

1948 - 2014

DON ENSKOG

THE FOUNDER OF THE CHRISTIAN COMIC ARTS SOCIETY

A COLLECTION OF THOUGHTS, AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND RARE FACTS ON
CHRISTIAN COMIC HISTORY



This booklet is dedicated to Don Ensign's Life and Legacy.



Don Ensign: The Founder of the Christian Comic Arts Society
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INTRODUCTION

by Robert Flores

Don Ensign was truly a humble man.

I first heard of him through the CCAS newsletter in 1996, called *New Creation*. I picked up this newsletter at the Comic-Con in San Diego. I would read his articles which were packed with lots of information. His interviews with others were very well done. I also got to read more from him through the preface of the Proverbs and Parables anthology. He had included quite a lengthy history of Christian comics (an awesome resource).

In my 7 years of active involvement with CCAS (2001-2008), I was able to fellowship with him and work with him several times. My first year in going to the Comic Con with CCAS is when I first met Don. He was one of the 7 men crammed into Dave Porta's two bedroom hotel room. I remember Don and I went to the Eisner awards that year. We both wanted to go, so we took the bus together and had a nice time. It was so great: my first year being involved with CCAS and I was hanging out with CCAS's founder! Years later, I would continue seeing him at Comic-Con. I would only see him once a year because he lived in Arizona and I was in California.

In 2007, when New Creation Entertainment was gearing up its business strategy, Don and I met at Ralph's house. Being on the CCAS board, we had several conference calls with Don in Arizona. Those calls were mostly business related, but it was still great to hear Don's voice.

There were lots of email correspondence over the years, too, I can remember. Whenever I would have some ideas for some new publications, I would always run them by Don. He would always have very detailed and thought out responses.

When I was a member of the A-O apazine, I enjoyed reading his 'tribs'. His articles were informative, entertaining and always made you think.

In 2009, I wanted to finish up the CCAS 25th Anniversary Booklet. I had to finish it, because, in my mind, it was a tribute to what God had done through Don Ensign. It was a tribute to all of CCAS, but for me, I wanted to do it for Don, because I knew he would never do it himself. Long story short, I did finish designing it, and in it, he shared some of his memories of how CCAS came to be. (This 40-

page book was printed and is available through CCAS).

I think everyone in CCAS (and in Christian comics) owes something to Don Ensign. He somehow was able to mobilize a lot of lonewolf Christian comic artists into a cohesive whole (not an easy task, I might add). He was always in the background; not in the spotlight. That's what I will remember him for. God used Don Ensign in many mighty ways that are still continuing to this day. CCAS could probably exist without Don (I mean, if God wanted it to); but the fact of the matter is, is that God used Don to make CCAS exist. That's how he chose to make it a reality: through Don's faithfulness.

Don was a talented artist, storyteller, archeologist and comics-historian. Thankfully, he has written so many things on his own life and on comics (and even several autobiographies) that will be used for years to come!

After leaving CCAS (due to time commitment issues), I tried to keep in contact with Don sporadically. I would get updates from other CCAS members on his health situation. I also appreciated whenever Don would update his health blog.

After a long battle with prostate cancer, Don passed away on March 19, 2014. When I had heard he passed away, I was sad, but joyful. He was no longer battling the pain of cancer in his body. To think that he is enjoying Jesus face-to-face at this moment is something that is truly beautiful.

Below, I have included several things Don himself wrote (i.e. some essays, some memoirs, etc.)

God bless you, Don, for all your work. May God bless us to carry on what you helped start.





A SHORT HISTORY OF CCAS

by Don Ensign

To everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under the sun. — Ecclesiastes 3:1

Someone has said timing is everything.

Looking back over the brief history of the Christian Comic Arts Society (CCAS), I have often wondered why didn't this happen before? Why didn't someone come up with the idea of reaching out to Christian cartoonists and comic book/comic strip fans before it actually happened? The only answer I can come up with is that it just wasn't time yet. It wasn't God's timing.

Within the short history of CCAS, I've witnessed a number of God "things." These are ideas and concepts that once they were put before the public they took off seemingly by themselves. They didn't have to be forced or pushed or argued for—they found easy and ready acceptance. I believe God's Spirit was involved in some mysterious way.

Things like the initial response to the *Valiant* newsletter "way back" in 1984. The response to the founding of *Alpha-Omega* in 1985 and its survival for over 145 bi-monthly issues especially in this age of near instant email communication and social network websites. The favor that CCAS has had at the San Diego Comic-Con for over a decade with its small press table, *Spiritual Themes Panel*, Sunday chapel and panel discussions. CCAS has had a direct or indirect influence for Christian activities and tables at other conventions around the country. Projects like the humble *Alpha-Omega* Challenge with its evangelistic impact and the amazing response by artists to the *Proverbs & Parables* anthology. More recently is the electronic community of Christian writers, artists and fans growing up around the CCAS social network website.

However the greatest God "things" are the wonderful brothers and sisters in Christ that I've been privileged to meet, enjoy fellowship and work with over the years. Folks like Paul Johnston, Ralph Miley, Billy Leavell, John Pierce, Kevin Yong, Jesse Hamm, David Porta, Clint Johnson, Christine Kerrick, Larry Blake, Steve MacDonald, George Macas, Jr., Steve Firchow, Geoff Strout, Eric Jansen, Robert Flores and so many, many more. We are all divine works in progress with the aim of glorifying our precious Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

CCAS is just one aspect of what God has done and is

doing within the realm of Christian Comics. We applaud the Spirit-directed efforts of Nate Butler (Comix35), *Megazeen*, christiancomics.net and so many others. CCAS is just a small leaf on the tree that God has planted.

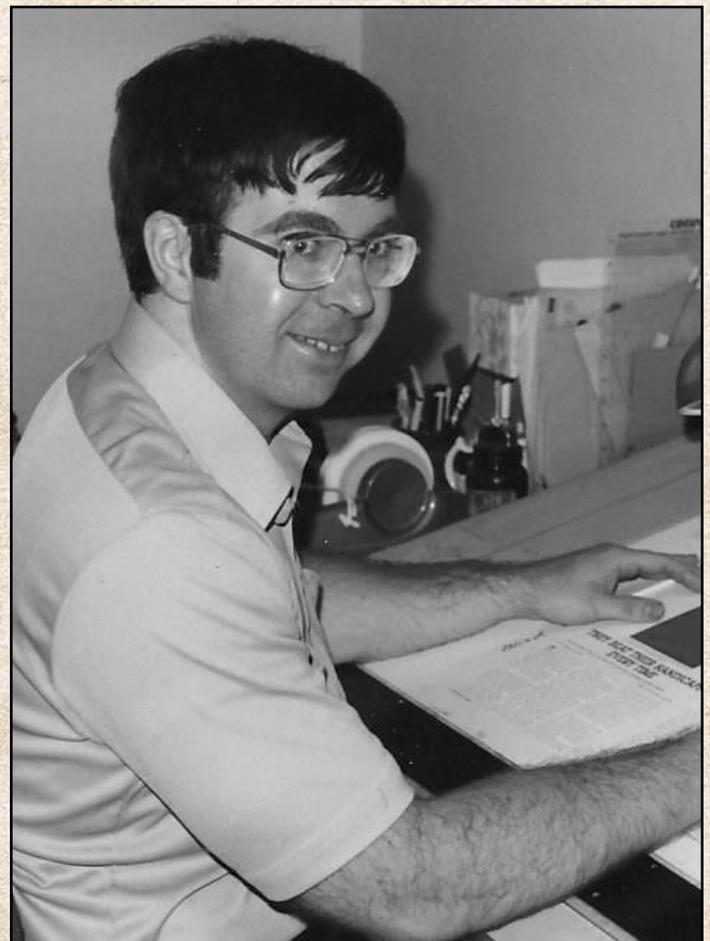
We hope you enjoy this brief survey and reminiscences about the past 25 years of CCAS history. Robert Flores has put a lot of hard work into it and we appreciate his efforts.

We believe that the best is yet before us. We believe in a big God who wants to do big things. As someone has also said "We ain't seen nothin' yet!"

God bless,

But when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. — Galatians 4:4,5

Republished from the CCAS 25th Anniversary Booklet, April 2009.





DON ENSIGN 8/85

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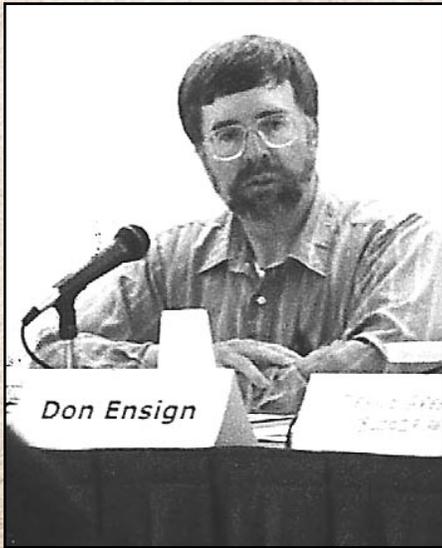


DON
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4-85

DON ENSIGN'S MEMOIRS

by Don Ensign

Disclaimer: This is my version of the history of CCAS and it is as factually true as my memory and records allow. It is important to realize that there were others who used sequential art (comics) for Christian purposes long before I was ever born. I do not take credit for originating Christian comics.



I was born in the late 1940's (May 26, 1948) and was raised in a Bible-believing, church-going home. I made a personal commitment to Christ as a young child and this was by far the most important decision of my life. As a kid growing up in the 1950's I was fascinated by media entertainment

such as television and comic books. The earliest comic book memory I have was on a trip to western Colorado to visit relatives when one of my brothers purchased a 1953 copy of Fawcett's *Lash LaRue*. Most of the comics I read during that time were Dell Comics like *Donald Duck*, *Uncle Scrooge*, *Mickey Mouse* and various other Disney TV and movie comics. I even subscribed to Dell's *Turok Stone of Stone* in the late 1950's. The first Bible-oriented comics I discovered during that time were David C. Cook's *Sunday Pix* (a Sunday School handout) with the wonderful *Picture Bible* series and a Bible adaptation strip in *Boy's Life* magazine. I became a dedicated comic book collector in 1961 and 1962 and was captivated by the Julius Schwartz-edited DC comics (*Green Lantern*, *Flash*, *JLA*, etc.) and the early Marvel super hero comics.

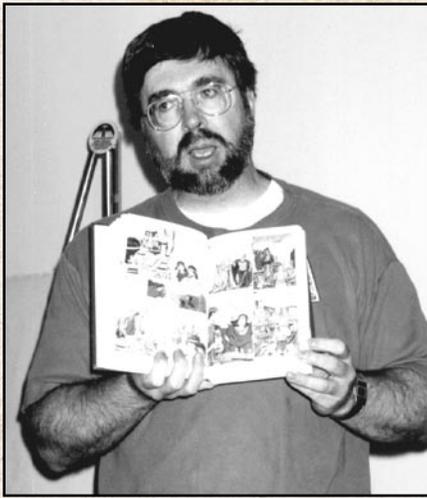
By 1963, I'd discovered comics fandom and throughout the 1960's was a contributor to several fanzines of the period. My older brother Elvin encouraged me to do Bible story adaptations. As a kid, that didn't sound that interesting as it had already been done and I was hugely smitten with superheroes. My first Christian super hero (Summer 1963) was a missionary character called *Dynamic Man* (no relation to the Golden Age hero) who battled Marxist guerrillas in South America. In late 1964, Dick Pryor of

Castro Valley, CA. ran an ad in the leading comics adzine, *Rocket's Blast-Comicollector* (RB-CC), announcing a new fanzine that he would publish and requested submissions. I was working on a story featuring a knight type character called "*The Protector*" and I sent Pryor the origin story. I had also envisioned the Protector as a Christian. Amazingly, he accepted it and printed a heavily edited version of it in *Heroes Illustrated* #1 (Spring 1965). In 1966, with my friends Bob LaRievère and Rick Nelson (we also went to the same church at that time), I published one issue of a fanzine called *Valiant*. If Star Studded Comics had their Texas Trio then Bob, Rick and I dubbed ourselves the Borderline Blockbusters (we lived within 20 miles of the US-Canadian border). However, *Valiant* lasted only one issue as the mail orders were not overwhelming.

I accepted an opportunity to join the Campus Crusade for Christ (CCC) staff full-time and by the end of 1971 was working at their headquarters at Arrowhead Springs near San Bernardino, CA. Shortly after arriving, I became friends with cartoonist Johnny Meitz who produced the art for the children's evangelistic tract *Good News* comic and *Good News Glove*. Several months later, Johnny, who was responsible for the rapidly growing overhead transparency area, was hard at work on a second evangelistic comic called *The Greatest Treasure*. I was asked to take over the transparency area to give him time to work on the comic. I felt honored to relieve Johnny of those duties. As the 1970's progressed, my interest increased in the Creation/evolution debate, I started developing ideas for a Biblical epic comic set in the times before the Genesis Flood. Through the fan press, I read about the San Diego comics convention. It took me several years to actually get down to the convention. I went for one day in July, 1974 and was completely blown away by it. There were many pros whose work I had admired giving panel discussions and lots of back issue comics for sale. Over the years, I have enjoyed numerous San Diego Comic Conventions.

I came back from that first convention with two desires. One was to return next year for the full four-day event and plan a Christian outreach to the convention attendees. I began





working on the pre-Flood book, but, because of various delays the finished comic, *Tales of Antediluvia* was not published until 1977. The book was printed in the Campus Crusade print shop and I received permission to use an abbreviated form of *The Four Spiritual*

Laws (CCC's main evangelistic presentation) on the back cover. That year, I arrived in San Diego with 500 copies of the *Tales of Antediluvia*. I displayed them on the freebie table and they were gobbled up by eager convention attendees. After the convention, I patiently waited for responses. And waited and waited. If memory serves, I did not get one response (I had included my address on the book) from the effort.

Around 1978 or 1979, I was sharing my interest in Christian comics with a friend and he encouraged me to find other people who shared a similar vision. Up until that time, I felt like "I was the only one" who was interested in producing Christian comics (I was aware of the *Spire* Christian comics and the Jack Chick comics and tracts).

After making it a matter of prayer, I met another CCC staff member, a writer in the editorial department named Paul Johnston. Paul was a very intelligent young man with a real love for comics. He and I worked on several unpublished strips.

During the early 1980's, I started researching and writing an article on the early 1970's *Fourth World* comic book series by Jack Kirby. I believed it was a tragedy that the series was canceled before any real conclusion had taken place. I also saw a thread of spirituality running through the stories—a thread of Biblical Spirituality. Toward the end of 1983, Paul and I began planning a newsletter. This newsletter would be geared towards comics fans who were Christians. We named it *Valiant*—a sort of revival of the short-lived fanzine I'd help produce in high school 18 years earlier. We ran a short ad in the classified section of *Comics Buyers Guide* announcing a free newsletter for "Christians interested in comics." Our first issue was dated May, 1984 and began with a six-issue installment series of my New Gods article. The letters from Christian comics people came in at a slow, but steady rate. At the end of *Valiant's*

14-issue two-and-one-half year run, we had accumulated around 200 on our mailing list. We developed a "phantom/umbrella" organization called the Christian Comic Arts Society that "produced" the newsletter. Paul and I were essentially the CCAS at that point.

Through the newsletter *Valiant*, we made the earliest contact with Christian comics fans who are or were well known in the movement. Billy Leavell, John Pierce and Harry Miller all

responded early on to the CBG ad. One local Southern California Christian comics fan called me in the summer of 1984 and wanted to check me out. Was I a real Christian or just some sort of cultic mole? Every month or two thereafter, we had some great discussions on comics and faith. Finally in 1986, I made a trip to his new home in nearby Santa Fe Springs where I met him and his beautiful wife. This was Ralph Ellis Miley.

Toward the end of 1984, Paul Johnston suggested that we produce an amateur press association (APA) publication where the newly forming community of Christian comics fans could connect and express themselves creatively. I thought it was an excellent idea. I had been involved in a short-lived comics Apa-zine back in the mid-1960s. We made announcements in *Valiant* about the upcoming Apa-zine that we christened *Alpha-Omega*. The first issue of

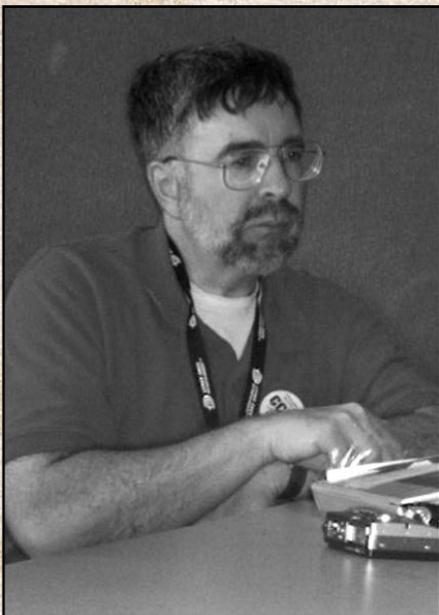
Alpha-Omega made its debut in March, 1985 and has been published on a bi-monthly basis ever since. About that time, Paul was bowing out of involvement (he did write some material for *Valiant*, but never



contributed to the Apa-zine that he had originally suggested).

That left me as the Central Mailer for the Apa-zine. I believed that, if the Apa-zine were to be a long-term success, I needed others to help carry the load. I asked several older, more mature *Alpha-Omega* contributors to be part of a CCAS Board that would help direct the newsletter (still being published at that point) and the Apa-zine and any other publications/activities that would be generated in the future. These contributors were John Pierce (Ohio), Harry W. Miller (Kentucky) and Billy Leavell (Tennessee). During and after my first Central Mailer tenure, the Board (pastor-cartoonist Steven Shipley was also involved) conducted its business entirely by mail and produced the first CCAS by-laws that has brought stability to the Apa-zine over the years. *Alpha-Omega* has published over 140 bi-monthly issues over the past 24 years making it a fixture in the Christian Comics movement.

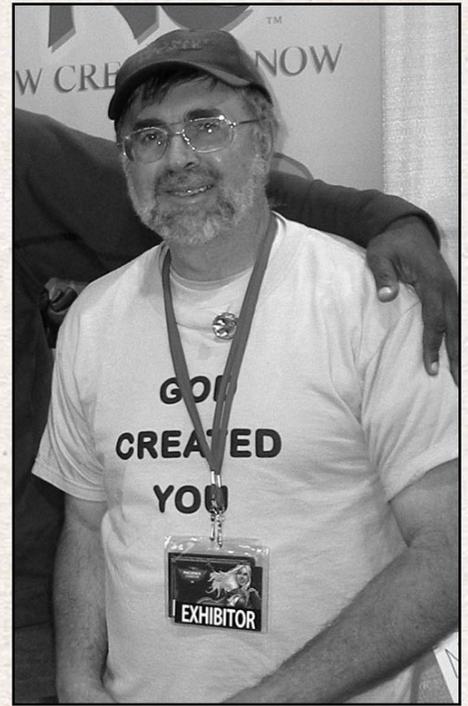
In the late 1980's, I also became acquainted with Nate Butler, who was a professional cartoonist working for Archie, Marvel and other companies doing humor and funny animal comics and coloring books. Nate would go on to produce *Aida-Zee* comics (1990) and the *Christian Comics and Games Magazine* (1995, 1996) for which I wrote a column and several reviews. Nate also approached the leadership of the San Diego Comics convention about having a panel discussing the emerging Christian comics movement. The first such panel was held in 1992 and was entitled *Christian Comics: The New Underground*. Nate was the moderator with Stan Lynde, Nestor Redondo, Ralph Miley and myself as panelists. A similar panel, *The Christian Comics Explosion* made it on the 1995 San Diego Comic Convention program with Nate again moderating



the panel composed of Reggie Byers, Rick Law, Kathleen Webb and myself.

In 1989, I made a trip to New England and New York State. The main objective of the trip was to research my family history. However, a secondary consideration was to meet other Christian comics folk who lived in

the region. I met Aaron Reed who became *Alpha-Omega* Central Mailer in late 1989. Also, I met Ernest Heriamia (Rhode Island), an *Alpha-Omega* contributor who earlier established a sister organization to CCAS called "Christian Fandom" composed of Christian science fiction and fantasy enthusiasts. In Binghamton, New



York, I visited artist David Transue, on whom I wrote an article in *Valiant* several years earlier. Two years later, I made a similar mid-west trip where I met *Alpha-Omega* members and others like Ken Leach, John Pierce, Gary Robinson, G. Raymond Eddy, Henry Chmielefski, Jimmy Stewart, Harry Miller and Jim Erskine.

Perhaps the most gratifying happenings have been the CCAS's participation at the San Diego Comic Convention. In 1996, Kevin Yong, Ralph Miley and I decided to publish a newsletter highlighting news from the Christian comics movement. This time, the newsletter was named *New Creation* and each of us made a minimum two-year commitment to it. This worked out as Nate Butler was winding up his *Christian Comics and Games Magazine* stint. During the 1996 San Diego Comic Convention, there was a large gathering of Christian comics folks at pro comic artist's Ben Herrera's home. Over the next year, Ralph, Kevin, Steve Firchow, Devin Parker, Eric Jansen, Clint D. Johnson and others began meeting at Ralph's home or my apartment. The *New Creation* newsletter did a good job reporting on the movement through 1998. However, it didn't grow in circulation beyond a certain point and we decided to suspend publication after our two-year commitment. One reason is we all wanted to put creative energy into other projects. Ralph spearheaded a project that initially asked members of *Alpha-Omega* to do one or two-page comic strip adaptations of their favorite Biblical proverb or parable. Early on in the planning, Kevin Yong and I became involved in helping Ralph. Soon, other Christian artists (originally limited to *Alpha-Omega* members) heard about the venture and

wanted to contribute art. What was originally planned as a normal-sized comic ballooned into a 144-page real trade paperback book called *Proverbs & Parables!*

Our local meeting agenda was to plan for the San Diego Comic Convention and pray for each other and the Christian comics movement. At the 1997 San Diego Convention, we had our first CCAS-sponsored *Spiritual Themes Panel*, which have continued ever since (several of which I have moderated or been a panelist on). The San Diego Convention has become a meeting place for many Christian comics folk. It has been great meeting and fellowshiping with Harold Buchholz, Hal Jones, Mike S. Miller, Gary Shipman, Jesse Hamm, Monte Wilson, Christine Kerrick, Chris Yambar, Bud Rogers, David Porta, Gary Martin, Sergio Cariello, Shelton Drum, Robert Flores, the late Edgar Williams and so many more.

Over the years, CCAS has generated several publications besides *Alpha-Omega* including the popular collaborative comic, *The Alpha-Omega Challenge* (1994), *A Christian's Survival Guide to Comics Fandom (& Conventions)* (1999), *Guide to Christian Comics* (2005-2008) as well as many pubs put out by various CCAS members.

In the 1990's, I designed the first CCAS website which was posted by Harry Hopkins (publisher of the Fandom Directory). Since that time, the CCAS website had gone through several redesigns including one by Carl Borg and with the current web master, Geoff Strout. It is very heartening to see the growth in this website as over 400 members have joined its social network connection. CCAS has also had Christian comics tables at Wizard World



Chicago hosted by George Macas, Jr. George has also conducted chapel services for several years at that convention. Likewise, Carl Borg hosted CCAS comic tables at the FallCon (Minnesota) as well as moderating *Spiritual Themes Panels* at that convention. Similar efforts at other conventions like the Mid-Ohio Con with John G. Pierce,

George Macas, Jr. and others also occasionally surfaced.

The best is yet to come. God has certainly blessed our humble efforts to honor and glory Him in the weird and wonderful world of comic art. All honor and glory goes to Him alone.

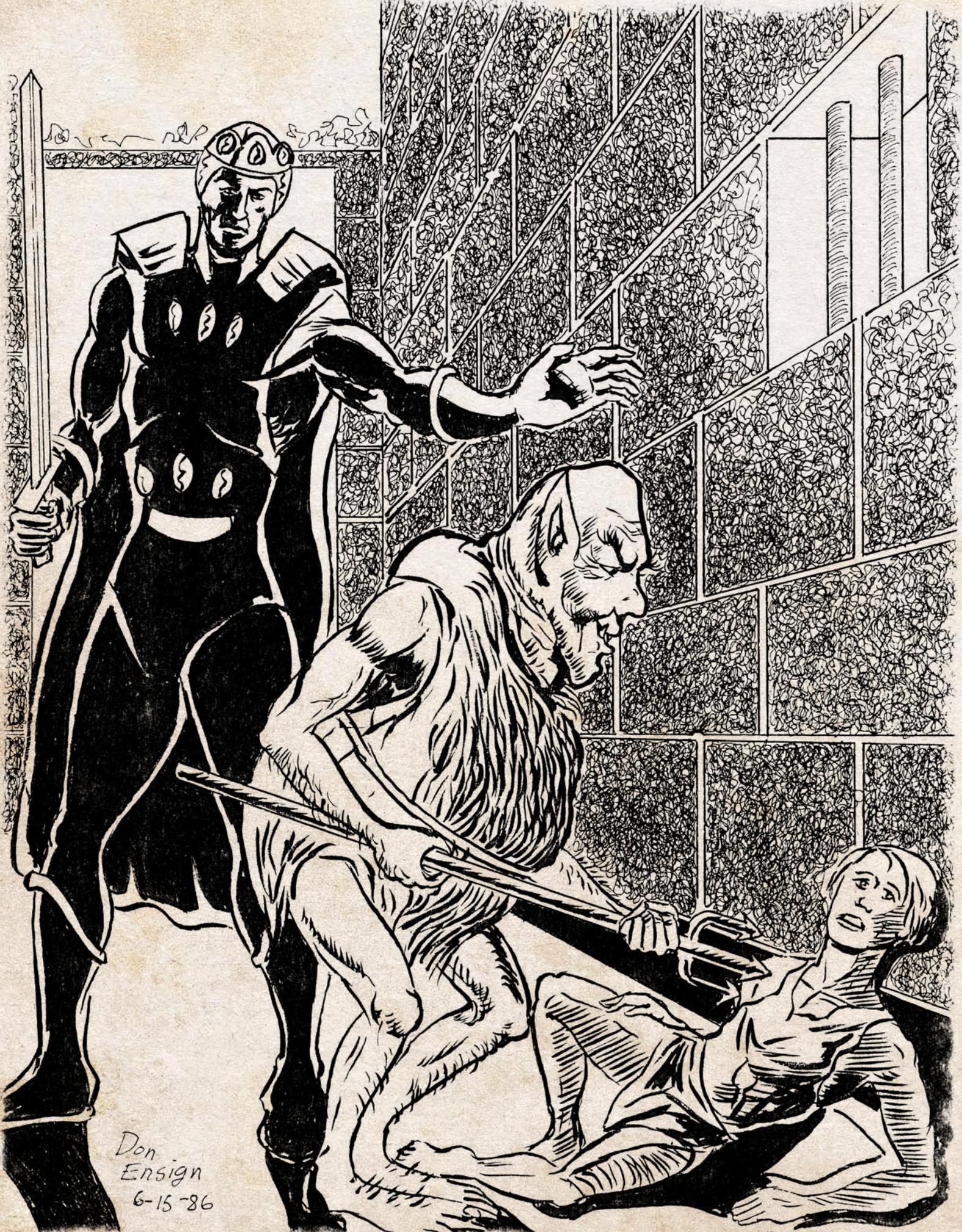


Pray for the group as you begin organizing the committees. First pray for humility to do whatever needs to be done (have a servants attitude). Pray that we can dedicate to the Lord what He wants us to do. Pray for the unity of Spirit and purpose. Pray for the ability to be flexible in genre. We should not be wedding to only one specific genre. Christian comics are not just Bible adaptations or manga or super heroes or true life mission stories or funny animals or fantasy or whatever. It is all that and more.

-- Don March 2006, Personal Correspondence to Robert Flores

Out of this mission statement will flow a set of obtainable (yet we need faith in the Lord to reach them) and measurable goals. Such goals can address how these comics can serve the greater body of Christ. We need to have products that those outside the group can enthusiastically support. Who are we trying to reach with these comics? We need to ask ourselves, for one example, what are the needs of the local church? How can comics be done to enhance and assist the ministry of the local church or mission agencies? We may find out that these churches (or other Christian organizations) may assist in the funding for the production of these comics. Whatever direction the group takes unity of purpose is essential to accomplishing any worthwhile goal.

-- Don March 2006, Personal Correspondence to Robert Flores



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**REX
DARING**





1991

Don Ensign (founder of CCAS) and Henry Chmielefski (member of Alpha-Omega)



1991

Ralph Miley, Mark J. Paul and Don Ensign in the house of Ralph Miley



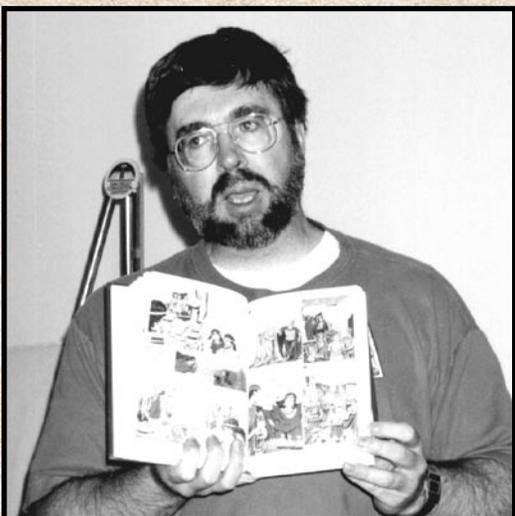
1996 SAN FRANCISCO APECON

Don Ensign, Jason Dube, Gary Shipman, Rick Law, Jesse Hamm and Ralph Miley



1997 SAN DIEGO COMIC-CON

Back row: Chris Davila, Mike Lee, Neal Marrs, Shelton Drum, Cynthia Drum, Ralph Miley, Christine Kerrick, Kevin Yong, Monte Wilson, Don Ensign, Jack Martin. Front Row: Cheryl Moorfield, Shadow McKenna and Jesse Hamm



1998 SAN DIEGO COMIC-CON

Don Ensign, speaking at the Christian Comics Sunday Panel



1996 SAN DIEGO COMIC-CON

Don Ensign, Kevin Yong, Ralph Miley and Devin Parker



1996 SAN DIEGO COMIC-CON
 Devin Parker, Ralph Miley, Jesse Hamm, Kevin Yong, Dave Porta and Don Ensign



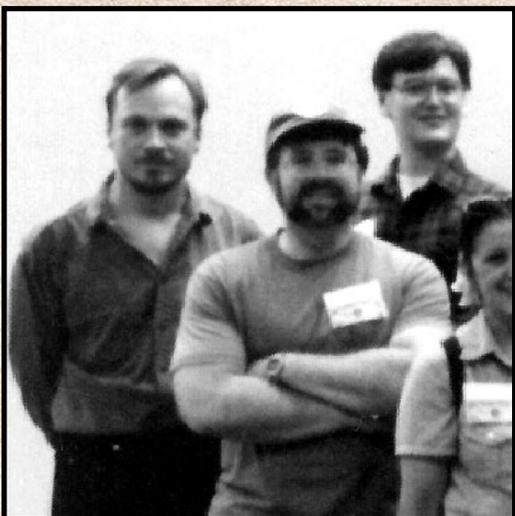
1998 SAN DIEGO COMIC-CON
 Ralph Miley, Sergio Carriello, Kevin Yong and Don Ensign



1998
 Planning Meeting at Ralph Miley's house. Attendees included: Eric jansen, Ralph Miley, Clint Johnson, Kevin Yong, Devin Parker, Don Ensign, Steve Firchow and Jack Martin



CIRCA 1992
 Ralph Miley, Dave Porta, Fred Watchman and Don Ensign



1998 SAN DIEGO COMIC-CON
 Eric Jansen, Kevin Yong and Don Ensign



1996 SAN DIEGO COMIC-CON
 Jesse Hamm, Ralph Miley, Rick Law, Devin Parker, Don Ensign and Kevin Yong



2000 SAN DIEGO COMIC-CON

Kevin Yong, Nate Butler, Sergio Carriello, Kathleen Webb, Ralph Miley, Jesse Hamm, Clint Johnson, Geoff Strout, Efran A. Crespo and Don Ensign



2001 SAN DIEGO COMIC-CON

Group shot. Front: Kendra H., Linda B., Edgar Williams, Jesse Hamm, Monte Wilson, Robert Flores, (?), Back: Dave Porta, Kevin Yong, Bud Rogers, Eric Jansen, Ralph Miley, Christine Kerrick, Devin Parker, Gene, Chris Yambar, Harold Buchholz and (?)



2006 SAN DIEGO COMIC-CON

Eric Jansen, Geoff Strout, Don Ensign and Robert Flores at the CCAS leadership meeting

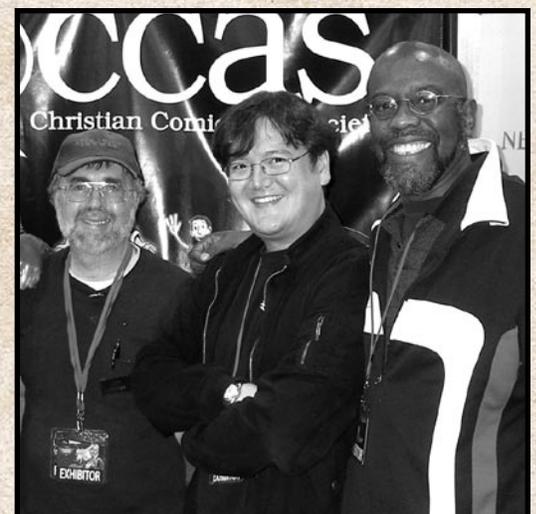


2011 PHOENIX COMIC-CON

Kevin Yong, and Don Ensign



2005 SAN DIEGO COMIC-CON - Group at Horton Plaza. *Front: Ben Avery, Bud Rogers, Demarcio Johnson, Linda B., Clint Johnson, Steve Lyles, Don Ensign, Heather Yong, Kendra H., Middle: Geoff Strout, Robert Flores, Eric Jansen, Janae Miley, Royden Lepp, Josh Ray, Amy Ray. Back: Richard Haselrig, Christine Kerrick, Ralph Miley, Wendell Washer, Sherwin Schwartzrock, Kevin Yong, Patrick Scott.*



2011 PHOENIX COMIC-CON
Don Ensign, Kevin Yong and Ralph Miley

CHRISTIANITY AND COMICS

by Don Ensign

So you read comic books?! And you are a Christian!

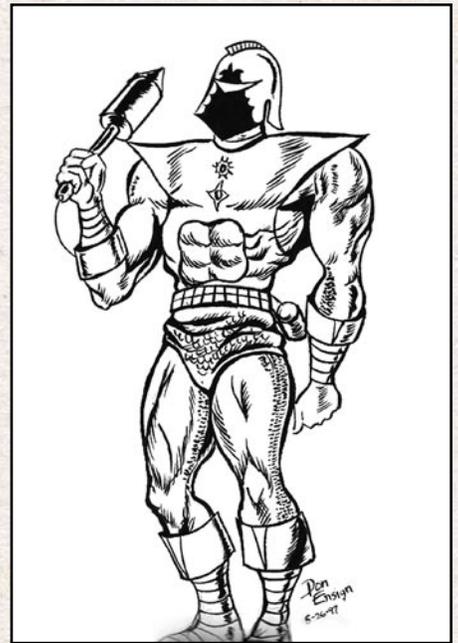
Some say comic books are totally worthless junk and we should steer clear of them. Others say we are completely free to read whatever we want. This writer would chart a course between these two poles. The abilities to write stories and draw pictures are God-given talents and we shouldn't disallow the comic book medium entirely. However, we should be discriminating about what we read. What we read can influence our attitudes and actions. There are good and bad things in the marketplace.

The purpose of this series is to help you discern the difference between the good and the bad--what can encourage you and what isn't worth your time. In order to discern the good from the bad the wheat from the chaff, we must know what we believe. The Bible speaks of discernment in at least two ways. One it is a gift that God gives to some Christians (1 Cor 10:12). Two, it is the ability all Christians should exercise by using their minds to determine what is true and what is false (Acts 17:11, 2 Tim 1:7).

Christian faith is satisfying to the whole person. We are to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength (Mark 12:30). Christian faith is not only satisfying emotionally and spiritually, but also intellectually. The Bible encourages Christians to use their thinking abilities in several ways. First, we are to study the Bible in order to understand it properly (2 Tim. 2:15). Second, we should be ready to give answers for our faith (1 Peter 3:15). Third, we are to earnestly defend our faith (Jude 3). Fourth, we are exhorted to cast down evil thoughts and everything that is against the knowledge of God (2 Cor. 10:5). A note of caution is in order. We must not make a god of our minds or our reasoning abilities. Man is not just a mind, he has emotions (soul) and a spirit. Also, while we can mentally apprehend much of what is in the Bible we cannot totally comprehend God or His Word (the Bible). A finite mind cannot fully comprehend an infinite being (Isaiah 55:6-9). It also should be stressed that the Christian receives spiritual discernment from God in order to understand the Bible (1 Cor 2:10-16).

The Bible is our measuring rod for discerning the good from the bad. The Bible claims to be inspired by the Word of God (2 Tim 3:15). It says we have not followed cunningly devised fables concerning Jesus Christ and the rest of scripture (2 Peter 1:16). The scriptures came by holy men who wrote under the direct influence (or inspiration) of

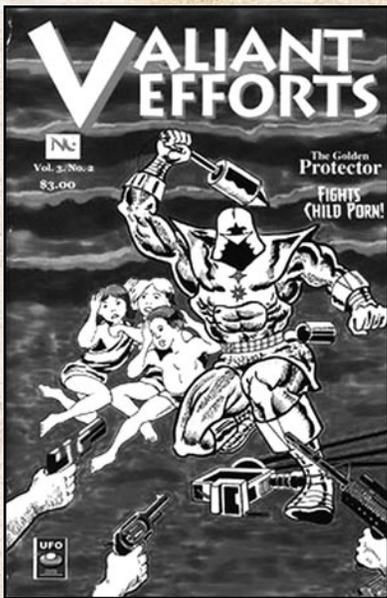
God (2 Peter 1:21). The Bible claims this about itself, but it also claims to be a historical book. Its historical assertions can be tested by evidence outside itself (i.e., historical research, analysis and archeology). The Bible also touches on areas of science and other areas of human endeavor. If the Bible is what it claims (i.e., the word from the infinite-personal, all-knowing, creator God), what it says about history and science should be correct. While it is beyond the scope of this series to delve deeply into the specifics of Biblical apologetics (the reasoned defense of the bible and Christian faith), much has been written in this area.



So far in this column we have assumed that most readers are Christians. We realize that there are some reading this that do not know what a Christian is. If so, please read on.

What does it mean to be a Christian? For some it means living a good life. It means living by the golden rule and helping others. For others it is identifying with the culture in which one was raised. If I am an American, then I am a Christian. For others it means going to church twice a year (or more) and doing other acts of piety. However, according to the Bible, all of these definitions fall far short of what it means to be a Christian.

The Bible states that God loves each one of us. "For God so loved the world that he give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should no perish, but have eternal life (John 3:16). God has good plans for us: "I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly" (John 10:10). Before and individual can know God's love and plan for his life he must realize that he is sinful and separated from God. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23). "The wages of sin is death" (separation spiritually from God) (Romans 6:23). To overcome this separation from God we must realize that Jesus Christ is God's only provision for man's sin. "But God demonstrates his own love for us, in that while we



were yet sinners, Christ dies for us" (Romans 5:8). "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.'" (John 14:6). We must individually receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, before we can truly know God's love, forgiveness and plan for our lives. "But as many as received him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who

believe in His name." (John 1:12). "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast." (Ephesians 2:8,9). Jesus Christ says, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him" (Revelation 3:20).

If you have not already received Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord we invite you to do so right now. You can do this by simply praying and thanking God for His forgiveness of your sin and asking Jesus Christ to become your personal Savior and Lord.

(If you have just made the wonderful discovery of knowing Christ personally, please write us and we will be happy to give you suggestions for growth in your Christian life. Also if you need questions answered concerning the validity of the bible or other things that have been mentioned in this article, please write for a free resource list.)

Next: How to discern what is good in comics by developing a Biblical worldview.

(reprinted from Don's "The Ensign Report" Column from Christian Comics and Games Magazine #0, 1994)

DISCERNING WHAT IS GOOD IN COMICS BY DEVELOPING A BIBLICAL WORLD VIEW...

by Don Ensign

Last time we explored a few introductory topics including the use of our minds in discerning between what is good

and bad and why the Bible is our measuring rod or guide for determining truth.

This time we will discuss the importance of developing a biblical world view. A world view is simply the way we perceive how the Earth and universe came to be, how it functions, and the purpose, and the purpose of existence. A world view determines how we look at reality and deeply influences our daily life. A worldview, whether consciously or unconsciously, is our foundational belief system. It influences not only our thinking but our actions as well.

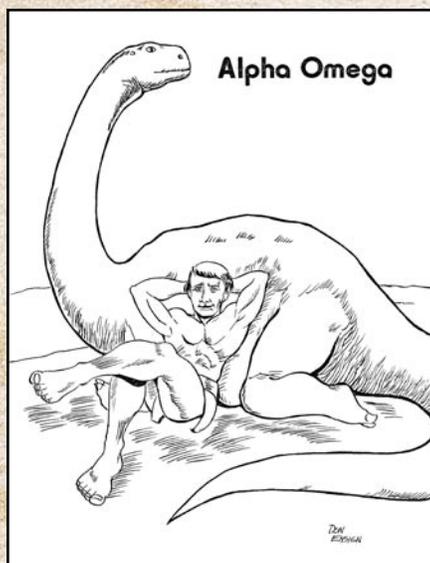
The Biblical world view begins in Genesis 1:1: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Several things should be mentioned here. First, the universe is not infinitely old; it had a beginning. Second, the universe had a Creator - it did not come into existence by itself. Third, the Creator is greater and separate from His creation (the universe). This is important for two reasons. Many eastern religions and much of the new Age movement are based on the concepts of monism and pantheism. Monism states that everything is interconnected or interrelated. There is no difference between God, man, a vegetable or a piece of granite. Pantheism states since "all is one" then "all is god." All things- including fish, people, trees and rocks- are said to take on the same divine essence. This is why Shirley MacLaine exclaimed, "I am God." She accepted the concepts of monism and pantheism. The very first words of Genesis leave no room for these notions. The Creator and the creation are separate and distinct. Fourth, the earth is given special mention from the rest of the universe. Fifth, if God has the power to create the heavens and the earth and all life, then He has more than enough power to perform any of the other miracles in the bible. These include the worldwide flood of Noah, the plagues of Egypt during the Exodus, the virgin birth of Jesus, the healings and miracles of Jesus and the New Testament apostles and the resurrections of Christ from the dead.

Further in Genesis 1, God is involved in forming specific aspects of His creation. He created light, water, dry land, the sun and stars, plants, animals and man on different days of the creation week. He commanded the plants, and animals to reproduce after their own kind. God created man (both male and female) in His own image. This is important as it precludes evolution from occurring. The modern concept of evolution states that somehow over the course of billions of years organic molecules organized themselves into replicating systems. These systems evolved into single cell organisms, then to primitive multicellular organisms, then to fish, amphibians, reptiles, mammals and finally man. Man is the highest rung on the evolutionary ladder. All of this was accomplished through natural

selection (survival of the fittest) and beneficial mutations, with competition, struggle, bloodshed and death being the means of creation.

Evolution is the basis for the naturalist or materialist world view. This world view precludes any kind of God or outside creator. Natural processes within the universe itself are sufficient to account for all the complexity we observe from the simplest molecule to the human brain. While a number of theories have tried to harmonize the Biblical creation account with the theory of evolution - any straightforward, normal reading of Genesis shows how incompatible the two are. The theistic evolutionist says God used evolution as His method of creation. This idea comes up short for several reasons. First, the text of Genesis 1 states clearly that the plants and animals were created fully formed and were to reproduce "after their own kind." Second, the character of God as revealed later precludes His using such a wasteful process in order to create living things. Christ says that God cares for the birds (Matt 6:26) and not one of them falls to the ground without Him knowing it (Matt 10:29). Would a gracious, loving God use such a cruel method as evolution to accomplish His creation? Several times in Genesis 1 we have the phrase, "And God saw that it was good." (Vs. 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31). How could God have pronounced such an awful method as evolution as "good," with its record of hundreds of millions of years of cruelty and death?

So what world views do comics portray? As one example, when I was a teenager I came across a fascinating comic book scene of a giant hand clutching a starry nebula as a "renegade Oan" names "Krona" tried to observe the origin of the universe (Green Lantern #40, 1965). The result of this forbidden behavior was an explosion which unleashed evil on the universe. In GL #43 one reader wrote, "In Krona's seeking of the secrets of the origin of the Guardians I



found some similarity between the story and the bible. Could that have been the hand of God as He created the universe?" The editor's response: "The author did indeed intend his story to be taken as you took it." As a young Christian I was happy to have this supposed validation of my comic

book reading habit. However, there are important differences between this (and most) "comic cosmology" and the biblical world view. Evolution is usually taken as a given. And while, in this particular story, there was a "God" that created the universe and "life," it was not the caring and personal God of the bible but more like that of the deists, who believe God created the universe and then was not involved further with it--unlike the God of the Bible.

In summary there are different views of reality or world views that compete for the modern mind. The pantheist (or New Age), the materialist and the Biblical are three of the most important in today's society.

Next: We further explore how the Biblical world view compares with those found in many secular comic books.

(reprinted from Don's "The Ensign Report" Column from Christian Comics and Games Magazine #1, 1995)

COMIC BOOKS AND THE BIBLICAL WORLD VIEW

by Don Ensign

(This is the end of a series of columns I wrote in Christian Comics and Games Magazine #0(1995) and #1(1996). These are still available from Nate Butler PO Box 27470, Albuquerque, NM 87125-7470. In the first column I discussed why a world view was important to our thinking and the importance of the Bible. Next we started to explore the Biblical world view. This time we will conclude our brief survey of the Biblical world view (Creation, the Fall, Jesus Christ and Future Things) and how it relates to comics.)

The Creation: Previously we mentioned that God created the physical universe with its plant, animal and human life and pronounced it 'good' and 'very good.' The invisible realities were also created at this time. Psalms 148:2-5 states that the angels were created at the same time as the sun, moon and stars. In scripture, angels are described as servants or messengers of God. These invisible realities distinguish the Biblical and materialist world view. The materialist worldview maintains that reality can be perceived only by the five senses. The Bible claims to be a revelation of spiritual realities beyond the abilities of the five senses. We accept this revelation by faith. "And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that he is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him." (Hebrews 11:6). However, this is not a blind faith. It is a reasonable faith based not on

wishful thinking, but on solid evidence. Biblical faith and science are not mutually contradictory. A good case has been made that the modern scientific method sprang from and conforms to a Biblical view of reality. Much of modern science assumes a materialist worldview, which excludes God from its discussions.

In 1986, the History of DC Comics was published. It stated, "We know the universe was created more than ten billion years ago, formed of vapor and forged with fire. The single will which brought light to the dark, gave substance to nothingness, and created life from unlife, must have permitted itself a sigh of satisfaction when its children wailed in birth." In the DC Universe "The single will" got the ball rolling by sending animated "seeds" throughout the universe. These seeds interacted with things like heat, sound, light, minerals and abstract concepts to produce life forms. Apparently something inherent in life caused it to evolve into "something greater." After this the "God" of the DC Universe, with some exceptions, is strangely silent and uninvolved. As we have seen, this is not how the Bible portrays the creation of life. God, the ultimate life giver, gave life to all of the creatures on the earth. God was very involved in creating the different forms or "kinds" of life. God placed limits (reproduce 'after its own kind') on the variability of life forms.

The Fall: In Genesis 3, while in a perfect environment, man is tempted by the serpent (identified as Satan in Revelation 20:2). The serpent's temptation was "You will be as gods (or as God) knowing good and evil". Man as God created him was innocent and pure. When man succumbed to Satan's temptation he experienced both spiritual and the beginnings of physical death. Spiritually, sin caused separation of fellowship between God and man. Physically, in order to cover man's nakedness, God killed animals and made coverings for man from the skins (Genesis 3:21). This foreshadowed the ancient Hebrew sacrificial system and the ultimate sacrifice of Christ on the cross for the sins of all mankind. Also, God placed a curse on creation (Genesis 3:17). Man would live by the sweat of his brow and physical death would come to his body (Genesis 3:19). This was not how it was meant to be. Death is an alien presence in creation. Looking again at the seminal Green Lantern #40 (October 1965) the Oan, Krona, broke the prohibition about looking into the origin of the universe. When

he did that, "...evil was loosed on the universe! It swiftly spread from world to world where intelligent creatures lived who had not the gift of immortality like the Oans... Brother killed brother, Hatred and violence grew, flourished!" For a number of years this isolated statement of cosmology stood in the DC

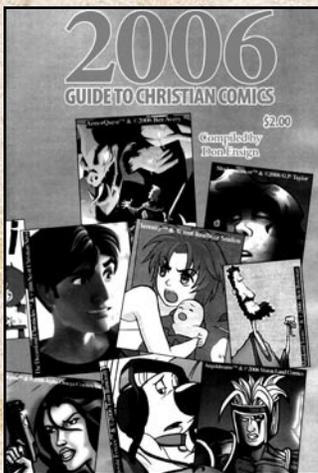


Universe. This scene was repeated in the History of the DC Universe though later revisions cast doubt on even that mild statement of theism.

Jesus Christ: How does the Bible bring resolution to the sin dilemma? I believe it comes in two stages, if you will. The first "stage" in the resolution of the problem of sin is the Incarnation, God becoming man in Jesus Christ. Jesus lived a morally and ethically perfect (or sinless) life. He fulfilled perfectly the Old Testament messianic prophecies and His death and resurrection provided the perfect substitute or sacrifice for the sins of all mankind. Sin deals with the basic problem of man's alienation from God. In the fictional world of comic books, a super-hero (you insert name) can physically save the world, but he can't save his own soul much less anyone's else's soul. He is as morally flawed as any normal person. The Bible states "...there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name [Jesus Christ] under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

Future Things: The final "stage" of the solution to the fallen world takes place in the future with the culmination of history. The book of Revelation tells of a time in the future where the devil, the unrighteous living and dead and death itself will be consigned to a lake of fire that burns forever. (20:10, 14) The present earth and heavens will be destroyed by fire (II Peter 3:12, 13). Then God will create a new heaven and a new earth where "righteousness" dwells (Rev. 20:14). The best the comic writers can come up with is something like Crisis on Infinite Earths where a myriad of comic book universes are destroyed or transformed into one. However, the same problems of sin and fallenness are transferred to the new world (or universe).

We have tried to show briefly how to develop a Biblical



world view and apply it with discernment to comics. We need to ask ourselves and God how close do the comics we read conform morally and spiritually to the Bible.

(Republished from Don's essay in the New Creation Newsletter #11, Aug. 1998)

(Special thanks to my wife, Jennifer, for transcribing the first two essays from the original sources -- Robert Flores).

CCAS EXHIBIT TABLES

(the following is an excerpt from a report Don Ensign wrote, regarding a CCAS table he had setup in 2007 at a local church fair in Tucson, AZ)

My desire (and goal) for the CCAS table was to inform and educate the attendees concerning what was new in the arena of Christian Comics. My display table was set up into two sections. On my right were publications with which I had creative involvement. I realized people would be interested in material I'd actually worked on (and I had a small sign indicating such).

Several things I realized (before I put up the exhibit) that some of the folks (perhaps most) would suffer from sensory overload if too many books were displayed. Second, there were many other exhibits of different ministries like Stonecroft Bible Studies, Wycliffe Associates, a Mission aviation ministry, a local Fireman/police chaplain ministry, Elder Care hospital singing ministry, some "cookie" ministries and a number of others. There was a lot of competition for the attention of a relatively small number of attendees. Third, Christian comics are a concept that is somewhat unusual to many conservative and senior church goers. Fourth, I explained the concept of the Extreme Conquerors strip a number of times and also some of the other comics like Serenity (and the influence and popularity of Japanese comics) that I felt might interest the folks who came up to the table. Also I discussed the San Diego Convention and CCAS table there and other ministry avenues that we have (I had several photos of me at the convention). Not being a talker my throat was slightly sore at the end of the evening.

Some comments I received were, "Wow, I didn't know there were still Christian comics being made. I remember some from years ago." One gentleman asked if, "I did all of the comics (he didn't read my signage)? Did I do this for a living? How much do I get paid for selling them?" Another lady asked, "Where I could get some of these comics?" I gave her my business card for later contact. Perhaps there was a weakness in my planning. A free catalog or connect publishers sheet would have been helpful. Another lady: "My 13 year old grandson is really into reading and

drawing comics and I'd like to get some of these for him." Several made comments, "Wow did you do all this artwork (referring to the Extreme Devotion work—again they didn't read the signage). I never knew you did art like that!" The lady choir director exclaimed, "Well I'm sure glad you are doing something else besides digging up those old dusty, dinosaur bones."

A slight disappointment was the response of the pastors of the church. The senior pastor didn't get within six feet of the table and mumbled something as he walked by which I took that he'd return to see what I had. That didn't happen. I apparently misunderstood. Another former pastor of the church and his wife walked by and didn't say anything but had disapproving looks on their faces. Cold body language. Another former pastor (not of this church) didn't get near the table, though his wife came up several times and was quite interested in Christian comics. Another former pastor (not of this church) did not visit the table. However, his wife came up and we had a pleasant, though short chat. My disappointment stems from the pastors not being hip. By this I mean that the comic book/comic strip medium can be a medium for the dissimulation of Biblical content and Christian values. However, I realized before the setting up the table that there would be those who wouldn't approve or at least be disinterested. This is an important lesson for us to learn as we communicate the value of Christian comics within a church environment. We expect some rejection in a secular convention situation, but we also must realize it will also happen in our cherished church home.

The only other qualms was the low attendance of church goers to the fair and the lack of young people (I was one of the few under 60 there). I believe a Christian comics exhibit table in an all age church would be more effective. Hopefully the table would have a big appeal to kids and young people. In summary, I felt that the Ministry Fair was a valuable and enjoyable experience. The response to the table was overall positive. I believe that my goal of exposing the attendees and other exhibitors to Christian comics was successful. I would certainly do it again, and certainly recommend it as an avenue for ministry to others in our group.

Life being short it seems to be more about legacy no matter how many copies of a publication we sell. What we do now will influence the future, hopefully for the good and the better.

-- The Ensign Report #8 (May 2013) UFO edition, May 2013, Tetragrammaton-Fragments #228

VISION AND PERSEVERANCE

by Don Ensign

In late 1961, as a young teen my leisure time reading interests turned from the current juvenile science fiction books to comic books. A reversal of reading habits for most young boys. The early flowering of what later would be called the silver age of comics peaked my fascination. The early issues of Flash, Green Lantern, JLA, Fantastic Four, Thor, Hulk cast their four color spell over my adolescent imagination.

I grew up in an evangelical Christian home. This meant going to church and Sunday School every Sunday and summer vacation Bible school. But more than these outward trappings it meant confronting one's personal inadequacy and sinfulness and being encouraged to become a Christian. This was accomplished by asking Christ to be your personal savior and thus being born again—spiritually. Not wanting to go to Hell I did this and never entertained any serious doubts about my eternal destiny from the age of ten or younger. But the

Christian life was even more than this. The Bible taught that God wanted to be in control of every area of my life. Did God want control of my hobby life also? How could I grate my Christian my fascination for

In grade school I gained rendering dinosaurs, insects, submarines, and delights. I started to try to how I could do comic book versions of Bible stories. This didn't excite me because it had been done before (David C. Cook's



Sunday Pix) and it wasn't superheroes.

As I experimented with doing my own comics I came up with a total revamping of an obscure 1940s super-hero named Dynamic Man. My Dynamic Man was a Christian missionary in Latin America. In 1963-64, I produced DM two stories—the last of which pitted him against a disillusioned communist guerrilla. Dynamic Man rescued a beautiful girl who turned out to be another other superhero who he later married. Later in 1964, I developed another Christian superhero named the Protector. The Protector was a super knight in shining armor and was published in a fanzine. I did several other stories of the Protector throughout high school but none of which saw print.

When I started college other things like studies, doing fanzine articles and non-Christian related comic strips took up my time. But the notion of doing Christian topics in comic book form still lurked in the recesses of my mind.

After college I joined the staff of Campus Crusade for Christ and worked at their Southern California headquarters. During that time the idea of doing Christian comics started reasserting itself. This was the early 1970s and one of the then current comic book trends was sword and sorcery. So why not do a Christian "sword and sorcery" (how's that for an oxymoron) comic? The story was set in the time before the Genesis flood and I worked on it off and on over several years.

In 1977, Tales of Antediluvia was finished. Several hundred copies were printed with an abbreviated and authorized version of the Fourth Spiritual Laws. That year I distributed most of them by placing them on the freebie table at the San Diego Comic Con. Then I waited and waited for response. Would you believe I don't remember getting a single response? Only God knows what affect it had on its readers. Perhaps it was a link in the chain for some-

one to trust in Christ. It definitely carried a clear witness.

About that time I started reading Francis Schaeffer. He wrote about how art was reflective of the culture that produced it. He also spoke that art can glorify God without having to preach a sermon or be an evangelistic tract. This was a liberating concept. About that time a non-comics Christian friend suggested that I needed to connect with other Christians with similar interests in comic books. This was a great idea as I had been a typical lone wolf Christian comics producer. We prayed about it and in a short time God answered.

In the early 1980's, I met another a Campus Crusade staff member who was a comics fan. We worked on several projects the most important one was a newsletter aimed at Christians interested in comics. This was Valiant (#1, May 1984), which lasted for 2 1/2 years and reached over 200 people. In March 1985, I launched an amateur press association called Alpha-Omega which is still being published today. Its purpose was to serve as a training ground and community for Christian comics fans and creators. Through Alpha-Omega several of us including Ralph Miley and myself published a short lived comic called Valiant Efforts (1987-92) featuring Christian superheroes (including an "Golden Protector"). By this time many others (including Nate Butler, Mark Poe, Frazier White, Jr., G. Raymond Eddy) were producing Christian comics.

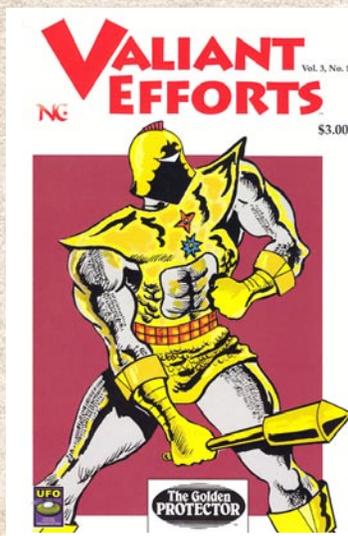
By now the intents of this seemingly self-indigent excursion into auto-biography should be apparent. First, we should have a vision. My vision was to see Christian principles or a Biblical worldview integrated into comic book stories. Comics that could have a Christian witness in a broad as well as a narrow sense. Second, we should have perseverance. We should not give up after one or two or many failures. Many would consider that my efforts with Dynamic Man, the Protector, the Valiant newsletter, Valiant Efforts and other projects were all failures. Were these "failures" discouraging? Yes. Did they cause me to throw in the towel? No. Because it is God who gives the

vision and the perseverance.

God has bigger things in store for us than producing even the most well written and drawn comics. He is in the process of developing our character. For some of us He may use doing "failed" comic book projects to accomplish that sanctifying task.

Remember vision and perseverance.

-- Reprinted from the *New Creation Newsletter*, #4, June 1997



A VERY SHORT AND PERSONAL HISTORY OF CHRISTIAN COMICS

by Don Ensign

According to art historian Harry W. Miller, comics in general and Christian comics in particular had their roots in early books like the Joshua Rotulus (5th-6th century AD), the Utrecht Psalter (830 AD), and the German colored woodcut of the Horsemen of the Apocalypse (ca. 1465). Each of these has sequences of pictures with words—the heart of what modern comics are. Be that as it may, our history of Christian comic books starts much later in time.

The Christian comic book genre is itself divided into several sub-categories. These sub-categories are the Bible adaptation comics, the Christian adventure comics and more recently several subdivisions within the contemporary Christian comic book movement that is largely centered, though not exclusively, around the direct sales market.

One of the fathers of the American comic book and of the first superhero, Superman, was also the first to develop the Bible comic. MC Gaines published the first issues of Picture Stories from the Bible in 1942. These adaptations were written by Sunday school teacher Montgomery Mulford and drawn by Don Cameron. Another entry into this genre was religious publisher David C. Cook's The Picture Bible. This rather extensive adaptation of the Old and New Testament was scripted by Iva Hoth and superbly drawn by one of Will Eisner's early associates, Andre LeBlanc. This first appeared in serialized form in the Sunday school handout, Sunday Pix during the 1950s and 60s and was later collected in book editions (1973, 1978).

More recent noteworthy efforts have been DC Comics' The Bible (1975), written by Sheldon Mayer and illustrated by Nestor Redondo. The United Bible Society produced a series of gorgeously painted comics (such as The Great Fisherman, 1983). In the 1980s, Tyndale House Publishers came out with a series of "Cosmics" that were humorous adaptations of Bible stories like Moses The Man Who Talked To Bushes (1987) by cartoonist Win Mumma. Most recently independent publisher Leo Bak produced the very literal and dramatic depiction of the last book of the Bible called Revelation: The Comic Book. (1995)

Perhaps bridging the gap between direct Bible comic adaptations and adventure comics was "Tullus," written by

Joseph Hughes Newton for David C. Cook. This historical fiction period piece took place in New Testament times and follows the adventures of a teenaged Christian. These stories began in late 1943 and appeared in Sunday School take-home papers similar to the aforementioned Picture Bible.

One of the most memorable individuals to enter this arena in the 1960s was Jack T. Chick. Chick started out publishing small black and white comic book tracts such as Holy Joe, which presented the Christian gospel in very stark, unapologetic terms. Over the years Chick also produced a series of full-sized color comics called the "Crusader Series". In this series, the heroes have adventures smuggling Bibles behind the Iron Curtain (Operation Bucharest, 1974), struggling against demon possession (Exorcists 1975) and battling bigoted evolutionists (Primal Man, 1976). The later issues became highly controversial as Chick began waging a vigorous literary war against the Jesuits in particular and the Roman Catholic church in general.

In the early 1970's, the Fleming H. Revell Company began their Spire Christian Comics line with such titles as David Wilkerson's The Cross and the Switchblade (1972) and Brother Andrew's God's Smuggler (1972). These stories were well drawn by comic book veteran Al Hartley. Later on, Spire also licensed the rights to use Archie, Jughead, Betty and Veronica from the Archie Comics Group to produce a rather odd hybrid commonly known as the "Archie Christian Comics." Hartley also produced the art on these comics. Perhaps an even stranger association was the abortive relationship between Thomas Nelson and Marvel Comics. In the early 1990s, these two publishing giants produced three issues of a Christian super-hero of sorts called the Illuminator (1993), several Bible adaptation comics including The Life of Christ (1993) and a "Christian Classics Series" doing updated adaptations of books like John Bunyan's Pilgrim Progress (1992).

I have had a ringside seat to observe and take part in the emerging Christian comics movement of the last two decades. My personal involvement in Christian comics began in the early 1960s as a young teenager having just discovered the early flowering of the silver age of comics. One my early superhero creations was "Dynamic Man" who was a Bible-believing missionary in Central America. In 1964, I developed another Christian superhero called "The Protector" who actually saw print in a fanzine of the time. In 1977, after several years of work, I self-published a comic book called Tales of Antediluvia and gave it away at that year's San Diego Comic Convention. This comic even had an abbreviated and authorized version of the Four Spiritual Laws (I was on Campus Crusade for Christ

staff then). The observable results from that evangelistic venture were less than impressive. Sometime later, a friend suggested finding other Christians interested in comics books. In May 1984, I published a newsletter called Valiant aimed at fellow believers with a love of the comic book medium. Valiant lasted 2 1/2 years and ended with a mailing list of 200 people.

In March 1985, I launched the amateur press association Alpha-Omega, which has served as a Christian communication forum and network on comic book related projects. Alpha-Omega is still being published and has produced over 80 issues. Through Valiant and Alpha-Omega many individuals important to the movement emerged. People like Harry W. Miller, former college art professor; Billy Leavell, ordained minister to the deaf; John G. Pierce, teacher, comics historian and writer; Ralph E. Miley, Los Angeles school teacher; Steven Shipley, former minister and small press publisher (who published Warrior, a newsletter similar to Valiant); G. Raymond Eddy, creator of the delightful angel mouse, Galen the Saintly; and Canadian Bob Wierdsma (publisher of the Christian Cartoonist & Illustrator) just to name a few. Various publishing collaborations spun off of Alpha-Omega as networking developed between like-minded individuals.

People such as Detroit-based Frazier White, Jr teamed up with Alabama artist Mark Poe to produce Project: New Man (1991) and Humants (1991). Ralph Miley, Jack I. Martin, Charles Whitley and myself produced several issues of Valiant Efforts (1988-91) for the direct sales market. I would team up with Ralph Miley and Kevin Yong in 1996 to produce the newsletter New Creation, which reports on this burgeoning movement.

One of the most influential Christian comics creators to emerge from this time is Nate Butler, a working comics professional with credits ranging from Archie to Marvel, produced Aida-Zee #1 (1990). Butler rounded up an impressive

group of well known comics professionals who professed varying degrees of Christian faith. Kerry Gammill (Superman penciler), Gary Martin (Nexus inker), Steve Lightle (Doom Patrol penciler), Dick Ayers (Silver Age Marvel inker and penciler), Murphy Anderson (DC inker and penciler), and Gaylord Dubois (prolific scripter for Dell and Gold Key comics) were among many who contributed to Butler's tightly managed and edited comic. Butler would go on to team up with Ron Vozar, a Christian games manufacturer, to publish two issues of Christian Comics & Games Magazine (1995, 1996). Butler also produced Parodee (1993, published by Don Chin) and Behold 3-D (1996, published by The Edge Group).

By the late 1980s and early 1990s there was a virtual avalanche of Christian comics creators entering the market. A number of well-defined (and not so well-defined) sub-categories started to appear in the emerging Christian comics movement.

Christian superheroes were represented by the aforementioned work of White, Poe and the Valiant Efforts crew. Other entries were professional animator John Celestri with his The Christian Crusader (1991) that did well for a time in the Christian book store market. Former Robotech artist Reggie Byers published several issues of the Kidz of the King (1994). Peter J. King came out with his Soldier of God (1997) and Todd Tennant drew the massively rendered Private Sector (1995).

About this time, Frank Peretti's novel This Present Darkness was making a significant impact on the Christian reading public. Out of this trend came spiritual warfare comics. Eternal Studios of Houston, Texas produced a well-drawn, computer colored series called Archangels: The Saga (1995) which became the best selling Christian comic of the period. Hal Jones of Battleline Comics came out with his very personal Beyond Human #1 (1995) and a talented young Matt Martin wrote and drew Vortex (1993), a sort of Christianized version of Spawn. James Pruett, managing editor of Caliber Comics, created and wrote the excellent The Apparition (1996) series. Angels and demons fought each other in Best Comics' Battleground Earth (1997?) by Paul Melletter and Chuck Angell.

A fantasy sub-genre was represented by Pakkin's Land (1996), a delightfully tasteful Narnia-like fable by Gary



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an impressive

and Rhoda Shipman, and Monte Wilson's elfin Romance (1994). The approaching turn of the millennium has produced apocalyptic comics such as Christine Kerrick's superb Empire (1997), Eric Jansen's Freedom Fighter (1997), and Adam Steadman's The Antipicator (1997). There were Christian funny animal comics like Apathy Kat by Harold Buchholz (1995), and Galen The Saintly by G. Raymond Eddy (1997); Christian ninja comics like Mike S. Miller's Immortal Two (1997-1998); Christian monster comics like Monster Mayhem (1998) by Rick Newby; Christian satire comics such as Jesse Hamm's "Comics To Bore and Confuse You" (1995) from Scattered and others.

In summary, Christian comics have served a variety of purposes. The Bible comics were produced to educate less word-oriented generations of children and adults about the wonders of the good book. Publications like Jack Chick's tracts, and comic books like Aida-Zee, are straight evangelistic vehicles produced to see people won to faith in Christ. Many of the more recent Christian comics are more entertainment directed. While they are not aimed only at Christians they are at best "pre-evangelistic" to the non-Christian reader. The message is more subtle than upfront. It should be stressed that many of these comics are not all equal in terms of art/story quality or spiritual/theological maturity. Some are very well done while others are diamonds in the rough. But they are all made with much enthusiasm and (hopefully) dedication to the Lord. How

much of this work is gold, silver, and precious stones and how much is wood, hay or stubble is for the one righteous God to judge on the last day (I Cor. 3:12-17).

Into this mix the Proverbs and Parables collection arrives with its vast array of talented Christian artists. We hope that you are blessed, encouraged and edified by this picturization of God's eternal written word.

(This is not meant to be a comprehensive survey of Christian comic books, past or present. If you have been left out of this brief rundown please accept my apologies. Your heavenly reward is far more important than fleeting temporal recognition.)

(Reprinted from Proverbs and Parables, Introduction, 1998)



VALIANT EFFORTS

NG

\$3.00

Featuring

The Golden PROTECTOR

Vol. 3, No. 3

Re-Introducing

STREET FURY



FIRST COMICS

I was born and raised in northwest Washington state. During my growing up years the farmers in the rural areas of the county provided seasonal employment for Junior and Senior High school children during the Summer break. The primary crop, strawberries were harvested during June and July. The farmers purchased old school buses and picked up city (and rural) kids and took them to the fields to pick strawberries which provided some income for the kids. When I was about ten years old my oldest brother took me along to



one of the fields and I got my first experience grubbing in the dirt picking the delicious small fruit. One day toward the end of the season we stopped at a small rural store. They had a comics rack and I purchased (or perhaps my brother did) a couple of comic books. They were, I believe a Superman (or Action), and a World's Finest Comics. I remember not being real impressed with them. The Mort Weisinger Superman of this period while having its virtues didn't excite me. The stories and art didn't compel me to follow up with either series. About that time I was following Turok Son of Stone (and some of the Disney Dell Duck comics). Perhaps I was too young, too engaged in outdoor activities to become interested in other comics. It would be several years before I gave Superman (and super hero comics) another look.

-- The Ensign Report #4 , Bio-Speak 4,(August 2012) UFO edition, May 2013, Tetragrammaton-Fragments #224

EARLY CHRISTIAN COMICS

As mentioned in prior BioSpeaks as a child my family took frequent trips from our home in northwest Washington to visit relatives in western Colorado. My family was a churchgoing family and on these trips we visited churches attended by my relatives. One congregation in Delta, Colorado I have memories of was the First Baptist Church. This church gave out take home Sunday School papers to the kids called Sunday Pix published by David C. Cook. Perhaps the most significant thing about Sunday Pix was they serialized the Bible in comic strip form. I later found out that the art was done by Andre LeBlanc. This art set a high standard in comic strip adaptations of the Bible. LeBlanc worked with Will Eisner (on the Spirit) and was well know for a comic strip called Intellectual Amos (in Quality's National Comics). The Sunday Pix Bible strips were later collected into book form called the Picture Bible. On several occasions I got permission from David C. Cook to use Picture Bible art for a magazine I designed for a faith based nonprofit I worked for in the 1980s and 1990s. Several years ago comic artist and former Kubert School instructor Sergio Cariello redid the art and it is now called the Action Bible which sells very well at comic conventions.

-- The Ensign Report #7, Bio-Speak 7,(March 2013) UFO edition, May 2013, Tetragrammaton-Fragments #227



DON ENSIGN
8/85

TIMELINE OF CCAS 1984-2018

1960's

• Don Ensign, a Christian, is interested in comic books and in using the medium for the furtherance of the gospel.

1964

• Don Ensign creates the Protector (later Golden Protector) as a Christian superhero. In 1965, it is published in a fanzine called *Heroes Illustrated* (#1, Spring 1965, published by Dick Pryor of Castro Valley, CA).



1970's

• Don Ensign discovers Jack Chick tracts and the Spire Christian comics by Al Hartley.



1972

• Don Ensign, while working at Campus Crusade (San Bernardino, CA), takes other responsibilities off of Johnny Meitz, so he can work on *The Greatest Treasure* tract.



1976 (and later)

• Don Ensign discovers the revolutionary Christian art ideas of Francis Schaeffer and Hans Rookmaaker.

1977

• Don Ensign self-publishes a Christian Comic, *Tales of Antediluvia* #1, and gives copies away at this year's San Diego Comic Con.



1979

• Don Ensign's friend, Terry Walsh, suggests that Don try and locate other Christian comic cartoonists who shared a passion for Christian comics.



1980 - 1982

• Don Ensign and fellow Campus Crusade for Christ writer, Paul Johnston, create a comic strip. Out

of this is birthed an idea that could reach multiple Christian artists, writers and fans.

1982

• Don Ensign picks up a flyer for the Comic Arts Society. He begins attending the bi-weekly meetings in a comic shop in Santa Monica, CA.

1983

• The Christian Comic Arts Society is formed by Don Ensign and Paul Johnston. Ideas for a newsletter are discussed.

1984

• Don Ensign places an advertisement in the Comic Buyer's Guide, offering the free *Valiant* newsletter. About 200 responses are generated from this one ad. Among those who respond include: Ralph Miley, John Pierce, Harry Miller, Billy Leavell, G. Raymond Eddy, Charles Whitley and Nate Butler.

1984-1986

• *Valiant* Newsletter is published by CCAS. It is composed of articles on Jack Kirby's *Fourth World* Series, Art and the Bible, the *Occult in Comics*, and features on Bruce Day and Stan Lynde.



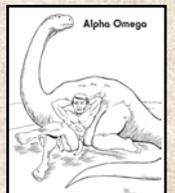
1984

• Don Ensign and Ralph Miley first talk on the phone and discuss the current comic book industry, likes and dislikes, fan stuff and Christianity.

• While publishing the *Valiant* newsletter, Paul Johnston suggests publishing an apa-zine to help connect Christian artists across the nation.

1985

• *Alpha-Omega*, the first apa-zine devoted to Christian comics, is published. (#1, September). Among the contributors are: Don Ensign, Ralph Miley, Billy Leavell, John Pierce and Harry Miller. Art and articles are featured inside.



1986

• Don Ensign and Ralph Miley meet face-to-face at Ralph's home in Santa Fe Springs, CA (August 30th).

Ideas for a collaboration project are discussed.

• Local monthly meetings begin to take shape in Don's home of Temple City. Others start attending, such as Charles Whitley. Meetings consist of a Bible study, fellowship and comic book discussions. Out of these meetings comes the idea for *Valiant Efforts*.



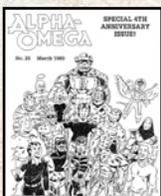
1986

• The first issue of *Valiant Efforts* is published. Three other issues are published through July 1991. Artists include Don Ensign, Ralph Miley, Jack Martin and Steve Firchow.



1989

• *Alpha-Omega's* 25th issue is published.



1990 to mid-1990s

• Local monthly CCAS meetings are moved from place to place: Santa Fe Springs, Temple City and South Pasadena. New members include: Clint Johnson, Kevin Yong, Eric Jansen, Steve Lyles, Wayne Cash, Jose Guillen and Fred Sanders.

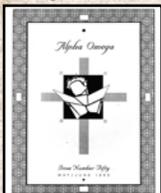
1992

• The first Christian Comics panel at San Diego Comic-Con, entitled "Christian Comics: The New Underground" is organized by Nate Butler. Panelists include: Stan Lynde, Nestor Redondo, Ralph Miley, and Don Ensign.



1993

• *Alpha-Omega's* 50th issue is published.



1994

• *The Alpha-Omega Challenge*, an ashcan, is published. Artwork is by several CCAS artists.



1995

• San Diego Comic-Con Christian dinner meeting (with pizza) organized by Nate Butler. About a dozen people attend,



including the late Nestor Redondo.

• Idea for a newsletter, *New Creation*, is suggested by Ralph Miley.

• Don Ensign designs the first CCAS website.

1996

• Ralph Miley, inspired by *The Big Book of Martyrs*, published by Paragon Press, begins discussing a similar compilation book based on Bible passages. Together with Don Ensign and Kevin Yong, he begins organizing artists for this project, which eventually becomes the landmark book *Proverbs and Parables*.

• Two informal CCAS gatherings took place offsite during the weekend of the San Diego Comic Con (July 5-6).



• 1st Table at the Alternative Press Expo (APE) in San Francisco, CA. Run by Ralph Miley, Kevin Yong and Don Ensign.



1996-1998

• The *New Creation Newsletter* is published and sent out to Christians for the next two years (13 issues) to approximately 60 people.



1997

• 1st CCAS table and *Spiritual Themes Panel* at the San Diego Comic Con. Many Christian artists and writers are blessed by the generated fellowship.



• *Alpha-Omega's* 75th issue is published.

1998

• *Proverbs and Parables*, an anthology featuring over 60 Christian artists, is published. This is the first trade paperback published by CCAS.



1999

• CCAS website moves to another server



and redesigned by Carl Borg.

Early 2000's

• CCAS Membership of the Southern California group grows to almost 20. Monthly meetings are held at Eric Jansen's workplace, Foursquare Missions Press, Downey, CA.

2000

• *New Crew*, a superhero satire comic book created and written by Kevin Yong, is published by Ralph Miley and features many CCAS artists.



2001

• CCAS website moves to another server by Carl Borg.

• *New Visions*, a compilation book of Christian stories, is published jointly by Clint Johnson and Ralph Miley and features many CCAS artists.



• *Alpha-Omega's* 100th issue is published in a special trade paperback format in September. The roster of *Alpha-Omega* includes over 20 members.



• 5th Table and *Spiritual Themes Panel* at San Diego Comic-Con.

2002

• *Paraman Vs. Terriflex*, the first mini comic-tract in full color, is published by Foursquare Missions Press. CCAS artists Eric Jansen and Linda Brown produce it. This comic is a forerunner to the later Street Comix line.



2002 - 2006

• Southern California CCAS monthly meetings are hosted at Eric Jansen's workplace, Foursquare Missions Press.



2003

• *A Christmas Treasury* is published by Eric



Jansen and features many CCAS artists.

2003 - 2006

• CCAS' Southern California group restructures which leads to stronger ties between itself and the nationwide *Alpha-Omega* membership.

2004

• The first edition (of 5) of the *Guide to Christian Comics* is published by CCAS and is compiled by Don Ensign. Its sister publication, *The Christian Comics Directory* is also published.



2005

• CCAS website is redesigned and maintained by Geoff Strout.

• *Alpha-Omega's* 125th issue is published.



2006

• 10th Table and *Spiritual Themes Panel* at San Diego Comic-Con.



• 1st Table at the Phoenix Comic Fest. Run by Don Ensign.

• Two CCAS tables at the Tampa Con, Florida. Run by Geoff Brenneman.

2007

• In collaboration with Foursquare Missions Press (Eric Jansen's employer) and a street ministry in New Jersey, CCAS artists, Robert Flores and Eric Jansen, create a line of comic-tracts designed to reach the lost on the street, called *Street Comix*. *The Lonely Lady* (for prostitutes) and *Homeless Harry* (for the homeless) are the first two published.



• New Creation Publications is formed by CCAS members Don Ensign, Ralph Miley, Clint Johnson, Kevin Yong and Wayne Cash as an independent art studio and works with several CCAS artists to produce several Christian comics and



media.

- ♦ Table at the Church Ministry Fair, Evangelical Free Church, Green Valley, AZ. Run by Don Ensign.

2008

- ♦ 1st Table at Los Angeles Wizard World. Run by Eric Jansen, Robert Flores and Ralph Miley.



- ♦ Table at Claremont Comic Convention. Run by Ralph Miley and Buzz Dixon.

2008 - 2015

- ♦ The *Street Comix* comic-tract line continues to be published by Foursquare Missions Press, with art by CCAS artists, including Rob Marsh. These comics include: *The Lonely Lady* (2007), *Homeless Harry* (2007), *Vengeance is Mine* (2008), and *Hooked* (2015).



2008 - 2009

- ♦ The CCAS Board of Directors completes new bylaws revision, moves ahead and completes non-profit status for CCAS.

2009

- ♦ New Creation Entertainment, in cooperation with several CCAS artists, produce two publications: *New Visions Anthology* (vol. 2) and *Ragged Capes*.



- ♦ CCAS publishes its *25th Anniversary Booklet*. It features many personal memoirs, photos, a members list and a brief history by Don Ensign. Designed by Robert Flores and edited by the CCAS Board of Directors.



- ♦ 1st Table at San Francisco WonderCon. Run by Ralph Miley.

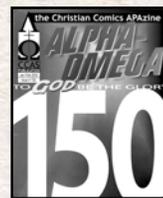


2009 - Present

- ♦ Southern California CCAS monthly meetings alternate between the cities of La Mirada, Northridge and Monrovia.

2010

- ♦ *Alpha-Omega's* 150th issue is published.



- ♦ Table and *Spiritual Themes Panel* at Phoenix Comic Con. Run by Don Ensign.

- ♦ Table at Tucson Comic Con. Run by Don Ensign



2011

- ♦ 15th Table and *Spiritual Themes Panel* at San Diego Comic-Con.

- ♦ Don Ensign publishes the first issue (of 5) of *Valiant Efforts* (#1-5, vol. 3).



- ♦ 3rd Table at San Francisco WonderCon. Run by Geoff Strout.

- ♦ Table and *New Creation Comic Panel* at Phoenix Comic Fest.

2012

- ♦ 1st Table at Anaheim WonderCon. Run by Ralph Miley.

- ♦ 1st Table at Los Angeles Comikaze. Run by Ralph Miley and Buzz Dixon.



2013

- ♦ 5th Table at WonderCon San Francisco.

- ♦ 1st CCAS Table at Irvine FishFest. Run by Ralph Miley and Eric Jansen and coordinated by Front Gate Media.

- ♦ 2nd Table and 1st *Spiritual Themes Panel* at Los Angeles Comikaze, hosted by Eric Jansen and Kevin Yong.

- ♦ 5th Creators Mixer at the San Diego Comic-Con.

- ♦ 4th Table at Tucson Comic Con. Run



by Don Ensign.

2014

• Don Ensign is admitted into the hospital for prostate cancer. In response, several CCAS artists contribute to a *Golden Protector* art book for him, while he is in the hospital.

• Don Ensign, CCAS's founder, passes away on March 19, 2014, in Tucson, AZ. His memorial service is held on March 24, 2014.



• CCAS celebrates its 30 year Anniversary.

• *Alpha-Omega's* 175th issue is published in March and includes 15 members.



• CCAS online social network includes 1400 members.

• 1st Alpha-Omega Con is organized and publicized by CCAS. This is the first Christian themed / family friendly comic book convention in the nation. It features several Christian artists, writers and producers in the Southern California area. Several panels are also part of the one-day event.



2015

• Biola University's Library's *Christian Comic Collection* is formed by Don Ensign's and Nate Butler's Collection, making it the largest collection of its kind in the world. This collection in La Mirada, CA, is made possible by the efforts of Dr. Fred Sanders, Ralph Miley and others and is designed to preserve and archive Christian comics for posterity and scholarly study.



• 7th and last CCAS Table at Phoenix Comic Fest.



2016

• 20th Table and Spiritual Themes Panel at San Diego Comic-Con.

• 7th Table at San Francisco WonderCon and 1st

Spiritual Themes Panel.

2017

• The *New Visions Anthology* vol. 2 is published. Several CCAS artists are involved.



• Table at the Art of Pop show in Claremont, CA. Run by Ralph Miley and Kevin Yong.

• *Silver Wolf*, a traditional superhero comic book, is published. Created by Kevin Yong, Eric Jansen and Larry Blake, as originally serialized in *Alpha-Omega*.



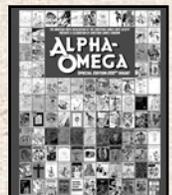
2018

• Table at the Christian Ministries Training Association (CMTA) in Pasadena, CA. It is a conference of Sunday School teachers, children, and youth leaders.



• A *Golden Protector* tract-comic is published.

• CCAS online Members number 1,834.



• *Alpha-Omega's* 200th issue is published in May.

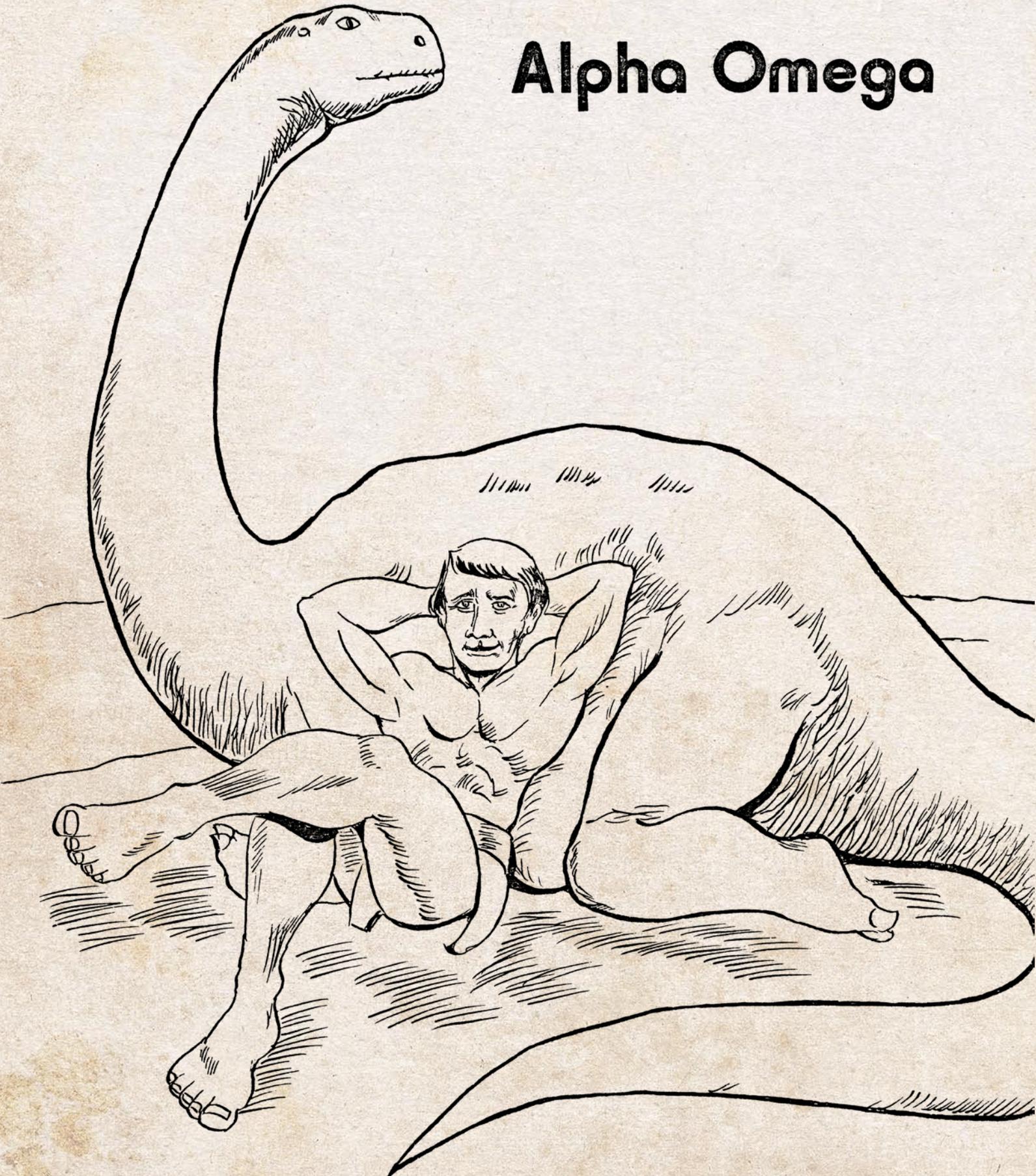
• 5th Alpha-Omega Con, the longest running Christian themed / family friendly comic book convention.



• *Ragged Capes*, vol. 2 is to published (late 2018). Several CCAS artists are involved.



Alpha Omega



DON
ENSGN



“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

— Hebrews 12:1-2



cccas

Christian Comic Arts Society

The Christian Comic Arts Society (CCAS) has existed for over twenty years through the APA-zine Alpha-Omega, the Southern California monthly meetings, an outreach ministry at the San Diego Comic-Con (and other conventions), and the CCAS website. Pulling Christians together from all over the comic book industry, CCAS produced the watershed graphic novel, *Proverbs and Parables, New Visions* as well as the annual *Guide To Christian Comics*.

The Christian Comic Arts Society is a volunteer organization whose purpose is to support Christian professionals, hopefuls, and enthusiasts within the comic book and related industries. We accomplish this by the following: (a) The sharing of the Christian gospel, message and faith, primarily within and through the comic book industry and art form; (b) Mentoring, training, friendship and fellowship; (c) The collaboration on and creation of visual storytelling.



PO Box 254
Temple City, CA 91780
www.christiancomicarts.com

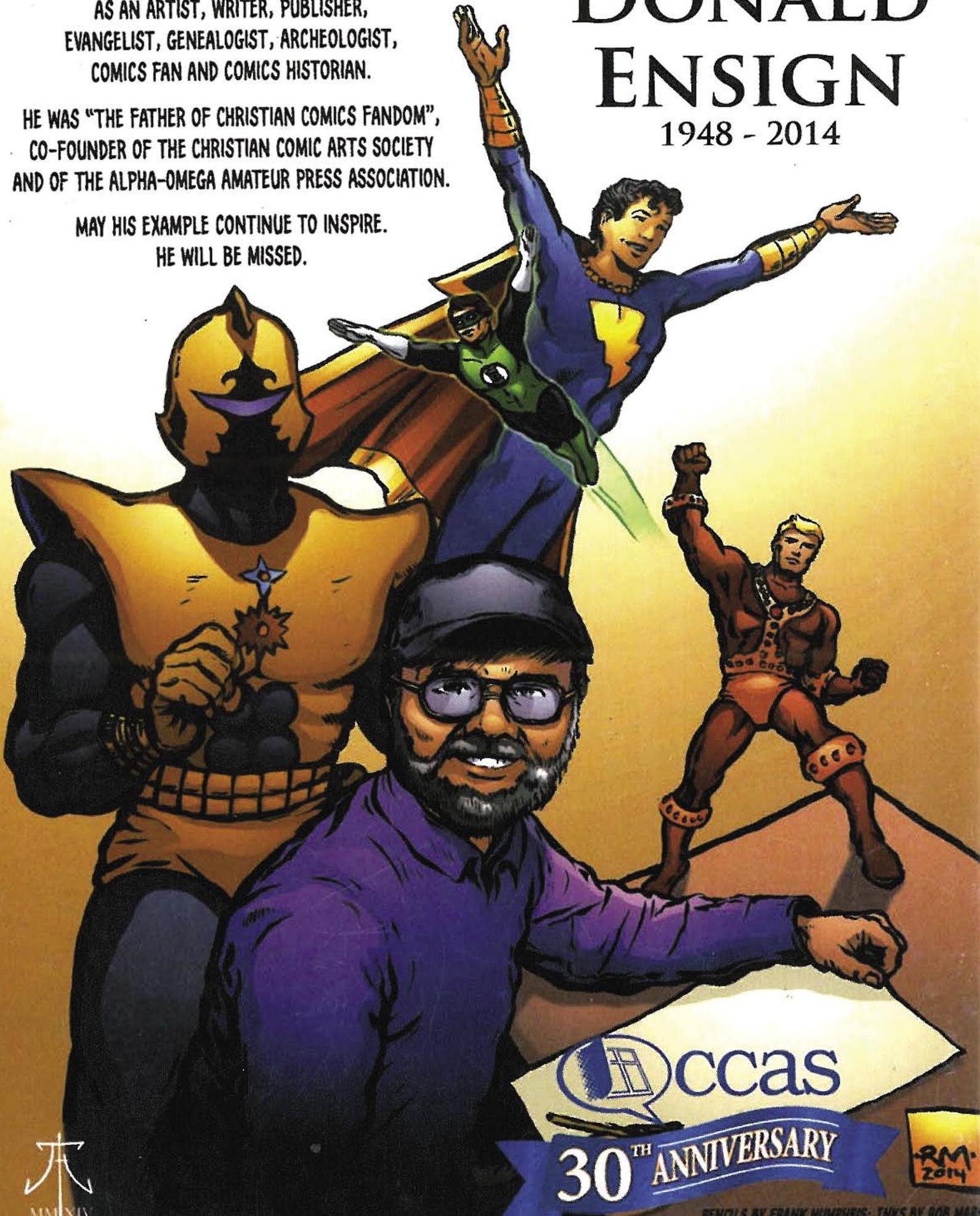
DON SERVED THE LORD
AS AN ARTIST, WRITER, PUBLISHER,
EVANGELIST, GENEALOGIST, ARCHEOLOGIST,
COMICS FAN AND COMICS HISTORIAN.

HE WAS "THE FATHER OF CHRISTIAN COMICS FANDOM",
CO-FOUNDER OF THE CHRISTIAN COMIC ARTS SOCIETY
AND OF THE ALPHA-OMEGA AMATEUR PRESS ASSOCIATION.

MAY HIS EXAMPLE CONTINUE TO INSPIRE.
HE WILL BE MISSED.

DONALD ENSIGN

1948 - 2014



 cccas

30TH ANNIVERSARY


MMXIV

RM
2014

FIGURES BY FRANK HUMPHRIS; INKS BY ROB MARSH