

# Forbidden By The Pope?

*The Ambitious Seventy-Reel Motion Picture of "The Holy Bible" Which the Italian Government Helped Produce Said to Be Disapproved*



Eve Eating the Fatal Apple.

**A**N extraordinary disagreement has arisen between His Holiness the Pope and the Italian Government over a moving picture called "The Holy Bible." This is planned to show the salient features of the sacred story from the Creation onward.

His Holiness the Pope, it is said, has forbidden Catholics to view the picture on the ground that it is immodest in parts and not designed to help the interests of religion. On the other hand, the Italian Government has subsidized the production and is endeavoring to promote it in every way in order to demonstrate the superiority of Italian films over those of other countries, and especially of France.

The Italian Government and the Pope have, of course, always been more or less in a state of antagonism, and this has now broken out anew on the very up-to-date subject of moving pictures.

It is understood that the Pope does not by any means consider the picture as altogether bad, but that a few parts of it are of such a character as to make it improper to produce it with the pretence of a religious motive.

What offended His Holiness especially was the manner in which Adam and Eve were represented in the Garden of Eden. Of course, it was necessary to display our first parents as undressed prior to the fall, because the Bible tells us distinctly that that was their condition and says that they "were naked and were not ashamed."

But, of course, there are different ways of representing nudity. According to some critics, Adam and Eve display themselves in this film in a bold and unblushing manner that makes "September Morn" seem a model of modesty by comparison. Moreover the woman chosen to play Eve is of a very fleshy type. It is also objected that there is an unnecessary amount of nudity in subsequent scenes of the film.

The controversy is a very peculiar one, because when the film was in preparation it was understood that the Pope warmly approved of it as well calculated to teach the sacred story to the people in Italy and other countries, and thus combat the modern tendency to neglect religion and religious history, which has caused His Holiness much anxiety. The impression that the Pope approved the film was probably based on a qualified approval given by a minor official at the Vatican when the project was first described to him.

When the Pope actually witnessed a private exhibition of the picture he was horrified at many of the scenes. It is stated that the one which displeased His Holiness is that which shows Eve eating the apple—the fruit of the tree that gave to man knowledge of good and evil.

The Pope requested the film company to destroy the picture, but this they refused to do. He then issued his order disapproving the picture. After that the company made some modifications in the film, but these, it is reported, do not yet satisfy the Holy Father. His man-

*Dying Egyptians, Victims of the Ten Plagues of Egypt.*



Adam and Eve Listening to the Voice of God in the Garden of Eden, Unclothed and Unashamed.

date will undoubtedly have a grave effect in deterring many pious persons from seeing the film, but, on the other hand, it may result in greatly increasing the attendance of others.

The production of the film cost 5,000,000 lire, or nearly \$1,000,000 in pre-war money. A large part of this money is said to have been advanced by the Italian Government, which desired this to be the most elaborate, impressive and stupendous film ever produced, and thus promote and advertise the Italian film industry throughout the world. The Italian Government desired especially to counteract the effect created by "Atlantide," a film based on Pierre Benoit's new book and aided by the French Government. The French film had been remarkable for the amount of money and effort spent on "location." The



A Close-Up of the Face of Cain After He Had Murdered His Brother Abel.



The Birth of Eve in the Garden of Eden, Created from the Rib of Adam, According to the Bible Narrative of the Story of the Creation.

**Miserable Sinners Seeking Refuge on the Pinnacle of a Mountain as the Great Flood Rises Around Them, While Noah and His Family Are Safe in the Ark.**

of Babel, in Mesopotamia—they employed over 20,000 actors. In the entire film more than 100,000 actors were engaged.

The entire original film consists of 79 Italian reels, 35,000 feet in length.

After all the effort and money that have been expended on this film it will seem to many very unfortunate that the producers could not make it free from grave objection.

The film naturally starts with the creation of the world, which is represented in a very entertaining and instructive manner. After that we soon come to the episode of Adam and Eve. The modern public see their first ancestor growing out of the dust under the hand of the Almighty.

Soon after that comes the creation of Eve, and here occurs, perhaps, the first ground for criticism. While Adam is lying in a deep sleep the Creator takes one of his ribs and makes a companion for him in the form of woman.

Eve is created perfectly full grown and well-developed. She stands up boldly in the sunlight clad only in her long golden hair. After that there are a number of very picturesque and idyllic scenes in the Garden of Eden.

The spectator sees Adam and Eve listening to the voice of the Lord, telling them that they must not eat of the fruit of "the tree which is in the midst of the Garden." The serpent then tempts Eve and she eats of the apple and gives it to her husband. This is a scene which has come in for considerable criticism because Eve munches the apple as if she were thoroughly enjoying it, instead of behaving in a furtive manner as a woman would do who knew that she was committing a forbidden act.

Another Bible episode which gave occasion for much local color was the building of the Tower of Babel.

Thousands of primitive men, real Arabs, gather around a stony space in Mesopotamia and discuss the building of a tower whose top shall reach to heaven. They go to work and raise up the mighty tower, one floor after another. When the workmen have carried it to a dizzy height the confusion of tongues falls upon them and they are scattered.

The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is the next spectacular episode.

The oppression of the Israelites by Pharaoh, the ten plagues sent to afflict the Egyptians and the Exodus of the Israelites under the leadership of Moses are pictured. One of the most ambitious scenes in the entire film is that which represents the miraculous passage of the Israelites through the Red Sea and the drowning of Pharaoh's pursuing host. This part of the film was actually made on the shores of the Red Sea.

The wandering of the Israelites for forty years in the wilderness and the desert of Sinai furnish another opportunity for impressive local atmosphere. The worship of the golden calf, Moses smiting the rock to bring forth water, the pillar of fire, the scenes upon Mount Sinai are all represented with great realism. The producers say that they made the greatest effort of all and suffered the greatest hardships in producing this part of the film. They penetrated the barren wilderness of Sinai, where there is practically no water on which a white man can live.

producers went to the Sahara Desert to make this film, and one of the most remarkable scenes was laid in a volcanic crater in that region. Other scenes showed thousands of wild desert Arabs, deadly sandstorms, wild beasts and real terrors and wonders of the desert.

In creating the film of "The Holy Bible" the Italians carried their operations to the forbidden, almost unexplored wilderness of Sinai, and to many other scenes of the Bible story. They located a large part of the story upon Mount Sinai, where Jehovah spoke to Moses and gave him the Ten Commandments. Other parts of the picture were taken in Egypt, Palestine and Babylonia.

The Italians and their Government deliberately set out to beat the French film makers. They hired the inhabitants of entire towns to take part in certain scenes; entire tribes of Arabs, kings and chiefs, and all the members of certain ancient monasteries and convents in the East. They filmed camels, lions, snakes and many other wild and domestic animals of the Orient.

In one scene—the building of the Tower