

VT-880 Transcription

Discussion of movie *The Last Temptation of Christ*.

21 May 1991.

NARRATOR: In some ways, the heat of the summer of 1988 centered around theaters like this one, in communities across the country, as the movie, *The Last Temptation of Christ* came to the silver screen, sparking a variety of intense reactions. (inaudible crowd noise)

M: I'm against anything that'll defame the word of God and defame Christ, because he is the son of God.

M: There's no sensitivity to the Christian view, and there's no courtesy to the Christian view.

F: Selling out to the Lord for your five dollars.

M: God bless you, you have your decision, and I have my decision.

F: We don't want, you know, have our Lord blasphemed, you know, [01:00] I don't want to hurt anyone, but I don't want anyone to have the wrong idea about our Lord either.

M: Basically, we were advised by police headquarters that they had received a bomb threat. A decision was made to play it safe, and vacate the theater, and hold a search.

M: I just want to see for myself before I pass judgment on it.

M: If I keep one person from showing up at this movie, it'll be worth it to me.

NARRATOR: This artistic work of Martin Scorsese, one of Hollywood's most noted directors, became the topic of talk shows and commentaries from coast to coast. Not to evaluate the movie, per se, but the philosophical premise of the movie's portrayal of Jesus Christ.

DICK CAPEN: I found *The Last Temptation of Christ* to be offensive. What bothered me more than anything else was the fact that the producers used a little bit of biblical history, mixed in with a tremendous distortion of the life of Christ. [02:00]

PAUL MOORE: For me, personally, it was a profound religious experience seeing the movie. You know, I've seen a lot of Bible movies in my day, and most of them are pretty awful, I think. However, this one deeply moved me because it did show Jesus struggling with the kind of human problems we all have. And overcoming temptation.

DENNIS PRAGER: Religion is reduced in this film profoundly. Jesus is a nerd in this film, he is an absolute nerd, a jerk, no one, except Judaists, would want anything to do with him, and of course, in this lopsided view, Judas is the only coherent hero in the whole thing.

JANE CHASTAIN: I think, perhaps, a better title of the movie would be *The Last Temptations of Christians*, because we know it's not the Christ in the Bible.

DON WILDMON: We say to Universal and MCA, you may not respect our religion, but you do respect our pocketbook, and we will express our faith in the [03:00] marketplace from this day forward, amen.

NARRATOR: What passions have driven so many with such great emotion? After all, it was just a movie. From this controversial movie comes this special investigative report. "The Christ of the Last Temptation." With your host, Dr. D. James Kennedy.

D. JAMES KENNEDY: The controversy, the claims and counter-claims generated by this film have greatly confused the American public, and have deeply concerned me. I felt that it was important to present an objective and critical view of the issues involved in this film to help resolve and answer many of the questions that have been raised. In order to do this, members of my staff and I [04:00] have screened the film, read the script, and researched most of the critic's reviews. And we've invited spokespersons from the primary points of view to participate in this program. We wanted to allow, under the constraints of time, their views to be directly expressed, so as to avoid

misunderstandings and assumptions. Unfortunately, some parties have declined our invitation. We regret their exclusion. MCA/Universal was not available for comment. As time has passed since the release of *The Last Temptation of Christ*, we can now take a more objective and rational look at the film, and the issue that it raises. What were the real issues? Why did they inspire such strong reactions? Was Jesus really blasphemed? [05:00] Did Universal Pictures sell its soul? What did Martin Scorsese set out to accomplish, and how did this complex story unfold?

MARTIN SCORSESE: The film is based on a novel, and it's based on a novel by [Nikos Kazantzakis?], and it's basically his idea of what we have in the film. Why I was attracted to the material, I always wanted to do a film on Jesus, I wanted to make a very real film on Jesus. What I mean by that is a film that people would respond to on a realistic level. And there has been one great film made on Jesus called *The Gospel According to St. Matthew*, by [Pozalini?], in which he uses *cinéma vérité*, but that's basically the gospel of St. Matthew. Now, this book enabled me to look at the Jesus character in a different way. That is, it deals with the double side of Jesus, the dual substance of God and man. God came down, [06:00] became incarnated in man, now, how much was man, how much was God?

KENNEDY: Martin Scorsese had made previous attempts to bring the book by Nikos Kazantzakis, *The Last Temptation of Christ*, to the movie theater.

TOM BRUEHL: Paramount looked at the script with a Martin Scorsese package as long ago as eight or nine years. Michael Eisner, who's president of the company, reviewed the script and the packaging, and as he usually did, had an informal body of authorities for each of the areas that we might be considering a production in, and had the script go out to some clergymen that were essentially on his list of tell me what you think about this. Well, the script and the comments came flying back that this was pretty hot stuff. And Michael seemed to think that discretion was better part of valor in this case, and thought to put the movie into turnaround, or the script, at that point. And so, Paramount [07:00] got away from it pretty early in its existence. So, in retrospect, you might say that Michael Eisner had some pretty good thoughts at the time.

KENNEDY: When the project was picked up by Universal, they knew they had a difficult project to sell, based on early theological criticisms of the book. Universal's management sought out Tim Penland, a media marketing consultant, to build bridges between the controversial moving project, and the concerns of the religious community. Dr. Larry Poland,

president of Master Media, assisted Tim Penland in the project.

TIM PENLAND: I'd had a very good experience with another major studio, Warner Brothers, in particular, on two other films, *Chariots of Fire*, and *The Mission*. They had been well-received in the Christian community, both films, and we had quite a success with that relationship with a major studio, and bringing major motion pictures to the Christian community that they could identify with. So, [08:00] when Universal called and said, "You're the expert in this area; we need your help," I was certainly open to listen to them. And I had heard about the film, I had heard that it had, you know, some serious complications, to say the least, and so, I sat down with them. And Tom Pollock, Chairman of the Board at Universal, called me into his office area, the head of production there, the head of marketing, the head of distribution, we had quite a serious group representing Universal, and he began to pour out his heart to me about the fact that they were not desirous releasing a film that defamed Christ, as a matter of fact, their desire was to release a faith-affirming film. They'd spent much time with Martin Scorsese, Martin Scorsese was committed to that. And so, over a period of several minutes, they just really convinced me that they were being pre-judged, that the

protesting was beginning right then in January, was about a film that people hadn't seen [09:00] and didn't know the contents. And Universal hadn't seen it. At that time, Universal had not even seen the film. And so, they were going on what Martin Scorsese said he had in this film. At a point somewhere down the road, I think, this is my opinion, I think Universal got a look at the film. And their promise to us had always been, as soon as we can see the film, you'll see it, Tim. Well, they broke that in faith. At some point, they looked at the film, and I think they said, "Oh, Lord, we've got a bad film here."

LARRY POLAND: We first recognized we were being used when we couldn't get communication. It's a little bit like in a marriage, when you've sensed that something is wrong, but you don't know what it is. For Tim Penland, because he was the guy who was at the heart of this, was having a difficult time getting callbacks from the various executives at Universal. So, that was the first clue. Secondly, we began to get rumors that weren't rumors, that they were trying to pursue another agenda. A little note in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* said that Martin Scorsese [10:00] had arranged to have Tim Penland hired to shepherd the film past the objections of [religionists?]. That was very angering to Tim and angering us to think that maybe from

day one, they had intended and conspired to use us to sell out our own brothers and sisters in Christ. And the third thing that really demonstrated the duplicity, was when they would not let us see either a script or the film. And yet, we got inside information that said the film was ready to be seen, at one point, had been seen by a key group of Universal executives.

PENLAND: We had two tough choices: if we don't protest, many people will be deceived by this film, this blasphemy. If we do protest, maybe it'll help the box office, but we believe, and we feel strongly, now that the film has died, that maybe we encourage some lookie-loos to come in the early stages of the film, people that said nobody's going to tell us what we can't see, we're going to go see anything we want to. Maybe we encourage some of those people to go, but we kept, we think, millions of people away from the film that would have gone, thinking they were seeing a legitimate film on the life of Christ.

POLAND: I think that we have awakened the sleeping giant. I like what Donald Wildman said at the rally at Universal, that at least 25,000 people gathered to, to express themselves. They think they're releasing a movie; they're really unleashing a movement. I believe that if Christians will stand up and be counted, and that doesn't mean in a

hostile, angry way, that it means at some point, every believer has got to say, I'm going to confess you, Lord, before man, or I will understand if you don't confess to me before my father.

KENNEDY: The concerns of a few quickly became a massive protest. Voices were heard from all walks of life, and from a wide variety of religions and media circles.

JOSEPH REILLY: We're scanning scripture on its hair, we're standing theology on its ear, and we're standing history on its ear, and all in the name of what? The bizarre. [12:00] All in the name of Hollywood, all in the name of Martin trashing Christ to get him down to Martin's four-times married level.

MOTHER ANGELICA: We are not through, and we are going to continue on, because this movie is a holocaustal movie, because it has the power to destroy souls eternally. I'm going to fight if I'm the only voice in America.

ROSEY GRIER: Now, we find a movie company that would dare to make fun of the creator of the universe. What we have to say is that we, as Christians, will not stand back and allow this to continue. We call [13:00] for it to end now.

MARC TANENBAUM: Having viewed it, I must say, knowing so many Christian friends, Roman Catholics, mainline Protestants, Evangelical Christians, Greek Orthodox, with

whom I've worked now for some 27 years, I could understand why classic traditional Christians were deeply upset by the film. After all, these are certain basic sanctities that every religion has, and when you turn those sanctities upside-down, inside-out, stand them on their head, that you run the risk of people being offended, and I think that's what happened in this case.

BILL BRIGHT: According to the most recent Gallup poll, 84% of the American people believe in the deity of Jesus Christ. Obviously, this offense of this tragic film will be [14:00] a heartbreaking experience for tens of millions, and around the world, hundreds of millions.

KENNEDY: As some dare to make a stand for their convictions, the spirit of this movement was caught dramatically in the actions of a young MCA recording artist.

STEVE GOODEN: I have resolved in recent weeks, after coming to the understanding that MCA Universal is distributing a movie entitled *The Last Temptations of Christ*, a movie that depicts Christ in a very defaming and blasphemous way, a movie that is not sound theologically, and not even sound fictionally, I'd like to say that my decision was inspired by a great writer, Charles Sheldon, in his book *In His Steps*, and like the character Rachel Winslow, I too want to make a stand to use my talents beyond my ego, and beyond my

financial gain. This contract is a 16-page contract [15:00] standard contract for a single deal, calls for an overall single and a nine-album option deal. It signs me exclusively to MCA Records. My attack is not against MCA Universal, or Martin Scorsese, my attack is against Satan, who perpetrated this through the instruments of this company. So, this contract is my righteous stand for a righteous cause. The only cause that's worthy of any such act which I'm about to do. I would like to encourage and challenge other men and women, young men and young women, that are signed in the industry, that are associated with companies, to make a decision to put their conscious convictions of Christ before their own personal gain, no matter what the cost, is worthy of the lost. I tear this contract in the name of my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. I'm tearing up a contract that would've [16:00] given me great financial gain, but what sacrifice have I made that's worthy of the accolades that apparently it looks like I'm receiving? I said there are missionaries in South America that are dying in mud piles, that are having their heads axed off, that are being shot in front of firing squads in the name of their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, there are no television cameras, there are no photographers, there are no interviews. So, what sacrifice

have I really made? I'd just like to say in closing, I'm not a famous celebrity, but this is what I can do.

(applause)

KENNEDY: What sacrifice has Steve made? Commitment versus career. All this reaction over one film? Is there really cause for alarm? Many have been quick to point out it's just a movie.

F: I don't think the people that are protesting [17:00] are giving it a fair chance. It's just a movie.

F: Not bad, not good, it's just a movie to me, you know?

M: Yeah, I think it's just a movie.

F: It's all right if I come and see it, it's only a movie.

M: It's just a movie.

M: I take it as a film, just, to me, it's a movie, you know?

KENNEDY: So, it's just a movie? But how powerful is one movie? What kind of difference could one movie make? An entire generation of teenage girls cut the hems and sleeves out of their clothes because of this movie. But more than fashion and style, movies sell values and attitudes, and lifestyles. All films, whether they try to or not, promote some kind of value system. Films are persuasive, whether they are designed to persuade or not. Studies conducted at Columbia and the University of California have shown that movies, and even news reports about teen suicide, have a

direct effect on the increased [18:00] rate of teen suicide in the week following the movie or news feature. The 1987 Attorney General's report concluded that sex and violence on television have led to increases in rape, child abuse, and even the divorce rate. What we see influences us, whether it's meant to or not. But really, could a film like *The Last Temptation* actually influence an individual's personal convictions or religious faith?

POLAND: We know, for instance, from the American Library Association, that after Fonzie took out a library card, the reports I heard, were that 120,000 teenagers went down and took out library cards. One day, I had my mailbox destroyed, and when the police called -- when I called the police to give them a report, they said, "Oh, we've had a rash of these." I said why? They said, "Because in a film, a comedy film, [19:00] that just has been hitting the theaters, they went down the street, kids did, in pickup trucks, bashing mailboxes." So, you can't tell me that the impact of the powerful environment of an hour and a half in a dark room, in which you control the thought process of a person, doesn't make any difference in his behavior, it does. And that's why *The Last Temptation of Christ* is such a lethal weapon to distort the minds and visions of people

to the place where they may never come to know the true Christ that I know and love.

F: A person seeing this that doesn't know what Christ is really like would walk away thinking that Jesus Christ is a wimpy, insecure, doubtful little guy that, you know, sinned all the time, and that's simply not true, it's not biblical.

M: I'm going to watch and learn pretty much. In my family, I wasn't brought up in a very religious family, not an active new religious one, so I have very little information on it. But there are experiences like this, I'm going just to see.  
[20:00]

DICK CAPEN: They very cleverly wove into the script enough biblical history, that made it difficult for those who are not as knowledgeable on the Bible as they might have been, to understand the difference between what is biblically correct, and what is a total distortion of the truth.

KENNEDY: *The Last Temptation of Christ* has, indeed, influenced some people's faith. This film opens by clearly stating that it's a work of fiction. Yet, can Hollywood produce a "work of art" that degrades people's closely-held values? Is there an ethical responsibility that must also be considered? Or is everyone free to do as he pleases under the First Amendment to the Constitution?

KEN WALES: I, as a member of the Director's Guild, do defend the right for any individual to express what he feels about religion, about his faith, about government, personal ambitions, all of that. But that is a right, [21:00] and with rights, come responsibility. And with responsibility must come a sense of caring, and a sense of sensitivity. I feel very much that in the case of *The Last Temptation of Christ*, that there was a great, perhaps the largest case, of insensitivity and non-caringness that has ever happened in this town. If the subject had been the private sex life of Moses, that film would've never seen the light of day, discussing the weaknesses of any other leaders of any other faith. In fact, when a film was done about Mohammed, the Muslim community rose up in arms, and very quickly, that film was pulled from distribution in the theaters, as it was being shown. Also, in the case of the film called *Santa Claus*, that particular film, which depicted Santa Claus as being a slasher, a demented pervert, that film was protested, and very quickly, Universal pulled that from release. So, there has been a great deal of history of films that have been [22:00] disappointing, or hurtful, or for one reason or another, have then been pulled from the very release in theaters for which they were intended.

REILLY: Scorsese could've cared less, all right? The main point is that while, they had a right to do it Constitutionally, from the standpoint of civility, sensitivity, decency, accuracy, historicity, whatever other, you know, norm you wanted to apply, I would say, they had absolutely no moral right at all to do what they did. So, you have a constitutional right, but then the question arises, is it in the interest of the well-being of your country and countrymen and women to exercise the right that you undeniably have?

POLAND: We said over and over, and we said it in that first press conference, we denounce censorship, we don't want any governmental, ecclesiastical, structural, institutional force preempting, or exercising prior censorship of what anybody says, because religion suffers more from that than art does. Even though we said [23:00] that over and over, they said this was an attempt to keep people from seeing what they wanted to see, produce what they wanted to produce, release what they wanted to release. We said no way, we understand Universal can produce things, and they can be irresponsible or responsible, within the boundaries of the First Amendment. But we're calling on them to be responsible, because the freedom to swing your arm ends

where somebody else's nose begins. And our noses were being bloodied by this film. But they never heard us.

KENNEDY: The First Amendment grants, to each one of us, the freedom of speech. But, in addition to that, there is the cement of civility, and sensitivity to the feelings of others, which holds a civilized society together. And when that is ignored, the result is chaos and anarchy. Most of our major media are governed by ethical rules, which require truthfulness, as well as sensitivity. The press [24:00] has journalistic efforts, the advertising industry has truth and advertising law, the postal service has mail fraud regulations, and the list goes on. But even where laws and regulations don't exist, we, as human beings, demand a basic moral responsibility to the truthful characterization of people, not making irresponsible fabrications and speculations about a persons or group of people's integrity. The case of Carol Burnett and the *National Enquirer*, the embarrassment of the *Washington Post*, with the fabricated Pulitzer Prize story. Then Jimmy The Greek's casual comments about black athletes. As these public figures discovered, when the responsibility for sensitivity is ignored, there's a great price to be paid. Sometimes, the price is paid by the party who is

irresponsible, and other times, the price is paid by the victimized [25:00] party.

F: I've just had it for these phony betrayals of our values, and people who actually live.

M: There's somebody's idea of a story, and it's a story, it's a cheap shot at my expense.

F: One thing these people's going to have to answer for it.

BUEHLER: We call upon Universal to be number one, making a decision of conscious about this film, and if not, number two, make a decision of economics. Because the Christians are saying, and apparently, we've been ineffective in saying this in the past, the Christians are saying, and are prepared to continue to say, we are here. And we will not be silenced.

TANENBAUM: One would hope that people in Hollywood would have the judgment, the sensitivity, to learn some lessons from these controversies, and not repeat them. If it's greed, essentially, [26:00] and making the money that counts, then I think, in time, they will run the risk of alienating a great many people of good will, who ultimately will turn their back on this kind of filmmaking.

KENNEDY: Left uncorrected, this trend toward insensitivity can cost even more. In fact, this kind of insensitivity has led to some of the greatest crises in human history.

Constitutional attorney John Whitehead, president of the Rutherford Institute, expressed this concern in a recent publication. "History," he says, "teaches us that in any society, ridicule sets the stage for persecution. The way of the Holocaust was first paved by false portrayals of the Jews as a people through the media. Their religion was held up to public scorn, their tradition was blamed for the death of Christ, the things they held sacred, were held [27:00] in contempt."

PRAGER: Freedom of speech was not enhanced, this Western civilization was not enhanced. We are not richer thanks to this film. Merely, another venerated symbol has been brought down, that's what has happened. And again, it's not my symbol, but I respect that. And for non-Christians who think, well, it's the Christian's problem. My only response there is, today, it's the Christian's most venerated symbol, why won't it be the Jews tomorrow, and why won't it be humanists the next day, and somebody else the next day? It doesn't end with one group.

KENNEDY: The concept of respecting the values of others, particularly, their religious convictions, is at the very foundation of our nation, our ethical system, and our social morality. Any violation of this unwritten code of conduct is a threat to all Americans. [28:00] So, this is

more than just a Christian issue, it's an issue of protecting personal freedom and dignity, an issue of concern to all responsible citizens. We, as caring Americans, need to respond to this threat, not in anger, but certainly, with boldness. That's why I'm prepared to take this message to the most powerful men and women in the entertainment industry. I'm willing to go alone, but if we go together, our united voice of concern will be heard, and heeded. Just as our forefathers joined together and pledged themselves to one another for the sake of America, we need to join together for the sake of maintaining America's greatness, and its unprejudiced freedoms. I believe we can present the signatures of one million concerned Americans to the entertainment industry, and let them know that we are disturbed by the media's careless and insensitive [29:00] treatment of individual's religious convictions and traditional values. As you and I join in this great effort, one million signatures will be delivered to the chairman of the board of every major motion picture studio, every film distributor, and every cinema chain. This petition will let them know that you and I are concerned about the irresponsible presentations in the entertainment media, and that we will no longer be silent, but will act responsibly to express our convictions. As the Declaration of

Independence was also a roll call of those who are willing to stand up and take action to preserve our freedom, this petition of protest is a clear message to those who ignore the decency of respect for others. We, as a collective group, will stand committed to withholding our patronage from those who [30:00] demonstrate such arrogance.

Therefore, please write to me today to get your copy of this petition of protest. So that you can let the entertainment industry know that this type of film will no longer be tolerated. There are, by the way, a number of other films just like this, or worse, that are already on the drawing board, or have been completed. It is vitally important that the industry know that we mean business about this matter. Please, write to me today, just write to me, James Kennedy, Box 1600, Fort Lauderdale, Florida, 33302. Or, just call the toll-free number that's on your screen. Just write to me and ask for the petition of protest.

JOHN STEWART: [31:00] Involvement has to be more than a flash in the pan, and I appreciate and am thankful for our massive demonstration. But to me, that's a preview of coming attractions. There's so much more we can do and will do, because we've begun a movement, and that means that getting involved is taking our stand for morality, for

decency, and to defend our Christian freedoms in this country, lest we lose them by attrition or by neglect. So, I think Christians have learned that the best way for evil to triumph is for good people to do nothing, and therefore, we're drawing the battle lines and saying, we're going to take on those spiritual forces that are trying to undo what the Kingdom of Christ is attempting to do.

KENNEDY: Thank you for taking down that address, and let me thank you now for responding. For standing with me in this, you know, the whole controversy surrounding the film, *The Last Temptation of Christ* began because of people's personal [32:00] opinions about a character in history who lived almost 2,000 years ago, a man called Jesus Christ. As we prepared this documentary presentation, the thing that astonished me over and over again, more than the protests, more than the publicity wars, was the personal dilemma that each individual experiences as he confronts the simple question, who is Jesus Christ?

F: Heavy question, heavy question.

F: That's a good question. (laughter) I don't really know.

M: He was God in the form of a man.

M: He's just a regular human like everyone else.

F: He's my savior.

F: I would kind of like to think that Jesus is a little bit human.

F: He was made in our likeness.

M: But he's the son of God, so...

F: He is God.

M: I figure he was a historical character, but other than that, I don't really know.

M: One of the greatest [33:00] (inaudible) masters and teachers of all time.

M: There might have been a Christ, but he wasn't the son of God, in my own opinion, because there is no God, in my opinion.

F: Christ is the son of God, and he's savior and lord for me.

M: Who (inaudible)? I don't know whether I really have any thoughts of what Christ is.

KENNEDY: This simple, but troubling question, who is Jesus, was actually the inspiration for *The Last Temptation of Christ* film and the novel on which it was based.

SCORSESE: There's certain things the church has set up as revealed truths in the gospels that we have to accept, but we also allow for a discussion, ideas, metaphors, that represent religious concepts, so we could discuss and learn better about God, and help us in our search for God.

KENNEDY: In the original novel, *The Last Temptation of Christ*, the biographical sketch about author Nikos Kazantzakis [34:00] indicates the writer's efforts to depict Christ as a prototype of the free man. Many of the struggles experienced by the novel's character of Christ closely reflect the struggles in Kazantzakis's own life. Struggles with love and hate, with weakness, the struggle to find direction, and purpose, and peace. So, that Christ, in the movie, was modeled after a troubled, wandering novelist, but who was the actual historical person known as Jesus Christ. It was at this crossroad that this movie's conflicts and contradictions were centered. Martin Scorsese, the director, set out to portray the character of history's most dramatic figure based on the bizarre writings of Nikos Kazantzakis, while Christians, as they have for centuries, turned to the scriptures [35:00] and the historical evidence.

NORMAN GEISLER: Everything we know, authoritatively, by Christ is found in the 27 books of The New Testament, and most of it right in the four gospels. These were eyewitnesses, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, James, Peter, Jude, the writer of the Hebrews, we have about eight different people writing 27 different books, they saw Jesus, they handled him, they talked to him, some of them

spent three and a half years of their life with him, they saw him after the resurrection. Over 500 people saw him on 12 different occasions. He ate with them four times, they saw the empty tomb twice, the grave close twice, they handled and touched him. There was no question in their mind who Jesus was, because this is an eyewitness account, coming from the first century. And the documents we have in our hands today, are more accurately copied than any book from the ancient world. We have 5,366 manuscripts, [36:00] handwritten copies of the New Testament, that's more than any book from the ancient world.

KENNEDY: Scriptures provide an amazingly accurate portrayal of Jesus Christ, as fully God and fully man, yet, sinless, fully aware of his deity, sacrificial mission of love, and his offer of salvation to all mankind. The conqueror of death. Not only does the Bible give us a clear record of Christ's life and character, but also, it can be found in the writings of the most famous Jewish historian of the time, Josephus. He wrote the history of his own people. In his antiquities of the Jews, he makes this most amazing statement. He declares...

NARRATOR: "About this time, lived Jesus, a wise man, if it be proper to call Him a man. For, He was a doer of wonderful works, teacher of such men as receive truth with pleasure.

He drew over to Him both, [37:00] many of the Jews and many of the Greeks. He was the Christ. And when Pilate, at the instigation of the principal men among us, had condemned Him to the cross, those who had loved Him at the first did not forsake him. For, He appeared to them alive again on the third day, the divine prophets having foretold these and many other things concerning him. And the sect of Christians so named after Him, are not extinct to this day."

KENNEDY: Now, this passage has been accepted by many of the greatest scholars in history. Another Jewish source, the Talmud, also testifies of Christ. But not only is this true, that there are these early Jewish references to Christ, there is even greater evidence of the historicity of Christ from many of the works of the early Pagan, or [even?] writers. Jesus Christ, and his character, are fact, not fiction. The Bible, which has given us such an explicit view of Christ, has stood the most scrutinizing examinations of any literary work in history. But how does the Jesus Christ of scripture compare to that depicted in the movie, *The Last Temptation of Christ*? What was in the movie that ran contrary to these historical, and biblical, and factual accounts of Christ, and why does it cause such concern?

F: To defame the name of Jesus Christ is blasphemous, and the movie is slanderous, and it does not coincide, and the problem where people do not know their Bible.

POLAND: My strongest feelings about the movie are that it is essentially a lie. It's a little bit like a dirty joke. If you would say, let me tell you the latest gossip, and you would create this story about someone that is noble, or respected, is an honorable person in the community, and then you would tell about all kinds of hideous things [39:00] they thought, hideous things they did, and talked about their emotional problems, and talked about the sex life and such, and then at the end, you said, April Fool, it was just a joke. It was just fiction. To me, that's the same kind of feel I get from this film, because here is not only a noble man, here is the person who has provided forgiveness, and redemption, and life itself, for hundreds of millions of living people on this planet. And he's been made the object of a dirty joke. You know, he's a wimp, he's mentally deranged, he's a hypocrite, he says, he's a liar, he says, he's filled with Lucifer, he says, he lusts, he sits and watches the first century equivalent of a porno flick, watching people have sex in a brothel. And then they say, oh, this is just fiction. It's deeply offensive to me, because it would be so wrong if it were done about any

noble person, much less, the person who has provided life and forgiveness for me.

CHASTAIN: The thing that disturbed me [40:00] the most was here is my Christ, my God, my savior, that did not know who he was, wandering around, you know, having second thoughts about his role.

LLOYD JOHN OGILVIE: The fantasy at the conclusion of the film is sex-explicit. And I believe that that's exactly what the viewer is going to remember, that it distorts the picture of Jesus Christ so seriously, that as a result, that will be a lasting impression in the imagination. Let me just say further, that fantasy is a projection of what's in either the conscious or the subconscious mind. And this is to suggest that Jesus Christ carried with him, these thoughts, and attitudes, and feelings about Mary Magdalene, as well as Mary and Martha Bethany, and that those were then projected into fantasy during the time of the Cross. Further, it suggests [41:00] that the reason that Jesus suffered for the sins of the world was to be the atonement for the sexual sins, as if that were the only thing. It doesn't deal with pride, or arrogance, but perhaps, the most sickening moment in the fantasy scene in the script, is when Jesus, as an old man, kneels to pray, and says, "Father, forgive me, I've been an unworthy disobedient son.

I want to be Messiah, I want to be crucified, and rise again." And then it flips back to the Cross, and Jesus finishes, saying the word that had been said as the transition point for the fantasy. And then, he says, "It is finished." My question is, what has finished? The only thing that's finished is the vivid film portrayal [42:00] of Jesus's defeat by the power of Satan. The film glorifies Satan, and demeans God, and that's the most serious thing, above and beyond the denigration of Jesus of Nazareth, is what kind of God is behind this? And therefore, this film will cause an outcry by everyone in the world who believes that God is Lord of this universe.

KENNEDY: Well, we've heard many of the general accusations about this film, but specifically, what does it say that is so contrary to the Bible, and so blasphemous about this film? Let's take a specific look at what's in this film. It begins with Jesus working in his carpenter shop. And he is making something out of wood. What is it? It is a cross. [43:00] Judas burst into the room and upbraids and reproaches him as a traitor, the only Jew in Israel who will make crosses for the Romans to crucify Jews upon. Not only does he make them, but later, he carries them out and helps the Romans to crucify a Jewish zealot. So, you feel later on what he himself is crucified that he's merely

getting what he deserves. Judas says that he is a traitor, he pushes him against the wall, and slaps him around. And he says, "Who is going to pay for your sins?" Jesus struggles, he doesn't know the answer. He says, "I'm struggling." Judas says, "No, I struggle, you collaborate with the Romans." It is also incredible in this film that Jesus Christ, who has been considered the most balanced and stable individual who ever lived, is made out to be some sort of a lunatic. He hears strange voices, he [44:00] falls to the ground, writhing in pain, holding his head. His mother says that he's sick in the head, and that he's always been this way, and come home, and she will cure him. And he's considered to be a lunatic. This, of course, is also blasphemous. Shortly thereafter, Jesus is out in the desert, and he speaks of himself. Now, in this film, this is what Jesus says about himself. He says, "I am a liar. I am a hypocrite, I break the commandments of God. I never tell the truth." Isn't that inconceivable? That the one who said, "I am the truth," in The Bible, should, in this film, say, "I never tell the truth." Christians, for 2,000 years, have based their whole salvation upon the fact that Jesus Christ told the truth. And yet, [45:00] in this film, Jesus is nothing like the Christ of The Bible. He goes on to say that "Lucifer lives within me." The Bible says that Christ

declares that the prince of this world cometh, who is Lucifer, the Devil, and hath no place in me." Yet, the film says that Lucifer lives within him. But doesn't Jesus, in the film, say that he is God? Well, yes, Jesus does. He says, "I have a voice within me, saying that I am the son of God, more than that, that I am God himself." But whose voice is it? Jesus, in this film, identifies the voice as that of Lucifer, Satan. So, Jesus's idea that he is God is a deception, apparently, that Satan is diluting him with. This, indeed, is blasphemy [46:00] of a very high order. Then, Jesus goes to the home of Mary Magdalene, and who, in this picture, is portrayed as a prostitute, a whore. And Christ sits all day long in the outer room, watching her through a transparent veil have sexual relationships with one man after another, hour after hour. So, Christ, here, is also portrayed as a voyeur, a peeping Tom. He declares that he constantly lusts after women, but that he doesn't take them, and the fact that he doesn't take them brings him to the place of pride. So, he's a man filled with pride. Yet, the Bible says that pride goeth before destruction, and yet, this is the Christ that we have portrayed in this film. Jesus also says that he desires to fight and have women, and to kill. But the only reason that he doesn't do that is the reason of fear. [47:00] He says

that his mother and father are fear, and that his God is fear. He later says that, "Can't God see inside of me? Can't he see all of my sins? That I'm filled with sin?" Yet, the Bible presents a Christ who is sinless. The "crystal Christ," a sinless human being. It seems like the director and author are unable to distinguish between temptation and sin. The Bible says that Jesus was tempted, in all ways, such as we are, yet, without sin. It says, over and over again, that he did no sin. That no guile was found in his mouth. That he was a perfect human being. This film portrays Jesus as a sinful man, struggling against temptation, and constantly falling, working his way up until finally, he becomes God. But this [48:00] is not what the Bible teaches, the film teaches what is called an apotheosis, where a man finally becomes God, is elevated to godhood. The Bible doesn't teach that, it teaches an incarnation, and says that God became man, not that man became God. God came down and took on human flesh, and was in all ways like we are, yet, without sin. For, the Bible makes clear that no sinful human being could pay for the sins of others. It had to be a lamb without spot or blemish. And so, Christ could say, at his trial, in the scripture, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" He is the only sinless one. And therefore, he is able to pay for the

sins of the world. In this film, Jesus is paying [49:00] for his own sins. In the Bible, Christ is paying for the sins of the world. There is a great, great deal of difference. The most astounding thing, I think, is that any theologian, or clergyman, could view this film and say that it did not contradict his faith. Anyone that would make this statement is simply indicating that his faith is not based on the teachings of this scripture, because this film is contrary to the scriptures in almost every point. In fact, I have never heard, in all of my life, so many terrible things said by Christ, about Christ, by even the most virulent atheist, as I heard in this film. Another very disturbing part, of course, is the so-called dream sequence, when Christ is on the cross. [50:00] Most all of the newspaper reviews simply said that Jesus dreams on the cross about having a normal family life. Well, it's far more than that. On the cross, a little girl, who is portrayed as an angel, comes and takes out the nails, and takes him down because, she says, God declares that you've suffered enough, and he wants you to have a normal life. He then marries Mary Magdalene, and she becomes pregnant with his child, and then God kills her. An interesting aspect of this film is that God is always doing terrible things to people, and the Devil is always doing wonderful things to

people. Jesus is filled with sin, and does nothing but sin all through the picture, whereas, Judas is the hero, the strong, courageous one who never does anything wrong. In fact, he only betrays Christ because Jesus begs him to do so. Everything is topsy-turvy, it is upside down, it is [51:00] reality turned on its head. But Jesus not only marries Mary Magdalene, but when God kills her, the angel tells him that there's only one woman in the world, they just have many different faces, so take any ones that you want. So, he goes to the home of Mary and Martha, and he begins to live with Mary, and he has several children by her. One day, when she's out of the village, getting some food, he has sexual relationships with her sister. This, of course, is adultery, and it's incest as well, to add to the heinous sins which are attributed to Christ in this film. And then, along comes an itinerate preacher whose name is Paul. Years have passed now, and this Paul is preaching the gospel about a Jesus that was crucified, and died, and rose again from the dead. Jesus goes to him and says, "You're a liar, I didn't die, and I didn't rise from the dead." And Paul says, "Who [52:00] are you?" He says, "I'm Jesus of Nazareth." Paul says to him, "Well, I'm glad that I met you, because you're not nearly as important as the Jesus Christ whom I preach. I don't care whether you died, or

rose, or anything, the important thing is that people need to believe something, and the Christ that I preach is more important than you. I don't want to ever see you again."

Isn't that incredible? Which is saying that the message of Christianity, which has been preached down through 20 centuries all over the world, is simply a fabric of lies, a tissue of falsehoods, it is merely the fabrication of the apostle Paul, and presumably, the other apostles as well. This, too, is a blasphemous handling of sacred things, and a trampling upon the sensitivities of countless hundreds of millions of people around the world. And after seeing all of this, [53:00] some people, including some clergymen, say where's the blasphemy? My friends, if anyone can't see blasphemy in this film, then they just don't know what blasphemy is. Both Martin Scorsese and Nikos Kazantzakis, who are involved in a search for the real Jesus Christ, I'm afraid, that both, in the novel, and in the motion picture, they failed to find anything vaguely resembling the real Christ. What they found is what Kazantzakis created, simply, a Christ made in his own image. It was, in fact, a God fashioned in his own image, an idol of the mind. But I would like to challenge you, my friend, if you are searching to know the true Christ, that you'll find Him [54:00] in the original script, which is found in the

gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. A Christ who is not a man, depraved, and filled with sin and fear, but rather, the divine creator, who came into this world, who humbled himself, and became man, the God man, and lived the perfect life in our stead, and died at an atoning death to pay, not for his sins, but for ours. And who offers to us, the gracious and free gift of eternal life, if we will place our trust in him, and receive him into our hearts. Have you done that? You can today, I hope, that you'll go to him in prayer, and ask him to come into your life, to cleanse you, to forgive you, and to give you eternal [55:00] life. And I hope, also, that you will make a firm commitment to be a good witness for Christ in your home, in your workplace, among your neighbors, everywhere, to take a firm stand for Christ in your life, and I hope that you'll also join me in this petition of protest, where every decent American, regardless of his religious background, should concur that we oppose this kind of religious bigotry being imposed upon the American people. This protest, these petitions, are going to be sent to the motion picture producers in Hollywood, to the distributors of films throughout the nation, and to the major chains of theaters, telling them that we do not want to see more such films as this. [56:00] I do hope that you'll join me in this

petition. To get your copy, simply write to me, James Kennedy, Box 1600, Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Or call the toll-free number on your screen. Please jot that down. That's James Kennedy, Box 1600, Fort Lauderdale, Florida. You know, there are other films like this, which are on the drawing board, or in process of being made. *Jesus the Man*, by Mel Brooks, *Jesus in Toronto*, and possibly even *Jesus the Homosexual*. I'm sure that if any of you found that some company was producing jelly beans where every other one was laced with strychnine, that you would raise your voice in protest to protect the health of American children. Well, my friends, [57:00] this film, which combines fiction, and fact, and fiction, and fact, over and over again, lies and truth, in such a way that the average person is incapable of discerning between the two, is far more dangerous than those jellybeans would be. Because, at stake here, is not merely their physical and temporal lives, but their moral, their spiritual, and their eternal lives instead. So, please, join with me in this petition of protest. This will go to the motion picture producers in Hollywood, to the distributors of films throughout the nation, and to the major chains of theaters. And I hope that your voice will be heard. The address, again, is James Kennedy, Box 1600,

Fort Lauderdale, Florida, 33302. Thank [58:00] you, and God  
bless you.

NARRATOR: "The Christ of the Last Temptation." This is has been  
a special presentation of the Coral Ridge Ministries. We  
invite you to take your stand with this petition of  
protest.

M: How come there's no secular extremist, out of 230 million  
Americans, is there not one secular extremist? But of  
course, there are. And they inhabit the media  
overwhelmingly, and particularly, Hollywood. So, something  
that can reduce religion to show it to be foolish, to show  
what is venerated by tens of millions of Americans as God,  
namely, Jesus of Nazareth, as a jerk. And he is, in the  
movie.

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