

“THE TEN” AMUSES CRITICS; DOUBLE STANDARD IS NAUSEATING

“The Ten” is billed as an irreverent comedy (rated “R” for crudeness) that ridicules the Ten Commandments; it opens on August 3 in select theaters. Here is what film critics are saying about it:

- “Only Christians with a very liberal sense of humor are likely to enjoy ‘The Ten.’ Even lay viewers will need to be tolerant of gags as envelope-pushing as anything in ‘Borat.’” [Variety]
- “[Gretchen] Mol stars as a 35-year-old virgin who gets deflowered—in lusty romance novel fashion on a trip to Mexico. Her hunky lover boy’s name? Jesus Christ.” [philly.com]
- “The Ten is, I guess, sacrilegious in the strictest sense of the term...” [slantmagazine.com]
- “The Ten is cohesive in the irreverence of its scenarios (in my favorite, Jesus Christ—Justin Theroux as a disheveled, overly hirsute carpenter...)” [notcoming.com]
- “Mol plays a mousy librarian...who travels alone to Mexico and has a wildly sexual fling with a local handyman named Jesus H. Christ (Justin Theroux in long hair and beard).” [AP]
- “They’re almost gleeful in their crudity; grinning ever-wider as they seem to ask the audience just who this bit of blasphemy is hurting.” [eflimcritic.com]
- “Comprised of ten blasphemous vignettes, each inspired by one of the Biblical Commandments, [it] goes out of its way to be irreverent and hilarious....” [emanuellevy.com]
- “The Ten is as sacrilegious as 1979’s The Life of Brian...” [filmstew.com]
- “‘The Ten’ is comprised of 10 blasphemous and hysterical stories that put the insanity back in Christianity.” [Roger Ebert]
- “(By the way, I did mention that conservative Christians may

find this film offensive?)” [independentcritics.com]

Catholic League president Bill Donohue had this to say: “If Hollywood were to substitute Muhammad for Jesus, it is a sure bet that many of these same critics wouldn’t find the humor in it. Moreover, we’d all be watching the fallout that such a movie would engender on the evening news.”

CATHOLIC-BASHING PLAYS ARE HOT

Bill Donohue, president of the Catholic League, offered the following comments today on the popularity of Catholic-bashing plays:

“The Helen Hayes Theatre in New York must be experiencing hard times these days, otherwise it wouldn’t be home to ‘Kiki & Herb: Alive on Broadway.’ According to *Variety*, the play claims that the Catholic Church is run by the Nazis and that ‘the devil really does wear Prada’; the devil is the pope. To show how timely they are, the play’s producers manage to squeeze in a smack at Mel Gibson, dropping the line ‘now he wants the Jews to treat him like they’re Christians.’ According to the Associated Press, ‘Catholics routinely come in for a thrashing, as do Republicans and anti-gay advocates.’ Guess that covers the bases. But this isn’t enough to satisfy the depraved appetites of the audience, which is why there is a discussion about a pet cow—actually a stuffed animal—who ‘ate the afterbirth of Jesus in Bethlehem and later became a show pony for the pope.’ Now would anyone want to have dinner with someone who thought this was funny?

“Another stellar play, ‘Mitzi’s Abortion,’ completes its run

on August 20 at Seattle's ACT Theatre. Mitzi is unsure whether she wants to abort her baby and seeks advice from none other than St. Thomas Aquinas. Guess what he has to say? According to a Seattle newspaper, *the Stranger*, Aquinas says, 'This inane position that the Church has taken lately which gives an embryo moral standing as a human person from the moment of conception! It's ludicrous. But these puppies are eating it up like kibble!' No one, of course, eats this stuff up more than those who consider this to be entertainment.

"Bigots in Chicago are running to the Oracle to see—one more time—'Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All For You.' This perennial features a vicious nun who rails against her dysfunctional students, derides the teachings of the Catholic Church, attacks Jesus and disparages the Virgin Mary. It has an almost cult following among the morally destitute.

"My guess is that those who spend money to see this fare are mostly angry old ex-Catholics stuck in a time warp. They'll never move on."a

"SOUTH PARK'S" FORCED MORAL EQUIVALENCY

On July 19, Comedy Central will re-air the "South Park" episode "Trapped in the Closet." The cartoon, which originally aired on November 16, 2005, was removed from Comedy Central's schedule of reruns in May by network officials after it angered Scientologists. Speaking to *Variety* magazine about episodes causing controversy, co-creator Matt Stone, cited "Trapped," a December 7, 2005 episode called "Bloody Mary," and his recent efforts to depict the Islamic prophet

Mohammed. According to Stone, "the mantra has always been everything is fair game."

Commenting on this is Catholic League president Bill Donohue:

"It is not accurate to put 'Bloody Mary' in the same category with 'Trapped.' 'Bloody Mary' not only ridicules Catholic beliefs, it does so in an obscene fashion. During the program, a statue of the Virgin Mary is shown 'bleeding out her ass' and spraying passers-by with the blood. After being called in to investigate, Pope Benedict XVI declares that the statue is merely bleeding out of the vagina. In addition, previous episodes of the show depicted priests as depraved lechers.

"There is no doubt that 'Trapped' lambastes Scientology. It mocks its celebrity adherents and portrays Scientology's president admitting the organization is nothing more than a global scam. The program also portrays a version of Scientology's creation story in a buffoonish manner. However, unlike 'Bloody Mary,' 'Trapped' is neither obscene nor vulgar.

"In addition, Comedy Central has recently been quite careful not to offend Muslims. Despite the creators' attempt to depict Mohammed in the episode 'Cartoon Wars,' the network's top brass blocked out his cartoon image. Stone and co-creator Trey Parker then expressed their frustration with their bosses' hypocrisy by depicting Jesus defecating on an American flag.

"Putting 'Bloody Mary' in the same category with 'Trapped in the Closet' and 'Cartoon Wars' forces a moral equivalency that does not exist. Indeed, Scientologists are ridiculed, Muslims are appeased, and Catholic holy figures are depicted in the most degrading of fashions. It is obvious that the Catholic Church bears the brunt of Comedy Central's scorn."

“DA VINCI CODE” BOMBS WITH CRITICS

Here's a sample of what critics who previewed "The Da Vinci Code" yesterday had to say about the movie:

- "Dud"; Unwieldy"; "Plodding." (Reuters)
- "A Bloated Puzzle"; "The movie is so drenched in dialogue musing over arcane mythological and historical lore and scenes grow so static that even camera movement can't disguise the dramatic inertia"; "No chemistry exists between the hero and the heroine." (*Hollywood Reporter*)
- "Almost as bad as the book." (*Boston Globe*)
- "High-minded lurid material sucked dry by a desperately solemn approach"; They've "drained all the fun out of the melodrama." (*Variety*)
- When the movie "takes a brief wrong turn, and Howard momentarily loses control of his huge, streamlined vehicle, it's hard to say where to put the blame." (FoxNews.com)
- "Critics Crucify 'Da Vinci Code.'" (Australian Associated Press)
- "Critics largely panned the cinematic version"; "The movie did receive some lukewarm praise, but the majority of the response was highly critical"; "One scene during the film, meant to be serious, elicited prolonged laughter from the audience. There was no applause when the credits rolled; instead, a few catcalls and hisses broke the silence." (CNN)
- "At one point, some of them responded in the auditorium with laughter to one of the developments in the plot—something director Ron Howard would not have

anticipated.” (Press Association Newsfile)

- “Shrugs of indifference, some jeering laughter and a few derisive jabs”; “The Cannes audience clearly grew restless as the movie dragged on to two and a half hours and spun a long sequence of anticlimactic revelations”; “Some people walked out during the movie’s closing minutes...and there was none of the scattered applause even bad movies sometimes receive at Cannes.” (AP)

Bill Donohue said, “If Ron Howard is being laughed at by those predisposed to believe the worst about Catholicism, he’s an utter failure.”

“DA VINCI CODE” SHROUDED IN SECRECY

Catholic League president Bill Donohue commented today on the secretive nature of “The Da Vinci Code”:

“The Associated Press recently observed that Dan Brown ‘has given few interviews,’ something the New York *Daily News* explains by calling him a ‘reclusive author.’ But if Brown is naturally reticent, the same is not true of those working on the film version of Brown’s book: their silence is a calculated and well-coordinated decision.

“In May 2005, *Variety* tried to squeeze some juice from the movie’s director and producers. They didn’t get a squirt. ‘We’ve made a pact...where we have numbered scripts and everything is extremely confidential,’ admitted co-producer Brian Grazer. So what about Father Richard McBrien, the Notre Dame theologian who was given a copy of the screenplay? McBrien said he was under contractual obligations not to

talk. By August 2005, the *New York Times* would write that 'Sony has dropped a scrim of secrecy' over the film. Indeed, the *Times* reported that 'The script has been closely controlled. Outsiders have been banned from the set. And those associated with the film have had to sign confidentiality agreements.'

"As we get closer to the film's premiere, the secrecy continues. *Time* recently noted that critics expected to see the movie in April, but have since learned that they're being shut out. *Entertainment Weekly* adds that 'Virtually everything about [the movie]...has been kept double top secret from the public.' Indeed, even the room where the final editing is taking place is marked 'DENTAL RECORDS,' further proof of how mysterious everything is.

"And they say the Catholic Church is secretive? But who could be more secretive than everyone associated with the 'Da Vinci Code' enterprise? Not Opus Dei—the latest issue of *People* gets it right when it refers to the lay organization as a 'once-secret group.' How ironic it is that the most uptight persons involved in this whole affair are the laid-back types in Hollywood? By contrast, the Catholic Church is an open book."

COUNTY OFFICIALS URGED TO ERECT CRECHES

Catholic League president Bill Donohue commented today on the Catholic League's latest Christmas campaign:

"Several weeks ago, we sent a booklet, [*Religious Expression at Christmastime*](#), to every county administrator in the nation;

there are 3,100 of them. The booklet encourages these officials to erect a nativity scene on public property. 'There is no law which says you must do so,' we said, 'but it is also true that *there is no law which prohibits you from doing so.*' Indeed, we stressed that for the past ten years, the Catholic League has received a permit from the New York City Parks Department that allows us to put a crèche in Central Park.

"As we pointed out, in 1995, the Supreme Court ruled in *Capitol Square Review Board v. Pinette* that privately sponsored religious displays must be allowed on public property if other forms of expression are permitted in the same location. Our booklet is replete with guidelines on this issue that should prove to be helpful to county administrators.

"There is much ignorance in this area. For example, in Wellesley, Massachusetts, town officials tentatively approved a policy that allows religious groups to display holiday decorations. That's great, except that their idea of fairness is to put a Jewish religious symbol, namely the menorah, alongside such secular Christian symbols as a Christmas tree and wreaths. Equity demands that a crèche be put alongside a menorah.

"It's even worse in Lansing, Michigan. Town officials recently erected a state 'Holiday' tree there. Jerry Lawler, executive director of the Michigan Capitol Committee, boasted that the 'Holiday' tree was meant to be inclusive. So he said it was okay by him to call it a 'Kwanzaa tree' or the 'Hanukkah tree' or the 'solstice tree.' In other words, he said it was okay to call it anything but what it is—a Christmas tree.

"The National Christmas Tree Lighting will take place on Thursday in D.C. We would like to hear from all those who might be offended, and why."

to orgasm. 'Mr. X,' one of Kinsey's most treasured discoveries, was just the kind of guy to do the dirty work. According to Kinsey biographer James T. Jones, 'Mr. X' was a pedophile who 'masturbated infants, penetrated children, and performed a variety of other sexual acts on pre-adolescent boys and girls alike.' To Kinsey's delight, he proved he could ejaculate in ten seconds.

"None of this, of course, was shown in the movie. No matter, the *Dallas Observer*, the *Chicago Tribune*, *Daily Variety* and *Slate* all said that the film 'Kinsey' was 'moving.' Jack Mathews of the *New York Daily News* described Kinsey as an 'odd genius,' while most everyone else is saying the movie should get an Oscar. Hear that, Mel?

"Regarding 'Birth,' the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* says the 'taboo' tub scene was 'the film's greatest strength.' And Rex Reed in the *New York Observer* protested that 'the film was viciously attacked as 'kiddie porn.'

"Kinsey's assistant, Wardell Pomeroy, admitted in 1972 that his boss' goal was to tear down the Judeo-Christian understanding of sexuality. This sheds light on why Hollywood only objects to predatory priests. In any event, 'Kinsey' is only opening today in New York and Los Angeles, thus proving once again the red-blue divide is no stereotype."

HOLLYWOOD PLAY ATTACKS GAY PRIESTS

"A Comfortable Truth: The Story of a Boy and His Priest" opened January 24 in the West Hollywood Lee Strasberg Creative Center; it runs through February 22. The play's website says

the work addresses "the controversial subject of juvenile molestation in the Church."

Written and directed by Mark Kemble, and produced by David Lee Strasberg, the play was reviewed favorably by Joel Hirschhorn in *Daily Variety*. Hirschhorn credits the actor who plays the boy for delivering "each church-crucifying zinger masterfully," and takes particular note of the scene where the boy screams "eat my brains." To demonstrate that the boy has been traumatized by the molesting priest, the kid is depicted playing in a rock group by the name "Fourth Reich Vatican Nazis." Thus do Kemble and Strasberg take another shot at the Catholic Church.

William Lobdell of the *Los Angeles Times* said, "The play's set looks like a cross between a church and a bombed out train station with a few religious icons, including a busted Madonna fallen to the floor...a crucifix disguised as a piece of junk—scraps of wood and metal topped by an upside-down milk pail with the spout serving as Christ's nose."

Here's what Catholic League president William Donohue said about it:

"When asked about his work, Mark Kemble said the play was about 'the danger of blind faith in the leaders of any religious organization.' But this is not true—there is no disparagement of any religion save Catholicism. Of the homosexual scandal in the Church, he says, 'I don't think it's an aberration.' Nor do I think it's an aberration that the people responsible for this play are from Hollywood.

"In a time when Catholic and Jewish elites are about to suffer cardiac arrest over Mel Gibson's film, it is instructive to note that none has said a word about this portrayal of a gay molesting priest. Nor will they—they are too busy instructing Mel how to portray Jews in 'The Passion.'"

CRITICS OF “THE PASSION” PLAY DIRTY

Catholic League president William Donohue spoke today about some of the critics of the Mel Gibson movie, “The Passion of the Christ”:

“It is one thing to criticize a movie, quite another to engage in vicious *ad hominem* attacks on the person behind the film. To be specific, Rabbi Marvin Hier of the Simon Wiesenthal Center is quoted in today’s *Daily Variety* saying that ‘No responsible Jew has made the accusation that Gibson is an anti-Semite.’ Wrong. On September 19, Abraham Foxman, national director of the ADL, said Gibson is ‘painting a portrait of an anti-Semite.’ On the same day Foxman added that Gibson ‘entertains views that can only be described as anti-Semitic.’ And on November 7, Foxman said the following: ‘I think he’s infected—seriously infected—with some very, very serious anti-Semitic views....[Gibson’s] got classical anti-Semitic views.’ Sounds like an indictment to us.

“Then there are the smear merchants who attack Mel’s father. In an interview that appeared last March in the *New York Times Magazine*, Hutton Gibson questioned the figure of 6 million Jews killed in the Holocaust, something many Jewish scholars have done. He did not *deny* the Holocaust, though it has often been reported that way. But why do the comments of a man who is in his mid-80s, and who has nothing to do with the film, matter so much? Unless, of course, the name of the game is to brand both Mel and his father as bigots. Even as recently as January 23, we were questioned by a producer at CBS about Mel’s father. We were asked whether he is a Holocaust denier; what his reaction to the film is; and

whether he is a member of the Catholic League.

“And consider this: when Rabbi Hier was asked on MSNBC to comment on the film, he directed his comments at Mel, not the movie. Referring to the *Times Magazine* piece, he said, ‘Gibson made it very clear that he wants to go back to the good old days, before, he says, the Catholic Church was spoiled by Vatican II.’ In short, beware of Latin Mass Catholics—they don’t like Jews.

“This movie should be subjected to the same kind of artistic scrutiny that accompanies any film. But the *ad hominem* attacks must stop.”

VIACOM: FIRST IN CATHOLIC-BASHING BROADCASTING

Catholic League president William Donohue today wrote to Sumner Redstone, Chairman and CEO of Viacom, asking him to do something about his company’s apparent disregard for Catholic sensibilities. Viacom owns Infinity Broadcasting and WNEW is an Infinity station: the “Opie and Anthony” show (WNEW) is currently the target of an FCC investigation, triggered by the Catholic League, over the show’s decision to broadcast a description of a live sex act in St. Patrick’s Cathedral on August 15.

To make matters worse for Redstone, the Catholic League has learned that Comedy Central (another Viacom holding) announced in May that it was spending \$5 million on local and national radio, including the “Opie and Anthony” show. Comedy Central aired a particularly vicious attack on Catholicism on its July 3RD episode of “South Park.” Indeed, on August 14, the day

that the offensive "South Park" episode was repeated, Comedy Central posted on the home page of its website the following quip: "The episode the Catholic League denounced. What other reason do you need to watch it?" This episode maligned all priests as pedophiles and was so bad that when Donohue appeared on the "Phil Donahue" show on August 7, Donahue showed a clip of it so that Donohue could comment on it.

Donohue issued the following comment today:

"Last year, we took out a full-page ad in *Variety* asking Sumner Redstone whether he agreed with the decision of Viacom-owned Showtime to air a movie adaptation of the Catholic bashing play, 'Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All for You.' Now, under Redstone's watch, comes this double-barrel attack on Catholicism. The time has come for Redstone to stop his bickering with Viacom COO Mel Karmazin and start acting like a responsible corporate leader by telling his subordinates to cease and desist in their attacks on Catholicism. Just as Enron is now synonymous with corporate irresponsibility in the energy sector, Viacom is fast becoming synonymous with corporate irresponsibility in the broadcasting sector. Only Redstone can reverse this pattern of corporate abuse."