

# Science fiction: a Biblical perspective

David J. Laughlin

Interest in science fiction has grown dramatically in recent decades. While science fiction has predicted many beneficial technologies, the genre is permeated with unrealism, humanism, occultism, New Age philosophy and Eastern mysticism. Furthermore, science fiction is firmly rooted in Darwinism and presents a distorted view of reality.

Science fiction is more popular than ever. Of the ten all-time top-grossing movies as of 1998, six are of the science fiction genre.<sup>1</sup> This does not include the recently released *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace* which broke the record for the fastest box-office gross, earning \$300 million in just four weeks.<sup>2</sup> The original *Star Wars* trilogy, even before the special editions were made, grossed \$1.3 billion worldwide at the box office,<sup>3</sup> and over \$4.5 billion in merchandise sales.<sup>4</sup> The impact of the *Star Trek* phenomenon is also impressive. The original television show inspired three spin-offs, including *Star Trek: The Next Generation* which aired for seven seasons and became the highest-rated syndicated show in the history of television.<sup>5</sup> And the number of science fiction book titles has increased from less than 1,000 in the early 1970s to 2,000 in the mid-1990s. One third of these are hardbacks.<sup>6</sup> Renowned director Steven Spielberg remarks: ‘Sci-fi has supplanted the Western as the most popular genre of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.’<sup>7</sup>

Defining science fiction is not as easy as recognizing its popularity. Although the genre’s origin goes further back, the term ‘science fiction’ was coined in the late 1920s and usually involves fantasy situations (time travel, outer space exploration with alien encounters, etc.) sustained by an atmosphere of scientific credibility.

## Predicting useful technologies

Probably the greatest appeal of science fiction is the technological wonders that it presupposes. Predicting beneficial technologies is certainly a positive aspect of the genre, as it has inspired scientific research which has brought many dreams into reality. Inventor and science fiction pioneer Hugo Gernsback (1884–1967), ‘passionately believed to the end in “true prophetic science fiction” and that it should “forecast the wonders of man’s progress to come”.’<sup>8</sup> In his first novel, written in 1911, Gernsback prophesied many technologies which have since come true: solar energy,

plastics, tape recorders, liquid fertilizers, microfilm and television to name a few. Appropriate, therefore, is the motto for his *Wonder Stories: The Magazine of Prophetic Fiction*. Other existing technologies predicted by science fiction writers of the past include submarines, airplanes, satellites, spaceships and nuclear energy. The application of scientific knowledge to produce practical technologies and to develop the Earth’s resources for mankind’s benefit is, of course, in line with Genesis 1:28.<sup>9</sup>

## Unrealism

Regrettably, however, too much of science fiction depicts phenomena or technologies that could never exist. Franz Rottensteiner acknowledges that ‘the “science” of science fiction is often indistinguishable from magic ...’.<sup>10</sup> For example, animals becoming half-human (or vice versa), contradicts everything scientists know about the limits of genetic variation. The creation of mass/energy from nothing, or its annihilation (e.g. by a mere laser blast), violates the First Law of Thermodynamics, one of the best proven laws of science. And the notion that dead matter can transform itself into a living organism (spontaneous generation) has never been observed and flatly contradicts the Laws of Biogenesis (that life always comes from life).

Because of this unscientific element, the setting for a story is usually far from mainstream society, where verification of imagined phenomena is either difficult or impossible. Kyle notes that many writers ‘locate their stories in far-away locales conveniently removed from reality, where no-one can disprove or discredit what they imagine there’.<sup>11</sup>

Much of early (19<sup>th</sup> century) science fiction takes place in what was, at that time, relatively unexplored regions of the Earth—the poles, under the sea, inside the Earth, etc. However, when these regions became more familiar to science, settings for science fiction were often relocated from the Earth to other celestial bodies—especially the Earth’s moon and Mars. But science eventually revealed the truth about these worlds. The manned missions to the Moon, as well as the unmanned probes to the planets of our Solar System, showed that life does not or could not exist on these bodies, forcing the locales to be changed again—this time to other star systems. How many science fiction stories are there that portray life on the Moon which were written after the Apollo program? Or the number of tales which depict intelligent civilizations on Mars that were written after the Viking probes beamed their results back to Earth? Writer Hal Clement understands the problem:

‘The fact is, I like to lay the scenarios of my stories on non-Earthly planets of my own devising. We know too much about the planets of our own solar system to let me use them very freely for this purpose, so I have to set up elsewhere. This forces me to assume faster-than-light travel for many of the stories.’<sup>12</sup>

Clement introduces here one of science fiction's most common violations in the laws of physics—exceeding the speed of light. This is the 'granddaddy of them all' according to novelist Norman Spinrad.<sup>13</sup> Spaceships hop from one star system to another in what appears to be a matter of hours or days. This violation, as far-fetched as it is, is nevertheless necessary for intergalactic exploration, because if a spacecraft were limited to travelling at light speed (as fast as that is) it would take tens of thousands of years just to exit our Milky Way, let alone journey to a neighbouring galaxy. Spinrad complains that this light velocity limitation is

'a pain in the neck to science fiction writers.

The literary necessity for faster-than-light travel is all too obvious. Without it, we could have no stories of galactic empires, not much anthropological science fiction, few pictures of alien cultures or *outré* planets, a dearth of first-contact stories—in short, science fiction writers would be pretty much confined to our own solar system . . . . Thus hyperspace. Or overdrive. Or whatever it takes to get our literary spaceships from star to star in literarily usable time.<sup>14</sup>

Using an unreality to justify (or 'as a basis for') other fanciful notions is misleading, especially when it is done in the guise of science. Whether it is intergalactic travel, or creating half-human monsters in a laboratory, the uninformed can be led to believe that the realization of such ideas is just a matter of a future technological breakthrough. When concepts are built from unrealities, the end result is an elaborate system of fabrication that is as sturdy as a house built on sand (Matthew 7:26–27). What value can such a system offer the real world? How edifying can a scheme of impossibilities be, however impressive or clever its presentation? In a *Wonder Stories* editorial, Gemsback writes:

'Many modern science fiction authors . . . do not hesitate to throw scientific plausibility overboard and embark upon a policy of what I might call scientific magic, in other words, science that is neither plausible, nor possible. Indeed, it overlaps the fairytale and often goes the fairytale one better.

. . . I have gone to this length to preach a sermon in the hope that misguided authors will see the light and hereafter stick to science as it is known, or as it may reasonably develop in the future.<sup>15</sup>

Paul, as he draws his letter to the Philippians to a close, exhorts: 'Finally, brethren, whatever is true . . . let your minds dwell on these things' (Philippians 4:8, NASB).

Not only are the laws of physics broken, but in science fiction movies, television shows and paintings, outer space is usually portrayed in an unrealistically attractive manner. The landscapes of celestial bodies, for example, almost always have a more romantic or inviting appearance than knowledge of our own solar system will warrant. Often

shown are mountains with pointed peaks that tower majestically behind a foreground of mysterious craters, crevices and caves. This is the way the Earth's moon was conceived until the space program replaced such imaginative ideas with reality. Apollo 16 moonwalker Charlie Duke recalls: 'None of the surface looked like the terrain depicted in science fiction movies of jagged peaks or precipitous cliffs. Instead the hills and mountains were all smooth and rolled gently toward the horizon.'<sup>16</sup>

Also unrealistic are stars which can be seen in settings that normally would wash out their appearance—for example, in a black sky as viewed from a brightly lit lunar surface, or surrounding a planet or moon as it is observed close-up from space. Admittedly, a star-filled sky is more appealing than an empty one. But in reality, the bright albedo of a celestial object prevents surrounding stars from being seen, as astronauts<sup>17</sup> and photos of our solar system testify.

Even sound effects in television shows and movies can be misleading. For example, outer space is a vacuum in which sound does not travel. Yet we hear explosions in space, starships thundering over our heads and small spacecraft as they whiz past, complete with the Doppler shift in sound.

Furthermore, science fiction has a tendency to depict outer space as an easily habitable environment. Practically every planet visited can sustain human life. However, there is little solid evidence that planets exist at all outside our solar system, let alone possess the right conditions for life to exist. Mars is the most Earth-like planet we know of, yet it is a deadly environment—over 95% of its atmosphere is composed of carbon dioxide with very little ozone to shield the Sun's ultraviolet light, and its temperatures can be as low as -87°C and as high as 244°C.

Why, then, does science fiction continue to depict outer space in such an alluring, but unrealistic fashion? First, as Kyle observes, through the ages man has always 'enjoyed the thrill of unreality. He wasn't necessarily concerned with practicality, his psyche merely demanded this kind of entertainment . . . .'<sup>18</sup> In a sin-cursed world filled with pressures and anxieties, we want to escape; get away from it all. 'Readers yearn: "Take us far away from today—take us far away from earth!" and the writers happily comply.'<sup>19</sup> Spielberg adds, 'The public has an appetite for anything about imagination, anything that is as far away from reality as is creatively possible.'<sup>20</sup>

Second, because of mankind's rejection of God (1 Corinthians 1:18), he has not found genuine meaning or peace in this world. So, he searches elsewhere to fulfil these needs. Maybe, he reasons, outer space has something to offer that cannot be found here. Perhaps the grass is greener on the other side of the galaxy. Consequently, man exalts the heavens. He makes outer space to be far more friendly than it really is. Unfortunately, this results in a misdirected placement of hope. The extravagant and expensive efforts to search for intelligent life in space is an example of this.

The Scriptures condemn such glorification of the heavens (Deuteronomy 4:19; Isaiah 47:13–14; Jeremiah 8:1–2).

All of us, at times, feel like getting away, escaping. In Psalm 55:6–8, David, in response to the pressures from his enemies, cries out:

‘O that I had wings like a dove!  
I would fly away and be at rest.  
Behold, I would wander far away,  
I would lodge in the wilderness.  
I would hasten to my place of refuge

and

From the stormy wind and tempest.’

David did not, however, look to the stars for help. In verse 16 of the same Psalm, he declares: ‘As for me, I shall call upon God, And the Lord will save me.’

Those who try to escape to unreality, or who place their hope in whatever they imagine may be in another world, will be in for a big disappointment. Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, wrote in Proverbs 28:19: ‘He who tills his land will have plenty of food, But he who follows empty pursuits will have poverty in plenty.’

The word translated ‘empty’ comes from the Hebrew *req* and refers to that which is ethically empty, idle, worthless, vain, or unprofitable. The New International Version renders the second line: ‘But the one who chases fantasies will have his fill of poverty’. This verse, in context, apparently refers to get-rich-quick schemes. However, a more general application could be made, namely that the one who lives and functions within the realm of Biblical reality will accomplish much, while the one who runs after myths and fantasies will have his fill of spiritual poverty. Man will not find peace until he places his faith in the Prince of Peace (John 14:27; Romans 5:1).

### To the glory of man

There are those, however, who believe that salvation and peace cannot be attained from God as mentioned above, but only through man. In *Humanist Manifesto II*, Paul Kurtz asserts: ‘No deity will save us; we must save ourselves.’<sup>21</sup>

Man believes he can accomplish this through technology. There is certainly no shortage of it in science fiction. In fact, futuristic gadgetry is one of the main attractions, whether it is a hand-held tricorder that can distinguish humans from androids, or a magnificent starship capable of whizzing across the expanse of space to new worlds. So impressive are the achievements, that many are tempted to go along with Arthur C. Clarke’s boyhood vision of ‘science as saviour of mankind and of mankind as a race of potential gods destined for the stars’.<sup>22</sup>

Perhaps the most presumptuous technology in science fiction is the one which is made in the image of man—the



*Perhaps the grass is greener on the other side of the galaxy.*

robot. Today’s industrial ‘robots’, which are often nothing more than extended, computerized arms, are not to be compared with the mechanical marvels of fantasy. The science fiction version usually has a complete, human-like encasement, with locomotion abilities that enable it to go practically anywhere. More significantly, it is conscious of itself and has a will of its own. Some models can even express emotion.

The word ‘robot’ comes from the Czechoslovakian *robota* which means ‘forced labor’. It was coined in 1920 by the Czech dramatist, Karel Capek, when he used the term to describe the entities featured in his masterpiece play *R.U.R.* (*Rossum’s Universal Robots*). In the play, the inventor of these automatons hopes to ‘make the existence of God an irrelevant question and prove that Man—with the aid of science—is truly the master of his world’.<sup>23</sup>

Although the inventor in the play is eccentric, it is interesting that in science fiction stories following *R.U.R.*, mankind’s motive for creating robots does not seem to change much. Kerry O’Quinn, in his preface to *Robots*, expresses his enthusiasm over this deification of man in science fiction through robot technology:

‘So while the creators of science and technology have given us actual robots that improve the upward climb of the human race, the creators of science-fiction drama show us that we are almost God-like in our conquest of the Earth—and of all we survey! To those movie and television artists who have given us this rare and exalted view of ourselves, this book is dedicated.’<sup>24</sup>

It is not surprising that Clarke views science fiction as ‘the literature of the gods’.<sup>22</sup>

As mentioned, predicting plausible scientific breakthroughs is beneficial and desirable. But the humanistic glorification of human technology to the exclusion of God is a return to the Tower of Babel mentality. Thankfully, the

Bible brings us back to reality and warns:

‘Do not trust in princes,  
In mortal man, in whom there is no salvation.  
His spirit departs, he returns to the earth;  
In that very day his thoughts perish.  
How blessed is he whose help is in the God of Jacob,  
Whose hope is in the Lord his God;  
Who made heaven and earth,  
The sea and all that is in them’ (Psalm 146:3–6).

### No God means no absolutes

The exaltation of man in science fiction through his achievements gives the impression that God is redundant and that faith in Him is obsolete. Also contributing to this reasoning is the promotion of evolutionary philosophy. Naturally, with God eliminated, His laws become meaningless and a new system of ethics will prevail. Science fiction has always been a very effective medium for promoting humanistic values.

One of the most powerful examples is seen in an episode of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* called ‘The Outcast’, written by supervising producer Jeri Taylor. In the story, Commander Riker of the *Enterprise* falls in love with an alien named Soren, a member of the J’naii race. Long ago, the J’naii were male and female, but evolved into their present genderless state. They now reproduce by artificial means and consider those few among the J’naii who have strong inclinations of gender to be throwbacks to their primitive past. Therefore, expressing feelings of gender is forbidden. Soren is among those who have gender, so when her intolerant superiors learn of her affair with Riker, they administer the dreaded psychotechic therapy which brings her back to ‘normal’. Although the story is an allegory, it draws an obvious parallel with today’s conflict between ‘bigoted’ Christian fundamentalists and ‘persecuted’ homosexuals. Mark A. Altman, regular contributor to *Cinefantastique*, comments: ‘Taylor’s script is a stunning reminder of how effective the science fiction genre can be in providing allegorical explorations of political and social concerns.’<sup>25</sup>

Virtually any issue can be treated this way in science fiction. Other cleverly written, anti-Christian allegories from both *Star Trek: The Next Generation* and *Star Trek: Voyager*, warn of the ‘dangers’ of moral absolutes, expose the ‘myth’ of Satan, show how illogical it is to believe there is a heaven, and promote ‘death with dignity’. Novelist Katherine MacLean explains in her instructions to science fiction writers:

‘Writer, think of a drastic plot. Write in as villain the most far-out alien horror of a creature you can conceive, then build for him his logical ancestry, his sources, his training, his needs and morality in the shape of his world around him until irresistibly you and the reader agree with his logic and you can see no other way to be right and moral than his way. Then you and your readers turn and look back at humans on Earth. Back on Earth you will see a very strange and weird flat-eyed monster.’<sup>26</sup>

### Occultism, New Age-ism and Eastern mysticism

The promotion of humanism, however, does not mean that all supernaturalism is excluded from science fiction—just *Christ-honouring* supernaturalism. The occult and Eastern religious thought, on the other hand, open many doors to the eerie and bizarre. Writer and lecturer, Reginald Bretnor explains:

‘If we accept the existence of telepathy and all other “wild talents”, limitless fictional opportunities open up before us, in interpersonal relations first and foremost, in our possible relations with other beings and cultures, in the relationship of God and man (or gods and men), in how we view the past and future (or futures), in how we see ourselves.’<sup>27</sup>

Spinrad also encourages this kind of mystical exploration:

‘Just as science fiction writers of the 1950s added the “soft sciences” of psychology, sociology, anthropology and economics to their spheres of interest, the science fiction writers of today should be looking into psychopharmacology, Eastern and Western systems of consciousness alteration, media analysis, perceptual psychology, systems analysis, the social and internal psychology of lifestyles and, if you will, psychedelia.’<sup>28</sup>

Dr C. Fred Dickason of the Moody Bible Institute points out:

‘The term occult derives from the Latin *occultus*, a form of the verb *occulere*, to cover up, hide. It means hidden, secret, dark, mysterious, concealed. It is used to describe phenomena which transcend or seem to transcend man’s senses or realm of natural experience.’<sup>29</sup>

The popular *Star Wars* trilogy is a prime example in which much of the occult and Eastern mysticism can be seen. By using the ‘Force’, one is able to see the future (similar to occult divination). One can also jump higher, dodge laser blasts and perform other supernormal feats. And those who are ‘strong with the Force’ are able to supernaturally move inanimate objects (psychokinesis). Writer and director George Lucas sums up the applications of the Force: ‘If you use it well, you can see the future and the past. You can sort of read minds and you can levitate and use that whole nether world of psychic energy.’<sup>30</sup> Also occultic are the metaphysical phenomena such as the after-death appearances of Obi-Wan Kenobi. All the above phenomena are somehow made possible by using the Force—a universal, impersonal energy field which surrounds, permeates and binds all things. Thus, the religion of *Star Wars* might be described as Western occultism with an Eastern pantheistic twist. Philip H. Lochhaas, an authority on religions and cults, comments:

‘The entertainment industry must be seen as a primary vehicle for promoting occult New Age views. Films are powerful instruments for influencing mil-

lions of minds. The Star Wars trilogy was only the first among many films to make statements about a pantheistic “Force” that represents deity, intuitive communication with “the other side” and “ascended masters” that form a hierarchy for bringing humanity into the New Age.<sup>31</sup>

*Star Trek* entertainment is also saturated with the occult as can be seen with the telepathic abilities of Spock, Tuvok and other Vulcans, and Counselor Troi to name a few. Telepathy involves the communication of two minds by means other than the five senses.

In no uncertain terms, the Bible condemns all forms of the occult:

‘There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, one who uses divination, one who practices witchcraft, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who casts a spell, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For whoever does these things is detestable to the Lord’ (Deuteronomy 18:10–12a).

Those who turn to mediums and spiritists do not seek assistance from God (Isaiah 8:19), but play the harlot (Leviticus 20:6) and become defiled (Leviticus 19:31).

It is easy to shrug our shoulders to this aspect of science fiction. After all, these strange wonders occur ‘in a galaxy far, far away’, or ‘where no man has gone before’. What is the harm, many may reason, as long as these things happen at a great distance? Also contributing to this attitude of indifference is that the words the Bible uses with regard to the occult are rarely used in science fiction, but are exchanged for modern, ‘scientific’ terms. This is deceptive and can even mislead Christians. Dave Hunt and T.A. McMahon warn:

‘What the secular world calls “mind power” many Christians confuse for “faith”. Likewise, the impersonal “Force” that occultists also refer to as Universal Mind or Nature is naively accepted by large numbers of both Christians and non-Christians as just another way of referring to God, when in fact it is a substitute for Him. Consequently, what often passes for “the power of the spirit” in the church can scarcely be distinguished from the alleged “mind powers” of psychics. Parapsychologists have been conducting scientific experiments with psychics for years and the idea of “psychic power” is gaining credibility.

... These New Age techniques are not new at all, however, but are the same old sorcery under new labels. Many modern practitioners, including leading Christians, seem unaware of the true nature of the dangerous mind-game they are playing. Sorcery called by any other name is still sorcery and it is everywhere in today’s space-age society, seeking to hide its true identity behind scientific or psychological terminology and success/motivation

and self-development labels.<sup>32</sup>

Johanna Michaelsen, once deep into the occult before being delivered, also warns: ‘The occult is not a passing fad. It is here and will continue to grow and spread like a mass of suffocating jungle vines until the promised return of Jesus Christ.’<sup>33</sup>

### Roots in evolution

Since many enthusiasts cannot agree on a definition of science fiction, it is not surprising that opinions also vary as to its origin. There are those who maintain that the genre began toward the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century with the novels of Jules Verne (1828–1905) and H.G. Wells (1866–1946).<sup>34</sup> Some make a case for the works of Edgar Allan Poe (1809–1849).<sup>35</sup> Others, however, go further back and pinpoint modern science fiction’s birth to Mary Shelley’s historic novel written in 1818: ‘Inspired by a dream, she wrote *Frankenstein: Or, The Modern Prometheus*, about a doctor obsessed with creating life. The Gothic tale was one of the first works to explore science’s destructive side and, as such, marked the birth of sci-fi as we know it.’<sup>36</sup> That the monster ‘was created by science, or at least pseudo-science, rather than by any pacts with the devil, or by magic’<sup>37</sup> also contributes to the placement of the story into the science fiction genre. The events and persons surrounding the composition of this tale reveal more and are worth mentioning.

William Godwin (1756–1836) was an English political socialist philosopher and novelist who was very influential on young writers of his time.<sup>38</sup> Shortly after serving for several years as ‘a minister of a dissenting religious sect’, he became an atheist.<sup>38</sup> He resented all forms of external restrictions and laws imposed on individuals, whether by another person or by government. His beliefs were similar to those of Erasmus Darwin. ‘Although Godwin and Darwin never met, they had connections and sympathies in common and were pilloried together as atheistical writers ...’<sup>39</sup>

In 1797, Goodwin married Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–1797) author of the first modern feminist work, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. However, only ten days after giving birth to their only child, named Mary Shelley (1797–1851), Mary Wollstonecraft died of puerperal fever.

In May of 1814, when Mary was sixteen, she met the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822), a friend of her father. Shelley was one of the most influential leaders of the romantic movement. He co-authored a pamphlet *The Necessity of Atheism* with a fellow student at the University of Oxford before his expulsion. Aldiss describes him as ‘a poet of science, a rebel, an atheist, an ardent lover of freedom and the west wind. No wonder he admired [Erasmus] Darwin, in whom these qualities were strong.’<sup>39</sup>

Two months after Shelley and Mary met, they left England while Shelley was separated from, but still married to,

his first wife (she would commit suicide in December of 1816 at which time Shelly and Mary would get married).

During their stay in Switzerland, Mary began to write *Frankenstein*. Her dream which initiated the story was, according to Mary,<sup>40</sup> inspired by late-night discussions with Shelly and other friends, including Lord Byron (1788–1824), the English romantic poet whose writings reflect his own life of promiscuity, purposelessness and theological unorthodoxy.<sup>41</sup> Their conversations dwelled on vampires and the supernatural, ‘and Byron and Shelly also discussed Darwin, his thoughts and his experiments’.<sup>40</sup>

*Frankenstein* was completed in 1818 and tells the story of Victor Frankenstein, a scientist who fashions an artificial man partly by using pieces of corpses, then brings it to life, but eventually loses his own life while searching for the renegade monster. Aldiss describes him as ‘a modern, consciously rejecting ancient fustian booklore in favor of modern science, kicking out father figures. His creation of life shows him further usurping paternal power, invading what was previously God’s province.’<sup>42</sup> The reasoning goes that if God does not exist and thus has nothing to do with Creation, then man could take on this role.

‘The concept of *Frankenstein* rests on the quasi-evolutionary idea that God is remote or absent from creation: man is therefore free to create his own sub-life; this was in accord with Erasmus Darwin’s statement that evolution, once it had begun, continued to progress by its own inherent activity and so without divine intervention. We can see that Erasmus Darwin thus stands as father figure over the first real science fiction novel.’<sup>43</sup>

Whether or not this is indeed the origin of science fiction proper, one fact is certain: evolution has permeated the genre from its beginning, giving writers the basis for humanistic themes and for imagining all sorts of strange phenomena. Kyle observes: ‘Charles Darwin, grandson of the mighty Erasmus Darwin, was upsetting the world with his evolutionary theories, greatly affecting thoughtful [i.e. science fiction] writers.’<sup>44</sup>

Significantly, Rottensteiner’s chronology of historically important literary works of science fiction lists only five stories written from 1817 (which includes Shelly’s *Frankenstein*) to 1859, the year Charles Darwin’s *Origin of Species* was published. Following the publication of Darwin’s book, however, the same timespan of 42 years (1859–1901) produced no less than 26 important science fiction works.<sup>45</sup>

Six of the novels listed were written by H.G. Wells, a political philosopher and sociologist who opposed Christianity:

‘None of [Wells’] contemporaries did more to encourage revolt against Christian tenets and accepted codes of behaviour, especially as regards sex, in which, both in his books and in his personal life, he was a persistent advocate of an almost complete freedom.’<sup>46</sup>

Wells studied under Thomas H. Huxley<sup>46</sup> (Charles Darwin’s ‘Bulldog’) and throughout his life was a firm believer and promoter of evolutionary philosophy.<sup>47</sup> He was also a Fabian socialist for a time.<sup>46</sup> Regarding his views on the implications of evolution, he wrote:

‘If all the animals and man had been evolved in this ascendant manner, then there had been no first parents, no Eden and no Fall. And if there had been no fall, then the entire historical fabric of Christianity, the story of the first sin and the reason for an atonement, upon which the current teaching based Christian emotion and morality, collapsed like a house of cards.’<sup>48</sup>

His writings naturally reflect his philosophy. In his classic *The Time Machine*, for example, the time traveller journeys to the year AD 802,701, the setting in which man has evolved into two species—the passive, child-like Eloi and the monstrous, ape-like Morlocks. Marxist themes can be seen in the division of the ruling and working classes of these races.<sup>49</sup> After his encounter with this civilization, the time traveller advances further into the future to a time when the Earth stops rotating. In this era, he witnesses strange crab-like creatures and a winged oddity that resembles a giant butterfly. Travelling still further into the future, he arrives 30 million years from the time when he began. Here he is so horrified by the deathly calm of the cooling Earth, that he races back to his own time.

*The Time Machine* was one of the early works of science fiction which depicts the evolution of different life forms on Earth. But evolutionary philosophy also provides the basis for the existence and evolution of life in other worlds. Since life evolved here on Earth, it is reasoned it must have evolved elsewhere because the universe is so large. Perhaps there are millions or even billions of planets upon which life exists. In science fiction, the diversity of these life-forms is only limited to one’s imagination where often the characteristics of human, animal and plant life are exaggerated or deformed to create bizarre creatures. This has resulted in one-eyed giants; slimy, bubble creatures; long-armed creepizoids with suction cups for fingertips; half-man, half-animal mutants; and 5-m-tall horrors with four arms, white tusks and eyes positioned on antennae.

Of course, oddities like these have never been observed on Earth and never will be. Mutations, which are supposed to account for major evolutionary changes, are nothing more than random alterations or departures from a programmed genetic code. Such random rearrangements result in a loss of DNA information which is the opposite of what macroevolution requires—the addition of genetic information. Neither will natural selection account for such strange creatures since it is simply a conservation process in nature which weeds out the harmful/disorderly effects of mutations, thus preserving a created kind.

At any rate, some civilizations of these creatures are ‘primitive’, while others are highly advanced with the means of invading the Earth. With the dazzling special



effects in today's entertainment, surrounded by an atmosphere of scientific and philosophical sophistication, alien life becomes more believable. Even Christians who reject evolution can be tempted to jump on the sci-fi bandwagon by reasoning that God could have created life in other worlds. After all, why would He go to all the trouble to create billions of galaxies with billions of stars in each galaxy if the Earth was to be the only place on which He would create life? John C. Whitcomb responds:

'In answer to this question, it must be recognized, first of all, that it required no more exertion of energy for God to create a trillion galaxies than to create one planet. "Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable. He gives strength to the weary and to him who lacks might He increases power" (Isaiah 40:28–29)'.<sup>50</sup>

Humanistic reasoning suggests that if God created life only on Earth, then our vast universe is a 'waste of space' (as promoted in the anti-Christian movie *Contact*). However, God does not need to fill the heavens with extraterrestrial life to be glorified. The Psalmist writes:

'The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands' (Psalm 19:1).

The tremendous variety, complexity and incomprehensible distances of celestial objects, including planets, nebulae, stars and galaxies, proclaim God's glory as they show His invisible attributes of eternal power and divine nature (Romans 1:20). This does not depend on the presence of extraterrestrials. We need not imagine alien life forms or other unconfirmed fantasies to be in awe of God's creation. Jules Verne, who generally wrote within the

sphere of plausible inventions and discoveries, said: 'Reality provides us with facts so romantic that imagination itself could add nothing to them.'<sup>51</sup> Similarly, when astronaut John Glenn was asked just before his historic flight aboard the space shuttle: 'Do you watch sci-fi shows, like *The X-Files*?' he responded, 'I don't need to get into the made-up stuff. The real thing is thrilling enough'.<sup>52</sup>

### Conclusion

Although science fiction has predicted a number of useful technologies, the genre is permeated with unrealism, humanism, occultism, New Age philosophy, Eastern mysticism and evolutionism which are of no value in the real world and are condemned in

the Scriptures. It is because science fiction has its roots in evolution that the false belief systems mentioned have emerged and thrive in the genre.

A high percentage of scientists have been inspired toward their profession by reading science fiction during their youth.<sup>53</sup> Unfortunately, they are also influenced by its evolutionary worldview. Regarding the importance and relevance of one's foundational beliefs, Dr Henry M. Morris comments:

'It *does* make a tremendous difference what men believe about their origin and the sad history of the Christian church of the past 150 years ought to be sufficient proof of this fact. The evolutionary-uniformitarian cosmology is far more than a mere biological or geological hypothesis. It is a complete world-view, a philosophy of life and meaning. One cannot really believe in an evolutionary history of the world without also believing in an evolutionary future of the world. His philosophy of origins will inevitably determine sooner or later what he believes concerning his destiny and even what he believes about the meaning and purpose of his life and actions right now in the present world.'<sup>54</sup>

Let us commit ourselves to the Lord and to the foundations which He established in His Word. May we build our worldview upon those foundations and apply them to every sphere of life.

### References

1. Famighetti, R. (Ed.), *The World Almanac and Book of Facts 1999*, Primedia Reference Inc., Mahwah, New Jersey, p. 177, 1998.
2. *Guinness World Records 2000, Millennium Edition*, Guinness World

- Records Ltd., p. 115, 2000.
3. The Force is back, *Time*, 10 February 1997, p. 69.
  4. Zwingle, E., A world together, *National Geographic* **196**(2):13, 1999.
  5. Trekking onward, *Time*, 28 November 1994, p. 74.
  6. The literature of nerds goes mainstream, *Time*, 8 July 1996, p. 62.
  7. Spielberg, S., as quoted by Hochman, D., The sci-fi 100, *Entertainment Weekly*, 16 October 1998, p. 30.
  8. Kyle, D., *A Pictorial History of Science Fiction*, Han-dyn Publishing, London, p. 142, 1976.
  9. Morris, H.M., *The Genesis Record*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, p. 77, 1976.
  10. Rottensteiner, E., *The Science Fiction Book*, Seabury Press, New York, p. 8, 1975.
  11. Kyle, Ref. 8, pp. 16, 18.
  12. Clement, H., Hard sciences and tough technologies, *The Craft of Science Fiction*, Harper & Row, New York, p. 48, 1976.
  13. Spinrad, X., Rubber sciences, *The Craft of Science Fiction*, Harper & Row, New York, p. 56, 1976.
  14. Spinrad, Ref. 13, p. 57.
  15. Gemsback, H., Reasonableness in science fiction, *Wonder Stories*, December 1932; (reproduced in Kyle, Ref. 8, p. 80).
  16. Duke, C., *Moonwalker*, Oliver Nelson, Nashville, p. 164, 1990.
  17. Duke, Ref. 16, pp. 123, 164.
  18. Kyle, Ref. 8, p. 12.
  19. Kyle, Ref. 8, p. 19.
  20. Spielberg, Ref. 7, p. 30.
  21. Kurtz, P. (Ed.), *Humanist Manifestos I and II*, Prometheus Books, Buffalo, p. 16, 1973.
  22. Aldiss, B., *Billion Year Spree*, Doubleday & Company, Inc., Garden City, New York, p. 260, 1973.
  23. Hefly, R. and Zimmerman, H., *Robots*, Starlog Press, New York, p. 8, 1979.
  24. O'Quinn, K., in his preface to *Robots*, Ref. 23, p. 5.
  25. Altman, M., Tackling gay rights, *Cinefantastique* **23**(2, 3), October, p. 71, 1992.
  26. MacLean, K., Alien minds and nonhuman intelligences, *The Craft of Science Fiction*, Harper & Row, New York, p. 157, 1976.
  27. Bretnor, R., SF: the challenge to the writer, *The Craft of Science Fiction*, Harper & Row, New York, p. 15, 1976.
  28. Spinrad, Ref. 13, p. 68.
  29. Dickason, C., *Angels—Elect and Evil*, Moody Press, Chicago, p. 196, 1975.
  30. Clarke, G., The Empire strikes back! *Time*, 19 May 1980, p. 73.
  31. Lochhaas, P., *The New Age Movement*, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, p. 25, 1988.
  32. Hunt, D. and McMahon, T., *The Seduction of Christianity*, Harvest House Publishers, Eugene, pp. 13–14, 1985.
  33. Michaelsen, J., *The Beautiful Side of Evil*, Harvest House Publishers, Eugene, p. 164, 1982.
  34. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15<sup>th</sup> Ed., Vol. 10, p. 552, 1993.
  35. Rottensteiner, Ref. 10, p. 97.
  36. Kim, A. (Ed.), The sci-fi 100, *Entertainment Weekly* **454**:32, 1998.
  37. Aldiss, B., Mary Wollstonecraft Shelly; in: Bleiler, E. (Ed.), *Science Fiction Writers*, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, pp. 7–8, 1982.
  38. *Funk & Wagnalls New Encyclopaedia*, Vol. 12, p. 20, 1986.
  39. Aldiss, Ref. 22, p. 15.
  40. Aldiss, Ref. 22, p. 25.
  41. *Collier's Encyclopaedia*, Vol. 5, pp. 58–60, 1989.
  42. Aldiss, Ref. 37, pp. 7–8.
  43. Aldiss, Ref. 22, p. 26.
  44. Kyle, Ref. 8, p. 28.
  45. Rottensteiner, Ref. 10, p. 153.
  46. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15<sup>th</sup> Ed., Vol. 12, p. 574, 1994.
  47. Bergman, J., Teaching evolution through science fiction, *CEN Tech. J.* **7**(2):173–176, 1993.
  48. Wells, H.G., *The Outline of History—Being a Plain History of Life and Mankind*, Cassell & Company Ltd, London, (the fourth revision), Vol. 2, p. 616, 1925.
  49. Rottensteiner, Ref. 10, p. 29.
  50. Whitcomb, J., *The Bible and Astronomy*, BMH Books, Winona Lake, p. 28, 1984.
  51. Verne, J., as quoted in Kyle, Ref. 8, p. 168.
  52. Zaslów, L., John Glenn: none of that Hollywood sci-fi stuff for this senator and American hero as he prepares to return to space next week, 'Straight Talk' in *USA Weekend*, a supplement of *The Sacramento Bee*, 16–18 October 1998.
  53. Kyle, Ref. 8, p. 168.
  54. Morris, H.M., *The Troubled Waters of Evolution*, CLP Publishers, San Diego, p. 26, 1982.

---

**David Laughlin** received a B.A. in Bible-Theology from the Moody Bible Institute and an M.A. in theological studies from Wheaton College. His Master's thesis was entitled, *The Identifications of Behemoth and Leviathan*. He has also written for the *Creation* magazine. David has been studying and teaching the subject of origins since 1986, and plans to teach Old Testament—especially Genesis—at a Bible College.

---