1971

The Canon, [1970-71]: Volume 1, Number 4

Dordt College

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The Christian and The Film Arts

To find out "where it's really at" in America, one need only to notice the mood of the audience as it files out of the neighborhood theatre. A careful observer notes the characteristic intense tone of voices, the first determined pull from a cigarette, the lead shoes on accelerator pedals, and the hesitant, despairing spirit of the mass as it emerges from fantasy to reality.

For you see, American movie-goers are desperately searching for an image which to idolize and emulate. The film industry, preying on such desires, provides ideal representations of perverted life styles. The variety of these Hollywood-constricted Baals because they supposedly offer the only alternative to being irrelevant passed-by, for better. The female worker's hour of joy begins as he is allowed, with John Wayne, to ride through the sunshine across an open prairie. The weary housewife, whom even Geritol can't help, finds hedonistic heaven in the theatre as she projects herself into the slot's role—causing ignoring the efforts of scores of men who risk death for the mere touch of her hand. The impact of the two-hour flick on America is awesome.

The Christian, entering the theatre, engages in hand to hand combat with the Devil on his own ground. "Jesus Christ!" Wasn't he the star of The Greatest Story Ever Told? "Worship Him!" "Are you kidding?" "He got killed."

It is a money-crazed, fornication-minded film industry that the Christ-follower must present a meaningful alternative. The vulgarity, plasticity and "last chance" makes to seeming to live remains, leads the Christian to exclaim in conjunction with Mary Magdalene: "They have taken away my Lord and I do not know where they have placed him." (John 20:13).

There is a heavy burden upon the shoulders of the Christians who write and produce films and plays. They stand over against the monstrous Hollywood movie industry, with its millions of dollars and pick of the talented people, and try, with their shoestring budgets and amateur talents, to produce meaningful Christian films. Without the backing of Christ their mission would seem hopeless. With little else but faith and a sense of calling to go on, these people keep on trying. They try, in their productions to portray reality the way the Christian sees it, which means that they try to portray life's spiritual struggle as well as its physical struggle. They have to try to make Christianity an integral part of their production and not something artificial that can be added or deleted from the production without changing the whole thing. Through their productions they have to strive to instruct as well as entertain their viewers if they want to have a truly great production.

Accidents for God

If you were a Roman of the Eastern Empire in 6 A.D. you would know of Theodora. She was a mine superior of no less reputation than our own Barbara Streisand. Mention Richard Burton, Elizabeth Taylor, John Wayne, or Dustin Hoffman, and you have testified to the presence of modern acting personalities and bodies. Hero or anti-hero, look at it the way you want, Theodora is still with us. It is she that Theodore that she could choose to marry the Emperor, Justinian. Our Grace Kelly chose to marry the Prince of Monaco.

That's only one impediment to a responsible development of God's Word for film. One response after another to God's Film World (historically an extension of drama) has focused irresponsibly on peripheral elements of the art, leaving the most important development to accident. Ironically, but I say that with a smile, the art has developed in spite of misdirection. Permit me to explain what I mean by saying Film arts are an accident of irresponsibility.

Whether it's Nicholas Ray ("Rebel Without a Cause, 1955), Robert Wise ("West Side Story," 1960), Robert Rossen ("The Hustler," 1956), Elia Kazan ("Splendor in the Grass," 1961), Dallas Lein ("Lawrence of Arabia," 1962), or more recent examples, film directors have capitulated to some secondary focus, rather than a vital concern for developing the film art in terms of God's law. But they do respond to God's created order for that particular artistic expression, developing it in spite of their secondary focus. The accident of irresponsibility.

by James Koldenhoven

Secondary responses turned primary for the humanitarian director are many. There is always the box office return in dollars and cents, sometimes the all-devouring incentive for the producers, sometimes a latent but powerful influence on the directors and editors. Not that financial consideration can ever be ignored—but responsibility is necessary here, too. My point is that often the material return turns out of perspective, effecting all the other aspects of film making. Like soliciting the prurient interests of a sick society. If sensuality will sell, let's give him a chance to gain a deeper understanding of life.

It is imperative for the Christian community to produce responsible critics whose task it will be to evaluate productions in the light of the current trends and to pass on his knowledge on to the rest of the Christian community. The Christian to-day needs all the help he can get to be able to discard the spiritual gifts of our time, for as it says in the book of Revelation, in the last days even the strong Christian has to be on guard against false prophets. The Christian critic should also inform his fellow Christians of worthwhile productions which are worthy of support by the rest of the Christian community.

It is only through a strong unified front by the Christian writer, producer, viewer and critic that we can expect to make any impact upon the trend of the movie industry and bring it to the glory of, not man, but God, and change it from an escape from reality to a help in order to face reality.

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The Christian viewer of a play or a film also has certain responsibilities. He demonstrates his responsibility by choosing what kind of production he will endorise. He is also responsible for evaluating the production because, as he is a Christian, he can never accept a production "neutrally." Being a Christian means to view bias and realize he can neither accept nor reject the portrayal of life presented in the productions he views. The productions the Christian endorses should, if possible, give him a chance to gain a deeper understanding of life.

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However, the variety of secondary and false spirits that lead him on, in addition to those that are mentioned above, are at times incidentally fragmented, apart from the perspective of God's Word valuable: compassion for fellow men, international justice, societal improvement, development of the film arts for the art's sake, and interest in man as a psychological animal. Incidentally valuable as these may be, and though these foci may have greater integrity than the material focus, they all honor the creation rather than the creator.

And in a sense, all men, Christians included, are prisoners of the creation. God's Creational Word surrounds us. Some of the laws in this Word we cannot violate, but obedience to many of the laws is a matter of choice. While you may defy the law of gravity, you will not be able to do so, but you may defy and violate the laws of compassion, marriage, and justice—often without fear of immediate punishment. But respond you will, one way or the other, faithfully or unfaithfully. And that response, even when it is most faithful, can be no more complete than the extent to which the form is developed. If you believe, for example, that a film had to be divided into five acts, as Seneca divided his tragedies, you would be limited. As drama developed, certain limitations were abandoned in the form of expression.

But let's put the matter positively. Stereophonic sound has opened up new psychological possibilities in the film. The Fellini notion that every man is a potential actor in the wide screen of impres-

(.Continued on page 3)

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Vietnam's history ign powers such as what the U.S. is, loses powers did. inst the war in h her views and to publish an uns the war wasn't example, school feels that they did attention of local and at one time, the stale leader of ight the attention of SDS, who sent What they said to ne's big dream as a.in the war, join S.D.S. did." She became fall of 1967 when confrontation against successfully blocking nion. She skipped j sor of the spring of "volunteer army. Stated set up a the whole it was a, the people had a the McCarthy cam- any one a traitor be write into ad- n there, but - says. rved as the exper radialization. As point from ideal- calism came at or on in Chicago. She ad friends who had and police records. her views and to- example, school feels that they were roved out of Well- university. She did joining the S.D.S by is just didn't appeal o much for Debbie, ot to the point that burning down the g. So she didn't go ideal" philosophers time after that, She pps because as time ideal than the S.D.S. (wo)
I fell in love with Julie Christie four years ago while watching “Dr. Zhivago.” I know a 41-year-old woman who feels the same way about Paul Newman. Whenever a Newman show comes to town she gets her teenage daughter to babysit so she can drift her husband with her to the theater. I’ve seen Leonard Whiting plastered on walls in the girls’ dorms and Peter Fonda displayed in the guys’ dorm. Elliot Gould’s heroic face was recently depicted on the front cover of Time under the inscription, “Star for an Uphigh Age.” Last month Detroit judge Joseph Gailiss advised lawyers involved in a murder case to see the film “Joe,” and then excluded people who had seen the film from jury duty in the same case.

Movies aren’t a simple kind of entertainment—they are complex, powerful, mind-bending tools that effect us morally, emotionally. Until enough time has passed for us to gain a better understanding of the medium, the word is “handle with extreme caution!”

A major factor that contributes to the power of a film is “star identification.” Many critics have mistakenly proclaimed the death of the Hollywood “star system.” Stars, they say, no longer hold the power they held in the silent era. What is true is that the studio system which built the原子stars within easy reach of anybody with an extra $1.50, and theaters are doing a thriving business. The same taste for changing slightly, the fact remains that the beautiful bodies we see on the screen hold a powerful attraction. As long as the motion picture is a form of art, the figure of the celluloid hero—often a self-sufficient, world-defying man whose head is “bloody but unbowed”—in the face of circumstances—will be a thing thousands of people will see as symbols of themselves. Audiences will always identify with the stars. Star identification is nothing new in cinema. The first movie fan magazines began in 1913, almost as soon as movies were born. Gladys Smith, who used the stage name “Mary Pickford,” was referred to by Thomas Edison as “the sweetheart of the Americans, and before she retired in 1932 she had gained a world-wide following. Two years after Charlie Chaplin appeared in his first film his name became a household word. Stories carried Chaplin dolls and Chaplin toys, the “Chaplin Walk” became a popular dance step, children used his name in playground rymes, and newspapers carried stories about the movie star’s comic strips. When Rudolph Valentino wore a fake beard as a publicity stunt, there were protests from women and barbers all over North America. Joan Crawford, Greta Garbo, and Marlene Dietrich were audience pleasers in the ’30s, and their names are still familiar today, even to young people two generations removed. Contemporary examples of the power of stars over the movie-going public are still being confirmed, but another example of additional to the list would be the death of Marilyn Monroe, an occurrence that was mentioned in earlier issues of this column and happened on many Christian Reformulated publications.

These screen heroes are powerful stuff. Handle with caution!

Since I’m a lusty judge of things that go on in other people’s lives, I would like to put my own mind to suggest the intense power of star identification in film. Speaking personally, I can say that I tend to identify strongly with particular people represented in movies, especially when I’m egotistical enough to think I can see a little of myself in them. In any case, Omar Sharif, playing Yusi in “Dr. Zhivago” touched me deeply, as did Sergio Brandachukski in the Russian version of “War and Peace.” I felt like I had been hit in the brain when Rato (Dustin Hoffman) died at the end of “Midnight Cowboy,” and I really felt big-hearted when the Pope (Anthony Quinn) defeated all the wealth of the Roman Catholic Church to world peace in “The Shoes of the Fisherman.” (I am not trying to defend these films, and I am certainly not suggesting that everyone should see them or would react to them in the same way that I did: I mention these stars as examples of a factor that happened to me.)

Last fall I discussed “Easy Rider” with a long-haired friend, and related what he thought of the oppressed, brutalized, and finally murdered star of the show, Peter Fonda. “Man, I was Peter Fonda!” was the response. Last year a young man traveling by motorcycle across the Midwest stopped for a night in Sioux Center and mentioned that he had gotten his cycle two weeks after seeing “Easy Rider.” And everyone has seen the highly modified “choppers” made popular by Captain America in the same show. Some pretty intense reactions!

No matter how loudly we protest that movies have no deep psychological meaning for us, we have to admit that they can initiate action or serve as catalysts to set off a reaction. We can’t even begin to discern what happens inside of us. So what happens when we sit back in a theater (with the sole purpose of being entertained)? We are attempting to put our own characters into films and make them our own. This is not just a matter of “evasion” or “GP” rated shows are better servants of God because they don’t display shocking forms of immorality. (What about the revenge theme in “Gas Hut” or the careless, god-denying morality in “Airport” or “Paint Your Wagon”?) As Christians, we cannot afford to be influenced easily by every movie we see! In fact, we had better be extremely cautious about being influenced by any movie! There are certainly other factors besides star identification which effect movie-viewers, but an

**FILM POWER**

by Dave DeGroot

The 1971 Fine Arts Festival will include a strong emphasis on film. Besides bringing a number of creative films to the campus during the next two months, the Fine Arts Festival Committee is arranging for a speaker who has been involved in the production of Christian films, and is encouraging students to produce original films.

The Fine Arts Film Contest will offer $200 in cash prizes for films in two categories: high school and college. A number of area public and private high schools are being contacted and encouraged to submit entries for the Festival, and arrangements are also being made for a film contest on the college level.

Rules are much the same for both the high school and the college categories:

1. Films entered in the high school contest must be 5 min or Super 8. Films entered in the college contest may be entered in either the 8mm-Super 8 division or in the 16mm division.

2. Films may be silent or accompanied by tape-recorded sound.

3. No length or subject restrictions, but the Fine Arts Festival Committee retains the right to disqualify films that it decides are “offensive in nature.”

4. Student (or students) must produce the creative aspects of the film without professional help.

The Committee has expressed the hope that lack of experience in working with film will not discourage anyone from submitting an entry to the film contest. Since there are a few students in this area who could be called “experienced” in film production, the prize money will probably go to individuals who have tried to make a film for the first time. Creativity and ambition are the main requirements for this contest!

Winning films will be shown publically during the 1971 Fine Arts Festival sometime between April 26 and May 5.

Deadline for the contest is April 10. For more information or to submit an entry, contact Dave DeGroot, 782, 4th Ave. N.E., Sioux Center, 722-1531. A small 8mm camera can also be rented from D. DeGroot.

Even monotonous can praise God in their songs

MAKE A JOYFUL NOISE TO THE LORD ALL YE LANDS!

Serve the Lord with gladness.

COME BEFORE HIM WITH THANKSGIVING!

With this last burst of praise, David turned again to the throne of glory and joined in the praise to the Lamb by David Cummins
FILM ACCIDENTS (Continued from page 1)

Cannon
Published monthly by students of
Dordt College, Sioux Center, Iowa.
Comments and opinions about the ideas expressed in this publication are welcome. Address correspondence to Cannon, 782 4th Ave. N.E., Sioux Center, Iowa 51250.
Editorial Staff: General Staff:
David DeGroot Sue Maatman
Jake Van Breda Verlyn Vander Top
Kathy Hengeveld Advisor: David Cummings
Jarl Neerhof Hugh Cook

Vietnam's history ignites powers such as the U.S. is rose powers did, just the war in her life views and to tout publish an a st wars wasn't her, for example, school feels they did attention of local and at one time, the state leader of light the attention of SDS, who sent What they said to's big dream as a diversity, join SDS. She became fall of 1967 when confrontation against successfully blocking... She skipped Jonas, in the spring of 's volunteer army. State- she sat up the whole it was... people had a he McCarthy camp- ing anyone a traitor be wrong into ad in... there, but... says... served as the ex- radicalization. As point from ideal- calm came at or en in Chicago. She ad friends who had and police records... its core," she says, the Establishment! trying to change this or realizing that it wrong because that people who were moved out of Well- university. She did joining the SDS by is just didn't appeal a much for Debbie... was to the point that burning down the... So she didn't go radical philosophers time after that. She ups because as time isn't than the SDS!

I'm working on a project that requires me to analyze the effects of propaganda on early film production. How can I approach this topic? 

To approach the topic of propaganda in early film production, you can consider the following steps:

1. **Define Propaganda in Film Context:** Propaganda is often defined as the use of communication methods and strategies to promote a particular ideology, cause, or viewpoint. In the context of early film production, this would involve analyzing how filmmakers used films to promote specific social, political, or cultural messages.

2. **Examine Early Films:** Look at early films, such as those produced by D.W. Griffith in the United States and D. W. Gergat in Russia. These filmmakers were instrumental in shaping the early film industry and played a crucial role in propagating their respective ideologies.

3. **Identify Propaganda Techniques:** Analyze the techniques used in these films to promote specific messages. This could include the use of visual elements, narrative structure, and thematic content to influence the audience.

4. **Consider Historical Context:** Understanding the historical context in which these films were produced is crucial. This includes the political climate, socio-economic conditions, and cultural norms of the time.

5. **Discuss the Impact:** Evaluate the impact of these films on society. How did they influence public opinion, social change, and the development of the film industry? Consider both positive and negative effects.

6. **Compare and Contrast:** Compare the propaganda techniques used in early films from different countries or regions. This can provide a broader understanding of how different cultures utilized film as a tool for propaganda.

7. **Reflect on Modern Relevance:** Finally, reflect on how the principles of propaganda in early films can be relevant today. Consider how current filmmakers use film to influence public opinion and shape cultural norms.

By following these steps, you can gain a comprehensive understanding of how early film production served as a tool for propaganda and its lasting impact on society.
OICES FROM HEAVEN AND HELL
PART II: TRUE SORROW

Judas had said his piece. He had warned people about God's wrath and the awful torments of Hell. He had even managed to get into some words on Truth and Justice.

--too bad he didn't follow his own advice. That's how he came to be called G.

No, you're right another man's's God.

Hardly.

To you it probably head over heels in love.

No, you gotta b KNEW wh.

Cool. Calculate.

(After we were followed way back)

She's mine.

Then Nathan called me.

He was about to get married.

My heart was broken.

Determinations are the same.

I have always been the one of greater sympathy and consideration. Today

To you it probably head over heels in love.

No, you gotta b KNEW wh.

Cool. Calculate.

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