


Executive Summary

The year began with the release of three major statements  by the Catholic League: a) a report on the Long Island daily *Newsday*, b) a comparative study of sexual abuse among professionals, and c) an open letter to the Jewish community.

In last year's annual report, I wrote that "*Newsday* is by far the most anti-Catholic" newspaper in the country. As evidence, I cited its unrelenting (and often patently untrue) criticisms of Rockville Centre Bishop William F. Murphy, along with other matters. Things got so bad in 2003 that I asked our staff to compile a report on *Newsday's* animus. In January 2004, the report was issued: we ran selections taken from the most biased articles that were written about the Catholic Church from January 2002 to December 2003.

Consistent with our approach, we did not criticize *Newsday* for its reporting on the failings of the Catholic Church. The scandal, as we have said over and over again, was not created by the media—it was the work of bishops, priests, lawyers, psychologists and others. The media, including *Newsday*, generally did a good job reporting on the scandal. Our problem with the Long Island newspaper was the steady drumbeat of negative, and often malicious, columns that were penned by its op-ed staff and its regular contributors.

We are happy to say that there was a dramatic turnaround by *Newsday* in 2004. Whether this was because our counterattack was finally being felt (our special report was sent to every priest in the diocese and we e-mailed every *Newsday* employee about it), or because major personnel changes were made at the newspaper during the year, is not known. Perhaps it was a little of both.

In February, we released a study that I had personally researched and written, *Sexual Abuse in Social Context: Clergy and Other Professionals*. It was not designed to minimize cases

of priestly wrongdoing; rather, it was designed to put the issue of sexual abuse in a context that made sense. That it was so well received by our beleaguered seminarians—if not by some Catholic observers—made it a truly worthwhile effort.

The report showed, in some detail, the extent of sexual molestation of minors as committed by the clergy of other religions. It also showed that the most common locus of sexual abuse was the home: that is where offending family members, relatives and family acquaintances committed their abuse. Perhaps the most revealing part of the report was the data on the public school industry. The problem of sexual abuse in the schools is startling, yet it gathers comparatively little attention in the media. All together, the report demonstrated that sexual abuse is a national problem that requires a national response.

Also in the beginning of the year, I wrote “An Open Letter to the Jewish Community.” It was written to advance an honest conversation with Jews over “The Passion of the Christ.” That so many Jews, as well as non-Jews, responded to my letter with enthusiasm and reasonableness was a source of a great satisfaction.

The point of the letter was to challenge the sheer demagoguery that characterized much of the response to Mel Gibson and his movie. Cheap talk about Jews being killed—as a direct result of seeing the film—were made by professors like Paula Fredriksen of Boston University, as well as by pundits and activists. But when the dust settled, there was not one act of violence committed against any Jewish person anywhere on earth. There were also no apologies from those who made the irresponsible predictions in the first place.

Catholic theologians also joined the anti-Passion brigade. Their anger was fueled by their own arrogance: they actually expected Mel Gibson to run his script by them for approval—as if he owed them something. And they tried to have it both

ways, as well: on the one hand, they accused him of not being a bona fide Catholic; and at the same time, they treated him as if he had a duty to report to them.

This report shows in numbing detail the war that was waged against this film. When at first the charge of anti-Semitism didn't work, the critics accused Gibson of fomenting violence. That didn't work either, so then they said it was too bloody. Shamelessly, the same movie reviewers who found such violent movies as "Saving Private Ryan," "Gladiator" and "Schindler's List" to be ennobling, now all of a sudden were horrified at the sight of blood. When this gambit failed, they said the movie was pornographic: that some of these same reviewers reveled at the sight of the Marquis de Sade practicing his perversions in the movie "Quills" was most telling.

On the part of at least some of "The Passion's" harshest critics, an anti-Christian animus was easy to detect. For example, Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League, expressed his worst fears when he charged that "[Gibson] is hawking it on a commercial crusade to the churches in this country. That's what makes it dangerous." In other words, it is not radical secularists whom Jews need to fear most, it is those church-going Christians. Not surprisingly, my letter to Foxman requesting he apologize to Christians went unanswered.

It would be a mistake to think that the movie was nothing but a source of contention. On the contrary, millions found in "The Passion" the most intimate connection with Jesus Christ they ever experienced. To say that the movie was life-transforming for some is no exaggeration. Reports surfaced in the U.S. and abroad about ex-cons who turned their life around after viewing the film. Indeed, for many Christians, the movie was able to service their spiritual needs in a way that even the best priests and ministers have not been able to do.

It is not impossible to fathom why some might not like the

movie. Perhaps it was too graphic; perhaps the foreign-language element was not attractive; perhaps the inspiring teachings of Jesus were not given their due; perhaps there wasn't much in the film that could appeal to those with little or no faith. All that much is understandable. What is hard to understand is the deep-seated hostility the movie elicited from many of the nation's cultural elites (e.g., see the section at the end of this report on "Maligning Mel").

It is one thing to be indifferent about a movie—we've all seen films that others like but for some reason are not our cup of tea. But that's not what happened with "The Passion." Driven by an almost maniacal hatred of the movie, pundits from coast to coast lashed out at it in a way that begs the question: Was it the movie that sent them over the top, or was it the fact that the script was based on the New Testament? To the extent it was the latter, it says something very disturbing about the nature of the discourse that colors the culture war.

Another prominent issue in the culture war that engaged the Catholic League was the fight over the Pledge of Allegiance. Michael Newdow, an angry atheist with an authoritarian streak, took his vendetta against the words "under God" in the Pledge all the way up to the U.S. Supreme Court. Oral arguments were heard on March 24, and on June 24 the high court decided that Newdow lacked standing to try the case.

The Catholic League filed a joint friend-of-the-court brief with the Thomas More Law Center supporting the right of public school students to utter the dreaded words "under God." The effect of the Supreme Court's decision not to hear the case was to uphold the constitutionality of the Pledge, but this is surely not the last word on the subject. Not until the high court rules on the actual merits of the case will this issue be firmly resolved.

The presidential campaigns of George W. Bush and John Kerry drew the Catholic League into the fray in several ways. Moral

values, especially as they affected the debate on abortion, embryonic stem cell research and gay marriage, brought a robust response from the league. Opposed to all three issues, we sought to cast the first two subjects as human rights issues, emphasizing the need to protect innocent life at all stages of development. With regard to same-sex marriage, our opposition was based on the primacy of the family, traditionally understood, and the need to maintain its privileged position in society.

As a matter of principle, the Catholic League has deliberately chosen not to align itself with either political party. We are quite happy not being the Catholic arm of either the Republicans or the Democrats, and we trust our members want to keep it that way. On several occasions, we have had to do battle with the leadership of both parties, as well as with individual office holders and candidates for office. That's the way it must be if we are to maintain our autonomy, a quality not unrelated to our legitimacy.

Having said this, it would be dishonest to say that we do not welcome the presence of Catholic politicians in public life. So when John Kerry became the apparent Democratic contender for the White House, we looked at his candidacy with certain interest. But the closer we looked, the more we discovered that there was hardly a public policy issue that the Catholic Church has addressed that Kerry didn't reject. Whether the subject was abortion (including partial-birth abortion), embryonic stem cell research, doctor-assisted suicide or school vouchers, Kerry's voting record was radically different from the Church's position on these issues. And while Kerry said he was opposed to gay marriage, he was one of only 14 senators not to endorse the Defense of Marriage Act, a bill that President Bill Clinton signed to assure the integrity of marriage in the states.

What made this so disconcerting was Kerry's insistence that he was a "practicing and believing Catholic." Many Catholics,

including not a few bishops, wondered how this could be, given the fact that Kerry's voting record was squarely at odds with the teachings of the Church in most instances. And when some bishops questioned whether his record on abortion disqualified him from receiving Holy Communion (Kerry voted with NARAL—the most extreme pro-abortion group in the nation—100 percent of the time), cries of violating the principle of separation of church and state were heard all over. Thus did this Catholic candidate for the presidency create problems for many in the Catholic community.

If someone had asked us at the start of 2004 what issue in the presidential campaign would engage the Catholic League, we would have named only one—the fact that the Democratic National Committee (DNC) had refused to drop Catholics for a Free Choice from the links section on its website. In 2002 and 2003, we spent a considerable amount of time and money seeking to get the DNC to drop its association with this notoriously anti-Catholic group. Finally, on April 8, 2004, the DNC unveiled its new website, and gone was the links section that tied the Democrats to Frances Kissling's despicable operation.

But little did we know that our involvement in the presidential campaign had only begun. By the end of the spring, we were taking aim at Kerry's Director of Religion Outreach, and by mid-summer we were going after the DNC's Senior Advisor for Religious Outreach. We effectively disabled the former director and we forced the latter to quit. Here's what happened.

Once we learned that the Kerry campaign had hired Mara Vanderslice as its Director of Religious Outreach, we immediately inquired about her. What we found about the 29 year-old was startling, so much so that we couldn't wait to tell everyone else.

Vanderslice was raised without any faith and didn't become an evangelical Christian until she attended Earlham College, a

Quaker school known for its pacifism. When in college, she was active in the Earlham Socialist Alliance, a group that supports the convicted cop killer Mumia Abu-Jamal and openly embraces Marxism-Leninism. After graduating, Mara spoke at rallies held by ACT-UP, the anti-Catholic group that disrupted Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral in 1989 by spitting the Eucharist on the floor. In 2000, she practiced civil disobedience when she took to the streets of Seattle in a protest against the World Trade Organization. In 2002, she tried to shut down Washington, D.C. in a protest against the IMF and the World Bank.

As I said of Vanderslice in our news release of June 14, "Her resume is that of a person looking for a job working for Fidel Castro, not John Kerry." I then added, "Just wait until Catholics and Protestants learn who this lady really is."

That's when everything unraveled. As Julia Duin of the *Washington Times* wrote, the Kerry campaign was in a "panic mode" over Vanderslice's role. So what did they elect to do? They gagged her: she was strictly forbidden from speaking to the media. Had they fired her, at least she could have kept her dignity. But instead, they kept her on the payroll in an outreach position while denying her the right to reach out to anyone.

We couldn't believe what a blunder this was. Just ask yourself, would the Kerry campaign hire an anti-gay to conduct outreach efforts with the gay community? It would never happen. But people of faith were not exactly a priority group for the Kerry camp, so they never really bothered to cultivate them.

If the hiring of Vanderslice was a blunder, the hiring of Rev. Brenda Bartella Peterson was a death wish. How could the Democrats shoot themselves twice?

Once it was announced that Peterson was the DNC's choice to

become its top religious advisor, we checked her out. In no time at all, we found that she not only favored excising the words "under God" from the Pledge of Allegiance, she was so passionate about it that she literally signed an amicus brief on the side of atheist Newdow. That's right—the DNC's new religious outreach person signed a brief that went before the U.S. Supreme Court trying to censor the words "under God" from the Pledge.

Once we blew the whistle on Peterson, she caved within a few days. Here's how she put it: "The whirlwind was more than I could just about stand. It was amazing." What was really amazing was that the Democrats never learned a thing after we exposed Vanderslice.

In fairness, there were some Democratic operatives who were not too happy with the way their party was handling these matters. People like Mike McCurry, John Podesta and Paul Begala knew that by offending people of faith, the Kerry camp was digging its own grave. But their voices were drowned out by others.

McCurry, former press secretary to Bill Clinton, explained that the secularists in the party were in control: "Because we want to be politically correct, in particular being sensitive to Jews, that's taken the party to a direction where faith language is soft and opaque." Kenneth Wald, a political scientist and director of the Center for Jewish Studies at the University of Florida, was just as blunt: "There is a very strong tendency within the Jewish community to be worried about the people who are supporting Bush and Bush's tendency to promote Christian values from the bully pulpit."

Another aspect of the presidential campaign that beckoned a response from the Catholic League was the behavior of some members of the clergy. Like it or not, the IRS is empowered to take away the tax-exempt status of non-profit organizations that endorse candidates for public office. The same applies to

members of the clergy when they are acting in an official capacity (e.g., they cannot endorse a candidate from the pulpit, but they can say what they want informally at a parish picnic). In any event, what exercises the Catholic League is the double standard: Protestant ministers, especially in African-American churches, routinely endorse candidates with impunity. But let a Catholic priest simply mention his objections to an issue, e.g., abortion, and he is immediately the object of censure by pundits and legal activists.

During the presidential campaign, we made two formal complaints to the IRS. The first one was made against a Miami Baptist church for allowing the church to become the venue of a political rally. On August 29, 2004, Bishop Victor T. Curry of Miami's New Birth Baptist Church welcomed Rev. Al Sharpton, who ran against Kerry for the Democratic nomination, and Terry McAuliffe, the chairman of the DNC. As reported in the *Sun-Sentinel*, Curry "made no apologies for turning his Sunday service into a political rally." Both Sharpton and McAuliffe made naked partisan appeals to the congregation; McAuliffe went so far as to say, "Get out to vote and we'll send Bush back to Texas."

The second complaint was filed September 15 against two Protestant black clergy groups from Pennsylvania, the Pennsylvania State Coalition of Black Clergy and the Black Clergy of Philadelphia. The former group endorsed Joseph M. Hoeffel for governor, and the latter group endorsed the incumbent and eventual winner, Arlen Specter.

If the Gibson movie consumed us in the first part of the year, and the presidential campaign kept us hopping in the middle part of the year, the annual attempts to censor Christmas engrossed us at the end of the year. Only this year was different—this time Christians fought back. And they did so with considerable success.

This report provides many examples of the anti-Christmas

animus that was evident throughout the nation. Activist organizations undertook many anti-Christmas efforts, and they are recounted in that section of the report. In the section on business and the workplace, there are several examples of attempts made to squash Christmas celebrations in the office. The section on education offers a detailed account of how many public schools sought to stifle Christmas. Bids by municipalities to ban Christmas can be found in the section on government. And the work of vandals—who destroyed nativity scenes—are located in the miscellaneous section.

Those who want to censor Christmas are, properly speaking, cultural fascists. With jackboot precision, they seek to use the club of the state to impose a secular regime on a nation founded on Judeo-Christian principles. There is no religious tradition that these fanatics can stand, and that is why they will use every legal and extra-legal measure available to whip the masses into line. They are the neo-totalitarians, zealots who pervert the First Amendment so as to subvert the moral foundations of liberty.

Those who think that the censoring of Christmas is a blue-state phenomenon need to consider what happened on the editorial page of the *Wichita Eagle*. The Kansas newspaper ran a “clarification” on December 8 that read, “A story in Monday’s paper referred to a tree that was lighted at Tuesday’s Winterfest celebration as a ‘Christmas tree.’ In an effort to be inclusive, the city referred to this tree as the ‘Community Tree.’”

On the other hand, as indicated, 2004 stood out as the year that Christians aggressively sought to reclaim Christmas. The Catholic League has made this a priority issue for at least a decade, but only in the last few years has it been evident that many others are also taking this issue seriously. Three things changed in 2004: a) the media, especially cable television and the Internet, decided to give this issue the attention it deserves, b) Catholic and Protestant legal groups

marshaled their resources to litigate these matters in an unprecedented manner, and c) individual Christians were mobilized in a way that surprised everyone.

Why did Christians react so strongly? Because they were energized by the success of Mel Gibson—his victory was their victory. Christians were also emboldened by their victories over the proponents of gay marriage: voters in the eleven states that had same-sex marriage on the ballot rejected the measure handily. Other initiatives, such as mandating parental consent for abortion, also won. The net result being that by the time the Christmas wars began, millions of practicing Christians had been sufficiently fired up by Gibson and the election that they were not about to lie down as usual.

In many ways, what is not in this report is as important as what made the cut. We get complaints from all over the country about alleged instances of bias or bigotry. Many of the issues are rejected because they are not within the domain of the Catholic League. Others are rejected because the facts don't stand up upon scrutiny. Still others are rejected because they are not deemed to be anti-Catholic, or at least not sufficiently so.

With respect to this last matter, the Catholic League considered and rejected appeals to protest the play, "Sin—A Cardinal Deposed." The play was a theatrical documentary based on the exact depositions of Cardinal Bernard Law. While it was not flattering of Cardinal Law, it was not anti-Catholic either. At no point in the production was there an attempt to paint with a broad brush, thus did it relieve our concerns.

What is also not in this report is a list of all the hate mail we received in 2004. Quite simply, the hate mail—as received via the Feedback section on our website, e-mail and postal mail (to say nothing of the abusive phone calls)—was so voluminous in 2004 that it would have filled several documents this size. To be clear, no one at the Catholic League

complains about criticism, including that with which we disagree. At issue is the quantity of mail we receive that is patently vicious and obscene. Bad as this is, nothing is worse than the deliriously hateful missives that target Jesus and Our Blessed Mother.

Reading this volume may inspire some to become active in the culture war. Others, like journalists and researchers, will find satisfaction in simply learning more about anti-Catholicism. Still others will approach it with ill-motives (we are not naïve at the Catholic League). We wish the inspired and the curious good luck.

William A. Donohue, Ph.D.
President

Activist Organizations

January 8



Des Moines, IA—The local ACLU complained that only one version of the Ten Commandments (the King James version) was posted in the Iowa Statehouse. What made the ACLU's complaint so bogus was the fact that this was a privately-funded display commemorating the moral and legal underpinnings of the U.S.

January 23

New York, NY—ADL head Abraham Foxman gave the Los Angeles Times his thoughts on the marketing practices for "The Passion of the Christ": "[Mel Gibson is] hawking it on a commercial crusade to the churches of this country. That's what makes it dangerous." William Donohue wrote to Foxman: "The subtext of this remark is that church-going Christians are latent anti-Semitic bigots ready to lash out at Jews at any given moment." Donohue asked for a public apology, which was never given.

March 15

Duluth, MN—The City Council voted to settle a lawsuit brought by the ACLU of Minnesota to remove a 47-year-old Ten Commandments monument outside City Hall. The structure was removed three months later.

April 6

Boston, MA—People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) unveiled “The Cow Pope,” a 10-foot tall statue of a cow dressed as a pope wearing a sash that read, “Blessed are the Merciful. GoVeg.com.” Created by Greg Metz, the statue showed the cow holding a crucifix that had another cow on it. This, according to PETA, was to “remind Catholics that few activities contribute more to suffering—both for animals and humans—than eating meat.” The cow was eventually displayed in New York, Philadelphia, Washington, DC and Providence, RI.

April 11

San Francisco, CA—The Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, a group of gay men who dress as nuns in outrageous costumes, held its 25th Annual Easter Sunday celebration in Dolores Park. This included their annual “Hunky Jesus” contest in which gay men dress as Jesus and are judged on physical appearance.

April 24

Washington, DC—At a protest during a meeting of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, onlookers spotted a T-shirt that read, “Pro-Choice and Anti-Catholic.”

April 25

Washington, DC—At the pro-abortion “March for Women’s Lives,” demonstrators held signs that read, “Keep your rosaries out of our ovaries.”

May 4

Everett, WA—Americans United for Separation of Church and State filed suit against Everett, Washington, seeking to declare a monument of the Ten Commandments unconstitutional.

May 25

Chicago, IL—The Rainbow Sash Movement announced it would wear its rainbow sashes in Chicago-area churches on Pentecost Sunday to protest Catholic teaching on homosexuality. Cardinal George asked his pastors not to give Holy Communion to the protesters.

May 27

Washington, DC—Barry Lynn of Americans United for Separation of Church and State wrote the IRS asking it to investigate what he termed “electioneering” by the Diocese of Colorado Springs. Lynn said Bishop Michael Sheridan’s pastoral letter about politicians receiving Communion was “code language that says ‘Re-elect Bush and vote Republican.’” Lynn called it “part of a larger trend among some members of the Catholic hierarchy to influence Catholic voters in this election year.” He cited the bishops of New Jersey and Archbishop Raymond Burke of St. Louis.

June 1

Los Angeles, CA—The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors voted to remove a small cross from the Los Angeles County Seal. The seal, in use since 1957, included the cross to represent the Catholic mission that was the foundation of the city. The board voted after being threatened with a May 19 letter from the ACLU of Southern California. The letter threatened a lawsuit against the city for violating the separation of church and state if the cross was not removed.

July 14

Johnson County, KS—The Mainstream Coalition authorized its members to spy on area churches to see if clergymen were violating IRS guidelines that govern political campaigns. The Catholic League protested the covert operation as being inimical to the spirit of freedom of religion as guaranteed by the First Amendment.

July 14

Cleveland, OH—An appeals court affirmed a lower court ruling that a poster of the Ten Commandments in the Richland County Courthouse was unconstitutional. The ACLU of Ohio filed the lawsuit in 2000 after a judge hung the poster in his courtroom.

August 13

Convoy, OH—The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit reversed a lower court decision that said the Crestview school district violated the First Amendment by allowing fliers advertising religious events to be distributed in students' mailboxes. The ACLU of Ohio, which brought the original lawsuit, said it would appeal.

August 21

Columbus, OH—A U.S. District judge denied a request by the ACLU of Ohio to stop a gospel concert for the benefit of the Franklin County Children Services. The judge ruled that the concert could proceed because the event's main purpose of helping foster children was not religious and did not violate the principle of separation of church and state.

August 24

Millsboro, DE—The ACLU of Delaware threatened to sue the Sussex County school board for opening its meetings with a prayer and for allowing invocations at graduations and other school events. The ACLU took action after a local Jewish woman complained.

August 27

Louisville, KY—After a complaint by the ACLU, post offices in Kentucky banned the sale of teddy bears with religious messages sold by HolyBears, Inc. The God Bless America Bear, God Bless Our Postal Workers Bear and God Bless Our Troops Bear were all nixed.

September 5

Oceanside, CA—The city council voted unanimously to hang a new

plaque in the council chamber saying "In God We Trust" with "Liberty" underneath. The ACLU threatened to take legal action to remove the plaque, but eventually backed off.

September 15

Plattsmouth, NE—An atheist and ACLU member successfully sued the town to remove a five-foot granite slab of the Ten Commandments erected in 1965 in the corner of a public park.

September 18

Moorhead, MN—The Freedom from Religion Foundation sought to pressure municipal officials to remove a Celtic cross from the city-owned Heritage Hjemkomst Center.

September 28

New York, NY—In a full page ad in the New York Times, MoveOn.org sought to impugn the integrity of the Gallup organization by alleging that a Christian bias colored its work. Unhappy that Kerry was trailing Bush in a recently published Gallup poll, MoveOn.org implied that George W. Gallup Jr.'s evangelical Christian status tainted the results.

September 29

Los Angeles, CA—A group of residents sued the three county supervisors who had voted for a new county seal earlier in the month that removed a small cross and substituted an Indian woman for the pagan goddess Pomona. The lawsuit said the supervisors' action was hostile toward religion and a waste of taxpayers' money. The supervisors action was in response to a threatened lawsuit by the American Civil Liberties Union.

October 1

Riverside, CA—The ADL's Pacific Southwest regional office wrote to officials of the Riverside County Courthouse asking them to censor a quote by Theodore Roosevelt that reads, "The true Christian is the true citizen." The words, which were engraved in gold letters on a mahogany wall, were to be covered while the court was in session; they were to be

uncovered during historical tours.

The ADL said the quote should be covered because it could be seen as “a specific endorsement of the Christian faith.” The regional office said it did not object to the entire statement by Roosevelt (some 80 words); its problem was that the remark in the courthouse was taken out of context.

In response, the Catholic League wrote to the courthouse officials, the judge, and the ADL offering to pay to have the entire Roosevelt quote engraved on the wall; we heard from everyone but the ACLU. Because a lawyer filed suit claiming censorship on the part of the ADL, no decision regarding the Catholic League’s offer will be made until the case is adjudicated.

October 26

Clay, WV—The ACLU of West Virginia threatened to sue the Clay County commissioners if they did not remove a plaque of the Ten Commandments behind the commissioners’ seats. The complainant was a non-Christian “who feels unwelcome in a governmental environment that endorses a particular religion.”

November 16

Cranston, RI—U.S. District Judge William Smith ruled that the City Hall’s holiday display featuring a crèche and a menorah was not unconstitutional, contrary to the contention of the ACLU.

November 17

Washington, DC—Americans United for the Separation of Church and State threatened to sue after Congress submitted a bill to President Bush authorizing \$10 million to refurbish 21 historic Spanish missions in California, 19 of which are owned by the Catholic Church and two by the state. The Catholic League noted there were no objections raised by civil libertarian groups when funds from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the state of California were used to

complete a renovation of the Breed Street Shul in Los Angeles earlier in the year (including restoration of the synagogue's stained glass windows).

November 17

Washington, DC—Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER), a group of activist lawyers assisting whistle-blowers who identify violations of environmental law within government, launched a bigoted anti-Catholic attack on Bush administration special counsel Scott Bloch. In filing suit under the Freedom of Information Act to obtain Special Counsel records regarding personnel practices, a PEER press release called Bloch “a religious conservative” who hired “recent graduates of the ultra-conservative Ave Maria law school.” PEER executive director Jeff Ruch said, “Scott Bloch’s personnel practices are taken straight from The DaVinci Code rather than the civil service manual.”

December

New York, NY—The Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding called for a “Seasonal” or “Winter” party instead of a Christmas Party, in the name of being “fair” and so as to “not offend anyone.” The firm also advised a “Seasonal” or “Holiday” gift exchange.

In the same set of “tips for handling this tricky season,” however, Tanenbaum called for an array of accommodations for Muslims celebrating Ramadan. These include staggered work hours in which Muslim employees leave work early each day, plus the rescheduling of “important meetings or high-stress assignments.”

December

San Francisco, CA—The Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, described affectionately by the Los Angeles Times as “queer nuns,” mocked Christmas all month long. For example, it joined with the San Francisco Gay Men’s Chorus in showing “grown-ups sitting on Santa’s lap,” along with transvestite elves.

December 15

Reynoldsburg, OH—Atheists lost in their attempt to stop the display of a nativity scene at City Hall. Faith Chapel, which had been displaying its crèche on the city property for five years, agreed to donate it to the city.

December 15


Bellevue, WA—An atheist couple asked the city council to remove its “Giving Tree” (which is what city officials call the Christmas Tree in Bellevue City Hall in hopes of not offending atheists).

December 19

Milford, CT—American Atheists staged a demonstration at a privately funded crèche on the public park of Milford Green, but only four protesters showed up. The four were greeted by 200 pro-crèche supporters waving homemade signs and singing Christmas carols.

The Arts

January 24

Los Angeles, CA— “A Comfortable Truth: The Story of a Boy and His Priest” opened in the West Hollywood Lee Strasberg Creative Center. The play’s website said the work addresses “the controversial subject of juvenile molestation in the Church.” It was written and directed by Mark Kemble, and produced by David Lee Strasberg. Kemble said the play was about “the danger of blind faith in the leaders of any religious organization.” 

Joel Hirschhorn in *Daily Variety* wrote that the actor who plays the boy delivers “each church-crucifying zinger masterfully.” To demonstrate that the boy was traumatized by

the molesting priest, he was depicted playing in a rock group by the name "Fourth Reich Vatican Nazis." William Lobdell of the *Los Angeles Times* wrote, "The play's set looks like a cross between a church and a bombed out train station with a few religious icons, including a busted Madonna fallen to the floor...a crucifix disguised as a piece of junk—scraps of wood and metal topped by an upside-down milk pail with the spout serving as Christ's nose."

March 12

Madison, WI—Terrence McNally's play "Corpus Christi" was staged at the Evjue Theatre, part of the non-profit Bartell Community Theatre. It was performed by StageQ, "a group formed to bring gay and lesbian theater and works by gay and lesbian playwrights" to the Madison area. The play depicts a Christ-like figure who has sex with the 12 apostles.

April

New York, NY— The musical "Bare" ran for the first time off-Broadway. Described as a "pop opera," it revolved around a gay love affair between two high school students, Jason and Peter, at St. Celia's Boarding School. *Variety* magazine called the story a "tragedy that cannot be prevented by the sympathetic but theologically narrow-minded counsel of the school's priest." The play included a scene in which Peter has a hallucination of the Blessed Mother after he ingests some hashish-laced brownies. She appears, the *New York Post* reported, as a "Diana Ross-like Virgin Mary offering loving advice to gays." The *Philadelphia Inquirer* described her as an "African-American woman weary of 2,000 years of being addressed as 'Hail Mary.'" "

The musical's final song, "No Voice," was described by *Variety* as "an ominous indictment of a church that fails to hear or understand them [the characters in the play]." Damon Intrabartolo, the show's creator, told the *Los Angeles Times* that he left Catholicism "with a great boyfriend and a lot of anger." He confided to TheaterMania.com: "I'm really

worried about the dark side of religion. It's so easy to say, 'F— this, I'm not going to church,' but you can never entirely escape your religious demons."

April 8

San Francisco, CA—The Contemporary Jewish Museum hosted a traveling exhibition put together by Independent Curators International called "100 Artists See God." It included Norm Laich's 2002 "CluelessJesus.com," that depicts a game board with a "feckless-looking" Jesus surrounded by symbols of "seemingly insurmountable social problems." Another was Jeffrey Vallance's 1992 "Relics from Two Vatican Performances" that showed a note from the Vatican to the artist acknowledging the reception of the artist's painting of Veronica's Veil. Next to the note was a handkerchief with the artist's face impressed on it with espresso in imitation of Veronica's Veil. A final piece was the Rev. Ethan Acres' 2002 "WWJD?"; it showed a nude, androgynous crucified person floating over the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels in Los Angeles. The artist identified himself as a clergyman "ordained" by mail.

May 12

St. Petersburg, FL—Terrence McNally's play "Corpus Christi" was performed by Gypsy Productions at a theater in the Suncoast Resort (which caters to homosexuals). The play depicts a Christ-like figure who has sex with the 12 apostles.

July 8

Denver, CO—Lady Sublime Productions presented the world premiere of "Lady Sublime and the Fantesticles" at the Phoenix Theatre. The musical was billed as "An Evening of Sex in Song" that is "all about sex—mostly gay sex." According to the *Denver Post*, one of the scenes depicted "a lusty encounter between an altar boy and a priest."

July 22

Cheshire, CT—The play "Shakespeare's R&J" by Joe Calarco was

performed by the Cheshire Performing and Fine Arts Committee in conjunction with the Parks Department as a "Shakespeare in the Park" production. The original play featured four boys in a "repressive" Catholic school where Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet" is forbidden. A tone of homoeroticism is the undercurrent of the play. In the version performed here, girls were substituted for the boys.

August 19

Green Bay, WI—Terrence McNally's play "Corpus Christi" was staged at the Green Bay Community Theater, by Warehouse Productions. (The group had previously staged its first ever production, about the murder of homosexual Matthew Shepard, the summer before.) "Corpus Christi" depicts a Christ-like figure who has sex with the 12 apostles.

October 1

New York, NY—Ernesto Pujol, a Cuban artist, performed a piece called "The Nun" at El Museo del Barrio. In the piece, Pujol dresses like a nun and wounds himself to the background tune of a children's lullaby. According to the *New York Times*, he then gazes at a table of phallic sculptures with "the intensity reserved for religious contemplation."

November 2

New York, NY—The *New York Post* reported that an anti-Christian poster was featured at a polling place in Manhattan's SoHo district. The poster showed a soldier pointing a gun alongside the words, "Say it, one nation under God. Say it, you love Jesus. Say it."

The poster was on a wall in the Puffin Room art gallery. It was in clear view of citizens waiting in line to vote. Ed Skyler, the press secretary to New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, denounced the posters as "totally inappropriate." William Donohue issued a formal complaint to the Board of Elections. He was informed by the Board that the polling place had been inspected before its use, but that the posters were

hung up afterward. He was also told that there will be no more voting at this venue in the future.

November 11

New York, NY—Phillips, de Pury and Co. auctioned “The Ninth Hour” by Maurizio Cattelan. The artwork depicts Pope John Paul II being crushed by a meteorite while clutching his crozier. While the work is open to interpretation, the artist confessed that it is a “little” bit anti-Catholic. It sold for \$3 million.

November 18-20

Tulsa, OK—Once again, the Nightingale Theater staged a production of the notorious anti-Catholic play, “Sister Mary Ignatius Explains it All for You,” written by Christopher Durang. The play mocks Jesus Christ and the Blessed Mother with a vengeance. When it first surfaced in the 1980s, it was condemned by Catholic, Jewish and Protestant organizations.

December

Minneapolis, MN—The Hennepin Center for the Arts presented a drag queen starring in a sexually oriented Christmas show entitled “Fall on Your Knees: Six Yule Orientation.” The *St. Paul Pioneer Press* called it “an off-kilter mix of slaughtered Christmas carols.”

December 1

Portland, OR—A filmed version of the play “Jesus Has Two Mommies” by Faith Soloway was shown at the Hollywood Theatre as part of the Oregon Film and Video Foundation/Hollywood Theatre Project. Called a “multi-media schlock opera,” the play featured Ms. Soloway, who played herself, and Christine Cannavo, who played her pregnant Irish-Catholic girlfriend. The two women join in a “commitment ceremony.” Ms. Soloway meets Jesus, who assuages her fears about her non-traditional relationship: he admits to having two mommies, Mary and Josephine.

December 2

Boston, MA—Ryan Landry’s play, “Who’s Afraid of the Virgin Mary?”, a parody of Edward Albee’s “Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?”, was performed at Machine. The lead roles of the arguing couple were played as St. Joseph and the Blessed Mother. Landry, a drag queen, played Mary. They are visited in the stable on Christmas Eve by Kris Kringle and his wife (also played by a man). Landry said, “I consider myself a Christian. I see nothing wrong with ‘playing’ the Virgin Mary in drag or [suggesting] that she has a drinking problem.”

Business / Workplace



January

Clayboys, a Canadian business that specializes in homosexual greeting cards, produced one called, “Yoga. Anywhere. Anytime.” The accompanying picture is of Jesus on the Cross with his feet in a yoga position; another card showed a man dressed as the Blessed Mother with the caption, “Our Lady of the Cross dressers”; and another included the Blessed Mother with the caption, “Holy Mary, Mother of God another birthday!”

March 24

Philadelphia, PA—After a complaint from the Catholic League, Urban Outfitters, a company that sells T-shirts and an array of merchandise targeted at young people, discontinued its magnetized figure of Jesus on the Cross; the figure of Jesus wearing underwear could be altered by putting various clothing items on it (e.g., a devil’s outfit and a hula skirt).

April

Mount Kisco, NY—An anti-Catholic flier was posted on the

bulletin board in an exercise room of the Northern Westchester Cardiac Rehabilitation Center. The Catholic League wrote to the director of the center who responded by taking the flier down and writing a letter of apology.

July

Kentucky—A Safe Auto Insurance Company television commercial broadcast here (and in some parts of Pennsylvania) depicted a priest listening to a woman drone on and on in a confessional until he puts on headphones and ignores her. The Catholic League informed the company that the ad trivialized an important sacrament for Catholics. The company then pulled the ad.

August 31

Aptos, CA—The following letter was distributed to patrons of Video USA, a movie rental store:



October

Long Island, NY—Easter Unlimited, Inc./Funworld sold Halloween costumes of a man dressed as a priest shown with an erection, and a nun shown in full habit holding her pregnant stomach. The inscription on the ad for the priest costume said, "Keep Up The Faith"; the nun ad said, "Thank You, Father!" The costumes were sold in stores across the country.

Harvey Cohen, a store official, said he would not comment on whether the company, run by Stanley Geller, carried offensive rabbi or imam costumes. After a member of the Catholic League called the store to complain, Cohen said the item would not be sold next year.

October 31

California—A store employee of Safeway dressed as a pregnant nun for Halloween. The Catholic League made a formal complaint

to the CEO of Safeway, Inc. We received an apology and a pledge that this would not happen again.

October 31

Amarillo, TX—At a Halloween workplace party in a health facility, a woman employee came dressed as a pedophile priest and another came dressed as a pregnant nun. The latter won the prize for “best costume.”

December

American Greetings was once again found selling a series of “rude” Christmas cards, while choosing not to offer any disrespectful cards for Hanukkah or Kwanzaa. Of over 200 Christmas e-cards, 39 were found in the “religious” category and 18 were “rude” (most featuring flatulence and urine jokes). All of the 35 “Happy Hanukkah” cards, the nine “family” Hanukkah cards, and the 14 “funny” Hanukkah cards were respectful. There were no disrespectful Kwanzaa cards among the 24 listed. There was also no “rude” section for Hanukkah or Kwanzaa among American Greetings’ Create and Print cards, just for Christmas (some of which included oral sex jokes).

Of Hallmark’s 104 Christmas cards, nine were religious, one mentioned Jesus and none featured a nativity scene. In its “humor” category, three had mild scatological references and one had sexual overtones. Of th

e five Hanukkah cards, four featured menorahs, even the one “humor” card. Of the six Kwanzaa cards, all were respectful and none was humorous.

Yahoo offered 31 categories of Christmas cards, one of which was “religious.” There were seven e-cards dubbed “risqué” and replete with sexual gags. In the “rude” category, there were 17 scatological-oriented cards. All of the 12 Hanukkah cards were respectful, most of which pictured a menorah or Star of David. All of the 24 Kwanzaa cards were respectful.

December

The Committee to Save Merry Christmas was formed. It started a boycott of Macy's and Bloomingdale's because parent company Federated Department Stores shunned "Merry Christmas" in ads and decorations. Federated soon placed a red and green "Merry Christmas" greeting on its corporate website with a message claiming that its divisions were free to use "Merry Christmas" in its advertising. Federated's statement added, however, that the terms "Season's Greetings" and "Happy Holidays" are "more reflective of the multi-cultural society in which we live today."

December

Manhasset, NY—A Barnes & Noble store featured displays for Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, and "Holiday Gift Ideas"—but left out Christmas.

December

Minneapolis, MN—The diversity consulting firm ProGroup advised employers that the way to deal with what it called the "December Dilemma" (a term used by the ADL) is to "Keep holidays inclusive and informative." The firm suggested, "Try using a seasonal theme rather than a holiday one. Establish new traditions around parties and end-of-year gifts."

December

Pittsburgh, PA—Downtown retailers began calling Christmastime "Sparkle Season" ten years ago, claiming it was an attempt to be inclusive. After complaints from Christians, they changed it to "Downtown Pittsburgh Sparkles"—sparking even more complaints. This year, for the third time, the Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership called it "Downtown Pittsburgh, a Holiday Tradition With a New Twist."

December

Albany, CA—Simma Lieberman Associates, a "multicultural" consulting company, bluntly told clients in a "Note for Employers": "Make sure your holiday party isn't a Christmas

party in disguise. Decorations and food should be general, and non-specific to any religion." Several lines later, the firm took the advice a step further: "Consider having a New Year's Party instead of a holiday party."

December
New York, NY—For the third year, Time magazine CEO Ann Moore banned its decades-long tradition of throwing an employee Christmas party. The company still gives Christmas bonuses, but it refuses to use the "C-word" in referring to them. According to a Time, Inc. spokesman, "It's not really a Christmas bonus...It's just a nice gesture that Ann Moore started three years ago."

December

New York, NY—Instead of the large, traditional green wreath with a red bow displayed in years past, New York City's Bar Building placed over its exterior foyer window a big bundle of twigs shaped like a diam

ond. According to one tenant's written complaint to the owner of the Bar Building, "A red sash, similar in substance to sheer red pantyhose, adorns the white bundle of twigs." One Bar Building worker commented: "What are they trying to celebrate—the Blair Witch Project?" Tenant complaints finally spurred management to put up a Christmas Tree in the lobby. The building also continued its tradition of placing a Jewish menorah with a prominent Star of David on public display.

December 10

Cincinnati, OH—In an interview with the Detroit News, an attorney with Strauss & Troy in Cincinnati warned that "if the workplace is permeated with religious symbols—presumably of another religion—to the extent that the employee feels intimidated, ridiculed or insulted, he or she could make the claim that the company has allowed or created a hostile environment."

December 10

San Francisco, CA—Littler Mendelson, the country's largest employment and labor law firm, warned that "Renewed interest in moral values—as evidenced by the recent presidential election—and increased religious activity in the workplace can lead to clashes during the holiday season." The firm recommended "a generic greeting card option" for employees sending cards to clients and contacts.

December 10

Riverhead, NY—An attorney with the Legal Aid Society of Suffolk County in Long Island placed a crèche next to a menorah that was on display in her office. Her boss moved it away from the menorah the next day and told her it did "not belong there." When she asked why the menorah was on display, he replied, "that's different." After faxing a complaint to her main office, she was given permission to display the nativity scene where she had first placed it.


December 11


Plantation, FL—Fifty protesters demonstrated at Broward and Fashion malls against a policy of displaying a menorah but no nativity scene. They called for a boycott of Federated Department Stores, which owns Bloomingdale's, Burdines and Macy's, for removing references to Christmas from its advertising and store displays.


December 14


The Associated Press reported that "major corporations [are] barring religious music from cubicles and renaming the office Christmas bash the 'end of the year' party."


Cartoons


 This cartoon by Owen Dunne (syndicated, 12-6-04) portrays the priest as having a sexually deviant motive for asking a young male basketball player to take off his shirt during the game. The implication is that priests are pedophiles.

 This cartoon by David Horsey (*Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, 4-27-04) unfairly suggests that the same Catholic Church that places sanctions on pro-abortion politicians has no problems with Catholics who favor the death penalty, war and sweat shops.

 This cartoon (*New York Post*, 4-25-04) suggests that Catholic officials would go easy on alleged child molester Michael Jackson because of their tolerance for such abuse.

 This cartoon by Mike Peters (*Dayton Daily News*, 4-14-04) paints the Catholic Church as a hypocritical institution that sanctions pedophilia while opposing abortion.

 This cartoon by Mike Ritter (*St. Augustine Record*, 5-5-04) makes a vicious sexual statement about a Vatican official who is about to give Communion to a pro-abortion, pro-gay rights politician.


 This cartoon by Ward Sutton (*Village Voice*, 5-22-04) makes a blasphemous statement about the Eucharist, depicts the Church as being corrupt and suggests that all priests are child abusers.



This cartoon by Don Wright (*Palm Beach Post*, 4-29-04), indicts the Catholic Church for allegedly tolerating pedophilia while opposing abortion.



This cartoon by Lloyd Dangle ran in the San Francisco edition of the *Metro* in June. It shows a neighborhood watch team taking steps to protect children from priests who live nearby; the implication is that all priests are child abusers.

 This cartoon by Lyle Lahey ran in the *Door County Advocate* (6-22-04). It shamelessly suggests that Catholic bishops do not consider pedophile priests to have gravely sinned the way pro-abortion Catholic politicians have.

Education



January 28

Dupo, IL—The Dupo School Board voted to reinstate Dupo High School student James Lord, who was suspended from the school's closed circuit broadcast television for signing off his December 17, 2003 broadcast by saying, "Have a safe and happy holiday and God Bless."

February 5

Kirtland, OH—Dr. James Tuttle, professor of moral philosophy at Lakeland Community College, was removed from teaching classes and threatened with dismissal for stating that he was a Catholic on his course syllabi. In March 2003, a student had complained that Tuttle mentioned his Catholic faith too often in class. In response, Tuttle stated on his syllabi that he was "a committed Catholic Christian philosopher and theologian." He encouraged any student who felt uncomfortable to speak with him. In April 2003, Tuttle received a letter

from Dean James L. Brown who wrote that he was “more bothered by [Tuttle’s] disclaimer than by anything I read in [the student’s] complaint.” Tuttle’s course load was then reduced. He refused to take the last pick of the classes, which contradicted his seniority status, resulting in him having no classes to teach.

March

Hyattsville, MD—Officials at Hyattsville Middle School prohibited students from wearing rosaries. A memo to parents said, “In our training about gangs, we have been informed that wearing rosaries as jewelry often is a gang symbol.” It added, “Our country is built on the premise of the separation of church and state. Therefore, we are asking that our students refrain from wearing rosaries or other items such as bandanas that might be associated with gangs.”

William Donohue wrote a letter to the CEO of Prince George’s County Public Schools, Dr. André J. Hornsby. He said, “There are several problems here, including constitutional ones. As I’ve indicated, there is nothing wrong with a school that decides to ban religious symbols that are being worn for the purpose of conveying a gang message (as opposed to religious expression). But when separation of church and state is invoked, it suggests that all religious symbols are prohibited. Would this mean that Christians cannot wear a cross, and that Jews cannot wear a Star of David? And why, if the First Amendment provision regarding church and state is being invoked, does it make sense to lump rosaries (a religious symbol) with bandanas (a secular symbol)...Go ahead and ban religious symbols that are being abused by gangs to get their message across, but don’t condition this edict on the grounds of separation of church and state. That is casting the net too wide, needlessly making this an issue of constitutional law.” A school official contacted Donohue saying that an apology to parents was given by the principal and a series of steps were taken to assure that nothing like

this ever happens again.

March 30

Freeport, NY—The 2003-2004 calendar of the Freeport School District noted religious holidays such as Yom Kippur, but made no mention of Christmas. It noted a Sunday holiday, Mother's Day, but not another Sunday holiday, Easter. After the Superintendent of Schools was contacted, the committee that creates the calendar moved to include Christmas and Easter in the 2004-2005 calendar.

August 18

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC) accused a Christian fraternity, Alpha Iota Omega, of discrimination against non-Christians because the fraternity did not allow non-Christians to be members. The fraternity refused to sign a "nondiscrimination" clause that would forbid it from considering religion when determining membership in the group. Alpha Iota Omega sued UNC over the issue.

August 27

Moline, IL—Bruce LeBlanc, sociology professor at Black Hawk College and a former Catholic priest and admitted homosexual, was known for his practice of graphically describing homosexual acts in the classroom and for his habit of mocking Christian beliefs. In Spring 2003, a student claimed he was harassed by LeBlanc for being a conservative and a Christian. He reported that LeBlanc wrote "F- God" on the blackboard.

After an advisory committee said he violated the school's harassment policy, the faculty of the college defended LeBlanc on free speech grounds. Though LeBlanc was not penalized in any way, the fact that the committee recommended he apologize to the offended student led him to challenge the decision through the school's collective bargaining agreement.

September 9

In a debate on Beliefnet.com between Ronald M. Green, chairman

of the department of religion at Dartmouth, and Nigel Cameron, research professor of bioethics at Chicago-Kent College of Law, Green made several anti-Catholic remarks while defending abortion and embryonic stem cell research. He questioned the propriety of Catholics even entering this discussion. Everywhere in Europe, he contended, was the presence of the Catholic Church: he admitted that France was mostly secular but, he said, there was "a determined and well-placed minority of devout churchgoing Catholics" that was still active.

In response, Cameron opined that "someone has been reading *The Da Vinci Code*." He also accused Green of promoting a conspiratorial view and even wondered aloud why Green would challenge the role of religious organizations in the bioethical debate, especially given the fact that Beliefnet was hosting the debate. "In fact," Cameron noted, "Green rants against the influence of religious people who think democracy gives them rights and responsibilities in public affairs."

October 5

Ann Arbor, MI—A federal judge ordered the Ann Arbor School District to pay \$102,000 in attorney fees and costs to the Thomas More Law Center because school officials had prevented a student from expressing her Catholic viewpoint against homosexuality during a "Diversity Week" program. In 2002, the student was prevented from participating in a "Homosexuality and Religion" panel because the school said her views were "negative." The judge, Gerald Rosen, wrote that "This case presents the ironic, and unfortunate, paradox of a public school celebrating 'diversity' by refusing to permit the presentation to students of an 'unwelcome' viewpoint on the topic of homosexuality and religion."

November

Newfields, NH—The principal of Newfields Elementary School defended the school's Christmas ban, saying, "For some time now we've tried to distance ourselves from religion and world events." He concluded, "It's important schools are all things

to all people or none to any.”

November

Charlotte, NC—At a Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools meeting, Rose Hamid, the head of a group called Muslim Women of the Carolinas, successfully censored “Silent Night” from the schools. “Joy to the World” was also banned. The principal of Smithfield Elementary School—a Baptist pastor—told those assembled that he had changed the focus of his school’s annual program from Christmas to winter.

November

Scarborough, ME—Parents who met throughout the fall with Scarborough School District administrators said the suppression of Christmas had become so intense, it’s being referred to as the “C-word.” The situation persisted in spite of an official district policy stating that schools should not ignore religion.

November 15

Maplewood, NJ—The local school district banned student bands from performing songs with references to Christmas or Santa Claus—even instrumental versions. A statement from school board president Brian O’Leary said the purpose of the ban was “to balance the important roles that religion and music can and do play in our curriculum with a desire to avoid celebrating or appearing to celebrate a religious holiday.”

November 17

New York, NY—Barnard College Religion Professor Celia M. Deutsch told a Student Government Association forum that there is “a lot of prejudice” on campus, specifically anti-Catholic sentiment. “I hear students say they are afraid to say they are Catholic,” Deutsch said, “because there is a whole set of associations [attributed with being Catholic].”

November 17

Budd Lake, NJ—Kathy Cogan’s one-woman show, “Vatican II: What

the Hell Happened?”, premiered at the Pax Amicus Castle Theatre. Cogan mocked the Sacrament of Penance, Holy Communion, marriage preparation programs, and other Catholic practices.

November 22

Garwood, NJ—A student wrote a poem about Thanksgiving that said, “Pilgrims thank God for what they were given.” The poem was displayed, but the school authorities excised “God” from it. After the student’s mother complained, the school put the word back.

November 22

Cupertino, CA—Public school teacher Steven Williams sued his school district and principal for banning him from using the Declaration of Independence, the writings of George Washington, and other documents from the Founding Fathers because of their references to God and Christianity. Stevens Creek School principal Patricia Vidmar had reportedly ordered Williams—but no other teachers—to submit all teaching materials in advance for review. The suit charged that Williams’ equal protection rights under the Constitution were violated.

November 23

Annapolis, MD—Public school teachers in the state were required to teach about the Thanksgiving holiday without mentioning religion. On the Pilgrims, an administrator said, “We mention they were Puritan but students usually just understand that they had a belief system and not much more than that.”

December

Epping, NH—The principal of Epping Elementary School boasted that “We do a fund-raiser for families in need, but we don’t call it a Christmas gift drive” because “It’s a time for giving and that’s pretty much universal.” He failed to explain, however, just why December should be chosen as a time

of giving.

December

Birmingham, AL—The University of Alabama’s Office of Cultural Diversity recommended that all nativity scenes be banned because they are “religion-focused.” But it said that the menorah—a Jewish religious symbol—is “fine” because it is really a “secular” symbol. University employees were instructed to “Avoid confronting others from different religions about their beliefs.” The purpose of the guidelines were to avoid “unintentional oppression or hostilities.”

December

Staten Island, NY—The official calendar of Tottenville High School noted as “Dates to Remember” Hanukkah on Dec. 8 and Kwanzaa on Dec. 26—but made no mention of Christmas. The school’s guidelines for the display of cultural/holiday symbols said: “The display of secular holiday symbol decorations is permitted. Such symbols include, but are not limited to, Christmas trees, Menorahs, and the Star and Crescent.”

December

Scottsdale, AZ—At CASY Country Day charter school, students were told that “Joy to the World” and similar songs were taboo. The school’s music teacher, Diane Spero, explained, “we don’t do religious songs at all.” Ruth Argabright, a music specialist in the Mesa Unified School District, remarked that “we’ve tried to be more inclusive as our world opens to us.”

December

Plainfield, IL—Central School listed the song “I Hate This Holiday” in its holiday concert program, a parody from the choral “Frosty’s First Adventure.” Bus driver Carmen Brown took it as an insult to Christians and called for a boycott of the concert. School principal Linda DeLeo conceded that the song was offensive and justified it by saying, “We have Jewish children, we have children who celebrated Ramadan a couple of

weeks ago. We take into account that we aren't all celebrating the same holiday and try to put on programs that everyone can celebrate."

December

Sacramento, CA—Three first-grade teachers were ordered by a superior not to let the word "Christmas" slip from their lips.

December

Yonkers, NY—A school superintendent reversed a limitation on holiday ornaments and lesson plans after the Thomas More Law Center filed suit against the school district for discriminating against Christians.

December

McHenry County, IL—Pupils at Spring Grove Elementary School managed to sing holiday songs at a celebration without mentioning Christ or the Christmas story. The banning of Christian references prompted the Alliance Defense Fund to send letters to 350 school district superintendents in the Chicago area informing them that legal precedents "allow and sometimes require officials to permit religious expression in public schools."

December

East Manatee, FL—Even snowmen were banned from display at Freedom Elementary School, whereas the school used to exhibit crèches. Only patriotic songs were permitted at the school's "winter concert." Nearby, at Braden River Middle School in East Manatee County, new guidelines banned "celebrating" the holidays; they could only be "recognized." Braden's principal said, "You won't see any Christmas trees around here." He added, "We keep it generic."

December 8

Gurnee, IL—Superintendent Dennis Conti's ban against Christmas music on school buses was voted down following a protest by parents at a packed meeting of the Woodland School District

board. They treated the assembled school officials to an impromptu rendition of "We Wish You a Merry Christmas."

December 9

Mustang, OK—Residents formed a living nativity scene across from Lakehoma Elementary School to protest the banning of the nativity scene and "Silent Night" from the school's annual Christmas play; the same school kept a menorah and other non-Christian religious symbols in the performance.

December 13

Egg Harbor, NJ—Egg Harbor Township Board of Education issued a ban on "Silent Night" from the public school's Holiday Singalong. But it did not ban the Hanukkah tune "The Dreidel Song" or the song "Kwanzaa's Here." After Christians protested, the Board voted 7-to-0 to reverse its earlier decision and "Silent Night" was returned to the program.

December 13

West Bend, WI—The West Bend Joint School District reversed its policy forbidding students to hand out Christmas cards containing the religious origins of the candy cane.

December 14

Mustang, OK—When a public school principal banned fifth-graders from acting out the nativity in a school pageant—but kept symbols of Kwanzaa and Hanukkah—voters retaliated by voting down two bond measures for local schools totaling nearly \$11 million. It was the first time in over a decade that Mustang voters denied their school district additional funds.

December 15

Plano, TX—Parents and children sued the Plano Independent School District for the pervasive religious hostility of its anti-Christmas policies. The school district's policy included a ban on red and green decorations, on giving out candy canes when a religious card is attached, and on parents giving one

another religious items on school property. The U.S. Department of Justice launched an investigation of the school district.

December 17

Kirkland, WA—A long-scheduled performance of Dickens' "A Christmas Carol" was cancelled by the principal because, he said, "Teaching about religious holidays is permissible, but celebrating them is not."

December 19

Worcester, MA—In a story contending that the city "is not following a national trend to take religion out of the December holiday season," the *Worcester Telegram & Gazette* cited the presence of "Santa Claus, a Christian symbol" at the city hall Christmas tree lighting. Mayor Timothy P. Murray said, "I don't favor generic greetings" and called the Christmas season "a time to celebrate our inclusion and diversity by honoring all the religions." Yet Worcester public schools continued a policy of banning nativity scenes.

December 22

Del Mar, CA—Del Mar Union School District "[cracked] down on religious Christmas symbols," according to the Los Angeles Times. Christmas trees were banned, Santa Claus was classified as a religious symbol, "Silent Night" was forbidden, and Christmas programs were reclassified as "Winterfest" celebrations.

Government



February 18

New York, NY—U.S. District Court Judge Charles Sifton ruled against the plaintiffs in the discrimination suit challenging the New York City Department of Education's policy regarding "Holiday Displays." The policy allowed the Jewish menorah and Islamic star and crescent while banning the Christian symbol, the nativity scene. The Catholic League arranged for the Thomas More Law Center to file the suit in December 2002 on behalf of a Queens, New York mother and her two children.

Sifton ruled that the policy is not unconstitutional and does not discriminate against Christians. In his decision, he wrote that the policy is secular in intent—the menorah and the star and crescent have a secular dimension, while the nativity scene is "purely religious." Elsewhere, he wrote that the holiday displays "must be reviewed as perceived by the children, Christian children in particular, but not one hypersensitive Catholic child." The Catholic League said the ruling smacked of anti-Catholic bias.

June 14

The Catholic League broke a news story on the hiring of Mara Vanderslice by the Kerry campaign as its new Director of Religion Outreach. Her resume was startling: she was an extreme radical who belonged to Marxist clubs in college; after college she spoke at rallies organized by anti-Catholic groups; she took to the streets of Seattle in a protest against the World Trade Organization; and she was arrested for trying to shut down Washington, D.C. and the World Bank. Four days after we exposed her in a news release, the Kerry camp put the muzzle on her, forbidding her to speak to the media.

July 19

Genesee County, MI—The ACLU filed a suit on behalf of appellant Joseph Hanas. Hanas, a Catholic, alleged that he was coerced into practicing Pentecostalism at the Inner City Christian Outreach (ICCO) rehabilitation center. The counselors and pastor running it called Catholicism "witchcraft," confiscated Hanas' rosary and Bible, prevented a

priest and deacon from visiting him, and forced him to attend Pentecostal Bible studies and services. There was no actual drug treatment activity in the program, and successful completion of the program required (among other things) proclaiming oneself "saved."

When Hanas requested a transfer out of ICCO into a secular program, Genesee County Judge Robert M. Ransom removed him from deferred sentencing, accepted his guilty plea, convicted and sentenced him. Had he remained in the deferred sentencing program, no conviction would have appeared on his record. The ACLU's brief argued that the choice facing Hanas constituted a violation of the Michigan and federal Free Exercise Clauses: he could remain at ICCO, and be coerced into practicing Pentecostalism and discouraged from practicing Catholicism, or he could face criminal sanctions.

July 23

Washington, DC—Democratic National Committee (DNC) Chairman Terry McAuliffe announced the appointment of Rev. Brenda Bartella Peterson as the first-ever Senior Advisor for Religious Outreach to the DNC. On Monday, August 2, the Catholic League issued a press release noting she signed an amicus brief to the Supreme Court in support of atheist Michael Newdow in his attempt to get the words "under God" stricken from the Pledge of Allegiance. Two more news releases on Peterson were issued on August 3 and 4. She then resigned her position on August 4, saying she couldn't take the pressure any more. She was not replaced and the DNC let the position expire.

November 1

New York, NY—In *New York* magazine, Rep. Charles Rangel, Democratic congressman for Harlem, reacted to Denver Archbishop Charles Chaput's statement that voting for an explicitly pro-abortion candidate was "cooperating in evil." Rangel said, "I don't know if priests go to confession. I just wonder whether priests confess to each other what they're

doing to our children. They ought to put a district attorney in some of these confessional boxes.”

November 15

La Grange, KY—Town officials decided not to display a nativity scene on the courthouse lawn. The scene had been displayed for 14 years. The reason given was that they feared a lawsuit from the ACLU.

November 23

Demarest, NJ—After 150 angry residents arrived at a borough council meeting, council members voted unanimously to scrap a planned vote to remove religious symbols from the borough’s village green.

December

Somerville, MA—Mayor Joseph Curtatone publicly expressed regret for calling Somerville’s “holiday party” a Christmas Party. “I apologize for the mistake,” Curtatone said, “and to anyone who was offended by it.”

December

Chapel Hill, NC—The town sponsored “a series of holiday events,” including a “Holiday Parade” and “a Community Sing and Tree Lighting.” But no mention was made of what the holiday actually was.

December

Tallahassee, FL—State Democratic legislators reportedly balked at Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Daniel Webster’s plans to recommend repeal of the state constitution’s 1885 anti-Catholic-motivated “Blaine Amendment,” which prevents public monies from helping religious schools and other institutions.

December 2

Denver, CO—After hundreds of angry phone calls, Mayor John Hickenlooper reversed a plan to replace the “Merry Christmas” sign outside City Hall with one that said “Happy Holidays.” He said, “Hickenlooper might have two 0’s, but I am not Scrooge.”

The city has also maintained a manger scene on the City Hall steps since the early 1940s, despite protests in recent years from militant atheist organizations.

The ad below appeared on the op-ed page of the *New York Times* on September 20.

CENSORING RELIGIOUS SPEECH

It is no secret that many of our cultural elites harbor an animus against religion. What they desire is for people of faith, of every religion, to recede from public life. Not content to disagree with practicing Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Muslims and others, they seek to silence them. Whether the issue is movies they detest, e.g., "The Passion of the Christ," or words they abhor, e.g., "under God," their natural impulse is to censor.

Because this is an election year, the censors have targeted clerics and religious organizations. They seek to silence them by appealing to a metaphor, written by Jefferson, about separation of church and state. Jefferson, however, said that it was a "lie" attributed to him by his foes that he wanted a "government without religion."

It is also a lie to say that today's foes of religion are principled: they said nothing when former President Bill Clinton recently spoke from the pulpit at New York's Riverside Church imploring the faithful to remember that "Politics and political involvement dictated by faith is not the exclusive province of the right wing." But isn't it the left wing that has objected the most to any "politics dictated by faith"?

This election season, the censors have their sights set on Catholic bishops, especially those who threaten sanctions against Catholic pro-abortion politicians. While abortion is a public issue, disciplinary measures are an internal matter. To be plain, no non-Catholic has any business lecturing Catholic bishops on the house rules of the Catholic Church. If the bishops were threatening sanctions against racists or anti-Semites, it is a sure bet they would be congratulated, not condemned.

It does not help the cause of the censors to invoke the politics of multiculturalism. For all the talk about diversity, over 80 percent of Americans are Christian and over 90 percent believe in God. And that is why attempts to secularize our society in the name of diversity are intellectually and morally indefensible. To be blunt, were it not for our Judeo-Christian heritage, freedom would not exist. Not here, not anywhere.

Finally, religious speech is entitled to the same protections as political speech. For those who disagree, it would be helpful if they thought of religious speech the way they do obscene speech. Then our rights would surely be secured.

*William A. Donohue, Ph.D.
President*



CATHOLIC LEAGUE *for Religious and Civil Rights*

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December 3

Glendale, OH—Officials took part in a Holiday Walk on the

Village Square, but no one explained what holiday was being celebrated.

December 3 & 4

Denver, CO—The city's annual Parade of Lights, sponsored chiefly by NBC affiliate KUSA-TV, banned the words "Merry Christmas" from all floats, as well as all Christmas songs. Parade spokesman Michael Krikorian said the decision to discriminate against Christians was made "out of respect for other religions in the region." Meanwhile, the parade honored homosexual and lesbian American Indians as "Holy People."

December 4

Franklin, MI—The village changed the name of its annual "Holly Day" to "the Franklin Winter Festival." Prominent store owner Les Gorback, who pushed for the new name, said, "Holly Day had the connotation it was strictly a Christmas holiday festival." According to Gorback, "We wanted to try to make it more inclusive, so we changed the name."

December 4

Fontana, CA—Santa Claus—who is not associated with anything other than Christmas—inexplicably appeared at the annual Festival of Winter's parade through Miller Park.

December 6

Wellesley, MA—When the town reversed policy and agreed to place a menorah in front of the town hall, town counsel Albert Robinson said it would be a giant legal step to place a crèche there, too.

December 7

New York, NY—Mayor Michael Bloomberg insisted that the City Hall Christmas Tree was really a "holiday tree."

December 9

Sunny Isles Beach, FL—The city's fourth annual holiday park lighting ceremony featured Santa Claus, but no Christmas

Trees, menorahs, crèches, or any other religious symbols. According to Susan Simpson, director of the Sunny Isles Beach Cultural and Human Services Department, excluding Christmas Trees and menorahs made the event inclusive.

December 10

New York, NY—As city workers were tearing down Christmas lights that residents of a lower East Side housing project had been putting up annually for a decade, the New York City Housing Authority reversed a directive from the previous day demanding that “All lights must be removed at once.”

December 12

Fair Lawn, NJ—Municipal officials called the Christmas Tree outside Borough Hall a “holiday tree” and, according to the *Bergen Record*, refused to allow a menorah there, too, because then they might have to allow other religious symbols.

December 15

Bay Harbor Islands, FL—With the assistance of the Thomas More Law center, Sondra Snowden successfully sued the town of Bay Harbor Islands, near Miami, reversing its discriminatory practice of banning the placement of a crèche in the town’s main square, while permitting the display of menorahs. The Star of David was also hung on lampposts throughout the town.

Snowdon supplied the crèche herself the following week at her own expense, dedicating it to the memory of her mother. Amidst honking cars and Christmas carolers, Father Peter Lickman of St. Basil Catholic Church blessed the manger scene in a brief ceremony. Snowden, however, told Fox’s Bill O’Reilly, “there’s still discrimination. I have walked down the street and been spit on. I have threatening phone calls that come into me.”

December 15

Hobbs, NM—After a written request from the Catholic League, Lea County Correctional Facility stated that it would make an exception to the prison’s restriction on showing R-rated films

to inmates and allow a screening of Mel Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ" during Christmastime. A Catholic inmate had asked for the League's assistance.

December 15

Pasco County, FL—County officials banned Christmas trees from public buildings after the county attorney determined that they were religious symbols. The American Center for Law and Justice called the action "the most extreme example of censorship imaginable."

December 16

Stafford Township, NJ—After initially balking at erecting a crèche in the municipal courtyard, the mayor agreed to accept a lighted nativity scene from a Catholic church; it became the centerpiece of the town's holiday display representing various faiths.

December 17

Pasco County, FL—After a deluge of angry phone calls and e-mails, plus a threatened lawsuit, officials reversed a Christmas Tree ban that had caused the removal of dozens of trees in county buildings; many of the trees were decorated by local schoolchildren.

December 22

Layton, UT—Following a 20-year tradition, Layton banned a crèche while allowing a paganistic "Winter Zoo." It featured dinosaurs, monkeys, bears and dozens of other lighted animals.

The Catholic League erected its annual crèche in Manhattan's Central Park on December 21.

Media



Books | Internet | Magazines | Movies | Music | Newspapers | Radio & Television

BOOKS

March 30

Glorious Appearing by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins was published. It is the twelfth and final installment of the “Left Behind” series of evangelical Christian thrillers begun in 1995. The United States Bishops’ Department of Education called them “both subtly and overtly anti-Catholic” for their depiction of a future pope who establishes a false religion linked with the Anti-Christ.

August 1

The Church that Forgot Christ by Jimmy Breslin was published by Free Press. He wrote of the issue of abortion: “The church of Rome today cries ‘abortion!’ to distract us from crimes by all their pedophiles and pimps.” Breslin rails against celibacy, the bishops, and the pope. Many statements that he attributes to people in the book are patently untrue. Unlike other books critical of the Church, this one smacks of a profound hatred of the religion Breslin has long since abandoned.

INTERNET

March 15

HowardStern.com parodied a poster for “The Passion of the Christ.” Called “The Passion of the Stern: A Radio Pioneer Persecuted By the U.S. Government,” Howard Stern’s face is

superimposed over that of James Caviezel as Jesus.

August 1

Chuck Currie's blog, "Views on faith and politics from a United Church of Christ Seminarian," included a piece critical of the Vatican's recent "Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and the World." The article was titled, "When Catholic Girls Go Wild." He wrote that "it is difficult to imagine how a male-only priesthood riddled with a discriminatory record on women's issues perceives that is [sic] has the moral authority" to issue such a document.

September

A radical website called "Church Arson" described its goal of "burning down the last temple and shattering the last church." It stated that people must "defeat the religions and theories of Christianity and Judaism." After this is accomplished, it claimed, "the executions of diehard Christians and Jews should bother no one."

October

Marketed on a website, artist Scott Richter created an image called "Saint Clinton." It showed President Bill Clinton's face on the traditional image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The image was sold on T-shirts, posters, refrigerator magnets, coffee cups and lunch boxes.

November

Café Press, a website that offers a platform for members to sell their own products, offered under the category "Religion" a subcategory called "Satanism." Included for sale was a T-shirt that said "I [heart] Satan" and a ceramic mug that said "F- for Jesus." "Holiday Gifts" included a "What Would Jesus Do?" thong and there was a sticker called "Figless is F-ed" that showed Jesus with the words "You are an insecure cult leader!"; Bumper stickers that said "Jesus is my nigga" and "Piss off an Evangelical...Think for yourself!" were also sold.

November 9

In *Slate* magazine on MSN.com, Christopher Hitchens wrote about the recent presidential election. While criticizing Garry Wills for his claim that the Enlightenment was brought to an end by the election, Hitchens wrote: "I step lightly over the ancient history of Wills' church (which was the originator of the counter-Enlightenment and then the patron of fascism in Europe) as well as over its more recent and local history (as the patron, protector, and financier of child-rape in the United States, and the sponsor of the cruel annulment of Joe Kennedy's and John Kerry's first marriages). As far as I know, all religions and all churches are equally demented in their belief in divine intervention, divine intercession, or even the existence of the divine in the first place."

MAGAZINES

February

E. Michael Jones, editor of *Culture Wars*, reviewed Roy Schoeman's book, *Salvation Is From the Jews*. What started as a review ended up as an anti-Semitic rant playing fast and loose with Catholic theology.

There was nothing in Roy Schoeman's book that would lead one to Jones's conclusions. For example, Jones wrote: "The overwhelming majority of Jews didn't just ignore Christ, they actively sought his death." He also called Jews who do not accept Christ the "synagogue of Satan."

Jones claimed that throughout much of Christian history, "What happened was precisely the Jewish participation in iniquity which their pertinacious and ongoing rejection of Christ made a necessity." He added that "the logic is inescapable." He blamed the Jews themselves for the Holocaust and pogroms: "Messianic politics has been a recipe for disaster...and the Nazi attempt to exterminate the Jews was a reaction to Jewish

Messianism (in the form of Bolshevism) every bit as much as the Chmielnicki pogroms flowed from the excesses of the Jewish tax farmers in the Ukraine.”

The Catholic League condemned Jones’s anti-Semitism and repudiated his efforts to justify it in the name of Catholic theology.

February 25

New York, NY—The Jewish magazine *Heeb* published a 10-page photo feature in its Winter 2004 edition mocking Mel Gibson’s movie “The Passion of the Christ” called “Back Off, Braveheart.” The editors who introduced the spread said that the death of Jesus was “summarily blamed upon the Jews,” until this “fondly held belief seemed destined to fade forever” after Vatican II. A sexually suggestive Jesus wears a Jewish prayer shawl as a loin cloth, and the Blessed Mother was shown exposing her breasts and body piercing. The occupation of the model photographed as Mary Magdalene was described as “Evangelist-cum-nymphomaniac country singer.” She was quoted as saying, “Who killed Jesus? Ryan Adams.” The woman who was photographed as Pontius Pilate was quoted as saying, “Christians believe the Jews killed Jesus; that is why there is so much anti-Semitism in the world. The church was created on that one simple anti-Semitic principle. Christians who say otherwise are making it up or misrepresenting their own religion.”

April 8

New York, NY—Time Out New York’s Gay and Lesbian listings section included a picture of an actor playing Jesus on the Cross for the listing of “Magnum: A Passion for Christ” at the 13 Little Devils club. The April 11th event was described as “A live crucifixion! Well-endowed go-go boys! Untold debauchery! It’s just another Easter Sunday with Dean Johnson and Daniel Nardicio.”

MOVIES

February 20

"Eurotrip," distributed by DreamWorks, opened in theaters. It follows a group of American high school graduates on a trip through Europe. They end up at the Vatican, where they invade the pope's private quarters, set fire to one of the rooms, mock the Sacrament of Penance and accidentally pull a bell that signals the death of the pope.

May 28

The MGM movie "Saved!" opened. It was billed as a "sweetly subversive comedy" about an evangelical Christian high school. The film features a Christian teenager who gets pregnant while attempting to reorient her homosexual friend; this follows a vision she has of Jesus, who appeals to her to "do everything you can to help him." The girl's mother has an affair with Pastor Skip, the school's principal, and many experience a crisis of faith.

All the Christians are presented as good-natured but hopelessly narrow-minded persons who can't negotiate life. On the other hand, the non-Christians are portrayed as tolerant and wise. The lone Jew remarks of Jesus on the Cross, "Now that is what I call hung on a cross!" She also comments that instead of seeking to be "born again," she has decided "not to serve Jesus after all, but to serve Satan."

June 12

New York, NY—The Human Rights International Film Festival at Lincoln Center showed a documentary film, "Saints and Sinners." The film, co-presented by Dignity/USA, was by Abigail Honor and Yan Vizinberg. It was described as following "the challenging and emotional journey of a devoutly Catholic gay couple determined to marry in a Catholic church. Caring more about formalizing their seven-year union within the

Catholic tradition than with legal recognition by the state, Edward DeBonis and Vincent Maniscalco pursue their dream, despite the expected rejection from the local church hierarchy.”

September 24

“A Dirty Shame” by director John Waters opened in theaters. The film features self-proclaimed Catholics from Baltimore who go on an uninhibited sex-spree. There is Ray-Ray, a so-called “sex saint” who affirms that “sex addicts are the Chosen Ones.” Ray-Ray is portrayed as a “Christ-like figure” who inspires his fetishistic followers by promising a “Resursexion.” One of his minions is Sylvia, Ray-Ray’s twelfth disciple; she plans on discovering “a whole new way to orgasm.” As Ray-Ray’s popularity grows, so do his “sexual miracles.” John Waters has a history of mocking Catholics. About the fact that the movie was rated “morally offensive” by the bishops’ conference movie reviews, Waters said, “It doesn’t have quite the ring of ‘Condemned’ which is what the Church used to call movies like this.”

October 15

“Team America: World Police” opened. The work of “South Park” creators Trey Parker and Matt Stone, it features a song about AIDS that lampoons the musical “Rent.” One of the lyrics is, “Everyone has AIDS/The pope has got it, and so do you/Come on everybody, we got a lot of quilting to do.”

November 19

Spanish director Pedro Almodovar’s film “Bad Education” opened, depicting a predatory homosexual priest who is principal of a Catholic boarding school in 1964. Classifying it as expressly anti-Catholic may not be appropriate, since almost every character in the film—transvestites, drug addicts, thieves, blackmailers, and murderers—is equally depraved.

MUSIC

January 2

Austin, TX—A band called “Show Me on the Doll” performed at Room 710. One band member dressed as a “demonic priest” while the lead singer, Bob Furtado, dressed in a nun’s habit made up of “garters, panties and shoes and nothing else.” The band was described as having the theme of “molestation and its effect on the development of homosexuality in youth.”

May

Deborah Harry, the lead singer in the band Blondie, released a new album, “The Curse of Blondie.” The song “Shakedown” contained the lyrics, “Whatcha got hidin’ in your body cavity?” and “I think I’d have a better chance to see the pope/I get so bored with this shtick and his mini-minute d—/And all his high and mighty s—/I’m a witch.”

NEWSPAPERS

January 14

Long Island, NY—Ed Lowe, columnist for *Newsday*, wrote an article about the scandal in the Church. Without offering any evidence, he simply proceeded to rant against the Church. For example, he said the federal Racketeer Influences and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act should be used against the Church, specifically the Diocese of Rockville Centre, and its bishop should be in jail. The Church, he said, “is rife with criminal conspirators who successfully have made deliberate, criminal efforts to thwart the proper application of law, for the purpose of cutting the organization’s financial losses.”

April 14

Dayton, OH—The *Dayton Daily News* published a cartoon by Mike Peters that depicted a bishop who denies Communion to a pro-

abortion Catholic politician, but simply moves a pedophile priest to another parish. William Donohue wrote a letter to the newspaper that was printed on April 27: "Now if this were a common occurrence, Peters might have a point. But considering the fact that a whopping two-thirds of one percent of the 46,000 priests in the U.S. have had accusations made about them—not all of which are true—the real disgrace belongs to Peters for portraying the clergy in such an offensive manner. And by the way, whether a bishop denies Communion to a pro-abortion Catholic is nobody's business. Ever hear of house rules?"

April 24

Lexington, KY—At the Association of American Editorial Cartoonists' annual convention, Pat Oliphant boasted of his recent work attacking the Catholic Church during the sex abuse scandal and attacking Mel Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ." A cartoon on the latter had been published on March 1 by the Boston Globe; the paper subsequently apologized for publishing it after receiving strong criticism from local Catholics. Oliphant stated he enjoyed provoking such reactions.

April 28

Long Island, NY—*Newsday* ran an article about critics of Monsignor John Alesandro, pastor of St. Dominic's in Oyster Bay. Some parishioners had lost confidence in his ability to lead the parish, while others have rallied to his side. The Catholic League did not object to this reporting, but it did find fault with a poll on *Newsday's* website asking the public whether Msgr. Alesandro should be removed as pastor. In response, the league asked the public to go to its website and cast a vote on the question, "Is *Newsday* anti-Catholic?" Our poll, like *Newsday's*, was open to everyone. We figured that since *Newsday* had broken ranks with virtually every newspaper in the United States by inviting non-Catholics to stick their noses into the internal affairs of the Catholic Church, it was

only proper to ask people from Maine to California what they thought of *Newsday's* foray into journalistic voyeurism.

We let our poll stay up for a few days. The final results to the question, "Is *Newsday* anti-Catholic?" were as follows: 95 percent said "yes"; 4 percent said "no"; and 1 percent were unsure. There were 1158 votes cast.

April 29

Akron, OH—Letter writer Joya Matheus was published in the *Akron Beacon Journal*. Without a shred of evidence, she claimed that "10,667" cases of "rape, sodomy and sexual torture of American children" were committed by Catholic priests. She concluded that "It is time that Congress hold the Catholic Church accountable for this lawlessness, if not by shutting it down then by revoking its tax-exempt status." That such a bigoted letter would be published by a mainstream newspaper was truly astounding.

May 5

St. Augustine, FL—The *St. Augustine Record* published a cartoon by Mike Ritter depicting a bishop labeled "Vatican" holding the Eucharist over a Catholic politician while telling him to "roll over." After a letter from the Catholic League, the editor Jim Baltzelle published an apology on June 6: "I am sorry that a recent syndicated cartoon regarding the Catholic Church offended so many local people, who felt the cartoon could have made its point less directly. I agree."

May 19

Philadelphia, PA—The May 19-25 edition of the alternative newspaper *Philadelphia Weekly* depicted Howard Stern crucified on a cross with the letters "FCC" replacing "INRI" above his head. The title was "Crucified by Bush's FCC."

May 31

San Bernardino, CA—The *San Bernardino Sun* published the notoriously anti-Catholic "Earth's Final Warning"

advertisement from the International Seventh-Day Adventist Fellowship of Mineral Bluff, GA. The ad, among other things, depicted the Catholic Church as the "Whore of Babylon" and talked of a plan between the United States government and the pope to achieve world domination.

June

During the month of June there were numerous media reports alleging that actress Jennifer Lopez had secretly married singer Marc Anthony. Lopez, twice divorced, was supposedly pregnant and, according to many news stories, would never have a child out of wedlock because she's such a "strict Catholic." Never before had Lopez been labeled as such.

June 25

New York, NY—The lead editorial in the *Forward*, a prominent Jewish weekly newspaper, accused Catholic bishops of being a threat to democracy:

"The threat by Catholic bishops to withhold communion from politicians who uphold abortion rights is an affront not just to democracy, but also to the best moral teachings of Catholicism...Where democracy is affronted is at the point where a church—the nation's largest single church, as it happens—attempts to impose its views from above by threatening to withhold what its believers consider an essential religious rite. That's nothing more than bullying, trying to bludgeon believers into substituting obedience for conscience. It's unfair to believers and unfair to the system." The editorial ended by saying the bishops failed to abide by their own creed because they "dishonored [the] doctrine of life" by not condemning "free-market fundamentalists" and the like.

June 30

Syndicated columnist Liz Smith wrote that the affair between Bill Clinton and Monica Lewinsky reminded her of the affair between John F. Kennedy and Judith Exner. Smith identified Exner as "the Catholic Judith Exner." William Donohue

responded in a press release: "We're disappointed that the lesbian Liz Smith didn't identify the Jew Monica Lewinsky the way she did the Catholic Judith Exner." On July 2, Liz Smith wrote, "The other day I referred to Judith Exner...as a Catholic...I was trying to describe her as she often described herself to me. No slur against Catholicism was intended."

October 28

In the days preceding the presidential election the following comments were taken from several news sources. All of them suggest that Christians are a threat to democracy.

* Robert Wright, visiting professor at Princeton, said Bush's "divine-feeling feelings" are part of today's "problem, not the solution."

* A *New York Times* editorial said if Bush wins again, he will appoint judges that will allow states to become "mini-theocracies."

* David Domke, a University of Washington professor, said "one is hard pressed" to distinguish between Osama bin Laden's religious views and Bush's.

* NYU professor Mark Crispin Miller said Bush wants a "theocracy."

* USC professor Neal Gabler said Bush's ideas are "the stuff of a theocracy—the president as pope or mullah."

* Yale emeritus professor Harold Bloom feared if Bush was reelected, the United States could be faced with a "theocracy, an eventual tyranny of the twice-born."

* Robert Kuttner of the *American Prospect* said Bush "seems to want to move the United States towards a theocracy."

* Journalist James Ridgeway said, "Bush's goal is to blur the lines separating church and state and turn the U.S. toward theocracy."

* Brian Rusche, director of the Minnesota Joint Religious Coalition, said, "We don't want a theocracy."

* S. Michele Fry of the *Contra Costa Times* and Linda Valdez of the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* both admonished readers to keep their guard up, remembering that "America is not a theocracy."

November 3

New York, NY—Maureen Dowd, columnist for the *New York Times*, wrote, "America has always had strains of isolationism, nativism, chauvinism, puritanism and religious fanaticism." But after the presidential election, she maintained, "We're entering a dark age, more creationist than cutting edge, more premodern than postmodern." All because Christians won on many moral issues. In the same issue, Paul Krugman blamed Christians for wanting to "break down the barriers between church and state."

November 3

Los Angeles, CA—Civil rights attorney Mickey Wheatley wrote in the *Los Angeles Times* that the United States has become "a fundamentalist-leaning nation, increasingly hateful and hated."

November 3

The following are comments taken from several newspaper sources in the days after the presidential election. They also smack of anti-Christian animus.

*In the *Detroit Free Press*, Mitch Albom wondered if President Bush understands that "he was not chosen god, bishop, rabbi or high priest?"

*The publisher of *Harper's* magazine, John R. MacArthur, blasted both President Bush and Senator Kerry for advertising "their subservience to Jesus Christ and the Christian god, without the least concern about whether it might offend me" and others like him.

*Ex-seminarian Garry Wills wrote in the *New York Times*, "Can a people that believes more fervently in the Virgin Birth than in evolution still be called an Enlightened nation?" He ended by saying that "moral zealots" will scare moderate Republicans with their "jihads."

**New York Times* columnist Maureen Dowd said President Bush "ran a jihad in America so he can fight one in Iraq."

*Also in the *New York Times*, Thomas Friedman accused Bush's base of wanting "to extend the boundaries of religion" and of promoting "intolerance."

*Without providing one example, Margaret Carlson wrote in the *Los Angeles Times* that Catholic bishops "demonized" Kerry's supporters by warning them "they could go to hell just for voting for him."

*Sheryl McCarthy of *Newsday* accused Bush of "pandering to people's fears, petty interests and prejudices" against gays and others.

*Sidney Blumenthal, writing in Salon.com, nervously observed that the new Senate majority is "more theocratic than Republican."

*Also on Salon.com, Sean Wilentz of Princeton University said, "religious fanaticism" had "seized control of the federal government."

*In the *New York Times*, Gary Hart proclaimed, "There is a disturbing tendency to insert theocratic principles into the vision of America's role in the world."

*DeWayne Wicham of *USA Today* wrote, "Putting God in the public square runs the risk of turning our democracy into a theocracy."

**Miami Herald* writer Leonard Pitts Jr. warned that social conservatives are "the soldiers of the new American

theocracy.”

*Ellen Goodman of the *Boston Globe* said people like her “don’t want their country racked by the fundamentalist religious wars we see across the world.”

*Author Barbara Ehrenreich argued that Americans are polarized because of “Christian fundamentalism.”

*Syndicated columnist Byron Williams wrote that America is moving “closer to a theocracy.”

*Tony Kushner, the anti-Catholic playwright, wrote that America has “a kind of unholy alliance between theocracy and plutocracy.”

*Cynthia Tucker, an editorialist with the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, blamed “black churchgoers” for using the Bible “as a bludgeon” against gays, saying “homophobia” now “oozes across lines of color.”

*A *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* editorial said the rejection of gay marriage means “the old bigotry against homosexuals has not abated.”

November 10

Los Angeles, CA—The *Los Angeles Times* printed the following letter by Gerald S. Rellick: “So many Christians, so few lions.” The Catholic League wrote to the paper pointing out that it would never consider publishing a letter that said the following similarly hate-filled, bigoted remark: “So many Jews, so few ovens.” This letter was not printed.

November 16

New York, NY—In the free weekly the *Village Voice*, several columnists wrote of the impact of religion on the recent presidential election:

*The day after the election, James Ridgeway confessed, “The dream has become a nightmare.” By that he meant “the dream of

a secular, liberal democracy.” Because, he said, “the Christians are stronger than ever.” He criticized “the self-absorbed, selfish Christians who take sanctimonious pride in wrapping themselves in the banners of the civil rights movement, missionary work abroad, giving old clothes to single mothers,” etc. Ridgeway then blamed Christians for not challenging the Klan in the 1980s, noting that it is Jews who fight racism outside the South.

*On the *Village Voice*’s website, Sharon Lerner warned of “an army of bloodthirsty archconservatives” who constitute the pro-life movement. So bad are things for the pro-abortionists that she said, “the sky could really fall.” She made it clear that it was the Christians she feared.

*Sydney H. Schanberg wondered aloud if the election meant “we’re having a second Civil War.” Though he doubted this, he nonetheless concluded that “there’s a feel of holy-war fever in America.” He also made it clear that it is the Christians he feared.

*Michael Feingold wrote, “The spoliation of our national forests by Bush-based economic interests, joined with the accelerated melting of the polar cap...will bring on what must surely be an increasing parade of natural disasters, pandemics, outbreaks of disease...” He warned that “as the sun gets more dangerous, the air less breathable, the water less drinkable, the hurricanes more frequent,” even the rich will suffer. He wrote further, “this is the election in which American Christianity destroyed itself. Today the church is no longer a religion but a tacky political lobby...” Indeed, “Christianity as currently preached and practiced in Middle America is virtually Satan, by the standards of anyone who strives to follow the teachings of Jesus.”

November 21

New York, NY—In a Thanksgiving piece that took comedic jabs at 50 different targets, almost all of them individuals, *New York*

Post gossip columnist Cindy Adams saved her final shot for the Catholic Church, thanking the Church for “bringing new meaning to the proverb, ‘Abstinence makes the heart grow fondlers.’”

December 8

Wichita, KN—The *Wichita Eagle* ran the following “correction”: “A story in Monday’s paper referred to a tree that was lighted at Tuesday’s Winterfest celebration as a ‘Christmas tree.’ In an effort to be inclusive, the city is actually referring to this tree as the ‘Community Tree.’”

December 9

Charlottesville, VA—Penelope Trunk, a columnist for a Virginia weekly, wrote a piece entitled, “Skipping Christmas: Erase Holiday from the Office.” Trunk asked, “why are we still hanging Christmas wreaths at work?” She contended that “Diversity in the workplace is not ‘diverse religious expression.’” And according to Trunk, “acting as if everyone has the ‘holiday spirit’ squelches the spirit of workplace diversity.” Jews like herself, she wrote, are “forced to take a holiday.”

Trunk added: “Given the nothingness of Christmas to most Jews, it’s absurd how much Christmas cheer Jews endure just to fit in at the office.” Trunk ended with the following advice to those who want to be “kind and generous” to minorities like her in the workplace: “You can start by getting rid of those Christmas wreaths.”

December 14

Charleston, WV—The *Charleston Gazette* ran an editorial opposing City Council member Mark Sadd for possible nomination to federal district court by President Bush, remarking that “Sadd is closely identified with the Catholic Church in West Virginia.”

March 31

The Comedy Central network aired an episode of "South Park" titled, "The Passion of the Jew." Eric Cartman, a young character often portrayed as an anti-Semite, says "The Passion" shows that "Jews are the devil." Cartman, dressed as Hitler, holds a meeting of the "Mel Gibson Fan Club"; obviously well-intentioned Christians show up and assume that his cryptic Nazi references in fact have some benign religious significance. The entire cartoon was replete with anti-Catholic characterizations.

May 12

The *New York Daily News* published an article by Michael Goodwin that was critical of Air America, the liberal radio venture. Goodwin said that on May 10 various hosts took the opportunity to slam Catholicism. He learned of a flip comment comparing the "pulling out" of American troops from Iraq to the Catholic Church's teaching on pre-marital sex; this was made on both the "Morning Sedition" and the "Unfiltered" shows. In the same vein, on "Morning Sedition" it was said that "the Catholic Church has secretly been encouraging oral sex for years." Al Franken imitated a priest giving Communion to a pedophile priest, saying, "Body of Christ," while denying a pro-abortion politician the Host.

June 28

The HBO series "America Undercover" aired a special documentary, "Celibacy." It purported to be an examination of celibacy as it is practiced in the world's religions. After a cursory glance at celibacy in eastern religions, it focused almost exclusively on Roman Catholicism. The overall theme was voiced at the outset: "The worldwide crisis in the Catholic Church begs many questions: Is sexual denial healthy? Or can it become something dangerous? Is there any link between enforced celibacy and an apparent epidemic of child abuse by the clergy?"

Ex-priest Richard Sipe asserted that homosexuals and

sociopaths are drawn to the celibate priesthood. Stories of sexual abuse were described in graphic detail, in contrast to the happy tales of priests who left and married. A pedophile priest named Robert admitted that castration set him free.

At the end, after distorting the travails of Galileo, the clincher question was delivered: “How long will it take the Church to come to terms with the nature of human sexuality?”

October 30

The Bravo Network aired a Halloween special, “The 100 Scariest Movie Moments” hosted by John Landis. In commenting on “The Exorcist,” he said, “It took a completely unbelievable situation and made it seem realistic, that the devil would take over a young girl and the Catholic Church would be the good protecting us from evil—*when they weren’t molesting young boys...*” (Our emphasis.)

December 7

Salt Lake City, UT—Several live intermission breaks on the public television station KUED Channel 7 were hosted by a woman wearing a nun’s religious habit and her sidekick, “Mary.” The two giggling women mocked the pop and the doctrine of purgatory and held a “raffle” for crucifixes affixed with objects resembling switchblades. A Catholic viewer complained to KUED general manager Larry S. Smith, who promptly apologized and promised that “this type of mistake will not be made again.

Miscellaneous



January 4

New York, NY—Red paint was smeared on two stone pillars near the sanctuary in St. Patrick's Cathedral.

January 4

Canton, MA—A statue of the Infant Jesus was stolen from a nativity scene outside of St. John the Evangelist Church.

January 9

Burlington, CO—St. Catherine of Siena Church was set afire by arson, Stations of the Cross and statues were destroyed, and the Blessed Sacrament was taken from the tabernacle and scattered around the church.

January 3

Baton Rouge, LA—The Catholic Life Center erects 500 white crosses to commemorate the anniversary of Roe v. Wade every year. About 200 were crushed and scattered by vandals. Two weeks later, more crosses were crushed by a car after a pro-abortion rally was held nearby.

January 13

San Antonio, TX—At San Fernando Cathedral, seven statues, most of them over 100 years old, were smashed by a man who called churchgoers "idolaters" and told them that he had to "save them" from "idol worship." The damage to the statues was estimated at over \$200,000.

January 31

Stoughton, MA—Two teenagers broke into Immaculate Conception Church, emptied the fire extinguishers in the church, drank the wine used for Mass, urinated on the altar and in the holy water, tried to steal the money out of a safe and poor box, and drew a pentagram on a window. The damage was estimated at \$10,000.

February 9

Carpentersville, IL—St. Monica's Church was vandalized in the middle of a weekday. A crucifix was broken and hung upside down, an altar cloth and a vestment were cut up, human feces

was smeared on the carpet, urine was found near the altar, and the number 666 was written on a sheet of paper along with insulting words in Spanish.

February 13

A postcard received by the Catholic League from Madison, Wisconsin about Mel Gibson's movie "The Passion of the Christ" stated that the movie is rated R "for graphic religious violence designed to shock teenagers into serving vocation-starved churches, adults into tithing at pre sexual [sic] abuse scandal levels; to preempt the Feb 27th report on abuse."

March 22

Johnston, RI—A statue of the Good Shepherd set up as a shrine to the unborn outside Our Lady of Grace Church was spray-painted with the words "anti-choice Nazis."

April 6

St. Louis, MO—Immaculate Heart of Mary Church and School were vandalized. Vandals emptied a fire extinguisher on all the church pews, smashed two sanctuary lamps, and dripped wax from burning candles. At the school, computer monitors were smashed, and a small fire was set in a classroom.

May

Denver, CO—A group of motorcycle bikers called "UMF" planned a "Catholic School Girl Benefit Poker Run" that was replete with Catholic bashing. The event, scheduled for June 11, was to feature young women dressed in plaid Catholic school short skirts. Pictures available on the group's website made it clear that obscene and highly insulting behavior was going to be exhibited. After consulting the Catholic League, local Catholics protested and the officials decided that no permit would be extended.

May 2

Arlington, VA—St. Thomas More Cathedral School was vandalized

with spray-painted graffiti in its hallway, cafeteria and gymnasium floor. The graffiti was sexually graphic and included anti-Semitic references.

May 6

Fort Oglethorpe, TN—The fellowship hall at St. Gerard Church was vandalized. Vandals spray-painted chairs, walls and tables and a portrait of Pope John Paul II was damaged.

May 27

Portsmouth, NH—A statue of the Blessed Mother was lifted off its pedestal and hung with a garden hose on a light fixture in front of the door of the rectory of St. Catherine's Church.

June 11

Waite Park, MN—In the space of a few weeks, four statues of the Blessed Mother were stolen from the private properties of residents of the town.

June 11

Mandan, ND—Molotov cocktails were thrown at a statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and at a school bus outside of St. Joseph's Elementary School. The statue was scorched.



The Catholic League contingent marches up Manhattan's Fifth Avenue in the annual St. Patrick's Day Parade.

June 12

Manchester, NH—The steps and the interior wall of Temple Israel were vandalized with anti-Catholic and anti-Semitic spray-painted graffiti.

June 30

Montpelier, VT—A statue of the Blessed Mother was draped with an American flag and set on fire outside of St. Augustine's Church.

July 16

San Jose, CA—Thieves broke into St. Maria Goretti Church, smashing a stained glass window, destroying votive candles, defacing icons of the saints, and stealing from the poor box. It was the fourth time in a year the church was broken into.

July 27

Boston, MA—At the Cathedral of the Holy Cross, the processional cross was stolen from atop a seven-foot pole. The pole was also bent and the vandal tried to break free the tabernacle of the cathedral. The cross was worth \$750.

August 15

Hayward, CA—On the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a statue of the Blessed Mother was decapitated outside the Church of St. Bede.

August 31

Greenwood, IN—An arsonist set fire to the carpet at the base of the altar of Our Lady of the Greenwood Church.

September 1

New York, NY—During the Republican National Convention, composer Philip Glass was featured at a counter-convention event. He told the room of celebrities that the U.S. was being “taken over by religion,” and that the country was being “ruled by the Bible and not the Constitution.” Glass composed the Catholic-bashing opera, “Galileo Galilei.”

September 7

Boston, MA—A sign for the new Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta Church was torn down the night before the first Mass was celebrated. The church was created by the merger of two older parishes.

September 14

Staten Island, NY—Vandals spray painted upside-down crosses, the number “666” and “The house of God has been destroyed” on the gymnasium wall of the school of Holy Child Church.

October 6

Chicago, IL—Theophilus Green, a forensic psychologist, filed suit in federal court against Francis Cardinal George, the Archdiocese of Chicago, and the major licensing and social services departments of the state of Illinois. The suit was filed on behalf of the doctor, his clients and staff, saying that the state services were negligent in not enforcing mandatory child abuse reporting. The suit also asked the court to remove the Church's tax exemption and to restrict federal Medicare and Medicaid monies from all Catholic schools, hospitals and churches.

Green stated, "I've contacted the church and informed them I am willing to drop some claims if the USCCB grants American clerics the right to marry. Marriage for priests is the only real protection the church can provide to children, as well as my clients....There is no question in my mind that if the Mayor of Chicago and the Governor of Illinois were not Catholics, that the church's failure to comment on a massive legal travesty to minorities and the state's deaf ear to the consequences of the church's child sexual abuse would continue. There is, unfortunately, no other way to say it. Cardinal George has ignored his religious responsibilities to his congregation to serve the expectations of politicians in office." Green claimed that his first witness would be the pope.

October 25

Godfrey, MO—A 19th century cemetery, St. Patrick's, run by Sts. Peter and Paul parish, was vandalized. Thirty-three headstones were toppled.

November 27

Lincoln, NE—A 45-year-old nativity scene was vandalized one day after it was set up. The figures, placed on a private front lawn, were completely smashed and bent.

November 27

Quincy, MA—A 20-inch statue of the Infant Jesus was stolen from a nativity scene in a local cemetery. The nativity scene was paid for by local churches after the city refused to display one in front of City Hall in 2001. A few days later, the statue was found floating in the town river and was recovered.

November 27

North Cambridge, MA—At St. John the Evangelist Church, a statue of the Blessed Mother that was part of a shrine to the unborn, was vandalized. The statue was spray painted and a crown of coat hangers was placed on the head. The driveway of the church was spray painted with the words, “Get yr religion off our lives!”

December

San Francisco, CA—The board of directors of the Pacific Heights Towers condominium complex banned residents from affixing seasonal decorations to their doors.

December

The following incidents all occurred in December. The media gave high profile to the Catholic League’s tracking of these events.

* Vandals damaged a life-size nativity scene in Merced, California.

* A Baby Jesus was stolen from a McKinney, Texas family’s yard.

* Over a dozen statues were stolen from a nativity scene in Pasco County, Florida, and three of the inflatable snowmen were slashed.

* A nativity scene was stolen from the yard of a Pataskala, New Jersey family.

* A family from Whitehall, Michigan also had its entire

nativity scene stolen.

* In Camillus, New York, a 75-pound nativity scene was stolen from a church.

* The nativity scene in Chicago's Daley Plaza was vandalized and the baby Jesus taken, even though the statue was locked down.

* Baby Jesus was also stolen from the Metcalf Mortuary in St. George, Utah.

* A church in Fairmount, New York had its nativity scene stolen.

* The baby Jesus was stolen from a large nativity scene in the historic Hancock Cemetery next to Quincy City Hall, Massachusetts.

* The Mountaineer Inn in Asheville, North Carolina had its nativity scene stolen by vandals.

* A family from Lockport, Illinois had its nativity scene stolen.

* A handmade nativity scene was destroyed by vandals on the property of a family in Lincoln, Nebraska.

* A front-yard nativity scene was damaged in Farmington, Illinois.

* A Baby Jesus was stolen from a nativity scene in the front yard of a businessman's home in Cheyenne, Wyoming.

* Thirteen large Nativity figurines were stolen from the front lawn of a home in Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin, then taken about a mile away and placed high in a tall tree. One of the statues sustained damage.

* Plywood figures of the baby Jesus and a statue of a sheep were stolen from Mesa Verde United Methodist Church in Costa Mesa, California.

- * A baby Jesus figure was stolen from Capitola Community Church in Santa Cruz, California.
- * Vandals cut the wire securing a baby Jesus statue in its manger in the yard of a home in South Anchorage, Alaska, and discarded the statue on the ground down a nearby bicycle path.
- * A baby Jesus figurine was stolen in Memorial Park in Lansdale, Pennsylvania.
- * The diocese of Knoxville, Tennessee's Madonna and Child statue was desecrated: the baby's arms and head were cut off, the stumps doused in red paint, the baby's head thrown through a glass door, an upside-down cross scrawled on the Blessed Mother's robe, and her face covered with paint.
- * A statue of St. Joseph, an angel and other pieces from a manger scene were stolen from a home in southern Charlotte, North Carolina, after the family received telephone calls complaining about the display. It was the second year the display was victim to theft.
- * The baby Jesus statue was stolen from a Knights of Columbus crèche in Epping, New Hampshire.
- * The Mary and Jesus figurines were taken from a manger scene in the front yard of a fireman's home in Tiverton, Massachusetts, while the scene's other figures were knocked over.
- * An original wood carving of a Madonna and Child was stolen from a nativity scene outside Peace Lutheran Church in Neenah, Wisconsin. The statue had been bolted into the frame in which it was displayed. "Whoever took Mary had to literally rip her out," said the parishioner who commissioned and donated the statue.
- * A crib scene built up over six years in Morningside, Iowa was knocked over and vandalized.

- * A baby Jesus from a Diamondhead, Mississippi crèche was stolen and inflatable Christmas figures were slashed.
- * An animal figure from a nativity scene on a residential front lawn was stolen in Maplewood, Minnesota.
- * The baby Jesus figure of the Baxter County, Arkansas courthouse's nativity scene was stolen.
- * A lighted nativity scene in the front yard of a home in Murrieta, California was stolen and its electrical cord cleanly cut—indicating that the theft may have been premeditated, since the thief brought along scissors.
- * The Lighthouse Church of God in Grand Traverse county, Michigan was robbed of the baby Jesus figure from its 25-year-old nativity display.
- * A wooden baby Jesus statue in a Knights of Columbus hall crèche in Barre, Vermont was stolen.
- * A statue was stolen from the nativity scene of Grace United Church in Plainfield, Vermont.
- * In Volusia County, Florida, a baby Jesus and manger in a family's crèche display was taken.
- * Three teenage males who stole eight Christ Child figures from nativity scenes at homes in Fort Branch and Haubstadt, Indiana were made to return them and apologize to their owners. Two were adults and face criminal charges. The third was referred to juvenile authorities.
- * A stolen plastic Magi figure was discovered by police in Whitman, Massachusetts and, nearby, three crèche figures were taken from the lawn of a Rockland, Massachusetts home.
- * Satanic symbols were drawn and profanity written on a figurine of a nativity scene on Highland Avenue in Norwalk, Connecticut.

* Five to six students at Taylor University in Upland, Indiana were expelled, and between 80 and 90 severely reprimanded, for criminal acts that included vandalizing a campus nativity scene.

* A 2-foot, 75-pound concrete statue of the Infant Jesus was stolen from a nativity scene on the lawn of St. Joseph's Church in Camillus, New York.

* A tabernacle containing the Blessed Sacrament was stolen from St. Isidore's Church in Danville, California. Since it was cemented to the altar, the thieves needed tools to remove it.

* A nativity scene was vandalized outside a private residence in Farmington, Michigan. The figures were knocked over and the manger was smashed.

* A local homeowner in Centerville, California had her statue of the Blessed Mother stolen from outside of her home.

* A nativity scene set up in front of the Corpus Christi Knights of Columbus Council in Mineola, New York was vandalized. The protective Plexiglas was smashed and the figures thrown out into the street.

* St. Mary's of Perpetual Help in Milo, Iowa was burned by an arsonist who was later arrested.

“The Passion of the Christ”



The following is a list of some of the more incendiary remarks made about the Mel Gibson movie, “The Passion of the Christ.”

We do not maintain that it is anti-Catholic to criticize a film, even before it has been released, but we do contend that the hostility to Gibson and to his work is unseemly. The campaign against him has been ruthless, and that is why the Catholic League mounted a counter-offensive.

Organizational Responses

Ad Hoc Committee of Catholic and Jewish Scholars

America, April 5, 2004; Philip Cunningham:

“‘The Passion of the Christ’ unquestionably fails to follow the official Catholic teaching on biblical interpretation and the presentation of Jews and Judaism...

“Catholics who take seriously Pope John Paul II’s commitment, made during his visit to the Western Wall in Jerusalem in March 2000, ‘to genuine fellowship with the people of the Covenant’ should ask whether it is acceptable for a filmmaker—even though he repeats the teaching of the Council of Trent that Christ died for the sins of all humanity—to combine scenes from the four Gospel accounts with many unbiblical elements so that the malice of the Jewish characters is magnified.

“In a church whose highest leadership has prayed for God’s forgiveness for exactly those sins over the past millennium and whose teachings repudiate such practices, the answer can only be no. The new wine of post-Vatican II teaching cannot be contained in the old wineskins of the pre-Vatican II Passion play that is the film ‘The Passion of the Christ.’”

Sun-Sentinel (FL), March 22, 2004; Sister Mary C. Boys:

“He [Mel Gibson] has featured the single-most divisive issue in Jewish-Christian relations...He has taken this potent, dangerous issue and put fire to it...This is the religious equivalent of road rage.”

***Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, March 7, 2004; “Pro and Con: Is Movie Anti-Semitic?; Film perpetuates the pain,” by Father John T. Pawlikowski:**

“The main story line of Mel Gibson’s ‘The Passion of the Christ’ focuses on an evil cabal of Jews that relentlessly pursues Jesus until it can blackmail a weak-kneed Pontius Pilate into issuing a writ of execution....

“Unfortunately, the version Gibson brings to life on the screen has proved toxic over the centuries—leading to the persecution and killing of millions of Jews at the hands of Christians....

“Far too many Christian leaders and Gibson himself seem totally oblivious to the pain and suffering such portrayals have inflicted on Jews in the course of history. Christians who react favorably to Gibson’s film are shamefully evading their religious responsibility.”

***Baltimore Sun*, February 25, 2004; Father John T. Pawlikowski:**

“Mr. Gibson has continued to blame the Jewish leadership in defiance of this scholarly and ecclesial consensus....

“This text [Matthew 27:25] has been used over the centuries by Christians to keep Jews miserable and marginal in society and at times even to justify their deaths. Mr. Gibson included this questionable text in his original script, deleted it because he claimed Jews would have his throat, put it back and then removed it from the final version. Such insensitivity to how much suffering this text has caused Jews over the centuries is deeply disturbing.

“The film also raises a question about Mr. Gibson’s ultimate agenda in making it.

“It is now clear that for the past several years he has been campaigning against the reforms introduced by the Second Vatican Council and against modern biblical scholarship. So the film also presents a challenge to the basic teachings of

Vatican II, including its historic declaration on the church and the Jewish people.”

Forward (NY), February 13, 2004; Father John T. Pawlikowski:

“The changes [cutting Matthew 27:25 from the film] don’t mean anything unless the fundamental theme is changed. Gibson has to acknowledge that the Jews didn’t kill Christ.”

Sun-Sentinel (FL), February 7, 2004; Father John T. Pawlikowski:

“The Passion can be a tool for bringing Jews and Christians closer. But the Passion movie doesn’t bring us one iota in that direction.”



“The Rev. Philip Eichner, chairman of the League’s board of directors, called the film ‘a powerful rendition of the last 12 hours of Christ.’

“‘I don’t believe it’s anti-Semitic,’ he said. ‘And it wasn’t Jews who killed Jesus, the religious authorities did because Jesus challenged them.’”

–Associated Press, February 25, 2004

American Jewish Committee

Washington Post, February 28, 2004; Rabbi James Rudin, senior interreligious adviser:

[Commenting on Mel Gibson’s statement that he prays for Jews]
“I know what ‘praying for’ means—converting Jews to Christianity. We feel put upon and say, ‘Enough. After 2,000 years, isn’t it clear it isn’t going to happen?’...We have a perfected religion that doesn’t need an addition or change. It stands on its own.”

CNN “Live From...” February 25, 2004; Rabbi James Rudin:

“Mel Gibson could have made a thoroughly Christian Passion play without beating up on the Jews, vilifying my religion, my

people, as he's done. It's also a sadomasochistic film."

**Fox News Channel "Hannity and Colmes," February 18, 2004;
Rabbi James Rudin:**

"But the problems for me in my judgment go much deeper than just the violence, which I consider gratuitous. And one of the problems is that it's really in a line of medieval passion plays, which have historically presented Jews and Judaism in a negative light...

"Inherently, it is a passion play that presents toxic Jewish, anti-Jewish images, stereotypes, and caricatures."

***Boston Globe*, February 6, 2004; Rabbi David Elcott, director of interreligious affairs:**

"But the real concern is that the movie pits Jesus and his immediate followers against everyone else, perfect goodness against satanic evil. In so doing, 'The Passion' has the potential to challenge the core values of democratic pluralism and mutual religious respect that undergird our country."

***Chicago Tribune*, February 6, 2004; Emily Soloff, director, Chicago Chapter:**

"The sacred text of Christianity is a complex document. I'm not saying there are going to be pogroms. But we had 2,000 years of that kind of relationship. It was often not a happy relationship. You can't expect in the last 40 years things to have been turned on their heads."

The Associated Press, January 22, 2004; Rabbi David Elcott:

"'The movie undermines the sense of community that has existed between Jews and Christians for decades,' Elcott said. 'This film makes it more important than ever for like-minded Christians and Jews to reassert their dedication to promoting interfaith harmony.'"

Anti-Defamation League

***New York Observer*, March 8, 2004; Abraham Foxman, National**

Director:

"Only for sadists, only for masochists could this [film] be beautiful. And for him [Mel Gibson] to say, 'I'm doing this because God commanded me'—there's a certain arrogance. He's on another trip. But that's fine, you know? It's his money. As long as we don't pay the price!"

***Washington Post*, February 19, 2004; David Friedman, Regional Director:**

"There have been important changes in theological understanding that this film appears to be thumbing its nose at."

***Dallas Morning News*, February 7, 2004; Mark Briskman, Regional Director:**

"The issue is not about Jewish sensibility. The issue is whether this movie can be used the way Passion plays have been used historically, in a way that is hurtful to the Jewish community."

***Detroit Free Press*, February 7, 2004; Abraham Foxman:**

"Over the last 2000 years, four words have fueled anti-Semitism: 'The Jews killed Christ...' So, we're concerned about this message wrapped up in a popular film that's couched as gospel truth and produced by a popular, creative genius.

"More people will see this film in three months than ever saw the passion plays in Europe through all the centuries. We know those plays rationalized anti-Semitic behavior. We fear this will, too."

***Orlando Sentinel* (FL), February 7, 2004; Abraham Foxman:**

"Abraham Foxman, executive director of the B'nai B'rith Anti-Defamation League, said he is troubled by the campaign, which he characterized as 'a commercial crusade.' The Passion, he said, 'is not being sold as a movie. It's being sold as a religious experience, as a pilgrimage, as a way back to faith.'"

***Sun-Sentinel* (FL), February 7, 2004; Abraham Foxman:**

“‘The movie blames bloodthirsty Jews for Jesus’ death,’ said Abraham Foxman, national director of the ADL, which is conducting its national executive meeting in Palm Beach. ‘And this during a time of a rise of global anti-Semitism...’

“The leaders acknowledged that Gibson has denied anti-Semitic intentions; the star has often said instead that all humanity’s sins were responsible for Jesus’ death. ‘But that’s not in the movie,’ Foxman said. ‘What you see and hear for two hours is the Jews, the Jews, the Jews.’”

***Sun-Sentinel* (FL), February 7, 2004; Rabbi Gary Bretton-Granatoor, Interfaith Consultant:**

“‘(Gibson) says his film is historically and scripturally accurate, but it’s not,’ he [Rabbi Bretton-Granatoor] said. ‘What happens if it goes to DVD and gets shown on youth retreats? And gets translated into Spanish and Arabic and Polish? It would turn back 40 years of Catholic-Jewish teachings.’”

***Seattle Times*, February 6, 2004; ADL Fundraising Mailer, quoted by David Klinghoffer:**

“Of great concern to the Anti-Defamation League [with regard to the film] is the possibility that individuals are more likely to be targets of attack, simply because they are ‘different.’”

***Daily News* (NY), January 26, 2004; Abraham Foxman:**

“He [Mel Gibson] didn’t miss any chance to malign the Jews.”

***Palm Beach Post*, January 25, 2004; Abraham Foxman and Rabbi Gary Bretton-Granatoor:**

“Mr. Gibson has produced his film with willful disregard for the opinions and outreach efforts of mainstream Jewish organizations and many Catholic and Jewish scholars. These mainstream religious leaders have continued to express concern about the impact of the film and its potential to turn back

the clock on decades of positive interfaith dialogue and the Vatican II Council reforms of the Catholic Church...

"Love and compassion are demonstrated by the Romans—only a few sadistic Romans harm Jesus and only because the Jews made Pilate punish him..."

"Our concern is that The Passion of The Christ could fuel the latent anti-Semitism that exists in the hearts of those people who hold Jews responsible for the death of Jesus, which always has been the source of Western anti-Semitism."

***Los Angeles Times*, January 24, 2004; Abraham Foxman:**

"Forty years ago, we in the ADL helped the bishops to write those guidelines that permit artists to be honest about their faith without being hateful in their work. What Mel Gibson is doing is as much an attack on the Catholic Church and the Second Vatican Council as it is anything else."

***Los Angeles Times*, January 23, 2004; Abraham Foxman:**

"In an interview about the film, Foxman added, '[Gibson is] hawking it on a commercial crusade to the churches of this country. That's what makes it dangerous.'"

***New York Times*, January 23, 2004; Abraham Foxman:**

"'Do I think it will trigger pogroms? I don't think it will,' he said. 'But will it strengthen and legitimize anti-Semitic feelings? Yes, it will...'"

"He [Foxman] said he had initially felt bad about sneaking into the showing, but later changed his mind. 'I decided yesterday, "Why am I uncomfortable? Let him be uncomfortable," he said, referring to Mr. Gibson. "For him to say, 'You can only see it if you love it?' I felt it was my moral duty to see it.'"

***Orlando Sentinel*, January 23, 2004; Abraham Foxman:**

[On Foxman's participating in a viewing of "The Passion of the Christ" in Orlando under false pretenses on January 21, 2004]

“Foxman flew into Orlando with Rabbi Gary Bretton-Granatoor, the ADL’s interfaith consultant, Wednesday evening. Foxman said the confidentiality agreement was part of Gibson’s ‘commercial Christian crusade’ of screening the film, which opens Feb. 25, to conservative evangelical groups and making certain that only favorable comments resulted. ‘This is marketing; they’re hawking it.’

“Foxman and his colleague said they did not sign the agreement.

“‘We consulted our counsel and were told that it’s not worth the paper it’s printed on,’ Foxman said.

“Although he and Bretton-Granatoor bought tickets to the conference in their own names, Foxman acknowledged that they used unconventional tactics to get inside the sanctuary.

“For example, both men registered for the conference as representatives of ‘The Church of Truth,’ in Brooklyn, N.Y., rather than of the Anti-Defamation League, according to Michael O’Sullivan, a registration official with the conference.

“‘I am sorry we had to engage in stealth tactics, but only because he forced us to,’ Foxman said.”

Palm Beach Post, January 23, 2004; Abraham Foxman, National Director:

“‘Gibson is challenging the church’s teaching. We must reach out and ask the Vatican and other denominations to restate their teaching on the Passion,’ Foxman said.”

United Press International, January 23, 2004; Abraham Foxman:

“‘Do I think it will trigger pogroms? I don’t think it will,’ Foxman said. ‘But will it strengthen and legitimize anti-Semitic feelings? Yes, it will.’”

Anti-Defamation League Press Release, January 22, 2004;

Abraham Foxman:

"We were saddened and pained to find that 'The Passion of the Christ' continues its unambiguous portrayal of Jews as being responsible for the death of Jesus. There is no question in this film about who is responsible. At every single opportunity, Gibson's film reinforces the notion that the Jewish authorities and the Jewish mob are the ones ultimately responsible for the Crucifixion...."

"Will the film trigger pogroms against Jews? Our answer is probably not. Our concern is that 'The Passion of The Christ' could fuel latent anti-Semitism that exists in the hearts of those people who hold Jews responsible for the death of Jesus, which has always been the source of Western anti-Semitism. Its portrayal of Jews is painful to watch."

Cox News Service, January 22, 2004; Abraham Foxman:

"'We respect Christians who come to see it,' said Abraham Foxman, national director of the ADL. 'They were moved to tears, and some were deeply pained.

"'I don't know how many sorted out the underlying issues as they watched the film,' Foxman continued, "but time and again it kept coming back to the bloodthirsty Jews.'"

Simon Wiesenthal Center

***Los Angeles Times*, February 8, 2004; Rabbi Marvin Hier, Dean and Founder:**

"I don't think the film is anti-Semitic. I think, however, it can inspire anti-Semitism around the world, by people who will view it and don't have a proper context."

***Los Angeles Times*, February 8, 2004; Rabbi Marvin Hier:**

"Every Jew who appears in this film, except for the disciples of Christ, are portrayed cruelly and portrayed as a people with an almost sinister look in their eyes....Jews who see this film, I believe, will be overwhelmingly horrified."

Fox News Channel "Big Story Weekend Edition," February 7, 2004; Rabbi Marvin Hier:

"[T]he total film is two hours. And the Jews do not have a single word of intelligence to say in the entire two hours. Except of course, those disciples of Jesus. The Jews are portrayed horribly and it's really an insult to the Jewish community...

"The beef is that the Jews are terribly insulted by this film and that will be the overwhelming reaction of the Jewish community."

Chicago Tribune, February 6, 2004; Rabbi Marvin Hier:

"This film portrays Jews in the most horrible manner I have ever seen....

"The Jews come across as pushy people, unkempt, with Rasputin-like features....It is an attempt to portray all Jews as the enemy. I am not saying that synagogues are going to be burned when the film comes out, but it could poison the minds of young people who say to themselves, 'Boy what a terrible people those Jews are.'"

CNN "CNN Live," February 6, 2004; Rabbi Marvin Hier:

"I have never seen a more negative portrayal of Jews than in this film. I'm not talking about the high priests only, all Jews. They never have an intelligent thing to say in a two-hour film. The Romans are made to look good. The audience will only have one conclusion—if the Romans look good, with the exception of the four whippers, and the Jews look so bad, who is responsible for this terrible inhumanity inflicted on Jesus? And they will only conclude that it was the Jews collectively, which will stir anti-Semitic feelings, even if it's not immediate, all over the world....

"The Roman authorities, from Pontius Pilate down, the generals, the captains, were portrayed as sensitive and nice people, with the exception of the four whippers. And there can only be one—in my view, there can only be one interpretation.

At that time, the main people responsible for the terrible inhumanity inflicted on Jesus were the Jews, and that is unfair and a distorted view of history.”

***Daily Variety*, January 27, 2004; Rabbi Marvin Hier:**

“It’s [a televised interview with Mel Gibson] a ploy to picture himself as a victim. No responsible Jew has made the accusation that Gibson is an anti-Semite...”

“[The film] will engender worldwide anti-Semitism. There is no other conclusion that can be drawn from the film in which the only bad guys in the film are Jews—Jews who look like Rasputin-like characters. The good guys are even the Roman officers. The only bad Romans are the four guys who administer the whippings and (endless) torture.”

CNN “Anderson Cooper 360°,” January 26, 2004; Rabbi Marvin Hier:

“There’s no question the audience is going to come out there saying it was the Jews. And there we have the collective decide issue thrown up here in the 21st century.”

CNN International “Q&A,” January 23, 2004; Rabbi Marvin Hier:

“I think that this movie is an incendiary device that will create a faster anti-Semitism all over the world, particularly in Europe, in the Arab world, and in South America. And I say this as a filmmaker myself. I’ve made six films. And I say that this film will engender hate against the Jewish people...”

“It [the film] worships a Jew, but it persecutes his people. It is a horrible presentation of the Jewish people. Even the casting, which I’m sure the director had a hand in, every Jew in this film from his eyes to the way his mouth, to the frowning, they look like Rasputin or the devil incarnates. It’s a horrible portrayal of Jews, and I think that many Christians will walk out on this film after they see the horrendous torture scenes. There is just no excuse for making a film like this.

"This is not the first film on Jesus that has been made. All the others have never crossed the line that Mel Gibson's 'Passion' has....

"I am not going to be used in some merchandising, or because of publicity, simply say, 'Let's be quiet and watch the Jews be portrayed horribly. Watch them be portrayed collectively as Christ killers.' I have an obligation to speak out against this. And I'm not the only one. The overwhelming majority of Jewish leadership and Catholic leadership and Christian leaders...

"Nine experts in the field of Catholic-Jewish relations...have said that this film is horrible."

***New York Times*, January 23, 2004; Rabbi Marvin Hier:**

"Rabbi Hier said he was 'horrified' by the movie, which he said depicted all Jews, except those who were Jesus' followers, as villainous, with dark beards and eyes, 'like Rasputin.'"



"'This movie is about sin and redemption, and man's inhumanity to man,' said William Donohue, president of the Manhattan-based Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights....

"'Where they saw a Jewish mob calling for his crucifixion, I saw a mob,' he said. 'Ultimately, it was the Romans who crucified Jesus.'"

-*Newsday* (NY), February 26, 2004

Commentary

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***Commonweal*, May 7, 2004; "Anti-Semitism in 'The Passion,'" by**

Rabbi Irving Greenberg, president, Jewish Life Network/Steinhardt Foundation:

“The Gospels themselves, literally understood, generate hatred (and worse) vis-à-vis Jews, living and dead...”

“Read literally, they are primary sources of hatred and anti-Semitism. In order to atone for past sins and to prevent future evil acts based on Gospel writings, the bishops and the leaders of other churches must confront the New Testament (via modern scholarship or theological critique) or stand convicted of continuing the evils of the past.”

***Jewish Week*, April 16, 2004; “Mel’s Secret: Jew-Baiting Good For Sales,” by Rabbi Shmuley Boteach:**

“[T]he real reason Mel Gibson succeeded with ‘The Passion’ was that he successfully baited the Jews, and Jew-baiting is big business...”

“But Gibson decided that his principal marketing tool was going to be provoking the Jewish community. From his father’s public comments about how the Holocaust never happened, to the film’s substantial deviation from the New Testament script in an all-out effort to implicate the Jews and exonerate the Romans in the death of Jesus, Gibson stuck the pins into the Jewish watchdogs as deeply as possible. When they barked it was music to his ears...”

“So it turns out that Mel Gibson may not be an anti-Semite after all. He’s just a businessman. Not necessarily very spiritual—if he were, then he would have announced from the outset that all profits from the movie would go to Jesus—but rather just an average guy who wanted to see a good return on his buck.”

***Los Angeles Times*, April 10, 2004; “‘Passion’ changes hearts, minds,” by Tim Rutten:**

“Gibson’s passion narrative is a pastiche of scriptural literalism, the mystical visions of an anti-Semitic 19th

century Bavarian nun and various obsessions that preoccupy the so-called traditionalist, pseudo-Catholic fringe.

“So, profits apart, the real question about ‘The Passion of the Christ’ is: Were those anxieties justified? Has Gibson’s film contributed to a climate in which anti-Semitism can flourish?”

“We now have at least a provisional answer, and it is yes....”

“When those who reckon by standards other than profit and loss come to judge the success or failure of Gibson’s film, they might hold in mind another admonition from the Christian scriptures:

“‘By their fruits shall you know them.’”

***The Nation*, March 29, 2004; “The Protocols of Mel Gibson,” by Katha Pollitt:**

“The Bible’s brief mention of Jesus’s flogging... becomes a ten-minute homoerotic sadistic extravaganza that no human being could have survived, as if the point of the Passion was to show how tough Christ was.”

***The New Republic*, March 22, 2004; “Gibson’s Offering,” by Stanley Kauffmann:**

“Is The Passion anti-Semitic? Certainly it is, because the Gospels themselves are anti-Semitic—in the sense of fixing Jewish responsibility for the Crucifixion.”

***Los Angeles Times*, March 20, 2004; “Folk piety links politics, ‘Code’ and ‘Passion,’” by Tim Rutten:**

“Mel Gibson’s version of Jesus’ arrest and execution recapitulates virtually every crude anti-Semitic stereotype that has ever disfigured Christian memory.”

***Saint Paul Pioneer Press*, March 20, 2004; “‘Passion’ movie is no panacea for Christians,” by the Rev. Tom Ehrich (Episcopal):**

"I found it sad that Gibson couldn't allow his film to make its own way, but had to dangle the bait of anti-Semitism...I found it sad that Christian conservatives could be so easily lured into promoting a film...as if they needed to float a sinking ship by shilling for the Middle Ages redux...

"But today's controversy reveals two worrisome undercurrents, which will outlive Gibson's dash to the bank.

"One is that Christians are spoiling for a fight. This fight, that fight, any fight. Bring it on. If we aren't fighting, we aren't living."

***Jewish Week*, March 19, 2004; "Gibson's 'Midrash,'" by Joshua Hammerman:**

"The innocent Christian observer will focus far more on the familiar Sunday school touchstones... But they will miss the subtle deviations from the text and incorporate some of these mythic events into their imagination, and that is where the danger lies...

"The filmmaker's freedom of speech should never be questioned. But Mel Gibson at best was irresponsible to add a new element of bigotry to the most dangerous story ever told. To revive the Passion that launched a thousand pogroms is almost the equivalent of shouting 'Midrash' in a crowded theater. We should be increasingly wary of this combustible amalgamation of visual image and inflated commentary."

***Duluth News Tribune*, March 17, 2004; "Distortions worsen pain of Gibson's 'Passion,'" by Edward Kale:**

"'The Passion of the Christ,' however, should never have been produced. It is based on biblical documents which are neither historical nor factual yet are treated as such. Much of it is nonbiblical... What did Jesus really say? Let's be honest. We don't know any more than Matthew did. The movie, to use British English, is 'bloody literal and bloody awful.'"

***America*, March 15, 2004; "Mel O'Drama," by the Rev. Richard**

Blake, S.J., Boston College:

“Yes, Roman execution was a brutal, bloody business, but presenting it in such graphic detail passes dangerously close to a pornography of violence. Clinical detail cheapens both eroticism and suffering...”

“[The film has a] morbid fascination with pain...”

***Bergen Record* (NJ), March 14, 2004; “The Gospel of Mel Gibson,” by Mike Kelly:**

“This is precisely the sort of narrow storytelling that led to centuries of anti-Semitic acts, culminating in the murder of 6 million Jews during World War II. Why doesn’t Gibson see this?...What’s truly scary is that audiences are flocking to see this.”

***Idaho Statesman*, March 13, 2004; “Bush and Gibson employ the politics of hatred,” by Dan Fink:**

“How troubling...to find that bigotry wrapped in the mantle of piety is alive and well in our own nation. America—a land founded by people fleeing religious intolerance—is currently besieged by leaders promoting hatred in the name of faith. Consider the two most prominent recent offenders: George W. Bush and Mel Gibson...”

“As for Mel Gibson, this veteran of numerous violent movies has now made a mint on his own sadistic film, promoting it through shameless Jew-baiting...In ‘The Passion of the Christ,’ Gibson not only revokes Pope John’s cry for forgiveness, he revivifies the ancient curse and revels in its bloodlust. Gibson would have us view the death of Jesus...with no reference to the terrible history of pogroms and murders inspired by generations of passion plays. This is, at best, inexcusably ignorant, and, at worst, simply anti-Semitic...”

“Whatever its art, this film is malevolent...”

“Alas, the consequences of our leaders’ courting bigotry in the name of sanctity are painfully obvious to those of us who

suffer their wrath... The real tragedy is that we...will have the terrible task of informing them [our children] that our nation's president and one of its biggest film stars are on the side of the bigots who are bullying them."

The New Republic, March 8, 2004; "The Worship of Blood," by Leon Wieseltier:

"It is a repulsive masochistic fantasy, a sacred snuff film, and it leaves you with the feeling that the man who made it hates life...It will be objected that I see only pious pornography in *The Passion of the Christ* because I am not a believer in the Christ...

"[I]s the sanctification of murder really what this country needs now?...But there is a religion toward which Gibson's movie is even more unfair than it is to its own. In its representation of its Jewish characters, *The Passion of the Christ* is without any doubt an anti-Semitic movie, and anybody who says otherwise knows nothing, or chooses to know nothing, about the visual history of anti-Semitism, in art and in film. What is so shocking about Gibson's Jews is how unreconstructed they are in their stereotypical appearances and actions. These are not merely anti-Semitic images; these are classically anti-Semitic images. In this regard, Gibson is most certainly a traditionalist...

"But the loathing of Jews in Mel Gibson's film is really not its worst degradation...Its loathing of Jews is subsumed in its loathing of spirituality, in its loathing of existence. If there is a kingdom of heaven, *The Passion of the Christ* is shutting it in men's faces."

***New York Observer*, March 8, 2004; "Passion of Mel is Mean, Gnarled, Next to the Sacred," by Ron Rosenbaum:**

"But enough about love. Let's talk about hatred. Not the incitement to hatred in *The Passion of the Christ*, although by this time any informed person, Christian or Jewish, who doesn't see it there is engaging in what Gabriel Schoenfeld

calls 'anti-Semitism denial' (in his important new book *The Return of Anti-Semitism*). Let's not even talk about the way Mel Gibson distorted not just history but the Gospels themselves to intensify the vilification of Jews. As Columbia scholar James Shapiro demonstrates in *Oberammergau: The Troubling Story of the World's Most Famous Passion Play*...efforts can be made to tone down the anti-Semitic incitement in the Passion narrative. Mel Gibson tones them up, as many have observed...

"You could argue that Mel Gibson is not intentionally anti-Semitic. It's possible that he's just too stupid to know the effect of what he's done, too ignorant of the historical effect of Passion plays. But his father is intent personified—intent that seems to have been transmitted to a gullible son who wants to win his father's love...

"Over the centuries, thousands of Jews have been murdered in pogroms that followed the anti-Jewish incitement of Passion play productions. It's unlikely that anything like that will happen in America as a result of the film, but there are other areas of the world where it's just as likely that something will. Its vicious incitement will be burned into the hearts of more people than have seen a Passion play in all of history up until now.

"If the Jews in Hollywood really 'controlled' everything, they would be making a movie about a Jew who was whipped and scourged by a mob who had been incited to murder by a Passion play. There's plenty of precedent, and it might provide a useful corrective.

"But I don't foresee that happening. As the Pope either said or didn't say: 'It is as it was.' Until it gets worse."

***Washington Post*, March 8, 2004; "Walking a Long Mile in Judas's Sandals," by Tom Shales:**

"Unlike Mel Gibson's notorious 'The Passion of the Christ,'

ABC's movie ["Judas"] seems happily lacking in anti-Semitic aspersions. Writer Tom Fontana...has Pontius Pilate's wife tell her husband, as the assassination of Jesus is plotted on Palm Sunday: 'Fix it so the Jews themselves are held responsible.'

"It might have been better still if the conversation had continued with Pilate scoffing, 'Who'd believe that?' and his wife replying, 'You can always find a few bigots and idiots who'll believe anything.' Regardless, the Big Lie was born, and two millennia later, Gibson would find a way to recycle it and gross more than \$200 million in the process. Surely his parking space in Hell has already been reserved."

***New York Times*, March 7, 2004; "Mel Gibson Forgives Us For His Sins," by Frank Rich:**

"With its laborious build-up to its orgasmic spurtings of blood and other bodily fluids, Mr. Gibson's film is constructed like nothing so much as a porn movie, replete with slo-mo climaxes and pounding music for the money shots. Of all the 'Passion' critics, no one has nailed its artistic vision more precisely than Christopher Hitchens, who on 'Hardball' called it a homoerotic 'exercise in lurid sadomasochism' for those who 'like seeing handsome young men stripped and flayed alive over a long period of time....'

"Speaking as someone who has never experienced serious bigotry, I must confess that, whatever happens abroad, the fracas over 'The Passion' has made me feel less secure as a Jew in America than ever before....

"What concerns me much more are those with leadership positions in the secular world—including those in the media—who have given Mr. Gibson, 'The Passion' and its most incendiary hucksters a free pass for behavior that is unambiguously contrived to vilify Jews....

"Of late, however, the star has ratcheted up the volume of his complaints, floating insinuations out of the 'Protocols of the

Elders of Zion.’ Speaking of his critics to Diane Sawyer of ABC, Mr. Gibson said: ‘It’s only logical to assume that conspiracies are everywhere, because that’s what people do. They conspire. If you can’t get the message, get the man.’ So who is in this dark, fearful conspiracy? The only conspirator mentioned by name in that interview was me. But Ms. Sawyer never identified me as Jewish, thereby sanitizing Mr. Gibson’s rant of its truculent meaning. (She did show a picture of me, though, perhaps assuming that my nose might give me away.)”

St. Petersburg Times (FL), March 7, 2004; “Is the Gospel Anti-Semitic?” by Roy Peter Clark, senior scholar, Poynter Institute:

“The tragedy lies in how we Christians have used the story of Jesus to hurt the Jews. This injustice will be visited upon our Jewish brothers and sisters with each viewing of *The Passion of the Christ*, not because the film is a hyperviolent distortion of the Gospels, but because it is a mostly accurate meditation on the central story of Christianity.

“Let me state my thesis more boldly. Every time we Christians tell the story of our salvation, we hurt the Jews....

“What would Jesus do if he sat through a Catholic Mass around Easter time and heard the communal reading of the Passion and listened as the congregation recited that the blood of Jesus is upon the heads of the Jews and their children?

“After he dried his tears, I think he would stand, raise his hand, and in the ensuing silence, declare to the congregation his pride in his Jewishness, his attachment to the Torah, and his sorrow that the story of his death had been turned so grotesquely against his own people.”

New York Times, March 5, 2004; capsule review by A.O. Scott:

“His [Gibson’s] stated goal was realism, but the emphatic musical, visual and aural effects—the first nail is driven into Jesus’ palms with a sickening thwack that must have

required hours of digital tweaking—make the film a melodramatic exercise in high-minded sadomasochism.”

USA Today, March 5, 2004; “‘Passion’ so bloody it’s sadomasochism,” by Al Neuharth:

“This is a skillfully planned and presented but wasted exercise in sadomasochism.”

Forward (NY), March 4, 2004; “Mel Gibson’s Cross of Vengeance,” by Daniel Jonah Goldhagen:

“I have often thought but kept to myself what a gruesome thing they are, traditional crucifixes, each one with the likeness of a mangled, agonized body affixed cruelly to it. I sometimes wondered, even as a child, what kind of a religion would want children to look at an image of a suffering, dying or dead man, with nails piercing his hands. What is its effect upon them? Why would the spiritual leaders of any religion want their flock to gaze regularly at such horror, to gaze lovingly at such horror, to feel exalted at the image of such horror?

“Instinctively I have always been uncomfortable around crucifixes, even though I grew up in the Boston area, historically the most privileged kind of environment for a Jew in a Christian world, one that was free of intense or intensely expressed antipathies towards Jews. I never really understood exactly why I felt such discomfort with the crucifix, and since it was not much of a presence in my life, I never asked myself. Perhaps it was because of my historical knowledge, acquired sadly even as a child, of the harm that the followers of the crucifix had inflicted on those who refused to embrace it. But perhaps not. It might have been only or mainly a visceral reaction of a sensitive child. After all, I had become a vegetarian at the age of 10 because I found the sight of meat revolting...

“Because of Mel Gibson, to speak openly about the gruesome crucifix imagery seems now not only permissible but morally unavoidable. Gibson’s film takes the fetishizing of horror and

death that exists within Christianity to some sort of sickly logical conclusion. Visually, iconographically and symbolically, Gibson's 'Passion' is a sadomasochistic, orgiastic display that demonizes Jews as it degrades those who revel in viewing the horror...Its orgy of unsurpassed and virtually unremitting sadism restores this part of the Jesus story deemphasized by the Catholic Church since the Vatican II reforms to center stage, to haunt all those who would follow Jesus with indelible, iconic images of cruelty. Gibson has thus unwittingly exposed the misguidedness of this cult of death. To the extent that such a vision of God dominates and obscures Jesus' Christian ministry of life, love and good works (as it does almost totally in the film), Gibson has also unveiled its meanness."

***Kansas City Star*, March 4, 2004; "Ghoulish 'Passion' secular, not sacred," by Vern Barnett:**

"Mel Gibson's 'The Passion of the Christ' is not just a bad movie; it is hurtful...Early concerns that the film might be anti-Semitic...now seem justified.

"One wonders if he [Gibson] is explaining the torture, depravity and sadomasochist preoccupations of his other movies by commandeering a sacred subject...What I ask is: Why doesn't God forgive humanity without this barbaric sacrifice?

"The popularity of this irresponsible movie marks how dangerous the secular religious spectacle has become."

***Washington Post*, March 4, 2004; "Scared Boring: Hollywood's Timid Streak," by Tina Brown:**

"It's not the supposed anti-Semitism of the movie they're ['Hollywood denizens'] worried about now—though you don't have to be Jewish to wonder about a picture in which the only Jewish authority figures are a bunch of mean, hook-nosed temple priests with long beards and an effeminate, overweight King Herod wearing too much eyeliner and lounging around with a pet leopard, while the gentile authority figure is a

conscience-stricken Roman with a fashionable Tom Ford stubble and a wife who talks like the chairman of the local chapter of Amnesty International.”

***Los Angeles Times*, March 2, 2004; “A Passion for Hatred That Mocks Christ’s Message,” by Robert Scheer:**

“I just saw Gibson’s ‘The Passion of the Christ’ and it is a blood libel against the Jewish people that should have every prominent Christian minister and priest speaking out in opposition....

“It requires a deeply felt anti-Semitism on Gibson’s part to depict the community that nurtured Jesus as nothing more than a venal mob that forced an eminently reasonable and kind Roman overlord to crucify Jesus. Even the beastly lower-level Roman legionnaires who whip Jesus for most of the movie’s duration are engaged in this orgy of sadism not to please Caesar but rather to mollify the rabbis....

“[T]he sadomasochistic preoccupation of the film could not obscure the fact that Christ never endorsed vengeance or departed from his message of universal love. Ultimately, however, this is just an exploitation flick that serves up the body of Christ as an object of continuous sick torture while ignoring his life and thoughts.

“Despite our pretensions of modernity and humanitarianism, the world is currently plagued by Christian, Jewish, Islamic and Hindu fundamentalists who seem more passionate about employing their holy books as weapons than as instruments of peace.

“Sadly, that is the essence of Gibson’s movie.”

***Philadelphia Daily News*, March 2, 2004; “Fact... or cruci-
‘fiction’?” by Stephan Rosenfeld:**

“Most troubling to me is ‘The Passion’s’ historically inaccurate portrayal of bloodthirsty Jews as being responsible for the Crucifixion....His [Gibson’s] is a work of ‘crucifiction’ and should be seen in that context....

“I remember thinking during one of the Jesus-thrashing scenes that the portrayal bordered on the pornographic—grossly mechanical to a point where the audience was losing feeling along with Jesus.”

***Washington Post*, March 2, 2004; “Faith and Violence” by Richard Cohen:**

“I thought the movie was...anti-Semitic, maybe not purposely so but in the way portions of the New Testament are—an assignment of blame that culminated in the Holocaust. But I wrote none of that, actually nothing at all, because there was something else about the movie that disturbed me, and it took days to figure it out. It is fascistic.

“I don’t know if I use the word right—probably I don’t. But I want to use it because I recently read Richard J. Evans’s brilliant ‘The Coming of the Third Reich,’ in which it becomes clear, if it wasn’t before, how violence was so much a part of fascism. It was not merely that Hitler and, to a lesser extent, Mussolini used force to get their way but also that violence, almost for the sake of it, became part of the ethic—what Evans calls ‘the cult of violence.’ After awhile, Germans became inured. That, both precisely and surprisingly, is how I felt watching Gibson’s disturbingly nondisturbing movie. I was bored stiff.

“This is what I mean by a fascistic sensibility. The violence was the message. It overwhelmed the message of Christ...What’s more, the cause of the violence—its origins—was not the Romans, who were actually in charge, but stereotypical Jews who, in their clever ways, manipulated even Pontius Pilate, about the only complex figure in the entire movie. Gibson says he is no anti-Semite. Maybe. But if he could breathe humanity into the autocratic Pilate, then why not something similar for the downtrodden Jews?”

Beliefnet.com, March 1, 2004; “Jesus at Midnight,” by Rabbi Shmuley Boteach:

"I personally found the film to be a gross defamation—not just of the Jews who were portrayed as having demonically demanded the death of Christ—but especially of Christianity which is portrayed as a religion of blood, gore, and death, rather than of blessing, love, and life."

***Newsweek*, March 1, 2004; "So What's the Good News?" by David Ansen:**

"It's the sadism, not the alleged anti-Semitism, that is most striking...I found myself recoiling from the movie, wanting to keep it at arm's length—much the same feeling I had watching Gaspar Noe's notorious 'Irreversible,' with its nearly pornographic real-time depiction of a rape."

***New York Times*, March 1, 2004; "Not Peace, but a Sword," by William Safire:**

"Mel Gibson's movie...is the bloodiest, most brutal example of sustained sadism ever presented on the screen..."

"The villains at whom the audience's outrage is directed are the actors playing bloodthirsty rabbis and their rabid Jewish followers. This is the essence of the medieval 'Passion Play,' preserved in pre-Hitler Germany at Oberammergau, a source of the hatred of all Jews as 'Christ Killers.'

"At a moment when a wave of anti-Semitic violence is sweeping Europe and the Middle East, is religion well served by updating the Jew-baiting passion plays of Oberammergau on DVD? Is art served by presenting the ancient divisiveness in blood-streaming media to the widest audiences in the history of drama?..."

"Gibson's medieval version of the suffering of Jesus, reveling in savagery to provoke outrage and cast blame, fails Christian and Jew today."

***Time*, March 1, 2004; "Why It's So Bloody," by David Van Biema:**

"[T]he film's true shock lies in Gibson's vision of what is most important in the Jesus story, in the relentless, near

pornographic feast of flayed flesh.”

San Antonio Express-News, February 29, 2004; “Truth seekers descend on city,” by Joe Holley:

“It wasn’t only Gibson’s overwhelmingly negative depiction of Jews (the movie slides by the fact that Jesus and his followers also were Jews); it also was Gibson’s searing and agonizingly long depiction of sadistic violence. I understand what Gibson’s trying to do, but, in effect, he panders to the same dark emotions that draw Spaniards to bullfights, that drew Romans to Colosseum gladiatorial bouts.

“For reasons too involved to explore here, I would argue that his Hollywood sadomasochistic torturefest dangerously distorts the Christian message.”

Washington Post, February 29, 2004; “So Much Irony in this Passion,” by Paul Richard:

“There is a lot of ‘anti’ in Gibson’s film, and not only anti-Semitism. The film is anti the secular, and anti the squeamish. And the many clean-cross Protestants who see it ought to be reminded that the style of its images once was aimed at Christians pretty much like them.”

Daily News (NY), February 29, 2004; “Week of Real Hatred,” by Jami Bernard:

“My main objection to ‘The Passion’ is that Gibson has used the tools at his disposal to disguise sadism as piety.”

San Antonio Express-News, February 28, 2004; “‘Passion’ rouses emotions—in all the wrong ways,” by the Rev. Michael Coffey, associate pastor, Christ Lutheran Church, San Antonio:

“For many centuries in Europe, the Passion play was presented in a specifically anti-Jewish way that provoked real violence and oppression against Jews....

“It is this history of blaming Jews for Jesus’ death that must be considered when evaluating public presentations of the Passion story. It is a blame that incites hatred and violence,

and it is implicit in the development of Nazi propaganda against Jews. To interpret 'The Passion of the Christ' without taking account of this troubling history is irresponsible...

"It is a pornographic presentation of violence."

***Jewish Week* (NY), February 27, 2004; "Mel Gibson's Blood-Soaked Blame Game," by George Robinson:**

"The theology...despite Gibson's protestations to the contrary and his apparent absolution by some Jewish leaders, is an appalling blend of medieval blood libel and Father Coughlin..."

"Whatever that [Gibson's] agenda may be, this much is definitely clear: Among the major motion-pictures recounting the Christ story, this is the only one that places almost all the blame for the death of Jesus on the Jews."

***New York Sun*, February 27, 2004; "Pornographic Religion," by Andrew Sullivan:**

"In a word, it is pornography."

"By pornography, I mean the reduction of all human thought and feeling and personality to mere flesh. The centerpiece of the movie is an absolutely disgusting piece of sadism that has no real basis in any of the Gospels...That same psychotic sadism permeates the entire enterprise..."

"I wouldn't say that this movie is motivated by anti-Semitism. It's motivated by psychotic sadomasochism. But Mr. Gibson does nothing to mitigate the dangerous anti-Semitic elements of the story and goes some way toward exaggerating and highlighting them."

"To my mind, that is also unforgivable. Anti-Semitism is the original sin of Christianity. Far from expiating it, this movie clearly enjoys taunting those Catholics, as well as Jews, who are determined to confront that legacy."

***Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, February 27, 2004; "Mel Gibson's**

Unredeeming Gospel of Pain,” by Tony Norman:

“As it stands, ‘The Passion of the Christ’ is a swirling miasma of torture devoid of serious character development or redemptive purpose. The film’s appeal to pain fetishists will be obvious, but most viewers will be justified in assuming that sado-masochism is at the heart of the gospel according to Mel.

“The movie has many good points, but they’re offset by oppressive meditations on sadism. Faith rooted in blood and guilt eventually conjures the god it deserves.”

Daily News (NY), February 25, 2004; “The Passion of the Christ,” by Jami Bernard:

“No child should see this movie. Even adults are at risk. Mel Gibson’s ‘The Passion of the Christ’ is the most virulently anti-Semitic movie made since the German propaganda films of World War II.

“The violence is grotesque, savage, and often fetishized in slo-mo...”

“The movie is a compendium of tortures that would horrify the regulars at an S&M club...”

“Religious intolerance has been used as an excuse for some of history’s worst atrocities. ‘The Passion of the Christ’ is a brutal, nasty film that demonizes Jews at an unfortunate time in history.”

Detroit Free Press, February 25, 2004; “Graphic film stirs tears for Jesus, fears for Jews,” by David Crumm:

“In portraying Jesus’ final hours, Gibson, a Catholic who disputes changes in his church since the 1960s, tramples on decades of interfaith relationships built by Catholic and Jewish leaders in the United States...”

“This isn’t a movie in any traditional sense. It’s an invitation to post-traumatic stress and an attempt to

evangelize moviegoers by stamping Jesus' suffering face into our consciousness."

***Los Angeles Times*, February 25, 2004; "'Passion' nurtures seeds of hatred," Walter Reich, George Washington University: "'Passion' nurtures seeds of hatred,"**

"What matters is whether the film will incite a significant number of people to hate Jews. And that, very effectively, it will do.

"How could it not? Many of its viewers will be believing Christians who, at excruciating length, in slow motion and repeatedly, will watch their Messiah—the gentle and forgiving Lord of love and peace—lashed, pierced, nailed to the cross. And those viewers will see the Jews as the people centrally responsible for that divine, ultimate and excruciating torment...

"Gibson says he wants the movie to lead people to a place of deeper faith. But for many it will lead to an inflamed, convulsed and abiding anger about Christ's torments, aimed at the perfidious, treacherous, scheming, sadistic and evil Jews.

"If such anger at Jews had no history of murderous consequences, the film and its effects wouldn't be of such concern. But it's precisely that kind of anti-Semitic anger, provoked over the centuries by sermons and Passion plays, that has resulted in expulsions, inquisitions and pogroms. And it's that kind of anger that became the seedbed in which the anti-Semitism that flourished in the last century, and the Holocaust it produced, took root...

"And at a time when for other reasons it [anti-Semitism] has been growing around the world, Gibson's film—powerful as only film can be—could dangerously accelerate that growth, inciting passions to a degree and on a scale that only a perverted presentation of the Passion can incite."

***Philadelphia Daily News*, February 25, 2004; "'Passion'**

nurtures seeds of hatred,” Walter Reich, George Washington University: “Film stirs dismay in modern-day scribe,” Ron Goldwyn:

“No one will storm from the metroplexes and launch a pogrom. But what will be the intangible effect on those who believe in Jesus’ divinity toward those who do not?”

***Chicago Tribune*, February 23, 2004; “Mel Gibson makes a war movie,” by Susan Thistlethwaite, president, Chicago Theological Seminary:**

“The controversy that has preceded this film’s official opening has been over the selective portrayal of the Jewish synagogue leaders as ‘responsible’ for the death of Jesus. This is an interpretation as well, and a dangerous one in the current world climate of rising religious hatreds...”

“The Roman soldiers are portrayed as brutal, but the slant of the film is to make the Jews culpable. This is an interpretive choice and a historically ignorant one...”

“This film is not only dangerous for Jews; it is dangerous for Christians in today’s warring world to think Jesus is an action hero...”

“It is also a sado-masochistic portrayal of the death of Jesus...”

“The message is that the violence done to Jesus justifies violent retaliation.”

***Fort Worth Star-Telegram* (TX), February 23, 2004; “Mel Gibson may not be anti-Semitic, but he’s not a very moral man,” by Christopher Kelly:**

“Wearing a cloak of piety, Mel Gibson—who has been quoted as saying the Holy Spirit ‘was working through me on this film’—has fanned the flames of anti-Semitism into a marketing bonfire...And he’s done it by preying on Jewish people’s very legitimate fears that the film will reignite old prejudices that Jews were responsible for the death of Christ...”

“Is ‘The Passion of the Christ’ anti-Semitic? That’s an argument that will likely carry on for decades. But this much cannot be disputed: Gibson’s actions thus far have been rooted in utter disdain for Jews...He turned the question of just how anti-Semitic the movie will be into a parlor game.

“Perhaps...being honest and forthright simply isn’t Gibson’s way. This is a man who has spent a career taking the low road, while holding the Bible out in front of him—a modern-day Elmer Gantry recast as a \$20-million-a-movie superstar. He tells people how to live and then does a pretty lousy job of setting his own example. ...

“Then there’s Mel Gibson the chauvinist, the man who has maintained that men and women are not equal...Then there is his unapologetic, unceasing homophobia...

“It’s a critic’s job to separate the art from the artist—to afford the artist at least that much respect; to judge a finished work solely on its own terms. Gibson has all but forfeited that privilege. You can’t invoke the Holy Spirit, you can’t hold your film up as the purest and most honest express [sic] of Jesus Christ’s story—and then not back it up with decent words, generous actions. Even if ‘The Passion of the Christ’ turns out to be the greatest rendering ever of the greatest story ever told, it will still mark a dark day for anyone who values humanity.”

***Orlando Sentinel*, February 22, 2004; “The Sin of ‘Passion,’” by John Dominic Crossan:**

“As a former priest who has written extensively about the early days of Christianity, I found this intolerantly violent movie portrays God in a way at odds with the views of most Christians....

“But this film’s consistently visual violence raised for me not a problem of squeamishness but a question of conscience: When, if the action is sadistic, does its sustained enactment

and viewing of Jesus' death become pornographic?...

"All of this is not to say that the concern of both Jewish and Christian critics with the way 'The Passion of The Christ' portrays the Jews' role in Jesus death should be ignored.

"There are major problems here as well, especially for those not aware of the history of the period...

"The God of this film is not a God of merciful compassion and loving forgiveness but a God of displaced punishment and vicarious retribution.

"If that were the character of God, this film would be the best argument ever developed for atheism. You would fear or dread, but why would you love or worship such a God?"

***Orlando Sentinel*, February 22, 2004; "Gibson's 'Passion' is not the only truth," by Myriam Marquez:**

"Frankly, as a Roman Catholic (and not a very good one), I find the controversy about this film a subplot to a more sinister aspect of the culture wars that consume us today. Many Christians aren't being honest.

"The controversy isn't so much about who killed Jesus. It's really about who's perceived to run Hollywood, the media and other powerful American institutions. The Nazis pointed to the Jews as the 'foreigners' who controlled Germany's economy. Today, a segment of American society blames secular Jews like Disney's Michael Eisner for holding powerful positions in Hollywood and the New York-dominated media, and forcing immoral popular culture on the hinterlands."

***Dallas Morning News*, February 21, 2004; "Why I won't see 'Passion,'" by Zsuzsanna Ozsvath:**

"Sometimes, a tradition is so deeply ingrained in our culture, as is anti-Semitism, that we recognize its psychological, religious and societal manifestations from the structure in which it appears. We know its workings, and we know its

consequences.

“Such is the case of the Passion plays and their most recent expression, Mel Gibson’s movie, *The Passion of the Christ*...

“Performed during Passion Week, the plays often were followed by processions of the villagers gathering for the Easter mass, preparing and carrying out pogroms against the Jews. In that way, thousands of Jews were hunted down and massacred over the centuries...

“And while I don’t think the showing of Mr. Gibson’s Passion play will be followed by pogroms here, I unfortunately can foresee its impact on audiences not only in Egypt, France and England but also in Hungary and Poland, where the flames of anti-Semitism already have consumed the lives of millions of Jews.”

***Philadelphia Daily News*, February 12, 2004; “Mel Gibson’s Mortal Sin?” by Michael Smerconish:**

“Is Mel Gibson a Holocaust denier?”

“I think that’s a fair question given a just-released excerpt from an interview with Gibson in an upcoming issue of *Reader’s Digest*...

“[On Gibson’s comments in *Reader’s Digest*] Wait a minute. At first blush that may sound OK. But go back and read it again. On closer inspection, it’s unacceptable if that is as far as it goes. It just might be a more cleverly disguised version of what his dad told the *Times* magazine...

“I’m anxious to see the movie, and have, until recently, been sympathetic to Mel Gibson in the context of concerns raised by people who largely have not seen the film and fear it is nothing more than a modern Passion Play. Now, I am not so sure my sympathy was warranted.

“I will see it –and, in the back of my mind, I’ll be

wondering, like father like son?"

***Newsday* (NY), February 11, 2004; "Despite Mel Gibson, the Gospels Aren't Gospel," by Paul Ginnetty, director, Institute for the Study of Religion and Community Life, St. Joseph's College, NY:**

"Uncritical reading of John had for centuries fanned anti-Semitism among the naïve and the willfully ignorant. Despite cuts of some potentially offensive material, there remains concern that Gibson's unsophisticated equating of text with accurate history could resuscitate such error. Were that to happen, recourse by Gibson to a glib defense of The-Bible-Made-Me-Do-It will be less than convincing.

"His blithe portrayal of biblical texts as uncomplicated history suggests an ideologically driven attempt to define any problematic elements of the film as being beyond criticism, cloaked in biblical inerrancy, Spirit-dictated history and his own piety."

***Los Angeles Times*, February 4, 2004; "Critics debate 'The Passion,' Gibson evades the debate," by Tim Rutten:**

"Take, for example, the straightforward way in which those concerned with Mel Gibson's soon-to-be-released movie, 'The Passion of the Christ,' continue to express their reservations and apprehensions, as compared with the filmmaker's continued evasions concerning nearly every significant issue raised by the controversy."

Letters

***The Record* (NJ), March 2, 2004:**

"One could argue that life's vilest acts of pornography are explicitly depicted acts of graphic violence...One could take thousands of biblical passages and convert each into a best-selling pornographic movie.

"Mel Gibson has out-martyred himself in the latest Jesus

flick...I wish he had gutted prints of his 'The Passion of the Christ' movie."

***Newsday* (NY), February 29, 2004:**

"The problem with Mel Gibson's 'The Passion of the Christ' is not the film itself, but the Gospel story on which it is based...

"The Gospel writers gave the Jesus story an anti-Jewish slant by describing him as persecuted at every turn by Jewish religious leaders and by putting the blame for his crucifixion on the Jews, not on the Romans who ordered his execution...

"Let's hope this film does not set the clock back and unleash a new wave of anti-Semitism. One Holocaust is enough."

***Jewish Week* (NY), February 27, 2004:**

"It's sad that Mel Gibson takes a single version (of many that exist) of the accounting of Christ's last days as the only truth (as if he were there to verify this). Perhaps it is even more important at this time to get out the explanation of James Carroll ('Constantine's Sword') as a way of countering Gibson's account. People might then begin to see that historically blaming Jews for the death of a fellow Jew really doesn't make sense. (Then again, they might also see that the reason for the shift of blame to the Jews will bring about some truths with which they may never be able to cope)."

***Fort Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel*, January 29, 2004:**

"Yes, we know that there are educated people of good faith who will internalize the play's message. Who will protect us from the ignorant peasants who think that the play offers them license to kill Jews?"

"The term..."anti-Jewish violence" in no way conveys the horrible slaughter of pogroms [that would be] brought on by this play."

News Stories

Variety, April 19, 2004; Salomon Korn, Vice President, Central Council of Jews, Germany:

"The anti-Semites will only have their views on Jews confirmed...[The film is a] sadomasochist orgy of violence [laden with] kitsch..."

Variety, April 19, 2004; Rabbi John Levi, president of the Australian Union for Progressive Judaism, Australia:

"I shudder to think of the effect the film will have on the uninitiated. Practically every piece of Jewish history was violated as the story was told."

Variety, April 19, 2004; Gilbert Lewi, Delegation of Israeli-Argentinian Associations:

"'You see images and stereotypes that we thought would never exist again after the Nazi era.'

"More worrying, he says is that some Christian groups are giving out free pirate copies of 'The Passion' and screening it in churches as an evangelizing and teaching tool."

Detroit Free Press, April 12, 2004; Samantha Harrison-Stand, Executive Director, Temple Israel, Bay City, MI:

"'It's not [a local anti-Semitic preacher] that really frightens me. It's the people who listen to him,' Harrison-Stand, the synagogue's executive director, said last month. 'The people who will go to the movie theater, see "The Passion of the Christ," and just crack and go out and do something crazy. That's what I'm afraid of.'"

USA Today, April 3, 2004; Charlotte Knobloch, Vice President, Central Council of Jews, Germany:

"[The film's] suggestive power...will give a further push to the current resurgence of anti-Semitism."

Hollywood Reporter, March 23, 2004; Marin Karmitz, French Federation of Distributors:

"I refused to program the film in my network of theaters...I have always fought against fascism, notably through my

exhibition activity. For me, 'Passion' is a film of fascist propaganda...

"Lastly, given the representation of the Jews, anti-Semitism is the third element of this fascist ideology..."

"Behind this 'Passion'...you can glimpse a whole internationale of religious fundamentalism, a martyrology based on violence, contempt for the body and hatred for the human element."

Sun-Sentinel (FL), March 22, 2004; Rabbi Robert Silvers, Congregation B'Nai Israel, Boca Raton, FL:

"Congregation B'Nai Israel Rabbi Robert Silvers, who spoke on a panel along with Boys, said it's unfortunate that a celebrity can use money to spread his own message. He likened the acceptance of the movie's message to voting for an electoral candidate based on information gathered from commercials.

"'How awful that now we'll do that with religion,' Silvers said. 'Shame on us all if we don't have the wherewithal to look into our own Bible, our own Scripture...Shame on us all if we don't take the challenge of learning this for ourselves.'"

New York Post, March 18, 2004; Evan Thomas, Editor, Newsweek:

"'It's just really a snuff film...for those who like that sort of thing.' Thomas, who admitted he hadn't seen the picture, called it 'ugly, long and historically inaccurate...everyone knows Pontius Pilate did the whole thing.'"

The Virginian-Pilot, March 13, 2004; Rabbi Michael Panitz of Temple Israel, Norfolk, VA:

"The movie itself is filled with anti-Jewish stereotypes. The worst was the assistant chief priest, the fellow with the hook nose and the ugly gleam in his eye. That's a stock figure going back to the medieval Passion play, repeated exactly in Nazi propaganda images and still used today in anti-Semitic cartoons."

Forward (NY), March 13, 2004:

"The Justice Department is being urged to rule whether Mel Gibson's 'The Passion of the Christ' constitutes a hate crime. An Internet petition by the Messiah Truth Project urges Attorney General John Ashcroft to determine whether the controversial movie about Jesus' death violates hate-crime statutes because its portrayal of Jews amounts to 'antisemitic diatribe.'"

Baltimore Jewish Times, March 12, 2004; Dr. Akiba Covitz, University of Richmond:

"'I don't think the Jewish groups that reacted [to 'The Passion'] had a choice, given the Holocaust, and how people were silent for so long about creeping hate,' said Dr. Akiba Covitz, a political scientist at the University of Richmond. 'When you see something that runs even the risk of that, you have to act; your response has to be swift, it has to be almost extreme to get people to pay attention to the issue. Whether that contributes to Mel Gibson making more money is not relevant.'"

Baltimore Jewish Times, March 12, 2004; Stephen Silberfarb, Executive Director, Jewish Community Relations Council of Minnesota and the Dakotas:

"Mel Gibson was Jew baiting—and we took the bait on his terms."

U.S. News and World Report, March 8, 2004; James Carroll:

"It is a pornographic celebration of suffering."

The Evangelist (Diocese of Albany, NY), March 23, 2004; Dr. Peter Zaas, Siena College:

"'It's rampant with anti-Semitic images...'

"Dr. Zaas said he doesn't come from a religious tradition that values suffering as an act of piety, so he was offended by Mr. Gibson's choice to focus so exclusively on Christ's suffering during the Passion..."

“‘I didn’t get anything from it except concern that someone was showing me these images on purpose: It was Mel Gibson crucifying Christ.’”

***The Dialog* (Diocese of Wilmington, DE), March 2, 2004; Rabbi Charles Klein, New York Board of Rabbis:**

“Through our eyes, we saw something frightening. We saw the Jewish community portrayed as a ruthless mob.”

***Peoria Journal Star*, March 2, 2004; Rabbi Eugene Korn:**

“This kind of interpretation of the passion has had a very toxic history. In the past, there has been violence against Jewish property and lives after production [sic] similar to this one.”

***Baltimore Sun*, February 28, 2004; John Dominic Crossan, professor emeritus, DePaul University:**

“Anyone who handles this story must know they have to be terribly careful—I don’t mean politically correct. Out of this story has come 2,000 years of anti-Semitic pogroms.”

***Indianapolis Star*, February 28, 2004; The Rev. Ron Allen, professor of New Testament studies, Christian Theological Seminary (Disciples of Christ), Indianapolis:**

“Its attack on Judaism is so destructive that it overpowers any other positive features...”

“The damage done to the human community by this film’s brutal picture of Judaism may be more harmful than the good intended by the filmmakers. I have to say that I think people are better off not seeing this film.”

***Sun-Sentinel* (FL), February 28, 2004; Rabbi Sheldon Jay Harr, Temple Kol Ami, Plantation, FL:**

“This movie has become an effective modern-day Passion Play. And Passion Plays have always pictured the Jews as bloodthirsty, satanic, hate-filled people.”

***Sun-Sentinel* (FL), February 28, 2004; Rabbi Geoffrey Botnick,**

Temple Torah, West Boynton Beach, FL:

"Some people will distort things from the movie, to serve their agenda. [The film] has the potential of changing the course of harmony between the Catholic Church and the Jewish people."

Atlanta Journal-Constitution, February 27, 2004; Kathleen M. O'Connor, Old Testament professor, Columbia Theological Seminary:

"I found the suffering so extreme as to be pornographic."

Detroit Free Press, February 25, 2004; Rabbi Daniel Nevins, Adat Shalom Synagogue, Farmington Hills, MI:

"As a Jew seeing this, it feels like we've gone back to a medieval us-versus-them model."

Newsday (NY), February 24, 2004; Dan Klores, independent filmmaker:

"[Those who engineered the publicity for 'The Passion of the Christ'] ought to be ashamed of themselves. They have appealed to neo-facist [sic] Holocaust deniers. They sold out for money. They are thoroughly cynical people."

Reuters, February 24, 2004; NY State Assemblyman Dov Hikind:

"I don't have any doubt this film will cause anti-Semitism. I don't have any doubt that this film will result in violence..."

"I don't know the purpose of the extent of violence. But why create hate? That's what the movie does."

"Nobody says 'dirty Jew' in the movie, but boy is the movie clear."

"It really is a blood libel against Jews. Mel Gibson has done a tremendous disservice to the real message of Jesus, which is about love."

Reuters, February 24, 2004; David Weprin, chairman, New York City Council Finance Committee:

"This is not the type of film we need in New York. It brings back ancient divisions."

Atlanta Journal-Constitution, February 23, 2004; John Dominic Crossan, professor emeritus, DePaul University:

"John Dominic Crossan...said that accepting the view that God was ultimately responsible for Jesus' final hours reinforces twisted theology.

"'If you face the theology squarely, you're dealing with a God who would not forgive people but would take it out on his own son,' Crossan said. 'While it might make you love Jesus, it would not make you love God. You're dealing with someone who is close to a monster.'"

Boston Herald, February 22, 2004; Michael Bohnen, Jewish Council for Public Affairs:

"The Jewish community is not being paranoid here. There's a 1,000-year history of Passion sermons, Passion plays, sparking demonstrations and pogroms."

San Francisco Chronicle, February 22, 2004; Susan Bond, associate professor, Vanderbilt University Divinity School:

"My concern about it is the use of graphic violence and heart-wrenching emotional trauma to get people to follow Jesus. It seems to me enormously manipulative."

San Francisco Chronicle, February 22, 2004; Rabbi Michael Lerner, editor, Tikkun:

"The Gibson film is at least as much an assault on Christian liberals and progressives as it is on Jews. I hope Christians will take the lead in organizing people of all faiths to leaflet every public showing of Gibson's film with a message that runs counter to the anger at Jews that this film is likely to produce."

Daily News (NY), February 21, 2004; Michael Evans, Jerusalem Prayer Team:

"I don't take the position that it might incite violence against Jews. I say it will incite violence against Jews."

San Jose Mercury News (CA), February 19, 2004; Bart Charlow, director, National Conference for Community and Justice:

"'Our biggest fear is that Gibson is treading on ancient and very dangerous grounds that have provoked anti-Semitism for hundreds of years,' said Bart Charlow...The movie could provide a rationale for everything from slurs to synagogue firebombings, from which the Bay Area has not been immune, he said."

Boston Herald, February 18, 2004; Stephen Prothero, Boston University:

"'The Gospels don't glory in violence the way Mel Gibson does. There's something perverse in turning the Bible into an action movie,' he [Prothero] said, suggesting that 'Mad Max Goes to Galilee' would be 'truth in advertising.'"

San Francisco Chronicle, February 17, 2004; Naomi Seidman, director, Center for Jewish Studies at the Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley:

"This movie is a representation of the New Testament, which is a nasty little document. It's hard for Jews to read..."

"You can't just reproduce the hateful atmosphere in which the Gospels were written. You have to understand the polemics of the time. Angry people say nasty, hurtful things. The New Testament arises out of that environment."

Los Angeles Times, February 11, 2004; Mike Evans, evangelical minister:

"I believe there is a serious crisis building here...Without an addition [a postscript to the film] of the kind we're urging, this film will be used to fuel anti-Semitism around the world..."

"I told Mr. Gibson that night that 'I don't want my savior to

be used as a sword to injure Jewish people....'

"I don't believe that Mel Gibson is an anti-Semite. I just don't think he's adequately researched the connection between this story, the account of Christ's Passion, and Jew hatred through history. There's no doubt that traditional Passion plays had a role in fueling hatred of Jews, including violence like the pogroms in Russia and Eastern Europe. Today, there are people throughout the Muslim world teaching their children the same evil myths about Jews that Hitler used. They're even doing it in schools."

Philadelphia Inquirer, February 8, 2004; Burt Siegel, Jewish Community Relations Council, Philadelphia:

"[Gibson] serves up the resurrected message of deicide."

CBS, "The Early Show," January 26, 2004; Rene Syler (anchor):

"Some critics say it's anti-Semitic because it blames Jews for the Crucifixion. In a TV interview Gibson does not deny it."

[To the extent that viewers accept Syler's conclusion, they might think Gibson is a bigot; the comments she refers to are the following:

Gibson: "The film collectively blames humanity for the death of Jesus. Now there are no exemptions there. All right? I'm the first on the line for culpability—I did it. Christ died for all men, for all times."

Arroyo: "Including the Jewish people?"

Gibson: "Yeah. They're part of the human race..."]

Orlando Sentinel, January 23, 2004; Rabbi Aaron Rubinger, Congregation Ohev Shalom:

"Rabbi Aaron Rubinger of Congregation Ohev Shalom said 'The Passion of The Christ' was 'cinematically very powerful,' but it had the potential to become an 'ecumenical suicide bomb...'

""[S]ome people will come away from this film with very

powerfully negative feelings about Jews.'”

Television

MSNBC “Scarborough Country,” December 8, 2004; Rabbi Schmuley Boteach:

“First of all, ‘The Passion of the Christ’ was an abomination for Christianity. It really should win the World Wrestling Federation Oscar for best movie. It’s a guy for two hours being kicked, beaten, his blood gushing everywhere. It’s just a diabolical, criminal, violent mess...It really is like Mohammed al-Zarqawi’s movies on the Internet where a guy gets his head chopped off. It’s gory. It’s ugly and it’s not inspiring...”

“The reason why many Jews—I’m not among them—are fearful of Christianity is, they’re tired of Christians saying that we’re a bunch of Christ killers. They’re tired of the lie that we killed Jesus...”

“Pontius Pilate killed Jesus. And the sin of Mel Gibson is the same sin of Michael Moore. They both whitewash tyrants. Michael Moore whitewashes Saddam Hussein, and Mel Gibson whitewashes Pontius Pilate, who was the Saddam Hussein of the ancient world. That’s why Jews are afraid of Christians.

“Slander is slander, whether it leads to violence or not. ‘The Passion of the Christ’ was historically fictitious, deeply libelous and slanderous movie portraying Jews killing one of their own. Jesus was an Orthodox Jew. He looked like me. He thought like me...”

“Because my evangelical Christian brothers and sisters are desperate for any kind of wholesome, religious mainstream movie. And they’re so desperate, they’ll even take a violent, gory, bloody mess, which really looks like a World Wrestling Federation movie...”

MSNBC “Scarborough Country,” March 4, 2004; Rabbi Schmuley

Boteach:

"On the contrary, this movie is perfectly in line with Hollywood. It is a violent movie. It's about blood and gore. This movie is Christianity as the cult of death....

"The fact is, this movie is ultimate act, sadly, of Christian desperation. Christianity is a great world religion. Why does it need to be so desperate, akin to Janet Jackson flapping out a boob at the Super Bowl? Now we have Jesus needing to be skinned alive in order for people to go to church?

"This is a guilt trip....This isn't a statement of devotion or faith. The statement is, Jesus suffered so much, how could you not believe in him now?"

MSNBC "Hardball," March 4, 2004; Rev. Andrew Greeley:

"This is a movie about torture that's being justified on the grounds that it is Jesus' torture. I think it was sadomasochistic and pornographic."

MSNBC "Hardball," February 27, 2004; Christopher Hitchens:

"It's more of an exercise in lurid sadomasochism, and it's an awful appeal to superstition....

[When asked what in the film is worthy of condemnation]:

"Well, it all depends on whether you like seeing handsome young men stripped and flayed alive over a long period of time. I don't.

"I know that Mr. Gibson has had problems with homosexuals in the past for making extremely crude and nasty remarks about them. One almost wonders what his homoerotic temptations are.

"There's no religion in the movie at all. There's no—I'm not a Christian. But there's no Christian precept. There's no understanding of what their guy is supposed to have stood for."

ABC "Nightline," February 25, 2004; John Dominic Crossan,

professor emeritus, DePaul University:

"My immediate reaction [to the film], actually, was extreme revulsion. I've been asked, yes, but what was your spiritual reaction? And I said, extreme revulsion is a spiritual reaction. I thought I'd be watching two hours of utter brutality. Possibly the way it was, of course, but still, I was watching it to the point I was wondering if this has become violent pornography."

CNN "News from CNN," February 25, 2004; David Denby, critic, *The New Yorker*:

"It's extremely sadistic. And I don't see in any way it could be called a spiritual experience."

Fox News Channel "On the Record with Greta Van Susteren," February 24, 2004; Jonathan Foreman, critic, *New York Post*:

"It's so beyond the norm of even ordinarily violent movies...I thought it was not just gratuitous, but pornographic."

Miscellaneous

***Daily News* (NY), March 1, 2004; unsigned editorial:**

"Gibson has filled 'The Passion' with deeply troubling images. They present a world peopled almost exclusively by scheming Jewish priests and bloodthirsty Jewish mobs...

"Gibson even turns Jewish children into monsters, literally...

"Christians who are baffled by the anti-Semitic allegations—and, indeed, many are baffled—need to understand that passion plays depicting Jews as murderers were used for centuries to stoke hatred and violence. They should also try to watch 'The Passion' through eyes other than their own and judge for themselves whether its images are at odds with the church's position."

National Public Radio "Fresh Air," February 25, 2004; David Edelstein, *Slate.com* columnist:

"What does this exercise in sadomasochism have to do with

Christianity? I don't know. I do know that Gibson is an angry man with a victimization complex."