Harry Potter and the Great Battle within the Church

Submitted by: Poconobarb

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A Christian Mother's Humble View

By Poconobarb

Introduction

When my children were small and my family went to church, the main thing I had to instill in my own children was to not tell the other kids the facts about Santa Claus. That was a matter for their parents to shed light on. So, once we discovered Harry Potter, I was at first shocked by the backlash. There were many who boycotted the book, and I was surprised at the absolute line in the sand that Harry had produced. When it became “Remember, don’t talk about Harry in Sunday school’ I finally decided that I wouldn’t keep this secret...We love Harry! I hope to shed some light on my understanding of why some so dislike Harry, and why I feel that, despite the fact that my first love is Jesus Christ, I can still read and enjoy Harry Potter.

Different Points of View

The best book I have read on the subject of Harry Potter and its many elements is John Granger's Looking for God in Harry Potter. I steadfastly boycotted his book the first two years it came out because I didn't feel I needed any "justifications" to enjoy a rather wonderful piece of literature. Mind you, I am not scholarly, but when I finally did read it, I found it was a wonderful interpretation of Joann Rowling's work and seen in a light that I knew was there all along. The Harry Potter stories have many layers of morality tales and illusions. They are not allegories in the sense of C.S. Lewis' classic Narnia series, but there are certainly parallels to be made.

Much of our "classic" literature, mostly being British, is written in a form that mirrors closely the Great Story (a term which refers to the Gospel of Christ Jesus); it is a tale of heroes, villains and the triumph of Good over Evil. For those who choose to not partake in fantasy literature, there are many other great works that speak these same virtues. We are all free to make the choice for our own families of what we read.

Let me stop for one moment and tell you my story of discovering Harry. When my oldest son was in a Christian school, the school participated in a national reading program, and Harry Potter was on the list. I had not heard the huge hubbub surrounding it, just that this was a story about a boy who was a Wizard and went to a wizarding school. I told my son that I would be reading this also, because I wanted to evaluate it for myself, as I did and still do with most of what he and my other children read. Needless to say, Harry's story captivated me then, and continues to do so today. I saw many things in Harry and his friends that would not be bad things for children to emulate. The main base of the storyline in each book is loyalty, love and honor. What could be so bad about those ideals?

I since have seen what many sincere Christians are concerned about. For those who believe the Bible as God's Word and the ultimate authority in life, there are clear warnings against sorcery. In particular, there is a passage in the book of Deuteronomy that says:

There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer, For all that do these things [are] an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee. (Deut. 18:10-12)

I include this passage so that those of you who have wondered may gain a small understanding of those who do not "do" Harry
To some, it is a sincere conviction in their lives to avoid all literature based in fantasy. Many do not read any literature that contains mythology, folklore or magical content of any kind. That is their conception of what the Word of God is teaching them. To those families I say "Blessings to you! Glad to see you stand strong in your conviction!" These are the ones who will explain their stance and leave it at that. Mainly, it is the admonition from Philippians to keep what is pure, lovely, and of good report that they live by:

*Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.* (Phil. 4:8)

Again, I applaud their stand to live by that.

I have read countless web pages and articles decrying Harry Potter as immoral and satanic writing. These websites express the fear that young children are lured to Satanism or the occult, making them go against the word of the Lord and endangering their eternal souls.

Unfortunately, these are the people that are the loudest in their rejection of the Potter books. Many times, without even really reading the series, they will denounce Harry, Rowling and all those who read it as moral misfits. They believe Potter fans to be delusional and even question the faith of many sincere believers. I am sorry that they won't even give another view legitimacy.

While I understand their concerns, I do not share them. I think some of what is being said is said out of fear of the unknown. The unknown element is actual "Satanism" or "Occultism". I have never, to my knowledge, run into anyone who truly "worships" Satan. I have known others who practice certain levels of Wiccan beliefs, and while I personally do not agree with them, I feel the Harry Potter novels do not exhibit any of these practices. In my opinion they would find that it is not a "handbook of witchcraft". I do not believe that what the Bible speaks of as sorcery and witchcraft is portrayed in the Harry Potter series. None of the characters that are magic, be they good or bad, "commune with evil spirits" for their source of power. Just as one is born to a nationality, characters in the books are born magical. It is fictional, fantasy, and a great mixing of folklore and classic literature. The "spells and potions" that are included are pure fantasy. Yes, some are rooted in mythological writings, but no one will ever be able to point a stick at something, shout "Wingardium Leviosa" and it will float. Just as no one will ever be able to tap their heels together three times, muttering a small phrase and be transported to another place. In my experience with Harry, there is no denial of God, there is no "real life" Satanism. Although JK Rowling doesn't deal with "religion" itself in the storyline, I do not believe that she is proclaiming Satanism either. In fact, the one character who does use many of what the general public would call "witchcraft" is Professor Trelawney, and she is shown at almost every point to be a false teacher. Even Firenze takes great pains to tell the class that no one can begin to see the future in anything.

That being said, JK Rowling cannot help but write about what she knows. She was raised as a member of the Church of Scotland, which roughly translates to the US's Presbyterian Church. She is a woman raised in a Judeo Christian society. The themes of The Great Story cannot help but be embedded in all of us raised in this atmosphere. Indeed, I can see elements of the Great Story in other cultures as well. The main theme of Redemption by Love is a mirror of the Gospel Story. In this lies the beauty and brilliance of JK Rowling's work. Although we don't really know her ultimate reasons, she has written such a work so that we may see the Great Story mirrored in hers. Please understand, that I am not saying that any character, including Harry himself is really Jesus. Just that in the circumstances of the storyline, there is a shadow of the great Biblical tales. I give you a quote from John Granger, who says it so much more eloquently than I can:

*Examining the tradition of English literature for an appreciation of Rowling's artistry and the meaning carried by her stories that so stir our hearts and engage our minds - this, I think, is the road to travel to get at what Harry Potter is about. Literary alchemy is dreadfully important in this understanding because it is the radical and traditional world view of strength coming from a self-denying harmony, from a sacrificial love that conquers death, that informs and drives these stories. Alchemy as metaphor for our resolution of the bonds of "I" to transcend ourselves and our individual egos, to open ourselves to spirit and love and life, is the language and heart of Harry Potter. Potter mania is what it is because this language speaks to the human heart, a heart designed and longing for this message of powerful love and true peace.*

Simply put, it is this: Harry opens us up to be able to experience his traumas, his joys, his fears and his defeats. We can safely fight his battles, and come out with the same victories over them. The genius and the draw of the Potter series, and why it instills "Pottermania" in so many is just that. We can grow along with Harry; we can relate to Harry; and Harry allows us to face some things that maybe we were having problems facing before. We can see and believe in the Great Story, and Good will triumph over Evil, even if we are having a hard time seeing the progress personally.

**Qualities that are in all of us**

As you read through every Harry Potter book, you will recognize in the characters, both good and bad, something in either yourself or others you know. Hopefully no one has ever had a teacher quite like Dolores Umbridge, but some have come close! We all know a Hagrid, who is simple and faithful. We all have the aunt whom we dread coming to visit. Of course, there are the outstanding qualities
in the main characters that shine through in all circumstances. Allow me to give a few examples of how the Bible resonates through the characters in Harry Potter.

"Sacrifice" - James and Lily Potter

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13)8

Despite their deaths, Harry's parents are central to his character. Harry has Lily's eyes, but the rest is James'. As we have seen in the books, at least James is not without a few faults. But they were fighting for the Greater Good, and sacrificed themselves, particularly Lily, for Harry. They willingly laid down their lives. The New Testament speaks in many places about Jesus doing this exact thing. As believers, the Holy Spirit indwells us. Does not the spirit of Lily and James indwell Harry's heart as well?

"Forgiveness" - Professor Albus Dumbledore

"Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven." (Luke 6:37)9

Dumbledore represents the quintessential father figure. Wise and accepting, he always knows what is best and readily admits his mistakes. He sees the potential in all people, no matter what their backgrounds are. He forgives and allows second chances. The theme of forgiveness can be found throughout the Bible. In the Old Testament, you find Joseph forgiving his brothers for selling him into slavery;10 God forgiving the whole city of Nineveh;11 and the Psalms sing of the mercies of the Lord.12 In the New Testament, Jesus teaches forgiveness in his parable of the Prodigal Son,13 and models forgiveness when he prays for those who crucified Him.14

"Loyalty" - Sirius Black/Severus Snape

Sirius represents the faithful friend and the protective godfather. He is fiercely loyal to those he loves. Sirius acts on his loyalty to those he cares deeply about, as shown in his fantastic outbreak from Azkaban. He knew Harry was in danger and could not stay put another minute. He risked his own life to take care of Harry.

Severus Snape embodies the same traits that Sirius does. Severus is shown to be loyal, but to whom is he actually loyal? He seems to be a faithful friend of Albus Dumbledore. He is faithful to Hogwarts. He is faithful to his mission of teaching. Will it be shown that, in a Judas-like twist, that he is truly loyal to Voldemort, and is ultimately play-acting his part? Severus is brave. But is he brave because of his unfaithfulness to Dumbledore the good side, or is he foolishly brave to the death for the wrong reasons? Is he a "believer" in the same way as Judas? Judas had every appearance of true belief, but in the end, his faith wavered. Does Severus really have faith in Dumbledore and the cause of the Order? Or does his true system of belief lie with Voldemort?

Unfortunately, two men also show us how holding a grudge can be a root of bitterness to your soul.15 Both Sirius Black and Severus Snape hold onto the past, to hurtful memories and things that have scarred them. Due to the grudge Sirius holds toward Severus, he cannot trust that Severus will do right by Harry. We also see that Sirius is right to a certain degree, since Severus indeed cannot get past the grudges held against the Marauders to treat Harry in a decent manner. Sirius may also have been able to enjoy the relationship that was developing between Harry and himself had he been able to get past the hard feelings he was harboring about Dumbledore keeping him at Grimmauld Place. Again, we see that Severus' grudge matches Sirius and he taunts Sirius about having to remain at headquarters.16 Bitterness of the spirit infects all of our ability to think clearly. We know already where this led Sirius. Will Severus, now aligned with Voldemort, have the ability to turn away from his bitterness and anger and be redeemed? Only if he can turn away from the hatred he has felt for years against James and the Marauders will Severus have a chance to do the right thing and get back to the right side of the battle.

"Betrayal" - Peter Pettigrew

"But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" (Luke 22:48)17

James and Lily thought they had chosen well for their Secret Keeper. Sirius was too obvious a choice, so they picked someone they assumed was their other dearest friend in the world, Peter Pettigrew. But, as we have seen in the examples above with Severus, Pettigrew's true faith did not lie with the greater good, it failed him when the chips were down. Like Judas, who brought the Roman soldiers to arrest Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane, Peter allowed his fear to get the better of him and betrayed the Potters to Voldemort. Instead of the great remorse that Judas felt afterwards, Pettigrew goes on to further betray his only other friend, Sirius, by framing him for the murders and the betrayal of the Potters.

"Everyman" - Harry Potter

Harry embodies many qualities that his mentors do: loyalty, forgiveness and sacrifice. Forget for a moment that the story is about a boy. He has very human problems, emotions and situations, regardless of age. Harry embodies the "Everyman"; the one who is searching for meaning in life and wants to find Truth. He, because of his past experiences, can have a heart of compassion and mercy, which is a lesson that the prophet Jonah had a hard time learning.18 After clear direction from God, Jonah decided that the
Ninevites were too evil for redemption. Jonah proceeds to run, repent and preach in Nineveh, but he is still angry that God did not, at that time, destroy the city. Jonah does not show the same compassion and mercy that God does. Harry shows the same troubles at times, but his heart of compassion and mercy wins out. We also have seen how Harry is in the beginning stages of “a heart of bitterness” because of his hatred of Severus Snape.19 This will surely be a huge issue in his defeating Voldemort, as it is his ability to love that Voldemort cannot fathom. Will Voldemort try to use Harry’s ability to hate to try and defeat him?

**Tom Riddle/Lord Voldemort**

For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy. Without natural affection, truce breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, high minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. (2 Tim. 3:2-5)

We were given the opportunity in *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* to see how the boy Tom Riddle was shaped by his experiences into the evil Lord Voldemort. This boy had every chance to study and achieve greatness for good. He was under the tutelage of many fine, moral teachers, including Albus Dumbledore. Voldemort is a shining example of the biblical warnings to turn your heart away from greed, vanity, selfish gain and immorality. We all have the potential to become Voldemort. We also all have the potential to turn our hearts to better things. He has a god-like image of himself, which will ultimately destroy him.

**Reflection**

I hope I have given you some things to consider when reading the Harry Potter books, whether for the first time or the one hundredth. I personally find great tales of morality, perseverance, loyalty, friendship and much more in the Harry Potter books. I find no moral reasoning to not enjoy the story. I have been able to use these books to talk to my children and others about issues of faith. And again, I respect my fellow believers’ in their convictions about fantasy literature. There is room enough for all opinions. As I strive to understand and accept my fellow Christian’s point of view, I would hope and pray that they would also, in the same great love, accept mine. I also hope that I have shown to those who do not share the beliefs held by the Christian community, why some of the friction about the Potter novels has erupted in the church community. Hopefully they can understand a little more easily when concerns are voiced. Let us also try to show some of the qualities to them as the characters in the books demonstrate to us; Loyalty, Strength, Friendship and Forgiveness.

**Works Cited**

It’s used to set a deadline for a task that should be complete by the end of the business day – typically 5:00 PM. When no time zone is provided, end of day is relative to the sender’s time zone. Acronyms used interchangeably with EOD include, end of business (EOB), end of play (EOP), close of play (COP), and close of business (COB). More Dominion perfidy. This makes me sick and livid. These crooked people are our neighbors! — PhysicsGal (@PhysicsGal88) November 13, 2020

As I was saying https://t.co/8lVf0EPIHM — Werise (@We_Have_Risen) November 13, 2020

Anyone see an answer to this letter…https://t.co/dApxewBdqJ pic.twitter.com/ewPlFfno3p — Werise (@We_Have_Risen) November 12, 2020

I want to understand by Andrea Harper and Dr Akilah El Hydrogen peroxide is the only germicidal agent composed only of water and oxygen. Like ozone, it kills disease organisms by oxidation! Hydrogen peroxide is conside...

Barbara McIntosh-Conroy FYI. Vicks Vaporub Vapor Rub On Feet Dieta Renal Hygiene Everyday Objects Things To Know Diy Things Funny Things Fungi. 35 Lifechanging Ways To Use Everyday Objects. These handy little things are all things you probably own already. Because Submitted by dynamically builds string, the only way we know to translate them is to use the settings.php technique. Theme problems. The following themes are known to not properly honor theme(‘node_submitted’): Artist C01. Nitobe.
Scribbulus is THE place for Leaky Cauldron readers to submit their essays and opinion pieces!

You're Angry, I'm Angry

The Sorting Hat, Ideology, and Free Will

The (Un)Forgivable Curses

See the rest over at Scribbulus!