

Johnson Street Church of Christ

The Golden Compass: Gateway to Atheism

December 7 is the opening of the long-awaited children's fantasy movie from New Line Cinema, The Golden Compass. Warnings are needed about this film and the books that underlie it.

You may be wondering why we are denouncing a kid's movie which, from all accounts, contains little of the crude language, sensuality, and overt violence which characterizes most Hollywood offerings. Why not oppose the movies with all of the filth instead?

The reason is simple. The Golden Compass is a "gateway" to a more dangerous destination: the trilogy of books on which it is based.

Phillip Pullman, an outspoken atheist author from England who has been winning award after award from the secular literary establishment, has produced a trilogy of children's books entitled His Dark Materials. By his own admission, he wrote the books to provide a secular alternative to the "poisonous" children's books of C. S. Lewis. The title comes from Milton's Paradise Lost, indicating Pullman's agenda to re-tell the biblical story of the creation and the fall of man.

But this time, the roles will be reversed. There is no Creator, just a mysterious natural force called Dust that causes matter to become conscious. The figure who represents God in Pullman's retelling ("The Authority") is a controlling, exploitive angel who is neither omnipotent nor omniscient - he was simply in a position to gain power through deceit. He rules through the Magisterium, which represents the institutions of Christendom, to hold oppressive, even murderous sway in the lives of humans. Pullman's replacement for Satan in this twisted tale is the mysterious but wise Lord Asriel, who sees through the Authority and his minions and leads a revolution against their oppression.

The charming young protagonist in this retelling is Lyra, the daughter of Lord Asriel, who is cast as the second Eve. This

Of C. S. Lewis' Chronicles of Narnia Pullman writes:

"...it is one of the most ugly and poisonous things I've ever read... nauseating drivel..."

-- Phillip Pullman, The Guardian (U.K.), 10/1/1998

time, however, she feels no shame. Instead, she is emboldened and empowered to cast off the Authority - eventually killing him, though without intent or malice. Along the way, she receives help from a pair of rebel angels, loving and passionate "companions" who are both men.

From reports we have received, if you go to the movie, you may not see much evidence of the anti-Christian bias that is so evident in the books. The movie appears to have been "sanitized" to make it more palatable to Americans, of whom 85% still profess Christianity.

This is why we are determined to expose the books. The movie may make it appear that the books are just harmless fantasy. Children who see the movie will want the books, and unless you are informed, you might decide to provide them.

If you do, your children will be exposed to a well-crafted seduction that denies God and mocks faith. They will be taught that religion exploits, that rebellion is courage,

and that sin is wisdom. They will learn to cheer for an alliance of homosexual angels and witches to prevail over evil "Christian" enemies.

Permit us to answer in advance the inevitable charge that we are practicing "censorship." Unbelievers, of course, have

as much right to make their case as believers do. But they ought to be transparent about what they are selling. In this case, they haven't been, so we feel compelled to supply information Christian parents need about the true content of Pullman's works.

We would also like to say that some of what apparently disturbs Pullman also disturbs us. It is beyond question that many who claim to follow Christ have gone beyond the bounds that God set in Scripture. Ignorance, hypocrisy, and even oppression can result whenever people stray from simple New Testament faith. If such excesses had been the only objects of Pullman's literary attack, we probably would not have objected.

But Pullman seeks to undermine the very foundations of faith. He mistakes religious abuse for religion itself, and paints all belief with the same ugly brush. He promotes a vision of a godless, human-centered world for our children to admire. Needless to say, we want no part of that.

"The Authority, God, the Creator, the Lord, Yahweh, El, Adonai, the King, the Father, the Almighty— those were all names he gave himself. He was never the creator. He was an angel like ourselves... he was formed of Dust as we are, and Dust is only a name for what happens when matter begins to understand itself."

-- Balthamos, a homosexual angel. The Amber Spyclass (3rd book of trilogy), p. 28.

The movie The Golden Compass appears to be a comparatively inoffensive gateway to the godless world of the writings of Phillip Pullman. We highly recommend that you not walk through it, and that you not allow your children to do so.

Extensive quotes from the books, the author, and the books' supporters as well as its critics may be found on our website, www.jscoc.org.

We recommend that you research these matters for yourself, but that you do so in a way that provides no funds to the author, his publishers, or New Line Cinema. We reluctantly purchased the books only in order to provide this information as honestly and fully as possible.

See below for some biblical teachings that may help you to answer this anti-Christian worldview.

For more information, or for other questions about spiritual things, feel free to contact our preacher at randydaw@gmail.com, or to contact the elders of our congregation at elders@jscoc.org.

"I'm trying to undermine the basis of Christian belief..."

-- Phillip Pullman, Washington Post, 2/19/2001

"But when you tell a story, there's got to be a worldview that's consistent throughout, and this is mine.... I wanted to emphasize the simple physical truth of things, the absolute primacy of the material life, rather than the spiritual or the afterlife..."

-- Phillip Pullman, New York Times, 11/7/2000

We exist at His pleasure, but without us He would remain.

We worship Him because He is superior to us in every way. All should bow before Him, saying:

"You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created." - **Revelation 4:11**

God at the Center: A Biblical View of the World

The biggest problem with Pullman's writings is not homosexual angels. Neither is it a wicked "Church" with sadistic "Christians." The Problem that lies behind all other problems with these books is that in Pullman's world, there is no God. The world he wants our children to believe in is self-existent, self-sustaining, and self-explaining.

Humans in his world are therefore entirely the product of natural forces. Life is in the body, and death ends life, period.

For Pullman, Christianity is a delusion. He thinks the sooner we cast it off the better we will be. He is passionate about this, because for Pullman, now is all there is for us.

Pullman freely admits that this worldview is the agenda behind his writings.

The Christian view of the world has potent and articulate challengers. Christians must learn to assert their faith.

"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you..." - **1 Peter 3:15**[†]

Biblical teachings are the basis for the Christian view of the world. Four are given in Paul's debate with the Athenian philosophers on the Areopagus, recorded in Acts 17.

I. This is God's World

"God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things..." - **Acts 17:24-25**

God is not a product of our minds - we are the product of His! We have nothing to do with His existence, though He is the source of ours:

"Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising." - **Acts 17:29**

II. We are God's Children

"...He has made from one blood every nation of men.... for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.'" - **Acts 17:26, 28**

The image of God is upon every human, descended from the first man and woman.

"Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion... over all the earth....' So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." - **Genesis 1:26-27**

The ability to choose and the right to manage our surroundings are granted by our Creator. We are the product of an eternal Mind. In important ways we resemble Him, and He has given us the right to seek Him if we choose.

III. God Wants Us to Know Him

"...so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us..." - **Acts 17:27**

God has done more than just to make Himself available. He has also come in search of us through Jesus, who was God in human flesh. Calling Himself "Son of Man" Jesus said,

"...the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." - **Luke 19:10**

Now here is possibly the most important question in the worldview debate: Are people lost without God? The Bible says that we are justly condemned, but that God has made a way for us to be redeemed through Christ.

IV. We are Accountable to God

"Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead." - **Acts 17:30-31**

This world will come to its end on the day God has appointed. Judgment will follow, and most will be lost (Matthew 7:13-14).

But Jesus took the punishment that our sins deserve when He died, and won power over death when He was resurrected. Grace will also be granted on that day, but only to those who are in Christ when it comes.

The implication is clear:

"For He says: 'In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you.' Behold, now is the accepted time... now is the day of salvation." - **2 Corinthians 6:2**

[†]all Bible quotations are from The Holy Bible, New King James Version, © 1982 Thomas Nelson, Inc.

Johnson Street Church of Christ

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