THE ISLAMIC WORLDVIEW, ETHICS AND CIVILIZATION
Issues in Contemporary Interdisciplinary Discourse

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Media Audience Ethics in Islam and Christianity

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Introduction

We live in a world of communication. At home, in school, in business and industry and in world affairs at large we always have to face the demands of a fast running world revolving around the magical and revolutionary web of communication technology. With the rapid advancement in Information and Communication Technology (ICT), however, comes a variety of moral challenges. The mass media celebrate values or broadcast programmes that some audiences sometimes find repugnant to their values.

To safeguard the cultural values of the media audience, there have been several attempts to formulate codes of ethics pertaining to the freedom, responsibilities, rights and duties of the media. Most studies on media ethics focus on the message sender, the message reporter and the quality of the message itself. Even most of the studies purportedly dealing with audience ethics stem from the standpoint of the message sender or message reporter.¹ Little effort has been invested in critically studying and outlining the audience responsibilities towards message reception and consumption, irrespective of the quality of the media content. Against this backdrop, some media theorists have underscored the concept of a mass media audience with some level of active role in relation to media messages.² From the concept of an active media audience, there emerged the concept of media audience ethics.³ Drawing on the responsibilities of audience members as they are exposed to experiences, ideas, and facts generated by the mass media, audience ethics refers to a code of ethics a media user, consumer, audience or recipient possesses when engaging with media content.⁴ It has now been established that “audience members have the ability to interact