

Urth Digest, Vol 51, Issue 44

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 20 Nov 2008

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/5232>

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David Stockhoff — 20 Nov 2008, 21:15

Let me clarify my thought.

I meant that it's almost as though Wolfe read Tertullian (or the debate he was part of) and and responded to him by deliberately constructing a character according to those severe Christian prohibitions /as though they were precise specifications/: a Christ figure who is everything Christ's followers cannot be. Why these specifications and not others?

I think this goes beyond "sin" and repugnance, neither of which is mentioned here. It's a question of temporal authority vs spiritual authority, at least. But we knew that.

Message: 4

Date: Thu, 20 Nov 2008 14:54:21 -0500

From: "John Watkins" <john.watkins04 at gmail.com>

Subject: Re: (urth) Severian as reverse Christ (or something)

To: "The Urth Mailing List" <urth at lists.urth.net>

Message-ID:

<93d4039f0811201154v58204796p2fadecf2753008b9 at mail.gmail.com>

Content-Type: text/plain; charset="windows-1252"

Naturally it's applicable to Severian. Wolfe makes it pretty clear, I think, that he finds Severian's profession to be repugnant.

Severian's journey, unlike the journey of Christ, is out of great sin into, well, maybe not exactly virtue, but into lesser sin. He's a better person at the end than at the beginning.

On 11/20/08, David Stockhoff <dstockhoff at verizon.net> wrote:

Recent lurker, first-time poster. Please excuse any formatting offenses!

As part of blog discussion on another topic, someone sent me a link regarding the historical development of Catholic positions on torture:

<http://www.rtforum.org/lt/lt119.html>

And the following caught my eye (the middle part):

A1. Tertullian (3rd century). This early representative of patristic thought follows the radically pacifist tendency of not a few Christians at that time who tended to take the Gospel's 'counsels of perfection' as universally binding precepts. Certainly, in Tertullian's judgment, any complicity in torture — either ordering it or personally applying it — is definitely ruled out for a disciple of Jesus. Arguing that no soldier, after

converting to Christianity, should continue in the army, especially given its pagan character, he asks rhetorically,

"[S]hall the son of peace take part in the battle when it does not become him even to sue at law? And shall *he* apply the chain, and the prison, *and the torture*, and the punishment, who is not the avenger even of his own wrongs?"*1 <http://www.rtforum.org/lt/lt119.html#FN_1>*

In similar vein, discussing "what offices a Christian man may hold", he refers to a recent case wherein a Church member had the opportunity to receive high public office as a magistrate. Tertullian argues that it would be morally impossible for this man to satisfy both the Gospel's demands and those of Roman law, for that would require him to abstain not only from all public pagan sacrifices, oaths, etc., but also from "sitting in judgment on anyone's life or character, . . . neither condemning nor fore-condemning; binding no one, imprisoning *or torturing no one*".*2<http://www.rtforum.org/lt/lt119.html#FN_2>
* These are the earliest known explicit Christian statements on the morality of torture.

I have no argument to make here---I merely find the references to binding etc.very applicable to Severian. It's almost a summary of his daily routine. (Recall that "lictor" means "he who binds.")

Can Christ not be a Christian?

David Stockhoff
