

You're listening to Imaginary Worlds, a show about how we create them and why we suspend our disbelief, I'm Eric Molinsky.

Before I begin, I want to welcome new listeners who may have just discovered this show because the podcast Twenty Thousand Hertz aired the crossover episode we did on radio dramas. That episode of course aired on Imaginary Worlds last month. If you're new to Imaginary Worlds, a great place to start is the first episode from 2014, which is called Origin Stories. In fact, some people start there and binge through the entire podcast in order. But you can also check out the different mini-series that I've done on Star Wars, Doctor Who and Harry Potter. I've also covered Star Trek, Game of Thrones, Lord of the Rings, Marvel and DC. So have fun geeking out!

Now today's episode is going to be unlike any episode I've done before because this is actually a round table discussion. You won't hear me much as narrator because I'm going to be taking on the role of moderator.

The inspiration for this episode came from a call out I put to my listeners on Facebook about what topics they'd like to hear. A number of people suggested the role of religion in sci-fi fantasy worlds. And I was thinking what I would actually love to hear are leaders of different faiths discussing that topic with each other – and these would be clergy that are also fans of science fiction and fantasy. So I gathered three of them together for a conversation.

Hussein Rasheed is a professor at Columbia University, and he's an al-waez, which is a traveling preacher at Muslim religious gatherings. He often uses pop culture in his college lectures and his religious sermons.

HR IN: I've used Lord of the Rings...

HR OUTand of course I have to mention the Jedi as Sufi orders, Muslim mystics.

RB: I've also used sci-fi fantasy in my sermons.

Rachel Barenblatt is a rabbi at congregation Beth Israel in North Adams, Massachusetts.

RB IN: A few years ago at the time of the last regeneration...

RB OUT: Turning around starting over

OS: Yeah, Doctor Who is a rich place to go.

Reverend Oscar Sinclair serves the Unitarian church of Lincoln Nebraska.

OS IN: There's a line that Matt Smith says in...

OS OUT: To skip over them because we've advanced enough as a society.

Our conversation continues after the break.

AD BREAK

Let's return to the conversation with Hussein, Rachel and Oscar. Since each of them is a spiritual leader in a different, I asked if there was ever a work of sci-fi or fantasy that they viewed in a particular way because of their faith?

HS: I remember when I first read Narnia...

OS OUT:...exploring metaphors that have been with us for thousands of years, and science fiction can be a great resource for that.

That's it for this week, thank you for listening. Special thanks to Oscar Sinclair, Rachel Barenblatt and Hussein Rasheed. I have included a list of all the novels and show they mentioned in the notes to this episode, and on my website.

Imaginary Worlds is part of the Panoply network. My assistant producer is Stephanie Billman. You can like the show on Facebook. I tweet at emolinsky and imagine worlds pod. My website is imaginary worlds podcast dot org.