

Hell on Earth - Sin and Redemption in Science Fiction



<http://www.dfamily.com/philosophy/teach/hswtl/journal.html>

[Our culture is reflected in our arts, just as the Renaissance and Reformation were reflected in the Arts of that day. Look at Sci-Fi and compare it to today's culture vs Christianity.] Breakdown of Philosophy

Hell on Earth - Sin and Redemption in Science Fiction

BreakPoint with Charles Colson
Commentary #030624 - 06/24/2003

If you want to get depressed in hurry, watch a lot of science-fiction movies.

Think of Blade Runner, the definitive science-fiction film of our time. It portrays Los Angeles as a decayed ruin, populated by swarms of wretches who speak an unintelligible street dialect. Announcements urge people to flee the wreckage of civilization by settling on other planets.

In theological terms, the vision of the world one often gets from sci-fi films like this is one of devastation due to human sin, but without any hope of redemption: It's existential despair.

[Does this ring true?

Are there any exceptions?

Even the one SF series I can think of often speaks of a time when the world had almost been destroyed. But now (okay, 23rd or 30th century, they had evolved past that. Redemption!)

But, for the author's sake, we can overlook this. He did say "often".

What sort of philosophy underlines a world destroyed by human sin?

Does Renaissance ring a bell?]

This grim vision of the future can also be seen in the *Matrix* and *Terminator* films, where human folly and hubris have destroyed civilization and led to mankind's enslavement and possible extinction. Other science-fiction/fantasy films, like *The Crow* and *Strange Days*, depict a world where chaos, not order, is the rule. Human civilization is an out-of-control dystopia with zombie-like people escaping into drugs and virtual reality games.

These violent and depressing movies may not appeal to many of us. But as Brian Godawa reminds us in his book, *Hollywood Worldviews*, Christians need to be aware that like other elements of pop culture, science-fiction films convey worldviews and impact millions.

On the surface, the worldview of many sci-fi films resembles a Christian one. The characters' predicament isn't purely the product of some malevolent force. Instead, it's the tragic consequence of willful human action. In effect, they're punished for sins.

[Had you ever thought about that before?

Funny, isn't it, how we can deny consequences in our lives but when the consequences aren't effecting us directly, we naturally recognize them.]

But the similarity is only superficial. As Thomas Hibbs of Boston College has written, **this is nihilism, not Christianity**. While the films see "violence and ineradicable guilt as the underlying truth about the human condition," they're missing a belief in Providence: the idea that **there's a God who sustains, nourishes, and cares for everything He has made.**"

[By this time you have certainly heard Ravi Zacharias say many times, an atheist has

- 1 No Hope
- 2 No Redemption
- 3 No Recovery]

This lack makes sense when you recall how naturalism -- the belief that nature is all there is -- permeates science fiction. **Without God, redemption is no option.**

Instead of **heroes acting on Providence's behalf**, this leaves us with **protagonists who are scarcely more sympathetic than the films' bad guys** or who are like the cop in Blade Runner, described as a "one-man slaughterhouse."

[The good guy is just as violent and rough as the bad guys. The hero, if they are anything, are supermen -- sometimes, super mean men.]

What's more, in these films, the forces of evil and darkness -- if you can identify them at all -- are **almost never defeated decisively**. We never learn what happens to the cop in Blade Runner, and there seems no end to the supply of killer machines in the Terminator films. Part of this, of course, is deliberate to allow for sequel films. But part of it is that, in a world **without Providence, evil can never be decisively defeated**. So, as the credits role, L.A. is still a dystopia.



<http://www.dfamily.com/philosophy/teach/hswtl/journal.html>