

# Contents

Preface: Philosophy Confronts <i>The Passion</i>	ix
Acknowledgments	xiii
1. Who Do You Say That I Am? Mel Gibson's Christ RALPH McINERNY	1
<b>I Did Christ Have to Suffer Violently?</b>	<b>7</b>
2. Seeing the World Made New: Depictions of the Passion and Christian Life MARK A. WRATHALL	9
3. Christ's Atonement: Washing Away Human Sin JERRY L. WALLS	25
4. The Focus of <i>The Passion</i> Puts the Person of Jesus Out of Focus CHARLES TALIAFERRO	40
5. Gibson's Sublime <i>Passion</i> : In Defense of the Violence WILLIAM IRWIN	51
6. God and Man Separated No More: Hegel Overcomes the Unhappy Consciousness of Gibson's Christianity JAMES LAWLER	62
<b>II Is <i>The Passion</i> Anti-Semitic?</b>	<b>77</b>
7. <i>Passions of the Christ</i> : Do Jews and Christians See the Same Film? THOMAS E. WARTENBERG	79
8. <i>The Passion</i> as a Political Weapon: Anti-Semitism and Gibson's Use of the Gospels PAUL KURTZ	90

9. *Is The Passion of the Christ* Racist? Due Process, Responsibility, and Punishment  
J. ANGELO CORLETT 101
10. The Passion of the Jew: Jesus in the Jewish Mystical Tradition  
ERIC BRONSON 111
- III What Is the Truth?** 125
11. Pilate's Question: What Is Truth?  
WILLIAM IRWIN 127
12. How Can We Know What God Truly Means? Gibson's Take on Scripture  
JORGE J.E. GRACIA 137
13. The Women Who Loved Jesus: Suffering and the Traditional Feminine Role  
CYNTHIA FREELAND 151
- IV Why Was Christ Killed?** 165
14. The Craftiness of Christ: Wisdom of the Hidden God  
DALLAS WILLARD 167
15. The Death of Socrates and the Death of Christ  
GARETH B. MATTHEWS 179
16. Dances of Death: Self-Sacrifice and Atonement  
BRUCE R. REICHENBACH 190
17. The Crisis of the Cross: God as Scandalous  
PAUL K. MOSER 204
- V Who Is Morally Responsible?** 219
18. Christ's Choice: Could It Have Been Different?  
JONATHAN J. SANFORD 221

19. Forgiven Judas: Extenuating Circumstances in the Ultimate Betrayal	
ANNA LÄNNSTRÖM	234
20. Resist Not Evil! Jesus and Nonviolence	
GREGORY BASSHAM and DAVID BAGGETT	246
About the Authors	261
Index	265

Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* has become one of the most controversial films ever made, and it is already a blockbuster of cinematography. Its defenders passionately regard it as one of the most moving and influential pieces of religious art ever created. But its detractors argue with comparable vehemence that the violence and gore it contains, its alleged anti-Semitism, a particular take on the Christian message, and a lack of historical and biblical accuracy, make it nothing more than a kind of political propaganda. Father Thomas Rosica praised it as one of the great masterpieces of religious art, but the secular humanist Paul Kurtz thinks of it as a political weapon in the hands of the religious right. Film critics are divided in their judgment, giving the film anywhere from no stars to five stars. Regardless of what one thinks of the film, however, its impact both personal and social is beyond question. Discussions about it are frequently heard everywhere, and not too long ago the news reported that a Christian minister had died of a heart attack while seeing the film in Brazil, so moved was he. *The Passion* deeply stirs people.

Who is right and who is wrong? Good question. But perhaps more important than the question are the reasons behind it. Many other works of popular culture raise important issues and produce controversy. Movies like *The Matrix* or *The Lord of the Rings* pose interesting quandaries about good and evil, the nature of reality, the ultimate end of humanity, time and morality, happiness, and free will and determinism, for example. Unlike many of these works, however, *The Passion* goes beyond a theoretical interest and well into the heart of many people's deeply treasured beliefs and values. Although other films may raise similar issues to those posed by this movie, Gibson's work puts them in a religious and social context that gives them particular significance. Audiences who see the movie cannot help but be disturbed and challenged by a message that concerns the