"TV aims at young urban viewers," Austin noted, "and so older people outside the cities who have some religious values are not the audience TV wants."

When mainstream religion left Hollywood, two things filled the vacuum: an anti-religious sentiment and trendy religions. New Age beliefs, gurus and Eastern mysticism became popular. "I know more practicing Hindus and Buddhists than Catholics," Prizer admitted. "Buddhism is fashionable in some circles." He added, however, that filmmakers are not the only ones who rejected traditional religion.

"What you find in Hollywood is no different from what you find among tenured professors or media people. It has to do with a whole class of people. Hollywood, if taken by itself, is an aberration from the culture as a whole, but it's not much different if compared to Stanford or CNN. A whole class has secularized itself," Prizer said.

The [anti-religious] bias is so obvious you'd have to be blind not to see it.
–'Sneak Previews' Host Michael Medved

Austin agrees: "Hollywood's view of America is relentlessly secular. That's true of all literature and arts of our time. Look at novelists, poets and playwrights. How many outstanding religious writers are there in the U.S. who are not ghetto-ized into being religious writers? The religious faith of American writers and artists is invisible."

But the problem goes deeper than just media controlled by secularists or Buddhists-for-the-day; the problem is that many of the media's powerful elite are anti-religious, especially if that religion is Catholicism.

"There isn't a good prominent Catholic writer in Hollywood," Austin declared. "If there were, he or she wouldn't advertise it, because it wouldn't be a plus. Anti-Catholicism is alive and well in Hollywood if for no other reason than the Church's stands on sexual issues. That's not politically correct ."

But screenwriter Furia adds a qualifier. The absence of religion on movie and TV screens isn't just a matter of "creative people not having strong religious connections" and "no theological dimension." He also points to a practical matter: "It's difficult to find the vocabulary to express religion in drama and comedy. It's difficult to deal with it in a dramatic language that isn't superficial."

So the heads of the studios are not people of faith, and the major producers are anti-religious, and the important writers are secular humanists. But what about the writers and producers I talked to? They are active Christians who have thought about their beliefs and values. Have they been able to influence movies and TV? Have they tried to get religious themes into their shows?

"I wrote a pilot about a priest, which demanded an understanding of what he did and why he did it," Furia said. "It wasn't made, but it didn't have to do with the subject matter. There is fear at the studios that such subjects won't reach a broad audience. Religion is a ticklish subject in our society. Religion remains in the closet."

I asked Austin what would have happened if he had ever suggested that a character on Charlie's Angels become religious. What if he had recommended that Farrah Fawcett's character undergo a conversion?

"Any religious expression," he replied, "is considered sectarian. So the producers would have asked me, 'What religion will she be?'

Any expression of spirituality that does get on has no affiliation and no moral component. By and large, religious characters on TV are incidental and played for comedy, or they are quaint and benign.

"It would be unacceptable to introduce a religious aspect. In entertainment shows, the characters don't talk about God. Religion is absent; you never see people pray, even if they confront life-and-death situations."

In my search for Hollywood's missing religious people, Austin advised, I should keep in mind what Hollywood does: "It is dealing with a mass product for a mass audience. It produces entertainment. They're selling escape from reality and truth. Religion is about truth, and anything tough about life, like the choice between good and evil, is avoided.

"If you want to be cynical, look at it this way: If religion sold, they'd sell it. The real law in Hollywood is money, and if they could sell a religious movie or TV series, they'd sell it—but as escape. The priest would be a detective or there'd be a sexy nun."

Ethics and morality have very little to do with the film business or what gets on TV.
–Former CBS Art Director Bill O'Donnell

Maybe it is just as well that I could not find the missing religious persons in Hollywood. On the other hand, I could not help wondering what would happen if director Martin Scorsese made a movie about the real Jesus instead of The Last Temptation of Christ?

What would happen if Arnold Schwarzenegger put his multi-million-dollar clout behind a film about Thomas Merton?

What would happen if a major studio announced that it was going to start producing TV shows promoting chastity?

I guess for now all of those ''what-ifs" remain unsolved mysteries.

Poll shows TV's major role in lives of children

Nearly half of America's school-age children have a TV in their bedroom and more worry about getting AIDS than worry about getting into college, according to a national survey on youth, education and television.

Sponsored by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the poll's preliminary findings document the profound influence that television has on the culture of children.

After spending a day in schools where three in four teachers use TV in their classrooms, the survey showed, nearly four of five children watch television at home before eating dinner.

For keeping up with current events, 79% of the respondents–children ages 6 to 17–said they get most of their news from television. That compares to 30% who read newspapers.

Cox News Service, 9/27/91

Send AFA Responses

Please send AFA copies of replies you receive from advertisers and other companies. Also, send news clippings on family issues. Your assistance is deeply appreciated.

Bush says TV hurting kids

President Bush has blamed TV's excesses for contributing to the break-down of the family. Bush said government can do little about it "when sensationalism dominates" on TV, adding that his grandchildren "watch stuff that has no redeeming social value."

"I am convinced that the excesses are having a bad effect on our children and family stability and learning," Bush said. He cited no examples, but said free speech rights curtail government involvement.

His message to parents: "Don't make the mistake of thinking your kids only learn from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m."

USA Today, 9/4/91

Homosexuality, teen sex, anti-Christian themes crowd fall schedule

Promotion of homosexuality as a positive and desirable lifestyle, illicit teen sex and anti-Christian themes fill family-time hours on the networks this fall. Prime-time parents are helping their teenage children become sexually active as never before on the small screen. Homosexuality has never been promoted so blatantly and so clearly. As might be expected, the family is under assault on other fronts as well–pro-abortion themes, frequent adultery, illicit sex, and attacks on traditional values.

Church & Dwight, Subaru ads support anti-Christian plot

The premiere episodes of NBC's FLESH 'N BLOOD aired September 19 and 20. A main focus is the mockery of Christianity. Both plots were filled with sexual innuendo and portrayed members of a Christian family as dishonest, ignorant, impolite, scheming country bumpkins. Arlo Weed, the "Christian" father curses often. Writers for both episodes were Michael Digaetano and Lawrence Gay. Tim Berry produced the first, Daniel Palladino the second.

In the opening scene of the first episode, Arlene, assistant to Rachel (a district attorney and the series main character) is on the phone placing a newspaper ad calling herself "horny" and giving her phone number. That morning as Rachel, who was adopted, is discussing looking for her biological family, Arlo Weed bursts through her office door, spouting nonsense lines about the Lord and "Jesus in the book of Job" in his thick country dialect. He then tells her he is her long lost brother. The Christian fool remarks, "Da---n, I wish Mom could see us now."

An associate of Rachel's tells her that Arlo is selling Bibles personally autographed by Moses.

Later in the episode Arlo's daughter, Beauty, tells Rachel she can adopt her and have a child without "committing the sinful act of fornication." (Canned laughter follows.)

In the second episode the Christians continue to be the subject of ridicule and more sexual innuendo is added. The Weeds have now moved in with Rachel.

One evening as Rachel awaits her date's arrival, Beauty asks if she is going to sin on her date tonight. Rachel says yes, she is. (A laugh track follows.) After she leaves, the Weeds see a man on TV who looks like her date. He is a murderer. Beauty says, "This is no coincidence, the hand of the Almighty was on the channel changer." At that moment Arlo's son, King, throws the channel changer down on the floor. (Canned laughter follows.)

The Weed family goes to the restaurant where Rachel and her date are having dinner. Rachel's date turns out to be an innocent actor and the Weeds ruin her evening. When Rachel returns from her date distraught that it didn't go well, she expresses displeasure with her newly-discovered Christian family. Young Beauty piously quotes Psalm 19:14 to her—"Let the words of my mouth and...."

"Da---t!" Arlo exclaims. "I can't go to bed with you upset." He offers to cheer her up by taking her to a favorite strip club. He then tells a bar joke.

Advertisers on the first episode included: CEO Masaharu Masumitsu, Subaru of America, Inc., Post Office Box 6000, Cherry Hill, NJ 08034, Phone 609-488-8500. Subaru automobiles.

On the second episode, advertisers included: Pres. Dwight C. Minton, Church & Dwight Company, CN 5297, Princeton, NJ 08543, Phone 609-683-5900. Arm & Hammer baking powder, Arm & Hammer deodorizer spray, Dental Care tooth powder.

Honda, Ralston Purina support pro-homosexual episode on NBC sitcom

The September 18 episode of SEINFELD on NBC dealt with homosexuality. The writer for the episode was Larry David, and the producer was Larry Charles.

Series hero is stand-up comic Jerry Seinfeld. Major focus of this episode is Seinfeld's friend George, who fears he may be homosexual after enjoying a massage by a masseuse.

Explicit dialogue follows in later scenes. George describes, for Seinfeld, how the masseuse "got two inches from 'it'" and "'it' moved." Seinfeld suggests, maybe it was "just changing positions" and says his does that all the time. George, however, is obsessed with his fear, recalling that "men have been popping into my sexual fantasies."

In the closing scene, Seinfeld does his stand-up comedy routine and says he believes heterosexual men worry about being homosexual because "deep down we have weak cells resistance...men think they could be talked into anything..."

He asks the men in his audience if they were to accidentally walk into a homosexual store would they wind up holding a guy's hand if they were asked to?

The pro-homosexual episode was supported by ads from: Pres. Koichi Amemiya, American Honda Company, 100 West Alondra, Gardena, CA 90248, Phone 213-783-2000. Acura automobile, Honda motor vehicles.

Ralston Purina Company, Chrm. William P. Stiritz, Checkerboard Square, St. Louis, MO 63164, Phone TOLL FREE: 1-800-345-5678. Chex cereal and products, Chuck Wagon pet food, Energizer batteries, Eveready batteries, Hostess snack foods.

General Motors ads sponsor homosexual theme in new NBC series

The first episodes of PACIFIC STATION aired on NBC September 15, 22 and 29. They were filled with sexual and homosexual innuendo usually followed with canned laughter. Debut episode writers were Barry Fanaro, Mort Nathan, Kathy Speer and Terry Grossman; Rita Dillon was producer. Martin Weiss and Robert Bruce wrote, and George Sunga produced the second episode.

Series heroes are Bob and Caprielli, police detective partners. Seeing bits of situations out of context, their supervisor is led to believe they are homosexual lovers. For example, he once walks in on them hugging; another time he finds Caprielli giving flowers to Bob (from Bob's wife). These frequent misinterpretations keep the homosexual theme before viewers.

There are also implications of illicit sex when Bob moves in with Caprielli because he is having marital trouble. (He eventually moves home and works it out.) Shortly after Bob arrives at Caprielli's, a woman appears in the bedroom dressed in a short bathrobe. Caprielli tells her he'll have to drive her back to the airport since Bob needs a place to stay.

"...don't you remember Bob?" Caprielli asks the woman. "The man I told you about during foreplay?"

The third episode, written by Speer and Grossman, and produced by Sunga, continued the all-sex theme, boasting "jokes" on foreplay, prostitution, women's breasts, bimbos, dog urination, porn magazines and toilet jokes.

Sponsoring all three family-time episodes was: Chrm. Robert C. Stempel, General Motors Corporation, 3044 W. Grand Blvd., Detroit, MI 48202, Phone 313-556-5000. Buick, Cadillac, Chevrolet, Oldsmobile, and Pontiac automobiles.