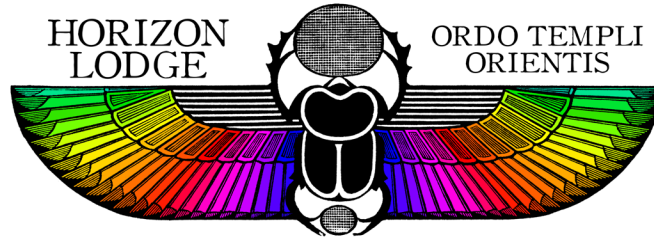


*The circle of the horizon is the earth and sky's embrace*

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## *Sky's Embrace*

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By LIGHT ye shall look upon yourselves, and behold All Things that are in Truth One Thing only, whose name hath been called No Thing ...

But the substance of Light is LIFE, since without Existence and Energy it were naught. By Life therefore are you made yourselves, eternal and incorruptible, flaming forth as suns, self-created and self-supported, each the sole centre of the Universe.

Now by the Light ye beheld, by LOVE ye feel. There is an ecstasy of pure Knowledge and another of pure Love. And this Love is the force that uniteth things diverse, for the contemplation in Light of their Oneness. ...

Lastly, by LIBERTY is the power to direct your course according to your Will. For the extent of the Universe is without bounds, and ye are free to make your pleasure as ye will ...

*Illustration: A visual interpretation of Liber CL by Entelecheia. Text: from Liber CL.*

“But you can all see that it is possible to miss so much by sticking to one narrow line of self-will and mistaking it for Real Will. It is, of course, self-will – having your own way, being efficient, being first, and so on. But Real Will is different. It is, in taste, very gentle.” Maurice Nicolle, *Psychological Commentaries on the Teachings of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky*, Volume 2 , p. 491.

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DNA Vessel  
BY AION 131

Horizon Lodge is a local body of Ordo Templi Orientis, the Order of Oriental Templars, or Order of the Temple of the East. We are located in Seattle, Washington.

The O.T.O is a hierarchical, fraternal membership organization. Our mission is to effect and promote the doctrines and practices of the philosophical and religious system known as Thelema, with particular emphasis on cultivating the ideals of individual liberty, self-discipline, self-knowledge, and universal brotherhood. To this end, we conduct sacramental and initiatory rites, offer guidance and instruction to our members and organize social and educational events.

For more information, visit our web site at <http://seattle-oto.org/>

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# Memory

BY MARK DALTON

Memory. It's a wonderful thing. For many, if not most of us, memory comes like a gift. We use it without much awareness to keep track of what we are doing and supposed to do, where we have been and where we need to go as our lives flow along. We have treasured memories we keep, as in a jeweled box, treasures we can get out, when we have a moment, unpack and relive an especially happy occasion. Sometimes memories catch us by surprise, either as a delight (a friend's face from long ago, the rush of first love, a ball caught, chord played, wave ridden), or as a gut-clenching fright (the sickening crunch of auto impact, an angry parent's slap on the side of the head, a slip on the side of a mountain). Memory just works, most of the time, seemingly by itself, without effort (although we may sometimes find ourselves fishing for just the right word, a name, a note, a date).

There's a different kind of memory, however. Disciplined, structured memory. We do well to remember that written history, as near as we can tell, extends back only, perhaps, 6,000 years. Before that, memory was all there was. Culture was carried in memory. Humanity as we know it today, Homo Sapiens, has been around for at least 40,000 years. People as smart and presumably as articulate as anyone you know. Relationships as complex and fraught with peril as relationships are today. Families and clans and tribes and communities needing organization, boundaries, rules and protocols to function effectively and to provide for the common good. Skills to be passed along, histories to recount, explanations of who we are and where we came from, and why we find ourselves here, to be passed along from generation to generation. All this information and structure carried in memory. Committed to memory in an organized way, to be pulled out quickly and reliably when needed — not just for enjoyment and reflection, but for survival.

Memory is integral to the discipline and practice of Magick. Generally speaking, the more powerful the Magick, the more complex the work, and the more there is to remember. One of the enormous differences between an enthusiast of Magick like me (one who reads, studies, and enjoys unraveling some of the secrets of Magick and the finding of themselves in the delightful company of others in the alternate stream of occult history), and a magician, a true magician, is the possession of a disciplined, highly functional memory. One capable

of absorbing long spells and rituals, often in obscure languages (in the case of Enochian Magick, not even a human language) — obscure language and sounds that simply must be memorized as received, often without many of the usual mnemonic tricks speakers use to keep themselves moving forward through a long recitation.

From my administrative perch in the mid-levels of a state government “super-agency” with 14,000 employees, I was surrounded by and, at times, in danger of being totally immersed in, a rapidly flowing stream of momentarily important but ultimately trivial bits of information, appearing in front of me by the moment, clamoring for attention only long enough to be quickly read, responded to (quickly), thrown into someone else's stream, tossed into a bucket beside me, or thrown back. The conditioning caused by years and years of this daily minute-by-minute “read, respond, route or ignore” activity, shared by millions of other overloaded office workers in electronic sweatshops around the globe, is to discourage retention, to let this information pass in and out of memory seamlessly, with the minimum necessary comprehension, little or no reflection, and immediate disposition.

This conditioning, of course, stands in almost exact opposition to the work of the magician, which is, in great part, to thoughtfully and carefully read and absorb volumes of information; to internally organize and reflect upon that information at length; to move from complex detail to comprehensive understanding; and to retain both these details and the organizational structure of this information in memory for general and specific ritual use.

At NOTOCON VII in Seattle, as part of his excellent presentation on *The Book of the Law*, Bob Stein spoke about the utility of memorizing parts of the Book, having it literally in mind for quick comparisons and discussion. Bob bemoaned that fact that memorizing poetry is no longer a standard part of the educational training of young minds. The famed Renaissance Magus and Gnostic Saint Giordano Bruno would no doubt agree with Bob on this point. Bruno was renowned for his gifts of memory, and taught others his method for organizing memory as he traveled across Europe in the waning years of the 16th Century. Bruno memorized vast amounts of text, whether written in Italian, English, French, German, or, of course, Latin.

The “Memory Palace” technique of training the mind to accomplish such feats, used by Bruno and the Jesuit missionary, Matteo Ricci, was well described as a

technique used by America’s favorite evil genius, the fictional psychiatrist and cannibal, Dr. Hannibal Lector. Author Thomas Harris wrote: “The memory palace was a mnemonic system well known to ancient scholars, and much information was preserved in them through the Dark Ages while Vandals burned the book. Like scholars before him, Dr. Lector stores an enormous amount of information keyed to objects in his thousand rooms...”

The Rites of Eleusis productions that were staged here in the Northwest by a troupe of musicians, dancers, and actors who had, to a degree, a symbiotic relationship with Horizon Lodge, offered an opportunity to see remarkable feats of memory, particularly by Jon Sewell, who, along with Melissa Holm, was the driving force behind these productions — principal composer, guitarist, primary vocalist, frequent leading man. Setting Crowley’s complex ideas and lengthy recitations to music was, in itself, quite a feat — but remembering these complex verbal and musical structures over the length of an evening’s performance, delivered with unflagging verve and enthusiasm, was, at times a wonder to behold. Sewell’s many years of training and experience as both musician and magician were brought to bear on this task.

In conversation, Sewell agreed that staging the Rites of Eleusis indeed involved feats of memory. The length, complexity and variety of Crowley’s libretto (for such it becomes in an opera) presented a challenge to the performers. Attaching prompts to memory helps, according to Sewell. The stage movements mapped out for the performers helps to prompt what comes next, for example. Setting the words in a context of music is helpful in itself, as music and spoken language involve

different parts of the brain, and linking the two in context can help a performer’s memory stay on track.

The form of a song (as in verse, verse, chorus, verse), if such a form exists, also helps to break up the song into smaller consecutive pieces that can be memorized in order and linked together in a chain. However, a piecemeal form of memorization can also present problems for longer works, says Sewell, if it is not done in order — memorizing favorite sections of *The Book of the Law* in a random way, for example, could make committing the entire work to memory more of a challenge, when the order of their appearance becomes of paramount importance.

Attaching words to images was an early method of memorization for Sewell. He memorized the Tarot deck, card by card, with each card and its image prompting memory of the associated characteristics of the card. This method is similar to Bruno’s “memory palace,” where memories are associated with, and organized into, rooms in the palace — entering each room along the great palace hallway gives access to different topics and their more detailed information. Meditation, attaining certain mental states that lend themselves to “loading” information into memory, is also important. Working with memory when walking, sitting in a hot tub or bath, or simply setting dedicated time aside for memory work is important.

Memorizing is work, however enjoyable, and it must be done in a structured and repetitive way to be successful. Sewell adds that memorized material must also be maintained — pull it up and work with it periodically — “use it or lose it” in short.



Moonboat

BY JAMES DALTON

# Swamped

SOROR MAO

I am thicket and  
Mud over an almost full moon.  
Throat full of dirt and eyes  
Wide as mist swallows the  
Din of what remained of a scream.  
Restless and heavy, beset by  
Melancholy and mire,  
Swearing by swale and  
Submergence that would let

Vines grow  
Where there are scars.  
Rock become dust  
Where I was eroded.  
Wood crumble to ash  
As I, waterlogged phoenix,  
Drag my feet along slick sand,  
Beset by stone and sharp air,  
Let my tongue loose a final bane.

I keep my fear.  
I let it tremble in the air around us.

It is light.  
Like illumination. Like wind.



## In The Footsteps of Sophia and Seth

BY DAVID STOKES

*This is an excerpt from the author's book published online and entitled The Twisted Weathervane, based on his esoteric journeys in London, UK. It is available from Amazon.com.*

Gnostic Discussion Group. It's just another advert on another online page to do with astrology. Influenced by evening short-cuts through the graveyard of amorphous portents I couldn't help emailing the named contact to ask what it's all about. The answer is quick, signed by their contact Kelly. They meet up as a small group twice a month in coffee-shops, to talk about Gnostic scripture. I ask where and when they next planned to meet and promise to show up if invited. Where are these coffee-shop Gnostics at? It's not that we bump into actual Gnostics or students of Gnosticism very often. Academics, admirers of Samael Aun Weor and characters who dress up as dissident bishops bandy the word around, but mostly it rings hollow in their words. In an age of disillusionment and confusion what rationalist has time for such abstractions anyhow, for the death-oriented venerations of sects long lost to history?

Earliest traces of Gnosticism date to the first centuries A.D., recorded by the Eastern Mediterranean civilisations of the time. Gnostic prophets Menander, Saturnilus, Basilides and Simon Magus have fallen to the bottom of academic pages, mostly appearing as foot-notes rather than quoted either reverentially or condemned as heretics as they once were. They are associated with sects such as the Borborites, Carpocratians, Naasenes and Cainites. They were somewhat apart from the Hellenistic, Roman and Christian cults of their times because of their practise of inverse exegesis, a reinterpreting of scripture whereby pariahs and outcasts are reassigned to heroic roles and given messianic powers.

Academics speak of two primary Gnostic traditions, the Valentinians and the Sethians. Sethians revered Seth, the third-born son of Adam and Eve, as the revealing angel of Gnostic wisdom. Their cosmogony is the more referenced Gnostic view of the cosmic and material order of things. With the Sethians we find a magisterial pyramid of celestial thought, introducing us to a mother, father and son. This triad of mother, father and son is enthroned at the apex of creation. A fallen being, interpreted often as Sophia (Wisdom), is the keeper of the world of matter.

Eastern, death-glorifying essences attached themselves to the origins of Gnosticism. A demiurge and his archons created the world as we understand it, but were unable to create human beings without an essence of transcendent spirit from the higher worlds. Humans by birthright are endowed with this divine fundamental and through knowledge disclosed by the revealing Gnostic spirit transcend the world of the demiurge and his demons.

The coffee-shop these Gnostics chose to meet in is bang in the centre of London, an area tagged with crass tourism rather than with anything to do esoteric antiquity, or London's ancient sites of mystery and power. We'd be forgiven for believing any honest engagement with Gnosticism in this age of reductionism — where so much communication is reduced to a meme or an online insult when possible — to involve the classics' department of a university, or a study-group in a theology college, or maybe a grandiose circle on the margins of occultism. The idea of people setting up discussion groups in coffee-shops brings up unexpected thoughts of ordinary people absorbed by the spiritual science of the first centuries A.D. This is somewhat intriguing.

There's lots of online posturing hinting at a Gnostic legacy with a higher sacramental vigilance. But contact with internet Gnostics is usually not encouraging. Proselytising on the net is not the best beginning for journeys, ancient sacred ciphers and philosophies. How more consolatory to imagine the organiser of the coffee shop discussion group as one of a few eccentrics whose passion for the classics shaped into an intellectual game, conveyed through dry study groups in draughty community halls and leaflets sent second-class in the post.

Valentinian Gnostics were more open to the recognised, literalist or Roman Catholic interpretations of Christianity. They studied Hebrew Bible passages, deciphering covert truths and messages from prophets of allegory and cryptic parables. They didn't turn away from the accepted Christian scriptures of their day, but rather viewed them as a record which on closer reading revealed hidden gems of learning. There is no universal consensus on the origins of Gnosticism, but early Christian ideologues Hippolytus and Tertullian condemned the Gnostics as heretics linked to the Samaritan magician Simon Magus, who shows up in The Acts of the Apostles as a convert to Christianity trying to buy spiritual wisdom from John and Peter. In the greater narrative of a winning religion Christian elders categorised Gnostics as heretical splinter-groups and dissidents with inexplicable Eastern undertones. Simon

Magus, whether he actually existed or not, was mocked as a fall-guy to Saint Peter, as nothing more than a chump trying to buy spiritual wisdom from the emerging masters of a winning creed. Church authority was merciless in its dealings with the Gnostic sects, much as monotheistic hierarchies at their most powerful tend to be merciless towards potential or actual competition.

The roots of Gnosticism are in the febrile religious and mystical renaissance of the Roman Empire's first and second centuries, somewhere around the beginnings of pre-Temple Judaism and the birth of Christianity. Multitudinous sects and schools competed against each other, and when Christianity became the Roman Empire's official religion the church fathers traduced, oppressed and exiled the Gnostics. Under a weight of persecution sealed by the power of the Roman Caesar the Sethians, Valentinians and smaller sects were eliminated from history. Although their legacy and beliefs lived on in more atomised revelations during the centuries to follow they were effectively crushed by an empowered religion with no sympathy or tolerance for its hermeneutics.

What links might exist between the first sects obliterated by an ascendant Christianity and a small group of Londoners meeting in a coffee shop at the heart of the tourist trails? Are they descendents of the prophet Mani, with family or cultural ties to Khuzistan in Iran, where a scattering of people yet practise Mandaean Gnosticism and speak the tongue of Mani? The Mandaeans are the last surviving strand of the dualist religion founded by Mani in 290 A.D., in the Persian city of Saleucia-Ctesiphon in Mesopotamia. Since the invasion of Iraq the Mandaean congregations, these descendents of Mani, have truly suffered, even by the standards of the Middle East. Only a few thousand remain in Iraq and in neighbouring districts of Iran. Their saints are Adam, Shem, Noah and Seth. If they have a messiah as the term is generally understood it'd be John the Baptist. Many fled the chaos of the Middle East and it's not inconceivable that someone connected to their sect might be in London without a congregation, reaching out to other seekers.

Such thoughts are animated in the days before the Gnostic coffee shop discussion, especially after the organiser Kelly emailed a reminder of where and when we were meeting and added the postscript, no occultists please. It implied a more Valentinian brand of Gnosticism, so a quick read-through of the Nag Hammadi before the meeting was in order. From the Zoroastrian persecution of the Mandaeans, through to the destruction of the Gnostics

by a Roman mutation of early Christianity, up to the present day killings of Mandaeans by literalist fanatics in the hilly villages of Iraq, has any comparable praxis stirred such peaks of rage and pogrom for perceived occultic or heretical practises?

So many of the sects snuffed out of history by the monotheistic zeal of Constantine and later by medieval popes embodied a righteous objection to the material world, a radical reaction to the metaphysical fragility of humanity. Their answer to the primary human dilemma was to reject the flesh and elevate spiritual activities to the highest value. Thus the Cathars in their isolated villages in the Pyrenees hated sexuality for they viewed it as the impetus for that most objectionable conundrum, human life itself.

The Roman church had by then arguably become the most powerful institution in the world by assimilating spiritual ideas into the beastly workings of war, monarchic rule, conquest, state power and the pacification of the peasantry. It fully embraced the material world and the fallen nature of humanity and forged from it a seat of power and a hierarchy as entrenched in the material world as any comparable hierarchy. The church couldn't afford to ignore heretical voices from the margins because such heresy threatened the primary flaw in the church's very existence. Heretics shunned the world and looked to the spiritual, whereas Rome came to terms with the material world, while consolidating an absolutism that held all power over the wrath of the God of Genesis and gate-kept all routes to the angels, to an all-loving messiah and to eternal life.

Like the Fraticelli, the Franciscans, and the Knights Templar, the Gnostics became targets of a suspicious religious power because their spiritual message became known by the people and was spread word of mouth by the people. Mystery schools whispered similar knowledge to each other and hid their conclusions from the watchful eye of ascendant monotheism. Thus the Mystery schools survived, and continue to survive. Seemingly the world can't bear too much purity, too much other-worldliness, too much disgust at human nature.

The idea of reincarnation is inseparable from Gnostic sects and Mystery schools and introduces another point of contention to Western monotheism's troubled relationship with its free-thinking off-shoots. Belief in reincarnation was suppressed in the occident because it is perceived to weaken the sanctity of individual life. Little wonder

so much esoteric knowledge was obscured through the centuries, hidden away from a jealous monotheism quick to judge thought itself as heretical.

One of the founders of the O.T.O., Theodor Reuss, also founded The Gnostic Catholic Church. Madame Blavatsky had a number of good points to make about Gnosticism and in *Isis Unveiled* supports Charles King's thesis of the Gnostic's Eastern roots. So to dissect what we generally understand as the occult, or the Western esoteric tradition, from Gnosticism is firstly an exercise in semantics.

Imagination, fattened by late-night readings of the Nag Hammadi, served up even more teasing questions as to who exactly Kelly was, and why she'd organised a Gnostic study group in a public place in the centre of London. And why she'd made a point to warn occultists not to show up.

The chance to ask a question or two about these ancient radicals doesn't appear every day. Critics question what they can only see as a world-denying fanaticism and a veneration of death at the cusp of Gnostic belief. Were these ancients and their medieval brethren really under a kind of spell from a nihilistic philosophy of the East? And criticism from today's church apologists can be cutting. Who were the Gnostics, and why are we planning to meet in a coffee shop in the centre of London to discuss them? Is Kelly linked to a Mystery school on the look out for new members?

Victorian esotericists left us astute insights into early Gnosticism, through texts like G.R.S. Mead's *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten*, published in 1900, *Thrice-Greatest Hermes* in 1906 and *Echoes of the Gnosis* in 1908. Mead was an associate of Madame Blavatsky in the final decades of her life and a faithful member of Blavatsky's Theosophical Society. His translations, articles in *Lucifer* magazine and writings in a sequence of booklets gave the reading public a fresh accessibility to the early Gnostics. Mead's work is a resource for both researchers and for postulants practising in the esoteric. Would Kelly from the Gnostic coffee-shop discussion group view Theosophists like Mead as one of the occultists she makes it clear she wants nothing to do with? It may just be a question of terminology, for often people speak at cross-purposes on what we mean by occultism. The word is fluid and its parameters expand in almost endless directions, depending on a person's reading list and inherited prejudices.

The Ecclesia Gnostica, not to be confused with Crowley's Thelemic grouping of a similar name, is organised in France and the USA. To the student of the arcane its Sunday morning service can come across as a parody of the Roman Catholic mass. They have reverends and an archpriest and a bishop and are very much in the tradition of the Valentinians, with the figure of Jesus as both rabbi and hierophant. They've particularized their catechism with Jesus as the earthly manifestation of a celestial Aeon and see Jesus as spirit rather as a man among men.

Since the 1960s when Ecclesia Gnostica became one of many fringe religions in the United States it has covered much ground in unifying its Gnostic vision with a more recognisable Christian devotion, with parallels to the theatrics of the post-Vatican II Roman Catholic mass and to the old Latinate rites predating them.

Religiosity and similarity in ritual between Ecclesia Gnostica and the Church of Rome short-circuit historical nuances between what is broadly understood as religion and the experimental freedoms of the esoteric. Yet, with theatrics put to one side they are a valid Christian Gnostic church in the Valentinian tradition. They've earned a far more thorough exposition than what time allows us here on these present pages. But cards of fate are already spread in front of us. Instead of a flight to L.A. in the hope of finding an Ecclesia Gnostic service to gape at there's an invite to a coffee shop in central London, to discuss Gnosticism with a woman by the name of Kelly and persons unknown. Ecclesia Gnostica's roots are in the England of the 1950s with the founding of the Pre-Nicene Gnostic Catholic Church by Ronald Powell, an Australian whose ideas evolved from his involvement with the Liberal Catholic Church. Powell re-created himself as the Most Reverend Richard Jean Chretien Duc de Palatine and later as Bishop Duc de Palatine. He announced his mission as one of, "... restoring the Gnosis — Divine Wisdom — to the Christian Church, and to teach the Path of Holiness which leads to God and the Inner Illumination."

Powell professed apostolic authority from one Most Rev Msg Hugh de Willmott Newman, who had handed on rights of succession from Syrian-Malabar, Armenian and Greek theodicy as well as from Liberal Catholics, Russian-Syrians, Old Catholics, Orthodox Coptics and Chaldean Uniates. Powell, as Bishop Duc de Palatine, augmented his credentials by association with elusive esoteric charters and orders, such as the Brotherhood of the Illuminati, and Memphis and Mizraim Rites of Freemasonry. Whether any of the apostolic rites of succession or the grand orders



are recognisable as belonging to what we know as reality is a question for another day.

In keeping with the idealism of our memorable esotericists Ecclesia Gnostica claim sodality with the brotherhoods of the Rosy Cross and orders of Illuminati often existing more in the imaginations of fertile minds than in the beastly furrows of day to day life. Such pseudo-Catholic posturing is a slight to the true Gnostics maligned into extinction by state religion in its worse profusions of murderous intolerance. In mimicking the affectation of altar Catholicism in its pomp, any Gnostic gathering, no matter how Valentinian in design, inculpates itself to an imitation of a power far too quick in its persecution of Gnostics and other dissenters when in history it held the power of life and death.

In his expose of Popery, *Vicars of Christ*, Peter De Rosa quotes historian G.G Coulton as saying the Roman church during the centuries when it was murdering and torturing heretics was responsible for the most elaborate, widespread and continuous legal barbarities recorded in all civilised history. De Rosa goes on to dismiss Catholic apologists who try to excuse the past evils of their church by arguing that the evil in question ought to be judged by the standards of the time and not by our present standards. "... the Inquisition was not only evil compared with the twentieth century, it was evil compared with the tenth and eleventh century when torture was outlawed and men and women were guaranteed a fair trial. It was evil compared with the age of Diocletian, for no one was then tortured and killed in the name of Jesus crucified."

That any Gnostic fellowship should want to veil itself in the grandiosity of an institution so inimical to its own purposes and design is anomalous to the rational onlooker. Listeners, believers and revealers of Gnosis cannot morph into priests and bishops, much as the true followers of Jesus Christ cannot become Scribes and Pharisees. Maybe the priest as sacral administrator is so hard-wired in the Western unconscious mind that our esoteric brothers and sisters can't help but slip into a pastiche of this role as soon as they lift a thurible or slip into a soutane.

A problem for the rationalist looking on as contemporary Gnostics mimic the church which persecuted them so obstinately is squaring mimicry with persecution and genocide. Much like the Fraticelli and Meister Eckhart's Free Spirits, Gnostics of all shades were kicked out of the bosom of the church and will not be invited back in. They are heretics and occultists and in the eyes of the cardinals

peering out from under their wide-brimmed galeri they must always remain so, whether or not there's a liberal pope in the Vatican. Parroting of titles such as priest and bishop are but tortures to the Gnostic's legacy. A naked swordsman's bowing before a cromlech is a more honest gesture for the Gnostic believer.

Declarations of apostolic succession and grand titles of office downgrade this link to Gnosticism to a pseudo-Catholic parade of vanity and obscurantism. Latinate rituals and Roman Church priest-craft were never a part of any Gnostic mythos or custom. To absorb such rituals, steeped in the blood of so many innocents, into re-created, contemporary rites of Gnosticism is like the peasant kissing the sword dripping with blood from the murders of his parents and children. The crimes of the Popes and the Inquisition against the Cathars in the 13th Century are yet quiescent in the European conscience. Persecution and genocide are persecution and genocide, even to those who never heard of the killing fields of the Lanquedoc.

Students of the arcane are instinctively suspicious of occult religiosity which apes the rituals of its historical oppressor, taking on titles of priest-craft alien to its own origins and spirit of inner-transformation. The air of these ceremonies is stifling for the freethinker who craves the primitive honesty of rhabdomancy or the Romany magic of tarot-reading, or the sight of skyclad witches vanishing into a midnight forest. At the Hesperian climax of the witching hour the rationalist thinks harder on the educible and evaluates the case for truth, not unlike the cultural historian gazing at a daquerreotype in the hope of seeing a not-before-seen facet of a seminal frame in history.

Recently in reply to a request to open its archives the Vatican's chief librarian said, "The church has no reason to fear history."

The only answer in any way remotely adequate to such a statement must come from Peter De Rosa. "Popes, like John XXII, had amassed a fortune by duping the poor, by selling livings, indulgences and dispensations. Others, like Clement VI, had sported themselves naked on bedlinen lined with ermine with their many mistresses. Below them, countless victims, also naked, screamed in agony as they were tortured and burned, sometimes for merely eating meat during Lent."

With such a nightmarish history to yet account for, the Vatican's chief librarian's statement that the church has no reason to fear history indicates we are living in a far less enlightened time than we're often led to believe.

Gnostic concepts of the demiurge originate in the Greek word *demiurgos* which translates as "craftsman," and was first introduced in Plato's "Timaeus." In the Greek-Egyptian wisdom dialogues known as the Hermetica, generally accepted as dating from the 2nd and 3rd Century A.D. but believed by some to date in part from the Persian period of 6th Century A.D., the demiurge also appears as a god of creation. From a schematic beginning Gnostics inflated the idea of a god of creation into a vision of an ignorant and malignant creator answerable for damning the material world into being. In classic Gnostic texts the demiurge is named as Samael or Saklas or Yaldabaoth or Nabruel and is sometimes identified with the God of the Old Testament. It's an ignorant and evil god capable of immense cruelty. Humankind's redemption hinges on acceptance that the demiurge could not create an unconditionally ignorant or evil being without inserting a spark of the transcendent god of the cosmos. It's this spark of the higher spheres where the hope of humankind begins and ends.

A vacuum left in Western cultural life by the annihilation of the perception of the demiurge by hierarchies in their most obstinate manifestations is observable in what passes as current philosophical and theological debate. Two polarised points routinely emerge from myopic exchanges with a pseudo-scientific materialist and a professed atheist competing against the dreary old tenets of literalist, monotheistic religion. We've all endured it at one time or other, the celebrity atheist denouncing literalist, monotheistic religion with indignation borrowed without asking from the oppressed and poor. This circus of false denouement is set up for cheap ratings rather than anything to do with metaphysical truth, and as such is quite worthless. A Neo-Darwinist waves a copy of a Richard Dawkins book in the air and condemns the literalist Christian and the literalist Christian assumes what he believes to be a Christ-like persona and as such is kinder in how he replies. Borges' analogy about a certain war comes to mind, as two bald men fighting over a comb.

Radio debates between the Jesuit Copleston and the atheist philosopher Russell from the 1940s were a more refined articulation of the polarisation in question. A shabby pastiche of an obsolete mid-Victorian argument, pitching simplified neo-Darwinism against outdated

literal Christianity, is dragged out and offered to bored, alienated television and internet audiences as a meaningful intellectual exchange.

Ignorant of arcane prudence and awareness, comedians and commentators never seem to get that the fearful, cruel, murderous god they are so busy denouncing might be the demiurge of Gnostic scripture. Have they heard anything at all about how over two thousand years ago Gnostic revealers deciphered the fallen nature of humankind and devised a cosmogony for the coming man? They rationalised the parthenogenesis of Jesus and were contemptuous of the fabulists, viperine prelates and sybarites of literal Christianity. These Gnostics paid for their dissent with their human lives and eventually with their overall annihilation.

The atheist's opponents in these barren debates never mention the Gnostic or other dissenting sects either, for they keep in line with the religious authority of literalism accountable for maligning both the prophets and congregations of Gnosis and redacting them from so many pages of history. On the popular intellectual platform of our times the Gnostics and their central idea of a demiurge is omitted, as there's no tenure to be had from submitting long-ago truths of esoterically-minded beadsmen. In these shallow debates there's nothing be wrung from comparing ancient Gnostic wisdom with Christian literalism and its critics from the tenured theory schools of Neo-Darwinism. But just for the record the modern atheist's denouncement of the Abrahamic god as merciless, cruel and murderous is in full accord with certain but not all Gnostic concepts of the demiurge.

The journey to meet the Gnostic discussion group is almost exciting. The night before I dreamed of Titans with faces daubed with gypsum, lulling the young Dionysus into a false sense of safety before tearing him limb from limb. Was this an omen? When I get to the basement floor of the coffee shop there's only one table occupied by more than one person. It's understandably a little awkward meeting people for the first time, while not knowing exactly what we're meant to be discussing. There are four women already seated and three of them are in their middle years or thereabouts, all with short hair and spectacles. The fourth woman is a little younger and has taken more time with her appearance. She's dressed all in black with long black, curly hair. Her chubby, dimpled, good-natured face is full of smiles as I approach the table. She brings to mind Thomas Hardy's Arabella. We shake hands and she introduces herself as Kelly. She looks at

me twice, as if she's sensed a trace of the strange light from the twisted weathervane. Can such a light somehow attach itself to people? She doesn't know the names of the other women, as she's only met them for the first time a few minutes earlier. They introduce themselves as visitors from Canada, just passing through London and curious enough to show up at the discussion group.

Kelly hands out printouts to each of us, explaining they are copies of an extract from the Gospel of Thomas. One of the visitors asks why the copied text is relevant. Kelly explains she'd like us to read from the piece in turn. And then Kelly will read from the accepted canon of the bible, so as to point out similarities between them. I'm already puzzled, but silently read through the text handed to me as one of the overseas visitors asks a question unrelated to what we're meant to be talking about here today. It's a question to do with museums and tourist bus routes, the kind of question any visitor to an unknown city would ask a local. Kelly answers the visitor briskly before redirecting us to the text she'd like us to read from. She's here to prioritise the subject matter. It's already clear she dislikes distractions.

One of the visitors begins reading from the words of Saint Thomas and after a few minutes pauses and asks if she's read enough. Kelly thanks her and says yes it's fine, and she then reads a short piece from the New Testament. Kelly's Bible is enclosed in a leather jacket with a zipper and she reads with the timbre of a native Londoner in her words. When she finishes reading she explains the relatedness of both texts with the deliberation of someone trying to put across a point to the simple-minded. One of the visitors asks a question which wouldn't sound out of place in a literalist Bible study class. Kelly can hardly wait to answer her. Unsure of what this is all about I mentally read words of scripture as they are interesting in themselves.

One of the other visitors reads a page of text aloud and then Kelly reads from the Bible to show how the sayings from Thomas echo passages from the gospels. There's another Sunday School-type question from one of the visitors. Again Kelly is happy to answer the visitor's question and even happier to tell us she worked all this out for herself. She went through her Bible page by page until she found the passages she was looking for. Any hope of finding a connection with Gnosticism is now entirely absent.

I'm starting to wonder what I'm doing here. It was naive to think people would organise themselves in the spirit of the 2nd and 3rd Century A.D. Gnostics or their medieval

successors in Italy, Spain and the Languedoc, for to meet independently of religious pomp, oppression of thought and pretension. Of course it was too much to ask. Such naivety is uncomfortable. The hierarchy headed by Constantine, the Holy Inquisition and the knights sent by Rome erased any remnants of Neoplatonic or Gnostic sects too effectively from Christendom for them to have any hopes of resurfacing in the present-day vulgus.

There's no need to spoil whatever Kelly is getting out of this Sunday School rigmarole, so I stay silent and read when it's my turn to read. The Gospel of Thomas is comprised of 114 sayings, said to be the words of Jesus as recorded by Didymos Judas Thomas. About half of the sayings can be found slightly re-worded in the accepted gospels, as Kelly has already pointed out here today in this awkward circle of strangers. Biblical scholars have doubts as to whether the sayings were picked from the canonical gospels or date from the canonical interpretations of Christianity, as there is no mention of Gnosis, or of any of the other ideas and beliefs accepted as part of Gnosticism.

To mention any of this to Kelly and the visiting women would sound so out of context it could only be interpreted as rudeness. It's a Sunday School echo-chamber about sayings which may have nothing to do with the Gnostics at all, but since when do facts influence conclusions in the human mind? The Gospel of Thomas was discovered as part of the Nag Hammadi treasures in a complete Coptic version copied in the Fourth Century and believed to be a translation from a Greek or Syriac original. A late second Century copy written in Greek was discovered in part at Oxyrhynchus in the 1890s, but none of this proves or disproves if the sayings from Thomas were simply appropriated from the Synoptic gospels.

Without trying to be less than kind the student of the arcane can only guess Kelly is not a daughter of a daughter of a Cathar, nor has she ever heard of the meadows of le fusan or the Perfects' gully at Larnat. There's no connection here with Montaillou in the Pyrenees where Pierre Authie preached about how the devil sneaked his way into paradise after waiting 1000 years at the door. Once inside paradise the devil tempted heavenly souls with promises of property, fertile fields, silver, gold, beautiful wives and great valuables of the material world. For nine days and nine nights the souls of heaven who'd been tempted by the devil fell to earth like rain. But the souls of heaven greatly missed the home they'd previously known and the devil gave them special supernal overcoats to help them forget the divine joys of where they'd fallen

from. The devil created the human body, but the bodies were inanimate unless the Heavenly Father breathed life into them. The devil asked the Heavenly Father to breathe life into the earthbound bodies and this he did, on the condition that what he put into the human body was his, hence the dichotomy between spiritual soul and material body.

Pierre Authie's sermon decocted the Manichean dualism at the heart of the Cathar's creed. In the early 1300s the Pope authorised the Cistercian Jacques Fournier, the Inquisitor Geoffroy d'Ablis and a crew of Dominicans, to kill every Cathar and defender of the Cathars in their hilly hamlets and caves of contemplation in the Pyrenees. This they did, wiping out the last living Gnostic community in Europe. Nobody here at this coffee shop table on this somewhat tired tourist trail has seemingly heard about the last of the Cathars burnt on pyres in the Carcassonne and Toulouse of the 1300s.

Kelly announces a break in the readings and two of the visitors take the stairs up to the entrance floor to order more coffee and cake. The third woman goes to the bathroom, so I'm left alone with Kelly. I ask her how she became interested in Gnosticism. She answers freely and warmly. She's a practising Anglican, titillated by the Latinate chants and old Catholic rites. She's watched films in high street cinemas about conspiracies at the Vatican where Gnosticism is referenced. As a private project she began comparing Gnostic texts, or texts presumed to be Gnostic, with the canonical scriptures. Through her readings she came across similarities between the sayings in Thomas and the Synoptic gospels. Now she's into trying to convince anyone who'll listen that because of these similarities the Gnostics ought not to be cast out as heretics. She's a Catholic groupie acting out a fantasy whereby she imagines she serves the gods of the Vatican by trying to bridge a gap between what Hollywood scriptwriters understand as Gnosticism and her own romanticised vision of Catholicism.

At one of the earlier discussion groups a guy with an O.T.O. background showed up and shared a little of his knowledge about the historical Gnostics. This shook Kelly and threatened to undermine her mission to defend popular cinematic representations of Catholicism. This is why she insisted that occultists are not welcome. Kelly is the centaur Chiron inspecting the arrows of Heracles, lost amid the restless legions of the lost inhabiting so many faceless cities of modernity. In her loneliness she found a Hollywood mention of the mostly misunderstood or

ignored spiritual movements in Western history. She wove a flag of devotion she hoped the defenders of Catholic authority would notice and approve of. As we speak her voice regresses to the voice of a small child. She's in the middle of a fantasy whereby she's taken on the role of the scholar unveiling hidden truths of the Roman Church. In reality she is copying from one book to another much like a secondary school pupil with no real idea of what the exercise in hand is really about. I've walked in on the fantasy of an aspiring old rite Catholic, whose only exposure to Gnosticism comes from the juvenile minds of Hollywood fantasy scriptwriters.

Did I really expect to meet the reincarnation of Peter Garcias the Cathar Perfect betrayed to the Inquisition by his cousin William the Franciscan monk? Or to find someone from the sham, merchandising obsession and fakery of this millennium who'd actually heard or read about the Encratites or who understands the meaning of the Cathar rite of endure, the fast of forty days where only cold water drinks were permitted? Or a worshipper of Mirothea, the female divinity from Three Steles of Seth and Three Forms of the First Thought and sometimes the mother of The Four Luminaries, or at other times the Pigeradamas? Only someone as deluded as Kelly could believe such connections are attainable as things stand.

Gnosticism died as a creed with the Cathars who were obliterated as a spiritual force by the brutality of a monotheist-motivated, medieval mindset. The wrath of popes condemned them to extinction and none in Europe today can lay any credible claim to a line of Gnostic succession. Family names in the old Cathar villages of the Pyrenees are an ancestral link but not a link in faith, creed or practise. Only in the Middle East can we locate rural communities of Manichaeans with a mythos extending back to John the Baptist and the Gnostic divinities of Adam and Seth. The error that expunged so many esoteric sects from European civilisation finds a prescient reference in Matthew 23:13: "But woe to you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. For you can neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to do so."

Would it please Kelly to know these words from Matthew were duplicated in a slightly altered arrangement in the Nag Hammadi Coptic text of the Gospel of Thomas, with an addendum urging us to be as wise as serpents and as gentle as doves? It's unlikely she'd be comforted by any of this. She's happy in her fantasy, and if the readings and the presence of others have helped her then maybe this



in itself is good. There is a time to speak, and a time not to speak.

The overseas visitors re-group at the table and deviate from this afternoon's topic by talking about the churches they frequent back home in Canada. I make my excuses and say it's been really interesting but I've got to go. Kelly thanks me, and as I've said very little, and said nothing at all related to the occult, she's happy to invite me to their next discussion in a fortnight's time. I thank her and am quickly out of there. Checking the time and realising Watkins bookshop is still open, I fast walk in the direction of Cecil Court.

It's hard to shake off the sadness from Kelly's eyes and her overall melancholia. It's a scientific fact that magnetic impulses from the heart can be measured from several feet away. Other impulses can be recorded too, once we can home in on them without the usual distractions. And Kelly's impulses are sadder and darker than they need to be. Hopefully the god of her heart will guide her to a Catholic or an Old Catholic church or Tridentine movement congregation where her abyssal urges are understood and embraced.

After a couple of minutes' walking in what passes as fresh air in central London, the mind clears and adjusts to the day's circumstances. The light hasn't altered as it does when one is walking past the twisted weathervane nearer to home. Such light can't be sensed here. It's easier to laugh off lingering gullibility, the earlier fantasies of meeting displaced Sethians or a French national with claims of succession to the Cathars, or maybe a disgraced theologian prone to lonesome digressions on early Gnosticism. We are disconnected from so many key aspects of our spiritual, arcane and religious legacy that the seeker after both hidden and unhidden truth can expect to find very little if anything at all on first investigation. Mistruths from so many centuries thicken into a miasma of doubt and obfuscation.

Movements related to the occult can't help themselves when it comes to claiming antecedents in deepest antiquity. For the Gnostic and deist sects of these present times not to do so sounds strange. The Antiquus Mysticusque Ordo Rosae Crucis is not simply a mystery school started by an American commercial artist in the early part of the 20th Century, but is shrouded in the mysteries of ancient Egypt. The Golden Dawn was not an esoteric order founded by a trio of gifted Freemasons in the London of the late 19th Century, but rather an order exalted with bone fides from the supernatural. The rites of succession occur in a continuum which includes rituals of the Knights Templar as well as the patronage of the secret chiefs.

In Watkins I quickly take the steps to the basement and to the section of shelves where the books on Gnosticism are kept. In place of a living link with the tradition of Seth there's a passage from The Secret Book of John. The passage dissects dissimilarity between Gnostic and Christian thinking. For the Gnostics it was not the expulsion from the Garden of Eden of Adam and Eve which brought to humankind the concept of sin, but rather a lapse of Sophia, or wisdom, in the overall design. The very world itself is sneered at as the work of a counterfeit celestial hand. The creator is the problem and not the created. Two thousand years of Christian flagellation of the sinful flesh is brushed aside as error by Gnostic philosophy. Naturally, both creeds are odds with each other.

Fragmented, misinformed soundings of ancient wisdom re-imagined in the febrile minds of Hollywood scriptwriters, and on the lips of lonely souls like Kelly, remind the student of the arcane how the extraordinary tradition has not as yet resurrected from the killing fields of the Lanquedoc. The angels are yet divided, the song of the pearl unsung and the dance of the Round Dance of the Cross undanced.



Venus in the Sea of Love

BY LUCY MOORE SOROR HEKA

<https://www.etsy.com/shop/SteleOfRevealing93>



# 31

BY GNOSIS

*These are the lyrics to a hip-hop production by Justin Moonchild, a.k.a. Gnosis. Justin Moonchild is a certified Yoga instructor, Hermetic astrologist, public lecturer, and Tarot reader.*

1 exalt Guph in Malkuth  
the Virgin's Kingdom  
2 Heh final lays idle  
the curtain's risen  
3 the Earth imprisons  
the Serpent Wisdom  
4 shadows hide Adonai's  
emerging vision  
5 the road to Yesod's  
rumored Foundation  
6 Levannah the Prana's  
Lunar bound station  
7 Shu astounds mages  
through renown raising  
8 Nephesh the breath  
moves around racing  
9 the code of Hod's  
cerebral Splendour  
10 the motion of oceans  
the Ego enters  
11 the Eagle's rendered  
an equal gendered  
12 intellect symbol sets  
the legal tender  
13 next stop Netzach  
the Phoenix Victory  
14 Aphrodite battles Nike  
the greenest imagery  
15 Dominus liturgies  
of Venus' mysteries

16 the fire desires the Higher  
Genius symmetry

1 Malkuth, Yesod  
Hod, Netzach  
2 Tiphareth, Geburah  
Chesed, Da'ath  
3 Binah, Chokmah  
Kether, Ain Soph  
4 Aur, Ain Soph  
Ain, Chaos  
5 Nephesh, Ruach  
Neshama, Chiah  
6 Yechidah, Assiah  
Yetzirah, Briah  
7 Atziluth  
Aleph, Mem, Shin  
8 Yod Heh Vav Heh  
Etz Chaim

1 breathe the breath of Tiphareth  
Adonis' Beauty  
2 cultivate Solar states  
of Bacchus' groupies  
3 the Vav prince duty  
to Ra imbues me  
4 LVX shocks the Ruach  
of conscious scrutiny  
5 reorder Geburah  
restore your Strength  
6 Power's Vision towers gripping  
the Scourge chord length  
7 the Sword or tank  
of Lord Hoor's rank  
8 Mars inlays sharpened blades  
the war horse flanks  
9 let's head to Chesed

Tzedek in Mercy  
10 Jupiter and Zeus confer  
Adeptus worthy  
11 Exemptus journeys  
extensive worldly  
12 Visions of Love risen above  
consensus worries  
13 the walk to Da'ath's  
deceiving Knowledge  
14 your swan song Choronzon's  
defeat symbolic  
15 beliefs demolished  
the Secret College  
16 lies amidst thy Abyss I resist  
reason's bondage

1 Malkuth, Yesod  
Hod, Netzach  
2 Tiphareth, Geburah  
Chesed, Da'ath  
3 Binah, Chokmah  
Kether, Ain Soph  
4 Aur, Ain Soph  
Ain, Chaos  
5 Nephesh, Ruach  
Neshama, Chiah  
6 Yechidah, Assiah  
Yetzirah, Briah  
7 Atziluth  
Aleph, Mem, Shin  
8 Yod Heh Vav Heh  
Etz Chaim

1 deeper to Binah  
awaits Understanding  
2 Mater's womb Saturn's tomb  
of late brothers ranking

3 the Heh Mother's granting  
the Snake wonders spanning  
4 Neshamah on to Babalon  
the Great's drunkards dancing  
5 closer to Chokmah  
Father of Wisdom  
6 the Chiah of Isa  
fosters division  
7 Pater's volition  
authors revisions  
8 sow Yod's Logos  
Daughter arisen  
9 sequestered to Kether  
emanation's Crown  
10 in Yechidah Shekinah's  
veneration found  
11 ten attainments down  
separation bound  
12 reducing to Union's  
exhalation rounds  
13 Ain Soph to Chaos  
the Limitless Light  
14 sentences fail Negative Veils

of primitive night  
15 the synthesis bright  
diminishing sight  
16 renew me the Beauty of Nuit's  
infinite heights

1 Malkuth, Yesod  
Hod, Netzach  
2 Tiphareth, Geburah  
Chesed, Da'ath  
3 Binah, Chokmah  
Kether, Ain Soph  
4 Aur, Ain Soph  
Ain, Chaos  
5 Nephesh, Ruach  
Neshama, Chiah  
6 Yechidah, Assiah  
Yetzirah, Briah  
7 Atziluth  
Aleph, Mem, Shin  
8 Yod Heh Vav Heh  
Etz Chaim



31 (album art)  
BY GNOSIS





Tahuti God of Writing and Magick

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