

## Publishing Editor's column

IT IS SOMETIMES SAID that Christadelphians follow the world but at a distance. Looking at the current state of the world, one hopes this is not true or the Brotherhood will not survive if the Lord remains away much longer. There is, however, some truth in the comment. Take, for example, television. In much of the Brotherhood it is now an accepted part of the home, whereas at one time it was considered something to be avoided, as bringing the world into the home.

There are arguments for and against having a television. We all recognise the evil of much that is broadcast, and brethren and sisters who have televisions will surely avoid such material, though the weakness of the flesh is such that one suspects that this is not always so. With so many channels, there is, however, much that is broadcast that is interesting and instructive rather than harmful. Nevertheless, though television can be of benefit, particularly to the elderly, the lonely and the housebound, if watched with discrimination, it can also be a distraction to those who ought to be using more of their time and abilities in the Truth's service.

These are somewhat obvious comments on the subject of television, however, and not ones that I wish to develop now. I was struck recently by some less well-known aspects of the evils of television brought out in a newspaper article (sent to me by a reader) written by Dr Aric Sigman, Associate Fellow of the British Psychological Society and author of a book entitled *Remotely Controlled: How Television is Damaging our Lives and What We Can Do About It*. This book was based on analysing scientific studies from a wide range of bodies, and also from researching how countries which have more recently introduced television have been affected by it.

The last country in the world to introduce television was the small Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan. Its introduction was followed by a crime wave, and local academics concluded that it was television which had brought about the change in behaviour. The small South Pacific country of Tonga was similarly affected following the recent widespread availability of American television programmes. Those in Britain who have lived through the last forty years or so are well aware of the enormous increase there has been in crime and immorality over this period, and television has surely been a major factor in this. We expect

the world to be a place of great wickedness at the time when Christ returns, and we can see how this has developed over past years, with television a major, perhaps the major, influence.

Figures for the amount of television watched in Britain today are truly amazing. According to researchers, on average a seventy-five-year-old has spent over twelve of those years watching television (more than anything else except work and sleep), and the average six-year-old has spent one year. The average child in his or her early teens spends fifty-three hours a week watching television and using a computer. And what are people watching? Not only is mainstream television becoming sleazier and sleazier (according to *Daily Mail* journalist Bel Mooney, for one), in Britain there are twenty-seven channels available on satellite and cable devoted solely to pornography. There are eighty-four such channels in Europe now; there were but three a decade ago.

Returning to Dr Sigman's studies, one aspect of television that he unearthed from the various reports that he researched is the deleterious effect that spending much time watching television has on physical and mental health, especially that of young people. He says that, amongst other things, excessive television watching (defined as more than two hours a day) lowers metabolism, resulting in weight gain, increases the risk of diabetes, and causes sleep problems and depression. Yet there has been no effort by the government to provide advice about these dangers, even though we are deluged with advice about food and drink issues and safety matters. Physically, mentally and morally the health of the nation, and that of other nations, is being damaged, even destroyed, by television, he says, and yet nothing is being done about it. Anyone concerned about the welfare of their children should be very worried about this, and how much more those whose main concern is to bring their children up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4)!

It is all a far cry from the early days of television in Britain, when Lord Reith, the devout first Director-General of the BBC, strictly controlled what could be shown, quoting Philippians 4:8 as the standard which should obtain. One wonders to what depths of wickedness we shall come before the Lord returns. We should surely all be praying earnestly that the day may be soon.

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