

# Jordan interview

The Urth list — 24 messages, 10 voices, 21 Oct 2011

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/6077>

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Andrew Mason — 21 Oct 2011, 21:27

I have just been looking at the Jordan interview with GW, which has been mentioned here a few times lately, and I noticed a couple of things.

First, I can't find any reference to God's promise to Noah - the claim that this is a long past universe is one that Wolfe makes unprompted, when asked if it is this universe or a future one. However, he adds 'Something that we are repeating rather than something that we are', which to me seems to count against the idea that that universe is radically different in nature from the one we are in.

The other thing is the 'Christ figure' remark, which is often quoted in a way that's not quite right. Here's what Wolfe says: 'In so far as there is a Christ figure it is Severian. That doesn't mean he has to be identified with Christ. He is in a position similar to that of Christ. But really it is a different position because Christ really is both God and man. Severian is not. Severian is a Christian rather than a Christ.'

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Jeff Wilson — 21 Oct 2011, 23:27 · in reply to Andrew Mason

On Fri, October 21, 2011 16:27, Andrew Mason wrote:

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It would be interesting to see if there are any references to rainbows on Urth.

The other thing is the 'Christ figure' remark, which is often quoted in a way that's not quite right. Here's what Wolfe says: 'In so far as there is a Christ figure it is Severian. That doesn't mean he has to be identified with Christ. He is in a position similar to that of Christ. But really it is a different position because Christ really is both God and man. Severian is not. Severian is a Christian rather than a Christ.'

This at least is consistent with the Long Sun and Short Sun books, where Christianity seems to be an emergent phenomenon.

Jeff Wilson - < [jwilson at clueland.com](mailto:jwilson@clueland.com) >  
A&M Texarkana Computational Intelligence Lab  
< <http://www.tamut.edu/cil> >

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Ryan Dunn — 21 Oct 2011, 23:42 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

On Oct 21, 2011, at 7:27 PM, "Jeff Wilson" <jwilson at clueland.com> wrote:  
It would be interesting to see if there are any references to rainbows on Urth.

To that end, does it ever rain on Urth? I'm trying to remember. Something about a Thecla memory with puddles stands out maybe?

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Ant3nio Pedro Marques — 22 Oct 2011, 11:33 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

No dia 22/10/2011, ?s 00:27, "Jeff Wilson" <jwilson at clueland.com> escreveu:

On Fri, October 21, 2011 16:27, Andrew Mason wrote:

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The genesis of a Christianity without a historical Christ - either because there never was one, or because he's been forgotten. Sounds interesting.

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Jeff Wilson — 22 Oct 2011, 12:41 · in reply to Ant3nio Pedro Marques

On Sat, October 22, 2011 06:33, Ant3nio Pedro Marques wrote:  
No dia 22/10/2011, ?s 00:27, "Jeff Wilson" <jwilson at clueland.com>  
This at least is consistent with the Long Sun and Short Sun books, where Christianity seems to be an emergent phenomenon.

The genesis of a Christianity without a historical Christ - either because there never was one, or because he's been forgotten. Sounds interesting.

There's a real-world idea similar to it called "Anonymous Christianity" - the redemptive power of the sacrifice truly was for everyone, even those who had no way to hear about it.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anonymous\\_Christian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anonymous_Christian)

Jeff Wilson - < jwilson at clueland.com >  
A&M Texarkana Computational Intelligence Lab  
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Lee Berman — 22 Oct 2011, 15:56 · follows Jeff Wilson

Antonio Pedro Marques: The genesis of a Christianity without a historical Christ - either because there never was one, or because he's been forgotten. Sounds interesting.

I agree. And mark me down in the camp who thinks Christ has not appeared in the Briah universe.

It was recently noted that as Briah is a previous iteration of our own universe, it should resemble it closely and therefore have a Christ. I agree!

My view is that Briah/Urth simply has not gotten its version of Christ yet. The Flood of Urth is

part of the preparation stages for him and they will get their Christ at some future, unwritten point in the story.

If we can accept that Urth is different enough from Earth that the Andes are on the east coast of South America rather than the west, surely we can accept a small difference such as Christ appearing on Urth in (their equivalent of) 50,000 A.D. rather than the 1 A.D. appearance of Christ on Earth.

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Dan'I Danehy-Oakes — 22 Oct 2011, 17:03 · in reply to Lee Berman

Lee Berman wrote:

I agree. And mark me down in the camp who thinks Christ has not appeared in the Bria universe.

Then how explain the references to the Theanthropos?

It was recently noted that as Bria is a previous iteration of our own universe, it should resemble it closely and therefore have a Christ. I agree!

My suggestion is that there was a historical person named Jesus who did many of the things Christ did, but who was not God. Mythology built up about him and people came to believe that he was the Theanthropos, as (in Wolfe's world) myths tend to resemble the One Truth over time.

Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

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Lee Berman — 22 Oct 2011, 19:34 · follows Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

mark me down in the camp who thinks Christ has not appeared in the Bria universe.

Dan'I Danehy-Oakes: Then how explain the references to the Theanthropos?

Without meaning to slight Christianity, the theanthropic concept did not originate with Jesus Christ. It can be found in pre-Christian religions stretching from Hinduism to Greek and Egyptian mythology.

I really think Agia's use of "the name of the Theanthropos" as an expletive to Severian is a purposefully ironic joke by Wolfe. I think the Theanthropos refers to The Conciliator for those in the commonwealth. As I've noted in recent posts, Severian seems to be immortal and in possession of supernatural power yet never in his writing (until perhaps the final pages of UotNS) does he even slightly acknowledge his own godhood (I can accept demi-godhood as I think Jeff prefers to think of it).

Dan'I: My suggestion is that there was a historical person named Jesus who did many of the things Christ did, but who was not God.

This I agree with. But I don't think we see any reference to this guy until Silk mentions his dream of a guy welcomed with palm fronds, etc. In my view, Wolfe mentions this Jesus not-Christ, and roods and gammadions and the distorted Roman Catholic Church in Viron as a way of saying that many Christians get too involved and attached to the trappings and rituals of their religion and forget that the essence of their faith (missing in Urth/Whorl) is Christ.

I don't agree with Marc that Wolfe retconned Urth/Bria into a previous- parallel planet/universe to our own after writing it. I see it there from the beginning of the story. I think this is the origin

of the ubiquitous "fuligin" theme.

I think it was a pretty standard 70's-80's SF trope that you passed from a higher universe to a lower universe by going through a black hole and emerging from a "white fountain" or quasar. Asimov used this exact scenario in *The Gods Themselves* and didn't the later *Star Treks* use it also?

Anyway, I think Wolfe puts Severian in fuligin and uses the color so liberally in the story as a way of indicating that Severian and Urth are accessible from our Earth only via a black hole. Yes, there is the plowman's explanation that fuligin is good for not showing blood splashes, but I think there is more to it.

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Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 22 Oct 2011, 20:25 · in reply to Lee Berman

Lee Berman wrote:

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Dan'l Danehy-Oakes: Then how explain the references to the Theanthropos?

Without meaning to slight Christianity, the theanthropic concept did not originate with Jesus Christ. It can be found in pre-Christian religions stretching from Hinduism to Greek and Egyptian mythology.

Agreed. But when you're dealing with a writer who insists that there is only one Theanthropos in the history of all universes, that becomes semirelevant at best.

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Can you point to any evidence for this?

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I agree with you here, and pretty much the rest of your post.

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

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David Stockhoff — 22 Oct 2011, 21:23 · in reply to Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

On 10/22/2011 4:25 PM, Dan'l Danehy-Oakes wrote:

Lee Berman wrote:

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Dan'l Danehy-Oakes: Then how explain the references to the Theanthropos?

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Agreed. But when you're dealing with a writer who insists that there is only one Theanthropos in the history of all universes, that becomes semirelevant at best.

Are you sure? Given Wolfe's view of how myths work / myth works?

I really think Agia's use of "the name of the Theanthropos" as an expletive to Severian is a purposefully ironic joke by Wolfe. I think the Theanthropos refers to The Conciliator for those in the commonwealth.

Can you point to any evidence for this?

This seems impossible to prove. But given that the term predated Christ, what else could it indicate but a non-Christ?

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I agree with you here, and pretty much the rest of your post.

I think it's a pretty big deal that at least three of us here agree that Wolfe offers a critique of his adopted religion in the Briah series. I've argued for it before: that I would extend the critique to Severian himself in terms of certain darker episodes in the Catholic Church's past. Just sayin'.

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Marc Aramini — 22 Oct 2011, 23:16 · in reply to David Stockhoff

--- On Sat, 10/22/11, David Stockhoff <dstockhoff at verizon.net> wrote:

I think it's a pretty big deal that at least three of us here agree that Wolfe offers a critique of his adopted religion in the Briah series. I've argued for it before: that I would extend the critique to Severian himself in terms of certain darker episodes in the Catholic Church's past. Just sayin'.

But ... but ... while certainly there are catholic ceremonies and celibate echoes of the priesthood in both all the Sun novels, it is tradition perverted. This is the religion Wolfe has chosen as an adult.

I don't think it's a critique so much as a use of the familiar tropes of his faith. Wolfe is not like Luther. You can find a critique if you are looking for it, but Pas' church is NOT the catholic church no matter how much it may be based upon it, and his attempts to deify himself through that institution actually made him SERVE the will of the Outsider in the final analysis - if you steal the Outsider's means, he will transform you or steal them back somehow to serve His purpose.

I think this "critique" is one of those eye of the beholder things - is he criticizing his church or its transformation and suborning into something "other"? As a Catholic myself, you know what I would say to that question, but I do think Wolfe's religious stance is one of the trickiest in sci fi, if not in all of literature.

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David Stockhoff — 23 Oct 2011, 01:26 · in reply to Marc Aramini

On 10/22/2011 7:16 PM, Marc Aramini wrote:

--- On Sat, 10/22/11, David Stockhoff<dstockhoff at verizon.net> wrote:

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If I understand you correctly, you're saying that no author can critique (not "criticize") his religion.

Note also that by "religion" I do not refer to anything other than that part of religion (all of it, I'd say, but I don't want to create a distraction here) which is entirely created by humans.

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Marc Aramini — 23 Oct 2011, 01:34 · in reply to David Stockhoff

--- On Sat, 10/22/11, David Stockhoff <dstockhoff at verizon.net> wrote:

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No, you misunderstand me. Of course he can critique his religion. I'm just not sure that's what he's doing. I think he is showing how when Typhon rips it off and tries to take Gods place, it still leads to the Outsider.

And if he believes in papal authority, it ISN'T created entirely by humans, when Jesus gave certain powers to his representative on earth, Peter.

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David Stockhoff — 23 Oct 2011, 01:54 · in reply to Marc Aramini

On 10/22/2011 9:34 PM, Marc Aramini wrote:

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And if he believes in papal authority, it ISN'T created entirely by humans, when Jesus gave certain powers to his representative on earth, Peter.

I think he can do both, and does. One simply can't depict a colorful, spectacular, empty religion without fingering any number of religions at their worst moments. Every religion has those worst moments. At least let's agree the Byzantine church is a suspect!

I hear you on the papal authority thing. It seems very odd for Wolfe to believe in it, since he attaches so much importance and authority to people's trying to come to grips with divinity without knowing "the truth." But there it is.

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Lee Berman — 23 Oct 2011, 02:41 · follows David Stockhoff

Dan'l Dannehy-Oakes: Agreed. But when you're dealing with a writer who insists that there is only one Theanthropos in the history of all universes, that becomes semirelevant at best.

Like David, I would like a link to this quote if possible. I don't necessarily doubt it, but it would be nice to see it in context.

Is it possible Wolfe spoke of one "Increate" in the history of all universes?

I do think The Increate mentioned in BotNS might be the Judeo-Christian god, Jaweh (or perhaps the God of the Trinity, which some consider to be different than Jaweh).

On the other hand, I don't think The Pancreator is the Christian God, nor the Outsider. They seem to be more along the lines of demiurge to me. In fact a demiurge is mentioned in BotNS along with other spooky gnostic deities like The Abraxas.

For those who think The Outsider is meant to be our "one, true God" of all universes I would pose a question:

Why is the Outsider repeatedly and strongly characterized as a dark god?  
A fuligin god even. Isn't the one, true, Judeo-Christian God defined primarily as a God of light? (Genesis 1:1-4, below)

I suppose some might argue that the Judeo-Christian God is a complete God encompassing both dark and light. While that may be so, it doesn't explain why The Outsider is characterized only as dark. And not just black, but the deepest kind of dark that sucks up all light. When has the God of the Holy Trinity ever been described like that?

1. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.
2. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.
- 3 And God said, ?Let there be light, and there was light.
- 4 God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness.

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Gerry Quinn — 23 Oct 2011, 09:39 · in reply to Lee Berman

From: Lee Berman

I do think The Increate mentioned in BotNS might be the Judeo-Christian god, Jaweh (or perhaps the God of the Trinity, which some consider to be different than Jaweh).

On the other hand, I don't think The Pancreator is the Christian God, nor the Outsider. They seem to be more along the lines of demiurge to me

Why? Doesn't PanCreator just mean "creator of all" while Increate means "existing without having created?" Both are attributes of the Christian God (and the Muslim God, who is referenced in BotLS, so we know Islam existed in Urth's past too). I think PanCreator and Increate both refer to the same monotheistic tradition, though it may well have evolved new scriptures and iconography.

For those who think The Outsider is meant to be our "one, true God" of all universes I would pose a question:

Why is the Outsider repeatedly and strongly characterized as a dark god?

I don't see that he is. What examples do you have in mind? Of course Silk does think of him as being linked to the darkness beyond the Whorl; but Silk is trapped in a decaying microcosm, and the only hope of salvation is to flee into that spangled darkness.

The descriptions of the Outsider in the casts of characters at the start of the latter three books are interesting:

Lake: the minor god who enlightened Silk.

Calde: the god of the broken and disparaged, whose realm lies outside the Whorl Exodus: the god of gods

Given that the writer is Wolfe, and taking into account other events such as Silk's vision of Jesus, I don't think this leaves very much room for doubt about the identity of the Outsider. (One might speculatively identify the three descriptions with the Persons of the Trinity, but that is not essential to the main reading.)

- Gerry Quinn

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Sergei SOLOVIEV — 23 Oct 2011, 15:51 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

Just one remark:

Why is the Outsider repeatedly and strongly characterized as a dark god?

The medieval Christian mystics (Meister Eckhart, Ruysbroeck) often told that God is "creative void" or "creative darkness" or even "creative nothingness" - I am sure Wolfe knows this very well. When Lee says "dark god" - I have an impression - he refers to modern mythology, where "dark" means "bad", "light" means "good".

cheers

Sergei

Gerry Quinn wrote:

\*From:\* Lee Berman <mailto:severiansola at hotmail.com>

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David Stockhoff — 23 Oct 2011, 19:05 · in reply to Lee Berman

On 10/22/2011 10:41 PM, Lee Berman wrote:

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A fuligin god even. Isn't the one, true, Judeo-Christian God defined primarily

as a God of light? (Genesis 1:1-4, below)

Because he dwells in the dark behind the sun, we can't see him with our eyes.

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António Pedro Marques — 23 Oct 2011, 19:15 · in reply to Lee Berman

Lee Berman wrote (23-10-2011 03:41):

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? Certainly a demiurge creates. It's the Outsider who isn't referred to as a creator, iirc.

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David Stockhoff — 23 Oct 2011, 20:12 · in reply to Sergei SOLOVIEV

On 10/23/2011 11:51 AM, Sergei SOLOVIEV wrote:  
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Wolfe knows this very well. When Lee says "dark god" - I have an impression -

he refers to modern mythology, where "dark" means "bad", "light" means "good".

cheers

Sergei

excellent! Before the creation there was "nothingness." Not nothing.

---

Lee Berman — 23 Oct 2011, 20:27 · follows David Stockhoff

Sergei Soloviev: When Lee says "dark god" - I have an impression - he refers to modern mythology, where "dark" means "bad", "light" means "good".

I do not mean this nor do I think Wolfe does. I think Wolfe uses the Sun Series to recognize that (as in Genesis 1:1) dark is the necessary precursor to light. Severian's universe is the necessary precursor to ours. "Good" and "bad" are human judgements. Divine necessity has no part of it.

I can agree in general that modern Christian religion/mythology casts light as good and dark as bad. I suppose my previous post was in recognition of this in wondering why, if Wolfe intended the Outsider to be our OUR GOD, why he made Him solely dark, without even a nod to a dark/light balance. If the Outsider is supposed to be Jahweh or the God of the Trinity I'm afraid I find him disguised so completely as to find him unrecognizable.

I rest on Wolfe's interview statements. Briah is a previous universe to ours. A darker one. Severian may be a dark version of our Saviour, the Outsider may be a dark precursor to our God.

Origin of Myth. I think keeping this concept in mind helps so much in understanding what Wolfe is saying in the Sun series. The Outsider is specifically identified with Dionysus. Why?

Dionysus is a huge part of our "dark" pre-Christian religion and spiritual side. Christianity has demonized him over and over, casting his goat aspect into the classic depiction of Satan, etc. I think Wolfe is trying to say with this story just what was initially addressed in this post. Dionysus worship was dark but not necessarily satanic. Dionysus was the proper god for his time period and place as the Outsider is for Briah.

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Andrew Mason — 23 Oct 2011, 22:19 · follows Lee Berman

Antonio Pedro Marquez wrote:

Lee Berman wrote (23-10-2011 03:41):

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? Certainly a demiurge creates. It's the Outsider who isn't referred to as a creator, iirc.

I think the Outsider is identified with the Maker in the Pajarocu story.

'Demiurge' does indeed just mean 'maker'; it has a specific connotation in gnosticism, where it is opposed to the true God, but in other contexts this need not be implied.

'Abraxas' does seem to be a gnostic word, but apparently it's unclear whether it is a name of the Archon or of the true God, so it's uncertain what we should.

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Andrew Mason — 23 Oct 2011, 22:21 · in reply to Andrew Mason

Andrew Mason wrote:  
so it's

uncertain what we should.

make of it.

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Sergei SOLOVIEV — 24 Oct 2011, 12:15 · in reply to Lee Berman

I find this post interesting. I have to think about it.

Sergei

Lee Berman wrote:  
Sergei Soloviev: When Lee says "dark god" - I have an impression - he refers to modern mythology, where "dark" means "bad", "light" means "good".

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