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### Potter's Villains and Christianity's Heroes

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It is often debated whether great literature has any meaning, a central quest, an overarching and passionate search for truth at its centre or not. If we consider the literature till the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century then we can say that there was meaning in literature but much of what is written ever since the First World War, is without any central goal or meaning. The next biggest question is: how does a great author reveal meaning in his or her work? Does he make his characters mouthpieces of his vision, as Jane Austen did or he lets the symbols speak.

J. K. Rowling, the author of the famous Harry Potter series seems to be the author who reveals meanings into her works by employing potent symbols. One of her central theme is the opposition of organized Prophetic Monotheism and this is why she has symbolized her novels to caricature her villains on the model of the heroes of Prophetic Monotheism.

Before Christianity there had been prophets. Although a few like Zoroaster<sup>3</sup> and Akhenaton<sup>4</sup> had shown prophetic characteristics before Moses, Judaism was the first organized religion with a revealed book. Jews had a predilection for the prophets – messengers of the God. But they had not limited the number of prophets. According to them, prophets descend on earth from time to time, in order to preach the Word of God.

The innovation of Christianity was the concept of the Last Savior. The basic premise of Christianity is based on the concept of original sin. Man is doomed because of the ancestral crime committed by the mythical Adam and Eve:

*“By his sin Adam, as the first man, lost the original holiness and justice he had received from God, not only for himself but for all humans. Adam and Eve transmitted to their descendants human nature wounded by their own first sin and hence deprived of original holiness and justice; this deprivation is called "original sin". As a result of original sin, human nature is weakened in its powers, subject to ignorance, suffering and the domination of death, and inclined to sin (this inclination is called 'concupiscence').”<sup>5</sup>*

The theory is: since man has been corrupted due to the original sin, he has to atone for this ancestral crime. This someone else is none other than the Son of God, Jesus Christ.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Hoffman, Joseph. *The Origins of Christianity*. New York: Prometheus Books. 1985.

<sup>4</sup> Reeves, Nicholas. *Akhenaten: Egypt's False Prophet*. New York: Thames and Hudson. 2005.

<sup>5</sup> The Vatican Archive. *Adam and the Original Sin*. Volume 416-418. 12 August 2011.  
<[http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/\\_P1C.HTM](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_P1C.HTM)>

<sup>6</sup> Goel, Sita Ram. *Jesus Christ: An Artifice for Aggression*. New Delhi: Voice of India. 2001.

There was a problem with this fabulous theory of Sin, Sacrifice and Atonement. Even after Jesus atoned for the original sin with his self-sacrifice at the cross, sin still remained in the world. It could mean only two things: either the sin in the world was not a consequence of the original sin, as told by the Bible. In this case, the Bible would be proved wrong and the original sin theory would collapse and along with it the necessity of Jesus Christ and subsequently Christianity itself. The Church could not let this happen.

The other possibility was: though there was Original Sin, Jesus Christ was unable to atone for it. This would again prove the uselessness of both Jesus and Christianity. The Church could not let this happen either.

The Church theologians found a marvelous and equally fabulous solution for this problem. It was said that Jesus did not only atone for the sins of the past, but also of the future. All those born after the Atonement, would also be redeemed of their sins, but only if they believe in Christ. In other words, people could continue to commit sin and every kind of crime. They would be redeemed if they believe in Christ.

From this point on in history, the entire concept of sin and remorse was altered. Before the advent of Christianity, man was judged on the basis of his actions. Christianity started judging on the basis of belief. Hence, a man who did good deeds all his life and did not believe in Christ would still be evil and burn in hell forever. On the other hand, a person who committed all sorts of crimes in his life and believed in Christ would be in heaven. His sins would be forgiven, as his belief in Christ would wash away his crimes.<sup>7</sup>

Action was rendered secondary and inconsequential. Belief became primary. Since actions happen in the real world and belief is entirely a concern of the mind, Christianity became increasingly divorced from facts, reason and logic. This gave birth to the schism between science and religion in the western world.<sup>8</sup>

There was another clause in this theory of Atonement for posterity. According to the Jewish tradition, prophets would always come from time to time, in order to preach the Word of God. If a new prophet could come, he could also atone for his contemporaries. This would look vastly more feasible than the fabulous claim of Christianity that Jesus atoned for those who would be born after him.

Hence it was declared that Jesus was the last Prophet; anyone claiming to be a prophet after Christ would be an imposter. This was the seal of prophecy. Jesus was declared the Last Prophet, the Last Savior. No one after him could claim to save humanity. Jesus got eternal copyright on the right for Atonement.

In Harry Potter's world we see that no savior comes from outside. Everyone has to make decisions for himself, without any help from outside; everyone has to find his own way.

<sup>7</sup> Goel, Sita Ram. *History of Hindu Christian Encounters (AD 304 – 1996)*. New Delhi: Voice of India. 1996.

<sup>8</sup> Dawkins, Richard. *The God Delusion*. London: Black Swan. 2007.

Rowling opposes forceful authority. Dubbing Dumbledore as gay is just another way of opposing authoritarianism. The Leaky Cauldron webmaster Melissa Anneli says:

*“Jo Rowling calling any Harry Potter character gay would make wonderful strides in tolerance toward homosexuality. By dubbing someone so respected, so talented and so kind, as someone who just happens to be also homosexual, she’s reinforcing the idea that a person’s gayness is not something of which they should be ashamed.”<sup>9</sup>*

It is natural that she opposes the fabulous claims of Christianity. This brings us to the Daily Prophet and J K Rowling. The Daily Prophet is the name of the most famous newspaper of the wizarding world. It is first mentioned in the first book at the King’s Cross. We find Hagrid reading the newspaper, while Harry is trying to ask him many questions. Later on, the news of Gringotts break-in is published in the Daily Prophet and Hogwarts students read it eagerly. In *Chamber of Secrets*, Harry reads in the Daily Prophet that Arthur Weasley has been fined for bewitching an old car, Ford Anglia. The pictures in newspaper are live! In these pictures people actually move and wave at the readers.

In *Prisoner of Azkaban*, we read the news of the break out of Sirius Black from Azkaban. In *Goblet of Fire*, the Daily Prophet reports about the incidents happening at the Quidditch World Cup. It plays a very important part in this book. The irritating and shamelessly resourceful reporter Rita Skeeter is introduced in this book. She distorts every piece of news in order to make it more interesting and scandalous. In the fifth book too, the Daily Prophet has a great role. Rita Skeeter keeps troubling Harry about the rise of Voldemort and finally Hermione gets Rita to take an interview of Harry in which tells the world the truth about Voldemort.

In the sixth book, The Daily Prophet spreads rumors about Harry’s adventures at the Department of Mysteries at the end of the fifth book. It makes a lot of surmises, many of them correct. In the last book, the Daily Prophet reveals the history of Dumbledore, albeit in a much distorted way.

In short, The Daily Prophet is just like an ordinary newspaper: serving sensational news to eager and gullible readers about everything. The only difference is that its pictures move, just like videos!

The question arises: why would Rowling use the word Prophet for something so trivial? The fact that she does, shows us that her view of prophets is not Biblical. She does not think of a prophet as someone who discusses the word of God and deeply religious matters. The prophet in her view can be concerned with trivial matters of daily routines. This is in keeping with the view of Michael Baigent, who opposes the orthodox interpretation of the Bible and its teachings.<sup>10</sup>

In the Judeo-Christian worldview, divinities are not involved in the daily trivialities of human beings. They are only interested in rewarding and punishing belief. On the other hand, paganism does not hold such a view. In many pagan religions there are many deities of nature. Some are

<sup>9</sup> Didlus, Avery. *The Music of Opposition which Rowling Faced*. 22 November 2010. <<http://today.msnbc.msn.com/id/21407911>>

<sup>10</sup> Baigent, Michael, Leigh, Richard and Lincoln, Henry. *The Messianic Legacy*. New York: Delta. 2003.

concerned with higher spiritual concerns of human beings, while others take care of their daily problems. Roman paganism had many such local deities.<sup>11</sup>

The way *The Daily Prophet* concerns itself with the lives of ordinary wizards, brings it much nearer to the pagan understanding than the Christian one.

Even more important is the adjective used with the word, 'prophet'. As opposed to the 'Last Savior' of Christianity, the Prophet in Rowling's wizarding world is Daily Prophet! Let alone last, the prophet in the wizarding world of Harry Potter is so regular that his news is delivered every morning in the Great Hall of Hogwarts, at the breakfast table of every wizarding family. This is so radical a break from the Christian fundamentalist opinion of Prophetism that the reader cannot help but be amused at the mockery of the very concept.

The very name of the most famous newspaper in the wizarding world, *The Daily Prophet* of Harry Potter shows us that this world is aligned more along the lines of the pagan ethics than the Christian worldview.



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<sup>11</sup> Jones, Prudence and Pennick, Nigel. *A History of Pagan Europe*. New York: Routledge. 1997.