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Little Hope Was Arson

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Little Hope Was Arson

Abstract

This is a film review of *Little Hope Was Arson* (2013), directed by Theo Love.

Author Notes

Dr. Bilal Yorulmaz is assistant professor of religious education at the Marmara University in Istanbul, Turkey. His research interests include religion and film, Turkish cinema history, Iranian cinema, Islam and Muslims in the movies, and religious education. This study is supported by TUBITAK (THE SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL RESEARCH COUNCIL OF TURKEY) 2219 International Postdoctoral Research Scholarship Programme.

Little Hope was Arson
(2013)
directed by Theo Love
Doc Features



This documentary is about someone setting fire to churches in East Texas in 2010. In all, ten churches were burned within the period of about one

month, creating fear in the community. The fire at the first church, Little Hope Baptist Church, was thought to be the result of an electrical failure until the police found this message scrawled on the bathroom wall of a hardware store: “Little Hope Was Arson.”

The movie follows the intense investigation into the church fires by a variety of law enforcement agencies, all working together. Finally, on the basis of two different kinds of shoe prints and DNA evidence, the police arrested two suspects, Jason Bourgue and Daniel McAllister. McAllister admitted to starting some of the fires with his friend, Bourgue, but Bourgue claims that he does not remember setting the fires.

McAllister was close to his mother and when she died he blamed God. Two years after his mother’s death, his father attempted suicide. Again Daniel blamed God. When he got involved with drugs and was ostracized by his family, he again blamed God. Bourgue also had problems. His mother was a

drug user, leaving him to be raised by his grandmother and grandfather.

Eventually he too used drugs, including a prescription medication to help him stop smoking. Jason claims when he wakes up he cannot tell if his memories are real or simply a dream.

At the end of the movie, some members of the congregations of the churches that were burned forgave the arsonists, while others did not. Some members wanted forgiveness and others wanted justice. The movie reminds us of such values as forgiveness, justice, truthfulness, repentance, love, and so on. The movie, however, does not give the viewer any definite answers regarding these values.

— Bilal Yorulmaz