

AMERICAN GNOSTIC CHURCH
Statement of Principles and Beliefs

I.

The American Gnostic Church was founded by Daeva Ares Animo, The Emperor, 325, Mogh Ruith, Aeshma Daeva, Sodomiticus ac Impudicus, on 16 Die Saturni, November, 1985, e.v., Sol in Scorpio, Moon in Capricorn, Mercury in Sagittarius, Mars in Scorpio, Jupiter in Aquarius, Saturn in Scorpio, Uranus in Sagittarius, Neptune in Capricorn, Pluto in Scorpio. Hence, the Church began with The Perfect Union of Fire and Water. Venus also was in Sagittarius.

II.

We are First Amendment Fundamentalists and fully subscribe to the Aquarian Anti-Defamation League's Aquarian Manifesto,¹ whose first tenet is, "ALL SENTIENT BEINGS HAVE THE RIGHT TO WORSHIP WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, AND HOW THEY WISH; PROVIDED THEY DO NOT VIOLATE THE SIMILAR RIGHTS OF OTHERS."

III.

We are a THELEMIC Church in that we hold Divine THE BOOK OF THE LAW and especially its major tenet:

DO WHAT THOU WILT
SHALL BE THE WHOLE OF THE LAW

admonishing all who would follow THE LAW to remember that the concomitant tenet is:

LOVE IS THE LAW, LOVE UNDER WILL²

IV.

Our Rites, Rituals, and Services shall include (though not be limited to):

- A. The Qabalistic Master Ritual,³
- B. The Egyptian Master Ritual,
- C. Enochian Invocations and Calls,⁴
- D. The Ritual of the Golden Dawn,⁵
- E. The Magical Eucharist,
- F. Invocations of the Holy Guardian Angels,⁶
- G. Invocation of the Bornless One,
- H. Invocation of Thoth,
- I. Goetic Evocations,
- J. Lesser Ritual of the Pentagram,
- K. Greater Ritual of the Pentagram,
- L. Lesser Ritual of the Hexagram,
- M. The Middle Pillar Exercise,
- N. The Ritual of the Rose Cross,

- O. The Satanic Rituals of Anton Szandor LaVey,⁷
- P. Liber Samekh (Congressus Cum Daemone),⁸
- Q. The Star Ruby,
- R. The Star Sapphire,
- S. The Ritual of the Mark of the Beast,
- T. Liber XV: The Gnostic Mass,
- U. IX^o Tantric Union of the Sun and Moon,⁹
- V. XI^o Tantric Union of the Stars,
- W. VIII^o Invocation of B*PH*M*T,
- X. The Sothis Ritual
- Y. * * *
- Z. The Greater Rite of Our Lord BA NEB TATEU.¹⁰

V.

Our Sacred and Profane Scriptures shall include (though not be limited to): The PISTIS SOPHIA, the Secret Books of the Egyptian Gnostics, and LIBER LEVIATHAN VEL TIAMAT-OPHIS, of which, see Appendix I.

VI.

Of Redemption

As do members of any Mystery Religion, American Gnostics owe a duty to the Spirit Father to concern themselves, so far as possible, with redemption. One must strive for deliverance from the material world. American Gnostics subscribe fully to the theological concept of dualism -- the belief that there are two eternal principles at work at all times: Light and Darkness, Spirit and Matter, the Higher World of Pure Being and the Lower World of Sense.

Writing of these two principles, E. F. Scott has observed that, "Although (they) are viewed as irreconcilable opposites, it is recognized that they have come to be mingled together. All the evil and misery in the world are set down to this forbidden intermixture of the antagonistic principles. This is the grand calamity which has made necessary a work of redemption."¹¹

Only in the ethical system of Gnosticism does a great and perhaps irreconcilable schism develop, and it is one that will have to be reckoned with by each individual member of the Church. Again, to quote Scott: "By (the dualistic hypothesis) the idea of morality, in the ordinary sense, was excluded. All material conditions were regarded as necessarily evil, and the aim of the Gnostic was to rise above them into the purely spiritual life....As a consequence, the Gnostic rule of conduct was liable to take either of two directions...." These two are:
(1) Rigid and unwavering asceticism, by which one holds oneself

"aloof from all sensual pleasures," reducing bodily needs to a bare minimum, and (2) the opposite extreme, i.e. libertinism.

The first of the above "modes" of conduct is self-explanatory and hardly unique to Gnosticism. The second is less universal and calls for what Scott refers to as an assertion of "independence of the material world by indulging in its pleasures without restraint." It would be difficult if not impossible to make the average Christian understand how one might be redeemed by libertinism. He simply would not fathom the Gnostic system itself, which seizes Judeo-Christianity and "turns it on its head." As Scott so aptly puts it:

...The libertine tendency is reinforced by the identification of the God of the OT (Old Testament) with the Demiourgos -- the inferior and tyrannical God. It is assumed that the moral law as laid down in the Decalogue is founded on his arbitrary will, and aims at the subjection of man's free spirit to the yoke of necessity. To defy the ordinances of the law, and thereby throw off allegiance to the inferior God, is a duty obligatory to the true Gnostic.

Hence, the doctrine, DO WHAT THOU WILT can take a rather radical tone, not to mention one whose reductio ad absurdum might be the mad incitations of a Manson, or the currently-seen serial criminality of a Son of Sam or a Night Stalker.

Yet, libertine Gnosticism is not synonymous with Satanism or Left Hand Pathworking any more than it is responsible for advocating rape or murder. (Only fundamentalist Christians believe that Satanists and LHP practitioners are "inherently evil" in the first place!) The American Gnostic Church is unique in allowing its members to choose for themselves the Path they wish to take, be it ascetic, libertine, or something in-between. Know ye, however, that the Church's founder has declared himself an Ophite-Cainite -- one who applies dualistic and therefore inverted moral standards of moral values to the characters of the Scriptures (even), seeing as Divine and Good not only Cain, Lilith, Esau, Korah, and the Men of Sodom, yet, also, Judas Iscariot, in Whose Lost Gospel he believes.

More about Ophite-Cainite Gnosticism can be found in Appendix II, Liber Archonticae. It is characteristic of the American Gnostic Church that its High Priests do not foist their personally-embraced dogma upon others.

VII.

Christos: Soter Kosmos

It might surprise the Christian that members of the American Gnostic Church believe in the Christ. We subscribe fully to the Docetic view of Jesus and are, therefore, ironically, more "Christian" than most Christians are. Simply put, Docetism is the doctrine that the Christos had no real material body and human nature, only an apparent body, "a phantasm of humanity."¹² This concept should hardly be alien even to Judeo-Christians since, in the angelic lore, Raphael is often depicted in this manner.

American Gnostics believe profoundly in the notion of a Soter (Saviour), though not in the notion that The Word could be "made flesh." Adrian Fortesque expresses our abhorrence of such a blasphemy when he writes:

...(Jesus) could not be Himself polluted by matter. He had come down to redeem men's souls by freeing them from matter; He Himself must be pure spirit. The body is bad, made by the powers of darkness and evil; therefore the Saviour could have no body. So all the passages of the Gospels that refer to His flesh, or to His dependence on matter in birth, eating, death, must be understood as describing mere appearances.

Hence, by the same line of reasoning, the Crucifixion itself was only an appearance; Basilides even posited that it was not Christ who died on the cross. It was Simon the Cyrenean, Magickally endowed with the appearance of being Jesus.

Thus is explained the "crimes" and "heresies" of the Knights Templar, who were executed en masse upon accusations by the Church that the knights spat on the crucifix and denied Jesus. They very probably did! Rene Gilles, in his The Templars: Were They Guilty?, put forth what was reputed to be the "Secret Rule" of the Templars, including the requirement, in one article, that they perform "an Act of Faith in God the Creator, and His Son who was not born, did not die, was not crucified, and is not risen...."¹³ Gilles concluded that the Templars thought it a duty to do this, because:

...Jesus...should not be adored as the man-Jesus...but as a spirit; the divine bounty and divine light not being able to be materialized in any carnal body...Jesus

was never really incarnated, and if He accomplished the miracles we know of, it was simply under His carnal appearance. At the last moment, he took the body of Simon the Cyrenean...while giving him His visage, and it was the body of Simon, in the resemblance of Jesus, that the Romans crucified. This principle admitted, it becomes evident that Jesus did not die on the Cross and did not need to rise again, and that the wood of the Cross, never having supported the divine body, had no value.

We American Gnostics refer to this act as "The Last Miracle of Christ." It is for this reason, then, that some Gnostic sects even today require members, in initiations into higher Mysteries, to deny Jesus and similarly spit upon the crucifix. Interestingly, Fortesque also tells us that the Cathari adopted Docetic views, and it is well known that when the Church conducted its genocide against that sect, many of its followers became Templar Knights, since the Templars were sympathetic to Cathar beliefs. There is certainly nothing contradictory in simultaneous acceptance of both Docetism and Gnostic dualism; indeed, study of Gnostic Scriptures reveals an intimate relationship between the two.

VIII.

Structure

There is an intimate relationship, too, between the American Gnostic Church and the Ordo Templi Baphe-Metis, in that Daeva Ares Animo founded both of them. Preceptors of the Order are ordained High Priests of the Church. The reverse is not necessarily true.

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-- SODOMITICUS AC IMPUDICUS, High Priest

APPENDIX I:
LIBER LEVIATHAN VEL TIAMAT-OPHIS

Chapter 1

In the beginning was Grace and Silence.

2Before the beginning was the Spirit Father, the Abyss. And it was His Grace, His Silence which created Mind and Truth.

3These two, then, they did create together The Word, which in turn created Life, and of It was created Man.

4These were the Aeons emanating from the Perfect Aeon, The Bornless One, the Great Mana, Pre-existent and content to remain in Perfect Silence and Perfect Rest for countless millennia.

5His Eight Aeons were added to Ten which were added to Twelve to produce Fifteen pairs, or Thirty Aeons.

Chapter 2

Of all the Aeons, only Mind knew the Perfect Aeon, and Mind wished to convey this Gnosis to the other Aeons, Brothers and Sisters. The Spirit Father forbade it.

2Rebelling, the Holy Spirit, Sophia, Who was Wisdom, took sides with Mind. And in Her agitation, She fell from the Pleroma, the Fullness of the Aeons.

3On Her own, and without the permission of the Spirit Father, Sophia conceived a Thought. And because the Perfect Aeon had not been involved, this Thought was born malformed and hideous.

4Sophia wrapped it in a Cloud of Light and called it JALDABAOTH!, First among the Archons.

Chapter 3

Jaldabaoth, in His zeal to create, thereby proving His divinity, formed six other Archons and Three Hundred Three Score and five Angels. From the Angels and the other Archons, Jaldabaoth withheld the power given Him by Sophia.

2"I am the One True God," he boasted, knowing at heart all along that this was not true. Having glimpsed in starlight upon the waters of Nuith a reflection of the Perfect Aeon, Jaldabaoth conspired with the other Archons -- Iao, Sabaoth, Adonai, Elohim, Oreus, and Astaphaeus -- to produce Adam in the Divine Image.

3But this Adam was a lifeless thing. All efforts to breathe life into him failed. Pitying Jaldabaoth, the Spirit Father

sent Angels to advise Him, and, sayeth they, "Breath some of the Pneuma you received from Sophia into the nostrils of Man."

Chapter 4

Thus was born Adam of the Spirit. Jaldabaoth imprisoned him upon the Earth. Adam he imprisoned in matter. And then Jaldabaoth gave him Woman and named He her Lilith.

2When Lilith refused to obey Adam as Divine Man, Jaldabaoth bade her fly away. Into the desert she went, there to meet Samael.

3From one of Adam's ribs, Jaldabaoth created Eve for Adam. And of their union came Cain, then Abel.

Chapter 5

Jaldabaoth wished to hide Wisdom from Man. And thus he ordered Adam and Eve to refrain from eating the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.

2The Spirit Father sent the Soter to advise Adam and Eve to eat of the Tree. Having done so, Adam and Eve knew that Jaldabaoth was not the One True God.

3Jaldabaoth punished them by turning them out of Paradise.

APPENDIX II: LIBER ARCHONTICAE

Aware that their greatest rivals were the Gnostics, the early Christians wasted little time nipping in the bud what they saw as heresies against the Church. The burning of the libraries at Alexandria, viewed in a Gnostic light, was the Crime of the Millenium, since so many Gnostic gospels and treatises were lost forever in the flames. Among these were the works of the Cainites, that most mysterious and enigmatic of Gnostic sects. We have only the heresiologists' scant information to go by, and although one suspects that some of these early "heresy busters" were in fact themselves closet heretics, the dearth of Cainite writings makes the study of them difficult if not impossible.

As portrayed by both Francis Legge (in Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity: From 330 B.C. to 330 A.D.) and Jean Doresse (The Secret Books of the Egyptian Gnostics), the Cainites were a splinter sect of the Ophites. Their gospels and scriptures included a Gospel of Judas, which may or may not have been the gospel according to Judas Didymus (i.e. the Apostle Thomas); a tract, Against the Hystera, which attacked "the womb" (i.e. the Creator God known to Judeo-Christians as Jehovah), and a Gospel of Eve.

It must be remembered that the Ophites themselves (the word literally means "Serpent worshippers") are said to have derived their doctrines from the Nicolaitans, or followers of Nicolas of Antioch. This is important when we consider that Epiphanius, the apostate, who belonged to the Nicolaitans in his youth, "interposes only the Basilideans between them and the followers of Saturninus," according to Legge. And the heresy of Saturninus can be traced back to that first (and most flamboyant) heresiarch, Simon Magus (who, among other things, traveled the entire breadth of the Near East in the company of a legendary woman said to be the reincarnation of Helen of Troy!).

Saturninus was very probably the author of docetism, the heresy that teaches that Jesus was a phantasm, a mere spectre having no physical form or existence. (Very often, the doctrine is first attributed to Basilides, though the latter merely refined it to include the idea that Simon the Cyrene, who carried the cross for Jesus, Matthew 27:32, was crucified in Christ's stead.) Surely there is ample evidence to suggest that Saturninus was the spiritual father of Ophitism. It was he, apparently, who authored the notion that Jaldabaoth, the Demiurge, was identical to Jehovah. Further, he vehemently opposed (as would the Ophites and the Cathari, as well) the commerce of the sexes, declaring marriage and procreation as the work of Satan.

It might come as a surprise to some that the Ophites owe much to Jewish mysticism and, in fact, have even been said to be "basically Jewish rather than Christian," as Gershom Scholem puts it in his monumental Kabbalah (New York: New American Library, 1978). Even prior to the Ophites, it must be remembered, the Essenes ("Pure") of Palestine taught of the future life:

...Bodies are corruptible and...the matter of which they are made is not permanent; but...souls are immortal, and continue forever; and...they come out of the most subtle air, and are united to their bodies as in prisons, into which they are drawn by a certain natural enticement; but...when they are set free from the bonds of the flesh, they then, as released from a long bondage, rejoice and mount upward.

(Josephus, quoted in Legge, op. cit.)

INTERLUDE

Four Sages decided to enter Paradise.

The first, Simeon ben Azzai, looked about and promptly succumbed. (It is not known what became of his soul.)

The second, Ben Zoma, looked about and promptly went stark raving mad.

The third, Elisha ben Avuyah (a.k.a. aher, or "other"), looked about and promptly forsook rabbinic Judaism and "cut the shoots," becoming a dualistic Gnostic.

The fourth and last Sage, Rabbi Akiva, alone entered in peace and left in peace.

If you meet Rabbi Akiva on the road, kill him!

* * * * *

Now, it is said by the ancient rabbinical scholars that, "Whoever ponders on four things, it were better for him that he had not been born":

1. WHAT IS ABOVE?
2. WHAT IS BELOW?
3. WHAT WAS BEFORE TIME?

4. WHAT WILL BE HEREAFTER?

Only Elisha ben Avuyah dared speculate on the four things.
Hail, Gnostic Saint Elisha ben Avuya!

* * * * *

Did the Ophites actually worship a Serpent? If not, then whence derives their name? Is the Serpent any special reptile? These and many more questions come to mind.

In point of fact, the Ophites did worship a serpent, and one particular serpent -- The Serpent of the Garden. When the jealous Jaldabaoth, fearful that Adam and Eve would learn of a power higher than he, forbade them to eat of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, Sophia/Lilith transformed Herself into the Serpent of the Tree, seducing Adam and Eve, and "in this way Adam and Eve begin to acquire knowledge of the Virtue which is above all things, and turn away from their creator," Jehovah. (Doresse.) Hence, by introducing Adam and Eve to the Knowledge (Wisdom?) of a Spirit Father, the Serpent of the Garden becomes a symbol of Divine Light, Life, Love, and Liberty.

It is significant that in some Gnostic versions of the tale, it is Samael (as incubus) and Lilith (as succubus) who seduce Adam and Eve respectively. That is because any Gnostic manifestation of Divinity must necessarily be androgynous and/or bisexual. In the Gnostic Gospel According to Thomas, for example, one reads:

Jesus saw children who were being suckled....
Jesus said to them: When you make the two one, and when you make the inner as the outer and the outer as the inner and the above as the below, and when you make the male and the female into a single one, so that the male will not be male and the female (not) be female...then shall you enter (the Kingdom)....

The Serpent, then, is the revealer of Gnosis.

Here, obviously, the seeds of Cainitism were sewn: If the Creator were evil or blind and jealous of the Spirit Father, then Christ could never have been made flesh, all of the Old Testament heroes were actually villains (and vice-versa), and the greatest apparent good was in fact the greatest evil.

Although sympathetic to Cainite beliefs, the AGC cannot countenance them in practice. The one true point of agreement

among almost all Gnostics is that Christ never "became flesh." That is, He was a phantasm, sent as Holy Spirit by the Spirit-Father, not only at the time of Jesus, yet, also at the time of Adam and Eve. By gematria, we know that the Brazen Serpent of Moses, Nachash (or NChSh, since Hebrew uses no vowels), has a numerical value of 358. The Hebrew for Messiah, MShICH, also has a numerical value of 358. Hence, the Holy Spirit manifested Itself as Serpent to reveal to Man the Gnosis of the Father.

Footnotes

¹Margot Adler, Drawing Down the Moon (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979. Apparently authored by P.E.I. Bonewits, who can be contacted at The Druids Progress, Box 456, New York, New York 10034.

²Aleister Crowley, The Law is for All (Phoenix, AZ: Falcon Press, 1985, edited and with an Introduction by Dr. Israel Regardie). This version of Libel al Legis by The Beast, 666, To Mega Therion, is possibly the definitive one, being not only a text, yet also a commentary on that text. Liber al Legis, as all Thelemites know, was the Divine prose poem/hymn/Gnostic scripture handed down to Crowley by Aiwass, a disincarnate spirit, in Cairo in 1904.

³Section IV, Subsections A & B are rituals based upon those found in David Conway's Magic: An Occult Primer (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1972). The originals were fine for their time -- progressive, really -- though the American Gnostic Church has found it advisable to revise them to an extent. The authorized versions will be available to members shortly.

⁴Gerald J. Schueler, Enochian Magic: A Practical Manual (St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Publications, 1985).

⁵Israel Regardie, Ceremonial Magic: A Guide to the Mechanisms of Ritual (Wellingborough, England: The Aquarian Press, 1980). The "Magical Eucharist" of Subsection "E" may also be found in this work.

⁶This and Subsections "G" through "N" may be found in Francis King and Stephen Skinner, Techniques of High Magick: A Manual of Self-Initiation (New York: Destiny Books, 1976).

⁷Anton Szandor LaVey, The Satanic Bible (New York: Avon Books, 1969); The Satanic Rituals (New York: Avon Books, 1972). N.B.: The AGC takes issue with some points made by LaVey, e.g., that BAPHOMET and Satan are one and the same entity. However, these rituals are sometimes efficacious, and LaVey himself, whether he knows it or not, is an orthodox Gnostic of the Cainite

persuasion.

⁸Aleister Crowley, Magick in Theory and Practice (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1976). This is Crowley's magnum opus and a must for any practicing Magician or true Occultist. N.B.: The "Catholic" Gnostic Mass is in the process of being revised by the Church for use by solitary practitioners. Subsections "Q" through "T" are included in this book.

⁹Subsections "U" through "Y" are available to members of the Inner Order of the Ordo Templi Baphe-Metis who are members of the Church as well. Upon request, and at the sole discretion of the Inner Order, some of these rituals may be lent to Outer Order initiates.

¹⁰Discretion is the better part of ascending the aeons.

¹¹E. F. Scott, "Gnosticism," in the Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951).

¹²Adrian Fortegue, "Docetism," in the Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics.

¹³G. Legman, "The Guilt of the Templars" (pub. unknown).