

Movies

The Christian experience works like this: God works tirelessly to reveal divine love to a man. The man is moved by God's revelation to turn from his sins and to depend on God. Love continues to move him. He depends with faith, by living by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

God pardons the dependent repentant one and lives through him, appealing to his will and to his mind. The man is transformed by considering Christ. As he was changed initially, by choosing Christ over sins, so he is changed continually.

Faith, love, beholding – the three human elements, determine our growth or regression. As they prosper, so do we. As they decline, we also.

Good Works

I was interested to discover that the term "good works" is used nearly a score of times in the New Testament, and never once as it is usually used today. I mean that today men mention "good works" normally by way of explanation that they can not save us. Typical sentences sound like this, "But good works can never save us. All our good works are filthy rags."

Now these two statements are true enough. But a man could nearly be excused for thinking that good works were a synonym for working one's way to heaven. That would make good works bad – a strange irony.

By way of contrast consider the New Testament thoughts about good works:

We should let our "good works" "shine before men" for the Father's glory. Jesus did "many good works" and used this fact to convict his persecutors of their injustice. So may we.

Tabitha, the first grown woman in scripture to be raised to life, was "full of good works." And this is well, for women "professing godliness" should be clothed with "good works." When older, they should be "well reported" for "good works" and if a widow has "diligently followed every good work" should be admitted into the church's care.

We are God's workmanship, created through the work of Jesus unto "good works" so that we can "walk in them." "Good works" are "manifest" before the judgment. We ought to be "rich in good works."

In fact, the man of God ought to be complete, thoroughly furnished unto all "good works." Religious leaders ought to in "all things" show themselves to be a "pattern of good works."

What Jesus wants to do is to "purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." So a

minister ought to "affirm constantly that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works." This is profitable for men.

We ought to "learn to maintain good works" or risk being "unfruitful." Accordingly, we ought to consider each other and "provoke unto love and to good works."

See Mt 5:16; Jn 10:32; [1Pe 2:12; Ro 13:3]; Ac 9:36; Ep 2:10; 1Ti 2:10; 5:10, 25; 6:18; 2Ti 3:17; Ti 2:7, 14; 3:8, 14; He 10:24.

All which truths are my reasons for writing this essay. As an elder in the Seventh-day Adventist church it is my way of discharging the duty to "affirm constantly" that my brethren should carefully "maintain good works."

Against "Movies"

The rational arguments against enjoying dramatized entertainment, the movies, can be well summarized. **First**, God is wiser than man, and God has counseled against such enjoyment. **Second**, we morally adapt to the objects of our attention. In other words, we are changed by "beholding." **Third**, our sense of the sinfulness of sin is deadened by familiarity. **Fourth**, our get-up-and-go degenerates when we treat problems passively—as movie watchers must. **Fifth**, the moral strength of men to resist immoral thoughts is sadly reduced by every cherished view of a poorly clad female. **Sixth**, time given to questionable uses is robbed from wholly wholesome uses, and we do not have enough time to discharge even the most basic of our duties in terms of Bible-study and Evangelism. **Seventh**, the change in the relation of the church youth to movies sets them up to be deceived by the "last deception" the church will face over the "Testimonies of the Spirit." **Eighth**, the issue of movies tests our source of authority – whether we give inspiration unqualified preference to experience or consensus. That same nature of test will be Salvational for the entire world a short time from now. **Ninth**, the indulgence in watching such entertainment increases men's love for pleasure while reducing their inclination to diligent study of the Word.

These nine reasons, unproved and even unsubstantiated in the summary above, all find their origin in the first. God is wiser than man.

God is Wiser than Man

1Co 1:25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

How it is that professed Christians feel at liberty to minimize or marginalize God's counsels? Who are they? The wise man answers that it is men's laziness that prompts them to disregard sound reasoning. To engage in research of God's counsel is more difficult than the lazy mind can bear to consider and so, as a way out, the mind reasons that it has already heard arguments and already

has a rational conclusion.

Pr 26:16 The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason.

Laziness allows some men to violate God's counsels ignorantly – but not innocently. But for many that have read the counsels time and society have simply blotted out the impression. They have forgotten the force of God's prohibitions. Their sense of moral responsibility to guard their senses is deadened.

For these and others I will review here a few Bible counsels to the point and in the [appendix](#) a few Testimonies to the same.

Ps 101:3 I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me.

The prophet of the psalms models responsible use of one's eyes. The willful watching of evil violates his admonition.

God-forgetting sinners are "filled" with "fornication, wickedness, covetousness," etc. Then there is the class who "knowing the judgment of God" against such sins not only "do the same" but "have pleasure" in those that do. A better description of those who look to the cinema for entertainment could hardly be devised.

How must it appear to holy recording angels when men choose for themselves to watch fornication, wickedness, or covetousness? Or murder or debate or deceit? Do we remember that they which "do such things are worthy of death" and yet take it all in as a harmless diversion? Or as an inspiration?

Ro 1:28-32 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, . . . disobedient to parents, . . . Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, *but have pleasure in them that do them.*

God's wisdom is such that, if we failed to ascertain the reason for His Counsel to avoid theatrical

entertainments, we ought still to implicitly obey. To wait until we can see wisdom in His wisdom is manifestly unbelief.

And God has plainly spoken that neither the unreal nor the untrue nor the dishonest nor the impure subjects are to receive our attention.

Phil 4:8 Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

We Morally Adapt to the Subjects We Consider

Most Adventists are familiar with the truth that "by beholding" we "become changed." We hope this principle from 2 Cor 3:18 will allow us to be assimilated into likeness to Jesus. That is the value in considering often Christ's sacrifice. Heb 12:1-3.

But the principle works both ways. This is why we should make no friendship "with an angry man." We would be changed by being in his society. Then how is it that we choose, for entertainers, men of lax morals?

2 Co 3:18 But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Pr 22:24 Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go

Sin, by Familiarity, Ceases to be Exceeding Sinful in our Estimation

Television programming works at cross purposes with the Law of God. Familiarity with sin, the constant repetition of its grosser examples, makes lesser examples seem nearly innocuous. The Law of God, on the contrary, makes even the smallest infractions stand out in bold relief as causing the death of the Son of God. The Law makes sin appear to be "sin."

Ro 7:13 Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.

Movies Encourage Passive Habits in an Age that Demands Action

The wisdom of spiders is that they get started on the projects that others might rather put off till later.

Pr 30:28 The spider taketh hold with her hands, and is in kings' palaces.

The fact is that television creates a habit of non-interventive behavior. We see persons in distress and remain reclined – waiting for someone else to rescue them. But just such a disconnect between perception and action characterizes the lost.

Ja 2:15-16 If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?

Mt 25:44 Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?

The last thing we need is another influence in our life to desensitize us to our personal accountability to act.

Looking at Women Lustfully Undoes Spiritual Men

David's story is sadly sufficient. Men today can not afford to have a glowing screen of bathing Bathshebas. Nor can they deny that the lusts of the eye threaten their very spiritual life. The scriptures on this point are too numerous for such a paper as this.

Mt 5:28 But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

Job 31:1 I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?

Pr 6:25 Lust not after her beauty in thine heart; neither let her take thee with her eyelids.

Jas 1:14 But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

Jas 1:15 Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

2Pe 2:14 Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children:

1Jo 2:16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

Yet three which sum up the rest particularly point to an active avoidance of both the big-screen and of the little ones. We would not want to make provision for our own fall by consenting to watch questionable items.

2Ti 2:22 Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

1Pe 2:11 Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;

Ro 13:14 But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

We Cannot Redeem the Time while Watching Television

Time given to questionable uses is robbed from wholly wholesome uses, and we do not have enough time to discharge even the most basic of our duties in terms of Bible-study and Evangelism.

The Bible calls our duty to the lost a "debt." Romans 1:14. By neglecting our duty to share we can "steal" God's words from them to whom we owe them. Jer 23:30. We ought to be redeeming the time. If we will give account for every idle word, what will we do in the judgment regarding every idle hour?

Eph 5:16 Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

Col 4:5 Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.

Mt 12:36 But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.

Despise not Prophesying and Heed not Consensus

The change in the relation of the church youth to movies sets them up to be deceived by the "last deception" the church will face over the "Testimonies of the Spirit." That deception will be to make the testimonies of "none effect." *Mar p. 158*. The counsels given in the [appendix](#) to this paper are ideally suited to be ignored by pleasure-seeking youth.

1Th 5:20 Despise not prophesyings.

1Th 4:8 He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit.

2Ch 20:20 ...Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper.

Those concerned about their own souls might well practice today for tomorrow's test. By searching the inspired data to ascertain for one's self what God says, a man may be prepared to stand when confronted with flimsy evidence that God did not mean what God said.

The final test of the world will pit experience and consensus, on one side, with God's plain statements on the other. This will be the Salvational test. And is not the issue of watching DVD movies and such a microcosm of the same today? Is not the issue one of God's plain statements in the Testimonies versus the consensus of two generations and versus the experience of the same? If we fail in the little test here, can we expect to stand in the greater one later?

Love of Pleasure Competes with Love for God

The indulgence in watching such entertainment increases men's love for pleasure while reducing their inclination to diligent study of the Word. The dictates of God and of pleasure differ here – much as in the Garden of Eden.

The judgment above, give for the benefit of the angels, will have in our life plenty of evidence whether we sought to more for the one or more for the other.

2Ti 3:2-5 For men shall be . . . lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

Conclusion:

We are worldly and know it not. We need more of Jesus and seem to sense that truth. But we have been blinded to how our tradition of self-entertainment is blunting our spiritual perceptions.

Our compassion for the lost, a virtue little cultivated by caring action, is being replaced with a pseudo virtue of revenge on the oppressors or rebellion against unjust authority. These themes of the Great Controversy play out in the scenes we watch and we identify with the violent heroes who so ably portray Lucifer's feelings.

And even if it is only the Little House on the Prairie that keeps our attention, it is at the expense of conscience. We have ignored God's plain counsel for no better reasons than a supposition that ignoring them would not hurt us. And, yes, not reading them is ignoring them.

Appendix

Testimonies Regarding Theatrical Entertainment

In the following indented quotations from Ellen White all emphasis is supplied.

Television, movies, ad-frames and video-clips have taken over an ill service to society once performed by novels and billboards, though the latter still make a contribution. The collection of them "educate the mind to familiarity with sin." Sensible parents will realize the value of avoiding "seeing many of the evils" and "hearing about much of the wickedness."

In Christian homes a bulwark should be built against temptation. Satan is using every means to make crime and degrading vice popular. We cannot walk the streets of our cities without encountering flaring notices of crime presented in some novel or to be acted at some theater. *The mind is educated to familiarity with sin.* The course pursued by the base and vile is kept before the people in the periodicals of the day, and everything that can arouse passion is brought before them in exciting stories. {AH 406.2}

Some fathers and mothers are so indifferent, so careless, that they think it makes no difference whether their children attend a church school or a public school. "We are in the world," they say, "and we cannot get out of it." But, parents, we can get a good way out of the world, if we choose to do so. *We can avoid seeing many of the evils that are multiplying so fast in these last days. We can avoid hearing about much of the wickedness and crime that exist.* {AH 406.3}

Men may take a "safe course." "No Christian would wish to meet death" while taking in a movie via his DVD player. "No one would want to me found" in such an activity when Christ should come. Such activity poisons the imagination and destroys religious impressions. Further, it blunts "the relish for the tranquil pleasures and sober realities of life."

The true Christian will not desire to enter any place of amusement or *engage in any diversion upon which he cannot ask the blessing of God.* He will not be found at the theater, the billiard hall, or the bowling saloon. He will not unite with the gay waltzers or indulge in any other bewitching pleasure that will banish Christ from the mind. {AH 515.4}

To those who plead for these diversions we answer, We cannot indulge in them in the name of Jesus of Nazareth. The blessing of God would not be invoked upon the hour spent at the theater or in the dance. *No Christian would wish to meet death in such a place. No one would wish to be found there when Christ shall come.* {AH 516.1}

Among the most dangerous resorts for pleasure is the theater. Instead of being a school for morality and virtue, as is so often claimed, it is the very hotbed of immorality. Vicious habits and sinful propensities are strengthened and confirmed by these entertainments. Low songs, lewd

gestures, expressions, and attitudes deprave the imagination and debase the morals. Every youth who habitually attends such exhibitions will be corrupted in principle. *There is no influence in our land more powerful to poison the imagination, to destroy religious impressions, and to blunt the relish for the tranquil pleasures and sober realities of life than theatrical amusements.* The love for these scenes increases with every indulgence as the desire for intoxicating drink strengthens with its use. *The only safe course is to shun the theater,* the circus, and every other questionable place of amusement. {AH 516.2}

Yesteryear's debate about whether Ellen White's prohibitions against the theater spoke with equal authority about the home cinema was settled by Ellen White long ago. The sanitarium thought to bring short theatrical performances into an Adventist setting for the casual refreshment of the guests. God testified that "the more [the patients] have of this kind of amusement, the less will they be pleased unless something of the kind shall be continually carried on."

And she made the connection that looks like prophecy today, namely that once such amusements would make their way into the home "the objections are removed" against attending "high-toned" shows at the theater. Such an outcome ought to be prevented with the next generation. God's "wisdom" would lead to their being guided to a "fountain" more filling.

Those who bear the responsibility at the sanitarium should be exceedingly guarded that the amusements shall not be of a character to lower the standard of Christianity, bringing this institution down upon a level with others and weakening the power of true godliness in the minds of those who are connected with it. Worldly or theatrical entertainments are not essential for the prosperity of the sanitarium or for the health of the patients. *The more they have of this kind of amusements, the less will they be pleased unless something of the kind shall be continually carried on.* The mind is in a fever of unrest for something new and exciting, *the very thing it ought not to have.* And if these amusements are once allowed, they are expected again, and the *patients lose their relish for any simple arrangement to occupy the time.* But repose, rather than excitement, is what many of the patients need. {CH 240.1}

As soon as these entertainments are introduced, *the objections to theatergoing are removed from many minds, and the plea that moral and high-toned scenes are to be acted at the theater breaks down the last barrier.* Those who would permit this class of amusements at the sanitarium would better be seeking wisdom from God to lead these poor, hungry, thirsting souls to the Fountain of joy and peace and happiness. {CH 240.2}

In the *Great Controversy* Ellen White quoted a contemporary writer as making a connection between worldly church events paralleling the theater and the fall of Protestantism. He suggests that form and ritual abound, as a self-imposed penance of sorts, where the church is conscience stricken over its wayward ways.

Says Howard Crosby: "The church of God is today courting the world. Its members are trying to

bring it down to the level of the ungodly. The ball, the theater, nude and lewd art, social luxuries with all their loose moralities, are making inroads into the sacred enclosure of the church; and as a satisfaction for all this worldliness, Christians are making a great deal of Lent and Easter and church ornamentation. It is the old trick of Satan. The Jewish church struck on that rock; the Romish church was wrecked on the same; and the Protestant is fast reaching the same doom." {GC88 386.3}

Imagine coming into someone's home. Your host says, "brother, ya wanna watch a James Bond with me?" As he puts the video in the player he hesitates to push "play." "Wait," he says, "lets pray. Our Father in Heaven, please bless us as we watch this movie. We ask for this gift in the name of our Savior Jesus. Amen."

The imagined scene ought to strike us with more force than it does. Something is wrong.

To those who plead for these diversions, we answer, "We cannot indulge in them in the name of Jesus of Nazareth. The blessing of God would not be invoked upon the hour spent at the theater or in the dance." {MYP 398.2}

Thousand of youth, in Ellen's day, had lost their value to society as potential workers for God. How had they fallen? By being exposed to the work of some "celebrated actor." "Their imagination continues to dwell upon the scenes they have witnessed" long after the show is over.

Now and again they may realize that morally they are sinking – their DVD's and card-games pulling them in the wrong direction. But then they remember that honored members of the church, physicians and the like, do like them and even promote such values.

Thus "they stifle conviction" and place themselves on a track where, through the internet or otherwise, they will come in contact with "that class of females 'whose steps take hold on hell.'"

A conscientious choice to avoid all such entertainments should never be called "narrowness of mind." Rather, it is an imitation of Jesus.

There is enough frivolity existing all around us, having a tendency to discourage serious impressions, and to put God out of the mind. Thousands of youth have bid fair to be an honor to their parents, and useful members in society, who have in an evil hour yielded to the Tempter who came in the *form of a professed friend*, and for the first time broke over the barrier to their conscience and attended the theater, *to see and hear the performance of some celebrated actor*. Everything fascinates them--their imagination is lively--their senses, their hearts, are carried away captive--they are intoxicated with excitement. They leave the theater; *but their imagination continues to dwell upon the scenes they have witnessed*, and they are anxious to go again, and again. They acquire a passion to witness theatrical performances. At times they may be convicted that card-playing and attending theaters are not having a beneficial influence upon their health and

morals; yet they do not possess sufficient fortitude and independence to tear away from these exciting pleasures. They may strengthen themselves with the thought that physicians have not only attended theaters themselves, but have recommended others to do so, and these physicians were Christians. They thus stifle conscience with the example of worldly, pleasure-loving, professed Christians. They have learned to play cards, considering it an innocent amusement. In attending the theater they place themselves in the most dangerous company, and are exposed to the deceptive, fascinating charms of the gambler, the sensualist, and that class of females "whose steps take hold on hell." They yield to temptation, and continue their downward course until their consciences become seared, and they will not hesitate to degrade themselves by any vice.

Christians are those who follow Christ. "Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean, and I will receive you." Tenderness of conscience in regard to these amusements should never be called precision and narrowness of mind. How can Christians call that innocent which is a snare to the soul, which has led thousands in the road to certain ruin? I cannot believe a true follower of Christ will touch a card for amusement, nor read novels, nor attend balls and theaters. If they have learned of Him who is meek and lowly of heart, they will have disrelish for former pleasures and amusements. {RH, February 20, 1866 par. 21-22}

Anyone listening to youth speaking today will attest that their imagination continues to dwell on "scenes" from movies as described above.

Ellen White wrote an article, published in 1881, that quoted a conversation between a would-be performer and one that would persuade her to be a Christian. The personal evangelist fails and, upon asking, finds that the reason. The girl, from a home that would never countenance attendance at a theater, nevertheless received parental encouragement to take part in church theatricals. From the time she was little she began playing a part.

"Come to Jesus first then, and he will give you the power." {RH, January 4, 1881 par. 13}

"I don't want him to. I believe if I knew I should die and be lost in three weeks from tonight, I would rather be lost than give up my passion." {RH, January 4, 1881 par. 14}

"And what is this dearly loved thing, worth so much more than your salvation?" {RH, January 4, 1881 par. 15}

"Oh, it isn't worth more, only I love it more, and I can't and won't give it up. It's that I--I want to be an actress; I know I have the talent; I've always hoped the way would open for me to go upon the stage, and I can't help hoping so still." {RH, January 4, 1881 par. 16}

"Do you think it would be wrong for you to do so, provided the way did open?" {RH, January 4, 1881 par. 17}

"I don't know that it would be a sin; but I couldn't do it and be a Christian; the two things don't go together.' {RH, January 4, 1881 par. 18}

"How did you come by such a taste? I am sure you do not belong to a theater-going family?' {RH, January 4, 1881 par. 19}

"Oh no! my father and mother are Methodists; they always disapproved of the theater. I've been in Sunday-school all my life. They used to make me sing and recite at the entertainments when I was four years old, and I acted the angel and fairy parts in the dialogues; and when I grew older, I always arranged the tableaux, charades, etc. Then I joined a set of sociables got up by our church young people. At first we did "Mrs. Jarley's Wax-works," and sung "Pinafore" for the benefit of the church; and then we got more ambitious, studied, and had private theatricals, and last winter we hired Mason's Hall and gave a series of Shakespearean performances, which cleared off a large part of the church debt. But that's only second-class work, after all. I want to do the real thing, to go upon the stage as a profession. My father won't hear of it; but I hope some time the way will be opened that I may realize my heart's desire.' {RH, January 4, 1881 par. 20}

"And meantime, will you not come to Jesus and be saved?" {RH, January 4, 1881 par. 21}

"No, I cannot do it and keep to this hope, and I will not give this up.' {RH, January 4, 1881 par. 22}

"And so the visitor turned sadly away, thinking for what miserable messes of pottage men and women are willing to sell their glorious birthright as children of God; thinking also of the seeds which are being sowed in our Sunday-schools, the tares among the wheat, and the terrible harvest that may yet spring up from this well-meant but injudicious seed-sowing." {RH, January 4, 1881 par. 23}

The story just quoted ought to shut the mouths of those who try to justify skits and such in church by referring to a Christmas program held seven years later. What they wrongly infer from what she wrote later they could plainly find contradicted here.

The husband of the home ought to see himself as the modern priest. To him belongs the duty of guiding his children and teaching his wife. He must ask, "Would my Master be a guest" in a living room of persons watching a show?" Would men observing the husband's media tastes see his "good works" and glorify God accordingly?

A great responsibility rests upon the husband--house-band--to bind the household together, by the ties of kindness, love, and harmony. In the patriarchal ages, the husband and father was the priest of his own household. And still it is his duty to invoke in their behalf the divine blessing, and to instruct and guide them in the way of life. Alas that his influence should ever be exerted to lead them into folly and dissipation! When about to accompany his wife and children to the theater or the ball-room, let the professed Christian ask himself, Can I seek God's blessing upon the scene of

pleasure? Would my Master be a guest at such a place? Will angels minister to me there? Can I there let my light so shine before men, that they may be led to glorify God? *Worldlings themselves look upon these amusements as inconsistent with the Christian's profession.* The following incident expresses the feeling which is entertained by many: A young lady professing to be a Christian had been gliding through the mazes of the dance, in a fashionable ball-room, when in conversation with another lady who lived only for this world, she revealed the fact that she was a member of a Christian church. "What!" exclaimed the other, "are you a Christian?" "I am," was the answer. Whereupon she received the stinging rebuke, "Then why are you here?" {ST, February 23, 1882 par. 9}

The statement above and the one following both bring up the issue of angelic accompaniment. The generation teaching my generation eventually mocked at *their* parent's warnings that good angels would not accompany them to the theater. If such knew that their own living rooms were becoming an "enchanted ground" where "fallen spirits congregate" they might have been less talkative.

Many place themselves on the enchanted ground by frequenting scenes of amusement where fallen spirits congregate. Professing Christian, when you resort to the theater, remember that Satan is there, conducting the play as the master-actor. He is there to excite passion and glorify vice. The very atmosphere is permeated with licentiousness. Satan presides, also, at the masquerade and the dance; he throws around the card-table its bewitching power. Wherever an influence is exerted to cause men to forget their Creator, there Satan is at work, it matters not how innocent the guise under which he conceals his purpose. {ST, May 18, 1882 par. 23}

Sins ought to be rebuked at church. But "in many churches" some sins in regard to amusement have become "fashionable. They are glossed over and excused." Men advocating the introduction of such things into the church are treated as friends and benefactors. They should rather be viewed as sources of moral contamination.

The theater, the race-track, and questionable amusements of every kind engage the attention of multitudes. In many churches sins have become fashionable. They are glossed over and excused. The right hand of fellowship is given to the very men who bring in false theories and sentiments. Right principles are no longer cherished. The conscience has become insensible to the counsel and reproofs that have been given. Messages calling for repentance are unheeded. {SW, March 21, 1905 par. 13}

Yet those opposing the sins of the pleasure lovers must be prepared to offer something in their place – the satisfaction of true religion.

Instead of disparaging Jacob's well, Christ presented something better. "If thou knewest the gift of God," he said, "and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." He turned the conversation to the treasure he had to bestow, which would satisfy the craving of mind and heart. He offered the woman something better

than anything she possessed, even living water, the joy and hope of the gospel of his kingdom. {YI, September 11, 1902 par. 2}

This is an illustration of the way in which we are to work. It is of little use for us to go to pleasure-lovers, theater-goers, drunkards, and gamblers, and scathingly rebuke them for their sins. We must offer them something better than that which they have, even "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding." We must make it as plain as possible to them that the law of God is binding upon all human beings, and that this law is a transcript of the divine character, an expression of that which the Creator wishes his children to become. {YI, September 11, 1902 par. 3}

But what if one member alone in a family has convictions against the television, theater, etc.? Though no one else can understand, she must maintain her convictions. To sacrifice her convictions to her children or kindred, in an effort to be their friend, is to "decidedly" work "against Christ."

My sister, you cannot have an experimental knowledge of the love of God in the soul, and the joy of true obedience to your Lord, who has bought you and your family with the price of His own blood, while you join yourself to these things. Your family do not understand as do you the reasons of the faith that leads away from all such pursuits. You can never be free in Jesus Christ and yet have a divided heart. My sister, you need now to consider that your influence in accompanying your daughters to the theater is decidedly against Christ. He declares that "he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of me" (Matthew 10:37). {11MR 336.1}

False theology is related to the issue of watching television and movies. Men-pleasing pastors that have adopted a theory that one is "not saved by good works but by Christ and Christ alone"[\[1\]](#) find that the youth must have such amusements as our forbidden by the testimonies in this appendix.

Another minister seeks to please his congregation, and tells them [that] young people must have pleasure; it is no harm to go to the theater and attend parties of pleasure and to dance, for Jesus attended a wedding feast. All this is in keeping with the theory that you are not saved by good works but by Christ and Christ alone. The ministers tell the congregations they cannot keep the law; no man ever kept it or ever can keep it. What a theory! The wise and good God presents to His people a law that is to govern their actions which it is impossible for them to observe! What a character to give our heavenly Father, who so loved man that in order to save him He did not withhold His only Son, but gave Him up for us all! How much more, says the inspired apostle, will He not with Him freely give us all things? {21MR 243.1}

[\[1\]](#) Ellen White, of course, always taught that good works provide no merit. Here she speaks like

the apostle in James 2 where works are said to "save" a man by demonstrating the legitimacy of his "faith."