

# DAGON

#657, APA-Q #567

October 2014

## THE FOUR AND A HALF KINGDOMS - iii

During the darkest part of the Dark Ages, a Slavic tribe called the Pravoslavs wandered into the Balkan Massif from the northeast under the rule of their chieftain Boguslav the Bogus, and settled there. Christian missionaries soon encountered them and easily converted them. About a generation or two later, an eloquent young Pravoslav named Polykarp, probably after a minor character in the New Testament, was inspired, either by the Holy Ghost or by the ease with which his countrymen had accepted Christianity, to begin preaching a supplement to Christian doctrine. He contended that, just as Christianity claims to complete and fulfill Judaism, so his revelations would complete and fulfill Christianity. As he obtained more followers, he proclaimed that he was the son of God, elder brother of Jesus, and first cousin once removed of the Holy Ghost, and thus a member of the Holy Quaternity. Eventually his preachings were collected by his followers into the Newer Testament. After Polykarp was mysteriously martyred while secretly preaching to the nuns in a convent, Polykarpian bibles were published, consisting of the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the Newer Testament.

Eventually the Pravoslavnic Patrimony of Polykarp was organized as a theocracy, with its capital in Polykarpolis, where it is ruled by a Patriarch and a High School ("Scholia Alta") of Bluejays, from the bright blue color of their robes. Missionaries were sent out, who because of their small numbers rarely traveled beyond the Balkan Massif. Their efforts did not meet with success in others of the Four And A Half Kingdoms. Most commonly these missionaries were thrown to the lions in the Temporary Roman Empire, imprisoned in Pundschruck, laughed at in the Grand Duchy, and married to the Queen in Skandalutz.

Despite their isolation, or perhaps because of it, the Pravoslavs remain faithful to the Newer Testament and the Holy Quaternity. From time to time, Polykarpian attempt pogroms against "unbelievers", by which they mean Christians, but these are soon abandoned lest they give ideas to the rest of the Four And A Half Kingdoms.

## THE MINISTRY OF MISCELLANY

**Dagon**, a monthly fanzine of commentary on science, science fiction, fantasy, mystery novels, comic art, role-playing games (RPGs), and anything else that seems like a good idea at the moment, is published by John Boardman, Room 238, 1910 Rosemont Avenue, Frederick, Maryland 21702-8249. My land-line telephone number is 301-662-8718. My cell phone number is 718-736-4901. **Dagon** circulates through **APA-Q**, an amateur press association (APA) which is edited once a month (if enough contributions come in) by Mark Blackman,

Apt. #4A, 1745 E. 18<sup>th</sup> Street, Brooklyn, New York 11229. The copy count for **APA-Q** is 20. For information about receiving and/or contributing to **APA-Q**, write to Mark.

**Dagon** also goes to others who have indicated an interest in its subject matter. Subscriptions are 10 issues for \$15 in the U. S., and for \$40 elsewhere.

In recent months my mailings have been delayed by several factors. Because the duplication of the pages of **Dagon** #655 was delayed, I did not get the **APA-Q** copies to Mark Blackman until the second week of August. Fortunately, Mark was able to postpone the mailing of **APA-Q** #565 until that issue of **Dagon** reached him. I am also short of stamps of the necessary large denominations, which means that foreign readers, and people who get packages of clippings from the newspapers I read, reporting on topics in which they may be interested, have to wait until my daughters get those stamps to me, and those packages thus get so large that they may have to deal with an inconveniently large numbers of such clippings.

\*

The September issue of **CAR-PGa Newsletter** begins with a Gen Con 2014 report by Michael Tresca. It is titled "Making Your Own Religion", and deals with the religions that might enter into a RPG, and which in that context have the *real* powers unaccountably denied to the religions of our world. Tresca divides them into "Personal Religion", "Organized Religion", and "Magic"; this last is easily the most common encountered in a RPG. These three different sorts of religion are then analyzed in the article. Another article by Tresca proclaims "Gen Con, Hobby Industry Hit Record Growth in 2014".

Each issue of **CAR-PGa Newsletter** contains a listing of upcoming RPGaming conventions. To receive **CAR-PGa Newsletter**, which is published monthly by Paul Cardwell for the Committee for the Advancement of Role-Playing Games, send \$1.50 a copy or \$15 a year to him at 1127 Cedar, Bonham, TX 75418. (Costs are \$2.25 a copy and \$20 a year to addresses outside the United States.) Each issue contains a long listing of gaming conventions and sites. Paul also offers a subscription anywhere, by e-mail, for \$5.

\*

In the last issue of **Dagon** I had assumed that the United States retained its essentially medieval system of weights and measures, as well as the Fahrenheit temperature scale, out of sheer inertia, while the rest of the world has sensibly converted to the metric system and the Celsius temperature scale. However, it is not quite as simple as that. In many aspects of life, Americans have been attracted to conspiracy notions, misleadingly called "conspiracy theories" by many. An article by Amir Alexander in the *New York Times Book Review* of 24 August 2014 reports that in the 1970s, when the metric system was being proposed by the United States Metric Board, and even taught in some schools, Dean Krakel, director of the National Cowboy Hall of Fame in Oklahoma, declared "Metric is definitely Communist. One monetary system, one language, one weight and measurement system, one world - all Communist." In boring ol'

reality, the metric system was first enacted by revolutionaries, but not by Communists. It was enacted in France shortly after the French Revolution. The meter was originally intended to be one ten-millionth of the distance from the North Pole to the Equator. The gram was to be the mass of one cubic centimeter of water at its maximum density, which occurs at 4° C (39° F). And the liter is one thousand cubic centimeters, or milliliters.

Possibly Communism got invoked by the anti-metric movement because Russia did not adopt the metric system until after the Communist revolution of 1917. But most of the rest of the world had already accepted the metric system and the Celsius temperature scale by then, so Communism can scarcely be involved in that. And the metric system is now universally used in the sciences, even in the United States. In fact, the legal definition of the inch in this country is exactly 2.54 centimeters, so in a sense the United States is already on the metric system, and no cowboy who wants the length of his lasso or any other possession measured in inches can change that.

Now that belief in a SMICC (Sinister Monolithic International Communistic Conspiracy) has declined following the partition of the Soviet Union, other conspiracies are being blamed for metric measurements. So Bob Greene, founder of WAM! ("We Ain't Metric!") is upset that the metric system "is all an Arab plot with some Frenchies and Limeys thrown in." The existence and character of such conspiracy notions gives us the real nature of the opposition to the metric system.

\*

This year there will be an election in November to select the new Mayor of Washington; the incumbent is not seeking another term. Muriel Bowser, the Democratic candidate, is presently the odds-on favorite. Two independent candidates are running against her. There does not seem to be a Republican candidate, which makes sense since there are very few registered Republican voters in our capital. Both the independent candidates were once Republicans, but they now obviously feel that running under that label will do them no good at all.

I am left wondering whether Muriel Bowser is related to Mary Bowser. Mary Bowser was born enslaved in Richmond, Virginia, in the first half of the nineteenth century. As a girl she was bought by the van Lews, a wealthy Richmond family of New York Dutch origin, who had come to Richmond for better economic opportunities. The van Lews had a daughter Elizabeth, a few years older than Mary. In those days it was customary for slave-owning families to assign to each of their children, a slave child of the same sex and age, to serve as a playmate, confidant, companion, and eventually a body-servant. Mary thus became Elizabeth's personal slave.

However, matters worked out quite differently from what her slave-owning father might have expected. Elizabeth van Lew grew to believe that slavery was wrong and needed to be ended. After her father died, she gave Mary her freedom, and sent her to a private school in

Philadelphia where she was given a good education. At that time, it was forbidden by law in Virginia to teach a slave even to read and write.

When the Slaveholders' Rebellion broke out in 1861, Elizabeth, who was then about 40, volunteered to serve as a nurse in a hospital for wounded Confederate soldiers, and for federal officers who were prisoners of war. From the wounded Rebels she got information on upcoming military operations, which she sent by Mary and other couriers to General Grant, whose forces were then slowly advancing on Richmond. She also contrived to liberate some of the federal prisoners. I had never heard of her efforts until I read of them in Al Nofi's *A Civil War Treasury*.

Eventually Elizabeth's espionage operations grew to include numerous informants and couriers, male and female (including her widowed mother), black and white, enslaved and free. When Elizabeth heard that Jefferson Davis's residence needed a new housemaid, she arranged for Mary to get the post. Mary was thus able to listen in on conferences of Davis and his generals while serving them meals, and (since she was believed to be an illiterate slave) to clean Davis's office, where she could find vitally important papers.

After the end of the Rebellion, Elizabeth was ostracized by her social set. Since she had spent most of her personal fortune on supporting her country's war effort, she would have sunk into poverty had President Grant not appointed her Postmaster of Richmond. Some of the federal officers she had liberated also helped her out financially. She died around the end of the century. It is not known what became of Mary, who moved to the North after the war.

In 2002 the Canadian novelist Marie Jakober wrote a novel, *Only Call Us Faithful*, a slightly fictionalized version of Elizabeth van Lew's career during the Rebellion. Jakober added an Author's Note explaining some minor changes she made to Elizabeth's story.

\*

The fact that Muriel Bowser's opponents are calling themselves independents rather than Republicans seems to indicate that, at least in Washington, D.C., the Republican label is political poison. In Maryland this also seems to be true. Maryland's Democratic governor, Martin O'Malley, is not running for another term this year, and political observers suspect that instead he is preparing to run for the presidency in 2016. The Republican candidate for governor, Larry Hogan, is not admitting in his television commercials that he is a Republican, indicating that "Republican" may also be a poison label in Maryland. Instead, he is portraying himself as a nice guy who wants to lower taxes. However, he does not indicate which government programs he will repeal if there is not enough tax money to pay for them. This is another Republican policy, also evident in national elections. While lower taxes are a popular campaign slogan, cutting government programs is *not* popular, and the obvious Republican policy is to hope that nobody notices.

Virginia elected a Democratic governor last year, but the label "Republican" might still

be a political issue there now, as members of Congress will be up for election in November. Ex-Governor Bob McDonnell, a Republican, did not run for another term in 2013. But he and his wife have just been found guilty of major acts of political corruption, including taking bribes. If this year's Republican candidates for Congress in Virginia do not mention during their commercials that they are Republicans, I will not be greatly surprised.

\*

For the past four years, Americans have been marking the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversaries of events of the Slaveholders' Rebellion. The government has issued two stamps each year, commemorating the most important events, including the naval campaign that restored New Orleans to its allegiance, and the Antietam, Gettysburg, and Vicksburg campaigns. And members of **APA-Q** have been discussing which campaign was the most important in defeating the Rebels.

Some descendants of the Rebels have also been trying to explain why their allegedly glorious cause was defeated. In the most preposterous such "explanation", some have declared that General James Longstreet, General Lee's right-hand man, was secretly a Yankee agent who advised actions that would cause their defeat. (One of the promoters of this notion was General Jubilation T. - er - *Jubal A. Early*.) There is even a book out that analyzes the causes of the Rebels' defeat, and is entitled *God and General Longstreet*.

I have just seen the 2014 stamps that commemorate events of 1864. And I had thought that one of them would certainly have to commemorate the March Through Georgia. I would say that that campaign was the one that defeated the Rebellion. The campaigns of Shiloh, Antietam, Gettysburg, and Franklin-Nashville all took place on the fringes of the Confederacy, but the March Through Georgia bored a hole in the heart of the Rebellion. It destroyed the slave-worked plantations that provided food to the Rebel army, including supplies for the men who were defending the approaches to Richmond against General Grant's troops. And the March Through Georgia arouses to this day loud complaints from enthusiasts for the Rebellion, who claim that it was somehow unfair to their ancestors. These complaints are the Rebels' own confession that the March Through Georgia was the most instrumental campaign in the defeat of the Rebellion.

It also inspired a famous song by Henry Clay Work, the Cole Porter of the nineteenth century. (Work is best known for his "My Grandfather's Clock".) You will find the text of his "Marching Through Georgia" in Al Nofi's *A Civil War Treasury*, together with the extent of its subsequent popularity in the military band repertoires of all English-speaking armies.

One of the song's "fifty thousand strong" of the march was Sergeant James Boardman of the 1st Minnesota Light Artillery, the younger brother of my great-great-grandfather.

Unfortunately the U. S. Postal "Service" finked out on the March Through Georgia. Instead, the 2014 stamps marked the battles of Petersburg (VA) and Mobile Bay (AL). Apparently southern whining about the March Through Georgia still had some effect on the choice

of campaigns to be commemorated.

\*

Translating from other languages into English may have its problems, but translating between the British and American versions of English can also be difficult. Not long ago, Perdita and I had a discussion about Felix Salten's novel *Bambi* and its sequels, which were originally written in German by an Austrian author. I recalled that in one of the novels Bambi and his herd encountered a herd of what the translator called "elk". However, the beast which Americans now call "elk", and the original Americans call "wapiti", does not occur in Europe. The animal which is called "elk" by the British, "*Elch*" in German, and "*elán*" in French is the one that North Americans now call "moose". My guess for this is, that when English speakers began to settle in North America, they encountered the wapiti, recognized it as a large deer, and knew that in Europe there is a large deer called "elk". Later, when these settlers encountered the animal called "elk" in Europe, they had to borrow the Ojibway name "moose" for it. Something similar may have happened in French, because the animal called "*elán*" by the French is apparently called "*orignal*" ("or-in-yahl") by French-speakers in Canada.

A further complication ensued when Disney made the film *Bambi*. While Salten's *Bambi* was clearly intended for the European red deer ("*Edelhirsch*" in German and "*cerf commun*" in French), Disney's artists drew them as white-tailed deer, a solely North American species whose antlers are rather more curved.

\*

I have recently encountered a well-known American folk-song of whose origin and original lyrics I am ignorant. It currently appears in television ads for Audi, but without words. A version of the words that is well-known appears below. I would appreciate any information about its origin and original text that readers can supply me with.

I suspect that this song may have begun as part of a children's game. But then, as often with such songs, the "folk process" had its way with the

words, and some were changed or added with allegedly "unprintable" words. Such words often appear in the line labeled "\*\*\*\*\*"

Round and round the mulberry bush  
The monkey chased the weasel.  
The monkey stopped \*\*\*\*\*  
Pop! goes the weasel.

Oddly, the weasel seems to get the better of the monkey. Usually the weasel is one of the "bad guy" animals in folk tales. I once saw an animated cartoon in which the Big Bad Wolf is brought to trial for his many committed or attempted crimes, as recorded in numerous folk tales. And the wolf's attorney is - a weasel.

\*

The spoken text in a commercial really ought to be pronounced correctly, particularly if

it is a commercial for an educational institution. A recent commercial for American Military University pronounced the word “relevant” as if it were spelled “revelant”.

To add further complications, there is no listing for American Military University in the directory of colleges in the 2014 *World Almanac*. I suspect that “AMU” may be a for-profit university with on-line classes, a sort of institution of which I am more than a little suspicious. After 37 years with a professorship at the City University of New York, I can easily think of circumstances in which teaching in an on-line university would present problems. For example, I was once giving a lecture which one of the students, a Haitian, did not understand very well. When he asked a question about what I had just said, I gave him my answer in French. Now how could this be managed in an on-line university?

AMU announces in its television commercials that it is not an institution of any of the American armed forces. Nor are its classes limited to members of the armed forces; it teaches courses which might be useful not only in the armed forces but in related occupations such as law, law enforcement, and forensics. Apparently AMU is a for-profit university that feels there might be a market for its courses, and profit in offering them.

\*

During the past year I have been watching television broadcasts of the baseball games of the Washington Nationals (“Nats”). They have good management, good players, and a good record this year, so I fully expect to see them in the post-season play-offs. But I do wonder about one minor item: Why does their second baseman have a Carthaginian name?

The man’s name is Asdrubal Cabrera. And the name “Asdrubal” (more commonly “Hasdrubal”) was borne by several prominent Carthaginians, including the brother of the more famous, and more successful, Hannibal. As Hasdrubal had been coming to his brother’s aid during the latter’s campaign in Italy, he was killed in battle with the Romans, and his head was thrown into Hannibal’s camp.

The Carthaginians were descended from Phoenician colonists who settled in northern Africa. The Phoenicians were a Semitic people whose language was close to Hebrew. The syllable “bal”, which occurs in several Carthaginian names, is clearly cognate with the Hebrew בעל (“baal” in the bible, meaning “god“, “lord”, “master”, “owner”, or, believe it or not, “husband”), and usually refers to a god of the Jews’ enemies. (“Hannibal” = חנבעל = “god’s grace“) In one of his books, H. G. Wells complained that the wars between the Romans and the Carthaginians were usually taught in British schools from the Roman point of view, and in such a way as to encourage anti-Semitism. That book may have been *The Outline of History*, but I’m not certain.

This still does not explain why the name “Asdrubal” (accent on the second syllable) is given in Spanish-speaking countries. I can only presume that some person important in the early history of Christianity was named “Asdrubal”, and that boys are sometimes named after

him. Otherwise I am completely at a loss as to why this name is given.

## GETTING CAUGHT UP

**The View from Entropy Hall #52 (Meškys):** Ken Ham's inability, as a creationist, "to articulate a theology to include the findings of science along with a belief in the divinity of the Bible" is not a coincidence. It is built into the fundamentals of creationism. The controversy commonly called "science vs. religion" is not merely about what we know. It is about *how* we know what we know. One can accept what thousands of scientists have discovered, observing, calculating, and meddling with the universe, or one can defend what an allegedly and absolutely infallible ancient text says about the universe. Moses (if he actually wrote Genesis) and Darwin cannot both be right, in their methods or in their conclusions.

One of many examples is the bible's chronology. There are numerous explicit statements of it, particularly in Genesis, and those who regard the bible as literally infallible cannot make an exception for this chronology. The births of the Genesis patriarchs are given in terms of the ages of their fathers, and from such evidence it is possible to draw up a chronology that leads from Adam forward. Most biblical chronologists eventually tie this to the death of Nebuchadnezzar, which is mentioned in the bible, and from this to secular (and often Pagan) historians who give a date for that death that can be translated into the Christian religious calendar. Translations and calculations of the bible vary from one interpreter to another, so Jewish, Eastern Orthodox, and western Christian sources give various dates for the biblical creation in terms of calendars used today. Most familiar is the assertion of Archbishop Ussher of the Church of Ireland (a Protestant body) that the universe was created in October, 4004 BCE, but all of such alleged dates of the creation are a few thousand years BCE. In order to arrive at the scientifically established age of the Earth of about four or five billion years, Christians and Jews have to interpret the words usually translated as "day" or "morning and evening" to mean many millions of years, which is ludicrous. See *Asimov's Guide to the Bible* for an account of this controversy.

The only way to avoid this contradiction and retain the bible's chronological assertions is to assert, as you do, that instruction in science is not the bible's purpose. This turns the chronological assertions of the bible into poetry, meant to impress rather than instruct the reader. But it also means that they cannot be literal truths.

Your comments about the Canadian health care system (and by extension, those of other industrialized countries, particularly including the United Kingdom) add sanity to the statements often made of those systems by opponents of what they malevolently call "socialized medicine". Such people are so fearful that the U. S. government might enact a health care plan that they slander the health care plans of other countries as impractical, bureaucratic, ineffi-



cient, or expensive.

Not long after your mention of *Archie* comics in **APA-Q #565**, there appeared in the *New York Times* of 5 September 2014 the obituary of Stan Goldberg, 82, who drew *Archie* and several other comics as a freelance. *Archie* began in 1941, and its original artist, not Goldberg, is whom I suspect you were mentioning as a neighbor in New Hampshire.

When I read the Tresca articles in the September **CAR-PGa Newsletter** (see p. 2 of this issue of **Dagon**), I wondered whether there had ever been an *Archie* story about role-playing games, which seem to have been a popular activity for teen-agers. Of course, now that recent *Archie* stories have been about Archie and his cohort as adults, its authors may have decided that they had got beyond teen-age hobbies.

I've never read, or even heard of, L. Sprague de Camp's book *Turn Left at Africa*. His historical novel, in which the characters conclude that the Earth is round, was set when the Persian Empire dominated the Middle East and Egypt. An expedition led by a Persian prince and a Greek scholar is sent up the Nile to find out more about the peoples who live there, and who might constitute a danger to Persian control of Egypt. During this journey, the Greek notices that the southern stars are higher in the sky, and the northern stars lower. He concludes that this could happen only if they were traveling over a curved surface. But I do not remember the book's title.

In 1958 I met some elderly members of the Baltic German nobility through which the Russian Empire had once ruled the Baltic States. They were then living in Bavaria, having moved west at the end of World War II. One man told me that they sometimes mis-spoke of themselves as "We Baltics" ("*Wir Balten*"), as if they were the only real Baltics. Our conversation included one of the problems that might arise if you know a great many languages. We spoke mainly in German, with some English, but at one point a man spoke to me in a language I could not recognize, much less understand. He immediately apologized for his mistake, and for speaking to me in - Estonian!

**Dagon #655** (me): In discussing the Hyperborean paradise in which some ancients believed, I cited a suggestion that their "Hyperborea" was actually a distorted account of China, brought over the Silk Road, whose western terminus lay to the north of the Roman Empire. I have since learned that the Syrian city of Aleppo had been the western terminus of the Silk Road. However, at some point in the journey from the Chinese Empire to the Roman Empire, the travelers would have had to move southward.

**APA-Qover #566** (Blackman): I recall having seen the qover qartoon before - almost certainly in a s-f fanzine, since who else would have used the word "filk"?

Many national anthems seem to have tunes from some other country. The U. S. national anthem is to the tune of a British drinking song. The British national anthem is to the tune of a German drinking song, "Heil Dir in Siegekranz". ("Hail to Thee in Triumph Crowned"). The

German national anthem, which praises the unification of Germany, is to the tune of an Austrian song which praises the Emperor of Austria, a firm opponent of any German unification that was not under him. The Dutch national anthem, the world's oldest and musically one of the finest, is to the tune of a French Protestant hymn. By contrast, the French national anthem is wholly French in its origins, and revolutionary in its spirit. Who can forget the scene in the 1942 film *Casablanca*, in which the staff and patrons of Rick's sing the *Marseillaise* in defiance of German occupation troops? France is not defeated even when it is occupied by enemy forces, as General de Gaulle also realized when he said "*France ne peut pas mourir!*" - "France can never die!"

**Blancmange** #686 (Blackman): Thanks for the brief reviews of the Steven Saylor mystery novels, some of which I have not yet read. I may write more extensive reviews of them in **Dagon** after I've read them.

More later.

### HELLO, JENNY!

On 10 September, Karina arrived with - at last - the high-value stamps I needed to mail out large envelopes containing clippings that I felt might interest the recipients, and also letters to foreign addresses. These included eighteen of the \$2 "Inverted Jenny" stamps, a reprint of the most valuable rarity among U. S. postage stamps. I have since been mailing out envelopes that require the \$2 and \$1 stamps. I will continue to do so in the next few days, including envelopes that contain this issue of **Dagon**. I only hope that the large number of such clippings that have accumulated for some readers do not dismay them with the amount.

**Dagon** #657

John Boardman

Room 238, Montevue

1910 Rosemont Avenue

Frederick, MD 21702-8249

( ) - If this space is checked,  
You may find something of  
interest to you on p. \_\_\_\_