

*The Golden Compass, Atheistic Diatribe, Flops at the Box Office*

Anthony J. Sacco, Sr. Copyright, December 2007.

---

PINE BLUFFS - It is liberal conventional "wisdom" that to boycott or protest a movie, book, or product only increases its popularity. That was BEFORE Christians began successfully using the tactic to combat the rash of offensive material aimed at them for the past 30 years by Hollywood, major media, misguided celebrities, and others, such as atheist radical author, Philip Pullman.

On December 3rd, I wrote a column sounding the alarm for Christian parents, about the release of New Line's *The Golden Compass*. (See *A Warning to Those Who Seek to Raise Wise Children of God. Philip Pullman's His Dark Materials Trilogy: The Golden Compass, The Subtle Knife, and The Amber Spyglass, are Dangerous Attacks Against Christianity*. See [www.saccoservices.com](http://www.saccoservices.com), <http://wywatch.net/8.html>, and <http://reljournal.com/Christianity>. I was not alone. Many others did the same.

Despite being called such names as "fundies," and "right-wing ideologues," those to whom these warnings were directed seem to have responded, staying away from theaters in droves, and keeping their children away as well. In its first weekend, although it *did* earn the #1 rating in the United States, *Compass's* box office take was a disappointing \$27 million. Compared to other big-budget, "family-oriented" films, it was positively anemic. That had to be bad news for its financial backers.

The movie *has* been doing well in such nominally Christian nations as England, Spain, France, and Germany. But that will not help the studio, because New Line sold off foreign distribution rights prior to releasing the film. In the United States, here's how *Compass* stacked up against the openings of other films of the same Fantasy genre:

Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire - \$102.6 million  
Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban - 93.6 million  
Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone - \$90.2 million  
Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets - \$88.3 million  
The Lord of the Rings - Return of the King - \$72.6 million  
The Chronicles of Narnia - \$65.5 million  
The Lord of the Rings - The Two Towers - \$62 million  
The Lord of the Rings - The Fellowship of the Ring - \$47.2 million  
The Golden Compass - \$27 million (estimated)  
Eragon - \$23.2 million  
Bridge to Terabathia - \$22.5 million  
Stardust - \$9.1 million

From these figures we can see that J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* is in a league of its own. However, *Compass* came nowhere near even the first *Lord of the Rings*, and made only a few million more than *Eragon*. That's got to be a major concern for Chris

Weitz, the film's director, and its producer, Deborah Forte. It should be. Slashfims called the numbers a "disaster."

Rolf Mittweg, president and CEO of New Lines' worldwide distributing and marketing operation described the opening week as "a little bit disappointing." He is also reported as saying that exit polls were favorable and that he was hoping word of mouth would help the film in coming weeks, especially with school holidays starting. "It's all about longevity," he said.

Maybe so. But if Mittwell's comment is accurate, then he and New Line will need a miracle. They've got a huge competition problem. Three blockbuster movies, including *I Am Legend*, opened the following week. Five more major releases were set for the Friday prior to Christmas, and two more were planned for release on Christmas day. That's a lot of competition. Based on its decidedly soft opening week, *The Golden Compass* is likely to have a difficult time surviving in theaters through the holidays. Indeed, its decline has already begun. On December 24, Reuters Entertainment Summary reported that, "*I am Legend* snatched the top spot at the international box office, ending the two-week reign of domestic dud, *The Golden Compass*." And by the close of the week ending December 28, *Compass's* ticket sales revenue was a mere \$4 million, compared to box office leader *I Am Legend's* \$34.2 million.

At this point, \$100 million in revenue for a pernicious film attacking God, the Church, and Christianity, in a country where 90% of its projected audience professes to be Christian, now seems a long shot, and \$80-\$90 million is more probable long range. That does not bode well for those who hoped to do movies of the two other novels in Pullman's offensive trilogy. And, it should be a warning shot across the bow for any who contemplate providing financial backing for this type of film in the future, that they can no longer get away with attacking Christians with impunity.

*Anthony J. Sacco, a writer, licensed private investigator, author of two novels; The China Connection, and Little Sister Lost, and a biography, Echoes in the Wind, holds degrees from Loyola College and the University of Maryland Law School. His articles have appeared in the Washington Times, Baltimore Sun, Voices for the Unborn, the Catholic Review, WREN Magazine and the Wyoming Catholic Register. E-mail him at [anthonyjsacco@hotmail.com](mailto:anthonyjsacco@hotmail.com) and visit his website at [www.saccoservices.com](http://www.saccoservices.com).*