

HBO's 'His Dark Materials' Battles Deceitful and Intolerant God in Finale

Christmas may be over, but the hatred for Christianity still lives on in television. HBO's anti-religious series *His Dark Materials* brings on what could be 2020's final salute to atheism with a stand against the "deceit, intolerance and prejudice" of God in the name of "understanding, truth and acceptance."

The Dec. 28 season 2 finale "Æsahættr" finally shows the previously missing Lord Asriel (James McAvoy), an explorer who's been at odds with the religious oligarchy known as the Magisterium.

After his escape into a parallel world in last year's finale, his true goal unfolds, to gather the "fallen" angels for an even grander scheme. In addition to proving the existence of a substance called "Dust" in defiance of their religious government, he pleads with the angels to join him in a battle against the ultimate religious figurehead: God Himself.

Forget fighting for "academic freedom" and atheism; he basically calls for anti-theism in the ousting of "the Authority" of God when he declares in a montage:

"I have struggled through many worlds to arrive here. But you know this. I have sacrificed things. Things I did not want to. My fight is not with you. But you are the last obstacle between me and my enemy and, if I must, I will raise arms ... again.

"My fight is with the Authority and those doling out cruelties in His name. Those who seek to divide in order to control ... And who have built worlds founded on privilege and divine

right, rather than care and need.

"I fight for freedom of knowledge. And in place of deceit, intolerance and prejudice ... I fight for the possibilities of understanding, truth and acceptance. But I cannot win these things alone. I will need help and support ... from you and all those who have rebelled.

"Let us be united in heart, soul and deed, and together we could build a republic of heaven above and a republic of ideas below. Worlds in which the scars of history may be healed. Better worlds, where the privilege of freedom becomes the right of all peoples.

"But I tell you this now. There is no neutral ground. You are either for me, or you are against me. Now which is it?"

For the record, the "Authority" in the original books the series is based on is not, in fact, God, but the first angel created who used that status to fool people into thinking he was God. However, that doesn't change the context of this speech.

From Asriel's perspective, there is a God, and he wants God and everyone "doling out cruelties in His name" gone. And it's only through the mind of brilliant scholars like him who reject God that they can fight for worlds built on "care and need."

In the show, the Magisterium and its lower organizations only prove him right by acting even worse in response. The outcome is no surprise coming from the children's book series written by Phillip "Christianity is a mistake" Pullman.

HBO is looking to finish out the series with a third and final season, which will bring child protagonist Lyra (Dafne Keen) into the destroying God scheme. Perhaps 2021 won't be that much better than 2020 after all.{eoa}

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