

Harry potter: corrupting our children

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The first women billionaire in England, J. K Rowling has done more than just write a fantastical seven book series; she has improved literacy all around the world. Rowling, who was first thought of as a boy because of her initials, has had everything from movies, to a theme park come out of her series. Even though she has been praised by many, Rowling, like every author, has her critics.

Rowling's critics come in the form of Religious leaders, especially those of the Christian faith. There is a lot of controversy surrounding J. K Rowling's Harry Potter series, and the religion in the books, but in actuality, religion is not the main focus, especially due to the fact that the genre of the series is fantasy, in other words, not based in reality. One side of this argument, made by religious leaders, is that reading these books converts children to the Wiccan religion. Father Gabriele Amorth states that the series "acts in a crafty and covert manner, and encourages young people to believe in black magic" (1). This is significant because if church leaders think badly about this book, devout Christian parents might not let their children read the books, which was exactly what was happening.

In one of her interviews with Oprah Winfrey, Rowling was asked the how she felt about religious leaders, and parents, saying that the books were too scary for young children to read. To this Rowling responds with "I think it is perfectly legitimate for a parent to say that is a bit too much, or we need to sit down and read that part together; that's great, in fact that's perfect!" (Oprah Interview). Here is one of the places where Rowling encourages not only reading, but also getting parents active in their children's education. It also shows that the Wiccan element in the stories can be a great

conversation for parents and children. If parents sit down with their children and talk about something that the child may not be able to understand on their own, it is building an open line of communication between a parent and their child. J.

K Rowling's books have also been on the most challenged books list in the years 2000-2009. A challenge is a formal, written complaint, filed with a library or school, requesting that materials be removed or restricted because of inappropriate material. Harry Potter was put on the list for "...various reasons including occult/Satanism and anti-family themes" (Strauss 1). Even though magic is a big part of Harry Potter, it does not mean that it is the main theme, and there is overwhelming evidence to support that Christianity is more connected to this book than people think. Even though there are people on the Wiccan side of the religious argument, there are also a lot of Christian elements in the story, especially those surrounding the striking similarities between Jesus Christ and Harry Potter.

One obvious comparison between Harry and Jesus is that they are both the chosen ones in their own way. Jesus was chosen to sacrifice himself for his people, and Harry was chosen to defeat Voldemort. Along with this, they both did not want to do what was asked of them. Jesus had his moment in the Garden of Gethsemane when he prayed to God, asking him "if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me" (Matthew 26: 39-40). Harry's moment of not wanting to do what he was being asked was in the seventh book, when he had to face Voldemort alone. He knew that he had to go by himself, and if he sacrificed himself to Voldemort, then no one else would be harmed.

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He died, but, like Jesus, was resurrected because he accepted death. Notice that these are all similarities between Jesus Christ and Harry Potter, not black magic converting children's souls. Another parallel between Christianity and the Harry Potter series are quotes taken directly out of the bible. In the seventh book, Harry and his best friend Hermione, go to Harry's hometown of Godricks Hollow, to see if they can find one of Voldemort horcruxes. While they are there, they visit the graveyard because Harry wanted to see the gravestones of his parents. Harry did find his parents gravestone, and on the grave was the quote, " The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (Rowling 328).

This quote is taken directly out of the Bible from 1 Corinthians. The enemy in the Bible was sin, while in Harry Potter it is meant to represent Voldemort. Voldemort has caused so much death and destruction, that Voldemort can represent sin in a way. Also in Godrics Hollow graveyard Dumbledore's mother and sister are buried. On their gravestones are written " Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Rowling 326).

This quote is from Matthew 6. This quote is saying basically the same thing in the Bible, and in Harry Potter. Harry finds his heart through finding Voldemort and killing the ultimate enemy, death. The last parallel between Harry Potter and Christianity is the fact that Harry Potter becomes Master of death at the end of the seventh book. There is a trio of objects that, if one person has ownership of each, will become the Master of Death. The three objects are an invisibility cloak, the Elder Wand, and the Resurrection Stone.

Throughout Harry's life, he acquires all of these things. The invisibility cloak in his first year passed from Harry's father to Dumbledore, the headmaster of Hogwarts, the school Harry attends. The Elder Wand Harry won in a duel, and the Resurrection stone he was also given to by Dumbledore. Harry isn't able to receive the resurrection stone until he is about to face death, and out of the stone comes his deceased mother, father, friend Remus, and his godfather, Sirius. Harry realized how much power he would have with these three objects, and decided no one should have that power. He buried the resurrection stone, broke the elder wand in half, and kept the invisibility cloak, to pass on from father to son.

This is important to the religious elements in the series, because it shows Rowling doing something very influential. Even though there are a lot of Christian elements in the Harry Potter books and movies, there are some people who look at the prominent religion in Harry Potter as atheism. In the series there are "About twenty ghosts...pearly-white and slightly transparent..." surrounding him as early as the first book (Rowling 115). Also, it is never mentioned in the books about there being a God, or anyone praying. Lev Grossman from the New York Times even goes as far to state that, "Rowling has more in common with celebrity atheists like Christopher Hitchens than she has with Tolkien and Lewis" (Grossman 1).

This quote is significant because Rowling's religious themes in Harry Potter have been compared to many writers who put religion in their works very obviously, Tolkien an obvious one in the Lord of the Rings trilogy. Something lacking from her books that are in Tolkien's are a God. This is significant to the argument over religion because if you look at the books in a general

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sense, there really doesn't seem to be a specific religion, or a specific God. This throws a whole different perspective on the argument over religion in the series. If people are to accept that the Harry Potter books are in fact atheistic, then the question is, what does Harry Potter have instead of God? He has to get his power from somewhere.

The solution is presented by Dumbledore in the form of a mere idea, but in future books what started as an idea is proven to be true. When Harry asks Dumbledore why he survived the curse Voldemort tried to kill him with when he was just a baby, Dumbledore answers with an astounding, simple, four letter word: love. When Voldemort tried to kill Harry, his mother pleaded with Voldemort to kill her instead of Harry, and he did. When he turned to kill Harry, the curse rebounded on him and left Harry with nothing but a scar to remember it. Dying for someone you love is nothing new, but love as your source of power is something new that Rowling coined, and it is described by Grossman as a “ cultural sea change” (Grossman 1). After researching both sides of this controversy, it was time to see what J.

K Rowling was saying to all the criticism. When interviewed about this, J. K was very calm and collected. When Rowling was asked about pushing the Wiccan religion or Christianity, Rowling simply stated in her interview with Oprah Winfrey that “ I am not pushing any belief system here...but there is a lot of Christian imagery in the books...which is an illusion to the belief system on which I was raised.” Rowling recognizes the different religions in the book, but assures people that she is not trying to convert people to the Wiccan religion, black magic, or even Christianity.

Many Christians, and fans of Rowling's books, state that they were not corrupted or converted to any other belief system, that they just enjoy the books for what they are, books. She also clearly states that, " I am not saying I believe in magic, I don't" (J. K Rowling Talks About Her Life on Oprah Winfrey Interview). In other words, Rowling clearly separates the magical world she has created from the real world, in real life and in her books. Rowling also has an answer to the Priests and parents who say that magic should not be talked, or even thought about.

When asked about these critics, Rowling responds in an interview with Oprah Winfrey with, " On the idea that you cannot talk about witchcraft, I find that nonsensical. It is a belief system that will always have a huge attraction."

When you look at all the fantasy and fiction books ever written, a lot of them have some sort of magical element in them, and that is what makes them fun to read, because it allows you to use your imagination. Imagination is the attraction behind witchcraft. If kids have imagination, anything can happen, but if you add magic to imagination, the possibilities are endless. There is a big controversy surrounding religion in the Harry Potter series, written by J.

K Rowling, and the different faiths surrounding the series, but there really should not be a controversy at all. The three main religious are Christianity, Wiccan, and atheism. These are a strange mix of religious, but current material shows that the controversy has died down a lot since the release of the seventh and final book, especially from the Priests who had challenged the books. The seventh book has the most Christian elements of all the books, which made it the most talked about. A lot of the churches and

schools, who had put in challenges about the book, realized that they weren't as bad as they thought they were.

The religion that is causing the controversy within churches and schools is the Wiccan elements, i. e. magic. To add to the mix of religious controversy, the idea of Atheism is proposed as a possible central religious theme in the books, because of the lack of God, and love as the source of power.

Christianity is prominent because it was the religion that the author of the series was raised upon.

Now that all the facts have been presented, do you believe that there was ever a real problem at all?