

Acts 18:3

TENTMAKERS

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THE CASE FOR A SATELLITE T.V. RECEPTION DISH¹

The isolation of churches and Christian day schools today is very great. There are a few co-ordinating organizations, but they are very weak. A good way to go bankrupt is to mail unsolicited materials to churches or Christian schools. Headmasters have not been willing to fight until their own schools are being attacked. By then, it is too late. The **Sileven case** in Nebraska is the first one in which this pattern of isolation has been broken.

We need to examine the cause of Sileven's notoriety. One word describes the difference: **television**. Several of the "electronic churchmen" devoted time on their shows to Sileven's plight. This media coverage did for Sileven what it did for Martin Luther King. It brought to light what the bureaucrats were doing. I was amused at a 1982 ABC TV report. They interviewed one woman, a supporter of the local public school, who said, "I think Nebraska's affairs should be run by Nebraskans, not all these outsiders." This was the same argument Southern whites used in 1962, the "outside agitators" argument. Television coverage made the difference for King. It could make the difference for Christians who want to recapture the nation.

The existence of satellites and cable channels has at last broken the hold of the major TV networks. The level of information provided by a 30-minute interview is far greater than that provided by a 2-minute news snippet. News snippets are designed to hold an impersonal audience's attention long enough to sell a percentage of them some soap. There is no dedicated group of viewers who are emotionally committed to an anchorman. On the other hand, there are millions of viewers who are personally committed to one or another of the electronic churchmen. Thus, they will sit in front of the screen and listen to a lengthy interview, and even try to understand it. **This puts a major educational tool into the hands of Christian leaders**—a tool which the humanists cannot match on television because of the "least common denominator" principle which governs the Nielson rating wars. The lever of television gives the local Christian soldier hope. He knows there is a potential army of supporters behind him, if he gets in a difficult situation. His supporters can be mobilized rapidly and inexpensively if a particular electronic churchman gets his case before the viewers. The problem of anonymity which the local Christian pastor faces in any confrontation with the bureaucrats can now be overcome overnight. This is what Martin Luther King discovered, and it led to the creation of a successful resistance movement in 1956. **Bureaucrats run from adverse publicity the way cockroaches run from light.** This weakness must be exploited by Christian activists.

mobilization tool of great importance. It is safe to say that few men are willing today to take the risks necessary to stand up to the various state and Federal bureaucracies. **The very presence of the satellite gives CBN an important edge in getting its people involved in Christian activism.** Without a means of publicizing a crisis, few pastors will take a stand. The CBN-mobilized leaders could easily take positions of leadership locally that other pastors would not dare to take, since they would not have the potential back-up of the CBN Satellite. The satellite is like a howitzer on a battlefield in which Christians have been fighting with pistols and slingshots. And now other Christian ministries are getting their own satellite channels.

Men need motivation. The existence of the satellite network offers men motivation. They can join together in a co-ordinated effort to roll back humanism at every level. This is the approach I call brush-fire **wara**. It can work well for legal resistance, but it can also work for political action, education, and almost everything else. It is a fundamental tool of resistance. But it takes a combination of centralized **strategy** and **local mobilization and execution**. It takes, in short, the application of the One and the Many principle.

The Fulcrum

Those who have been most successful in developing the lever of satellite communications and cable TV distribution have been skilled practitioners of media communications. Understandably, there has been a tendency to emphasize the **impact** of the media. But a medium needs a message; it is not (contrary to McLuhan) itself the message. The message has, until recently, been limited: personal salvation, personal healing, family solidarity, and musical entertainment.

Those who have been in the "fulcrum production business" have been inept at developing levers. They have not written widely read books, nor have they pioneered the use of TV communications or motion pictures. The few exceptions: the Schaeffers, the various Christian counselors — **Dobson**, Gothard, and Adams—and the six-day creationist movement (including the old Moody science films). But with respect to positive programs of Christian reconstruction, there has been no successful program so far—graphically or politically.

What is now needed is a bringing together of the lever and the fulcrum. Those who have built up large audiences must begin to join hands with those who have developed specific programs of reconstruction: education, legal defense, political training, etc. The "electronic churchmen" have got to begin to target specific segments of their audiences who are ready for specific programs: first by education, second by organizational mobilization. In short, we **need feet, hands and eyes**, and each subgroup within vari-

1. Adapted from "Levers, Fulcrums, and Hornets," in *Christianity and Civilization* 3, 708 Hamvassy, Tyler, TX 75701; \$14.95.

ous large television audiences needs specific guidance and training in order to become proficient

There is no doubt that CBN would be better able to begin this program of specialized training than any of its competitors. It has the broadest audience. Scattered within any given prime-time audience, there are more people who might be interested in getting involved in a particular action program. CBN is on the air 24 hours a day. It can therefore devote specific time slots to identifying and developing segments of the overall viewing audience, but without alienating the viewers as a whole. Also, Pat Robertson, not being a pastor, is less of a threat to the egos and programs of the nation's pastors.

CBN University offers an institutional base for launching an educational program. Robertson's Freedom Council offers an institutional base for the creation of political education and training. If each of these two organizations can recruit the services of outside specialists in the particular areas, then the expertise of the "fulcrum developers" can be put to use. I have in mind such non-profit organizations as the Free Congress Foundation, the Rutherford Institute, the American Vision, the Foundation for American Christian Education, the Foundation for Christian Self-Government, the Institute for Christian Economics, the various creation research organizations, Chalcedon Foundation, and other educational groups. A body of explicitly Christian literature in several areas has been produced over the last two decades. These educational resources should be integrated into an overall program of education and mobilization.

In the past, there has been a problem of communication between "lever builders" and "fulcrum builders." The "lever builders" have been fearful of getting too intellectual, too controversial, and too action-oriented to maintain their large, essentially passive Christian audiences. The risk of controversy has been too great. The "fulcrum builders" have resented pressure from the "levers" to "water down" their message in order to meet the needs and intellectual abilities of mass audiences. They have chosen instead to gather still more footnotes, develop still more complex theories, and publish ever fatter books in the quest for the near-perfect intellectual equivalent of Augustine's *City of God* or Calvin's *Institutes*.

In the providence of God, both sides have been correct, up until now. The levers are longer, and the fulcrums are stronger, than they would otherwise have been had the developers in each camp been too concerned with imitating the other. But now the levers are in place, and the fulcrums are as ready as they need to be at this moment in history. Christian viewers are not nearly so passive these days. They see clearly the threat of humanism for the first time. Therefore, it is time to meet the newly felt needs of these viewers. There is always a need for larger audiences and more footnotes, but there is a far greater need today to get the existing footnotes in bite-sized portions to the existing hungry multitudes. Christ fed the multitudes with two fish and five loaves of bread; we can feed them with our existing body of materials. While they are digesting what we can deliver today, the fulcrum experts can crank out more footnotes.

The "Technological End Run"

The humanists have captured the mainline denominations, the universities, the major news media, the entertain-

ment media, and the public schools. In short, **humanists have captured the giant institutions**. But look at what is happening. The generalized institutions are losing their share of the market. What is clearly taking place is a shift from the generalized to the specialized, from the large to the small. *Life* and *Look*, along with the original weekly *Saturday Evening Post*, did not survive. The proliferation of special-interest magazines and newsletters has enabled advertisers to target specific audiences and increase their revenues per advertising dollar spent. Now the same phenomenon is taking place in the television industry. Like the Model T Ford, which could not compete once General Motors offered five or six cars with numerous models, so is the modern TV network. The networks look strong today, just as the Model T looked in 1914. Looks are often deceiving.

The humanists captured the national political parties, but today we find that single-interest voting patterns are tearing the national parties apart. Direct-mail campaigns allow these groups to target their audiences, producing more votes per invested dollar, and more ulcers per elected politician. What Alvin Toffler has predicted in *The Third Wave*, and what John Naisbitt has predicted in *Megatrends: Ten New Directions Transforming Our Lives*, is the coming decentralization. In short, in the face of excessive centralization and Statism, we are seeing a countertrend, or better put, multiple countertrends. We are being given an opportunity to attain a better balance between the One and the Many.

Christians are in an excellent position to take advantage of this reversal. Christianity is decentralized—indeed, "fragmented" better describes our condition. If the Christians can assemble themselves into loosely organized but well trained special-interest blocs, while today's centralized humanist culture is disintegrating, the result could be **the creation of a new cultural synthesis**, one based on biblical law rather than some version of humanistic natural law, meaning a version of the myth of neutrality.

What we need, therefore, is a **technological "end run" around today's entrenched, centralized, humanist institutions**. We have begun to do this in television. The development of an alternative information network through newsletters has also made an impact. The development of direct-mail lists has increased our ability to get a specific message to a specific audience. We have a real edge in communications. The Christian day school movement has made a substantial dent in the humanist monopoly of information. Where we have not yet been successful is in the areas of higher education, political training, and legal defense.

As the number of Christian broadcasting alternates expands, we will be able to create a new educational system. Communications are crucial. Now that Gene Scott has pioneered the low-cost reception dish idea, others can get involved. An investment of \$777.77 allows a church to receive one station; one station is only the beginning. (For details, contact: University Network, 1615 S. Glendale Blvd., Glendale, CA 91205.) When Christian broadcasters know that they can reach an audience of thousands of churches, each armed with a satellite reception dish and several video-cassette recorders, they will be able to restructure modern Christian education, including political education. The monopoly of the humanist media will be definitively broken. The sooner your church buys a reception dish, the sooner this monopoly will be destroyed.

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