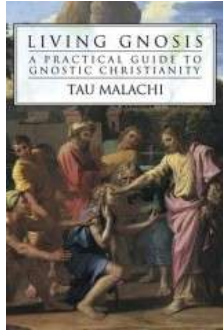


Introduction to Sophian Gnosticism Study Guide



Some sections taken from the book Living Gnosis by Tau Malachi.



Produced by Magdalene Circle (www.magdalene-circle.org) in Austin Texas.

|

Sophian Gnostic Tradition



Introduction

This document is intended to serve as an introduction to the Sophian Gnostic Tradition. It is not intended to replace personal study or interaction with a Sophian Study Group or Circle, but will give the reader an overview of the Tradition and points for further discussion.

Sophian Tradition and Structure

Sophian Gnosticism

Because Gnosticism was considered heretical, during the crusades and inquisition anyone who was “proven” to be a Gnostic heretic was killed. Most Gnostic traditions went underground and continued to operate in secret. Some traditions died out and others continued depending on the ability to stay hidden and train initiates.

The Sophian Tradition’s legends claim the tradition comes directly from Saint Mary Magdalene, who is considered to be the Apostle of the Apostles, as she was the first to see the risen Christ. Many of the Gnostic texts depict her as a teacher and apostle who was far more advanced than most of her contemporaries. There is obviously no way to prove the tradition came directly from Mary Magdalene, as no such records could be maintained. Whether this is historical fact or part of the Tradition’s myth cycle is unclear, but the teachings of the Tradition closely match what fragments of teachings have been found and attributed to the Magdalene.

The Tradition can trace its movement from generation to generation from the US back to England, to France, and to Germany. Each generation has a “presiding lineage holder” (spiritual teacher that guards the tradition and keeps the tradition alive). This presiding lineage holder can be male or female and is designated by the previous presiding lineage holder to take over upon their death. The current presiding lineage holder in the United States is Tau Malachi.

Tau Malachi

Malachi is a modern Christian mystic and Gnostic whose adventure in the spiritual path began in his early youth. At the age of eight he met his beloved Teachers, Tau Elijah ben Miriam and Mother Sarah, who taught and initiated him into the Sophian Tradition of Gnostic Christianity, and exposed him to diverse lineages of both the Western Mystery Tradition and Eastern Traditions. He became the protégé of Tau Elijah and before his death, in 1978, Tau Elijah imparted to Malachi the traditional blessing as his



successor in the Sophian lineage. At the age of sixteen, January, 1983, Malachi took up the mantle of the lineage-holder and founded Sophia Fellowship as an expression of the Order (the Sophian lineage, outwardly known as “Ordo Sanctus Gnosis”). He has actively served as a teacher and guide to others in the Gnostic Path since that time, holding the recognition of an Elder and Tau in the Sophian Tradition.

Along with his work in the Sophian lineage, Tau Malachi is also a Chevalier in the International Order of Chivalric Companions, a Martinist, and has also received ordination and consecration as an Independent Apostolic Bishop.

Tau Malachi has written several books on Gnosticism and the Sophian tradition, including: *Gospel of Saint Thomas*, *Gnosis of the Cosmic Christ*, *Living Gnosis*, *Saint Mary Magdalene*, and *Gnostic Healing*.

Sophian Gnostic Structure

Sophian Gnostic Tradition is broken into two structures: the inner and the outer. The inner tradition is centered around the presiding lineage holder while the outer tradition is manifested in a church body called Ecclesia Pistis Sophia. The inner group of initiates resides and practices in the same geographical location as the presiding lineage holder. The spiritual leaders of this community are either Tau or Elder. These designations are based on spiritual attainment and realization of the light power within their life (Tau often being the level of the presiding lineage holder). The inner group or fellowship is a closed organization that can only be joined by being physically in the geographical location of the presiding lineage holder and being accepted into his/her Circle.



The outer form of the tradition is called Ecclesia Pistis Sophia (Body of Faith Wisdom) and is made up of Circles and study groups throughout the world. Ecclesia Pistis Sophia is roughly the church arm of Sophian Gnosticism where initiates can explore the Tradition with others in their area or through various distance attendance methods. Tau Malachi, being the presiding lineage holder, is the presiding Bishop of Ecclesia Pistis Sophia. Each Circle or study group has a Gnostic Bishop, Priest, Deacon, or Leader who coordinates and organizes the group. For a group to be recognized in Ecclesia Pistis Sophia, the group leader must be mentored in Sophian teachings and recognized by Tau Malachi. This is to make sure the Circles and study groups are continuing the work of the Sophian tradition and doing the work that the Mother Spirit has appointed them. Ordination as a Gnostic Priest occurs when a Gnostic Teacher has reached an appropriate level of spiritual awareness, study, and work; to where a Bishop in the tradition believes it is time to ordain them for the work ahead.

In general, meetings of most Circles and study groups in Ecclesia Pistis Sophia are open to the public so people can learn more about the tradition and its teachings. To become a full member of a Circle, an aspirant must be initiated through the three fold rite of initiation and accepted as a Companion by a Bishop, Priest, or Deacon through the Rite of Reception.

A Companion is a person who wishes to come along-side the Bishop/Priest/Deacon as a spiritual friend to learn and serve the tradition. A Companion is a student and a co-worker in the spiritual work of the group.

Three Fold Rite of Initiation



The Three Fold Rite of Initiation is a beautiful ceremony where the initiate is into a natural setting and initiated into the tradition. The three fold rite consists of Baptism, Chrism, & Wedding Feast. Baptism is usually performed by immersion in running water such as a stream or river to represent the death and rebirth into the “true self”; Chrism is anointing with oil to symbolize the fiery intelligence of the Holy Spirit coming upon the initiate; and Wedding Feast is a rite with bread and wine that resembles the Orthodox Eucharist, but is used to represent the unity all have with God through the Bridal Chamber.

Rite of Reception



Once an initiate has undergone the Three Fold Rite of Initiation, they can ask their teacher to receive them as a Companion of the circle. If the teacher agrees, then a Rite of Reception is performed where the spiritual teacher accepts the initiate and they are formally accepted into the body of the Circle/Study Group.

Basic Sophian Beliefs

The Name of Jesus



Much can be said about the name of Jesus. Jesus is actually the Greek version of his name. In Aramaic, the language he and his disciples spoke, his name would have actually been Yeshua. Many Gnostic traditions use the Aramaic version because it is what he would have actually been called during his incarnation. Jesus/Yeshua is the same name as Joshua (Yehoshua) from the Old Testament. The difference being that the Hebrew name in the Old Testament was translated as Joshua, and it was translated from Greek in the New Testament as Jesus.

In the New Testament it is said that the name of Yeshua has power and can banish dark and unclean spirits. The question is what is the meaning of this name and why would it have power? Yeshua in Hebrew is spelled Yod – Heh – Shin – Vav – Heh. This is very similar to the divine name of God, YHWH, which is spelled Yod – Heh – Vav – Heh. In Kabbalah, YHWH is considered the Great Name of God and in the Judaic tradition it is so holy that it is not to be spoken aloud. So, as we can see above, the name of Yeshua is the same as YHWH with the addition of the letter Shin in the middle. Calling YHWH a name is actually sort of deceptive. It is more a designation than a name and is actually a verb instead of a noun. YHWH means “That which was, is and forever shall be”. This can be taken to indicate a divine being but also means a force or the Life Power.

That being said, the name Yeshua literally translates to “YHWH delivers” or “The truth will set you free”. The Shin in Yeshua’s name is very significant because it most often refers to the Holy Spirit (or Shekinah). This

Shekinah is the power and presence of God within and beyond creation. This implies that the name Yeshua signifies an embodiment of this consciousness force and that Gnosis comes by embodying this force.

Secret Knowledge

The willingness to seek direct spiritual experience is the foundation of all mystical traditions. This is the heart of Sophian Gnosticism. The idea of “secret knowledge” is simply because it is impossible to tell someone the inner teachings because one has to experience them for oneself. In the Gospels (traditional and Gnostic), Yeshua himself speaks of “inside” and “outside” knowledge. Here is a passage from the Gospel of Matthew:

Then the disciples came and asked him, “Why do you speak to them in parables?” He answered, “To you it has been given to know the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven, but to them it has not been given. For to those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance, but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. The reason I speak to them in parables is that seeing they do not perceive, and hearing they do not listen, nor do they understand.”

Here Yeshua speaks of outsiders and insiders, and he indicates the distinction is that the insider has some experience of Gnosis. This does not preclude anyone from becoming an insider. Gnosis is not limited by God or man, but by the individual and their desire for spiritual experience.

The Living Yeshua



The Gospel of St. Thomas begins with the statement: “These are the secret sayings which the living Jesus spoke and which Didymos Thomas Judas wrote down.” It then continues to say, “And he said, ‘Whoever finds the interpretation of these sayings will not experience death.’”

The name Living Yeshua is common among Christian Gnostics because it denotes the Risen Christ. If one reads all of the Gnostic Gospels, they will find that almost all of them claim that their origin is from the Risen Yeshua, implying that the teachings are from a spiritual or visionary experience. This also implies a direct and personal experience of the Christos.

The very nature of the Living Yeshua is not an experience rooted in the past. This is an ongoing experience and makes Gnostic Christianity a living tradition that grows and evolves.

Tradition

The word tradition in the English language has come to mean something fixed and makes one think of doctrine or creed. This is not the case with Gnostic Christianity. Sophian Gnosticism is a living tradition that is rooted in transmission of wisdom and enlightenment. Our tradition represents a body of teachings and practices that aids initiates in their ability to enter into direct and personal gnostic experience.

In the tradition, a Priest (outer branch teacher), Bishop (outer branch spiritual leader), Elder (inner branch spiritual leader), or Tau (inner branch head of the Tradition) is an initiate who has acquired Gnosis of the Living Yeshua and who embodies something of Christ consciousness. In fact, all Gnostic initiates to the degree that they have achieved something of a higher consciousness, embody something of a living presence of enlightenment.

Obviously, as this living transmission of wisdom or enlightenment passes from one generation to another it grows and evolves to assume whatever form is necessary. Even though the tradition as a whole has a common language and basic teachings, each Gnostic Circle is unique to the individuals who are part of it.

To truly understand a tradition of Gnostic Christianity, one must seek to become an insider by seeking direct and personal experience of the truth and light.

Acquiring Gnosis

Acquiring gnosis involves a spiritual friendship with a Priest, Bishop, Elder, or Tau of a living Gnostic tradition. It is possible for wild gnosis to occur and for one to come to enlightenment without a Gnostic Circle, but being part of a Gnostic community is much more likely to generate the conditions that will bring about this experience. The purpose of a Gnostic teacher and circle are to support one's own spiritual practice and life. The acquisition of gnosis and progressive self-realization ultimately comes from consistent spiritual practice and the integration of one's spirituality into one's daily life.

The Sophian Tradition teaches diverse forms of spiritual practice and in-depth teachings. These teachings are all based on Christian Kabbalah.

Son of the Human One

When Sophian Gnostics speak of the Messiah we do so through principles taught through Kabbalah and the mysteries of Messiah and Adam Kadmon (the archetypal or primordial human being).



It is important to keep in mind that the Hebrew word Messiah has the same meaning as the Greek word Christos (Christ in English). This word literally means “anointed one” and does not include all of the connotations that the church has put onto it.

The most common term Yeshua uses for himself is the “Son of Man”, not the “Son of God”. This signifies him as the “Son of Adam” or the “Son of the Human One”. This has deep significance based on the teachings of Kabbalah. When Yeshua speaks of himself as the “Son of Adam”, he speaks of himself as embodying something of the ideal human being.

According to Kabbalah, Adam Kadmon is the pure emanation of divine being, specifically a pure emanation of the infinite light. Also, Adam Kadmon is the “image and likeness of God” – a person of light existing in the light-continuum. Adam Ha-Rishon is the same but the activation of the divine potential within creation – an enlightened human being.

This Adam is both male and female in one body and is reflected in the Sophian teachings of Lord Yeshua and Lady Mary Magdalene.

In Kabbalah, everything is said to come into being through and for Adam Kadmon. He/She is the potential of all life and at outset exists in an unconscious unity with the light-continuum. The soul of every human being comes from the great soul of Adam Kadmon. We are all a unique expression of Adam and united within him. As individuals and as a collective, we are Adam Kadmon awakening and coming into being and in this sense we are all sons and daughters of Adam.

When Yeshua speaks of himself as the Son of the Human One, he alludes to the realization of this truth and the light within himself. When he makes “I am” statements, such as “I am the way, and the truth, and the light” it is

of this divine truth he speaks. But he does not speak of himself in this manner alone. In the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew he says, “You are the light of the world”, which is to say, “You are a person of light who comes from the light-continuum”.

Another esoteric teaching on the title Son of the Human One involves Adam & Eve’s children. Their first two sons are Cain & Abel. Cain kills Abel in a fit of rage and in effect, both are lost. Adam & Eve then have another son, named Seth. Seth is said to be “the image and likeness of Adam”. Cain and Abel represent the sinner and saint, darkness and light within a human being. Being the image of Adam, Seth is his true son and the unification of light and darkness – true humanity. So, when Yeshua calls himself the Son of Man he is calling himself Seth.

The name Seth is composed of two Hebrew letters, Shin and Tau. These are the last two letters of the Hebrew alphabet and imply completion or fruition, and a state of perfection.

The story of Cain, Abel, and Seth reflects the process of awakening of the soul of light in us. In the process of our awakening, at the outset there is a play of spiritual ignorance and we are unaware of our connection to the continuum of light. Because of this, dualism occurs and there is an illusion of separation. In this process of individuation, the soul enters cycles of incarnation. In this cycle, we forget who we truly are and we must labor to reintegrate ourselves to the person of light who is united with divine being.

To recognize and realize the soul of light in us brings about a spontaneous unification with God. In Christian Gnosticism it is a state called Christ Consciousness.

Soul of the Light-bearer

From the Gnostic perspective, the purpose of the divine incarnation is the revelation of what we truly are – revelation of the person of light. It is this revelation that helps us to see the image of our true self and thus empowering us to activate our divine potential. From our point of view, Yeshua does not come to redeem us from sin but rather to redeem us from cosmic ignorance and to impart true gnosis.



The image and likeness of God is not the physical body, but the soul of light. Thus, a “human being” is any self-aware and intelligent life form, whether resembling what we call human or not. According to Sophian teachings, human beings exist within many world-systems in creation. Wherever self-aware and intelligent life-forms evolve, the truth of the soul of light is revealed by way of an incarnation of the light presence – an incarnation of the Christos.

Souls that have been Christed or enlightened transmigrate back into incarnation to help teach and serve as an example to those who have not yet come to realization. While this may sound strange, the same idea appears in many world wisdom traditions where they speak of Buddhas and avatars. According to Sophian teachings, Yeshua is among the most significant and influential light-bearers to appear on earth. Thus from a Gnostic perspective, what is meant by Christ extends far beyond the name “Christian”.

John the Baptist

Yeshua may have had any number of spiritual teachers. In the Sophian teachings, it is said that Yeshua had 3 principle spiritual teachers, but that John the Baptist was his true holy Tzaddik (or spiritual teacher). The connection between John and Yeshua is said to stem from a previous incarnation. As stated in the Gospels, John was the reincarnation of the prophet Elijah. The tradition also teaches that Yeshua was the reincarnation of the soul of Elisha, the protégé of Elijah.

Birth of a Mystic



In Sophian teachings, Yeshua is conceived through the sexual union of Joseph & Mary and even though he is a great soul and spiritual prodigy, he is not born Christed. The story of immaculate conception is considered a myth that is meant to convey mysteries of the journey to Christ consciousness and the fact that Yeshua was born free of the karmic ties that most humans bare. Being born in a barn among animals is quite symbolic also, as it conveys the idea of the bestial soul (Nefesh) being transformed through the process of enlightenment and the actualization of the soul of light (Neshamah).

The view of Yeshua being conceived in a natural way is common to most Christian Gnostic traditions. This subject is also covered in several Gnostic Gospels. The term for Holy Spirit in Hebrew, Ruach Ha-Kodesh, like the term for God's divine presence and power, Shekinah, is feminine. There is birth and there is rebirth. The spiritual birth is a sparking of fiery intelligence and a movement of Grace through Mother Sophia. She is personified in the Gospels as Mother Mary.

Emergence of the Light-Presence and Light-Bearer

The baptism and temptation are the fruition of a long spiritual journey begun in Yeshua's youth. This culminated around the age of 30. This represents light-transmission between a Tzaddik and disciple when the distinction between the two vanishes and there is only the one light-presence.

Words like light-transmission, light-presence, and light-continuum can be somewhat curious and undoubtedly vague. To someone who has experienced these, they are perfectly clear. The words point at it, but it is actually a spiritual experience. If a person embodies something of this divine presence, it can be transmitted to others – a shared experience can be facilitated. The light-transmission between a Tzaddik and a disciple is somewhat akin to a candle that is lit, drawing near to another candle. When they separate, both are lit, illuminated and illuminating. It is like the Tzaddik is akin to a midwife, and the disciple is one who is in labor to give birth to the Christ self. It is ultimately the disciple who must work out his or her self-realization and pass through the pains of labor to enter into the joy of having given birth.

After his baptism, Yeshua was driven out into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan. There are many esoteric teachings on exactly who and what Satan is among the various traditions of Gnostic Christianity. The name Satan literally means "adversary". In Judaic tradition the name is Samael, which means the "poison of God". On the most basic and universal level, Gnostic teachings consider Satan, the ego-illusion. This produces the illusion of separation of us from one another and God. This is called the "evil inclination" in Kabbalah. Because of ego-illusion we tend to identify ourselves only with the surface consciousness, our mortal name and form, and personal history. Yet on a deeper level, there is a part of us that exists beyond space-time – the person of light. All of the temptations by Satan are a product of the ego-illusion. The banishing of Satan, thus, represents the dissolution of the ego-illusion and self-grasping.

The Second Adam

Yeshua stands at the center of the Gospel as a holy person who realizes and embodies supernal consciousness. Yet, in the Sophian Gospel, he does not stand alone. Others around Yeshua embody the light-presence, more or less. This becomes most obvious in Gnostic Christian traditions, which speak of St. Mary Magdalene as co-equal and co-preacher of the Gospel with Yeshua, and which view Mary Magdalene as the divine consort and wife of Yeshua - the female embodiment of the Christos (Christ presence). In the canonized Scriptures there is a hint at

their relationship. Mary Magdalene is the first to see Yeshua after his resurrection. In the Gnostic Gospels there are more direct hints at a special relationship between the two.

In the Sophian tradition there is a rich and extensive oral tradition about St. Mary Magdalene. She is viewed as the female embodiment of the Christos. In fact this is where the name of the tradition comes from. Yeshua is considered Christ the Logos (Greek for embodiment of Word) and Mary is considered Christ the Sophia (Greek for embodiment of Wisdom).

To gain some insight into the importance of both male and female in the Sophian tradition, we must go back to the teachings in Kabbalah on Adam. A common title given to Yeshua is “the Second Adam”. According to the account given in Genesis, the first Adam (Adam Ha-Rishon) is androgynous. This is how Adam and Eve are separated out from this initial Adam. Thus, the teaching is that Yeshua and Mary as Logos and Sophia are actually male and female counterparts.

The Exile and Redemption of Sophia

In most Gnostic traditions, the purpose of the divine incarnation is not to save the world, but instead to save the fallen Sophia who is exiled to the world. Essentially, divine wisdom is the nature of consciousness, which is the foundation of creation and in bondage to cosmic ignorance. Thus, through the incarnation, Logos enters the world to awaken and redeem Sophia. Therefore, in her redemption the world and all creatures are redeemed.

In the Sophian tradition, the story of St. Mary Magdalene reflects this common theme of Gnosticism. Her life story is an allegory of the soul that becomes obscured and lost in the material world. This myth cycle is played out in the Gnostic gospel called Pistis Sophia.

The Good News of The Bride



In Sophian teachings, every aspect of the story of St. Mary Magdalene relates directly to the relationship of our own consciousness to the Living Yeshua. In truth, our soul is a bride to the light-presence, and in unification with the light presence, we enter into what Gnostics call the Bridal Chamber.

We are all more in touch with our soul of light as little children. The truth and light are innate to the human soul, but obscured by the habitual patterns in consciousness manifested from previous incarnations. In unenlightened society, we are quickly trained to develop our outer personality that does not reflect the soul of light within us. Because of this we only identify ourselves with the outer self and surface consciousness.

In effect, we become lost and out of touch with the soul of light within.

Nevertheless, in the story of Mary Magdalene, we are told that anyone who consciously recognizes the plight of the soul in the world and who consciously opens her- or himself to the truth will be received by the light-presence, and the soul of light will begin to shine from within her or him.

The image of Lord Yeshua and Lady Mary, according to Gnostic Christianity, is the image of our own true selves as men and women. In the eyes of Sophians, the need for a Christed woman is quite obvious – how can we speak of the salvation of both men and women without the image of the Christed person in both male and female form?

The Sophian Gospel

Essentially, what we are exploring is the Sophian Gospel, which is a weave of oral tradition, Biblical Gospels, and Gnostic Gospels. What characterizes the Sophian Gospel is the inclusion of St. Mary Magdalene in the Christ revelation. Including Lady Mary brings out the hidden Gospel of Sophia interacting with the Gospel of Logos.

There is a parallel between the events of the Gospel revolving around Yeshua and the events of the Magdalene's life. The written Gospels serve as a ground of inspiration for the Sophian Gospel as stories are read between the written lines. The main focus of the Gnostic Gospels is the metaphysical and spiritual truths to which they point. One must keep in mind that the oral tradition is much richer than the written stories. The Sophian Gospel is not meant to be fixed or static, but instead is living and evolving, fluid and flowing – hence inspired by the Spirit.

The Union of the Bride and Bridegroom



The Holy Spirit descends upon Yeshua during the baptism. At the same time, a prophet appears to Mary. Yeshua experiences the temptation by Satan in the wilderness as he struggles to integrate the light-presence that has entered into him. While Yeshua is wrestling with Satan, Mary is struggling against seven demons – both experience an extreme internal conflict. As Yeshua performs his first miracle, Mary re-enters the Holy Land. There is a great mystery in and behind what is transpiring with Yeshua and Mary, but it is not isolated to them.

The implication is that this mystery transpires within all of us.

As much as Mary and Yeshua are connected, so are we all. This is the key message of the Gospel, whether taken from an orthodox or mystical perspective. In an actual mystical experience, the distinction between what is external and historical and what is internal and spiritual vanishes. When one goes into the inner-most dimensions of consciousness, the lines between past, present, and future blur.

We become bound to space-time-consciousness through self-identification with name and form, and personal history – a self-identification with the limited and finite being. If we let go of this limited self-identification and generate a new self-identification with fully evolved and enlightened being we would be liberated from bondage.

This idea is present in the stories of Lord Yeshua and Lady Mary, who identify with the light-presence that emerges within their experience. Because we so strongly identify with our name, form, and history, the emphasis on the need for both a man and woman embodying Christ consciousness becomes obvious.

The Sacred Dance

According to the Sophian Gospel, when Yeshua took Mary into the wilderness, she asked him to instruct her. Over the course of five days, he taught and initiated her into the outer, inner, and secret teachings of the Gospel and revealed to her the true nature of the divine kingdom – that the kingdom exists within a person to the degree a person can bring forth his or her soul of light.



In many intimate and private moments, it is said that Yeshua imparted to Mary the wisdom that he shared with no other disciple. Because Magdalene received these teachings, she knew focused questions to ask to bring out inner and secret teachings in the company of other disciples, so that others might receive greater wisdom.

When Yeshua took his close disciples aside for teaching, Mary was often there as well. It is not in the canonized Gospels, but Mary was also present at the

transfiguration. According to legend, the male disciples fell unconscious because of the display of fluid reality that Yeshua presented. Mary, on the other hand, stayed lucid and conscious, receiving the full light transmission that Yeshua intended.

Mary was the primary teacher of the women disciples, but she also taught and initiated any men who received her. As the story goes, the night of the transfiguration Mary took 3 of her closest disciples into a cave and was transfigured before them. The image of the primordial Eve and Lilith appeared with her.

The Mystery of Anointing and Crucifixion

In the Sophian Gospel it is Lady Mary who anoints Yeshua with costly perfume as preparation of holy sacrifice and the ultimate revelation of the light presence. St. Mary's depiction in the Sophian Gospel as the one who anoints Yeshua is important for it is a magical act which makes the body of Yeshua a talisman of the karma of the world soul, thus making the redemptive aspect of the crucifixion possible.

Their wedding is akin to the mystical union of the priest-king and priestess-queen. Among Gnostics the Crucifixion is a very complex discussion. Some Gnostics view the appearance of Yeshua on the cross as completely illusionary while others speak of an actual incarnation and death. Often Gnostics are pointing to something in between this point of view. This represents the fact that Gnostics seek an inner knowledge and understanding of this event. Unlike traditional and fundamentalist traditions, there is no dogma about it.

The Bride in the Passion, Crucifixion, and Resurrection

St. Mary Magdalene is present at the Last Supper. With the women disciples, she prepares the room, lights the lamps, and invokes the divine presence and power. When the male disciples accompany Yeshua to the garden, Mary and the female disciples hold a vigil of prayer and meditation throughout the night.

The cross represents an interesting symbol in Sophian tradition. It represents the union of Logos and Sophia – the Bridegroom and the Bride. The vertical axis is Logos and the horizontal is Sophia. Sophian Gnostics point to a cross of light and spirit instead of one of wood.

Although Mary was aware that Yeshua would be resurrected, she still mourned the loss of her husband and love. Unlike the traditional stories where St. Mary Magdalene goes to the tomb unaware of who Yeshua is, the Sophian tradition teaches that she goes with great joy in expectation of his resurrection.

In the Sophian view, Yeshua is the light and Mary is the prism through which the light is refracted into rays of rainbow glory. Each ray is a different grade of the light transmission and each apostle receives the rays that he or she is capable of receiving and imparting. Thus there are inner, outer, and secret levels of the light transmission.

The Risen Savior and St. Mary Magdalene



Most of the Gnostic Gospels begin where Orthodox ones end – at the resurrection. Many of the oral traditions speak of St. Mary Magdalene as the Risen Savior appears to her more than anyone else.

The large part of the Sophian tradition does not center on the sacred dance between Lady Mary and Lord Yeshua, but instead focuses on the love-play between the Risen Savior and the Holy Bride. There is a deep dialogue of Christian Kabbalah at its center. We must remember that the discussion in Gnosticism of the Risen Savior and Holy Bride go much deeper than a discussion of Lord Yeshua and Lady Mary. They are personifications of Savior and Bride. Gnostics are always pointing to something that is beyond what meets the eye.

Conceptions of God

If you realize how many Gospels there are in Gnostic tradition, you quickly realize how many different views of God there are also. Gnostic traditions can have radically different views of God from a very dualistic approach (a good God and a bad God) to God as an impersonal force.

The Sophian Conception of God



In Kabbalah there are three common terms for God that relate directly to our vision. They are Ain, Ain Sof, and Ain Sof Or. Ain means “no-thingness”; Ain Sof means the “infinite”; and Ain Sof Or means “infinite light”.

The term Ain in Sophian tradition denotes that God is completely beyond our mental faculties. This is to say that God is neither something nor nothing. One way to look at this is to look into our own consciousness and see where thoughts arise. They do not appear to have a beginning or an end. They are no-thing. This points to the idea that our consciousness is the same as the nature of God. So, to know God, we must know ourselves.

We can understand the nature of God by looking at our own self-hood. We experience a distinct sense of self, yet when we look inward and go looking for the self, there is no self to find. Yet, when we turn outward the self seems to reappear. Thus we can experience God as both personal and impersonal; as immanent and transcendent. Basically, Sophian teachings constantly remind us that whatever concepts of the ultimate truth we may have, they are not the ultimate truth itself.

God the Father and God the Mother



According to Kabbalah the first human soul, Adam Kadmon is an androgynous being. We are also told that Adam is created in the image and likeness of God. Thus, we must assume that God is also an androgynous being. Sophians believe that God is beyond all gender association whatsoever. Yet, Adam was divided into male and female and both were said to be in the likeness of God. So, we often speak of the male and female aspects of consciousness and the male and female aspects of the divine being.

If one looks into the word Spirit in both Hebrew and Greek, one will find that in Hebrew it is actually a feminine word and in Greek it is neuter, having no specific gender association. This brings the question as to why traditional Christian theologians have

decided that the Holy Spirit is male. Sophian Gnostics consider the Holy Spirit to be feminine and often calls her the Mother Spirit.

Sophian tradition does speak of a trinity, but more often of a tetrad consisting of Father, Mother, Son, & Daughter. This is reflected in the divine name Yahweh which consists of the Hebrew letters Yah, Heh, Vav, Heh. The Yah is considered God the Father, the first Heh is God the Mother, the Vav is God the Son, and the second Heh is God the Daughter (or Bride).

The Father in Sophian tradition is considered the transcendent form of the divine and is the divine name Yahweh, the force of divine power, while the mother is the imminent aspect of the divine and is the divine name Elohim, the matrix of the life-power in many forms. When we speak of the Father & Mother, we are not speaking of a God and Goddess, but of masculine and feminine aspects of the One God, which is both Mother and Father.

The Bright and Dark Mother and the Earthly Mother

Because the Mother is the immanent aspect of God, she has both dark and light manifestations because she is the matrix of creation. Every manifestation of being-conscious-force is the Mother. God the Mother is the divine presence and power we encounter and experience within and behind everything. This is true of the material world, inner dimensions, and the spiritual world. The divine mother does not change, but how we view her does – creating the dark and light aspects.

A common invocation of Sophians includes the terms “Heavenly Father and Earthly Mother”. This points to the fact that the Mother is the Holy Spirit and is all around us at all times. The Mother is God’s presence that we experience all around us all the time.

Mother Mary



In traditional churches, Mother Mary is seen as the Mother of Christ, but not as God the Mother. She is seen in various ways, but mostly as an intercessor between human beings and God.

Among Gnostics, the view of Mother Mary is diverse. Some do not speak of her almost at all while others see her as much more. In the Sophian tradition she is seen as another image of Christed womanhood. It is felt that she also reached enlightenment, just as Yeshua and Mary Magdalene did. In our tradition she is seen as a personification of

Mother God.

Demiurgos



There are many different myth cycles among Christian Gnostics. All Gnostic traditions do speak of the demiurge and archons, but how they see these beings can be quite different. Some dualistic schools believe that the God of the Old Testament is the Demiurge (false creator) and the God of the New Testament is the True God. Sophian tradition believes that Demiurge is a spiritual being of cosmic ignorance. This is any time we see God in our image instead of his/her true image. So, Demiurge is seen in many forms. When people commit atrocities or act in ignorance in the name of God, they are actually acting for Demiurgos and not the one true God. This can be seen in some stories of the Old Testament, but can also be

seen in modern times when someone commits murder in the name of Jesus. In either case, this is a being of ignorance and not the true Light.

Archons in the Sophian mythos are beings of admixture. They are the beings of grey instead of light or dark. An Archon is very much like a human from the standpoint that they have their own agenda and their own reason for what they do.

The Play of Cosmic Forces

The process of one becoming many gives way to play of cosmic forces in creation. In this play there are divine, admixed, and demonic forces – beings of light, admixture, and darkness. In the tradition, this play of cosmic forces is not external to us. We draw to us and even create spiritual beings based on our consciousness. Our state of mind, intentions, and what we cleave to draws these forces to us. It is a symbiotic relationship going on all around us. Thus, our path of inner exploration is about trying to find our way through this maze of emotions and desires to draw more light to ourselves.

The Nature of Apocalypse

The word apocalypse actually means revelation. It doesn't mean big bad end of the world as we have come to consider it. For a Sophian Gnostic, apocalypse is something that has to happen in every person's experience for their path to enlightenment. We must have this revelation or apocalypse within our own experience to truly grow and evolve as spiritual beings. Sometimes the apocalypse is difficult and painful as we find our way through our egoistic desires and find who we really are, but it is not the end of all – just the end of the old self.



In addition to the personal apocalypse, there is also an idea of a world-wide apocalypse that will eventually occur. In Kabbalah, this is seen as the end of days when the universe gets pulled back into God and all who have become enlightened will reunify with the Divine. The Kabbalistic view is that this is still not the end as God will create again and the whole process starts over.

The Coming of Christ

The second coming of Christ is also not the same for a Sophian as for a traditional Christian. The first thing to remember is that we do not consider Yeshua to be the only Christed individual. So, the coming of the Christos can occur for anyone as they reach enlightenment and supernal consciousness. This second coming is a personal experience for the individual. There is also a legend in the tradition, that there will be a worldwide second coming, when the Christos as Sophia will manifest in the bodies of several people of various Traditions who will help lead humanity to global enlightenment and liberation.

The Old Testament

Many Gnostics have noticed the difference in tone and texture between the Old and New Testaments of the Christian Bible. It has led many to believe that it is a different "God" that is spoken of between the two. The Sethian Gnostic tradition (among other dualistic Gnostic schools) attributed the Old Testament to the Demiurge and the New Testament to the True God. In the Sophian tradition we do not believe that it is God that changes between the testaments, but instead the people that have changed. We see the difference as a spiritual evolution of the people as we move from through the Old and New Testaments.

When Sophian Gnostics look at scriptures they see a progressive light transmission occurring at various levels, each more refined and evolved from the last. They look to draw whatever spiritual wisdom they can, leaving anything obsolete behind.

Sacred Unity

The Hebrew word Anoki is used in the Old Testament to mean "I Am". This is used in Exodus 20:2-3 where God says, "I am the Lord your God". This alludes to the divine name Eheieh. God uses this divine name to describe him/herself to Moses at the burning bush with the phrase "Eheieh Asher Eheieh" which means "I am who I am" or "I am that I am" or "I shall be that I shall be". Anoki also relates to the name of Enoch which means "initiate". All of this points to the central unity that the light presence of God is within and behind all creatures and creation. This relates directly to when Yeshua says "I am the way, and the truth, and the life...". Meaning the Christos (the light presence within Yeshua) is this unity within all beings.

Going Further

The Sophian Tradition is a rich and complex set of teachings that cannot be summed up in one publication. To learn more visit the Magdalene Circle web site (www.magdalene-circle.org), the Sophian web site (www.sophian.org), and/or check out a Circle meeting to get first hand experience.