

THEATER AND FILM:
—————
A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

THEATER AND FILM:
—
A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

PAUL KURITZ



Theater and Film: A Christian Perspective

© 2007 by Paul Kuritz. All rights reserved.

Published by Redemption Press, PO Box 427, Enumclaw, WA 98022.

Second Print Edition: 2014

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any way by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording or otherwise—without the prior permission of the copyright holder, except as provided by USA copyright law.

Old Testament Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the *Orthodox Study Bible*, prepared under the auspices of the Academic Community of St. Athanasius Academy of Orthodox Theology, Elk Grove, CA. Copyright © 2008 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

All New Testament Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the *New King James Version*. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked “NIV” are taken from the *Holy Bible, New International Version*®. NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by the International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House. The “NIV” and “New International Version” trademarks are registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by International Bible Society. www.zondervan.com

ISBN 13: 978-1-63232-136-7

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 2006904538

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface.....	vii
Introduction.....	1
The Formal Cause of the Dramatic Theater.....	23
The Material Cause of the Dramatic Theater.....	57
The Efficient Cause of the Dramatic Theater.....	89
The Final Cause of the Dramatic Theater.....	109
The Working Christian Theater Artist.....	135
Endnotes.....	161
Index.....	179
Contact Information.....	185

PREFACE

Saint Luke describes Christians as members of “the Way.” Since the first edition of this book, *The Fiery Serpent: A Christian Theory of Film and Theater*, my pilgrimage on the Way has led me to a deeper and fuller understanding of life in Jesus Christ. In particular, by the grace of God, I have found the Orthodox Church, the original church founded by Jesus Christ. The modifications to this edition have their genesis in my understanding of that ancient faith.

For most of my life I have worked in the dramatic theater. When I was led to recover my Christian faith, I began to write to reconcile my life in the dramatic theater with my new understanding of creation. I’ve retitled this book *Theater and Film: A Christian Perspective* and hope Christians of all backgrounds, as well as non-Christians wanting to learn how a Christian understands the worlds of theater and film, may find this book worthwhile.

In *The Orthodox Way*, Metropolitan Kallistos Ware, Bishop of Diokleia, writes, “In the beginning

there was only God: all the things that exist are his creation, whether in heaven or on earth, whether spiritual or physical, and so in their basic ‘thusness’ they are all of them good.” Evagrius observed, “That which is evil in the strict sense, is not a substance but the absence of good, just as darkness is nothing else than the absence of light.” St. Maximus the Confessor said, “Not even the demons are evil by nature, but they have become such through the misuse of their natural powers. Evil is always parasitic. It is the twisting and misappropriation of what is in itself good. Evil resides not in the thing itself but in our attitude towards the thing—that is to say, in our will. To say that evil is the perversion of good, and therefore in the final analysis an illusion and unreality, is not to deny its powerful hold over us. For there is no greater force within creation than the free will of beings endowed with self-consciousness and spiritual intellect; and so the misuse of this free will can have altogether terrifying consequences.”¹

The mimetic arts, which include theater and film, are part of the “all things” God has created. And so, theater and film, in their “thusness,” are good. As the great Russian filmmaker Andrey Tarkovsky asks, “Perhaps our capacity to create is evidence that we ourselves were created in the image of God?”²

Satan, from the very beginning, realized the power of mimesis and used the mask of the

serpent in the garden to bring Adam and Eve their downfall. The creation story illustrates the power of mimesis and the desire of Satan to corrupt what God has created.

To illustrate the power of mimesis, God reclaimed the mask of the serpent used by Satan in the garden, and turned it into a mask pointing to the coming salvation in Jesus Christ, in the episode narrated in Numbers 21:6-9. The evangelist Saint John recognized this act and noted, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up" (John 3:14 NKJV).

Just as the serpent must never be seen as a means of salvation, but rather point to Christ as our Savior, so too, theater and film must never be seen as a means of salvation, nor as a substitute for the Divine Liturgy. Neither should the theatrical aesthetic experience be confused with the spiritual experience of liturgy.

Satan attacks whatever God has made and seeks to convince us that God did not make it. Satan attacks first those creations of God that hold the most potential to sway people away from God. If Satan can convince us that God did not create the gift of mimesis, then he has a powerful tool to convince us that God himself does not exist.

Mimesis—art, music, dance, and narratives including poetry, novels, opera, chorale, theater and film—can and should relate stories of God's love, redemption, and salvation, thereby giving glory to

him. Stories of Satan's destruction of human life provide powerful warnings. Stories of Christian faithfulness and repentance encourage pilgrims on the Way.

The means of mimesis are neutral, subject to both the glorification of God and the corruption by Satan. Christians must pray for both discernment and protection when approaching the mimetic arts, for great is the glory to God and great is the danger to man. Above all, the Christian artist should remember that God does not simply help the Christian artist by encouraging us, or arranging for things to work out. Rather, the Christian theater artist knows that God is actually in the artist, working in union with the human artist.

The dramatic theater that a Christian artist creates is done so in union with Christ, so the work is not that of an individual, but of his common life with and in Christ.

I did not arrive at this point in my life alone. God has been with me all along, waiting for me and loving me, whether I knew it or not, whether I believed it or not, or whether I wanted it or not. My parents loved and encouraged me unconditionally. May their memory be eternal. My dear wife Kathleen has been my beloved companion and inspiration on our journey of faith.

This book, and all I do, is for God, my parents, and for her.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The Relationship between Things in Life and Things on the Stage and Screen

So the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died. Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord and against you; pray to the Lord that He take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people. Then the Lord said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live." So

Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived.”³

He removed the high places and broke the sacred pillars, cut down the wooden image and broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made; for until those days the children of Israel burned incense to it, and called it Nehushtan. He trusted in the Lord God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor who were before him. For he held fast to the Lord; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the Lord had commanded Moses. The Lord was with him; he prospered wherever he went. And he rebelled against the king of Assyria and did not serve him.”⁴

WHAT IN THE WORLD IS this peculiar story about? Snake bites? Desperate people seeking relief from their leader? A leader seeking help from God? God interceding in a strange, mysterious, and miraculous way?

It is the story of two realms—the human realm and the supernatural realm, two powers—the power of evil and the power of God, and two ages—the

present age and the age to come. Since exile from paradise, people have been waiting for God to fulfill his promise, to restore his loving rule, and to heal the relationships within creation. In this story, God breaks into the present age, an age dominated by sin, evil, wretchedness, unrighteousness, hatred, deception, strife, conflict, misery, pain, suffering, death, and rebellion against God's will, to temporarily let us see a glimpse and experience a taste of the kingdom of God.⁵

God's Paradigm

The book of Numbers presents God's paradigm for the role of dramatic theater amid the tension between the present age and the age to come, between the kingdom of men and the kingdom of God. The story demonstrates how the kingdom of God—God's rule or reign—can appear, using human error and sin to both glorify God and bless our lives. Most importantly, the story is an image prefiguring Jesus Christ. Christ compares himself to the bronze serpent saying, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up," (John 3:14 NKJV). Through Christ, the powerful serpentine symbol of death is defeated and transformed into an image of life. Christ trampled down death by death; he

united himself with death in order to conquer death.

In Numbers chapter twenty-one, we find God's people losing faith in him and grumbling and complaining about the ways and means God has given them. To draw them back to him, God allows poisonous snakes to bite and kill his people. In Moses' account in the book of Numbers, the serpents were literal reptiles. They could very well have been metaphors for temptations, leading God's complaining people away from his purpose and their abundant life in him.

Serpents have been after humans since the garden of Eden. Snakes trigger something deep in our brains that makes them powerful symbols. In the book of Genesis they are described as the craftiest and most subtle of God's creations. Snakes are both symbols of great danger and great healing. Two snakes wound around a pillar looking at each other, in the form of a caduceus, would come to symbolize medicine and medical societies throughout history.

When the Hebrew people realized their problems were due to their lack of faith in God, they came to Moses and repented. They asked Moses, God's representative, for help. Moses prayed and God instructed Moses to create something. The healing story of the fiery serpent is a paradigm, not just for medicine but, I believe, for describing God's ability to use the dramatic theater of stage

and screen to illustrate the dynamic tension of living simultaneously in two kingdoms. We live in the *already* and in the *not yet*, where God's kingdom may arrive, offering an opportunity for a character to change—either direction or mind. The Greek word for change is "*metanoia*"—repentance.

Moses was instructed to create a replica of a poisonous snake, to lift it up on a pole, and to isolate it in time and space for the audience's viewing. God said those who are bitten would live if they simply looked at it. Moses did what he was told and those who looked at the snake recovered. How did this happen? How can we begin to understand what was going on?

The Greek philosopher Aristotle held that if we want to know what something is, we need to know four things about it:

- What it is made of
- The form or shape it takes
- The power it needs to come into being
- The end or purpose for which it is made

For example, if my brother is hungry, I may decide to make him a sandwich. His favorite sandwich is made of wheat bread, sliced turkey, and mustard. Its form is one piece of bread spread

with the mustard, topped by the turkey slices and the second piece of bread. The power of cooking brought it onto his plate, so it could fulfill its end—provide nourishment for my brother. I give the sandwich to my brother; he gives me his thanks and we establish a relationship, a communion.

This four-part method of analysis can be applied to anything. For example, we are made mostly of water. We take the form of an integrated body, mind, soul, and spirit, in the image of God. The power needed to bring one of us into being is God. The purpose of our life is *theosis*—through Jesus Christ, to unite in love with God’s energies, to fully become the image of God for which we were created. Film critic Brian Godawa notes, “Even though we are fallen, with our art partaking of this fallenness, we are still created in the image of God, and therefore our creations continue to reflect our Maker.”⁶

In other words, a made thing has some of the traits of the one who made it. For example, the plays of William Shakespeare reflect his preoccupations, experiences, and style; just as the films of Elia Kazan reflect his. We can begin to understand the creator—Shakespeare or Kazan—by understanding what the creator has made. We can begin to imagine Shakespeare after reading his plays or Elia Kazan after seeing his movies. We can also begin to understand God’s energies by seeking to know his creation.

One behavior we share with our creator is the desire and ability to make things to make ourselves known to others. Through the story of the fiery serpent God revealed Jesus Christ. Through the story of the fiery serpent, God may be revealing his purpose for the dramatic theater.

Dramatic Theater

Art, plays, and films are ways people make themselves known to others. Ability or skill has been called art, *teckne* in Greek. "Art is a fundamental necessity in the human state. 'No man,' says Thomas Aquinas following Aristotle, 'can live without pleasure. Therefore a man deprived of the pleasures of the spirit goes over to the pleasures of the flesh.'"⁷

Theater has been defined as the presentation of oneself or selves, isolated in time and space, to another or others. *Dramatic theater* has been defined as the presentation of an imaginary self or selves, isolated in time and space, to another or others.⁸ So the art of the dramatic theater is the ability or skill of presenting an imaginary self or selves, isolated in time and space, to another or others. Since some of us are better able to present an imaginary self or selves or are more skilled in manipulating the isolated time and space, some works of dramatic art are more effective, or better, than others.

What abilities or skills are necessary to create a work of dramatic theater? Let's use Aristotle's four questions. The *material* of the dramatic theater is a human being, isolated in time and space, imagining before one or more other human beings. Imagining is picturing in one's mind. The human being imagining is perceived to be imagining when we begin to share the picturing. The imagining person uses body and voice to communicate what is happening in his mind. The *form* of dramatic theater is a story, one of our species' defining products. The *powers* of scriptwriting, acting, directing, and designing are required so the dramatic theater can fulfill its purpose. The film or play has the potential to be offered lovingly in thanksgiving to God, and to the audience, to form a new relationship, a communion honoring Christ.

All species seek a common end: to survive and to reproduce. We are no exception. In fact, the two desires constitute our fundamental happiness. *To survive* means to live without death. A desire for eternal life animates us. *To reproduce* means to leave something of ourselves in our wake. Reproduction is an act of love. (Love is here and throughout defined not as a feeling but as the will to do good, know truth, and experience beauty.) Reproduction can partially satisfy our desire to survive. We can reproduce through such things as children, protégés, legacies, and artistic creations. Love can be the power for reproduction.

God the creator so loved the Israelite people, that he caused the fiery serpent to be created, lifted up, and endowed with the power to save. In fulfillment of the prophecy inherent in the serpent, God the creator so loved the world, his audience, that he sent Jesus Christ, his only-begotten Son, to them.

Jesus Christ demonstrated, with signs and wonders, that the kingdom of God, the age to come, had finally, in fact, arrived. By entering into the kingdom through him, we can begin to experience life in the kingdom of God while still living in the present evil age! This is the story enacted in the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ for humanity.

All attempts at storytelling and dramatic theater model this historical paradigm—the invitation to enter into the kingdom of God. To the extent that our attempt succeeds, the success resonates across time and space as a universal aesthetic experience—true, good, and beautiful.

Storytelling

Species learn to survive and reproduce through trial and error. Our species has the unique ability to pass on information about surviving and reproducing gleaned by trial and error, through storytelling. Great stories climax at a moment, a

sign, or a wondrous event, when the kingdom of God is glimpsed. Storytelling allows us to see the energies of the kingdom vicariously; it encourages us to look for similar sightings in our own lives. Storytelling may even grant fictional accounts the same power to enhance our ability to survive and reproduce as historical accounts.

The dramatic theater can show human beings struggling—deprived of freedom, devoid of sanctity, dependent on sinfulness, alienated from God, estranged from their fellow men.

Dramatic theater that satisfies our yearning for true information, leading to survival and reproduction, makes us happy. We think of that play or film as good, worthy, artful, and beautiful. A good actor has worthy imaginings communicated in artful manipulations of time, space, body, and voice. A good piece of dramatic theater, a true piece of dramatic theater, a beautiful piece of dramatic theater, allows all—maker and audience—to understand life in two kingdoms, to seek more of the kingdom of God, to understand and love God, oneself, and our fellow human beings more than before.

Our universal desire for survival and reproduction can, in the hands of this evil age, result in plays and movies awash in sex and violence, the crudest means of achieving our desires. In fact, dramatic theater's makers have often imagined our basest instincts on the stage because, as long as we

remain trapped in this present age, we are subject to the desires of the flesh. Stories often show us seeking the world's kingdom, conforming to this evil age, rejecting the kingdom of God, even after experiencing the blessings of its breakthrough.

The Form of the Serpent

The shape or form of the fiery serpent was drawn from the personal experiences of the people; the serpents were real everyday serious problems. The fiery serpent on the pole looked like a real serpent to its audience. But the bronze serpent did not pose a threat to the people; they were able to contemplate it without fear. The bronze serpent was harmless due to the material of which it was made.

The serpent was also more than just a serpent lifted up. The serpent had been transformed. The serpent was a preview of the future great lifting up of Christ. The serpent alone could not accomplish what it accomplished. But, because the serpent was conceived and created as an image of Christ, as a prelude to the arrival of his kingdom, the work of art attained its transcendent power.

The Material of the Serpent

The material of the fiery serpent was bronze, not the tissues that make an actual serpent. Bronze

is an alloy made when two less precious metals, copper-bearing rock and tin, are heated by charcoal fire. The molten metal was poured into a cast or mold of a serpent. When cooled and hardened, the bronze form was filed and polished.

The Power to Make the Serpent

To make a bronze serpent required the God-given *tekne*, or skill, of the artist. Skill, innate or learned, comes from God; the Lord fills the artist “with the Spirit of God, in wisdom and understanding, in knowledge and all manner of workmanship, to design artistic works.”⁹ Skill is a mysterious gift, an energy given to us as we experience the full image of God.

The Purpose of the Serpent

God provided the skill to make the bronze serpent. God also provided the purpose of the fiery serpent—to foreshadow the coming of Jesus Christ by doing what we could not do, namely, save ourselves from death. God crowned the work, made the bronze look like fire, and attracted the audience to the light of Christ which it reflected. The work reflected God’s transcendent and transformative light because every aspect of the work—form,

material, manner, and purpose—reflected God’s purpose and glory.

As a result of this God-glorifying work of art, the people were saved from death, restored to health, and provided with a preview of the kingdom of God, where they might enjoy their abundant lives in Christ. How does it work? The artists seek, God provides. *The Wisdom of Solomon* summarizes the story:

Even when the terrible rage of wild
animals
Came upon Your people
And they were being destroyed from the
bites of twisting snakes,
Your wrath did not continue to the end.
They were troubled for a short while as
a warning,
And received a pledge of salvation
In remembrance of Your law’s command.
For the one who turned to it was saved,
not by what he saw,
But by You, the Savior of all.
So in this You persuaded our enemies
That You are the One
who saves from every evil.
For the bites of locusts and flies killed
them,
And no healing was found for their life,

Because they deserved to be punished
by such things.
But the teeth of poisonous serpents
Did not overcome Your children,
For Your mercy came to their aid and
healed them.
For they were goaded to remind them of
Your oracles
And were quickly saved,
Lest they should fall into deep
forgetfulness
And be continually
unmindful of Your kindness
For neither herb nor medicinal plaster
healed them
But it was Your word, O Lord, which
heals all men.¹⁰

The dramatic theater—the fiery serpent—can reveal the gospel of grace, a leading to our Lord Jesus Christ. “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up” (John 3:14 NKJV).

The paradigmatic story in Numbers suggests a model for our dramatic theater makers who seek to imitate the means and ends of the great maker himself. Dramatic theater presents the story of a hungry human being unable to sate his hunger with the things of this earth, presented with another way to live. If the new way is accepted, he may be

healed or restored. He may or may not acknowledge God as the source of his blessing. If made for the purpose of glorifying God, the film or play can have the ability to invite us to *metanoia*, repentance. At least, the work can cause us to reconsider our hungry lives and our veneration of false gods.

Many works of the dramatic theater glorify humanity. In a later episode of the story, King Hezekiah destroys the work of art when the work became valued for itself rather than for the God who infused every aspect of its creation; who made the bronze look like fire. The young king destroys Moses' bronze serpent because the people had begun to worship and glorify the serpent rather than the source of the serpent's healing power.

Art for art's sake, or even for society's or people's sake, is idolatry. Dramatic theater which is made and loved for itself rather than as a means of glorifying the Creator, the source of the dramatic theater's power, is likewise not as effective in moving, healing, or drawing us to Christ. Plays and films are not for dramatic theater's sake, not even for our sake, but for the sake of, for the glory of the Creator, the giver and sustainer of our lives. Only then can they have value and power. As Hamlet concludes, there must be acknowledgement of "a Providence which shapes our ends"—in the dramatic theater, as in our lives.

Films and plays have shown people living without God, experiencing meaninglessness,

except for what they can convince themselves has meaning. Yet even when the kingdom of God is glimpsed, human rule is not immediately or totally abandoned. Christ comes with an offer. God does not compel people to rid themselves of problems and temptations. But he does provide the miraculous invitation, as he did with the fiery serpent and with the cross.

As the truth of Jesus Christ informs the dramatic theater, God points us to Christ. God does not establish his kingdom in or through the dramatic theater, but he can use it to show his power, to awaken our desire to seek him, and to deepen our trust in Christ, as we live in Christ safely and without fear in a world of poisonous snakes, lust, violence, and temptation. The Christian dramatic theater, like the fiery serpent, is a glimpse of grace, leading us to the source of grace. Christian films and plays can point the way to Christ; they do not remove all our fears, or take away the pain of the snakebite. But they invite us to travel along the way of the cross.

The creation of films or plays is a worthy endeavor when God's energy is present. We are open to inspiration because we are made in the image of our creator. No other species was made in the creator's image. Consequently, no other creature can create like we can.

God is the power that brings about human beings. To bring God's power to bear on our

endeavor called dramatic theater, his energy must be included. He must be the chief audience member whose approval the artists' imaginings seek. But unlike God, we can only make out of something already made; only God can create from nothing. Without God's initial creation, we would lack material to use in our own creations. God created us to bless him for all he has made, and to offer all back to him with love. We create to commune gratefully with our heavenly Father.

Films and plays can narrate several basic stories of the Christian worldview. First, the story can depict fallen man, lost and depraved, revolting against God, conforming to this evil age. These "heroes" live with faith in the things of the earth—themselves, others, wealth, political philosophy, knowledge, or pleasure. A second basic story can reveal men's reaction to a glimpse of God's energy in their lives. Unfulfilled and empty outside of communion with God, the fallen and flawed heroes may eventually repent, and follow Christ with a hunger only he can satisfy. The Russian filmmaker Andrey Tarkovsky notes art "is born and takes hold wherever there is a timeless and insatiable longing for the spiritual, for the ideal: that which draws people to art. Modern art has taken a wrong turn in abandoning the search for the meaning of existence in order to affirm the value of the individual for its own sake."¹¹

In some stories the hero chooses to remain as he is; in others, he decides to pursue *theosis*—holiness, divinity in Christ. Sometimes we see a hero living in the tension of hungering for many things. An encounter with God's energies causes the hero to reconsider his view of the world, if only for a moment.

In comedies, audiences can laugh at and ridicule heroes whose faith in this evil age is either excessive or defective, who never question the objects of their misplaced faith. In tragedies, audiences can pity heroes who find themselves in fearful situations of betrayal by that to which they have given their faith. In melodramas and tragicomedies, heroes may be rescued by God's providential grace. The heroes may either seek God or rationalize away their unusual encounter, and thereby continue to misplace their faith.

The Christian plot defies the classical definitions of comedy and tragedy by transcending each, with heroes made free from both fear of death and public opinion. Repentance leading to redemption is the arc of the action in the Christian story. We see a person seeking a life in Christ, even while remaining in, but not of, this evil age. We see the blessings God grants, even while his people continue to live in the fallen world. We can see a person yield to the rule of God. We may see a person seek the righteousness of the kingdom. We can see the indwelling Holy Spirit impart new

life. As Jacques Maritain notes, “The definition of Christian art is to be found in its subject and its spirit ... It is the art of humanity redeemed.”¹² Redemption necessitates the discovery of the truth in Christ: “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.” Truth is Jesus Christ.

The human mind and heart may encounter the truth. Our universal ability to understand certain dramatic plots, stories, characters, and thoughts suggests the universality of the concepts the words and images represent. Just as our senses detect real shapes and colors, so our minds and hearts detect real harmonies and unities in plays and films. After the initial shock of the new wears off, beneath the play’s or film’s cultural and individual differences, we begin to find universal concepts which make appreciation and translation possible. Beneath different cultural customs and morés lie common human values and aesthetic desires. The similarities among Sanskrit drama, Noh theater, Shakespeare, and Broadway musicals are massive, far greater than their differences. The differences are usually differences in emphasis, not wholly new aesthetic systems. Aesthetic disagreements in the history of the film and drama are just about matters of degree. A completely new aesthetic cannot be imagined any more than a completely new color.

Our minds can create the rules of soccer and chess and can change them. The rules aren’t there until we make them. But our minds and

hearts discover other universal rules given by God. Such rules affect the dramatic theater. We can't change the God -imprinted rules. They are natural to our humanity. The universal existence of nonconformists and rebels proves the presence of a natural aesthetic that transcends particular societies. We may be free to create plotless stories, without humanly recognizable characters. But we are not free from our innate instinct to assume, in what we are witnessing, a story involving beings with human traits. The events of a play or film may be chosen by random selection but we will project causality onto what we see. We may seek to create a meaningless play or film, but we cannot stop our desire to find meaning; even meaninglessness is a meaning. We are made to seek meaning.

This book investigates the nature and art of the dramatic theater—movies and plays—through a Christian lens:

- What is the relationship between things in life and things on the stage and screen?
- What is the *material cause* of the dramatic theater?
- What are the natural materials used to make dramatic theater?
- How does it compare to God's *material cause* in creation?

- What is the *formal cause* of the dramatic theater?
- What blueprint does the dramatic theater follow; what is the architectonic element of the dramatic theater?
- What is its relationship to the shape God gave creation?
- What is the function of storytelling? For God? For humans? For theater artists?
- What are human traits? Where do they come from? How do they compare to the behaviors of characters in the dramatic theater?
- What is the relationship between the words of a script or screenplay and the Word?
- What is the relationship of the dramatic theater to ideas like art and beauty?
- What is beauty in the dramatic theater?
- What makes a play or film beautiful?
- What is goodness in the dramatic theater?
- What makes a play or film good?
- What makes a good work of dramatic theater?
- What is truthfulness in the dramatic theater?
- What makes a truthful play or film?

- What is the *efficient cause* of the dramatic theater?
- What power causes a work of dramatic theater to come into being?
- What is its relationship to the power which causes creation?
- What is the *final cause* of the dramatic theater?
- What is the purpose of the dramatic theater?
- How does it relate to God's purpose in creation?
- What does it mean to be a Christian working in the theater and film?
- What is it like to be a Christian theater artist?
- What ought it to be like to be a Christian theater artist?
- What purpose does God have for a Christian theater artist?