

GLAD TIDINGS

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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The Republic of Heaven

Jerry Fite

The author of the *Golden Compass*, Philip Pullman, recently answered his critics in an interview on the Today Show. The movie, based on his book, was released nationwide this past Friday and has been criticized as anti-God and anti-Christian. Instead of answering “yes” or “no” to the question, Mr. Pullman said, “*I always mistrust people who tell us how we should understand something. They know better than we do what the book means, or how we should read it or whether we should read it or not...I prefer to trust what I call the democracy of reading.*”

Instead of affirming or denying the question concerning his work, he implies his critics are controlling know-it-alls and he would rather let readers determine what it means to them. He believes in “the democracy of reading.” This may be a revealing avenue into the heart of Philip Pullman concerning the character of his work. He speaks not only of *the democracy of reading*, but he has written of his vision of “*the Republic of Heaven.*”

In the November/
December 2001 edition of the

Horn Book Magazine, a publication designed for honoring the best in children’s books, Mr. Pullman’s article entitled “The Republic of Heaven” appeared. Admitting he had not read many children’s books, he comments: “*...the children’s books I love are saying something important about the most important subject I know, which is the death of God and its consequences...I take it that there really is no God anymore; the old assumptions have all withered away. That’s my starting point: that the idea of God with which I was brought up is now perfectly incredible.*”

He intellectually realizes that if God is dead, he must provide himself and others a new joy that believers in God know as Heaven. It is what ever gives you joy and meaning in the only reality you can experience, “*the here and now.*” He writes, “*we must find a way of believing that we are not subservient creatures dependent on the whim of some celestial monarch, but free citizens of the republic of heaven.*”

Pullman’s humanistic philosophy comes through clearly when discussing a standard determining good and evil. In His Re-

public of Heaven, “*it is no good to say that ‘x is good and y is evil because God says they are’; the King is dead and that argument won’t do for the free citizens of the republic.*” Even “evil” cannot look to Satan as a source because “*he’s dead to.*” Good and evil has no source, but man. And only man will determine for himself what is good and evil.

According to Pullman, the Bible has had an effect upon generations because it seized the mind and captured the heart by the stories it contained. Therefore his utopia of the republic of heaven will best be manifested through “*stories,*” “*and one of the few places we can be certain of finding stories is in the books children read.*”

Is it not interesting that Mr. Pullman has produced a trilogy containing stories for children? He has been successful in seizing the mind and capturing the hearts of young readers. But his ultimate joy, the republic heaven, is capturing the minds of a new generation with thoughts of anti-absolute truth but pro-relativism, anti-God but pro-Humanism and therefore anti-Christian. Parents beware (*Matthew 7:15*)