

"GOLDEN COMPASS" FANS WANT RED MEAT

Catholic League president Bill Donohue offered his latest remarks today on "The Golden Compass," which opens on Friday:

"The screenwriter, Chris-'American Pie'-Weitz, got himself into another sticky situation when he told *Variety*, 'People are essentially misreading and misrepresenting a book that is full of good values.' Commenting on a similar remark by Weitz, Hanna Rosin noted in *The Atlantic Monthly* that Weitz 'hadn't quite realized that the loudest part of Pullman's fan base regarded that interpretation as a cop-out.'

"Pullman's most conspicuous fan base is bridgetothestars.net, and the anger expressed there regarding the watering down of the anti-Catholic bigotry is palpable. The website's review of the movie says, 'The removal of the religious motivations makes the institution [Catholic Church] incredibly bland, a mere band of thugs with a domineering power for no apparent reason.' They're disappointed that the thugs aren't priests. In the latest issue of the U.K. magazine *The Big Issue* (available on the fan website), it complains that the film is guilty of 'toning down Pullman's at times brutal attacks on the Catholic church.'

"Lou Lumenick in the *New York Post* was totally honest when he wrote that 'Bill Donohue of the Catholic League has been publicizing the movie by claiming it's an anti-religious tract, as much as it pains me to say so...[he] may actually have something of a point. You don't need to be a Jesuit scholar to figure out that the film's bad guys who keep complaining about heretics...are clearly meant to be reps of the Catholic Church.' Similarly, Mark Morford of SFGate.com calls Pullman's books 'aggressively anti-Christian,' but he is also chagrined that the movie denies him the red meat that Catholic bashers feed

on.

“Best of all is American Atheists and the U.K.’s National Secular Society. They are furious about being undernourished. The leader of the latter was quite revealing when he said, ‘We knew from the beginning that the producers of this film intended to leave out the anti-religious references. We think this is a great shame.’ Exactly our point—it’s Pullman’s trilogy, not the film, that really sells atheism to kids.”