

Prepare for EASTER

Compiled by JANINE DEVILLIERS

Publications and Promotions

Dan Brown has become a worldwide phenomenon with his tale of an ancient mystery. Mysteries and legends provide hours of entertainment and the more ancient and well known the facts around it, the more enthralling for the potential code breaker.

The Bible is one of the most widely-read documents and contains mysteries and secrets aplenty, providing material for many a researcher, archaeologist and historian. The story of Christ as told in the Bible: His birth, life and death, contains many aspects which have given rise to speculation and different interpretations over the centuries.

The Library Service collection includes a few titles dealing with these mysteries as well as several different interpretations of the life of Christ, which provide fascinating viewing material for Christians, as well as followers of other religions.

Historical perspectives and research

The Jesus conspiracy [videorecording] / producer and director, Graham Judd.

The arrest, trial and execution of Jesus is a central tenet of the Christian faith and centuries of anti-semitism are based on the Jews' supposed complicity in his death. In this programme legal reporter David Jessel sets out to examine the historical record of the twenty-four hours before the crucifixion and places it in the context of the religious and political situation of the time. Besides Jesus himself, there are two key figures, the Roman prefect Pontius Pilate and the Jewish high priest Joseph Caiaphas. By talking to a number of archaeologists, historians, biblical scholars and legal experts, Jessel tries to establish who was responsible for what has been called history's greatest miscarriage of

justice. He examines the reliability of the existing records, notably the gospels, and tests them against the known facts of the customs and legalities of the time. In particular he looks for the truth in the motives and the conspiracy of interests of the Roman rulers of Judea and the Temple priests, both of whom would regard Jesus and his teachings as a threat to vested interests and civil order.

An interesting account of, what one of the people interviewed calls, the most important trial in the history of mankind.

The Last Supper [videorecording] / producer and director, Dan Setton.

This programme starts by explaining the significance of the Jewish Passover meal, commemorating the deliverance of the children of Israel from bondage in Egypt, before explaining what happened at a Passover that took place some 1500 years later in Jerusalem. Using current and reconstructed documentary footage, as well as re-enactments, it sketches the background to the seder that became known as The Last Supper, which Jesus shared with his disciples. In the process it explains details of the ritual involved, including the preparation of the food, and recounts the events of the day as recorded in the Bible. Shot entirely on location in Israel, it also refers to the correlation between the Jewish Passover and the Christian Eucharist. An informative and well-made semi-documentary that puts these religious traditions into historical perspective.

In pursuit of the shroud [videorecording] / producer and director, Reuben Aaronson.

The Shroud of Turin is supposedly the cloth in which the body of Christ was wrapped after the crucifixion. It first appeared in Europe in 1355 and has prompted much speculation as regards its authenticity. Various teams of scientists have examined the cloth, with sometimes conflicting results. A 1970s research project cautiously concluded that it was probably genuine, whereas a 1980s study that used carbon dating found that the cloth itself was about 600 years old and thus couldn't possibly be authentic. Since then it has been suggested that the carbon dating itself was faulty, not taking into account possible bacterial contamination, and this programme goes over all the evidence once again. A number of experts in various fields comment on different aspects, ultimately doing little to settle the controversy. Certainly the image of Christ, revealed when viewing the negative of a photograph, seems clear enough and there is enough supporting evidence for the claim

to be taken seriously, but some crucial points are still not settled, notably since further carbon dating has not yet been approved. At times it leaves scientific evidence behind, notably when it is surmised that the image of Christ was projected onto the cloth through radiation at the moment of resurrection, but it is a well-made and thought-provoking programme for believer and non-believer alike.

Story of Christ on video

Jesus Christ movie star [videorecording] / producer, Ray Bruce; director, Martin Goodsmith.

From the earliest days of the cinema, filmmakers have attempted to portray the story of Christ on the screen, sometimes with a certain measure of success and sometimes less so. This programme presents an overview of some of these efforts and discusses the dilemma confronting anyone seeking to portray both a human Jesus and a divine Christ in an age of religious doubt. Starting with the first mimed versions of gospel stories, to extracts from films like *King of kings*, *The greatest story ever told*, *The gospel according to St. Matthew*, *Godspell*, *Jesus of Nazareth* and *Jesus of Montreal*, it shows how filmmakers in different countries have tried to interpret the story and discusses the controversies that sometimes accompanied their efforts. It also includes interviews with some of the actors who portrayed Jesus (Max von Sydow, Enrique Irazoqui, Robert Powell, Willem Dafoe) and directors David Greene, Franco Zeffirelli and Martin Scorsese. A fascinating and respectful programme that should be of general interest.

Titles in stock

Passion of the Christ

King of Kings

Jesus of Nazareth

The Miracle maker

Jesus Christ superstar

The lion and the lamb: the story of Jesus Christ.

These titles provide borrowers with information to appreciate and understand fiction set in a biblical historical context with specific reference to the political problems, trends, customs and beliefs of this period. During the forthcoming Easter, an important religious celebration, librarians could also put these video titles to good use. It can also be promoted in a display - see page 51 for an Easter display or refer to the **CL** of January/February 2005, page 43.

Resourceful librarians would be able to devise more ways to promote these riveting titles and inform their communities of its availability, making their borrowers aware of the fact that the public library also provides material to enrich their spiritual lives.

Note: Reviews by Freddy Ogterop, Film/Video/DVD Selector

