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### Harry Potter is the New Bible

Not all families were cast under the spell of *Harry Potter* as it spread across the nation. In fact, many parents were horrified with the Harry Potter series. Because it contained elements of witchcraft, many saw the book as dangerous for their children. They feared that their children would start worshipping the devil if they read the books. However, one mother saw beyond the witchcraft and, not wanting her children to miss the trend, rewrote the series with a more “Christian” outlook.

Dubbed “Hogwarts School of Prayer and Miracles”, perhaps the fan-fiction written by a user known as proudhousewife is a little extreme and veers from the original plot. For example, Hermione is the daughter of Reverend Dumbledore and housewife McGonagall and Harry flees from househusband, Mr. Dursley, and evil career woman, Mrs. Dursley. In proudhousewife’s introduction, she explains what prompted her to rewrite the series. Her children wanted to read the *Harry Potter* books, and she didn’t want to discourage them from reading, “but [she didn’t] want them turning into witches” (proudhousewife). The most interesting concept about her rewriting the series is that she saw valuable themes within *Harry Potter* that she wanted to teach her children. If proudhousewife was able to recognize that the *Harry Potter* series contained elements worth retelling her children, then why shouldn’t every Christian? The novels encourage compassion, equality, and self-sacrifice. The Bible contains all of these themes. The *Harry Potter* series—particularly the first and last novels—is a deeply religious set of texts that borrow

heavily from the Judeo-Christian narrative. Any parent should endorse the themes the novels encourage.

At its most basic level, the Harry Potter series is religious simply for the themes it encourages—themes that are also in the Bible. Harry Potter is extremely compassionate, respectful, and concerned with treating everyone as an equal. We are first introduced to creatures that play a subservient role in the wizarding world in *The Chamber of Secrets*. Harry meets the house-elf Dobby, who attempts to save him from the evil basilisk controlled by Voldemort. Upon meeting Dobby, Harry offers him a seat on his bed, at which point Dobby bursts into tears for being treated “like an *equal*” (*Chamber of Secrets* 13). He goes on to speak of Harry’s “greatness” after Harry’s asks how to help him escape from his owners (*Chamber of Secrets* 15). Eventually, Harry tricks Dobby’s owner (since house-elves are essentially slaves) into giving Dobby his freedom. Similarly, Jesus Christ taught that one must treat everyone as an equal. Close to Christ’s death and before a dinner with all of his followers he decided to wash their feet. This act was extremely unusual, and several disciples protested against their master serving them. Jesus Christ explained that he was setting an example and since he had washed their feet, they “should wash one another’s feet... Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master,” (“New International Version” John 3.14-16). Both Harry and Jesus insist on treating everyone as peers, despite apparent inequalities.

Additionally, Harry Potter is extremely respectful to those whom others treat as less than human. Towards the end of the *Deathly Hallows*, Dobby dies and Harry digs the grave and buries Dobby himself. Griphook, a goblin whom Harry saves, comments that, “Goblins and elves are not used to the protection or the respect that you have shown this night. Not from wand-carriers,” (*Deathly Hallows* 488). Harry treats Griphook with respect even though he is ornery

and distrustful of wizards due to his past experiences. The Bible depicts a parallel lesson through Christ's treatment of a colony of lepers. Leprosy was a disease that resulted in the affected people being outcast from society. However, when Jesus encountered a group of lepers upon his travels, instead of ignoring their cries for help, he cured them of their disease ("New International Version" Luke 17.13-14). Jesus respectfully interacts with a group of people that the rest of society has ignored and demonized. Just like Harry Potter treats other creatures, like goblins and elves, with respect even though the rest of wizarding world does not. The themes of compassion and respect are clear in both the *Harry Potter* series and the Bible, which should encourage parents to share both narratives with their children.

Harry willingly sacrifices himself to save others and comes back to life, just like Jesus Christ. While his sacrifice may be the most literal argument, it is also one of the strongest comparisons from the *Deathly Hallows* to the Bible. The idea of self-sacrifice and is one of the main tenants of the Christian faith, and they are rampant in the *Harry Potter* series. In fact, self-sacrifice was so important to J.K. Rowling that in addition to Harry's self-sacrifice, three characters give their lives in order to protect Harry so he can defeat Voldemort. Those characters are: Lily Potter, Harry's mother; Albus Dumbledore, Headmaster of Hogwarts; and Severus Snape, Hogwarts professor. We learn early on in the series that Harry's mother died "trying to protect [Harry]" and according to Voldemort she "needn't have died" (*Sorcerer's Stone* 294). And later Dumbledore explains that "love as powerful as your mother's for you leaves its own mark...to have been loved so deeply, even though the person who loved us is gone, will give us some protection forever," (*Sorcerer's Stone* 299). Is that not the same thing as Jesus loving the people of the world enough to sacrifice himself in order to save them?

Dumbledore and Snape's sacrifices, however, are not initially obvious. It is only at the end of the final novel that we learn what they both gave to others. Rowling reveals through Snape's memories that Dumbledore knew that Voldemort planned to have Draco Malfoy, another Hogwarts student, kill him. Instead, Dumbledore insists that Snape kill him to prevent damaging Malfoy's soul, claiming, "I would not have it ripped apart on my account," (*Deathly Hallows* 683). While Dumbledore was already going to die of injuries he endured attempting to eliminate the Horcruxes in order to defeat Voldemort, he made sure that no one else had to suffer from his death. Voldemort would have tortured and killed Malfoy if he did not succeed in killing Dumbledore, and Dumbledore knew it was not in Malfoy's nature to take another's life.

However, The greatest self-sacrifice besides Harry's sacrifice is that of Severus Snape. As a young boy, Snape fell in love with Lily Potter née Evans. And his love for her remained despite his becoming a Death Eater and her marriage to James Potter, Snape's nemesis. After Voldemort had killed Lily against Snape's request, Snape spent his entire life living a lie. Despite hating Harry for his similarities to his father, Snape saved his life time after time in order to protect Harry for Lily. However, he refused to let anyone know, even making Dumbledore swear that he would "never reveal the best of [him]," (*Deathly Hallows* 679). When Dumbledore tells Snape that Harry must die, he is furious. "I have spied for you and lied for you, put myself in mortal danger for you. Everything was supposed to be to keep Lily Potter's son safe," (*Deathly Hallows* 687). Even though Snape hates Harry to the core of his being, he gives up his whole life, all personal glory, and eventually dies to protect him. He does this all out of love for Lily. While on a smaller scale than Christ's sacrifice, each of these character's sacrifices to save Harry is a powerful comparison to the Bible, multiplied by the sheer number of self-sacrifice. Even more characters in the series give their lives in order to fight the evil Voldemort, but Harry

is obviously the most notable example. However, Harry is not the only example of a Christ-figure in children's literature.

It is widely acknowledged that *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*—another novel in a children's fantasy series—by C.S. Lewis is a “Christian-based [work]” and is an “appropriate [book] for Christian children (Elliott, Murphy 17). *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* shares the same ideas of sacrifice that *Harry Potter* does. Greg Garrett, professor of English at Baylor University, actually proposes that C.S. Lewis would have “celebrated the fact that there is no more powerful contemporary retelling of the gospel narrative than Rowling's 4100 pages,” (Murphy 25-26). The deaths and rebirth of Harry Potter and Aslan are directly similar to that of Jesus Christ and should further encourage parents to read the *Harry Potter* books to their children. The series relates directly to the Bible as well as another well-known Christian allegory. When comparing the deaths and rebirths of all three characters, remarkable similarities can be observed. All of the characters are innocent, but they give their lives to protect others. Aslan gives his life for Edmund, Harry for all his friends, and Jesus for the entire world.

In *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, Aslan is the good lion that rules as king over all of Narnia. With four children, he defeats the evil White Witch who has made it never-ending winter in Narnia. However, the White Witch tricks Edmund, one of the children, into betraying his siblings. Since Edmund is a traitor, the White Witch can take his life. But Aslan takes Edmund's place, and the White Witch kills him. However, Aslan comes back to life. He explains that, “when a willing victim who had committed no treachery was killed in a traitor's stead...Death itself would start working backward,” (Lewis 179). Harry's sacrifice in the *Deathly Hallows* is very similar in that he gives his life to protect his friends. In the final battle of the *Harry Potter* series, Voldemort threatens to “punish every last man, woman, and child who

has tried to conceal you” unless Harry gives himself up (*Deathly Hallows* 660). However, Harry “meant to let [Voldemort] kill [him]” which allows Harry to live (*Deathly Hallows* 708). Jesus, too, knew he “must be killed and after three days rise again,” yet he still died “for our sins” (“New International Version” Mark 8.31, Romans 4.25). The Bible further explains that since Jesus died on the cross, as long as one believes in him, one will go to heaven. Each of these characters gave their lives for a purpose greater than them. Their self-sacrifice is directly relatable to Jesus’s sacrifice and should encourage any parent to read the *Harry Potter* series to their children.

While many parents were concerned with the elements of witchcraft present in the *Harry Potter* series, they should see the characteristics both narratives share. Both Harry Potter and Jesus Christ promote compassion, equality for all people, and self-sacrifice. In addition, *the Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* is widely regarded as an excellent story for Christian children, and this novel shares the same sacrificial story as Harry Potter and the Bible. Children should be encouraged to read the Harry Potter series since it promotes the same themes as the Bible. J.K. Rowling herself even says, “There is a lot of Christian imagery in the books. That’s undeniable,” (Murphy 27). The author herself says the novels use the Christian narrative. Parent’s should have more faith in their children; they did not “turn into witches” when they read C.S. Lewis’s Christian work, and they won’t when they read the *Harry Potter* series. It might even drive home Jesus’s message of love in a compelling and engaging way.

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