

Ok, so recently, on an Internet newsgroup I'm on, there was a discussion about the "Banned Books Week" done by the American Library Association. Basically, this is a little program done by the ALA to help bring about awareness of some of the books people are trying to ban and to promote freedom and stop censorship and all that. Unsurprisingly, to any of us who even glance at the news every so often, the Harry Potter books are at the very tip top of the list of books some people want banned. This particular little controversy piqued my interest, as I am both a Christian and a Harry Potter fan, so I have been doing some digging around and reading up on some of the feelings behind this attempt to ban the books.

Why do all these Christians have such an issue with Harry Potter? I mean, if you read *The Lord of the Rings* (LoTR), or *The Chronicles of Narnia* (CoN) you find all sorts of magic and stuff in them too right? So, why this huge fuss? Many Christians believe that both LoTR and the CoN are written from Christian perspectives, with deeper meanings that can be found in between the words on the paper. Now, the CoN is in a class by itself, because C.S. Lewis DID write it with a bunch of Christian themes and messages hidden in its pages. It is allegory of beautiful proportions. However, though Tolkien was a Christian, there is no hidden message in the LoTR nor did he write it to make a point or teach a lesson. Tolkien himself writes, in the foreword to *The Fellowship of the Ring*, "*As for any inner meaning or 'message,' it has in the intention of the author none. It is neither allegorical nor topical*" (Tolkien x). He wrote it because he had developed a language - Elvish - and that language demanded a story. While it is

true that the use of magic is very limited in LoTR and that there is the implication of what we will call a "religious" view of things in the story, it is NOT a "Christian" story. It is a fictional story of courage and loss, of friendship, of the ultimate battle between good and evil. In much the same way that Harry Potter is also a story based on those themes.

Now the difference, for these Christians, is that HP is very based on the "New Age" kind of magic. The problem, as they see it, is this: Christians are not to practice divination, or "witchcraft", and HP is rife with these sorts of themes. Richard Abanes, author of "Harry Potter and the Bible: The Menace Behind the Magick," writes, *"Although the story is fictional, Harry Potter has real-world occult parallels"* ([The Apologetics Index](#)). And, Focus on the Family writes, *"[In Harry Potter], magical power is gained through inheritance and learning. It is not granted by a higher authority, because there is no Higher Authority—at least none higher than Harry's mentor, Albus Dumbledore, and the evil Lord Voldemort. The two are equal, antagonistic and unaccountable to a higher authority"* ([The Apologetics Index](#)). This is then is the problem: the Harry Potter novels introduce powers, but do not acknowledge God who, according to the Christian mindset, is the only "true" power. However, I find myself asking, what about Superman or Spiderman? Did they not also have incredible powers, without any mention of some form of higher authority? So, then why are they to not banned, belittled, and argued about?

I do see their point in a way. It is true, that HP uses magic and does not come from a belief in "the one true God." As a Christian, I can understand why

some people might believe that to read the HP books, or to let their children read them, would seem to be participation in a form of divination. However, I find I cannot agree with their analysis of the HP books. In my opinion, the HP books are fantasy, just like the Spiderman and Superman comics and the LotR novels. They are just fun stories about a young boy who, through courage, humility, love, and friendship, is able to overcome giant obstacles. That to mean is the main point that Christians miss by getting caught up in the magic. The magic is a side part of the book; the travel of Harry Potter from child to adult is the real story. I believe that this is one of those areas of freedoms that Christians are given.

Here's where it becomes a problem however. Some Christians don't simply want to not allow their children to read HP, they want to ban the book for EVERYBODY. They decide that because they believe it to be wrong, it is therefore wrong for everyone. See, but here's the thing: The way a Christian is called to live is different than the world, but, we are NOT, I repeat NOT, called to try and make a non-believing world live as we do! We are called to make disciples, to introduce people to Jesus, to show them BY THE WAY WE LIVE, the love God has for mankind. But, we cannot expect those that do not believe as we do to understand the way we live, or the lifestyle we are called to lead. In fact, the Bible tells us they won't understand. It is "foolishness" to the world. Why in the world would they abide by something that is "foolishness" to them?

Why then...WHY, do Christians continually try to force the rules they live by onto non-believers? You don't like the HP books, ok. I respect that, and so do most of the non-believers. They make think you're weird for not reading them, they may not understand your reasons, but they are not going to start up controversies over the fact that you choose not to read those books. So, why is it these Christians have decided that an unbelieving world has to, or is even GOING TO, follow the same path that Christians do? This is not what we are called to do as Christians. Jesus did not, as He ascended back into heaven, say to the disciples, "Go into all the world, and make them live by the rules I have given to you." Nor does the New Testament spend a lot of time teaching how Christians are to govern the non-believing world. Quite the contrary, the Scriptures teach how we can find Christ, who He was and what He did; how to live for Christ and follow the will of God; and how to run the CHURCH in a non-believing world. Reaching the world for Christ will not be done by people attempting to shove the "rules for Christian living" down the throats of those who do not believe in Christ!

One of the people on my newsgroup, a non-Christian, asked the question, "I wonder, if Jesus were here today, would he ban these books, or would he stand against the banning?" I do not believe he would do either. He would not ban the books, because that is not the point of why he came here. And, truthfully, it is a fruitless attempt anyway. No, I think what Jesus would do is try to reach the lost. I think he would love people, go to where they lived, attempt to help them, comfort them, gently teach them. In fact, if you read the New

Testament, the only people Jesus really gets angry and "debates" with is not the "sinners", but with the church leaders of the time. How sad is it that many of today's church leaders and members have become the Pharisees?