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# Book Reviews

**TELEVISION AND RELIGION: THE SHAPING OF FAITH, VALUES, AND CULTURE.** By William F. Fore. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1987.

Dr. William F. Fore, ordained United Methodist, is assistant general secretary for communications of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. In the preface of this book he provides an effective summary of each chapter (pp. 12-13):

“Chapter 1 describes what we already know about television and its power, and why religion is concerned about TV’s cultural role. Chapter 2 enlarges the perspective to show that TV is actually an expression of the new technological era, and describes the church’s inadequate response thus far to the challenges of the technological era.

“Chapter 3 sets forth a Christian theological framework from which to analyze the world of television, and Chapter 4 then examines television—its myths, stories, values, and assumptions, in comparison with this Christian worldview. Chapters 5 and 6 describe in detail the best known of the church responses to the challenge of television—the electronic church—in both its positive and negative aspects. Chapter 7 suggests specific strategies for action in the mainline churches.

“Chapters 8, 9, 10, and 11 consider the three ethical and public policy issues which must command our attention as we consider ways to respond to the challenges posed by television: violence and sexual violence; censorship and media regulation; and the global implications of our American media policies...

“Finally, Chapter 12 looks at some ‘signs of hope,’ specific ways individuals and groups can work in production and distribution, the influencing of public policy, and media education.”

The last point is precisely the weakness of this book: it gets to “signs of hope” only in the last chapter, and then there is not enough time left to give us more details about specific directives concerning how we can resolve the problems of media hopelessness covered in the first eleven chapters.

A short section of Chapter 12, called “The Vision,” concludes the book with some helpful, hopeful, general suggestions. Concerned citizens can “...create local television councils and community action to get stations to accept their public accountability; introduce media education courses in the schools; use community organizations to develop programs relating to community issues in the ‘narrowcast’ media of cable TV, videocassettes, low-power TV, public broadcasting facilities, and commercial side-band channels; utilize stockholder action and, under certain circumstances, boycott” (pp. 200-201).

Since the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod’s use of media is lumped

with the history of the "electronic church," which Fore discounts as "evangelical" and "fundamentalistic," it might evaluate whether it can benefit from Fore's critique. It will find it difficult to abandon its Word of God (Law-Gospel) theology of communication in favor of the "social gospel" political activism of Fore's basic religious viewpoint.

Harold H. Zietlow

AGING, A TIME FOR NEW LEARNING. By David J. Maitland. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1987. Paperback, 133 pages.

One is quickly disabused of the expectation that here is a manual that will provide new insights and better methodologies in educational programs for the elderly in the congregation. For those not previously initiated this volume will introduce you to "imaging," i.e., a guided journey made possible by enabling a person to get in touch with the inner self. The author strives to demonstrate how past recollections and hoped-for futures can be reconciled in an individual life reflected in a person's self-understanding that will enable that person to live more completely and fully in the present. This in part is what the psalmist means, according to Maitland, when he requests that God would teach us to number our days (Psalm 90). In short, there is something in experience which is instructive. In this reviewer's mind—and he may be accused of oversimplification—the text may well be considered a commentary on Erik Erickson's seventh stage (of eight) of human development, "Stagnation or Generativity." In this polarity the aging person either stagnates, simply waits to die, or uses the time as an investment to build up a heritage to be passed on to future generations. Those acquainted with Abraham Mazlow's ideas on "self-actualization" might also resonate sympathetically with Maitland's material. The wise heart, according to Maitland, is one which is secure in the realization that historically, currently, and perpetually, it dwells in God (p. 133).

Norbert H. Mueller