

The Gnostic Handbook



The Institute for
Gnostic Studies

the Gnostic Handbook

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INTRODUCTION

We have felt for many years that there is a great need for a study of the principles on which the Gnostic tradition is built. At first we avoided such a task as our knowledge of the Gnostic tradition was still evolving and because any outline of religious symbolism can come across as dogmatic. However, as time progressed we realized that if we waited until all the facts were in and we worked to avoid all possible misconceptions, we would end up with the Gnostic Handbook never being written. Accordingly, we believe that within this handbook is a comprehensive summary of the basic principles of the Gnostic tradition. We realize that what we outline in this text is unusual and rightly so, Gnosticism is a unique form of perception and hence offers a very different worldview from that found in Christian, Pagan or Esoteric and Occult traditions. Gnosticism is the essence behind such outer forms and hence offers the framework from which religion, occultism and mythology create the form.

In recent times with the advent of fundamentalism of all forms, a clear and precise explanation of the ideals of Gnosticism is not only useful, but mandatory. At the onset it should be made clear that Gnosticism is a personal experience of religion. The term Gnosis means "an experience of knowledge" and religion (from the Latin *Religio*) means "to bind back to the point of origin" and hence Gnosticism is an experience of the real essence of what God is. It does not represent dry dogmatism or a simple recital of facts, but a real and personal experience of God within human experience. It is in this spirit we issue this handbook. The structure of this handbook is aimed to facilitate easy access of information on basic religious questions. This is not meant to be an exhaustive theological exposition but a summary of the teachings which embody the Gnostic legacy which has been passed onto the Institute for Gnostic Studies. The approach we have taken in this handbook has been a religious one, our primary source of symbolism has come from within the Essene, Greek, Gnostic, Zoroastrian and Christian mystical traditions. Other interpretations are certainly possible and for those who wish to get "behind" the symbols, interpretations and beliefs we suggest you study the various publications and courses issued by the Institute for Gnostic Studies.

We hope you will find the Gnostic Handbook edifying as well as enjoyable reading..

Chapter One: WHAT IS GNOSTICISM ?

Gnosticism as a Form of Perception

What do we mean when we say Gnosticism is a form of perception ? To truly understand the Gnostic vision it is important to grasp what Gnosticism is and not to be bogged down in various historical manifestations of the Gnostic way of looking at things. Gnosis literally means wisdom but does not mean book learning, even tradition, it is a direct experience of the divine, the flash of wisdom that is brought when we meet “God” face to face. Certainly Gnosticism has certain key motifs, certain perennial ideals, which we will examine in the course of this book. However, we must appreciate that there are “Gnostic” trends in most religious traditions. Whether we are talking about Odin on the World Tree and his flash of wisdom as he grasped the runes or whether we are talking on the mystic achieving wisdom after days of penance and fasting, both are essentially Gnostic. In some ways the best way to appreciate Gnosticism is to use the metaphor of algebra.

Algebra is a branch of mathematics that uses letters etc to represent numbers and quantities. Algebraic is ultimately from Arabic Al-Jabr – reunion of broken parts.

Pocket Oxford Dictionary.

It may be thought that Algebra has little similarity to spirituality, however, if we consider it more closely they have much in common. Algebra uses letters to represent actions and numbers, it is a system of representation and in a sense, symbolism. This is also the case with spirituality. Spirituality uses symbols to stand for realities, it uses images to represent things that cannot be easily imagined or explained. The problem is that Algebra is an academic form of mathematics and has little effect on everyday life while spirituality controls and influences us more than we would care to admit. Only by removing religious iconography from the realm of the emotions and appreciating it as a symbol system, as a form of divine algebra can we really understand its nature. The Gnostic handbook is one application, one representational system for the ancient Gnosis. It can be seen in many forms and using many symbol systems. Accordingly, it is important to realise the difference between the representational letter and the thing that is represented, between the essence and the form. The Institute hence differentiates between its philosophical works (such as Gnostic Theurgy) and its religious works (such as the Gnostic Handbook).

To give an example, while all Gnostic traditions agree on the universe being in some sense dualistic, there are many divergent ways of expressing this dualism and even more ways to understand. Some Gnostic schools have two a true and false God, one the Essence behind all things, the other a Demiurge or false creators, others see the dualism as relative and only existing between mans perception (ignorance) and the truth. While all of these “representational” systems are dif-

ferent, their essential message is the same. In algebraic terms while the letters vary, the numbers they represent are identical. This should be kept in mind while studying this Handbook, it is one and one only interpretation of the essential Gnostic wisdom.

The aim of using Algebra according to the Arabs was to have a better understanding of the real nature of the equation, to find the essential form through the many shards or forms. This too is the vision of the Gnosis, the Arabic meaning of Algebra is pregnant with meaning – the reunion of broken parts.

The Sources of our Tradition

The Gnostic tradition is one that has spanned Millenniums, it represents the height of the religious traditions of Humanity. Its primary points of focus are found within Vedic Philosophy, Zoroastrianism, Greek Mystery traditions, Old World Religions (pagan and heathen) and Gnosticism. The Gnostic tradition is not culturally locked within the Christian tradition as many modern exponents seem to profess. It is a Pan-Gnostic tradition, which spans many traditions and cultural milieus. The primary assumption of the Gnostic tradition is that at some point in the dim reaches of time there was a primal universal religion, this religion diversified as man spread across the earth and different cultures and nationalities development. Accordingly, remnants of this perennial philosophy are found within the various traditions, belief systems and faiths. These faiths rather than being the primary sources of wisdom within themselves are actually remnants of one earlier, and more pristine school of knowledge. As time progressed the higher kingdoms saw the loss of gnosis and therefore chose to restore the structure of the Mysteries.

When Jesus came of age within the Essenes he purified the structure of the Mystery traditions and re-instated the original Gnostic faith. Hence, the Gnosticism of Jesus is not superior to other Gnostic traditions, but is a refinement or adaptation of an age-long tradition. Indeed, the gnosticism of Jesus brought together Egyptian, Greek and Mystery Cult traditions (such as those of Eleusis and Mithra) into one coherent system. The iconography of Judaism played a small part but was insignificant in comparison to, for example, the Greek Mystery cult tradition. To understand this “nexus” of the gnosis we really need to jettison the old model which sees gnosticism as a Jewish or Christian heresy. As has been documented in such texts as the Jesus Mystery and Jesus Christ, Sun of God ++++++ it is more likely that Rabbinic Judaism and Christianity are pagan and Gnostic heresies ! While there may be vigorous complaints and denials it is now even well known that so-called Jewish Kabbalah primarily derived from a reworking of Neo Platonic mysticism which into Jewish religious language..

These teachings, however, did not remain available forever. As society changed and a new regime came to power the teachings of Jesus were suppressed and replaced with the political faith of Emperor Constantine, and accordingly the Gnosis went underground to ensure its survival. What we have in today's religious movements are not the original forms of Judaism and Christianity, but apostate faiths masquerading in their place. The Bible itself has been tampered with to

such an extent that only through much critical study can we restore just some of its inner meaning. The Institute upholds the original inner teachings of Jesus as part of a continuum of wisdom which spans from Pagan to so-called Christian sources.

But it is perhaps desirable to state unequivocally that the teachings here, however, fragmentary and incomplete belong neither to the Hindu's, the Zoroastrian, the Chaldean, nor the Egyptian Religion, nor to Buddhism, Islam, Judaism or Christianity exclusively. The Secret doctrine is the essence of all these.

**The Secret Doctrine,
Madame Blavaskty.**

Behind the veil of all the hieratic and mystical allegories of ancient doctrines, behind the darkness and strange ordeals of all initiations, under the deal of all sacred writings, in the ruins of Nineveh or Thebes, on the crumbling stones of old temples and on the blackened visage of the Assyrian or Egyptian Sphinx, in the monstrous or marvellous paintings which interpret to the faithful of India the inspired pages of the Vedas, in the cryptic emblems of our old books on alchemy, in the ceremonies practised at receptions of all secret societies, there are found indications of a doctrine which is everywhere the same and everywhere carefully concealed...the key of all divine obscurities and the absolute queen of society in those ages when it was reserved exclusively for the education of priests and kings.

**Transcendental Magic,
Eliphas Levi.**

Gnosticism and other Ways of Knowing

In these days of science, technology and the rule of rationalism it is hard to grasp the ancient view of wisdom. Knowledge was not simply to know about something, but to know something, to appreciate its place within the living cosmos (the Great Chain of Being). The scientific model with its emphasis on experimentation and materialism, removed man from his place within a living universe and replaced it with a universe of dead and inert substances. Experimentation was used to buttress a belief in the scientific method, yet "the scientific method" was a system based on self delusion. Experimentation is used to prove the results of a given thesis, the experiments created are those which fulfil the requirements of the thesis, others are rejected.

A simple mathematical example can be used, if the hypothesis or answer is 7, we can use "experimentation" to "prove" the data. The answer, however, could be $4 + 3$, $6 + 1$ or $5 + 2$, depending on how you want the result the data is selectively chosen. The scientific approach hence is self-referencing, it demands the acceptance of certain pre-defined ideals (such as evolution, progress and the supremacy of the experimental method) and then moulds the data, consciously

or unconsciously, to fulfil the data. Critiques of the scientific method are many but for the observer the results of the scientific method are most pronounced when he looks at the world itself. The results of unbridled science and rationalism are illustrated in our consumer society, our unquenchable thirst for technology and progress at all costs, and the resulting polluted and dying continents.

Materialism, Rationalism and Fundamentalism go hand in hand, once you reject the possibility of a wisdom (gnosis) that is greater than the collective psyche of man, then the mind becomes the point of reference. Ethics become irrelevant, as do spiritual values and principles, in their place appear the relativism of the modern society whose primary focus is on progress. If you couple this with the disposing of religion by Darwinian science then man is reduced to a animal, no more, no less and his behaviour and values come to reflect this unconscious revelation.

Fundamentalism is, in some sense, the encroachment of Rationalism into the religious field. Mysticism and esotericism (inner teachings) are rejected in favour of doctrines and beliefs that can be understood by a blinkered use of the rational mind. While fundamentalism is ambivalent to the intellect, it uses a restricted form of rationalism to hold its doctrines in place, accordingly, fundamentalism is most prevalent in religions of "the book" - Protestantism, Islam and so forth. While other forms of fundamentalism exist, the most pernicious forms are those which in reaction to materialism and scientism use rationalism to create a stalwart of dogma and doctrine, and yet in the process destroy the very foundation of the true religious vision- mysticism.

To appreciate the esoteric and mystical view of truth we need to travel back to Ancient Greece and examine the allegory of the cave as used by Plato. This allegory, beyond all others, offers us a real insight into the problem of what truth is. Plato sees all of humanity as prisoners, each of us has been kept chained in a subterranean cavern from birth, facing a dark wall. Only a very small amount of light enters the cavern and this comes from a small opening high overhead. Because of our chains, we look in opposite direction and hence can only observe the dark shadows which pass along the wall we are facing. These shadows are cast by the men and occurrences of the upper world beyond the overhead opening. Our perceptions and hence of the shadows and reflections, Plato's major contemplation was on what would occur if one of us escaped from the cave ?

Plato's answer is found in his work The Republic, where Socrates tells us that at first the escaped prisoner would be blinded by the strength of the light of the upper world and would retreat back to the shadows. But only for a while.....

He would need, then, to grow accustomed before he could see things in that upper world. At first it would be easiest to make out shadows, and then the images of men and things reflected in water, and later on the things themselves. After that, it would be easier to watch the heavenly bodies and the sky itself by night, looking at the light of the moon and stars rather than the Sun and the Sun's light in the day time...Last of all, he would be able to look at the Sun and contemplate its nature, not as it appears when reflected in water or any alien medium, but as it is in itself

in its own domain....And now he would begin to draw the conclusion that it is the Sun that produces the seasons and the course of the year and controls everything in the visible world and moreover is in a way the cause of all that he and his companions used to see .

Republic, Plato. 516ff.

Plato, then, is illustrating for us the state of Man, his insight is clear and precise. Man is chained by his attachment to his perceptions which are based on materialism and rationalism. The only reality he sees is a reflection and this reflection creates an illusionary world around him. The true source of what he perceives is found in the World of Ideals and yet he cannot even contemplate this source since his view of reality is conditioned by his belief in the primacy of the material world.

The World of Ideals is the real source of wisdom but to appreciate this world, we must expand our understanding of reality from the limited perceptions of sense to a multifaceted universe of many dimensions and realities, we must move from the mountains of earth to the "Great Chain of Being". This "Chain of Being" we will discuss further in this work, in the meantime, we need to consider what it means in regards to how we understand truth or gnosis.

The religious systems, ideologies and movements which have evolved within the history of man are reflections, distortions and adaptations of the truth which exists unsullied in the world of Ideals. Rather than truth having evolved and developed, as some would tell us, truth has dissipated as time has moved away from the first point of creation. Accordingly, like a stone thrown in a pool, we see the ripples through time but do not comprehend the first event. As we have moved further and further away from the "Golden Age" the ripples have become more and more distorted until now, in the Age of the Wolf they have dissipated into the pool of illusions. Religions, ideologies and movements are hence exoteric.

Exoteric - of philosophical doctrines, treatises, modes of speech, etc.: Designed for or suitable to the generality of disciples; communicated to outsiders, intelligible to the public. Hence of disciples, etc. Belonging to the outer circle; not admitted to the esoteric teaching.

Oxford English Dictionary

Esotericism (the inner teachings) are elusive and hard to find, they have been passed from "mouth to ear" through brotherhoods, sects and orders. They do not evolve, while their appearance may change from age to age, they exist as memories and reflections, transmissions from the Golden Age (the equivalent in time to the World of Ideals) through history. While esotericism can take any form from Hindu to Buddhist, Christian to Islamic, it is at the core, distinct from each. It is trans-temporal and yet being in time takes the appearance of the country, tradition or

epoch it is clothed by. At the same time we must appreciate the form it takes, esotericism is not ecumenical, it is dangerous to assume that all esoteric traditions are the same. Islamic esotericism (Sufism) is distinct from Buddhist esotericism and while both are part of the Lore they should not be mixed and combined into some-kind of occult eclectic soup. While at the core esotericism is unified gnosis, in time, in history and in our experience it takes many forms and has many appearances and these must be appreciated for what they are. Similarities are noted, comparisons are useful but we must not believe that similar systems are the same

Esotericism and Modern Language

When we consider the gnosis an important issue regarding language arises. The issue is that many (perhaps most) of the concepts, beliefs and mental structures we have are artificial, they have evolved as the society around us would like them to evolve. Hence to really understand the gnosis there is a great need for you to put aside your pre-conceptions. This will be difficult as so many words have connotations which have been deliberately programmed to have us react in certain ways. We have developed certain "understandings" of Philosophy, Religion, Democracy, Politics etc..... all of which may or may not be true, but nevertheless all of which probably originated from the system around us, rather than from within the perennial tradition. It is always important to realise the extent to which language can be moulded to suit different world-views and used to create specific reactions and impressions. In some ways we might agree with the discussion in Alice in Wonderland between Humpty Dumpty and Alice...

"When I use a word" Humpty Dumpty said... "it means just what I choose it to mean - neither more nor less".

"The question is" said Alice, "whether you can make words mean so many different things".

"The question is" said Humpty, "which is to be the Master - that's all".

Through the Looking Glass.

Lewis Carroll.

To appreciate the gnosis you will need to put aside your beliefs and assumptions and reconsider most of what you have been taught. It is imperative that you understand the terms we use and the context they are used in. Many of the words and concepts we present, though obviously from the English language or more specially from the language of esotericism, have little or no connection to the concepts of the same name in the modern usage !

Now, stop for a moment and consider the fact that we have already used a number of these programmed "buzz words"...

Occult, Esoteric, Exoteric, Reincarnation, Gnosis, Mystery teachings..

...and each of these will trigger a certain association for you. For example, you would probably relate the term Occult to something sinister and evil, and yet the word itself simply means "hidden". Members of the medical profession, for example, use the term occult bleeding for bleeding which comes from an unknown source. Hardly sinister or demonic I would suggest. Again and again we must emphasise that to understand and appreciate the esoteric worldview you need to put aside the associations, prejudices and pre-conceptions you have and consider new meanings for the terms that are used. It is important for you to understand the language we use in the context of how we use it, and not in terms of prevailing religious terminology. We are not asking you to just accept everything we say or blindly agree with our redefinition of old terms. What we are asking you to do is temporally suspend disbelief, enter into your studies with us and only make a decision after you have seen the whole picture.

So let's consider some of the terms we have used and will use..

The term **Gnosis** comes from the Greek word meaning ("to know"), but it means the process through which the seeker of spiritual wisdom experiences the divine and is transformed.

The teachings which make this transformation possible are considered **Mystery Teachings** because they embody the most ancient wisdom, the essential essence behind the worlds religious and ideological systems.

In this sense they are **Esoteric**, eso - meaning inner, they are the inner teachings that are behind or beyond the secular, they are core religious wisdom available to the few.

They are **Occult** in that they are secret, hidden or unknown.

They are **Religious** in the sense that religion means "to bind back", "to return to the source or origin". These teachings are those which lead back to the World of Ideals from which we have become alienated.

Chapter Two: The Great Chain of Being

The reference point for modern man is the material world, he judges life by his perceptions and acts accordingly. His life is hence governed by physical desires and materials requirements. This way of life, whether it be Western consumerism or Marxist materialism, was created by the development of the (Western) scientific worldview, whereby man was removed from his place at the center of the universe and reduced to his new status as an "evolved monkey". Beginning in the 19th century (some would argue earlier) prevailing ideologies began to jettison God, spirituality and the Medieval worldview and replace "superstition" with a "scientific" model based on matter, evolution and technology coupled with a belief in progress. This new scientific model was and is a direct contradiction of the earlier "traditional" model, which was based on the "Great Chain of Being".

This Great Chain is the traditional view of the universe which is not locked in a simple "nuts and bolts" view, but which encompasses the great span of existence from the very heights of spirit to the depths of the infernal realms. The Great Chain of Being while expressed in many cultures is not doctrinally specific, it can be found in Hindu, Buddhist, Platonic, Christian and Mystical cosmology, it is found throughout literature from myth and legend to the visions of Dante.

" The plan and structure of the world, which, through the Middle Ages and down to the late eighteenth century most educated men were to accept without question - the conception of the universe as a " Great Chain of Being", composed of an immense or infinite number of links ranging in hierarchical order from the meagerest kinds of existents.. through every possible grade up to the ens perfectissimum"

Great Chain of Being,
Arthur Lovejoy.

Modern mans vision of reality can be seen like those locked into Plato's cave, he perceives only shadows and presumes these to be real. This is far more dangerous than we admit, for if we limit our reality to our sense alone then we remove all possibility of ethical or spiritual insight and reduce existence to material banality. While psychology may wish to somewhat expand our horizons by positing spiritual equivalents within the mind, it is still reductionist and everything is referenced back to the senses and the material world. If it is from matter we come, then to matter we shall return.

A useful allegory may be that of a chess game, the pieces move and we assume they do so of their own volition. We may build complex theories regarding their movements, even creating laws and theories to explain why they move in certain ways. We can classify the different pieces

and marvel at their characteristics. However, due to our own limitations we cannot conceptualise that someone or something may be moving them.

"Flatland".

To
The Inhabitants of SPACE IN GENERAL
And H.C. IN PARTICULAR
This Work is Dedicated
By a Humble Native of Flatland
In the Hope that
Even as he was Initiated into the Mysteries
Of THREE DIMENSIONS
Having been previously conversant
With ONLY TWO
So the Citizens of that Celestial Region
May aspire yet higher and higher
To the Secrets of FOUR FIVE or EVEN SIX Dimensions
Thereby contributing
To the Enlargement of THE IMAGINATION
And the possible Development
Of that most and excellent Gift of MODESTY
Among the Superior Races
Of SOLID HUMANITY
Preface to Flatland

If we for a moment accept the reality of the Great Chain of Being, then we can theorise that the universe is multi-dimensional and has many levels of existence. If we consider this for a moment and ponder how "real" our dimension seems to us, then perhaps other levels would be perceived as concrete and real as our own from within their own vantage-point. This very concept was the basis of a fascinating story written by Edwin.A.Abbott in 1884 called "Flatland". Originally published under the pseudonym of Mr.A.Square, it was found to be the work of an English clergyman and Shakespearean scholar, whose fascination with mathematics led him to publish this tale.

The importance of Flatland is that it helps us conceptualise the possibility of altered dimensions from the perspective of geometry. Now, I am not Edwin Abbott and hence, I cannot paraphrase his story in a way he would appreciate, but I can give you the gist of the tale. (I would also suggest you go and buy a copy, it has been reprinted by Dover Books and is available in a very economical edition). Imagine a world of only two dimensions, a world of beings who only know "across and side to side" and have no knowledge whatsoever of up and down. These entities live in a diverse world of squares, triangles, circles as well as many other "nationalities". They live in a world much like our own, except for one thing, they are flat. Imagine one day Mr.Square enters

his flat home, walks across to his flat lounge and sits down (however that is possible in two dimensions) and begins to read an even flatter book. Suddenly a voice comes to him from another dimension, this voice is actually coming from Mr.Jones, a traveller from the dimension of Up, but Mr.Square does not know this. Mr.Square cannot see him because Up does not exist for Mr. Square, all he experiences is a loud bellowing, but disembodied voice. Mr.Square, by now obviously terrified, demands that this being makes himself known to him. Mr.Jones with the aim to oblige and enter into inter-dimensional communication, lowers himself towards the ground in Mr.Square's home. Mr.Square cannot see the totality of Mr.Jones, all he sees is the points and lines of Mr.Jones body where they connect to the two dimensional lines of his lounge room. Mr.Square comes quickly to the conclusion that he is communicating with a weird selection of lines and points. From this conclusion he decides he is either quite mad or that he has had a little too much to drink from his flat bottle of Gin. Mr.Jones is not happy, he does not like to be thought of as a weird and disjointed collection of lines and points. He grasps Mr.Square on his two dimensional shirt and lifts him into the air. Mr.Square is ecstatic and very confused, where is he ? He has no idea of the dimension of Up and hence cannot understand the experience, as he begins to hover above the ground he see his friends below, but they cannot see him.

However, as he returns to his two-dimensional world, at the moment of contact he re-appears, seemingly out of nowhere. He tries to explain but how can they understand dimensions beyond their two dimensional perception ? This tale illustrates the hypothesis of other dimensions, if we attempt to translate a cube into two dimensions we know that what we arrive at, is nothing but a reflection or an approximation. We know that in a cube all lines are of the same length, yet, in a two dimensional representation, the length of the lines seem to vary. According to modern Geometry if we take a cube and apply it into a further dimension we arrive at what is known as a "Tesseract". This cannot be illustrated as it exists in four dimensions, all we can see is its reflection as a cube inside a cube. Theoretically, however, we know it exists !

Giving some consideration to this tale we may begin to hypothesise about various planes, dimensions, worlds or orders of existence. If we project our cube into higher dimensions, we can create an infinite progression until we reach some final point of conclusion. In the ancient traditions this has been known for a long time, and while the number of levels or planes may vary depending on the esoteric tradition, the model - The Great Chain of Being remains remarkably the same. In the words of Arthur Lovejoy, author of "The Great Chain of Being" - "It (the Great Chain of Being), has been the dominant official philosophy of the larger part of civilised mankind through most of its history".

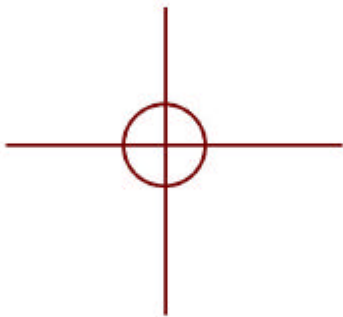
The Traditional Model of the Universe.

That sign is the sign of the cross, which very clearly represents the manner of achievement of this realization by the perfect communion, of all the states of the being, harmoniously and conformably ranked, in integral expansion, in the double sense of "amplitude " and " exaltation ". In fact, this double expansion of the

being may be regarded as taking place horizontally on the one hand, that is, at a certain given level or degree of existence, and vertically on the other, that is, in the hierarchical superimposition of all the degrees. Thus, the horizontal direction represents "amplitude" or integral extension of the individuality taken as basis for realization, an extension which consists in the indefinite development of a given group of possibilities subject to certain special conditions of manifestation; and it should be clearly understood that, in the case of the human being, this extension is in no way confined to the corporeal part of the individuality, but includes all its modalities, of which the corporeal state is properly only one. The vertical direction represents the hierarchy, likewise and a fortiori indefinite, of the multiple states, each of which, when similarly considered in its integrality, is one of those groups of possibilities corresponding to one of the "worlds" or degrees, which are included in the total synthesis of "Universal Man". In this cruciform representation, the horizontal expansion therefore corresponds to the indefinitude of possible modalities of one and the same state of the being, regarded integrally, and the vertical super-imposition to the indefinite series of states of the total being.

Symbolism of the Cross, Rene Guenon

If we wish to conceptualize the "Great Chain of Being" there is a simple place to start. Let us begin by viewing material life as a horizontal line, on this line we have everyday existence, we could even use two lines to refer to the influences of time and space. In any event these occurrences are horizontal, they exist within the experience of time, space and matter and hence exist on the material line. At the same time we can suggest this line is intersected by another, a vertical line, the line of spirit. Whereas the horizontal moves from life to death, beginning to end and repeats again and again, the vertical moves from Alpha to Omega, from the heights to the depths. This image, the cross, is the primal image of the Great Chain of Being and traditional cosmology. It is pregnant with meaning and within it are the central concepts of gnosticism.



If we consider the cross and the intersection between the spiritual and the material, we can also contemplate the variations in ideals between these two extremes. The material emphasises the physical, material and quantitative, while the spiritual emphasises spiritual, ethereal and qualitative. The Vertical line represents ethics, content and meaning, the horizontal represents results, activity and relativity. The interface between these two lines is within the "Sacred Centre". It is from this centre that we can begin to unfold some of the major concepts of the traditional view of the world. The Sacred Centre is the point where man touches the divine and can come under the influence of the spiritual world while existing within the physical, it is only at this nexus that enlightenment is possible.

If we consider the image of the Cross we can delineate certain characteristics, there is the Sacred Centre, the Vertical Line becomes the Axis Mundi, the horizontal line becomes the Earth, above which are the supernal worlds, below which are the infernal. This map of the living cosmos is central to the sacred lore. While it may take many forms in the traditions that abound on planet earth, the essential characteristics are the same. When applied to traditional models of the universe, the horizontal bar of the cross becomes the Earth, Midgard, physical reality and the Axis Mundi becomes the pillar that spans the worlds. It is sometimes images as a vertical series of planes, worlds or dimension, a tree, a ray (the Ray of Creation of Gurdjieff) or a pillar. Indeed it is the beanstalk that Jack climbed to reach the world of the giants !

The Axis Mundi and the Sacred Tree

The Axis Mundi is the pillar and at its center is the nexus of earth, the earth turns on this center and its horizontal (physical) reality is formed. The turning marks the cycle of time.

" If you are calm, clear-headed and rationally decisive, people say you are well centred or focus. In that saying is our instinctive recognition that everything has its proper centre which is also its essence. The essence of an individual, one's center and citadel, is the mind. But it is not the ultimate centre...

The idea of a fixed centre and a continually moving periphery has many illustrations. It is like a wheel turning on an axle, a rope swung round a vertical pole, a compass making a circle. A grander cosmological image is of a spherical universe, with the spherical earth at its centre, both revolving upon the same unmoving pivot, the world pole.

In all traditional systems of religion this image has provided the dominant symbol"

At the Center of the World

John Michell,

Thames and Hudson 1994

Working from this model, we can go further and delineate the characteristic of the Axis Mundi or Cosmic Tree. The Cosmic Tree can be imaged in two different manners – organic and emanation. The Organic model is found in most pagan and heathen traditions, it emphasizes the change some nature of the worlds and planes. The emanation model is more formal and while it infer the ever changing landscape of spirit it has more clearly delineated worlds, planes and inhabitants. Whichever we use, both have certain general motifs which are the basis for the Great Chain of Being.

Characteristics of the Traditional Model

The first is the point of origin, this is only described in negative terms (by what it is not).

The second is considered the upper world, it is sometimes imaged as the world of the gods but in a Gnostic system we prefer a more impersonal description. This world includes any number of "original principles", it is the higher reaches of Plato's World of Ideals. In the general Gnostic-Theosophic tradition it has a triune principle.

Within the triune principle is the power of polarity, this is important as it gives rise to the sexual polarity of most pagan traditions and the balance between Mind and Intuition in others.

The third is the other world, it is an intermediate reality and is comprised of any number of planes, worlds or locales. These can be described in semi-analytic terms as planes or dimensions or in more organic terms as worlds, halls or localities.

The fourth is the earth or the physical world.

The fifth is the underworld, the realm of the dead. In most organic models this is seen inside or below the earth, in the emanation models it is usually related to the moon and seen above or around the earth.

The third, fourth and fifth characteristics are more noticeable in organic models, in emanation models they tend to be included within a gradient of states or worlds. These can be any number, but in the Gnostic Theosophic approach tends to be seven.

To fully appreciate these characteristics we shall take some case studies of specific cultural "maps" which outline the traditional model of the universe.

The Neo-Platonic Cosmos

One of the pivotal figures within the history of traditional cosmology is Plato. While before him both Pythagoras and Socrates are of great significance, it was Plato who outlined the major characteristic of the Great Chain of Being - Ideals. For Plato an Ideal was more than just a notion or idea, Ideals existed eternally in the World of Ideals (similar to the Gnostic Pleroma) and had eternal, abstract qualities. It is from this World of Ideals the lower worlds emanate, resulting in the physical world. Platonism, Neo Platonism and Gnosticism argue between themselves in regards to the nature of matter. While all posit a Demiurge which created the material dimensions, the nature of this being (from demonic to malefic, bungling to a demi-god) depends on the school and sect. Plutarch (45-125AD), for example, posited a negative world soul (Demiurge) and hence heralded a reconciliation between Platonic and Gnostic thought. When the Platonic model was combined with Pythagorean mathematics a hierarchical structure re-

sulted. This early model which spanned the universe from the "All" to matter, was probably the map from which later Kabbalah and Medieval occult schematics evolved.

Plotinus, a classic Neo-Platonist, outlined a map which was founded on the indescribable One (En) who is the causeless cause. Plotinus also called it the Good and the first god, Protos Theos. Below En is a series of hypostasis or emanations which make up the Great Chain of Being. Below En is the Nous or "Gods thought" in which exist the Platonic forms of Archetypes. From Nous emanates Soul (Psyche), and then Psyche emanates the World Soul and individual souls. The World Soul has higher and lower natures, one of which is the archetype of nature, Physis. It is from Physis that the material world emanates. The three primary emanations of En, Nous and Psyche form the nexus of Plotinus' system.

In terms of our characterises, this model includes the indescribable one (1st C), Protos Theos, Nous and Psyche (2nd C), Platonic Archetypes (3rd C), the World as emanated by Psyche (4th C), while the underworld is hidden within nature which has its own consciousness (physis). This dualism between the spiritual and physical we will return to later, the two aspects of the world soul are one of the most important misunderstood aspects of Gnosticism.

Theosophical and Modern Maps

The Theosophical map is found in many new age and spiritual books. Most of these have adapted and distorted the model and not really come to grips with the full depth of the vision held by Mme. Blavatsky and others such as Steiner, Alice Bailey and Max Heindel. This map was developed by Madam Blavatsky and from the Theosophical movement migrated into a range of cosmologies, it is found adapted in systems ranging from Max Heindel's Rosicrucian Cosmo Conception to the work of Rudolf Steiner and Alice Bailey.

In Theosophy and related traditions, there is an original nothing or absence (1st C), a triune principle of Will, the Word and Wisdom (2nd C) and a series of seven planes which bring together the other characteristics. The underworld is subsumed within the astral plane which is Heindel's Desire plane.

The Seven Planes according to the Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception (Heindel)

Divine Plane.
Plane of Virgin Spirits.
Plane of Divine Spirit.
Plane of Life Spirit.
Plane of Thought.
Desire Plane.
Physical World..

While this model may be useful, especially in the creation of resonances or correspondences between phenomena. (For example, relating seven planes to the seven bodies of man, seven colours and rays etc). It can also be counter traditional and reductionist. The tendency is to use the seven planes in a standard "scientific" chart and ignore the more organic view that was held of the planes in early Theosophy. In the next chapter we will examine this in more detail and consider it in terms of the Gnostic tradition.

The Kabbalistic Tree of Life

The Kabbalah is a system of some controversy, it has been heralded as the greatest mystical system of all, handed down by Moses and guarded by the Jewish people. The problem with this largely mythical tale is that the Kabbalah was not developed til at least the 6th century AD and incorporated Greek and Gnostic images, forms and traditions. Indeed it has been suggested by both Barbara Thiering and Gershom Scholem that the very image of the Tree of Life was derived from Greek rather than archaic Jewish mystical sources. While the Kabbalah is of course overlaid with imagery of Old Testament, Jewish, Christian (and sometimes Gnostic) layers, it is primarily a Greek Neo Platonic model.

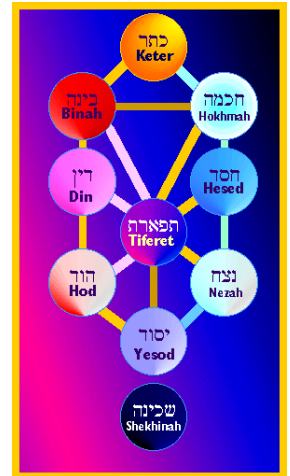
The Tree starts with nothing, the great void or emptiness behind all things, this is known as Ain (1st C) Ain at various cycles moves through transformative stages and manifests three principles (2nd C)

Kether	The Divine Will
Chokmah	The Logos
Binah	Sophia (Saturn)

We have deliberately chosen Gnostic names here to prepare you for there use in our Gnostic model of the universe as presented in the next chapter. Chokmah and Binah also form the polarity of male and female principles which give “birth” to the rest of the Tree of Life. (They could also be easily related to the Fire and Ice of Yggdrasil).

Geburah	Mars
Chesed	Jupiter
Tiphareth	Sun
Hod	Mercury
Netzach	Venus
Yesod	Moon
Malkuth	Earth

These planes or world, which can be related to planets and realities bring together the remaining



characteristics with the Astral plane at the Moon and the Earth at the base.

There are many attributions related to the Kabbalah and as a system of classification it is extremely useful. Again we must avoid the tendency towards reductionism and see the centres more as a landscape in which townships meld into each other rather than as a classification scheme from a biology textbook !

Yggdrasil: The World Tree

Nine world I can count, nine roots of the Tree

Volupsa

Nine lays of power I learned from Bolthorn, Bestla's father

Odin in the Havamal



Yggdrasil is a prime example of the organic model of the Great Chain of Being. In the Elder Edda Yggdrasil is identified as a sacred Ash Tree, it becomes obvious that this is no ordinary tree but a tree which glyphs the worlds and which encompasses many strata's of reality. In the Grimnismal Yggdrasil is described as having three great roots, one lies under Hel, the realm of the dead, under another dwell the giants and under the third live human beings. A squirrel runs along its branches, an eagle nests in its crown, four deer browse on its branches and a dragon gnaws at its roots. In the Volupsa the sacred Ash is described as very tall, always green and moist, the source of dew and as having the Well of Destiny (Urd) as its roots. At Ragnarok, the "towering ash trembles, and the world tree howls".

" The Ash is of all the trees the biggest and the best. Its branches spread out over all the world and extend across the sky. Three of the tree's roots support it and extend very, very far. One is among the Aesir, the second among the frost giants, where Ginnungagap once was. The third extends over Niflheim and under that root is Hvergelmir, and Nidhogg gnaws the bottom of the root".

Gylfaginning, Younger Edda

Snorri Sturluson,

Trans. Antony Faulkes.

Yggdrasil is one of the more poetic and expressive images of the Great Chain of Being. In some forms of Northern worship it was celebrated with a "gigantic pillar", one of which, Irminsul was renowned for its size, but was destroyed by Charlemagne in his attempted conversion of the Saxons in the eighth century. From the world tree extends nine worlds or realms, five of which are on the central axis and four in the directions. Pathways link all the worlds with the central Axis.

(The system of nine rather than seven duplicates the principles of fire and ice as distinct worlds, this is not found in later models of the universe such as the Anglo Saxon)

The world in the center is called Midgard. The word Gard means dwelling, it is obviously related to the word Garden. Midgard is Middle Earth, the garden in which we live our lives. It includes the physical world as it is perceived by our senses. Encircling Midgard is the world serpent. (4th C)

Niflheim is the realm of ice and darkness, while Muspellsheim is the world of fire and heat. The interaction between fire and ice, Niflheim and Muspellsheim (2nd C) is a major dynamic within the activity of the world tree. This interaction occurs in Ginnungagap (1st C), an empty abyss, where the fire of Muspellsheim meets the icy rivers of Niflheim and from this dynamic the giant Ymir is born. Odin and his brother, born from giants, carve up the body of Ymir to create Midgard. Ymir's bones become the mountains, his teeth the rocks, his blood the rivers, his skull the vault of the sky, his hair the forests and grasses. Like the Titans, Ymir's death creates mankind. Hence Midgard is a checkerboard on which fire and ice battle against each other until the game is completed.

From the interaction of Fire and Ice within the Great Gap, the planes or worlds are formed. This model when examined critically (we will return to it in the next lesson) has a lot in common with the Kabbalah and Theosophical plane models. Together they give us a good overview of the Great Chain of Being.

The planes or world below the triune forces of the Void, Fire and Ice are:

Vanaheim is the world of the Vanir. It is the realm of fertility, wealth and fecundity, fields of luscious crops, fruits, wildlife and pastoral beauty.

Jotunheim is the home of the giants. There are three types of giants, Thursar, Rises and Etins, all children of Ymir.

Ljosalfheim is the home of the Light elves or Ljosalfar. There are two classes of elves, the light inhabit the lighter realms above Midgard, while the dark elves (dwarves) inhabit the subterranean realm.

Asgard, the home of the Aesir of Sky Gods is above the elven world and is the crown of the World Tree. The name Asgard means "enclosure of the Gods". Within Asgard is Valhalla, the Hall of the Fallen where the warriors of Odin are taken if they are killed in battle and from where they will return to the final battle or Ragnarok. Snorri Sturlson describes an inner enclosure (gardh) as being built right within the center of Midgard, the sacred space of human society. However, this enclosure, this true essence of Midgard as Asgard, can only be entered by crossing the Bifrost.

Within Asgard is also the halls of the Gods, these are twelve in number and many relate them to the Ideals or forms which are related through the Zodiac.

Between Asgard and Midgard is the Rainbow Bridge or Bifrost, a secret path which is taken by the gods when they join council meetings of the council of the Gods at the well of Urd, it is guarded by Heimdall.

The above worlds (including Asgard) are considered facets of the other world (3rd C), while the underworld (5th C) includes those below..

Svartalfheim is the realm of the dark elves which exist in the subterranean world under Midgard, they are also known as Dwarves.

In the lower realms of the underworld lies Hel, the realm of the dead.

The worlds are traditionally listed as the Gap plus nine worlds, these correlated well with the model we will discuss in the next chapter. Where there is a triplicity above (Void, Fire and Ice) and seven worlds below.

Each of these models offers us a glimpse of traditional cosmology in action, concepts such as the Axis Mundi, Sacred Centre (Midgard) and the various worlds are delineated. Each of the models we have presented (albeit in brief form) offer different views of the Great Chain of Being. Most have much in common.

In our next chapter we will offer a Gnostic model of the universe using these examples to expand and refine what the Great Chain of Being means to the seeker of gnosis.

In the previous chapter we discussed the basic framework of the Great Chain of Being, its five characteristics and gave some examples of this model in esoteric systems. In this chapter we want to “put flesh on the bones” and outline a specific model of the Great Chain of being based on a Gnostic-Theosophic system. This model owes a lot to the early Greek Mystery Traditions (the source of Gnosticism) as well as to later Gnostic and Theosophic traditions.

Chapter Three: First Principles

Who or What is God ?

One of the central issues within any religious tradition is who or what is God ? In traditional faiths as well as within esotericism and mysticism there is clear definition of God though this may be expressed through many diverse images and language forms. These definitions while divergent in form, have one thing in common, they all define God without the using descriptions in moral or ethical terms. God simply Is. In some sense this is central to the Gnostic understanding of God for he/she/it is beyond definition, to define God in any way, is in some sense, to limit he/she/it. For the Saivite Hindu, for example, the supreme deity is defined as Shiva with Brahma and Vishnu simply being modes or personas. While in other traditions, Brahman or Vishnu is supreme with the other deities being modes of its expression. In each case, there is still a further more transcendent form, the Parabrahm (or ParaVishnu/Shiva), each being defined as beyond definition with the traditions of divine activities being relegated to the lesser forms or manifestations or interpreted in an allegorical fashion.

In the Zoroastrian faith titles such as Ahura Mazda are superlative definitions of a first cause, while in the later derivative Mithraic faith God was defined as Zurvan or the Lord of Time, since fate or time was believed to be the principle which is beyond all things. For the Gnostic, God simply *IS*. He/she/it is the one source beyond and behind all things, in both the Zoroastrian and Israelite faiths God is usually simply called Lord as this designates a title of respect for a superior.

While these definitions are all, in some sense, useful, mystics and Gnostics usually go a step further, they define God by what it is not. This use of negative imagery allows the very first principle to be beyond all form, definition and human projections. In many tradition is is achieved by the use of a paradox so we have descriptions such as the unmoved mover, unoriginate originator and so forth. In Zen Buddhism we have the description of the Tao as the “Tao that can be spoken is not the Tao”. In Gnostic literature we also have some very poetic representations of this first source.

The Gnostic concept of god is more subtle than that of most exoteric religions. It reconciles the supposed differences between so-called monotheistic and Polytheistic traditions, as well as uniting such models as Theism, Deism and Pantheism.

What's in a Name ?

The issue of the name of God is an important one, for in some sense to give something a name is to define it. For Medieval sorcerers to know the name of a spirit was to control it. In the Gnostic tradition we understand the frailty of the human spirit and the desire to project humanity onto divinity, this tendency towards anthropomorphism is a dangerous one. Too often man in his suffering desires to bring the Gods down to a more physical level, when this happens the currency of divine imagery is debased. While certainly images, legends, myths and Godnames have their place, their value is in what they represent rather than in themselves. In regards to the name(s) of God in the Old Testament there is a real quandary, there are many names for God, though translated under the one title in English. What makes it more difficult is that each name has a different meaning, the name Elohim, for example, means Mighty Ones (note it is plural) and can be applied to any form of demi-god, destructive or constructive, of the light or of darkness.

The same applies to the formula of YHVH, while it has a esoteric meaning, it too, has been twisted to reflect the barbaric and violent storm God that is falsely represented throughout the Old Testament as the creator. For Gnostics there are literally two Gods within the Old testament period, the original I AM, the transcendent one of the light and the Barbaric thought form which became the nationalistic warlord of later fundamentalist Judaism. For these reasons Gnostics tend to avoid the Old Testament names of God altogether and use the more common terms of the Mystery tradition.

The Pleroma

The first principle is the source of all light, the Unoriginate Originator. However, this principles does not exist alone, throughout time he/she/it expands and contracts filing the spiritual dimensions with luminous beings of all orders and forms. In the Valentinian hierarchy, for example, there are eight major forms (Aeons) and twenty two minor. In the Gnostic Theosophic tradition there are three principles and seven lower planes or dimensions. The processes by which these realities are created are complex and vary from tradition to tradition. Each of these interpretations can be further expanded to include a whole universe of luminous realities, from the highest forces or Aeons to choirs and angels.

Traditionally this complete spiritual kingdom is known as the Pleroma or fullness, because it is filled to the brim with light and life. At the same time, the major spiritual forces within it are known as Aeons. While in the Gnostic tradition we tend to emphasize the three principles, the Divine Will, Logos and Sophia and the Seven Spirits or Aeons, there is a universe of created beings which exist in the Pleroma and which fulfill the creative directive expressed by the Lord of Wisdom. In one Gnostic tradition, Michael (as a manifestation of the Logos Ray) and first

estate predecessor of Jesus, who was the first created immortal.

The Divine Will

The Divine Will is the first principle of action, it is Kether in the Kabbalah and Brahma in the Hindu traditions. It is the creative principle, not in the sense of matter but in beginning the emanation process through which the whole Great Chain of Being with its world, dimensions and multitudes of life are manifested.

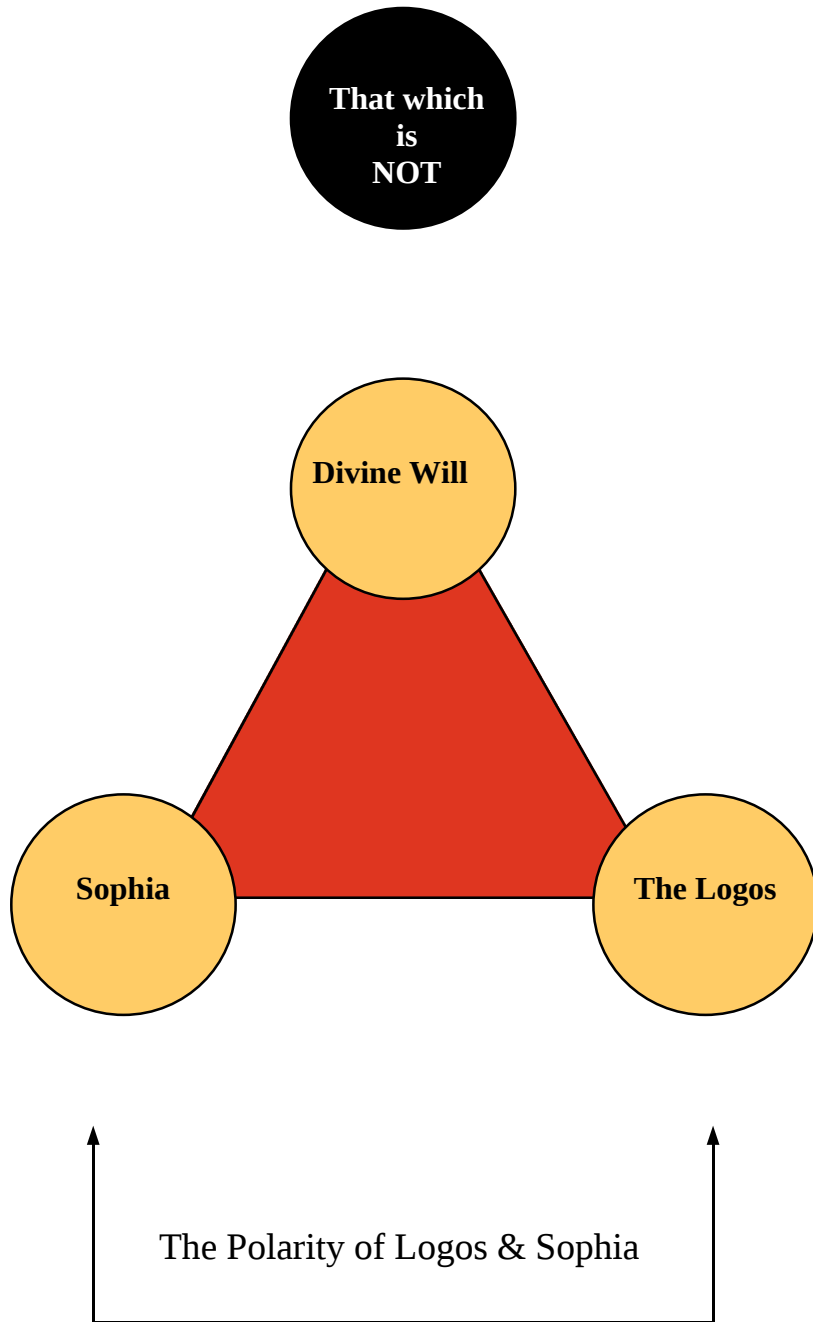
Logos and Sophia

The two principles which are manifested and work in unison with the Divine Will are the Logos and Sophia. The Logos is the divine mind and the concept came directly from the Greek Mystery traditions. Indeed as early as 6th century BCE Heraclitus stated that the "Logos was shared by all". While Orpheus stated "Behold the Logos Divine, thread well the narrow path of life and gaze of him." It is from this tradition that the Gospel of St. John derives its model as expressed in the early verse "In the beginning was the Logos". The Logos was known as Spenta Mainyu in the Zoroastrian tradition in mythology it is sometimes the pre-existed state of the Son of God.

There are many positions in the Great Chain of Being for the Logos and Sophia and as we study further complex myths and legends of their power will be discussed. However, in their most primal form they work within the triangle of force in the upper world.

What about Jesus ?

One of the major debates in Christianity has been about the nature of Jesus. However, when we examine the New Testament in a critical manner some important facts come to light. Jesus over and over again claimed to be the Messiah and a Son of God, but not God himself. He prayed to the Father and spoke of God as a separate entity to whom he was obedient. In the Gospel of John the identity of Jesus is the central theme, the aim of this Gospel is to show the reader that Jesus is a Messiah, the Son of God, not God the Son (John 21:31). While John himself clearly tells us that Jesus distinguished himself from the father who is the "Only one God" (John 17:3, 5:44, 6:27). We also find St. Paul clearly describing Jesus as the first-born of every creature and the firstborn of the dead (Col 1:13,15,18). This is echoed in the Book of Revelation where we read that Jesus is the "Beginning of the Creation of God". Over and over again we find nothing of Jesus being God or even equal with God. Jesus hence was a messenger of the Pleroma whose God existed in the upper worlds.



Jesus, Christ and Logos

When we come to understand that Jesus was a created being a new picture of divinity arises. In many Gnostic traditions many sons of God are acknowledge, however Jesus was believed to be the first created entity, Michael. Jesus existed in the first estate (before coming into a physical body) as Michael, that immortal who plays such an important role in mystical Christian traditions. When Michael is born into the Essene community, he becomes Jesus. At his Baptism, after years of training (the so-called Lost years) he became the Christ. His special Essene training had involved processes that cleansed the human state by the power of Sophia and transformed his bodily vehicle into a form that was made pure enough for the communion with the Logos. Jesus as an individual, discrete being (Michael) still existed but communed with the Logos within him. Jesus was not and is not God or the Logos or Christ, he became Christed and hence in that understanding is known as Jesus the Christ. The term Christ means "anointed" and refers to the state of sonship to the Lord of Wisdom. Jesus at his baptism communed with the Mind of God (Logos), his actions came to embody the Spirit of God (Sophia) and he became a full son of God (Christ).

We speak of God, of the Son, his Word, and of the Holy Spirit and we say that the Father, the Son and the Spirit are united in power. For the Son is the intelligence, reason and wisdom of the Father and the Spirit is an effluence, as light from fire. In the same way we recognize that there are other powers which surround matter and pervade it.

Athenagoras

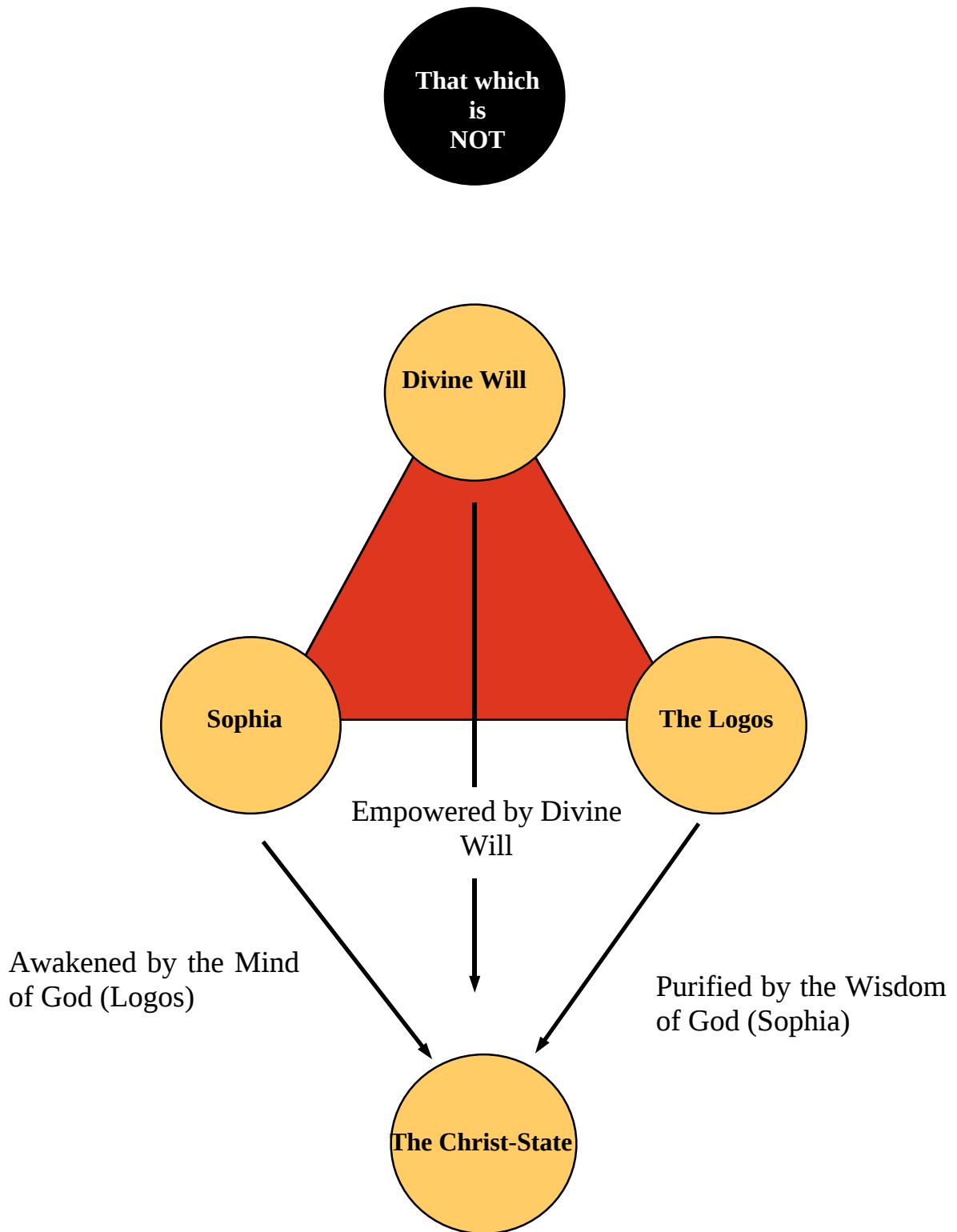
Generally speaking the ancient Gnostics primarily viewed Christ as an eternal, celestial power, the Logos with which it is possible to have an intimate, personal relation, since our higher consciousness is made in its image. For this reason, Gnostics stressed the experience union with the divine and showed little interest in the historical Jesus, whom it has always been impossible to know in a concrete sense or even accurately in a historical sense.

Jesus Christ, Sun of God.

David Fideler,

Quest Books. 1993.

The state of Christhood is a state to which all of us must aim, it is the state by which we return to the Pleroma. The Logos and Sophia are energy fields emanating into the lower worlds and if permitted will transform us into immortal beings. This teaching is *The Solar Tradition* and is central to our understanding of the Gnosis.



What is Sophia ?

The general understanding of the Holy Spirit as found in the Christian tradition is a desexing of the great feminine power. Sophia is the goddess or feminine principle and as such exists from the earliest pagan traditions right through to the Greek Mysteries and Gnosticism. In Gnostic literature she is described by many names – the All mothers, Mother of the Living, Shining Mother and the Holy Spirit. Sophia is seen as the counterpart of the Logos and cannot work without. It is hence suggested in esoteric Gnostic literature that it was the combined power of Jesus and Mary Madgadene who transmitted the Mysteries, not Jesus alone.

The Sophia tradition has survived hidden under the veil of Christian piety, it is still found in the cult of the Virgin Mary and is most powerful in the Russian orthodox traditions. It is a tradition of great age and some beauty that personifies the power of the Holy Spirit as distinctly female. For example, in Proverbs particularly we have Sophia wandering the street begging men to love her. While in the following quotes we may even begin to think that Sophia or Wisdom is separate, yet in reality, Sophia is a facet of the Lord of Wisdom himself.

Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets: She crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates: in the city she uttereth her words, saying, How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorn-ers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?

Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you. Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; But ye have set at naught all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.

For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them. But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil. The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old....When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth: When he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep: When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the

foundations of the earth: Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him.

Proverbs 1:20-33, 8:22,27-30.

This great being, both royal and feminine, who being neither God nor the Eternal Son of God, neither angel nor saint, receives the veneration of the One who accomplishes the Old Testament, as well of the One who is the begetter of the New Testament; who is she, then, but the truest humanity, the purest and most whole of beings, the macrocosmic whole, the living soul of nature and of the universe eternally united and uniting in the process of time with the divine and uniting all that is.

**The Pillar and Foundation of the Truth,
Pavel Florensky.**

The importance of Sophia can be best understood when we understand the primal myth behind her nature. Throughout many cultures there has been the legend of the Goddess who is stolen from the world of life and is taken to the underworld. There she is kept captive pinning for her lover who is still in the other world. She waits and pines until at last some salvation is achieved by her hero coming into the underworld to save her.

However, this salvation is at a cost and together they end in a battle against the underworld until the completion of the tale. Though there are many modifications of this tale, it is the story of the spark of God within man. Mans true self is caught in the coils of earth and is lost in the consciousness of matter. The nature of the spirit-spark within man is that of being a seed, God in potential. In Hebrew it is called the Ruach and interestingly, one definition offered of the Ruach is Sophia. So, here we have an Israelite version of the classic tale. The spirit of God in man is a spark, a seed of Light, it is caught in matter and crying out for Salvation. The Logos embodied in Jesus answers the call and through great suffering offers salvation. But it is not that simple, for while Sophia still lives in the world system, she can only travel to the upperworld by day and must return to the underworld by night or so the legend goes.

So man, on the Path of Transfiguration, though being reborn through the powers of the Pleroma must live in the world, but try not to be of it. Sophia hence offers us some fascinating insights into the nature of God. She is the Daughter of the Divine Will and yet is the part of the Divine Will itself, she is the Spouse and Lover of the Logos and the Spirit within Man. She is reflected in the light hidden in nature, the Ecclesia, the Gnostic Scripture and Man, and illustrates the presence of light in all things.

In each of these things Sophia is manifested. In the material world Sophia is the presence of God in nature. Even after all the pain man has inflicted on it, nature still exhibits the divine spark, though its luster has been sorely diminished. Sophia is the Bride of the Logos embodied in the

Ecclesia, in the Scriptures Sophia is Wisdom and in man she is the very essence which changes him from mortal to immortal, she is the Holy Spirit.

Therefore Sophia is twofold, at once divine and creaturely - above and before creation and in creation.....In the world, Sophia is actualised - as the earth's Eros for heaven, all creation longing for liberation from the bondage of corruption for the radiance of Sophianic light, for beauty and transfiguration.

Sophia - The Wisdom of God.

Sergei Bulgakov,

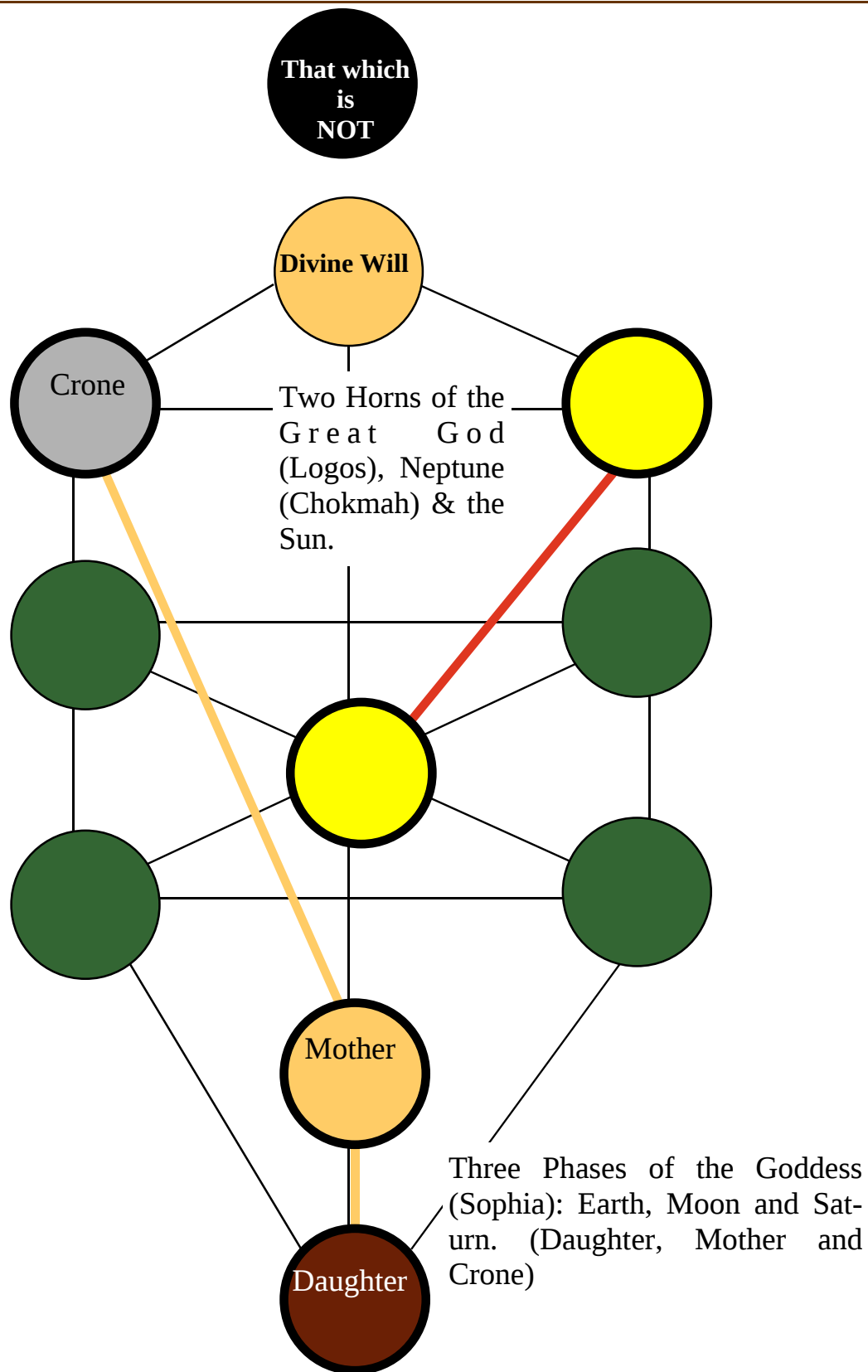
Lindisfarne Press, 1993.

The concept of Sophia is alien to many western Gnostics and yet when we clearly study the Bible in the light of the Gnosis, we find she is an integral part of divinity. When we consider how often the concept of Sophia is linked to the concept of Wisdom, we can achieve a deeper understanding of the power and beauty of the Pleroma.

The Polarity of the God and the Goddess

While the three principles (sometimes called the Triangle or Triune Principle (Singular) work in unison, in many traditions there is a strong emphasis placed on the polarity between the Logos and Sophia. While many Gnostics would tend to avoid overt anthropomorphism and see these more as principles, other traditions place a strong emphasis on the God/Goddess nature of the polarity. These traditions range from those of paganism and heathenism to the syzergies of Valentinus.

While there is nothing wrong with using myth and legend to “put flesh on the bones” of metaphysical principles, we should not confuse the image with the essence. Certainly there is a wide range of God and Goddess images which fit nicely on this polarity, they also move down through the planes and have other expressions. If we use the Kabbalistic model for a moment we can see how the pagan concept of the Horned God and the Triple Goddess arose. The Horned God manifests as the Logos in Chokmah and then as the Sun. These are his two modes. While the Goddess manifests as the Old Crone of Saturn (Sophia/Binah), the midwife (Lunar) and the girl child (earth). These images are pregnant with meaning and certainly help us appreciate the power of these principles beyond simple mental speculation. However care must be taken for it is too easy to reduce the gods to images which fit our preconceptions and by using a gender based polarity we can easily end up with both misogynist and homophobic models.



This ability to show the origins of the symbols of many systems is a unique characteristic of Gnosticism. Rather than there being conflicts between pagan and so called Christian, theism and non theism and related contradictions, we find that all alternatives are reconciled within an all encompassing system. This is the insight which gnosticism gives, it shows the esoteric meaning behind religious symbol systems and in some sense bypasses them by divining their true meaning. This does not degrade the role of myth, legend, tales and scriptures but places them in the real position, that is, as the outer flesh or form of the Mysteries. Scriptures cannot stand alone, within the gnosis at their heart, they become as stone.

Impersonal to Personal

As part of the Gnostic worldview is the understanding of the role of personalism in religion. By personalism we mean not only theism (the worship of a personal god) but the use of gods and goddess with personality, character and humanness. This tendency is found in all religious traditions, while in the pagan traditions the gods seem more human, it is certainly also found in the Monotheistic traditions as well. Jehovah and Allah at times seem all too human. For the Gnostic the impersonal is the highest principle, the “unoriginate Originator” is without personality in a human sense of the word since it is beyond all of our preconceptions and projections. While the three principles of the Divine Will, Sophia and the Logos can be given iconographic and literary form they too are essentially what they are called – Principles. They are not personalities, they are not “personal deities”. Accordingly Gnosis is a form of perception, feed by the minds and fueled by the emotions. It does not, however, greatly emphasize devotion (Bhakti) that is focused or obsessed with image, sound, form and so forth. While we understand and use the power of images, to become devoted to one such image is to ignore its true nature. Indeed, obsession with an image of the divine can lead away rather than to the higher principles.

There are myriad spiritual forms throughout the Great Chain of Being. In the Gnostic system, there are many, many names for them. As they are in the dimensions below the upper world they are “partial” representations of aspects of the divine and each has its own unique essence, form and so forth. While these too, at heart are Principles, there are more and more degrees of independence and uniqueness as we move down the emanation ladder. So, for example, by the time we reach the astral worlds, there are millions of spirits of varying characters and forms, each unique. None are absolutely good and evil but there are variations in their attitude towards man.

While these spirits have their own unique essence and expression, the form they manifest in is due to us, not to them. They are clothed by the language and mythology of our cultures, heritage and traditions. We should always keep this in mind when dealing with different symbol systems, it is not the “letter” that is the most relevant, but the spirit. It is too easy to confuse the images of the divine as found in literature and myth with the reality and become locked in forms which only partially represent the unique characteristics of a spirit, god or form. In some sense we must transcend the Gods to understand them.

The Solar Logos – Christ

The term Christ means “anointed” and it is the force of the Spiritual sun. It represents the completed individual in which Sophia and the Logos have transformed consciousness and the mediator at the nexus of all systems. The Solar Logos, Christ or the Sacred Sun transmits the transforming energies of the triune Principle throughout the planes. It is the door through which the energies of the upper world communicate with those of the planes. It can be imaged as the dying and reborn sun and hence related a wide range of God-man myths and legends.

I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.

John 10:9

The Sun can be also however harsh, it dries out the land and kills the livestock as well as bringing out the change of tides and the flourishing of life. This reminds us that creation and destruction are the normal cycles of the universe and we must grow through them not being too attached to the material experience.

Since the Triune principles do not directly manifest in the lower worlds the Solar sphere becomes the intermediary, the manifestation and the gateway. In some sense this is where the legend of the incarnation or Avatar originated. The belief that God came into the lower worlds is an adaptation or analogy to the process whereby the Pleroma manifests via the solar sphere into the lower planes. For the Gnostic, Jesus, for example, was Michael, a created being who incarnated and became Christed, he was not God made flesh. There are many other entities who being Old Souls achieve Christhood and become Son/Suns. In this sense these entities become manifestations of the Sun and hence we can appreciate how the incarnation motif became accepted. However, the anthropomorphic tradition of God actually entering matter as God is a corruption of the Solar mythos and a misunderstanding of the essential Gnosis.

Gods and Spirits

The Great Chain of Being is brimming with life, there are spirits, Gods, Aeons, so many forms with so many names. It is simply best to say that as the emanations proceeded from the higher principles through the Seven Spirits (see below), myriad forms of life are created. In our Gnostic tradition these are generally categorized as the Seven Spirits or Logoi (sometimes also known as Aeons), the Immortals or Masters who work within each plane or ray and spirits. These spirits are of many forms, from the higher to the lower. There are many, many ways of categorizing them from the Kabbalistic to the Medieval, from Neo Platonic hierarchies to those of Christian angelology. While we are offering one model it is up to the individual student to explore and expand their understanding through considering the many descriptions of these forms.

The Seven Spirits

According to the Gnostic traditions the triune principle manifests through a series of seven Logii or in more traditional language Archangels or spirits. These forms can be expressed in many different ways, the most traditional is to know them as Aeons, while in Egypt they would have been called Sacred Principles or Neters. In the Zoroastrian tradition they are known as the Holy Spirits (Spenta Amesha). (These are akin to the Seven Spirits before the Throne in the Book of Revelation). This links interestingly with some western traditions, which see the Seven Spirits before the throne (Revelation 4:5) as seven phases of the Holy Ghost. These Aeons or spirits have many different aspects and facets, they may also be related to the Seven Rays of the Theosophical and Rosicrucian Mystery traditions. In the heavenly hierarchy these spirits are again emanations from the trune principle and under them are formed the Immortals, beings that embody each ray or spirit.

And out of the throne proceeded lightning and thundering and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

Revelation 4:5

The Seven Spirits according to the Zoroastrian Tradition

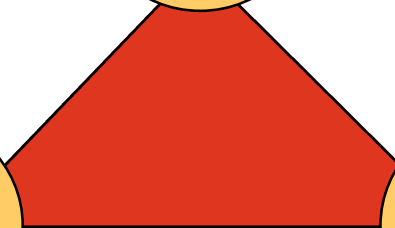
- | | | |
|----|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. | Khshathra Vairya | Desirable Power, The Kingdom of God |
| 2. | Haurvatat | Wholeness, Health |
| 3. | Spenta Armaiti | Holy Piety, Devotion |
| 4. | Ameretat | Long life, Immortality |
| 5. | Vohu Manah | Good purpose, good thought |
| 6. | Asha Vahishta | Best, Right, Truth, Order |
| 7. | Spenta Mainyu | The Holy One |

Further to this, the Seven Logii form the body of the universe or Great Chain of Being. It is from their forms that the seven planes of existence come into being. This is one of the most important aspects of the Gnostic teachings. The seven planes are not simply geographic locations, they are living, growing, transforming bodies which are enlivened by the seven Logii. It is the same with the physical plane, it is not inert matter but is alive. The earth is not simply a ball of dirt in space, but is Gaia a immense organism which is as much alive as we are. Each plane subdivides into lesser planes and each plane dimension has its own consciousness and reality. In this model everything is inter-related. So, for example, man is in a unique symbiotic relationship with Gaia which in turn is part of a greater web of spiritual energy which makes up the Logii of the physical plane. All forces are in symbiotic relationship with those above them,

That which
is
NOT

Divine Will

The Logos



Sophia

— THE SEVEN LOGOII —



The Seven Planes, Dimensions or Worlds—
each a living web empowered by one of the
seven Logii.

hence, man is part of the body of Gaia and his behavior and actions effects Gaia as much as would our own semi-independent digestive function ! This unique and new view of life is imperative for not only environmental and conservation reasons but for our own survival as a species. (This may seem at odds to the traditional dualism of much Gnosticism, however, we will explain in some detail later what Gnostic dualism really is and, bluntly, it isn't what most people think!)

The various realms that exist can be understood as planes, dimensions, realities, locales or worlds, depending on what perspective you may wish to take. The Gnostic tradition tends to use the Gnostic Theosophic model which offers seven planes. There are other models such as the four worlds of the Kabbalah and the more complex Valentinian scheme of some thirty aeons. We are not stating one is more correct than the other, we have simply chosen one model from within our tradition to expound. Together all models illustrate the multi-faceted nature of reality, the earth being only one plane within a larger picture. There can be many views of such a structure, ranging from alternative universes, dimensions or planes to other realities, each has its place in our understanding.

The Seven Planes

Max Heindel Model

Divine Plane.
Plane of Virgin Spirits
Plane of Divine Spirit
Plane of Life Spirit
Plane of Thought
Desire Plane
Physical Plane

Theosophical Model

Divine Plane.
Monadial Plane.
Spiritual Plane
Intuitionial Plane
Mental Plane
Astral Plane
Physical Plane

The Divine Plane

This is the point of origin, the matrix from which all universal systems evolve. It is the plane of the triune Principle and on a more tangible level, the dimension from which the upper world operates.

The Monadial Plane

From this plane the True Self or the Pneumatic Light Self operates in the present cycles, though in most of humanity it is in embryonic form only. In the cycles of creation this is the plane from which polarization and differentiation originated. It is on this level that the Seven Holy Spirits operate and direct creation.

The Spiritual Plane.

This is the plane of archetypal forms and is the location from which energies from the upper planes are condensed and radiated into the lower. This is the plane on which the Immortals exist.

The Intuitional Plane

This plane is also known as the Intuitional Plane. It is the dimension where the forces and archetypes take creative solidity and manifest. On a human level, it is the dimension of high level intuition and cosmic awareness.

The Mental Plane

This is also known as the Mental Plane. Here the flood of energy takes the form of reason and thought, blueprints are formulated and laid.

The Astral Plane

The Desire plane is also known as the Emotional or Astral Plane. In some traditions it is also seen as the reflective sphere or Astral light. The division between the Mental and Desire Plane is not as clear as it seems and intermingling occurs between them both.

The Physical Plane

The world on which we live.

The Earth and the Underworld

On a critical examine of our models one will notice an anomaly, in the organic models (Yggdrasil etc), the underworld is beneath the earth, indeed in Medieval Mysticism hell (the “Christian” underworld) is even within the earth, being at its centre. While in the Emanation model the underworld is called the Astral Plane (even the Spirit world) and is above the earth, rule by the Moon.

The first thing to note is that the underworld is not hell. There is no heaven and hell in the Gnostic system, the underworld is the realm of the dead and where we experience the afterlife. Some people create their own “Heavens and Hells” there but that is another story. The models we are outlining cannot be reduce to scientific charts, while there are seven planes they intermingle and meld. The planes exist behind, through and within the physical and they interpenetrate each other just as much. The astral plane can be imaged under, inside or above the earth,

all have the same imagery. It is somewhat a matter of how we conceptualise the universe. The model of the astral plane above the earth, ruled by the moon has a more hierarchy feel, while the underworld communicates more on an emotional level.

The model of the underworld also brings to mind the ancient polarity of Earth and Sky. The Earth and Sky polarity was probably the most ancient model of the universe, while the Logos and Sophia model is central to Gnosticism, this older structure is found in many nature religions. The Divine Will is seen as either the Cosmic Father or Mother and the earth is the wife, husband or lover. In this mythology the underworld is intricately connected to the earth, even seen as part of it. In the Norse tradition the God is Odin or Tyr (much earlier) and he is the lord of the upper world (Asgard) and Hel is the Goddess of the underworld and earth. Hel and Freya are much the same Goddess, she simply split into two and was demoted due to strong patriarchal and later Christian influences. She was the goddess of death and rebirth, fertility and suffering, she guards the dead and sends them back to life, she compliments and completes the Lord or Tyr/Odin. In Celtic mythology she guards the great cauldron and in the Norse this cauldron is the “seething cauldron” from which the drizzle formed from fire and ice coalesces and from which life is formulated. We can see a cross over with Sophia, she too is the goddess of the departed and the earth. This system also embraces the Logos and Sophia model but expresses it in a different way. The danger with overtly nature oriented symbolism is that it genderizes the principles and while this offers some beautiful literature and mythology, it can also transform the Gods so that they appear in our own image, which degenerates the principles into warring, fighting and marauding reflections of ourselves. (and this is certainly true with the Viking tradition). So once again we can marvel at the imagery, but should be aware of its limitations.

The Immortals

The Immortals are those beings which work within the force of the seven planes or rays. The seven Logoi emanate currents of force throughout the planes (called Rays) and through each there is a spiritual hierarchy. In this work we will not discuss these in details but you can read about them in our other texts. While some traditions have brought the Master tradition into disrepute with their ever channelling ascended yahoos etc, this should not be allowed to discredit the real and important role of those who work within the Great hierarchy.

Chapter Four: The Secret of Saturn

The Complexity of Evil

The major problem with understanding evil is that there are many forms of evil and these are mixed together. It is especially difficult when cosmological “evil” is mixed with issues of ethics and personal suffering. While the iconography of evil certainly appears in all cultures, one of the most potent icons is that of Satan. It is a difficult image because most people do not appreciate the various motifs which have been woven together to make the one figure. It is quite clear from Old and New Testament sources (as well as apocryphal texts) that Satan meant something very different at various times. These differences have been overlooked within contemporary Christianity due to its desire to “frighten” the sinner into salvation. For the esotericist it is imperative to decode these perennial motifs are they solve once and for all the mystery of evil.

The image of Satan has three primary motifs within it, these can be found in the Old Testament, Apocryphal sources (with some OT/NT references) and within the New testament. These are mirrored in other esoteric traditions, for example, the Old Testament view of Satan as Tester is also found in Hinduism. These three motifs can be summarised as follows:

1. **The Satan-Saturn Complex—The illusion of cosmological evil. (Perceptual Dualism)**
2. **The Watchers—Evil as ignorance. (fallen astral forms). (Temporary Dualism)**
3. **Evil as Ignorance- (Ethical Dualism)**

These three models are found quite clearly in different forms of scripture. The Satan as Tester image is primarily Old Testament, the Watchers are found primarily in the Book of Enoch (but also referenced subtly in the OT & NT), the image of Satan as Bad Mind is primarily New Testament. These three motifs are found in all aspects of Gnostic, Essene and Christian literature. For example, the Demiurge. The Demiurge as Saturn is not evil but only the harsh school teacher, yet within the watchers the Demiurge is desire (pride, uncontrolled lust etc). All fallen spirits are Demiurges, all have desire to leave their station and enter earth. While the Demiurge in man is the Ego.

These three different motifs explain the strange amalgam of tales we have throughout the Bible about evil which range from the fall of Lucifer (light bearer) (the watchers), Jesus calling Peter “Satan” (ethical dualism) and the Book of Job image of Satan as Tester.

The Secret of Saturn

The darkest aspect of the Gnostic tradition is that of dualism. So many people who read about the Gnosis accept at face value that the Demiurge (or creator) is evil and that matter itself is, if not evil, then a mixture of darkness and light. This anti-matter, anti-body position tends to be found in extreme Christian Gnostic sects and has continued today through Christian Puritanism and some new age Gnostic derivatives, Heaven's Gate UFO cult is a prime example. To understand the nature of the Demiurge and hence the true Gnostic position on the world and matter we need to provide a background on some of the myths involved.

There are many traditions and explanations of how this occurred, ranging from the fall of Sophia to the Genesis tale. For the Valentinians the primal error occurred after a long process of hierarchical expansion, the Unoriginate Originator expanded into manifestation and hierarchies on hierarchies took form. Each hierarchy manifested a further hierarchy until, finally, the last emanation, Sophia was created. Sophia, being the last creation, did not understand the nature of what had occurred, in her anguish she cried out for the Divine Will, in this state of suffering she emanated Ialdabaoth. Ialdabaoth in his ignorance believed he was the creator and formed matter, by his error, Sophia herself became trapped in his creation as did thousands of beings of light that came to believe his error. This tradition is intriguing as it paints the Demiurge in an ignorant rather than malefic role, in some sense it embodies the ambivalence found in much Hermetic literature where the "false creator" is seen more as a blundering demi-god than as an adversary.

For the Kabbalists the fall occurred on a far more ethereal level, when the cosmic light of Ain Soph began to expand it produced emanations known as Sephiroth or light centres. As these Sephiroth or light vessels began to create a hierarchy of being, a reflection was cast onto the ocean of cosmic spirit and this reflection, being distorted, gave birth to destructive and twisted forces (Klippoth), which in turn created the material world.

Even among the Gnostics there are many variations in interpretations of the fall. Some traditions see the creator as the Divine Will or Sophia, others see the creator as the Demiurge and hence evil. Some have two Yahwehs, a true Light Lord and a false substitute. Some sects refute the whole Old Testament saying it is the work of the False Yahweh, while others even see the serpent in Genesis as a premonition of the savior.

For a more modern twist, one science fiction writer (with a penchant for occultism and a strange adaptation of psychology) outlined the Gnostic myth in a more technological form. Millions of years ago in the spiritual dimensions, a spirit entity decided he wanted more power than was his due, he created a sequence of mind traps or games. These games or traps enthralled the other spirit beings and as they became involved in them, they found themselves creating material reality. The final game involved forgetting who they were and entering into matter, hence, they entrapped themselves. Modern adaptations of the Alpha Event are not unusual. For exam-

ple, there is much discussion about the possibility that extra-terrestrial entities genetically engineered mankind. These theories were made popular by such writers as Zecharia Sitchin and on a more vulgar level by Eric Von Daniken. Whether we wish to use a highly spiritual and ethereal description such as that by the Kabbalists or see the supposed fall of man in more material terms it is of little importance, something occurred and the algebra we use to represent it is somewhat irrelevant.

The Church teaches that God is the source of all perfect and that the whole world, visible and invisible, is His creation. Yet one does not need to be a philosopher to observe that in this world of ours moral and physical evil - suffering, cruelty, decay, death - is abundantly present. How then can God, the supreme Good, be the cause of suffering and evil ? Must He be held responsible for wars, epidemics, the oppression of the poor by the rich ?...The Bogomils (A Medieval Gnostic sect) had an answer which was at least logical and consistent; evil and pain are inherent in this world because the world is the creation of the Evil One.

**The Byzantine Commonwealth,
Obolensky**

What are we to make of such speculations. Is the world really evil ? or worse Is the creator of the world evil ? The first thing we need to do is to consider how this model arose and then examine the esotericism that exists behind it. The first thing we need to consider is how the different models of the creation of matter developed. Some traditions, such as the Hindu and Greek, tend not to demonise matter. While such schools admit there are degrees of darkness and light and forces which are helpful to man and those who may wish to hinder, none are actually seen as absolutely evil. Certainly in the pagan traditions the Gods have many aspects and the appearance of totally evil gods seems to have been the result of Christian influence. Indeed even the post primitive of cultures while placating so called “destructive” spirits see these as protecting the land or a sacred site etc, there is little evidence of so called ontological evil. While some schools are “dualistic” and see a conflict between matter and spirit this is more a conflict between mans attachment to matter and spirit, hence the emphasis is moved from cosmology to perception. If we examine the multitude of myths regarding the creation of matter with this in mind we begin to see an answer to our dilemma, these models are talking about different things. Some are talking about cosmology, others about personal evil. So in the Hindu, Greek and other systems the question is more the nature of ignorance and evil from the perception of man, while the Gnostic and Kabbalistic seem to be discussing how suffering etc arose and tracing this back to a cosmological structure.

Perceptual Dualism

This begins to hint that the problem is not with the universe but us, it is our perception of the universe which is the issue. Evil, so to speak, is in the eye of the beholder and hence extremely dualistic gnosticism is a product of “those who suffer” and this seems quite clearly so. To suggest the world or the creator is evil is really a personal perception and since Gnosis means personal wisdom then we can see that the Gnostics were recording their personal insights alone, not offering eternal truth. Each insight may vary not only according to the environment and experience of the author, but to the stage of his or her life and the suffering he or she has or has not experienced. Dualism therefore is a matter of perception, not one of cosmology. In the Institute we call it “Perceptual Dualism”. The nature of perceptual dualism is much like that of a classroom. Like children in school we may sometimes hate our teachers and other times love them. Long after schooling has ended, later in life we may look back and suddenly realize how much it helped us, but during the period of harsh discipline we may despise the process and the teacher(s) involved.

On a cosmological level evil cannot exist, if the Great Chain of Being unfolded from a single principle then everything must have its place and role and to suggest a separate ontologically evil force destroys this balance. So how does evil exist ? This paradox is symbolized in the Gnostic astrological traditions as the planet Saturn. Saturn is both Sophia, wisdom and Satan, the tester. In the Old Testament Satan was not a rival to god but worked within Gods court to test and trial the faithful. Saturn is hence a dual image and it is to Saturn that the title Demiurge is usually applied. Saturn is also Sophia and through Ialdaboath matter is created and yet we may ask – why was it a “sin” for Sophia to want to know or understand the Divine Will ? It seems clear that this supposed error was actually the process by which Sophia (and with her mankind) could enter matter and achieve an understanding of the Divine Will. This model is duplicated in Genesis where the serpent tempts Eve and Eve is seen to “fall, yet in reality Eve begins a necessary journey into the material world, symbolized by putting on coats of skin and being dispelled from the Garden. The entry into matter was hence painful but necessary. So while Saturn/Sophia may have caused the material world and its suffering and pain, it is through realizing that this world is only a “classroom” that we see through the Demiurge/Satan and find wisdom behind it. In the ancient mysteries this was represented in strange initiatic rites. In these secret rituals the neophyte would be lead to a goat, donkey or sometimes a strange statue (Baphomet). These animals were made to look as disgusting and obscene as possible. The neophyte would then be asked to kiss the backside of the creature. If they refused they would have failed the initiation, if they went ahead and “puckered up”, they found they were kissing the lips of the Priestess. Here clearly is the movement from one mode of Saturn to another, from the Demiurge to Sophia. The Knights Templar did something similar where their large “devil” like Baphomet figure actually represent the Sophia, the Goddess of wisdom. (Indeed, the world Baphomet when decoded with the Atbash Gematric code gives the name Sophia !)

If we accept that dualism is perceptual therefore pain, suffering and the trials of life are rela-

tive. Pain and Suffering may seem nearly intolerable from the perspective of those locked within it and for those experiencing the harder end of life. However, if we accept that as individuals we have many lives and that incarnation is for the purpose of development, then we may after some consideration comprehend the reality that pain and suffering is part of a learning process. However, since our minds are limited by material experience we do not perceive the full picture and hence treat our material reality as the final arbiter of experience. Pain and suffering are real, but only relatively so. Things will seem different if looked at from the wider perspective of multiple lives and worlds.

While we may have disposed of cosmological evil, the question still arises as to how does Evil appear in the world ? While we may accept that pain and suffering, disease, death etc are not “evil” except from our own perceptions, how do we explain murder, rape, war and the more destructive of man’s behaviour ?

The last phase is probably the most important, Man’s behavior. So much that we would like to blame on the Demiurge, God, Spirits or anything else is actually the fault of mankind itself. As Robert DeGrimston discusses in his superb essay “Humanity is the Devil”, the cosmological devil or Saturn is not “evil” but simply a tester, it is mankind who has become evil, through its ignorance. Ignorance is the problem, for in ignoring our true natures we become enmeshed in matter (which is of itself spiritual neutral) and following our desires become more and more ignorant. While matter is neutral, our lust and desires lead to behaviors that can be best described as evil. These occur because we are seeking in matter something it cannot give, matter is there to give us an experience which leads us back to spirit. If we attempt to gain wisdom from matter then we will become more and more frustrated, like a rabid consumer, we seek more and more goods and yet nothing satisfies the craving. Dualism then is between Spirit and Ignorance, the Upper Worlds and our attachment to matter, not between spirit and matter themselves, since ultimately, they are part of each other.

The Watchers of Enoch

They thought of themselves, that they were beings existing by themselves and without a source, since they do not see anything else existing before them. Therefore they live in disobedience and acts of rebellion, without having humbled themselves before the one because of whom they came into being.

They wanted to command one another, outrivalling one another in their vain ambition...They were brought to a lust for power over one another according to the glory of the name of which each is a shadow, each one imagining that it is superior to the others.

Nag Hammadi Tri.Trac 79:12-32

While we have shown (at least I hope so), that there is no cosmological evil, that does not mean evil cannot or does not exist. Since every entity has free will, then ignorance can occur on multiple levels of existence. Hence, it is important to realize that some spirits can also work in a way that is not beneficial or even harmful to man. Just because a spirit is not physical does not mean it is more developed or evolved, astral denizens are much the same as us (indeed the human dead are part of the astral kingdom) and hence can share our own ignorance and stupidity as well as our joys and illuminations. While certainly Gnosticism does not accept the reality of beings that are intrinsically evil. We do accept that since man has free will and can make himself evil through ignorance, so astral spirits can do the same. These fallen spirits are described in many Gnostic texts and can certainly gang together and influence man in a destructive way. These spirits are not intrinsically or ontologically evil, but have become evil through ignorance, desire and so on. This is important as it proves there is no evil god in competition with the source of all life, no hierarchy of destruction, but ignorant spirits and entities.

The legends of the Book of Enoch which permeate so much Biblical literature suggest that since these spirits desired to have physical bodies they entered the earth stream and interbreed with man producing giants and depraved offspring. This is why the Great flood occurred, not to destroy man but to purify the earth of these mutated forms. This desire however continued and brought about not only the corruption of many astral realms but allowed these spirits to incarnate on earth ! This last fact is important and has far more significance than we may realize. As we will discuss in another work it is possible many of these fallen spirits have taken physical form and are now in controlling positions in governments and institutions.

If we believe that spiritually destructive forces are working on many different levels, then we cannot ignore the existence of these forces on the physical plane as well as on the spiritual. For centuries there has been a belief in a Secret Government which manipulates and controls world politics, while conspiracy theories may seem, at first glance, unbelievable, when we consider the current state of world affairs then it does seem that some sort of nefarious plan has been in operation. In *Conspiracy or Degeneracy* by Revilo.P.Oliver we read the following...

A theory that a conspiracy has been working consciously for many centuries is not very plausible unless one attributes to them a religious unity. That is tantamount to regarding them as Satanists engaged in the worship and service of supernatural evil, the directors of the conspiracy must see or otherwise directly perceive manifestations which convince them of the existence and power of Lucifer (Satan). And since subtle conspirators must be very shrewd men, not likely to be deceived by auto-suggestion, hypnosis, or drugs, we should have to conclude that they probably are in contact with a force of pure evil..

This quote illustrates the real focus of the world conspiracy theory. It is not enough to posit the existence of a secret government behind the scenes, we need to ascertain the nature of the forces which govern this secret government.

And clearly these forces are the powers we have described and those who rule these secret bodies are the Dominions and Principalities we have discussed. There are more books than we can list that identify the Secret Government and its links with bodies such as the Trilateral Commission, the Council on Foreign Relations, the Bilderberg Group and the United Nations, however, only when we grasp the clear indication that these bodies are operated by alien entities, entities without souls controlled and manipulated by destructive Archons do we really understand the full nature of the world around us.

I am not so interested in identifying and describing these individuals as I am in calling your attention that they do exist. John the Baptist as he preached the coming of the Christ, foretold the end of this race of mechanical men when he said " O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come" . Again referring to the barrenness of this counterfeit creation he said, " Every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire ". He prophesied the coming of one who would baptise with the sacred fire.." Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor and will gather the wheat into his garner, but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable ".

Needless to say these human automatons are the chaff and their final end can come through only one process: Transmutation. For this is the only approved method whereby the wicked shall be removed from the face of the earth.

In the Bible these soulless beings are referred to throughout as the wicked for they have seen to it that all more specific descriptions of their race have been removed - lest mankind discover them and rise in righteous indignation against their overlords. And thus the death of John the Baptist and that of Jesus the Christ were brought about by the counterfeit race who for thousands of years have set brother against brother, race against race and have caused the children of God to blame one another for the murder of the saints. Today, as always, they occupy positions of authority and financial power. They have gained control of the destiny of empires and they seek ever to thwart the purposes of God. The injudicious use of taxation exerted by their direction has placed an unconscionable yoke upon the neck of humanity. Their control of entertainment media and the trends of youth towards dissonant arts forms and discordant music has perverted noble attributes and spawned a race of delinquent rebels whose code, or lack of it, has gnawed at the vital future of America and the people of many nations. Modern means of communication and distribution of the printed word, the spoken word and the dramatic word through television and motion pictures have caused ideas to span continents and the world almost with the speed of light. Like a prairie fire, the dry grass consumes itself to the roof of

hopes of humanity which are blighted, then by the searing infamy of wasted energy and emotion.

The Soulless Ones: Cloning of a Counterfeit Creation.

Mark.L.Prophet.

Summit University Press, L.A. 1981.

The doctrine of Dominions and Principalities is one of the more difficult to explain without sounding extremist and paranoid. It certainly lends itself to dark speculation and conspiracy theories. However, it is a doctrine that is central to a real understanding of the world around us and there is certainly more to come, since the Watchers not only live among us but through interbreeding are part of our own genetic make-up ! In some sense it is mandatory for our Transfiguration to realize the extent to which our bodies, mind, world and reality are controlled and manipulated by forces hostile to our spiritual goals.

Archons, Dominions and Thoughts that Run Wild

There is a simple premise in esoteric literature, thoughts have power. Even modern science accepts that behind the structure we know as the material world is a web of energy and the interactions between different types of energy creates the semblance of solidity we call matter. Thought, then, as a form of energy has the same power. This is why in so many traditions there are admonitions about controlling the thought process, while thinking and doing are still different things, thinking does have its effects. Clairvoyants of many persuasions have seen and documented the shapes and forms produced by various types of thought, witness the work of Charles Leadbeater. While many of these forms are fleeting, when empowered by the emotions and by reverie and memory they become more than just thoughts, they become thought forms. These thoughtforms exist beyond simply when they are thought, they take on an independent existence within the mind of the thinker. They then influence memory and condition our perceptions of everyday life. We may want to see these thoughtforms as only existing within the psyche of the neurotic or unstable and yet all of us have our lives conditioned by the thought forms we have created in the past. For most people they never see the present unfiltered, all experience is sieved through thoughtforms created from childhood and even beyond through past lives.

Meme: (pron. 'meem') A contagious idea that replicates like a virus, passed on from mind to mind. Memes function the same way genes and viruses do, propagating through communication networks and face-to-face contact between people

David S. Bennahum.

Thoughts however go much further. As documented in much modern research on Memes, thoughtforms can become like viruses of the mind. They can spread throughout groups, families, nations and indeed the world and are passed through the deeper levels of the unconscious we all experience. Rumours, tales, urban myths are all memes or thoughtforms, while they may be primarily past via the printed word, internet, media etc, there is a time when they reach a certain “saturation point” and then become part of the collective unconscious. This is exceptionally dangerous as negative and violent forms can control groups and crowds creating mob violence and aggression. These groups minds are really thoughtforms out of control. If we return to the image of Satan for a moment, we may remember that the image of Satan in the Old Testament is primarily that of the tester, the “devils advocate” rather than one of an evil being. In the New Testament, however, things are different. The term Satan is used to describe people (Jesus calls Peter Satan and says “get behind me”), groups (Jesus says the father of the Jews is the devil) and is described as plural (legion). If we consider this model carefully we start to realize that the New Testament Satan is not the tester of the Old Testament, but is “bad mind”. That is Satan is negative thoughtforms. These forms exist in an individual (Peter’s weakness) or collectively (the idea of ownership and control which tempted Jesus as he looked over the cities – “all this can be yours”). It is legion as there are multitudes of Archons both dwelling within our minds and within the collective unconscious.

The question of the devil being the father of the Jews takes us into the darker reaches of Archon theory, because not only can they exist in the unconscious collective mind but they can create a breach into the astral worlds through which fallen spiritual entities can then move into the earthly spheres and control the thoughtforms created. These forms as known in the Gnostic Tradition as Archons, they are the products of mankind enlivened by fallen spirits and fed by our own emotions. They can control and influence individuals, collectives even nations and governments. Jesus decried the “Jews” not because of racial prejudice but because the Judaic community of that period had become fundamentalist and literalist, they had lost the esoteric core of their tradition. In becoming so extreme they had created a destructive thought form which they were feeding. In Gnostic literature these Archons can so increase in power that they become Dominions, forces which control whole groups of people even races and countries. So while the Jewish people thought they were worshipped the IAM, they were actually feeding a false god, an Archon they had created from their own ignorance. This happens all too often and why the esoteric tradition is so imperative. Without the guidance of Gnosticism and esotericism, many will be caught within the web of exoteric (outer) religion. Fundamentalism, cults, literalism, extremism are all products of incorrect readings of the spiritual tradition. When these groups develop their thoughtforms take on a life of their own and not being connected to the “real” energies of the Great Chain of Being they soon sour and become a nexus for the manifestation of fallen entities from the astral worlds. These fallen spirits work out of step with the universe and invigorate these forms so that they become independent, discrete fields of energy within the astral world (Archons). They grow from Archons to Dominions and rule from their astral kingdoms. Their poor and unfortunate worshippers think they are following the “true god” but are actually feeding monsters created from mans suffering and igno-

rance. Many of these forms feed on suffering, while others feed on pleasure, they amplify the emotions of their members to gain more and more sustenance. In some sense they are truly “spiritual vampires” and without esotericism, all religions and traditions succumb.

*(They took....)*The name of those that are good and gave it to those that are not good, so that through the names they might deceive him (mankind) and bind those to those that are not good.

Nag Hammadi Gospel of Phillip 54:18-25.

The imagery of Archons is very strong in Gnostic literature and because it has become mixed with tales of cosmological dualism many have come to believe that the Archons are the result of a cosmic error or fall. The reality, as discussed earlier, is that there was no great cosmic error, just a misperception caused by ignorance. Yet at the same time this ignorance has created a doorway through which fallen forms can enter and these Archons or whatever we call them which keep us from appreciating our own misperceptions. Indeed, it is through our permission that they enter the earth sphere. This is the idea which gave birth to the fall of man tradition. Since man in his ignorance created fallen thought forms and allowed fallen entities to enter into the earth stream then ultimately man is responsible for the present condition of his planet, his culture and his soul.

The issue of Archons is complex for there is an interaction between our own thought forms and real fallen astral entities. These fields (probably a better description than forms) allow these entities to interface with our own unconscious. Accordingly they can change form according to the language of the culture they communicate through and being a mixture of our own thoughtforms and “fallen” spirits can mimic our own hidden desires and needs. While in Medieval periods we may have had demons, incubus and succubus, in the present we have aliens, UFO abductions and medical experiments by creatures we cannot see. In the modern mode, these Archons are sometimes called “ultraterrestrials”. However we must realize that these forms are spiritual in origin. Sure, they may be other races within our universe, assuredly so, but it does seem that the majority of UFO sightings and experience reflect our own fears, terrors, needs and desires and hence have a Archonic origin.

The world is the work of lowly powers which though they may mediate be descended from Him do not know the true God and obstruct the knowledge of Him in the cosmos over which they rule. The genesis of these lower powers, the Archons, and in general that of all of the Orders of being outside God, including the world itself, is the main theme of Gnostic speculation....The universe, the domain of the Archons is like a vast prison whose innermost dungeon is the earth, the scene of mans life. Around and above it the cosmic spheres are ranged like concentric enclosing shells. Most frequently there are seven spheres of the planets surrounding by the eighth that of the fixed stars....

The religious significance of this cosmic architecture lies in the idea that everything which intervenes between here and the beyond serves to separate from God, not merely by spatial distance but by active demonic force. Thus the vastness and multiplicity of the cosmic system express the degree to which man is removed from God.....

The Archons collectively rule over the world and each individually in his sphere is a warder of the cosmic prison. Their tyrannical world-rule is called Hiemarmene, universal Fate.....[This universal fate] aims at the enslavement of man. As guardian of his sphere each Archon bars the passage to the souls than seek to ascent after death, in order to prevent their escape from the world and their return to God.

The Gnostic Religion,
Hans Jonas.

So when we read a description of Gnosticism such as that found in the classic text The Gnostic Religion by Hans Jonas, we must appreciate that the seeming cosmic dualism is actually a dualism between the real and the unreal, between the light of the higher worlds and forces which have been created through ignorance. They are like “monsters from the Id”, they seem real enough and since the physical world is shaped and formed by our perceptions, they are for all intents and purposes real. The only way for us to escape Hiemarmene (universal fate) is to realize that we have created the prison bars ourselves.

What a tragic world this is, he reflected. Those down here are prisoners, and the ultimate tragedy is that they don't know it; they think they are free because they never have been free, and do not understand what it means. This is a prison, and few men have guessed. But I know, he said to himself. Because that is why I am here. To burn the walls, to tear down the metal gates, to break each chain. Thou shalt not muzzle the Ox as he treadeth out the corn, he thought, remembering the Torah.

The Divine Invasion, Phillip K Dick.
HarperCollins 1981.

For we contend not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness.

Ephesians 6:12

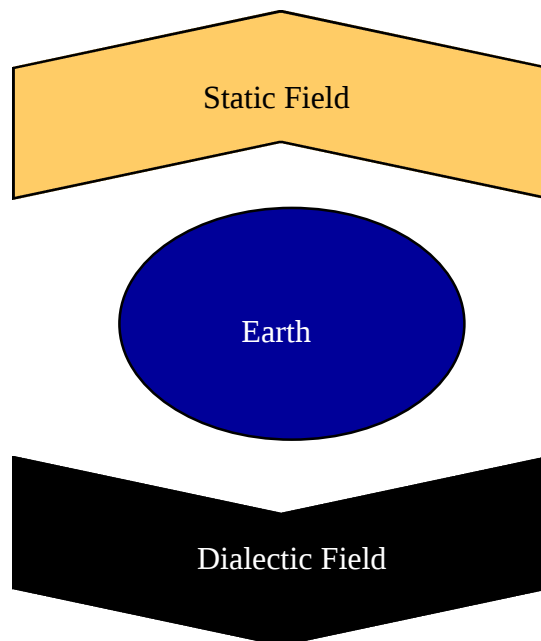
While the Archons and the Demiurge are creations of mans ignorance, they are used by the

fallen spirits as a source of power. This is one of the major problems with the Archons we create, they attract forms and spirits which are in ignorance and hence follow them.

The Battle Within

This model becomes more complex when we start to consider its full ramifications. If the watchers interbred with mankind and produced giants, then this is bizarre enough. However, if their hanged genetic make up (due to their fall) has mixed with ours then mind is a mixture of two lifestreams. This mixture is found hinted at in all literature, in Norse mythology we are a mixture of the giants and the breath of Odin, in some schools of Gnosticism we are a mixture of Pre-Adamite and Adamite stock, in others, we are a mixture of the soil of the earth and the divine breath. This biological conflict is important as it explains why we have such different models of experience. There is so much evidence for mans violence and destructiveness, way even beyond that of the animal kingdom and yet also so much evidence for mans love, beauty and transcendence. In Gnostic terms this is because there are two fields of influence, the Static (Pleroma) and the Dialectic (Archon). These fields pull us towards the light and towards matter. The drive towards matter is necessary but has been overlaid with the artificial desires and drives of the fallen forms. Hence, the Dialectic field is based on a involuntary necessity, but actually works against us.

It is important to see what this clash is not, it is not a clash between body and spirit and matter and spirit. Matter has its place and is a necessary teacher, the clash is between spirit (Static fields) and the artificial forms created by the watchers and ultimately by ignorance.



In Summary

In Gnosticism evil is many things, it cannot simply be reduced to an easy formula. While there is certainly no ontological or intrinsic evil, there are things which appear evil and things which can become evil. To summarize;

1. There is no cosmological or ontological evil. Saturn is a tester and may seem evil (perceptual dualism), but this is a problem of perspective. While disease and death may seem “evil,” in the greater picture they are not. There are many “partial” spirits (such as fire sprites etc) which can only work in a restricted way and hence can appear evil only because we do not understand their limited focus and purpose.
2. Ethical evil is created through ignorance (which creates attachments to matter, greed, etc etc). This can infect not only human but spirit beings of varying degrees. Hence there can be angels, demons etc which are “destructive” but this is of ignorance not out of cosmological design.
3. Since thoughts have power, mans ignorance has dire effects. It is capable of creating thought vibrations which congregate in the collective unconscious and then if given enough power can move into the lower astral plane. These forms (Archons and Dominions etc) also collect ignorant astral forms and create principalities within the Astral world. These Archons then, in turn, influence and control man and his civilization.
4. Man is caught between the fields of energy created by the forces of Light (Pleroma-Static) and the fields forged by the Watchers (Dialectic) yet created ultimately through ignorance.

Chapter Five:

The Gnostic Concept Of Time

The Gnostic Concept of Time

The concept of progress or the lineal development of history is primarily a Nineteenth century invention. While it may have first appeared with the Renaissance and humanist philosophy, it was the industrialisation of the West and the advent of Darwinian which really set the ball rolling. Progress as a philosophy has become so deeply ingrained in both the sciences and arts that that any modern study within both fields accepts as a foundation a belief in evolutionism (both physical and cultural). The traditional view of history is at variance with this approach, it is inevitably cyclic and emphasises the ebbs and flows of culture. While the cycle may return to itself, the focus is on decline rather than on development. Within the Norse traditions the gods are ultimately destroyed at Ragnarok and a new cycle of manifestation, conflict and resolution begins. While within Gnosticism the Omega Day ends the cycle and a “new heaven and new earth” begins. The Vedic system outlines this cycle in far more detail, the whole of creation is governed by a series of cyclic processes, these range from the Days and Nights of Brahma (the creative force) to the Yugas or epochs. The Sanskrit names for the four ages are Krita or Satya Yuga, Treta Yuga, Dvapara Yuga and Kali Yuga.

The Krita or Satya Yuga is the Golden Age, the age of Spirit and it is from here that things get successively worse until the Kali age, which ends in an apocalypse of water and fire. Each age in succession is shorter than its predecessor, is more intense, and more material. The Kali age is the shortest, most materialistic and intensely destructive. It is this age we are in now. The Kali Yuga, or Iron Age is sometimes described as the Age of the Wolf, due to its ferocity and violence. There are many different dating systems, but according to the Mahabharata, the Kali Yuga started on the midnight of 17th and 18th February, 3102 BCE and represents the final stage of the cycle. It is interesting that this date coincides with the start of the 5th Sun period of the Mayans, which they believe climaxes in 2012.

"All kings occupying the earth in the Kali Age will be wanting in tranquility, strong in anger, taking pleasure at all times in lying and dishonesty, inflicting death on women, children, and cows, prone to take the paltry possessions of others, with character that is mostly Tamas, rising to power and soon falling. They will be short-lived, ambitious, of little virtue, and greedy. People will follow the customs of others and be adulterated with them; peculiar, undisciplined barbarians will be vigorously supported by rulers. Because they go on living with perversion, they will be ruined.

"And Dharma becomes very weak in the Kali age, and people commit sin in mind, speech, and actions... Quarrels, plague, fatal diseases, famines, drought, and calamities appear. Testimonies and proofs have no certainty. There is no criterion left when the Kali age settles down. People become poorer in vigour and lustre. They are wicked, full of anger, sinful, false, and avaricious. Bad ambitions, bad education, bad dealings, and bad earnings excite fear. The whole batch becomes greedy and untruthful. Many Sudras will become kings, and many here-tics will be seen.

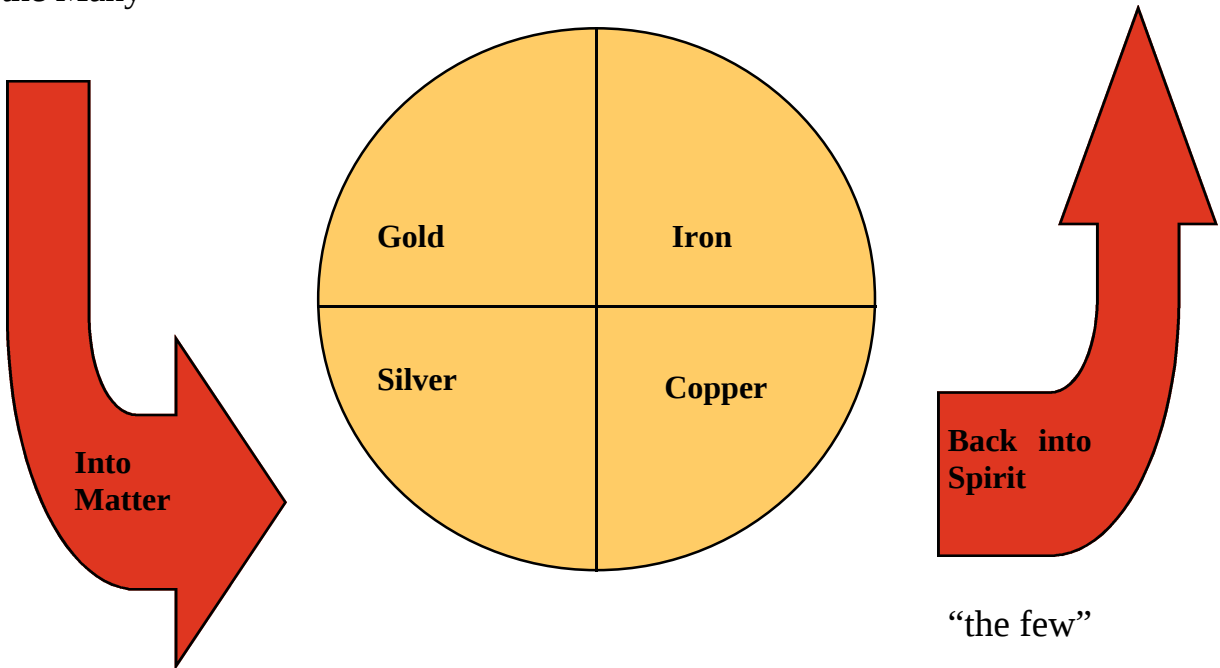
"There will arise various sects; Sannyasins wearing clothes colored red. Many profess to have supreme knowledge because, thereby, they will easily earn their livelihood. In the Kali age, there will be many false religionists. India will become desolate by repeated calamities, short lives, and various diseases. Everyone will be miserable owing to the dominance of vice and Tamoguna; people will freely commit abortion. "Earth will be valued only for her mineral treasures. Money alone will confer nobility. Power will be the sole definition of virtue. Pleasure will be the only reason for marriage. Lust will be the only reason for womanhood. Falsehood will win out in disputes. Being dry of water will be the only definition of land. Praise worthiness will be measured by accumulated wealth. Impropriety will be considered good conduct, and only feebleness will be the reason for unemployment. Boldness and arrogance will be equivalent to scholar-ship. Only those without wealth will show honesty. Just a bath will amount to purification, and charity will be the only virtue. Abduction will be marriage. Simply to be well dressed will signify propriety. And any hard-to-reach water will be deemed a pilgrimage site. The pretence of greatness will be the proof of it, and powerful men with many severe faults will rule over all the classes on earth. Oppressed by their excessively greedy rulers, people will hide in valleys between mountains, here they will gather honey, vegetables, roots, fruits, birds, flowers and so forth. Suffering from cold, wind, heat and rain, they will put on clothes made of tree bark and leaves. And no one will live as long as twenty-three years. Thus in the Kali Age humankind will be utterly destroyed."

The Hindu Purana

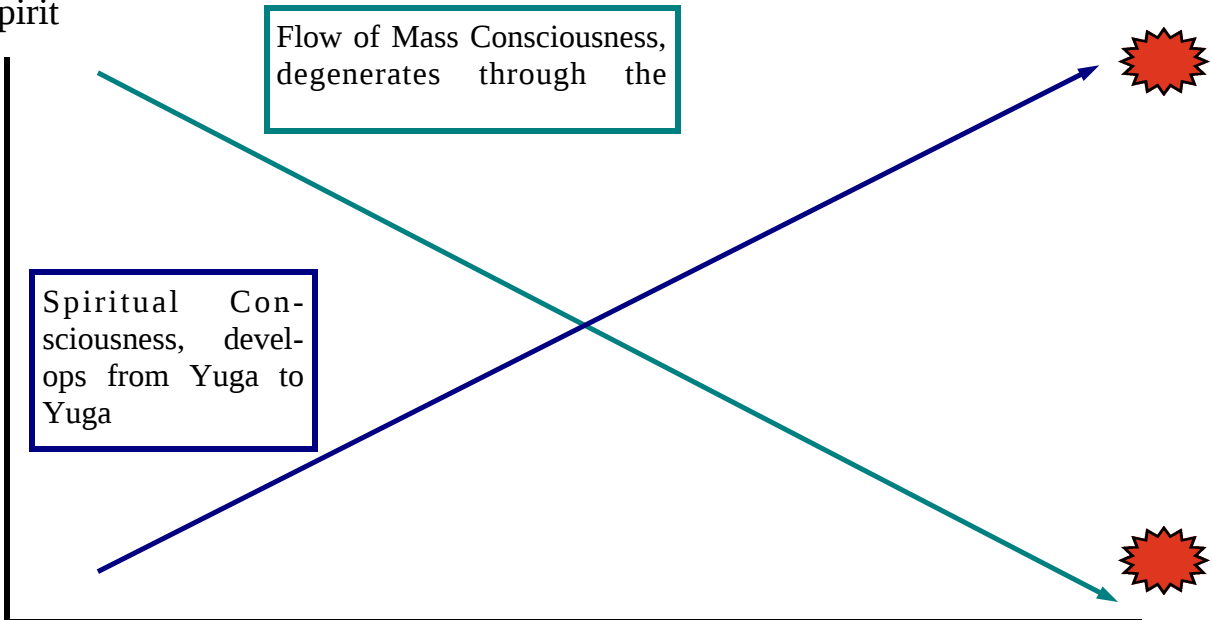
The four ages correlate remarkably well with the image described in the Old Testament book of Daniel. Central to Daniel chapter two is the description of an unusual figure, a figure that is used to express a prophetic outline of history. The interesting thing is that inherent with this figure is a pattern and design which is far older than the text of Daniel in which it appears. The image is comprised of gold, silver, bronze and iron (with clay feet) and partakes of the oldest division of history. While this division also has a localized and prophetic meaning which focuses on

The Yuga Cycle

“the Many”



Spirit



Matter



Kali Yuga, when technology and Matter seems at its greatest, it is actually at the lowest ebb and the few who find wisdom will achieve the most of all.

the interplay between various major kingdoms from the 6th century BCE onwards, its primary focus covers immense periods of time and sets the stage onto which humanity plays its part.

These four ages are also found in the Greek historical tradition as the ages of Gold, Silver, Bronze and Iron. However what is especially interested in the Greek in a trans-temporal age which exists between the Copper and Kali Yuga. While this age – the age of Heroes, is not seen as existing "in time", it exists as the path of Transfiguration (the Solar Tradition) during the Kali Yuga. So while the age may be dark, there is wisdom for those who seek.



While the Vedic, Indo-European, Biblical and Greek traditions may be primarily of a traditional religious nature, the concept of decline is also found within the work of many great historians, so much so that many speak of the school of historical pessimism. In some way the major figure within this school was Oswald Spengler.

Historical Models of Cyclic Time

Oswald Spengler was born in 1880 in Blankenburg, Germany and educated at the universities of Halle, Munich, and Berlin. On the basis of his extensive studies in mathematics, science, history, philosophy, and art, he formulated a philosophical system that offered an explanation of the history of human culture.

In his single important work, *The Decline of the West* (1918-1922, revised ed. 1923;), Spengler attempted to prove that each civilization possesses a unique "soul" and style of art and thought, and that all cultures pass through a life cycle of birth, growth, decay and death comparable to the biological cycle of living organisms. In his analysis of the history of Western Europe, Spengler argued that the culture of Europe had entered the final stage of its existence that was to be chiefly a period of technological and political expansion. His other works include *The Crucial years* (1933) and *Man and Technics* (1931).



The nexus of Spengler's work is that history is not a mechanical series of events, but represents the outward manifestation of a much deeper process. History, according to Spengler, is organic and moves through cycles of summer, spring, autumn and winter. These cycles are akin to life periods and there is much in common with Jung's view regarding racial memory, archetypes and forms. Races and nations have collective minds and hence operate on a deeper level than individuals, they cannot be reduced to economic or class processes alone. These organic cycles of decline are important as they bring the Yugas into a more historical and academic vein. Spengler does not describe the great cycles of the ages (as the Yugas represent in a macrocosmic aspects), yet his

individual civilisations all work through mini-Yugas which he represents as organic national seasons. While there will always be debate about the particulars of Spengler's work its place within the traditional understanding of history cannot be denied.

The ramifications of an organic view of civilization are very relevant to the Gnostic. If cultures are like a human body, for example, then we can suggest that its various parts have differing levels of importance, ability and significance, and that to reduce all aspects of the "body" of the "organic" society to an equal footing would be like suggesting the head is equal to the arm, the appendix to the eyes. This basic inequality is a foundation stone of the unique vision of Gnosticism which emphasizes individual spiritual development over a vast number of lives.

To really appreciate the esoteric and religious significance of these cycles we need to consider two major figures and their outlines of the sacred cycle – Rene Guenon and Julius Evola.

Rene Guenon and Julius Evola

Guenon is not a man who liked the press, he was a bitter critic of the cult of personality and avoided worthless shows of ego. While Guenon would have avoided offering any biographical details, I think that at least some background is in order. Rene Guenon was born on the 15th November 1886 to an architect father, his family owned a vineyard which was passed to his younger brother as it was obvious Rene had a flair for the academic but was not gifted in either the arts or winemaking. Moving to Paris in his youth he had contact with many occult organizations, becoming a student of Papus for a period. By 1912 he had become an initiated Sufi and became deeply immersed in the esoteric of both Hinduism and Islam. After the death of his wife in the 1930's he left to spend the rest of his life in isolation in Cairo, rejected the modern world. He again married and live with his Egyptian wife under the name Abdel Wahed Yahi. He died on the 7th January 1951.



Guenon's earliest works are meant to clear the way for a real appraisal of esotericism and Gnosis, they are bitter and incisive attacks on both Theosophy and Spiritualism. These two works offer an insightful rejection of the syncretism and bourgeois indulgence that had become the occult movements of the period. He documents the stupidities and extremes of both movements and intimates that it is not the spirits of the dead who are communicating with spiritualists but subversive forces. He believes that these forces of Counter Gnosis and Anti-tradition were offering Counter-Initiations in an attempt to degrade the real and essential Gnosis. When the assault against Counter Gnosis was completed Guenon turned his gaze to the very soul of Western Man. In *Orient and Occident* (1924), *Crisis of the Modern World* (1927) and *The reign of Quantity and the Sign of the Times* (1953) he lays bare the Western soul and documents the clear signs of our de-

generation and collapse. These works are uncompromising and offers a critique of the destruction modernism is perpetuating on our society, he demands a return to real esotericism as opposed to the false "feel good" cults of his time.

Guenon however was not all assault and warfare, his metaphysical works show a great mind which can see to the very heart of esotericism. Certainly his writing on symbolism are hard going, titles such as the Symbolism of the Cross (1931), Fundamental Symbols (1962) and Multiple States of Being (1932) are not easy reading. They demand a concentration which, I am afraid, many modern minds fed on computer games and TV will find difficult. However the sheer intellectual exhilaration one can gain from mastering them cannot be easily forgotten. Guenon also published hundreds of book reviews in such journals as *Le Voile D'Isis* and *Etudes Traditionnelles*, spewing forth venom mixed with insight in such a form that it has never been repeated again. While his critiques of modern forms are noteworthy and relevant, at times there is a tendency to turn a molehill into a mountain and throw the baby out with the bathwater. For example, while Jung's disciples certainly twisted Gnosticism and Alchemy totally out of proportion it is probably unfair to turn the knife on Jung himself. However, in the end we have to realize Guenon was very aware of how the media worked and hence by providing explosive, venomous and virulent reviews they were guaranteed publication and they were always read and hence, in that sense, they had their effect. Whether you liked what he said or not, you were effected by what he wrote and considered his message.

Guenon's view of history is that it is comprised of a series of cycles, these he takes directly from the Vedic tradition. In practise this means that history is a record of degeneration. Accordingly, since the earliest times man has been sinking deeper and deeper into the mire of matter. While view is not popular with materialists and secularists, it is nevertheless the key focus of Guenon's work. In his magnum opus *"The Reign of Quantity and the Signs of the Times"*, Guenon succinctly outlines the process of spiritual degeneration. As man thinks he is evolving, he is simply accelerating his own destruction - living standards and technology may advance, but only at the cost of spirit. This metaphysical entropy causes matter to become successively more physical, more solid, and on a spiritual level - more malefic. Society becomes centred on globalism (witness the New World Order), rather than on nations and individuals and there is an emphasis on scientific advances rather than simplicity. As we reach the later phases of this degeneration (the present period), anti-traditions and forms of anti-gnosis arise purporting to be of spiritual value.

The most dangerous facet of this process is how, in the darkest age, fissures will appear in the barrier between the physical world and the lower astral planes, and there will be an intrusion of the malefic inhabitants of this inferior subtle domain. This strange and dark prophecy as found in is also a key to a deeper understanding of the real nature of Aquarius. While the new-agers claim it will be an age of love and mung-beans, since the ruler of Aquarius is Saturn, we can expect a bumpy ride first. While Saturn is also the lord of the Golden Age (the Satya Yuga), this emphasises the dual nature of the planetary daemon, tester, destroyer and guardian of the

Garden of Eden. The key philosophical emphasis within Guenon's historical analysis is on the duality of quantity and quality, quality being the character of the Golden age (and indeed the principle of Gold – see our discussions of this later) and quantity, the Kali Yuga attribute. Whether it be the decay of the nature of currency, or the clash between craftsmanship and the rule of the machine, this cycle of decay can be seen within the class between quantity and quality. Indeed, many modern criticisms of technology such as those of Neil Postman have a strong Guenonian ring.

Evola and "The Revolt against the Modern World"

Julius Evola was the most notable representative of the traditionalist position, he was also considered one of the most erudite authorities on Hermeticism and Magic. This did nothing to reduce the great controversy that surrounds him. Julius Cesare Andrea Evola was born in Rome in 1898 to an aristocratic family of Sicilian origin. His childhood was marked by intelligence close to genius and he quickly learned many languages. He read widely in German, French and Italian. He became involved with both the Dada and futurist movements and was considered a promising artist. He served with honour during World War I in a regiment of mountain artillery and survived the war to continue his search for meaning. He made contact with Arturo Reghini (1878-1946) who was the co-ordinator of the UR group which studied speculative Freemasonry, occultism, and other occult traditions, it had a strong interest in the work of Rene Guenon.

Evola's natural aristocracy came to the surface and he became the learning exponent of the developing philosophy of the UR (and its successor KRUR) group. Evola and the UR group became aligned to the natural principles of aristocracy and while not having a necessarily high opinion of Mussolini, realised the pragmatic value of his revolution and gave him their support in print. Evola's early work (Pagan Imperialism) attacked the debilitating effects of Christianity as it was represented in the period and upheld the heroic virtues of Rome. This work and related articles caused controversy throughout Italy. Later Evola founded La Torre (the Tower), his own magazine, however, due to conflict with the prevailing state it only last ten issues. His works slowly started to move towards the spiritual side of politics and he made it clear that the only real return to "traditional esoteric values" can occur when we ourselves are transformed.



In 1945 he was hit by a stray bomb and paralysed from the waist down, he spent the rest of his life writing, researching and offering guidance to those seeking a spiritual revolution. He died in 1974. His writing are profuse yet most are not as yet translated into English, it seems there is a great fear regarding the explosive nature of his insightful vision. Evola was not afraid of offending peoples foibles or attacking their sacred cows. He attempted to unite politics, occultism, religion and traditionalism into a "world shattering" vision and he had remarkable success.

For Evola, history was a series of cycles that are degenerative rather than evolutionary, we are then in the darkest age of all (the Kali Yuga), rather than entering an age of light, love and peace. Our modern way of thinking is, (according to Evola) a wasteland, it is the final stage in the decay of truth, rather than its pinnacle. History from this perspective is a series of "steps down-ward" whereby new religious and esoteric systems are fragments of the truth rather than being new innovations or developments. Evola's magnum opus, "*Revolt against the modern world*", slices through the false theosophies, new age visions and pseudo-intellectual systems so prevalent today and offers insight into the real nature of man, his history and his goals. The approach of Evola is elitist in the sense that it is intellectually and spiritually demanding, Evola demands maximum concentration from his readers, however, in return he offers a worldview, a Weltanschauung that challenges the foundations of currently held beliefs.

The nexus of Evola's "*Revolt against the modern world*" is a exposition on the cycles of history and a intense and insightful consideration of the role of esoteric spiritual values. Evola's historical outline takes the Yugas a step further, he discusses the cultural focus of each period and the changes that take places within the ideological and spiritual traditions of each epoch. The Golden age is that of the Polar tradition, it was based in the Arctic regions where days and nights were long and the Axis Mundi was a steady focus within the night sky. At this time the traditions of Sky and Earth worship were in balance, while the sky had ascendancy, the role of earth (albeit in submission) was acknowledged and relevant. The classes as seen within the divine caste system (which reflected the ages of history) were in balance and creativity and intelligence were rewarded. As the Polar age ended and migrations from the Arctic were caused by changes in weather patterns, Aryan man spread across the globe and mankind entered the Silver age. During the Silver or Lunar epoch, earth cults took ascendancy, the feminine and fertility became of paramount significance and this lead to an emphasis on pagan and Gaia oriented traditions. The research of Marija Gimbutas and others gives a good outline of the worship that occurred in this period. As the ages unfounded, in reaction against this earthly epoch, the Dionysian or Copper age began. The worship of strength, violence, masculine virtues battle against the feminine values and patriarchal civilisations were formed. While these civilisations were of great historical importance, to achieve their balance they suppressed the lunar or silver cultures and hence existed as a reaction rather than as a creative expression. This being so, it only took so long before the clashes between the two forces dragged man into the current age, that of the Kali Yuga. Now lunar and Dionysian, feminine and masculine, sky and earth are in conflict and battle and will continue so until the age ends in bloodshed.

Evola decried the decadent nature of the modern world and its social and political isms and ologies and demanded a return to old world values, which he felt were epitomised by the Teutonic Knights, knights who could act as spiritual warriors waging war against the whole corrupt bourgeois modern system. This concept of spiritual warriorship he elucidated most clearly in his radically revisionist book on Buddhism – "*The Doctrine of Awakening*".

In the *Doctrine of Awakening* Evola offers a radical re-assessment of Buddhism and indeed of

the path to completeness. He argues than the modern monastic approach of Buddhism is alien to Gautama's original intent and suggests that Buddhism was originally a path of action. Accordingly Evola sees the primal form of Buddhism as centred on a warrior/priest rather than on a monk. He uses emphasizes the role of Aristocracy but in a unique Evolian sense.

The term Aristocrat here is used in its strictest etymological sense, coming from the Greek word *Aristos* meaning best. The Buddhist disdain for talking about self and God comes not from disbelief, Evola argues, but from a demand for action. There is no Self, so create one, there is no God, so become one. This approach is certainly at odds with much that passes for modern Buddhism and yet in these days of navel gazing and armchair occultism, one cannot help but be exhilarated by his call to arms. But a simple call is not all of Evola's message, he does not leave us with theory alone. The Doctrine of Awakening re-evaluates the basic tenets of Buddhism and examines them in light of the warrior-priest ethos. Rather than advocating a negative detachment whereby life is experienced at an arms distance, Evola suggests we experience detachment by "riding the tiger", by flowing with the punches, rather than against them. There is no life-denying here, more a transcendence achieved amidst the chaos. At the same time, Evola does not wish to see partial. His approach is that there are many ways to "ride the tiger", one can ride slowly and with care, or struggle into the night, one can beat it into submission or lull it with song. Evola other published works, the *Yoga of Power* and *The Hermetic Tradition* offer various interpretations of the means to achieve the Aristocratic Self.

Evola's worship of the Heroic brings us full circle, it brings us back to the Yugas and the Greek model with its trans=temporal Heroic age. The Age of Heroes in the Greek system exists outside the time based cycle of Gold, Silver, Copper and Iron, it is that call to go beyond the natural entropy of the cycles and achieve greatness. In Evola's system it is the true Solar path, the path of the Sun which leads back to the Axis Mundi, the Polar Golden Age.

Chapter Six:

The Gnostic Concept Of Time II

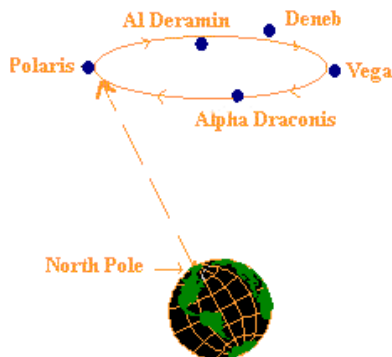
The Great Year

The concept of precession is central to the cycle known as the Great or Platonic Year. It is based on the simple fact that the earth does not “sit straight”, there is a slight wobble in the earth’s axis as it spins. Accordingly the North Pole describes a circle taking 2590 years to reach the point at which it started. As this process unfolds the Vernal Equinox is seen to move backwards through the signs. This backwards movement starts at Capricorn and ends at Aquarius, the reverse of the normal yearly cycle. Many have argued that it was Hipparchus in the second century BCE who discovered this, however there is clear evidence that it was known far earlier to the Mayans and Egyptians.

This cycle is the basis of many different systems of mythology, De Santillana and Von Dechend argue in “Hamlets Mill” that the “Great Year” may indeed be the basis for most cosmological systems. The Gnostic tradition suggests that this great cycle was known to the Atlanteans and was encoded into the rituals and architecture of Ancient Egypt. Accordingly, the role of the Pharaoh and later the priesthood had a special significance in relation to the unfolding of the great year.

The Egyptian Star Gnosis and the rite of Rebirth

The central focus of Egyptian ritualism was the Great Pyramid, it was connected to the Sphinx and operated as a initiatory structure. The Pyramid was identified with the Sanctuary of the Sun and embodied Ra, the Solar Logos. The rites undertaken in the Chamber of the King and Queen were rites of rebirth whereby the Pharaoh became identified with the Solar Sphere. He mediated the energies of the Logos and hence accelerated the positive current and sublimated or transformed the negative. The Sun like the planets and zodiac was a doorway between the spiritual and physical worlds and hence emanated forces from the Pleroma and from the worlds of the Archons.



During the rite of rebirth the Pharaoh left his body and traveled through the heavens. He journeyed through the realms of the planets and zodiac using passwords, gestures and codes, only after successfully passing the spheres could he then navigate through the great barrier and enter the Pleroma. This ritual form was connected to the Egyptian astro-Gnosis and involved the Pharaoh becoming the mediator for his people. In

this role he also prepared Egypt for the change which took place at the “Equinox of the Gods”, when one astrological sign gave way to another. For 180 years before this event the Pharaoh and priesthood would work creating new symbols, mythologies and astral vessels so that the incoming energy could be utilized for the benefit of Egypt.

As time progressed the Egyptian Star-Gnosis, the Divine rite of Rebirth and the secret of Planetary and Zodiacal mediation was passed from the Pharaoh to a separate priesthood. With time and changes in both state and religion, the teachings were held under oath by secret orders and brotherhoods. Even within the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn we can find elements of the mediation rite within its equinox rituals, however, the emphasis has changed to emanating the forces only for those linked to the Order and hence joined to its “group mind”. As we head further into the Kali Yuga it is the individuals task to use and transform the heavenly energies within him or herself.

It is important to realize that Energies the Zodiac like those of the Planets are ambivalent, they receive and relay forces of both positive and negative natter. In a more medieval context, they are said to possess both Spirits and Intelligences. The Gnostic tradition has always been unsure of astrology and see the heavenly forces as energies which must be reckoned with, not Gods to be worshipped.

The present change of cycle is that movement from Pisces to Aquarius, while there is some variation in the dating it is generally accepted that Aquarius will dawn around 2024 with some margin of error. (Astrologers fluctuate the dating of the age of Aquarius from between the year 2000 to around 2100). At the change of each sign there is much transformation, for example, the change from Aries to Pisces at approximately 6 BCE triggered a wide range of spiritual manifestations. It would be possible to link Zoroaster, Gautama Buddha and Jesus/James all into the nexus of the movement from Aries to Pisces. Indeed the imagery of Pisces as the fish has much in common with Jesus and early Christianity. In Egyptian mythology Horus is also sometimes seen as the fisherman. There are many ways to image the astrological ages, in one Egypt tradition Isis is related to Taurus, Osiris to Aries, Horus to Pisces and Maat to Aquarius. The start of the Pyramid age was linked to Leo and many believe that the Sphinx was carefully ligned to the image of Leo at the horizon, while it forms embodied the Priestess of Virgo and the form of the Lion as it represented the change from one astrological age to the next (Virgo to Leo).

Heraldic Cycles

The Platonic year is 25,920 years long and hence each sign cover 2160 years. Each of these signs can be further sub-divided into minor precessional cycles, each of which is 180 years long. In each astrological age the first minor cycle is of the same characteristic as that of the greater, hence in Pisces, the first minor cycle of 180 years was that of Pisces of Pisces. The last age of the minor cycle is important as it is preparation for the changeover to the next age. This

cycle is known as the “Equinox of the Gods”, in the present cycle (Pisces), is began in 1844 and is ruled by Aries. In the Egyptian initiatory traditions this period was also known as the Heraldic cycle, it was the period in which the priesthood prepared the symbolism, legends and vessels for the influx of energy which would occur at the changeover to the new cycle. The cycle itself encompasses four different co-ordinates, these can be related to the four letters of the divine name (YHVH), the four elements, the four Canopic Jars of mummification and the four phases of the Temple.

Heraldic Cycle	Element	God- Name	Pisces Year
Initiation	Fire	Yod	1844
Transmission	Air	He	1904
Consolidation	Water	Vau	1964
Manifestation	Earth	He	2024

Horus Son	Head	Neter	Contents	Direction
Duamutef	Jackal	Neith	Stomach	North
Qebsennuf	Hawk	Selkit	Intestines	South
Hapi	Baboon	Nephthys	Lungs	East
Amset	Man	Isis	Liver	West

Probably the most expressive image of the four elements of the Heraldic cycle are seen reflected in Egyptian Temple architecture. The general style of Egyptian Temples includes a Great Court, Vestibule, Hypostyle Hall and the Great Seat. This design was later adapted into what became the Israelite Sanctuary and Kings Solomon’s Temple.

In general, the Egyptian Temple was surrounded by a massive wall of mud-brick. This wall isolated the Temple from its surroundings, which symbolically represented the forces of Chaos. Metaphorically the mud resulted from the union of heaven and earth. The brick wall itself was therefore set in wavy courses to symbolize the primeval waters, representing the first stage of creation.

The exterior walls of the Temple resembled a fortress, so as to defend it against all forms of evil. The Temple was entered through two pylons, beyond which lay an open court.

This court sometimes had colonnades along the sides and an altar in the middle. Next, along the temple-axis came the hypostyle, a pillared hall often surrounded by small rooms which are used for the storage of Temple equipment and for other secondary purposes. Finally, there was the sanctuary, which was a dark room containing the shrine, where the figure of the Neter was placed. The sanc-

tuary's doors were shut and sealed all year long and were open only for the great festivals. The Sanctuary was called the Great Seat.

Historical Deception: The Untold Story of Ancient Egypt

Moustafa Gadalla

Bastet Publishing, 1996.

The Temple symbolized the fourfold process which took place both within the Heavens and the activity taken by the priesthood in their ritual activities. It has a specific application within our description of the process of cosmic mediation in the Heraldic cycle. If you telescope the imagery you could image a High Priest moving through the stages of the Temple, each stage representing a period of activity in which the priesthood has been working and preparing. As he completes each stage it would represent a aspects of the Heraldic period, only at the moment of the movement from one age to the next would he enter the Sanctuary and transit the energies to the priesthood and to Egypt.

To fully appreciate the Heraldic cycle as it leads towards Aquarius, we should examine the four dates at the climax of Pisces. From 18444 to 21024 we have the Piscean Heraldic cycle ruled by the sign of Aries. Aries is ruled by the planet Mars and hence this suggests the violent and martial tone that Pisces, which is assigned the Egyptian God Horus, has taken in this last age. While Pisces is water, Aries is Fire and hence we have the interaction of Will and Emotion, while Pisces distributes power, Aries generates it and hence the combination of these powers brings great changes.

The attribution of Horus to Pisces is controversial and will raise the hackles of the disciples of Aliester Crowley who believe the Aeon of Horus began with his revelation in 1904. I do not aim to debate the Gnostic versus Thelemite position here, the linked document will cover that in some detail if you want further information. The classic Gnostic position is to align Isis with Taurus, Taurus being the earth goddess, Osiris is assigned to Aries and it the imagery of the sacrifice of rams to the Father God are throughout that period. Horus is Pisces, the imagery is related to Jesus as the Fisherman, the ocean of mankind, the fish as Christian symbols is also founder as a symbol of Horus as Fisherman. Horus as a semi-solar image is found throughout religions of that period, Christianity representing the misapplication of Horus to become a violent martial force. Maat is Aquarius, the outpouring of truth and Gnosis.

The first date in our Heraldic cycle is 1844, it is the initiation whereby the process of change from Pisces to Aquarius began. There are many other hidden indicators of this date, in the Biblical tradition there are specific prophecies that focus on this date. The 2300 year prophecy of the cleansing of the Sanctuary, began in 457 BCE with the declaration of Artaxerxes to restore Jerusalem and ended in 1844. The prophecy focused on the Solar Sanctuary and the climax of it is when the sanctuary is transformed when the priest enters the innermost realm (the sacred Seat). Some references include Daniel 8:14 and 9:25. The 2520 (7 Times) Prophecy focused

on the loss of the Ten Tribes of Israel to history and the description of their re-awakening to the Gnosis started in 1844. This period is also known as the time of the Gentiles and is referenced in Leviticus 26 and under the guise of the prophecy of the seven times.

1844 as a trigger point for the Heraldic cycle is also interesting as many religions view this as an important date, the Adventists (and other protestant sects) of the period preached throughout America that Jesus was returning and a great disappointment occurred due to a misunderstanding of this prophecy. Modern groups deriving from the Adventists including Seventh Day Adventists and Branch Davidians continue to believe that this date was significant and teach that in 1844 Jesus entered the “Holy of Holies” in the Israelite Temple and began an investigative judgment of the Dead. During the period from 1844 to an unspecified date the Angels of the Book of Revelation will unveil their messages and mankind will go through great tribulations heading towards the Second Coming of Jesus. This theology while in a language different from the Egyptian Heraldic cycle is basically identical. The energy of Christ can be related to the Solar force which meditates the astrological cycles and hence we can easily relate the quasi-Christian imagery to the esoteric tradition.

1904 as the transmission period of the heraldic cycle certainly is expressive. Aliester Crowley declared that in 1904 Aiwass, a being he claimed was a secret Chief or master, revealed that a new age was dawning. The matter is made more complex as Crowley interpreted this to mean that the Aeon of Horus had begun in 1904. However, from a Gnostic perspective this is unlikely. The Aeon of Horus was the Age of Pisces and Crowley had experienced a further transmission of the energy which was becoming Aquarius. At the same time this energy restated much of the teachings of the Solar Tradition since it had become garbled through the ages. However, since this knowledge was filtered through Crowley’s unconscious, difficulties arise. The current of 93 he outlined is the Piscean current, Agape (Love), Thelema (Will) and Logos (word) all are aspects of it and 93 reduces to 12 - the Zodiac and of course the twelve disciples, twelve being the sacred number of completion within Biblical numerology. There are many difficulties as Crowley disciples transformed his Gnostic vision into a counter culture cult. The relevance is in Crowley declaration of the revelation. Further activity of this period include Jehovah’s Witnesses who still believe Jesus returned (in spirit) during this period (1914 in some groups but the dates vary). Many other denominations also follow this revelation, so the acceleration of the current certainly has resonance among many traditions. The World Wars that occurred during this period could also be considered ramifications of mankind fighting against the transformation current and the Counter-Gnosis moving into the political dimension. As the energies change the activities of the Dominions and Principalities intensify.

1964 was the consolidation of the current in the sense that it as the energies accelerated society was pushed to the limit. The result being the opening up of the collective psyche which brought about every possible extreme, politically, sexually, emotional and spiritually. The Counter-Gnosis intensified and became dominant in both fundamentalism and the syncretism of the New Age. However, other discoveries such as the Dead Sea Scrolls and Nag Hammadi library

came into effect in this period and gave rise to the Gnostic revival that continues till this day.

2024 is the approximate date for the manifestation of Aquarius. However, do not expect it to be all love and light. Aquarius is ruled by Saturn or Uranus, depending on whether you use the modern attributions. Saturn is both the Demiurge and the divine purifier, Uranus is the lord of the Abyss or great barrier between the Pleroma and the lower world. Aquarius will be an age of great ferocity, violence terror as well as growth and transfiguration for those who seek the light. One of the images associated with Aquarius is the Peacock. The peacock was the sacred image of the Yeizidi, a Islamic people who followed an ancient Gnostic religious tradition. The Peacock was Melek Taus who can be related to the Demiurge (our projections regarding matter), but at the same time the eyes of the peacock (Eye=Ayin in Hebrew, the Devil Tarot Card) show us that ultimately dualism has no power, no reality and hence the real source is beyond in the Pleroma and the Invisible spirit.

Chapter Seven: The Continuum of the Gnosis

The Gnostic Identity Message

What we know as the Gnostic identity message is central to our understanding of the Gnostic tradition. It is difficult to summarise such a complex subject as it demands an extensive study of the evolution of religion, history and politics to grasp its meaning and even further thought to consider its ramifications. However, we need to at least examine some of the basic concepts on which the Gnostic identity message is founded.

The crux of the Gnostic Identity message is a radical re-interpretation of history. From our perspective this re-interpretation is actually a return to the original essence of the Gnostic traditions. To appreciate these re-interpretations it is imperative to consider the Bible in its original languages and in the context of the religious ideologies that prevailed at the period it was written. It is also imperative to understand the big picture which shows where the tradition originated and to consider the nature of Israel and the Gnostic view of Christianity

Origins

To suggest a common denominator between Gnosticism, Kabbalah, Medieval Occultism and Nordic and Vedic Sources is to court disaster, at least in the eyes of modern scholarship. However, if we examine the research of those who laid the foundations for modern archaeology and anthropology, there is much evidence for a direct link between these divergent forms, (even perhaps evidence of a single source or point of origin). If we take Kabbalah, for example, today promoted as Judaic Mysticism when we examine the scholarly texts on its origins (both by Jewish and non-Jewish sources), they all tend to agree that the Kabbalah had its roots in Greek and Hellenistic philosophy, Gnosticism and Alexandrian Hermeticism, and furthermore, that it was only later adapted by Judaic sources. An authority as respected as Gershom Scholem clearly suggests a strong Greek influence, if not Greek origin for the Kabbalah. Indeed he posits the key Kabbalistic glyph of the Tree of Life as having obvious Greek and Gnostic origins. Nag Hammadi texts such as the Secret Book of John and the writings of the Valentinian Gnostic sect all elucidate a hierarchical structure which could be seen as a precursor to later Kabbalistic glyphs and figures.

If in turn we take our exploration further and give due consideration to the origins of Greek philosophy and esotericism, an Egyptian influence can be seen clearly on both Pythagoras and Plato. Such scholars as Heinrich Schliemann, have noted the similarity between Greek and Vedic forms and suggested a common place of origin. Similar similarities can be found be-

tween Nordic and Vedic sources and hence as we come to speculate on these links we may begin to conjecture that they are ripples resulting from a stone cast into the primal pool of gnosis. Ripples that have spread out through cultures, traditions and peoples, many of which have forgotten the origins of their legends, tales and philosophy. Julius Evola and many others suggest that this primal culture was based in the Arctic region and due to severe weather changes migrations took place to many diverse locations. While an arctic origin to Vedic culture may seem unusual to modern scholarship, it is exactly what was argued in *The Arctic Home in the Vedas* (1903) by Bal Gangadhar Tilak .

In this work Tilak argued for an early origin of Vedic culture in the interglacial period and used detailed astronomical and historical research to prove his thesis. He argued that the earliest records were from up to 35,000 BCE (very similar to the Pharaoh lists of Manetho, but that the major impetus was circa 10,500 – 8,000 BCE when after the destruction of the original polar home, migrations began. These continued through the period of 8,000-5,000 BCE with settlements through Northern Europe and Asia. It was during the period of 5,000-3,000 BCE, which Tilak calls the Orion period, that the Vedic hymns and sacrificial system were evolved. Other texts evolve between 3,000 and 1,400 when the memory of the original homeland is dim.

This theory is all the more challenging when associated with the latest research in dating the Sphinx and early Egyptian culture. The work of John West (*Serpent in the Sky*), Bauval & Hancock (*Keeper of Genesis, Fingerprints of the Gods, the Orion Mystery*) and others have significantly pushed back the dating of the foundation of Egypt, maybe to even as early as 10,500 BCE.

The latest dating of the Sphinx has a major effect on how we evaluate history. From geological research by Prof. Robert Schloch of Boston University, it has been conclusively proven that the Sphinx shows signs of major erosion from rain-water. The evidence suggests that this level of erosion would have demanded a very different environment from today. When this is coupled with the astrological image that the Sphinx encodes (the Lion head represents Leo), a likely dating is found around 10,500 BCE. This is when the feet of the Sphinx would be aligned with Leo on the Horizon. It also fits well with the erosion evidence.

Many see this period, when great cataclysms such as the onset of the last ice age changed the face of the earth and Arctic man was driven to migration as the source from which later scattered esoteric traditions are the reverberations.

This polar culture held within it the key perennial wisdom of its people. This tradition was carried throughout northern Europe and Asia and it is said that many of the early Vedic hymns can be dated from this period of wandering (5000-3000 BCE). However, by the time the later Vedic texts were written, circa 3000-1400 BCE, the origins of their tradition had been forgotten.

Intricately related to the idea of a polar homeland (there is some debate over Arctic versus Antarctic due to the possibility of a polar shift connected to the ice age) is the work of Rand and Rose Flem-Aeth. In *When the Sky Fell*, they offer extensive research to show the likelihood of

the location of the legendary land of Atlantis being one and the same as the Polar Homeland, now covered in ice. It is suggested by Blavatsky (the Secret Doctrines) that it is from this primal, polar land that various races spread throughout the globe. There is some debate about the exact number of migrations, there is general agreement certainly that major settlements were made in Tibet, India, Sumer/Egypt and South America. It is from the Sumer/Egypt basin that the Israelite Mysteries developed.

The Israel Connection

Developing from the theory above we have the fascinating studies by Ahmed Osman and others. These suggest clearly a direct link between what was supposed to be Judaism and Egypt. This evidence proves, fairly conclusively in many peoples minds, that Moses and Arkenaten were the same people and that the Israelites were his followers escaping from Egypt. This model certainly re-visions the Old Testament as we start to realize that Judaism in this earlier phase had little to do with what we see as Rabbinic Judaism today. The evidence is then they developed a large desert culture with an emphasis on a God and a Goddess and that most Old Testament stories were written at a much late date and were distorted by the then fundamentalist and nationalist priesthood.. To appreciate this, we should revisit the Old Testament and see what we can find.

El, Yahweh and Reconsidering the Bible

There is more to the Old Testament than first meets the eye, and its study opens up a Pandora's box of issues we need to consider. Modern scholars believe that the Old Testament is not a coherent whole, when it is subjected to Biblical criticism it is found that there are at least three different streams of information within it. The El Stream, the Yahwahist Stream and the Priestly Stream. The El Stream is the very earliest, it seems to represent the pagan traditions of Canaan and surroundings. Within this tradition the Gods are known as El or the Mighty Ones, one of the more important is Baal. Associated with these Gods are goddesses, the major being is known as Athirat. Together Baal and Athirat form the basis of the pagan Canaanite tradition. As Israel became more nationalistic and political the El tradition was suppressed. At the same time a fundamentalist and literalist extreme arose within the society and this new tradition was the Yahwahist Stream. Yahweh becomes the Mighty One, Baal is vanquished and replaced with the tradition of the coming Warrior Messiah, with the goddess relegated to the shadows. The history of Israel is, in some sense, the battle between these two streams or religious traditions and between these two streams and the Gnosis ! In studying the Old Testament we need to realise that it is not the Word of God but a remnant, a historical record of what occurred within Israel at that period. While it contains scraps of the original Mysteries it is not primarily a religious text, but a mixture of myths, legends, histories and interpretations. While certainly the esoteric keys are found hidden throughout its pages we must also be aware of the distortions of the Gnosis that exist within it.

The Priestly Stream (that of the Scribe) rightly belongs beyond the Old Testament, it occurred

after the captivity in Babylon when Yahwehist scribes took control of Diaspora Israel in Babylon and re-moulded Judaism into a new form. This new form was based on literalist and fundamentalist not Gnostic values. The Yahwahist tradition was embodied, the El demolished and the Priest class was edited into the Old Testament to make it seem supreme. The Old Testament, as such, is a very edited book. It was written by a Priest class which existed a long time after the original events, and a class which wanted to destroy the traditional power of the Qadesh (see later discussion of this group) and mould the Yahwahist tradition into a militaristic style cult. This moulded Old Testament, (combined with the Talmud) became the text of modern Jewry. When the Israelites migrated to other lands after the Assyrian captivity they re-established many of the Gnostic traditions. Hence, the Druids and those of the Celtic faith probably had more in common with the original Israelite Gnosis than modern Judaism and Christianity. We can see how the struggle between various divergent traditions has been edited into the Old Testament, Joseph's Coat of many colours, for example, a Sumerian symbol of a Qadesh priest became a simple piece of clothing. Baal has been demonised to become the enemy of the people of Israel yet we know that the early Priests of Israel actually accepted Baal as part of their faith and there are other examples too numerous to mention. In some sense the creation story and other tales in the Old Testament echo this re-writing of history, while they certainly contain images and icons of the original Aryan faith, they also reflect the distorted tradition established by the Pharisaic Priesthood. One of the best examples of this is the image of the Serpent. The Serpent was a sacred symbol of the Israelite tradition, throughout the Old Testament it is also used as a symbol of wisdom. Moses uses a serpent to heal the people of Israel, in Gematria the serpent has the same numerical value as the Christ and is seen as a "type" of Jesus. Yet, at the same time, the Serpent is cursed in the priestly rendition of Genesis and seen as a symbol of evil.

And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole:
and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it,
shall live

Numbers 21:8

The serpent clearly is the symbol of Gnosis, wisdom and the earliest traditions. Again, while we can see remnants of the Gnostic faith in the myths and legends of Genesis, we can also see clearly the later addition of elements that the fundamentalist Priesthood could use to fight against the Israelite tradition. While we do not aim to try and summarise the Qadesh tradition here, it was an inner esoteric tradition that embodied a special form of technology aimed at transforming man into god (deification). It represented the highest class within the spiritual hierarchy and included forms of Shamanism, ritual technology and Gnostic Science. It was the esoteric heart of the Israelite people, regardless of the nature of the outer forms. It was similar to the inner grades of the Essenes and Gnostic sects and is at the heart of the Gnostic Faith.

The Sacred Serpent

The Serpent is an image central to the Gnosis, while this may at first seem unusual when we come to appreciate the esotericism of the Serpent we can understand its significance. The major problem which arises with the iconography of the serpent or snake is the prejudice found in most Christian literature, this all too clearly, however, comes from a misunderstanding of the image and distortion found in the Old Testament text.

The Bible as a whole has an ambivalent view of the serpent or snake, on one hand it seems to be represented as evil, even as an icon of the devil himself, while on the other it is used to represent wisdom and even perhaps salvation. The most obscure image is that found in Numbers 21:8-9 and Isaiah 15:29 where the serpent is used as an image of redemption. Moses holds up the serpent (on a cross) to heal Israel - most Christian scholars agree that this is a type of the coming Messiah, in Christian terms, Jesus himself. Accordingly, we have the unusual suggestion of the Serpent as Jesus. In Hebrew numerology the numerical value of the serpent or snake is that of the Messiah. Many Gnostic sects saw the serpent as the agent of redemption and the primary symbol of Gnosis. The Ophites (from the Greek word for serpent, Ophis), like many modern Gnostic groups, ourselves included, believe that the serpent of the Genesis story was a representative for the Lord of Light (as was Jesus), while the Creator depicted in the Old Testament was seen as the Demiurge. It has been suggested that since there was no town known as Nazareth existing in the first century common era, that the epithet Nazarene may actually be Naasarene which means the Serpentine and refers to Jesus' ancestry within the Gnostic communion.

The iconography of the Serpent links the Gnostics with the earliest occult traditions. In ancient Egypt the Serpent was the symbol of duality, it was both creative and destructive. Since it had both a forked tongue and dual penis, it was used to represent the potential's for good and evil within sexuality and the intellect. As the serpent of earth it represented that which destroys, the constant returning to the earthly cycles. In this representation it was reproductive, earth bound and destructive. While for the Egyptians the heavenly Serpent was that which gave man the knowledge to perceive the divine. The Egyptians were well aware that serpents don't fly, but by giving the serpent wings they emphasised the unique difficulty of going beyond the earthly cycles. The shedding of skin was a useful image for the cycle of eternal re-occurrence, whereby all things repeat until final annihilation or liberation is achieved.

The serpent then could be understood as representing the knowledge of Good and Evil, in its destructive mode it represents our attachments to the material world.. In its heavenly mode it represents the secret knowledge of the light. To achieve this secret knowledge one must transmute the instincts (the dual penis) and the intellect (the forked tongue) as well as going beyond the cycles of ordinary life (the shedding of the skin).

Within the traditions of Gnosticism the Serpent is used to represent the path of the Pneumatic, the highest Path to the Treasury of Light. In our tradition, as in the Valentinian Gnostic school, there were three grades - the Hylic, Psychic and Pneumatic. The Hylic was that of everyday man, it was sometimes represented by a crawling serpent, the snake of earth. The Hylic is the bulk of humanity, it has little innate spark of life and generally is a creature of instinct. The Psychic was the first path of Salvation and was represented by the Dove. The Psychic is a mixture of light, mind and flesh and is dominated by his lower instincts, he needs the guidance of the Gnostic school to achieve liberation. The secret path was that of the Serpent of Light, the winged Serpent. This path is followed by the Pneumatics, the Parfait or children of the Pleroma. The duality represented by the snake is very expressive, in some ways it hints at the secret techniques used within the higher path. The very things than condemn the Hylic to earth are turned and used to liberate the Pneumatic. The Serpent (and related images such as the snake and dragon) is therefore a expressive image of the nature of the Gnosis. The winged serpent represents the highest wisdom, while the crawling serpent represents the decay of earth. The duality of the snake is the dualism of the Ancient Wisdom.

Israel on the World Stage

If we continue from our Egyptian Israelite model, the next question is what happened to the Israelite community ? The historical evidence suggested that the Priest class created a literalist/fundamentalist "cult" which came to the forefront in Judaism after the time of Jesus. But where did the earlier Israelites go ? We know that ancient Israel, whose capital was Samaria, was taken captive by the Assyrians in 721 BC and yet after this traditional history tells us that the ten tribes are lost - but is this really so ? Or has history also been twisted by scribes and politicians ? We know that Josephus writing in 70 CE states "the ten tribes did not return to Palestine only two tribes service the Romans after Palestine became a Roman province". According to Second Esdras (a book within the New Testament Apocrypha) the ten tribes moved a thousand miles west to Southeast Russia to become the people history knows as the Scythians. In Race and Civilisation Roger Pearsons writes " Nordic Scythians overran Palestine in the seventh century BC and the history of the Sacae or Scythians with their many tribes and branches is well worth following. They originated in south-east Europe and moved through Asia as far as Turkestan and Afghanistan, even into India to the Indus. Many early writers (such as Polemon of Ilium, Galienos, Clement of Alexandria, Adamantos) state that the Scythians were similar to the Celts and Germans being fair or ruddy in hue".

Ancient historians including Ptolemy and Herodotus and modern historians such as Gibbon have also affirmed that the captive tribes of Israel were known through various periods as Guta, Gatae, Gauls, Goths, Manda, Dacians, Teutons, Normans, Angli, Suka, Scythians and Saxons. All these people were of the same racial stock and heritage as Ancient Israel. Now it is possible that Israel disappeared in one section of the world and the progenitors of the Anglo-Saxon-Celtic

people appeared in the same place a few years later without the two peoples being in anyway related but hardly probable! The overwhelming circumstantial evidence makes it appear that the lost tribes of Israel and the progenitors of the Anglo-Saxon-Celtic people were one and the same. And when, in addition to the circumstantial evidence cognizance is taken that these people have fulfilled what the prophets wrote of Israel, the probability becomes a certainty.

Sharon Turner

To really understand the nature of the early Israelite tradition they need to be seen as indigenous Mystery cults passed down from father to son (this is the meaning of the world Kabbalah) and embodying the secrets of creation. When Israel was taken into captivity a large segment of these teachings went with her and were transmitted to different locations around the globe and remnants remain in forms alien to what many would consider to be Judaic or Christian at all ! One of the major focus points of this tradition was within Ireland and England.

The Druid Connection

A classic example is found in the Druidic traditions. It is believed by many that the Druids became the Priestclass of Israel in exile after they had settled in Ireland and England. Many facets of the early Druidic faith resemble what we know of the original Israelite Mysteries. The secret alphabet which the Israelites used was sustained by the Druids and for mnemonic purposes was related to trees (and later to Birds and Animals). The Druids also met in outdoor sanctuaries (certainly the original Israelite way of worship), kept to their own and sustained a priesthood which had much in common with the Qadesh. Certainly the native religion of the Celts and many other Indo-Europeans betray a strong similarity to the Israelite traditions. One interesting fact to note is that according to many modern linguists the Welsh language has more words taken from Hebrew than any other language world-wide. This and many other historical facts suggest that the traditions of early England rather than being darkly pagan were actually Gnostic and probably embodied more truth than what was being taught in the Churches that were attacking them for heresy ! A later tradition regarding the relationship of Jesus to the Druids adds even further light on these connections..

In regards to Jesus traveling to Britain the details are sketchy but reliable. The evidence suggests that Israel was more of a cosmopolitan region than many scholars have realised, it had links with many peoples and many cultures. Joseph of Arimathea was a very rich man and it is now believed he bought and traded tin and other items from bases in England, probably Cornwall and Somerset. We know that after the death of Jesus around AD 63 St. Phillip actually sent Joseph and others back to England to preach the Gospel (*Refer. Victory of Aurelius Ambrosius by Gildad Albanicus*). In regards to Jesus traveling to Britain with Joseph there are many traditions in Somerset and other localities that certainly suggest same. It is even suggested that the

very location of Glastonbury Cathedral is where Jesus and Joseph built their hut on their first trip to Britain.

In the western confines of Britain there is a certain royal island of large extent, surrounded by water, abounding in all the beauties of nature and necessities of life. In it the first Neophytes of Catholic Law, God beforehand acquainting them found a Church constructed by no human art but divinely constructed (by the hands of Christ himself) for the salvation of his people. The Almighty has made it manifest by many miracles and mysterious visitations that He continues to watch over it as sacred to Himself....

A letter from St. Augustine to Pope Gregory

Amazing as it may seem even the Druids believe that Jesus came to Britain and taught them the esoteric teachings, for example, Taliesin, the Bard and Druid (circa AD 550) states “Christ, the word from the beginning, was from the beginning our teacher and we never lost his teachings”.

There are many volumes examining the details of Jesus' trek to Britain, some of the more important examine the historical record of Glastonbury which can be traced right back to the chapel built by Jesus himself. For this reason the site has continued to remain sacred and became the centre of other important legends and religious tales such as King Arthur and his knights. Obviously since Britain was the destination for so many of the Lost tribes of Israel we may expect that it would be of primary importance for the early spreading of the message. From many accounts Ireland and England were the first countries outside Palestine to receive the Christian message.

The Essene Link

Connected to these migrations is another very important link. When some of the people of Judah returned to Palestine after the captivity, not all accepted the Roman rule and integrated into the secular state. Though the Pharisees and Sadducees continued the fundamentalism form of Judaism, some of those who returned kept the original Israelite faith and separated themselves off into the deserts.

Though this group traveled from location to location, around approx. 180 BC they formed a secret communal order to sustain the ancient Mysteries in the deserts of Palestine. This group kept separate from the rest of the local peoples but kept contacts with Greek and perhaps even Egyptian Mystery Cults. They were not insular but taught a form of the Mysteries with both Israelite, Greek and Egyptian elements. This group was known as the Essenes and forms an important link in the survival of the Gnosis through the dark time from Constantine's rule to the present.

If it is true as everyone attests, that Moses left an oral law, it is amongst the Essenes that it was preserved. The Pharisees who flattered themselves so highly on possessing it, only has its outward forms, as Jesus reproaches them at every moment. It is from these latter that the modern Jews descend.

**La Langue Hebraique,
Fabre D'Olivet.**

While we will study the Essenes in more detail later, they form an important background, as it is from them that Jesus came and re-established the Gnostic faith. They are not an easy group to understand as they were in some sense transitional. While they tried to keep the original Israelite faith they were also corrupted by many local customs, laws and beliefs and hence while their hearts were in the right place, their beliefs were not. Their value is more in the bridge they created for the Gnostic traditions and Jesus, than in their own doctrinal stance.

Jesus was not a Jew racially or by geography (he was a Galilean), he was certainly not a Jew by religion either but an Israelite in the Essene sense. In this context we can then see how Gnosticism (or real Christianity) developed out of the Israelite-Essenes, not the fundamentalist or literal Judaism of the Pharisees..

They (The Essenes) were not waiting to receive the Law - they already possessed it. Their aim was to deliver it from the realms of darkness in which it had been engulfed. The Torah, that is, the Divine Teachings as revealed to Moses had, it was held, been successively perverted by false expositors .

**The Dead Sea Scriptures,
Theodore Gaster,
Doubleday, NY.**

The Essenes, Jesus and the Foundations of Gnosticism

The work of Jesus is central to the transformation of the Gnostic Tradition. Jesus as a pre-existent spirit; the Arch-Angel Michael took human form so he could show the way back to the Pleroma. He was born and lived as a human with the same potential for failing; same potential for suffering as all humans, he experienced the tides of the material world and overcome them. He traveled the world in his "so-called" missing years, studying in both India and Britain, bringing the threads of the Mystery Tradition to a common climax. While at the same time achieving a mastery of himself and the world around him. The baptism of Jesus shows clearly his high state of Initiation, his energy field has been cleansed of its fallen elements by Sophia and in recognition of his achievement, the Divine Will acknowledges his new state. Michael is now Jesus the Christ, the Christ state being the achievement of communication with the Mind of God or the Logos.

As soon as Jesus was baptised, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

Matthew 3:16,17

Jesus was now in a position to transform the human situation, as a Son of God (a being whose essence is in commune with the Logos and whose actions embody the Holy Spirit), he now went about his task of redeeming Israel. He was the Messiah from the Land of Light come for his people.

These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans, go rather to the lost sheep of Israel.

As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near.'

He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel."

Matthew 10:5-7

Matthew 15:24

Jesus however had more to achieve than simply transmit the Gnosis to Israel, Jesus had to initiate the current which would open the door to the Mysteries. By being initiated into the Essenes he brought Greek Mystery traditions and Israelite wisdom together, by being trained by the Israelites he has a link back to Egypt (also through the Greek). His travels in England and India brought into "pagan" and Hindu/Buddhist wisdom, so the Christ literally brought together many streams of esotericism into one font of secret wisdom. This teaching was certainly for Israel but in a new sense, it was for those prepared for initiation not for any discrete historical, cultural or racial class alone. This Gnosis or secret knowledge, clearly inferred that doctrine or belief was not enough, Jesus himself had to spiritually transform the nature of the material plane, so a new current, a new vibration was available which offers redemption from our false perceptions and our self created imprisonment.

Chapter Eight: Conditional Immortality & Reincarnation

The Aim of Life

The aim of life is to offer man a chance to gain salvation, to enter the path of Transfiguration. Since time immemorial the pleroma has outlined an escape route, a path by which man may awaken the True Self and grasp the gift of immortality. And immortality is a gift, in all mythologies we find a quest for immortality, a trial that leads to a reward of life eternal. In the twelve labours of Hercules we have a series of initiations which lead to eternal life, while in the quest for the Golden Fleece (of immortality) we have Jason overcoming immense odds to grasp it. The Divine will offers man many chances to gain immortality and these chances take place in many lives. Reincarnation within Gnostic thought is not the same as it is within eastern philosophy. Reincarnation occurs within a limited period and offers the opportunity for immortality, it is not an immortal soul gaining experience but a *mortal* "self" being offered opportunity on opportunity to enter the spiritual path. Reincarnation is also limited in time, while we do not know the number of lives or opportunities man is given, there is a limited time allotment after which the cycle is completed and unredeemed lifesparks cease to individually exist, unless they have been re-awakened by Transfiguration.

The Bible and Reincarnation

Now you may react by arguing that there is no Biblical authority for reincarnation. However, I am afraid that you would be very, very wrong. In the early Christian Church there were many that taught reincarnation. Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Jerome, Gregoras, Augustine and Irenaeus - to name but a few. It was only during the Council of Nicea in 325 AD that the concept of reincarnation became unpopular and this was coupled with the development of teachings regarding the Trinity, Eternal Hellfire, purgatory and other dogma's which were imported into the Church for political reasons by Emperor Constantine. It was only in AD 553 at the Second Council of Constantinople that reincarnation was finally and formally condemned.

In regards to Scripture itself it is obvious that Church copyists have removed many of the classic reincarnation references, however, references still do occur if you look closely and carefully analyse what you read.

In the Book of Revelation we have an exciting description of what will occur at the end of the earth cycle when the "born again", the spiritually transformed enter the New Kingdom. As part of the description the following is outlined....

Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.

Revelation 3:12

This verse clearly explains that those who have overcome (that is those who completed their spiritual development), will become a pillar in the temple of God and he shall go out no more, that is, he will reincarnate no longer. This is obviously the message intended in this verse.

Also when we examine the Gospels we find Jesus asking the disciples, who do they think I am ? You would think that when the disciples answer in terms of reincarnation that if this was incorrect Jesus would certainly correct them ! Surely he would not let them continue in their ignorance ! But no, Jesus accepts what they say but simply corrects them in regards to his own identity !

When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?

And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Matthew 16:13

We can then continue and note that in Matthew 17:10-13 Jesus informs them that he could not be Elias as Elias has already returned as John the Baptist ! (But I say unto you that Elias is come already and they knew him not). This is very obviously a description of reincarnation. Another excellent example is the commentary on Luke 12:58-59 offered by Carpocrates, a Gnostic leader from the Third Century.

As you are going with your adversary to the magistrate, try hard to be reconciled to him on the way, or he may drag you off to the judge, and the judge turn you over to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison. I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

Luke 12:58,9.

Carpocrates explains that the true meaning of this tale is that the opponent is the Demiurge, our perception of matter and that the jail is the body (the fallen material world) itself. No one can escape reincarnation until all earthly actions have been experienced.

Rather than continuing to analyse each verse one by one, let me just give you a couple by themselves to consider.

But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.

Now that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.

Luke 20:35-37.

But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

Micah 5:2

I think from these references it becomes quite clear that reincarnation was taught by the early Gnostic Christian church and even though the Bible has gone through constant editing and re-writing reincarnation still survives into the modern translations.

The Mechanism of Reincarnation

To understand the way in which reincarnation works we have to examine the effects of our actions. Now, in generally held Christian views there is a belief that actions do not have an effect, we ask for forgiveness and all is gone. This is obviously not correct, every action has an effect. Even if the moral (and the If is big !) punishment was removed from an act by asking for forgiveness the natural effect of that act remains ! (For example, I get Hepatitis from a heroin injection, while I may be forgiven for damaging my temporal physical vehicle, I still have to deal with the disease !) This process of cause and effect is found in many different traditions, in some forms of eastern philosophy it is known as Sanskaras or Karma.

If a soul when it has entered the body persists in evil it does not taste the fruits of life eternal, but is dragged back again, it reverses its courses and takes its way back to creeping things and that ill-fated soul having failed to know itself, lives in servitude to uncouth and noxious bodies, in this doom are vicious souls condemned.

Hermes.

In the western tradition it is figuratively called The Book of Judgement. This book is a balance sheet of the actions of the person as he reincarnates. As time progresses the positive and negative attributes of a person's life weigh against each other and the person continues to reincarnate. At various stages the balance will reach a crucial stage and accordingly the circumstances of a persons life will drastically change to give them a further opportunity to enter Transfiguration. These opportunities continue until the Omega Day when the cycle draws to a close. If the person has entered the spiritual life, then during these stages a slow and steady transformation of the Mind into True Self will occur (this process is called Transfiguration) and the born again persons name is figuratively transferred to the Book of life. No longer is a record kept of action and reaction, but a record of growth and spiritual transformation.

He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

Revelation 3:5

Transfigurism aims at nothing more nor less than demolition of the old microcosm, including the lower and higher self and building a totally new lower and high self, from the root substance of the original kingdoms .

The Coming Revolution,

J.Van Rijckenborgh.

The mechanism and aim of reincarnation is clear. Reincarnation is a process by which the Divine Will uses the experiences of our lives to awaken us to his spiritual truth. The opportunities for liberation are limited and the clock of cause and effect (The Book of Judgement) is ticking away. If we ignore the opportunities enough, then at the Omega day we may end up simply ceasing to exist. If we accept the opportunity, then our names are transferred to the Book of Life and our transformation begins.

Heaven and Hell

Having studied this far you still may have many questions regarding the Gnostic view of reincarnation, and you may wonder about the Judaic and Christian views regarding Heaven and Hell. Accordingly, we shall examine them for a moment. Heaven and Hell are symbols, within the Bible there is clearly more than meets the eye when we consider the various Hebrew and Greek terms used for them. The problem that arises when critically considering Heaven and Hell in the Biblical text is the problem of textual distortion. One of the easiest ways to come to an honest understanding is to let the original terms speak for themselves.

For example, there are many different terms for Hell. Like the many differing names of God, the various modern copyists have tended to use one word in numerous locations, where in real-

ity there are multiple words in the original Hebrew or Greek, which each offer many possible interpretations.

Hell on Earth

The term Sheol is used a lot in the Bible and as used in the Old testament can be interchanged with Grave, Pit, and Abode of the Dead. It is used to describe the state of the dead in relation to earth. The dead have no consciousness in relation to earth as they have returned to it ! The Grave or the state of being dead (without consciousness) is used to represent the lack of awareness the reincarnating soul has of the earth sphere. Time and time again this term is used to refer to cessation of activity and not in reference to an eternal fire or to any " spiritual realm ".

Hell - First it stands for the Hebrew Sheol of the Old Testament and the Greek Hades of the Septuagint and the New Testament. Sheol in Old Testament times referred simply to the abode of the dead and suggested no moral distinctions, the word Hell as understood today, is not a happy translation.

Colliers Encyclopaedia, 1986 Vol. 12 PG 28.

The Term Hades is the New Testament equivalent of the Hebrew Sheol and therefore has the same meaning - the Grave or in esoteric terms, the astral plane where a soul resides between incarnations and returns to earth again and again and again. The general tone of these Biblical terms are negative, that is, that the process of returning to the grave and returning back to earth is painful and destructive, from a Gnostic perspective this is certainly true. The other term regularly used for hell explains this even better, Gehenna (used in the New Testament) has a very specific meaning and symbolism. It literally refers to the valley of Hinnom and hence can only be understood in the context of what this valley represented. The Valley of Hinnom was located outside the walls of Jerusalem and was a large rubbish dump. Fires were triggered by the adding of sulphur so that the rubbish could be burnt up.

It became the common lay stall of the city, where the dead bodies of criminals and the carcasses of animals and every other kind of filth was cast..

Smith's Bible Dictionary.

It is such an apt description of the how we experience the darker aspects of our world, into which we are forced to reincarnate - criminals, carcasses of animals and every kind of filth. When we die, the body is eaten by animals or burnt by sulphur, or in more modern terms, cremated or buried and our soul then again must return. This sort of eternal re-occurrence, "hell on earth" is the iconography of Hades, Sheol and Gehenna, it is the real meaning of Hell.

While we may see the world as a form of the divine and should avoid unnecessary dualism in regards to our bodies and matter. In the end we must also accept that the world is a temporal schoolhouse and one that includes a lot of pain and suffering in its teaching method ! Hell, then, is not some eternal location to which we are damned in the future, indeed, in the Gnostic tradition, the end of those not awakened is simply oblivion, nothingness, ceasing to exist. If there is any hell with torture and gnashing of teeth it is the world in which are now exiled.

What is Heaven ?

The Hebrew Shamayim (always used in the plural) is translated 'heavens', but basically means high or lofty. It is used to refer to the atmosphere of earth (such as in Deut 4:17, Proverbs 30:19), outer space (Heb 11:12, Isa 13:10), the sky (Isa 45:8) and a range of other localities. The term is also used to refer to the higher worlds. In some ways it can be used to both refer to the astral worlds (the lower heavens) and the true heavens (the Pleroma) above.

Chapter Nine: The Mystery of Deification

What is the Aim of this Spiritual Process ?

To understand this is to focus on a central issue in the teachings of the Gnosis, that of the **Mysteries**. To appreciate the esoteric or Mystery teachings that are at the centre of Gnosticism we need to understand that the Gnosis is a progressive revelation. The Divine Will reveals to man knowledge (Gnosis) only as man is capable and willing to receive it. Certainly the knowledge that the Lord revealed to Moses was more advanced than that he revealed to Abraham and certainly the teachings of Jesus to his twelve disciples was different from that which he gave to the multitudes. In recent studies it has been discovered that Jesus laid the groundwork for the imparting of the Mysteries in the secret teachings he gave to his disciples, but even at his death did not believe they were ready for the inner mysteries. It now seems likely that these teachings, known as The Mysteries, were imparted to James, the Brother of Jesus and then to the other disciples. Over and over again St. Paul intimates that there is a special knowledge: The Mystery (Ephesians 3:3), The Mystery of Christ (Ephesians 3:4), The Mystery of his Will (;9), The Great Mystery (5:32), The Mystery of Christ (Colossians 2:2), The fellowship of the Mystery (Ephesians 3:9) and so on. Paul tells us in Ephesians 3:9 that the Mystery had been hid in God and that it had been a secret from the beginning of the world.

The Mystery which has been hid from ages and from generations, but now made manifest to his saints.

Ephesians 1:26

Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.

Romans 16:25,6

This Mystery is the opportunity for the deification of man. It is the secret whereby man may become part deified. He may return to the Pleroma awakened and in a state of divinity. It is clear that this path is not for all of Adam's children, but for a select number, the Psychics and Pneumatics.

For many are called, but few [are] chosen.

Matthew 22:14

As we re-read so many of the passages of the New Testament with this in mind we can see so clearly what is being indicated. We have the potential to become Christ's or better, we can become Christ, we can become one body, one family, the fullness of the Pleroma.

We shall be "partakers of the divine nature".

II Peter 1:4.

We have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office, so we being many are one body in Christ and every one members of one another .

Romans 12:4,5.

An interesting quote in this regards is made by one of the fathers of the early Church, Eusebius, who had the following to say...

The Word of God (Christ) is now God as he had been man, in order to deify mankind together with himself .

Demonstratio Evangelica, IV:14.

Other early Church fathers, partakers of the Mystery, also commented on the matter...

That a man, by keeping the directions of God, may receive from him immortality as a reward and become God.

Ad Autol. II:27,

Theophilus.

Thy body shall be immortal and incorruptible as well as thy soul. For thou hast become God.

Hippolytus.

For Christ was made man that we might be God.

De Incar,

Athanasius.

The Nature of Theosis (Deification)

Central to the Gnostic understanding of humanity is the belief that it is possible for man to become part of the God-Family. While mankind as a whole may seem to be in a pretty dismal state at present, the Gnostics have always taught that it is possible for the “particles of light” to be redeemed, and for those who seek, to find the Treasury of Light. This doctrine of Theosis or deification has been a major part of the Mystery tradition since the earliest days and has survived, albeit, in modified form, to the present in both the exoteric and esoteric traditions.

The concept of deification is found in the earliest religious systems, the rites of Kingship in both Sumeria and Egypt centred on the king being initiated through a secret rite of death and rebirth so that he could become a mediator between his people and God. As the mediator he was considered divine and was imputed with the symbols of divinity. In these early periods the way in which humanity contacted the higher worlds was through the Priest/King, in these theocracies individuals could not be deified in their own right, but achieved the power to develop and grow through the mediatorship of the divine Priest/King. While certainly the morality of these kings varied and so did the focus of their mediatorship, the principle remained, nevertheless, the same and the tradition continued. As the ages rolled on, mankind’s interaction with the spiritual worlds changed, rather than theocracies non-theistic political systems developed and the role of mediator was replaced by the priest, shaman or wise person. Through death and rebirth rites the priest achieved a state of power whereby s/he was able to mediate between the spiritual and physical worlds. At this stage we can see that individual Theosis was still far in the future, mediatorship was embodied in the Prophet, Priest, Shaman or wise person. The rites of Kingship and priesthood were kept secret and at first only passed via brotherhoods, cults and orders, however later they were also transmitted to individual priests and shamans who qualified but were outside the “monastic” system. Theosis at these early stages involved collective as well as individual gnosis, the land and the king, for example, in the Celtic tradition were intricately connected. In ancient Israel the people could only be cleansed by the Priest entering the Holy of Holies once a year and undertaking secret rites on behalf of his people.

A natural development after the mediating priest was the achievement of the individual right to deification. However, this involved spiritual as well as psychological changes. Man could not just develop the right to be deified, the Divine Will had to reach into the lower worlds and change the nature of the mystical path. Through the work of Jesus and Mary Magdalene, a religious transformation occurred and mankind was given the right to enter the Kingdom of Light. In the past some individuals had been able to achieve Theosis (Enoch walked with God and was not), but these were unique cases and were above and beyond the norm. In preparation for the work of Jesus and James, the Qumran community (the Essenes) had been formed, the teacher of righteousness began to outline the requirements for individual Theosis and this became the Mystery teachings of the Essenes. Other mystery cults undertook similar preparation.

The Essenes rejecting the apostate forms of literalist Judaism, separated themselves into the deserts and began preparation for the great change which was to occur. They understood that there were to be two Messiahs, a King (Davidic) and a Priestly. Today these two Messiahs have been misunderstood and the concept of Messiah or Christ has been distorted. In ancient Israel the Christ or Messiah was not one individual, it was a state of consciousness, a role and a task. The Davidic Messiah was the King who was expected to liberate Israel from its prison, while the Priestly Messiah was to give Israel a new spiritual impetus.

These two roles need to be carefully considered. In present scholarship there is a tendency to confuse literalist and fundamentalist forms of Judaism with the Gnostic forms of the Israelite Mysteries. Accordingly, the King Messiah tends to be seen in purely political and revolutionary terms, while certainly there is a political element to the message of the Davidic Messiah we must realise that since matter is only a temporal manifestation, for the Messiah to save Israel as a whole (as a collective of particles of light), the physical world must be redeemed ! This is why there is such an apocalyptic emphasis in Essene and Gnostic literature, for the Davidic Messiah to complete his task all matter must be transformed back to spirit. Accordingly, the role of the Davidic Messiah was to prepare Israel for a new interpretation of the Kingdom of God, Jesus as the Davidic Messiah illustrated how individual Theosis was possible. For through individual Theosis the particles of light may be liberated and at the Omega Day all light retrieved from matter. By his death and resurrection (whether literal or as a Mystery enactment) he embodied the old rites of Kingship and taught how individuals through death and rebirth could become deified.

During the life of Jesus, he prepared his disciples for this change in spiritual technology. He taught how they could come into contact with their Light selves but that only after his death could they receive the power of Sophia. It was only after he had conquered death that a path to individual Theosis became available and the task of those who followed such as Mary Magdalen and Simon Magus. Later the Gnostic St. Paul offered a full revelation of the Mystery of Theosis.

The new teachings as revealed by Jesus and Paul has two distinct aspects, the first is that of individual self discovery. This is the path of the Dove known to the Gnostics as the Psychic Path. It is the path outlined by Jesus. After the death of Jesus and outpouring of Sophia at Pentecost, James the Just revealed a second path, the path of the Serpent or the Pneumatic Path. This is the path of Theosis or deification. The concept of Theosis is found in the writings of many Church Fathers and is embodied in the initiations described in the Secret Gospel of Mark (refer works of Morton Smith). The path of the Serpent involved secret training, occult techniques and death and rebirth rites, it was both a way of life and a ritualised process. (As it is today).

There were two paths of survival for the doctrine of Theosis. As the Gnostic cults came and

went the doctrine was passed from one to another and flowered in the Cathars and Knight Templars. From the Knight Templars the doctrine passed to various esoteric orders and was transmitted via Freemasonry and occult traditions. This form of the doctrine of deification sustained the technology and science, but lost most of the ethical and religious teachings associated with it.

On the other hand, the doctrine was also passed from the Gnostic cults to various Monastic orders within the Orthodox Church. Here the doctrine took root and became an accepted teaching within the Orthodox traditions. It is still taught today within most Orthodox communions, however, over the centuries it has lost its context, esotericism and technology and in such an exoteric form exists as little more than a name. We also know that the esoteric form of Theosis was taught to Gurdjieff by various esoteric Christian bodies and made its way into modern Fourth Way Schools. A prime example is in the work of Boris Mouravieff (Praxis Institute) who combines Orthodoxy with Fourth Way traditions.

Theosis or deification is central to the Gnostic tradition. It represents the natural development of the inner transfigurative processes of Ancient Israel. We can see how the Divine Will revealed knowledge to man first through Kingship in a theocracy, then through the Prophets and Shamans and finally directly to the human soul through initiation and Transfiguration. The essence of the Transfiguration process is the ability of an individual to enter the path of rebirth and escape the Archons to return home as a immortal member of the God-family.

The Mystery

The Mystery is central to our understanding of the real message of the Apostolic Gnosis. That is also why we tend to call True Christianity, Gnostic Christianity, as the term Gnosis means Knowledge. However, Gnosis represents more than theory, it represents the living experience of the knowledge or Mystery. The Mystery is more than ancient theory, it comprises a series of doctrines and practises that actually offer transformation of man into God. Jesus, our Elder Brother outlined a technology, a spiritual process whereby man may be sanctified and purified to such a level that he is transformed into child of the Treasury of Light. This process is that of Transfiguration and encompasses the idea of being Born again and is very different from what you may have been taught about being reborn.

To be Born Again

The actual nature of the process of Transfiguration is important to define, so is the way of entering into it. The fundamentalist Christian concept of simply giving your life to Jesus is utterly alien to the real teachings of the Master Jesus. The process of being born again is just that, *a process*. Just like a child takes nine months from conception to birth, so the process of being reborn takes a long period of time, perhaps even many lives. It is an apt description, birth brings us into the fallen world, rebirth takes us out of it ! The moment of conception is that time when

you decide to enter onto the Path of Transfiguration. From that conception you begin to grow and transform from a person of the flesh to a being of spirit, from a slave of the Archons to a centre of Light. The choice of reproductive imagery is deliberate, since the Gnostic tradition is anti-reproductive, in some sense to be born again is to be de-born as well as reborn, you have chosen to create a new self within yourself rather than perpetuate the cycle by reproducing an external self (a child). For most of us, this transformation is not completed within our life-span (s), and hence we have to wait until the end of the cosmic cycle when the children of the Pleroma are finally reborn into the new Kingdom.

The Nature of Transfiguration

Transfiguration offers the transformation of man. It offers liberation from the cycles of the World of the Archons and transfiguration into a new Being, a child of the Treasury of Light. Transfiguration is based on the example of Jesus who through his Ascension to become the first Born of the Treasury of light opened the way so we can enter the spiritual Path. This Path is known as the Path(es) of the Dove and Serpent or the Path of Transfiguration. When a person enters the Path, the Pneumatic Spark or Light Self that has been frozen in time awakens and begins to grow once again. Sophia cleanses the Mind, instincts and other constituents of the psychic apparatus and prepares the initiate for communion with the Logos or Mind of God. The process of rebirth is just that, a process. Nobody is immediately born again, the process of rebirth takes much time (even lifetimes) from conception (entering the spiritual Path) to final rebirth into the Kingdom of God.

Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

1 Peter 1:23

Transfiguration involves both Grace and Works, Justification and Sanctification. These are loaded terms but important in understanding how the process of rebirth actually operates. The moment you enter the Spiritual path you are seen as reborn, that is, the Pleroma perceives you as a new creature, a new being. The Aeons see you as a child of the Light. In this sense you are justified, that is, through Transfiguration you are seen as reborn. However, you must now live up to this commission and actually achieve this state. Many start the path but do not make it. There is a vast difference between the initial act of justification and the long process of purification or sanctification through which you must travel before you are actually reborn. By Grace you have entered the spiritual path, by works you make it to the moment of Rebirth. The process of transformation is a difficult and demanding trek however by following the teachings of the Gnosis you will reach the goal. Just like there are many miscarriages in this world, there are many in the spiritual world. Being conceived on the Path of Transfiguration is not enough, the Path itself must be traveled!

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

1 Corinthians 5:17

The Two Paths

The first Path is known as the Terrestrial Path or that of the Dove. There are actually two paths within the process of Transfiguration. Before anyone can enter the Path of the Serpent of Wisdom or the Celestial Path they must have passed through the Terrestrial first. The Terrestrial Path is the path of rebirth for most Gnostics, it is a demanding way which transforms the Dialectic into the very substance of the Treasury of Light. In the New Testament it is the Path of the Called. In the secret teachings of Valentinus those who enter the Path of the Dove are known as Psychics, while those who follow the secret Path of the Serpent are known as Pneumatics.

The Path of the Dove has seven stages. These seven stages illustrate the process of the Terrestrial path, after the Gnostic has worked through these stages he can rightly be called a Child of the Treasury of Light. At this point, depending on his destiny, he will reincarnate and teach and assist others or he will enter the Celestial or Secret Path. The destiny of those who remain as Children of the Dove is to be reborn as Immortal beings living on the restored Light world which will be the replacement for Earth. The Earth will be rectified and return to the Static Kingdom and will exist in a dimension of Light populated by those of the Terrestrial Path of Rebirth.

The Mysteries

.....and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things.

Ephesians 3:9

The Word of God is now God as He had been man, in order to deify mankind together with himself.

Eusebius,

Demonstratio Evangelica IV:14

The Mysteries are a special teaching which is not covered in most Biblical studies. It is the final secret teaching revealed by Christ (after his ascension) to St. Paul and then onto the other Apostles. The teaching was the last stage of the continuing development of the spiritual System given by Jesus. The Mysteries are described in a range of New Testament books as the Mystery (Ephesians 3:3), The Mystery of Christ (Ephesians 3:4), The Great Mystery (Ephesians 5:32), The Administration of the Mystery (Ephesians 3:9) and in many other verses. This teaching was

an esoteric Gnosis which was not available until its revealing after the death of Jesus. This teaching was a special wisdom for a certain class of initiate. The Divine Will would call certain people from the Path of Terrestrial Salvation to enter a new way, that of Celestial Deification. And that is the nexus of this new specialized teaching, that some of the initiates would be called to become Part of the God Family, in other worlds, Gods themselves ! This special Path is known as the Celestial Path, the Path of the Serpent of Wisdom or The Path of the Chosen Ones. Initiates on this Path were known in some traditions as Parfait or Perfected Ones. This Secret teaching has been known to the Orthodox Churches for some time but has been taught in radically divergent fashion.

Gods essence is inaccessible. His uncreated and eternal energies (Glory, Light, Love) permeate the universe and make possible a personal union with man. In its worship the Church offers thanksgiving that God has opened the way for man to come to him and has made union with him possible.

This is the Orthodox Churches' teaching of the deification (theosis) of man, a doctrine based on the Incarnation, which revealed a new perfect humanity.....This union is the goal of prayer and participation in the Sacraments, it involves the co-operation of two wills, divine and human. In this union with God human beings become " partakers of the divine nature " (II Peter 1:4) without ceasing to be creatures. Other New Testament writers expressed this union in terms of being or dwelling in Christ.

The fathers of the Church as well as modern theologians recognised that deification as the goal of Christian life lies at the base of every important theological controversy in the history of the Orthodox Churches.

**Abingdon Dictionary of Living Religions,
Page 553.**

In simple terms the Divine Will will call certain Gnostics on the Path of Transfiguration onto a special road. These will be few in number and the demands on them will be ever so great. Their first task will be the mastery of the Terrestrial Path, however, then rather than reincarnating simply to teach and assist, they will achieve perfection while doing the special tasks required by The Lord of Wisdom. Some of these Perfect Ones will achieve some measure of perfection in the flesh and become emissaries of the divine in their lifetimes.

The Mysteries are very different from the more traditional Gnostic paths for they include no moral or ethical restrictions, for as a man becomes part of God, he will act as the voice of God directs. These Perfected Ones or Parfait as the Cathars called them, are few and far between. As it is all too easy for a man to claim immortality and perfection, it is another thing to actually achieve it. In many cases the Ecclesia themselves " administered the Mysteries ", that is, they

recognized or denied the state of Perfection to avoid charlatans and false prophets claiming the title without right.

I said, 'You are "gods"; you are all sons of the Most High.'

Psalms 82:6

Mystery of the Melchisedek Priesthood

Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchizedek.

Hebrews 5:10

One of the ways we can see the differences between the two paths of Salvation is found in an understanding of the Priesthood of Melchizedek. This priesthood is a special, immortal Royal line which was founded by the Lord of Wisdom in the period before creation. It is a unique Priesthood and one available to all those of Israel. It comprises, however, various levels or hierarchies within it.

The four levels of the Melchizedek Priesthood are:

- 1 First Born of Creation.
- 2 144,000 Elders.
- 3 Celestial Class.
- 4 Terrestrial Class.

The First born of Creation is Michael who became Jesus himself. He is the Highest Priest of all.

The *144,000 Elders* are of a special class. They are the Overmen or Succeeders from the last cycle. They are a group who passed right through the seven phases of the previous Adamic evolutionary cycle. When they saw the destruction being reeked throughout our universe by our own ignorance and stupidity, they elected not to continue on with their own development but to return and incarnate on earth to assist the lost souls of our planet. They are virginal in the sense that while they are incarnated in human bodies they were not of this cycle, they are the true firstfruits from beyond earth. Throughout history they have reincarnated as teachers, leaders, warriors and priests, they were the builders of the Great Pyramid in Egypt under Enoch and will lead the Lost tribes of Israel in the End times.

And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts,

and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.

These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.

Revelation 13:3-4

The *Celestial Class* are those who have reached perfection through the Path of Transfiguration and achieved a state of Godhood. They continue to incarnate on earth working with the Will (Logos) of the Lord of Wisdom. In the end time the 144,000 in conjunction with the Celestial Class will fulfil the role of the "Left Hand of God" cleansing the planet in preparation for his return. The Celestial class will be deified and unit with the pleroma.

The *Terrestrial Class* are those who achieve perfection at the resurrection. They apply and follow the Gnostic principles in many lives as they transform from earthly to heavenly substance. The terrestrial class will continue their development in the next "Great Chain of Being" (new heaven and new earth).

Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.

Revelation 3:12

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

Revelation 21:1-4

Chapter Ten: The Seven Stages of Salvation

The Seven Stages of Salvation

The Paths of Salvation are divided into seven distinct steps. Each of which we shall examine in some detail...

- 1 First Steps.
- 2 Faith and Education.
- 3 Baptism. (Initiation).
- 4 Anointing. (Holy Spirit).
- 5 Overcoming The Dialectic System.
- 6 (Communion and Feasts).
- 7 Rebirth
- 8 Resurrection.

First Steps: Repentance

The word repentance rings in the ears of most of us who had the misfortune of being brought up in Christian traditions. The problem is that most people have no knowledge of what the word really means ! The image of repentance in keeping with the traditions of most of western Christianity, is simply to say you're sorry, you can do whatever you want as long as you say sorry to God and get forgiven. However, this is not what the Gnostic tradition or for that matter the Bible really says. The actual term repentance means to turn about, to reverse, to change. It means a point where an individual decides his life is going the wrong way and turns it about and heads in another direction. The term repentance in the Gnostic sense means to awaken to the fact that one's life; being, mind and emotions are chained to the Dialectic field and whatever ones does, one cannot escape. Hence, only through Transfiguration can liberation be achieved. The first stage of Transfiguration is to turn away, to repent, to give-up the Path of the world (The Dialectic field) and begin the trek to Redemption.

This change of direction starts with the simple acknowledgment of the Covenant and by a conscious effort to start living the life of a true Gnostic.

First Steps: Detachment and Controlled Awareness

When Buddha said all life was suffering he wasn't joking ! The perceptiveness of Gautama Buddha's understanding of how the Dialectic system is perpetuated cannot be underestimated. As Buddha expressed in his four Noble truths, all life is suffering because we become attached to what happens to us and attachment leads to reaction and reaction to attachment. Buddha's solution is interpreted by modern scholars of the Buddhist traditions (Himayana and Mahayana) to be total detachment. There, however, is a problem. If we understand that the Dialectic system is sustained by action and reaction then total detachment and total attachment both will have ramifications and by logic, reactions. If we see 0 or no linkage to the Dialectic system as the goal then Detachment would be negative (-1) and attachment would be positive (+1). Both involve actions and reactions. Many Gnostic schools apply western versions of Buddha's logic the problem however is that when we attempt to totally detach from the world, the reaction is normally so strong, we end up in total attachment ! One of the first steps in the Path is that of "Controlled Awareness". Controlled Awareness is becoming totally aware of what is happening within us and around us. It involves realising that the process of rebirth involves the "death" of the old terrestrial mind and emotions, and the rebuilding of a new Self. Transfiguration awakens the real self, a Self we have never experienced and one which is truly 'us' and yet so alien at first. Accordingly the new Gnostic on the Path must become aware of the changes that are occurring within him and observe and understand the reactions and actions that occur. The "controlled" facet of awareness is in the fact that the Gnostic must slowly learn to make decisions about what occurs in his mind and emotions. A pause must be created before an action is taken; an emotion is expressed; a behaviour is enacted and a decision made regarding its value in light of the Spiritual Path. In some situations attachment will be the answer, in others detachment, the key is awareness and the focus is on controlled decision making. Full detachment and full attachment are opposites and hence lead further into the Dialectic rather than away from it.

First Steps: Study, Conviction and Emotion

The structure of the psyche must also be taken into consideration. How many of us focus on careers, money, music, fame and so on. The true Gnostic must be focused on the Spiritual Path and nothing else. In the Gospels the allegory of giving up all is used, obviously you are not expected to give away everything but your sole goal must be to reach the Treasury of Light.

Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me.

Luke 18:22

Developing this thought we need to consider the role of the Mind and the Emotions in our lives. For most of us, prior to entering the Path, our Lords are either the Mind or the emotions. Yet on the spiritual path this cannot be so, the mind is a good scribe but a bad master, the emotions and

the body are excellent followers but rotten leaders. The new Self which is awakening must take control of the body ("Put your House in Order") and a restored Mind and Emotions will take their rightful place beneath it. In the life of the Gnostic there should be a simple set of principles...

1 Study should come first, study the Scriptures, study the Gnostic texts and the Restored Gnostic keys.

2 Secular thinking and belief come second ! Logic and belief must be based in a firm foundation, the foundation of Self and the Lord of Wisdom.

3 Thirdly and definitely only third comes the body and the emotions. Sure, look after the body and enjoy the world, but do so with care ! Just because you wake up one morning feeling bad does not mean you have fallen off the spiritual path. But remember, the world is a trap, a dialectic prison and hence indulgence (+1) or attachment and mortification (-1) or detachment are both actions and reactions and hence part of the prison we are caught in.

Faith and Education

One of the most important steps on the Path is that of education or more correctly, re-education. When the Gnostic begins to really study the Bible with the Keys of the Mysteries a whole new understanding arises and this new understanding (Gnosis) will change forever the way he looks at the world. Study is hence a major part of the Path of Transfiguration and it leads to a whole new way of examining the world. This viewpoint is sometimes called faith but is better described as Conviction. It is a worldview that grows out of the experience of the Gnosis. An experiential wisdom that the world is really a fallen place, and that we are being called home to another world, another dimension; another order of being. The process of re-education is constant as it involves a battle, everyday we are programmed with garbage from the Dialectic system, Television, radio, newspapers, novels, books, friends, family members...all offer us the wisdom of the world. Accordingly, everything we are fed enters into our minds and conflicts with the new developing Self.

But this is just the beginning ! Within everyone of us are false selves, little identities created out of desires and unconscious materials (internal Archons), these false selves like Gods demand attention and control. These little selves are nodes of unconscious desires and experiences and hence are "restricted" in focus and knowledge, they are therefore extremely dangerous and destructive. Little Gods of Self hate, Lust, Narcissism, addictions etc. all control and cloud the mind and instincts. They refuse to allow us to live in the present replaying past events and creating false associations between present events and the past. They control the mind to such an extent that the Voice of God (the Logos) cannot be heard and we become lost within our internal fallen worlds. At the same time, the old Mind and emotions are also false Gods, for their place is in submission to the awakened Self (True Self) not in domination of it. The structure of

the True Man is like a chariot, the body is the Chariot itself, riding in it is the True Self, the mind is the reins and the Horses are the emotions. Only when these constituents are in their rightful place does the chariot speed in the right direction. The horses are good at their given task but very bad drivers ! So all things must be in their place and this is the task of Transfiguration. The process of re-education involves a long and arduous battle in which the old " Gods " die and a new God is reborn. The Mind and Emotions are destroyed in the Dark Nights of initiation and a new mind/emotion complex is formed under the directions of the True Self. Like Osiris we must rise from the death of our old selves into the new.

Lord, I die daily.

1 Corinthians 15:30

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

2 Cor 5:17

Baptism, Initiation and The Anointing

He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

Luke 3:3

Baptism or immersion into water represents the first Initiation on the spiritual Path. It is a ritual recognition of the process of rebirth that has begun. The rite itself is not the same as the rite of Christening, there is no Biblical evidence for the initiation of minors. The rite of baptism is by full immersion into water and represents the descent of the Old man into death (the water) and rebirth as a new creation. This can be readily seen from Luke 3:3 where Baptism is specifically referred to as the Baptism of Repentance. Repentance as discussed earlier involves a radical change of life direction and hence can only be recognised in someone of mature age. Baptism is the first of the Seven Sacraments used by the Gnostic Church. The rite is only available to those who have entered the Path of Transfiguration. Baptism is one of three Initiations offered by the Gnostic Ecclesia: Baptism by Water, Anointing with the Holy Spirit and Celestial Confirmation (Consolumentum). As can be seen from the verse below there are two distinct forms of Baptism, both of which are available to those on the Terrestrial Path. There is the Baptism of repentance (known scripturally as the Baptism of Water or John's Baptism), and there is the Baptism or Anointing with the Holy Spirit or Fire. (The Baptism of the Holy Spirit). The Third Initiation, that of the Celestial Class is a unique rite (not a Baptism) and one we will not elaborate on in this study.

So Paul asked, "Then what baptism did you receive?" "John's baptism," they replied. Paul said, "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus." On hearing this, they were baptised into the name of the Lord Jesus.

Acts 19:3-5

The Anointing of the Holy Spirit is the Baptism with Fire. It is not given with the Baptism of repentance but is offered later on the spiritual Path. As the Baptism of repentance is recognition of starting the spiritual Path, the Baptism of Fire is recognition of a certain degree of achievement and is stimulus for further growth. The Baptism of water symbolises the start of the work of Sophia in cleansing the life of the student, it also initiates the growth of the Light Spark in the Gnostic. The Baptism of fire recognises the growing Spark of Light and accelerates the destruction of the "old man" within the Gnostic being. As the Spark of Light grows it attempts to commune with the Mind of God (Logos) to which the Gnostic now has access, however, false perceptions and attachments block the way. As the initiate grows Sophia purifies and destroys the blockages between the Self and the Logos. This process is recognised and accelerated by the Initiation of Fire. The Spirit baptism also recognises the new Mind and emotion through which the New Man is being formed. Accordingly, as Sophia acts new gifts and powers are activated. It should be noted that since this Baptism initiates new aspects of the Transfiguration process, it should be only offered to mature Gnostics. An initiate just on the path, so to speak, by taking this Baptism can bring on internal experiences beyond his maturity, it is no use destroying the mind and emotion until you are ready to relinquish control of them to the New You !

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit.

There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.

There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues.

All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.

1 Corinthians 12:4-11

When they arrived, they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit,

because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them; they had simply been baptised into the name of the Lord Jesus.

Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

Acts 8:15-17.

Many may argue against separate Baptisms of water and fire and yet clearly in the Book of Acts we have a discussion of the difference between the Baptism in the name of Jesus and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This also leads us to an understanding of the esoteric meaning of the name Jesus and the Christ. Jesus in symbolism is the human principle. In Gnostic literature the name Jesus was symbolic of the spiritually disciplined life, hence, Baptism in the name of Jesus is the first Baptism, that of water, that of Discipline, that of Repentance. The Second baptism (or anointing) is that of Fire, it is the Christ Baptism. At this baptism Sophia breaks down the barriers between the new awakened Self (Pneumatic Spark) and the Logos, and the Gnostic enters into communion with the Mind of God. In other words, the Divine Will is present in his soul, he is Christed.

Living the Life of a Gnostic: Overcoming The Dialectic System

In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,

2 Timothy 3:12

Of great significance on the Path of Transfiguration is actually 'living the Life'. As part of the Path we offer some guide-lines, these include...

- 1 Following the Light Within
- 2 Separation from the World.
- 3 Fellowship.
- 4 Life on the Path

Each of these offer assistance along the Path, following the Light within includes the guidance we receive from the Gnostic tradition. For example, in how we should deal with ourselves and those around us. Separation from the world is of paramount importance. While this is difficult to apply today it is abundantly clear that we are to keep to our own path, avoid social contact with those not of the Gnosis, and keep ourselves focused on our own traditions.

The term fellowship means association, community, communion, joint participation, intercourse, the share which one has in anything, participation, the right hand as a sign and pledge of fellowship (Strong's Exhaustive Concordance). It is not simply a social gathering or friendships, but a communion of those of similar heritage and of similar belief. Fellowship certainly assists many on the Spiritual path who find the quest difficult and isolated, however, it is only of value inasmuch that the fellowship itself conforms to the dictates of the Gnostic tradition.

Life on the Path

Life on the spiritual path is difficult, it is a battle between the false perceptions we have inside ourselves (and those outside) and the power of Light. In the Gnostic traditions there are many descriptions of this battle and what it entails. Within the modern esoteric traditions this battle is posited in terms of a force called the " Dweller on the Threshold ". The dweller guards the crossroad between the World of the Archons and the Treasury of light and as the Gnostic approaches this doorway attacks him without mercy, only those truly on the path survive. Some Gnostic systems image this process as a cosmic trek through the planets where at each planet the soul needs special passwords and gestures to gain " right of passage ". For others this battle is seen in terms of an internal quest. For St.John of the cross this process was part of the ascent of Mount Carmel where the Soul would meet its maker. Along the way the soul experiences torments and immense pain as it is purified and prepared for the divine marriage with God.

Hence the Dark night with its aridities and voids is the means to the knowledge of God and self, although the knowledge given in this night is not as plenteous and abundant as that of the other night of spirit, for the knowledge of this might is as it were, be the foundation of the other.

(The soul experiencing the Dark Night) resembles one who is imprisoned in a dark dungeon, bound hands and feet and able neither to move, nor see, nor feel any favour from heaven or earth.

Dark Night of the Soul,

St.John of the Cross

(N1:12,6 N2:7,3)

In whatever form the dark Night is experienced it is terrifying. It occurs in the spiritual growth of all who follow the Path. After the initial excitement of entering the Path and starting the spiritual quest, doubts arise; fears; dreams; terrors; a feeling of abandonment, an inability to study, meditate or concentrate. It is during this period that the " old " mind and emotions are destroyed, so feelings of death and rebirth are not uncommon. It is a truly shattering occurrence. However, it will be experienced many times along the spiritual path as the lower vehicles are transformed and the New Self grows. An excellent description of this process is found in the lit-

erature of Alchemy. For the Alchemists the substance that was being transformed into Gold was themselves and the procedures reflected the spiritual Path. The formula of IAO was used as a code to pass on the teachings to their students.

The life of the Gnostic involves the total transformation of the individual from one substance to another and accordingly involves the greatest revolution in consciousness possible. This transformation cannot be readily expressed in words but needs to be experienced. An interesting description of the transformation is given by Nietzsche when he discusses the process of "overcoming man" and becoming the Overman and compares the gap between Man and the Overman in the following terms....

I teach you the Overman.

Man is something that shall be overcome.

What have you done to overcome him ?

All beings so far have created something beyond themselves; and do you want to be the ebb of this great flow and even go back to the beasts rather than overcome man ?

What is the ape to man ? A laughing stock or painful embarrassment.

And man shall be just that for the Overman; A laughing stock or a painful embarrassment.

You have made your way from worm to man; and much in you is still worm.

Once you were apes, and even now, too, man is more ape than any ape.

Whoever is the wisest among you is also a mere conflict and cross between plant and ghost. But do I bid you to become ghosts or plants ?

Behold I teach you the Overman.

Thus Spake Zarathustra,

Fredrich Nietzsche.

Chapter Eleven:

The Secret Way

And going out of the tomb they came into the house of the youth, for he was rich. And after six days Jesus told him what to do, and in the evening the youth comes to him, wearing a linen cloth over his naked body. And he remained with him that night, for Jesus taught him the Kingdom of God.

Secret Gospel of Mark,

The Secret Gospel,

Morton Smith. Aquarian, 1985.

This verse provides an excellent introduction to the Path of Gnosis. In the Secret Gospel of Mark we have a record of a small segment of the initiated tradition which survived beneath the gloss of early Christianity. As can readily be seen from the above quote, the inner training involved days of tuition and education as well as a nocturnal initiation, where the teachings of the Kingdom were finally revealed. This certainly is not the Born Again experience of a Southern Baptist ! The Path of the Gnosis or Celestial Salvation is very different from what most people expect. It builds on the foundations of the terrestrial path but goes far beyond them. It is a path for a Chosen few in juxtaposition to that of the Path of the Called few. The Path to Salvation in general terms is only for a small number, therefore the Celestial Path is for an even more minute elect. It is a special elite Path for the chosen.

Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to.

Luke 13:24

In the early Gnostic Church the State of Perfection was well recognised. To avoid charlatans claiming the state, the church itself verified the achievement. This was known as the Administration of the Mysteries (Ephesians 3:9). This recognition was by a third form of Baptism, a secret rite. This was known as the Consolamentum by the Cathari and could only be offered once in a lifetime. It is rumored that if someone took this baptism and was not prepared for it, it would destroy them or send them mad.

The Order of the Hierarchs has the task of Consecration and of Perfection, that the illuminative Order of priests bring light and that the task of the deacons is to purify and to discern the imperfect.

Dionysius, The Complete Works,

Paulist Press, 1987.

This special class was known in many other Gnostic traditions. In some groups they were known as the Living Saints or Perfected Ones. The Cathars knew them as the Parfait. This Celestial class, however, did not live like other Christians. Because they had achieved a new state of being they went far beyond the normal restrictions and confines of contemporary morality. As illustrated in the wineskins tale of the New Testament, the New Wine of the Gnosis cannot be poured into old wineskins, according a totally New Man (Light Being, Parfait) must be formed before receiving the secret teachings. The New Wine or Esoteric teachings of Jesus were reserved for the Celestial class.

And no one pours new wine into old wineskins.

If he does, the new wine will burst the skins, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined.

No, new wine must be poured into new wineskins.

Luke 5:37,38

This system of graduated knowledge, different teachings for different levels of Salvation is also clearly intimated in the work of Jesus himself. Jesus taught in a carefully structured hierarchy composed of The Twelve Disciples, The Seventy and the Multitudes.

It can be readily seen that this structure of teaching is mirrored in the Multiple Paths to Salvation. The Celestial path, the Terrestrial Path and the Multitudes who may follow the ethical codes but do not enter the Path. It is not simple to explain the nature of the Celestial Path nor the calling to it. However, it is imperative for the Gnostic to know the voice when it comes, for the Celestial path is a special calling bringing unique opportunities as well as many dangers.

Celestial Transfiguration

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth in me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.

John 14:12

The calling to the Celestial Path is a special one. It echoes across lifetimes bringing the Parfait to higher and higher levels of development, until, at an appointed time perfection is achieved. This state of Perfection is a unique state of being. It is one where the Gnostic is in tune with the Mind of God (Logos) and his actions embody the Holy Spirit (Sophia). This state of "Walking in the Light" represents a special achievement of spiritual regeneration. It is the full manifestation of the Covenant of the Mysteries and is represented by a very small group of humanity.

Now it is fitting that the soul regenerate herself and become again as she formerly was. The Soul then moves of her own accord. And she received the divine nature from the Father for her rejuvenation, so that she might be restored to the place where originally she had been.

This is the way of the ascent to the Father.

The Exegesis of the Soul.

Nag Hammadi Library II 134:6-15.

The process of achieving Celestial Transfiguration involves a range of complex spiritual transformations. It begins with the traditional Terrestrial Path and after a period known as The Dark Night of the Soul, a special calling is experienced. This calling is unique to each one called, and is a harrowing experience, which shakes the soul to its very core. The Gnostic is then lead through secret and inner interpretations of Scripture and practise (by a teacher or Hierarch) and then into an experience of full regeneration. Usually this process is achieved over many lifetimes and in keeping with the coming End of Time many Parfait are now awakening into the Celestial State.

The amazing thing about this state is that it goes further than simply returning the "soul " to Perfection (Terrestrial Salvation) but actually transfigures the Self to become a member of the God family while in life !

This state of Perfection (Teleios) is inherent within the concept of spiritual rebirth and the nature of the New Man in Christ. As a Gnostic is reborn in the image of God, then the implication is that it is possible to fully reflect the nature of God. This obviously entails perfection. Some Biblical references will help you get some background...

Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

Matthew 5:48

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Romans 12:1,2

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Galations 2:20

But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.

1 Peter 5:10

For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

Hebrews 2:10

That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

2 Timothy 3:17

Going Beyond the Law

The perfection of this state, however, is not the moral perfection that many may contemplate. To be privy to the very mind of God is to be beyond all Law and Moral restrictions. For the Lord himself is not bound by any law or regulation, neither is the Perfected Parfait. This is why the Perfected Ones are unique among those of the Gnostic Ecclesia, for the very things that would lead the average man or Gnostic to destruction a hundred times over, will lead a Parfait to further perfection !

For I am Knowledge and ignorance. I am shame and boldness. I.... I am sinless and the root of sin derives from me. I am lust in appearance and yet interior self control exists in me.

The Thunder, Perfect Mind - Nag Hammadi Library.

This issue of the Amorality of the Celestial Path is probably the most difficult to understand. It is because of the unique nature of the Parfait and their missions for the Lord of Wisdom that a state of " living beyond the Law " must be achieved. The law is a product of the fallen world and is of some significance within the earthly kingdoms. However, when a Parfait goes beyond the world and is living as a being in the Treasury of Light (only temporarily in the lower world) then obviously he is not under earthly law. The law of the Pleroma or The Treasury of Light is Pure freedom since all beings in that world are united in divinity, accordingly, the Parfait is be-

yond all law. This state of perfection and union with the Mind of God is imperative so the Parfait can achieve the special tasks the Lord of Wisdom requires of them. While those of Terrestrial Salvation may continue to reincarnate to teach and assist until being resurrected unto perfection. Those on the Celestial Path achieve some measure of perfection in life after many incarnations and become emissaries of the Pleroma.

For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.

1 John 5:4

They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

John 17:6.

If therefore it be the Will of God that I should commit sin, my will must be the same, and I must not desire even to abstain from sin

The Book of Nine Rocks.

(Beghards)

The fascinating thing about this Amorality is that it is a higher form of Ethics. As discussed in our earlier lessons with reference to Buddhism, both attachment and detachment are "actions and reactions" and hence governed by the Dialectic world. Real asceticism or Celestial ethics comes from being beyond all forms of morality and that includes attachment and detachment. This is embodied in the message found in many Gnostic Gospels. For example in the Gospel of Thomas we read....Whoever has come to understand the world has found a corpse, and whoever has found a corpse is superior to the world.

But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

Galations 5:18

This state can be philosophically understood in the sense that the Laws of the lower world took the role of a schoolmaster and hence when the Gnostic has graduated from school, the Law is no longer necessary, it has achieved its purpose. Other explanations could include that Morality is the raft left behind when you have crossed the river and achieved perfection and that after the Flames of Sophia have consumed all sin nothing is left but perfection.

Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

Galations 3:24,5

The Parfait

There are many groups throughout history whose legacy is still found today in the continuation of the Gnostic Ecclesia. One of the most important was the Cathari. The Cathars means "The Pure Ones" , the term comes from the Greek word Katharos which is translated the purified. Within western Europe these early Gnostics appeared in northern France and the Low Countries toward the late 11th or early 12th century. Persecuted and expelled from the north, the Cathars travelled south and found success in the semi-independent province of Languedoc and the surrounding areas. Here they became known as Albigenses. It is believed the Cathars originally derived from sects such as the Bogomils and Paulicians who originated in such regions as Armenia, Syria and Asia Minor. The Cathars or Albigenses were a distinctly Gnostic sect believing strongly in the Dualism between the Higher and lower worlds and identified the creator of matter with the Demiurge. This creator they called the Rex Mundi or King of the World. They centred their worship on God the Father and the manifestation of the Logos in his Son. They strongly opposed the ecclesiastical hierarchy and they held that the traditional Christian church, with its corrupt clergy and its immense material wealth, was the agent of Satan and was to be avoided.

The Roman Catholic Church initially attempted to reconvert the Albigenses through subtle means. When every attempt failed, Pope Innocent III launched the Albigensian Crusade (circa 1209-29) that annihilated the Albigenses and desolated much of southern France. Small groups of Albigenses survived in isolated areas but were pursued by the Inquisition.

One of the central Cathari rituals was that of the Consolamentum, a special form of adult baptism which could be administered only once. It was reserved only for those special Cathars who had attained the level of the " Perfected Ones ". It is believed the rite was preceded by a fast, various ritual forms of preparation and given by the laying on of hands.

This rite was taken so seriously that anyone who profaned it by returning to a " material life " was expelled from the community. The Believers, or Credentes were those of the Terrestrial Path and followed a similar path to that of the Perfected Ones, however perfection was not required of them. The Cathari form a major link in the lineage of the Modern Mysteries and sustained the Esoteric teachings while under persecution from the apostate Church and transmitted them, via small sects and cults, to today's Gnostics.

Wisdom from India

To give an example from Hinduism of the Amoral Path. We find in traditional Hindu (Tantric-Vedic) Tantra there are two distinct traditions, The Right and Left Hand Path. These have nothing to do with White and Black magic as the ignorant suggest but are two distinct methodologies of redemption. The Right hand Path is symbolic and the images regarding sexuality are applied symbolically with strict moral codes enforced. The Left Hand Path is literal and uses the very things that the Right Hand Path condemns to achieve liberation. These two paths have many similarities to the Terrestrial and Celestial traditions. For more information we can turn to Julius Evola's excellent text *The Yoga of Power* for details of the different traditions within the Buddhist Tantra's...

There is a significant difference between the two Tantric paths, that of the Right hand and that of the Left hand.

In the former the adept always experiences someone above him even at the highest level of realisation. In the latter he becomes the Ultimate Sovereign. In the Buddhist Tantras, Buddha paradoxically upholds the relativity of every moral precept, the uselessness of worship, the insignificance of the five precepts of early Buddhism, and even of the triple homage of the Buddhist tradition in terms so blunt that at monastic gatherings the Bodhisattvas who are on their way toward enlightenment faint (the terrestrial Path) while the Tathagatas (Celestial Path) the enlightened ones remain unmoved. (Notes in Brackets Ours)]

The Yogin obtains liberation through the same actions that should keep in Hell any other man for ages unending.

Jnanasiddhi.

These discussions are also found in many other esoteric eastern works. For example the *Manava-Dharmashatra*, one of the older Indo-Aryan works, flaunts the great powers that a Brahman has and how far he has come beyond the law. The example we earlier gave regarding the fire which removes all impurity is repeated many times with the resulting perfectionist state emphasised. This tradition of Amorality arising from total achievement of divinity is characteristic of the inner Mystery tradition in both the east and the West. Throughout all periods of Church history right up until today secret sects have upheld the perfectionist doctrine, these have ranged from the Brethren of the Free Spirit to the Cathars and modern Gnostic Orders. Certainly the Gnostic Gospels (Nag Hammadi) well illustrate the Perfectionist teaching. The focus on being beyond the Law also includes the sinless state, because, theoretically, if one is beyond the Law then there can be no sin as sin is recognised only by the conviction of the Law.

Where there is no Law, there is no sin

Romans 5:13

He who has knowledge of the Truth is a free man, but the free man does not sin,
for who sins is the slave of sin

Gospel of Phillip 1:20

While, of course, Celestial Transfiguration does not accept or condone the misuse of the perfect state (perhaps that in itself is proof of a lack of perfection !), it is quite clear that many of the secret teachings included within the technology of Transfiguration use methods that are way beyond the conventional morality of " modern " western Christianity. While we realise this may come as a quite a shock for those accustomed to the morality of " Fundamentalist Christians ", the evidence for such an inner tradition which leads to a state beyond Law is found in all early Gnostic teachings. We are not however encouraging " free for all " morality since it is clear that the Celestial Path is for the few and far between and can destroy those who enter it unprepared. However, for those of a special calling a life beyond conventional Law and Ethics will be the result. The actual Path of Celestial Transfiguration involves a special spiritual technology which was revealed by Jesus after his resurrection to his disciples, with final revelations being given to Paul in what are now known as the Mysteries.

The Secret of the Qadesh

Jesus said " When you make the two one, and when you make the inside like the outside, and the outside like the inside, and the above like the below and when you make the male and the female one and the same, so that the male not be male nor the female female.....then you will enter the Kingdom ".

The Gospel of Thomas 2:38.

Within the oldest Gnostic traditions we find that a further division is made within the spiritual classes. The Psychic or Dove class are allowed to reproduce (though not encouraged) and in fulfil the role of creating children, however, those of the Serpent class are not permitted to reproduce and in the many traditions were defined as gender-variant or homosexual. This fact alone explains a lot about descriptions of the Essenes and others being celibate, the meaning of course, was more non-reproductive than altogether non-sexual. This early tradition centred on a special priestclass known as the Qadesh or Holy ones, they sustained the Mysteries and were the innermost initiates. As the Bible fell into the hands of the extremist and literalist scribes this class was expunged from the text and homosexuals and the gender variant were turned into the most evil of all criminals. Of course, this was a simple way for the apostate scribes to write themselves into history and the original priestclass out !

There are so many examples of the Qadesh class hidden within the Old Testament, the "coat of many colours" for example, was a ritual garment worn by a Sumerian gender-variant priest, in the Bible the coat survives but the context does not. It seems clear for example that the story of Sodom and Gomorrah was actually a tale re-moulded by the scribes to suggest a battle between two religious traditions that of the town of Sodom or Qadesh and the warrior cult of Yahweh. There are many other Biblical examples, certainly the homo-erotic relationship between David and Jonathan in the Old Testament springs to mind. While we do not wish to belabour the point certainly all early Aryan traditions suggest a special elite homosexual (or at least gender variant) priestly class. The Epic of Gilgamesh has a special relationship between Gilgamesh and Enkidu, the Druids and Celts were renowned for homosexual priest activity and certainly the Shaman traditions of early cultures focused on gender variant activity.

This understanding of reproduction is central to the Gnostic view of sexuality. While reproduction may be necessary for the propagation of the species, it is by its very nature difficult as it tends to bring our focus back towards the material world. Accordingly, those who choose this path can only be initiated into the Path of the Dove, in future lives it was envisaged in the old texts they would reincarnate in forms suitable to enter the Qadesh priesthood.

The reason behind the Qadesh priesthood is quite simple. Reproduction has an energy field which gravitates towards propagation of the species and hence sustaining the material world. Accordingly though this field can be modified and a certain liberation achieved (the path of the Dove) only by total rejection of this field can full liberation be gained. While a heterosexual can certainly achieve this, it is probably more difficult for them to reject the reproductive urges programmed in their cellular structure than for a homosexual. At the same time the Path of the Serpent is non-discriminatory, reproduction and reproductive values are the issue, not sexual preference. The aim therefore, for those on the terrestrial path is to control the influence of the Dialectic field. If reproduction is necessary, and in the Kali Yuga we do have some doubts about it, then we should apply health rules to ensure the best possible bodies for the incarnation of future souls. The aim, however, of the Celestial Path and the Qadesh is obviously very different.

The Bridal Chamber

The aim of those on the celestial path is to achieve liberation in the body, accordingly the energy fields of the organism must be transformed to a point whereby they will survive the effect of the manifestation of the Pneumatic Spark from the Treasury of Light. Therefore many of the technologies of the Celestial path use methods which actually change the energy form of the organism. One of the central techniques used is known as the Bridal Chamber. This ritual was unique to the pre-Christian Gnostics and was carried into Christian Gnosticism, it was also clearly alluded to in the early celebrations of the Eucharist and Agape Feast. In later history the Mystery of the Transformation of Eros was reflected in the traditions of courtly love in Mediaeval

val England and France and the imagery of Alchemy (particularly in the Mass of the Holy Ghost).

The Bridal chamber is based on the process of Solve et coagula. After the instincts and mind have been "destroyed" and reformed, the two poles of the electromagnetic organism (Astral Body) are stimulated and at their union the Shekinah awakens. (The Shekinah or presence is that part of God which is locked in the lower worlds and awaits redemption) As the Shekinah awakens it rises to the higher planes and re-unites with the Sophia. This rite is central to many Gnostic traditions and is the pre-requisite for the Consolamentum or The Sacrament of Perfection. Again, we understand that this new appreciation of sexuality and its practical use within the Celestial path may be difficult for those used to the straight-jacket morality of many modern religions.

However, we can perhaps best defend our position in this regards, by repeating some of the defences used by an Abbess in the trial of a 18th Century Dominican Order of Saint Catherine, which was accused of immoral conduct..

As our spirit is free, it is only the intention that can make an action wicked. It is enough, therefore, to lift ourselves in our minds to God and then nothing is sinful. To practise that which we mistakenly call impurity is true purity, which God wishes and bids us to practise and without which we have no way of finding God, who is Truth.

Vie de Sciptone de Ricci .

Brussels 1895

Chapter Twelve: Restoring the Bible

Restoring the Bible

When we consider the Bible and the nature of the Gnostic tradition we need to grapple with many questions. The first major issue is the corruption and distortion that has crept into the Bible and the process of restoring it to its original Gnostic form. The process of restoring the Bible is a difficult task because it involves a wide range of problems. Obviously, there is the simple issue of what books should be in the Bible, what books have been edited and changed and what texts have been tampered with. But there is far more, there are many sections in the Bible which have been added in, words have been translated in obscure and contradictory ways and terms which had specific applications at the time of writing have been twisted out of context. Still, this is a beginning, and the first step to Biblical understanding is context. So much of the Bible can only be comprehended in terms of the surrounding passages, the flow of the book and the period it was written in. The verse structure of the Bible is artificial, it was only added in for ease of reading with modern translations, hence, many of the stops, passage divisions and paragraph forms, which we take for granted, are simply arbitrary. To give you a classic example - what did the criminal on the cross actually say to Jesus in Luke 23:43 ?

And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise

or

And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee To day, shalt thou be with me in paradise.

There were no comma's in the original edition, so did Jesus say that the criminal would be in paradise today (ie. ascend to heaven on his death) or did Jesus simply say the criminal would be in paradise sometime and simply use a turn of phrase to intimate how he was speaking, " I say unto thee today ". This is a clear example of how modern grammatical composition, when added into the Bible, can be used to produce misleading theology. In the above example, we see how certain denominations using modern translations are able to use the first form of the verse in an attempt to prove that we go straight to Heaven when we die. Even though this concept is based on a dubious use of grammar, especially dubious if we understand that the grammar was added in by translators for easy reading; nothing more, nothing less.

What about the Old Testament ?

The Gnostic attitude towards the Old Testament is ambivalent to say the least. The major issue is that it was written during the Babylonian captivity and edited to fit the prevailing Pharisaic form of Judaism that existed at that time. The fact is the Old Testament was written at the same time as the Babylonian Talmud and other questionable Edomite/Judaic texts. In this context it becomes clear that the Old Testament as we have it is not a Gnostic or Israelite text, but a text distorted to fit the Talmudic Jewish tradition. Accordingly, it mixes together accounts from a wide variety of sources and contexts with little thought to their integrity and original meaning. We can deduce that there are at least four Old Testament strands and these are in addition to the original Israelite Gnosis. This original gnosis was sustained by secrecy and taught mouth to ear (Kabbalah) by a small Pneumatic class, little of this tradition has been recorded in the Biblical accounts. Accordingly, the Old Testament is of extremely limited value. Most of the terms, words and concepts used are based on the original Israelite mystery language (Hebrew) and hence some of the esotericism may be coaxed out of the text, but this is not simple and is extremely time consuming.

Regardless of the Esotericism, we must be clear about the nature of the Old Testament in its current form. The Gnostic view is that if you followed the traditions in the Old Testament as they presently are, you would be enslaving yourself under Archons rather than liberating yourself through the Aeons. The Laws, Covenants and other agreements are sure signs of the enslavement of mans spirit by the Archon Yahweh, they illustrate how distorted the Old Testament really is. From a historical perspective there is little of the original Israelite teachings in the Old Testament. When we contemplate that Israel and environs had various religious traditions including Gnostic (Esotericism), the EL tradition (Canaanite Paganism), various strands of EL and Yahweh Worship and then later, the Priestclass of the Pharisees, one can start to get the picture of how distorted and confused the Old Testament really is. It is a sign of extreme credulity if not stupidity for Christians to try and interpret the whole Old Testament as a coherent early revelation and it does little for their intellectual integrity.

Bible Narratives

Biblical criticism has shown that there are at least four intermingled narratives within the Old Testament, most of which specifically seem to be in conflict. The Epic tradition seems to date from the original Exodus while the Priestly tradition dates from the Babylonian captivity. This second narrative was probably written by a literalist Priestclass who had little knowledge of the true meaning of the tradition. Therefore, it is clear that most sections of the Old Testament have been re-worked. A number of examples may help you to get the overall picture.

In the Epic Tradition the original covenant includes the Ten Words or Ten commandments only,

while the Priestly tradition includes the Covenant code laws. (These laws could not have been written at the Exodus as they include agricultural regulations and references to the Canaanites which obviously originate after their settlement in Palestine).

In the Epic Tradition the Covenant Code was an adaptation of the Ten Words into civil law yet we can show how this code has been re-written time and time again (producing the Priestly Version) and moved back into Scripture in an attempt to prove that the latest set of laws were actually written by Moses.

In the Epic Tradition Moses crosses the Reed Sea (not the Red Sea) when the wind blows the waves apart (this still occurs today), the emphasis being on God using nature to achieve a miracle. The Priestly tradition has Moses raising his arms and opening the Red Sea, this second tradition emphasises the nearly magical power of Moses and hence, by inference, the occult power of the later Priesthood.

In the Epic Tradition there are eight plagues upon Egypt, in the Priestly tradition, Ten.

These differences, and many others, are major and show that while in Babylon the Pharisees mixing Babylonian Paganism and Judaism not only wrote such texts as the Talmud but also edited together the Old Testament. Hence, the task of restoration becomes even more daunting and reference to documents such as the Dead Sea Scrolls becomes imperative.

A further issue is with the clear intimation that the Bible has an inner meaning. Certainly the oral tradition of the Israelites known as " Kabbalah " taught the Bible had at least three levels and the modern Biblical scholar Barbara Thiering outlines how the Essenes used a " Peshar " code to hide certain Mysteries from the profane. All these things must be considered when we start to quote the Bible or use Scripture to prove a certain viewpoint. The Gnostic Apostolic Church is working hard to help in the restoration of the Bible to its original purity and to reinstate the esoteric or Mystery teachings that are central to real Christianity.

Multiple Levels of Truth

Inherent within the Mystery teachings is the understanding that Truth is a complex and multi-faceted thing and cannot be reduced to simple doctrine or dogma. Accordingly, within the ancient Gnostic teachings there was a clear understanding that there were (and are) multiple levels on which Truth operates. When St.Paul discusses in Hebrews that there is Solid Food and there is milk or infant food in regards to Truth , he is simply re-iterating the teaching of multiple truth levels.

In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid

food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

Hebrews 5:12.

The importance of these multiple levels cannot be underestimated, for inherent within them is the way in which the Lord of Wisdom reveals himself to man. Jesus certainly acknowledged these triple levels in the way in which he taught his message. There is clear evidence within the New Testament that Jesus used Parables to reveal certain teachings to different classes of disciples. In this structure of teaching there is wisdom for the Multitudes (the people of Israel), the Seventy and for the Twelve Disciples and these levels clearly refer to the three degrees of truth.

The disciples came to him and asked, "Why do you speak to the people in parables?"

He replied, The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.

Matthew 13:10-12

The Bible is a part of ancient religion which was both exoteric and esoteric. Theologians fail to recognise that they have but the outer shell, although Jesus made the existence of an inner teaching very clear. Anciently, religion was divided into three degrees and man spent his life mastering them.

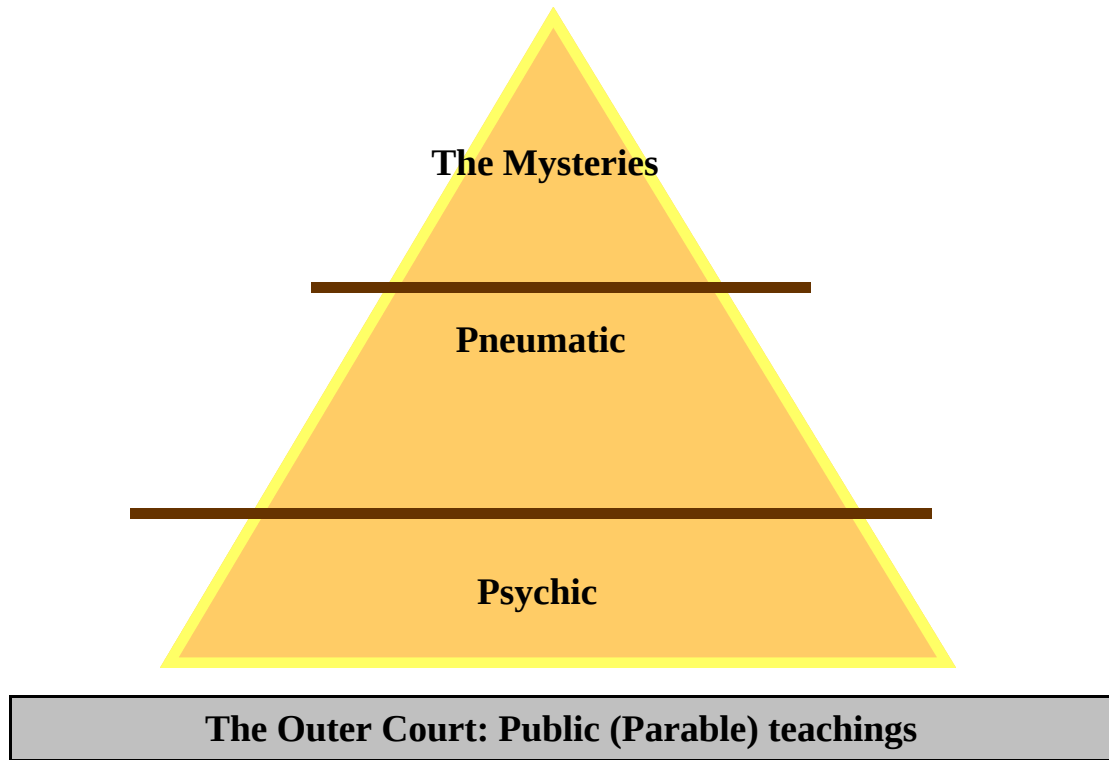
Dr.R.S.Clymer

Traditionally, deeper levels of meaning are understood as occurring in three different degrees, now, that doesn't mean a verse cannot have seven or ten different meanings (some definitely do), but that generally the Bible is focused on a triple level of interpretation. To help explain this I will give you a range of different examples showing how different Biblical verses and concepts can have multiple meanings and that even some of these multiple meanings can lead to other multiple meanings !

For example, the Seven Churches may be studied on multiple levels.

Level One Seven Churches of Revelation as literal historical Churches.

Level Two Seven Churches as seven periods in development of the Ecclesia (Church) on Earth.



Level Three Seven Churches as representation of the seven locations with the organism (Chakras). With related associations to the Seven Planes and Seven Bodies.

Now, you may say, "Come on! you want us to believe that Scripture can apply on all these levels". Well, just take a look at the Churches of Revelation. Not only do the specific descriptions regarding attributes of each Church (with very specific outlines of their good and bad points) fit perfectly into the framework of the seven periods of Church history which span from the first century to the present. But these attributes link perfectly with both the traditional Hindu and western descriptions of the qualities and dangers found in each Chakra centre. Coincidence? Unlikely!

These multiple levels of truth are imperative for without them it is impossible to grasp the overall picture. Just like you build a house in stages, Truth comes in stages and only when you have grasped Level One are you able to expand and deepen your understanding into Levels Two, Three and so on. In the many volumes published by the Church we follow the same principle, lesson will build on lesson, chapter on chapter. So, if some of the earlier material seems too simple or not to go far enough, wait until the building blocks are laid onto the foundation. The

Gnostic Handbook is the Foundation and other volumes will build the house. And lets be clear about it, without a firm foundation the house will fall !

Continuing Revelation

One of the keynotes of the Gnostic system is the revelation is personal, that is to say, that Revelation as found in the many thousands of sacred texts is only sacred to those people who accept that they are sacred. The various Gnostic Scriptures are useful to the modern Gnostic student but should not be treated as "every word inspired by God". One of the more important things when it comes to Scripture is *mans reason*. We need to study the historical basis for the Bible, Gnostic Texts, Dead Sea Scrolls and Nag Hammadi Library so we can get a context for where Gnosticism has come from. At the same time we must be aware of the great distortions that have occurred with all Old Testament, Judaic and Christian texts. The key concept within Gnosticism is continual revelation. We can also see the development of Gnostic doctrine and Theurgy in light of recent research and experience. Continual revelation while of significant importance always needs to be seen in the context of the Gnostic lineage, anybody can have a revelation and they can come from any one of a million sources. The modern Gnostic tradition as exemplified in the Institute of Gnostic Studies carries on this line of spiritual and Gnostic revelation valuing our heritage and traditions as well as well as recent refinements and revelations.

Behind the Institute if the Gnostic Apostolic Church, this is our inspiration and the religious application of our work. We should consider some aspects of the Church as part of this study.

Chapter Thirteen: The Gnostic Apostolic Church

Churches and Temples

In the Gnostic Apostolic Church we realise that a "Temple of the Gnosis" is a permanent doorway between the worlds and hence we create two distinct environments for use within the Church. The Actual term Church comes from the base word "Ecclesia" and means people and/or community, hence within the Church we use the Church building as a meeting place, a counseling centre and a nucleus for Church activity within the congregation. Our Churches are where services of a worshipful and celebratory nature are held.

The Temple of the Gnosis is a different affair. In it both initiations and ritual are held which have special power as the Temple forms a permanent intersection between worlds. It is a place of great power and beauty and should always be treated as such. In the Gnostic Apostolic Church both Churches and Temples are governed by ordained ministers of our tradition, even though laymen are encouraged to develop private "Spiritual" spaces within their own homes for their own use

The Use of Ritualism

Ritual is a means by which we can formulate an artificial world in which internal realities (and other spiritual worlds) can be explored. Through ritual the conscious mind is controlled and the unconscious is explored and conditioned so that external realities from beyond the physical plane can be investigated, other spiritual powers contacted and other dimensions opened.

The key to ritual is that it must have two distinct forms. The first must always be the training of the mind, the exploration of the unconscious and a clear and precise understanding of the structure of your own psyche. Then and only then are you ready to enter into work of a more advanced spiritual nature. Before ritual can become a doorway to other dimensions, it is imperative that the mind is trained and under control, otherwise, as is the case with so many untrained spiritual practitioners, obsession and delusion result. Beyond all these considerations is the simple issue of intent. While techniques of ritual and occultism can be remarkably similar across all traditions that does not make them qualitatively the same. A knife can be used to heal and to kill, so can the occult traditions.

The focus must be on Transfiguration and then ritual and related methodologies can be used, however, the intent must always be clear and pure. Too many modern occult orders ignore eth-

ics, morality and intent and teach their techniques to all and sundry, our response to this is from the New Testament.....Do not throw your pearls before swine.

The Monastic Life

In the Gnostic Apostolic Church we have three levels of Priesthood. The basic minister or pastor of the Church, the Senior Pastor who is a member of the Pneumatic Priesthood who has however decided to continue working within his or her pastoral duties and those of the Qadesh Priesthood. Members of the Qadesh Priesthood have vowed himself/herself to the Gnostic tradition. They are celibate, but in a special sense, they are encouraged to have full sex lives but to keep focus on the True Self and the Lineage of the Gnosis. Spiritual and sexual partnerships are permitted, but the duties the priesthood must come first. As discussed in early chapters, the Senior Pastors and Qadesh Priesthood are members of the Pneumatic priesthood and are non-reproductive, whether they be heterosexual or homosexual in orientation. Members of the Qadesh Priesthood are usually homosexual.

The Gnostic Tradition: A Brief history of the Church

It is difficult to encapsulate the history of the Gnostic tradition. However, it is fair to say that it began in the time of the great Sumerian and Egyptian kingdoms and was passed down, at first in oral form, (Cf.Kabbalah " passed by mouth ") through esoteric brotherhoods. In the west this knowledge was passed onto the initiate (Jesus) in the Essene Sect, after his death his followers passed on the secret teachings. This new order centred around Ormus (46 A.D.) and continued through the Knights Templars, the Eleutherians, the Church of Carmel, the Rosicrucians and onwards. In modern times the lineage continued in a variety of forms, the more ritually oriented line was continued in such organisations as the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, the early Theosophical movements, the Astrum Argentinum, the Ordeo Templi Orientis and the Fraternity of Saturn (Germany). However, these organisations got bogged down in the technology of the spiritual processes and lost the vision and art of the Gnosis. Hence modern representatives of such organisations and others found in the "ritual magic(k)" community have little in common with the real Gnostic legacy. Various mystical brotherhoods have also arisen claiming to follow the Gnosis, but these have, in the most, tended to be Liberal Christian organisations who have still not realised the complete framework of the Gnostic system. Most are simply supposed Liberal minded Christians who are sick of modern Christianity but do not have the illumination of the Gnostic traditions. The Gnostic Apostolic Church has developed out of the work of Pastor Robert Ledwidge who, after studying a wide range of spiritual traditions and systems, came to a realisation of the nature of the Gnostic legacy and its ramifications in religious, political and developmental fields.

The Role and Purpose of the Gnostic Apostolic Church

The Gnostic Apostolic Church is a modern manifestation of the current which has been working to redeem man from the prison of matter. Throughout history there has been a continuum of secret Churches or Ecclesias which have carried on the Mysteries of the Gnosis. The Gnostic Apostolic Church is representative of the Remnant Ecclesia that carries on the Gnosis in the Age of the Wolf. The Gnostic Apostolic Church is the title used for the general religious operations of the Brethren, it symbolizes our focus on the Restoration of the original Gnosis. The term Ecclesia or Church is not simply an organisation or a group of people aiming for the same goal though it includes these. It is a special spiritual nucleus which invigorates those who join it and motivates them in their quest for self awareness. The Institute for Gnostic Studies is used to further the educational aspects of the Church's mission.

Membership and Priesthood

Membership in The Gnostic Apostolic Church can be divided into five classes;

- 1 Associate.
- 2 Full Membership.
- 3 Priesthood.
- 4 Senior and Monastic Priesthood.
- 5 Council Membership.

These five classes represent the various levels of specialisation within the Church structure.

Associate Membership is available to anyone who has a general interest in the Church.

Full Membership can be divided into two classes:

Full Membership (General).

This is available to any present or past student of our Church's training texts (such as this One) issued through the Institute for Gnostic Studies who has an interest in the Churches on going work.

Full Membership (Initiate).

This is available to those who have completed Church training courses and have been initiated but do not wish to apply for ordination.

Due to recent changes in the flow of the ages (the acceleration of the Kali Age), our present position is that only those who agree to forgo reproduction can become full members of the Church. Those already with children can join as long as they agree to not have any further children. Those who already have families are eligible to join as full members (General or Initiate) but cannot enter the priesthood without special permission from the Council.

The *Priesthood* can also be divided into three classes:

Priesthood (General). This is available to those who have completed the ordination training program of the Church and have been approved for ordination via a private interview with the Church council.

Priesthood (Senior). This is available only to those who have a special calling to the Pneumatic Priesthood but wish to remain in Pastoral duties.

Priesthood (Monastic). This is available only to those who have a special calling to become Monks and Nuns of the Gnosis. The study program is the same as for the general Priesthood but with extra units and special ordination vows. Priests within this class are initiated into the Qadesh Priesthood and live a monastic lifestyle.

Post ordination studies are required.

The Council of the Aeons. This is the Inner Council of the Church, it is invigorated by the power of the Pleroma and empowers the Church and its activities. It interviews all candidates for ordination and has the final decision regarding approval or rejection of ordination candidates.

Sacraments of the Church

The Gnostic Apostolic Church acknowledges seven sacraments, these are:

- 1 Naming.
- 2 Baptism.
- 3 Ordination.
- 4 Union.
- 5 Illumination.
- 6 Rites of Passing.
- 7 Feasts and Festivals.

In connection with these the Church also acknowledges Healing Sacraments and the Sacred Eucharist.

Naming Rituals are similar to Baptisms, they welcome a child into the world and give a special protection for that child. However, they do not lock a child into any specific form of religious practice or tradition. As our Church no longer encourages reproduction this rite is of limited importance.

Baptism recognises the great spiritual changes which take place during this period. These rites, sometimes known as "Rites of Water and Fire" are somewhat similar to confirmation however, they confirm a persons entry into adulthood as well as into a spiritual life.

Ordination. Ordination is that special sacrament that confirms a persons spiritual calling. In the traditions of the Gnostic Apostolic Church it has two distinct forms, General and Qadesh.

Each has its own specific vows and requirements.

Rites of Union. These are the rites of Union (they are available for either heterosexual or homosexual relationships of stability)..

Illumination is the sacrament given to acknowledge the achieving of a state of spiritual enlightenment. It is a real sacrament of " Sainthood " not the frail imitation the apostate Church upholds. It is only given to the highest initiates of the Path of the Serpent.

The Rite of Passing is the rite which guides a person through the time of death into the afterlife, it has much in common with the rites of the Egyptian and Tibetan Books of the dead. In the Gnostic traditions there are various rites of passing, including rituals for those left behind, rites for those passing away, rites for over the body, rites for just after death and so forth.

Feasts and Festivals. These are various religious celebrations which occur during the year.

Communion. This is celebrated as required to symbolise the life of Jesus and his role in our entering the covenant with Lord of Wisdom..

Other sacraments include Sacraments of Healing and Blessing.

Conclusions

The goal of The Gnostic Apostolic Church is to awaken mankind and bring him to a realisation of his true nature. Mankind is moving towards the Omega Point, the Great day when all must graduate or fall. This day is also the Day of Judgement in that only those who have entered the Path of Transfiguration and are being reborn can return to the Treasury of Light.

Those who are pursuing the Path of Transfiguration are truly New Men, Homo Novus and can look forward to a new world and a new way of life as the Christ current transforms them into children of the Treasury of Light.

For more Information see:

The Institute for Gnostic and Gnostic Apostolic Church

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