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THE IMPORTANCE OF THE 700 CLUB

By Gary North

So you enjoy watching the 700 Club. Well, so do I. There's nothing else like it on T.V., right? No other show gives us the opportunity to hear and see as many interesting people. We learn about God's work in other people's lives. We hear about new books, new evangelism programs, and new ways to teach others about the old-fashioned Gospel. We also learn about the war between Christianity and humanism.

In other words, we **learn**. That's what makes the 700 Club unique. There is so much information available, day after day. And if you're anything like I am, you tend to take it for granted after a while. You think it's normal to be able to turn on your television and gain access to a wealth of information. Well, let me tell you something: it isn't normal. It's very close to a miracle.

Think back to the late 1960's and early 1970's. Do you remember where most of us got our information? From the nightly news. We let the major networks screen our information for us. And in screening that information, the networks made one assumption: that the God of the Bible is irrelevant to the affairs of this world. That assumption is wrong. But it affected everything that the networks did, and still do.

If you start with the presupposition that the God of the Bible just couldn't be who the Bible says He is, then everything you think or do will be colored by that presupposition. It's like a pair of rose-tinted glasses: if you put them on, everything will be a darker or lighter shade of rose.

The Bible says repeatedly that the fool has said in his heart that there is no God (Psalm 14:1; 53:1). The Bible also says that every man knows about God, for the very creation testifies to His existence, but men hold this truth back—actively suppress it—in unrighteousness. The King James Version reads: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness" (Romans 1:18). But the Greek is more explicit: the word translated as "hold" is actually closer to "hold back" or "hold down." It is an active suppression of the testimony of God: "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse" (Romans 1:20).

What does all this have to do with television? Plenty. It was not so long ago that we were all virtual captives of the television news. We were all heavily influenced, day by day, by those who were actively suppressing the knowledge of God. They were selecting what news went on the screen, and what **interpretation** would be given to us of that selected news.

We were very much like the people of ancient Israel whose source of information was the priesthood. But every few genera-

tions, the priests and the kings grew corrupt. They chased after false gods. And what happened? The people were deceived. They went to the false priests for guidance. The kings hired the priests and made them **court prophets**. Then God would raise up true prophets to confront the false prophets, the corrupt kings, and the sinful people, with the testimony of God.

Confrontation

We don't have God-ordained prophets any more. Jesus Christ was the final prophet, priest, and king. With the coming of the Bible, men have had access to God's revelation. Yet all men have a prophetic task: to proclaim God's word. We are all responsible before God to challenge the false prophets of our day. Each Christian, wherever he is, and in whatever circumstances, has to proclaim God's truth.

The successful proclamation of the word involves every sphere of life. We can't say to ourselves: "Well, God doesn't hold men responsible in **this** area of life." God holds us responsible for our very thoughts (Matthew 5:28). So wherever we are, or whatever we do in life, we are to do all things to the glory of God: "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:17). But if this is what we're required to do, then it means that sinners do the opposite. Everything they do is to the dishonor of God and the glory of the great enemy of God, Satan. Neutrality is a myth. We cannot serve two masters.

Therefore, when we live our lives to God's glory, we are at war. We are to subdue the lusts of our flesh and the errors of our minds by the word of God, and by His grace. We cannot assume that all facts are neutral. Was Satan neutral when he interpreted God's word to Eve? Was he neutral when he tempted Jesus in the wilderness by quoting Scripture? And what did Jesus do in response? He quoted Scripture **in context** (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10).

That is precisely what we must do. When we are told to believe anything contrary to the Bible, we must quote Scripture, if only to ourselves, in context. There is no neutral knowledge. Knowledge is either God-honoring or God-defying.

This brings me back to my original subject: **television news**. A few years ago, we were generally content, as Christians, to allow the secular humanists to collect information for us and deliver it to us, all nicely packaged, every evening. We had no regular source of information on television that enabled us to **rethink** what we were being told by the humanist news media. We were passively absorbing the culture of humanism, night after night, because we assumed that all news is neutral, that it wasn't **filtered** news, **interpreted** news, and **managed** news. But it was. And it still is.

Today, we have an alternative. In fact, we have several alternatives. There are a number of Christian television broadcasting organizations available to many communities. But the one source of information that is consistently relevant to the events of our day is the 700 Club.

Hard News, Soft Packaging

Pat Robertson is a master at creating an illusion. The illusion is that rethinking humanism's civilization is easy. He smiles. He seems to be able to recall, on a moment's notice, an encyclopedia of information. He chats effortlessly. It all looks so easy. Pat Robertson, unlike the Hollywood version of Samson, doesn't grunt and groan as he pushes the pillars of humanist culture down on the heads of the enemy. But whether we recognize it or not, his chosen task in life is very much like Samson's: to challenge the leadership of the Philistines of our era.

The talk-show format is familiar to Americans. Millions of people are entertained nightly by a television talk show. This has been going on since the 1950's. But the talk shows that most Americans watch are frothy entertainment. They are not serious discussions. Sure, there are the Sunday afternoon interviews, where several reporters interview a political figure, or some national leader. But these are humanistic confrontations: the reporters try to drag out some admission by the leader, and the leader tries to evade answering them forthrightly. Besides, hardly anyone watches these shows. They're all watching some weekend sports event on another channel.

The 700 Club is different. It seems leisurely, but it is a concentrated source of new information. It seems entertaining, but it is concerned with the issues of life and death. It creates an illusion of informality, but the guests are intensely concerned about their topic for the day. The 700 Club has a "soft format," but it brings to the viewer information about the hard facts of life in a disintegrating humanist culture. Pat Robertson is re-educating American Christians, day by day.

How important is the information we get on the 700 Club? Absolutely vital. The Christian community has always been accused of being anti-intellectual. We have been accused of being concerned with "pie in the sky, by and by." Well, maybe we have been in the past. But that is changing very fast, and the 700 Club is one of the main reasons it is changing. Today, Christians get more "hard-core" information on the 700 Club than the vast majority of non-Christians gain from humanist news shows. And millions of us are watching. (The liberals would call this process "consciousness raising.")

Maybe you don't think of yourself as an intellectual. Maybe you think all intellectuals are "eggheads," easily cracked. Let me tell you something: if you're tuning in the 700 Club on a regular basis, you're more of an intellectual than 90% of the voters in the United States. You are using your **intellect** to understand what's going on in the world. You're taking time and effort to pay attention to **ideas**. You even start using ideas you've picked up during Pat Robertson's interviews to evaluate what you're reading in the newspaper or seeing on the secular news broadcasts. If you're not an intellectual, who is?

You see what Pat Robertson is doing? He's a very clever fellow. He is transforming the viewing habits of millions of Christians. More important, he is changing their **thinking habits**. Remember, thinking is like any other learned act: it takes practice. Most of it is based on habit. Thinking requires new facts, but always interpreted by a reliable standard of interpretation. And Pat Robertson, unlike the network news teams, uses the one fully reliable standard of interpretation: the Bible. That, more than anything else, is why the 700 Club is creating an **intellectual revolution** within the Christian community.

The Revolution

Pat Robertson is a revolutionary. He doesn't look like it, does he? Such a nice fellow, always smiling. It doesn't matter that he wears three-piece suits and looks like a banker. He is a revolutionary. An American revolutionary.

John Adams, the second President of the United States, wrote to his old political rival, Thomas Jefferson, and offered an assessment of the revolution they had helped to create decades earlier. He wrote it in 1815, when their careers were over. (An odd fact of history: they both died on July 4, 1826, on the 50th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, which they had both helped to write.) Here is what Adams wrote:

What do we mean by the Revolution? The war? That was no part of the Revolution; it was only an effect and consequence of it. The Revolution was in the minds of the people, and this was effected, from 1760 to 1775, in the course of fifteen years before a drop of blood was shed at Lexington.

Pat Robertson is a revolutionary in much the same way that Sam Adams was when he established the **Committees of Correspondence** in Boston in 1772. The Committees were inter-colonial news links among the various groups in each colony that were dedicated to restoring the rights of Englishmen in the colonies. Prior to these Committees, the main sources of information were what we might call the "Establishment Press." Newspapers that were openly published in each major city relied heavily on information delivered by means of British ships. These papers reflected the British point of view, all too often. Sam Adams was determined to create an **alternative information network**. Without alternative sources of information, especially concerning the efforts of the patriot party in resisting encroachments on the freedom of colonial citizens, there could be no co-ordinated efforts to challenge the growing British bureaucracy. As the Declaration of Independence complained concerning King George III: "He has erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither swarms of Officers to harass our People, and eat out their substance." Two centuries later, Washington is doing the same thing.

The satellite communications system which delivers the 700 Club to so many cable television systems is part of today's growing network of alternative opinion. So are the hundreds (even thousands) of newsletters, including *Pat Robertson's Perspective*. These new sources of information are vital in what is rapidly becoming the **Christian counter-revolution**—a revolution against the humanists' reconstruction of the American Christian commonwealth.

This counter-revolution—which is regarded as a revolution by the humanists—is, above all, a **revolution of thought**. This is the heart and soul of any true revolution. John Adams saw it in 1815, and we should, too. When people begin to rethink the accepted truths of a civilization, they have taken the first step toward becoming revolutionaries. The 700 Club is unquestionably a revolutionary institution.

The theological liberals have often argued that Jesus was a revolutionary. Conservatives have officially rejected this view, because they tend to see revolutionaries as skinny, bearded people carrying bombs. But if we take John Adams' assessment seriously, then we have to say that Jesus **was** a revolutionary from the point of view of the Roman Empire and the leaders of Israel. He was **God's counter-revolutionary** who was calling rebellious humanity back into fellowship with the Creator. He was overturning the foundations of the humanist empire of H. day. He was asking people to rethink their first principles of life. And when they rethought their anti-God principles, and were

converted, they began to replace the corrupt institutions of their day. Christianity conquered Rome in three centuries. Christ defeated Caesar.

This counter-revolution involved every institution of Roman society: the family above all, but also worship, business, politics, charity, and so forth. **Everything was called into question, since everything was tainted with sin and rebellion against God.** This is why the Jews and Gentiles of Thessalonica created such an uproar against Jason, who was being visited by Paul and Silas. The mob came looking for Paul and Silas. "And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also; Whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus" (Acts 17:6-7). **The world turned upside down:** this was also the tune played by Lord Cornwallis' military band as the British surrendered to the American forces at Yorktown in the fall of 1781.

This is the meaning of God's promise to Israel: "Thus saith the Lord God: Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. ~~I will overturn, overturn, overturn,~~ it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is, and I shall give it him" (Ezekiel 21:26-27). **The crown rights of King Jesus** must be affirmed. this is what Thessalonians meant: Christ, the true king, was indeed turning their humanistic world upside down.

The information revolution, which is a product of technology, is creating a far more decentralized information system. The newsletter, the computerized mailing list, and the satellite have been combined by creative people to produce a rapidly changing information network. Like the printing press in Luther's day, and like the Roman Empire's language, roads, and shipping network in Jesus's day, **the information revolution is preparing the way for a new revival.**

Clearing House

The most expensive scarce economic resource in the world is accurate information. It takes time and capital to obtain it. What the 700 Club does is to assemble large quantities of information and package it into a form that the average Christian can digest and use.

It never ceases to amaze me how the staff of the 700 Club can find such informed people to discuss any given topic. The guests are not always Christians, but time after time, a guest will appear who is just the right man to listen to. In the midst of rising interest rates, ~~we get a discussion of money-market funds~~ with William Donoghue. This was precisely the right person to deal with the subject. We get Gordon McClendon to discuss strategic metals in the 1980's. The very people I would have selected to discuss these topics are the ones who appeared on the 700 Club.

This means that Christians have a great competitive advantage over the average T.V. viewer. We have a staff of dedicated people lining up guests for the show—in effect, our own hired experts. The staff is, in effect, working for the large viewing audience. The quality of the guests indicates that the staff knows what is going on in the world. Christians are better informed today than ever before.

A decade ago, nothing like this existed. There were no staffs of knowledgeable Christians in the news media. There were no programs that served the Christian community as clearing houses for new information. Christians were far more dependent on the humanists for their information.

Consider the costs of conducting a private search for people of the caliber of those who appear on the 700 Club. The cost would be prohibitive. There are not enough hours in the day to conduct

such a search, unless we could assemble a staff and finance it. That is what the 700 Club has done for us. The show can reduce our information search costs.

Active Viewing

If Pat Robertson has done us all the favor of locating top-flight people to speak to the issues of the day, then we have an obligation to make proper use of his efforts. This means that we must begin to discipline ourselves to become active viewers. Passive viewers are what the humanist news media are designed to satisfy. We should do better.

It is a generally accepted fact that within 24 hours of a college lecture, the typical student has forgotten 90% of what he heard. The learning curve is grim. It takes years of education to reshape a mind. And this is with active participation on the part of the students.

The humanists can reshape minds over a lifetime. They have most people hypnotized. People invest four hours a day in T.V. viewing; the effects are cumulative. It begins at age 2 and continues until death. Passive viewers eventually learn from what they watch, but the education is not extremely specific. People absorb an **attitude toward life**, not necessarily a specific pile of facts. What they learn, above all, is that God and God's word are not important aspects of reality.

Therefore, we need to become active viewers. We need to think about what we are watching. Viewers of the 700 Club should have pencil and paper close at hand, to take a few notes, or to record a guest's name, organization, and address. If we want to follow through on an idea, or a program, or a book, we need to be able to refer back to our notes. This is active viewing: gathering information in order to act.

We get tired, of course. Maybe we don't want to take notes on everything. But if we find that a guest is "speaking to our personal needs" then we should be prepared to take some action, such as dropping the guest or his organization a card, or even a dollar contribution in a letter, and get on his mailing list, or get information on his publications, or whatever. What good is a clearing house if nobody pays any attention to the information presented by the speakers?

Christians cannot afford the luxury of thoughtlessness. We cannot begin to exercise godly dominion over the earth if we remain as passive as the average T.V. viewer. Christians must take advantage of the **knowledge explosion** that is going on in front of our very eyes. The technological miracle of satellite broadcasting is being made available to us, and we have to recognize the importance of this revolution.

There is a legitimate area of mental relaxation. We need not take notes on every audio tape, every T.V. show, and every sermon we ever hear. But when the 700 Club brings us key representatives of important movements, or organizations, or special interest groups, we should pay attention. When we see a show on the Christian history of the United States, we should try to remember some of the details. We should take the effort to order the book, or whatever is being offered, if the information seems important to us.

Too much work? So was the establishment of the early church. So was the establishment of the colonial Christian commonwealths in New England, New York, and Virginia. What about the Protestant Reformation? Was it a passive affair? Of course not. Are we any less responsible than our predecessors were?

What are we saying to ourselves? That our era is irrelevant to the development of God's kingdom? That what we do really doesn't matter in history? That we are incapable of challenging the humanist culture of our age? That God doesn't care if we sit around, passively responding to the crises of life, and the enter-

tainment of life? Are we nothing but spectators? What generation has ever been "let off God's hook" in the task of subduing the earth to the glory of God? Not one. Not ours.

This is why the 700 Club is such an important resource. I suspect that most viewers are neglecting this resource. I was trained as a scholar, yet I find the interviews stimulating. I get information that is important to me, and I get it on a regular basis. There are more things going-on around us than we imagine; a clearing house can serve as an introduction to the unknown (to us) events of the day. Not a final word, of course, but an introduction. The 700 Club serves as a kind of **data bank for Christian reconstruction**. We should not neglect the use of such a resource.

Pat Robertson's success as an interviewer is based on the fact that he is a kind of sponge. He talks to so many people that he can absorb information from many different fields. He has a decent memory, so he can make connections that other people find it difficult to make, simply because his guests provide him with so much unique information. He may forget 95% of what he is told in any given interview, but after a thousand interviews, the information begins to pile up. Pat Robertson is a data bank wearing a vest.

None of us cannot afford the time to investigate everything we hear on the show. What we can do is to pay attention to everything, in order to find something that interests us, or that might help us to be better stewards. When we hear it, we can follow through. We need to get the **division of labor** operating. Each of us can follow through on something.

The body of Christ is a unit (I Corinthians 12). It fits together. This is why we need clearing houses: to keep us informed of what all the other members of Christ's body are doing to advance His kingdom. We need to have respect for these other workers in the vineyard. The advantage of the 700 Club is this: it offers us the widest range of "vineyard workers." Not just evangelists, not just social workers, not just reformed alcoholics, but Christians who are actively working in **every** sphere of life. This is the vision that we need to adopt: that we can be successful in subduing the earth to the glory of God.

The Shotgun

The 700 Club is important to the various Christian organizations. They can tell their story to a huge audience. The 700 Club is a sort of **shotgun**. A specific guest can "fire a shot" on the show, and a few pellets will hit the targets—people who are interested in what he is saying. Most viewers will not respond, since only a few will be that interested in a specific discussion. But a few will respond. Without the shotgun of the 700 Club, it would be prohibitively expensive for any guest to locate the few people who will respond to his message.

It is important for Christians with particular interests and skills to identify themselves by contacting guests on the show. These groups need to locate those who can help them financially, or locally. People who are in the information business—which means most of the guests on the show—need to know that their message is being heard. That is why Christians should respond when we hear something of importance. We must become

active viewers and selective responders.

The development of mailing lists is crucial in today's world. To raise money, each group needs a list. To communicate new information, each group needs a list. To call people to action, or to sacrifice, or to rejoice, each group needs a list. The 700 Club helps each group to develop a better mailing list by means of the shotgun of a mass audience. It is a vital service.

No one needs to be on dozens of mailing lists. Everyone ought to be on a few. **Each person should select a few groups to support and promote.** This is why the 700 Club is so valuable. It identifies the potential groups of importance to a person. It screens them, and it gives a good summary of what their focus is, group by group. This is why we need to keep the show on the air. It reduces our information search costs.

We also need a single source of a kind of "emergency alert." If any Federal bureaucrats begin to act unconstitutionally, the 700 Club can alert millions of Christians. We can defend our interests collectively. Without a large network of **activist** Christians, there is little likelihood that the rising tide of bureaucray can be rolled back. **The threat of persecution is reduced by the very presence of the various Christian interview shows.**

Conclusion

Christians tend to bicker a lot among themselves, and Christian groups are constantly battling each other for the allegiance of a limited number of donors. But, then again, profit-seeking businessmen are also competing for a limited number of consumer dollars. We should regard honest competition as a way of increasing the number of available opportunities. The same is true of Christian organizations.

It should be clear that the 700 Club, as a source of information to viewers, and as a "shotgun" for organizations to locate potential supporters, deserves the support of all Christians and groups that are ideologically in agreement with Pat Robertson's perspective. No other single source of communications offers so small, underfunded organization an audience the size of the 700 Club's audience. It saves the viewers time in locating the Christian organizations they deserve to support, and it saves the organizations the enormous expense of locating the handful of enthusiastic viewers who will respond. There is no other clearing house remotely as effective.

We need better information. The Christian community has been starved for information. The ferocity of the attacks by establishment churches, establishment journalists, and establishment politicians should indicate just how dangerous to the humanist movement the T.V. preachers really are. But as a source of wide-ranging new information, the 700 Club is by far the most important, and therefore the most dangerous to Establishment humanists. This is why Christians of all denominational commitments need to support the organization. It is a time-saver, a search-cost reducer, and an entertaining medium, all at the same time.

To receive *Pat Robertson's Perspective* (which is a monthly newsletter and often very informative), write:

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