

FURTHER READING: *The Passion of The Christ* (Part 2)

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As promised, we present you the follow-up to last month's "Further Reading" entry on *The Passion of the Christ*. Offering a collection of internet reviews/commentaries on what has become nothing short of an 'event' movie, the first edition of "Further Reading" also pledged to monitor a few high-profile or notable American critics who had not yet responded to the film as of the publication date of the first "preview" edition of *Synoptique*. Here are some of the noteworthy findings.

For those interested in tracking the views expressed by various authors on the film from perhaps the world's most important daily, check out the New York Times' online "Spotlight," which provides access to material published in those pages dating back to March 2003. Beliefnet also amasses a compendium of writings from both scholars and readers of the webzine, publishing perhaps to the reader's greatest benefit some in-depth theological debates between biblical experts. As for the critics writing for other important 'secular' publications, Jonathan Rosenbaum of the *Chicago Reader* writes only a "capsule" review, but uses his minimal space to blast the film not for the anti-Semitism and homophobia that most critics are charging it with, but for its "general disgust for humanity." In his review, *Durham Independent Weekly's* Godfrey Cheshire does what he seems to do best, provide context, framing his evaluation of Mel's "retrograde" flick in a discussion of "Harmonia Abrahamica," Iranologist Henry Corbin's term for the continued search for the "essential commonalities shared by Judaism, Christianity and Islam." However, one of the peaks of the entire critical landscape (thus far) belongs to *TNR's* Stanley Kauffmann. Obviously

aware of what has been lacking from critical discourse on *Passion*, he writes the piece that you would expect to read given how director Gibson has responded to criticism over the film's content. If Gibson defends his film by claiming that it follows the Gospels closely, then should we not check the Gospels themselves for what is said instead of accepting the director's word 'on faith'? Kauffmann does just this (as does *National Review's* Michael Novak), showing which elements of the film are 'the Gospel truth' and which are the 'truth' as told by Gibson and his co-writer, Benedict Fitzgerald. (Unfortunately, Kauffmann's review is now available online only to those with subscriptions to *The New Republic*. I provide the reader with the bibliographical information nonetheless, in hopes that he/ she will seek out a copy of the review at a local library.)

It is my belief that the critical reception to *Passion* demonstrates to what degree North American English-language front-line criticism forms an intriguing body of film writing even in these times of so-called 'crisis.'

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<http://www.indyweek.com/durham/2004-03-03/movie.html>

Gibby, Sian. "Ecce Homo?" *Slate* (February 26th, 2004)
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Kauffmann, Stanley. "Gibson's Offering." *The New Republic* (March 22nd, 2004)

[Available only to subscribers at https://ssl.tnr.com/p/docsub.mhtml?i=20040322&s=kauffmann032204](https://ssl.tnr.com/p/docsub.mhtml?i=20040322&s=kauffmann032204)

Lott, Jeremy. "The Passion and the Fury." *The American Spectator* (Feb 25th, 2004)

http://www.spectator.org/dsp_article.asp?art_id=6208

Macomber, Shawn. "Ash Wednesday at the Movies." *The American Spectator* (February 26th, 2004)

http://www.spectator.org/dsp_article.asp?art_id=6214

"Mel Gibson's Passion of the Christ." *Beliefnet* (various undated articles)

http://www.beliefnet.com/index/index_525.html

Novak, Michael. "Brother Gibson's Passion." *National Review Online* (February 25th, 2004)

<http://www.nationalreview.com/novak/novak200402250908.asp>

Rosenbaum, Jonathan. "Capsule of Passion of the Christ." *Chicago Reader* (not dated)

http://spacefinder.chicagoreader.com/movies/briefs/25486_PASSION_OF_THE_CHRIST.html

"Spotlight on The Passion of the Christ." *New York Times* (postings dating from March 9th, 2003 to March 15th, 2004)

<http://www.nytimes.com/ref/movies/PASSION-REF.html>