

Christology & Sev-ology

The Urth list — 3 messages, 2 voices, 17 Apr 2005

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/4405>

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thalassocrat at nym.hush.com — 17 Apr 2005, 04:23

OK, so Sev isn't supposed to be Jesus. He's just a guy who happens to have been selected to be the transcendant saviour of humanity's potential and who along the way recapitulates some of Christ's miracles, including the raising of the dead. Notably, these miracles are performed by virtue of his own power, as the New Sun, and not eg as a saint would perform them, through petitioning the Increate.

When he prays at the altar of the Pelerines shortly before his destruction, he prays to himself. In a beautifully written but spooky scene, Sev imagines himself speaking through a crack in the edge of the universe to a listener. As he asks to be give the power to lead himself, the crack expands to reveal a new universe bathed in light, and himself as the one listening.

Inire hails him as a divinity, unambiguously: Helios and Hyperion. Hierodules and Hierogrammates worship him. Like it or not, Sev is a god, and not just a minor one (despite his self-deprecating words at the end of UOTNS).

How this fits with any kind of orthodox Christinity, even as a fable, I have no idea. If I were a Christian, I think I'd find it quite disturbing. I don't think I could read it as any kind of "imitation of Christ" story. Sev bears no stigmata. He violently fails to imitate Christ at his betrayal, and he kills the prison governess without hesitation or qualm. There is no suggestion that he errs in doing this.

How to square this failure to imitate the crucial aspect of Christ with Sev's Christ-like miracles? If Sev isn't supposed to be a type of Jesus, why the miracles? Were Wolfe not supposed to be an orthodox Catholic, I'd find it easy to see him as criticizing Jesus: He shouldn't have been such a wuss; He should have been more like Sev.

Leaving that aside, how can the story be seen as theologically orthodox? What room does orthodox Christianity have for a god not consubstantial with God? If I look for a Christian context, I think it works much better as an fantasy in the tradition of Adoptionism, ie the tradition which sees Jesus as a created being given divinity by God. This of course was a widely accepted and respectable view until the final triumph of "orthodoxy" over its various expressions, notably Arianism.

Sev is confirmed as a god on the Ship, outside of Time, when he is resurrected as an aquastor and the New Sun, his god-hood, is brought into being and united with him. It reminds me of the pre- Nicaean (respected, widely accepted) views of proto-Arian Origen:

"God is incorporeal, immaterial, uncreated and unbegotten .. the Monad .. Christ is God's only-begotten son, not in any human sense, but eternally, just as a ray of light is generated by its source ... He is the Word of God, of a different substance from God, and in a sense almost material, because 'he shows himself and puts himself into the minds of those who can receive his virtues and knowledge.' ... Among the rational beings who loved their creator in varying

degrees, one soul remained inseparably devoted to its creator. The soul was united with God's Word to become a single spirit which, with the substance of the soul mediating between God and flesh, was born as God-man. Hence Christ has a soul like all other souls, capable of both good and evil." [Barnes, "Eusebius and Constantine", pp88-89]

Perhaps Wolfe is actually a closet Arian?

"The Word of God did not always exist, but came into existence out of nothing. For God, who existed, made him who did not exist out of what did not exist. Hence, too, there was a time when he was not. For the Son is a creature and an object. He is neither like the Father in substance, nor the true and natural Word of the Father, nor his true Wisdom, but one of the created objects, and he is improperly called Word and Wisdom, since he himself came into being by the proper Word of God and the Wisdom in God, in which God made both everything and him. Hence he is both mutable and changeable by nature, as are all rational creatures. The Word is alien to, different from and separated from the substance of God, and the Father is invisible to the Son. For the Word neither knows the Father perfectly and exactly nor can see him perfectly. And the Son does not know the nature of his own substance. For he was made for our sake, so that God might make us by means of him, as by a tool."

-- Alexander of Alexandria, describing the errors of Arius.

"The Son, [Arius] wrote, was a 'perfect creature of God, but not like other created objects.' He received life and existence from the Father 'before all ages': only the Father is without beginning; the Son is 'begotten by the Father outside time,' and hence neither eternal nor coeternal with the Father.

-- Barnes, *ibid*, p203

thalassocrat at nym.hush.com — 17 Apr 2005, 04:26 · follows thalassocrat at nym.hush.com

Oopsie -

When he prays at the altar of the Pelerines shortly before his destruction

Obviously, "its destruction".

James Wynn — 17 Apr 2005, 06:01 · in reply to thalassocrat at nym.hush.com

Leaving that aside, how can the story be seen as theologically orthodox?...It reminds me of the pre-Nicaean (respected, widely accepted) views of proto-Arian Origen:

This brings up an idea that I've been toying with that Severian was intended as an amalgum of heretical Christs. His name identifies him with the heretical Encratites as explained here and elsewhere: <http://www.urth.net/urth/archives/v0206/1204.txt.shtml>

This would fit with Wolfe's claim that Severian is not a Christ-figure.

~ Crush