

AFA UPDATE

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THE PASSION REVISITED

Two weeks ago I described my feelings about Christianity in the context of Mel Gibson's controversial production. Since then, I've seen the film itself and would like to add a few comments.

I found myself not very moved by the figure of Jesus, despite his horrible beatings and his cruel death at the hands of the Romans. I felt sorry for him as a human being, but what (allegedly) happened to him was not exceptional in the long course of human history. The Romans did not manufacture their whips and barbs just for one Jewish radical, nor did they think up the crucifixion so that a carpenter from Nazareth could have a gruesome death. Thousands of men died comparable deaths as the Empire suffocated free nations from the Middle East to Europe. Similar acts are being perpetrated in Third World prisons even as you read these words.

We are supposed to be moved by Jesus because, to Christians, he was the Son of God. But for those of us who see him as a mortal, he becomes simply another regretful statistic in the calculus of empire - tragic, pitiful, wronged, but nothing more.

Ultimately, Jesus moves us less than our own heroes from the same era. When Jesus of Nazareth was a young boy, the Germans were fighting the Romans in the forests of central Europe. Men and women, our ancestors, were dying. Some perished in battle, and no doubt some were tortured. It is for them that we should feel the greatest sorrow, for we are connected to them by bonds of blood and troth. We have no such ancestral bond to the Middle East.

I found The Passion a valuable reminder of the arrogance of empire. Two thousand years ago the victims were Germans, and Celts, and Jewish aspirants to the role of Messiah. Today those beaten into submission are Palestinians, Tibetans, and the Serbs of Kosovo.

The lines of the old song are still true - “get out of line, the man comes and takes you away.”

Braveheart was also a movie about resistance to oppressors, and it was a story better told. Most importantly, it was about men and women to whom I am connected.

EASTER AND OPPORTUNITY

Easter is the day that gives meaning to the Christian religion, yet (along with Yule) it is heathen in both its spirit and in the icons that accompany it. Eggs, bunnies, rebirth, and the Saxon Goddess of the dawn - the ancestral echoes are strong and obvious, and they have little to do with the resurrection of Jesus.

Easter and Yule provide us with a wonderful way to present Asatru to others. Some people are afraid of us, thinking our traditional religion peculiar if not downright threatening. But what could be threatening about Easter bunnies and eggs? What could be peculiar about Yule wreaths and exchanging gifts?

We can use the common symbols of Easter and Yule to provide a “comfort zone” when describing our beliefs. We can show non-Asatruar that they have nothing to fear from us, and that we are probably more like them than they know. Let’s teach them that the native Way of our people is alive and well - right under their noses, in customs they know from their earliest childhood. It’s not “weird,” it’s what they’ve done all their lives.

PROSELYTIZATION

But should we reach out to others at all? Isn’t that what (gasp!) Christians do? Well, yes, it is. And much of the “pagan community” scorns proselytizing for the very reason that the mainstream religious organizations do it. We need to get over our shyness and learn that it is not only okay to reach out to our kin, but that in fact we are obligated to do so.

I do not mean the intrusive, insistent way that some zealots push their religion on the willing and the unwilling alike. But making ourselves available for those who may be attracted to what we have to offer is a very different thing from grabbing people on the street corner and telling them they are going to burn forever if they don’t do what we say. There is a place for active efforts to bring people of European heritage back to the way of their ancestors.

For those who still feel uneasy about the idea, let me pose a hypothetical situation. Suppose you were a farmer in Iceland and your neighbor Thorvald mentioned that he had just renounced Thor to follow the White Christ. Would it be acceptable for you to try to talk him out of it?

Suppose you waited a week and, having brooded in your farmhouse for days, decided that you really ought to convince Thorvald that it would be better if he kept his troth to Thor. Would that be permissible?

What if you waited a year? Two years? Obviously, the amount of elapsed time is not the point. We owe it to the Holy Powers, and to the folk, to reach out to our kin in ways consistent with good manners and respect.

THE ODIN BROTHERHOOD

To my delight, the fifth edition of *The Odin Brotherhood* arrived in this week's mail. I have long been an admirer of this enigmatic little volume, and to see it released in a new and revised edition was a pleasant surprise.

While the structure of the book has been changed to make it easier to home in on specific subject matter, nothing has been deleted. In fact, there is new information on the nature of the Odin Brotherhood and Dr. Mirabello's interaction with it, plus a bibliography.

As I've said before, this isn't your typical Odinism or Asatru. Its visionary insights come like lightning flashes - "Odinism is a creed of iron"... "Beware of gods who cannot laugh"... "Only the terrorized repent."

Copies sell for \$20. I will secure detailed ordering information and send it to the AFA Update list as soon as possible.

IMPORTANT DATES

March 20 - Ostara, or Oester. This is the day honoring the Saxon Goddess of springtime and the dawn, a day for reveling in life's return at winter's end. Celebrate her day with bunnies, eggs, and the other pre-Christian symbols of this day. Greet her at a sunrise service with outstretched arms, and take the light of dawn into the core of your being!

April 9 - Day of Remembrance for Jarl Hakon of Norway. Hakon restored the worship of our Gods after they had been suppressed by Christian kings. Recall Hakon's virtue by formally renouncing foreign creeds, or by vigorously exercising your guarantees under the Bill of Rights.

April 15 - Sumarsdag/Sigrblot. This was the first day of summer in the Icelandic calendar. It falls, on the Thursday between the 9th and 15th of April, about the same time of year as the annual sacrifice to Odin for success in the upcoming raiding season. Welcome the warm months, and make an offering to the Father of Victory for triumph in your personal struggles!

Hail the Holy Ones!

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