

## Sample Quotations from Phillip Pullman's His Dark Materials

Most of these excerpts are taken from "The Golden Compass: Agenda Unmasked," an essay by Bill Donohue, published by the Catholic League. With their permission, I have used quotes from Donohue's work to give you a "feel" for the anti-Christian sentiment of Pullman's writings.

Though heavily slanted toward the Catholic viewpoint, Bill Donohue's essay is measured and well documented. There is much in it that would be of use to anyone wanting to oppose Pullman and his agenda. It may be ordered for \$5 at [www.catholicleague.org](http://www.catholicleague.org)

### Background: (by Randy Daw)

Pullman's trilogy is populated with characters who share his disdain for religion. Religion is symbolized by The Magisterium (an actual Catholic name for their authoritative hierarchy), which was transformed (in Pullman's imagination) by Reformation leader John Calvin to represent Christendom in all of its forms. The Church and its agents are uniformly presented as horrible and misguided. As it turns out, God ("The Authority") is nothing but a decrepit old angel, also mortal, who is easily (and inadvertently) dispatched by the protagonist children in the last book.

Gyptians, witches, and Lord Asriel are rebels against the Authority.

Balthamos is a rebel angel who is in an apparently homosexual relationship with another rebel angel. They are greatly admired by the children who meet them.

Mrs. Coulter is Lyra's (the child protagonist) mother who slowly converts to the side of Wisdom (atheism).

For the most part, these excerpts speak for themselves:

### Excerpts from Book I (The Golden Compass)

**A Gyptian leader, discussing the Church:** "The Church in recent times, Lyra, it's been getting more commanding. There's councils for this and councils for that; there's talk of reviving the Office of the Inquisition, God forbid."<sup>36</sup>

**Lord Asriel, telling Lyra about the Church and the discovery of Dust:** "Now all discoveries of this sort, because they have a bearing on the doctrines of the Church, have to be announced through the Magisterium in Geneva. And this discovery of Rusakov's was so unlikely and strange that the inspector from the Consistorial Court of Discipline suspected Rusakov of diabolic possession. He performed an exorcism in the laboratory, he interrogated Rusakov under the rules of the Inquisition, but finally they had to accept the fact that Rusakov wasn't lying or deceiving them."<sup>38</sup>

**Lord Asriel, discussing the General Oblation Board severing children's dæmons:** "There was a precedent. Something like it had happened before. Do you know what the word *castration* means? It means removing the sexual organs of a boy so that he never develops the characteristics of a man. A castrato keeps his high treble voice all his life, which is why the Church allowed it: so useful in Church music."<sup>39</sup>

**Lord Asriel, speaking gleefully of his plans:** "This will mean the end of the Church, Marisa, the end of the Magisterium, the end of all those centuries of darkness!"<sup>41</sup>

## Excerpts from Book II (The Subtle Knife)

**Mrs. Coulter, speaking from her position of authority with the Church's General Oblation Board, in an attempt to extract information:** "Oh, there is more suffering to come. We have a thousand years of experience in this Church of ours. We can draw out your suffering endlessly. Tell us about the child."<sup>43</sup>

**Ruda Skadi, a witch:** "In every world, the agents of the Authority are sacrificing children to their cruel god!"<sup>45</sup>

**A servant, speaking about his master, Lord Asriel:** "Well, Lord Asriel has never found himself at ease with the doctrines of the Church, so to speak. I've seen a spasm of disgust cross his face when they talk of the sacraments, and atonement, and redemption, and suchlike. It's death among our people, Serafina Pekkala, to challenge the Church, but Lord Asriel's been nursing a rebellion in his heart for as long as I've served him, that's one thing I do know."

**Serafina:** "A rebellion against the Church?"

**Servant:** "Partly, aye. ...I think he's waging a higher war than that. I think he's aiming a rebellion against the highest power of all. He's gone a-searching for the dwelling place of the Authority Himself, and he's a-going to destroy Him."<sup>46</sup>

**Will's father, speaking to Will:** "There is a war coming, boy. The greatest war there ever was. Something like it happened before, and this time the right side must win. We've had nothing but lies and propaganda and cruelty and deceit for all the thousands of years of human history. It's time we started again, but properly this time."<sup>47</sup>

**A witch, to her fellow witches:** "Let me tell you what is happening and who it is that we must fight. For there is a war coming. I don't know who will join with us, but I know whom we must fight. It is the Magisterium, the Church. For all its history...it's tried to suppress and control every natural impulse. And when it can't control them, it cuts them out...I have traveled in the south lands. There are churches there, believe me, that cut their children too...not in the same way, but just as horribly. They cut their sexual organs, yes, both boys and girls; they cut them with knives so that they shan't feel. That is what the Church does, and every church is the same: control, destroy, obliterate every good feeling. So if a war comes, and the Church is on one side of it, we must be on the other."<sup>48</sup>

## Excerpts from Book III (The Amber Spyglass)

**Dr. Mary Malone:** "I used to be a nun, you see. I thought physics could be done to the glory of God, till I saw there wasn't any God at all and that physics was more interesting anyway. The Christian religion is a very powerful and convincing mistake, that's all."<sup>52</sup>

**Mrs. Coulter, to a priest, after she leaves the Church:** "Well, where is God...if he's alive? And why doesn't he speak anymore... Is he still alive, at some inconceivable age, decrepit and demented, unable to think or act or speak and unable to die, a rotten hulk? And if that is his condition, wouldn't it be the most merciful thing, the truest proof of our love for God, to seek him out and give him the gift of death?"<sup>53</sup>

**Ogunwe, an ally of Lord Asriel:** "I am a king, but it's my proudest task to join Lord Asriel in setting up a world where there are no kingdoms at all. No kings, no bishops, no priests. The Kingdom of Heaven has been known by that name since the Authority first set himself above the rest of the angels. And we want no part of it. This world is different. We intend to be free citizens of the Republic of Heaven."<sup>54</sup>

**Balthamos, a rebel angel:** "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—the first angel, true, the most powerful, but he was formed of Dust as we are, and Dust is only a name for what happens when matter begins to understand itself."<sup>55</sup>

**Serafina:** “I met an angel: a female angel...She told me many things...She said that all the history of human life has been a struggle between wisdom and stupidity. She and the rebel angels, the followers of wisdom, have always tried to open minds; the Authority and his churches have always tried to keep them closed.”<sup>56</sup>

**Father MacPhail, president of the Magisterium’s Consistorial Court of Discipline, discussing Lyra:** “Still just a child, I think. This Eve, who is going to be tempted and who, if precedent is any guide, will fall, and whose fall will involve us all in ruin. Gentlemen... I propose to send a man to find her and kill her before she *can* be tempted.”<sup>57</sup>

**Mrs. Coulter on why she did not turn Lyra over to the Church:** “If you thought for one moment that I would release my daughter into the care—the *care!*—of a body of men with a feverish obsession with sexuality, men with dirty fingernails, reeking of ancient sweat, men whose furtive imaginations would crawl over her body like cockroaches—if you thought I would expose my child to *that*, my Lord President, you are more stupid than you take *me* for.”<sup>59</sup>

### Footnotes (using Donohue’s numbering)

<sup>34</sup>Philip Pullman, *The Golden Compass*, p. 27.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 79-80.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 113.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 325.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 328.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 347.

<sup>42</sup>Philip Pullman, *The Subtle Knife*, p. 221.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 243.

<sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 40-41.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 282-283.

<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 44-45.

<sup>49</sup>Philip Pullman, *The Amber Spyglass*, p. 64.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 286.

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 366.

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 393.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 293-294.

<sup>54</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 188.

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 429.

<sup>57</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 292.