

The Gnostic Catholic Creed: Seeds of Self Knowledge

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The word “creed” is defined as a brief authoritative formula of religious belief. It is also synonymous with religion and ideology. The Creed may therefore be considered a declaration of the beliefs of the congregation, as well as a symbolic representation of the Ecclesia and of the Mass itself. An understanding of this formula may begin with studying the correspondences of the symbolism presented line-by-line, in addition to simple exoteric analysis and reflection on the way one relates to the Creed. Symbolic correspondences can be found by examining the qabalistic significance of specific words within the creed and by relating passages to other symbol sets, including the Tree of Life, the Tarot, and western mythologies. While I have attempted to collect and summarize a wide variety of interpretive information here via research, such data can only grossly approximate the true mystery, which comes with practice, meditation and visualization.

In various portions of this essay, I have used the words *masculine* and *feminine*. In all cases below, these words are used to describe metaphysical concepts, cognate to *yang* and *yin* respectively. These words are not intended to describe *human* gender, behavior, sexuality, or anything of the sort.

“I believe in one secret and ineffable LORD;”

Throughout the rest of the Creed, Crowley uses all capital letters on words that are either known to be of Greek or unknown origin, or words to which he applied isopsephy (Greek gematria) in other works. The word “Lord” stands apart from the others, as it is clearly an English word. Nevertheless, the application of isopsephy to this word, transliterated to the Greek alphabet, reveals layers of meaning.

If we resolve the “O” in LORD to the Greek *digamma*, the total value of the word becomes 140. Crowley was occasionally fond of making this liberal transliteration, probably because of that letter’s origin in the Phoenician *waw*. Another Greek word, which also adds up to 140, is ηδονη, meaning lust, delight, or joy. The implication is that in some way, this LORD is identical with ηδονη, and that ηδονη is secret and ineffable. This is an apt association by my reckoning, especially given the Collect, entitled “The Lord,” which reads as follows:

“Lord secret and most holy, source of light, source of life, source of love, source of liberty, be thou ever constant and mighty within us, force of energy, fire of motion; with diligence let us ever labour with thee, that we may remain in thine abundant joy.”
(Crowley, 1997)

What is truly remarkable, however, is that the word ηδονη (pronounced “hedoneh”) has a striking phonetic similarity to the Hebrew אֲדֹנָי (“Adonai”), which means, in English,

“Lord,” and is used throughout the Bible to refer to that God, who is also secret and ineffable.

This Lord corresponds to Hadit, to Kether on the Tree of Life, and to the Stéle of Revealing in the Mass.

“and in one Star in the company of Stars of whose fire we are created, and to which we shall return;”

It can be argued that Crowley is talking about something else here, something separate from the secret and ineffable Lord, due to the sentence structure. Also, if the Lord is secret and ineffable then this passage cannot, by definition, be a description of it. Throughout the Mass, Crowley refers to the Lord in two contexts, and probably means two different things. For example, “In the name of our Lord the Sun, and of our Lord ...,” [sic] where the second “Lord” referred to cannot be named, and an ellipsis is apparently used in place of any name or description. (Helena et al., 1995)

The description above can refer to the sun, Sol, materially. The sun’s light gives us life through the energy it provides to vegetation, which is the basis of all our nutrition. In this way, we are literally created of the sun’s fire. Our physical bodies will return to this source by the same means, as we are digested by various insects that then pass us on to the plants. The plants then convert our carbon to sugars in the process of photosynthesis, where the sun’s fire finally rends our very molecules asunder.

A more esoteric interpretation could be that each of us is a Star in the company of Stars; that we are the Gods of our own creation; that we create our bodies and minds and return to our original state after death.

This Star corresponds to Ra-Hoor-Khuit, to Aiwass, to the Holy Guardian Angel, to Tiphareth on the Tree of Life, and to the Host in the Mass.

The company of Stars of which this Star is a member corresponds to Nuit, to the negative veils surrounding the Tree of Life, and the Priestess and Paten in the Mass.

“and in one Father of Life, Mystery of Mystery, in His name CHAOS, the sole viceregent of the Sun upon Earth;”

Here Crowley identifies a Thelemic deity by name. Chaos, in Greek, is spelled Χαος, which evaluates to 871. Other words that share this value include: αχος, pain or sorrow; σκοταίος, secret or dark; φαρος, a web or cloak; αγνίζω, to purify; and ακων, “against one’s will.” These associations may seem confusing at first or contradictory to the nature of deity, but they match well the visions described in the 14th Aethyr of *The Vision and the Voice* where Chaos speaks to Crowley:

“His voice comes in a whisper: O thou that art master of the fifty gates of Understanding, is not my mother a black woman? O thou that art master of the Pentagram, is not the egg

of spirit a black egg? Here abideth terror, and the blind ache of the Soul, and lo! even I, who am the sole light, a spark shut up, stand in the sign of Apophis and Typhon.

“I am the snake that devoureth the spirit of man with the lust of light. I am the sightless storm in the night that wrappeth the world about with desolation. Chaos is my name, and thick darkness. Know thou that the darkness of the earth is ruddy, and the darkness of the air is grey, but the darkness of the soul is utter blackness.”

And again in the 4th Aethyr:

“Blackness, blackness intolerable, before the beginning of the light. This is the first verse of Genesis. Holy art thou, Chaos, Chaos, Eternity, all contradictions in terms!”

To intellectually resolve the seeming contradiction of finding this dark desolation as the Father of Life, we can turn to the natural sciences. As the Father of Life, it makes sense that His nature would seem to suggest death and an absence of life – for life is born of these things in nature. In the physical universe, conservation of energy demands that no energy be lost or gained – there is always the same amount of energy in the universe. This being the case, utter desolation would indicate the absolute maximum in potential energy, without form. This is the beginning of creation.

There is one passage in *The Vision and the Voice*, which possibly suggests an alternate spelling. While this spelling does not match the conventional Greek spelling, it does indicate new depths of correspondence. From the 7th Aethyr:

“Now there is a word of four letters that containeth in itself all the mystery of the Tetragrammaton, and there is a word of seven letters which it concealeth, and that again concealeth the holy word that is the key of the Abyss.”

There is a good deal of commentary on this passage, which seem to be summarized in footnote 5:

“These words are probably BABALON, CHAOS, TARO”

One way that Babalon could conceal Chaos is if the latter were spelled, in the Hebrew, “כעוס,” totaling 156, the same value as Babalon. These correspondences, along with some further suggestions in the commentary on the above passage, deserve further research and meditation.

We can qabalistically verify that Chaos is the Father of Life. This can be done through pythmenes (Greek *aiq beker* – adding the numerals of a word’s value to reach a kind of “root value”) and notarichon (corresponding initial letters to core concepts). The value of Χαος is 871, which reduces by pythmenes to 7, the value of the letter *zeta*, which in Greek notarichon, traditionally stands for Ζοε (Life).

According to Crowley, only a Master of the Temple may comprehend the mystery of Chaos. (1997)

Chaos corresponds to Chokmah on the Tree of Life, and to the Priest in the Mass. Chaos, as vice-regent (Priest), performs the function of the sun (Holy Guardian Angel) through the medium of the Air (the Lance – see below).

“and in one Air the nourisher of all that breathes.”

Air is one of the four Alchemical elements. The original Greek word is $\alpha\eta\rho$, and it carries the additional translations of *mist* and *cloud*. Without air (containing many gases), no life on earth (that the author knows of) could transmute base matter into energy. Indeed, the lowest forms of life, such as algae, all require sunlight and air at a minimum to survive (those that live in water extract gasses thence). In this physical sense, nourishment is indeed provided by air to all that breathes.

The value of the word is 109, which corresponds to $\text{H}\rho\alpha$ (Hera), the second wife (and sister) of Zeus. Hera is known as “The Perfected One” and She is known for ultimate and equal rulership, with Zeus, of the world of the Greek Gods and the Earth. Philolaos, a Pythagorean, relates the element of air to Dionysos. Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea, attributed air to Athena. Plato corresponded air to the octahedron, one of the five perfect solids. (Barry, 1999)

Using pythmenes, the value of the word is reduced to 1. The Greek initial α is traditionally attributed to air by notarichon, as is the Hebrew \aleph . These both have a value of 1. The Greek α is also the first letter of $\alpha\nu\alpha\tau\omicron\lambda\eta$ (east, sunrise).

The one Air corresponds to the path of \aleph on the Tree of Life, to The Fool (Atu 0) in the Tarot, and to the Lance in the Mass.

This fragment concludes the first sentence in the Creed. The four parts of this sentence are all related in the sense that they all have predominantly masculine attributes.

“And I believe in one Earth, the Mother of us all, and in one Womb wherein all men are begotten, and wherein they shall rest, Mystery of Mystery, in Her name BABALON.”

The sentence structure in this passage is slightly different from that above. In this case, there are three parts to the sentence and mere commas rather than semicolons separate each part. Therefore, it can be argued that they all refer directly to Babalon. Still, Crowley capitalized the initial letters of Earth, Mother, and Womb, which may offer additional hints to the nature of Babalon.

Earth, in Greek, is $\Gamma\alpha\iota\alpha$, which evaluates by isopsephy to 15. Other words sharing this value are: $\theta\epsilon\alpha$, goddess; $\delta\iota\alpha$, asunder or through; and $\epsilon\iota$, “thou art.” Pythmenes reveals that the root value of 15 is 6, which corresponds to $\alpha\beta\beta\alpha$, or father. (Babalon conceals

Chaos, the Father of Life – see above.) The initial letter E of Earth probably transliterates to the Greek η, which in and of itself is a word in Greek meaning “I was.” The meaning of η by notarichon is, curiously, Hera. The initial letter Γ of Γατα has a value of 3, clearly corresponding to Binah on the Tree of Life.

Mother, in Greek, is Μητηρ, which evaluates to 456. Curiously, this is exactly 300 more than the value of Babalon. Using pythmenes, we again arrive at the values of 15 and 6 (see Earth above). Other words with the value of 456 include: μεταβολη, change; διακαιοκρισια, righteous judgment; διοβολος, hurled by Zeus; and ζευγμα, bond.

Womb, in Greek, is Δελφους, which evaluates to 1139. Another word with this value is γελωτα, laughter. This value does not reduce to 15 or 6, like those above, through pythmenes. Rather, the digits add up to 14, which breaks down further to 5, the same as the value of Αδ, Had or Hadit. Again, this is an ultimately feminine symbol with a fiery and masculine association. The number 5 is also related to the sphere of Geburah on the Tree of Life, arguably the most masculine (but fundamentally feminine) member of the feminine Pillar of Severity. This seems appropriate. Of the three concepts, Earth, Mother, and Womb, the latter is the most related to generation, a typically masculine trait. The initial letter W of Womb probably transliterates to the Greek *digamma*, which carries the value of 6, thereby maintaining the connection with Mother and Earth above. It may also transliterate to *omega*, which by itself means the end, or the last, and is symbolic of the seventh heaven of the Christian Gnostics.

Babalon is spelled Βαβαλον in Greek, and Her value is 156. This number does not appear very remarkable at first glance, as there are few (not very revealing) other words with the same numerology. The number 156 is the product of 12 and 13. The number 12 suggests the zodiac and the complete macrocosm. The number 13 corresponds to Hebrew words meaning, “love” and “unity”.

Applying pythmenes to the number 156 also gives us 12 (see above). Applying pythmenes to 12, we get 1+2=3, the number of Binah on the Tree of Life and the value of the letter Γ. The meaning of Γ by notarichon is Γατα (see above) and γενναω, to beget or to be born. The associations to Earth, Mother, and Womb are clearly evident.

Crowley has a great deal to say about Babalon in *The Vision and the Voice* and elsewhere. She bears the cup, and collects the blood of the saints therein. Her consort is Chaos in this context. A beautiful depiction of Babalon can be found in Crowley and Harris’ Thoth Tarot (Atu XI).

Babalon corresponds to Binah on the Tree of Life, and the cup in the Mass.

“And I believe in the Serpent and the Lion, Mystery of Mystery, in His name BAPHOMET.”

The case of Baphomet is a curious one. The word’s origin is unknown. In Crowley’s *Confessions*, he relates the tale of his frustration at not finding the correct spelling of this

name (as no spelling he could devise yielded sufficiently significant values by his reckoning), and asking a spirit for guidance. In it, the spirit tells the spelling of Baphomet as it might transliterate to the Hebrew: באועמיתר. Using the Hebrew gematria, this adds to 729, which is 9^3 and corresponds to Κηφας, the name (which literally means “stone,” and in this context, the cubical cornerstone of the Church) that Jesus gave to Peter. (Crowley, 1989) The word σκαφη, ship or vessel, also shares this value.

What is odd about this spelling is that it ends in *resh*, which transliterates to the English letter “r.” Crowley felt that this spelling resolved the etymology of the word, because it has a phonetic similarity to a title meaning “Father Mithras.” (Unfortunately, he does not reveal what title this might be.) Another etymological theory that Crowley liked, but which was not supported by the new spelling, was that Baphomet was a corruption of βαφη μετοεξ, baptism of wisdom. (Crowley, 1989)

The name Baphomet dates back at least as far as the Knights Templar. Other similar deities date back at least as far as the Manicheans and other Christian Gnostics. The ideas that Baphomet represents have always been thought of as evil by dualists who believe that flesh and matter are manifestations of evil forces. Baphomet represents generation, and any symbol depicting generation or incarnation is in harmony with Him. (Helena et al., 1995)

The association of the lion and serpent to Baphomet gives further clues to His nature. There is a Christian Gnostic depiction of Yldaboath as a lion-headed man with a serpent wrapped around Him. Yldaboath, in the Christian Gnostic mythology, is the deity responsible for the creation of the Earth and its inhabitants. He was a blind idiot God, who could not see the other deities around Him (actually above Him) and therefore mistakenly thought He was the *only* God. Many sects of Christian Gnosticism regarded Him as evil because of His essential flaws, and because of the flaws of His creation. However, most Thelemites do not equate flesh and matter as intrinsically evil, so therefore Baphomet, our equivalent of Yldaboath, is not regarded as evil either. He is the result of the union of Chaos and Babalon and He symbolizes the union of opposites.

Baphomet corresponds to Tiphareth on the Tree of Life, and the Deacon in the Mass.

“And I believe in one Gnostic and Catholic Church of Light, Life, Love and Liberty, the Word of whose Law is THELEMA.”

It is doubtful that the potential readers of this document will require much elaboration on the meaning or numerology of the word θελημα. It means “will” and its value is 93. This value is shared by αγαπη, love.

That our Church is Gnostic and Catholic simply means that we believe in direct, unmediated knowledge of deity, and that our Church is universal and comprehensive. (See Dictionary definitions of the terms.)

The repetition of the initial letter “L” in “Light, Life, Love and Liberty” draws attention to itself. The value of the letter λ is 30, and its meaning by notarichon is “lion.” The repetition of four λs gives us a total value of 120, the number of ov (the Greek word for “being” and the Egyptian word for the sun). There is also a symbolic correspondence between these words and the יהוה formula: Light = י, Life = ה, Love = ו, Liberty = ה.

The Church and the word θελημα correspond to Malkuth on the Tree of Life, and the physical congregation and temple in the Mass.

“And I believe in the communion of Saints.”

Up to this point in the Creed, there seems to be a kind of chronological cosmology depicted. The Creed begins with the most ineffable and here we are at the level of the most physical. Likewise, the majority of the Mass seems to be a pageant depicting the same. At this point in the Creed (and in the Mass), the trend begins to reverse itself in the act of communion.

Communion in the Mass consists of eating the physical manifestation of Chaos (the body of God), and drinking that of Babalon (the blood of God). The wine is also the blood of the Saints – our ancestors. These were individual human beings and characters from myth that embodied, in some way, the phallic principle in our culture. Whether Gods, or bards, or mystics, martyrs mythological or literal, or what have you, the Saints listed in the Mass have universally been a positive, generative force in the Western Esoteric Tradition. That list is far from comprehensive (or even representative), and it may be argued that *all* those who actively participate in our mystical current will become Saints at death, for we all must rest in the Womb of our creation. We must also return to the Star in the company of Stars. Thereby, in addition to being the body of God, the host in communion may be seen as the Saints’ bodies just as the wine is the blood.

This act of communion represents the realization of a spiritual union between the congregants and the tradition. It also is an act of sharing between congregants, and stimulates feelings of intimate fellowship and rapport – toward each other and toward our predecessors the Saints. We are members of their community, and we were before we were born. Communion is communication also, and therefore suggestive of Knowledge and Conversation with the Holy Guardian Angel.

The communion of Saints corresponds to the path of ٧, and to the communion in the Mass.

“And, forasmuch as meat and drink are transmuted in us daily into spiritual substance, I believe in the Miracle of the Mass.”

The Miracle of the Mass occurs in the consumption and digestion of the Eucharist. This is the process whereby we unite opposites within ourselves, taking in Chaos and Babalon to become the child, Baphomet.

We eat every day, and we unite opposites constantly in this way through the very function of our bodies. Daily we perform transmutation; daily we turn the lead into gold; and daily our activities nourish the spirit. It is perhaps the consciousness of these processes, and the awareness of their relationship to the rest of our world, which makes it a miraculous occurrence.

This Miracle takes place – not at Mass, or even in the twelve hours it takes to digest the materials after Mass – but over the course of years or even decades, as nutrients are stored, deposits left in arteries, practices observed, and awareness expanded in the body, mind, and spirit. There is no completion to this Miracle. Even after death, the process continues. It is the process, and not the result, which is miraculous. It is actually physically miraculous because it represents an isolated anomaly at extreme variance with the rest of the known universe. The Second Law of Thermodynamics states that entropy always increases. Perhaps a caveat should be added for our experience: that as Chaos increases, so shall He multiply.

The Miracle of the Mass corresponds to the path of ψ and to the moment in the Mass when the Priest and Priestess cry, “HRILIU!”

“And I confess one Baptism of Wisdom whereby we accomplish the Miracle of Incarnation.”

This confession is foreshadowed immediately prior to the commencement of the Creed, when the congregation performs the step and sign of Man and Brother, Woman and Sister – the old Masonic step and sign of the first degree, symbolizing birth.

Physically, there is only one way to accomplish the Miracle of Incarnation without the intervention of advanced medical technologies. The Baptism of Wisdom is it. The act of sex is not the terminal meaning of this symbolism, however, for sex is itself symbolic. Our own Baptism of Wisdom came at conception, but everywhere is conception taking place. Our thoughts, our actions, our love, every physical law of nature and every magickal practice facilitate the process of intercourse – of union.

Nevertheless, this passage is far more materially based than that of Baphomet, which is also concerned with the union of opposites (note also the possible etymological relationship between Baphomet and the Baptism of Wisdom mentioned above). It is the first of the two confessions in the Creed. The word “confession” implies that this is not a metaphysical metaphor, but a physical euphemism, for to confess is to make something known. We are making known that sexual intercourse alone brings incarnation.

The symbolic and reverent language of this confession of the sex act supports the popular Thelemic perspective that sex and sexual symbolism are divine, and that sexual taboo is to be examined with a critical eye.

The Baptism of Wisdom corresponds to Yesod on the Tree of Life, and to the font in the Mass.

“And I confess my life one, individual, and eternal that was, and is, and is to come.”

After conception and birth, we experience life. Each of us is singular, existing as a distinct entity forever. Furthermore, we will forever have a past, present, and future that we relate to. The confession made here describes the Holy Guardian Angel, our “higher self” that is independent of our worldly identity. The Creed has methodically progressed from the passage above regarding the Gnostic and Catholic Church – the material basis of the congregation – to the divine and separate self in each of us.

My life corresponds to Tiphareth on the Tree of Life, and to the censer in the Mass.

“AUMGN, AUMGN, AUMGN.”

Crowley transliterates *aumgn* to αςμγν (with the ς here representing the antiquated *digamma*), demonstrating again that numerology is of far greater importance than phonetic spelling when it comes to words of this nature. (Crowley, 1997) Rightfully so, for it is in the correspondences where we find meaning in the word. Its value is 100, corresponding to the Greek λαγνεια (lust) – again the underlying principle of the union of opposites. By pythmenes, the value is the same as that of Air, above.

This word is a Thelemic *mantra*. As such, it literally represents the aspiration of the congregants, as they conspire to unite in breath and vibration, raising the spiritual consciousness of each. It is also suggestive of our immanent oneness with God and the divinity of our selves.

Our *mantra* corresponds to the three Supernal spheres on the Tree of Life (Binah, Chokhmah, and Kether), and the altar in the Mass. This concludes the line-by-line analysis.

Looking at our Creed as a whole, there appears to be a correspondence to the *Gloria* section of Crowley’s Star Sapphire ritual (see [The Book of Lies](#)). It may therefore be appropriate to examine and compare the Gnostic Mass to the Star Sapphire, as well as other Eucharistic rites (such as the Mass of the Phoenix). In addition, I have found a possible recursive expression of the יהוה formula within the Creed. These findings, and the major attributions identified previously in this essay, are shown in the attached table.

The Creed depicts the act of creation, and the aspiration of the created. It foreshadows future repetition of this cycle, demonstrating by example that there is no part of us that is not of the gods.

It is in the best interest of any that study and attend the Mass to perform such an exegesis as this, or to meditate upon the meaning of the Creed in some fashion or another, using this essay and the resources in the bibliography as a starting point.

Creed	Tree of Life	Ecclesia & Mass	Gloria	Recursive יהוה			
LORD	Kether	Stélé	Gloria Patri	י			
Star	Tiphareth	Host					
Company of Stars	Negative Veils	Paten, Priestess		ה	י		
CHAOS	Chokhmah	Priest		ו			
Air	Aleph	Lance		ה		י	
BABALON	Binah	Cup	Et Matri		ה		
BAPHOMET	Tiphareth	Deacon	Et Filio		ו		
THELEMA	Malkuth	Congregation, Temple	Et Filiae		ה		י
Saints	Samekh	Communion	Et Spiritui Sancto Externo			ה	
Miracle	Teth	HRILIU	Et Spiritui Sancto Interno			ו	
Baptism	Yesod	Font	Ut Erat Est Erit In Saecula Saeculorum				
My Life	Tiphareth	Censer				ה	
AUMGN	Binah	Altar	Sex In Uno Per Nomen Septum In Uno ARARITA				ה
AUMGN	Chokhmah	Mid-Altar					ו
AUMGN	Kether	Super-Altar					ה

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