

“THE DA VINCI CODE” FILM STIRS CONTROVERSY

Not a single frame has been shot in the film version of “The Da Vinci Code” and already it is the source of controversy. England’s famous Westminster Abbey has refused to allow Columbia pictures the right to use its cathedral, saying it would be “inappropriate” to allow filming.

The movie, which is based on the best-selling book, is not scheduled to be released until May 2006. No matter, major media outlets are already tapping Bill Donohue to jump into the fray; he did so with interviews on the “Today” show and on “Paula Zahn Now.”

In his August 10 appearance on NBC’s “Today” show, Donohue mentioned that he wrote to the movie’s director, Ron Howard, back in March requesting that a disclaimer be put in the beginning of the movie saying it is a work of fiction. Though the book was marketed as a novel, author Dan Brown maintained in interviews that it is based on historical truth. This is why Donohue said, “You want to play it both ways and tell us this is an admixture of fact and fiction. You’re going to incur the wrath of the Catholic League.”

When he was interviewed by Paula Zahn on CNN, Donohue outlined his concerns: “I don’t like the genre of docudrama. It’s either a documentary or it’s a drama. I didn’t like it with Oliver Stone, I didn’t like it with Alex Haley. And I don’t like it when they’re playing fast and loose with my church, making up lies about the Catholic Church.”

Donohue’s biggest objection is the book’s questioning of the divinity of Jesus. As he said to Zahn, “We have 25 accounts in the Gospels, and 40 [additional ones] in the New Testament talking about the divinity of Jesus Christ. What he’s [Brown]

trying to say is that this whole thing is a ruse. Now, Hollywood wouldn't make a movie, 'The Protocols of the Elders of Zion,' which is notoriously anti-Semitic...."

Donohue made hay with the remark of John Calley, the film's co-producer, who recently admitted that the movie is "anti-Catholic." Donohue said, "I love it when he did that, because it's no longer Bill Donohue saying this movie is anti-Catholic." That sure does seem to settle the issue. Stay tuned.