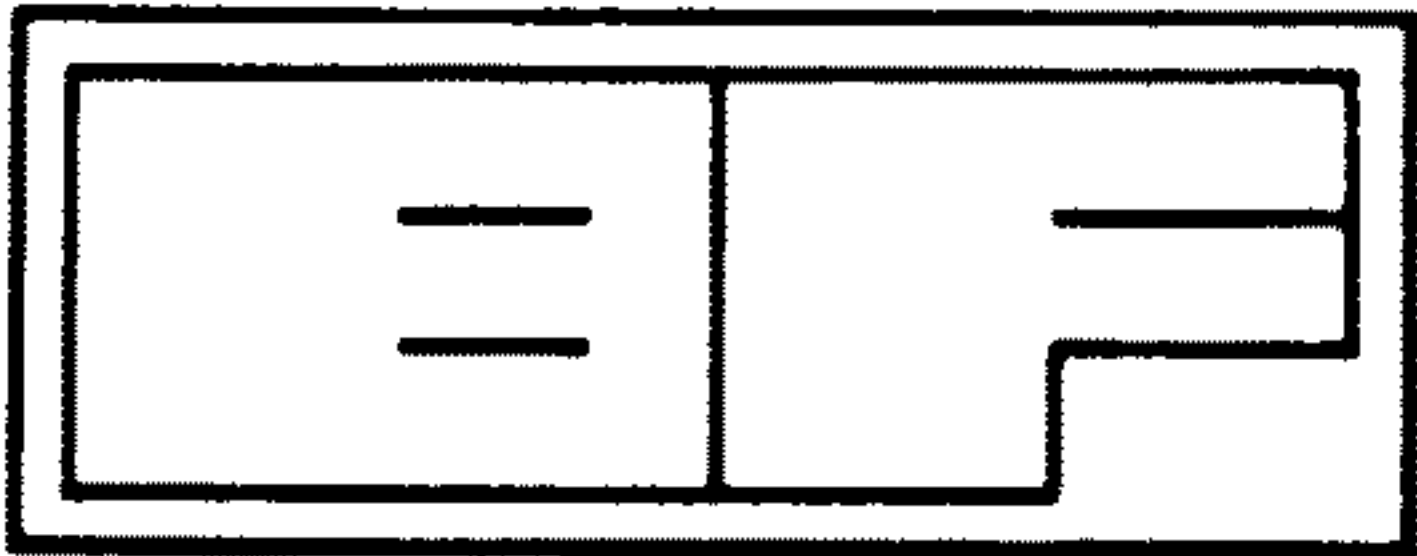


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BRANDON FILMS, INC.
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THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO SAINT MATTHEW

(Il Vangelo secondo Matteo)

A Film of Pier Paolo Pasolini

Christ Enrique Irazoqui
Young Mary Margherita Caruso
Older Mary Susanna Pasolini
Joseph Joseph Morante
John the Baptist Mario Socrate
Peter Settimio Di Porto
Judas Otello Sestili
Matthew Ferruccio Nuzzo
Christ's Voice Enrico Maria Salerno

The film is dedicated to the
memory of Pope John XXIII

Produced by Alfredo Bini
Distributed by Brandon Films

CREDITS

Directed by Pier Paolo Pasolini

Photographed by Tonino delli Colli

Editor Nino Baragli

Music of Bach, Mozart, Prokofiev, Webern
and the Congolese Missa Luba

Costumes Danilo Donati

Production Companies Arco Film (Rome), Lux Cie
Cinematographique de France (Paris)

Locations in Southern Italy: Calabria, Lucania, Puglie

Production date: 1964

Running time: 136 minutes

Pasolini Answers an Interviewer's Questions on
"The Gospel According to Saint Matthew"

Q: From what you've said about your Catholic upbringing, Catholicism is not something deep inside you, it's something with which you have chosen to have a relationship, which is mainly an external relationship: it's a factor in Italian society rather than a factor in you - - - is that a fair way of looking at why you chose this text for a film?

A: Well, if you saw THE GOSPEL as a work of a practicing Catholic then you're right to put me the question. But I don't think that is right. Maybe I didn't realize this myself until a month ago when I saw it again after a gap of two or three years. It's not a practicing Catholic work . . . it's only externally that the film has (such) characteristics.

But internally nothing I've ever done has been more fitted to me myself than THE GOSPEL for the reasons I talked about before - - - my tendency always to see something sacred and mythic and epic in everything, even the most humdrum, simple and banal objects and events. So in this sense THE GOSPEL was just right for me, even though I don't believe in the divinity of Christ, because my vision of the world is religious - - - it's a mutilated religion because it hasn't got any of the external characteristics of religion, but it is a religious vision of the world, so making THE GOSPEL was to reach the maximum of the mythic and the epic.

Besides, the whole film is full of my own personal motifs, e.g., all the minor characters from the agricultural and pastoral proletariat of Southern Italy are mine completely, and I only realized this when I saw it again now; and I also realized that the Christ figure is all mine, because of the terrible ambiguity there is in him.

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Q: How in fact did you choose the figure for Christ?

A: That was a sudden inspiration involving psychological factors in me, my way of seeing people. I spent more than a year looking everywhere for someone to do Christ, and I'd almost decided to use a German actor. And then one day I came back to the house and found this young Spaniard, Enrique Irazoqui, sitting here waiting to see me and as soon as I saw him, even before he had a chance to start talking, I said: 'Excuse me, but would you like to act in one of my films?' - - - even before I knew who he was or anything. He was a serious person, and so he said 'no.' But then I gradually won him round.

* * * * *

Q: The trouble about making a film of the Gospel is that it isn't just any old story, it's a story that in a society like Italy has been captured by an institution, the Catholic Church . . . a film on the subject surely runs the risk of becoming, likewise, the property of the Church as an institution, in this particular situation.

A: Yes, I agree, this was a real danger, but you must also bear in mind that nobody in Italy reads the Gospel, really nobody. I asked every single person I knew and only three or four at the most had read the Gospel, so that this was much less a danger in Italy than elsewhere . . . in fact, the film had a different reception in Italy than from what it got in England and America: in Italy it was a disconcerting and scandalous novelty, because no one expected a Christ like that because no one had read Matthew's Gospel; whereas in England and America it confirmed people's viewpoint, by and large; it certainly wasn't considered scandalous.

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Q: You found some good locations - - - where were they?

A: The whole film was shot in Southern Italy. I had decided to do this even before I went to Palestine, which I only did to set my conscience at ease. I knew I would remake the Gospel by analogy. Southern Italy enabled me to make the transposition from the ancient to the modern world without having to reconstruct it either archaeologically or philologically. I did a long tour of the South alone by car and chose all the locations and then went back with my assistants and did the planning.

* * * * *

Q: He (Christ) is full of contradictions in the text . . .

A: In this case I have done a kind of analogy voluntarily. I have reconstructed by analogy, in a modern figure the teleological contradictions there are in the Gospel. The Gospel is full of contradictions. They are essential; they are what make it great and rich. But while the contradictions in the text are contradictions of content, of meaning, passion, faith, religion, the contradictions in my film are more existential and therefore more disquieting.

* * * * *

Q: You have put in one or two bits that aren't in Matthew like the text when Christ dies.

A: Yes, that is from Isaiah. That is one of the few liberties I allowed myself. There is another bit from Isaiah where he is walking along with the apostles in Calabria just before the investiture of Peter. But the whole of Matthew is full of quotes from Isaiah, so I felt that was fair enough.

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Excerpted from PASOLINI ON PASOLINI, edited by Oswald Stack, Thames and Hudson Ltd, London. 1969. pp. 73-98.

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