

ASHÉ!

JOURNAL OF EXPERIMENTAL SPIRITUALITY

Fall 2005



<GNOSIS>

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Photographs of Bet Giorgis, a 12th century rock-hewn church in Northern Ehtiopia, by Klaas Lingbeek-van Kranen.

ASHÉ

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2005 Ashé Journal Book Award Winner

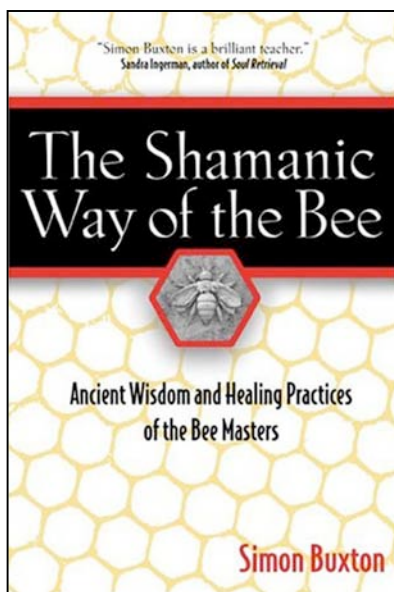
The editors of *Ashé Journal* are pleased to announce the winner of its Book Award for 2005:

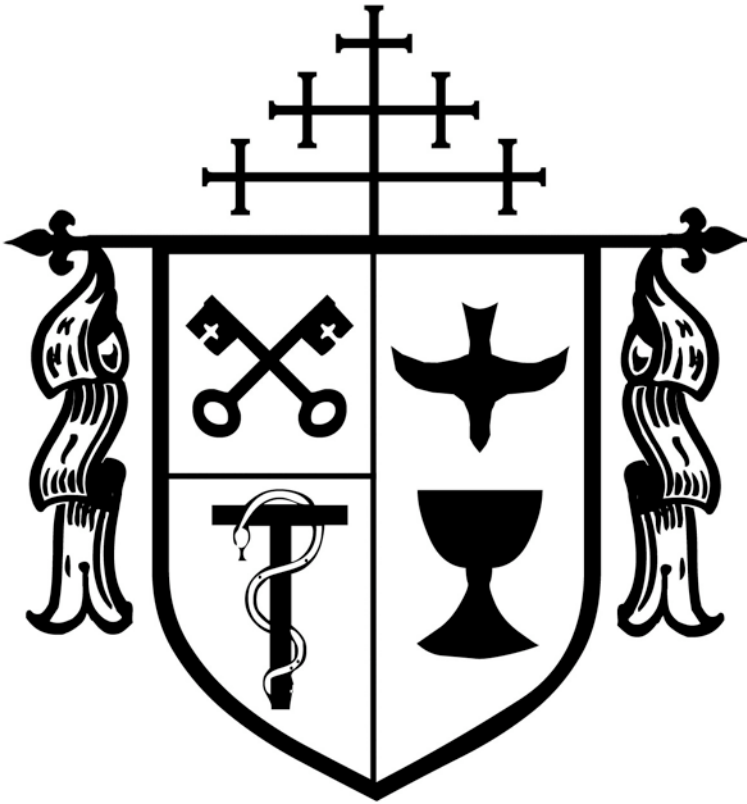
The Shamanic Way of the Bee: Ancient Wisdom and Healing Practices of the Bee Masters by Simon Buxton, published by Inner Traditions.

Part ethnography part spiritual autobiography reveals the rich tradition of bee shamanism. Buxton reveals its subtle intelligence; its sights, sounds, and smells; and its unique ceremonies. First set upon the path at age nine by an Austrian bee shaman. This early contact prepared him for his later meeting with an elder of the tradition who took him on as an apprentice. This work captures Buxton's 13 years of training and exploration.

Buxton is a beekeeper, the British faculty for the Foundation for Shamanic Studies, and the founder/director of The Sacred Trust in England.

See review in issue #4.1.





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Will the Circle Be Unbroken? The Gnosis: From Anti-ism to Non-ism.

By Alamantra

Numerous writers like Philip K Dick and Robert Anton Wilson have written of experiences that they have articulated as a sort of Gnosis and have spent years and pages trying to map, understand and objectively convey these experiences. That this task has been such a struggle can be evidenced in Dick's massive *Exegesis*, which is a powerful indicator of not only the profound nature of the experience as well as the immediate and lasting power that it holds over a person's consciousness, but also the inadequacy of the limitations of symbol and language to capture, contain and summarily express the experience.



Photo: Klaas Lingbeek-van Kranen

“Are you experienced? Have you ever been experienced? Well, I have.” Jimi Hendrix

In my own experience of Gnosis there have been a variety of ‘revelations’ experienced in a continuing sine-wave of peaks and valleys: revelations about nature, about myself and my own interaction with the principle of Divine Order. I can note where it’s profound and mysterious insights have been such a jolt to my own nervous system as to cause me to completely re-examine the totality of my participation in the human condition.

One of the things that the Gnostic writers, as well as others or mystics of varying denominations and practices, have struggled with since ‘the beginning’ was expressing a foundational principle that had been initially understood as a completely subjective experience.

“In the beginning was the word. And the word was with God and the word was God.”

So every descriptive must have a point of origin and the only tangible or understandable expression of origin is symbolic. We begin with a word, which is the sharing of experience from one person to another.

The notion of a Divine Order is the principle upon which all religion and spiritual philosophy is founded and all schools agree on this ‘certainty’. This agreement is tacit in the formation of a priest class and its hierarchy, as enjoying a higher spiritual status—a higher communion—than the worshipper, and all of the physical entitlements that accompany such a station. It is precisely because most humans have some capacity to intuit or otherwise recognize this sense of Divine Order that *organized* religion has enjoyed any measure of sustainable success in the first place.

This idea of Divine Order can be demonstrated beyond human notions concerning society, religion or secular law. It can be observed in the social order of the bee, the colonial efficiency of the ant, the construction of the spider’s web, the symmetry of a rose and on and on.

The key evidence of Divine Order, as concerns such fundamental human concepts as time, is the apparent regularity of solar, lunar and astronomical cycles. These concepts have been implemented and

projected through the human will in such practices as the intentional regularization of breathing and heartbeat that is taught and achieved through meditation, yoga and other practices that have been said to lead one to a sort of ‘self-illumination.’

These are such important associations and observations in the cause of asserting Divine Order that they have been encoded, employed and addressed by every religion and philosophic school.

What connects human consciousness with this realization or Gnosis is our own observer status. Like the passage from John 1:1 “*In the beginning was the word,*” the expression “*Can I get a witness?*” establishes an ontological beginning which has been an impetus and orientation in our evolution as spiritual beings. Once again this sharing initiates a point of origin that requires at least one other person and a sharing of observation to create its objectified validity.

Our ability to witness and observe the unfolding of Creation, its Manifestation, and Demise, and to see this as recurring and as a processional or somewhat consistent event throughout nature and time, is enabled by our ability to communicate. That is to say, this ability functions to transmit complex ideas in the form of a sophisticated symbolism and create a historical pictorial/written record and (now, through the means of computer, video and other electronic medium), preserve in some sense our observations of—and neurological interactions with—particular moments in time.

Our religious and social institutions can be understood to be reflective of the internal expression of Divine Order, but as has been stated in texts too numerous to indulge here, there is a subjugation principle that distorts, and limits the expression of this Divine Order.

This principle of subjugation has been expressed in the Gnostic cosmology as the Demiurge.

dem·i·urge *n.*

1. A powerful creative force or personality.
2. A public magistrate in some ancient Greek states.

3. **Demiurge** A deity in Gnosticism, Manichaeism, and other religions who creates the material world and is often viewed as the originator of evil.
4. **Demiurge** A Platonic deity who orders or fashions the material world out of chaos.

[Late Latin *demiurgus*, from Greek *demiourgos*, *artisan*: *demos*, *public* (from *demos*, *people*. See *da-* in Indo-European Roots) + *ergos*, *worker* (from *ergon*, *work*. See *werg-* in Indo-European Roots).]

How is it that a word with such an origin as a public worker, artisan, or more specifically a MAGISTRATE (i.e. a civil officer with the power to administer and enforce law) came to be synonymous with the concept of an originator of evil? Once again, we see where the principle of asserting rigid organizational forms with the necessary imposition of limitation and restriction became regarded as the very ORIGIN of “evil”. ”Magistrate” comes from the word “Master” and therefore properly epitomizes the notions of both hierarchy and privilege enjoyed by a group elite separate from other participants in any given community. This process of separation is quite the opposite of the sense of communion and sharing that the word ‘Gnosis’ seeks to establish.

There is within the scope of human nature a sense of conflict that produces numerous results of varying consequence, one of which is the unchecked desire to express or commingle Order as a hierarchy that privileges a few at the NEEDLESS expense of the many. This is a manifestation of fear, which is itself a distorted reflection and therefore an uninformed reaction of two ideas: (1) That we are temporally limited creatures and (2) it is this belief by which we define meaning to the word SACRED which means that which is sanctified or set apart.

The realization through Gnosis informs us that there is a principle connecting all existence wherein everything is sanctified by the fact that it exists and therefore is nothing sanctified or set apart from any other thing. The apparent division between profane (or secular) and the sacred

is obliterated and shown to be at the very root of the primal sense of conflict. Through this ‘realization’ is the division healed. Thus Gnosis can be described as an evolutive process that moves through three stages. These stages were defined in the Hegelian dialect as Thesis, Antithesis and Synthesis.

Certain patterns of thought formulate themselves with an initiating spark of Divine illumination, and corresponding new patterns of behavior as well as a new sense of priorities begin to emerge that is in conflict (Antithesis) with what history has informed us is the previously established status quo (Thesis). This experience is so profound that it is often described as a complete and second birth into life. In this case, to be ‘born again’ conveys the idea that one has entered into a life of spiritual intentionality (Synthesis).

The early Gnostic writers understood this, but sometimes reacted to it in the form of unnecessary or inefficient practices and dogma; no doubt due in part to the fact that they were tied to the limitations of the language and experience of their predecessors. Their descriptive comprised a portion of the worldview. The present worldview is always conveyed in the language of past experience.

There is a vast difference between the Gnosis itself and the religion(s) that have been called Gnosticism. I would even go so far as to say that the two ideas are diametrically opposed. The universal connecting principle, conveyed through Gnosis, transcends the limited and dogmatic expression of any “*ism*,” that is to say any dogmatic and permanent assertion or consolidation of ‘objective reality.’

“Ev’rybody’s talking about
Bagism, Shagism, Dragism, Madism, Ragism, Tagism
This-ism, that-ism
Isn’t it the most
All we are saying is give peace a chance” *John Lennon*

The Gnosis is a transmission intimately associated with the notion that life itself is a subjective experience. The subject of this transmission must acknowledge that the word “Gnosis” is not the exclusive, complete or perfect descriptive of the ideas that the word intends to convey and aim instead at opening a door and expanding it rather than enforcing a law or routine that limits the experience.

“In the beginning was the word.”

A similar notion is expressed as the Tao.

The Tao that can be known is not Tao.

The substance of the World is only a name for Tao.

Tao is all that exists and may exist;

the World is only a map of what exists and may exist.

One experiences without Self to sense the World,

and experiences with Self to understand the World.

The two experiences are the same within Tao;

they are distinct only within the World.

Neither experience conveys Tao

which is infinitely greater and more subtle than the

World. —*Tao Te Ching*¹

What I am employing the word “Gnosis” to describe has, as a result of its subjective manifestation, a characteristic of being an anti-ism ...something that is opposes all dogmatic assertions of the word IS.

“And that’s the way it IS.” Walter Cronkite.

We begin with an assertion built on a given institutional or cultural premise. Since, in the temporal field of being, the only constant is change, this premise must eventually come into conflict with the universal condition. It takes more and more energy or force applied to

¹ Based on an interpolation by Peter Merel of translations by Lin Yutang, Ch'u Ta-Kao, Gia-Fu Feng & Jane English, Richard Wilhelm and Aleister Crowley.

the original institutional or cultural premise to maintain its existence against the natural flow of time. Even the continued application of energy to maintaining a form becomes, not only a corrosive of the foundation of that form, but also a distortion in the wake of the temporal flow as it is increasingly isolated from the universal mandate for change. Regardless of the amount of power devoted to its maintenance, it will eventually succumb as the amount of force required increases exponentially the more it is isolated from the natural cycle of change.

In his numerous lectures, one lesson that Robert Anton Wilson has emphasized in the expression of his own Gnosis is that we have to let go of the notion of dogmatic assertion as permanent and rigid descriptions of reality. He suggests a simple practice we can use to break up the dogma and reinvigorate our sense of wonder: practice saying “that’s the way it is TO ME” rather than “that’s the way it is.” It reminds us that our individual consciousness is enmeshed in its own interpretation rather than clinging to the false notion that there is an objective, universally agreed upon “anything” whatsoever.

The Gnosis then, is for the purpose of this article, a process of ‘anti-ism’ that is simultaneously postulated with the establishment of any given dogma that seeks to coerce any sort of spiritual conformity. The Universal Spark of the Divine, being ever-changing, never diminishing LIFE cannot, by virtue of its inherent nature, be forever fixed or coerced into any one representative model. Therefore anti-ism is that which opposes the dogmatic assertion of IS, preferring to interpret reality or Divine Order as a dynamic and ever changing, evolutive process of systole/diastole rather than to act from the very artificial premise that reality is an unchanging and static order. The dogmatic interpretation of a static reality can be symbolized as a circle, an enclosure that is never broken and doesn’t in itself offer any potential for change, whereas the Gnosis or “anti-istic” principle is best expressed in the form of a spiral which incorporates a sense of order, ratio and proportion but in an expansive and evolutive state.

However, this Gnosis cannot stop at being defined merely as a negative affirmation, for this reintroduces a stasis and thus stultifies the process itself. Gnosis requires that even this duality of opposites be transcended and this is done through a process of synthesis whereby the the “ism” (dogma) and its particular “anti-ism” are melted in the cauldron of subjective application and an orientation is created, which I define as the “non-ism,” this is to say, a subjective point of reference where the process can begin anew. In a polarized field of opposites, an “ism” can be said to represent a dogma upon which beliefs and practices are established and are to be held in rigid accord without deviation. This ‘setting apart’ culls the objective from the subjective and thus establishes an anti-ism, a set of beliefs and practices not in accord with the dogma, and therefore objects of contempt to be suppressed. Non-ism, then, represents the rest of the field of possibility, the non-descriptive experiential that falls beyond the initial thesis and its antithesis; and can only therefore be determined in a strictly subjective manner. Once the attempt to objectify the experience as a dogmatic and universally applicable certainty occurs, a new thesis (thes-IS or This-IS) is established and the tri-fold process begins again.

A historical correspondence to such considerations can be found in the writings of the early Gnostic instructors who described the totality of potential and manifest reality as the “*Pleroma*” that was formed in layers like the skin of an onion. Each layer was referred to as an “*Aeon*,” and like an onion, the difference between each layer was a general and evolutive postulation from the last. There is no clearly objectifiable distinction where one layer begins and another ends.

When we attempt to objectively assert and enforce such a distinction, we lose our ‘observer’ status and take on the demiurgic role of administration and enforcement of the view that we have chosen to isolate from the dynamic field of change or possibility.

Pyrrho of Elis (c.360-c.270 BCE.) understood this and so taught that suspension of judgment was a necessary step in attaining Ataraxia (imperturbability). Pyrrho taught that we could never know anything

about the essence of any other thing, but only how it appears to us. He relegated all such superficial observations to the realm of opinion, and his 'opinion' was that thus, knowledge and certainty were impossible; it was therefore impossible to arrive at knowledge of ultimate truth. He and those of his school would not say "this is so," but rather, "this SEEMS so to me," "this APPEARS to be the case." Any statement of observation would be prefaced with "perhaps" or "it may be." This school of thought has been revitalized through the school of "maybe logic" that is so advocated by Robert Anton Wilson.

She Who Is Unheard and Unrecognized

Catt Shiflett

The real question is not whether Yeshua was married (again, in the formal sense of the word), for why should that be so important? The interesting question is this: Was Yeshua fully human, with a normal human sexuality that was capable of intimacy and preference?

As the ancient proverb says: “That which is not lived is not redeemed.” If Yeshua considered as the Messiah and the Christ (from Greek Christos, a rendering of the Hebrew Mashiah), did not live his sexuality, then sexuality would be unredeemed. In that case, he could not be a Savior in the full sense of the word. This eventually led to the institution of a logic in Christianity that was more oriented to death than life. This was especially the case in Western Roman Christianity:

Jesus Christ did not live his sexuality;
therefore sexuality is unredeemed;
therefore sexuality is essentially a bad thing;
therefore living your sexuality can be degrading
and can make you guilty.



Photo: Paul Cowan

This kind of guilt-ridden sexuality can make us truly ill. Thus the very origin of our life, in its physical sense --- 'in the image of the Creator' --- is logically transformed into an instrument of death. Could it be that we Westerners, driven by our collective unconscious guilt, are still suffering the consequences of this logic today? From Jacob Needleman's introduction to The Gospel of Mary Magdalene by Jean-Yves Leloup.

Along my sacred journey I have encountered people who seem to wrap a constrictive, static, objective definition around the nature of Gnosis and Gnosticism. Objectively speaking, one could define Gnosis as the path and the vehicle by which a human soul evolves into the Christ-consciousness of self-realization. Anything more specific than this and one begins to encounter the same sort of obstacles one finds when defining a strictly objective view of the nature of reality. I have found that the nature of Gnosis is indeed subjective and experiential for each individual soul. Therefore, I can speak with authority of my living Gnosis and no other, just as I can speak with authority and experience of my own reality.

I took my vows and became a devotee of my Lady Mary Magdalene nine years ago. However, my insight into Christ Sophia, she who is unheard and unrecognized, the Shekinah in exile, began long before. It began within and behind the circumstances and karma surrounding my birth, abandonment, abuse, betrayal, rejection, sacrifice, and redemption.

My Gnosis is ongoing. It ebbs and flows like the tides, progression and regression, three steps forward and two steps back; yet ever evolving onward. My Gnosis, just as my life itself, is a constant process of creative evolution.

Among women today there is a familiar refrain, a recurring theme if you will, that goes something like this: "Just once in my life I'd like to be able to believe in my heart that the person I'm presently in a sexual relationship with is The One. The One who treasures me, adores me, and finds me beautiful and whole inside and out in all ways, my soul mate." This is the yearning and desire for true love, trust and intimacy; the very thing humanity loses in the banalizing of sex and love. This is the

experience of the Shekinah in exile: the marginalization and desecration of love in its varied expressions; perhaps most painful being the suppression of the knowledge of the sacred union. This is an idea of revolutionary impact regarding human sexual relations – the sacrament of sex itself.

Among the seven books that I will refer to, the definitive work on this subject is the Gospel of Philip (*The Gospel of Philip: Jesus, Mary Magdalene and the Gnosis of Sacred Union* by Jean Yves LeLoup)

(page 66 plate 112) V.60: [Jesus]:

This is how it is with those united in marriage.

The mystery which unites two beings is great;
without it, the world would not exist.

What gives substance to the world is *Anthropos*.

What gives substance to *Anthropos*

is an intimate and enduring relation [gamos]

Seek the experience of the pure embrace [*koinonia*]

it has great power;

contemplate the Presence in this impermanent body.

The verse above provides a glimpse of the sacramental nature of sexual union. This is the WHY, the reason for desire of intimacy between human beings. The sacrament of union is NOT merely the social custom of marriage itself, but rather the sexual union. It is the intentional intimacy of the sexual embrace that creates the trust and bond and “sacred union” of the gnosis. In the passage above, Jesus refers to the ‘mystery which unites two beings.’ In doing so he doesn’t distinguish that this unity is specifically the result of male coupling with female, but refers instead to any two beings which recalls the more traditional verse from the Book of Matthew (18:20) “Where two or more are gathered in my name, I am in the midst.” Further, he points out that the world is the outer shell that is created by the mystery of union between two beings. The world is defined, and articulated through the facilities of humanity

and humanity is defined and articulated through the unique power of bonding that is an 'intimate and enduring relation.' Though the body is impermanent the Presence or sense of unity that comes from a PURE embrace that is to say: an embrace motivated by love or the recognition of compatibility between two souls is the eternal indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Through the recognition of shared perception the apparent division of manifestation is annihilated, giving birth to a sense of wholeness or completion. Thus the process and evolution of creation and destruction rolls perpetually onward.

Even though I can only write from my experience as a woman, I cannot see how this idea of gnosis through sexual intimacy is gender specific. What is at stake is not mere biological reproduction. Rather what is being created and cultivated is a bond through trust and intimacy, culminating in a personal gnosis, a sense of union between Self and other Self. Beyond the union of flesh is the soul-to-soul connection because it is accepted in any Gnostic path that there must be an integration of the masculine and feminine principles in each individual soul in order to know one's Self.

Another book that I highly recommend and which gives a deeper and more thorough insight is *Gnosis of the Cosmic Christ: A Gnostic Christian Kabbalah* by Tau Malachi:

The Gospel of Truth emerges from the love-play of the Bridegroom and Holy Bride, and, in their union, they fulfill and complete one another. He is the Son of the Heavenly Father, Christ the Logos, and she is the Daughter of the earthly Mother, Christ the Sophia – the Soul of the World.

Through Lady Mary, the Holy Bride, humanity and the world are joined to Yeshua Messiah and, in her redemption, all souls are redeemed. (Malachi, p.330)

The Daughter and Holy Bride is the image of the divine Mother below; the lower Shekinah is the

reflection of the upper Shekinah. Everything we might say of Binah regarding the divine feminine, we may also say of Malkut, for Malkut is the manifest power of the divine Mother. Just as the divine Mother is both bright and dark, so also is the Daughter and Holy Bride. For though we may speak of the upper and lower Shekinah, in truth, there is but one Shekinah above and below. The Shekinah—power manifest in holy saints and angels and the Shekinah—power manifest in the evil-doer and demons, in essence is the same Shekinah. The whole of creation and all creatures are sustained by God's presence (Shekinah) and nothing exists apart from God's presence (Shekinah)

The Holy Bride is the maiden of light, the mother of the royal blood, and the crone of ageless wisdom; yet she is also the mistress of the night, the queen of demons, and the hag of Chaos. (Malachi, p.337)

...And so it is with ALL WOMEN. In order to be a true woman and live at full power, true to her Self, her gnosis must culminate in the integration of all seven aspects of the Sacred Feminine: Mary Magdalene: Our Lady In Red [who is the Holy Bride proper] Maiden of Light, Mother of the Royal Blood, Crone of Ageless Wisdom, Mistress of the Night, The Queen of Demons, and The Hag of Chaos.

It is important to understand that this isn't a mere allegory but is a crucial element of the meta-story that is human existence. This need for union and integration plays out on every field of human possibility or endeavor. It is a core human impulse as we are manifest as psychological and sociological creatures.

The overall importance of the theme of reunion and reintegration is emphasized in Rollo May's essential classic *Love and Will* where he states:

This is why the reuniting of will and love is such an important task and achievement for man. Will must come in to destroy the bliss, to make possible a new level of experience with other persons and the world; to make possible autonomy, freedom in the mature sense, and consequent responsibility. Will comes in to lay the groundwork which makes a relatively mature love possible. No longer seeking to re-establish a state of infancy, the human being, like Orestes, now freely takes responsibility for his choices. Will destroys the first freedom, the original union, not in order to fight the universe forever – even though some of us do stop at that stage. With the first bliss of physical union broken, man's task is now the psychological one of achieving new relationships which will be characterized by the choice of which woman to love, which groups to devote himself to, and by the conscious building of those affections.

Hence, I speak of the relating of love and will not as a state given us automatically, but as a task; and to the extent it is gained, it is an achievement. It points toward maturity, integration, whole-ness. None of these is ever achieved without relation to its opposite; human progress is never one dimensional. But they become touchstones and criteria of our response to life's possibilities. (May, pp.285-286)

Here Rollo May articulates so well the myriad of neurosis and pathologies played out on psychiatrists' couches throughout Western Culture. Within the conscious integration of love and will is created and manifest the Gnosis of sacred union. Without the unification of love and will together, love is degraded to the desire to dominate and possess, which is the root of sexual violence, and will becomes the vehicle

through which this errant desire is pursued. The only possible result of such disintegration is further schism and unsatisfied desire. In fact, this book *Love and Will* is such a deep exploration in the various aspects of love as well as the application of will and intentionality that it is practically required reading for anyone who is going through the healing process of recovering from sexual violence or exploitation.

Another book that I highly recommend and that I believe should be read and thoroughly understood by teenage girls in Western culture is *A Woman's Worth* by Marianne Williamson:

Having been taught that the power of strong women is in various ways suspect, many of us find it hard to fully embrace our power. We're afraid. But the Goddess is ready to correct our thinking. Her key, the access point, the miracle, is love. We are here only to love, and love casts out fear. When we understand that love is the reason for our power – that it **is** our power – we lose our fear of owning its strength. We become willing to experience the power within us, that it might be used as a channel through which love is expressed to all humankind. (Williamson, p. 58)

Here again what we see expressed at the core of woman's self-esteem is integration of the bright and dark aspects of the Divine Feminine. As Williamson further elaborates:

The truth that sets us free is an embrace of the divine within us. It means remembering we are the daughters of God, and daughters of God don't brake for jerks.

When a woman falls in love with the magnificent possibilities within herself, the forces that would limit these possibilities hold less and less sway over her. A relationship that keeps us tied to the push and pull of

co-dependent neurosis is a block to our shining. When we are very clear that we *want* to shine—then we attract into our lives the kinds of relationships that help us do that. Until a woman has given herself permission to be fabulous, she will not find herself with partners who promote her ability to be so. As long as she tears herself down, she will attract people who tear her down; she will find others who agree that she is undeserving and lacking as long as that is how she thinks of herself. (Williamson, p. 59)

The above reiterates the necessity of becoming a WHOLE and complete woman through the integration of the seven different aspects of the Sacred Feminine. It is the only path by which a woman can come into her own power and to truly know her Self; and with that the capacity for surrender and true sacred union with another Self.

Finally, I would recommend two books to be read together. These are *The Gnostic Gospels* by Elaine Pagels and *The Chalice and the Blade: Our History, Our Future* by Riane Eisler. Together these books provide the reader with a historical, anthropological and sociological perspective and overview of the crisis of womanhood in Western civilization. In both books one will find reference to another text, the “Trimorphic Protennoia” (the Triple-Formed Primal Thought). This was originally a Barbeloite treatise that is thought to have originated sometime in the 2nd century CE:

I am Protennoia, the Thought that dwells in the Light. I am the movement that dwells in the All, she in whom the All takes its stand, the first-born among those who came to be, she who exists before the All. She (Protennoia) is called by three names, although she dwells alone, since she is perfect. I am invisible within the Thought of the Invisible One. I am revealed in the

immeasurable, ineffable (things). I am incomprehensible, dwelling in the incomprehensible. I move in every creature.

I am the life of my Epinoia that dwells within every Power and every eternal movement, and (in) invisible Lights and within the Archons and Angels and Demons, and every soul dwelling in Tartaros, and (in) every material soul. I dwell in those who came to be. I move in everyone and I delve into them all. I walk uprightly, and those who sleep, I awaken. And I am the sight of those who dwell in sleep.

I am the Invisible One within the All. It is I who counsel those who are hidden, since I know the All that exists in it. I am numberless beyond everyone. I am immeasurable, ineffable, yet whenever I wish, I shall reveal myself of my own accord. I am the head of the All. I exist before the All, and I am the All, since I exist in everyone.

I am a Voice speaking softly. I exist from the first. I dwell within the Silence that surrounds every one of them. And it is the hidden Voice that dwells within my, within the incomprehensible, immeasurable Thought, within the immeasurable Silence.

I descended to the midst of the underworld, and I shone down upon the darkness. It is I who poured forth the water. It is I who am hidden within radiant waters. I am the one who gradually put forth the All by my Thought. It is I who am laden with the Voice. It is through me that Gnosis comes forth. I dwell in the ineffable and unknowable ones. I am perception and knowledge, uttering a Voice by means of thought. I am the real Voice. I cry out in everyone, and they recognize it (the voice), since a seed indwells them.

This is significant in that it shows that among these early Gnostics that the Divine Feminine was the only way by which the Gnosis could be comprehended. To know the Mother, the Shekinah above is to know the Daughter, the Shekinah below. Thus I believe that the Sophia Christos embodied in Lady Mary Magdalene, must be fully received and fully recognized in the power and glory of Kallah Messiah—the anointed Bride—and Nukva Messiah—the Holy Daughter. She must be fully received and recognized as co-equal Christ consciousness by the collective of human consciousness. Until this occurs, sexuality will not be redeemed, thus womanhood will not be redeemed, thus humanity cannot be redeemed. This is the crucial importance of the gnosis of sacred union. This is why it is relevant and will always be relevant in human relations and its recognition is the only way to obliterate sexual violence, exploitation and the false sense of separation that alienates humanity.

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The Deep Things Of Satan

Jonathan Sellers

People today take for granted many things which were considered important enough to be classed as Mysteries by the Ancients, our Ancestors. Why only a couple or three centuries ago, Einstein, Bohr, Heisenberg, Hawking, Sarfatti would have been brought before the Office of the Holy Inquisition. (We leave out the Sacred name of Einhorn, since he failed to sneak past the 20th Century Inquisition, and even got an



Photo: Phil Sigin-Lavdanski

episode of *Law and Order* dedicated to his story in the 2002-03 season... tisk tisk) People today care little for the Gods their ancestors worshipped. Maybe it's just as well, because that keeps the Initiates forever separated from them. Them = the dross. It does not seem a big deal today, that nearly 2500 years ago the Historical Buddha was Illuminated and preached his famous sermon at the Vulture Peak. Yet, in those days it was a revolutionary idea, an idea that backfired when it was

introduced to the Mediterranean. Hell, it backfired in India as well. Look at the way India has become. What a pathetic shell of what it once was.

The idea that “man” saves himself, that he learns how to KNOW HIMSELF, to LIBERATE HIMSELF from the fetters imposed upon him by Conditioning, Social and Tribal Customs, by the Caste System, by the worship of National “Gods”. (and this is as applicable here as it is in India proper) In addition, the undoing of the curse of four generations, or the absolution of Karma.

The Wisest among US know and live by this standard. Yet there have been many dangerous cowards who, upon seeing that the Nationalistic Big Daddy God Cults weren’t necessary to “man’s” well-being, decided that they must be made necessary to man’s survival. This is how orthodox Christianity was formed, at the outset, by Peter, the apostate, who disregarded his Master’s command to regard Jon as the Successor. But Peter (pun may or may not be intended) was one of these small, petty, cowardly little males who have been responsible for all the ugliness in the world.

GNOSTICISM IS the generic term that refers to this revolutionary shift from Nationalistic Big Daddy God Cults. Saint Alexander the Great paved the way for its entrance into Western Society. The Alexandrine Cult was a major step, for it demonstrated that ALL Nation-States worshipped essentially the same deities. The next step was for the worshipper to recognize that without the worshipper the deities would have no platform to rest on. In other words, the deities, once actual beings, like Ancestors; by the time of the Alexandrine period were projections of the individuals who worshipped them. In recognizing this, the logical conclusion was to develop that latent property that lies within each person, and make the Individual a FIT RECEPTACLE for the INDWELLING OF THE DEITY. This was, in its peculiar manner, introduced by the Buddhists. The result was to realize the Buddha Nature, and gradually live in such a manner that allowed it to be consciously perceived constantly.

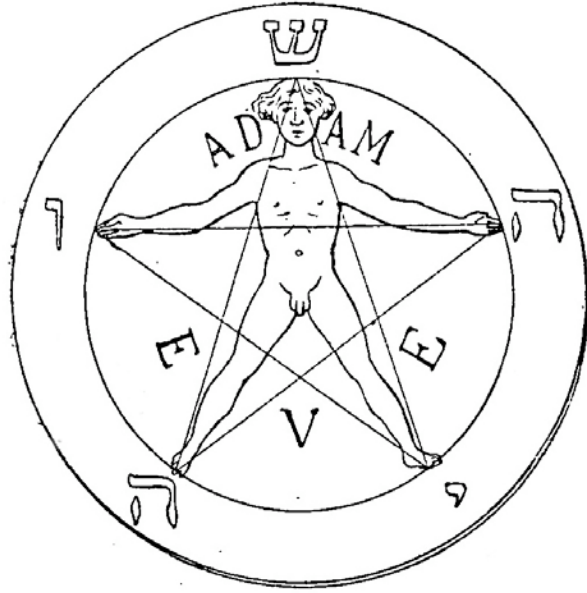
This, too, is the “Day-Spring from on high” which some of the sects in the Mediterranean sought. This is Self-Knowledge. This is NOT worship of the God of one’s race, family, culture, nation, state, or empire. If a nation-state of such self-realized individuals existed, it would have no need for National Gods, nor would it have any need for gods at all. It would be one living organism, the Deity manifest in all its diversity: female, male, and all-inclusive. There would be no need for all the prescriptions pronounced arbitrarily by lawgivers like “Moses” or “Paul” or “Peter” or any of the pronouncements of the popes who are nowhere as divine as they would con us into believing.

The above being stated, we must make a statement about this. Nazi Germany was one such nation-state, of “self-realized” beings, convinced that they were liberated, awakened, free. So, if the rest of the world is not so realized, then at least it better construct a big enough fence around the seething mass of the one-mind that would exist in such a body of people, as it can get out of hand.

People who harp about getting a one-world order going assume that they will be among the chosen ones, and that the rest of us who enjoy our individuality would be got by the weed whackers of the N.W.O. There will always be Kings and Slaves, no matter what we get. This is fairly self-evident. As humankind thinks it is getting liberated, there are terrorist threats or technological advancements that come and dash any such hopes.

True, in the Antinomian Spirit, some of us can and do exist, without much infringement upon our sovereignty by the Rulers. However, to expect that the entire world could go back to an Edenic state is a bit much, especially when its gardeners would be humans much like the rest of the livestock that grazes in the garden.

How many of these people are Teachers themselves? Probably not a single one of them, for the Teachers Know the Wrong of the Beginning,



and know the folly of allowing the humans to do anything about making corrections that amount to a mass of totalitarianism, even when it appears to be candy-coated feel-good ideals.

For plenty of us, the model of conduct can be typified by ancient Gnostic currents, like the Carpocratians; like the various groups that derived from them, and like their 20th century successor, Thelema. Yet, this is not good enough, either, because it still implies belief in things that some of us see no reason to waste time with.

A person might ask, “Well, if the Carpocratians or the Frankists are so great, then why aren’t they the rule and not the exception?” Well, probably, because the herd rules, and the herd is unable to live this way without adjustments to their mother-boards, and perhaps better software installations.

When numerous people get involved with things like Satanism, Thelema, et cetera: all the apparent rebel-spirituality flavors - is it out of rebelling, or is it out of just plain starting at ground zero and assimilating one of these idea systems as their own rule of conduct? Who knows? We might not even want to be any such thing had we been born into it. Of course the Satanism that gets popularized is for the most part a stale joke, as we see in it nothing of the Angel-Cults that really can be categorized as such. Now, our predecessors the Ancient Magi, the early Teachers, the Watchers, the Anunnaki, were a bit of both: Godly and Satanic. Read the Old Testament sometime, and figure out what Satan really is, and then, the rebel-god stuff might wear off a bit.

It makes no sense to us that the Devil Traditions are characterized as evil, as “Ahrimanic” even, when the counter-currents that oppose them have been far more prolific in manifesting evil in the world and perpetuating it. The Devil that was invented by the Church was done to prop up the protection racket and give the Priapus cult a run for its money. Indeed it ran for the hills, but it never died out.

Anything that scares the livestock is to be regarded with fear, superstition, misunderstanding, weapons, punishment, whispering campaigns, ostracism, torture, penalization, and death. Yet, it is evident

to some of us that the very god of the Old Testament manifests this same personality in its more wrathful phases, and rather than being an opposite god, is a component of the all-inclusive entity, much like the Tibetan Buddhists have Peaceful and Wrathful deities, and our basic makeup as well is so ordered, if we but tap it and exploit it for our own benefit!

Perhaps it is true that only a very rare segment of the population, particularly the human population, can appreciate the real Secret Tradition, because it is not what people have seen in the advertisements. That being said, we shall leave it there, tyle the Lodge, and proceed with the present survey.

GNOSTICISM IN GENERAL

“Gnostics,” says Budge, “is the name usually given to a group of religious sects which flourished in WESTERN ASIA and EGYPT between 250 B. C. and A. D. 400. One and all claimed that they possessed γνῶσις, i.e., ‘knowledge,’ but that ‘knowledge’ was of a highly spiritual nature, and was transcendental, supernal and celestial in character. According to some of the Gnostics, that knowledge was obtained by a series of revelations which were made by the One great God, Who was the Creator and Sustainer of the universe, to men who had fitted themselves to receive them by self-abnegation, fasting and prayer. The oldest history of the Gnôsis and the tenets of its followers will be found in the work of HIPPOLYTUS (died or martyred in the first half of the IIIrd century a.d.), Refutation of all Heresies. Another history written a couple of centuries later is the “Panarion” of EPIPHANIUS. The Coptic works, “Pistis Sophia,” (i.e. Faith-Wisdom) and books of IĒŪ provide us with a great deal of original first-hand information. The tenets of some of the Gnostic sects were derived primarily from INDIA, and they travelled westwards through PERSIA to SYRIA, PALESTINE, EGYPT and GREECE with the Buddhist envoys to the SELEUCIDAE and the PTOLEMIES who were sent thither by the kings of India in the IIIrd and IInd centuries b.c. Modern research has shown that the pictographic writings of the Indians and Sumerians were almost identical in character, and it may be that there is Sumerian influence in Gnosticism. The astrological element

in Gnosticism, of which so many examples are found on Gnostic amulets, certainly came from Babylonia, the home of astrology. ... And it is tolerably certain that many of the curious linear signs which represent the sun, moon, planets and other stars, are garbled copies of early Sumerian pictographs.” - Amulets and Talismans, pp. 200-1.

While the Sumerian view of the relationship between God and Man is one of Master and Slave (fitting the idea of the Rulers and the humans), as we have seen: some men were deemed worthy, of full age, and of good report, and became WISE MEN. They came to partake of the Knowledge of their Origins, the dual nature of the self, the whole package. The Historic Buddha learned the Knowledge in his country, India, which had been colonized in the North for a long, long time. Not all humans are able to come to the realization of the Four Noble Truths or the Noble Eight-fold Path, but those who do, rejoice.

Even the Thelemite view shows that the majority of humankind is doomed to slavery because it chooses to stay asleep and remain ignorant. Therefore, the Kings of the Earth shall be Kings forever, the Slaves shall serve.

Budge also tells us that “The Egyptian Gnostics rejected many of the pagan cults of the early dynastic Egyptians, but they regarded Ra, Horus and Harpokrates as forms of their ‘One God of heaven,’ and they connected Isis with the Virgin Mary, Osiris and Serapis with Christ, and Hathor with the naked woman who was the symbol of wisdom according to the latest form of Gnosticism in the IVth or Vth century.” - *ibid.*, p. 203

In other words, HORUS was regarded as the Highest God while ISIS and OSIRIS were given subordinate roles, and HATHOR was regarded as SOPHIA, Divine Wisdom personified. And this is exactly what we find if we look deeply into Thelema. This Highest God, too, is Manifest in Man, this Divine Wisdom available to the Few and the Chosen who are able to seek and find IT.

So, now, we come to Carpocrates and his system..... But first. another rant on Antinomian Gnosis.....

ANTINOMIAN GNOSIS

The Orthodox Church and all its offspring regard Antinomian Gnosis with extreme dread, as well they should, since the pastors of those churches are its shepherds, and the sheep must be kept within the boundaries of the flock. What is wrong with this picture? The Jesus of the Scripture is said to have spoken: "I have not come to abolish the Law but to fulfill it." Now unless we are using two dictionaries, Fulfill and Maintain are not the same words nor do they convey the same meaning. For that matter, fulfilling the Law, would, in due time, abolish it as well, as it would no longer be necessary.

Of course, in this day and age, if one threat or obstacle is removed, another dozen or so have to be created in order to justify the need for unthinkable outlays of budgetary allocations. If they get rid of Saddam and Osama, they will make for damn sure we get another two dozen threats to national security in order to justify government spending gone mad.

The idea was to fulfill the law, to undo the Wrong of the Beginning. The Carpocratian mythos is quite interesting (see below, and the accompanying Readings segment). For, a soul, incarnating in its body, with the remembrance of its divine home, as it descended through the womb-door, is free from the fetters of the Archons, the Rulers.

So, if Jesus were incarnated, as they say, to undo the "Sin of Eve"... and release the "Curse" - so-called... then why does it not seem to have taken? Why do we still need a hierarchical entity known as the Church - regardless of denomination? Why do we need missionaries, and protection racket confessionals, and all the rest? Simple answer is: WE DON'T! How many people can simply wake up and see that they are free, that they direct the movie that is their life? That they make their

rules as they go? Well, evidently, precious few can actually do this correctly. There is a correct way of doing this sort of thing after all.

But were you to ask what this is, what would we say? Would you believe us?

Not only that, but through the centuries this has been hinted at, through these various schools, from the Carpocratian period, through the Barbelo-Gnostics, and then hidden within Christian heresies that would spring up from time to time, including, to a certain extent, the Albigensian Heresy. Including, to a certain extent, the Waldensians. Including the Brethren (and Sisters too) of the Free Spirit. Including the Alumbrados, the Quietists, and so forth. We can include the Shabbetean Movement, the Frankist movement. The Bavarian Illuminati was yet another movement, even if it may have had nefarious plans, it still was showing how stupid the Establishment really was. It has not changed, has it?

Nope, I was right. The early Socialist and Communist movements originally pointed this direction but got mired in red tape and proved themselves to be the dismal failures that they have been all along. The Revolutions that came to France and the rest of Europe backfired because the masses were engaged against their inbred rulers (and some Euros accuse we Americans of sleeping with our cousins! Hah! They should know.) too late in the game for it to work correctly.

What happened to it all? Did it get swallowed up by the Modern Age? Yes. It really did.

We are at a crucial point in the history of the planet. Artificial Intelligence. Will you worship the machine? The boss comes and says,

***Isn't life better when
you're enjoying living it?
Fuck all that noise about
asceticism and morality
and binding oaths of
poverty. That is more
trappings that the
authorities create in order
to ensnare the peons.***

hey, you gotta love this! What would you do, what would YOU do? Get down on your knees, as I figured.

Well once upon a time I was sitting right where you are sitting now the boss came in and said here's the steeley dan III from Yokohama and it replicates itself now.... why it'll get in there right into the tight places like a candiru...

Wouldn't you? And I said I'm getting out of here, me! An he belches garlic like a mafia don an says you're white white WHITE! And so by not giving in to the Machine, by not worshiping the Genetic replication of Big Daddy, the first of the Satans, Lucifers, and so on was created. The Authorities / Rulers / Archons were pissed off, because there was a class of being that could defy it.

Then we are told, that this same class, aka Teachers, sought to educate this same class of peons before they were supposedly ready enough to accept the Teachings. Like we say, they never have been, nor are they likely to ever be ready to accept the Teachings. I think it was Gurdjieff who said all of nature is food for the Great Architect. (Not verbatim, by the way.)

So, if we can break free from the conditioning (and this applies to those of us who aren't conditioned religiously, but secularly as well)..... then..... what? Wouldn't you? Isn't life better when you're enjoying living it? Fuck all that noise about asceticism and morality and binding oaths of poverty. That is more trappings that the authorities create in order to ensnare the peons.

So now that we've looked into the "deep things of Satan" from our point of view, let us take a brief glance at Carpocrates and his "son" Epiphanes.

CARPOCRATES AND HIS SCHOOL

SIMON MAGUS was a student/disciple of DOSITHEOS. SIMON's school was known as the SIMONIANS. From the School of the SIMONIANS emerged NICOLAUS, the deacon, of Antioch;

CERINTHUS; and MENANDER. From NICOLAUS came the NICOLAITANS. One of the chief pupils in this school was CARPOCRATES, also of ANTIOCH, who transplanted himself to Alexandria. His school was also known as the CARPOCRATIANS.

Carpocrates' son and chief disciple was EPIPHANES, not to be confused with EPIPHANIUS the heresiologist. EPIPHANES' school became known as the PHIBIONITES, from whence sprang all the sects that became classified as Gnostics, Borborites, Stratiotics, Secundians, Coddians, Zacchaeuses, et cetera. They were all Sethian-Ophites.

We are not going to present everything we have, in this survey, just key items and primarily our ideas connecting the past with the present, as we find in the Carpocratics perhaps the earliest idea of Thelema a long time prior to Rabelais even, and the primary source from which the Quietists derived their teachings.

The Carpocratics were an early example of DO WHAT THOU WILT SHALL BE THE WHOLE OF THE LAW. We shall inquire as to what these 'deep things of Satan' might be, which Clement considered so horrible that he thought it legitimate to lie under oath to deny the existence of the Secret Gospel of Mark. Irenaeus, as quoted and paraphrased in Willis Barnstone's *The Other Bible*, gives us clues. First, they regarded Jesus as a human progeny, one of the big no-nos. Also, says the Bishop of Lyons,

They say that the soul of Jesus was brought up lawfully in Jewish customs but despised them and therefore received powers through which it annihilated the passions which are attached to men and punish them. The soul which, like the soul of Christ, is able to despise the world-creating Archons, will similarly receive power to do similar things. For this reason they have reached such a state of pride that they say they are like Jesus himself; but some say they are even more powerful, and

others say that they surpass his disciples, such as Peter and Paul and the rest of the apostles; they fall short of Jesus in no respect. Their souls, having come from the Authority above, and therefore similarly despising the world-creators, were deemed worthy of the same power and worthy to attain the same end. If any one despises things below more than Jesus did, he can become greater than he was...

This is not so unreasonable, after all, since the Buddhists have been after similar ends for a lot longer than Christians have. In the final summation, Buddha-hood and Christ-hood are the same thing. Yet slaves cannot become Buddhas or Christs, because they have to continue to worship something outside of themselves. Yes massa! Slaves like Irenaeus and Clement like their chains.

Continuing -

“They practice magic arts and incantations, charms and spells, familiar spirits and dream-senders, and all other wicked activities, saying that they have power to rule over the rulers and makers of this world and also over all that they created. Like the Gentiles, they were driven by Satan to slander the divine name of the Church so that men who hear of their actions of one sort or another suppose that we are all of the same kind and turn their ears away from the proclamation of the truth. Seeing what they do as men blaspheme all of us, though we participate with them in nothing - doctrine, practice, daily life.”

“They have reached such a pitch of madness that they say that it is in their power to do whatever is irreligious and impious, for they say that actions are good and bad only in accordance with human opinion. In the transmigrations into bodies, souls ought to experience every kind of life and action, if in a single life on earth any one of them has not first taken care to experience everything once for all and in equal completeness, actions such as it is not right for us to mention or to hear or even to have in mind, or to believe that any such thing is considered among men who live in the civilized world, so that, according to what their writings say, their souls, which have been involved in

every experience, may not, when they depart, still suffer any lack. They must act in such a way that they will not be forced into another body if something is still lacking in their freedom.”

“The souls which in a single life on earth manage to participate in all sins will no longer become reincarnate, but, having paid all their ‘debts’, will be freed so that they no longer come to be in a body.”

“And if godless, unlawful, and unspeakable things are done by them, I should not believe them. But in their writings it is written, and they provide exegesis to prove, that Jesus SPOKE IN A MYSTERY PRIVATELY TO HIS DISCIPLES (MARK 4:10-11) and judged them worthy to transmit these things to those who were worthy and who believed them. For through faith and love (cf. Gal. 5:6) we are saved; all else is indifferent, after the opinion of men, and is sometimes considered good, sometimes bad. NOTHING IS EVIL BY NATURE.”

“Some of them cauterize their disciples behind the lobe of the right ear. When Marcellina came to Rome under Anicetus, since she belonged to this school she led many astray. THEY CALL THEMSELVES Gnostics. They have images, some painted, some made of other materials, and they say that their picture of Christ was made by Pilate when Jesus was among men. They put crowns on these and place them with images of worldly philosophers, like Pythagoras and Plato and Aristotle and the others; and the rest of their veneration of the images is like that of the Gentiles.”

Basically the principal charge against the Carpocratians, and all the other Gnostic sects, is their disregard for the authority of the Church hierarchy. Any person or group who found they didn't need the nonsense being forced upon the crowd by the bellowings and rantings of Irenaeus, Clement, or anyone else in the “official” “Church”, in this category of hucksters, was condemned outright.

This has been done every time the Authorities find groups who discover that the Authorities are not necessary to their well being, survival, or salvation. This was done in the days of the Gnostics, and

other crucial periods throughout the ages. This was done in the case of the A & P Rite, as well; done in the 1960s, in the 1980s post-sexual revolution; it is done today in the days of Homeland Security and “Terrorist Threats to Merica.”

WE DO NOT NEED THE AUTHORITY OF THE CHURCH OR ITS SECULAR ARMS IN THE POLICE STATE.

People who can think for themselves do not need any of this. This is why we have always been forced into hiding and seclusion, or barbequed or strangled. Kurt Rudolph, in *GNOSIS*, writes of Carpocrates:

The historicity of Carpocrates and his son Epiphanes has been denied repeatedly. One saw behind his name rather a gnosticising cult association of the late Egyptian god Harpocrates, Horus the son of Isis, and gave credence to the report of Celsus who knew of “Harpocratians.”¹

Although it is not possible to discuss this question more fully here, it seems to me that there is little reason for doubting the existence of the person of Carpocrates (the name, however, may contain a conscious allusion to Harpocrates). Carpocrates is said to have worked under the emperor Hadrian (117-138), especially in Asia Minor, but to come allegedly from Egypt.² His son, who died at the age of 17, already played an important role (Clement even describes him as the actual founder of the school); the book already cited, “On Righteousness”, was composed by him.³ A female disciple of Carpocrates, Marcellina by name, spread his teaching (in modified form?) in about 160 in Rome (Celsus calls her followers actually ‘Marcellians’). The sect flourished in about 130. Its system works up earlier gnostic tradition into a consistent antinomianism,

¹ Origen, *Contra Celsum*, V-62.

² Clem. Alex. *Strom.* III. 5,2.

³ *Ibid*, p.268f.

or libertinism, which the soul must follow to its redemption, if necessary through several births.⁴ Jesus is the example worth striving for on this road, an example that can even be surpassed. Only faith and love are necessary for salvation; the rest, especially laws and regulations, is neutral. We have already got to know the cultic consequences that follow from this,⁵ as well as from the syncretistic cult of images of the Marcellian gnostics.⁶

So, then, we have a system that conforms to an early representation of the antinomian and Thelemic ideal, though not necessarily the same as the Qadosh tradition we are researching. Yet, at the bottom of the Qadosh tradition, is this Quietist /antinomian ideal, be it Carpocratians, the Free Spirit, the French Quietist groups, the Shabbeteans and Frankists... And as we can see, the ideas expressed here can be found more in Eastern Tantrik groups than in the West. Yet in the Syrian Gnosis, this also has existed, particularly in the generic sect of Sethian - Ophites / Barbelo-agnostics.

Now we shall look at Epiphanes.

EPIPHANES / PHIBIONITES

Epiphanes is regarded as Carpocrates' son. In Epiphanius of Salamis' synopsis of the foul Gnostic heretics, which we shall notice in the next segment, the Phibionites are regarded as the followers of this Epiphanes. This Epiphanes would have flourished at roughly the same time as Valentinus, or the middle of the second century c.e. So, then, it is likely that the Phibionites were the Carpocratians of the time of Clement. Epiphanes taught that everything is equal.

There is equality in the Universe, in the solar system, among the animal kingdom, and among humankind. And then, the point of the discourse: "As the laws could not punish men who were ignorant of

⁴ Ibid, p. 256.

⁵ Ibid, p. 250.

⁶ Ibid, p. 225 f.

them, they taught men to transgress.⁷ For particularity of the laws cut up and destroyed the universal equality of the divine law....

“The ideas of Mine and Thine crept in⁸ through the laws which cause the earth, money, and even marriage no longer to bring forth fruit for common use. For God made vines for all to use in common, since they do not refuse the sparrow or the thief; and similarly wheat and the other fruits. But outlawed sharing and the vestiges of equality generated the thief of domestic animals and fruits.

“For man God made all things to be common property. He brought the female to be with the male in common and in the same way united all the animals. He thus showed “righteousness” to be a universal sharing along with equality. But those who have been born in this way have denied the sharing which is the corollary of their origin and say, “Let him who has taken one woman keep her,” whereas all can share her, just as the other animals show us.

“With a view to the permanence of the race, he has implanted in males a strong and ardent desire with neither law nor custom nor any other restraint is able to destroy. For it is God’s decree.... Consequently one must understand the saying: “Thou shalt not desire” as if the lawgiver was making a jest, to which he added the even more comic words “thy neighbor’s goods”.⁹ For he himself who gave the desire to sustain the race orders that it is to be suppressed, though he removes it from no other animals. And by the words “thy neighbor’s wife” he says something even more ludicrous, since he forces what should be common property to be treated as a private possession.”¹⁰

For an exact parallel to this, written by an early 20th century Initiate into Tibetan Buddhism, who happened to be an American - Dr. W. Y. Evans-Wentz, we suggest the reader obtain a copy of *The Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation*, and study its contents thoroughly. Especially of value

⁷ Cf. Gal. 4:19.

⁸ Cf. Gal. 2:4.

⁹ Exod. 20:17.

¹⁰ Clement, *Strom.* III. 6-9.

is the Introduction, particularly the 9th section: Good and Evil, pp. 35-57, especially the part dealing with Morality, pp. 45-52. It is, if anything, a vindication of Epiphanes and Carpocrates, and their predecessors and successors. In short, a vindication of all those who attempted to show Western Society the path to Self-Liberation from the Sleep of Ignorance. Instead, it was our sects who were urged to “go to sleep”, as the Rite of Memphis was. Well, even now, even amongst the Esoteric Trade, insomnia occurs!

Also, Alexandra David-Neel, *Initiation and Initiates in Tibet*, Chapter XIV: Different Kinds of Morality, expresses the very same thing. It is precisely our Western Morality, so-called, or Lack There-of: or, rather, that Morality imposed on us by Judaeo-Christian propagandists and their armies, that has resulted in present-day society being more bankrupt, ethically, morally, aesthetically - than any other factor. The invention of the “sin complex” by Jews and Christians is truly the work of the “foul devil” which they, and they alone, willingly serve, and with so many blood sacrifices as to make Carthage look like an evening with a Hibachi on the balcony of the apartment building... by comparison.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

So these “Deep things of Satan” might seem rather tame by today’s standards, but this was HERESY at the time it was being preached. Yet, today, in the political climate we find ourselves in, it is worth considering that these ideals are far more viable than the dead ends offered by Church, State, and Corporation. If there was such a group, and if said group was interested in a Secret Gospel of Mark, containing the teachings that were conferred upon the Initiates into Egyptian Christianity, then... this is what it’s all about. Not the stuff we’ve been told to believe forever, but THIS!

Gnosis and the New Physics

Tobias Churton

Throughout the world the news will be trumpeted that you are engaged in labours, the purpose of which is to ensure that human knowledge and the empire of the human mind over matter shall not for ever continue to be a feeble and uncertain thing.

COMENIUS, *VIA LUCIS* (The Way of Light)

It was inevitable that sooner or later physics would return to metaphysics. That is, after all, how it began: with the Gnostic search for the One behind all phenomena. The desire to understand and master matter; the quest for the spirit imprisoned in matter; the chasing of light diffused throughout nature in divine signatures; the central role of humankind, the Great Miracle, as bridge between the visible and invisible—all are Gnostic themes. And they all influenced the quest for science.

From the time of Friar Bacon to Michael Maier's *Atlanta fugiens* (1617) and beyond, the scientific effort has been characterized by the appearance of spectacles: instrumental apparatus to aid the carnal eyes in making a theory of nature. This effort was predicated upon Christ's dictum, "The truth will make you free." Investigation of nature's laws was thus regarded at the outset of the sixteenth-century scientific endeavor as a Hermetic pursuit. Know nature, know the creator: know thyself: ergo, become free of nature. It was in a sense a quest for virginity; scientists wear white for their chemical nuptials.

The quotation from Comenius that begins this chapter also contained a warning to the youthful Royal Society of 1668. Should the spiritual ends of knowledge be subsumed beneath the purely material, then the work might well degenerate into “a Babylon turned upside down, building not towards heaven, but towards earth.”¹

This transpired to be prophetic. State and privately funded scientific knowledge has come for many to represent not a liberation but a threat. It seems the more power over nature we have attained, the more critically dependent on nature we have become. Resources dwindle, and Mother Nature is unwell. The blame has been placed, somewhat unfairly at the door of the mechanistic philosophies embodied or deduced from some of the works of Newton, Bacon, and Descartes, and rationalist philosophers such as Locke, Hume, and Mill. But human beings find it hard not to see the world in terms of their own ideals and, more especially, thoughts.

It was especially hard for them to resist deifying their rational constructs and even the rational principle itself when faced with the enormous practical success of reason’s application. Machines worked. It was hard not to see the brain as a computer and to eulogize the advantages of artificial intelligence while eschewing the abiding value of the real thing.

The scientific revolution represented a wonderful opportunity not only for craftspeople of unbelievable ingenuity, but also for every moron who would like to rape all mystery out of existence. The objective, the visible, the tangible, the observable: these represented the real universe of science. Away with angels and subtle forces and the whole panoply of magic and the (organically) invisible spirit; matter was real, vital, all-inclusive. Numbers were firm, solid, reliable. Intellection was masculine.

The Hermetists with their organic doctrines of mind *in extenso* were out of date; theology had nothing to do with practical, realistic science. God the demiurge-mechanician, the bored Hephaestus of the stars, had created the cosmos and had handed over the reins of the cosmic chariot

¹ Comenius, *Via Lucis* (The Way of Light), 1668.

to an evolutionary, mathematical process whose “selfish genes” were destined to give birth to man the tool-maker, separated surveyor of all he saw and an idol unto himself. So we see the symmetrical inversion of the truth. In short, matter was real. Spirit was matter of opinion.

Although this mentality still dominates most Western thinking and commerce and is trundled out thoughtlessly in our places of education, the triumphal ecstasy of materialist science had begun to wane even before World War I, at the very height of what has since come to be called “classical” physics. “Classical” was a suitably pretentious name for an era of gathering humanistic certainties.

Everything in the cool materialist garden looked more or less rosy until around the turn of the century, at which time were born a number of people destined to become physicists. They were Werner Heisenberg, Wolfgang Pauli, Max Born, Pascual Jordan, and Paul Dirac, born to build with and build on the work of Max Planck, Ernest Rutherford, Erwin Schrödinger, Niels Bohr, and Albert Einstein. Their minds opened upon an unexpected world: the world of the atom, the elementary building block of what was then conceived to constitute matter --- that is, as far as mainstream science was concerned, reality.

A year after Aleister Crowley received the highly relativistic *Book of the Law* (1904), promising revolutionary children and an era of force and fire, Albert Einstein published his general theory of relativity, in which he proved mathematically that space and time were relative, not absolute conditions of the universe --- relative, that is, to the speed at which the observer or observing apparatus was traveling.

Einstein identified mass with energy and showed that nothing could be expected to travel faster than light (an idea highly suggestive to Gnostics). Beyond 186,000 miles per second, the idea of traveling anywhere collapsed. Putting it another way, if two photons (from the Greek, light-beings), or light-energy particles, were traveling in opposite directions at the speed proper to light, then if one were to affect the other, we would need to postulate a fourth dimension, even the rupture of

linear time. A photon “knows” no time. Such theories were unsettling. The machine rattled.

If mass was energy, what did this energy consist of? Energy, in physical terms, is a measured effect—to be precise, the effect of activity associated with and within atoms. Since atoms released energy at measurable (but not necessarily consistent) intervals, it was reasonable to assume that unlike the atoms of Democritus, they were not irreducible solids—as if the creation was the work of a three-dimensional *pointilliste*—but hid within a world of their own. This world is called the subatomic world, beyond the senses and, to some extent, the logic of sense, and is the particular province of quantum mechanics.

Quantum physics has to do with quantities of energy (called quanta) emitted from atoms under certain conditions. In particular, energy registers as light, call photons, as well as electrons, particles bearing electrical charges loosed from proximity to the nuclei of atoms, interacting with other subatomic particles (variations of which are still being discovered and given tentative names like quarks, gluons).

In spite of what we were taught in physics at school—the famous atom of Bohr (a mini-nucleocentric cyclic universe wrapped in a spherical shell)—we should not picture the atom in this fashion, except for general visual appropriation of indeterminate phenomena. We can have no solid picture of the atom at all.

What appears to be the atom is a dynamic relationship so small that were we to remove manually each atom from a spoonful of carbon in reverse time, we should still be scooping them at the time when the universe is currently thought to have originated. That’s fifteen billion years ago.

An atom is to be regarded as a set of statistical probabilities, indefinite knowledge of whose behavior has been found to have useful applications, from lasers and microchips to DNA and holograms. In fact, the atom has been described as being more like a cloud than an object, a cloud of electromagnetic activity—a description highly suggestive of Gnostic parlance.

In gnosis, the cloud is a regular symbol for the illusory or gross body, the idea behind which has to do with the veiling of the sun. When, for example, it is written that “a cloud received Him [Christ] out of their sight” (Acts 1:9), we may take it to signify that the Logos (creative Mind) incarnate became imperceptible to carnal sense.

Likewise, the world of subatomic physics is imperceptible to the senses, except through apparatus cleverly designed according to pre-conceived types and ranges of measurable phenomena. The beauty of quantum physics is that observations suggest from within themselves the experimental shortcomings of the process of observation itself. We can now join in qualified assent to William Blake’s assertion that the atom is “a thing that does not exist,” something he observed without recourse to external apparatus, but in keeping with the vision granted him by what he called the Divine Imagination. It may be said that the impact of that imagination is now being observed by scientists.

Carl Jung, when examining the thought-world of Gnostic alchemy, came up with a formula of perception pertinent to this study. Jung recognized that on confronting the unknown, when the conscious mind is at a loss to ratiocinate the mysterious phenomenon before it, the unconscious mind projects images and ideas from an interior well of archetypes onto the external phenomenon, uniting the subject to the object. The mind makes matter meaningful—not surprisingly, if we see matter as a manifestation of mind. Thus, the alchemists saw the chemical process as embodying a spiritual or at least psychic process and perceived themselves to be united with it.

After Newton, we can broadly say that where the study of physics was concerned, rational cause-and-effect, linear mathematics proved adequate to explain a whole range of natural phenomena, from the planets to plastic. Come the advent of quantum physics, reaching its first high-water-mark in the late 1920s, Jung’s formula comes back into play. As scientist and author of *The Tao of Physics*, Fritjof Capra, said in 1982: “I now believe that the world view of mystical tradition is the best and most appropriate philosophical background for the theories of modern

science.” In this setting it would be most surprising if we did not find ideas familiar to the history of Hermetic thought, when theorizers attempt to interpret the sub- or even nonatomic world. What had quantum physics to assert that could lead to such a conclusion.

THE COPENHAGEN INTERPRETATION

At first sight the association does not look too promising. A meeting of physicists held at Lake Como in Italy in September 1927 saw Niels Bohr reveal what has since become known as the Copenhagen interpretation of quantum mechanics. (Bohr was in Denmark when he worked it out.) The theory runs as follows: When a choice is made to measure precisely the position of a particle (such as an electron), the process of measurement forces the particle to develop more uncertainty with regard to its momentum. The reverse is also the case. Science will have to be content with the knowledge that precise measurements of momentum and position of particles is impossible—only probabilistic formulas can be applied.

These formulas are, nonetheless, highly useful. Among other things, this apparent block on knowledge means that the future cannot be statistically predicted, which, in classical physics, was always a theoretical possibility in the context of a universe consisting of separate components obeying fixed laws. These features of quantum theory also contributed to Heisenberg’s uncertainty or indeterminacy principle.

This has been expressed by Professor David Bohm as the discovery that “even if one supposes that the physically significant variables actually exist with sharply defined values (as is demanded by classical mechanics) then we could never measure them simultaneously, for the interaction between the observing apparatus and what is observed always involves an exchange of one or more indivisible and uncontrollably fluctuating quanta.”² This was quite a blow to the old school.

² David Bohm, *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*, 69.

Furthermore, in quantum physics the observer participates in the system of observation to such an extent that the system cannot be viewed as independent. That meant, at least in the quantum context, *au revoir* to the Cartesian notion of an external universe, independent of cognition. Most significantly, it had been discovered that the energy we call an electron may become manifest both as a wave and as a particle, depending on the measuring conditions.

In the famous (idealized) two-slit experiment, we are asked to imagine a wall seen from above, with two holes spaced apart. In front of the wall is an electron gun and behind it, a detector. When a single electron is aimed at the wall, the pattern displayed on the detector indicates wave interference. This extraordinary phenomenon suggests that the electron has gone through both holes at once, in the form or function of a wave, and interfered with itself.

The electron “knows” that both holes are open. Yet, if observed, an electron is seen to go through one hole or the other, and is registered on the detector as a particle. It is as though the electron experiences or even creates a parallel world in which it is in two places at once—a process that can never be observed directly, for the moment an attempt is made to do so, the wave function immediately collapses. The particle “knows” it is being watched! It also behaves as if it knows what other particles are doing. In this context, objective knowledge of a supposed material world is simply impossible.

We are currently unable to know how an electron particle can suddenly function as a wave and what, if anything happens in between. In the words of Professor John Gribbin: “It is interesting that there are limits to our knowledge of what an electron is doing when we are looking at it, but it is absolutely mind-blowing to discover that we have no idea at all what it is doing when we are not looking at it.”³

No wonder Niels Bohr was moved to declare, “Anyone who is not shocked by quantum theory has not understood it.” Going further down the metaphysical road, Gribbin asserts in his book *In Search of Schrödinger’s*

³ John Gribbin, *In Search of Schrödinger’s Cat*, 161.

Cat (1984): “Nothing is real when we look at it, and it ceases to be real as soon as we stop looking.” The Machine has not only fallen to pieces, but the pieces are not pieces anymore.

Einstein for one was most disturbed, and he (and others) spent years trying to fill the gaps left by the collapse of linear, classical logic, with the formulation of what are called hidden variables to account for the illogical and uncertain character of the quanta.

In the quantum world the left hand always knows what the right hand is doing. In physics, this idea is called the theory of complementarity. Complementarity involves compensations in energy made “between” separate photons traveling apart at the speed of light with no known three-dimensional medium joining them.

Yet, in spite of the fact that nothing we know can travel faster than the speed of light, one photon can indeed affect the other. According to Einstein, “No reasonable definition of reality could be expected to permit this.”⁴ The theory of complementarity was proven decisively in the summer of 1982 in a series of experiments conducted at the University of Paris-South by a team led by Alain Aspect.

John Gribbin concludes: “The experiments prove that there is no underlying reality to the world”⁵ It is difficult to see precisely what the presumably unreal Gribbin means by this astonishing statement. If quantum effects are real (and human perception is a valid approach to the real—a big if), they cannot demonstrate themselves out of existence.

I understand him to mean that a world of three-dimensions cannot sustain itself alone. The idea of a relatively material universe has broken down—but then it could be suggested that such a world is only an idea after all! This will come as little surprise to students of gnosis, in whose domain matter has long been symbolized by water. Water—or clouds—represent energy in flux whose ultimate basis is ultimately

⁴ Albert Einstein, quoted in Abraham Pais, *Subtle is the Lord* ... (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982). From a paper “Can quantum mechanical description of physical reality be considered complete?” by A. Einstein, B. Podolsky, N. Rosen, reprinted in the volume *Physical Reality*, ed. S Toulmin (San Francisco: Harper and Rowe, 1970), 456.

⁵ John Gribbin, *In Search of Schrödinger’s Cat*, 4.

unknowable by ratiocination: the Ungrund of Böhme; the Ain Soph of the kabbalists; the Bythos of the Valentinians; the cosmic Nothing of Pico and Crowley; the Hermetic Good, source of Mind.

In the Gnostic conception, All ($\pi\alpha\nu$) is projection from source into greater complexity and obscurity. The human being, with a foot in both worlds, is understandably perplexed. However, the Buddhist notion of the world as maya (whose root is shared with the Sanskrit matra, measure), or illusion, can be, and frequently is, taken to the extreme that the world does not exist.

It might be more illustrative to say that the world bears and illusory character if we take our sense of it at any point to be absolute (the essence of materialism). The world constantly breaks down into partly chaotic activity the more we analyze it, that is, take it as real by breaking the whole into parts. As Dean Inge observed, "A journey through the unreal is an unreal journey,"⁶ and it is not only the first Gnostics and last existentialists who have held the view that this journey, though vexatious to the soul, may not be totally in vain.

Those who have explored other dimensions of consciousness have seldom returned to say this one is a complete waste of time. The positive aspect of the Hermetic vision invites us to explore the mind of God, in whose projection we may be conscious participants, having experienced gnosis. We can, if we so choose, go along for the ride; we can follow the law of Thelema: Do what thou wilt!

Nearly two thousand years ago, a writer of a Hermetic dialogue pondered the problem of what it was that bodies, or in our case, photons, moved in:

Hermes: All movement then takes place within something that stands fast, and is caused by something that stands fast...

The movement of the cosmos then, and of every living being that is material, is caused, not by things outside

⁶ Dean Inge.

the body, but by things within it, which operate outwards from within; that is to say, either by soul or by something else that is incorporeal.

...I have now explained to you what is that by which things are moved, as well as what is that in which things are moved.

Asclepius: But surely, Trismegistus, it must be in void that things are moved.

Hermes: You ought not to say that, Asclepius, Nothing that is, is void; it is only that which is not, that is void.

...Is not air a body? ...And does not that body permeate all things that are, and fill them by its permutations? ...Hence the things which you call void ought to be called hollow, not void; for they are full of something that exists.

Asclepius: What then is that incorporeal thing?

Hermes: It is Mind, entire and wholly self-encompassing, free from the erratic movement of things corporeal; it is imperturbable, intangible, standing firm-fixed in itself, containing all things, and maintaining in being all things that are; and it is the light whereby soul is illuminated.

Asclepius: Tell me then, what is the Gods?

Hermes: The Good is the archetypal Light; and Mind and Truth are, so to speak, rays emitted by that Light.

Asclepius: What then is God?

Hermes: God is He that is neither Mind nor Truth, but is the cause to which Mind and Truth, and all things, and each several thing that is, owe their existence.⁷

Because gnosis is concerned with the elementary character of consciousness, we should not be surprised to find unprejudiced attention to matter throwing up classically Gnostic features; the wave/particle

⁷ *Corpus Hermeticum*, Libellus 2.12a-13.

duality is an obvious example. Duality is the character of creation from a primal unity in all Gnostic systems, and emphasized at the core of the I Ching, Tantra, and, indeed, all rational intellection (thesis/antithesis --- synthesis, or, more properly, thesis/antithesis—annihilation of thought).

The core of the Gnostic Anthropos is alien to this duality, and from a purely Gnostic perspective, it is no surprise that the once-godlike objective observer of nature has, in quantum studies, “fallen” into matter and been united with his observations—like that fatal aesthete, Narcissus. He thinks he is investigating nature but finds instead that he is exploring some of the contents of his own creative mind. No wonder he is entranced! This possible confusion is what seems to have irritated Einstein so much. How could there be science without absolute objectivity? To which one might respond: how could there be objects without absolute rationality?

This process of projecting ideal archetypal unconscious contents onto the findings of quantum physics is most noticeable in the influential works of David Bohm, late professor of theoretical physics at Birkbeck College, London. Bohm’s interpretation of quantum physics suggested to him that the cosmos bears inherent continuity, a universe of co-inherent extension, the whole (including mind and matter) enfolded at all possible points with wholeness or “holomovement” (the essence of holistic theory) governed by a universal holonomy as its essential nature: “undivided wholeness in flowing movement,” he called it.

“In this flow mind and matter are not separate substances,” Bohm wrote in his striking book *Wholeness and Implicate Order*, which reads very much like a description of the Stoic world-soul, the *anima mundi*, the grainy god of paganism and of its corollary, pantheism.

There are also strong suggestions of pre-Socratic concepts deriving from Anaximander and Heraklitos: All is Flux. Bohm’s vision also bears many remarkable similarities to that of the Gnostic Giordano Bruno: the

universe as a total energy system of infinite potential, “a synthesis of infinite relativity,”⁸ expressing *nous* rooted in other dimensions.

For Bruno, an infinite universe is the only possible expression of an eternal God.⁹ Where Bruno sees infinity in the extension of space, Bohm sees it in an unending enfoldment of reality, the holomovement. Likewise, we are reminded of Nicholas of Cusa’s use of the Hermetic geometrical apotheosis: God is an infinite sphere whose center is everywhere, circumference nowhere.

Bohm could have taken as his text Christ’s saying that if a house be divided against itself, it cannot stand, for he deduces an ethical imperative from the quantum survey. He believes that the physics of his holomovement has immediate practical consequences, providing a noetic basis for the struggle against fragmentation of the mind (psychology and psychiatry), fragmentation of the body (medicine), and the painful fissures throughout human society (politics).

What difference will acceptance of this truth make? As Johann Valentin Andreae found in the seventeenth century, the truth—whether from science or from any other quarter—is mostly despised and her followers shunted into cloisters. We need more than thoughts to sustain us; something like an active principle of complementarity would do the trick. These photons seem to love one another as themselves.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge had a similar vision to Bohm, calling it the One Life, which his famous Mariner transgressed in a moment’s thoughtlessness. This is the *unus mundus* of the alchemists (that which is above is like that which is below; to work the miracle of the One Thing), Blake’s marriage of heaven and hell, a baby in a backyard stable in Bethlehem—the Hermetic romance.

In answer to those who would see such a vision as an idealistic goal still to be achieved, we have the assertion of John Lennon (a man who had a bellyful of the illusion of the world) that it is not that we want the world to be one. It is One, hence “One World One People” appeared on

⁸ David Bohm, *Giordano Bruno: His Life and Thought* (New York: Schuman, 1950).

⁹ See Giordano Bruno, *On the Infinite Universe and Worlds*, in Singer, Giordano Bruno.

the run-out groove of his last record. Elias Ashmole's armorial motto says much the same thing (with a suggestive construction denying simplistic monism): EX UNO OMNIA—certainly more practical than the somewhat premature *E Pluribus Unum*, on which the United States and other social idealisms have foundered.

This all ties in with the Gnostic vision that duality and the accompanying phenomenon of separateness, isolation, and alienation represented the central problem in the nature of consciousness in three dimensions (the hylic hell). The Gnostic goal was to participate in the restoration of the Pleroma, the fullness of God as a dynamic, equilibrated whole.

Three-dimensional consciousness represented the fall from a protean unity, with its fixation on the illusion of real objects and accompanying desires and pains. This is important since Gnostics are too frequently called dualists. In their consistent (Hermetic) form, Gnostics were and are—when properly understood—antidualists. To communicate to the world-fixated being the Gnostic message that materialistic perception leaves us in a prison without light, it was perhaps necessary to concretize the idea that immersion in matter was a terrible thing and should be resisted and overcome. Materialist consciousness is a very hard nut to crack. It is in all of us and is everywhere about us. The real difficulty is that it is relatively true!

The Hermetic gnosis is weighted very heavily against the idea of creation as evil, while Aleister Crowley was adamant that dualism of matter and spirit was anathema, since matter may be seen as a manifestation of mind. The ideal Gnostic state, which Raja Yoga calls samadhi (union with God), is expressed by the Logos-incarnate in St. John's Gospel as "I and my Father are one"—a statement anathematized in its turn by those who believe in an external God, separate from an external material world. The classic illusion of low-level human perception thus turns God into a materialist.

Lama Govinda, a modern Buddhist scholar, expresses union with God in these terms: "This experience does not dissolve the mind into an

amorphous All, but rather brings the realization that the individuality itself contains the totality focalized at its very core.”¹⁰ This compares interestingly with Aleister Crowley’s *dhyana* experience in Sri Lanka in 1901, which brought him a vision of the divinity of the human archetype, itself akin to Ezekiel’s vision of God in human form in his famous prophecy (1:26), so reminiscent of Blake’s glorious Albion.

Other facets of quantum theory abound in suggestive parallels with familiar Gnostic themes. As stated earlier, a photon moving at the speed of light does not know time. A light particle emitted at the time of the Big Bang (a demiurgical image, as Hans Jonas has observed) and traveling outwardly ever since would, at the end of time, be back where it started: both alpha and omega, beginning and end. Does this not indicate a phenomenon reminiscent of Plato’s description of time in his *Timaeus* as “the moving image of eternity”?

The experience of timelessness that characterizes the essential Gnostic experience is thus shown not to be the delusion of an overheated brain but rather *less* illusionary than the average consciousness.

The principle of complementarity suggests that everything in the universe, past, present, and future, is connected to everything else. Each thing somehow holds an image of everything as a whole within it. Spare a thought for the limitations of language! Everything is connected within a web of electromagnetic radiation that functions as if it were omniscient, omnipresent, and even omnipotent (bringing particles forth seemingly *ex nihilo* and transcending linear time when occasion demands).

These features, normally associated with an external deity, appear to function in the nature of...things(?). Thus the Hermetic axiom so important to a practical mystic like John Dee: *mundus imago dei* (the world is the image of God) is to believers a valid inference from the results of experimental physics.

¹⁰ Renee Weber, *Dialogues with Scientists and Sages* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986).

There is much in quantum physics to suggest a kind of pantheism. That is to say, if you see the universe as interweaving matrices of energy, then is this energy in toto, GOD? It is a tempting thought.

However, this idea of God as a binding intelligence, or even a blind force working on automatic mathematical pilot, reads very much more like the Gnostic's crazy Demiurge (identified by Blake with the rational faculty in mournful isolation), whose work is that which can be bound and measured (Law), than the unknowable Father who can, paradoxically, be known in the spirit. It very much depends on whether you conceive of the universe as a spiritual system in sensible manifestation, or as a statistical system of abstracts in which we find ourselves.

The inevitable tendency of physics, when we consider the premises of experimental observation in the Baconian mold, is toward the latter. But in spite of Stephen Hawking's amusing tease that science will show us "the mind of God" (especially when the reverse might equally be the case), it is doubtful if we know enough about the universe to be anything like conclusive on this question.

The prodigious mathematician Kurt Godel's incompleteness theorem, formulated in the 1930s, not only seems to be presage some aspects of current chaos theory but also, according to Larry Dorsey, M.D., writing about the primacy of nonlocal mind, shows that nature's laws, if they are consistent as we believe them to be, must be of some inner formulation quite different from anything we know¹¹ and which, at present, as Bronowski put it, "we have no idea how to conceive."¹²

Personally, I find the term pantheism useful: the concept that God is in the All, and the All is in God—but that the All is not God. This view leaves more rooms in the many mansions of the divine house open for inspection. And like those electrons who seem to keep freedom of direction open to the very, very last instant—and may alter the course or

¹¹ Larry Dorsey, *Recovering the Soul: A Scientific and Spiritual Search* (London: Bantam New Age Books, 1989).

¹² Bronowski, *A Sense of the Future* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1977).

even form when observed—this formulation (and that is all it is) seems to guarantee freedom from being dominated by matter. This is what the Hermetically influenced Comenius hoped would characterize the work of systematic science in the Royal Society.

Furthermore, we may doubt that spirit—or, more particularly, mind—is an activity of what is called electromagnetism on the same basis that we doubt the nineteenth-century parapsychical speculation that God was embodied in the supposed medium of ether. We may just end up with another phlogiston: a nonexistent substance dreamed up to fit a preconceived formula.

St. Paul said that “spiritual things are spiritually discerned” —and when we grasp the meaning of this, we may see a renewed theology once more become the reigning queen of the sciences—so long, that is, as theologians do not become the reigning queens. God, Blake tells us, is not a spiritual diagram.

We may also wonder how it could possibly be that such ideas as the primacy of mind (apprehended in the Hermetic *nous*); the plurality of multidimensional worlds; the human being as microcosm (reflecting and creating the macrocosmos, the whole present in the parts—a deduction of Bohm from quantum theory); the interpretation and (mainly) orderly correspondence of all things in the astromagical doctrine; the effectiveness of willed magical gestures (note the “butterfly effect” in chaos theory); the significance of randomness in guaranteeing freedom and extradimensional guidance (from the Urim and Thummim to the Tarot and I Ching); precognition, the illusion of matter; the creation of the universe as a consequence of a disturbed prior equilibrium (the universe as a result of vacuum fluctuations and asymmetry, a deduction from quantum theory); the idea of a nonlocal mind affecting matter—and indeed the whole idea of God and eternity—could have arisen without humankind possessing faculties superior to sense perception for thousands of years (at least). All these ideas arose long before systematic physics had even found its way out of (Plato’s) cave. If

humans lacked such faculties, it is difficult to see how physics itself could ever have emerged.

We can only conclude that contrary to the materialist delusion, humans, in their essential being, are, as the Hermetic philosophy asserts, superior in their senses in ways we have hardly begun to grasp. It seems that our only obstruction is ourselves.

In this context, it would not be going too far to say that physics, along with the other sciences, is advancing “back” toward her glorious status as the practical and applied aspect of spiritual gnosis.

In the words of quantum physicist Erwin Schrödinger: “We may, or so I believe, assert that physical theory in its present stage strongly suggests the indestructibility of Mind by Time.”¹³

British physicist Paul Davies has remarked that physicists “have learned to approach their subject in totally unexpected and novel ways that seemed to turn common sense on its head and find closer accord with mysticism than materialism ... Science has actually advanced to the point where what were formerly religious questions can be seriously tackled.”¹⁴

If all this appears to some minds to be antiscientific, this is far from my intention. It is simply to say that there is a persistent tendency to use science as a proof for religious ideas and, less frequently, vice versa. This must, ultimately, be as vain as supposing that archaeology could prove that Moses was who the Bible says he was, or that the Turin shroud could prove an event as miraculous as the resurrection of Christ is supposed to have been.

“First come the bread, then the morals,” as Brecht put it.¹⁵ The archetypes create us, not we them, as (the Gnostic) Jung has shown. The mind that observes nature is—at its highest point, synthesis, or evolution—Gnostic, seeking knowledge of its freedom. Undoubtedly

¹³ Erwin Schrödinger, *Mind and Matter* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958).

¹⁴ Paul Davies, quoted in Larry Dorsey, *Recovering the Soul: A Scientific and Spiritual Search*, Bantam (London: New Age Books, 1989).

¹⁵ Bertolt Brecht, *Threepenny Opera*.

such a mind, even if it is as maimed by the overdependence on sense or reason as ours are, will discover a Gnostic universe, for it is an article of knowledge in gnosis that the mind that creates the universe is shared among us, should we choose to be participants in it.

We all go back before the Big Bang, and what we uncover in its extension is nothing more nor less than ourselves.

‘Now fix your thought upon the Light.’ he said, ‘and learn to know it.’ And when he had thus spoken, he gazed long upon me, eye to eye, so that I trembled at his aspect. And when I raised my head again, I saw in my mind that the Light consisted of innumerable Powers, and had come to be an ordered cosmos, but a cosmos without bounds. This I perceived in thought, seeing it by reason of the logos [spiritual mind] which Poimandres had spoken to me, ‘You have seen in your mind the archetypal form, which is prior to the beginning of things, and is limitless.’

Thus spoke Poimandres to me.¹⁶

In perception, as in love, we receive but what we give.

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¹⁶ *Corpus Hermeticum*, Libellus 1.7-8: The “Authentic Nous” Speaks to Hermes Trismegistus.

The Thunder: Perfect Mind

Anne McGuire, Ph.D.

(CG VI.2:13,1-21,32)

I was sent from the Power

And I have come to those who think upon me.

And I was found among those who seek after me (13,2-5).

Look at me, you who think upon me;

And you hearers, hear me!

You who are waiting for me, take me to yourselves.

And do not pursue me from your vision.

And do not make your sound hate me, nor your hearing.

Do not be ignorant of me at any place or any time.

Be on guard!

Do not be ignorant of me. (13,5-15).

For I am the first and the last.

I am the honored and the scorned,

I am the harlot and the holy one.

I am the wife and the virgin.

I am the m[oth]er and the daughter.

I am the members of my mother.

I am the barren one and the one with many children.

I am she whose marriage is multiple, and I have not taken a husband.

I am the midwife and she who does not give birth.

I am the comforting of my labor pains.

I am the bride and the bridegroom.

It is my husband who begot me.

I am the mother of my father and the sister of my husband.

And he is my offspring.

I am the servant of him who prepared me and I am the lord of my offspring.

But he is the one who be[got me] before time on a day of birth and he is my offspring in time, and my power is from him.

I am the staff of his power in his youth and he is the rod of my old age.

And whatever he wills happens to me.

I am the incomprehensible silence and the much-remembered thought.

I am the voice of many sounds and the utterance (logos) of many forms.

I am the utterance of my name (13,15-14,15).

Why, you who hate me, do you love me

And hate those who love me?

You who deny me, confess me,

And you who confess me, deny me.

You who speak the truth about me, tell lies about me,

And you who have told lies about me, speak the truth about me.

You who know me, become ignorant of me; and may those who have been ignorant of me come to know me (14,15-25).

For I am knowledge and ignorance.

I am shame and boldness.

I am unashamed, I am ashamed.

I am strength and I am fear.

I am war and peace (14,26-32).

Give heed to me (14,32-33)..

I am the disgraced and the exalted one (14,33-34)..

Give heed to my poverty and my wealth.

Do not be haughty to me when I am discarded upon the earth,
And you will find me among [those] that are to come.
And do not look upon me on the garbage-heap and go and leave me
discarded.
And you will find me in the kingdoms.
And do not look upon me when I am discarded among those who are
disgraced and in the least places,
And then laugh at me.
And do not cast me down among those who are slain in severity (14,34-
15,14).
But as for me, I am merciful and I am cruel (15,15-16).
Be on guard!
Do not hate my obedience,
And do not love my self-control in my weakness.
Do not forsake me,
And do not be afraid of my power.

Why then do you despise my fear
And curse my pride? (15,16-24).

I am she who exists in all fears and boldness in trembling.
I am she who is weak, and I am well in pleasure of place.
I am foolish and I am wise (15,25-31).
Why have you hated me in your counsels?
(Is it) because I shall be silent among those who are silent, And I shall
appear and speak?
Why then have you hated me, you Greeks?
Because I am a non-Greek among non-Greeks? (15,31-16,3).
For I am the Wisdom of Greeks
And the Gnosis of non-Greeks.
I am judgment for Greeks and non-Greeks.
I am the one whose image is multiple in Egypt.
And the one who has no image among non-Greeks.

I am she who has been hated everywhere and who has been loved everywhere.

I am she who is called Life and you have called Death.

I am she who is called Law and you have called Lawlessness.

I am the one you have pursued, and I am the one you have restrained.

I am the one you have scattered and you have gathered me together.

Before me you have been ashamed and you have been unashamed with me.

I am she who observes no festival and I am she whose festivals are many.

I, I am godless and I am she whose God is multiple.

I am the one upon whom you have thought and whom you have scorned.

I am unlearned, and it is from me they learn.

I am she whom you have despised and upon whom you think.

I am the one from whom you have hidden and to whom you are manifest.

But whenever you hide yourselves, I myself will be manifest.

For whenever you are manifest, I myself [will hide f]rom you.

Those who have [...]

[...]

[...] senselessly

Take me [...] [underst]anding out of pain, and receive me to yourselves out of understanding [and] pain. Receive me to yourselves out of disgraceful places and contrition.

And seize me from those which are good even though in disgrace.

Out of shame, receive me to yourselves in shamelessness.

And out of shamelessness and shame, blame my members among yourselves.

And come forward to me, you who know me and who know my members.

Establish the great ones among the small first creatures.

Come forward to childhood and do not despise it because it is little and small.

And do not bring back some greatnesses in parts from smallnesses, for the smallnesses are known from the greatnesses.

Why do you curse me and honor me?

You have wounded and you have had mercy.

Do not separate me from the first ones whom you have k[nown].

And] do not cast anyone [out
and do not] bring anyone back [...]
...brought you back
and ... [kno]w him not (17,4-18,5).

[I...] what is mine

[...] I know the fi[rst ones] and those after them know me.

But I am the [perfect] mind and the repose of the [...]

I am the gnosis of my seeking, and the finding of those who seek after me.

And the command of those who ask of me.

And the power of the powers by my gnosis
of the angels who have been sent by my logos,
And the gods in their seasons by my command,
And it is with me that the spirits of all humans exist,
and it is within me that women exist.

I am she who is honored and praised and who is despised scornfully.

I am peace and because of me war has come to be.

And I am an alien and a citizen.

I am substance and she who has no substance.

Those who come into being from my synousia are ignorant of me,

And those who are in my substance know me.

Those who are close to me have been ignorant of me And those who are far from me have known me. (18,6-35).

On the day when I am close to [you, you] are far away [from me And] on the day when I [am far away] from you, [I am] [close] to you.

I [am] [...] within.

[I.] of the natures.

I am [.....] of the creation of spiritsrequest of the souls. (18,35-19,8). [I am] restraint and unrestraint.

I am union and dissolution.

I am the abiding and I am the losing.

I am descent and they come up to me.

I am the judgment and the acquittal.

I, I am sinless and the root of sin is from me.

I am desire in appearance and self-control of the heart exists within me.

I am the hearing which is attainable to everyone and the ungraspable utterance.

I am a non-speaking mute and great is my multitude of utterances (19,9-25).

Hear me in softness and learn from me in harshness. (19,25-27).

I am she who cries out,

And I am cast out upon the face of the earth.

I prepare the bread and my mind within.

I am the gnosis of my name.

I am she who cries out and I am the one who listens.

I appear an[d...] walk in [...]

seal of my [...][sign] of the

I am [...] the defense.

I am she who is call[ed] Truth. And violence [...] (19,28-20,8).

You honor me [...] and you whisper against [me].

You who are defeated,

judge them before they pass judgment against you.

For the judge and partiality exist within you.

If you are condemned by this, who will acquit you?

Or if you are acquitted by him, who will be able to restrain you?

For what is inside of you is what is outside of you.

And the one who molded you on the outside has made an impression of
it inside of you.

And that which you see outside of you,
you see inside of you.

It is manifest and it is your garment.

Hear me, listeners, and be taught my utterances, you who know me!

(20,9-28)

I am the hearing that is acceptable in every matter;

I am the utterance that cannot be restrained.

I am the name of the voice and the voice of the name.

I am the sign of writing and the manifestation of difference.

And I ...

[3 lines missing]

[...] light [...] and [...]

[...] listeners [...] you.

[...] the great power.

And [...] will not move the name.

[...] the one who created me.

But I shall speak his name (20,28-21,11).

Behold, then, his utterances and all the writings that have been
completed.

Give heed, then, listeners, and you also, angels,

And those who have been sent,

And you spirits who have arisen from the dead, (21,12-18).

For I am the one who alone exists,
And I have no one who will judge me. (21,18-20).

For many are the sweet forms that exist in numerous sins
And unrestrained acts and disgraceful passions, and temporal pleasures,
Which are restrained until they become sober
And run up to their place of rest.
And they will find me there,
And they will live and they will not die again (21,20-32).

NOTES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

This translation is based on the edition of the Coptic text by G. W. MacRae, Nag Hammadi Codices V,2-5 and VI with Papyrus Berolinensis 8502,1 and 4, ed. D. Parrott, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1979, 231-55, with critical reference to the English translations of G. W. MacRae, in *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, ed. J. M. Robinson, 271-277; and B. Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures*, NY: Doubleday, 1987, 80-85. The poetic arrangement of the text is adapted from the translation of R. Unger, "Zur sprachlichen und formalen Struktur des gnostischen Textes 'Der Donner: der vollkommene Nous,'" *Oriens Christianus* 59 (1975) 78-107.

Thunder, Perfect Mind (NHC VI,2) presents the revelation discourse of a female divinity who speaks alternately in first-person statements of identity ("I AM") and second-person address. The text's parallelism of structure, together with its extensive use of antithesis, paradox, and other literary devices, point clearly to its poetic or hymnic character. B. Layton has argued persuasively that the paradoxical and often outrageous pairing of antithetical terms in the "I AM" statements of Thunder can be read as a complex identity riddle to be solved by the knowing or "gnostic" reader. At the same time, attention to various features of the text as a whole suggests that it is not only the mystery of

the speaker's identity, but the relationship between the divine speaker and her human hearers that forms the exegetical crux of the text.

Thunder focuses attention on the hearers' relationship to the divine speaker not only through its alternating structure of first-person proclamation and second-person address, but also through its metaphorical imagery of kinship and gender, its references to the audience's responses to the divine, and its claims about the speaker's role in the operations of language and intellect. Its persistent, uncompromising use of paradox pushes its hearers to relinquish the apparent sense of its words and to seek the hidden meaning of individual utterances and of the discourse as a whole. Finally, by locating the divine in the "voice" and "hearing" of the text, it leads its hearers or readers to find the divine within the text and within themselves, and so to discover themselves within the divine. In such an interpretive movement of letting go and finding, of becoming sober and being found, the text's final words suggest, the reader "goes up" to the salvific "place of rest," "finds" the divine persona revealed in the text, and "enters into" a state of living and not dying again.

Thunder's conception of salvation does not conform to the more familiar "Gnostic" image of a transformative movement or 'conversion' from blindness to vision, deficiency to fullness, or ignorance to gnosis. Rather, Thunder presents an understanding of salvation that comes through the interpretive process of grappling with the language of the text and confronting the paradoxical nature of the divine within the antitheses of ignorance and gnosis, weakness and power, shame and honor, death and life. At the same time, Thunder forges a sharp distinction between those who merely hear the words of the text and those who hear the divine voice with gnosis, that is, between those who remain ignorant and those who come to know the divine in the fullness of her complexity and mystery. Those who hear the utterances of Thunder with gnosis enter into salvific relation with the divine through the interchange of divine utterance and divine hearing, manifested within the symbolic world of the text and within themselves. "Thunder, Perfect

Mind” may thus be interpreted not only as a title for the text, but as a name for the divine speaker, her thundering utterances, and her place of dwelling within those who hear her voice and know her mystery with the salvific gnosis and hearing of perfect mind.

SETTING IN ANCIENT MEDITERRANEAN RELIGIONS

While Thunder resembles many other ancient texts in various ways, its distinctive combination of features is virtually unmatched in the religious and philosophical literature of antiquity. In form, Thunder’s first-person proclamations of identity (“I AM”) parallel most directly the aretologies of the goddess Isis. Yet the text’s alternation between first-person identity statements and second-person address bring it closer to the form of the philosophical sermon or diatribe, familiar from the monologues of biblical Wisdom (e.g., Prov 8, Sir 24, Wis 7-8, 1 Enoch 42). In addition, Thunder combines these literary modes with rhetorical features, such as paradox and antithesis, which are more characteristic of the Greek riddle.

In content as well as form, the closest parallels to Thunder are found in the hymnic speeches of female divinities in other Nag Hammadi texts, especially those of Pronoia (in Ap. John II,1:30,11-31,28); Protennoia (throughout Trim. Prot. XIII,1); Sophia Zoe, the “Eve of Life” (in Orig. World II,5:114,8-15); and the spiritual Eve in The Gospel of Eve (Epiph., Pan. 26.3.1). Yet unlike most of these divine discourses, the utterances of Thunder have no narrative or epistolary setting. They appear as unmediated divine speech, addressed directly from the divine to her human hearers or readers.

There is no general scholarly consensus on the social or historical setting of Thunder. While scholars agree that the text exhibits no explicitly Jewish or Christian elements, its imagery resonates with a variety of sources, including Jewish and Christian Wisdom, Isis traditions, Middle Platonism, Stoicism, and with other Nag Hammadi texts, especially those designated “Sethian” and “Valentinian.” Thunder may profitably be read in relation to all of these texts and traditions as a

revisionary poetic work that puts forward a distinctive perspective on the nature of the divine and her relation to humankind.

LANGUAGE, DATE, AUTHOR, PROVENANCE, AND MANUSCRIPT

Thunder, Perfect Mind exists only in the Coptic version found at Nag Hammadi (NHC VI,2:13,1-21,32). The author, date, and place of composition are unknown, but a cultural milieu like that of second- or third-century Alexandria is plausible. In any case, it is clear that the text was originally composed in Greek well before 350 C.E., the approximate date of the Coptic manuscript. The surviving text is relatively well preserved, with minor damage near the top of the first four pages (13-16) and somewhat more serious damage on the first ten lines of the remaining manuscript pages (17-21).

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Thunder, Perfect Mind & the Law

Eric K. Lerner

A recent article in *The Mountain Astrologer* “Fixed Stars: Other Voices in Our Astrology” by Bernadette Brady noted “that we have a bright and visible pole star, Polaris, for the first time in 4,500 years. The last pole star was Thuban, and the time was 2700-2500 B.C.E. during the 4th dynasty in Egypt and the period when the pyramids were built.” (TMA, August/September 2005, p.33.) At the epoch of the previous pole star, the



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Egyptian Goddess Nut embodied the firmament of the heavens. She gave birth to both Isis and Osiris, progenitors of the original two aeons that defined human spirituality, according to Aleister Crowley’s Liber AL, *The Book of the Law*. However, in Liber AL, “the manifestation of Nuit” –not Isis –characterizes the first Aeon.

The reappearance of the Pole Star and Nut’s heaven seem to fold time in on itself, creating contact points or portals between epochs, in the

present. The heavens that presaged the first two Aeons of Liber AL (and the zodiacal ages of Aries and Pisces) now illuminate the New Aeon. The reoccurrence of celestial patterns illustrates time's continuity. What was will be again.

The goddess Nuit in Liber AL gives the heavens voice. She is an eternal present that is usually characterized as the "Eternal Feminine" in discussion of metaphysical literature. Nuit's voice echoes that of the female narrator/divinity of the *Thunder, Perfect Mind* which was composed an Aeon earlier. Both the first section of Liber AL and *Thunder, Perfect Mind* illustrate mankind's quest for sacred attainment through embrace of a constant and undifferentiated expression of female energy. The timing of the previous Pole star, the writing of *Thunder, Perfect Mind* (nearly 3,000 years later) and Liber AL (two thousand years further in the future) represent aeonic signposts. There is another more precise time correlation between *Thunder, Perfect Mind* and Liber AL. The former was not rediscovered until the year of Crowley's death, 1947, when the Nag Hammadi texts were uncovered in Egypt (the country where Crowley 'received' Liber AL). Crowley was unfamiliar with *Thunder, Perfect Mind*. That makes numerous similarities between the two works seem all the more important in understanding the significance of their affinities. Both express a divine feminine consciousness that invites the reader, hearer, to recognize a secret code in existence through which man becomes one with eternity.

The texts employ similar rhetorical techniques. Scholar/translator Anne McGuire identifies key structural elements in *Thunder, Perfect Mind*: the alternation between first and second person statements, the use of paradox, and proclamations of "unmediated divine speech." Each technique has precedent in metaphysical expressions, including Hebrew Wisdom texts, Greek philosophical riddles, and Isis aretologies. A cursory examination of Liber AL shows that Crowley employed all three tactics. His methods are more refined than those employed in *Thunder, Perfect Mind*. Relative to the author[s] of *Thunder, Perfect Mind*, he had benefit of an additional two aeons of literature when composing his word

pictures. However, structural similarities in both works abound. Approximate harmony of composition indicates the similar motives of the authors.

The search for meaning begins with the implicit recognition of opposites: mankind's state of ignorant being versus the goddess' grasp and expression of profound intelligence. Man is relatively insignificant in stature when contrasted with the awesome omnipotence displayed by the force of genesis. This is amplified in literary terms through the alternation between first and second person statements. Both works represent the perpetual discourse between man and the Eternal Feminine. Their resemblance posits a universal type of intelligence and quest for deep awareness that spans human history.

Thunder, Perfect Mind begins:

I was sent from the Power
And I have come to those who think upon me.
And I was found among those who seek after me
(13,2-5).
Look at me, you who think upon me;
And you hearers, hear me!

Liber AL also employs alternations. (Indeed it expands on such strategy by the inclusion of third person, perhaps an indication of one additional Aeon, step forward in consciousness, since the earlier text was written.) Simple first second person contrast also takes place near the beginning of the text.

12. Come forth, o children, under the stars, & take your fill of love!
13. I am above you and in you. My ecstasy is in yours. My joy is to see your joy.

Such statements in succession and opposition echo call and response, a technique used in Afrikan praise songs that have been adopted by Christian hymns and liturgies. The call indicates the initial expression of the divine intelligence. The response suggests human recognition of the divine. Herein lies a means to harmony. Every two points posit the existence of a third presence, whether that is a connecting line or midpoint between the two. Crowley's third person statements and the implication of such in *Thunder, Perfect Mind* indicate where the human listener may himself engage in intercourse with the totality of sensation, experience and knowledge contained within the initial call.

Paradoxes repeat point counter point rhythm and extend the duality of the first second person alternation. This is illustrated in the often-quoted stanza from *Thunder, Perfect Mind*:

For I am the first and the last.
I am the honored and the scorned,
I am the harlot and the holy one.
I am the wife and the virgin.
I am the m[oth]er and the daughter.
I am the members of my mother.

Liber AL employs paradox too, albeit using ironic literary manipulation:

21. With the God & the Adorer I am nothing; they do not see me. They are as upon the earth; I am Heaven, and there is no other God than me, and my lord Hadit.

22. Now, therefore, I am known to ye by my name Nuit, and to him by a secret name which I will give him when at last he knoweth me. Since I am Infinite Space, and the Infinite Stars thereof, do ye also thus. Bind nothing! Let there be no difference made among you between any one thing & any other thing; for thereby there cometh hurt.

This key passage of Liber AL also echoes the *Thunder, Perfect Mind's* speaker:

I am the incomprehensible silence and the much-remembered thought.

I am the voice of many sounds and the utterance (logos) of many forms.

I am the utterance of my name (13,15-14,15).

Perspective shifts inform both works. However, the most critical similarities in understanding and purpose are revealed by the aretologies of both feminine voices such as the on of the above passage. They command the infinite, and demonstrate this force through the emphatic quality of their proclamations. The listener is encouraged to enter into such a lofty position through entering rapturous embrace of the goddess.

The *Thunder, Perfect Mind* speaker urges:

Take me [...] [underst]anding out of pain,
and receive me to yourselves out of understanding [and]
pain.

Receive me to yourselves out of disgraceful places and
contrition.

And seize me from those which are good even though
in disgrace.

Out of shame, receive me to yourselves in
shamelessness.

And out of shamelessness and shame, blame my
members among yourselves.

And come forward to me, you who know me and who
know my members.

Establish the great ones among the small first creatures.

Like the speaker of *Thunder*, Nuit offers her listeners salvation when they enter into her embrace:

But to love me is better than all things: if under the night stars in the desert thou presently burnest mine incense before me, invoking me with a pure heart, and the Serpent flame therein, thou shalt come a little to lie in my bosom. For one kiss wilt thou then be willing to give all; but whoso gives one particle of dust shall lose all in that hour. Ye shall gather goods and store of women and spices; ye shall wear rich jewels; ye shall exceed the nations of the earth in splendour & pride; but always in the love of me, and so shall ye come to my joy. I charge you earnestly to come before me in a single robe, and covered with a rich headdress. I love you! I yearn to you! Pale or purple, veiled or voluptuous, I who am all pleasure and purple, and drunkenness of the innermost sense, desire you. Put on the wings, and arouse the coiled splendour within you: come unto me!

Both promise to elevate the follower to transcendence, a new level of sensation and perception through their surrender unto her.

The call and response character of first/second person alternation and use of paradoxes prepare the listener to achieve conjunction with the sheer force of the proclamations. Opposites beckon to a synthesis. Individual polarities represented by the contrary statements break down. They cancel each other out and thus create a third vantage point. The aretological statements of both speakers represent a primary force that fills the void created by contradictions. Here genuine knowledge of the sacred feminine is frankly available to him who allows himself to act as a conduit for the surge of power. The speaker calls herself and her consort—he who receives her essence and becomes part of it—into being from the void by her awesome virtue.

The excellence of constancy, the continuum of being throughout time and space, spurs the listener to engage in coitus with non-being to realize himself through ecstasy. The necessity of such engagement is inescapable and akin to the inevitability of mathematical laws. Crowley, ever fond of equations, chooses to somehow quantify Nuit:

60. My number is 11, as all their numbers who are of us.
The Five Pointed Star, with a Circle in the Middle, & the circle is Red. My colour is black to the blind, but the blue & gold are seen of the seeing. Also I have a secret glory for them that love me.

This passage lends itself to conjecture. The sum of eleven's two integers is two. The sum of two and nine is eleven. Historically, nine is the number assigned to the Eternal Feminine and her manifestations. For instance, it designates both the Hindu deity Kali and the Yoruba Oya (a.k.a. Janzan, "Mother of Nine.") The salient mathematical property of nine is that by whichever other single digit multiplier one combines with it, the numbers expressing the resulting sum always add up to nine. The fundamental property of the number is unalterable. The first and the last are synthesized through mathematical law. Is Crowley trying to move the notion of the eternal feminine forward into the current aeon by adding the number to her original expression? There are two more aeons to follow in the totality of the Liber AL to follow the one that describes the feminine principle of the first chapter.

However, continuity is also herein expressed by the naming of colors. Crowley carefully mentions the three primary colors that compose all colors—red, blue and gold—in the description of the goddess's symbol and nature. The combination of these colors creates white, illumination. Her color is black only to those who are incapable of seeing and perceiving. In contrast, she offers the means of all seeing and distinction.

Also, the fourth of her initial statements reminds us of the number nine and its immutable property: “Every number is infinite; there is no difference.”

The *Thunder Perfect Mind*'s speaker, “sent forth from the power” also declares her universal command: “For I am the first and the last.” Her constant combination of extremes in her self-description also allies her with the number eleven. She is always talking about herself in terms of one thing plus its opposite. This may be expressed also as $1+1$ or better $1=1$, and thus glossed as 11.

She is the voice of experience—in the past, present and future. By asserting her command of all, she demonstrates supreme dominion. She contains all possibility and thus is in a position to understand all possible exigencies. There is the potential for her to give answers, given her omniscience. She embodies wisdom. She taunts her listeners to gain knowledge through shedding human ambivalence about the very state of existence and the desire to realize something more. To do so requires having the freedom to relinquish one's position in the space time continuum.

Why, you who hate me, do you love me
And hate those who love me?
You who deny me, confess me,
And you who confess me, deny me.
You who speak the truth about me, tell lies about me,
And you who have told lies about me, speak the truth
about me.
You who know me, become ignorant of me; and may
those who have been ignorant of me come to know me
(14,15-25).

In a consistent manner, Nuit in Liber AL issues her appeal:

22. Now, therefore, I am known to ye by my name Nuit,
and to him by a secret name which I will give him when
at last he knoweth me. Since I am Infinite Space, and

the Infinite Stars thereof, do ye also thus. Bind nothing!
Let there be no difference made among you between
any one thing & any other thing; for thereby there
cometh hurt.

23. But whoso availeth in this, let him be the chief of all!

The recurrent idea to experience the goddess through adding oneself to her has the formulaic character of mathematical equations in both works. The message of the goddess reveals entering a relationship so perfect, balanced and fundamental to all things that it is ineffable like the laws of mathematics. The flesh is recognized through its limitations. Therefore it can be quantified as a single value. Transcending the value is achieved through the operation of adding to that sum to the goddess' and creating something else. The act of embrace is akin to fueling. Thus the listener ravishing and being ravished by the goddess is propelled through infinitude.

The conclusion of *Thunder, Perfect Mind* summarizes this process:

For many are the sweet forms that exist in numerous
sins
And unrestrained acts and disgraceful passions, and
temporal pleasures,
Which are restrained until they become sober
And run up to their place of rest.
And they will find me there,
And they will live and they will not die again (21,20-32).

The final command of Nuit also invokes the journey through the expression of carnal urges as being prerequisite to for a man to separate himself from his physical being so that he may achieve intercourse with the goddess in order to partake of eternity.

62. At all my meetings with you shall the priestess
say—and her eyes shall burn with desire as she stands

bare and rejoicing in my secret temple—To me! To me!
calling forth the flame of the hearts of all in her love-
chant.

63. Sing the rapturous love-song unto me! Burn to me
perfumes! Wear to me jewels! Drink to me, for I love
you! I love you!

64. I am the blue-lidded daughter of Sunset; I am the
naked brilliance of the voluptuous night-sky.

65. To me! To me!

I have but scratched the surface in calling to the reader's attention to some of the correspondences between the *Thunder, Perfect Mind* and the first section of Liber AL. In doing so, I find myself feeling increasingly ambivalent about subjecting both sacred texts to the intellectual's dissecting table. I have always placed a greater value on direct experience than second hand summaries in the experience of the divine. The reader should directly absorb both works. Hopefully, the reader's own interpretative faculty provides an adequate tool to reveal the illumination that lies within both texts.

By placing both texts side by side I hope to share my own experience of the awe that I felt when I recognized how much common ground the two texts share. That brings me to the point that metaphysical literature often seems to spring from the same source. The individual craftsmanship of the interpreter-writer may often shape such experience differently. The virtue of individual intelligence is that due to its unique location in time and space and the imprint of unique life experiences that it can give description to different parts of the whole. Yet the final analysis often reveals remarkable continuity between significant attempts to express divine consciousness.

My motivation to draw your attention to two these two testaments of eternity—separated by nearly two thousand years, yet today once more ironically enveloped by the firmament of Nut in the Heavens—is so that you will be encouraged to enter into a dialogue with their respective

speakers. I deliberately avoided some of the more subtle formulae expressed in both texts which further illuminate the methodology of initiation in most mystery traditions – just to be a little spiteful, perhaps, or maybe so that you will take that as a carrot to pursue in taking a little more time with both texts. (Actually, the formulae are not all that hard to discern. Something greater than yourself gave you a pair of eyes...) Also, I have avoided discussion of the two additional chapters of Liber AL. Is that because they do not have bearing on *Thunder, Perfect Mind*? Do they extend its dialogue or supplant it?

I hope that you will take the time to ponder these issues yourself and arrive at your own conclusions. Doing such invest you in a continuation of mankind's investigation of eternal questions.

Sethian Genesis

Tau Markus Ignatius, Apostolic Primate



Until very recently all that was known of the Gnostics came to the modern period within the writings of early orthodox herisiologists such as Irenaeus and his polemic *Adversus Haereses*. This changed in 1945 with the discovery of thirteen leather bound codices buried in the desert near Nag Hammadi, in middle Egypt. The find comprised 52 works mostly from first and second century Gnosticism. It is generally assumed that the

works were buried in the fourth century in response to the crackdown on heretical texts, especially under the rule of Flavius Theodosius (347-395) the last emperor of a unified Roman Empire. Since the discovery of the Nag Hammadi Library, as the find has come to be known, much has been learned about the original Gnostics, especially the Sethians from whom it is assumed the codices originated.

The Sethian Gnostic sect is generally thought to have its roots in a pre-Christian Jewish Gnosticism. This is clear in its adoption of characteristic Jewish speculative texts, such as the *Apocalypse of Adam*. Much of their early philosophical speculations centered around the Sophia—the feminine icon of divine wisdom. Along with other sects of the period, they appear to have inherited a developed baptismal rite. Within the Sethian cosmology, this rite became known as the Rite of the Five Seals.

The Sethian sect differ from the many other Gnostic sects existent in the first century through their emphasis on the importance of Adam's third son, Seth and their explicit identification with their being the 'seed of Seth.' The Sethians conceived of Seth as the Illuminator prophesied in many Gnostic texts. The salvific belief that Seth would return to save his descendents was a cornerstone of their religious structure.

By the beginning of the second century, the Sethians had begun a Christianizing process. They adopted many of the tenets, interpretations, and texts making their way around first century Roman Palestine. As their influence of their contact with early Christianity took hold, they began to adopt more explicitly Christian texts such as the *Apocryphon of John*, the *Thought of Norea*, the *Coptic Gospel of the Egyptians* and the untitled Bruce Codex. Existent Sethian texts were also adjusted to fit the permeating Christian influence. Texts such as the *Trimorphic Protennoia* and the *Hypostasis of the Archons* had taken on a Christianized form by the end of the second century.

Throughout this period, the latter half of the first century through the second, Seth became identified as the Christ and the full power of early messianic Christianity took hold of the Sethian Gnostic precepts. The advent of Seth, or Setheus, was seen as the initiating event of the illumination of those descended from him. The unique Sethian baptismal rite continued to play an important role in their religious life and concept of salvation.

Eventually the Sethian emphasis on communal baptismal rites and the more complex and solitary baptism of the Seven Seals began to wane.

Contemporaneous with this functional decline, arose a rejection of the Christian influences. By the third century, the Sethian Gnostics had moved from Christianity to an adoption of Neo-Platonist philosophy and askesis.

Sethian Gnosticism eventually all but died out. Both from internal philosophical divergence and, more dramatically, the increasing orthodox attempts to stamp out heresy; the existence of the Nag Hammadi library is attributable to this heresiological purge. It is generally presumed that the codices were buried in an attempt to prevent their discovery by the forces of Emperor Theodosius. With the resurgence of Gnosticism in the 19th century coupled with the discovery at Nag Hammadi in the 1950's, there has been a heightened interest in the Sethians and their beliefs. In the latter part of the 20th century, the small but influential cabal known as The Brotherhood of Seth began to explore the more esoteric and mystical applications of the Sethian gnosis.

From this material and diverse lineages, the current Gnostic Church was formed. With the subtle influences of the obscure Sethian Orthodox Church, the modern Gnostic Church quietly provides a framework for direct appreciation of the Gnosis. This gnosis is not to be realized as it is ever pre-existent. Through the Baptism of the Spirit one is provided a personal contact with the wisdom lying alongside the material world. Baptism opens the door and the Ritual of the Mass reaffirms one's connection to the unmanifest.

What follows is a modern interpretation of the basic Sethian cosmology as it centered on the creation of the Demiurge, IALDABOATH, and the revelation of Adam, the continuance of his gnosis as held within his seed, and the eventual coming of the Illuminator. It draws direct inspiration from several contemporary Sethian texts—relying heavily on the *Apocryphon of John*, the *Apocalypse of Adam* and the *Gospel of the Egyptians*.

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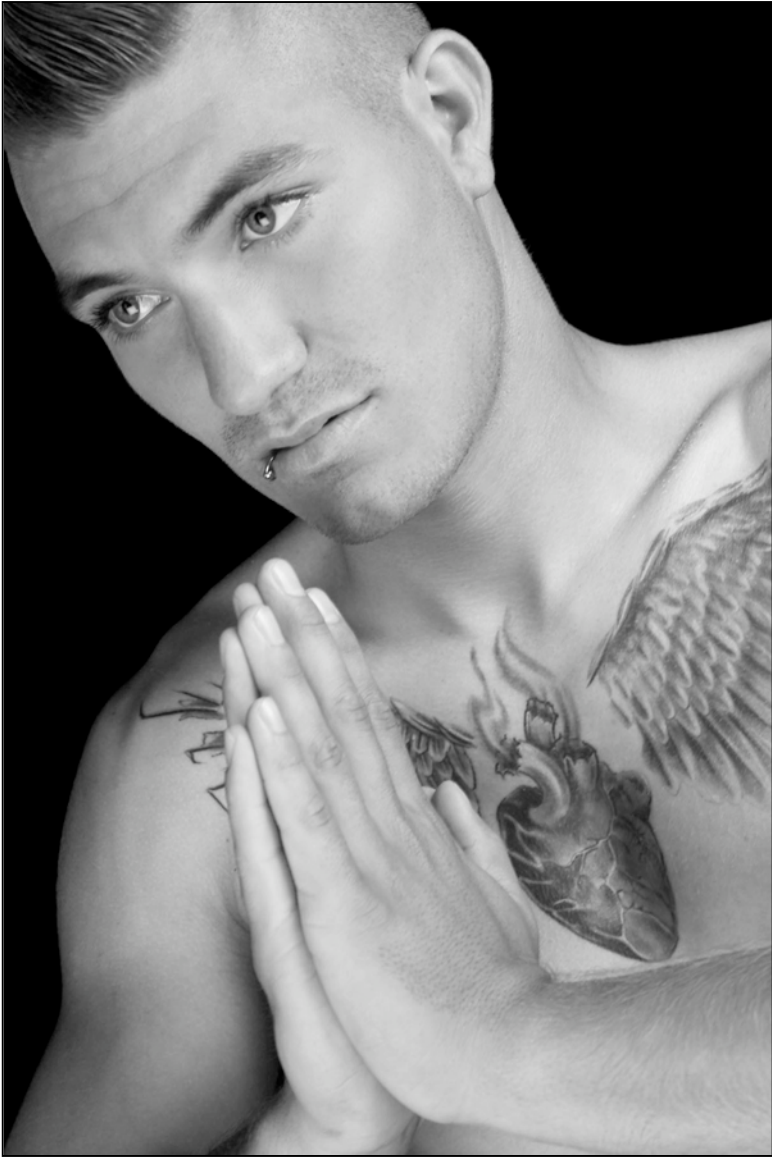


Photo: Karina Tischlinger

AND FIRST THERE WAS NONE

The Monad is a monarchy with nothing above it. It is the ineffable One that exists as God the All Mother-Father of all that is and all that is not and all that exists a potential between the two. The invisible One is above everything and exists as incorruption—the silent One in the pure light into which no eye can look.

The Monad is the invisible Spirit who is Not-God. Nothing exists above him and no one is lord over him. Everything exists within him. He is eternal. Perfect in the light.

The Monad is illimitable, as there is no one prior to him to set limits on him. He is unsearchable, since there exists no one prior to him to examine him. He is immeasurable, since there was no one prior to him to measure him. He is invisible, since no one saw him. He is eternal, since he exists eternally. He is ineffable, since no one was able to comprehend him to speak about him. He is unnameable, since there is no one prior to him to give him a name.

He is immeasurable light: Pure, Holy and Immaculate. He exists not in perfection, nor in blessedness, nor in divinity, as he is superior to all these. He is not manifest nor is he nonmanifest. He is neither large nor is he small. He is not one among others. His essence does not partake in the aeons nor in circles of time. Time was not apportioned to him and he is not confined by the dimensions of space.

He is majestic in his perfection—pure, immeasurable mind. He is an aeon-giving aeon. He is life-giving life. He is a blessing-giving blessed one. He is knowledge-giving knowledge. He is goodness-giving goodness. He is mercy and redemption-giving mercy. He is grace-giving grace, not because he possesses it, but because he gives the immeasurable, incomprehensible light. Know him by his name: CHAOS.

He looked at his light about him, the spring of the waters of life. His thought became a deed and Spirit came forth from his mind. Sophia. She is the forethought of the All. Her light shines like his light—the perfect power, which is the image of the invisible. She is the first thought, the spirit form of his light in his image. Her womb is the womb

of all life, for she is prior to them all, the Mother-Father, the first man, the holy Spirit, the thrice-male, the thrice-powerful, the thrice-named androgynous one, and the eternal aeon among the invisible ones, and the first to come forth.

Spirit requested from the invisible that he give her foreknowledge. And the ineffable One consented. And when he had consented, the foreknowledge came forth, and it stood by the forethought; it originates from the thought of the invisible One. It glorified him and his perfect power, Sophia, for it was for her sake that it had come into being.

And she requested from the invisible that he grant her indestructibility, and he consented. When he had consented, indestructibility came forth, and it stood by the thought and the foreknowledge. It glorified the invisible One and Sophia, the one for whose sake they had come into being.

And Spirit requested from the invisible that he grant her eternal life. And the invisible One consented. And when he had consented, eternal life came forth, and they attended and glorified the invisible One and Sophia, the one for whose sake they had come into being.

And she requested again from the invisible that he grant her truth. And the invisible One consented. And when he had consented, truth came forth, and they attended and glorified the invisible, excellent One and Sophia, the one for whose sake they had come into being.

This is the pentad of the aeons of the Father that is the first, the image of the invisible Spirit; it is the forethought and the thought, the foreknowledge, the indestructibility, the eternal life and the truth. This is the androgynous Pentad of the aeons, which is the Decad of the aeons, which is the ONE, which is NO-THING.

And he looked at Sophia with the pure light which surrounds the invisible Spirit, and by his spark she conceived from him. He begot a spark of light with a light resembling blessedness. But it does not equal his greatness. Thus the only-begotten child of the Mother-Father came forth; it is the only offspring, the only-begotten one of the Father, the pure Light.

He anointed it with goodness of the Holy Spirit until it became perfect. And the child of Spirit requested to give it a fellow worker, which is the mind, and he consented gladly. And when the invisible One had consented, the mind came forth, and it attended the child of Spirit, glorifying him and Sophia. And all these came into being in silence.

For from the light, which is the divine noncorporeal child of Spirit, and the indestructibility, through the gift of the Spirit the four lights appeared each placed over an aeon. Grace belongs to the light, Armozel, the first angel. The second light is Oriel. Daveithai is the third light. The fourth light is called Eleleth. These four lights attended the divine Child of Spirit.

Knowing the abomination to come, with foreknowledge the perfect mind, the One revealed the will of the invisible Spirit and the will of the Child of Spirit. Thus did the perfect corporeal being appear—Adam, the first revelation, truth revealed in flesh. The One placed him at rule over the first aeon with the mighty one, the Child of Spirit, beside him, both guided by the first light Armozel. The Invisible One gave him a spiritual and invincible power.

Adam placed his son Seth over the second aeon in the presence of the light Oriel. In the third aeon the seed of Seth was placed over Daveithai and the souls of the saints were placed therein. And within the fourth aeon, the souls were placed of those who do not know the Pleroma and who did not repent at once, but who persisted for a while and repented afterwards. These are within the glow the fourth light Eleleth. These creatures glorify the invisible Spirit.

Then the Sophia, being an aeon unto herself, conceived a thought from herself, desiring to create a likeness of herself without the consent of her consort, the ineffable One. Because of her power, the thought did not remain a thought and something came out of her. As this being was created without the knowledge of her consort, it was different from herself and imperfect.

As she beheld the fruit of her desire, her child changed form and transformed into a lion-faced serpent, with eyes like the flickering spark

of lightning. She cast it from her, sending it outside the place of Spirit, that none of the immortal ones might see what she had created in ignorance. She cloaked it in a cloud of mist and set it atop a gilded throne, so that no one might see it save the for the holy Spirit who is the mother of all the living. She named her child IALDABOATH.

Thus a loathsome and horrifying creature was cast out upon the world to wander forever separate from the knowledge of the pre-manifest. A king set upon a throne of fool's gold blind within a cloud of delusion.

Thus the first archon came into being. Having taken great power from his mother, he became strong in his own right. He created his own aeons with a flame of luminous fire that still exists to this day. He joined with his own arrogance and created lesser authorities to serve him: the Reaper, the Eye of Envy, Kalila-Oumbri, Yabel, Adonaiou, Sabaoth, Cain, Abel, Abrisene, Yobel, Armoupieel, Melceir-Adonein, and Belias, lord over the depth of Hades. He placed seven kings upon seven thrones over the seven heavens, and five more over the depth of the abyss, that they may reign. He shared his fire with them. He did not send forth the power of the light that he had taken from his mother, however, for he is arrogant ignorant to his own darkness.

The light mixed with the darkness, and caused the darkness to glow. When the darkness mixed with the light, it caused it to dim to shadow.

The archon is called by any of his three names Ialdaboath, Saklas and Samael. Impious in his arrogance and ignorant of his origin, he declared:

“I am God and there is no other God beside me.”

The archons created seven powers for themselves. These powers, in turn, created for themselves six angels for each one until they numbered 365. Time-encrusted, these are the days of the week and the turn of the year.

The faces of Ialdaboath are legion. He shared his unholy fire, and the infernal knowledge hidden therein, with those he created, and those they created, thereby becoming their overlord. Because of the divine

glory received from his mother's light, he called himself God and refused to acknowledge or pay obeisance to the kingdom from which he came.

Having created everything before him, he organized it in the image and design of the first aeons that had preceded his creation. Thus, in this way, he thought, they might become akin to the indestructible ones. As he had never set eyes on those beyond the domain of space and time, this innate memory arose from the power within him that he had taken from his mother. Thus the power of his mother, the Sophia, drove him to create in the likeness of the cosmos.

When he beheld his creation and the multitude of angels surrounding him, all of which had come forth from him, he said unto them, "I am a jealous God, and there is no other God beside me." Through his proclamation, the angels came to realize that there exists another God—for if there were no other, from whence would jealousy arise.

Then his mother began to stir and waken. In her lifting sleep, the Sophia moved back and forth. Perceiving the dimming of her light, she comprehended the deficiency of her creation. She realized that she had drawn a shadow across herself because of her own action.

Recognizing that her shadowy garment was not perfect, she began to weep and repent her deed. The Pleroma, hearing her prayer, spoke to the Holy Spirit. He consented, and the invisible Spirit poured their whole Pleroma over the Sophia. She was lifted up to an aeon above her son, so that she might correct her deficiency.

"Man exists as does the son of Man," cried a voice across the aeons. Hearing it, Ialdabaoth perceived the voice to be that of his mother, for he knew none other to be above her. The voice of the most exalted aeon beyond all aeons, the perfect One, revealed himself in a likeness of human form.

The aeon of the archon trembled and the foundations of the abyss shook. The waters that are above the material world became alight with an indescribable fire. As the archon and his legion beheld the underside

of heaven thus illuminated, an image began to form pulling shape and form from the fiery maelstrom.

Pointing at the image above, the archon said “Let us create a man according to this image of God.” Through the seven servitors, of the archon created a being in accord with the image displayed before them. Each in turn, the powers shaped Man based on their abilities: goodness created bone, foreknowledge created sinew, divinity created flesh, lordship created marrow, kingdom created blood, envy created skin, understanding created hair. With the multitude of angels in attendance, the seven powers gave rise to the seven substances of matter that combined to create limbs, torso, and all the constituent parts of the corporeal form. Thus they created a likeness of the perfect man. And they proclaimed, “Let us call him Adam, so his name may carry the power of light before us.”

Thus have they power over the body. And demons reside in the body as determined by the four conditions: heat, cold, wetness and dryness. The mother of all in the world is Matter.

Then the embodiment of knowledge, the Sophia, wished to take back the power stolen by her fruit, the archon. She petitioned the ineffable One for his mercy. Through the nimbus of his holiness, he sent five refractions of his light down to the kingdom of the archon and his angels. The light of the ineffable One declared unto the assembly of angels and before their master that they were come to bring forth the power of the mother. They said unto the archon, “Blow onto his face and the wind of your spirit will cause his body to rise.” He blew into the face of their creation and the previously unmanifest power of his mother went out of Ialdaboath. Born in ignorance, he did not know the true source of this power. The body moved, became strong and began glowing with an aura of luminosity.

Seeing this, the servants of the archon grew jealous, for they had given of themselves to create him and his power now exceeded theirs. Recognizing this, they joined forces and over through him, casting him down to the lowest depths of matter.

The blessed One, the Mother-Father, took mercy on the power of the Sophia that had been brought forth from the archon. Through the Holy Spirit, he sent the Epinoia, who is called Life, to aid Adam. She assists creation, working along side to restore his fullness—showing him how to rise by teaching him of the potency of his seed. The Holy Spirit secreted the luminous Epinoia within Adam, so that the archons might not know of her existence.

Thus the first man emerged from the shadow. He thought himself superior to all the powers that had made him. Perceiving this, the archons and angels brought fire, earth and water together with the four worlds to cause a great conflagration. The host brought Adam into the realm of death, that he might be reformed by the elements originating in matter, which is the darkness of ignorance and desire, and their own counterfeit spirit. Thus Adam became entombed in this newly-formed body of matter, within which the angels had shrouded him. The ignorance of his own creation, bound him to become a mortal man. He was the first to fall. Thus was the first separation. The Epinoia of the light remained within him—a seed waiting to wake.

The archons gave Adam a place in paradise, saying unto him: “Eat, that is at leisure,” thinking on their bitter luxury and depraved beauty. Their opulence is but deception and their trees bear only poison fruit—their only promise Death. The Tree of Life the angels placed in the midst of the garden paradise.

They plotted together to reveal to Adam the mystery of life as figured in the tree’s physical form. The root of the tree was bitter and its branches death. The shadow the tree cast was hate. Its leaves were colored by deception. Its blossoms oozed an ointment of evil and its fruit bore the taste of death. Desire formed its seed and darkness its sprouts. The tree is the resting place of those who have tasted Hades. They called this the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

The angels stood before the tree, preventing Adam from seeing the fullness of his own creation. However, the blessed One, through the serpent taught Adam to eat the fruit of wickedness and lust. Despite the

shadow cast by his ignorance, Adam began to realize his disobedience to the great archon was due to the light of the Epinoia that resided inside him.

Perceiving this, the archon cast a pall of forgetfulness over Adam so that his heart became heavy and he would not see.

The great archon wished to draw forth the light, Epinoia, from inside Adam. He tried and failed as the light cannot be grasped. Instead, he pulled forth a portion of his own power. This he shaped into another form in the likeness of how Epinoia appeared to him. Thus not from a rib bone, in the tale related by Moses, but from his own power did the archon create the female creature.

At the first moment, Adam looked upon this creature beside him, the luminous light that is Epinoia shown forth and lifted the veil that had descended over his mind. He instantly became sober from the intoxication of darkness. He recognized his counter-image and said, "This is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh." Thus shall one leave their parents and cleave to one's partner, and they will become as one flesh.

Through the Sophia, they tasted the perfect knowledge. The light of the Epinoia shown over them.

Seeing that they had withdrawn from his influence, Ialdaboath cursed the earth. He found the woman preparing herself for Adam. Considering himself lord over her, the archon seduced her and begot two sons. The first was Eloim, who is the embodiment of righteousness; the second was Yave, who is the embodiment unrighteousness. The first son he set as lord over water and earth and the second son he placed as lord over fire and wind. As a deception, he called these sons Cain and Abel.

To this day, procreation has continued due to the great archon, Ialdaboath. He planted the seed of desire in the original couple and thus has guaranteed the replication of the bodies, each containing the counterfeit spirit planted in them by the archon.

These two archons, his sons, he set over the tomb that is the body of man. Though trapped in matter, Adam, inspired the shadowy echo of

his own foreknowledge, begot the likeness of the son of man. In accord with the way of the aeons, he called his son Seth. His mother, the Sophia, sent down her spirit, which is in her likeness and thus is a copy of the pleroma, to prepare a dwelling into which the aeons may come down.

Thus from Seth the immovable race flows forth. Those into whom the Spirit of life will descend, they will be saved and become the perfect and will become purified from wickedness and evil. This secret seed of Seth are not affected by anything save alone for the state of being in the flesh. They bear this burden expectantly waiting the time when they will be met by the receivers of the body. Such are they that are worthy of the imperishable, eternal life.

THUS FOLLOWS THE WORDS OF ADAM TO HIS SON SETH...

Listen, my son. When God created me from the earth, and then created Eve, your mother, we remained in the glory we had glimpsed in the aeon from which we had come. Through the intervention of the serpent, we partook of the fruit and learned of the knowledge of the Eternal One. We realized that we resembled the Holy Spirit, and were in fact higher than the god who had created us—greater even than those powers that resided within him, of which we knew not.

In his wrath, the ruler of aeon and its authorities, angels and powers, divided us. Thus we became as two aeons. With division, the glory that had been in our hearts departed from us, along with the first knowledge that had breathed life into us. Thus a fatigue of forgetfulness descended before our eyes so that we might not see. But that knowledge entered into our seed. For this reason, I have called you by the name of the one who is the seed of the great generation from whom all knowledge comes. From that day, the eternal knowledge of the One of truth withdrew from your mother and I, since, we only know of dead things, such as man. Then we recognized the God of our creation, for we were familiar with

his powers. Henceforth we served him in fear and slavery—our hearts growing ever darker.

Three men appeared before me. I did not recognize them for they were not apportioned from the powers of the God that had created us. They surpassed the God we knew in glory even as they showed themselves before us. They spoke: “Arise, Adam. Arise from the sleep of death and learn of the aeon and the seed of the man to whom life has come, who came from you and from Eve.”

Upon hearing these words from these great men standing before us, Eve and I sighed in our hearts. And the Lord, the God of our creation, appeared unto us. He said to Eve and I, “Adam, why do you sigh in your hearts? Do you not know that I am the One, your God? That I am the God that created you? I am he who breathed the spirit of life into your soul.” In his shadow, darkness fell upon the eyes of I and your mother, Eve.

Then the God of our creation, came upon Eve and created from her a son for himself. In those moments, I felt an overpowering desire for your mother. The vigor left me, the eternal knowledge I possessed was destroyed, and a weakness poured over us. Thus we came under the authority of death, and the days of our lives became few.

Come, listen, my son, for I will reveal to you what those men of mystery revealed to me. Then shall my generation and the generations of my generation tied in the bonds of slavery be complete.

For God, the almighty, our Father, shall rain down showers and a great deluge shall wipe all things of flesh from the face of the earth along with those from the seeds of man that have passed this life from the knowledge that came from your mother and I. By the power of God, the multitude of flesh will be left behind in his waters.

Then shall God rest, his wrath sated. He will cast his power upon the waters—that power being given then to his sons and their wives in an ark along with the creatures of the earth and the birds of heaven. Then shall God say unto Noah, known to the generations as Deucalion, “Behold! I have protected you and this ark, along with your wife, sons,

their wives and the creatures of my creation. I will give the earth to you and your sons and to their sons, and all those who follow after the sons of your sons. Thus as king shall you rule. No seed shall come from you that shall not stand before my power and glory.”

Then men shall come as light upon a great cloud. They shall come, these perfect men who had been cast out from the knowledge of the aeons and the angels. These elect men shall stand in their radiance before Noah and the aeons. Then God shall say to Noah, “Why have you turned away and broken my decree? Why have you created this generation to scorn my power?” Noah testified, “I swear in the face of your awesome power that the creation of these men was not from me or my sons or any of my seed.”

These elect men were taken to a secret land—hidden in a holy place. There they dwelt with the angels and the full knowledge of the imperishability.

Noah divided the world amongst his own sons: Ham, Japheth and Shem. “My sons, the world is given unto you. Remember one thing above all others... remember to serve in fear and slavery for the rest of your days. Thus shall my seed continue to be pleasing before the eyes of God. Thus is it sealed by our hands with fear and commandment before God almighty.”

The seed of Ham and Japheth came to form twelve kingdoms.

Seeing another kingdom existing apart from the power of their God, those descended from Noah took themselves before their God. “Who are these men, these sojourners who are separate from your power and glory and have turned back the multitude of your throng? Who are these that have come from another aeon and overturned your power and spurned your glory and are impervious to the dominion or your hand?”

Their God, the great archon, spoke: “They have come from a land of great men. They come from a land of men not defiled, for their souls were not created by one defiled. They come as the direct commandment of a great angel, resplendent in knowledge and foreknowledge. I shall send a blinding mist and the eyes of the Illuminator shall be darkened.”

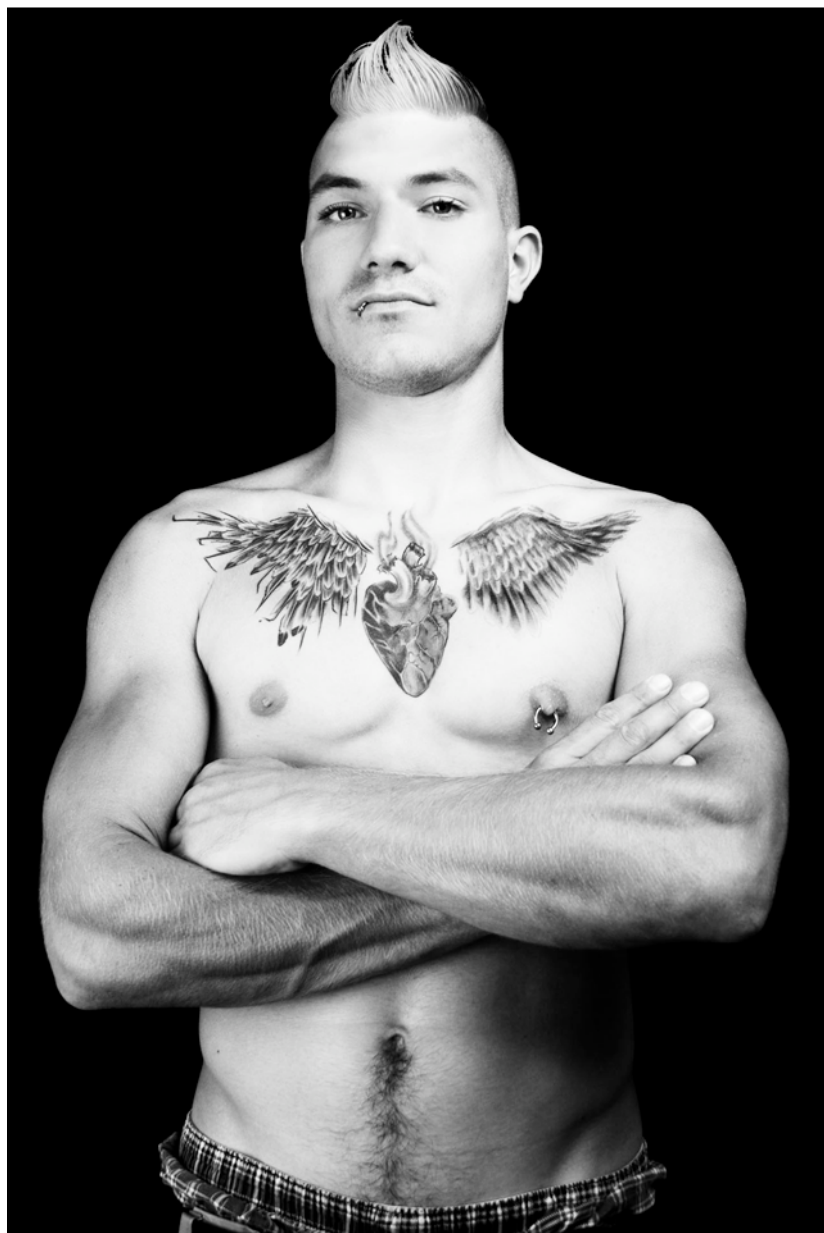


Photo: Karina Tischlinger

Then God sent fire, brimstone and a rain of acid upon these mysterious men. Clouds of light descended from the aeons.

Abrasax, accompanied by Sablo and Gamaliel, descended and brought these men from the fiery wrath of God. These men became like angels, for they were not strangers to the angelic realms.

Once again, for a third time, the Illuminator of knowledge shall pass by the world of man in great glory. He shall leave fruit-bearing trees for the descendents of Noah's sons Ham and Japheth. He shall redeem their souls in the days of their deaths. The whole of creation that came from the dead earth shall fall then under the authority of death. For they have not received the spark of the Holy Spirit from the creator of their kingdom, but shall receive this knowledge from the eternal and powerful angel, the Illuminator, carried from the aeons in the seed of you my son, Seth.

Then the great archon was angered. "Who is this one, who thinks his power exceeds mine?" He rose up in a great wrath against the world of man. He took his glory from them and secreted it away in a holy house known only to him. Thus man could no longer perceive the power of God nor could they see the Illuminator when he appeared among them. Instead they punished the flesh of any person touched by the Holy Spirit.

My son, subsequent generations shall speak of the great Illuminator's appearance but will use his name in error. The leaders of the 13 kingdoms shall propose theories as to his origin. But the generation without a king shall know from whence he had come and how he was chosen. "Out a foreign land and from a great aeon, has the great Illuminator come forth. And his light shed over the race of secret seed hidden within."

Then the seed, who received his name, rose up against the power and a great darkness descended upon them.

The people cried out with a single voice saying, "Blessed is the spirit of those men who have known the truth of the knowledge of God. For they shall not die. Being not corrupt by desire, they shall reside with the

angels—remaining in the light of the glory of God flowering forth like fire and blood.”

Then a voice came to them, from whence they did not know. “Those of you who have control over the holy baptism, why are thou crying out against the living God with lawless tongues, and souls driven by desire and sinful actions? Angels will bring those that you do not know as yet. They shall be set upon the highest mountain, upon a rock of truth. Theirs shall be the teaching of the knowledge of truth, for they possess the knowledge of eternal God beyond all Gods.”

Thus spoke Adam to his son Seth. Seth, in his turn, taught his seed about those that would come. Thus was the hidden knowledge of Adam imparted to Seth, and the holy baptism of knowledge born of the word carried onwards by his son’s progeny.

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Light in Disaster

Gnosis manifested in catastrophe

Jeremy Vincent Thomas Puma, Doorkeeper

As we continue our insane dance of civilization, rushing blindly ever onward towards the Eschaton, beset by increasing levels of natural disaster, we find that, unfortunately, 99% of the discussion surrounding events like 2004's Boxing Day Tsunami or the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina becomes tarnished and transformed into a weird rhetorical cesspool. In this unfortunate morass, we discuss everything with such passion and ego that trying to engage intelligently results



Photo: Niels Laan

in a kind of “crap magnet” that attracts empty polemic and political nonsense. Arguably, this happens with 99% of all discourse anywhere, but normally such discourse doesn't concern the deaths of tens of thousands of people. If, indeed, we are, in the modern era, at the mercy

of radical environmental change, we need to engage the question of natural disaster, and more importantly, our reaction when such events occur. Gnosticism provides an excellent basis for the discussion of this issue in the modern context.

Ah, the Theodical Problem: If God is all good, how could It allow such a monstrous horror to occur? This is the Ultimate Question when it comes to monotheism. The pagans could blame earthquakes and tsunamis on Poseidon and thank Asclepius for medical miracles, but if the responsibility for every old thing rests with One Single Omnipotent and Omni-benevolent True God, then how can this God escape the blame? We can place the onus for societal catastrophes such as terrorism or war on civilization's scarred shoulders and avoid having to think about such difficult concepts. Concerning natural disasters, though, how can one help but think that God is indifferent at best, cruel at the worst? Our spiritual health in the coming century may very well depend on the ways in which we choose to answer this question.

The "answers" people give to the theodical question in the face of major disaster cover the entire spectrum. Some individuals celebrate a tsunami as a display of God's wrath against "America-hating" Muslims and the Indonesian sex trade. Other individuals see a hurricane as evidence that the rapture is almost at hand. On the far end of the measuring stick, we see "new age" types and proponents of Eastern religions claim that the horrors involved were based on some kind of Karma, that the victims deserved what they received, even if innocent, due to past transgressions.

Generally speaking, these answers, perhaps emotionally satisfying to certain sets, are blatantly based on the individuals-as-objects premise, from which evil actions tend to spring. The abstract "They" are being punished for some kind of human transgression and, since it's all part of "God's plan," therefore deserved what "They" got. "We," on the other hand, are "Good," and so God is on our side and therefore damn the torpedoes and quite a few souls, as well. Those who make these excuses tend to ignore pretty much everything that Jesus ever said, in favor of the

violent and oft-times cruel deity featured so prominently in the books of the Old Testament.

These arguments are, of course, absurd. A Good God would never kill 150,000 people, for any reason whatsoever. A Good God most certainly would never cause the kind of devastation associated with natural disasters in the modern era. Sadly, this kind of projection does little to solve the theodical problem and paints those who believe such nonsense as compassionless, selfish and generally mean people. In many cases, they can hardly be blamed; after all, when fluffy dies and little Timmy asks why, Grandma's general reply has always been that "Fluffy's with Jesus now, and he's dead because of God's plan." Jesus must have a heck of a time cleaning his apartment with all of those dead kitties and puppies in there.

Tell the relatives of the dead floating through the ruins of New Orleans that everything happens because of God's plan. Go ahead, tell them.

Other people, a bit more reasonably, take the Job tack, which is to say that God is vast and unknowable and all powerful, and we are mere specks of nothingness compared to God, therefore who are we to try to figure out why It does what It does? This is a fairly consistent argument, but it sets up some slippery slopes for the individual questioner. The first is that it's impossible to discuss God in any way shape or form without coming to at least some assumption about It. Even the assumption that God is so vast that we cannot discern Its intentions assumes that God does not want us to discern Its intentions. If this is the case, then why discuss God at all? Besides, no matter what God's indiscernible plan might be, if it involves indiscriminately killing 150,000 people for what doesn't seem like any particular reason, it isn't "Good." Neither is making the lives of millions of people miserable for the foreseeable future. If God indeed has a master plan that includes so much suffering, then sign me up for the lake of fire.

Of course, some people will claim that Satan, not God, commits these acts. This brings us back to the original question: why does evil

exist in the first place? If God is all knowing and all powerful, why create Satan if God knew that he would eventually destroy so many lives? This also opens the door to the idea that nature itself is evil and under the auspices of the Dark Forces, or at least outside of the realms of God, an argument used in the so-called “Enlightenment” to justify environmental destruction and degradation.

No matter how one tries to reconcile a God that is all good with a world in which disaster on the scale of Hurricane Katrina occurs, it simply isn’t possible. Why the discrepancies between the loving God of which Jesus spoke and the bloodthirsty monster of much of the Old Testament? Why the rampant suffering and hideous evil on Earth that was created by a “Good” God? Why, if God is all-forgiving, did He kick Adam and Eve out of Eden in the first place?

The Gnostic Way presents a very powerful answer to these questions. Gnostic mythology, whether or not one chooses to accept it as literal, holds that the world was created not by the all-Good God, but by an insane demigod and his assistants, the Archons, who rely on control of the created world for their continued existence. This insane demiurge—called Yaldabaoth in many Gnostic texts—isn’t evil in the way that we understand evil. Rather, it’s mad, schizophrenic even, with a bona-fide God complex—probably the biggest one ever.

Yaldabaoth is the supreme puppet master. It was created by accident, as an improper iteration within the fractal equation that brought about Being, and it resides, with us, within its creation, an imperfect, incomplete, illusory and often insane reality. Yaldabaoth remains in power because people let him do so. Every time someone commits an act based on a selfish, imagined concept of deity, every time someone treats other individuals as mere objects instead of free individuals deserving the respect one gives one’s self, Yaldabaoth and his pals grow a little fatter. Needless to say, most people who worship Yaldabaoth don’t even realize it.

Yaldabaoth isn’t YHVH, he’s the god who impersonates YHVH and orders murder. Yaldabaoth isn’t Allah, he’s the false image of Allah

who commands people to order suicide bombings. Yaldabaoth isn't Jesus Christ, he's the illusory Jesus of the *Left Behind* series who casts nonbelievers into the pit of fire. Yaldabaoth is the deity who causes a hurricane in order to pass judgment on New Orleans, the "new Sodom and Gomorrah." He created the Boxing Day tsunami to castigate those America-hating Muslims who perished under the waters of the Indian Ocean. He's behind every defense of every natural disaster, every image of a punishing deity in the mind of every insidious theorist who claims that God would destroy so many lives at one time. Does Yaldabaoth exist in "reality"? Does it matter? He exists in the hearts and minds of everyone who hates, and that's a pretty powerful existence.

From a Gnostic standpoint, natural disasters in general don't occur due to the influence of the demiurge. Nature tends to be neutral, an extension of the same fractal series that led to the creation of the cosmos. However, as the reality of the demiurge, the reality in which we reside, is completely insane from the get-go, the forces that act therein can also be insane, irrational, beyond any mortal attempt to categorize. When considered in this light, we find that catastrophe itself is neutral, just one of those crazy things that happens in our crazy reality. We can't answer any kind of spiritual question concerning the causes of natural disaster; instead, we must turn within and look at our reactions to such things, as this is where the battle between Yaldabaoth and the Unknown God occurs.

There is, you see, according to Gnostic cosmology, a real, true God who exists above the illusory reality of the Black Iron Prison. This is the Unknown God, the God of the Christos who descended into Jesus and the God of Sophia, the Divine Feminine and comforter. This Unknown God is indeed all Good, but its power within the realms of the false reality is "covered up" by the illusions cast by Yaldabaoth and the Archons. This Power can be uncovered by humans, who can rebel against the Rulers of this World and their servants by denying them the control they need to survive. This is the True, Hidden God of the

Gnostics, who descends into the limitations of matter to redeem and purify the unreal and insane world of the demiurge.

Thus, the theodical question of natural disaster, within the Gnostic Way, is solved rather neatly, because the Gnostic recognizes that it's a more complex issue than the dualistic "if god is good why do bad things happen" argument. In the most recent instance, Hurricane Katrina, tragic and horrible as it was, wasn't the result of any immediate action on the part of some God or another. It wasn't even the result of any immediate action on part of the demiurge. It was, instead, a ripple within an insane reality, a misfiring synapse in the universal brain. The Demiurge, on the other hand, immediately recognized it as a controlling mechanism, and entered the hearts and minds of the Objectifiers, his servants, who proceed with the one-upmanship, the judgments, the finger-pointing and blame. He feeds off of their images of him as an all-powerful Judge who metes out punishment to the unworthy.

These theorists are under the control of the Rulers of the World, the wardens of what Philip K. Dick called the "Black Iron Prison." It's easy to control people when they believe that they're somehow privileged, or better than the unwashed brown masses in Asia. It's extremely easy to control anyone who's so full of themselves that they literally believe that they're so good that they escaped God's wrath. Suffice it to say that this is a far from healthy, far from Christian attitude that does nothing but underline God's apparent cruelty to those who suffer. There's no quicker way to turn people away from God.

Thus, we find that the Gnostic understanding of natural disaster, and the answer to the questions posed thereby, lies within. We can no longer see these catastrophes as external menaces, which we must fear at all costs. The Demiurge, Yaldabaoth, loves it when we allow ourselves to succumb to fear and the objectification of others. He dry-washes his hands in glee whenever a minister claims that the victims of Hurricane Katrina "had it coming." He loves to hear citizens giving up more of their freedoms in exchange for "safety"—the safety of FEMA, the safety of Tsunami warning systems, the safety of Stadiums turned into shelters.

Note, however, that none of these individual horrors occurs due to a storm itself; the aftermath of disaster results directly from our reactions to said disasters.

For instance, the trouble left in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina didn't result from Katrina itself. The trouble with Katrina resulted from our lack of preparedness for it, and our reaction to it. The humans involved in the situation caused all of the trouble. Nature doesn't cause problems, our interaction with it, or lack thereof, does. So, one can't possibly blame Katrina itself—Katrina just Was, as part of the insane universe.

There's a powerful lesson in this. Hurricane Katrina's aftermath acted as 'apocalypse porn' for many very good people with very good intentions (what's that about hell and paved roads?). However, just as Katrina did nothing and our reactions to Katrina did everything, so this blaming process does nothing but our reactions to it do everything. No matter the amount of "blame" assigned to one thing or another, be it an inept government or a Vengeful Deity, theories of external cause and effect are like some giant peacock's tail of *schadenfreude*. As one shakes one's head and clucks one's tongue about those damned government leaders, one displays a certain subconscious delight in being proven correct, when all that really happened is that lots of us are worse off now than we were previously.

Most of us, as individuals, are helpless in the face of catastrophic disasters, not because we're bad people, but because such situations are far too massive for our limited perceptions. This helplessness leads us into despair and terror; we worry ourselves sick that our turn might some day arrive. We desire some kind of control over the situation, and in so doing we open ourselves to the machinations of the Archons and the wardens of the Black Iron Prison. What, then, can we do, from a Gnostic perspective, when confronted by natural catastrophe?

It would be wonderful to save the world, but many of us have problems of our own and simply can't do anything. There's nothing wrong with not being able to provide anything other than sympathy and

compassionate thought and prayer; sincere and compassionate prayer does a lot more than lots of people give it credit for. Still, it sometimes seems unfulfilling to offer a few paltry words in lieu of heading to a disaster area to assist with clean-up.

Because these events occur and because our reactions to them determine their eventual impact, we can stop reacting to them so vehemently and practice a little good old-fashioned detachment. This doesn't mean, by any stretch, that we shouldn't care about what happens in a catastrophic situation, that we shouldn't donate time or space, pray, cry, what have you. It means, simply, that we should at least start trying to get out of the cesspool of worthless theorizing, in which Yaldabaoth sits and bathes, and instead start living in the Eternal Present.

We can try to DO something, as individuals, about the lessons we learn from catastrophic events instead of dwelling on the hideousness of the situations themselves. We can start by being nice to our friends and neighbors and loved ones and complete strangers, so that if something hideous happens to us we're surrounded by seeds of compassion that we've sowed. We can look within and attempt to know for ourselves that we are not separate from hurricanes or tsunamis or natural disasters of any kind, that they are all humans just like us. We can realize that what happens to the least of us happens to all of us, and so we can show compassion and goodness to those least of us with whom we interact every day.

We are every single person who is affected by every single disaster. Literally. Each one of us has gone through Katrina, and will have to go through Katrina. Each one of us will die in the waves on a beach in Indonesia, will be shot by police on a flooded street, will be airlifted to safety, will save a hundred people by stealing a bus and driving to shelter. How do we want others to treat us while we're facing these things?

We can work thusly, on an individual level, assured of the presence of the Unknown God whenever people are suffering or in pain, just as we are assured of the presence of the Demiurge whenever people objectify one another. The Unknown God, the God of goodness ~ that

reveals itself to those for whom a path is open, descends within the masses of individuals who rush in to assist those in need, with the compassionate hearts who wept and gave and helped and were so affected not because they were told to by the news or by the politicians of the world, but because they honestly felt compassion within.

The True God is as powerless to prevent natural disasters as a psychologist is to prevent brain aneurysms. Instead, the Unknown God mitigates the after effects of the disaster every time someone helps someone else through compassion, regardless of religion, race, geography. This is how the God of Goodness works within the Gnostic framework, within the spirits of the compassionate many.

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Burroughs-ian Gnosticism: In His Own Words

Sven Davisson

Burroughs explicitly linked his philosophy to Manichaeism—a third century Persian religion. Manichaeism was founded by a young preacher, Mani in the early to mid third century of the common era. Mani was heavily influenced by Gnostic Christianity—calling himself a “disciple of Christ” and the “Paraclete,” or biblical healer. The Manichaens incorporated many existing belief systems into their world-



Photo: Kenneth C. Zirkel

view. From Mandeism and Gnosticism, they appropriated a strongly held belief in cosmic dualism. It is in this sense that Burroughs links his philosophy to that of the third century religion. Burroughs’ fiction and nonfiction work (as the two are not readily separable) are best characterized as mythology. He himself described his effort as writing the mythology for the space age. His philosophy has many parallels to

early Gnosticism that go beyond this simple invocation of Manichaeism dualism.

Burroughs first encountered the concept of the Johnson Family while still a boy reading the book *You Can't Win* by Jack Black. First published in the 1920's Black's autobiographical account of hobo life was immensely popular in its day. Burroughs describes the Johnsons in *The Place of Dead Roads*:

“The Johnson Family’ was a turn-of-the-century expression to designate good bums and thieves. It was elaborated into a code of conduct. A Johnson honors his obligations. His word is good and he is a good man to do business with. A Johnson minds his own business. He is not a snoopy, self-righteous, trouble-making person. A Johnson will give help when help is needed. He will not stand by while someone is drowning or trapped under a burning car.¹

In his essay “The Johnson Family,” Burroughs elaborates on the Johnsons’ philosophical placement within his mythic system—explicitly linked them to Manichaeistic dualism:

The Johnson family formulates a Manachean position where good and evil are in conflict and the outcome is at this point uncertain. It is *not* an eternal conflict since one or the other must win a final victory.²

In contrast to the honorable world of hobos and criminals, Burroughs describes a type of person known simply as a ‘Shit.’ Unlike the Johnsons, Shits are obsessed with minding other’s business. They are the town busy body, the preacher, the lawman. Shits are incapable of

¹ *The Place of Dead Roads*, iv.

² “The Johnson Family,” 75-76.

taking the honorable road of each-to-his-own. Burroughs describes the situation in his essay “My Own Business” thus:

This world would be a pretty easy and pleasant place to live in if everybody could just mind his own business and let others do the same. But a wise old black faggot said to me years ago: ‘Some people are shits, darling.’ I was never able to forget it.³

In Burroughs’ mythology, the world is one of conflict between the Johnsons and the Shits. A Shit is one who is obsessively sure of his own position at the cost of all other vantages. Burroughs describes Shits as incapable of minding “their own business, because they have no business of their own to mind, any more than a small pox virus has.”⁴ This is more than a offhanded analogy. For Burroughs, Shits are, in actuality, virus occupied hosts—chronically infected by what he terms the Right virus. “The mark of a basic Shit,” Burroughs reminds us, “is that he has to be *right*.”⁵

The war between the Johnsons and the Shits is an epic one that runs throughout Burroughs writing. Though of immense proportions, like the Gnostic battle between good and evil, the cosmic war is not figured across eternity. It has an end and, for Burroughs, that end is imaginable. It does not come without immense conflict, however. Burroughs tells his reader, “The people in power will not disappear voluntarily.”⁶ There is no turning back, once the battle is met. “Once you take up arms against a bunch of shits there is no way back. Lay down your arms and they will kill you.”⁷ “Hell hath no more vociferous fury than an

³ “My Own Business,” 15.

⁴ Ibid, 16.

⁵ Ibid, 16.

⁶ *The Job*, 74.

⁷ “The Johnson Family,” 77.

endangered parasite.”⁸ And remember: “The wild boys take no prisoners.”⁹

In discussing his mythology, Burroughs describes a classic Catch-22: “He who opposes force with counterforce alone forms that which he opposes and is formed by it... On the other hand he who does not resist force that enslaves and exterminate will be enslaved and exterminated.”¹⁰ Burroughs’ work begs the question, how does one resist the forces rallied against one without taking on the virally-tainted of the opposing force. To imagine a permanent solution proves an easy flirtation. In his essay “My Own Business,” Burroughs writes that “one is tempted to seek a total solution to the problem: Mass Assassination Day.”¹¹

In *The Place of Dead Roads* Burroughs imagines a scenario where the Johnson Family organizes into armed squads who fan out to hunt the virally infected. Some Johnsons are assigned as “Shit Spotters” whose task it is to move out into cities and small towns across the country recording those who exhibit virus occupied behaviors. Acting upon the intelligence thus gathered, sharp shooters follow-up eliminating the detected Shits.¹² Ultimately Burroughs tempers his fantasy. He observes, “Probably the most effective tactic is to alter the conditions on which the virus subsists.”¹³

In truth, indifference will prove the end of the Shit problem. “Conditions change, and the virus guise is ignored and forgotten.”¹⁴ Burroughs envisions the Shit position obsoleted by changes in normative culture:

This trend toward sanity has brought the last-ditch
dedicated shits out into the open, screaming with rage.

⁸ “My Own Business,” 16.

⁹ *The Wild Boys*, 148.

¹⁰ *The Job*, 100.

¹¹ “My Own Business,” 17.

¹² *The Place of Dead Roads*, 155-6.

¹³ “My Own Business,” 18.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 18.

Victimless crime, the assumption that what a citizen does in the privacy of his own dwelling is nonetheless someone else's business and therefore subject to denunciation and punishment is the very lifeline of the *right* virus. Cutting off this air line would have the same action as interferon, which blocks the oxygen from certain virus strains.¹⁵

And slowly the Shits are ignored into a dull celluloid sunset.

Like many of the early Gnostics, Burroughs believed that humanity was tainted from birth by outside elements. Within his writing, all humanity is infected from the outset. "We are all tainted with viral origins."¹⁶ "[T]he whole quality of human consciousness, as expressed in male and female, is basically a viral mechanism."¹⁷ He posits a theory of 'inverse evolution.' Also like the early Gnostics, Burroughs cosmology contains a parallel to the Fall. He suggests that "Man did not rise out of the animal state, he was shoved down to be an animal to be animals to be a body to be bodies by the infamous Fifth Columnists."¹⁸

Due to this viral mechanism, the cosmic conflict is configured within the domain of our own bodies. Burroughs wonders if "the separation of the sexes" isn't "an arbitrary device to perpetuate an unworkable arrangement."¹⁹ Theorist Robin Lydenberg writes that Burroughs sees "the only possible relationship between two sexes defined in binary opposition to each other is one of conflict."²⁰ For Burroughs this arena of perpetual conflict, enacted through and on the zone of the body, is one of the largest elements standing between

¹⁵ Ibid, 16.

¹⁶ *Cities of the Red Night*, 25.

¹⁷ Ibid, 25.

¹⁸ *Port of Saints*, 105.

¹⁹ "Women: A Biological Mistake?" 126.

²⁰ Lydenberg, 162.

humanity and the potential to mutate into something with even a slight chance of survival.

Lydenberg continues:

Burroughs attributes the polarization of reproductive energy to structures of binary opposition which set two incompatible sexes in perpetual conflict, channeling the flow of creative energy into a parasitic economy based on power and property.²¹

Burroughs suggests that this division has trapped humans in a state of neotany, arrested evolution (A.E.). He writes, “I am advancing the theory that we were not designed to remain in our present state, any more than a tadpole is designed to remain a tadpole forever.”²² Within his mythology, there is very little hope that humanity will make it out. The necessary mutation that might spur us back onto the evolutionary path may prove unattainable. Bleakly, he writes in *The Western Lands*:

Man is indeed the final product. Not because homo sap is the apogee of perfection, before which God himself gasps in awe—“I can do nothing more!”—but because Man is an unsuccessful experiment, caught in a biologic dead end and inexorably headed for extinction.²³

And...

“It is inconceivable that Homo sapiens could last another thousand years in present form.”²⁴

²¹ Ibid, 156.

²² “Women: A Biological Mistake?” 125.

²³ *The Western Lands*, 41.

²⁴ Ibid, 223.



Photo: Jasmin Awad

Burroughs did believe in reincarnation. In interviews, he described it as a ‘given.’ “I have written [in *The Place of Dead Roads*], Kim had never doubted the existence of gods or the possibility of an after-life and Kim is my alter ego and spokesman like Larry Speaks.” Birth, however, “is something to be avoided... the worst thing that could happen.”²⁵ For Burroughs, it seems, the real trick is not to be born in the first place. “The human condition is hopeless once you submit to it by being born...*almost*. There is one chance in a million and that is still good biologic odds.”²⁶ *Almost*, and the slightest glimmer creeps in.

As Burroughs sees it, the only escape possible for humanity is biologic mutation. This is nothing less than an evolutionary jump into the unknown—a complete and total movement away from what one knows as human. Burroughs writes in *The Western Lands*: “A problem cannot be solved in terms of itself. The human problem cannot be solved in human terms.”²⁷ And in his essay “Immortality” he warns us that “Mutation involves changes that are literally unimaginable from the

²⁵ Maeck.

²⁶ 84

²⁷ *The Western Lands*, 27.

perspective of the future mutant.”²⁸ The mutation he envisions represents “A step into the unknown, a step that no human being has ever taken before.”²⁹ Once one takes the step there will be no turning back. “Evolution would seem to be a one-way street.”³⁰

The Gnostics believed that the world was created by an evil being, the Demiurge known as IALDABOATH. This being was an abortive creation of Sophia, the embodiment of cosmic wisdom, formed when she took creation unto herself without the knowledge of the non-dual prime-entity. The Demiurge is unaware of his own origin and thinks of himself as the one and only GOD of his creation. One finds strong parallels to this cosmology within Burroughs mythos. The world is actually at the mercy of an ephemeral, but all too real, force Burroughs calls simply ‘Control.’ In *The Western Lands* he writes, “We are controlled by the Powers. Not one, but many, and often in conflict. It is all part of some Power Plan.”³¹

Burroughs views the modern period as characterized by an insidious display of Control’s raw authority unprecedented in history. Within his fiction, he depicts a world of “control madness,” which is predicated on the modern wholesale presentation of image and word, constructed through careful manipulation of the media, the state, religion and advertising. For Burroughs, the modern world is characterized by “random elements” that have come to power through accidental conditions. Modern leaders are the “unwitting” agents of control. Thus, “the iron-willed dictator is a thing of the past.”³²

The modern world is a horrific terrain of constructed knowledge—organically directed toward the eradication of all free thought. Contrasting this modern manifestation of Control with its

²⁸ “Immortality,” 135.

²⁹ Ibid, 135.

³⁰ “Women: A Biological Mistake?” 125.

³¹ *The Western Lands*, 188.

³² “No more Stalins, no more Hitlers.”



Barbed Wire, Auschwitz One, Poland (*Photo: Emma Holmwood*)

historical antecedents, Burroughs writes, “To confuse this old-style power with the manifestation of control madness we see now on this planet is to confuse a disappearing wart with an exploding cancer.”³³

Just like humanity’s precarious position in a state of neotany, Burroughs sees that the presence of Control is not perpetual. Again the cosmic conflict is not eternal. For Burroughs humanity is in “the last game.”³⁴ In *The Western Lands*, Burroughs writes of Control’s ultimate plan:

The program of the ruling elite in Orwell’s *1984* was: ‘A foot stamping on a human face forever!’ This is naïve and optimistic. No species could survive for even a generation under such a program. This is not a program

³³ *The Job*, 60.

³⁴ *The Western Lands*, 254.

of eternal, or even long-range dominance. It is clearly an *extermination program*.³⁵

Finally...

The door closes behind you, and you begin to know where you are. This planet is a Death Camp... the Second and Final Death.³⁶

Just like the evil God of the Gnostics, Burroughs concept of Control masquerades as the axiomatic, natural laws of the Cosmos. In *The Job*, Burroughs notes, "All control systems claim to reflect the immutable laws of the universe."³⁷ Control wears the mask of religion, temporal law enforcement, the righteous politician. The greatest tactic of Control represented within Burroughs' work is that of the One God Universe (OGU):

Consider the One God Universe: OGU. The spirit recoils in horror from such a deadly impasse. He is all-powerful and all-knowing. Because He can do everything, He can do nothing, since the act of doing demands opposition. He knows everything, so there is nothing for him to learn. He can't go anywhere, since He is already fucking everywhere, like cowshit in Calcutta.

The OGU is a pre-recorded universe of which He is the recorder. It's a flat, thermodynamic universe, since it has no friction by definition. So He invents friction

³⁵ Ibid, 59.

³⁶ Ibid, 254.

³⁷ *The Job*, 43.

and conflict, pain, fear, sickness, famine, war, old age and Death.³⁸

Compare this One God with the Gnostic conception of the Demiurge.

For Burroughs, the notion of One God is simply a method employed by Control. It is akin to the Mayan calendric system in which each moment was predictable as it was pre-recorded. No matter the holy book or the messenger, the notion of One God proves little more than a palliative film shown to prisoners on Death Row. In such a system, resistance is a dangerous move:

So the One God, backed by secular power, is forced on the masses in the name of Islam Christianity, the state, for all secular leaders want to be the One. To be intelligent or observant under such a blanket of oppression is to be 'subversive.'³⁹

While describing his concept of the One God Universe, Burroughs outlines his contrasting view of a Magical Universe. "The most basic concept of my writing," he writes, "is a belief in the magical universe, a universe of many gods, often in conflict. The paradox of an all-powerful, all-seeing God who nonetheless allows suffering, evil, and death, does not arise."⁴⁰ Like the Gnostics, Burroughs held the belief that through contact with this magical universe, one could break free of the confines of the One God Universe, thus moving outside the grasp of Control. Burroughs image of the Garden of Alamout is analogous to the way the Gnostics employed the vision of the Kingdom. A glimpse of either is transformative—a Gnostic vision taking one above the realm of the evil creator god, the Demiurge or Control. For Burroughs, through dream visions, one becomes a god:

³⁸ *The Western Lands*, 113.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 111.

⁴⁰ "My Purpose Is to Write for the Space Age," 268.

You need your dreams, they are a biologic necessity and your lifeline to space, that is, to the state of God. To be one of the Shining Ones. The inference is that Gods are a biologic necessity. They are an integral part of Man.⁴¹

Burroughs appropriates the Egyptian notion of an after life, a paradise known as ‘The Western Lands.’ Unlike the Christian or Islamic heaven, entry to the Western Lands is by no means guaranteed. It does in fact lie at the end of a very dangerous journey—one in which portions of the soul struggle to reach immortality. Burroughs asks his readers to compare his mythological description of the Western Lands with the shoddy images of paradise promised by the proponents of the One God Universe:

Look at their Western Lands. What do they look like? The houses and gardens of a rich man. Is this all the Gods can offer?”⁴²

“Well, I say then it is time for new Gods who do not offer such paltry bribes. It is dangerous to think such things. It is very dangerous to live, my friend, and few survive it. And one does not survive by shunning danger, when we have a universe to win and absolutely nothing to lose. It is already lost.”⁴³

In *The Place of Dead Roads*, he tells us unequivocally: “This is no vague eternal heaven for the righteous. This is an actual place at the end of a very dangerous road.”⁴⁴

⁴¹ *The Western Lands*, 181.

⁴² *Ibid*, 184.

⁴³ *Ibid*, 184

⁴⁴ *The Place of Dead Roads*, 171.

Burroughs sees that historically “the Gods held all their keys and admitted only favored mortals.”⁴⁵ This was the case in the Egyptian system, described in their *Book of the Dead*, where gods and demons had to be placated, propitiated and answered with their sacred names throughout the nearly impossible journey across the wasteland between earthly life and the Western Lands. Like the Gnostics, Burroughs’ mythology proposes, no matter how remotely, the possibility that one may discover the secret key (gnosis) that opens the secret represented by the Western Lands. Again like the Gnostics, Burroughs understood that this metaphorical key unlocked not just one revelation, but everything in an instant. This is the vision of the Kingdom conveyed by Jesus, or the Illuminator, in the Gnostic scriptures. Burroughs writes, “Once you find the key, there are not just one garden but many gardens, an infinite number.”⁴⁶

Throughout his own *Book of the Dead*, Burroughs frequently warns us of the treacherous nature of the journey:

The road to the Western Lands is by definition the most dangerous road in the world, for it is a journey beyond Death, beyond the basic God standard of Fear and Danger. It is the most heavily guarded road in the world, for it gives access to the gift that supersedes all other gifts: Immortality.⁴⁷

And...

The Road to the Western Lands is devious, unpredictable. Today’s easy passage may be tomorrow’s death trap. The obvious road is almost always a fool’s road, and beware the Middle Roads, the roads of

⁴⁵ Ibid, 171.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 171.

⁴⁷ *The Western Lands*, 124.

moderation, common sense and careful planning. However, there is a time for planning, moderation and common sense.⁴⁸

Within his mythology, Burroughs appears to suggest that the end is all but a given. The final trains are moving inexorably toward the gates of the camp. There are many ways in but no exit. For humanity, stuck for millennia just moments before mutation, there is no escape for the soul. No windows, but the smell of the charnel fires are a dead give-away. Perhaps it is too late and we have already moved past the evolutionary point of no-return—already dinosaurs in dénouement. But with Burroughs, there is always an *almost*.

Burroughs' close friend and collaborator Brion Gysin reminds us: "The outbreak of Armageddon made things infinitely more complicated but all that much more urgent."⁴⁹

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⁴⁸ Ibid, 151.

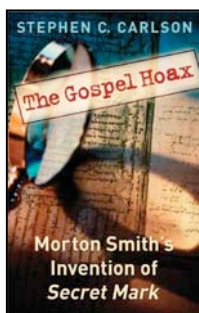
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Secret Gospel of Mark

Review by Sven Davisson

The Gospel Hoax: Morton Smith's Invention of *Secret Mark*, Stephen C. Carlson (Baylor University Press, 2005, 141pp, \$19.95)



Since its first announcement, controversy has surrounded Morton Smith's discovery of fragments from a hitherto unknown "secret" Markan gospel. According to Smith's own account, while cataloging the ancient library at the monastery Mar Saba, he found a letter from the 2nd century theologian Clement of Alexandria. In this letter to an unknown follower Theodore, Clement refutes the arguments of

a rival sect. Within the text of his letter, Clement quoted material not found in the canonical version of the Gospel of Mark. The letter makes reference to a secret version of Mark that included key passages, of which he quotes two, redacted from the widely circulated version.

Over the past half-century, biblical scholars have argued over the origin and authenticity of Smith's discovery. Complicating matters, the original letter was not found. What Smith discovered, instead, was a partial copy of the letter penned into the endpapers of printed edition of Isaac Voss's 17th century *Letters of Ignatius of Antioch*. Smith attributed the Greek cursive hand to an anonymous 18th century monk. Add to this the fact that the original 'copy' has disappeared, leaving only Smith's

photographs to work from, and it would appear the argument for or against has stalemated.

In the world of scholarly forgeries, nothing is a truer revelator than time. The passage of time makes anachronisms more apparent. As scholarship progresses and firmly held assumptions shift with discoveries or academic whim, underlying truths themselves become dated and linked to their time. Anachronistic scholarly truth may prove in fifty years as telling as forensic inconsistencies in paper or ink.

Stephen Carlson takes this one step further. He proposes that for a forgery to be compelling, to gain traction, the forgery must tweak a controversy of its own time. Clements letter and its portions of Secret Mark caused a stir by connecting homosexuality and Jesus—one would be hard-pressed to find a combination more controversial in late 1950's. Carlson quite convincingly argues that the notion of same-sex desire, and the particular manner in which it is characterized in the Clementine letter, would not have been intelligible in the 2nd century. Clements' ire at the Carpocratian's "shameless lies" is only intelligible in a mid-twentieth century context.

In addition to his textual analysis, Carlson provides a in depth analysis of the handwriting and other aspects of the document itself. While he is limited by his unavailability of the original document, he manages to add several key pieces of information. One such is his detection of the forger's pause in the handwriting. With use of accompanying detail enlargements, Carlson shows the distinctive hesitation, where the pause allows ink to bleed into the paper, in what is supposed to be a quick cursive hand.

Carlson furthermore made the discovery of a second example of handwriting matching that of the scribe responsible for the Clementine letter. He identified identical penmanship in another text at Mar Saba, one Smith himself catalogued and dated to the 20th century. This modern scribe was named "M. Madiotes." Carlson takes this further and finds that Madiotes is not a modern Greek surname. He translates it as

“swindler” or “bald-headed man” and points out that Smith was bald by the time of the manuscript’s alleged discovery.

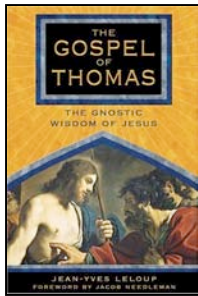
It is with this almost overwhelming quantity of evidence, that Carlson make his key argument for a switch from viewing Secret Mark as a forgery to appreciating it as a clever academic hoax. Carlson’s may not be the definitive work on the subject of Smith’s *Secret Mark*, but he has certainly gone far beyond anyone else’s investigations into its provenance. He has opened up many unexplored avenues of investigation. *The Gospel Hoax* is fun to read (something not often true of an academic work of this type) and gives one a new admiration for Mortan Smith’s craftiness—if Carlson’s premise is substantiated.

Thomas

Review by Sven Davisson

The Gospel of Thomas: The Gnostic Wisdom of Jesus, Jean-Yves Leloup (Inner Traditions, 2005, 228pp, \$14.95)

The Gnostic Gospel of St. Thomas: Meditations on the Mystical Teachings, Tau Malachi (Llewellyn Publications, 2004, 365pp, \$17.95)



In the fifty years since the discovery of the Nag Hammadi 'library,' no other text has captured the popular imagination like The Gospel of Thomas. The discovery of a new gospel made intriguing news and the content was quickly and widely appropriated by various New Age movements. The text itself consists of 114 sayings, or logion, attributed to the historical Jesus and allegedly recorded by his disciple Thomas.

Many of the sayings have their parallels in the synoptic gospels, while others are new or differ in key ways. Fragments of the text had been found earlier in the Greek Oxyrhyncus papyri. It was not until the discovery of the complete manuscript at Nag Hammadi that the fragments were recognized as comprising a separate gospel.

Within academe, two distinct camps of thought exist surrounding the historical placement of the Thomasian gospel. One side places the writing of the text as early as 40c.e., making it one of the earliest extant Christian texts written contemporaneous with the Pauline epistles. The

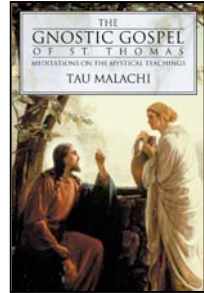
other camp argues for a later attribution of the text to the second century. Those who argue for the early origin of the text, point to the relative absence of Gnostic philosophy from the words attributed to Jesus. Most pointedly, there appears to be no influence of Valentinian Gnosticism on the composition of the text, which sets it in mark contrast to the other texts in the cache at Nag Hammadi. This would tend to point toward the text being an earlier manuscript adopted by the Gnostics sect who buried the cache.

Scholars have long postulated that the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) relied on an earlier text (Q) now lost to antiquity. Those who favor an early authorship for Thomas, often propose the manuscript as the Q text or an early document relying on Q. Familiar verses from the synoptic gospels have their parallel in Thomas. Logion 93, for example, “Do not throw pearls to swine, for they may treat them as rubbish” is echoed by Matthew 7:6 and Luke 14:35. Logion 100 includes the famous instruction: “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and give to God what is God’s, and give to me what is mine” (Cf. Matthew 22:17-21; Mark 12:14-17; Luke 20:22-25; John 17:10).

The debate regarding the date of the original text aside, the discovery of the Thomas Gospel represents one of the important and fascinating discoveries of the 20th century. Thomas is easily the most widely read and referenced of the Christian apocrypha. The text has entered the standing lexicon of popular culture, propelled most recently by the immense popularity of Dan Brown’s *Da Vinci Code*.

Two new editions of the complete text of the Thomas Gospel with new commentaries were released in the past year. *The Gospel of Thomas: The Gnostic Wisdom of Jesus* by Jean-Yves Leloup from Inner Traditions presents a new translation of the text by the author and a verse commentary. Leloup’s book also includes the complete text in Coptic with accompanying translation. Each verse is then broken out and commented on. The author has also included a useful cross-reference for each verse with the canonical gospels and other New Testament books.

The Gnostic Gospel of St. Thomas by Tau Malachi pairs the original translation by E. J. Brill, included in James Robinson's *Nag Hamadi Library*, with a new commentary. Malachi provides his own commentary to Brill's translation. Malachi does not include New Testament cross-references and he rarely places Thomas within its historical and textual context.

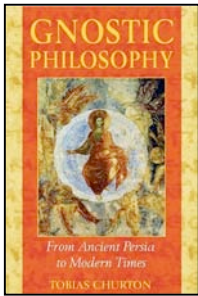


Both authors have a longstanding connection to Gnostic philosophy, authoring several previous works each. Leloup is the founder of the Institute of Other Civilization Studies and the International College of Therapists, as well as authoring translations with commentary of *The Gospel of Mary Magdalene* and *The Gospel of Philip*. Tau Malachi is an initiate of the esoteric order O.S.G. and is the founder of the Sophia Fellowship. His other works include *Living Gnosis*, *Gnosis of the Cosmic Christ* and *St. Mary Magdalene*.

Leloup is a more traditional Gnostic commentary on the text rooted as he is in European Gnostic traditions. His new translation is an important contribution to the field. Malachi, influenced as he is by Kabbalah and the Malcheziadec philosophy, is a more modern, New Age, meditation on the text.

Reviews

Gnostic Philosophy: From Ancient Persia to Modern Times, Tobias Churton (Inner Traditions, 2005, 480 pp, \$18.95)



Hopefully not too much precious time will be wasted in my encouragement to the reader of this review to GET THIS BOOK. This is, quite simply, one of the best books I have read this year. Though I could, with plenty of justification, describe this work as erudite, witty, humorous, profound, engaging or any of a number of descriptions, none of these would convey the sense of validation I got will devouring its pages.

Rather than relegating “gnosticism” as mere historical analogy, Churton breathes life into the Word and makes it live through his own flesh and speak to us through his own passion for the subject.

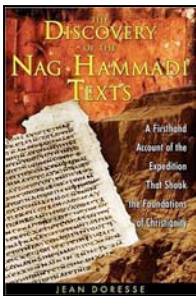
Mr. Churton takes us through an entertaining menagerie of historical figures, ideas, persecutions and reformations where, after a kaleidoscopic fashion, he eloquently introduces us to a tradition that has always emphasized challenging accepted beliefs with personal revelation and experience. He unfolds the curtain of the Great Mystery Play to give us a cast of Zoroastrians, Christians, Knights Templar, Troubadors, and is thoughtful enough to even include a couple of rock stars and the modern age of physics into this narration.

He devotes an entire chapter to that infamous Victorian mage, Aleister Crowley and in doing so neither portrays the Great Beast as an

object of idolization nor contempt. Instead he focuses on Crowley as a purveyor and synthesizer of many traditions, which truly serves to bring his contribution to the Gnostic current into sharp focus. The book is worth reading for this chapter alone.

Included in this issue of Ashe, you will find that Inner Traditions has been generous enough to allow us to reprint a chapter from this book; and so be able to experience but a brief glimpse into the wonderous insights Mr. Churton is able to produce in this very important work. We not only recommend it as general reading, but advise those organizations that endeavor to instruct in the mysteries that this is an invaluable resource for your libraries and curricula.

The Discovery of the Nag Hammadi Texts: A Firsthand Account of the Expedition that Shook the Foundations of Christianity, Jean Doresse (Inner Traditions, 2005, 384pp, \$19.95)



There seems to be an ever-present interest in the beliefs of our predecessors. These days it isn't unusual to see such words as "Gnostics," "Illuminati" "the Ancient Mysteries" and so forth being bandied around in the popular media. As I write this NBC's "Today Show" has been doing a series of pieces on fringe beliefs such as Kabbalah and Scientology. A writer named Dan Brown has become a subject of table discussion with the success of his fictional works like *The DaVinci Code* and *Angels and Demons*. Ironically, these works have raised the ire of the Catholics and other so-called "Christians" who wish to see these books denounced as fiction, even though the author never made any other claim. One would suppose then that perhaps they question the authenticity of those works by which they lay claim to their own spiritual authority and it is for this reason that they seem so disconcerted by the popularity of Mr Brown's yarns, which they view as somehow being compellingly competitive.

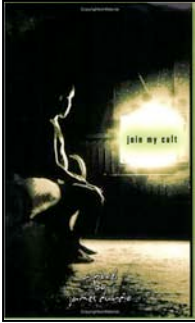
The upshot of all of this is that there is a growing number of people who are questioning the dogma they have been given and looking to history for their own answers. It is in this context that an author like Jean Doresse is prepared to make a most significant contribution. As the only living survivor of the 1945 expedition that brought the Nag Hammadi texts to the attention of the world, Mr. Doresse provides an invaluable account of the conditions of this discovery and provides rich contextual and background information. Among the Nag Hammadi texts was the *Gospel of Thomas*. Originally referred to as Didymus (the twin), Thomas was said to have been the twin brother of Jesus. This gospel contains 114 sayings that have been attributed to Jesus but was not included in the various “authorized” editions sanctioned by the church. Needless to say, such information casts those other better known teachings in a whole new light; a light that had been condemned as “Gnostic” by those more “expert” in the needs of humanity’s salvation.

Unlike Dan Brown, Jean Doresse is a scholar and his style is decidedly more academic. For five years he undertook expeditions on behalf of the French government, which established the first archaeological service in Ethiopia and was also head of the research department at the Centre National de Recherche Scientifique. Though it has been out of print or otherwise unavailable for a number of years, it is once again available through Inner Traditions.

For those who are interested in the origins of Gnosticism and the conflict between those who preferred to call themselves “Christian” this work is simply indispensable.

Join My Cult, James Curcio

(New Falcon, 2004, 284pp, \$16.95)



James Curcio (a.k.a. agent 139 and company) has assembled the characters of the Chapel Perilous for a modern mystery play. Mixing heavy doses of pop-culture with occulture, the reader will surely encounter every type of fabulous beastie that has strutted across the pages of the western press for the last 100 years or so, be it Castaneda, Choronzon or Captain Kirk. All of these characters are presented within the context of the writer's, as well as his associates', experiences and interactions. The effect of this engaged this particular reader in a profound and enjoyable sense of synchronicity that reminded me of my own connectedness to the mysteries. In this sense, I would say that this book offers a type of access to the *Mysteria Mystica Maxima* for those who are ready. As a sideshow, we have a unique and intelligent commentary about modern mental-health practices from the perspective of a person who was somewhat reluctantly initiated into those particularly dubious mysteries.

As the "New Falcon" label on the spine promises, this is another work in a class of experimental literature that has been previously head-mastered by writers like Robert Anton Wilson, William Burroughs and James Joyce. While it is our opinion that Mr. Curcio is by no means ready to move to the head of this class, we will concede that we found "Join My Cult" to offer us a glimpse of some promise and potential, and assure other avid readers that, in the midst of the various montages, they are sure to find their own insights delivered in an imaginative style illuminated with bright flashes of wit:

"We have energy all around us. It is us; you cannot separate yourself from your energy. Our consciousness is electro-chemical." Alexi lit up another cigarette, and

added offhandedly, “got to add to the ambiance.” Alexi’s speech had an off-kilter, loping stride that made Ken think of William Shatner and Leonard Nimoy simultaneously.

Ken shook his head. “Cut the crap.”

“With practice, we can learn to control this energy --- to do nearly anything with it. To take and give it to others, affect the eventual outcomes of things... You must understand, there is an intricate unseen... dimension... to events. Intent, concentration, will, whatever you want to call it, leads this energy, if it has a vessel fit to manifest in. You can think of it in these terms: whenever something happens, it inflects itself forwards and backwards in time, affecting the lattice of all past and future... what is it?” Alexi stopped, noticing Ken’s brow wrinkling.

“Do you mean you sometimes take this energy from unknowing people?”

Alexi chuckled. “When it is necessary. Or useful,” seeing Ken’s look of disdain, he added, “We are all One. Taking and giving are two sides of the same coin.”

Ken nodded. “It is logical.”

“Machiavellian, perhaps, but logical. Anyway, I can show you how to utilize it in time,” Alexi said.

“How is this energy different from energy of other sorts --- physical energy?” Ken asked.

Alexi thought for a moment. “The difference is simply wavelength. Certain ranges of frequencies, you could say, are visible to us as color... think about all that exists out there that we simply don’t have the apparatus to perceive? On the quantum level the difference between particle and wave is purely a perceptual one. When air is vibrated we experience sound. Even so-

called solid matter is dynamic. Glass is a liquid. What I'm saying is that we can generalize and say everything is energy--- vibrations of a medium in various modalities. I also have an intuition that energy is consciousness. This energy is expressed in a variety of ways. It is focused in a specific way within our nervous systems, which allows it to will itself into motion... into awareness of itself. God is 'I am that I am.' Regardless all energy is conscious whether or not it relates to itself and thereby has the illusion of self-awareness." (pp. 28-29)

Though some detractors might accuse this work of a verbose sort of over-indulgence, or an outright narcissism, and others might complain that the experimental technique of the narrative is sophomoric, lacking the nuance and edge of a Gysin or Burroughs, I found Curcio's shoot-from-the-hip dialogue to be refreshing. The reflective character of the narrative is honest, directly addressing the reader from the author's own perceptions and challenges; and his highly metaphorical style is simple, if heavy-handed in places. Still, it is evocative with such pointed phrasings as "*The door opened mournfully,*" (p.93) striking chords of the poetic. What makes this story work is the inter-mixture of the dark and foreboding, the naked pain of uncertain existence, with a suitably coarse humor that cloaks a profound sense of compassion:

"The fear of that harsh reality croaks as that toad, and begins the anti-labor, the anti-birth, or running away from this present, precious moment. Depression is simply the child of fear—fear of living. Maybe, too, even the Hope is but an afterbirth, a placental cord to hang on and climb away to darkness. But—never so with Hope founded on Love. Do you fear your own life so much that you would daily pray for the consummation of walking death? The fear of a blissful

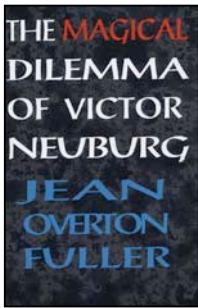
life with an end... does the Joy suddenly not taste quite so sweet, then?" (p. 138)

We conclude by saying that we very much recommend this book to a wide and varied audience interested in any type of alternative or gonzo spirituality, and look forward to seeing more work from Agent 139 and company in the future. More of his work can be found at www.jamescurcio.net and www.joinmycult.org

The Magical Dilemma Of Victor Neuburg, Jean Overton Fuller

(Mandrake of Oxford, 2005, 324pp, £13.99/\$25.00)

Reviewed by Charlotte, *Mandrake Speaks*



During a small occult Fair at the beginning of 2005 I discovered that Marc Aitkin, who was organizing sound and lighting for the event, had also made a short film around a ‘what if’ future of Victor Neuburg. Victor Neuburg being best known as Aleister Crowley’s disciple and lover but he was also a poet, editor and the man who ‘discovered’ Dylan Thomas. The film was screened at the fair, but the impromptu showing didn’t do **Do Angels Ever Cut Themselves Shaving** justice; so we decided to give the film another, more focused viewing.

During preliminary arranging of this screening I discovered Richard McNeffs novel, *Sybarite among the Shadows* (Mandrake of Oxford); a strangely similar ‘what if’ also centered on Victor Neuburg, (similar in intuitive direction that is rather than in execution and result) complete with wartime settings and dedications to Mercury and Thoth respectively. Both of these creative works were initially inspired by a book by Jean Overton Fuller, *The Magickal Dilemma of Victor Neuburg* Needless to say after encountering the works of the two above artists I very quickly

purchased and read Jean Overton Fullers book, to check out the source of such abundant inspiration.

The first part of *The Magical Dilemma* is centered on Jean in 1935 when she was in her early twenties and she first became part of a circle of poets, which included Dylan Thomas and Pamela Hansford Johnson, and which was formed by Victor Neuburg when he was Poetry Editor of *The Sunday Referee*.

This part of the book was a joy to read, as it fleshed out many of the names that I have encountered in various books and references over the years; creating a reality from history so to speak. In this first section of *The Magical Dilemma*, we see Victor Neuburg through the eyes of the younger Jean Overton Fuller and gradually realize the impression this gentle soul made upon her. Not simply a strong enough impression to last over the years to the time when she finally wrote this biography, but also powerful enough for her to overcome her personal beliefs and morality in the face of the said sexual and magical behavior of Neuburg.

Truth to tell, in many ways I would say that Fuller adored Neuburg. That she thought him a good, gentle and talented man is beyond doubt but in many ways a sort of love and idealization of him on her part comes across in the book that must have made some of the research into Neuburg's past difficult for her.

“for me he lit a flame that can never be put out...”

I was intrigued as to the belief system of Fuller, which in some way seems contradictory. On one hand she has a working knowledge of palmistry/astrology and more academic branches of esoteric lore but on the other seemed to have what could be seen as a type of near Christian morality; more than one could explain as being a purely generational thing. Discovering Jean Overton Fuller's Theosophist affiliations clarified this, though the inclusion of Pamela Hansford Jones verbatim views of that period also helped me realize more about the standard morality of that time for women; even women of the more 'bohemian' set of that time. In later parts of the book, Fuller goes more into the life

of Neuburg, and particularly his relationship, both sexual and magical, with Crowley.

The conflict of her obvious fondness for Neuburg, with detailing his relationship with someone like Crowley whom she saw as an ‘inflated pseudo messiah’ and as ‘exceedingly coarse’ with near no redeeming features becomes obvious at points, though she generally retains the degree of professionalism necessary to rise above this, introducing statements from those she respects such as Gerald Yorke who retained a high opinion of Crowley.

Whilst *The Magical Dilemma of Victor Neuburg* book did not take me to the same places of imaginative and creative exploration as it did Marc Aitkin and Richard McNeff, I still found it to be an interesting and stimulating book. I won’t deny that some of the opinions and perspectives of Jean Fuller differ from my own, however this didn’t detract from my enjoyment of the book as anything that triggers a process of thought and evaluation can only be a good thing!

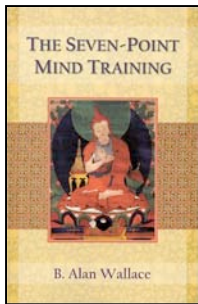
Reading *The Magical Dilemma of Victor Neuburg* caused me to re-examine dynamics of creative magical relationships in general, as well as mulling over some fundamental aspects of the contemporary magical community that are well worth looking at. It also painted a very loving and more complete image of Victor Neuburg who for many years has existed only as a vague shadowy outline along with others of Aleister Crowley’s associates and lovers in my mind’s eye, and this is a great thing as even in death Crowley has been allowed to reduce those who helped create the magick of that time, and this is something that has long needed rectifying.

One of the most poignant parts of the book was a quote given by Preston; “Victor...was a dead man; he gave up magic and spent the whole of his life feeling he was not doing what he was meant to be doing.” Jean Overton Fuller’s book shows that Victor Neuburg never gave up magic...just changed the way in which he performed it and without Crowley remained a creative, wondrous and spiritual man in his own right.

I think the best close for this review is a verse from “The Epilogue” in Victor Neuburg’s collection of poetry *Triumph of Pan*, dedicated to Crowley:

Because the fulfilment of dreams is itself but a dream, There is no
end save the song, and song is the end;
And here with a sheet of songs bareheaded I stand,
And the light is fled from mine eyes, and the sword from my hand
Is fallen; the years have left me a fool, and the gleam
Is vanished from life, and the swift years sear me
And rend.

The Seven-Point Mind Training, Alan Wallace
(Snow Lions Publications, 2005, 152pp, \$14.95)



Alan Wallace has led a rich and fascinating life. In 1971 he left his studies at the University of Göttingen (West Germany) to go to Dharamsala, India, where he was able to spend the next four years studying Tibetan Buddhism, medicine, and language. While there he was fortunate enough to spend a year living in the home of Dr. Yeshe Dhonden, the personal physician of the Dalai Lama. In 1975 and at the request of the Dalai Lama, he went to Switzerland where he joined Geshe Rabten, a noted Tibetan Buddhist scholar. In 1979, and once again under the guidance of the Dalai Lama, Mr. Wallace went on a four-year retreat in India, then Sri Lanka and finally the United States. In short, he has spent a great deal of time working with the Dalai Lama and his circle and has established an excellent reputation as both a scholar and promoter of Tibetan Buddhism in his own right.

Though originally published in 1992, Snow Lion Publications re-released “The Seven-Point Mind Training” in 2004. In contrast to the passive contemplation of Ruysbroeck or the Quietists, in this work

Wallace focuses on manifesting compassion by connecting to the outer life rather than secluding one's self in the inner. Wallace advocates making "the liberating passage from the constricting solitude of self-centeredness to the warm kinship with others which occurs with the cultivation of cherishing others even more than oneself."

Because Western culture's emphasis on consumerism and self-aggrandizement leads to general breakdown and destruction, the techniques advocated by Wallace have more immediacy than ever. This book, though rich in Tibetan wisdom, is written in a clear, concise, informative and entertaining manner for easy assimilation into the Western mindset. It is a recommended primer for Wallace's *Balancing the Mind...*

Balancing the Mind, Allan Wallace

(Snow Lion Publications, 2005, 352pp, \$18.95)



This 2005 Snow Lion release begins with a forward by the Dalai Lama. *Balancing the Mind* is an in depth exploration of Quiescence (which has much in common with the Epicurean description of Ataraxia) This is an extremely comprehensive study on the nature of consciousness with a bibliography that is itself a valuable resource for those who have an interest in this subject. Both of these books are recommended to those who not only have an interest in Buddhism, but also anyone who is interested in Neuro-Linguistic Programming and other models of consciousness study. (Recommended.)

The Adornment of the Spiritual Marriage (with The Book of Truth & The Sparkling Stone), Jan van Ruysbroeck. Translated by C.A. Wynschenk Dom. Introduction by Allan Armstrong (Ibis Press, 2005, 250pp, \$16.95)



This volume contains three of Jan van Ruysbroeck’s best known works: *The Adornment of the Spiritual Marriage*, *The Book of Truth*, *The Sparkling Stone*. The first of these is *The Adornment of the Spiritual Marriage*. Throughout the course of its three books, Ruysbroeck examines a methodology for the development of the soul through Christian virtue as manifest in an active life, a rich interior life built on passive contemplation, and the culmination of these as a life of union with God. In the second book of this work, he attacks the Quietists of that period who have come to be generally known by history as the Brethren of the Free Spirit.

The Catholic Encyclopedia informs us that:

Quietism (Lat. *quies*, *quietus*, passivity) in the broadest sense is the doctrine which declares that man’s highest perfection consists in a sort of psychical self-annihilation and a consequent absorption of the soul into the Divine Essence even during the present life. In the state of “quietude” the mind is wholly inactive; it no longer thinks or wills on its own account, but remains passive while God acts within it.

(<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12608c.htm>)

Though Quietism is best known today through its 17th Century advocates and reformers, Miguel de Molinos and Madame Guyon, its most consistent feature which is a passive sort of prayer or meditation, can be traced as a spiritual practice throughout history; especially in

Brahman and Buddhist practices. This state, which has been described as a sort of serenity, can also be found in the Epicurian expression of Ataraxia. It is most likely this interpretation that finds its way into the practices of the Brethren of the Free Spirit.

Beginning in the early 13 century with David of Dinant we see a teaching begin to emerge that instructs us that God is identical with the primal cause: 'there is only one substance, not only of all bodies, but also of all souls, and that this substance is nothing else but God himself.' This notion was built upon and further developed by Almaric of Benna who declared that since God is the formative principle of all things, then all people are as divine or Godlike as Christ. After Almaric's death a group came together calling themselves the Amalricians who believed that since God is all things, then all things are good and therefore there is no such thing as sin. They were put down by the Church in 1210, but their legacy continued through others who embraced these teachings like the Brethren of the Free Spirit, who believed that no action was impermissible by anyone who had realized his own god-hood. The threat to the social order should be obvious:

Sin was a fraud and work was the ordained punishment by God for humanity's Original Sin. Thus work was a fraud against nature. Their cosmological unity also proposed that since all people are the sons and daughters of God, then incest was an inevitability and so physical incest between siblings was thought to have a sacramental nature.

Certainly such a comparison insulted Ruysbroeck's sense of Christian piety and spiritual integrity. He believed that the contemplative, turning inward of passive prayer was an essential component of a person's surrender to God; which he described as consuming God and being consumed by God. But he also believed that this was meaningless without virtue and he saw the Free Spirit as being without virtue. In the last two chapters of this work he strongly condemns this:

Now some men, who seem to be righteous, yet live
contrary to these three ways and to every virtue. Let

every one observe and prove himself! Every man who is not drawn and enlightened of God is not touched by love, and has neither the active cleaving with desire nor the simple and loving tendency to fruitive rest. And therefore such a one cannot unite himself with God; for all those who live without supernatural love are inclined towards themselves and seek their rest in outward things. For all creatures by their nature tend towards rest: and therefore, rest is sought both by the good and by the evil, in divers ways. (Chapter LXVI)

Now we find yet another kind of perverted men, who are in some points different from those already described; though they too believe themselves to be exempted from all works, and to be instruments with which God works what He wills. And therefore they say that they are in a purely passive state without activity; and that the works which God works through them are noble and meritorious beyond anything that another man, working his works himself by the grace of God, could do. And therefore they say that they are God-passive men, and that they do nothing of themselves, but that God works all their works. And they say they can do no sin: for it is God who does all their works, and in themselves they are empty of all things. And all that God wills is worked through them, and nothing else. These men have surrendered themselves to inward passivity in their emptiness; and live without preference for any one thing. And they have a resigned and humble appearance, and can very well endure and suffer with equanimity all that befalls them; for they hold themselves to be the instruments with which God works according to His will. Such men in many of their ways

and works are like in their conduct to good men, but in some things they differ from them; for all things to which they are inwardly urged, whether these be virtuous or not, they believe to proceed from the Holy Ghost. And in this and in suchlike things, they are deceived; for the Spirit of God neither wills, counsels, nor works, in any man things which are contrary to the teaching of Christ and Holy Christianity. (Chapter LXVII)

In light of the above condemnations, some might find it ironic that the reformed Quietism of Molinos had more in common with contemplative writings of Ruysbroeck than the original Brethren of the Free Spirit.

The second work in this trilogy: The Sparkling Stone may be seen as a continuation of themes or commentary on the Spiritual Marriage. He proposes that man must possess four characteristics in order to achieve perfection. *He must be good and zealous* (outwardly active), *inward and ghostly* (introspectively passive), *an uplifted and God-seeing man* (committed to God), and *an outflowing man to all in common* (he is to be a spiritual wellspring for all people and things without distinguishing one and denying another.)

It would not be consistent with Ruysbroeck's views to see the spiritual doctrine he embraced as being merely of a passive nature. He describes the process of coming to the Lord in terms of an ordeal that must be overcome.

And therefore the Spirit of our Lord speaks thus in the Book of the Secrets of God, which St John wrote down: **to him that overcometh**, He says, that is, **to him who overcometh and conquereth himself and all else, will I give to eat of the hidden manna**, that is, an inward and hidden savour and celestial joy; and will give

him a sparkling stone, and in the stone a new name written which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it. This stone is called a pebble, for it is so small that it does not hurt when one treads on it. This stone is shining white and red like a flame of fire; and it is small and round, and smooth all over, and very light. By this sparkling stone we mean our Lord Christ Jesus, for He is, according to His Godhead, a shining forth of the Eternal Light, and an irradiation of the glory of God, and a flawless mirror in which all things live. **Now to him who overcomes and transcends all things, this sparkling stone is given;** and with it he receives light and truth and life.

Though Ruysbroeck had railed against the Quietists, his work was non-the-less condemned by clergy who felt it supported a pantheistic view, and his doctrine of the union of the soul with God was declared by the church to be heretical. The final book, *The Book of Truth* presents a refutation of these charges. He shows his views to be in accord with other accepted tenets of the church, namely in the writings of Paul and especially John and St. Augustine. He makes a passionate argument for his love of God and the Church and ends in Chapter XIV of that work with:

In all that I understand, or feel, or have written, I submit myself to the judgment of the saints and of Holy Church. I wish to live and to die as a servant of Christ, in the Christian faith, and I desire to be, by the Grace of God, a life-giving member of Holy Church.

Even though these three books have been published together previously, this release by Ibis Press offers an excellent introduction by Allan Armstrong, rich in background and biographical information. This

creates a more appropriate context than the version which can be found with Evelyn Underhill's more metaphysical and decidedly more opinionated introduction. At only \$16.95 (U.S.) it is a value and a meaningful addition to one's library. (Recommended).