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5/3/05
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Final Research Paper

Introduction

Religion and literature are two very different topics. One is completely abstract while one is based on that which is tangible. Both, however, tickle the mind and have the ability to pack a powerful punch when combined. Additionally, science has a horrible habit of clashing with religion in ways that can only be described as monolithic. Yet somehow texts are being produced which effectively combine all three: religion, literature, and science. These texts are both morally, intellectually, and creatively stimulating. One such grouping of said texts is the Ender Wiggin Saga, written by Orson Scott Card. Throughout this paper I am going to explore the way in which these areas have been molded and meshed together to produce a highly successful and widely popular book series. So what exactly are the religious undertones of Orson Scott Card's Ender Wiggin Saga? Just wait until I tell you.

Orson Scott Card

There are several reasons behind my decision to choose this topic for my research paper. Orson Scott Card has long been a favorite author of mine and although I did not realize the full degree of it at the time, has always incorporated strong religious undertones into his literary works. As I dug deeper into the world of OSC, as he is so commonly referred, I discovered the reason for the religious elements in his works. Card is not only a writer, but a publisher. He has published many websites and operates many online groups. One of these programs is a Mormon Church "virtual-village" named Nauvoo. This website is described as a general gathering place for Latter-Day Saints (LDS) to share their ideas on Jesus Christ and the Gospel. This find, was to me both astonishing and satisfying. On one hand, I was surprised to find that this author managed a religious website because it just seemed extraordinary to me that a science fiction writer would be so deeply involved with religion. On the other hand, I felt a sense of relief when I saw this website because it meant that my initial hunches were correct and that I was not doing pointless research. Due to both factual discovery and personal knowledge I feel that Card is intending the general message that God is always there. Whether we realize it or not, there is an omnipresent being that functions on a higher level than human beings. Throughout all of his works, he also reveals his feeling that this higher being is constantly watching over us. It reprimands or exemplifies the bad and rewards or lends assistance to the good. Additionally, the information I discovered on the Mormon faith was staggering. There is an entire community of information on the Mormon faith available on the internet to which I was completely oblivious. I even found material (which is used in this paper) on Dummies.com. Orson Scott Card helped the information moving process also.

Orson Scott Card's website, www.hatrack.com serves as a vehicle not only for publishing his own works and self promoting, for also as a vehicle for

publishing the work of others. Much of the work that his colleagues, students, or admirers have produced can be found on this website or connected to it by link. A valuable resource to me and an interesting addition to a personal website is the addition of the Research Section. The Research Section is an area where you can find links to related work, information on how to properly cite Card or any of the information that you may find on the site, as well as a separate area marked Student Papers. Student Papers is an area where any noteworthy paper written about Orson Scott Card is posted. To me, this was an invaluable resource because it provided me with raw information as well as a plethora of sources. Now stepping back to take in the full breadth of Card as an author and theologian, I have found that you have to look at this man from a few different angles before you can truly understand him.

Taking a look at Orson Scott Card from a different perspective, let's look at this man a writer. It is very plausible that Card wrote science fiction simply because he was interested in it. Sharing prizes and friendship with the great Ben Bova, it is no surprise that Card got into science fiction writing at all. Nor is it so much surprising as it is encouraging that a writer that focuses so much of his life on religion can write a science fiction book good enough to receive notable awards. It can be argued that Card did not write these books with the initial intention of making them allegorical (although the later novellas in The Ender Wiggin Saga are allegorical to a significant degree). Rather, Card wrote these books because he, quite simply, was interested in these topics. The religious inclusions are apparent because the man included personal information and experience; that information and experience just so happened to be heavily religious. Much the same can be said about J.R.R. Tolkien and The Lord of the Rings. These books have come under constant scrutiny for their allegorical elements. Each time the question is asked, though, Tolkien simply replies that the books were not *intentionally* written that way, but can be considered to reference the Bible if one is so inclined as to make the connection. It can also be argued that these books, although they did not begin so, developed into allegorical pieces because Card realized the connection and sought to focus on that.

God in the Machine

My feelings are torn as to what to think about how Card handled his inclusion of the God-like beings into his works. From a religious standpoint, it is unnatural for God to be depicted through a machine because that comes with the understanding that it was created. God is presented as someone who always was and always will be. So it is therefore unnatural for someone involved with religion as much as Card is, to create a supernatural figure in something that is not only unnatural, but created by man. This forces one to wonder then, was Card's intent not to say that God created us, but rather that we created God? Perhaps then he is not as religious as he leads people to believe. The argument has no foreseeable end. To take up a more congenial note, let's take a look at his deity inclusion from a science fiction standpoint.

Card built a deity out of a tried and true science fiction character, the all powerful machine. These machines stand in place of the God figure in these

novels. They display omnipresence, higher intelligence, and a working more complicated that most appear to understand. This was a good choice of character because machines have no gender, thus it leaves the ambiguity of God in tact. Also, in these future worlds, these Godlike machines have a significant amount of power thus reinforcing the belief that God has ultimate power and control. These machines can be compared to a familiar science fiction character. Hal, from the Space Odyssey series is very much like the machines thought up by Card. Hal has no direct contact with human beings, simply because he is a different life form, a digital one. Hal does, however, have influence over the people and machines that surround him. The machines in Card's works function in much the same way. They have no way of directly interacting with human beings, instead they work influences over them in order to get them to match their will. Card does not present this idea of an all powerful God without giving the reader a little extra to think about though.

Card portrays the God-figure in the series, oddly enough, as female; Jane. This is strange because coming from such a strict religious group such as that of Mormon, you would expect Card to take on the more recent (past few thousand years) view of the deity in the masculine. The Mormon faith does see God as having a feminine counterpart; a heavenly mother (Apologetics Index), but the heavenly father is still the more active and prevalent of the two. The idea of a feminine God-figure is an interesting one and which leaves Card open to ridicule from his Mormon community.

The One

Throughout the Ender Wiggin Saga, it becomes painfully clear that Ender is being compared to Jesus Christ. Now it can be reasonably argued that you can find a Jesus-protagonist parallel in almost any book. The only difference with the Ender Wiggin Saga is the overwhelming evidence in support of this parallel.

From the beginning of the series, some things make the Jesus-Ender connection very clear. Logan Mallory said it best when he wrote,

All throughout his story, people find themselves drawn to him. They love Ender, respect him as a leader with perfect capabilities, and therefore follow his every move. The group's trials grow near, and Ender becomes the commander and his twelve most trusted friends come to his side. Under Ender's guidance, they accomplish the unthinkable and save the world from destruction. This again relates to Christ and his ministry. Although many followed his teachings, twelve became the most trusted and loyal to Christ. They worked under Jesus in order to fulfill his command and preach the gospel to all. Both Jesus and Ender were amazing leaders who had a common goal of saving the world, whether literally or spiritually.
(Mallory)

The Mormon Jesus is not seen as much as a leader of his people as he is a mediator between them and the higher power (God). This compares directly to Ender because in the series, Ender holds the same position. The Formics

(buggers, sentient alien race) forge a connection with Ender that only the two parties can understand. Likewise, Ender forms a connection with Jane that only said parties can understand. It is through these connections that Ender acts as the hub of communication between these three beings/species (Mallory). Additionally, the young man also goes through a certain self discovery wherein he must come of age, and realize the full extent of his strength and power. These ideas are obviously connected with the Mormon Jesus. Another religious parallel is that in the end, Ender gets married; another allegory to the Mormon Jesus.

The Great Flood

In the final novel of the Ender Wiggin Saga, the planet Lusitania, which happens to be the planet around which the book is centered, finds itself under siege. An apocalypse countdown has been set for the planet, and the inhabitants of said planet must find a way off of the doomed sphere. In this part of the series, Ender Wiggin acts as Noah, he not only builds the escape “boats” but he also finds a place for everyone to go. This can be compared to Noah and the great floor. The inhabitants of the planet were doomed because they were deemed hazardous and a threat to the safe existence of future human life. They were however given a countdown to their time of destruction. This can be compared to when God told Noah that he was going to destroy everyone on Earth because they had become too corrupt. Ender, who goes out and finds a new place for the inhabitants to live, can be considered Noah taking the non-sinning spirits from the doomed place and to a safe one instead, where new life can begin. Card uses this area of the book to make an interesting, first-hand connection with his worldview of the eternal spirit.

The Eternal Spirit

According to Dummies.com, The Mormon worldview focuses around the central idea of the eternal spirit. Spirits have no beginning and no end. They have always existed just as God has. Life on earth is merely a test for these souls or God’s children, to see where they will end up once they shed their physical bodies and return to the spirit world. The spirit worlds for those who have gone through the tests are much the same as they are for other religions. There is a hell, a purgatory, and a heaven. Although these new worlds are only temporary and not as polar as the names imply. The final resting places for eternal spirits fall into line more with the Christian view of hell, purgatory, and heaven. Hell being all fire and brimstone, purgatory being a sea of gray and fog, and heaven being eternal happiness and joy in the presence of God. Card presents this idea in an interesting way to his readers.

Returning to a previous reference, Ender builds escape “boats” by which he evacuates the inhabitants of Lusitania to other planets when they face utter destruction. The term boat is being used here to refer to an object similar to that of a freight car with seats. No engine, no seemingly plausible transportation device, nothing. This is where Card’s Mormon worldview comes into play. Jane (the God figure) uses her power to temporary “remove” these boats from normal time and space and store them on her plane of existence for an instant, only to be returned to normal, everyday life at some predetermined location separate

from that of departure. For that brief moment when the boats coexist with Jane on a plane of existence different from the one we are used to, Ender described the feeling of bodies around him. Not normal people, but ghosts, that tried to grab on to his body and pull him right out of it. This is essentially a description of the interaction between two phases of the eternal spirit; the body-housed spirit passing through the true spirit world.

The Holy Family

Orson Scott Card is obviously a religious man. And perhaps one of the most important and most overlooked themes throughout his books not only has to do with Mormonism itself, but also a value present in all Mormons. That value is the importance of the family.

Card's 'annoyance' with today's American culture shows through in his work. He often takes a position that is opposite of what predominates the culture of America. Most of Card's stories have a family base where there is a traditional family (consisting of a mother, father and children) (Porschet, M).

This ideal is not only one that relates to most religious groups, but comes directly from Mormon beliefs. According to Dummies.com, the Mormons believe that God does not work alone. He is married and shares his power with his wife. These family values are evident throughout the series in that no one protagonist goes on to live alone. Each protagonist is matched to a partner at the least, commonly a family also.

Ender's Dogma

Ultimately, the religious undertones, whether intentional or not, in no way distract from the story or make it less enjoyable. To the average reader the allegories and religious parallels are virtually undetectable. To Mormon readers or other Christian readers, the religious elements in the Ender Wiggin Saga are much more noticeable, intentional or not.

...I believe that I present Mormon theology most eloquently when I do not speak about it at all" ("SF and Religion" 11). However, it is almost impossible to find a single Card fiction piece that does not reflect the significant spiritual values spoken of by Paul Horgan. (Porschet, A).

An interesting counterargument to the ease at which Mormon and Christian readers easily recognize the religious dogma in these stories is that sometimes these parallels are passed up simply because they are so familiar to religious readers from these groups. Alma Porschet put it best when she said,

Rather than litter his landscapes with easily identifiable Mormon tags, he assumes a distinctively LDS worldview. The results are science-fiction and fantasy novels that speak to a wide non-Mormon audience (witness his multiple awards and nominations, and the many positive reviews that do not even mention religious elements in his works) and at the same time offer careful readers insights that are compelling and moving in their religious intensity (Porschet, A).

As is in human nature, nothing can be perfect, and we must find a problem with everything. Card has been ridiculed in the past for his comments on gay-rights (Kuzinski), R rated movies (Card), and for not using all of his writing as vehicles with which to preach the word of Mormon (Porschett, A).

The main attraction of the books in the Ender Wiggin Saga is not the fancy science fiction setting, nor is it the religious references that work their way under your skin just enough so that you can barely feel them. No, the main attraction of these books is something that is universal to us all; that thing is morality. Cards books focus on issues that everyone experiences growing up, or thinks about as they get older. This main attractive element of the Ender Wiggin Saga is that every reader can relate to at least one part of Ender's life, and more often than not, *agree* with what he thought or actions he took. Card once said that he will often "have the "good characters", or hero, defend the ideas he personally finds to be true" (Porschett, M). This is understandable; no one wants to put good values in the "villain", that takes away from their imposing menace as a character. But these personal qualities along with the life experiences of the author add to the story and produce not only characters, but events and circumstances that other people can relate to and learn from.

In the end the argument is still up in the air. Did Orson Scott Card intentionally include the religious undertones in The Ender Wiggin Saga? Or was he just simply working off of what he knew? Perhaps no one can write a piece of literature that is completely unbiased? If an atheist wrote a book, it would most certainly contain at least some kind of atheistic views and mentalities. I personally feel that Orson Scott Card did a very good job of writing books that conveyed good moral messages. At the same time I feel that he did not intentionally include the religious undertones mentioned until later in the series. I think that all Card wanted to do was write something that would make a difference in people's lives.

I knew that if I could write a story that would illuminate some hitherto dark corner in someone's soul and live on in them forever, then it hardly mattered whether writing made me rich or kept me poor, put my name before the public, or left me forgotten, for I would have bent the world's path just a little, yet all would be different from then on because I had done it (Biggle 112).
(Porschett, M).

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