
What Will Hays Told Charles Smith.

The following story is three years old, but it is probably as new to you as it is to us, and since it is a good lesson in Apologetics from a non-Catholic source we take special pleasure in handing it on to you, picking it out of correspondence passed between Cecil DeLille, Will Hays, and Charles Smith, President of the American Association for the Advancement of Atheism.

Charles Smith wired Cecil DeLille protesting against the production of a religious picture "The Atheist," which, it was alleged, was then in process of formation. He said in part: "We shall gladly present statistics disproving the clerical morality lie that one cannot be good without God. The clergy-inspired blackening of character of atheists must stop.... Should you proceed to foster prejudice against us we shall everywhere protest showing of 'The Atheist.' Religious propaganda is out of place in the movies."

In reply Cecil DeLille set Mr. Smith right on the detail of what pictures he was producing and also on the matter of what pictures he had a right to produce: "Your telegraphic suggestion that I eliminate the thought of God from my future pictures I must discard inasmuch as this is a free country and I feel that I have as much right to use my medium of expression to give the world my thought as you have the right to use your medium of expression to give the world your thought."

Mr. Smith replied that while he could not prosecute Mr. DeLille for blackening the character of atheists, he could protest and he proposed to do so. He added: "If all the Atheists in America were organized, they would be powerful enough to prevent production of anti-Atheistic motion pictures. We propose to organize them."

Mr. Smith placed his correspondence with Mr. DeLille before Will Hays; his reply was in part as follows: "Building upon their faith in a Creator, and in a God of Justice and Mercy, men have established certain codes of conduct, pursuance of which tends to produce the happiness, peace and comfort of their fellow-men. These codes, these thoughts, are inseparable from religion; and rather than see the motion picture, by the elimination of God from it (which would be utterly unnatural) used to discourage the religion from which these ideals of right living and of right thinking spring, I would prefer to see the motion picture utterly destroyed. And I can think of few more calamitous happenings than to take from the world the motion picture which has clothed the empty existence of far-off hamlets with joy and lifted listless folk till they walk the peaks of romance and adventure like their own Main Street.

"The motion picture, I may add, is concerned with drama, and drama is connected with whatever man does. Potentially, everything touching man -- his thoughts, his ideals, ideas, aspirations, his ambitions -- is motion-picture material. To ask us to eliminate God and man's belief in God, therefore, is to ask us to eliminate one of the most profound urges in man -- the spiritual urge. Such is unthinkable.

"In fact, to ask us to eliminate God from motion pictures is equivalent to asking that sunshine be barred from the playgrounds where emaciated, ill-kept children of the tenements find a moment's respite of happiness. It is equivalent to asking us to blot the stars from the heavens because men, ay look at them and dare to ask themselves, as Napoleon did of his fellow voyagers into Egypt, 'But, who, gentlemen, made all these?' We could not do it if we wanted to. God is in every art, in every laudable ambition, in every worthy achievement. God is in laughter and in drama and in beautiful landscapes, and it is in a genuine spirit of reverence that I state that God is in our wholesome pleasures and our wholesome entertainment."

PRAYERS: Ed Graham's grandfather ill; Donald Reighard's cousin deceased; a deceased friend.