

Destroying Inhumani

The Whorl list — 6 messages, 4 voices, 25 Apr 2001

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/1404>

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James Jordan — 25 Apr 2001, 22:43

The Secret, it seems, is a weapon that can destroy the inhumani, but one that may be and likely is too heavy to wield.

I'd like to go back to something someone suggested, which is that when men are good, and thus Christlike, then such good people will voluntarily give blood as needed to help inhumani become good, as Christ did for humans. Practically, such blood could be deposited in blood banks, analogous to Christ's deposit of His blood in the Eucharist.

This has not satisfied because transforming the inhumani does not seem to be a weapon to destroy them. But is this the right understanding? SS is clearly a religious as well as a political and personal novel. Twice we have eucharistic scenes. That's no accident: In Christian thought the Eucharist is eating and drinking Christ's death into oneself, so that one can die to one's own evil and be born anew, over and over again. I suggest that to transform the inhumani into true humans is precisely to destroy inhumani, to destroy what makes them IN-humani.

Pay close attention to the name Wolfe has given them: We humans are usually inhumani, unless we "die" in Christ and are "raised" to a new life.

In short, I suspect that destroying the inhumani has a religious meaning, not a military one. Grist for the mill.

Nutria

*This is WHORL, for discussion of Gene Wolfe's Book of the Long Sun.

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 26 Apr 2001, 09:05 · follows James Jordan

PatNutRit:

The Secret, it seems, is a weapon that can destroy the inhumani,

No, no, a _thousand_ times no! Horn says clearly that it will not, that it will reduce them to mindless beasts. (Of course, you might consider that a form of "destruction.") So far, "love each other" is the _only_ suggestion that has any plausible hope of doing this.

Practically, such blood could be deposited in blood banks,
analogous to Christ's deposit of His blood in the Eucharist.

Not the Catholic (& therefore Lupine) understanding of the Eucharist. In the Eucharist, the Sacrifice of the Messiah is

-- not reenacted, but made present, in a sense which transcends time and space: thus, the blood which the wine becomes is not blood "deposited" in some mystical blood bank, but actually bled at that (eternal, universal, non-temporal) moment. This is, btw, analogous to the original Passover, in which the message is "God did so-and-so for us" -- not "for our ancestors," but "for us"; in eating the Passover, a Jew of this day and age is mystically present at the original Exodus. All the People of Israel are present at Sinai.

A somewhat subtler objection is "if the secret will reduce the inhumani to mindless beasts, the Love One Another hypothesis won't work _because_ humans

will voluntarily give their blood to the inhumani." Ahhh, but the inhumani to whom they give their blood become human (at least in spirit); so the only pure inhumani are, precisely, the mindless beasts. This, of course, is true even as Horn speaks: Krait, Jahlee, Fava, etc., are in fact human in spirit. But they represent danger _because_ the kind of human they have become is not a being of Agape; and the "weapon" is "too heavy to wield" _because_ humans, _not_ loving each other, will not voluntarily give their blood to the inhumani anyway. It is "too heavy to wield:" it is not practical (in the Fallen World, in which Blue, Green, Urth, and the _Whorl_ all inhere) to suppose that humans will as-a-race become Agape-driven, and so they cannot even lift the "sword" that would destroy the inhumani _as a threat_.

This has not satisfied because transforming the inhumani does not seem to be a weapon to destroy them. But is this the right understanding? SS is clearly a religious as well as a political and personal novel. Twice we have eucharistic scenes.

Right -- the "agape feast" is brought into extreme foreground.

That's no accident: In Christian thought the Eucharist is eating and drinking Christ's death into oneself, so that one can die to one's own evil and be born anew, over and over again.

Clearly you're not of the "once for all" persuasion. ;*)

My own understanding is a bit different from the "over and over again" you cite here -- Catholicism, as I understand it, teaches not that the Eucharist is rebirth (that happens at Baptism), but of the process by which we are gradually sanctified, con-formed to the Image of Christ. By analogy, repeated feeding from Agapistic humans would gradually sanctify the inhumani, and con-form them to Agape.

I suggest that to transform the inhumani into true humans is precisely to destroy inhumani, to destroy what makes them IN-humani. Pay close attention to the name Wolfe has given them: We humans are usually inhumani, unless we "die" in Christ and are "raised" to a new life.

Ummmm. I _think_ the root of the word is not "human (ex _homo_)" but "humus." The prefix "in" is ambiguous, and can mean "not" or simply "in." Thus, the inhumani are "not-Earthly," and, at the same time, they are the "in-Earth," the Buried, in at least the sense of "hidden," but becoming horrifically literal in the marketplace of Gaon.

In short, I suspect that destroying the inhumani has a religious meaning, not a military one.

There we are in complete agreement 8*)

Blat, blat,

--Blattid/Dan'I

*This is WHORL, for discussion of Gene Wolfe's Book of the Long Sun.

Kevin J. Maroney — 26 Apr 2001, 12:53 · follows Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

At 09:05 AM 4/26/01 -0700, Dan'I wrote:

No, no, a _thousand_ times no! Horn says clearly that it will not, that it will reduce them to mindless beasts. (Of course, you might consider that a form of "destruction.") So far, "love each other" is the _only_ suggestion that has any plausible hope of doing this.

"Travel to Green; kill all the humans and sentient inhumani there" might also do it. That would be a very heavy weapon indeed, because it would require mass slaughter of sentient, innocent, beings, including the children of the inhumani.

It is possible that non-sentient inhumani cannot pass to Blue. If I understand correctly, the Neighbors didn't encounter the inhumani until the Neighbors came to Green, so it is possible that the inhumani could not bridge the gap between the planets until they had acquired something from the Neighbors; if the inhumani all were devolved to beasts, then perhaps they would once again be stranded on Green.

But I feel I am standing on sand, and wish that I had some bedrock on which to build this interpretation.

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Dan'I Danehy-Oakes — 26 Apr 2001, 10:21 · follows Kevin J. Maroney

In response to my:

... So far, "love each other" is the only suggestion that has any plausible hope of [reducing the inhumani to mindless beasts],

Kevin wrote:

"Travel to Green; kill all the humans and sentient inhumani there" might also do it. That would be a very heavy weapon indeed, because it would require mass slaughter of sentient, innocent, beings, including the children of the inhumani.

This is true -- but I'm not sure it's relevant. While "Love One Another" may not be The Secret, it clearly must be related to The Secret; slaughtering the entire human population of Green would not fit this criterion. (As an alternative, what about inviting the entire human population of Green to come live on Blue, and then genociding the sentient inhumani... But no; that simply couldn't be done with any measure of certainty.)

It is possible that non-sentient inhumani cannot pass to Blue.

And more likely that it wouldn't occur to them to do so.

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James Jordan — 26 Apr 2001, 12:18 · follows Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

At 09:05 AM 4/26/2001 -0700, Blattid wrote:

Practically, such blood could be deposited in blood banks, analogous to Christ's deposit of His blood in the Eucharist.

Not the Catholic (& therefore Lupine) understanding of the Eucharist. In the Eucharist, the Sacrifice of the Messiah is -- not reenacted, but made present, in a sense which transcends time and space: thus, the blood which the wine becomes is not blood "deposited" in some mystical blood bank, but actually bled at that (eternal, universal, non-temporal) moment. This is, btw, analogous to the original Passover, in which the message is "God did so-and-so for us" -- not "for our ancestors," but "for us"; in eating the Passover, a Jew of this day and age is mystically present at the original Exodus. All the People of Israel are

present at Sinai.

Well sure. That's being more precise than I was being, but I think the analogy fits either way. As you probably know there is more than one version of "transubstantiation" in RC thought today, but whether Wolfe would agree completely with the particulars you set out or not, the basic notion is the same.

A somewhat subtler objection is "if the secret will reduce the inhumani to mindless beasts, the Love One Another hypothesis won't work _because_ humans will voluntarily give their blood to the inhumani." Ahhh, but the inhumani to whom they give their blood become human (at least in spirit); so the only pure inhumani are, precisely, the mindless beasts. This, of course, is true even as Horn speaks: Krait, Jahlee, Fava, etc., are in fact human in spirit. But they represent danger _because_ the kind of human they have become is not a being of Agape; and the "weapon" is "too heavy to wield" _because_ humans, _not_ loving each other, will not voluntarily give their blood to the inhumani anyway. It is "too heavy to wield:" it is not practical (in the Fallen World, in which Blue, Green, Urth, and the _Whorl_ all inhere) to suppose that humans will as-a-race become Agape-driven, and so they cannot even lift the "sword" that would destroy the inhumani _as a threat_.

Agree. Some inhumani become humi, others revert to animals.

That's no accident: In Christian thought the Eucharist is eating and drinking Christ's death into oneself, so that one can die to one's own evil and be born anew, over and over again.

My own understanding is a bit different from the "over and over again" you cite here -- Catholicism, as I understand it, teaches not that the Eucharist is rebirth (that happens at Baptism), but of the process by which we are gradually sanctified, con-formed to the Image of Christ. By analogy, repeated feeding from Agapistic humans would gradually sanctify the inhumani, and con-form them to Agape.

Either way. I think ultimately it is pretty much the same thing. We must "die" to sin daily, and be "raised" daily, so being "born anew" daily stems from the Baptismal beginning.

Ummmm. I _think_ the root of the word is not "human (ex _homo_)" but "humus." The prefix "in" is ambiguous, and can mean "not" or simply "in." Thus, the inhumani are "not-Earthly," and, at the same time, they are the "in-Earth," the Buried, in at least the sense of "hidden," but becoming horrifically literal in the marketplace of Gaon.

Well, Wolfe has his pregnant puns, and surely "inhumani" also connotes "inhumane."

I think we are in essential agreement.

Nutria

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Adam Stephanides — 26 Apr 2001, 13:57 · follows James Jordan

on 4/26/01 11:53 AM, Kevin J. Maroney at kmaroney at ungames.com wrote:
It is possible that non-sentient inhumani cannot pass to Blue. If I understand correctly, the Neighbors didn't encounter the inhumani until the

Neighbors came to Green, so it is possible that the inhumans could not bridge the gap between the planets until they had acquired something from the Neighbors; if the inhumans all were devolved to beasts, then perhaps they would once again be stranded on Green.

Not that they couldn't bridge the gap (I think the inhumans do fly from Green to Blue, despite the physical implausibility), but that they had no reason to, since they had plenty of non-intelligent prey on Green and no desire for intelligent prey (nor inkling that any prey existed on Blue, intelligent or not). Devolved inhumans would presumably be in the same position.

--Adam

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