

BIBLICAL THEMES IN SCIENCE FICTION

SBL Press

# BIBLE AND ITS RECEPTION

Robert Paul Seesengood, General Editor

*Editorial Board:*

Lisa Bowens

Stephen R. Burge

Siobhan Dowling Long

J. Cheryl Exum

Michael Rosenberg

Number 6

SBL Press



BIBLICAL THEMES  
IN SCIENCE FICTION

*Edited by*

Nicole L. Tilford and Kelly J. Murphy

SBL Press



**SBL PRESS**

**Atlanta**

Copyright © 2023 by SBL Press

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by means of any information storage or retrieval system, except as may be expressly permitted by the 1976 Copyright Act or in writing from the publisher. Requests for permission should be addressed in writing to the Rights and Permissions Office, SBL Press, 825 Houston Mill Road, Atlanta, GA 30329 USA.

Library of Congress Control Number: 2023934289

SBL Press

---

---

## CONTENTS

Abbreviations .....	vii
Introduction	
Nicole L. Tilford and Kelly J. Murphy .....	1
Adam, Eve, and Lilith	
Krista N. Dalton .....	15
The Tower of Babel	
Tom de Bruin .....	35
Noah's Ark	
Nicole L. Tilford .....	57
The Handmaid	
Rhonda Burnette-Bletsch .....	85
The Utopian City	
Steven J. Schweitzer .....	103
The Land	
Jackie Wyse-Rhodes .....	121
Babylon	
Jason A. Staples .....	145
Messiah/Christ	
Frank Bosman .....	167

Resurrection and Afterlife	
James F. McGrath .....	187
Apocalypse	
Kelly J. Murphy .....	207
Reading from the Twilight Zone: An Afterword	
Christine Wenderoth .....	239
Contributors.....	253
Index of Ancient Sources.....	255
Index of Modern Scholars.....	260
Index of Science Fiction Works.....	263

SBL Press

---

---

## ABBREVIATIONS

A.J.	Josephus, <i>Antiquitates judaicae</i>
ABD	Freedman, David Noel, ed. <i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> . 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
AJS Rev	<i>The Journal of the Association of Jewish Studies Review</i>
ASAP/Journal	<i>Association for the Study of the Arts of the Present</i>
b.	Babylonian Talmud
2 Bar.	2 Baruch
EJL	Early Judaism and Its Literature
EncJud	Skolnik, Fred, and Michael Berenbaum, eds. <i>Encyclopedia Judaica</i> . 2nd ed. 22 vols. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007.
Eruv.	Eruvin
Gen. Rabl	Genesis Rabbah
Hag.	Hagigah
Hist.	Herodotus, <i>Historia</i>
Int	<i>Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology</i>
JBR	<i>Journal of the Bible and Its Reception</i>
JCS	<i>Journal of Cuneiform Studies</i>
JHS	<i>Journal of Hebrew Scriptures</i>
JIBS	<i>Journal for Interdisciplinary Biblical Studies</i>
JJS	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
JLA	<i>Justice League of America</i>
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
Jub.	Jubilees
LHBOTS	The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
Lit	<i>Lit: Literature Interpretation Theory</i>
NIB	Keck, Leander E., ed. <i>The New Interpreter's Bible</i> . 12 vols. Nashville: Abingdon, 1994–2004.

<i>NIDB</i>	Sakenfeld, Katharine Doob, ed. <i>The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i> . 5 vols. Nashville: Abingdon, 2006–2009.
NIV	New International Version
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NTL	New Testament Library
Num. Rab.	Numbers Rabbah
<i>PRSt</i>	<i>Perspectives in Religious Studies</i>
<i>RelSRev</i>	<i>Religious Studies Review</i>
RM	Ra'ya Mehemna
Sanh.	Sanhedrin
SemeiaSt	Semeia Studies
Shabb.	Shabbat
<i>SJOT</i>	<i>Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament</i>
<i>Symp.</i>	Plato, <i>Symposium</i>
WW	<i>Word and World</i>

SBL Press



---

---

## INTRODUCTION

NICOLE L. TILFORD AND KELLY J. MURPHY

The Bible and science fiction. At first glance, the two seem to be opposites. One remembers the past; the other looks to the future. One is revered as sacred by people all around the world; the other is often indifferent or even hostile to religion. But which is which?

The Bible, of course, is a collection of texts written two thousand or more years ago. These texts record the relationship of a people with their God from creation, through destruction, and toward restoration. For Jews, the Bible (the Tanak) consists of twenty-four books, including legal codes, sayings of and stories about prophets and kings, and miscellaneous writings. Christian Bibles (the Old and New Testaments) include additional texts, notably stories about Jesus of Nazareth, whom Christians view as the Son of God and savior of the human race. It is misleading, in other words, to talk about “the Bible” as though it were a singular book. There is no *one* Bible; rather, there are *many* Bibles: Jewish Bibles, Orthodox Christian Bibles, Roman Catholic Bibles, Protestant Bibles, even variations within each major tradition. Yet, regardless of tradition, for the modern reader, the contents of these texts are fixed, they clearly take place in the past, and, for many, they count as sacred history.

Science fiction, however, is a more recent invention. Although elements of the genre can be traced back further (see Roberts 2005), science fiction as a recognizable category is largely the product of the late nineteenth–early twentieth century, a time of growing scientific optimism and religious skepticism. The name of the genre itself derives from pulp magazine publisher Hugo Gernsback (1926), who viewed “scientifiction” as a tool by which to teach the public about new scientific discoveries. Today, science fiction works vary widely, and there is an ever-expanding list of subgenres, each with its own unique characteristics. There are “hard” science fiction works that are grounded in “known

scientific principles” (e.g., Cixin Liu’s 2008 novel *The Three Body Problem*), and there are “soft” science fiction works where there might be “little awareness of science at all” (e.g., Walter M. Miller’s 1960 novel *A Canticle for Leibowitz*).<sup>1</sup> There are cli-fi works that explore the effect of climate change on society (e.g., Margaret Atwood’s *Oryx and Crake*) and space westerns that look for a brighter future among the wilderness of the stars (e.g., *Star Trek*). There are dystopian works that examine the breakdown of society and cyberpunks that contrast societal failure with technological achievement (e.g., *Altered Carbon*, 2002). There are even authors who are regularly cited as science fiction writers who reject the label. For example, Margaret Atwood, whose 1987 novel *The Handmaid’s Tale* won that year’s Arthur C. Clarke Award for Best Science Fiction, “prefers the term ‘speculative fiction,’ which she defines as stories set on Earth and employing elements that already exist in some form, like genetic engineering, as opposed to more wildly hypothetical science fiction ideas like time travel, faster-than-light drives, and transporters” (“Margaret Atwood on Science Fiction, Dystopias, and Intestinal Parasites,” 2013).

Scholars often note how difficult it is to define science fiction. After all, as David Seed explains,

it has previously been explained as a combination of romance, science, and prophecy (Hugo Gernsback), “realistic speculation about future events” (Robert Heinlein), and a genre based on an imagined alternative to the reader’s environment (Darko Suvin). It has been called a form of fantastic literature and an historical literature. (2011, 1)

For these reasons, in his *Science Fiction: A Very Short Introduction*, Seed declines to offer one definition of the term, for “that way madness lies.” With Seed and others, this volume does not attempt to offer a definitive definition of what science fiction is or what counts as science fiction, instead recognizing the diverse and ever-shifting identities of science fiction.<sup>2</sup> Regardless of precise definitions, we recognize that science fiction has been and continues to be a form of popular entertainment, amazing

---

1. For the distinction between these categories, see Wolfe 2005, 18, 21.

2. For readers interested in the debates about what constitutes science fiction, see Hubble and Mousoutzani 2013; Latham 2014; and Seed 2011, as well as their extensive bibliographies.

the public with stories about fantastic worlds, alien peoples, and marvelous inventions. These stories are often set in the future, or at least an alternate present, and speculate about what might be.

Yet, one does not need to dig deep to see that the differences between biblical texts and science fiction are not as stark as they first appear. From the modern perspective, biblical texts relate events of the past, but from the perspective of those who first compiled and transmitted them, biblical texts also speculated about the future. Biblical prophets, for example, harshly criticized the religious practices of their day, spoke of a time to come when wickedness would be wiped away, and dreamed of a world in which the righteous would flourish. Biblical texts also contain alternate presents: stories such as the book of Jonah and the book of Judith (preserved in some Christian Bibles) are entertaining fictions designed to tell deeper religious truths.

Moreover, events in biblical texts are often as outlandish as science fiction narratives. People build towers that are so tall they reach the heavens. They construct vessels that save the last remaining life on earth. They die and come back to life. Historical biblical narratives speak of entering wondrous lands and meeting strange peoples, and apocalyptic visions use imagery that rivals even the most fantastic science fiction narrative. Today, biblical texts may seem comfortable and familiar, but when they were first transmitted, they were often as bizarre as tales of extraterrestrials and wormholes are to us.

Conversely, science fiction narratives are sometimes outlandish, but they are also often chillingly familiar. When heroes are not out gallivanting across the cosmos, they are next door, in the school yard or the ghetto, struggling against social injustices and moral inequalities that are all too recognizable. They consider past failings and suggest future solutions in the same way that biblical narratives use the past to dictate the future. In fact, many science fiction authors borrow their narratives directly from biblical texts, and even the most antireligious science fiction narratives explore the same themes as biblical narratives: trust, hubris, justice, peace.

Many people argue that science fiction asks something of its readers—or, perhaps, *does* something to them. Indeed, one of the most famous and oft-cited definitions of the genre is from theorist Darko Suvin (2016, 15), who calls science fiction the “literature of cognitive estrangement.” According to this view, science fiction forces readers to question their suppositions about the world and reflect on reality in new, possibly transformative, ways. Harsh dystopian regimes, for example, compel

readers to look closely at their own social interactions, while the compassion of extraterrestrials encourages audiences to reconsider what it means to be human. As science fiction and fantasy author Ursula Le Guin (1979, 19) argues, this “distancing, the pulling back from ‘reality’ in order to see it better, is perhaps the essential gesture” of science fiction. In this, science fiction is not too distant from biblical texts, many of which urge their readers to rethink what they know about reality: in biblical texts, punishment becomes a learning opportunity, exile builds kingdoms, and death transforms into new life. Biblical texts and science fiction works both deliver engaging, even if often terrifying, escapes from daily life. But they do so in such a way that provides an opportunity for their audiences to see things anew, from a slightly alternative space, and, perhaps, to see it better.

Furthermore, science fiction is not as antireligion as it is often characterized to be. In fact, many science fiction narratives privilege scientific thought and criticize religion as a backward mentality. Yet, alien worlds are filled with unique religious practices, and characters routinely search for and even find the divine. Some science fiction franchises are so popular that they have become cult-like in their own right. Fans gather each week at the same time and the same place to experience the next installment in their favorite series. They take yearly pilgrimages to conferences, where they dress in attire made special for the event and meet with select representatives (authors, actors, artists). They pay large sums for franchise merchandise, the rarest of which take on almost the status of relics. Official narratives—those produced by the franchise’s creators or licensees—become canon, while fan fiction and unpopular narratives develop as apocrypha. Science fiction may be antireligious at times, but it sure looks like religion.

The Bible is not science fiction, and science fiction is not the Bible. But they are part of the same creative impulse: the human desire to dream, to consider worlds unseen, to speculate on what might be. Although unlikely allies, they work in tandem to push humanity toward a better state.

### The Contents of This Volume

Designed to introduce undergraduates and the general public to the basic contours of the subject, this volume examines one piece of this relationship: the direct appearance of biblical themes and narratives in science fiction. In doing so, *Biblical Themes in Science Fiction* enters a number

of long-standing conversations, including critical scholarship on religion and science fiction. Previous scholarly work on the intersections between the Bible and science fiction have approached the topic from a number of angles, often focusing on the ways in which broader religious concepts such as transcendence, morality, canon, and the sacred have impacted the development of the genre (McGrath 2011; Simkins 2016; Grigg 2018).<sup>3</sup> Others have surveyed how specific Christian themes such as divinity, creation, providence, the messiah, the apocalypse, and the church have influenced the entire genre (McGrath 2016; McKee 2007) or a particular corpus of science fiction, such as *Doctor Who* (Crome and McGrath 2013) or *Star Trek* (Neese 2016). Additionally, a 2021 issue of the *Journal for Interdisciplinary Biblical Studies* entitled “The Bible and Speculative Fiction” featured articles that explored the intersections of biblical texts, biblical interpretation, and science fiction from several angles. For example, Shayna Sheinfeld (2021) traces the religious tensions in *Battlestar Galactica* (2003–2009) with a particular focus on the character of Gaius Baltar and how he might be understood when read alongside the biblical figure of Abraham, particularly in early Jewish interpretation. Others, such as Frauke Uhlenbrauch’s (2015, 2016) monograph and edited collection, focus on biblical texts and the way science fiction can be used to understand and interpret the Bible. For example, Uhlenbrauch (2015, 195) writes, “If we take into account the cognitive estrangement [science fiction] texts are supposed to evoke in their readers by juxtaposing a world in which one or more aspects are thoroughly unfamiliar, one notices that the contemporary Bible reader is in fact reading stories about an unfamiliar far away world.”

In contrast, *Biblical Themes in Science Fiction* explores how biblical themes influence what we call science fiction. In other words, rather than using a contemporary category to look back at ancient genres, this volume traces how elements of the biblical materials appear in science fiction. How, for example, does the story of creation from the book of Genesis get picked up and used by science fiction authors? Or how do stories of spaceships fleeing doomed worlds draw on the biblical account of Noah

---

3. In a similar vein, scholars have also focused on other modern genres and their relationship to the biblical material. Readers who are interested in fantasy, a genre that at times overlaps with science fiction, are pointed to Aichele and Pippin 1992, 1997, and 1998. Garber 2021 is also a helpful exploration of the biblical theme of prophecy in popular fantasy and science fiction.

and the flood? Additionally, the goal of this volume is different from some of the previous work on the relationship between the Bible and science fiction. Much (though certainly not all) of the existing literature on the Bible and science fiction seeks to “deepen and encourage” the faith of its readers (Neese 2016, xxi), “help [readers] as they reflect on their own beliefs” (McGrath 2016, 4), or uncover how science fiction can be used as a “spiritual tool” to “forg[e] the faith of the future” (McKee 2007, xiv). In contrast, *Biblical Themes in Science Fiction* focuses on biblical narratives and themes more broadly, without presupposing a particular religious viewpoint.

In what follows, each contributor introduces a biblical theme and/or narrative, tracing it as it appears throughout twentieth- and twenty-first-century science fiction. The authors then focus on one example of science fiction—a novel, a film, a television show, or a video game—and how the biblical themes and/or narratives are invoked and, often, changed by the science fiction authors. The examples the writers of this volume turn to in their explorations represent the diversity inherent in science fiction, from hard science fiction to soft, from space operas to postapocalyptic tales. They are not exhaustive, nor are the themes they are chosen to represent. Rather, they are intended to illustrate key connections between biblical narratives and science fiction and provide a solid foundation for further exploration.

In “Adam, Eve, and Lilith,” Krista N. Dalton reviews the creation accounts found in the book of Genesis, including their themes of gender difference, power structure, and the human quest for knowledge. Dalton then outlines how the rabbis understood Eve, who is named only in Gen 3, to be the second woman created; the first woman, unnamed in Gen 1 but whom the rabbis called Lilith, fled from Adam and became known as the mother of demons. Eve and Lilith became archetypal enemies: “great mother of humanity versus mother of demons, a chaste wife versus a willful temptress, bearer of life versus bringer of death.” Science fiction writers, as Dalton explains, draw on the themes found in the creation stories as they explore the future of humanity. Adam and Eve, and sometimes Lilith, become paradigms for seeing humanity as separate from and perhaps better than the other creatures. Here Dalton focuses especially on Octavia Butler’s Xenogenesis trilogy, later named *Lilith’s Brood*, in which an African American woman named Lilith is the heroine of a story, chosen by an alien race to return to a destroyed Earth and begin humanity anew. Butler’s work imagines a future that challenges the typical colonization narrative often found in the writings of white male science fiction writers,

a future where Lilith—a marginalized woman—refuses to reinscribe the violence of the colonizer.

Tom de Bruin's "The Tower of Babel" explores the brief biblical narrative of Gen 11:1–9, a story about a time when humans all spoke the same language and tried to build a tower to heaven, only to be interrupted by the deity, who worried that this was "only the beginning of what they will do; nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them" (Gen 11:6 NRSVue). In response, God confused the humans so that they could no longer understand one another, scattering them across the world. In the biblical account, as de Bruin argues, "the story functions as an etiology of linguistic and national diversity and as a warning against human arrogant audacity." The "curse of Babel," wherein God creates languages and nations, eradicates any possible human unity. Both literal tower building as a sign of human ambition and hubris as well as the curse of Babel appear widely throughout science fiction, often used as mechanisms through which authors critique their present, including human technological advancement. De Bruin concentrates in particular on Samuel R. Delaney's 1966 novel *Babel-17*. The novel explores how a new language—Babel-17—is created to be used as a weapon in an intergalactic war. The novel draws upon the biblical account to scrutinize the role of language in human behavior and relationships and the possibility of technological advancement gone wrong.

In "Noah's Ark," Nicole L. Tilford illustrates the long tradition of imagining what—and, especially, who—might be worth saving if the world were coming to an end. Embedded in the biblical book of Genesis is one of the world's oldest, and most famous, ark narratives, Gen 6–9. This narrative recounts the story of Noah and his family, who are saved by God from a divinely sent, world-destroying flood. Ark narratives such as Gen 6–9 force their audiences to consider what is most important to them and their social interactions. In the biblical text, the answer is Noah, who is saved because he alone in his generation provides a model for how humans should behave. For science fiction writers, the answer ranges from the young to the rich to the scientifically minded. Tilford traces three storylines from the British science fiction television show *Doctor Who*, each of which draws on the trope of the ark. She examines differing values these episodes place on human ingenuity and humanity's worth and how the changing answer to the question of who—or what—should be saved reflects the ever-changing contexts of the creators of the show.

Next, Rhonda Burnette-Bletsch's "The Handmaid" examines how the book of Genesis depicts tensions between wives and the women who often bore children for them, with a special focus on the story of Sarah and Hagar from Gen 16 and 21. She focuses particularly on how these narratives have been interpreted by marginalized women. As she writes, "in a patriarchal society such as ancient Israel, the bodies of women become mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion in the construction of community boundaries." Burnette-Bletsch then explores how this theme is utilized in some science fiction accounts, especially Margaret Atwood's 1983 *The Handmaid's Tale*. While the book—and the later television series of the same name—both cite the story of Rachel and Bilhah to justify the creation of handmaids who will bear children for women who are assumed to be barren, Burnette-Bletsch reveals how "the tumultuous relationship" between the central female characters of Atwood's creation is better understood as reflecting that of Sarah and Hagar. Moreover, Burnette-Bletsch exposes the way that "biblical interpretations of the powerful can be challenged by the theological intuition of the oppressed."

Steven J. Schweitzer's "The Utopian City" analyzes the ways in which science fiction draws on the idea of the utopian city, a construct that is found in both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, especially in texts that imagine a future and idealized Jerusalem (also known as Zion). As Schweitzer illustrates, utopian cities—biblical or otherwise—provide a means for authors to criticize what they understand to be the ills of the present while simultaneously offering hope for the future. Unlike the biblical tradition, however, science fiction writers often disrupt the concept of a utopian city, instead depicting such cities as "dystopia in disguise." Schweitzer traces *The Matrix* trilogy's use of Zion, depicted in the films as the only remaining human city in a world now ruled by machines. Ultimately the trilogy subverts the expected outcome. Unlike the biblical texts, where a final battle between good and evil ends with the righteous ensconced in the new Jerusalem/Zion and the unrighteous forever barred from the city, *The Matrix* rejects such a simplistic dualism: "utopias, according to the film, must be dynamic and open to change."

In the following chapter, "The Land," Jackie Wyse-Rhodes surveys how land has remained a category for reflection from the biblical texts forward, including in the genre of science fiction. Wyse-Rhodes begins by charting the various ways that the biblical texts picture land, from garden to wilderness to a lost possession in the face of exile. In both their deliberations on literal lands and the many ways that they invoke land metaphorically,



the biblical authors use the idea of land to ponder the past, present, and future. When science fiction writers reflect on land, they often do so to ask important questions about human nature, including human tendencies such as arrogance or greed and the effects such propensities have had on the earth. To highlight how science fiction often draws on biblical themes around land—including idyllic gardens, disquieting wilderness brought about by human actions, and the future of humanity on earth—Wyse-Rhodes turns to Atwood’s MaddAddam trilogy. While Atwood’s novels focus on the negative impact that humanity has had, the world depicted in the MaddAddam trilogy also offers hope for the land, found in the idea of renovation—not just for the land but for humans, too.

In “Babylon,” Jason A. Staples maps out the history of the ancient Near Eastern Babylonian Empire and the various ways it appears across the Hebrew Bible and New Testament, from the story of the tower of Babel to its appearances in the historical books, the prophets, and apocalypses. According to Staples, the name of this empire “came to be portrayed as the archetypal evil empire in early Jewish and Christian literature, the megacity representing imperial power and culture in all its oppressive splendor, the image of hubristic ambition and (ultimately doomed) human attempts to gain godlike power.” In science fiction, the trope of an evil empire based in a self-indulgent and corrupt metropolis (e.g., the Galactic Empire in *Star Wars*) abounds. The many biblical threads that focus on Babylon coalesce, as Staples demonstrates, in Fritz Lang’s 1927 film *Metropolis*, where a city deeply divided by socioeconomic class is run by a man who lives in the “new tower of Babel.” By drawing on biblical imagery of ancient Babylon, *Metropolis* offers a scathing critique of affluence that is produced at the expense of the working class, while simultaneously critiquing human confidence in technology and ideas of continued human progress.

While previous chapters explore the ways that science fiction has taken up biblical themes in television, film, and literature, in “Messiah/Christ,” Frank Bosman turns to how messianic themes and Christlike figures appear in science fiction video games. In biblical texts, a messiah is a powerful, divinely appointed figure who restores the kingdom of God. In science fiction works, messianic figures have a similar appeal, saving humanity or even the entire universe from the forces of evil. In his extended analysis, Bosman identifies the messianic hero as but one of several types of heroes in science fiction video games, all of whom enable players to experience the narrational adventure in different ways.

For example, a game with a “messianic hero” directly draws upon imagery inspired by the Christ-figure from Christianity as the gamer is led through a series of self-sacrificial actions (see, for example, the character Aurora in the game *Child of Light*). Games with a “christophoric hero” take this one step further; the gamer is provided the opportunity to voluntarily identify himself or herself as a messianic hero, choosing of his or her own accord a “(narratological) death of the game protagonist, that is, the player’s avatar.” For example, Bosman points to *Fallout 3*, a post-nuclear war narrative in which the gamer has the choice to sacrifice his or her avatar to deliver others.

James F. McGrath’s “Resurrection and Afterlife” begins by noting how, “if there is something that forms a common interest and pursuit across the domains of religion, magic, science, science fiction, and fantasy, it is surely the expression of a human desire to cheat, overcome, or at the very least postpone death.” McGrath briefly outlines the diverse perspectives on afterlife found in the biblical texts and then traces the explicit and implicit use of resurrection and afterlife in science fiction. Here the focus might be on individual immortality or the survival of humanity more broadly, and authors interrogate the limits of human science, the possible effects of a reliance on technology, and potential relationships between mind, body, and/or soul. McGrath focuses his attention on *Battlestar Galactica* and the diverse ways that the show—from its original incarnation to its later spinoffs—have wrestled with questions of resurrection and afterlife.

In “Apocalypse,” Kelly J. Murphy identifies the ways in which the genre of biblical apocalypse is used to criticize the present period of its authors, to call people to certain behaviors, to wrestle with the meaning of history, and, sometimes, to imagine a hopeful future. Murphy explores the ways in which these themes appear throughout the biblical books of Daniel and Revelation, as well as other ancient apocalypses. She then turns to the many ways that these themes have been threaded throughout contemporary apocalyptic and postapocalyptic science fiction. Often the future that contemporary science fiction writers picture is far messier than the ends imagined by the biblical writers. While some contemporary science fiction imagines a postapocalyptic world in which humans survive and perhaps even thrive, many of these stories are more pessimistic about human nature. This is particularly the case in how zombies are used in science fiction, and Murphy demonstrates this by turning to M. R. Carey’s 2014 novel *The Girl with All the Gifts*.

Finally, in “Reading from the Twilight Zone: An Afterword,” Christine Wenderoth reflects on why “biblical themes—Adam and Eve, Messiah/Christ, resurrection, apocalypse, and all the rest—transcend the pages of the Bible and enter our consciousness, our literature, our popular culture to stay alive and animate our explorations of the universe.” To do this, she invokes the category of midrash in its broadest sense. Just as midrash builds on the biblical texts while also addressing gaps in them, science fiction builds on biblical themes and narratives, reshaping them for new contexts. Wenderoth calls readers to let *both* the Bible and science fiction speak—and to “let each speak to the other.” After all, she writes, both are “here to help us to see the universe in all its mysterious, frightening, maddening, and awesome refractions.”

Separately, each essay in this volume offers a unique look at a specific biblical story, corpus, or theme; read together, the essays highlight the many voices of the collection that has come to be called the Bible. In doing so, the contributors illustrate how the biblical texts wrestle in diverse ways with questions about the past, the then-present, and the future, always interrogating what it means to be human, what it might mean to be divine, as well as what might simply *be*—both seen and unseen. Each chapter individually explores how science fiction has taken up biblical stories and themes, often in radically new ways, and thus showcases how science fiction—much like the biblical material—wrestles with time and meaning. Together the chapters demonstrate that science fiction is not the obverse of the Bible. Rather, science fiction often draws on the biblical, even as it transforms it and makes it into something new.

#### Works Cited

- Aichele, George, and Tina Pippin, eds. 1992. *Fantasy and the Bible*. *Semeia* 60.
- , eds. 1997. *The Monstrous and the Unspeakable: The Bible as Fantastic Literature*. Playing the Text 1. Sheffield: Sheffield University Press.
- , eds. 1998. *Violence, Utopia, and the Kingdom of God: Fantasy and Ideology in the Bible*. New York: Routledge.
- “The Bible and Speculative Fiction.” 2021. *JIBS* 3.1.
- Crome, Andrew, and James F. McGrath. 2013. *Religion and Doctor Who: Time and Relative Dimensions in Faith*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock.
- Garber, David G., Jr. 2021. “Biblical Prophecy and Popular Fantasy and Science Fiction.” Pages 143–290 in *The Oxford Handbook of the Bible*

- and *American Popular Culture*. Edited by Dan W. Clanton Jr. and Terry R. Clark. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Gernsback, Hugo. 1926. "A New Sort of Magazine." *Amazing Stories* 1.1.
- Grigg, Richard. 2018. *Science Fiction and the Imitation of the Sacred*. New York: Bloomsbury.
- Hubble, Nick, and Aris Mousoutzanis, eds. 2013. *The Science Fiction Handbook*. Literature and Culture. New York: Bloomsbury.
- Latham, Rob, ed. 2014. *The Oxford Handbook of Science Fiction*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Le Guin, Ursula K. 1979. *The Language of the Night: Essays on Fantasy and Science Fiction*. New York: Putnam.
- "Margaret Atwood on Science Fiction, Dystopias, and Intestinal Parasites." 2013. Wired. <https://tinyurl.com/SBLPress6708a1>.
- McGrath, James F., ed. 2011. *Religion and Science Fiction*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick.
- . 2016. *Theology and Science Fiction*. Cascade Companions. Eugene, OR: Cascade.
- McKee, Gabriel. 2007. *The Gospel according to Science Fiction: From the Twilight Zone to the Final Frontier*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox.
- Neese, Kevin C. 2016. *The Gospel according to Star Trek: The Original Crew*. Eugene, OR: Cascade.
- Roberts, Adam. 2005. *The History of Science Fiction*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Seed, David. 2011. *Science Fiction: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Sheinfeld, Shayna. 2021. "The Old Gods Are Fighting Back: Mono- and Polytheistic Tensions in *Battlestar Galactica* and Jewish Biblical Interpretation." *JIBS* 3.1:1–19.
- Simkins, Jennifer. 2016. *The Science Fiction Mythmakers: Religion, Science and Philosophy in Wells, Clarke, Dick and Herbert*. Critical Explorations in Science Fiction and Fantasy 54. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.
- Suvin, Darko. 2016. *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre*. Edited by Gerry Canavan. *Ralahine Utopian Studies* 18. New York: Lang.
- Uhlenbruch, Frauke. 2015. *The Nowhere Bible: Utopia, Dystopia, Science Fiction*. *Studies of the Bible and Its Reception* 4. Boston: De Gruyter.
- , ed. 2016. *Not in the Spaces We Know: An Exploration of Science Fiction and the Bible*. Perspectives on Hebrew Scriptures and Its Contexts. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias.

Wolfe, Gary K. 2005. "Coming to Terms." Pages 13–22 in *Speculations on Speculation: Theories of Science Fiction*. Edited by James E. Gunn and Matthew Candelaria. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow.

SBL Press