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The Third Testament

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The Third Testament

Abstract

This is a film review of *The Third Testament* (2010).

This is a genre of film that I really enjoy. It asks the question: What if things aren't the way we think they are? We are so often set in our ways and cannot imagine things being any different from how we think they are that it is always a pleasure to have someone challenge the status quo. In this film, the question is: What would the world be like if there was a "Third Testament?" According to the story, a Third Testament has been added to both the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Pope has made it official. The Third Testament is now part of the Canon of the Bible. The Third Testament includes four new gospels – The Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Phillip, the Gospel of Mary and the Gospel of Phoebe – some of which figure heavily in the recently found Gnostic Gospels. How will the inclusion of the Third Testament change our understanding of the Bible? Furthermore, how will it change our understanding of Christianity?

The newly added gospels seem to have a different message from the other testaments. At least they emphasize different aspects of Christianity. The new gospels are less about faith and getting into heaven than they are about personal power, enlightenment, and social equality, especially for women. The new gospels are more about finding God within, than having faith in an unseen God that is somewhere out there. The Third Testament is more about loving your neighbor than about salvation. What if there was such a testament?

But there is more. This is not merely a theological debate, although it is that. It is also a story about a conspiracy. There is a secretive organization, Blue, an international consulting firm, working behind the scenes. Blue's slogan is: Managing the World, One Solution at a Time. Managing? Manipulating? Is Blue trying to hide some fundamental truth that might shake the very foundations of our religious beliefs? This reminds me of Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code*, which actually merits a reference in the film. Is Blue hiding the truth? Is it hiding the truth about the Third Testament? Big, secretive, powerful organizations, whether they be the Catholic Church, the giant corporation, or the Masons, are wonderful elements to add to a movie. The story keeps us guessing about what is real and what is not. And, while it keeps us guessing about what is real and not real, the film also challenges our understanding of what is truly real in the world around us.

All of this "what if" and "what's real" and "whodunit" is to be found in what appears to be a documentary film – a documentary film about a missing documentary film maker. Because the movie is supposed to be a documentary film, it has the feel of a cross between *The Blair Witch Project* and any one of the numerous television shows that are supposedly exposing some until now hidden truth. Using a documentary style also allows the director to introduce the many twists and turns in the film. The viewer has some reason to believe this or that in

the film, but he or she also has some reason not to believe this or that. All of this keeps the viewer on his or her toes throughout the film.

The director, screenwriter, and producer of the film, Matt Dallmann, told me that the film "is really just a 'what if' scenario if a third testament was presented in modern day with all of the political and religious spin in modern day media." He did not intend to push his own message, but rather leave it up to the viewers to reach their own interpretation. From my perspective, however, it seems that there is a transformation in the main character over the time of the film. She, the wife of the missing documentary film maker, starts out taking one position and ends up taking the opposite position. That transformation suggests to me that the message of the film corresponds to the message of the Third Testament, whether the Third Testament is taken to be literally true or not. Love your neighbor. Make the world a better place for others. Find God within yourself.

This film is not yet rated. Since I found one scene of cruelty to be very difficult to watch, I would not recommend the movie for children or even young teens.