


# “The Passion of the Christ”

*The following is a list of some of the more incendiary remarks made in 2003 about the Mel Gibson movie, “The Passion of the Christ.” We do not maintain that it is anti-Catholic to criticize a film, even before it has been released, but we do contend that the hostility to Gibson and to his work is unseemly. The campaign against him has been ruthless, and that is why the Catholic League mounted a counter-offensive.* 

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## Organizational Responses

### Ad Hoc Committee of Catholic and Jewish Scholars

***The Jewish Week* (NY), December 26, 2003; Father John T. Pawlikowski, Director of the Catholic-Jewish Studies Program, Catholic Theological Union:**

[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, Professor of Judaeo-Christian Studies, Hebrew Union College:**

“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, Professor of Practical Theology, Union Theological Seminary:**  
"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, Professor of the Appreciation of Scripture, Boston University:**  
"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:**

"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* (NY), 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, Professor of New Testament Studies, Vanderbilt University:**

“I don’t know if the film is anti-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:**

“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. Pilate 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."

***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."

***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; Paula Fredriksen:**

“Jesus was Jewish. But with this story, it’s easy to forget.”

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

“As a member of the Catholic Church, I regard his [Mel Gibson’s] 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:**

“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:**

“Those who might see the film without much or any background in recent biblical interpretation will be terribly misled.”

**American Jewish Committee**

***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, senior interreligious adviser:**

“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:**

“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**

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

“I think he’s infected—seriously infected—with some very, very serious anti-Semitic views. ... [Gibson’s] got classical anti-Semitic views. ...

“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:**

“[Mel Gibson] entertains views that can only be described as anti-Semitic.”

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

“We’ve been getting mail—ugly, ugly mail. If the debate has evoked such hate, what will that film do?

“[Mel Gibson]’s painting a portrait of an anti-Semite. 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 [Cardinal Hoyos's praise for the film]: '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. ...

"'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:**

"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:**

"[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."

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

"I find this sad. ... 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, Associate 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* (NY), March 28, 2003; Abraham Foxman:**  
“It’s very serious. ... 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**

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

“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 (NY), 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.”

**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—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."

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Commentary

### **Columnists**

***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."

***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."

***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.”

**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. ...

"[D]amage 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."

***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 Fottmann:**

"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:**

"Gibson has said his film was to tell the true story of Jesus' death. There is still time, Mel, to tell the truth."

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

"[N]o matter how grotesque the murder of Jesus was, its 'true horror' lies in the way this event [the Crucifixion] 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**

***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**

***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. ... Don't go to see it."

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

"[I]would have walked out halfway through [the film]. ... 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. ... 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."

**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.'"

***Washington Times*, August 29, 2003; "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."

### **Miscellaneous**

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

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

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

"THE PASSION IS A LETHAL WEAPON AGAINST JEWS."