

= Religious debates over the Harry Potter series =

Religious debates over the Harry Potter series of books by J. K. Rowling are based on claims that the novels contain occult or Satanic subtexts . A number of Protestant , Catholic , and Orthodox Christians have argued against the series , as have some Shia and Sunni Muslims . Supporters of the series have said that the magic in Harry Potter bears little resemblance to occultism , being more in the vein of fairy tales such as Cinderella and Snow White , or to the works of C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien , the former known for writing fantasy novels with Christian subtexts . Far from promoting a particular religion , some argue , the Harry Potter novels go out of their way to avoid discussing religion at all . However , the author of the series , J. K. Rowling , describes herself as a practising Christian , and many have noted the Christian references which she includes in the final novel Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows .

In the United States , calls for the books to be banned from schools have led to legal challenges often on the grounds that witchcraft is a government @-@ recognised religion and that to allow the books to be held in public schools violates the separation of church and state . The Orthodox churches of Greece and Bulgaria have also campaigned against the series , and some Catholic writers and officials have voiced a critical stance . The books have been banned from private schools in the United Arab Emirates and criticised in the Iranian state @-@ run press . Religious responses to Harry Potter have not all been negative . " At least as much as they 've been attacked from a theological point of view , " notes Rowling , " [the books] have been lauded and taken into pulpit , and most interesting and satisfying for me , it 's been by several different faiths . "

= = Christianity = =

= = = Evangelicalism = = =

Most of the criticism of Harry Potter is from Fundamental Evangelical Christian groups , who believe the series ' alleged pagan imagery is dangerous to children . Paul Hetrick , spokesman for Focus on the Family , an American Evangelical Christian group based in Colorado Springs , Colorado , outlined the reasons for his opposition to them : " [They contain] some powerful and valuable lessons about love and courage and the ultimate victory of good over evil ; however , the positive messages are packaged in a medium ? witchcraft ? that is directly denounced in Scripture . " Harry Potter has been the subject of at least six book burnings in the U.S. In 2002 , Chick Publications produced a comic book tract titled " The Nervous Witch " that declared " the Potter books open a doorway that will put untold millions of kids into hell . " In 2007 Jacqui Komschlies wrote an article in Christianity Today comparing Harry Potter to " rat poison mixed with orange soda , " and said , " We 're taking something deadly from our world and turning it into what some are calling ' merely a literary device . ' "

A common belief among fundamentalist Christians is that Harry Potter promotes the religion of Wicca , and so keeping them in public schools violates the Separation of church and state in the United States . In her response to Laura Mallory 's court case , education attorney Victoria Sweeny said that if schools were to remove all books containing reference to witches , they would have to ban Macbeth and Cinderella . Jeremiah Films , a Christian video company largely known for its Clinton Chronicles release , also released a DVD entitled Harry Potter : Witchcraft Repackaged which stated that " Harry 's world says that drinking dead animal blood gives power , a satanic human sacrifice and Harry 's powerful blood brings new life , demon possession is not spiritually dangerous , and that passing through fire , contacting the dead , and conversing with ghosts , others in the spirit world , and more , is normal and acceptable . "

In 2001 , Evangelical journalist Richard Abanes , who has written several books arguing against new religions and Mormonism , published a polemical text that made similar allegations to the video : Harry Potter and the Bible : The Menace Behind the Magick . Later editions incorporated comparisons and contrasts between Harry Potter and the more overtly Christian works of C. S.

Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien . In an interview with CBN.com , Abanes remarked that , " One of the easiest ways to know whether a fantasy book or film has real world magick in it is to just ask a simple question , ' Can my child find information in a library or bookstore that will enable them to replicate what they are seeing in the film or the book ? ' If you go to The Chronicles of Narnia and The Lord of the Rings what you see in , story magic and imagination , it is not real . You can 't replicate it . But if you go to something like Harry Potter , you can find references to astrology , clairvoyance , and numerology . It takes seconds to go into a bookstore or library and get books on that and start investigating it , researching it , and doing it . "

Abanes writes : " The classic passage dealing with divination , along with several other forms of occultism , is Deuteronomy 18 : 10 @-@ 12 :

There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter 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 thing are an abomination unto the LORD . "

" If this were the only passage dealing with occultism , it would be enough to forbid all of the practices found in the Harry Potter series . But there are numerous other verses to consider ... "

The debate has inspired at least two satirical Internet urban legends . In 2001 , The Onion , an American satirical newspaper , published an article entitled " Harry Potter Sparks Rise in Satanism Among Children , " which said that the " High Priest of Satanism " had described Harry Potter as " an absolute godsend to our cause . " This article was actually copied into a chain letter and circulated among Christians as " proof " of their views . The following year the Canadian daily the National Post released a similar spoof article in its satirical column Post Morten , saying that " Rowling ? or , as she shall henceforth be referred to and credited as , Mrs. J. K. Satan ? said that as she sat in a coffee shop one grey day , wondering what to do with her empty , aimless life , it hit her , ' I 'll give myself , body and soul , to the Dark Master . And in return , he will give me absurd wealth and power over the weak and pitiful of the world . And he did ! ' " This article was also copied into a chain letter and released as " truth " onto the web .

In 2009 , Matt Latimer , a former speechwriter for US President George W. Bush , claimed that during the Bush administration , " people in the White House " had denied Rowling the Presidential Medal of Freedom because the books " encourage witchcraft . "

While some evangelical Christians consider Harry Potter related to Satanism , a poll in 2000 indicated that this position remains a minority view . Seven percent of Americans who have heard of the books have a negative view of them , with 52 percent having a positive opinion and the remaining 41 percent unsure . This compares with 33 percent of Americans who identify themselves as Evangelical and 39 percent who take the Bible literally . In 2001 the Alamogordo Christ Community Church in New Mexico burned hundreds of copies of the Harry Potter books . Jack Brock , leader of the church , said the books were an abomination because they inspired children to study the occult . He and his followers admitted they have never read any of the books , and tossed in some Stephen King novels . Venezuelan scholar Fernando Baez , in a study of the history of censorship and book destruction commented , " There is more than one way to destroy a book , upon being denied a city permit to burn books , the Rev. Douglas Taylor in Lewiston , Maine , has held several annual gatherings at which he cuts the Potter books up with scissors . "

Some evangelicals have supported the Potter books : evangelical author Connie Neal , in her books , What 's a Christian to Do with Harry Potter ? , The Gospel According to Harry Potter , and Wizards , Wardrobes , and Wookiees : Navigating Good and Evil in Harry Potter , Narnia , and Star Wars , wrote that the books preach Christian values and can be used to educate children in Christian tenets . Mike Hertenstein of Cornerstone magazine , in his article " Harry Potter vs the Muggles , Myth , Magic & Joy , " uses the term ' Muggles , ' used in the books to describe non @-@ magical humans , to describe Christians without imagination . Christianity Today published an editorial in favour of the books in January 2000 , calling the series a " Book of Virtues " and averring that although " modern witchcraft is indeed an ensnaring , seductive false religion that we must protect our children from , " this does not represent the Potter books , which have " wonderful examples of compassion , loyalty , courage , friendship , and even self @-@ sacrifice . " Italian

Methodist minister Peter Ciaccio analysed the relationship between J. K. Rowling 's work and Christian theology , stating that the Harry Potter series is the positive outcome of the encounter of the Jewish @-@ Christian tradition with other important features of the Western cultural heritage (namely Celtic , Nordic and Classical) .

= = = Catholicism = = =

The Catholic Church has taken no official position on the books , but various Catholics , including officials of the Roman Curia , the hierarchy , and other official bodies have presented mixed views on the subject .

Beginning in 2001 , Cardinal George Pell , Archbishop of Sydney , has occasionally written on the Harry Potter series in his regular column in The Sunday Telegraph . In his columns , he praised the books for displaying values that are " deeply compatible with Christianity . " In his book Be Not Afraid , Pell praised the books as having a " good dose of moral truth " and for being " a good yarn . "

In 2003 , Father Peter Fleetwood , a priest incardinated in the Archdiocese of Liverpool at the time serving as an official of the Pontifical Council for Culture , made comments supportive of the novels during a press conference announcing the release of Jesus Christ the Bearer of the Water of Life ? A Christian reflection on the " New Age . " In response to a question asking if the magic presented in the Harry Potter series should be considered in the same light as some New Age practices warned against in the document , Fleetwood stated , " If I have understood well the intentions of Harry Potter 's author , they help children to see the difference between good and evil . And she is very clear on this . " He added that Rowling is " Christian by conviction , is Christian in her mode of living , even in her way of writing . " This comment was seized on by the media as an endorsement of the novels from the Catholic Church , and by extension , the Pope at that time , John Paul II , though there is no evidence that the Pope officially approved of the novels .

Also in 2003 , the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith , Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger ? who later became Pope Benedict XVI ? received a manuscript of a book critical of the novels from a German author . He stated in a private letter expressing gratitude for the receipt of the book , " It is good that you enlighten people about Harry Potter , because those are subtle seductions , which act unnoticed and by this deeply distort Christianity in the soul , before it can grow properly . " He also recommended she send a copy of her book to Fleetwood at the Council for Culture . In a second letter , the cardinal gave the author permission to make his first letter public . These letters from Ratzinger prior to his elevation to the papacy have been used to suggest that the pontiff was officially opposed to the novels .

Criticism against the books also comes from one of the official exorcists of the Archdiocese of Rome , Father Gabriele Amorth , who believes that , " Behind Harry Potter hides the signature of the king of the darkness , the devil . " He further told the Daily Mail that the books make a false distinction between black and white magic , while , in reality , the distinction " does not exist , because magic is always a turn to the devil . " Amorth believes that the books can be a bad influence on children by getting them interested in the occult .

Before the release of Harry Potter and the Half @-@ Blood Prince in 2005 , Msgr. Fleetwood , then serving with the Council of European Episcopal Conferences , gave an interview with Vatican Radio . In the interview , Fleetwood reaffirmed his positive opinion of the books , and remarked that then @-@ Cardinal Ratzinger 's letters may have been written by a member of the congregation 's staff and simply signed by the prefect . He also stated that his and Amorth 's opinions are just that , conflicting personal opinions of priests .

For the film adaptations , the Office for Film and Broadcasting of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has rated each film either " A @-@ II " or " A @-@ III " , meaning the content was not found to be morally offensive . The Episcopal Conference named the film adaptation of Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban as one of the ten best family films of 2004 , and Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - Part 1 as one of the best movies of 2010 .

The Vatican newspaper , L 'Osservatore Romano , dedicated a full page to the debate in its 14 ? 15

January 2008 issue . Essayist Paolo Gulisano said the Harry Potter novels offer lessons in the importance of love and self @-@ giving , but Professor Edoardo Rialti described Harry Potter as " the wrong kind of hero " and said that , " Despite several positive values that can be found in the story , at the foundations of this tale is the proposal that of witchcraft as positive , the violent manipulation of things and people thanks to the knowledge of the occult , an advantage of a select few : the ends justify the means because the knowledgeable , the chosen ones , the intellectuals know how to control the dark powers and turn them into good ? This is a grave and deep lie , because it is the old Gnostic temptation of confusing salvation and truth with a secret knowledge . " However , in July 2009 , L 'Osservatore Romano praised the moral stance of the sixth Harry Potter film , Harry Potter and the Half @-@ Blood Prince , saying , " There is a clear line of demarcation between good and evil and [the film] makes clear that good is right . One understands as well that sometimes this requires hard work and sacrifice . " It also noted that the film made clear that " the search for immortality epitomised by Lord Voldemort " was morally wrong .

A French Traditionalist Catholic circle has published a thorough critical study of the Harry Potter series along the lines of demonology , with the title - in English translation - Harry Potter and the Order of Darkness .

= = = Orthodox = = =

In 2002 , the Greek Orthodox Church authorities in Thrace released a statement denouncing the Harry Potter books as Satanic , saying that they " acquaint people with evil , wizardry , the occult and demonology . " The statement also criticised the purported similarities between Harry Potter and Jesus Christ , saying , " It is beyond doubt that Harry was made to resemble a young savior . Upon his birth people try to kill him , he is forever subjected to injustice but always supernaturally manages to prevail and save others . Let us reflect , who else ? is held to be the unjustly treated God ? "

In June 2004 , soon after a native Bulgarian , Stanislav Ianevski , had been cast to portray the character Viktor Krum in the film adaptation of Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire , the Bulgarian Orthodox Church printed a front @-@ page article in their official newspaper , claiming that " magic is not a children 's game , " and that the holy Synod had advised that a church in Sofia hold special liturgies every Thursday to cure those afflicted by spells or possessed by evil spirits . Pamphlets were posted throughout the city , claiming that reciting a Harry Potter spell " is as if you are praying to evil " , and that " God hates magic . "

However , the Russian Orthodox apologist deacon Andrei Kuraev argued in his 2003 book Harry Potter in the Church : Between an Anathema and a Smile that the Harry Potter books are not dangerous . His arguments include the books ' similarity with traditional fairy tales and literary classics such as the Iliad which no @-@ one calls " Satanic " ; the difference between the books ' magic and real occult practices ; the presence of Christian values such as humility , love , sacrifice and choosing the right over the easy . He quotes other notable Orthodox priests and church officials such as M. Kozlov and S. Pravdoliubov as supporting his position .

The American academic and Orthodox Christian writer John Granger has analyzed the literature in a positive light . Granger , a Christian classicist , has defended the books in his book , Looking for God in Harry Potter . Granger argues that the books do not promote the occult because none of the magic is based on summoning any sort of demon or spirit ; he contrasts occult invocational magic (calling up spirit beings to do your bidding) with literature 's common incantational magic (saying a set phrase to use power from an unspecified source) . Indeed , says Granger , the themes of love triumphing over death and choosing what is right instead of what is easy are very compatible with Christianity .

= = = Anglicanism = = =

In 2000 , the Dean of Canterbury Cathedral refused to allow his church to be filmed as part of Hogwarts in the Harry Potter film series , saying that it was unfitting for a Christian church to be used

to promote pagan imagery . Gloucester Cathedral agreed to take its place ; the Dean of Gloucester , the Very Reverend Nicholas Bury , admitted to being a fan of the books ; " I think the book is a marvellous traditional children 's story and excellently written . It is also amusing , exciting and wholesome , and is just the sort of story families should be encouraged to read . " The decision still resulted in many angry letters to the local paper , the Gloucester Citizen . Said one honorary chaplain , " Oh yes , there was quite a to @-@ do . There was one particular man , very evangelical , writing in and complaining that it wasn 't right for such things to be going on . I don 't think it was so much the film 's subject matter but the fact that filming was happening at all . " Similarly , Durham Cathedral also allowed its use for two of the films .

Then @-@ Archbishop of Canterbury George Carey gave positive remarks about the Harry Potter and the Philosopher 's Stone film in his New Year Message for 2002 , calling it " great fun , " and a film that " asks some very real questions " on moral issues .

In June 2007 , the Anglican Church published Mixing it up with Harry Potter , a 48 @-@ page book designed to use parallels from the novels to teach the faith to 9 ? 13 @-@ year @-@ olds . The author of the book , Kent youth worker Owen Smith , argued that , " These sessions draw parallels between events in the world of Harry and his friends , and the world in which we are seeking to proclaim the gospel to young people [...] To say , as some have , that these books draw younger readers towards the occult seems to me both to malign J. K. Rowling and to vastly underestimate the ability of children and young people to separate the real from the imaginary . "

= = = Latter @-@ day Saint (Mormon) = = =

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter @-@ day Saints (LDS Church) has expressed no official or unofficial reservations or cautions about the Harry Potter books and movies , all of which are freely sold at the Brigham Young University campus bookstore . At least two prominent leaders of the church have even recommended the series and spoke of being fans because they teach morality and show good victorious over evil .

= = Islam = =

The popular scholarly site Muslim Matters has spoken positively of both the books and the films . However a number of Islamic scholars have argued that the books ' magical themes conflict with Islamic teachings . A series of online fat?wa have been logged by imams against Harry Potter , decrying it as un @-@ Islamic .

The Harry Potter books are banned in schools across the United Arab Emirates (UAE) . According to a spokesman from the education ministry of the UAE government , the books ' fantasy and magic elements were contrary to Islamic values . Despite being banned from schools in the Emirates , there are no plans to ban them from bookshops within the country .

In August 2007 , police in Karachi , Pakistan discovered and defused a car bomb located outside a shopping centre where , hours later , the final Harry Potter novel was scheduled to go on sale . The book launch was postponed in response . A local police superintendent commented that , " We are not sure so far whether the target of the bombing was the book launch , but the connection cannot be ruled out . "

While the Harry Potter books are available for sale in Iran , an editorial in the 26 July 2007 edition of the state @-@ run newspaper Kayhan , which has ties to Iran 's Supreme Leader , the Ayatollah Ali Khamenei , criticised Iran 's Culture and Islamic Guidance Ministry for approving the distribution of the final Harry Potter novel . The editorial claimed that the book , " includes destructive words and sentences which oppose to the values [of the Islamic Republic] , " and that airport security had failed by " [trusting] the American @-@ British publisher which has Zionist collaborators , such as Warner Bros .. " The editorial described the books as a " Zionist project " and claimed that " Zionists had spent billions of dollars " on it .

Feiz Mohammad , the Australian radical Islamic preacher believed to have inspired Tamerlan and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev , the perpetrators of the Boston Marathon bombing , decried Harry Potter for "

paganism , evil , magic and the drinking of unicorn blood " .

= = Judaism = =

Many prominent rabbis have described the Harry Potter books as , in the words of one , " a force for good " . In 2005 , a conference at the University of Reading debated whether Harry Potter had a " yiddishe neshama " (Jewish soul) . Sir Jonathan Sacks , the former chief Rabbi of the Commonwealth of Nations , claims that , in " a society in which adolescents are precociously adult , and adults are permanently adolescent " , Harry Potter has " reclaimed the kingdom of childhood , proving that you don ' t have to betray to enchant " .

The decision to release the final volume of the Harry Potter series , Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows , in Israel at 2 AM on a Saturday morning briefly angered many of Israel 's rabbis , since it fell during the Jewish Sabbath , a time when business dealings are forbidden .

= = Book challenges = =

The books ' inclusion in public and school libraries has been frequently challenged for their focus on magic , particularly in the United States , where it was ranked seventh on the list of the most challenged books in American libraries between 1990 and 2000 despite having been first published in the United States in 1998 . In 1999 , the Harry Potter books were challenged 23 times in 13 states . According to the American Library Association , they are now the most challenged books of the 21st century .

However , the ALA notes that overall , opposition to Harry Potter in the US appears to be waning ; having topped the list of the most challenged books in American schools in many previous years , they have to date failed to reappear in the top ten since 2003 . Humanist commentator Austin Cline attributes this decline to school libraries employing " opt @-@ out " policies which allow parents to prohibit their children from reading books they do not wish them exposed to .

A selection follows of the more notable challenges to the books :

In 1999 , in response to complaints from three local parents , Zeeland , Michigan school superintendent Gary Feenstra restricted access to the Harry Potter books to those pupils whose parents gave written permission . Later reports claimed that the parents were concerned about the books ' magical and witchcraft @-@ related themes . In response , children began a letter @-@ writing campaign , forming clubs and organising petitions , which ultimately merged into an internet site called Muggles for Harry Potter . Eventually the site took on a broader remit as kidSPEAK ! , a forum for children to tackle censorship in general .

In 2000 , The Public Library system of Jacksonville , Florida was faced with a lawsuit from conservative Christian group Liberty Counsel of Orlando after they began awarding " Hogwarts ? Certificate of Accomplishment " to young readers who completed the fourth Harry Potter novel , Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire . One parent complained that " If they are going to pass out witchcraft certificates they should also promote the Bible and pass out certificates of righteousness " . The lawsuit was averted after the Library agreed to stop awarding the certificate . That same year , Carol Rookwood , headmistress of St Mary 's Island Church of England Aided School in Chatham , Kent , England , banned the books from school grounds , saying that , " The Bible is very clear and consistent in its teachings that wizards , devils and demons exist and are very real , powerful and dangerous , and God 's people are told to have nothing to do with them " . In response , the chairman of the Church of England 's doctrine commission , Stephen Sykes , said , " The Church 's position is that magic and sorcery are contrary to the Christian religion , Mrs Rookwood is absolutely right . [But] children who are capable of reading Harry Potter could be told not to take witchcraft seriously , or might even realise that for themselves " . In July 2000 , Birkenhead Primary School in Auckland , New Zealand placed a ban on the Harry Potter novels being read aloud by teachers in class after parental complaints regarding the books ' supposedly occult content . However , the ban was lifted after a number of students and parents complained . Also in 2000 , Christian parents complained to the school board in Durham Region , Ontario about Harry Potter , and managed to

get the books removed from school library shelves . The books were reinstated after a public outcry .

In 2002 , in York , Pennsylvania , local parent Deb DiEugenio , along with her pastor , attempted to have the books banned from her daughter 's school . DuEugenio said that " It 's against my daughter 's constitution , it 's evil , it 's witchcraft ... I 'm not paying taxes to teach my child witchcraft " . The school board eventually voted 7 ? 2 to keep the books , with an opt @-@ out for concerned parents .

In 2003 , Billy Ray and Mary Nell Counts , a couple in Cedarville , Arkansas , brought suit against the local school board on behalf of their daughter to contest a rule requiring parents ' written consent to read the Harry Potter books . A parent , Angie Haney , had requested such a rule on the grounds that they were " not based on fiction , " at the prompting of Pastor Mark Hodges , who was also a member of the school board . A district court judge decided the rule was unconstitutional . The decision was cited as precedent in subsequent censorship cases . Also in 2003 , a Russian woman filed charges against Rosman Publishing , responsible for Harry Potter 's Russian translation , saying that the books " instilled religious extremism and prompted students to join religious organizations of Satanist followers " . A probe found that there were no grounds for a criminal prosecution .

In September 2005 , Laura Mallory , a mother of four children in Loganville , Georgia , attempted to have the Harry Potter books banned from her children 's school library on the grounds that they promoted a religion , Wicca , and thus for a public school library to hold them would violate the separation of church and state . On her website , she states , " Harry Potter is being used to teach and promote witchcraft , Wicca , a U.S. [Government] recognised religion , in our schools , classrooms , and to this entire generation . " Mallory said the books carry " evil themes , witchcraft , demonic activity , murder , evil blood sacrifice , spells and teaching children all of this . " Mallory , who is a Christian missionary , said that she believed the books encouraged children to practice religious witchcraft or become Wiccans . Mallory also commented that she has not read the entire book series because " they 're really very long and I have four kids . I 've put a lot of work into what I 've studied and read . I think it would be hypocritical for me to read all the books , honestly " . Following her case 's rejection by the school , Mallory then took her case to the school appeals committee , but was rejected again . On 20 April 2006 , Mallory took her case to the Gwinnett County School Board , but on 11 May , the board voted unanimously against her . In June 2006 , Mallory launched an appeal against the County Board 's decision with the Georgia State Board of Education ; that appeal was rejected the following December . In January 2007 , she appealed to the Gwinnett Superior Court ; that appeal too was rejected three months later . She considered taking the case to federal court , but spent the following summer with her husband and four children . She is now an ordained minister for children and young adults , claiming that her case against Harry Potter has inspired her to a new calling .

In July 2006 , Sariya Allan , a teaching assistant at Durand Primary School in Stockwell , South London , quit her job after she was suspended for refusing to listen to a seven @-@ year @-@ old pupil read a Harry Potter book in class . A practising Pentecostal , she told the girl that " I don 't do witchcraft in any form , " and that she would be " cursed " if she heard the novel recited . Allan took her dispute with the school to an Employment Tribunal , citing religious discrimination and claiming for damages . The school 's lawyer claimed that , " her suspension was due to her obstructive conduct over time . It was not down to that day alone . " The case was heard in June 2007 and the tribunal found in favour of the school .

In September 2007 , Pastor Ron Barker of St. Joseph Church in Wakefield , Massachusetts received international attention after pulling the books from the shelves of the parish 's K @-@ 8 school . According to the ALA , this was the first time the books were banned in Massachusetts . The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston claimed this was an independent action in which the Church played no role . " It may be a great series , but for some it is a vehicle for entering into some occult practices , " he said . " Sorcery and witchcraft are not appropriate subjects for a Catholic school and I do not want parents or children thinking we approve of them in our library . " He claimed his actions were no different from protecting children with a peanut allergy ; " What I did is

start a spiritual peanut butter ban on Harry Potter , " he said .

= = Responses to criticism = =

= = = Wicca = = =

In response to the criticism that the books promote Wicca , a number of Wiccans and other commenters have argued that the critics ' definition of Wicca tends to lump together many and various spiritualist practices that actually have little in common . They have also highlighted the differences between magic within Wicca , which is invocational and derives from the divine powers , and that depicted by the Harry Potter books , which is a purely mechanical application of spells without invoking any deities . A Wiccan review of Harry Potter : Witchcraft Repackaged pointed out that " communing with the dead and spirit world , sorcery , curses , occult symbology , black magic [and] demon possession " ? all cited by the book as evidence of Harry Potter promoting Wicca ? are not part of Wiccan belief .

Divinatory practices such as scrying and astrology , although occasionally employed by characters in the books are neither unique nor central to the Wiccan religion and are treated in the novels in a condescending , tongue @-@ in @-@ cheek manner ; the school divination teacher is , according to writer Christine Schoeffer , " a misty , dreamy , dewy charlatan , " who is ridiculed by the students and staff alike . In the Harry Potter universe , Schoeffer claims , " the entire intuitive tradition of fortune @-@ telling ? is discredited . "

The website religioustolerance.org says , in their analysis of Chick 's " The Nervous Witch " , that the comic 's heroine cries that ' she got into " The Craft " (i.e. Wicca) " Through the Harry Potter books ! We wanted his powers ? so we called for spirit guides . Then they came into us . " In reality , spirit guides are unrelated to the Witchcraft in the Harry Potter books and are not sought by Wiccans . They are a New Age phenomenon.'

= = = Occult vs. fantasy and fairytale magic = = =

Regardless , statements such as those in Witchcraft Repackaged that the books depict actual occultist practices of any kind have been roundly criticised . Christian writer Stephen D. Greydanus writes that the magic of the Harry Potter novels is not the ritualistic , invocative magic of Wicca or occultism but the same " fantasy " magic practised in the works of J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis ; " If anything , the magic in Rowling 's world is even more emphatically imaginary , even further removed from real @-@ world practices , than that of Tolkien or Lewis ; and , like theirs , presents no appreciable risk of direct imitative behaviour . " Christianity Today columnist Charles Colson asserts that the magic in Harry Potter is " purely mechanical , as opposed to occultic . That is , Harry and his friends cast spells , read crystal balls , and turn themselves into animals ? but they don 't make contact with a supernatural world . [It 's not] the kind of real @-@ life witchcraft the Bible condemns . " Austin Cline notes that , " The Harry Potter books simply aren 't about Wicca as it is currently practiced . J.K Rowling researched Wiccan practices and incorporated a few elements in order to give her books a bit more of an air of reality , but she and Wicca are drawing upon the same corpus of ancient traditions and stories so similarities are inevitable . They certainly aren 't a sign that the books work to " indoctrinate " people into Wicca as a religion . "

In his book , John Granger makes what he thinks a critical distinction between what he calls the dangerous invocational magic (calling a spirit) and Rowling 's incantational magic , in which the formula one speaks gets the job done , and says that her presentation to the materialistic world that there is more out there than is visible is doing a service for the cause of Christian evangelism .

Connie Neal has commented that , " there are 64 real references to witchcraft in the first four Harry Potter books , but you have to see them in context to know they are not teaching witchcraft or sorcery . Many of the detractors who have actually read the books already have made up their mind that Harry Potter is evil before they read . They have taken a magnifying glass and picked at the

books , using literary reductionism to find what they want to find . You can pick up Dickens ' A Christmas Carol and do the same thing that these people have done with Harry Potter ; it is ridiculous . "

In 2001 , Massimo Introvigne , an Italian expert in emerging religious movements , criticised the Fundamentalist impulse to distrust fantasy . " Fundamentalists reject , or even burn , all products of contemporary popular culture , because their modes of production , languages and styles are not intrinsically Christian [...] Most children understand that magic is used in fairy tales and juvenile supernatural fiction as a century @-@ old language , and that this is fiction , not reality . If we dismiss the use of magic as a language , we should at least be fundamentalist to the bitter end , and go against " Mary Poppins , " " Peter Pan , " and " Sleeping Beauty , " and insist that Cinderella puts a burkha on . "

= = = Secularism = = =

Another response to the claim that the books promote the religion of witchcraft , which has been raised as much by Christians critical of the books as those who support them , is that , far from promoting religion , the books do not promote religion in any way . Apart from celebrating Christmas and Easter and a non @-@ denominational clergyman presiding at both Dumbledore 's funeral and the Weasleys ' wedding , religious practices are largely absent from the books . In her critical editorial on the books , Focus on the Family 's Lindy Beam comments , " The spiritual fault of Harry Potter is not so much that Rowling is playing to dark supernatural powers , but that she doesn 't acknowledge any supernatural powers at all . These stories are not fueled by witchcraft , but by secularism . " The Harry Potter books have been lauded by atheists and secularists for their determinedly non @-@ religious outlook . Mika LaVaque @-@ Manty of the liberal website Left2Right notes , " Religion plays no role in the books . There are no churches , no other religious institutions , nobody prays or meditates , and even funerals are non @-@ religious affairs . " When considering the role of religion within Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows , Christopher Hitchens observed the apparent secularism in the novel , stating that the characters of Harry and Hermione possess certain moral virtues while also expressing an ignorance of Christian ideas . In an article written for Time magazine before the publication of the seventh and final book in the series entitled " Who Dies in Harry Potter ? God , " Lev Grossman argues that , " Harry Potter lives in a world free of any religion or spirituality of any kind . He lives surrounded by ghosts but has no one to pray to , even if he were so inclined , which he isn 't . " Grossman goes on to contrast Harry Potter with other , more explicitly religious fantasies , such as C. S. Lewis ' The Chronicles of Narnia and J. R. R. Tolkien 's The Lord of the Rings .

= = = Rowling 's response = = =

J.K. Rowling has repeatedly denied that her books lead children into witchcraft . In an interview with CNN in 1999 , she said ,

" I absolutely did not start writing these books to encourage any child into witchcraft . I 'm laughing slightly because to me , the idea is absurd . I have met thousands of children and not even one time has a child come up to me and said , " Ms Rowling , I 'm so glad I 've read these books because now I want to be a witch . "

In an interview on the Donny & Marie Show in 1999 , Rowling said that " You have a perfect right , of course , as every parent does , and I 'm a parent , to decide what your child is exposed to . You do not have the right to decide what everyone else 's children are exposed to . So that 's how I feel about it " .

" Practicing Wiccans think I 'm also a witch " , Rowling told Entertainment Weekly in 2000 . " I 'm not . "

" People underestimate children so hugely " , Rowling said when asked about the controversy in the 2001 documentary Harry Potter and Me , " They know it 's fiction . When people are arguing from that kind of standpoint , I don 't think reason works tremendously well . But I would be surprised if

some of them had read the books at all . "

In a conversation on Twitter in December 2014 , Rowling tweeted , " To everyone asking whether their religion / belief / non @-@ belief system is represented at Hogwarts : the only people I never imagined there are wiccans . . . it 's a different concept of magic to the one laid out in the books , so I don 't really see how they can co @-@ exist . "

= = Christianity in the novels = =

While many describe the books as secular or Satanic , many writers , including Rowling herself , have gone to great lengths to demonstrate that the books actively promote Christian values .

Rowling attended a Church of Scotland congregation while writing Harry Potter and her eldest daughter , Jessica , was baptised into that faith . " I go to church myself " , she told MTV in 2007 , " I don 't take any responsibility for the lunatic fringes of my own religion " . In 2000 , when asked if she was a Christian by journalist Max Wyman of The Vancouver Sun , she replied ,

" Yes , I am , which seems to offend the religious right far worse than if I said I thought there was no God . Every time I 've been asked if I believe in God , I 've said yes , because I do , but no one ever really has gone any more deeply into it than that , and I have to say that does suit me , because if I talk too freely about that I think the intelligent reader , whether 10 or 60 , will be able to guess what 's coming in the books . "

" Personally " , she said of her religious faith , " I think you can see that in the books . Of course , Hogwarts is a multifaith school . " Rowling claims to have been very careful not to colour her novels in an overtly religious way , lest one faith be given prominence over any other . Rowling said that to her , the moral significance of the tales seems " blindingly obvious " . The key for her was the choice between what is right and what is easy , " because that , that is how tyranny is started , with people being apathetic and taking the easy route and suddenly finding themselves in deep trouble . " In an interview with MTV after the publication of the last book , she is quoted as saying , " To me [the religious parallels have] always been obvious , but I never wanted to talk too openly about it because I thought it might show people who just wanted the story where we were going . "

In 2007 , Rowling described her religious background in an interview with the Dutch newspaper De Volkskrant :

" I was officially raised in the Church of England , but I was actually more of a freak in my family . We didn 't talk about religion in our home . My father didn 't believe in anything , neither did my sister . My mother would incidentally visit the church , but mostly during Christmas . And I was immensely curious . From when I was 13 , 14 I went to church alone . I found it very interesting what was being said there , and I believed in it . When I went to university , I became more critical . I got more annoyed with the smugness of religious people and I went to church less and less . Now I 'm at the point where I started : yes , I believe . And yes , I go to the church . A protestant church here in Edinburgh . My husband is also raised protestant , but he comes from a very strict Scottish group . One where they couldn 't sing and talk . "

Rowling has occasionally expressed ambivalence about her religious faith . In a 2006 interview with Tatler magazine , Rowling noted that , " like Graham Greene , my faith is sometimes about if my faith will return . It 's important to me . " In a British documentary , JK Rowling : A Year in the Life , when asked if she believed in God , she said , " Yes . I do struggle with it ; I couldn 't pretend that I 'm not doubt @-@ ridden about a lot of things and that would be one of them but I would say yes . " When asked if she believed in an afterlife , she said , " Yes ; I think I do . " In a 2008 interview with the Spanish newspaper El País , Rowling said , " I feel very drawn to religion , but at the same time I feel a lot of uncertainty . I live in a state of spiritual flux . I believe in the permanence of the soul . "

= = = Rowling and the Inklings = = =

Several Christian writers have compared Rowling to the Inklings , a group that included C. S. Lewis , J. R. R. Tolkien , and Charles Williams , who explored Christian themes and morality in a fantasy context . Dave Kopel , citing John Granger 's book , draws comparisons between Rowling 's and

Lewis 's common usage of Christian symbols , such as lions , unicorns and stags . He compares the work to Lewis 's Christian allegory : " In the climax of Chamber of Secrets , Harry descends to a deep underworld , is confronted by two satanic minions (Voldemort and a giant serpent) , is saved from certain death by his faith in Dumbledore (the bearded God the Father / Ancient of Days) , rescues the virgin (Virginia [sic] Weasley) , and ascends in triumph . It 's Pilgrim 's Progress for a new audience . " (This quotation predates Rowling 's revelation that Ginny Weasley 's full name is Ginevra , not Virginia .)

Other Christian writers find Rowling 's treatment of magic less acceptable than Lewis 's and Tolkien 's . In his essay " Harry Potter vs. Gandalf , " Steven D. Greydanus notes that in the works of Tolkien and Lewis , magic is confined to alien realms with their own laws , whereas Rowling 's world coexists with our own ; he thinks this is wrong : " Lewis goes to great lengths to make clear just how dangerous and wrong , how incompatible with Christianity , is any form of attempted magic in our world . " John Andrew Murray similarly observes that Rowling 's work portrays magic as a natural force to be manipulated , while Lewis and Tolkien portray magic as a gift bestowed by a higher power : " Despite superficial similarities , Rowling 's and Lewis ' worlds are as far apart as east is from west . Rowling 's work invites children to a world where witchcraft is ' neutral ' and where authority is determined solely by one 's cleverness . Lewis invites readers to a world where God 's authority is not only recognised , but celebrated ? a world that resounds with His goodness and care . "

Rowling 's attitude toward the Inklings , and to Lewis in particular , has undergone change . In 1998 , in one of her earliest interviews , she said that she had a lifelong love of C. S. Lewis . " Even now , if I was in a room with one of the Narnia books I would pick it up like a shot and re @-@ read it . " However , in later interviews she expressed a different opinion . " I adored [Lewis ' books] when I was a child , " she told the Sydney Morning Herald in 2001 , " I got so caught up I didn 't think C. S. Lewis was especially preachy . Reading them now I find that his subliminal message isn 't very subliminal . " In an interview with Lev Grossman in 2005 , she said , " There comes a point [in Lewis ' The Last Battle] where Susan , who was the older girl , is lost to Narnia because she becomes interested in lipstick . She 's become irreligious basically because she found sex . I have a big problem with that . "

" I did not set out to convert anyone to Christianity , " she told Time in 2007 ; " I wasn 't trying to do what C. S. Lewis did . It is perfectly possible to live a very moral life without a belief in God , and I think it 's perfectly possible to live a life peppered with ill @-@ doing and believe in God . "

As regards Tolkien , Rowling said in 2000 that " I didn 't read The Hobbit until after the first Harry book was written , though I read Lord of the Rings when I was nineteen . I think , setting aside the obvious fact that we both use myth and legend , that the similarities are fairly superficial . Tolkien created a whole new mythology , which I would never claim to have done . On the other hand , I think I have better jokes . "

= = = Christian allegories in Deathly Hallows = = =

A number of commentators have drawn attention to the Biblical themes and references in her final Harry Potter novel , Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows . In an August 2007 issue of Newsweek , Lisa Miller commented that Harry dies and then comes back to life to save mankind , like Christ . She points out the title of the chapter in which this occurs ? " King 's Cross " ? a possible allusion to Christ 's cross . Also , she outlines the scene in which Harry is temporarily dead , pointing out that it places Harry in a very heaven @-@ like setting where he talks to a father figure " whose supernatural powers are accompanied by a profound message of love " . Miller argues that these parallels make it difficult to believe that the basis of the stories is Satanic . There is also speculation from The Leaky Cauldron 's podcast , PotterCast , episode 115 entitled " Those Deathly Hallows , " in the Canon Conclusion segment with Steve Vander Ark , that the Hallows act as a parallel to the Holy Trinity ; Harry accepts death as did Jesus , they both come back from death , and defeat the Devil / Voldemort . Jeffrey Weiss adds , in The Dallas Morning News , that the biblical quotation " And the last enemy that shall be defeated is death , " featured on the tombstones of Harry 's parents

, refers to Christ 's victory over death at the end of the world . The quotation on Dumbledore 's family tomb , " Where your treasure is , there your heart will be also " , is from Matthew 6 : 21 , and refers to knowing which things in life are of true value . " They 're very British books , " Rowling revealed to an Open Book conference in October 2007 , " So on a very practical note Harry was going to find biblical quotations on tombstones , [but] I think those two particular quotations he finds on the tombstones at Godric 's Hollow , ? almost epitomise the whole series . "

Deathly Hallows begins with a pair of epigraphs , one by Quaker leader William Penn and one from Aeschylus ' The Libation Bearers . " I really enjoyed choosing those two quotations because one is pagan , of course , and one is from a Christian tradition " , Rowling said . " I 'd known it was going to be those two passages since ' Chamber ' was published . I always knew [that] if I could use them at the beginning of book seven then I 'd cued up the ending perfectly . If they were relevant , then I went where I needed to go . They just say it all to me , they really do . "

Raymond Keating also outlines several Christian themes of the last book in an article in Newsday , concluding that " It 's possible to read Lord of the Rings and Narnia without recognizing the religious aspects . That 's even more so the case with Harry Potter . But Christian themes are there nonetheless " . Christian commentator Jerry Bowyer says of Rowling 's " fundamentalist bashers " , " So much of the religious right failed to see the Christianity in the Potter novels because it knows so little Christianity itself [...] The gospel stories themselves , the various metaphors and figures of the Law and the Prophets , and their echoes down through the past two millennia of Christian literature and art are largely unknown to vast swaths of American Christendom . " As regards Rowling 's belief that discussing her faith would spoil the books , Bowyer says , " For once , I disagree with her : I don 't think [the bashers] would have guessed the ending . Most of them can 't recognise the ending of the story even after it 's been told . "

In her appraisal of the series , The Mystery of Harry Potter : A Catholic Family Guide , author Nancy Carpentier Brown writes ,

" After burying the remains of Mad @-@ Eye Moody , Harry " marked the spot by gouging a small cross in the bark with his wand . " Now , if they were true Wiccans , wouldn 't he have gouged a pentagram ? When Harry finally has the chance to face Voldemort (Tom Riddle) and possibly kill him , Harry pauses and offers Voldemort a chance , saying , " Show some remorse . " ... Giving a person a chance to redeem themselves , to begin to realise your own sins , by showing remorse , shows a Christian theme to the story . "

= = Dumbledore 's sexual orientation = =

On 19 October 2007 , Rowling spoke at New York 's Carnegie Hall . When asked by a fan whether Albus Dumbledore , the books ' wise mentor @-@ figure , " who believed in the prevailing power of love , ever [fell] in love himself " , Rowling replied ,

" My truthful answer to you ? I always thought of Dumbledore as gay . ? Dumbledore fell in love with Gellert Grindelwald , and that added to his horror when Grindelwald showed himself to be what he was ? falling in love can blind us to an extent ? he was very drawn to this brilliant person , and horribly , terribly let down by him . "

The statement was met with an ovation from the audience . " If I 'd known it would make you so happy , I would have announced it years ago ! " Rowling said . In an appearance three days later in Toronto , she responded to questions about Dumbledore 's " outing " by saying that she had decided his sexuality " from very early on . Probably before the first book was published . "

Christians critical of both Harry Potter and homosexuality responded pointedly to the revelation . Christian author Berit Kjos wrote ,

" My first response was , " Thank you , Lord , " because this helps us show others that these books should not be used in the churches to illustrate Christianity . Because Dumbledore has been revealed as a homosexual , it helps me communicate my message . It helps Christians who are concerned about the use of Harry Potter books in churches , because it makes it very clear that these books are not intended to be Christian , that Rowling isn 't speaking as a Christian . She has introduced values that are contrary to the Biblical message . "

Laura Mallory responded to the Rowling 's statement by telling U.S. network ABC , " My prayer is that parents would wake up , that the subtle way this is presented as harmless fantasy would be exposed for what it really is : a subtle indoctrination into anti @-@ Christian values ? A homosexual lifestyle is a harmful one . That 's proven , medically . " Linda Harvey , the president of Mission America , an organization which " monitors both the homosexual agenda directed at children as well as paganism among American youth , " wrote an opinion piece for WorldNetDaily , asking :

" Will we allow our kids to believe it would be perfectly appropriate for the headmaster of any school to be homosexual ? ? Will some find ways to re @-@ cast homosexuality into something different than the " abomination " it 's called in Scripture ? Will it become something more like a sad disability , one that the " mean religious right " targets for nefarious purposes ? "

" It 's very disappointing that the author would have to make one of the characters gay , " said Roberta Combs , president of the Christian Coalition of America , " It 's not a good example for our children , who really like the books and the movies . It encourages homosexuality . " On 27 October 2007 , Pat Robertson 's Christian Broadcasting Network called for a ban on the books .

Rowling commented on the dispute in an interview with the BBC . " Do I think a gay person can be a moral compass ? I think it 's ludicrous that we are asking that question in the 21st century . The Christian fundamentalists were never my base . "

John Granger , in his blog , reposted the negative reactions of many Christians :

" The media presentation of the event as Ms. Rowling 's endorsement of homosexuality and an anti @-@ faith agenda was straight from Rita Skeeter 's notebook and part of their endless campaign to convince the public that Ms. Rowling is the enemy of their enemy , namely , the Church ; the anguished and disappointed response of many Christian readers to these reports was also according to Culture War formula and in keeping with a hyper @-@ extended understanding of the word gay . " Dumbledore is gay " no more makes the books an invitation to homosexuality or contrary to orthodox Christian belief than Sorcerer 's Stone made them a " gateway to the occult . "

Catholic fantasy author Regina Doman wrote an essay titled " In Defense of Dumbledore , " in which she argued that the books actually support Catholic teaching on homosexuality because Dumbledore 's relationship with the dark wizard Grindelwald leads to obviously terrible results , as he becomes interested in dark magic himself , neglects his responsibilities towards his younger sister and ultimately causes her death .

Despite Rowling stating that " he (Dumbledore) is my character and as my character , I have the right to know what I know about him and say what I say about him " , a number of commentators have argued that Rowling 's claim has no weight , as there is no indication anywhere in the novels of Dumbledore 's homosexuality . " Ms. Rowling may think of Dumbledore as gay , " said New York Times columnist Edward Rothstein , " but there is no reason why anyone else should . " According to John Mark Reynolds , assistant professor of philosophy at Biola University and the founder of Torrey Honors Institute , " there is just no way to know this ? fact ? about Dumbledore from the books . It is not there , it is not relevant , and Rowling 's opinions about her characters are now only of historical interest " . Others doubted that Rowling 's claim was true to her original intent , and some considered it a publicity stunt . American writer Orson Scott Card criticised Rowling 's revelation as " appallingly hypocritical " , saying that " Instead of making us know and understand the character as a gay man , we are slapped with it at the end , as if being gay were just an afterthought " .