

Christianity and Film in a Culture of Unbelief

Some Reflections of a Fellow
Christian Pilgrim

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**“Those who tell the stories
rule society.”**

~ Plato

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“In America today, it is quite clear who the principal storytellers are: filmmakers.”

~ James Spiegel

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“Paul McGuire, an independent filmmaker, says that not only have Christians had no influence in film’s 100-year history, ‘they have actively discouraged those who are artists, filmmakers and dancers from creative expression.’”

~ Cal Thomas

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Game Plan

- focus on film primarily
- basic outline
 - I. Reflections on the Power and Value of Film
 - II. Thinking Christianly about Non-Christian (and Anti-Christian) Films

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Some Presuppositions of My Talk

1. Christianity is true.
2. God has spoken to us infallibly in Scripture.
3. God is absolutely sovereign over all creation and history.
4. Art is Gift.
5. The arts are indispensable to culture and to the Church.
6. Film is art.

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I. Reflections on the Power & Value of Film

A. The Nature of Film

1. A Narrative Art

an art used to tell a story

2. Centrality of the Image

what makes film unique

3. Film as Dialog

involving movie maker(s), viewers, & culture

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I. Reflections on the Power & Value of Film

B. The Power of Film

1. Film as Revealer

a. Window

- into the life of another
- into culture
- into the human condition / predicament
- into alternative worldviews or moral visions
- into possibilities
- into how things are
- into how things ought or (ought not) to be

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I. Reflections on the Power & Value of Film

B. The Power of Film

1. Film as Revealer

a. Window

b. Mirror

2. Film as Shaper

a. of persons

character development

worldview development

b. of culture

3. **Caution**

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I. Reflections on the Power & Value of Film

B. The Power of Film

1. Film as Revealer

a. Window

b. Mirror

2. Film as Shaper

a. of persons

character development

worldview development

b. of culture

3. **Caution** – risks as well as benefits

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II. Thinking Christianly about Non-Christian and Anti-Christian Films

A. Avoidance or Engagement?

B. Some of the Relevant Biblical Principles

1. Great Commandments
2. Injunctions to Holiness & Moral Purity
3. Principles concerning Christian Liberty
4. Cultural Mandate & Great Commission
5. Concerning the Mind of Unbelief

Romans 1:18-32

II Corinthians 10:1-5

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II. Thinking Christianly about Non-Christian and Anti-Christian Films

D. Some Suggestions for Faithful Christian Engagement with Film

1. develop ability to *really* appreciate film
 - a. its artistry
 - b. its message (?)
 - c. its (possible) functions as revealer and shaper
 - d. its underlying worldview
2. commit to engaging in movie-initiated conversation
3. encourage gifted Christians to consider a vocation in film making, or real film criticism
4. use discretion with respect to personal weaknesses

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II. Thinking Christianly about Non-Christian and Anti-Christian Films

E. So, what about “The Golden Compass”?

1. Background Info and Current Cultural Context

a. Philip Pullman & his agenda

b. militant atheism on the rise

c. movie – story defanged

2. To See or Not to See?

3. A More Important Question

Are we prepared to answer Pullman’s challenge?

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Q & A

What do you think?

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Some Reading Recommendations

On thinking Christianly about film:

Robert K. Johnston, *Reel Spirituality: Theology and Film in Dialogue* (Baker, 2000).

R. Douglas Geivett and James S. Spiegel, eds., *Faith, Film and Philosophy: Big Ideas on the Big Screen* (IVP, 2007).

On thinking Christianly about the arts generally:

Gene Veith, *State of the Arts: From Bezalel to Mapplethorpe* (Crossway Books, 1991).

Leland Ryken, *The Liberated Imagination: Thinking Christianly about the Arts* (Harold Shaw, 1989)