

Witchcraft and Harry Potter

By Sherry Taylor

"Ten thousand years we've
struck the fire
Creation's music freely sung,
With magick joined we've
praised the stars
Since first the world begun.
Our spirit lives in timeless
dance
The Tarot and the Rune,
And nights united in the power
Of Drawing Down the Moon."

-David O. Norris

First a story: in Charlottesville, Virginia, Buford Middle school had planned to take every student to see the new Harry Potter movie. They sent out the permission slips and got everything ready when at the last moment two of the parents came and claimed that they could not do this because Harry Potter promoted Witchcraft and Satanism.

The material I'm about to present is the basics on Witchcraft, the history and how movies misrepresent this religion. By the end of this article, I will, no doubt end up defending Harry Potter, and perhaps angering a few people who do not share my beliefs. For that I do not apologize, for that is my opinion.

Witchcraft. A history

First of all, Wicca, Paganism, or witchcraft is not, nor has it ever been an occult, as the occult is known today. The occult is identified now with Satanism, which has nothing to do with Paganism. The term "witch" is derived from the word Wicca, which is a Pagan religion. "Witches usually follow their own path, and don't meander along with a crowd just because somebody says so. Witches practice individualism,

freedom of thought, and have a close connection with the world around them, including plants, animals, and other people. We commune with streams, sky, fire, trees, and rocks, much like the indigenous ancestors of America," says Silver Ravenwolf, author of *Teen Witch*.

Paganism is an age-old religion, and is a backdrop to many monotheistic religions. Christianity indirectly stemmed off of Paganism. During the Dark Ages, the Church sought out a plan to promote Christianity and to get rid of paganism. They used various methods including torture, fear and misinformation. The Church created the Inquisition, which was comprised of influential men who persecuted innocent people all over Europe. Historians believe that during this time, the Witch Finders murdered over two million people. By the time the men of the Inquisition were through, the female population had fallen to an alarming low.

Men are capable of great evil, and they, at times, changed the Bible to free them of responsibility and to fit their purposes. "...Religious leaders changed the Bible, particularly in one passage, where it still says 'Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.' In the original language of the Bible the wording was 'Thou shalt not suffer a poisoner to live,'" says Ravenwolf.

There are many misconceptions of Paganism, including the belief that Pagans worship the Devil. This is not so, the Devil is a Christian belief, and Pagans feel that to name something evil is to give it power. "...Humans create the evil in the world and are too chicken to take responsibility for what our minds, hearts, and hands have wrought in negative circumstances. Human beings find great joy in laying the

on some mythical being rather than owning up to what we have, in error, created ourselves," says Ravenwolf.

There is nothing negative about Paganism, despite what many may think. Those who think this are not educated in the practice of Wicca. Pagans do not eat babies or kill animals. They do not drink blood of *any* animal and do not believe in the Devil. They do not dress all in black or do curses or hurt people in any way. They do not work black magic (Ever mind the rule of three, what you give out comes back to thee). They do not, no matter how much fun it sounds, fly on broomsticks. They don't call themselves warlocks ("truth twister") nor can they change their hair color in the blink of an eye.

Pagans also do not pervert the symbols of other religions, and they do not appreciate when their symbols are perverted. The most common is the inverted pentagram. There is nothing evil about the pentagram, it simply stands for the four elements: Earth, Air, Fire and Water, with the circle meaning ever lasting love. Christians do not like when their cross is inverted nor do Jews like when the Star of David is perverted as well, so it should stand to reason why an inverted pentagram angers the Pagans. Pagans also believe that there is not one true path to God, they accept other religions without prejudice or malice. Unfortunately, some people use Paganism as a means of backlash. In one instance, a Fundamentalist Christian is suing his ex-wife for custody of their child. He is using her religion (Wiccan) as grounds for her being unfit as a mother. Being a Pagan or Wiccan should have no effect on a person's character, anymore than being a Christian or Jewish might have. Which also