

Wolfean theologies and the Long Sun

The Urth list — 5 messages, 3 voices, 05 Feb 2009

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/5333>

Exported from an unofficial mirror of a public mailing list. Copyright in each message remains with the person who wrote it. Email addresses are obscured as `user at host`, the form the original archive published. This file was rebuilt from parsed fields rather than retained headers, so it is faithful in content but not byte-exact.

David Stockhoff — 05 Feb 2009, 21:08

Thanks for the links, Stanislaus.

That was in fact the distinction that I assumed in reading the books---that there is the Increate, and then there is everything else. None of those other terms are used, of course---merely hinted at, so some posters here have had to use them. Nothing even tells us what entity possessed Severian. One assumes the Increate, but Witz has proposed the New Sun itself.

I don't follow that this rule alone keeps Severian from being "a Christ," since that depends on the degree to which Severian is divine and for that matter whether the OTC is divine. If neither is divine, then there is no forced inequivalence on these grounds alone. If both are---well, that was the reason for my original question.

I'll let someone else ask how filioque fits into this scheme. ;)

BTW, did you derive the Long Sunshade mechanism yourself, or from reading someone else? I only read LS once, but the Pylon made so little sense to me I just blotted it out.

Your explanation is perfect in every way---it explains how shadeup could seem fast or slow, and how light moves from east to west along the Long Sun.

Is the Long Sun itself then an uncontained energy beam or flame rather than a large fluorescent tube? What material does the Shade consist of?

How big an asteroid would this require? Any candidates?

Message: 7

Date: Wed, 4 Feb 2009 20:44:05 +0100

From: "Stanislaus B." <sbocian at poczta.fm>

Subject: Re: (urth) Wolfean theologies

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

Message-ID: <1661202702.20090204204405 at poczta.fm>

Content-Type: text/plain; charset=windows-1250

Hello!

On 4 lutego 2009, David Stockhoff wrote:

...

Yes, you are saying exactly what I think. As only a semiliterate person in these areas, as well as being an atheist, I am naturally leery of a too-theological interpretation.

...

However, outside the work, I personally don't see much difference, because to me they are all characters, and the world is plainly big enough for infinite variations. Christ himself was partly derived from characters who preceded him. I would identify a character with stigmata and a spear wound who carries the Divine Spark as one with a much more *specific* relation to the Christ than Frodo would have.

...

Second, I asked, if Severian experiences in TUotNS, as he relates he does, at least a glimpse of what it's like to be God/a god/a godling/whatever (I don't see support in the text for useful distinctions between these), then what does that mean for the work? To this question, I got John's suggestion that Severian's divinity might have been temporary, and Brunian's. It's still open. Is this passage part of TUotNS's New-Sun-for-Dummies role, or does it tell us something specific, like Severian is divine? is he divine temporarily or inherently? Or am I jumping to conclusions? Perhaps, read properly, it tells us Severian is NOT divine?

...

Since you yourself said that your knowledge of theology is limited, I will try to explain some basic conceptions of that science. They are not exclusive to Christianity BTW, in fact they have been discovered by the Greek philosophy.

God is categorically different from all other things which exists (including gods/divinities/godlings/angels/saints). God is the fundamental ground of all existence, outside the world, space and time. Whatever exists, exists because of God. Moreover, no words which can be used to describe any other things can be rightly used about God. In fact, saying that God exists, is good, wise, powerful etc is in a sense untrue - all those words do not describe God correctly.

For that reason saying that Severian is Christ makes no sense. Even saying that Severian resembles Christ is meaningless if you do not understand that categorical difference.

Here you can find a good description of the problem by Pseudo-Dionysios Areopagita. He is my favourite author when explaining Wolfe, since he is heavily influenced by Neoplatonists. The introduction by translator to "On the Divine Names" is very good and should explain things.

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/rolt/dionysius.iii.ii.html>

<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06614a.htm>

That fundamental difference is quite clearly explained by Wolfe in the Melito's story in "The Citadel of the Autarch";

"The eagle looked at the angel when he heard what the cock said, and the angel looked at the eagle. 'The Pancreator is infinitely far from us,' the angel said. 'And thus infinitely far from me, though I fly so much higher than you. I guess at his desires? no one can do otherwise.'"

Note that this is NOT an orthodox position. It a Neoplatonic, not Christian idea (as is most of the New Sun, of course), but it clearly shows the difference between the True God and all other divinities, of which there is so many in the series.

-- Best regards, Stanislaus B.

Pokieruj psem-bohaterem i uratuj Penny! Skaczysz i gryziesz >> zagraj >>
<http://link.interia.pl/f204f> -----

Matthew Weber — 05 Feb 2009, 21:19 · in reply to David Stockhoff

On Thu, Feb 5, 2009 at 1:08 PM, David Stockhoff <dstockhoff@verizon.net> wrote:
Thanks for the links, Stanislaus.

That was in fact the distinction that I assumed in reading the books---that there is the Increate, and then there is everything else. None of those other terms are used, of course---merely hinted at, so some posters here have had to use them. Nothing even tells us what entity possessed Severian. One assumes the Increate, but Witz has proposed the New Sun itself.

I don't follow that this rule alone keeps Severian from being "a Christ," since that depends on the degree to which Severian is divine and for that matter whether the OTC is divine. If neither is divine, then there is no forced inequivalence on these grounds alone. If both are---well, that was the reason for my original question.

The Christ of traditional christology is divine as the incarnation of the Son (one of the three Persons of the Trinity). Since the Trinity is not a hierarchy, and since its Persons are co-eternal, Christ is not a created being; the begetter/begotten language bespeaks a relationship and not a temporal order (in the Creed's language, Christ is *genitum*, *non factum*, and *consubstantialem Patri*--begotten, not made, and of the same substance as the Father). Orthodox Christianity does not understand the Incarnation as a kind of possession or adoption. It is the unity of two natures (the divine and the human) in one person, often called the hypostatic union.

It is difficult for this Christian priest to see how Severian could be a Christ; he is unaware of his Godhead in any meaningful way, and is far from sinless. His trajectory is, however, fairly close to that of a Christian who strives to imitate Christ and grows (oh, how slowly!) in faith and virtue.

Having said this, though, I'm sure that other interpretations will offer much of value. Wolfe's work is very complex, after all!

Matt +

Oligarchy : a government resting on a valuation of property, in which the rich have power and the poor man is deprived of it.
Plato (c. 428-348 B.C.), *The Republic*, bk. VIII, 550-C

Son of Witz — 05 Feb 2009, 22:00 · follows Matthew Weber

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

From: Matthew Weber [<mailto:palaeologos@gmail.com>]

Sent: Thursday, February 5, 2009 01:19 PM

To: 'The Urth Mailing List'

Subject: Re: (urth) Wolfean theologies and the Long Sun

It is difficult for this Christian priest to see how Severian could be a Christ; he is unaware of his Godhead in any meaningful way, and is far from sinless. His trajectory is, however, fairly close to that of a Christian who strives to imitate Christ and grows (oh, how slowly!) in faith and virtue.

Having said this, though, I'm sure that other interpretations will offer much of value. Wolfe's work is very complex, after all!

--

Matt +

Cool. A priest. I love the internet for grouping unlike minds together.

Very sorry if anything I've said has offended you, good sir. I like that you directly knocked down my arguments with solid arguments, rather than suggest I shouldn't be speaking about this, as some here have.

The discussions here have made me back off on the idea of Severian as an instantiation of the Logos. I based that on the idea that he, as Conciliator and New Sun, forged a peace between God and Man, and that he fulfilled both the Redeemer role, in bringing the sword, and the Prophet role - his stint as Conciliator, instilling hope in a "Second coming" To me, the "miracles" of resurrection are less important, though telling. I'm now not sure that Severian actually "forged a peace". That lies on the assumption that the schemes of the Hierodudes were God's work. I think that what he did was good, and was God's work, but I can perfectly see how the text casts that into doubt.

I suppose though, that a lot of the argument against Severian as Christ rests in the Morality question, one in which I've thoroughly ignored. I feel that he's not hugely immoral though. He's usually supposed to be cruel, but he almost always chooses mercy, unless he's fulfilling his carnificial role. One is reminded of The Last Temptation of Christ, where Jesus is building crucifixes. (I don't really know how heretical that story is.) I find it massively compelling, the idea of Man as torturer, who must better himself to mercy. Severian's Carnificial role is justified by Paleamon's moral rationalization, that it is crucial that Good Men do the torture, and not bad men. In light of that, Severian still chooses, or says he will, to abolish torture all together.

I think what's most interesting to me, is not whether he is or is not a Christ, but the idea of becoming the myth that shaped you. I'm in the middle of Green's Jungles, and Horn seems to be experiencing this dynamic in a very different way. This is the "Becoming like Christ", and that's what's important, I think, to the story's messages. [SHORT SPOILERS] Horn seems to have become Silk, just as he always strove to think like Silk, and how he was known to otherwise imitate Silk. Can't wait to see where that goes.

Severian not only becomes The New Sun, the myth he's longed for his entire life, but he goes onto become the Conciliator the first time. The idea is just preposterously hilarious and awesome.

it was just commented that I linked Severian to the New Sun, rather than the Increate. I meant sort of the opposite. My point was that Stars have no consciousness that we can speak of. I meant that he was connected to the Increate, and that it is that energy acting through him. I can't speak to whether that makes him divine, or temporarily divine, or what.

~sonOfWitz

David Stockhoff — 05 Feb 2009, 22:15 · follows Son of Witz

These 2 points are especially of interest:

---Orthodox Christianity does not understand the Incarnation as a kind of possession or adoption.

Makes sense ...

---he is unaware of his Godhead in any meaningful way

even though Severian is a liar, or at least doesn't tell us everything. But I agree that the brief moment in which Severian "is" or "writes as" the Increate is not best taken as a tiny revelation of a huge truth. How exactly it should be taken, I'm not sure. What was Wolfe saying? Simply that Severian's healing powers are the real deal, not derived from Heirogrammatic manipulations?

I wonder about Severian's striving to become good. I am not sure I see much evidence of a *conscious* striving. Mostly, he makes mistakes and tries to avoid repeating them. Which may be enough.

Message: 2

Date: Thu, 5 Feb 2009 13:19:10 -0800

From: Matthew Weber <palaeologos at gmail.com>

Subject: Re: (urth) Wolfean theologies and the Long Sun

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

Message-ID:

<e815e3c90902051319o17c9de68s7bbd66d3d7a88cba at mail.gmail.com>

Content-Type: text/plain; charset="iso-8859-1"

On Thu, Feb 5, 2009 at 1:08 PM, David Stockhoff <dstockhoff at verizon.net> wrote:

Thanks for the links, Stanislaus.

That was in fact the distinction that I assumed in reading the books---that there is the Increate, and then there is everything else. None of those other terms are used, of course---merely hinted at, so some posters here have had to use them. Nothing even tells us what entity possessed Severian. One assumes the Increate, but Witz has proposed the New Sun itself.

I don't follow that this rule alone keeps Severian from being "a Christ," since that depends on the degree to which Severian is divine and for that matter whether the OTC is divine. If neither is divine, then there is no forced inequivalence on these grounds alone. If both are---well, that was the reason for my original question.

The Christ of traditional christology is divine as the incarnation of the Son (one of the three Persons of the Trinity). Since the Trinity is not a hierarchy, and since its Persons are co-eternal, Christ is not a created being; the begetter/begotten language bespeaks a relationship and not a temporal order (in the Creed's language, Christ is *genitum*, *non factum*, and *consubstantialem Patris*--begotten, not made, and of the same substance as the Father). *Orthodox Christianity does not understand the Incarnation as a kind of possession or adoption. It is the unity of two natures (the divine and the human) in one person, often called the hypostatic union.*

It is difficult for this Christian priest to see how Severian could be a Christ; "he is unaware of his Godhead in any meaningful way,* and is far from sinless. His trajectory is, however, fairly close to that of a Christian who strives to imitate Christ and grows (oh, how slowly!) in faith and virtue.

Having said this, though, I'm sure that other interpretations will offer

much of value. Wolfe's work is very complex, after all!

-- Matt + Oligarchy : a government resting on a valuation of property,
in which the rich have power and the poor man is deprived of it. Plato
(c. 428-348 B.C.), The Republic, bk. VIII, 550-C ----- next
part ----- An HTML attachment was scrubbed... URL:
<<http://lists.urth.net/pipermail/urth-urth.net/attachments/20090205/173591ac/attachment-0001.htm>
>

Matthew Weber — 05 Feb 2009, 22:31 · in reply to David Stockhoff

On Thu, Feb 5, 2009 at 2:15 PM, David Stockhoff <dstockhoff@verizon.net> wrote:

I wonder about Severian's striving to become good. I am not sure I see much
evidence of a *conscious* striving. Mostly, he makes mistakes and tries to
avoid repeating them. Which may be enough.

In my experience, that's what many of us do most of the time (make a mistake, realize it's a
mistake, try not to make it again). Most people aren't capable of sustained striving over a
lifetime--we only manage it in bursts. "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak".

Matt +

Oligarchy : a government resting on a valuation of property, in which the
rich have power and the poor man is deprived of it.
Plato (c. 428-348 B.C.), The Republic, bk. VIII, 550-C