

Damn filthy Hiero-wasp-creatures

The Urth list — 12 messages, 8 voices, 06 Jan 2008

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/4967>

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thalassocrat at nym.hush.com — 06 Jan 2008, 05:18

In UOTNS, the Hirarchs and Tzadkiel lie repeatedly and harm Sev and

other humans in ways which range from displays of petty malice to near-genocide.

There is no evidence whatsoever that they are part of a holy hierarchy with the Increate at its apex. The only reason for believing in Hireodudes-as-angels is if one already has a conception of a universe structured in such a way, as Sev does.

Sev's perceptions are moulded by the religion which he absorbed as a child and youth, and by his training to obedience to authority as

a torturer. The religion, of course, is the one for which he himself provided the founding myth, in Typhon's day. There is no connection to the Increate. In Citadel, when he prays at the Pelerine altar, he finds the object of his prayers to be himself.

Sev's religion is based ultimately on Sev's own claims to be a Conciliator and the "miracles" he performed; of course these "miracles" were merely phenomena of a higher technology. The "conciliation" is at best an unfulfilled hope, at worst a lie deliberately engendered by T. There is nothing anywhere to suggest a closer union between humans and Hiero-people or any benefit to humans. Sev's career as supposed "Conciliator" ends with him sanctioning the death of most people on Urth.

(Perhaps you could point to the presence of Father Inire and the Hierodules as some kind of outcome from the "Conciliation", but it is a hard to see what particular benefits they bring, and they would appear to be dupes themselves. Eg: Inire believes that the coming of a New Sun will see the Commonwealth strengthened. Etc etc etc.)

Tzadkiel returns Sev to Typhon's time at least in part so that Sev will cause this religion to establish itself, molding Sev's outlook

in the future in ways favorable to T's agenda. When Sev threatens to go off track during his mini-ministry (lasting perhaps a week?),

by breaking out of his cell, T appears to him in a vision barring his way.

Afterwards, by the brook Madregot, mini-Tzadkiel mendaciously implies that she does not know exactly how to guide Sev to return to his chosen time. Then she guides him precisely to a re-entry which puts him back on Urth when it is too late to do anything to help his people survive the flood, but just in time to see it wash away his wife and the last of those people. Her (mocking, I think) laughter follows him.

On Yesod, T and the Hierarchs display consistent malice and contempt towards humans. It

starts pettily enough with the Hierarchs causing the lander carrying Sev and the crew representatives to swoop & loop in a terrifying manner, while the Hierachs look on with amusement.

They promise no further tricks, but the whole "trial" is a trick. The humans have been tricked into believing they are there simply to serve as jury, in the trial of somebody whom they are tricked into believing to be the Autarch. In the event, they are called upon to defend their real lives against artificial beings conjured from Sev's memories. Not having being indoctrinated with the fake New Sun religion, they of course choose Urth over Ushas and genocide - except for Gundie, unanimously.

For this, they either die or have their memories taken from them. This is no trial, and the crewmen are not jurors. Their "verdict" is treated as worthless, and they are punished for delivering it.

As to why T goes through this charade - I think it's probably malice, and for the same kind of amusement the Hierachs enjoyed from the distress of the humans on the lander. And perhaps to make sure that Sev is committed to his role as dupe - if he consents still to the New Sun path after seeing it overwhelmingly rejected by his fellow humans then I guess nothing is going to turn him away

from it.

One of his functions no doubt is to take the burden of guilt for the coming destruction away from the Hiero-dudes. As T says in his parting words, Urth will be destroyed at *Sev's* command - not T's.

Look, Increate - clean hands! And I sacrificed my own son! (But did he care for this son?)

The Hierogrammates are not angels of the Increate. They appear to me to be a species of evolved insect. The Hierachs are their "larvae" - they live underground, perhaps in something resembling an insect nest, but certainly evoking images of Morlocks. I can't help but think of those varieties of wasp which grow their larvae inside the bodies of living hosts, which eventually die from it.

We know nothing certain of what happened to the original human/Hieros, but I wouldn't be surprised to find they ended up as hosts to the ancestors of the Hierogrammates, and were destroyed. Perhaps T's ultimate agenda is to develop humans to the point where

they are once again suitable for this purpose; not co-evolution, but parasite and host.

One of the things not to like about this reading is that in some ways it turns NS into a literary trick analagous to those of the Hiero-dudes. The reader is duped, just like Sev. If Sev had been able to uncloud his mind of all the baggage of vague mysticism he would have seen malicious wasp-creatures instead of angels. If the reader can peel back his layers of preconceptions about what kind of story this is, he discovers within them a rather hackneyed pulp- SF trope.

Perhaps this points to another reason for Wolfe including the SilkHorn-meets-Sev scenes in SS: the (IMO) far greater work expunging or perhaps redeeming the lesser ...

Hello thalassocrat,

Sunday, January 6, 2008, 6:18:36 AM, you wrote:

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The Neoplatonic philosophy is hard to understand. The hierarchical part is simple, but the ultimate otherness of the Increate is difficult to understand. Severian, however, understood it, as far as it is possible. Read again the parable of the cock - the angels are still infinitely far from the Increate, and can only guess at his wishes.

The religion of Urth is much older than Conciliator and in no way depends on his miracles, or in fact on any miracles (although they still happen). It was founded by Theoanthropos. As to the technological explanation for Severian's resurrection - it is not exactly apparent in the books. The most important difference is that most religions and philosophies have very different value structures from the modern one. Killing nearly all people on earth certainly was not good, but in the neoplatonic view it was very far from real, important evil. Reading Machen helps to understand that point of view.

<http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks06/0601371.txt>

Hierogrammates are certainly not angels and do not claim it at all. On the other hand such beings as Tzadkiel are very much different from them.

I wonder whether you did read "Voyage to Arcturus" by David Lindsay? I think it would have interested you.

<http://members.aol.com/siure/lindsay.htm>

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

Mamy worek pełen prezentów. Te prezenty są dla Ciebie.

Sprawdź >> <http://link.interia.pl/f1cbf>

thalassocrat at nym.hush.com — 07 Jan 2008, 09:19 · follows Stanislaus

On Mon, 07 Jan 2008 07:39:52 +1100 Stanislaus <sbocian at poczta.fm>
wrote:
Hello thalassocrat,

The Neoplatonic philosophy is hard to understand. The hierarchical part is simple, but the ultimate otherness of the Increate is difficult to understand. Severian, however, understood it, as far as it is possible. Read again the parable of the cock - the angels are still infinitely far from the Increate, and can only guess at his wishes.

There's the cock story, and other bits and pieces also. in Dr Talos' play, Nod tells Gabriel that he's only guessing at what the Increate wants. G sees he was afraid of that; clearly, the same is true for him too. There's also the little story of the angel slain by an arrow. Gabriel says: "If I had known we could die, I would not at all times have been so brave" - or words to that effect.

All of these little markers support my view. Thinking of "Gabriel" in these stories as a reflection of the real Hierogrammates, they tell us that such "angels" are neither spiritual beings (they can die) nor the direct agents of the Increate. It may even be true that T et al believe they are working the will of the Increate - such convenient self-deception isn't very uncommon.

The religion of Urth is much older than Conciliator and in no way depends on his miracles, or in fact on any miracles (although they still happen). It was founded by Theoanthropos. As to the technological explanation for Severian's resurrection - it is not exactly apparent in the books.

Perhaps parts of the religion, or the framing of the religion, are older than the Conciliator - there is no way of knowing - but everything suggests that the main focus of the religion is now the New Sun/Conciliator as holy hero, perhaps as an avatar of the Increate, although that is never made very clear.

The Pelerines are devoted to Conciliator-worship. The carolyer on the scaffold in Saltus starts by addressing the Increate but in this fragment clearly addresses a New Sun mythologized from Sev's mission in Typhon's day: "You, the hero who will destroy the black worm that devours the sky; for whom the sky parts as a curtain; you whose breath shall wither vast Abaia etc etc etc". Ditto for the Conciliator/New Sun to whom Agia, Dorcas and others refer as an aspect of the divine. Ditto for every reference to Urthly religion I can recall.

Without Sev's mission, the Conciliator/New Sun figure would not exist in the religion of his youth. There would presumably be some other divine hero-type, but not this one & not one which would set a religious context for Sev thinking that the New Sun was an absolutely unquestionably good thing.

The most important difference is that most religions and philosophies have very different value structures from the modern one. Killing nearly all people on earth certainly was not good, but in the neoplatonic view it was very far from real, important evil.

That for me would be an enormous argument against ever signing up for a neoplatonic religion. Really, I think part of Wolfe's intention is a critique of those kinds of religious sensibility which can lead one to consider genocide as anything but an "important evil". He puffs up a cloud of this neoplatonic, gnostic, whatever mumbo-jumbo jargon and imagery, but underneath it you have a core reality of (maybe) parasitoid wasp creatures, demonstrably malevolent towards humanity & in no way divine.

Hierogrammates are certainly not angels and do not claim it at all. On the other hand such beings as Tzadkiel are very much different from them.

Not sure I understand this. T is of course a Hierogrammate. He sure doesn't go much out of his way to dispel the angel image. Think of the scene in his captain's cabin when Sev & Gunnie are returning to Urth, putting on a show of power and majesty to awe the humans. Another piece of trickery. Of course, we know that he isn't an angelic being; just another creature whom the Hiero/humans moulded in some fashion.

Perhaps you're thinking of the Hierarchs or Hierodules?

I wonder whether you did read "Voyage to Arcturus" by David Lindsay? I think it would have interested you.

I probably will read it, thanks.

David Duffy — 08 Jan 2008, 01:59 · in reply to thalassocrat at nym.hush.com

On Mon, 7 Jan 2008, thalassocrat at nym.hush.com wrote:

On Mon, 07 Jan 2008 07:39:52 +1100 Stanislaus <sbocian at poczta.fm> wrote:

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Unfortunately I am not au fait with theological thought about the Noachian Flood, but I suspect it is not usually regarded as an evil by RCs.

David Duffy.

thalassocrat at nym.hush.com — 08 Jan 2008, 02:29 · follows David Duffy

On Tue, 08 Jan 2008 12:59:23 +1100 David Duffy

<David.Duffy at qimr.edu.au> wrote:

Unfortunately I am not au fait with theological thought about the Noachian Flood, but I suspect it is not usually regarded as an evil by RCs.

I guess the really-truly God gets a free pass to do whatever he wants & it is by definition "good", since it's his game.

I don't think the same applies to creatures, like Hierogrammates.

Roy C. Lackey — 08 Jan 2008, 06:37 · follows thalassocrat at nym.hush.com

Andrew wrote:

There is no evidence whatsoever that they are part of a holy hierarchy with the Increate at its apex.

As you are doubtless aware, I have argued the opposite view before, so I won't bother to repeat it all. I can't, of course, prove the Increate's involvement because the Increate never appears on the stage. Just a few comments.

Sev's religion is based ultimately on Sev's own claims to be a Conciliator and the "miracles" he performed; of course these "miracles" were merely phenomena of a higher technology.

Sev's abilities to heal and to raise the dead to life again are not the products of alien high-tech. Even mighty Tzadkiel could not heal Herena's arm or raise Zama to life the way Sev did, as Barbatus explained when Sev complained of being brought back to life as a mere high-tech eidolon. (URTH, 359-60)

One of his functions no doubt is to take the burden of guilt for the coming destruction away from the Hiero-dudes. As T says in his parting words, Urth will be destroyed at *Sev's* command - not T's.

And just before saying that, Tzadkiel said, "The death agonies of the world you know will be offered to the Increate. [. . .] Much that is beautiful will perish, and with it most of your race; but your home will be reborn." (153) And that seems to be the point of it all. Bad-ol'-Man needed to be slapped down -- again. That's how the god-game works. Sacrifice in an attempt to placate a wrathful god, a conciliation made by a conciliator. Only Sev isn't the one who had to pay the price, no matter how bad he said he felt about it all after the fact. After all, torturers are famous for their sympathetic qualities.

In any event, BF&O thought of themselves as holy slaves, but they were not Tzadkiel's slaves, even though they had been fashioned by the Hierogrammates. As Famulimus said, "How could Hierodules be holy, did we not serve the Increate? Our master is he, and he only." (36) My point here is that both the Hierogrammates and their helpers seem to believe that they were serving the Increate when they did what they did, to, for and about the people of Urth.

Perhaps this points to another reason for Wolfe including the SilkHorn-meets-Sev scenes in SS: the (IMO) far greater work expunging or perhaps redeeming the lesser ...

Silkhorn continued to make sacrificial offerings to the Outsider, even after he was on Blue and gave up on being just a reader of entrails. You seem to think Silkhorn a fine, upstanding dude and the Outsider the True God. Silkhorn did the same thing Severian-the-Conciliator did, only on a smaller scale; a matter of degree, not kind. If Wolfe's work is any indicator of his religious leanings, he seems to regard the concept of religious sacrifice in a favorable light.

-Roy

Matthew Groves — 08 Jan 2008, 12:52 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

On Jan 5, 2008 11:18 PM, <thalassocrat at nym.hush.com> wrote:

One of the things not to like about this reading is that in some ways it turns NS into a literary trick analogous to those of the Hiero-dudes.

Speaking for myself, this is the nail in the coffin of this reading. Calling it a "literary trick" makes it sound like something Wolfe might do, but really it just turns too much of The Book of the New Sun into a Big Fat Lie.

On Jan 8, 2008 12:37 AM, Roy C. Lackey <rclackey at stic.net> wrote:

As you are doubtless aware, I have argued the opposite view before

Roy, would it be possible for you to find and post a link to that old argument?

thalassocrat at nym.hush.com — 08 Jan 2008, 13:08 · follows Matthew Groves

On Tue, 08 Jan 2008 17:37:27 +1100 "Roy C. Lackey"
<rclackey at stic.net> wrote:

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A couple of things. First, I think the Hierodules are dupes. They probably believe all this hogwash. (I think Father Inire is a dupe also, whether or not he's actually a Hierodule.)

Second, I concede that maybe not everything Sev does faux-miracle- wise has a Tzadkiel-tech basis. Another annoying but evident possibility is that Sev somehow or other has Magic Blood which lets him draw & focus energy from external sources in time-twisting ways.

Even if this is the case, it doesn't imply any kind of divine origin for this power & it remains the case that it was Sev's own miracles which boosted the establishment of the New Sun religion, which was my original point.

Sev may be the Hierogrammate's chosen one just because this Magic Blood is a necessary attribute of what they want from the Hieros, possibly the original source of their own time-twisting powers. At least this would provide some better motivation for the question of why Sev. Perhaps he's supposed to mate with every female on Ushas or something.

One of his functions no doubt is to take the burden of guilt for the coming destruction away from the Hiero-dudes. As T says in his parting words, Urth will be destroyed at *Sev's* command - not T's.

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their sympathetic qualities.

Of course, as you say, it comes down to whether or not you think Tzadkiel actually has any idea of what the Increate might want. I think it fits better to assume that Wolfe's Increate is not in fact a wrathful Jehovah figure, and Tzadkiel is bullshitting himself and/or Sev.

In any event, BF&O thought of themselves as holy slaves, but they were not Tzadkiel's slaves, even though they had been fashioned by the Hierogrammates. As Famulimus said, "How could Hierodules be holy, did we not serve the Increate? Our master is he, and he only." (36) My point here is that both the Hierogrammates and their helpers seem to believe that they were serving the Increate when they did what they did, to, for and about the people of Urth.

But obviously, believing it doesn't make it true.

Perhaps this points to another reason for Wolfe including the SilkHorn-meets-Sev scenes in SS: the (IMO) far greater work expunging or perhaps redeeming the lesser ...

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Really, I think Wolfe would indeed see a qualitative difference between sacrificing animals and killing off most of a planet full of humans, as I imagine most people would. Maybe that's actually a bad distinction, but I don't think Wolfe would agree. I certainly don't think SilkHorn is perfect, and in fact I think sacrifice is an area where he's a bit of dunce. He never seems to get the point of Oreb squawking "No cut!" all the time.

But I think Olivine's little communion is supposed to show that Silk did decide that sacrifices weren't pleasing to the Outsider, the only god. SilkHorn doesn't explicitly remember this decision, but think of his "sacrifice" of bread and wine to the Outsider after the Battle of Blanko. Also think of his disgust at the hordes of animals slaughtered in the sacrifice in the Grand Manteion in RTTW.

I wouldn't be surprised to find that SilkHorn would still participate in animal sacrifices even if he did remember the decision, if necessary. He'd just think of them as rather meaningless and distasteful.

And, obviously, I do indeed think that Wolfe intends SilkHorn to be a very fine upstanding dude, and the Outsider to be the really- truly God. (Obviously, that doesn't mean that I necessarily

agree that SilkHorn is my idea of an exemplar or that I actually believe in any kind of god.)

One final thing: Wikipedia says Tzadkiel is supposed by some to be the angel who stopped Abraham from killing Isaac. I vaguely recall that this is supposed to be the definitive point at which Yahweh made it clear that human sacrifice is a Bad Thing. It seems that even T's name is a lie.

But I don't think he always lies. Eg: Mini-T says to Sev beside Madregot: "I've many times been called a liar".

Steven — 08 Jan 2008, 17:47 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

I've just started Pirate Freedom and have been having similar, though more confused thoughts about GW's 'real' religious thought. It's hard for me to square a number of items in his many books with his professed Catholicism. Normally, I'd just say: Well, the author is a fantasist and has a writing persona and then, separately, there's his real life feelings. But GW seems to purposefully entwine the two and it makes me wonder at the value he places on belief. Or am I just a dupe, falling for the seeming veritas of his writing?

Any thoughts? I'm a Spinozist myself and have no ax to grind in the dogma wars.

On Jan 8, 2008, at 1:37 AM, Roy C. Lackey wrote:
If Wolfe's work is any indicator of his religious leanings, he seems to regard the concept of religious sacrifice in a favorable light.

Steven
<http://bowenfineart.com/>

Lane Haygood — 08 Jan 2008, 18:09 · in reply to Steven

Remember that Wolfe uses narrators to tell his story -- unreliable ones. Anything written in the narrative voice should be taken to be the thought of the narrator, not necessarily Wolfe himself. That, and Catholicism isn't necessarily a monolithic edifice of thought. I can certainly see where various philosophical and theological schools influence the "mythology" of Wolfe's works, as it were. I don't think Wolfe intends to endorse these as a proper system of belief so much as he uses them to make his works interesting and meaningful.

Lane

On Jan 8, 2008, at 11:47 AM, Steven wrote:
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Steven
<http://bowenfineart.com/>

Roy C. Lackey — 08 Jan 2008, 20:30 · follows Lane Haygood

Matthew Groves wrote:

On Jan 8, 2008 12:37 AM, Roy C. Lackey <rlackey@stic.net> wrote:

As you are doubtless aware, I have argued the opposite view before

Roy, would it be possible for you to find and post a link to that old argument?

It's been debated more than once, largely by Adam Stephanides and myself, so it's not neatly packaged in one place. The last round was in March of '05, in the "Increate on trial" thread.

-Roy

Jeff Wilson — 09 Jan 2008, 07:48 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

Roy C. Lackey wrote:

Andrew wrote:

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But Severian is also the Autarch, the Epitome of Urth - so it's a willing, self-sacrifice as far as that goes. (Severian survives, but is no longer Autarch or epitome of anything.)

Or not. All of this, with the "higher" creatures knowing no better the Increate's wishes, and with "evil" men actually serving the greater good by their parts in the Increate's plan - it makes a pretty good case for moral relativism.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson@io.com
< <http://www.io.com/~jwilson> >