

## ***Is The Passion of the Christ Really Based on the Gospels?***

**By Tony Robinson**

In the first two articles of this series I laid a foundation which demonstrated that 1) you don't have to see *The Passion of the Christ* in order to make a judgment about it and 2) you need to be very discerning about things masquerading as truth. It is a fact that we live in the last days. It is a fact that in these last days, deception will be so intense and so real that even the elect will be in danger of being deceived to one extent or another (Matthew 24:4, 24). Therefore, we need to exercise the utmost wisdom in how we judge things.

Many who have favorably reviewed this movie have stated that it followed the Gospel. In fact, some insist that it was taken directly from the Gospel accounts. Some have commented that many of Yeshua's words were taken directly from the Gospel accounts. The long and short of it is this. People like the movie because they believe it is an accurate and realistic portrayal of the last hours of Yeshua's life. So far so good right? This is based on the Gospels? Well, not exactly. Anyone who tells you that this movie was "based on the Gospel" is not telling you the *whole* truth. I'm not saying that people are deliberately lying to you. I'm just saying that they have not told you the *entire* truth for whatever reason—maybe they don't know. Listen carefully, please. This movie was not based on the Gospel accounts. *The Passion of the Christ* was based on **aspects** of the Gospel accounts **AND...AND...AND...** partly on the revelations/visions of a woman named Anne Catherine Emmerich who lived in Germany in the late eighteenth, early nineteenth centuries. First, let's talk about Gibson's presentation of *aspects of the Gospel*.

The last time I took inventory, the Gospel was composed of certain minimum requirements. A person must know they are a sinner. They must know that the wrath of Elohim (God) abides upon them because they have broken His Torah (Law). They need to know that Yeshua the Messiah has died on their behalf for the sins they committed. They also need to know that He was raised from the dead as proof that the Holy One had accepted His holy sacrifice. Then they need to know that they can receive forgiveness of sins IF they repent and believe the message. This information must be transmitted to them through preaching. This message is the Gospel. I have read many reviews and I have talked to some people who have seen the movie. And although people have different opinions concerning the movie, in almost every instance people agree that if you don't already know the purpose for Yeshua's death, you won't even get a hint of it from this movie! I've questioned people about this and they all have said that if you weren't already Scripture-literate, you would not even know the real reason Yeshua needed to suffer and die. This is not my opinion. It's the honest opinion of many who have seen the movie. In their words, "there is no clear presentation of the Gospel." I won't belabor this point. All I can say is this. According to what I have seen and heard, the Gospel was not and could not have been communicated in this movie. If you only tell people about the suffering of the Messiah without telling them about their need to repent and believe

so that they can have forgiveness of sins, then you haven't presented the Gospel! So, for the record, ***this movie does not present the Gospel***. It only presents a *portion of the Gospel*. I can already hear people saying, "But Tony, He was only dealing with the last twelve hours of Yeshua's life." Yeah...right. If he wanted it to be evangelistic then it was his responsibility to work the full gospel message into the movie. Furthermore, my contacts told me that there were many flashbacks that could have been used to present more aspects of the Gospel, but Mel chose not to do so. Remember the flashback to when the crowd wanted to stone Mary Magdalene? No words were spoken at all! One of my contacts told me that if you didn't already know the story you could get the feeling that Yeshua was bending over drawing a line in the dirt and daring others to cross it. Again, this is not my opinion, but *the opinion of someone who saw the movie*. By the way, they enjoyed the movie.

Now, let's turn to Anne Catherine Emmerich. The fact that Gibson used Emmerich's visions as source material for *many* of the non-Biblical scenes has been well noted. First of all, he admitted so in an interview with Peter J. Boyer.

"**'Amazing images,'** he said. **'She supplied me with stuff I never would have thought of.'** The one image that is most noticeable in 'The Passion' is a scene after Jesus' scourging, when a grief-stricken Mary gets down on her knees to mop up his blood (emphasis added)."<sup>1</sup>

Many people who have seen the movie and read the visions of Anne Catherine Emmerich have also noted Gibson's usage of her material. Note the following quotes:

Biblical scholar John Dominic Crossan jokes that if Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* should come up for Oscar consideration, the nomination for best screenplay should go to a little-known 18th-century German nun. The mystical visions of Sister Anne Catherine Emmerich (1774-1824) are the basis of some of the more stunning, non-biblical scenes in Gibson's movie - from Jesus' confrontation with Satan in the Garden of Gethsemane to the explicit details of his scourging by Roman guards, to a crucifixion scene in which his arm is pulled out of its socket, according to a reading of her work. ***Gibson has said*** that he based his film in part on the visions of Emmerich recorded in *The Dolorous Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ*. "There it is," Crossan says. "Read the book. ***You could put a camera in front of it. She is the script for the film*** (emphasis added)."<sup>2</sup>

More than 170 years later, this little-known document became the basis for many of the non-biblical scenes in Mel Gibson's film "The Passion of the Christ." "If Mel Gibson gets an Oscar for Best Director," says author and Bible scholar John Dominic Crossan, "Sister Anne Emmerich [should] get it for Best Adapted Screenplay. ***Emmerich is simply his screenwriter*** (emphasis added)."<sup>3</sup>

Let's go into more detail. There are some other scenes that were taken from Emmerich's visions of which I want you to be aware. David Neff of *Christianity Today* explained how a portion of Jesus' scourging scene was taken from Emmerich's material:

Here is one such detail from Emmerich: "[A]fter the flagellation, I saw Claudia Procles, the wife of Pilate, send some large pieces of linen to the Mother of God. I know not whether she thought that Jesus would be set free, and that his Mother would then require linen to dress his wounds, or whether this compassionate lady was aware of the use which would be made of her present. ... I soon after saw Mary and Magdalen approach the pillar where Jesus had been scourged; ... they knelt down on the ground near the pillar, and wiped up the sacred blood with the linen which Claudia Procles had sent."<sup>4</sup>

After recording the quote above from Emmerich's visions, Neff added the following:

"Gibson does not follow *Dolorous Passion* slavishly, and at many points he chooses details that conflict with Emmerich's account. But the sight of Pilate's wife handing a stack of linen cloths to Jesus' mother allows Gibson to capture a moment of sympathy and compassion between the two women, and the act of the two Marys wiping up Jesus' blood gives Gibson the opportunity to pull back for a dramatic shot of the bloody pavement."<sup>5</sup>

Neff goes on to explain another scene taken from the visions of Emmerich:

"Emmerich writes that during Jesus' agony in the garden, Satan presented Jesus with a vision of all the sins of the human race. "Satan brought forward innumerable temptations, as he had formerly done in the desert, even daring to adduce various accusations against him." Satan, writes Emmerich, addressed Jesus "in words such as these: 'Takest thou even this sin upon thyself? Art thou willing to bear its penalty? Art thou prepared to satisfy for all these sins?'"

Gibson shows Jesus being tempted by a pale, hooded female figure, who whispers to him just such words, suggesting that bearing the sins of the world is too much for Jesus, that he should turn back."<sup>6</sup>

Laura Sheahen also chronicled Gibson's usage of Emmerich's materials. She stated, "Gibson's movie fills in the gaps of the Passion story with the nun's imaginative transports. Whereas the Gospels devote relatively little space to descriptions of Jesus' last hours, "The Dolorous Passion" envisions them in painstaking detail. The intense drama of her visions may also explain their appeal to the filmmaker."<sup>7</sup>

For example, in the Gospels, Jesus is shown praying in Gethsemane, but the devil is not mentioned. But in Emmerich's visions, the devil tempts Jesus as he prays, saying, "Takest thou even this sin upon thyself? Art thou willing to bear its penalty?" In Mel Gibson's movie, the devil also tempts Jesus in Gethsemane.

"The Dolorous Passion" describes "numerous devils among the crowd, exciting and encouraging the Jews, whispering in their ears, entering their mouths, inciting them still more against Jesus." In Mel Gibson's movie, an androgynous devil moves through a Jewish mob as Jesus is sentenced.<sup>8</sup>

In the crucifixion scene, the nails are driven all the way into and through the cross until they protrude on the other side. Then, they were bent at a ninety-degree angle. Guess where Gibson got the idea that the nails went all the way through the wood of the cross? If you guessed Ann Catherine Emmerich, you're right. As you can see, Mel Gibson not only made use of *aspects of the Gospel* accounts, he also made extensive use of the visions of Anne Catherine Emmerich. Remember what I told you earlier. He did not base this movie solely on the Gospel accounts, but added many of his own embellishments *under the guise of artistic license*, as so many call it. He used the Gospel accounts **AND** the visions of Anne Catherine Emmerich! Some may simply say, "so what?" Well, let's look more into the life of Anne Catherine Emmerich. Ms. Emmerich lived from 1774-1824. It is said that as a child, she had *visions of Jesus and Mary*. Her visions were accompanied by a mixture of *pain and religious ecstasy*. She entered a convent at the age of 29. She was often *sick and bedridden, suffering from numerous*

**mysterious ailments.** During the early 1800's in Westphalia, Germany, she had visions about events in the life of Yeshua in which she was (ostensibly) an eyewitness. It is said that she was shown events that occurred during the last supper, garden of Gethsemane, Yeshua's arrest, scourging and execution. Because of her revelations, she has been described as a *mystic* and *prophet*. It is also recorded that she bore the *stigmata*—the wounds in the hands, feet, side, and head (crown of thorns) inflicted upon the Messiah during his execution. Furthermore, it is also claimed that ***she bled profusely from those wounds on Good Friday and other holy days!*** A German poet by the name of Clemens Brentano visited Emmerich frequently and wrote her visions and prophecies until her death. These writings were then collected in several volumes, including [The Dolorous Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ](#).

Beloved, do you understand the significance of her mysterious illnesses? Do you understand how her stigmata or wounds in the hands, feet, side and head appeared? Do you know what caused her wounds to bleed on Good Fridays and holy days? Lastly, do you know from where she received these visions and revelations? I don't know about you, but it is obvious to me that Ms. Emmerich was demon possessed. Anyone who understands anything about demonic manifestations and the occult will quickly realize that Ms. Emmerich's sicknesses were caused by demonic oppression. Anyone who understands the idolatry found within the Catholic Church will understand that her stigmata were satanically induced. Furthermore, ***and most importantly***, her prophetic visions were demonically inspired!

If this is the first time you've heard of these types of manifestations, then you will need to go to your Christian bookstore and pick up any book dealing with cults, satanic manifestations and demon possession. There is ample material out there to help you understand the source of these manifestations and her visions. Ms. Emmerich's stigmata are all you need to know in order to understand that hasatan was working through her. If you were to rank demonic manifestations, surely stigmata would be towards the top of the list. It is right up there with weeping portraits of Mary, etc.

I want to key in on one important point concerning our portrait of Anne Catherine Emmerich—her prophetic visions. Although the undiscerning may call her a mystic and prophet, ***the Bible refers to her as a false prophet***. Furthermore, her visions were brought to her by demons. And what are the ramifications? Simply this—Mel Gibson based his movie partly on the *Divinely-inspired Gospel* accounts and partly on the *demonically-inspired visions* of a demon-oppressed false prophet! The Torah clearly teaches us not to mix truth with error. Remember, this was Chava's (Eve's) sin. The B'rit Chadasha (New Covenant Scriptures) teaches the same.

<sup>14</sup>Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And ***what communion has light with darkness*** [Gospel truth versus demonic visions]? <sup>15</sup>And ***what accord has Christ with Belial*** [Gospel truth versus demonic visions]? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? <sup>16</sup>And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God... (II Corinthians 6:14-16, emphasis added)

Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world (I John 4:1).

Anne Catherine Emmerich is closely related to the false prophet of Deuteronomy 13:1-3 through false signs (stigmata) and a false message (visions of the “passion”).

<sup>1</sup> If a prophet, or one who foretells by dreams, appears among you and announces to you a miraculous sign or wonder, <sup>2</sup> and if the sign or wonder of which he has spoken takes place, and he says, "Let us follow other gods" (gods you have not known) "and let us worship them," <sup>3</sup> you must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer. ***The LORD your God is testing you to find out whether you love him with all your heart and with all your soul*** (Deuteronomy 13:1-3. emphasis added).

Anne Catherine Emmerich had supernatural manifestations. Anne Catherine Emmerich had visions and revelations. Do you see the connection with Deuteronomy 13:1-3? Everyone is hailing Gibson’s movie as a presentation of the Gospel. Well, as I said before, *he does not present the Gospel message*, only a part of it. Secondly, he added to the Gospel. Now some may say that he took poetic license to fill in some gaps. Even if we allow for non-Biblical additions, ***look at the source of the material*** for the “poetic license!” Would you have done that? If you, as a disciple of Yeshua, were producing a passion production, would you use the demon-inspired visions of a false prophet to fill in a few gaps?

Everyone seems to think that Mel Gibson produced this movie because he wanted it to be used as an evangelistic tool.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, many hail this movie as an evangelistic tool. I certainly don’t think so.<sup>10</sup> For now—just for the sake of making a point—I will pretend that Mel actually wanted to present the *Biblical message of the Gospel*. I’m sure you realize that many Churches have passion plays, sermons, etc. during the Easter season. Mel is not unique in this matter. Let me set up a hypothetical situation. You are a Pastor and you want to deeply impact your congregation this year when Passover/Easter comes around. You’ve decided that you want to bring in a guest speaker who can really help bring home the message of how much Yeshua suffered for mankind. If 1) Anne Catherine Emmerich were alive, and 2) you knew the information about her presented in this article, would you invite her to speak at your congregation about the suffering of the Messiah? After all, she had eyewitness visions of events not mentioned in the Scriptures. I’m sure she would really deliver a message that would make everyone think they were really there. And you know what else? If you invited her on Good Friday or a (Catholic) holy day (like Ash Wednesday perhaps), I’m sure she would bleed from her stigmata. Now that would really help get the message across wouldn’t it? After all, isn’t that the purpose of the stigmata? Isn’t it a visual of the sufferings of the Messiah? I know many of you are repulsed at this point. I’m sorry. But why is this movie by Mel Gibson any different? Why are we repulsed by the prospect of having Anne Emmerich bleed in our Churches as she recounts her "revelations" but think it's great to go see her "revelations" acted out on a big screen under the guise of Gospel evangelization? Mel’s movie and the hypothetical visit of Ann Emmerich to your Church would be similar since, as you have now been informed, he used much of her visions as source material. The only difference

between the two is that Mel's movie would have visuals to go along with what Anne Emmerich would be saying.

Suppose you are the member of a congregation and your Pastor passes out an announcement that Anne Catherine Emmerich will be coming to your congregation to deliver the Easter/Passover sermon. You do a little research on Anne and discover what I've presented in this article. Would you go see her? And yet this is exactly what millions of believers are doing. Why did I choose the analogies above? Because they fit well with what believers are saying about the movie. Look at this quote:

"It's the best evangelization opportunity we've had since the actual death of Jesus."<sup>1</sup>

Aren't Churches buying up seats in theatres so that they can go see the extent of Yeshua's sufferings? I'll tell you what they are doing. They are allowing their minds, hearts and emotions to be manipulated by a person who is presenting portions of the Gospel with demonically-inspired accounts of Yeshua's suffering and death. Am I being judgmental? Absolutely not! I'm putting this movie within the context of the clear teachings of Scripture so that you can decide whether or not you really want to go see it.

You see beloved, Mel Gibson had lots of options at his disposal to use as "poetic license." Pertaining to the non-Biblical extras often dubbed "poetic license," Mr. Gibson could have added many scenes and effects—not mentioned in the Scriptures—that would have enhanced the Biblical account! Instead, he opted for the satanically-inspired embellishments of a demon-oppressed false prophetess. I'm sorry about my intense usage of adjectives. Those are the simple facts.

As I've stated before, if you have decided not to see this movie, then I hope this information has confirmed your decision not to go. If you haven't decided yet, then I ask that you consider this article. If you have seen it, maybe these articles will help you understand why some choose not to view the movie. There are many who are promoting this movie and encouraging others to go see it. They have the right to do that and I wouldn't want to take that right away. By the same token, I have equal right to encourage people not to see it.

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<sup>1</sup> Peter J. Boyer, "[The Jesus War: Mel Gibson & 'The Passion'](#)," *The New Yorker*, September 15, 2003.

<sup>2</sup> 'Passion' scriptwriter: 18<sup>th</sup> century nun? *The Arizona Republic*  
<http://www.azcentral.com/arizonarepublic/arizonaliving/articles/0228passionseer28.html>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> David Neff, **The Passion of Mel Gibson—Why evangelicals are cheering a movie with profoundly Catholic sensibilities**, *Christianity Today*, 2/2/0/04.

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/movies/commentaries/passion-passionofmel.html>

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>6</sup> Idid.

<sup>7</sup> Laura Sheahan, Another Scriptwriter for Mel Gibson's 'Passion'?  
[http://www.beliefnet.com/story/140/story\\_14096\\_1.html](http://www.beliefnet.com/story/140/story_14096_1.html)

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> I will discuss his motivation in the next article. His motivation for producing this film is not a mystery. Furthermore, it won't be my opinion. He has publicly stated why (motivation) he produced this film. So in the next article we'll examine that subject.

<sup>10</sup> I will discuss what I feel is the true purpose of this film in the sixth article of this series.

<sup>11</sup> Lisa Wheeler, associate editor of Catholic Exchange, "Churches Make 'Stunning' Show of Support for Gibson's 'Passion'" Newsmax (Thursday, Feb. 5, 2004)