

# Maligning Mel Gibson

*March 2003 – Present*

*The following quotes represent some of the most unfair statements on Mel Gibson and his film, "The Passion of the Christ." The selections in each category are in reverse chronological order.*

## **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 the Rev. 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 Jewish Week (NY), December 26, 2003; Father John T. Pawlikowski:**

[Fr. Pawlikowski, who has continuously responded to prelates' endorsements of the film by demanding nothing short of papal approval, now comments on the pope's approval of the film.]  
"...It is important to understand that this is hardly a magisterial pronouncement from the Pope that is above critique. *I remain, as do others, very skeptical as to whether this ailing Pope was fully briefed about the concerns we and others have expressed*" [emphasis added].

**The Jewish Week (NY), December 26, 2003; Michael Cook:**

"The issue, I submit, is not Mel Gibson's movie at all but the future of Catholic-Jewish trust. Either the Vatican and/or the bishops are not tuned into this reality, or they don't care, or they do care but Jews are simply not as high on the

priority list as Jews had hoped.

"...The question to be posed to the Bishops and the Vatican and the Pope is not, 'Say, is the movie great, or what?' but rather, 'If this film poses the threat of unraveling five decades of advances in Christian-Jewish relations, then what shall we say about it in that light?'

"...In their own sense of abandonment, Jews may very well abandon the venture of Catholic-Jewish understanding [and turn toward Evangelicals] ...a move I predict has already begun to spread nationwide.

"...As many have said to me, 'You know, it's just like what happened to us in the Six-Day War. Evangelicals may want to end us by converting us, but at least they won't abandon us.'"

**Cybercast News Service, November 7, 2003; Sister Mary C. Boys:**

"Boys noted that the movie is already 'dividing evangelicals and Catholics—Catholics and Catholics, and Christians and Jews.

"'I don't believe that [given the divisive] result that he [Mel Gibson] could claim that the Holy Spirit is behind this.

...

"'Our concern is what happens after people see the film? Will anti-Semitic actions happen or will attitudes against the Jews be exacerbated by this film?'"

**Cybercast News Service, November 7, 2003; Paula Fredriksen:**

"Paula Fredriksen ... believes Gibson's production will prove to be "an inflammatory movie.' ...

"Fredriksen said the movie continues the 'toxic tradition of blaming the Jews for the death of Jesus.

"'A movie like this could very possibly elicit violence

against Jews.'"

**National Catholic Register, October 5, 2003; "The Passion: Still a Sign of Contradiction," by Barbara R. Nicolosi:**

"One of the scholars who started all the controversy by publicly lambasting an early version of the screenplay told me emphatically, 'The New Testament is undeniably anti-Semitic.'"

**The New Republic, September 29, 2003; Correspondence by Paula Fredriksen:**

"...Gibson has 'every right to decide for himself' how to present his movie. But does he have a 'right' to misrepresent what his movie is? Gibson has repeatedly claimed that 'The Passion' is both scripturally faithful (an 'accurate' rendering of the gospel material) and historically accurate (true to a plausible reconstruction of early first-century Jerusalem). In fact, it is neither. That is the problem. ...

"Finally, as the chronology in my article argued and as the four-minute trailer for the movie and subsequent reports from viewers have confirmed, the script that we saw was the script that Gibson shot from. That is how I know what the movie is about—though I am sure that the grisly makeup and Gibsonian gore make the visual experience even more lurid than was the script itself. ...

"I am still counting on the people in the pew who, when they view Gibson's movie, will not recognize any gospel known to them."

**The Jewish Week, September 19, 2003; Sister Mary C. Boys:**

"'One of the problems is people are going to see this film and are going to conclude that's the way it is because they don't know anything different, it's part of the religious illiteracy in our country,' Sister Boys said. 'We really have to find ways to educate them about interpreting Scripture more

thoughtfully.'”

**The Times Union (NY), September 19, 2003; Sister Mary C. Boys:**

“‘It’s not understanding,’ she said of Gibson’s script. ‘He wouldn’t know a scholar if he ran into one.’”

**The New Yorker, September 15, 2003; Paula Fredriksen:**

“He [Mel Gibson] doesn’t even have a Ph.D. on his staff.”

**The Evangelist (Diocese of Albany, NY), September 11, 2003; Sister Mary C. Boys:**

“The average Christian goes to see this film, which is going to be incredibly graphic, and [thinks] the people that do this to Jesus are the Jews. This does not do well for Christian-Jewish relations.”

**National Public Radio, “All Things Considered,” September 3, 2003; Sister Mary C. Boys:**

“Will this film exacerbate divisions between Christians and Jews? Will this film exacerbate differences between traditionalist Catholics and those who see themselves more in the mainstream? Will this film exacerbate divisions between, say, Catholics and evangelicals? And I think if it does any of those, then I find it difficult to believe that the Holy Spirit is at work.”

**Philadelphia Inquirer, August 21, 2003; Paula Fredriksen:**

“There is no plot, no character development, no subtlety. The bad guys are way bad, the good guys are way good.”

**Associated Press, August 9, 2003; Sister Mary C. Boys:**

“For too many years, Christians have accused Jews of being Christ-killers and used that charge to rationalize violence.... This is our fear.”

**Kansas City Star, August 9, 2003; Sister Mary C. Boys:**

"Our fear is that if the film is based on the script we read—which is possible but not necessarily the case—it could promote anti-Semitic sentiments."

**Beliefnet.com, August 7, 2003; Amy-Jill Levine:**

"I don't know if the film is ant-Semitic—I have only seen a version of the script—but the reaction to the scholars' objections could be interpreted as anti-Semitic. ...

"Alas, fidelity, accuracy, and sensitivity were all lacking in the script I saw for Mr. Gibson's production."

**ABC, "Good Morning America," August 5, 2003; Paula Fredriksen:**

"I don't plan to pay money to see it. He's gotten enough of my time for free already."

**Fox News Network, "The O'Reilly Factor," August 5, 2003; Paula Fredriksen:**

"...I saw a later script, not an early script. So I do have a sense of what the film is about. The point is how you take that. We were just talking about the Jewish temple guard assisting Roman soldiers in arresting Jesus.

"And if you then say that the entire incentive for the action is at the motivation of the chief priest, and that the chief priest is leaning on Pilate, so that Pilate is very anxious, of course, to keep his Jewish subjects happy—I mean, it's a colonial power. Pilot doesn't have to run his office on popularity.

"Then you can foreground and overemphasizing you can foreground and overemphasize and distort [sic], and end up having all the heavy lifting done by the Jewish high priest and having it, it ends up being a fight between Judaism and Christianity."

**MSNBC, "Buchanan & Press," August 4, 2003; Paula Fredriksen:**

"I think it's inflammatory."

**The New York Times, August 2, 2003; Sister Mary C. Boys:**

"When we read the screenplay, our sense was this wasn't really something you could fix. All the way through, the Jews are portrayed as bloodthirsty. We're really concerned that this could be one of the great crises in Christian-Jewish relations."

**The New York Times, August 2, 2003; Father John T. Pawlikowski:**

"This was one of the worst things we had seen in describing responsibility for the death of Christ in many many years."

**The New Republic, July 28, 2003 – August 4, 2003, "Mad Mel," by Paula Fredriksen:**

"We knew that we were working against his [Mel Gibson's] enthusiasm, his utter lack of knowledge....

"Jews are the objects of anti-Semitism, but Catholics and other Christians, inspired by Gibson's movie, could well become its agents. (Indeed, on the evidence of the anti-Semitic hate mail that we have all received since being named as critics of Gibson's screenplay, this response is already in play.) ...

"When violence breaks out, Mel Gibson will have a much higher authority than professors and bishops to answer to." [emphasis added]

**Dramatizing the Death of Jesus: Issues that Have Surfaced in Media Reports about the Upcoming Film, The Passion; by Mary C. Boys, Philip A. Cunningham, Lawrence E. Frizzell, John T. Pawlikowski, June 17, 2003:**



"We understood from the outset of our review of the script that our report did not represent an official statement of the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops...

"Anyone who composes a script for a dramatic presentation of the death of Jesus must draw upon four distinct passion narratives in the four gospels in the New Testament. One cannot assume that by simply conforming to the New Testament that antisemitism [sic] will not be promoted."

**New York Post, June 13, 2003; Mel Doesn't Stick to the Scripture in Crime of 'Passion' by Andrea Peyser:**

"Dr. Paula Fredriksen of Boston University said: 'Jesus was Jewish. But with this story, it's easy to forget.'"

"Gibson has said his film was to tell the true story of Jesus' death.

"There is still time, Mel, to tell the truth."

**The Jewish Week, March 28, 2003; Sister Mary Boys:**

"As a member of the Catholic Church, I regard his thinking as bizarre and dangerous, and suggest that Jews judge them similarly. ...

"We seem to have at best fringe Catholics if not heretical with ... a tragically twisted understanding of the relationship between Judaism and Christianity. It is compounded by the arrogance great wealth makes possible in producing a film that will reopen wounds of history."

**The Jewish Week, March 28, 2003; Michael Cook:**

"Dr. Michael Cook, a professor of Judaeo-Christian Studies at Hebrew Union College, said, 'Gibson's film may reverse progress the Christian community has made' in reinterpreting anti-Jewish New Testament passages. ...

“‘Were Jesus today to witness the hatred exuded and directed against fellow Jews by this film, might Jesus not construe the theaters showing it as modern ‘temples’ most in need of his cleansing?’”

**The Jewish Week, March 28, 2003; Rev. John Pawlikowski:**

“Father John Pawlikowski ... said he is ‘naturally quite upset at the prospect of this film. ... Those who might see the film without much or any background in recent biblical interpretation will be terribly misled.’”

**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.’”

**Forward, September 26, 2003; Rabbi David Rosen, director of interreligious affairs:**

“This is distressing because there is a battle between the more traditional and the more liberal wings within the Catholic Church, and the relationship with the Jewish community has become a football in this fight.”

**The Jewish Week (NY), August 15, 2003; Rabbi James Rudin:**

“I came away very troubled because this movie as it stands has the potential to harm Christian-Jewish relations in many parts

of the world.”

**Christian Science Monitor (MA), July 10, 2003; Rabbi James Rudin, senior interreligious adviser:**

“Given that this is radioactive material – that’s the only way I can describe it—I’m urging Mr. Gibson to follow what others have done and consult prior to release.”

**Anti-Defamation League**

**Press Release, September 27, 2004; Abraham Foxman, National Director, and Rabbi Gary Bretton-Granatoor, Director of Interfaith Affairs:**

“Recently, the release of Mel Gibson’s film “The Passion of the Christ,” reasserted the anti-Semitism that derives from the work attributed to Sr. Emmerich [Bl. Anne Catherine Emmerich]. Serving as his muse, her visions guided Mr. Gibson in adding elements that do not derive from the Gospel narratives and break with the Second Vatican Council’s teachings. Among these elements include: the association of Jewish characters with the demonic, the destruction of the Second Temple, the benign portrait of Pilate, and the negative characterization of *Jewish guards and leaders*.” [Emphasis added.]

**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:**

“(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 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 [emphasis added]. 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.'"

**Cybercast News Service, November 7, 2003; Abraham Foxman:**

"'I think he's infected—seriously infected—with some very, very serious anti-Semitic views. ...

"'[Gibson's] got classical anti-Semitic views.' ...

"Foxman claimed that 'hate crimes [against Jews] go up Easter week worldwide' because in many Christian churches, 'the sermon is given about the passion.'"

**Associated Press, September 19, 2003; Abraham Foxman:**

"Foxman said the actor 'entertains views that can only be

described as anti-Semitic.'"

**Daily News (NY), September 19, 2003; Abraham Foxman:**

"...Abraham Foxman of the Anti-Defamation League said signs already are ominous.

"‘We’ve been getting mail – ugly, ugly mail,’ he said. ‘If the debate has evoked such hate, what will that film do?’

"Foxman said Gibson’s recent statements—portraying himself as the target of shadowy conspiracies and “anti-Christian” newspapers—highlighted his concerns.

"‘He’s painting a portrait of an anti-Semite,’ he said. ‘This is anti-Semitic stereotyping.’"

**Daily Variety, September 19, 2003; Abraham Foxman:**

"Foxman, who has requested to see but not yet screened the film, said of the cardinal’s comments: ‘It makes the film worse, more damaging, more threatening because what we thought we had eliminated with Vatican II is coming back in a film.’

"Foxman also charged that Castrillon Hoyos was attempting to appease traditionalist Catholics. ‘It seems to be a conscious policy to bring them closer at our expense,’ he said.

"Foxman emphasized that the ADL has had a very good relationship with American Catholic officials, collaborating on interfaith initiatives designed to combat anti-Semitism.

"‘I guess we should now take this up with Rome,’ Foxman said."

**The Jewish Week, September 19, 2003; Abraham Foxman:**

"‘When you put those things together [Mel Gibson’s statements],’ said Foxman, ‘that is a portrait of an anti-Semite. To me this is classic anti-Semitism.’"

**Minnesota Public Radio, "Marketplace," September 9, 2003;**

**Abraham Foxman:**

"Can you imagine, if this film is not changed and it begins to play around the world, what—what it may possibly trigger?"

**Daily News (NY), September 7, 2003; Abraham Foxman:**

"Foxman, who survived the Holocaust because Catholic clergy baptized him to shield him from the Nazis, added, 'I think [Gibson] is on the fringes of anti-Semitism.'"

**National Public Radio, "All Things Considered," September 3, 2003; Abraham Foxman:**

"He said such things as he now understands what Jesus Christ felt like; he understands what it means to be persecuted. Well, finish that sentence. By whom? Or he says this will probably be the last film he's permitted to make. Well, who's going to stop him? It's unstated. Or he made this film and at a tremendous cost, but for some this is a great opportunity to make money. And again, he's talking about Jews, Jewish organizations."

**Houston Chronicle, August 18, 2003; letter by Mark S. Finkelstein, chair, Anti-Defamation League, Southwest Region, Houston:**

"It [the film] threatens to set back the decades of progress that has been made in inter-faith relations between Christians and Jews since the Holocaust."

**Philadelphia Inquirer, August 13, 2003; Abraham Foxman:**

"Abraham Foxman, the [Anti-Defamation League's] national director, had expressed concerns that if Gibson's 'message was tainted, [the movie] is dangerous. He is an icon. People will see this film without a guide, without their priest.'"

**Anti-Defamation League Press Release, August 11, 2003; Abraham Foxman:**

"We are deeply concerned that the film, if released in its present form, will fuel the hatred, bigotry and anti-Semitism that many responsible churches have worked hard to repudiate....

"We hope that Mr. Gibson and Icon Productions will consider modifying 'The Passion,' so that the film will be one that is historically accurate, theologically sound and free of any anti-Semitic message."

**Anti-Defamation League Press Release, August 11, 2003; Rabbi Eugene Korn, ADL Director of Interfaith Affairs:**

"Many theologically informed Catholics and Protestants have expressed the same concerns regarding anti-Semitism, and that this film may undermine Christian-Jewish dialogue and could turn back the clock on decades of positive progress in interfaith relations."

**The Sun (NY), August 4, 2003; Op-Ed, by Abraham Foxman:**

"In a world when anti-Semitism has undergone a frightening resurgence, one of the hopeful perspectives is the fact that the Church has changed so dramatically. We urge the makers of 'The Passion' to continue this important progress that has benefited Christians and Jews."

**The Washington Post, July 22, 2003; Abraham Foxman:**

"'I find this sad,' said ADL National Director Abraham Foxman, who hasn't been permitted to see the movie. 'Here's a man who appeals to the mass audience, but he feels he has to surround himself with a cordon sanitaire of people who back him theologically and maybe ideologically and will stand up and be supportive when the time comes.'"

**Christian Science Monitor (MA), July 10, 2003; Abraham Foxman:**

"We don't have the arrogance to say, 'You should make these changes,' or to censor it.... We'd just like an opportunity to sensitize him [Mel Gibson] about what history has taught us."

**New York Post, June 21, 2003; Letter, Ken Jacobson, Assoc. National Director:**

"We have good reason to be seriously concerned about Gibson's plans to retell the Passion. Historically, the Passion—the story of the killing of Jesus—has resulted in the death of Jews. "

**Daily News (NY), June 14, 2003; Myrna Shinbaum, spokeswoman:**

"'Historically, treatment of the death of Jesus and the passion has led to the death of Jews,' ADL spokeswoman Myrna Shinbaum said. 'Since Vatican II in the 1960s, Catholics and Jews have worked very hard to move away from a literal interpretation [of the New Testament]. We would hope this film wouldn't set us back.'"

**The Jewish Week, March 28, 2003; Abraham Foxman:**

"'It's very serious,' warns Abraham Foxman, national director of Anti-Defamation League. 'The 'truth' he [Mel Gibson] is talking about has been used for 2,000 years to buttress anti-Semitism and to give a rationale for persecuting Jews.'"

**Simon Wiesenthal Center**

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

"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.'"

**Jewish Journal of Greater Los Angeles, August 24, 2003; Rabbi Marvin Hier:**

"It's a headache we don't need. ...

"Now since the Romans are not here anymore, if you're upset with how Jesus died, there's only one people left to blame—and that's the Jews."

**CNN, "CNN Live Sunday," August 10, 2003; Rabbi Marvin Hier:**

"Jews have a right to be concerned. We're the ones that paid the bill in the last 20 centuries for the false charge of



deicide causing millions of deaths.”

**Forward, August 8, 2003, Letter by Harold Brackman, Consultant:**

“It is Christians who bear the responsibility, after 2,000 years of religious-inspired anti-Semitism, to inhibit rather than inflame the excesses of their own haters. When filmmakers with a Christological agenda fail to accept this responsibility, the blood that may result is indeed on their hands.”

**Newsday (NY), July 22, 2003; Rabbi Marvin Hier:**

“This is a story for which millions of people throughout history paid with their lives. They were burned at the stake, killed in pogroms and the Inquisition, and it was also these ideas that served as the foundation of the Holocaust.”

**CNN, “Live From the Headlines,” June 30, 2003; Rabbi Marvin Hier:**

“What I am saying is that four Catholic scholars representing the Catholic bishops, joined five Jewish scholars, unanimously felt there was a great deal of anti-Semitism in the script.”

**Los Angeles Times, June 22, 2003; “Mel’s Passion; Gibson’s making a film on Jesus worries some Jews,” by Rabbi Marvin Hier and Harold Brackman:**

“Any film about such a sensitive subject would set off alarm bells. But a film by Gibson is particularly alarming. ...

“At this tinderbox moment in our new century, we need to be especially careful about a movie that has the potential to further ignite ancient hatreds. “

**MSNBC, Scarborough Country, June 11, 2003; Rabbi Marvin Hier:**

Joe Scarborough, host: “Rabbi, if you read the four gospels –

what do the four gospels in the New Testament say about the crucifixion of Jesus?"

Rabbi Marvin Hier: "Well, first, let me go right to the point. That's a lot of nonsense. Let me say..."

Scarborough: "What's a lot of nonsense?"

Heir: "That the Jews—first of all, crucifixion is illegal according to Jewish law. According to (UNINTELLIGIBLE) law..."

Scarborough: "What's a lot of nonsense, though?"

Heir: "To blame the—Christ was crucified. Crucifixion is not a Jewish method of punishment. Secondly, the event occurred on Passover night. If you could get one Rabbi to leave his Seder to participate in a judgment on Passover night, it would be like getting the Supreme Court to convene in the United States for a night trial. It is simply impossible."

### **Rabbinical Alliance of America**

**Jerusalem Post, September 12, 2003; Letter by Rabbi Abraham B. Hecht and Rabbi Joshua S. Hecht, Rabbinical Alliance of America:**

"The Rabbinical Alliance of America, representing the united voice of 500 Orthodox rabbis serving Jewish communities throughout North America, strongly opposes The Passion, produced by actor and director Mel Gibson.

"The message of this movie—as widely reported by the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles and by others who have reviewed the film—is highly problematic for its historical inaccuracy and its message of intolerance and overt anti-Semitic overtones."

### **Commentary**

### **Columnists**

**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 Christians' memory."

**Saint Paul Pioneer Press, March 20, 2004; “‘Pasion’ 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.”

**The 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 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 cruci-  
"fiction" 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,” Walter Reich, George Washington University:**

“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 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, 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."

**The State (SC), November 20, 2003; "Pass on Gibson's Passion," by Rabbi Marc Howard Wilson:**

"...The wacky perspective of a wacko Catholic will certainly not change their [Jewish] minds."

**Village Voice (NY), November 7, 2003; "Mel Gibson's Jesus Christ Pose," by Jessica Winter:**

"It may instigate violence..."

**Palm Beach Post, October 24, 2003; "Gibson's film all about**

**his own agenda,” by Steve Gushee:**

“Sure, Mel Gibson’s film, *The Passion*, is probably anti-Semitic. The less obvious but more dangerous problem is that the movie about the death of Jesus is probably not Christian.

...

“Any version of the Crucifixion that blatantly ignores the teaching of the church is both devious and probably servant to another agenda.

“Gibson says *The Passion* reflects his faith.

“That may well be, but it’s not Christianity.”

**Philadelphia Daily News, September 24, 2003; “Jews Probably Did Do It–But So What?” by Steven Waldman:**

“Christians who don’t understand Jews’ sensitivity to the misuse of *Passion* narratives are a bit dense. On the other hand, some of the comments from Gibson supporters smell rotten.”

**Newsday (NY), September 23, 2003; “The Power and Clash of Symbols,” by Katti Gray:**

“Whether Hollywood will release ‘*The Passion*,’ filmed with another all-white cast and traversing the last 12 hours of Jesus’ stormy life, is the lingering, unanswered \$25 million question of the moment.”

**New York Times, September 21, 2003; “The Greatest Story Ever Sold,” by Frank Rich:**

“Clearly he [Mel Gibson] was looking for a brawl, and he hasn’t let up since. ...

“What makes the unfolding saga of “*The Passion*” hard to ignore is not so much Mr. Gibson’s playacting fisticuffs but the extent to which his combative marketing taps into larger

angers. The "Passion" fracas is happening not in a vacuum but in an increasingly divided America fighting a war that many on both sides see as a religious struggle."

**Entertainment Weekly, September 5, 2003; "Heaven and Mel," by Jeff Jensen and Allison Hope Weiner:**

"History is populated with people who've gone to extremes in the name of Jesus Christ. Some have died for him. Some have killed for him. And some have made \$ 25 million films about his trial and crucifixion in Aramaic, Latin, and Hebrew without even the benefit of subtitles."

**Boston Globe, August 18, 2003; "Gibson's Contentious 'Passion,'" by Cathy Young:**

"But in its own way, the attitude of some champions of 'The Passion' is troubling... The biblical account of Jesus' life and death should not be sacrificed to political correctness. But the cry of 'political correctness' can also become a cover for very real bigotry."

**Salon.com, August 14, 2003; "Mel Gibson vs. 'The Jews,'" by Christopher Orlet:**

"'The Passion' will most likely offer up the familiar puerile, stereotypical view of the evil Jew calling for Jesus' blood and the clueless Pilate begging him to reconsider. It is a view guaranteed to stir anew the passions of the rabid Christian, and one that will send the Jews scurrying back to the dark corners of history."

**Daily News (NY), August 8, 2003; "Mel Must Act to Stem Rise of Anti-Semitism," by Richard Chesnoff:**

"We've come a long way in Christian-Jewish relations. But now Hollywood's Mel Gibson threatens to set it all back—maybe 2,000 years. ...

"Mostly, Gibson, an enormously popular figure, must decide

whether he wants to be responsible for reviving the kind of hate-filled passions that will send other 7-year-olds running home from school, taunted by gangs calling them 'Christ killers.'"

**Los Angeles Times, August 6, 2003; "'Passion' shaping up as Gibson's lethal weapon," by Tim Rutten:**

"And as the growing controversy over Gibson's 'The Passion' spills more widely onto the nation's op-ed pages, into political magazines and even into the halls of Congress, more than rhetorical bruises are likely to be suffered.

"Even in steady hands, the Passion narrative is as combustible as material can be. "

**The New York Times, August 3, 2003; "Mel Gibson's Martyrdom Complex," by Frank Rich:**

"These days American Jews don't have to fret too much about the charge of deicide—or didn't, until Mel Gibson started directing a privately financed movie called 'The Passion,' about Jesus' final 12 hours. ...

"...damage has been done: Jews have already been libeled by Mr. Gibson's politicized rollout of his film. His game from the start has been to foment the old-as-Hollywood canard that the 'entertainment elite' (which just happens to be Jewish) is gunning for his Christian movie. ...

"But the real question here is why Mr. Gibson and his minions would go out of their way to bait Jews and sow religious conflict, especially at this fragile historical moment."

**The Boston Globe, July 22, 2003; "Is Mel Gibson's Film Passion for Jesus Misplaced?," by Alex Beam:**

"Whatever Gibson's intentions, the film will be perceived as anti-Semitic, because the Christian Bible holds that Jesus was a Jewish prophet rejected and betrayed by his own people."

**New York Post, June 19, 2003; "Mel's Cross to Bear," by Eric Feltmann :**

"Gibson's insistence that the film 'conforms to the narratives of Christ's passion and death found in the four Gospels of the New Testament' is hardly reassuring. Because, to be sure, the gospels, for various historical reasons, do paint Jews in the worst light. "

**New York Post, June 13, 2003; "Mel Doesn't Stick to the Scripture in Crime of 'Passion,'" by Andrea Peyser:**

"Dr. Paula Fredriksen of Boston University said: 'Jesus was Jewish. But with this story, it's easy to forget.'

"Gibson has said his film was to tell the true story of Jesus' death.

" There is still time, Mel, to tell the truth."

**The Boston Globe, April 15, 2003; "The True Horror in the Death of Jesus," by James Carroll:**

"He [Gibson] was referring to the graphic violence with which the film renders the crucifixion, but no matter how grotesque the murder of Jesus was, its 'true horror' lies in the way this event became the source of hatred and murder aimed at the Jewish people. ...

"Even a faithful repetition of the Gospel stories of the death of Jesus can do damage exactly because those sacred texts themselves carry the virus of Jew hatred. ...

"The religious anti-Judaism of the Gospels provided soil out of which grew the racial anti-Semitism of the Holocaust. Once Christians know where the falsely anti-Jewish Passion story led, it is criminal for them to repeat it naively—whether from a pulpit or on a movie screen."

**Letters**

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

"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; Letter:**

"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; Letter:**

"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; Letter:**

"Yes, we know that there are educated people of good faith who will internalize the play's message. Who 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."

**New York Post, November 5, 2003; Letter by NY State Assemblyman Dov Hikind:**

"Though spoken in Aramaic and Latin, Gibson's film doesn't need subtitles; it screams 'The Jews killed Christ' in every scene."

**New York Times, October 5, 2003; Letter:**

"Mel Gibson's ability to pervert and invert scriptural teaching while claiming to uphold it leads me to think his next movie will be a stirring account of Pope Pius XII's life."

**Palm Beach Post, October 1, 2003; Letter:**

"Cardinal Hoyos' position goes beyond mere insensitivity. When the Cardinal supports Mr. Gibson, he assures the fact that anti-Semitism will continue to thrive and flourish."

**People, September 22, 2003; Letter:**

"After the murder of 6 million Jews, the Jewish community in the United States and worldwide should be concerned about the message being sent by Mel Gibson's film.... This dangerous revision is an insult to the memory of the Holocaust and the good Christians who have tried to make amends for the ultimate crime of anti-Semitism."

**Newsday (NY), September 18, 2003; Letter:**

"Gibson's 'The Passion' is 'just' a movie in the same way 'The Protocols of the Elders of Zion' is 'just' a book."

**Journal News (NY), September 9, 2003; Letter:**

"The movie 'Passion' will foster intolerance toward individuals who had nothing to do with the death of Christ. ... Mel Gibson reminds me of Jane Fonda's actions during Vietnam: irresponsibility from individuals who either do not care what events result from their actions or are just too stupid to understand."

### **News Stories**

**Washington Times, December 11, 2004; U.S. Catholic-Jewish Consultation Committee:**

"The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and the U.S. Catholic-Jewish Consultation Committee recently called the film a 'modern version of the notorious medieval Passion Plays which so often over the centuries have triggered riots against the Jews of Europe.'"

**Washington Times, December 11, 2004; John Crossin, Professor, Catholic University of America:**

"Catholics at Catholic University also regarded the movie as an anti-Catholic, anti-papal presentation because the Catholic Church had already interpreted these events..."

**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.’”

**The 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.” [Emphasis added.]

**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 aback 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 (CA), 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 (CA), 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.'"

**The Jewish Week, December 26, 2003; Michael Signer, Professor of Jewish Thought, Notre Dame University:**

"It is time to admit that Catholic-Jewish relations in the United States have reached an all-time low in terms of the energy both sides are giving to the area. ...

"We need to see how deep the miasma is—and Gibson's film is just the symptom—not the cause. ... By the time we get to 2005 and the 40th anniversary of Nostra Aetate...there may be nothing much to celebrate."

**New York Post, November 17, 2003; Elizabeth Castelli, Assistant Professor of Religion, Barnard College, NY:**

"Jews are not fairly portrayed, especially the Jewish leadership. Their portrayal is unhistorical and drew upon Medieval stereotypes—stereotypes that have a history of

inspiring violence against Jews.

“‘I hope those images won’t inspire it today.”

**New York Post, November 17, 2003; The Rev. Mark Hallinan, S.J., St. Ignatius Loyola Church, NY:**

“‘It doesn’t touch on the values that [Jesus] represented and that continue to be a positive force in the world today. ...

“‘Unsophisticated people viewing the film will see Jews as cold, heartless people. ...

“‘It’s contrary to the Gospels. ... Jesus taught us not to persecute our enemies. ...

“Recommendation: ‘Don’t go to see it.’”

**New York Post, November 17, 2003; Rabbi Robert Levine, Vice President, New York Board of Rabbis:**

“Rabbi Robert Levine ‘would have walked out halfway through’ Mel Gibson’s ‘The Passion of Christ’....

“‘I was not prepared for this kind of movie. ... Not knowing what Mel Gibson’s motives are, my visceral reaction was that this is a hateful treatment of Jews.

“‘It hurt me as a Jew to watch it. ... It was the most appalling depiction of Jews in a film in my recollection. It was painful and inaccurate. ...

“‘I don’t think any person of faith should put a dime in Gibson’s coffers. ... This film could reopen wounds that have healed beautifully between Christian and Jews since Vatican II. ...

“Recommendation: ‘I hope no one goes to see it.’”

**New York Post, November 17, 2003; Lou Lumenick, New York Post film critic:**

"...By literally depicting Jews as 'Christ Killers,' [Mel Gibson] is going down a dangerous road that most Christian leaders abandoned decades ago. Unless Gibson provides some sort of historical context, he could—as his detractors charge—be fueling anti-Semitic feelings among less sophisticated Christian audience members."

**Daily Press (VA), October 25, 2003; Roy Anker, Professor of English, Calvin College:**

"Roy Anker, a professor of English at Calvin College who's written about Jesus films for Christianity Today, hasn't seen 'The Passion of Christ.' That is a problem, Anker said. ...

"'I don't think Gibson is anti-Semitic, but he's acting like it,' Anker said, 'judging from how dumb he's being about this.'"

**Scripps Howard News Service, October 1, 2003:**

"'The film is dangerous for Jews all over the world,' said Dov Hikind, a New York state assemblyman and Jewish activist. 'I am concerned that it will lead to violence against Jews.'"

**CNN, "CNN Live Sunday," August 31, 2003; Paul Clinton, CNN Correspondent:**

"He [Mel Gibson] is a very conservative man. He is very, very religious and it's this splinter group, this traditionalist sect of Catholicism that has everybody worried."

**August 29, 2003, Washington Times; Jewish leaders condemn film, by Liz Trotta:**

"'This film can potentially lead to violence directed against the Jewish community,' said Assemblyman Dov Hikind, an Orthodox Jew and Democrat from Brooklyn.

"'It will result in anti-Semitism and bigotry. It really takes us back to the Dark Ages ... the Inquisition, the Crusades, all

for the so-called sin of the Crucifixion of Jesus.' ...

"City Councilman Simcha Felder, a Brooklyn Democrat, said it appeared that Mr. Gibson had a passion for inciting hatred and bigotry, and that his movie should go straight to the video stores instead of theaters.

"Malka Moskowitz, an elderly woman from Brooklyn wearing a straw hat, said she was a Holocaust survivor and compared the atmosphere of dispute surrounding the movie with the bloody reign of the Third Reich. 'This is the way it started,' she said, her voice breaking.

"A rabbi from Brooklyn called the film pornography. He told Mr. Donohue that he would be responsible if violence broke out."

**CNBC, "Capital Report," July 22, 2003; Gloria Borger, Co-host:**

"Everyone at the super-secret screening was forced to sign a confidentiality agreement, but—and no surprise here—the details soon leaked out. And again no surprise, the handpicked crowd liked what it saw. "

### **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 5, 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 him in 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 there 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**

**Video USA, 90 Rancho Del Mar, Aptos, CA, August 31,  
2004; [letter to customers](#):**

“We abhor the effect “The Passion” will have on young people who accept it as a truthful depiction of history. We decline from making it available to those who might be adversely influenced by it and we refuse to profit from it.

“We lived in the time of the Holocaust. We lived when here in America there were unpunished lynchings. We lived in a time when gangs searched out and beat up “Christ Killers” as a celebration of Easter. ...

“We know the power film has in ‘teaching history.’ We remember Joseph Goebbels [sic], Hitler’s minister of propaganda, proving that if one tells people anything often enough they will believe it. Filmed epics, truthful or whimsical, often become reality in the minds of those with no contradicting experience.

“There are many good films with positive values which we are proud to offer. Consider watching [other films] instead of that invented pageant by the son of a man who insists that the Holocaust never happened.”

**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."

**"Imus in the Morning," September 24, 2003; Comedian Bill Maher:**

"I do think Mel Gibson is anti-Semitic."

**August 28, 2003; sign at protest urging News Corp. not to distribute "The Passion," New York:**

"THE PASSION IS A LETHAL WEAPON AGAINST JEWS."

**More Catholic League material on "The Passion":**

[VIDEO USA BANS "THE PASSION"](#) (*Catalyst*, 11/04)

[ATTACKS ON MEL CONTINUE](#) (*Catalyst*, 11/04)

[DVD SALES OF "THE PASSION" ENRAGE CRITICS](#) (9/17/04)

[PAULA COMMITS GENOCIDE](#) (*Catalyst*, 9/04)

[VIOLENCE AND "THE PASSION" \(PART ONE\)](#) (*Catalyst*, 6/04)

[VIOLENCE AND "THE PASSION" \(PART TWO\)](#) (*Catalyst*, 6/04)

["THE PASSION" CONTINUES TO EXCITE](#) (*Catalyst*, 5/04)



[TWO MONTHS AFTER "THE PASSION": BODY COUNT-ZERO](#) (4/21/04)

[PROMINENT CONSERVATIVES JOIN THE CHORUS AGAINST "THE PASSION"](#)(*Catalyst*, 4/04)

[EVEN PLAYING DIRTY DIDN'T WORK](#) (*Catalyst*, 4/04)

["THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST" SETS NEW RECORDS](#) (*Catalyst*, 4/04)

[ONE MONTH AFTER "THE PASSION": BODY COUNT-ZERO](#) (3/24/04)

[VATICAN SPOKESMAN: "THE PASSION" IS NOT ANTI-SEMITIC](#) (3/12/04)

[CRITICS OF "THE PASSION" CRACKUP](#) (3/8/04)

[CRITICS SEE PORN AND S&M IN "THE PASSION"](#) (3/5/04)

[ADL "PASSION" GUIDE FOR TEENS IS FLAWED](#) (3/3/04)

[NYPD MONITORS "THE PASSION" FOR HATE CRIME](#) (3/2/04)

["THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST" OPENS AMIDST FUROR](#)(*Catalyst*, 3/04)

[SAINT MEL](#) (2/26/04)

["PASSION" CRITICS EVINCE NEW PURITANISM](#) (2/24/04)

["THE PASSION" WOUNDS THEOLOGIANS' EGOS](#) (2/23/04)

[ATTACKING MEL'S DAD](#) (2/19/04)

[FOES OF "THE PASSION" CRACKING UP](#) (2/19/04)

[ABE FOXMAN NEEDS A REALITY CHECK](#) (2/18/04)

[FOX NEWS TWISTS FACTS ON GIBSON FILM](#) (2/13/04)

[IS MEL AN ANTI-SEMITES?](#) (2/12/04)

[WILL JEWS BE ASSAULTED AFTER "THE PASSION"?](#) (2/10/04)

[AN OPEN LETTER TO THE JEWISH COMMUNITY](#)

[DEMAND FOR "THE PASSION" TICKETS EXPLODES](#) (1/29/04)

[CRITICS OF "THE PASSION" PLAY DIRTY](#) (1/27/04)

[ADL INSULTS CHRISTIANS OVER MEL GIBSON'S FILM; APOLOGY REQUESTED](#) (1/26/04)

["THE EARLY SHOW" DISTORTS MEL GIBSON'S REMARKS](#) (1/26/04)

[POLITICS AND SPIN OVER "THE PASSION"](#) (1/23/04)

[2003 REPORT ON ANTI-CATHOLICISM: "THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST"](#)  
(2003 *Annual Report*)

[POPE GIVES KUDOS TO MEL GIBSON'S MOVIE](#) (12/17/03)

[VATICAN OFFICIALS GIVE KUDOS TO MEL GIBSON](#) (12/9/03)

[ADL TO HOST ATTACK ON MEL GIBSON](#) (11/4/03)

[THE MEL GIBSON CONTROVERSY AS SEEN THROUGH THE EYES OF AN ORTHODOX JEW](#) (*Catalyst*, 11/03)

[BILL MAHER BRANDS MEL GIBSON ANTI-SEMITIC](#) (9/24/03)

[ADL SEEKS TO POISON CATHOLIC-JEWISH RELATIONS](#) (9/18/03)

[REACTION TO MEL GIBSON'S FILM REACHES HYSTERICAL LEVEL](#) (8/27/03)

[ADL ATTACK ON "THE PASSION" IS UNFAIR](#) (8/12/03)

[THE NEW REPUBLIC LIBELS MEL GIBSON](#) (7/21/03)

[CATHOLIC BISHOPS DID NOT CONDEMN GIBSON MOVIE](#) (7/1/03)

[ADL ATTACKS MEL GIBSON](#) (6/25/03)

**Note on the Ad Hoc Committee:**

\* "Neither the Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, nor any other committee of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, established this group, or authorized, reviewed or approved the report written by its members" (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Office

of Communications: [Ecumenical and Interreligious Committee Responds To News Report](#), June 11, 2003).

“We regret that this situation has occurred, and offer our apologies. I have further advised the scholars group that this draft screenplay is not considered representative of the film and should not be the subject of further public comment. When the film is released, the USCCB will review it at that time” (Mark Chopko, general counsel for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops).

“The [ad hoc committee members] do not represent either individually, or together, an official film review committee of the USCCB” (Letter from Rev. Arthur L. Kennedy, Executive Director, Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops).

**The members of the Ad Hoc Committee are as follows:**

Sr. Mary C. Boys, Union Theological Seminary

Michael J. Cook, Hebrew Union College

Philip A. Cunningham, Boston College

Eugene J. Fisher, Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs,  
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Paula Fredriksen, Boston University

Fr. Lawrence E. Frizzell, Seton Hall University

Eugene Korn, Anti-Defamation League

Amy-Jill Levine, Vanderbilt University

Fr. John T. Pawlikowski, Catholic Theological Union

\*\* This comment prompted the Catholic League to issue a news release on January 26, 2004, available [here](#).