



RADIO FREE THULCANDRA 16. January 1989. 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 active participation is preferred. I hope to publish RFT quarterly, so my target for the next issue is April 1989. The earlier I receive contributions, thus giving me more time to work on layout, the happier I will be.

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WHY YOU ARE GETTING THIS

- You are on the current mailing list. See Important Announcement in Potpourri.
— Sample copy. See above for how to get future issues.
— Review copy.
— Trade (?)
— Editor's whim.

POTPOURRI

By Marty Helgesen

The previous issue drew a number of letters. The lettercol is three times longer than it was last time, and takes up most of the zine. There are discussions of fantasy, science fiction, fandom, and various other topics. Two of the other topics (Homosexuality and abortion) will be phased out unless someone comes up with something new and different to say, as they are not directly related to the purpose of this zine.

Although I was pleased with the response, not everyone responded. And that brings me to an IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT. I put everyone on Ernest Heramia's current mailing list onto my current mailing list. However, that list does not offer a lifetime sinecure. If I have not heard from you and if you want to continue receiving RFT, look at the statement of availability in the masthead. Some fan editors require a published, or at least publishable, letter of comment to continue receiving their zines. I am less demanding. While I welcome publishable locs--this would be a very thin fanzine without them--I will settle for an indication that you are still alive and still interested in receiving RFT.

In RFT 15 I said, "Two dollars ... will be accepted as an expression of interest, but more accurate participation is preferred." The word "accurate" should have been "active". Accuracy is for typists, and as I commented to myself in MINNEAPA some years ago, I'd fire me as my typist if I didn't work so cheap.

Speaking of MINNEAPA, it is about the size of some other apas, but used to be much bigger, so we are looking for members. It is monthly, with minac 1 page every other mailing. There are no dues; you set up a postage account with your mailing agent. Anyone interested can request a spec copy from the Official Editor: Beth Friedman, 2630 Pleasant Avenue S #301, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55408. (I distribute outside copies of my apazines to various people. Anyone who would like samples can ask me.)

Please tell people about RFT and Christian Fandom. Or, if you know people you think might be interested, you can send me their names and I'll send a sample copy. Also, if you are willing to distribute flyers at cons you attend, let me know which cons you have in mind and I'll send you a supply. Kathy Tyers has already volunteered to do this.

I plan to chair a Christian Fandom meeting at Minicon this year, and I have been invited to participate in a panel on religion and SF. Minicon is held over the Easter weekend. Information from Minicon, P.O. Box 8297, Lake Street Station, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55408.

At Nolacon I picked up a flyer from The Science Fiction Club of Gdańsk Poland. They are interested in communicating with fans outside Poland. I sent a copy of RFT 15 with a cover letter in which, among other things, I identified the reference in the title, but did not explain it. I've received a reply from Krzysztof Papierkowski, Vice-President of the GKF, who said, "We also hope that Thulcandra won't be a Silent Planet anymore and that bad Eldils will die out." He sent several fanzines, most in Polish, which I cannot read, despite my Polish ancestry. A friend at work is studying for her Ph.D. and has a fellow student who is from Poland, so she took them to her and brought back notes giving me the gist of them. She reportedly enjoyed them although I don't think she's a fan. Even without a translator I could recognize several of the titles as Tolkien references. Krzysztof also sent a fanzine of Polish fan fiction translated into English by Poles. Anyone interested in contact with Polish fans can write to Gdański Klub Fantastyki, ul. Chyłońska 191, 81-700 Gdynia, Poland.

Susie Burns, 720 West Victoria #D3, Cosa Mesa, CA 92626 is looking for a west coast con devoted to Anne McCaffery's Dragonrider books. I suppose she'd also be interested in fanzines dealing with them. If you know of any, please tell her.

OREGON CHRISTIAN FANDOM — ORYCON 10

By Margaret G. Forsythe, Pendragon

Oregon Christian Fandom has settled into a pattern of small gatherings in the Salem-Portland area during the year and the renewal of more geographically distant friendships at ORYCON. We had a women's luncheon in Salem in March and our summer picnic at Champoeg State park in July. This was a pot-luck cook-out. Two members brought grills, each household brought the meat it wanted and everyone added to the salad and dessert menus. The turnout was small, but the day was sunny and relaxed. There was plenty to eat and we had the leisure to talk or stroll in the park.

ORYCON-10 in November was a good convention. We were back at the Columbia River Red Lion again, so there were no elevator problems, plenty of convenient meeting places, and good programming. Fourteen people turned out for our meeting. Since this was the fifth year for Oregon Christian Fandom, it was no longer possible to just stand up and talk about the organization, so we planned a short program. There was a book exhibit, the new format and address for RADIO FREE THULCANDRA was introduced, and I read part of an interpretive essay on the Star Wars movies. I was able to read only part of it because this year we were limited to one hour and the next hour's program came to claim the room. This left Star Wars suspended in mid-paragraph.

We missed Bishop Elizabeth Harrod. The Red Lion is far from any churches and there was no other clergyperson in sight to lead a worship service. So, Fandom gathered for the buffet breakfast in the river-view dining room and then scattered. Concluding social notes: The engagement of two of our members was announced with tentative wedding date of March. In December one couple had a new baby boy. We are now raising our next generation of Christian fans.

PRAYERS AND PRAISE

AXIS was a newsletter for Christian writers and artists of science fiction and fantasy which folded recently because the editors had more pressing responsibilities. I do not intend to try to replace it, but in the announcement of the change in editorship of RFT which I sent out I said I would pick up the idea of a Prayers and Praise column. It included prayer requests and praise reports related to SF&F writing and art, such as works in progress or submitted to publishers, as well as illnesses and similar personal needs. Nothing came in for the first issue, but now a note from Kathy Tyers offers thanksgiving that her novel Fusion Fire has made the LOCUS monthly bestseller list, and that Bantam Spectra has decided to buy her fourth novel, which has the working title Shivering World. "I covet prayers for perseverance, for maintaining godly priorities (my family in particular), and for efficient use of my time as the deadline grows closer."

I would add the engaged couple and the couple with a new baby mentioned in Margaret Forsythe's above report as people whom we could remember in our prayers.

In RFT 15 I mentioned the flyer at Nolacon urging people to write to Noreason protesting con-space being made available to Christians, and said that kind of bigotry requires no answer. I meant, of course, that there was no need to refute its factual errors. I suggest that an appropriate answer is to pray for the person responsible. And that calls to mind another suggestion. It is not connected with fantasy, science fiction, or fandom, but I will give myself some leeway. In all the discussions I've seen of the movie The Last Temptation of Christ, I do not recall seeing any calls for prayers for Martin Scorsese and the others responsible for the movie that they repent of their blasphemies and come to know the real Christ instead of a fictional one.

BUTTONS AS WITNESSING TOOLS

By Elizabeth L. Hensley

Buttons are fun and effective ways to witness because buttons fit right into any science fiction convention. I mix the Christian buttons in with a large number of Star Trek, Star Wars, and Doctor Who buttons, as well as others I wear just for fun. Often people find themselves reading the Christian buttons as they read the others, and thus are not able to stop themselves. And once they've read them, they've read them!

Buttons also make it easy to start conversations. I wear one that says, "It only takes an hour to read everything Jesus said." I often get asked, "Is this true?" I say, "Yes. Get yourself a large print Bible so you won't get eyestrain, get a red letter edition, and get a modern translation so you won't be spending most of your mental effort trying to translate "ye olde English" and sit down for a mere hour. Most people can do it within an hour, some speed readers can do it in a few minutes, and even the slowest of readers won't take much more than an hour. EVERYBODY ought to read what Jesus Christ said ONCE in their lives." And do you know what? When I say this, most people, even non-Christians, agree with me.

One that helps counter-attack the erroneous idea many non-Christians have that God doesn't want anyone to have any fun, "Grin! Jesus Loves You* *And the rest of us will wonder what you've been up to."

Ancient humans used the things they knew to explain God: fishing, shepherding sheep, chariots, kings, vineyards, pottery, etc. We, too, can use the things we see around us to better understand God. The fact that computer programs and video tapes can be copied and re-edited and kept indefinitely, makes a nice little parable about immortality. This has led me to make several buttons that use this modern parable situation as a theme:

"21st Century Christian. My Brainwaves are being videotaped for future re-editing."

"I have NOT lost my mind! God has me on a back up disk."

Here is a two button combo: "Destroy a disk, if the program is still in the computer, it still exists," and "Destroy my body, my brainwaves are still in God, I still exist."

Somebody who can do really fine calligraphy may be able to get both of them on one button. If they do I would like very much to receive a copy for my own button machine.

I saw this button being sold and worn at Worldcon: "Militant Agnostic. I don't know and you don't know either." This led me to make this button: "It IS possible to feel God's presence in THIS world," and I drew a little cross after the word "world." This button proved to be a great conversation maker and allowed me to witness several times to the living Presence at World Con.

Before an agnostic can become Born Again, he/she must accept the reality of God's existence. Evolution has been one of the devil's best tools, becoming an enormous stumbling block to belief in God, but I discovered that you can take evolution and relativity and use them as stepping stones, instead of stumbling blocks, to prove

God's existence. (The Time Space continuum is curved. Anything that curves must eventually come back upon itself. Simple lifeforms develop up into more complex, the end result of this process is unavoidably God.) I have used this idea with the Holy Spirit's leading and brought several agnostics to belief in God, a few all the way to accepting Christ, and another few to the point where they at least started to doubt their doubt. This idea has led to several great buttons: One with the words, "Time is elliptical," in the middle and the words, The Lord creates the universe evolves The Lord..." going in a continuous circle around the edge. If somebody wanted to get fancy they could add the symbol for infinity (an 8 turned on its side to represent a Möbius strip).

I was delighted to find the following button being sold at World Con. It showed a picture of the Christian fish symbol with legs. The words said, "Evolution in action."

Not all buttons worn to witness of Christ at a science fiction convention have to have a science fiction theme. The following buttons can be worn anywhere, including cons:

A beautiful one of flowers and trees that said, "Rejoice in the Beauty of the Lord!"

One of a little boy with a spilled ice cream cone: "Praise the Lord anyway!"

One with a little caterpillar on it: "Please be patient. God isn't finished with me yet."

One that just said, "God bless you," in huge calligraphic red letters on a green background.

One that says, "Praise God!"

Star Wars provided us with a wonderful chance to witness. Star Wars related Christian buttons include:

"The Force is strong in this one."

"I knew 'the Force' before He became a Movie Star."

"The Force is real* *His name is Jesus."

And a Doctor Who / Star Wars cross: "R2D2 is a Born Again Dalek."

And finally, the button that is in response to the "Born Again Pagan" buttons often seen at cons: "Christians Are Born Again Pagans."

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Editor's Comments: I agree that buttons can be an excellent way of witnessing. I've gotten a lot of comments with "Christians Are Born Again Pagans" and with one that has a Cross in the middle and the words, "There's a better answer than 42" around the edge. I also have one I had made after Joan Marie Verba suggested it when she was in MINNEAPPA: "I was a conscientious objector in the sexual revolution." I personally prefer to wear only one large button at a time, but that's a matter of individual taste. I specify large because I also wear a small button I got from Ernest Heramia several years ago that says, "Christian Fandom." I wear that all the time at cons, regardless of what other button I may be wearing.

When one is thinking of a slogan for a button, one should consider not only what one wants to say, but how other people are likely to interpret the words. They may not

interpret them the way he intended. I've seen a number of Christian bumper stickers I think would have no effect on non-believers, or would turn them off. The one I dislike the most is, "God said it. I believe it. That settles it." The first time I saw it my immediate reaction was, "Settles it for whom?" I'm not sure how people would react to your "21st century Christian..." button, but since it's a button, not a bumper sticker, it might serve to start conversations.

Someone who wears, and seriously means, the "Militant Agnostic..." button is actually claiming to have some very definite knowledge. He claims to know that the human mind is incapable of knowing whether or not God exists, and to know that God, if He exists, is inherently unknowable. This means he claims to know that the God of the Bible does not exist, because the God of the Bible can be known by reason reflecting on the universe (Rom. 1:19ff.), by revelation, and by religious experience.

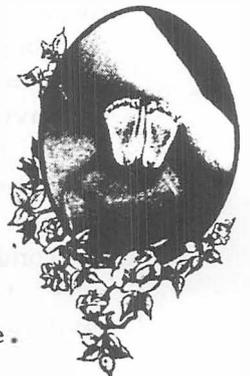
When I first saw the fish symbol with legs button I interpreted it as a dig at Creationist Christians who deny evolution.

I have several problems with your Time Space argument. As an aside, I wonder if it is hyperbolic to say that anything that curves must eventually come back upon itself. But that's incidental. My major problem is with the button saying, "...the universe evolves The Lord..." God did not evolve. He always existed, or, more precisely, always exists. He exists of His own nature, independent of the universe. He is self existent being. He created the universe out of nothing, and it depends for its continued existence on a continuing act of His creative will. The universe can evolve, under God's providence, but it can never evolve into God. It is a created being (or a collection of created beings) and can never become an uncreated being. That would be a contradiction in terms.

Someone once said, "God minus the universe is God. The universe minus God is nothing." Voltaire's line, "If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent Him," may serve--whatever he intended by it--to illustrate the human need for God. As St. Augustine wrote, "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you." But apart from that, Voltaire's statement is nonsense. If God did not exist, we would not exist to be able to invent him.

I like "R2D2 is a Born Again Dalek" but I am not happy with the other Star Wars buttons. The Force in Star Wars is a sort of pantheistic god. It is just an impersonal force. God is a personal being. (I would say, with Jews and Moslems, that God is a person, except that we Christians know that God is not a person, but three persons in one divine nature.) God has the attributes of personhood: intellect and will. He can know and love. Therefore, it is possible to have a personal, loving relationship with Him. We were created for the purpose of having that relationship. Heaven will consist primarily of a direct, loving, face-to-face relationship with God that will transcend any relationship, even with God, we have in this life. One cannot have that kind of relationship with the Force.

Buttons can be used for other than Christian messages, as one sees during every election campaign. I sometimes wear a small one that says, "Cancer cures smoking." And at cons and at work I always wear a pin in my collar in the shape of a pair of tiny human feet. As I explain when anyone asks, these perfectly formed feet are not a scale model. They are a full-size replica of the feet of an unborn child only ten weeks after conception. They thus serve as a graphic refutation of the claim that an unborn child is just a blob of tissue. Anyone interested can send \$2.00 to The Precious Feet People, P.O. Box 730, Taylor, AZ 85939 for a Precious Feet pin and a sample of literature. Or one can just request a free catalog.



(←With Comments by the Editor→)

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

Although by now the topic has extended itself to the point where it has only a tangential relation to fandom, I feel that your lengthy commentary on my last LoC entitles me to a reply, which I shall keep as brief as I can.

I have no comment on the merits of Cardinal O'Connor's ministry to AIDS patients, but I think you grossly distort both the facts and the spirit of the demonstrations at St. Patrick's. I didn't witness any of those demonstrations myself (though my sister did), but I know some of the people involved. Can standing silently during the homily really be construed as a "disruption" -- much less a "desecration" -- of the Mass? And it's hardly accurate to say that it was "necessary" for the church authorities to use the courts and the police : there was never any provable threat to security, the church's decision to use force seems to have been more of a media publicity stunt than anything else. According to my sister, many members of the congregation found the presence of the police far more disruptive than that of the demonstrators. I personally think such demonstrations are a waste of time, since they can never achieve their goals : the Cardinal is merely implementing the Vatican's directives, and no amount of pressure on him as an individual could give him the means to change those directives, even should he wish to.

"Gay rights laws", far from being a mere propagandistic ploy to protect same-gender sexual activity, are a simple necessity as long as gays are perceived by the public as a minority that can be harassed, denied housing and employment, and even killed, with impunity. Since you live in the New York area, you may recall that a few months ago two young men were savagely beaten on the West Side by a teenage gang -- and, that same week, a jogger was sexually tortured and killed by a similar gang in Central Park -- simply because of their *perceived* sexual orientation. Such occurrences are in no way exceptional; the same and worse is reported to the Anti-Violence Project every day (just a few years ago, you may remember, a Brooklyn priest was the victim, and his murderer was acquitted, in an obvious case of bias). When the actions of the courts and other authoritative institutions lead the public to believe that certain social groups are beyond the law's protection, special legal action is required to correct the situation. I can understand the rationale that would accord *no* category any special legal protection (all are equal before the law) : but once one has accepted legislation against racial and religious bias, to exclude perceived sexual orientation is in itself blatant discrimination.

I may have been careless about my terminology, but I think it's right to say that Christ's fulfillment of the Law in Himself does give Christians a different "understanding" of the Law in Scripture. The term *to'evah* used to condemn homosexual activity in Leviticus 18:22 does in fact originally refer to ritual transgression, like the term *tame'* used of eating pork in Leviticus 11:7 : neither appeals to "natural law", which in any case would

have been an odd concept in pre-Exilic times. As for the Romans passage, it's still a matter of debate whether the term *physis* is supposed to suggest "natural law" in the Stoic sense, or simply "individual nature" as in the common usage of the period. Since I'm not a Fundamentalist, I *do* make a crucial distinction between the sayings of Jesus and the cultural content (as opposed to the theological content) of the sayings of Paul (or "Deutero-Paul", as the case may be).

Natural law is, by definition, that which is perceptible through natural philosophy, before the aid of Revelation. But by to-day "natural philosophy" has expanded to include all the advances of the sciences, such as knowledge of the structures of the psyche and its unconscious processes. If, in formulating a moral theology, one rejects any understanding of "natural law" later than, say, that of Aquinas, one winds up with a very schizoid system.

I'm disappointed to see you give in to the gutter-press commonplace of mentioning homosexuality and pedophilia in the same breath, as though there were a natural link between the two. You should know that NAMBLA is hardly representative of the gay community, that many members of that community are in active moral opposition to it, and that there is a long-standing controversy as to whether it should be part of the network of gay organizations at all. It is a constant in Western culture that scapegoated minorities are depicted as a threat to the young ("They're out to get our children!"), with predictable effects; in fact, the ploy was successfully used by the Roman establishment against early Christians. See Norman Cohn's *Europe's Inner Demons* for a survey of the phenomenon.

Of course there are a large number of possible psychosexual dysfunctions, of which pedophilia is one. Such paraphilias, as they are called, are strategies to avoid true intimacy and reciprocity in sexual relations. Since they are, in origin, learned strategies, they can (like phobias) be unlearned, and are thus completely different from -- and unrelated to -- sexual orientation. All paraphilias cut right across sexual orientation boundaries. And, there is no evidence that any particular sexual orientation is a "perversion" --i.e., that it is in itself conducive to paraphilias. Anti-gay writers like to pad their essays with lurid evocations of sleazy bathhouses, public toilets, etc., to make gay sex seem inseparable from dysfunctional sex (What if every discussion of heterosexuality were required to begin with a graphic description of the goings-on at Plato's Retreat?) Most gay people lead normal, well-integrated lives; and many enjoy lifelong relationships that are as mutually giving as any enjoyed by, say, a childless heterosexual couple.

I use the term "homophobia" in its common colloquial meaning, that is, an irrational rejection of gay people and everything that relates to them. This is in theory separable from a disapproval, on doctrinal grounds, of same-gender sexual activity; but in practice the two are rarely separate. Most people who claim to oppose gays because of religious considerations are in fact using Scripture to justify their homophobia. This becomes evident from the tone of their dialogue, or rather their refusal to dialogue. Many Christians who can summon up compassion for killers, adulterers, and swindlers, suddenly lose every atom of charity when faced with

sexual difference Gays are seen as an absolute "Other", and their experience and opinions are belittled, dehumanized, and dismissed with contempt. Part of it, I suppose, comes from the ego-gratification of seeing some of one's neighbours as automatic spiritual inferiors. It's also a way of indulging in cruelty with impunity. I have yet to come across a pastoral approach to homosexuality that is *really* based on the "hate-the-sin-love-the-sinner" tenet (the Courage group, incidentally, is no exception), without any undercurrent of irrational viciousness and personal attack. Such approaches should rightly be labeled "homophobic".

I'm sure none of the above will convince you, so we will have to agree to disagree, and humbly recognize the mysterious fact that different people, because of divergences in their experience and understanding, are summoned to live Christ's love in radically different ways. Unfortunately, in the words of R.I. Moore : "The founder of Christianity said that his father's house had many mansions, but his followers have persisted in the conviction that they should all live in the same one."

To Nancy Wasko : One shouldn't put Satanism and Paganism in the same boat. They really have nothing in common, except for a certain anti-establishmentarian stance. I'm not aware of a substantial Satanist presence in fandom (does anyone out there have further information?). Satanism recognizes the basic principles of Christianity, but seeks to reverse them. Paganism (or rather, Neo-Paganism, since the variety that is spreading through fandom has little to do with traditional Paganism) is, by contrast, a nature religion that seeks to augment the organic solidarity between humans and the Earth. A huge number of Neo-Pagans don't seriously believe in anything at all : they're into it for the fun of play-acting elaborate rituals, and to be part of a like-minded extended family. It's also a classier way of being anti-Christian than boring old atheism (many Neo-Pagans -- like many other fans -- are in reaction against repressive establishment influences on their early life). But there *are* some Neo-Pagans who are genuine spiritual seekers, and they're the ones I'm concerned with here.

As for witnessing to Neo-Pagans, I've found the most effective method is to simply *be* Christian, to project the sense that Christianity is a *religion*. This may sound startling, but very many Neo-Pagans are honestly not aware that there is any spiritual content to Christianity. Getting their data from the media, they see Christianity as a vast political platform for social control and policing behaviour, sustained by a dry, joyless code of do's and don't's. They assume that all Christians are defensive, judgmental bigots who are "against" any number of things but not clearly "for" anything. Imagine their surprise, then, to discover that Christians have a rich, personal relationship with Jesus Christ that mobilizes them at all levels of their being (intellectual, emotional, imaginative), and that the fruit of that relationship is a caring, loving outreach to their fellow-humans and an open interest in the spiritual lives of others, even if they are non-Christian (as has been mentioned, all religions are, in a sense, "half true"). To many Neo-Pagans it's really news that the Christian tradition includes mysticism, intellectual brilliance, selfless charity, breathtakingly beautiful liturgy and ritual...

Since my primary field is Celtic Studies, I've given lectures on Celtic paganism at largely Neo-Pagan events (many Neo-Pagans feel their beliefs have vaguely "Celtic" roots, although they rarely have much knowledge of the facts). So I know the milieu quite well, and by now probably a majority of my friends are Neo-Pagan (I'm also very much in sympathy with the spiritual aspirations of *sincere* Neo-Pagans). Much of the anti-Christian animosity is artificially sustained, especially by a spurious mythology of the "Burning Times", which keeps Christians at a distance. At Esotericon, a mostly religion-oriented con which draws both Neo-Pagans and Christians (and others), I've noted an interesting evolution over the years. At the beginning, if one walked into a Neo-Pagan party, one would be met with a barrage of vicious anti-Christian anecdotes. Now, after all the mingling, I meet quite a few Neo-Pagans who find Christianity worthy of interest, or even admire some aspects of it, or at least are tired of the old enmity. Of course many of the Christians who come to Esotericon are Gnostic Christians who use an imagistic, Neo-Platonist language that Neo-Pagans can relate to easily. And I, as an Eastern Christian, have an ingrained sense of the importance of liturgy and ritual which, again, appeals to Neo-Pagan sensibilities. For Evangelicals, who place more everyday emphasis on the Bible than on liturgy, the gap may be initially harder to bridge. But once the sense of mutual threat is removed, who knows what can happen?

To Mike Van Pelt: Also of interest to Christian fans are Michael Davidson's two SF novels on religious themes, *The Karma Machine* and *Daughter of Is*. *The Karma Machine* deals mostly with Buddhism, but *Daughter of Is* is specifically Judaeo-Christian. The plot concerns a group of atheist scientists who create their own planet complete with sentient beings in whom, through "religious experiences" engineered by mind control, they instil a "perfect" religion, including an ersatz Messiah. But Divine Grace intervenes, a genuine Messiah appears, and the atheists are confounded.

I'm surprised you didn't include any of R.A. Lafferty's works, many of which are explicitly Christian in theme, albeit from a skewed, "Mooreeffoc" viewpoint.

(Your letter in RFT 15 was about three pages long, that in reply to a clause in a sentence by Ernest Heramia, two sentences in Nancy Wasko's Boskone report, and a two sentence paragraph in my Conspiracy report. My "lengthy commentary", as you describe it, was slightly shorter than your letter. I agree with you that the topic has only a tangential relationship to fandom, so after my reply I am not likely to print anything on the subject that goes over what has already been said.

The New York Times account of the arrest of homosexuals who demonstrated during Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral (Dec. 7, 1987) said the demonstrations started in March 1987. The Archdiocese tolerated them until October, when, after complaints from people who went to Mass to worship God, ushers began reading a statement to the demonstrators warning them that they would be arrested if they did not leave. For two months the demonstrators left at that point, but on Dec. 6 they refused to leave and were arrested. The Times also reported that other homosexuals who, it said, were not affiliated with Dignity, had been engaging in other disruptions during Mass,

including, "taunting the cardinal". And considering the number of months the Archdiocese tolerated these demonstrations before taking action, I think the words "media publicity stunt" apply more properly to the demonstrations themselves.

Yes, there have been cases, and not just in New York, of homosexuals being beaten and even murdered by gangs of thugs. But assault and murder are already illegal. Laws forbidding landlords and employers from taking a person's decision to engage in homosexual acts into account would have nothing to do with that. (I know that "gay rights" laws speak of sexual orientation, not actions, but a person's sexual orientation is unknown unless he proclaims it or is caught in the act, and very few chaste homosexuals publicly identify themselves as such.)

Legitimate civil rights laws, such as those forbidding racial or religious discrimination, forbid discrimination based on what people are. "Gay rights" laws forbid discrimination based on what people choose to do. When I have mentioned this distinction in past discussions, some people, to my surprise, have asked if I therefore objected to laws forbidding discrimination against people who engage in the actions of going to church, receiving Communion, etc. They missed the point. No one objects to the physical actions involved in such activities. It's not like the Thugs who worshipped Kali by robbing and murdering travellers. In that case the actions were wrong in themselves. However, those who want to discriminate against people who go to church object to the religious significance of the actions.

Some years ago I read an article about religious persecution in the Soviet Union. It mentioned a photograph that had appeared in a Soviet newspaper showing several children with their hands folded in prayer. The caption said they had been taken from their parents who had taught them to do such detestable things. Since folding one's hands is not usually considered a detestable act, it is obvious that the Soviets objected to the prayerful significance of the actions, not to the actions themselves. However, the physical actions of homosexual intercourse are wrong in themselves. The law should not forbid people to take other people's freely chosen actions into account. See also, Are "Gay Rights" Right? Homosexuality and the law by Roger J. Magnuson (Minneapolis: Straitgate Press, 1985)

The acquittal of the admitted killer of a Brooklyn priest involved bias, but not necessarily bias against homosexuals. The priest was white, the killer was black, and his lawyer was Alton Maddox, who had acquired a local reputation as a black racist demagogue long before he achieved nationwide notoriety through his involvement in the Tawana Brawley hoax. He said the charges against his client were "racially motivated." The admitted killer was acquitted, but later was arrested, tried and convicted of another major felony.

The priest was found dead in a deserted industrial section of Brooklyn. The killer admitted shooting him, but claimed it was self-defense. He said the priest had driven him there for a paid sexual encounter, but he changed his mind. It is not impossible that the priest was a homosexual--some priests are afflicted with that condition--but I am not aware of any evidence to support that accusation except the statement of the killer, and his story didn't make any sense. The idea that a hardened street criminal would need a gun to defend himself against a middle-aged priest is improbable on the face of it, but the killer's story made it even more implausible. He said the priest wanted to perform fellatio on him. In other words, the priest allegedly wanted to put his face into the killer's crotch where he would be particularly vulnerable to being chopped on the neck, kned in the face, or otherwise easily disabled without the need for a gun. Some people wondered what the priest was doing in that neighborhood, if not seeking illicit sex, but there is a possible explanation. The last person, other than the killer, to see him alive

was a bishop whom the priest had driven home after a meeting and dinner. It is quite possible that the priest neglected to lock the door on the passenger side, and the killer jumped in when he was stopped for a traffic light and forced him to drive there at gunpoint for the purpose of robbery.

Christians do not have a new understanding of the Old Law. Rather, we understand that the Old Law was superseded by the New Law when Christ fulfilled it.

It is part of the nature of human beings to see. The fact that some people are born blind does not change this fact. It means that they are born with a birth defect. Heterosexuality is also part of the nature of human beings. It is the way we reproduce. A fuller defense of that statement would require more space than I am willing to give to this tangential subject. My point is that if it is true that some people are born with a homosexual orientation, that would not make homosexuality a part of human nature. Like congenital blindness it would be a birth defect.

In the first paragraph of my reply last time I said, "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." When I brought up pedophilia I mentioned homosexual pedophilia in only one sentence: "Many, although certainly not all, homosexuals are also pedophiles, and some of them have organized the North American Man Boy Love Association." [Underlining added.] The rest of the paragraph discussed the "many heterosexual pedophiles". Despite the disclaimers and my emphasis on heterosexual pedophiles, you accuse me of giving in to "the gutter-press commonplace of mentioning homosexuality and pedophilia in the same breath, as though there were a natural link between the two."

I do not know what homosexuals in general think about NAMBLA. I do recall reading several years ago that a coalition of homosexual organizations had voted to admit NAMBLA, with at most 2 or 3 "no" votes, and that the only organization that resigned from the coalition in protest, rather than be associated with NAMBLA was a group called Parents of Gays.

None of your comments address the point I made with my reference to heterosexual pedophiles: 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." And this is true even if the pedophilia has a genetic origin or was caused by early childhood experiences, such as being the victim of a molester, for which the person had absolutely no responsibility.

Incidentally, the obligation to exercise self control and to refrain from satisfying one's sexual desires applies equally to unmarried heterosexuals like me. Of course, it is theoretically possible that I will meet the right woman and get married, but as the years go by that becomes increasingly less likely.

Your explanation of your use of "homophobia" has a strong flavor of name calling, and serves to confirm my description of its common use.

I agree that the best way to witness to neo-pagans, or to anyone else, is to make a positive case, in one's words and in one's life, for the truth of Christianity. A large part of this is explaining what we really believe and why. I prefer to put the

emphasis on what rather than why, although both are important, because, as you say, many non-Christians are rejecting a distorted view of Christianity. By removing the misunderstanding we may be clearing the way for God's grace. As Frank Sheed said, the truth makes a stronger case for itself than we can make for it.

One practical advantage of this approach is that I can concentrate on understanding the truths I believe, which I would want to do for their own sake, apart from their value in witnessing. I don't have to learn the errors of countless differing positions. Also, even if I were to successfully refute someone's false beliefs, that would not necessarily mean that he would adopt true beliefs. He might embrace another error. Finally, making a positive case for my beliefs instead of attacking someone else's beliefs minimizes the danger of provoking an emotional defensive reaction.

That said, I must add that it can be useful to know something about the beliefs of people you are witnessing to. It lets you know, in the jargon phrase, where they're coming from. You can learn of beliefs you have in common with them on which you can build. You can also learn objections they are likely to raise so that you can be prepared to answer them. Of course, it is essential that the books offering this information be accurate. I have seen books written by Protestants (and by unbelievers) attacking the Catholic Church which grossly misrepresent the teachings of the Church. I am not talking about statements in the form, "The Catholic Church teaches X, which is contrary to the Bible." If the Church really does teach X, then the dispute is a matter of biblical interpretation. I am talking about statements like, "The Catholic Church teaches Y," when the Church does not teach Y. That sort of thing makes me wonder about the accuracy of books attacking Mormonism, the teachings of Jehovah's Witnesses, etc. And the fact that the author was a member of the group in question is no guarantee of accuracy. Again, I have seen books and tracts by apostate priests--I am talking about men who really were priests, not total frauds like Jack Chick's Alberto Rivera--which blatantly distort Catholic teaching and practice. This fact makes me wonder about the accuracy of books by former Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, etc.)

Jan P. Dennis, Crossway Books, 9825 W. Roosevelt Road, Westchester, Illinois 60153

The Scriptural condemnation of homosexual acts stands intact despite the novel exegesis of writers like John McNeil, John Boswell, Derrick Bailey, Norman Pittenger, Gregory Baum, and Anthony Kosnik. These writers' positions have been ably refuted by John McKenzie, Pierre Grelot, Edward Schillebeeckx, William May, John F. Harvey, and others. The picture Kondratiev paints of a variety of acceptable understandings concerning homosexuality within the church is false. In reality, the church's historic condemnation of homosexual acts remains in place, despite the efforts of a tiny but vocal contingent to engineer a revisionist coup. The vast majority of Christendom--Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Evangelical, Fundamentalist--rejects the revisionist position outlined by Kondratiev.

The etiology of homosexual "orientation" and behavior is still in dispute, both among those who affirm the moral legitimacy of homosexual acts and those who don't. For example, one need only glance through publications from the homosexual subculture to find numerous expressions of homosexuality as something one chooses. The so-called revolution in human psychology that Kondratiev affirms has nowhere been indisputably established, certainly not within Christian circles. As regards the development of homosexual "orientation" in a "natural" way, there are many (notably Elizabeth Moberly) who regard homosexuality as resulting from pathological rather than natural psychosexual development. The point is that the etiology of homosexuality is still controverted, not settled as Kondratiev dogmatically states.

As regards "confused feelings about male dominance," etc., I suggest Kondratiev broaden his reading to include, e.g., George Gilder (Men and Marriage), Michael Levin

(Feminism and Freedom), Nicholas Davidson (The Failure of Feminism), and Stephen Clark (Man and Woman in Christ).

(In accord with my statement about phasing out this topic at the beginning of my reply to Alexei, I have cut out large parts of Jan's letter. Normally I will not mention editing letters, but in this case it seems useful.)

Robert S. Coulson, 2677W-500N, Hartford City, Indiana 47348

In the Christian literature category, Farmer's Father John Carmody stories were reprinted (or at least some of them were reprinted in the pb Father To The Stars for Tor. One of them, "Night of Light" was expanded into a novel for Berkley. He wrote a novel called Jesus on Mars for Pinnacle in 1979. I own a copy, but I haven't read it; Farmer was turning them out pretty fast for awhile there, and I didn't keep up.

Also, there are the works of Robert Nathan, who wrote both fantasy and "straight" (or mundane) fiction. All of his novels are about love; many are more overtly Christian. The fantasy titles I own are Portrait of Jennie, But Gently Day, There Is Another Heaven, The Devil With Love, Heaven and Hell and the Megas Factor, Road of Ages, and The Elixir. Most are gentle stories about the power of love, and nearly all are fascinating.

Nathan's admirer, Thomas Burnett Swann, wrote How Are The Mighty Fallen? about the love between David and Jonathan, and while he interpreted some of the events in ways that modern Christians might not appreciate, he referred to "love" in the same way that the Bible does; it is possible to love someone without going to bed with him or her.

I remain a Secular Humanist, however. or at least secular, my humanity has been called into question now and then.

(No, Buck, to be a Secular Humanist I think you have to have faith in humanity, and you have too much common sense for that. If you recognized that the defects in humanity which preclude that kind of faith are the results of the Fall and that Christ has provided the means of overcoming them, you wouldn't be secular either.)

Glenn T. McDavid, 36 Salem Lane, Evanston, Illinois 60203

Thank you (and, I suspect, Ross Pavlao) for sending me *RFT 15*. I read it with considerable interest. I can amplify somewhat on Mike Van Felt's letter in *15*, at least in regard to Foul Anderson. Notable among Mike's examples was Nicholas van Rijn. Van Rijn is an important character in Anderson's Technic Civilization stories. One of his contemporaries, and perhaps a competitor, is Martin Schuster, the master trader in "The Three-cornered Wheel" (the first part of *The Trouble Twisters*). Schuster knows and respects Jewish traditions. He uses his knowledge of the Kabbalah to deal with the theocracy that the protagonists confront.

Centuries later, but in the same universe, we find Admiral Juan Cajal of the Terran Empire. Cajal commands the attack on the Domain of Ythri in *The People of the Wind*. Cajal is a devout Roman Catholic, and is portrayed very sympathetically in a story that is more a conflict more of good against good than of good against evil.

Anderson's fantasy provides a variety of other interesting examples. The novel *Three Hearts and Three Lions* is based on the myths of Catholic medieval Europe. The symbols of Catholic Christianity are an important part of the forces of law (the good side, opposed to "chaos") in that story. At the end of the story Holger Carlsen, the Danish hero, is received into the Roman Catholic Church.

Anderson has linked characters from several of his series in the taproom of *The Old Phoenix*, and there Holger Carlsen meets Prince Rupert of the Rhine, hero of *A Midsummer Tempest*. This story is set in an alternate world version of the English Civil War. Anderson does not care for the Puritans, but his portrayal of their Anglican opponents, including Rupert, shows that he is not hostile to Christianity as a whole. Also present at *The Old Phoenix* was Valeria Matuchek from *Operation Chaos*, a story where the forces of good include a Protestant pastor and a Catholic priest.

The universe of Anderson's hero Dominic Flandry is a science fiction version of the late Roman Empire, with Flandry clearly conscious of the impending fall. Recently Poul and Karen

Anderson have written a fantasy tetralogy, *The King of Ys*, set in the time of the fall of the historical Western Roman Empire. By this time the older pagan beliefs were rapidly losing ground. With the establishment of the church many evil things were done in the name of Christ. It would be easy to write a story set in this period in which the Christians are the villains and the pagans the oppressed heroes.

However this is not what *The King of Ys* is about. The fall of the pagan city of Ys is the result of conflicts among the pagan Ysans and Irish and the Mithran Gratillonius, who is the hero of the series. It is the Christian Bishop Corentinus who helps the survivors build a new life in Armorica (modern Brittany) and is crucial to the final scenes of the series. Nor is Corentinus an isolated figure who just happens to be a Christian. He is linked to St. Martin of Tours and through him to St. Patrick. His role in the story depends on his position in the Catholic Church.

However, the presence of Christian characters is neither the most important nor the most interesting issue in seeing how Christianity is viewed in a work of fiction. Far more fundamental is the world view implied by the story itself. The work of J.R.R. Tolkien is the most obvious example of this distinction.

The world view of Anderson's fiction was discussed by Sandra Miesel in *Against Time's Arrow: The High Crusade of Poul Anderson*.¹ Miesel sees the struggle against entropy as the common theme in Anderson's work, fantasy as well as science fiction. This struggle is often depicted in myth and symbolism, as in the struggle between law and chaos in *Three Hearts and Three Lions* or *Operation Chaos*. The struggles of the failing Roman or Terran empires can also be easily interpreted in this light.

The Second Law of Thermodynamics dictates that the total entropy of any closed, i.e. isolated, system will tend to increase, always making the system more disordered. The Second Law does allow an object to decrease its entropy, but it requires that such a decrease be paid for by increasing the entropy of the object's surroundings. Life can develop on the planet Earth, decreasing the entropy of the living matter. However, that life is completely dependent on solar energy, and the total entropy of the solar system is increasing. The Sun is using up its supply of nuclear energy, ultimately transforming it to disordered energy--heat.

From this point one can treat the entire Universe as a thermodynamically closed system, and apply the Second law on the largest possible scale. All forms of life, above all human beings, create order in the world, but that order is achieved by decreasing the order of the world around them. Eventually all human institutions must fail, all living things must die, and all matter must decay. All things will come to an end in the "Heat Death" of the universe.²

The Second Law of Thermodynamics was discovered in middle of the last century. Its cosmological implications were popularized in the 1930's by Sir James Jeans and Sir Arthur Eddington. Jeans or Eddington could have inspired part of the prologue of Anderson's *Three Hearts and Three Lions*:

...a visiting physicist: one of those magnificent types which only Britain seems to produce, scientist, philosopher, poet, social critic, wit, the Renaissance come back in a gentler shape.

Miesel goes on to show that despite this prospect Anderson's characters do not despair. They are free to choose how they will respond to the universe and they can choose to struggle against the chaos around them. However, in that fight it is still possible, indeed necessary, to find love and happiness, and that too is seen throughout his fiction.

Turning from physics to faith, the Heat Death interpretation of the second law implies that any attempt to place ultimate reality in the universe as we know it must lead to despair, since everything in it is doomed. Not only is unending improvement unachievable, it is ultimately not possible to maintain the world even as it is now. This is a very uncomfortable prospect for a purely secular world view. However, William R. Inge, the "gloomy Dean" of St. Paul's cathedral, had a different reaction:

The idea of the end of the world is intolerable only to modernist philosophy, which finds in the idea of unending temporal progress a pitiful substitute for the blessed hope of everlasting life, and in an evolving God a shadowy ghost of the unchanging Creator and Sustainer of the Universe. It is this philosophy which makes Time itself an absolute value, and progress a

cosmic principle. . . . Modernist philosophy is, as I maintain, wrecked on the Second Law of Thermodynamics; it is no wonder that it finds the situation intolerable, and wriggles piteously to escape from its toils.³

For Inge, as for most Christians, God is the creator of the universe, and distinct from it. The universe, as God's creation, may be subject to the Heat Death, but he is beyond its reach. Christianity has also always spoken of an end of the world, a Day of the Lord, a *Dies Irae*. While the Heat Death is described in mathematics rather than the apocalyptic symbolism of Daniel or Revelation, the conclusion is the same. All things of this world will pass away.

How does this apply to Anderson's fiction? Christianity is an important part of western history, which Anderson's fiction draws on extensively. Whatever Anderson's own views may be,⁴ his fiction agrees with the traditional Christian view of the ultimate fate of the physical universe. Christians are called upon to show love in the world, which is also the response of Anderson's best characters. For all their failings, Nicholas van Rijn, David Falkayn, and Dominic Flandry do show real compassion for those around them, as do the characters discussed above. Religious believers, especially Christians, are so often treated favorably by Anderson because their response to the world, when true to their beliefs, agrees with his.

This turned out to be a more elaborate response than I had first expected, but I hope you find it helpful. I am not sure if the detailed references are appropriate for *RFT*, but they do show where these ideas come from. I hope other *RFT* readers may be interested. In any case, the reading for this has been fun.

1. San Bernardino, Borgo Press, 1978.
2. This simple application of the laws of thermodynamics to the universe as a whole is not without controversy, especially when Einstein's General Theory of Relativity is considered. Recently some noted physicists have questioned the view that the Second Law implies the end of all life. Freeman Dyson (*Infinite in All Directions* (New York, Harper & Row, 1988, pp. 97-121) has argued that while Carbon-based life as we now know it cannot survive indefinitely in the future, the laws of physics do not forbid intelligent life from existing, and indeed thriving forever, even in an expanding universe. John D. Barrow & Frank J. Tipler, *The Anthropic Cosmological Principle* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1986, ch. 10) also discuss this possibility. They further suggest that intelligent life could under some circumstances be said to exist forever in a closed universe--one that recollapses in a finite time period.

Miesel does not consider these possibilities, and in fact *Against Time's Arrow* was written before they were widely discussed. She is following the "traditional" view of the Second Law as implying the end of all things, and of all life. This is the view she sees in Anderson's fiction. However, future discussions of the fate of life and the universe must consider them.

3. William R. Inge, *God and the Astronomers*, Warburton lectures 1931-1933 (London, Longmans Green, 1934), quoted in Barrow and Tipler, *The Anthropic Cosmological Principle*, p. 168.
4. Miesel describes him as an agnostic. *Against Time's Arrow*, p. 11.

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As the person responsible for all but one of the program items you mentioned at Nolecon, I would like to explain the rationale behind my choice of topics and panelists. I did not organize any panel for the purpose of "dogma bashing", and think that anyone who did would have a short career in con programming.

"Is the Scientific Method the Death of God" has been run twice, once at Universe in 1987 and once at Nolecon. The first time that I ran it, I scheduled a Jesuit college chancellor who is also a physicist on the same panel as a rabbi, a christian, an atheist, and an agnostic. (The rabbi unfortunately couldn't show, and was replaced by Jerry Pournelle. This was not because one is a credible substitute for the other. Jerry drives on Saturday and the rabbi doesn't.)

As I had hoped, both times that the panel was presented it came up with the same conclusion; that no combination of technical developments in any way invalidated the need for human spiritual development. (To misquote Robert Anton Wilson, nothing in physics contradicts St. Augustine's prescription to comfort the bereaved, heal the sick, help the needy, or raise the spirit of men.) The fact the panel came to a conclusion that matched my own pleased me, but I would not have considered the panel topic invalid had they come to another conclusion. I do not consider a panel a failure if its final synthesis does not reflect my own views. The people who attended did not come to see what the Nolecon programming staff thought of the question, but what the authors thought.

The balance of this panel as I saw it was as follows: Ray Lafferty and John Barnes were chosen as authors who had written books involving spiritually motivated persons in future highly technological settings. (Barnes wrote "Sin of Origin", a complex piece whose hero is a Catholic missionary. I was surprised to find that he is an atheist.) Robert Silverberg was chosen as an author who has written several pieces in which either mystic or organized religion is integrated into a future society, and also because he has a fine knowledge of both history and philosophy. Algis Budrys was chosen as a moderator for several reasons. I have observed him showing respect for persons whose personal belief he does not share. He is effective as a moderator, which is important in a situation where some members of the audience might show up with an axe to grind. Finally, I trusted Algis to keep a sense of perspective, which he did by all accounts I have heard. Too often a panel shifts to some minor technical quibble

or wanders into a word by word dissection of a paragraph in some obscure piece printed in a defunct magazine. I needed someone to keep the discussion on track.

"Religion in Fantasy", as the sub-heading indicated, was designed as a writing panel. As a seminar on the craft of writing believable cultures, complete with beliefs and traditions, it was not designed to provide insights about this or any real world.

"Resolved: SF must be Atheist" was the brainchild of two authors who desperately wanted to do this topic- then pulled out after I had already scheduled it! I tried to put some people on both sides of the argument on this panel.

As an aside, the argument about whether you can have God intervene in a story is actually valid, as numerous bad writers who have written themselves into a corner have done exactly that. I have lost count of the number of bad stories where problems are resolved by bizarre coincidence or Deus Ex Machina. This is more prevalent in bad fantasy than bad SF, but is still a problem.

I don't know what conclusions were drawn by those on the New Age panel. New Age thought has always struck me as an oxymoron. Some panels you run because you have to.

There are some questions that are valid now, will be valid in a thousand years, and would have been valid a thousand years ago. Among these are inquiries about the relationships between people and their god, their state, and each other. I try to put a mix of these types of questions and the momentarily topical on any program that I originate. In the case of the last minute thrown together mess that was Nolacon, I may not have achieved the perfect balance, but I did manage to include at least a few of the puzzles that have bedeviled us since the ancient Greeks took the first hard looks at life. As far as I know, the question that was asked regarding the analysis of the universe affecting faith was first asked by Socrates; I would like to think that the old grouch would have felt comfortable discussing the question with Budrys, Lafferty, Silverberg, et al. (With a translator, of course. I nominate Gene Wolfe.) Perfect government, perfect relationships, and perfect religion may be forever out of the reach of humanity, but the search for them has been the prime business of the best of our species since the dawn of time.

Fandom has generally been interested in the more experimental programming that I have tried to put together. I would like to think that a fair percentage of science fiction fans have asked themselves these questions and at least tried to seek good answers. Those answers might not agree with mine, but I will do my best to understand and respect them. I will also continue to run panels that will help other people hear different views, in the hope that doing so will help them with their synthesis of philosophy and everyday reality.

A rather long soapbox speech there, but I hope you will print at least some of it. I feel that it is necessary to ask interesting and perhaps irritating questions to help people examine their prejudices and assumptions. By running programming that mixes science fiction speculation with philosophy, several different interests are merged. The fact that attendance at philosophic programming is generally high is the best measure that other people find these lines of inquiry interesting.

A few other comments on your article:

For an interesting explanation of Silverberg's remarks regarding science as a method of understanding God, read "A Brief History of Time", by Dr. Stephen Hawking. He regards the universe as a map of the mind of God, as a physical manifestation of a spiritual being. To Hawking, the advancement of science aids and informs the spirit of man, as well as the understanding.

Regarding your remark about the church never proscribing dissection, I must disagree. In the 1700's the use of cadavers in medical schools for dissection was attacked from the pulpit in Scotland and England. This created a black market in corpses, some persons were actually murdered for the value of their bodies. See The Peoples Almanac, vol. I for a famous case.

Thanks for sending the zine. I'm not a Christian, but I did enjoy reading it and I suppose qualify as an "anyone who is interested." I appreciate the free interchange of thoughts and support any publication that encourages communication between people of different philosophies. Good luck with your editorship!

(←Thank you for the inside information. For new readers and those old ones who have not yet committed the previous issue to memory I should say that I did not accuse anyone of seeking dogma bashing. I reported that Algis Budrys said he suspected the organizers of the panel expected dogma bashing.)

There's no doubt that a bad writer can resort to a Deus Ex Machina with a real deus to get out of a problem. The question is whether a good writer could write a good story in which God intervenes. I think it could be done if the writer led up to the miracle properly.

The panelist's aside about the Church forbidding dissection specified the Middle Ages. That meant he was talking about the Catholic Church, and my comment did the same. A broader definition of "the Church" would include the Church of England, but then one would have to speak of parts or a part of the Church taking the action.→)

Joan Marie Verba, P.O. Box 1363, Minnetonka, Minnesota 55345

I received the latest RADIO FREE THULCANDRA. Thank you. I found the issue interesting, but with all due respect to you and Ernest Heramia as editors, I do not think that RFT is yet fulfilling its potential. I have a few thoughts on that subject, which I want to share with you and other readers.

I have supported Christian Fandom and RADIO FREE THULCANDRA for a number of years now. It has been my hope that RFT would bring together Christian fans of science

fiction and fantasy (and those who are interested in Christian writers of science fiction and fantasy), and provide a forum for exchanging ideas, advice, reports of activities, book reviews, etc. Since we are a nondenominational group, I thought it would be particularly interesting for people of various backgrounds (e.g. Catholic, Baptist, Lutheran) to compare notes according to their traditions.

To date, there has been a little of this, but in my opinion, far too little. Instead, a very large portion of current and past issues of RFT have been devoted to discussing abortion, almost completely from the perspective of those who oppose legalized abortion. Enough of this! I read and understood those arguments the first time. To be subjected to this discussion a second, third, fourth, and fifth time is to, at the very least, bore the readership to death. Those interested in abortion arguments can subscribe to any number of newsletters and journals. There is no need for this to be replayed in RFT.

The letters generated by this topic took up far less space than the articles and editorials on this topic, which tells me that the readers weren't greatly interested in it. And if the readers did wish to discuss it, the discussion would go more smoothly if the editor would step back and let the readers discuss each side of the issue, rather than printing editorial after editorial and article after article.

(Joan's letter also included almost two pages of suggestions on how to improve RFT, for which I am very grateful. I agree with some of them and disagree with others, but it was helpful to read them and think about them. (The last paragraph of her letter printed above was taken from there because it fit with her complaints about the abortion discussion, which I shall address in a moment.) Joan also sent a sample copy of TREKLINK, a bimonthly Star Trek newsletter she edits. If anyone is interested, it is available for \$9.00 per year (\$1.50 per issue) in North America, \$18.00 per year (in U.S. funds) elsewhere. Checks payable to Joan M. Verba.

I agree, Joan, that RFT is not fulfilling its potential, and I am trying to improve it. I also agree with your hopes for RFT expressed in your second paragraph, with one exception. I may not be understanding you correctly, but I don't think denominational backgrounds would be a significant factor in our discussions. I certainly don't want arguments about the doctrinal differences between us, and I don't think you do either. I want to emphasize the "mere Christian" beliefs we have in common.

I have looked through all of the issues of RFT from number one to date, and your recollection of the abortion discussion is incorrect. It did not take up a large percentage of the total pages (although "large" is a relative term), and it has been almost entirely in the letter column. In RFT 6 Ernest did reprint an open letter from The Chapel of the Air attacking prostaglandin chemical abortions, but it produced no big discussion. In RFT 7 someone asked him why he printed it, he answered briefly, and that was the end.

In my column in RFT 7, which was published late in November 1984, I wrote about an aspect of the 1984 election campaign which had a counterpart in fandom. Candidates who mentioned their religious beliefs and clergymen who spoke out on the moral aspects of some campaign issues were accused of violating "the separation of church and state." In other words, people were free to be Christians so long as they didn't act on their beliefs. I said that there is a similar attitude in fandom: it's okay for a fan to be a Christian so long as he doesn't mention it in fandom.

I pointed out that churchmen are allowed to speak on some issues. I mentioned that in 1980 the Archbishop of Boston spoke out against abortion shortly before a primary in which one of the candidates was pro-abortion, and was widely criticized for violating the separation of church and state. A few weeks later the Bishop of San Diego said no Catholic should vote for a racist shortly before an election in which one candidate was

a leader of the Ku Klux Klan, but there were no complaints that he violated the separation of church and state. I did not argue against racism or abortion, although I oppose both. I just mentioned the double standard. In RFT 8 Joy Hibbert explained the difference by saying, in brief, that racism is bad but abortion is good. That is what started the discussion. It remained entirely in the letter column, including Ernest's replies to letters, through RFT 14. In RFT 15 Ross's article and my supplemental comments did discuss abortion, but they were not so much arguments against abortion as discussions of the practical implications of believing abortion is wrong. Ross's article was primarily about selecting criteria for evaluating candidates, and he illustrated it by discussing his criteria for the 1988 presidential election. But in his first paragraph he urged those who disagreed with his criteria to come up with their own.

In any event, there probably will not be much about abortion in future issues except in the letter column if I receive letters on either side I consider worth publishing. And for anyone who wants to avoid discussions of abortion, I should warn you that a large part of Tim Callahan's letter, and my reply, which follow discuss abortion, as does a smaller part of Ernest Hiramia's letter.→)

Tim Callahan, 1971 Santa Rosa Avenue, Pasadena, California 91104

Despite his declaration to the contrary, my friend Ross Pavlac is indeed advocating single issue voting in his unwarranted attack on the candidacy of Michael Dukakis. Considering that the election has already been won by Bush, it might seem a waste of time to rebut Ross's arguments. Nevertheless, abortion continues to be an issue and will continue to be one regardless of whether a Bush appointed Supreme Court voids Roe v. Wade or not. Of greater importance than the issue itself is the ability of anti-abortionists to blind themselves to all other issues to the degree that someone as decent and ethical as Ross Pavlac can end up supporting a man like George Bush.

Ross begins his argument with an extensive quote from an article by Francis Schaeffer. While the assertions quoted are Schaeffer's, I will assume Ross shares the views expressed. There is a basic flaw in Schaeffer's reasoning. It is, essentially, that he deals in a world of ideas and legalisms rather than in what actually happens in the real world. Consider, for example, his contention that no one but Christians hold the view that human life has an "intrinsic, unique dignity". He lists specifically the Buddhists, Hindus and Ancient Greeks as lacking this view. I assume he would also include atheists and agnostics. Perhaps some failure on the part of the Buddhists et al. to say the exact combination of words that would convince Schaeffer that they value human life sufficiently is what gave rise to this piece of spiritual arrogance. Certainly it ignores examples from the real world, particularly Mahatma Gandhi, when considering what value people of other faiths give to human life. Certainly Gandhi's view was vastly superior to the view that must have been held by those pious New England sea captains who made sure that the black slaves they transported from Africa, in conditions of brutal barbarity, arrived in the New World converted to the true faith. Considering these slavers, considering the many fratricidal Christian princes who treated serfs as property, and especially considering the crowned heads of Europe who, espousing the divine right of kings, were outraged by the sentiments expressed in the Declaration of Independence, it is impossible to agree with Schaeffer that the views we take for granted concerning compassion and the dignity of human life are rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition.

Schaeffer continues his line of reasoning to contend that once we don't hold human life in the womb sacred, there is an inevitable slide from abortion to infanticide to forced euthanasia of the old. What absolute bunk! In the fifteen years since Roe v.

Wade has there been any serious asse.tion by anyone that infanticide is anything but murder? The facts simply don't support Schaeffer's contention. For whatever reason, the law still says that, once born, the infant is a person and doing away with a person is murder. Now the infant is obviously a person long before he or she is born. Just as obviously, it seems to me, a fertilized egg is not a person. Just when that speck of life does become a person is a scientific question. But let any scientist dare to dispassionately try to fix that point and he will find himself set upon by anti-abortionists and pro-choicers alike, each armed with the law and guided by ideology and passion, to the exclusion of reason.

Having done with Schaeffer, Ross, speaking in his own voice, comes up with the bizarre assertion that Dukakis is "enthusiastically" for abortion. I seriously doubt that anyone is enthused about the prospect of abortion, unless they hold stock in an abortion mill. What Dukakis in fact said, is that he believes in letting the pregnant woman make the choice. Perhaps those opposed to abortion should use as their symbol a coat hanger. Because that's precisely the choice poor women will make. The rich, of course, will not be troubled with such risks as bleeding to death from an illegal abortion. They'll simply combine a foreign vacation with successful termination of their pregnancy. This contention of mine is, by the way, supported by the actual history of illegal abortion in the days before Roe v. Wade.

Ross next makes the point that a Bush appointed Supreme Court will likely throw the abortion issue back to the states, the majority of which, he thinks, will ban all abortions except those done to save the mother's life, or in cases of either rape or incest. Now here I see an interesting voiding of the absolute, intrinsic value of human life. If abortion is murder of the fetus, and such trivial matters as genetic viability are no justification for such a murder, isn't it still murder to abort the child resulting from rape? Aren't we, in essence, murdering the child because his father was a rapist? Did his father's act somehow void the fetus's intrinsic human value? And yet the termination of such pregnancies is acceptable to most anti-abortionists. Careful, I think I see the erosion of an absolute value and the inevitable slide into infanticide and forced euthanasia!

Next, Ross takes Dukakis to task for saying he's personally against abortion but won't force his point of view on the woman. What, I wonder, is so repugnant about a politician subordinating his own point of view? What is wrong with an elected official championing the right of choice in an issue that has sharply divided most Americans? Let me illustrate the proper role of an elected official in a situation in which his personal views sharply differ from those of the electorate. Suppose I am a congressman and my strong personal opposition to nuclear power (a fact) is solidly rebuffed by my constituents. They are pro-nuke all the way. How do I vote? Pro-nuclear, of course. I'm not in Congress to indulge my personal point of view. I am the representative of the people of my district. I must echo their will. That is an absolute. Finally, the bit about killing Jews is a cheap shot, Ross. It was unworthy of you.

(No, Ross was not advocating single issue voting. He mentioned two issues he considered qualifying issues: The Constitution and the Supreme Court, and abortion. The two are related in that the Court will rule on abortion, but the first would be important even if abortion were not a current social issue. The question of whether the Supreme Court should apply and interpret the Constitution as written, with changes in the Constitution being made only through the amendment procedure, or should act as a "permanent constitutional convention" as a supporter of judicial activism put it, changing the Constitution as it thinks necessary under the pretext of interpreting it, applies to many issues, and is important in itself as a matter of principle.

I have not read the article from which Ross quoted, so I will offer only a few observations. It seems clear that Schaeffer was talking about doctrines, not

individuals. Christians who treat other people badly are acting contrary to Christ's teachings, even if they claim to be acting in His name. Was Gandhi just a Hindu saint who lived, more fully than most Hindus, according to the principles and virtues all Hindus are expected to follow? Or did he transcend Hinduism? I suspect the latter. For one thing, he is said to have been impressed and influenced by the teachings of Jesus, not becoming a Christian only because of the lives of Christians he saw. (This reaction is understandable in a psychological or emotional sense, but makes no sense logically. Christianity depends on the statement, "Jesus of Nazareth is God incarnate." If that statement was true when Jesus was teaching and healing in the streets of Jerusalem, it is true forever. No actions by sinful Christians in future centuries can change the past and make it false.)

The movement to justify infanticide based on the acceptance of abortion began even before Roe v. Wade. For example, the April 1968 issue of The Atlantic Monthly had two articles on the subject. The first was by the father of a baby born with Down's Syndrome who died of heart failure and jaundice shortly after being institutionalized. He said that the child could have lived for years, which would have been a serious inconvenience, and that the law should permit direct euthanasia, that is, direct killing of Down's Syndrome babies. He acknowledged that children with Down's Syndrome do not suffer, but said their families suffer. This article was followed by "A Theologian Comments" by the Rev. Joseph Fletcher, who is best known as the promoter of what he calls "situation ethics". He supported the direct killing of Down's Syndrome children, and wrote, "The only difference between the fetus and the infant is that the infant breathes with its lungs. Does this make any significant difference morally or from the point of view of values? Surely not." He obviously was assuming that most of his readers accepted abortion and was building on that position. Ironically, the lack of significant differences between a fetus and an infant had long been used by pro-lifers. We used to say, "You wouldn't kill a newborn baby because he was handicapped, so why would you kill a baby before he is born if you think he might be handicapped?" That argument is largely obsolete now because many people would kill an newborn baby because he is handicapped.

Legal infanticide is now a reality. The best known case is that of Infant Doe of Bloomington, Indiana. He was born in 1982 with a defective digestive system so he could not swallow food. There is a standard surgical procedure to correct this condition, but it was not performed because he had two other problems. One was Down's Syndrome. The other was parents who apparently wanted a perfect baby or a dead baby. They refused to permit the surgery, and they refused to have him fed intravenously. At a court hearing the judge upheld the parents, saying they "have the right to choose a medically recommended course of treatment for their child in the present circumstances." When the news got out--which was unusual; usually these things are done quietly--at least ten couples offered to adopt Infant Doe. One of them had a three year-old daughter with Down's Syndrome. His parents refused all the offers, and six days after he was born Infant Doe starved to death.

Note that Down's Syndrome is not a painful condition. People with it are generally reported to be very happy; limited in their abilities, but happy. On the other hand, starving to death is a



very painful procedure. Some doctors, noticing this fact, have urged that the law be changed to permit doctors to kill handicapped and retarded infants with a lethal injection.

In January 1978 Dr. Francis Crick, a Nobel Prize winner, said, "no newborn infant should be declared human until it has passed certain tests regarding its genetic endowment...if it fails these tests it forfeits the right to live."

I could fill pages with other cases of babies being starved to death because they were born with Down's Syndrome and other conditions which are not painful, and of doctors and ethicists defending the practice, but I won't. Anyone interested can read Death in the Nursery: the Secret Crime of Infanticide by James Manney and John C. Blattner (Servant Books: 1984) which provides full details with documentation.

Your statement, "Just when that speck of life does become a person is a scientific question," assumes that personhood is only a scientific concept.

In 1973 the Supreme Court legalized abortion on demand for the full nine months of pregnancy, giving us the most "liberal" abortion law in the world. Before that the fights were in state legislatures, with most pro-abortionists trying to broaden the grounds and lengthen the period in which abortions were permitted. But in 1970 Michael Dukakis, then a state legislator, introduced a bill to legalize abortion on demand. It said, "Abortion may be performed by any physician who has first obtained the consent of the female upon whom said abortion is to be performed." As governor he vetoed budgets because they restricted state funding of abortion. Perhaps it would have been more precise to say Dukakis is "militantly and aggressively" pro-abortion instead of "enthusiastically", but the point is essentially unchanged.

Bernard Nathanson, M.D. was an abortionist and a founding member of the National Association for the Repeal of Abortion Laws. He became convinced--on the basis of scientific evidence, for at that time he was still an Atheist or Agnostic--that unborn children are human beings, and became pro-life. In his 1979 book Aborting America he admitted that the statistics of thousands of women dying from illegal abortions were complete fabrications for propaganda purposes. Actual figures show that the maternal death rate from abortion was not significantly affected by legalization. Women still die, and many more are seriously injured, from abortions, but it's legal now. Even before legalization most abortionists were doctors. Legalization just meant they could admit it and advertise openly.

You are correct that if abortion is wrong the hard cases, such as rape should not justify it. You are incorrect in saying that most anti-abortionists consider such abortions acceptable. We oppose all abortions, without exception, a fact that can be confirmed by looking at right-to-life literature. However, among the population as a whole, as Ross said, most people oppose abortion in general but think there should be exceptions if the abortion is medically necessary to preserve the life of the mother or if the pregnancy is the result of rape or incest. Under these circumstances a total ban on abortions would be hard to obtain. Therefore, many, although not all, pro-lifers are willing to compromise on the grounds that a law banning 95%, 99% or more of all abortions now performed is better than no legal restrictions on abortion at all.

Nuclear energy, like most public issues, is a question of weighing alternatives. Opponents say the danger from radiation is too great. Supporters say the dangers from radiation are exaggerated, and that pollution from conventional power plants is killing people now. It is a matter of trade-offs, not absolute values. But even in these issues an elected official should not blindly follow the opinion polls. If the voters don't like his actions they can replace him. When a legislator should follow his own judgement against the perceived will of his constituents is a complicated issue, but not one that should be discussed here.)

Ernest Heramia, 167 Central Ave., East Prov., R.I. 02914

It flys! It flys! Uh, pardon my glee, I'm just excited to see RFI "airborne" again. Ginsee! it's strange having RFT drop into my mail box. Good first issue, Marty.

It certainly was nice to hear myself referred to as a "Pentecostal Christian", but I am afraid that it may mislead some people unfamiliar with Pentecostalism. (Not to mention causing nasty theological surprises, like poor Steve Schaper got when he asked me if I was joking, when I referred to my denominational affiliation as "Neo-Taoist Pentecostal Hawaiian")

While the Assemblies of God, the Church of God, and other churches use the word "Pentecostal" as a convenient denominational name. "Pentecost" isn't a denomination, it's an experience. A Pentecostal is a Christian of any denomination, who has had a mystical experience, similar to that of the disciples in the second chapter of Acts, and as a result, is more thaumaturgically active than Christians who have not had the experience. (Francis of Assisi, the Waldenses, and the Shouting Baptists are regarded as "proto-Azusa Street Pentecostals") It is in this sense that I use the term. While I do fellowship with the Church of God, Assemblies of God, and the like, my theological and doctrinal stances are radically different from theirs, being rooted in Hawaiian Eclecticism.

It wasn't exactly an excessive claim to inclusiveness that bothered me about the name "Christian Fandom". What bothered me was a growing tendency among some Christian fans to define "Christian" as a member of a mainstream church or an adherent to Orthodox Christian theology, rather than merely "a follower of Christ". If this kind of "I'm-a-real-Christian-because-I-believe-this-and-you're-not-a-real-Christian-because-you-believe-that" business started, eventually "Christian Fandom" would be, in reality, "Black, Eastern Orthodox, Liberal Democratic, Christian Fandom" or some other equally absurd entity. I felt that if Christian Fandom was going to abandon the loose definition of "Christian", then a name change was in order.

"Fellowship" doesn't have a "churchy sound" to Tolkien fans.

Actually, all religions are "choose-your-own-adventure". The Neo-Pagans and the Post-Pagans just do it differently. Switching to a food analogy, Neo-Paganism is like a potluck supper, where the diners share what they have concocted, and you are free to eat whatever strikes you as wholesome and pleasing. Post-Pagan religions, (Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, etc.), are like "gourmet" restaurants. The diners first choose a restaurant serving the cuisine they believe to be "the one true gourmet cuisine", then from a limited menu, order the meal that strikes them as wholesome and pleasing. Pagans, (New Guinea tribesmen, Australian Aborigines, Amerindians, etc.), by way of comparison to Neo-Pagans and Post-Pagans, are mainly interested in survival, and so eat whatever they can find, wholesome or not, pleasing or not.

One problem with eating in a gourmet restaurant that you don't have at a potluck supper, is that you are subject to the whims and tastes of the cooks, who are supposedly following the recipes of the Master Chef. If you find out that the food you ordered is neither wholesome nor pleasing, you are stuck. You must either eat it, go hungry, or send it back to the kitchen, (a very dangerous thing to do

if the cooks are temperamental, you could find yourself roasting on a spit or being stretched on a taffy machine until you recant your bad taste).

At a potluck supper, if nobody brought anything you can eat, you can at least chow down on what you yourself brought. Few people at a potluck supper consider their dish to be "the one truly gourmet cuisine" and most acknowledge that their dish is an exotic acquired taste; So it is unlikely that you will anger somebody by not taking any of the food they brought. Granted, you are more likely to get food poisoning at a potluck supper than a restaurant, but because potluck suppers tend to be small affairs, and the people who dine at potluck suppers tend to be more knowledgeable about food preparation and their own digestive system, these incidents are seldom fatal and never far reaching.

Because most restaurant patrons tend to blindly trust the cooks, the rare incidents of food poisoning in restaurants are more deadly and far reaching, than incidents at a potluck supper. Tragic examples that comes to mind, are the Jonestown Massacre, the Holocaust, the Chinese Cultural Revolution, the Spanish Inquisition, the Armenian Genocide, the Israelis' Occupation of Palestine, the Islamic Revolution..., all of these caused by people mindlessly swallowing what it put on their ideological plates.

Now I'm not condemning gourmet restaurants, or advocating potluck suppers, but I do feel that people should meet the Master Chef for themselves, learn how to cook, and avoid unwholesome food.

The newest thing about the New Age seems to be slick packaging and advertising. Madison Avenue discovers the occult. The New Age brand of spiritualism, (and spirituality for that matter), strikes me as a fast food kind of spiritualism, (MacMedium's? Bogey King?). Where the old Spiritualists needed a magic circle of believers to call up spirits, the Channelers seem to just close their eyes, and poof! instant connection with the spiritworld. (Maybe they replaced the old switchboard with computerized relays in the Afterworld?)

And what a colorful group of spirits! The old mediums just called Indians, the dear departed, and the like. These channelers are calling zillion year-old alien gurus, Atlantian God-kings, and creatures so wise that they, which I call them, speak to those beings, which I call "us", in words groups, that we, being called "us", which we call "ourselves", which we call "sentences", so complex, that nobody, who we do not call "ourselves", can understand what they, which meaning those beings that we call "us", can understand! (Is it possible that lawyers are channeling, and don't know it?)

I shouldn't make fun of this commercialization of the paranormal and the exploitation of the spiritually hungry, though, considering my old church is sponsoring a \$20 a person seminar on How to Pray. Gingsee, in the old days, if somebody didn't know how to pray, we would teach him for free. Maybe we should apologize post-humourously to Simon Magus?

"Did C.S. Lewis and Joy Davidman consummate their marriage?"!!!!
(Wow, and they accuse Trekkers of being nosy!)

What I find disturbing about some Gay groups, is their belief that sexual orientation is predestined and unchangable. The very existence of bisexuals, former homosexuals, former heterosexuals, and a myriad of other sexual chameleons disproves this view of sexuality. Why I find it disturbing is because it encourages irresponsibility for one's actions, the "pigeon-holeing" of the individual, and the ultimate enslavement of humanity to a single worldview. I don't let Calvinists get away with this, I'm not letting Gays get away with it.

"Christian Fandom does not endorse any political candidates." You could have fooled me. Of course it is quite permissible for a publication to endorse a candidate, unfortunately "1988: PRESIDENT BY WHAT CRITERIA" perpetuates the notion that all "real Christians" are Republicans.

If one is "pro-Life", you must be "for Life" all the way, not just hopping on some faddish bandwagon, and hopping off when it is no longer fashionable. It isn't enough to just get children born into the world. You must see that they grow up healthy and strong, that they get a proper education, that their lives are not wasted in wars or senseless "police actions", that they get good jobs and decent places to raise their own children in, and that the society they live in is fair and just. ?
Come to think of it, our new President isn't pro-Life at all, is he?

I too would like to see the abortion issue thrown back to the states, and the states in turn throw it into the laps of the individual mothers-to-be. If life-or-death choices are to be made for a child, I would rather see those choices made by the child's mother, than some political fat cats.

Gina Impiccini: Has anybody introduced you to "FILKING"?

Nancy Wasko: You witness to a Pagan the same way you witness to any other non-Christian. Pray alot, fix what you really believe in your mind, (as opposed to what you been told to believe), and then go have a friendly conversation with the person, about what the two of you believe. Truth needs no trickery to triumph.

(I agree that some people use the word "Christian" too narrowly. I have been told personally, and I have heard many people say on call-in programs, that only people who have spoken in tongues are Christians. And many Fundamentalists and Evangelicals seem to use the word "Christian" as if it referred only to their kind of Christianity, although I'm sure that in many cases that is not intentional. However, if the word is to have any meaning, we have to have limits on its use. Is a Mormon a Christian? Is a Jehovah's Witness a Christian? Is an Atheist who says he admires Jesus as a great man and tries to follow his moral teachings a Christian?

The question of where one draws the line can come up in any group of Christians. Dropping the name "Christian Fandom" would not eliminate the problem. Also, the article in the first issue saying that we need a doctrinal statement was universally rejected. Since our meetings at cons and the pages of RFT have always been open to interested non-Christians, I don't see any advantage to dropping the name. If someone can think of a better name, we can adopt it, but until then I think we should keep Christian Fandom.

During a lunch expedition at the 1987 Fourth Street Fantasy Convention in Minneapolis mention was made of choose-your-own-adventure books, and I had the idea of a Jane Austen choose-your-own-adventure book: "If you choose to accept Mr. Darcy's proposal, turn to page 57. If you choose to reject it, turn to page 82." A few minutes later Hamlet came into the conversation, and we all started working on a choose-your-own-adventure version: "If you choose to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, turn to page 74. If you choose to take arms against a sea of troubles, and, by opposing, end them, turn to page 29." "If you choose to be, turn to page 19. If you choose not to be." My description of Neo-Paganism as a choose-your-own-adventure religion was based on this characteristic of making choices at every point. Normally someone chooses to read Pride and Prejudice, Hamlet, or Galactic Patrol and then reads the story the author wrote. If someone chooses to accept Christ he must accept all that Christ taught. He must not say, "Yes, Lord, I believe you when you say X and Y, but I don't believe you when you say Z." Christians should agree on this principle even though we disagree about some of the details of what He taught.

In a restaurant one has to deal with the waiters because the chef does not come out of the kitchen and speak to customers face to face, although he did when he started the restaurant. If the waiters are properly trained, especially if the chef has had some role in their selection and training, this is not a serious problem, but it is not the same as talking personally to the chef.

To leave the analogy, it is possible, indeed it is necessary, to have a personal relationship with Jesus in prayer. However, we cannot talk to him face to face and receive an answer in words the way the Apostles and other disciples did. We have to get His revelation from men. Men, inspired by the Holy Spirit, wrote the Bible, and men proclaim His message today. How authoritatively they do so is a matter of dispute. As a Catholic I have definite beliefs about the means Christ provided to proclaim and safeguard His revelation. Protestants have significantly different beliefs on these questions. I am willing to discuss these points privately, but, as I said above, I want to keep denominational disagreements out of RFT.

Christian Fandom did not endorse a candidate. Ross Pavlac did. And since he did it with the words, "hold my nose and vote for Bush," it was hardly a ringing endorsement.

I don't know how many people think that all "real Christians" are Republicans. Ross quoted Francis Schaeffer as saying, "Be careful not to get caught on tags. For example, Republican versus Democrat. And the issue is not the word conservative versus the word liberal." It is true that in recent years politically conservative Christians have become more politically active and have received a lot of media attention, but for a long time political statements by churchmen and church groups supported liberal positions. There were complaints that some national church offices had gone too far left and had lost touch with the views of the people they claimed to speak for. No political party program is going to follow Christ's teachings completely, partly because Christ did not set forth a political agenda. When He told us to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's, He did not tell us which things were which. Last August Archbishop Whealon of Hartford, Connecticut announced that he was "unable in conscience to remain a registered Democrat," even though "In my childhood home, God and Jesus Christ were first, the Catholic Church second, and the Democratic party was third." And several months before that, Bishop Austin Vaughan (an auxiliary to Cardinal O'Connor) also left the Democratic party because of its "total unconcern for the fate of the unborn." Bishop Vaughan has been arrested several times recently for participating in Operation Rescue sit-in demonstrations at abortion chambers. I do not know if either of these bishops have registered as Republicans, or if they have remained independents. But despite the general tendencies there are pro-life Democrats and pro-abortion Republicans. Party labels are not enough.

The statement that to be pro-life one must be for life all the way has itself become a faddish bandwagon. The point is not getting children born into the world. It is protecting children from being killed. Adding various quality-of-life issues, usually interpreted in a liberal way, has the practical effect of weakening abortion as a political issue. A pro-abortion liberal can say he's pro-life because he supports health care, education, etc. But to enjoy any of the benefits of society one has to be alive. The right to life is the basic, primary right.

Also, good intentions and pious rhetoric, however sincere, are not enough. Programs to improve health care, education, housing, etc. don't always work the way they are intended. Many people say, for example, that federal anti-poverty programs have actually increased poverty rather than reducing it, that they have created a culture of dependence among the poor. The book Losing Ground: American Social Policy 1950-1980 by Charles Murray (Basic Books: 1984) argues that that is true, citing many federal statistics to prove it. I have not read the book, although I've read of it, but even if I had I would not offer an opinion as to how well the author makes his case. That is irrelevant to this discussion. The point is that people who agree that we should help the poor can sincerely disagree on what means will best achieve that goal.

In the 19th century, when Socialism was new and radical, someone--the remark has been attributed to various people--said, "Any man who is not a Socialist at the age of twenty has no heart. Any man who is still a Socialist at the age of thirty has no head." Many people say that a free-market, with appropriate restrictions on monopoly exploitation, etc., provides a greater level of general prosperity, even for the poor, than does a Socialist economy. Others say that a Socialist economy is better. And there are other economic theories, such as Distributism and Social Credit. They are not widely followed, but their supporters say they would produce an even better society. Again it is irrelevant which is correct. . . . Neither a free-market economist nor a Socialist should be able to say, "I am pro-life because I support an economic system which will improve prosperity and the overall quality of life." They are pro-life if they oppose the taking of innocent human life by abortion, infanticide, eldercide, etc.

Under the Supreme Court's 1973 decree abortion is now completely up to the mother. It is impossible for any state to pass a law effectively forbidding any woman who wants an abortion for any reason at any stage of her pregnancy from getting it. This is wrong. In ancient, pagan Rome the law of paterfamilias gave a father the right to kill his children. That law was wrong. The modern American law of materfamilias is wrong, too. The Roman father could kill his children after they were born. So far the American mother can kill her children only before birth, although, as I pointed out to Tim Callahan, the movement for infanticide is growing, just as pro-lifers predicted it would.→)

Lynn M. Maudlin, Box 394, Altadena, CA 91001

About Silverberg and Sagan's Contact, my dad is a physicist and a deeply committed Christian - which he finds to be completely logical. He observed that with physics you get to a certain place and you start to really need some explanations (a first cause, as it were.)



I wrote a song based on Peter Kreeft's Making Sense Out of Suffering - this tidbit triggered in response to your mention of his Between Heaven and Hell. He was a guest speaker at one of the annual Southern California C. S. Lewis Society retreats at St. Andrew's Priory (a Benedictine monastery up in the high desert, right by Edwards Air Force Base - I've sat in their chapel while the space shuttle made sonic booms coming in for a landing) and he was great.

I write songs about a lot of stuff; I have an album (available as a cassette only, at this point in time - a courtesy to friends and fans while I continue to try and sell this expensive puppy to a record label) and, while it's only 10 songs out of 300-plus, it includes songs about the deceptions of the devil, about creation and astronomy, about tempted Christians, about a whore, about love going-going-gone, and one song called, "If You Can't Live Without Me Then Why Aren't You Dead?" Also, the African Children's Choir out of Uganda covered "Can You Imagine That Night?" - I let them use my tracks.

Anyway, I think the tape is having the same response as Christian Fandom (what are YOU doing here?!) - why did you put all these gospel songs on your album? And, from the gospel companies, "THIS isn't a gospel album--" That will teach me to put 4 secular, 4 gospel, and 2 either-way songs on a single tape. Because labels are difficult and dangerous things; Christians are often as leery of fans as fans are of Christians. I guess we're all twisted (bent, at any rate).

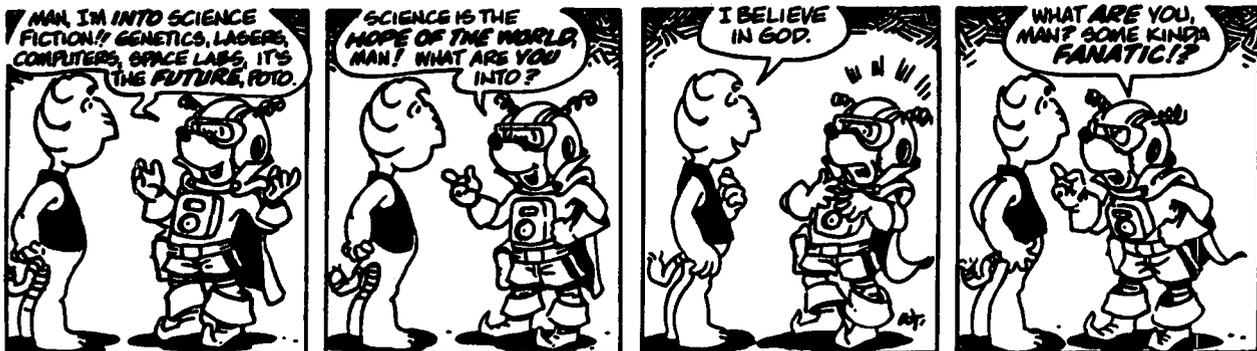
In response to Bernie Wingerter, if CSF is intended to evangelize, it needs to be fairly covert or it won't reach the target audience OR exceptionally strong - nothing mediocre for Jesus. It made me think about my place in the world, my place in the music biz. I don't think I'm called to the gospel music industry, to be another Christian singing songs for other Christians - in my mind it's more a matter of being down behind enemy lines and wooing the unsuspecting soul. But I don't know. I don't like the enemy's arrows and snares. Prayer is appreciated. Cassette purchases are appreciated (Moonbird Music, P. O. Box 394, Altadena, CA 91001 - \$7.98 but if someone's in financial distress let me know; I'll discount.)

I knew about Dignity, but not Courage. Thanks for the insight on the Archbishop of New York. The CSL essay "We Have No Right To Happiness" has granted me great courage and sustained me through some difficult times. Our culture is so insistent on the opposite! Argh.

Was anybody else amazed by the December Analog? There were a number of stories with not un-Christian attitudes (!!) and values (how unusual!), particularly the cover story, "Sanctuary," where the protagonist is a nun! Good stuff.

I was glad to see a mention of Mary Ann Hodge's The Rampant Guinea Pig - she's a good editor and a good writer as well (she had a story in the Mythic Circle #6) The

HOLIDAY OUT



Mythic Circle might be of interest to your readership; we function as a writer's roundtable in print (lively lettercol) and there are often stories with a Christian slant. (There are often stories with an anti-Christian perspective, too - and LOCs complaining about the misrepresentation.) The upcoming #7 has some discussion of G. K. Chesterton's Orthodoxy in the lettercol. (I know because I co-edit the puppy and I just typed it up!)

Also, before ending this massive missive, I should make an early mention of the 1992 joint Mythopoeic Society and British Tolkien Society conference in Oxford, England. Join the Mythopoeic Society and be eligible for early registration. Inquiries about the Mythopoeic Society and/or Mythic Circle should go to P.O. Box 6707, Altadena, CA 91001.

(←Peter Kreeft has written a number of excellent books. His Between Heaven and Hell, which I mentioned because the context called it to mind, may be his worst, despite the interesting premise. I've just finished his new book Fundamentals of the Faith: Essays in Christian Apologetics (Ignatius Press: 1988). As he says in the Introduction, the essays were written for Catholics by a Catholic, but most of the book is about the central core of "mere Christianity". (Several of his earlier books were published by InterVarsity Press and are completely "mere Christian".) In addition to the basic apologetics for the existence of God and the deity of Jesus (and, in the last few chapters, the authority of the Catholic Church) he discusses the creeds, the theological virtues, and the Lord's Prayer.)

Rolf Andersen, Kongleveien 45, 0860 Oslo 8, Norway

Neo-Paganism: From the snippets I pick up here and there, I think I'm beginning to form a picture of what kind of thing it is. But if someone could provide me with a short definition and an overview of its diverse manifestations, I'd be very happy. Living somewhat apart from the rest of the world (and fandom) we tend to pick up trends a few years after you. But I do see signs of the kind of mentality that I imagine is behind Neo-Paganism, manifesting itself in a failed attempt to revive something with at least the outer trappings of Nordic paganism, gamers becoming a little too absorbed in what they're playing, an unhealthy interest in the occult and a romantic preoccupation with some of the historical manifestations of gnosticism, as well as a few rumors here and there of satanism. Not overwhelmingly serious in extent yet, but it might be very enlightening to know what may be hitting us in a few years.

To Mike Van Pelt's letter about the depiction of people with religious faith in SF: A fascinating topic. In some ways SF must be the most dangerous thing of all to write. Authors of "mainstream" fiction to a certain extent have things cut out for them: The world they describe is already there (though, of course, many ignore or fantasize away large chunks of it). But if you have to make up even the reality (world, culture, etc.) you're writing about, your personality and your beliefs are bound to show pretty clearly, unless you're a good author consciously trying to avoid revealing too much of yourself. This, of course, is why so much SF is two-dimensional, from a Christian viewpoint. If an author doesn't take all of reality into account, the realities he creates in his writing will be flawed too.

This means, among other things, that while it is very interesting to compare how different authors treat specifically Christian (or religious) characters, it is also important to dig deeper. How does the author depict his characters and the universe he has created, regardless of what he specifically calls them? Even though Christianity or religion or whatever may not even be mentioned, you could have a moral character in a moral universe, not in the sense that they necessarily live

are

up to defined moral standards, but in the sense that we / shown a universe that works by a moral standard (perhaps even infused by the saving grace of a superior being - Philip K. Dick, anyone?) where it is, so to speak, good to be good. Tim Powers is an interesting newer example. While, on the other hand, I am sure one could have inserted a believable Christian into, say, The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, and then let him drown in condescending smiles inspired by the fashionable (a key to its success, apart from the humor) laid-back, absurdist nihilism that pervades the book.

(←I think you've got a good idea of Neo-Paganism. My own limited observation agrees with Alexei Kondratiev's remark that here the emphasis seems to be on Celtic paganism. However, the basic attitude is, "Whatever works for you." At the Paganism at Minicon someone said that some people had successfully used Lovecraft's Cthulu myths! The person added that one should be careful when trying something like that.→)

Bernie Wingerter, 611 Franklin, Keokuk, Iowa 52632

First, I don't mean to convey that the use of metaphor and simile in fiction to portray Christian ethics is a bad thing. C. S. Lewis certainly was a master at using these tools, but I haven't seen much fiction past the typical "good vs. evil" fantasy which is so commonly used by Christian and non-Christian fantasy writers alike. Note that while Lewis' fiction used rich metaphor, he did it in such a way as to draw undeniable parallels to life in the Christian faith, not merely generic good/bad. The question remains, even after your pointing out that Jesus Himself more often than not used metaphor: do purported CSF&F writers use the same approach with honest intentions--furthering the Christian message, etc.--or for commercial reasons like selling as much work as possible, taking care not to offend a non-Christian readership? I believe we'll not be judged for holding opinions and dogma, but for the motivations that formed those opinions and beliefs.

Second, there may not be as much contradiction in my position as it seems. To begin with, SF&F fans and readers have always been considered unorthodox folks, at least where their reading interests are concerned. I'm not so sure the common presupposition that non-Christians won't read intrinsically Christian material holds true here. I don't think there has been enough explicitly Christian SF to merit foreknowledge. I believe, as I said earlier, that much if not most CSF around is merely CSF&F by name only--theologically watery stuff that tries to attract Christian and secular readers alike. It may well be that stuff that is courageously Christian SF&F will appeal more to the average reader on the basis of its straightforwardness.

I'm not sure of your meaning in the last paragraph of your reply to my letter. I would simply like to see CSF&F which goes farther in glorifying God, but you seem to be saying that a writer may be guilty of tempting God by attempting to write fiction that is more explicitly Christian, is this right? Actually my feelings stem more from the standpoint of reading CSF&F than writing it, though I am interested in both.

(←If it's a good science fiction or fantasy story I think most fans will read it even if it is explicitly Christian. Many fans have read Monsignor Robert Hugh Benson's 1907 novel Lord of the World as a classic of pre-Gernsback science fiction even though it is an explicitly Catholic novel of the end of the world. And in 1961 Walter Miller's A Canticle for Leibowitz won a Hugo, even though a few fans have attacked it as Catholic propaganda. But it was not published in a Catholic ghetto. It first appeared in The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction, and the book was published by a secular publisher. I enjoyed This Present Darkness, which Ross Pavlac reviewed last issue, but it was published by Crossway, and probably sold almost entirely through religious bookstores. (I've seen it in a Catholic bookstore as well as a Protestant one.) No one can accuse the author of watering down his Christianity. Do you think many non-Christians would read it? If a non-Christian did read it, do you think it would do anything to help convert him? (Jan Dennis is the editor of Crossway, and perhaps can provide some information on these questions.)

My remarks about the danger of tempting God were referring to publishers rather than authors. But the main point is of general application. Only God can judge whether someone is trusting Him, in response to a special leading from Him, or, in other words, is displaying the virtue of prudence or an excessive timidity.))

Lelia Foreman, 7314 Granite Creek, San Antonio, Texas 78238

Maybe it's a good thing I couldn't make it to Nolacon II. I would have been ticked off by the discussion of whether or not C. S. Lewis consummated his marriage. I always assumed that since he took all scripture seriously, that he would take the duty to have sex whenever the wife wants it seriously also. Of course, being the sort of frank fellow he was, maybe he didn't mind. But were I a famous writer, I WOULD MIND all such speculation about me. So I won't do it about other people.

Would you consider running ads? I want to place a wanted ad: I'm looking for In Search of Forever by Nigel Suckling, and for posters and calendars by Rodney Matthews. I will pay reasonable prices plus shipping.

Also, could someone tell me again why I should read Winter's Tale by Mark Helprin? It had a lot of stars beside it, and it is indeed great writing, but why should I as a Christian want to read it? I read the first couple chapters, then dipped in and out until the last few chapters. Was there supposed to be a Christian moral in it? I saw some Christian symbols though not used in a way I could understand, and a lot of Hindu mysticism with reincarnation and the spiral of history etc. Since I dipped, perhaps I missed something? I have five children and lobby for the ARC and secretary for the Autism society and lead a group of homeschoolers and organize field trips and sit on task forces etc. I don't have time to read something just because it has fine writing. So give me a better reason to try Winter's Tale again.

Thank you for being around.

((The consummation controversy was not really discussed at Nolacon. During the C.S. Lewis panel someone mentioned the story that after Lewis died his brother burned a lot of his manuscripts and other papers. Ross Pavlac replied that the accuracy of that story is disputed; that as with any famous person a number of controversies grew up about Lewis. He just mentioned the consummation controversy as one of them. Since I knew that the controversy had been resolved, I provided the information. That was all.

After reading your letter I read Jack: C. S. Lewis and His Times by George Sayer (Harper & Row: 1988) It is an excellent biography which has gotten very favorable reviews. Sayer was a student of Lewis at Oxford who remained a close friend for the rest of his life. Among other things the book gives a far more favorable picture of Lewis's relationship with Mrs. Moore (his "adopted" mother) than do previous accounts which seem to have been unduly influenced by Warren Lewis's negative view. I have only one minor complaint about the book. In the bibliography, which, I must admit, does not claim to be comprehensive, the section listing books on his religion and religious writings does not include Christopher Derrick's C. S. Lewis and the Church of Rome: A Study in Proto-Ecumenism (Ignatius Press: 1981), which I found very informative, although some Lewis fans seem to have misunderstood it. From Sayer's book I learned that my account in RFT 15 was incorrect in one detail. The Anglican ceremony was before, not after Joy's cancer went into remission.

Lewis did indeed recognize a husband's obligation to satisfy his wife's sexual desires. In fact, he used that fact of that obligation to illustrate a point in Mere Christianity. There are three reasons why someone might think the marriage was never consummated. The first is the state of Joy's health. Indeed, Sayer indicates that

the marriage was not consummated for the first several months, not only because of Joy's health but because of Jack's. However, if that were the only reason I don't think the controversy would have arisen.

When Lyle Dorsett gave his talk on Joy Davidman at the New York C. S. Lewis Society he said he was surprised when he learned of the controversy. It would not have occurred to him to doubt that the marriage had been consummated. He said he thought the controversy resulted from the resentment of some of Lewis's friends toward Joy, whom they considered a brash, pushy American who had disrupted their lives and taken Lewis away from them. He added that since she was Jewish by birth, although a convert to Christianity, anti-Semitism may have played a part. The point was that they preferred to think that he didn't really love her enough to enter a true marriage with her, that the marriage was only to protect her from deportation when her permit to live in Britain expired.

This explanation may be true to some extent, but I don't think it's the main explanation. I think the real reason was that Joy had previously been married to and divorced from William Gresham. There are among Christians three different beliefs about the legitimacy, or perhaps I should say, the efficacy, of divorce. Some believe that marriage is indissoluble, and that a civil divorce is just a legal fiction. Some others believe that marriage is in general indissoluble, but that divorce and remarriage are permissible in one or more special cases. Still others believe that divorce and remarriage are legitimate for almost any reason. In this interdenominational forum there is no need to discuss which belief is correct. Lewis, who wrote mostly about "mere Christianity" did not discuss this point, but there are indications that he held the first belief, or possibly the second. Sayer confirms this, quoting from a letter Lewis wrote to his closest friend, Arthur Greeves, when he was considering the civil marriage: "the 'reality' wd. be, from my point of view, adultery and therefore mustn't happen." Therefore, if he had consummated the marriage he would have violated his conscience. We all do that every time we sin, but this would have been, not a momentary lapse, but a premeditated, continuing sinful life. I think people claimed the marriage had not been consummated to protect Lewis's good name. In fact, Lewis did not violate his conscience. He came to the realization that since Gresham had been married to another woman before he married Joy, in the eyes of God he was still married to his first wife, and his marriage to Joy was not a true marriage. Since she had never been truly married to Gresham, she was free to marry Lewis. This was the justification for the Anglican ceremony. When Lyle Dorsett explained this in his talk, some people in the audience laughed, but it seemed perfectly reasonable to me.

I looked up the book you want. It's cataloged under Rodney Matthews, with a note, "Text by Nigel Suckling and Rodney Matthews." It was published by Paper Tiger, a British publisher, in 1985. According to Whitaker's Books in Print 1988 it is still in print. hardcover £12.95, paperback £7.95. Stephen Schaper recommended A Winter's Tale in RFT 13. Perhaps he could explain why more fully. I will just note that some people, who do not have as many family responsibilities as you do, do have time to read books just because of fine writing.→)

Alexander J. Wei, 420 Waverly Avenue, Newton, Massachusetts 02158

I thought I would add something to the current list of Christian references in SF.

Anderson, Poul. A short story called "The Problem of Pain" in which a young minister is the narrator. Deals with the problem of pain and evil as seen by humans and by Ythrians. Shows signs of having read C. S. Lewis' book.

Card, Orson Scott. A Mormon, Card's "Hot Sleep" reminds me of the Book of Mormon, and he had another short story where his protagonist was a Mormon.

Clarke, Arthur C. Short story called "The Star", where the narrator is a minister wondering why the star of Bethlehem was a nova that destroyed an alien civilization.

Christopher, John. The Sword of the Spirit series, including The Prince in Waiting. Christians appear as the only ones who will help mutated people. Like many Englishmen, Christopher seems to have a wistful regard for Christianity without, I think, believing it.

Dickson, Gordon R. The Friendlies in the Childe Cycle are believers in a God who is curiously undefined, while their devil is called Anarch. There is some appreciation for the importance of faith.

Howard, Robert E. The inventor of Conan the barbarian also invented a Puritan loner called Solomon Kane, who was a great swordsman and avenger of wrongs.

L'Engle, Madeline. A professed Christian, all her books contain a Christian outlook, including a clergyman called Canon Tallis.

Simak, Clifford. In a book called The Fellowship of the Talisman (which looks like a copy of you-know-what, but I believe is essentially original) a young Christian in a post-nuclear-war world attempts to verify a scroll about Jesus by an unknown disciple.

Wolfe, Gene. A professed Catholic, his artistic vision does not seem like orthodoxy, but his Conciliator and Increate from the Book of the New Sun seem almost Christian.

(←The clergyman in Clarke's "The Star" was a Jesuit astrophysicist. The story originally appeared in the first, November 1955, issue of Infinity Science Fiction. The third, June 1956, issue had a story "Rebuttal" by Betsy Curtis. In her story the expedition returned to Earth with everyone suffering from a mysterious disease. A priest-physician treating the Jesuit astrophysicist discovered that after the astrophysicist told the crew what had happened they all gave up in despair and effectively willed their bodies to die. In a lengthy conversation, parts of which would give me trouble if they were meant literally rather than symbolically, he pointed out that a rational creature's destiny is in Heaven, not in this world, and that the people of that other solar system may have rejoiced when God told them how He would use their passing from this world. "The Star" has been reprinted many times. So far as I know, "Rebuttal" has never been reprinted.→)

Chuck Connor, c/o Sildan House, Chediston Road, Wissett, Near Halesworth, Suffolk IP19 ONF, England

Ross's book reviews were interesting, and I'd like to know how many of those books were published by major houses, and how many were put out due to independent publishers--not only that, but also whether they had any kind of descriptive on them (ie, "fiction" "Fantasy" "SF", etc.) The reason for asking is to see what kind of category the writer/publisher has put on it (it also helps when it comes to book suppliers in this country invoicing publishers). This Present Darkness sounds inviting, though with no price listed I'm going to have to see if I can deal direct with Crossway Books and by-pass some of the tax or whatever. Still, a SWAT band of Angels coming for to carry it on home sounds deliciously different from my usual reading of late (mostly detective/private eye stuff, with some old odds & ends from some second hand bookshops and the like.)

Your comment following the piece [on politics] was also curious in that you being an ASH (Anti Smoking somethingorotherbeginningwithan'H') supporter, yet there

on the front cover is a depiction of someone lighting one up. Yes, true, it does work very effectively as a piece of art, and as a title page, but isn't there a conflict here?

The comments about Paganism in Fandom: It would probably work out that at least 75 percent of Fannish Pagans were only there owing to fashion as opposed to any real beliefs (just as the children rebelled against their parents, and produced the 50s, the 60s, the 70s (now that's what I call cyclic!) fans have rebelled against the usual flow of things, and gone for the obscure or the fashionable). Sadly, like everything else British, Britfandom is very reserved when it comes to diverging from well-worn tracks (tracts?).

Oddly enough there was a 'Doctor' last year visiting the UK enroute to France, who was the head of the Satanist Church of Sett (in San Francisco). He was going to France in search of the Loup Garou (werewolf... There wolf!) but it came out that the Church of Sett actually received tax rebates from the US government, because the Church claimed it was a non-profit making society. Tax relief on the wages of sin?

Alas, I must be away, so I'll close by saying Thanks again for keeping me on the RFT mailing list. Consider me not so much as a convertible, but more a saloon model.

(←John the Balladeer was published by a regular publisher of science fiction and fantasy, and is just labelled "Fantasy" on the spine. Monastery was published by a major publisher of all kinds of paperback books. Since I haven't seen it I don't know how it was labelled. The other two books were published by Protestant publishers and probably are sold almost entirely by religious bookstores. This Present Darkness says "A Novel" on the front cover, and The Only Game in Town is unlabelled.

ASH is Action on Smoking and Health (and GASP is Group Against Smokers' Pollution). And the conflict didn't really bother me until I was collating and stapling the issue. Seeing the cover so many times made the cigarette start to grate on me. But as you say, it does work effectively as a piece of art.

Your final pun would be lost to many Americans because what you call a saloon model we call a sedan. (It might have helped if I printed your earlier remark that you are one of the "interested non-Christians" reading RFT.)

Cath Ortlieb, P. O. Box 215, Forest Hill, Victoria 3131, Australia

Even before being introduced to Christian fandom I realised that while there is some hostility/contempt/intolerance towards Christianity in Australia there are many who accept people for what they are, including what they believe in. Most of my fannish friends are non-Christian but they are open minded and we have had some interesting discussions. Unfortunately, many fans have not had positive experiences with Christians, mainly outside of fandom, which has coloured their opinions; mind you Christianity has suffered a great deal because of the actions/words of people who claim to be practicing Christians. My experience is obviously restricted, but I'm aware that the situation is different elsewhere. I discovered this when I visited the West Coast of the U.S. in 1984 after a report appeared in FILE 770 of a 'difference of opinion' I had with Harlan Ellison when he visited Australia. I don't know who gave the version to Mike but despite letters from a few people who were actually present, the distorted account was not corrected. I was not very amused because, as a result, some people had this rather strange idea of what I was like. This led to a few embarrassing situations. It distressed me that I was being shunned because I was perceived as 'one of those Christians'. I gather that the Christians tend to be associated with the Jimmy Swaggart type mentality. I agree with what you said to Bernie Wingerter regarding 'our role' in fandom. We must be prepared to live our Christianity in fandom rather than preach at the non-Christians; it just doesn't work.