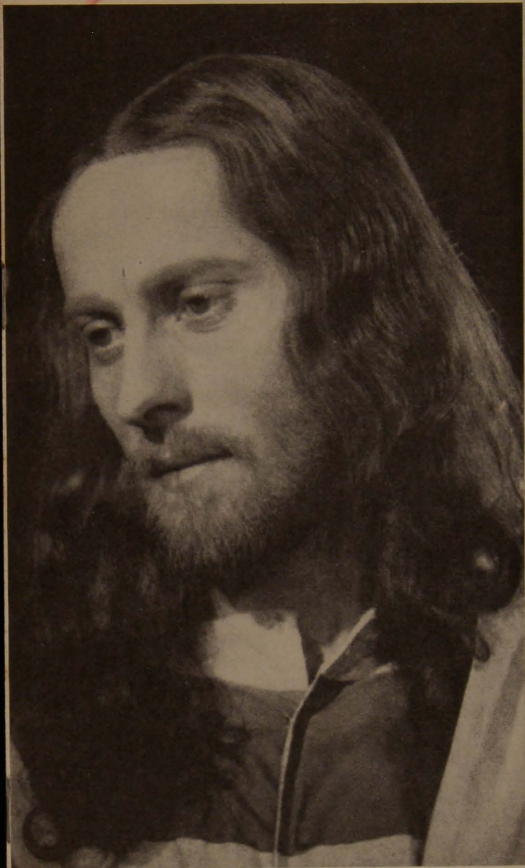


The Divine Tragedy



"We must look upon the production of MONSIEUR VINCENT with the satisfaction of having accomplished a great work and above all with the determination to develop into something greater.

"In this spirit we are preparing THE DIVINE TRAGEDY."

—GEORGES DE LA GRANDIERE

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FORE

WORD

The world is caught today in a mighty struggle against the forces of materialism and godlessness. In this struggle there can be no neutrality. Now, more than ever before, those who are allied on the side of truth and love of God must work together to overcome the forces of evil.

One of the most effective means of bringing messages of truth and morality to the whole world is through the medium of the motion picture.

THE DIVINE TRAGEDY is undoubtedly the greatest and the most challenging motion picture conceivable, since it deals with the Passion of Christ. The author, however, has not only tried to recapture on the screen the historical drama narrated in the Gospels—with all the reverence befitting the representation of Christ—but has especially endeavored to portray its profound influence on our daily lives. He wanted to remind men of good will of the greatest messages of love and justice of all time and to give them an understanding of the spiritual ideal which will save them.

No other undertaking could bring a greater force to serve the cause of peace or to combat atheistic materialism so effectively.

THE DIVINE TRAGEDY will be created anonymously, no names of producer, author, director, or actors being mentioned. The collective effort of a group of devout and eminent artists will be brought to fruition so that the peoples of the world may once more be revived by the divine message.

Millions will see the film, a large number of whom may be ignorant of the Gospel or have false conceptions of it. The production of THE DIVINE TRAGEDY will be just as important for the enlightenment of the ignorant as for the confirmation of the faith of believers, the two purposes being closely allied.

It is not intended to be a propaganda film for one church alone, but rather a holy work, profoundly human and universal.

Against an external threat of war we all draw together, Protestants, Jews, and Catholics, ready to lay down our lives and this entails no compromise in matters of faith. It is even more imperative that we draw

together in times of peace to defend eternal values. We are embarked on the most critical spiritual battle in history, and if we are to prevail we must unite for the defense of certain common goals.

THE DIVINE TRAGEDY is certainly one of these goals, having already aroused the interest of Catholics, Protestants, members of the Greek Orthodox Church, Jews, and even Moslems.

Since such a subject must not be hampered by national barriers, the plan is to produce the film simultaneously in English, French, and Spanish, making it an international film in every respect. It will be produced in the south of France, Morocco, and Italy, by technicians and artists chosen from among the best in Europe and America. The producing company will bring together representatives from many different nations and within the bounds of possibility THE DIVINE TRAGEDY will be presented in the language of each country where it is released and will thus benefit from the widest distribution.

Technical Innovations

Thanks to Abel Gance's three fundamental technical innovations: the PICTOGRAPH, TRIPTYCHS, and SOUND PERSPECTIVE, it can be predicted that THE DIVINE TRAGEDY will mark an important date in the annals of motion pictures.

THE PICTOGRAPH: Through the invention of a patented multifocal lens it will now be possible for the director to arrange the visual elements of any scene with perfect clarity as he wishes the audience to see it. Instead of being, as heretofore, the servant of the camera, he becomes its master. The result is an infinite grain in visual subtlety and variation. The Pictograph can also be utilized in "trick effects" and "process shots" in such a way that spectacular effects which in the past would have made the production costs prohibitive can now be obtained economically and with added artistic value.

THE TRIPTYCHS make it possible to modify, like a visual accordion, the size of the projection area through the use of a triple screen which embraces

three times as many visual elements as ordinary production and approaches the scale of the great public performances of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Aristophanes in ancient Greece.

SOUND PERSPECTIVE: This invention (which has been successfully demonstrated at the Rex, the second largest theater in Paris) permits the director to cause the sound to emanate from any part of the theater he desires. The audience, in consequence, becomes an integral part of the action on the screen, and the script of *THE DIVINE TRAGEDY* has been written with the specific object of taking the fullest advantage of this remarkable invention.

Preparation and Realization

For several months the work of combining the theological, technical, and administrative aspects of this undertaking has been proceeding under the control of the producer of *MONSIEUR VINCENT*, which won twelve awards, including the Academy Award presented in Hollywood in April, 1949.

Every stage in the action of the film and every word of the dialogue has been submitted to eminent theologians in France, Switzerland, and the United States, and they have given their unanimous approval. These words, "unanimous approval," are significant, for it is conservatively estimated that they mean a potential public of 300 million people for *THE DIVINE TRAGEDY*.

The Portrayal of Christ

From tests made on a great number of persons who were not professional actors a man emerged who is physically, artistically, and, of even greater importance, spiritually suited to represent Christ.

As the late Father Sertillanges said in referring to the role of Christ, "It is impossible, but it is necessary." If, during the two-hour picture on the life of Christ He did not appear once on the screen, so many obvious subterfuges would have to be resorted to that the result would be totally ineffectual and lamentable. It should not be forgotten that Christ was born the Son of Man, that He lived in our midst. If we do not show Him in the flesh, with the simplicity that Rembrandt portrays Him in *THE PILGRIMS OF EMMAUS*, many spectators throughout the world, Christian or not, will retain a false idea of Him.

Of course the representation of Christ will be made with the utmost discretion, especially in the scene of the Crucifixion. Furthermore, since *THE DIVINE TRAGEDY* should be shown to all nations of the world, it is planned to make two versions of the film, in one of which Christ will not appear. This latter version may be exhibited in the few countries where the visual representation of Christ is not deemed desirable.

Production Estimate

The cost of promoting *THE DIVINE TRAGEDY* is estimated at \$2,200,000. Of this amount \$1,000,000 is being raised by public subscription in various countries. The American quota is \$300,000.

MONSIEUR VINCENT was produced entirely by public subscription, with the gratifying result that over 100,000 people became aware that they can play a role in the production of good films. Although the entire cost of *THE DIVINE TRAGEDY* could readily be met through ordinary methods of financing, it was decided to reserve an important part of the enterprise for widespread popular participation. American shares are priced at ten dollars per share in order to favor investment by people of modest means.

The financial estimate seems unbelievably modest when compared to the cost of major Hollywood productions. However, the financial advantage of making this picture in Europe, combined with the economies effected by the use of the Pictograph invention, makes this low estimate entirely dependable.

Statistics prove that the great religious films of the world have been most successful. The Motion Picture Almanac annually publishes a list of the "best hundred"—the pictures which have greatest profits—which is highly instructive. The list includes *QUO VADIS*, *THE KING OF KINGS*, *BEN HUR*, *GOING MY WAY*, *THE BELLS OF ST. MARY'S*, *THE SONG OF BERNADETTE*, etc.

Those who subscribe to *THE DIVINE TRAGEDY* will not be making a donation. On the contrary, all indications are that participation in this great work will be a sound investment. However, financial participation in the production of *THE DIVINE TRAGEDY* is not urged and should not be undertaken with the sole idea of making a profit.

Those who wish to make their contributions to this enterprise as a donation can do so through any chari-

table organization which is recognized by the Treasury Department.

Subsidiary Enterprises

Apart from *THE DIVINE TRAGEDY* itself, several subsidiary films will be made. These will include documentaries on Palestine, the Holy places, and the paintings of the Crucifixion to be found in European museums.

In addition there will be an exclusively Biblical film and, in agreement with both Catholics and Protestants, a number of pictures will be made for catechism classes and Sunday schools. Hitherto such films have been produced with meager resources and their value and scope have been limited. In this instance it is planned to make utmost use of sets, technicians, actors, extras, and natural locations employed in *THE DIVINE TRAGEDY*. The result will be a number of short educational pictures of the finest quality.



Synopsis of the Film

Obviously any synopsis of a script of over five hundred pages can offer no more than the purpose and general trend of the film. The reader should bear in mind the fact that the medium of the motion picture utilizes to the fullest the appeal of visual reproduction which the written word cannot always recapture in its entirety.

The film presents not only the Biblical story but a modern drama as well which brings into sharp focus the fact that the forces of evil which existed two thousand years ago are the same that are ravaging the world today; that the ancient truths are eternal and offer the only solution for human problems.

The modern part of the story is set in the atomic age. In no way is atomic warfare treated as inevitable. The story is not a prophecy. Rather we have here a warning that the horrors we have already known may well recur if humanity, disregarding the teachings of Our Savior, persists in its headlong race toward self-destruction. The bomb is used as a symbol of what man can do to himself if he makes his own judgment supreme.

In the film we follow the great drama of Christ's public life, and we note a tragic similarity to our own time, the same types of good and evil. We see that the men and women of Our Lord's time are the same as

those of today and tomorrow with their good qualities, their shortcomings, and their weaknesses. In both periods we find the believers and the unbelievers, the indifferent and undecided, the pious and the profane. Thus begins a certain parallelism, erasing the barriers of time and space.

While Christ speaks to the Hebrews among whom He lived, He is heard with equal clarity by the countless unfortunates of the modern story. His words apply today as they did then. Even the audience is brought into the action at times. The responses to the Lord's Prayer, coming from the Sound Perspective throughout the theater, give a moving sense of direct participation in the action on the screen.

The film proceeds to tell in chronological sequence the story of Christ's life. We see Mary, His Mother, John, and the Disciples, and Judas who betrayed Him. We witness some of the miracles: the blind see, the lame walk, the deaf hear, the lepers are cleansed, the dead brought to life . . .

We see Jesus followed by a great multitude as He climbs a hillside and then delivers to them the stirring Sermon on the Mount—the words of eternal salvation.

We witness the sad foretelling of His Calvary . . . the resurrection of Lazarus . . . the supper in the house of Simon the Leper, and the repentance of Mary Magdalene as she anoints the feet of Jesus with her precious oils.

There is the triumphant entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday with a vast gathering waiting to proclaim Jesus their King. But when He tells them that His Kingdom is not of this world He speaks to the modern crowds as well; He speaks indeed to us all.

The Grand Council of the Sanhedrin decides to contrive the crucifixion of Jesus, despite the opposition of Nicodemus and Joseph of Aramathea . . . The money changers are driven from the Temple . . . And Our Lord comes to His Last Supper.

Christ is led to Pilate, to Herod, and back again to Pilate. Then we come to the *Via Dolorosa*. Amid the joyous celebrations of those awaiting the Passover, Jesus carries His Cross to Calvary, mocked and spurned.

Christ reaches the hill and is nailed to His Cross. And now, for the last moments of His life, the camera moves so that we observe the scene on Calvary from the height of the Cross, just as it appeared to His eyes.

The third hour. He is dead. The earth quakes. There is panic in the Temple. Joseph of Aramathea asks for the body of Christ for burial and Procula, Pilate's wife, is converted.

After the third day we see Christ's appearance to Mary Magdalene, the disappearance of His Body from the Tomb, and His visits to His Apostles.

Though the men who crucified Our Lord try to stifle the story of His Resurrection, circulating the story that His disciples had stolen the Body, the truth spreads rapidly. Soon everybody is talking about the tragedy—that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the Son of God—that the true Savior has been sacrificed. The handful of disciples grows to hundreds of thousands. We see that Christ's charge to "go therefore and teach ye all nations" is beginning to be fulfilled.

The forty days since Christ's Resurrection have passed and we now behold Him standing alone on the Mount of Olives. He speaks to the Hebrews and to us moderns as a great wind rises about Him.

"You are all witness of these things."

"I will send you the gift promised by My Father."

And in His Ascension we see Him at last in the power and the glory which will endure forever. It is on this note of triumph that we end, bearing away with us a renewed and strengthened faith, secure in the knowledge that Christ dwells with us today and always, showing us the road to peace on earth and eternal salvation.

For further information on THE DIVINE TRAGEDY

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