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CHURCH OF CHRIST
800 West Tenn.
MIDLAND, TEXAS

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The Menace of the Movies

By
GUY N. WOODS

C. C. Morgan.

Price: 50 Copies, \$1.25; 100 Copies, \$2.50

Personal Copy

FIRM FOUNDATION PUBLISHING HOUSE
Austin, Texas

See inside cover
Preserve

J. Eddie Weems, Pepperdine College,
Los Angeles, California, February 3:
"I congratulate you on the extra edi-
tion of the Firm Foundation. I am
glad that you and Guy N. Woods are
not afraid to condemn the salacious,
immoral movies. Why do not all
preachers condemn this greatest evil
in America? How can any Christian
attend the movies when he knows that
most of those who produce the pic-
tures are immoral? Can we have clean
pictures from lewd, immoral actors?
Nearly every time that I pick up a
Los Angeles paper I read about some
actor divorcing his second, third, or
fourth wife. Charlie McCarthy is near-
ly the only exception."

From "Foundation"

2/20/40.

Preface

We desire that all will read and re-read the following exceptionally fine article of Brother Guy N. Woods on the "Movies." Have you studied this question? Did you know that thousands of juvenile criminals before the courts now, are confessedly there, because of "the movies"? There is where they got their idea of a criminal life and the inspiration that caused them to commit crime and led them into the clutches of the law. Did you know that by far the greatest per cent of criminals now in the penitentiaries are what we call "young people"?

Shall America continue to be a disgrace to the enlightened nations of the world because of the salacious influences that emanate from the crime hatcheries of Hollywood? And shall Christians wink at it? Where do young people, just blooming into the strength and beauty of manhood and womanhood, come into possession of those loose conceptions of the connubial relation—marriage, divorce, "affairs," etc.? They did not get them from the Bible. And this is one reason why we plead for the Bible and for sound

gospel literature. The one great outstanding need of the masses today is the saving truth of Christ's glorious gospel. It is of more actual value to our government than all things else combined. And do not overlook the distressing fact that the people do not know the truth and that you and I may save them by passing along to them the truth on the printed page.

—G. H. P. Showalter

THE MENACE OF THE MOVIES

The modern moving picture show is the most potent single influence in our American civilization today. This statement is made advisedly. According to a recent report of a British Commission, only the Bible and the Koran have an indisputably larger circulation than that of the latest film from Los Angeles! And we may be certain that those who regularly attend the movies are more influenced thereby than the same group is by the Bible or the Koran. Seventy-seven million people attend the movies each week in the United States; twenty-eight million of these are adolescent young people—eleven million of them not over thirteen years old. These seventy-seven million people spend an average of two hours each week under the spell of the silver screen and the influence wrought upon them can scarcely be estimated. Not long ago, a questionnaire was sent to a group of High School superintendents, asking this question, In your opinion which is wielding the

greatest influence on our young people today, the home, the church, or the school? The replies revealed the amazing fact that in the opinion of seventy-nine per cent of those questioned, the picture show was influencing the young more than either the home, the church or the school.

According to the 1936 report of the World's Sunday School Convention, held in Oslo, Norway, a little more than twenty-two million people attend Sunday Schools in the U. S. Nearly four times as many therefore, are in regular attendance at the movies as in "Sunday School." And they stay twice as long under a scientific medium far more effective in appealing to the imagination than the "Sunday School." In view of these facts, it is proper to inquire, What is the nature of the impressions thus made? Are the movies an ennobling influence, contributing to moral uplift? Are they such that Christian fathers and mothers should want their children placed under the spell thereof? A tree is known by its fruit. We propose in this study simply to set forth the fruits thereof, and let the reader form his own conclusions. This is being written January 1, 1940. There has just been released the widely heralded picture made from the popular best seller, "Gone With the Wind." No novel of recent years has so captivated the popular fancy as this book. Its release on

the screen has therefore been awaited with keen delight by millions. Yesterday, the press was given the National Legion of Decency rating on this picture. Under an INS date line, the papers carried the following story: "The super film of the Old South, 'Gone With the Wind,' drew an 'objectionable in part' rating today on the National Legion of Decency rating list released in New York. The legion put the Selznick picture in its third division and labeled it a class B film. Reviewed this week for the Legion, the film was described in these words: 'Objection: The low moral character, principles and behavior of the main figures as depicted in the film; suggestive implications; the attractive portrayal of the immoral character of a supporting role in the story.'"

The reader should ponder well this report of the most popular film now being shown to the American people. Note that in the opinion of an impartial commission, uninfluenced by religious interest, and operating solely in the interest of decency, the film is described as having its main figures depicted as "low moral characters," as containing "suggestive implications," and as presenting an "attractive portrayal" of an "immoral character." Can it be possible that the thousands of fathers and mothers who profess to be members of the Body of Christ, charged

with the solemn responsibility of "bringing up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," but who nevertheless permit their children to attend the movies (and many times go with them) are insensible of the dangers of permitting their offspring to see immorality depicted in an attractive light? Can it be a matter of indifference to them that in this and hundreds of other films their children have unfolded before them a filthy portrayal of immoral conduct glorified and made attractive?

It may be said that "Gone With the Wind" is an exception; every reader knows in his heart that it is not; that it is merely typical of the general run of films that come to the movie houses of the land. The themes presented give prominence to rape, lust, prostitution, murder, adultery, seduction, and to every other conceivable form of criminality. An analysis of 250 films revealed 97 murders, 51 cases of adultery, 19 seductions, 21 abductions, and 45 suicides. Of the characters in these films there were 176 thieves, 25 prostitutes, and 35 drunkards. The movies therefore, are immoral. They are inimical to the best interests of society, not to speak of the utter ruin they bring to the soul. Those who succumb to their seductive influence bid farewell to spirituality and genuine regard for the Lord; and one who learns to delight in the lustful embraces, the lewd

scenes, the dirty sayings, the love triangles, the illicit romances, the drinking, the murders, the divorces of the silver screen, soon loose all regard for things spiritual. How many Christian fathers and mothers who read this would deliberately turn their children over to the tutelage of gangsters, tainted characters and immoral women, or require them to associate with those who indulge in lewd talk, drink liquor constantly, and live in adultery? Would you turn your boy over to a group of thugs who would teach him to rob, commit murder, blow safes, and kidnap and murder innocent children? Would you want your daughter to be instructed by a licentious rake who would deliberately destroy her modesty, trample on her innocence, arouse her passion and seduce her to sex delinquency? Surely you would not deliberately thus do; and yet, this is, in effect, exactly what thousands of fathers and mothers are doing to their children every week by permitting them to attend picture shows! Do you question this? I offer as proof the testimony of thousands of the boys and girls themselves. "Our Movie Made Children," by Henry James Forman, is a summary of the investigations made during the years 1929-1933 by the Payne Fund, an organization interested in youth and their relation to movies. It is not written from a religious point of view; yet, example after example

is presented therein in which boys revealed how they learned crime and girls prostitution from movies. This is a copyright book, (MacMillan, price \$2.50), and I cannot therefore quote from it; but I would urge the reader, and particularly, all gospel preachers, to speedily acquire a copy for themselves. A careful perusal of it will enable one to learn what the movies really are, a monster Pied Piper, with marvelous trappings, playing an irresistible tune to thousands of young people while luring them to their doom.

Yes, the movies are immoral. Harry Vom Bruch, in his book, "The Carnival of Death," points out that in the brief period of two months, 150 films shown throughout the United States were wholly debarred from Canada and Australia. It would seem that our peaceful neighbors of the north are more watchful of the morals of their youth than we are. Mr. Bruch also says: "Repeated warnings against American films are being heard today from all quarters of the globe; from China and Japan and India and Italy and Germany and France and South America. Even Turkey, the 'infidel' nation, is aroused to protect its children against the Christian (?) nation; and now Sir Hasketh Bell, former governor of Uganda and northern Nigeria in Africa, warns his British countrymen against the 'devastation being wrought in

the Dark Continent by American moving pictures'” (page 26). Sad commentary indeed, on our boasted civilization! It can mean only that America is rapidly becoming the debaucher and corrupter of the world.

The evil of divorce rides with a high hand throughout the land. We are witnessing the disintegration of homes at the most rapid rate our country has ever known. There was an average of one divorce granted to every thirty-three marriages in 1870; in 1935 the ratio had plummeted to one divorce in five marriages. In some sections the ratio is one to each two and one-half marriages. We trace the blame for this alarming condition to Hollywood. Movies tend to destroy the sanctity of marriage. We need no further evidence of this than the flagrant violation of all social standards on the part of those who make the pictures in filmdom's capital. And since they determine in a large measure the standard of conduct for millions of people, in manners, morals, dress, etc., the attitude of Hollywood is now reflected in the lives of these millions throughout the country. Under the circumstances, an utter breakdown in moral and social standards was inevitable. Let professed Christians remember, that when they walk up to the box office and lay their money down, they are contributing to, and acquiescing in, a continuance of this condition; and to this extent become responsible for the evils

that result therefrom. Mr. Thomas, in his column on Hollywood of June 2, 1935, said, "The film crowd has never frowned on divorce, never has regarded it as a sin for a girl to have an affair, and never has known the meaning of prohibition." In her column of July 15, 1939, Dorothy Dix was asked, "Do you not believe that the women of today are ruining the world? Women smoking, drinking, staying out until early morning at night clubs, and leading loose lives. I believe if our influential women, such as screen stars, officials' wives and the like, would turn against these things that not only destroy the soul, but also the body, that in no time the world would change for the better. They could do more in one week to improve society than preachers could in a hundred years" (signed, A Worried Mother). Miss Dix said in reply, "Undoubtedly the screen stars have great influence over women, for didn't we see every sister from 17 to 70 wearing a Greta Garbo bob, no matter what a figure of fun it made her? And there is no denying that every little flapper is modeling herself on Mae West or Marlene Dietrich or some other movie queen." In view of these facts, was it not inevitable that the morals of Hollywood would become the morals of millions throughout the country? Is it a matter of wonder that modesty is becoming a rare virtue and sex delinquency increasing

by leaps and bounds? How could it be otherwise when millions of impressionable boys and girls are fed poison pictures that show wealth, leisure, travel and beauty, in the midst of impure love, indecent kisses, and open immorality, and all of it with a happy ending?

I am not unmindful of the fact that there are exceptions; I will be told that Shirley Temple certainly could not be classed as immoral or wicked, and that it is reported that Deanna Durbin is a regular attendant at Sunday school. Will Rogers had millions of admirers, and always spoke out on the side of purity and decency. Doubtless, some are better than others; but the so-called "good players" always appear in pictures with those that are bad, and thus they are guilty of promoting the same evil standards; in fact, they do immeasurable harm in enlisting more fans, getting them started to see sex-filled, love-crazy crime and blood pictures. When you see Shirley Temple at play you also see improperly dressed women, drinking, sex themes, and killings in the same films. It will be said perhaps, that there are good pictures, pictures that convey splendid moral lessons, worthy of the consideration of the purest people. Possibly; but it is exceedingly strange that such pictures are never advertised. If we are to judge of the pictures by the advertisements, all are bad; for all tell of

voluptuous women, contain suggestive implications, and present lurid delineations of compromising situations. But grant that there are occasional good pictures: There may also be found occasionally a good piece of bread in a garbage can. You certainly do not want your children to take even good pieces of bread from garbage pails; the danger of being contaminated is so great that it is better to forego the occasional good picture than to run the risk involved.

Aside from the spiritual element involved, the movies have become a matter of concern in law enforcement circles. In the Lubbock Avalanche Journal, under the heading, "Lubbock's, Officers Face Big Problem," Judge J. J. Dillard is quoted as saying, "With the two-gun, two-fisted, hard-riding hero of the screen has come the youth who is at his best with big hat, pistol, boots and chaps. The apparent ease with which the criminal of the theater goes about his work has given many boys the idea that they too, can get in on easy money." It was further pointed out by the Judge that practically every juvenile taken before him is a fan of western, fighting, crime and preview shows. The Associated Press recently carried the story of a threat to blow up the Cuero, Texas, federal building unless \$18,000 were left at a designated spot. The matter was cleared up with the apprehension of a 11 year-old-boy, caught in the act of

mailing a third threatening letter. The boy, the report said, confessed that he conceived the idea of sending the threatening letter after witnessing a gangster movie. Raymond Hamilton, notorious Texas killer electrocuted in 1935 said shortly before death, "I cannot tell how to raise your children, but I know I learned a lot about hi-jacking and bank robbing at the movies."

But we desist. The limits of the paper will not permit of a tithe of the evidence we have accumulated showing the corruption and immorality of the picture show. In view of these facts how can Christians continue to patronize that which is so obviously of the devil, so antagonistic to the cause of the Nazarene? Attendance at the movies will utterly destroy your Christian influence. You may question this; but it is the truth. I know of a case in which a Bible school teacher attended the movies just one time. She did it this time unwillingly, and only at the insistence of one she loved. But her class was scandalized. They heard of it, they talked of it at home, and discussed it with each other. It disillusioned some, it broke the hearts of others, it raised a question-mark in the minds of all. This sister never again occupied the high place in the affections of her class, and her influence was ever thereafter impaired. The price she paid was too great. But do

you answer that even your minister attends the movies? As I go among the churches in evangelistic work, I am told again and again by shocked Christians, that they have discovered that their minister attends picture shows. And it is always with regret that this is heard. No man, it matters not who he is, can have the influence in a community where he preaches that he should, who is an attendant at the show. And one of the most impressive things about it is, that unsaved people are the first to notice it and to talk about it. Wicked people know that the picture show is no place for a Christian, much less for a preacher of the gospel! They know that crime and sex and lewd exhibitionism are not fit subjects for the amusement of children of God. "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor. 6:19, 20).

[Bibliography: **Our Movie Made Children**, by Henry James Forman; published by The MacMillan Company, price \$2.50. **What Is Wrong With the Movies**, by John R. Rice, published by The Zondervan Publishing House, price 35c. (This is by far the best treatment of the subject that I have yet seen.) **The Carnival of Death**, by Harry Vom Bruch, published by The Fundamental Truth Publishers, price 25c.

These books should be ordered through the Firm Foundation Publishing House, Austin, Texas.]