

Infrequently Asked Question Answered

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 19 Jan 2000

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/2077>

Exported from an unofficial mirror of a public mailing list. Copyright in each message remains with the person who wrote it. Email addresses are obscured as `user at host`, the form the original archive published. This file was rebuilt from parsed fields rather than retained headers, so it is faithful in content but not byte-exact.

David Lebling — 19 Jan 2000, 08:54

From: "Talarican" <exultnttalarican at mindspring.com>

III:XXXIII At Castle Baldanders, when Famulimus and Barbatus set Sev straight regarding their lifespan, Baldanders interjects with "These things live only a score of years, like dogs". His tone "told [Sev] more than is written here, for each word fell like a stone dropped down some deep cistern". Aside from the contempt obvious in B's choice of words, what did his tone convey to Severian?

This one at least seems fairly clear. Baldanders' goal is, on more than one occasion, stated to be eternal life. Famulimus and Barbatus have "awesome cosmic power" but very short lifespans. Baldanders thinks they've completely missed the point.

Recall that there is a certain strain of C. S. Lewis in the hierodules' attitudes: Lewis believed (or at least wrote, in Out of the Silent Planet) that space colonization and the desire for immortality were sins. Baldanders embodies one of these sins, Typhon both; the cacogens neither. Their humility is certainly presented as a positive thing, contrasting with Baldanders' creepy Dr. Frankenstein-ish experiments (not unlike those in That Hideous Strength) and later, Typhon's equally nasty attempt at eternal life.

Have you ever noticed that none of Wolfe's space colonies seem to be very happy places? (Then again, I suppose none of Wolfe's places seem to be very happy.)

Dave Lebling
(aka vizcacha)

Michael Straight — 19 Jan 2000, 10:26 · follows David Lebling

On Wed, 19 Jan 2000, David Lebling wrote:

Recall that there is a certain strain of C. S. Lewis in the hierodules' attitudes: Lewis believed (or at least wrote, in Out of the Silent Planet) that space colonization and the desire for immortality were sins.

I don't think Lewis thought colonization and immortality were themselves sinful. It would be more accurate to say he thought either one would be disastrous because of sin's corruption of humanity. To colonize the universe would be to spread corruption to possibly untainted planets. And since death provides a chronological limit to how bad a person can become, immortality would make it possible for someone to become more and more evil forever.

-Rostrum