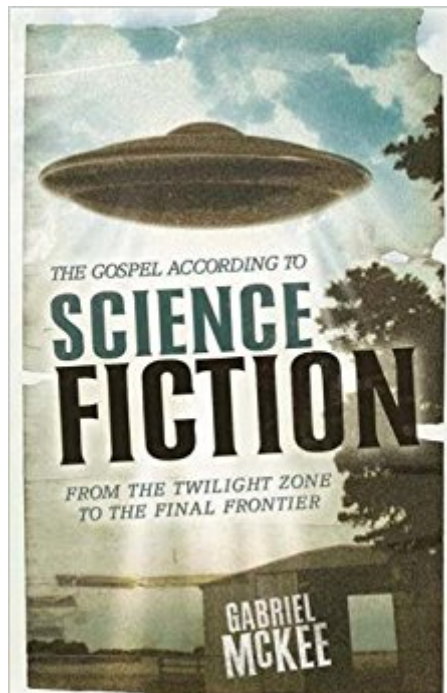




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The Gospel According To Science Fiction: From The Twilight Zone To The Final Frontier



Synopsis

In this thorough and engaging book, Gabriel McKee explores the inherent theological nature of science fiction, using illustrations from television shows, literature, and films. Science fiction, he believes, helps us understand not only who we are but who we will become. McKee organizes his chapters around theological themes, using illustrations from authors such as Isaac Asimov and H. G. Wells, television shows such as Star Trek and The Twilight Zone, and films such as The Matrix and Star Wars. With its extensive bibliography and index, this is a book that all serious science fiction fans--not just those with a theological interest--will appreciate.

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Aliens, spaceships and giant robots may not seem to have much in common with matters spiritual, but in the mind of Harvard-trained writer and blogger McKee, they hold important theological insights. McKee's knowledge of science fiction is impressive. He quotes esoteric short stories from the 1930s alongside contemporary sci-fi and fantasy films, showing an encyclopedic command of the genre. It serves him well as he combs the genre for examples of religious themes such as sin, faith, religious experience, the apocalypse and the afterlife. The author all too briefly touches upon the issue of science and faith, but this can be forgiven in a book primarily about science fiction. "The main goal of SF [science fiction]," writes McKee, "... is to show us how we can face the future and overcome the new challenges that our changing world may develop." By utilizing

a solid theological background and culling the world of science fiction literature and films for help, McKee illustrates that organized religion should have a similar goal: "It must be willing to face whatever changes may come and adapt itself to the spiritual questions of the future." This fascinating hybrid of theology and sci-fi is creative, lucid and contains impressive scholarship. (Jan.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Gabriel McKee earned his Master of Theological Studies from Harvard Divinity School. He is the author of *Pink Beams of Light From the God in the Gutter: The Science-Fictional Religion of Philip K. Dick*, as well as articles on religion in popular culture for the *Revealer* and *Nerve*.

This book consists mostly of synopses. Thus, serves well only as a reservoir and a round-up of plots. The Author ignores evolution of the genre and omits theoretical papers, in the result each chapter follows somewhat obscured, temporary and chaotic logic. There is Ketterer at least, but very briefly summarized. No Kermode. No Brummett and others. The profit: vast choice of plots, can't deny that (one to mention is the lack of non-English writers, there are few, Lem, thanks for that. But no Strugatsky brothers?) I got irritated by few obsessively repeated sentences. After 100 pages of reading you begin to take account of sentences like: "Few SF stories have embraced the concept of a divine plan as completely as...", as really repetitive. Nevertheless, the book contains very good, interesting insights, only you have to look for them carefully.

A fascinating, readable, entertaining, clever, and comprehensive look at science fiction's treatment of religion, spirituality, and God. A great book.

I was not careful when I purchased this book. I thought that the "Gospel" part of the title was tongue in cheek. It wasn't. I'm glad I made this mistake because I used it as an exercise in realizing how much people read into books exactly what they want to see. The author has read and seen a powerful amount of SciFi. No doubt about that. I haven't seen or read one quarter as much but based on the books and films that I have seen I was surprised at how christianity seemed to crop up in these books and films. I'm a christian but I did not see this viewpoint in the books and films that I saw and also made their way into this book. I did see God-the Creator and have been curious about other viewpoints on this. The search for the creator in SciFi (some - not all) is fascinating. But this is not the book to read if you share this curiosity. As far as saying that SciFi may be a peek into how we will think in the future, let's not forget the Fiction in Science Fiction. If we accept that this is true

then why not apply this theory to other writing/film genres: horror, slasher movies, porn. Let's hope this is not the case.

Writing this review in 2009, when it's clear that science fiction dominates American popular culture, I'm surprised we haven't had more solid book-length explorations of the genre from a biblical perspective. To be sure, Gabriel McKee's reflection isn't a traditional "Bible study" format. There have been a number of very popular books and entire sets of multimedia educational materials that go back and forth from video to specific biblical lessons. This is not that book. But as the "Star Trek" origins movie opened this year, I searched far and wide for a good spiritual analysis of the series that, as a journalist, I could share with my own readers. I wound up turning to Gabriel's book and even interviewing Gabriel for our "Star Trek" coverage. If you're specifically a Trekkie, though, I should stress-this is a book about the whole genre and the TV series is only one thread that runs through the book. The volume is very helpful in lifting up specific examples out of a wide variety of sci-fi works, then weaving together the themes into provocative back-and-forth discussions of spiritual principles. I recommend it highly. And partly I'm saying this because Gabriel McKee's analysis here is rare in its scope. You'll find yourself wanting to go back and see a lot of movies, watch some old TV and re-read a bunch of good sci-fi novels.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book. McKee seems to have taken all of his theology training, as well as thousands of hours of reading and viewing SciFi, to come up with a magnum opus. I kept on expecting him to leave out some major or theologically significant minor work of science fiction, but he always came through. McKee helpfully breaks down science fiction into various theological categories, from the nature of God to the afterlife to the presence of a soul, and looks through many examples in-depth to gain an understanding of how the genre as a whole treats theology. This is not a simple, dry list, but rather McKee integrates each movie and book into the discussion, weighing the treatment of the theology as well as the new ideas that the work bring to the table. Though he obviously comes from a Christian standpoint, he is very balanced in his treatment, looking positively at pro-theistic and anti-theistic standpoints, as well as works embracing Islamic, Buddhist, and Hindu perspectives. You will never again be able to look at the science fiction genre as anti-religious, or even irreligious. (One juicy tidbit is McKee's very convincing revelation that science fiction is simply the modern aspect of the ancient apocalyptic religious genre.) The primary drawback of this book is that I now have a whole host of new books to read, even though I decided to peruse only about 5% of the books mentioned.

I like "The Gospel According to ScFi" okay as it has lots of information and lots of reviews of books and short stories. I did find it kind of repetitive and tiresome in some chapters. Also I found the actual presentation of the gospel lacking. I felt a more accurate title might have been "spiritually in ScFi" but that is juts my opinion. Author is obviously an excellent scholar and a good writer.

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