

HARRY POTTER

J.K. Rowling, an English authoress has, in the last number of years turned the world upside-down, so to speak, with the production of the Harry Potter fantasy series. According to the online free encyclopedia, Wikipedia, Rowling has sold over 325 million copies of her books, and is worth over one billion dollars. Recently the seventh book in the series was announced to be released July 7th, 2007. According to the author it is to be the last book in the series she plans to write.

The exciting adventures of Harry Potter have been an attractive reality-release for fantasy readers for a number of years. It has been said by many that once you start reading one of the books, you can not put it down until you are finished! Harry Potter fans are serious about their love for the books.

The series has received negative press as well. Some, "Christian" groups and preachers have spoken out against the focus the books emphasize on the practices of witchcraft, sorcery, etc. Some have come down so strongly as to say it would be a sin for Christians to read the books because the Bible condemns witchcraft. Others have felt that such anathemas have been far too harsh, as the books are being read for entertainment purposes only and pose no threat in the minds of young people to pick up witchcraft as an alternative to Christianity.

Consider the subject of witchcraft for a moment. In Old Testament times it was a sin to practice witchcraft. Read Deuteronomy 18:9-12. There Moses said that practicing wizardry and sorcery (witchcraft) was an abomination to the Lord. So serious was the crime that the law said that if you found a sorceress (witch), you were not to let her live, Exodus 22:18. That is why the witch of Endor was so fearful when she realized it was king Saul who was seeking to speak with the dearly departed prophet Samuel through her black magic in 1 Samuel 28. The New Testament condemns it as well. Sorcery, or witchcraft as in the KJV, is described as a work of the flesh in Galatians 5:19,20.

Consider the nature of temptation. It can be said that everyone who practices witchcraft started through thinking about it by way of some sort of outside influence before they began participating in it. Any sin participated in has a stage where before doing it, thinking about it, and being tempted by it, led to its participation, cf. James 1:13-15.

However, the question that must be answered is whether reading fantasy which includes as part of its content, witches and wizzards and their antics, is the same thing as participating in witchcraft? The answer is a definite No! For clarification, consider applying such to other types of reading material. If you read a book that has a character that is a practicing alcoholic, does reading that book mean you are an alcoholic? No! In 1973, a movie was released called "The Sting." It was a movie starring Robert Redford and Paul Newman, who played as characters who coned a mob-boss out of a large amount of money. It won the Academy Award for best picture that year. It was a movie about stealing. Would we say that watching "The Sting," a movie about stealing, would make one a thief? Certainly not! Who among those old enough to remember, did not go

around trying to make their noses twitch like Samantha's? "Bewitched" was family entertainment for the masses. It was fun and light humored. Perhaps unbeknownst to most people, some may have sought to use it as a springboard toward participation in the black arts. But, by-in-large most saw it for its intended purpose of entertaining America in the 1960s. Under the same token, some may do the same through the Harry Potter series. But most simply take it for its entertaining purposes, like any other fantasy.

Before dismissing the concern about reading and focusing on witchcraft, it should be at least considered that fantasy is fantasy, and should be kept in that arena. It is meant to be a fun escape from reality. As with any other fantasy novel or movie, parents should take the opportunity to explain that Harry Potter is make-believe, and not take for granted that their children understand it to be so. Watching the movies or reading the books can be a wonderful opportunity to talk about the fact that some people do delve into the world of black magic, and witchcraft, and participation in such is contrary to the will of God.

—Scott