

# Is Darth Vader Really Satan?

By RELIGIOUS NEWS SERVICE

Science Fiction has become box office sensation.

It's being discovered that all is not lasers and phasers and little green men from Mars.

The best of the tales — "2001: A Space Odyssey," "Star Wars," and "Close Encounters of the Third Kind" — touch a chord of human responsiveness that, some say, is almost religious.

"Star Trek," the television series that spawned a whole cult of "Trekkies" and gave the name "Enterprise" to the first U.S. space shuttle, has from its beginning conveyed a message of inter-galactic brotherhood.

Themes based on the eternal verities also pervade the newer films, now dressed up with breath-takingly spectacular effects made possible by computers and electronic advances.

The gadgetry has advanced light years beyond the now laughable papier mache props used by the Flash Gordons and Buck Rogers in movies of the '30s and '40s. Yet none of it disguises the very human qualities of such other-world creatures as Chewbacca the Wookiee in "Star Wars."

Ray Bradbury, considered the dean of present-day science fiction writers, put it this way in an article, "The God in Science Fiction," in a recent issue of Saturday Review:

"Humanity, after all, is a concept that only indirectly has to do with shape, size, color, texture, or number of fingers, limbs, heads, presence or absence of gills, tails, or, for that matter, sex.

"We sense a near-humanity with dolphins, whales, and other creatures here on Earth. On far worlds confronted by six-foot spiders, we would... no matter how dreadful their maskings, their shapes, their seeming appearance, if Christ's Spirit, or Buddha's, or Muhammad's instructed them, sit back and break bread with them, confident that they were no more or less paradoxical than ourselves, knowing that dark and light exist in us all, with the will to murder put aside more often than exercised."

It became popular in the 1960s to examine science

## Life, Liberty and Law



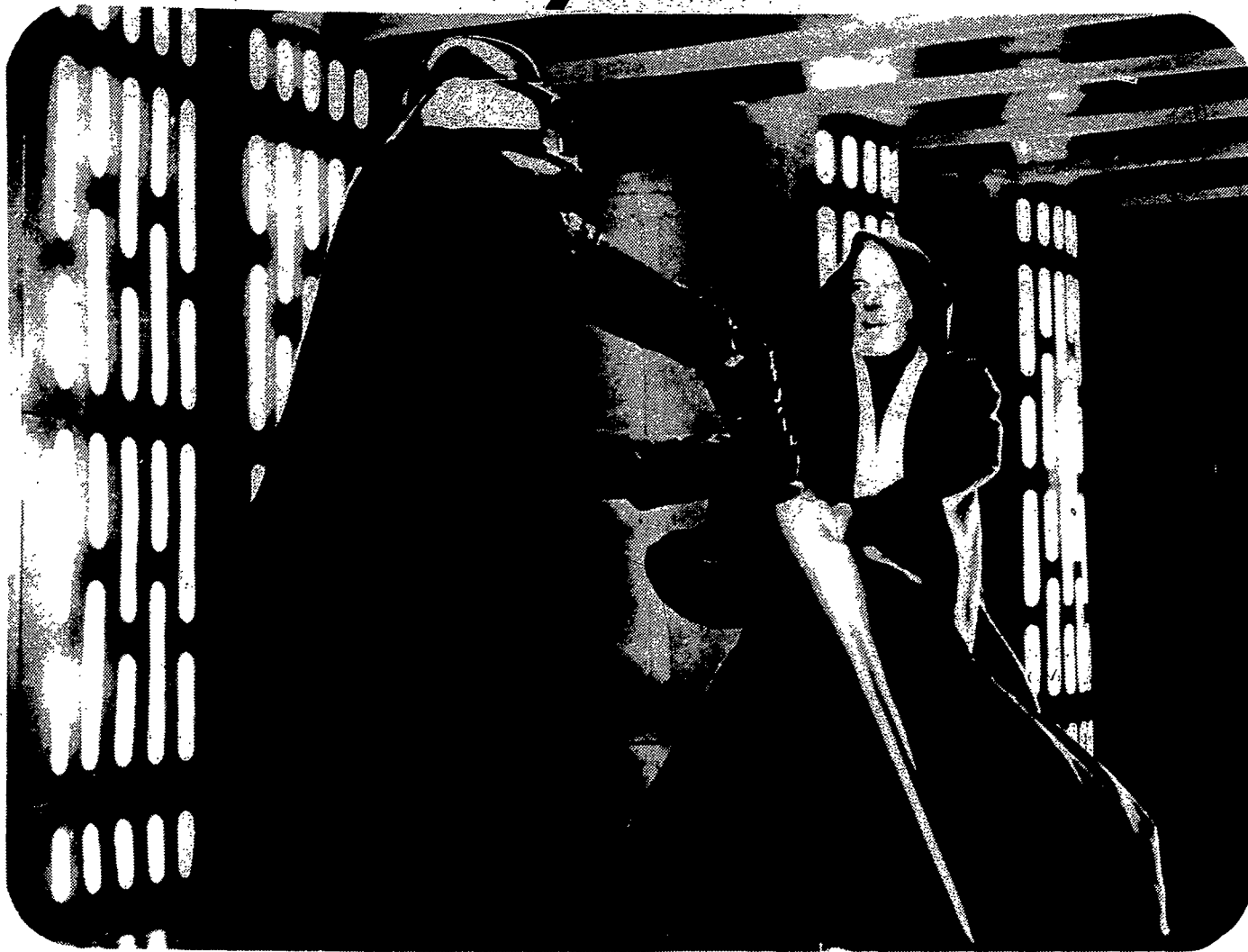
Nancy Murphy

By mid-1965, medical science had published fears surrounding the pill with special emphasis on the dangers to teenage girls. Dr. J. B. Hemsley in the Medical Journal (7/65) wrote of his concern about the pill for physically immature girls "because estrogens can cause premature closure of the growth centers. Once these centers close, normal growth is no longer possible." Other scientists noted the effects on immature pituitary glands. (Possibly the largest single group of teenagers now on the pill comes from the welfare families whom Planned Parenthood and the U.S. Department of HEW refer to euphemistically as "the sexually active poor." Both PP and HEW hope to distribute contraceptive drugs to teenagers WITHOUT PARENTAL KNOWLEDGE OR CONSENT.

Education in Love, the sex education program offered by the Rochester Catholic schools, was published in 1971, at least six years after the above information was available to educators and doctors; yet not a single word against the pill is included at the eighth grade level when artificial birth control is detailed. Even this past year when the secular news media was forced to reveal some of the dangers of the pill, the Rochester Diocese remained silent. No

word of warning, no word of explanation or clarification or advice was sent home to Catholic parents from anyone in CCD, Pre-Cana or Catholic school authority. 1977 would have been the perfect time for local Catholic educators to revive Humanae Vitae, to stress Natural Family Planning, and to emphasize the Catholic moral code. However they have failed to do so. All of the books on Humanae Vitae referred to in EIL are written by those who dissent from Humanae Vitae. No mention at all is made of Natural Family Planning.

I urge you to learn of another of the primary natural methods, the Sympto-Thermic (We have already examined BBT and the Ovulation methods). Sympto-Thermic, with exciting new developments discovered almost weekly, utilizes the physical symptoms of ovulation and, combined with the temperature shift, recognizes the fertile period. Hormonal changes give rise to physiological changes which any woman can observe: breast tenderness, intermenstrual discomfort, mood shift, mucus, varicose vein problems, complexion blemishes, ring stains on the fingers, vaginal pressure or odor etc. Please understand that the brief information in this series on NFP cannot substitute for a course in Natural Family Planning. This series is simply an introduction. Next week we shall discuss the opening of the best NFP office in Upstate New York, right here in Rochester. Complete details and assistance will come from a staff of couples who have taught NFP for many years. As it says in the 1857 charter of St. Mary's Hospital, this office is open "to those of all creeds and to those of none." Happy New Year.



Darth Vader, the symbol of ultimate evil, battles with his Light Sabre in a duel with the totally good Ben Kenobi in the George Lukas film Star Wars.

fiction for its social relevance, and relevance was found. Robert Heinlein's "Stranger in a Strange Land," and "The Moon is a Harsh Mistress" are best-selling examples.

Now, critics are focusing on some theological aspects of science fiction and discovering that many works have had religion as at least an implicit theme.

A story by pioneer science fiction writer H.G. Wells is one oft-cited example. He built his "The Time Machine" around a world in which biblical morality had been discarded for Nietzsche's concept of the "Superman," with the morals of the Anti-Christ, beyond good and evil.

But it is C.S. Lewis, the witty and intellectual advocate of Christianity, who occupies a unique place among science fiction writers. He dared write a novel from an explicitly religious viewpoint. It was, to be sure, set on a faraway planet, "Perelandra," but it is an undisguised allegory of the Fall. The novel has attained great popularity among aficionados of the genre, even those non-religious or hostilely anti-religious.

Often, however, when science fiction deals with religion, it is from a negative stance.

In Arthur C. Clarke's seminal work, "Childhood's End," for example, alien chief Karellen comments on the leader of a group which is portrayed as made up of sincere but misguided religious fanatics. Of this man, Karellen says:

"You will find men like him in all the world's religions. They know that we represent reason and science, and however confident they may be in their beliefs, they fear that we will overthrow their gods. Not necessarily through any deliberate act, but in a subtler fashion."

Several critics have drawn parallels between certain motifs in "Star Wars" and Frank Herbert's "Dune" trilogy. Harold O.J. Brown, chairman of the systematic theology department at Trinity Seminary in Deerfield, Ill., has commented that the Herbert epic "draws heavily on Jewish, Christian, and Islamic sources to produce a deeply religious, though not easily identifiable, amalgam."

Father Andrew Greely, a sociologist at the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago, has made other comparisons between religion and science fiction. Writing in The New York Times, he comments that "stories like Poul Anderson's 'Tau Zero,' Robert Heinlein's 'Stranger in a Strange Land,' and Philip Jose Farmer's 'Riverboat Trilogy' are first cousins to the Medieval mystery plays, just as the perennially popular TV 'Star Trek' series is first cousin to the Medieval morality plays (Captain Kirk as Everyman)."

But what of "Star Wars"? What do the theological implications of this film have to do with its astounding popularity?

Although most critics have drawn attention to its traditional plot of good versus evil, some analysts have raised concern about the unclear elements in the portrayals of these two forces.

Brown expresses concern that the evil depicted in "Star Wars" is "undefined and unclarified." Writing in Christianity Today, he comments, "We understand the Empire to be tyrannical, and we see its sinister genius exemplified by the black-clad, masked Lord Darth Vader. But why it is evil or wherein its evil consists is not specified."

In his Times article, Father Greeley has examined "Close Encounters of the Third Kind" from a theological perspective. He notes that "when you deal with the question of whether we are alone in the universe, you are necessarily dealing with a religious question," but warns that "if science fiction has built-in religious tendencies, its answers to religious questions are not automatically hopeful ones."

Viewing the UFO question in the light of earthly history, the priest-sociologist writes that "humankind has good reason to fear what might happen if indeed it is not alone. Human colonizers frequently wiped out 'inferior' native populations... With a record like ours we ought to live in terror of what a superior race of saucerlings would do to us."

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