

The following is an extract from *The Wisdom of the Knowing Ones* by Manly Hall:

In his rare and valuable text *The Gnostics and their Remains*, C. W. King sums up the Gnostic genesis. His remarks are in substance as follows:

Sophia Achamoth, the generative wisdom of the world was lured into the abyss by beholding her reflection in the deep. Through union with the darkness, she gave birth to a son — Ialdabaoth, the child of chaos and the egg. Sophia Achamoth, being herself of a spiritual nature, suffered horribly from her contact with matter, and after an extraordinary struggle, she escaped out of the muddy chaos which had threatened to swallow her up. Although unacquainted with the mystery of the Pleroma — that all-including space which was the abode of her mother the heavenly Sophia, or divine wisdom — Sophia Achamoth reached the middle distance between the above and below. There she succeeded in shaking off the material elements, which had clung like mud to her spiritual nature. After cleansing her being, she built a strong barrier between the world of intelligences or spirits, which are above, and the world of ignorance and matter, which stretched out below.

Left to his own contrivances, Ialdabaoth, the son of chaos, became the creator of the physical part of the world; that part in which sin temporarily prevailed because the light of virtue was swallowed up in darkness. In the process of creation, Ialdabaoth followed the example of the Great Deity who engendered the spiritual spheres. He produced out of his own being six planetary spirits, which he called his sons. The spirits were all fashioned in his own image and were reflections of each other, becoming progressively darker as they receded from their father.

Here we have the Platonic theory of proximities, in which it is described that those beings which are closest to the source of life, partake most of the source, but to the degree that they retire from the source they partake of the absence of the source, until at last the outer extremity of the reflections is mingled in the substance of the abyss.

Ialdabaoth and his six sons inhabit seven regions disposed like a ladder. This ladder had its beginning under the middle space (the region of their mother Sophia Achamoth) and its end rests upon our earth, which is the seventh region. When the earth is referred to as the seventh sphere it does not mean the physical globe, but signifies rather the region of the earth composed of ether.

Ialdabaoth, as may be inferred from his origin, was not a pure spirit, for while he inherited from his mother (generating wisdom) instinct and cunning, as well as an intuitive realization of the universal immensity, he also received from his father (matter) the qualities of ambition and pride, and these dominated his composition. With a sphere of plastic substances at his command Ialdabaoth severed himself from his mother and her sphere of intelligence, determining to create a world according to his own desires in which he should dwell as lord and master. With the aid of his own sons, the six spirits of the planets, the son of chaos created man, intending that the new creature should reflect the fullness of the Demiurgic powers. This man should acknowledge matter to be his lord and should never seek beyond the material sphere for truth or light. But Ialdabaoth failed utterly in his work. His man was a monster, a vast soulless creature which crawled about through the ooze of the lower elements bearing witness to the chaos that conceived it. The six sons captured this monster and brought the awful creature into the presence of their father, declaring that he must animate it and give it a soul if it were to live.

Ialdabaoth was not a sufficiently exalted spirit and he could not create life; all he could do was to make forms. In his extremity, the Demiurge bestowed upon the new creature the ray of divine light which he himself had inherited from his mother Sophia Achamoth. It is thus that man gained the power of generative wisdom. This new man sharing the light with his own creator, now beheld himself as a god and refused to recognize Ialdabaoth as his master. Thus, Ialdabaoth was punished for his pride and self-sufficiency by being forced to sacrifice his own kingship in favour of a man he had fashioned.

Sophia Achamoth now bestowed her favour on mankind even at the expense of her own son. Humanity, which now contained her light, followed the impulse of that light and began to collect of itself and into itself, and divide light from the darkness of matter. By virtue of this spiritual industry, mankind gradually transformed its own appearance until it no longer resembled its creator Ialdabaoth, but took on the visage and manner of the supreme Being — Anthropos the primal man — whose nature was of the substance of light and whose disposition was of the substance of truth.

When Ialdabaoth beheld his creation greater than himself, his anger blazed forth with jealous rage. His looks

inspired by his passions were reflected downward into the great abyss as upon the polished surface of a mirror. This reflection apparently became inspired with life, for all bodies are but ensouled shadows, and from the abyss, arose Satan in the form of a serpent, the embodiment of envy and cunning.

Realizing that man's power lay in the protection of his mother, Ialdabaoth determined to detach man from his spiritual guardian, and for this reason, created about him a labyrinth of snares and delusions. In each sphere of the world grew a tree of knowledge, but Ialdabaoth forbade man to eat of its fruit lest all the mysteries of the superior worlds be revealed to him and the rulership of the son of chaos come to an untimely end.

Sophia Achamoth, determined to protect the man who contained her own soul, sent her genius Ophis in the form of a serpent to induce man to transgress the selfish and unjust commands of Ialdabaoth. Man, having eaten of the fruit of the tree, suddenly became capable of comprehending the mysteries of creation. Ialdabaoth revenged himself by punishing this first pair (Adam and Eve) for eating the heavenly fruit. He imprisoned man and woman in a dungeon of matter, building around their spirits the physical bodies of chaotic elements wherein the human being is still enthralled. But Sophia Achamoth still protected mankind. She established between her celestial region and relapsed mankind, a current of divine light, and kept supplying him constantly with a spiritual illumination through his own heart. Thus an internal light continually protected him even though his outer nature wandered in the darkness.