

The poor dragons

The Urth list — 6 messages, 3 voices, 02 Oct 2007

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/4916>

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Roy C. Lackey — 02 Oct 2007, 19:46

Thinking about the amoral Aelf and the problems attendant on their problematic position in a hierarchical cosmology between men and dragons leads logically to some other difficulties. It stands to reason that dragons, native to an even lower level, are also amoral and without an eternal spirit. Otherwise, how could beings with souls be expected to worship amoral, soulless, animated debris? What benefit could they possibly derive from such worship, intrinsic or otherwise? What could the Aelf, given their nature, possibly do in their capacity as gods to or for the dragons that the dragons would find beneficial?

What of Setr, who was somehow half human? Was he morally culpable for anything? If No, then the epic struggle against him is diminished to the level of a struggle against a particularly dangerous snake or rabid animal, neither of which bear any responsibility for any harm done by them to men. If he is morally neutral, then he is just a bogeyman, a cardboard embodiment of something that can't really be called Evil because it lacks the moral component associated with Lucifer. If Yes, if he had a human soul, what reasonable hope had he for salvation, apart from divine grace, a concept I see no provision for in Wolfe's Seven Worlds cosmology? Did he owe reverence to the Overcyn or to the Aelf?

-Roy

thalassocrat at nym.hush.com — 02 Oct 2007, 21:20 · follows Roy C. Lackey

On Wed, 03 Oct 2007 05:46:40 +1000 "Roy C. Lackey"

<rclackey at stic.net> wrote, inter alia:

... divine grace, a concept I
see no provision for in Wolfe's Seven Worlds cosmology

I disagree with that. When Able transforms Dsiri, he does it in the presence of a Valfather whom the magic helmet reveals to be "bright shadow". I'm sure that the one true God is present behind the Valfather aspect, and Able here is acting as the agent of divine grace.

Anyway, I think it'd be pretty amazing for Wolfe to construct a cosmos with absolutely no provision for divine grace, especially one which appears to share the same Heaven with ours.

Roy C. Lackey — 03 Oct 2007, 05:22 · follows thalassocrat at nym.hush.com

Andrew wrote:

On Wed, 03 Oct 2007 05:46:40 +1000 "Roy C. Lackey"

<rclackey at stic.net> wrote, inter alia:

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I disagree with that. When Able transforms Dsiri, he does it in the presence of a Valfather whom the magic helmet reveals to be "bright shadow". I'm sure that the one true God is present behind the

Valfather aspect, and Able here is acting as the agent of divine grace.

My whole sentence was: "If Yes, if he [Setr] had a human soul, what reasonable hope had he for salvation, apart from divine grace, a concept I see no provision for in Wolfe's Seven Worlds cosmology?"

I was speaking of salvation, the salvation of a being with a soul, by divine grace. I didn't say that God could not act in the world(s). In consequence of Able giving her his blood, Disiri became a human woman and thereby gained a soul. With a soul, she then had a *chance* at salvation, like any other human. Merely having a soul does not guarantee entry to Heaven.

Able may have been God's agent for making Disiri human, but Able was not the agent for her salvation, if that should turn out to be her lot. That is the job of a redeemer. As you wrote a few days ago, "Why Jesus hasn't impinged on Mythgathr so far - dunno!" I don't know either, which is why I said it was "a concept I see no provision for in Wolfe's Seven Worlds cosmology."

If Wolfe believes that salvation is by grace alone (RC Church doctrine), and that men cannot influence the outcome (Pelagian heresy), then what is a body in the middle worlds supposed to do?

Even if Setr did have a human soul, he was set up to fail. If he had a human soul and worshipped the Aelf, he was guilty of violating the religious dictum to worship upward. As a dragon, he was compelled to worship the Aelf. Either way, he was in violation of the First Commandment, if there was such a thing in the Seven Worlds.

If TWK had been written by someone other than Wolfe, I could write all these religious issues off as just background for a rip-roaring fantasy story. But it isn't a rip-roaring story and it *was* written by Wolfe. What was his religious message?

-Roy

Stanislaus — 03 Oct 2007, 20:46 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

Hello Roy,

Tuesday, October 2, 2007, 9:46:40 PM, you wrote:

Thinking about the amoral Aelf and the problems attendant on their problematic position in a hierarchical cosmology between men and dragons leads logically to some other difficulties. It stands to reason that dragons, native to an even lower level, are also amoral and without an eternal spirit. Otherwise, how could beings with souls be expected to worship amoral, soulless, animated debris? What benefit could they possibly derive from such worship, intrinsic or otherwise? What could the Aelf, given their nature, possibly do in their capacity as gods to or for the dragons that the dragons would find beneficial?

What of Setr, who was somehow half human? Was he morally culpable for anything?

A few points:

- 1) The original inhabitant of the Aelfs' world was Kulili, and she should be worshipped by the inhabitants of the dragon's world.
- 2) Are we certain that the dragons were originally inhabitants of that world? We know that the Lowest God came from above. In addition, beings from so low level should be weak. Dragons are not weak, nor stupid. They have too many human characteristics.

I wonder whether they are not similar to Osterlings, only more so?

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Best regards,
Stanislaus

----- Jak skompromitowac Wisniewskiego? Zobacz
>>> <http://link.interia.pl/f1be7>

Stanislaus — 03 Oct 2007, 21:00 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

Hello Roy,

Wednesday, October 3, 2007, 7:22:12 AM, you wrote:

....

If Wolfe believes that salvation is by grace alone (RC Church doctrine), and that men cannot influence the outcome (Pelagian heresy), then what is a body in the middle worlds supposed to do?

...

This is in fact the Calvinist doctrine, which is quite different from Catholic one. BTW, "sola gratia" is quite well known as the shibboleth of Protestantism.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sola_gratia
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Calvinism>
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Luther
<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11604a.htm>

Pelagians taught that men DO NOT need grace at all, and that they can save themselves by their own effort.

Best regards,
Stanislaus <mailto:sbocian@poczta.fm>

Stworz swoja w?asna telewizje internetowa!
Sprawdz >>> <http://link.interia.pl/f1bdc>

Roy C. Lackey — 04 Oct 2007, 05:46 · follows Stanislaus

Stanislaus wrote:

Pelagians taught that men DO NOT need grace at all, and that they can save themselves by their own effort.<<

I know that. That's why (partly) the RC Church declared it was heresy. The other part was that the Pelagians denied the idea of Original Sin. I'll state the basic idea of the heresy, because I want to use it as a possible logical explanation of the religious problems I've been harping about in TWK. (There is also a NEW SUN angle, but I'll save that for another time.)

The Pelagians held that Adam's progeny were not contaminated by his sin. Without Original Sin, there was no need for a universal redeemer. Jesus was seen as a good role model, but was not necessary for individual salvation. (It's easy to see why the Church frowned on these ideas.)

Man could put himself in good standing with God by leading a good life, leading to salvation.

Didn't Wolfe say, somewhere, that in TWK he wanted to show a society where knights existed but where that society was not underpinned by Christianity? Anyway, that seems to be the de facto situation in TWK. If the description of the origins of the Seven Worlds given in the fourth chapter of WIZARD is valid, then there was no Creation (at least not the Genesis variety; we are told that men were raised up from animals), no Garden, no Adam, no Original Sin. There is no evidence that Jesus ever existed in Mythgarthr, or ever would. It's the Pelagian heresy brought to life in fiction.

Everything and everyone below Elysion has something wrong with it, in varying degrees, simply because they are something apart from God. Beings are bad, evil, wrong or whatever because they are imperfect. Beings are judged on the basis of their own actions, not what someone else did.

My problem, and I think many other readers have the same problem, is reading the book with certain Judeo-Christian preconceptions getting in the way of comprehending what Wolfe actually wrote. If you look at it this way, if you can dismiss those preconceptions and accept Wolfe's Seven Worlds at face value, then a lot of the religious questions simply go away.

I don't know why he wrote the story this way, but I think he did.

-Roy