

ATTACKS ON MEL GIBSON GROW; SO DOES HIS SUPPORT

Mel Gibson's movie, "The Passion of Christ" (recently retitled from "The Passion"), won't be released until Lent, but the reaction to it hasn't abated since the first salvo was launched against the Hollywood star last spring.

Lining up against Gibson is the ad hoc committee of New Testament scholars, both Catholic and Jewish, who are furious that they have had to confine their comments to a stolen script of the film. Comedian Bill Maher, an inveterate anti-Catholic, charged that Gibson was "anti-Semitic." Rabbi David Rosen of the American Jewish Committee also joined the debate when he said this is "a battle between the more traditional and the more liberal wings within the Catholic Church, and the relationship with the Jewish community has become a football in this fight."

One person in the Jewish community who is not sitting on the sidelines is Abraham Foxman of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL). In *The Jewish Week*, he recently accused Gibson of being anti-Semitic. Foxman also attacked Gibson's father for saying that fewer than 6 million Jews died in the Holocaust (something many Jewish scholars concede).

Foxman was upset with Gibson's comment that the ADL and others would come after him had he not excised the passage from Matthew which reads, "His blood be on us and on our children." Foxman also objected to Gibson's comment to Peter Boyer in *The New Yorker* that "modern secular Judaism wants to blame the Holocaust on the Catholic Church." For Foxman, this amounts to "classic anti-Semitism."

The Catholic League immediately charged Foxman with seeking "to poison relations between Catholics and Jews." "Similarly,"

we offered, "it is no secret that extremely secular Jews have teamed up with profoundly alienated Catholics to blame the Catholic Church for the Holocaust. Quite frankly, most Catholics are fed up with the lies of Goldhagen and Cornwell."

What is particularly disturbing is to read that in the September 15 *New Yorker*, Foxman said, "Per se, I don't think that Mel Gibson is an anti-Semite." Yet in the September 18 edition of *The Jewish Week*, he said Gibson was anti-Semitic. After we blasted Foxman the same day for his irresponsible remark, he told AP on September 19, "I'm not ready to say he's [Gibson] an anti-Semite."

Keep your eyes on this one-it's an issue that will only intensify.