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The Whorl list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 26 Jun 1997

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Kieran Mullen — 26 Jun 1997, 13:58

More fuel for the holy wars...

With respect, I flat-out don't understand how it can be so. A Christian is, by definition, a follower of Jesus Christ. (This is the minimum criterion, you can pile on as much theological baggage as you wish.) Christ is unknown in Severian's universe, so Severian cannot follow him. Therefore, Severian is not a Christian.

This seems to be a limited definition, from an sf point of view.

How would you classify the creatures in Lewis's Out of the Silent Planet or Perelandra? They don't follow Jesus specifically, but they are certainly patched into the God of the Judeo-Christian tradition. I think that one facet of Wolfe's writing is theological sf, trying to stretch the boundary of normal sf. (In traditional sf "gods" are just very powerful contingent beings.) He's implying that if the Earthly Christian tradition is true, it must be true **everywhere**.

If that's all too religious for you, remember the ambiguity. Silk could be completely wrong about the Outsider; it could all come from Crane's medical explanation.

There is, perhaps, some ambiguity in what Wolfe told you. Perhaps he meant that though Severian is in no way meant to be Christ or someone like Christ (this would make the New Sun books heretical, after all), he is trying to live a Christ-like life. You don't have to be a Christian to do this--you don't even have to know who Christ is. But if you are doing it, then you may be said to have a "Christian character".

It might be helpful to think how a Christian would interpret Abraham from the Pentateuch. He walked and talked with God, and it changed his life. However, Abraham certainly wouldn't be a "Christian" in the sense being "a follower of Jesus Christ". However you might say that in the Christian tradition, he is a Christian figure.

To me Silk has more of a Mosaic flavor to his character than Christic. He leads his people out of bondage to a promised planet. However, he does not get to walk in the Land himself. I mean, "Exodus"? The burning bush?

Kieran Mullen

Derek Bell — 27 Jun 1997, 18:25 · follows Kieran Mullen

In message <199706261856.LAA25244 at lists1.best.com>, Kieran Mullen writes:

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Maybe I'm stretching the comparison too far, but could Silk have a brother high up in the Chapter - analogous to Aaron, the High Priest, Moses' brother?

Terrel