

GOD, C. S. LEWIS, AND J. K. ROWLING?:
CHRISTIAN SYMBOLISM IN HARRY POTTER
AND THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA

A Report of a Senior Study
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ABSTRACT

C. S. Lewis has placed much intentional, and quite obvious, symbolism in his series of children's books, *The Chronicles of Narnia*. There is another author that also has written a series of children's books that may be interpreted in a like manner—J. K. Rowling is that author and her series is *Harry Potter*. *Harry Potter* and its author have received a great deal of criticism from much of the Christian community. However, there are, in fact, many elements her works that may be interpreted under a Christian lens, and these works are in many respects, very similar to Lewis' *Narnia*. In each series, there are symbols of agapē love, a good representation of Christ figures, and symbols of redemption. These symbols and the explication of such are the focus of this study.

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INTRODUCTION

“Do you think I am trying to weave a spell? Perhaps I am; but remember your fairy tales. Spells are used for breaking enchantments as well as inducing them. And you and I have need of the strongest spell that can be found to wake us from the evil enchantment of worldliness which has been laid upon us for nearly a hundred years.”

*- C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory: and Other Addresses*, 31.*

It is common knowledge that C. S. Lewis is a Christian and much, if not all, of his writing is tied to Christianity or theology in some form or manner. A common reaction to C. S. Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia* is one of a Christian nature. Indeed, in the article, “In Defense of C. S. Lewis,” Gregg Easterbrook says,

Lewis, a prolific writer of Christian commentary, enfolded religious themes into the stories, allowing children to read them as adventure yarns and adults to appreciate the symbolism. In one book Aslan dies and is resurrected; in another he appears as a lamb and serves the children roast fish, the meal Jesus requested after the resurrection.

Lewis is indeed quite intentional in his use of symbolism in *Narnia*. What is perhaps not as commonly known, however, is that the same type of symbolism is used in a similar book series. This series is the popular *Harry Potter* novels by J. K. Rowling.

This claim might seem startling, considering the reaction among many Christians to the *Harry Potter* novels has been almost anything but positive. From the books often topping the banned books list, to many book burnings, many Christians are completely opposed to *Harry Potter* and its author. Despite all of this, however, Rowling is insistent that her novels present no threat to Christianity, and many find the novels useful in discussing matters of faith. Michael Nelson writes in his article, “Fantasia: The Gospel According to C. S. Lewis,”

She's a member of the Church of Scotland and, whenever she's asked, says, ‘I believe in God, not magic.’ In fact, Rowling initially was afraid that if people were aware of her Christian faith, she would give away too much of what's coming in the series. ‘If I talk too freely about that,’ she told a Canadian reporter, ‘I think the intelligent reader—

whether ten [years old] or sixty—will be able to guess what is coming in the books.

Nelson also points out that Rowling's *Harry Potter* books bear striking similarities in Christian themes to Lewis' *Narnia*. He notes that both series bear themes of, "...courage, loyalty, friendship, compassion, forgiveness, persistence, and self-sacrifice with a compellingness that puts William Bennett's *Book of Virtues* to shame." These themes are present and quite explicit in both series of books. This being said, one may question what content in *Harry Potter* could compare to *Narnia*. J. K. Rowling, despite all the negative feedback she has received from the Christian community, has also been heralded as a writer whose work is akin to that of the Inklings, J. R. R. Tolkien, and C. S. Lewis. Alan Jacobs points out in his article, "Harry Potter's Magic," "Joanne Rowling has expressed her love for the Narnia Books...but as a literary artist she bears far greater resemblance to Tolkien." There are many elements in Rowling's novels from which one could derive a Christian theme. Identifying and explaining some of these themes is the object and goal of this thesis.

In *Harry Potter*, one of the foremost themes is love, in the sense of sacrifice, familial ties, and friendship. The reader sees this in the loving self-sacrifice of Harry Potter's parents for an infant Harry; Harry, Ron, and Hermione (The Trio) bear much love for each other and display this in their actions towards one another; Harry shows great love for his Godfather, Sirius Black, and Sirius returns this love in many ways, including self-sacrifice; and this similar love can be seen in Harry's love for his teacher and friend, Albus Dumbledore, as well as Dumbledore for Harry. Similarly in *Narnia*, we can see this same type of love in the Pevensie children for each other, and foremost, in Aslan's love for the children and his creation, the world of Narnia.

As *Narnia* has the center Christ figure of Aslan, likewise, there are many Christ figures in *Harry Potter*. This differs in only one factor: *Narnia* is much more of an allegorical representation of Christianity with only one true Christ figure, whereas *Harry Potter* is more symbolic, featuring many Christ figures. Some of the Christ figures in *Harry Potter* are Harry's parents, Lily and James Potter; Albus Dumbledore; and in many respects, Harry Potter himself is a type of Christ figure.

One of the other main themes in both *Harry Potter* and *Narnia* is one of redemption. In both series, the reader finds many of the characters being redeemed or in need of redemption. In the *Harry Potter* series, at the end of every book Harry and his comrades are redeemed, sparing *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, where Harry and Hermione redeem Sirius Black from execution. This theme of "setting the captive free" can indeed be found Biblically (think Barabbas, who in the Gospels was set free instead of Jesus). Likewise, in *Narnia*, there are multiple symbols of redemption. Edmund in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, Eustace in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, Prince Rilian in *The Silver Chair*, and even Digory Kirke's deathly ill

mother in *The Magician's Nephew*, all point to some sort of redemptive theme, echoing the Biblical theme of redemption. These are but a few symbols of redemption found in each series.

In spite of this, however, much of the Christian public's reaction to Rowling's *Harry Potter* has been remarkably negative. From book banning to book burnings, Harry has caused quite the uproar among many Believers. The Greek Orthodox Church even published a pamphlet listing *Harry Potter* and his creator as champions of the occult, titling the pamphlet, "Would You Like to Initiate Your Children to Satanism?" Despite all of this, however, there are many who share the opinion that *Harry Potter* offers a symbolic look at Christianity similar to that of Lewis' *Narnia*. However, there are many differing opinions within this group. Present are those who believe that *Harry* is symbolic, but that the symbolism found within is likely not intentional. William Bates in the article, "Magic, Christianity, and Harry Potter," has found nothing to cause him to believe that *Harry Potter* is an occultist work. He says when comparing *Narnia* to *Potter*, "However, it would be fallacious to argue that Narnian Magic is acceptable because its author was a committed Christian whereas Hogwarts' magic should be censured because no such claim is made by J. K. Rowling" (23). The point Bates makes here is well taken, and is perhaps hitting at the root of the negative reaction given by much of the Christian community. Similarly, Dr. Francis Bridger, Principal of Trinity Theological College, minister in the Anglican Church, and author of *A Charmed Life: the Spirituality of Potterworld*, has no opinion on whether or not Rowling's works are intentional. Bridger pleads ignorance in this respect; he says, "Joanne Rowling may perhaps be none too pleased by this analogy—I have no idea whether she would consider herself a Christian or not..." (144). Like Bridger, many Christians simply do not know and do not dare to speculate the possibility that Rowling's works have the potential for Christian discussion.

Conversely, also passionately involved in this discussion are those who find much symbolism in *Harry Potter* and believe it to be intentional. At the helm of this group is John Granger, an author, speaker, and college professor. Granger is known as the "Harry Potter Professor" and teaches classes on Harry via his website, HogwartsProfessor.com, on-line at Barnes & Noble University, and at Peninsula College in Port Townsend, Washington. Granger has spilled much ink on the topic of *Harry Potter*, having written two books on the subject (*The Hidden Key to Harry Potter* and *Looking for God in Harry Potter*) and edited a third book to be released in the near future, entitled *Who Killed Albus Dumbledore? (and Is He Even Dead?)*. He bases his belief about Rowling's intentions around a quote given by Michael Nelson (as mentioned previously in this introduction). Commenting further on this quote, Granger says, "I do not know the details of Rowling's religious confession besides what is reported in our Muggle media, namely, that she is a member of the Church

of Scotland and that she says her faith is key to understanding the books” (182). In agreement with Granger is Dr. Carrie Birmingham, Assistant Professor of Teacher Education at Pepperdine University. Remarking on the Hogwarts motto of, “*Draco dormiens numquam titillandus*,” (which is Latin for “Never tickle a sleeping dragon”), she says,

It would be as if the motto of Hogwarts were also Rowling’s motto. In writing a Christian symbolist work disguised as an attractive adventure set in a fantasy world of magic, Rowling sneaks past the watchful dragons, careful to avoid tickling them into wakefulness. Furthermore, in disguising Harry Potter as a series about witches and wizards, Rowling has lulled the dragons into deeper slumber, for a story which raises so many Christian hackles would appear to be a most unlikely venue for Christian teaching. (Birmingham)

This being said, it can be determined that the study of Christian symbolism in Rowling’s works is not simply an idea knocking about in one person’s head. Rowling’s novels are indeed replete with much Christian symbolism. John Granger points out, “There is no proof that Rowling is deliberately writing Christian literature, but the pervasive pattern of Christian symbolism is strong enough to support the claim that Harry Potter is Christian symbolist literature” (qtd. in Birmingham). Many are participating in this conversation; comparing Rowling’s works with a tested work of Christian literature, namely Lewis’ *Chronicles of Narnia*, will further prove their Christian nature. Studying these works in depth may prove useful for those who are interested in learning about more about *Harry Potter* before reading it themselves, or allowing their children to read the books. (It might also be helpful for readers to know that this author finds *Harry Potter* and *Narnia* both to be extremely edifying. Particularly considering that the author of this study is a former *Harry Potter* skeptic.)

The three symbols of love (specifically of *agapē* love as described in the Bible), Christ figures, and redemption can indeed be found in both *Harry Potter* and *Narnia*. The focus of this study will be on these three symbols, as they are portrayed in each series and in the Bible, and on the conclusions that can be drawn from them. The discussion brought about by *Harry Potter* and *Narnia* has been longstanding, and this thesis will only serve to further more discussion.

CHAPTER I

WHAT'S AGAPĒ LOVE GOT TO DO WITH IT?: AGAPĒ LOVE AS PORTRAYED IN HARRY POTTER AND THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA

“...It contains a force that is at once more wonderful and more terrible than death, than human intelligence, than forces of nature. It is also, perhaps, the most mysterious of the many subjects for study that reside there. It is the power held within that room that you possess in such quantities and which Voldemort has not at all. ...It was your heart that saved you.”

– Albus Dumbledore, Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix, 843-44

Albus Dumbledore's words to Harry Potter reflect a main theme found in each book of the *Harry Potter* series: love, be it in friendships, parental relationships, or other human connections. The love Harry demonstrates for his friends and parental figures throughout the series plays a central role in much of the action in the novels, as does their reciprocating love for him. The way this love is demonstrated is remarkably similar to the Christian tenet of agapē love. A concept integral to the Christian faith, agapē love is perhaps the basis for all Christianity. Without the agapē love of God, there would have been no Christ. Accordingly, John 3:16 says, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” ([Bible Gateway](#)). The Greek word for “loved” used in that scripture is “agapaō,” meaning, “to love; in the NT [New Testament] usually the active love of God for his Son and his people, and the active love his people are to have for God, each other, and even enemies” (Strong 1587). “Agapaō” is related to the Greek word “agapē,” which has the same meaning as “agapaō” (Strong 1587). This being said, it may be determined that in principle, agapē love is perhaps foundational to all Christianity. Therefore, the study of agapē love as described symbolically in a novel or novels, be it in a manner paralleling God or Christ's love for Christians or the love Christians are to have for others, is integral and important to understand and discuss in the context of Christian literature. On this topic as found within *Harry Potter*, John Granger says,

Rowling tells us (through Dumbledore) that what is worse than an absence of life

is an absence of love—and that love trumps death just as light overcomes darkness.... Love is behind the door, love is the power that Voldemort cannot understand or endure, and it is love, the sacrificial love that saves Harry, which permeates Harry's heart and gives him a reflected part of its power. (67-68)

This being said, it is simple to see that the power of love is indeed a main theme throughout not just *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, but also in the other *Harry Potter* novels as well. Furthermore, in *Narnia*, it is simple to see the multiple symbols of agapē love. On the symbolism in his own works, C. S. Lewis says,

The waking world is judged more real because it can thus contain the dreaming worlds; the dreaming world is judged less real because it cannot contain the waking one. For the same reason I am certain that in passing from the scientific point of view to the theological I have passed from dream to waking.... I believe in Christianity as I believe the sun has risen not only because I see it but because by it I see everything else. (qtd. in Como 137)

C. S. Lewis believes that his reason for writing symbolism is to explain the real world by the “dreaming world.” As Aslan says to Lucy in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, “This was the very reason why you were brought to Narnia, that by knowing me here for little, you may know me better there” (Lewis Dawn Treader 541). Understanding the symbolism found in Lewis' works aids in understanding agapē love and other Christian tenets elsewhere. Identifying how Lewis understands the symbolism in his own works allows the reader to better understand that symbolism as well.

The first example of agapē love the reader finds in *Harry Potter* is in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* with the sacrificial death of Harry's parents, Lily and James Potter. This event is crucially important and plays a central role throughout the entire series. When Voldemort discovers where the Potters are hiding in Godric's Hollow, he goes to murder them and their infant son. (The reader discovers why Voldemort truly goes after the Potters in the later books). To protect their son, James Potter faces Voldemort head-on, while Lily Potter takes baby Harry to hide him. Voldemort kills James and then goes after Lily. Voldemort says in regards to Harry's parents, “...Yes, boy, your parents were brave.... I killed your father first, and he put up a courageous fight...but your mother needn't have died...she was trying to protect you....” (Rowling Sorcerer's Stone 294). This shows the true agapē love of Harry's parents. Voldemort might not have killed Lily had she chosen to step aside and let him have Harry, but she chose to die in Harry's stead. Their actions echo Jesus' words to his disciples in John 15:13, “Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends” (Bible

Gateway). The word used for love in that verse is indeed, agapē, the self-sacrificing love of God or Christ for his people (Strong 1587). Dumbledore explains the significance of Lily's sacrifice at the end of *Sorcerer's Stone*. He says,

Your mother died to save you. If there is one thing Voldemort cannot understand, it is love. He didn't realize that love as powerful as your mother's for you leaves its own mark. Not a scar, no visible sign...to have been loved so deeply, even though the person who loved us is gone, will give us some protection forever.

(Rowling *Sorcerer's Stone* 299)

This example of agapē love perfectly parallels Christ's love for his people. The agapē love of the Potters towards their son is an example of Christ's love for his people, the Church (referring to the body of believers, not a particular denomination or building); there are also many examples paralleling between the agapē love of God and the agapē love of Christians for Christians found in the *Harry Potter* novels. One of the most significant examples is the central figure of *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, Sirius Black.

Sirius Black has been accused of being Voldemort's main supporter and killing no less than "thirteen people with a single curse" (Rowling *Prisoner of Azkaban* 38). He has now escaped Azkaban to go after what is believed to be the only thing standing between Voldemort and his resurrection—Harry Potter. As the book progresses, the reader discovers that Sirius is not the evil servant of the Dark Lord he appears to be. He is, in fact, Harry's Godfather and not a servant of Voldemort. He escapes prison to watch over Harry and protect him from the real culprits after him, Peter Pettigrew (Pettigrew is an animagus, who masquerades as Scabbers, Ron's pet rat) and, of course, Voldemort himself. This willingness to place oneself in harm's way to protect another is an excellent example of agapē love. Kristin Kay Johnston, in her article "Christian Theology as Depicted in *The Lord of the Rings* and the *Harry Potter* Books," describes this as an "act of self-sacrifice for a higher good and for others" (6). Sirius' willingness to risk his own life to protect Harry is an act of agapē love similar to that of Harry's parents, much like a father figure or Christ. In *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, for example, Sirius hides out among the outskirts of Hogsmeade, simply so he can be nearby if something were to happen to Harry. Commenting on his behavior, Ron says, "'Poor old Snuffles,' said Ron, breathing deeply. 'He must really like you, Harry.... Imagine having to live off rats'" (Rowling *Goblet of Fire* 534). Sirius loves Harry as if he is his own son, and likely would even if he were not his godson. Sirius' love for Harry is similar to that of Paul for his younger brothers in Christ, particularly Timothy. In 1 Corinthians 4:17, King James Version (KJV), Paul calls Timothy his "beloved son" (Bible Gateway). The Strong's Concordance defines the Greek word for "beloved,"

agapētos, as, “dearly loved one; the object of a special affection and of a special relationship, as with Jesus the beloved of the Father” (Strong 1587). This word is also related to agapē. Taking this into consideration, it can be determined that Harry is Sirius’ “beloved son,” despite the fact that Harry is not his biological child.

Similarly, Harry loves Sirius as a father figure. When Harry is plagued with scar pains after a terrible nightmare about Voldemort at the beginning of *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, he wonders to whom he could ask what it could mean; he says,

What he really wanted (and it felt almost shameful to admit it to himself) was someone like—someone like a *parent*: an adult wizard whose advice he could ask without feeling stupid, someone who cared about him, who had had experience with Dark Magic.... And then the solution came to him. It was so simple, and so obvious, that he couldn’t believe it had taken so long—*Sirius*. (Rowling *Goblet of Fire* 22)

This shows Harry’s viewing of Sirius as a father figure. In addition, in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, at the death of Sirius, Harry laments over him as if he were his own father. Harry wants to numb the pain of Sirius’ death by not acknowledging its occurrence; Dumbledore disagrees with Harry’s wishes: “You have now lost your mother, your father, and the closest thing to a parent you have ever known” (Rowling *Order of the Phoenix* 824). This loss cuts Harry to the core—it is as if he has lost his parents all over again. Here again, we witness Sirius going into the line of fire to save Harry, but also we see Harry go into the line of fire to save what he thinks is an endangered Sirius. Judging from this example the reader may say this: while Sirius’ love for Harry may be understood as agapē love between a parent and child, Harry’s love for Sirius is also an example of agapē love between Believers.

Perhaps the most prevalent example of agapē love in *Harry Potter* is found in the friendship of Harry Potter, Ron Weasley, and Hermione Granger (dubbed simply as the “Trio” by the *Harry Potter* fan base, and referred to as such in the rest of this paper). The Trio’s actions offer many examples of agapē love through out the novels. However, the three were not always friends; in fact, Ron and Harry found Hermione to be rather annoying at the beginning of *Sorcerer’s Stone*. Despite this, however, the three have become inseparable and perhaps the agapē love displayed in *Sorcerer’s Stone* is the event that seals their friendship.

On Halloween during *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*, a troll is let loose in Hogwarts. During the rush to get the students to their dormitories for safety, Harry remembers something highly important: “As they jostled their way through a crowd of confused looking Hufflepuffs, Harry suddenly grabbed Ron’s arm. ‘I’ve

just thought—Hermione.’ ‘What about her?’ ‘She doesn’t know about the troll.’ Ron bit his lip. ‘Oh, all right,’ he snapped. ‘But Percy’d better not see us’” (Rowling *Sorcerer’s Stone* 173). Despite the fact Hermione has not done anything to even truly merit Harry and Ron’s friendship, the two still choose to go and find her. This leads to the two battling a “full-grown mountain troll” (Rowling *Sorcerer’s Stone* 178). Not only do Harry and Ron risk life and limb for Hermione, Hermione also takes the blame on herself for why Harry and Ron were there instead of following their instructions to go back to their dormitories:

“Please, Professor McGonagall—they were looking for me.” “Miss Granger!”
Hermione had managed to get to her feet at last. “I went looking for the troll because I—I thought I could deal with it on my own—you know, because I’ve read all about them.” Ron dropped his wand. Hermione Granger, telling a downright lie to a teacher? “If they hadn’t found me, I’d be dead by now....” (Rowling *Sorcerer’s Stone* 177-78)

This event seals their bond of friendship. Furthermore the text states, “But from that time on, Hermione Granger became their friend. There are some things you can’t share without ending up liking each other, and knocking out a twelve-foot mountain troll is one of them” (Rowling *Sorcerer’s Stone* 179). This event can be interpreted as *agapē* love because of the risk involved. This follows with Strong’s definition of *agapē*, “the active love his people are to have for God, each other, and even enemies” (Strong 1587). Hermione before this event was certainly not their friend, but perhaps their enemy, and yet Harry and Ron choose to go warn her anyway. This, by definition, is an example of *agapē* love.

The reader may also find another example of *agapē* love in *Sorcerer’s Stone* in the obstacles the Trio face to get to the Stone before Voldemort. The first example found in this event is Hermione and Ron’s choice to go along with Harry to find the Stone. Harry intends to go find the Stone by himself; however, Hermione and Ron are not going to let him: ‘I’ll use the invisibility cloak,’ said Harry. ‘It’s just lucky I got it back.’ ‘But will it cover all three of us?’ said Ron. ‘All—all three of us?’ ‘Oh, come off it, you don’t think we’d let you go alone?’” (Rowling *Sorcerer’s Stone* 271). Hermione and Ron are not about to let Harry go it alone. Once again *agapē* love, by definition, is displayed. In their love for Harry, Hermione and Ron are going to go with him into the face of danger.

Also in their quest for the Stone, Ron displays *agapē* love for Hermione and Harry during their battle with the transfigured Wizard Chess set. Ron chooses to sacrifice himself to allow Harry and Hermione to go on. He says, “‘Yes...’ said Ron softly, ‘it’s the only way...I’ve got to be taken.’ ‘NO!’ Harry and Hermione

shouted. ‘That’s chess!’ snapped Ron. ‘You’ve got to make some sacrifices! I take one step forward and she’ll take me—that leaves you free to checkmate the king, Harry!’” (Rowling *Sorcerer’s Stone* 283). Ron’s sacrifice allows Harry and Hermione to go on to the next obstacle. Ron loves his friends and their cause more than his own wellbeing. His “active” agapē love for them allows them to go on to get the Stone.

Another example of agapē love the reader sees between the Trio in their quest for the Stone, is Harry’s love for Hermione and Ron when they face the final task before reaching the Stone. Once Hermione solves the riddle to get them through the flames Harry tells her,

“You drink that,” said Harry. “No listen, get back and get Ron. Grab brooms from the flying-key room, they’ll get you out of the trapdoor and past Fluffy—go straight to the owlery and send Hedwig to Dumbledore, we need him. I might be able to hold Snape off for a while, but I’m no match for him, really.” “But Harry—what if You-Know-Who’s with him?” “Well—I was lucky once, wasn’t I?” said Harry, pointing at his scar. “I might get lucky again.” (Rowling *Sorcerer’s Stone* 286)

Harry is more concerned about Hermione and Ron’s safety than about his own. As does Ron, Harry bears an active agapē love for his friends, putting them before himself.

In *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, readers may find more examples of the agapē love the Trio bears each other and for those around them. One of the first examples is of Ron and Hermione’s love for Harry when he, in an angry rage after finding out who is thought to be the betrayer of his parents—as well as their greatest friend and his godfather—is none other than Sirius Black. Harry is ready to go after Black, but his friends are attempting to be the voice of reason: “‘You won’t, will you, Harry?’ said Hermione. ‘Because Black’s not worth dying for,’ said Ron. Harry looked at them. They didn’t seem to understand at all” (Rowling *Prisoner of Azkaban* 214). Hermione and Ron may not understand exactly what Harry is feeling; however, Hermione and Ron do understand that the greatest thing they can do for their friend is to keep him out of harm’s way. To quote Dumbledore in *Sorcerer’s Stone*, “It takes a great deal of bravery to stand up to our enemies, but just as much to stand up to our friends” (Rowling *Sorcerer’s Stone* 306). This sort of bravery is often found in the context of love for a person or for a higher cause. Hermione and Ron’s love for their friend, their “active” love (Strong 1587) in this context may be considered an example of agapē love.

Hermione shows her agapē love for Harry in a way that at first does not seem so loving. Harry mysteriously receives a Firebolt, the fastest racing broom in existence, for Christmas without a card, note, or

message of any sort. Fearing for his safety, Hermione informs Professor McGonagall about it, who promptly confiscates the broom to have it examined. Upon the confiscation of the broom, Harry and Ron are two very irritated Gryffindor boys:

Harry stood staring at her, the tin of High-Finish Polish still clutched in his hands. Ron, however, rounded on Hermione. “*What did you go running to McGonagall for?*” Hermione threw her book aside. She was still pink in the face, but stood up and faced Ron defiantly. “Because I thought—and Professor McGonagall agrees with me—that that broom was probably sent to Harry by Sirius Black!” (Rowling *Prisoner of Azkaban* 232)

Hermione is faced with anger and isolation from the boys, but she feels a greater concern for Harry’s safety than for his anger. Risking condemnation, Hermione shows agapē love the hard way—offending her friends with her good intentions. This act illustrates Hermione’s lack of concern for her own feelings and her greater concern for Harry’s safety; this example may therefore be interpreted as an example of agapē love.

One of the many examples of the Trio’s agapē love for others is found in their willingness to stay and be with Hagrid during Buckbeak’s execution. Hagrid has urged them to go on, not wanting them to see such a thing. The three try to stay to help: “He turned to Harry, Ron, and Hermione. ‘Go on,’ he said. ‘Get goin’.’ But they didn’t move” (Rowling *Prisoner of Azkaban* 330). This act of love the Trio displays towards Hagrid shows them to be caring and supportive through all things, even something as gruesome as an execution. Here the Trio’s display of love for Hagrid mimics the way Christians are to show agapē love to other Christians, as well as others.

Further, in *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* we find Harry, Ron, and Hermione in a very different place. Harry has just been witness to the resurrection and return of the Dark Lord, Voldemort, and the death of Cedric Diggory. Dumbledore has asked the student body to leave him alone and not to interrogate him about his encounters. This request causes a good portion of the student body to avoid Harry somewhat; however, this does not seem to bother him too much. He says, “He found he didn’t care very much. He liked it best when he was with Ron and Hermione and they were talking about other things, or else letting him sit in silence while they played chess. He felt as though all three of them had reached an understanding they didn’t need to put into words...” (Rowling *Goblet of Fire* 717). This seems to parallel with the Biblical story of Job. When Job was suffering, as Harry is, his friends sat with him to comfort him. Job 2:11-13 says,

When Job’s three friends, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar

the Naamathite, heard about all the troubles that had come upon him, they set out from their homes and met together by agreement to go and sympathize with him and comfort him. When they saw him from a distance, they could hardly recognize him; they began to weep aloud, and they tore their robes and sprinkled dust on their heads. Then they sat on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights. No one said a word to him, because they saw how great his suffering was. (Bible Gateway)

As Job and his friends have an understanding about his circumstances and suffering, so do Hermione and Ron. This sort of compassion that Job's friends, and Hermione and Ron display is most definitely an act of "active" agapē love towards other Christians.

In *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, the reader discovers another example of agapē love between the Trio. When Harry believes he has seen Voldemort in the Department of Mysteries at the Ministry of Magic, torturing his godfather Sirius, Harry is ready to jump and run to his aid. Hermione suspects that this is a trap set by Voldemort and begs him not to go until he is certain about Sirius' condition. Hermione, trying to protect Harry from doing something incredibly dangerous, urges him saying, "'Harry, I'm begging you, please!' said Hermione desperately. 'Please let's just check that Sirius isn't at home before we go charging off to London—if we find out he's not there then I swear I won't try and stop you, I'll come, I'll d-do whatever it takes to try and save him—'" (Rowling *Order of the Phoenix* 735). Hermione is almost certain that Voldemort is trying to trap Harry, but Harry is not about to listen to reason. After unsuccessfully trying to contact Sirius, Harry chooses to go after Sirius, but not without the aid of Ron, Hermione, Ginny Weasley, Neville Longbottom, and Luna Lovegood. Harry initially desires no company, but they insist. The willingness of many of the members of the DA (Dumbledore's Army, here: Ron, Hermione, Ginny, Neville, and Luna) to go with Harry into the very face of danger, may seem just simply a heroic action, however, considering the Christian context of the stories Rowling writes, one may see these actions as agapē love.

Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince contains multiple examples of agapē love, but perhaps one of the most prominent examples is something Harry does for the rest of the group. Harry passes off his prized Felix Felicis, a potion that brings good luck to the user, to Ron and Hermione and the rest of the DA before setting off on his mission with Dumbledore. He says when they object, "'I'll be fine, I'll be with Dumbledore,' said Harry. 'I want to know that you lot are okay.... Don't look like that, Hermione, I'll see you later....'" (Rowling *Half-Blood Prince* 552). Giving up one of the things that may be his only protection against the Dark

Lord, Harry sacrifices this protection for the love of his friends. This gift proves a little more than useful, and is perhaps the saving grace of those in the DA and the Order of the Phoenix. Ginny recounts the tale of the battle that evening, but miraculously, not one of the members of the Order has died. She says, "...Harry, if we hadn't had your Felix potion, I think we'd all have been killed, but everything seemed to just miss us—" (Rowling *Half-Blood Prince* 612). This representation expresses the power of agapē love, denoting a certain depth of sacrifice, and demonstrates the breadth of Harry's love for his friends.

The Trio are not the only characters who demonstrate agapē love in *Harry Potter*. Professor Dumbledore demonstrates agapē love in his final moments in *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*. When Harry and Dumbledore reach the tower over which the Dark Mark stands, Dumbledore orders Harry to go alert Snape to what has happened. As he is about to do so, he hears someone coming up the stairs. Dumbledore tells him to back away and as Draco Malfoy bursts through the door, Dumbledore silently immobilizes Harry beneath his Invisibility Cloak. Harry is perplexed at this because the only sound he hears is Malfoy's cry of "*Expelliarmus!*" (Rowling *Half-Blood Prince* 584). The text highlights his confusion and wonder at Dumbledore's act:

He could not understand how it had happened—*Expelliarmus* was not the Freezing Charm— Then, by light of the Mark, he saw Dumbledore's wand flying in an arc over the edge of the ramparts and understood.... Dumbledore had wordlessly immobilized Harry, and the second he had taken to perform the spell had cost him the chance of defending himself. (Rowling *Half-Blood Prince* 584)

This selfless act seems indeed to fit the definition of agapē love set out by James Strong, author of the Strong's Concordance, "the active love his people are to have for God, each other, and even enemies" (Strong 1587). Dumbledore protects Harry when he could have protected himself and his dialogue with Draco that follows is evident of the compassion he wishes to show to him if he will "turn from their [his] wicked ways..." then he "will forgive their [his] sin" as mentioned in 2 Chronicles 7:14 ([Bible Gateway](#)). This sacrificial, unconditional love displayed to both Harry and Draco may only be termed as agapē love.

These are but a few of the symbols and representations of agapē love found in *Harry Potter*. For sake of comparison, a look at another Christian book series can make it easier to see similar symbols for agapē love. C. S. Lewis', *The Chronicles of Narnia*, like *Harry Potter*, contains multiple symbols of agapē love. There appears to be a greater number of symbols for agapē love found in *Harry Potter* than in *Narnia*, which is likely due to the difference in length and complexity between each series. At any rate, in *Narnia* agapē love is best

illustrated through examples provided by the Pevensie children and Aslan.

One example of agapē love one may find in *The Chronicles of Narnia* is the example given by Peter, Susan, and Lucy Pevensie toward their brother Edmund in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. Edmund has betrayed them all to the White Witch, all for Turkish Delight and the thought of being “prince” next to the White Witch. Once the Pevensies and the Beavers realize that Edmund has escaped to go tell the Witch what he has discovered, Peter tells Mr. Beaver, “‘All the same,’ said Peter in a rather choking sort of voice, ‘we’ll still have to go and look for him. He is our brother after all, even if he is rather a little beast. And he’s only a kid’” (Lewis *Lion*... 149). Throughout the beginning of the novel, Edmund has been quite beastly to his siblings. Despite this, when they discover he is missing, they run outside to look for him and bellow his name throughout the woods. Even when Mr. Beaver tells them that they should run first, and leave the salvation of Edmund to Aslan, the Pevensies insist on looking for him. This display of care and compassion can only be described as agapē love.

Another example of agapē love in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* is Aslan’s compassion on Edmund. When the White Witch approaches Aslan to make claim on Edmund’s life, he bargains with her, exchanging his own life for Edmund’s. Aslan announces to the Pevensies and the other Narnians, “‘You can all come back,’ he said. ‘I have settled the matter. She has renounced the claim on your brother’s blood’” (Lewis *Lion*... 176). He subjected himself to a traitor’s death at the hands of the White Witch and her minions. Aslan’s sacrifice is exactly parallel with Christ’s agapē love for the church with his own death and resurrection found in the Gospels.

Yet another example of agapē love found in *The Chronicles of Narnia* is found in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*. Eustace Scrubb, the Pevensies younger and perfectly insufferable cousin, has been turned into a dragon by a magical bracelet and the “dragonish thoughts in his heart” (Lewis *Dawn Treader* 466). After Eustace spends about a week or so as a dragon, Aslan appears to him. Aslan cures his dragonish state, but only after Eustace learns a difficult lesson. Aslan takes Eustace to a well to bathe, but before he can do so, he must shed his thick, scaly dragon skin. Eustace proceeds, but only sheds one skin to find another lying beneath it. He tries this three times until Aslan says, “‘You will have to let me undress you’” (Lewis *Dawn Treader* 474). Aslan proceeds to tear the skin off with his huge claws, and afterwards throws Eustace into the well. Eustace is healed. This picture of agapē love exemplifies Christ’s love for the church in his care and “cleaning up” of Eustace, the unlovable. As Isaiah 1:18 says, “‘Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool’” ([Bible Gateway](#)). Eustace’s “sins” have been washed

away by Aslan's agapē love.

Clearly, agapē love is present throughout these examples in both *Harry Potter* and *The Chronicles of Narnia*. In many cases, this sort of love is held between close friends, families, or friends who are like family, such as with the Pevensie children, Lily and James Potter, the Trio, Harry's love for Sirius and Dumbledore, as well as Sirius and Dumbledore for Harry, not to mention Aslan's love for Edmund and his people, the Narnians. In multiple examples, agapē love is also accompanied by sacrifice, particularly in the cases of Lily and James Potter, Dumbledore, and Aslan. All three of these examples mimic Christ's sacrificial love for the Church. This love for the Church is integral in the study of Christ figures in *Harry Potter* and *The Chronicles of Narnia*. As seen in numerous instances in the Gospels, Christ's actions are driven by agapē love. Without this sort of agapē love, there is no Christ figure. Characters in these stories become like Christ as Philippians 2:1-2 says, "If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose" (Bible Gateway). "Being one in spirit and purpose" becomes the result of agapē love and the creation of a Christ figure.

CHAPTER II

OF CHRIST, WIZARDS, AND LIONS: CHRIST FIGURES IN HARRY POTTER AND THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA

*“It isn’t Narnia, you know,” sobbed Lucy. “It’s you. We shan’t meet you there. And how can we live, never meeting you?” “But you shall meet me, dear one,” said Aslan. “Are—are you there too, Sir?” said Edmund. “I am,” said Aslan. “But there I have another name. You must learn to know me by that name. This was the very reason why you were brought to Narnia, that by knowing me here for a little, you may know me better there.” – Aslan to Lucy and Edmund Pevensie and Eustace Scrubb, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, 541.*

Central to many, if not all, symbolically Christian stories is the element of the Christ figure. In the text of both *Harry Potter* and *The Chronicles of Narnia*, there are many Christ figures. These figures do not merely represent Christ in the area of sacrifice, but also in the many other characteristics and actions of Jesus Christ, as recorded in the Bible. Christ figures can be seen in their identification with God the Father (in *Harry Potter* and *Narnia*, a father or father figure), compassion towards others, actions similar to those of Jesus of Nazareth as recorded in the Bible, and as is perhaps most obvious, sacrifice. These are the main elements of Christ that can be seen in the *Harry Potter* series as well as *The Chronicles of Narnia*.

Perhaps the most obvious Christ figures found in *Harry Potter* are Lily and James Potter, Harry’s parents. Harry’s parents are deceased before the first page of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*. Harry has been left to live with his very unpleasant aunt, uncle, and cousin, the Dursleys. The reader discovers the nature of the Potters’ death—murdered by Voldemort himself. Voldemort had intended to kill Harry that night as well, however, he was stopped unexpectedly. Voldemort notes that James Potter fought courageously, but further says, “...but your mother needn’t have died...she was trying to protect you...” (Rowling *Sorcerer’s Stone* 294). Similarly, Dumbledore further explains to Harry about his mother’s death, and exactly what gave him the name, The Boy Who Lived,

Your mother died to save you. If there is one thing Voldemort cannot understand, it is love. He didn't realize that love as powerful as your mother's for you leaves its own mark. Not a scar, no visible sign...to have been loved so deeply, even though the person who loved us is gone, will give us some protection forever.

(Rowling *Sorcerer's Stone* 299)

The loving sacrifice of Lily and James Potter for their infant son mirrors the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the Church, giving himself up completely through death.

Like his parents, Harry Potter himself may be considered a Christ figure. Harry exhibits many qualities of Christ, even from the very beginning of his life. Kristin Kay Johnston makes an interesting point concerning this detail:

When Harry was a baby there were strange signs in the world, such as the appearance of hundreds of owls, as well as shooting stars, perhaps reminding us of the appearance of the angels and the star of Bethlehem at Jesus' birth. Recall also the fact that Harry as a baby has to flee evil—this recalls both Jesus' flight into Egypt with Mary and Joseph as well as Moses being put into the basket to escape death.

(6-7)

This being said, it is also interesting to note the many other things that parallel with Jesus Christ and Harry's birth. Before Jesus was born, there were many prophecies concerning him, most notably the passage of Isaiah 53, which covers Jesus' life, ministry, and resurrection. Note also that there was a prophecy about Harry Potter. The prophecy states,

THE ONE WITH THE POWER TO VANQUISH THE DARK LORD APPROACHES.... BORN TO THOSE WHO HAVE THRICE DEFIED HIM, BORN AS THE SEVENTH MONTH DIES...AND THE DARK LORD WILL MARK HIM AS HIS EQUAL, BUT HE WILL HAVE POWER THE DARK LORD KNOWS NOT...AND EITHER MUST DIE AT THE HAND OF THE OTHER FOR NEITHER CAN LIVE WHILE THE OTHER SURVIVES.... THE ONE WITH THE POWER TO VANQUISH THE DARK LORD WILL BE BORN AS THE SEVENTH MONTH DIES....

(Rowling *Order of the Phoenix* 841)

Harry's life is marked and changed by this prophecy. His life thus far in the series has followed the prophecy to the letter. For Voldemort to be stopped, the prophecy must be carried out. Harry must conquer Voldemort, as

Jesus has conquered Satan.

One physical characteristic of Harry that parallels with Christ is Harry's lightning bolt scar. Harry received his scar the night Voldemort murdered his parents and attempted to murder Harry, the mark of his battle. When Christ rose from the dead and showed the disciples his scarred hands and feet, he was showing them the marks of his battle, so to speak. The image of the lightning bolt scar has more significance to this comparison when thought of in the light of Luke 10:18. The verse states, "He [Jesus] replied, 'I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven'" ([Bible Gateway](#)). The lightning bolt scar marks Voldemort's fall from his "glory," so to speak, when he was at his greatest power. As Jesus' scars mark his conquering over death and triumph over Satan, Harry's scar marks his conquering over death (the killing curse, *Avada Kedavra*) and triumph over Satan (Voldemort).

Another characteristic of Christ we see in *Harry Potter* is Harry's identification with his father. Harry is told multiple times throughout the novels "you do look *extraordinarily* like James" (Rowling *Prisoner of Azkaban* 427). Not only does Harry resemble his father physically, but also throughout the novels the reader is shown that Harry grows to resemble his father in his actions and attitudes. Perhaps the most explicit example of this can be found in *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*. In *Prisoner of Azkaban*, Harry discovers who his godfather is, and the identity of the person who handed his parents over to Voldemort. Throughout these experiences, Harry's identity as his father's son is solidified, particularly in the final chapters of the novel. Harry goes as far as to stop Sirius Black and Remus Lupin from killing the man who handed the Potters over to Voldemort, Peter Pettigrew, saying, "I'm not doing this for you. I'm doing it because—I don't reckon my dad would've wanted them [Sirius and Remus] to become killers—just for you" (Rowling *Prisoner of Azkaban* 376). Albus Dumbledore later confirms Harry's decision. Dumbledore says, "I knew your father very well, both at Hogwarts and later, Harry," he said gently. "He would have saved Pettigrew too, I am sure of it" (Rowling *Prisoner of Azkaban* 427). Harry's actions are in line with his father's, much like Christ's actions and will are in line with his father's. Further, Catherine Jack and David Paul Deavel say in their article, "Character, Choice, and Harry Potter," "While Harry has not forgiven his parents betrayer at this point, he still has the model of his father as a guide to his own actions, and Harry chooses to follow his father's example rather than to indulge his own desire for revenge" (59). When Jesus was praying in the garden of Gethsemane in Luke 22:42, he prayed, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done" ([Bible Gateway](#)). Jesus followed his Father's will and took the cup, dying on the cross. Harry in the same way has carried out, what the reader can reasonably conclude would be his father's will, sparing the one who was

responsible for his death.

The reader may find another point of interest concerning Harry and his Christ-likeness during the attack of the dementors on Harry, Hermione, and Sirius Black. Harry sees a familiar face forming a Patronus charm as he is blacking out; this face Harry that he sees, he believes is his father. Harry puzzles over this during the rescue of Buckbeak the hippogriff and Sirius Black with the Time Turner. Knowing his father is dead, the prospect of James Potter conjuring the Patronus is a complete impossibility. When Harry realizes it was he who conjured the Patronus, the form of the Patronus is what causes such a great surprise. Harry's Patronus takes the form of a stag, the very same form his father would take as an animagus, a witch or wizard who can turn his or herself into an animal at will (Rowling *Prisoner of Azkaban* 108). Dumbledore draws out a particularly interesting point about Harry's Patronus; he says,

You think the dead we loved ever truly leave us? You think that we don't recall them more clearly than ever in times of great trouble? Your father is alive in you, Harry, and shows himself most plainly when you have need of him. How else could you produce that *particular* Patronus? Prongs rode again last night.... You know, Harry, in a way, you did see your father last night.... You found him inside yourself. (Rowling *Prisoner of Azkaban* 428-29)

The point Dumbledore makes is indeed a curious one. Harry not only resembles his father physically, and understands what his father might do, but he also is much like his father in ways he does not fully realize: the spirit of James Potter seems to dwell within him. In the same way, Jesus identifies himself with his Father in John 14:7: "If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him" ([Bible Gateway](#)). Whoever sees Jesus sees the Father, and in the same way, whoever sees Harry, sees his father. As Sirius points out, "You are—truly your father's son, Harry..." (Rowling *Prisoner of Azkaban* 415).

Another characteristic of Harry's Christ-likeness is found in the theme of sacrifice. In many ways the reader sees Harry running into the line of fire for his friends, and in many instances, this involves a certain element of sacrifice. This element of sacrifice falls into line with Christ's example of sacrifice at his crucifixion. Jesus said in John 15:13, "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends," but also in verse 15 of that same passage, Jesus also says, "I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you" ([Bible Gateway](#)). Jesus called his disciples his friends and willingly laid down his

life for them. Harry has been shown to do this on a number of occasions, putting himself in harms' way, always thinking of his friends before himself. *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* features many examples of this, particularly in the case of Sirius Black. While Harry is taking his O.W.L. exams he drifts off into a vision, in which he sees his godfather, Sirius Black being attacked by Voldemort. Before stopping to fully understand the situation, Harry rushes off into a plan to go save Sirius, not caring what happens to him, as long as his godfather is safe. He says to Hermione when she tries to convince him that his vision might be a trap laid by Voldemort, "Hermione, it doesn't matter to me if he's done it to get me there or not—they've taken McGonagall to St. Mungo's, there isn't anyone left from the Order at Hogwarts who we can tell, and if we don't go, Sirius is dead!" (Rowling *Order of the Phoenix* 734). Harry shows no regard for his own life, caring only for the life of his godfather.

In a similar manner, Harry is willing to rush into the line of fire for Hermione as well. Taking another example from a passage in *Order of the Phoenix*, the reader can see this clearly:

The second Death Eater, however, had leapt aside to avoid Harry's spell and now pointed his own wand at Hermione, who had crawled out from under the desk to get a better aim. "Avada—" Harry launched himself across the floor and grabbed the Death Eater around the knees, causing him to topple and go awry. (Rowling *Order of the Phoenix* 789)

This action, trivial though it might seem, shows Harry doing everything in his power to spare his friend, when he could have very easily been killed himself. A similar incident is repeated a few pages later:

But the Death Eater Hermione had just struck dumb made a sudden slashing movement with his wand from which flew a streak of what looked like purple flame. It passed right across Hermione's chest; she gave a tiny "oh!" as though of surprise and then crumpled onto the floor where she lay motionless.

"HERMIONE!" ...A whine of panic inside his head was preventing him thinking properly. He had one hand on Hermione's shoulder, which was still warm, yet did not dare look at her properly. *Don't let her be dead, don't let her be dead, it's my fault if she's dead....* (Rowling *Order of the Phoenix* 792-93)

Harry, blaming himself for what happened to Hermione, would have been devastated if she had died, shouldering all the responsibility on himself. It would seem that Harry would have preferred to take the place of his friend if anything had happened to her, judging from this quote. These two examples illustrate Harry's

willingness to lay his life down for his friends, and in many ways identify him as a Christ figure.

There are many examples of Christ figures in the *Harry Potter* series. One character seems to stand at the forefront for many, however, and that character is Albus Dumbledore. Dumbledore is portrayed in the novels as a wise and knowledgeable teacher, just as Jesus was viewed in his day as a wise and knowledgeable teacher. Indeed, the disciples and those who followed Jesus were constantly amazed at his actions and teachings. Mark 7:37 says, "People were overwhelmed with amazement. 'He has done everything well,' they said" (Bible Gateway). Dumbledore is also described as "...the only wizard Voldemort ever feared" (Rowling *Goblet of Fire* 679), this because of his power and wisdom. These characteristics match Dumbledore with Jesus in demeanor and the respect he received because of his wisdom and the miracles he performed. It seems to be in *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* when the reader sees Dumbledore at the peak of his Christ-likeness. Perhaps one of the most symbolic elements in the entire *Harry Potter* series is found in the final chapters of *Half-Blood Prince*, and that particular element is found in Albus Dumbledore at the final moments of his life. These descriptions offer an almost complete allegory to Jesus' final moments on earth.

In chapter 26, Harry and Dumbledore are in search for one of Voldemort's horcruxes. Their search takes them to a cave. In this cave, the device that is protecting the horcrux is a basin filled with a potion that cannot be dipped into, but is solid to the touch, with the horcrux at the bottom. Dumbledore, after examination of the basin, determines that the only way to get to the bottom is to drink the potion. Dumbledore claims the job and gives Harry these instructions, "Harry, it will be your job to make sure I keep drinking, even if you have to tip the potion into my protesting mouth. You understand?" (Rowling *Half-Blood Prince* 569). Harry obeys Dumbledore's orders despite his protests during the ordeal. This might draw some comparison between this particular passage with Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane found in the Gospels. Matthew's Gospel in chapter twenty-six and verses thirty-nine and forty-two quotes Jesus as saying, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will... He went away a second time and prayed, 'My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done'" (Bible Gateway). Jesus has willingly accepted his duty, as Dumbledore has too accepted his duty to take the potion, "the cup," so to speak. The suffering Dumbledore sustains during this time is substantial; he is weakened greatly, as Jesus was during his time of prayer in the garden.

When Harry and Dumbledore make their way to the lightning-struck tower at Hogwarts after their venture into the cave, the two are faced with a surprising turn of events: treason and betrayal. Draco Malfoy has been given the task of killing Dumbledore, by none other than Voldemort himself. As Harry and

Dumbledore land atop the tower, they hear the sound of someone running up the stairs. Before the door is flung open, Dumbledore wordlessly immobilizes Harry who is hidden beneath his invisibility cloak. The text states,

The door burst open and somebody erupted through it and shouted,
“*Expelliarmus!*” ...Then, by the light of the Mark, he saw Dumbledore’s wand
flying in an arc over the edge of the ramparts and understood.... Dumbledore had
wordlessly immobilized Harry, and the second he had taken to perform the spell
had cost him the chance of defending himself. (Rowling *Half-Blood Prince* 584)

Harry, under the invisibility cloak and prevented from all movement so as though not to burst out in action, is as safe as possible in the given situation. Dumbledore’s actions, driven by agapē love for Harry, have spared Harry’s life while taking no heed for his own. This indeed proves to cost Dumbledore his life. This action of sacrifice is remarkably similar to Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. Dumbledore offered no resistance to his captors, exactly as Jesus did not. Indeed, the prophet Isaiah speaks of Jesus’ actions, saying in 53:7, “He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth” ([Bible Gateway](#)). Even as Dumbledore is betrayed and slain by one he called friend, Severus Snape (the *Harry Potter* equivalent to Judas Iscariot), the reader is given an image that is startlingly similar to a crucified Jesus, giving up the ghost. The text states, “For a split second, he seemed to hang suspended beneath the shining skull, and then he fell slowly backward, like a great rag doll, over the battlements and out of sight” (Rowling *Half-Blood Prince* 596). The image of the Dark Mark, a shining skull, brings on images of the hill on which Jesus was crucified, Golgotha. John 19:17 states, “So the soldiers took charge of Jesus. Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha)” ([Bible Gateway](#)). Harry and Dumbledore have journeyed to the “place of the Skull” and Dumbledore has been crucified, so to speak. Jesus only had one friend present at his crucifixion, John, the disciple whom Jesus loved. In the same way, Harry is intensely loyal to Dumbledore (one may recall the great display of Harry’s loyalty to Dumbledore in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*) and is his only friend present, and in the same way Harry can be called “the disciple whom Dumbledore loved.” These final moments of Dumbledore’s life offers an almost complete allegory to the final moments of Jesus’ life.

These examples of Christ figures in *Harry Potter* are quite explicit; however, they are symbolic. In comparison to Lewis’ *The Chronicles of Narnia*, there are not many Christ figures, but in comparison, only one. This one Christ figure found in *Narnia* is Aslan the Lion, Son of the Emperor over the Sea. In Aslan’s character, Lewis embodies the many aspects of Christ into one being. This character is the dominant figure throughout the

entire series, and perhaps one of the clearest allegorical Christ figures found in literature.

When placed in chronological order, the first book in *The Chronicles of Narnia* is *The Magician's Nephew*. In this story, the reader follows the adventures of Digory Kirke and Polly Plummer who stumble into the yet to be created Narnia through the devious trick of Digory's Uncle Andrew. While the two are in this strange land, they witness a marvelous thing: the creation of Narnia.

The Lion was pacing to and fro about that empty land and singing his new song. It was softer and more lilting than the song by which he had called up the stars and the sun; a gentle, rippling music. And as he walked and sang, the valley grew green with grass. It spread out from the Lion like a pool. It ran up the sides of the little hills like a wave. In a few minutes it was creeping up the lower slopes of the distant mountains, making the young world every moment softer. The light wind could now be heard ruffling the grass. Soon there were other things besides grass.... (Lewis *Magician's Nephew* 64)

This Lion speaking Narnia into existence is none other than Aslan. The reader may recall the creation story of the Bible in which God speaks the world into being. Indeed the Scriptures say throughout Genesis 1, "And God said..." ([Bible Gateway](#)). What may be interesting to note is the nature of Aslan's character as played out through the other *Chronicles of Narnia*: Aslan is portrayed as a Christ figure. For this allusion to be congruent to the Bible, how may this seeming inconsistency between the two be used to form an allegory from this particular passage? This answer is found in Genesis 1:26, which states, "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground'" ([Bible Gateway](#), emphasis added). The "us" found in this verse refers to the Trinity—God the Father, God the Son (Jesus), and God the Holy Spirit. Thus, the symbol of Aslan the Creator fits with the aspect of Jesus in God the Creator.

Another aspect of Aslan's Christ-likeness is found in his very being a Lion. In the Bible, Jesus is often described as a lion. A simple word search on "lion" in the Bible recovers many verses that refer to Jesus Christ. The most explicit of these verses is Revelation 5:5 which states, "Then one of the elders said to me, 'Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals'" ([Bible Gateway](#)). This parallel is quite clear and further establishes Aslan as a Christ figure.

Indeed, another point of interest concerning Aslan is his "parentage." Aslan claims himself to be the "Son of the Emperor Over the Sea." Though this Emperor is never seen face-to-face in the novels, he is given a

very God-like aura. Aslan being his son, by nature draws Aslan to parallel to Jesus Christ himself, Jesus calling himself the Son of God. Extrapolating on the point of Aslan as a Christ figure, Joy Alexander says in her article, “The Whole Art and Joy of Words,”

...Aslan is clearly a character redolent of divinity and with godlike connotations.

This is explicitly reinforced by Lewis when, less that a month after writing to fifth-graders, on June 19, he replied, when the idea of a cartoon version of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* was suggested to him: “I am sure you understand that Aslan is a divine figure, and anything remotely approaching the comic (above all anything in the Disney line) would be to me simple blasphemy.”

(Alexander)

From the mouth of the author himself, we see Aslan’s character established as a one of divine nature, and from the literature it is quite simple to see Aslan as a Christ figure.

One of the most transparent symbolic elements found in the *Chronicles of Narnia* is found in the first novel published, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. In this novel, the capital image of a Christ figure is found in Aslan’s sacrifice for Edmund Pevensie. Edmund, having become a traitor and eaten of the White Witch’s food, has committed an offense worthy of death according to the Deep Magic. Aslan meets with the Witch to talk over her claim. She renounces her claim on Edmund’s life, however, only in exchange for Aslan’s. The exchange takes place that evening. No one is aware of the exact terms of the agreement Aslan and the Witch have made, save for those two themselves. As Aslan begins to walk to his appointed time, Lucy and Susan spy him, and follow after him. Aslan appreciates their company saying, “I am sad and lonely. Lay your hands on my mane so that I can feel you are there and let us walk like that” (Lewis *Lion...* 179). This is much like Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane when he calls Peter, James, and John to come with him to watch and pray in Matthew 26:36-38, which states,

Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.” He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.” (Bible Gateway)

In the same manner, Aslan calls upon Lucy and Susan to comfort him before his death. Like Aslan, Jesus too was “sad and lonely.”

Aslan goes to his appointment with the White Witch, allowing himself to submit to the humiliating, degrading, and painful death of a traitor he has chosen to take upon himself. The text lists Aslan as being bound, shorn of his mane, muzzled, and finally murdered by the White Witch herself (Lewis *Lion...* 180-81). This description also matches the account of Jesus' scourging and crucifixion found in the Bible. Jesus was "bound" by the mob of the chief priests and soldiers in the garden after being betrayed by Judas as recorded in Matthew 27:2. Jesus too was "shorn of his mane," as his beard was plucked out, prophetically spoken of in Isaiah 50:6, "I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard; I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting" (Bible Gateway). He was "muzzled" in the sense that he did not speak up on behalf of himself. Indeed, Mark 15:3-5 states, "The chief priests accused him of many things. So again Pilate asked him, 'Aren't you going to answer? See how many things they are accusing you of.' But Jesus still made no reply, and Pilate was amazed" (Bible Gateway). Finally, Aslan was murdered, and thus, Jesus was crucified, the debt now paid for traitors (in both accounts). It is notable that the manner of Dumbledore and Aslan's deaths is very similar (both die willingly, die for traitors, only one or two friends present at their death) and their deaths resonate with Jesus' death.

Perhaps the most crucial moment in this story is found in the resurrections of both Aslan and Jesus. In the morning after his death, Susan and Lucy are sad and crying on the body of the fallen Aslan. They turn away to go inform the rest of the company of Aslan's death, but hear a great and thunderous crack. The Stone Table where Aslan was killed has broken in two. Upon find this, they are greeted with another sight: a resurrected and fully restored Aslan. He explains the circumstances as thus:

...Though the Witch knew the Deep Magic, there is a magic deeper still which she did not know. Her knowledge goes back only to the dawn of time. But if she could have looked a little further back, into the stillness and the darkness before Time dawned, she would have read there a different incantation. She would have known that when a willing victim who had committed no treachery was killed in a traitor's stead, the Table would crack and Death itself would start working backwards. (Lewis *Lion...* 185)

Aslan, being sinless and taking Edmund's place allowed him to live again. Similarly, Jesus, having committed no wrongdoing, taking the place of sinners, is allowed to resurrect, to live again. Luke 24:46-47 states, "He [Jesus] told them, 'This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem'" (Bible

Gateway). These comparisons undoubtedly place Aslan in the role of the Christ figure—which is widely accepted by many.

Another post-resurrection example of Aslan as a Christ figure can be found in *The Horse and His Boy*. During this story, Bree the Horse echoes the disciple Thomas in his disbelief (Bree boasting about his doubts that Aslan is actually a Lion, and Thomas not believing in the resurrection of Jesus). Aslan puts all his doubts aside when he suddenly appears to Bree and his company: “Now Bree,” he said, “you poor, proud frightened Horse, draw near. Nearer still, my son. Do not dare not to dare. Touch me. Smell me. Here are my paws, here is my tail, these are my whiskers. I am a true beast” (Lewis *Horse...* 299). These words to Bree are comparable to Jesus’ words to Thomas in John 20:26-29:

A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.” Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!” Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” (Bible Gateway)

Thomas has seen and believed, just as Bree has done. This offers yet another similar point between Aslan and Jesus.

In *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, another example of Aslan and his Christ-likeness presents itself. In this adventure, Lucy and Edmund Pevensie and their unbearable cousin Eustace Scrubb are on an adventure with King Caspian to find the seven lost lords of Narnia. During their adventures, Eustace is transformed into a dragon with the aid of a magic bracelet, but in greatest part, due to the greed he harbors in his heart when discovering some treasure. Aslan is the only one who can offer Eustace the cure he needs for his ailments:

Aslan must shed Eustace’s dragon skin and bathe him. Eustace describes the situation to his cousins saying,

And there was I as smooth and soft as a peeled switch and smaller than I had been. The he caught hold of me—I didn’t like that much for I was very tender underneath now that I’d no skin on—and threw me into the water. It smarted like anything but only for a moment. After that it became perfectly delicious and as soon as I started swimming and splashing I found that all the pain had gone from my arm. And then I saw why. I’d turned into a boy again. (Lewis *Dawn Treader*)

Aslan was the only who could cure Eustace of his predicament. Likewise, as stated in Acts 4:12, “Salvation is found in no one else [Jesus], for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved” (Bible Gateway). Indeed, Jesus himself declares in John 14:6, “Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me’” (Bible Gateway). As Aslan is the only cure for Eustace’s condition, Jesus is the only cure for man’s sinful condition.

Also in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, the reader finds Aslan another time, but in the form of a Lamb. Interestingly enough, this lamb offers the children a breakfast of fish, roasting over a fire, much like the breakfast Jesus offered his disciples in John 21:9 (Bible Gateway). An interesting parallel here is also Aslan taking the form of a Lamb. John the Baptist calls Jesus in John 1:29, “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (Bible Gateway). Discovering the Lamb is none other than Aslan himself, the children are met with shock, “...but as he spoke, his snowy white flushed into tawny gold and his size changed and he was Aslan himself, towering above them and scattering light from his mane” (Lewis *Dawn Treader* 540). As Jesus is described as both the Lion and the Lamb, Aslan too is the Lion and the Lamb.

In the final volume of *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *The Last Battle*, the apocalypse has come to Narnia. Aslan has gathered his children and they are entering through The Door to his country. When entering this marvelous land, Lucy laments about the inevitable possibility of returning to her own world. Aslan calms her fears saying, “The term is over: the holidays have begun. The dream is ended: this is the morning” (Lewis *Last Battle* 767). Aslan has passed judgment on the world, and gathered all his to himself. Likewise, in Revelation 11:18, Jesus will judge the world and reward his saints, “The nations were angry; and your wrath has come. The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your saints and those who reverence your name, both small and great—and for destroying those who destroy the earth” (Bible Gateway). Aslan has judged his world and rewarded his saints, as Christ will in his second coming.

The symbols for Christ found in both *Harry Potter* and *The Chronicles of Narnia* are very similar, but portrayed in different styles. J. K. Rowling is subtler with her symbolism in *Harry Potter* than C. S. Lewis is in *Narnia*. In Rowling’s works, more than one character or object may represent something, in this case, Christ; thus there are multiple Christ figures in *Harry Potter*. Conversely, in Lewis’ *Narnia*, the reader finds only one Christ figure—Aslan. John Granger describes this difference in this manner: “Allegories are stand-ins or story translations of a worldly character, quality, or event into an imaginative figure or story.... Symbols, in contrast, can be stacked up” (Granger 99-100). This main difference allows both series to be studied for Christian

symbolism, but under different lenses. Each series offers its own rich symbols, but merely in a different manner.

The actions of these Christ figures are driven by agapē love, particularly in the examples where sacrifice is involved. Likewise, the Christ figures, in their Christ-like actions and attitudes bring about some form of redemption. It does not take a careful reading to see that the two symbols of agapē love and Christ figures are often present because someone is in need of redemption. These three symbols form a trinity that is difficult to separate. It is the final theme of redemption that ties the other two together.

CHAPTER III

THE END RESULT: REDEMPTION IN *HARRY POTTER* AND *THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA*

*“Your mother’s sacrifice made the bond of blood the strongest shield I could give you.... While you can still call home the place where your mother’s blood dwells, there you cannot be touched or harmed by Voldemort. He shed her blood, but it lives on in you and her sister. **Her blood became your refuge.**”* – Albus Dumbledore to Harry Potter, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, 836 (emphasis added).

Redemption is one of the main tenets of Christianity, if not the ultimate tenet. This principle is important because within it, Christianity finds its basis. The work of Jesus Christ in his crucifixion is all in vain if not for the redemption found within that work. Indeed, this point of doctrine is noted biblically in Hebrews 9:12, “He [Jesus Christ] did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption,” as well as in Ephesians 1:7, “In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace” (Bible Gateway) and in multiple other places as well. Without this final act of redemption, there is simply no need for agapē love or the necessity of a Christ figure. It is this symbol of redemption that is the fulfillment of agapē love and the Christ figure, and it is this symbol that is found throughout and is intrinsically linked in *Harry Potter* and *The Chronicles of Narnia*.

It would appear to be a common thread in the *Harry Potter* series that the title character or someone in his company is always redeemed in the final scenes of each novel. This is most true of Harry himself. Harry is known through out the wizarding world as “The Boy Who Lived.” This is because his life is the result of redemption, and this redemptive work is the motivating action for the entire series. Commenting on this work, the sacrificial death of Lily and James Potter, Catherine Jack and David Paul Deavel note, “His parents’ sacrifice of love marks Harry more deeply and formatively than his magical talents or even than the lightning

bolt scar on his forehead” (58). Harry lives because of his redemption, as Christians live through Christ. By this same token, Romans 6:11 says, “In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus” ([Bible Gateway](#)). As Christians are alive in Christ’s redemption, Harry is alive through the redemption made by his parents. His parents’ sacrifice redeems infant Harry, allowing him to become a redeemer to others.

The mark Harry received from Voldemort was no accident. Harry is the one prophesied to defeat Voldemort and remove his reign of terror over the wizarding world permanently. The text of the prophecy fits Harry to the hilt; Harry is the son of “those who have thrice defied him,” his birthday is on July 31st, “as the seventh month dies,” and Voldemort did indeed, “mark him as his equal.” However, Harry “has power the Dark Lord knows not” (Rowling *Order of the Phoenix* 841). It would appear that Voldemort has chosen Harry to be his personal opponent, and much like the prophecy concerning Christ and Satan in Genesis 3:15 which says, “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel” ([Bible Gateway](#)), Jesus is Satan’s personal opponent. Satan’s defeat is achieved through Christ’s resurrection, “crushing” Satan’s head. Harry’s role as the redeemer of the wizarding world closely parallels with Jesus’ role as the redeemer of Christians.

One element of the *Harry Potter* novels that might seem insignificant through the entire series is the centerpiece of the first novel. *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*’s title says it all—the Sorcerer’s Stone (or Philosopher’s Stone in accordance with the legend and the British book title) can be identified as a symbol of redemption. Concerning the Sorcerer’s Stone, the text states, “*The ancient study of alchemy is concerned with making the Sorcerer’s Stone, a legendary substance with astonishing powers. The stone will transform any metal into pure gold. It also produces the Elixir of Life, which will make the drinker immortal*” (Rowling *Sorcerer’s Stone* 220). The Elixir of Life is what Voldemort is seeking throughout the first book; this elixir offers an interesting comparison with the biblical “Elixir of Life.” In John 4:13-14, Jesus, speaking to a Samaritan woman, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” It is also interesting to note that Jesus describes this water in John 4:10 as “living water”—the biblical Elixir of Life ([Bible Gateway](#)). It is simple to conclude from this illustration that the Elixir of Life which comes from the Sorcerer’s Stone is congruent with the living water offered by “Christ Jesus...the chief cornerstone” ([Bible Gateway](#) Ephesians 2:20). This is just one of the many examples of redemption found in the *Harry Potter* novels.

In *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, there is a symbol for redemption that is perhaps less

obvious than much of the symbolism found in *Harry Potter*. When Harry and Ron decide to take the flying Ford Anglia to school when they miss the Hogwarts Express, the two boys crash into the Whomping Willow and are in huge trouble. How these two escape the severe hand of Severus Snape may be seen as an almost allegorical representation of redemption. Consider this author's interpretation of Harry and Ron's sentencing:

Harry and Ron represent Man and Professor Snape represents Satan the Accuser. Satan has no power to condemn man, so he fetches those that do, Professors Dumbledore and McGonagall, who represent God the Father and Jesus the Son. Man is forgiven his sin (Misuse of muggle artifacts, underage wizardry, destruction of school property, and performing magic before muggles), but still must suffer the consequences (detention), but is spared bane of hell, away from the presence of God (expulsion from Hogwarts and the God figure, Dumbledore). After Man is absolved his sin, he is rejoiced over in Heaven (the celebration in Gryffindor tower). (Rowling *Chamber of Secrets* 79-85)

Indeed, this allegory is not quite as apparent as the other symbolism offered in *Harry Potter*, but this interpretation offers a look at redemption comparable to John Granger's comparison in *Looking for God in Harry Potter*. Granger writes about the fight with Tom Riddle at the end of *Chamber of Secrets* calling it, "the most transparent Christian allegory of salvation history since Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*" (133). Granger sees Harry as Everyman, Tom Riddle as Satan, Ginny Weasley represents man's virgin innocence and purity, the basilisk is sin, Dumbledore is God, Fawkes the Phoenix is Jesus, the Phoenix song is the Holy Spirit, the sword of Gryffindor is the sword of the Spirit (Granger notes Ephesians 6:17), the Chamber of Secrets is the world, and Hogwarts represents heaven. He sees this allegory play out as such,

Man, alone and afraid in the world, loses his innocence. He tries to regain it but is prevented by Satan, who feeds on his fallen, lost innocence. Man confesses and calls on God the Father while facing Satan, and is graced immediately by the Holy Spirit and the protective presence of Christ. Satan confronts man with the greatness of his sins. God sends man the sword of the Spirit, which he uses to slay his Christ-weakened enemy. His sins are absolved, but the weight of them still means man's death. Satan rejoices. But the voluntary suffering of Christ heals man! Man rises from the dead, and with Christ's help, man destroys Satan. Man's innocence is restored, and he leaves the world for heaven by means of the

Ascension of Christ. Man, risen with Christ, lives with God the Father in joyful thanksgiving. (Granger 135-36)

Granger's allegory indeed offers a strong parallel between the Christian Salvation story and Harry's redemption in *Chamber of Secrets*. Similarly, Kristin Kay Johnston notes, "...Harry descends into the underground chamber to fight the evil serpent (the basilisk) and rescue Ginny 'from the dead'" (6). Although Johnston and Granger's interpretations of the literature are varied slightly, each still points to the scenes in *Chamber of Secrets* as a redemptive work. The presence of these symbols in the pit Chamber of Secrets (the actual chamber, not the book) places them as a ray of hope of redemption in the midst of the dreadful surroundings.

In *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* we move from the depths of the Chamber of Secrets to the skies on the wings of a Hippogriff. *Prisoner of Azkaban* is one of the most popular of the *Harry Potter* novels. *Prisoner of Azkaban* is also different from the other novels of the series in its format. The ending is what sparks this contrast. Unlike the other five volumes of *Harry Potter* that have been released, Harry and the Trio are not the ones being rescued at the end of the novel; rather, Harry and Hermione are the redemptive figures in *Prisoner of Azkaban*. The redemption of Sirius Black and Buckbeak the Hippogriff is the main focus. There is no great encounter with Voldemort as seen in the other novels, although there is an encounter with his servant, Peter Pettigrew. Harry feels his and Hermione's efforts to save Sirius were futile since Sirius is still believed to be a loyal servant of Voldemort, murderer of Peter Pettigrew, and Judas Iscariot to Lily and James Potter. Professor Dumbledore believes differently however, saying "Didn't make any difference? ...It made all the difference in the world, Harry. You helped uncover the truth. You saved an innocent man from a terrible fate" (Rowling *Prisoner of Azkaban* 425). As Harry has spared Sirius from a terrible fate, Christ has spared the Church their terrible fate. Colossians 1:13-14 states, "For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Bible Gateway). Sirius Black has been rescued from "the dominion of darkness" that is Azkaban Prison by the son of his best friend. As in John 8:36, being set free by the Son is being free indeed (Bible Gateway).

In all of the *Harry Potter* novels, the final scenes usually point to some form of redemption. In the finale of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, Harry is redeemed from Voldemort through the "old magic" of his mother's love. In *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, Harry and Ron are rescued from expulsion from Hogwarts, and Harry and Ginny are redeemed from death through Fawkes the Phoenix and his gifts. Sirius Black is spared the fate of a Dementor's Kiss in *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*. In *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, Harry is redeemed from Voldemort and the Death Eaters by the echoes of those Voldemort

has murdered; and in what appears to be a literal interpretation of Hebrews 12:1, these echoes are much like an actual, “great cloud of witnesses” ([Bible Gateway](#)). Dumbledore comes to the rescue in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, foiling Voldemort and saving Harry and the DA. And in his final redemptive act, Albus Dumbledore lays his life down for Harry in *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*. That there is some symbol of redemption found in the finale of all the *Harry Potter* novels may be very telling. Biblically speaking, redemption is the final end point of Christ’s work on the cross. The redemption of his saints is the main focus—the chief result of salvation—as is noted in Revelation 12:10, “Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: ‘Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down’” ([Bible Gateway](#)). The defeat of the evil one, the redemption of saints from evil, and the authority of the redeemer is established—this is the pattern the redemption story follows in the Bible, but also in *Harry Potter*. This same pattern can be identified in *The Chronicles of Narnia*. *The Chronicles of Narnia* offers many examples of redemption. Much like *Harry Potter*, an example of redemption can be found in each volume, and oftentimes, this symbol of redemption is the centerpiece for the entire story.

In chronological order (based on the Narnian time line), *The Magician’s Nephew* is the first *Narnia* chronicle. It is in this first novel that the reader may find a strong symbol for redemption. Digory Kirke has entered the Garden in hopes of finding something to cure his sick mother. The Witch attempts to trick Digory into stealing an apple that would provide healing for his mother, despite the warning he received upon entering, which states, “Come in by the gold gates or not at all,/Take of my fruit for others or forbear,/For those who steal or those who climb my wall/Shall find their heart’s desire and find despair” (Lewis *Magician’s Nephew* 92). Despite the Witch’s urgings, Digory resists, but is deeply saddened that he may not be able to help his mother. He returns to Aslan, who says, “That is what would have happened, child, with a stolen apple. It is not what will happen now. What I give you now will bring joy. It will not, in your world, give endless life, but it will heal” (Lewis *Magician’s Nephew* 100-01). As the apple, the gift of Aslan, does not bring eternal life in the world of men, neither does Christ’s gift bring eternal life in this world. However, the gifts both Aslan and Christ offer do bring eternal life in their world. Jesus said in Luke 17:33, “Whoever tries to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it” ([Bible Gateway](#)). Digory, after being tempted to “keep” the apple (representing life), but instead chooses to “lose” the apple, gains life. Digory Kirke’s mother is revived and becomes one who, as in Ephesians 2:1-5, was “dead” but is now “alive” through the work of redemption ([Bible Gateway](#)).

The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe offers one of the most transparent symbols of redemption in the sacrifice of Aslan for Edmund Pevensie. Aslan has met the requirements of the Deep Magic—he has died a traitor’s death—the death Edmund deserved. Aslan, alive again through the power of the Deeper Magic, is the one who brings life again to those turned to stone by the White Witch’s wand, his presence turns the tide in the Battle of Beruna, and is the one who conquers the White Witch herself in battle. With Aslan being the foremost and established Christ figure in *Narnia*, it is by this same token that the reader can identify all of these acts as a work of redemption for not only Edmund, but also for the entire country of Narnia. The text states, “The battle was all over a few minutes after their arrival. Most of the enemy had been killed in the first charge of Aslan and his companions; and when those who were still living saw that the Witch was dead they either gave themselves up or took flight” (Lewis *Lion...* 192). Aslan has saved the day in the same way Christ has saved the lives of those who follow him.

Aslan again plays the role of the redeemer in *The Horse and His Boy*. The beginning of the life of Shasta (or as the reader later learns, Prince Cor of Archenland) in *The Horse and His Boy* is a redemption story in itself. An infant Shasta has been set adrift in a boat and is discovered by a Calormene fisherman named Arsheesh. When Shasta learns his true identity, he learns what, or rather who, has perpetuated his entire journey—Aslan. Cor informs Aravis of the prophecy about his life and how he would become savior to Archenland. When Cor is telling Aravis about how all this came to be, he makes an interesting comment:

The Lord Bar himself had been killed in the battle. But one of his men said that, early that morning, as soon as he saw he was certain to be over hauled, Bar had given me to one of his knights and sent us both away in the ship’s boat. And that boat was never seen again. But of course that was the same boat that Aslan (he seems to be at the back of all the stories) pushed ashore at the right place for Arsheesh to pick me up. (Lewis *Horse...* 302)

Aslan has redeemed Cor from death, and by the same token, Cor has become a redeemer to the entire nation of Archenland—Savior to his people. Like Cor, there were similar prophecies surrounding Jesus’ birth. Matthew 1:21 says, “She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins” ([Bible Gateway](#)). Cor’s destiny is to rescue his people, as Jesus’ destiny is the same—both have brought about the redemption of their people.

Prince Caspian is the fourth chronological installment in *The Chronicles of Narnia*. The novel’s title character is also a product of redemption. Caspian is an orphan prince, living with his aunt and uncle who are

acting King and Queen of Narnia in the absence of Caspian's father and mother. When his aunt, the Queen, finally give birth to a child, a son, Caspian's life is in great danger. Awakened in the night by his tutor, Dr. Cornelius, Caspian is hurried away for fear of his life. Caspian is unsure if his Uncle Miraz would really choose to murder him. Dr. Cornelius has only this in reply, "He murdered your Father" (Lewis *Prince Caspian* 343). With this ominous warning, Caspian is sent away to refuge in Archenland. Here the reader sees Prince Caspian seeking refuge, as the Christian seeks refuge in Jesus Christ. 2 Samuel 22:2-3 says, "The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation. He is my stronghold, my refuge and my savior—from violent men you save me" ([Bible Gateway](#)). The horn mentioned in this particular passage of scripture is interesting when thought of in the context of the very important gift Dr. Cornelius gives Caspian—the magic horn of Queen Susan. This horn summons help when blown, which may be interpreted as a "horn of salvation." These are but a few of the symbols of redemption found in *Prince Caspian*.

As mentioned in previous discussion of *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, Eustace Scrubb is changed into a dragon through the working of a magical bracelet and his own greed. Aslan, the Christ figure, is the only one capable of reversing Eustace's dragon-like state. Eustace's state is reminiscent of the human condition. As Eustace is trapped in his dragon form with no chance of escaping it on his own, so humanity is caught in its own sin. Eustace does not want to be a dragon any longer, but as in Romans 7:18, "I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out" ([Bible Gateway](#)). Aslan tells Eustace when he tries to take his own dragon scales off, "You will have to let me undress you" (Lewis *Dawn Treader* 474). Aslan cleans Eustace up, transforms him from a dragon into a boy again, and dresses him in new clothes. The prophet Isaiah speaks of a similar dressing in Isaiah 61:10, "I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels" ([Bible Gateway](#)). Eustace has been "clothed" with righteousness. His salvation is found in Aslan, the Christ figure.

The Silver Chair is quite varied from the other *Narnia* chronicles. Aslan is not as physically present in this novel, but he is the motivator for the entire quest to save Prince Rilian. Aslan sends Jill Pole and Eustace Scrubb on this journey, accompanied by the Marsh-wiggle, Puddleglum. The entire quest to find Prince Rilian is another redemption story. Rilian is held captive by the enemy (Satan), cannot break free of the spell he is under on his own (sin), and to break the enchantment, Rilian (and now Puddleglum, Jill, and Eustace also) must

declare their faith and belief in Aslan and Narnia. Puddleglum makes his declaration to the Witch,

Suppose we *have* only dreamed, or made up, all those things—trees and grass and sun and moon and stars and Aslan himself. Suppose we have. Then all I can say is that, in that case, the made-up things seem a good deal more important than the real ones. Suppose this black pit of a kingdom of yours *is* the only world. Well it strikes me as a pretty poor one. And that’s a funny thing, when you come to think of it. We’re just babies making up a game, if you’re right. But four babies playing a game can make a play-world which licks your real world hollow. That’s why I’m going to stand by the play-world. I’m on Aslan’s side even if there isn’t any Aslan to lead it. I’m going to live as like a Narnian as I can even if there isn’t any Narnia. (Lewis *Silver Chair* 633)

It is at this point that the Witch knows she cannot charm their belief in Narnia out of them, and she tries to destroy them in her snake form, but is slain by Prince Rilian, Puddleglum, and Eustace. The *Silver Chair* story offers a similar set-up for the redemption plot as the one John Granger points out in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, with its plotline featuring a person in need of redemption, a savior, declaration of belief, and salvation.

The Last Battle is the final volume of *Narnia* and features a strong Biblical parallel for redemption. *The Last Battle* portrays the final redemption of those who believe in and trust Aslan—the rapture of his followers. Aslan has pulled his followers out of a dying Narnia. Likewise, Christ has promised the redemption of his followers, saying in Matthew 24:31, “And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other” ([Bible Gateway](#)). Aslan performs a similar act in *The Last Battle*; he has pulled his followers out of Narnia, which is dying and falling into chaos. Aslan shuts the door on Narnia and the whole land is destroyed. The book of Revelation tells of the second coming of Christ, the destruction of the world, and the taking of believers into the new heaven and the new earth. This is what has happened to the Pevensies, Polly, and Digory; the expression of joy and rapture that is held by the followers of Aslan is unparalleled. Lucy asks, “‘We’re so afraid of being sent away, Aslan. And you have sent us back into our own world so often.’ ... ‘Your father and mother and all of you are—as you used to call it in the Shadowlands—dead. The term is over: the holidays have begun. The dream is ended: this is the morning’” (Lewis *Last Battle* 767). This is the bright morning that Christ has promised for his followers that Aslan has brought his followers to as well.

There are quite a few symbols of redemption found in these novels; this is by no means a definitive list. There are also some patterns found in *Harry Potter* and *The Chronicles of Narnia* that are worthy of note. In *Harry Potter*, Harry himself is the most common object of redemption. He is the one who finds himself in need of a savior most often, with the exception of *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, where he and Hermione are saviors to Sirius Black and Buckbeak the Hippogriff. The method redemption is portrayed in *Harry Potter* is multifaceted—many characters play the role of redeemer, but there is a symbol for redemption in each book. In *The Chronicles of Narnia*, Aslan is the sole redeemer, but also uses others in his acts of redemption. *The Silver Chair*, for example Aslan uses Eustace, Jill, and Puddleglum to find Prince Rilian and save him from his captivity. Since Aslan is the sole Christ figure in *Narnia*, he is also the sole redeemer. One thing that holds true through both of these series is this—redemption always takes place through a Christ figure and that Christ figure is motivated by agapē love.

CONCLUSION

“His hand closed automatically around the fake Horcrux, but in spite of everything, in spite of the dark and twisting path he saw stretching ahead for himself, in spite of the final meeting with Voldemort he knew must come, whether in a month, in a year, or in ten, he felt his heart lift at the thought that there was still one last golden day of peace left to enjoy with Ron and Hermione.” – Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince, 652.

What may be determined from all this discussion of *Harry Potter* and *The Chronicles of Narnia* and symbols of agapē love, Christ figures, and redemption? That there is enough material to discuss for the length of a thesis is notable. That there is enough secondary material to allow for this type of discussion is something that is also worthy of mention. *Harry Potter* does not appear to be the dangerous book series that many Christians have made it out to be. The comparison with *The Chronicles of Narnia* is demonstrative of that. But the question still remains, what does all this mean? Taking each of the symbols discussed respectively and combining them, readers may be able to form some conclusions about their presence in *Harry Potter* and *The Chronicles of Narnia*.

One thing that is useful to note initially is that where there is one symbol of agapē love, a Christ figure, or redemption, the other two symbols are often present as well. Biblically speaking, this is true as well. Let us recall John 3:16 for example, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” ([Bible Gateway](#)). Breaking the verse down, the Greek word used for “loved” is “agapaō,” which is related to the Greek word, “agapē;” there is mention of the Son—the Christ figure, and finally, the redemption of those who believe, “whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” These three aspects are a representation of something akin to the Holy Trinity. This is also proven Biblically. The three parts of the Holy Trinity are God the Father, God the Son (Jesus Christ), and God the Holy Spirit. 1 John 4:8 notes that God is love, and in the Greek the word used for love in that verse is indeed, agapē (Strong 1587). Therefore, God the Father is the embodiment of agapē love. Next in the

Trinity is God the Son—Jesus Christ—the ultimate sacrifice for sin and the original Christ figure. The final part of the Trinity is God the Holy Spirit. Jesus promises the Holy Spirit will come to his disciples after his death. John 14:26 says, “But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you” ([Bible Gateway](#)). The Holy Spirit is received as a mark of redemption; it is redemption itself as in Titus 3:5, “He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit” ([Bible Gateway](#)). Therefore, redemption may be seen as a representation of the Holy Spirit. The symbols of agapē love, the Christ figures, and redemption are much like the Trinity, and these symbols are the ones found most often in each of the *Harry Potter* and *Narnia* novels.

As John Granger and Carrie Birmingham have both noted, it seems unlikely that all of this symbolism in *Harry Potter* is there by mistake, mere chance, or accident. Why then is *Harry* often excluded from Christian literary circles? Dan McVeigh notes in his article, “Is Harry Potter Christian?” “But clearly Rowling writes in a specifically Christian literary tradition. The catch? That tradition is one whose High Church roots—Anglican and Roman Catholic—make assumptions built into Rowling’s use of it inaccessible to a significant segment of American Christianity.” McVeigh makes an interesting point; Rowling has not formally made any statements about her faith, save that she is a member of the Church of Scotland and that she believes in God. However, these statements and the wealth of symbolic material that is found in these novels may be enough to indicate that the study of *Harry Potter* in Christian circles may be useful and even edifying. We do not know for sure if J. K. Rowling is intentional in all of this symbolism, but that her works are even capable of being interpreted in the same manner as C. S. Lewis’ *Chronicles of Narnia*, seems to speak for itself to some degree. Parents who are concerned about their children reading *Harry Potter* should not fear its content, since the books are easily interpreted under the lens of Christian symbolism.

With one *Harry Potter* book remaining in the series (set to be released in the summer of 2007), readers may hope to discover an even greater wealth of Christian symbolism in the novels, whether J. K. Rowling chooses to reveal her true intentions concerning the novels or not. With *Harry Potter* as one of the most popular novel series for children available today, events or scenes from the novels may be easily used as an “exemplum” or sermon illustration, just as easily as many use now with Lewis’ *Narnia*. (The discussion of Christ figures in this thesis might be a good place to start.) In short, the discussion is not finished here. There are many, many more symbols left to discuss in *Harry Potter* and *The Chronicles of Narnia*. As John 21:35 notes, “Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the

whole world would not have room for the books that would be written” (Bible Gateway). Something similar may be said of the wealth of symbolism in Harry Potter and The Chronicles of Narnia; there is still much left to be discussed, and in doing so there are many more books to be written. As the narrator notes on Harry’s thoughts in the introductory quote, he still has one more golden day left to enjoy with Ron and Hermione. Readers too have one more golden day left with Book 7, and as C. S. Lewis remarks in *The Last Battle*, Harry and his friends may meet with an endless day where, like an endless book—each chapter is better than the last.

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