

COVENANT WITH MY EYES

They call it *hell-a-vision*, and an idol, and an abomination. Is TV getting a bad rap? Here is my 70's expose of the tube, and a personal testimony about viewing.

A Personal Word

It's off again. Oh, I don't mean "off". I mean **OFF**. This time I've taken the thing apart, unhooked the main cord, and made it impossible to turn on. Unless of course you know where the cord is hiding, and how to re-attach it. Which I do.

But it's off. Waiting for the next "emergency" to happen. Some world-wide catastrophe that we Americans have learned to accept as "must" viewing. Some "spiritual" program that "all" the Christians "must" see. Some educational selection that my daughter's teacher "demands." Some news item, like the election returns, that Dad just HAS to watch.

I'm 50 now, and not as violently opposed to distractions as before. They call it "mellowing" in the world. The Bible talks about "falling away." (Have I got your attention yet?)

I well remember the TV that I triumphantly marched out to the garbage dump. TV in one hand, hand-axe in the other. I bashed in the front of that thing to be sure I wouldn't change my mind.

Those were good days. "Phinehas" days, for those who understand. Some of you still live in that violence against sin. Did I say sin? But I'm ahead of myself, and I hear American shouts of "liberty!" rising in the background. Is it only my imagination that the only churchmen who have no "liberty" are those who expose flesh for what it is? Is not liberty to be contained in such a way that it gives no *occasion* to the flesh?

Is your TV contained in this way? Or by the grace of God have you long ago rid yourself of this pest?

Sure, sure, yours cost SO much, "and to just pitch it is SUCH a waste. And if we give it away to someone weaker than ourselves, or an unbeliever, we'll do them such harm." Yeah, yeah, I've heard it all: inside my own heart, daily.

How do we get into these traps? We listen to our culture, then to our own lusts. Sometimes we even try to talk the Lord into it... "Lord, you know there's so much GOOD on TV. Like those educational programs [most of which loudly promote evolutionary concepts!], and the news [which announces the daily litany of murders and rapes to us right before we sleep! And then we wonder why we dream like we do, even blaming it on the Lord sometimes: God told me...] and of course *Christian* programming [like Van Impe praising the Pope, and the latest music sensations selling their mega-buck albums] ..."

Even though I say all that, I know there's some "good" there. But who has the power to wade through all the commercials, previews, and lies, to *get to* that "good" and remain untouched?

Hey, go to a Mormon meeting. Doubtless you will hear the name of Jesus (a GOOD thing!), hear some great music (a GOOD thing), and meet some great people! Stay there long enough and you are a *lost man*. Mixed in with the good is the poisonous, as in every offering of Satan.

The call to liberty is important, and I want to inject it here again. No one can "tell" you to dump TV. But the evidence is mounting that TV is one of life's WORST complications. One could even call it an "idol" for many believers.

What do you mean, my TV is an idol! Well, idols replace the true God, in time and in emotion spent. What do we do when we're sad? *TV cheers me up*. Afraid? *TV distracts me*. Happy? *I use TV to celebrate!* What do we look forward to? *That special sports event*. Where do we spend our time? *A football game is longer than two church services! A 2-3 hour basketball or baseball game occupies more of your time than (perhaps) a whole*

WEEK of personal Bible study and prayer! Where does our TV sit? *In the very center of one of our finest rooms? Plus in the very center of all our bedrooms? Plus in the very center of ??? So that everyone can see?* And where is our Bible sitting? And Christian tracts? And Christian books and music? When people come to our houses, they know immediately that we are plugged in to the world. Would they guess we are plugged in to Jesus, or do we have to tell them?

One more thing, then I'll let you read a paper I gave to the University of Cincinnati in the 70's. (I've revised it a little, but it still reflects a period when TV wasn't even as dangerous as it is now. Nevertheless I believe the principles I laid down still apply.)

We should have known the potential evil of the little box when we heard it, and the newspapers, and radio etc, referred to as the "media". *Media* is the plural of "medium," and Bible students shouldn't have to be told that a *medium* is a go-between spanning the gap from hell to earth. A demonic but human messenger with words from hell .

Why did all these communications vehicles become known as the "media" ? Obviously, *someone* is trying to get a message to us. The method he uses, among the others, is TV. Now we know that on the other end of this message-giving process we will definitely *not* find the Lord , for the *media* were not created for Him. God speaks to us by His Son, His Word, His TRUE Church, His Spirit, etc. Long before the "media", God was doing quite well, thank you, getting the Word out. And He can do it today in this mad technological era.

No, the prince of the power of the air is Satan. I believe the Lord has been preached on the "air waves", but for this present darkness, we must understand that that domain has been relegated to the Enemy! No need to fight for it. OK, use it if you can. But our own domain, the realm of the Spirit of God, is still intact, and God is having His way in spite of the Satanic control of earth's electricity! Let him have his day. Soon the Kingdoms (electronic and otherwise!) of *this world* become the Kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ.

Now that promised trip back to the early 70's. (Original name of this essay was "*The Friendly TV*".)

THE FRIENDLY TV

Somewhere during the last couple of decades, the dog ceased being man's best friend. Man has found a more varietable companion, one which makes no messes, and needs no meals. Also, one which keeps him company under any circumstances, but whose personality is controlled by a switch. This new creature has electricity in its veins, a constantly changing face, and many times rabbit ears. Commonly called *the TV*, this strange marvel comes boxed only in a wooden frame. But as face watches face, incredible things happen...

I'll be traditional and tell you all the good TV has done and is capable of doing:

- (1) It keeps kids *and adults* off the street.
- (2) It promotes a spirit of unity in the household. A common interest can for a small while bind the family together, while so many forces today strive to tear apart.
- (3) It can provide a change in the daily routine of life.
- (4) Great amounts of information are broadcast every day on TV: news programs, nature programs, agricultural helps, etc.

I will not now defend or deny these points, nor will I say that there are not more possible items that could be added. What I wish to say is that, in spite of all the possible good TV gives to society, the negative contributions that follow and that time has forced me to omit, far outweigh the positive points, and should cause one to hesitate the next time he is about to assume his position before the tube. Let's begin with an obvious but not-too-often-considered fact: A person watching TV isn't doing something else. That is to say, the person involved constantly in TV watching has that much less time for creative activity, social involvement, constructive family-building. For, contrary to point 2 above, TV watching does not *always* tend to unify;

"enraged at not being allowed to watch TV, a 15-year-old Newark youth fatally beat and stabbed his great grandfather yesterday afternoon." (1)

A bizarre exception. Perhaps. But vaguely it reminds me of times I have scolded my 2-year-old for interrupting a particularly interesting show. And of times when other disputes have arisen over which program was to be viewed.

The fact that a family unit is all in one room does *not* mean it is "together." And supposing that the family has agreed to refrain from argument for the evening, has agreed to watch one particular program, is enjoying it immensely, can it still be said that the family is any better for it?

[I must inject here that this archaic family under consideration at least still was attempting to do the right

thing, and be together. Today there is a TV in every room, and the above situation seldom occurs. We've come a long way, but in the wrong direction]

Public investment might be considered. The fact that nearly every American has at least one TV and a huge percentage have 2 or more means that dollars and cents are being invested, big time. But the real money issue in regards to TV is the silent killer known as commercials. The TV industry is sustained by advertising, and attracts many billions of dollars of it annually. The basis for this great TV/advertising romance is that TV is the one single medium with the greatest impact on today's world. (2)

Narrowing this ad thing to the world of children:

"American corporations last year spent nearly \$400 million just on children's TV advertising, as well as untold sums on heavy social science research designed to discover how to get through the kids' primitive psychological defenses. (There are 15 motivational research agencies specializing in children in New York City alone.) By the age of 18, children have seen an awesome total of 350,000 commercials. What have they learned? ...you solve your problems by buying and using things. Physical force is important and useful. Don't feel guilty about self-indulgence while others may be deprived...images of commercials saying father is a jerk, mother is stupid and a gossip, all kids should make out, and elderly people sit around arthritic and constipated." (3)

Parents aren't off the hook here. It's a fact that children want what they see, but of those surveyed concerning their buying habits, 65% admitted that they yielded to their kids' demand for a TV product.

And of all TV products, TV *toys* have to be the worst. Not only are they lacking in quality, they cost more, due to the very fact that they are being advertised on TV.

So it's not just the fact that "people watch TV", but WHAT they watch that causes difficulties. And although advertising may harm the wallet and several values, they are the fresh air of the day in comparison to those segments in between commercials that we call programs:

"By the age of 14, kids have seen over 11,000 murders, not to mention beatings, holdups, loud arguments, exchanges of intense hostility, etc..."(3)

"One randomly sampled week included 144 murders on TV." (2)

If a child watches TV from 4-9 pm, from the ages of 5-14, he will see 13,000 human beings destroyed. (2)

So, he sees a lot of violence, and it is paraded as one of life's inevitables. He sees that manual labor is not too interesting or worthwhile. He sees that confidence and toughness are needed to succeed in life. (4) He sees sexual perversion of nearly every sort. *And the rest is coming.* He sees that laughter is not only the best medicine, but in many cases the only medicine. He sees that tears show weakness. He sees grown men and women living lives of foolishness, and seeming so *very* happy. Yes, he reads of their misery behind the scenes, and their suicides, and their divorces, but never learns WHY, for example, Judy Garland never could "fly over the rainbow." It never seems to click that the world of TV is an unreal world designed for dollars, designed for the glory of man, and NOT to meet human need.

The "what" of TV is bad enough. Multiplied by the "how much", the problem takes on disaster proportions! The average home watches 6 hours of TV per day. (2) The average male viewer between the ages of 2 and 65 will watch 3,000 entire *days* of TV: ***nine full years of his life!*** The figure in low income houses is even higher.

The TV addict. Product of the world's greatest people. And perhaps contributing to its own devastation. The TV addict begins his career on Saturday mornings, early in life, with those darling cartoons. With luck he'll end it in a rest home that has a set in every room. TV begins as fun and diversion. But it soon becomes master. Sixty per cent of the families of the US have changed their eating and sleeping patterns because of TV [*you may increase all statistics, since around 30 years of "progress" have passed*]

Why? What is the allurements?

Some turn to the tube to find support and expression for unresolved conflicts. It seems that problems are being worked out on TV. The viewer "feels" better after watching someone else solve his problems. Of course he forgets that when he awakens next a.m., his problem will still be there, despite the "feeling."

Others are drawn for somewhat of an opposite reason: They *know* TV is unreal, and here they can escape from an otherwise boring life. In other words, the mentality of the alcoholic.

Whether attracted by real or unreal, most love violence. (Whether in drama or sporting events) And many try to defend this love by citing works of violence down through the centuries: Greek history, "Little Red Riding Hood" (!), even the Bible! These classics they compare to their James Bond thriller. Differences are obvious enough to the wise, but just for the record: A. The Bible (for example) *contains* violence, but *is* a beautiful story of

a loving God. James Bond *contains* a story (somewhere), but *is* violence. And B. The reason for violence being added to , say, “Little Red Riding Hood,” was to offer a perfectly horrible example, to arrive at a moral, and ultimately to *quench* violence in real life. Today’s sagas present violent persons as the *hero*, not the *villain*, and praise their actions. Seldom are morals considered.

Not only do persons love seeing unreal people slaughtered, they seem to lose contact with *real* problems: “By sheer repetition (viewers) have become desensitized to violence and they have come to see aggression as a normal part of existence. They have also been taught that life is lived at a high pitch. So they are easily bored, they look for stimulation, they are thrill seekers.” (3)

Surely there are those who watch TV only for information given. I wonder aloud, can this information be gained from radio or newspaper?

A second suggestion, as I conclude these comments, is that only those in the home mature enough to know when and how to “stop” be allowed to choose and view the family TV programs.

Thirdly, for those convicted by the evidence who have decided to ban the TV, I suggest that there be found an immediate replacement that will be more constructive. There will be great voids in some homes when the TV is turned off for the last time. Mourning, as for a lost pet -or even relative- will set in. But when the void is filled with a meaningful activity, it is possible for these poor deprived ones to come to a state where they actually wonder how they ever had time for such a nuisance! There are testimonies available that sound much like the ones of those freed from alcohol and drugs.

Christian, spiritual values are simply not taught , with any consistency, by the American TV industry. The message of the Lord is not there. As your TV time increases, your spiritual interests will decrease. Perhaps Christians in the industry can help “salt” things down by adding Christian values, but for that same Christian to feed off the world’s medium is unthinkable.

Let’s not kid ourselves. All TV is educational TV. The power of a word and an image is unfathomable. Our lives are shaped by the intake of our minds. I encourage readers to choose cautiously those things they wish to enter that sacred ground.

[specifically Christian content added for readers of this booklet. UC is NOT a Christian school]

Bibliography

- (1) *New York Daily News* , January 21, 1964
- (2) *Violence and Your Child* , Arnold Arnold, 1969
- (3) *St Anthony Messenger* , May, 1974, p. 9
- (4) *TV and the Child*, Himmelweit, 1958
- (5) *TV & Human Behavior*, Leon Arons & Mark May, ed.

A final word

Well, that was it. I got an A on the paper. Easy grader. Then, over the next 30 years, I went out and bought several TV’s. I’d get a hold of a cheap one, watch a while, shut it down, throw it out, buy another.

But that’s my problem. As I said, we’ve shut it down again. What about you? Have you seen the dangers of which I speak? Have you brought this squarely before the Lord to see what He thinks about it?

Please pray for us, that nothing will distract us from the work that He calls us to do, but that legalism will not have its way here either.

Say, why not write and share your own references on this topic, or even some personal testimonies? I’ll let this booklet expand in the future, and bless a lot of people with your input.

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May the Lord bless you!