

Chrism

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 23 Apr 1999

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Dan Rabin — 23 Apr 1999, 00:50

I just noticed this one:

1. When Severian is initiated into the Order of Seekers for Truth and Penitence, he is anointed on his forehead with blood, the chrism of the Order.
2. When, in the Second House, the old Autarch shows Severian the book that shows "the way to the Garden", blood vessels in Severian's forehead burst. "The sight has marked you," comments the old Autarch.

I don't think this implies that Tzadkiel and Master Palaemon are one and the same :-), but a lot of things **do** come together in the latter scene:

A. Severian's sworn loyalties--to the Order (betrayed), to Vodalus (ultimate betrayed, but shown in **this very scene** to be compatible with loyalty to the Autarch), to the Autarch (sworn spontaneously as a result of the vision), and of course, to the higher beings who have just anointed him. In typical Severian fashion, he misunderstands what has happened, and swears fealty to the Autarch instead.

B. The Autarchial succession--the old Autarch was informed that Severian was next while Severian was with the Thecla khaibit (as revealed in Citadel). Now Severian shows up again as the expected messenger from Vodalus, carrying a message impressed on an implement that has the same shape as the forebrain-extraction tool. Then, before the old Autarch's eyes, the beings from the book anoint Severian. After a brief release of tension when he realizes that he has invested Severian's search for the garden with too weighty a meaning, he drops a hint about the manner of succession (later he admits that he was seeking to postpone his time). Whereupon Thecla's memories identify the Autarch and Father Inire enters to guide Severian to the Green Room.

Now Severian knows that he serves both sides in the civil war, as does the Autarch. He seems to miss the import of his new anointment. Within a couple of chapters he will be acting in "Eschatology and Genesis".

I have toyed with the idea that perhaps Severian is anointing himself, thus making the future Autarch self-anointed as well as self-ruler, but this doesn't seem to fit Severian's general attitude of reverence toward the divine.

Oh, the craft!

-- Dan Rabin