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Hollywood's Devastation

by

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Preface:

I chose this topic for my theses paper because of the negative influence it has been in my own life. When I first made a weighty decision – one that required standing by myself for what I believed to be right – I didn't understand how hard the Christian life could be. I found Hollywood to be one of the most detrimental influences in my personal life.

A person who will know God and escape the corruption of the world must also cut off the corrupting influences of the world. Christians, as Jesus said, are in the world but not of the world. Many Christians today want to escape the consequences, but not the influences. This has been true in my own life. As I tried to do what was right, I struggled under the influence of this worldview or mentality.

Two things concern me about Hollywood. The first is, people often don't realize and sometimes don't even care that it is of the world. The second is, these movies, and all of secular media, have a tremendous impact on the mind. Given that it is of the world, these effects would be detrimental to the Christian mind.

Hollywood has held me back in my Christian walk. I fought hard. Given my experience in fighting this battle, I sometimes wondered how other Christians could watch it. I concluded that Hollywood is wrong and not for the Christian. However, I must also concede that there are those who, although they may watch movies, are not indulging or living in the world. I believe there is no law against those who live by the Spirit (Galatians 5:22,23).

It is my desire to steer those in or headed toward it away, and into the light of God's Word. Rather than pursuing the world and its pleasures, let us pursue God. Why chase the wind when you can have God?

God Bless

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Theses Statement:

The entertainment mentality has penetrated all of society and the church with its filthy lifestyle and worldly value system.

Introduction:

John Piper once said: "...much exposure to sensuality, banality, and God-absent entertainment does more to deaden our capacities for joy in Jesus than it does to make us spiritually powerful in the lives of the living dead" (Piper). Basically, that means that we can't be effective in the world around us by entertaining ourselves with it. Furthermore, he writes: "sources of spiritual power – which we desperately need – are not in the cinema." Later, we'll look at some of his thoughts again. For now, just imagine with me for a moment a man wading on a beach, about ten feet into the ocean. Enjoying himself, he never realized the stingrays lying just an inch under the sand. For the moment, he is perfectly content to enjoy the massage of the ocean water across his feet and legs. Suddenly, he is bitten, unawares and quite regretful. Don't get me wrong – it was not enjoyment that was wrong, it was enjoyment in a dangerous place. The stingray was like the many dangers in our society today, often unobserved, but nonetheless present and dangerous.

Today one of the big things we face is the secular media. As technology has progressed and capabilities have run wide, culture has adapted and become accustomed to these things. But for the large part, the underlying implications have been overlooked. It has been said that technology progressed so fast during the last half of the 20th century that scientists couldn't keep up with all the actual effects of it. With the advancement of this new technology, entertainment has come to the front lines of our culture in a dynamic way that we may not understand.

In this paper, we'll be looking specifically at Hollywood. Today, Hollywood seems to be synonymous with movies, and/or entertainment. Although there are privately produced movies and other forms of entertainment, in referencing entertainment and movies, I refer to movies produced by Hollywood unless otherwise specified.

During some of my younger years, I remember watching a few movies. Many of these movies contained scenes that were obviously wrong for the Christian. People were brutally murdered; most times we would adamantly agree that the bad person needed to die. Other times the less important lost their lives. Bloodshed was normal, violence necessary, and a touch of sensuality was great.

There are two movies in particular that I remember watching. I know the name of the second, and the first I simply cannot remember. The first was an action movie of a group of stranded U.S. soldiers in an underdeveloped country. Fleeing from the guerillas, they grew closer together as a group. The general in charge was the hero, accompanied by a girl. They fell in love as they fought together. The intensity of the chase increased when they discovered the president's son in their group – also an explanation for the intense chase. Through it all there were numerous depictions of the horrific torture inflicted by the guerillas and plenty of romantic scenes between the general and his girl who didn't like each other – but did.

The second movie was an animation film called *UP*. A man and his wife had dreamed of going to Paradise Lost for a long time. Unfortunately, his wife passed away before they could go. Some time passed until a local development closed in around his house. They tried to take his house down, but before they could, he strung it to helium filled balloons and sailed away towards his dream of Paradise Lost. Incidentally, a young boy got stuck with him, adding some spice to the story. After landing the house just short of their destination they ran into some talking dogs controlled by remote. These dogs were searching for a colorful bird and wreaked havoc on the two-person party as they tried to find Paradise Lost. Along the way the boy found and befriended the same bird the dogs were looking for. One day the bird ran away and while chasing it they ran into the dogs again, who led them to their owner's dark cave full of skeletons and such like. The movie ended with a big man-to-man and life-to-life fight over the cave, the dogs and the bird. In the end, the bad guy fell off a cliff to his death. The old man triumphantly claimed the cave and settled into Paradise Lost!

The first movie was a bad movie. Some may argue that it was fit for older audiences, but it did contain violence, murder, language, and a romantic theme. The second movie did not seem that bad. To many this movie is harmless and rated as a mere G – for all ages. But it had a worldview weaved seamlessly and effortlessly into the plot of the movie. Although there was nothing overtly wrong with the movie its' very worldview was secular and not Christian. Although many worldviews are far more devious than this G rated movie every worldview that differs from the Bible should not be embraced by the Christian.

The movie industry has been shaping the minds of its audience for years, and few people realize this. The entertainment mentality and the spirit of Hollywood have penetrated all of society and even into the church with its filthy lifestyle and worldly value system.

Body:

Spirit in Opposition:

The spirit of Hollywood is in opposition to the spirit of God's Word. Hollywood is born of the flesh and God's children are born of the spirit. The spirit of Hollywood is individualistic, selfish, perverse, crooked, dishonest, and proud. Ephesians 5 lists the works of the flesh, which it says, "are manifest." It is easy to see what Hollywood consists of. Furthermore, it is easy to see that it opposes Christianity.

Christianity is also easy to discern. Jesus talked about a strait and narrow road, the Bible talks about death to self, simply meaning that we value Christ more than ourselves. There were other examples – of which I have selected some from the beginning of the New Testament – who displayed what the Bible calls righteousness, justice, holiness, and more. Christianity is a spirit, an attitude, or a theme. It is an attitude of justice, righteousness, and humility. It is the upward path, leading to Christ where our real life is hidden. Christianity is a focus on God.

John Piper said, "All Christ-exalting transformation comes from 'beholding the glory of Christ.' Whatever dulls the eyes of our mind from seeing Christ powerfully and purely is destroying

us” (Piper). Oswald Chambers wrote about being “haunted” by God. He says this: “The Psalmist says we are to be haunted by God. The abiding consciousness of life is to be God, not thinking about Him. The whole of life inside and out is to be absolutely haunted by the presence of God” (Chambers June 2).

God has and plays the central role in everything. It is He that created the world, it is He that dwells in Heaven, it is from Him that everything comes and it is to Him that everything goes. When Isaiah saw the Lord high and lifted up, He hid his face because God was that awesome. It says the posts of the door moved at the voice of him who cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Finally, Isaiah said, “Woe is me! For I am undone...for my eyes have seen the King.” (Is. 6:1-5)

2 Corinthians 3:18 says: “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.” Revelation 4:11 says: “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou has created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.” It is natural, normal, and right for a Christian to behold the beauty of the Lord. When a Christian does this, he is changed into the image of Christ.

When the shepherds heard about Jesus’ birth, it was no small thing: “...lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid, and the angel said unto them, fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.” (Luke 2:9,10) It goes on to say that the Christ was born, the Savior of the world! “Suddenly, there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men’” (vs. 13,14).

Zechariah, when praising God after the birth of John the Baptist, said about serving God and His Kingdom: “...that we...might serve Him...in *holiness and righteousness* before Him...”(Luke 1:74,75; italics added) Luke 1:6 six also says that Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth were righteous before the Lord.

In accounting Simeon, the Bible says, in Luke 2:25: "...there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon Him." Verses 37 and 38 say that Anna, a widow for most of her life whose focus was on God, "departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayer night and day." When she came to the temple at about the same time as Simeon, she "...instantly gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of Him to all them that looked for redemption."

The kingdom of God is the kingdom of the all-powerful, almighty, unstoppable, and omnipotent God of all creation. Jesus is a glorious, wonderful, and beautiful Savior, as the shepherds heard in the fields. Simeon and Anna were able to see and recognize the Christ because they were in tune with the major key, or the core elements, of the Kingdom of God. Simeon was a just and devout man, Anna prayed and fasted often, and they were both filled with the Holy Ghost. Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. (Luke 1:6) Also, Zechariah, when praising God of His kingdom, said that it is one of holiness and righteousness before God. There are some distinct themes beautifully woven throughout the kingdom of God.

When Jesus came and walked this earth, he expounded on these Kingdom Themes. They are beautiful. So God centered, so un-selfish, and so much to His glory that ourselves, our own glory and good reputations don't matter so much. When we don't matter so much, it can get painful. In fact, Jesus even said that any man who loves father or mother more than Him couldn't be His disciple. Jesus also said that any man, who is not willing to take up his cross and follow Him, is not worthy of Him. To deny one's self and take up the cross symbolized death to self. Paul also spoke of being dead to self, but alive to Christ. The Christian's real life is hidden in the beauty, life, and glory of Christ.

Jesus, during the Sermon on the Mount, said that the way to life is through a strait gate, and proceeds on a narrow way. The way that many are on is the broad way with a broad gate, leading to destruction. This strait gate and life is the way of the Kingdom of God, always walking upward

toward the light of Christ. The broad gate and way is the kingdom of darkness and of this present world, walking downward toward darkness and the destruction of the world.

Finally, Micah 6:8 says about the Lord's requirements: "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord required of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" The very essence, core and foundation of God's law are these three elements – justice, mercy, and humility. In the world today, there is almost no regard for these. Isaiah 59:14 does talk about truth being "fallen in the street" implying that truth was completely disregarded as if it was waste. In many places of our world today, truth is regarded this way. Hollywood, from the display on the screen, seems to trample on not only truth, but also everything mentioned above and all else that God stands for.

Hollywood is opposed at heart to God's Kingdom. Rather than a focus on God, it is focused on self. It is individualistic, selfish, perverse, crooked, dishonest, proud and so on. Everyone fights for himself, and everyone does what is right in his own eyes.

The movies Hollywood produces do not teach the Bible. They do not put a picture to God's righteousness, to the humility of Jesus, or to the love of Christ. They more accurately put a picture to the lust of the flesh, the pride of life, and the lust of the eyes. The movies coming from the world embody and act the world. They are not from God. The only time Hollywood will portray someone like Simeon or Anna or Zechariah and Elizabeth is to mock.

Hollywood mocked Christianity in its film *Inherit the Wind*. Ray Comfort complained about this movie in his book, *Hollywood Be Thy Name*, which was a partly fictionalized film of a dispute between two teachers at a public school. One advocated Creationism, the other Darwinism. Upon investigation of the film and the actual historical account Comfort discovered that the film differed greatly from the actual historical account. William Jennings Bryan was portrayed as an idiot whose character didn't meet expectations, was a terrible speaker, and was un-thoughtful and un-realistic. His hometown, a Christian one, was portrayed as stupid, un-thoughtful, mean, and downright un-reasonable. Clarence Darrow, of course, was the hero. The actual historical account states that Bryan

was a great speaker, a likeable man, and that his hometown was pleasant, and quite hospitable to his opponent (Comfort, 79-82).

Hollywood disdains Christianity in more appealing ways. An action movie I watched years ago, entitled *XXX State of the Union* was filled with language, violence, and some sensual romance. The story included in the middle of all the action a woman involved at the center of the plan; deviously scheming, putting her life on the line but always getting away. She deserved to die – she fully asked for it, but since she was so integral to the movie she didn't die. Although unrealistic, it was extremely suspenseful to a young teenager, which I was at the time. The movie itself was geared toward younger teens. The chapter at the end focused on the making of the movie. They described how they thought, debated, talked and planned what to put into the movie and how to do it in order to attract the young teenager audience. Although unrealistic, the movie did support a lot of violence, some language, and enough sensuality to sell. Plugged in, by Focus on the Family, says this about the movie: "The first *XXX* offered a new millennium take on the James Bond formula, augmenting the usual elements – suave hero, curvy women, explosions, gadgets, intrigue, and a villain you love to hate...to the tune of 142 million dollars...the violence, however, *is* true to the genre..." (Holtz).

I remember another action movie to which I cannot remember the name. It was action packed and full of suspense, even more than the one above. The main character, an undercover detective for the FBI, was after a band of military imposters. With machine guns blasting, things flying, and camouflage rushing, the movie was full of suspense as he pursued them. Stealing one of their snowmobiles and a gun, he gave relentless chase. Rushing across the snow he pulled out his newfound gun, shooting disparagingly at the imposters. But nothing happened. He found in short order that he was firing empty shells. The next scene showed the imposters discussing one of their previous missions. One younger man, apparently not with them on that mission, commented that it was disappointing that he wasn't with them. The man in charge leaned over and agreed, saying "Yeah, I wish too you would have been there, 'cuz then I wouldn't have to do this." A sharp knife was in his hand, which he used to stab the guy in the heart. The young man's lifeless body slumped

over in his seat. The rest of the group continued their lively chat as the truck rocked down the old leaf covered road. In my mind now, I can imagine the truck fading into the distance, with these words flashing across the screen – and maybe even across the heart of all those who watch it: “There is no room for Him here.”

These two movies are not the only two bad movies, neither are they anything close to the worst of movies. There are many others that glorify violence, murder, drunkenness, rebellion, sexual immorality, bad language, carelessness, and such likes even more than these two. The problem is that the wrong thing is always glorified by Hollywood. Hollywood is so popular today because it utilizes the desires of the flesh to sell its product. It glorifies the wrong way, stirring up those fleshly passions and ungodly feelings of the human heart.

In addition to glorifying the wrong way, it is possible for these movies to capture a person’s emotion, controlling to a degree the way he feels. Focus on the Family proposes that movies really can shape the way we think and feel (Movie Nights, Plugged In Online). The article proposes that just as Jesus told stories to teach a foundational truth, such as the wise man and the foolish man, so do the moviemakers today. Also, considering the resources available, they can do quite a bit to make their audience feel a certain way. They “know exactly what they want us to think and feel and some are experts at making it happen” (Movie Nights, Plugged In Online).

Mauritz Stiller, one of the earliest movie producers, and a famous one, said this about movies: “For us film is a miracle created by Satan – the greatest miracle, which can capture human emotions and happiness faithfully, more faithfully than any other medium. And I am sure film is more suitable for the art of depravity than for the art of godly justice” (Comfort, 39).

Also, it has been said that children can share their parents’ bitterness. For example, if the parents express bitterness toward a certain person in front of the children, the children will take up that bitterness. The children have no reason to be bitter except that their parents are bitter. Where do the children go with this bitterness? Could a violent movie saturated with hatred have the same affect

on its viewer? Could violence make a person feel violent towards another person, since he cannot be violent with the movie?

Malcolm Muggeridge says about Television: “The prevailing impression I have come to have of the contemporary scene is of an ever-widening chasm between the fantasy in terms of which the media induce us to live, and the reality of our existence as made in the image of God as sojourners in time” (Muggeridge, 30). In other words, the media has induced us to live in a reality apart from our responsibility to God and the reality that God has given us.

If it is possible to live in a fantasy world, it also seems quite possible that emotions can be aroused, or “captured” by a movie. I suppose the deciding factor is whether or not the emotions generated are godly, good, and in accordance with God’s Kingdom, or whatever is true, just, lovely, praiseworthy, etc (Phil 4:8). The “righteousness” of a movie, in addition to being in or out of accordance with God’s Kingdom, could also be tested by the emotions it generates. If it is not fit for the Christian mind, it is not fit for thought.

Its Influence on the Mind

Malcolm Muggeridge said: “...if it is the case, as I believe, that what we call Western Civilization is fast disintegrating, then the media are playing a major role in the process by carrying out a mighty brainwashing operation, whereby all traditional standards and values are being denigrated to the point of disappearing, leaving a moral vacuum...” (Muggeridge, 23) Could it be that the media is actually brainwashing its audience? It may surprise you, but Hollywood, in addition to heralding all the wrong things, contains a world-view rooted deeply and firmly in the content of the movie, seamlessly meshing itself and becoming an integral part of it. Henry Blank said about the Christian mind: “We need Christian minds, not heads filled with knowledge, but renewed minds – minds that can think Christianly about this world, minds that are able to respond to the world and engage the world with the truth of the One who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life” (Blank, 3). The mind is no small thing.

James W. Sire says, in his book, *Discipleship of the Mind*, that “God has got to be involved in every thought – the conscious or unconscious backdrop to all consciousness, all non-consciousness” (Sire, 14). Sire also describes the Christian mind, in its proper place, as an attitude toward God, just as the writer in Proverbs said: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Proverbs 9:10). This is the core of the Christian worldview, when a person sees himself and everything around him in the light of God’s Word and through the eyes of God.

Romans 12:2 says: “And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God...” Verse one says to present the body as a living sacrifice, which is one’s reasonable service. Most would agree that it is our reasonable service to give our lives back to God after He gave His for us. This is the first step, but the next is not less important – it is to be transformed by the renewing of our mind. The Greek word used here for renew means “to renovate” (Strong). Our minds need to be renovated, or think differently from the world we came from. Your mind needs to be renovated to think according to God’s truth and not according to the system of the world.

2 Corinthians 10:5 says: “Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and taking captive every thought to the obedience of Christ.” Every thought in the mind must be taken captive and made obedient to the mind of Christ. Although our minds are redeemed, it is still possible for thoughts of the world to occupy them. This is why it’s important for the mind to be renewed, or “renovated”. But how is it possible for thoughts to be taken captive and “renovated” toward the obedience of Christ if the mind is constantly immersed in the world’s thought system? It seems that a mind immersed in the world’s system of thought and a mind that utilizes the world’s values would have quite some trouble taking those unwanted thoughts captive to the obedience of Christ. If the Christian mind adopts some thoughts and values from the world, those unwanted thoughts and values from the world will also press for acceptance.

When I refer to a Christian mind thinking as it should, I refer to a Christian mind saturated with a Christian world-view, or system of thought. When a Christian mind thinks as it should, it will

value what God values, it will look at beauty as God does, and it will see the world through God's eyes. Anything it thinks will be in line with what God thinks. When a Christian mind thinks as it should not think, it will value what God does not value, it will see as beauty what God sees as distortion, and so forth. It is important that the Christian mind is "renovated" and thinks as God thinks.

Our minds are constantly engaged, active and working in the society around us. It is important that we are not only engaged in the society around us, but that we know the impact it has on us. The society around us does impact our minds, and can influence us without our awareness of it.

Society has already been likened to a river. On this river are many people, some going upstream, some going downstream, and others headed across the river. One person may be on this river, judging his progress in relation to the boats around him, but he forgets that the current of the river is moving every boat downstream, regardless of the direction it faces, and regardless of its path in relation to other boats (Fore, 21). Even though the media we immerse ourselves in may not be as blatantly evil as some, it has a pronounced impact on culture, even so much as to shape its values and belief system.

It is important to note here the effect a motion screen has on a person's brain. Henry Blank, in his paper *Video and the Christian Mind*, says that every person's brain consists of two main electrical currents – alpha waves and beta waves. Alpha waves are more relaxed currents, while beta waves are higher frequency currents and used when the brain thinks. Henry Blank says this:

"Traveling through our brains are electrical impulses that we call brain waves that can be measured with an instrument called an electroencephalograph (EEG). Our brain produces different kinds of waves depending on the type of task it is performing...Beta waves are high frequency waves that are produced when the brain is in an active state: engaged in conversation, solving a math problem, or reading a book. Alpha waves are lower frequency waves that are produced when the brain is in a passive, relaxed, and meditative state... In an experiment in 1969, Herbert Krugman monitored a person through many trials and found that in less than one minute of television viewing, the person's brainwaves switched from Beta waves – to primarily Alpha waves. When the subject stopped watching television and began reading a magazine, the brainwaves reverted to Beta waves."

"Your brain produces higher frequency beta waves when you are reading because reading is an exercise that requires focused mental activity. Reading requires you to constantly think and ask questions about what you are reading to make sure you understand it. Reading requires

some imagination. Your mind forms mental images to help you interpret the words. Your brain must be active to read. As soon as you stop focusing, your reading stops. However, watching a video requires no thought and no imagination. And since no thought is required, the brain quickly reverts to the relaxed alpha state. The writer goes on and says, ‘this research indicates that most parts of the brain, parts responsible for logical thought, tune out during television viewing.’ So the first thing you need to know about video is that when you sit down in front of the screen, your logical thought processes tend to shut down fairly quickly” (Blank, 7).

Blank goes on to say that a person could receive passive instruction from television because of the induced alpha wave state of mind. In other words, since television, namely, motion picture does all the work for your brain, and since it tends to inhibit thinking, your brain is open and susceptible to the influence of the shows you watch. This low frequency alpha brain wave state-of-mind is called a state of suggestibility, which is similar to hypnosis (Blank, 9). It is in this state that a person can actually be told what to do, and, since he can’t really think about what he hears, it goes directly and unchecked through the subconscious corridors and into his mind.

Advertisement companies use the same principle to inoculate their audience’s mind with their products. Marshall McLuhan says about advertisement: “Ads seem to work on the very advanced principle that a small pellet or pattern in a noisy, redundant barrage of repetition will gradually assert itself. Ads push the principle of noise all the way to the plateau of persuasion. They are quite in accord with the procedures of brain-washing” (McLuhan, 306). Not only do they take advantage of the suggestible state of mind induced by motion picture, McLuhan suggests that they also attempt to brainwash their audience. He also said that advertisements are built on the “tested foundations of public stereotypes or ‘sets’ of established attitudes” (McLuhan, 307). In other words, they utilize the values of the surrounding culture to sell their products. Furthermore, he says, “When movies came, the entire pattern of American life went on the screen as a nonstop ad” (McLuhan, 310). Now it is proposed, and in light of everything looked at above, that all of Hollywood is one big advertisement, working through the subconscious alleys of people’s minds and inducing them, without their knowledge, to think, act, value and believe just like they do. What you watch on a screen can affect you!

This influence is also referred to as passive learning (Blank, 9), and can be exemplified by a father/son relationship. No matter what a father verbally teaches his son, his son will always see past that and follow his example. Regardless of what a father teaches his child, his lifestyle will teach more effectively. It is still important that a father verbally instructs his children, but just as important, if not more, to remember that his example will quite effectively teach in a passive way.

It is important that the Christian mind is developed both in a direct and passive way. Although passive learning can be demonstrated in a father/son relationship, the son can't do much about the example his father sets and teaches. It is important, however, that he is aware of what is going into his mind. No matter how much a person knows he is still susceptible to the passive influence given by movies.

When a person constantly exposes his mind to secular media, he will eventually begin to think like it. Even those from the best of homes can be influenced by this and, although they have all the answers, can be taught to think like the world. Although those from the best of homes may not be nearly as susceptible to this type of influence, it is still possible, and often unrealized, that these movies do have an impact on the way a person thinks.

I will never forget one minister's testimony of movies. He said that he never watched many movies, but one time he did, with his friends. As he drove home, he felt as if there was a demonic darkness over him, as if the movie itself was demonically driven. Furthermore, he said that, although it didn't contain any violence, sexuality, or language, the entire plot to the movie was wicked and demonic. This is an example of a movie whose plot, worldview, and mentality itself has power to shape and influence. Had he already been trained to think like the movies, he quite likely wouldn't have been able to sense the darkness. Also, at that point, if he had chosen to throw his arms up and indulge in Hollywood, he may not have become a minister.

Given enough time for this mentality to assert itself firmly into the mind of its viewer, a person will think like Hollywood. When this happens, the person is subject to it, and in bondage. His mind will be controlled to think like the world, bringing in more and more of Hollywood, only

reinforcing the mentality. For a while things will seem to be good and under control; he will be able to still be a Christian, only adopting those values and beliefs that are not overtly wrong. With time and repetition, however, it is inevitable that the mentality will assert itself more and more, pushing for even that which is clearly unacceptable.

When a person imbibes Hollywood movies, he embraces their values, worldview(s), and mentality. It will eventually become a part of him. Many people, important and not important, actors and viewers, VIPs and street people, have been influenced and are influencing others with this worldview.

Hollywood's Confusion

Garbo, one of the earliest actors, and a very famous one came to the end of her career confused, torn, and hopeless. Her confusion was generated by Mauritz Stiller; quoted earlier, who said that film is a miracle created by Satan. He was the one who made her famous. Ray Comfort quotes Garbo in his book *Hollywood Be Thy Name* saying:

“God? Who is He? What roads does He travel? Why do we talk all the time about someone no one has ever seen? True, I have heard Him many times, but I have never seen Him. Now, as I advance in age, His voice is becoming clearer. Yet I cannot allow myself to follow His voice, for if I do, I will not be myself.”

“...why did a wise God push me into the hands of Mauritz Stiller, who, as I look back, was most likely an instrument of Satan?”

“...I was abandoned in this world like a corps of leaderless soldiers...” (Comfort, 38,39).

She acted very early in the film industry; her films were silent and black and white. She was one of the first to be popular, and one of the first to become so confused. Ray Comfort says about her:

“Garbo was one of Hollywood’s first (and biggest) carefully crafted golden calves. But once again, her image was unreal. Despite her incredible success, she ended up totally disillusioned with life. Sylvester Stallone said, ‘When you make it big in Hollywood, it’s like you have keys to the candy store. Your morals get corrupted, and you start believing your own hype. You surround yourself with people who will tell you what you want to hear. Hollywood is isolated and money-driven, and faith is certainly not up at the forefront’” (Comfort, 40).

Jim Carrey, a famous actor, starring about fifteen years ago and still popular today, perhaps best known for playing in *Dumb and Dumber*, said about God, during an interview:

“We’ve always tried to humanize him in some way. He’s probably just a shaft of light in a doorway or something like that...generally, when I’m on the beam, man, it’s like the blessings just come one after another, like rain. It’s unbelievable” (Comfort, 23).

This man, among others displays a deplorable lack of the knowledge of God. God is light. The Bible says so. But to carelessly say that He’s just a shaft of light in a door way is to really say we have no clue what God is. God, speaking through the prophet Hosea lamented that His people were destroyed for lack of knowledge of Him (Hosea 4:6). When the knowledge of God is disregarded, when a person takes no thought to who God is, he will really have no clue what God is. He will simply have to guess.

Still others, neither careless nor hopeless, have turned to something other than God, such as Eastern mysticism, or finding the answer within themselves. Linda Evans said that she coped with life’s daily problems by “looking outside to see whether things were working out all right”. Later in the same interview she said, “I did the impossible...I went into an ancient school of wisdom, and I spent years going inwards, meditating and, you know, finding God within me” (Comfort, 78).

Judy Collins said about Heaven,

“I don’t think I’m going to be greeted by vestal virgins, and I doubt if I’ll be walking among the clouds with Voltaire. I might! We don’t know...I believe in a spiritual existence. My beliefs would more closely parallel the idea of reincarnation, of the spirit not being destroyed, but going on in some form or another” (Comfort, 18).

Bob Dylan said about God,

“I feel a heartfelt God. I don’t particularly think that God wants me thinking about Him all the time. I think that would be a tremendous burden on Him, you know. He’s got enough people asking Him favors. He’s got enough people asking Him to pull strings” (Comfort, 19).

Robert Duvall said about being born again, “I think the experience of being reborn is a personal experience...being reborn on a daily basis throughout my life is the thing. No one has the definitive answer” (Comfort, 51).

These people acting from within Hollywood or from a celebrity platform have unwound their lives in confusion without God. Being reborn on a daily basis is not biblical. It is true that we die daily and that the Christian life is lived day by day, but it is not true that a person is reborn every day.

It may be true that people can't handle everyone else's problems, but it is not true that it is too much for God – there is nothing too big for Him. These people display a significant lack of the knowledge of God. Always chasing fame, success, and ultimately self, they find nothing. Groping further, they only grasp the empty futility the world has to offer.

Lauren Stoltzfoos, on a trip to Hollywood and the Los Angeles area in California several years ago wrote in her blog about some of the people she saw. Though not acting in Hollywood, these people were confused, trying desperately to make sense out of life. Relentlessly missing the mark, never looking to God, and groping in the darkness, they frantically reached for anything of substantial strength and value. Only to be found clutching the mystical sensuality and frivolity of the worldly and sinful material offered by Hollywood. Everywhere – in the streets, at the mall and in homeless shelters, were hopeless and hurting people. Grasping and desperate victims whose hearts were bleeding with deep longing for something to know, hold onto and value; hunger just blazing from their eyes. She describes them as follows:

“Malnutrition of the soul abounded, the striving for something real and true was just as elusive as the shadows dancing from the bright lights. Never attainable – and, even more tragic, nothing is even there...Hollywood is the definition of success, and in the very mecca of such brilliancy, the eyes of the people darted back and forth in unrest” (Stoltzfoos).

She wrote of an older woman she met at the mall. Asking if she could pray for her, the woman began to sob, requesting prayer for her family who was fighting. Clutching her heart, she tried to describe the pain. The woman insisted, and then paid for the prayer. It takes a certain desperation to give a total stranger \$20 for a prayer. This same quiet desperation lay all over Los Angeles (Stoltzfoos).

In stark contrast to such pain, darkness, and confusion, God's people have it made. Although we have pain, we also have a God to bear it with us, and to heal. Instead of darkness, we have the light of God's word. Instead of confusion, we have a confidence and purpose in our steps. Instead of bleeding and charcoaled hearts, we have God's love and hope of an eternal future with Him. We have a light in our hearts, a purpose to our path, and a God who loves us.

Lauren says it well in her article entitled *Elusive, Dancing Shadows*. Talking with a cashier, he asked, “How are you doing?” She smiled and said, “Very well.” His mouth dropped in disbelief, saying he never hears people say that and “we really need more people like you.” Twice more, someone exclaimed over the beauty of the group:

“One lady looked at us and said, ‘Wow, you have such natural beauty. It’s amazing....you look like, um, pure.’ I laughed and told her, ‘That’s what we are.’ Another deep look of hunger flashed in her eyes...Isn’t it ironic? Hollywood, in the center of fashion and pursuit of beauty, I’m told – with a long dress and a white ‘thing’ on my head – that I’m beautiful. And right there, in the very heart of seduction and impurity, a girl longingly exclaims over our purity.”

“...I looked up at the glittering lights. I saw the movie actors and the limos. Is this as good as it gets? Is this really the end of what the world has to offer? Then, I looked inside of me. I saw in there Jesus, and enough love and security to last me an eternity. I’d be a fool to ever even give a second glance to Hollywood” (Stoltzfoos).

Psalm 1 says that the man that does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly, and who does not sit in the sinner’s path, or stand in way the scornful is a blessed man. Furthermore, it says that his delight is in the law of the Lord. Verse 3 goes on to say “...he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water...and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.” Finally, the last verse says that the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the ungodly shall perish. These people’s lives have unwound in confusion and hopelessness without God.

God set Creation in motion with laws of order and beauty, giving testimony to His existence and His nature. However, since the beginning of creation, mankind has refused to acknowledge this. Pride, selfishness, and rebellion have blinded the eyes of man, causing them to hold the glory of God in their hearts while living in unrighteousness. Romans 1:18, 19 and 20 talk about the wrath of God toward the ungodly of the world, and toward those who hold the truth in unrighteousness, because the things that can be known about God are shown to them, being clearly visible in the surrounding creation. God’s natural creation gives a clear testimony of His existence. Verses 20 and 21 say, “...they are without excuse” because, knowing God, “they glorified Him not as God...but became vain in their imaginations.” Because of this, God gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts (vs. 23).

There is a story of a town called Liberal, in Missouri, founded by a man named George H. Walsler. The goal was “‘to found a town without a church, [w]here unbelievers could bring up their children without religious training,’ and where Christians were not allowed” (Wikipedia). Infidels from other towns were invited to live there. The town was an experiment in intellectual community living. Some time went by before Clark Braden, a Christian preacher, debater and author came and wrote an article about the town. He reported “more drunken infidels can be seen in a year in Liberal than drunken Christians among one hundred times as many church members during the same time” (Wikipedia). Drinking was not the only problem, however. Swearing was common, lack of reverence for parents and of obedience to them was the rule, and immorality prevailed at places like town dances and shows (Wikipedia). Another article, on the same town says: “Although atheists want no part of living according to the standards set out by Jesus and His apostles in the new Testament, the real fruits of evolutionary atheism also are too horrible for them to contemplate” (Lyons, 3). Paul says about these people, “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools” (Romans 1:22).

Lawlessness

There is, as a general attitude, throughout all of Hollywood movies, a spirit of lawlessness. That means, quite literally and simply, that people do whatever they want, with nothing to stop them. Paul wrote in 2 Timothy that the last days will bring about perilous times, in which people will be lovers of themselves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, despisers of those who are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, and lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God. Galatians chapter 5 says “the lusts of the flesh are manifest...” and then it gives a list, similar to the one given above. It is easy to see what is right and what is wrong. Given this, it is evident that Hollywood is wrong, along with all their lawless, fleshly deeds.

2 Thessalonians chapter two talks about a spirit of iniquity. Verse three says about the return of Christ: “Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition,” and it goes on to say that he

will exalt himself above all that is called God or worshipped. Then it says in verse seven that the mystery of iniquity is already at work. It is evident that this spirit, or attitude of lawlessness is already at work.

Shortly after the fall in the Garden of Eden, when mankind began to multiply on the face of the earth, God saw that the wickedness of them was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of every man's heart was only evil continually. Then it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart (Genesis 6:1,5,6). The earth also was corrupt before Him, filled with violence. All flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth, meaning that all flesh did what was morally wrong. Finally, about all this, God said to Noah, the only righteous man left, "The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them" (Gen. 6:8,9,11-13). The two main problems were corruption through the flesh, or body, and violence. This is almost identical to the content of Hollywood's films. Jesus also compared the time of Noah to the end times (Matt. 24:38,39).

In his epistle, Peter talks about those who "walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government," who are presumptuous, self-willed, and not afraid to speak evil of dignities, speaking evil of that which they do not understand. They shall utterly perish in their own corruption, he says in 2:12. If God "spared not the old world, but saved Noah, the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly..." How much less will these people be saved? These people await, not the salvation of the Lord, but their own corruption, which awaits all the ungodly (2 Peter 2:5-12).

The destruction of the ungodly is coming. Jesus said, about the return of the Son of Man, that two men will be working together in a field, the one will be taken, and the other left. Peter says here in 2 Peter chapters 2 and 3 that the ungodly will utterly perish in their own corruption and that the elements of the earth will pass away with fervent heat. 2 Thessalonians chapter 1 says about the return of Christ, "...the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus

Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe” (2 Thessalonians 1:7-10). Hollywood does not wait for the salvation of the Lord, much the contrary – its own corruption awaits it.

In regards to the Christian, any association he has with the world should be purely evangelistic. The Christian should never identify itself with the world. 2 Peter 3:17 gives a warning from the apostle Peter, regarding the error of the wicked, saying, “...beware, lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.” Ephesians 5, as mentioned above, gives a list of the works of the flesh, which are manifest, or obvious. After the list, verse seven warns, “be not ye therefore partakers with them.” 1 Thessalonians 5:22 also says, “Abstain from all appearance of evil.”

Romans 1, mentioned above, gives another list of these ungodly people. The list is the same, but there is one small phrase I would like to look at. Verse 32 says, “...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.” The word “have pleasure” means to give approval. Psalm 5:4 also says, “...thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee.” God has no pleasure in wickedness. Neither can God’s people, as His children, take pleasure in wickedness or give approval to them that do such things.

Ephesians 5:7 says to not be partakers with them. How many different ways can a person partake with Hollywood? Given all the violence, murder, sexuality, language and more, is it okay for a Christian to partake by watching it? Is this not taking pleasure in it? If not pleasure, is it not partaking with it? How much more should God’s people focus on and pursue Him. Just as Lauren said, she looked inside of herself and saw Jesus, and enough love and security to last an eternity. It is a foolish thing to pursue Hollywood when you can have God. Peter says, “seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness” (2 Peter 3:11).

Ray Comfort says, in his book *Hollywood Be Thy Name*, that Hollywood, as a producer of movies, has a language, and that language is money. We as Christians have a guide for what should occupy our minds. Philippians 4:8 tells us to think about whatever is true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous and praiseworthy. If it fits into this criterion, it's good for the Christian. However, if we watch, and even pay to watch those things that don't fit into this criterion, we speak, in Hollywood's language, that we like it, and ask them to keep it coming. If every professing Christian in America would stop watching "un-Christian" films, Hollywood would have to stop making them. They wouldn't survive. That would tell them it's not okay (Comfort, 112,113).

In an anonymous interview of someone who had been to Hollywood, I asked her opinion on Hollywood. She replied that she doesn't like it – it pulls people down and gets their mind off God. As for being there, she said it was cool to look back and say she'd been there, but she didn't want to go back. There was a foreboding sense of darkness over the place – especially at night. When asked about the impact of movies on the church, she said they can be a distraction, leaving you wanting more, and that we should rather go toward God and His Word (Anonymous Interview).

Rather than indulge in the entertainment media, we should turn to God's Word and let our minds be filled with His Truth. The entertainment media does not consist of truth. It is a sensual lifestyle, leading away from God and toward self-fulfillment, and in the end it leads to confusion, hopelessness and torn, broken lives. Hollywood produces charred hearts and ruined lives on the inside, just as a forest fire chars and ruins anything in its way, and through the screen, Hollywood leads people in the same direction.

God's Heart of Restoration

Rather than be partakers with them, we should be occupied with God's Kingdom. God's heart is bent toward restoration. For those living in sin, it is His desire that they come to repentance and be saved. 2 Peter 3:9 says that God "is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

Although God wants to restore, He makes it clear that He will judge in the end. Isaiah 28:21 talks about God performing His strange act. This verse was given in the context of God being upset with His people for falling into sin and forgetting about Him. Verse 21 says "...he shall be wroth...that he may do his work, his strange work; and bring to pass his act, his strange act." His people were astray, and he was wroth, or angry. Although He was angry at their sin, it was still a strange act for Him to judge His people.

Hosea 11:8 and 9 describes God's heart in deciding what to do with the Israelites – to destroy or to restore. In verse 8 God says, "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together." God's heart bled, it was turned within Him. Destruction goes against God's nature. He chose to disperse the Israelites rather than destroy them because of His love for His people.

Finally, John 3:16 says that because God loved the world, He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." It is God's will for people to live, not die. It is God's will for people to be restored, not judged.

All over Los Angeles and Hollywood, lives are torn and ruined, people are in despair, and God is blinded from their eyes. (2 Cor. 4:4) They look up and see only darkness. Isaiah chapter 59 talks about the sins of Israel separating them from God. Isaiah says,

"Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear...we grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if we had not eyes: we stumble at noon day as in the night; we are in desolate places as dead men...for our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us...judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter" (Isaiah 59:1,2,10,12,14).

The Israelites had fallen into sin so far that they couldn't even communicate with God. God says in the beginning of the chapter, His hand has not been shortened, neither have his ears quit working, but rather, it was the sins of Israel that came between God and the people! Likewise today,

it is the sins of people that separate them from Him. It is because of sin that those people in the streets look up and see only darkness.

Isaiah then says in verse 16, “And He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor...” There was not a man in Israel worthy of interceding before God on account of the people. There was no one qualified to stand before God and represent the people to Him. Although we know Jesus is now our great High Priest, in the Old Testament it was the priests that interceded for the people. At the most critical time, there was no one to intercede.

Today, does God plan to use His people in the restoration of others? Is He looking for intercessors today? Does God want to use us to bring restoration? It seems that if God thought there should have been intercessors in the time of the Israelites, there should be intercessors today.

Conclusion

Hollywood is the entertainment mentality, leading many to mindlessly engage in its entertainment. It is like a stingray lying just below the surface of a smooth ocean floor. Its sting is fatal, ruining the lives of those without God. Its entertainment mentality has penetrated most of society, even finding its way into the church, primarily through the name of entertainment.

It is opposed to the Kingdom of God at its heart. God’s kingdom is one of righteousness and uprightness of heart. It is one of integrity, humility and love. It is focused on God. Those of God’s Kingdom pursue God and are marked by these traits. Hollywood, on the other hand, is marked by crookedness, perverseness, dishonesty, pride, and murder. It is focused on self. Those of this kingdom are marked, more or less, by these traits. They pursue themselves.

Hollywood affects the way its audience thinks, leading even those who profess Christ, to think like the world. The value system of the world is rooted deeply in the world of Hollywood. This value system carries some influence, and tends to shape its audience to think in accordance with its values, apart from the knowledge of the audience.

People who have made a career out of Hollywood have often come out bruised, torn, confused, hopeless, and without God. Having turned their back on God all their life, it is extremely hard to look at Him. Greta Garbo said she can hear His voice, but cannot follow lest she not be herself. Garbo, Carrey, and others display a significant lack of understanding when it comes to God. Their knowledge of Him is shallow, and their lifestyle keeps them from Him. There are others in Hollywood who are not on the screen or stage, but are caught in it, nonetheless. There are many on the streets, confused, torn, and hopeless, living life apart from God. In Hollywood, there is little difference between the screen and the street.

Hollywood is a community of lawlessness, awaiting the destruction of God by their own corruption. Just as Noah's generation was corrupt and violent, so Hollywood is corrupt and violent. Movies tend to be dominated by violence and sexual immorality. Our society constantly presses for more and more "freedom" in these areas – freedom to be more corrupt. This is flagrantly displayed, heralded, and honored on the screen. Hollywood falls under the ungodly, waiting the judgment of God.

In the midst of all this, it is necessary that we understand God's heart in restoration. God wants to restore. When the nation of Israel fell into sin, God marveled and wondered that there was no intercessor for the people. Many lives in Hollywood, not to mention the world, are characterized by sin, pain, and darkness. Many of them grope about, in a spiritual sense, reaching and clutching for something to hold onto, but finding nothing. Instead of something valuable and of worth, they only find meaningless darkness, quickly fleeting out of their hand as they open it. They long for something more, but can't find it because their sins have blocked them from God. Rather than to indulge in their entertainment, it would be much better, as God's people to be involved in God's Kingdom, interceding on behalf of others, and thus building the Kingdom of God. Finally, as John Piper said at the beginning of the paper, "God absent entertainment does more to deaden our capacities for joy in Jesus than it does to make us spiritually powerful in the lives of the living dead. Sources of spiritual power...are not found in the cinema" (Piper).

I would like to conclude with one final thought. I recently came across an article published by Focus on the Family, at pluggedin.com. It was entitled *Which Nature are you Feeding?* I'm sure you already know about the two natures: Flesh and Spirit. This paper mentioned one thing I hadn't thought of in a very long time, and I'd like to note it here in conclusion. The spirit is nourished by Bible study, prayer, Christian fellowship, and serving others (Smithouser). It's that simple! Just a little discipline is all you need. A related article, linked to the first, entitled *6 Keys to a Healthy Entertainment Diet*, gives six things that Olympic trainers use to help their students eat right (Smithouser and Waliszewski). The list could be summed up by simply saying, Just be careful what you watch! Ask yourself, which nature do you feed, and are you careful about it? I hope so.

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