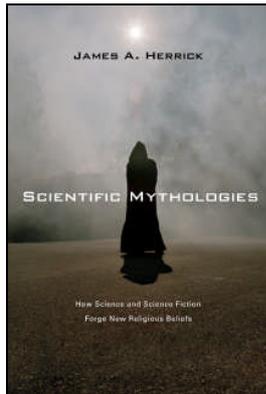


## BOOK EXCERPT



### **Scientific Mythologies:**

*How Science and Science Fiction Forge New Religious Beliefs*

288 pages, paper, \$23.00  
978-0-8308-2588-2  
Available May 2008

**James A. Herrick** is Guy Vander Jagt Professor of Communication at Hope College in Holland, Michigan. He has also written *The Radical Rhetoric of the English Deists* (University of South Carolina Press), *Argumentation* (Strata), *The History and Theory of Rhetoric* (Allyn & Bacon) and *The Making of the New Spirituality* (InterVarsity Press).

## The Truth is Stranger than Science Fiction

*“Coming in the wake of numerous books that have snidely dismissed Christian belief as a lot of wishful thinking and superstitious hokey, Scientific Mythologies is a refreshing and revealing reminder of the odd forms a longing for transcendence can take when the God who actually did come down from the heavens is rejected.”*

—**Ken Myers**, host and producer of the *Mars Hill Audio Journal*

From extraterrestrial mysticism to biotech humanity and deep space to alien gnosis, James A. Herrick offers an instructive look at why paying attention to science fiction is important for anyone who cares about where our culture may be headed.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Over the past several centuries, science fiction and the more speculative productions of scientists themselves have combined to create a virtually religious hope** in aliens, space exploration, the future and the “next step” in human evolution. From the many cultural texts devoted to these and similar topics, from the surprising interest of the scientific community in such questions and from the positive public response to speculation on such issues, it seems apparent that we are witnessing nothing less than the emergence of new transcendent narratives—new myths—to answer our deepest questions. We appear to have entered a second pagan era, complete with a new mythology in which minor deities once again descend from the stars, seek intimate involvement in our lives, direct our course into the future, invite us to join them in the skies, and even interbreed with us to create a hybrid species capable of meeting the challenges of tomorrow.

Such observations might be of minor significance were it not for the fact that our mythologies—the narratives by means of which we make sense of our existence—have a way of shaping who we are and what we are becoming. Thus, our present search for new gods may influence a wide range of political, scientific and religious discussions and decisions. It is crucially important, therefore, to attend to the cultural sources that are delivering its new myths to Western culture. If we trivialize mythic tales of alien encounters, space exploration and human evolution as “merely” entertainment, **if we dismiss all such stories as inconsequential cultural fluff, then we may find ourselves responding to these powerful narratives in another form—as public policies, social agendas and proselytizing religious movements.**

—Excerpted from *Scientific Mythologies*