Religious Themes in Gaming

This topic is locked from further discussion.

#1 (/forums/games-discussion-1000000/religious-themes-in-gaming-25992585/?page=1#js-message-294651720) Posted by **TruthSeeker777 (/profile/TruthSeeker777/)** (101 posts) - 8 years, 1 month ago

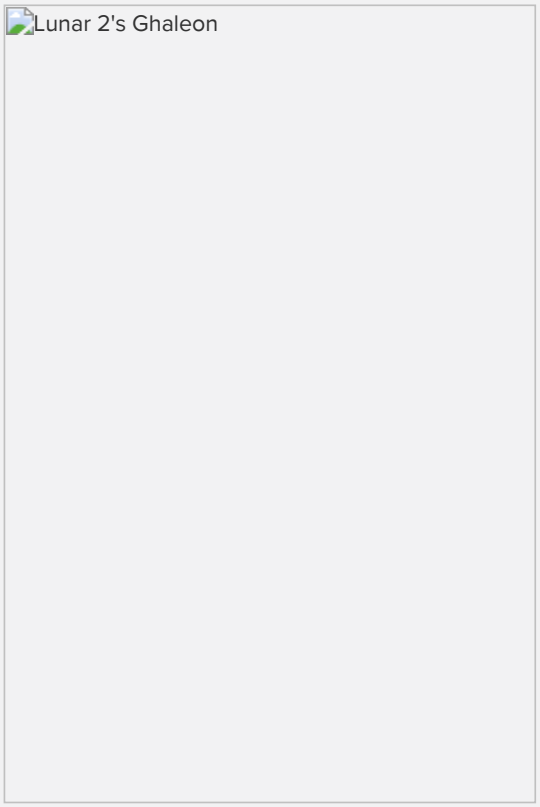
I find it fascinating when a game's story incorporates religious themes and motifs in its narrative. One of my favorite game series to do this is the *Lunar* series.

SPOILERS

Although on the surface one could dismiss the *Lunar* series as a simple boy meets girl, boy falls in love with girl, boy saves girl (and the world) plot, what I found fascinating is the deist theme hidden beneath the surface (Deists are people who believe the universe was created by a intelligent deity who does not interfere with humanity or the laws of the universe).

Early in the course of the game, the player discovers that the world was created by the goddess Althena. Unbeknownst to all of the world's inhabitants (exempt the game's main characters who discover this mid-game) this goddess chose to stop playing an omnipresent & omnipotent role and was reincarnated in human form (the main love interest Luna), thus sacrificing her immorality. She decided humanity as a whole were moral beings who could function better without her.

The series' most fascinating character is the main boss of the first game, Ghaleon (who returns in the sequel). Ghaleon, one of the Goddess' former protectors, is extremely bitter and enraged with the Goddess' decision to give up her power and become human. He believes humanity needs an all-powerful deity to watch over them. Ghaleon decides that he will find, capture, and control the human incarnation of the goddess (Luna) and channel her buried power to control the world and become the new divine leader.



Ghaleon (above)

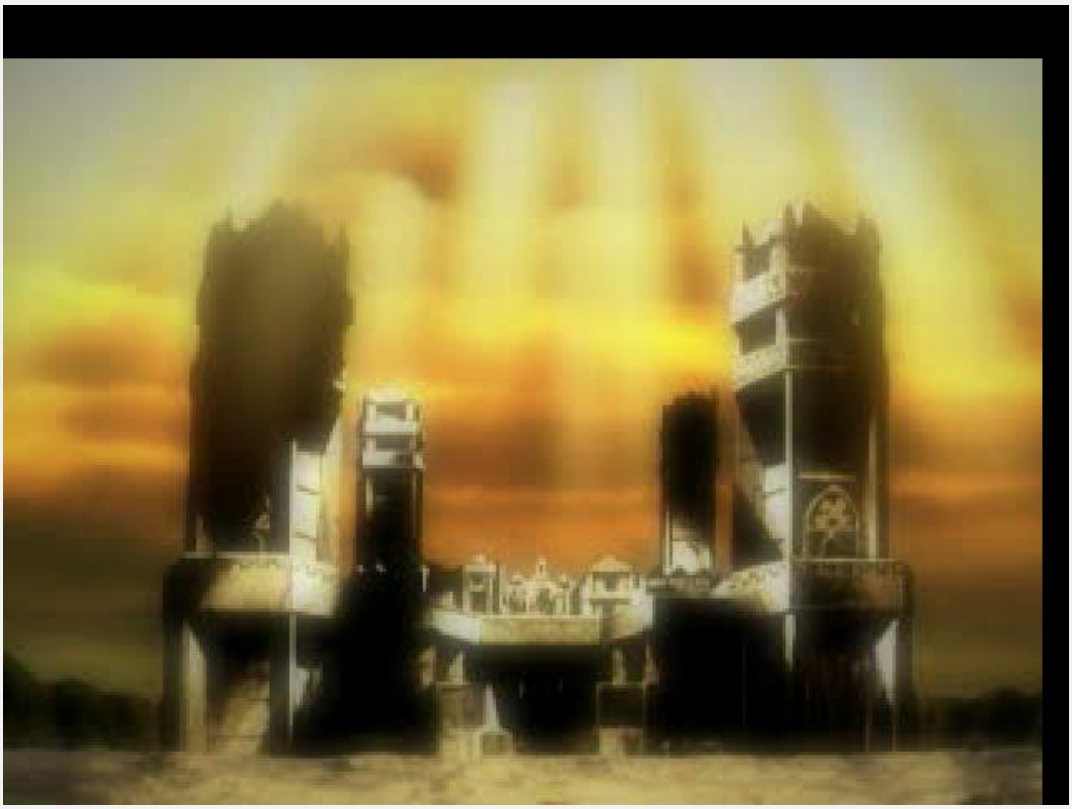
To me, Ghaleon is not evil; he just has a different philosophy on what is best for humanity. Lunar's world history is not unlike ours, it is filled with bloody wars and senseless violence. I believe Ghaleon generally wishes for a more perfect, utopian world and believes the best way to accomplish this is to strip humanity of its free choice and force it to his will by whatever means necessary. He wants to play cosmological babysitter and actively intervene in humanity's affairs, preventing them from inflicting harm upon themselves and the planet.

Ultimately Ghaleon is defeated by the heroes who believe human beings as a whole are morally good. The heroes fight Ghaleon to protect humanity's free choice from a controlling, all-powerful deity.

The sequel *Lunar 2: Eternal Blue*, which takes place a thousand years after the events of the first game, features a religious sect called Althena's Chosen. This group shares similarities with the Catholic Church: Althena's Chosen worship in large cathedrals with bright colored stain ****windows, they dress in formal ropes similar to Catholic bishops and obey every command made by a woman who claims to be the goddess "Althen" (in actuality she is an impostor since the real Althena/Luna died a thousand years earlier). "Althena" dresses in attire similar to the Pope and resides in the holy city of Pentagulia (*Luanr 2*'s Vatican).

ABOVE: Althena's Chosen cathedral with two "bishops"

ABOVE: The Althena imposter and boss (notice Pope-like hat and cane)



ABOVE: The Holy City Pentigula (Lunar 2's version of the Vatican)

Althena's Chosen is portrayed as a grossly corrupt sect. They charge your party an outrageous sum of money to pray/heal at their temple's Althena statute (Althena statues serve as healing stations that restore your party's HP and MP and can be used for free in every location in the game except for the Cathedral of Althena's Chosen) and constantly pressure the world's inhabitants to donate money to gain favor with the goddess (money they secretly pocket themselves).

To me, the game's creators painted a world which matches the philosophy of deism: a deity created the world and then decided to leave humanity alone. Those who believe in and worship the goddess are deluded and misinformed. Organized religion in *Lunar 2* consists of groups of people who worship a goddess who in actuality died over a thousand years ago! Worse yet, some of these believers (Althena's Chosen) prey on others' emotional vulnerabilities to fuel their greed and corruption all while hiding behind the name of the goddess. They make empty promises of gaining favor and good fortune with Althena in exchange for money. The game's creators undoubtedly possessed an unfavorable view to organized religion, alluding to some of the corrupt practices of the ancient Catholic Church.

Ultimately, the story of Lunar 1 & 2 is one of optimism and hope. The world of Lunar consists mostly of moral characters. The game's message is that humanity is good and is capable of a peaceful co-existence with the planet and each other.

END SPOILERS

I am sure there are other religious allusions in *Lunar,* but this served just as an example.Would anyone else like to share their observations of religious or philosophical themes and allusions in video games?

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#2 (/forums/games-discussion-1000000/religious-themes-in-gaming-25992585/?page=1#js-message-294653144) Posted by **Jemdude (/profile/Jemdude/)** (6045 posts) - 8 years, 1 month ago

I've actually played both Lunar series, but I don't see the religion of Althena as similar to Christianity. A goddess that needs protection and can be manipulated is not one I'll be tempted to worship anytime soon.

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#3 (/forums/games-discussion-1000000/religious-themes-in-gaming-25992585/?page=1#js-message-294653312) Posted by **TruthSeeker777 (/profile/TruthSeeker777/)** (101 posts) - 8 years, 1 month ago

The goddess only needed protection when she became human (Luna). It was in her human state in which she needed protection since she gave up her omnipotence.

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#4 (/forums/games-discussion-1000000/religious-themes-in-gaming-25992585/?page=1#js-message-294653466) Posted by **ninjacat11 (/profile/ninjacat11/)** (5008 posts) - 8 years, 1 month ago

As long as they don't overdo it (Left Behind, Bibleman, etc.), I don't give two rats asses.

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#5 (/forums/games-discussion-1000000/religious-themes-in-gaming-25992585/?page=1#js-message-294656143) Posted by **Jemdude (/profile/Jemdude/)** (6045 posts) - 8 years, 1 month ago

> *The goddess only needed protection when she became human (Luna). It was in her human state in which she needed protection since she gave up her omnipotence.*
>
> *-- TruthSeeker777*

No, she needed protection even when she was the goddess. Althena was powerful but not all powerful. Althena needed protection from the dragon master and the 4 dragons. Do you remember what Alex said as part of the first things he said at the beginning of Lunar Silver Star Story? He dreamed of being a dragon master and protecting the goddess Althena.

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#6 (/forums/games-discussion-1000000/religious-themes-in-gaming-25992585/?page=1#js-message-294659724) Posted by **TruthSeeker777 (/profile/TruthSeeker777/)** (101 posts) - 8 years, 1 month ago

I think this is debatable, but the issue you raise I feel makes the game more interesting. I do not think Althena ever NEEDED the dragons or the dragonmaster for protection since before the events of the Lunar games she banished Zophar (who I consider the game's Satan figure) to the Blue Star single handedly without the help from the dragons or the dragonmaster (as far as I recall they weren't even formed yet, didn't this happen much later in the timeline?). If so, this action hints at omnipotence.

Furthermore, I read from this article in wikipedia regarding the Saturn version of the game:

"In the original, Dyne loses his power as a result of confining the Black Dragon, who had gone insane and was laying waste to the land. Ghaleon hated the Goddess for sending his friend to do a task that he believed she should have done herself"

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lunar:_Silver_Star_Story_Complete (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lunar:_Silver_Star_Story_Complete))

So this fact also suggests omnipotence since Ghaleon is angry since Althena could have easily handled the problem herself instead of letting Dyne do it. If Althena took care of the problem Dyne wouldn't have had to lose his powers.

The existence of the dragons and dragonmaster raises interesting questions that relate to Western religions, especially Christianity. How come God makes missionaries and disciples go out and attempt to convert non-believers when it would be better and more effective if He came down and communicated with non-believers directly? Likewise, why does Althena use the dragons and the dragonmaster to accomplish her goals when she could do it better herself?

Why, according to the Bible, did God cast such amazing miracles in the OT and less so in the NT (and arguably non-existent today?) If God exists, why doesn't He make His presence more clearly known? If God wanted to, He could easily alleviate the sufferings of millions of lives instead of stepping back and letting charities and governments try to take care of world suffering (Africa, Middle East, natural disasters, etc.).

In the end I believe the uncertainty to the extent of Althena's power makes the game richer since it raises the above questions. I also personally think the game makes religion appear less credible as a whole.

Side note: Always fun talking to a Lunar fan, there are very few of us.

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#7 (/forums/games-discussion-1000000/religious-themes-in-gaming-25992585/?page=1#js-message-294662500) Posted by **Jemdude (/profile/Jemdude/)** (6045 posts) - 8 years, 1 month ago

The only thing the game does is make Althena's religion less credible; not Christianity. God has his reasons why he uses agenets such as missionaries to reach people, but when the time comes, humankind will dwell with God more directly.
There is no way that any human or even an angel can take over God's mind and control him like Ghaleon did when he took over Althena's mind. And Althena's chosen was really a cult that Zophar was benind. Surely you are not saying that Satan is controling most Christian churches? God can raise people from the dead while the Junior Premiere of the Magic Guild said that Althena doesn't have that power. Althena does not exist anymore while God will always exist. But that's okay since the story line might have been less interesting if Althena was made to be so powerful that Ghaleon couldn't do anything to her.

I do have a question though. Do you have any idea what relation Lucia had with Althena? Were they sisters, mother/daughter, etc.?

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#8 (/forums/games-discussion-1000000/religious-themes-in-gaming-25992585/?page=1#js-message-294665963) Posted by **TruthSeeker777 (/profile/TruthSeeker777/)** (101 posts) - 8 years, 1 month ago

Your answer for why God relies on missionaries is the most common-go-to answer for Christians when they lack a real answer: you have to have FAITH that there IS a God and that he has HIS REASONS (despite how illogical and cruel they might seem). Now I want to be clear that I am not attacking you or your faith; it is just an answer I have heard many times before. From the Christian POV, there is really no easy answer to the tough questions I threw at you. I personally believe that questions like the ones we have discussed can be better explained through science and logical reasoning (though science alone cannot answer EVERYTHING at this time, it does a fine job and has explained away many things that were once thought unexplainable)

Regarding the game, I don't consider Luna the actual goddess Althena since I believed the real Althena in essence died when she decided to become human. This means that Ghaleon's mind control is not over the powerful goddess, but rather a mere human (Luna) who, like Ghaleon, is capable of great magical power but not to the level of omnipotence.Ghaleon would never be able to overpower or control Althena in true deity form.

Although obviously Christian churches are not closet Satan worshippers, I feel there are still comparisons that can be made. The tactics employed by Althena's Chosen to me are not completely dissimilar to tactics used by some so-called Christians that say some truly ridiculous things that many people fall for. One of the most famous and outrageous claims involved Pastor Oral Roberts who claimed that God would "take him home" if he did not raise $8 million:

http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,964970,00.html (http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,964970,00.html)

Now do you think God would have honestly killed Oral Roberts had he not raised the money? Of course not! This was simply a shameless tactic to raise quick funds while using God's name to fool ignorant people. And sadly, there are more examples like this. Now these stories do not discredit Christianity, they just demonstrate the reality of corruption in organized religion. I believe *Lunar's* developers were simply trying to demonstrate this reality with Althena's Chosen.

If I recall correctly, Althena's Chosen do end up repenting fortheir ways later in the game. However, they still believe (like the priestesses in the first game) that there is a goddess watching over them when there simply isn't. This to me infers that the game's creators were trying to subtly demonstrate how easily people can believe in something that isn't even there simply because it provides psychological comfort. *Lunar*'s inhabitants believe in the goddess because it gives them as sense of purpose and a protective celestial mother-figure to turn to when times get rough. Based on this and my earlier interpretations, I conclude that the game's developers created a game which conveys a deist worldview: *Lunar*'s world was created by a goddess in the beginning but this goddess has ceased to be, yet many of the world's inhabitants mistakenly perceive the goddess as actively engaging in their daily lives.

I do not recall that quote from the Junior Premiere. Which Lunar game and which version does this quote appear in (PS or Saturn?)? If you can find this quote easily please share! Even with this quote you could still argue that the goddess is omnipotent. After all, didn't Zophar raise Ghaleon from the dead? Considering that Althena is more powerful than Zophar I do not understand why Althena would not be able to raise people from the dead as well.

I agree with you that the character of Lucia is not adequately explained. Wikipedia provides this brief explanation:

...she is the guardian of the Blue Star. She has existed for thousands of years, watching over the Blue Star until it is capable of being inhabited again. At her introduction, she is solely concerned with locating Althena, being as Zophar is manifesting himself on Lunar and Althena has apparently not taken any preventive action.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lunar_2:_Eternal_Blue_Complete (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lunar_2:_Eternal_Blue_Complete)

Maybe it could be argued that Lucia is some sort of angel-like figured created to serve Althena? I guess you could also argue this makes her Althena's daughter since Lucia most certainly was created by Althena and not born from mankind or any other lifeform for that matter.

Ultimately, *Lunar* is a video game which contains some minor plot holes and unexplained events. However, imo the Bible also contains unexplained "gaps." An example of one "gap" is the often overlooked Jesus' genealogy contradictions between Matthew and Luke:

http://campus.fortunecity.com/defiant/666/genluke.html (http://campus.fortunecity.com/defiant/666/genluke.html)

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genealogy_of_Jesus (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genealogy_of_Jesus)

Despite our differences in opinion, I think it is hard to deny that there are references to religion in *Lunar1 & 2*.

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#9 (/forums/games-discussion-1000000/religious-themes-in-gaming-25992585/?page=1#js-message-294666185) Posted by **gamingqueen (/profile/gamingqueen/)** (31076 posts) - 8 years, 1 month ago

Is it a myth or it's actually practised today? Nice topic btw :) it's new!

I'm not sure if this counts but I wanna play Assasin's Creed so bad. Even though parts of the story were explained before especially that it revolves around a minority of muslims but I still wanna see what motive the writer gave for hero to assasinate people during the crusade. I'm not aware that Shias were active during that time honestly so this will make a great source of infoson them during that era to me.

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#10 (/forums/games-discussion-1000000/religious-themes-in-gaming-25992585/?page=1#js-message-294671807) Posted by **Qixote (/profile/Qixote/)** (10830 posts) - 8 years, 1 month ago

I don't know if this topic was intended for actual religion or includes fictional ones. But many games have fictional religious themes. My favorite is the Thief series with the Hammerite religion. Those nuts worshipped "The Builder" and carried around big hammers to bash anyone stealing their holy artifacts. Thief 1 and 2 also had tons of reading material which detailed the whole Hammerite doctrine.

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#11 (/forums/games-discussion-1000000/religious-themes-in-gaming-25992585/?page=1#js-message-294671904) Posted by **Jemdude (/profile/Jemdude/)** (6045 posts) - 8 years, 1 month ago

I know that you are not attacking the Christian faith but just engaging in conversation. Religious scams have happened in any religion; not just Christianity. But that doesn't mean that Christianity condones such things. Ripping off people and deceiving them is hardly a Christian teaching. As for Jesus' genealogy, one is Joseph's genealogy and the other is Mary's genealogy.
The Lunar games I played are the PS version. The quote is from memory. I believe she qutoed it soon after seeing Ghaleon in Lunar 2.

It's not surprising that Lunar 1 & 2 have references to religion since Althenaism is a religion in and of itself in the fictional world of Lunar. The creators of Lunar 1 & 2 borrowed a lot of things from elsewhere. This isn't unusual. Do you think the Blue Star is our Earth and the world of Lunar our moon? Could White Knight Leo come from LT Worf, chief of security, from Star Trek: The Next Generation? The list can go on and on.

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#12 (/forums/games-discussion-1000000/religious-themes-in-gaming-25992585/?page=1#js-message-294676546) Posted by **tskeeve (/profile/tskeeve/)** (667 posts) - 8 years, 1 month ago

Interesting topic. I think that our preference for religious themes in gaming is actually based on our real life beliefs in a sense; at least for me, I'm an atheist with a Hindu cultural background, so it generally appeals to me when a game has a scientific and/or anti-religion slant (though I can see how some people could be offended). If the game has religious themes, I tend to prefer themes that relate to those of eastern religions -- FF7 and the lifestream for example, but once again, this is simply because I come from a Hindu background and can relate to it more easily. I get a bit put off when the game has western religious themes, mainly because I'm both unaccustomed to them and I find the

use of churches, bishops, etc. a bit 'cheesy' in most games I've played, but maybe that's just me.

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#13 (/forums/games-discussion-1000000/religious-themes-in-gaming-25992585/?page=1#js-message-294676809) Posted by **nirvana563 (/profile/nirvana563/)** (2913 posts) - 8 years, 1 month ago

Games dont take religion into the game.

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#15 (/forums/games-discussion-1000000/religious-themes-in-gaming-25992585/?page=1#js-message-294676885) Posted by **gamingqueen (/profile/gamingqueen/)** (31076 posts) - 8 years, 1 month ago

> *The Halo games and books have pretty massive similarities to religion, especially Christianity. Things in the bible, like Noah's Ark, the flood in that same story that would wipe out everything ("The Ark" is supposed to save you from "the flood").*
>
> *The "Ark of the Covenant" that contained the Ten Commandments.*
>
> *The fact that the number 7 means complete in the Bible and that there are seven Halos, and halos are the things around holy people's heads in many paintings and drawings so they signify something like "holy".*
>
> *Master Cheif is called John 117 and John 1:17 is a reference to Jesus in the Bible so Master Cheif is obviously supposed to be the Messiah.*
>
> *The Covenant is translated at Wiktionary.com as "God's general promise of salvation to the faithful as taught in the Bible."*
>
> *And probably many more.*
>
> *Bungie pretty much based the entire Halo universe on the stupid Bible.*
>
> *-- WhiteWorld*

That was actally scary :o

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#16 (/forums/games-discussion-1000000/religious-themes-in-gaming-25992585/?page=1#js-message-294679862) Posted by **inoperativeRS (/profile/inoperativeRS/)** (8844 posts) - 8 years, 1 month ago

> *[QUOTE="WhiteWorld"]*
> *The Halo games and books have pretty massive similarities to religion, especially Christianity. Things in the bible, like Noah's Ark, the flood in that same story that would wipe out everything ("The Ark" is supposed to save you from "the flood").*
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>
> *Bungie pretty much based the entire Halo universe on the stupid Bible.*
>
> *-- gamingqueen*

That was actally scary :o

That's only the beginning, though. The number seven appears everywhere in the Halo games, for example "Cortana" is seven letters, the monitors of the different installations are all numbered as exponents of 7 (343 Guilty Spark, 343=7^3, 2401 Penintent Tangent, 2401=7^4 etc) and 7 is not only the number for complete but 777 is the number of God, and godhood is a theme that often appears in the Halo universe. The Forerunners believed they were semigods, caretakers of the galaxy, and Mendicant Bias, the godlike AI the forerunners build to defeat the flood turned against his masters with the phrase "You built a God, and thought he would do your bidding. You ignorant fools." (not word by word, but pretty much).

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#17 (/forums/games-discussion-1000000/religious-themes-in-gaming-25992585/?page=1#js-message-294682514) Posted by **TruthSeeker777 (/profile/TruthSeeker777/)** (101 posts) - 8 years, 1 month ago

haha, as far as I know there is no actual person that follows the religion in *Lunar.* It is simply a backstory to explain the the game's world.

With this said, I wouldn't be entirely surprised if someone started a religion based on a video game. Scientology came from a sci-fi writer and Jedi came from sci-fi film series:

Jedi Church: http://www.jedichurch.com/ (http://www.jedichurch.com/)

Is the church of Halo (sci-fi game) not far of? Some Christian youth ministries use Halo as a recruiting device to attract young people:

http://kotaku.com/gaming/haloz/best-church-ad-ever-310220.php (http://kotaku.com/gaming/haloz/best-church-ad-ever-310220.php)

http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/07/us/07halo.html (http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/07/us/07halo.html)

I actually attended one such event six or so years ago.

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#18 (/forums/games-discussion-1000000/religious-themes-in-gaming-25992585/?page=1#js-message-294683065) Posted by **TruthSeeker777 (/profile/TruthSeeker777/)** (101 posts) - 8 years, 1 month ago

I think it is not a very strong argument to assume one genealogy is from Joseph and the other from Mary. Reading the passages in Matthew 1:1-17 and Luke 3: 23-37makes no clear mention of Mary but they both clearly mention Joseph. If one genealogy (are you assuming the Matthew version as Mary's genealogy?) is supposedly of Mary then why not specifically state that? There doesn't seem tobe any evidence to suppose one genealogy is from Mary. This seems like a mistake to me.

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