

A very interesting interview indeed

The Urth list — 7 messages, 7 voices, 07 Sep 2006

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/4717>

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Adam Thornton — 07 Sep 2006, 19:36

I was reading the recently-posted Larry McCaffery interview, in which the mystery of 5HC is "given away" (<http://www.depauw.edu/sfs/interviews/wolfe46interview.htm>)

There's the following quotation in it too:

"The fact that you stand there and let someone hit you in the face doesn't do anything to eliminate violence (it may even contribute to further violence) ?which is one of the underlying themes in The Book of the New Sun."

That seems a very explicit repudiation of one of the more memorable passages in a book that's generally considered to be a pretty huge influence on Wolfe's work generally and BotNS in particular.

Adam

Matthew King — 07 Sep 2006, 20:28 · in reply to Adam Thornton

On Sep 7, 2006, at 2:36 PM, Adam Thornton wrote:

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I take this to be a reference to Matthew 5:39 (and parallel passages), the famous "turn the other cheek" instruction.

Wolfe's statement above could be seen as a repudiation of Mt 5:39, if you assume that the scope of the instruction is universal, that it applies to all men at all times. I think this is a dangerous assumption to make about a passage in a document that was written for a specific and narrow group of men. GW has shown in his work a deep consideration for narrative context, and I think it unlikely that he would give the New Testament documents any less thought.

I've been reading Malina and Rohrbaugh's Social-Science Commentary on the Synoptics lately, in which they apply the sociological research of the Context Group to Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Valuable reading, though I don't find it wholly convincing. Here's a bit of their take on Matthew 5:39

What the scenes described in these antitheses offer is a way out of the honor-shame impasse that requires taking satisfaction. . . . [They] all describe having one's entitlements infringed on in a humiliating way: being struck on the right cheek by a backhand slap is an insult, as humiliating as being successfully sued in court or being forced to carry military gear for a mile. All such humiliating behavior required defense of one's honor. The advice given is to put up with the dishonor and cede what one was entitled to! The key to imagining the scenarios here is to realize that all of them presume an audience. In the Mediterranean world no one fights in public without others intervening to break it up. . . . Should someone be publicly insulted, the bystanders are sure to intervene. The real question raised by the image here is whether an insulted person should seek to defend his own honor or let another person defend him. Allowing others to come to one's defense enables one to be reconciled later with the one who dishonored and not proceed to a demand for satisfaction and feuding.

Mo Holkar — 07 Sep 2006, 20:34 · in reply to Adam Thornton

At 20:36 07/09/2006, Adam wrote:

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Mm, I picked up on that too. Perhaps a synthesis of that passage with the one about coming not in peace but with a sword. I guess that may be part of what he means when he says later in the interview "I am a practicing Catholic, although I don't think that designation would give people much of an idea about what my beliefs are"...

Mo

Jeff Wilson — 08 Sep 2006, 05:23 · in reply to Adam Thornton

Adam Thornton wrote:

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Do you mean the Bible? Particularly, "turn the other cheek"?

thalassocrat at nym.hush.com — 08 Sep 2006, 11:04 · follows Mo Holkar

On Fri, 08 Sep 2006 05:36:38 +1000 Adam Thornton <adam at io.com> wrote:

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The most striking manifestation of this to me is Sev's behavior when he's arrested in UOTNS. He messes up bunch of soldiers, and then he kills the prison governess almost immediately upon meeting her. If I were a Christian, I'd find those pretty disturbing events in Sev's "ministry".

I can never make up my mind whether (a) Wolfe thinks Jesus was a wuss & that Sev is showing how a non-wuss handles this kind of situation (b) it's another indication that the universe of New Sun isn't ours, in line with theories I've posted previously (c) Wolfe thinks the Bible got it wrong and that, in fact, Jesus went down fighting (d) some other damn thing.

Joel and Rachel Wilhelm — 08 Sep 2006, 23:47 · follows thalassocrat at nym.hush.com

The central message of the Church is that man is saved by grace from God - not due to moral perfection. Wolfe has deeply flawed characters who nevertheless are used by the Divine - not unlike Biblical characters (David for example). I see no contradiction.

Joel W.

On Sep 8, 2006, at 6:13 PM, urth-request at lists.urth.net wrote:

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Daniel D Jones — 09 Sep 2006, 13:22 · in reply to thalassocrat at nym.hush.com

On Friday 08 September 2006 07:04, thalassocrat at nym.hush.com wrote:

On Fri, 08 Sep 2006 05:36:38 +1000 Adam Thornton <adam at io.com>

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I think seeing Sev as a direct parallel to Jesus is a mistake. Certainly, he is in some sense a Messiah figure but I think that's he's both more and less. More, in that there are a great many other themes and issues being addressed than solely a Messiah, and less in that Sev certainly isn't in any sense a perfect representative as Christ was supposed to be. If you're a Christian, you're supposed to use Christ's actions as a model on which to base your own. It's become a trite phrase but that's exactly what WWJD means. I don't think Wolfe ever intended anyone to ask WWSD, so trying to draw critiques of Christ's actions from Sev's actions is, I think, missing the mark.