

Aside on Christ figures in TBotNS

The Urth list — 20 messages, 5 voices, 11 Dec 2008

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/5271>

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David Stockhoff — 11 Dec 2008, 19:02

I had forgotten that Tzadkiel's son fought and died in the judicial combat that confirmed Severian's success as Epitome.

If Tzadkiel is the Demiurge, and the Demiurge is God, then that makes the son, well, his Son. Not sacrificed, but exposed to the risk of death, because Tzadkiel thought it wrong to judge Urth without putting something of his own on the block.

Again, I am reminded of the theory that TBotNS presents parodies of the true religion, and the phrase in Tlon, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius that Wolfe has pointed at as an inspiration for TBotNS: "an atropious or banal reality."

Son of Witz — 11 Dec 2008, 20:01 · follows David Stockhoff

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John Watkins — 11 Dec 2008, 20:07 · in reply to Son of Witz

The standard Gnostic view was that Christ was an emanation of the true God, and so, yes, "elevated far beyond the false creator" (or real creator of the material world, whatever).

On 12/11/08, Son of Witz <sonofwitz at butcherbaker.org> wrote:

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David Stockhoff — 12 Dec 2008, 00:02 · follows John Watkins

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BTW, I meant "atrocious" in my quote below. I think this term can apply to actual atrocities as well as travesties of Christian form, and nothing is more banal than a sci-fi cliché or a mundane explanation of a miracle.

I think the Conciliator is exactly that: "a healing energy sent in from the true God into the realm of the Demiurge." Tzadkiel knows he is no Demiurge, but he is clearly the higher being in charge of our creation. To Urth, he is God in all the ways the Increate is not---the way the "hairy thunderer" Yahweh is everything the Christian God is not.

Message: 2

Date: Thu, 11 Dec 2008 20:01:59 +0000

From: "Son of Witz" <sonofwitz at butcherbaker.org>

Subject: Re: (urth) Aside on Christ figures in TBotNS

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

Message-ID: <W2548019216258801229025719 at webmail36>

Content-Type: text/plain; charset="us-ascii"

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Jordon Flato — 12 Dec 2008, 00:51 · in reply to David Stockhoff

Well, a big big difference here is that I don't see Tzadkiel asking for worship, or denying the Increate, or putting himself in place of the Increate. He acknowledges his nullity in the face of the Increate, and also never demands worship. The Demiurge demands worship, and tries to set himself up as God with a capital G.

On Thu, Dec 11, 2008 at 4:02 PM, David Stockhoff <dstockhoff at verizon.net> wrote:
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Son of Witz — 12 Dec 2008, 02:21 · in reply to Jordon Flato

yeah. I agree with Jordon's worship comment.

The Increate name maps to the true godhead, The Uncreated, rather than a yahweh figure. but I see no figure in NewSun that really does map to Yaweh. I suppose you're right that Tzadkiel is the closest, but I see him still in the archangel / djinn category, ontologically. I can accept this sort of gnostic prison planet idea without an overt demiurge. I sense the Black Iron Prison.

admittedly, PKD informs my notion of Christ heavily.

~witz

On Dec 11, 2008, at 4:51 PM, Jordon Flato wrote:

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David Stockhoff — 12 Dec 2008, 15:56 · follows Son of Witz

Jordon & Witz---

It doesn't work perfectly for exactly those reasons. However, the pattern is so clear I don't think it can be denied.

Also, for me there is little difference between Yahweh saying he is the Utmost and humans thinking he is, not realizing he is simply a sun god and that a bigger God lies above and behind him. This is partly because humans lie and make things up about their gods, and partly because the universe of TBotNS is, in a way, a Catholic universe with all the flesh stripped away to reveal the bones, like a postmodern building. It is generally rational and rationalized, relatively speaking. It has to "make sense" regardless of our existing religious beliefs, which will never perfectly apply.

If Tzadkiel had been an evil or foolish Demiurge (Abaia and his brothers seem to want to fill that slot), it would have been a very different story.

Message: 1
Date: Thu, 11 Dec 2008 16:51:35 -0800
From: "Jordon Flato" <jordonflato at gmail.com>
Subject: Re: (urth) Aside on Christ figures in TBotNS
To: "The Urth Mailing List" <urth at lists.urth.net>
Message-ID:
<273409710812111651g4b3059c6kac072c41d63af90e at mail.gmail.com>
Content-Type: text/plain; charset="iso-8859-1"

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Jordon Flato — 12 Dec 2008, 17:03 · in reply to David Stockhoff

Sure, I'll grant there is a correspondance there. Hell, I've been arguing for the Christ correspondences while saying it's not a precise fit, so I can't really buck this one!

Somehow, though, I've always felt that Tzadkiel and the rest were more the higher angelic heirarchy. Especially with the biblical notion that Man is higher than the Angels, and the BotNS idea that The Hierogrammates lift up man so they will resemble the Hierogrammates creators (who were, thus, higher than them).

On Fri, Dec 12, 2008 at 7:56 AM, David Stockhoff <dstockhoff at verizon.net> wrote:
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Son of Witz — 12 Dec 2008, 17:13 · follows Jordon Flato

Yeah, I see the correspondence.

In that view Yaweh must be an archangel or something. not exactly. he's the aborted offspring of Sophia, if I remember right. But either way, he's in a category far above humanity, which from our perspective is very hard to differentiate the levels of ontology.

Parody has come up in this discussion of Christ in BoTNS, and I don't think it's unfair, but I don't think it deflates the lofty things either. I find UotNS practically hilarious. it is parody, and slapstick. More and more I seem to be of the opinion that UoTNS is truly a sequel to, and not a part of BoTNS. BoTNS is very much "Is he the messiah" UoTNS is more "he's the "Messiah" but what does that mean? who's Messiah? and to what ends?" That Severian ends up as a "petty god", as (I believe it was) Roy put it, is both funny, and well deserved. dude's been through the wringer, been manipulated to the ends of time, and now he gets to rest and live it up a bit in the

fruits of his labor.

From: Jordon Flato [mailto:jordonflato at gmail.com]

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Dave Tallman — 12 Dec 2008, 20:49 · in reply to David Stockhoff

David Stockhoff wrote:

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The idea that Yaweh (the Creator as shown in the Old Testament) is a different being than the God of the New Testament has been rejected as heresy by the Church from the time of Marcion.

That is not to say that Wolfe couldn't play with the idea. Pas is a demiurge in comparison to the Outsider in the Long Sun books. I just don't see as much of that in the New Sun books.

John Watkins — 12 Dec 2008, 20:54 · in reply to Dave Tallman

On 12/12/08, Dave Tallman <davetallman at msn.com> wrote:

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Me either. Tzadkiel isn't playing at being God--he's either genuinely God's agent, or playing at being God's agent.

David Stockhoff — 12 Dec 2008, 21:50 · follows John Watkins

But angels don't have sons.

Basically, I'm suggesting any being in charge of Urth or its galaxy is essentially a type of god. Though he also functions as angel.

Message: 5

Date: Fri, 12 Dec 2008 09:03:04 -0800

From: "Jordon Flato" <jordonflato at gmail.com>

Subject: Re: (urth) Aside on Christ figures in TBotNS

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

Message-ID:

<273409710812120903j46b473dy3af4c28ca2716fc1 at mail.gmail.com>

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John Watkins — 12 Dec 2008, 21:52 · in reply to David Stockhoff

He's a Sufficiently Advanced Alien. Such creatures are indistinguishable from gods from a mortal viewpoint (although not, of course, from the viewpoint of the Increate.)

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Son of Witz — 12 Dec 2008, 22:03 · follows John Watkins

He's a Sufficiently Advanced Alien. Such creatures are indistinguishable from gods from a mortal viewpoint (although not, of course, from the viewpoint of the Increate.)

What if the Archangel Gabriel is a Sufficiently Advanced Alien?
does that change anything? everything?
or is the Sufficiently Advanced Alien still on a mission from on high? Can only Angels work Gods plan, or can Aliens too?

Many will argue that there are "Higher Beings" out there. In the old days, we called them Djinn, Angels, Demons, Gods, etc, and saw them in flying chariots? Our modern material minds, when apprehending them, seem to see Aliens in saucers. Are they the same entities? If so, what does that tell us?

I think the Heirogrammites and Heirodules are the same entities that past speculation has called Archangels and Angels. I'm not saying that Tzadkiel IS an Archangel, any more than I'm saying Severian is Jesus. Tzadkiel and Gabriel are just different ways our human minds have wrapped around the experience of these Higher Beings. Same with Severian and Jesus. That EITHER of those characters are "real" is HIGHLY unlikely, but the prospect that these "characters" are trying to express some higher being that IS existent seems much more likely to me. This is where Wolfe keeps it ambiguous and leaves it to faith.

~SonOfWitz

John Watkins — 12 Dec 2008, 22:12 · in reply to Son of Witz

On 12/12/08, Son of Witz <sonofwitz@butcherbaker.org> wrote:

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Are you asking for my philosophical and theological speculation, or are you asking about the teachings of the ancient Christian churches?

I think the Heirogrammites and Heirodules are the same entities that past speculation has called Archangels and Angels.

You may be right. But this is Gene Wolfe's book, and we're led to believe that Gene Wolfe is an orthodox Roman Catholic (heck, a Thomist!). As such he likely believes traditional Christian doctrines concerning angels.

That EITHER of those characters are "real" is HIGHLY unlikely,

I don't think Wolfe agrees. That is, I think he believes in the Archangel Gabriel, and made an effort to faithfully depict him in his short story, The Queen, much as he made an effort to faithfully depict the Archangel Michael in The Wizard Knight.

Whether or not Tzadkiel is meant to similarly depict an angelic being is up to debate--I think it's more likely that Tzadkiel is meant as a parody of an angelic being, or as a deconstruction of the idea of an angelic being than as a faithful depiction of the higher powers as Wolfe understands them. But that's just my interpretation.

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That he does.

~SonOfWitz

Son of Witz — 12 Dec 2008, 22:32 · follows John Watkins

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are you asking about the teachings of the ancient Christian churches?

no, I'm merely asking one to strip away the PLOT and try to deal with what the story is getting at. He's cast aliens as angels, metaphorically. It seems really obvious to me. Who cares if their "not" literally angels in Severian's world. They're metaphorically Angels doing the work of God. Of course, that can be doubted to the ends of time.

David Stockhoff — 12 Dec 2008, 23:34 · follows Son of Witz

Sure, in the plain, sci-fi interpretation of TBotNS. But he's also something else, because everything in TBotNS is also Something Else.

Message: 8
Date: Fri, 12 Dec 2008 16:52:14 -0500
From: "John Watkins" <john.watkins04 at gmail.com>
Subject: Re: (urth) Aside on Christ figures in TBotNS

John Watkins — 12 Dec 2008, 23:44 · in reply to Son of Witz

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This is the actual definition of begging the question.

Son of Witz — 12 Dec 2008, 23:50 · follows John Watkins

-----Original Message-----

From: John Watkins [mailto:john.watkins04 at gmail.com]

Sent: Friday, December 12, 2008 03:44 PM

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This is the actual definition of begging the question.

Dis me all you want, but it makes PERFECT sense to apply circular logic to a book about intractable timeloops where you can never extract what happened first of which the most explicit description of is given by Heirodules when they describe a two headed snake eating it's own head.

So you want to solve a metaphysical paradox with logic? Good fucking luck, buddy.

~witz

John Watkins — 12 Dec 2008, 23:52 · in reply to Son of Witz

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-----Original Message-----

From: John Watkins [mailto:john.watkins04 at gmail.com]

Sent: Friday, December 12, 2008 03:44 PM

To: 'The Urth Mailing List'

Subject: Re: (urth) Aside on Christ figures in TBotNS

On 12/12/08, Son of Witz <sonofwitz at butcherbaker.org> wrote:

Are you asking for my philosophical and theological speculation, or are you asking about the teachings of the ancient Christian churches?

no, I'm merely asking one to strip away the PLOT and try to deal with what the story is getting at. He's cast aliens as angels, metaphorically. It seems really obvious to me. Who cares if their "not" literally angels in Severian's world. They're metaphorically Angels doing the work of God. Of course, that can be doubted to the ends of time.

This is the actual definition of begging the question.

Dis me all you want, but it makes PERFECT sense to apply circular logic to a book about intractable timeloops where you can never extract what happened first of which the most explicit description of is given by Heirodules when they describe a two headed snake eating it's own head.

So you want to solve a metaphysical paradox with logic? Good fucking luck, buddy.

Ok, I think I'm out of this discussion. Sorry.

~witz
