With kindest regards

From

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Kaj Munk: The Word

Although »The Word« is dealing with a miracle it is through and through a realistic film, a play about those who are weak in faith. The miracle hoped for does not come to pass until one who has faith, the thtrue faith, comes.

The action takes place amongst Danish peasants in a small outlying parish on the Westcoast of Jutland. It pictures the struggle between two different sides of the Christian faith: the bright and happy Christianity, and its contrast: the dark religious fanaticism, hostile to life.
The bright faith we find on the biggest and oldest farm, Borgensgaard, and the dark faith in the modest home of the village-tailor, where the pharisaical »gloomy men« assemble regularly for devotional meetings.

Borgensgaard is owned by the old Morten Borgen who has, through a generation, successfully worked for the encouragement of the cheerful life-affirming Christianity, and achieved that the majority of both small and large peasants look up to him as their spiritual leader. But just now when he is at his highest, doubt has begun to steal upon his mind. Sorrow and disappointment have prepared the way: he has lost his wife, and of his three sons, the one to whom
he was most attached and of whom he was expecting most, is suffering from mental derangement. The three sons all live on the farm.—The eldest son, Mikkel, works the farm. He also has caused his father grief in as far as he does not share his father's belief. His wife, Inger, tries to »convert« him, but in vain, and she then satisfies herself with the thought that he is at any rate a good and honest man who greatly loves her and their two little girls. She is now expecting the third child, which they both hope will be a boy.

The next son, who is of unsound mind, is named Johannes. His father made him study and hoped that he would carry on the religious traditions of
the home. But the intense religious studies carried him into a religious crisis and a nervous break-down, ending in mental disease. He now believes that he is the Christ. His talk is nebulous, and he makes very frequent use of quotations from the Gospels.—The youngest son, Anders, is also going to cause his father grief, because he has fallen in love with the very young Anne, daughter of the village-tailor. Things are not easy for these two young people, because they both know but too well the implacability of their respective fathers. Encouraged by his brother Mikkel, Anders makes up his mind to take the bull by the horns and go and have a straight talk with »Peter
Tailor«, whilst Inger promises to plead for him with his father. Neither Anders nor Inger succeed. »Peter Tailor« will not hear of a connection between his pure and innocent Anne and Anders, son of the »Heathen« at Borgensgaard, and he even shows Anders the door. Inger is fighting hard against her father-in-law’s peasantpride and his inveterate contempt for the »gloomy men« who gather in »Peter Tailor«s home.

Morten Borgen is nevertheless at the point of succumbing to Inger’s persuasions, when Anders returns home from his unsuccessful offer of marriage. In a broken voice he relates his disastrous defeat.— When Morten Borgen learns
that his son has been rejected by »Peter Tailor«, who should count himself lucky to get related to the Borgensgaard people, his peasant-pride again takes hold of him. He orders Anders to drive with him to »Peter Tailor«, declaring that Anders is going to get his Anne as sure as Morten’s name is Morten.

When Morten Borgen and Anders arrive at »Peter Tailor«’s, the latter has called his flock together for a devotional meeting, and not until this is finished can Morten Borgensgaard get a talk with »Peter Tailor«.

Although Morten Borgen proceeds very cautiously, »Peter Tailor« is neither to be led nor driven. In his opinion, his daughter would become »a child of sin«
the day she moved to Borgensgaard as the wife of Anders. It comes to a stormy scene between them: faith against faith.—When the altercation is at its highest point the telephone rings. It is a message from Borgensgaard, that Inger is in birth-pangs, and it is feared that it will cost her life. »Peter Tailor« becomes triumphant: In this way God puts to the test those who will not bend to the will of God. Morten Borgen quite loses his head, because »Peter Tailor« wishes for the death of Inger. Unable to control his anger, he gives »Peter Tailor« a slap in the face, and leaves this »haunt of the gloomy men«.

In Borgensgaard there is apprehension and despair. The boy, who was so
fervently desired, was born dead. The mother has lost so much blood that the worst is to be feared. At first it looks as if Inger may survive, but then there is a change in her condition, and she quietly sleeps into death.

When Mikkel brings the message of the death of his wife, the insane Johannes quotes the words of Jesus: »She is not dead, she only sleeps«. He enters the death-chamber. Just as Jesus raised Jairi daughter from the dead, he will now call Inger back to life, but he fails, because he has forgotten to beg God for the power without which miracles are not possible. Instead of conquering death, Johannes falls into a deathlike faint. His brothers carry
him away. When wakening from his faint he sneaks away from the farm and hides himself.

The day before the interment, a funeral solemnity takes place in Borgensgaard. The coffin with the lifeless Inger stands in the best parlour, and only the clergyman and the nearest relatives are allowed to say good-bye to her here. In the other rooms all the inhabitants of the parish have gathered together inorder to express their sympathy, because Inger with her happy disposition was loved by all. As the last comers, »Peter Tailor« and his wife and daughter arrive, and they walk straight into the best Parlour, because
»Peter Tailor« has come for a reconciliation with Morten Borgen. As a proof of his sincerity, he makes the almost unbelievable sacrifice to bring with him his daughter Anne, so that she and Anders may get each other.

Just as Morten Borgen gives the order to close the coffin, Johannes enters. Has he recovered his senses? He begins with reproaching those present with their lack of faith. Why has not one of them prayed to God to give Inger back to them? He gives the answer himself: because, amongst the believers not a single true believer is to be found! They all speak of wonders and miracles, but nobody believes in them! The moment he arrived, he had felt God's
strength within himself, but now the others’ lack of faith has weakened his faith! —The little hand of a child now slips into his. It belongs to one of Inger’s girls. Johannes has promised her to awake her mother from Death. and the child’s voice says: »You must hurry!« The child’s faith in him now gives him his own faith back. He steps forward to the coffin and prays God to give him the Word, the creative lifegiving Word! And to the Dead he says: »In the name of Jesus Christ, as God will it, return to Life! I say to you »Woman arise««— Inger opens her eyes and sits up in the coffin! She lives! The wonder has happened, because nothing is impossible for him who does positively believe!
Kaj Munk: «LE VERBE»

Quoique «Le verbe» (en Danois «Ordet») traite d'un miracle, c'est un film très réaliste sur ceux qui sont de faible foi. Le miracle que l'on espère, n'arrive pas avant que celui qui possède la foi, la vraie foi, vient.

L'action se passe parmi des paysans Danois et dépeint la lutte contre les deux différentes tendances de foi, savoir: Le christianisme heureux et vivifiant et le fanatisme morne et abjurant la vie. Le christianisme vivifiant on trouve dans la plus grande ferme de la commune rurale, «Borgensgaard», et le christianisme morne on trouve dans le petit chez-moi du tailleur du village.
«Borgensgaard» appartient au vieux Morten Borgen, qui est le chef spirituel de la plupart des paysans. Mais maintenant la doute a commencé de se glisser dans sa coeur à cause de chagrins et espérances deçues. Sa femme est morte, et un de ses fils est aliéné. Les trois fils demeurent à la ferme.

Mikkel, l'aîné, fait valoir la terre. Il a causé du chagrin à son père, puisqu'il ne partage pas sa foi. Sa femme, Inger, qui attend son troisième enfant, a tâché
en vain de «convertir» son mari, mais elle se contente maintenant du fait qu’il est un homme bon et brave qui aime beaucoup sa femme et ses enfants.

Johannes, le deuxième fils, qui fut le grand espoir de son père et qui devrait être pasteur, est devenu aliéné pour cause de ses études théologiques forcées. Il croit maintenant qu’il soit le Christ, et il cite toujours les Evangiles.

Anders, le plus jeune fils, va aussi causer des difficultés à son père, parce qu’il est devenu amoureux d’Anne, la fille du tailleur, quoique leurs pères respectifs soient des ennemis. Anders prend la décision d’aller parler ouvertement avec le père d’Anne, tandis qu’Inger va tâcher de plaider sa cause auprès du père d’Anders.
Inger fait de son mieux pour surmonter l’orgueil rustique de son beau-père et son mépris pour le tailleur. Mais en vain! Toutefois, quand Anders revient à la maison tout à fait désolé parce que le tailleur ne veut pas permettre que sa fille épouse un fils du «païen de Borgensgaard», son orgueil ne peut pas souffrir un tel dédain de la part du tailleur qui devrait être heureux de devenir un membre de la famille de «Borgensgaard».

Morten Borgen va donc, immédiatement, en voiture avec Anders chez le tailleur pour fixer la chose. Mais il ne peut pas persuader le tailleur à donner son consentement au mariage d’Anne et Anders, et une grande querelle ensuit entre Morten Borgen et le tailleur.
Alors, on téléphone de "Borgensgaard" qu’Inger est malade à mourir. Quand le tailleur fait observer d’une voix triomphante que «Dieu éprouve de la sorte ceux qui ne veulent pas se plier à sa volonté.» Morten Borgen ne peut plus se maîtriser, et il quitte vite la maison avec son fils. — A "Borgensgaard" règne l’angoisse et le désespoir, car Inger meurt après avoir mis au monde un fils mort-né. Quand Mikkel dit qu’Inger est morte, Johannes répond avec les mots de Jésus: «Elle n’est pas morte, elle dort seulement.» Il veut, comme le fit Jésus avec la fille de Jairus, rappeler Inger à la vie, mais il ne réussit pas, puisqu’il a négligé de demander à Dieu la force nécessaire. Au lieu de remporter la victoire sur la mort, Johannes tombe lui-même en défaillance.
Le jour de l’enterrement est venu. Le cercueil avec Inger se trouve dans la salle de "Borgensgaard". La famille, les amis et le pasteur sont là pour faire leurs adieux à Inger, car elle fut bien aimée par tout le monde. Le tailleur arrive lui aussi avec sa femme et sa fille pour se réconcilier avec Morten Borgen et donner sa fille à Anders. — Au moment, où Morten Borgen va donner des ordres de mettre le couvercle sur le cercueil, Johannes entre dans la salle. Est-ce qu’il a recouvert sa raison? Il commence par reprocher aux assistants leur manque de foi. Pourquoi n’a aucun d’eux prié Dieu de leur redonner Inger? Il répond lui-même que c’est parce qu’il n’y a personne entre eux qui croit en vérité. Quand il entra dans la salle il sentait en soi la force de Dieu,
mais maintenant il l’a perdue puisque personne entre eux ne possède la foi. Personne n’ose croire au «Verbe» de Dieu.

Une petite main d’enfant se glisse plein de confiance dans la sienne. C’est la fille ainée d’Inger à qui Johannes a promis de faire ressusciter sa mère. Elle lui chuchote: «Faut te dépêcher!» En ce moment, la foi de l’enfant redonne à Johannes sa force de foi. Il prie Dieu de lui accorder «le Verbe», le Verbe qui crée et vivifi! Et, à la morte Inger Johannes dit: «Au nom de Jésus Christ, comme Dieu le veut, je te dis: «Femme ressuscite!»» Inger ouvre ses yeux et se soulève dans le cercueil. Elle vit! Le miracle s’est fait, car, rien n’est impossible pour celui qui croit en vérité!
Morten Borgen ................. Henrik Malberg
Mikkel ................. Emil Hass Christensen
Johannes, bis sons .......... Preben Lerdorff Rye
Anders ................. Cay Kristiansen
Inger, Mikkel's wife ........ Birgitte Federspiel
Maren ................. Ann Elisabeth
Lilleinger, their children .... Susanne
Peter Tailor ................. Einer Federspiel
Kirstine, bis wife .......... Sylvia Eckhausen
Anne, their daughter ......... Gerda Nielsen
The Doctor ................. Henry Skjær
The Clergyman ................. Ove Rud
Karen, maid at "Borgensgaard" ... Hanne Ågesen
Mette Maren ................. Edith Thrane

Photos: Erik W. Willumsen

PALLADIUM FILM - COPENHAGEN