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Which Witch?
The Controversy Surrounding Bewitched and Harry Potter

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Abstract

Beginning in 1999, J.K. Rowling began to receive criticism about her *Harry Potter* series, which was first published in 1997. Christian Fundamentalists in opposition to the books argued that occult themes present in the series were harmful to the spiritual development of children. Those in opposition cited the negative response to the popular TV series *Bewitched* during its initial airing in the 1960s as grounds for rejecting *Harry Potter*. This connection was made because the popular television series and the successful book series both contained witchcraft elements; however, this connection is false. Primary sources show that *Bewitched* was not challenged based on the issue of witchcraft during its initial airing in the 1960s and 1970s. Despite modern Christian fundamentalists' claims, the modern negative response to *Bewitched* is built on contemporary reflection. When Christian fundamentalists seek to prove that their outcry against the witchcraft used in *Harry Potter* is not unique it is suggested that America had rejected a form of media based on witchcraft when the public spoke out against *Bewitched* in the 1960s. In fact, the claim that *Bewitched* received criticism during its initial airing is incorrect. My research shows a direct contemporary correlation between the protest to *Harry Potter* beginning in 1999 and the rejection of *Bewitched* by Christian fundamentalists based on the issue of witchcraft.

Keywords

Controversy surrounding *Bewitched* and *Harry Potter*, Christian Fundamentalists, witchcraft, Southern Conservative, censorship

Definitions

Fundamentalist/Christian Fundamentalist

For the purpose of this research, a "Fundamentalist/Christian Fundamentalist" is a self-identified fundamentalist. A fundamentalist is an individual who rejects the modern liberal movement of Christianity that began in the early 20th century. Another common characteristic is that they believe that the Bible should be taken literally. The rejection the early 20th century movement and the literal translation of biblical scriptures makes one a fundamentalist. An author identifies or labels another person or group as fundamentalist/Christian fundamentalist by referring to the person/persons as such in written or spoken form.

Tract/Christian Tract

A Christian tract is a literary work of religious nature meant to show the readers' need to accept Jesus Christ as their personal savior. Christians believe that by accepting Jesus Christ as one's personal savior, that person will ascend to heaven after they die. Tracts are usually handed out or left in public places, like restrooms and restaurants, for people to find.

Southern Conservative

This term refers to people who live in the southern states in America. States included are Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas.

Introduction

Bewitched was the most successful supernatural sitcom brought into American households during the 1950s and 1960s.¹ At the premiere of the show in 1964, supernatural sitcoms were still a new phenomenon on primetime television. The public reception of supernatural themed shows was still vague while *Bewitched* was being developed in the early 1960s. *My Favorite Martin* premiered on CBS in 1963 and served as a push for *Bewitched*.² The show based on the crazy antics of an alien was successful and well received by American audiences and allowed the development team of *Bewitched* to continue their exploration in creating a supernatural sitcom centered on Samantha and Darrin.

The ABC network was concerned about the use of witchcraft in a show, and precautions taken by the network during the development of the show prevented outcry against *Bewitched*. The response of Christian fundamentalist religious groups to the supernatural sitcom was limited

¹ Metz, Walter. *Bewitched*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2007. p. 14.

² Marc, David. *Comic Visions: Television Comedy and American Culture*. Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 1997. p. 111.

to only two documented reports of resistance. One documented concern was expressed to Sol Saks, the creator of the show, and the second concern to Dick York, the first Darrin. Saks was on a radio tour to promote a book of his. Before one show, the station manager asked Saks to refrain from mentioning anything about *Bewitched* because the station was family-oriented. Saks thought the request was silly because he included an early version of *Bewitched*'s pilot script in the book. Saks stated:

I found out later that it's the belief of some very conservative people that witches are considered very evil creatures. The truth of the matter is that there have always been bad witches and good witches, such as *Cinderella*'s godmother. I just couldn't understand how they were picking on little innocent Samantha.

Dick York was also doing a radio show when a listener called in and said that he would not let his children watch the show because it was sacrilegious. York respected the listener's remarks, but he held firm to his belief that the show was suitable for family viewing and the high ratings confirmed that America believed the show was suitable for families.³ The show was successful in portraying a controversial topic, witchcraft, without mass public resistance.⁴

Witchcraft in *Harry Potter* has stirred negative feelings in some people who believe that the use of witchcraft will desensitize children to this topic and negatively affect their personal spirituality. Some believe that tolerance to *Harry Potter* will lead children away from Christianity and towards groups that practice witchcraft.⁵ While the target audience of *Harry Potter* is children (although many adults now enjoy the series) and the *Bewitched* target audience was the family, *Bewitched* still brought occult themes into households.

³ Pilato, Herbie. *Bewitched Forever: The Immortal Companion to Television's Most Magical Supernatural Situation Comedy*. Irving: The Summit Publishing Group, 2001. pp. 22-23. Pilato

⁴ Pilato, p. 2

⁵ Koff, Eileen. "A Society Bewitched: The Subtle Lure of Occult Tolerance."

This research shows that the recent resistance to *Bewitched* has been created by the controversy surrounding *Harry Potter*. The resistance to *Bewitched* and *Harry Potter* began in 1999 and the books are commonly compared to one another by fundamentalists. When fundamentalists looked for a scapegoat to explain why books with occult themes, like *Harry Potter*, became popular, *Bewitched* bore the brunt of the blame.

Methods

Research for this project was through primary and secondary sources that provide information about the background and resistance to *Bewitched* and *Harry Potter*. Primary sources used included interviews, magazine articles, and newspaper articles. These documents were utilized to study the controversy (and lack of controversy) surrounding *Bewitched* and *Harry Potter*. Secondary sources provided detailed information on attitudes held by people concerning *Bewitched* and *Harry Potter*. I watched the complete first and second seasons and then every third episode in seasons following. This process was used since the ABC network was initially hesitant to air the show because of occult themes. I wanted to see if the magic used in the show varied between early episodes and later episodes. In addition, I read the seven books in the *Harry Potter* series to gain a background on the handling of occult themes in the series.

Common Misconceptions

When *Harry Potter* began to receive criticism in 1999 from Christian fundamentalists because of its use of occult themes, *Bewitched* began to receive opposition as well. Eileen Koff, a Christian public speaker, and the Christian fundamentalist tract writer, Jack Chick, attributed the success of *Harry Potter* to the acceptance of *Bewitched* during the 1960s.⁶ Francis Bridger, an Anglican theologian, explored how *Bewitched* allowed *Harry Potter* to become popular in his book, *A Charmed Life: The Spirituality of Potterworld*. Bridger states that *Bewitched* set the

⁶ Ibid., Builds the connection that *Harry Potter* was successful because of the early success of *Bewitched*

stage for *Harry Potter* by using magic as a comedic device.⁷ Koff, Chick, and Bridger all credit the success of *Harry Potter* to the early acceptance of *Bewitched*.

Koff, Chick, and Bridger state that the negative response to *Harry Potter* is not unique and that the resistance to the “Boy who Lived” is a mere repeat of the public outcry that unfolded when *Bewitched* aired during 1964-1972. Bridger suggests that *Bewitched* was accused of promoting witchcraft just as *Harry Potter* was beginning in 1999.⁸ Frustrated online bloggers who were outraged by the negative response that *Harry Potter* received believed that the outcry to *Harry Potter* was not unique. Bloggers asked those in opposition to *Harry Potter* to consider the outrage that America expressed during the initial airing of *Bewitched* in the 1960s.⁹ However, there was no outrage to *Bewitched* during the 1960s.

Precaution and Initial Reaction to *Bewitched*

In *Bewitched Forever: The Immortal Companion to Television’s Most Magical Supernatural Situation Comedy*, Herbie Pilato discussed the controversy surrounding *Bewitched* as being limited to hesitation of the ABC network and the show’s production crew.¹⁰ The *Bewitched* pilot was pitched to ABC President Tom Moore in 1963. He was initially hesitant to put a show on the air with a witchcraft theme. Moore believed, like many other television producers of the 1960s, that airing a show containing occult or Satanist themes would cause the network to lose viewers. In particular, Moore was afraid of losing viewers in the Bible Belt because of the supernatural themes in the show. Moore expressed his concerns about the show to

⁷ Bridger, Francis. *A Charmed Life: The Spirituality of Potterworld*. Reference found on p. 31.

⁸ Ibid. Reference found on p. 31.

⁹ Pilato., Reference is found throughout Chapter 3.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 45.

Bewitched director and producer, William Asher: “My network will lose all the South and Midwest.”¹¹

Moore was not the only person involved with *Bewitched* who was worried about the public’s reaction to a show that frequently used witchcraft. Agnes Moorehead, who played Endora, Samantha’s spell-casting mother, had initial doubts. Moorehead was a Presbyterian minister’s daughter and had grown up in a conservative Christian household. She identified herself as a fundamentalist Christian and stated “My life has been ruled by my beliefs working for the glory of God and in matters of belief I am a fundamentalist.”¹² Before signing on to shoot the pilot episode, Moorehead asked: “How could witchcraft appeal to the general public?”¹³ Moorehead dropped her questioning of the show and signed on once she realized that the motive of the show was to amuse viewers not to challenge personal beliefs. The actress did not believe that the pilot would even sell to a network because of the witchcraft used. A month after production wrapped up on the pilot, Moorehead received a call from producer Asher to let her know that ABC had picked up *Bewitched*. Even after ABC signed the show, Moorehead, like Tom Moore, was hesitant to believe that the show would be a success. Moorehead, who was still dabbling in other areas, including a one-woman show and musical theater, only agreed to sign on for eight of the twelve episodes during the first season.

Moorehead was known for standing up for her beliefs and played a crucial part in ensuring that *Bewitched* did not cross any boundaries that could possibly offend church goers. If she felt the show was overstepping boundaries, her opinions on the matter were heard. Her vital

¹¹ Ibid. Quote found on p. 12.

¹² Ibid., p. 23

¹³ Ibid., p. 23

insight regarding witchcraft, along with the cautious steps by the production team and ABC network, allowed *Bewitched* to mature into a show known for comedy rather than controversy. Moorehead understood, as did the rest of the production team, that *Bewitched* was a situation comedy meant to bring laughter into the home, not witchcraft.¹⁴

Tom Moore continued to delay ABC's decision about whether or not to place *Bewitched* in the fall 1964 line up. Pressure on Moore to pick up *Bewitched* began to build when Quaker Oats decided to back the show. Due to the hesitation of ABC, the show was offered to ABC's competitor, NBC. Despite his own discomfort, Moore gave the green light to produce *Bewitched*. From the beginning of the show, ABC was wary about the witchcraft theme and stressed that no dark elements would be used in the show. Moore continued to believe that ABC would suffer in the polls until *Bewitched* was ranked #2 in the Nielsen ratings after its first season.¹⁵

To comply with ABC's wish to have no dark magical elements in the show, Moore created guidelines for the creative team to follow. The production team made sure to exclude any references that could be taken for dark magic. In an interview, producer Jerry Davis affirmed that the show used magic for entertainment purposes only by stating: "We were very conscious not to cross those lines."¹⁶ The aim of this show, like that of any other television show, was to make money. The program did not have as its aim to compromise the values of its viewers.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 23

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 112.

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 15.

The Mainstreaming of *Bewitched*: Christianity and Philanthropy

While the series was running, producers appealed to the Protestant masses by incorporating traditional Christian beliefs into the show. The show stressed philanthropic ideals to illustrate Samantha's powers being used for the betterment of humankind, not its downfall.

In efforts to alleviate doubts of viewers concerned with witchcraft used in the show, executives focused on emphasizing traditional Christian values and practices in the show. The Stephens observed Sunday as a day of rest in several episodes, and the couple regularly observed Christmas. When a frog is transformed into a man by a witch in "Nobody but a Frog Knows How to Live," Samantha takes pity on him and transforms him back into a frog. Samantha says a silent prayer for guidance in the situation. Samantha helps out at a church fundraiser in "Double, Double, Toil and Trouble." In "Love is Blind" Samantha plays matchmaker between her close friend Gertrude and Darrin's artist buddy, Kermit. Darrin, who suspects Gertrude to be a witch, intervenes and arranges a date between a former lover (Susan) and Kermit. At the conclusion of the episode Kermit chooses Gertrude to wed. The closing scene is Samantha standing at the altar as a bridesmaid. Producers hoped that by placing the Stephens in traditional Christian practices, audiences would feel a deeper connection with Samantha and Darrin. The show was about the relationship between Samantha and Darrin and to give America hope that any problem could be solved with a little magic in 30 minutes.¹⁷

To further promote the normalcy of *Bewitched*, philanthropic themes were woven into episodes. Samantha promoted the children's charity, UNICEF, in the episode "Samantha Twitches for UNICEF." During the show, Samantha used her powers to persuade a businessman

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 23, 126, 159, and 161

who was blinded by a spell of greed to honor his \$10,000 pledge to the children's organization. In "Samantha Fights City Hall," the blonde witch uses her witchcraft to save a cherished city park from the hands of a greedy developer. The use of philanthropic themes allowed viewers to understand that Sam's magic was used to improve the lives of humans.¹⁸

Bewitched was liberal towards racial tolerance and constantly attempted to break the color barrier in America during what came to be the civil rights era. In "Samantha on the Keyboard" Endora transforms Tabitha (Samantha and Darrin's daughter) into a piano prodigy. Darrin challenges Samantha to take piano lessons, the mortal-way, without magic. Upon arriving at the Stephens' house one afternoon, the piano instructor, Mr. Monroe, hears Tabitha playing. He is impressed with the young girl's talent and brings a world-famous conductor to hear her play. Samantha, who is mortified by her mother's interference, demands Endora reverse the spell. Endora complies, and the conductor becomes upset with the childish piano key bashing that Tabitha produces for him. To save Mr. Monroe from further wrath, Samantha searches for another musical talent with this spell: "Piano child prodigy, if I am near you...Send vibrations so I can hear you... Youthful genius go on playing...I'm flying now and later paying." Sam discovers the son of a high school janitor playing in a music room. She presents Matthew Williams, a young African American with a gift for the piano to Mr. Monroe and the conductor. Both men are impressed by his talent and sweep the young boy off on a world tour. Samantha used her witchcraft to promote the African American child and ensured that he will have privileges he would have not had if Samantha did have not magical powers.¹⁹

¹⁸ Metz, p. 81

¹⁹ Pilato, p. 172

Marcella Saunders' 10th grade English class at Los Angeles's Jefferson High School was invited to the set of *Bewitched* by William Asher and Elizabeth Montgomery (Samantha). Asher and Montgomery were married throughout the filming of *Bewitched*. The teacher was trying to motivate her students to excel in writing and enlisted the *Bewitched* crew to help. William Asher chartered buses three times for the class to come to the set in Hollywood. Joan Mayher, a *TV Picture Life* writer reporting on the occasion, wrote: "He [Asher] and Elizabeth proceeded to make sure each occasion would be a memorable one."²⁰ On the class's first visit, Asher gave students a copy of the script so that they could follow along with the filming. Ms. Saunders reported that only six students in her class were reading at grade level and that over 44% of students were just at a third-grade reading level. She saw the actions of Asher and Montgomery as an opportunity for her students to become actively engaged with reading material. After the first visit, Saunders reported the great strides in reading her students made: "Kids who could not read were now doubling up on scripts."²¹

The students in Ms. Saunders' class were so motivated by their experience with Asher and Montgomery that the students brainstormed to surprise the couple with a present. One student suggested that the class write a *Bewitched* script. After numerous brainstorming sessions, the class decided to tell a story of racial acceptance. In the script, Tabitha meets a new friend, Lisa, who happens to be black. Tabitha, who wishes to become sisters with Lisa, casts a spell. Both girls end up with polka-dots on them; Lisa with white polka-dots, Tabitha with black ones. The class presented the wrapped script to the Ashers. Montgomery's response was: "We

²⁰ Mayher, Joan. "The Secret Liz Montgomery Shares with her Husband." *TV Picture Life* Dec 1971. <http://www.harpiesbizarre.com/vintagesisters.htm>

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 5

[Asher and herself] were overwhelmed...we've had manuscripts submitted by professional writers that weren't as well written or creative." William had the script approved and began to set the wheels in motion for "Sisters at Heart" to be filmed.²²

During the production of "Sisters at Heart" the students from Jefferson High School and the Ashers stretched themselves to ensure that the episode was well-produced and promoted. The students participated in the story conferences, production meetings, and show rehearsal. Elizabeth, who disliked talk shows, went on Merv Griffin's show to promote "Sisters at Heart," which was set to air on Christmas Eve 1970. The episode became Elizabeth's favorite and was the recipient of the Governor's Award at the 1971 Emmys. Due to the efforts of Ms. Saunders' English class, a fund was established for Jefferson High School to buy new equipment and materials for the school. When asked about the experience, one student responded:

We students at Jefferson High are never given a chance to prove what we are capable of doing because some feel we are too far gone to try to help. But there are people left who'll give us the chance to prove what we can do.²³

Bewitched allowed Asher and Montgomery to use their magic off the set to inspire inner-city students. The efforts of the couple were admired by the viewing audience, who, like Tabitha, felt that racial prejudice was unnecessary in the 1960s.²⁴

²² Ibid., p. 5

²³ Ibid., p. 7

²⁴ Pilato, p. 197

Reaction to *Harry Potter*

Negative reaction to *Harry Potter* began in 1999 with actions by three Michigan parents who felt that the witchcraft elements present in the series were too strong for impressionable children. These parents feared that once children read the series, they would begin to practice witchcraft.²⁵ Francis Bridger sums up the opposition to *Harry Potter* by Christian fundamentalists:

The Bible, [fundamentalists] argued, denounces witchcraft and the occult, and since *Harry Potter* is all about witchcraft and the occult, *Harry Potter* must be denounced and the books targeted for banning, burning, or (at the very least) labeling with warning stickers.²⁶

Concerned parents have urged for the series to be removed from school and public library shelves in the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada. The American Library Association (ALA) reports that there were more attempts to ban *Harry Potter* from library shelves than any other book in 1999. The series would remain on the “Top Ten Most Challenged Books” list until 2006.²⁷

Recently, in 2005, Georgia resident and mother of three, Laura Mallory appeared before the Gwinnett Board of Education, the Georgia Board of Education, and the Gwinnett County Superior Court in hopes she could have the series removed from Gwinnett County Public Schools. She is now considering taking her fight to federal court.²⁸ Mallory backs her campaign to have *Harry Potter* removed with statistics from the Barna Research Group, a marketing firm serving Christian ministries. The research group polled 612 teenagers between the ages of 13-19 and concluded from that data that

²⁵ Granger, John. *Looking for God in Harry Potter*. Salt Lake City: Saltriver, 2006.

²⁶ Bridger, Francis. Quote found on p. 4.

²⁷ American Library Association Office of Intellectual Freedom. “Free People Read Freely.” <http://www.ala.org/Template.cfm?Section=oif> (accessed March 2, 2008).

²⁸ Swanepoel, Sharon. “Harry’s Harsh Critic Speaks Out.” *The Loganville Tribune*. June 2007.

Teenagers who have read *Harry Potter* books or have seen the *Harry Potter* movie were more likely to have experimented with psychic or occult activities than those teens who had not ... the study revealed that 41 percent of teens have seen the Potter film or have read one or more of the Potter books. As a result of watching the movie or reading the books, 12 percent said they were more interested in witchcraft.²⁹

According to the Barna Research Group, of the teenagers who had read the series, twelve percent were drawn to witchcraft more than they were before reading the series. In an informal survey, MSNBC polled readers to express their opinions on *Harry Potter* (Table 1). MSNBC found that about one in every 10 readers polled believe that the series entices children to practice witchcraft. While this number is small, it still indicates that ten percent of Americans see some validity in Mallory's fight to have the series removed on the basis that *Harry Potter* causes young people to consider witchcraft.

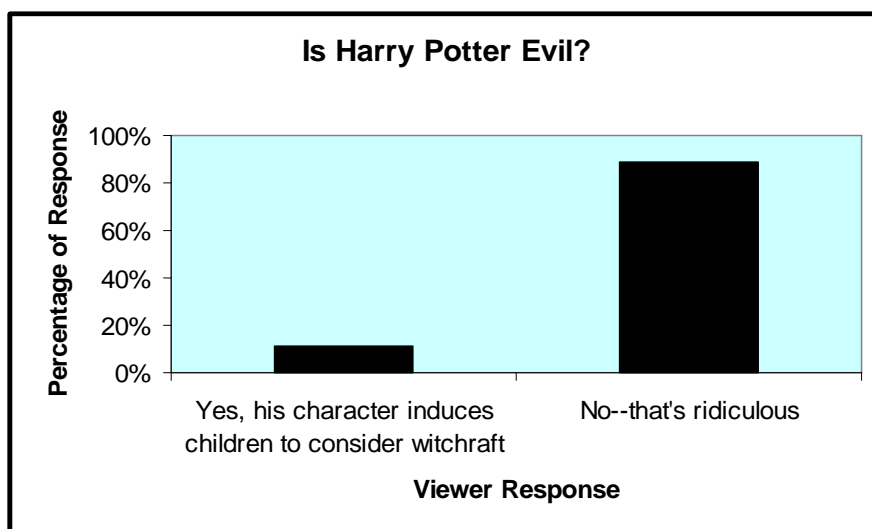


Table 1. Survey from MSNBC, 96,161 responses, 2008.

²⁹ Barna Group, The. "New Research Explores Teenage Views and Behavior Regarding the Supernatural." <http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdate&BarnaUpdateID=216> (accessed March 3, 2008).

Marriage of *Bewitched* and *Harry Potter*

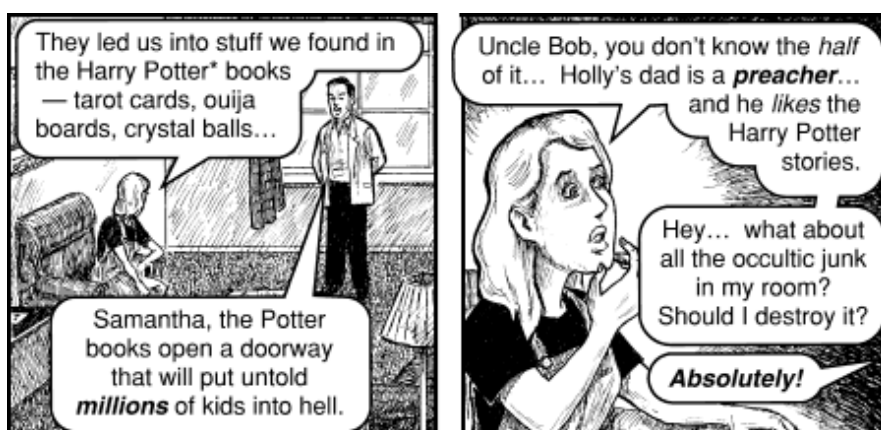
Jack Chick's "Bewitched?" tract was released in 2000 in 27 different languages and is the first documented publication to express opposition to *Bewitched* due to witchcraft themes used in the show (Figure 1). The tract blames the innocent aura that the ABC network and *Bewitched* production team created as a pathway to the deterioration of American morals.

"Bewitched?" was not Chick's only stab at Samantha and *Bewitched*. In 2002, Chick released "The Nervous Witch" that connects *Harry Potter* and *Bewitched*. The tract shows two teenaged girls, Samantha, a blond, with her friend Holly, who both actively practice witchcraft. The girls have dabbled in witchcraft by trying to cast spells and use Ouija boards, tarot cards, and crystal balls, which they discovered after reading the *Harry Potter* series. Samantha accepts Jesus as her savior and renounces the ways of her past when she practiced witchcraft (Figure 2).³⁰

³⁰ Chick, Jack. "Chick Publications." An original version of the tract "Bewitched?" and "The Nervous Witch" can be viewed on Chick's publication website. <http://www.chick.com/default.asp> (accessed November 10, 2007)



Figure 1. Jack Chick's Christian evangelical tract entitled "Bewitched?" (Source: Chick Publications)



*See the video, "Harry Potter: Witchcraft Repackaged," available from Chick Publications.

Figure 2. Jack Chick's Christian evangelical tract entitled "The Nervous Witch?" (Source: Chick Publications)

Chick's accusation that *Bewitched* and *Harry Potter* had desensitized society to occult themes is not unique; Eileen Koff gave a lecture at a conference on a similar subject. During a conference on inner healing in 2000, Koff gave a talk entitled "A Society Bewitched: The Subtle Lure of Occult Tolerance" in which she credited the increase of occult practices to the appealing lifestyle shown in the Stephens' household. Koff stated that while the issues of drugs, abuse, promiscuity, and moral decline were on the rise beginning in the 1960s, the influences of these issues on society has been more intense in the present time than in any other. She further affirmed that the acceptance of witchcraft was more widely received and that the increased interest in the supernatural realm was directly correlated with the glamorous lifestyle that *Bewitched* portrayed. To Koff, the acceptance of the supernatural lifestyle portrayed in *Bewitched* has resulted in the acceptance of occult themes in other sources. Koff went on to encourage her audience to guard their children from occult media, including *Harry Potter*.³¹

Koff views *Bewitched* as a beginning of the deterioration of morals in America. Viewers who were spellbound by Samantha and Endora's abilities were given the impression that they were positive characters—which Koff believes fooled Christians to not speak out against the show. In her lectures, Koff asked her audience: "How many of us [Christians] were beguiled by the craftiness of witchcraft? Did we scrutinize the message?" She went on to state:

Were we so caught up in the new special effects, that we forgot that witchcraft, in any form, is abomination to the Lord? Over the period from the 60s to today, the message of Samantha has changed very little. What has changed is the blatancy of witchcraft now seen as an acceptable form of belief.

Bewitched, according to Koff, opened the opportunity for more forms of media with occult themes to become available to young people. These new sources containing witchcraft elements,

³¹ Koff. The speech is used to encourage parents to prevent their children from reading the *Harry Potter* series.

such as *Harry Potter* and *Pokemon*, infiltrate the minds of children and make them, according to Koff, more vulnerable to the world of witchcraft. Koff encourages her audience to throw these influences out of their home and gives various Bible verses to support her opposition to the use of witchcraft.³²

Modern resistance to *Bewitched* began a year after resistance to *Harry Potter* started in 1999. As seen in Jack Chick's tract, "The Nervous Witch," (2001), comparisons between *Bewitched* and *Harry Potter* are common. After 1999, books speaking out against *Harry Potter* because of its occult themes began to be published. Articles and books have been released to encourage Christian parents to restrict their children from reading J.K. Rowling's publications. The resistance to *Bewitched* by fundamentalists is a new phenomenon that just recently began.

Discussion

It is crucial to point out that the majority of Christians do not have negative feelings toward *Bewitched* or *Harry Potter*. Organizations such as *Christian Today* and *Focus on the Family* are influential Christian groups that do not encourage readers and listeners to give up *Harry Potter*.³³ In fact, to the disgruntlement of some fundamentalist and conservative patrons, both organizations suggest that parents can strike up a conversation about witchcraft in a controlled environment by watching *Bewitched* and reading *Harry Potter* with their children.³⁴ Another argument is that if *Harry Potter* is opposed, then other books that have occult themes would also need to be opposed. Bridger states:

If we (Christians) reject *Harry Potter*, therefore, on the grounds that it endorses wizardry and magic, or has a tone of darkness about it, we (Christians) will also have to reject, on exactly the same grounds, both *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* and *The Lord of*

³² Ibid., p. 1

³³ Neal, Connie. Reference on pp. 16-20.

³⁴ Granger, John. pp. 215-226

the Rings, as well as keeping a rather close eye on certain parts of the Bible just in case children accidentally get the ‘wrong’ idea.³⁵

Comparing *Bewitched* and *Harry Potter* to other successful supernatural books, television shows, and movies would provide more insight into what causes fundamentalists to publicly reject certain books, shows, and movies and not others. C.S. Lewis and Tolkien both published successful book series, *The Chronicles of Narnia* and *The Lord of the Rings*, respectfully, and did not and have not received criticism for the magic used in each series. Bridger argues that these men have not received the same type of criticism that *Harry Potter* has because both men’s “Christian credentials were impeccable... [therefore, these men] are fireproof.”³⁶

In 2007, Phillip Pullman’s *The Golden Compass*, part of the *His Dark Materials* series, began to receive attention from Christian fundamentalists. The attention was not because of the witchcraft used in the series but, rather, for how the author’s personal belief, as an atheist were woven into the series. In the series, the protagonists seek to kill God. Christian groups, not just fundamentalist groups, joined with the Catholic League to encourage parents to boycott the book and the movie. President and CEO of the Catholic League Bill Donohue said: “These books denigrate Christianity, thrash the Catholic Church, and sell the virtues of atheism.”³⁷ The \$180 million dollar film was released on December 5, 2007 by New Line Cinema but, unlike *Harry Potter*, did not meet New Line’s expectations in North America. The film grossed only \$25 million its opening week in the United States, and many Christian groups credit the boycott by

³⁵ Bridger, Francis. p. 27

³⁶ Ibid. p. 22

³⁷ Evans, Catherine. “Christian Groups Claim Pro-Atheist ‘Stealth Campaign’ in Nicole Kidmand Fantasy Film ‘The Golden Compass.’” <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,305487,00.html> (accessed March 21, 2008).

parents as the reason for low figures. Even though the film was ill received in America, the film grossed over \$300 million worldwide.³⁸

Researching the controversy or lack of controversy surrounding *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *The Lord of the Rings*, *His Dark Materials* along with the controversy surrounding *Bewitched* and *Harry Potter* would show that an author's personal beliefs plays a crucial role in the acceptance of the book, television show, or movie by Christian fundamentalists. Lewis and Tolkien were public about their Christian beliefs, this fact made parents trust the author's decision to use magic in their series. Pullman, on the other hand, is public about his atheistic beliefs. The author has said that America seriously lacks literature for atheist children and that he hopes that the *His Dark Materials* series will fill this void.³⁹ *Bewitched* may have been helped by the personal beliefs of Agnes Moorehead. Her beliefs assured viewers that the show meant to use magic only as a comedic device. Rowling's personal beliefs were unknown until 2002 when she stated that she is a Christian. She is reported as saying that she wanted to keep her personal beliefs unknown so that the outcome of the series would be less predictable—in essence, she believed that if readers knew she was a Christian then they would conclude the series was an allegory of the Christian faith and assume that good would triumph over evil.⁴⁰ *Harry Potter* might have avoided criticism if the Christian beliefs of Rowling were made public in 1997. If Rowling's beliefs were public initially, the series might be held in the same high regard that fundamentalists hold *The Chronicles of Narnia* and *The Lord of the Rings* series.

³⁸ Ibid. p. 2

³⁹ Ibid. p. 3

⁴⁰ Nelson, Michal. "Fantasia: The Gospel According to C.S. Lewis." http://www.prospect.org/cs/articles?article=fantasia_the_gospel_according_to_cs_lewis (accessed March 3, 2007).

Conclusion

The careful planning of the ABC network as well as the cautious efforts taken by the cast and crew of *Bewitched* allowed the show to run for eight seasons with limited public outcry. The overly-cautious actions of ABC President Tom Moore and actress Agnes Moorehead were crucial in ensuring that the witchcraft used in the show was strictly for entertainment purposes. In addition, producers appealed to the Christian masses by incorporating traditional Christian beliefs into the show. Philanthropic ideals were incorporated to illustrate Samantha's powers being used for the betterment of humankind, not its downfall. The belief that *Bewitched* received criticism after its initial release because of occult themes used on the show is an exaggeration. The outcry that *Bewitched* received during the 1960s was confined to a few phone calls made to Sol Saks and Dick York.

Most of the criticism *Bewitched* has received is from modern sources like Jack Chick and Eileen Koff. When *Bewitched* is compared to *Harry Potter*, it is assumed that since both subjects use witchcraft that the response to both must have been the same. In other words, since *Harry Potter* has received criticism and backlash for witchcraft elements, *Bewitched* must have received negative feedback as well. *Bewitched* avoided negative feedback by the careful planning of the ABC network and the show's production team. The negative response to *Bewitched* assumed by modern fundamentalists is based on contemporary attitudes.

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