

A Thousand Ages

The Urth list — 4 messages, 4 voices, 04 Sep 2002

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/3440>

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Steve Case — 04 Sep 2002, 22:43

In chapel today (I go to a Christian university) we had our academic convocation service and sang the hymn "Oh God, Our Help in Ages Past". The fourth verse jumped out at me because it's the exact quote Wolfe uses to start the Book of the New Sun at the beginning of Shadow of the Torturer: "A thousand ages in thy sight/Are like an evening gone./Short as the watch that ends the night/Before the rising sun." The hymn says it's based on Psalms 90, but I looked it up and the wording is different enough that I bet Wolfe got the quote directly from the song. I just thought it was kind of interesting, and it made a boring service a little more enjoyable. I thought Wolfe was a Catholic; do Catholics sing the same hymns Protestants do? The other five verses don't hold a lot of interest in regards to the Short Sun, except for verse five: "Time, like an ever-rolling stream/Bears all its sons away./They fly forgotten as a dream/Dies at the opening day." That fits the book rather nicely as well.

My two cents for the month,
-Steve

Matthew Weber — 04 Sep 2002, 22:52 · follows Steve Case

At 05:43 PM 9/4/02 -0500, Steve wrote:

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Yes, it's based on Psalm 90. It's Isaac Watts' versification of the psalm, made when the Puritan faction was demanding that only the psalms be sung in churches. These days, Roman Catholics avail themselves of the rich heritage of Protestant hymnody, when they bother to sing hymns at all (as opposed to bad "folk" music).

Oh, and hello, list. This is my first post, after a month or so of lurking and reading the archives. Are we still using Long Sun pseudonyms?

Matthew Weber
Curatorial Assistant
Music Library

University of California, Berkeley

Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree.
The Holy Bible (The Old Testament): _The First Book of the Kings_, chapter 4, verse 25

John Barach — 04 Sep 2002, 23:04 · follows Matthew Weber

Matthew writes:

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Wolfe talks about that hymn in an essay in _Castle of Days_. Mind you, Wolfe didn't grow up Roman Catholic, did he? He may well have been familiar with the song (which is a pretty popular one and shows up in a ton of hymnals) from his youth.

John

Steve Strickland — 04 Sep 2002, 23:16 · follows John Barach

Thanks for the verse five excerpts. Resonates nicely.

Being a protestant who's married to a catholic, I can tell you with certainty that protestants and catholics sing each other's hymns all the time.

Steve Strickland

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

From: Steve Case

To: urth at urth.net

Sent: Wednesday, September 04, 2002 5:43 PM

Subject: (urth) A Thousand Ages

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