

JEWS AND HOLLYWOOD

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Ever since Rabbi Shmuley Boteach and I squared off against each other on the December 8 edition of MSNBC's "Scarborough Country," there has been considerable chatter over my comment, "Hollywood is controlled by secular Jews who hate Christianity in general and Catholicism in particular."

Context is always important, so let's take a look at it. Just before I spoke, Boteach mocked "The Passion of the Christ," saying, "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." Thanks, Shmuley, for being so sensitive about that "guy."

In the same segment that I made this remark, I also said the following: "You have got secular Jews. You have got embittered ex-Catholics, including a lot of ex-Catholic priests who hate the Catholic Church, wacko Protestants in the same group..." Later in the debate, I said, "There are secularists from every ethnic and religious stock," and when people talk about Hollywood, they are "talking mostly about secular Jews."

In short, I did not single out secular Jews as some have said. Nonetheless, I do regret using the verb "controlled," and that is because it suggests that there is some kind of cabal among secular Jews. That's nonsense. But is there a segment of the secular Jewish community that is anti-Catholic? Absolutely.

The day after our debate, Boteach was kind enough to have me on his radio show to mix it up again. During the course of that conversation, I admitted that there was a segment of the Catholic community that is anti-Semitic. I then asked him if he would agree that there is a segment of the secular Jewish community that is anti-Catholic, and he denied it without

equivocation. That's also nonsense.

Now consider what the *New York Times* said about "The Passion" on June 24: "Significantly, in the movie industry, which tends to be liberal and secular in outlook, as well as disproportionately Jewish, few people interviewed about 'The Passion' said they had actually seen the movie." Is this not a softer way of saying what I said, at least in part?

The "Today Show," *Newsweek* magazine, the *Los Angeles Times* and other media outlets have all reported on the Hollywood animus against "The Passion." As one Oscar-campaign veteran put it, "a lot of older Academy voters, who are largely Jewish, refuse to even see this movie." Tom O'Neil, who is one of the most prominent students of the Oscars, recently described what happened when the Mel Gibson film was being considered by the experts: "At this religious movie, there was more cussing and swearing by Oscar voters than has ever been seen in an Academy screening before." This says it all.

The point is that no one seriously disputes the fact that Hollywood is a heavily secular Jewish community. And while some may want to defend Hollywood against the charge that it is anti-Christian in general and anti-Catholic in particular, those who do so carry a heavy burden. It is not for nothing that Hollywood has been turning out one Christian-bashing film after another for the past few decades.

Indeed, a report released on December 16 by the Parents Television Council shows that Hollywood has a real problem with religion. The study of CBS, NBC, ABC, Fox, WB, UPN and Pax contained 2,344 treatments of religion constituting 2,385 hours of primetime television. L. Brent Bozell, the president of the organization, concluded that "anti-Catholic bigotry" was "rampant" on network shows.

It is not without significance that while this controversy has been brewing, I have been labeled "a neocon plant inside the

Catholic right” by a right-wing Catholic publication. Indeed, simply because I have publicly acknowledged the debt I owe to several key Jewish intellectuals, I have essentially been tagged “the tool of the Jews.”

Now it is not likely that someone who is “the tool of the Jews” is also someone who wants to foment problems between Christians and Jews. That both charges are patently false will be denied by no one save those with an agenda.

Finally, it is important to mention that the *Forward*, a Jewish weekly, published an editorial last summer saying that it is merely a “sociological observation” to note that “Jews run Hollywood.” The newspaper quite rightly said that to say “the Jews run Hollywood” is an entirely different matter, one that smacks of anti-Semitism.

The *Forward* gets it just right. Now if only my critics would learn how vital it is to make critical distinctions.