

Let's Communicate . . . About Movie Ratings

Becket Hall

As a parent of two teenagers, I have been rather upset by some of the low quality and definitely B-grade movies that have recently been slipped into the A category as either A-4's or A-3's in the ratings of the N.C.O.M.P. I have begun to lose faith in the N.C.O.M.P. and now wonder how a parent can judge both the moral and technical quality of the movies that are being produced today.

Elizabeth B.

It is true that the National Catholic Office for Motion Pictures (N.C.O.M.P.) has in the past couple years liberalized its standards at least to the extent that a number of movies which has formerly been classified as B have now been reclassified as A-3 or A-4. However, we feel that this is a necessary development on the part of N.C.O.M.P. for as people's attitudes concerning what is acceptable in a motion picture change, so too the standards for appraising these films must also change. Whereas thirty years ago the mere presence of the word "damn" in a movie could cause an uproar, today no one would even bat an eye at such an occurrence. While taking into account obvious limits, standards must reflect the times. The N.C.O.M.P. has made a start in this direction, and we would like to see it continue.

Now, concerning your problem, there are several points that should be mentioned.

First of all, a rating A-3 or A-4 means "for adults" and "for very mature adults" respectively. These ratings are beginning to mean exactly what they say. Gone are the days when most

A-3 movies would not even offend the most sensitive of adults.

We should also remember that today's ratings are still far from infallible. Moreover, the maturity of the individual also needs to be considered. Thus the ratings of the N.C.O.M.P. shouldn't serve as one's sole guideline. Instead, one should also consider newspaper and magazine film reviews and the opinions of those who have seen the movies in question.

We also feel that the N.C.O.M.P. ratings might be more helpful if, when each rating first comes out, they would give a brief explanation of why they rated the picture as they did. It would seem a benefit to those consulting the N.C.O.M.P. ratings if they would state some of the worthwhile aspects of the film and not merely list the pitfalls as they presently do.

Ratings will serve as a warning as to what one might expect from a film, but rating movies alone will not change the caliber of the movies being made today. If parents feel that the motion pictures being shown today are a danger to the moral welfare of their children, it is their duty, as parents, to bring this matter to the attention of the movie producers and distributors. As long as parents continue to attend movies which they feel are morally harmful, motion picture companies will continue to produce them.

Address questions and comments to:

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THE FABLED Lion's Gate highlights the ruins of Mycenae, one of the most ancient cities of Greece. The walls of Mycenae are the greatest monument remaining of the heroic age of Greece.

TWILIGHT silhouettes a lonely seagull over the Aegean sea as the sun nestles against the Grecian mainland. Nearby offshore islands are dotted with Byzantine churches and shrines.

Fabled Greek isles

This is the last in a series on "The Crescent of Christianity" written by the Rev. C. J. McNaspy, S.J., associate editor of America magazine. Photos by Rev. Elmo Romagosa of the CLARION. Copyright, June 1967, by the CLARION Herald.

By the REV. C. J. McNASPY, S.J.

From Athens the pilgrim may easily visit a number of other jeweled spots: Daphni (mentioned in our last article), Cape Sounion (one of the most beautiful spots in Europe, with its temple remains and view out over the Aegean), and a host of others. Even a short trip over the Aegean will prove most rewarding and introduce one to the Greek isles.

The nearest islands are quite accessible. Aegina, for example, carries one into the real world of Greece, far from metropolitan Athens. It is dotted with hundreds of little Byzantine churches and shrines, and crowned by a startlingly handsome temple, dedicated to Minerva-Aphaia.

On a clear day — and most days are transparently clear — one can see the Parthenon in the distance, and to the right the temple at Sounion, a triangle of wondrous shrines. Other islands that can be comfortably visited on a single-day voyage are Poros and Hydra, as you skirt the shore near Nauplion (which was the capital of Greece following its war of independence, from 1821 until 1834, when the government moved to Athens).

NOT FAR TO THE WEST of Athens is its ancient rival, Corinth. For centuries this was known as a most splendid city — indeed, its architectural style, the Corinthian, is the one that the Romans and later Europeans seem to have liked best. In 146 B.C. Rome captured Corinth, and from this is dated the incorporation of the Greek world into the Roman empire. The city was rebuilt and is again in ruins. However, one can visit and stand on the very spot where St. Paul preached to the Corinthians.

While we don't have his sermons, we do possess two magnificent letters that he wrote back to the church in Corinth. It is a particular joy to stand there on the Bema, or public platform, where Paul preached and read chapter 13 of I Corinthians: "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels . . . The museum in Corinth is also worth a visit, and you will stop and admire the canal that cuts through the Isthmus of Corinth.

If you have time, you will want to continue southward into one of the oldest civilized areas of Greece. We know little of the country at the time when the Pyramids were being built in Egypt, but some 400 or 500 years later (around 1900 B.C.) Greece seems to have been invaded by ancestors of Sophocles, Socrates, and other "classic" Greeks. They produced a high culture often called Mycenaean, since Mycenae was one of its centers.

ANOTHER CONTEMPORARY culture, apparently closely related, was centered on the island of Crete at Knossos (which you can visit in one day from Athens, taking a morning flight to Herakleion and returning that evening). At Mycenae you will visit the ancient battlements — far older than the Parthenon or other monuments in Athens — and enter the famous Lion Gate and the traditional tomb of the family of Agamemnon, the Atridae. Here you are in truly ancient Greek history.

Still a few miles farther down in the shrine town of Epidauros, where an ancient theater still stands and is in regular use during the summer. Estimates on the seating capacity of the theater vary from 16,000 to 30,000 (depending on the size of the viewers, I suppose); but, in any case, it is immense, and I can vouch for the truth of the story that the acoustics are perfect from any seat.

On another trip out of Athens, also to the west but north of the Gulf of Corinth, you drive past Marathon (where one of the most important battles was fought between Greeks and Persians, in 490 B.C.), on through Thebes (celebrated for the story of Oedipus the King, Antigone, and other classic plays), toward Mount Parnassus. This mountain, rising a mile and a half, must have impressed the ancient Greeks as much as it does us; for they thought of it as sacred to Apollo and the Muses, sources of wisdom and the arts.

NEARBY IS THE vast temple complex of Delphi, famed for its oracle, the most famous oracle of antiquity. The entire area was called by the Greeks "the navel of the earth." The spot is still so impressive that it is likely to leave the clearest and sharpest memories of all Greece, apart from the Acropolis in Athens.

The oracle was the mouthpiece of Apollo; mysterious fumes were said to emanate from a fissure in the rock, enlightening a priestess who had just been purified in the Castalian stream (still there, and you may drink from it). From all over the Greek world people would come to consult the oracle, and though most of the oracular utterances were obscure if not ambiguous, the inscription on the temple was universally useful: "Know Thyself."

During the Middle Ages, a sanctuary was built in honor of a holy monk named Luke the Stylite. Hosios Lukas was built in the 11th century, under the patronage of the Emperor in Constantinople, Basil II. It includes two churches, together with a crypt and monastic cells, and some of the most striking mosaics in Greece.

In modern times, it is a shrine not only to the faithful but to devotees of great Christian art.



THE 11TH CENTURY monastery of Hosios Lukas enshrines striking Byzantine mosaics such as those above of St. Peter and St. Paul. But equally striking are the etched-like faces of present day monks of the monastery.



ON THE SLOPE of Mt. Parnassus is the Temple of Delphi. The area was called by Greeks "the navel of the world." The temple was the site of the Pythian Oracle which guided the destinies of thousands.



PRESERVED in the ruins of ancient Corinth is the Bema, or speaker's rostrum, where public announcements were made and debates were held. Probably on this site above St. Paul preached to the residents of Corinth. Below is the handsome temple of Aphaia, on the island of Aegina.



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