

De Arcanis Catholicae: The Church Arcane

For Ars Magica

by Jeremiah Genest & Adam Bank

Hermetic Missive: The Church and the Old Gods

Spoken by Sigorney of Shewsbury, Archmaga of Merinita:

The gods of the pagan times endure. The Church in its early days faced a legacy of old religions refusing to die. Rather than watch people carry on pagan rituals in defiance of the Word, Church Fathers like Gregory the Great knew they must embrace the old rituals and bend them toward the true Divine. The only way to fight superstition in those days was to carve crosses on menhirs, to place pious images on the sacrificial trees, to claim fountains and natural temples as holy to the Virgin Mother. Where the Church went it blanketed the ancient ways with a cloak of orthodoxy.

Old myths persevere, even in the corridors of the Vatican, and most importantly within the Order itself.

Old Gods in Christian Schoolrooms

Mythology, much more than simple rustic superstition, became part of Christian culture during the first centuries after Christ. Before the Church Fathers were Christian, they were Greek and Italian, Syrian and Egyptian. Even in the face of breaking the First Commandment, the Church Fathers knew that the structure of civilization had to be preserved, and permitted Christian children to attend classical schools.

In the 4th century, Christian youths were educated as pagans. Children learned to write by practicing the names of the gods. The curriculum of grammar school featured Virgil and the other poets. The waves of invaders from the 6th to 8th centuries destroyed the heart of Roman Christian civilization and the classic ways of schooling along with it. The ancient sources, however, had not dried up; beyond the barbarian rupture, seeds of renewal survived. In the 12th century the French cities of Chartres and Orleans became great seats of classical studies, and once again pagan thought flourished strong in the center of the Church.

Old Gods in Christian Ancestral Pride

Pride of race prompts historians and poets to seek ancestors for their people in the fables of the past. The Franks claim to descend from Francus of Troy, as the Romans had claimed Aeneas of Troy as their predecessor. The Italians claimed

the god Janus, then Saturn and his sons, as the first of their kin. Many cultures claim figures of myth as their patrons, and tell stories of how their tribes were born. The heroes of old begat dynasties and no royal European legacy would be complete without at least a demigod as founder of their house. The kings of England, I hear tell, claim to descend from the line of Brutus of Troy.

And who is to say they are wrong?

Old Gods in Biblical Allegory

Many seek spiritual meaning in the figures of the old gods and moral lessons in their adventures. Throughout the pagan era, readers of Homer, Virgil, and the like distinguished the literal stories relayed from their deep and secret meanings. In the age of Christian Platonists, the once scandalous poems became sacred texts, whose words, although written long before Christ, contained the hidden truths of God.

The Church should be hostile to allegory because it can give pagan theology the imprimatur of holy scripture. The Church Fathers themselves, however, applied the method to holy books. Having conserved "profane" poetry in their own education, they were inevitably led to moralize pagan mythology in their turn. In the 6th century, for example, while Gregory the Great wrote on biblical allegory in the *Moralia*, the Church Father Fulgentius paralleled his work with the profane allegories of the *Mythologiae*. Through allegory, the first Christian philosophers turned the "lies" of the pagan poets into moral truths.

In our time, allegorical studies of the old gods are an accepted part of Christian heritage. Bernard of Chartres, John of Salisbury, and many others meditate on pagan religion searching for disguised sacred teachings, incomprehensible to the common man.

The Magic of the Bible

Magic, astrology, enchantments, exorcisms, divination, dream interpretation, and practices more strange are found throughout the Old and New Testaments. Magic in the Bible is presented through factual observations, mysterious allusions, and outright prohibition and regulation. Such tantalizing snippets of information profoundly affected medieval Christian thought. The biblical tales of prophecy, visions, and miracles lead Christians to wonder about divination, demons, and wizardry.

Many learned scholars of the privileged classes of Europe made their way East in search of Biblical peoples and customs. Some followed tales of the Kingdom of Prester John (first circulating in the mid-12th century), others searched for the Marvels of the East and races of monstrous men among the descendants of Adam mentioned in Genesis.

In the Bible, Egypt was the land of Joseph's stewardship, the captivity of the Israelites, the Exodus under Moses' leadership, the childhood home of Jesus, and the birthplace of monasticism. Western Europeans viewed the tales of ancient Egypt, of its arcane religion, hieroglyphic script, zoomorphic gods, and elaborate funeral rites, with both repulsion and awe. Many medieval philosophers considered Egypt to be the greatest source of arts and crafts, mathematics, astronomy, and architecture.

One European traveler's description of the ruins of Babylon comes from Benjamin of Tudela

(**Kabbalah**, page 13): "This is the ancient Babel, and now lies in ruins; but the streets still extend thirty miles. The ruins of the palace of Nebuchadnezzar are still to be seen; but people are afraid to venture among them on account of the serpents and scorpions with which they are infested."

A 13th century Arabic source, al-Qazwini, states, "Babil: the name of a village that formerly stood on one of the branches of the Euphrates in Iraq. Currently, people carry off bricks of its ruins, and there exists a deep well known as 'the Dungeon of Danayl' [Daniel], which is visited, by Jews and Christians on certain yearly occasions and on holidays. Most of the population holds the opinion that this dungeon was the well of Harut and Marut," two fallen angels mentioned in the Koran.

Harut and Marut

A group of angels, after observing the sins being committed on earth, began to ridicule man's weakness. God declared that they would act no better under the same circumstances and proposed that some angels be sent to earth to see how well they could resist idolatry, murder, fornication, and wine. No sooner did Harut and Marut, the angels chosen, alight on earth than a beautiful woman seduced them. Discovering that there was a witness to their sin, they killed him. The angels in heaven were then forced to admit that God was indeed right, whereas the fallen angels faced atonement for their sins either on earth or in hell. Harut and Marut chose to be punished on earth and were condemned to hang by their feet in a well in Babylonia until the Day of Judgment.

Enoch

The scant information about Enoch in the Bible made him an object of fascination in the Middle Ages and the subject of a large cycle of legends. According to the Book of Genesis, Enoch "walked with God" for 365 years. Of his mysterious demise, the Bible only says, "he was not, because God had taken him."

The Antediluvian Age

The Book of Enoch, supposedly penned by the divine magician himself, describes the world as Enoch knew it. Before the Flood, many mortals possessed great powers and lived to great ages (Methuselah, son of Enoch, lived 969 years). According to Genesis, angels walked freely among antediluvian humanity, and even interbred with mortal women (Genesis 6:1-4).

Book of Enoch paints this commingling in a dark light. The wicked angel Shernihaza, identified by later theologians as Seth, the third son of Adam, lured 200 others to cohabit with women. The offspring of their unnatural union were giants 450 feet high. Together with their ill-begotten progeny, the evil angels oppressed humanity and taught them the ways of villainy. In response, God imprisoned the evil angels until the final judgment, and brought down the Flood. Enoch tried to stop the punishment of the angels and the destruction of Earth, bringing his own magic to bear against God Himself, to no avail.

Many of the early Church Fathers supported the Book of Enoch. They believed all evil in the world originated with the demonic offspring of angels who fell because of their lust for women. By lusting for human companionship, the evil angels "violated both their own nature and their office." Later Church Fathers condemned the Book of Enoch as a heresy. In the 2nd century, Rabbi Simeon ben Jochai placed a curse on all those who dared believe it. The Book of Enoch was denounced, banned, burned and shredded by Christians and Jews alike, but never quite lost. With an uncanny persistence, the book has found its way into several covenant libraries.

Azazel in the Book of Enoch

The angel Azazel taught unrighteousness on Earth and revealed to mortals the eternal secrets

hidden in Heaven. Azazel brought humanity the art of the smith, of jewelry, makeup, and all fashions of prideful adornment. He taught men to make swords, knives, shields, and breastplates. The angel Penemue fell with Azazel, teaching mortals how to write with ink and paper. It is written that the angels taught humanity alchemy, and that their teachings were consigned to a book entitled Chemeu. Enoch wrote "and so there arose much godlessness, and they committed fornication and they were led astray and became corrupt in all their ways."

God bound Azazel hand and foot and cast him into a deep pit in the Arabian desert of Dudael. Buried under rough and jagged rocks, covered by eternal darkness, Azazel abides forever, never seeing light.

Giants: The Children of Cain

The figure of the giant reaches back into Pagan and Hebrew mythology. In Greek legend the giants are born from the blood shed on the earth by Ouranos at the moment of his castration by his son Cronos. Later in an attempt to avenge the Titans and to release them from their confinement in Tartarus, the deepest region of Hell, the giants wage battle against the gods. Immense, the giants of classical myth possess incomparable strength and ferocity; they are always bearded and completely covered by hair, except for their legs, which are often composed of serpents. The giants symbolized release from confinements and restrictions, the goal of their battle.

In the book of Genesis, and legends associated with it, the giants appear again. With Cain's expulsion from Paradise to Nod, and his subsequent sexual congress with the wild beasts that roamed east of Eden, there arose a race of beings of mixed natures, human and animal. This mixed race contained beautiful women, referred to as the "daughters of Cain," who attracted the attention of certain angels so that, falling to earth through their lust, the angels coupled with the daughters of Cain and sired the giants. Monsters spawn from the mingling of natures God meant to be kept apart. The giants are intensely monstrous because they arose from the forbidden commingling of three natures: human, animal, and angel.

Nimrod is the first historical giant identified by name in Scripture, and he is blamed with introducing a number of antisocial activities associated with blood and violence into the world. Nimrod was a hunter, who when game ran short, resorted to cannibalism. It was Nimrod, as king of Babel, who led his fellow giants to build the tower as a means of waging war on God. Goliath, perhaps the most famous of Scriptural giants, descended from Nimrod.

Ham

"He therefore, being much and frequently intent upon the stars, and, wishing to be esteemed a god among them, began to draw forth, as it were, certain sparks from the stars, and showed them to men, in order that the rude and ignorant might be astonished, as with a miracle."

--The Church Father Cassian discussing Ham

Ham appears in Genesis with the beginning of the Flood, but his legacy as magician comes from popular myth and the Recognitions, a text written of the Church Father Cassian (circa 420 AD). Ham, his father Noah, and his brothers Shem and Japheth were the four male heirs of Adam. Before the Flood, evil angels corrupted mortals by teaching them the profane uses of magic. They dabbled in the malefic arts and magical illusions, turning from God to the worship of fire and devils. With the Flood, God cleansed the Earth of all traces of magic-except for Ham, the last antediluvian magician.

Alone in the family of Noah, Ham became an expert in magic. Knowing that his father would never allow magical knowledge into the ark, Ham engraved the ways of magic on metal plates and stone tablets. He hid them before entering the ark and retrieved them again after the floodwaters subsided.

Ham passed down his knowledge to his son Mesraim, the alleged progenitor of the Egyptians, Babylonians, and Persians, who passed it down to his son Nimrod, who used Ham's magic to build the Tower of Babel. Those and other eastern peoples, according to the Recognitions, knew Ham as "Zoraster" (a Latinized version of Zoroaster), admiring him as the first author of the magic arts. In addition to wonders, tricks, and illusions, Ham's magic involved sexual depravity and blood sacrifices. Ham, as Zoraster, met a fiery death at the hands of a demon, but this made little difference to his followers, who insisted he had been carried up to Heaven in a chariot of lightning.

The wickedness of Ham became a central target of medieval Church sermons. To some among the Order, however, Ham is a hero, a progenitor of the Order. To others, the Recognitions is a Christianized fiction of the Old Ones or Hermes Trismegistus, and an attempt to discredit the authenticity of magic.

Moses the Magician

"And the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, 'When Pharaoh says to you, 'Prove yourselves by working a miracle!' then you shall say to Aaron, 'Take your rod and cast it down before Pharaoh, that it may become a serpent.'"

"So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and did as the Lord commanded; Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh and his servants and it became a serpent. Then Pharaoh summoned the wise men and the sorcerers; and they did also, the magicians of Egypt did the same by their secret arts. For every man cast down his rod and they became serpents.

"But Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods..."

--Exodus 7:8-12

Moses stands side by side with other great magicians of the ancient world. Moses was raised in Egypt, the native land of magic. He acquired great power and knowledge in his frequent conversations with the God of Israel, learning His secret name. His defeat of Pharaoh's sorcerers, reputedly the greatest magicians of all time, proved his power was greater than any before him. Moses was famous among pagans of the late Roman Empire as a powerful magus. Pliny the Elder ranks Moses with Zoroaster. Apuleius mentions Moses in his defense against charges of magic as a well-known figure in magical circles.

Moses wrote three great books of magic. The Secret of Moses contains Moses' understanding of the natural world and how to control it. The Diadem of Moses explains his techniques of controlling the spirits of the air and the earth. The Book of Moses on Archangels contains all the information God told Moses about the celestial hierarchy on Moses' journey through the seven heavens.

Solomonic Wizardry

King Solomon (***Kabbalah***, page 122), wisest man in the history, worked many marvels and wrote many books of magic.

The Song of Solomon, called the Canticle of Canticles, is a collection of love poems in the Old Testament. Narrated alternatively by a man and a woman, the poems have no coherent story, but instead describe the beauty and excellence of the narrator's beloved. Rabbinical scholars look to the Song as allegory of God's love for the Israelites and the sacred covenant between them. Orthodox Christians interpret the Song describing the love of Christ for his church. Christian mystics, on the other hand, construe the Song as the love between God and the individual human soul.

Solomon was the greatest magician of his time, student of astrology, demonology, herbalism, and physics. His skill at exorcising demons, battling evil spirits, and swaying the hearts and minds of men has never been rivaled. Much of this wisdom is supposedly contained in the Testament of Solomon, a text fiercely guarded by the practitioners of Solomon's magic.

Several books circulate in learned circles of Europe purporting to teach the Ars Notoria, or Notary Art of Solomon. This Art seeks to gain knowledge from or communion with God by invocation of angels, mystic figures, and magical prayer. It is said that the Creator revealed this art through an angel to Solomon one night while he was praying, and that by it one can in a short time acquire all the liberal and mechanical arts.

The Magi of Matthew

"Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the East to Jerusalem, saying where is he that is born king of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East, and are come to worship him. And, lo, the star which they saw in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy, and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts: gold and frankincense, and myrrh."

--Gospel of Matthew

According to the medieval legends of the Star of Bethlehem, many astrologers across the world observed with awe and dread the appearance of a new Morning Star. No astrological theory could account for its appearance or significance, save that it must have marked the end of an era, and the birth of a new. But three Persian magoi, called the Magi in the Gospel of Matthew, stood apart from this confusion. They identified the star as the Christ Child from the first. Skilled interpreters of the stars, they took the new star sign as confirmation of God's promise to Abraham that his children would one day be equal to the stars.

The tale of the three Magi presented a thorny problem to the Church. Saint Augustine preached that the Magi were magicians of the very worst kind. He spoke of their "irreligion" and "unholy practices," having been previously "burdened with sins." Rabanus Maurus, a renowned Benedictine theologian from Germany (circa 776-856 AD), firmly disagreed, saying the Magi were philosophers, men of great learning from Chaldea. Their three gifts to Christ represent, among other things, "physica, ethica, logica," the three elements of human knowledge.

Saint John Chrysotom, the Church Father credited with much of the Liturgy, believed the Magi had assistance from an ancient text of Seth, that predicted the star and the gifts to be offered. They followed the star for two years, miraculously provided with food and drink along the way. They found the Child, presented the gifts, and eventually became helpers to the apostle Thomas.

Angels brought the same three gifts of the Magi (gold, frankincense, and myrrh) to Adam for his marriage to Eve. At Adam's death, Noah and his three sons took the gifts, along with Adam's body, into the ark. When the floodwaters receded, Shem, led by an angel, took the body and the gifts to Golgotha, where a rock opened of its own accord to inhumate them. When the Magi saw the star, according to Chrysotom, the prophesy of Seth directed them to Adam's burying place, where they brought forth the three gifts and gave them to Jesus.

Jesus

Many non-Christian scholars called Jesus a "magician." Jesus can be viewed a typical miracle-worker. He exorcised demons and spirits, healed the sick, raised the dead, and predicted the future. In the Bible, Jesus is accused of exorcising demons, not with the power of God, but the aid of the demon prince. Within three hundred years of his birth, Platonists preaching against Christianity accused Jesus of stealing the "names of the angels of might" from Egyptian temples, of using powerful daemons and words of power to trick Romans into abandoning the old pagan gods.

The Gospel of Matthew reports that Jesus spent part of his infancy in Egypt, but of his young adulthood and education nothing is known. Forces hostile to Christianity used this to explain his "magic." According to one rabbinical story, Jesus returned from Egypt tattooed with spells and

hexes. Most early rabbinical accounts of Jesus label him a madman, as many wizards were mad.

Those Hermetic mystae who disdain the Church share similar opinions. In Egypt, they say, Jesus learned the secrets of magic, but he turned from the light of the true magical divine and became the corrupt servant of the evil Demiurge.

Simon Magus

Simon Magus, patron of the earliest schools of Gnostics, was born sometime during the 1st century in the village of Gettones in the Levant. Simon traveled greatly, never settling in a single community, and visiting many urban areas. During his travels he developed an exceptional talent for magic, earning a reputation across the known world as a powerful wizard. He became a pupil of the magus Dositheus, a curious and elder Samaritan. Shortly before his death, Dositheus named Simon as leader of his group of disciples.

Simon met his death trying to outfox Saint Peter. Traveling to Rome, Simon asked Peter if he could purchase the secret of Christian "magic," hoping to provoke Peter into a battle of wits.

The offended Peter engaged Simon in a series of debates until Simon challenged him to a magical duel in the streets of Rome. To prove his puissance over the Christians, Simon leaped and soared through the air. It seemed Simon finally outshone Peter, but when the Apostle prayed for God to remove the demons supporting Simon's invisible wings, he plummeted to the ground and died.

Despite his ignoble end, Simon's disciples refused to lose faith, and the Gnostic cult of Simon Magus persevered for over a hundred years. The feats of Simon cover all areas of Hermetic magic. He endured fire without being burnt, caused beards to grow on children, and trees to sprout suddenly from the ground. He could change his face to resemble the visage of another, dig through mountains and pass through rocks as though made of soft clay. He became invisible to the eyes of mortals, created gold from nothing, and flew through the air (albeit briefly).

The Simonians were as addicted to magic as their founder, employing exorcisms and incantations, love-philters and enchantments, familiar spirits and dream-senders. Menander, the immediate successor of Simon in Samaria, said that with magic, a wizard could overcome the angels who had created this world.

Gnosticism

Did Gnosticism begin as a Christian heresy? Or were the Gnostics the legacy of ancient pagan mystics? We may never know, but the Gnostic mysteries unite all that came before them, perhaps incomprehensibly. While Gnosticism itself fragmented as its leaders disagreed, its central goal remained the same: seeking the mysteries not from study, or science, but divine revelation.

Simon Magus introduced the concept of the gnosis, or "sacred truth." He preached that all evil sprouted from a break within the Godhead. The 3rd century work Pistis Sophia, however, presents the first full explanation of the gnosis: The world, produced from evil matter and possessed by evil demons, cannot be a creation of a good God. It must be an illusion, or an abortion, dominated by Yahweh, the Jewish demiurge, the demonic ruler of the material world. This world must be alien to the true, good God. The real world of God and his good spirits is the pleroma, the realm of light. Humanity, native to the realm of light, is entrapped in the false world of darkness by the demiurge. To escape, humanity must be rescued by divine intervention.

Gnosticism differs from Christianity, Platonism, Stoicism, and so many others because the pursuit of reason and living the good life does not lead to salvation. We sleep, unable to awake, awaiting the Savior.

Ophites

According to the Ophite Gnostics, the demiurge Jehovah (one of many evil beings) sealed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, denying them the all-important knowledge of good and evil. The serpent of Eden was the true liberator of mankind. It taught Adam to understand good and evil, to know that Jehovah was in fact evil, and to pursue the true, hidden good God. Jehovah punished the serpent by casting him down into the underworld. There, the serpent begat six sons, and together these seven demons represent the true force of good in the world. These seven good demons oppose the seven planets, powerful spiritual beings aligned with Jehovah. Ophites called the seven celestial planets the Holy Hebdomad, consisting of Ialdabaoth, Iao, Sabaoth, Adonai, Eloeus, Oreus and Astanphaeus.

Jesus, the Ophites say, was nothing but a man who served as the vessel of the Christ, an emanation of the true, good God. As the Christ descended through the seven heavens to the evil Earth, it emptied each heaven of its power and united with the mortal called Jesus, who then taught the gnosis in an attempt to save humanity from the demiurges.

Sethians

The Sethian Gnostics took their name from Seth, son of Adam, who is regarded in some circles as a unique recipient of divine revelation and as the author of sacred books. The historian Josephus in his Jewish Antiquities recorded that Seth and his descendants discovered the art of astronomy and that one of the two pillars on which they recorded their findings still existed in his time.

The Confession of Cyprian

"What the Lord keeps secret is no concern of yours; Do not busy yourself with matters that are beyond you."

--Ecclesiastes 3:22-23

Cyprian was a magician by profession in the 3rd century, who, after being educated from childhood in heathen mysteries and the magic arts, repented and was baptized, became bishop of Antioch, and finally achieved a martyr's crown. The Confession describes his education and subsequent practice of magic.

At a tender age Cyprian was consecrated as a gift to Apollo and initiated into the arts of the dragon. When not yet seven years old, he entered the mysteries of Mithras. At ten his parents enrolled him as a citizen of Athens where he carried a torch in the mysteries of Demeter and ministered to the dragon on the citadel of Pallas. When not yet fifteen, he visited Mount Olympus for forty days. There he saw the phalanx of each god and goddess, and how from Mount Olympus spirits were dispatched to every nation of the earth.

Cyprian's parents demanded he learn whatever there was in earth and air and sea. Cyprian traveled to Egypt to study at ancient shrines. He went to Chaldea to learn the lore of air, fire and light. At the age of 30 he had acquired great mastery over the world and returned to Antioch to experiment in magic. The people of Antioch celebrated him as a magician and philosopher endowed with vast knowledge of things invisible.

But later the Christian girl Justina revealed to him the weakness and fraud of the devil, and it was her example which caused Cyprian to turn with disgust from magic, publicly confess his crimes as a magician, burn his books of magic and be baptized into the Christian faith.

The Enochian Psalmists, A Secret Society

Symbol: Two Obsidian Tablets

Motto: "Light from divine darkness."

Patrons: Biblical magicians

House Affiliations: Any

Flaw Requirements: Vow (To follow the Commandments) -2

Origin Myth: The Seeker faction known as the Enochian Psalmists rejects most of the Old Ones legend, believing instead in the Biblical and later sources as literal truth rather than metaphor. Devout Christians, the Psalmists view magic as a gift of the Divine. They follow the early rabbinical and Christian legends of biblical divine magicians and claim to carry the secrets of Adam, Enoch, and Moses. They are fascinated by the stories of Ham, son of Noah, that link him to Hermes. The most heated topic among the Psalmists, all great lovers of disputation, is whether the Church correctly portrays Ham as a practitioner of evil magic, or if Ham in fact preserved beneficent divine magic from the Flood.

Levels of Initiation: They are organized along the lines of a monastic orders. The Psalmists usually form together in covenants, overseen by an Abbot. All report to the Superior General who resides in the covenant of the Sacred Tear, in the Greater Alps Tribunal, the center of this society.

Goals and Practices: The Psalmist's main goal is to discover and purge what sinful elements of the Hermetic Arts make working magic an anathema to the Divine and divine auras. To meet this end, the Psalmists join other Seeker factions in the centuries-old treasure hunt for artifacts of biblical and earlier ages. Unlike other Seekers, the Psalmists strive be on friendly terms with exotic magicians that share similar ideas.

Psalmists care little about concealing their existence and political machinations from the Order at large. Psalmists openly proselytize their beliefs and write Psalters and texts on harmonizing Christian hermetism with Hermetic magic. The secrets they have uncovered, however, remain closely guarded, for fear of what "black magic" could do with them.

Virtues Taught: Hermetic Theurgy (+1), Arithmancy (+1) Ars Notoria (+3), Bibliomancy (+3).

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