

Football film, Fox comedy follow old formulas

By Henry Herx and Gerri Pare
Catholic News Service

NEW YORK — The predictable story of a troubled college football team trying to make it into bowl competition slowly unfolds in *The Program* (Touchstone/Samuel Goldwyn).

The ingredients are familiar, especially the veteran coach (James Caan), whose job is on the line if his squad of troublesome players fails to win a bowl bid.

Then there are the by-the-numbers players ranging from an alcoholic quarterback (Craig Sheffer) to a steroid-taking defensive tackle (Andrew Bryniarski) and a freshman tailback (Omar Epps).

How they pull it together as a team is less interesting than the scenes of college-recruitment practices, academic hanky-panky, faked drug tests and assorted athletic payoffs.

Exploring the problems of collegiate sports could produce more interesting scenes, director David S. Ward instead relegates them to the background, while focusing sympathies on those involved in breaking the rules.

The problem with this is that none of the school's cardboard characters merits any emotional involvement.

Because of bone-crunching violence on the field, an attempted rape, substance abuse and occasional rough language, the U.S. Catholic Conference classification is A-III — adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is R — restricted.

'For Love or Money'

Michael J. Fox continues a string of fluffy, forgettable films with the featherweight romance *For Love or Money* (Universal).

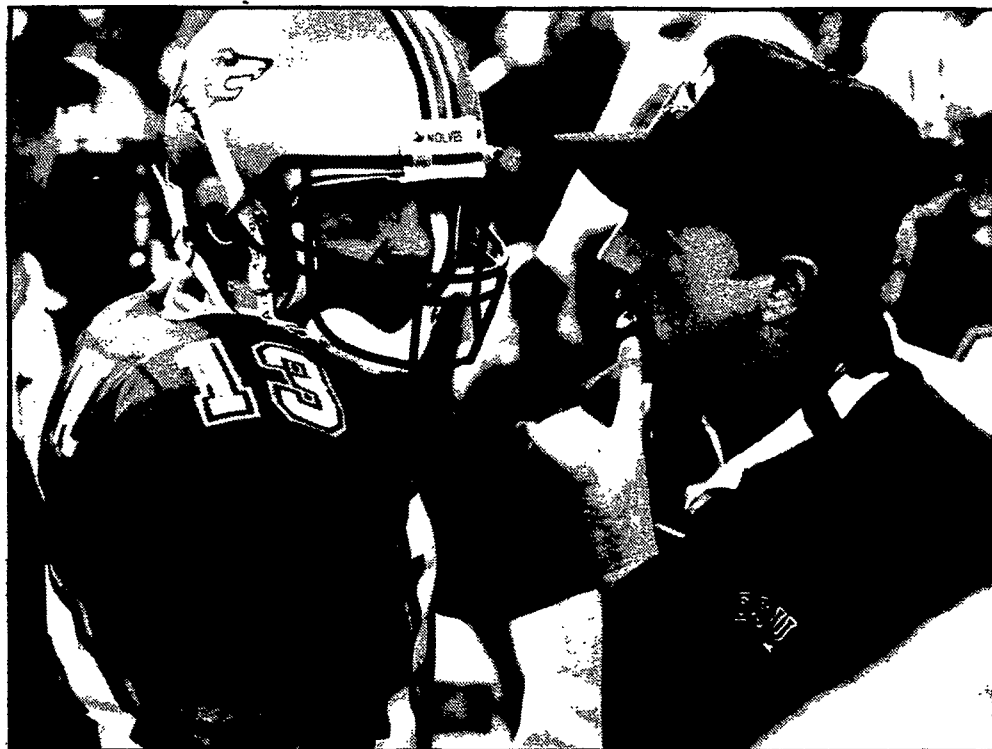
He plays confident concierge Doug Ireland, who will solve seemingly any problem a guest encounters. But he'll need more than \$100 tips to build his dream hotel in New York City, where he has optioned land for it, but needs megabuck backing.

Enter cagey tycoon Hanover (Anthony Higgins), who sees the hotel's potential. He'll give Doug the money for playing companion to Hanover's young mistress, Andy (Gabrielle Anwar), whenever Hanover must be with his wife.

Soon Andy hates Doug's groveling to Hanover, and Doug resents that Andy is demeaning herself with a married man who is probably just using her. One can guess who ends up with whom.

Barry Sonnenfeld directs a tired formula movie with a typically unrealistic Hollywood happy ending. Not only do wedding bells peal but — despite choosing integrity over materialism — the newlyweds still get the brass ring on the merry-go-round. Yet this supposed comedy is not much of a merry-go-round.

Due to an innuendo affair and recurring sexual innuendo, the USCC classification is A-III — adults. The MPAA rating is PG — parental guidance suggested.



Touchstone Pictures
James Caan (right) plays Eastern State University head coach Sam Winters and Graig Sheffer portrays star quarterback Joe Kane in *The Program*.

Author explores the complexities surrounding religious conversion

The Dynamics of Religious Conversion: Identity and Transformation, by V. Bailey Gillespie; Religious Education Press (Birmingham, Ala., 1991); 261 pages; \$14.95 (paperback).

By Father Sebastian A. Falcone
Guest contributor

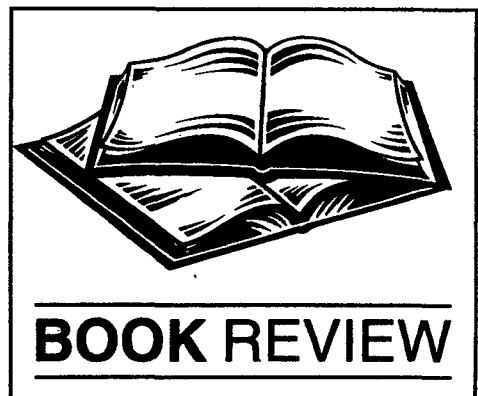
The literature devoted to religious conversion tends to fall into two basic classes: personal narrative and systematic analysis. The first class, often a tribute to grace and sometimes a triumph of style, aims at the reader's heart. The second, often slow of movement and sometimes heavy of hand, aims at the reader's mind.

Dynamics of Religious Conversion clearly belongs to this second type.

Bailey Gillespie has set three challenges for himself: to probe the process of conversion; to scan its massive literature; and to explore the connections conversion may have with identity formation and crisis. By itself any one of these would have been a stern challenge. Together, they make for a Herculean task.

The book's strength lies in its approach. Gillespie's latest work is a major revision of his *Religious Conversion and Personal Identity* (1979), mixed with insights from his *Experience of Faith* (1989) and his extensive research on religious development among Seventh-Day Adventists. Add to this the analysis of more than 60 specialists on religious conversion in chapter two and the strong influence of psychiatrist Erik Erikson's work on identity and ego-development. In short, the work offers a broad tapestry with intricate details.

Gillespie has not short-changed the biblical, historical, psychological, anthropological, developmental, and, not to be caught napping, even the feminist areas of inquiry. The work's



BOOK REVIEW

trademark is intensity.


Some disappointments, however, should be registered. The author is unaware of — or at least not concerned about — the debate among New Testament scholars as to whether Paul's encounter on Damascus Road is best understood as a "conversion" or "call."

The reader who is warned of "myriad definitions" of conversion can be thankful only "twenty-two" are offered (p.65), though one will be hard put to find them explicitly dealt with in the extended discussion.

The absence of several outstanding contributors to the subject at hand (Arthur D. Nock, Krister Stendahl, Walter E. Conn, for example) are hard to explain as well.

Despite these shortcomings, this work offers a remarkable exploration into religious conversion — especially its connection with ego-development. I recommend it highly to pastoral facilitators, religious educators and counselors who are committed to understanding conversion as the complex phenomenon it is, and its relationship with wholeness, growth, nurture, and the search for authentic identity.

Father Falcone is professor of New Testament Studies at St. Bernard's Institute.



FINE FOOD GIFTS of CHEESE, FRUITCAKE and BOURBON FUDGE

made by the Monks of the Abbey of Gethsemani.
Cheese served at the White House-Fruitcake rated #1
by Newsday (flavored with Kentucky Bourbon).

For a free catalog write:
Gethsemani Farms - Box 146 - Trappist, KY 40051
Call: 1-800-846-4005 Fax: 1-502-549-4124
Prompt delivery, with satisfaction guaranteed.
Available all year round. Prices include delivery (in USA).

MISSION NEWS

Eric's entire family, except for a grandmother, was killed in Liberia's civil war. These days, he feels safest when the missionaries are around.

♦ The young Liberian boy spoke often with Brother Tim Rice, O.F.M. Cap., who visited the war-torn nation for his Religious Order which is considering missionary service there. "Just before I left, I ran into Eric," Brother Tim said. "As I said good-bye, he handed me a fish, wrapped in newspaper, and I knew that he had given me his own evening's meal." ♦ For Eric and the people of Liberia, missionaries are truly one of their greatest signs of hope, says Archbishop Michael Francis of Monrovia, Liberia. He expresses gratitude to all who, through the Propagation of the Faith, serve his people in Liberia, offering prayers and financial help. ♦ *This World Mission Sunday, for missionaries, for the people of Liberia and throughout the Missions — and for Eric — please offer a generous response to the call for prayers and financial support!*





Photo: Ken Central African Republic, © MESSICO



The Society for THE PROPAGATION OF THE FAITH
Fr. Robert C. Bradler
1150 Buffalo Rd.
Rochester, NY 14624
Attention: Column

Please remember *The Society for the Propagation of the Faith* when writing or changing your Will. 344 10/14/93