

TELEVISION AS A MEDIUM FOR EVANGELISM

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ANDREWS UNIVERSITY
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ABSTRACT

TELEVISION AS A MEDIUM FOR EVANGELISM

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ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Project Report

Andrews University

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Title: TELEVISION AS A MEDIUM FOR EVANGELISM

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Problem

The electronic communications media of today appear to offer almost limitless opportunities for communicating the message of the gospel to very large numbers of people. Television in particular occupies a primary place in communicating with people in the western world. A large proportion of the leisure time of many people is spent watching television. Nevertheless, the use of the television media by religious organizations, and individuals, is the subject of controversy.

The purpose of this project is: (i) to set forth a theology of evangelism; (ii) to discover the role of mass evangelism in the New Testament church; and (iii) to evaluate the use of

television as an aid in fulfilling the commission of Jesus Christ to take the gospel to all the world.

Method

A sixty-second television announcement was produced and aired on a country television station. This spot announcement presented before people the facts of the accuracy and reliability of the Bible and invited them to purchase a Bible and a set of "Profiles of Faith" reading guides by writing to a post office box address.

The various churches in the viewing area were invited to participate in conducting a survey. Various individuals were also asked to attend a seminar to be conducted for those responding to the television offer thus introducing people to fellowship in a group.

The television spot was aired twenty-five times over a period of ten days at various times during the afternoon and evening. A letter was sent out to those who took advantage of the offer several weeks after they had received their reading guides by mail. This letter invited them to attend a Bible study seminar.

Results

Up to 174,000 people were repeatedly exposed to a message affirming the veracity of the scriptures and their relevance to man today. They were also repeatedly invited to study this remarkable book. Twenty-five people wrote in and purchased the reading guides. Church members aided with the survey.

One member of the public registered for the seminar which was consequently cancelled and in its place a courtesy call was made to those who purchased the reading guides.

Conclusions

There is a valid role for the use of the electronic medium of television in fulfilling the gospel commission. Church members are eager to see this medium used and are very willing to participate in seeking to establish relationships with those who respond to the television spots. The effectiveness of this outreach would have been improved by airing the spots solely in prime time and also by this writer being located for a longer period of time in the viewing area.

It is felt that there is considerable potential for the use of television as an aid in fulfilling the gospel commission.

Andrews University
School of Graduate Studies
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A Project Report
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Religion

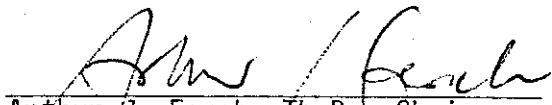
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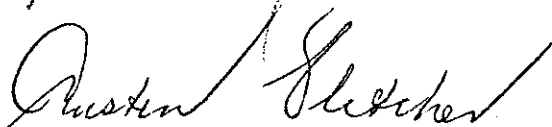
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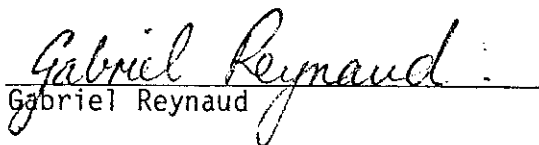
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The last few centuries have witnessed the ministries of evangelists such as George Whitefield, John Wesley, Charles Finney, Dwight L. Moody, and Billy Sunday. A modern example of this tradition is found in the ministry of Billy Graham. Television broadcasts (sometimes live) of his crusades have been watched by millions of people.

Today the mass communications media, and particularly television, have largely replaced the social, communication and entertainment function of the public meeting place. This has profound and challenging implications for evangelism. It is of particular importance for the Seventh-day Adventist church for two reasons. Firstly, this church sees itself specifically as a movement raised up to proclaim the three angels' messages to the whole world just prior to the second coming of Jesus Christ. Secondly, it arose in the mid-nineteenth century and adopted the public-meeting form of evangelism of those times, which has continued to this day. As the twenty-first century approaches, this form of evangelism is becoming increasingly anachronistic. This church is therefore faced with the necessity of changing its approaches in communicating the gospel to large groups of people. This writer is thus seeking to adapt the methods of evangelism to

the communications media of today in harmony with the Biblical principles of evangelism..

Chapter II will reveal that the role of the Trinity in the plan of salvation is primary. The mission is therefore God's mission and the church is to participate in this mission.

The term λαός refers to all of God's people and it will be seen that in the early Church there was no division between the roles of formal and informal missionaries. Both are to work side by side complementing each other in their respective activities, not denying nor ignoring the validity of the other. It will be proposed that the apostles were the ones responsible for raising up groups of believers whose witness in turn resulted in further discipling.

Consideration will also be given to the various venues and strategies used in evangelism. It will be seen that the principles of sowing and reaping were used as illustrations of the work of evangelism.

Chapter III will examine religious broadcasting in the United States of America and in Australia today. It will be shown that the majority of this broadcasting is characterised by certain factors: (i) it is very commercialised; (ii) it is the subject of strong criticism by mainline Christian denominations; (iii) it has a large viewing audience who find its ministry helpful; (iv) it is theologically superficial; (v) it is failing as an evangelistic ministry; and, (vi) it fails to function as part of the spiritual body of Christ.

Consideration will also be given to the use made of the tools of mass communication in three periods of history: (i) the second millenium B.C.; (ii) the world of Jesus' day; and, (iii) the Reformation era. In the light of this, two questions will be raised. Firstly, will not God use the electronic media of the twentieth century to help communicate the gospel? Secondly, can Christians today and in the future use these media successfully?

In Chapter IV the experiment undertaken by this writer in using television in evangelism will be described. It will be seen that he sought to avoid various mistakes made in using television by the major segment of religious broadcasters in America. This involved giving particular attention to the nature of the message proclaimed, the format and style of the television spot announcement, and, the liaison with the various congregations of the area. It also involved using a programme format which could be aired in prime time. This chapter also will describe the planning of a survey to help in the evaluation of the experiment and the organization of a Bible study fellowship.

The evaluation undertaken in the last chapter will be found to centre around firstly, an evaluation of the survey and secondly, a comparison between this experimental use of television and other similar uses of television in Australia.

CHAPTER II

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD IN EVANGELISM AND MAN'S PARTICIPATION

Evangelism is the task of every Christian. In the twentieth century Christians are confronted with ever more sophisticated communication media. These give man the means of rapid and effective dissemination of information. How is the Christian Church to use these media? To gain an understanding of the role of the media in evangelism, it is necessary to examine the means and facilities used as a method of outreach in the early church. It is also important to understand the activity of God and the work of man in the task of mission. It is this writer's view that many errors in evangelistic efforts have their basis in an inadequate and incorrect understanding of the place of the divine and the human in evangelism.

Unless one is aware of the divine sovereignty in mission, it is likely that the functions of men (or the media) will be misunderstood with certain very subtle implications. This chapter examines the sovereignty of God and also the avenues of evangelism used by the early church.

The Divine Sovereignty of God

Evangelism is a sovereign initiative of God. Man relates to evangelism according to God's free, sovereign, salvific action

in Jesus Christ and His sending of the Holy Spirit as Christ's representative on earth.

James I. Packer speaks of the antinomy between Divine sovereignty and human responsibility. This antinomy is Biblical and the danger we face arises specifically in connection with evangelism.

The temptation is to undercut and maim the one truth by the way in which we stress the other: to assert man's responsibility in a way that excludes God from being sovereign, or to affirm God's sovereignty in a way that destroys the responsibility of man. Both mistakes need to be guarded against.¹

The Divine sovereignty does not remove the duty of evangelism. There are four ways in which this is so. Sovereign grace does not affect (1) evangelism's necessity; (2) its urgency; (3) the genuineness or truth of its invitation; and (4) the responsibility of the sinner for this reaction to the Gospel. In fact, it is the sovereign grace of God which gives our only hope of success in evangelism, for the conversion of the sinner is the fruit of grace. It is not man's skills nor methods which determine whether or not evangelism is successful.² To see man's salvation as being dependent upon the faithfulness of the human instrument is to be blind to the grace of God. If one sinner is lost because of failure (or inadequacy) on man's part then salvation is dependent not on grace but on works.

¹James I. Packer, Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1961), p 25.

²Ibid., pp. 92-112.

Salvation is the work of God, and the God of Scripture is a triune God. It is in this perspective that Christians endeavour to fulfil the evangelistic commission. Jesus can say in praying to the Father: "As You sent Me into the world, I have sent them into the world" (John 17:18).¹ Not only were the disciples sent by Christ, but they were to wait in Jerusalem for the gift promised by the Father, the gift of the Holy Spirit who would give them the power to be Christ's witnesses. The Spirit is spoken of as being sent by the Father in Christ's name and of being sent by Christ Himself.

The Spirit is present in the world to continue the ministry of Jesus on a worldwide scale.² It is important to note, firstly, that while the Son was sent by the Father, nowhere in Scripture do we find the Father spoken of as being sent by the Son. Secondly, that while Jesus speaks in terms of His dependence upon the Father the reverse is never mentioned.³ Thus we see that there is a certain order in the salvific activity of God in Christ.

The intimate relationship between Christ and the Father is not to be understood simply in terms of a model for our relationship to Christ as Lord. While it is true that Christ's relationship to the Father does exemplify in some ways our relationship to the Christ, He does not speak of our relationship to God purely in terms of our relationship to Himself. It is rather our relationship

¹All Biblical quotations are from the New International Version, unless otherwise stated.

²John 5:17-19; 14:25; 15:26; 16:5-11; 17:18; 20:21; Acts 1:4,4,8.

³Matt 6:9; 15:13; 23:9; Luke 11:2,11,13; John 4:22-23.

to the Father that is emphasized. We not only see this in the way that Jesus speaks of the disciples' relationship with the Father, but also in the stress Jesus places upon His own dependence upon the Father.¹

Our relationship to God is a relationship to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Father not only sends the Son, He also is the one responsible for disciples coming to the Son. Our relationship to the Son (as distinct from the Son's relationship to us) has its source in the Father's activity.² This is a very important point which we must keep in mind as we endeavour to fulfil the Gospel commission.

The concept of the Divine initiative in salvation is essential to any understanding of mission. The Father's call precedes the Son's voice. No-one comes unless drawn by the Father. Or to put it in another way, everyone who listens to the Father and learns from Him, comes to Christ (when confronted with Him) because He is seen for who He really is: the One sent from God.³ Jesus is not the initiator or founder of the kingdom. It is God's kingdom. Jesus is the One who is sent as herald and bearer of the kingdom.⁴ Likewise with Christ's disciples, they

¹Matt 24:36; Mark 13:32; John 3:35; 5:30,36; 8:28,29,42; 10:37; 12:49,50; 14:24; 15:15. Jesus also speaks of being equal with the Father (Matt 11:27; John 5:21,26; 6:36,47; 8:16,19,58; 10:31,38).

²John 6:37-39,44; 10:29; 17:6,9,12,24; 18:9.

³John 6:44-46.

⁴Lesslie Newbigin, The Open Secret (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1978), p. 23.

are the heralds of the kingdom, not the instigators of it. Christian mission is essentially the task of the triune God. It is always thus. The involvement of human beings in this activity does not make it their activity. It is still God's work.

The chief evangelist is God the Father, and He proclaimed the evangel through His angel, His Son and His Spirit before He entrusted any part of the task to men. This was the order and the church comes at the bottom of the list. And the church's witness will always be subordinate to the Spirit's. It is less that we do the witnessing and He confirms our testimony, than that He bears the witness and we corroborate His.¹

This is not to say that the human activity is unimportant or unnecessary. Rather it is to say that the importance of man's role in evangelism lies not in the fact that it is indispensable (for it is not), but in the fact that God has chosen man to corroborate His witness. Man's role is not that of saviour. We testify to Christ the Saviour. "We present Christ for the sole, sufficient reason that He deserves to be presented."² Christian mission is not an initiative but a response. It is not so much a duty as a privilege, not so much a command as a promise.

The Evangelistic Commission

The parallel between Christ's mission and the disciples' mission is clear. Jesus stated that as the Father had sent Him, so He sent His disciples.³ They are given a definite task to

¹ John R. W. Stott, Our Guilty Silence: The Church, The Gospel and the World, Christian Foundations Series, no. 22 (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1967), p. 57.

² Idem, Christian Mission in the Modern World (London: Falcon Books, 1975), p. 78.

³ John 17:18; 20:21.

carry out. "Their mission proceeds from His. It is only because He has accomplished His mission, and indeed precisely because He has accomplished it that they are sent into the world."¹ It is as a consequence of Christ's receiving all authority in heaven and on earth that the Saviour gives the commission to go to the world. Mission is the proclamation of Christ's dominion.

John 3:16 states that, "God so loved the world that He gave His only Son." The world-wide mission was the expression of the Father's world-embracing love.

Jesus came proclaiming the establishment of His kingdom. The disciples' proclamation of the kingdom is consequent to this. Jesus made disciples, they are to make disciples. Karl Barth comments, "One thing is required of the disciples They must μαθητεύειν (make disciples). What is added in the participle clauses is not a second or a third thing alongside the first, but its elaboration."² Thus in making disciples they are to "baptise" and "teach."

Μαθητής in the Greek world denotes the man who directs his mind to something. It also implies a direct dependence of the one under instruction upon an authority superior in knowledge and emphasizes the fact that this relation cannot be dissolved.

¹ Leon Morris, The Gospel According to John: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Michigan: W. B. Eerdmans, 1971), p. 846.

² Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, 4 vols., ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1961), 4/3:861.

Fellowship of disciples continued even after the death of the teacher on the basis of the particular insights of the master.¹

In Judaism, the teacher was held in high esteem because of his great learning. For the student, submission to the Rabbi, as well as devotion to him, took precedence over that owing to father or mother. The students entered into close fellowship with their Rabbi, eating, travelling and attending weddings with him.²

The disciples of Jesus were called at His initiative. In the New Testament the master's control extends to the inner life and "we do not find any instances where μαθητής is used without this implication of a supremely personal union."³ It was this unity with Christ that resulted in the common unity of believers. Christ sent the disciples out to establish a community on earth. The relationship of this community to Christ necessitated a fellowship of a completely unique quality on earth. It was upon this community that Christ sent the Holy Spirit under whose power the disciples became the disciplers.

To carry out the gospel commission "means complete submission to Jesus Christ, constant fellowship with Him, constant devotion to Him, service to Him and obedience to Him."⁴

¹K. M. Rengstorf, "μαθητής," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1964), 4:416,423 (hereafter cited as TDNT).

²Cleon Rogers, "The Great Commission," Bibliotheca Sacra 130(1973):264.

³Rengstorf, TDNT 4:441-42. ⁴Rogers, p. 267.

(Italics mine.) This "personal relationship" is essential to evangelism and it is important to realise that the goal of evangelism is to bring people to a fellowship with God based upon a relationship restored by Jesus Christ. Evangelism must also bring the Christian community to participate in the mission of Jesus Christ to the world. Thus they must be brought into the Christian community as members of the body of Christ. Evangelism that fails in these relational dimensions fails to fulfil the commission of Jesus Christ.

Jesus and Methods of Evangelism

Jesus alluded to sowing and harvesting to illustrate the work of evangelism. In John 4:35-38 Jesus addresses His disciples at the well, having shortly before finished His discussion with the Samaritan woman. He states to His disciples,

Did you not say, "Four months more and then the harvest?" I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life, so that the sower and reaper may be glad together. Thus the saying 'One sows and another reaps' is true. I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labour.

Four months was a commonly understood length of time between the sowing and the harvest of grain.¹ It seems probable that Jesus points His disciples to the fields of grain ready for harvest. They took four months to grow. Then drawing their attention to the crowd of white-robed Samaritans the woman is bringing to

¹Morris, pp. 278-79. Morris refers to John Lightfoot: Horae Hebraicae et Talmudicae (London: n.p., 1823), n.p.

Jesus,¹ He draws a contrast between nature and grace in the fact that the crowd are ready for harvesting now.² He then states a proverb: that "one sows and another reaps," making the application that they are reaping the harvest sown by the labours of others.³ Jesus no doubt has in mind the fact that He is the seed which falls into the ground and dies bringing forth an abundant harvest.⁴ (It is interesting to note that elsewhere Jesus thinks in terms of the reaping taking place at the second advent.)⁵

There are therefore certain dimensions to evangelism. Firstly, there is the work of Christ and particularly His death on the cross. Secondly, there is the fact that people, in evangelising, are involved in sowing and reaping. Sometimes in sowing, sometimes in reaping, and sometimes in both. Thirdly, are the facts that one can sow and never reap and one can reap who has never sown.

In Scripture, evangelism is seen in terms of proclaiming a message. The emphasis is on the activity of spreading the message and not on the results.⁶ The verb "to evangelise" is used

¹H. V. Morton, In the Steps of the Master, 4th ed. (London: Rich and Cowan, 1935), p. 154.

²William Barclay, The Gospel of John, The Daily Study Bible, 2 vols., 2d ed. (Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, 1956), 1:160-161.

³The others probably refer to the Old Testament prophets and John the Baptist.

⁴John 12:24. ⁵Matt 13:39.

⁶See for example Acts 17:4; Luke 4:43; Acts 8:4; Gal 1:11; 2 Cor 11:7; Luke 4:18; Rom 1:15; Acts 8:35,40. It is only in one of these passages that any reference is made to the outcome

with particular reference to the content of the message.¹ To evangelise is to sow (the seed) and to reap. Jesus, when He spoke of some reaping and where they had not sown, did not imply in any way that the sower was not involved in the task of evangelising. On the contrary He saw both fulfilling the evangelistic task. Paul also spoke in terms of one person sowing, and another watering, and of God giving the increase.² All the four soils of the parable of the sower were "evangelised," though only one was fruitful. It was the condition of the soil that determined the response not the method of the sower.³ It is therefore incorrect to evaluate evangelism in terms of its success (or results). It must be evaluated in terms of its spreading of the evangel.

A further point is that Jesus at times spoke to crowds⁴ and at times to individuals.⁵ He thus evangelised the masses but He also used the personal interview. It would have been a physical impossibility for Him (or the disciples) to get to know everyone personally or to have time to build a deep relationship with each person in the crowds to whom they spoke. There is therefore

(Acts 8:35), where we are told of a conversion as a consequence.

¹G. Friedrich, "εὐαγγελίζομαι," TDNT, 2:718.

²1 Cor 3:5-8.

³It is important that we sow the seed. Our message must be the message of Scripture and the Christ of Scripture. Sowing chaff will bring no harvest.

⁴Matt 5:1; Luke 5:1,2; John 6:2,22. Similarly, at Pentecost and in the evangelism of the apostle Paul, there was the proclamation to the masses.

⁵John 3:1-21; 4:9-27.

a place for both the one-to-one approach and "crowd" evangelism.

One final point: Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost.¹ Without Christ man would have passed into eternal oblivion. It is the love in the heart of the eternal God that motivates the mission of Jesus Christ to ransom the human race from its sin. Each individual has now the choice of accepting or rejecting the free gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ.

The House

The development of special buildings for churches is not mentioned in the New Testament, and it is most likely that they did not exist. Harnack states that the first evidence for church buildings is in the time of Commodus, and that the oldest known church building is that of the church of Edessa which was destroyed in AD 201.² The term 'church' referred to the community of believers which is a spiritual body. In speaking of the Pauline usage of the term ἐκκλησία Robert Banks states that "the term could only be applied to an actual gathering of people, or to a group that gathers viewed as a regularly constituted meeting and not . . . to a number of local assemblies conceived as part of a larger unit."³

¹Luke 19:10 (Luke 15:4,6,24,32).

²Adolph Harnack, The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries, 2 vols., 2 ed., rev. and enl. (London: Williams and Norgate, 1908), 2:85-86.

³Robert Banks, Paul's Idea of Community: The Early House Churches in Their Historical Setting (Surrey Hills, N.S.W.: Anzea Publishers, 1979), p. 43.

The meeting places of the New Testament church communities were the homes of the believers. We find them meeting in the upper room after Christ's ascension. Peter, after being released from jail, went to the house of John Mark's mother where a meeting was being held. While the synagogue played an important role in Paul's evangelism, once the Christian community was formed it was the houses that filled the function of meeting places.¹ Paul speaks of the church which is in the house.² As the Christian community grew it was necessary to form other house-churches.³ Thus there would often be several house-churches in one city. The use of homes as churches lent itself to hospitality and no doubt did much to foster the spirit of fellowship among the believers. Paul emphasises the supreme importance of loving one another throughout his letters. His use of the term "church" reveals that what could be predicated for the individual community was also true of the church as a whole. Thus while every community was a unit in itself it was also a microcosm of the whole church. In speaking of the social characteristics of the Christian community, Harnack states,

It was this and not any evangelist which proved to be the most effective missionary. In fact, we may take it for granted that the mere existence and persistent activity of the individual Christian communities did more than anything else to bring about the extension of the Christian religion.⁴

¹Acts 12:12; 28:17.

²Rom 16:5; 1 Cor 16:9; Col 4:15; Phil 2.

³Harnack, 2:86. ⁴Ibid., 1:434.

The home was not only the place of Christian worship. It was also a place of Christian witness. It was to their home that Priscilla and Aquilla invited Appollos, that they might explain to him the way of God more adequately.¹ It was in the home of Justus that Paul spoke to the Corinthians.² At times whole families were baptised together.³ It was most likely that Paul used the homes of those with whom he was staying as meeting places to which people came to hear the gospel. It is logical to conclude that the hospitality shown to Paul would also have been extended to non-believers in the community with the goal of making disciples of them.

The Synagogue

Paul frequently spoke in the synagogues. "Visitors were often honoured by being invited to preach the sermon. This privilege Paul often utilised as an opportunity to preach the gospel."⁴ After delivering the sermon he was frequently invited back, and would preach for several consecutive weeks and in some cases even months.⁵ His preaching usually resulted in opposition from the Jews and his expulsion from the synagogue.⁶ Luke is

¹Acts 18:26. ²Acts 18:7. ³Acts 16:31-34; 1 Cor 1:16.

⁴"Synagogue," Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1960) pp. 1054-56 (hereafter cited as SDABD). See also Acts 13:14-16; 17:1,2,10,11; 18:4; 19:8.

⁵Acts 17:2; 19:8.

⁶Acts 9:20-23; 13:13,14-50; 14:1-6; 17:2-5; 18:4-6; 19:8-9.

always careful to point out that some believed, and it is these believers who formed the nucleus of the church. It is most probable that Paul continued meeting with the believers in their homes. Acts 17:7-8 shows us that Paul, after being expelled from the synagogue, went to the house of Titius Justus "and many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptised." Acts 19:8-9 records that Paul, after being expelled from the synagogue went to the lecture hall of Tyrannus. Tyrannus was probably a teacher of rhetoric, philosophy or other subjects.¹

It is important to realize that the synagogue was not only a means used to communicate with the Jews, but also with the Greeks, particularly the god-fearers who were attracted to the God of the Jews. At times it seems that the number of Greeks in the synagogue probably even outnumbered the Jews.²

The Market Place

In the New Testament times the ἀγορά denoted not only the market place, but the broad places in the streets which were places of concourse, like the market place.³ In the cities it comprised the large public squares and it was there that the people gathered to listen to the orators or to discuss politics or other subjects.⁴ Acts 17:5 refers to the ἀγοαίων ἄνδρας.

¹"Tyrannus," SDABD, p. 1115. ²Acts 18:44.

³"Market," Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature, 12 vols. (New York: Harper, 1874; reprint ed., Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1969), 5:763 (hereafter cited as CBTEL.)

⁴"Market Place," SDABD, p. 687.

These people were the idle, the unoccupied and the newsmongers who lounged about the market place.¹

Wandering philosophers took advantage of this meeting place to address the people and present their ideas. The disciples of the Stoa and of the Cynic philosophy were especially active in their itinerant propaganda.² The people of the cities were quite accustomed to seeing and hearing itinerant missionaries. In Acts 17:17 we read of Paul conducting market-place evangelism. It states that he "reasoned in the market-place day by day with those who happened to be there." Despite the disadvantages,³ Paul used these outdoor meeting places as a means of communicating the gospel to whomever was willing to listen, and even in the ἀγορά on Mars Hill he met with some positive response.⁴

The Evangelist

Itinerant preachers and philosophers were common in the days of New Testament. We do not know of one Jew comparable to Paul.⁵ There is no evidence that the Jews had a formal missionary programme.⁶ We know more of the preachers of popular philosophy who sought to present their teachings to the public. "The

¹"Market," CBTEL, 5:763.

²Adolf Deissman, St. Paul: A Study in Social and Religious History (London: Hodder and Stoughton, n.d.), p. 198.

³Acts 17:5; 18:18. ⁴Acts 17:34.

⁵Samuel Sandmel, The First Christian Century in Judaism and Christianity: Certainties and Uncertainties (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 22.

⁶Ibid., p. 50.

philosopher became a street-corner orator, and the Cynics in particular preached their "gospel" to all who would listen."¹ One example of these itinerant philosophers is Apollonius of Tyana who travelled around Asia Minor as a teacher-healer in the first century. A.D.²

The term "evangelist" occurs only three times in the New Testament. In all three, the evangelists are subordinate to the apostles although there is little difference between them. All apostles were evangelists, but not all evangelists were apostles.³ The New Testament gives us no definition of their functions, nor does it give any detailed and practical working of the church. A deacon could exercise the function of an evangelist.⁴ The member of the local congregation was a missionary to those within the sphere of his everyday life, and with the dispersion became a missionary to other geographical locations. One difference between the informal missionary and the apostles (or evangelists) seems to have been the task of preaching and teaching. However, it is very difficult to determine clear categories or differences between the informal and the formal missionaries. One fact is clear in the New Testament. The

¹C. K. Barrett, ed., The New Testament Background: Selected Documents (London: S.P.C.K., 1956), p. 75.

²Eduard Lohse, The New Testament Background: Selected Documents (London: S.P.C.K., 1956), p. 75.

³G. Friedrich, "εὐαγγελιστής," TDNT, 2:737.

⁴Acts 8:25, 1 Cor 1:17.

activities of the formal missionaries are given considerably more attention than those of the informal missionaries.¹

If we take Paul's missionary activity as an example of formal evangelism, certain characteristics stand out. Firstly, Paul saw that his first responsibility was to teach the gospel, to communicate knowledge.² Secondly, he was an itinerant. That is to say that the portions of his life that we have recorded deal with his missionary journeys. Thirdly, Paul saw his task as taking the gospel into unentered regions. After having raised up a community of believers he would leave its care largely to others.³ Eusebius records how the itinerant evangelists (immediately succeeding the apostles), having laid the foundations, appointed shepherds and then moved on.⁴ Thus it can be said to a certain extent, that Paul saw his mission in terms of taking the gospel into previously unentered regions, whereas the member of the community saw his mission in terms of taking the gospel to those he met in his everyday associations. There was, however, no distinction drawn by the early church between the responsibility of the full-time ministry and the laity to spread the gospel.

All missionaries sought to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to those around them. It was the content of the message,

¹In Acts 8, for example, v.1 records the dispersion of the believers, while the rest of the chapter records the activity of Philip the evangelist.

²1 Tim 1:10-14; Acts 9:29; 17:2,17; 18:11; Eph 3:8.

³Romans 15:20. ⁴Church History, 3.37.2-3.

rather than only the work of the men, that resulted in the spread of Christianity. For Paul, the heart of the gospel is the story of the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus. While in the early church the writings containing the acts and words of Jesus came to be given the name gospel, "in the New Testament εὐαγγέλιον is oral preaching."¹

Not only did the missionaries proclaim the gospel, the way they lived and died for their Lord and Saviour and the miracles that accompanied their preaching authenticated it. Michael Green refers to the factors of their example, fellowship, transformed characters, joy, endurance and power.² "Christlikeness is the sine qua non of evangelism."³ The impact of healings and exorcisms in a world with inadequate medical services and oppressed by belief in demons was a factor of considerable importance in the advance of the gospel.⁴

This way of living was not the sole prerogative of the formal missionary. Nor is it correct to conclude that the major task of evangelism was accomplished by the formal missionary. Harnack states,

The most numerous and successful missionaries of the Christian religion were not the regular teachers but Christians themselves, in virtue of their loyalty and courage. How little we hear of the former and their results! How much we hear

¹G. Friedrich, "εὐαγγέλιον," TDNT, 2:727-36.

²Michael G. Green, Evangelism in the Early Church (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1975), p. 193.

³*Ibid.*, p. 184.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 188. One must be careful not to over-emphasize the role of the miraculous in the spread of the gospel.

of the effects produced by the latter! We cannot hesitate to believe that the great mission of Christianity was in reality accomplished by means of informal missionaries.¹

Strategies

Did the early evangelists have a strategy for a worldwide mission? While Paul may not have planned the itinerary of his missionary tours, he states that it was his purpose "to preach the gospel where Christ was not known"² and that he planned to go to Rome³ and Spain.⁴ All the towns in which we know that Paul established Christian communities were centres of Roman administration, Greek civilisation, Jewish influence or of some commercial importance.⁵ Paul had a deliberate policy of commencing his evangelism with the leaders in society when he entered a new area.⁶

Roland Allen has certain reservations regarding the possibility of Paul's having a strategy.⁷ This appears to arise from the possibility of concluding that once the strategic centres have been exposed to the proclamation of the gospel, the task of the evangelist is completed. Those who conclude this fail to understand that Paul saw the work of spreading the gospel as having just begun in a centre when a Christian community was established.

¹Harnack, 1:368. ²Rom 15:20. ³Acts 19:21.

⁴Rom 15:24,28.

⁵Roland Allen, Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours? (London: World Dominion Press, 1960), pp. 13-14.

⁶Green, p. 256. ⁷Allen, pp. 12-16.

Paul's strategy of mission seems to have been to do as much as he possibly could to spread the gospel into as much of the world as was possible.¹ He thus had certain plans, but at the same time was flexible enough to follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit.² His activities in spreading the gospel were sometimes premeditated, and at other times carried out when the opportunity presented itself.

Laity in the New Testament

The term λαός occurs 140 times in the New Testament. In the majority of its uses it simply means "people" or "population." It is also used to mean "Israel." It is used figuratively for the "Christian community." This meaning is found especially in the writings of Paul and is not found at all in the gospels. Acts 15:14 refers to the fact that God started (with the conversion of Cornelius, Acts 10) to take from the Gentiles a people for Himself. It is faith that is the deciding factor. The old biologico-historical or national element is of no significance.³

The laity are God's people. Entrance into the community is by baptism. In this community there is a unity and a diversity. Paul speaks of the diversity in unity in 1 Corinthians 12:12, where he states, "For just as the body is one and has many members,

¹Paul's view of the world was that of the Roman Empire. Whether he thought of the people lying beyond its border we do not know.

²Acts 16:6,9,10.

³H. Strathmann, "λαός," TDNT, 4:50.

and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ." The structure of the church is not hierarchical but functional. The gifts are given at the discretion of the Spirit, and are for the building up of the body, not the building up of the recipient.¹ The classification of the church into the two groups of clergy and laymen is foreign to the New Testament. Just as each part of the human body is to fulfil its function within the sphere of the body as a whole, so with the church. The gifts belong to the body, and evangelism is part of the church's ministry.

The Role of the Laity in Evangelism

Jesus did not call all His followers to the full-time task of being formal missionaries. While the twelve were called in this way, Jesus had many intimate friends who, as far as we know, remained in their occupations.

While the church is referred to as the body of Christ, it is not to be understood in the sense of a second incarnation. The incarnation of Jesus is a unique, unrepeatable event. Paul, in Ephesians 5:23, states that, "Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which He is the Saviour." In the functioning of the body is to be seen a reflection of Christ's ministry. His love, His life and His care for humanity is to be reflected in its care for others. It is the church's privilege to proclaim Christ to the world by word and example.

¹1 Cor 12:11.

Since λαός refers to all of God's people, it is the laity who conduct all evangelism. Evangelists are those members of the body (or laity) who have the gift of evangelism. The evangelist is one of the laity. The concepts of laity and evangelism in Scripture do not allow for the division into two hierarchical groups of formal and informal missionaries. Thus, evangelism in the New Testament is understood as the task of the λαός. This task is pursued by each individual according to his gifts and the specific guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Paul not only worked to spread the gospel as an itinerant apostle. He often refused the support from the tithe which was rightly due to him.¹ He thus worked as an artisan and in this activity worked as a missionary.

Artisan-missionaries were not uncommon in Paul's day. We have examples of artisan-philosophers in Simon the shoemaker, Demetrius of Sunium (who was a porter), Dio Chrysostom and Musonius Rufus. Workshops, including those of the shoemaker or leather-worker, were used as a setting for intellectual discourse, a setting though, used primarily by Cynic philosophers. It is likely that Paul carried on his missionary activity in these workshops.²

It is also likely that the artisans who were Christians used their places of labour in a similar way. The Christian artisans then spread the gospel in an informal way, and it is

¹1 Cor 9:14,15.

²Ronald F. Hock, The Social Context of Paul's Ministry: Tentmaking and Apostleship (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), pp. 37-42.

thus that Christianity spread by the gossiping of the gospel by informal missionaries going about their day to day business.

In the spread of Christianity in the first two centuries there was little, if any, preaching to the masses. A pagan made contact with a Christian and the message of Jesus Christ was shared with the world.¹

Conclusion

The New Testament reveals that there was no division between the roles of the formal and informal missionaries in the early church. Both worked side by side complementing each other in their respective fields. There was not categorising of one group as professionals and another as helpers. The role of one was not affirmed at the expense of the other. All played an active part according to their abilities, each respecting the other.

The avenues and methods that each used were largely determined by what was available to them. Paul used the synagogue, the market-place and the workshop. While the mass media of the twentieth century have no equivalents in the first century, certain conclusions may be drawn regarding their use in evangelism today. Summarised, these are:

1. It is the sovereign grace of God that brings about the successful accomplishment of evangelism.
2. God the Father sent His Son Jesus Christ who commissioned his

¹Arthur D. Nock, Conversion: The Old and the New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 212.

followers to be heralds of the kingdom. They were to go and make disciples after they had received the Holy Spirit. This was and is their responsibility.

3. The witness of men is subordinate to the witness of the spirit.

4. The task of the gospel commission is to make disciples, which involves a personal relationship to Jesus Christ and His body on earth, the church.

5. The communication of a message is an important and essential part of evangelism. The media of today are means of helping to communicate the Christian message.

6. The media do not fulfil the role of the Holy Spirit, the Christian church or the Christian missionary. They must complement the Christian community in their outreach. They must not be used in a way that negates, replaces or ignores the making of disciples and the consequent fellowship of believers.

7. Since men such as Paul used every opportunity (and means) available to them to spread the gospel and make disciples, it is consistent that the media be used today as aids in evangelism.

8. In view of the function of the media, it may be better to describe their role as that of pre-evangelism.

CHAPTER III

THE USE OF TELEVISION BY RELIGIOUS GROUPS

Religious Broadcasting in the U.S.A.

The advent of the mass media in the twentieth century has provided religious organizations with a seemingly spectacular new means of spreading the good news. Ben Armstrong, executive director of National Religious Broadcasters in the United States, expresses the feelings of quite a number of church leaders when he states: "I believe that God has raised up this powerful technology of radio and television expressly to reach every man, woman, boy and girl on earth with the even more powerful message of the gospel."¹ Could it be that he is correct? Do radio and television have the potential of being used to this extent? Serious thought needs to be given to the use of the electronic media in fulfilling the evangelistic commission.

In the United States the Communications Act of 1934 attempted to bring to order the burgeoning broadcast industry.

¹Ben Armstrong as quoted in Jeffrey K. Hadden, "Soul-Saving via Video," The Christian Century May 28 1980, p. 611. Similar views can be found in the Seventh-day Adventist church. For example, M. Carol Hetzell (former Director of the General Conference Communication Department) stated of radio and television: "These two avenues of communication hold out for the church the greatest hope of finishing its assignment to reach all the world with this message." M. Carol Hetzell, "Evangelism Electrified," Tell, May 1978, p. 1.

W. C. Winslow states:

The argument was that the airwaves belong to the people but because the electronic spectrum is limited, only a few can use those radio signals. In granting a license to those few individuals--in essence, a monopoly--the government realized that it had to safeguard the rights of the public. So in return for that monopoly, broadcasters were required by the Federal Communications Commission to serve 'the public convenience, interest and necessity.' Broad segments of the public had to be served including, but not exclusively, serving the religious community.¹

Mainline Protestant denominations formed local and national councils of Churches broadcasting units. The result was that these liberal Protestant groups became the de facto voice of Christianity over the nation's airwaves. Fundamentalists were left out until the early 1970's when they started buying fringe time. Sunday morning commercial religious television was born. Today, commercial religion controls 93 per cent of all religious programming. The mainline denominations are all but left out.²

Pat Robertson was the first to introduce organised Christian fund-raising on television. Therefore, in a sense, he can be considered the father of commercial religious television of the type supported by viewers' contributions. A Yale lawyer turned religious broadcaster, he opened several television stations. He led the way to the production and distribution of syndicated Christian

¹William C. Winslow, "Christians on the Air," Christian Century, 4 November 1981, pp. 1135-36. Similarly, in Australia the Broadcasting and Television Act of 1942 required radio and television stations by law to provide a certain amount of time each week free of charge for religious broadcasting. See Broadcasting and Television Act (1942-1973) (Canberra, Australian Government Printer, 1979), p. 72.

²Winslow, pp. 1135-36.

television programmes.¹ His television ministry has grown into Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN). His ninety-minute programme, 'The Seven Hundred Club',² appears on 130 television stations and 3,500 cable television systems, and four CBN-owned stations five days a week. It is also broadcast in twenty-two foreign countries. In 1978 his television appeals brought in fifty-eight million dollars.³ His programmes are produced at a twenty-six million dollar production centre in Virginia Beach.⁴ His annual income is estimated at forty-seven million dollars.⁵

Jim Bakker considers that his spiritual gift, his specific calling from God, is to be a television talk show host. He hosts the PTL Club ("Praise the Lord" or "People that Love"). Bakker is supported monthly by 700,000 PTL partners. His television studio is considered one of the best in the world. His daily two-hour programme is aired throughout the United States through 200 broadcast affiliates. The PTL club's satellite, an RCA Satcom I, broadcasts Christian programming twenty-four hours a day. The PTL studio also underwrites a \$2,000,000 Spanish programme seen in seventeen

¹Tom Bisset, "Religious Broadcasting Comes of Age," Christianity Today, 4 September, 1981, pp. 33-34.

²The Seven Hundred Club was named for the first 700 people who agreed to become partners and contribute ten dollars a month.

³James M. Wall, "God's Piece of Cheese," Christian Century, 27 February 1980, pp. 214-20.

⁴Richard M. Hirsch, "The Electronic Church," International Review of Mission 71(1982):100-101.

⁵Kenneth S. Kantzer, "Making the Most of the Electronic Church," Christianity Today, 6 February 1981, pp. 14-15.

Spanish-speaking countries.¹

Bakker's dreams extend beyond the television ministry. He believes he received a direct revelation from God to build "Heritage Village." It comprises a mansion, studio, well-equipped offices, sauna, massage room, and \$200,000 swimming pool, all set in immaculately kept gardens. This project, however, is dwarfed by the "Total Living Centre." It is a luxury holiday resort and includes a university for 12,000 students and everything else one would expect of the best in its class. This project is estimated to cost around \$100,000,000 but has not yet been completed.²

The message of Bakker is that God will bless Christians when they turn to Him. When we give to God He gives more in return. When in distress we turn to God He will solve our problems--always. He consistently holds to a health and wealth theology. For the thorough-going Christian all goes well--continually. Thus parading past his cameras are a constant stream of successful problem-free people.

Other leading personalities in religious television have been classified in the following manner:

'The Supersavers' (Billy Graham, Oral Roberts, Rex Humbard, Jerry Falwell) 'The Mainliner' (Robert Schuller), 'The Talkies' (Pat Robertson, Jim Bakker), 'The Entertainers' (Jimmy Swaggart, Ross Bagley), 'The rising Stars' (James Robison, Kenneth Copeland, Jack Van Impe). And they [Hadden and Swann] separate all these from 'The Teachers' (Richard De Haan and Paul Van gorder of "Day of Discovery" on which there is no

¹Philip Yancey, "The Ironies and Impact of PTL," Christianity Today, 21 September 1979, pp. 28-33.

²Ibid.

solicitation over the air, only offers of a free Bible course for serious study), and Frank Pollard's 'At Home with the Bible' a Southern Baptist study which neither buys time nor solicits funds on the air.¹

Most electronic evangelists claim to have very large viewing audiences. In 1981 Bakker claimed to have 20,000,000 viewers, Rex Humbard up to 100,000,000 viewers, Jerry Falwell 15,000,000 viewers, James Robison 50,000,000 to 60,000,000 viewers. Research by various organizations (Harris, Gallup, private research companies and academics) show with remarkable uniformity that the estimates cited above are all absurd.² Hadden and Swann state that Falwell's audience is "fewer than one and a half million each week (a fraction of the figure he claims)."³ The Arbitron⁴ audience survey figures state that:

Apparently the combined audience for all syndicated religion programmes jumped dramatically from about ten million in 1970 to more than twenty million in 1975, and has been dropping ever since.⁵

¹Jeffrey K. Hadden and Charles E. Swann, Prime Time Preachers as quoted in William F. Fore, "A Critical Eye on Televangelism," The Christian Century 23 September 1981, pp. 939-941. Fore also states that: "In 1979, income raised by Falwell's television programme was thirty-five million dollars while its operating costs for direct-mail appeals promotion, and administration (including maintaining Falwell's twelve-room house and private jet) amounted to twenty-six million dollars. Thus, 'the fund raising vehicle itself spent more than five dollars to every seven dollars it earned.'" p. 939.

²Kenneth J. Holland, "Electronic church Audience Declines," These Times, November 1981, p. 14.

³Fore, p. 940.

⁴Arbitron, and also Nielson, are two companies and they constitute the primary ratings services for television.

⁵Ibid. These figures do not include cable television which has a disproportionately high number of viewers according

Peter Horsfield also draws attention to this trend and states that "the pattern indicates market saturation by religious programmes."¹

Religious broadcasting is making considerable impact--as ex-president Jimmy Carter's presence at the thirty-seventh annual meeting of the National Religious broadcasters indicated.² Hadden and Swann consider "televangelism"³ a phenomenon of considerable significance for the future of religion in the United States. They state: "The televangelists are destined to play a critical role in the shaping of the balance of the twentieth century. They have more undisputed access to the airwaves than any other social movement in American society."⁴

A favourite technique used by every major electronic evangelist is the "Give-to-Get" ploy. The message is: if you give--really give--to God He will return that gift to you and much more. If after giving you have not received then it is

to audience response. Nor does it take into account those people who watch more than one program. Hadden and Swann consider the unduplicated audience to be around five to eight million. Even if their estimate is too low the unduplicated audience would still be considerably less than twenty million.

¹Peter C. Horsfield, "Religious Broadcasting at the Crossroads," The Christian Century, 27 January 1982, p. 87.

²Edward E. Plowman, "Carter's Presence Confirms Clout of Evangelical Broadcasters," Christianity Today, 22 February 1980, p. 48.

³Televangelism is a term used to describe the use of television to broadcast the Christian religion to the viewing public with the aim of evangelising.

⁴Hadden and swann, as quoted in Fore, p. 939.

because you have not given enough. And so countless thousands are drawn in and give sacrificially in the false hope of an abundant life in return. Some even borrow money to support their evangelist. Unfortunately, as all false promises it is disappointment not the abundant life that is the lot of the credulous.¹

Hadden and Swann categorize the themes of most of television's super-preachers into three areas.

First, the televangelists refer to the demonic to relieve the feelings of guilt: 'Jesus washes away all sins and the devil is responsible for all backsliding.' Second, they emphasize one variation or another of the power of positive thinking: 'If you would just let God be in command of your life, everything would be super A-O.K. Only the devil can mess up God's glorious plan for your life. But the devil cannot win, and his daily encroachment on Christians' lives can be checked, if they would just stick together.' Third, they preach that 'It's all right to look out for yourself; human selfishness, properly viewed, is not a sin.'²

One of the more fascinating innovations of the electronic church is the use of pseudo-personal letters. These letters, often composed solely by computers, include personalized paragraphs composed from data carefully and skilfully gleaned from mail-ins. This gives the viewer a sense of personal involvement (albeit false) and together with the contributions they make

¹Another favourite technique is Successful People. The evangelist interviews a person who describes how bad things were till he let God into his life and how wonderful everything has been since. The message is simple: believe in God and all will be wonderful for you too. However, when viewers find it doesn't all work out wonderfully they blame themselves and sink deeper into discouragement and self-doubt. Fore, "Beyond the Electronic Church," The Christian Century, 7 January 1981, p. 30.

²Fore, "Critical Eye," p. 940.

to support the program enable them to feel that they are contributing a successful evangelistic outreach. As Fore states: "Alone in the privacy of their living rooms, the electronic communicants are able to transcend their sense of loneliness and little worth."¹

Mail serves another useful purpose to the electronic evangelist. It is a means of assessing with Gallup-like accuracy the preferences of the audience. This in turn enables the producers to focus on those issues and emphases that bring in the mail (and the money).² Thus due to his need to raise funds (to stay on the air) and to have a sizeable audience, the "televangelist" is under pressure to tailor his programme (and message) to the whims of the viewing audience.

The electronic church is big business. "The Wall Street Journal estimates that the phenomenon generates a cash flow of a half billion dollars a year."³ Several major United States newspapers, including the New York Times, and Dr. Ben Armstrong (executive secretary of National Religious Broadcasters) would place the figure for religious radio and television broadcasting "somewhere in excess of one billion dollars."⁴ It is obvious

¹Ibid.

²J. Thomas Bisset, "Religious Broadcasting: Assessing the State of the Art," Christianity Today, 12 December 1980, p.29.

³Hirsch, p. 101, and also Kantzer, p. 150. It should be noted that this figure includes religious radio as well as religious television.

⁴Bisset, "Assessing the State," p. 28.

that religious broadcasting has a large group of committed and generous contributors who believe that the ministry of the electronic church is in some way worthwhile. Gallup poll data reveals that, "twenty-six percent of those who watch religious television said they contribute ten percent or more of their income to religious causes. An additional 12 percent reported giving between five and nine percent."¹

Because the electronic church is dominated by a dozen or so big names does not mean that they are the only people using television as a tool in Christian witness. An exhaustive coverage of all other ministries is impossible. However it is worthwhile to look briefly at some of them.

Frederick Price is pastor of the Crenshaw Christian centre in Inglewood California. With a church membership that has tripled to over 9,000 he used television in his ministry. The centre's television programme, "Ever-Increasing Faith," is enormously popular in Los Angeles. However, Frederick Price does not credit the increase in membership to television but rather to personal witness. He uses television "not to build membership but to teach the Bible."²

A Lutheran programme "Lutherans of the Prairie," which

¹Ibid. It should be noted that the money is donated to religious causes which may (and probably does) include the electronic church. Also it would be interesting to know whether those donating money to the electronic church did so because they saw it as an evangelistic outreach or because it met a need in their lives.

²Lloyd Billingsley, "They Line Up for Hours to Get into this Los Angeles Church," Christianity Today, 5 March 1982, pp. 76-77.

topped the Sunday morning ratings for its area takes a different approach. The format involves presenting the viewers with real-life experiences: a funeral director whose views changed dramatically following his son's death, a retarded person's expressions of anguish over the mockery he endures. The programme went to exceptional effort to be accurate, warm and humane.¹

Some lesser known televangelists use television as an evangelistic medium but unlike the superstars use personal follow-up. Dick Jewett's "Lifeguard" programme in San Francisco is one example. Follow-up involves group therapy, and pastor's Bible classes provide entry into the church.² Henry Feyerabend in Toronto has built his church from twelve members to around 400 through his television programme. His concept of follow-up is:

Love them into the church, keep them busy in the church, have a good Sunday night evangelistic meeting and win them in eye-to-eye, heart-to-heart personal Bible study.³

Mike Wallace and Don Preston are pastors who while pastoring churches, produce a weekly television programme with the help of various laymen. It is financed by the congregations (and thus does not solicit funds on the air). The programme, "Christian Magazine," conducts interviews and covers events. It attempts to appeal to unbelievers by demonstrating spiritual interpretations. For example, the programme on the Little Olympics drew

¹Burton Everist, "The Electronic Ostriches," The Christian Century, 13 May 1981, p. 547.

²Dewitt S. Williams, "Goals for Radio - T.V. Work," Tell, December 1978, p. 2.

³Ibid.

on the Apostle Paul's metaphor of "fighting the good fight" and "finishing the course." Christian Magazine is aired over the local cable station and has a potential audience of 15,000. Its purpose is "to challenge traditional and current thinking, as Christ did with the Pharisees, and cause people to think and examine the Bible for themselves."¹

Don Wildmon as a Christian approaches the medium of television from a different perspective. Television, he believes, practises religious discrimination. "Religious people are shown as fools, . . . family life is distorted, and traditional values are woefully under-represented."² Christians are continually ridiculed and belittled. To continually present Christians, their values and culture, in a negative light is a gross injustice. Thus by boycotts and lobbying Wildmon seeks to correct the situation.³ He aims to reduce the number of programmes which

¹Vesta-Nadine Robertson, "A Church takes 'Christian Magazine' to the Tube," Christianity Today, 26 June 1981, p. 23.

²Ron Alridge, "One Vote For a Country-Slick Preacher," Christianity Today, November 6 1981, p. 64.

³Ibid. Wildmon also states that:
 "People make decisions based on Christian principles, but rarely on television. People pray, but rarely on television. Every community in America has local churches and synagogues that contribute to the good of their local communities and this country; but they don't exist in television. The Christian faith has healed the alcoholic, rehabilitated the criminal, rejoined the broken home, helped the teen-age drug addict find purpose, and undergirded the ethics of business people. But you would never know this by watching network television. Christians . . . adopt children no one else wants to. . . . Christians have built hospitals, schools and institutions of help and compassion." Donald E. Wildmon, "Let's Get Religion in the Picture," Christianity Today, 19 February 1982, p.11.

misrepresent Christians and replace them with those depicting Christianity and Christians more accurately.

Religious Broadcasting in Australia

Religious television broadcasting in Australia probably began with the telecasting of the traditional services of the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England. This form of broadcasting continues today. Whereas the church services are usually broadcast on the ABC, it falls to the lot of the commercial stations to broadcast the televangelist (such as Schuller, Humbard and Vandeman).

Generally the pattern of religious broadcasting has mirrored that of America with the mainline churches entering religious broadcasting using the free time supplied by law to air their church services. They were followed by the fundamentalist organizations and individuals buying time in order to gain access to the airwaves.

The mainline churches in Australia have banded together to form the Christian T.V. Association. They produce a variety of programmes with formats such as: interviews, discussions, and religious documentaries. Today they are also involved with commercial television and use advertising time (much of it prime time). This is used to air a variety of thirty and sixty-second spots often related to a song or passage of scripture.

Other religious groups have been confined mainly to the Sunday 8:00 A.M. to 12:00 M. time period. Their programmes have been mainly half-an-hour to one hour in length, and seventy

percent are produced in the United States of America.¹ In an attempt to obtain air time in reasonably rated time-slots they have experimented with short spot messages aired in peak viewing periods. These fall into three categories: (1) Those produced by the Christian Television Association, (2) Those produced as community service messages (such as the Mormon and Catholic churches' 'family life' type formats and church-sponsored community aid appeals), and (3) Others produced for airing in paid commercial time-slots, (such as Seventh-day Adventist church-sponsored messages advertising evangelistic meetings, offering Bible study courses, or promoting community health).

The Use of the Media by the Seventh-day Adventist Church

Seventh-day Adventists have been quick to seize the opportunities offered by the media for broadcasting the message of scripture. Broadcasts commenced in 1923 from the present site of Andrews University in Michigan. H.M.S. Richards began broadcasting in 1930 in Los Angeles. Today Adventists make 3,500 radio broadcasts and some 600 television broadcasts every week. Well-known programmes (and broadcasters) include "Voice of Prophecy" (commenced in 1931 by H.M.S. Richards), "Quiet Hour" (commenced in 1937 by J. and L. Tucker), "Faith for Today" (commenced in 1950 by W. and F. Fagal) and "It is Written" (commenced by George Vandeman). Today these programmes are produced at the Media Centre in Thousand Oaks, California a

¹Phillip Adams, "What in God's Name is Going On?" The Bulletin, 30 August 1983, p. 47.

far cry from the chicken-coop office used by H.M.S. Richards in 1930.¹

Various programme formats have been used. "It is Written" for example, is a documentary/lecture style presentation. "Faith for Today" is basically a drama-style presentation with comments by W. A. Fagal. These programmes are generally broadcast on Sunday mornings. Access to better-rated viewing times is very difficult to obtain. This has resulted in efforts to use thirty-second or one minute spots, or where possible five minute programmes.

Various formats have been used in different countries. For example: in Indonesia evangelistic meetings have been broadcast on television.² In Brazil ten minute preaching segments (on television) have been used to create interest in large evangelistic campaigns. Thirty second spots in prime time drawing people's attention to Mother's Day, and five minute programmes focussing on social and domestic problems received enthusiastic responses.³ In Holland television advertising dramatically increased attendance at Five-day Plans to stop smoking.⁴

In Australia the Seventh-day Adventist church began providing material for television broadcasting over twelve years

¹Williams, p. 2.

²Hetzel, "A Visit to the Far East," Tell, May 1977, p. 4.

³Harold Reiner, "South America Believes in Broadcasting," Tell, September 1977, p. 4.

⁴R. Bruinsma, "5-Day Plan on Dutch Television," Tell, July 1977, p. 5.

ago. This material consisted largely of the American-produced programmes: "It is Written" and "Faith for Today." In attempts to broadcast outside these low-rating times, various short five or three minute programmes such as "Focus on Living" and "Crisis" have been produced in Australia. Use has been made of thirty second and sixty second spot announcements advertising evangelistic meetings, promoting the church's annual Appeal for Missions or inviting people to enrol in Bible correspondence courses. Some spots have been used to sell books on Creation or simply to broadcast a passage of scripture or give a short Bible study (on such subjects as the Second Coming of Jesus Christ).

Mass Communication and Scriptural Proclamation

Modern technology has presented us with potent means for communicating with large numbers of people simultaneously. There is no need of lengthy argument to support this. The twentieth century has witnessed an unprecedented increase of the world's population to a size unimagineable in the days of the apostles.¹ There almost seems to be a parallel between the population explosion and the invention of the mass communications systems such as television and radio. Today it is unique and an unprecedented phenomenon that one can communicate with millions of people simultaneously. It is not uncommon to have a live world-wide

¹Estimates of the world's population 2,000 years ago place it at about 250 million. It took till the mid-nineteenth century to reach 1,000 million. Today it stands at around 4,500 million and by the year 2000 may reach 7,000 million.

audience numbering 600,000,000 people simultaneously viewing an event.¹

It has been stated that "the God of Christianity is a uniquely communicative Deity."² While God can live uniquely in fellowship with Himself, He communicates with man. His personhood is not dependent upon man's communication with Him. God is complete in Himself. Man is incomplete by himself. Secondly, the fact that the Christian God is a uniquely communicative deity can be seen when compared with the transcendence of the Greek deities or the deities of many non-Christian religions (such as Hinduism). God has sent His son--to communicate His love to man. The written Word is secondary to the living Word in this communication.

An essential factor in the process of divine communication by the written Word was the development of the alphabet. Allan Millard traces this development from the earliest beginnings of writing by the people of Mesopotamia before 3000 B.C. These people discovered how to place pictures in series to convey messages and then how to treat the pictures as symbols for sound-values. The use of a sharpened reed to impress these pictures on soft clay led to the development of cuneiform script. The idea of writing spread, notably to Egypt. However, the cumbersome complexity of the signs and symbols meant that writing became the craft of specialist classes, the scribes.

¹The viewing audience for one of Elvis Presley's concerts was estimated at this figure, while viewing audiences for such events as the World Cup Soccer exceed it.

²John W. Montgomery, "Mass Communication and Scriptural Proclamation," Evangelical Quarterly 49(1977):19-20.

At least six different scripts were known in the second millenium B.C.¹

Into this variety came the alphabet. The decisive step was to reduce the number of signs by producing a distinct sign for each consonant rather than for each syllable, as had previously been the case. This step took place somewhere in Syria-Palestine, where inscriptions were found dating from about 1600 B.C. to 1200 B.C. This alphabet with its few signs broke the monopoly of the scribes and brought reading and writing within the reach of any intelligent person. It was around this time that the people of Israel were settling in the land of Canaan. The rules given to Moses were written, preserved and copied. What was set in writing was considered authoritative throughout the ancient Near East. The laws were to be read in public once every seven years. Writing also came to occupy a prominent role in the communication of God's words. Many signs of divine overruling accompanied the entry of Israel into Canaan. The development of the alphabet also played an important role in Israel's culture.²

A second group of factors influencing communication with the masses occurred around the time of Christ and the apostles. Lawrence Waddy in his valuable book Pax Romana and World Peace, shows that conditions geographically, politically, and linguistically, were ideal in the first century for the rapid spread of

¹Allan Millard, "Mass Communication and Scriptural Proclamation: The First Step," Evangelical quarterly 50(1978):67-68.

²Ibid., p. 68-70.

Christianity. Firstly, the road system and the fact that it was virtually free of brigands enabled relatively rapid transit for the traveller. Sea travel was quite rapid--it was not exceptional to cover 150 miles a day.¹ Secondly, linguistic communication had also reached a unique level. The language spread by Alexander's conquests persisted after the division of his kingdom and penetrated all parts of the Roman world. Robertson states:

It was the language not only of letters, but of commerce and every-day life. . . . It was really an epoch in the world's history when the babel of tongues was hushed in the wonderful language of Greece. . . . The Papyri and the inscriptions prove beyond controversy that the Greek tongue was practically the same whether in Egypt, Herculaneum, Pergamum or Magnesia. The Greeks were the school-teachers of the Empire.²

Moulton succinctly summarizes the impact of this linguistic and physical revolution when he states:

No one can fail to see how immeasurably important these conditions were for the growth of Christianity. The historian marks the fact that the gospel began its career of conquest at the one period in the world's annals when civilization was concentrated under a single ruler. The grammarian adds that this was the only period when a single language was understood throughout the countries which counted for the history of that Empire.³

After a long interval of time a third factor arose which profoundly influenced the spread of Christianity: the invention of printing. This enabled Luther to publicize his protest and

¹Lawrence Waddy, Pax Romana and World Peace, (New York: W. W. Norton, n.d.), pp. 122-23. As quoted by Montgomery, pp. 13-17.

²A. T. Robertson, A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research, 3d ed., rev. and enl. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1919), pp. 54-56.

³James Hope Moulton, A Grammar of New Testament Greek, 4 vols, 3d ed., rev. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1908)1:6.

disseminate his teachings, as no other reformer had been able to do. Montgomery goes so far as to say that the success of the Protestant Reformation was due to a large extent to the printed page.¹ Grimm states that, "The importance of printing in the spread of the Reformation can scarcely be exaggerated."²

In the light of these three factors: (1) the alphabet; (2) the dual structure of relatively safe travel and the common knowledge of the Greek language; and (3) the invention of printing (and its implications for the Reformation), it must be said that the God of Christianity has made best use of the mass communication tools of the day in communicating the gospel. When the mass communication media of the twentieth century is considered it must be concluded that these will likewise be used as tools in fulfilling the gospel commission.

An Evaluation of the Ministry of the Electronic Church

Mainline denominations have expressed grave concern at various aspects of the electronic church's ministry. Firstly, there is the concern regarding the lack of community and fellowship among the viewers of the electronic church. Instead of a body involved in worship and fellowship there is a host of television viewers living out their Christianity in isolation from one another, in front of a television set. Sills states:

¹Montgomery, pp. 18-19.

²Harold J. Grimm, The Reformation Era: 1500-1650, (New York: Macmillan, 1954), p. 160.

The "electronic church" implies that the Body of Christ does not need to be incarnate in a particular community through an organized congregation having property, institutional life, and both witness and mission in the community. . . . It is a "communion of saints" without having the sacrament of true communion. It is a "fellowship of believers" without having any concrete interaction, a phantom fellowship of mind alone. It is a "body of Christ" without a corpus, a body consisting only of a head but having no arms, no legs, no heart!¹

One could ask if it is an invisible church denying the validity of the visible church. Sills sees the electronic church as a new form of the heresy of Docetism and coins the term "Docetic church."² Yancey considers that "perhaps the most dangerous aspect of all is the latent effect of television to create a dependence on a vicarious experience." He states: "In essence, the electronic church is the mouth of the body, but without the head."³ There appears to be no effort at all by the electronic evangelists to funnel new converts into Christian communities for nurture (unlike the insistence by some mass evangelists such as John Wesley on the importance of church membership).

It is however interesting that recent studies rebut the criticism that the electronic church⁴ replaces church attendance with television viewing. John Roos, CBN marketing specialist,

¹Mark R. Sills, "The Docetic Church," The Christian Century, 21 January 1981, pp. 37-38.

²Ibid.

³Yancey, pp. 1253-54.

⁴It is probably more correct to use the term electronic pulpit if the function of the televangelists is to be accurately described.

discovered from surveys that 34 percent of those responding said they had become more involved in the local church as a result of watching CBN, whereas only 2 percent say they have become less involved in the local church.¹ Another poll by the American Research Corporation in Irvine, California found a 26 percent increase and a 9 percent decrease in church attendance resulting from religious radio and television.² Regarding those who stop attending church as a result of viewing religious media programmes, Robert M. Diebert, professor of psychology and psychiatry states:

There is little reason to believe that the electronics are actually pulling people away from churches they would otherwise be attending. Rather, people have left the traditional denominations and their traditional services and then found satisfaction or identity with electronic church offerings. . . . There is some research suggesting that exposure to electronic services moves people to join local churches, and not to estrange themselves from community involvement.³

One question that remains unanswered however is: Do people change from a mainline liberal denomination to a fundamentalist (or charismatic) denomination as a result of religious broadcasting? If people are disenchanted with their church are they likely to seek a church where the sermons and basic theological approach are similar to the electronic churches? It could well be that mainline liberal denominations are losing members to the

¹John Maust, "Critics, Electronic Church Try Two-way Communication," Christianity Today, 7 March 1980, p. 66.

²Kantzer, p. 150. If 9 percent of a congregation leave and then different people join the congregation increasing its size by 26 percent then there has been a 26 percent increase and a 9 percent decrease.

³Ibid., p. 15.

fundamentalist churches as a result of the electronic church.

A second criticism concerns the content of the programme. As far as theology is concerned, they at best are superficial and at their worst a complete farce.¹ Permeating it all is the Madison Avenue sell. Fore states:

Do the purveyors of the electronic church think the values of the gospel are so obscure that only the hard sell can move them off the shelf? Slogans, pop songs, glad names, bad names, stacking the cards, bandwagon--every technique basic to the ad game is part of the stock-in-trade of the electronic church, which is, indeed, selling something people don't need--a superficial, magical God.²

Most televangelists are mass media professionals and theological amateurs. Their messages have a shallow doctrinal content. Characteristically absent are such subjects as the cost of discipleship, Christian perseverance, repentance and sin. "Easy-believism" is substituted for true discipleship and genuine repentance. Bisset states:

Loving, caring, and understanding are more often subject matter than atonement, justification, and sanctification. And while the former are commendable, the latter are indispensable. Without them the Christian faith in the mass media becomes a bandaid salvation: fast talk and quick cure in the era of feelings. . . . What we are seeing today,

¹An example of the latter would be Marjoe Gartner. He considers evangelism to be a form of entertainment. Whether the evangelist believes his gospel is about as important as whether an actor playing Lenin is really a communist. Gartner makes it clear that the success of a revivalist depends on his skill in playing on people's emotions so as to produce money, fainting, glossolalia, conversions or whatever. It is the right tone of voice and technique that are all-important in his opinion. Robert M. Price, "Evangelism as Entertainment," The Christian Century, 4 November 1981, pp. 1122-24.

²Fore, "Beyond the Electronic Church," p. 30.

then, is a programming drift away from teaching and preaching toward counseling, interpersonal relationships, holistic living, and physical healing.¹

The electronic church addresses the felt needs of people. A gallup poll revealed these to be (in order of priority), (1) salvation; (2) physical well-being; (3) the need for love and affection; and (4) the desire for meaning in life.² It is interesting to reflect on how much these needs would be met by regular fellowship in loving, caring local church.

A third issue which needs to be examined is the claim by the televangelists to be evangelising. Are they really broadcasting to the unconverted? There are millions of unconverted and unchurched Americans (not to mention the rest of the world). Are the vast sums of money pouring through the electronic church accomplishing a new and powerful thrust in evangelism? Despite the limitations of a superficial theology, are millions of the unchurched being exposed to some Christian teaching?

Unfortunately, research shows that they are talking largely to the converted while the rest of America (and the world) goes unevangelized by the mass media. Eighty-five percent of those in the United States who watch (or listen) to religious broadcasting profess to be converted. Documented national media ratings surveys show that less than four percent of the total available radio and television audiences are reached by religious broadcasting.³ The gospel is not being broadcast, but "narrowcast"

¹Bisset, "Assessing the State," p. 24.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 30.

to a highly defined audience. We are speaking largely to Christians. More disturbing still is the fact that: "Virtually all of the programmes have audiences in which two-thirds to three-fourths are fifty years of age and older; they also are primarily women."¹

Thus as far as taking the gospel to the unchurched is concerned televangelism is a failure. To speak of the electronic church as evangelistic is to indulge in make-believe mission. No doubt there are a few people who tune in from curiosity and are exposed to a certain degree to some sort of Christian message. However the conclusion that the big time televangelists are really orientated towards sustaining their own programmes rather than evangelising is unavoidable.²

While these criticisms apply to the majority of televangelists it should be noted that there are exceptions. The use of the media by Billy Graham is one example. His ministry knows nothing of fund-raising, nor of the shallow theology of the other big names in the electronic church. He sees the need for improvement in incorporating converts into local churches.

The use of the media by Seventh-day Adventists also knows nothing of the commercialism so characteristic of the majority of the televangelists. George Vandeman endeavours to incorporate interests into the church by way of seminars. Also characteristic

¹Fore, "A Critical Eye," p. 940.

²This does not mean that the electronic church isn't accomplishing something. That it has a viewing audience who pour millions of dollars into its coffers shows that many are getting

of his programme is the central role of Bible teaching. The theology of his programme does not manifest superficiality of easy-believism, nor is the viewer left with false ideas that the Christian life is free of difficulty or hardship.

In conclusion the following points can be made regarding the major usage of television in religion:

1. The electronic church does not separate people from the local church community although it may lead them to transfer away from a mainline liberal church towards a more fundamentalist group.
2. The electronic church has become captive to commercial broadcasting. The media may be more its master than its servant. One can ask whether the medium has in fact become the message.
3. The electronic church is a failure in terms of evangelism. Firstly, it is not proclaiming a sound (or complete) Christian message. Secondly, it is preaching mainly to the converted; and thirdly, it is failing to lead people to fellowship and nurture in a Christian community.
4. The electronic church does however provide a semblance of individual attention and also an avenue for people to at least feel they are contributing to the fulfilling of the gospel commission.
5. As a result of evaluating the electronic church we are able to aim at establishing a television ministry that would be evangelistic and be involved with the local church community.

The Relationship of Television and the Christian Community in Evangelism

Christians have shown various attitudes towards television and radio. Some have considered them to be of the devil and thus taboo. The dictum that "whatever is new is evil" often seems to be the basic reason for this attitude. Such Christians reject the use of television completely. It is seen by them as one more tool of the devil to lead people into sin and unholiness. Such

something out of it, or at least feel they are.

thinking however is based on the fundamental error of consigning the world (and its modern inventions) to the devil. Such people have actually been tricked by the same line of argument as Satan's lie to Jesus which offered our Lord the kingdoms of this world.¹ In fact they were not his to give. While Satan may be the prince of the power of the air, he operates in a limited way within the jurisdiction of God's sovereignty.

Other Christians have detached themselves from using the media to spread the gospel because of the way some have commercialised religion to serve their own ends, or because the media has been used in a way they perceive as destructive to the congregation. The electronic church is thus seen as a surrogate church which while appearing to heal, in reality hurts, while appearing to teach, misleads, and while claiming to be a church, undermines or even destroys the church. Those who separate themselves from the media in this way are not doing so on the basis of scriptural principle but in reaction to the apparently illegitimate use of the media. Although some use the media inadvisedly, this does not negate the validity of the media as a means of Christian proclamation. Rather it negates the validity of their particular use of it.

One of the most important facts to be revealed from evaluation of various methods of evangelism is the role of friendship (personal relationships) in influencing people to become

¹Matt. 4:9,10; Luke 4:5-8.

members of the church invisible and the church visible. The evangelistic crusade of Billy Graham in Seattle in 1976 resulted in approximately 2,900 people becoming church members. Firebaugh states that:

The results of the survey of inquirers suggest that mass evangelism is individual evangelism in a mass setting. We asked inquirers why they attended the crusade. The responses indicated that personal invitations are more important than general invitations, announcements, or advertisements. . . . For this the role of the local church is paramount.¹

The results of surveys by Win Arn show that "friends and relatives" are the reason given by 70 to 90 percent of lay people for being in Christ and in their church.² Therefore while the content of the message is primary, the role of friendship in bringing people to Christ and a Christian church is also very important. These two factors must exist together for evangelism to be effective. The roles of the media and the local church congregation must dovetail together. This is probably the most important factor regarding the successful use of the media in evangelism.

The media must therefore be understood as a tool for evangelism. It cannot and must not replace the church in the task of evangelism. However, the church must allow a place for the role of the professional evangelist. Paul in the first century planted churches. The churches then became evangelistic

¹Glenn Firebaugh, "How Effective are City-wide Crusades?" Christianity Today, 27 March 1981, p. 26.

²Win Arn, "'Church Growth,' Leader Win Arn Responds to Firebaugh's Conclusions," Christianity Today, 27 March 1981, p. 26. He also states that "crusades are more successful as the local church plays an increasingly central role."

as their members "gossiped the gospel" with those they met in their everyday associations. Both the professional evangelist using his tools of evangelism and the church community complemented each other in the task of spreading the gospel. So it must be with the use of television today.

One fundamental aspect of evangelism is communication. In the evangelistic outreach in the New Testament we see much dialogue taking place.¹ At times there was only one way communication as the gospel was proclaimed.² In the book of Acts it would appear that proclamation (preaching) occupies a primary role. However we must be careful in drawing such a conclusion in a way that would imply an absence of dialogue. The apostles occupied a public (and visible) role in spreading the gospel. There can be no doubt however that the laity also fulfilled a prominent place in this work. Thus while proclamation is fundamental, listening plays an important role too. Listening helps us to understand others. The only way to know where a person is in their spiritual pilgrimage is to get to know them personally. Secondly, listening is crucial because it helps others to understand themselves, and thirdly, listening lets others realize that we care.³ It must

¹For example John 3:1-21; 4:9-27; Acts 8:26-39.

²For example Matt 5:1; Luke 5:1,2; John 6:2,22; Acts 2:16-40; 9:19.

³Dennis R. Borg, "Christian Witness is Dialogue, Not Monologue," Christianity Today, 27 March 1981, p. 31. Listening is often helpful, however in some Biblical situations it appears that there was only monologue. For example on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) there was no dialogue between Peter and the thousands present. Nor did Peter know where each person was in their spiritual pilgrimage.

be remembered that the Christian listens, not to give the impression that he cares, but because he does care.

In evangelism, communication on the horizontal level involves monologue and dialogue. There is also the vertical dimension of communication. The Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin and righteousness and judgment.¹ This vertical dimension of communication must not be overlooked in the task of evangelism, and when the gospel is communicated by the medium of television the vertical dimension is also functioning.

It is important in evangelism to start with people "where they are"--a concept that Jesus clearly understood in His ministry on earth. He communicated with them by means of things which were familiar to them, the things of nature and of their everyday lives.² He used the essential principle of teaching: proceeding from "the known to the unknown through the medium of the well-known." In the use of television we must therefore broadcast in times when people are viewing. We must use words and signs familiar to the viewer.

If we are going to go to the people when we use television in evangelism we must gain access to prime-viewing time. Simply broadcasting in the religious time slots, such as Sunday mornings is not adequate if we are to truly and fully evangelise. It is interesting that 'It is Written' has been aired in prime time in

¹John 16:8-13.

²The incarnation and Christ's use of parables testify of this.

New York.¹ 'Faith for Today' has also aired its "Westbrook Hospital" programme in prime time in two major cities. Prime time television spots each costing between \$20,000 and \$30,000 have brought startling results. Whereas a broadcasting at the regular time would result in thirty or forty telephone contacts, more than 5,000 came in.²

Going to the people is not just a matter of proclaiming a message. We must also go to the people in person. The Christian in using the media must remember that it is only a tool. The goal of evangelism is to make disciples. This must not be interpreted in terms of simple dissemination of information. The person using the media must proclaim a sound Christian message, but he must go further by bringing the person into discipleship to Christ and fellowship in the Christian church. It is worship, fellowship and evangelism that constitute the dynamics of the believer's life. To proclaim without discipling robs the new convert of the opportunity for fellowship and worship.

On the other hand, it is possible for the church to offer fellowship without worship (or evangelism). The result is a social club. While the media when used in evangelism must not become an end in itself, neither must the church. The goal of evangelism is inadequately expressed simply in terms of decisions for Christ or church membership. One can make a decision but fail to enter into

¹Neal C. Wilson, "'It is Written' gets Prime Time in New York," Adventist Review, 14 September 1978, p. 24.

²Neroli Zaska, "Dramatic Result from Experiment," Adventist News, 1 June 1983, p. 1.

all the dimensions of being a disciple. On the other hand it is possible to become a member of a church and fail to have a living relationship with Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.¹ Both media-centred and church-centred evangelistic thinking are inadequate and unsound. While the church has an important role in the function of mission, "church-centric missionary thinking is bound to go astray because it revolves around an illegitimate centre."² The church must not obscure the primary functions of a triune God in mission, otherwise mission becomes a function of the church rather than the church being viewed as a function of mission.³ Christianity then devolves into "churchianity." It is God who is to be worshipped. It is Christ whose disciples we are to become.

One of the most important factors in evangelism is the element of mystery. All our strategies and efforts at evangelism are to leave room for the mysterious work of the Holy Spirit.

When one takes into account the use made of the various avenues of communication of Moses' day, the first century world and the sixteenth century in evangelism, one can ponder the question: what use will God make of communication media in the twentieth century? It seems certain that He will use them for His own purposes. Only time will tell in what way and to what extent.

¹In speaking of the numerical increase of membership in the Episcopal church John Shelby Spong states: "We had social prestige going for us, and that provided us with all the new members we really wanted." John S. Spong, "Evangelism When Certainty is an Illusion," The Christian Century, 6 January 1982, p. 12.

²J. C. Heokendijk, "The Church in Missionary Thinking," International Review of Mission 41(1952):332.

³Rodger C. Bassham, "Seeking a Deeper Theological Basis for Mission," International Review of Mission 67(1978):330-34.

CHAPTER IV

TELEVISION EVANGELISM IN GIPPSLAND

This writer has always been interested in evangelism. To be involved in the task of bringing people to an understanding of God's abundant grace, a commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, and fellowship in the Seventh-day Adventist Church is a great privilege.

Today the mass media (and particularly television) have all but replaced the social, communication and entertainment functions of the public meeting place. This has profound and challenging implications for mass evangelism. While running a public-meeting style of evangelistic programme in Mildura in 1976 this writer's brother was experimenting with television spot announcements in Ballarat. These spots were in fact one-minute Bible studies on such subjects as the Second Coming of Christ. Colour transparencies with the words of Scripture superimposed on them were skilfully assembled to produce a succinct, smoothly-flowing message. This together with the study of the subject "Broadcast Evangelism" resulted in a determination by this writer to one day use the medium of television as a means of evangelism.

The Television Station

It was decided that a television station operating in a country region would best fit the scope of this project. The

large metropolitan centres, such as Sydney or Melbourne, were out of the question for the following reasons. Firstly, the size of the population and the area covered by the broadcast would involve at least forty churches. The time and effort required to successfully inform the membership of the various churches, organize Bible-study fellowships and adequately match members with new interests made a programme of such a scale unfeasible. Secondly, due to the experimental nature of this evangelism it was considered wise to work in a small way initially. Thirdly, the time required to raise the large sums of money involved was not available.

Several smaller centres were considered. Newcastle was rejected because, although much smaller than Sydney or Melbourne, it was still too large. The country centres of Bendigo and Ballarat in Victoria, and Bathurst in New South Wales were also considered and rejected. It was finally decided to use the facilities of TV8 in Bendigo which transmits to three population centres by three subsidiary stations. BCV8 broadcasts from Bendigo, covering central Victoria which has four Seventh-day Adventist churches and a population of 240,000. STV8 broadcasts from Mildura covering "Sunraysia" (the north-west of the state) which has four Seventh-day Adventist churches and a population of 45,000. GLV8 broadcasts from Traralgon covering Gippsland (the south-east of the state) which has seven Seventh-day Adventist churches and a population of 175,000.

It was decided to broadcast from Traralgon in Gippsland for the following reasons. Firstly, this writer was well-known among the membership of the area, having pastored, or fellowshipped

regularly, in all but two of the churches there. This was thought to be a distinct advantage when forming Bible-study cell groups and when approaching members personally to conduct surveys. The second reason was that this writer would be able to locate himself in this district during the time involved in completing the programme.

On the 12 February 1983, initial negotiations were held with Robert Cooke, the National Sales Manager of TV8 Bendigo. The matter of feasibility of the project, the availability of time slots in the months of June (or July), and the cost of airing twenty spots in near-prime time were discussed.

On the 21 April, 1983, negotiations were finalised. It was decided to broadcast a sixty-second spot twenty-five times in a variety of time slots ranging through prime-viewing and near prime-viewing times.¹ These television spots would commence on the 22 May, 1983, and conclude on the 31 May 1983. This period immediately followed the school holidays. This was considered advisable in order to avoid undue disruption in following up the interests, which would occur if televising of the spots took place just before this holiday period. The cost of the broadcasting was \$2534. It was felt that twenty-five spots would give a reasonably good coverage of the viewing audience.

The television spots when aired in prime time (between 6:00 P.M. and 9:00 P.M.) have a viewing audience amounting to 35 percent of the population, or approximately 61,000 people. In

¹See appendix 1.

the afternoon and late evening (after 9:00 P.M.) the audience drops in number to 18 percent of the population, or approximately 31,500 people.

The Television Advertisement

When studying the subject of Broadcasting Evangelism at Andrews University in 1978 this writer was involved in the writing and production of radio spots of thirty- and sixty-seconds duration. The studies and experience were invaluable in undertaking this project.¹

Historically, religious broadcasters have tended to utilize four basic models. Firstly, there is the model of "Pulpits and Prophets" in which the camera and the microphone are simply extensions of the church pulpit and the personality of the preacher. The second model, "Sinai and the Spectacular" utilizes the camera and microphone as a window through which to view a "mighty act of God"--a spectacle such as God's invasion of Sinai or a modern example of the dramatic (such as a healing or conversion). The third model uses broadcast technology as an extension of the lectern to teach theology, ethics or other matters of learning. The fourth model is "Leaven." This model is designed to incite growth. It usually utilizes a confrontation technique.²

¹The following books were of particular help in understanding the broadcasting industry and in writing and producing the television spots: Scott H. Robb, Television/Radio Age: Communications Coursebook (New York: Sol Paul Television/Radio Age Magazine, 1978); and William A. Peck, Anatomy of Local Radio-T.V. Copy, 4th ed. (Blue Ridge Summit, Pennsylvania: TAB Books, 1976).

²The first model generally assumes the 'rationality' theory

The television spot used in this project endeavoured to inform people of the accuracy of the Scripture, to stimulate their curiosity and motivate viewers to put forth some effort to discover more by writing to purchase the reading guides. It is not unlike an experience related by Burton Everist. He tells how television launched his children, then sixteen, twelve, and ten years old, into the entire Tolkien trilogy (Lord of the Rings). They proceeded to read all the books, then re-read them, and plunged into other reading as well.¹ It was this sort of effect that this writer was seeking. However, his purpose was also to channel people into a fellowship study group thus adding the dimension of Christian fellowship to the learning process.

This response was sought because communication has been described in terms of inter- and intra-personal relationships at various levels of "depth" with the sharing of a world and life view between two or more persons.² Ellens states:

A simple functional definition of communication must surely describe it as an interpersonal interchange of experience or insight by which meaning is shared. . . . Communication starts in the feeling world of the communication and ideally induces a comparable feeling event in the receiver of the communication.³

of human personality (man needs to be informed and motivated), the second model assumes the 'emotional' personality theory, the third assumes the 'rationality' theory of personhood and the fourth assumes a rational-emotional theory of personhood. J. Harold Ellens, "Psychodynamics in Mass Media Society," Journal of Psychology and Theology 7(1979):200.

¹Everist gives other similar examples, see Everist, pp. 547-48.

²Schouls (1972), Allport (1950, 1953) and Ellens (1970, 1974). Ellens, p. 192.

³Ibid., p. 192-193.

When television is used in conjunction with the Christian community in evangelism, it can be seen that the intra- and inter-personal dimensions of communication can be fulfilled.

From a background of fifteen years' experience Pablo Sosa has worked out several guidelines for using the media in evangelism. This writer found several of these points helpful in producing the television spot, namely: (1) respect the listener; be interested in what he is thinking; (2) the broadcaster is not the owner of truth; the scriptwriter and announcer are also listeners to the message together with whoever is viewing the programme; (3) avoid sectarian terminology; you are not talking to believers; (4) use a colloquial tone, don't preach; the style must say: "We want to talk;" (5) encourage dialogue; the programme must not claim to know everything or sound as if it thinks it does; and (6) a programme does not try to connect the viewer to itself but to a community.¹ It is interesting to note the stress that he places on the attitude of the announcer (and producer). One has the picture of the broadcaster and viewers being fellow-travellers in the quest for truth. The Christian evangelist can speak with authority. The authority is derived from the truth he proclaims but must not deny the listener his freedom to evaluate for himself what is said. A good illustration of the mutuality of proclaimer and listener is the Samaritan woman bringing the townspeople to Jesus. Both she and the people with her are mutual learners of Christ.

¹Pablo Sosa, "The Witness of the Church Through the Mass Media," International Review of Mission 69(1980):209-10.

Various options are available regarding the style of the television spot.¹ It was decided to advertise a set of Bible reading guides together with a Bible and a book on archaeology. The book that was chosen was "Buried Evidence" because it is not too involved for the man in the street to read and find interesting. The Bible was a King James Bible. This was used because of its widespread acceptance. The reading guides used were Profiles of Faith because of the quality of their content and the attractiveness of their colourful covers (an important factor when viewers have colour television).

Since people are familiar with the idea of paying for television offers, it was decided to charge for the Bible and lessons. The charge made was six dollars which covered about half the costs involved.² Selling the material has certain advantages. Firstly, it avoids suspicion. There is a strong tendency for people to think that there must be a catch if something is offered free. Secondly, selling the material immediately stops those who write in for every free offer simply because it is free. The disadvantage of charging is that some people may genuinely not be able to afford it. However, there are very few people in this situation and it was felt that the advantages of charging outweighed the disadvantages.

¹It can aim to inform, sell a product, invite to a meeting, give a personal testimony, create an interest.

²People could purchase the reading guides and book, without the Bible for three dollars if they so wished.

In writing the script¹ the principles enunciated by Peck were generally adhered to. He makes such points as: (1) focus on one idea; (2) use vivid language and avoid cliches; (3) write the way you speak; (4) keep it simple and short; (5) use a hook at the beginning to grab the viewers' attention;² (6) ask, don't tell, give a reason, don't argue; (7) use a stinger at the end;³ and (8) use repetition.⁴

There are certain differences between commercial advertising and the production of a spot presenting information about the Scriptures and offering a Bible for sale. The hard-line sell techniques designed to manipulate a person into buying are inimical to the principles of Jesus Christ. Evangelism is not salesmanship. It is one thing to communicate a message and a different thing altogether to use salesman's techniques in selling a product. Christianity is not a product to be sold. It must not be cheapened by salesmanship.

¹For a copy of the script see appendix 2.

²It is estimated that only fifteen percent of a viewing audience is concentrating when a commercial appears on the screen. It is therefore essential to get everyone's attention at the beginning of the television spot.

³A stinger is a crisp statement used at the end of the commercial to increase the impact. It can be an outright request for a sale, a surprising bit of news or an irrelevant bit of humour.

⁴Peck, p. 54. Peck also states that there are four things the commercials should do: (1) get attention: hook the listener, give the central selling idea; (2) build interest: present the facts, realistically, add urgency as needed; (3) increase desire: show how the listener will benefit, be concrete, sell; (4) get action: ask for the sale, sting the listener with something that helps him make up his mind to buy.

The television spot produced by this writer endeavoured to communicate information as well as to advertise and sell a Bible and reading guides. The first twenty seconds of the script reads as follows:

The lands of the Middle East have fascinated and intrigued people for years. These are the lands of the Bible, the world's most remarkable book. Historically and geographically the Bible is accurate and has predicted future events with amazing precision. It has a timeless message for the computer age.¹

The attitudes of many people in Australia is that the Bible is a book of fables. People with this attitude would be confronted by the facts presented in this script. This writer believes that in evangelism people must be approached on the level of the rational with some appeal on the emotional level. However, the emotional appeal must be subordinate to the rational. The reference to the Bible's timeless message for the computer age was an endeavour to present the Bible as relevant to man today. While the archaeological pictures appear on the screen it is important to affirm that this amazing book has something to say to men today.

The pictures appearing on the screen in this section of the script are slides of the pyramids, Byblos, Jerusalem, Hatshepsut's tomb and Petra. It was planned that these would create a strong enough visual impact to arouse people's interest and also to give them some sense of intrigue or mystery (and hopefully, expectation). Public evangelistic efforts have shown that people are interested in archeology, and it is still the

¹For a copy of the script see appendix 3.

most effective opening night topic. This reflects the interest of Australians in travel (and to a lesser extent in history).

The second part of the television spot lasts for forty seconds. The script for this section reads as follows:

This new do-it-yourself kit is to help you unlock its mysteries. It contains a set of twenty-four project notes in full colour plus a paperback book, Buried Evidence, which tells you how archaeology proves the Bible true. This kit costs \$3. For an additional \$3 you can have a King James Bible. Both packages costing only six dollars. Send a cheque or postal order now to Profiles of Faith, Box 150, Leongatha, 3953. Profiles of Faith, Box 150, Leongatha, 3953.

During this section the Profiles of Faith reading guides, the paperback book "Buried Evidence," King James Bible and the postal address appeared on the screen in co-ordination with what was being said. It is a moderately low-key sell, and rather straightforward. This writer wanted to avoid completely any appearance of the hard-sell or of pressuring. It was particularly important that it did not present an appearance of commercialism.

The whole television spot endeavoured to treat the viewer as an intelligent individual and to give him (or her) a reason for purchasing a set of reading guides. The phrase "do-it-yourself kit" was designed to say to the person that he is free to pursue a study of the Scriptures in his own home without having the unwanted pestering characteristic of certain religious groups. This did not mean that there would be no further contact. All it implied was that his privacy and individuality would be respected.

The production of the television spot at NBN3 in Newcastle was considered because of the recommendations of personnel at the Adventist Media Centre in Sydney. They had found them to be more economical than Sydney-based companies and Newcastle is within

easy reach of Avondale. The studio hire was approximately \$250 an hour and it was thought it would take about one hour to produce the spot. However it was finally decided to produce the spot at the TV8 studios in Bendigo. Due to the fact that the spot was being aired on their station, they produced it for a much smaller sum.¹

The television spots were broadcast on and between 25 May, 1983, and 31 May, 1983. The times were as follows:

Sunday,	22 May:	5:10 P.M., 6:10 P.M., 7:28 P.M., and 9:18 P.M.
Monday,	23 May:	12:20 P.M., 6:55 P.M., 10:00 P.M. and 10:40 P.M.
Tuesday,	24 May:	5:50 P.M., 6:55 P.M., 9:40 P.M. and 11:00 P.M.
Wednesday,	25 May:	10:30 P.M., 10:55 P.M. and 12:10 P.M.
Thursday,	26 May:	6:55 P.M., 9:10 P.M., 10:00 P.M. and 12:00 P.M.
Friday,	27 May:	10:00 P.M., and 12:00 P.M.
Saturday,	28 May:	6:15 P.M.
Sunday,	29 May:	5:30 P.M.
Monday,	30 May:	12:00 P.M.
Tuesday,	31 May:	11:00 P.M.

On four of the first five days the spot was broadcast four times (and three times on the odd day). It was then broadcast twice on the sixth day and once on each of the remaining days. This pattern was followed to achieve maximum exposure with the number of spots purchased.

The Survey

In order to make some assessment of the number of people in the community who remembered seeing the television spot a

¹The final cost was approximately \$60.

survey¹ was constructed. It consisted of eleven questions. The first three dealt with people's viewing habits, particularly to find out if (and to some degree to what extent) they viewed GLV8. The fourth question attempted to assess the time of day (afternoon or evening) in which the viewer was watching GLV8. The fifth question prompted the interviewee to think about any new commercials he may have seen (in the past week). Questions six, seven and eight sought to discover whether or not they had seen the spot. Questions nine and ten asked them about their desires and actions in response to purchasing the television offer, and, question eleven sought to discover if they had ever written in for a television offer.

The survey was conducted throughout Gippsland, in and around the towns of Warragul, Leongatha, Moe, Traralgon, Sale, Bairnsdale and Orbost. Members of the local Seventh-day Adventist churches were invited to conduct the survey in their local shopping centres, amongst their neighbours and friends, some even interviewed people in restaurants. Five hundred survey sheets were distributed with printed instructions and 174 were completed and returned.

The survey was conducted between, and including, Saturday, 28 May and Saturday, 4 June. On the 6 June there were Regional meetings (at Yarram) for all of the Gippsland churches. The

¹See appendix 3

completed survey sheets were collected and many expressed enthusiasm and satisfaction at seeing television being used as a tool in evangelism.

The Response to the Television Offer

Twenty-five people wrote in requesting the material offered. Fifteen purchased the completed six dollar package. Ten purchased the Profiles Lessons without the Bible (for three dollars). The mail started arriving on Thursday 26 May (the spots having commenced on Sunday evening 22 May). Between one and three letters arrived over two weeks. One letter arrived over two weeks after the last spot had been screened. The address used was a post office box in Leongatha where this writer was staying. It was thought that a local country town address would help appeal to country people and it was more convenient than using the address of the television station at Traralgon. The material was mailed out as the requests came in.

The Bible Study Fellowship

In order to facilitate the introduction of interests, from the television offer, into the worship and fellowship of the Christian community an afternoon seminar was planned. It was planned to be conducted in the centre (or centres) where there was an adequate response. It would have been ideal to invite them directly to church. It was felt however, that this would be rather threatening for some people, and secondly, that it would be better to make personal contact with them before introducing them to a church service. Their response to the television

offer indicated an interest in the bible and what it taught. (Church attendance was another issue altogether.) Therefore, it was considered best to make personal contact with them on the common ground of this interest.

The majority of the responses came from the Sale area. Discussions with various members of the local church, the Sale pastor, and a few phone calls to various motels resulted in the Columbia Room at the Commodore Motel being booked for the seminar. The town hall was too large and various halls were considered unsuitable for a variety of reasons.¹ The Commodore motel was well-known in the local community. It was a popular entertainment venue situated in the centre of town.

The Columbia room was large enough to accommodate up to thirty or forty people comfortably. Its atmosphere was pleasant and there were facilities for having afternoon tea and using an overhead projector. Also the seating could be easily arranged and moved when desired for gathering in small discussion groups. It would also facilitate a friendly and relaxed atmosphere. It was planned to have everyone seated in a large circle for at least some part of the seminar (probably towards the latter part) to help improve personal interaction.

The date of the seminar was set at about one month after the people received their material through the mail. It was felt that some time had to be allowed for them to read it and

¹For example, some were dingy and others too far from the centre of the town or in out of the way places.

some time allowed for them to be able to make plans to attend the seminar. A letter¹ was mailed to them on 15 June which invited them to a "friendly and informal seminar." An outline of the four session programme, its venue and time was given and an application form included.

It was planned that the fellowship group would be the means of bringing the interested people together and also introduce them into the fellowship of Seventh-day Adventist Christians. This writer had personally approached several people from the local Seventh-day Adventist church to see if they would be interested in attending the seminar and making friends with the people who had responded to the television spot. Several had expressed their interest in the whole concept and agreed to attend. The people the writer had approached were characterized by openness, friendliness and warmth.

It was hoped that after the seminar there would be an interest in meeting in a small group on a regular basis to study the Scriptures in a home. As the relationship between people in the group grew they would be able to incorporate the new believers into membership in their local Seventh-day Adventist church. Whether this interest eventuated or not, an invitation would be given at the seminar to attend church both on Sabbath (for worship) and on other social occasions (such as picnics, etc).

It may seem to some that the Bible study groups were an unnecessary step in the process of inviting the new interest to

¹See appendix 4.

attend church. This writer, however, felt that it was necessary. Firstly, it was for the purpose of establishing relationships with church members on a more personal and intimate level than the setting of a congregation at worship. Secondly, the small group provides a place for dialogue at a one-to-one level in a relaxed atmosphere. A third reason is that it would enable some church members to spend time in a small group in study and fellowship together and thus facilitate their own spiritual growth.

The programme was to commence at 2:00 P.M. on Saturday, 9 July, and conclude at 5:30 P.M. It was decided to provide afternoon tea to help people get to know one another. Each session was designed to last for about forty-five minutes and include a time for group questions and group discussion. The topic of the first session was: "How to Study Your Bible." This would introduce people to such matters as the need to read extensively and intensively, the importance of the context, the background material of the various books of the Bible, the various tools as aids to Bible study (concordances and commentaries) and the rational aspect of the whole message of the Bible (that man is to have a restored relationship with God through Jesus Christ).

The second subject, "The Universe is Friendly," would (with the help of colour slides) show people the beauty and order in nature and in space, drawing the conclusion that the universe is friendly. The subject of the first advent of Christ would be covered briefly. Discussion would deal with such questions as "How would I have felt if I had been the man born blind and

Jesus healed me?"

The third subject "Good News About Your Future" would include the Gospel and the Second Advent of Jesus. Discussion would revolve around such questions as "What difference would it make in my life if I were absolutely confident of my eternal destiny?"

In the fourth session the film "Empty Cities" was to be screened. This film deals with archaeology's verification of the historical accuracy of the Bible. It also shows that the collapse of the great civilizations of history (Egypt, Babylon, Rome and others) was due to moral decay from within. Empty cities were considered to be the result of empty lives, (lives without a relationship with Jesus Christ). The film concludes with a brief appeal for people to follow Christ. Discussion would centre around the implications of the reasons for the collapse of these empires for our society today.

Only one viewer registered for the seminar. This was rather disappointing and the seminar was cancelled. It was decided to make personal contact, wherever possible with each person who had received the Profiles of Faith material.

CHAPTER V

EVALUATION OF THE USE OF TELEVISION IN EVANGELISM IN GIPPSLAND

Evaluation of the use of television in evangelism in

Gippsland involved:

1. The construction and administration of a survey to discover some characteristics of people's viewing habits and particularly the approximate proportion of the population who remembered seeing the television advertisement
2. To collect relevant data to enable an estimate to be made of the number of people exposed to the television spot announcement
3. To compare this evangelistic programme with other similar programmes
4. To compare the response with that for the Sunday morning time slot
5. To determine the cost-effectiveness of the programme
6. To discover the relationship of those attending the seminar with other Christian groups and also their previous exposure to the Seventh-day Adventist church
7. To determine the relationship between those responding to advertisements and those attending fellowship groups

Certain factors made the comparison between different programmes of evangelism using television very complicated.

Firstly, there was the fact that each viewing area displayed different characteristics.¹ Secondly, was the fact that the

¹Such factors are: population size; whether the viewing area was urban or rural (and in what proportions); and the size of the main population centre (such as Newcastle, Bendigo or Traralgon).

purpose of various programmes were quite different.¹ Thirdly, was the fact that the television broadcasts varied considerably in the amount of money available and the time slots used.

Factors which may have introduced some bias into the data area:

1. Population statistics were derived from the 1977 census
2. The information regarding the number of viewers at a given period was provided by the television stations
3. The survey was not correlated with census data to check on its validity.

The Survey

The survey contained thirteen questions.² All of these questions sought to obtain information of a factual nature.³ The information sought concerned people's viewing habits, then church affiliation and attendance, and particularly whether or not they had seen the television spot advertising the Bible and "Profiles of Faith" lessons.

To facilitate marking of the survey sheets, predetermined options were written with space for marking the appropriate response given by the interviewee. Care was taken to make the language as conversational as possible and to eliminate possible ambiguity. The total number of survey forms which were completed

¹Some television spots sought to advertise meetings, others to give away Bible lessons and others to sell Bible lessons.

²See Appendix 3.

³None dealt with opinions nor attitudes.

and returned was one hundred and seventy-four.

The survey figures suggested that the viewing habits of people during the three days before they were interviewed were as follows: 19 percent watched television for less than one hour (each day); 17 percent watched between one and two hours; 31 percent watched between two and three hours; 17 percent watched between three and four hours; and 16 percent watched more than four hours.¹

Question two of the survey showed that forty people (23 percent) said they viewed only Channel Eight; forty-one (24 percent) said they viewed it "most of the time"; thirty-two (18 percent) said "about the same as other channels";² forty-one (24 percent) said "hardly ever"; and twenty (11 percent) said they "never watched GLV 8."

Fifty-six percent of the interviewees affirmed that they remembered seeing a new commercial in the past week. Fifty-two percent said they remembered seeing a television commercial with a picture of the pyramids in the last week.

Question seven asked: "Do you remember seeing in the last week a T.V. ad advertising a Bible for sale?" One hundred and eight (60 percent) of interviewees answered affirmatively (and the others negatively). If this figure of 60 percent is representative of the whole population of the viewing area it would mean

¹It needs to be noted that the surveys were taken on different days of the week.

²The majority of those interviewed lived in areas receiving only two channels: ABC and GLV 8.

that as many as 105,000 people would have seen the spot.¹ To broadcast a spot once in prime time cost \$126. The viewing audience at this time would number 60,000. Thus it costs \$0.002 (or 0.2¢) to broadcast a message once to one viewer. This compares very favourably with the cost of sending a personal letter. If thirty cents were allowed to cover the cost of printing, handling and postage, the total cost of sending one letter to 60,000 people would be \$18,000.

Approximately three quarters of those who said they remembered seeing the spot also said they remembered the price. Of the people interviewed, thirteen (7 percent) thought of writing in. However, only three (less than 2 percent) said that they wrote in for the material. The majority of people interviewed (86 percent) stated that they had never written in for a television offer. Thus it would seem that only a small proportion of the population are in the habit of writing in to request an item offered to them by television commercials (whether it is for sale or offered free).

If we make the assumption that a person who says he has no religion or says he never attends church is a non-Christian, we find that among those surveyed not one non-Christian thought of writing in. This is rather a disturbing factor since it was the non-Christians who comprised the target audience. It is

¹Since most (146 out of 174) of the surveys were completed in the part of the viewing area which does not receive Melbourne's television channels the figure is probably a bit lower. There would be approximately 20,000 people living within the viewing area of Melbourne's television channels. This amounts to a little more than 10 percent of the population of the GLV 8 viewing area.

possible that the spot had no appeal to this sort of person. The commercial was remembered by 40 percent of those who said they never attended church (which is less than the 60 percent figure for the group as a whole).

Comparisons with other Evangelistic Programmes

Various evangelists in Australia have used television in order to advertise their public meetings in Australia. One of the first to do this was John Carter in Albury in 1977. The utilization of television spot messages was attractive from the economic point of view. For example, it cost \$265 for a two-minute message in prime time on AMV 4. This reached an estimated audience numbering 80,000 which means that the cost on a per-person basis was \$0.003 (or 0.3¢). These short messages advertised "Heart-Beat" programmes, "Five-Day Plans to Stop Smoking" and public evangelistic meetings.

The spot advertisement for the public meetings incorporated in its script some of the Biblical material to be presented at the meeting. (This characteristic is quite common to the style of short announcements used.) Thus the short announcement fulfilled two functions: (1) to advertise the meeting; and (2) to impart some knowledge of the reliability of the Bible (and sometimes some of its teachings). However, their primary role was to attract people to public evangelistic meetings. It was the desire of this writer to use the television medium with the primary purpose of introducing the teachings of the Bible to people and give them the opportunity to study from its pages at home. Later they could be brought into the fellowship of Christian believers.

George Vandeman has made several trips to Australia to conduct Bible study seminars to facilitate people's entry into church fellowship. His programme "It is Written" has been broadcast on Sunday mornings for almost twenty years. However it has unfortunately suffered from two disadvantages: (i) it was only telecast on Sunday mornings; and (ii) Australian audiences may not be responsive to American religious broadcasts. One factor which the writer discovered, however, was that people who are searching for a religious experience will often tune into the Sunday morning religious programmes. This writer believes there is a valid case to be made for airing religious programmes on Sunday mornings despite the small viewing audience. It would, however, greatly enhance the impact of these broadcasts if they featured Australian personalities. It is disappointing that Australian talent is not used in this time slot. Quite a number of people (some known personally to this writer)¹ have found their way into the Seventh-day Adventist Church with initial contact having been made solely by watching "It is Written."

The television spots aired by the present writer were similar to "It is Written" in respect to the factor of using television as a means of communicating some message of the Bible to people. They were only one minute in duration (compared with thirty minutes for "It is Written") and were thus limited in what they could communicate. However, since they were short they could

¹These have now been members of the church for several years and are mature and dedicated Christians.

be aired in prime (or near-prime) time and thus reach a much larger audience.

In 1978 twenty spots were aired on BTV 6 Ballarat. They were sixty-seconds in length and were broadcast nine times during the month of May¹ between 9:30 P.M. and 10:30 P.M. The same spot was then aired at 6:15 P.M. on twelve consecutive Sunday evenings.² This was in the middle of the main news bulletin. This station transmits to south-western Victoria. The viewing area has a population of 312,000. The viewing audience number 130,000. Fifty-four people wrote in and asked for the advertised material. No follow-up of any nature was attempted, however two backslidden Seventh-day Adventists contacted the Ballarat pastor and after having Bible studies were re-baptized. (Their daughter was impressed to purchase a set of lessons as advertised in the television spot and send them to a Bible teacher in a non-Seventh-day Adventist academy in Chile.)

Thus 130,000 people were informed several times of the reliability, accuracy and trustworthiness of the Bible at a cost of \$3,500.³ As a result two people have returned to fellowship and worship in the Seventh-day Adventist church.

In 1979 a 60-second spot was aired ten times on BTV 8 Bendigo, on consecutive Sundays, at 6:15 P.M. This was in the

¹On May 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 21.

²On May 21 and 28; June 4, 11, 18 and 25; July 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 and August 6.

³This amounts to \$0.0011 for the spot to be broadcast once to one person.

middle of the main news bulletin. The television spot was virtually identical with the one broadcast from BTV 6. It affirmed the accuracy of the Bible and advertised a set of Bible lessons. The population of the viewing area numbered 450,000 and the estimated viewing audience numbered 157,000. The cost of broadcasting the spots was approximately \$2600.¹ Again no further contact was sought with those who wrote in. However, one young couple contacted the Seventh-day Adventist minister and after a series of Bible studies were baptized. This couple had had no previous contact with Seventh-day Adventists or any affiliation with other Christian denominations. The husband is at present a Pathfinder leader having now been a member for several years. His younger brother has also been baptized and now a niece is showing considerable interest in becoming a Christian.

The same television spot was also aired on Sunday mornings on BTV 8 for nearly two years. It was broadcast once each Sunday for eighty-six weeks. During this period thirty-three people wrote in for the material. This represents, on average, one response for every 2.6 times the spot was broadcast. In prime-time on BTV 6, the response rate was one response for every 0.37 times the spot was broadcast,² and in prime-time on BTV 8 it was one response every 0.23 times.

¹Ibid.

²It should be remembered that BTV 6 and BTV 8 are two different viewing areas with prime-time audiences of 130,000 and 450,000 respectively. Considering that the Ballarat audience is significantly smaller (about 30 percent) the increase in response in prime-time is all the more marked.

The broadcasting in Gippsland brought one response for each time the spot was aired. Of the twenty-five spots aired in Gippsland only six were in the prime-time period. This could be a reason for the lower response rate compared to those of BTV 6 and BTV 8 mentioned above.

It therefore seems that it is advisable to air television spots in prime positions rather than buying a 'package' of advertising covering differently rated times (as was done by this writer). Comparisons of responses in prime-time and Sunday morning time slots strongly suggest the advisability of using prime time.

The cost of reaching each person in Albury (in 1977) was \$0.00332. In Ballarat (in 1978) it was \$0.00154 for each person. In Bendigo (in 1979) it cost \$0.00166 for each person and in Gippsland (1983) it cost \$0.00243 for each person. The differences in these costs could occur as a result of several factors. Because of the complexity of these factors it is unwise to attempt to make comparisons without very extensive analysis of the viewing areas, audience characteristics (ages, religious affiliation, etc.) and different scripts used.

Because only one person registered for the seminar, it was decided to cancel the seminar and in its place endeavour to make personal contact (wherever possible), by means of a courtesy call, on those who had purchased the material.¹ All of those contacted were courteous and pleasant. One lady has said that she would write to us when she has completed the lessons. She

¹Twelve of the twenty-five people who had purchased the material gave post office boxes as their addresses and consequently could not be personally contacted.

has an aunt who is a Seventh-day Adventist and is very interested in the Seventh-day Adventist church. The minister who visited her considers her to be a "very good prospect." One man expressed his appreciation strongly. He attends a non-denominational Bible study group. He enjoyed studying the lessons but doesn't agree with the Sabbath. Another lady in another district expressed that she was very interested in studying the Bible and particularly Bible prophecy.

Thus while the seminar did not eventuate, personal contact has been made with many of the recipients of the Profiles lessons and hopefully some of these people will find their way into membership in the Seventh-day Adventist church. This writer would very much have liked to work with these people but was unable to do this.

Conclusion

From a series of comparative studies covering rapidly-growing local Adventist congregations Gottfried Oosterwal concludes that the following hallmarks stand out clearly:

- (a) a genuine fellowship among the believers, which reaches out also to people not of our faith;
- (b) an active life of communal Bible study and prayer;
- (c) small groups responsible for the various ministries of the church;
- (d) an active programme of witnessing in the community, with specific assignments and goals;
- (e) a wholistic and diversified ministry that is well planned (proclamation and service, word and deed);
- (f) a family-like atmosphere with much joy, love and peace;
- (g) a pastor whose sermons are relevant to the context in which the believers find themselves, and whose work is geared towards guiding the members in evangelism and church growth.¹

¹Gottfried Oosterwal, "The Seventh-day Adventist Church in the World Today," in Servants for Christ: The Adventist Church Facing the '80's, ed. Robert E. Firth (Berrien Springs, Michigan: Andrews University Press, 1980), p. 26.

Television can help in the task of proclaiming the gospel (point e). It can assist in communicating the content of the Christian message. Russell Staples has stated that: "The possibilities inherent in the use of the mass media, and the responsibility of those who use them are tremendous."¹

This writer plans in the future to use television in harmony with the viewpoints expressed by Oosterwal and Staples in the above statements. In order to accomplish this it would be necessary for this writer to be located in the viewing area for two or three years at least. It is hoped that this will eventuate.

¹Russell Staples, "Seventh-day Adventist Mission in the '80's," in Ibid., p. 137.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Study of the subject of evangelism revealed several important perspectives. Firstly, the task of salvation is the mission of a Sovereign God. It is the Father who sent the Son to this world to redeem fallen humanity. The Son has sent the Holy Spirit to continue His work on a worldwide scale. All Christians are to be participants in the task of taking the gospel to the world. The witness of the Christian community (the church) is subordinate to the Spirit's witness.

Secondly, Jesus commanded His disciples to go and "make disciples" of all nations. The task of evangelism involves the proclaiming of a message (about Jesus Christ) and the bringing of people to a relationship with Jesus Christ who is Lord and Saviour.

Thirdly, Jesus the apostles and the church of the New Testament used various ideas and methods in evangelism. Jesus spoke to crowds and also with individuals. He likened the task of some individuals to sowing and (or) reaping. Paul spoke to crowds taking advantage of the various avenues available for public discourse in his day. The house, the synagogue, and the market place all become venues for the proclamation of the gospel. The

laity also played a major (though largely unseen) part in the spread of Christianity.

Evangelism in the twentieth century must be a function of the church (together with worship and fellowship). Evangelism which ignores the church community or functions in isolation from it is not evangelism in the scriptural sense. The church is part of a mission. It must not think in terms of mission being initiated by the church. It is God who has initiated the mission. It is the Holy Spirit who is the evangelist to the world. The church (and the individual Christian) are to be participants in this mission. Correct understanding of these issues will give tremendous impetus to evangelism throughout the Seventh-day Adventist church.

The use by the Christian God, of such avenues of communication as the alphabet, the Greek language, and the printing press, affirms the validity of the conclusion that He will use the mass communications media of the twentieth century to forward His mission.

A study of the use of television by other Christian groups revealed that the major part of the Christian broadcasting today is an aberration of evangelism. Firstly, they are broadcasting to the converted. Secondly, their content is theologically superficial and largely unsound. Thirdly, they have drowned themselves in commercialism; and fourthly, they operate in a manner that obfuscates the gospel and ignores the essential fellowship of individual believers in a Christian community. They replace the "good news" by becoming the good news themselves. They err by making the medium the message. This danger confronts everyone irrespective

of the medium they may use in evangelism--whether it is television, the church or friendship. None of these is the message. It is Jesus Christ who is the message. The media have their place but they must not become the message.

In evaluating the criticisms made of religious broadcasting it is important to remember that the faults lie in the way television has been used, not in the medium itself. If those using it had a sound understanding of Christian teaching, if they presented a Biblically accurate picture of the Christian life, if they complemented the Christian community, if they actually endeavoured to speak to the unconverted and if they avoided commercialism, then the criticisms levelled against them would be unfounded.

Christian television broadcasting must function as an avenue for "discipling" rather than being an end in itself. Those using it must seek to bring people to fellowship and worship in a Christian community. Television must not replace the church but complement it. Its use must be understood as one aspect of the church's participation in mission not as the mission. Television broadcasting must not be the goal or focal point of mission.

The use of television in evangelism in Gippsland resulted in up to 105,000 people being exposed to a message affirming the accuracy of scripture. The viewing public gained information by the psychological means of repeated factual assertions. Also, affirmed repeatedly was the fact that the Bible has a message for man in the computer age.

To communicate this information to these people by means of a letter would have cost at least \$31,500. This is over ten

times the cost of the television spots. To accomplish it by word of mouth on a one-to-one basis would have taken many years. It must be remembered that while research reveals that up to 70 percent of those at present in the church have come to Christ and church membership primarily through the influence of friends, the remaining 30 percent listed other factors as central in their conversions. Secondly, television can be used as a means of facilitating the evangelism on a one-to-one basis. Also it must be remembered that the means of mass communication enables contact to be made with people who have no Christian associates.

In the past people have come to a relationship with Christ and fellowship in the Seventh-day Adventist church as a result of initial communication occurring by means of television. Time will reveal the results of this writer's seed-sowing effort.

In his future use of television in evangelism this writer would seek to make the following improvements:

1. Be associated in fellowship with a Christian congregation for at least several months before televising, and then to use spots as a means of facilitating members' communication with friends
2. Appear himself in the television spot (as a member of the local community) to add more of the personal dimension to the communication
3. Focus the message of the spot on Jesus Christ and His uniqueness
4. Design and print colourful reading guides dealing with the particular issues involved in becoming a Christian and fellowshiping in the church as a complement to the distinctive teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist church. This would help in reaching non-Christians.
5. Seek ways and means of using television to facilitate interaction between Christians and their non-Christian friends and associates.

APPENDIX 1

TELEVISION ADVERTISEMENT SCHEDULE

TELEVISION ADVERTISEMENT SCHEDULE

TIME	RATE	NO.	DATES	DAY	TIME	SEC	RATE
5:00 P.M. - 6:00 P.M.	126.00	2	22/05	SUN	5:10 PM	60	126.00
			29/05	SUN	5:30 PM	60	126.00
6:00 P.M. - 11:00 P.M.	126.00	11	22/05	SUN	6:10 PM	60	126.00
			22/05	SUN	7:28 PM	60	126.00
			22/05	SUN	9:18 PM	60	126.00
			23/05	MON	6:55 PM	60	126.00
			23/05	MON	10:40 PM	60	126.00
			24/05	TUE	6:55 PM	60	126.00
			24/05	TUE	9:40 PM	60	126.00
			25/05	WED	10:30 PM	60	126.00
			25/05	WED	10:35 PM	60	126.00
			26/05	THU	6:55 PM	60	126.00
			26/05	THU	9:10 PM	60	126.00
12:00 P.M. - 1:30 P.M. M-F	126.00	2	23/05	MON	12:20 PM	60	126.00
			26/05	THU	1:00 PM	60	126.00
12:00 P.M. - 1:30 P.M. M-F	49.00	8	23/05	MON	1:00 PM	60	49.00
			24/05	TUE	1:10 PM	60	49.00
			25/05	WED	12:10 PM	60	49.00
			26/05	THU	1:20 PM	60	49.00
			27/05	FRI	1:00 PM	60	49.00
			27/05	FRI	1:20 PM	60	49.00
			30/05	MON	1:20 PM	60	49.00
			31/05	TUE	1:10 PM	60	49.00
5:30 P.M. - 6:00 P.M.	126.00	1	24/05	TUE	5:50 PM	60	126.00
6:00 P.M. - 6:30 P.M.	126.00	1	28/05	SAT	6:15 PM	60	126.00

APPENDIX 2

TELEVISION ADVERTISEMENT SCRIPT

TELEVISION ADVERTISEMENT SCRIPT

THEME MUSIC

PYRAMIDS

The lands of the Middle East have fascinated and intrigued people for years. These are

BYBLOS

the lands of the Bible, the world's most

JERUSALEM

incredible book. Historically and geograph-

HATSEPSUT'S TOMB

ically the Bible is accurate and has predicted future events with amazing precision. It

PETRA

has a timeless message for the computer age.

READING GUIDES

This new do-it-yourself kit is to help you unlock its mysteries. It contains a set of twenty-four project notes in full colour,

BURIED EVIDENCE
BOOK

plus a paper-back book, Buried Evidence, which tells you how archaeology proves the

BIBLE

Bible true. This kit costs only \$3. For an additional \$3 you can have a King James Bible, both packages costing only \$6. Send a postal order or cheque now, to Profiles of Faith, post office box 150, Leongatha postcode 3953. Profiles of Faith box 150 Leongatha 3953.

APPENDIX 3

SURVEY OF MARKET PENETRATION OF "PROFILES"

T.V. ADVERT ON CHANNEL 8

-
8. Do you remember how much it cost?..... YES NO

-
9. Did you consider writing in for the offer?..... YES NO

-
10. Did you write in for it? YES NO

-
11. Have you ever written in for a T.V. offer?..... YES NO

-
12. Which of these categories best describe your religion?
None___ Catholic ___ Anglican ___ Uniting ___ Baptist ___
Other _____
-
13. How often do you classify your church attendance? Regularly___
Often ___ Occasionally ___ Never ___ Don't Know _____
-

APPENDIX 4

INVITATION TO SEMINAR

INVITATION TO SEMINAR

P. O. Box 150
Leongatha
Victoria, 3953

June 15th 1983

Dear Friend,

As a purchaser of the "Profiles of Faith" material you are cordially invited to attend a friendly and informal seminar on Saturday July 9th from 2:00 P.M. to 5:30 P.M.

It will be held in the Columbia Room at the Commodore Motel in Sale (On the corner of Raymond and Foster Streets). There will be a nominal fee of \$2.50 each (or \$5.00/family).

The program will consist of four sessions including a film and is as follows:

2:00 P.M.	"How to Study Your Bible"
2:55 P.M.	"The Universe is Friendly"
3:50 P.M.	"Good News About Your Future"
4:45 P.M.	"Empty Cities"--film

There will be opportunity for questions and an interval when afternoon tea will be provided.

Registration will commence at 1:45 P.M.

The closing date for booking is July 1st, but we would appreciate your reply as early as possible to facilitate our printing and planning.

Fill in the enclosed form and mail it to "Profiles"
P. O. Box 150, Leongatha, Victoria 3953.

Looking forward to meeting you on July 9th,

I am,

Yours sincerely,

J.R. Dabson, Co-ordinator



SEMINAR BOOKING RESERVATION

Please find enclosed my reservation fee for:-

(Number of places) at \$2.50 each
Family= \$5.00

Name

Send to "PROFILES" P. O. Box 150 Leongatha Vic 3953
by July 1st - thankyou

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