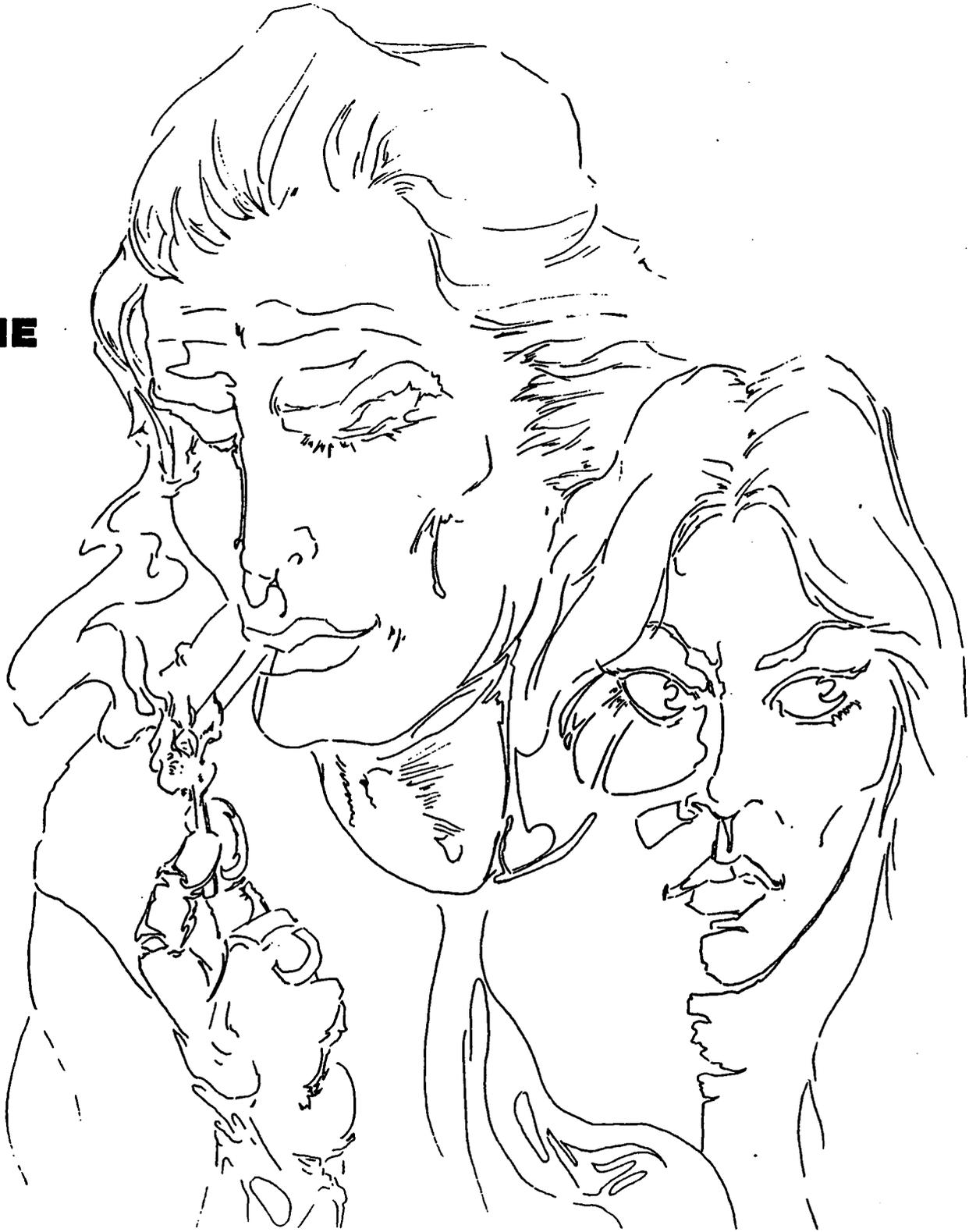


WELCOME

TO



RADIO FREE THULCANDRA

RADIO FREE THULCANDRA 15. October 1988. Edited and Published for Christian Fandom, an interdenominational fellowship of Christians and Science Fiction.Fans interested in the courteous and accurate representation of Christian viewpoints in the fannish community, by Marty Helgesen, with significant editorial assistance by Ross Pavlac. It is available for "the usual", that is, articles, artwork, letters of comment, trades for other zines, etc. Two dollars to help meet the cost of printing and postage will be accepted as an expression of interest, but more accurate participation is preferred. I have a particular need for artwork, both covers and interior art. I hope to publish RFT quarterly, so my target for the next issue is January 1989. The earlier I receive contributions, thus giving me more time to work on layout, the happier I will be.

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- ___ Sample copy. See above for how to get future issues.
- ___ Review copy.
- ___ Trade (?)
- ___ Editor's whim

POTPOURRI

By Marty Helgesen

When Ernest Heramia, who started RFT, was unable to continue it as a genzine, I offered to take on the responsibility of editing and publishing it. I see it as a fanzine with a Christian orientation, intended primarily for Christian fans, but available to anyone who is interested.

Christian Fandom, as it says in the masthead, is an interdenominational fellowship. To indicate the scope of the word "interdenominational": Ernest Heramia, who started it, is a Pentecostal Christian, I am Catholic, and Ross Pavlac, who has been very active in the group since its beginning, has described himself as "orthodox Protestant". We have fundamentalists, members of theologically liberal churches, and people at various points in between.

In RFT 14 Ernest raised the issue of an organizational structure for Christian Fandom. His apa/auxine proposal attracted little interest, but the question is still important. There should be some provision for continuity. Also, we do not want people to get the idea that this is two or three fans doing things for everyone else. We want active participation by as many people as possible. That is one major reason I want active participation in RFT. I hope you will send letters or comment, articles, and artwork rather than money.

However, we must organize realistically. At a Nolacon panel on the early days of fandom panelists mentioned something I already had heard at other discussions of fan history. In those early days eager fans started national organizations with local chapters consisting of one or two people. Naturally these groups quickly fell apart. We should not try to set up an organization beyond the needs of a group our size. We also should consider the number of people who would be interested in doing administrative work. I urge everyone with opinions on the organization of Christian Fandom to send them to me so we can have a full discussion in the letter column.

In RFT 14 Ernest also said he was dropping the name Christian Fandom. On this point I disagree with him. In a later letter he explained that the name seemed to him to imply an excessive claim to inclusiveness. There are many Christians in fandom who are not a part of our group. He made a comparison to the New England Science Fiction Association, which, despite its name, does not include all fans in New England. However, I think his example proves too much. There are many other organizations in fandom and in society in general with names that, if taken literally, imply a comprehensiveness that does not exist. I think this is so common that in ordinary English usage most people ignore the literal implications of the names.

On the positive side, I think the name clearly and concisely identifies what we are: an organization of Christian fans, and a few interested non-Christians. Furthermore, the name is becoming known in fandom. Name recognition is important for any organization. It is particularly important for us because one of our major purposes is to help fans in general realize that there are a lot of Christian fans, that there is no incompatibility between being a Christian and being a fan. Sometimes large corporations change their names to new ones they think are more suitable. They have multi-million dollar advertising budgets to publicize the changes, but, according to a newspaper story I saw a few months ago, these name changes don't always work as hoped. I think it would be a bad idea to throw away the name recognition we have achieved.

A somewhat related question is the generic term which describes our group. At the meeting at Nolacon Ross referred to it as a support group. The context made it clear that he was distinguishing it from an evangelistic group. Christian Fandom as

an organization does no evangelization. Individual Christians in fandom are free to do whatever kind of evangelization they see fit on their own. However, to many people, including me, the words "support group" suggest a group of people who try to help each other deal with a common problem such as cancer or diabetes. Being a Christian is not a problem, it is a blessing. I mentioned this to Ross afterwards. He said he intended to indicate that we try to help with the feelings of isolation, and the outright hostility, that some Christians experience in fandom, but he agreed that the term has too negative a connotation. The term we've used most often is "fellowship". It has a churchy sound to it, but it may be the best we can do. Does anyone have any other ideas?

This is the first genzine I've published, but I've been reading fanzines for 31 years. In 1974 I joined MINNEAPA and have published 178 issues of STRAIGHT FROM THE FISH'S MOUTH for it. The primary reference of the title is geographical--I live on the southwest end of Long Island, which is shaped like a fish swimming west-- but there are other references and allusions, including the Christian fish symbol. In 1979 I joined a second apa, FLAP, for which I've published 54 issues. I use a different title for each issue of my FLAPzine. Titles have included NO FAULT EARTHQUAKE INSURANCE, MERRIMACK LIZARDS, OCCAM'S DEPILATORY, ILLUMINATI PINE, ACROSS THE SAHARA BY SUBMARINE, and, for the fifth anniversary mailing, YOUNG LUSTRUM.

As I said in the flyer I sent announcing the change in editorship, I want to emphasize material on the relationship of our faith and our hobby. I want to de-emphasize, although not eliminate entirely, Christian material that has no connection with science fiction, fantasy, or fandom. Since there still will be room for some material of that kind, there also will be for fannish material with no connection to Christianity. To me, a fanzine without puns, obscure references, or other silliness is like a fish without a mouth. Therefore you are likely to see things like this geographical note: In a recent issue of his FLAPzine SLOW DJINN, Dave Locke reprinted a newspaper photograph of a sign saying:

| | |
|---------------------|------|
| NEW CUYAMA | |
| Population | 562 |
| Ft. above sea level | 2150 |
| Established | 1951 |
| TOTAL | 4663 |

In other words, I want RFT to be an eclectic mix of faannish and sercon material. For those of you not familiar with fannish slang, "faannish" refers to the social/subculture aspects of fandom, especially the silly bits, and "sercon" means serious and constructive. Normally I will not explain fannish slang as I use it. People can pick up the meaning from context, or they can ask. Or, if you are interested, you can get a copy of RUNE 78 (available for \$3.35 from the Minnesota Science Fiction Society, Inc., P.O. Box 8297, Lake Street Station, Minneapolis, MN 55408, checks payable to the Society or to Minn-STF; the published price of \$2.00 will get you the next issue.) RUNE 78 was a special issue intended to bring fanzine fans and convention fans closer together, and was sent to everyone who attended Minicon 23 in addition to its regular readers. It includes a slightly edited transcript of the Minicon Operations Log so you can see how a convention looks from the point of view of the people running it. It also has glossaries of fanzine and convention terminology.

I attended Minicon. It is put on by what has been called Crazy Minneapolis Fandom, which may explain why I feel so much at home there. A fannish atmosphere does things to one's mind. The library computer system I work with every day uses barcodes, but it wasn't until I saw Eileen Lufkin with a small box with a UPC code on it that it occurred to me that a bar code used to be "Joe sent me." And Sunday in the Hucksters' Room I saw something which led to the idea of opening a bar

called Popular Demand, and next to it opening a candy store that took bets. It would be the front by Popular Demand.

Friday around noon there were trays of doughnuts in the con suite, so I decided to have lunch. I put a powdered sugar doughnut between a plain doughnut and a cinnamon one and made a doughnut sandwich. I considered the action a minor bit of incidental silliness, but I later learned that witnesses had spread news of it throughout Minn-Stf.

There was a bowl in the con suite with condoms in it. This provided an occasion to mention an item I had just seen reprinted in the New Statesman, a left-wing British political journal to which my library subscribes. It has a column of strange or otherwise notable items from British newspapers. This one appeared in the March 4, 1988 issue: "The case was brought to light last August when Greenwich Council's Trading Standards sent samples from two brands of condoms to the London Scientific Services for testing against the British Standard. The British Standard allows a maximum of three per cent to have holes.--Kentish Times"

When I mentioned that to Lon Levy he told me of a libertarian (I think) fanzine or other publication that wanted to promote the use of condoms so it included one in each copy of an issue. They were stapled in.

The Christian Fandom meeting was on Friday afternoon. It went rather well. One woman who later said she had been studying in India, asked what I thought about Neo-Pagans in fandom. I replied that to the extent that Neo-Pagans are serious they are just another religion, and like all non-Christian religions they teach some truth mixed with some error. In this connection I pointed out that while an atheist has to say that the majority of the human race, now and historically, is mistaken about its basic view of the universe, the Christian can say that almost everyone else is partly right. The questioner, and at least one other person, didn't agree with this. They were talking about statements such as "Jesus is God incarnate" being true for me but not true for some other people. If all someone means by that is that I believe it to be true while some other people do not, his position is correct although worded in a very careless and misleading way. However, if someone means that the statement really is true for me and false for someone else, that is nonsense. One might just as well say that the statement "New York is one of the fifty states" is true for me and false for someone else. If a statement is true it is true for everyone, whether everyone realizes it or not. If X is true, not-X cannot simultaneously be true.

Someone told me Sunday that after last year's Minicon someone had complained about the Christian Fandom being on the program because it had nothing to do with science fiction. I replied, "As distinct from belly dancing, which has a close connection with science fiction?" (Several Twin Cities fans are involved in belly dancing and give performances and workshops at Minicons and some other cons.)

Saturday morning there was a panel on Paganism in Fantasy and Science Fiction. I arrived a few minutes late. (It was at ~~the ungodly hour~~ of 11:00 A.M., which is early at a con.) That evening I spoke with Lon Levy, who had been on the panel as a sort of Jewish pagan. I mentioned that had the occasion presented itself I would have asked a question I had asked at the Christian Fandom meeting. If an ancient pagan were to come forward in time and, after learning the language, meet some Neo-Pagans, would he say, "They're doing what I used to do."? Lon said, "No." At the beginning of the panel the moderator asked for definitions of paganism. Lon said something about the ancient Greeks and was told, "We're talking about modern paganism." He agreed with my description of Neo-Paganism as a "choose-your-own-adventure" religion.

That weekend was the change to Daylight Savings Time, as if fans don't lose enough sleep at cons, which led to the theme, "Spring Forward, Fall Over". The program book said for 2:00 A.M. Sunday, "Temporal shuttle departs for 3:00 am." There were several interesting items scheduled for 2:01 A.M., including "Mudwrestling Joanna Russ and Jerry Pournelle: Jessica Amanda Salmonson, referee." "Eleanor Arnason reads from her latest work, hailed as the first Marxist Gor novel: Wage Slaves of Gor," and "Zoroastrian Fandom." Unfortunately, I missed all of them.

That last item amused me, and pleased me, too. If we are well known enough to be the basis of a friendly joke, that means we have achieved some success in making Christian fans a visible presence in fandom.

On Wednesday, August 31 I flew to New Orleans for Nolacon II. The weather was hot and sticky, and I hated it. After walking a few blocks my clothing was soaked with sweat. *(Yes, the weather had the a little horse!)* I quickly decided that instead of being called The Big Easy, New Orleans should be called The Big Soggy. There also were frequent, heavy, but usually brief rainstorms which made crossing the street between the two hotels chancy. The weather did clear up Monday, which was sunny, comfortably warm, and DRY. This made the boat ride very pleasant. Fortunately the air conditioning worked well in both hotels. It could have been worse. Over that same weekend Seattle had temperatures in the 90's and no electricity in the central business district because of a fire in some feeder cables.

The hotels were right on the border of the French Quarter, so I walked around there. I was less thanwhelmed. I won't say, "If you've seen one wrought iron balcony you've seen them all," but I will say that my personal appetite for seeing them is easily satisfied.

The convention itself was an organizational disaster. This wasn't primarily the fault of the people who actually ran it since many of them had been recruited within a week of the opening of the con after people who had been in charge resigned or were fired. Panels were moved from one room to another on a different floor, and no one told the panelists. They had to find out from the daily newsletter. During most of Saturday there was no reliable schedule available. The schedule in the newsletter was wrong, reportedly because the wrong floppy disc had been dumped. This was not discovered until after it was printed, so signs were put up at the newsletter distribution points saying a special issue with the correct schedule would be published, as eventually it was.

A sign just inside the door of Operations said, "Thank you for not screaming hysterically and not foaming at the mouth." (Another sign, which was removed before the end of the con, said, "Thank you for not smoking, spitting, drooling, bleeding, or dripping any pus.") Speaking of signs, there was one near the con registration area which said, "CONVENTION INFORMATION THROUGH THIS DOOR. If we don't know, we'll be proud to lie."

When I arrived at the Sheraton I saw that there was another convention there. It was a black Baptist foreign mission organization. Their presence no doubt disconcerted some fans who are uncomfortable being around Christians. The unusual behavior and attire of some fans at cons could have disconcerted the Baptists, but they left by the end of the week. When I got back to work I learned that two women I knew from work--former members of the library's administrative staff (civil service)--had been at that convention. I hadn't known before I went because one of them was retired and the other had transferred to another part of the college several years ago.

Saturday afternoon Ross Pavlac chaired a Christian Fandom meeting with assistance from me. It went well. Discussions ranged from Dragonraid, a Christian FRP game which Jimmy Swaggart had denounced without bothering to see how it differed from other FRP games, to "The Last Temptation of Christ" and the general question of how Christians should respond to various kinds of evils in society. There were a few places where the discussion could have gone off into digressions but we were able to keep it going smoothly. We ended the meeting with a prayer. It has occurred to me that there is an old fannish catchphrase: "Anything two or more fans do together is fanac." I wonder if the people who started that catchphrase realized it would include praying?

Sunday night Ross and I gave a Christian Fandom party. Ross, who is experienced in such matters planned it, and I provided the room. At Ross's request K. T. Fitzsimmons, a member of the Chicago bid committee, bought our supplies when she went shopping for supplies for the Chicago party, for which we are grateful. The party was very successful. Some people showed up at the announced starting time of 10:00. The room soon became so full that we had to carry a table out into the hall to make more room, and one conversation group moved out into the hall. The crowd started thinning out around 2:00, and around 3:00 there were only two small conversations going on. Then someone asked what time it was. When I said, "around 3:00" there was a yelp from someone who probably had to get up the next morning, and the party broke up. After Ross and I cleaned up I went off to the filk rooms, and Ross went to proofread the con's newsletter.

There were two minor problems. At first an initial conversation with the first arrivals grew into one big discussion, as if it were a meeting instead of a party. After a while, though, it broke up into a number of conversations, as befits a fannish party. While I was talking with Bernadette Bosky about 17th century authors and other matters relating to her dissertation, I heard people near us saying something about quantum mechanics.

The other problem was that the two bags of M&Ms I bought because I'm not fond of pretzels and chips ran out soon. Since we had leftover pretzels and chips it seems obvious that for future parties we should have more M&Ms and fewer pretzels and chips. (Speaking of future meetings, Ross has told me that Tom Veal was so pleased with the party that he offered the use of a suite at Windycon to hold another one.)

While I was standing near the door, talking, I noticed that someone had come in and was chanting something. I ignored him. Later, while we were cleaning up, he came by again and asked how we had liked his Buddhist mantra. I told him no one had paid attention to it.

Ross had had flyers printed for the party with a blank space to write in the place and time, and we posted them in the hotels. On one of them someone wrote, "Jimmy Swaggart Presents ...". This amused me because Jimmy Swaggart had been criticized by name at both the meeting and the party, not for his recently publicized sexual sins but for his practice of attacking things without bothering to find out the facts first. He and the graffiti scrawler seem to have something in common.

On another copy of the flyer someone wrote above the words "Christian Fandom" the words "Non sequitur! Non sequitur!" Since a non sequitur is a defective argument, he probably meant to say "Contradiction in terms!" or "Oxymoron!" (As Doug Hoylman once explained in MINNEAPA. an oxymoron is a castrated Irish Bull.)

Someone at the con was posting and leaving piles of a flyer saying, "Going to Noreascon III? Protest your Registration fee being used to provide Con Space for Right-wing, Bible-Thumping fundamentalist Christians!! Write to ..." That kind of mindless bigotry requires no answer, but I noticed that on one of the posted flyers some people had written remarks about freedom of speech. one

There were several regular program items dealing with religion. On Friday there was a panel, "Is the Scientific Method the Death of God?" The program book description said, "Are God and science mutually exclusive? How have advances in technology altered our spiritual perceptions?" It was well attended, with over 250 people filling the room. The moderator was Algis Budrys, who identified himself as an atheist. The other panelists were: John Barnes, who said he probably had been invited to be on the panel because he had written a book involving the Catholic Church of the future; he later identified himself as an atheist, R. A. Lafferty, a Catholic, Robert Silverberg, who said he had been born Jewish but did not now practice any religion. (My reports of this and other panels are not in chronological order).

Budrys said he suspected the organizers of the panel expected dogma bashing, but he wanted to avoid that.

Silverberg said he had read Carl Sagan's novel Contact, and was surprised at how well it was written. He added that the book makes a case for the existence of a supreme being, but he didn't say what it is. He said the scientific method is the way to find God in the 20th century. He later said that the scientific method is not the death of God but the beginning of the understanding of God. He did not explain any of these statements

Lafferty said the questions religion answers include: Why is there anything? Why is there so much of it? and Why is it so complex? Budrys said science fiction and fantasy deal with the same questions, and added the question What are we to do about it? Panelists noted that a number of prominent science fiction authors have discussed religious questions, especially in their later works.

Budrys suggested that with genetic engineering, artificial intelligence, etc. man might evolve into a being that could reverse entropy. He added that this may have happened at least once before. Silverberg commented that if it had happened and if some being had started the process of entropy in our universe He might not look kindly on attempts to reverse it. Budrys himself mentioned that his idea still leaves the question of where the first "first cause" came from.

Budrys said that religions talk about praising God and fearing God, but he isn't interested in a being who demands egoboo and wants us to grovel. Unfortunately, I did not have a chance to point out that we praise God, not to give Him egoboo, but because praise is the proper response of rational creatures to the infinite perfection of their creator, and that fear of the Lord is properly understood as reverential awe, not groveling.

A woman in the audience identified herself as an astrophysicist at the Marshall Spaceflight Center and said that the creation narratives in Genesis provide an excellent poetic account of the beginning of the universe as it is now understood. Later a man in the audience who appeared to be a "Fundamentalist Atheist" said that a "budding astrophysicist" should pay attention to physics books, not to the Bible. He mentioned things like the description of night and day before the creation of the sun. He hadn't been paying attention. The woman had described herself as a working astrophysicist, not a budding astrophysicist. (There are, after all, more enjoyable ways of reproduction.) More to the point, she said Genesis provided a

poetic account of creation. In fact, as early as the third century some of the Church Fathers were writing that obviously the creation narratives in Genesis were not intended to be read as literal history, because of such things as the mention of day and night before the creation of the sun. They knew what poetry is. The fact that modern Fundamentalists seem not to know, or seem not to recognize that God can inspire men to write poetry to express His revelation is unfortunate, but Fundamentalism is relatively new in Christianity, and despite the media attention given to Fundamentalists they are not the biggest group of Christians.

On Saturday there was a panel on "Religion in Fantasy: What Works and What Doesn't?" It attracted over 100 people. It was mostly about creating religions for fantasy universes.

On Sunday there was a program item: "Resolved: SF Must Be Atheist: Hard SF writers pride themselves on backgrounds of logical universes with workable coherent science. Is there room for God in these realms of logic?" It attracted a small audience (around 40) and wasn't very interesting. Although billed as a debate, it wasn't. The panelists didn't disagree very much. They agreed that it's okay to have religion as part of the society in an SF story, but God cannot intervene to resolve the story with a miracle. This is a meaningless agreement since dragging God in to solve everything with a miracle wouldn't work in a mainstream novel, or even in a fantasy. As some of the panelists in the Religion in Fantasy panel on Saturday noted, magic is not religion. It is an alternate technology that doesn't work in our universe. This idea is not new. It's been made many times before. As I said several years ago, if magic worked and science didn't we'd fly to conventions on broadlooms instead of Boeings, but otherwise things would be the same. Working magic is manipulating the universe (or some small part thereof) according to the rules. It is not the same as asking God to override, in a special case, the general rules He made. And asking God for things is only one part of religion. However, while having God step in to solve everything as a Deus ex machina is a bad idea in any kind of fiction, I think it would be possible to write a hard SF story in which a miracle occurs, if it is done properly, just as it would be possible to write a mainstream novel in which a miracle occurs.

I think it was at this panel that one of the panelists said as an aside that in the Middle Ages the Church forbade dissection, thus impeding the development of surgery. (It seems that attacks on Christianity in general and Catholicism in particular frequently are made as asides to other statements.) That charge didn't sound right, so when I got home I checked in a history of medicine and other sources and confirmed that it is a myth. It's just another of the many false legends about the Church, such as the claims that there was a female pope named Joan, that a Church council once debated whether women have souls, or that Pope Callixtus III issued a bull against Halley's Comet. (That last myth re-appeared in the press during the 1986 appearance of Halley's Comet.)

On Monday there was a panel, "Is There Anything New in New Age?: Is the New Age the same old spiritualism reincarnated? What is the difference between seances and channeling sessions?" My opinion is that the answers are No, Yes, and None, but I wanted to hear what New Age people would say. However, it was at 10:00 A.M., and I wasn't interested enough to get up early enough to attend. If I had woken up spontaneously early enough to have finished breakfast by then I would have gone.

C. S. Lewis died the same day as President Kennedy. (Aldous Huxley died the same day too, and a book--Between Heaven & Hell by Peter Kreeft--has been written in which the three meet just after death and discuss religious questions.) Since 1988 is the 25th anniversary of his death, on Sunday Ross Pavlac chaired a "C. S. Lewis Retrospective" panel and slide show. It was mostly about his science

fiction and fantasy. During the discussion mention was made of the controversy over whether his marriage to Joy Davidman was ever consummated. I was able to provide definitive information on the question. First I pointed out that there were two marriages. When she seemed to be dying of cancer Lewis married her in a civil ceremony so the British government would not deport her back to America. Later, after her cancer went into remission, they were married in an Anglican ceremony. That marriage was consummated. I attended a meeting of the New York C. S. Lewis Society at which the guest speaker was Lyle Dorsett, the author of And God Came In, a biography of Joy Davidman. He mentioned the consummation controversy and said that when he interviewed one of Joy's sons by a previous marriage the son told him that one night he had walked into his mother's bedroom and found them engaged in sexual intercourse. Dorsett had brought with him to the meeting a man who spoke up from the audience, identifying himself as Joy's brother. He said she had written him a letter in which she mentioned having intercourse with Lewis. She said he was rather good at it.

On Monday I met Dave Wixon who started stuffing doubloons into my pockets. Doubloons are coin-shaped pieces of metal which are thrown to the crowds during Mardi Gras parades and other suitable occasions. Nolacon had its own doubloons, and he was helping dispose of the surplus. That evening, during the boat ride, I thought of what he could do with them and told him. I said he could take them home to Minnesota and sell them to the state. When the British government wants to honor someone it dubs him a knight. We don't have knights in the United States, but Kentucky honors people by making them colonels. Minnesota could honor people by dubbing them loons, and giving them doubloons as a token of the action. Dave did not try to throw me overboard.

Earlier Monday, after giving me the doubloons Dave said that he and Ann Chancellor had chartered a small riverboat for an evening cruise, and invited me to come. He also handed me an engraved invitation. This aroused certain suspicions in my mind, and, as it turned out, in the minds of others.

The boat was the River Rose. It had a plaque with a large painting of a rosebud. Bob Tucker pointed it out to me, and said it was better than the one in "Citizen Kane."

From time to time a member of the crew described what we were passing and told anecdotes about New Orleans. He mentioned a Confederate general who lost his left arm and left leg in the Civil War, and later ran successfully for governor with the slogan, "Vote for what's left of me. Everything I stand on is right."

At the end of the cruise suspicions were confirmed when the engagement of Dave Wixon and Ann Chancellor was announced.

HOLIDAY OUT

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YEAH.

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POTO.

AH-HA!
YOUR
ANSWER!

"PEOPLE MAKE
MISTAKES, NOT
COMPUTERS"



JUDEO-CHRISTIAN SF AND FANTASY LIBRARY

By Ross Pavlac

All books and records are rated on the following scale:

***** Must-buy
 **** Highly Recommended
 *** Recommended
 ** Recommended with reservations
 * Not Recommended
 No star Gack!

In this column, ratings are based on an equal weighing of literary quality and how well the theological elements in the book are handled. Reviews I do in other publications are not necessarily rated using these same criteria.

John the Balladeer by Manly Wade Wellman, Baen Books, NY, 1988, 306 pp., \$3.50, paperback.

Manly Wade Wellman, who passed away April 5, 1986, was one of the key writers in American fantasy and horror for the past 40-plus years.

John is disputably his most famous creation. A man with no last name, and a silver stringed guitar on his back, he spent his time tramping the hills of North Carolina and running into all manner of supernatural creatures and situations, mostly evil. Wellman lived in this area, and the portrait of rural folk and hill life is vivid and authentic.

The interesting thing about John for readers of RFT is that John was a devout Christian. This is made clear again and again in the stories in this collection. Some reviewers have seen John as a Christ figure, though John the Baptist is a closer parallel, as Wellman himself hinted on some occasions.

Although Wellman wrote five novels about John, he always felt that John worked best in short stories, and I tend to agree. This collection includes all of the John short stories (including the complete content of the out-of-print Who Fears the Devil?), and is an excellent introduction to the character.

Of particular interest for reading aloud to others is "On the Hills and Everywhere," the story of a man who hires a carpenter to build a fence between him and the neighbor he has been feuding with.

Those who are attempting to write Christian SF/fantasy would do especially well to study this book, as it provides excellent lessons in dialogue, background, and the blending in of Christianity so that it is undeniably present but not hitting the reader in the face with it every other page.

Rating: ****

The Only Game in Town by John Bibee, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois, 1988, 209 pp., paperback.

This is the third and best book thus far in Bibee's Spirit Flyer series. Although it should be read following the first two (The Magic Bicycle and The Toy Campaign), it can be read independently.

This is technically a juvenile novel, aimed at early teens, but the writing quality and idea content are such that all Christians interested in fantasy will find it enjoyable.

The series takes place in a small town called Centerville, where a major spiritual battle is occurring. The good guys are equipped with mysterious bicycles called Spirit Flyers, which have amazing properties. They look like beat-up junkers, but have flying capabilities and more. For example, the mirror on a Spirit Flyer is cracked and broken, but when you look in the portion that is left, you see reality as it really is, including any otherwise invisible spirit beings that are around.

The good guys are mostly children in their early teens. They sort of know how to use Spirit Flyers, but constantly are fighting off peer pressure to conform to the secular world.

The bad guys include a mysterious toy store owner who distributes toys that are not quite what they seem to be. There is a gang of kids who has been co-opted by the lure of Goliath Super Wings bikes, which look all nice and shiny and sleek and black, ever so much nicer than the clunky Spirit Flyers. The Super Wings bikes have some very nifty accessories; the only problem is that the power source for them is....never mind.

In The Only Game in Town, the forces of evil introduce a new element into the town: a scoreboard that is mounted on a wall of the toy store and which keeps score for all the kids. But we're not talking just sports scores here. As Mrs. Happy so aptly puts it, "The point system covers everything and makes it all official! All your good points and bad points are added up on the Big Board. Then you can see your overall score and ranking among the other children. We call that the Big Picture.

"It's popularity points, good points, bad points, grade points, scores of game points, status points, statistic points, I.Q. points, personality points, beauty points, brownie points, friendly points, snobbish points, mistakes, money points, the value points of things you own.... In fact, everthing you do and everything you have and everything you are goes into the Big Board in the form of points."

Pretty neat, huh? All on-line and instantaneous, with no visible sign of an input mechanism. And the kids do catch on fast. After all, "it's like a game played in every town all over the world. In fact it's the only game in town and the whole world, really. It's performance that counts. Each person gets the points he or she deserves and the Big Board is just there as a community service to count those points."

There's just a tiny catch. If you choose not to cooperate with the peer pressure around you and don't buy the right clothes and hang out with the right people, your point score drops so fast it isn't funny. And if you happen to ride a Spirit Flyer, forget it.

Daniel Bayley, the hero of the book, is faced with the choice of giving in or be shunned by nearly everyone in Centerville. The reward if he gives in: being named Number One in the Point Game. Just give up the silly Spirit Flyer, ride a nice, neat Goliath Super Wings. What about those chains and snakes that are

all around when you look in the Spirit Flyer mirror? Aw, never mind that.

This is one of the best books about peer pressure that I've ever read. And I guess it's no surprise. After all, the Point System is the Only Game in Town. Isn't it?

Rating: ****

Monastery by Patrick Whalen, Pocket Books, NY, 1988, \$3.95, 346 pp.

This is one of those teaser books. It looks like it's pro-Christian, but as you read on, you discover it's just the same old stuff.

General plot: a contemporary vampire novel. Decades ago, the Catholic Church stuffed the last dozen or so vampires away in a crypt on a remote island off of Washington State, and set a couple of priests to guard it, relieved by a new pair of priests every 10 years. As the story opens, the priests both die within a short period of each other. The Church in the U.S. has forgotten of the vampires' existence and as a result the monastery is sold to a university, which starts rehabbing and exploring. And then the fun begins....

Okay, the priests themselves are handled with respect. In fact, the leader of the vampires considers his most respected opponent to have been a priest who he battled a couple of centuries ago (the priest lost, of course).

But it soon goes downhill after that. The book is inconsistent about the historical power of Christianity to battle vampires. On the one hand, reference is made to the Catholics having performed rituals when entombing the vampires, and the implication is those rituals had at least some power. Likewise, the priests in charge drew a cross on the entrance to the tomb with their own blood, to help seal it. When the university students open the vampires' crypt, a point is made that although the corridor and crypt door are cold, the cross itself is hot to the touch.

Now from that you'd figure that maybe this Christianity stuff really has some power, right? That maybe the book will go back to the classic rules of vampire-hunting, and some of the book's characters will find a deeper religious faith as they fight the vampires?

Naaah. None of the methods discovered by the humans during the book that are effective against vampires have anything to do with religion.

It gets worse. The romantic interest for the hero is a female TV evangelist who is on assignment to do a story on Indians living on the island. As we meet her, we discover that *gasp* she has a potty mouth and loves to swear a blue streak when off camera, that *eek* she has the morals of an alley cat and loves to sleep around, that *awk* her producer is a homosexual, and that *ooh* she's not sure if she even believes in God.

Now with an opening that treats the priests with respect and that indicates (via the hot cross on the crypt door) that there may be something to Christianity's power against the supernatural, you'd think that maybe this will be different from most books that introduce corrupt televangelists (aren't those the only Christians we see in books anymore?). You'd think that

maybe she will go through a renewal of her faith, and end up being one of the primary forces of good fighting the vampires with Christian tools.

Wrong. Once she gets onto the island, the fact that she is a televangelist (corrupt or not) does not enter into the book at all for the entire remainder of the story! What's the point of making the character a televangelist in the first place? There is not even a mild attempt by her to use Christian means to fight the vampires.

And to top it all off, the book's ending has a Halloween style double twist shocker. Barf.

If you want a good Christian vampire story, go rent Captain Kronos, Vampire Hunter, the greatest swashbuckling vampire movie of all time. You're not going to find it here.

Rating: *

This Present Darkness by Frank E. Peretti, Crossway Books, Westchester, IL, 1986, 376 pp.

This book is a publishing phenomenon in the Christian subculture. It is a very vivid demonstration that Christians are starving for well done fantasy and SF. After all, the problem is that once one gets beyond C.S. Lewis and his circle, most Christians have no idea as to what they can buy next.

At both of the Christian bookstores where I regularly talk with the staff, this book cannot be kept in stock. They order a half dozen or so copies, and they're gone almost immediately, they order another half dozen, and they're gone, too. And the book just keeps on selling. The latest reports I have claim that total sales are over 150,000 copies, 50,000 of which is just in the past couple of months! That's darn good by any standard!

The story is about spiritual warfare in a small town. A new newspaper editor comes in and finds out that not only did the previous editor resign under odd circumstances, but that a number of other people in town have recently had scandals occur and been forced to move out. He then discovers that an international conglomerate has been quietly buying virtually all of the property in town, including making a bid for the land owned by the the local college.

So on one level, we have a plot of very large scale corporate corruption of a small town. But on another level, we discover that the town is virtually swarming with angels and demons, who go about their business with the resident humans largely ignorant of their existence.

Angels. Yeah, sure. You're probably thinking of the wimpy, ethereal angels seen on church walls. Hey, this is a SWAT team of some mean dude angels, man. We're talking angels that have faced down demons and won, and who are just itching for a fight. Let's meet three of them:

"Nathan, the towering Arabian who fought fiercely and spoke little. It was he who had taken demons by their ankles and used them as warclubs against their fellows."

"Armoth, the big African whose war cry and fierce countenance had often been enough to send the enemy fleeing before he even assailed them. Armoth had once battled the demon lords of villages in Brazil and personally guarded a family of missionaries on their many long treks through the jungle."

"Chimon, the meek European with the golden hair, who bore on his forearms the marks of a fading demon's last blows before Chimon banished him forever into the abyss."

Great stuff. Perhaps the most riveting aspect of the book is the way in which the book exemplifies how spiritual warfare really works. The summoning of angels to the town is begun by a single man praying by himself for renewal in his church and for some aid against the evil he senses in the town. As a revival starts in one of the local churches, more and more angels arrive and the angels get stronger and stronger. The ability of the humans to have angels battling evil on their behalf is directly related to the amount and sincerity of prayer that takes place.

The book weaves the secular and spiritual plot and maneuverings together quite well. Deus ex machina is kept to a minimum; there is only one point in the book that I felt was a "cheat" in the internal consistency of the plot.

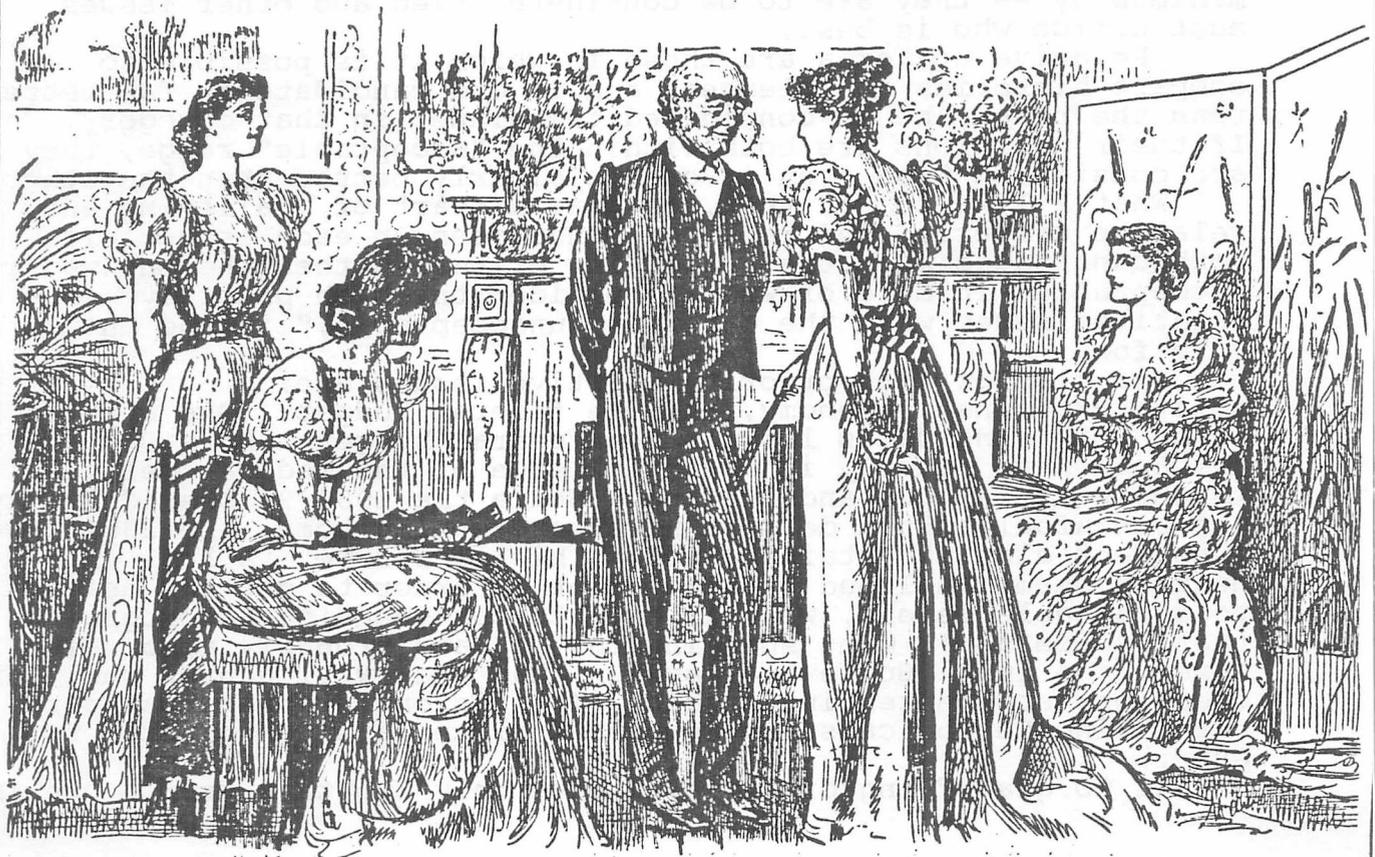
The only reason I won't give this book a full five stars is that the literary quality is "just" average by mainstream SF/fantasy standards, which means it is well above the average SF/fantasy novel published by Christian publishing houses. No, it's not Lewis or Tolkien by a long shot, but it's a darn good read. Peretti is working on a sequel (due in 1989), and if he keeps improving, he'll be capable of taking on mainstream fantasy authors head to head in just a few years. Keep an eye on this guy.

Rating: ****

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PUNCH, OR THE LONDON CHARIVARI.

[JUNE 10, 1893.]



ILLUSTRATED PROVERBS.

"I MUST WARN YOU, VICAR—YOU'RE THE ONLY GENTLEMAN—AND YOU'LL HAVE TO TAKE US ALL FOUR IN TO DINNER!"
 "FOREWARNED IS FOUR-ARMED, MY DEAR MRS. MASHAM!"

1988: PRESIDENT BY WHAT CRITERIA?

By Ross Pavlac

Editor's note: This article represents the views of the author and does not claim to be a statement on behalf of Christian Fandom. Christian Fandom does not endorse any political candidates.

With each election year, one is faced with choices. After a number of years of following national politics, I have come to the conclusion that it is dangerous for Christians to consider themselves allied with any one political party. Each time, we must order our criteria anew and compare the candidates against those criteria, then vote based upon informed opinion. If you don't like the criteria I state here, then you are welcome to come up with your own, research candidate's positions, and vote accordingly. If you aren't willing to think about criteria and do research, then you have no business voting -- please stay home.

As I see it, there are two types of criteria: qualifying criteria and relative criteria. A qualifying criteria is one that a candidate either does or does not meet. If both meet the criteria, then it does not matter how much they exceed the minimum by -- they are to be considered tied and other issues must decide who is best.

Relative criteria are those in which it is possible to compare histories and pledges, and if one candidate is far better than the other, he is considered the winner in that category. If their positions are both within the "acceptable" range, they are considered tied even if one is clearly better than the other.

What I like to do, then, is draw a chart of qualifying and relative criteria, and rank the candidates on each issue. If both candidates meet the qualifying criteria, then the one who is "acceptable" in more of what I consider the high priority relative issues when the other is "unacceptable," is the one I vote for.

Examples of high priority relative issues are: military/defense, economy, and the federal budget. One area in which both candidates lose is the federal budget. Both Dukakis and Bush have totally ignored the issue of the federal deficit, which is tremendous and growing. While the 1988-92 president may not run afoul of the deficit nightmare coming home, the 1992-1996 president almost certainly will. This scares me. A lot. And neither seems inclined to admit that in order to get the deficit to manageable levels, we will have to cut spending in programs that people don't want spending cut in, and probably also raise taxes. No fun. But even less fun than what will happen when our creditors stop extending credit. This is one problem that pork-barrelling Republicans and Democrats alike have contributed to. Grrrr.

As to qualifying criteria, I have only two this year. One is

the treatment of the U.S. Constitution, and the possible appointments to the Supreme Court that the next president will make. There currently is a war going on between two views. The currently dominant view is the judicial activism view that the constitution is "dynamic" and that as the times change, the changing views of the justices can be used to adjust the constitution to keep it current. The opposing view, judicial restraint, holds that the constitution means what the founders of the country said it means, that any changes needed due to changing times should properly be provided by constitutional amendments, and that to leave changing the constitution up to the whims of the then-current justices opens it up to tyranny by a small minority. I hold to the latter view, and it is clear from their speeches that Bush generally holds to the same view I do, and Dukakis holds to the view that lets the justices tinker as they will.

The other issue that I view as qualifying is the issue of the value of human life, i.e., do the candidates have respect for the value and dignity of man, and will their policies reflect this?

I first started thinking about this in 1982, when the late Francis Schaeffer (in Insight, a publication of the Communications Institute) wrote an article called "Priorities 1982;" most of the article is still highly relevant. Schaeffer wrote, "What should be the priorities...so that (they) will be something that will stand at the heart of the matter...?"

"Be careful not to get caught in tags. For example, Republican versus Democrat. And the issue is not the word conservative versus the word liberal.

"The first priority I would stress is that of human life. I would put this above everything else, the crucial issue for which Christians must stand.

"Human life stands at a crucial place because there is an unbreakable link between the existence of the infinite personal God and the unique dignity, intrinsic dignity, of people.... If that God does not exist, and He has not made people in His own image, there is no basis for an intrinsic, unique dignity of human life.... The Buddhists do not have it, the Hindus do not have it, certainly the Greeks did not have it. The concept we have and have taken so for granted of the human dignity of human life and compassion for human life is rooted back into the Judeo-Christian position, rooted in the existence of this infinite personal God. If that infinite personal God is not there, there is no basis for unique dignity of any human life, including your human life.

"To allow the devaluation of human life as it is accepted today is wrong in principle. And if this is not enough for us, then pragmatically you must realize that it is your human life that is being devalued. It is not just the unborn baby. It is all human life. Abortion should never be discussed as an isolated issue.... It is abortion first, flowing on to infanticide. The thing is never very static, it flows on very quickly to the allowing of a death by starvation of a baby that does not come up to somebody's concept of a standard of life worthy to be lived after the baby is born. Why not? If the mother can take the life of her baby, which all biology acknowledges as human life, merely for her own happiness and her own convenience, why should the parents not let their baby starve to death if the baby does not come up to a standard of life in a

way that interferes with their happiness? There is absolutely no dividing line.

"It rapidly goes on to the next step. The step that is being discussed now is freedom of choice in regard to helping the old people push off -- if they are a social, a family, or an economic burden.... With the way we are going, by the time you get somewhere near my age, when the demographic situation is changed, and there are more and more old people in proportion to the young, and you are an economic burden and a social burden, you are the one who is going to get caught in the wheels."

Heavy stuff. And as time has passed, I find myself agreeing with it more and more.

On the abortion aspect of the human dignity issue, there is no question: Bush is against abortion, Dukakis is enthusiastically for it.

And the abortion issue can only be solved at the presidential election level. The dirty little secret of the abortionists is that the 1973 Roe v. Wade decision legalized abortion for all nine months of the pregnancy, and the courts have consistently struck down all attempts to add any modification or sanity to that. Attempts to add a "cooling off period" -- forget it. Attempts to have even the abortionists (in whose financial interest it is to encourage abortions) provide any kind of balanced counseling -- struck down. Rights of fathers to prevent abortions -- struck down.

If Bush is elected, the people he would appoint to the court would probably vote for throwing the whole issue back to the states, rather than trying to impose rules at the national level. Most likely, the majority of states would then vote to have abortion to save the life of the mother, and in the cases of rape and incest (despite pro-abortion rhetoric, polls have consistently shown that when these qualifiers are added, a clear majority of Americans are anti-abortion for any other reason).

The 1988 Democratic platform is coy about its intent, smoothly slipping in, "the fundamental right of reproductive choice should be guaranteed regardless of ability to pay." "To an ear untutored in political deceit, this sounds numbingly innocuous. You wanna reproduce? Feel free." (Stephen Chapman, Chicago Tribune, 9/8/88). In English, this means the Democratic party is firmly behind abortion on demand with no restrictions whatsoever, and that abortion should be federally funded!

Dukakis is just as coy. Like New York governor Mario Cuomo, Dukakis belongs to the "I'm personally against abortion, but it is a personal decision that can only be made by the individual woman" school of thought. This position is the classic cop-out. How about: "I'm personally opposed to governments killing Jews, but it is a personal decision that can only be made by the individual government."

But Dukakis goes beyond that. The classic cop-out implies that the individual's ethics are such that though they will not oppose abortion, they will do nothing to encourage it. As a state legislator, Dukakis introduced a bill to legalize abortion, three years before Roe v. Wade. As governor, he four times vetoed budgets/legislation that attempted to place restrictions on government funding of abortion. He has appointed strong pro-abortionists to head key state agencies, including Human Services. He was keynote speaker at a 1986 Coalition for Choice abortion rights "celebration."

So in Michael Dukakis we have someone who is in favor of government funded abortions and not hesitant to use veto power to follow through on that belief, who has introduced pro-abortion legislation, and who has been a keynote speaker at pro-abortion rallies. I realize that not everyone reading this is anti-abortion, and I would especially ask those people to enlighten me: in what way are Dukakis' actions different from those of one who thinks abortion is wonderful? That is why I call the "I'm against abortion personally but..." position a cop-out, especially when uttered by politicians.

At this point, those of you who are not anti-abortion are probably screaming that I am advocating single-issue voting. I am not. The point behind a qualifying issue is that it is just that: if both candidates meet the qualifying criteria, then the other issues must decide it on the relative merits of the candidates' positions. Also, on an issue like abortion, the lines are drawn such that if both candidates are in favor, then the differences between them are (relatively) negligible on that issue; if both are against then again it doesn't matter how much against they are. As Schaeffer stated, abortion is part of the larger issue of affirming human dignity; I have seen nothing that would lead me to believe that Dukakis' positions on infanticide or eldercide are any better.

Yes, the issues of human dignity also include things like the treatment of the poor, and the Democrats have in the past few years been more sympathetic to this than the Republicans. However, murder is the ultimate indignity, and the champions of saving human lives must be given priority over those who would concentrate funds on the betterment of those lives that are already here. (Also, the welfare system, despite its faults, is at least keeping people fed.)

But it's really more than just murder of infants in the womb. It's the desensitization of our population towards the value of human life. What are the psychological effects on our culture, on the women who have killed what part of them claimed was just tissue and another part of that knew was human?

If both candidates were anti-abortion, then the 1988 choice would be much harder. I sympathize with the Democrats' desires to aid the underprivileged (though I question the practicality of their proposed solutions). I appreciate the desires of Republicans to keep government from growing too large (though many of the footnotes in their programs still benefit Big Business and the old-line Republican establishment). For me, though, the situation is clear: hold my nose and vote for Bush, because Dukakis = death.

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 Editor's Comments: The disclaimer at the beginning of this article is a matter of policy rather than practicality. RFT does not have a readership large enough to affect an election. When Ross sent me the article he said in a letter that it doesn't deal with SF, but it deals with questions of ethics and ultimate issues that are on the minds of Christian fans. The meeting at Nolacon, at which we spent a lot of time discussing how Christians should respond to problems and evils in society, illustrates this. And, of course, the fact that I generally agree with him is one reason I'm printing it, but people who disagree are free to respond. As I've said, I want to encourage an active letter column.

One minor disagreement I have is that Ross compares the "personally opposed but" position to someone who saying he is personally opposed to governments killing Jews. I prefer to compare it to being personally opposed to slavery.

Nazi genocide was an official policy of the German government. Slavery was a private matter between a plantation owner and his slave trader. The government permitted slavery and supported it with such things as fugitive slave laws, but did not require it.

As Ross says, when people talk about abortion as a disqualifying issue the cry of single-issue voting is heard. Therefore, I think it is important to note that many people have one or more qualifying/disqualifying issues by which they judge candidates. For liberal Democrats, opposition to abortion is a disqualifying issue. They have such great influence in the party organization that no presidential aspirant who is not "pro-choice" has a chance for the nomination. Not many people realize that when the Supreme court legalized abortion on demand in 1973 the Rev. Jesse Jackson was outspoken in denouncing the decision. He was very active in the right to life movement for several years. Then, as he became serious in his desire for national office, he flip-flopped. And it is worth noting that four years ago many of the same people who today are asserting the lack of qualifications of Sen. Quayle for Vice-President were enthusiastically acclaiming the selection of Rep. Ferraro as the Democrats' Vice-Presidential nominee. Rep. Ferraro was an obscure Member of the House with an undistinguished record. Her only qualification for the nomination was anatomical. The National Organization for Women had made it clear that the selection of a running mate was a disqualifying issue. If the Democratic ticket did not include a woman, N.O.W. would not support it.

In a recent apa discussion of smoking I made a comment which, although it mentions one candidate, expresses a point of general application, so I'm going to repeat it here. Anyone who knows me knows that I am a militant anti-smoker who strongly supports Clean Indoor Air laws. But opposition to smoking can be overdone. For example, after Jan. 1, 1989 the State of Massachusetts will not employ anyone as a "public safety employee" if he smokes on or off duty. The rules cover "the inhaling, exhaling or burning of any lighted cigaret, cigar, pipe or other product containing tobacco." William F. Buckley, Jr., who reported this in his column, quotes Gov. Dukakis's state personnel administrator: "The statue calls for termination of an employee who is found after a hearing to have violated the prohibition. Since smoking has been established as a contributing risk factor for hypertension and heart disease, disability retirement due to hypertension and heart disease should eventually be reduced. It is believed that this disqualification of smokers for public employment may be the first such ban on a state-wide basis."

Smoking is not the only thing that contributes to diseases. Would Gov. Dukakis want to ban from public employment everyone who eats several eggs for breakfast every morning, or who eats too much red meat, or who doesn't exercise as much as the government thinks he should? If a private employer wanted to do that I wouldn't mind because I think private employers should be free to make their decisions on any grounds they want, rational or irrational, unless it would result in a serious, widespread injustice, as with racial discrimination. I think governments, which act on behalf of the people and which spend the people's money, should be held to a higher standard.

Frank Sheed, a noted Catholic author, publisher, and lay theologian, wrote in his 1953 book Society and Sanity: "At the moment the sky is filled with the clang of battle between Totalitarianism and Democracy. In fact, there is no necessary opposition between them. They are answers to two different questions.

"Totalitarianism is an answer to the question, 'What things are Caesar's?'-- the answer it gives being that all things whatsoever are Caesar's, that the State's right of control is unlimited, that the citizen has no rights against the State, no part of life that is simply his own.

"Democracy is an answer to the question 'Who is Caesar?'--the answer it gives being that Caesar is whomever the People elects.

"Obviously there is no necessary opposition between them. One State might easily give both answers. It might decide that authority resides in the People, and that the People elects its government and can change its government. And it might also decide that there is no limit to the People's control, through that elected and dismissible government, over the life of the individual, that for what is conceived to be the good of the totality, the individual may be totally regimented. There is no paradox here, no improbability even. A government which can claim to be doing what the majority of the people think best can interfere in the life of citizens as the most absolute tyrant could not: it was not an autocrat who in this century imposed Prohibition upon a great people: no autocrat would have dared. In fact control by government is spreading so fast in the democracies that the distinction already noted between the two main types of social authority has less meaning than of old, and Caesar is as good a symbol for one as for the other."

SPACER'S PSALM

By Elizabeth Hensley

Even though I explore the dust of a thousand planets
The sands of a million worlds,
And wander far from home
Even there the Lord will guide me
Even there the Lord will keep me
And show me beauty
Under every alien sky

As Abram trod so will I tread,
Across the velvet wilderness,
Throughout the mighty Galaxies themselves:
And even there the Lord will know me
Show me ways to love and serve
Show me ways to love and serve
Show me the beauties of great Planets
And the Joy of strange Lifeforms.
As He conquered so will I conquer
And make the desolate planets warm and home:

My children shall grow up
Knowing neither Earth nor Eden
But they shall find the Lord!
He will guide us and protect us
Fast all of Space itself,
And dimensions shall not faze us
For we know that God is there.

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"For religion all men are equal, as all pennies are equal, because the only value in any of them is that they bear the image of the king." -- G. K. Chesterton

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(←With Comments by the Editor→)

Alexei Kondratiev, 35-12 161st Street, Flushing, New York 11358

Dear Ernest :

Glad to see that RFT is still alive and kicking, and that Christian Fandom continues to develop. A couple of things, though, give me cause for alarm. In your description of Boskone, you deplore the prominence of the Gaylaxians (why do you call them "Gaylaxicans"?). Since they are originally a Boston group, it's not surprising to see a lot of them at Boskone. By referring them to them as "ugly", were you extending that epithet to all gay people? Or did it just apply to their "fanatical intolerance"? I wish, for those of your readers who haven't been attending Boskones, that you'd been more specific about the nature of their "intolerance". Were they intolerant of Christianity as the way to salvation through Jesus Christ? I doubt they'd be unanimous on such an issue, since some of them (at least in their national offshoot, the Gaylactic Network) are Christian. Or were they intolerant of the political activities of certain Christian denominations? Considering that such groups have been lobbying, sometimes with dehumanizing viciousness, to deprive gay people of some basic civil rights, "intolerance" of them seems quite understandable, even sane! And it has nothing to do with Christianity per se. Christians of good standing (and gays) can and do have widely differing views on the subject.

This brings me to the next point that disturbs me : in your report on the Christian Fandom meeting at Conspiracy, you casually dismiss the Unitarian woman's questions about Christianity and homosexuality as a "digression", "off the subject". However obnoxious her tone may have been (I don't know, I wasn't there), the spiritual destiny of 10% of all humanity should be of more than marginal concern to the believers of any creed. You state, as a categorical end to all discussion, that "the New Testament explicitly condemns homosexual acts". Perhaps you and Ross are convinced of this. I'm not, and many Biblical scholars today share my doubts. Nowhere does the New Testament discuss homosexuality as a phenomenon in itself : all the possible references to homosexual activity are tangential, occurring in passages that focus on other subjects. Classical and Biblical scholars are still unsure of what malakoi and arsenokoitai really meant in the context of the period. Modern translations that gloss them as

"homosexuals" confer a false clarity upon a muddled record. As for the Romans passage, St. Paul is talking about faithfulness to Revelation, and using sexuality as a metaphor. It sheds some interesting light on St. Paul's personal prejudices, but offers little guidance to a modern Christian seeking to establish a valid moral attitude towards homosexuality in the light of current knowledge. Jesus himself -- the ultimate authority -- gives no explicit pointers.

One problem often met with in this context is that conservative religious leaders usually attribute the rise of the gay rights movement and the growing tolerance of homosexuality in educated circles to "laxity", a decay in moral values, and portray the Church's opposition as a rock of certainty and intellectual rigour confronting the arbitrary fashions of "the World". In fact, the gradual acceptance of homosexuality has come about as the result of an advance in knowledge, an epistemological change. Just as the cosmological revolution removed Earth from the centre of the Universe (but in no way lessened its importance to God's plan), and the biological revolution revealed that we are made of the same stuff as all other creatures (but in no way diminished our responsibility towards our Creator), so the psychological revolution of the last eighty years has shown that the human personality is a very complex structure with many different patterns of development, and that many of its workings are on an unconscious level, therefore outside the realm of moral accountability -- although the moral principles governing the use of the Will remain unchanged. Human sexuality in particular has been revealed to be a multi-faceted phenomenon, extending far beyond -- and in many ways quite independent from -- the instinct to procreate. One aspect of sexuality whose importance has only recently come to be understood is sexual orientation -- i.e., how the object of erotic desire is determined. It is now clear that there is and has always been a sizable, stable minority of individuals in the population who are predominantly or exclusively oriented towards their own gender, having developed this orientation in a "natural", pre-conscious way. Since sexual orientation is an immutable (despite the claims of quack psychologists), unconsciously developed facet of personality, homosexuality cannot be an acquired "vice", and any moral strategy that treats it as such is no longer tenable.

Of course homosexuality is not an "alternate lifestyle". There are as many homosexual lifestyles as there are heterosexual ones. One can be gay and celibate or gay and casually promiscuous -- and all the lifestyles in between. A gay person convinced that Scripture condemns homosexual activity may opt for lifelong celibacy; or, taking St. Paul's advice that "it is better to marry than to burn", he/she may seek a mutually giving, monogamous relationship with

someone of their own sex -- that is, within the only erotic parameters possible for them. Or he/she may conclude that Scripture makes no statements relevant to sexual orientation, but may nevertheless choose to use his/her sexuality responsibly, in accord with the principles of Christian ethics. One must be granted the dignity of one's own moral choices. Remember, also, that when prohibitions come not from the universally perceptible "Tao" but from a specific reading of Scripture, they concern only those who accept that reading. Thus it is sinful for an Orthodox Jew to eat pork, but not so for a Christian who has a different perception of the Leviticus dietary laws.

The widespread and violent homophobia in our culture is not so much the product of religion (despite what anti-Christian gays claim) as the result of confused feelings about male dominance, gender roles, and gender-role anxiety. The Bible is just brought in as reinforcement. Children grow up perceiving that "faggots" or "queers" are the most loathed and despised class of people in society, that they are beyond the pale of human consideration. They then grow up to project all their fantasies of evil and depravity onto gay people, and to persecute them without suffering any qualms of conscience.

In all this long diatribe I've been leading up to a very simple point : Christians are not allowed to have scapegoats, and I should hope that Fannish Christians (open, by definition, to rational discussion of anything) will not stoop to various forms of fag-bashing. We cannot brand any group as "The Enemy". Whenever we encounter a group in fandom that holds a consciously non-Christian position -- Neo-Pagans, old-style atheists, anti-Christian gays -- we cannot "Satanize" them, but must recognize that they have come to their positions for specific reasons that have to do with their life-experience. We can pray for them, we can rebut any erroneous statements they make about Christianity, we can discuss their positions with them (provided we make an attempt to understand their positions), but we cannot indulge in hostility towards them. Many Christians, especially of the Evangelical sort, personalize their temptations by imaginatively placing them under the tutelage of Satan. This can be a very effective psychodynamic device, but it can get out of hand when people get included in the range of "Satanized" objects. Also, the "Satan" label can be used to relieve one of the responsibility to understand what is contained under that label, so that anything that is confusing or challenging gets "Satanized" ("Satan and the New Age movement", indeed! But that's another kettle of fish, for another time!).



(←The typographic and other evidence in RFT 14 indicates to me that the Boskone report was written by Nancy Wasko, not by Ernest Hiramia, but Ernest did say on page 1 that the Gaylaxians "seem to grow more fanatically intolerant with each con." I was not at Boskone last February, and I haven't noticed the intolerance of which Ernest spoke, which may mean I haven't been at the right place at the right time, so I don't know exactly what they meant. However, based on what I know of homosexuals in New York, San Francisco, and other cities, I doubt that the homosexuals in question made the kind of distinctions you mentioned. It should go without saying, but just so there is no misunderstanding I will say explicitly that nothing I say about homosexuals is intended to refer to all homosexuals, but only to prominent organizations and spokesmen, to what seems to be the predominant tendencies among those who seek and receive the greatest media attention.

John Cardinal O'Connor is the Archbishop of New York. His actions clearly illustrate the traditional Christian distinction: Hate the sin, but love the sinner. He has made hospital wards and other church buildings available for hospices for homosexuals--Catholic and non-Catholic--dying of AIDS. He has provided a lot of Church money to help them, and priests, brothers, and sisters to work with them. He has personally worked as a volunteer orderly at St. Clare's Hospital, emptying bedpans for AIDS patients as well as offering them spiritual assistance. When he announced that he would do this, cynics sneered that he wouldn't follow through and do it, or that he would do it only once as a token gesture. They were wrong. Although one of the stated purposes was to encourage others to volunteer by demonstrating that it is safe to come into close contact with people with AIDS, he did not work as an orderly only once as a token gesture. He has done it many times as his schedule has permitted.

In September 1984, only a few months after becoming Archbishop, he met with a delegation of homosexuals. Two weeks later, Karen Doherty, who had been a member of the delegation representing the Conference for Catholic Lesbians, sent him a letter in which she said, "We were glad for the opportunity to speak to you in person.... What I particularly appreciated was the fact that I did not feel talked down to or held at a distance because I am a lesbian woman."

Despite all that, homosexuals in general display a virulent hatred for him. During homosexual parades on Fifth Avenue marchers engage in blasphemies outside St. Patrick's Cathedral. Catholic homosexuals have regularly disrupted Masses at which Cardinal O'Connor was the celebrant, which not only desecrated the Mass but greatly disturbed the other members of the congregation who had come to the cathedral to worship God, not to watch a political demonstration. It has been necessary to use the courts and the police to protect the sanctity of the cathedral and of the Mass. To Catholics the Mass is the most sacred act of worship, but these Catholic homosexuals felt free to disrupt it.

The main reason he is hated and vilified by homosexuals is that he remains faithful to the Church's traditional teaching that homosexual acts are intrinsically sinful. As a result he obeys and enforces the Church's rule that an organization of Catholic homosexuals called Dignity, which seeks to change the Church's teaching on homosexual acts, may not use Catholic churches for special homosexual Masses. (He supports another organization of Catholic homosexuals called Courage, which recognizes the sinfulness of homosexual acts and offers its members spiritual help so that with God's strength they can control their inclinations and live chaste lives. I understand that there are similar groups in some Protestant churches.)

Also, along with other religious groups, such as the Salvation Army and an Orthodox Jewish organization, he has opposed laws giving homosexuals special legal privileges, laws which are propagandistically mislabelled "gay rights" laws. As he said, "Homosexual inclination, in our theology, is not morally wrong. Homosexual behavior is. We bear no

malice toward homosexually active persons. We abhor their being harassed or persecuted in any way. At the same time, we do not believe that homosexual behavior should be declared lawful or that such behavior should be elevated to a protected category.

"We do not believe that religious agencies should be required to employ those engaging in or advocating homosexual behavior. We are willing to consider on a case-by-case basis the employment of individuals who have engaged in or may at some future time engage in homosexual behavior. We approach those who have engaged in or may engage in what the Church considers illicit heterosexual behavior the same way."

Nat Hentoff, a civil libertarian who describes himself as a Jewish atheist, has written a book, John Cardinal O'Connor, from which I have taken these quotations, although as a New Yorker I have independent knowledge of many of the events. He interviewed Karen Doherty, the lesbian who wrote the 1984 letter from which I quoted, to see if her opinion of Cardinal O'Connor had changed in the years since then. She said it had not, and added, "That letter of mine shocked a lot of my gay and lesbian friends, and some of the nuns and priests who support us. The tendency is to say, 'If you're with us, you're good, but if you're not you're bad.'"

I think that attitude, rather than the kind of analysis you mentioned, explains the fanatical intolerance of which Ernest spoke.

I wrote the account of the Christian Fandom meeting at Conspiracy. The problem was not an obnoxious tone, but a long discussion which was not connected to the purpose of the meeting. Although non-Christians are welcome to attend Christian Fandom meetings, the meetings are primarily to provide an opportunity for Christian fans to talk to each other. Ross Pavlac conducted the meeting at Nolacon, and after his introductory remarks, when he threw it open for discussion, he mentioned the occurrence of a long digression at Conspiracy and requested that anyone who wanted to argue about the truth of Christianity, or anything like that, see one of us after the meeting or come to the party.

I will not now discuss the meanings of individual Greek words, although if others want to discuss them in their letters that will be fine with me, but I think they have to be understood in the context of the general New Testament ethic that sex is only for a man and a woman who are married to each other.

In Romans 1 St. Paul is not talking about faithfulness to revelation. He is talking about the pagans who disregarded not revelation but the evidence of God that the universe presented to their rational minds (Rom.1:20-21, 28). They are contrasted with those pagans who did acknowledge and follow the natural moral law (Rom. 2:14-16). And I see nothing metaphorical in his condemnation of men lying with men, or of women lying with women. Those sins, like the other sins listed in Rom 1:28-30, are the results of ignoring God's natural moral law which is written in our hearts (Rom 2:15).

I believe that the entire Bible is the inspired word of God, although different inspired authors used different literary forms to express God's truth. Therefore, it makes little difference to me whether a doctrine is taught by Jesus or by St. Paul. It comes from God whether He spoke it Himself while incarnate on Earth or inspired St. Paul to write it. But even apart from that, Jesus spoke almost exclusively to Jews. They knew homosexual actions are wrong. (Cf. Lev. 18:22) St. Paul was writing primarily to pagan converts, many of whom came from cultures in which homosexual conduct was considered acceptable.

Yes, it is widely held nowadays that with a few exceptions, such as those extreme feminists who have adopted lesbianism as a "political" statement repudiating men, most

homosexuals are not responsible for their orientation. However, that does not justify their engaging in homosexual actions. This can be seen by remembering that homosexuality is not the only perversion. There are others, including pedophilia. Many, although certainly not all, homosexuals are also pedophiles, and some of them have organized the North American Man Boy Love Association. However, there are also many heterosexual pedophiles, and they have their own organization, the René Guyon Society, named after a man who wrote books advocating "intergenerational sex", as child molesters like to call it. These men have the slogan "Eight is too late." Their sexual orientation is toward little girls. They cannot satisfy their sexual desires by marrying adult women any more than homosexuals can. But surely no one but another pedophile or a truly consistent moral relativist would say that pedophiles are therefore free to molest little girls. They must exercise self control throughout their lives and never satisfy their desires. The same is true of a man who desires only other men. See also, "We Have No 'Right to Happiness'," by C. S. Lewis in his collection God in the Dock (published in Britain as Undeceptions).

Jews do not believe that eating pork is a universal evil which they recognize while we gentiles do not. They believe that the prohibition against pork is only binding on Jews as part of their covenant relationship with God. Furthermore, the reason Christians are not required to fulfill the Old Testament Law is not that we understand it differently than Jews do. It is because Christ fulfilled the Law and we live in Him.

I don't know in what sense you use the word "homophobia", but I want to comment on it because it is widely misused. A phobia is by definition an irrational, excessive fear. Ailurophobia is an irrational fear of cats. (And, as Doug Hoylman once observed in MINNEAPPA, tooraloorailurophobia is an irrational fear of Irish cats.) Brontophobia is an irrational fear of thunder. According to the same pattern, homophobia is an irrational fear of homosexuals or of homosexuality. I don't doubt that there are some people who have homophobia in the proper sense of the word. However, I see the term used most often as a smear word to try to discredit anyone who says that homosexual intercourse is wrong or who opposes the homosexual political agenda. If his positions are the result of an irrational fear, there is no need to take them seriously.

C. S. Lewis says somewhere that there are two errors men can fall into about demons. One is to ignore them or even claim they do not exist. The other is to be unduly concerned with them. With our fallen human natures we are capable of sinning on our own, without demonic assistance, but that does not mean that demons cannot or do not tempt us or even seek to possess us.→)

Gina Impiccini, 1945 Tennyson NE, Massillon, Ohio 44646

During my recent trip to Worldcon I was pleased (ecstatic actually) to discover "Christian Fandom". I never expected to meet other Christians in Fandom. It was an incredible encouragement. I often find cons oppressive spiritually & actually considered never going to another, but maybe now I'll stick it out a little longer. (But I'll still sing worship choruses when browsing art shows. Whew! Some of it rots my mind. (←I'm glad you found us. One of the main purposes of Christian Fandom is to provide fellowship for Christian fans, to overcome the "Am I the only one?" feeling.→)

Nancy K. Wasko, 41 W. School Street, W. Springfield, Massachusetts 01089

Lots of comments to make on the last RFT. First, for Chuck Conner of England, yes, it really is that bad in Fandom in the States. Christians are viewed as people to keep your distance from, at best, and as heretical people who should stay out of Fandom, at worst.

I've never seen a study done on how much active Paganism goes on throughout fandom. I do know that we are seeing a large surge in popularity of Paganism in the United States, everything from practicing witches who held a rally at the University of Massachusetts last month, to out and out Satan worship. I believe it's growing fastest on college campuses, but it has been and will continue to be a large part of fandom. I don't know about British fandom, but here in America, fandom for many years has been the place for those with alternate lifestyles, realities, and sexual preferences (be they into orgies, young children, homosexuality, or whatever), and the one religion that supports all of the above is Satanism.

For those who would like to read more on the spread of Satanism in the United States, I highly recommend the following:

The Satan Seller by Mike Warnke. First published in 1972, this classic is from the point of view of a former high priest of Satan (who is now an excellent Christian comedian, by the way).

Satan's Underground by Lauren Stratton. This one was just released in March. Lauren was sold into a pornography ring by her parents, and through this was dragged into Satan worship. This is not always an easy book to read--sometimes it is very graphic.

The Beautiful Side of Evil by Johanna Michaelson. I have not yet had a chance to read this book, but I have heard many good things about both this book and her ministry to save pagans.

The one topic I would like to see a book on is how to witness to, deal with, etc. Satanists and other pagans. Mike Warnke has a few booklets on this as part of his ministry, but that's about it.

Marty, thanks for the report on Conspiracy. I won't be able to make it to Nolacon, but I'm hoping to attend Noreascon III in '89.

Coming items of interest: Merlin, the second book in Steve Lawhead's series on the Arthurian legend will be out in July [1988]. Also, the last movie in the apocalyptic A Thief in the Night series, Prodigal Planet, will be released on video sometime in September. Having dealt with new releases from this company before, I'd guess not to look for it in stores until early October. (A note to Steve Schaper--I've never seen any of the series in novel form, so I doubt if Prodigal Planet will be novelized. If you find information to the contrary, let me know.)

(I wonder if the American Civil Liberties Union objected to the rally of witches on the campus of a public, tax-supported university on First Amendment, Separation of Church and State grounds.)

Mike Van Pelt, 3340A Landess Avenue, San Jose, California 95132

I'm very glad to hear that RFT is keeping the old format. I was somewhat dismayed at the announced changes. This was just a bit too much coming right on the heels of the loss of Axis.

For a while I've been thinking about the depiction of people with religious faith (Christians, mostly, but other faiths, too) in science fiction. Most SF writers studiously ignore religion, as if it can be made to go away by closing one's eyes and thinking Reductionist thoughts. Virtually always, if people of faith are depicted at all, this depiction is one of the "Seven Deadly Stereotypes": Ignorant Bumpkin, Mindless Fanatic, Greedy Cynical Hypocrite, Repressed Kill-joy, Fool, Primitive Who Doesn't Know Better, or Angst-ridden Neurotic.

But there are a few exceptions. I'm working on a list of works that depict Christians or the Christian worldview in a positive light. Here's what I've got so far. This mostly on the SF side, as I don't care much for fantasy, and haven't read a lot of it.

Anderson, Poul

Father Francis Xavier Axor in Game of Empire, a Jerusalem Catholic priest. He's a Wodenite, four-meter-long lizard-like extraterrestrial, and a nice, elderly gentleman. There's one really good scene where he talks to Diana Crowfeather about his faith.

(I'd like to know more about Wodenites; the two I've read about in Anderson's stories, Axor and Adzel (a Mahayana Buddhist in the Polesotechnic League stories) are both converts to a human religion. There must be a story behind that.)

Lewis in Brainwave. Incredibly intelligent, and quite confidently certain of the existence of God. (I wonder if Anderson had C. S. Lewis in mind when writing this?) I don't think his exact faith was specified.

Nick van Rijn in the Polesotechnic League stories. This isn't entirely a positive depiction of a Christian; van Rijn is something of a scoundrel. But he's a scoundrel with a heart of gold.

Eloise Waggoner, the xenotelepath in "Kyrie".

"A Chapter of Revelation", Anderson's contribution to the book The Day the Sun Stood Still, one of three novellas based on the premise that, in a time of crises, people get together to pray--and, as in Biblical times, "the earth moved not around the sun, neither did it rotate."

Blish, James

Father Ramon Ruiz-Sanchez, Jesuit priest in A Case of Conscience.

Perhaps Dr. McCoy in Blish's "Star Trek adaptations. In Spock Must Die, McCoy says the reason he dislikes the transporter is that he is worried about what happens to the soul of the transportee.

Henderson, Zenna

The People, of course. They constantly refer to The Presence, The Power, and The Name, and in one of her last People stories in Fantasy and Science Fiction, Karen explicitly stated that those were their names for Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In one of her stories a Mindless Fanatic shows up, and is contrasted with a genuine Christian.

Christian themes showed up in several of her non-People short stories, too. I know nothing about her other than her fiction.

Lewis, C. S.

Out of the Silent Planet, Perelandra, and That Hideous Strength. These stories are out of the ordinary in that they not only have genuine Christians in them, but they explicitly assume the validity of the Christian world view.

The Chronicles of Narnia. What can I say about these, but that these are fabulous books. Suppose God created another universe, a storybook kind of world, only real. And suppose His Son chose to enter this universe in the form of a huge, golden-maned lion. This is enough to convince me to read a fantasy from time to time. (But they're never THIS good!)

Niven, Larry

Larry Greenberg in World of Ptavvs, an Orthodox Jew. One statement by another character who was describing Greenberg's possible motivations stands out in my mind: "He's a genuinely religious man, but suspicious of superstition, if you know what I mean." I felt that Niven didn't really show Greenberg's faith too well; we're just told about it by other characters.

Father David Hopkins in "The Subject is Closed", in the Convergent Series anthology. He's depicted in a positive or neutral light. The Chirpsithra have a really awful sense of humor, I think.

Pournelle, Jerry (with Larry Niven)

Rev. David Hardy, the Navy Chaplain in The Mote in God's Eye.

Inferno, an updating of Dante's work. Like Lewis' Space Trilogy, it assumes the Christian Worldview is true in fact. In an interview, Pournelle stated that they had borrowed quite a bit from Lewis, especially The Great Divorce.

Palmer, David R.

Candy, the supergenius WWII survivor in Emergence. It's hard to say just what her faith was. She talks about life after death, but there are never any real specifics other than that her Karate teacher was the son of a missionary in China. But after all, she's only eleven years old. Overall, there seems to be a sense of spirituality that isn't obviously non-Christian.

Saberhagen, Fred

Johann Carlson in the Berserker stories is a Christian. He is also the only person able to consistently defeat the Berserkers, terrible machines programmed eons ago to wipe out all life. The soulless Berserkers have no capacity for emotion. But, at the mention of Carlson, they do manage a reasonable facsimile of terror.

Smith, E. E. "Doc"

This is reaching a bit. (Well, a lot, but I like the Lensman books too much to leave this out.) In Masters of the Vortex, when the subject of God comes up, Dr. Neil Cloud, the supergenius capable of computing simultaneous integrals in his head faster than any computer admits as how he does believe in a "First Cause." Well, it's a good start, anyway. The only religion mentioned in any of the other Lensman books was a kind of paganism which seems to consist solely of having an oddly constructed deity to swear oaths by.

I don't know a whole lot about the faith of these authors, other than, of course, C. S. Lewis. I believe Poul Anderson is Catholic, and Jerry Pournelle is Episcopalian. I recall hearing somewhere that James Blish was also Catholic. If anyone knows anything about David R. Palmer, Zenna Henderson, and Fred Saberhagen, I'd like to hear about it. I'm also interested in adding to this list.

(←James Blish is buried in the churchyard of an Anglican church in Oxford, so if he was a Catholic, presumably he was an Anglo-Catholic, otherwise known as High Church Anglican.

Anthony Boucher, a Catholic, wrote a number of stories with Christian characters, such as "The Quest for St. Aquin". When he was editing The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction he published stories with Christian characters by other authors. Walter Miller's A Canticle for Leibowitz, which centers around a future Catholic religious order, originally appeared there, as did most, if not all, of Philip Jose Farmer's stories about Father John Carmody.

The other day I was looking at my library's copy of The Science Fiction Encyclopedia edited by Peter Nicholls and others, and noticed a long article on religion which lists many works that deal with religious themes. I then checked the Encyclopédie de l'Utopie, des Voyages extraordinaires et de la Science-Fiction by Pierre Versins, which also has an article on religion which lists many works. If you can read, or even pick your way through, French, you may want to find a library that has a copy.→)

Bernie Wingerter, 611 Franklin, Keokuk, Iowa 52632

Do you think the role of CSF [Christian Science Fiction] (such as it is today) should be more for the edification of Christian SF&F fans, or as a tool to evangelize a very liberal, unGodly secular SF&F crowd--or both? Other? Chuck Waibel (who was going to publish a CSF zine last fall about this time with Steve Deyo which was to have been called ANAKRON) and I disagree on this: he believes CSF should be more for the edification of the body, I think more along the lines of evangelization.

I think CSF&F that I have read to date--and that has been admittedly little--suffers from lack of courage and fuzzy direction. Jesus Christ did not hide His message in His pants pocket. Rather, He proclaimed it unwaveringly and absolutely to all who would listen. Why then do so-called CSF zines (speaking in the past tense, of course) choose to publish fiction that is too careful not to step on secular toes? I suspect the biggest reason is that editors are afraid their magazine might lose its commercial value if the stuff they print offends a large segment of the buying public. Steve Deyo doesn't think there are enough Christian SF&F fans to support a CSF zine, and he may be right. Still, should we be lukewarm and condescending for the sake of garnering a few more subscriptions? I'm sure the kind of CSF&F zine I'd like to publish (or at least see published) is an invitation to financial suicide. On the other hand the Lord sometimes works in strange ways to create strength from weakness, good from bad, blessing a fool who dares to tread where angels fear.

(←While Jesus proclaimed His message unwaveringly and absolutely, He did not do so all at once. He revealed the fact of His deity slowly, by doing and saying things only God could do, such as forgiving sins. He silenced demons who recognized Him. He told people He healed not to tell others. After the Transfiguration He told Peter, James, and John to tell no one what they had seen until after His resurrection. St. John tells us that at the Feast of the Dedication, "The Jews gathered round him and said, 'How much longer are you going to keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.'" (10:24-25)

Most people agree that the reason Our Lord relied more on actions which implied His deity, than on explicit words stating it, is that that was necessary to teach what He wanted to teach. If He had just said, "I am God," the people would have stoned Him for blasphemy. If He had worked dramatic miracles to prove His deity, they would have fallen down in adoration, too awestruck to listen the way He wanted them to listen.

There seems to be a contradiction in your position. Writing or publishing SF so explicitly Christian that only Christians would read it would serve only to edify the body. If non-Christians won't read it, it can't present truths to them which could serve as channels of God's grace.

A writer can write exactly what he wants. If it doesn't sell, all he's lost is the time and effort. So long as he's not trying to make a living by writing, it doesn't matter. He can wait for his audience to discover him. However, a publisher has to pay to have copies of a book or magazine printed. If they don't sell, he is out that money, and has cartons of unsold copies to dispose of. If he loses too much money on material that won't sell, he will be out of business.

Throughout the centuries there have been Christians who have just forged ahead, trusting in God to provide, and He has. However, when Satan tempted Christ by urging Him to throw Himself from the parapet of the Temple, relying on the prophecy that God would provide angels to bear Him up, He replied, "It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God," or, as more recent translations put it, "You must not put the Lord your God to the test." If someone feels led by the Lord to attempt some seemingly impossible task, ignoring the virtue of prudence and relying on God to make it work, and if after prayer and reflection he is convinced that that is what God is calling him to do, then he should do it. But someone who acts imprudently without a clear leading from God may be guilty of tempting God. Since we cannot judge the souls of others, we must be aware of the two possibilities.→)

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 Readers of RFT are likely to be interested in C. S. Lewis, so I will mention the Bulletin of the New York C. S. Lewis Society, which prints the text of papers presented at its monthly meeting and other material of interest. To subscribe send \$7.00 to the Treasurer: Mrs. John Kirkpatrick, 466 Orange Street, New Haven, CT 06511. Meetings are held on the second Friday of every month except August at the Episcopal Church of the Ascension, 12 W. 11th Street in Manhattan.

Dan Goodman (P.O. Box 809, Minneapolis, MN 55458) has given me a copy of APA FABER, which may be of interest to those of you interested in becoming writers or artists. It is a hybrid between an in-print workshop, in the form of an apa, and a general circulation fanzine. Members are required to produce a minimum of one page of original creative/artistic/formal material (written or graphic) and one page of comment on/critique of others' material.* Printing is available for those who can't print themselves. There are no dues. People who get it by mail set up individual postage accounts. Nonmembers may be contributors. APA FABER is "Available for a short review of Ray Bradbury's THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE, Pamela Dean's WAR FOR THE OAKS, Philip Jose Farmer's DUNE MESSIAH, or any similar work; or for letter of comment." If you're really interested in joining you should be able to convince Dan, who is the Official Collator and unofficial editor, to send you a copy.*(OOPS! Minac is per two mailings.)

Mary Hodge (20500 Enadia Way, Canoga Park, California 91306) has sent me a flyer for The Rampant Guinea Pig, a magazine of fantasy & subcreative fiction. Issues 1-7 are now available for \$3.00 each. Checks payable to Mary Hodge. In her cover letter requesting a copy of RFT she said that RGP sometimes prints fiction with a religious or metaphysical slant. If you send her an S.A.S.E she will send you her "Writers' and Artists' Guidelines" (Payment is contributor's copies plus fame and glory.)

Scavenger's Newsletter (Janet Fox, 519 Ellinwood, Osage City, KS 66523-1329) is described as a monthly markets newsletter for sf/fantasy/horror writers and artists with an interest in the small press as well as other markets. Sample \$1.00.