

The Conciliator

The Urth list — 5 messages, 3 voices, 24 Nov 1999

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/1983>

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Roy C. Lackey — 24 Nov 1999, 14:07

Dan Rabin wrote:

[snip]

This is POWERFUL STUFF! These events would not seem to their witnesses to be just a sequence of unconnected supernatural-appearing tricks. Rather, they would seem to be a divine intervention against Typhon by a power far greater that heals and succors rather than imposing rule. Ymar's rule, prophesied by the Conciliator, would derive its legitimacy from the connection. Indeed, we learn over the course of _New Sun_ that the quest to bring the New Sun is the central feature of the Autarchy. The fact that the Autarches have Hierodules as advisors is an enactment of Severians "conciliation".<<

[snip]

Perhaps the fact that we see these events through Severian's eyes rather than those of the populace is what makes all seem so inconsequential.<<

From what we are shown in the text, the Conciliator was known to most people of the Commonwealth in Severian's time, but his cult was not widely established; that is, people had heard of him but he was not the center of a popular religion. The Pelerines and their like were relics of a faith in decline, if it had ever been catholic. More importantly, whenever the Conciliator was mentioned, usually in terms of being or bringing the New Sun, it was done in a manner suggestive of Someone who would somehow bring about a renewal of Urth--who would make well again the weakened sun and usher in an era of peace, plenty, and prosperity. The analogy is with the Jewish concept of the Messiah current in some quarters two millennia ago. The Messiah was to be an earthly ruler, a temporal authority over a kingdom overflowing with milk and honey on earth, not some celestial everafter.

Nowhere--absolutely nowhere in NEW SUN--is there even a hint that the coming of the Conciliator is conceived of as an eschatological event. So far as the coming of the New Sun is known to the people of Urth, it is a good thing--for them. The man on the street had no inkling that he and all he knew and loved would have to die for someone else to get to heaven--that is, Ushas.

Had the people of Urth known that they would have to pay the price of complete obliteration for a "sin" that wasn't even theirs, and if they had had a choice in the matter, I have little doubt what their choice would have been. The feeble attempt at rationalization at the phony trial by having people whom Sev had wronged elect to fight on his side, thus tipping the balance of justice in favor of the New Sun, is just that--feeble. All but Gunnie were aquastors; aquastors are only of the dead; the dead have nothing to lose. They weren't real.

The psyches of the aquastors come from memory--Sev's memory. They existed in his memory as he wanted to see them, idealized to suit his notions of Justice and Right. He hardly knew some of the people--little Severa he had never even met. And they all forgave him--sure, that's human nature, very believable.

Oh, and happy birthday Alex.

Roy

Jim Henley — 24 Nov 1999, 22:29 · follows Roy C. Lackey

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

From: urth-errors at lists.best.com [mailto:urth-errors at lists.best.com]On
Behalf Of Roy C. Lackey
The analogy is with the
Jewish concept of the Messiah current in some quarters two millennia ago.
The Messiah was to be an earthly ruler, a temporal authority
over a kingdom overflowing with milk and honey on earth,
not some celestial everafter.

This is a fascinating point, Roy. It dovetails with the idea of Sev as Christ _figure_ rather than the second coming of Christ himself. And suggests a different angle on what the book is "about" - here's what a "worldly" messiah would look like, fellas; how do you like it?

FWIW, there are some interesting parallels with what the Branch Davidians actually believed (as opposed to the caricature of their beliefs in the popular press) about a sequence of Anointed (Christos) through history.

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I might plead "insufficient evidence" on this one. Certainly Talos knew, though of course he's a little freak - the whole purpose of his play was to get the eschatological nature of the New Sun across to folks. Well, and to get people to drop their goodies and run in fear, but is that really a _different_ thing? <g>

So Talos is Minister of Propaganda for the Other People, which returns us to a question I still have no answer for: Why are a bunch of folks who live in the water all worried about the prospect of a flood? And they're supposedly the enemies of humanity in general, or they should stop confusing people by attacking our ships. So why is it any skin off their nose if most of Urth's population is wiped out?

Okay, Erebus rules the pole and his domain would shrink, so he has a motive. Unfortunately, I'm not quite sure why Erebus is still alive in the first place. If he's a giant and he's living on the Antarctic land mass - we're told his namesake mountain is his seat of power - why hasn't he collapsed into a puddle of bile and bone meal already?

I think awhile ago, someone suggested that they were all leary of the altered saline content that would characterize the new oceans. But this doesn't, um, wash. (Bad Jim!) Juturna seems happy to swim way up Gyoll, and Baldanders heads first for Lake Diuturna before, at some presumed later time, entering the ocean.

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complete obliteration for a "sin" that wasn't even theirs, and
if they had

had a choice in the matter, I have little doubt what their choice would have been.

I'm less convinced. My personal reaction would be, "I'd rather not drown thank you." What's more, tonight I seasoned a strip steak with black and cayenne pepper, seared it in a cast-iron skillet, poured a quarter-cup of dilute bourbon over it and finished it in the oven for five minutes at 400 degrees. Then I salted it and ate it hot. We can't afford that kind of meal every night in the Henley household (it was on sale!), but right now the idea of living off algae in my bloodstream holds little appeal. Green Man, phooey.

Nevertheless, we've seen groups of people embrace their own deaths in the name of religious fulfillment and we'll see it again before we're dead. A whole world without New Sun dissenters? Probably not. Would it be wrong to proceed in the face of objections from 49% of the population? For the sake of ten just men? One? I have my own answer, but if there is a god, what is my answer worth?

Which reminds me: this very existential question (if there is a god, what do our human standards of ethics matter) is explored to terrific effect, IMHO, in a movie of the last decade called THE RAPTURE. I recommend it as supplemental material for our studies in recent threads.

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An excellent point.

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Likewise.

Best,

Jim

"What fades in time Costello/
will hurt much more" Bacharach, "My Thief"

Jim Jordan — 26 Nov 1999, 15:01 · follows Jim Henley

At 10:29 PM 11/24/99 -0500, you wrote:

Okay, Erebus rules the pole and his domain would shrink, so he has a motive. Unfortunately, I'm not quite sure why Erebus is still alive in the first place. If he's a giant and he's living on the Antarctic land mass - we're told his namesake mountain is his seat of power - why hasn't he collapsed into a puddle of bile and bone meal already?

Interesting. In Dante, Satan is in a block of ice at the center of the earth. Hell is frozen. Make Erebus a Satan-figure then. Does Satan want humanity annihilated, or does he want them to worship him? The latter. Perhaps that's why Erebus and his minions oppose any New Sun.

Nutria

Jim Henley — 27 Nov 1999, 12:01 · follows Jim Jordan

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

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

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Good job, Nute: that's two out of three, and an excellent two. The Urthes say that everything in the saga has three levels - the science-fictional (plot/world) significance, the literary (allusive) significance and the religious significance. Your theory does nicely for the latter two: alas, it still doesn't explain how Erebus survives being land-bound and giant-sized. (One possible explanation: Erebus isn't really a giant. Another: He's a "chem," giant robot division.) Nor does it quite explain why the warm-water Abaia is in league with the ice-god Erebus. But you've reduced the number of things I worry about by one, for which I thank you.

Best,

Jim

"It ain't the knife thru your heart that tears you apart
it's just the thought of someone sticking it in"
-- Graham Parker, "Protection"

Jim Jordan — 29 Nov 1999, 09:25 · follows Jim Henley

At 12:01 PM 11/27/99 -0500, you wrote:

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Great summary. Gotta remember it.

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Dunno. But, Satan is frozen in a block of ice, as I recall. Mebbe old Erebus is in some similar state: immobile, and operating through agents.

As to the league with Abaia, I dunno. Frankly, the three times I read Severian were years ago,

and I really need to reread them in the light of all the kinds of things other people have called attention to. I'm really an observer when it comes to the Abaia-Erebus business, for I did not read with that question in mind.

Nutria