

“THE LEDGE” SELLS ATHEISM

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on “The Ledge,” a movie that opens July 8 in Los Angeles and New York City:

People of faith, especially Catholics, are used to being trashed by Hollywood, but they are not accustomed to films that promote atheism. Yes, there was “The Golden Compass,” an atheism-for-kids effort which the Catholic League successfully boycotted (in fairness, it was the book upon which the movie was based that triggered our response, not the screen adaptation). “The Ledge” is different in that its backers are selling themselves as the real pioneers: they expect it to be a ground-breaker. In short, they are relying on its potential fan base accessing the film through Video on Demand (it opens in only two theaters).

The characters in the movie are utterly predictable. Gavin’s loss of faith deepened after his wife blamed him when their daughter was killed in an accident. Because he believes in nothing, he is the good guy. Gavin has an affair with an evangelical’s wife—you guessed it, the evangelical is a close-minded homophobe—leaving the poor gal (played by Liv Tyler) in a mess. You see, she was once a prostitute before her husband (himself a former alcoholic and drug abuser) introduced her to God. In any event, after Mr. Intolerant, the evangelical, discovers the affair, he tells Gavin to jump from a ledge or he’ll kill both of them, including himself.

Matthew Chapman is the writer and director. “God-fearing straight men have had a monopoly for a very long time,” he says, “and many peculiar decisions have been made.” Among the most peculiar, historically speaking, is something Chapman doesn’t want to admit: it was the Judeo-Christian ethos of America that accounts for the unprecedented levels of justice and freedom enjoyed by non-believers.

Chapman is an atheist and the great-great grandson of Charles Darwin. Darwin, it should be noted, was a self-described

agnostic. He once said to a dogmatic atheist, Edward Aveling, "Why should you be so aggressive? Is anything gained by trying to force these new ideas upon the mass of mankind?" Too bad Chapman didn't learn that lesson.