

'The Golden Compass' Not Good as Gold

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CBNNews.com - As Christians set their sites on the big screen this Christmas season, the phrase “coming to a theater near you” should come as a threat when referring to *The Golden Compass*.

Packaged as a kid-friendly, Narnia-style movie just in time for the holidays, *The Golden Compass* is regarded by Christian movie critics as a wolf in sheep's clothing.

Opening on December 7, the movie is based on the first book of an overtly anti-God trilogy written by an avowed atheist.

“Phillip Pullman says that he wrote his fantasy trilogy *His Dark Materials* because he was so upset by the Christian evangelism of C.S. Lewis in his series of Christian tales entitled *The Chronicles of Narnia*,” says *Movieguide* Publisher Dr. Ted Baehr. “Pullman says he wanted to expose the 'lie' of the Christian church and assert his truth of an atheist vision of reality.”

Pullman made no secret of his hatred of the Narnia series in past interviews.

“I loathe the Narnia books,” Pullman expressed. “I hate them with a deep and bitter passion, with their view of childhood as a golden age from which sexuality and adulthood are falling away.”

In Pullman's eyes, Narnia is “one of the most ugly and poisonous things” he's ever read.

Will his contempt for God be as evident in *The Golden Compass* movie?

Catholic League President Bill Donohue argues in his 23-page booklet *The Golden Compass: Agenda Unmasked*, that Pullman's motive in the movie is to “bash Christianity and promote atheism.”

However, atheists and Pullman fans contend that movie producers buckled under pressure mounted by the Christian right and cleaned up the movie for theaters.

Luring Kids to Atheism?

So the dogged atheism of the books may not be as obvious in the movie – but that's for a reason.

Donohue claims that the movie was “watered down” to attract kids to purchase the trilogy

books in a “deceitful, stealth campaign.”

“The movie has been toned down, but it is going to lead kids to read the book,” Pullman told CBN News before describing the wickedness of the 12-year-old Lyra in the trilogy. “The girl wants to rip her father's heart out, and at the end of the whole trilogy, she kills God because He is “just a bumbling old fool.”“

The atheistic undertone is also witnessed by Adam Holz, the associate editor for Focus on the Family's *Plugged In* magazine.

“Pullman has been openly hostile about C.S. Lewis, and has been pretty clear about his desire to offer an alternate fantasy series based on what he would describe as humanistic principles,” Holz said. “I think parents need to be paying attention, to be vigilant and to be engaged.”

Craig von Buseck, Ministries Director for CBN.com notes that *The Golden Compass* is by no means an innocent fantasy film.

“Pullman is harnessing the power of story to promote his anti-God agenda,” von Buseck said. “In a 2003 interview, Pullman stated that his books -- a trilogy titled *His Dark Materials* -- were about 'killing God.’“

Redefining Virtues?

The Golden Compass attempts to undermine the morality of the Bible, according to Movieguide publisher Baehr.

“Pullman's world is a sad, animalistic universe. The trilogy ends in hopelessness,” Baehr said. “Love is not selfless giving, because that would be useless in a materialistic world. Love instead is the lust of pleasuring each other.”

Baehr says that this mode of thinking is adhered to by the 12-year-old protagonist.

“All she wants to do at the end of the trilogy is sexually pleasure herself with her friend,” Baehr told CBN News.

But a New Line Cinema spokesman says “*The Golden Compass* is an entertaining fantasy about love, courage, responsibility and freedom.”

Annie Laurie Gaylor, the co-president of Freedom From Religion Foundation, an atheist advocacy group, said “Phillip Pullman and I would say it is religion that poisons everything.”

Gaylor's daughter read the Pullman's trilogy “over and over.”

“What this book is about is casting off Church authority,” added Gaylor. “I think it's very, very positive. There should be something for freethinking children.”

But Baehr sees *The Golden Compass* as something far more potentially destructive and dangerous, saying the movie is “the exact opposite of anything a Christian would want to watch.”

Even though Baehr did not begin a boycott on the movie because he has not yet seen it, he does “urge people of faith and values no to bother to corrupt their children with this odious atheistic worldview.”

Sources: CBN News, MovieGuide, Religion News Service, Fox News, Wikipedia, Catholic League, Goldencompassmovie.com