

Fantasy, Fiction, Imagination

I. Definitions.

- A. fantasy: Imagination; the process or the faculty of forming mental representations of things not actually present.
- B. imagination: 1. The action of imagining, or forming a mental concept of what is not actually present to the senses (cf. sense 3); the result of this process, a mental image or idea (often with implication that the conception does not correspond to the reality of things, hence freq. *vain (false, etc.) imagination*). 2. The mental consideration of actions or events not yet in existence. 3. That faculty of the mind by which are formed images or concepts of external objects not present to the senses, and of their relations (to each other or to the subject); hence frequently including memory.
- C. fiction: The species of literature which is concerned with the narration of imaginary events and the portraiture of imaginary characters; fictitious composition. Now usually, prose novels and stories collectively; the composition of works of this class.
- D. fable: 1. a. A fictitious narrative or statement; a story not founded on fact. b. esp. A fictitious story relating to supernatural or extraordinary persons or incidents, and more or less current in popular belief; a myth or legend.
- E. parable: a. A comparison, a similitude; any saying or narration in which something is expressed in terms of something else; b. *spec.* A fictitious narrative or allegory (usually something that might naturally occur), by which moral or spiritual relations are typically figured or set forth, as the parables of the New Testament.
- F. hero: 1. *Antiq.* A name given (as in Homer) to men of superhuman strength, courage, or ability, favoured by the gods; at a later time regarded as intermediate between gods and men, and immortal. 2. A man distinguished by extraordinary valour and martial achievements; one who does brave or noble deeds; an illustrious warrior. 3. A man who exhibits extraordinary bravery, firmness, fortitude, or greatness of soul, in any course of action, or in connexion with any pursuit, work, or enterprise; a man admired and venerated for his achievements and noble qualities.
- G. discretion: Ability to discern or distinguish what is right, befitting, or advisable, esp. as regards one's own conduct or action; the quality of being discreet; discernment; prudence, sagacity, circumspection, sound judgement.

II. Preliminary thoughts.

- A. As in much of Christian life, this topic involves commandments, discretion, discernment.
- B. Is information that is not reality ever permissible?
- C. Is our Christian liberty unbounded?
- D. Can some information intake affect us negatively?
- E. Can information violate God's law?
- F. Is information necessarily evil if it is not based in reality?
- G. Can our imagination be completely shut off?
- H. Can our imagination be a good thing?
- I. Can our imagination be an evil thing?
- J. Can our imagination be our downfall?
- K. Information suitable for mature adults may not be suitable for immature children.
- L. Information suitable for mature Christians may not be suitable for immature Christians.
- M. Motive is important: of the author and the consumer.
- N. Should we make pleasure serve us or should we serve pleasure?
- O. Is Scripture the only permissible source of information?

- III. We are long past the age of fictional literature and live plays. We live in an age of that plus electronic visual fiction, fantasy games, animation, virtual reality hardware/software.
- A. For some, fiction and fantasy is nothing more than a pleasing diversion. For others, fiction and fantasy is an escape from an uncomfortable reality and/or a means to a false world that satisfies lust.
 - B. Pleasure in general can be addictive (**ISA 47:8**) but the interactive fantasies where the “entertained” actively engages in the “entertaining” are especially addictive.
 1. They cater to both the *pleasure* and the *control* longings of the heart.
 2. The Massive Multiple Online Role-Playing games are so addictive that many are unable to decouple from them and re-engage reality.
- IV. God is very interested in what we feed our minds, what thoughts are formed in our minds to dwell on, and how those formed thoughts become speech, character and action and influence worship.
- A. God demands to be worshipped in spirit and truth (**JOH 4:24**) which is seriously impeded by false ideas of God spawned from fantasy or fiction.
 - B. Evil communications corrupt good manners. **1CO 15:33**.
 - C. We speak out of the abundance of the heart/inward man. **MAT 12:34-36**.
 - D. What we think, we are. **PRO 23:7**.
 - E. We are held accountable not only for evil actions but for conceived evil thoughts. **MAT 5:28; JAM 1:15; ISA 55:7**.
- V. Imagination is a power of the mind that may be used for good or evil. **1CH 29:17-18; NAH 1:9, 11**.
- A. God holds us responsible for our imaginations but He also understands them. **1CH 28:9**.
 1. He knows why we imagine the things that we imagine.
 2. If we are struggling with our imaginations, God knows why and He can help.
 - B. Evil imaginations interfere with receiving and obeying God’s word. **JER 16:11-12**.
 - C. Evil imaginations will make you *good for nothing*. **JER 13:10**.
 - D. Vain imaginations lead to a moral free fall. **ROM 1:21**.
 - E. The gospel seeks to cast down imaginations that exalt themselves against the knowledge of God. **2CO 10:5**.
- VI. We are warned against fables that oppose the truth. **1TI 1:3-4; 4:6-7; 2TI 4:4; TIT 1:14**.
- A. The gospel is not a fable, nor did it spring from a fable. **2PE 1:16**.
 - B. The gospel is special in that it is rooted in historical fact: the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. **1CO 15:1-4**.
- VII. The above warnings do not forbid all fiction or even all fables.
- A. Since imagination may be used for good or evil, so may fiction and fable.
 - B. Christ’s parables were, by definition, “...fictitious narratives...” E.g. **MAT 21:33-40**.
 - C. Consider the fable involving talking trees. **JDG 9:7-21**.
 1. This addressed a real situation in which the men of Shechem had chosen an unsuitable man to be their king.
 2. The trees represented different types of men who might be selected as king.
 - D. Another example of a fable put to good use is **2KI 14:8-14**.
 1. This fantasy tale was also based in truth.
 2. The lesson is that those who are most boastful and presumptuous tend to overestimate their ability and so court their own destruction, especially if they enjoy

- any success. **PRO 1:32.**
- E. Consider the staged production of **2SAM 14:1-23.**
1. Joab was scriptwriter and casting director; the woman was the actress.
 2. This story shows us the power of the stage to influence men.
- F. A good measure for discerning good fiction/fantasy from evil fiction/fantasy is if the fiction/fantasy promotes evil, it should be guarded against. **PRO 19:27; 1CO 15:33.**
- G. Another measure is whether or not the fiction/fantasy produces an effect in our minds contrary to what we are told to think about in **PHIL 4:8.**
1. think: *intr.* To exercise the mind, esp. the understanding, in any active way; to form connected ideas of any kind; to have, or make, a train of ideas pass through the mind; to meditate, cogitate. (The most general verb to express internal mental activity, excluding mere perception of external things or passive reception of ideas.). b. with about, of, (on, upon arch.), over: To exercise the mind upon, or have the mind occupied with; to meditate on; to consider, attend to mentally, apply the mind to.
 2. Many ideas from what we are exposed to will pass through our minds but this is not the same as thinking upon something.
 3. If the fiction or fantasy, rather than generating a positive applying of the mind in line with **PHIL 4:8**, instead generates negative imaginations contrary to **PHIL 4:8**, that fiction or fantasy wound up being used for evil.