

TWK: Able's future

The Urth list — 5 messages, 4 voices, 07 Dec 2005

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Roy C. Lackey — 07 Dec 2005, 05:09

Last month I wrote:

[snip]

And, at the end, even though Able turned his back on Skai, it seems he will be given a position in a still higher realm than Skai;<< [snip]

That can't be right. There's no place up for him to go but Kleos. Able's association with Michael is not enough to get him to Kleos. Able wrote from Aelfrice, where he saw the events in Mythgarthr play out across the sky. He mentioned a future time when he will return to Mythgarthr. The "great lord" mentioned by Michael as being in need of a champion is not God, who has no need of one, least of all in Kleos. We are told that there are other worlds on all the levels except the first and last. It may be that the "great lord" in need of a champion is on another world on the fourth level, a world other than Dream or Mythgarthr. Maybe our own. It may even be that the "great lord" is on a world on the third level other than the Valfather's. That might be the explanation for the apparent mixing of unrelated Celtic (Gawain) and Norse traditions that Able seems to have experienced, a cross-contamination of worlds in the same way that he went from America to Mythgarthr.

-Roy

James Wynn — 07 Dec 2005, 05:34 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

Roy says:

That can't be right. There's no place up for him to go but Kleos. Able's association with Michael is not enough to get him to Kleos.

Hmm...maybe. But why would Michael seek Able's help for a lord in Skai? Michael went seeking Able--seeking an Able that didn't exist when Able first met him. The idea of proceeding ever upwards seems to be the overall theme of the novel. Michael is only the second person from Kleos (at best) that Able has met. Is it surprising that Able would be a hero in Kleos? Look how quickly Able seems to have risen to prominence in Skai.

J

Roy C. Lackey — 07 Dec 2005, 20:52 · follows James Wynn

Crush quoted and wrote:

Roy says:

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Hmm...maybe. But why would Michael seek Able's help for a lord in Skai? Michael went seeking Able--seeking an Able that didn't exist when Able first met him. The idea of proceeding ever upwards seems to be the overall theme

of the novel. Michael is only the second person from Kleos (at best) that Able has met. Is it surprising that Able would be a hero in Kleos? Look how quickly Able seems to have risen to prominence in Skai.

It would surprise the hell out of me for Able to even get to Kleos, much less be a hero there. As hartshorn said in another context, Able is a knight not a saint. Just who would a crude dude like Able fight in God's backyard? Kleos was a place made by God as a reward for the "servants" he had created. (W, 46) (I think those "servants" are what are usually called angels.)

Because anything apart from God is by definition less than perfect, those servants were unhappy with that imperfection in Kleos. They wanted to cast out as much of that imperfection as they could. God created a place for them to put it, which was Skai. The imperfection was embodied in the form of the giant Ymir. "Some servants of the Highest God surrendered their places in Kleos and went down to kill him. They did, but they could never go back." (ibid.) Some hold that the Valfather was one of those who descended and could never return. (48) (Echoed by Able leaving Skai?) The farther removed from God's perfection, the worse the corruption, descending by degrees to evil.

Able was no angel, and I don't think he ever would/could be. I don't think it's even theoretically possible for a post-creation being to attain the status of a pre-creation being. But this begins to stray into religious territory it's probably better not to traverse.

I don't think Able was all that prominent in Skai; clearly he was nowhere near as powerful as the Valfather and his immediate family, and/or the other original "servants" of God.

Michael didn't meet Able in Kleos, so clearly he had come down from his high place. Presumably he was able to return, unlike his brother servants/angels who went down to Skai. What's the difference?

-Roy

don doggett — 10 Dec 2005, 04:12 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

--- "Roy C. Lackey" <rclackey at stic.net> wrote:
Michael didn't meet Able in Kleos, so clearly he had
come down from his high
place. Presumably he was able to return, unlike his
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who went down to Skai. What's the difference?

-Roy

Angels are by definition messengers of God, so it only makes sense that Michael can travel wherever he needs to do his duties. Able is special because he is human. According to Christian belief, we are God's special children and this whole setup is for our benefit, though we are unworthy of it. At least that's my understanding. I'm not sure I buy that in the "real world" but for the purpose of story that's the situation. I think.

Don

Andy Robertson — 10 Dec 2005, 09:22 · in reply to don doggett

don doggett writes:

According to Christian belief, we are God's special children and this whole setup is for our benefit, though we are unworthy of it.

I don't believe this is the case in any of Wolfe's fictional universes. Humans may be special, but so are the Neighbours. Everyone is special.

I suspect the thing that bound the descended angels to Skai was probably the slaying of Ymir and the shedding of Ymir's blood.