

# 'South Park' Scientology battle continues to rage

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — "South Park" has declared war on Scientology.

Matt Stone and Trey Parker, creators of the animated satire, are digging in against the celebrity-endorsed religion after a controversial episode mocking outspoken Scientist Tom Cruise was yanked abruptly from the schedule Wednesday—with an Internet report saying it was covert warfare by Cruise that led to its departure.

"So, Scientology, you may

have won THIS battle, but the million-year war for earth has just begun!" the "South Park" creators said in a statement Friday in Daily Variety. "Temporarily anonymizing our episode will NOT stop us from keeping TheTans forever trapped in your pitiful man-bodies... You have obstructed us for now, but your feeble bid to save humanity will fail!"

The Internet blogger hollywoodinterrupted.com said Thursday that Cruise threatened to not promote "Mission: Impossible 3," a surefire sum-

mer blockbuster, if the offending episode ran. Comedy Central is owned by Viacom, as is Paramount, which is putting out the film.

But Cruise's representative, Arnold Robinson, told The Associated Press Friday that the mega-star made no such demands.

"Not true," Robinson said. "I can tell you that he never said that."

A call by The Associated Press to a Paramount representative was not returned.

The episode in question,

"Trapped in the Closet," which first aired last November, shows Scientology leaders hailing Stan, one of the show's four devilish fourth-graders, as a savior. A cartoon Cruise locks himself in a closet and won't come out. An animated John Travolta, another famous Scientologist, enters the closet to try to get him out.

The battle began in earnest earlier this week when Isaac Hayes, another celebrity Scientologist and longtime show

member—voicing the ladies' man Chef—quit the show, saying he could no longer tolerate its religious "intolerance and bigotry."

Stone and Parker didn't buy that either.

On Monday, Stone told The Associated Press, "This is 100 percent having to do with his faith in Scientology. He has no problem—and he's cashed plenty of checks—with our show making fun of Christians."

A Comedy Central spokesman said the network pulled the controversial episode to make room for two shows featuring Hayes.

"In light of the events of earlier this week, we wanted to give Chef an appropriate tribute by airing two episodes he is most known for," the spokesman said.

On the Net: [www.comedycentral.com/shows/south\\_park/](http://www.comedycentral.com/shows/south_park/) [www.hollywoodinterrupted.com](http://www.hollywoodinterrupted.com)

## Church and a show at theatre

Continued from page 6B country services will feature the same sermon. The two church bodies will meet together in small groups throughout the week at worshippers' homes.

The church staff will transport a trailer of equipment including a sound system and lights to the theater every

Sunday and take it down at the end of services, so regular movies can be shown at the theater in the afternoon.

"Velocity is totally different from anything anybody has seen here," said Glen Allen resident Pam Dumke, who is on the launch team for the new church. "I see so many people who aren't affiliated

with a church and they don't have that bond with a church family that is so important for my husband and I."

Velocity is the 13th house of worship created in the state since 1990 by Virginia Vision, a group started by the Fellowship of Independent Christian Churches to start churches around the state.

## Non-Catholics also observe Lent

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

INDIANAPOLIS — What did you give up for Lent?

It's not just a question for Catholics anymore.

In a sign that the Lenten spirit of fasting and repentance is becoming more ecumenical—and less just a "Catholic thing"—non-Catholic Christians say they are doing without their favorite vices, too.

"My dad was a Lutheran minister and used to give up something for Lent," said Cary Solida, Indianapolis. "Since he died last year, it's something I can do in order to remember him."

Solida is giving up soft drinks for Lent, which means abstaining from two of his favorites: Coca-Cola and Mountain Dew. His father, David Solida, used to give up his favorite beverage, iced tea.

So far, Cary Solida says he is doing pretty well.

"I haven't broken yet,

although it's hard," he said. "It's the first time I've been this committed to doing something, but I think I will (succeed) just because of the significance of what I am doing."

The practice of giving up a favorite food, drink or activity is a time-honored tradition for Catholics, who have observed a 40-day period of fasting, abstinence and almsgiving during Lent since the fourth century.

The Rev. John Echert, a Catholic expert who teaches at St. Paul Seminary in Minnesota and answers questions on Catholic television network EWTN's Web site ([www.ewtn.com](http://www.ewtn.com)), says the only real obligations for Catholics is to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, and to abstain from meat on each Friday during Lent.

"Beyond this, it is encouraged to take on additional penance but not required," Echert said in an online

exchange.

Not required, but certainly observed by Catholics. And these days, other Christians.

Luke Prifogle, Indianapolis, describes himself as "very nondenominational" with a faith that includes elements of Christianity, Hinduism and Islam. He gave up soft drinks for Lent.

"I have always believed that a lot of personal growth can be achieved through introspection during periods of self-denial," said Prifogle, who was raised Southern Baptist.

"I do find great value in many different religious practices. I've actually given up something for Lent for the past five years, some years with greater success than others. This year I have been successful so far, but it's still early, and I will admit the temptation to break my vow is growing."


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