

## AFA UPDATE

### A PROJECT OF THE ASATRU FOLK ASSEMBLY

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## THE PASSION

Today is the day that Mel Gibson's long-awaited movie about the death of Jesus opens in movie theaters across the country. It comes to us on a swelling wave of controversy. The production has stirred the wrath of public censors such as the Anti-Defamation League on the one hand, and fomented a frenzy of devotion among Christians on the other.

There is much we can learn from this massive exercise in public relations and religious hysteria. I, for one, plan on seeing *The Passion* if for no other reason than to peek inside the mind of my ideological opposition.

My feelings about *The Passion* and its producer are ambivalent. I have long admired Mel Gibson as a man of principle and morality. *Braveheart* was a monument to the Scottish warrior spirit and to the kind of idealism our world so desperately needs. *The Patriot* was perhaps less polished, but Gibson's implied support for the right of Americans to own guns tweaked the politically-correct guardians of approved culture. I think that Mel Gibson is a man I could like on a personal level. Even in regard to *The Passion*, a movie expressing a religious viewpoint antithetical to my own, I admire Gibson's courage and trueness to his own beliefs.

## CHRISTIANS AND CHRISTIANITY

*The Passion* forces me to once again confront my feelings about Christians and Christianity. For many years after taking up the Way of the Ancestors, I was furious at Christians for what their church had done - for the murders, the lying, the repression; in short, for the twisting and destruction of our native culture. I eventually outgrew this resentment. After all, my parents were Christians, as were all my kin of recent memory. I cannot hate them, nor can I hate the many good men and women who follow Jesus.

Having said that, I am opposed to the Christian religion and consider it the greatest disaster to ever afflict the European peoples. Christianity, essentially a Middle Eastern belief, was forced to make many compromises to win acceptance among our forefathers and foremothers. This process of accommodation is described with compelling clarity by Dr. James C. Russell in his excellent book, *The Germanization of Early Medieval Christianity*. Unfortunately, that Germanic flavor has been washed away as the Church courts the teeming masses of the Third World, leaving the West thrall to an alien ideology that loads us with guilt, tells us to love everyone in the world, and proclaims that the ties of blood and nation are not important.

Notwithstanding my opposition to the Christian creed, I cringe when Asatruar refuse to capitalize the proper noun "Christianity," or indulge in childish comments disparaging those men and women who follow Christian belief. This hardly speaks well for our maturity. Instead, we must be ready to intelligently argue for our own convictions - and above all, our lives must be worthy testimonies for the Aesir and Vanir.

#### OF HUMAN SACRIFICE

The Passion describes the death of a man-god to appease the wrath of Yahweh. In ancient times, the Jews would ritually put all their sins upon a goat, and then by killing that animal they rid themselves of their wrongdoings - hence our modern term "scapegoat." This is precisely the role of Jesus in the Biblical account. Most people do not realize that Christianity is built around an instance of human sacrifice.

In a sense, the many victims of Christian zeal over the millennia are also human sacrifices, burned at the stake or tortured to death or simply murdered for heresy or different belief. The irony is considerable, since some Christians are quick to accuse followers of native religions around the world of exactly this sort of behavior.

Better by far is the idea of "sacrificing self to self," as when Odin undergoes his ordeal on the World Tree. By constant evolution, by continually seeking after transformation, we become wiser and stronger - and we need not kill others, or ourselves, or innocent goats in the pursuit of this goal! Let us present this higher ideal to intelligent Christians, and offer them a viable alternative to the death cult which has gripped them and which has debilitated our people.

#### THE HAMMER AND THE NAIL

One Christian businessman, moved by The Passion, is selling golden nails to be worn around the neck as reminders of the nails that pierced Jesus. This macabre worship of death and pain is a disturbing theme in Christianity. We are reminded of the words of the writer Malcolm Muggeridge, who commented that since the crucifixion we (meaning people of the Christian persuasion) are to worship defeat, not victory. Certainly not all

Christians would agree with that statement, but to Asatruar it is absolutely unthinkable. We worship victory and life, not defeat and death. Better to wear the Hammer than the nail!

## OUR PASSION

As Jesus underwent his passion, so we must reach within us and find a passion of our own - a passion for our ancestors, for the Gods and Goddesses who are our kin, for life itself! The movie now storming the nation is an example of what religious fervor can do. Can we not match it with our own inspired might? Of course we can. I invite you to fan your passion - your passion for the Way of our people. Light the Needfire, and let the light shine forth in Midgard!

Mel Gibson chose to release his production on Ash Wednesday, one of the key dates leading up to Easter in the Christian tradition. On this day, many Christians smudge their foreheads with the ashes of burnt palm fronds as a sign of penance and sorrow for sins.

Let us make this day our OWN "Ash Wednesday." For us, the ash in question is not the burnt remains of palm fronds, but rather the ash tree - indeed, the mighty World Tree on which Odin gives self to self. Let this day, and every Wednesday, be truly...Woden's Day!

## IMPORTANT DATES

March 9 - Day of Remembrance for Olvir. Olvir was a Norwegian who organized sacrifices to the Gods in defiance of King Olaf Tryggvason. When Olaf caught him planning rites for the coming of spring, he killed him. Olaf's co-conspirators were murdered, mutilated, exiled, or fined, depending on their degree of complicity. Honor this Asatru martyr by welcoming the Goddess of Spring on Ostara, thus proving that Olaf did not, in the long run, succeed.

March 21 - Ostara, or Easter, is a Germanic Goddess whose name was carried over into the Christian calendar. Praise her on this day for the springtime and the dawn, and revel in the rebirth of life at winter's end. Celebrate her day with bunnies, eggs, and the other pre-Christian symbols that characterize this day. Greet her at a sunrise service with outstretched arms.

Hail the Holy Ones!

Stephen A. McNallen  
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Next update March 10th!