 17.

61. "...we should notice how television shapes our way of looking at the world. Television, he argues, is like Christianity: it fashions our whole way of thinking. That is thought provoking. It makes us ask which is shaping our thinking more--Christianity or secular television? Has television become an obstacle to our forming a Christian mind?" Referring to a question raised by Dr. George Gerbner of the Anenberg School of Communications, Univ. of Pa. Kevin Perotta, "Television's Mind-boggling Danger," Christianity Today 26 (May 7, 1982): 20.

62. "Most Christians find it difficult to develop a daily awareness of God as sovereign Lord who holds the initiative in his dealings with us. The difficulty is worsened as we immerse ourselves in the television view of the world, where there is absent an awareness of God's ability to work his will in every circumstance of life. On television, God never does anything." Ibid., 21.

63. At some point between our turning on the television for a little entertainment after dinner and our turning it off at the end of the evening, we enter a receptive communion with the images and messages of a secular culture. We begin with relaxing, and end up with loving the world." Ibid.

64. "You are responsible to God for your thoughts. If you indulge in vain imaginations, permitting your mind to dwell upon impure subjects, you are, in a degree, as guilty before God as if your thoughts were carried into action. All that prevents the action is the lack of opportunity." Ellen G. White, Testimonies to the Church (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1948), 2:561.
65. "The thoughts must be bound about, restricted, withdrawn from branching out and contemplating things that will only weaken and defile the soul. The thoughts must be pure, the meditation of the heart must be clean . . . ."

66. "You will have to become a faithful sentinel over your eyes, ears, and all your senses if you would control your mind and prevent vain and corrupt thoughts from staining your soul. The power of grace alone can accomplish this most desirable work." White, Ibid.

67. "Those who would have that wisdom which is from God must become fools in the sinful knowledge of this age, in order to be wise. They should shut their eyes, that they may see and learn no evil. They should close their ears, lest they hear that which is evil and obtain that knowledge which would stain their purity of thoughts and acts." Ellen G. White, The Adventist Home (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Assn., 1952), 404.

68. "Separation from the friendship and spirit of the world is needful for us if we would be united to the Lord and abide in Him . . . . There can be no union between light and darkness. God intends that His people shall be a peculiar people, separate from the world, and be living examples of holiness, that the world may be enlightened, convicted, or condemned, according as they treat the light given them." White, Testimonies, 2:689.

69. "Many thoughts make up the unwritten history of a single day, and these thoughts have much to do with the formation of character. Our thoughts are to be strictly guarded, for one impure thought makes a deep impression on the soul. An evil thought leaves an evil impress on the mind. If the thoughts are pure and holy, the man is better for having cherished them. By them the spiritual pulse is quickened and the power for doing good is increased."

70. "We are in the world," they say, "and we cannot get out of it." But, parents, we can get a good way out of the world if we choose to do so. We can avoid seeing many of the evils that are multiplying so fast in these last days. We can avoid hearing about much of the wickedness and crime that exist." White, The Adventist Home, 406.
71. "But we should not needlessly expose ourselves to influences that are unfavorable to the formation of Christian character. When we voluntarily place ourselves in an atmosphere of worldliness and unbelief, we displease God and drive holy angels from our home." Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1958), 169.

72. "Everything that can be done should be done to plant ourselves and our children where we shall not see the iniquity that is practiced in the world. We should carefully guard the sight of our eyes and the hearing of our ears so that these awful things shall not enter our minds." Ibid., 403, 404.

73. "Many of the popular publications of the day are filled with sensational stories that are educating the youth in wickedness and leading them in the path to perdition. Mere children in years are old in a knowledge of crime. They are incited to evil by the tales they read. In imagination they act over the deeds portrayed, until their ambition is aroused to see what they can do in committing crime and evading punishment. . . . They are led to the commission of crimes even worse, if possible, than these sensational writers depict." Ellen G. White, *Ministry of Healing*, 444, 445.

74. "The heart is corrupted through the imagination. The mind takes pleasure in contemplating scenes which awaken the lower and baser passions." Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 2:410.

75. "The mind of a man or woman does not come down in a moment from purity and holiness to depravity, corruption, and crime. It takes time to transform the human to the divine or to degrade those formed in the image of God to the brutal or the satanic.

By beholding we become changed. Though formed in the image of his Maker, man can so educate his mind that sin which he once loathed will become pleasant to him. As he ceases to watch and pray, he ceases to guard the citadel, the heart, and engages in sin and crime. The mind is debased, and it is impossible to elevate it from corruption while it is being educated to enslave the moral and intellectual powers and bring them in subjection to grosser passions.

Constant war against the carnal mind must be maintained; and we must be aided by the refining influences of the grace of God, which will attract the mind upward and habituate it to meditate upon pure and holy things." Ibid., 478, 479.
76. "... if we let our minds run in that low channel that many who are seeking only vanity and folly permit their minds to run in, how can we be a benefit to our race and generation?" Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home*, 513.

77. "Among the most dangerous resorts for pleasure is the theater. Instead of being a school of morality and virtue, as is so often claimed, it is the very hotbed of immorality. Vicious habits and sinful propensities are strengthened and confirmed by these entertainments. Low songs, lewd gestures, expressions, and attitudes, deprave the imagination and debase the morals. Every youth who habitually attends such exhibitions will be corrupted in principle. There is no influence in our land more powerful to poison the imagination, to destroy religious impressions, and to blunt the relish for the tranquil pleasures and sober realities of life than theatrical amusements. The love for these scenes increases with every indulgence, as the desire for intoxicating drink strengthens with its use. The only safe course is to shun the theater, the circus, and every other questionable place of amusement." Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 4:653.


79. "Those who claim to know the truth and understand the great work to be done for this time, are to consecrate themselves to God, soul, body, and spirit. In heart, in dress, in language, in every respect, they are to be separate from the fashions and practices of the world. They are to be a peculiar and holy people; they cannot carry the marks of likeness to the world... the carnal mind craves conformity, similarity to the world in so many ways that the mark of distinction from the world is scarcely distinguishable." Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1915), 350, 351.
APPENDIX C

MEDIA QUESTIONNAIRE

Name: __________________________
Address: _________________________

1. Age: _________________________

2. Sex: M F (Circle one)

3. Years of School Completed (Circle one number)
   K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 16+

4. Do you consider yourself a professing Christian?
   Yes No (Circle one)

   If you answered "Yes" go on to question #5.
   If you answered "No" go on to question #6.

5. How long have you been a professing Christian? ______

6. Circle the number which best describes your personal
   religious viewpoint:
      (Very Conservative) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (Very Liberal)

7. Circle the number which best describes your opinion of
   the overall quality of your daily life:
      (Very poor) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (Very good)

8. What are the things in your daily life that dissatisfy
   you the most?

9. What are the things in your daily life that satisfy you
   the most?

10. If you would like to change your life for the better,
    how would you?
11. How much time do you usually spend in daily personal devotions? Please check the most appropriate line.

   ___ Little or none
   ___ Up to 15 minutes per day
   ___ Up to 30 minutes per day
   ___ Up to 45 minutes per day
   ___ Up to 60 minutes per day
   ___ More than 60 minutes per day

12. Of the time you usually spend in daily personal devotions, how much do you spend in reading/studying the Bible? Please check the most appropriate line.

   ___ None  ___ 1/4  ___ 1/2  ___ 3/4  ___ 4/4

13. Does your home/family own a TV set? Yes  No (Circle one)

If you answered "Yes" go on to #14.
If you answered "No" go on to #16.

14. How many years has your home/family owned a TV? ______

15. Briefly describe the role TV occupies in your home/family life:

16. What do you think the present impact of TV is on you and your family?

17. How much time do you usually spend watching TV? Check the most appropriate line.

   ___ Never or almost never
   ___ Less than 2 hours per week
   ___ At least 2 but less than 5 hours per week
   ___ At least 5 but less than 10 hours per week
   ___ At least 10 but less than 15 hours per week
   ___ At least 15 but less than 20 hours per week
   ___ At least 20 but less than 25 hours per week
   ___ More than 25 hours per week
18. What types of programs do you usually watch? Circle a number for each.

Sitcoms (Rarely/never) 1 2 3 4 5 (Regularly/always)
Movies 1 2 3 4 5
Drama 1 2 3 4 5
News 1 2 3 4 5
Police/Crime 1 2 3 4 5
Nature 1 2 3 4 5
Sports 1 2 3 4 5
Documentaries 1 2 3 4 5
Public TV 1 2 3 4 5
Cartoons/children's 1 2 3 4 5
Soaps 1 2 3 4 5
Rented videos 1 2 3 4 5

19. When you turn the TV on do you turn it on to a) watch TV, or b) watch a specific program? a b (Circle one)

20. What factors influence your decision whether or not to watch a specific program?

21. In deciding whether or not to watch a specific program, do any principles or standards come to mind to guide your choice? Yes No (Circle one) If you answer "Yes" please list examples.

22. Please evaluate the show "Hill Street Blues" (or a similar one you have seen recently). In your evaluation do your best to answer the following questions: a) Is it suitable for a Christian to watch? b) If so, explain how it is, listing examples of specific Christian principles it portrays. c) If not, explain how it isn't, listing examples of specific Christian principles it does not portray (or that it violates). Program: __________________________

23. What changes, if any, do you think you should make in your life relative to TV viewing?
24. If you listed any changes in #23, how do you feel about making those changes?

25. (Second questionnaire only.) What specific things did you learn from this seminar?

Thank you very much for answering this questionnaire.
APPENDIX D

Seminar Sermon: "Dancing Phosphors"

Do you ever get discouraged? You tell yourself, "I'm not going to do that (or whatever) again." And the first thing you know, you've done it again. The very idea of ever being what we ought to be gets so distant and remote at times. Are you discouraged?

Take heart! I have some encouragement for you. First, I want you to find 2 Cor. 3:18. Notice what it says: (I'm using the R.S.V. today.) "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit." Imagine! As we behold His glory—His self-sacrificing love—we are being changed into His likeness. As we behold how He took all our liabilities and gave us all His assets, how He disadvantaged Himself in every way in order to give us every imaginable spiritual advantage! as we behold this glory, we are being changed into that.

Ah . . . let me ask you one little question. This text says that we are being changed into His likeness as we behold His glory, right? What if we aren't beholding His glory? What then? The principle of this text means that we
are being changed into whatever it is we are beholding. What are we beholding?

He was born into a very normal American family—a very normal Utah family. His father and mother were typical parents. His siblings were ordinary siblings. His home was normal in every respect.

When he reached the age of around 12 or 13 he, like so many boys, was exposed to what you and I call pornography. Pornography became for him a secret dark room in his soul. No one suspected its presence. But it was there, changing him day by day.

Pornography distorts. Human beings become objects to wield power over in sexual ways. Pornography creates an insatiable desire to first, imitate what is seen, and second, to see ever-increasingly graphic violent sexual acts.

The day came when he began viewing slasher films—films in which human beings are actually murdered in erotic settings. He lingered at this stage for approximately two years as he toyed with the idea of imitating that act.

And then he murdered his first victim. His insatiable appetite drove him onward to murder again and again. Today, Ted Bundy is dead. He beheld ... and became. What are you beholding?

Please—I'm not for a moment suggesting that you are beholding pornography. Ted Bundy merely illustrates the
principle of our text. This morning I am asking you just what it is you are beholding? That is what you are becoming.

Ninety-eight percent of all American homes are beholding bright, colored little phosphors dancing on a screen. They're red, green, and blue dots of light dancing before our eyes. We're beholding them and they're changing us.

One individual stated the following about those bright, dancing little phosphors: "We are what you have made us. We were brought up on your TV. We were brought up watching Gunsmoke, Have Gun Will Travel, FBI, Combat. Combat was my favorite show. I never missed Combat." That quote is number forty in the handout of references you will receive this afternoon. Who said it? One of the members of the Charles Manson "family." That family was responsible for one of the most heinous murders of the century: the Tate-LaBianca murders.

We behold those bright little phosphors and they're helping to change us. Ah, but we say we don't remember the images those phosphors create. Oh? Do we really forget the moment we've beheld?

I don't have the documentation for what I am about to relate. I wish I did. If you know the source please tell me. An experiment was being performed in which a patient had his brain exposed. The experimenter was
touching various parts of his brain with a probe which administered a very mild electrical charge. As the experimenter touched each part of the brain the patient was asked, "What are you experiencing?" The individual would then relate what came to his mind.

The probe reached his memory banks. "What are you remembering?" "It's a summer day. I'm walking down a city street to the stadium to watch a game."

"Who's playing?"

"I don't remember."

"What do you see as you walk down the street?"

He described the stores he walked by and the cars sitting alongside the curb. "Can you see their license plates?"

"Yes."

"What are their numbers?"

He proceeded to relate the license numbers.

"When was this?" the experimenter asked. As it turned out, it was years earlier. My friend, you may not remember, but be very sure you haven't forgotten.

In the book *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television*, author Jerry Mander retells the plot of a Soviet-made film based on Stanislaw Lem's science fiction novel, *Solaris*. Personnel at a space station orbiting around the planet Solaris are experiencing difficulties such
as insanity and suicide. Psychologist Kris Kelvin is sent from earth to solve the problem.

Kris discovers that the planet Solaris that the space station is orbiting around is like a huge mind that can project images into your conscious thought. The problem is with the images that are projected. One of those images is that of his long-dead wife who committed suicide early in their marriage.

A struggle develops. On earth she is dead. Orbiting around Solaris she is alive once again. Kris attempts, unsuccessfully, to dispose of her in various ways. He tries but can't shut out the images. The struggle is for control of his mental imagery. Eventually Solaris wins. He yields to the images projected by the planet. Kris loses his mind and becomes insane like the others.

Mander applies this story to television. Television is like the planet. It has the ability of projecting images into your mind. Once they are there you can't shut them out. Mander maintains that we have lost control of our images to the screen—we have lost control of our minds.

As with Kris in this fictional story, many of the problems associated with the screen are the images it projects into our minds. Those images are fictional, or are they? We see them. They enter our minds. They shape our characters. We become changed by what we behold.
Take the Star Wars movies, loved by an entire generation of youthful viewers. "May the force be with you!" Ah, but the producer of those films, George Lucas, is a practicing Hindu. Have you ever stopped to think of the theological teachings of those movies and their impact in the mind and character of your children?

Science fiction author Orson Scott Card maintains that if a fictional story teller can make you love the story they tell enough, they can change your values; they can shape your future. What he hasn't said, is that the fictional story teller can create your character by what he places on the screen for you to behold and love.

Rod Serling wrote the story Doomsday Flight in which an airliner comes under threat of a bomb in flight. While that movie was being broadcast, a bomb threat was received by a domestic carrier in a fashion identical to that of Serling's fictional story. In the days following the screening of that movie enough bomb threats above the ordinary number were received that the Federal Aviation Agency accused the network of endangering public safety by screening that film. Just prior to his death Serling commented, "Yes, I wrote that story, but to my undying regret."

In 1978 the movie Born Innocent was aired by NBC in an "after school special." A few days later an attack on a young person occurred in northern California. The attack
was identical to that portrayed in the movie. The youthful attackers admitted that they got their idea from the screen. The victim's mother filed suit against the network. It is interesting to note that the next time the film was aired it was after 11:30 p.m. and the offensive attack had been edited out.

The Hi-Fi Shop used to be located on Washington Blvd., Ogden, Utah's, main downtown street. Several years ago two young men entered the store at closing time and forced the individuals present to go to the basement, where they murdered several of them. One of those two young men has now been executed and the other is presently on death row. One of the things they did to their victims was force them to drink Drano. They admitted they got the idea from watching a movie. By the way, one of those two young men was raised a Seventh-day Adventist.

Ah, but enough of the negative. By beholding we become changed. Some become murderers. But, we can also become saints. Let me tell you about several that I have known. These are real people, by the way. Every one is a member of a church I have pastored. Real people. Real saints.

Helen is a member of one of the three churches I first pastored. She has a cleft palate and you need to listen carefully to understand her. She is no beauty. One day I was returning from my little church off in the middle
of the national forest. As I drove along I realized that I was following Helen. Suddenly a deer ran across the road right in front of her. (In that area you have to constantly watch for that sort of thing to happen.) Helen slammed on her brakes and missed the deer, but suddenly a huge cloud of steam rolled out from under her hood.

I got out of my car and opened her hood. She had just gotten her car back from Rudy, one of our town's mechanics. Someone in his shop had left a pulley puller on top of the engine and Helen's sudden stop had thrown it into the radiator. Her reaction? "Well look at that. Rudy forgot his tool. I'll have to see that he gets it back."

What an attitude. No vindictiveness. Just a sweetness. That's Helen. She's a saint. She has been beholding Jesus and she's become a lot like him.

Real people. Real saints.

Jackie is a mother. The last time I saw her was in the pool at Andrews University when I was there taking a class. She had remarried and she brought me up to date on what she and her children were doing and what her new husband was like.

Her first husband was the one who brought her into the Seventh-day Adventist Church. He was an elder in my church. Shortly after I moved from that pastorate he took up with the wife of one of the other elders of the church.
I was glad I had moved—it was a heartbreaker for everyone who knew them.

As I talked with her there was no bitterness or hostility, no unforgivingness. There was just a sweetness—the sweetness of a saint. Jackie reminds me of Jesus. I think she's spent a lot of time beholding Him.

Real people. Real saints.

Carol worked as an R.N. in the medical clinic and knew everyone in town. Dave worked on the railroad. When he came into the clinic he met Carol and couldn't get over how kind she was. The impression she made on him lasted. The day came when Dave and his wife were baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Today he's pastoring in Hawaii.

What I never knew during the time I pastored that church was that Carol was a manic depressive who had times of severe depression. Some Sabbaths her husband Joe would come to church alone. "Where's Carol, Joe?" "Oh, I told her she ought to stay home and rest today." We never knew. But her problem never got in the way of Who she was beholding. As I remember the various churches and many different members I have had the privilege of pastoring, Carol stands out as an example of the marvelous character it is possible for a sinner to develop. Carol had the spirit of Jesus about her.

Real people. Real saints.
Dick is an ordained gospel minister who works as a Bible teacher. He's very conservative, so you know there are some things that he does not approve of. There were some programs on that academy campus that Dick and his wife never attended. No one expected them to.

Dick loves early Adventist history and he has a collection of early Adventist publications. He also loves the writings of Ellen White. We have often discussed her comments, and as he talks you can tell that he is in love with the One those writings describe. The spirit he manifests is a spirit almost of Heaven. The first year the Zappara Award for excellence in Adventist education was awarded at that school, Dick was the recipient. They tell me there was a sustained standing ovation as he made his way forward to receive the award.

While I lived there it was very interesting to me to watch the rebellious young graduates from the prior year come back to Alumni Weekend in clothing and hairstyles designed to shock the faculty. Every one of them looked for Dick: they knew he loved them. By the way, when he was young, he contracted polio which left one of his legs deformed and it is impossible for him to play ball.

Dick has spent hours beholding Jesus in the pages of Ellen White's publications. You can tell.

Real people. Real saints. They have been beholding and they have been becoming.
One more? I received a call that one of my young mothers had been rushed to the hospital with a diagnosis of possible cerebral palsey. What of her three young children, I thought? Her youngest daughter was suffering from NF, neurofibramatosis, the illness that afflicted the Elephant Man. Further tests determined that the mother's condition was not cerebral palsey, but AVM, a congenital condition in which the arterial system is joined to the veins too soon, so that pressure in the arteries is carried over to the veins and that pressure causes the veins to hemorrhage. A blood clot had formed which was exerting pressure inside her brain.

An operation was performed which resulted in the paralysis of one side of her face and the loss of her ability to swallow. Her weight shrank to 90 pounds.

Today she is home with her family and improving. She is gradually learning to swallow again. Her faith has carried her through. She has triumphed over one of life's most difficult experiences—a lingering, debilitating illness.

I should tell you that when she was in academy she was voted the most beautiful girl in school. That's gone for now. But her character shines through her face—even the non-functioning side. Her character is beautiful. Her letters are completely inspiring. She has been developing a
likeness to Jesus. During the long hours of a long convalescence she has beheld Him. She has become changed.

Real people. Real saints.

What about you and me? We can behold and become changed into a likeness of Jesus. But what about the bright, dancing little phosphors we see on the screen? Are we going to allow those little phosphors to create us in their image? Are we going to allow ourselves to become changed into that?

"And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit."
APPENDIX E

Spiritual Counsel

What, if any, do the following texts have to do with television?

Pro 4:23-

2 Cor 4:18-

Deut 6:5, 1 Jno 2:15-17, Jas 4:4-

2 Cor 10:5, Matt 5:27-29, Rom 8:5-9, Phil 4:8, 2 Pe 2:14-

Matt 15:18-20, 2 Cor 7:1, Rev 21:17-

2 Cor 6:14-18, Matt 5:13-16, Rev 18:4, Jno 17:1, 1 Pe 2:9, Jas 1:27, 4:4-

Psa 101:3, Job 31:1, Isa 33:15-16, 2 Cor 3:18, Matt 6:22-23-

Psa 101:7-

Rom 13:1-7-

Matt 6:19-33, Luke 12:15-34, Phil 4:11-13, Heb 13:5, 1 Tim 6:6-12-

Deut 32:35, 43, Rom 12:17-21-
APPENDIX F

Values in Conflict

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APPENDIX F

Values in Conflict

**Television**
- Glorify self
- Instant gratification
- Materialism
- Power
- Winning
- Narcissism
- Use of violence
- Holiness of beauty
- Pleasure/hedonism—indulge self
- Leisure
- Revenge
- Celebrities

**Christianity**
- Glorify God
- Patience
- Spiritual realities
- God's power
- Letting Him win
- Compassion toward others
- Dependance on God
- Beauty of holiness
- Service
- Redeeming the time/self-respect
- Forgiveness
- Jesus

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APPENDIX G

Tips for Handling TV
(From Various Sources)

1. Teach ____ (Discrimination)_______

2. Make sure ____ (You watch properly)__________

3. Do not use as a ____ (Babysitter)__________

4. Make sure your viewing is ____ (Intentional)_______

5. ____ (Control)____ the set
   a. Decide ____ (when it's turned on and off)___
   b. Decide ____ (what's seen)_____
   c. Turn ____ (it off)_______
   d. Buy ____ (a Sears padlock)_________

6. Be ____ (completely consistent)_________

7. Adjust ____ (your viewing rules to your child's age)_____

8. Watch ____ (with)____ your child and then ____ (discuss what is seen)_____

9. Provide ____ (alternate activities)_____

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APPENDIX H

Suggested Reading for Seminar Participants


APPENDIX I

Questionnaire Cover Letter

1390 Cross St.
Ogden, UT 84404
June 3, 1991

Dear Friend,

Remember attending that seminar on television about three months ago? I surely hope so, and I also hope that what you learned that Sabbath has stuck with you and is helping you relate to television and the media. The seminar was very enjoyable to me and I hope you enjoyed it too. It was a delight to be a part of your church family that Sabbath.

Remember that questionnaire you filled out? If you remember, I also promised that you would be receiving it one more time. You will find it enclosed with a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Would you so very kind as to sit down right away and fill it out and put it in the return mail?

Please fill out all answers. If you have any comments you would like to make, please include them on the back of page three. Also, if you would like to know the conclusions I have drawn based on everyone's answers (approximately 80-90 people participated), let me know and I will see that you receive them. Since I can't graduate until I hear from you and everyone else who participated, I will very much appreciate hearing from you as soon as possible! Thanks for taking the time to fill out and mail the questionnaire right away.

May God bless you and may you continue to grow as a Christian. And may the media never cause you to love this old world. It's time to leave for a better land, don't you think? Thank you again for participating and for sending that questionnaire on its way. I'm hoping to hear from you within a week.

Sincerely,
Pastor John Glass
APPENDIX J

W.Y.S.I.W.Y.G. SEMINAR EVALUATION

I liked:

I didn't like:

It would be better if you:
APPENDIX K

"MY LIES ARE YOUR FUTURE"

In January, 1989, the University of Rochester, Rochester, New York, held a week long Conference on Power. One of their speakers was science fiction author Orson Scott Card who spoke on the power of ideas.

Introduction of Speaker:

He maintains that the stories Americans tell each other define us as a people. If you can change the stories, you can change the people.

Scott received the Hugo and Nebula awards in 1987 and is the author of such recent books as Worms, Saints, Seventh Son, and Red Prophet. Referring to his books Red Prophet and Seventh Son, the Chicago Sun Times praised his formidable scholarship in history, religion and folklore, and said that these books may prove to be the most important work of American fantasy since Stephen Donaldson's original Thomas Covenant Trilogy. He understands the psychological dynamics of power: its fascination, its tendency to corrupt the one who uses it, and he understands the dangers of technological power, to separate the one who uses it from the human consequences of his acts. He has a profound sense of ethical responsibility. His subject is entitled, "My Lies Are Your Future."

Orson Scott Card:


Somebody says, "Who are you?" You usually tell them your occupation, right? You want to describe someone to
someone else. You let them know what it is they do, who it is they are according to the communities they belong to.

Now when we're born we have no concept of anything but ourself. I. But very quickly we learn that the world is divided into two groups of things: things that do what we want them to do, and things that don't do what we want them to do. When you think about it, that is still pretty much the division that we use through our lives. But gradually you learn to expand the area that you have power over. You get your fingers to do what you want, to go where you want, to grasp. You learn to crawl--everywhere--and climb on whatever it was your parents told you never to climb on. You also discover that the other group--the stuff that you don't control, can hurt you. Like when you stick your wet little finger holding a wet little penny into a wall socket. But most important, the most useful, the most dangerous things in the world are the people.

At first you don't know how dangerous they are. You cry; Mom changes you . . . she feeds you . . . whatever she thinks you want. But as your needs get a little more sophisticated you discover that you need language to explain it. And as soon as you learn language you learn to lie. You learn to tell stories that aren't true. This is not because there is any innate evil in children. It's because you have not yet learned that language is supposed to correspond to reality . . . in some way. Instead, language is simply a device to put more things under your control. So when Mom comes to you and says, "Did you knock that off?" "No." You learn that "no" is the way that you postpone or even sometimes avoid punishment, even though, of course, you are the one who knocked it off.

I think of my 18-month old daughter and her brother two years older (back when they were that age). They're much older now and much more mature and much more honest. I was standing in my bedroom just looking at them the way we parents do when our children are still small enough for us to think they're cute. Looking at them building with blocks together and thinking what sweet, wonderful human beings they were. And then I watched as my 18-month-old daughter Emily picked up the biggest, heaviest, bulkiest block in the set, walked over to Jeffrey from behind--he'd done nothing to her, mind you--and whacked him across the head, faster than I could intervene. And before I could make a sound Jeffrey started crying. "Ahanh, ahanh, ahanh." Really fake. I knew he was in pain, but it did not sound convincing at all. "Emily hit me." Ahanh. And then Emily, big tears in her eyes, looked at him with absolutely heartfelt pain and said, "Jeffery hit me." Completely believable.
Now if I had walked into that room at that moment and
had not seen what had transpired, Jeffrey would have been in
serious trouble. Because Emily had learned that if you cry,
and if you blame the other person, and if you're good enough
at it, good things happen to you and bad things don't. It
was a terrible lesson for her to learn, and it didn't apply
of course, to her at that moment because I knew exactly what
had happened, but it's one of the struggles. But gradually
as children, you do discover that words are supposed to be,
are assumed to be, a way of representing past events
accurately and valuing them telling what they're worth.

For instance, your Mom tells the neighbor--you overhear
her when you're a little kid--"You should have seen little
Betsy. She was so cute. She was holding the newspaper and
pretending to read out the astrology page just the way Bob
reads it out to me every morning while I'm making
breakfast." And the neighbor cuddles you and says, "Aren't
you the smartest little thing!" And . . . those words give
you a couple of lessons. First of all, you learn that this
reading thing makes people like you. That's of value. (I
think that's at the root of all precocious children who read
early.) And second, you learn that when people hear stories
about you, they will react as if they had actually seen you
do the things you are said to have done. Telling a story
about you puts memories of who you are into other people's
minds as if they had seen you do it. Stories told about you
create you in other people's minds.

Isn't it a good feeling just to watch the speaker flip a
page over? You know you're going somewhere, don't you? So
I'm not going to tell you how many of these there are. I'll
just let the horror increase as you realize this never ends.

Most of this early learning takes place within your
first and most important community, which is your family.
At first you think the whole world is like your family, that
everything will be like it is in your home. I don't know
about you, but one of my great shocks was my first encounter
with a public restroom. You know the scene; some of you
have even acted this out. "Hey Dad, this toilet seat's
broken in front. It's split in half. And where's the tank?
I'm not going to use this thing. It's not a real toilet. I
want a real toilet like the one we have at home." To
which, of course, your father replies, "Yes, you are going
to use this toilet, or I'm going to strip you naked, hold
you upside down over the toilet, and wring you out." Maybe
your dad didn't talk like that, but if he didn't, then you
didn't have a real dad, because my dad talked that way. And
that's how real dads talk.
You learn that other kids do have parents, but they're different from yours. Other kids are different from you, and some are more different than others. When my boy Jeffrey was in Kindergarten, one of the reasons we had moved out of the West and into the East was so that our kids would actually know that there are people who are not identical to them, people of other races. You grow up out in the Mountain West and if you see someone of another race, either he's an Indian who got lost or he's a foreign student. And so we wanted our kids to experience people of other races, other cultures, and other religions.

But one day Jeffrey was telling us about the kids at school and mentioning some of the people, and he mentioned one name: he said, (he was telling us who his friends were) and he said, "This is my friend, but I don't like him." And I said, "Well, why? Why don't you like him?" And what came out very innocently was it was because he was black. And of course you know, my wife and I were sitting there listening to this with horror in our hearts. But we didn't want to make a big deal about it and you know, we knew--time for a lecture about the differences between people that matter and the differences that don't matter.

But what it really told me was it's pretty much built in. There's no way that he got this at home. He might have picked it up from other kids, but I doubt it at that age. It's that when you see somebody else that looks different from you or different from the people you're familiar with, you have a tendency to back off, to recognize the difference and not feel comfortable with the other person.

And so, for whatever reason, we do begin almost immediately to sort ourselves into communities: people that we feel comfortable with, people that we're not like. When we're young, of course, we sort ourselves into boys and girls and never the twain shall meet—until the flood of hormones changes our minds.

Again, I realize I'm using my kids as examples, but they're the only ones that I know and they're much cuter than yours, so I should use them as examples. Now, my son Jeffrey is old enough to be involved with clubs, which is the nice version of gangs.

Another kid in 5th grade named Ben has set himself up as the Admiral of the club (I love the military ranks, you can be sure) of the boys. And he assigns the ranks that the others have. You can go from Ensign to Captain, from Captain to Commodore—something about the Navy, I don't know why. All the boys in the 5th grade belong to the club, and at first when it began, you would get a higher rank when you
recruited someone else to join the club. I guess this is how multi-level marketing is born at an early age. I’m sure that Ben has a future in Amway. But this is . . . Let me tell you how Jeffrey started to learn how these communities work, how power works within them.

One day Ben decided something that Jeffrey didn't like and Jeffrey said so. And so Ben said, "Okay, then you're not a Captain anymore. You're a Private." And so Jeff came home and he told me all about it. "Today I'm not a Captain anymore; I'm a Private now. Because . . ." Then he told me the situation, and I asked him, "Did you do what he wanted afterwards?" "No." So I said, "Good. But what do you want to have happen now?" "I want to be a Captain again." So I said, "Simple! Just do whatever Ben wants. Just don't have any ideas of your own, don't ever do what you want, just do whatever he wants, and I'll bet you'll be a Captain again." He said, "That's dumb, Dad." Which it was. I mean, he knows the tone of sarcasm in my voice. And I said, "Well then, quit. He can't demote you; he can't boss you around if you aren't in the club." And this was also not acceptable. "Then I'd be the only boy in 5th grade that isn't in it." And of course that is the intolerable condition for a 5th grader.

And so I explained it to him because he's a bright kid. He understood faster than I explained--I can always tell by the impatient look in his eyes. And I said, "Look, Jeff, this club exists for one reason only: to get everybody else to do what Ben wants. No matter how many promotions he gives out, is he ever going to give a promotion that puts somebody over him to give him orders?" And he'd been studying American history this year and he said, "Ben's running this like a monarchy isn't he?" The image that had popped into my mind of course was Germany: the Third Reich. I almost said that, but no, I thought, monarchy. We'll give Ben credit for being George III, not Adolph Hitler. And then Jeffrey said, "It should be a democracy." So I feel really proud I had spawned a revolutionary.

He went to school the next day. He said all of this in the club meeting on the playground and all the other kids agreed with Jeff, which is what revolutionaries always hope for, and once Ben saw this happening (this guy's no dummy, he has a future in business) he made concessions. So from now on he makes 3/5ths of the decisions and they make 2/5ths of them. I have no idea how they're going to vote on who gets to make which ones, but Jeffrey came home perfectly happy, Ben was apparently happy, and when you think about it, I bet the President would be happy to have that system too. In fact, we've had some presidents who've used it, so, I think the story shows plainly some of the laws of
community formation, some of the immediate power that the community has over the members, over the people who want to be in it badly enough to accept that power.

First of all, it makes a clear division—a strong community will make a clear division—between members and non-members, and will regard the non-members as somehow dangerous or rivals or competitors. A community that doesn't somehow take pride in itself and value itself more highly than non-members is going to be very, very weak. Second, there's a system of rewards tied to correct behavior. It's amazing when you look at human communities how paltry some of these rewards are. Like Ben declaring that Jeffrey is a Captain or a Commodore. What does that mean? That people will die for that kind of thing. And finally, there's a system of punishments, a coercive power.

You know the examples, the formal examples, obviously; they're on the job. If you're in a community of workers at a factory or something you know that the rewards are promotion—that's a tangible one. Better yet is a raise. But there are also things like office size, the office location. I have a corner office with two windows—you know that that means you're hot stuff. But there are also the negative ones: get fired, don't get the promotion, get humiliated in front of everybody else.

Another example: a very formal pattern, the Catholic Church. Rewards? Sacraments, salvation, promises for the future. Punishment? Excommunication. I use the Catholic church because most Protestant denominations are not quite so clear about the punishment level. They threaten you with hell but they don't necessarily kick you out. So it becomes much more subtle.

The irony of these forms of direct power in a community is that once you use the power to the hilt, once you exercise the maximum power, to reward or to punish, you no longer have power over that person. Once somebody is excommunicated you've done everything to him that you can. Once—if you have that power—once if you kill him, he is dead and he will no longer do what you tell him to. Once you strip someone of a rank in a club and kick him out, what do you threaten him with from then on? You have nothing left. That marvelous moment in the film "Gandhi"—meeting in South Africa, standing there, and he says, "And if they kill me they will have my dead body, not my obedience."

The real power in a community comes not from the act, but from the story. That is, it doesn't come from the fact that you have killed everyone who disobeyed. It comes from the fact that the other people know that you can do it.
When you exercise the power to kill, the point of it is for other people to know that you can do that and then they will fear you and then they will obey you.

You don't get people's obedience by promoting them to the highest rank. You get their obedience by promising to promote them to a higher rank. You get the obedience from the story. So, if you get hired to a new job and the first thing you hear is, "Whatever you do, don't argue with Mr. Kendrick, or you will never, ever, ever get a promotion." Do you pay attention? Well, you do if you value being employed. Eventually you might change your mind. You might discover that Kendrick is a real human being and that you like him and that the story wasn't true. But as long as you believe it, as long as that's what you've heard, you're very careful with Mr. Kendrick.

Or try this one. This is a good one. This one's been used before. If you allow Hitler to unite the German people by letting him take the German Sudetenland away from Czechoslovakia, his ambitions will be satisfied and there will be peace. Great nations acted on that one, on that story. But you see there wasn't peace, was there? Because after that story was told about the Rhineland, there was Austria after Austria, there was Czechoslovakia after Czechoslovakia. They finally caught on about Poland.

You learn this as a kid. The story keeps working only as long as it's believed. It's the concept of truth. The story has to be true, demonstrably true. You have to come up with some evidence, or eventually people stop believing it. But that does bring us to the power of storytellers in a community.

We have a lot of them. You're surrounded by stories all the time: history, news, gossip, biography, --and fiction. But you spend an awful lot of time listening to stories and telling them. (I don't dare say the majority of time because it may be that you're working on an assembly line or something like that where you're actually relating to machines, but when you're with people, what do you spend your time doing if not telling stories? or listening to them tell stories?) It's one of the most pervasive human activities. And this is vital to community formation.

Let me give you an example. Most of you here, I assume, are American citizens, right? I know of at least one exception in the audience and I already sounded him out on this today. Let me give you a little American history test. Whom did we elect as our first president? Whom did we fight in the Revolutionary War? Who won? I heard somebody say "we did."
Do you understand what I'm doing to you? We? We? Which of you were there? Not one of us. And yet it is not a false statement, is it? It's not false to say we won, we won the Revolutionary War, we Americans did. And why isn't it false? No person alive today was alive then. And the reason is, the reason this is true, is because stories are how a community maintains its identity across time and space. We have taken upon ourselves that story.

I daresay that most of us in this room are descended, at least a majority, from people who did not come to America until after the Revolution. Not even your ancestors were there. And yet by coming here, by becoming part of this nation, your ancestors or even you have taken this story upon yourselves. You have adopted it as part of your identity. And it is truthful, now, for you to speak of the American past as things that "we" did, things that happened to "us," because you're a member of the community. It's part of your identity. You have included yourselves in the American "we". And so all things that are said of Americans we take personally.

Have you ever been present when someone of another nationality insults an American? I don't care how you feel about a particular issue, there's this little part of you which says "Oh yeah?" And all things done to Americans we take personally. We do. The marines in Beirut. Pearl Harbor. Didn't it stab you, even if you disagreed with the policy that put marines in Beirut. Didn't it hurt when they were killed? Didn't it hurt when the challenger blew up? Because we were up there.

And yet the funny thing is we are so different from Washington's America that we wouldn't even recognize it. We probably wouldn't be comfortable. Heck, most of us couldn't have even voted in Washington's America. But in order to believe that we are still the same community we revise the past to maintain the illusion that in the ways that matter we are still the same. We are still the same people. And the way we do this is that either: we deny that the change ever took place by pretending that they were just like us even then. No, they didn't like McDonald's, but they did like fast food, right? Or, we deny that the difference matters. Ah, well, that's trivial, that's trivial. In the ways that matter we're all still American.

That was page four! Significant percentage. We may even finish this one before the evening's out.

This shifting story that defines a community across space and time is the community epic. When you accept a
community you accept its epic. You adopt it as your own.

Now story isn't the only thing that forms community. I should mention that just as important is ritual. I'm not talking about self-conscious ritual, for those are certainly included within it. But, for example, I have a friend, a very good friend who's a fireman, and he feels an immediate solidarity whenever he sees a story of a fire on the news. He looks at those guys and he knows what it feels like to go into the building. He knows what it feels like to hold the hose. He's acted out the rituals. When I meet up with writers I know what it feels like to sit there at the keyboard with only stupid words in your head, trying to type them and pretend that they're not as stupid as they sound to you. I've done the rituals. I'm part of that.

So you have an immediate solidarity with those who are acting out some aspect of the life you're acting out. That means there's solidarity with people, say at a factory, who do the same job, who work on the same crew. You feel a kinship with them.

But it still takes a story to transcend that immediate ritual connection. For a union to form that exists outside the plant as well as in, to connect other plants together, you still have to be able to explain to them how you're alike, even though they work for Armour Meat Packing and you work for Hormel. And for the union to embrace people doing very different jobs you still have to somehow explain how you're alike. You have to tell a story that will connect those rituals together.

Now when you're talking about the epic of a community there's an internal epic that we members of the community believe that we are, and an external epic, that those poor saps that aren't among us think we are.

The internal epic of the Jewish people: a 5,000 year history; a story of being persecuted, but also being chosen of God. Can't even attempt to give an encapsulation of all that it entails in the epic. But what's the external epic? For many centuries the external epic has been a) can't trust a Jew. they'll cheat you every time. They're rich. They have a conspiracy to rule the world. And they kill Christian babies in their rituals.

Now, what you believe about yourself in the internal epic determines how the members act. The external epic determines how you are treated by other people. The result of that particular external epic was pogroms, the holocaust. Whoever controls the epic controls the community, either externally or internally. If you as an American, or say as
a Christian, can redefine what it means to be an American or a Christian, then you can control the behavior of other Americans or Christians. If you can persuade them that real Americans act in a certain way, then insofar as they think of themselves as real Americans they will act out the story you have told them. Why else do you think that people go out to be shot at? Why else would people die in a faraway place for their country if their country hadn't persuaded them that's what real Americans do?

Example: The American Civil War. Story manipulation here. The South needed British and French support. If the British and French had come in on the side of the American South the South could have won because for them victory just meant the North gives up. And if the South had had the British fleet to break the American blockade, if they'd had French troops, since the French fleet wasn't worth much at that time, they could have made it: they could have held out; they could have won.

Well, Napoleon III in France definitely wanted to be on their side, but being the courageous, freethinking person that he was he would not act without British support. So they had to persuade the British. If they persuaded the British they had it made. So what's the first thing that they did? The South withheld their cotton to show the British how much they needed southern cotton. Let's make them hurt and then they'll know that they've got to come in on our side.

How successful do you think that was? Not very. If you know anything about the British epic, the internal epic of the English people, it includes this idea, "Nobody tell us what to do. Nobody makes us do anything we don't want to do." And so that didn't work. They discovered very quickly, in fact, that this wasn't working, and so they tried something else.

Now the British epic also includes this idea: we stand for freedom; we stand for the little guy against the bullies. So the South went to Britain claiming, "Hey, we're just the little guys. We just want to live our lives. And these bullies in the north are picking on us: they won't leave us alone. They're invading us. We're the victims. We don't want any problems. We just want to be left alone. Help us."

And this was getting some good play; this was working. So, what did Lincoln do to stop that story? Exactly. The moment the Emancipation Proclamation was made the South's story was shot—it was gone. It couldn't work because now the North was saying anybody who helps the South is for
slavery, and anybody who helps us is against slavery. And so it took the British epic, reinterpreted it in its relationship with the American events and that was the end of any serious attempt or effort on the part of anyone in Britain for entering the Civil War on the side of the South.

Manipulating the epic and controlled community behavior.

Real power, the kind that does not use itself up when you use it, comes from an internalized story. Stories...(some content lost at this point due to turning the tape over)

You belong to hundreds, maybe even thousands of different communities. Your family, perhaps your church, school, your job your income level, every single special interest job that any pollster has ever divided you into. Any club you might have joined, every book you have read, forms a community of all those who have those memories in their heads.

But you don't belong to all those communities equally. Some of them have more power over you than others. The ones you care about and believe in the most are more a part of you, of your self-definition. Leaving them would hurt more: their sanctions matter more to you; you have more allegiance to them.

For example, you're a teacher, we'll say. Is being a teacher so important to you that you'd die for it? Most teachers would probably hesitate before saying yes. Perhaps even, "Hell no, I'm not going to die for it." Would you kill for it, for the right to teach?" I don't think so. But, it is important enough for most teachers that they'll go through life being paid less than it's worth. Isn't it? They'll moonlight for the job. They'll go to college in order to prepare for it. You'll put up with pin-headed administrators for it. You'll put up with smart-mouth, lazy kids for it. So you will sacrifice something. That is so important to you that you'll give up something. And if it stops being that important to you, you quit. It stops being part of who you are.

If the cost becomes too high you begin to withdraw your allegiance and start looking at the want ads. You start preparing your resume. You start looking for other jobs. And you aren't so much of a teacher anymore. You no longer define yourself as being a teacher, even if you're still doing it. Because you haven't got the other job yet. You're gone, your trunks are packed. Your allegiance has gone.
Now a community that consistently demands more than its members can bear and will not adapt to them, will eventually die of rigidity. For example the Puritans. You don't know any Puritans now, do you? Very, very few people say, "We are Puritans." They're gone. The nursing profession is one that's heading down this road. We have a severe shortage of nurses. The reason is very simple and very clear: it costs too much for the rewards they're given. I'm not talking in financial terms. Even teaching is going through some of this process.

So communities can shrink to death by being too rigid and unable to bend, -or a community that demands nothing of its members, that constantly shifts and changes. A community that is weak will eventually fragment and die as its members are pulled away into stronger allegiances. Ah, maybe they still think of themselves as members of that community, but it doesn't matter that much to them. A lot of mainline Christian churches suffer through near-death serious membership losses during our lifetime for that very reason. No demands. Nothing important about it. Changing too much.

The American Dream.

You know what the American Dream is, don't you? Let me give you a definition. See if it sounds like what they're saying these days. The American Dream is to get ahead, to get money, to be better off than your parents were. Success. Donald Trump. Donald Trump, I think, says the word American Dream every 20 minutes all day. I've never heard him speak without mentioning it. Is that the American Dream?

I remember a little different American Dream. When I was growing up in the 50's it was different: it was security. Nobody can take away what you've got. You're safe. Got a nice job, got a nice house, everything's set. We know what's going to happen. The American Dream.

And there was an earlier one too. I've read about it in history books. I've read what people were writing at the time. When they said the American Dream back in the 1800's by and large they were talking about independence. "Nobody can tell me what to do. I'm going to own my little plot of land. I'm going to plant what I like--nobody's going to tell me what I'm going to plant." Daniel Boone said "I need elbow room. I'm going to move on. Too many people around here. Nobody's going to make me do what I don't want to do."

The American Dream is our shorthand way of saying it's the American statement of aspirations, the good that we
think it's OK to strive for. The athlete or the newscaster or Donald Trump making obscene amounts of money while other people are hungry. Who gets outraged over a few left-wing pinheads? By and large we say, "Hey, it's the American Dream. Don't begrudge it to them. It's what we all want, isn't it? Maybe it'll happen to me someday. I can't complain. It's OK."

Fifty years ago? No way. For one thing, fifty years ago athletes weren't rich. They were paid what they were worth and rich guys were the public enemies of their age, of their day. John D. Rockefeller who actually, if you read his biography, was a decent human being in most ways that we think of as being decent. He was hated, loathed by the American public. Teddy Roosevelt became one of the most popular presidents ever by going after these guys and cutting them down to size. By going after Donald Trump and cutting him down to size. We hated those guys. They were not the American Dream, they were the American nightmare. The American Dream was somebody else.

But we act and we value other peoples' acts according to what story we believe is the American Dream. Now who changed the story? How did it change? How did our national character change? All right, I guess that it's the depression and our solutions to it that gave us the dreams that I remember of the fifties. To keep us safe. It's because my parents had seen it all stripped away and they like the idea of a government that would make sure it would never happen again, that we could not fall into that slot ever again.

But what about the dream we've got today? I don't know. I haven't tried to track this. Maybe it comes from the economic model of history that's been very popular with the historians for the last while. This is the idea that the founding fathers didn't act out of any noble ideas: they acted in order to preserve their own economic interests, the interests of their class. I believe that's true of bouschwa, but we did buy it. In the profession of history it became the official version of American history for some time.

Or maybe our change of American Dream came because Communists attacked Capitalism so much that we felt we had to defend it. What we forget is that the reason the Communists attacked Capitalism and used that as their dirty word is because it was already a dirty word in America before Communists ever spoke about it. Capitalism was generally regarded as dangerous and dirty and ugly. Factories were regarded as the enemies of freedom. Wage slavery was what it was called even back in the 1840's and
1850's. We knew then, but somehow now we think of Capitalism as being the American hero. Why? Because those damn Commies hate Capitalists and call us Capitalists and so Capitalism must be good.

That may be part of the process. I don't know. Maybe it's because we turned our sense of responsibility over to the government? Maybe it's because we did achieve safety in the fifties and sixties? And so we forge the price that... I don't know about the actual causes, but there's been a change, a tangible, palpable change in the way we dream of what we want.

Now all this that I've talked about so far, and it's been long. But we actually are well over half-way, for those of you who are counting pages. All of this is about the epic story. The story that is intended to be taken as true, and is about a particular group.

But what about fiction? What about stories that we know from the beginning are false? When I put out a novel we agree . . . it says on the outside, "This is a pack of lies. None of this stuff happened." Why do you buy it? Now some of you, of course, are saying "Frankly I don't buy it and now that you mention it I never will." But still, you watch television, right? Even the people who say they only watch PBS, it's a lie. You watch television. You go to the movies . . . you go to the opera . . . you get your fictional stories one way or another. You're hungry for them. There's no society on earth that does not have some form of fiction. Why?

Fiction can function as an epic. Something like Uncle Tom's Cabin, Shakespeare's nationalistic history plays, whatever. But most fiction is not epic. It functions on a very different level. Most fiction is what I call mythic. It's not about one community; it's about how the world works, how stuff works. What it means to be human. Most specifically fiction deals with causal relationships. Period. I'm not trying to tell you what it says about them, but that's what a story is. It's the ordered presentation of causally related events.

Let me show you. We live together, OK? I come home. I say to you, "Hey, you know what happened downtown today? A glass panel fell off a skyscraper downtown." So what's the thought that goes through your mind? What comes next? What happened? What next? So . . . Isn't the ultimate question "so what?" Don't you realize that saying "so what" is a causal question? So what ensued? What was the result? What happened?
Nothing happened. It fell. It broke." "Then why did you tell me? Why did you bring it up if nothing happened?"
Ah, but if when you say, "What happened?" I say, "It was a horrible crash. Glass just sprayed everywhere. Look. I still have glass here on the lapel, in the pocket. I walked under that spot five seconds ... I could have been killed." Now there's a story. Not a story of what really happened, but of what could have. I could have been killed. And of course I am the hero of my own ongoing story.

Or else maybe I wasn't right there, but I knew those glass walls weren't safe. It's the wind. The wind goes by. The pressure changes ... sucks them right off. They're going to kill somebody. I knew they should never ... What am I doing? I'm telling you why it happened. I'm making a causal assertion, right? No no. There was a guy up there pushed it, that's what I hear. He pushed it off. He was trying to commit suicide but he ended up inside the building and the glass came down.

No, it was an explosion. A terrorist bomb. I heard this big bang before it came down. Why did it happen, that's what I'm telling you. It's a causal assertion. I'm telling you a story. You are not content with the information until it's been made into a story. As anyone who's studied statistics knows ... .

What do you think gossip's all about? Things happen among our friends and acquaintances that are inexplicable. You look at (by the way most gossip is about sex) ... and it's because you look at this couple. They're getting together. You think, "These two cannot possibly be together." So, what does gossip do? It provides you with a rationale that makes this inexplicable event make sense. "Ah, she's after his money." "Ah, he's impotent, she doesn't mind." We come up with stories that explain things to us.

Or you have a couple that you know they've got the perfect marriage and they're breaking up. If their marriage can break up, what about mine? I mean, we fight all the time. They never fought. Ah, but then gossip comes in and explains it for you. "Well, ah ha, she found a piece of underwear that didn't fit her." Or, "You know how it goes. He was too successful and she just couldn't deal with his success." We find reasons, we explain it. That's what gossip's all about and don't you love the people that are good at this?

There are born fiction writers. Eventually gossip is as tentative as news. I mean when we find out more information
we'll change our minds about it. We'll go do something else. We don't accept it with the same authority as fiction writing, but the very fact that we live for gossip (we all do--don't lie to me or anyone else or pretend that you do not live to find out what's going on in other people's lives)--the reason we're so hungry for it is because it explains the actions of other people.

Let me give you some examples from fiction. The fiction writer. I'm talking about movies, television, novels, plays, short stories. To the degree that you and the audience believe in and care about the story, that fiction writer has the power to revise your sense of how the world works. That's more powerful than changing the epic. That's more powerful than revising your conception of the community. There's a power to change your values, or if you're young enough, to create them. If he can get you to care about a story and believe it. If . . .

You do have some freedom here folks, you're not all puppets for us fiction writers. We don't control you absolutely, because you sort out which ones you believe in and care about and that is who you are. I think. The stories that you choose to believe.

But there is an influence that story tellers have over the society they live in. Think back, those of you who are old enough to do this, to the 60's and 70's when drugs were weird and interesting and cool in fiction. People on drugs were usually spaced out, but they were happy. Everybody smoked if they were neat. The cool macho guy punctuated sentences with a drag on a cigarette. Always had something to drink. Went out, drove in his car, had a car chase. Didn't die. You knew it was cool. And it had an influence. I can't deny it had an influence, but it's been changing, see. This is where all the fiction writers who say, "Hey, we're just doing art. Don't need to pay attention to what we're doing. Just art. Just a story.", this is where they confess that they're lying when they say that. It isn't true. Because there's now a deliberate effort to change some of these things. Like drugs, for example.

The only thing that gets censored anymore on television is drugs. But it's not just the censorship, (which technically it isn't censorship because the government isn't doing it. It's being done by the networks so it's just editorial judgment.) I don't say that sarcastically. The only censorship that is truly dangerous is when it's done by the government. If there's no editorial judgment anything gets published. My stuff gets published. But there's a deliberate effort to change the image of the people who do these things.
For example the movie *Working Girl*. One guy in the movie does drugs, right? Is he cool? How many of you have seen the movie? That's good. You're alert, you're aware. That's a good movie. You should see that movie. But, what do we see? We see that the only guy that takes drugs is a moron: repulsive, repugnant, male chauvinist pig. We hate him. That's the image they try to present now. That is a deliberate conscious effort to try to save other people from dying on drugs. Same thing.

Heroes on TV no longer drink and drive. In TV shows, right? Fewer people smoke on TV and in the movies. That's just the way it is. And it has an effect; it does have an effect.

Now let me give you an example of one of the finest shows on television right now: *L.A. Law*. Love the show. Excellent writing. But on that show people routinely, *routinely* sleep together if they're at all attracted to each other. Now you realize in 1959 if anyone had proposed one of those incidents in a television script it could not possibly have been shown. And I'm not talking about government censorship there either. It would have been outrageous to the American people. "You do not show that kind of behavior! That is the way whores behave." That's the way it was. Our values have changed. And now...

A recent episode of *L.A. Law*--I watched it and I finally realized one incident (can't remember the name of the characters) we actually watched what I think is a first for prime time. We see top nudity on a woman from the side, her breast pressed against the chest of the man with whom she's making love. My first thought, of course, was, all I needed to know was that they went home together. I know the rest. And if I want to see that I'm married, you know. I don't need them to show me that on television.

So who are they showing? What is it for? Now if there's something unusual about it, if there's some character trait that we needed to understand, then I can see a reason for it. But there's no reason for it except, pushing the envelope. "We can show this on *L.A. Law*. We got away with this. They can't tell us what to do. Ain't we cool?" And you can't for a moment pretend that anything else was going on there. There wasn't art. I mean the purpose wasn't artistic. The purpose was to push the envelope.

Now, the same writers and producers who want to show responsible drinking and oppose drugs are trying to push the envelope on sex. How far can you go? Well, if we show it
from the side I think we're OK. If it's on the screen for less than a full second I think we're OK.

Now, the question is, do they bear responsibility for the effects of what they show? Do you think for a minute that there aren't people watching that who don't internalize those values? I'm not talking about the showing of the nudity. I'm talking about the fact that never on L.A. Law has anyone been attracted to another person and not go to bed with them. Do you think that doesn't anything to do with any 15-year-old girl hopping into the sack and getting pregnant? Do you think there is no one paying the price for the story that's being told? If you think that we don't live on the same planet. I'm telling you the story that I believe, which is, that it does create and change values. And over time a story teller with clear views and a powerful talent can change the values and behavior, the internalized story, the conscience of enough people that society itself changes.

And then, because it's a very subtle power and works best when it's unnoted, unnoticed, the writer is in fact, subversive. It can bypass the public authority. The story is pervasive. Doesn't work just within one community because it's passed off as entertainment. And people in a very stratum end up absorbing it. It crosses community boundaries. It becomes part of the outside world that communities must respond to, either to adapt to the changes, or to defend themselves against those changes.

Fictional story telling ultimately is even censor proof. Because even though censors can stop me from publishing my book they can't stop me from telling you a story. And if they do stop me by killing me or whatever else, they can't stop you from making up a joke that contains exactly the same moral message and passing it along and telling your friends. In fact, that's why humor in the Soviet Union--political humor, oral jokes passed from one person to another--has developed into an art form that I've never found anywhere else. Political humor in the U.S. is pathetic compared to what it is in the Soviet Union. Because there it's been necessary. There is no other way of political story telling. People will sacrifice to get a good story. So you can conceal truth, but you can't conceal fiction because people will make it up when they can't buy it.

So you want to know what America is today? Or what it will be tomorrow? Perhaps what even the whole world will be like? Go to the movies. Read books. They're reflecting the present culture, but some of them are changing it. Even
more important, go to the movies your kids are watching. Read the books that they're reading, the ones they love best, the ones they want to pass on to their friends. That will tell you what happens tomorrow.

Now skip the little lecture on why science fiction has superior access to adolescents and why we have more power over your children then you do in their teens. And realize that all the literary criticism that deals with story telling on a solely aesthetic level is trivial. Because the primary effect of story telling is behavioral, and therefore moral. You decide what stories you like generally on a moral basis. "I like that story. What a great person. What a great story. You've got to read this." You're not saying that as a general rule because the writing was pretty. If you hate what happens in the story it doesn't matter how pretty the writing is. And if you love what happens in the story it doesn't matter how bad the writing is. How else can you explain the career of Edgar Rice Burrows?

Aesthetic criticism of amoral art is like deciding whether to buy a rifle or a fire extinguisher on the basis of their color or their pleasing lines—or whether the style is traditional or avant garde. Ignoring the question of how my home will be different if this object is in it, it's not the business of government to decide that. Government is a special interest group that is incapable of acting in the best interests of the community at large on issues like this. Story tellers are a rival power center and government instinctively knows it and government is not fit or able to judge what stories should be presented, so not for a moment should you think that I'm talking about any kind of censorship.

What I am talking about is your responsibility as readers, as members of the audience, because every single one of you is a critic. You function as a critic every time you say "Saw the greatest movie! You've got to see that movie!" "I read this book. Incredible! You've got to read this book!" or, "Ah, I read it, but... Saw the movie. A waste of time. Don't go."

You do that all the time, don't you? And don't you resent it when your friends go anyway when you tell them not to? And when they come whining to you about what a bad movie it is, don't you say, "Aha, well I told you so." You have influence. You want influence over your friends. All I ask is that you be aware of the moral content of the stories that you absorb. Be aware that something is being done to you. And then get it under control. Because the audience has the responsibility to encourage the spread of
true and good stories.

Now you and I may not agree which stories are true and good. I've told you some of the ones that I believe in. You may disagree with me completely. And that's almost fine. I mean, I really think I'm right, but the point that I'm trying to make is, if I act and you do nothing, I win. And I'm acting.

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