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Bad Guys Become the Heroes Now

FOLKLORE and religious traditions shaped life patterns for the young for thousands of years. Forefathers and national or family heroes were portrayed as models for the young, who emulated their achievements.

Ideals varied from one nation or one clan to another but in most cases the older, the wiser, the stronger, the more productive and more generous ones were recognized as the men to follow.

It was not until "mass communications" were invented that unseen powers began taking control of people's minds as well as their lives, often without the victims being aware of having been "conquered."

Politically, we have witnessed entire nations indoctrinated with communism, Nazism and fascism so that totalitarian governments could be established. With proponents claiming the right to free speech, these philosophies have been introduced into American government, churches, schools, businesses, news and entertainment.

One of the more destructive activities against freedom has been the

deliberate, almost systematic, defamation of heroic leaders.

Scandal-mongers have dug up and publicized every human fault of these models they could find. If none could be turned up, it appears that some have been created for sensationalism's sake.

Effects of truths or lies about alleged weaknesses of our heroes may be about the same if young people can't tell the difference.

Advertising messages have changed many of our ideas and standards.

Entertainment in the form of movies and television has changed the world in which we live, not necessarily for the better. By continually observing leading characters drinking, carousing and committing immoral acts many people have gotten the notion that the hedonistic life is the only way to go.

A switch has been pulled on us. Now the leading characters are the bad guys, the greedy, the murderous, the reckless, the dishonest and the immoral. Frequently, no good guys appear at all. To the im-

pressionable youngster the stars still are the heroes.

Coaches used to kick athletes off the squad if they were caught smoking or drinking. Now professional stars add to their fabulous salaries by giving testimonials for beer and quite a few admittedly use narcotics. These, too, are heroes for our young.

Books and movies in the past presented as heroes and heroines people who were worthy of imitation. They were honest, upright, ambitious, hard-working and unselfish. Look at them now!

Unfortunately, religious denominations and other organizations have displayed considerably less skill in utilizing mass media for good and for the well-being of mankind. Too often their efforts have produced dull programs and heavy reading, which failed to score in competition with expertly done boosts for bad habits.

Our choice of heroes may be one of our great limitations. People seldom rise above the ethics of their heroes and leaders.