

# Refracted Visions and Future Worlds: Mormonism and Science Fiction

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**A**lthough science fiction and religion both attempt to define possible or probable future states, they often seem incompatible. Critics of science fiction frequently argue that including religion in science fiction vitiates the power of the imagined world; and since, as James Gunn has stated, "religion answers all questions that science fiction wishes to raise . . . science fiction written within a religious framework . . . turns into parable."<sup>1</sup> Readers of science fiction accept the ground rules of the imagined universe, even when they are a-religious or anti-religious. When one enters the arena of science fiction, it is as if religion ceases to function. James Blish's *A Case of Conscience* (New York: Ballantine, 1958), Walter Miller's *A Canticle for Leibowitz* (Philadelphia:

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<sup>1</sup> James Gunn, *The Road to Science Fiction: From Gilgamesh to Wells* (New York: New American Library, 1977), p. 3. See also Robert Scholes and Eric Rabkin, *Science Fiction: History, Science, Vision* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 42-43, 49. George Scithers, former editor of *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine* instructs authors not to include gods and angels in any stories submitted to him; such stories, he contends, are not science fiction.

This paper emphasizes novels which refer to particular religions (in most cases Mormonism) or to particular doctrinal points. For the far broader subject of general religious themes, motifs, or images developed within science-fiction novels, see Frederick Casey, *The Future of Eternity: Mythologies of Science Fiction and Fantasy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982); David Ketterer, *New Worlds for Old: The Apocalyptic Imagination, Science Fiction, and America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1974); Frederick A. Kreutzer, *Apocalypse and Science Fiction: A Dialectic of Religious and Secular Soteriologies* (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1982); and Patricia Warrick and Martin Harry Greenberg, *This New Awareness: Religion Through Science Fiction* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1975), which includes a brief bibliography of science-fiction novels with religious themes.

Lippincott, 1950), or Piers Anthony's Planet of Tarot trilogy are among the few novels to incorporate contemporary religions *qua* religion into a science-fictional framework. More often, religion in science fiction functions as metaphor, myth, or structural device. For example, Roger Zelazny's *Lord of Light* (New York: Avon, 1969), contains characters who have assumed the names and symbolic functions of Hindu gods. Most references to specific religions — at least to Western religions — are limited to Catholicism,<sup>2</sup> Judaism, and, curiously enough, Mormonism. The first two are not surprising — Catholicism because of its long history and influence on modern Christianity, and Judaism because of its long tradition of wandering and "otherness," its sense of estrangement which Darko Suvin defines as singularly appropriate to science fiction.<sup>3</sup> To find overt references to LDS thinking and theology, as in the Anthony novels, is surprising, since Mormons are numerically inferior to most major religious denominations and are little known beyond a superficial awareness of some of their more unusual doctrines and practices.

In another sense, however, it seems fitting that science-fiction writers, particularly American writers, refer to what has been called the only indigenous American religion. In discussing Robert Heinlein's *Stranger in a Strange Land*, Robert Scholes and Eric Rabkin state that "Heinlein's Smith is as American as the Mormon Joseph Smith, and Heinlein knows it."<sup>4</sup> But most references to Mormonism in science fiction are limited to superficialities in plot and based on equally superficial attitudes. Heinlein's use of Mormonism as a stereotype in *Stranger* seems fairly representative. The Church provides a general backdrop, as Scholes and Rabkin argue, and a ready source of clichés for easy moral judgment. One character in *Stranger* notes, for example, that the Fosterites have gotten away with "much more than Joseph Smith was lynched for"<sup>5</sup> — that is, for indulging in polygamous relationships. Here, Heinlein oversimplifies a complex issue by creating a cause and effect equation which is obviously incomplete as an explanation. Underlying theology is less important than stereotypic actions.

This pattern also occurs in other works. John Varley's *Wizard* (New York: Berkeley, 1980) alludes twice to Mormonism, both times as a quick evaluation of characters or situations. In one, a witches' coven is referred to as having "changed from just another forgotten dethlehem into a religion rich enough to stand beside the Catholics, the Mormons, and the scientologists" (p. 15).

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<sup>2</sup> In "Cathedrals in Space" (in *Turning Points: Essays on the Art of Science Fiction*, ed. Damon Knight [New York: Harper, 1977], pp. 144–62), James Blish, writing as William Atheling, Jr., discusses why almost all religious science fiction takes Catholicism as its starting point. He points to a "chiliastic panic, . . . so that the choice of the most complex, best organized and oldest body of Christian dogma as an intellectual background seems only natural" (p. 150).

<sup>3</sup> Darko Suvin, *Metamorphosis of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1979), pp. 3–16. Much of the text is devoted to his definitions of *cognitive* and *estrangement*.

<sup>4</sup> Scholes and Rabkin, *Science Fiction*, p. 57.

<sup>5</sup> Robert Heinlein, *Stranger in a Strange Land* (New York: Berkeley, 1971), p. 315. The novel originally appeared in 1961.

Later, a character enters the hub of the sentient planet Gaea and passes through a maze of structures copied from terrestrial models, including the "Zimbabwe Mormon Tabernacle" (p. 38). Varley thus relies primarily on immediate, obvious, surface characteristics of Mormonism.

The pattern found in Varley and Heinlein seems consistent with the uses of Mormonism in other science-fiction novels. Ian Watson's *The Embedding* (New York: Bantam, 1977) and Dean Ing's *Systemic Shock* (New York: Ace, 1981) both contain stereotypical references to Mormonism, with little expression of doctrine. Watson describes two saboteurs as "clean-cut out of cemetery marble, Mormon evangelists" (p. 147). Later he returns to the image: "Pilot and passenger had the same clear-cut Mormon uniformity of the Soft War Corps" (p. 191). A few paragraphs further, Watson uses the proper noun as an adjective: "'That's about it,' the mormon salesman nodded" (p. 192). There ceases to be any substance to the references at all; they exist merely as tags to identify stereotypes. And the stereotypes do not fulfill any further function in plot, development, or characterization. Such references to Mormonism are entirely divorced from doctrinal considerations.

In the post-cataclysmic world of Ing's *Systemic Shock*, Mormonism is the only surviving social structure capable of controlling an America divided and devastated by attack. Ing refers frequently to prophets and scriptures, but rarely allows Mormon beliefs to influence the narrative. In general, he simply relies on stereotypes of social structure, discipline, and order.

Philip Jose Farmer's *Flesh* (New York: Signet, 1968) does, on the other hand, incorporate specific Mormon teachings, even though he does not identify them as such. One character is named Nephi Sarvant. Sarvant's church, the "Last Standers," were a "peculiar people," ardent proselytizers for the "Book of the Church." During both his eight-hundred-year star-flight and his brief return to the DeeCee (Washington, D.C.) of a future earth, Sarvant inflexibly denounces the immorality he perceives around him and contends that his church — which has entirely disappeared during his absence — was, is, and will be the only true religion. Sarvant serves as a one-dimensional commentator on morality, religious philosophy, and sexual practices in Farmer's future society. Offended by offers of alcohol and overt sexual discussion early in the narrative, he abruptly leaves the dinner table, alienating his host and embarrassing his companion crew-members. He stalks out of the house and is immediately treed by a lioness which has been patrolling the grounds. Farmer thus satirizes Sarvant and his superficial pretensions to martyrdom. One of the characters holds the lioness by the collar and tells Sarvant to come down: "It's not yet time to throw a Christian to the lions." Sarvant is put to the test and fails comically. Farmer's references to lions and Christians emphasize Sarvant's shallowness.

Shortly thereafter, Sarvant, forced to find work, becomes a sweeper in the Temple of Gotew, where infertile women hope to become pregnant through their faith in the goddess and the good offices of male volunteers. As Sarvant slowly discovers what happens in the temple, he is righteously indignant. Then, as Sarvant becomes enamored of one of the "unfortunate ladies," his moral

indignation is revealed as repressed lust. He approaches the woman, who agrees to go with him, thinking that he is merely performing his duty to the goddess. When he rapes her, raving about his *own* true religion, he is dragged from the temple and hanged.

Again, Farmer systematically reduces Sarvant's religion to a series of clichés: the fanatical missionary proselytizing out of his "Book"; the religious extremist insulting those who drink alcoholic beverages; the sexually repressed personality who seeks release in extravagant sexuality. In Heinlein's *Stranger in a Strange Land*, Joseph Smith's damning sin was polygamy; in *Flesh*, Nephi Sarvant's is rape. But in the latter novel, we also witness the gradual removal of Sarvant's doctrinal supports until he is isolated from his own religion. In Farmer's alternate future, a religion such as Mormonism is not only invalid but inimical to life.

Perhaps the most extended portrayal of Mormonism — and the most explicit — in recent science fiction occurs in Piers Anthony's Planet of Tarot trilogy. In the three novels — *God of Tarot* (New York: Jove, 1979), *Vision of Tarot* (New York: Berkley, 1980), and *Faith of Tarot* (New York: Berkeley, 1980) — Brother Paul of the Holy Order of Vision is dispatched to the colony on the Planet Tarot to discover, if possible, the true God of the planet. The colony, composed of tiny enclaves of extremist sects, had been subjected to a series of "animations," hallucinatory recreations of the colonists' beliefs, dreams, and nightmares.

In *God of Tarot*, Brother Paul undergoes a series of personal visions, each relating to a major card of the Tarot deck, which result in a culminating vision of the human soul as no better than compost. Convinced that the answer to his quest cannot come from within, he decides to test the religions by entering animations which reveal the essence of each. He is accompanied in his quest by a number of colonists, including Lee, a member of "the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints."

In *Vision of Tarot*, Anthony's interest in Mormonism becomes more explicit. Lee does not use face cards (p. 4); he notes that polygamy, which he calls "plural marriage," is (not *was*) an option rather than a requirement (p. 6); and he appears as Christ in an animation which traces apostasy growing within the Church as the Apostle Paul systematically alters Christ's original teachings. Suddenly Lee exclaims, "Perhaps they are doing better in America" (p. 192). He lifts Brother Paul and the two pass through the air, as Lee explains about the Nephites and the Jaredites. (Significantly, Anthony does not, like many, refer to the Book of Mormon as a history of the Lost Ten Tribes of Israel.) During the flight, the two argue over the LDS stand excluding blacks from the priesthood, and Lee is enraged when Paul reveals his own one-eighth black ancestry. In his fury, Lee angles toward earth, with Brother Paul following. Their speed increases until they are "slanting in toward the land" at 35,000 kilometers per hour:

They skimmed the ocean, leveled out, and approached the coastal mountains. . . . Collision!

"And it came to pass in the thirty and fourth year . . . there arose a great storm . . . behold, the whole face of the land was changed, because of the tempests and the whirlwinds and the thunders and the lightnings, and the exceeding great quakings of the whole earth. . . ." (pp. 195-96)

The destruction accompanying Christ's appearance in the Americas, quoted from the Book of Mormon, results from Lee's racism, which, since Lee represents Christ, shifts the emphasis from salvation to a particular doctrinal point.

Despite a generally positive portrait of Lee in other passages, he appears as a schismatic in an animation of Dante's *Inferno*. He accepts this charge without question, agrees that his church is both polygamous and plagiarized (a reference to the Spaulding controversy) and identifies himself as a descendant of John D. Lee (p. 231). Brother Paul asks, "Did the Mormons defend Lee's actions?" and Lee answers "No . . . He was tried and condemned. But —" The final incomplete phrase suggests that Lee does in fact hold the Church as a whole guilty and also hints that the other charges against the Church are also true.

Only after Lee has divested himself of adherence to the peculiar doctrines of the LDS Church can he emerge as a truly righteous man. Brother Paul concludes:

Maybe the origins of the Mormons are suspect, or maybe it is all a great libel. It doesn't matter. What matters is what the religion is *today*. Many worthy religions have foundered when their adherents forgot their original principles — but here is a religion that became greater than its origin! The Mormons today constitute one of the most powerful forces for good on Earth. Their uprightness stands in stark contrast to the hypocrisy of so many of the more conventional religions. Therefore, there is no crime in this man who has faithfully honored the fine principles of his faith. Let us crucify no more people for being better than *we* are. (p. 232)

Within this apparent compliment to Mormonism (and in the context of the novel, Brother Paul is sincere) is an inherently dangerous attitude toward the Church. Lee is exonerated primarily because he has divested himself of Mormonism's historical and doctrinal claims as a revealed religion. But Lee is wrong, and so is Brother Paul. Joseph Smith, the Book of Mormon, plural marriage, and the earlier teachings on blacks and priesthood are essential to Mormonism; without them it would cease to differ from "more conventional religions."

Yet it is precisely this background that Brother Paul aids Lee in rejecting: "What *is*," Lee repeated. "I have been haunted by what *was*." Then his face glowed — literally. "We have no further business in Hell," Jesus said. "Hell itself has no business existing" (p. 233). With that, Lee leads Paul and an entourage of animation-shadows out of the hell of their own imaginings.

In the final volume, *Faith of Tarot*, Brother Paul descends with Lee into an animated-Hell to confront Satan himself. References to Mormonism diminish, since Lee has shed many of his "flawed" characteristics — all related to LDS doctrines. He now represents a purified Christianity. Brother Paul observes that Therion, a devil-worshipper, had, "in his fashion, just been tested as crucially as Lee had been in Dante's Hell — and profited as much" (p. 10).

Yet Lee's only profit was his rejection of his past — the theological and historical backgrounds of Mormonism — in favor of a rootless, modern "righteousness." The few remaining allusions to Mormonism revert to stereotypes: Mormons disapprove of laughter; Mormons are polygamous; and Mormons see sex as simultaneously to be desired and to be repressed.

Ultimately, in spite of his obvious knowledge of Mormon teachings and his respect for Lee as a character, Anthony presents as lopsided a portrait of Mormon thinking and doctrine as the other writers. He says little about Joseph Smith or revelation. Polygamy and the Church's earlier stand on the blacks become flaws in Lee's character; but to remove them necessitates denying the Church's claim to revelation and consequently makes of Mormonism just another conventional religion. In short, Mormonism is treated stereotypically. References exist primarily to elicit programmed responses in readers. Given the theoretical framework of science fiction, this attitude is perhaps understandable and self-propagating.

Science fiction assumes that the future is yet undetermined and is therefore an appropriate subject for speculation. It rests, as Darko Suvin argues, on what can be known objectively and rationally: science and technology, the changes they engender in human societies, factual knowledge and extrapolations from that knowledge.<sup>6</sup> Even the generally accepted name for the genre suggests this emphasis on the rationally knowable. Suvin defines the *science* as the element of cognition, while the *fiction* is the element of estrangement — that which sets science fiction apart from mainstream literature.

Mormons who choose to write science fiction are partially limited by this perception of its purposes and functions. Unless they concentrate on theology to the detriment of fiction, they must tacitly accept the assumptions of science fiction and introduce religious motifs tangentially or symbolically. The recent television series, *Battlestar Galactica* suggests Mormon elements throughout, as with the ongoing search for the planet Kobol. Yet there is little specifically related to LDS doctrines and teachings in the series. Sandy and Joe Straubhaar, in "Science Fiction and Mormonism: A Three-Way View," refer to Larson's productions as "wholesome family entertainment which don't betray many Mormon ideas except on the level of detail."<sup>7</sup> They note, for example, the Council of Elders and a Quorum of Twelve, even though these officials have no particularly religious functions. Beyond this, there is little to identify the series with LDS thinking; it remains essentially popularized science fiction.

Orson Scott Card, a Mormon who has attained some prominence as an author of science fiction, illustrates the uncomfortable exchange between science fiction and Mormonism. Other than generalized analogues in *Capitol* (New York: Ace, 1979), and *The Worthing Chronicles* (New York: Ace,

<sup>6</sup> In their definitions of science fiction, Suvin, Gunn, Scholes and Rabkin, and Tzvetan Todorov (*The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, trans. Richard Howard. [1970; reprint ed., Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980]) have all emphasized the importance of technology and technological change. Gunn, for example, considers the rise of technology as one of four preconditions to the formulation of the genre.

<sup>7</sup> Sandy and Joe Straubhaar, "Science Fiction and Mormonism: A Three Way View," *Sunstone* 6 (July/Aug. 1981): 56.

1983), and references in stories such as "Quietus" (in *Unaccompanied Sonata and Other Stories* [New York: Dial, 1981] pp. 120–33), there is little specifically Mormon material in his novels and short stories. His writing is overt science fiction — extrapolative and speculative. Yet he has been accused of not being Mormon enough, of ignoring the moral and theological potentials of his background and of being "deviant" in his writing. One Mormon reader rejected *Songmaster* (New York: Dial, 1980) because Card includes a brief (and, in terms of the developing narrative line, necessary) homosexual encounter. Similarly, the Straubhaars "find it regrettable that a skillful author whom we would like to be proud of as a fellow Saint . . . has not consistently written more that is recognizably religious and thematically 'Mormon.'" <sup>8</sup> They emphasize the religious possibilities in science fiction, rather than the science fiction Card has actually produced.

Another recent work of science fiction clearly illustrates the opposite danger Mormon authors face when they write science fiction. Gerald Lund's *The Alliance* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983) is a book with a message, and to the extent that the message is relayed, the novel succeeds. To explore what seems a particularly LDS viewpoint — the free agency of all human beings to make moral decisions — Lund uses the conventions of science fiction.

Set in Montana eighteen years after the "termination of civilization" through widespread warfare and the resulting devastation, this novel presents a new perspective on our world. New technologies are metaphors for developments beyond (yet to a degree within) our times: silicon-chip implants control the brain and its impulses; computer watches provide constant, 1984-style monitoring of all citizens and cause their deaths should they act counter to the interests of the Major and his ostensibly utopian Alliance. Through the eyes of protagonist Eric Lloyd we see ourselves as we are and as we may become.

As Lloyd leaves his valley village, he confronts the complexities of the Alliance of Four Cities and moves toward open conflict with the electronic monitoring systems. Thus far, the novel seems straightforward science fiction, yet an undercurrent, present from the first pages, suggests that Lund has purposes other than merely creating an alternate future. He has essentially reversed the process noted in Farmer, Anthony, and the others. Where they used LDS doctrine as stereotype, Lund now uses science fiction itself as stereotype.

The narrative begins with the virtual destruction of human civilization. The opening sentence reads simply: "Before the world ended, the place was known as Star Valley, Wyoming" (p. 1). Although the villagers have remained totally isolated from outside contact for eighteen years, Lund does not develop the vision of nuclear catastrophe or apocalypse. The landscapes are lush and verdant rather than devastated. In one instance, a particular location had sustained a direct nuclear hit — yet it is now, after less than two decades, supporting life and being farmed. While it might be possible to reconcile both visions by speculating about the nature of future weaponry, Lund does not do so.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

Lund's computerized watches and silicon-chip implants seem as complex as Anthony Burgess's "Reclamation Treatment" in *A Clockwork Orange* (New York: Norton, 1962) or Piers Anthony and Robert Margroff's surgical implants in *The Ring* (New York: Ace, 1968). In each of these novels, the technological advancement or device played a key role in defining the theme of the novel.

Burgess's treatment cures his character of a propensity for violence; yet the cure itself must be reversed because the new, reformed Alex cannot survive in his society without recourse to the violence that has become the norm. Anthony and Margroff's hero, Jeff, succeeds in removing the device from his finger, but spends the rest of the novel discovering that, given humanity's fragmented knowledge of circumstances and emotional inability to think clearly and directly, we *need* controlling devices. The original ring had been flawed in its programming; the "Ultra Conscience" unilaterally forbids any violence. But Jeff discovers that some violence is necessary. The ring becomes a symbol of freedom which Jeff willingly resumes: "My armor will be the ring. . . . A ring that knows when to restrain *itself* as well as the wearer. An impractical morality never did anyone much —"; Jeff breaks off, but the implication is that the phrase would end with "good" (p. 253).

By comparison, Lund's implants and watches seem largely stereotypic. They are never fully explained, nor does he present any detailed history of their development. More critically, when the time comes, Eric and his friend Cliff Cameron remove them with notable ease — from which point, the devices simply fade away as Lund moves into an action-packed conclusion based on reprisal and violence. Toward the end, the heroine is threatened with implant-generated torture, but the threat is never realized.

As science fiction, *The Alliance* is stilted, largely because the novel seems less concerned with speculation and extrapolation than with assertion. Its thesis is clearly drawn from LDS doctrine: "Even God, with all his incredible majestic power and infinite knowledge, chooses not to force men to be good. And the reason is clear. When man has no choice but to do good, there's no point in calling him moral. Men cannot be good without making that choice themselves. They can be made to act in good ways, but they cannot *be* good" (pp. 128–29). This sentiment is repeated almost verbatim several chapters later: "Even infinite power cannot make men *be* good. You can make them *act* in good ways, but to really *be* good, an individual must choose good things freely. It's man's most basic and sacred stewardship — to serve as the guardian of his own behavior" (p. 181). The thesis is undeniably LDS — but its overt introduction, couched in the language of religion, limits the novel as science fiction.

Instead of extrapolative, speculative, often painful probing into the possibilities of human character, such as we find in Burgess or Anthony and Margroff, Lund simply asserts. In *A Clockwork Orange* and *The Ring*, the writers create a sense of discovery; the thesis develops gradually throughout the novel until the final, conclusive awareness. The reader — like the characters — must discover the "message" of the novels. Lund, on the other hand, identifies his thesis early and devotes the rest to its support. However powerful *The Alliance* may be as theological statement — and the dust jacket declares that it "makes

a stunning statement about free agency in a gripping and entertaining way" — it falters as science fiction.

It appears, then, that Mormon writers who approach science fiction frequently find themselves either subordinating the conventions and structures of science fiction to more open philosophizing about theological principles (which is in some senses antithetical to the nature of science fiction) or condemned for writing within the framework of their chosen genre and subordinating theological or doctrinal considerations to it. Yet there are essential differences between science fiction (which represents what Todorov classifies as the "scientific marvelous," that is, technological and mechanical marvels)<sup>9</sup> and religious writings, which incorporate what is traditionally called the "Christian marvelous," a world view compatible with the workings of divinity in human affairs. To expect an author to blend such variant forms, just because he happens to be a Mormon, may be unfair.

Mormonism, of course, openly espouses the "Christian marvelous." Not only is Mormonism based on subjective foundations, but it has also replaced, perhaps more than any other major denomination, a scientifically postulated future with an age built upon the revelation and restoration of true religion. Science may play a part in that future; the Church is noted for encouraging scientific study and for incorporating technology into its work. But within the framework of Mormon perception, science as a mode of knowing is subordinate to revelation. Computers and microfilm replace hand-written documents, not because they are inherently superior but because they increase the potential of the Church to accomplish its work. Science is important among members, but not as an ultimate end. The "scientific marvelous" that characterizes science fiction is subordinate to revelation.

Additionally, because of its basis in on-going revelation, Mormonism can know much about the truths of the future. Science fiction, conversely, has not seriously claimed to be a prophetic literature for several decades. Most contemporary critics and writers see its role as monitory and adaption-promoting, rather than predictive. They are concerned, not with what *will* be, but with what *might* be, given specific circumstances. They also frequently extrapolate from the present, creating possible futures which in turn reflect back to and comment directly on that present. Ursula K. LeGuin's *The Left Hand of Darkness* (New York: Walker, 1969), for example, does not prophesy that in our distant future we will contact a race of perfect androgyns, like those on her planet Gethen. Instead, she creates a science-fictional world where sexual classification becomes literally a matter of choice. Into that world, she intrudes one of us, a human whose sex is permanently fixed. By doing so, she creates not prophecy but metaphor, and the novel becomes a means by which she can investigate sexual stereotyping within our own society.

A further complication arises because, if science fiction is to succeed, the reader must accept the reality of the world portrayed. For many Mormons — and for many religious readers in general — nothing "unreal" can be permitted to interfere with "reality." If the reader cannot willingly enter into the

<sup>9</sup> Todorov, *The Fantastic*, p. 56.

fictive world and share in what Tolkien has called sub-creation, or William Irwin the "game of the fantastic,"<sup>10</sup> then to that extent science fiction fails. A reader disturbed by Anthony's overt restructuring of Book of Mormon history and equally overt sexual references in the Tarot trilogy may find it difficult to understand his underlying purposes and thesis. After all, the novels are already "false," so what would be the purpose in reading them?

Given these assumptions, science fiction and religion — and Mormonism in particular — seem essentially incompatible. One asks the questions, as Gunn says, while the other answers them. Based as it is upon revelation and prophetic insight, Mormonism's absolutist stance is bound to color the responses of a genre like science fiction. The only ways such a literary form can deal with such a religion is to reduce it to stereotypes as did Watson and Ing, or to strip it of its claims to being a unique mode of knowing, as Anthony did. In either case, the result is the same — allusions that provide easily accessible images for short-cut representations of ideas and attitudes outside the realm of science fiction.

On the other hand, in order to assimilate science fiction, Mormonism seems either to subordinate the fictive forms to the larger purposes of salvation and alter the genre into something else (Gunn argues for "parable," in its theological sense), or to entertain momentarily and imaginatively perspectives drawn from other worlds. Readers must agree, for the duration of the reading experience, that although such futures will not exist, given the principles of revelation and prophecy they *could* exist.

In *The New Awareness: Religion Through Science Fiction*, Patricia War-  
rick and Martin Harry Greenberg juxtapose the twin modes of science and religion: "Each serves a similar function: to help man shape his universe enough to make it comprehensible. Religion has its poetic or intuitive language, using myths to express its images of the universe. Science uses hypotheses and models. To ask which is true is a meaningless question. Each is a different way of perceiving the cosmos, of shaping reality."<sup>11</sup> The more critical question, they suggest, is "Does the myth or model function? Does it provide a guide that makes life meaningful and significant?" In the novels I have discussed, the answers seem to be that one or the other can function fully within the fictions — but not both. If the province of science fiction is extrapolation and speculation about future states, then it cannot approach Mormonism from the direction of doctrine and teachings, since those are the precise elements of Mormonism which reveal the future that science fiction wishes to explore. And since Mormonism is a revelatory religion, it reduces science fiction itself to the level of cliché and stereotype, and subordinates the open speculation — the "cognitive estrangement" — essential to science fiction.

<sup>10</sup> W. R. Irwin, *The Game of the Impossible: A Rhetoric of Fantasy* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976). See also Scholes and Rabkin, *Science Fiction*, p. 7.

<sup>11</sup> P. xii. The editors note that the collection of stories will explore "the fundamental questions asked by various religions." The book purposely does not provide answers, for "the hope of the editors is that out of the dialogue the reader carries on with the ideas of the stories, he will develop his own answers. Self-created answers are, finally, the only sustaining answers" (p. xi). Their stated purpose is to suggest ways in which contemporary man can face the complexities of his world by holding both views simultaneously — the scientific and the religious — indicating that for the moment at least, the two seem incompatible.