

DEFENDING THE FAITH SERIES:
**NOTHING GOLDEN
ABOUT THIS COMPASS:**

A CRITICAL RESPONSE TO THE
GOLDEN COMPASS BOOK AND MOVIE



By Pastor Chris Jordan
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NOTHING GOLDEN ABOUT THIS COMPASS: A CRITICAL RESPONSE (By Pastor Chris Jordan – November 2007)

HARRY WHO?

For over 10 years, I served as the Youth Pastor and Christian Education Director at Bible Fellowship Church in Surrey, BC. During that time, I had the privilege of partnering with parents in helping them to fulfill their God-given call to train up their children in the way that they should go – in the paths of righteousness. Part of my job included helping parents to navigate their children through the landmines of the modern media. However, I am embarrassed to admit that when a parent first approached me in 1999 and asked me what I thought about Harry Potter, my first response was, “Harry who?” Needless to say, I had some catching up to do, and started informing myself about this series of books and movies. One of the things I discovered through this process was that – although there was a wealth of information about this topic on the Internet – much of it was incorrect, incomplete, or contradictory. The Christian bookstore wasn’t that much better. I picked up two books on different sides of the debate. “What’s a Christian to do with Harry Potter?” by Connie Neal, who praised the books and encouraged believers to read them, and “Harry Potter and the Bible” by Richard Abanes, who encouraged Christians to stay away from these books that were filled with witchcraft. And so, I had to embark on my own personal journey of discovery to see what the books were really about. I wanted to be able to give an informed and accurate response to parents and their children.

THE DA VINCI DECEPTION:

A little over a year ago, I heard rumblings of a movie that was coming to the theatres based on a book by Dan Brown called, ‘The Da Vinci Code.’ Once again, I dove into this book and picked it apart, and put together a critical response entitled, “Exposing the Top 10 Lies of the Da Vinci Deception.” We had people in our church who took these brochures out on opening night of the movie, and put them on the windshields of cars in the parking lot of the theatre. I was blessed to receive an e-mail from an unbeliever later that week, thanking me for the research I had done on the paper, and that even though he didn’t agree with my position, appreciated how fairly and accurately I had treated the topic. Which brings us to October of 2007.

THE GOLDEN COMPASS:

The first e-mail that I read about The Golden Compass said this: “*There will be a new children’s movie out in December called The Golden Compass. It is written by Phillip Pullman, a proud atheist... He hates C.S. Lewis’s Chronicles of Narnia, and has written a trilogy to show the other side. The movie has been dumbed down to fool kids and their parents in the hope that they will buy his trilogy where in the end the children kill God and can do as they please.*”¹ As I started digging into this issue, I discovered that the Catholic League has condemned The Golden Compass as a deadly effort to indoctrinate children into anti-Christian beliefs, saying, “*The film is being sold as an innocent children’s fantasy, but in reality there is nothing innocent about it: the movie based on a book that was written to promote atheism and denigrate Christianity.*”² Having read the book for myself, I have come to the conclusion that The Golden Compass is ten times more dangerous, deadly and destructive than Harry Potter and the Da Vinci Code put together.

What follows is a critical response to these books, designed to inform the reader of the actual content of the books themselves, as well as giving some suggestions as to how we should respond.

WHO IS PHILIP PULLMAN?

Before looking at the actual content of the books, let's take a look at the author himself. "*Pullman is a supporter of the British Humanist Association and an Honorary Associate of the National Secular Society. New Yorker journalist Laura Miller has described Pullman as one of England's most outspoken atheists.*"³ Here are some quotes from the author, to help give you an idea of his agenda...

- "*I am all for the death of God.*"⁴
- "*My books are about killing God.*"⁵
- "*I'm trying to undermine the basis of Christian belief.*"⁶

In short, his books are a, "*deliberate attempt to foist his viciously anti-God beliefs upon his audience... Pullman represents the polar opposite of CS Lewis (the author of the Christian allegorical series The Chronicles of Narnia). Pullman has repeatedly—and with apparent glee—lashed out at both Lewis and the faith he represents. "I hate the Narnia books, and I hate them with a deep and bitter passion," he told one interviewer.*"⁷ It's interesting to note also that, "*It was Lewis' Christianity, and the success he had in conveying his love for his religion to children, that convinced Pullman to write the anti-Narnia series.*"⁸

WHAT IS THE GOLDEN COMPASS ABOUT?

Because there is a lot of misinformation that gets passed around on the internet, I felt like it was important to give you some first-hand research and explanation of the content of the book, including what I hope will be a useful parent's guide. This chart includes a description of several different categories including a look at the blood, gore, violence, weapons, profanity, sex and nudity found in the books, to help parents make an informed decision as to whether or not to allow their children to see the movie and read the books. Please note that where I quoted books and websites, that I always went back to the original sources to make sure that the information contained here is accurate.

Random House, the publishing company for these books, says, "*In The Golden Compass, readers meet for the first time 11-year-old Lyra Belacqua, a precocious orphan growing up within the precincts of Jordan College in Oxford, England. It quickly becomes clear that Lyra's Oxford is not precisely like our own - nor is her world. In Lyra's world, everyone has a personal demon.*"⁹ However, this is no harmless children's fantasy novel! Something called 'Dust' "*drives the plot, and is a source of strife between Church authorities (the bad guys) who see the invisible substance as original sin and want to suppress it, and those scientists and rebels (the good guys...) who want to promote it. The Church kidnaps children because Dust isn't attracted to children as much as it is to adults. The General Oblation Board (of the Church) exists to perform vile experiments on children, the cruelest being one where they sever the child's demon from them.. Though severing a person's demon effectively turns him into a zombie, it is the Church's idea that it is better to do this than let the children grow up and fall into sin.*"¹⁰

PARENTS GUIDE:

Blood / gore / violence	a severed head; ghosts with bleeding stumps where their heads should have been, someone shot in the neck with an arrow; someone shot between the eyes with a gun; someone shot in the back with an arrow, twitching and coughing out blood; other grisly murders; ferocious battles; children kidnapped and tortured; a gory, bloody fight between two bears.
Weapons	arrows, knives, swords, rifles, machine guns, fire throwers
Profanity	several mild profanities - bloody, h*ll and d*mn; and the Lord's name is taken in vain a couple of times
Supernatural Elements	Witches, demons, ghosts, 'cliff-ghasts', astrology
Imitative Behaviour	the main character, Lyra, smokes cigarettes, as do other children; Lyra earns the nickname "Silvertongue" for her masterful ability to lie and deceive; Lyra rebels against authority.
Sex / Nudity	reference to children swimming naked together; In the third book, main characters include two homosexual angels; and premarital sex between the two main teenage characters is encouraged and applauded.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE PROBLEMS WITH THE GOLDEN COMPASS?

1. THE BOOK CALLS GOOD EVIL, AND CALLS EVIL GOOD.

The Bible says, **"Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness."** (Isaiah 5:20). One of the many problems with The Golden Compass is the fact that its very foundational philosophies are anti-Christian and anti-Biblical to the core. The leaders in the Church are the bad guys. Witches are the good guys. Sin – rebelling against God's Word – is promoted as being good. In fact, in the closing pages of the book, the heroine, Lyra, makes this shocking statement, *"We thought Dust ("sin") must be bad too, because they were grown-up and they said so. But what if it isn't? What if it's – Yeah! What if it (sin) is really good?" If Dust (sin) were a good thing... What if it were to be sought and welcomed and cherished?"*¹¹

2. THE BOOK PORTRAYS DEMONS AS BEING GOOD:

Another major problem with the book is the issue of the demons. The Random House website describes a demon as a: *"Soul-like companion to each individual human being."*¹² The Golden Compass movie website further describes demons as *"a talking animal spirit that accompanies them through life, always close to its corporeal self... The bond between human and demon is extraordinarily powerful – a person without a demon in Lyra's world would be seen as horribly mutilated and trifling with this connection is taboo in the extreme."*¹³ Now some would argue and say, "But Pastor Chris, this is just a children's fantasy book. This isn't reality. It isn't harmful." Isn't it? Read these frightful words from the Golden Compass movie website:

*“In our world, it is possible that people have demons as well, only they are invisible. If you would like to learn more about your demon, and create a demon avatar to take out into the world with you, select, “Meet your demon.” To discover your own demon, look into your heart and answer the following 20 questions. Your true character and the form of your demon will be revealed, ready to be taken with you into your virtual world.”*¹⁴

When I read those words, I was chilled to the bone. This so-called harmless children’s movie website, encouraging children to discover their own demon? Steve Wood, of the Family Life Center, cautions, *“Pullman’s work is about to bring millions of children into contact with the demonic. By volume three of the trilogy children are invited to join in a diabolical revolt against God, bishops, and priests.”*¹⁵ And perhaps the most troubling thing I read on this movie website was the fact that, as of November 14th, there were 387,616 users on the website with their own personal ‘demons’!

Consider some of these quotes from The Golden Compass about Pullman’s demons:

- *“Everyone’s demons instantly became warlike: each child was accompanied by fangs, or claws, or bristling fur, and Pan, contemptuous of the limited imaginations of these gyptian demons, became a dragon the size of a deer hound.”* (pg. 55).
- *“Mrs. Coulter smiled, and her demon bared his white teeth in a grin of imp-like pleasure.”* (pg. 70).
- *“His serpent demon’s mailed head and emerald eyes glittered...”* (pg. 93).
- *“The witches have the power to separate themselves from their demons... they can send their demons far ahead on the wind or the clouds...”* (pg. 164).
- *“The only eyes you could see... were the blazing yellow eyes of the wolf demons.”* (pg. 289).

Compare those descriptions with what the Bible has to say about real demons:

- *“Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back... And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world. He was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.”* (Rev. 12:7-9).

3. THE BOOK DEPICTS THE CHURCH AS BEING EVIL:

Perhaps the most famous verse in the Bible – John 3:16 – most accurately describes our Creator God and His heart for people: *“For God so loved the world, that He gave His one and only son, so that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.”* The whole message of Christianity is summed up in the two commandments to love God and love people. And yet, Pullman’s books blatantly attack the Church, and portray the Church’s leaders as being power-hungry, controlling, hateful, hurtful and evil.

- *“The church’s power over every aspect of life had been absolute.”* (pg. 30).
- *“And the Church in recent times, it’s been getting more commanding...”* (pg. 127).

In The Golden Compass, the Church leaders are the ones who are kidnapping and abusing children! There is no doubt in my mind that Pullman very intentionally paints the church in a negative light, with the goal of getting people to despise Christianity.

WHAT ABOUT THE OTHER BOOKS?

It has been noted by many reviewers that The Golden Compass (although very anti-Christian in its content) is the tamest one of the trilogy, and that with each successive novel, Pullman's anti-Christian agenda becomes more and more pronounced. Movie reviewer Jeffery Overstreet said, "*As we went into the second and third book of the trilogy, something very strange started to happen. The characters...were suddenly turning into pawns in Pullman's clever game to try and portray the Church as devoid of anything loving or good or gracious. "[Pullman's] characters, as they make their way through the world, end up waging a second war in heaven. And Pullman portrays them killing God, who turns out to be just a supernatural imposter who's feeble and cruel and senile.*"¹⁶

Here are just a few selected quotes from the other two novels to give you an idea of how Pullman continues to promote his humanistic agenda:

VOLUME #2: THE SUBTLE KNIFE:¹⁷

- **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."
- **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... 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."

VOLUME #3: THE AMBER SPYGLASS:¹⁸

- **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."
- **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?"
- **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."

In this third and final novel, the two main characters “*Will and Lyra stumble upon God himself. He is not an imposing force, however. Rather, he is encased in crystal and being terrorized by ghoulish beings called cliffghasts. He is “so old and he was terrified, crying like a baby and cowering away into the lowest corner...Demented and powerless, the aged being could only weep and mumble in fear and pain and misery.” The children release God from the case, and he dissolves into the air like the dead...*”¹⁹

WHAT SHOULD OUR CHRISTIAN RESPONSE BE?

First Peter 5:8 says, “*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.*” Spiritual warfare is not a game! Romans 16:19 instructs us to, “*be wise in what is good and innocent in what is evil.*” It is my firm conviction that Christian parents should protect their children from the dangerous lies being taught in both these books, and the movie coming out this December. “*But why?” the question arises from liberals. “What are you afraid of?” My children losing God, especially before they have a firm hold on Him, that's what. At some point they will question the existence of God. I did. It's normal to do so. I want more than anything else I want for my children, even their own happiness in this life, for them to believe in God, Who is their salvation. If you believe in God, and that the loss of God is the worst thing that can happen to a person, then you would sooner give your child a rattlesnake to play with than expose him or her at an early age to the work of a man who openly says he wishes to destroy God in the minds of his audience.*”²¹

The movie poster tagline for The Golden Compass boasts: “*There are worlds beyond our own: The Compass will show the way.*” A compass is defined as, “*a device used to determine geographic direction.*” Based on that definition, there is nothing ‘golden’ about this compass. The only ‘way’ this compass will lead you – and your children – is astray. Instead of allowing an avowed atheist to lead you, look to the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ – who is the way, the truth, and the life – to lead you in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

“Do not enter the path of the wicked, And do not walk in the way of evil. Avoid it, do not travel on it; Turn away from it and pass on. For they do not sleep unless they have done evil; And their sleep is taken away unless they make someone fall. For they eat the bread of wickedness, And drink the wine of violence. But the path of the just is like the shining sun, That shines ever brighter unto the perfect day. The way of the wicked is like darkness; They do not know what makes them stumble. My son, give attention to my words; Incline your ear to my sayings. Do not let them depart from your eyes; Keep them in the midst of your heart; For they are life to those who find them, And health to all their flesh. Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life.” (Proverbs 4:14-23).

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THE DEFENDING THE FAITH SERIES:

1. **Exposing The Da Vinci Deception** (a response to The Da Vinci Code)
2. **Investigating Angels and Demons** (a response to Angels and Demons)
3. **Nothing Golden About This Compass** (a response to The Golden Compass)

For more articles or sermon notes by Pastor Chris Jordan, go to:

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HERE'S WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS RESOURCE:

- Pastor Chris, I would like to give thanks on the information you sent. The Pathfinders in Pinawa were to see this movie on Sat until I sent the movie alert. The other leaders say thanks as well. We are supposed to guide our kids and if it means saying no, oh well. God bless you Chris. I didn't like what I heard a bout the book. (Cindy, a parent from Seddons Corner, MB).
- Thank you for this great email and your work on it. I for one will be sending it on to every email address I have in my book. You have identified what I have considered to be one of Satan's best works in our day he's going for our kids. And that makes him a target in my mind. We must pray for Mr. Pullman's soul and his salvation. Awesome job. Thank you again. Be blessed for your testimony. (Paul Bamber, a Foursquare Pastor from Regina, SK).
- Chris thanks so much for all the work you have put into this. I have passed it on and had some very positive comments. I gave a copy to my father in-law who was very impressed as well. Again thanks for taking the time. (Dawn, a parent from Surrey, BC).
- Chris thanks for putting the time and effort into this paper. It is intelligent, well thought out and well written...it is refreshing to find a piece of Christian literature that is done with excellence and truth without fear mongering. (Nichole, a parent from Winnipeg, MB.)
- A very well researched article. I'm going to save it and refer to it when needed. Have you thought of sending this to "Focus on the Family"? Thanks for sending it our way. (Graham, a worship leader from Surrey, BC).
- Chris. Thank you so much for your research on *The Golden Compass*. Your work is excellent. Can I have your permission to make your paper available to our church and our Foursquare pastors? Blessings. (Barry Buzza, President of the Foursquare Gospel Church of Canada).