

Re-Christianizing America

I had the pleasure, this weekend, of reviewing a “Christian movie” that turned out to be good.

I use the quotation marks to signal my awareness that the entertainment market’s full of “Christian” movies, TV shows, and whatnot that are just like the secular movies and TV shows, only not as good, and with some little bit of Christian additive slapped onto it like a decal. If you scraped it off, no one would notice. Not that there’s anything at all bad about showing one of the characters in the story coming out of a church, where he has obviously attended a service—but it does need to go farther than that.

“Fragile World,” though, really is a Christian movie, in that the main characters’ problems cannot be solved, or even understood, until they recognize that God is truly God, and dare to put their trust in Him. Writer-director Sandy Boikian has come up with a very tricky story that will keep you guessing—so much for Christian movies being simple-minded!

This is a movie that’s worth something. It matters because, over the past hundred years or so, we Christians have conceded to Non-belief practically the whole enormous territory of our popular culture.

People spend up to hundreds of hours a week watching movies and TV, listening to popular music, reading novels and comic books, and playing video games—vastly more time than they spend in school or family activities, to say nothing of the comparatively little time they give to God in prayer, worship, or Bible study. By far, gobbling up pop culture is how we educate ourselves. This is what we feed into our minds, day and night; and what comes out is only a manifestation of what goes in.

In consuming pop culture, we gorge ourselves on crime and

fornication of all kinds, on selfishness, shallowness, and every form of short-term, thoughtless gratification. Who needs saints and prophets, when you've got costumed super heroes?

Religion in general, and Christianity in particular, is almost invisible here. An observer from Mars might be excused for thinking, after a careful study of our entertainment media, that religion plays only a negligible part, if any, in our daily lives. How would he be wrong in thinking so?

Is it any wonder that we habitually elect villains and dunderheads to govern us, when it's been so deeply planted in our minds that corruption and foolishness are the normal workings of the world? What can we hope to accomplish in our politics, as long as millions of us, come election day, are willing to vote a notorious and habitual criminal—Hillary Clinton, trailing behind her almost 40 years of scandal—into the highest office in the land, and go to bed thinking nothing the less of themselves? That's our toxic culture doing our voting for us. That's the monster coming out of the tar-pit that we've made of our culture.

But in a story like "Fragile World," the lessons are different—love instead of mindless sex for the asking; faith instead of magic; giving instead of endless taking; reality instead of wishful thinking. In this story, it is not taken for granted that no one has a conscience.

What if we consumed movie after movie, novel after novel, in which the protagonist is not mocked as a holy joe for being honest, telling the truth, being considerate of others, or simply being good? What if decency and integrity were presented not as oddities, but as normalcy?

In my own "Bell Mountain" books, if I may say so, I've set myself the goal of "re-normalizing religion"—depicting faith and communion with God as everyday aspects of life for ordinary people, even as they once were for most Americans.

These are fantasies, and “Fragile World” is much harder to categorize.

One novelist, one movie-maker, can only stake a claim to a very small piece of the ground. But as servants of God, our position is never hopeless. A lot of little pieces of ground will add up to a bigger one. As Nehemiah told us, the new wall of Jerusalem was built not from one great stone, but from many smaller ones.

Re-building a Christian culture in America will have to be the work of many generations.

But if it were impossible, God wouldn't be calling us to do it.

I have discussed these topics, and others, on my blog, <http://leeduigon.com>, throughout the week. Please stop by and read! All it takes is just one click to get you there.

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