

Harry Potter

Miss Andrea Stoltz

There are more problems with *Harry Potter* than just witchcraft.¹

I say *just* witchcraft not because I think it is a minor issue, but because it seems as though most people who do not approve of the series are critical of *Harry Potter* for this reason alone. Although this is a very good (probably the best) reason to shun the world of Harry Potter, there are plenty of other reasons to be critical.

In our base world, we do not have to *look* for offensive material that attacks our senses. It is blatant. It is rampant. It is almost unavoidable. That's not to say that this is the only way we are affected by the impurities of the world. Quite often they come to us in much more subtle ways. Of course, subtle evil is much more harmful than blatant evil, because it is harder to recognize and thus harder to avoid. Most harmful of all is evil under the guise of good. If we think something is good, we do more than just *not avoid* it—we *embrace* it.

J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series is exactly this—evil that seems good. The fact that so many people *are* embracing it makes it look even better. We find ourselves thinking that since this or that Christian group thinks it's okay, then it must be. If someone you regard as a “good” parent allows his child to read *Harry Potter*, there must be nothing wrong with it, you conclude.

But isn't this way of thinking precisely what we want to avoid? The “everyone-else-is-doing-it-so-it-can't-be-bad” outlook is one of the weakest ways of rationalizing immorality. It's right up there with the “if-it-feels-good-do-it” mentality. If a “good” parent or a “conservative” Christian group approves of and even encourages this kind of reading, it does not mean that the books are good – it means someone is either uninformed or misinformed. For the benefit of both, allow me to summarize briefly the four existing *Harry Potter* books.

Synopsis of Harry Potter

In *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*,² we meet Harry Potter, an eleven-year old boy living with cruel relatives in a suburb of London. Ten years ago, he defeated Lord Voldemort, the most powerful dark wizard in history. His parents, on the other hand, did not survive the attack. They died trying to save Harry. On the night of his eleventh birthday, he received notice that he was actually a wizard, and that he has been accepted to Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. While at Hogwarts, he learns to cast spells, play Quidditch,³ and outsmart even the most experienced wizards. In the end, Harry and his friends, Hermione and Ron, fight a 12-foot troll and also rescue the Sorcerer's Stone⁴ from a professor-turned-villain.

Harry's second year at Hogwarts, chronicled in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, sees Harry with new, more dangerous adventures before him. Among other things, Harry finds out he is a Parselmouth, which means he can talk to snakes. The year is spent mainly in trying to discover the Chamber of Secrets,⁵ and the Evil that lies within. Once in the chamber, he must battle an oak-sized basilisk⁶ under the command of Lord Voldemort, and then Lord Voldemort himself. Harry is victorious in his attempt to eradicate the Evil in the Chamber of Secrets.

While Harry is in his third year at Hogwarts, the magical world is set on edge at the news of an escaped criminal. In *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, life at Hogwarts is not as blissful as it was before. Since there is reason to suspect that the escaped and very dangerous criminal is after Harry, prison guards known as Dementors are stationed around the school, and Harry is not allowed to do anything that might jeopardize his safety (*i.e.*, anything “fun”). The criminal, Sirius Black, does, in fact, catch up with Harry. The reader soon finds out that Sirius is actually Harry's godfather and guardian, and has been trying to look out for Harry. Harry escapes a werewolf, outsmarts the dark wizard, and frees a misunderstood hippogriff⁷ all while in the process of rescuing the Prisoner of Azkaban⁸ from the school authorities and the Dementors,⁹ who are out for more than blood.

Finally, all things dark and horrible come to a head in *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, which

gives the account of Harry's fourth year at Hogwarts. The year begins with the Quidditch World Cup, where Harry encounters veela, beautifully seductive women who can make men bow to their wills by their dancing. He has a scrape with the Death Eaters (followers of Lord Voldemort), and later competes in the Triwizard Tournament, a year-long competition between the top three European wizardry schools. Unfortunately, Harry's schoolmate and competitor in the tournament is brutally killed by Voldemort, who uses one of the "unforgivable" curses¹⁰ to do so. Harry, of course, manages to overcome him once again, with the help of his dead parents. He escapes only to find out that one of his favorite and trusted professors was actually a Death Eater, and trying to do away with Harry the whole time.

When Fantasy Becomes Reality, Where Does Reality Go?

Many things in Rowling's "fantasy world" of Harry Potter coincide with our own world. The setting of the stories is somewhere outside present-day London. The magical shopping strip, Diagon Alley, is reached via a tavern in London, which has been enchanted so that only witches and wizards can see it. Behind the tavern is a brick wall. To access Diagon Alley, the witch or wizard must push in the correct brick. Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry has also been enchanted, so that Muggles, non-magical people, will stay away from it. It is out in the countryside, though also situated somewhere in Britain.

This is not a made-up fantasy world that Rowling has "created," although she likes to say it is. These characters live in our world and in our time period. They play with the same video games, use the same computers, and drive the same cars. They have a Quidditch "World Cup," just like our soccer World Cup. The teams competing in the "World Cup" are Bulgaria and Ireland, real countries. There are even characters in her books that really existed. Where is the line between fact and fiction?

The problem here is that by weaving reality through a "fictional" work, confusion inevitably ensues. Rowling has admitted to receiving letters from children who want to know how to get in touch with Albus Dumbledore, the headmaster of Hogwarts. They want to enroll! Some children are even awaiting their letters of invitation from Hogwarts. It is a real place that we just can't find because we are Muggles.

Rowling and Scholastic,¹¹ instead of discouraging this thinking, perpetuate it. At the official Harry Potter website,¹² kids can enroll in Hogwarts, shop at Diagon Alley, and send owl messages (via e-mail). Rowling, in an on-line interview sponsored by Scholastic,¹³ answers questions from children about Harry and his friends as though they were real people. Someone (no names are given in the interview) asked Rowling, "Where is Azkaban?" (As though it were a real place!) She answered, "It's in the north of the North Sea. A very cold sea." No wonder kids say they want to be just like Harry or Hermione or Ron! People they believe and trust are telling them, in so many words, that they exist! It must be even more confusing for the kids in Britain, to whom places like London and the North Sea are real places, and not just somewhere on a map.

Several years ago, "JFK" was in the theatres. Oliver Stone produced it, and he said himself that it was not meant to be a biography, or any kind of historical account of the late John F. Kennedy's assassination. He said it was fiction, and should be viewed as such. Yet such a big controversy developed over the movie, because it wasn't historically accurate. People were upset because he did not portray the event as they knew it had happened. Why did this happen? People are easily confused. Using an almost entirely historical setting for a fictitious work makes us think that it *is* historical, and thus believable.

The fact that there is no line between real and imaginary is only one reason that Harry Potter is dangerous to children. If adults have a hard time distinguishing between real and not real, how much harder will it be for children, and how much more detrimental? Since children cannot always make the distinction by themselves, the books they read must do it for them. If a book fails in this regard, it can have harmful effects, such as what's happening now, with children thinking Harry Potter, his friends and his school are real. Kids do not "grow out" of an interest in magic, they simply develop it. Furthermore, if the authors encourage this blurring between real and fantastical, it is because they understand and desire the negative results that they know will follow.

Fuzzing-Out Good and Evil

Speaking of blurry lines, the distinction between good and evil throughout the books is fuzzy, if anything at all. But how can I make this assertion when everyone says that Rowling shows a definite struggle between good and evil? Rowling herself says, “The theme running through all of these books is the fight between good and evil.” Even though the Harry Potter books are constantly being praised for “hav[ing] a strong moral message and clearly portray[ing] good and evil,”¹⁴ the reader sees, time and again, constant contradiction. Characters who were portrayed as evil turn out to be good, while the good guys end up being villains.

A clear example of this vagueness is Sirius Black, the escaped murderer who turns out to be Harry’s “godfather,” falsely accused and wrongfully convicted. Throughout the majority of book three, he is shown to be a dangerous and evil wizard, though in the end we find out how much he cared for and helped Harry’s parents before they died.

At the end of the fourth book we see Mad-Eye Moody, who has been helping Harry to avoid punishment all year, turn out to be a Death Eater. Then we find out that it was actually one of the higher-ups in the Ministry of Magic, who has been drinking a Polyjuice Potion¹⁵ all year in order to make himself look like Moody.

Even Harry, who is the “hero” of the series, bears striking resemblance to Lord Voldemort, his mortal enemy and the most evil wizard around. They both can speak to snakes; they were both orphans; the scar Harry got from Voldemort’s attack burns whenever Voldemort is near; they both use wands made from the feathers of the same phoenix.¹⁶

So who is good, and who is evil? Every book in this series has at least one character that turns out to be other than how he was portrayed. This is not to say that a plot twist or surprise ending is wrong. Some of the best writers employ this technique. The problem materializes when too many of the characters are unreliably good or evil; when you never know who’s who or what side he’s on. Those characters who *are* one way or the other are usually not portrayed in a favorable light, or they change to become what everyone else wants. Either way, indisputable messages are clear.

Take Severus Snape, the Potions professor, for example. From the start, he is portrayed as a horribly mean and unjust disciplinarian, simply because he does not want to tolerate any of Harry’s rule-breaking tendencies. He knows that Harry and his friends are up to something, and he usually tries to prevent the behavior, or correct it after they have done something wrong. Of course the students think this is wrong of him, but what about the other professors? Time and again, they chastise Snape in front of the students for trying to interfere with Harry’s escapades. Harry is constantly referring to how much he can’t stand Snape, and how Snape absolutely hates him in return. The obvious message here is that those who make any attempt to uphold the rules are unfair and hateful.

Hermione, one of Harry’s best friends, was originally ostracized by Harry and his friend Ron because she was a “goody-goody.” She always did her homework on time and always studied for tests. To add insult to injury, she never let her friends copy her work or test answers. As a result, she was not worthy to be their friend, until the day she told a lie to a teacher in order to cover up for the boys. Suddenly, she won their respect, and was allowed to join them in their capers. From that day on, she was the brains behind all their exploits, from teaching them how to stealthily steal ingredients for a potion to using deceitful means in procuring a restricted book from the library. Basically, then, the message is that if you aren’t automatically cool, then lying will make you so.

Although Harry is supposed to be the “good” in the series, he is not the prototype of heroism that his readers like to think he is. According to the world, Harry Potter embodies all that is virtuous and noble, at least as far as is possible for pre-teen and teenage boys. He is a shining paragon of courage and loyalty, one who is worthy of emulation and awe. Nevertheless, a running theme throughout all the Harry Potter books is “the end justifies the means.” Every time Harry comes out victorious in an endeavor, he has usually used some kind of immoral or at least questionable means to overcome his obstacles.

As an example, in the fourth book, Harry is forced to enter the Triwizard Tournament, a “friendly competition” that had been discontinued for several years because too many people were dying. Harry is praised on several occasions for his performance in the competition. But had he not had other students, ghosts, Ministry employees *and* professors giving him the answers to clues and riddles, he never would have been able to complete the tasks set before him. Cedric Diggory, the other Hogwarts Champion, is praised for his love of fair play and integrity. During the tournament, he not only told Harry beforehand what the task would be, but also took the answers that Harry gave to him (after getting them from someone else). At the end of the competition, Moody gives a justification for this

when he says, “Cheating’s a traditional part of the Triwizard Tournament and always has been.”

The “Moral” Is...?

Traditionally Christian values are not in abundance here. What we would call virtues are either totally lacking in Harry Potter’s world, or are portrayed fictitiously as some other nameless, usually vicious qualities.

Obedience, to Harry Potter, is not “obeying one’s lawful superiors.” Rather, it is more along the lines of “making it look like you’re not doing anything wrong.” Usually Harry and/or his friends are rewarded for disobeying a professor or a school rule, not reprimanded. If they *are* reprimanded, it is usually by the professor that is law-abiding, and therefore “out to get them.” Of course, this is also the professor that is most often disobeyed, lied to, and stolen from. The reason for this is simple. If you don’t like a superior, or if he is unfair to you, your obligation to obey him vanishes. We see this time and again. Harry does not have to obey his aunt and uncle because they are mean to him. He does not have to obey Professor Snape, because Snape hates him. He does not have to obey the prefect, Percy Weasley, because he is just Ron’s nerdy older brother.

Courage, according to Harry Potter and friends, means looking for danger, usually after being told not to do so. Loyalty is breaking the rules for another. Justice means you can get away with anything if you’re famous, and temperance is that virtue whereby a person gets drunk only when he’s *really* happy or *really* depressed.

The characters in *Harry Potter* continually act for their own self-interests. For example, Hermione puts a full-body bind curse on her classmate when he tries to keep them from going into forbidden areas after curfew. Professors put memory charms on students to whom they have revealed their innermost secrets. Harry and his friends make a potion that will turn them into other people when they want to find out information from someone else. Professor Lupin,¹⁷ when talking with Harry about Harry’s father, reflects,

I sometimes felt guilty about betraying Dumbledore’s trust...he had no idea I was breaking the rules he had set down for my own and others’ safety... But I always managed to forget my guilty feelings every time we sat down to plan our next month’s adventure.

Obviously, being trustworthy is not as important as having an adventure with friends.

Now, For The Magic Part

Perhaps the most alarming quality experienced is dangerous curiosity about magic and the occult. Rowling says that she had no intention of luring children into the world of witchcraft when she wrote these books.¹⁸ This might very well be the case. However, what’s happening is precisely that. Kids want to find out more about casting spells, predicting the future, and witches and wizards in general. They just don’t see it as fantasy, as something that they can never even hope to attain themselves. The scary thing is—they *can* do it, and they *know* they can do it, because Rowling and her world of Harry Potter are telling them they can.

The most typical response to this disdain for magic is, “But if magic is so terrible, why do we allow and even encourage our children to read *The Chronicles of Narnia* or *The Lord of the Rings*?” My answer is that these classics are on a completely different plane than *Harry Potter*. Most people that are familiar with C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien agree that they are writing from at least a Christian point of view, if not completely Catholic in their writing and thinking. Rowling is most definitely not. The “magic” contained in their works is not the same at all.

The major difference between the two types of magic is that Harry Potter characters are involved in occult magic. With Tolkien, Lewis, and most other fantasy authors, the word magic is not even an apt term for what takes place in their books. Those authors never use the word “magic” themselves—it is almost always ascribed by an outsider, namely the reader.

Magic is actually defined as the art of using supernatural means to conform events to man’s will. Witchcraft has, in its very definition, an evil connotation, and reference to discourse with the devil. Sorcery is defined as “the use of power gained from the assistance of evil spirits...divination by black magic...necromancy, witchcraft...synonymous with magic.”¹⁹

The word “occult” comes straight from Latin, and means “hidden” or “secret.” The strict definition of the word “occult” in the English language refers to things that are deliberately hidden or secret. We say Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament is, in Latin, *occultus*, that is, hidden from ordinary

sight, because He does not *look* like He is there.

In common English, however, the word “occult” specifically refers to those practices of the “supernatural” by which an individual attempts to learn things he is not meant to know, or control things outside of the sphere of his existence. In other words, there are certain things that we are not to know within our time here on earth. These are the things that are hidden from us, by God, because *He* is in charge. Dabbling in the occult is simply trying to encroach on the realm of God, sort of like what Adam and Eve did.

The common thread which runs through every aspect of the occult is this using of deviant means to execute one’s own plan. This is precisely why magic and all its subdivisions are so offensive to Our Lord. Obviously, the attempt to circumvent God’s Will is not going to be carried out by God Himself. Ergo, the conclusion is clear: occult practices are brought about by an evil force, namely Satan.

Rowling VS. Tolkien, Lewis, and Others

As a matter of fact, Rowling’s *Harry Potter* books are frequently compared to J. R. R. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, and C. S. Lewis’s *The Chronicles of Narnia*. The comparison is a superficial one, at best. It is usually based upon the use of “magic,” and the fact that there is a witch and/or a wizard in the story. What they never mention is the distinction between how these characters perform their “magic.”

The term “magic” can only be used here, if we understand that it is being used equivocally. The phenomenon of having one word describe two completely different things occurs frequently in the English language. Thus we have “book” meaning a box-shaped collection of uniformly shaped pages bound together, as well as the process of acquiring reservations on an airplane. The only way we can use the word “magic” here is if we understand that it is referring to two different entities, due to lack of better terms.

In *The Lord of the Rings*, what we would call “magic” is a natural ability of the Elves, which is recognized as such. They (Elves) all have it, and they can’t teach it to anyone. In *Harry Potter*, “magic” is a dependence on some kind of supernatural source, and can be learned and taught, to better and worse degrees. The wizards, Gandalf (good) and Sauruman (bad), are not humans with magical powers. They are of an altogether different and superior species, whose individuals are naturally endowed with the ability to do things that other beings cannot. They have taken human form, but are not actually human. In *Harry Potter*, the good and bad wizards are all humans, go to the same school, and use the same magic.

The *Chronicles of Narnia* do, in fact have a witch. She is regarded as and clearly shown to be evil, and no question remains on that matter. As far as her magical ability goes, she has taken for herself powers that are not even rightfully hers. In other words, Aslan, the representation of goodness, uses powers that come from a source of goodness. That source is the one who, as creator of Narnia, has “legitimate authority over all things” and has ultimate control of that power. Where do the powers come from that are used in *Harry Potter*?

In *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Chronicles of Narnia*, the power that the good beings possess is used for the good of everyone involved. It is not used to satisfy the whims of any particular character. Nor do they use their powers to stop someone else who is trying to interfere with their own personal plan. There is always a bigger picture involved, and that picture has been determined by someone else, who has the authority to do so. The evil witch/wizard characters use their powers to serve themselves, contrary to what has already been determined. This is clearly shown to be wrong in both Narnia and Middle Earth. There is never a question whether an evil character is evil. In Hogwarts, though, one never can tell.

Just because Lewis uses the word “witch” and Tolkien uses the word “magic” does not mean Rowling can be compared with them. Rowling, though she relies heavily on occultism for her creatures, does create a few of her own. Does this automatically mean that she is on the same plane as Tolkien? Rowling’s characters all speak in various British dialects. Does that mean she is on the same plane with Lewis? Their stories might have a material similarity here and there, but their spirit is different. It is the difference between the way the authors think. Certainly, how a writer thinks affects his work. How does Rowling think? In an interview with Rowling she says, “Do what you want, not what your parents want.”²⁰ Is this along the same vein as Tolkien and Lewis?

Just Plain Gross

Throughout Rowling's four books there are instances of names, people, and items that are taken directly from occult history. She, herself, admits that she has based about one-third of her material on actual occultism.²¹ Remember, though, that she has already said that she has no interest in luring children into the world of the occult. Remember also that she recognizes the fact that children are really becoming curious about occult practices after reading her books.

Not only are the *Harry Potter* books full of fact-based, occult drama, but they often involve exceedingly gory details which leave little to the imagination. Children's imaginations are pretty active as it is. Hence the need for graphically depicted blood-and-gore scenes is relatively minute in children's literature. This is aside from the fact that they really don't need these images etched into their young minds, anyway.

In a subplot of book two, one of the professors is waiting for the Mandrakes to mature, because they are necessary for producing a cure for the students who have been petrified by the basilisk. Historically, a mandrake is a plant that people believed would grow under the place where a man was hanged. Its root was said to have looked like a gnarled, shriveled up, dead infant, which was supposed to have made a shrieking noise when pulled out of the ground. In *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, a Mandrake is a plant, the root of which is an *actual* baby.

Instead of roots, a small, muddy, and extremely ugly baby popped out of the earth. The leaves were growing right out of his head. He had pale green, mottled skin, and was clearly bawling at the top of his lungs. Professor Sprout took a large plant pot from under the table and plunged the Mandrake into it, burying him in dark, damp compost...The Mandrakes didn't like coming out of the earth, but they didn't seem to want to go back into it either. They squirmed, kicked, flailed their sharp little fists, and gnashed their teeth; Harry spent ten whole minutes trying to squash a particularly fat one into a pot.²²

Its screams are fatal to anyone who hears, so the students who are present have to wear earmuffs. Rowling then depicts the stages of the Mandrakes' lives as though they are human beings. Later, when the mandrakes are "mature" enough for use, they are cut up into pieces and stewed. In the same book, the ghost that haunts a girls' restroom is lamenting the fact that she's already dead, because she can't kill herself again.

Then there are the Dementors, the guards of Azkaban, who are "among the foulest creatures that walk this earth." Next follows a description of just how foul they are. The Dementor "...will feed on you long enough to reduce you to something like itself...soul-less and evil. You'll be left with nothing but the worst experiences of your life." As if that's not enough, we find out exactly how they do this. It's called a "Dementor's Kiss":

It's what Dementors do when they wish to destroy utterly...they clamp their jaws upon the mouth of the victim and—and suck out his soul...you'll have no sense of self anymore, no memory, no...anything. There's no chance at all of recovery. You'll just—exist. As an empty shell. And your soul is gone forever...lost.

Toward the end of *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, Harry is magically (and unknowingly) transported to a graveyard where Voldemort and Wormtail, Voldemort's latest faithful servant, are waiting for him. Wormtail is about to resurrect Voldemort into a fully functional wizard again. Voldemort has been inhabiting someone else's body, since he doesn't really have much of a body of his own after being defeated by Harry now fourteen years ago.

It was as though Wormtail had flipped over a stone and revealed something ugly, slimy and blind—but worse, a hundred times worse. The thing Wormtail had been carrying had the shape of a crouched human child, except that Harry had never seen anything less like a child. It was hairless and scaly-looking, a dark, raw, reddish black and its face—no child alive ever had a face like that—flat and snakelike, with gleaming red eyes....Harry saw the look of revulsion on Wormtail's weak, pale face in the firelight as he carried the creature to the rim of the cauldron. For one moment, Harry saw the evil, flat face illuminated in the sparks dancing on the surface of the potion. And then Wormtail lowered the creature into the cauldron; there was a hiss, and it vanished below the surface; Harry heard its frail body hit the bottom with a soft thud. Let it drown, Harry thought...please...let it drown.

Then there's the special ceremony and spell to join the dark lord with a body:

And now Wormtail was whimpering. He pulled a long, thin, shining dagger from inside his cloak... *Flesh-of the servant-w-willingly given-you will-revive-your master*. He stretched forth his...hand with the missing finger. He gripped the dagger very tightly in his left hand and swung it upward...He could not block the scream that...went through Harry as though he had been stabbed with the dagger too. He heard something fall to the ground... then a sickening splash, as something was dropped into the cauldron...the potion had turned a burning red... Wormtail was gasping and moaning with agony...*Blood of the enemy...forcibly*

taken...you will... resurrect your foe. He saw the shining silver dagger shaking in Wormtail's remaining hand. He felt its point penetrate the crook of his right arm and blood seeping down the sleeve of his torn robes. Wormtail... fumbled in his pocket for a glass vial and held it to Harry's cut so that a dribble of blood fell into it. He staggered back to the cauldron with Harry's blood...and poured it inside.

Then Lord Voldemort's return:

But then, through the mist in front of him, he saw, with an icy surge of terror, the dark outline of a man, tall and skeletally thin, rising slowly from inside the cauldron... whiter than a skull, with wide, livid scarlet eyes and a nose that was flat as a snake's with slits for nostrils...Lord Voldemort had risen again.

One simply cannot help but wonder, "Is this really appropriate for kids?"

Conclusion

The various troublesome aspects of *Harry Potter* fail to turn away many readers, Catholics included. Why is this? Harry and his friends (the "heroes") are not the types of role models children should have. What young readers see fictitious characters doing, they will want to do as well. They begin to think that since this character acts this way, it's normal, or at least acceptable. It is a well-known fact that they get ideas from the books they read. Whether these ideas are constructive or detrimental depends on the book and the message it conveys. Harry Potter lies regularly and gets away with it. Doesn't it seem likely that a youngster will think it unfair when he can't get away with something that Harry did?

Those who praise Rowling's work constantly bring up the same tribute: the story shows a fight between good and evil. Who's good and who's evil, though? When a character has as many vices as Harry does, the word "good" does not come to mind. To me, it doesn't seem like a fight between good and evil—it seems like a fight between evil and not-quite-as-evil.

As to the witchcraft in the books, people say it's harmless, that it has nothing to do with the occult, *etc.* If you search the internet for "witchcraft" topics, Harry Potter is number seven on the list of results. Number seven! And this is alongside other sites advertising paraphernalia such as spell books, witches' "rosaries" and even cauldrons for sale. Books on witchcraft and spells mention that the Harry Potter books are great because "[w]itches in books are restrained only by the limits of their authors'—and their readers'—imagination."²³ There is no way to deny the relationship between Harry Potter and the occult when it is shown as clearly as this. The reason for the accolades from authors of witchcraft books is not coincidental. It cannot be excused as just a similarity in taste. Our Lord says,

Beware of false prophets who come to you in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. By their fruits you shall know them...every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, and the evil tree bringeth forth evil fruit...every tree that bringeth not good fruit shall be cut down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits you shall know them...²⁴

What are the fruits of the Harry Potter books? Rowling, a former teacher, is thrilled to see all the ideas sparked by her books.²⁵ Check out any teachers' resource website, and you will find plenty of ideas for integrating the Harry Potter stories into your curriculum. Go to a teachers' supply store to find out when the next magic and sorcery classes for kids are being held. Out of ideas for science class? Ask your neighborhood children's section librarian what the latest Harry-Potter-inspired science experiments are, and she can produce several ideas from which to choose. The possibilities are endless. In fact, certain churches have begun to follow the craze as well. In England, one church had banners and other symbols from *Harry Potter* upon the walls. Its pastor dressed up as Albus Dumbledore, along with a Harry Potter look-alike, Muggle songs and Quidditch. The reason for such absurdity? It was relevant to the lesson, James 1:17-27²⁶, which speaks of the blessings of God.²⁷

If Harry Potter has this kind of effect on adults, what will it do to our children? I know I don't want to find out. This tree needs to be cut down and cast into the fire before any more children start gathering its fruit. We can't teach them morals and ethics at home and school only to have it all undone in their leisure time. Kids recognize contradictions like this very easily. Guess which example will be followed and which will be tossed out the window.

¹ *Webster's Unabridged Dictionary*: an act or instance of employing sorcery especially with malevolent intent; ...alleged intercourse with the devil or familiar.

² *The Sorcerer's Stone* is *The Philosopher's Stone* in Europe. Rowling thought the word "sorcerer" would be more familiar to Americans than "philosopher."

³ A cross between soccer, basketball and hockey, played up in the air on broomsticks.

- 4 Occult history has it that the philosopher's stone was actually a powder, when mixed in the proper way and with the proper spell, could turn base metals into gold, and produces the Elixir of Life, which will give immortality to the drinker. This is what it is in Rowling's book as well. The alchemist who was supposed to have discovered it was Nicholas Flamel, who also retains his correct name and age in *The Sorcerer's Stone*.
- 5 The Chamber of Secrets was installed by one of the founders of Hogwarts, Salazar Slytherin. He hid an indescribable evil in the Chamber, which could only be unleashed by his legitimate heir, in order to rid the school of all those "unworthy" to practice magic (*i.e.*, Muggle-borns).
- 6 A basilisk is a large snake that, when looked at directly, kills. When looked at indirectly, he only "petrifies," that is, he renders his victim comatose.
- 7 Half eagle, half horse.
- 8 Wizards' prison.
- 9 Soul-sucking guards of Azkaban.
- 10 The three unforgivable curses are: *Crucio!*, which throws the victim into a sort of uncontrollable seizure; *Imperius!*, which gives the user total power over the will of the victim; and *Avada Kedavra!*, which kills the victim. Use of any of these spells is cause for life imprisonment in Azkaban.
- 11 Rowling's American publisher.
- 12 harrypotter.warnerbros.com.
- 13 Scholastic.com on-line interview of February 3, 2000.
- 14 Bloomsbury Publishing representative. Bloomsbury is Rowling's UK publisher.
- 15 With ingredients like lacewing flies, powdered horn of a bicorn, and a bit of the person they want to turn into, this potion will make the user look and sound like another.
- 15 We find out in book four that the feathers were taken from Albus Dumbledore's phoenix, Fawkes. Yes, he's named after Guy Fawkes, of the Gunpowder Plot of 1605. Effigies of Fawkes are still burnt yearly in some places in Britain. Phoenixes go up in flames regularly, and come back to life again.
- 17 From Latin, *lupus*, meaning "wolf." Professor Lupin is a werewolf.
- 18 Richard Abanes, *Harry Potter and the Bible* (Camp Hill: Horizon, 2001), pp.22-24.
- 19 *Webster's Dictionary*.
- 20 Scholastic.com
- 21 *Ibid.*
- 22 Rowling, *Chamber of Secrets*.
- 23 Pauline Bartel, *Spellcasters: Witches and Witchcraft in History, Folklore, and Popular Culture* (Dallas: Taylor Trade Publishing, 2000), pp.244-247.
- 24 Mt. 7:15-20.
- 25 Scholastic.com
- 26 King James Version, that is.
- 27 Ruth Gledhill, "Church to Lure Young with Harry Potter," *The London Times*, September 1, 2000.

Miss Andrea Stoltz obtained her undergraduate degree in Liberal Arts at Thomas Aquinas College, CA. Since graduation she has taught for three years in the elementary schools of the Society of Saint Pius X; firstly at Sacred Heart, Mancelona, MI, and then at St. Vincent de Paul Academy, Kansas City, MO. She wrote the article because some of her students were reading the Harry Potter series. Today she is Sister Andre Dominique with the Dominican Teaching Sisters of Fanjeaux.

Harry Potter Wiki is a database for J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter books and movies, that anyone can edit.Â Hagrid's Motorbike Adventure!
Brave the Forbidden Forest with Hagrid from June 13 at the Wizarding World of Harry Potter! Read more >. Hufflepuff Pride.