

Salutations to Xavier of the Spire of the Celestial Cascade,

Your letter is welcome, though its contents, and more especially the companion documents, evoke a mixed response.

I must first congratulate you on being recognised as a blasphemer and heretic. If congratulations were not expected, or sought, you should possibly be aware that White Spire Ascending has little respect for the Imperial Synod. Your rejection by them gives me insight into what Artaxus may have seen in you.

We Whitespires are quite familiar with the Synod's enthusiasm for wielding charges of "abuse of powers" against those they disagree with, or – more accurately – feel threatened by. Our own withdrawal from Imperial life is rooted in this. If needs must that we save the Empire, and the Way, in spite of the Synod, then so shall it be.

It became clear to us some time ago that the magistrates do not understand the Way, or the theology that underpins and surrounds it. I venture to suggest that it is not their incorruptibility that you doubt, but their infallibility. Until such time as a theologian is appointed as a magistrate, they shall remain dependent on the poisoned words of those who are most assuredly corruptible; the Synod priests.

If it is your ambition to try and reform the Synod and save it from itself, we shall applaud it and wish you better fortune than we fared in prior generations.

On other matters, I am glad you have benefitted from meeting with Yael. It is always fascinating how the threads in the Net interweave and intertwine.

As to Mourning Steading, I regret that I was not clearer that they, like ourselves, have withdrawn from Imperial life and do not send delegations to Anvil. The reason is tied to the blade you have identified as Nightripper's Bane. It came into the hands of a beloved daughter of that Steading and the aura directly resulted in her death. The resultant grief and anger caused the Steading to rename itself and cut itself away from others.

Consequently, Mourning Steading is sympathetic to Lucidianism. It was my hope that the destruction of aura, or blade, would turn sympathy to loyalty. Their direct aid would be beneficial in fulfilling the coven-oath of White Spire Ascending. Highguard's appetite for another Exemplar of Courage is a far lesser priority as far as I am concerned.

Your request for us to print copies of your documents is acceptable, though as part of the usual commercial arrangement. Having this done is not the same as our endorsement, as some of your texts would attract this, and others would not.

*On the matter of your texts, your desire to produce an antithetical response is fascinating as a method of manipulating the Net of Heavens. The experiences you cite within *Fear the Synod*, regarding the Cardinals, resonate strongly with us. Can we infer from your stated intentions that it, in part, represents your opposition to someone sitting the Throne?*

*On the *Abridged Philosophies*, we cannot agree with your – publically stated, at least – *Lucidian Conclusion*. I regret to say that it is our belief that all auras, even those naturally occurring, are malign. Naturally, we do not share this belief publically, lest we attract further accusations of heresy.*

*On the matter of *Artaxus*, I suspect it would quite shatter his poise to know you might consider him an Exemplar. If I were to think of a single virtue in the context of *Artaxus*, it would most assuredly be *Vigilance*. None was more alert to the danger of auras, and of striving to oppose them. In his *arête*, he excelled at exorcism. Teaching was one of the methods that he used to promote vigilance, and the sharpening of the mind's blade against the tangling vines of external influences.*

Perhaps you might consider how the desire to shield a person, location or object against auras would be the epitome of vigilance against such influences.

*Your ambition, whilst worthy, is likely flawed. I hold little expectation that the Synod will recognise a *Whitespire Exemplar*. I should be delighted if you could prove me wrong.*

*On the matter of pilgrimage, I can confirm that, *Artaxus* travelled to all *Highguard* territories as part of his work, and his desire to peel away the *Highborn* lies about the *Scions of Atun*. I would also agree that removing vile auras is an act of benevolence – and arguably salvation.*

*On the matter of inspiration, *Lucidianism* pre-dates *Artaxus'* labours but it is safe to say that, of his generation, I know of none who has done more to spread it amongst the *Empire*. Though, owing to its controversial nature, I regret I am unwilling to provide numbers and locations of those who heeded him. I shall write to those whose contact details that I have and enquire from them of any tales they might tell that would aid your cause. The difficulty with having one of your *Spire* be a traveller and a teacher is that others had as much, and often more, contact with him than we did.*

*If you would seek a miracle, there was a time when *Artaxus'* soul was excommunicated and he was still able to exorcise a natural aura of prosperity in the *Marches*, or so he claims. I can reassure you that the*

excommunication mark was later removed from his soul. Nevertheless, I do not think that is a story that will garner much public support.

As to legacy, when the great work of White Spire Ascending is complete, and we have granted salvation unto the Empire, I will be most happy to credit this to Artaxus. However, once again, I do not think the Synod will be grateful or supportive of what we have done for them.

In closing, you have evoked the virtue of Loyalty. Though I consider it to be a waste of time, I shall do as you bid me and put pen to paper and write to the wretched Cardinals about Lucidianism. I will enclose that letter with this one and you can decide if it would actually aid your cause, or hurt it.

May you always keep your poise in testing times,

*Artellus Whitespire
Arbiter of the White Spire Ascending
Zenith*