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The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 29 Aug 1999

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Alice Turner — 29 Aug 1999, 21:12

Hi, I'm new. Somewhat to my surprise, the archives search engine for this list turns up no references to Zoroastrianism, so this may not be completely old ground.

Hi Jim, nice to see you.

Actually, the subject has come up, though quite a long time back. I haven't tried the new search engine, so can't speak to that. But I know the creation myth, and had discussed it with mantis before we two jumped on board (another story), and I do remember that it came up here in a fairly long thread on Dr. Talos's play.

But you do bring up interesting new matters. I had thought of the Ascians almost entirely as Wolfe's satire of Communism or any group demanding Correct Thought and I tend to think of Zoroastrianism as a fairly forgiving and nonintrusive religion (I lived in Bombay for a few years during my teens and had Parsi friends---believe me, compared to the horrors of the Hindu caste system, Parsis, who are all sort of honorary Brahmins, have it good). So I am a little uncomfortable with your analogy, "ironic" though it be. How, btw, do you fit the hierodules into this design? Or don't they fit, since they don't seem to have anything to do with the Ascians?

As to the geography question, since I disagree with just about everyone, I won't confront that except to say that yes, they are in the southern hemisphere (everyone will agree on that), but plate techtonics have been at work, and no, they are not in South America (everyone will not agree on that).

-alga

Then this morning, the following two things slammed into each other:

"The most important thing about Zoroastrianism is the dedication to ethical and moral excellence. The motto of the faith is:
GOOD THOUGHTS, GOOD WORDS, GOOD DEEDS."
alt.religion.zoroastrianism FAQ

"And the Ascian, his voice no louder than my own had been, and perhaps even softer, answered, 'How shall the state be most vigorous? It shall be most vigorous when it is without conflict. How shall disagreement be banished? By banishing the four causes of disagreement: lies, foolish talk, boastful talk, and talk which serves only to incite quarrels. How shall the four causes be banished? By speaking only correct thought. Then shall the state be without disagreement. Being without disagreement it shall be without conflict. Being without conflict it shall be vigorous, strong and secure.' "

CITADEL V, last page

So CORRECT THOUGHTS become CORRECT WORDS which lead to CORRECT DEEDS.
It seems like it could be an ironic transformation of the Zoroastrian motto, a secularized heresy if you will.

Jim Henley — 02 Sep 1999, 13:33 · follows Alice Turner

-----Original Message-----

From: urth-errors at lists.best.com [mailto:urth-errors at lists.best.com]On
Behalf Of Alice Turner

Hi Jim, nice to see you.

Hey, thanks!

Actually, the subject has come up, though quite a long time back. I haven't tried the new search engine, so can't speak to that. But I know the creation myth, and had discussed it with mantis before we two jumped on board (another story), and I do remember that it came up here in a fairly long thread on Dr. Talos's play.

I'll have to track that down. I couldn't imagine that Zoroastrianism was a completely foreign topic on the list.

But you do bring up interesting new matters. I had thought of the Ascians almost entirely as Wolfe's satire of Communism or any group demanding Correct Thought and I tend to think of Zoroastrianism as a fairly forgiving and nonintrusive religion (I lived in Bombay for a few years during my teens and had Parsi friends---believe me, compared to the horrors of the Hindu caste system, Parsis, who are all sort of honorary Brahmins, have it good).

So I am a little uncomfortable with your analogy, "ironic" though it be. How, btw, do you fit the hierodules into this design? Or don't they fit, since they don't seem to have anything to do with the Ascians?

Ah, good questions.

First, I have nothing against the Parsis myself, except that the view of some of the more traditional sectors that one may not even convert to the religion goes so far in the direction of "nonintrusive" that it comes out the other side into elitism, IMHO. And to the extent there is anything at all to my "Correct Thought/Good Thoughts" notion, I was a little mild in my language in the first post. While I said "secular heresy" I might as easily have said "perversion" of the Zoroastrian motto. And its very secularism constitutes (in the eyes of the devout, including, I would presume, Wolfe himself) the bulk of the perversion.

In that case, Correct Thought would stand in relation to the Z-flavored religion of the Commonwealth (and the rest of Urth?) as Marxism/Leninism stands in relation to the millenarian aspirations of Judaism/Christianity. (If you care, I am neither devout nor Marxist.) I don't doubt that you are right that the first impulse behind the portrayal of the Ascians was probably Wolfe's own experiences with Communist prisoners in the Korean War, though. And there remains the possibility that I'm all wet when it comes to the rest of it.

But ignoring the possibility of my own error for a minute (for as long as possible, really!), yeah, I'd say you can ignore the heirodules when accounting for Ascian thought because Ascian thought itself seems to ignore the heirodules. But in a different though related direction, if we

came up with seven named heirogrammates (or maybe just heirodules) it would be tempting to try to link them with the seven Attributes of the Gathas. At that point we'd probably see that I was pushing the analogy too far.

Still, Zoroastrians do worship before a sacred fire...

As to the geography question, since I disagree with just about everyone, I won't confront that except to say that yes, they are in the southern hemisphere (everyone will agree on that), but plate techtonics have been at work, and no, they are not in South America (everyone will not agree on that).

I must reluctantly agree with you here, which is too bad, because I really want it to be Argentina and Buenos Aires. If only the mountains and the sea were reversed! I'll bet it's Typhon's fault...

Best,

Jim

"We can't be certain who the villains are
cause everyone's so pretty"

-- Sheryl Crow