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*Pamela Bay,*  
A Screenplay  
and  
Developing a Methodology for Theological Connoisseurship  
of Feature Film

A PROJECT/DISSERTATION

Presented to

THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY COMMITTEE  
at St. Stephen's College  
Edmonton, Alberta

in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of

Doctor of Ministry

by

Jane Elizabeth Ann Smith-Eivemark  
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## **Dedication**

**I am indebted to Dr. James Schmeiser, who guided me through the earliest trekking of spiritual wilderness and academia. Thank you for your knowledge, wisdom, patience, and trust. I offer this project/thesis with gratitude and love for your generosity.**

## **Abstract**

**My dissertation asks the question “Of what relevance is feature film to the life of the church”? My project/dissertation describes the value of feature film as a bridge-builder between the sacred and the secular. I describe how the arts in general and feature film specifically are under-used vehicles for theological reflection. While considering the work of Margaret Miles, Lloyd Baugh, John May, and Michael Bird, I develop my own method of theological reflection for feature film. In developing my methodology, I incorporate the educational work of Elliot Eisner and the theological structure of W. Paul Jones.**

**As my project, I have written my first full-length feature film script, *Pamela Bay*, which is a reflection of my experience of the choking effect of patriarchy in the life of the church. My project/dissertation is my attempt to be a bridge-builder between the worlds of feature film and theology. I test my methodology on *Pamela Bay* and in an educational setting with two quite different groups of learners. I demonstrate that good theological reflection reflects a quality of life which simply is while simultaneously inviting us to a full, and sometimes complex participation in life.**

**In our complexity, the paradox of truth is found when we cross the bridge between what is and the depths of reflection we can bring to our experience. This is the gift of connoisseurship; a gift we can bring to film as well as a gift film can offer to us.**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am very thankful for the many people who have encouraged me to seriously begin developing as a creative writer.

I want to thank my beautiful daughters, Sarah, Kate, and Alex for their sustaining love. Their youthful enthusiasm not only nurtures me, but like the “Velveteen Rabbit”, makes me more real. I want also to thank my husband, Phil, without whom I could not have faced many truths about love.

I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to my Doctoral Committee members, Dr. Ray Douziech, Dr. Chris Levan, Mr. Bill Meilen, and Ms. Cherylyn Stacey, who have given so very generously of their time and talent. I would like also to express gratitude to my students whose enthusiasm for *Pamela Bay* and feature film has made for wonderful memories and learning.

I am very grateful for the guidance and encouragement I have been given by Dr. Ric Laplante whose serendipitous suggestion, in my last phase of research for this project/thesis, gave me the key to connoisseurship.

I am also very thankful for the labour of love that Ms. Nancy Mackenzie has offered me as the final editor of my work.

Finally, for those who helped me to move beyond many shadows of death: the men in Dorchester Penitentiary, Ms. Margaret Clark, Dr. William Close, Fr. James Gray O.S.B., Dr. JoAnn Hammond-Meiers, and Dr. David Wong, I am very deeply appreciative of the life you have mirrored to me.

My hope is that *Pamela Bay*, as my mirrored experience of many missed opportunities for growth, and my method of theological reflection, will help to engage not only connoisseurship of feature film, but a connoisseurship of the great diversity of the many gifts of the body of Christ.

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## **Introduction**

**The artist is called to be a bridge-builder between the liturgical expressions of the past that form the very best of tradition and the prayer needs of the present. The artist also has to be the bridge-builder between the realities of our secular society and the sacredness of our worship. Only people of deep prayer and faith, it seems to me can fulfil this challenging role.**

**Archbishop Rembert Weakland, O.S.B.**

**This thesis is about feature film as a bridge-builder between the secular and the sacred “liturgical expressions of the past and the prayer needs of the present”. It builds bridges to the world of theology by developing a methodology to assist one in becoming a theological connoisseur of feature film. This project/dissertation comes in two distinct, but complimentary forms:**

- 1) a full-length screenplay for a feature film; and**
- 2) a theological reflection method for studying feature film.**

**The primary objectives of my project/dissertation are:**

- 1) to help the reader become more aware while watching feature film, to engage feature film as an art form, and to reflect theologically on this whole process;**

- 2) to help a person become a theological connoisseur of feature film;
- 3) to see my feature film screenplay, *Pamela Bay*, as a composite of characters who are confronted with some contemporary problems of church life such as the influence of patriarchy within a Roman Catholic seminary.

To achieve these primary objectives I have developed this project/dissertation in the following manner:

- 1) Chapter one looks at the need for an appreciation of the arts within theological education;
- 2) Chapter two considers the prominence of feature film as one of the most important literary genres of our time, and demonstrates how the art form of feature film is an influential medium for theological reflection;
- 3) Chapter three introduces my theological reflection method for feature film;
- 4) Chapter four develops my theological reflection method alongside other methods of viewing feature film;
- 5) Chapter five applies my theological reflection method to *Pamela Bay*; and
- 6) Chapter six discusses my experience with the method when used both with theological students and with students with little or no formal theological training;

## 7) Conclusion.

To contextualize this work I want to begin by telling something of my experience in the Doctor of Ministry Program at St. Stephen's College. The reality is I began writing this thesis and screenplay a number of years ago. As a result of my religious awakening as a young woman, I began learning the greatness of the Gospel. I wanted to respond to my calling as a Christian by bringing this greatness to contemporary stories. While participating in the program over the last four years I have been able to finesse what I have been wanting to say for a number of years.

How have I discerned the contemporary needs of the faithful? In Madelaine L'Engle's book, Walking on Water, Reflections on Faith and Art<sup>1</sup> she speaks eloquently of the artist as she/he attends to her/his faith. Her writing has been a guiding light for my journey as I have sought to integrate my dual roles of artist and minister. L'Engle's belief is that the work of art needs to be served and the artist is the work's servant.<sup>2</sup> If the work comes to the artist and says, "Here I am, serve me", then the job of the artist is to serve. The work is not to be measured by the size or the greatness of the work. Quoting Jean Rhys, in an interview in the Paris Review, L'Engle says:

The amount of the artist's talent is not what it is about. Listen to me. All of writing is a huge lake. There are great rivers that feed the lake, like Tolstoy and Dostoevsky. And there are mere trickles, like Jean Rhys. All that matters is feeding the lake. I don't matter. The lake matters. You must keep feeding the

---

<sup>1</sup> Madeleine L'Engle, Walking on Water, Reflections on Faith and Art, (New York: Bantam Books), 1980.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 24.

lake. ... To feed the lake is to serve, to be a servant. ... The great artists, the rivers and tributaries, collaborate with the work, but for most of us, it is our greatest privilege to be its servant. ... When the artist is truly the servant of the work, the work is better than the artist. ... When the work takes over, then the artist is enabled to get out of the way, not to interfere. When the work takes over, then the artist listens. ...<sup>3</sup>

As an artist I have discovered the privilege of serving to be very difficult. The truth frequently revealed itself through suffering and pain. The suffering allowed a new quality of being which was humility (the humility to ask for what I needed everyday and the humility to recognize my place in the scheme of things). I was awakened to many darkened recesses of my being as I brought something new into being. It was something meaningful for me, certainly, and hopefully will be for the wider community of believers.

I believe the artist, the poet, and the musician dare to bring forth new forms, new kinds of vitality, and meaning in their suffering and work. In bringing forth new forms, I see tradition challenged by the phenomenon of the artist's passion. Rollo May writes of the phenomenon of passion searching out form:

This passion for form is a way of trying to find and constitute meaning in life. And this is what genuine creativity is. Imagination, broadly defined, seems to me to be a principle in human life underlying even reason, for the rational functions, according to our

---

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 24.



definitions, can lead to understanding – can participate in the constituting of reality – only as they are creative. Creativity is thus involved in our every experience as we try to make meaning in our self-world relationship.<sup>4</sup>

I became more deeply committed to my gift of imagination as I struggled with draft after draft of both my story and thesis. Part of my deepening commitment was shaped by a dream. In the dream Jesus waited on me in a lovely restaurant. He served me the finest salmon, bread, and wine. In a brief moment he told me to write stories while I dispensed the Spirit. He made it clear to me what I need to do.

L'Engle expresses the relationship between faith and creativity in the following way: "The creative process has a lot to do with faith, and nothing to do with virtue, which may explain why so many artists are far from virtuous; are, indeed, great sinners."<sup>5</sup> I have seen more of my own sinfulness as I have tried to embrace the darker characters that have emerged in *Pamela Bay*. The very letters that compose the name *Pamela Bay*, if reworked, read: "A Beam Play". I find these words highly significant because they suggest a dual meaning relative to the creation of *Pamela Bay*. The first meaning suggests that I need to remove the beam from my own eye. The second meaning suggests that *Pamela Bay* is a play of light. *Pamela Bay* has shed much light in my life as my faith has been challenged to deepen. L'Engle states of the role of faith for the artist:

The depth and strength of the belief is reflected in the

---

<sup>4</sup> Rollo May, *The Courage To Create*. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1975), p.134.

<sup>5</sup> L'Engle., p.148.

work; if the artist does not believe, then no one else will; no amount of technique will make the responder see truth in something the artist knows to be phony ... [L'Engle says of herself:] My faith in a loving Creator of the galaxies, so loving that the very hairs of my head are counted, is stronger in my work than in my life, and often it is the work that pulls me back from the precipice of faithlessness.<sup>6</sup>

Picasso stated that he painted not to ask a question, but because he had found something that he wanted to share.<sup>7</sup> In faith, I have found what it is I needed to share. In *Pamela Bay* I wanted to share some of the pain of my experience of being a professional lay woman in the Roman Catholic church. While I have known satisfaction in my developing skills, I have been unable to apply them in a way that is truly satisfying. I have yet to find a place in the church where I feel 'at home'. L'Engle talks about the journey homewards as a motif for many artists. She separates what the journey homeward looks like for the secular and the Christian artist. In fact, *it is only in this regard that she sees them as different*.<sup>8</sup> It is not faith that separates who is Christian and who is not. It is the purpose of the work that separates the Christian artist from other artists. The Christian is doing his or her work for the purpose of the advancement of the realm of God.

While I yearn to go home, I have found that I am more content with my restlessness in my earthbound journey as I allow my passion to try to find new

---

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 149.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, P. 196.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 162.

forms of creation. To not appreciate the mystery and the opportunities that are placed before me is to miss life. I do not want to miss life, rather I want to be a connoisseur of life's deepest currents.

Writing creatively has been an experience like nothing else for me. The characters' diversity in *Pamela Bay* are representative of both the pain and the ensuing fragmentation that I have felt. The characters also are representative of the dynamism that is forming within me as I am forming a new gestalt both in this work and in my person. *Pamela Bay* offers an opportunity to embrace a mirrored reflection of my experience.

The following dissertation offers the opportunity for a budding theological connoisseur of feature film to use a theological reflection method to mirror what he/she sees in the images that unfold before him/her.

The first step will be to consider *Pamela Bay* as a script for a full-length feature film. The dissertation which follows *Pamela Bay* begins by discussing the role of the arts within theological education.

# *Pamela Bay*

original screenplay by

**Jane Smith-Eivemark**

FADE IN:

EXT. AERIAL VIEW OF ST. THOMAS AQUINAS SEMINARY GROUNDS - DAY

Montage of Stained Glass Windows, the Chapel, Classrooms,  
The ground is barren. The trees are barren also.

VIVALDI'S "WINTER" is heard SOFTLY; it is BECOMING  
LOUDER.

EXT. SEMINARY FROM STREET - DAY

ESTABLISH an old, large seminary.

CAMERA FOLLOWS a solitary man running in a track suit  
toward the entrance way of the building.

EXT. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS SEMINARY FRONT STEPS - DAY

The runner halts at the foot of the steps in CU.

FR. GREG is a bland-looking middle-aged man who is the  
Rector of the seminary. He is a short man dressed in a  
track suit walking up the steps.

CU: On FR. GREG'S FACE as he enters the seminary.

VIVALDI IS BECOMING SOFTER.

INT. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS SEMINARY FOYER - DAY

The GRANDFATHER CLOCK in the foyer is seen in the  
distance as FR. GREG opens the front door.

An OLD KINDLY PRIEST, FR. SAM, walks in front of the  
clock as the TIME IS NOTED at EIGHT A.M..

FR. GREG, a little out of breath, stops to speak  
with FR. SAM.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FR. GREG

Good Morning, SAM. Good to see you back.

FR. SAM

It's good to be back. Rome is O.K., but I ate too much pasta. Give me mashed any day.

FR. GREG

Was it worth going?

FR. SAM

The church is so different here, GREG.

FR. GREG

Thank God it isn't all on our shoulders, eh SAM?

FR. SAM

It's arrogance that they don't try to really appreciate that we could handle more. They think we're ignorant and uneducated.

FR. GREG

Being responsible for the world is a hard task. The Pope can have his job.

FR. SAM

It would be a darn sight better if he was prepared to give a few more inches.

FR. GREG

Well that won't be in our life time.

FR. SAM and FR. GREG walk away from each other in opposite directions. FR. SAM stops to look at a sign in the GLASS CASE in front of the chapel. "WHAT DO YOU SAY THE SECOND COMING IS?"

EXT. BAY-FAULKNER HOME - DAY

A simple home in a suburban area has a serene sense about it as seen from the street. CHILDREN of various ages are in front of the home on their way to school.

DR. PAMELA BAY, an idealistic woman in her mid thirties, a theologian at St. Thomas Aquinas Seminary, appears to be under some stress as she leaves for work is getting in her car.

EXT. PAMELA'S CAR - DAY

PAMELA pops a k.d.Lang track in the player - "CONSTANT CRAVING." The MUSIC IS QUITE LOUD. PAMELA looks intense as she backs out of the driveway. She sees a tricycle through her rear view mirror, stops the car and gets out. PAMELA moves the tricycle onto the lawn, gets back in the car and drives along the street where we see STUDENTS walking, riding bicycles, and tossing a football to and fro. She drives to the ST. THOMAS AQUINAS SEMINARY parking lot.

INSERT:

SIGN indicating ST.THOMAS AQUINAS SEMINARY PERMIT PARKING ONLY. THE MUSIC FADES.

ANOTHER ANGLE:

There are a few cars in the parking lot.

There are PEOPLE walking through the parking lot. PAMELA walks in the side door of the seminary.

INT. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS SEMINARY CORRIDOR - DAY

PEOPLE are moving about in the corridor as PAMELA stops in front of an ABSTRACT PRINT on the wall to speak with one of her students, PAUL KYLER. A tall, wiry man in his early twenties, looking feeble but determined, is opening his day book.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAUL  
DR. BAY, have you got a minute?

PAMELA  
Yes, sure I do.

PAUL  
I want to know what's happening with  
me. Will you see me later today?

PAMELA  
Yes, you and I meet at 2:00.

PAUL is about to walk away, but sees FR. GREG walking  
briskly toward them.

PAUL  
Here's Fr. Greg, now.

WIDE ANGLE:

FR. GREG (dressed in his clerics) stops to speak with  
PAMELA and PAUL, PAUL back to PAMELA.

PAMELA  
Good Morning, FR. GREG.

FR. GREG  
Don't worry, PAUL. We'll have it  
all sorted out very soon.

PAUL  
That's great, FR. GREG. I'm glad  
you came along.

PAUL walks away with a contented look on his face.

PAM  
What will we have sorted out? If  
the assessment says what I think it  
does then Mike says he's out.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

FR. GREG

He's doing well academically. He's seeing you for some support. He'll be fine.

PAMELA

(looking bewildered)

GREG, Paul is a very disturbed young man.

FR. GREG

Ron Smith has written to the Bishop to complain about you. And now you want to toss Paul Kyler out too.

PAMELA

No, I don't want to toss Paul but you need to know how serious his situation is. Let me speak to Ron about his complaint today, and let's hope Mike's assessment of Paul is completed so we can decide.

FR. GREG

Why speak with Ron?

PAMELA

I'd like to give Ron a chance to air some of his difficulties.

FR. GREG

Are you sure, PAMELA? By writing to the Bishop he's shown you where his authority lies. Maybe I should handle it?

PAMELA

He needs to know I hear what he says.

FR. GREG

PAMELA, our faith is simple. So are these two fellows. Don't complicate things.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAMELA

GREG, we have a responsibility to prepare people for Ministry. I can't go against my own best judgment.

FR. GREG

It's not judgment that I'm calling for. I'm calling for some compassion

PAMELA

Ron needs to learn how to handle conflicts like an adult. Not by running to the Bishop. What is he going to do in a parish?

FR. GREG

You can talk to him, but...

PAMELA

Ron isn't where my trouble lies, GREG. I want to see Paul get the help he needs. I'm not sure you see that is what I am trying to do.

FR. GREG

You're helping Paul, aren't you?

PAMELA

He is seeing me, but he needs more than I'm capable of offering.

FR. GREG

When the assessment arrives I'll look it over and then we'll talk about Paul's future. O.K. ?

PAMELA

Thank you.

FR. GREG walks away and PAMELA stops for a moment in front of a crucifix.

CU:

PAMELA looks directly at the crucifix.

The corridor is quiet. There are many photos of priests that come into view as PAMELA walks along the corridor. TWO OLD PRIESTS, pass her walking in the opposite direction. PAMELA walks into the chapel, past a Holy water font.

INT. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS SEMINARY CHAPEL - DAY

Pamela genuflects and kneels to pray. We look through her eyes as she closes them.

FLASHBACK:

INT. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS COLLEGE - DAY

PAMELA is in her early twenties. She is walking along a corridor in ST. THOMAS AQUINAS COLLEGE with SR. RITA, who is in her late forties. SR. RITA is a firm but kind woman dressed in her habit.

PAMELA

I want to study theology. I've got to find my own life.

SR. RITA is unlocking the door to her office. SR. RITA has a small white board on her door for notes.

INSERT:

A note reads: SR. RITA, CALL ME IMMEDIATELY! PAMELA. The office is in the basement of ST. THOMAS AQUINAS COLLEGE.

INT. SR. RITA'S OFFICE, ST. THOMAS AQUINAS COLLEGE - DAY

It is decorated with PIECES of ART from Africa and South America - statues, tapestries, and posters of Romero and Nelson Mandala. PAMELA and SR. RITA sit down.

SR. RITA

I see it's urgent, PAM.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAMELA

It's my life. I don't know my call for sure but I know I want to know more.

SR. RITA

I don't want to discourage you from studying theology, but it'll be a tough road if you're not in an order.

PAMELA

You've been my mother since Mom and Dad died and lots of nuns in the community have helped me over the years, but I can't see myself in an order.

SR. RITA

There are many ways to serve God, PAMELA. It's a matter of using your own gifts.

PAMELA

I know. I have a great hunger for this knowledge. I'll know intuitively what to do when I get it.

SR. RITA

Yes you will, PAM. I know you will.

DISSOLVE:

INT. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS SEMINARY CHAPEL - DAY

CU:

PAMELA'S EYES are CLOSED, determined in a shaft of sunlight.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANOTHER ANGLE:

PAMELA moves from her kneeling position and sits in a pew. The sunlight is beautiful through the stained glass image of Jesus with the woman at the well. The sunlight touches PAMELA'S face. She smiles.

INT. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS SEMINARY CLASSROOM - DAY

The chairs are assembled around a table for class. PAMELA sits down on a chair beside a small round table. STUDENTS begin to sit down also. RON SMITH, a small serious seminarian sits next to her.

RON

Today we're going to look at  
GENOVESI's "IN PURSUIT OF LOVE."  
I thought it was excellent.

JOE SMALLEY, a man in his early forties is sitting directly across from RON. JOE is balding and has a pot belly.

JOE

I feel discouraged already. That  
guy was so hard to read.

RON

Hard to read would be a good place  
to start. Do you think so, DR. BAY?

PAMELA

It's your call, RON.

RON nods for JOE to go ahead.

JOE

Well, O.K. It's not what he says so  
much as the way he says it. I want

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOE (CONT'D.)  
to be a priest and talk to real  
people. I really struggle with the  
theological terminology.

RON  
It's tough isn't, JOE?

JOE  
Well, as a plumber, it's tough to  
understand writing like this. I'd  
like to take a wrench to it  
personally.

DISSOLVE:

JOANNE PORRETTA, an impeccably-dressed middle-aged woman  
of medium height, carries herself with dignity as she  
walks from her seat to pull the curtain because of the  
sunlight.

RON  
We're here to help each other. So  
let's work with an example.

JOANNE sits down in her chair.

JOANNE  
I've got one.

JOE  
Great. Go ahead.

JOANNE  
How many times do you see Fr. Greg  
running in a week? And in this book  
celibacy's not even mentioned. Our  
ordained leaders are required to  
remain celibate. IMPOSSIBLE  
SITUATION. Celibacy is a gift of  
God. You can't institute God's  
gifts.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RON

Our faith is built upon tradition. Celibacy is part of the tradition. I never expected celibacy to be covered in this book.

JOANNE

GROW UP, RON. A Catholic book about sexuality and celibacy is left out. The tradition says to me that celibate priests are above us.

RON

I don't think so. It just says we're different.

PAMELA

I'm afraid we have to end the debate today. Thank you everyone. RON, have you got a couple of minutes?

CLASS MEMBERS are filing out.

JOE and JOANNE are seen talking with each other.

RON is gathering his things.

PAN: PAMELA and RON.

RON

Yes, sure.

PAMELA

I understand that you've written to the Bishop concerning me.

RON

Don't worry. It's not just about you.

PAMELA

But if you have a problem with me, RON, surely you should talk to me about it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RON

My complaint is about something larger than just you. How can I become a priest? Can you teach me that? No. You're a woman, you're not a priest.

PAMELA

RON, I can help you to learn things you need to know. A theologian can help a priest.

RON

I'm saying you'd have greater credibility if you were a priest because that's what I'm going to be. If you were a nun it would help, at least you'd be celibate.

PAMELA

Does a person have to be a reformed alcoholic to help an alcoholic?

RON

That's not the same. People don't come to church for theology. They come to be healed and comforted and encouraged by a priest.

PAMELA

Yes they do. But, do they ever need challenge?

RON

(hesitantly)

I just mean that caring for people is what a priest does. Teaching and preaching. Not this constant theological badgering. Look, DR.BAY, I've got to go, I'm late.

CU: PAMELA

PAMELA nods as RON leaves the classroom quickly.



INT. PAMELA'S OFFICE - DAY

PAMELA's office is decorated tastefully with prints by Picasso and Monet. There are pieces of children's artwork and lovely photos of Pamela's husband and child on her desk. The bookcase is filled with theological texts, along with many novels. The TELEPHONE RINGS. The door opens as PAMELA, at her desk, speaks into the phone.

PAMELA  
O.K., thanks Betty.

PAMELA hangs up the telephone as PAUL enters her office.

PAUL sits across from PAMELA in front of her desk.

PAUL  
I don't know where I left off.

PAMELA  
Give yourself some time.

PAUL  
Well last time I was talking about life at home, wasn't I?

PAMELA nods her head.

PAUL  
When I was a kid it was awful. My Dad...He was a rotten son-of-a-bitch.

ANGLE ON PAUL:

PAUL winds his arm as if to pitch a ball.

CAMERA TO CU ON PAUL.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAUL

It was a good enough home, except  
for him...

FLASHBACK:

EXT. YOUNGER KYLER HOME - DAY

JOHN KYLER, a well-built man in his late thirties,  
dressed in his suit, in blinding sunlight, loosens his tie  
and catches the baseball that is thrown by PAUL. PAUL,  
thirteen, stands with his catcher's mitt in front of his  
stomach. DAVID KYLER, who is seventeen is standing with a  
mitt.

JOHN

That's it, DAVID, good pitch.

DAVID

DAD, that was Paul.

JOHN

No way. I saw it spin! Couldn't  
see you because of the sun, but it  
was your spin.

CU:

PAUL looks discouraged.

MARY KYLER, a depressed looking woman in her mid-  
thirties, calls out the back door to JOHN, DAVID, and  
PAUL.

MARY

Supper you guys. Come and get it.

PAUL

I'm coming, MOM.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHN

We need about ten more minutes. Get back out here, PAUL, now! Supper comes after we finish the game.

PAUL

O.K., DAD.

INT. KYLER KITCHEN - DAY

The KYLER FAMILY is seated around the kitchen table.

JOHN

Way to go, DAVID. When you can play ball, you can do anything. Remember that. Give me those potatoes, PAUL, before you turn into a spud yourself.

PAUL

Yes, SIR.

JOHN

What the hell's wrong with you, PAUL? You need to take aim. What happens when you take a piss?

PAUL

I take aim, SIR, and it goes in the toilet.

JOHN

You do the same damn thing with the ball and the bat. Understand?

PAUL

Yes, SIR.

JOHN

Do we have any more meat in this house, WOMAN?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARY  
Yes, DEAR.

JOHN  
Then get it. I'm hungry.

DAVID  
I've got to go out tonight for a  
little while. Can I be home at  
eleven?

JOHN  
Sure, SON.

DAVID  
May I be excused please?

JOHN  
Yes. Have a good time, DAVID.

DAVID leaves the kitchen. MARY proceeds to clean up the  
kitchen with Paul's help as John grabs the newspaper.

INT. PAUL and DAVID'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The bedroom is dark. The LIGHT comes on. There are many  
HEAVY METAL BAND POSTERS on the wall as well as POSTERS  
OF LANDSCAPES and PICTURES OF YOUNG FILM STARS.

PAUL is in bed. DAVID staggers into the room.

DAVID  
I'm feeling good. I'm feeling so  
good.

PAUL  
What do you want, DAVID?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAVID

Don't let the old man talk to you like that. Don't let him treat you like a freaking faggot.

PAUL

What are you talking about, DAVID?

DAVID

I'm beginning to think you are a wus. Look at this crap all over your wall.

DAVID is pointing at a POSTER over PAUL'S bed.

PAUL

I'm not a wus, so take a hike.

DAVID plays at strangling PAUL then moves away to his closet and begins undressing. PAUL sits up and throws a book at DAVID. It misses him. PAUL pounds his bed with his fists and kicks his legs.

DAVID

You take aim, Piss-head.

PAUL

You support the old man?  
Look at you. You're the wus.

DAVID begins to laugh hysterically.

BREATHLESS, DAVID has the giggles.

DAVID

What am I laughing at?

PAUL

You just do what he tells you to do.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAVID

I'm the best athlete and the best student, I'll have you know.

DAVID takes a bottle from his pocket and takes a drink.

PAUL

So? I don't like the things the old man likes.

DAVID

Make yourself like them. It'll make life easier.

PAUL

I like my life more than you like yours.

DAVID

Throwing tantrums all the time doesn't exactly say you're happy.

PAUL

I'm not sold to the devil like you, STUPID.

CU: PAUL

INT. PAMELA'S OFFICE - DAY

CU: PAUL

PAUL

I didn't know what to do. I was thirteen.

PAMELA

Life's been very difficult for you, PAUL.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAUL (sad)  
Yeah, but no more difficult than a  
lot of other people.

PAMELA  
There's a lot of pain in what you've  
told me.

PAUL  
Nothing like the pain in the people  
at the Seed, especially the hookers.  
They're in the worst position I  
think. No pun intended.

PAMELA  
Of course. PAUL...It's time...

PAUL  
Yeah, I know. I've got to go. Too bad  
you couldn't really hear a little  
more.

PAMELA  
It's important to hear what the  
assessment has to say, PAUL.

PAUL leaves PAMELA'S OFFICE.

CU: PAMELA has a troubled look on her face.

FR. GREG KNOCKS on her open door.

He enters, closes the door.

FR. GREG  
Did you speak with Ron?

PAMELA  
Yes I did.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FR. GREG  
Any change?

PAMELA  
Not for now.

FR. GREG  
PAMELA, don't make matters harder  
for yourself.

PAMELA  
I'm trying to get him to see  
something new.

FR. GREG  
He doesn't want to see anything new.  
Let sleeping dogs lie.

PAMELA  
I do my best for my students, GREG.  
For their benefit. Ron and Paul both  
have real problems that need to be  
addressed.

FR. GREG  
If seminarians complain about you,  
and then the Bishop says you have to  
go, whose problems will you help  
solve then?

PAMELA  
I can't be less than I am, GREG.

FR. GREG  
Nobody's saying be less than you  
are. Your problem is that you  
haven't lived long enough.

There is a KNOCK on the door.

PAMELA rises to answer it. She opens the door while  
FR. GREG looks on as GERRY HOFFMANN enters.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

GERRY is in his late-forties. He is rather rough-looking and walks with a slight limp; he is wearing a denim jacket with a pack of cigarettes in his right chest pocket.

PAMELA

GERRY, what a surprise to see you.  
Come on in. Do you remember  
FR. GREG?

GERRY

How you doing, FATHER?

FR. GREG

I've been doing very well, GERRY,  
thanks. And you?

GERRY

Good, but we're missing Pam still.

FR. GREG

Are you still painting?

GERRY

No, I'm working with the guys  
mainly. Now and again, one of the  
seminarians comes down and works  
with me.

FR. GREG

Ah, Paul, right?

GERRY

Actually, Joe Smalley, a real good  
guy most of the time. Paul, just  
sometimes.

FR. GREG

Great to hear it. Good to see you,  
GERRY. Have a great Christmas.

FR. GREG leaves Pamela's office. GERRY sits down on a  
small couch near Pamela's bookcase.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GERRY

I should have called, PAM. Sorry.

PAMELA

Don't worry. I've got time.

GERRY

I want to talk about Paul. PAUSE. I don't know if the Seed is the right place for him. Pete didn't know how to handle this one. It needs your attention I think.

PAMELA

What's up?

GERRY

Pete was told that Paul scared a woman on purpose when he was doing his Bible study.

PAMELA

What happened?

GERRY

Paul put a knife to a woman's face I think. It was just a table knife but...

PAMELA walks over to her book case where GERRY is now standing.

INSERT:

There is a banner that says MUSTARD SEED STREET MINISTRY behind them. GERRY and PAMELA are in a photo that is sitting on the book case. There is a CERTIFICATE of APPRECIATION for PAMELA BAY stating HEARTFELT THANKS FOR YOUR FAITH HELPING US TO GROW ON THE STREET on her wall.

PAMELA

That's unacceptable. Why didn't Pete toss him?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GERRY

Because Pete didn't know what to do.

PAMELA

Thanks, GERRY. I'll come over and talk to Pete right away.

GERRY

You know it would be good to have you come back.

PAMELA

Thanks a lot, GERRY. I miss all of you too.

INT. OUTER OFFICE - DAY

GERRY and PAMELA embrace.

PAMELA stops to speak with her secretary, BETTY. BETTY is a pleasant middle-aged woman who stops typing when PAMELA begins to speak.

PAMELA

BETTY, I'm going home for lunch today and then I'm headed to the Seed. I'll be back around 3:30 or 4:00.

INT. BAY-FAULKNER BACK DOOR ENTRANCE - DAY

SALLY BAY-FAULKNER, Pamela's four year old daughter is tugging at her skirt. SALLY is somewhat precocious, but sweet. Pamela turns to pick up SALLY.

PAMELA

Hello, ANGEL. I hope you and NINA have been enjoying yourselves today.

SALLY begins crying. PAMELA strokes her hair to comfort distress and carries SALLY into the KITCHEN.

INT. BAY-FAULKNER KITCHEN - DAY

NINA, Sally's nanny, a young Australian woman with a happy countenance, is preparing lunch.

SALLY  
MOMMY, NINA was mean to me today.

PAMELA  
What happened?

SALLY  
Nina didn't let me watch two movies.

PAMELA  
That's not mean, SWEETHEART, that's smart.

SALLY gets down on the floor and stomps off.

NINA calls after her.

NINA  
You know what, SALLY. We need to pick up a parcel this afternoon. Then you can watch "THE RESCUERS."

The TELEPHONE RINGS. NINA answers it as NINA places a neatly cut sandwich in front of PAMELA.

NINA  
Mark's on the line, PAMELA.

PAMELA  
Hi. PAUSE. No I can't Mark. It's my late night. PAUSE. Yeah, about nine. Love you, 'Bye.'

PAMELA hangs up the telephone and picks up her sandwich and takes a bite.

SALLY  
Promise you'll kiss me good night. O.K., MOMMY.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAMELA  
Pinky swear.

PAMELA entwines her baby finger from her right hand with SALLY's baby finger on her right hand as PAMELA eats her hurried lunch.

SALLY  
Pinky swear too. I love you,  
MOMMY.

PAMELA  
I love you too, PUMPKIN. NINA, Mark  
is supposed to be home for supper  
but please call his office around  
four to check.

NINA  
Will do, PAMELA.

PAMELA gives SALLY a long hug and then they walk hand in hand to the garage.

PAMELA is drinking her tea as she walks to her car.

INT. GARAGE - DAY

PAMELA gets in the car. She pops her head out the window to send SALLY a "fly-kiss."

SALLY is standing alone in the semi-darkness of the garage as PAMELA waits for the street to clear before she backs out of the driveway.

PAMELA gets out of the car.

SALLY and PAMELA embrace.

PAMELA gets in the car.

SALLY waves happily when PAMELA goes.

EXT. MEDICAL CLINIC - DAY

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Establishing Shot of stencilled door saying: DR. MARK FAULKNER AND DR. DEBORAH HAWTHORN, FAMILY MEDICINE.

DEB HAWTHORN, is Pamela's husband's partner in practice. DEB is in her mid fifties, very kind and gentle. She is talking with MARK FAULKNER.

MARK is bright and has a gentle manner, in his early forties. They are looking at a document.

DEB

She showed a few cancerous cells two years ago, but today she's fine.

MARK

I just don't get it. We're both healthy. Things are good. But then maybe the stress of her work.

DEB

Yes, absolutely, stress could be it.

MARK

I'll talk to Pam.

MARK is walking out the door.

DEB

You know what my Dad used to say? We people in ministry, we don't listen to ourselves. We listen to other people so we can tell them what to do.

MARK

I'll keep that in mind when I talk to Pam.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEB

I don't want to be preachy,  
but Pam may have to make a decision  
if you really want another child.

MARK

You're right. I'll see what happens  
tonight.

EXT. MUSTARD SEED CHURCH - DAY

PAMELA parks her car in front of the MUSTARD SEED CHURCH.

CELINE DION'S "THE POWER OF LOVE" is heard for a few  
seconds as she sits staring at the building.

THE MUSTARD SEED is a CHURCH that has been converted for  
inner-city ministry.

PAMELA gets out of the car and locks it.

As PAMELA walks toward the front door, she meets a FEW  
PEOPLE who are standing around smoking.

A FEW MEN greet PAMELA as she enters the building.

A WOMAN struggling with a baby carriage is helped by  
PAMELA.

INT. OPEN AREA, MUSTARD SEED CHURCH - DAY

PAMELA walks into the open area which is FULL of PEOPLE  
who are going through clothing items assembled on tables.

PAMELA greets a FEW PEOPLE as she walks through the room  
toward the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN, MUSTARD SEED CHURCH - DAY

GROUP OF PEOPLE are in the kitchen cleaning up after lunch.

IRENE, a big, friendly, elderly Scottish woman moves toward PAMELA. They embrace and smile.

IRENE

How are you, DEAR? It's good to see you; you're such a stranger these days.

PAMELA

I'm doing better now that I see you, IRENE.

IRENE

What can I get for you, PAM?

PAMELA

How about a cup of coffee?

IRENE

You sit down right here and I'll get you some pie and coffee.

IRENE serves PAMELA a piece of pie and a cup of coffee.

PAMELA

I always feel better when I see you.

IRENE

It's my pie. It hits the spot.

PAMELA

How are your grandchildren, IRENE?

IRENE

My daughter has stopped me from seeing them. I whacked one of them on the bottom last time I was over there and my daughter is frightened I'll lose my temper as I did when she was a child.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

PAMELA

That hurts, doesn't it?

IRENE

It sure does. I was drunk and angry then. Today I can handle myself. One whack on the bum is nae beating a child.

PAMELA

No it's not. Do you want me to talk to her?

IRENE

She's pretty stubborn.

PAMELA

I wonder where she gets that?

PAMELA and IRENE begin to laugh.

PAMELA walks over to meet PETE.

DISSOLVE:

INT. PETE'S OFFICE, MUSTARD SEED CHURCH - DAY

PETE is a middle-aged man; the fact that he has to do things is written all over his face. He is carrying his day-timer as he greets PAMELA.

PETE and PAMELA sit down.

PETE's OFFICE has posters of people everywhere plus a poster of the laughing JESUS. His office is meticulously tidy relative to the chaotic sense of the open area and the kitchen.

PETE

Good to see you, PAMELA. So Gerry told you? I really didn't want to bother you with this but what Paul did was weird.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAMELA

Something needs to be done about Paul. Nobody can behave like that here, PETE.

PETE

Well I felt because he was a seminarian, you know, it was just a really bad day or something.

PAMELA

Bad day or not, he can't do what he did.

PETE

What's going to happen?

PAMELA

I'll talk to him and he won't come back to the Seed.

PETE

I feel bad about that. He does do some really good things, especially for our ladies of the night. His 'Mary Magdalenes.'

PAMELA

I haven't heard this before.

PETE

He reads to them sometimes when he comes down in the morning. He "tucks" them in for a good "day's" sleep so to speak.

PAMELA

How long has Paul been doing that?

PETE

A few weeks.

PAMELA

How did it start, do you know?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETE

As part of his work with the women, he finds that they really like to be read to. You know he does the Bible study too, but they really like it when he reads.

PAMELA

It's the first I've heard of it.

PETE

It's a little strange, but it works. On another topic if I can. I want to know if you're coming over at Christmas?

PAMELA

We'll be here. What about you, PETE? I hear you've got a special friend now.

PETE

You must've been gossiping with Irene.

PAMELA

Who me?

PAMELA and PETE share a laugh in front of the LAUGHING JESUS POSTER.

PAMELA embraces PETE.

Some PEOPLE are walking by.

PAMELA leaves Pete's office, in CU.

DISSOLVE:

INT. OPEN AREA - DAY

PAMELA is seen speaking to people as she walks through the open area on her way out. CHRISTMAS CAROLS are HEARD THROUGH A CRACKLY SPEAKER as PAMELA walks through

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

speaking with people. We do not hear anything of their conversation but we see the POVERTY of the PEOPLE in the building.

PAMELA stops to admire a BABY as a MOTHER is struggling with her YOUNG BROOD as she looks at a pile of clothing.

PAMELA

What a lovely little boy.

MOTHER

Do you want him? You can have him.

PAMELA

He's a handful, eh?

MOTHER

(grabbing two childrens' shoulders)  
Worse than these two by far.

PAMELA

Can I hold him for you while you go through the tables?

MOTHER

No, we have to go.

CU on PAMELA looking quite despondent as she walks away.

CUT-AWAY:

The various activities in the MUSTARD SEED, as the CAMERA moves around the building, are shown:

IRENE is cooking in the KITCHEN.

PEOPLE are sitting DRINKING COFFEE.

EXT. MUSTARD SEED CHURCH - DAY

As PAMELA walks out the front door, she meets some of the SAME PEOPLE who were standing around smoking when she entered the building.

PAMELA is still looking somewhat despondent but her countenance changes as she meets PEOPLE. There is a little snow falling.

EXT. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS SEMINARY PARKING LOT - DAY

FR. GREG jogs from his car into the seminary, dressed in his clerics.

INT. FR. GREG'S OFFICE - DAY

The TELEPHONE is RINGING in his office.

FR. GREG enters, grabs the phone, only to HEAR it GO DEAD.

FR. GREG hangs up the telephone. He is taking his coat off as he hears a KNOCK at his OPEN DOOR. He turns to see RON SMITH standing there.

RON

FR. GREG, do you have a few minutes?

FR. GREG

Sure. Let's go get a coffee.

INT. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS SEMINARY DINING ROOM - DAY

There are a NUMBER of STUDENTS sitting in the dining room. SOME STUDENTS with their books open convey a sense of study. FR. GREG and RON sit down.

FR. GREG

What's on your mind, RON?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RON

I want to talk to you about the  
complaint I made against Dr. Bay.

FR. GREG

I know you're struggling.

RON

I don't know who's struggling with  
who. I'm confused. She tried to  
talk to me today.

A couple of STUDENTS walk by and acknowledge FR. GREG,  
one with a smile. He smiles back.

FR. GREG

Pamela Bay is a woman of conviction.  
She'll stay with her point.

RON

Yes, you're right on that. I just  
wonder...

FR. GREG

Wonder what?

RON

It's just really hard for me to see  
women here. I came to seminary  
expecting something different.

FR. GREG

Well the best thing you can do is  
pray to accept things as they are.  
Do you know the Serenity Prayer?

RON

Yes.

FR. GREG

When you're troubled just pray it.  
It'll help you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RON

I'm glad you are here, FR. GREG. It means a lot to us. To know you care the way you do.

FR. GREG

I'm happy to be here for you. The church is my life.

RON

Well...just the same, we think you're really swell. Remember that time we were all singing in your class? I liked that spirit of camaraderie.

DISSOLVE:

CU: RON in DINING ROOM

FLASHBACK: INT. CLASSROOM, ST. THOMAS AQUINAS SEMINARY - DAY

CU: RON

The classroom is quite plain. There are simple portable chairs, but instead of being in rows, they are in a circle in part of the room. There are EIGHTEEN PEOPLE in the classroom.

FR. GREG enters. There are a couple of plants in one corner of the class.

FR. GREG

Good Morning. I believe it is over to you today, RON.

RON STANDS

RON

Thank you, FR. GREG. This morning I want to talk about the divine in music. As all of you know, I'm a

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RON (CONT'D)

singer. So today, I would like to  
lead us in a little session.  
Alleluh, Alleluh, Alleluh,  
Alleluiah, Praise Ye the Lord.  
Alleluh, Alleluh,  
Alleluh, Alleluiah, Praise ye the Lord.  
Praise ye the Lord. Alleluiah.  
Praise ye the Lord. Alleluiah.  
Praise ye the Lord. Alleluiah,  
Praise ye the Lord!

RON'S CLASSMATES show varying degrees of enthusiasm  
in singing along with him while some indifference is  
shown.

RON

You'll get it quickly. O.K.  
This half of the circle is first  
(using his arm to point out  
the boundary)  
and you are second.

The CLASS begins to SING ALLELUIAH in a round and they  
sing with RON conducting.

RON is enjoying himself immensely.

RON looks at FR. GREG and he smiles back as he is  
singing.

CU: RON HAPPY.

INT. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS SEMINARY DINING ROOM - DAY

RON

I felt so good about leading the  
class with you. I feel humiliated in  
class with her.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

FR. GREG

I suggest you hang on to that  
good memory, and let it help you  
when you're struggling. You've got  
many gifts, RON.

RON

I really appreciate your time,  
FR. GREG. I won't let you down.

RON leaves the dining room.

FR. GREG stares into space.

DISSOLVE THROUGH STAINED GLASS:

FLASHBACK:

INT. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS SEMINARY CHAPEL - DAY

INSERT:

There is a BANNER hanging in the chapel that has WELCOME  
BACK TO ST. TOM'S printed on it.

It is a beautiful bright autumn day. The chapel is  
magnificently warm with sunlight. FR. GREG and PAMELA are  
doing simple jobs such as putting music books out and  
putting flowers in place.

PAMELA

What are you hoping for this year,  
GREG?

FR. GREG

A better game of golf.

PAMELA

Sounds uplifting, GREG.

FR. GREG

Nicely handled, PAMELA.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAMELA  
No, seriously.

Stopping the prep work that he's doing, FR. GREG stands still and looks at PAMELA.

FR. GREG  
Work that never ends, that's my life. I like to read the books that I do. I like to teach.

PAMELA  
Where's God in all of this for you, GREG?

FR. GREG  
Probably when I putt. I have to concentrate. I have to listen.

PAMELA  
What about priesthood?

FR. GREG  
It was my parents' idea more than anything else, but it suits me.

PAMELA  
What suits you best?

FR. GREG  
Truth?

PAMELA  
Please.

FR. GREG  
This does I suppose. But I really don't see it as clearly as the years go by. It's distracting.

PAMELA  
What were you looking for?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FR. GREG

I don't know. Most men are boys looking for another mother - church, wife, whatever. We need to be consoled - and I guess what makes me a priest is my need to console.

PAMELA

We're in different worlds, GREG.

FR. GREG

Maybe not so different. Think about what I've said and look at your own choices.

PAMELA

O.K. I'll do that.

FR. GREG

Accept the way things are, PAMELA. Looking for ways to bring the Kingdom here may be too ambitious.

PAMELA

I thought it was here, GREG; or bits of it, any way.

FR. GREG

True. But maybe it's not so very different than what we know.

PAMELA

Then again, maybe it's radically different.

DISSOLVE:

INT. FR. GREG'S OFFICE - DAY

FR. GREG is putting on his "green" when he hears a KNOCK on the door.

FR. GREG motions PAMELA to sit in a comfortable chair.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They sit down. There is a beautiful wall of books behind FR. GREG. The bookcase has a number of photos on it.

INSERT:

There is a lovely photo of PAMELA and FR. GREG taken at the "welcome back" celebration.

WIDE ANGLE:

PAMELA

We need to talk about Paul Kyler.

FR. GREG

What else can I say, PAMELA? He's pulling his weight.

PAMELA

GREG, it's his field work. He has held a knife to someone's face.

FR. GREG

What happened?

PAMELA

He held the knife to a woman's face to illustrate a point. 'No harm intended' is his argument.

FR. GREG

So you want him to go immediately?

PAMELA

I want the psychologist to review his material immediately. This knife incident is one of two things pointing to his inappropriate behaviour. The other is his attitude.

FR. GREG

I want the Bishop to review your notes, and if you and I can't agree, then we'll leave it to his authority, shall we?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAMELA

What about the psychologist?

FR. GREG

The Bishop must have the last word.

PAMELA

Of course that is fine with me -  
provided he reads the psychologist's  
recommendation into his decision.

FR. GREG

The Bishop will do what he will do,  
PAMELA.

PAMELA stands up to go. FR. GREG stands up to pull a book  
from the shelf. Opening the book,

CU: FR. GREG:

PAMELA

I will be speaking to Paul this  
afternoon. The knife is serious  
enough, but what is happening to him  
that he should do such a thing?

FR. GREG

It's serious, but don't make it  
bigger than it is. He was  
demonstrating a point, didn't you  
say? Being dramatic perhaps?

PAMELA

I'll let you know what he says about  
the incident after I meet with him.

INT. PAMELA'S OFFICE - DAY

PAUL KNOCKS on Pamela's door.

PAMELA

Come on in.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAUL

Hi, PAMELA. Something's really been bothering me. I'm glad you called me in.

PAMELA and PAUL sit down near her bookshelves.

PAMELA

What has been bothering you, PAUL?

PAUL

I started thinking about my brother again, and how my mother was so useless and my father is such an SOB.

PAMELA

What do you mean?

PAUL

I mean she said nothing to stop my old man. What kind of a mother is that?

PAMELA

Why does your Mom have to stop your Dad?

PAUL

Because mothers are supposed to protect their children. That's why. What kind of a question is that anyway?

PAMELA

Is there anything that has triggered these memories?

PAUL

Well what do you think? Talking with you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAMELA

Yes, of course. But I was wondering if there was anything in particular that was bothering you?

PAUL

Oh I get it. I suppose that woman told you that I put a knife to her.

PAMELA

I'd like to hear what happened from you.

PAUL

I just did it to make a point. Like this.

PAUL walks over to PAMELA and puts a pen to her throat.

PAUL

I happened to have a bread knife in my hand at the time.

PAMELA

You scared her, PAUL.

PAUL

What the hell would scare her? She's a hooker.

PAMELA

She trusted you. She felt vulnerable. A knife is threatening.

PAUL

I'm seeing the psychologist next week. I'm sure he'll get my point.

PAMELA

PAUL, I can't let you go back to the Seed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAUL

Why? I'm doing good things there. You can't stop me. That wouldn't be right.

PAMELA

It is right until some of the wounds in your own life get healed. You need to get a bit of distance.

PAUL

See I trusted you enough to tell you things, and you used it against me.

PAMELA

I'm trying to help you, PAUL.

PAUL

Well you're not. You're pulling me out of work I'm good at, and wondering if I should even be a priest. What gives you the right?

PAMELA

PAUL...

PAUL grabs PAMELA'S hand and holds it for a few seconds.

PAUL

It's human, right, to want to be touched? I do that for the hookers. I read to them like they are little girls. They love me. Why do you want to take away the goodness that I provide?

PAMELA

I want you to know more about yourself. Minister from your own pain, but let your own wounds heal.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

PAUL

O.K. Let's do that. When the worst thing you can imagine happened, I was a young kid.

PAMELA

The best thing you can do is talk to the psychologist, PAUL. He's trained to hear your pain.

PAUL

Just let me tell you something, will you?

PAMELA

All right.

CU: PAUL

DISSOLVE:

PAUL (V.O.)

Well my brother...

FLASHBACK:

INT. KYLER LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

JOHN and MARY are talking with TWO POLICE OFFICERS. The OFFICERS are weathered-looking middle-aged white men.

PAUL at thirteen is peeking around the corner.

JOHN

He left here last night to go out with some friends. It's what he usually did.

OFFICER 1

Was it his usual habit to drink or use other drugs?

JOHN

No. Not at all.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OFFICER 2

Was he happy the last few days?

JOHN

Of course he was. He was always happy. He was the best student in his school.

OFFICER 1

What about his home life?

JOHN

He has had everything that we could possibly afford to give him.

OFFICER 1

I understand David shared a room with his younger brother. Could I speak with him please?

JOHN

He won't know anything, but I'll tell him to come out to talk to you.

OFFICER 1

Perhaps he heard his brother say something that could be helpful.

JOHN

MARY, tell Paul to get in here.

PAUL enters.

JOHN

PAUL, the police want to know if you know anything about David. I told them what they need to know but you listen to what they have to say.

OFFICER 1

PAUL, did you see David after he left the house last night?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAUL  
Yes, SIR.

JOHN  
When did you see David?

PAUL  
He came in my room about ten  
o'clock, SIR.

JOHN  
He didn't come in the house after  
he left.

OFFICER 1  
Let's just hear the boy out,  
MR. KYLER.

PAUL  
I was sleeping. David came in to  
talk to me for a few minutes.

OFFICER 1  
What did you talk about, PAUL?

PAUL  
Just things about life. He was  
telling me some tips about playing  
ball.

OFFICER 2  
Did you talk about anything else?

PAUL  
Yes sir, a little. He told me I  
needed to pay more attention to  
everything. He thought I was  
slacking.

OFFICER 2  
Did you think he was sad?

PAUL  
No, SIR.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DISSOLVE:

INT. PAMELA'S OFFICE - DAY

PAMELA

So you knew a lot more about your brother, David, than you told.

PAUL

Yes I did. I knew that he was unhappy, and he was playing games with the old man but I didn't want to squeal.

PAMELA

You were under a lot of pressure.

PAUL

David was under a lot of pressure to succeed. I feel terrible about it.

PAMELA

You loved David very much.

PAUL

Yes I did.

PAMELA

And that makes it even harder.

PAUL

I have felt a great deal of responsibility for David because if I'd played the game a bit more, perhaps he wouldn't have felt so much heat.

PAMELA

How would things have been different?

PAUL

He wouldn't be dead.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAMELA

How can you know that?

PAUL

I just know it.

PAMELA

What about your parents?

PAUL

Mom never says much. Useless. My Dad is the same old SOB. Fr. Greg has known my family for a long time. He comes around every so often. They thought he'd be good for me.

PAMELA

It's good to have a comforting friend.

PAUL

It sure is. Fr. Greg has been great. That's it. I've got to go.

PAUL is getting up to leave.

PAMELA

Yes. As I said earlier, PAUL, I don't want you to go to the Seed. You can come back to see me tomorrow and we'll speak about what will happen in the meantime.

PAUL leaves PAMELA'S OFFICE.

PAMELA leaves her office and goes to FR. GREG'S OFFICE.

INT. CORRIDOR - DAY

PAUL walks along the corridor one way and PAMELA heads in the opposite direction to FR. GREG'S OFFICE.

FR. GREG'S OFFICE - DAY

FR. GREG is at his desk as PAMELA enters.

PAMELA

Is there a reason you chose not to tell me that you were involved with the Kyler family for a number of years?

FR. GREG

Yes. You would even be more intent on tossing Paul if I told you.

PAMELA

Not necessarily. I simply would like to know. I know what I need to know!

FR. GREG

You're overreacting to Paul. He's young. He's immature. You're doing him a lot of good.

PAMELA

That's not the point. He scares people, and is doing inappropriate things in his field placement.

FR. GREG

I remind you, PAMELA, this is my seminary, and I will pull rank if I need to.

PAMELA

GREG, I want to help Paul but he needs more than I can give. He's dangerous in his placement. What more do you need?

FR. GREG

Stop seeing him. Leave him to me.

PAMELA

Great. You deal with him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FR. GREG  
Done. That was simple enough.

PAMELA leaves and FR. GREG picks up the TELEPHONE.

FR. GREG  
(into phone)  
That's right. No need for Kyler's  
assessment.

INT. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS SEMINARY CHAPEL - NIGHT

The lighting in the chapel is very soft. The chapel has  
a SMALL NUMBER of MEN who are gathered for Vespers.

RON SMITH is present. PAMELA walks in. She kneels in the  
chapel.

INT. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS SEMINARY CORRIDOR - NIGHT

RON walks along the corridor in the seminary. Some of  
the paintings and portraits along the wall are very old  
and some are modern. There is a cold feeling here.

INT. RON'S ROOM, SEMINARY - NIGHT

RON is staring at the ceiling. He jumps up and pulls  
open a drawer. He pulls an O'Henry bar out and goes back  
to lie on his bed.

RON presses a remote control and begins listening to  
DAVID BOWIE and BING CROSBY'S DUET of OH HOLY NIGHT. Ron  
slips into a memory as he closes his eyes.

FANTASY FLASHBACK:

INT. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS SEMINARY CLASSROOM - DAY

PAMELA is sitting in the centre of the circle. The  
class is assembled.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAMELA

How do you think a person knows when they hear the voice of God?

RON

I believe that the answer calls a person to fuller life if the answer comes from God - more life for others as well as for the person who is praying.

JOE

It's a matter of choosing the higher good. It's an individual judgment call often, but I need my community as a frame of reference.

PAMELA

What happens when you need to go against the community?

INT. RON'S ROOM, SEMINARY - NIGHT

RON opens his eyes. He hears a KNOCK at the DOOR.

RON

Who is it?

INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE RON'S ROOM - NIGHT

JOE

It's Joe. Do you want to talk?

RON lets JOE in, opens the fridge door and indicates a coke.

JOE

No, I want a real drink; let's go someplace.



EXT. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS SEMINARY PARKING LOT - NIGHT

JOE and RON get into Joe's NEW CHEV PICK UP TRUCK. They are driving.

JOE  
So tell me, RON, what's going on in that brain of yours? More discernment?

RON  
Actually, yes. I was just remembering what you had to say about making decisions.

JOE  
Well let's make a decision for the best wings in town, O.K.?

RON  
Phil's right?

EXT. PHIL'S BAR & GRILL - NIGHT

JOE and RON get out of the truck and walk across the parking lot into the bar.

INT. PHIL'S BAR & GRILL - NIGHT

JOE and RON sit in a booth away from others.

RON  
So what exactly are you doing downtown?

JOE  
I'm working with the guys.  
Paul Kyler comes sometimes too.

RON  
So you're doing the right thing.  
Looking after the poor.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOE

That's why we're going to be  
priests, isn't it?

RON

I don't know, JOE. But who isn't  
poor in some way?

JOE

You're right. But not tonight. I'm  
buying and we're drinking "Gold."

INT. KITCHEN BAY-FAULKNER HOME - NIGHT

MARK is taking his coat off in the kitchen as he reaches  
for a glass of juice in the fridge.

MARK

Sorry I couldn't get home for  
supper. How's she been, NINA?

SALLY (V.O.)

Mommy!

NINA

Restless. There she is again.  
She'll be glad to see you.

SALLY (V.O.)

Mommy!

NINA

I'm headed for bed.

MARK

Good night, NINA.

SALLY (V.O.)

Mommy!

INT. SALLY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

SALLY is sitting up in bed crying.

INSERT:

There is a beautiful PHOTO of Pamela and Sally on her night table beside her bed.

Behind SALLY is a poster of puppies with a crucifix beside it. MARK walks in at a brisk pace.

SALLY

Where's Mommy? I want Mommy!

MARK

She can't come now, SALLY.  
I'm here, you'll be all right.

SALLY

The monster came, DADDY. He took Mommy away.

MARK

You're safe. I'm with you. The monster's gone and he won't come back.

SALLY

He's still here.

MARK

No he's not. They don't come back when they know you're with somebody. I'm here now sweetie.

SALLY

DADDY, I don't want to go to sleep.

MARK

You don't need to go to sleep right now. Let's just read for a while.  
O.K.?

SALLY

O.K.

MARK begins to READ THE VELVETEEN RABBIT to SALLY.

MARK

There was once a velveteen rabbit.  
And in the beginning he was really  
splendid...

MARK turns out the light when SALLY is nearing sleep.  
Sally is falling asleep. He kisses her and as he is  
leaving the bedroom.

PAMELA enters. MARK greets PAMELA with a kiss. PAMELA  
hugs SALLY.

PAMELA

Hi, ANGEL.

SALLY

MOMMY, the monster was here.

PAMELA

He's gone now. He's gone.

PAMELA hugs SALLY again. PAMELA turns out the light.

INT. BAY-FAULKNER LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

MARK puts on a VAN MORRISON tape. The track is "HAVE I  
TOLD YOU LATELY THAT I LOVE YOU?"

PAMELA walks in.

MARK and PAMELA sit down in the living room.

MARK

Deb called me in to look at your  
chart a couple of days ago.

PAMELA

How did I look?

MARK

Not as tired as you do now.

PAMELA

That bad?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARK

That bad. Well, not really. You need to be rested in order to be fruitful and multiply.

PAMELA

MARK, what are you trying to tell me?

MARK

I'm trying to tell you that I love you and there is no reason, from my vantage point, for you to be under the stress you are.

PAMELA

I want to teach. I want to use my talents to be there for people.

MARK

Can you do that without being ignored by the status quo?

MARK kisses PAMELA as she begins to cry a little.

PAMELA

I would hope so. I don't know when that will be though.

MARK

Let's go to bed.

PAMELA and MARK walk out of the living room in each other's arms.

EXT. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS SEMINARY - NIGHT

A sense of beauty and serenity is striking as the seminary comes into view.

INT. PAUL'S ROOM - NIGHT

A beautifully decorated room that is quiet but a sense of chaos is developing with BROODING MUSIC.

PAUL is listening to some LOUD HEAVY METAL MUSIC through his EAR PHONES. He is stirring around the room. He dances. He sits down in a chair and rocks himself back and forth. He looks in the mirror. He looks at a photo of his brother, David. He looks at a family photo. He throws it and smashes it.

EXT. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS SEMINARY - NIGHT

Pulling away from the seminary. The seminary diminishes in size but the HEAVY METAL MUSIC INCREASES in VOLUME.

EXT. TUNNEL - NIGHT

From the chaos of Paul's room to the serenity of the seminary to the night chaos in the inner city. HOOKERS are out on the street.

EXT. DOWNTOWN TRAFFIC - NIGHT

It is a very dark night. The traffic is steady.

INT. PAUL'S ROOM - NIGHT

PAUL throws a book on OLD TESTAMENT AND SACRIFICE across the room. It hits the wall. The force is hard and hits a mask that is hanging on the wall. It falls and breaks. Paul picks it up and throws it out the window. Then, he picks up a case from the floor and leaves his room quickly.

INT. FR. GREG'S SUITE - NIGHT

FR. GREG answers the door as he hears a bell ring. PAUL enters Fr. Greg's suite.

FR. GREG  
What's up, PAUL?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAUL

Life, FATHER, life itself.

FR. GREG

You're very philosophical tonight.  
I thought we were going to talk  
tomorrow afternoon.

PAUL

It's that woman. She's getting  
everything wrong about me.

FR. GREG

Let's sit down with Pamela tomorrow  
morning and straighten everything  
out, shall we? We've known each  
other a long time. You can trust  
me.

PAUL

Are you sure?

FR. GREG

Tomorrow. I promise. No delays.

PAUL

Thanks, FR. GREG; I knew I could  
count on you. I just want to tell  
you one thing before I go, O.K.?

FR. GREG

Go ahead, PAUL.

PAUL

Before we talk with Pamela tomorrow,  
I just want to tell you something.  
It's something my parents said. I  
was coming near the kitchen one  
night and heard them say things that  
really upset me.

FR. GREG is listening intently as PAUL speaks to him.

FLASHBACK:

INT. KYLER KITCHEN - DAY

JOHN

Why did it have to be David?

MARY

Paul is a good boy.

JOHN

He's no real son. For Christ's sake he's going to be a priest, and he couldn't even do that without Fr. Greg pulling strings.

MARY

Yes dear but...

JOHN

Will you stop trying to tell me what Paul is? I know what he is.

MARY

I didn't say anything. I wanted to say that he's a fine young man and he needs a chance. You need to let him know...

JOHN

WOMAN, I lost the only son that was ever going to amount to anything.

MARY

Oh come on now, JOHN. You can't really mean that.

JOHN

I mean every bloody word of it.



INT. FR. GREG'S SUITE - NIGHT

CU: PAUL

PAUL

That's my Dad. I have to do what I can to achieve something good.

FR. GREG

It is a good thing to find what is good, PAUL. Love will come later.

PAUL

You have taught me so much. You don't feel sorry for me, do you?

FR. GREG

You're fine, PAUL. Don't worry.

PAUL

I want to be a priest. A priest for my family. A priest for the community that hurts.

FR. GREG

Why don't you go down and rest now and then we'll all talk tomorrow.

PAUL

Thanks, FATHER GREG.

CU on FR. GREG as PAUL leaves FR. GREG's suite.

INT. BAY-FAULKNER KITCHEN - DAY

MARK is preparing an omelette. SALLY is sitting on the counter beside him.

They are listening to children's music - Carmen Campagne - they are SINGING UN ELEPHANT SUR MA BALCON along with the tape quite enthusiastically.

The DOORBELL RINGS.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

**SALLY**  
I want to get it, DADDY!

**MARK**  
Bonne ma cherie.

PAMELA enters the kitchen. She kisses MARK.

SALLY runs out of the kitchen.

INT. BAY-FAULKNER FOYER - DAY

SALLY runs through the living room and into the foyer to open the door.

SALLY throws her arms around SR. RITA. SR. RITA is in her early sixties at this time. She has a very stately countenance.

CU: SR. RITA

FLASHBACK: SR. RITA'S POV

EXT. CONVENT - DAY

PAMELA, as a child, is throwing her arms around a younger SR. RITA. SR. RITA sits down with an adolescent PAMELA to tell Pamela the news of her parents' death.

**SR. RITA**  
PAMELA, I am so sorry.

**PAMELA**  
If I was with my Mom and Dad then I wouldn't have to be here. I would have been dead with them.

**SR. RITA**  
I know you feel that way now, but you need to live your life, PAMELA.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAMELA  
No I don't!

CU: Older SR. RITA, as she greets SALLY.

INT. BAY-FAULKNER FOYER - DAY

SR. RITA and SALLY hold hands while walking to the kitchen. SR. RITA and PAMELA embrace.

INT. BAY-FAULKNER KITCHEN - DAY

MARK  
Hi, RITA! How are you?

SR. RITA  
Good, full of tales. I've spent a lot of time in our hospital today and it's only 11:30. Glad to be here.

MARK  
SALLY and I have done a little of this and a little of that. Pam's been shirking her work. Should we tell SR. RITA or should we let her guess?

SALLY  
Guess! Guess!

MARK  
No clues, right, SALLY?

SALLY  
SR. RITA, what do you think is in this cupboard?

SR. RITA  
I think there's something in that cupboard that is pretty special.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SALLY

Yes. Do you want me to tell you what it is?

MARK

I thought you wanted SR. RITA to guess what they are.

SALLY

I do. She wants me to give her one hint, DADDY.

SR. RITA

What about two hints, SALLY? Then maybe I'll be able to guess.

SALLY

They are dark and good to eat. Do you give up?

SR. RITA

I think you made a cake and a meatloaf.

SALLY

No, silly, we made these!

INSERT: TRAY OF CHOCOLATE COOKIES with a cloth over them.

SALLY whips away a cloth covering the tray.

SR. RITA

Uhm! They look great. I hope we can eat them after lunch.

SALLY

Yes we will, won't we, DADDY?

MARK

You bet, HONEY..

PAMELA walks between the kitchen and the dining room with some dishes and food.

INT. BAY-FAULKNER DINING ROOM - DAY

The table is set with a beautiful cloth. It has a lovely bouquet of flowers as its centre piece.

SR. RITA

I am thankful for the blessings of my family. I would like to pray for Sr. Veronica especially at this time.

SALLY

I'm thankful for Mommy and Daddy and Sr. Rita.

MARK, PAMELA, and SR. RITA exchange knowing glances.

MARK

Did you remember your snow pants, RITA?

SR. RITA

You bet.

SALLY

Wait till you see me on my slider.

SR. RITA

Is it big enough for me?

SALLY

Yep. You come on with me an we'll race Mommy and Daddy.

SR. RITA

Let's go for it!

DISSOLVE:

EXT. SNOWY HILL - DAY

From the bottom of the hill, SALLY, MARK, PAMELA, and SR. RITA are having a wonderful time racing down the hill. They go to the top of the hill. PAMELA smiles with SR. RITA.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAMELA

I think it's time for those cookies  
and a hot chocolate.

SR. RITA

Let's persuade that daughter of  
yours to stop for a minute.

PAMELA

I'll try. Hang on SALLY!

SALLY and PAMELA are going down the hill again.

MARK

(speaking to SR. RITA)  
Like mother, like daughter.

MARK and SR. RITA share a smile.

EXT. BISHOP MCCLAREN'S RESIDENCE - NIGHT

A grand-looking home. FR. GREG (wearing a clerical  
collar) steps out of his car. As he walks toward the  
house, there is an expression of uncertainty on his face.

The HOUSEKEEPER, looking out the window, moves away as  
FR. GREG comes closer to the house.

INT. BISHOP MCCLAREN'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The furnishings are beautiful antiques. The art on the  
walls is beautiful as well. FR. GREG is at the liquor  
cabinet. BISHOP MCCLAREN is in his late 60's, of moderate  
height, a little heavy, charming. He has been a handsome  
man in the past.

FR. GREG

Scotch for you, JOHN?

BISHOP MCCLAREN

Yes thanks, GREG.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Fr. GREG pours tall drinks into beautiful crystal glasses. He brings BISHOP MCCLAREN his drink and sits down near him.

FR. GREG

To your health, JOHN. Slante.

BISHOP MCCLAREN

And to yours, GREG. Slante va!  
Tell me about young Kyler. Is there anybody else beside Pam who sees him as off-balance?

FR. GREG

Not so far. But frankly I told Mike he could take his time with the psychological assessment.

BISHOP MCCLAREN

Well, we'll see what it reveals when Mike finishes it.

FR. GREG

I think Kyler is immature, a little rough around the edges but his heart is in the right place.

BISHOP MCCLAREN

Does he show any sign of imbalance in your opinion?

FR. GREG

No. I find him to be a very socially and spiritually concerned young man who genuinely cares for the poor. His field placement is good for him.

BISHOP MCCLAREN

So Pamela is over-reacting about this knife incident, you think?

FR. GREG

Putting it bluntly, yes. I don't think she really understands the world of a young man. How could she?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BISHOP MCCLAREN

Well, you'll get it settled. PAUSE.  
I want to ask about Joanne Porretta.  
How's she getting along?

FR. GREG

She seems to be enjoying her studies  
very much.

BISHOP MCCLAREN

I met Michael Porretta the other day  
and he was telling me that his wife  
is a thorn in his side with her  
Pamela Bay quotes.

FR. GREG

Joanne's been trying hard. I would  
say, however, for all concerned that  
Pamela has been more than we  
bargained for.

BISHOP MCCLAREN

All I want to know is that you will  
see the Porrettas and you'll get  
this Paul Kyler business settled  
within the week. Right, GREG.

FR. GREG

Done.

BISHOP MCCLAREN

Good.

The HOUSEKEEPER enters the living room.

HOUSEKEEPER

Dinner is served.

CU of BISHOP MCCLAREN and FR. GREG walking to dinner.  
Fr. GREG supports the Bishop as he walks along.



EXT. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS SEMINARY - DAY

EXT. PAMELA'S OFFICE, CORRIDOR - DAY

PAMELA and JOE sit down on some comfortable chairs.

PAMELA

I was just over at the Seed hearing  
all about your adventures.

JOE

Yeah, I've been helping them out  
with a little carpentry and some  
plumbing of course. You know  
washers were my business for a long  
time.

PAMELA

How do you like working with the  
guys?

JOE

I like them. They're mainly guys  
that didn't get a chance.

PAMELA

Do you ever work with Paul when  
you're there?

JOE

No. He works with the women mainly.  
I think they like him because he  
seems so young and innocent.

PAMELA

Not a middle-aged knowing soul  
like you, eh?

JOE

Two major differences there, PAMELA.

PAMELA and JOE share a smile.

EXT. PORRETTA HOME - NIGHT

A lovely suburban home with many trees. There is an  
ambiance of both old and new wealth with a Porsche in the  
driveway.

INT. PORRETTA KITCHEN - NIGHT

JOANNE is preparing supper as she speaks to MICHAEL, who  
is standing in the kitchen having a glass of wine.

JOANNE

Fr. Greg O'Brien came by to see me  
today.

MICHAEL

(sarcastically)

What did the good Irish father  
want? A donation for a theological  
scholarship I suppose?

JOANNE

No, MICHAEL, he came to see how I  
am feeling about my studies.

MICHAEL

You are so naive. He's here to  
blaze the trail to  
St. Thomas Aquinas glory and he  
needs money to do that.

JOANNE

I don't agree. He's clever  
enough to know you are not  
thrilled about my studies.

MICHAEL

Of course. That's my point. He  
wants to smooth my dislike of  
things over.

JOANNE

MICHAEL, he came to see me because  
he knows that I had some doubts  
before I said I'd go to St. Tom's.  
Pamela Bay made the difference.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MICHAEL

JOANNE, Greg O'Brien came here to solicit money for their fund-raising campaign. The Bishop knows I can't stand this feminist influence on your thinking.

JOANNE

Maybe I need something for myself, MICHAEL. I have found something that's real for me and you want to do is destroy it.

MICHAEL pours himself another glass of wine.

MICHAEL

This is a stupid conversation. Is supper ready?

JOANNE

Five minutes, MICHAEL.

MICHAEL

Just tell me one thing, O.K., JOANNE?

JOANNE

What is it?

MICHAEL

Is your study of theology to help you understand our little Mikey's death - or to find another rationale to pull away from me?

JOANNE

I want to know more about my faith. I'm trusting in a loving God to bring me forward, MICHAEL.

EXT. MUSTARD SEED CHURCH - NIGHT

PAUL enters the building. He stops to talk to THREE WOMEN by the door.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAUL  
Have you seen Gerry lately?

WOMAN ONE (Wary)  
He was in the games room  
about half an hour ago.

PAUL moves away.

THE WOMEN talk amongst themselves.

WOMAN TWO  
Isn't that the guy that put the  
blade to Yvonne's throat?

ONE WOMAN goes off from the group.

PAUL goes to A MAN sitting alone having a coffee.

PAUL  
Have you seen Gerry?

MAN  
Nope.

PAUL begins to move very quickly as he goes through the building.

PETE sees PAUL and comes to greet him.

PETE  
Hi, PAUL. What's the rush?

PAUL  
I need to talk to Gerry. Where is  
he, do you know?

PETE  
Not for sure but come on in my  
office and I'll call for him on the  
intercom.

PAUL  
Thanks, PETE.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAUL sits down in Pete's office. PAUL looks very agitated.

PETE  
(into intercom)  
GERRY HOFFMANN, please go to Pete's office. GERRY HOFFMANN.

PETE goes to the coffee-maker.

PETE  
Here you go, PAUL. While we wait for Gerry.

PAUL nods his head.

PAUL  
Can you call again?

PETE  
Sure, PAUL.

PETE  
(into intercom)  
GERRY HOFFMANN.

A MAN enters Pete's office.

MAN  
You just missed him, PETE. He went home about five minutes ago.

PETE looks a little disgruntled.

PAUL  
PETE, Pamela Bay told me that I have to stop working here because of that little knife thing.

PETE  
You scared that woman, PAUL.

PAUL  
I didn't do anything to harm her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETE

I don't think you tried to hurt her - but she got scared. We need to get this cleared up and I'd like to help you.

PAUL

You can help by shutting up and getting Gerry on the phone now Tell him to come back here.

PETE

What if I don't get him tonight? Why don't we just sit and talk?

PAUL

It's Gerry I want to talk to. There's something he knows that can help me.

PETE

O.K., PAUL. I'll try his number.

PAUL

Just stay cool, PETE. Give me the number and I'll dial.

PETE shows him the card.

PAUL dials Gerry's number.

SPLIT SCREEN: PETE'S OFFICE and GERRY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

INTER CUT: PAUL and GERRY on phones.

PAUL

Gerry, I need to talk. Can you come over to the Seed?

GERRY

Yeah. O.K. Bud. See you soon.

EXT. STREET BESIDE MUSTARD SEED - NIGHT

GERRY steps out of his car. TWO HOOKERS call out to him.

HOOKER ONE  
Hi honey. Hey, GERRY.

HOOKER TWO  
Hey, GERRY.

GERRY  
How you doing girls? Why don't you come in? Lots of coffee still on.

HOOKER ONE  
Can't make a living sitting and drinking, can I?

The TWO HOOKERS laugh.

GERRY walks into the Seed.

GERRY walks into Pete's office.

GERRY  
PAUL, what can I do for you?

PAUL  
I want you to talk to Pamela Bay. She's cut me off from this place. You know the girls really like me. She's got no right.

GERRY  
What happened?

PAUL  
Pamela said I have to stay away from this place because I accidentally put a bread knife that was already in my hand near someone's throat.

GERRY  
Hey, can you back up a bit? Tell me the whole thing, O.K.?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CU: PAUL

PAUL (V.O)  
I came in to do a Bible study one  
day.

DISSOLVE:

PAUL and FIVE WOMEN are sitting at a table in a  
classroom at the Seed. They are sitting discussing a  
Bible verse.

PAUL puts a video in the VCR.

INSERT: "JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR" scene where  
Mary Magdalene is soothing Jesus in the cave with  
ointment.

PAUL  
He was good to women like you.

WOMAN ONE  
Yeah. Now he might be afraid of the  
publicity.

PAUL  
I'm not afraid.

WOMAN TWO  
You're young. I don't think you'd  
say that if you were a real priest.

PAUL  
Yes I would! I want to be like him.  
Seek justice, help the poor,  
befriend the downtrodden, even  
people like you.

WOMAN THREE  
Well thanks a lot. You should live a  
little before you know what. I've  
screwed a few priests in my  
profession. They needed me as much  
as I needed their cash.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

PAUL

Jesus needed Mary Magdalene. He needed the other Mary and Martha too. I think he knew what he was doing.

WOMAN FOUR

I came here because I want to learn something. Let's stay on topic.

PAUL

What kind of a God needs women like you?

WOMAN THREE

I don't know of any God who needs me. I've known a few priests who do like I said. So screw you too.

The WOMEN laugh. PAUL looks a little disgusted and angered; he walks over to WOMAN THREE. He has a dinner knife in his hand. He grabs her and puts the knife up against her throat.

PAUL

Don't you get what's going on? We're trying to say you're worthwhile enough to God. Are you? Are you?

WOMAN THREE pulls away. She leaves the room quickly.

WOMAN TWO

I think you scared her with that knife.

PAUL

I didn't mean to. I didn't even know it was in my hand. I just was trying to make my point. She's important to God.

CU: PAUL

INT. PETE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

CU: PAUL

PAUL

I just was trying to make a point.  
She took it entirely the wrong  
way...

GERRY

She got scared. The street is a  
violent place, PAUL. What we can do  
is get her and you and Pam together  
and try to straighten this out.

PAUL

Thanks, GERRY.

GERRY

Go back to St. Tom's. Get a good  
night's sleep and we'll get on to  
this as soon as we can meet Pamela.

PAUL gets up from his chair. He leaves.

PAUL

See you soon.

PETE and GERRY watch PAUL go.

PETE

GERRY, are you sure you did the  
right thing?

GERRY picks up the phone and dials.

SPLIT SCREEN: BAY-FAULKNER HOME and PETE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

INTER CUT: PAMELA and GERRY

PAMELA

Hi Gerry. What's up?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GERRY

I just met with Paul Kyler in  
Pete's office.

PAMELA

What happened?

GERRY

He told Pete and I how upset he was  
about your interpretation of the  
incident with the knife and I said  
you'd get a meeting together.

PAMELA

Thanks a lot Gerry. I'll talk to  
you soon.

PAMELA hangs up.

Go to single screen.

PAMELA walks around the room a little. She finds Mark  
working at his desk.

INT. MARK'S STUDY - NIGHT

PAMELA

MARK, there is something that I am  
anxious to settle. Can you give me a  
few minutes?

MARK

What's going on?

PAMELA

It's Kyler. I can't get Greg to see  
the importance of his situation. I  
think he's really coming unglued.

MARK

See the Bishop. Tell him what you  
think.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAMELA

I told Kyler he couldn't go to the Seed, and he went there tonight trying to appeal to Gerry and Pete!

MARK

That's insubordination. What's going on with this guy?

PAMELA

His contained rage is coming undone. I wonder how much longer before he pops.

MARK

But you're the one who's off balance?

PAMELA

Of course, you know that.

MARK

You're too smart for Greg O'Brien, but it's his seminary.

PAMELA

What do I do, MARK? I don't want this guy to hurt somebody.

MARK

What about the psychological test stuff? When will that be done?

PAMELA

I don't honestly think that O'Brien would go so far as to slow it down, but I'll call Mike tomorrow.

MARK

It could be dangerous, PAM. Be careful.

PAMELA

I will.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARK

Good. Now let's go find some security behind our door.

PAMELA

I'll be with you in about half an hour. I want to spend some quiet time so I can let go of some of this stuff.

MARK

I'll be waiting.

PAMELA throws MARK a kiss and she goes into a quiet room.

PAMELA lights a candle and stands before an alter as she lights more candles. She picks up a Bible and flips through some pages before she settles on something.

PAMELA sits and reads quietly.

DISSOLVE:

INT. PAMELA AND MARK'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

PAMELA is standing before MARK as he sits in bed.

MARK smiles as she gets into bed and the light goes out.

INT. PAMELA AND MARK'S BEDROOM - DAY

MARK and PAMELA look relaxed as they sit up in bed.

MARK

Are you sure you want to go to school today? Maybe you'd like to play hooky with me?

PAMELA

I need to go, MARK. I want to put closure on this somehow.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAMELA (CONT'D.)

Mike is an insightful fellow. If the tests are done, I'm sure they'll expose Paul for what he is.

MARK

Why don't you call Mike before you leave? I'd like to know that you're going to be O.K.

PAMELA

Good idea.

EXT. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS SEMINARY - DAY

Long shot from the road.

EXT. PAMELA'S OFFICE - DAY

GERRY sits waiting for PAMELA outside her office as PAMELA arrives.

PAMELA

Good morning, GERRY.

GERRY

PAMELA, I've got to talk to you before you meet with Kyler.

PAMELA

Come on in.

PAMELA and GERRY walk into Pamela's office. The door closes.

INT. PAMELA'S OFFICE - DAY

Pamela is taking her coat off.

GERRY

PAMELA, this could be more trouble than you think.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAMELA

What do you mean, GERRY?

GERRY

I was charged for federal time after I sold to a guy who committed suicide. You know that, right?

PAMELA

Back at Clinton Pen.

GERRY

Yeah. Because he was a minor they hit me a lot harder, "made an example" of me. He looked older.

PAMELA

What are you trying to tell me, GERRY?

GERRY

I never talked to you about it because, well, I thought that part of my life was over. It was Paul Kyler's brother, DAVID.

PAMELA

And Paul is aware of who you are. Oh my God!

GERRY

That's my hunch.

PAMELA

This really is dangerous.

GERRY

So he comes to St. Tom's because he wants to be a good boy or because he's got nothing else to do? I don't think so.

PAUL steps out from a closet behind Gerry.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAUL

Not quite. Your psycho babble is pretty damn accurate but you shouldn't have spent so much time on the street.

GERRY and PAMELA are shocked to see PAUL.

PAUL moves closer to them, walks around them, and weaves around the room.

PAUL pulls the cord on the phone out of the socket.

PAMELA

PAUL, what is it that you want?

PAUL

DR. BAY, in due time but you do what I want you to do now.

PAMELA

O.K., PAUL. We'll do things your way. But what do you want?

PAUL

I want you to shut your mouth until I tell you to talk. I don't want to have to say the same thing twice again. So shut up now!

GERRY

It's me you're looking for, PAUL. Let Pam go.

PAUL

How shall I make my point? Do you prefer this? I said SHUT UP.

PAUL draws a pistol and points it directly at Gerry's head.

GERRY

Hey man, what are you doing?

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

PAUL  
Just making sure I have your  
attention.

PAMELA  
You've got it, PAUL.

PAUL points his gun at PAMELA's head and then back to  
GERRY.

PAUL  
Do some talking Hoffmann! Tell me  
what you did to my brother.

GERRY  
What do you want to know?

PAUL  
Where did you meet David? How did  
it all go down?

CU: GERRY

GERRY  
Look. David came to me to buy his  
first hit of downers. I thought he  
was older.

FLASHBACK:

EXT. SNOOKER AND BOWLING PALACE - NIGHT

GERRY (late thirties) and DAVID (seventeen) are dressed  
in summer clothing.

DAVID  
What's happening, Man?

GERRY  
Everything you could possibly want  
man.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAVID

Hey Man, can you help me out?

GERRY

I can do it dude. You got the money,  
I got the time.

DAVID

Smooth sailing help. I've got a lot  
of thinking to do.

GERRY

All right. Do you want the slam-bam-  
whammy size or something a little  
more chic?

INT. PAMELA'S OFFICE - DAY

GERRY

He always wanted the slam-bam and he  
always paid top dollar. No screwing  
around with cash. Dave was a dream  
customer.

PAUL

He was only seventeen years old!

GERRY

Hey, calm down man. Back then, that  
was the way it was, eh? That was  
another time zone man.

PAUL begins swinging his gun back and forth as he  
speaks.

PAUL

I've looked for the perfect way to  
find justice for David. Pamela Bay  
led me to you. Paradox, right, PAM?  
May I call you, PAM? Faith/Sin,  
Flesh/Spirit. Justice/Crime. I have  
come to do justice to see justice is  
truly done.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAUL points his gun at PAMELA'S head.

Let she who opened The Gate be my witness. She is the Baptist. I am the Christ. This son-of-a-bitch murdered my brother!

PAMELA

WHOA. Slow down, PAUL. I found out this morning. Just as you heard it.

PAUL is becoming hysterical.

PAUL

Don't lie to me again. You helped this bastard get out of prison! You worked with him and helped him get into the Seed! You're in cahoots with him!

PAMELA

So you've known me for some time.

PAUL (sneering)

Yes. I went to Clinton to find Hoffmann. When I heard he was getting out, I decided to wait for the right time for us to meet.

PAMELA

What happened to David was terrible, PAUL. What happened in your family was terrible. But Gerry didn't kill your brother.

PAUL (yelling angrily)

What does that mean? My mother cries every single day. I live with crap everyday of my life. Tell me again he didn't kill David.

PAMELA

It's awful that David died. But he made some choices, PAUL.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAUL (angrily)

David didn't make any decisions. He was on auto pilot. The old man made the decisions. Fr. Greg's right about you - you women have no place here. You don't know crap from Adam.

PAUL thrusts his gun in PAMELA'S face.

PAMELA

David did have a choice, and so do you. Drop that gun and I will do all I can to find the help you need.

PAUL (smiling wickedly)

The two of you can be offered as sacrifice. That's the kind of help I need.

PAUL pulls the gun away from PAMELA and moves it between GERRY and PAMELA.

PAMELA makes a desperate attempt to get through to PAUL.

PAMELA

What about getting Fr. Greg's opinion on this?

PAUL points to the phone with his gun.

PAUL

Pick up the phone. Plug it in. Get Fr. Greg down here right now if that's what you want.

PAMELA PICKS UP the TELEPHONE, plugs it back in. She dials and speaks nervously into the phone.

PAMELA

Greg, please come down to my office now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SPLIT SCREEN: PAMELA'S OFFICE and FR. GREG'S SUITE - DAY

INTER CUT: PAMELA and FR. GREG

FR. GREG is working at his computer but has picked up the telephone. He listens. 'Yes?'

FR. GREG

Is it crucial that we meet at this moment, PAMELA? I've just begun my working day.

PAMELA

Paul Kyler is with me now.

FR. GREG (patronizing tone)

Paul Kyler isn't a crisis situation twenty-four hours a day, Pamela.

PAMELA

Greg, please come now. Paul is here now.

FR. GREG

All right. But I don't want to stay too long.

INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE FR. GREG'S SUITE - DAY

Fr. Greg looks at his watch. He reenters his suite.

INT. FR. GREG'S SUITE - DAY

FR. GREG finds a tape and pops it into his VCR. He presses the RECORD button. On the T.V. screen, there is a note to himself: RECORD GERALDO TODAY.

INT. PAMELA BAY'S OFFICE - DAY

PAUL is standing, gun in hand, behind the door, excited and sweating.

PAUL

O.K. This will be good. Fr. Greg will hear my story for himself.

INT. CORRIDOR NEAR PAMELA'S OFFICE - DAY

FR. GREG stops and listens to a student who is speaking to him. We cannot hear what is being said.

EXT. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS CHAPEL - DAY

Fr. Greg peeks in the door to the chapel for a few seconds. Mass is being celebrated. Fr. Sam is seen behind the altar as he consecrates the bread, light streaming around him.

INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE PAMELA'S OFFICE - DAY

FR. GREG KNOCKS on PAMELA'S DOOR.

"Come in!"

FR. GREG walks in. PAUL, GERRY, and PAMELA are seated around a table. FR. GREG joins them.

FR. GREG

Obviously we need to settle what's happening with you at the Seed, PAUL.

PAUL

Yes. And something else important too.

FR. GREG

It's your time, PAUL.

CU: PAUL points the gun at FR. GREG.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CU: GREG looks dumbfounded.

PAUL

Pamela is concerned that I might act violently, but I just want you to listen to me and see that I handle myself well.

FR. GREG

I will. We all will listen but get rid of the gun, PAUL. You don't need it with me.

PAUL

NO! I don't trust two of the three people in this room. I made it my business to find out about Pamela and Gerry before I came here.

FR. GREG

PAUL, please. The gun.

PAUL yells and points the gun at GERRY.

PAUL

He murdered David.

FR. GREG

I don't follow you, PAUL. Your brother David committed suicide. Was some of your 'business' buying drugs, PAUL, and using those drugs like your brother?

PAUL

What about it? The truth these drugs helped me see things clearly.

FR. GREG

What happened since you and I met earlier, PAUL?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAUL

I showed up early for my  
appointment. So here we are.  
Justice time for me and for David.

FR. GREG reaches out for Paul's gun. PAUL moves toward  
him.

PAUL

You don't understand either.

PAUL barrel-whips FR. GREG on the head, knocking him  
down and out.

GERRY

What do you want of me, PAUL?  
Killing me seems too easy.

PAUL

SHUT UP. I want justice for my  
family. You killed my family when  
you murdered David.

GERRY

Your brother was a kid from a rich  
family. And he used to buy. I had  
no reason to smack him - he was  
paying my bills; he was a good  
customer.

PAUL

But you murdered him, you dope-  
dealing bastard.

PAMELA

Think PAUL - GERRY was a dealer who  
was making money. He would have  
preferred David to be alive so he  
could have kept on making money.

PAUL thrusts his face close onto PAMELA's.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

PAUL

You stupid woman! You truly believe that? Because of Hoffmann supplying David, he was able to overdose.

PAMELA

What's stupid about believing a dealer wants to make money?

PAUL

Can't you see anything? It's stupid to believe he didn't murder David.

PAMELA

GERRY confessed to dealing but, PAUL, dealing is not murder.

PAUL

You'd say my parents murdered David then? They... no - my Dad was the one who pushed and pushed him. So it was him right?

PAMELA

Maybe too many people pushed him, PAUL?

PAUL

How does a guy like David seek help? He's supposed to be so 'on top' of everything.

PAMELA

That was probably the greatest problem in David's life - feeling that he had to be on top. Nobody gave him permission to be himself.

PAUL

The drug man did - Satan's little helper, MR. HOFFMANN did. That's what killed my brother.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GERRY

I sold to David; I didn't murder him. I am truly sorry about what happened to your family. What can I do to make it up to you?

PAUL

Yeah, right. My mother cries every night because she has lost her son. My old man, that bastard, tried to give me everything that was David's. He wanted me to wear my dead brother's shirt at Christmas.

GERRY

PAUL, I didn't do anything to hurt you on purpose. I did what I was into at the time - he lost and you lost. And I wouldn't do that today.

PAUL points his gun at GERRY.

PAUL

My family lost everything because of you. I've been thinking for many years how I can make things right for David and my family.

PAMELA

How can you make things right, PAUL? By killing me? By killing, GERRY? What after that?

PAUL

I have learned to love justice and to do it. It is time to do justice for David. I need a sacrifice. It is time the slate was cleaned for my family.

PAMELA

PAUL, for the love of David, seek justice but don't do this. Please let us help you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAUL forces PAMELA onto the floor at gunpoint and holds her down with his foot.

PAUL points a gun at GERRY.

GERRY tries to scuffle with PAUL.

PAUL shoots GERRY in the heart. GERRY falls to the floor.

PAUL shoots PAMELA.

PAUL sobs as he drags their bodies into the form of a cross. He kneels and raises his eyes.

PAUL  
It is done, David.

EXT. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS SEMINARY - DAY

It is raining softly, a dull day. The trees are barren. There are many people entering the seminary.

INT. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS SEMINARY CHAPEL - DAY

The chapel is filled with PEOPLE.

There are QUITE A FEW YOUNG MEN who are standing as they sing.

In the front pew MARK is seated with SALLY.

SR. RITA, is taking a paper to the lectern.

FR. GREG has a large bandage on his head. He leads the PROCESSION into the chapel to the altar. He bows and turns to the CONGREGATION, breaking down somewhat.

FR. GREG  
Today we have a very difficult  
goodbye. Dr. Pamela Bay's life was  
too short from our human  
perspective.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FR. GREG (CONT'D.)  
We take little consolation from our  
faith when we are in pain, but today  
we will try to help each other so  
that, indeed, we may know that  
Pamela is at home with God.

FR. GREG moves forward a few steps to stand between the  
front pews, where MARK and SALLY are seated on the left  
side.

SR. RITA is seated beside SALLY.

FR. GREG  
Please stand as we greet Pamela  
one last time.

The CONGREGATION stands. Processing from the back of the  
chapel, THREE MEN and THREE WOMEN carry Pamela's coffin  
toward the front of the church.

The SMALL FOLK CHOIR, being led by RON SMITH, leads the  
CONGREGATION singing "ONLY IN GOD."

CONGREGATION  
Only in God will my soul be at rest  
From God comes my hope, my salvation.  
God Alone is my rock of safety, My  
Strength, My Glory, My God.

Pamela's coffin comes into closer view as FR. GREG greets  
the PALLBEARERS.

RON SMITH and the CHOIR are seen before FR. GREG begins  
to speak.

MARK and SR. RITA drop tears as the coffin is set down.

FR. GREG  
God, our Father, be with us in our  
grief as we say goodbye to your  
faithful servant, Pamela.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARK is crying as FR. GREG speaks. He pulls SALLY close to him.

Panning around the chapel there are STAINED GLASS WINDOWS depicting VARIOUS IMAGES - IMAGES OF JESUS WITH THE WOMAN AT THE WELL, ST. THOMAS AQUINAS AT HIS DESK, JESUS WITH A CHILD, STUDENTS WITH BOOKS IN HANDS, AND CANDLES.

PEOPLE are seen crying throughout the CONGREGATION.

FR. GREG sits down.

JOANNE PORRETTA walks to the lectern.

JOANNE

I loved Pamela Bay. She was my teacher and my friend. Today I would like to share something of my sense of Pamela's life through the immortal words of T.S. ELIOT.

JOANNE (V.O.)

'We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started.'

RON SMITH looks at JOANNE very intently as she is reading.

MICHAEL PORRETTA is sitting in a pew a few rows back from the front, looking indifferent as his wife speaks.

BISHOP MCCLAREN comes into view.

JOANNE (V.O)

'And the fire and the rose are one.'

BISHOP MCCLAREN takes the pulpit.

BISHOP MCCLAREN

Pamela Bay is loved by all of us.  
She had many gifts that she shared

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BISHOP MCCLAREN (CONT'D.)  
freely. Pamela worked tirelessly  
with the poor for many years.

RON SMITH is focused on the crucifix as the BISHOP  
reads.

RON sees PAMELA'S IMAGE on the crucifix.

JOE SMALLEY looks very sad as he sits and listens to the  
Bishop.

BISHOP MCCLAREN (V.O.)  
But you are not in the flesh, you  
are in the Spirit, if in fact the  
Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone  
who does not have the Spirit of  
Christ does not belong to him. But  
if Christ is in you, although your  
bodies are dead because of sin, your  
spirits are alive because of  
righteousness.

BISHOP MCCLAREN sits down.

FR. GREG stands up to preach at the lectern.

FR. GREG  
Pamela Bay loved St. Tom's very,  
very deeply. She came here to serve  
God with an open heart.

MARK is staring into space as FR. GREG speaks.

MARK pulls SALLY a little closer to him.

MARK'S POV:

FLASHBACK:

EXT. BEAUTIFUL SANDY BEACH ON THE LAKE - DAY

PAMELA, SALLY, and MARK playing on the beach.

INT. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS SEMINARY CHAPEL - DAY

CU: MARK wiping his eye with a tear in it.

FR. GREG (V.O.)  
Pamela lived her faith lovingly.  
She died trying to help a very  
troubled young man and a co-worker.

FACES of JOANNE PORRETTA and RON SMITH punctuate the  
CONGREGATION as CAMERA pans around the chapel.

ANOTHER ANGLE:

RON bows his head in tears and then raises his head and  
stares blankly at the crucifix.

MARK and SALLY are holding each other closely.

FR. GREG moves from the lectern to the altar. He begins  
to prepare for Communion.

RON SMITH stands up to lead the CHOIR SINGING "GIFT OF  
FINEST WHEAT."

JOANNE listens in a reverie.

FLASHBACK:

JOANNE sees an image of PAMELA talking with a FEW  
STUDENTS outside the college.

FR. GREG is seen running in the distance.

CONGREGATION (V.O.)  
You satisfy the hungry heart with  
gift of finest wheat; Come give to  
us, O saving Lord, The bread of life  
to eat.

There are OLDER NUNS who are visible in the congregation  
as they proceed toward Communion. PAMELA turns and looks

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

sadly over her shoulder as she disappears into bright light.

CU: JOANNE is sad. A tear falls.

EXT. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS SEMINARY - DAY

With a POLICE ESCORT leading the FUNERAL PROCESSION, the HEARSE pulls away with MANY CARS following.

EXT. FUNERAL PROCESSION - DAY

Many cars follow one another. Life is seen on the street as the procession moves toward the cemetery. There are houses with joyous Christmas decorations. A star on a roof is seen with its light on. It stands out because there still is daylight.

EXT. PAMELA'S GRAVE SITE - DAY

BISHOP MCCLAREN is standing at the head of Pamela's grave. He extends his hands for a blessing.

Pamela's casket is being lowered as he speaks.

BISHOP MCCLAREN  
Lord, take your faithful servant to  
live with you in fulfilment.

BISHOP MCCLAREN makes the sign of the cross. He steps aside.

SR. RITA helps an older nun, who is dressed in her habit, to move to the head of Pamela's grave. They are accompanied by a young woman who is carrying a basket of red roses.

SR. RITA  
Gracious and loving God, who is  
mother and father to all, we commend  
our sister, Pamela to you.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

MARK and SALLY step forward to throw the first roses in Pamela's grave.

The young woman with the roses begins to pass them out to people who move forward to throw one in the grave.

Many people continue to throw roses in the grave.

EXT. CARS LEAVING THE CEMETERY - DAY

The hearse leads the way as many people drive out of the cemetery. There is no symmetry as there was when the procession left the seminary.

INT. BAY-FAULKNER LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

MARK steps into the living room and pours himself a drink from the cabinet. He sits down in a comfy chair, picks up an old fashioned glass to sip on a drink. He is sitting sipping when he slips into a fantasy.

CAMERA dissolves through his drink.

INT. BAY-FAULKNER LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

PAMELA is beautiful in a red dress. She walks up to the chair where Mark sits watching her.

PAMELA puts Bette Midler's: "DO YOU WANNA DANCE?" on the disc player.

Mark stands up and begins to dance sensuously with her. They are clearly enjoying one another's company as they dance. MARK is shaken from his fantasy as he hears.

SALLY (V.O.)

Mommy!

MARK gets up from the comfy chair and is going to Sally's bedroom.

INT. SALLY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

MARK enters.

SALLY

Daddy! The monster came. The monster wants to take me.

MARK

No, PUMPKIN. No monster is going to take you.

SALLY

Don't go, DADDY. The monster took Mommy.

MARK

I'm not going anywhere, PUMPKIN.

MARK settles SALLY.

SALLY falls asleep.

MARK begins to cry as he pulls SALLY close to him.

INT. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS SEMINARY CHAPEL - NIGHT

RON is kneeling in the chapel while he prays by candle light.

CUT AWAY:

Some visuals of PAMELA in class come up in his imagination.

FR. GREG enters the chapel quietly. He sits down beside RON.

RON

I'm confused. This has been awful. What's going to happen?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FR. GREG

Things will be back to normal soon,  
RON.

RON stays in the chapel as FR. GREG leaves.

EXT. DIOCESAN OFFICE - DAY

INT. BISHOP MCCLAREN'S OFFICE - DAY

FR. GREG is sitting across from BISHOP MCCLAREN as he  
reclines in his chair.

FR. GREG

Thank God it's over.

BISHOP MCCLAREN

Yes, thank God.

FR. GREG

She should have known Gerry Hoffmann  
would blow up in her face one day.

BISHOP MCCLAREN

Yes, a man might have had the sense  
to see it coming. She's gone to her  
reward and we'll be far more careful  
about lay staff in future.

FR. GREG

I just hope there is no scandal  
around her and this man.

BISHOP MCCLAREN

I think her marriage was solid. Her  
husband will protect her good name,  
and we will too, Greg.

FR. GREG

She was naive. Too naive for  
priesthood, surely.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BISHOP MCCLAREN

Yes, well, it is unfortunate. What about young Kyler?

FR. GREG

He's in psychiatric assessment. Critical Care. Undoubtedly he'll have a long stay.

BISHOP MCCLAREN

Good. He'll get the help he needs. What about the psychological assessment that Mike was working on?

FR. GREG

I asked him to close the file. Paul Kyler will never be a candidate now, anyway; so there's no point in Mike continuing his work.

BISHOP MCCLAREN

It's unfortunate that we can't predict human behaviour with greater accuracy.

FR. GREG

Ah, but that's not our work. Only God can know what is in a person's heart.

CREDITS

FADE OUT

**THESIS**

**Developing a Methodology for**  
**Theological Connoisseurship**  
**of Feature Film**

## **Chapter 1**

### **The Need for the Arts** **in Theological Education**

## Chapter One

This chapter explores the importance of the arts in theological education because the arts offer enormous potential for engaging in theological reflection. Chapter one summarizes and comments on some recent approaches that have been articulated regarding the potential of the arts in theological education. My commentary on these approaches was written with a view to setting the stage for the larger picture in which my project/thesis belongs.

When we reflect theologically on our experience of a work of art, we have the opportunity to deepen our relationship with God. In this ever present invitation to deepening the potential for both personal and professional growth, we can become more appreciative of God as well as more appreciative of God's love for us. Peter S. Hawkins writes of possibilities for the arts in theological education:

**This is to say that what the arts may offer theological education is what they have always offered Christian culture: a way of telling the canon's truth, an apocrypha of the imagination that at once show that health of the received tradition and demonstrates its need to render a new account of everything old. As apocrypha, its authority will always be a matter of debate and its legitimacy a bone of contention. But along with such uncertainty of status comes a freedom to question, a license to explore and discover, an openness to change, a sense of the danger of the entire enterprise. The "third testament" of the arts presents us not with a rival gospel, but with an opportunity for Word to be made flesh again and again; not with an invasion of a closed canon, but with the chance to keep the canon alive and fecund, continually open to interpretive revision and continually facing the**

challenge to discover a new vernacular – the language of its time.<sup>1</sup>

In relation to theological education, art can have a prophetic, critical, and/or a pastoral responsibility as it makes the Word 'flesh again and again'. Art can offer its critique both implicitly and explicitly as it stirs the imagination. For example, a probing Picasso or the exquisite sound of Mozart can help us enter into the transcendent realm. If one sees the arts as offering numerous ways to interpret and express the divine mystery, that can never be fully disclosed [in] a rich diversity of ways, in fact, that call upon more dimensions of our humanity than theological education has so far called into play, [then one can be richer by far.]<sup>2</sup>

How does art remain faithful to its role to render visible that which is essentially invisible and/or how does art move us to trust the breaking forth of something new in our midst? Let us begin by trusting that art can point to those moments and places in our lives where the experience of finitude and the transcendent dimension are felt and expressed within culture itself.<sup>3</sup> In religious traditions, the symbols and sacraments are representative of our beliefs which are both timeless and transcendent. In culture, we recognize the same phenomenon as artists attempt to take us out of the mundane experience of everyday life and point the way to something new that needs to be recognized. "In this way, the theological function of art is that of bringing the viewer a

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1 Peter S. Hawkins, "What is Truth?": The Question of Art and Theological Education. Theological Education, Autumn 1994 Volume XXXI, Number 1, p. 111. **Bold is inserted by this author.**

2 Ibid. p. 112.

3 Michael Bird, "Film as Hierophany", Religion in Film, Ed. John R. May and Michael Bird, (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press), 1982, p. 4.



picture of culture's own striving for the infinite".<sup>4</sup> Take, for example, film as an expression of art. The thinking that has been called into consciousness by the effect of a film such as *Star Wars*<sup>5</sup> has been phenomenal. The film has taken a very old myth of good winning over evil, which is nothing new, but *Star Wars* has cast the myth in a new light which helped many people recognize the need for their own journey to discover the 'force' as worthwhile. The 'force' has been interpreted in many different ways, one of which is the transcendent force of God. With the potential and ability, as well as the desire to transcend ourselves in culture and religion, there is plenty of room for theological reflection to expand its ability to enter into dialogue with the arts. How, then, can theological reflection become more inclusive of the arts?

Nicholas Wolterstorff states that three things ought to occur relative to the arts in theological education. He thinks of the fundamental reality of the arts as consisting not in discriminable works of art, but rather in three interlocking, long-enduring, much-contested practices of art ... producing, performing, and appropriating works of art.

Secular art education tutors us in looking at van Gogh as representing a stunning and influential episode in the history of stylistics. What is totally missed – the point comes through vividly in Vincent's letters to his brother Theo -- is the sacramental sensibility which lies behind van Gogh's paintings. Secular art education programs will not school viewers on how to look at van Gogh's paintings so as to discern this dimension; where else is such tutoring to occur, at a sophisticated level, but in Christian colleges and theological schools? **There is a "calling" here, waiting to be acknowledged ... in theological education to stand back and reflect on the three practices of creating, performing, and**

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> *Star Wars*, dir George Lucas, with Mark Hamill, Harrison Ford, and Carrie Fisher, 1977.

**appropriating religiously and theologically significant works of art. One would want here both to understand where these practices have been historically and what they should be for us.<sup>6</sup>**

Wolterstorff calls for a much more highly integrated model of learning than what one normally encounters in a faculty of theology. He calls for an appreciation of the arts. He calls us also to appreciate the depth dimension of the 'sacramental' quality of famous artists' approach. What was happening to van Gogh? What shifted in his life as he left seminary to paint? What does van Gogh's experience of church teach us? How does van Gogh's work reflect the love of God? There is much material which is very rich as one unpacks it in theological reflection.

Learning in a more integrated fashion helps the student to awaken to the crux of theological awareness which is the inherent worth of every creation in the universe. The undervalued role of the arts is a direct reflection of the undervalued sense of much of creation. Frank Burch Brown presents an eloquent critique of the undervalued role of the arts in theological education:

**Christian thinkers have commonly associated the arts with religious foreplay or afterglow; they have rarely viewed what is artistic as climactic or focal. ...Theology has a long history of becoming alarmed by art - by the fact that artistry typically appeals to the senses, veils as it reveals, plays with what it displays, craftily surprises and delights us. ...Theological marginalization of the arts has not been unintentional. For much of Christian history, educators and theologians have expressed a deep suspicion of the arts precisely because of art's connection with the senses and emotions. ...The way that art acts inside and outside church can**

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<sup>6</sup> Nicholas Wolterstorff, "Three Functions of Arts in Theological Education." Theological Education, Autumn 1994 Volume XXXI, Number 1, pp. 97 & 98. **Bold is mine.**

indeed serve to distract from reflection, to smother reason, to bathe one in sheer sentiment. Art is no substitute for analytical, rational discernment. But Christianity was not founded on the idea that rationality should have the only or final word – God being described as transcending human reason.<sup>7</sup>

Burch Brown sees the need for a change in theological education that respects not only the need for interdisciplinary activity in the academic world but an appreciation of life and a religious expression that is more wholistic. To support Burch Brown's approach, it should be noted that we are in a period of history where our rhetoric about wholistic approaches is strong. We have yet to integrate this wholistic approach to our learning. The room for art in theological education is thus a space for both appreciative discernment and critique, including the disciplined study of competing artistic traditions both in practice and in theory.<sup>8</sup> Considering the place and power of the arts in theological education, as diverse as they may be, Burch Brown says they may be grounded in the following four principles:

1. The artistic capacity to **move and mobilize**. The endeavour to truly understand God is wedded to love and the practice of love. And the native language of love has always been preeminently artistic and aesthetic, moving the self and will to envision that which is to be desired, to discern how to reach toward it, and to want to reach and to be reached.
2. There is the artistic capacity to **imagine possibilities** not clearly conceived in society at large. Regardless of whether such religious imagining dwindles

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<sup>7</sup> Frank Burch Brown, "Characteristics of Art and the Character of Theological Education." Theological Education, Autumn 1994 Volume XXXI, Number 1, pp. 6 & 7. **Bold is mine.**

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

under the present social and economic hardships, it plainly has thrived by means of artistic culture within a larger, often hostile, cultural context.

3. **There is also the artistic capacity to enliven one's often anaesthetised sense of the particular, of that which resists easy dogmatism and totalizing generalization, bringing such particular awareness to bear precisely on unseen dimensions of ideas and doctrines.**
4. **Finally, there is the artistic capacity to elicit and elucidate a sense of realities that either rupture or transcend ordinary sense. At times these perceptions are negative in nature, as one knows from the best holocaust literature. Indeed, theology cannot be truly educational in understandings of God without confronting terrors in a manner available to artistic expression.<sup>9</sup>**

Burch Brown, in essence, calls for a more complete way of appreciating not only the arts, but life itself. One's consciousness can be heightened as a result of participating in that which helps us to transcend our ordinary sense.

Theologically, one can recall Jesus speaking of our need for our second birth. Our second birth is an awakening to our whole being. Rather than succumbing to the temptation of reductionism, or remaining within our heads, and/or acting childishly because of emotions that can drive us, we are called to live from a groundedness that is inclusive of all of our being. In short, Burch Brown invites us to take the opportunity to bridge what, at heart, is not a chasm. Art does help us bridge our worlds because art can never be separated from experience.

The biggest challenge in theological education today is to move from an approach that has been more associated with the head to one which includes the

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 9. **Bold is mine.**

heart. An integrative approach in learning that honours the formation of a person in ministry as well as the information that he/she takes in is critical for the development of ministers. The greatest bridge-building, in other words, is an internal process where one truly integrates what he/she knows at both the level of head and of heart. The dynamic of personal integration helps one to interact with other people and disciplines with greater depth. Burch Brown does not develop the ideal of each person's artistry as much as he expresses the need for appreciation of the arts as a valid beginning for developing a greater depth in the house of theological education. Art is pertinent not only to the adornment but also to the structure of virtually every room and so to the study of every area. In addition, art merits separate attention -- a room of its own within the larger curriculum.<sup>10</sup>

In my own work with theological students, I have worked with differing artistic mediums such as novels, paintings, music, and feature film. Very briefly, I can say that students, when able to make connections to the joys, pains, and mysteries of life, are able to more fully appreciate the rational discursive material that I ask them to take in. They are invited to build their own bridges as they reflect upon the worlds that have been built by artists.

Let us turn to one final theoretical approach to the arts within theological education. Gordon D. Kaufman takes a more radical stance than Burch Brown. Kaufman is eager for a radical shift in our appropriation of the arts within theological education. He writes:

Our tendency in theological education has been to think of the arts as providing us with illustrations of certain historical points we are making, or with source material for historical knowledge or knowledge of the

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

contemporary world. We have seldom, as far as I can see, thought of them as presenting us with a quite different paradigm of education, one that might be of considerable help to us. ... Instead of drawing on literature, painting, and music, [ and film] largely for illustrations to enhance our historical and theological teaching, **what we would seek to learn from the history and practice of these and other arts would be the ways in which traditions can be appropriated for the purpose of acting creatively in the world.**<sup>11</sup>

What is his sense of acting creatively in the world? What is the responsibility of theological education if we take Kaufman seriously? He elaborates:

**Christian theological education ... would be conceived as not simply a matter of transmitting bodies of knowledge to students but rather as preparing them to help transform our world -- searching out new insights, seeking to develop new sensitivities, working out new practices, new ways of thinking. We would seek to appropriate Scripture and tradition, not simply to know something we did not know before, but for the redemptive purpose of creating the new, enabling a new *praxis*. Theology and ethics, in this mode, would be understood as the imaginative/reflective dimension of our (Christian) *praxis*, with which we are working toward the creation of a new world, and so-called practical theology would take up some of the real problems in today's public world and attempt to address them. ... When conceived on this model, theological education would be understood as induction into certain particular (artistic) practices, rather than as the passing on of various sorts of historical and theoretical knowledge, though historical and theoretical study would, of course, also be indispensable. ... Because the arts would actually provide the central model for this change of perspective, the difficulties in 'integrating' them into**

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<sup>11</sup> Kaufman, Gordon D. "Theology, The Arts, and Theological Education." Theological Education, Autumn 1994 Volume XXXI, Number 1, p. 18. **Bold is mine.**

theological education might then dissolve away.<sup>12</sup>

Unfortunately, in too many schools of theology, we are suppressed and restricted to thinking that we can do no more than pass on the sacred bodies of knowledge of yesteryear through traditional means of education. Imagine if theology could embrace all of life through more comprehensive education in the arts in much more dynamic ways? Would not the church come alive with a entirely new sense of vocation? The appreciation of all of the gifts of the church would be manifested in ways that would be much more deeply reflecting of the Gospel as we learn more creatively and more artistically to call forth all the gifts of the people. It is not only art, in the strictest sense, that is being spoken of here. Nor is it only those who would appreciate art. It is recognizing the potential that art's appreciation of reality that can bring so much more to the creation of new realities in all sectors of life. Art mirrors life, and the more deeply we engage life, the more deeply we are able to enter into the experience of the people that we are called upon to serve.

Another approach to Kaufman's position is supported by Wilson Yates.

Yates describes the following tasks for theological education:

- 1) The first task is to engage and respond to the ambivalence of the church and the seminary regarding the power and the role of the arts in the religious life. In this first task, Yates recognizes our need for conversion before we truly can introduce the arts into an atmosphere that has been highly suspicious of anything lying outside the realm of reason. If we recognize that art is more like faith, perhaps the arts will have a chance in theological education that it hasn't had to date.
- 2) The second task is to reconstruct the history of the

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 19. **Bold is mine.**

dialogue.<sup>13</sup> Here, Yates, outlines a set of questions that would help us reach a historical understanding of the interplay of the cultural ethos, institutions, individuals, and specific events in the development of theological education's interest in the arts.

- 3) The third task for the theology and the arts agendas are to claim and analyze our own theological legacy.<sup>14</sup> In this task, Yates recognizes the importance of identifying the theologians' works and the approaches they used. Again, he offers questions that are good guidelines when approaching the works we choose to study.
- 4) The fourth task is to treat the methodological questions that have arisen in the dialogue. Entering into the dialogue, Yates offers the following points of consideration as guidelines:
  - a) The power and significance of the arts.
  - b) Theological disciplines' treatment of the arts.
  - c) The interdisciplinary nature of theological work with the arts.
  - d) Protecting the integrity of the artwork.
  - e) Art as theology.
  - f) The revelatory character of art.
  - g) A theology of image and/or symbol.
  - h) The matter of 'high' and popular art.
  - i) What makes a work of art religious.
  - j) The encounter of the religious in the arts.
  - k) The relationship of the aesthetic to the spiritual.
  - l) The construction of art and theology.
  - m) The reconstruction of theological education.<sup>15</sup>
- 5) The fifth task is that of integrating the arts within major theological disciplines.<sup>16</sup> Yates calls us to identify the links; the points of interdependence,

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 52 & 53.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.



the relationships among the arts and the disciplines that already exist; and to build upon those relationships.

- 6) The sixth task is that of defining and utilizing strategies that will institutionalize work within the arts on a more permanent basis. Yates quotes from John Dillenberger in an article entitled "Theological Education and the Visual Arts: the Situation and Strategies for Change" (ARTS 5/1 Fall 1992). Dillenberger observes that ... it is clear the arts do not have the place in theological education that other modalities do, such as psychology, sociology, ethics, spirituality, and other theological perspectives. But, he continues, these too were once outside the centre.<sup>17</sup>

Yates speaks of implementing the arts in theological education on a level with other disciplines that were 'outside the centre' at one time. The arts have not been totally discounted, but their bearing upon theology has not had the impact of the disciplines of psychology and sociology. There is reason to hope that the arts will be more fully included as we continue to learn more of their value in the theological enterprise.

Michael Bird speaks about the theological function of art by referring to the classic work The Sacred and the Profane by Mircea Eliade:

In his classic study of the mythic and ritualistic dimension of religion, Mircea Eliade introduces a concept that serves well the purposes of theological explorations of culture and art. This is the term hierophany, utilized by Eliade 'to designate the act of manifestation of the sacred. ... The paradoxical nature of reality seen in this light consists in the fact that it discloses not only itself but also another dimension underlying it. By manifesting the sacred, any object becomes something else, yet it continues to remain itself.' While particular objects and places have

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 57.

traditionally been set aside in religious cultures as holy objects or spaces, a hierophany can occur anywhere. All nature is capable of revealing itself as cosmic sacrality. The cosmos in its entirety can become a hierophany.<sup>18</sup>

When we observe the work, we are offered the opportunity to see more. The eyes of faith give us the desire to see more. The tools with which we engage in theological reflection give us the ability to see more. The combination of faith and skill allow us to enter our lives with a new richness and diversity. Paul Tillich, who brought a richness and diversity to the theological task, attempted to address these questions of faith and revelation, and the role of art in culture. He offered an explanation of art's responsibility to help us enter the very heart of existence. He masterfully expressed our human striving. Bird quotes Tillich:

Reason asks for revelation, [and hence] seeking an ultimate unity of its conflicting and unresolved polarities [is key to comprehending the paradoxical nature of life]. The quest for a reunion of what is always split in time and space arises out of reason and not in opposition to reason. The quest is the quest for revelation.<sup>19</sup>

The quest is for the beautiful, for the true, for God. Art has a role that can both emphasize and facilitate our very deep need for transcendence. In our need for transcendence, we can discover those places of reunion. The paradoxical nature of learning is enhanced when rational, analytical approaches are tempered with the reality of the artist's approach to life.

The approaches of Burch Brown, Kaufman, Yates, Tillich, and Hawkins speak clearly to the need for expanding ways to appreciate the arts. Underlying

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<sup>18</sup> Bird., p. 3.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

their ways of appreciating the arts within theological education is their desire to more deeply appreciate God. This is critical to my project/dissertation as I believe that faith seeks not only understanding as in a traditional definition of theology, but rather seeks to more deeply appreciate God – to become connoisseurs of God as it were. To engage in the theological enterprise is to want to appreciate God in new ways. In our deeper appreciation of God we can call forth a much more dynamic church if, as Kaufman suggests, we learn to develop a fuller appreciation of the arts. While we need to learn to appreciate the works themselves, the process of dialoguing with the works will call forth life where there has not been life previously.

In the next chapter, we will consider the specific art form of feature film as an ideal medium for theological reflection.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Feature Film as a Medium for Theological Reflection**

## Chapter Two

The first photographic film, *The Passion Play of Oberammergau* was shown on January 31, 1898. It was directly patterned after mediaeval Passion plays and featured thirteen tableaux of about a minute each from the trial and death of Jesus. Another early film, *The Temptation of St. Anthony* (1902), began with a monk reading an ancient manuscript: Suddenly he sees a naked woman, but as he moves toward her, she turns into a skeleton!<sup>1</sup>

In this chapter we will consider the prominence of feature film's rise as the most important literary genre of our time. Further, this chapter will demonstrate the art form of feature film as a medium which allows us to look critically at our culture as a whole and, specifically, as a means to theologically reflect on our culture. This will set the stage for chapter three where a theological reflection model is developed.

### Feature Film and Its Influence

The first motion picture theatre opened on Broadway in 1913; by 1916, there were twenty-one thousand theatres in the U.S. <sup>2</sup> Film's influence has grown rapidly over the course of the century, even more so with the advent of video cassette recorders (VCRs). The growth of film's influence can be said to be a direct mirroring of the growth of industrialization and capitalism more than

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<sup>1</sup> Ronald Holloway. Beyond the Image, (Geneva: World Council of Churches in Cooperation with Inter film, 1977), p. 48.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p 75.

anything else. Film is a technological medium, and technology is surely the driver behind most of the growth areas/sectors of this century. From its inception through to our present day, film has made extensive use of technology as a central means of both creating the content of a story and, most prominently, delivering the story.

### The Uneasy Relationship between Religion and Film

There has been an important relationship between the visual arts and religion throughout history. The quote which began this chapter emphasized this point. The first film was driven by religious themes, while the second, *The Temptation of St. Anthony*, visually presented the religious theme of sexual temptation. In some circles "the importance of the visual to religion has long been recognized. Within historical Christianity, religious images gave a focus to and informed piety".<sup>3</sup> At the time of the advent of feature film, Biblical scholarship was undergoing its own changes that would influence both scholars and artists who participated in film and other expressive mediums. Theodore Ziolkowski, in Fictional Transfigurations of Jesus<sup>4</sup>, indicates that "in the nineteenth century, Protestant and agnostic/atheistic Biblical scholarship succeeded in breaking the monopolistic grip that the Christian Church had maintained for centuries in its presentation of the Christ of Faith. This led to

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<sup>3</sup> Roger Finke, "An Unsecular America," and Bryan Wilson, "Reflections on a Many-Sided Controversy," in Religion and Modernization: Sociologists and Historians Debate the Secularization Thesis, Ed. Steve Bruce, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

<sup>4</sup> Theodore Ziolkowski, Fictional Transfigurations of Jesus, Ch. 2, "The De-Christianizing of Jesus", (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), pp. 30 - 54.

secular, at times irreverent, interpretations of Jesus in literature and drama".<sup>5</sup> The Gospel narratives had entered the public domain outside of the Church's direct control. Ziolkowski continues:

The Church's patent had run out, so to speak. Thus there emerged through the artist's imagination an array of secular portraits, ranging from Christomaniacs to socialist variations of the Jesus material. In short, the Gospels influenced the literary imagination not by faith but through fascination with a person who, though admittedly historical, remained mysteriously and irresistibly contemporary -- independent of faith in him as God and as the saviour of humanity.<sup>6</sup>

The 'Jesus of History' took on traits of the 'Christ of Faith' because of this growth of artistic endeavours to bring Jesus alive. It has always been the effort of believers to bring the Jesus of history to bear upon the Christ of faith; in the medium of feature film, however, a new power that was not of the church had come to exert its own unprecedented authority in its presentation of reality. This usurping by secular film makers of what was for almost two thousand years an exclusive domain of the church, presenting Jesus to the masses, became a source of contention between the two 'powers'. For many church authorities, yesterday's question of just how far some filmmakers will go, is still being asked today.

Some of the concerns that arose initially around the viewing of films were similar to concerns that had arisen when the practice of using visual artifacts such as icons were initially being considered by the early church. The church was

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 30 - 54.

<sup>6</sup> Neil P. Hurley, "Cinematic Transfigurations of Jesus", *Religion in Film*, Ed. John R. May and Michael Bird, (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1982.), p. 61.

concerned, to put it simply, that people would become too attached to the images. Simple believers would miss the reality of the mystery of God by attaching themselves to that which was less than the God they sought. While attachment was necessary, detachment was also necessary.

Film images are not icons, of course, but there is something to be learned from the ways that people were/are taught to enter into the experience of an icon relative to the watching of feature film. Film images are more naturalistic than still pictures; they move. Margaret Miles writes of this learned behaviour:

For spectators to acquire the distance from the screen that we experience and yet remain emotionally engaged by the new medium [of film] took approximately a generation ... . The film viewer must learn a new skill ... the art of identification appropriate to film ... . Mediaeval Christians cultivated an altogether different relationship to visual image than late twentieth-century spectators' trained detachment.<sup>7</sup>

What relevance is there to viewing with detachment or attachment? Both the intentional attachment of the Christian to his/her religious images, and the detachment of the viewer bring satisfaction to the individuals involved in these activities. Christian devotional literature abounds with instructions for cultivating devotional attachment, not to the religious image itself, but to the spiritual world to which it points.<sup>8</sup> The stories of early film spectators indicate that what twentieth-century spectators need to learn is detachment because of their over-identification with the film. Today we speak of a problem of desentisization of people because of the phenomenal number of images that most people in North American society are taking in through feature film and

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<sup>7</sup> Margaret R. Miles, Seeing and Believing, (Boston, Beacon Press, 1996), p. 31.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 32.



other media.

Other ways that we are sensitized/desensitized to taking in material from the screen are in the conventions of film making.<sup>9</sup> Very little has been written about conventions in religious film as there are no recognized conventions of which to speak. This is of enormous concern for those who wish to see more stories that are inclusive of religious motivation and commitment. There has always been debate over that which is 'truly' religious. Perhaps we need, writes Margaret Miles, a more inclusive definition of 'religious' -- a definition that includes the posing of issues that require secular ethical decisions.<sup>10</sup> She states further that "... the advantage of this expansive definition of religion is its cross-cultural applicability; all religions seek to inform their members' lives and to order their relationships".<sup>11</sup>

### How Film Is Viewed

Miles touches a huge religious sensibility. If one favours her expansion of the reality of religion, the scope for both viewing and creating film expands enormously, for film is viewed according to its own conventions. If those conventions begin to include, or to take over, religious ones, then religious institutions are indeed challenged to change. Conventions are based upon

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<sup>9</sup> For example, a convention of a Western film is the bad guy wears a black hat. The comic can harm a person in a black comedy but not if it frightens the audience.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

conscious or unconscious expectations. When a viewer comes away from the story, his or her satisfaction with the film rests heavily upon the satisfaction that has come from adhering to or ignoring these conventions. It is necessary to attend to what conventions work in stories because the audience has expectations from previous experiences. For example, audiences would not have accepted *The Sound of Music*<sup>12</sup> ending without the family's successful escape to the mountains; and while audiences found it difficult to see *E.T.*<sup>13</sup> go home, they understood the necessity of his leaving.

Viewers 'know' when they watch a film that they do not see things "as they really are, but the film's entertainment value lies in its ability to make them forget that it is in fact a representation, or construction. Viewers want to enter the world on the screen. In order to be entertained, they need to believe they are in another world and they are annoyed if they cannot believe that they have not done so".<sup>14</sup> Audiences identify with characters and want to cheer the protagonist on if they empathize with him/her. Audiences want to enter the protagonist's world.

'Suspended disbelief' is the way that one enters another world and it is the entering of another world that can allow for expansion of one's own world. Does 'suspended disbelief' make sense when one aspires to serve God with all her/his heart, soul, and mind? To this question, I respond with a resounding "Yes". Miles offers an eloquent answer in the following manner:

Although films neither refer to, nor present a real world, a film is itself a world in two senses. It presents a constructed world – a world that is (more or less)

<sup>12</sup> *The Sound of Music*, dir Robert Wise, with Julie Andrews, Christopher Plummer, and Richard Haydn, 1965.

<sup>13</sup> *E.T.*, dir Steven Spielberg, with Dee Wallace, Henry Thomas, Peter Coyote, 1982.

<sup>14</sup> *Miles*, p. 27.

coherent and comprehensive – and it is an intricate set of codes and conventions. Although fiction films do not reveal the real world, they can and do reveal the representational systems of the cinema.<sup>15</sup>

The films which make most sense, or (more accurately) touch most people's experiences, are the ones we consider to be great. But greatness is subjective only to a certain extent. Standards are, in part, both formed and informed by the experiences of particular communities. Drama often plays a central role in this dialectic; drama depicts many of these experiences and brings them to our attention. In other words, dramatic art has always had a special role in depicting the greatness and smallness of our humanity. Film plays a very special role as it mirrors our humanity.

#### Film as a Vehicle for Meaning

Film is also part of the tradition of dramatic art which has always portrayed the passions of the human soul. Film's power and its fascination are so real to us because, within it, we see ourselves in all our strengths and weaknesses. A classic expression of the value of the dramatic arts was written by Plato in the tenth book of *The Republic*. "Few persons ever reflect, as I should imagine, that from evil of other [humans] something of evil is communicated to themselves. And so the feeling of sorrow which has gathered strength at the sight of the misfortunes of others is with difficulty repressed ...".<sup>16</sup> Aristotle responded to Plato, implicitly, in his famous definition of tragedy: dramatic art does not water the passions, it purges them "though pity and fear effecting the

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>16</sup> Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Charles M. Bakewell, (New York: Scribner's, 1928), pp. 404 & 5.

proper catharsis of these and similar emotions".<sup>17</sup>

The portrayal, as well as the integration, of our passions is the work of the soul. It is a lifetime of work that will carry on whether or not there is a conscious response by the individual. If there is a conscious response, the work is more fulfilling because of one's participation. The danger zones, perhaps, are better dealt with when the viewer is conscious of what is happening. The work of finding meaning in our existence is, indeed, dangerous. The kind of dangerous work that the virtuous religious person does not often want to face as part of reality, on either a personal or a societal level is the work that one must do in order to attain depth on the spiritual path. The religious person who says 'yes' to life, however, will participate on a journey that is both dangerous and exciting as he/she seeks the meaning of life. "The passion for meaning -- for meaning not only of one's personal life but also of existence as such -- that passion, that drive, that quest must channel all the other passions and then prevail at the end."<sup>18</sup>

Film is an excellent medium to illustrate all the human passions for meaning:

Film is a form of dramatic art ideally suited to the portrayal of the passion for meaning ... [it presents many problems] that need to be considered when one considers the relationship between feature film and religion. Because of its unique power to imitate action in time and space, film can show [human beings] in search of meaning through every technique at its command: visual and aural imagery, composition of frame, movement of the camera and movement within the frame, visual continuity, and finally editing.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Ernest Ferlita, "Film as Quest For Meaning", Religion in Film, Ed. John R. May and Michael Bird, ( Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1982. ), p. 115.

<sup>18</sup> The Orestes Plays of Aeschylus, trans. Paul Roche, (New York: New American Library, 1962), App. IV, p. 21.

<sup>19</sup> Bird, p 116.

Concretely, one might ask, what kind reflection on the meaning of existence does *Schlinder's List* <sup>20</sup> bring to mind? In the many questions that need to be addressed, the question of meaning will be a common thread in the variations within the tapestry of the suffering that is presented in this film. This quest for meaning often manifests itself in the journey of a particular person or of a group of people. Such a powerfully portrayed story draws the viewer in on the level of the emotions. The power of seeing and hearing inclines us to 'feel' the story which makes for a completely different experience than a cerebral process of taking in information. Whereas our culture, with its overemphasis on the analytical, has tended to portray the quest for meaning as an intellectual understanding of life, film demonstrates that such a quest is at least as much, if not more than an emotional experience of passions channelled into a structure of meaning which can light our way. A well-told story which touches our humanity, such as *Chariots of Fire* <sup>21</sup>, can inspire us to venture out again with renewed strength.

Film can present a great deal of difficulty, however, because we are not simply faced with our passions being portrayed on the screen, but with the passions that are stirred within us. A critical way of watching a story might ask us to empathize with the motivations of people we might never be able to draw close to in real life. One such film that comes to mind is The Professional.<sup>22</sup> Here is a story of a professional hit-man who bonds with a young child quite beautifully. Superficially, it would not seem possible, but after entering the

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<sup>20</sup> *Schlinder's List* , dir Steven Spielberg with Liam Neeson, Ben Kingsley, and Ralph Fiennes, 1993.

<sup>21</sup> *Chariots of Fire* dir Hugh Hudson with Ben Cross and Ian Charleson, 1981.

<sup>22</sup> *The Professional*, dir Luc Besson with Jean Reno and Gary Oldman, 1995.

experience of these two people empathetically, we realize that love is possible, or at least an attempt at loving is possible, in situations where one may think it impossible. The transcendent quality of love enters into our lives in a new way (in 'suspended disbelief' even to the point of empathizing with a hit-man).

### Film as a Vehicle for Cultural Theological Reflection

In film, (even the darkest ones where a producer has no intention of demonstrating meaning in life) we are always presented with ways of finding meaning. We are creatures that can only be open to the greatness of life if we are open to the mystery of life; such a mystery includes more of what we don't understand than of what we do. Religious content by this definition doesn't mean that you necessarily get a religious film. "What is required in a cinematic theology is a consideration of how the style of film can enable an exploration of the sacred (one recalls here the view of Tillich, in his analysis of religious art, that it is style, not subject matter, which is of primary significance)".<sup>23</sup> This distinction between style and content is imperative when developing a theology of film.

To support the question of the style of a theology of film, A. Ayfre has developed a succinct way of considering film from a theological point of view.

Ayfre suggests:

There is cinematic approach to the sacred that discloses not only its surface appearances but also the inner strivings that point to its depth. 'Genuinely' religious films, by no means restricted to explicitly religious

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<sup>23</sup> Bird., p. 14

subjects, are those in which the cinematographic recording of reality does not exhaust reality but rather evokes in the viewer the sense of its ineffable mystery. This cinematic realism confronts the spectator with a reality in which there is more than that of which it is the image.<sup>24</sup>

Full life calls forth the necessity of reflection upon experience. We have a need to both reflect upon experience and to move beyond it. We have a need to transcend ourselves. We have a need to observe ourselves and to learn from ourselves. Quoting Henri Agel, Bird writes: "Film has a fantastic ability to heighten our perception of things pointing beyond themselves by means of a realism which is sensitive to the paradoxical character of reality, to be aware of a 'distance within the heart of things', to see a thing 'present in its very absence, graspable in its ungraspability, appearing in it disappearing".<sup>25</sup> Bird goes on to write:

For Agel, Ayfre, and Bazin, cinema offers a self-reflection indicating the limits of the film-maker as artist, yet attests to their potential role in pointing to an initiating presence which comes from the 'other side' of reality, and which is met in an open encounter. Speaking of the inner horizon of perceived objects, Agel describes the capacity of cinema to 'allow nature to speak' precisely by recognizing the limits of film and by 'not forcing nature, but rather on the contrary, respecting the given reality'. In this capacity, cinema becomes not so much a voice of the artist but a diaphragm which is sensitive to the speech of the cosmos waiting to be heard. In Eric Rohmer's words, a film does not give a translation. ... The cinema is an instrument of discovery.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

These thinkers show a great love and appreciation for the classic search for truth and beauty. Their thinking is truly representative of incarnational theology and is supported by Mircea Eliade from a mythological point of view. Eliade writes in The Sacred and the Profane:

In its intensification of those movements and spaces where reality is seen to be straining in its anguish, its void, its divisions, toward its boundary-situation, at which the dimension of depth breaks in, cinema becomes at least the witness for and frequently the agent of the manifestation of something of a wholly different order, a reality that does not belong to our worlds.<sup>27</sup>

In Eliade's language, film becomes a 'hierophany' at such a point. The meeting of the sacred and the profane has a name given to it. The example of the hit-man in *The Professional* comes to mind. What could be more profane than to make huge amounts of money by killing people? What could be more sacred than risking your life for a child? The same man performed both actions in this film. Here we see a superb example of film's ability to be a medium where the sacred can meet the profane. However, when we lose sight of the spiritual matrix of a culture's life, we are apt to misconstrue the significance of the popular art forms that emerge within that culture.<sup>28</sup> Hence, the number of violent youth gang attacks after the film *A Clockwork Orange*.<sup>29</sup> Films have the power to incorporate us, the viewers, into the dominant patterns of our culture by projecting images of our culture before us.<sup>30</sup>

Tillich deals eloquently with the question of culture and the transcendent.

<sup>27</sup> Mircea Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, (New York: Harper, 1961), p. 11.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 106.

<sup>29</sup> *A Clockwork Orange*, dir Stanley Kubrick with Malcolm McDowell, 1971.

<sup>30</sup> Bird., p. 106.



In The Protestant Era he writes:

A present theology of culture is, above all, a theology of the end of culture, not in general terms but in a concrete analysis of the inner void of most of our cultural expressions. ... Often one gets the impression that only those cultural creations have greatness in which the experience of the void is expressed: for it can be expressed powerfully only on the basis of a foundation which is deeper than culture, which is ultimate concern, even if it accepts the void, even in respect to religious culture.<sup>31</sup>

Tillich recognized the human striving for the transcendent in many ways. He believed that we are always asking for revelation.<sup>32</sup> Tillich's investigation of 'culture pointing beyond itself' understands "reality in such a way that it tends simultaneously toward self-sufficiency and toward self-transcendence. ... This paradoxical discovery of finitude and openness to the transcendent is, according to Tillich, the moment at which culture inevitably is driven beyond itself to an awareness of its depth."<sup>33</sup>

Eliade, whose work centres upon meaning in mystery, wrote:

To be open to mystery: the image of journey resonates with that attitude of mind; the experience of film at its deepest level prompts that response. Quest is the archetypal image for the furthest reach of the human spirit. ... Even in their depleted state, [archetypal images] 'present to us the only possible point of departure for the spiritual renewal of modern [human beings]. It is of the greatest importance, we believe, to rediscover a whole mythology, if not a theology, still concealed in the most ordinary, everyday life of contemporary [humans]; it will depend upon him/herself whether he/she can work his/her way

<sup>31</sup> Paul Tillich, The Protestant Era, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 60.

<sup>32</sup> Bird., p. 4.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

back to the source and rediscover the profound meanings of these faded images and damaged myths.<sup>34</sup>

A film trilogy such as *Star Wars* <sup>35</sup> has demonstrated the importance of this quest for truth of which Eliade writes. The huge success of this trilogy had everything to do with its characters' readiness to embrace the need for truth. The mystery of transformation was evident as each of the characters moved along the path of his or her journey. The protagonist resists his journey in the beginning but as he accepts his 'destiny' he learns more of the truth of his life. Not only is the protagonist called to change in this film -- all characters are affected deeply by his quest for truth. They are all called to move forward. As they move forward, so is the audience called to move forward.

Our life moves on two interrelated levels, one exterior, the other interior. In feature film, the first level is the level of plot, the second is the level of meaning; the first of visual-aural reality, the second of spiritual reality. A person may well subscribe to a religious code and yet find his/her behaviour demonstrating something that is contrary to his/her beliefs. The plot may carry a person in one direction but the meaning may appear to be quite different. Images of change register more quickly and sometimes more subtly than we can notice in our day-to-day lives. We learn by image first, then by words.

When feature film is attuned to the cultural concerns of the contemporary scene we do see ourselves in bold, living colour. If the ear of religion would but

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<sup>34</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Images and Symbols: Studies in Religious Symbolism*, (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1961), pp. 11 & 17.

<sup>35</sup> *Star Wars*, dir George Lucas, with Mark Hamill, Harrison Ford, and Carrie Fisher, 1977.  
*The Empire Strikes Back*, dir George Lucas, with Mark Hamill, Harrison Ford, and Carrie Fisher, 1980.

*Return of the Jedi*, dir George Lucas with Mark Hamill, Harrison Ford, and Carrie Fisher, 1983.

see these images with greater sensitivity, the voice of religion could be stronger. We need to be aware that these images are drawn from the matrix of our culture which forms us implicitly and explicitly. Film has a definite relationship to our culture. Miles writes eloquently of this relationship:

Films are neither icons to be emulated, nor are they distillations of evil. They are cultural products, deeply informed by the perspectives, values, and aspirations of their makers. They beg for creative discussion, for it is finally the uses to which Hollywood films are put that determines their function in [North] American society. Moreover, films need to be talked about, not merely the emotions they stimulate in diverse viewers, nor whether the images they present of various character are positive or negative, but what particular anxieties and interests of their social moment they address, whether obliquely or directly.<sup>36</sup>

Films allow us to dream, cry, fantasize, and to see much of what we often cannot because of our own limitations:

Sometimes, at their best, films can help to identify resources and to imagine alternatives to the social arrangements, the images, and the religious institutions that have contributed to the problems of public and private life. They can contribute to the images with which we work out how we, as a pluralistic society, might live as good characters in a good story.<sup>37</sup>

We are formed by our western culture. When we theologize, we do so from our western perspective. What this means is that we need to understand our culture if our theology is to be relevant. As we look at feature film as a medium to reflect upon our culture, cultural studies thus bring a very helpful

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<sup>36</sup> Miles., p. 193.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p.193.

perspective as we learn to reflect theologically on film because cultural studies can help us to address some of the shortcomings of the dysfunctional communication system between the church and the culture which formed the church. Miles writes:

Cultural studies' approach to media calls for an exploration that goes beyond 'impressions' to documented description of the broader social 'conversation' within which the film is one voice. ... In concrete terms, then, a cultural studies approach requires information about a film's funding and production; its distribution to theatres; the director's intent, as described in interviews; the box office earnings; and the diverse critical perspectives given in reviews. It also analyzes the screenplay, camera work, narrative, and soundtrack. ... Since a cultural studies approach depends, for its accuracy and insight, on determining which features of society are crucial to a reconstruction of a film's communications, it is always vulnerable to suggestions that a central aspect of common experience has been overlooked.<sup>38</sup>

Cultural studies cover the spectrum of a film's production from beginning to end. Cultural studies helps us to learn the functions of popular film in our context.<sup>39</sup> "In contrast to methods of film criticism that think of films solely as texts -- psychoanalytic, semiotic, Marxist, feminist, auteur, or genre criticism -- a cultural studies approach scrutinizes them as products of the culture's social, sexual, religious, political, and institutional configurations".<sup>40</sup>

Cultural studies offer a good starting place for our reflection process. Film allows us to see in story form that which we value. Like religion, films describe

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p.25.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

and define their characters' orientations and attitudes to the world. They invite the question, "How does this character's life work"? If one considers the interest in values and relationships common to religion and film, both can be approached as parts of a common human search for meaning. No one, as was stated earlier, is exempt from a search for meaning. Meaning with and without others must be found for the sake of one's self. It is the paradox of the individual within community by which we are called to live. To live in this paradox which we call life means that we need to immerse ourselves in both our personal and our social dimensions in order to find meaning.

Apart from the larger questions of culture and church, we need to consider the question of resistance to anything emotional in our places of higher learning. Films are not worthy of consideration by many serious scholars because they are too emotional. From this point of view watching a film is not as difficult as reading a book. Watching a film does not mean work because it is pleasure. There are many misconceptions and obstacles to overcome for a person to feel at home with a serious consideration of film. Some of these obstacles are intellectual snobbishness, the diverse worlds of film and religion, and all of the polarities within these respective worlds. Miles states:

We, as a society, seem to seek evidence that will substantiate and reinforce our belief that religious practices are ineffective and that religious beliefs are wrong, misguided, and dangerous. We apparently need to be reassured that it is quite safe to ignore religion both as personal motivation and as a voice in public discourse. Popular film both reflects a popular consensus that traditional religion is deeply untrustworthy and reinforces our public rejection of religion.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. ix.

What is there available in contemporary film that invites a Christian to say yes to his/her beliefs? Again, Miles' insights are helpful:

On the face of it, it seems that as many [North] Americans believe less and less, we want to see more and more. But what if there is some important reality in the old proverb, 'Seeing is Believing'? Does the 'voluntary suspension of disbelief' to which we must consent if we are to be entertained affect us in ways we ignore? I am often alarmed to find that the people most concerned about this issue seem to be political and religious conservatives. The inequities and the prejudices of earlier times are too evident to encourage me to think that a return to a society unaware of its glaring injustice, its chauvinism and racial intolerance, would be a step in the right direction. Rather, we must go forward to a society of equality and mutuality that we have never known and for which we have no blueprint. ... To provoke thought, to propose questions, and to suggest a method for exploring a film's voice in public discourse about issues that press [our] society with their urgency.<sup>42</sup>

As people of a faith tradition that invites us to a story that is very large and expansive, film clearly presents us with the opportunity for a dialogue that will make our tradition much richer. Christianity will not necessarily benefit from 'religious' films per se but from films that ask us to question our lives.

While Miles is correct in her cultural studies approach to film, as persons looking at film as a vehicle for theological reflection, our approach needs to be more refined. The need for human beings to discuss and/or portray many beliefs has found a whole new mode of communication both within churched and unchurched circles. The way to enter into such discussion with greater integrity is to know something of the ways to theologically reflect on this very powerful,

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. x & xi.

**influential and, many times, beautiful medium. This will be the subject matter of the next chapter as we explore the value of a theological reflection method designed for feature film viewing.**

## **Chapter 3**

### **Introduction of My Theological Reflection Method**



### Chapter Three

In this chapter I will introduce my theological reflection method for feature film. This methodology is designed as a tool for theological discernment for both students of theological education and for others who are interested in learning to theologically reflect upon films they have seen. This method grounds the abstract stances of Burch Brown, Yates, and Kaufman which we looked at in chapter two. This chapter proceeds in the following manner:

- 1) the background of my theological reflection method is explored; and
- 2) the theological reflection method is developed.

#### The Background to the Theological Reflection Method

My theological reflection method assumes that theological reflection is rooted in a desire not only to know, but to appreciate God more deeply. Knowing is an important step in developing a mature love for another, including for God. A connoisseur is someone who knows and appreciates a specific area of interest. In our case, the interest is in viewing feature film with a vision to knowing and loving God more deeply.

Elliot Eisner, in his book The Enlightened Eye: Qualitative Inquiry and the Enhancement of Educational Practice<sup>1</sup>, outlines an educational methodology

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<sup>1</sup> Elliot Eisner, The Enlightened Eye: Qualitative Inquiry and the Enhancement of Educational Practice, (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1991).

which serves as the root of my theological reflection method. Eisner's method is exquisite in its simplicity; it draws together the different threads of educational theory into a practical methodology. Eisner thus parallels my own work -- the making the theoretical more accessible and practical. Eisner bases his educational methodology on what he calls connoisseurship -- "connoisseurship is the art of appreciation of our capacity 'to make fine-grained' discrimination among complex and subtle qualities".<sup>2</sup>

### Eisner's Connoisseurship

Perception plays a central role in our knowledge of the world and is a central concept of Eisner's methodology.<sup>3</sup> Perception is our past experiences interacting with our present environment. Eisner writes:

Perception manifests itself in experience and is a function of the transactions between the qualities of the environment and what we bring to those qualities. The character of that experience is in large measure influenced by our ability to differentiate among the qualities we attend to.<sup>4</sup>

Eisner uses appreciation of wine as his way of explaining his idea of connoisseurship. Eisner lists the following requirements as necessary in order to be a wine connoisseur:

- 1) We need wine present to us and we must possess the ability to taste it. In Eisner's methodology 'tasting' means more than simply taking a

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<sup>2</sup> ibid., p. 63.

<sup>3</sup> ibid., p. 63.

<sup>4</sup> ibid., p. 63.

mouthful of wine. Tasting also requires us to possess the attribute of perceptivity or 'the ability to differentiate and to experience the relationships' between the qualities or relationships inherent in the wine.<sup>5</sup>

- 2) An awareness of this perceptivity because while we all have the potential to experience the qualities of relationships present in the wine the wine must possess the relationships (sour wine doesn't have an exquisite taste to experience) and we must possess the ability to recognize the relationships.<sup>6</sup> Making the potential experience an actual one 'is a manifestation of qualitative intelligence. Connoisseurship depends on high levels of qualitative intelligence in the domain in which it operates'.<sup>7</sup>
- 3) We must have the ability to match our present experience with past ones of tasting wine in order to place our experience within the larger whole of wine tasting. Knowing that we are tasting a Chardonnay rather than a Cabernet immediately, from our past experiences of tasting Chardonnays, alerts us to be aware of the specific relationships of Chardonnays which aren't present to a Cabernet. In other words, we need a concept of what Chardonnays are supposed to taste like.<sup>8</sup>

However, our ability to be a wine connoisseur requires that we have more than "our ability to differentiate the subtle and complex qualities of wine and to compare them in our sensory memory with other wines we have tasted".<sup>9</sup> We need to understand the history or the process by which these qualities came to be.

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 64 & 65.

“Knowledge of that history can have a bearing on our ability to experience its qualities”.<sup>10</sup> Such a knowledge of the factors which went into the creation of the wine will influence the qualities of the wine for which we will look.

Lastly, wine making is not simply a mechanical process; it is an art because “the quality of wine depends on someone being able to (1) experience the qualitative nuances of wine and (2) make judgments about the virtue of the qualities experienced”.<sup>11</sup> In other words, the proof is entirely in the subjective tasting and not in the mechanical process of making wine. A great wine can’t be reproduced by rote; there are numerous factors, some outside human control, which will effect who tastes the wine and what it tastes like. Eisner’s point is that the more complex the subject – be it wine, people, or feature film – the greater the amount of information we must employ to form an educated appreciation.

Our experience will influence how we interpret this information. For Eisner, our ‘ideas about something make a difference in how we regard it’.<sup>12</sup> Our knowledge of the subject is not simply gained through observation and pure sense experience. Our present understanding of various theories of knowledge, what we believe is important, and our ideas of what constitute good relationships will all influence how we take in information and how we interpret that information. In other words, our present experience can both open us to new ways of perceiving, and limit what we will allow ourselves to perceive.

Eisner emphasizes the limiting function of knowledge we have already

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66.

accumulated. Values we presently have in place act as filters as to what sense data we will accept or reject. He states:

We learn a language that is categorical, and categories frame our perception in particular ways. These categories, moreover, are value laden. We learn to look for those qualities that are labelled, but especially for ones that have particular value for us. ...Thus, our aims influence our language, and our language influences our perception.<sup>13</sup>

Further, we give our values (honesty, truth, love) and concepts (in film, dialogue, the quality of the story, characterization) names, and then give specific meanings to these names. The names were originally derived from earlier perceptions of qualities that were conceptualized and then given a particular name. A process ensues:

As one moves from labels to relationships among labels and from there to explanations for the covariability among the qualities the labels designate, one acquires theory. Theories are complex explanatory structures designed to satisfy human rationality, need for order, and desire to anticipate the future -- if not always to control it. Labels and theories ... are among the most useful 'technologies of mind'.<sup>14</sup>

Theories have a serious drawback as well. Theories, while allowing us to make sense out of our experiences, also have an innate tendency to limit those same experiences. Filtering our experiences through our theories inhibits our ability to experience that data which does not fit into that theory because we tend to ignore those details which do not fit neatly into our theories/filters. Knowing

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 66 & 67.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

our filters, for this reason, becomes absolutely imperative.

Eisner speaks of epistemic seeing or the kind of knowledge we obtain through our faculty of sight.<sup>15</sup> Knowledge is not merely about analytical truth propositions, but includes an overall awareness of the qualities which our senses provide us. He thus expands his concept of sight knowledge to include all the senses, and the qualities to which they are sensitive (being in a darkened room with a group of strangers, the sound of a speaker system, visual stimulation). To be aware of these qualities is the source of our knowledge. In order for us to become aware we must first become conscious of the particular qualities, and then cultivate the ability to see the particular as part of a larger whole. We must be able to make connections. With this as background,

Connoisseurship is the means through which we come to know the complexities, nuances, and subtleties of aspects of the world in which we have a special interest.<sup>16</sup>

Knowledge acquisition is thus a process of becoming aware. We all have this capacity of connoisseurship to some extent in certain areas of our lives. As our skill of connoisseurship is developed we are able to make finer discernments of the qualities we experience which, in turn, allows us to form a more complete conceptual framework through which our experience interacts with the sensory qualities. We possess countless experiential imprints which we draw upon to allow us to order and make sense of our many experiences. For Eisner, connoisseurship is the art of "appropriate application of criteria to the

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68.

instance."<sup>17</sup>

Summarizing Eisner's methodology, in order for one to nurture connoisseurship three steps must occur:

1. One must see or experience or be aware of the event.
2. The event must be placed within a class of similar events remembered by the individual or the group. This class must extend along a continuum from the best to the worst.
3. A choice must be made as to where this event must be placed on the continuum.

As these three steps occur we must simultaneously keep in mind the following:

1. There is no single ideal to which the event can be related. What we consider to be excellent comes in many different forms. Different concepts of value lead to different value estimates of the event. As well, who experiences the event influences how the event is experienced.
2. Within an event like teaching or viewing a film virtually everything differs from teacher to teacher and film to film.

An educational connoisseur must "attend to everything that is relevant either for satisfying a specific educational aim or for illuminating the educational state of affairs in general".<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71.

Adapting Eisner's Connoisseurship to a Theological Reflection  
Method for Feature Film

How, then, can one parallel Eisner's educational connoisseurship with a theological reflection method for feature film? Making use of Eisner's framework, my first step is to offer a definition for connoisseurship of film for theological reflection. *Connoisseurship of film is the art of appreciation coupled with our capacity to make educated theological discriminations among the complex and subtle qualities of film.*

Connoisseurship and the Role of Perception

To develop the art of appreciation one must take into consideration the role of *perception*. In this theological model, perception is what the viewer brings to the film being watched. Our perceptions are informed by our experiences as well as the experiences and traditions that informed the theological community of which we are a part. One cannot appreciate the present without some recollection of the past. Our experience in the present can tell us that, in some cases, the past experience is worth letting go while in other cases, the past will inform how we take in the present.

As well as cultivating the quality of perception, a theological connoisseur of film must:

1. **Consciously or critically watch the film and have the abilities to make theological distinctions. As the viewer is aware of his/her value system, ultimately (theologically) he/she will be aware of**



the values presented in the film. As the viewer is conscious of his/her experiences and/or feelings, he/she will recognize the characters with whom he/she relates well and those with whom he/she does not and why this process takes place

2. Be aware that he/she possesses this perceptivity to observe theological distinctions and
3. Have the ability to place the film being watched into a larger genre of films -- i.e. -- character films, 'action-hero' films, war films, etc. and be aware of the theological assumptions associated with the particular film genre with which he/she is concerned.

### Connoisseurship and Understanding Ourselves

Note some of the words in the preceding paragraph -- *awareness, perceptivity, experience, values*. Such words emphasize that theological film connoisseurship is an art, and not a mechanical process. Watching films depends on a number of variables which ultimately make the experience a highly subjective one. The many factors that influence this process need to be named in order that some methodology can be created with an awareness of this reality. One of the first prerequisites we need to come to grips with is ourselves -- we need to understand ourselves -- particularly ourselves in relation to the created world of feature film.

What are we looking for and what are our filters? How does our personal experience influence what we will look for in a film and how we will process the information? Our psychological and social filters will allow us to see the

theological dimension of a film, but will also limit us as to what theological dimension we will see or accept. At this point I am interested in exploring some of the features behind the power of film and how these features relate to our filters.

While the human psyche and our understanding of what and who we are is quite diverse, everyone is influenced by archetypal images. A constant theme in the works of Eliade is that it is inconceivable that either the human psyche or nature will ever be drained of at least the vestiges of the sacred. Archetypal image and sacred object remain irrepressible.<sup>19</sup>

Quoting Martha Nussbaum, Margaret Miles writes the following:

... Like classical drama, film represents the particular class, behaviour, and loyalties of its characters. It also often provides nuanced explorations of emotion. Moreover, popular film represents characters in situations and quandaries that often bear a marked resemblance to our own, making visible social issues that could not be presented with immediacy and power in any other format.<sup>20</sup>

Film has an unique responsibility to mirror our human reality. In mirroring our reality, the viewer sees characters with whom he/she relates readily and those with whom he/she does not relate readily. The quality of the responsiveness in the relationship is often related to the archetypal qualities of a person's character. In short, the contemporary audience, much the same as its distant ancestors, responds to those archetypal images presented in our stories. The archetypes help the viewer to know instinctively what it is that he/she is

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<sup>19</sup> John May, "Visual Story and the Religious Interpretation of Film", Religion in Film, p. 23.

<sup>20</sup> Miles., p. 7.

looking for because there is a resounding sense of familiarity with story elements and characters that one has seen before.

### Connoisseurship and the Making of Educated Theological Discriminations

In ancient Greece, theatre was understood to identify and explore a central question -- how human beings should live. It is not a far-fetched claim that popular films can also be seen as implicitly, if not explicitly, addressing the question of how human beings should live. In other words, films explore ethical questions. Films offer varying philosophies, psychologies, and theologies.

The question of how we should live may not be very well thought out for the viewer. In fact it may not even be a conscious formulation. But, if the audience looks at films with a hope of finding a response to the eternal question there are a range of answers available.

Serious film watchers are few. Many view film as a mindless activity or as an escape. When someone watches a film seriously, however, that person can choose whether to accept, reject, or adopt a film's proposed values only when the question of how to live is consciously brought to the experience of watching and thinking about the film. Films generally do not explicitly tell the viewers how to live their lives. Watching is an individual experience. Miles writes:

Twentieth-century [people] do not think of film going as an especially social or communal activity. Each person is effectively isolated in the darkened theatre. People are next to each other but cannot make eye contact, and we are requested not to talk during the show. By contrast, ancient audiences, sitting in the

common daylight, saw the orchestra. They simultaneously saw the dramatic action, felt in themselves the emotions elicited by the action, and observed their fellow citizens' reactions.<sup>21</sup>

Clearly, late twentieth-century moviegoers lack the communal religious setting that signalled the fundamental seriousness of drama to Greek audiences. Can we, who love to be entertained, but who also think about 'how we should live', gather material for considering our lives from the movies? Can we think of going to the movies as a way of seeking the transcendent? Putting the two questions together is our next priority.

### Theological Connoisseurship and the Quest for Transcendence

Michael Bird quotes Mikel Dufrenne when he writes of the search for the transcendent in our culture:

Belief-ful realism expresses the fundamental ambiguity in which discernment of the transcendent is made possible by turning in the direction of the real. Indeed, the problem of religious language itself is rooted in the necessary task of designating this paradoxical relationship of realism and self-transcendence: Religious terms are the more adequate, the more they express this paradox in its depth and power. Belief-ful realism represents, then a religion-and-culture typology which is at once 'realistic' and 'self-transcending', which in its seeking of the unconditioned focuses upon the concretely finite, which perceives culture both as surface and as transparent to its religious depth.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>22</sup> Bird., p. 7.

Dufrenne's notion of a 'sensuous realism' as a means by which the viewer is brought into an encounter with a 'depth' in the world is an important concept when one considers the questions of underpinning.<sup>23</sup> According to this view, "meaning is not primarily something that I think with detachment but something that concerns and determines me, resonating in me and moving me. ... Meaning is a demand to which I respond with my body. To feel is to transcend. ..." <sup>24</sup>

In contrast, Tillich, in his analysis of culture and transcendence, places an emphasis upon the real as distinct from Dufrenne's emphasis on the sensuous. "Both stress the importance of the concrete, of tangible reality, as the focal point of ontological analysis, opposing the views of idealism or supernaturalism, which lead away from the everyday real" <sup>25</sup> Tillich strives for the deepest place of being whereas Dufrenne maintains experience is that which is 'really real'. If the 'real' world of these characters is that which is placed before me, do I resonate with their vision of humanity or do I see a vision of life that is calling me to a new way of being?

Because many films do not invite us to a new vision of humanity through their reinforcement of the current cultural values is not reason to dismiss them. In fact, it is a greater reason to explore why these values and this way of being has such a power. On the one hand, the seduction of the audience by films, and on the other, to the hunger of human beings in the midst of a technological civilization to have their lives taken up into a more potent, magical realm is part

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

of our reality. If the audience can more deeply understand what the deeper message of the film is, the clues to this influence can help the viewer enter into a deeper conversation/contemplation of the world from which this film emerges.

Humanity hungers for a world in which we are more powerful than we are in the everyday world. Film exploits this want by providing us with heroes who exercise control in the cinematic world which far exceeds our daily experience. Movies give us a magically transformed and ordered world where the discontinuity between desire and reality is overcome:<sup>26</sup>

... The experience of seeing a familiar world imaginatively transformed in film may allow the viewer to hope that his/her often chaotic daily experience is not the last word. This element also accounts for the power of cinema. Indeed, we may now understand that the great film is the one that returns us to the world with a sense that we have to see, to use a liturgical formula, 'in, with, and under' the recognizable and familiar in the film to a larger world of order and significance.<sup>27</sup>

In a society such as ours, it stands to reason that film represents a silent saviour.<sup>28</sup> People look to film to fulfil a great number of needs. Therefore it is essential to examine not only what is missing in peoples' lives, but to comprehend how much religion has to learn from film in the chaotic swirl of the latter part of our century. Having looked at film as it relates to the individual still leaves us with the problem of how to make sense of all this data we are receiving. In terms of this dissertation, the question becomes 'How can

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 112.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 112.

we structure this data through theological lenses to better appreciate ourselves and our world in relation to God'?

### Beyond Our Theological Lenses

In order to nurture connoisseurship of film with theological reflection, the steps presented earlier on pages 148 - 149 will act as a methodological guide. While they may seem self-explanatory and easy to accomplish in theory, in practice, because each of these steps demands an educated awareness, many of us fail to critically follow them. Briefly, the steps are:

1. We have to critically see the film unfolding before us.
2. We must place the film into the genre of films from which it comes.
3. We place the film on the continuum of the class from best to worst.

As we follow these steps we must keep in mind:

1. There is no single ideal of a perfect film.
2. The film will be different from any other film.
3. Connoisseurship must keep in mind factors which will influence the experiential interpretation. Some of these factors may be: seeing a film in the cinema or on broadcast television or VCR, the reaction of the audience in the cinema, the reviews, if read, prior to seeing a film, the comfort level while watching a film or the societal filters which subtly state a point (the changing roles of women in this decade of film is striking when compared to films made in the 1960s for example).

From the story, the audience will learn what the writer/director considers to be important. To make educated judgments about the significance of the content of the story, we must know what the story is trying to present and the alternative ways that content has been presented in other films of that genre and/or in other mediums – i.e. the faithfulness to the human/divine nature of Christ. For example, almost every film about Jesus will tip the scale too far one way or the other.

### Theological Worlds as a Component of Theological Connoisseurship

To this point, the theological reflection method has been given a frame to support it. The next step, to give it its ‘theological’ character, is to infuse the frame with theological filters. The theological filters, the theological worlds used to line the frame of this reflection method, come from the work of W. Paul Jones<sup>29</sup>. Theological reflection of feature film within ‘theological worlds’ encourages a ‘connoisseurship’ of the many ‘worlds’ that exist. The “Theological Worlds Inventory” was developed with a view to help the student know his/her ‘theological world’. In the interaction of the student’s sensitization to his/her “theological world”, this theological reflection method will help the student to recognize his/her theological filters and their effect on the way(s) he/she is able to interact with the film and its ‘theological worlds’.

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<sup>29</sup> W. Paul Jones, Theological Worlds. (Nashville: Abington Press, 1989).



## A Summary of the Theological Worlds<sup>30</sup>

### World One: Separation and Reunion

For inhabitants of this world, there is often a sense of abandonment. Within this huge cosmos, we feel isolated, small, lonely – a speck in a vast and staggering space. At times we seem to be aliens, or orphans. Life tends to be a quest to understand the mystery of this whole. Our longing is to find our way home, back to the Whole. We yearn wistfully for a harmony to all things, while being haunted by the sad thought that there may be no other world but this one.

Resolution as the promise of homecoming can begin through experiencing the fact of our existence as itself a gift. In sensing this mystery of being, one can be touched with awe. Such sensitivity often comes in sacramental moments in which we are grasped in oneness with the Ground of our being. It is as if a veil is lifted, if only for a moment, and we know that we truly do belong. Such moments serve as centre point for the turning wheel, the unchanging in the changing, the eternal in the flux.

The cycle of nature reflects, almost liturgically, the cycle of life itself: birth, death, rebirth. Experiences of this ongoing rhythm are foretastes of a hoped-for cosmic harmony, that final reunion of everything that is separated. Even in this world, touches of paradise can be sensed around us. It is when we do not understand this, or forget, that we despair. But we are nonetheless bitten by

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<sup>30</sup> I am using the work of Bruce Wheatcroft, a colleague in the Doctor of Ministry program, to present Jones' Theological Worlds Inventory. Paul Jones, "Theological Worlds Inventory, Discovering One's Self and One's Congregation," 1994.

eternity, so that neither this life nor this earth can ever really feel like home. The meaning of our craving is to return from whence we came, losing ourselves in God. Day-to-day authenticity results from becoming transparent to God, living such that we point beyond ourselves to the Power of Being in which we are all grounded.

Some of the major filters we need to be aware of in 'world one' are:

- abandonment;
- need to establish unity;
- longing for a better world;
- need to find harmony; and
- the need to lose oneself in the mystery of life.

### World Two: Conflict and Vindication

In this world, history and its various institutions are tainted with self-interest. Conflict seems to be at the heart of life, even of nature, with many persons deprived of the means needed for living. Wherever one turns, the scene is a drama of winners and losers. Death is the final enemy, symbolizing the hostility which resists the crucial goal of humanizing this world. The foe is widespread, for even the cosmos is beset by entropy, so that such haemorrhaging seems to give to each part a sense of being violated. Thus threatened by the possibility of chaos, persons are tempted to grasp for power, escalating their world toward the threat of nuclear destruction. Nations seem willing to 'bring it all down' rather than lose. At one level or another, then, one keeps being

pushed into being a 'warrior'. Our reaction too often is one of anger or rage. Reform is called for, even rebellion. Yet even though one is determined to change the world, such efforts sometimes feel as though they lead toward a never-ending defeat.

Hope for resolution is rooted in the vision of a new heaven and a new earth, to be realized as liberation within the here and now. In Shakespeare's words, 'all's well that ends well'. Otherwise history is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing. Since death in all forms is God's foe, resurrection, then, provides promise not only to the individual, but to history itself. On behalf of that goal, God takes sides, being committed to the poor, the captive, the blind, and the oppressed – and so must we. God calls us to be co-creators in this completion of creation. History will be vindicated by its completion, flowing back to give meaning to each part as means to that end. "Thy kingdom come on earth, as it already is in heaven". One way to work toward that vision is to live as if the end is already here. Such hope in the God of the future makes us never satisfied with what is. This is why the prophet believes in a hope worth dying for.

Filters that we need to be aware of in 'world two' are:

- conflict;
- chaos;
- the world's instability;
- hope to bring about something new in the world;
- eventual vindication.

### World Three: Emptiness and Fulfilment

Those who inhabit this World are concerned with the self, for the dilemma that has taken hold of them is self-estrangement. One is uneasy that if people really knew me, they wouldn't like me. It isn't so much that I'm bad; it's as if there may not be much there. If my mask were to slip, it would be all over. But perhaps that wouldn't change things much after all, since often no one seems to care. The problem for many of us in this world is that often we are made to feel invisible, impotent, unheard, or insignificant. We are afterthoughts, outcasts, as it were. And inside there is this emptiness, a void, an ache that resides in one's midsection -- the fear of being nobody, which in turn hinders action for fear of being rejected. So I try to be who others want me to be, until I don't know who I am. And yet still I don't belong. My life seems like a deception, as I become increasingly alienated even from myself. The result is a paralysis, an aimlessness, a floundering -- trapped by myself within myself. My reward is a strange comfort in inertia -- where it is too late for action, too soon for regrets.

Resolution begins by being awakened to one's possibilities, usually by the support of a promise of a caring friend or group. In being accepted, one is lured toward wholeness and fulfilment. For the Christian, such meaning emerges not only through the nurture of a Christian community, but through the one who in scripture models life as giving and receiving love. In being loved for who I am, I can be and become my true self. Knowing from within that real self hood means

to love and be loved, I am empowered to realize my potential. Such faith involves so believing in myself that I dare feel again, unable to love others if I do not love myself. The delicious mystery of living is growth, expansiveness, fulfilment -- the dynamic of redeemed life. It entails a cycle that nature models for us. Death is part of the life process, just as rebirth is part of the death process. Throughout, the focus is self-discovery, self-growth, self-risk. Therein God is not distant, but experienced as present in a world that becomes friendly in its orderliness and hospitable in its potentiality.

Filters that we need to be aware of in 'world three' are:

- self-estrangement;
- powerlessness;
- emptiness;
- alienation;
- self-acceptance.

#### World Four: Condemnation and Forgiveness

This world is characterized by the struggle with temptation and sin. Within each of us is a tendency toward arrogance, to play 'god' by idolizing who we are and what we possess. While we prefer to see our questionable behaviour as rooted in ignorance, more often than not we deliberately choose what is wrong, often because it is 'forbidden fruit'. In the quiet hours, it is hard to dispel a sense of guilt, evoked often by fear of judgment. We can feel like fugitives. This condition has to do not simply with what we do, but with an inner disposition. In trying to change, we experience an impotence to be otherwise, as

if we are diseased. It is as though there is a deep need within me to justify my life, to convince myself and others that I am worthy of living. Thus life becomes an unending chore to be done. Yet I can never do enough, and so this drive flirts heavily with self-deception – in regarding myself as being far better than I am. But the truth is that the good I want to do, I don't do; and what I shouldn't want to do is precisely what I end up doing. So I am caught, with even my efforts at selflessness being selfishly motivated.

Since I cannot get out of my own way, resolution becomes possible only through God's intervention, centring in the gift of forgiveness. Repentance, leading to conversion, exhibits faith as trust that we have received reprieve, even though in no way do we deserve it. In spite of our unacceptability, God adopts us, not simply as children, but as heirs of eternal life. This is why the word 'grace' is so important, for the Gospel is the miracle of the empty hands. The Christian's life is one of paradox – in which God forgives the unforgivable, loves the unlovable, and accepts the unacceptable. Our call is to respond in faithful obedience to this proclamation. Emphasis is not on self-realization but on self-sacrifice. Good works are not done in order to receive, but are spontaneous and joyous responses to being already justified by God's graciousness. Thus life is lived on a pendulum swinging between repentance and forgiveness and characterized by thankful humility.

Filters that we need to be aware of in 'world four' are:

- struggle;
- true identity found in paradox;
- need for forgiveness;
- repentance.

### World Five: Suffering and Endurance

The dilemma which focuses life for citizens of this world is life itself, the way things are. There is a heaviness to daily living so that it seems that whatever can go wrong, will. And whatever was troublesome yesterday will surely happen again and again. While the characters and settings change, the plot remains basically the same – as variations on the theme of ‘victim’. Whether the examples are a poor person who knows deprivation from without, or a successful one who is being eaten by cancer from within, there is the same sense of being engulfed, controlled, wronged, as if a refugee. Suffering is the one constant, the sign of living near the edge. One is unable to exist without being scarred. Life often feels like a predator. So one is tempted not to feel anymore, to trade in trying for a cynical fatigue. Worn down in one’s courageous fortitude, distrust is often the best defence against being done in. This is a hard world, one not readily chosen, for sadness edges even the joys.

Although one cannot really change the way things are, one does have a choice as how to live. Resolution, ironically, can come through suffering, as through a refining fire, as it were. Travail, rightly faced, can bring healing, in which integrity is birthed. Integrity is a determined willingness to outlast, to persevere, no matter what. Spirit is that strange power which strengthens one to press on, even when one can think of no better reason than just keeping on keeping on. For the Christian, such faithfulness, no matter what the consequences, is rooted in the belief that we are not alone. Because God is

suffering with us, we can endure to the end. On Golgotha, God screams in agony with us, drinking deeply of all that we too go through; therefore nothing can separate us from such a God. Redeemed life has little to do with grand designs or miraculous reversals. It has an integrity born of tenacity on the daily road. A redeemed life respects the small and the commonplace. A knowing glance and a sharing hand are the manna which feed us. What gives dignity to life is the quality of never quitting when we face whatever happens without being deceived, we win a 'moral victory'. What matters is not the quantity of life but the quality of living. Thus, life is to be drunk to the dregs, for one has only one life to live. One must take 'one day at a time'.

Filters that we need to be aware of in 'world five' are:

- foreboding outlook;
- victim of life's hardships;
- suffering servant;
- distrust of motivations of others;
- perseverance.

Jones's 'theological worlds' serves the theological reflection method in two complementary ways. First, it provides us with a means to identify our own theological lenses and what we will allow ourselves to either observe or accept. Second, the 'theological worlds' provides us with a tool through which we can filter the meaning of particular films. Both of these two ways are expanded upon in the next section.



### My Theological Reflection Method for Feature Film

Perception is informed by the 'theological world(s)' that influence(s) the viewer. An individual's perceptions are informed by his/her experiences as well as the experiences and traditions that inform the 'theological world' of which he/she is a part. Using Eisner's framework of connoisseurship, Jones' concepts of 'theological worlds', and questions that are pertinent to religious experience, I have developed the following theological reflection method for feature film<sup>31</sup>:

#### 1) The Intentional Dimension:

a) Is there an intentional theological message?

b) What 'theological worlds' do you see being represented?

Do the 'theological worlds' assert themselves overtly/covertly?

c) Does the film have a particular 'theological world' at heart?

Do the other 'theological worlds' surface in the film?

d) What values are implicitly and explicitly stated in film?

e) Does the writer/director want to emphasize the importance of a particular 'theological world'?

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<sup>31</sup> This method will provide a richer experience if one reads Theological Worlds and completes the 'Theological Worlds Inventory'.

2) The Structural Dimension:

- a) What is the organizational form (controlling idea) of the film and how does this influence the message of the film?

What 'theological world' does the organizational form of the film represent and how does this influence the message of the film?

- b) Does the organizational structure of the film facilitate the audience seeing a particular 'theological world'?

3) The Curriculum Dimension or the Content Dimension:

- a) What is the connection between the themes in the story with themes in Scripture?
- b) Does the script indicate a preference for a 'theological world'? Does the script indicate preferences for 'theological worlds' relative to characters?
- c) Did the producer/director's 'theological world' respect the 'theological world' of the medium's 'theological world' from which it was lifted (if it was transferred from another medium)?

4) The Pedagogical Dimension:

- a) All films are mediated by many sources -- writer, actors, director, cinematographer, editors, current cultural values. Which of these sources are

dominant in the film under consideration?

Does the 'theological world' of the dominant vision in the movie show through?

- b) What the audience takes away from the film will almost always go beyond what the filmmakers intend. How does the film convey its message?

Does the audience have an openness to the 'theological world' of the filmmaker?

5) The Evaluative Dimension:

- a) How should the film be evaluated theologically?

- situational/contextual ethics/morals;
- sensitivity to peoples' relationships;
- transcendence of culture;
- recognizable traits of God;
- does the film help the viewer look below the surface?
- does the film let the audience in to the emotional 'worlds' of the characters?
- does the audience have a chance to exercise its desire to be the connoisseur of the character's lives?

- b) How does the film's 'theological world' present situational/contextual ethics/morals?

How does the film's dominant/lesser 'theological world' demonstrate sensitivity to peoples'

relationships?

- c) How does the film, if at all, transcend culture?  
How does the film's transcendence relate to the 'theological world' of the film?
- d) What was the purpose behind the film?
  - to tell a story;
  - to make a particular point about cultural/religious values;
  - to make a huge profit.

In my adaptation of Eisner's method one can learn to appreciate feature film in a twofold manner:

- 1) feature film offers many opportunities for theological reflection;
- 2) the person who applies this theological reflection method to a film has a good tool with which to appreciate the film – enough usage of this tool will, indeed, allow him/her to become a connoisseur of feature film because 'theological worlds' provide an excellent filter for the information contained in a full-length feature film.

Connoisseurship will be the reward for those who will refine their skills. Connoisseurship also offers the benefit of theological virtue, to use an old expression; the connoisseur is, in the first instance, the one who shows appreciation for something, in our case for the value of feature film within

theological reflection. Further, the connoisseur possesses the skills to make those subjective theological discriminations. Thus, spiritually, the connoisseur can come to have a new appreciation of God. This is the heart of theological reflection.

This theological reflection method is thorough in its approach. In the next chapter I compare my method to Miles' cultural studies approach (which we discussed in chapter 2). As well, I will compare my method with two other methods of film appreciation -- Lloyd Baugh's hermeneutical method<sup>32</sup> and a method which considers whether or not a film is a myth or a parable by John R. May and Michael Bird.<sup>33</sup> While these methods of theological exploration are complementary, I will demonstrate how my method is well-suited to theological reflection both for the student of theology and for the person who is simply interested in viewing film and who may be interested in engaging a process of theological reflection after viewing.

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32 Lloyd Baugh, Imaging the Divine: Jesus and Christ-Figures in Film. (Kansas: Sheed & Ward, 1997).

33 John R. May and Michael Bird, Religion in Film, (Knoxville: U. of Tenn. Press, 1981).

## **Chapter 4**

### **My Theological Reflection Method** **Alongside Other Methods**

## Chapter Four

In the preceding chapter, I outlined my method of theological connoisseurship, which incorporates some of the ideas of Eisner and Jones; however, Eisner and Jones were not the only theorists to influence my method of theological reflection. I have been influenced by three other theorists whose methodologies are instructive for any serious theological connoisseur of film. Indeed, in subtle ways, I have also incorporated their thinking into my own method. Therefore, to provide my theological reflection method with a solid foundation, I will now demonstrate how these other methods complement and build up to my own method. These complementary methods are:

- 1) Lloyd Baugh's Hermeneutical Method;<sup>1</sup>
- 2) Margaret Miles' Cultural Studies' Method<sup>2</sup> of Film Reflection; and
- 3) John May's and Michael Bird's idea of film as Myth or Parable?<sup>3</sup>

Chapter four introduces:

- 1) Baugh's "essential dimensions and typical guises of the Christ-figure".<sup>4</sup>
- 2) Miles' cultural studies' methodology and the two major questions it contains:
  - a) How should we live?

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<sup>1</sup> Lloyd Baugh, Imaging the Divine: Jesus and Christ-Figures in Film. (Kansas: Sheed & Ward, 1997).

<sup>2</sup> Margaret Miles, Seeing and Believing. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996).

<sup>3</sup> John R. May and Michael Bird, Religion in Film, (Knoxville: U. of Tenn. Press, 1981).

<sup>4</sup> Baugh., p. 205.

- b) Do we need to consider a wider definition of religion?
- 3) May's and Bird's approach to religious interpretation of film.<sup>5</sup>:
- a) Knowing whether a story is a myth or a parable is a helpful screen through which to understand the theological significance of a film.

I will also demonstrate what I consider to be the weakness of each of these methods and how my method of theological reflection answers these weaknesses. I will show that the essential question my method will address is:

*How does an awareness of the characters', the story's, and one's "theological world" contribute to one's development as a connoisseur of feature film?*

### Lloyd Baugh's Hermeneutical Method

Baugh's work on Jesus films and Christ-figure films is, in my opinion, the most accessible work in this field. His work is an excellent prerequisite for my method of theological reflection because it demonstrates the abundance of the Christ-figure motif in feature film. Knowing that this Christ-figure motif is widespread provides fertile ground for theological reflection on the telling of the Christ story in the many different genres of feature film. Initially, then, let us turn to Baugh's definition of the Christ-figure.

How does Baugh define the profile of the Christ-figure?

The profile of the Christ-figure in film can include a number of elements or dimensions, all of which can be recognized on the one hand in the fullness of their meaning in Jesus the Christ, and on the other hand to a lesser extent in the figure of Christ represented in the

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<sup>5</sup> John R. May and Michael Bird, Religion in Film, (Knoxville: U. of Tenn. Press, 1981), pp. 36 & 37.



film in question. At the same time, the filmic Christ-figure assumes a number different guises or forms, each of which serves as an appropriate metaphor of the totality of the Christ-event or some dimension thereof.<sup>6</sup>

The Christ-figure does not always reflect the totality of the Christ-event; therefore, a consideration of how different dimensions of the Christ-event are manifested is essential.<sup>7</sup> The following section, then, is a detailed outline of how Baugh sees the Christ-figure manifested in feature film.

### Some Motifs of the Christ-Figure

#### 1) The Transcendental Character

“Reflecting the transcendental character or at least origins of the Word-of-God-made-flesh, the filmic Christ-figure often has mysterious origins. For example, in the film, *E.T.*<sup>8</sup> the Christ-figure comes from outer space”. The theme of divine origins is a theme that is often treated in an erroneous mythical manner, for example in the first *Superman*<sup>9</sup> film.<sup>10</sup>

#### 2) Reflecting the Actions of Jesus Christ the Master

Reflecting the actions of Jesus Christ the Master, the protagonists in many

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<sup>6</sup> Baugh., p. 205.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 205.

<sup>8</sup> *E.T.*, dir Steven Spielberg with Dee Wallace and Peter Coyote , 1982.

<sup>9</sup> *Superman*, dir Richard Donner with Christopher Reeve and Margot Kidder, 1978.

<sup>10</sup> Baugh., p. 206.

Christ-figure films attract a group of followers whom they teach and form and save.<sup>11</sup> Billy Kwan in *The Year of Living Dangerously*,<sup>12</sup> acts as master and guide for Guy Hamilton, in the end paying for Hamilton's salvation with his life.<sup>13</sup>

### 3) The Commitment to Justice

Another motif typical of the Christ-figure is that of the commitment to justice. The protagonist of the film often enters a community or a situation in which injustices are being perpetrated against the people, and one aspect of his mission is to free the people from this yoke. This pattern is clear in many westerns, for example *Pale Rider*<sup>14</sup> in which the protagonist-heroes are Christ-figures; it is crucial in the popular Christic hero films such as those of the *Batman*<sup>15</sup> and *Superman*<sup>16</sup> cycles.<sup>17</sup>

### 4) Christ Worked Miracles

Working wonders is common in popular superhero films such as *Batman* and *Superman*.<sup>18</sup> It is rather problematic in the serious Christ-figure film, because miracle and mystery are categories not widely credible in the modern

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11 *Ibid.*, p. 206.

12 *The Year of Living Dangerously*, dir Peter Wier with Mel Gibson and Sigourney Weaver, 1983.

13 *Baugh.*, p. 206.

14 *Pale Rider*, dir Clint Eastwood with Clint Eastwood and Michael Moriarity, 1985.

15 *Batman*, dir Tim Burton with Michael Keaton and Jack Nicholson, 1989.

16 *Superman*, dir Richard Donner with Christopher Reeve and Margot Kidder, 1978.

17 *Baugh.*, p. 206.

18 *Ibid.*, p. 206.

and postmodern worlds.<sup>19</sup>

5) The Conflict between the Protagonist and some Authority Figure or Figures

In the gospels, perhaps the element which creates the most dramatic tension is the conflict between Jesus and the Jewish religious authorities.<sup>20</sup> In *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*,<sup>21</sup> the protagonist McMurphy is pitted against Nurse Ratched and the hospital authorities.<sup>22</sup>

6) Jesus Christ in His Passion and Death Redeemed Humankind

Jesus was the sacrificial victim, the scapegoat, who took onto himself the sins of the world. In the conclusion of *Shane*,<sup>23</sup> the protagonist, having in a sense taken onto himself the sins of the people he has saved, rides out of town towards the wilderness, like the biblical scapegoat.<sup>24</sup>

7) Jesus Withdrew to a Deserted Place

"The gospels tell us that Jesus often withdrew to a 'deserted place' (Lk. 4:42) to pray".<sup>25</sup> "A low-key but crucial example of this is in *Cool Hand Luke*<sup>26</sup> where the director has Luke, as he hides out in the church, awaiting the

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19 *Ibid.*, p. 206.

20 *Ibid.*, p. 207.

21 *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, dir Milos Forman with Jack Nicholson and Christopher Lloyd, 1975.

22 *Baugh.*, p. 207.

23 *Shane*, dir George Stevens with Alan Ladd and Jean Arthur, 1953.

24 *Baugh.*, p. 207.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 207.

26 *Cool Hand Luke*, dir Stuart Rosenberg with Paul Newman and George Kennedy, 1967.

final showdown and his death, address a very direct and impassioned prayer to God, powerful because it is so familiar in tone: the parallel to Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane is evident".<sup>27</sup>

#### 8) Styles of Prayer of Christ-Figures

"Perhaps the closest the cinema of Christ-figures comes to represent the profound mystical prayer of Jesus is, as we have seen, in *Jesus of Montreal*,<sup>28</sup> in the experience of the young actor Daniel as he, in the role of Jesus in the passion play, hangs on the cross. In these two remarkable sequences, Arcand's Christ-figure comes closest to the Christ he represents or figures".<sup>29</sup>

#### 9) Jesus in his Passion was the Fulfilment of the Suffering Servant

"The protagonist of David Lynch's film, *The Elephant Man*<sup>30</sup>, in his life situation, cruelly deformed, reified by men, object of ridicule and of false accusations and injustice, reproduces in his own flesh and experience the situation of the suffering servant".<sup>31</sup>

#### 10) The Shedding of Blood

The shedding of blood, representing the blood of Jesus, shed like that of the sacrificial lamb for the redemption of humankind, is often a dimension of

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<sup>27</sup> Baugh., p. 208.

<sup>28</sup> *Jesus of Montreal*, dir Denys Arcand with Lothaire Bluteau and Catherine Wilkening, 1989.

<sup>29</sup> Baugh., p. 208.

<sup>30</sup> *The Elephant Man*, dir David Lynch with Anthony Hopkins and John Hurt, 1980.

<sup>31</sup> Baugh., p. 209.

the dynamic of the Christ-figure film.<sup>32</sup> In *Romero*,<sup>33</sup> the Archbishop is shot at the moment of the elevation of the chalice of consecrated wine, so that in a very powerful christic symbol, the blood of the dying martyr is literally mixed with the sacrificial blood of Christ.<sup>34</sup>

#### 11) The Via Crucis

The *via crucis*, the representation of the suffering Jesus carrying his cross to Calvary, is almost always suggested in a metaphorical way in the Christ-figure film.<sup>35</sup> In *Dead Man Walking*,<sup>36</sup> the nun and Christ-figure reaches out to the good-thief figure on his cross. The gesture is clearly suggestive of that of Jesus on his cross, 'reaching out' to the repentant thief.<sup>37</sup>

#### 12) Metaphorical Images of the Resurrection

A filmic Christ-figure is authenticated when there is some metaphorical representation of the Resurrection.<sup>38</sup> In the conclusion of *The Legend of the Holy Drinker*,<sup>39</sup> the protagonist, Andreas, having completed the mission given him by a mysterious stranger and a God-figure, dies in the sacristy of a church. It is a Sunday morning, the church bells are ringing, and Olmi places Andreas on the ceremonial throne reserved for the Bishop, surrounding him with priests

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 209.

<sup>33</sup> *Romero*, dir John Duigan with Raul Julia and Richard Jordan, 1989.

<sup>34</sup> *Baugh*, p. 209.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 209.

<sup>36</sup> *Dead Man Walking*, dir Tim Robbins with Susan Sarandon and Sean Penn, 1995.

<sup>37</sup> *Baugh*, p. 209.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 210.

<sup>39</sup> *The Legend of the Holy Drinker*, dir Ermanno Olmi, 1988.

and acolytes. For Andreas, an unreformed alcoholic and derelict who lives under the bridges along the Seine, but who finally acquires some self-respect, this death -- with a shaft of sunlight shining on his face -- is a Resurrection-victory.<sup>40</sup>

In addition to providing us with some motifs of the Christ-figure, Baugh goes on to provide us with models of the filmic Christ-Figure. He writes of such a figure in this manner:

The filmic Christ-figure is embodied in a variety of guises or models, some traditional and others rather original, some representing the totality of the Christ-event and others of a more limited scope, only some of its aspects. We recall that at times the Christ-figure is a dominant presence, with a major significance for the overall theme of the film and at times it is embodied in a secondary character or even in a single image, effective only for a brief moment and with a limited significance in the film as a whole.<sup>41</sup>

### Some Models of Filmic Christ-Figures

#### 1) The Saint as Christ-Figure

The New Testament challenges all Christians to be followers of Christ, to model their lives after him, to be Christ-figures. Evidently, the Christian saint fulfils this challenge to a particularly high degree, and thus is more clearly an image or figure of Christ. "In film ... not all saints qualify as Christ-figures, just as not all filmic Jesus representations are valid. ... In general, in the case of saints who receive the stigmata, the visual signs of the passion of Christ, their

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<sup>40</sup> Baugh, p. 210.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 210.

representation of Christ is more evident. Yet again here, choices of the director regarding style and content can reverse the meaning and actually negate the significance of the Christ-figure".<sup>42</sup>

Films about saints have been around since the beginning of the film art. Already in 1898, George Hatot had made a short film, *Jeanne d'Arc* <sup>43</sup>. This was followed in 1917 by *Joan the Woman*<sup>44</sup>, the first of sixteen films dedicated to the French saint. In 1911, *Il poverello d'Assisi*,<sup>45</sup> was made, the first of nine films on Saint Francis of Assisi. In 1897, Walter Hagggar made *The Sign of the Cross* <sup>46</sup> – it was remade by DeMille in 1932 – the first of a seemingly endless series of films on the early Christian martyrs, in which there are six *Quo Vadis* <sup>47</sup> films, reaching from 1901 to 1985.<sup>48</sup>

## 2) The Priest as Christ-Figure

In this motif a character is presented, the priest or minister, who through ordination represents Christ in the celebration of the sacraments, and who in his/her mission represents the pastoral teaching and guiding activity of Christ.<sup>49</sup>

Not all filmic priests or ministers are Christ-figures. The identification is not automatic, for depending on the film, the priest can serve a variety of functions and meanings, one of which is as a caricature, that is as "the ineffectual

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 211.

<sup>43</sup> *Jeanne d'Arc*, dir George Hatot, 1898

<sup>44</sup> *Joan the Woman*, dir Cecil B. DeMille, 1917.

<sup>45</sup> *Il poverello d'Assisi*, dir Enrico Guazzoni, 1911.

<sup>46</sup> *The Sign of the Cross*, dir Walter Hagggar, 1897.

<sup>47</sup> *Quo Vadis?* dir Mervyn LeRoy with Robert Taylor and Deborah Kerr, 1951.

<sup>48</sup> *Baugh.*, p. 211.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 216.

support, the hand-ringing moralist, the platitudinous adviser, the remote commander, the plastic or unctuous hand-shaker".<sup>50</sup> In some films, the priest is a negative foil to the authentic Christ-figure incarnated in one of the other characters.<sup>51</sup>

Interesting in this regard ... are the films which feature several priests. The effect is often subtle variations on the Christ-figure theme, different degrees of identification with Christ in each of the priests.<sup>52</sup>

### 3) Woman as Christ-Figure

A film such as *Dead Man Walking*<sup>53</sup> portrays a woman as a Christ-figure.<sup>54</sup> In her role as Sr. Helen Prejean, Susan Sarandon is a protagonist. In both her persona and her activities, she represents the full dynamic of the Christ-figure.

### 4) Some Extreme Christ-Figures: The Clown, the Fool, the Madman

Charlie Chaplin in *Limelight*<sup>55</sup> is a clown-Christ-figure.<sup>56</sup>

His name in the film, Calvero, a variation on Calvary, already signals his christic identity, as does the soteriological dynamic of his activity. Though a down-and-out comedian and past his prime, he rescues a woman so desperate that she is about to commit suicide. He cares for her and inspires her to resume her dancing career. When she finally goes on stage,

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 216.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 217.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 217.

<sup>53</sup> *Dead Man Walking*, dir Tim Robbins with Susan Sarandon and Sean Penn, 1995.

<sup>54</sup> Baugh., p. 219.

<sup>55</sup> *Limelight*, dir Charles Chaplin with Charles Chaplin and Claire Bloom, 1952.

<sup>56</sup> Baugh., p. 220.



Calvero is in the wings; she does well, but he has a heart attack and dies, happy for her and peaceful. ... Clearly, the hope that Chaplin shows us in the dancer, her rebirth artistically, is a 'resurrection image'. Calvero lives on in her.<sup>57</sup>

Baugh goes on to describe the madman in *Ordet*.<sup>58</sup> A deeply enigmatic figure, Johannes incarnates both the sacral and the delusional, both holiness and lunacy, and he represents the great paradox – the sign of contradiction – of the word of truth in the mouth of the madman.<sup>59</sup>

#### 5) The Outlaw as Christ-Figure

While there is no problem with a Christ-figure represented by a reformed criminal or repentant sinner, there remains the delicate question of whether an outlaw, an unrepentant sinner or a vulgar and brutal man without a hint of conversion, can have dimensions of a Christ-figure.<sup>60</sup>

In the film, *Giant*<sup>61</sup>, Jett Rink, a victim though anything but sympathetic, rests his arms on a rifle slung over his shoulders and bows his head, in a precise visual reference to Christ crucified. A young woman kneeling at his feet and looking up at him completes this peculiar Calvary-image.<sup>62</sup>

Michael Graff explains that these far from edifying characters can represent dimensions of the Christ-image because they are 'not only culprits but also

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 220.

<sup>57</sup> *Baugh.*, p. 221.

<sup>58</sup> *Ordet*, dir Carl Dreyer with Henrik Malberg and Emil Hass Christensen, 1955.

<sup>59</sup> *Baugh.*, p. 220.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 221.

<sup>61</sup> *Giant*, dir George Stevens with James Dean and Elizabeth Taylor, 1956.

<sup>62</sup> *Baugh.*, p. 221.

victims', and he goes on to explain that 'it is not that the outlaw as outlaw represents Christ, but rather that the crucified Christ stands near him'. The point is that the cross is always in a crucifixion group [of Jesus and the two thieves]. Neil Hurley suggests a different and interesting justification of the filmic 'bad guy' as a Christ-figure, explaining that 'the nature of Jesus' death as a criminal, incontrovertible as a historical datum, makes the persecution and death of certain rebels take on a mystical aura.<sup>63</sup>

#### 6) The Child as Christ-Figure

There are few films in which a child embodies aspects of the redeemer, the one who saves his/her people. In *The Navigator: A Mediaeval Odyssey* <sup>64</sup>, an exceptional child, Griffin, who has the rare ability to see Good and Evil, and the ability to travel back and forth in time, finds himself in a mediaeval town threatened by the plague. Identified specifically with Christ crucified as the Messiah when he climbs the bell tower of the Cathedral to fix a cross on the peak, Griffin has to die in order to save the people.<sup>65</sup>

#### 7) The Dramatic Role of Jesus as Christ-Figure

One of the rarest and most curious guises for the filmic Christ-figure is that of Jesus in a dramatic presentation. In this modality, the Christ-figure is embodied in the person and actions of an actor playing the role of Jesus in a

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<sup>63</sup> Baugh., p. 221.

<sup>64</sup> *The Navigator: A Mediaeval Odyssey*, dir Vincent Ward with Hamish McFarlane and Bruce Lyons, 1988.

<sup>65</sup> Baugh., p. 221.

representation of the passion.<sup>66</sup> Arcand's film, *Jesus of Montreal*<sup>67</sup> creates a very close identification between the young actor and the role he is playing, and perhaps even with the real Jesus 'behind' that role.<sup>68</sup>

#### 8) The Popular Adventure Hero as Christ-Figure

One of the most common vehicles of the Christ-figure in cinema is the popular adventure film. In these films the protagonists, in dimensions of their personalities and in aspects of their behaviour, reflect elements of the story of Jesus Christ, though clearly in a less intense and less authentic manner. ... In George Lucas' science-fiction blockbuster *Star Wars*,<sup>69</sup> for example, the protagonist, a young, innocent but very brave Luke Skywalker becomes a 'disciple' of an older figure, Obi-Wan Kenobi, who on a number of levels represents Jesus Christ: he lives simply, imparting wisdom and giving good example to people like Luke and he opposes evil in the person of the villain Darth Vader.<sup>70</sup>

Baugh also describes other versions of the popular adventure hero which help the viewer to expand his/her view of the Christ-figure. One can see that the Christ-figure motif, for Baugh, is well represented in film.

Baugh has described characters in films as Christ-figures that provides at times a liberating perspective; at other times his hermeneutic simply has not worked for my students, nor for myself. My students felt that Baugh was too definitive, too arrogant, or simply stretched beyond belief in his hermeneutic.

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66 *Ibid.*, p. 222.

67 *Jesus of Montreal*, dir Denys Arcand with Lothaire Bluteau and Catherine Wilkening, 1989.

68 *Baugh.*, p. 222.

69 *Star Wars*, dir George Lucas with Harrison Ford, Carrie Fisher, and Mark Hamill, 1977.

70 *Baugh.*, p. 222.

However, when Baugh's approach was combined with my reflection method based upon the 'theological worlds' there was at times a clearer understanding of how Baugh's method was effective. In other words, with the unpacking of the 'theological worlds', of the Baugh's Christ-figure and the 'theological world' of the story, there was a greater ability to appreciate Baugh's interpretation. Margaret Miles was an important reference point in my course on the theology of film as well. Let us turn to her work.

### Margaret Miles' Cultural Studies' Method of Film Reflection

Margaret Miles asks two crucial questions with which a theological connoisseur must come to terms: 'How should we live' and 'Do we need to consider a wider definition of religion'? Film is the most influential literary genre of our time. Many people go to films looking for answers to life-related questions which religion used to answer, but for these people, no longer does. One of the underpinnings of my thesis is that organized religion needs to make much better use of film as a means of theological instruction than it presently does. With a solid method of theological reflection, film can be an excellent medium to educate in a 'religious' manner. Thus, it becomes imperative that we, as theological connoisseurs of film, understand Miles' point of view on these questions. My method is designed, in part, to answer Miles' questions.

a) How should we live?

The long answer to the question of why [North]

Americans' symbolic resources are impoverished has to do with a confusion of cultural roles. **Movies cannot replace religion in its traditional capacity to define and encourage love. The media's secular imagination relies on caricatures of religion while strenuously trying to fill religion's shoes. Yet popular film contributes to identifying and engaging issues of how to live even in its failure to provide richly imagined pictures of human life and relationships. Even in popular films' striking failure to select images of relationships that honour and augment human life, they reveal the inadequacy of gendered notions of desire, the erotic, sex, and love. But, ironically, to understand this message requires that one think of the movies as more than good clean fun, and that one seriously evaluate the influence of their images on individual and collective experience and longing.**<sup>71</sup>

Margaret Miles names an important reality – the confusion between what movies can provide, and what they are expected to provide. The movies have a power that is enormous, but good filmmakers know that audiences are giving too much power to films because of the confusion of the roles of culture and religion. Miles asks an extensive number of questions in her method of analysis that really boil down to asking how the medium of film is interpreted within a culture. The importance of knowing, of course, the confusion in many peoples' minds about where to turn for information has led an enormous number of people to seek, albeit, mostly unconsciously, their religious answers from the big screen. Recently, a professional writer<sup>72</sup> spoke to this problem by stating that he felt it was indeed very sad that popular films were both the solution to many peoples' problems and the source of moral assessment for many people as well.

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<sup>71</sup> Margaret Miles, *Seeing and Believing* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), p. 156. **Bold is mine.**

<sup>72</sup> Robert McKee, "Story Telling Workshop", Edmonton, February, 1998.

While I am very supportive of film and its value in culture, it is imperative, as Miles states, that we learn to watch film seriously -- to learn something about how we live, but not to confuse this possibility/responsibility with the role of religion in our lives. How we should live is a question that is so meaningful in our theological reflection process with film because we are able to contextualize our questions/knowledge. Miles' comments, of course, point us to a wider definition of religion if we are to not only reflect upon religion, but to be able to appreciate things religious in all aspects of life. Let us turn to this question a little more specifically.

b) Do We Need to Consider a Wider Definition of Religion?

Miles emphatically states that yes, we do need to consider a wider definition of religion. With a wider sense of religion, we are able to see what helps to bind people together. For example, if people could watch film together, and indeed they do, the discussion that often ensues is an opportunity to speak of shared experiences. This is not considered a religious experience by many, but indeed, the sharing of dreams and hopes and disappointments and sorrows helps individuals to form community. The broader levels of acceptance that can be engendered in such activity is extremely valuable as well.

A wider definition of religion is not restricted to broadening community within our own religious tradition. Miles calls for the tolerance that we need to extend to those from other religious and secular traditions for all of us to operate with some shared values. The call that Miles gives us is the call to the

importance of the diversity of people and traditions within a culture. The important truth of her contribution reflects on the importance of recognizing the many factors of culture and how these influence religion.

Let us turn now to the more specific question of the religious genre in story-telling so we may have a better sense of what the story wants to communicate. A better understanding will facilitate a more effective use of my theological reflection method.

**John R. May and Michael Bird: The Film as a Myth or a Parable**

May and Bird offer a number of approaches to religious interpretation of film in their book: Religion in Film.<sup>73</sup> In the following excerpted chart the extremes of parable and myth in relation to the three basic religious questions of the East and West are shown. Mythic patterns suggest polarities between East and West, whereas the concrete applications of the parabolic structures emphasize specifically Christian responses.<sup>73</sup>

*Extremes of Story*

**MYTH (establishes world)**

separation-and-return  
(closed/open design)

division-and-unity  
(wholeness/communion)

conflict-and vindication  
(illumination/saving  
love)

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<sup>73</sup> John R. May and Michael Bird, Religion in Film, (Knoxville: U. of Tenn. Press, 1981), p. 37.

**PARABLE (subverts world)**

**risk-not-security  
(mystery)**

**weakness-not-strength  
(demon within)**

**death-not-life  
(unrequited love)**

To consider whether a film is a myth or a parable is crucial as that determination provides the clue to the story's intent. If it is a parable, the intent of the story is to 'subvert'. If the story is a myth, the telling of a story will introduce us to a world that begins and ends with a particular logic. Such knowledge is a helpful screen through which to filter the theological significance of a film.

The parables of Jesus of necessity address the principle religious questions.<sup>74</sup> Parables rather than myth account not only for the emergence of a new religious story in history, but also for the awakening of religious self-understanding in the individual believer.<sup>75</sup>

Myths, on the other hand, are narrative patterns that establish the world. Separation and reunion, division and unity, and conflict and vindication as structures of reconciliation are the structures of myth.<sup>76</sup>

The determination of whether a film is a myth or a parable helps one to consider the message that a filmmaker is trying to make. Is he/she trying to 'subvert' the world or is he/she trying to create a story with the familiar narrative structure of myth? I have found this approach particularly helpful as I

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<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.



consider the 'theological worlds' that constitute a story. Thus Baugh's work on Christ-figures in film, Miles' questions on life and what can be considered religious, and May and Bird's understanding of parable and myth form crucial building blocks which lead up to my own method of theological reflection.

A solid understanding of the aforementioned themes will allow the theological connoisseur to reap the full benefits of my method. However, I do offer some criticisms of these works. My method asks theological questions directly; in Miles' method, there is only a general approach to religion relative to culture. In Baugh there is no dialogue with his interpretation (hermeneutic); Baugh is the expert who doesn't ask questions for his readers to ponder. Baugh doesn't let the reader inside his questions. There is no dialogue between the person who views the film with a view to theological reflection, and the film in question. With Baugh, the student gets Baugh. What he does offer – wonderful guidelines relative to the varying faces of the Christ-figure which, when understood, become excellent interactive starting points in my method. In May and Bird, the conversation stops once the story has been identified as a parable or a myth. My method takes the next step and begins the process of theological reflection upon the parable or myth.

### Jane Smith-Eivemark's Method of Theological Reflection

The 'theological worlds' filters<sup>77</sup> invite the participant to discover his/her own 'theological worlds' as well as the 'theological worlds' of the

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<sup>77</sup> W. Paul Jones, Theological Worlds. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989).

characters and the film. A 'theological world' is ... "a preconceptual gestalt of meaning – feeling which, in picturing reality, directs behaviour, shuns contradiction, and thrives on communal confirmation".<sup>78</sup> Being aware of one's 'theological world' enables a person to develop the qualities inherent in being a theological connoisseur of feature film. Incorporated into my method, 'theological worlds' present the student with the opportunity to enter into the experience of theological reflection with considerable depth. Depth begets a deeper appreciation, which is the value that is central for connoisseurship. Although there are many questions in my method, the essential question of the method distils to this multi-dimensional question:

*How does an awareness of the characters', the story's, and, one's 'theological world' contribute to his/her development as a connoisseur of feature film?*

My adaptation of Eisner's Connoisseurship allows a person a very thorough opportunity to view film and reflect upon it theologically. It not only asks the participant to become more aware of his/her filters, but indeed, calls for an opportunity to interpret the story through the filters of the film itself. In my adaptation of Eisner's method, the student must make the effort to answer the questions for him/herself to both engage the story and be engaged by it. Focused questions in my method help the budding connoisseur to think through his/her world and the world of the characters, and to relate their findings both to the story and to their personal interaction with the story. My method, I believe, will

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<sup>78</sup> Jones., p. 233.

provide the viewer with a comprehensive tool to enter into a very thorough theological reflection on the film.

Employing my method of theological reflection with *Pamela Bay* in the next chapter will help us to better comprehend just how the method can help one to better appreciate the theological value of a particular story.

## **Chapter 5**

### **My Theological Reflection Method** **Applied to *Pamela Bay***

## Chapter Five

In this chapter my theological reflection method is applied to my screenplay, *Pamela Bay*. Relative to the Theological Worlds<sup>1</sup> filters, while I will draw from information contained in Jones' book and from the Theological Worlds Inventory<sup>2</sup>, I also refer you to the 'theological worlds' chart<sup>3</sup> that I have included in the appendix. The chart helps to locate terms such as 'obsessio' (driving force) and 'epiphania' (resolution) within Jones' writing.

My theological reflection is divided into five major divisions. Each division is made of a series of questions designed to elicit the necessary responses to encourage a deep theological dialogue between the viewer and the film. Such a dialogue will, in turn, facilitate a theological reflection on the film.

### The Intentional Dimension:

a) *Is there an intentional theological message?*

Yes. *Pamela Bay* intends to speak to the worth of each of the gifts of the Spirit. In Corinthians 12: vs. 4-7 we read the following:

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<sup>1</sup> W. Paul Jones, Theological Worlds. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989).

<sup>2</sup> I am using the work of Bruce Wheatcroft, a colleague in the Doctor of Ministry program, to present Jones' Theological Worlds. Paul Jones, "Theological Worlds Inventory, Discovering One's Self and One's Congregation," Edmonton, 1994. The inventory is included in the appendix.

<sup>3</sup> Jones, Theological Worlds, , pp. 42 & 43. This chart is available in the appendix.

**Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same God; and there are varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.<sup>4</sup>**

There is little appreciation shown by the Rector, Fr. Greg O' Brien, for the gifts that Pamela Bay brings to St. Thomas Aquinas Seminary. She is dismissed by him. She is also dismissed by the Bishop and to some extent by the seminarian, Ron Smith. Pamela Bay suffers the ultimate dismissal in death when she is killed by Paul Kyler (because he cannot stand to face the pain of his life).

Pamela seems to feel the closest affinity toward those who are poor -- those whose gifts are not recognized, and clearly struggles with knowing her place in the 'theological world' of seminary. Her husband, Mark, asks why she needs to do what she is doing. Pamela seems to have a sense of the value of leaving her struggle with this world behind, but makes the choice to remain in it.

The story of *Pamela Bay* rings of the truth of the Christian Gospel as Pamela, like Jesus, attempts to help others, even to the point of death. She has been barely recognized. Her way of loving is missing important dimensions both in her personal and professional life, but the Christ-like traits are recognizable. Her drivenness is discernible underneath her 'world two' determination to see things change. It can be argued that her drivenness cost her her life, and that her goodness made her vulnerable to the pathological rage of one who felt he must

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<sup>4</sup> The Bible, Revised Standard Version, edited by Herbert G. May and Bruce M. Metzger, (New York: The Oxford University Press, 1977).

kill her. The viewer's own filters will colour the way he/she sees the truth of Pamela's life.

A secondary theological message is that we are very underdeveloped as a church because of our lack of recognition of one another's gifts. Paul Kyler would not have suffered as he did had he known a face of love who could affirm his gifts at some point in his life. In flashback, we have a sense that as a young boy he tried to be himself but his disillusion with life was brought to the fore when his brother, David, committed suicide. His disillusion settles in his soul as he grows up with a depressed mother and tyrannical father. The pain he had known all of his life started to leak through his facade when love came close to him in the face of Pamela Bay.

The parable of the woman cleaning house comes to mind (Lk. 11: 24-26). Paul was sincerely trying to clean house by seeking support from Pamela, but the soul work that was involved began to overwhelm him. He did not have enough strength to overcome the demon of rage that emerged at this time. Evil took over his decision-making power. He killed Pamela and Gerry for what he considered to be 'justice' -- for David. Paul is working with a primitive consciousness -- with a primitive ethic -- an eye for an eye.

The complexity of the character's lives is multi-layered as is evident in the following discussion of the 'theological worlds' which are represented.

*b) What 'theological worlds' do you see being represented?*

I see all five 'theological worlds' being represented. I will address the dominant themes as they are seen through the filters of each of the 'theological worlds'.

Pamela Bay's life is predominantly rooted in 'world two'. She was very much caught in the essential rhythm of conflict and vindication. She chose a life that was filled with conflict, for she felt that she was a part of the liberating force that will take people out of the clutches of patriarchy and into a vision of the 'new church' that the Second Vatican Council is calling forth.

Pamela knew evil in a very personal sense. Having had her parents taken from her as a child left her with a terrible loss. She recognized and felt compassion for the downtrodden; for they, indeed, were the ones who felt the impact of evil most strongly in life. Pamela's parents were very active in the movement of their contemporary Catholic leaders in the United States before immigrating to Canada with the wave of Americans into Canadian universities in the early 1970s. Their radical Catholicism continued to be a part of the influence of Pamela's life -- for good and bad as Pamela grew up in the hands of a group of radically religious women led by Sr. Rita after the death of Pamela's parents.

Pamela learned a great deal about the white middle-class societal dominance which often projects its collective evil onto the poor; but she knew it is the poor who feel the impact of evil most powerfully. Pamela gave her heart to the poor -- in prison and on the street after wrestling with whether or not she



had a vocation to work with them. In flashback, we see Pamela as a younger woman declaring her allegiance to the vision of a church that is not yet realized. Sr. Rita warns her of the difficult road ahead -- Pamela was not deterred from proceeding, but rather the obstacles made it that much more inviting.

Pamela agreed to teach theology at the seminary after working in the Mustard Seed Street Ministry because she wanted to bring the passion that she had for the Gospel to the people who were training to bring the Gospel to others. It was inviting for her to have the opportunity to be instrumental in the shaping of peoples' theological education. Pamela's 'obsessio' -- in other words, her sense of the human condition -- was with chaos. But out of chaos comes order. To bring her experience of the poor and her sense of the chaotic in life together with earnest theological discussion had so much potential.

Pamela remained a fighter for the poor as she took her position as instructor at St. Thomas Aquinas Seminary. She continued this fight, however, in an environment that was largely indifferent to her passion/compassion. Fr. Greg ran his seminary as he chose to despite feeling pushed by Pamela's insistence to see Paul Kyler's problems. They could not find a way to communicate with each other. Had she recognized her naivete, Fr. Greg and Bishop McClaren believe, she would have saved her life -- not only from Paul Kyler's gun shot, but the trouble she should have seen coming when she involved herself with Gerry Hoffmann.

Pamela took her vocation to ministry very seriously. She was consumed with the truth of good winning over evil, and truly believed that she was a part

of the eternal battle between good and evil, between forgiveness and lack of forgiveness. Her demonstration of forgiveness for Gerry allowed him to open doors for a new life.

In Pamela's personal life, she was not quite as engaging. She loved her husband and her daughter and truly would have liked to have another child. However, she was much more captivated by the romantic vision of Vatican II and what she could do to help implement its wonderful vision of humanity. Pamela's soul had not caught up with her theology. Mark was a patient man, and was willing to help Pamela grow. His loving attitude toward her when questioning her attitude of martyrdom was evident. She proceeded with one last action in the case of Paul Kyler and assured Mark that she would be careful. She was careful, but was overtaken by something much larger than Paul, Gerry, or herself.

Pamela's life was taken from her, but did she lose her soul in the process? I think not. I think she did the best she could do, as did all the characters in this story. Her consciousness did twig to the love of her husband. She was close to putting much behind her when the end came. Pamela's ethic was one of humanity being good. She believed people do the best they can; she did her best and so did all the others in the story.

While 'world two' is predominant and evident in Pamela's life, she has a strong unconscious 'world one' bent. Pamela was orphaned as a young child and had felt to some extent homeless since the time of her parents' death. Pamela's security was given to her by her parents, and when they were taken away, a part

of her died with them. She retorted to Sr. Rita after being told of her parents' death – "I wish I had died with them". Sr. Rita was unable to hold Pamela in her pain in the way that Pamela needed. She responded simply to Pamela by stating: "No you don't, you have your life to live". Pamela was unable to face her own pain as a young girl, but she didn't run from pain. Instead, she ran into pain as a care giver later in life, when she was a minister of the Gospel.

Pamela masked her sense of homelessness by working with the homeless and others who had been neglected in society. She felt more at ease with the homeless and the downtrodden than she did with the middle class environment she had known all her life, in spite of having been raised by those who had taken vows of poverty.

Pamela's feelings of happiness were shallow to some extent. Her sense of meaning was incomplete as she tried to mask the pain that she experienced. Pamela feared deep down that her child/children might lose her, and as she had lost her own parents, while this remained unconscious, it was evident that there was a problem that was not clearly discernible when she and Mark were not successful in their desire to have another child. Pamela's gift of unmasking Paul Kyler's pain and seeing through other peoples' facades was not applied to her own life at the time of her death.

Pamela's conscious desire to serve God, family, neighbour, and students was subverted by her unconscious desire to go home -- by her desire to abandon the concerns of this world for the bliss of the world where she knew that she would meet not only her parents once again, but be relieved of the burdens of

this world; something of 'world five' is evident. Pamela's feeling of being overwhelmed by this life touched her conscious work, but was more closely aligned with this deeper desire to go home – to leave the meaninglessness of life behind, as characteristic of 'world one'.

Pamela did not grow beyond the pain of losing her parents. While present and caring toward the people she had been called to serve, she had never felt the ability to completely attach herself to anyone else after losing them. Pamela's husband, Mark, was aware that she loved him, but he knew that there was something missing in their lives.

When Pamela is killed, he is angry with everyone. He is unable to face his feelings of anger toward Pamela in his own grief, but Mark's anger will surface in time. As Mark spoke soon before her death to Pamela of her tiredness and questioned why she had to be martyred and abused, she gave him no answer that was truly satisfying, but he knew that he had her attention. Mark's grief is that Pamela was very close to recognizing that so much of her effort was in vain, and while he was inviting her to come home, she was responsive, but never was able to receive the invitation fully. Some might argue that Mark was more truly the Christ-figure in this story in his 'world one' revelation of the possibilities of home.

Father Greg is a man who, in his fatherly care of the seminarians, appears to genuinely care for others. He is easy-going, charming, witty, and intelligent. Fr. Greg is the archetypal Irish priest. He 'putts' and he enjoys knowing that when God made time, He made plenty of it - no need to rush. Fr. Greg feels the

ache of the emptiness of 'world three' -- the ache of not being himself. However, he will do nothing to change because his situation is too comfortable.

While the discerning eye will detect something distasteful about Fr. Greg's approach toward Pamela Bay, the ordinary eye will most probably ask: "What is Pamela Bay's problem"? He has an approach that is kind and good and supportive. What more could she want? Fr. Greg asks Pamela why she wants to dismiss Paul Kyler. On top of this, he reminds Pamela that another seminarian, Ron Smith, has complained about her. Fr. Greg tells her that she has not lived enough and, ironically, he says this very close to the time of her death. Fr. Greg is the enabling factor/character of a 'world three' approach. His concern about the shortage of good candidates for priesthood is one that truly enables the system to perpetuate itself. With the death of Pamela Bay, his thinking will stand to win greater favour amongst the community members who are concerned for the seminary and the church because he knows his constituency. The outward response to Pamela is that she pushed Paul too far.

Fr. Greg tells Ron Smith after Pamela and Gerry's murders that "we will go on doing what we do best -- teaching and learning". Fr. Greg has not been touched by Pamela's life, except with indifference and/or annoyance; after her death, he remains untouched as well. The audience knows the truth -- he could have made a difference for Gerry, Paul, and Pamela, but he chose not to.

Paul Kyler's character is the most tragic of all. The issue in Paul's life is the demonic death of his brother which, in effect, killed his family. Paul feels enormous guilt for being alive. This is a 'world four' trait. His guilt transfers

itself superficially as he takes on the role of seminarian so that he may be the redeemer of his family and for the downtrodden with whom he closely aligns himself -- particularly the hookers who come to the Mustard Seed Ministry. Paul's 'obsessio' manifests clearly as the powerlessness of his dismissal from his ministry placement forces him to act on his feelings of hatred and revenge. Paul's perversion of truth stems from a complex web of relationships. His entry into seminary life is no less complex. There is little support from anyone but Fr. Greg. Paul is appreciative of Fr. Greg's support, but knows little worth in his presence in seminary life but to try to comfort the women who are as his mother was -- prostituting themselves. Paul's relationship with Pamela is a hopeful departure from that which he has known with women; however, when Pamela bursts the bubble so to speak, his rage begins to unravel -- slowly at first and then uncontrollably. Pamela's light of truth -- inviting him to come home -- cannot be received by him. While not clear what will become of Paul, it is hoped that psychiatric treatment will help him to heal.

While the consideration of the 'theological worlds' that have been represented in the story brings the viewer into a new awareness of the interplay between the characters and the weaving of the story itself, we need to look a little more deeply into the question that arises in the way(s) that the 'theological worlds' assert themselves.

c) *Do the 'theological worlds' assert themselves overtly/covertly?*

The 'theological worlds' assert themselves both overtly and covertly in the characters' lives. The characters are complex. While the characters are predominantly oriented in one 'theological world' it is evident that they, to a greater or lesser extent, know the realities of other worlds in their own subjectivity. The overt assertion of 'world two' in Pamela's life is more meaningful when related to the covert assertion of 'world four' as she invites Paul to receive the help that he needs. She expresses 'world four' covertly in her forgiving attitude toward Gerry and the others who are involved at the Mustard Seed Ministry.

Reflecting more closely on the covert or overt expression of a character's world or the world of the story are all options when a person chooses to use the method to focus on a particular issue. For example, such an issue might be: How does Paul Kyler's relationship with his mother play itself out in the formation of his 'theological world'? A close-up view of this relationship would entail a greater enhancement of the covert and overt assertions of the 'theological worlds' of both Mary and Paul Kyler.

The ability to adjust the lenses according to the learning desire/need is a very important feature of this method of connoisseurship. The adjusting of this or that factor in the appreciation of the work of art at hand will enhance the experience of seeing the film more completely.

d) *Does the film have a dominant 'theological world'?*

*Pamela Bay* is a story which comes from the heart of 'world four'. The 'issue' of this story is demonic -- it is the issue of being dismissed. The Christology that this story espouses is our need of saving grace -- to put it another way, human beings need a saviour. Everyone needs to be recognized by another -- everyone needs to recognize him/herself -- it is the very essence of who we are -- beings created in the likeness and image of God.

Everyone in this story lacks recognition of self and others. *Pamela Bay* is illustrative of the human condition. We all miss not being seen for who we are. We all long to know that our being is meaningful. We all need to know something of the gift of reprieve. While *Pamela Bay* offers reprieve to Paul Kyler he is unable to receive it.

There are no 'good guys' and 'bad guys' in *Pamela Bay*. All are good and bad alike. All try to do the best they can. There are no unqualified heroes in *Pamela Bay*. The question of heroism is addressed, rather, through the ability to see what it is that constitutes the character of the people in this story. The question of motivation of which guilt plays a major role in the lives of people who live in 'world four' is a key to the story. Paul feels guilty about everything. The one thing that he seeks to do to relieve his guilt is the act for which he is truly guilty. Paul's crime is not where his guilt originates but it is his crime that may be his salvation.

The paradox of the story is love. None of us know love completely. There are moments of reprieve that allow us more deeply to enter love's embrace.



*Pamela Bay* is not a myth which offers the resolution of love. Rather, it is a parable which offers the message that it is reprieve, and certainly, more fully, love that we need. If we do not have love, we have nothing.

e) *Do the other 'theological worlds' surface in the film?*

The sub-plot of Pamela's personal life is from 'world one's' invitation to come home. Mark Faulkner offers Pamela a life centred in another world. She is about to receive Mark's offer, but she is not quite ready.

The sub-plot of a predominantly male world in which Pamela has attempted to enter as a liberating figure is manifested in the plot of the story as she tries to help Paul by trying to 'get through' to Fr. Greg. The interaction of two people on staff in a seminary is echoed by this sub-plot which intensifies the meaninglessness of the 'world five' in St. Thomas Aquinas Seminary where they wish to go on as if there was no need to change.

Another sub-plot surfaces also in Joanne Porretta's life. Joanne is trying to leave her 'trapped' existence by searching for the wholeness of 'world three's' 'epiphania'. Her ache is to find out what is meaningful in her life. She is the classic case of a person who moves ahead one step only to move backward two steps. Joanne wants to model herself after the freedom she appreciates in Pamela Bay. Joanne rises to a new life when Pamela dies. Joanne recognizes Pamela's gift of liberation for her as she praises this gift of freedom at Pamela's funeral.

Theological worlds are as unique as the individuals who live in them, and will manifest themselves with different nuances in the various relationships

that people enter. What is core to some of the quality of relationship can be discussed by considering the values with which people live. Let us try to uncover some of the stated values in the film so as to more deeply enter into the 'theological worlds' of *Pamela Bay*.

f) *What values are implicitly and explicitly stated in film?*

Because the values of the story are better spoken to in the context of reflecting on the "theological worlds" of the characters and the story, I have simply isolated these values in this section in order to provides an opportunity to quickly glance at the values one can explore in *Pamela Bay*.

*The following values are stated implicitly in Pamela Bay:*

1. Suffering will always be a part of life. Some people will grow. Some will not.
2. The truth is found in love.
3. There can never be enough love -- there is far too little love in the world.
4. What appears to be true may not be true upon a closer examination.
5. The perpetrator of a crime is often the victim of a crime initially.
6. Pain needs to be addressed or it will manifest itself in very ugly ways.

*The following values are stated explicitly in Pamela Bay:*

1. Love of family.
2. Love of friends.
3. Compassion for the marginalized.
4. Life can be choked over and over again with little or no attempt.

g) *Does the writer/director want to emphasize the importance of a particular 'theological world'?*

I want to emphasize the importance of each individual knowing his/her own 'theological world' as he/she comes to view feature film. In the knowledge of one's uniqueness, one becomes more 'at home' with him/herself and so with the whole of creation. When one is 'at home' with one's self, one does not need to pretend. He/she is free to enter the world from his/her own ground.

The diversity of characters in *Pamela Bay* have the potential for truly creative living if only they could recognize one another for who they are. The heart of the drama of *Pamela Bay* is, of course, that these people do not know how to live in harmony. No one 'theological world' is the answer here; nor is it, by implication, the answer anywhere else. Each and every person is called to live in his/her own dignity as a creation of God's.

The importance of recognizing the 'worlds' from which the characters ground themselves and in which the story itself is grounded is the key to recognizing the message of the story. The 'theological world(s)' that filter an

individual's experiences will filter the way he/she sees the film. Knowing one's self will help the viewer to learn more deeply of the characters that reveal themselves in the story as it unfolds.

Let us now turn to the structural dimension of the film so that even more layers of the story become evident in our theological reflection process.

### The Structural Dimension:

- a) *What is the organizational form (controlling idea) of the film and how does this influence the message of the film?*

*Pamela Bay's* controlling idea is 'all people do the best they can'. The story indicates this by the lives of all the characters. They fail to understand each other often in this story but 'they are all doing the best they can'. Pamela strives to help Paul find the support he needs. She dies in her attempt to help him.

Fr. Greg tries to run his seminary the best way he can. He cannot see that he has a big problem on his hands with Paul Kyler who is about to explode. What is it that prevents Fr. Greg from seeing the truth? Is he so immersed in himself that he cannot see the pain that Paul Kyler is in? Is he so immune to Pamela Bay's sense of truth that he sees her as a woman as not worthwhile enough to take seriously?

What went wrong? In the closing scene with Fr. Greg and Bishop McClaren, there is a dreaded sense of limitation. They just do not 'get it.' Is this a statement about the human race? Is it a statement about men? Is it a statement

about patriarchy? All of these questions will be answered by the individual viewers in their own ways. The viewing of *Pamela Bay* is an opportunity to open further to these important questions through the vehicle of 'theological worlds' lenses.

- b) *What 'theological world' does the organizational form of the film represent and how does this influence the message of the film?*

The 'theological world' that the organizational form of the film represents is 'world four'. There is a condemnation of people by one another -- Paul condemning Pamela and Gerry, and the Bishop and Fr. Greg condemning Pamela Bay. There is no opportunity for forgiveness given by the characters who need to not only offer this opportunity, but to receive forgiveness themselves.

- c) *Does the organizational structure of the film facilitate the audience seeing a particular 'theological world'?*

*Pamela Bay's* organizational structure facilitates the audience seeing through the lenses of 'world four' as the story is one where if recognition of one another could have been realized, then forgiveness could have been possible.

The Content Dimension:

a) *What is the connection between the themes in the story with themes in Scripture?*

There are two themes of the story that I want to parallel with two themes in Scripture. The first Scriptural theme that *Pamela Bay* addresses is of the need for forgiveness. The second is the need for love.

The need for forgiveness is powerful in *Pamela Bay* because it is missing in the story. Its power is in its absence. The story of *Pamela Bay* would be completely altered if forgiveness was a reality in the lives of all of these people. The freedom to begin again after an error, after a huge loss, or after sinful action is the act of forgiveness that the characters need to experience in both acts of contrition and in generosity toward others.

The second theme that is crucial for consideration in *Pamela Bay* is the need to attend to the greatest commandment. The screens of 'theological worlds', as valuable as they are, are meaningless without applying the screen of love to this film. The love that is missing in peoples' lives is evident everywhere.

Mark wonders why his wife is doing what she is doing. John Kyler is utterly tyrannical. Mary Kyler is chronically depressed. Paul Kyler suffers from the pathology of uncontrollable rage. Pamela Bay needs to move from a god of idealism to a God of love. Fr. Greg O'Brien needs to recognize the importance of living his own life. Ron Smith needs to know that worshipping a sterile god

will not allow him to effectively lead people as a priest.

Joe Smalley has fled his 'cage' whereas Joanne Porretta is in the process of leaving her 'golden cage' on the occasion of Pamela's death. The agony and suffering that people experience allow opportunities for growth. The characters in *Pamela Bay* show marginal growth. Again, as a parable, *Pamela Bay* points to our need of the transcendent love of God.

- b) *Does the script indicate a preference for a 'theological world'? Does the script indicate preferences for 'theological worlds' relative to characters?*

The script indicates a preference for 'world one'. Because the characters in the story are living out of 'worlds one, two, three, four, and five', and the story told is a 'world four' story, the preference for 'world one' manifests itself in a quiet way.

All of the struggle, pain, chaos, guilt, anger, hatred, and indifference that are central in this story speak of Pamela Bay's longing for resolution. *Pamela Bay* communicates the futility and the pain of these peoples' lives. They need to struggle with their lives in their own skin. Their struggles do not bring very satisfactory resolution, but the story begs the questions for the audience in the manner of a parable.

- c) *Did the producer/director's 'theological world' respect the 'theological world' of the medium from which it was taken (if it was transferred from another medium)?*

This question is not applicable.

**The Pedagogical Dimension:**

- a) *All films are mediated by many sources - -writer, actors, directors, cinematographer, editors, current cultural values. Which of these sources are dominant in the film under consideration?*

Because this story has not been developed as a film, this question is not applicable.

- b) *Does the 'theological world' of the dominant vision in the movie show through?*

This question cannot be answered because the screenplay has not been actualized.

- c) *What the audience takes away from the film will almost always go beyond what the filmmakers intend. How does the film convey its message?*

This question is not applicable because the film has not been made.

- d) *Does the audience have an openness to the 'theological world' of the filmmaker?*

I am going to answer this question from the vantage point of my experience with the students who read *Pamela Bay* as a vehicle to learn the Theological Worlds.

In the opposing and strong forces that they have met in the story, initially,



I think that my 'theological world' was all but invisible to them. The conflict was evident. The complexity of characters was evident. The desire for something better was clearly understood by them when we finished reading the script. Something better for the church – something better for Pamela, Paul, and Gerry - - something better for everyone was desired.

*Pamela Bay* is not only a story in which a person can recognize some of humanity's shortcomings, but it also is a story in which the writer's intention is to ask people to look beyond the film because the more one reflects upon the story, the more one will get out of it.

#### The Evaluative Dimension:

a) *How should the film be evaluated theologically?*

The film should be evaluated through the filters of the Gospel. The plumb line for 'good' theology is the respect with which it embraces the dignity of all creation through the filters of faith, hope, and love.

*Pamela Bay* directly states that our humanity is sorrowfully lacking in understanding. The story does so because it amplifies the need to care deeply enough to recognize the individual before you (including the need to look at oneself).

A story such as *Pamela Bay* serves to try to point us toward the need to

live with God and with one another in a more focused manner. *Pamela Bay* points to our Trinitarian theology as it looks at how the worship and study of our transcendent and immanent God is conducted. *Pamela Bay* also speaks to the work of the Holy Spirit among us as the story's characters attempt to live with authenticity. None of the characters live without authenticity within the 'theological world' from which they emerge. It is, however, the lack of being able to communicate honestly with others that establishes the conflict that plays itself out as each individual remains in his/her own world.

b) *What are the situational/contextual ethics/morals of the film?*

The ethics of this story are simple. The story wishes to express clearly that people live the best way they know how.

Although Paul Kyler has murdered two people, his guilt for this crime, when contextualized, can be seen in a different light. He is a victim before he is a criminal. He is a victim of his circumstances and is not able to rise above this status.

The morality of *Pamela Bay* calls for the recognition of the worth of each human being. The sin of systems such as patriarchy is that people will be overlooked.

c) *Does the film express sensitivity to human relationships?*

Without sensitivity to peoples' relationships there can be no understanding of the story. The story needs to 'grab' the audience emotionally

and, while I felt a lot of unpleasant emotions in *Pamela Bay*, I was 'grabbed' by the importance of what they were trying to say: 'Love doesn't come easily, if it comes at all, and mature love is barely realized'. We need to do a lot of work in order to be loving people. We have a God who is calling us to this love, if we would hear.

*Transcendence of culture:*

There is little evidence of transcendence of culture in *Pamela Bay*. There is, rather, a sacramental quality to the story that points to the need for the transcendent in the sorry state of affairs. There are slight glimmers of the transcendent in scenes such as the one where Pamela returns to embrace Sally once more before she goes to work. There is a scene in Pete's office where Pamela and Pete embrace one another when in the background the laughing Jesus poster is an opportunity to see them in a larger light. There are isolated moments, in short, of transcendence, but on the whole, the story is a parable that points to the need to subvert some of our perceptions of church – specifically seminary life at St. Thomas Aquinas Seminary.

*Recognizable traits of God:*

In *Pamela Bay*, the diversity of God's traits are as diverse as the characters as they live within the uniqueness of their 'theological worlds'. God 'is'. The God who 'is' exists in all of the 'theological worlds' for God is the source of all life.

Concretely, let us consider Paul Kyler. What he did was wrong, but in his broken heart his motives were pure – to bring justice to his family. His method of bringing justice was limited. Will love embrace him in his limitations? I believe so. He will be embraced by the God of love whose absence the parable of *Pamela Bay* points to as the one who all characters need for fulfilment.

*Does the film help the viewer look below the surface?*

*Pamela Bay* helps the viewer get below the surface of a number of current theological questions if the viewer involves him/herself with the characters. The emotional pull of a character will help the viewer enter into a particular world. The closeness that a viewer feels for the characters has not only to do with story construction but with the filters that a person has in his/her life. The complexity of the characters invites much reflection.

*Does the film let the audience into the emotional 'worlds' of the characters?*

*Pamela Bay* is not an easy world to enter in spite of Fr. Greg, Paul, and Pamela being sympathetic characters to a greater or lesser extent. Pamela is the most sympathetic character of these three because she is killed. Paul is also a sympathetic character because he was never given a chance to grow.

Fr. Greg is a sympathetic character with qualification. He shows his true colours as he reflects on Pamela's death with the Bishop in the end.

*Does the audience have a chance to exercise its desire to be the connoisseur of the character's lives?*

The audience has a chance to be the connoisseur of the character's lives in the way in which they enter into their lives. I have entered into the lives of these people and so I feel affinity with all of them. They are a part of my soul. The affinity that the audience will feel with characters is dependent upon their own filters.

b) *How does the film, if at all, transcend culture? How does the film's transcendence relate to the 'theological world' of the film?*

The film transcends culture in its attempt to respond to a God of love. The film's transcendence relates to the 'theological world' of the film by holding up the possibility of an 'epiphania' of forgiveness.

c) *What was the purpose behind the film?*

*Pamela Bay* was written as a mirror to my experience of the choking effect of patriarchy within the church. *Pamela Bay* was written also to allow public entry into a world that is by and large a foreign world -- the world of seminary life. The purpose in doing this was to help Catholics and others who were interested in learning more of the situation of a woman who was competent, but not recognized; a young man whose deep hurt not only ruined his life, but took the life of two innocent people.

Hurt is very real in our humanity. To expose this kind of pain is done

with the hope that we can learn from this story something of what needs to be recognized – each and every one's talents. The orchestration of this kind of recognition is a large task, but I believe that it is possible.

We have much to learn as we develop our thinking on many of the questions that *Pamela Bay* poses.

### Conclusion

In my adaptation of Eisner's method one can learn to appreciate feature film in a twofold manner:

- 1) feature film offers many opportunities for theological reflection;
- 2) the person who applies this theological reflection method to a film possesses a good tool with which to appreciate the film – enough usage of this tool will, indeed, allow the person to become a theological connoisseur of feature film.

Connoisseurship will be the reward for those who will refine their skills. Connoisseurship, to use an old expression, also offers the benefit of theological virtue; the connoisseur is, in the first instance, the one who shows appreciation for something, in our case for the value of feature film within theological reflection. Spiritually, this connoisseur can come to have a new appreciation of God and that is the heart of theological reflection.

Theological reflection with *Pamela Bay* as a teaching vehicle, and the application of this method to feature film are the subject matter of the next chapter.

## **Chapter 6**

### **How My Theological Reflection Method has been Applied in the Classroom**



## Chapter Six

This chapter discusses my experience with my method of theological reflection when used in two unique settings of theological education. In each setting different nuances of my project/dissertation were applied in direct learning situations. The teaching venues were:

1. A course on theology of film where my method of theological reflection for feature film was employed.
2. Six students within a CPE (Clinical Pastoral Education) unit who reflected theologically upon the screenplay, *Pamela Bay*. As they read their parts and studied their characters through the Theological Worlds<sup>1</sup> lenses, *Pamela Bay* took on new meaning.

What follows is the 'stuff' of research when understood from an academic point of view. It is, also, the 'stuff' of peoples' lives -- their feelings, observations, questions, comments, and their theological reflections as they approached the material of my project/dissertation.

### Theological College

I taught a theology of film course throughout the winter term of the

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<sup>1</sup> W. Paul Jones, Theological Worlds. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989).

academic year, 1997-98, entitled *Modern Makers of Theology*. This course was designed at a Masters level of theological study. There were only three students registered in the course; thus, it gave me a wonderful opportunity to enter into the theological reflection process with them. As I engaged my own experience of teaching I learned that it was my students in many ways who were teaching me how to proceed with the development of my method.

I assigned Lloyd Baugh's book, *Imaging the Divine: Jesus and Christ-Figures in Film*<sup>2</sup> and Margaret Miles' text, *Seeing and Believing*<sup>3</sup> as core textbooks for the course. As a group they quite frequently felt disfavour toward Baugh's approach, finding him arrogant and exclusive.

Miles was noted most often for the central ethical question that she posed: "How Should We Live"? This question surfaced in each film that we studied. The students noted that it was the impact of the characters in films and the curiosity that ensued about them that took precedence over and against what they did. For example, in the Jesus films<sup>4</sup>, the question of who Jesus was, was central. In the Christ-figure films<sup>5</sup>, questions such as "can a person be a Christ-figure without being a Christian"? frequently arose.

<sup>2</sup> Lloyd Baugh, *Imaging the Divine: Jesus and Christ-Figure Films*, ( Kansas: Sheed & Ward, 1997).

<sup>3</sup> Margaret Miles, *Seeing and Believing*, ( Boston: Beacon Press, 1996).

<sup>4</sup> The Jesus films were:

*Jesus of Nazareth*, dir by Franco Zeffirelli with Robert Powell and Anne Bancroft, 1976 ;  
*Jesus Christ Superstar*, dir by Norman Jewison with Ted Neeley and Carl Anderson, 1973;  
*The Last Temptation of Christ*, dir by Martin Scorsese with Willem Dafoe and Harvey Keitel, 1988.

<sup>5</sup> The Christ-figure films were: *Jesus of Montreal*, dir by Denys Arcand with Lothaire and Catherine Wilkening, 1989;

*Dead Man Walking* dir by Tim Robbins with Susan Sarandon and Sean Penn, 1995;  
*Bagdad Cafe*, dir by Percy Adlon with Marianne Sagebrecht and CCH Pounder, 1988;  
*Shane* dir by George Stevens with Alan Ladd and Jean Arthur, 1953.

The three students who were enrolled in my class were all deeply dedicated to personal growth as well as to learning more of their faith tradition. They have been engaged by the films in many ways that challenged them to growth. I had spoken to the students about the research that I was doing early in the course and told them that I would at some point ask them to use my method when viewing a film. Concretely, their introduction to the method was as follows:

- a) to do the 'theological worlds inventory' if they had not previously done so;
- b) watch the film, *To Sir With Love*<sup>6</sup> with the intent of seeing it within the genre of teacher as Christ-figure;
- c) reflect on the film by using my method; and
- d) because the students had been acquainted throughout the course with Lloyd Baugh and Margaret Miles' work I also asked them to note how my method compared with/complemented their experience with Baugh and Miles' work.

Let us now turn to their summarized responses to the method after viewing *To Sir With Love* through 'theological worlds' lenses.

Student "A":

"I found that viewing a film through the 'theological worlds' methodology was successful. It opens up a film to the theological perspective and therefore enlarges its possibilities and scope. A film like *To Sir With Love* provides a good example of this. From a surface viewing, the film did not have a theological dimension to it apart from the ethical nature of the teacher. Yet

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<sup>6</sup> *To Sir With Love*, dir by James Clavell with Sidney Portier and Lulu, 1966.

when I examined the film through the 'theological worlds' method I found that there was indeed a deeper theological angle which could be taken from it.

One area in which the 'theological worlds' method is especially strong is in its ability to address the individual's own world view. The 'theological worlds' framework allows for the varying types of views on God and ways of observing the world. The framework within each individual views films is indeed wide and subjective. My framework is different than yours and a method of viewing films which considers this subjective reality is valid".

STUDENT "B":

"I really liked your method. Your questions enabled me to reflect intentionally on various dimensions of the film. Without your questions, my theological connoisseurship was limited to my own theological space/issues. Which is okay at one level, but the critique and response becomes very subjective. Your questions direct us to respond to certain overarching and specific elements in the film. We become much broader critics/reviewers of film using your method.

I like the 'theological worlds' focus, but I can see that being limiting for those who don't know of Paul Jones' typology. So I have begun thinking of the different 'theological worlds' as different mythologies; each world is essentially a different mythology. Such a focus is more accessible to folks who don't know the Jones' typology but who do understand the different fundamental approaches and resolutions to life, the universe and everything".

**STUDENT "C":**

**"Looking at this film with the Theological Reflection Method for Feature Film, a lot can be taken from this film".**

**The following excerpts are from Student C's reflection on *To Sir With Love*:**

**The Intentional Dimension:**

**"This act of struggling can be seen as separation for Mr. Thackeray in the sense he does not understand his calling in life. His 'obsessio' is isolation from his home and career in his field of training. By the end of the film, Mr. Thackeray gets a sense of reunion in that he turns down an engineering job to keep working as a teacher. In a sense you can say he found his calling in life. His 'epiphania' is his finding a home at the school and society that he is living in".**

**The Evaluative Dimension:**

***What was the purpose behind the film?***

**"I feel the purpose behind the film was to tell a story and to make a particular point about cultural values. The story is that of a teacher reaching the hearts of a bunch of young hoodlums and giving them self-worth and a sense that they can survive in this society if they believe in themselves. The cultural values are that respect and love can go a long way and that everybody should have a chance at living a good life. Society today, as in the 1960s when this film**

was made, holds values that once a hoodlum you are always a hoodlum. Society should focus more on love, respect, and giving people a second chance”.

Let us now turn to another venue of learning.

### *Pamela Bay* within Clinical Pastoral Education

The second setting of learning where I introduced my method of theological reflection for feature film was within a CAPPE (Canadian Association of Pastoral Practice and Education) program in an acute care hospital in western Canada. My theological reflection method was adapted for the students in this setting; the purpose of introducing aspects of my method in this instance was different from the university course setting discussed earlier. Therefore the content and process were both different from that of the previous setting. As a vehicle of education, the students could enter into *Pamela Bay* with the intent of learning more of Theological Worlds. The students participated in their learning by reading the parts of the various characters’ as well as engaging in theological reflection on the story of *Pamela Bay*.

In order to capture the reflections and questions/answers that surfaced over the course of the process, the following entries were recorded on a weekly basis as the process evolved. The following is my summary of the process.

**The Introduction to the Process of using Pamela Bay as  
a Vehicle to learn about Jones' 'theological worlds':**

- 1) Very quickly, the students were given an overview of the characters in *Pamela Bay*. They chose what part(s) they wanted to play.
- 2) We went through the outline of the process as a group.
- 3) There was a concern raised about the process by one student. She spoke of her confusion about using this kind of learning exercise. When her question was responded to by speaking of the value of entering into the experience of another via story, she was satisfied to proceed.
- 4) There was a comment about the adventure that we were setting out on. There was an openness to the process.

**Week One:**

**Debriefing the First Week of the Process:**

- 1) Pamela Bay was at the centre of many lives. The following questions were asked:

How did this affect her decisions to act?

If she had pulled back, would things have been different?

Was she the author of her own demise?

- 2) The theme/reality of dismissal was prevalent:

Pamela Bay was not heard by the authorities nor by her students.

This theme of dismissal was one with which the students (exclusively female) resonated.

- 3) It was noted by a student in the beginning that she felt it was no accident that respective students had chosen the characters that they had. During a later part of the day, questions about *Pamela Bay* surfaced again:
- 4) When asked how I felt about the reading of *Pamela Bay*, I spoke to the significance of the story in my life by speaking to the double-edged meaning of Pamela Bay's title/name: Removing the Beam from your own eye; and Radiant Light.
- 5) I also spoke of my hope that such an exercise would help all of the group to have a much closer understanding of Theological Worlds.
- 6) I likened the reading of *Pamela Bay* to a giant verbatim<sup>7</sup>. Participating in roles in verbatim exercises is very like taking on a character's role in a story. The concept of direct entry into the experience of another allows one to try another's shoes on.

### Week Two:

#### What 'theological worlds' are the Characters in?

##### Pamela Bay

The group saw Pamela Bay as a predominantly 'world two' person. Pamela wanted to prepare people for ministry, but was seen as someone who was more at home when involved with people on the street. Pamela was seen as leading a crusade.

Pamela was also located in 'world five' because of her martyrdom.

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<sup>7</sup> A verbatim is a teaching tool used in CAPPE training whereby a student brings a recording of a conversation with a patient/client for discussion with their peers.



Pamela, as spoken of by the woman who read her part, was someone with whom she struggled because of the climatic scene. Pamela's actor saw herself not confronting, but 'kissing the feet' of Paul Kyler, if she had to, in order to be with him.

It appeared, to some members of the group, also, that Pamela is unconsciously a 'world one' person. She felt isolated and abandoned by the church. She was also isolated and abandoned as a child by her parents at the time of their death; and therefore much of her drivenness was closely connected to the pain of her parent's death.

While Pamela was not seen as neglecting her own family, clearly she had not resolved much of the pain of her childhood and this seemed to prevent her from feeling more at ease with her personal life. Pamela was seen partly as hero, martyr, and the author of her own demise.

#### Fr. Greg

Fr. Greg was seen as 'putting' through life in 'world three'. He was neither in a 'top' nor a 'bottom' position. Priesthood was not his idea. His parents had wanted him to be a priest. Fr. Greg exemplifies the shadow side of 'world three' as an enabler of that which is dysfunctional. Troublemakers such as Pamela Bay come and go, but the system, in this case, the church keeps on going.

#### Paul Kyler

Paul Kyler is in 'world two'. He sought vindication for the death of his

brother, David. Paul wanted to see justice done.

Paul's immersion, however, in 'world four' was clear. The group saw his greatest suffering to be the guilt that Paul felt – guilt about being alive, and he felt rejected by his tyrannical father and his mother who offered him no support. Paul's brother, who had been everything his parents hoped for and while a star, was ultimately, by his death, suffocating the family. It was noted that Pamela was the antithesis of Paul's mother. Paul was 'seen' by Pamela, and it frightened him.

In a moment, for a person in 'world four', all could be squandered. Indeed, this was the case for Paul. Did he consciously set out to kill Gerry and Pamela? Was it his crime, rooted in the demonic, which overtook him? Is it possible for a person to be driven unconsciously to the crime of murder?

Very quickly, as a group, we discussed the 'worlds' where Joe Smalley, Gerry Hoffmann, and Ron Smith were located.

Joe is seen in 'world three' because of his 'ache' for something more which brought him to seminary. His hope is to model something of love for the poor. Joe's life experience has taught him that it is important to give to others. Some of the emptiness which is characteristic of the shadow side of 'world three' is evident in Joe as well.

Gerry is in 'world four' as he has known love as forgiving the unworthy.

Ron is in 'world three' as someone who knows his self-estrangement as impotence. Some members spoke of Ron's potential for growth. Some members of the group spoke of Ron as belonging in the world of 'jerks'.

The time designated for the process did not allow for discussion of other

characters this week; however, the group felt 'that their juices were being pumped' in this process.

**Week Three:**

**Where do(es) the 'theological world(s)'  
of *Pamela Bay* fit into the Gospel?**

A number of Scriptural themes were discussed. Pamela's arrogance was theologized by the story of the necessity to remove the beam from one's eye before proceeding to take the speck out of another's eye. Pamela was not seen as arrogant by everyone. There was a sense of Pamela having done everything she possibly could in order to help Paul Kyler. Pamela was caught in a system that did not respect her point of view. This sense of Pamela was upheld scripturally with reference to the theme of crucifixion and resurrection in Pamela's life. She did all that she could, and she died a martyr.

Relative to a sense of working with the whole of *Pamela Bay* and its parts, one student, in particular, struggled with locating *Pamela Bay* as a whole within the Gospel. She worked hard on placing the story as a whole in a Gospel hermeneutic and was frustrated that others kept going back to individual characters. Quite a lengthy discussion around the question of the relation of the whole to the parts ensued.

An interesting phenomenon to note, here, was the Scriptural reference to which I said the story was based. In my writing of *Pamela Bay*, I was mostly concerned with speaking to the reality of people missing one another. Part of

this missing has to do with a systemic lack of recognition.

**I sincerely believe that if we created systems in churches which reflected the truth of honouring all parts of the body of Christ then the church would be a very different institution. This leads us to our next question:**

**How does the Story's 'theological world' Connect with your Religious Tradition?**

There was no hesitation on the part of the group to see that, if indeed the theology of the body of Christ was respected much more deeply, the Christian church would be a very different reality.

Connections with *Pamela Bay* and congregations were clear in terms of the students recognizing feelings of dismissal that were familiar to all in the group. The group resonated with the sense that the ordained minister has too much on his/her plate and if the ways of recognizing the uniqueness of the gifts of individuals and their respective 'theological worlds' could be realized then not only the institutional church would benefit, but the influence of such a healthy way of forming community would be a good influence on the larger society.

**Week Four:**

**Images of God in each of the 'theological worlds' of the characters and the story:**

There was intrigue around the possibilities that emerged when the

theological reflection process began with considerations of sexuality and spirituality because of the experience of one person entering into 'character' as one of the prostitutes. The group was delighted with the considerations of the quest for the divine in any number of ways, especially from a 'hooker's' point of view.

The woman who read the part of John Kyler spoke of her difficulty in seeing his appreciation of the divine. The group spoke of what was important to him – what was his guiding light – what was his 'obsessio' as they tried to develop a sense of John Kyler's 'world'. An engaging process ensued with more discussion of the various characters and how they related to the divine.

#### Week Five:

#### How do(es) your 'theological world(s)' meet with the 'theological world' of Pamela Bay?

The students spoke of the value of their 'theological worlds' changing as well as the reality of their changing perceptions of 'theological worlds' affecting the way they interacted with their characters and the ways they related to the story on the whole. The receptivity to the detrimental effect of patriarchy in the church and in other parts of our society were mentioned.

In short, the students' appreciated using this method to learn about a very complex theological text. The characters and role-playing allowed the students to enter the process of imagination with enthusiasm. As a result of learning this

way, the process of theological reflection took on new dimensions for some students.

Role-playing also afforded the opportunity for theological reflection upon certain aspects of the personalities of the students, themselves. Their understanding of 'theological worlds' and how this would help them to minister more effectively was a distinct area of growth.

## **Conclusion**

## Conclusion

*Pamela Bay* was written not only as a story for the screen, but as a personal and professional integrative piece. It was written as a “preconceptual gestalt of meaning-feeling” which sought to express its truth. In short, *Pamela Bay* was my ‘theological world’. *Pamela Bay* was written as my attempt to realize Archbishop Weakland’s definition of the artist with which I began this project/ dissertation:

The artist is called to be a bridge builder between the liturgical expressions of the past that form the very best of tradition and the prayer needs of the present. The artist also has to be the bridge builder between the realities of our secular society and the sacredness of our worship. Only people of deep prayer and faith, it seems to me can fulfil this challenging role.

Archbishop Rembert Weakland, O.S.B.

Jones writes of the crucial role played by the arts because “functional theology ... is a reality not only for consciously religious persons and communities, but for each person’s human struggle for meaning”.<sup>1</sup> The expressions that result metaphorically create a publicly available thematic universe, which, at best, forms the outer edge of a paradigm struggling to be

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<sup>1</sup> W. Paul Jones, Theological Worlds, (Nashville: Abingdon Press) p. 23.



born".<sup>2</sup>

*Pamela Bay* as a parable speaks to the church both needing, and going through a paradigm shift. Jones speaks also of John Steinbeck's recognition of the theological nature of the creative process when, in creating East of Eden, he found himself drawn to discern the Cain and Abel story as a universal paradigm:

The greatest terror a child can have is [to be] not loved, and rejection is the hell of fears. I think everyone in the world to a large extent has felt rejection. And with rejection comes anger, and with anger some kind of crime in revenge for the rejection, and with the crime guilt -- and that is the story of [humankind].<sup>3</sup>

I share Steinbeck's recognition of the theological nature of the creative process. *Pamela Bay* has Steinbeck's rejection/anger/crime dynamic as a central focus. Paul Kyler has felt the powerful rejection of his family and he has committed a terrible crime because of the pain of his rejection. It is rejection that sets Paul Kyler on his destructive path. On the surface, in his role as seminarian, it would appear that his path was of God. His path, however, is demonic as he is obsessed with finding revenge for his brother David's death by merely going through the pretences of seminary life. When Pamela begins to penetrate the truth of Paul's facade she shows wisdom. She is not victimized by his evil power, but chooses to try and embrace him. In her embrace, she loses her life.

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<sup>2</sup> Steven Pepper, World Hypotheses, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), ch. 5; Herbert Richardson, Toward An American Theology, (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), pp. 37-46; Thomas Kuhn, The Structures of Scientific Revolutions, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970); cf. Ian Barbour, Myths, Models, and Paradigms, (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), pp. 104 & 5.

<sup>3</sup> John Steinbeck, East of Eden (New York: Viking Press, 1952), intro.

Her loss of life is a metaphor for the much needed change in our world of patriarchy to one that is much more inclusive of the value of all people and their respective talents.

We need a shift in paradigm that will enable all who care to participate in the spiritual life to do so with their genuine voices – voices that can attest to the diversity of God. When we say “yes” to our own voice, we say “yes” to the rich diversity that we are, as well as the diversity that God is. Jones writes further of our need to hear the contemporary call for ‘grooming’:

We need a church capable of grooming these contrasting communities of family resemblance, each capable of inviting into theological allegiance the hosts of spiritually malnourished in our contemporary culture. The recognition of ‘theological worlds’ entails the recovery of spiritual direction as the church’s central task. This means midwifing the integrity of each individual’s theological quest into individual and communal accountability. In so doing, the church can discover that social justice is commitment to the sacredness of such theological intimacy for each and all.<sup>4</sup>

‘Theological worlds’ are those descriptive ... meaning spaces in which each person attempts to domesticate the chaos as home. My attempt has been to make the church my home – my world. Such a personal world comes into being by an impulsive logic, discernible as my autobiographic thread. The home I sought is not what I believed it would be. My openness to truth as it unfolded in my life was being realized as the dynamic between the interplay of my

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<sup>4</sup> Jones., pp. 236-237.

particularized 'obsessio' and 'epiphania' became conscious.

'Obsessio', on the one hand, is the crystallization of deep need around focused imagery so powerful as to become a driving impetus toward satisfaction. 'Epiphania', on the other hand, is the congealing of those events which so function as hints that they give hopeful contours worthy of wager.<sup>5</sup> My 'obsessio' has been the search for truth, and *Pamela Bay* has been my 'epiphania'. *Pamela Bay* has allowed me the opportunity to work with my pain in a creative way; *Pamela Bay* also offers a parable of our times.

The ironic discovery for me was to discover the truth of these words of Dorothee Soelle as contextualized by Jones as he names a Christian theological paradox: "Truth is not something that we find or by which we are found, but something that we make true".<sup>6</sup> With *Pamela Bay* I have discovered much about truth. I did make *Pamela Bay* but I also listened to her many voices which, taken together, spoke the truth to me.

What made the journey to the 'true' real this particular time when other journeys have ended in failure? It was the presence of faith. Jones speaks of faith in this way:

Faith is a gambling upon the future, a living 'as if', with such intense commitment that one's life is the foretaste of making true the not yet. The proof for any faith is one's willingness to die for it -- and thus to live within it. ... Faith is both determination and gift.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 233.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 234.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 234.

I had the faith to trust that I was being led in the right direction. I allowed many of my demons to come into the light for transformation as the story developed in various stages. As my demons spoke their truth, the truth of love could be embraced more intimately.

I have learned that there is little consolation in a religious life when one does not take him/herself seriously enough to assert the truth of his/her life. I have learned the frustration and the loneliness of standing alone, while paradoxically beginning to feel more a part of the whole. I have learned more of the truth of the paradox of individuation. I have learned that I must embrace my separateness in order to be more fully connected to God and to others. The dance of faith is saying "yes" to oneself and to God simultaneously irrespective of what that might do to disrupt even the most treasured of human relationships. Relative to 'theological worlds' Jones puts it this way:

There is something special in knowing that no one else is like me, that I live in a world uniquely my own. Yet it is terrifying if one cannot believe deeply in that world, and thus in one's self as product and fashioner. Yet even if one could, the search is not for isolated meaning. By our natures, we need others with whom to explore and validate that meaning as community, enhancing its fullness through sharing, being driven to conversion if necessary, being held accountable for deepening and broadening our commitment. ... For this creative interplay of pluralism and commitment, the church stands to become a unique instrument. What is important here is to recognize the grounding for such a calling. The crisis in contemporary theology is leading to a phenomenology of 'theological worlds'. Christianity, in turn, must come to understand itself as

a composite of such alternative rhythms. Thus, in becoming true to its nature, Christianity can make a graphic contribution to religion as the universal dance.<sup>8</sup>

Our contemporary reality rewards conformism when it comes to faith. Faith, by and large, doesn't question nor does it ask people to question. If we are truly people of faith, however, we will change many times as we grow more in the likeness and image of Christ. Jones puts the truth of the work of change in this way: "the unity of a human life is the unity of the narrative quest", and that informing unity, discovered performatively, is the home base that forges what we have called a 'theological world'. Therefore theologizing is the process of identifying, nurturing, forging, or reforging one's impulsive logic as identifiable narrative, whether magnetized by imagery of battlefield or of cottage, [or of a chaplain and professor's world]".<sup>9</sup>

God is known by me in a new way. God's voice is discernible in each voice in *Pamela Bay*. Each voice has something to say about the nature of God because each person is an incarnation of God. Each voice demonstrates that "Christianity is a construct of overlaying configurations, loosely held together by witness to a common overlap as 'epiphania' – the story called Jesus as the Christ".<sup>10</sup>

One's 'theological world' will dictate what theological lenses a person will bring to film as he/she seeks to reflect on it theologically. Our own developing story will inform us how we allow the story to emerge before and within us.

Jones expresses this dynamic in this way:

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 242.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 235.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 239 & 240.

The aesthetic enterprise distils metaphors that promise a world. As these emerge through living, the task of theology, in turn, is to distil them into alternative plots, identifying them conceptually through a process of faceting. The result is disclosure of the anatomy of 'theological worlds' as they compete for loyalty in a particular epoch. Throughout this process, individual and sociocultural contexts interact in lively fashion. Thus what Steinbeck calls the story of humankind is actually a distillation of the rhythm that functionally defines his own autobiographical pilgrimage, proffered as inclusive by being so incarnated within recognizable flesh that it invites viability.<sup>11</sup>

The theologian is called to encourage the flowering of individuals within the community. The call of the Gospel is one of interdependence -- theologically, psychologically, sociologically, and so forth. Jones identifies such an understanding as one which is "the most pervasive dimension of human interaction".<sup>12</sup> The truth of Jones' assertion is one that calls for a much more creative interplay between the church and the world, and specifically, for this project/dissertation, the church and the arts, and the individual's relationship to both.

This project/dissertation has sought to be open to possibilities which enable one to have an appreciation of the role of the arts in theological reflection. I have dealt specifically with the role of feature film as a vehicle where one can become a connoisseur. I believe we have many stories to tell through the great diversity of human creation. In this project, *Pamela Bay's* voices have sought to

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

**tell their stories, whereas the dissertation sought to offer a way to drink from their stories through the distillation of the connoisseur's methodology. I hope that this project/dissertation, by extension, can help us to become connoisseurs of richness of the banquet of life that we are invited to by God.**

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## **Appendix**

### **A. "Theological Worlds" Inventory and Chart**

### **B. My Method Applied to Two Feature Films:**

*Dead Man Walking*

**and**

*The Seventh Seal*

**“Theological Worlds”  
Inventory and Chart<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> The Theological Worlds Chart is taken from Jones, Theological Worlds, pp. 42 - 43.

# **A THEOLOGICAL WORLDS INVENTORY: DISCOVERING ONE'S SELF AND CONGREGATION**

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## **I. Introduction: the Meaning of a Theological World**

Because we alone of all creatures can ask "Why?", we are unique. But because our answers are often unclear, we never know with certainty who we are or what we are to do. This is what makes life a struggle for meaning. Whether we recognize it or not, then, we are functional theologians, beginning months before our birth.

Rather than reflecting a perspective decided in advance, most often our answers are working assumptions carved out unconsciously through the process of living. Thus the "World" that results as home from their configuration is often unknown to the self. There are as many Worlds as there are persons. Yet these individual Worlds overlap, forming communities – latent and manifest. Those with whom we share a World are those whom we can understand almost intuitively, able even to finish their sentences for them. There are other persons, however, with whom we live "Worlds apart." These are not only the ones we have difficulty understanding, but with whom it is difficult to find a point of contact. Our research has identified five such Worlds, serving as a typology of pure possibilities.

A World results from the interaction between two poles. The first is one's obsessio, that lived question, need, ache, or dilemma which has its teeth into us at the deepest level. Other concerns are variations on that basic theme, standing in line behind its importance. The second pole is one's epiphania, that which through one or more events, moments, and/or persons brings sufficient illumination, satisfaction, or healing to provide a lived answer worth wagering one's life upon. One's epiphania is what touches promisingly one's obsessio, either as fact or as hope.

The dynamic establishing one's World, then, is this ongoing interaction of obsessio and epiphania. One's disposition is determined by whether this dynamic is seen more from the perspective of one's obsessio, or the epiphania is the more weighted pole. Whichever, each knows itself only in relation to the other.

Christianity does not create yet another World. Rather, those who affirm Jesus of Nazareth as epiphania for their World do so because of the healing pattern of meaning resulting from its unique engagement with one's concrete obsessio. Thus there are as many Christian Worlds as there are Christians. But they also converge in communities, resulting in five Christian variations on the themes of the universal theological Worlds.

One's theological World, then, tends to be unconscious, unknown, and/or unrecognized. Therefore theological growth begins first with discerning the World in which one is living. This Theological Worlds Inventory is designed to assist in that task. As a vehicle for articulating one's theology self-consciously, it can lead one to explore what it means to live more faithfully within one's World, help sense if one's World is stifling and in need of abandonment for another one, and help one enter into dialogue with members of other theological Worlds.

There are five parts to this Inventory. Instructions will be given in each Part:

- I Introduction**
- II Inventory**
- III Self-Rating Description**
- IV. Self-Scoring Sheet**
- V. Evaluation of Each World**



**Instructions:**

For each of the following questions, choose the answer which fits you best – put a "3" next to that answer. For the same question, choose the answer that is second best for you – put a "2" next to that answer. Then choose the answer that fits third best – put a "1" next to that answer. Respond honestly to as many as you can. There are no right or wrong answers. An answer is correct if it reflects your own feelings. It is wrong if it reflects either what you think you should prefer, or what you guess may lead to a particular outcome for the Inventory. In answering, let your mind roam quickly over your life experiences. Remember your own struggles, as early as you can. Let your answer characterize the "feel" of life for you over the "long haul." If a question, or its options, makes no sense, omit it.

1. My uneasiness increases when I feel:
  - a. out of control
  - b. tempted
  - c. disconnected
  - d. exhausted
  - e. empty, rootless
  
2. Life for me is a:
  - a. mysterious pilgrimage
  - b. basic right
  - c. courageous act
  - d. new gift
  - e. quest for self-fulfillment
  
3. My spiritual life is best characterized as:
  - a. requesting forgiveness with empty hands
  - b. meditating on ideals for my life
  - c. praying for others
  - d. contemplating, centering, uniting with
  - e. ascetic, strength for the dark night
  
4. A scripture passage with which I can identify is:
  - a. "We can rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance."
  - b. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son."
  - c. "Thou hast made us but a little lower than the angels."
  - d. "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb ..., and a little child shall lead them."
  - e. "I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know."

5. I tend to view death as:
- a. a reality to be faced steadfastly
  - b. deserved and rightful
  - c. a foe to be resisted
  - d. opening to another world
  - e. part of life's rhythm
6. The human condition is most characterized by:
- a. alienation
  - b. pain
  - c. personal guilt
  - d. injustice
  - e. invisibility
7. I am renewed when I experience:
- a. awe, wonder
  - b. exoneration, justice
  - c. fullness, self-worth
  - d. humility, forgiveness
  - e. compassion, integrity
8. When things are not going well, I sometimes feel:
- a. condemned
  - b. powerless
  - c. isolated
  - d. shutout
  - e. victimized
9. Who is Jesus?
- a. suffering companion
  - b. disclosure of that which is not recognized
  - c. a definitive human word about who God is
  - d. God's definitive word about who we are
  - e. foretaste of what is promised to be
10. When I experience limitations, I tend to:
- a. feel overwhelmed, passive
  - b. become arrogant, self-serving
  - c. act judgmentally, sometimes violently
  - d. feel impotent, hollow
  - e. feel exiled, separated, rejected

11. To improve things, my efforts should focus on changing:

- a. structures
- b. attitudes
- c. beliefs
- d. relationships
- e. perspectives about the whole

12. That which I find painfully real in life is:

- a. conflict
- b. disappointment
- c. shallowness
- d. isolation
- e. judgment

13. "Center stage" for making sense out of my existence is:

- a. the cosmos
- b. the self
- c. the demonic
- d. history
- e. life itself

14. What is most likely to disrupt life?

- a. seduction
- b. institutions
- c. weariness
- d. homelessness
- e. self-doubt

15. I tend to focus on:

- a. elsewhere
- b. past
- c. future
- d. expansive present
- e. each day as it comes

16. I have been haunted by a sense of:

- a. emptiness, worthlessness
- b. longing
- c. being at fault
- d. being threadbare
- e. anger

17. **Life is a joy when I feel:**
- \_\_\_\_\_ a. **vindicated**  
 \_\_\_\_\_ b. **loved**  
 \_\_\_\_\_ c. **at rest**  
 \_\_\_\_\_ d. **harmony/unity**  
 \_\_\_\_\_ e. **cleansed**
18. **An image for "home" is:**
- \_\_\_\_\_ a. **tomorrow**  
 \_\_\_\_\_ b. **spring housecleaning**  
 \_\_\_\_\_ c. **a day off**  
 \_\_\_\_\_ d. **a room of my own**  
 \_\_\_\_\_ e. **the ocean**
19. **In my life I have struggled most with feeling:**
- \_\_\_\_\_ a. **unimportant, worthless, trivial, undeveloped**  
 \_\_\_\_\_ b. **guilty, sinful, incompetent, wrong**  
 \_\_\_\_\_ c. **separated, homeless, adrift, lonely**  
 \_\_\_\_\_ d. **used, hopeless, fragile, futility**  
 \_\_\_\_\_ e. **competition, injustice, inequality, exploitation**
20. **What tends to give you hope?**
- \_\_\_\_\_ a. **changes in this world that will make it better**  
 \_\_\_\_\_ b. **support that encourages me to become who I am**  
 \_\_\_\_\_ c. **experiences that hint of the meaning of the whole**  
 \_\_\_\_\_ d. **trust in God's graciousness**  
 \_\_\_\_\_ e. **Divine companionship to see it through together**
21. **I can best contribute to the Reign of God by:**
- \_\_\_\_\_ a. **fighting for the oppressed**  
 \_\_\_\_\_ b. **being obedient to God's will**  
 \_\_\_\_\_ c. **standing with the rejected**  
 \_\_\_\_\_ d. **maximizing the potentialities in me and others**  
 \_\_\_\_\_ e. **striving for harmony between nature and humans**
22. **When I am not at my best, I can feel:**
- \_\_\_\_\_ a. **trapped**  
 \_\_\_\_\_ b. **wandering**  
 \_\_\_\_\_ c. **driven**  
 \_\_\_\_\_ d. **wrong**  
 \_\_\_\_\_ e. **unfocused**

23. The rhythm that best describes conversion for me is:
- a. from guilt to pardon
  - b. from suffering to integrity
  - c. from alienation to homecoming
  - d. from nothingness to self-identity
  - e. from oppression to liberation
24. I invest much time in efforts to:
- a. discover myself
  - b. forgive myself
  - c. realize myself
  - d. give of myself
  - e. be true to myself
25. The words best describing the human condition are:
- a. wanderer, orphan, stranger
  - b. victim, wounded, undone
  - c. self-doubt, impotence, ache
  - d. duplicity, selfishness, forbidden fruit
  - e. enslaved, oppressed, violence
26. Freedom means:
- a. no hunger or thirst for anyone
  - b. going home
  - c. a chance to start over
  - d. to outlast
  - e. to lose self-doubt in becoming who I am
27. How does reconciliation with God occur?
- a. By entering the world, God conquers the forces opposing us.
  - b. Christ pays the price for our sins.
  - c. In following Jesus, we come to a closer relationship with God.
  - d. There are moments in which the veil is lifted, and we belong.
  - e. God identifies with us as companion through it all.
28. Which pair of words best describes the dynamic of living?
- a. emptiness/fulfillment
  - b. suffering/endurance
  - c. separation/reunion
  - d. conflict/vindication
  - e. condemnation/forgiveness

29. In reflecting on my past, I remember times of feeling:
- a. invisible
  - b. tempted
  - c. engulfed
  - d. powerless
  - e. lost
30. Evangelism is effective if someone:
- a. is awakened to try
  - b. encounters the plight of the oppressed
  - c. finds the courage to persevere
  - d. senses the priority of being over doing
  - e. is brought to belief
31. God is the One who:
- a. brings into deeper harmony
  - b. takes sides
  - c. lures forth possibilities
  - d. atones for us
  - e. experiences our needs with us
32. Why do good?
- a. to make amends for my actions
  - b. in response to the kindness and encouragement I have received
  - c. power and energy overflowing from deep within
  - d. empathy with others
  - e. to fight injustice
33. I am afraid lest in the end:
- a. I might give up
  - b. there won't be anything more
  - c. things will not have been made better
  - d. I will be unliked/unwanted
  - e. I will be found wrong
34. I identify with:
- a. Israel's forty years braving the desert
  - b. Sara who was barren
  - c. Adam and Eve who became homesick for Eden
  - d. Peter who betrayed
  - e. Moses who ran away from taking the hard stands

35. A noble purpose for my life would be to:

- a. evoke harmony
- b. obey God
- c. fight the good fight
- d. persevere with integrity
- e. respect each person as sacred

36. Jesus is best understood as:

- a. pioneer, prophet
- b. threshold, model
- c. companion, sympathizer
- d. illuminator, evoker
- e. savior, Lord

37. The problem with so many of us is that we don't:

- a. risk
- b. last
- c. care
- d. know
- e. confess

38. Who is the Christ?

- a. redeemer
- b. messiah
- c. revealer
- d. suffering Servant
- e. teacher/example

39. One needs to focus on:

- a. the long run
- b. depth
- c. breadth
- d. motivation
- e. goal

40. As I understand suffering,

- a. it can become an instrument in personal discovery.
- b. it is wrong, to be fought.
- c. God's ways are not our ways.
- d. it is part of life.
- e. it can be a testing or penance.

41. Faith is trusting in:
- a. the future as coming
  - b. the unknown
  - c. a new beginning
  - d. me
  - e. the inevitable
42. I could be faulted for expecting:
- a. too much
  - b. to lose
  - c. to be inadequate
  - d. to be wrong
  - e. too little
43. I am drawn by picturing Jesus:
- a. alone with God in the mountains in prayer
  - b. with the woman at the well
  - c. overcoming temptation in the desert
  - d. casting out the money-changers
  - e. agonizing in Gethsemane
44. Life entails:
- a. guilt to be removed
  - b. victory to be won
  - c. mystery to be unveiled
  - d. duty to be lived
  - e. fulfillment to be realized
45. Which of these activities would make you feel alive?
- a. experiencing reconciliation after a bitter fight
  - b. helping a homeless family
  - c. doing a retreat in the mountains
  - d. having deep meal conversation with a friend
  - e. being acknowledged by friends at work
46. Redemption for me comes from experiencing Jesus as:
- a. nurturer
  - b. comrade
  - c. liberator
  - d. illuminator
  - e. savior



47. When things get difficult, in order to survive I sometimes:
- \_\_\_\_\_ a. turn secret
  - \_\_\_\_\_ b. turn away
  - \_\_\_\_\_ c. turn off
  - \_\_\_\_\_ d. turn inward
  - \_\_\_\_\_ e. go away
48. I live life as if it has about it the feel of:
- \_\_\_\_\_ a. fantasy, mystery
  - \_\_\_\_\_ b. tragedy
  - \_\_\_\_\_ c. lyric poetry
  - \_\_\_\_\_ d. pathos
  - \_\_\_\_\_ e. "comedy" (successful resolution)
49. Relationships sometimes become strained because of:
- \_\_\_\_\_ a. intensity, heaviness
  - \_\_\_\_\_ b. reluctance to venture
  - \_\_\_\_\_ c. failure, selfishness
  - \_\_\_\_\_ d. factors external to the relationship
  - \_\_\_\_\_ e. misunderstandings in communication
50. God is the One who:
- \_\_\_\_\_ a. identifies with us
  - \_\_\_\_\_ b. forgives us personally
  - \_\_\_\_\_ c. promises a new earth
  - \_\_\_\_\_ d. draws us into union
  - \_\_\_\_\_ e. adopts us as family
51. One must learn how to deal with:
- \_\_\_\_\_ a. one cause at a time
  - \_\_\_\_\_ b. one world at a time
  - \_\_\_\_\_ c. one day at a time
  - \_\_\_\_\_ d. one life at a time
  - \_\_\_\_\_ e. one episode at a time
52. A Biblical image that appeals to me is:
- \_\_\_\_\_ a. Jesus and the woman accused of adultery
  - \_\_\_\_\_ b. Job's patient strength in adversity
  - \_\_\_\_\_ c. the Emmaus reunion
  - \_\_\_\_\_ d. Exodus to the promised land
  - \_\_\_\_\_ e. the thief forgiven on the cross

53. I need:

- a. approval
- b. strength
- c. to experience myself as part of a greater Whole
- d. to become worthy
- e. to have a cause

54. I can identify with the Psalmist who said:

- a. "As a hart longs for flowing streams, so longs my soul for thee, O God."
- b. "Parent of the parentless and protector of widows, you lead out the prisoners to freedom."
- c. "In the shadow of your wings I will take refuge, till the storms pass by."
- d. "Too heavy for us are our offenses, but you wipe them away."
- e. "You have made us little less than a god; with glory and honor you have crowned us."

55. Sin is:

- a. a condition that defines us even before we act
- b. misdirected good
- c. part of life's struggles
- d. closing one's eyes to the mystery
- e. compromising too soon

56. The ideal Christian is a:

- a. martyr
- b. saint
- c. witness
- d. visionary
- e. spiritual mentor

57. My experience of sin is:

- a. unrealized potential
- b. separation
- c. indifference
- d. perversity
- e. weakening

58. The Gospel means:

- a. remaining faithful to the end
- b. deny myself for others
- c. giving myself for a cause
- d. learning to love myself
- e. losing myself in God

59. It is fine to:

- \_\_\_\_\_ a. enjoy
- \_\_\_\_\_ b. try
- \_\_\_\_\_ c. begin again
- \_\_\_\_\_ d. soar
- \_\_\_\_\_ e. win

60. A worthy end for my life:

- \_\_\_\_\_ a. to be reunited with all of life
- \_\_\_\_\_ b. to change the way things are
- \_\_\_\_\_ c. to endure, with integrity
- \_\_\_\_\_ d. to become a whole person
- \_\_\_\_\_ e. to do good

61. Christian experience centers in:

- \_\_\_\_\_ a. "mystic" oneness
- \_\_\_\_\_ b. focused growth
- \_\_\_\_\_ c. strength to persevere
- \_\_\_\_\_ d. common cause
- \_\_\_\_\_ e. new birth

62. It is important for persons to:

- \_\_\_\_\_ a. get in touch with their feelings
- \_\_\_\_\_ b. keep on keeping on
- \_\_\_\_\_ c. confess their shortcomings
- \_\_\_\_\_ d. risk the unknown
- \_\_\_\_\_ e. get involved

63. A group of words that characterizes Christ's work is:

- \_\_\_\_\_ a. vision, victory, completion
- \_\_\_\_\_ b. justification, reprieve, salvation
- \_\_\_\_\_ c. survival, sojourner, companion
- \_\_\_\_\_ d. unity, homecoming, oneness
- \_\_\_\_\_ e. model, wholeness, freedom to be

### III. A THEOLOGICAL WORLDS DESCRIPTION AND SELF-RATING

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#### **Instructions:**

Before scoring the Inventory you have just taken, read the descriptions of the five Theological Worlds below. Then put the number "1" next to the World that best fits your perspective, a "2" next to the one that fits second best, and so on, through all five descriptions. This will give you an opportunity to select a World, and give an order of preference for the other Worlds. A comparison of your choices with your scores as determined in Section IV will help indicate your degree of theological self-awareness.

#### **\_\_\_\_\_ WORLD 1: SEPARATION AND REUNION.**

For inhabitants of this World, there is often a sense of abandonment. Within this huge cosmos, we feel isolated, small, lonely – a speck in a vast and staggering space. At times we seem to be aliens, or orphans. Life tends to be a quest to understand the mystery of this Whole. Our longing is to find our way home, as it were. We yearn wistfully for a harmony to all things, while being haunted by the sad thought that there may be nothing behind it all.

Resolution as the promise of homecoming can begin through experiencing the fact of our existence as itself a gift. In sensing this mystery of being, one can be touched with awe. Such sensitivity often comes in sacramental moments in which we are grasped in oneness with the Ground of our being. It is as if a veil is lifted, if only for a moment, and we know that we truly do belong. Such moments serve as center point for the turning wheel, the unchanging in the changing, the eternal in the flux.

The cycle of nature reflects, almost liturgically, the cycle of life itself: birth, death, rebirth. Experiences of this ongoing rhythm are foretastes of a hoped-for cosmic harmony, that final reunion of everything that is separated. Even on this side, touches of paradise can be sensed around us. It is when we do not understand this, or forget, that we get in the way. But we are nonetheless bitten by eternity, so that neither this life nor this earth can ever really feel like home. The meaning of our craving is to return from whence we came, losing ourselves in God. Day by day authenticity is in becoming transparent to that God, so living that we point beyond ourselves to the Power of Being in which we are all grounded.

#### **\_\_\_\_\_ WORLD 2: CONFLICT AND VINDICATION**

In this World, history and its various institutions are tainted with self-interest. Conflict seems to be at the heart of life, even of nature, with many persons deprived of the means needed for living. Wherever one turns, the scene is a drama of winners and losers. Death is the final enemy, symbolizing the hostility which resists the crucial goal of humanizing this world. The foe is widespread, for even the cosmos is beset by entropy, so that such hemorrhaging seems to give to each part a sense of being violated. Thus threatened by the possibility of chaos, persons are tempted to grasp for power, escalating into a threat of nuclear destruction. Nations seem willing to "bring it all down" rather than lose. At one level or another, then, one keeps being pushed into being a "warrior." Our reaction is often one of anger, sometimes even of rage. Reform is called for, even rebellion. Yet even though one is determined to change the world, such efforts sometimes feel like a never-ending defeat.

Hope for resolution is rooted in the vision of a new heaven and a new earth, to be realized as liberation within history. In Shakespeare's words, "all's well that ends well." Otherwise history is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing. Since death in all forms is God's foe, resurrection, then, provides promise not only to the individual but to history itself. In behalf of that goal, God takes sides, being committed to the poor, the captive, the blind, and the oppressed – and so must we. God calls us to be co-creators in this completion of creation. History will be vindicated by its completion, flowing back to give meaning to each part as means to that end. "Thy Kingdom come on earth, as it already is in heaven." One way to work toward that vision is live as if the end is already here. Such hope in the God of the future makes us never satisfied with what is. This is why the prophet believes in a hope worth dying for.

### — WORLD 3: EMPTINESS AND FULFILLMENT

Those who inhabit this World are concerned with the self, for the dilemma that has taken hold of them is self-estrangement. One is uneasy that if people really knew me, they wouldn't like me. It isn't so much that I'm bad; it's as if there may not be much there. If my mask were to slip, it would be all over. But perhaps that wouldn't change things much after all, since often no one seems to care. The problem for many of us in this World is that often we are made to feel invisible, impotent, unheard, or insignificant. We are afterthoughts, like outcasts, as it were. And inside there is this emptiness, a void, an ache that resides in one's midsection – the fear of being nobody, which in turn hinders action for fear of being rejected. So I try to be who others want me to be, until I don't know who I am. And yet still I don't belong. My life seems like a deception, as I become increasingly alienated even from myself. The result is a paralysis, an aimlessness, a floundering – trapped by myself within myself. My reward is a strange comfort in inertia – where it is too late for action, too soon for regrets.

Resolution begins by being awakened to one's possibilities, usually by the support and promise of a caring friend or group. In being accepted, one is lured toward wholeness and fulfillment. For the Christian, such meaning emerges not only through the nurture of a Christian community, but through the One who in scripture models life as giving and receiving love. In being loved for who I am, I can be and become my true self. Knowing from within that real selfhood means to love and be loved, I am empowered to realize my potential. Such faith involves so believing in myself that I dare feel again, unable to love others if I do not love myself. The delicious mystery of living is growth, expansiveness, fulfillment – the dynamic of redeemed life. It entails a cycle that nature models for us. Death is part of the life process, just as re-birth is part of the death process. Throughout, the focus is self-discovery, self-growth, self-risk. Therein God is not distant, but experienced as present in a world that becomes friendly in its orderliness and hospitable in its potentiality.

### — WORLD 4: CONDEMNATION AND FORGIVENESS

This world is characterized by the struggle with temptation and sin. Within each of us is a tendency toward arrogance, to play "god" by idolizing who we are and what we possess. While we prefer to see our questionable behavior as rooted in ignorance, more often than not we deliberately choose what is wrong, often because it is "forbidden fruit." In the quiet hours, it is hard to quiet a sense of guilt, evoked often by fear of judgment. We can feel like fugitives. This condition has to do not simply with what we do, but with an inner disposition. In trying to change, we experience an impotence to be otherwise, as if we

are diseased. It is as though there is a deep need within me to justify my life, to convince myself and others that I am worthy of living. Thus life becomes an unending chore to be done. Yet I can never do enough, and so this drive flirts heavily with self-deception -- in regarding myself as being far better than I am. But the truth is that the good I want to do, I don't do; and what I shouldn't want to do is precisely what I end up doing. So I am caught, with even my efforts at selflessness being selfishly motivated.

Since I cannot get out of my own way, resolution becomes possible only through God's intervention, centering in the gift of forgiveness. Repentance, leading to conversion, exhibits faith and trust that we have received reprieve, even though in no way do we deserve it. In spite of our unacceptability, God adopts us, not simply as children, but as heirs of life eternal. This is why the word "grace" is so important, for the Gospel is the miracle of the empty hands. The Christian's life is one of paradox -- in which God forgives the unforgivable, loves the unlovable, and accepts the unacceptable. Our call is to respond in faithful obedience to this proclamation. Emphasis is not on self-realization but on self-sacrifice. Good works are not done in order to receive, but are spontaneous and joyous responses to being already justified by God's graciousness. Thus life becomes the ongoing pendulum between repentance and forgiveness, characterized by thankful humility.

#### WORLD 5: SUFFERING AND ENDURANCE

The dilemma which focuses life for citizens of this World is life itself, the way things are. There is a heaviness to daily living, so that it seems that whatever can go wrong, will. And whatever was troublesome yesterday will surely happen again, and again. While the characters and settings change, the plot remains basically the same -- as variations on the theme of "victim." Whether the examples are a poor person who knows deprivation from without, or a successful one who is being eaten by cancer from within, there is the same sense of being engulfed, controlled, wronged, as if a refugee. Suffering is the one constant, the sign of living near the edge. Unable to exist without being scarred, life often feels like a predator. So one is tempted not to feel anymore, to trade in trying for a cynical fatigue. Worn down in one's courageous fortitude, distrust is often the best defense against being done in. This is a hard world, one not readily chosen, for sadness edges even the joys.

Although one cannot really change the way things are, one does have a choice as how to live it. Resolution, ironically, can come through suffering, as a refining fire, as it were. Travail, rightly faced, can bring healing, in which integrity is birthed. Integrity is a determined willingness to outlast, to persevere, no matter what. Spirit is that strange power which strengthens one to press on, even when one can think of no better reason than just keeping on keeping on. For the Christian, such faithfulness, no matter what the consequences, is rooted in the belief that we are not in it alone. Because the companion God is suffering with us, we can endure to the end. On Golgotha, God screams in agony with us, drinking deeply of all that we too go through; therefore nothing can separate us from such a God. Redeemed life has little to do with grand designs or miraculous reversals. It is the integrity born of tenacity on the daily road, respecting the small and the commonplace. A knowing glance and a sharing hand are the manna which feed. What gives dignity to life is the quality of never quitting, so facing without deception whatever happens that it becomes a "moral victory." What matters is not the quantity of life but the quality of living. Thus life is to be drunk to the dregs, for one only goes around once. This can be done if one takes "one day at a time."

## IV. SELF-SCORING THE THEOLOGICAL WORLDS INVENTORY

### Instructions:

Transfer your responses to each question onto this page. Note that the letters a, b, c, d and e are NOT in alphabetical order. Total each column. The highest number indicates the Theological World which most fits you; the second highest indicates the second best, etc. Compare the results with your "Self-Rating."

1.	c	a	e	b	d
2.	a	b	e	d	c
3.	d	c	b	a	e
4.	e	d	c	b	a
5.	d	c	e	b	a
6.	a	d	e	c	b
7.	a	b	c	d	e
8.	c	b	d	a	e
9.	b	e	c	d	a
10.	e	c	d	b	a
11.	e	a	d	c	b
12.	d	a	c	e	b
13.	a	d	b	c	e
14.	d	b	e	a	c
15.	a	c	d	b	e
16.	b	e	a	c	d
17.	d	a	b	e	c
18.	e	a	d	b	c
19.	c	e	a	b	d
20.	c	a	b	d	e
21.	e	a	d	b	c
22.	b	c	e	d	a
23.	c	e	d	a	b
24.	a	d	c	b	e
25.	a	e	c	d	b
26.	b	a	e	c	d
27.	d	a	c	b	e
28.	c	d	a	e	b
29.	e	d	a	b	c
30.	d	b	a	e	c
31.	a	b	c	d	e
32.	c	e	b	a	d
33.	b	c	d	e	a
34.	c	e	b	d	a
35.	a	c	e	b	d
36.	d	a	b	e	c
37.	d	c	a	e	b

38.	c	b	e	a	d
39.	b	e	c	d	a
40.	c	b	a	e	d
41.	b	a	d	c	e
42.	a	b	c	d	e
43.	a	d	b	c	e
44.	c	b	e	a	d
45.	c	b	e	a	d
46.	d	c	a	e	b
47.	e	b	d	a	c
48.	a	e	c	b	d
49.	e	d	b	c	a
50.	d	c	e	b	a
51.	b	a	d	e	c
52.	c	d	a	e	b
53.	c	e	a	d	b
54.	a	b	e	d	c
55.	d	e	b	a	c
56.	e	d	b	c	a
57.	b	c	a	d	e
58.	e	c	d	b	a
59.	d	e	a	c	b
60.	a	b	d	e	c
61.	a	d	b	e	c
62.	d	e	a	c	b
63.	d	a	e	b	c

<b>Total</b>					
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World 1   World 2   World 3   World 4   World 5

**World 1:** Separation and Reunion  
**World 2:** Conflict and Vindication  
**World 3:** Emptiness and Fulfillment  
**World 4:** Condemnation and Forgiveness  
**World 5:** Suffering and Endurance

## V. THEOLOGICAL WORLDS: AN EVALUATION

Each Theological World can be a valid arena in which to live, move, and have one's being. No one World, as such, is better than another, nor more true. Nor can these Worlds be arranged so as to view some as elementary, others as more mature. The first task enabled by this Inventory was to identify the World in which you already live. The result may be a feeling of satisfaction, for your self-identity may be as you would want. Thus you are ready to understand that World more coherently, furnish it more fully, articulate and share it more fluently, and live it more faithfully. On the other hand, you might be receiving the description of your self-identity with negative feelings. This might mean that you are living an inherited World rather than residing in your own home. Or you may be living your World at its weak edges. Or in seeing your World rendered self-conscious, you may begin to experience it as suffocating or inhibiting, inviting the honesty of crisis.

Whichever your reaction, the next task is to explore the alternative Worlds. This may be done for several reasons. It can enrich your own World by incorporating coherently dimensions of the others. It may well test their viability as the beginning of your own conversion. It can help you understand better other persons, and why you and they interact as you do. It can help to provide a profile for a concrete congregation, giving clues to its inner dynamics. Or it may provide the base for restructuring your congregation.

What follows is an invitation to begin such a dialogue, indicating a few of the strengths and weaknesses possible within each World.

### WORLD I: SEPARATION AND REUNION

**Strength:** Persons inhabiting this World are attracted by wholeness and harmony, valuing the inclusiveness of all. The cosmos and nature share this harmony, valuing the inclusiveness of all. The cosmos and nature share this organic and mysterious totality. There is a quiet and often patient acceptance of human foibles by placing things within this larger perspective. There is a tendency to be sacramental, whether in the formal sense or through delight in participating in the rhythms of nature. Whichever, meaning is celebrated in the simple gift of existing. While life is often experienced in terms of polarities or dualities, ultimately these are unreal. Unity is rooted in God, in whom we live and move and have our being. Because God, as All in all, grounds and holds all things in being, it is possible to transcend the separation of subject and object in contemplation and the mystic experience. This may make one sympathetic to Eastern thought in particular and the unity of all religions in general. The basic posture in this World is to stand before life as mystery, invited to live as reverent guest. The Reign of God means the unifying of all things in God, experienced now in foretaste, as moments of transparency. In such timeless moments, one is touched by the still point of the turning wheel. Ethics emerge from this organic vision, ecologically sensitive that "in as much as you do it to the least of these you do it to Me."

**Weakness:** Mystic experience can undercut the passion for action. Becoming resigned to the rhythms of separation and reunion, one can overlook destructive problems by seeing them as relatively insignificant from the perspective of Eternity. Socio/econo/political dimensions of life can be treated as if they are not fully real. Since harmony is intuited as cyclic rather than linear, history can take on an uneasy status, or reduced to inevitable pattern. Furthermore, the propensity to see things symbolically can undercut the concreteness of life, with transparency sacrificing the uniqueness of each thing. Individuals in this World tend to feel alone, and as a neglected minority in modern society can be encouraged to adopt an individualistic posture toward life and others.



## WORLD II: CONFLICT AND VINDICATION

**Strength:** Persons who reside in this World tend to be committed to issues of justice and freedom. They are often willing to risk personal security and gain in order to join God in the fight for vindication of what is right. This leads many to protest against the individualism and privatization characterizing current life in the USA. They appreciate the physical ingredients of commonday existence, which accounts in part for their anger when the necessities of life are denied to anyone. There is a firm awareness of the corporate nature of life, and thus of the degree to which evil is systemic in nature. These people tend to have a finely honed social conscience, and are committed to the cost of discipleship.

**Weakness:** Often such persons have a hard time enjoying life, drawn to "doing" far more than to "being." Not only are they often driven people, but there is a tendency to regard things more as means than ends. They live more for the future than the present. As a result, there can be a shallow and non-spiritual activism, on the one hand, or, on the other, a sacrifice of relationships in behalf of results. Ironically, passion for one's particular cause does not always bring with it a sensitivity to other oppressions. Anger against death can lead to an avoidance of death. There can be a cleavage between humans and nature, bringing an insensitivity that sacrifices the ecological whole to a rectification of economic impoverishment. Further, the emphasis on corporate and systemic injustice can be made so central that the sin as residing deeply in the self may be neglected. Likewise, concern for people can lead to a neglect of the person. Self-righteousness can also be a temptation, leading one to simplify issues by dividing groups into "good" and "bad." This can result in "crusades," where the means for victory can contradict the values entertained as goals. Finally, this emphasis on goals can lead to utopianism, both in program and in personal calling, leading to burnout and/or capitulation.

## WORLD III: EMPTINESS AND FULFILLMENT

**Strength:** There is a keen sensitivity in this World to how socialization can scar and marginalize the person. The individual tends to be lost in any structure, resulting in the self being alienated from itself. Inhabitants of this World tend to have a healthy regard for eros: for vitality, for feelings, for deep sharing, for a lyric love of living. Dualism is opposed, insisting, for example, on integrating right and left brain thinking, and regarding mind and body as a whole. This World is populated with persons whose eyes are honed to see possibilities, becoming awakened to one's environment as positive and hopeful. "Becoming" is a key term, with growth regarded as the natural state of things. The precious moments are often characterized by a lyric child-likeness, fascinated with the new and imaginative.

**Weakness:** In the passion for fulfillment, there can be a tendency to neglect or even exclude persons who are not part of one's support. There can be excessive pride in one's stage of "maturity," needing the "less enlightened" with whom to compare oneself. Because citizens of this World are often from more privileged classes, there is a tendency to overlook the negative impact of systems and the need to use power in changing dehumanizing systems. Seeing life in terms of potential, there can be a tendency to identify "winners" with personal effort, "losers" with failing to try enough. Finally, the optimism often characterizing this World can lead to a discounting of one's shadow side, blind to one's own motivations for advantage even when denying all interest in power.

## WORLD IV: CONDEMNATION AND FORGIVENESS

**Strength:** Residents of this World have the courage to look at human duplicity without illusion. They see a powerful case for God in the destructive spectacle of humans playing "god" in the very act of denying God. Evidence of the "fall" is this universal human pretentiousness. What needs to be heard is the good news that God's grace is free and available to those who repent of their arrogance and ask for it. While conversion can be once and for all, there continues to be a need for confession and forgiveness, over and over. Christian life is characterized by humility, in knowing that one is sustained by grace. The response called for is one of faithful obedience, rooted in a strong distinction between good and evil and in a committed discipleship of self-denial.

**Weakness:** There can be a tendency for the individual in this World to be guilt-ridden. Thus one may be tempted to put guilt-trips on others. Either way, poor self-images can result. Stress on sin can be so strong that it blurs whatever motives, capacities, and degrees of goodness may be present, undercutting morality in society. In portraying the new birth in terms of a heavy contrast between "before" and "after," one's inevitable shortcomings can be driven inward, creating a secret life of deception, sometimes from oneself, but certainly from others. Relatedly, the distinction between believer and non-believer can be so graphically drawn that rather than confessing one's shortcomings, one may be tempted to project them onto others, in acts of righteous superiority. This can occur not only in personal living, but in establishing political, economic, and national dualisms which too easily identifies one's own position with God's. Such idolatry can encourage use of force to keep the "unrighteous" from prevailing. Emphasis upon response can render justification by faith, ironically, into a new form of works-righteousness, known as the "Protestant work-ethic," in which one is driven to prove one's worth. There can be a tendency to surround the offer of God's free and unmerited grace with so many conditions that it is no longer free.

## WORLD V: SUFFERING AND ENDURANCE

**Strength:** Residents of this World have a keen discernment of the way things are, and what is means to live as the leftovers of others. This sensitivity can bring a deep empathy for others. There is a tendency to be tenacious, strong, and shrewd, committed to living with a special brand of "homey" integrity. Deep loyalty and dependability for its own sake can become second nature, with a capacity to outlast with long-suffering. These are the ones who remain for the long haul. They are often surprisingly open to share what they have, being more concerned for the quality of the little than the quantity of the much.

**Weakness:** While these are the salt of the earth, the salt can lose its savor -- by becoming strung out, overextended, or burned out. Thus around the edges can lurk the shadows of depression or immobilization, even a tinge of masochism. For inhabitants of this World, closure and resolution are difficult to effect. Also apathy toward change can become a defense mechanism. There can be a tendency to squander "everything" in an irrational moment, either of respite, or of gambling on a miraculous reversal. Because this World rests on life as unchanging, remaining basically what it was, is, and always will be, a resident can be undone if a reversal does occur. In finding oneself in the "up position," one can be tempted to become judgmental, even intolerant, against those with whom one had formerly identified so deeply.

## THEOLOGICAL WORLDS

Essential Rhythm	Issue	Feel	Obsessio (human condition)	State	Atonement	Christology	Epiphania (salvation)
1 Separation and Reunion	Cosmos	Longing	Isolation experienced as abandonment (mystery, obtuseness, throwiness, opaqueness)	Alien/ Orphan	Experiential (substantive, humanistic, revelational) "To mediate" Love as tearing the veil	Revealer/ Evoker (to lead me home)	Coming home/ Being home (harmony)
2 Conflict and Vindication	History (evil)	Anger (rage)	Normlessness experienced as chaos (enigma, wrenched, invaded, oppressed, opposed)	Warrior	Constitutive (classical, ransom, dualistic) "To combat" Love as taking our part	Messiah/ Liberator	New Earth (consummation)
3 Emptiness and Fulfillment	Self	Ache (void)	Self-estrangement experienced as impotence (insignificance, self-alienation, not belonging, lost potential, invisibility)	Outcast	Enabling (subjective, representative, incorporative) "To model forth" Love as filling to overflowing	Example/ Model	Wholeness (enriched belonging)
4 Condemnation and Forgiveness	Demonic	Guilt	Powerlessness experienced as idolatry (diseased, condemned, falling short, fearful)	Fugitive	Compensatory (objective, forensic, exchange) "To take away" Love as forgiving the unworthy	Savior/ Redeemer	Adoption (reprieve)
5 Suffering and Endurance	Life	Overwhelmed	Meaninglessness experienced as engulfment (plagued, flooded, controlled, manipulated, wronged)	Victim/ Refugee	Assumptive (subjective, reversal, cancel, annealment) "To write off" Love as outlasting with long-suffering	Suffering Servant/ Companion	Survival (integrity)

**My Method Applied to Two  
Feature Films**

**My Method Applied to**

***Dead Man Walking***

Portions of My Method Applied to *Dead Man Walking*<sup>1</sup>

The Intentional Dimension:

*a) What are the goals and aims of the genre of film including those which may be publicly announced and those which actually appear in the film?*

The goals and aims of this film are clearly to humanize a very difficult question for many human beings: is capital punishment appropriate or not? Robbins' celebration of the religious significance of our humanity brings a depth to the film which otherwise could not be present. The depth of God's love is present in the love that Sr. Helen Prejean shows for Matthew Poncelet. In light of the love that is evident, even those for whom capital punishment is the answer for their grief might recoil in the face of Poncelet's execution. It is the power of their not being satisfied with his execution that made many people believe that only love can heal the depth of pain that comes with such loss.

*What 'theological worlds' do you see being represented?*

I see *Dead Man Walking* as a 'world four' film. Remembering that the filters that we need to be aware of in 'world four' are struggle, true identity is found in paradox, the need for forgiveness, and repentance. Poncelet is brought to a state of mind/heart where he seeks forgiveness. When he is sentenced to death, paradoxically, he finds life.

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<sup>1</sup> *Dead Man Walking*, dir Tim Robbins with Susan Sarandon and Sean Penn, 1995.

*b) Is there an intentional theological message?*

There is a very distinct theological message in this film. Love does not conquer all, but love does invite further growth -- even unto death. God's love does not exclude anyone.

Poncelet's willingness to enter his pain allows the healing power of love to enter into his life because of his relationship with Sr. Helen. Messages such as Prejean's 'power of presence' are very clear. It is not what she does, but out of who she is, that she ministers to Poncelet and others. She is the shepherd who leads Poncelet.

Prejean's leadership is distinctly fashioned after the leadership of Jesus. Jesus emptied himself so that he could become the servant. Prejean left opportunities behind so that she could enter into religious life. Prejean demonstrates a freedom in her choice that celebrates the life of the vowed religious in the Roman Catholic Church.

*Do the 'theological worlds' assert themselves overtly/covertly?*

'World four's' assertions are apparent throughout the entire film. A man who requests another's presence as he prepares for his execution is demonstrating his need for a relationship that will bring him to repentance. Poncelet may not have been conscious of repentance, but he was conscious of his need to be with another. It is in his relationship with Prejean that he 'paradoxically' finds life as he approaches his death.

*c) What audience was the film written for?*

The film was written for the general public in North America. The general public remains uncertain about capital punishment. *Dead Man Walking* allows a fresh perspective on the question. A wholesome nun who stands by a repulsive killer allows a window into a story that is complex. The story does not represent one who is good and one who is bad. Poncelet is not redeemed by love in the immediate sense, but in a transcendental sense -- although this transcendental love is embodied by Prejean.

*Does the film have a particular 'theological world' at heart? Do the other 'theological worlds' surface in the film?*

*Dead Man Walking* has 'world four' at heart. 'World three' surfaces in Poncelet's personality as he moves from his alienated state to one where he appreciates 'the face of love'. 'World two' surfaces in its examination of the question of the worth of capital punishment. To put it another way, the interface of the centre of the story is the heart of a man who is converted to a readiness to meet the completeness of love because he has met 'the face of love' in Prejean. The worthwhileness of capital punishment is not an abstract question in *Dead Man Walking*. It is a very real question that surfaces in the face of a particular man's crime.



*d) What values are implicitly and explicitly stated in film?*

The central value of the Gospel – agape (authentic concern) is explicitly stated. Courage to go on a new journey, openness to love in its many manifestations, justice being worthy of seeking, and the genuine need that all of us have for relationship are all values that are clear in the film’s presentation.

Implicitly, the values of the serenity prayer could be said to undergird the way of love in *Dead Man Walking*:

- 1) serenity to accept what I cannot change;
- 2) courage to change what I can change;
- 3) the wisdom to know the difference.

*Dead Man Walking* is a sensitive look at a topic that continues to produce many heated debates.

*Does the film exhibit values from a particular ‘theological world’?*

As stated earlier, *Dead Man Walking* exhibits the values of ‘world four’ most clearly.

*What ‘theological world’ values do you see being exhibited?*

I see the values of ‘world four’ being exhibited as Poncelet seeks someone to help him to face his death. While forgiveness is not in his mind, he is open to it when he allows himself to respond to Prejean’s love -- a love that calls him out of himself.

*e) What are the theological relationships implied by the values stated in the film?*

The theological relationships implied by the values stated in the film are the following:

- i) the sustaining presence of the Holy Spirit in the world -- Prejean opens herself to the Spirit of truth;
- ii) the incarnation of God -- Prejean is the Christ-figure in the film who recognizes the incarnation of God in Poncelet;
- iii) God is the shepherd who will look for the lost one -- Prejean looks for and finds the lost sheep in Poncelet;
- iv) in her singing of 'Be Not Afraid', Prejean presents the abiding love of God presented in Isaiah 43, the source of this hymn;
- v) the recognition of seeing Christ in prison as stated earlier -- Prejean knows that the Gospel calls us to see the face of Christ in the prisoner.

*Does the director want to emphasize the importance of a 'theological world'?*

The director doesn't want to emphasize the importance of a 'theological world' but wants to tell the story authentically. In his faithfulness to the characters, their 'theological worlds' are apparent. In Robbins' faithfulness to the portrayal of Poncelet's 'obsessio' his meeting Prejean allows for an 'epiphania'. Characters in a drama 'bump up against each other's 'worlds' as they search for truth in their lives.

- g) Does the director/producer/writer publicly endorse what values the film holds before us?*

The director/writer publicly endorses the values of the film. He has made other films that speak strongly to our need for honesty as human beings. He asks the audience to read *Dead Man Walking* as the credits roll. His endorsement of the book and his befriending of Sr. Helen Prejean are indicative of his integrity. Susan Sarandon, who played Sr. Helen Prejean, is Robbins' real life partner. They both are concerned citizens of the world who not only love the creative scope of film but are both deeply committed to justice.

- Do the director/producer/writer publicly endorse the value system of a particular 'theological world'?*

The writer/director publicly endorses the value of human interaction that is loving. The particular expression of 'world four' in *Dead Man Walking* demonstrates a love that is healing through Prejean as she approaches Poncelet's pain. Robbins' commitment to justice would certainly indicate his public endorsement of the value of a forgiving approach from one human being to another.

- h) Does the audience understand what the director is trying to portray or do they come away with their own interpretation?*

The audience appeared to have a clear understanding of the central issue of the film. While the audience may be slower to grasp the depth of the power of love; they have, however, appreciated Prejean as a very decent woman who

loves.

*Does the audience understand what 'theological world' the director is trying to portray or do they come away with their own interpretation, being shaped by their own 'theological world'?*

The audience was aware of the need for Poncelet to find forgiveness as Prejean's forgiving nature helped him to break free from his walls of isolation. The audience may well not have understood the breadth of the theological possibilities but the simple gestures of forgiveness and love are universals that could be appreciated.

**The Structural Dimension:**

*a) What is the organizational form of the film and how does this influence the theological message of the film?*

The organizational form of the film is centred around the outgoing nature of love. Sr. Helen constantly moves forward as the story moves toward Poncelet's death. Even death cannot break the power of love.

*b) Understanding the organizational form of the film will allow us to consider alternative ways of presenting and/or interpreting the material.*

The film could have begun with Prejean's entry into the prison. Having begun, however, with her entry into religious life gives us a clearer picture of the power of love growing from this woman's specific commitment. Her noticeable

growth, from a young woman to a middle aged woman reveals a deepening of her commitment to God over time. If the film had begun from the prison scenes onward, it would have left this important dimension of her life out.

I have a very deep appreciation of the way black and white film as well as flashbacks were interspersed in this film. Clarity comes gradually to Poncelet in flashback as he tries to remember his crime. Black and white film helps these scenes to stand out from the main body of the film. Robbins' creative choices were wise, even to the point of Prejean being pulled over by the police for speeding. Her humanity never leaves us even though she embodies Christ so very deeply. Prejean is a Christian admired by people who desire Christian maturity. Prejean is also simple enough to be present to Poncelet's family in a way that truly helps them through this ordeal. Prejean's faith and her willingness to embrace many ambiguities holds the many tensions of her life together.

*The 'theological world' as evidenced in the organizational form of the film will allow us to consider alternative ways of considering the material as we consider the form from the vantage point of another 'theological world'.*

Had the story been organized around 'world one', it may well have focused on the struggles of Prejean's as she grew in this ministry. Another scenario might have been one where the film was organized on a 'world three' theme. In Poncelet's quest for himself, perhaps, we could have seen him shift his identity from a person who is tremendously void to one who is able to accept and give love.

*Does the organizational structure of the film facilitate the audience seeing a particular 'theological world'?*

The organizational structure of the film facilitates the audience seeing the film through 'world four's' filters. Struggling with repentance, forgiveness, and finding one's true identity are beautifully structured in this story.

### 3. The Curriculum Dimension or the Content Dimension

a) *What is the connection between the themes in the script with the themes of the Gospel?*

The connection between the themes in the script with the themes of the Gospel are the themes of love, courage, peace, and conversion.

Prejean's love is radically driven. She has vowed to give her all to Christ. She lives that radical commitment before she meets Poncelet and it is her grounding in the love of Christ that gives her the courage to say 'yes' to Poncelet's request. Prejean's simply singing, 'Be Not Afraid' as Poncelet goes to his execution is a simple prayer of confidence in the love of God being more powerful than the violent death that Poncelet will undergo. Prejean offers a simple prayer to break down the power of violence. She opts for peaceful intervention.

Finally, it is Prejean's embodiment of love that invites Poncelet's conversion. If he could not trust in the power of the love that she embodied, he would not be able to let his defences go.

*What is the connection between the themes in the script with the themes in each of the 'theological worlds'? Relate these themes to Scripture.*

The themes in the script that relate to themes in each of the 'theological worlds' are forgiveness and repentance, finding one's true identity paradoxically, and struggle. These are the central themes in 'world four'. Poncelet's quest for accompaniment at this stage of his life indicate his desire to leave his self-alienation and the powerlessness that he feels.

Themes in the script that relate to themes in Scripture are the sustaining presence of the Holy Spirit in the world as found in Prejean as she ministers to Poncelet; the incarnation of God -- Prejean is the Christ-figure in the film who recognizes the incarnation of God in Poncelet.

*b) Is the script integrated or more a collection of themes/scenes relative to Gospel values?*

The script is well integrated. The transitions are subtle. The challenges that both Prejean and Poncelet have to face are intimately connected. She encourages him to see that his confession of guilt is not really for God, the victim, or the victim's parents, but for him. It is he who needs to be freed.

Prejean's life prior to the main part of the story and after the story are integrated into the story by emphasizing her central commitment at the beginning and ending of the film. The story begins with her vows to religious life; it ends with a deepening commitment as a healing instrument for Delacroix after Poncelet's execution.

In Christian theology, themes of life, death, and resurrection are central to

our faith. Prejean, as Christ-figure, has helped not only Poncelet to face his own passion but Delacroix who may also be healed by the love of God that Prejean will bring to him. Prejean's sense of life, death, and resurrection in her own life is heightened as she considers where she has come from – a life of wealth to a life of poverty; Prejean's willingness to die to self – to be humble enough to hear the heartache of the victims' families and their feelings of betrayal as she ministers to Poncelet, and finally, her own sense of the resurrection – Jesus' love will be enough to sustain her as she moves forward after putting so much energy into what could be construed as a lost effort.

*Did the producer/director's 'theological world' respect the 'theological world' of the medium's 'theological world' from which it was lifted?*

The director showed profound respect for the 'theological world' of not only the medium but the person's 'theological world' from which it was lifted. It shows a writer great honour to have him/her available on the set when a film is being shot. Sr. Helen Prejean was asked for her creative contribution throughout the shooting stages of *Dead Man Walking*. She felt that her 'theological world' was given enormous respect.

*d) Are the characters in the film convincingly presented?*

The two principle characters are very convincingly presented. Prejean is an authentic, mature woman who has taken vows as a nun. Poncelet's repulsive character is never so awful that we would turn away from him entirely. Robbins



walks a tightrope with Poncelet, however, when he has him speak of things evil as admirable. Prejean, an attractive woman, seems appropriately placed in life.

While polar opposites, Prejean opens the doors of communication for a meeting ground with Poncelet. This meeting ground is holy ground, for there the barriers break down.

*Are the relationships in the film convincingly presented?*

The relationships in this film are convincingly presented. Prejean is a real woman with real needs as well as the Christ-figure for Poncelet. She laughs, jokes, feels deeply, is intelligent, and cares very deeply for people in her life.

Poncelet is genuinely connected to his family by deep emotional bonds and he feels guilt for the pain he has caused his mother by his actions. Relationships with the supporting cast all seem entirely realistic. Prejean's need of people in a healthy manner and Poncelet's tragic family all make sense in this story.

#### 4. The Pedagogical Dimension

*a) All films are mediated by many sources -- writer, actors, directors, cinematographer, editors, current cultural values. Which of these sources are dominant in the film under consideration?*

Dominant sources in this film are the director, editor, and the two principle actors. Characteristic of Robbins' films are characters that have depth

and complexity. In turn, they must face depth and complexity. His confidence in the editing of the horrific crime scenes with a confession that is becoming clearer as time goes on works magnificently.

There is something that can be counted on in a Robbins' film -- the need for honesty. Robbins knows that only honesty will reveal the truth. It is the truth that will set people free. Prejean standing in her truth enables Poncelet to open to his truth. Love is connection with a person with whom I can be myself.

*Does the 'theological world' of the dominant source in the movie show through?*

The 'theological world' of the dominant source in the movie shows through in each and every scene. The lovely humour and humanity of Prejean, even as she is stopped for speeding, indicates the power of love as her driving force -- subtle and profound. It is her uniqueness that was able to touch the hardened heart of Poncelet.

*Is knowing the context of the film the same as knowing the 'theological world'? If so, please explain. If not, please point out the differences?*

Knowing the context of the film helps to know the 'theological world' but they are not the same. To know 'theological worlds' is to know a theological construction that is an overlay for the story.

### 5. The Evaluative Dimension

a) *How should the film be evaluated theologically?*

- *situational/contextual ethics/morals;*
- *sensitivity to peoples' relationships;*
- *transcendence of culture;*
- *recognizable traits of God.*

God's transcendence, immanence, steadfastness, vulnerability, intelligence, and depth of care are all evident in Sr. Helen Prejean. Prejean is a very balanced woman who brought a very balanced approach to her ministry to Poncelet. Prejean is a sincere woman seeking to offer what she can most authentically. While feeling hurt when criticized for her willingness to stand with Poncelet, she understands that she must reach further to stand with those victims who are hurting. She does not change her stance toward Poncelet but she expands her horizons.

*How does the film's 'theological world' present situational/contextual ethics/morals?*

*Dead Man Walking* presents the issue of capital punishment with great wisdom. The story allows the audience to enter into the worlds of both Prejean and Poncelet. Therein we meet their humanity and not abstract concepts that support this or that claim. Ethics always needs to test its worth in the real experiences of peoples' lives.

*How does the film's dominant/lesser 'theological world' demonstrate sensitivity to peoples' relationships?*

*Dead Man Walking's* dominant 'theological world' demonstrates sensitivity to peoples' relationship as it is a story of the power of love in reconciliation. Not every person felt they 'won their reward' so to speak but love's face shone in even the darkest hour for Poncelet. Love begins to take root in Delacroix's life as he opens further to the pain of his loss of his loved ones. Prejean is able to return to her life with a renewed sense of the power of love and her radical commitment to love.

*How does the film, if at all, transcend culture? How does the film's transcendence relate to the 'theological world' of the film?*

*Dead Man Walking* transcends culture in its Christian attitudes of forgiveness and love. The film's transcendence relates to the 'theological world' of the film as repentance and forgiveness are central values to 'world four'. The finding of one's true identity paradoxically is a central truth in 'world four'.

*How does your 'theological world' influence the ways you see the purpose of the film?*

I have answered the inventory as a thoroughly 'world one' person. I am able to see good purpose in 'world four's' approach to life. The difficulties that accompany finding oneself in paradox cannot be predicted. If Poncelet had not had to face death in the ugly manner of execution, would he have been prepared to see the 'face of love' with such vulnerability?

I see Poncelet as free to 'go home' from my 'world one' vantage point after having undergone his 'world four' journey. Prejean is free to return to her world with greater depth and responsiveness to the victims of Poncelet's crime. Prejean has learned that restorative justice is not only in siding with the one who commits the crime. There are still many voices that she will attend to, I suspect, from her 'world two' orientation and this is indicated as she befriends Delacroix. Her 'world' will never be the same – mine has been altered as well, from the experience of viewing and reflecting on this film.

**My Method Applied to**

***The Seventh Seal***

## PROFOUND GOD-TALK CAN EXIST IN FILM

by John Pater

Reflections on *The Seventh Seal* (1957), Written and Directed by Ingmar Bergman; critique based on Jane Smith-Eivemark's Theological Reflection Method for Feature Film

### Is there an intentional theological message?

This film is "in your face" theological. The absence-presence of God is the central, ever-present thesis of this film. God, angels, life, death, demons and saints are part of almost every conversation. And yet it isn't trite or evangelical in tone. Bergman does an incredible job using this medium to engage us in a serious look at some huge questions about the existence of God ("God is silent" and yet "God is a maddening reality inside me") and the meaning (or "emptiness") of life. Issues are raised, especially by the main character, the knight Antonius Block, that are usually the preserve of philosophical-theological textbooks.

### Does the film have a particular "theological world" at heart? and does it assert itself overtly/covertly?

This is a "world one" film. Antonius Block experiences the abandonment of God. The entire cosmos feels empty and devoid of meaning. He longs for God to be revealed: "Can it be really so terrible to want to know God with the senses?" He never comes to the point (unlike his crusade companion) of believing that God does not exist. God is merely "silent", "who must be there somewhere", and that drives him to the point of exhaustion. He is on a journey, a journey home, a journey that is completed only with his "dance with death." He has the good fortune though of meeting along the way a small troupe of actors who in their innocent life reveal the way ("this shall be to me a sign") to life joined with God: "the stillness, the twilight, the strawberries, the milk ... I won't forget this moment." It's a reality that at least one of the actors actually has visions of frequently: "not the kind of reality you see, but the kind you sense with your heart."

Bergman is overt in portraying the dynamics and extremes of "theological world one". It's the world, the mythology, he favours, over against other "worlds" that surface in the film.

Do the other "theological worlds" surface in the film?

The "world four" theology of guilt and condemnation is portrayed in the traveling preachers/monks who preach a message of damnation. According to their mythology the plague is God's judgement on their sins, a judgement that will visit them, so they'd better repent quickly before death takes them. This theology is not portrayed in a sympathetic light. Both the troupe of actors and the company of Antonius Block are horrified by this approach to God and life.

The acting troupe themselves represent a "world three" longing for a life where their gifts are welcomed. They are outcasts in a dieing world that doesn't seem to want their gifts of joy and laughter and innocence. In the end their journey and life continues, not yet (or ever) whole, but "on the way."

A "world five" mythology is a strong dimension in the general life of everyone in the film. Life is one of suffering and endurance. The horrible effects of the plague are overwhelming. It seems the best anyone can do is merely survive. While this is the general condition of life in this film, this "world" is subsumed under the huge questions which the filmmaker deals with through his characters and narrative. "World five" may be the reality of life, but "world one" dominates with its questions and issues. Antonius Block is not caught up with life's meaninglessness and struggle (world five) as much as he is caught up with the abandonment of God (world one). His is not a question of survival (world five) but of coming home to the truth (world one).

What is the controlling idea of the film and how does this influence the message of the film?

Again, this film is driven by the dilemma of the silence of God. Life is not empty, God is not dead, so why does God not become real to our "senses"? Such a worldview comes in the midst of incredible suffering. And yet the film does not push a view of attempting to change that reality (a world two response); nor does it even wish to help us to take on the attitude of long-suffering (a world five response); instead it dwells on the question of God's seeming abandonment of the cosmos, despite the "maddening reality" of God continuing to "be". The "world one" mythology organizes the way the story unfolds and influences the ultimate message of the film.



What is the connection between the themes in the story with themes in Scripture?

The title of the film is taken from the book of Revelation. A text from that book is heard at the beginning and near the end: "And when the lamb opened the seventh seal there was silence in heaven which lasted for about half an hour."

That silence of God is a theme heard in many places in the Bible: the existential questions in the book of Job; the Psalmist's cry (echoed by Jesus on the cross) "my God why have you abandoned/forsaken me?"; the angst of some of the Hebrew prophets when confronted with disaster. In the film, silence is noted several times both in words and in the scenes portrayed (silence around the vision of the virgin Mary; the stillness and tranquillity of the life of the troupe of actors; trees being unusually still before a storm; and the knight's wrestling with a God who is silent.)

There are several other allusions to biblical texts and themes. A biblical hell and brimstone sermon violently intrudes on the lives of villagers as monks carry a cross and whip themselves into symbolic repentance. One of the actors frequently sees visions (ala Isaiah or Ezekiel) of saints, demons and even Death leading others in a dance. The chess game between Death and Antonius Block is reminiscent of Jesus' parlays with the devil in the desert.

There is not a strongly evident Christ-figure in this story, although some of the characters at times hint of such *imitatio*. The knight himself in his dual with Death is an echo of Christ's dual with Satan both in the desert and in the grave. The knight's gut-wrenching quest for God to come out of hiding is not unlike the cry from the cross: "why have you abandoned me?" The visionary actor is not unlike Jesus' in his ability to "see" what the kingdom of God is like: "not the kind of reality you see, but the kind you sense with your heart." Curiously, even Death in the final scene where he leads the knight and his cohorts in a dance, is an odd echo of (a world one) Christ leading them home: "through the rain which cleanses the tears on their cheeks."

All films are mediated by many sources - writer, actors, directors, cinematographer, current cultural values. Which of these sources are dominant in this film?

Ingmar Bergman is both the writer of this story and director of the resultant film. Because the story is dominated by the huge cosmic questions, Bergman has to be seen as the dominant source. This is likely his quest, or at least the quest, as he understands it, of his contemporary society. The questions and the issues frame the story he tells. If he had other driving issues, he would have written and directed a different story/film.

Does the audience "get" the film's message?

I don't think they can avoid it. Bergman persistently confronts us with the central issue, both in how the central character deals with it and the "answers" others may have. I'm not sure one could watch this film and come up with anything different than what Bergman intended.

To what extent are situational/contextual ethics/morals dealt with in the film?

The film does bring us into that 14th century world and the whole crisis of the plague which rampaged through Europe. At times we are confronted with the dilemma of how one ought to respond given that circumstance: the highly infectious dying person who begs for water and help; the condemnation of "righteous" monks; the bullying of the actor in the pub-inn; the persecution of the young woman accused of witchcraft.

How does the film deal with relationships between people?

The film beautifully portrays a healthy, life-engendering relationship between the young actors and their child. Lampooned is the relationship between a blacksmith and his flirtatious wife. The knight and his crusade companion seem to be equals and are respectful of each other's conclusions on the whereabouts of God. People in the pub-inn display typical crowd pressure and go along with the bullying of the actor.

How does the film, if at all, transcend culture?

This film came a decade after World War II. It came at a time when atheism was gaining preeminence in Europe and North America. The film was Bergman's debate with that worldview. He was saying: hold it, are you sure about the "death of god"? As such he engaged and challenged his time and transcended it by not simply going along with the drive toward atheism. His placing the story during a 14th century crisis paralleled the crisis of his time of war and holocaust. His "world one" mythology did not so much transcend as provide an answer that might be acceptable to many during this time. The longing for answers to where was God, where is God in the midst of all this, "fit" his time extremely well.

What was the purpose of the film?

The film was made to deal with the crisis of Bergman's world. He was making an extremely clear point about the paramount religious questions/issues of his day. He framed a clever story around God's seeming absence, providing his "answer" to their dilemma.