

SPOILER ALERT

# Love amidst the ruins:

## *Harry Potter and The Deathly Hallows Part 2*

by Mathew Block

“IT ALL ENDS.”

So reads the tagline of the eighth and final *Harry Potter* film, *The Deathly Hallows Part 2*. As the words might lead you to believe, this is a dark film. The tension which has been growing throughout the series comes to its culmination here in the battle for Hogwarts as teachers, students and Harry's friends face off against Voldemort and his evil army. It's a conflict many beloved characters do not survive.

This film is about death. In fact, the entire series leading up to this point has been about death. From the first story, when Harry's parents are murdered by Voldemort, to the death of Dobby the house elf at the end of Part 1, death is a prevailing theme. Now, as Harry faces off against Voldemort a final time, they both know only one can survive.

The name Voldemort reveals the series' preoccupation with death. In French, *vol de la mort* means “flight from death.” The wizarding world fears Voldemort precisely because he is in many ways a grim reaper character; his presence inevitably means death and destruction.

But one can also interpret the French phrase *vol de la mort* as “flight from death.” This is Voldemort's driving passion, as we see clearly in this final film. He is desperately trying to escape death. It's the reason he splits his own soul and hides pieces of it in “horcruxes”; he cannot die so long as these magic objects remain safe and hidden. It's the reason he seeks out the legendary “elder wand” believing that by making himself the most powerful wizard of all time he can conquer death.

But while the name Voldemort is likely taken directly from the French, J.K. Rowling (who holds a degree in

classical languages) may have intended a secondary meaning to the name. In Latin, the name sounds similar to words for “I wish” and “death.” Voldemort's “flight from death” is, in some sense of the word, still a death wish. No one can, by their own strength, cheat death—Voldemort's assertion in this film that “only I can live forever” notwithstanding. He places his trust in his horcruxes, but even they cannot ensure for him eternal life. In this final film Harry, Ron and Hermione destroy the remaining horcruxes one by one.

We see him then, afraid—perhaps for the first time. He is vulnerable. He has not truly escaped death.

No man can prevent death's coming. So what then is the proper escape? If, as is written on Harry's parents' tomb (and as it written in the Bible) that “the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death,” how is this death finally to be destroyed?

In the *Harry Potter* series, the answer is love—specifically, self-sacrificial love. It's true of the death Harry's parents faced before the beginning of the first film and book and it remains true all the way to the death of Dobby the House Elf.

While *Deathly Hallows Part 2* is a film of death and destruction, in the midst of the ruins there is love.



Despite the grief and pain, viewers find elements of forgiveness, mercy, and redemptive sacrifice, even glimpses of resurrection—light shining in dark places.

In *Deathly Hallows Part 2*, Harry learns at last that he must die to defeat Voldemort. When Voldemort had attempted to kill Harry as a child, he accidentally latched a part of his soul onto him—unintentionally making him into a horcrux. As long as Harry lives, a part of Voldemort will always live. He cannot die unless Harry also dies. Faced with this knowledge, Harry goes willingly to face his death—trusting that by his sacrifice others may live.

*continued on page 48*

It is impossible to miss the thematic overtones of Scripture and the words of Jesus here: “Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.”

But while the film’s tagline tells us *It all ends*, the message of *Deathly Hallows Part 2*— indeed, of all the *Harry Potter* films—is that it *doesn’t* all end. Death does not write the final chapter. It does not get the final word.

Harry falls, struck by the killing curse Voldemort casts at him. But he does not, in fact, die. Or perhaps it is better to say he does not stay dead. Harry awakens in an ethereal place, a heavenly version of King’s Cross train station. While given the opportunity there to “go on,” Harry instead returns to the real world to finish his destiny: to destroy Voldemort and the death he personifies. Voldemort is at last defeated.

But the film does not end with the Harry and his friends standing in the wreckage of the battle; there is an epilogue, set nineteen years in the future, in which we see new life and new love. The old horror has faded away. The wizarding world is again safe—a place where fathers can love and encourage their sons as they go off to school for the first time. Death never writes the final chapter; but love always will.

Let’s be clear: *Harry Potter* is not Christian allegory. But it is deeply influenced by Christian symbolism, deeply influenced, according to the author herself, by her own Christian faith. The discerning viewer will see elements of that symbolism throughout the series, but especially so in this final film. And these themes, together with strong acting performances from the cast, beautiful special effects, and a deeply satisfying story, make the film well worth watching.

**Mathew Block** is a freelance writer and member of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Regina, Saskatchewan. He blogs at <http://blog.captainthin.net/>

## CLASSIFIED



### Position available Communications Manager

Lutheran Church–Canada’s Synod office in Winnipeg is seeking a Communications Manager. The person in this position is responsible for maintaining ongoing communication program of synod and developing new strategies for communication with internal and external constituencies. Under the supervision of the President of Synod, the Communications Manager is proactive in identifying issues and current events to which LCC should respond or report upon. The manager is also responsible for online and print publications that share the mission and ministry of Lutheran Church–Canada. As part of the synodical office team, the Communications Manager provides advice and guidance on communication issues for each area of the Synod’s work.

#### Duties include:

- Editorial supervision of [www.canadianlutheran.ca](http://www.canadianlutheran.ca) and The Canadian Lutheran magazine
- Responsibility for InfoDigest and DoorPosts e-newsletters
- Supervision of LCC’s web and social media presence
- Monitoring all aspects of LCC’s communication
- Representing LCC to non-church media
- Developing new communication strategies and resources

#### Qualifications:

- Minimum Bachelor’s degree in a related field, such as communications, English, journalism or equivalent experience
- 5-7 years previous experience in communications, editorial or marketing communications roles
- Active member of a Lutheran Church–Canada congregation
- Experience with MS Word, PowerPoint, Excel, Adobe Acrobat, Adobe InDesign, Adobe Photoshop and Wordpress.

The candidate for this position will: have excellent written and oral communication skills; the ability to work proactively under minimum supervision; demonstrate a strong commitment to and understanding of Lutheran theology; pay attention to detail; demonstrate a servant attitude; have the skills to exercise critical judgment in decision making and problem solving; excel at networking and relationship building; possess excellent planning and organizing abilities;

A detailed job description is available at [www.canadianlutheran.ca/classifieds](http://www.canadianlutheran.ca/classifieds)

To apply for this position send a PDF copy of your resume to Dwayne Cleave ([treasurer@lutheranchurch.ca](mailto:treasurer@lutheranchurch.ca)). Deadline for applications is September 23, 2011.

### Always looking for news

Here are some tips for submitting news items to the district news sections of *The Canadian Lutheran*.

- Designate a reporter to write about your event and photographer to take pictures.
- In your story Include the five Ws: who, what, where, when and why; also how.
- Keep the story short (no more than 250 words).

- Use quotes from those involved
- Send your congregation or school stories and reports to your district editor.

#### Photos

- Avoid lines of people; look for action during the event.
- Take digital photos at the LARGEST size and e-mail to your district editor