

Secular Director Takes Another Worldly Jab at Christ

Here we go again. Another blasphemous anti-Christian movie is in the works. Moviemaker Paul Verhoeven appears to be on the verge of making a major film to totally besmirch Jesus.

The Dutch director who made *Basic Instinct*, *Robocop* and *Showgirls* now has reportedly found funding and a writer for a movie to be based on his 2010 book, *Jesus of Nazareth*.

The book asserts the myth that Jesus may have been the product of a rape of the not-so-Virgin Mary by a Roman soldier. That statement alone says all you need about this upcoming movie, if indeed it ever makes the big screen. I pray it will not.

According to the scholars, even ones not friendly to conservative Christianity, there isn't a shred of historical evidence for the premise of Verhoeven's proposed film. Thus, the whole thing will help promulgate a lie. We're entitled to our own opinions, but not our own facts.

Dr. Paul L. Maier, a best-selling author who is a Harvard-trained professor of ancient history at Western Michigan University, sent me an email statement on the idea that Jesus was a product of a rape:

"This crude, worthless claim is old and discarded by all serious scholars. The rapist Roman soldier was supposedly a fellow named 'Pantera,' which is a corruption and misunderstanding of *parthenos*, Greek for *virgin* and applied to Mary. This is an example of the silly season on sensational Jesus claims."

I also sought a comment from Dr. Darrell L. Bock of Dallas Theological Seminar. He wrote me, "Assuming (the story about the movie) is real, you can simply note this charge is a later

effort to slander Christian claims and is not historical.”

Although a filmmaker and not a theologian per se, Mr. Verhoeven has been a part of a radical group of 70-plus scholars called the Jesus Seminar. This group sat in judgment on the words of Jesus as found in the four Gospels. They voted—anonynously—that Jesus supposedly only said (for sure) 18 percent of that which is attributed to Him in the Gospels. Their judgments were not based on any manuscript issues, but rather their own opinions. (They threw out everything Jesus said in the Gospel of John—even though John was an eyewitness of Jesus.)

The late theologian and author, James Montgomery Boice, once said of the Jesus Seminar:

“Imagine a group of scholars, now—2,000 years from the time that Jesus lived and whose words were written down by eye witnesses—a group of scholars 2,000 years later voting in a meeting on what Jesus really said and what He didn’t. That is laughable.”

If Verhoeven makes his movie, here’s an easy prophecy to make: It will fail spectacularly.

When I first heard about this potentially upcoming movie the other week from my favorite missionary to Hollywood, Dr. Ted Baehr, publisher of Movieguide, I said to him in an email about these kinds of anti-Christian movies: “We get darned if we do (speak out against it, which supposedly increases the attendance) and darned if we don’t.”

Ted responded: “Since we do the numbers, I have never ever seen speaking out drive up box office (traffic). That is an urban myth. We have countered many movies and television (shows). *The Last Temptation of Christ* cost over \$50 million, and made about \$8 million. We pulled the teeth on *Golden Compass*. We got *Playboy Club* and *GCB* off TV.”

I remember well, back in 1988, the controversy surrounding Martin Scorsese's blasphemous movie *The Last Temptation of Christ* that Ted refers to.

Some of the \$8 million or so that it made came because of moviegoers that wanted to defy the Christian protesters. As a Jewish friend of mine told me at the time, he went to see the film because "Jerry Falwell made (him) do it." My friend told me that as a movie, it was horrible—not that he had any qualms about the bad theology or bad history. He said that that film belonged only in art theaters or the like. (No offense to art theaters.)

Successfully (and respectfully) translating Jesus to the big screen is obviously not always easy. Perhaps that's part of the reason for the old notion that religion is box office poison.

But didn't Mel Gibson prove that wrong? In 2004, knowing that Hollywood had already shunned him for daring to make *The Passion of the Christ*, he successfully marketed his movie to the church crowd.

During Lent 2004, he managed to fill many theater seats with his very moving picture. His movie made hundreds of millions of dollars, even though it totally lacked Hollywood's imprimatur.

Gibson proved that there was a huge potential audience for pro-faith movies. He crashed through the gates and paved the way for more faith-friendly box office fare.

I remember shortly after that, Hollywood released *Saved*, a very anti-Christian movie about religious hypocrites at a Christian school. The moguls probably figured, "Hey, maybe religion sells after all." So they released the movie—which bombed—because generally Christians aren't going to see a movie that ridicules their faith and degrades their Savior.

The difference between *The Passion of the Christ* and *Saved*—apart from all the quality differences as to —was the difference between showing respect versus denigrating the professed religion of the majority of Americans. That's the difference between *The Passion* and Verhoeven's movie if it ever makes it to the silver screen.

Click [here](#) for the original article at Movieguide.