author asks a challenging question: Who is entitled to define Islam? Its diverse currents and movements attest to the dynamism of this religion. Our understanding would be impoverished if we took the fundamentalists for normative and succumbed to their view of Islam as a homogeneous religion that discourages dissident views for being cracks in a monolithic structure. On the other hand Muslims have the right to develop their own political, cultural and social structures without having Western norms imposed upon them, as if these were ideal and universal.

He sees encouraging signs of Muslim creative activity in the increasing use of the novel and recently the Internet, in order to elaborate new images of Islam and communicate the rich diversity of Islam. Will all this lead to mutual understanding and enrichment between Islam and the Euro-American world? With the author, I would like to think so.

JOSEPH ELLUL OP

THE FILMGOER'S GUIDE TO GOD by Tim Cawkwell, *Darton, Longman & Todd*, **London, 2004, Pp. v + 170, £10.95 pbk**.

The word in the trade is that books on religion and cinema do not sell, but this book deserves to do well. Tim Cawkwell has had a long history of watching and making films; he knows the industry from the inside. Here he has taken a number of theological themes including 'God's Grace and God's Silence', 'Faith, Salvation', 'Guilt', 'Crucifixion', 'Resurrection' and has shown how they have been treated in a number of films. His treatment offers sufficient detail without going into extensive analyses but he does avoid the shallowness typified by the identification of unlikely figures like Shane and Arnold Schwarzenegger as 'Christ-figures' that spoils a good deal of theological writing about film.

The author's choice of films does not pander to the popular cinema-goer; the directors Cawkwell most admires are Dreyer, Rossellini, Bresson and Tarkovsky. This is not a surprising choice, indeed it is admirable, but you are not likely to see DVDs of the first three in your local HMV store nor are you likely to see those three on television or even in a cinema, certainly not outside London. But do not despair, those with a serious interest in film will have seen some Bresson and Tarkovsky and maybe Rossellini and the author also gives serious attention to more popular and widely available movies such as *O Brother Where Art Thou* and *The Night of the Hunter* ('Salvation'), *Brighton Rock* ('Violence') and *American Gigolo* ('Guilt'). The chapter on Faith is devoted to Tarkovsky's parables of the boy who makes the bell and restores Andrei Rublev's

https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0028-4289.2004.0059h.x Published online by Cambridge University Press

commitment to painting, and the hunt for paradise in the mysterious and admittedly difficult *Stalker*.

I can understand Tim Cawkwell's enthusiasm for *The Passion of Joan of Arc* by Carl Dreyer in the chapter on 'Crucifixion', though I don't entirely agree that Bresson's treatment of the same theme is a failure, but in the chapter on images of Resurrection, which includes *Babette's Feast* and *Breaking the Waves*, I cannot share his enthusiasm for Dreyer's *The Word* (*Ordet*). This slow and bizarre picture of religious life in Jutland offers a resurrection as unconvincing as that of Shakespeare's in *The Winter's Tale* by a holy fool who has been driven out of his mind by reading, we are told in the film, too much Kierkegaard. See this film and learn the lesson to keep off Kierkegaard!

When the author discusses films that this viewer has seen, he engages the reader's interest and draws out details that one might not have noticed in the film; when he gives an account of a film that one has not seen, it is more difficult to engage with the writing but one often feels driven to track the film down and watch it. I certainly feel this about Rossellini's *The Messiah*, an out of the way film if ever there was one that Cawkwell finally traced after twenty years to a German version without subtitles. It sounds one of the more successful films about Jesus, though the author is more generous to some of the Hollywood efforts than I would have expected. Of course, in the final chapter on 'Images of Christ', it is Pasolini's *Gospel According to St Matthew* that gains the accolade, a masterpiece if ever there was one, whatever minor miscalculations the director might have made. There is also a discussion of Pasolini's earlier attempt to play with images of Christ in *Accattone* where the anti-hero, a pimp, dies between two thieves, albeit after a motorbike crash.

Cawkwell has an Epilogue in which he asks for a cinematic equivalent of Bach's *St Matthew Passion*, for '... a film-maker to film the passion story on an epic scale, but to punctuate its drama with moments of stasis, with commentary, with reflections. The result might be shown in cinemas but even better it might be used liturgically in Holy Week, thus awakening in us a new understanding of this story of stories'. He must have known Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* was in production though he cannot have seen it, not even a rough-cut, at the time of writing. Is this the film he was hoping for? I doubt it, though it would certainly have merited discussion in this book. There has been a huge range of responses to Gibson's film. Jews certainly see it differently from Christians but, to be fair to Gibson, he portrays a sinful world that wants to destroy Jesus rather than simply a culpable Jewish nation. Personally I found the film too theatrical, too obviously histrionic to respond emotionally, though I have spoken to others who have wept through all two hours of it

https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0028-4289.2004.0059h.x Published online by Cambridge University Press

and a male friend who came out shaking. The extent of the violence shown towards Jesus is unreal: how could he have gone through all that without passing out? How could the soldiers have ever got him to the execution site if they had kept hitting him so often? The deposition and *pietà* show the Gibson approach clearly: in renaissance paintings the corpse of Jesus shows his wounds, here he looks like a piece of raw meat. Not a film for liturgical use.

GEOFFREY TURNER

https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0028-4289.2004.0059h.x Published online by Cambridge University Press