

Book 7, Episode 5, Resurrection with Matt Potts

SPEAKERS

Marcelle Kosman, Hannah McGregor, Matt Potts

(Witch, Please Theme Music plays) (Dance of the Priestesses by Victor Herbert Orchestra)

Marcelle Kosman 00:10

Hello and welcome to Witch, Please, a fortnightly podcast about the Harry Potter world. I'm Marcelle Kosman.

Hannah McGregor 00:17

And I'm Hannah McGregor, and Marcelle, this is officially our Halloween episode.

Marcelle Kosman 00:21

Oh, goody!

Hannah McGregor 00:22

Yeah. So I want to hear all about your favorite things about the scariest season in the sorting chat.

Marcelle Kosman 00:29

What a great sorting chat topic. I love this season.

Hannah McGregor 00:35

You actively tried to buy a house that was haunted so...I don't think I knew how much you liked ghosts before we started making this podcast and I found out that you want them in your house and your body. *(Soundbite of woman saying "ew")*

Marcelle Kosman 00:47

(laughs) Yeah. Yeah, it was a weird one. I almost told that anecdote to my students in the summer.

Hannah McGregor 00:35

No! Don't do that.

Marcelle Kosman 00:47

And then I was like, There's no way that'll help them respect you.
(laughs)

Hannah McGregor 01:02

One time, Marcelle let a ghost use her body like a mech suit.

Marcelle Kosman 01:07

A meat sack.

Hannah McGregor 01:08

Like a meat sack. Is your new house haunted?

Marcelle Kosman 01:12

Uhhhh, I don't think so. No.

Hannah McGregor 01:14

Okay. What are you going to do to up its haunted vibes this Halloween then?

Marcelle Kosman 01:20

Other than commit some murders in it?

Hannah McGregor 01:23

(laughs) Yeah. And in addition to.

Marcelle Kosman 01:26

I'm just joking, listeners. Yes. And I don't know. Probably. You know what, honestly, really? Nothing. This season. This season is all about survival mode for me. I actually forgot that it was Yom Kippur until I was like two glasses of wine in *(Soundbite of crowd gasping in shock)* and then was like, whoops!

Hannah McGregor 01:46

You know what? Lucky for you, Yom Kippur is all about apologizing for fucking up, right?

Marcelle Kosman 01:51

Yes. Yes. Let's talk about the best parts of Halloween, which are undeniably small creatures in costumes.

Hannah McGregor 02:00

Oh, yeah, absolutely. Kids, pets, kids and pets, kids and pets in matching costumes. Sorry, it just occurred to me that people could be putting their kids and their pets and matching costumes.

Marcelle Kosman 02:10

I think that the best people do.

Hannah McGregor 02:13

Marcelle, what is going to be Fae and Cohen's couple costume this year? (*laughs*)

Marcelle Kosman 02:20

Actually, thanks to our mutual friends, Caitlin and Steve, Cohen will be wearing a costume that matches their tiny child's costume and they will both be dressed as puppies.

Hannah McGregor 02:35

Oh, no.

Marcelle Kosman 02:36

(*laughs*) Yeah, it's got a tail. Yeah, I guess somebody who had twins was selling their kids' costumes. So it was like two for 10 bucks. How do you say no to that?

Hannah McGregor 02:47

You absolutely don't say no to that. And actually, if you could dress Fae up like a puppy as well, that would be ideal.

Marcelle Kosman 02:55

Yeah, I'll do my best. I'll do my best. Okay, but can I tell you one of my favorite new discoveries? I'm not sure if this is a new thing or if I've just noticed it for the first time this year. I love that fall brings with it casual goth home decor. And I don't mean like big foam tacky stuff that you put outside for the season. But I mean like plates, like decorative household things that are just super goth. *(laughs)*

Hannah McGregor 03:25

Yeah, I think Marcelle, that right now something that's happening where we the millennial generation are becoming middle aged homeowners. And because we spent all of our money on homes and have no other money left anywhere, we go to the dollar store and decorate our homes with various kinds of absurd kitsch.

Marcelle Kosman 03:49

That checks out, that checks out. Okay. Okay.

Hannah McGregor 03:52

No investment purchases for us.

Marcelle Kosman 03:54

Uh-uh. None whatsoever. Okay, well speaking of scary stuff, Hannah, what are your favorite things about the scary season?

Hannah McGregor 04:01

I mean, we've covered all of them. I love casual goth decor. I love kids and pets in costume. I love that suddenly for one month we all agree that chocolate bars should be very small. I love watching all of the adults being like I need to get some Halloween candy and it's like you know you can just buy a chocolate bar anytime. You're an adult. *(Marcelle laughs)* You can just buy a full size Oh Henry bar. You don't have to wait for October to buy like 70 tiny ones in individual wrappers. No, it's fine.

Marcelle Kosman 04:36

(laughs) Love that.

Hannah McGregor 04:37

Yeah, they even sell the small ones. You can just have candy whenever you want. But I like the way that people get excited about goofy things. And my top favorite thing is trick or treaters, which is always a challenge for me because I never ever live anywhere where trick or treaters come and so I'm always like, just trolling the streets on Halloween.

Marcelle Kosman 04:59

That's weird. *(both laugh)* That's weird.

Hannah McGregor 05:04

Yeah, just wandering the streets. A single woman just eyeing other people's kids.

Marcelle Kosman 05:08

I mean, you're really leaning into your spinster aesthetic, right? You know, eventually you're gonna decorate your entire condo in candy and lure the children in, right?

Hannah McGregor 05:19

That's the dream!

(Soundbite of Witch's song from Hocus Pocus plays)

(Witch, Please Theme Music plays)

Marcelle, I have a question. Is it offensive to make Halloween themed jokes that compare the resurrection to zombies?

Marcelle Kosman 05:54

Oh, jeez, Hannah. I feel like that's really a question for our guest. Not for me.

Hannah McGregor 05:58

It's a shame he's not allowed to talk yet because it's time for revision. *(Marcelle laughs)* So we have brought our favorite

theological expert back. So probably we should summarize what we talked about last time we got theological.

Marcelle Kosman 06:12

I think that's a great idea, Hannah. All right. So listeners you may remember, in our episode on The Soul with special guest, Matt Potts, we talked about the soul.

Hannah McGregor 06:29

(laughs) Right there on the chin.

Marcelle Kosman 06:30

We started by taking a look at the Hebrew Bible where there is no theory of the soul beyond nefesh, which Matt encouraged us to think of roughly as livingness. In the New Testament, nefesh is translated as psyche, which is closely aligned with pneuma, or spirit. What gets complicated here is the overlapping yet different understandings of the relationship between body and spirit. So on the one hand, we have the Gnostic tradition in which the flesh is the spirit's prison.

Hannah McGregor 07:04

Your body is a cage.

Marcelle Kosman 07:05

Yeah, that keeps me from dancing with someone you love. Yeah, but my mind holds the key. ***(Soundbite from "My Body Is a Cage" by Arcade Fire: my body is a cage keeps me from dancing with the one I love)*** But on the other hand, the Christian doctrine that God became flesh, known as the Incarnation, made the body a site of holiness. So is the soul an immortal thing that can be separated from the corruptible body, otherwise known as being freed from its meat cage? Or is it something else, something more living?

Hannah McGregor 07:46

To answer that, Matt introduced us to the work of religion scholar Terence Johnson, specifically his concept of Tragic Soul Life, which conceives of the soul as that which can live and flourish beyond the touch of white supremacy. In John's words, quote, "the idea of the soul is crucial for understanding Black moral and political vocabularies. It suggests that persons are not necessarily doomed by histories haunting horrors, whether through discourse, agency, imagination, or all of the above the human in this case, the Black, possesses an intrinsic value; the soul," and quote.

Marcelle Kosman 08:21

From there we turn to Harry Potter to think about the soul as a force that does not deny the reality of death. But that defies death through an inward strength. We contrasted Harry's willingness to face death and his correspondingly uncorrupted soul with Voldemort's fear of death and willingness to commit unspeakable acts of evil and violence to achieve immortality. And if I recall correctly, we desperately wanted to talk about book seven, and that scene in the clean Kings Cross Station in particular, and now, at long last week can!

Hannah McGregor 09:02

I know, it is thrilling. So, with absolutely no ado, let's go re-meet our guest.

(Witch, Please Theme Music plays)

Marcelle Kosman 09:18

Hey, Hannah, do you want to ask that question about zombies again, now that we're in transfiguration class?

Hannah McGregor 09:26

Mmmm. First, I want you to introduce our guest.

Marcelle Kosman 09:28

Fine, okay. Matthew Potts grew up in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and graduated from Notre Dame with a BA in English. After a brief

stint in the Navy in Japan, he began graduate school and took both his masters of divinity and PhD degrees from Harvard. He serves on the Harvard faculty now and teaches courses on religion and literature. He's also an Episcopal priest and has ministered to several congregations in Massachusetts and he can perform last rites over zoom. Currently he is the Minister of Harvard's University church. Matt is the co-host of Harry Potter and the Sacred Text. He likes running, cooking, walking his dog, the baseball team, the Detroit Tigers, dessert, and doing nearly anything with his wife and kids. He also likes a lot of books. Welcome back, Matt.

Hannah McGregor 10:22

Hi, Matt. (*Hannah and Matt laugh*) How's it going?

Matt Potts 10:24

Hi. Good. How are you? I'm glad to be here. (*Soundbite of crowd "awwing"*)

Hannah McGregor 10:32

So Matt, what's your stance on zombie jokes?

Matt Potts 10:35

Can I answer your question with a question? What do vegetarian zombies eat?

Hannah McGregor 10:39

I don't know. What do they eat?

Matt Potts 10:40

Graiiiiiiiiinnnnssss. (*Soundbite of drum kit "Ba-Dum-Chi"*) (*Matt laughs*) So does that mean I love them or hate them? I don't know. I don't know-

Marcelle Kosman 10:49

Oh, grains!

Matt Potts 10:52

Oh, grains!

Hannah McGregor 10:53

I feel like if I hadn't already known that you were a dad I would know now. Because of that joke that you just did. *(Matt laughs)*

Marcelle Kosman 11:07

(laughs) I'm embarrassed how long it took me. I was like, I don't get it. Gray gray. Oh, grains!

Hannah McGregor 11:13

You have a PhD in literature.

Marcelle Kosman 11:15

I know. And you know what I'm constantly yelling on this podcast is how good I am at reading text. *(Matt laughs)*

Hannah McGregor 11:20

So, Matt, when we invited you to come back for book seven, you specifically said that you wanted to talk about resurrection. What is that? What's that? Why? What is it and why?

Matt Potts 11:33

Well, I remember, I mean, your summary was really helpful. And I remember in our last conversation we wanted to talk about book seven, especially the scene where Harry sort of dies, dies, doesn't die? I don't know, kind of dies?

Hannah McGregor 11:45

And you said that book seven lacked the courage of its convictions. And we were like, what? And then Coach, who's mean was like, no talking about books seven. *(Soundbite of a sports whistle blowing)*

Matt Potts 11:56

Yeah, because I do. Maybe we'll discuss this later on. Part of me believes or wants to believe or thinks or worries that book seven

lacks the courage. Like it loses its nerve at the end. Oh, but that might be just me, projecting my own experience. I think Christianity does the same thing. I think the Gospels do the same thing. They lose their nerve and don't actually say what they mean to say.

Hannah McGregor 12:19

That is a hot take. I love it.

Matt Potts 12:22

And specifically around resurrection, resurrection is a whole thing. That's the whole question.

Hannah McGregor 12:26

Okay. I mean, I feel like we probably have some background we need to get before we can get to what's up with the failures of the Gospels, I guess. *(laughs)*

Marcelle Kosman 12:34

What's up with Christianity is I think-

Hannah McGregor 12:38

What is up with the resurrection? Where are we gonna start?

Matt Potts 12:40

I think that the zombie jokes are interesting, because in our kind of conventional understanding, when we think of resurrection, we don't usually attribute that language to zombies. Right? The undead or the wandering around dead. Like, we don't. I don't think that we think of that as resurrection. That's something else. Right? Resurrection is a reanimation of a different sort. Right?

Hannah McGregor 13:00

Yeah, resurrection is being living again, rather than being undead.

Matt Potts 13:03

Yeah. Being like, ambulatory and dead. That's different from living again, right?

Hannah McGregor 13:08

Yes. Yes.

Matt Potts 13:09

Right. So this is interesting. So I think a lot about the language of resurrection, or at least the use of that word, which is kind of a weird word. When you think about it, the use of that word to describe being living again, I think comes out of the Christian tradition. And the word in the Greek New Testament, the New Testament, all the Gospels and so forth are originally written in Greek, the word that is translated as resurrection in English is anastasis, which basically means to stand up. Like if you were taking a rest in the afternoon and then got up you would anastasis or whatever, right? It also just means got up. And like a very, like non-theological heroic superhero being alive again, way, it's just got up.

And it probably translates, you know, because they're written in Greek. We don't know, like, what the original Aramaic speakers were saying, because Jesus and his disciples probably spoke Aramaic, which is closely related to Hebrew. But the Hebrew word which talks about resurrection is tequmah, which also just means stand up. Oh, the other interesting thing about this word anastasis is, so the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, most people at the time of Jesus spoke Greek. So the Jewish Diaspora usually encountered their scriptures in Greek. And that text, that Greek text is called the Septuagint. And the word anastasis shows up in the Septuagint. And there it means like, establish.

Hannah McGregor 14:29

In what sense?

Matt Potts 14:30

To make stand. To make it stand up, right? So like, there's a physicality to the idea of resurrection, at least in the original languages of these texts, which just kind of basically means like, he got up. So like, in the New Testament, there are all these proclamations about Jesus, He has risen and he has risen. Right. And I think 2000 years of like, Christian obsession about this purported event, is like he has written becomes this like metaphysical triumph, right? And it probably carried some of that sense for these other communities as well. but also what they were saying to each other was like, he got up.

Hannah McGregor 15:03

He got up, guys, he got up!

Matt Potts 15:04

Like I'm still standing, Elton John, this is-

Marcelle Kosman 15:09

I get knocked down.

Matt Potts 15:10

But I get up again.

Hannah McGregor 15:11

But I get up again! That's right!

(Soundbite of Tubthumping by Chumbawamba plays:

"I get knocked down, but I get up again!

You are never gonna keep me down.

I get knocked down, but I get up again.

You are never gonna keep me down!")

Hannah McGregor 15:12

Okay, so resurrection. Getting up.

Matt Potts 15:25

In a kind of mundane sense or everyday sense. So the other thing we need to think about here, I would invite us to think about, we don't need to, I'll invite us to think about this is, is just kind of in the, you know, the religious community around Jesus's time, especially the descendants of the Israelites, right, there were differing ideas about the afterlife. And there were different groups of folks who were kind of arguing about the afterlife, or the non-existence of the afterlife. So the dominant class, the elites, the religious elites, in Judea at the time, did not believe in any afterlife, they were called the Sadducees. They were the priests of the temple, they tended to pay attention to the written scriptures, the Written Torah the most, and because there's not a strong account of the afterlife, or the soul in the Hebrew scriptures, beyond this sense of living this, they didn't really believe in the afterlife, the kind of place of the dead, in the Hebrew Scriptures is called shale. But shale is just sort of, that's where you're dead. Like, it's dark, and nothing happens. Right? It's not, there's not a sense of punishment or rewards for things you did in this life. It's just you when you're dead, you're dead. So the Sadducees did not believe in the afterlife. They also therefore did not believe in the resurrection of the dead.

Hannah McGregor 16:37

Do you need a soul or a spirit to have an afterlife? Do those two things go hand in hand?

Matt Potts 16:43

Well, we're going to get to that. That's a great question. And this is part of what's going on with resurrection, I think.

Marcelle Kosman 16:49

So I just want to make sure we've already established that I am a very, very bad Jew. *(Matt laughs)* But we continue to have that same relationship to the afterlife in Judaism, correct? That there is no heaven or hell, I can't remember what the word is. But like the

word for hell, it just means absence from God or distance from God.

Matt Potts 17:11

You know, I can't speak for contemporary Judaism.

Marcelle Kosman 17:12

Matt, Episcopos priest, is that still true? *(laughs)*

Matt Potts 17:17

Marcelle, Jewish person, Here's what- *(all three laugh)* I think it's the right question. I can't answer it. But I can tell you that at the time of Jesus, this was contested among people who ascribed to the Judean religion.

Hannah McGregor 17:33

Well, that makes sense, because Christianity was just Judaism.

Matt Potts 17:37

Right. So what's going on is like, there was another group that was a rival of the Sadducees. These tended to be not the elites, working class folks, tended to be, right? Called the Pharisees. Modern Rabbinic Judaism is descended to spiritual and moral descendent of the Pharisees, the Pharisees at the time, mostly did believe in resurrection, they thought that there was an afterlife, and that the afterlife would be physical that at some point in the future, bodies would be physically raised up. Because remember what we said about the soul, the soul can't really be taken away from the body, like, so if you want the soul to persist, there wasn't really a conceptual way for it to persist without the body.

Now, this is really different. We talked about this when we talked about Gnosticism the last time I visited. That was really different from Greek thought, because Greek thought was like, Oh, the soul is easily separable from the body. In fact, that's the problem. The body is the meat cage, the soul needs to get free. *(Marcelle laughs)*

Hannah McGregor 18:31

Meat cage. The meaty cage.

Matt Potts 18:31

The flesh cage, the spirit needs to get free, right? That's the Greek thing. And you can kind of see like, as I was saying, By this time, there have been hundreds of years of Greek influence in Jewish life and culture and practice. And you can see sort of like this interest in saying, Oh, maybe we can be eternal. Maybe there is immortality, that maybe that's starting to infiltrate into Jewish thought a little bit, but the idea that the soul is separable from the body is not something they wanted to do. So if there's going to be the persistence of the individual, there has to be some resurrection at some point in the future.

Hannah McGregor 19:03

Is that present in the Hebrew Bible? I never got to the end of the Old Testament. *(Marcelle laughs)* It's so long in the middle part is so many rules.

Matt Potts 19:15

Well, the other thing is that the Pharisees believe that the Oral Torah was as authoritative as the Written Torah. So the fact that it might not show up in the Written Torah was not necessarily a problem. And you could understand why, right? These are not the elites. So there might not be as many literate folks. So like, the Oral Torah can also be authoritative, right? And the other thing that happens and this is getting a little bit of history, so in 70 CE, the temple is destroyed, the Second Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed, and the Sadducees go down with it because they're the priests to perform other sacrifices.

So what's left in the ruins, like the literal ruins of Jerusalem, are Jews who are trying to figure out what it means to be faithful without being able to follow all the rules about sacrifice which are in the written Torah. So you have people like the Pharisees who

have said, well, we can just follow these other laws. There are all kinds of moral and other kinds of laws for living besides the sacrificial laws that we can follow, we can still be faithful to our God, even without a temple. And Christians were saying a similar thing. They were saying very similar things to the Pharisees, which is why in the early Christian writings the Pharisees are seen as rivals because they were both kind of like the shoots growing out of the ruins of Temple Judaism.

And they're kind of competing with each other. And so Christians believe very similar things that there is a promise of eternity for, early Christians believed that who were largely especially around Jerusalem, were largely Jewish, they were identified as a Jewish, they thought that they were carrying on Judaism in the ruins of the temple. And they would say, yeah, there is eternity for us. There is a promise of immortality for our soul. But our soul is not separable from bodies. So the body must physically rise. If there's going to be eternal life, it's going to be in this body, because my nefesh my livingness is nothing without the physical material part of myself. Basically, what distinguishes the Pharisees, this is way too reductive, but I think I'm just going to say this right now.

Hannah McGregor 21:13

Oh, my God, you're gonna get over simplified with 2000 year old theology? I'm outraged!

Matt Potts 21:18

(laughs) Right? What I think was one of the main things that distinguishes these two groups in the ruins of Jerusalem at the time, are the Pharisees are like, there is a resurrection of the dead. But it's at some point in the future, after the Messiah comes, right? And the Christians are saying, there is a resurrection of the dead, and the Messiah came, and he will be here soon, Christians were basically just this super apocalyptic group who were saying the time is now. We've seen him and we know it, because his body already was risen. And so he's gonna

come back and all the dead are going to rise, and we are going to be part of Jesus's kingdom. So is this like, very similar theologically? And even morally and ethically, despite what the gospel say? But the Christians were like, No, it's happening now, within our lifetime and replaces the New Testament, which says, there are people who are reading this now, who will not die before they see this happen.

Marcelle Kosman 22:05

I mean, there are billboards in Edmonton that say similar things. So I would say that that has remained a strong strand of Christianity.

Matt Potts 22:15

Which is hard to pull off for 2000 consecutive years, if you think about it.

Marcelle Kosman 22:19

I know, right? It's a lot of waiting. But I wanted to jump in because I'm suddenly remembering like, Yeah, this is why Jews don't have cremation. This is why the body is supposed to be buried intact. And this is why there isn't embalming or whatever, because your body has to be uncorrupted and intact for when the Messiah comes. And then you are, you get up, you get up.

Matt Potts 22:43

And for a long time, you get up, that's right. And for a long time, Christians also would, it was not right to be burned after death, cremated after death, because the body had to be in such a state that this could feasibly happen that the body could get up.

Hannah McGregor 22:55

Yeah, I had a youthful obsession with medieval reliquaries and-

Marcelle Kosman 23:01

That doesn't surprise me in the least.

Hannah McGregor 23:02

No, it's probably the least surprising fact I've ever said about myself. But like, in my early 20s, I really liked touring around old European Catholic churches and seeing, like, a Saints finger. But it's basically that idea, right? That the closer you are to God, the less corruptible your flesh becomes, the longer your body will be preserved the, I guess, the more ready it is for the resurrection.

Matt Potts 23:29

Now, one of the things that happens early on in Christianity is this Greek kind of influence and impulse that we see in Gnosticism, which is like, Oh, the soul can get away from the body, right? Starts to dominate Christian thought, even as Christian thought resists it, right. So Christianity, in the early centuries, wanted to insist upon bodily resurrection, physical resurrection in the Nicene Creed, which is like one of the early confessional statements, people are meant to say, I believe in the resurrection of the body, right, they have to specify that that's the body that's resurrected, not just a spiritual resurrection. And I think you'll probably find this is true in Christian communities today, when you actually ask Christians on the ground then, and now, what they conceive of when they think of the afterlife, they're probably thinking about something spiritual, right? When they think about, like, the wings on the clouds up in the heavens or whatever. I'm not sure many Christians actually think about it that way. But they don't think of the zombie thing, they don't think the corpse is actually going to struggle out of the ground and get up and start walking around on Earth. They think that there's a spiritual realm to which one's immortal soul escapes, and eternally resides.

And, you know, without judging any contemporary believers opinions, that would have been seen as heresy in the first century and exactly the wrong thing. Exactly opposite of what Christians were claiming who were saying, Nope, the flesh, the body, is the thing that is resurrected. Now, I said heresy, but that's complicated, (*Hannah laughs*) because a lot of what counts as

orthodoxy and heresy just has to do with who had power. Right? And so there were lots of early, lots of early followers of Jesus, the Valentinian 's and so forth, who were perfectly fine thinking that the spirit escaped the body and that's where eternity was. So, these things have always been present. But that's the first kind of thing I wanted to cover about resurrection.

Hannah McGregor 25:05

So it's the presence of Greek thought that is leading to a sort of desire to think of the body as something you leave behind. How much of it do you think is also just the day to day reality of looking at a corpse and being like, well, that's no good.

Matt Potts 25:22

For sure. Yeah. Because unlike the relics that you see in Europe, right, most bodies decompose, like, it doesn't matter if you don't burn them. They become dust, right? Like, that's part of the thing. And again, also maybe just after generation, after generation of generation of Jesus not returning and this not happening, then that kind of leads you to spiritualize your sense of what's going on. So the resurrection of the body becomes understood as- I don't want to get ahead and move to our next segment- but it becomes kind of like what happens in Kings Cross, where Harry's body is on the ground there.

But his spirit or soul or something is in some kind of conversation in this other spiritual realm, which is embodied and it's blurry here. I mean, the way the apostle, Paul, talks about the body, the spirit and the soul. And he also talks about spiritual bodies in addition to fleshly bodies. So this stuff is very muddled and messy. But I think that's the point is that it is muddled and messy, like if these things had not been worked out, and certainly not worked out as clearly as like, kind of contemporary, conventional Christian depictions of resurrection would have it.

Hannah McGregor 26:27

So, may I ask you a personal question?

Matt Potts 26:30

Sure. Okay, yeah. (*Hannah and Marcelle laugh*)

Hannah McGregor 26:31

What do you personally as a Christian make of the promise of resurrection that is 2000 years late?

Matt Potts 26:44

Personally, I don't have a belief in the afterlife.

Hannah McGregor 26:46

Really?!

Marcelle Kosman 26:48

Coach is clapping. I just need listeners to know.

Matt Potts 26:52

This is kind of a great transition to me saying I think Christianity loses its nerve. So can I ask the two of you a question?

Marcelle Kosman 26:58

Absolutely. Yes.

Matt Potts 26:59

Like, when you look at Christianity, and you hear Christians saying he has risen or whatever, like, what version of that story have you absorbed? Like any? like, do you? Like, do you know, like, what the resurrection looks like? What are Christians talking about when they say Jesus has risen or whatever?

Hannah McGregor 27:14

Yeah, he's died. He was crucified. And then his body was removed from the cross. And it was entombed in a cave.

Marcelle Kosman 27:22

With a big stone and-

Hannah McGregor 27:26

With big stones and then three days later.

Matt Potts 27:30

Yeah, that's right.

Hannah McGregor 27:31

Somebody went to I can't remember who, but somebody went to the zoo,

Matt Potts 27:36

It's so important who, but that's okay.

Hannah McGregor 27:26

Oh, is it important who?

Matt Potts 27:39

I think it's important who.

Marcelle Kosman 27:41

Peter! It was Peter!

Matt Potts 27:42

No. Mary Magdalene, it was the women. The men all ran away, the men all ran away, they betrayed him and ran away. The women went back to the tomb to care for him, to care for the dead.

Hannah McGregor 27:52

And the rock had been rolled away. That's the big thing I remember is like returning to the tomb, and the rock has been rolled away. And the body is gone. And then they meet a guy. And the thing that I really remember is that lots of people don't believe it's him. Like when they meet him, it's not obviously him in some way. Like, in some way, the encounter with the risen Christ is confusing to his closest disciples, which I think implies that having risen he is not identical to what he was like before. Sorry, I'm getting deep here. But yes, no, this is my knowledge. So he rises.

And then unclear what happens after that. I think after he rises, he ascends.

Marcelle Kosman 28:44

So, full disclosure, I am a patrilineal Jew. So I actually went to Catholic school. So here's- **(Matt makes a surprised sound)** I know, it is complicated. As are my feelings about Christianity. So what I remember is that there were a lot of, like Hannah was saying, there's a lot of the closest disciples meeting the risen Christ, and them not believing. And him, I don't want to say getting mad, but basically, like telling them that if they didn't believe that he was the risen Christ, then they were not believers.

And the reason I remember this is because this for me was really kind of like, I didn't have the word for gaslighting at the time. But this was one of the things that I was like, well, this doesn't make any sense. It doesn't make any sense that these people who should recognize this person, like it never seemed like it was framed in a like, I can't believe it's you. It was more like, no, no, you cannot be him.

Matt Potts 29:56

Yeah, that's right. And then there are these other scenes too, which we referred to earlier on like where someone puts their fingers in his side wound to test-

Hannah McGregor 30:03

And who does that? Thomas?

Matt Potts 30:05

Thomas does that. There are also these scenes of Jesus eating. So, he sits down to breakfast with them. Because you can see this insistence that like, this is not a spirit. Spirits don't have breakfast, right? You can't put your finger in the side with spirits, right? You can't put your finger in the side wound of a spirit. So this must have been a physical resurrection. It's not happening someday when the Messiah eventually comes, the Messiah has

come. It's him. And this is going down. Just wait a couple of years, right? Any day now.

Marcelle Kosman 30:33

So it is a resurrection. Well, hang on. Okay, so Christian says, this is a resurrection. It is a real body. It's not a spirit, because he's sitting down and eating and you can stick your fingers in him. So then I don't understand. Top quality body, you can finger it. So then. So then what's the other resurrection that's 2000 years late? Like if that happened, then who's saying he's gonna come back? Wasn't he just here? Why does he have to? How many times do you need your Messiah to be resurrected is what I think I really want to know.

Matt Potts 31:17

Well, the problem there is that for early Christians is that the Messiah has come but he hasn't done the Messiah thing. Like how come the Romans are still in charge? How come Jerusalem has been destroyed, and one thing that happens is that, and this happens in Pharisaic Judaism in Rabbinic Judaism as well, but the mission of the Messiah becomes more spiritualized. Like, it's not necessarily to actually create a political institution in this geographical location. It has something to do with our relationship to God in a fuller way. So Christians turn to that more quickly, because they have this problem where they want to say the Messiah came, but he didn't do the thing the Messiah is supposed to do.

So maybe we had the wrong idea about the thing that I was supposed to do, but also, he's also going to come back and rule the globe at some point too. I mean, you talked to contemporary evangelicals, they have a very literal idea that Jesus will come back and that the globe will become the whole new Jerusalem, and that Jesus will rule over the globe, right? So I wanna get back to myself saying that I think Christianity loses this nerve. Because these are your you did a great job that you have you these are all

like, these are all the stories. There's also all this ambivalence as well, like, as you said, like people don't recognize Jesus at first. And then when they recognize him, he disappears from their sight. Like a ghost, right? Physical bodies don't do that. Right?

Before Jesus has the fingers put in his side, he enters through a locked door. He appears before them fully physicalized, materialized. physical bodies don't do that, unless there's some very weird stuff going on. Right? So like, in the Gospel of Matthew, there's a crowd that sees Jesus and it says, Well, not everybody saw, but some did. And you should believe the ones who did. And then ones who doubted, you know, they're probably just not very, not very faithful. So there's a lot of ambivalence going on here. And nowhere is the ambivalence more stark than in the first written gospel, not the one that shows up first in the Bible, the one that shows up first in the Bible is the one that early Christian theologians liked most. They put it first.

But the one that was written first, that's Matthew that when that shows up first. So Mark, Matthew, is the one they like most, Matthew lifts most of Mark. And Mark was written first. Mark was written in around the year 70. Right when Jerusalem is under siege. And like literally 10s of 1000s of Judah fans are enslaved, another maybe 100,000 are killed, the temple is destroyed. There are reliable sources, relatively reliable sources that say that at times during the siege, as many as 500 Jews a day were being crucified, right? So like, you can see why these are apocalyptic texts. Right? This is an apocalyptic situation, the city and the center of our life and culture, and religion, the temple has been destroyed. It's supposed to be the earthly home of God destroyed, and 500 people a day crucified and 10s of 1000s, being put into slavery, 10s of 1000, being murdered and slaughtered by the Romans. And then the gospel of Mark shows up.

And in its first version, in the Gospel of Mark, the women go to the tomb. And they see that the tomb is empty, and they don't understand what's going on. And they run away in terror. The last word of the gospel of Mark, the first version of the gospel of Mark is terror. They run away in terror. That's written about 70 CE, about 10 years later, Matthew rewrites it, lifts a lot of Mark, and then adds all this stuff about Jesus showing up and talking to the disciples and explaining what was going on. Then Luke shows up around the same time and also lifts for Mark and says many of the same things. Oh, by the way, Jesus came back and ate some fish with the disciples and also made a bunch of promises and we all saw him. Right? And then in about the year 100, John shows up and John has Thomas fingering Jesus' side wound and all other kinds of experiences with the risen Christ.

Hannah McGregor 35:01

John adds a lot of real fun flavor.

Matt Potts 35:02

That's right. And then around that time, around the time of John, an extra eight verses are added to the Gospel of Mark.

Hannah McGregor 35:10

At the end?

Matt Potts 35:11

At the end. which say, oh, and then by the way, we forgot to mention that after this, Jesus appeared to his disciples. Yes, Jesus just like Matthew and Mark and John said, Jesus appeared to his disciples. And we don't have to end this thing in emptiness and terror. But the first version of the gospel is like, here's what resurrection is. It's an empty tomb. And you're terrified, because you don't understand what's going on. Right? Now there is one earlier account of the resurrection; it's not like Mark was the first person to talk about the resurrection. And this is from Paul, Paul didn't write a story of Jesus's life and never knew Jesus while

Jesus was alive, but started following Jesus afterwards. And he has an account of having a vision of Jesus. He called an appearance, which is why he started following Jesus. And he said, the disciples also had Jesus also appeared to them. But he's not very specific about this.

Hannah McGregor 36:01

Was that the point where he fell off his horse?

Marcelle Kosman 36:03

He falls off his horse, right? He was Sol and then he became Paul, after seeing Jesus and Jesus told him your name isn't Sol anymore. It's Paul.

Matt Potts 36:11

That's right. But so he doesn't really get theological about what those appearances are. He just says Jesus appeared to me. Just like he appeared to the brothers. And that's it. He's out like, oh, we ate fish. Oh, we put his finger inside. Oh, it was absolutely physical and not just me having a vision. He's just like, I just saw Jesus and he told me to stop persecuting these people who are following him and I started following him too.

Hannah McGregor 36:33

Okay. So what do you make of this? I mean, other than clearly people were trying to sort of add a different interpretation of the resurrection or one that maybe sort of was more comfortable.

Matt Potts 36:51

Yeah, more comfortable, right? So can I introduce a theorist now?

Marcelle Kosman 36:55

Yeah.

Matt Potts 36:56

There's a French Jesuit sociologist named Michel de Certeau.

Marcelle Kosman 37:03

Yeah yeah, walking around the city.

Hannah McGregor 37:07

We are big de Certeau fans over here. (*Marcelle laughs*)
Actually, de Certeau might be the only dead white French man who I cite in my book.

Matt Potts 37:18

Really? So, de Certeau disciplinarily tended to work in sociology. And that's where he's best known. But he was a Jesuit brother. He wasn't a priest, but he's a Jesuit brother. The Jesuits are a really influential order of Catholic priests and brothers, mostly priests, they tend to run educational institutions. They are very influential.

Marcelle Kosman 37:39

They did a lot of the colonizing. (*Soundbite of crowd booing*)

Matt Potts 37:47

Yeah, they did. One of the reasons they became very influential is because they were on the leading edge of the Catholic Church's missionary strategy/ colonization efforts, right? And so they were in places that were European colonies, and they were conducting missions in those places and building schools. And that's why they're also this important educational order. Certeau wrote in like the late 60s 70s, he was kind of part of the kind of French theory flourishing in the Paris universities in like the late 60s and 70s. So he knew Lacan and Derrida and Christoval. And these other folks.

Marcelle Kosman 38:24

They hung out and high fived a lot.

Matt Potts 38:25

Yeah, he wrote some essays on theology, a couple of interesting ones. One is called "*From the Body to Writing, A Christian*

Transit". And the other one is called "*How is Christianity Thinkable Today*", but even if you can kind of see what he's getting at with "*From the Body to Writing, A Christian Transit*", because what he basically says is like, we need to stop looking at all the appearances afterwards. He says, The important thing is the empty tomb, and the emptiness is actually the crucial thing. And he doesn't actually connect this to the resurrection, I connected to resurrection personally using Certeau. But what he wants to say is like, the most important thing about the resurrection is not that Jesus shows up bodily again to the disciples. In fact, he implies it, doesn't say explicitly, because he probably gets in trouble with the Jesuits. He implies that Jesus coming back and apparently disciples, is kind of a problem.

And if that's why he has to ascend again, and disappear again, because what's really crucial is the emptiness and absence of Jesus. Because if Jesus is present still, fully in front of us, right, then he's the Messiah, then he's the one that's going to save us. But if he's gone, then it's the people left behind, our responsibility to step into the space that he has left, and to continue on his ministry. Right? So if he's in the ministry of Love and Justice and care for the oppressed, and marginalized, and so forth, right? If he's still around, if he's standing next to me, then that's his job, and he should do it. Go do your job, right? If he's gone, but we want to say that his work still needs to be done. Then, what he basically says is the condition for the possibility of a church is the empty tomb, because if Jesus is around, we don't need church, because he's gone, the church must step into this role.

And what it suggests is that resurrection, new life after death is not necessarily about anything about the afterlife or appearances or any of that stuff. And in fact, he suggested it is dangerous if we think we see Jesus someplace if we identify Jesus someplace. That's dangerous, because then you're displacing what should be your commitment to working on behalf of justice and mercy and all these things on to some other idol, which is not the thing.

Right? And we see this in Christian history, you'll start idolizing that other thing, at the expense of works of justice and mercy and everything else.

So what he means is like, even if you think you found Jesus, you didn't. Keep looking. And the manner by which you keep looking is to keep doing the work of justice. So for him, resurrection is like, first ending of gospel of Mark, empty tomb terror because the world was falling apart around us. So what do we do, we have to step into that space and do something about it. And so resurrection becomes something more like, or at least one definition of it could be this new life that steps into the place of absence and pain and mourning and grief that has been left in order to try to create the conditions for justice and mercy and love in the lives that we could begin again.

Hannah McGregor 41:12

Like standing up. Get up,

Matt Potts 41:13

Get up. Yeah.

Hannah McGregor 41:14

All right. I really want to get further into this. Like, okay, what if we don't believe that there is an afterlife? What does that mean for our understanding of the resurrection? But I think it might be helpful to do so with, say, a textual example that would let us work through some of the sort of ethical implications.

Matt Potts 41:44

I think, do you have any ideas for candidate texts?

Marcelle Kosman 41:48

Could you suggest one? (*Marcelle and Matt laugh*) Do you have one in mind?

Hannah McGregor 41:53

Let's go talk about Harry Potter now!

Marcelle Kosman 41:57

(laughs) What a good idea, Hannah. Yes.

(Witch, Please Theme Music plays)

Hannah McGregor 42:08

Now that we've established that it is funny to make zombie jokes about resurrection, I can start making a lot of them in OWL's, but I won't, because I'm sensitive. *(Soundbite of an owl hooting)*

Naw, I just can't think of any jokes. Except this one. How many vegans does it take to screw in a light bulb?

Matt Potts 42:25

I don't know.

Hannah McGregor 42:26

I'm better than you. *(Soundbite of a drum kit Ba-Dum-Chi)*
(Matt and Marcelle laugh) Okay, let's talk about Harry dying and coming back. And also maybe Voldemort's gross flayed soul bit.

Marcelle Kosman 42:44

I think we've got to start with the hot ticket, right? Like when we were talking to you, Matt, about coming back to talk about the soul. And you were like, I want to talk about resurrection, you said that you didn't think that Harry should have come back to life. And that's where I think we should start. Because if everything else gets cut, this is the conversation that we're gonna have, So!

Hannah McGregor 43:15

Answer for your crimes! *(Marcelle laughs)*

Matt Potts 43:19

So I just said that I think the Christian tradition loses this nerve. And that's because it has this figure which, you know, it's telling us all through the Gospel of Mark, this is the Messiah, and then

he dies, and the tomb is empty. And it just stops the story there and invites the reader to be like, Okay, what are you going to do about it? What are you going to do about it? Right? And then everything that happens later in the Christian tradition, remember, I was talking earlier about like, the difference between the Pharisees and the early Christians was that the Pharisees were like the Messiah is still coming and the Christians were like, no, he came, he just had to take a quick bathroom break, we'll be right back.

Right? Like, and then all the kingdom's stuff, right. But if the Messiah came in and left and now it's on you, that's a different task than waiting till he comes back again. So one of the ways I read the Harry Potter series is that an anxiety throughout the series from Book One is Harry's Messianism, the boy who lived. Only he can fight Voldemort, only he can save us. And I think what the book does and actually does pretty persuasively throughout is actually try to like, suggest that that is a misperception, a misunderstanding on the part of the wizarding community and what it will actually take at the end. What we see in that final scene when haggard carries Harry's not actually dead body out is it takes the whole community.

It takes his friends, the whole school, all the people who are fighting on behalf of justice, it takes them to defeat and what I want to be the case is that they do that. I mean, it wouldn't be a very good children's book if this happened, right? But I feel like him actually being able to hop up and join the fight with them is a version at, this is where I might be projecting my disappointment Christianity upon the Harry Potter series, but it's a version of them kind of losing the same nerve, right? Like, even if Harry's gone, we are still here, we can still do this, we will still do this, we step into the place of his absence full of grief and mourning and emptiness and terror, but still ready to fight for the things that he wanted to fight for and to do the things that we believe that are worth doing, right? And so part of me says like, if he doesn't come

back, then it's even more clear that what we need is the community to step into the place of the one who we thought was the only one who could do it.

Marcelle Kosman 45:29

Mm hmm.

Hannah McGregor 45:32

It does, I think undeniably fail in its narrative nerve in that final moment, because the series is arguing against Messianism and one of Voldemort's failings is that he does believe in the idea of the Messiah, he, in fact, over invest in the idea of the Messiah and thus creates his own defeat in the hands of this child. And so in that moment, where Voldemort taunts everybody at the Battle of Hogwarts and says, you know, your Messiah has fallen, you must give up now. And they're like, No, that's actually not what we're doing here. Like, we are not a messianic cult, we are a community that believes in a set of values, and we're not going to stop believing in this set of values because you killed this kid.

In fact, your murder of a child in front of us is gonna really lead us to double down this whole idea that we don't want you in charge. And so he has misunderstood and the community steps up and that is his sort of, you know, fatal flaw is that he constantly misunderstands. You know what Dumbledore insists on glossing as love which is a bit simplistic, but you know, Voldemort does constantly misunderstand. And then, Harry jumps up, picks up the elder wand and single handedly defeats Voldemort. Thus undermining everything the story has just said about not needing singular heroes, about not even a messiah figure about Harry's actual strength not being like military prowess, but his capacity for love.

Marcelle Kosman 47:07

So yes, but... I know I'm not going to Yes, and I'm gonna Yes, but.

Matt Potts 47:15

The look of betrayal on Hannah's face.

Marcelle Kosman 47:18

I know. I know. He doesn't pick up the Elder Wand. Voldemort has the Elder Wand. And Harry is just using whatever wand, I guess, Draco's second wand or the one he got from his mom. I don't know. So Harry's using that wand. And it's Voldemort's attempt to avada kedavra Harry that ends up killing him. Right? Like, Harry doesn't kill Voldemort. Because he can't, because that would mean that he would do the unforgivable curse, which would make him bad tomorrow. Yeah. So I think I agree that I think that the series could be more nervy. But I also think that it won't be more nervy because like, because it is not.

And that is largely because we talked about the sort of conservative nature of the hero's journey, which is that you're always attempting to reestablish the status quo, right? And so what I want to suggest, maybe, is a way that the series does attempt to resist its messianic message is in the fact that none of the dead who come back do actually come back. Right? So like, I remember reading it for the first time and being so certain that Sirius was going to come back. And then when Dumbledore died being so certain that Dumbledore was going to come back.

Hannah McGregor 48:48

Especially because we were primed to believe that because of Gandalf, because of Aslan, because of the way that all of the magical messianic figures in other thinly skinned Christian allegory fantasy series, they always come back. They're always like Psych! I'm still a lion. And I'm fine.

Marcelle Kosman 49:10

Totally. And this final book in particular is very much like, oh, yeah, there is a thing that will bring people back, there is, but it doesn't.

Hannah McGregor 49:20

And you can't.

Marcelle Kosman 49:23

And you can't. And I remember even in book six, I remember when they introduced the idea of the Ineri. And I was like, Oh, for sure. For sure. That's when we're going to, Voldemort's going to bring them back. They're going to be gross zombie versions, and it's going to be really upsetting. And I remember being kind of disappointed that the series didn't go in that direction. But again, it's a different series that I was wanting.

Hannah McGregor 49:47

I hadn't been thinking of the Ineri, Marcelle, such a useful addition to the conversation about how resurrection is figured in this book, because it's another way in which Voldemort is like bringing the dead back. You can bring them dead back, magic has no limitations. And that then is contrasted to the fact that like Harry's proper understanding of the use of the Resurrection Stone has to be rooted in knowing that you actually can't bring anybody back.

Matt Potts 50:16

Yeah. So when I say that I think the book loses its nerve. I'm being deliberately provocative, because I think the other thing the book is doing is actually trying to be nervy in exactly that way. Right? So if you think about the Resurrection Stone, it doesn't bring anybody back. What it does is make him confront his mourning, it makes him look more directly at the people he cannot bring back. And it's only in facing that directly that he's given kind of the resolve to walk exactly into the scary thing that he doesn't want to walk into.

Hannah McGregor 50:42

He actually has to come face to face with the irreversibility of death.

Matt Potts 50:47

Exactly. Which is like, in the gospel of Mark, the women running away from the empty tomb in terror, right? Like, this is what he's going, he's not like, I bet what's gonna happen is I'm gonna meet up with Dumbledore in a couple minutes. And we're gonna have a nice chat in a very clean King's Cross Station, and he's gonna give me a choice about where I'm going. That's not what everything's Harry looks at all the people he has lost. And he's just like, This is what it is. Right? So I think that's nervy.

Marcelle Kosman 51:11

And he asks if it'll hurt.

Matt Potts 51:12

That's nervy. Right? And also like the scene you already discussed as well, which is when Neville and everyone rise up, they think he's dead. Right? They don't, it's not like he pops up first. And they're like, Oh, we can do it. Right? As you said very eloquently it's in spite of that. It's like you just kill the child. That's not that's we're gonna live into our values. We didn't do this because we thought he was the one. We did it because we love him. And we still love him. And so take that, right? And I think you're right, Marcelle, as well. Like, I hadn't really thought about it. But like, you know, I think the movies do a worse job at this than the books. Because right? Because in the movie, the final scene very much looks like two superheroes at the end of the Marvel series or whatever, like going at each other and seeing who's more powerful.

But yeah, you're right, if the book is careful to describe this as Harry's just like, if this is you, you're doing this to yourself, right? He's very careful to describe that. And that's the way it plays out in the books more clearly. Now, like you said, I think that there are just there's a momentum to the hero's journey kind of trope and momentum to the way we do read literature and to this whole history. You know, Harry is an additional thinly veiled Christ figure like Gandalf and Aslan, and all these others. And so there's also

this all this momentum to have him get up. But I think within the confines of those tropes in the weighty, weighty cultural momentum, I actually think that this series does a pretty good job of poking at that. And making us confront mourning and confront loss and accept it. Rather than assume that, you know, the way the Christian tradition often talks about it is like, you have to accept death, but not really because if you do you get to live, right, like- There's a little wink in this book, it winks after all the characters. Don't wink. The text winks at you after everyone else does not wink.

Hannah McGregor 53:04

I mean, speaking of losing your nerve, I think part of the deep dissatisfaction that so many readers have with the terrible epilogue to this book, is that if you leave it before the epilogue, it's a scene of Harry's retreat. Right? So in that final moment, yeah, he has come back. And he did the thing that was his job, that had been made clear to him that it was his job, but he did it sort of, without glory, and without any interest in the praise that was gonna be heaped on him. And in that moment, where he has been invited by his community to like, step into the position of the hero, he leaves. He wants to nope out of that whole situation.

And then it would be a more interesting ending to end it with Harry being like, I'm actually, I'm actually gonna go. And that epilogue, I think part of why the epilogue feels so dissatisfying is because there is a little glimmer of some sort of a refusal of the hero's journey in that final battle, or at least a complication of the hero's journey. And then the epilogue just ties this neat little bow on the whole thing. Like, don't worry, everything's back exactly the way it was before. Don't worry about it. Everything's fine.

Marcelle Kosman 54:28

They Are at Kings Cross. They're getting on the train.

Hannah McGregor 54:34

You have no further responsibilities. Can we talk about the flayed soul bit?

Marcelle Kosman 54:36

Just going back to that conversation about how gross bodies are.

Hannah McGregor 54:41

Do we think that this series presents a belief in the afterlife? What is going to happen to Dumbledore after King's Cross?

Marcelle Kosman 54:53

So I would argue nothing, because Dumbledore isn't there because it's in Harry's head. Dumbledore isn't any more there than Harry's parents are there in the forest with him.

Matt Potts 55:05

I mean, I think what's really interesting about that scene for me, I mean, in my reading is that whatever you believe in the afterlife, you can see it in that scene. So it really invites the reader in and allows the reader to like, not have to give up anything that they feel committed to, in order to go through the scene with the text, right? So if you have a strong belief in the afterlife, there's plenty there for you to be like, okay, yeah, this will work. And if you don't have a strong belief in the afterlife or have no belief in the afterlife, you can also say, this will work.

I think, what's interesting about resurrection here, or at least some of the conversations, the two conversations we've been having is that Voldemort's soul, when rendered materially in this space, is so wounded and flayed, like, kind of what's presumed in that depiction is that there is an essential relationship between physical and spiritual reality, because his soul is broken and flayed and abused. So also in this space, the physical manifestation is going to be similar, right? And so like that idea that the soul can escape the body that these things go together, and that actually, the condition of one relates directly to the condition to the other, that seems to speak back to some of those

early commitments about the soul not being able to be divorced from the flesh.

Marcelle Kosman 56:19

So then, what should we make of the fact that if I'm remembering right, Voldemort's flayed soul bits are sort of figured as a child or as a grotesque baby. Kind of? And that Harry feels a sense of like, should I help it? And Dumbledore is like, Nah. You can't.

Hannah McGregor 56:42

He says there's nothing you can do for it.

Marcelle Kosman 56:46

And Harry, again, he does it twice, right? Like he sees it, I think once and is like, Oh, should I help it? Dumbledore says, No, you can't. And then again, Harry's like, Are you sure? Are you sure? Like a little while later. And so I'm just wondering, like, what, what? How? Oh, I don't know what to do with that. I never know what to do with that. How did the two of you read that scene?

Hannah McGregor 57:17

You know, one of the things that it makes me think about is, you know, Harry has been positioned his whole life as a savior figure. And we see him having this sort of complex relationship to his own status as a potential savior that Hermione accuses him of. She's like you, you have internalized this narrative about yourself, and you believe it is your job to save people, and that is being actively used against you. You're being manipulated by the belief that it is your job uniquely to save everyone. And in that moment, his instinct to steal, I can save Voldemort somehow. Right?

I can intervene in some way, I can redeem him in some way. You know, again, a sort of moment of like, Harry kind of believing in his own capacity. And he is told by Dumbledore in that moment, No, he is beyond saving, which immediately makes me think about Dante and the encounter with damned souls. And the understanding that there is no external force that has damned

these souls, they have done this to themselves. The violence done to your soul is a violence that you do to your soul, not a punishment being laid upon you by an external authority. I think that is one of the things that we see in that moment that like Voldemort is not being punished. Voldemort is not going to hell, because he's a bad guy. Voldemort has destroyed himself through his own acts. And that's not something that Harry can fix.

Marcelle Kosman 59:05

Yeah. Very well put Hannah, I find that a very satisfying response.

Hannah McGregor 59:11

Which does bring us back to exactly sort of the version of the resurrection you're describing Matt, right, which is one where it's like, you can't sit back and wait for an external authority to punish or reward. You just gotta do it your own damn self.

Matt Potts 59:26

Yeah. Jesus almost never talks about the afterlife in the Gospels. I think there's one place that he does. And he's telling the parable, it's not clear to me, actually, I'm hedging. To me, it seems like he's actually not trying to say, hey, here, everybody, here's what the afterlife looks like. He's just telling a story, right? But the situation describes as much like this where the wealthy man who's cruel to another man named Lazarus puts himself in a place where he can no longer connect with Lazarus or anybody else. And Abraham in this case, who is with Lazarus in the good place, says to the wealthy man I'm sorry, we can't help you. Like even if we wanted to, we can't get to you, like you have isolated yourself, you're too far gone. There is this idea that even, you know, once you've finished this earthly test, if you fail in that particular way, nothing, not even the reach of God can get to you. And it is, as you said, Hannah. It is around sort of like you've done this to yourself, like you made some choices that have consigned you to this space. And that's just where you are. It's not punishment, it's not a choice

that someone else has made for you. It's a choice you've made for yourself.

Hannah McGregor 1:00:31

Which does go hand in hand with that final moment in which, you know, Harry in his encounter with Dumbledore in the King's Cross limbo is also basically being told by the one guy who he wanted to be an unassailable authority figure. He's being told sorry, there aren't any of those. There is no outside person who is perfectly right and perfectly good, who you can look to for constant direction. Dumbledore is like, yeah, I fucked up. I dabbled in Nazism. I made a bunch of shitty mistakes. I did terrible things to you as a child, like I am just a guy. Aw man. What if we're all just guys? *(Matt laughs)*

Marcelle Kosman 1:01:23

What if we're all just guys?

(Witch, Please Theme Music plays)

Thank you, witches, for joining us for another episode of *Witch, Please*. If you want to hang out with us some more, we're on Twitter and Instagram at @ohwitchplease. And if you want to hang out with us EVEN MORE you should go to patreon.com/ohwitchplease, where you can get all kinds of amazing perks like exclusive merch, movie watchalongs, blooper reels, and literally so much more. Hannah, do you have anything to plug?

Hannah McGregor 1:02:11

Sure do! I wrote a plug segment into the end of this so I can plug my book. My book is out! *A Sentimental Education* came out last month now. But guess what, you can still buy it and read it. And I think it's pretty good. So I think probably you should and also I talked about this podcast in it. So it is pertinent to your interests. And hopefully by the time this comes out, the audiobook is also going to be available. So if you prefer engaging with my work through my famously mellifluous voice. There's an audiobook

version that I read and edited and produced myself. It was a bad idea. I regret it. So go to [audible.com](https://www.audible.com) and buy that book, please.

Marcelle Kosman 1:03:01

So you might regret it. But listeners everywhere are thrilled.

Hannah McGregor 1:03:05

Yeah, you have to make my unbelievably bad choice worthwhile. Marcelle, do you have anything you want to plug?

Marcelle Kosman 1:03:13

No, Matt, do you have anything that you would like to plug?

Matt Potts 1:03:18

In fact I do. I'm following Hannah's example. I have a book coming out in just about a month at the end of November. The book is called *Forgiveness, An Alternative Account*. And it basically does with forgiveness kind of what I've done the two times I've come on this podcast, which is basically arguing that the Christian tradition has it entirely backwards and has misapplied what could be a really fruitful moral category and use it to harm people. So I read fiction to try to reclaim a different kind of forgiveness. So I read novels and I read some of the stuff that I've been talking about in the two podcasts. And I'm really excited. It's coming out at the end of November.

Hannah McGregor 1:03:56

That's incredible. Are you going to record an audio book?

Matt Potts 1:03:59

There is an audio book. They hired a reader to read it for me so I don't have to do my own.

Hannah McGregor 1:04:05

Yeah, no, yeah, it's an absolute nightmare to do it yourself. But you have such a mellifluous voice.

Matt Potts 1:04:07

They didn't think so. They hired somebody else. But there will be an audiobook. Yes.

Marcelle Kosman 1:04:16

And I know that we mentioned earlier this other podcast that you do but maybe just mentioned again right now, just in case.

Matt Potts 1:04:23

I'm also the co host on Harry Potter and the Sacred Text.

Hannah McGregor 1:04:25

Which, you know, the day that we're recording on the guest on!

Marcelle Kosman 1:04:29

Oh goody.

Hannah McGregor 1:04:30

Witch, Please is produced in partnership with Wilfrid Laurier University Press and distributed by Acast. You can find the rest of our episodes at ohwitchplease.ca. Special thanks AS ALWAYS to our team-player of a producer, Hannah Rehak, aka COACH! 🤔

🎵 🏁 (***Soundbite of sports whistle blowing***), to our Witch, Please apprentice Zoe Mix, (***Soundbite of record rewinding***) and to our sound engineer Erik Magnus! (***Soundbite of chimes***)

Marcelle Kosman 1:04:58

At the end of every episode We shout out everyone who left us a five star review on Apple podcasts. So you've got to review us if you want to hear me get...

Hannah McGregor 1:05:09

(***Singing***) Lost in the woods.

Marcelle Kosman 1:05:12

I don't think it's quite that.. ***(Singing another tune)*** lost in the woods... or something like that. Thank you this week to:

tinydebbiejane

Hannah McGregor 1:05:22

We'll be back next episode to continue our discussion of Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows. But until then...

Matt Potts 1:05:28

Later witches!

(Witch, Please Theme Music plays)