

Evidence of Christianity in Urth's past?

The Urth list — 5 messages, 3 voices, 06 Oct 1999

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/1821>

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Craig.Christensen — 06 Oct 1999, 07:57

Has it been established here that Christianity played no part in Urth's past? Or that it did, but so long ago that it has been forgotten? Would Dorcas' memory of the rood be evidence that it did? Does 'rood' have other meanings than crucifix?

Michael Andre-Driussi — 06 Oct 1999, 09:15 · follows Craig.Christensen

Craig Christensen wrote:

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Or that it did, but so long ago that it has been forgotten? Would Dorcas' memory of the rood be evidence that it did? Does 'rood' have other meanings than crucifix?

It has been established that Dorcas's family made enamelled crucifixes. Likewise, that the pelerines are a band of Red Cross women (battlefield healers), and they use a cross form on their letters (the "narthex sigil of the order").

(Greg Feeley used these points to extrapolate that the pelerines bought their crucifixes from the family of Dorcas whenever they were in Nessus; this family connection/association then facilitates the meeting between Catherine and Ouen.)

So yes: a form of Christianity played a part in Urth's past, in the teaching and church of the Conciliator (at the very least); and was so long ago that it has been all but forgotten.

=mantis=

Michael Straight — 06 Oct 1999, 13:53 · follows Michael Andre-Driussi

On Wed, 6 Oct 1999, Michael Andre-Driussi wrote:

So yes: a form of Christianity played a part in Urth's past, in the teaching and church of the Conciliator (at the very least); and was so long ago that it has been all but forgotten.

I know we've been through this some before, but I was curious in what sense you think Christianity played a part in "the teaching and church of the Conciliator."

-Rostrum

Michael Andre-Driussi — 06 Oct 1999, 13:52 · follows Michael Straight

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On Wed, 6 Oct 1999, Michael Andre-Driussi wrote:

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(Where's Jim Jordan =now=?) <g>

While I'm not about to produce an essay on the spot, I might be able to answer the question if it were a tad more specific.

Or, better: If you have something to say, go ahead and say it!

We are on the same page, I hope: Canog's THE BOOK OF THE NEW SUN.

A few details chosen at apparent random: Holy Katharine, St. Amand, Nilamon, Ctesiphon's Cross. It seems to me that there are only three ways for these to appear in the text: either the roots of the Commonwealth's culture go so deep as to remember Christianity (in the same way that the Apollo Mission photo is retained in the picture gallery); or, the Church of the Conciliator has recapitulated Christianity (mainly a Greek Orthodox form) in a sort of parallel evolution (so the Commonwealth's Katharine isn't Earth's Katharine, she just looks like a twin); or it is all just a translating error on the part of Gene Wolfe.

FWIW, I doubt that this approaches the answer you want to read, and as we have gone over this ground before, I have the sense of repeating myself repeating, still: I have a sense that Severian's Narrative is a pagano-Christian text, in that it approaches Christianity by way of pagan elements and traditions. It recapitulates Christianity along the way (just as an obscure Jewish sect was transformed by some Greeks and then some Romans). This is somewhat similar to Dante's Comedy, but also somewhat opposite: Dante gathered the suppressed pagan elements into a well established Christianity; Severian approaches the nebulous Christian through the established Pagan.

=mantis=

Michael Straight — 08 Oct 1999, 12:49 · follows Michael Andre-Driussi

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That last bit gets at the possibility I was wondering about. No one reading Tolkien thinks that Aragorn is Christ-like because there was Christianity in Middle Earth's past. The resemblances are attributed to Tolkien himself. Is it possible that the religious stuff in the New Sun looks like Christianity for the same reason the spaceships look like sailboats: because Wolfe likes Christianity and sailing?

I think one reason I ask is that I'm trying to puzzle out whether Severian's story is meant to be separate from the story of Christianity, to be related in the mind of the reader, or whether Wolfe intends the Christian story to be part of Severian's story (or vice versa).

-Rostrum