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Simonian Aeonology

Notes accompanying Simonian Hierarchy Drawing

Excerpted from Mead G.R.S. *Simon Magus: An Essay on the Founder of Simonianism based on the Ancient Sources with a Re-Evaluation of his Philosophy and Teachings*. London: The Theosophical Society, 1892

About Æons

The Patristic meanings of the term æon include lifetime, time, long but definitive period, period of indefinite duration, eternity; pleroma (Gr. πλήρωμα) is the totality of æons or whole invisible world.¹ In Gnosticism, however, Æons are logocic emanations:

In many Gnostic systems, the various emanations of the God, who is also known by such names as the One, the Monad, Aion teleios (The Perfect Æon, Gr. αἰών, τέλειος), Bythos (Depth or profundity, Gr. βυθός), Proarche (Before the Beginning, Gr. προαρχή), E Arche (The Beginning, Gr. η αρχή), are called æons. This first being is also an æon and has an inner being within itself, known as Ennoia (Thought, Gr. ἐννοία), Charis (Grace, Gr. χάρις), or Sige (Silence, Gr. σιγή).

Æons often came in male / female pairs called syzygies, and were numerous (20-30). Two of the most commonly listed æons were Jesus and Sophia. The æons constitute the pleroma, the “region of light.” The lowest regions of the pleroma are closest to the darkness; that is, the physical world.²

Compare with these “pairs of opposites,” in the *Anugitā*, the “pairs” of *Aeōns*, in the elaborate system of Valentinus, the most learned and profound master of Gnosis. As the “pairs of opposites,” male and female, are all derived from Ākāsha (undeveloped and developed, differentiated and undifferentiated, or SELF or Prajāpati), so are the Valentinian “pairs” of male and female *Aeōns* shown to emanate from Bythos, the pre-existing *eternal* Depth, and in their secondary emanation from Ampsiu-Auraan (or sempiternal Depth and Silence), the second Logos.³

¹ Lampe G.W.H. *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961

² Edited from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gnosticism#Aeons>

³ *Secret Doctrine*, II p. 569 *fn.*



The Unmanifested Universal Cause of all Universes is lying in potentiality (δύναμις), and in Incomprehensible Silence,

In treating of emanation, evolution, creation or whatever other term may be given to the process of manifestation, therefore, the teachers deal only with one particular universe; the Unmanifested Root, and Universal Cause of all Universes lying behind, in potentiality (δύναμις), in Incomprehensible Silence (σιγή ακατάληπτος). For on the “Tongue of the Ineffable” are many “Words” (λόγοι), each Universe having its own Logos. (p. 50)

“Producing itself by itself, it manifested to itself its own Thought (επινοία).”

Simon speaks of the Logos of this Universe and calls it Fire (πύρ). This is the Universal Principle or Beginning (των όλων αρχή), or Universal Rootage (ρίζωμα των όλων). But this Fire is not the fire of earth; it is Divine Light and Life and Mind, the Perfect Intellectual (το τέλειον νοερόν). It is the One Power, “generating itself, increasing itself, seeking itself, finding itself, its own mother, its own father, its sister, its spouse: the daughter, son, mother, and father of itself; One, the Universal Root.” It is That, “which has neither beginning nor end, existing in oneness.” “Producing itself by itself, it manifested to itself its own Thought (επινοία).”⁴ (p. 50)

[Simon] considered that all the parts of the Fire, both visible and invisible, possessed perception⁵ and a portion of intelligence. The generable cosmos, therefore, was generated from the ingenerable Fire. And it commenced to be generated . . . in the following way. The first six Roots of the Principle of generation which the generated (sc., cosmos) took, were from that Fire. And the Roots . . . were generated from the Fire in pairs [Syzygies] . . . (pp. 14-15)

Out of the “Spirit moving on the Waters” or the Seventh Power, emanate the three syzygies of the Middle World,

The names of the seven Æons, as given by the author of the *Philosophumena*, are as follows: The Image from the Incorruptible Form, alone ordering all things (εικὼν ἐξ ἀφθάρτου μορφῆς κοσμοῦσα μὴ πάντα), also called The Spirit moving on the Waters (το πνεῦμα το ἐπιφερόμενον ἐπάνω του ὕδατος) and The Seventh Power (ἡ ἐβδόμη δύναμις);

⁴ Epinoia (Logos) synonyms in Gnostic systems: Mother, or All-Mother, Mother of the Living or Shining Mother, the Celestial Eve; the Power Above; the Holy Spirit, for the Spiritus in some systems is a feminine power (in a symbolical sense, of course), pre-eminently in the *Codex Nazaraeus*, the scripture of the Mandaïtes. Again she is called She of the Left-hand, as opposed to the Christos, He of the Right-hand; the Man-woman; Prouneikos; Matrix; Paradise; Eden; Achamōth; the Virgin; Barbelo; Daughter of Light; Merciful Mother; Consort of the Masculine One; Revelant of the Perfect Mysteries; Perfect Mercy; Revelant of the Mysteries of the Whole Magnitude; Hidden Mother; She who knows the Mysteries of the Elect; the Holy Dove, who has given birth to the two Twins; Ennoia; (p. 67.)

⁵ Φρόνησις, consciousness? [Intellect, understanding; *Patristic Greek Lexicon*.]



And the Seventh Power. “The seventh Power, He who has stood, stands and will stand” for He is the cause of those good things which Moses praised and said they were very good.

1st syzygy Mind (νοῦς) and Thought (επίνοια), also called Heaven (ουρανός) and Earth (γῆ);

2nd syzygy Voice (φωνή) and Name (ὄνομα), [Theodoret gives ἔννοια. — *fn.*] also called Sun (ἥλιος) and Moon (σελήνη);

3rd syzygy Reason (λογισμός) and Reflection (ενθύμησις), also called Air (αἶρ) and Water (ὕδωρ). (p. 61)

And in all of these was blended and mingled the Great Power, the Boundless, He who has stood. (p. 15)



From the Fire of Divine Thought, Six Syzygies passed to Action

From the Potency of Thought, Divine Ideation thus passed to *Action*. Hence the series of primordial emanations *through Thought begetting the Act*, the objective side of Fire being the Mother, the secret side of it being the Father. Simon [Magus] called these emanations *Syzygies* [συζυγία] (a united pair or couple), for they emanated two-by-two, one as an active and the other as a passive Aeōn. Three couples thus emanated (or six in all, the Fire being the seventh), to which Simon gave the following names: Mind (νοῦς, *Nous*) and Thought (επινοία, *Epinoia*),⁶ Voice (φωνή, *Phōnē*) and Name (ὄνομα, *Onoma*), Reason (λογισμός, *Logismos*) and Reflection (ενθύμησις, *Enthumēsis*),⁷ the first in each pair being male, the last female. From these primordial six emanated the six Aeōns of the Middle World. Let us see what Simon himself says: “Each of these six primitive beings contained the entire infinite Potency [of its parent] but it was there only in Potency, and not in Act. That Potency had to be called forth (or conformed) through an *image* in order that it should manifest in all its essence, virtue, grandeur and effects; for only then could the emanated Potency become similar to its parent, the eternal and infinite Potency, If, on the contrary, it remained simply potentially in the six Potencies and failed to be conformed through an image, then the Potency would not pass into action, but would get lost”;⁸ in clearer terms, it would become *atrophied*, as the modern expression goes.⁹ . . . just as the potentiality of grammar or geometry in a man's mind. For potentiality when it has obtained art becomes the light of generated things, but if it does not do so an absence of art and darkness ensues, exactly as if it had not existed at all; and on the death of the man it perishes with him. (p. 15)

⁶ [Irenaeus and Epiphanius both call this second partner in the first pair of “Roots” *énvoia*, *Ennoia*.]

⁷ [The Abbé Cruise translated *Enthumēsis* as “Conception.”]

⁸ *Philosophumena*, lib. VI, ch. i, § 12 (ed. Cruise, p. 250)

⁹ *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (E.S. INSTRUCTION No. II) XII pp. 553-54



Universal Logos is Fire (πῦρ), the Universal Principle or Beginning (των ὅλων ἀρχή), or Universal Rootage (ρίζωμα των ὅλων). This Fire is not the fire of earth; it is Divine Light and Life and Mind, the Perfect Intellectual (το τέλειον νοερόν).

Heracleitus called the Universal Principle (των ἀπάντων ἀρχή) Intellectual Fire (πῦρ νοερόν), and said that the sphere surrounding us and reaching to the Moon was filled with evil, but beyond the Moon-sphere it was purer.¹⁰ (p. 52)

The Six Fire Syzygies¹¹ and analogous terms

Mind – Heaven	Thought – Earth
	Epinoia (ἐπίνοια)
	Ennoia (ἐννοια)
Nous ¹²	Psyche
Male	Female
Christ	Jesus
Spiritual Soul	Human Soul
Voice – Sun	Name – Moon
Reason – Air	Reflection – Water

Of the two lower Syzygies, or Lower Quaternary of the Æons, we have no details from the Fathers. We may, however, see some reason for the exoteric names—Voice and Name, Reason and Reflection—from the following considerations:

- (1) We should bear in mind what has already been said about the Logos, Speech and Divine Names.
- (2) In the Septenary the Quaternary represents the Manifested and the Triad the Concealed Side of the Fire.
- (3) The fundamental characteristics of the manifested universe with the Hindūs and Buddhists are Name (Nāma) and Form (Rūpa).
- (4) Simon says that the Great Power was not called Father until Thought (in manifestation becoming Voice) *named* (ονομάσαι) him Father.
- (5) Reason and Reflection are evidently the two lowest aspects, principles, or characteristics, of the *divine* Mind of man. These are included in the lower mind, or Internal Organ (Antah-karana), by the Vedāntin philosophers of India and called Buddhi and Manas, being respectively the mental faculties used in the certainty of judgment and the doubt of enquiry. (pp. 61-62)

¹⁰ *Op. cit.* i. 4. Compare the Diagram and explanation of the Middle Distance *infra*. The Moon is the “Lord” of the lower plane of the Middle Distance, the Astral Light of the medieval Kabalists. This is a doctrine common to the Hermetic, Vedāntic, and many other schools of Antiquity.

¹¹ “And the male (heaven) looks down from above and takes thought for its co-partner, while the earth from below receives from the heaven the intellectual fruits that come down to it and are cognate with the earth.” (p. 15)

¹² The male (Heaven, i.e., the Nous or Christ, or Spiritual Soul) looks down from above and takes thought for its co-partner (or Syzygy); while the Earth (i.e., the Epinoia or Jesus, or Human Soul) from below receives from the Heaven the intellectual (in the spiritual and philosophical sense, of course) fruits that come down to it and are cognate with the Earth (i.e., of the same nature essentially as Epinoia, who is essentially one with Nous). (p. 74)



Tripartite Fire is One

The fire eats up all which connects with it from below.

The dark part of the flame is a throne upon which the white part of the flame stands. The dark part changes its colour. The white part never changes.

And above the white part rests a Hidden Light which is stronger.

. . . the *Zohar*, or “Book of Splendour,” speaks of the mysterious “Hidden Light,” that which Simon calls the Hidden Fire (το κρυπτόν), and tells us of the “Mystery of the Three Parts of the Fire, which are One” as follows:

. . . it is a fire which devours fire, and it is a fire which devours itself and consumes itself, because it is a fire which is more mighty than fire, and it has been so confirmed. But, Come, See! Whoever desires to know the wisdom of the Holy Unity should look in that flame arising from a burning coal or a lighted lamp. This flame comes out only when united with another thing. Come, See! In the flame which goes up are two lights: one light is a bright white and one light is united with a dark or blue; the white light is that which is above and ascends in a straight path, and that below is that dark or blue light, and this light below is the throne to the white light and that white light rests upon it, and they unite one to the other so that they are one. And this dark light, or blue colour, which is below, is the precious throne to the white. And this is the mystery of the blue. And this blue dark throne unites itself with another thing to light that from below, and this awakes it to unite with the upper white light, and this blue or dark, sometimes changes its colour, but that white above never changes its colour, it is always white; but that blue changes to these different colours, sometimes to blue or black and sometimes to a red colour, and this unites itself to two sides. It unites to the above, to that white upper light, and unites itself below to the thing which is under it, which is the burning matter, and this burns and consumes always from the matter below. And this devours that matter below, which connects with it and upon which the blue light rests, therefore this eats up all which connects with it from below, because it is the nature of it, that it devour and consume everything which depends on it and is dead matter, and therefore it eats up everything which connects with it below, and this white light which rests upon it never consumes itself and never changes its light . . . And on this white light rests above a Hidden Light which is stronger. Here is the above mystery of that flame which comes out from it, and in it is the Wisdom of the Above.¹³

(pp. 54-55)

¹³ *Zohar*, i. 50b, Amsterdam and Brody Editions: quoted in Isaac Myer's *Qabbalah*, pp. 376, 377

