



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

Elim pastor believes that “Passion” film shows “how unbelievably Jesus suffered for us”



The Impartial Reporter article

Another pentecostal preacher has come out in favour of the blasphemous Hollywood film, “The Passion of the Christ.” He is Pastor Bill Dunn of Brookeborough Elim Church in Co. Fermanagh. Rev. Ivan Foster submitted the following letter to “The Impartial Reporter”, which carried the article containing Pastor Dunn’s endorsement of the film in its April 8th edition.

Dear Editor,

It is with reluctance that I pen this letter but there is much more at stake than the feelings of men.

It was sad to read of the endorsement that Pastor Dunn of Brookeborough Elim Church gave to the film, “The passion of the Christ.” He conceded that it was a controversial film with much brutality. Fur-

thermore, he informs us that the film “has sex, drugs, bad language and violence . . .” and yet he insists that “it shows clearly how unbelievably Jesus suffered for us.”

(In the edition of the Impartial Reporter which carried our letter, the newspaper apologised to Pastor Dunn for including the statement about “sex, drugs, bad language and violence . . .” as it acknowledged that he did not make this statement, Editor.)

Even if this film did not contain the “sex, drugs, bad language and violence,” it could not show clearly to the world “how unbelievably Jesus suffered for us”, as Pastor Dunn asserts. The sufferings of Christ for His people were, by and large, invisible to men and therefore impossible to be depicted by men in any form. That fact was symbolised by the darkness that was sent of God at the time of the Saviour’s deepest agonies on the cross. “Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour,” Matthew 27: 45. Under the cloak of that darkness, Christ suffered as the Surety for His people and died to pay the price of their redemption. It was not the sufferings of Christ at the hands of Jewish persecutors or Roman soldiers, but His bearing the sufferings of the guilt and condemnation of the sins of His elect that made atonement. This He did after man had done his worst to the Saviour and He was hanging on the cross. “Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities,” Isaiah 53: 10-11. It is not the film’s brutality that Bible-believers chiefly object to. In fact, the brutality of the film is not really a basis for objecting to it at all, since crucifixion is a most brutal event. Therefore, if it is to be depicted, the depiction cannot but be brutal if it is to be true to life. No, it is the very essence of the film itself that is objectionable. It purports to be a depiction of



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the trial and death of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is both the fact that such a topic should be the subject of a film and secondly that the film should set forth as truth something which is far removed from the record of the Bible that is at the heart of the Christian's objection to this film. The film is a flagrant breach of the Second Commandment. That Commandment forbids any representation of the likeness of God to be made. A likeness of Christ can be based only upon man's depraved imagination, since there is no record given us by God of the physical likeness of the Saviour. It is an arrogant and wicked act on the part of any man to seek to portray the incarnate God and equally sinful for any to encourage or excuse such a portrayal. To say that such a breach of the Second Commandment can advance the cause of God is to make God the author of confusion. Supporters of this film, who claim to believe the Bible, would have God condemn on one hand as blasphemous that which He takes up with His other hand to wins souls to faith in Christ! How the devil must love such foolish talk amongst God's people! The basis of the film is not the gospel. The basic material used in its making is the visions of two Roman Catholic nuns, Anne Catherine Emmerich and Mary of Agreda. Of the visions of Emmerich, Mel Gibson said, "She supplied me with stuff I never would have thought of" (The New Yorker, Sept. 15, 2003). From the media accounts of the film, there is much in it that has absolutely no basis in the Bible. That being so, it seems hardly the Lord's choice for evangelising the world since "no lie is of the truth," 1 John 2:21. He Who would not let the devils speak the truth in His name (Luke 4:41), is hardly likely to endorse men setting forth a lie in His name! The command of Christ to His disciples was : "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen," Matthew 28:19-20. It is very wrong to claim that Christ will use that which is largely composed of man's deceiving inventions to accomplish that end, which the disciples were to seek ONLY by preaching that which He had taught them. The warning of Christ to His disciples regarding the emergence of false prophets and false Christs may be used here. "Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not," Matthew 24:23. I say to all, do not believe those who would tell you that the Christ of the Bible is to be found in this film. It is a lie and a deceit. If you would see the passion of Christ then look in that one place where God has given us a record of it — the Word of God. Read your Bible, for it is in the Holy Scriptures that you will see and hear the authentic Christ. "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me," John 5:39.

Sincerely,

Ivan Foster.

Minister of Kilskeery Free Presbyterian Church.