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**From the Bible to *Harry Potter*: Updating an ancient myth into modern fantasy**

The *Harry Potter* series began in 1997 and concluded in 2007. In a matter of ten years, the series joined the ranks of the most read books in the world, with 400 million copies sold as of 2015, according to writer James Chapman (“10 Most Read Books in the World”). The *Harry Potter* series phenomenon, though, faced criticism in the United States by those who believed the books promoted witchcraft and occultism, and so the books were banned in many libraries across the nation. These controversies have also affected critical scholarship about the books resulting in much of the existing research focusing on religious controversy rather than on critical analysis of the *Harry Potter* series. In my thesis, I leave the controversies aside and instead focus on what the *Harry Potter* series means for readers and what the driving elements are behind readers’ attraction to the series today. A series that has had a dominant presence in modern culture is worthwhile investigating to discover what about the books has brought them to their stunning popularity. I argue throughout the remainder of my thesis that through *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (hereafter *Harry Potter DH*) completion of the Bible, and its position in the fantasy genre, modern-day readers find *Harry Potter DH* an approachable text to explore the complex universal questions all humans have.

When examining the dominant themes and symbols found in *Harry Potter DH*, it is apparent that these elements parallel those found in the Bible. Although such a connection might not be noticed by other readers, the parallels are recognizable to those who have any past

experience reading biblical scripture. The parallels that I noticed each time I read *Harry Potter DH* piqued my curiosity to discover if the Bible, which Chapman ranks as the most sold book in the world at 3.9 billion copies, could be the reason behind the *Harry Potter* series' success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. How might such a connection affect modern-day readers, if at all, since these readers live in a secular culture? And why would a series that contains parallels to the Bible attract readers in a secular world where religion and the Bible are so openly criticized? To answer these questions, I will examine the connections between *Harry Potter DH* and the New Testament, and how these connections affect and prove valuable to modern-day readers living in a secular world.

Obvious parallels between the Bible and *Harry Potter DH* exist. Previous scholars have explored them to a certain extent, but they have differed on the significance of the connections. John Granger who finds parallels between the two texts and argues in favor of *Harry Potter DH's* connection to the Bible, takes a more spiritual approach to the phenomenon by arguing that readers are attracted to the *Harry Potter* series because all humans are designed to respond to stories that reflect the Bible (xvi). Author Richard Abanes has a different understanding of the *Harry Potter* series. After looking at the common themes found in the series, he concludes his book *Harry Potter and the Bible* by arguing that the series is full of harmful messages that promote occultism and moral relativism (260). The article "Christianity in Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows" by Bill McCarron clearly makes connections between the two texts, but the article does not dig any deeper than briefly stating multiple connections; McCarron never analyzes the significance of those connections. In summary, Granger understands the connection from a spiritual approach, Abanes states that the messages link back to occultism, and McCarron fails to move beyond the surface of the connection. On the other hand, I approach the connection

between the Bible and *Harry Potter DH* with a much deeper critical analysis on how the literary techniques found in both texts leads to the connection that eventually translates into why readers are attracted to the series.

In *Harry Potter DH*, J.K. Rowling borrows two direct passages from the Bible. Both are found on gravestones in Godric's Hallow, the town where Harry was born. Although Christian symbols, themes, and images are sprinkled throughout the entire series, Rowling does not explicitly place biblical passages into her text until the final book. On the significance of this borrowing Rowling states:

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 ... I think those two particular [biblical] quotations he [Harry] finds on the tombstones ... they sum up, they almost epitomize, the whole series. (Petre)

As Rowling indicates, the two passages, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matthew 6:21) and "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death," (1 Corinthians 15:26), do have great significance to the series overall and justify why exploring the connection between *Harry Potter DH* and the Bible is worthwhile, and why it might give readers insight into removing one's fear of death and learning what type of life to live to make the acceptance of death easier.

Aside from the direct quotes, the connection between *Harry Potter DH* and the Bible might at first glance appear to be a stretch, but if one compares the two texts through a generic lens, the plausibility of the connection becomes clearer. Throughout this thesis, I work with the assumption that the Bible functions as a myth. By taking the Bible as a myth, for the purpose of my analysis, I do not intend to detract from the validity of the Bible's teachings, or from its

status as a text sacred to Christians. Instead, I am more interested in the anthropological status of the Bible and in how the mythic elements of the Bible contribute to the connection between it and *Harry Potter DH*. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines *myth* as “a traditional story, typically involving supernatural beings or forces, which embodies and provides an explanation, aetiology, or justification for something such as the early history of a society, a religious belief or ritual, or a natural phenomenon” (“Myth”). The Bible fits well with this definition of myth. The Bible is a traditional story in that it has survived and been integrated into Christian North American and Western European culture since it was compiled. Further, the *OED* shows that the etymon for *myth* is the Greek term *mythos* or *μύθος*. The term *μύθος* originally meant “word” (Wharton 89). The *OED* then confirms that the term *word* is synonymous with the Greek term *logos* or *λόγος* (“Word”). *Logos* is a word commonly used to describe the Word, or the message of Christ (“Logos”). So even though many Christians today might be hesitant to call the Bible a myth because of the fictional associations this term has, taking the term back to its root and viewing it from an anthropological and sociological perspective shows that *myth* is an appropriate description for the biblical scriptures because the Bible is an account of the Word — the story of Jesus.

The Bible has another element that reveals its function as a myth — it involves supernatural beings and forces such as angels, demons, Satan, and Jesus. Multiple books in the Bible illustrate the distinction between the natural world and the supernatural power of Jesus, as well as the supernatural setting of events yet to come. The Book of Revelations in particular is full of myth-like passages that show the otherworldliness of the New Testament. Revelations 12:3 describes Satan as “a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads,” while Revelations 14:14 shows a vision of “a white cloud, and upon the cloud

*one* sat, like the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.”

Both images place supernatural beings in supernatural settings and show the otherworldly strength of these beings. These characteristics embody the essence of the definition of myth.

The last portion of the *OED*'s definition of a myth mentions that a myth provides an explanation for a religious belief. The Bible, with the Old Testament and New Testament, was written to explain how Jesus in the New Testament fulfills the Old Testament and what this means for Christianity. The Bible, though full of multiple stories, is one grand narrative with teachings that act as guidelines on how to understand the world and how to live according to the message of Christ. The ancient text has been integrated into American culture since it was compiled, and it even has a major effect on modern-day Americans. It ranks as the most sold book in the world, and according to a 2015 Pew Research study, 70.6 percent of the 35,000 Americans who participated in the study identified as Christians (“Religion Landscape Study”). This shows Christianity's presence in American culture and society, even though there are non-Christian people who do not practice the teachings of the Bible. Therefore, this traditional story that explains a religious belief fits into the category of myth because, as scholars Matthew Dickerson and David O'Hara explain, “the events of myth are seen not only to affect the rule of a particular realm, but to dramatically affect the whole history of the world” (28). The Bible offers an explanation for who rules in the supernatural world, but those teachings move beyond the supernatural realm and show how the supernatural realm affects the natural world as well. The Bible's stories have often been the frame of discussion in sectors such as media and politics. But other than the blatant discussion of religion that circulates in modern American society, the words of the Bible have also been woven into other works of art, such as literature, and, in particular, *Harry Potter DH*.

Understanding the connection between genres reveals how the literature that has evolved since the Bible has led to *Harry Potter DH* as an updated Bible story. This connection is made possible because the two texts exist on the same genre spectrum, with the Bible as myth and *Harry Potter DH* as fantasy. This spectrum is where “Tolkien associates myth, legend, and fairy tale as part of a continuous whole, which he calls the Literature of Faërie” (Dickerson & O’Hara 26). The Literature of Faërie, as J.R.R. Tolkien describes it, exists as a continuum, with myth on one end, fairy tale on the other end, and fantasy and heroic romance falling in the middle. While the Bible falls under the myth category, *Harry Potter DH* falls under the fantasy category. The etymon for the term *fantasy* provides context as to why *Harry Potter DH*’s position in the fantasy genre works and how it affects readers’ ability to find answers to their questions. The *OED* shows that the original Greek term for *fantasy* is *φαντασία*, which means “a making visible” (“Fantasy”). Thus *Harry Potter DH*’s position in the fantasy genre reveals how the book makes visible the questions that all humans have. *Harry Potter DH* can only be an update, however, if it keeps the same messages of the Bible and retells them in a new, more modern setting, which is exactly what it does. In this thesis, I will narrow in on the four themes that I find to be the most relevant to modern-day readers. The four most dominant parallels in themes are good versus evil, sacrificial love, death and the afterlife, and hope. *Harry Potter DH* takes up these four themes from the Bible and deploys them in a more recognizable setting, which ultimately attracts the modern-day reader living in a secular world because it becomes a place where the answer to their questions are made visible.

The first theme that both the Bible and *Harry Potter DH* explore is the theme of good versus evil. The concept of good versus evil of course existed long before the *Harry Potter* series and before the compilation of the Bible. Interpretations of this idea have been shown as part of

everyday rhetoric and have taken shape in multiple versions of storytelling. Over the years, books and films have shown good triumphing over evil whether in works about war, Disney characters or superheroes. But the representation of good versus evil in the Bible stands as one of the main sources, or reference points, from which other stories have borrowed their ideas from. The mythic elements of the Bible have made it an authoritative source to borrow from because "this spell — the great biblical Story — embodies ideas that have been key in informing nearly all the myth and fantasy of the West. These ideas include ... the notion that there is an invisible moral battle in which the visible world participates" (Dickerson & O'Hara 67). This invisible moral battle is initially one that individuals must battle internally. This internal battle is a battle within the soul, where a person seeks to discover which moral characteristics he or she wants to possess. After the internal battle is fought and the individual determines which side he or she stands on, he or she is then prepared for the external battle. The external battle of good versus evil between two opposing forces often unfolds as an outright war, which is the case in the Bible, which predicts the end of times when a battle will commence. Ultimately, though, the internal battle determines where one will stand if and when that time for the external battle presents itself. This literary and moral theme presented in the Bible has clearly been carried out in the *Harry Potter* series as Harry is seen early on developing a sense of right and wrong and then using that to stand at the final battle as the ultimate symbol of good.

Both the Bible and *Harry Potter DH* provide readers with characters who translate the theme of good versus evil into action, but *Harry Potter DH* specifically provides readers with new and more relatable characters whom they accept as their heroes and with evil characters whom they want to avoid ever becoming. Two figures in the Bible who stand as the ultimate representatives of good and evil are Jesus and Satan. Consistent with its parallels to the Bible,

*Harry Potter DH* also offers its own representatives of good and evil — Harry and Voldemort. Voldemort's acceptance and pursuit of evil, as well as his deceptiveness, parallel Satan, as both are "evil men and seducers [who] shall become worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived" (2 Timothy 3:13). Voldemort and Lucifer, later referred to as Satan, both had the potential to do great things with their power and intelligence. Hogwarts offered Voldemort the chance to develop his skills for the greater good, and God offered Satan the chance to be a powerful angel in heaven, but both chose to follow their evil ambitions instead. Voldemort makes himself into the evil being that he is through the creation of his own Horcruxes. To create a Horcrux, Voldemort rips apart his soul and places each piece into an object. Therefore, when his body is destroyed like the night he killed Harry's parents, he does not die because the fragments of his soul are anchored to earthly objects. The only way to sever one's own soul to create a Horcrux is to murder. Voldemort's six intended Horcruxes, and six selfishly motivated murders, show how far he is willing to go to flee death. Hermione, who stands on the side of good, discovers in *Harry Potter DH* the evilness involved in creating a Horcrux as she reads from a book that details the process: "It warns in this book how unstable you make the rest of your soul by ripping it, and that's just by making one Horcrux! Harry remembered what Dumbledore had said about Voldemort moving beyond 'usual evil'" (Rowling 103). The internal battle between good and evil does not last long for Voldemort. By ripping apart his soul in order to live a materialistic life void of love and goodness, his internal battle comes to a quick end, and eventually, so does his external battle. He has no soul to even contemplate which side to stand on. Voldemort becomes the evil that the Gospel writer Paul warns against in 2 Timothy 3:13. He embodies the characteristic of the type of man who "loved darkness rather than light, because their [men's] deeds were evil. For everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his

deeds should be reprov'd" (John 3:19-20). Voldemort willingly lives a life defined by evil acts. His decision to live this way is a clear example of how consuming evil can be, and his eventual downfall demonstrates to readers that one side is better than the other, and that the good side is the one that will win in the end.

With evil, its opposite, good, exists, and while Voldemort represents evil in all its forms, Harry represents good in all its forms. Harry's life thus inevitably parallels the life of Jesus. Although Harry is surrounded by evil, and even though the unknown Horcrux that resides in him pulls him toward the side of evil, he resists any temptation to join the Dark Side and becomes the prevailing symbol of good. His ability to choose good for himself allows him to become the beacon of good for the whole wizarding world. As scholar Emily Griesinger points out, Harry was tempted at times to join the Dark Side just like Jesus was tempted by Satan. Satan once said to Jesus, "'You could be great, you could have all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, just throw your lot in with me'" (Matthew 4:8-9). Jesus refused to play this game, and so does Harry" (469). Both set aside any selfish desires and choose a path of righteousness. They both become the bearers of good news against the forces of evil.

Harry and Jesus use powerful objects in order to reveal the power good has over evil, so aside from the parallel in the theme good versus evil between the two texts, good versus evil is also reflected in the symbol of the sword of Gryffindor and in the symbol of Horcruxes. Harry uses the sword of Gryffindor and Jesus uses the cross, and through examining the purpose behind their respective uses of these objects, it becomes apparent that the sword of Gryffindor can stand as a symbol of the cross. The sword of Gryffindor not only symbolizes the triumph of good over evil in *Harry Potter DH*, but it also parallels the triumph of good over evil that the cross has in the Bible. During the time in Harry's quest to defeat Voldemort's Horcruxes, when hope and

doubt begin to fill his mind, Harry finds the sword. Harry and Hermione set up their campsite in the Forest of Dean as they try to determine how to destroy the only Horcrux in their possession, which is the locket. In the midst of Harry's heightened frustration, the sword comes to his rescue and dispels his doubts. A patronus, which turns out to be Snape's, guides Harry toward a nearby lake. As he nears the lake, Harry notices that "the ice reflected his distorted shadow and the beam of wandlight, but deep below the thick, misted gray carapace, something else glinted. A great silver cross ..." (Rowling, *Harry Potter DH* 367). The sword of Gryffindor, at first identified by Harry as a cross, symbolizes good to Harry because it has the power to defeat the Horcruxes. The sword thus becomes the object Harry uses to defeat the Horcrux, much like the cross became the object Jesus used to defeat death.

Both the sword and the cross are physical manifestations of the internal battle and serve as the points in the plot when there is a shift from the internal battle to the external battle. Both objects are used by the two who have settled their internal battles and have accepted their fates. Harry and Jesus then move their values of *being* good to *bestowing* good to others, and the only way to do that is to defeat evil. Both the sword and the cross have the power to defeat evil. But Satan, though he understands Jesus' power to defeat him, uses any means necessary to stop Jesus. Similarly, the locket Horcrux "sensed the presence of the sword and tried to kill Harry rather than let him possess it" (Rowling, *Harry Potter DH* 373). Evidently, the Horcrux understands that the sword has the power to destroy it, which is why it tries to prevent Harry, by any means necessary, from driving the sword into the locket itself. But even though evil can sense good's power, it still refuses to concede and instead "the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us who are saved it is the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18). Voldemort sees the pursuit of love and goodness as foolish and a waste of time because he would

rather chase immortality and power and believes that he can come out victorious. But as Dumbledore reiterates to Harry in *Harry Potter DH*, Voldemort's evilness blinds him to the goodness of the world. Dumbledore tells Harry, "his [Voldemort's] knowledge remained woefully incomplete, Harry! That which Voldemort does not value, he takes no trouble to comprehend. Of house-elves and children's tales, of love, loyalty, and innocence, Voldemort knows and understands nothing" (Rowling 709). Goodness is nowhere to be found within Voldemort, and even though love almost destroys him the night he killed Harry's parents, he fails to admit its power. Therefore, his internal evilness can be easily destroyed by the sword. This foreshadows how he loses the final battle. His decision to follow evil does not compare to the power on the side of good.

The good and evil forces in the world of *Harry Potter DH* exist alongside one another, from before Harry's time and during Harry's time, but Harry provides hope that good will defeat evil and evil will be gone forever. The way that good and evil are understood in *Harry Potter DH* reveals how Rowling uses messages from the Bible to describe the presence of good and evil in the wizarding world. Rowling adopts the Christian parable of good and evil growing side by side that is described in Matthew 13:24-30 when Jesus demands that the tares and the wheat grow together until the harvest, at which time the reapers must "gather together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn" (Matthew 13:30). Although the battle between good and evil first takes place internally, it eventually leads to the external battle where one side must triumph over the other because, as the parable of the wheat shows, two opposing forces cannot exist together forever. The final defeat of evil in *Harry Potter DH* compares to the Bible's teaching of good and evil's side-by-side existence and their eventual separation. However, the final defeat of evil — the tares — differs from the final triumph of

good — the wheat. While the Book of Revelations explains what the final battle at the end of times will look like and how evil will be tossed aside and good will stand victorious, the Bible also teaches that the final battle has yet to come. For today's Christians, this means they are still fighting the internal battle and preparing for the external battle. *Harry Potter DH*, on the other hand, carries out the battle that the wizarding world has known would ultimately come. Harry, once he has conquered the internal battle, must move to the external battle. But even in the more physical battle that takes place on Hogwarts' grounds, Harry must use his internal sense of what is right and wrong and take that knowledge to the battlefield. As the Bible teaches,

We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

Wherefore, take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. (Ephesians 6:12-13)

Though *Harry Potter DH* does not explicitly state the connection with the teaching in Ephesians, this lesson applies to Harry because he draws his power more from inner strength than from physical strength. He arms himself with the goodness that both his mother and Dumbledore instilled in him in order to defeat Voldemort, the ruler of the dark world. With that power, Harry is ready for the final battle.

The imagery of the battle presented in the Book of Revelations is updated in *Harry Potter DH* as Hogwarts becomes a warzone preparing for the final battle. At the Battle of Armageddon, “the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army ... and the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse” (Revelations 19:19-21). At the Battle of Hogwarts, the armies already on Harry's side are joined by more who are willing to fight beside him. Those already

gathered outside the entrance hall “heard uproar from the distant boundary of the school as what sounded like hundreds of people came swarming over the out-of-sight walls and pelted toward the castle, uttering loud war cries. ... Then came hooves and twangs of bows, and arrows were suddenly falling amongst the Death Eaters” (Rowling 732-33). All those opposed to Voldemort and his followers joined in the battle, and thus the final battle between Harry and Voldemort commences, much like the final battle between Christ and Satan that Revelations 19:19-21 alludes will one day come. As John Granger points out, "Rowling is creating a not-very-subtle parallel universe within Harry's magical world of a battle between the armies of Christ and those of Satan" (19). Granger explains that readers root for the good side in the battle between the two because "we are designed to have spiritual experiences and to long for the sacred — and not just any hierophany but something from the side of the angels ... it's pretty clear she [Rowling] wants us rooting for the king of Heaven and earth" (20). Granger refers to all humans when he says that they are automatically drawn to stories that relate back to the story of Jesus because they are wired to receive and recognize the story of the Bible, which to him is the “Great Story,” or the master narrative. While I agree with Granger that the Bible has become a master narrative in Western Christendom from which other works of literature borrow, I approach my argument more from a literary point of view rather than as a spiritual phenomenon. To say that people are simply wired to be attracted to stories that relate to the Bible fails to provide literary evidence as to why this might be. There are literary techniques at play in *Harry Potter DH* that explain how the connection between books like *Harry Potter DH* and the Bible occurs, and why readers respond with interest, even if they are unaware of the connection or its precise origin.

While Granger argues that there is an innate longing in humans to follow Jesus’ story and to root for Jesus at the last battle against Satan, the literary parallels that exist between the

Christian master narrative and *Harry Potter DH* only work because those themes have been uprooted from the Bible and placed in other works of literature. Therefore, through the repetitive use of these themes throughout literary history, readers have developed a familiarity with them and tend to find them attractive to seek out. For the most part, though, the origins of the themes remain unknown to them if they are not part of Christian tradition. But *Harry Potter DH* goes beyond the updated representation of good versus evil. Whereas the Bible offers symbols, parables and characters of good and evil and reveals the final battle that will happen as described in the Book of Revelations, the final battle has yet to occur. *Harry Potter DH*, as a work of fantasy literature, completes the story, and the final battle between good and evil actually unfolds. Therefore, "myth and fairy tale provide the symbols that enable our imagination to make sense of the world, and to see it as meaningful" (Dickerson & O'Hara 62). The wizarding world, which struggles with the internal and external battle between good and evil and which parallels these struggles as presented in the Bible, allows for further exploration of this theme and provides readers with a fully drawn out example of good's power and definitive defeat of evil in the world. Even in a secular world, this is a belief that all hope for and can witness in the wizarding world of *Harry Potter DH*.

The beginning and end of the *Harry Potter* series reveal the second of four thematic parallels that can be found in the Bible — sacrificial love. Whereas the Bible's example goes to the extreme with the scenes of crucifixion, *Harry Potter DH* offers a less intense example that modern-day readers can more easily comprehend. The sacrifice Harry's mother, Lily, makes out of love for her son creates an example for Harry to follow that eventually results in his own sacrifice for his friends and the rest of the wizarding world. It could be argued that Rowling could have borrowed this theme from any number of works of literature since "tales of heroic

self-sacrifice of course existed before the Christian era, but few compare with the drama and intensity of the death of Jesus. It is fair to say that Jesus' willingness to go to a cross without defending himself or seeking to escape is one of the great formative motifs of Western culture" (Killinger 72). The New Testament account of Jesus' life does not provide many details on his younger years, but Jesus' death is told in searing detail. These details contain an overarching message that have been passed down in works of literature since the Bible's compilation, and that message is one of love and sacrifice. The Bible repeatedly teaches the lesson of sacrificial love, with one of the most prominent passages stating, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). The greatest honor and greatest show of love and goodness are to put others in front of oneself. Jesus espoused this message and, as the Bible tells, he entered the world and became the greatest example of it. The theme of sacrificial love in the Bible is paralleled in *Harry Potter DH*, as Harry, like Jesus, understands the far greater benefits of offering up his life for the sake of others, as opposed to living a life of selfishness. Voldemort foolishly fails to see the power that love can have, whereas, "it is love and care for the life of others that motivates Harry to go along the path to his death, or, to put it differently, he is prepared to sacrifice himself in order to avoid more people being sacrificed for him" (Wandinger 39). Both Harry and Jesus are told of the fate that awaits them, and instead of hiding from it, they embrace it. Both are filled with fear before their upcoming deaths. The night before Jesus knew he would be crucified he cried out, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death. ... O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matthew 26:38-39), and Harry, on his walk through the forest toward Voldemort and his death, explains how he "could no longer control his own trembling. ... At the same time he thought that he would not be able to go on, and knew that he must" (Rowling, *Harry Potter*

*DH* 697-98). Despite their doubts and fears, both decide that they will fulfill their destinies because they understand that their dying means that others can live, but though both books offer this message, *Harry Potter DH* is the example readers learn from. Harry's thoughts and internal monologue before his death are written in a way that is much more straightforward, modernized, and easy for readers not only to understand, but to apply to their own lives. This is especially true of the sacrificial love *Harry Potter DH* readers witness with Lily's sacrifice to save her son. A mother can extract the main message from Harry's struggle and Lily's example and apply it to times when she puts her child before herself, even though that means making sacrifices on her end. On the other hand, Jesus' moment before death is riddled with metaphor and is complicated by the one-sided dialogue with God. Therefore, through the more straightforward approach that *Harry Potter DH* offers, readers can take Harry's moment of overcoming fear and doubt and apply it to their own lives.

Sacrificial love requires a personal amount of courage, but this value is also one that can be taught. Even though both Harry and Jesus' eventual destinies are prophesized before their births, one person plays a substantial role in each of their journeys by setting an example of sacrificial love — their mothers. Lily's selfless act of defense that guides Harry on his path toward a life of sacrifice and love for others parallels Mary's selfless act when she readily agreed to be the mother of Jesus. Both instances of a mother's sacrifice show the sons that the ultimate outcome of selflessness is the gift of life for all of humanity or the rest of the wizarding world. In the end, "the fact that both Jesus and Harry lived to fulfill these destinies was a testament to their mothers' love" (Knudslie 147). Both sons were products of sacrificial love, and therefore, they fully understood the protection that was not only bestowed upon them, but that they too could bestow upon others. Lily's sacrifice set an example of what love looks like, which Harry carries

with him throughout his life. Furthermore, Lily's sacrifice enables Harry to defeat Voldemort in the end. Harry, like Jesus, understands that the only way to defeat evil once and for all is to willingly accept his own death and offer up his own life. Voldemort's weakness, and as the Bible points out, Satan's as well, is that they do not understand the power of love. The Bible reiterates the importance of placing love before all things:

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding bronze, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing. (1 Corinthians 13:1-3)

Voldemort and Satan can possess as much power as their counterparts, but even if Voldemort is a more experienced wizard than the 17-year-old Harry Potter, Voldemort lacks the greatest power of all — love. On the other hand, Harry uses the love from his mother as an example of how to love his friends and all witches and wizards, which inevitably guides him in his final selfless act. He understands that his greatest power comes from the inner strength of love and compassion for others. Harry even explains this understanding to Voldemort as the two battle one last time in *Harry Potter DH*: “‘I was ready to die to stop you from hurting these people —’ ‘But you did not!’ ‘— I meant to, and that's what did it. I've done what my mother did. They're protected from you’” (Rowling 738). Because Harry “meant to,” or in other words, intended to die, he overpowers Voldemort. Voldemort, though, who would never cease his attempts to outrun death, can not understand this, even in his final moment, and so he has no power over Harry.

Sacrificial love is reflected in the symbol of blood in both the Bible and *Harry Potter DH* because of the tangible examples of when blood saves both Harry and Jesus' life. Although the biblical teaching is difficult to grasp, the symbolic power of blood serves as a powerful explanation to Harry's ability to save the wizarding world. Blood's symbolism and connection to sacrificial love has great implications not only in *Harry Potter DH*, but also in the Bible. As the new covenant sent out to fulfill the promises of the Old Testament, Jesus willingly shed his blood for the sake of all humanity and in him "we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace" (Ephesians 1:7). Jesus' blood, shed at his sacrifice on the cross, saved his followers from dying by the chains of Satan and gave them a new life. Similarly, Harry's blood, which pulses with the love from his mother's sacrifice, not only has the power to keep Harry alive, but it also has the power to protect and save the rest of the wizarding world. Because Voldemort's life is guided by greed and selfishness, he remains blind to the power that Harry's blood contains. Therefore, Voldemort makes a mistake the night in the graveyard in *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* when he uses Harry's blood to rebuild his own body (Rowling 642). This consuming of worthy blood by an unworthy individual evokes the consumption of Jesus' body and blood in the Catholic sacrament known as the Eucharist. The consuming of Jesus' blood is only meant for those who have faith in Jesus and who accept his teachings, so "whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 11:27). Paralleling Harry's blood to Jesus' blood, Voldemort's taking of Harry's blood unworthily shows that he does not respect the significance of Harry's blood. By using the blood for selfish reasons and without pure intentions, Voldemort shows a lack of reverence toward Harry and an inability to understand the power of Harry's blood. Dumbledore explains the significance of that moment to Harry when the two

meet in King's Cross station in *Harry Potter DH*: "He took your blood believing it would strengthen him. He took into his body a tiny part of the enchantment your mother laid upon you when she died for you. His body keeps her sacrifice alive, and while that enchantment survives, so do you and so does Voldemort's one last hope for himself" (*Harry Potter DH* 710). Just as Voldemort left a piece of his evil self in Harry by unintentionally making him the seventh Horcrux, he mistakenly brings a piece of Harry's goodness inside himself. Therefore, when Voldemort strikes Harry with the killing curse, he only kills the evil piece of himself, the Horcrux, and because Harry's powerful blood also resides in Voldemort, Harry survives the killing curse. For the second time, Voldemort underestimates the power of love and blood. Voldemort's foolishness and underestimation of blood's power can also be seen in Satan's irreverence toward Jesus and Jesus' blood. Although Jesus' power over Satan is clear, Satan continues to use his deceptive ways to gather as many followers as he can. But in the end, "they overcame him [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb" (Revelations 12:11). So in the end, "Harry is saved by sacrificial death and blood just as Christians are saved by Christ's sacrifice and blood" (Granger 234). *Harry Potter DH* successfully brings forth the theme that is told with such intensity in the Bible and shows how an age-old teaching glorified in a myth can be accepted and even admired in a modern-day secular world under the disguise of a modern-day work of fantasy literature.

Both the Bible and *Harry Potter DH* teach that love and selflessness are two of the most important ways to live because "this notion of sacrifice has deep and lasting significance in myth and religion" (Ramaswamy 35). The theme of sacrificial love in the Bible has special meaning and implications for the context in which the Bible is written, but it also has had lasting effects that have been passed down and re-explored in the fantasy genre. The fantasy world of *Harry*

*Potter DH* takes up this important theme and updates it with a new hero who ultimately parallels Jesus and whom readers witness live out selfless acts. The shedding of blood, which is often viewed negatively because of its association with death, takes on a whole new meaning that reveals the honor in placing others before oneself. Because of this, *Harry Potter DH*'s readers gain a clearer insight into what it looks like to set aside their own wants and desires and instead learn that placing others first has greater significance and meaning to their own lives and to the lives of those who are positively affected by those selfless acts.

One of the results of sacrificial love that readers catch a glimpse of in *Harry Potter DH* is death and what comes after death, which reveals the third of four themes paralleled in both texts. In an interview with *NBC Dateline*'s Meredith Vieira, Rowling stated that her mother's death had a major impact on her writing of the *Harry Potter* series, so much so that death stands as one of the prevailing themes of the entire series alongside the theme of love ("Harry Potter: The Final Chapter"). The unknown element of death and the afterlife is one of the most complex spiritual questions that perplexes humans, and fantasy literature like *Harry Potter DH* offers a place to explore these questions. Much of Rowling's understanding of death and the afterlife connect back to the Bible. It has already become clear that Rowling writes that love is the greatest power of all, as does the Bible. Because of goodness, love, and sacrifice, there is no reason to fear death. Her message aligns well with the message the Bible has about the power of love even in death: "For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creation, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39). Love trumps even death, and it becomes clear that Lily's love for Harry and Harry's love for his friends emit a power so great that Harry is brought back to life after Voldemort's attempt to kill

him. Similarly, Jesus' love for all people raises them from the dead into eternal life. Rowling uses this message and retells it by portraying what happens to those who fear death and to those who accept death.

Harry and Voldemort have two different understandings of death, and Rowling makes it clear that one is more right than the other, not only by the final outcome of the book, but also through the journey leading up to the final battle. Voldemort's life, full of evil, selfishness, and greed, began with his determination to outrun death and his belief that he could and would accomplish such a feat. He takes every measure necessary to avoid death, from drinking unicorn blood to creating Horcruxes. But Voldemort's understanding of death is flawed because his "flight from death ... is toward immortality, rather than eternal life" (Johnston 78). In his arrogance, Voldemort seeks to outrun death in order to gain followers and to become the master of death. But Rowling's adoption of the Bible's understanding of death reveals that Voldemort's efforts are futile because in the end, there is only one who is the true master of death. After Harry is struck by Voldemort's killing curse and sees Dumbledore in King's Cross station, Harry asks Dumbledore to explain how he is still alive. Dumbledore reveals that Harry lives on because he, like Jesus, is the true master of death, "because the true master does not seek to run away from Death. He accepts that he must die, and understands that there are far, far worse things in the living world than dying" (Rowling, *Harry Potter DH* 720-21). Accepting death, as Harry shows in his long journey to overcome the doubts that plague him, and as Jesus shows in the Garden of Gethsemane, is not easy, and it takes enormous courage and love in order to follow through, but they both show that it can be done. Through Harry's acceptance of death, he obtains a glimpse of the afterlife by spending a brief time in the peaceful King's Cross afterlife setting.

Harry's time in the afterlife provides readers with a comforting and hopeful example of the afterlife, a concept that is unclear and confusing in a secular world. Harry finds himself in a cleaner and more peaceful King's Cross station after he is struck with the killing curse. Rowling's decision to make Harry's version of the afterlife the train station called King's Cross redirects attention to Jesus' sacrifice on the cross where "the superscription of his accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS" (Mark 15:26). Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor during Jesus' time, feared Jesus was trying to usurp Pilate's power by becoming the King of the Jews. Although Jesus never explicitly called himself the King of the Jews, this was the title Pilate ascribed to him, which was also written on the sign that hung on the cross where Jesus died. The play on words that relates back to the Bible places Harry's actions in comparison with Jesus'. Both of these authoritative figures cross over into the afterlife, but what sets Harry and Jesus apart from the rest is that both choose to leave the afterlife and return to the world, even though Harry knows he will be returning to a battle scene where evil and loss, like in the real world that Jesus returns to, still exist.

Harry is only able to return to life, however, because he did not fully die when Voldemort hit him with the killing curse. Though Harry aligns well as a Jesus figure, Harry is not a perfect representation because he is not completely good or without sin. He is flawed, and that becomes most clear at the moment of his death. After Harry is hit with the killing curse and enters King's Cross station, Dumbledore explains to Harry why he is still alive. The only part of Harry that dies is the unintended Horcrux that has resided inside of Harry since he was a baby. Therefore, Voldemort's curse only manages to kill the part of Voldemort's soul inside of Harry, and it leaves Harry's own soul undamaged. The idea of the soul containing parts echoes a teaching in 1 Corinthians 13:10, which states, "but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in

part shall be done away.” The imperfect part of Harry is expelled, while the rest of his goodness remains intact. Harry’s flaws make his character more relatable to readers. Even though he parallels Jesus in many ways, evilness still resides in him, just like the Bible teaches it resides in everyone. This teaching from Corinthians, updated in the *Harry Potter DH* setting, shows readers that even those who are considered good all the time, still contain small parts of evil. But as the Bible teaches and the scene in King’s Cross shows, the evil parts can be dispelled. By not making Harry an exact replica of Jesus, readers are able to insert themselves into Harry’s situation and understand the difference between which souls will go on and which souls will not. For those who struggle to believe whether the afterlife exists or not, Rowling’s message encourages them to live good lives to ensure that if there is an afterlife, they will be able to cross over like Harry and not be stuck in torment like Voldemort.

Rowling makes a clear distinction between those who can and cannot pass through to the splendors of the afterlife. While in King’s Cross, Harry sees the marred fragment of Voldemort’s soul writhing in pain and screaming out. Harry, with his capacity to love all things, wants to help it, but Dumbledore tells him twice that neither of them can. The living, breathing, and healthy body of Harry, in contrast to the mangled piece of Voldemort, illustrates a tough teaching of the Bible that Rowling chooses to tackle in this moment in the afterlife. The Bible teaches that people will be judged for the way they live their lives, and not everyone will enter the glories of the afterlife. Mark 8:35-37 states, “For whosoever would save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel’s, the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” This reveals the importance of valuing one’s life and preserving the soul’s goodness to cross over into heaven. This plays out in *Harry Potter DH* in the scene in

King's Cross. Harry has the ability to cross over in the afterlife because he values his soul. His sacrificial death shows that he values the life and the souls of others as well. Voldemort, on the other hand, who chooses a life of murder and self-destruction, clearly suffers in the afterlife and is unable to completely cross over to enjoy its magnificence. Harry loses his life so that others can live, therefore ensuring him a joyful existence in the afterlife where all his needs are met, from being immediately clothed the moment he needs to be to seeing without his glasses. But Voldemort tries to save his own life by choosing the path of immortality. Voldemort defies the teaching of the Bible and willingly tears apart his soul, thus setting himself up for a miserable existence in the afterlife.

*Harry Potter DH* plays out what the Bible only teaches about souls and the afterlife.

Rowling makes clear that death is not the worst part, but rather, she demonstrates what happens to the soul afterward as far more troubling. Literary scholar Andrea Stojilkov highlights the tough teaching that the Bible espouses and that *Harry Potter DH* updates for modern readers, when she states, "Rowling's message is clear: only souls which are unmarred by evildoing are able to continue their existence in the afterlife, while the ripped and burdened souls die, or exist like Voldemort's, which is a punishment worse than death" (139). Harry and Voldemort stand as clear examples to modern readers of what happens to a person after death. The questions of death and the afterlife are among the most troubling to people in a secular society, and Rowling's explanation of it in the seventh *Harry Potter* book, though aligned with the Bible, is not a comforting one to those who do not follow the values that she emphasizes are crucial to living a peaceful existence in the afterlife. Moreover, the complexity of it can seem overwhelming, but in the updated *Harry Potter DH* version of the Bible, the teaching is made clearer. Rowling specifically highlights the importance of a person's choice in deciding what type of life he or she

will lead. She makes it clear that the individual decides whether he or she will live more like Harry or like Voldemort, and she offers examples of what happens to those on either end of the spectrum. Ultimately, though, it appears that Rowling encourages her readers to live a good life full of love and selfless acts in order to ensure the ability to cross over into the afterlife.

Voldemort acts as a sort of warning to those who choose the path of evil. This can be seen in *Harry Potter DH* when Harry tries to help Voldemort back at the battle. Understanding what will become of Voldemort if he does not repent of his wrongdoings, Harry warns Voldemort, “before you try to kill me, I’d advise you to think about what you’ve done. ... Think, and try for some remorse, Riddle. ... I’ve seen what you’ll be otherwise. ... Be a man ... try ... Try for some remorse. ...” (Rowling 741). Although Voldemort disregards Harry’s advice, the message of repentance and hope still resonates for readers who live in a secular world and are trying to understand the complexities of the consequences of actions, and this moment offers them a clear example of what they can do to choose the path that Harry is on. Harry echoes Jesus’ teaching to “Repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 4:17). The Bible teaches that those who have led unvirtuous lives can repent before their deaths so that they too can enter heaven. But the scenes in *Harry Potter DH* take the Bible’s teaching of death, the afterlife, and repentance and update it in a way that readers can understand. *Harry Potter DH* is more approachable to non-Christians living in a secular society because they aren’t as resistant to that text as they are to the Bible. Rowling’s book does not openly associate with organized religion, so all previously regarded stigmas are left out of readers’ mind. Moreover, through *Harry Potter DH’s* completion of the Bible, readers witness what will happen to those who do not choose a righteous lifestyle. The question of what happens is no longer guesswork because the scene in King’s Cross and Voldemort’s final moment of pride before his death shows what

will happen. Even though Rowling adopts one of the hardest teachings to understand from the Bible, she clearly sends a message of hope by deliberately borrowing an important message from the Bible: “The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death” (1 Corinthians 15:26). Harry’s victory proves that death is destroyed when a soul enters eternal life. While Voldemort is ultimately defeated by death for choosing the evil path, Harry brings the message of hope to others when he returns from his glimpse of the afterlife. He shows that death can in fact be defeated as long as one accepts that death is inevitable and that nourishing the soul by living a good life unmarred by evil is more important.

With the final battle over and Voldemort defeated, the final thematic parallel of hope dominates the last part of *Harry Potter DH* and ultimately ends the entire series with an example of the unity and peace that the Bible promises will occur after the final battle. At the conclusion of the battle, celebrations and rejoicing erupt around the grounds of Hogwarts, and everyone focuses in on their beacon of hope — Harry. He served as the wizarding world’s hope for a peaceful world without the fear of Voldemort, so when that day finally comes, “they wanted him there with them, their leader and symbol, their savior and their guide” (Rowling 744). Although others helped in the final battle, Harry, like Jesus, was the only one with the power to defeat Voldemort. Voldemort could not be killed by anyone else except by Harry, which parallels the sole power Jesus has to defeat Satan. But whereas the Bible only promises the scene of jubilation at the conclusion of the battle where the blessed are “called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb” (Revelations 19:9), *Harry Potter DH* depicts what the great feast of celebration actually looks like:

McGonagall had replaced the House tables, but nobody was sitting according to House anymore: All were jumbled together, teachers and pupils, ghosts and parents, centaurs

and house-elves, and Firenze lay recovering in a corner, and Grawp peered in through a smashed window, and people were throwing food into his laughing mouth. (Rowling 745)

The moment in the Great Hall is a time for unity among the witches and wizards — who for so long lived in fear — to join together in celebration. The feast in the Great Hall parallels the feast Christians look forward to sharing with Jesus at the end of time, as the Bible promises. The underlying hopeful message that comes from these feasts is unity. Unity in the Bible is often depicted in the act of communion. The image of unity in *Harry Potter DH* offers modern-day readers a glimpse at how finding hope and feeling hopeful can be achieved.

While the scene in the Great Hall shows how the wizarding world comes together in celebration of the end of evil's reign, the epilogue in the seventh book offers a glimpse of living in peace and happiness with a unified wizarding world. This hope shown in the epilogue has deeper significance in the context of Tolkien's understanding of the concept of the so-called eucatastrophe and its connection to the Bible's portrayal of hope. The eucatastrophe is "the consolation of fairy-stories, the joy of the happy ending: or more correctly of the good catastrophe, the sudden joyous 'turn' ... denies universal final defeat and in so far is *evangelium*, giving a fleeting glimpse of Joy, Joy beyond the walls of the world, poignant as grief" (Tolkien 62). According to Tolkien, the ending has to be more than a mere happy ending that shows good triumphing over evil. It has to show a sort of joy that is beyond this world — a joy that hints at the new life that the Bible says will one day come. In his essay *On Fairy-Stories*, Tolkien considered the eucatastrophe to be the highest function of fairy stories, and he noticed that works of fantasy literature that pull off an eucatastrophic ending hint to the eucatastrophe that is told in the Bible (64). With the ending of the seventh *Harry Potter* book, Rowling clearly succeeds in

producing a eucatastrophe that parallels the Bible's, and the epilogue shows this connection the clearest.

Nineteen years after the Battle of Hogwarts, the cycle of the wizarding world continues on, though with an obvious absence of current fear and evil. King's Cross station is where those who were present at the battle gather, with no divide between good and evil. Even Harry and Malfoy, Harry's school enemy back in the day, acknowledge one another. That moment of truce stands as a reminder of the journey it took to get to the point that the wizarding world had long hoped for. This reveals a strong example of what the Bible mentions as a byproduct of perseverance: "By whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope" (Romans 5: 2-4). It seems appropriate that the series ends in the same place that Harry stood years before as a young boy destined for greatness. He now returns after going through moments of tribulation, patience, experiences, and hope. He represents the journey that the Bible tells Christians they must endure before they can get to the point where Harry is. As Susan Johnston points out, "the final chapter of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* envisions a return to Platform 9 3/4; we see those new generations who present a new beginning, and that appear as the peace and wholeness I have characterized as hope flowering forth in Christian unity" (84). The Christian-like unity present in the epilogue exists because the epilogue showcases two important aspects — grace and communion — that are needed to move the epilogue beyond the mere happy ending and into the eucatastrophe that makes the *Harry Potter DH* ending a parallel to the hope present in the Bible.

The ultimate defeat of evil that brings hope into the wizarding world and the after-effects of that defeat — grace and communion — give the glimpse of joy that Tolkien mentions as being close to the Bible's. The Bible teaches the importance of grace and communion, and I use these two qualities to argue that Rowling's eucatastrophe meets Tolkien's requirements and parallels the Bible's eucatastrophe. Malfoy stands as the perfect example of grace. Malfoy, who was once Harry's school enemy and a follower of Voldemort, acknowledges Harry at the train station. His nod toward Harry suggests that the two understand that they can both live in the new world that Harry created with his victorious defeat over Voldemort. Further, the theme of communion, which was present in the Great Hall after the battle, is shown again when Harry and Ginny meet Ron and Hermione at the station with their families. They are reunited and share the moment of sending their children to Hogwarts. Even Teddy Lupin, who became an orphan after his parents, Remus and Tonks, died in the Battle of Hogwarts, shares in this communion because he is considered part of the Potter family. Therefore, the ending of *Harry Potter DH* stretches beyond the mere happy ending and achieves the eucatastrophic ending that Tolkien suggests connects a piece of fantasy literature to the Bible. The elements that aid in that — unity and grace — provide readers clear-cut examples of what actions they can take in their lives now to clear a path for a joy that far surpasses their current knowledge of happiness.

Although the elements of hope in the Bible can be seen in the seventh *Harry Potter DH*, and though Rowling integrates Tolkien's idea of an eucatastrophic ending into her work of fantasy literature, the connection between the ending of the Book of Revelations and the ending of *Harry Potter DH* is not as fleshed out as it needs to be to complete the thematic parallel of hope between the two texts. Both Tolkien and Johnston fail to go into the depth of the epilogue of the Bible — the Book of Revelations — in their analysis of the eucatastrophe. The Book of

Revelations describes the second coming of Jesus at the Battle of Armageddon, where Jesus and his armies will defeat Satan and his army and live in peace for the thousand years that Satan is locked away. At the close of the thousand years, Satan will be loosed one last time and will try to deceive as many people as he can before he is banished forever. Then, Jesus will reign forever in eternity with His people. This begs the question of where the ending of *Harry Potter DH* fits into all of this. I argue that the Battle of Hogwarts parallels the Battle of Armageddon and that the epilogue parallels the peaceful thousand-year reign of Jesus on earth where the hope of the happy ending still exists. The epilogue does not represent the final expulsion of Satan and the beginning of eternity because the witches and wizards clearly do not die and enter the afterlife that Harry had a glimpse of when Voldemort unsuccessfully tried to kill him. Further, *Harry Potter DH's* epilogue clearly points to the fact that evil will come again. Ron encourages his daughter, Rosie, to out-compete Malfoy's son, Scorpius, as he tells her to "make sure you beat him in every test" (Rowling 756), and the sorting into the different houses still exists because Albus Potter asks his father, "What if I'm in Slytherin?" (758). Clearly, Slytherin still has a bad connotation to the younger generation, which may foreshadow eventual conflict. It appears that the younger kids' beginning at Hogwarts points to a time in the future when evil might come again. This shows more clearly how *Harry Potter DH* aligns with the predicted events at the end of time as taught in the Book of Revelations.

Even though there are clear indications that evil will come again, it does not take away from the hopeful ending that the epilogue offers. The Book of Revelations, though full of battles and death, offers hope, as does the end of *Harry Potter DH*. Even before the second coming of Christ, Christians understand the hopeful path that is ahead of them: "And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, and like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of mighty peals

of thunder, saying, Hallelujah! For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth” (Revelations 19:6). They know Jesus’ eternal reign is coming, and so they are hopeful. Similarly, the wizarding world is already in the midst of the final times. The Battle of Hogwarts is behind them, and they exist blissfully in the time of peace where Harry, their savior, is among them and continues to stand as their beacon of hope. And just as the Book of Revelations ends on a happy note, so too does the seventh *Harry Potter* book. Just as the pain of the wounds from Jesus’ crucifixion subsided at his death and resurrection, so too does Harry’s scar. Following Harry’s defeat over death and Voldemort, “the scar had not pained Harry for nineteen years. All was well” (Rowling 759). This peaceful moment shows what joy looks and feels like in the absence of fear.

The Bible is the master narrative from which other works of literature have borrowed, including *Harry Potter DH*. Literary devices such as themes, metaphors, and symbolism found in the Bible have been explored and reused in other works of literature, so much so that readers have developed the recognition of these themes and a longing to read more about them. But even though they recognize the themes and are attracted to stories that use them, they do not necessarily understand where they come from. This is a literary phenomenon, more so than a spiritual phenomenon, as, for example, John Granger argues. When he refers to why readers are attracted to the story of the Bible, or stories related to the Bible like *Harry Potter DH*, he often uses phrases such as it’s “in our nature,” we are “hardwired for it,” and our hearts are “designed” for it. While he believes people are designed to respond to the themes found in the Bible, I argue that people have developed a familiarity with these themes because they have been repeated over the years in multiple works of literature, and so people have developed a liking for these themes and have even tried to apply them in their own lives.

While *Harry Potter DH* borrows themes and symbols from the Bible, it also offers an updated version of the Bible's story, which is why modern-day readers who live in a secular world respond so well to Rowling's book. The themes shift from doctrine to more fun and relatable understandings that modern-day readers can apply to their daily lives. They read about the values of the characters in the wizarding world, and they witness the characters' actions, and they then want to imitate the characters' values and positive actions. Therefore, the adventures and mystery in the wizarding world draws readers in, but the content — the themes and symbols — makes them stay. In a secular world where the Bible is more openly rejected, not as many people read the ancient text to learn these themes. Instead, they turn to modern-day writing like *Harry Potter DH* to explore these complex themes. Finding biblically related themes in *Harry Potter DH* reveals that "the Gospels have moved from the Bible to alternative places that adolescents find accessible" (Apostolides & Meylahn 3). Although I would extend that even further by including all ages and not limiting it to adolescents, these biblical teachings are still reaching people today, but they are simply disguised in the world of fantasy literature. By bringing the New Testament to life in a new and interesting way, *Harry Potter DH* provides modern-day readers a story that they can turn to to explore these four themes. Non-Christians living in a secular society are less likely to turn to a text openly associated with organized religion, but they are more likely to turn to *Harry Potter DH* because it does not focus explicitly on religion but instead offers more direct answers to the questions all humans have.

Both *Harry Potter DH* and the Bible predominately take place in the natural world but also contain supernatural elements. Moreover, both fall within the same genre spectrum of the Literature of Faërie that Tolkien describes with the *Harry Potter* series as fantasy and the Bible

as myth. Because *Harry Potter DH* exists in the fantasy genre and offers a familiar setting, readers are able to explore the spiritual questions that the book's themes bring forth.

The otherworldly setting of fantasy literature has a direct impact on modern-day readers' acceptance of the themes present in *Harry Potter DH* and their ability to explore the complexities of what those themes suggest. The setting is far enough away from reality but still grounded enough in the natural world that readers feel more comfortable not only entering that new space, but also finding credibility in what is taught there. Readers are attracted to this new but not-too-far-off world. Therefore, they are "more willing to enter a secondary world and accept what happens there ... Moreover, since the secondary world serves as a mirror or metaphor for ours, things that happen in that world, including ideas the reader and characters learn, can be applied to our world" (Sammons 6). The readers see the values in Harry Potter — to be good, to love and sacrifice oneself, to not fear death, and to hope — and can apply them to the questions they have while living in today's world. The otherworldly setting also works to simplify the complex.

Other than being a less approachable text to a secular society, the Bible's complex teachings make it difficult to extract the important messages being conveyed, but with *Harry Potter DH* and its otherworldly setting, the same themes that are in the Bible are presented in a much more direct manner. Readers are placed in a familiar-looking world with relatable characters that creates a level of comfort between the text and readers. Therefore, "fantasy narratives have the ability to engage the reader's imagination by producing a safe place wherein the reader can try on other identities and play out different life scenarios (re-imagining their lives)" (Apostolides & Meylahn 4). Readers enter into the other realm, one that is familiar enough to be able to imagine, but one foreign enough that they feel removed enough away from

the realities of life that they feel confident in placing themselves in the scenarios. They get to imagine themselves as Harry, and they then strive to embody Harry's noble characteristics. That is why Harry's imperfect matchup as a Jesus figure, since he is flawed and with sin, is an important distinction to make between the two. Readers find Harry's values and goals more attainable because they witness a man who is flawed, just like them, overcome those flaws by taking practical steps to live a better life with more meaning and a more hopeful ending.

By reading *Harry Potter DH* in a fantasy setting, secular readers catch a glimpse of the teaching of the Bible. In a world that contains recognizable places but also enchantments and magical creatures, readers' imaginations become highly activated, which opens readers up more to the content and the underlying messages found in the book. Those messages, which began with the master narrative and have been told for years since then, have become more accessible to modern-day readers because of its placement in the otherworldly setting. In that setting, they finally receive the answers to the questions that every human has:

While religious discourse is alien to the postmodern age, there is still a psychological and spiritual need "if not to believe, then at least to hope," says Filmer, and this need is met in fantasy literature, which operates in the same domain and uses the same literary devices — metaphor, image, symbol — as the discourse of religion and "does so largely to the same end; the articulations of hope" (iii). (Griesinger 460)

*Harry Potter DH* readers strive to live out the values presented in the book but do so without the knowledge of where they originally came from. It goes beyond the text and becomes a world readers want to inhabit. The fantasy setting guides readers to take what they have learned and bring it back to their own world. During that time of exploration, the openness and imaginative

space of the genre provides readers with examples on how to answer their own spiritual questions in reality.

Modern-day readers are comfortable referring to *Harry Potter DH* to explore these complex themes not only because the attraction to these themes has been developed through literature's repetitive use of them, but also because the book does not openly associate with organized religion. However, it is clear through my analysis of the thematic parallels that the Gospel themes have been transferred from the Bible to *Harry Potter DH*. So even though readers are unaware of the connection, they still learn the message of the Gospel. *Harry Potter DH's* completion of the Bible, and its position in the fantasy genre provides readers the imaginative space to explore and find answers to the complex and universal questions that all humans have. Even if the Bible is not where modern-day readers learn these themes, they are still learning the values that these themes portray and that have been crucial to the development of humanity. These values are clearly important because they have survived from a book written thousands of years ago and have integrated themselves into modern fantasy literature. Therefore, for non-Christians uncommitted to reading the Bible, fantasy literature acts as the new space for them to explore what these values mean and how they can apply them to their lives.

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