

GOD GOES TO THE MOVIES

Are you looking for a point of contact with non-Christians by which to reason together? Do you seek common ground for dialogue about issues that really matter for the sake of the Gospel?

One of the most productive areas for thoughtful interchange is film. In popular movies we find creative expressions of worldviews, values, concepts of the self, and especially theology.

Why? Because according to the Biblical worldview, human beings are hard-wired for spirituality. We seek meaning and purpose. We need love and an object to worship. We long to be creative. We strive to comprehend and prevent evil. Our cultural artifacts are filled with religious and philosophical assertions. We can learn how to use these affirmations and questions as a basis for Gospel discussion.

For example, I recently watched an interesting movie on Netflix called, "The Man Who Knew Infinity." The film is about a devout Hindu, who was a self-taught, mathematic genius. In 1913 Srinivasa Ramanujan traveled to Trinity College, Cambridge, to study with G. H. Hardy, an atheist. The story raises fascinating questions about faith and science (mathematics), the meaning of life, Christianity and Hinduism, revelation, and racial prejudice, for example.

Here are three, brief dialogues between Ramanujan and Hardy that illustrate the confrontation between spirituality and the modern worldview.

Hardy: Oh no. God and I do not exactly see eye to eye. So, if I prepare for rain, then it won't. (Looking up at the clouds and speaking...) So far, so good and I am spending the day in the library. Now, we are sure to have sun. You see, I am what you call an atheist.

Ramanujan: No sir. You believe in God. You just don't think he likes you.

Doctor: The danger is his lungs.

Hardy: He has had a bad cough for some time.

Doctor: It is no cough. He had advanced tuberculosis.

Hardy: (shocked and saddened) Well. Is there nothing we can do?

Doctor: Pray. It will take a miracle.

Hardy: Life for me has always been mathematics.

Ramanujan: Do you want to know how I get my ideas? My god, Namagiri. She speaks to me. Puts formulas on my tongue when I speak. Sometimes, when I pray. Do you believe me?

Hardy: ...But, I don't believe in God. I don't believe in anything that I cannot prove.

Ramanujan: Then, you don't believe me. Don't you see? An equation has no meaning to me unless it expresses the thought of God.

How might you use this film for discussion with non-Christians or instruction in the church? Here are five questions that can guide you:

1) What is the message of the film? What does it assert, promote or reject?

2) How does the film express its message? (characterization, script, scene, etc.)

- 3) What worldview, ethical, or theological themes arise from the film?
- 4) What does the biblical worldview teach about these themes? (compare and contrast)
- 5) How might you communicate with a non-Christian about this movie?

For more insights go to Ted Turnau's website, Faith-Popular Culture-Imagination, and download his "Movie Night Kit" (<http://www.turnau.cz/content/turnaus-movie-night-kit>, in English). Also read his blog and articles on this site (in Spanish).