

Baptism and Confirmation: Shadow of the Torturer: Chapter I

The Urth list — 9 messages, 5 voices, 22 Aug 2014

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/6637>

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marcobadie at katamail.com — 22 Aug 2014, 07:10

My third post at the Urth list.

Thanks you, Gerry Quinn and Lee, for your comments and observations at my first posts.

My point: the double resurrection in Chapter I of Shadow of Torturer states a connection between Severian and the the dark-haired woman, just dead.

Next.

When Severian is resurrected from water by the Undine, he is baptised in the form of a baptism by immersion, unconsciously entering the congregation of the subjects of Abaia.

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The Confirmation administered by Vodalus makes Severian ?a "Soldier of Abaia" (Severian thinks himself a Vodalarius). Soldier is a derivation of Solidarius, Latin meaning someone who works for money. Solidare in Latin means "to pay" and the Roman soldiers were paid in "Solidi". Severian instead is paid in chrisos (only one).

Later, in the Claw of Conciliator, Severian will receive the sacrament of Eucharist in the form of the flesh of Thecla.

The succession of sacraments follows the tradition of the Eastern Orthodox Church rather than the Roman Catholic Church (where Eucharist is very close to Confirmation).

Next post: Catherine and the Undine

Marco Cecchini, from Italy (sorry for my sloppy english).

Marc Aramini — 22 Aug 2014, 09:25 · in reply to marcobadie at katamail.com

I like it, but there is and always has been a syncretic symbolism in new sun between water, healing, and death that undercuts this baptism imagery a bit. It's not just baptism, it is healing coupled with death. He heals the sick at Thrax in the water cataract stumbling three times with terminus est - water imagery is turned into both healing and death- it is the flood and the crucifixion of urth, renewal through drowning. Over and over water is rebirth. Not for abaia, I don't think, but the link between the flood of genesis and the apocalypse of eschatology. Water is always linked to healing, death, and resurrection from the very start and presages the flood of renewal. I don't think Vodalus is important enough with his false coin to warrant a confirmation before sev gets his diabolical Eucharist.

Usually confirmation is fully adult - I wouldn't expect it right after the baptism unless we had an adult convert. (Wolfe may have been, BUT ...)

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Marc Aramini — 22 Aug 2014, 09:31 · in reply to Marc Aramini

And to some degree the conciliator redeems the diabolical Eucharist - Thecla is brought to genuine life not only because of the analept of the alzado, but because of who is consuming her flesh. I need to read the sequence all the way through again but completely undercutting sev's moral journey makes the book a bit more like Wright's secular naturalistic reading (that sev has no free will and is simply manipulated by forces) which I resist quite innately as contrary to Wolfe's entire belief system.

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Marc Aramini — 22 Aug 2014, 09:51 · in reply to marcobadie at katamail.com

Marco wrote: "The succession of sacraments follows the tradition of the Eastern Orthodox Church rather than the Roman Catholic Church (where Eucharist is very close to Confirmation)."

I need to do a little research I suppose, but is it inverted to the point of confirmation following baptism and preceding communion? I keep kind of overlooking the whole Byzantium angle in favor of catholic imagery I guess.

Sorry for ignoring this part of your point in my initial response.

Marc Aramini — 22 Aug 2014, 09:57 · in reply to Marc Aramini

The water/death/resurrection imagery is in several scenes, like Dorcas' appearance where she hands him Terminus Est, like the breaking of terminus est at the lake against Baldanders , etc. I don't think the imagery at the start is simply baptism imagery, though certainly that might be one part of it.

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Gerry Quinn — 22 Aug 2014, 11:05 · in reply to marcobadie at katamail.com

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I'm not convinced by the connection between Severian and the woman - might she not simply be the mother of the peasant who wanted to guard her corpse that night?

The rest works for me; Severian was arguably baptised, confirmed and received the Eucharist of the Church of Abaia/Vodalus as you say - but in the end he abjured that faith...

- Gerry Quinn

Brad Henry — 22 Aug 2014, 14:31 · in reply to Marc Aramini

For what its worth, this description is very close to both the New Testament (baptised into christ's death, etc...) understanding of baptism and the Catechism (that develops more fully the connection between the noah-flood, the arc, and baptism).

On Fri, Aug 22, 2014 at 5:25 AM, Marc Aramini <marcaramini at gmail.com> wrote:

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Lee — 22 Aug 2014, 15:17 · follows Brad Henry

Marco Checchini: Later, in the Claw of Conciliator, Severian will receive the sacrament of Eucharist in the form of the flesh of Thecla.

Marc Aramini: And to some degree the conciliator redeems the diabolical Eucharist - Thecla is brought to genuine life not only because of the analept of the alzado, but because of who is consuming her flesh.

I am guessing Marc gets the "diabolical" adjective for this eucharist from the James Jordan interview with Gene Wolfe back from 1992. An excerpt and a link to that interview will be found

below. I find Wolfe to be at his least guarded and most revelatory in this interview and would recommend it, in its entirety, to any who are unfamiliar with it.

JJ: ...There also seem to be images of the eucharist

GW: There are diabolical eucharists: people who are eating corpses in order to get the memory of the dead person...

JJ: Now the climax of that inversion seems to be when Severian actually eats the brains of the preceding autarch. Did you see that as another form of the diabolical communion? Or something that was necessary? It seems to be necessary to the novel.

GW: What I was doing was to say that in order to be a good ruler you must be familiar with the tradition of that rule---of that country and of the people in the past who have administered that rule. No, not diabolical in that case. The diabolical thing is more Vodalus and the graverobbers

My own personal favorite Wolfe quote from that interview is:

JJ: Which is another way of saying, do we have fallen angels here or some type of power that really was operative in the world before the kingdom of God?

GW: That is my personal belief. I think that the gods of paganism were real. But what I tried to do was to write about that pagan world as the pagans themselves wrote about it.

That opened up worlds of understanding for me. The link to the whole interview is here:

<http://members.bellatlantic.net/~vze2tmhh/wolfejbj.html>

Lee — 22 Aug 2014, 18:04 · follows Lee

Brad Harvey: For what its worth, this description is very close to both the New Testament (baptised into christ's death, etc...) understanding of baptism and the Catechism (that develops more fully the connection between the noah-flood, the arc, and baptism).

I think Severian's flooding of the Vincula and Silkhorn's cleansing of the sewer on Green serve a similar connective function.

Moreover the mythological cleansing of the Augean Stables was done by an oft-cited pre-cursor to Jesus: Heracles.

Gerry Quinn: I'm not convinced by the connection between Severian and the woman - might she not simply be the mother of the peasant who wanted to guard her corpse that night?

I'm good with the association of this corpse with Severian's mother, who is likely represented in Dr. Talos' play as the Contessa Carina.

I think the evidence is against this corpse being a random commoner. Why would Vodalus and Thea risk their lives just to be able to eat the flesh and live the memories of a peasant's mother? The long, pale gown doesn't seem very peasantish either.

Moreover, Severian later sees her face in the face of the exultant Ultan. Plus, the corpse's livid face might indicate she had recently been tortured to death by Allowin's necklace (which receives an otherwise inexplicably detailed description).

Given that Cyriaca was later sentenced to strangulation for the crime of adultery, I suspect this was also this woman's crime. If the connection of this corpse to severian's mother is valid, it adds insight to the brief relationship between Catherine and Ouen.