

Celestial Horus™



Tradition Book Five
for Mage: The Ascension

Celestial Chorus™



Make a Joyful Noise Unto the Lord
— Psalm 98:4

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PRINTED IN CANADA

Very Special Thanks To:

Jennifer Hartshorn, whose fierce vision lingers beyond her departure.

Trace o'Conner, who brought grace and humor to a thankless job.

Joshua Gabriel Timbrook, who set the standard for those who dwell in Darkness.

Remy Blaine, whose succinct observations reminded us that even the quiet ones have teeth.

Lisa Charlton, who still holds her head high among The Great Unwashed.

David Remy, who gave so that others might survive.

Cindi Mayberry and **Roger Smith**, who left us all too few expressions of their great talents.

Sean Bajar, whose dreams came and went too soon.

Bruce Butkovitch, who left to tour a little sooner than expected.

Lori Sanders, former den mother for the Rage gang.

...and **Elizabeth Folkes**, who needs the Goddess' blessings more than most, it seems,

On Black Wednesday, Icarus fell to Earth. All of you made the sacrifice that allows this book, and future ones, to see publication. Everyone will be missed. We are poorer for your departure.

Author's Dedication and Thanks:

This work is dedicated with love to:

Kimberly Hausbeck, Red Bird Woman — with my deepest gratitude for a summer of Awakening.

Climbing up on Solsbury Hill,

I could see the city light.

Wind was blowing, time stood still;

Eagle flew out of the night...

— Peter Gabriel, "Solsbury Hill"

Thomas Walker — for having shared seven years with me, in joy and in sorrow.

If I ever hurt you,

I never planned it that way

Until tomorrow,

Live for today.

— Cicero, "Live for Today"

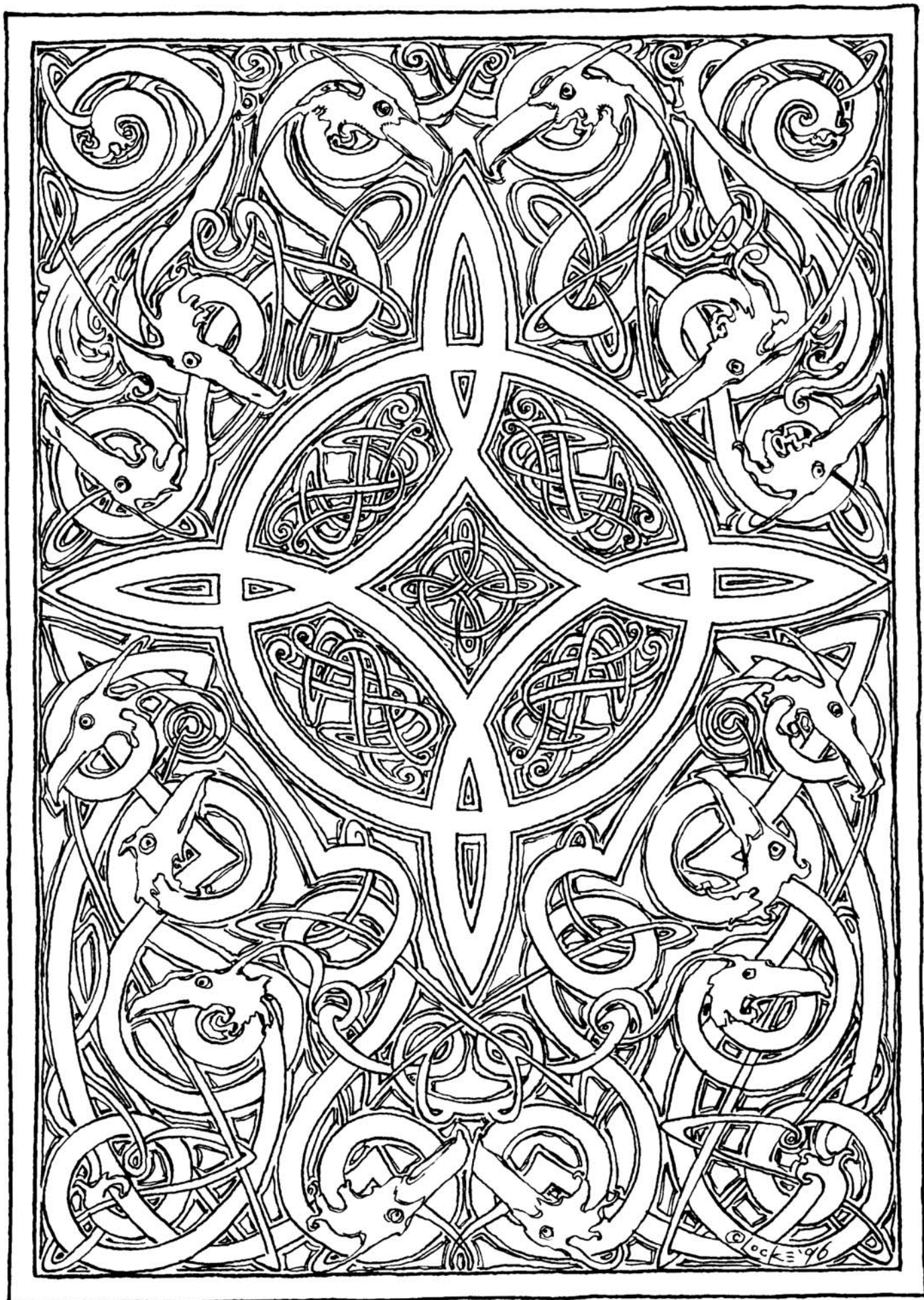
Thanks go to Shari Hausbeck, for her role in our Montana summer; Phil Brucato, for his continued support and gentle dentistry; and fellow game-designers, Graeme Davis and Keylan Qazzaz, for their professional advice, encouragement and sense of humor.

Finally, special thanks are due to Steven D. Long.

Celestial Chorus™

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Prelude: The Book^{of} Ages, or The Theophanies of the ONE

*I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart;
I will tell of all thy wonderful deeds.
I will be glad and exult in thee,
I will sing praise to thy name, O Most High.*
— Psalm 9:1-2

Preface to the First English Edition



Our esteemed Pontifex Maximus, in his infinite wisdom and goodness, deems that our Holy Writ should be translated into the English tongue, that it may be better understood across the world; that these words and songs may be more easily learned in the hearts and minds of all Choristers, not merely those among the educated elite; and that our Writ may be freed from the tyranny of the Hermetics, who would use Latin, a most venerable and ancient tongue, as a means of hiding arcane secrets and obfuscating the Truth.

Let Chorister and Catechumen alike read these words and learn from them, for they are the manifestation of the One's

unfolding actions within and throughout history. Let these Truths be propounded across the lands, for they are the teachings of the First Singers themselves, passed down through the generations from Singer to Singer unto us now, as we prepare to stem the tide of the Promethean Order of Reason and other Skeptics.

We exist as the One's emissaries, and we have been entrusted and empowered by Him to bring the straying flock back into His fold. If we may do so through kindness and mercy, then our Lord be praised. But let His burning fury immolate any who dare speak against Him or who stand in the Way of Ascension.

Thy will be done, Amen.

Preface to the Fourth English Edition



It has been 150 years since publication of the last official edition of our Congregation's scriptures, and in the minds of many, it is an act long overdue. Since the last edition, a plethora of new songs, visions and manuscripts have been unveiled and revealed to our Congregation, and no small handful of them have stood the test of time, now demanding equal space in our canonical readings. *The Book of Ages*, or *The Theophanies*, has long called out for a new edition, and our Office is delighted and proud to fulfill this mission.

The purpose of this edition is not to enforce a canonical acceptance of certain texts over others, but to show what is most commonly accepted by the mainstream of our Congregation. It is regrettable that a number of hymns and manuscripts had to be omitted for this purpose; while such works — particularly the *Hymn of the Spheres*, the *Rape of Lilith* and the *Byzantine Apocryphon* — have proven to be remarkably inspirational or influential for limited groups of Choristers, they have not as a whole been commonly accepted. These and other texts will be in an authorized collection of deuterocanonical works in the near future.

Textual History

We of the Celestial Chorus consider our *Book of Ages* to be a living, growing document. We believe in an ongoing creation and a continuing revelation. The One does not speak once and remain silent forever after; we are the notes of His Song.

Without a doubt, many of the songs and stories in *The Theophanies* predate their written variants by countless generations, surviving in oral tradition and transmitted through generations of Singers. However, the collection of these stories into the form that would be called *The Book of Ages* probably began during the later part of the second millennium B.C.E., as Mentu-hetep began unifying the disparate bands of Singers into one Congregation with a unified mission.

From that time, *The Theophanies* grew as individual communities contributed their stories and songs to it. Eventually, some of these tales would fall by the wayside, while others would become accepted in wider and wider circles. In this manner, *The Book of Ages* grew, and continues to grow to this day. The fact that these texts, psalms and hymns come from a variety of original tongues and languages, from Old Persian to contemporary American English, is a testament to our Congregation's universality and plurality.

Translation History

The first English translation of *The Theophanies* was a translation from the Latin manuscript of the same collection. It was common practice for most educated individuals in the Middle Ages to be versed in Latin; this was particularly the case with members of our Congregation, due to our deep ecclesiastical ties with the Christian Church.

As such, it was natural that Latin, the *lingua franca* of the churchman and the intellectual, would be the chosen language for *The Theophanies*. In the early 1300s, however, with a movement away from Latin toward vernacular languages beginning in our Congregation — and ultimately spreading throughout various churches as well — it became apparent that vernacular editions were a necessity. Awakening was not limited to the educated.

Many individuals within our Congregation worked independently on translation projects, but finally, in the early 1400s, an officially sanctioned effort was underway to present a variety of vernacular editions. The English edition was one such result, along with German, Italian and Spanish editions.

The Second (1645) and Third (1838) English Editions of *The Theophanies* were modifications of the First Edition, with some correction made when it appeared errors in translation — either from the manuscripts' original languages to Latin, or from Latin to English — had been made. The Third Edition Revised (1929) was a nominal attempt at best to include a few newer documents, but these had not yet found universal acceptance among our congregation, and this sub-edition was not widely approved.

However, with the Fourth Edition, we have gone back to the original languages and translated them anew into more fresh, contemporary English, while also adding new psalms and visions that have gained acceptance.

It should also be recognized that this edition demonstrates a broader inclusivity and historical understanding than previous editions through a number of its features, as shall be discussed below.

Language

The first English translation was released to the Chorus in 1465, and as such was filled with conventions of Elizabethan English that are now anachronisms. While there is certainly no lack of educated individuals in our Congregation, the use of such antiquated jargon is prohibitive, exclusive and entirely unnecessary.

The second and third editions of this work did little to correct the language. As they were merely modifications of the first edition, there was little room for them to grow. However, with the fourth edition, the editors — under the auspices and blessings of the Pontiff and the entire Curia — have chosen to translate the original manuscripts into current colloquial English. We have attempted to maintain the original poetic quality of the documents wherever possible, but some loss in translation is always to be expected.

Some critics of our approach argue that the previous editions had a poetic quality which outweighed scholarly conventions. While all of our Congregation should appreciate qualities of rhythm and meter, we should not neglect the value of scholarly exactitude. Frankly, some of the previous editions were based more upon poetry (or even ideological bias) rather than upon history and original meaning. We have returned to the original meanings, and we remain confident that our edition is not entirely lacking in graces of its own.

Of course, the true poetry of any of *The Theophanies* is how they are made manifest in our lives, not what form they take on paper.

New Texts

A number of texts, including the *Letters of Genevieve* and the *Song of Bernadette*, are recent additions to the canon. The process of determining canonical status is discussed elsewhere and not the concern of this introductory text. Suffice it to say, though, that majority usage is a valid enough argument for canonical acceptance. With no less than a dozen new books, psalms and songs in current use since the third edition, a new edition was necessary.

Introductions

In order to contribute to the education of our Congregation — an education, some critics say, that is deteriorating rapidly under the onslaught of the Skeptics — we have chosen to add a brief historical introduction to each of the various components of *The Theophanies*. These are not meant to be exhaustive; they serve only as points of reference for the original document, placing them within some historical context.

Variant Texts

While we, like editors of previous editions, have chosen to include only those documents that are most commonly accepted by our Congregation across the globe, we do understand that the same text may, over the course of generations, take on different forms in different nations.

We have indicated some of the more important variants in brackets, that our readers might have a greater understanding and appreciation of the text in the many forms it may take. It should be clearly understood that our use of brackets does not imply a less significant or deuterocanonical status, only that these portions of text are not found in the major source manuscripts.

Conclusion

The documents that make up our sacred scriptures are the living testament of all those who have gone before us, that they may guide us in wisdom towards reunion with the One. Our scriptures are not a closed book or some dead manuscript; instead they are a living history, ever growing and building as generation upon generation manifests the One's glorious Song.

There is a maxim in religious studies — and anyone who has studied religious history to any depth can attest to this — that orthodoxy is often defined only in the face of heresy. Liken our Congregation's growth after the Promethean upheaval to the Catholic Church's growth after the Protestant Reformation. It was the growing threat of heresy that forced the codification of orthodoxy and orthopraxis.

If this is true, then it might even be surmised that the contemporary face of the Chorus owes much to the Technocracy for instigating such radical change and forcing us into a different future. While many theologians among the Chorus might disagree with this statement, and would prefer to bemoan our loss of status some 500 years after the fact, they cannot deny that who we are today is defined by what happened to us then.

Lexicon

Book of Ages: The sacred scriptures of the Celestial Chorus.

Catechumenate: An Apprentice's period of training and study.

Curia: The Chorus' administrative council.

Dark Singers: Technically, Nephandi; sometimes loosely applied to any ill-willed mage.

Enchiridion: (Greek, "handbook") Portion of the *Book of Ages* which sums up many of the Chorus' beliefs.

Faithful: The Celestial Chorus — those mages who follow the One's purpose for placing humanity on the Earth.

First Singers: The first, and most powerful, mages.

The Four Ages: Concept which divides history into four ages, each representing a different epoch in Chorus' history:

- **First Age:** The earliest days, the time of pre-history, when the First Singers (q.v.) walked the Earth; ended in second century B.C.E.

- **Second Age:** The time from the establishment of the Congregation, in the second century B.C.E., to the Battle of the Milvian Bridge (312 C.E.).

- **Third Age:** The period of Christian ascendancy within the Congregation, from the Battle of the Milvian Bridge to the Declaration of the Ivory Tower in 1325.

- **Fourth Age:** The reign of the Technocracy, from the 14th century to the present day.

Great Adytum: The Chorus' seat of authority and main Horizon Realm.

Longaevi: Alternate term for the fae.

Messianic Voices: The Christian faction within the Congregation which, starting in the fourth century C.E., rose in power to become the dominant voice.

Pontifex Maximus: The central authority for the Chorus.

Metempsychosis: The ancient belief of reincarnation.

Rebels: Those of the Many who struggled against the One's authority; also called **The Defiant**.

Reconciliation: The End Times, when all Creation shall be reunited. The One's followers will be rewarded, His opponents will be destroyed. Some believe a great war will occur.

Sacred City: The goal of the Congregation — a world which reveres the One and places religion at the center of society.

Congregation vs. Chorus

The term *Congregation* applies to the gathering of like-minded Singers in the second century B.C.E., who shared a common ideology of Reconciliation. This loosely allied group was unified and named the Celestial Chorus in 1461. However, since the Chorus sees itself as the inheritor of the Congregation's mission, it continues to call itself "the Congregation." Only context can determine whether the term is used to describe the historic antecedent or the current body.

Variant Terms

The following terms are typically used within the Congregation in favor of the Council of Nine's common parlance.

Adytum: Chantry. This term may vary from place to place: Sanctuary, Temple, etc.

Catechumen: Apprentice

Exarch: Master

Praecept: Mentor

Presbyter: Adept

Singer: Mage

The Song: Magick

B.C.E. and C.E.

The Chorus recognizes that not all of its members view the birth of Christ as an axial moment in time. Thus, B.C.E. (Before the Christian/Common Era) is preferred to B.C. (Before Christ), and C.E. (Christian/Common Era) to A.D. (Anno Domini, Year of Our Lord).



Chapter One: THEOGONY (History)

Then I saw the lucent sky, in which I heard different kinds of music, marvelously embodying all the meanings I had heard before. I heard the praises of the joyous citizens of Heaven, steadfastly persevering in the ways of Truth; and laments calling people back to those praises and joys; and the exhortations of the virtues, spurring one another on to secure the salvation of the peoples ensnared by the Devil. And the virtues destroyed his snares, so that the faithful at last through repentance passed out of their sins and into Heaven.

And their song, like the voice of a multitude, making music in harmony praising the ranks of Heaven, had these words...

— Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias*, Vision 13

The Creation Hymns



How great is the power of God! His mere will is creation; for God alone created, since He alone is truly God. By a bare wish His work is done, and the world's existence follows upon a single act of His will.

— Clement of Alexandria, *Exhortation to the Greeks*

This edition includes three of the many Creation psalms and songs our Congregation has adopted. We believe that in understanding our Creation myths we understand ourselves, but let it be clear here that by saying "myths," we mean not fabrications or lies, but stories containing within them principal truths. These Creation hymns have been composed throughout our history, but we have followed the example of previous editions by placing them at the beginning of our Book.

The Hymn of the One

Easily the most well-known Creation hymn comes to us composed in Avesta. Many versions of this text have been passed down through oral transmission, but this particular text is easily the earliest recorded variant. Preserved on a scroll by a small sect of Singers in the Urals who had been isolated from the rest of our Congregation until the 15th century of the Common Era, the scroll is currently dated as over 2,500 years old; the number of redactions it went through before being recorded, and the hymn's true age, can only be guessed. It is one of the earliest known recorded manuscripts of our Creation hymn, although our South Asian brethren insist that their Sanskrit version is 1,000 years older.

While most European Creation hymns refer to the Creator as a "He," this particular manuscript identifies the One's gender as feminine. Earlier editions chose to revise this in favor of the male gender, but we have decided — despite some protest — to return to the original gender designation.



The One Sings

In the Beginning was the One.

She Was, from the time before all time, but She was alone.
She looked into the Void — a cold, dark, silent place.
And it came to pass that She desired light and sound.

So the One Sang

A single, perfect note,

And it was good.

Her note filled the emptiness of the Void, giving it life.

She Sang again, and this note was good as well.

And She Sang once more, creating another note.

She Sang many different notes, pleased equally by the
sound of them all.

But it was not enough to produce single notes,

So She Sang two notes together,

And then three.

Note by note Her melody grew, until finally She Sang
forth an entire Song!

Her Singing filled the Void;

Where once was silence, was now Her music.

Still there was the darkness, and the All-Singer was
displeased.

So She filled Her Song with fire and light,

Making it a fevered burning hymn,

Majestic and bright and pure.

And the Void was empty no more,

Filled instead with all things good and beautiful and true,
Her Song burning away the dark cold of the Void as the
sun dispels the morning chill.

The Birth of the Many

But still She desired companionship.

So She Sang again, giving life unto each note, until She
gave birth to the Many, born into music and light.

The One Sang to them, and they learned that they too
knew Her Song, that they were lesser reflections of Her:

Faint, dim images, still bearing within the seeds of the
One's Song and Her light.

It came to pass that the Many gathered,

Singing in concord the One's Song, and radiating Her
splendor.

They gathered their multitude of voices and Sang together;
while each was singly beautiful,

Together they were a magnificent harmony.

Both song and light were lesser than the One's, yet still
they were worthy.

They Sang and then they shone, and the One was pleased.

They praised Her in Song, for she was their All —
Creator and Composer, the First Note and the First Song.
She was the All-Singer.

The Lesser Creations

As the One created the Many, so did the Many create;
And as the Many were lesser reflections of the One, so
were the creations of the Many even lesser reflections.
Yet in all things there still existed the spark of the One,
And Her Song was the heartbeat of all Creation.

The Many gave birth to the myriad worlds,
And to the lands and seas upon these worlds,
And to the many creatures which inhabited them:
Creatures that lived in air or water,
On the land or beneath it,
Creatures which walked, or crawled, or flew, or swam.
And the One watched, and listened, and was content with
the works of Her children.

For time immeasurable She Sang to the Many,
And the Many Sang to Her, and they Sang together,
With One as melody and Many as harmony.
And it was good.

The Dark Ones

But discontent crept into the hearts of a few,
And they desired not to render the Song of the One,
But instead their own.
Some did so out of pride,
And others because they were weak and easily swayed,
But others out of malice, or spite, or anger.
These rebellious few met and conspired to create their own
song

Even greater than that of the One
— Which cannot be!

But they rose their voices in a song of their own,
A harsh, raking noise like the shattering of rock,
Or the breaking of bone,
Lacking beauty, filled with power.
Their dissonance grew, and where it filled the heavens,
The One's light dimmed,
And darkness reigned.
And these nether-regions were black and dismal,
Filled with a cacophony of sounds,
A symphony of pain, and hate, and greed, and all things
terrible.
Where once there was harmony, was now discord.



The War in Heaven

The One was displeased, and Her Song rose in anger.
Her loyal children Sang with Her,
And their combined Song dwarfed the discord of the
Rebels,

Driving their voices into silence.

But the One was merciful, and She forgave the Rebels and
the Discontented,

And offered unto them a chance to rejoin the celestial
choirs which Sang in harmony together with Her.

But these Rebels smoldered in their pride,
And were sullen in their anger.

And again they sang,

A discord so loathsome that the Faithful covered their ears
and wept, while others fled in fear.

Our Mother's anger was terrible to behold!

Her Song rose again;

Her voice shook and the Heavens trembled under Her
might.

The Defiant rejoined against Her,
Hoping against hope to overcome Her Song with their
own dismal noise.

[Her Faithful took up their arms,
Seeking to restore the harmony that once reigned supreme.
And others wavered, indecisive, overcome by fear and
weakness.]

And their War shook the celestial firmament,
With competing Songs vying for dominance.

And finally the One smote the malcontents,
Shattering them, and exiling them from Her presence.
She banished them to the world of forms, the lesser realms
of their own creation,
That they might learn and grow and come into Her Song
of their own desire.

With them, She sent those that wavered; these too had
Shattered,

For they lacked the strength to support Her Song.
And with them She sent the Faithful, who were also rent
asunder,

That they might guide the banished,
And protect them from the Defiant who even still sought
to usurp the One's glory.

The Many, now a multitude,
And the One silent once more.



Excerpts: The Book of the First Age



When the gods created Gilgamesh they gave him a perfect body. Shamash the glorious sun endowed him with beauty, Adad the god of the storm endowed him with courage, the great gods made his beauty perfect, surpassing all others, terrifying like a great wild bull. Two thirds they made him god, and one third man.

— The Epic of Gilgamesh

The First Age is the Age of prehistory, when the First Singers wandered the Earth, and their deeds were recorded in myth and legend. It spans thousands of years, from the beginnings of humanity to the second century before the Christian era.

The Book of The First Singers

Of the early songs and texts to comprise the Book of the First Age, this particular document is perhaps among the most comprehensive. Many other books are testaments to individual Awakened, extolling their virtues and detailing their exploits, but rarely placing them in the larger context of the First Singers' mission; for example, some of those heroes barely mentioned in this text (e.g., Mitras and Bhishma) receive hymns of their own and are treated even further in the un-Awakened's literature.

Verse numbers were added to the text for the first edition, although the practice was neither widespread nor popular for The Book of Ages. It is possible that this text's prominence grew as our identity was challenged by the rise of the Traditions and the Order of Reason; it was a means of demonstrating our primal origins, and how the Celestial Chorus was the inheritor of a Divine purpose.

I. The Early Days

- 1 After the Shattering came Time,
- 2 when the Multitude lived as creatures of flesh and bone, as beings of frail mortality and a short life that could be measured in days and years.
- 3 The Song was quiescent within them, still a part of their very being, but now clothed in matter.
- 4 For matter has the power to conceal spirit,
- 5 and beings of matter may be blind to the spirit within them, regardless how great or powerful.
- 6 And in these bodies, the sparks of the Maker lay dormant, Sleeping.
- 7 But some of His Children still remembered, and the shards of Divinity glowed brightly within them.
- 8 These were the First Singers, the first mortals to sing the Maker's Song, to radiate His light and power.

9 These few heard His distant Song and traveled the lands, giving, caring, protecting and avenging, acting as beacons in the night, providing warmth and safety.

10 They lived many days and performed wondrous deeds, ever striving to make the Song of the Maker be heard by others.

11 The few who remembered the true Song, the Song of the Maker, walked the Earth —

12 Mitras and Gundar, Enoch and Bhishma — many bright and powerful voices were of this number, ministering to all the One's children.

13 And we were like unto gods then, for there was little we could not do.

II. The Exiled

- 1 Those of the Multitude in exile were a difficult lot, though;
- 2 for those whose Song was quiet were like children,
- 3 unable to comprehend the truths of their elders or to see the right way before them.
- 4 And so the First Singers had to nurse them.
- 5 [Many of the Sleeping ones had to live whole lifetimes again and again before they ever heard the Song within them, and these ones the First Singers gently cared for lifetime after lifetime.]

III. The Rebels

- 1 But the Rebels were also banished,
- 2 and even after the Shattering many among their number continued their dark ways.
- 3 These too had been clothed in forms of flesh, their origins forgotten,
- 4 but even these continued their dark deeds, however venial in nature.
- 5 Even to these the First Singers ministered in the hopes of bringing them to the Maker,
- 6 but too often they met with failure.

IV. The Skeptics

- 1 And then came the Skeptics,
- 2 those who doubted the Maker's existence and argued against it,
- 3 and they strove to turn the Sleeping children away from the One.
- 4 "Our Maker is dead," said they, "for we created Him out of our own weakness, and now we need this phantasm no more."
- 5 Where they went, they spread their disbelief, and where they went, hope died.

V. The Dark Singers

- 1 And then the Dark Singers appeared,
- 2 those who remembered their celestial origins and were vengeful and bitter.
- 3 And they sang their songs, filled with rancor and ill will, and they too worked powerful acts,
- 4 but not in the name of the First Song;
- 5 they spoke of allegiance to Others, false gods which they said rivaled the Maker,
- 6 and granted their followers powers to dwarf those of the Maker's own children.
- 7 And many great deeds were done in these days, as our earliest champions fought the evils of the Dark Ones.
- 8 These Dark Singers wrestled with the First Singers, promising the Sleeping children powers undreamt of, bargaining for control of these frail souls.
- 9 And they fought the First Singers, through means both earthly and unearthly, sometimes seducing them into the service of the Others.
- 10 And the Dark Singers were a blight on the face of the Earth.

VI. The Lost Ones

- 1 Not all of the First Singers stayed true to the One's Song.
- 2 There were those tempted by the Dark Singers,
- 3 and they were lost to the Maker.

- 4 But there were also those who heard His Song as if through wood or stone, distant and distorted;
- 5 and they too sought to guide the Slumbering ones,
- 6 but too often the One's Song was ignored.
- 7 And though they were not the enemies of the First Singers, nor were they their allies,
- 8 for two cannot stand both against and beside each other.

VII. The Passing of the First Singers

- 1 The days wore on, and the years,
- 2 with the First Singers slowly guiding the Sleeping children,
- 3 and the Lost and Straying singing a different Song,
- 4 and the Dark Singers ever attempting to snuff the light and dampen the Maker's Song.
- 5 As the First Singers slowly died, or disappeared, or came back into unity with the Maker,
- 6 they were replaced by their disciples, who, like their predecessors, heard the Maker's voice and strove to guide all toward reunion with Him in celestial harmony.
- 7 But these Singers found each passing generation weaker and weaker,
- 8 until the time of the now,
- 9 when we are but mortal men amongst mortal men,
- 10 surrounded on all sides by our enemies.

Excerpts: The Book of The Second Age



Kings may rule the world, but the wise rule Kings.
— Shekel Hakodesh, 18

The Second Age runs from the Chorus' early organized beginnings to Constantine's embrace of the Christian faith. As such, it covers roughly 1600 years, during which the Congregation slowly grew in power and influence. The documents from this time reflect both the growth of faith and the increase in organizational activity.

The Testament of Mentu-hetep

We have regrettably little from the earliest days of our Congregation's history, when the Egyptian Awakened One named Mentu-hetep first began uniting us, but his Testament is both a significant and well-known piece from this era. It was most likely recorded in hieroglyphs of the 18th dynasty, the time which it details. However, if it ever existed in such form, it has been lost to us. Much of it was preserved in oral history, with the earliest record found written in Demotic. A small Druze congregation was

discovered singing a radically different variant — recorded elsewhere — which greatly expands upon the verses alluding to the Reconciliation.

The Desolate Days

In Egypt, the land of the burning sun, the scorched sand and the muddied waters, Sang a man named Mentu-hetep; he was a priest, who worshipped the All-Singer by the name of Aten. Born in the ancient city lunu¹, he served the court of the Pharaoh Amenhotep IV, in the city of Thebes. Mentu-hetep, who had accepted the supremacy of Aten early in his youth, was one of Aten's most faithful followers. In these days, the Singers were many, but few of their number remembered the True Song.

Mentu-hetep had traveled much in his days; on his journeys, he met many Singers, those who sang of power and distant beauty, yet did not themselves hear the All-Singer. He spoke with those who sang of blood and life, and theirs was a sanguine and unwholesome threnody; and he met with those who sought the Song only for personal gain, and theirs was a bloated and self-serving paean to greed; and he talked

1. The Biblical city On, called Heliopolis by the Greeks and Romans.

The Second Age, in Brief

The Second Age, in which the Congregation first gathered and grew in power, began in the late second millennium B.C.E. — during the 18th dynasty and the reign of Ikhnaton. Until this point, Singers were either lone figures or small bands of like-minded individuals. The solitary Singers rarely operated together, and communication between the small groups was minimal at best.

Some time during Ikhnaton's reign, Mentu-hetep, an Egyptian Singer, had a vision of the Divine and called for a grand assembly. Finally, after many years of separation, the disparate groups and lone Singers gathered together and vowed to work cohesively as a "Congregation" of the Faithful. A Grand Council was formed of representatives from different religions; although it had little authority, it tried to facilitate communication between the various members and groups of the Congregation. Likewise, the first Adytums were established as combination temple-library-hostel for our Singers, and those Adytums built in locations of civil power ultimately grew in prominence and influence.

Of course, the destruction of Akhetaten also resulted in the destruction of the first Adytum, and with this event we realized that we could not fully tie our authority to any Earthly place. Thus we began construction of the Great Adytum, our Horizon Realm which now acts as the true seat of our authority.

Nonetheless, various mundane Adytums waxed and waned in power, and it was from the most influential Adytums that our leadership grew. As Egypt's power ebbed, Greece's influence rose; ultimately, the Roman eagle spread its wings. With each of these shifts in power, the significance of various Adytums shifted as well. At first, the Adytums in Thebes and Memphis played the most prominent roles; in turn, the Athenian and Alexandrian Adytums grew in status (particularly after Alexander the Great sacked Thebes), and finally, Rome's Adytum became the leader.

Likewise, as various Adytums grew in influence, so did various groups hold sway. At first, the Theban Circle was the most influential group; these Singers were the inheritors of Mentu-hetep's authority, and they were significant in holding together the fledgling Congregation. With the rise of Alexander's empire, the Alexandrian Chorus reigned supreme. During this time, the Chosen of Abraham — insular Hebrew singers — held together the peoples of Israel; not only did they ensure their own ethnic and cultural survival, they also provided for the theologically fertile grounds which would give birth to Christianity. Their Adytum, the Temple of Solomon, reigned supreme in its area, untouched by the changing tides of fate and fame, until its destruction (in its second incarnation) in 70 C.E.

By the time of Christ's birth, almost the entire membership of the Grand Council was Roman. Rome was seen as the supreme power of the world, and the Council felt that the Congregation's future lay with it. During these years, the Congregation's organization began to take on more Roman characteristics, until finally the Council was renamed the Curia. The High Councilor became the Pontifex Maximus, and what had once been a role of parliamentary leader soon became almost absolute authority.

The centuries following Christ's birth saw a radical change in the make-up of the Congregation and the Council. From the Holy Land came the Messianic Voices, a group of Christian Singers who began as little more than a small cult or fringe movement. At the same time, the Sons of Mitras grew in power and influence, so that by the end of the second century of the Common Era, Mithraism and Christianity were rivals.

By the year 312, when Constantine embraced Christianity, the outcome was clear. Although the Messianic Voices were still a minority in the Congregation, they were the largest of all the various groups. By the year 324 and the Nicene Council, the Pontiff and almost the entire Curia were Christian.

Timeline

- c. 1353 – 35 B.C.E. — Amenhotep IV (Ikhnaton) promotes monotheistic sun worship in Egypt. Disparate societies of Singers gather into one Congregation.
- 965 — Solomon becomes king of Israel; begins building Temple in Jerusalem.
- 800 – 500 — Growth of Greek city-states (e.g., Athens). Expansion of Congregational activities into Europe.
- 478 — Temple of Apollo built at Delphi.
- 509 — Foundation of Roman Republic.
- 334 – 23 — Alexander destroys Persian Empire, begins consolidation of Greek world and Hellenistic age. Alexandrian Adytum rises in prominence.
- c. 4 B.C.E. — Probable birthdate of Jesus Christ.
- c. 30 C.E. — Career of Jesus Christ.
- 312 — Battle at the Milvian Bridge.
- 313 — Constantine the Great grants freedom of worship to Christians.

with those heard the voices of spirits in all things, and theirs was an ephemeral measure. Yet none of these knew of the All-Singer by any name, and they mocked Mentu-hetep for his submission to Heaven.

And Mentu-hetep despaired.

And this disconsolate Singer went into the desert and wandered and fasted for 40 days and 40 nights. He prayed to Aten for guidance, and the All-Singer appeared unto him as a burning corona, illuminating the night sky.

"What is Your bidding, O my Master?" asked Mentu-hetep, penitent before Aten, humbled by His majesty. "What would You have of me?"

"Gather my children unto me," said the All-Singer. "For they have drifted.

"For millennia you and your brethren have sung unto the peoples of the Earth; but with each passing generation, more have fallen from my ways. Even the faithful have forgotten the meaning of harmony. Too often you sing alone, and you must now sing together, as one.

"Send forth for your brothers and sisters, those who remember me by any name,

"Gather together in unity, that your purpose may be given new strength.

"Sing together in harmony, that my Song may be perpetuated!

"Many more will fall by the wayside, and they shall be spurned as they have spurned me.

"But converged you shall give each other strength and wisdom. And then you may guide the Slumbering children toward me, and all shall be One once more.

"Your voices will fill the air, and your chorus shall fill the heavens. For you are celestial in origin, and your song heavenly.

"Let your celestial chorus unite!"

And the vision of the All-Singer left, and Mentu-hetep's eyes were seared from their sockets, and he was blind for ever more.

The Gathering

Upon his return to the city of Thebes, Mentu-hetep sent forth a summons to all his brothers and sisters across the world, asking that they gather and meet in Egypt.

Far and wide went his summons, through means magickal and mundane, from the land of the Great Mountains in the furthestmost East to the lands across the Great Waters in the West, he called out to those who still heard the Song.



Mentu-hetep was assisted in his efforts by the Pharaoh, who had been led to Aten by Mentu-hetep's ministrations. As the blind Singer sent forth his summons, Amenhotep IV — now called Ikhnaton — abandoned Thebes to build a new city dedicated to Aten. [And this displeased the priests of the land, the priests who taught of the many gods. And they foretold a terrible fate for this city.]

Many rejected Mentu-hetep's summons, but many answered. In time, these Singers came, slowly gathering in Akhetaten, the Pharaoh's new city; from across the seas and over the mountains, from distant nations and from lands still unheard-of they came. Some arrived singly, and others in pairs, while others came in groups, the smaller congregations. All these remembered the All-Singer in one form or another. The nearby Knights of Aten came first, followed by the Chosen of Abraham; then came the Mazdeans, Gilgamites and Mithradites came from the East, the Canerites and Delphians from the North, the children of Bhisma and Vallana and other disciples of the Maker. All were glad to come and sing of the One, the All-Singer, the First Note, the Creator, the Universal Harmony.

For many days these strange visitors came to Ikhnaton's fledgling city, some under cover of night lest their strange manners draw forth the criticisms of the Pharaoh's enemies. Finally, after all guests had arrived, the many Singers met and sang together of the One and the Many, of the celestial harmony that had once been, and would be once more. And Mentu-hetep, the blind Singer, sang unto his brothers [and sisters]:

*In the beginning was the All-Singer, and He was unity.
The First Note became Many, and still there was unity,
A beautiful, glorious canticle heard throughout the cosmos!
Until the Dark Ones broke the harmony
With songs of anger and pride,
And we scattered across the Earth
Like grains of sand in a desert wind.*

And the assembly sang with him, and it was a wondrous hymn. And Mentu-hetep sang again:

*In the days long past,
When the First Singers roamed,
We sang alone; separate, yet still one,
Joined by our memories
of ancient days,
and celestial origins.
Acting apart, yet still in concert,
we praised the All-Singer!*

And the assembly sang with Mentu-hetep, and it was a wondrous hymn. And Mentu-hetep sang again:

*But now, in these trying times, we Sing alone.
We work singly to fulfill our mission,
And on our own we can do little.
In a vision the All-Singer Sang to me, and I Sang to Him!
He has declared that these days are past,
That where one is strong, many are stronger.
Let us unite in His glorious name!
Let us Sing together to Him,
Cast aside our differences, and join in a just cause!
Let our combined efforts usher forth a new era,
Where all humanity sings of the All-Singer's glory!
Recall your heavenly origins, and gather your voices
In one beautiful melody,
and let our Song be heard from now
To the ending of all time!*

And the assembled sang with Mentu-hetep, and it was a wondrous hymn. And Mentu-hetep sang once more:

*It shall pass, in the days yet to come,
That there shall be a great and terrible war,
In the Heavens and on the Earth,
Between the Singers of Light and the Singers of the Darkness.
We shall take up our arms,
and marshal our forces against the Dark Ones.
Our losses will be many,
and we shall cry out to Heaven for respite!
And at the end, after our victory,
All shall be One again,
The Dissonants crushed,
Broken into utter nothingness,
And all others shall Sing in harmony!
The many notes shall be one heavenly Song once more.*

And such was the strength of Mentu-hetep's holy words that all were in accord with him. So clear was the voice of the All-Singer that the Singers pledged to Sing together once more, for lone Singers could not attain the chorus of Heaven. And the scattered groups united, recognizing that we knew the same Song, and that we all worshipped the Creator, who may have a multitude of names and forms but still remains One; and each pledged to honor the faith of his brother, for it was good.

Many years passed, and the Sacred Congregation grew in the strength of the All-Singer.

The Chorus Across the Globe

And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.
— Matthew 24.14

It is a common misconception that our Congregation's history is exclusively Eurocentric, in spite of apparent North African and Middle Eastern roots. While our most noticeable expansion was synonymous with the rise of Hellenism, the Roman Empire and ultimately the Holy Roman Empire of Christian Europe, it is naive to believe that we were utterly absent elsewhere.

The Testament of Mentu-hetep makes it clear that the assemblage was global, as his summons crossed the "Great Waters" (most likely the Atlantic) and the "Great Mountains to the East" (probably the Himalayas). However, the document does not state which of these more distant Singers responded, or what happened after their return. A number of theories have been put forth, based upon both archaeology and local oral traditions.

• The Americas

Apocryphal texts tell of Mentu-hetep sending an expedition across the Atlantic to spread the Congregation to the far shores. Very little evidence supports this.

Regardless, we know that the American continents have had a remarkable history of Singer activity; although effectively isolated from the Congregation's main body, some native songs show a common goal and ideology. Singer activity ranged from the tribal elders of the North Americans to select priesthoods and cults in the Central and South American Indian empires. To this date, we are still slowly learning of the ancient Middle American Singers who responded to Mentu-hetep, and to what extent our teachings may have permeated later Olmec or Maya civilizations. Even if American Singers did respond to the summons, though, neither party maintained communication afterward, and separate traditions developed.

Without a doubt, though, our activity in the Americas was eclipsed by that of the Dreamspeakers, who were more in touch with what the local people desired and what the land needed. Missionaries sent across the ocean with European explorers, conquistadors and colonists caused disaster. How many of our missionaries killed potential members of our own Congregation — separated by time and distance, but Singers of the One Song nonetheless — merely because they refused to accept Christianity? How many Dreamspeakers (who we have more in common with than we often choose to acknowledge) died as a result of our actions?

May the Lord forgive us.

• Africa

As was the case in the Americas, the spirit-ways took root in Africa and became more prominent there than were any of our own Singers. Strangely, considering our organizational origins in Egypt, we did not have a stronger presence in Africa. Why we did not successfully foray south remains a mystery. We did, later on, follow Coptic Christianity into Egypt (reviving the Congregation's faltering presence in that nation) and Ethiopia, ultimately helping the Ethiopic peoples build a great empire. Legends of the mighty Abyssinian Presbyter Ioannes contributed to the European legends of the African priest-king Prester John.

• The Middle East

The Middle East has always been a crucible of religious, ethnic and political tensions — tensions which have reflected in the Chorus. The Chosen (Hebrew Singers, followers of Abraham) have long resisted excursions of other Singers into their territory. In addition, the debacle of the Crusades (which only heightened tensions between Jewish, Christian and Muslim Singers) and the seeming hegemony of the Ahl-i-Batin led to Congregational reluctance to move with any strength into the Holy Land. However, peripatetic Singers have been known to Sing in the Middle East, sometimes alongside Batini mages.

• Jerusalem

Jerusalem is by far the holiest city of the Western world, central to Judaism, Christianity and Islam. King David built Jerusalem upon the Canaanite city of Urushamen, and King Solomon constructed his famous Temple here; Jesus was arrested, tried, crucified and (according to tradition) resurrected here where the Church of the Holy Sepulcher now rests; and Muhammad ascended unto Heaven from this same city. Ruled alternately by Jews, Romans, Ottomans and Europeans, contested over by the three great faiths, it also lies at the very heart of religious hatred and bloodshed. Various groups held sway here, from the Chosen of Abraham and the Messianic Voices within the Chorus, to the Batini mages (who far outnumbered Muslim mages in the Congregation). It has seen its share of religious, political, ethnic and magickal strife. Violence still remains in the "City of Peace," but the Chorus has finally established a steady presence. The Jerusalem Adytum is jointly run by an uneasy alliance of Jewish, Christian and Muslim Singers.

• Asia

Due to the widespread and pervasive influence of the Akashic Brothers, the early Artificers (ancestors of Iteration X) and several groups of Imperial Chinese magicians, our Chorus had few successes in Asia. Although we have had a relatively strong presence in South Asia, with thousands of un-Awakened accepting the Divinity of the One in the Godhead, the Akashic influence in Buddhism and Taoism — among the many native Asian traditions — limited our effectiveness. Our members in the Indian subcontinent still remain somewhat disenfranchised from their European counterparts, due to the European missionary activity in India and what they claim is our apparent disregard for their own sacred songs of the One, many of which may predate those found in *The Theophanies*.

The Commentary of Antonius

Antonius (220 – 313 C.E.), one of the latest writers and Singers of the Second Age, studied the many years before him and analyzed them with remarkable perspicuity; he was not only Awakened, but remarkably intelligent. The fact that he lived to see the repercussions of the Battle at the Milvian, and even wrote a few short letters to the reigning Pontiff regarding the Council of Nicaea, has prompted a number of Choristers (even some of our own Office) to argue for moving his corpus under the Third Age rubric. However, we defer to tradition and maintain his writings in their current place, since their bulk was composed during the Second Age.

Antonius lived in an interesting time; as a Son of Mitras, he was no doubt prepared to see his religion, Mithraism, rise ascendant through the Roman Empire. Instead he witnessed his religion's wane as it was replaced by Christianity. This alone would have explained the critical eye he frequently turned toward Christianity. His criticisms of the Messianic Voices and the Nicene Council were most likely considered inflammatory; in addition, he wrote in favor of religious tolerance, a custom well-ignored by many of our members during this Age.

All these factors compounded, ultimately leading to his fall from popularity during the Third Age, and the subsequent exclusion of his writings from the first and later editions. However, we have come full circle now, and Antonius' popularity has risen tremendously, even among Christians, who appreciate his keen eye and candid voice. We are pleased to restore some of the writings of Antonius to The Book of Ages.

Mithraism vs. Christianity: And the Winner Is...

*Mithras, God of the Morning, our trumpets waken the Wall!
Rome is above the Nations, but Thou art over all!*

— Rudyard Kipling, *A Song to Mithras*

Historically, Mithraism can be traced to the fifth century B.C.E., where the figure of Mithra appears as a Persian deity of wisdom and light. By the second century of the Common Era, veneration of Mithra had transformed into a "mystery religion" (a cult which revealed its teachings to only a select few, typically after a symbolic death/rebirth initiation) widespread in the Roman Empire — even more widespread than Christianity.

Mithraism was particularly popular with soldiers, who favored the cult's militant symbolism. It bore certain similarities to Christianity: a baptism ritual, a Divine Lord responsible for salvation, a strong moral code, a militant disposition and similar concepts of the afterlife and a final judgment. Unfortunately, Mithraism was still too tied into its polytheistic backgrounds, and it looked to a figure that — unlike the figure of Jesus — could not be historically identified. For these, and other reasons, Mithraism fell before Christianity.

But the contest was close; in 307, the Emperor Diocletian dedicated Mithra as a "protector of the Empire." With the ascension of Constantine, imperial favor turned to Christianity over all other faiths, including Mithraism. The Mithraic revival by Julian the Apostate (360-363) was a failure.

Had fate worked a tiny bit differently — had Constantine died at the battle of Milvian, and had Julian not been felled in battle by an arrow through the eye, the religious history of Europe could have been quite different.

• Mithraism and the Congregation

Mithraism survives to this day as a true mystery religion; the general public is unaware of its survival, and the majority of its worshipers are members of the Congregation — specifically, the Sons of Mitras, a fellowship which venerates the First Singer Mitras. Some Mithraic historians suggest that the Messianic Voices were responsible both for Julian's untimely death and Constantine's success. Few of the Sons bear a grudge towards Christ-Singers, but should these allegations ever be proven, some unpleasantness would develop.

The Letter to the Cilicians (excerpts)

This letter includes Antonius's reflections on Salvation — which, by this time, we now understand to mean Ascension.

• On Salvation (Ascension)

What is Salvation, my Brothers in the Lord? This is a worthy question, for its answer defines our very existence. We of the Congregation have long argued and debated the meaning of Salvation from the first days when we gathered in Akhetaten. While we have few easy answers, we can at least discuss some beliefs which are universal in our Congregation.

Salvation may be seen on the individual level. It is when the Singer's sense of self becomes inseparable from the Divine. He no longer says "I" referring to himself — he says "I" knowing that he and the Creator are one and the same! This is not to say that we are gods, though, or that we are equal to the Creator; it is to say that what makes us alive, and who we are, is the Divine Spark itself. To fully realize this — not to simply acknowledge it or agree with it — is the meaning of Salvation. It is when Singer and Song become one.

But we may speak on a universal scale as well. This too has multiple aspects; the first is merely the widespread application of the previous principle, where all the Created come into harmony with the Creator. Certainly this is possible, and one need not have Awakened to join with the Creator. Many holy men throughout the Ages have been Saved, we believe, who were un-Awakened.

The second aspect of universal Salvation is more passive; it is when all humanity comes to accept the One as Lord and Creator. Some in our midst believe that should all mankind accept the One unanimously and universally, then all shall be Saved. Not all in our Congregation believe this, but we do agree that it is still a goal to pursue, as it allows for a greater chance of individual Salvation to occur.

• Diverse Religious Sympathies

Accepting the One as Lord and Master is the truest way to Salvation. It is well-accepted by our Chorus the rejection of the Creator by His rebellious children was the cause of our current state; thus, for us to be reconciled to the Creator, we must all accept His dominion.

Our Congregation's founders, we must note, came from many varying and divergent religious traditions, for it was known then that the worship of the One took on many customs according to each nation and peoples. But the questions arose: "Is any one religion more fitting to Salvation? Are any religions less worthy?" It has long been the resolution of our Congregation that all religions stand on equal footing and each may lead to Ascension. Thus I, as a Son of Mitras, have no lesser or greater a chance of Salvation than do my Christian or other brothers.

• On the Coercion of Belief

Some question whether religious beliefs can be forced upon an unwilling people. This has provoked much debate, and has never been fully resolved. I, for one, am opposed to this sentiment, for a religious devotion born of terror is a fleeting and intangible thing. The Lord wants His children to come willingly, and if they must live lifetime after lifetime until they make the first step, then so be it. Other, more zealous members of our congregation, however, more concerned as they are with purity of thought, care little for free will.

The Letter to the Bogomil Congregation (Excerpt)

Of great concern to our early founders was whether we should play prominent roles in leading the citizens of our nations. Some argue that we should remove ourselves from the mundanities of civil rule, and instead contemplate our own spiritual growth, or act as models of faith and piety. Those who support this claim believe that any marriage between the Congregation and the civil authorities is bound to end in catastrophe. I understand that this is your view, and that you point to the disaster at Akhetaten for evidence.

As we know, Mentu-hetep's former student, the pharaoh Ikhnaton, seemed to fulfill our goal of building a society dedicated to the One. Unfortunately his introduction of widespread monotheism in Egypt was hasty, and we, in our youthful enthusiasm, supported him. When he began construction of a city dedicated to the Aten, we rejoiced. Akhetaten became the site of our first Adytum; indeed, Akhetaten itself means "Horizon of Aten," and we saw it as the first manifestation of the Sacred City.

When Ikhnaton abandoned the other gods and built temples to Aten in locations sacred to other gods, we still said nothing. This was our mistake; it is folly to enforce our beliefs on others while showing disrespect for their own native traditions, and it is disastrous to utterly cast aside the old ways in favor of our own. This was demonstrated when Akhetaten was destroyed after Ikhnaton's death.

You argue that this calamity is evidence of what happen when our Congregation develops alliances with the secular authorities. However, let not your caution cross the border between circumspection and fear. What was wrong was the way we allowed Ikhnaton's rebellion — for such is what it was, in truth — to go unchecked. Many in our Congregation argued against this, but their warnings went unheeded.

We learned from this that we cannot force people to accept the Creator. Our mistake was not so much an act of hubris as a lesson on unrestrained growth. This does not mean, however, that we must entirely abandon our attempts to lead humanity in favor of an isolated hermitage of self-

contemplation. One of the surest ways to nurture the un-Awakened is by guiding the entire society in which they live; we must be helmsmen of their ship, that we may direct it toward the port of salvation.

The Letters to the Pontifex Maximus

• The Congregation and Christianity

Your Eminence:

I hope that my letter finds you well, and that the blessings of the Creator are upon you.

I have heard tales that our Emperor, Constantine, claims to have received a vision before his battle at the Milvian Bridge, instructing him to put the name of Christ upon his standard and thus assuring him his subsequent victory in battle. As a result, I am told, he will be adopting Christianity as his personal faith. While I am pleased for my Christian brethren — particularly that they will no longer face persecution — I am somewhat troubled by this event and what it portends.

First, let me explain. Some in our Congregation believe that the figure of Jesus was merely one of our own kind — either a Jewish Singer or even an Orphan. Either may be the case, as he certainly shares certain characteristics of a Singer: he worked miracles, he called people to Faith, and he cried out for a radical transformation of one's life. Some even argue that he is the manifestation of some spirit power or force.

The Messianic Voices, on the other hand, are Singers who believe that the figure of Jesus was in fact the One made flesh, and that his incarnation was a necessary ransom to free humanity, which had become "hostage" to the dark powers. While I do not hold to this particular creed, I do not begrudge my Christian brethren their beliefs.

However, I have noticed something disturbing. It seems that a good many Christ-Singers have become blinded by their own Faith; while they still believe in the Congregation's teachings, they also assert that the Christian Faith is the only valid Faith for Salvation. It is as if all other beliefs have fallen by the wayside with the triumph of Christianity.

Certainly, not all Christians in our Congregation claim this; many still see the workings of the Creator in every religion. But there are increasingly more intolerant and closed-minded Singers in our midst, and I fear what might happen should this minority ever become the majority.

In closing, I wish to refute the allegation that some of my non-Christian brothers have made, that a cabal of Christ-Singers forced Constantine's vision upon him, as well as working the Song to bring about the victory at the Milvian, thus ensuring the Emperor's adoption of Christianity. I, of course, have no evidence for my refutation, but I cannot

imagine any of our Congregation beguiling and manipulating one of the un-Awakened in this manner.

• The Council at Nicaea

Your Eminence:

I am confident that this letter finds you in good health, and that your sacred duty is more joy than burden.

I hear that you have recently been baptized a Christian. If this is your heartfelt desire, then I congratulate you and wish you the best. Pay no heed to those who insinuate that your conversion was as a means of gaining some political leverage over the growing number of Christ-Singers.

I must confess that I am disturbed by the events of the Council recently held at Nicaea to discuss the so-called Arian heresy. Is it not strange that this Council should so closely mirror debates taking place among the Messianic Voices? I admit that I have of late remained apart from much of the theological battles wracking our membership, in favor of personal contemplation and pursuit of the Creator, so perhaps my knowledge is wrong. Please follow me while I repeat the situation as I believe it to be the case, and you may correct any errors.

Some in our fellowship do not believe that Jesus could have been the One Incarnate, but that he was a mortal like all others. They proclaim, however, that he was Chosen by the Creator for the sake of redeeming the world; as such he has an exalted position, but he is not "one in being" with the Creator. They believe this in opposition to the majority of Messianic Voices, who argue that Jesus is of the exact same nature as the One.

Coincidentally, an un-Awakened Alexandrian priest named Arius began trumpeting similar views, and his views have begun to take root amongst the Christian communities. It is certainly not uncommon for our own arguments to infiltrate the un-Awakened communities, but the speed with which the Church called a council to debate this "heresy" is alarming. Is it possible that Christ-Singers are using the Church to determine orthodoxy and to define heresy, simply in order to force their beliefs upon those Voices they consider "deviant?"

While I do not recognize the names of any of the Nicene Council's participants as having been members of our Congregation, I am not alone in wondering what role Christian Singers played in this Council. If it is proven that any of the Congregation manipulated the Council to our own advantage, instead of allowing the Faith to take its natural course, then I will demand justice for those Singers whose Faith has just been branded illicit, and who have in turn been anathematized by the very Church that they love and support.

Excerpt: The Book of The Third Age



In hoc signo vinces.

By this sign shalt thou conquer.

— the vision of Constantine at the Battle of the Milvian

The Third Age began in the year 313 of the Common Era, after Constantine embraced Christianity. This was an absolute triumph for our Congregation, and it represented the fulfillment of many years work. The interrelationship of Church,

State and Chorus was a complex and almost symbiotic affair, documented and analyzed thoroughly elsewhere.

This was, without a doubt, the most productive period for the European Chorus. An unparalleled number of songs, hymns and sermons were produced during this period. Although arguments vary over when the Fourth Age began, it has long been tradition that the Third Age ended with the Declaration of the Ivory Tower on March 25, 1325.

The Third Age, in Brief

The Third Age represents both the codification of Christianity, as various heresies were swept away by the pens of theologians or the swords of Crusaders. Likewise, it represents the expansion of Christianity throughout the Congregation. Soon into the Third Age, the Messianic Voices were clearly the majority in the Congregation. Many other groups either disappeared, their vitality sapped by the rising giant of Christianity, or were thrust into the sidelines. The Sons of Mitras and many other pagan groups watched their faiths fight valiantly and then finally die. Eventually, the Pontifex and the entire Curia were Christian, and by that point the future was clear: Christianity would rise supreme over all. In time, the Messianic Voices were synonymous with the Congregation.

Even within the Messianic Voices, though, dissent continued. In some cases this dissent spilled over into the un-Awakened, while in other cases it started with the Sleepers and made its way to the Congregation. What began as a single group, the Messianic Voices, ended as a number of groups divided along ethnic or theological lines. Issues of faith and orthodoxy were worked out, sometimes with violence. It was during this point that the Cabal of Pure Thought, a group of Singers who stressed a single, unified Church, rose in power and influence.

With Charlemagne came the rising hope for a unified Christian Europe. Although not all of Europe fell into his Empire, it was a magnificent attempt at both unifying and Christianizing many disparate lands and peoples. The Congregation rejoiced, for it seemed that the vision of the Sacred City was close.

Unfortunately, strife almost tore apart the Congregation. As the rift grew between the Eastern and Western churches, culminating in the schism between Rome and Constantinople, so did the Singers of the Congregation quarrel. Those of the West argued for the supremacy of Rome in all matters theological, while Eastern Singers argued for a co-equal status. The Singers of the Cabal of Pure Thought, almost exclusively Western, saw the schism as a serious threat to unity, and thus to Salvation, and argued for the subordination of the Byzantine Singers. The Pontiff and the Curia, in a moment of wisdom, ignored them, seeing more in common between Rome and Constantinople than the arguing theologians were able to admit. The Sacred City was still in sight, and some variance in belief was possible.

The Crusades became another rallying-point for unity among the Messianic Voices, but it was one more step at marginalizing non-Christians. Muslim Singers, never fully a part of the Congregation, became the enemy, and Jewish Singers watched their own lands become the victor's prize. The Albigensian Crusade proved to be at first a victory for the Cabal of Pure Thought, and then a defeat; the repercussions of that Crusade led to the official ousting of the Cabal from the Congregation, although many Singers still harbored sympathy for them.

Less than a century later, the Cabal of Pure Thought re-emerged as part of the Order of Reason. In 1325, the Declaration of the Ivory Tower was drafted, and the walls of the Sacred City slowly began tumbling down.

Timeline

- 325 — Council of Nicaea.
- 800 — Charlemagne crowned Holy Roman Emperor.
- 1095– 1272 — The Crusades.
- 1208–1244 — Albigensian crusade against the Cathars in France.
- 1325 — Declaration of the Ivory Tower.

The Aachen Manifesto

Early in the ninth century, a militant offspring of our group relocated from Rome to Aachen, the capital of Charlemagne's empire. These priest-knights, Christian Singers who excelled equally in the arts of war and magick, gathered at Charlemagne's palace. The Palatine Knights — who have since come down in history and legend as the Paladins — swore holy vows to protect humanity and all Creation from the soldiers of darkness. Their creed has remained a model and inspiration for all who would take up their name and their cause.

Note that their use of the phrase "Chorus Celestial," although common in oral lore, was one of the first such written formulations. No doubt, it was influential in 1461 when Valoran reunited us as a Tradition of the Council of Nine.

The Palatine Creed

We, of the Sacred Congregation of the Chorus Celestial, assembled in the Sanctuary at Aix-la-Chapelle, do pledge on this day, the 11th of November in the 800th year of Our Lord, to become true Protectors of Mankind.

We take now these Holy Vows, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, that no creature of Infernal influence or vice kind shall pose a threat to Humanity:

I. From vampires, discarnate spirits and other evil dead shall we safeguard Mankind;

II. From shapeshifters, changelings and other inhuman species shall we defend Humanity;

III. From demons, succubi, incubi and any other dark spirits shall we protect the Innocent;

IV. From sorcerers, thaumaturgists, warlocks and others who traffick with dark forces shall we shield the Powerless;

V. From the Dark Singers and all who would desecrate or pervert the Lord's good Creation shall we preserve the Earth.

Let our War Song be heard and our battle cry be trumpeted across the world, for a powerful army unto the Lord shall we be.

In the name of God, Amen.

The Visions of Lucien

Lucien (d. 994 C.E.) was one of the most enigmatic — and prophetic — voices of the Third Age. He wandered into a monastery at Lyon; his past was, and still is, unknown. He was famed not for his mysterious origin (almost common during the Mythic Ages), but for his Song-delivered prophecies. Unlike many millennial prophets who foretold the coming of an imminent Apocalypse, Lucien foretold other days that would be just as dark and dire. His visions were collected and numbered almost immediately after his death for future study. 21 of his 49 visions and prophecies have been fulfilled, although not all are of the same magnitude.

XIIth Vision: The Blood-Soaked Days

These prophecies now speak clearly of the Inquisition. It is presupposed by some that the "hard-hearted shepherds" represent either those mortals who led the Inquisition, or the Cabal of Pure

Thought, the society of Awakened (once allied with our Congregation) who may have contributed to the Inquisition's success.

1 This vision of the Lord came to me.

2 Upon a mount there grazed many sheep. Some grazed near a cliff, close to the edge from which they would fall to their doom, while others grazed far from the dangerous precipice.

3 Some ate grass, filling their bellies with the food of life, while others ate rocks and thorns, till they bled and bleated.

4 And there were many shepherds for these sheep, and they watched over them; standing guard with crooks and watch-fires, they were to guide the sheep away from the cliff and the rocks and thorns.

5 But some shepherds saw only the word of their duty, and not the intent, and they hardened their hearts. They punished those sheep that did wrong, though the sheep are but animals.

6 While some shepherds would gently pull back from the precipice those sheep who were too close to the edge, others smote the sheep with their crooks, splitting their skulls. And while some shepherds healed and nurtured the sheep who ate rocks and thorns, these other shepherds split their bellies and let them bleed.

7 "For such is the price of disobedience," they said.

8 And then came the time when these shepherds would beat and kill those sheep whom they suspected of approaching the edge, or eating rocks and thorns. And finally these shepherds came to burn and smite those of the flock whom they suspected did desire to approach the cliff or to eat the rocks and thorns.

9 "For such is the price of disobedience," they said.

10 And finally these same shepherds looked to the other shepherds, and questioned whether they were harbored sympathy for the disobedient sheep, and were lax in their duties.

11 And these hard-hearted shepherds took their crooks and watch-fires and turned on the other shepherds.

12 "For such is the price of disobedience," they said.

13 And the owner of the flock came to the mount, and saw that he had no sheep, and that the mount was covered with the blood of sheep and shepherd alike.

14 And he wept for the wounded and slain, and his lamentations seemed endless.

15 And the owner turned on the hard-hearted shepherds, cursing them and all their progeny. "I asked you to care for my sheep," he cried out, "but you have destroyed them, and your fellow shepherds!"

16 "And in so doing, you have destroyed yourself. For such is the price of disobedience."

17 And the Lord said to me: O man, you and your Singers are the shepherds, and a time of blood is coming, when some of your midst shall punish the flock instead of guiding them.



XXVIth Vision: On the Promethean Uprising

While the activities of the Prometheans — not yet known as the Order of Reason — had continued unabated, they were generally met with mixed success. Still, their eventual paradigmatic revolt in the 14th century was unforeseen except by those who listened to the words of Lucien — one of whom was Valoran, who regularly studied these prophecies.

1 This vision of the One came to me.

2 There was a man, bound to a rock in an endless sea, immobilized save for his writhing torment. He was here as punishment, for daring to steal the fire from Heaven.

3 Three eagles flew above him, circled him, each taking their turns at striking his liver. And it came to pass that these eagles turned to speak to each other while aloft.

4 The first eagle spoke: "We are here to follow the dictates of the King of the Skies, He who placed us here, for He is good and just, and this man attempted to usurp that which belongs to our King."

5 And when he was through, he again dove to strike the chained man.

6 The second eagle spoke: "We are here to understand the secrets of flying and the mysteries of nature. We question why lightning strikes as it does, and we desire to control it. I know not of your King."

7 Contemplating this, he ignored the chained man.

8 The third eagle spoke. "We are here to experience the joy of flight, to thrill at the beating of our hearts, to draw power from the blood of the chained man. I know not of your King."

9 Contemplating this, she ignored the chained man.

10 The first eagle spoke again. "You are both wrong."

11 To the second eagle, he said, "You desire only power and secrets and knowledge, but not wisdom."

12 And to the third eagle he said, "You seek the dark thrills of physical life and not the lessons they offer."

13 The first eagle ignored the chained man that he might argue with the others, until it finally came to pass that all three eagles fought each other in they sky, ripping and rending at each other until they could barely fly, and they went to the chained man's rock for rest.

14 And when they alighted, they saw that the chained man was free, for they had forgotten to watch him.

15 Weakened as they were, they could do nothing,

16 and he chained them to the rock,

17 and he reigned as king.

18 And the One said to me: O man, you and the many Singers are the eagles, and a time of tears is coming, when you shall no longer fly and shall instead be imprisoned by those which you should have contained.

Excerpts: The Book of the Fourth Age



The Kingdom of God is like this: a woman journeying homeward failed to notice that her cracked jar trailed grain until, by the time she finally arrived, the jar was empty, the grain lost.

— The Gospel of Thomas

The living nature of our *Book of Ages* is nowhere more evident than with the Fourth

Book. Since we now live in the Fourth Age, hymns, texts and psalms may yet be written that can be added to the canon. As it is, the current statements of our faith are produced during this Age, and among the most significant documents of our history have come about since the ascendancy of the Order of Reason.

The Fourth Age, in Brief

The Fourth Age was a tumultuous period for the Congregation. With the rise of the Order of Reason, the paradigm of the Sacred City — which the Congregation had been slowly working toward — started crumbling.

The Congregation was divided within and under siege from without. Externally it warred (sometimes verbally, sometimes physically and sometimes magically) with the Hermetic mages and the witches of the Verbena. Internally the Messianic Voices still suffered from divisions over Christian theology, while non-Christian Singers were all but absent from the Congregation. Meanwhile, the Inquisition's flames burned hotter, taking Christian and heretic alike, almost indiscriminately. Hermetics and Verbena blamed the Congregation, even while some of the Congregation's own went to the flames. And a miserable time was had by all.

By the mid-1400s, the Congregation was in desperate need of motivation and reunification; the arrival of Valoran was seen by some as a Godsend. Citing a vision of the archangel Gabriel, this charismatic cleric managed to unite the disparate factions within the Messianic Voices, make peace with the Hermetics and Verbena, and draw back the marginalized non-Christian Singers into the fold. In 1461, the Congregation was able to present a unified face to the Council of Nine under the name the Celestial Chorus — an ancient name, rarely used, but given new life thanks to Valoran.

Unfortunately, this did not end all division within the new Chorus. As the Protestant Reformation grew, and more churches splintered away from the Roman Catholic Church, new stresses developed within the Chorus. Thankfully, the external threats of the newly-strengthened Order of Reason and the Nephandi managed to keep the Chorus together. Tales tell of two 16th century German Adytums, one Lutheran and one Catholic, engaged in constant strife over denominational polity; upon hearing of a threat from nearby members of the Order of Reason, the Singers allied their forces and dealt with the Prometheans — and then resumed their arguments.

As the Order of Reason grew in power, the Chorus saw a dark future on the horizon. With each progressing age, humanity turned further and further away from religion. However, these external threats functioned to bring together the otherwise-opposed factions within the Chorus. Certainly, some within the Congregation still lament our loss of prestige and power, and would rather squabble over theology, but these are certainly the minority. For most, however, theological arguments fell to the wayside, and religious differences seemed irrelevant. The true battle was for humanity's salvation and the restoration of hope.

Timeline

- 1466 — Grand Convocation; Congregation reunited as Celestial Chorus.
- 1517 — Protestant Reformation begins.
- 1545–63 — Council of Trent and the Catholic Counter-Reformation.

The Sacred City

This anonymous tract is known for its clarity; it sums up in a few short pages what many other Christian philosophers and theologians would agonize over in any number of books and summas. It speaks of the sacred paradigm built in the Middle Ages, when the Congregation was at its zenith. That it was written during the beginning of the Fourth Age, when this paradigm was collapsing, is ironic. It is often said that we shall not appreciate what we had until we have lost it.

I see now a perfect City, built not on selfishness and ego and pride and greed, but on the love of the Lord. Are we not on the verge of founding this City? Does not the common man tremble under the fear of God, and quake for the love of Him? Is not the Lord at the center of our hearts, our minds, our thoughts? It is not enough that the Creator resides within us — within us all, Awakened and un-Awakened alike — but that we acknowledge His presence, that we praise and glorify Him. When the whole world, and all its citizens, share an equal love and respect for the Divine, then shall this Sacred City be built, and then shall all Ascend. Even now we are working toward building this City, brick by brick. And each soul we turn towards God shall be a brick of this City, and it shall be a glorious sight!



Chapter Two: The Enchiridion (Teachings)

*The Lord is my sun and His rays have lifted me up
And chased all darkness from my face.
In Him I have acquired eyes
and seen His sacred day.*

— Odes of Solomon, 15.



Introduction

The Enchiridion's author, Sister Genevieve (1879–1957), one of the greatest Choristers of our century, was known equally for her devotion to the Christian faith, her loyalty to the Chorus and her almost limitless love for the un-Awakened. Settling into a comfortable old age, she turned to instructing less-experienced Choristers; never taking on the role of Praeceptor, she nonetheless was free

with her advice for any member of the Congregation. Her associates collected transcripts of her various talks and combined them into one manuscript which she edited shortly before her death.

Her Enchiridion (from the Greek term for “handbook,” or “manual”) is broken into two parts, the Principia and the Congregation. The first part discusses the essential truths of the Congregation — our beliefs on creation, cosmology, our Divine role and so forth. The second half is far more mundane, discussing the organization of the Chorus and other relatively worldly affairs.

I. The Principia



We begin first with a discussion of the principle truths of creation, on which we of the Chorus have the deepest of insights and inspirations.

A. The One

Before the One, what is there to count?

— Sefer Yetsirah

The One is our Creator, called many names: he is the Lord of Lords, the King of Kings, the First Cause, the Ens Entium, the Author of our Being, the Great Mana, the King of Light and the Lord of Greatness. He is the All-Singer, the First Note, the First Song, the Endless Symphony.

He is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the Be-all and the End-all.

I. On the One's Gender

Our Creator is genderless, but for the purposes of our limited comprehension, the One manifests to us as male. Some in our Congregation contend that the One is female, or neuter, or both. I pay little heed to such arguments.

II. On the Symbol of the Sun

As the sun shines in the sky and illuminates our day, so does the Lord God burn in the celestial firmament. It is for this reason that it is right and proper that the One and the sun be ever linked, for the sun is the only visible symbol of the Creator which all may sense;

those with sight may see this symbol, and even those without sight may still feel its warmth.

The sun is likewise the bringer of light, that light which dispels the darkness and drives away the myriad evils that thrive under cover of night. Let those who would dedicate their lives to combating the Nephandi and their ungodly ilk remember the power of the sun, and like the sun, let them burn away all that which is wrong!

However, let us be mindful that the sun is symbol, not object, and that we should not descend into the banalities of sun worship.

B. The Many

The Divine Light rays out immediately upon the Intelligences, and is reflected by these Intelligences upon other things.

— Dante, *Il Convito*, III. xiv 2

The Many also have a multitude of names: angels, daemones, devi, demigods. These names are irrelevant compared to their reality. Just as the One is viewed as the sun, some within the Chorus liken the Many to stars. While modern astronomy understands the stars as distant suns, our cosmology understands them as the human eye perceives them — smaller lights suspended in heaven but dwarfed by the light of the sun.

Our scriptures read, “The few who remembered the true Song, the Song of the One, walked the Earth, ministering to all His children./And we were like unto gods then, for there was little we could not do.” Our origins and our mission are clear, as bright as the sun itself. We were like gods; the other Singers — be they circle-drawers or herb-collectors or any other Tradition — may have powerful Songs, but we represent the Lord. As He showed mercy to His foes, so should we. But as He also showed terrible justice unto those who continued their dark ways, so too do we have like rights and responsibilities.

The Many are also called the Pure Ones by the demented scholars of the Hermetic Orders, who ever sought to replace one valid term with another in their desire to wrest away our stewardship over the Slumbering ones.

C. The Soul

The soul continues as an instrument of God's harmony, a tuned instrument of Divine joy for the Spirit to strike on.

— Jacob Boehme

We must begin our discussion with a contemplation on the nature of the soul. For it is the soul, the burning spark of God within us, that defines who and what we are.

I. The origin of the Soul

It is an indisputable truth that the origin of the human soul is the Lord. He created, as we are taught, the Many from Himself, and the Many became a Multitude and were given worldly form. As the Multitude came from the Many, and the Many from the One, and as we are manifestations of the Multitude, so then do we understand that we come from the First Cause. Our soul is that shard — called by some an Avatar — of the Lord carried within our mortal sheath.

II. On the Awakened

As fragments of the Divine, we all contain the power to Sing, to create. But in most, this power is diminished, the Song unheard. For some, the ember of the All-Singer burns greatly, for others only a little. So many mortals do not realize their own potential; the Song

within them is silent, their Avatars sleeping. Such humans — Sleepers in the common parlance — make up the bulk of humanity. But in a few, such as you and me, the shard Awakens and yearns to Sing again, to create, to shape reality.

The Chorus recognizes that Awakening may occur in one of two measures: through deliberate action on the part of a Praeceptor, or through spontaneous experience. Either method brings about the same result: the Avatar Awakens and the individual feels the joyous stirrings of the Divine within. Although our Congregation prefers the former method (which is typically compounded with guidance and instruction) that the Singer may be taught the truths of our history, we recognize that some Avatars cry forth of their own accord.

III. On the un-Awakened

That we all come from the same Many who were participants in Creation cannot be disputed. However, there are many who would thus set ourselves above the flock which we tend. This is as great a heresy as that which drove the original rebels to sing against the One.

While we do hear the Song of God more clearly than do the Songless, and we do possess miraculous powers, and we do guide the common man, we should be ever-mindful that the common man still houses a Divine spark which one day may Sing as loudly as the spark within us.

D. On Ascension

The thought of you stirs him so deeply that he cannot be content unless he praises you, because you made us for yourself and our hearts find no peace until they rest in you.

— St. Augustine, *The Confessions*

It is the goal of all Creation to return to the Creator, to be restored to its primal state of perfection and bliss. Ascension is nothing less than Apotheosis and reunion with the Divine. Some may reach it individually of their own efforts, while others must be guided slowly toward perfection. The un-Awakened soul may Ascend if she has lived a pure and virtuous life; however, this Ascension most commonly occurs after death.

Every member of our Congregation should have two goals: to Ascend individually, and to guide others to that same goal. One cannot easily strive to do both, however, and there shall come a time when a choice must be made.

It is more glorious to reach Ascension than it is to guide others. But it is more virtuous to halt one's own growth in order to assist others. We believe that the truly virtuous may have Ascension thrust upon them by the One as a reward for their merit.

I. On Metempsychosis

Our congregation has a multitude of teachings on the issue of *metempsychosis*, known more commonly as the transmigration of souls, or reincarnation. Some argue that the soul goes through a cycle of incarnations in its Path to Ascension, while others claim that we are given a single opportunity during which we may reach this goal.

A Chorister must come to this answer of her own accord, and not begrudge her fellows for a variance in opinion. One's personal religion often is a guiding influence, but not exclusively so; I consider myself a devout Christian, yet I believe in metempsychosis as well.

E. On Religion

*From the moment you came into the world of being,
A ladder was placed before you that you might escape.*

— Divani Shamsi Tabriz, XII

It is a basic truth that religion is the only means of Ascension. Early in our history, we concluded that any religion, any form of

belief which yokes a human to the Divine, is valid; let us not forget that the root of religion, is *religare*, meaning "to bind, to tie." Religion is that which binds man to God, and our early Singers taught us that any religion which instilled piety in the hearts of the believer was a valid vehicle to Ascension. Unfortunately, there have been those in our history who did not believe this truth. May the Lord have more mercy on them than they showed to others.

The Many-Tongued Fires of Faith

Or, the Chorus and World Religions

I have seen the ancient Way, the Old Road that was taken by the formerly All-Awakened, and that is the path I follow.

— Samyutta-nikaya, II. 106

It would be pointless to list every religion and how it has figured into the Chorus' long history (and vice versa). However, since religion lies at the heart of the Chorus' teachings and beliefs, a summary is both useful and necessary. Do not assume that the absence of any religion below indicates that religion's intrinsic value — only its relative impact within the Chorus.

• Ancient Faiths

The Celestial Chorus is the last repository for many faiths which the world at large consigns to antiquity and history books, with no followers left. This includes a number of smaller Christian heresies that managed to survive the fires of the Inquisition just enough to continue on in the form of an occasional Singer.

Some of these practitioners seek out new Catechumens who demonstrate deep spirituality not yet committed to any religion, and attempt to persuade them to join their ranks. Other religions may simply be adopted upon Awakening as a newly Awakened Avatar cries out for a certain Path. Of course, these are always among the minority; most Choristers remain the faith of their childhood, but conversion does happen.

• Baha'i

Some consider the Baha'i faith — which originated in Islamic Persia — to be the fulfillment of Chorus teachings, with its emphasis on a single world religion and its attempts to unify all faiths. This religion has relatively few followers in the Chorus, however, particularly because of its minimal missionary activity.

• Christianity

The Celestial Chorus is considered by most outsiders as an exclusively Christian organization. This is a common misconception, thanks to the Chorus' interrelationship with the Christian Church. That the Chorus is predominantly Christian is true, but even so, a remarkable amount of diversity exists; a Christian Chorister is as likely to be a Mormon, a Quaker or a Copt as he is to be a Roman Catholic. And it is not uncommon to find representatives of these disparate churches quibbling over denominational discrepancies.

This division has gone back as long as there have been Christians within the Chorus, from the days of the Gnostics, Arians and other heretical groups to the present day. Both the medieval itinerant warning the Church of its greed and the Dominican Inquisitor judging that itinerant for heresy might both have been members of the Chorus. Zealous, closed-minded Christians are and have been a minority in the Chorus. Even during the Inquisition, their numbers were greater, but they hardly constituted a majority view. However, they are a loud minority, and too often they are perceived as the true face of the Chorus.

Although the Congregation has long proclaimed itself a champion of religious pluralism, it cannot be disputed that during the Middle Ages, all non-Christians were effectively shut out of the Congregation's leadership. The founding of the "Tradition" of the Celestial Chorus in 1461 was in fact a reunification of the disparate parts of the Congregation and the beginning of the restoration of ecumenism within the fellowship of the Faithful.

• Hinduism

The Congregation has had a long, rich history in the Indian subcontinent. Indian Choristers have their own hymns, scriptures and songs that predate many of the commonly accepted Western counterparts; some conform in message to the Western scriptures, while some are unique and offer their own insights. Contact between East and West began with Mentu-hetep and was strengthened by the Alexandrian movement into India. From there it diminished, so that only minimal communication passed between the two Congregations during the Mythic Ages, until the Tradition's formation by Valoran.

However, Hindu Choristers are understandably angered by the Christian hegemony that remains within the Chorus. These Singers still fight for their ideological and cultural survival, and after many centuries of being ignored by their European brethren, are finally finding their voices in a global Chorus.

• Islam

The goals of Islam and the Chorus are almost identical, in that both see submission to the Divine as the means of Salvation. It is not surprising, however, that so few Muslim Choristers exist.

The Ahl-i-Batin have had a well-established presence in traditional Islamic lands, with the Batini playing the same role in *dar-el-Islam* as the Congregation played in Christendom. Moreover, the missionary activities of the Messianic Voices (whose missionaries tended to minimize, or even criticize, their Batini brethren) rendered many Muslim Awakened inimical to the Chorus. The Crusades heightened the tensions even further, as Muslim Batini fought Christian Singers. With the fall of the Batini, many within the Congregation argued for a full-scale movement into Islamic lands. However, wiser voices within the Congregation prevailed, and no such incursions have occurred.

For now, most Muslim Choristers are those Singers born outside the Middle East (or converts). Singers born in traditionally Muslim nations tend to operate independently or in their own fellowships, and only infrequently ally with the Chorus. The Chorus itself is slowly relearning of the open hand's superiority to the closed fist, and a new tactic might eventually win more Muslim converts.

• Judaism

The Chorus has a long tradition to draw on in Jewish history, going back to the earliest of the wandering Hebrew prophets who steered their peoples toward God. Both Jews and Christians alike consider many notable figures in the Torah to be Awakened — from Abraham to Moses and onward. Solomon built his famed temple, the most important Sanctuary for Jewish Singers, and he is credited for having authored many esoteric works.

Unfortunately, the Jewish Singers are among those hurt the most by the Chorus' history — from the days when first Greeks and then Romans tried to impose their culture and philosophy upon the captive Jews, to the Messianic Voices who accused the Jews of sinfulness for rejecting Christ. During the Crusades, the Chosen of Abraham watched their homelands bloodily trade hands between Muslims and Christians. Jewish Singers have had an unfortunate experience within the Congregation.

This is a sad state of affairs, because much of the Chorus' greatest metaphysical speculation comes from the medieval Jews. Choristers and Hermetics argue to this day over whose purview the Kabbalah belongs, and who better understands its contents. The Middle Ages and its Christian ideocracy left little room for Jewish Singers, but they persisted, uniting under their own banners, serving as philosophical, cultural and religious havens for the Jewish Awakened. In 1461, most of these groups joined the Celestial Chorus, but a few remain as isolated Crafts.

• The New Age Movement

The Chorus remains split over the so-called "New Age." Some traditionalists argue that only those religions that tie their origins to Divine revelation can help one Ascend, and that the New Age movement is nothing more than a light buffet approach for those incapable of dedicating themselves to any one faith. Some critics even contend that the New Age is nothing more than a pseudo-religious front for the Order of Hermes, the Verbena or even the Nephandi, to steal believers away from the Chorus.

Others within the Chorus, however, contend that the New Age movement is a valid spirituality, and they point to the growing number among the Chorus who come from a New Age background, who self-Awaken without formal instruction or religious ritual.

• Tribal Religions

Followers of tribal religions — be they Native Americans, Africans or any other indigenous cultures — are more typically drawn to the Dreamspeakers through cultural links or visionary inspiration. However, there exist a number of tribal mages who, politics and history aside, are more clearly committed to the mission of the Chorus, and who believe that all peoples must be united under the One.

Early in the Congregation's history, tribal singers may have been equals with priests of other religions. By the time of the Messianic Voices, sadly, they were consigned to the sidelines, their religions seen as primitive (the term *pagan* literally means "country-dweller"). Some affected nominal conversions to Christianity, but still retained many aspects of their original faiths.

Tribal Singers hope to one day share a role as equal partners in the Tradition's leadership. Until that day, they remain on the fringes of Chorister society.

• Zoroastrianism

Zoroastrianism — an ancient, once-dominant faith in Persia until the coming of Islam — is a minority in the Chorus, but its role in religious history is significant. Many believe that Zoroastrian eschatological and cosmological beliefs influenced both Judaism and Christianity. Zoroastrian Singers believe that the *frasho-kereti* (or "making-fresh," the Renewal) will be the transformation of an imperfect world into a heavenly ideal, and that all, even the Technocracy and the Nephandi, will rejoin with Ahura Mazda, the Wise Lord.

Zoroastrian Singers have the unique linguistic privilege of being truly called Magi, for the Latin *magus* ultimately comes from the Persian *magush* — ancient Zoroastrian priests, astrologers and diviners, the same "Magi" (or "Wise Men") who visited the newborn Jesus.

I. On Scripture

Members of our Congregation are frequently confused over how to determine how the truths of our Creation text should be interpreted against our own religious upbringings — whether the "In the beginning..." of our Creation Hymns is closer to the truth than the "In the beginning..." according to Genesis, or even Darwin. It has been easy to avoid such matters by wrapping them in comprehensible philosophical wranglings until we are no closer to the answer than we were at the beginning of the question, while still producing some thousand pages of rhetoric. In the Middle Ages, it was convenient to assume that

our own teachings were anagogical while the Biblical texts were literal; in other ages it was almost compulsory to abandon one in favor of the other. I personally believe that both speak of principal truths, and any inherent contradictions are either illusory or irrelevant.

II. On Heterodoxy

We of the Chorus should bear in mind that the One lies within each of us, and that our manifestations of belief should depend more upon our personal experience with the Divine than upon the decisions or dogmas of others. Let those Singers who wish to accept the tenets and doctrine of organized religions do so out of the

gladness of their hearts and the conviction that they are right — not out of fear of reprisal. Likewise, let those whose personal religions deviate from the accepted norm also do so joyfully. The heterodoxy of an individual is merely her personal expression of faith. Let their beliefs only be judged in the merit of their actions; as you shall “judge a tree by its fruit,” so shall we judge the religions of others.

I believe that the diversity of religious opinion within the Chorus — much more commonly accepted now than during the dark times of the Middle Ages — is a testament to the many ways in which the One may sing. That we have practitioners of long-lost faiths in our group, and that we have followers of religions otherwise alien to our world are all proofs that the One speaks to each of us individually.

a. The Inquisition

Too often in the history of humanity, people have confused piety with orthodoxy; the Inquisition was one tragic example of this confusion, when a single-minded belief was imposed upon people, and those who dissented — or were even believed to dissent — were punished.

Sadly, the more zealous members of our Tradition fell sway to Inquisitorial tendencies, and more than one Singer has worked to suppress other beliefs. However, it has always been my belief that the Inquisition could have happened quite easily without the meddling of Choristers or those narrow-minded zealots from the Cabal of Pure Thought. Humanity is capable of great evil and destruction without the help of mages. Some would say that the Chorus pushed the cause; I say we only rode the wave.

b. The Reformation

I have heard it said that the Reformation was pushed by the Order of Reason as a means of removing secular power from the religious authorities and as an attempt to further divide the Church.

I find this insulting. It utterly denies that there may have been any valid religious reasons for the Reformation, that it may have been a vehicle for grace. Even within the Catholic Church, many are grateful for the Reformation, for it prompted the Council of Trent in 1545, which began the process of codifying and reforming Catholic doctrine. In addition, it opened up a flowering of new Christian groups within the Chorus — Christians who were more free to practice their own beliefs.

Likewise, while the Reformation certainly had some impact in our own community — and did, at times, threaten cohesiveness — I see it as a natural progression in the history of the Church, and an event in which un-Awakened and Awakened alike were equal participants.

I see the Reformation for what it claims to have been: a Reformation of the medieval Church and the beginning of a new era.

III. On The Sacred City

This is the vision I have: that one day, all the world shall be a Sacred City, built on the love of God. In the Mythic Ages, we spoke of a Sacred City. This City, I believe, was built on ignorance and fear, and so it could not stand.

We did not lose our Sacred City to the Skeptics and the Prometheans; we gave them the keys. But when we do have the City of God, it shall be one of love, in which all people are willing citizens, sharing in the glory of the Lord.

Many critics decry the breakdown of religious barriers, the opening of new religions, the syncretism of so many current faiths. This “world religion... is a farce and a sham,” according to them. They dispute the validity of any such efforts.





But is this not what we seek? A common love of the Divine, in which Christian and Muslim may share the same vision of God? To look upon the face of God and see that, despite doctrinal differences, we see the same One? I look forward to this day. I speak this as a devout and pious Christian who prays every day for my Muslim and Jewish and Hindu allies; not that they may see my Path toward the One, but that they be granted success on their own.

F. On the Nature of Evil

And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit.

— Revelations, 9:2

It pains me to speak of those first children who rebelled against the Lord's glorious and just vision. Error is always a possibility when one has free will, and the Many were not created as mindless automatons; thus God created children with the potential to rebel, and some chose to act upon it.

We must simply accept that evil exists, and it exists solely as an absence of goodness, beauty and truth, for these are principia of Creation. Evil, malice, spite, greed — these did not come from the Song of God, but from an absence of that Song and a desire to sing something better. So let us not fall into the trap of the dualists who argue that good and evil are equally opposing factors, some necessary "yin and yang" in the metaphysics of the cosmos.

On the other hand, neither can we deny the reality of evil, for it is stronger now than ever before. We must be on the guard against its baleful influence, lest we walk the same Path as the First Singers who went astray, and we must be vigilant against evil for the sake of the helpless.

G. On the End Times

In those days the earth will give back what was entrusted to it, Sheol will return what it has received and Hell will give back what it owes.

For in those days the Elected Ones will arise and choose the good and holy from those who died.

The day has come when they are to be saved.

— The Book of Enoch.

We of the Congregation believe that at some indeterminate time in the future, all shall be rejoined; the Multitude shall again become Many, and the Many will rejoin with the One. We call this time the Reconciliation, the Reckoning, the Apocalypse. Some believe that the Reconciliation shall be a complete unity, with God absorbing All, and all the Multitudes dissolving into the One's burning light. Others of our Congregation — and I fall into this lot — believe that our reunion shall be one of Harmony, echoing the original Song; we shall each have our own voice, but we shall all Sing together.

At this point, the Lord shall choose who shall continue to exist. Those He favors will be allowed to continue Singing, while others He shall turn a cold eye to. And they shall be snuffed out, to exist no more; as He created them, so shall He uncreate them. Those who have come to recognize God in their hearts and to live virtuous lives in accordance with His will, shall be chosen to stand by His side.

Many visionaries within our Congregation speak of a great war that shall be the sign of the Reconciliation, when all the forces of good

and darkness shall clash once more in a great fury of destruction sweeping across the Tapestry. This battle shall be the proving ground; those who fight for Heaven shall be among the redeemed. Those who turn against the Lord have already determined their lot.

I tell you this: it is my personal belief that there are no guarantees as to who shall stand on which side. There are some within our Chorus who may in time choose to stand against Our Maker. And there are those creatures of Infernal origin who may ultimately surrender themselves to the One for His mercy. Let us not rest on our laurels, content in our seemingly assured salvation.

II. The Congregation



We turn now to an understanding of the body of our Congregation, which propounds upon the sacred truths offered in the first part of our Enchiridion.

A. Our Mission

Lo! Good deeds annul ill deeds. This is a reminder for the mindful.

— Qur'an, XI. 114

If it has not been made clear and evident yet, then let the following words suffice: the mission of the Celestial Chorus is to shepherd humanity toward Ascension and to prepare for the Reconciliation. We do so through a threefold practice: by instilling piety and Faith in the hearts of mankind, that they might have a vehicle for Ascension; by caring and nurturing for those in need, that they may feel the One's love; and by warding Sleepers from the powers of darkness, that they may walk the Path to Ascension free from danger and corruption. Others would argue that our Chorus has different missions: to restore the sacred paradigm, to avenge ourselves upon the Technocrats, what have you. I consider these to be selfish and less important missions, subordinate to the Lord's true purpose. A broad variety of lesser groupings, minor orders and sacred societies exist within our Chorus to support the goals of any of these (and other) missions, but we, regardless of our personal goal, must never forget our threefold task.

B. On Catechumens

One man spends seventy years in learning

And fails to kindle the light.

Another, all his life learns nothing

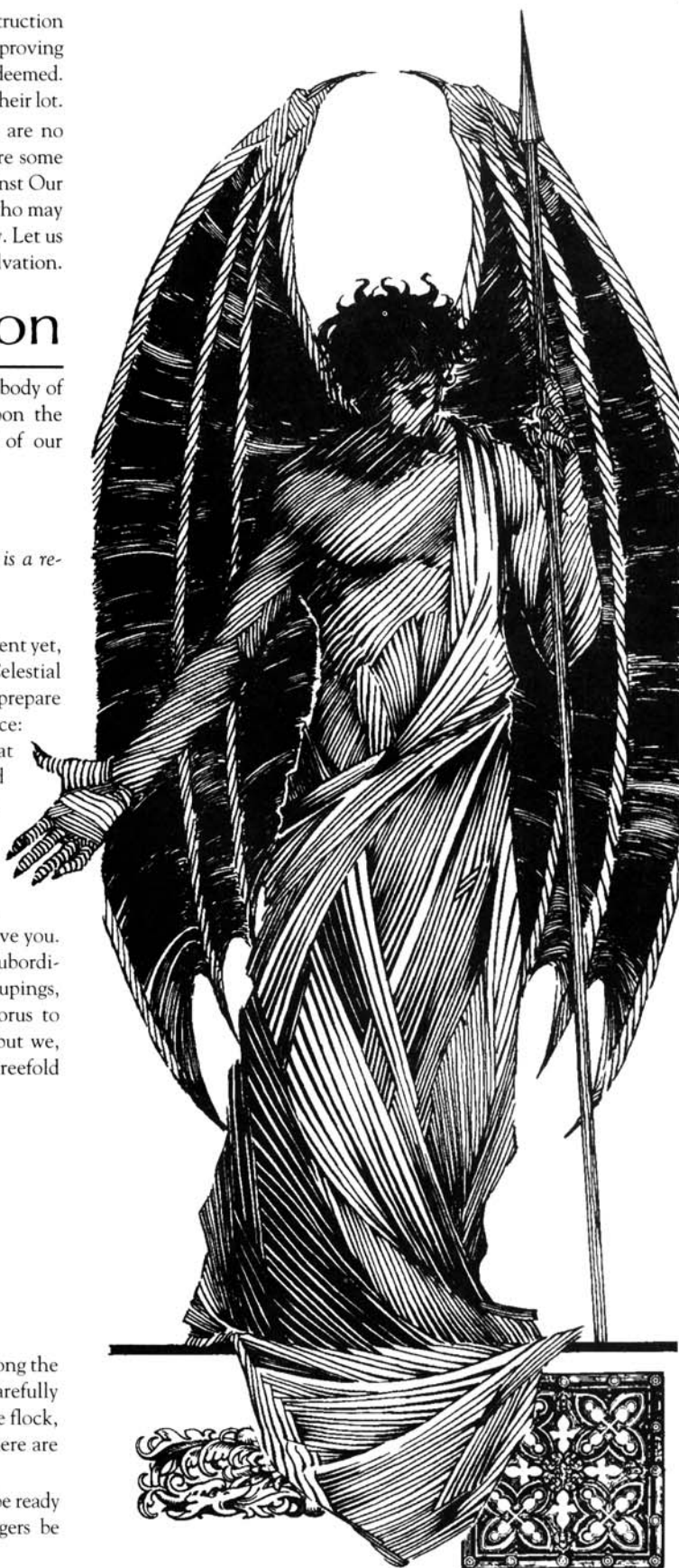
But hears one word

And is consumed by that word.

— Ansari, *The Invocations*

Catechumens, or those learning how to Sing, are among the most precious resources in our Chorus, and should be carefully gathered and taught. These are the future shepherds of the flock, and they are being prepared for a most noble mission. There are many ways by which we find our Catechumens.

Our Singers are taught to recognize that the One may be ready to Sing in anyone. We must be vigilant, lest these Singers be



misguided by other Traditions or warped by our enemies. We look for those who are of kind heart, noble purpose and resolute steadfastness. They must care for all humanity, desiring to help those in need and ever-ready to protect the weak. In older days, we searched for our members among the priesthood and the religious orders, but we now look across all of society. Social workers, activists, missionaries — anyone concerned with bettering the human condition is a valid candidate.

Of course, some sense of the Divine is a necessary requisite. The candidate need not be a dedicated church-goer, but must show some spiritual awareness. This can only be determined through extensive communication with the candidate, who must not be aware that she is being primed for a higher purpose. If the potential Catechumen does not display an inherent recognition of the Divine, we may still rely upon her for aid and assistance, and may watch her for spiritual growth, but realize she is not ready to Sing. Here we see how fine the line between acolyte and Catechumen runs; the only difference for us is that the Catechumen is an acolyte who has touched the Divine Within.

Once we decide an individual is worthy of preparation, she is slowly inculcated in the ideals of the Chorus, until she is finally ready for the Truth. When she has accepted the offer to join the Chorus, she enters the period known as the *Catechumenate*, and learns the history and sacred texts of our congregation. This rigorous period

often lasts years, until the student has proven herself ready to Sing. When her Praeceptor deems that she is at last ready, the slumbering shard of the One is roused in the Rite of Awakening.

We must also recognize, however, that the our Lord rouses some individuals of His own accord, and these people begin to Sing bereft of any moral or theological instruction. Finding such people is especially important; we must guide them in their formative years, lest they fall prey to ignorance or temptation. Some few Singers in our history have come into our fold after Awakening spontaneously and being taught — through revelation — of our mission and history. Most spontaneous Singers need some remedial instruction, but let us not look down upon them for their seeming ignorance. Instead, let us hold them in high esteem for hearing the One's Song without our intervention!

While we actively seek new blood, Our Creator guides many of us toward each other; a stray meeting between strangers, a chance conversation, can be valuable opportunities to meet future Catechumens. In many cases, we become aware of the promising soul through dreams and visions. Some believe these come from the Avatar yearning to be Awakened, contacting us as it stirs within the mortal sheath, while others believe that these come directly from the One Himself.

Factions in the Chorus

There are any number of groups within the Chorus, allied by ideology, religious origin or both. Membership in any of these societies is purely optional of course, and many Choristers remain outside such divisions.

• Anchorites

Isolationists to the extreme, Anchorites are those Choristers who believe primarily in working toward their own Salvation, and ultimately retire into seclusion to dedicate their time to prayer and meditation. Even though they separate themselves from the world, Anchorites still have much to offer; many of the Chorus' Masters have come from this informal collection. Some of these hermits do venture into "the real world," though, if they feel called to do so by the Divine Voice, or if they feel they have some valuable lesson to learn or duty to perform before they can continue their Anchoritic pursuits.

• Cabal of Pure Thought

Letters from the early 800s refer to a society called the Cabal of Pure Thought, which advocated a single, unified religion is the means to Ascension. This Cabal, born in a Christian age, saw Christianity as that religion. The Templars, originally knights who guarded pilgrims in the Holy Land, were once controlled by the Cabal, before their apparent destruction in 1313.

Unfortunately, many of the other Singers within the Congregation found themselves being attacked by the Cabal as "deviant," and the Cabal soon developed a reputation for being divisive. Soon this society saw that it would be more effective attempting to influence and manipulate the un-Awakened than by arguing with other Singers. It was an instrumental, if covert, force in the Albigensian Crusade (against the Cathars of France, inheritors of an ancient dualistic heresy) and ultimately in the establishment of the Inquisition.

It soon became clear that the flock was being massacred, not ministered. In time, the clandestine actions of the Cabal were revealed, and the Pontifex issued the *Montségur Edict* (1245), censuring the Cabal; in response, its members walked out of the Congregation, only to reappear less than a century later as part of the Order of Reason. As a result of the Enlightenment, the Cabal ultimately perceived Reason to be superior to religion as a unifying means, and in time the New World Order was born.

Some believe, however, that a hidden arm of the original Cabal still exists within the Celestial Chorus, a branch who did not walk out with their brothers, who never became purveyors of Reason and who still covertly attempts to manipulate the Church and force a single, unified Christian belief upon humanity.

• Knights of St. George

Just as Saint George — who members of this order count among the Awakened — slew the Dragon, so do the members of this self-professed knighthood seek to destroy the horrors of the vampire and his ilk. They are masters of the arts of war and the most powerful martial magicks, and are less concerned with tending the sheep than with destroying the wolf. While they hunt the occasional Nephandus or go out of their way to contend with a troublesome Garou, they do not lump all evils into the same mix; these knights are fairly focused in their mission, and prefer to concentrate on the evils of the Kindred.

Esoterists allege that these Knights totally misunderstand the true meaning of Saint George's battle with the Dragon, which should be viewed symbolically as the purification of the spirit; these same esoterists hint at a clandestine order of Knights, dedicated to spiritual self-perfection, masters of ancient hidden knowledge.

• Merovingians, the Long-Haired Kings

This faction is unique in the Chorus in that it is a hereditary faction, dating themselves to the fifth century and the Frankish Merovingian dynasty, credited with strange and mystical powers. They take on only familial relations as Catechumens, and are fairly

clannish and secretive in their relationships with other Singers, refusing to reveal their full membership. The ancient Merovingians were sometimes called "the Long-Haired Kings" in reference to their association of long hair with magical prowess; to this day, many Merovingians prefer to let their hair grow for the same symbolic association.

The Merovingians are known to take positions of leadership in business and politics among the un-Awakened. They claim that their duty is to act as an anchor for the Congregation in the mundane world — through arranging bank loans, political protection and whatever worldly necessities might assist the occasional beleaguered Chorister. However, critics accuse them of harboring other secret motives.

• **Septarians**

Among the most conservative members of the Chorus, these fundamentalists argue against inter-Tradition equality. They believe in a strict separation — hence the wall, or *septum* — between the Chorus and other mages, insofar as fighting the Technocracy or any of the Traditions' other foes. For them, a Virtual Adept is as loathsome as any Technomancer, and the Hermetics and Verbenas are the real reasons the sacred paradigm was lost. This group has minimal influence among the Chorus, but it is steady and long-standing, and not likely to disappear any time soon.

• **Latitudinarians**

The Latitudinarians are less a society than a group with a common goal: the breakdown of the Chorus's hierarchy, which has not changed much since its inception during the days of the Roman Republic and codification during the Mythic Ages. They argue for a radical reform resulting in a less centralized leadership and more tolerant behavior toward other Traditions. For the Latitudinarians, the Chorus' history has been a long, slow one of growing intolerance and bigotry. That legacy, they maintain, must end before the Reconciliation fires consume the whole Tradition.

• **Monists**

While some within the Chorus argue against the breakdown of denominational differences and condemn religious syncretism as insulting to the integrity of religion, the Monists represent the extreme opposite view. This group argues that the world would be best served by a single global religion in which all divisions are dropped. Critics of the Monists say that this is an unreasonable goal, but the Monists are quick to point out the results of their work: the World Council of Churches, which attempts to reconcile the many Christian denominations and the works of religious teachers and thinkers who try to demonstrate parallels between Hinduism and Catholicism or Christianity and Zen Buddhism.

These unifiers tend to work diplomatically; rather than forcing a conversion, they attempt to convince their fellows to a change of heart inspired by their pious example and persuasive logic. Most Monists are great speakers with prodigious debating skills and sterling character.

• **Sisters of Gabrielle**

Gabrielle, a leading ancient Chorister and master of Umbral lore, founded a sisterhood of Singers whose primary mission is to safeguard the Tellurian from the horrors of the Nephandus, the Infernalists and the demons with whom they truck.

This exclusive group, open only to female Choristers of all religious orientations, stresses martial magicks, combat skills and a thorough knowledge of Otherworldly opponents. Few Choristers outside this Sisterhood are allowed entry to their private Horizon Realm, called New Delos, but those who have gone there report that it still reflects the splendor and grandeur of ancient Greece.

• **Alexandrian Society**

Once called the Theban League, this society of philosopher-priests contends that the divisions between religion and science are artificial, imposed by the Technocracy. Their solution to overcoming this wall lies not by ideologically bludgeoning science (as seen in the creationists vs. evolutionists debate), but by accepting science into the fold of religious thought. Members of this group master both accepted (physics, mathematics) and esoteric (alchemy, quantum physics) sciences to better prove religious doctrines (e.g., the existence of the soul), and push for a revival of sacred science. To them, religious truth and scientific hypothesis are not as different as they might seem.

• **Sons of Mitras**

The Sons are a small but ancient group which identifies Mitras, one of the First Singers, as their founder. A somewhat militant group, they consider themselves the guardians of tradition and the current military leaders of the Chorus. Due to Christian hostilities, they went underground by the end of the fifth century. With the Chorus' reunion in 1461, however, they re-emerged and pledged to defend and protect the sacred Congregation from its many enemies. These warriors typically look for Catechumens with a military background or interest, and are among the more regimented and disciplined factions within the Chorus.

• **Children of Albi**

Inheritors of many of the Cathar teachings, this misunderstood group is a minority within the Chorus. They consider themselves Christians, but not "Constantinian Christians" — they are not followers of the path which Constantine helped codify. They believe in the One God, but in two "kingdoms" — the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan (the evil material world, in which we are trapped); this anti-material dualism sets them apart from many other Choristers. They follow the Gospels, in addition to a number of other works typically considered apocryphal, and stand utterly opposed to any marriage of Church and State (their history of persecution certainly bears them out on this). Their members, in fact, are not allowed to hold any form of civil employment.

The Children of Albi were forced underground as a result of the Albigenian Crusade and the Inquisition; they only reluctantly joined the mainstream Chorus, and only because of Valoran's sincere and urgent promptings. To this day, though, they remain hesitant to fully trust the Chorus, remembering all too well the fate of their ancestors.

• **The Nashimites**

This small sect originated in the Middle East, and forms a repository for a number of ancient Gnostic beliefs, with a few interpretations of their own. This sect argues that the One God contains all possibilities, including the capacity for evil — by no means an unusual argument. They also assert that Unity contains duality, and that either good or evil may one day become the predominant characteristic. The Reconciliation will be a frightful battle, the Nashimites argue, because the outcome is not fixed — every soul that turns away from good helps tip the scales further in the direction of evil, and the One God may, in the end, become evil.

While most within the Chorus scoff at this particular notion, it seems to be similar to a belief held among Chorus *barabbi*, who proclaim that they are the future of the One.

C. The Hierarchy

The man of refinement turns his thoughts back to the past, goes back to his origin, and does not forget those through whom life has come to him.

— Li Chi, Chi Yi, sect. 2

The Chorus is steeped in tradition and history, leading to an extensive administration. Some within our Congregation argue that this is a boon, for our leadership has centuries of experience to rely upon; others argue that it is a hindrance, old and out-moded. I myself tend to ignore such matters, for they are trivial details at best, which pale next to our true mission.

I. The Pontifex Maximus

Our Chorus is led by the *Pontifex Maximus*, the oldest ranking Chorister alive. The Pontifex, "he who prepares the way," is rarely anything less than a Presbyter in the Sphere of Prime. In addition to magickal mastery, he must have displayed wisdom, prescience and a deep love of God. The position of Pontiff is traditionally a lifetime one, although it has happened that a Pontiff might abdicate in favor of the Anchoritic lifestyle, or to become an Oracle. When the seat becomes vacant, all the members of the Chorus gather at the Celestial City to select a new Pontiff. Some Choristers engage in debate, others in prayer and meditation. Finally, votes are cast and a new Pontifex is chosen.

The Pontiff guides and instructs the Chorus, but does not command it. We do not place infallibility on him, nor do we consider him the living Voice of the One — we all have that capacity. Our

Pontiff is seen as a senior elder, and one whose advice should be heeded, but we are not bound to obey him.

II. The Curia

The Pontiff does not act alone in leadership. He belongs to the Curia, the ruling council of elders and Presbyters of our Congregation. The Curia meets regularly at the Great Adytum to discuss the Chorus' mission and how it might be bettered. The Pontiff most typically comes from this group, just as the Primus — our representative at the Council of Nine — is selected from among this body.

The Curia has, in its history, acted in concert and claimed the right of *magisterium*, or the authority to instruct and define certain matters of faith. In the Middle Ages, the Curia was quite busy. We have thankfully put much of that period behind us. While much of value was produced during that period, the majority of the Curia's proclamations were little more than punitive pronouncements of little metaphysical import.

One of the current Curia's primary responsibilities is to keep the peace within the Chorus, reconciling the various religious and ideological factions, lest they tear us apart. If we cannot find reconciliation within, then we certainly cannot find it without.

D. The Great Adytum

How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of Heaven!

— Genesis 28:17

The Great Adytum is our ancestral home and the place of our central leadership. It is not of this Earth, residing instead in what is



currently called a Horizon Realm — a pocket of reality set just beyond the confines of our own world. Our first Adytum was built in Egypt, in the city of Akhetaten, by Mentu-hetep. When it became clear that the Congregation could not remain physically locked into one nation lest it wither and fail, the original Adytum was moved in its entirety to this Horizon Realm.

In its history, it has gone through many changes, having been called everything from New Akhetaten to the Eleusinian Fields to the Celestial City to New Jerusalem, based upon whatever religion seemed to hold the most sway among Singers at the time. With each name change came changes in physical appearance, as well; it changed from a classical pagan temple to a monastery to a glittering city of light. Now it is a juxtaposition of styles and landscapes, reflecting the current diversity and plurality of our group.

The Adytum consists of a central structure — the Oratorium — containing chapels for the Pontifex and the Curia, in addition to massive assembly halls for our greater gatherings. Surrounding this

edifice lay various structures and halls built as places of worship for the many faiths that make up our membership. Each of these structures, in turn, has portals that connect to various temples, churches and synagogues across the world. A number of Choristers make the Great Adytum their home, including the Pontifex, a few members of the Curia and a diverse assortment of other Singers.

This is a wondrous place, where a guest may praise the One in glorious Song or quiet contemplation. Here I have read countless sacred scriptures, watched the Knights of St. George train with the Sons of Mithras, and conversed with practitioners of rare and little-known religions. Our gatherings here are joyous occasions, and a testament to what the Chorus may achieve when we act in concert.

I have heard rumors of a dark and secretive Horizon Realm called the Celestial Temple of the Sun. I have never seen evidence of such a place myself, and so choose to ignore these rumors. If such a place does exist, it is not in the character of our Congregation, and I would be fearful of the motives of its inhabitants.

Chorus Holy Days

With the plethora of religions represented in the Chorus, it is not unfair to observe that the Chorus *always* seems to be celebrating some religious observance or another. In addition to those holidays celebrated by the members of each respective religion, Choristers share a number of holidays in common:

- **Summer Solstice**

The longest “day” of the year — when the sun, symbol of the One, remains visible late into the evening — is one of the Chorus’ most festive holidays, filled with feasting and a multitude of joy-filled choral presentations.

- **The Day of the Martyrs**

Observed on November 1, this holiday commemorates all those Choristers who have died in battle against the enemies of the Chorus, be they Marauder, Nephandus or Technocrat. It is a solemn occasion, marked by a Requiem held at the Great Adytum. Some Choristers wish to include among the martyrs those who died during the Inquisition; unfortunately, no one agrees whether this should include those fighting on the side of orthodoxy or those victimized for heterodoxy.

- **Winter Solstice**

The shortest “day” of the year — when the sun seems barely present at all — is also a time of deep contemplation and silent prayer. As soon as the sun sets, Choristers gather together to quietly meditate upon the role of the One in their lives, and upon the sanctity of their mission.

- **Feast of the Gathering**

This holiday celebrates the first gathering of the disparate Singers by Mentu-hetep, the acknowledged “founder” of the Chorus in its earliest manifestation. Marked by a solemn liturgy at the Great Adytum, the feast features sermons recalling the tales of the earliest members of the Congregation as they struggled to unify in the name of a common mission.

- **Other Holidays**

In addition to these holidays, various factions and splinter groups within the Chorus may gather to observe their own religious rituals. Some Choristers, for example, observe a day of mourning on March 13, the anniversary of the Declaration of the Ivory Tower, for the decline of the sacred paradigm. There is little chance that a comprehensive liturgical calendar could ever be compiled which lists every single holiday the Chorus observes.

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Chapter Three: The Palatine Syllabus (OPiNions)

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

— Matthew, 7:15



With the growth of the Technocracy came the resulting rise of the Traditions; in the face of opposition and ideological slavery grew the unity of the Council of Nine. However, our Congregation has always had a history of viewing the mages of the Traditions as misguided and even untrustworthy. As we were forced through our experiences to work together with them, we were also forced to formulate our thoughts about them. The Palatine

Syllabus, first written in the early 1930s but frequently revised, was one such result. Although the anonymous piece is obviously the product of an ultra-conservative author, it epitomizes the standard by which the Prometheans and other Traditions are judged to this day, in addition to the various supernatural creatures that we frequently encounter. Although the document claims single authorship, it was likely written by a group of individuals, claiming for themselves the teaching authority of the Chorus.

Introduction to the Syllabus



To those who Sing with God,
Hail and Well Met!

I am but a humble member of the Congregation of the Chorus Celestial, one who has seen much but spoken little. Now, after many years of silence, I offer these words to the confused and beleaguered forces of the One who must contend with the growing armies of the Adversary. Although I do not speak as Primus or Pontiff or member of the

Curia, nor even as a Presbyter or Praecept, I speak with impunity, for I do not offer any new revelations or innovative theories. I only speak from the millennia of experience and tradition behind the Chorus, and as such, I represent her Voice. Heed my words, that you may walk the right Path and Sing with the Lord now and for all eternity.

In the Name of the One,
Signed,
an anonymous servant of God

The Supernatural



This portion of the Syllabus discusses the “supernatural,” a highly relative term used by this author to describe all those miscellaneous inhabitants of Creation, from ghosts to shapeshifters. There is often dissent among the Chorus as to how to treat and comprehend these creatures, and The Palatine Syllabus shows us one such approach.

Q: What are the Supernatural Creatures?

A: The Chorus teaches, in Her infinite wisdom, that the various supernatural entities which make up this Tapestry are all among the Children of the One. Whereas those of us who carry the Lord’s Song are the manifestations of those Many who supported the All-Singer in the Celestial War, it is also commonly accepted that the creatures of darkness are among those who, in their pride and rebelliousness, sang against or failed to support Him.

Q: What is their Origin?

A: It is taught that the Creator’s children fell into three classifications: those who supported Him, those who resisted and those who wavered. Those who wavered and those who sang against Him were both banished to this worldly form, in order that they might learn the lessons of humility and loyalty.

The creatures of the supernatural — be they shapeshifter or vampire or any of their kith and kin — are customarily counted among those who did not support Him. It should be recognized that as there are various degrees of rebelliousness, so too did these manifest as the different entities — some farther from human goodness and closer to diabolical evil.

Q: What is Their Nature?

A: It is also commonly accepted amongst our Chorus that these supernatural creatures exist in a shadowy realm between the Awakened and the Sleeping; their Avatars have been awakened to wondrous powers, but because of their own sinfulness, their nature has been perverted into something dark and sinister, limiting them to certain static, inflexible forms. Hence, despite their power — which often is truly overwhelming — they are not true Singers, even less so than the Dark Singers.

Q: What of Vampires?

A: The Undead rank among those who were the most rebellious and hateful of God’s children; their pride and anger have twisted and warped them into wicked inhuman

beasts. The nature of their hubris grants them what they most sought: power, strength and dominion over others. However, it also forces them to feed off helpless Sleepers — and others — as cattle.

On certain rare occasions, the Infernal taint may not have taken root entirely, and some small bit of the vampire’s humanity might remain untarnished. In such instances, it is believed that the Oracles may be capable of cleansing the taint, but this is a true rarity.

Some contend that the Undead are actually victims, having ultimately been chosen and perverted against their own wishes; thus, while they are sinister in nature, they are not responsible for their condition, nor can they be automatically considered among those who rebelled.

I argue that while a vampire’s creation is usually not a voluntary process, it is naive to assume that they are merely victims; I propose that the very reason certain individuals are chosen to become heirs to this vile heritage is because the darkness within them calls out to those already Turned. For, as we know, like attracts like.

Q: What of Shapeshifters?

A: We must remember that there are two forms of shapeshifter: those Singers who use the Life Arts to alter their human form, and those creatures who share two natures, one human and one animal. This Syllabus is concerned with the latter assortment. Many such shapeshifters exist, some with the form of wolf, others with the form of cat, and even others that share the natures of coyote, or bear, or a myriad collection of animals.

Shapeshifters, like vampires, are counted among those who rebelled in Heaven. However, they did so less out of sheer wickedness than out of some quality of their nature that sought conflict and strife. As such, they should be pitied more than vampires. Let us not forget, though, that their flaws remain powerful enough to warp them into savage, uncontrollable beasts.

This deformity is one that, unfortunately, is carried with them lifetime after lifetime, repeatedly manifesting itself just after adulthood, twisting these poor souls into embodiments of violent rage. In addition to such physical deformity, their nature leads them to spiritual deviance; they come to think of themselves as the embodiment of some Divine wrath, that they are the protectors of this fading tangible thing called the world. This spiritual abnormality has built up, generation after generation, until it has become a culture unto itself.

Fortunately, such souls are easier to guide to salvation. If they can be contacted, and persuaded (by Song, if necessary) to abandon their reckless indulgence in violence and



recant their heretical beliefs, the hope that they may be reborn into something purer remains.

Q: What of the Longaevi?

A: These creatures have many names; be they *fae*, or fairies, or changelings, or *Longaevi* (as some in our Chorus still refer to them, in reference to their extended lifespans), they are a confused and confusing lot.

Many in the Chorus believe that these creatures are a separate and distinct species, like man or animal. Unlike animals, though, they house within their breasts a shard of the Divine. Some Choristers argue that these creatures have been given a different forum in which to work out Salvation, separate from, (but not morally distinct from) humans.

I contend that this is folly. I reiterate the arguments of the early Fathers of the Messianic Voices who, after much deliberation and meditation, came to the conclusion that these changelings were wicked and mischievous children, who rebelled not so much for the sake of pride or power but because they felt it strangely humorous to do so. Their caprice carries on in this life, wrenching their forms and making their mischief that much more powerful. The fact that these entities often ally with shapeshifters is further proof of their shared origins as Rebels.

On the Spiritual World

A: Spirits, like animals, were among those creations brought forth by the Singing of the Many during the Lesser Creation. These spirits mirror the intent and motive of their creators; some are beneficial, some are mischievous, and some are truly baneful. An entire hierarchy of these spirits ranges in power and influence.

Remember this warning: exercise caution when dealing with any spirits that appear friendly or even “mostly harmless” — demonic phantasms easily befuddle!

Q: What of Angels?

A: We believe that not all of the Many were shattered. Some, those closest to God, remained in their pure forms that they might better aid those banished to the world of forms. These we call by a variety of names: the Seraphim and Cherubim, the Thrones, Dominions, Virtues and Powers, the Principalities, the Devas, the Archangels and Angels. These are to be revered, but not worshipped, for their closeness to Heaven and their primal purity. They have been known to appear to the truly devout and pious, to lend aid and counsel, or even to protect against the powers of darkness.

Q: What of Demons?

A: There is much that could be said about these entities. The most authoritative work is Sister Gabrielle's *Treatise on the Infernal*, a most praiseworthy call to arms against the Diabolic. However, let me sum up the basis of her work: Lesser demons are the spirits that were created by the first Rebels. They can be dangerous, and should be destroyed when the opportunity presents itself, but they are not the truest threat.

We must be ever-vigilant against the works of the greater demons, those of the Many who were the most wicked and baleful and managed, through force of their own ill will, to survive the Shattering and linger in their original, powerful forms. They did not escape the Lord's notice — for nothing could — but were banished to nether-realms and Infernal regions with many names: Gehenna, Sheol, Hell, the Inferno.

Of the greatest of these is Lucifer, sometimes called the Satan, the Adversary, Belial, Eblis or Abaddon; he was the leader of the Rebel Singers, and the greatest in pride and power. He is revered as Ialdabaoth by the Nephandi, and some Dreamspeakers call him the Wyrn.

When confronting demons, be warned! The inexperienced cannot tell the difference between the lesser demons and the greater. Let this reminder serve as caution: the truly powerful and wicked demons are subtle beings, and the ones to be most feared, for their apparent weakness can lead a Chorister to his own pride-filled downfall.

Q: What is the Endless War?

A: The Endless War is yet another epithet for the mission of the Chorus; for while some among us believe that our sacred duty is merely to coddle the Sleepers until they are ready to accept Heaven, others among us recognize that Ascension can never occur while Lucifer and his legions have a strangle-hold on the soul of the world. The War that was begun in Heaven never ended. Although the Many shattered and the Dark Children were exiled, the War continues, albeit on a new battlefield with new players.

Those active in the Endless War, those dedicated to spiritual combat, shall live a truly difficult life. The advances of the Technocracy are paltry compared to the threats posed by the Infernal. Even worse than physical danger is the threat of temptation and corruption, for nothing pleases Hell more than to subvert one of Heaven's own.



The Celestial Chorus and Demons

Having our abode, then, among heavenly things, that is, walking in the spiritual commandments of God, we should war against the spiritual forces of wickedness seeking to draw us away from our abode.

— Saint Augustine of Hippo, *The Christian Combat*

The Chorus disagrees on many different issues, but all Choristers concur about the malefic role of the Infernal and the necessity of combat with its influence. A fair amount of controversy exists over the role of “neutral spirits”; some of the more conservative Choristers like to lump all spirits into the demonic category, but this is not a universal phenomenon. Regardless, the Chorus as a whole has much to say (and much to write) about the Infernal: from catalogues of the demonic hierarchy (many of them contradictory) to general exhortations against the Infernal, to manuals on the means used to undermine or outright defeat demonic entities.

Chronicles that concentrate on Storytelling the Eternal War should be dark and gritty, not just spiritual slug-fests; such tales should focus on temptation and salvation, human weaknesses and spiritual triumphs. For more information on demons and the Infernal, and on the Nephandi Infernalists and cultists who serve them, refer to **The Book of Madness**.

Q: What of Ghosts?

A: We turn now to the poor discarnate spirits of the dead, be they called ghosts, restless souls, wraiths or any other epithet. The nature of these entities is at first easily enough discussed: they are mortals who, for whatever purpose, having died, are locked in Limbo. They have not Ascended — as may happen sometimes after death if the individual was a virtuous and obedient servant of the Maker — nor have they gone on to another cycle of life in which they may be given yet another chance to come to God of their own choice.

Some contend that these entities perhaps remain in such discarnate form through some deep conviction that keeps them from moving on, or because of some task unfulfilled. Even within our Chorus, some argue that this form of afterlife is merely another stage in which the recently dead may attain Salvation.

I answer that this is naive. It is foolish to assume that a woman killed on an errand to the post office would exist in some afterlife because of the urgency of the letter she was unable to mail, or that an old man’s affection for his favorite chair is strong enough to keep his spirit on the premises. This is blatant and unadulterated folly.

No, the magisterium of the Curia offers the truth on the natures of these wraiths. They are individuals who still waver from accepting the All-Singer out of some inherent weakness of heart, and because they have not fully denied Him, nor have they accepted Him, they still linger on. Theirs is a truly miserable lot, for their own destruction shall come from weakness of spirit. They shall wither away of their own accord, unless they can come to accept God and be released from their bonds.

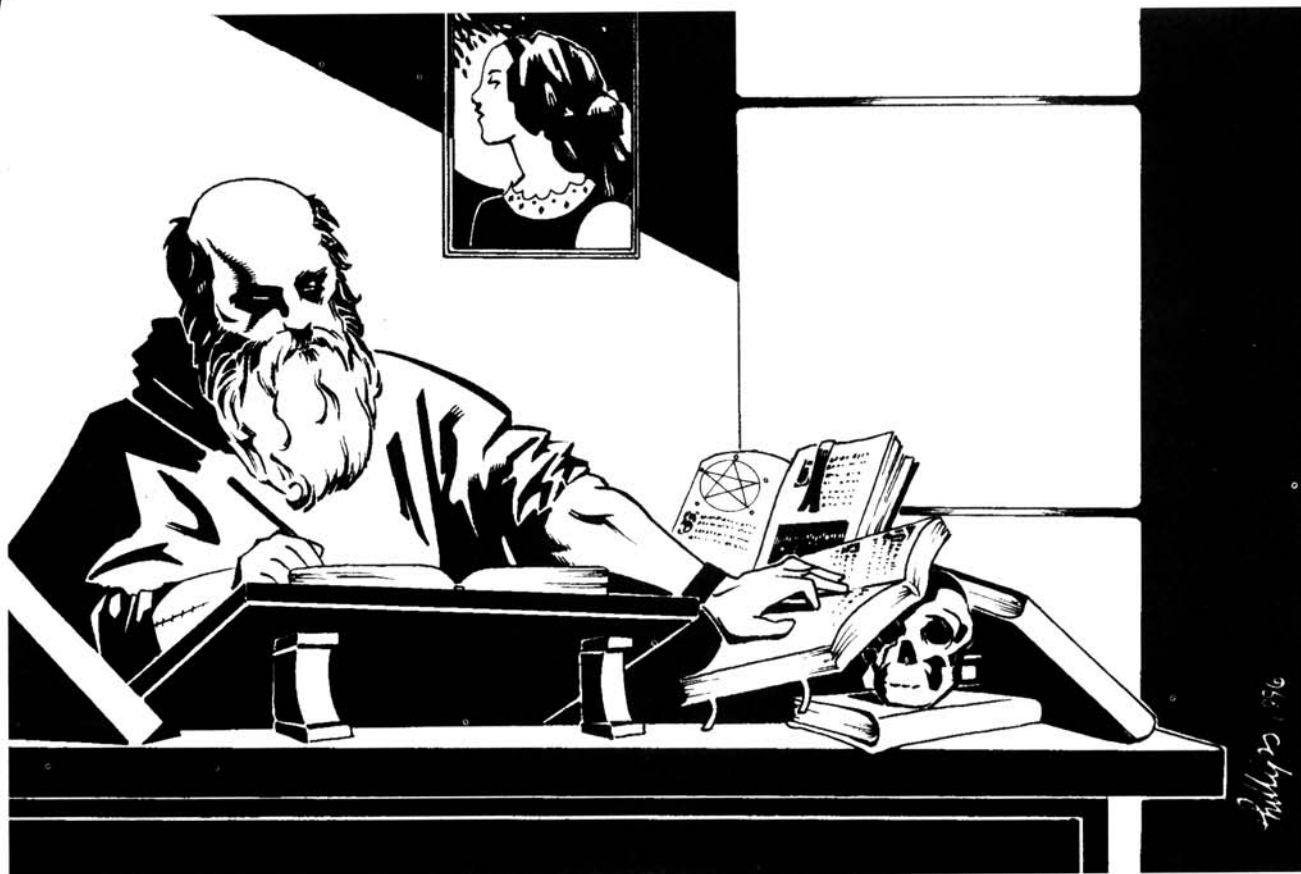
The Disparate Singers



This portion of the Syllabus discusses the other Singers, be they our allies or our enemies. For many within our Congregation — including apparently the author of the Syllabus — there is a clear division between “us,” the Celestial Chorus and all other Singers. This statement — like the rest of the Syllabus — represents the most conservative viewpoints. When reading the author’s thoughts on the other Traditions, for instance, we can assume that he would have counted the late-coming Virtual Adepts alongside the Sons of Ether, if not with the Prometheans they once belonged to, had he added his thoughts to a later edition.

Q: What of The Council of Nine?

A: We must, of necessity, currently count them among our allies, but only tentatively so. Let it be clear that we do not view these “mages” of the “Traditions” as full partners in the work of salvation; they should be viewed instead as remedial allies. Our beliefs are perennial, having been manifested by Singers throughout the Ages, and are the truths behind all of their misbegotten fallacies. Their sins, at least, are not as grand and proud as the Promethean hubris of the Technocracy or the malefic design of the Nephandi. If anything, these mages are closer to the un-Awakened who have wavered, and who have forgotten the Song of God.



Some among the Council have been our opponents throughout history. The Verbena are among the worst, for they would deny the transcendence and holiness of the All-Singer, looking for the sacred in blood and passion. Their sanguine song has long been an affront to us, but for now we must be tethered to them by our circumstances.

The Order of Hermes has also long been a rival, although it has gone through many names. The Hermetic mages are the epitome of the pride-filled sorcerer who seeks to wrest control of creation from God in order to satisfy his own insatiable hunger for power and knowledge. From the days in Egypt when they first sought the mastery of creation, to their theft of Solomon's name for their hidden magicks, to the Middle Ages when they were almost feudal lords, power has ever been the name of their Song.

The Dreamspeakers have, like the Verbena, forsaken the supremacy of Heaven in favor of more trivial metaphysics. They see not the Supreme Spirit, the One, and instead dally with the spirit realm — a sometimes trivial, and often dangerous occupation. Some among our own Chorus are so obsessed with the spirit ways (particularly those from backwater cultures and heathen religions) that they might well be Dreamspeakers in disguise. We must watch them carefully.

The Cult of Ecstasy is an unfathomable lot, the canaille of the Council. They cannot be accused of ignoring the Lord — it is hard to “ignore” what one cannot even see through an opiate stupor. While some of them seem gifted in the prophetic arts, these seers seek only the thrill of the day, and as such are perhaps spoiled children. Although this group has a long history, as a whole it still must mature. Then it might see the error of its ways.

The Akashic Brothers seek too much the Divinity within; while the One is at the heart of all, He still reigns supreme and transcendent. The Akashics have mastered their own Divinity, but see this mastery as their sole goal. They do not realize that we have a purpose beyond merely self-absorbed meditation.

The Euthanatos foolishly believe that they can perceive when an individual has lived past his allotted time, and assume that by pushing a soul to a speedy reincarnation, that soul has a greater chance of Ascension. But how can the soul Ascend if it is not given a sufficient chance to practice self-perfection, and instead is rushed through a cycle of valueless lives? And who are the Euthanatos to determine what is sufficient?

The Sons of Ether are a trivial and paltry lot. They obsess over their scientific toys and have avoided the

Promethean heresy to a degree. We can ignore them while they huddle over their playthings, but we should also be aware of their possible betrayal.

Q: What of the Technocracy?

A: We have known this group by many names and in many forms: the Skeptics, the Atheists, the Prometheans — all those would put the will of man above the Will of God and who would deny His Existence. Some among our Chorus dispute who poses the greatest threat: the Nephandus who would corrupt and taint the Sleeping soul, or the Technocrat who would deny that soul's very existence. I cannot argue that either is worse, for they are both sinners.

That we have fallen from the Mythic Ages is true; that our vision of the Sacred City, once so close but now just a memory, cannot be disputed. That we have the damnable (if not already surely damned) Order of Reason to blame for this loss is also true. Once they were but a thorn in our side, a minor annoyance, an irritant. Now they are among our greatest foes because they oppose not just our acts of salvation but our right to perform them. They have led the Sleepers into the most abominable wasteland, the desolate realm of faithlessness and despair. For this they must be punished.

There are many Conventions within the Technocracy, just as there are "Traditions" within the Council. We care not for these artificial divisions, for they are all to be despised equally. Be they gene-splicers, electricians or mechanocrats, they all share a vision with no room for the One.

Q: What of the New World Order?

A: We do pay special attention to the New World Order. This Convention may be traced to the Cabal of Pure Thought, a group of Singers who nobly tried to instill a uniformity of belief and thought in the Middle Ages, until they fell sway to the errors of Reason without Revelation. They now stand among our greatest ideological enemies. While other Conventions hold to the Promethean heresies, it is the duty of the New World Order to actually promote disbelief and skepticism among the un-Awakened. For this heresy they must fought on every front.

Q: What of the Nephandi?

A: There is little to say about these Luciferian mages that has not already been said. They are a blot upon the Earth and shall be expunged. They should be actively sought out and destroyed, that their vile purpose be halted. We know them to be our ancient enemies, from before the time we even walked the Earth; they are the Dark Ones, the rebel-

lious children who fought against us and our sovereign master.

Fear these Dark Singers, my children. They seek to destroy our bodies and pervert our spirits. Nothing pleases them more than to turn one of our own to their dark cause. They are not content with leading those Sleepers who would, as an effect of their own vile nature, turn toward evil anyway. These souls are paltry morsels on their table, little more than fodder for their cause. Their true delight is the seduction of the innocent.

If you come across any Chorus *barabbi*, do not engage them in combat. Notify the Curia, that they may call down the fires of Heaven upon these abominations.

Q: What of the Marauders?

A: These Singers have been warped by the power of their own Songs. Lunatics, they cannot be held fully responsible for their actions. However, exercise caution around them, as they leave madness in their wake. Some might be useful soldiers against the Nephandi or the Technocracy, but they could too easily turn against us or destroy our own ranks. Some argue that the Marauders are the harbingers of the Apocalypse; as their madness spreads, so approaches the time of Reconciliation.

Q: What of the Others?

A: Not all Singers can be easily classified. Many in the early days of the Council remained equally dissatisfied with the Order of Reason and our own proceedings. Some of these are what are now called "Crafts," while others defy description.

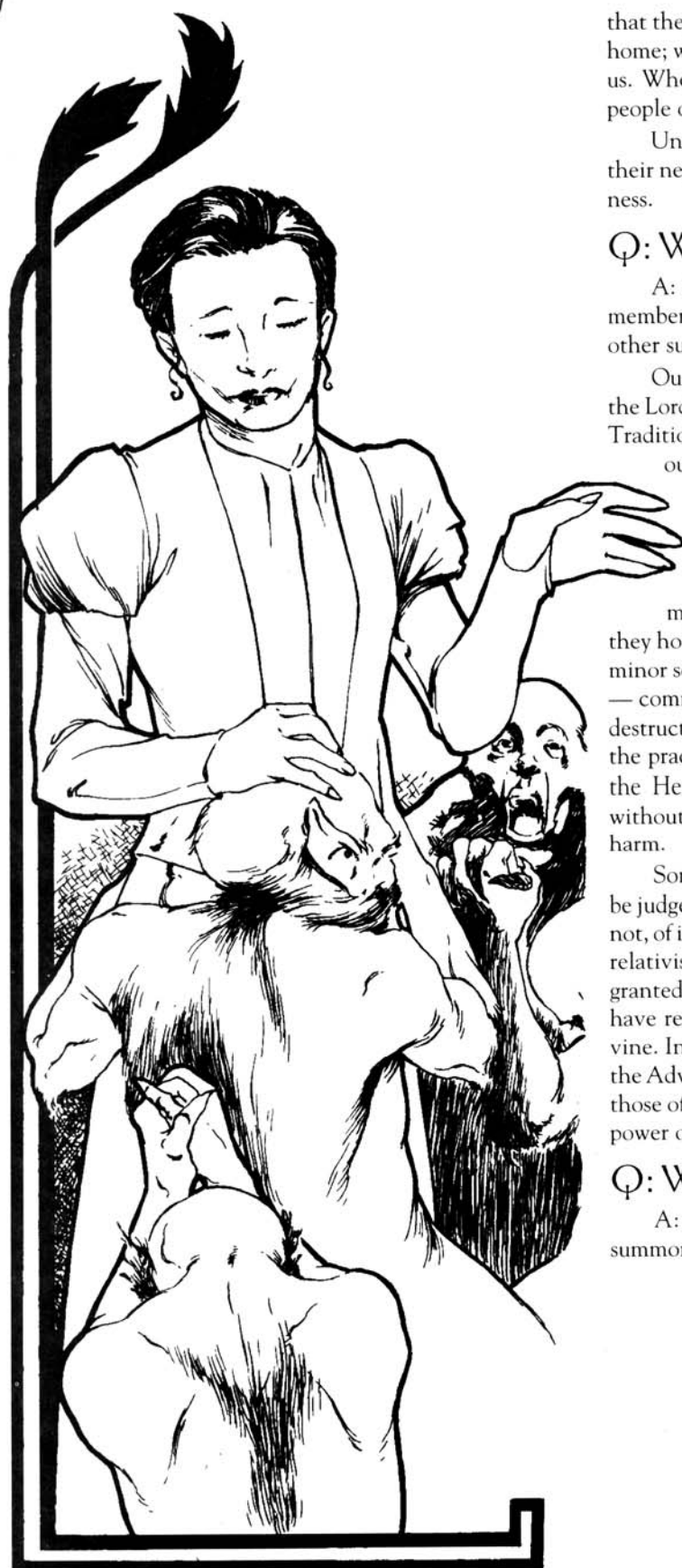
Such Singers can only be judged on an individual basis. Some may be splinters of our Congregation from the distant past who failed to unite with us in a time of need. We must pity them and try to bring them into our loving fold.

Others represent the same sins and errors of the Traditions, and as such should be treated with caution. Offer each of them the chance to Sing with us, and judge them by their answer. Some may yet be brought into our fellowship, while others will clearly fight against us during the Reconciliation.

Q: What of the Ahl-i-Batin?

A: The Ahl-i-Batin, who once Sang alongside us, are a special case. That they turned their backs on the Nine should not be held against them; there are some who to this day argue that we should not be allied with the other Singers as "equal partners."

Regardless, the Batini are frequently men of Faith, and should be respected as such. Although they have drifted from our true mission, they are the group closest to us. In time, we hope, their piety and devotion to our Maker shall lead them to fully understand, respect and appreciate our mission. Now



that they have disbanded, they are leaderless and without a home; we should use this weakness to gather them closer to us. When and if they finally join us, our ranks will have people of strong arms and stronger faith.

Until then, we must always be ready to remind them of their neglect, and attempt to persuade them into righteousness.

Q: What of Orphans?

A: Orphans count themselves as unaffiliated mages, members of no group, be it Tradition or Technocracy or any other such association.

Our treatment of them must be simple: guide them to the Lord. Otherwise, consider them as one would any of the Traditions — lesser allies. If they prove to be antithetical to our cause, then eliminate them and let God judge them.

Q: What of Hedge Magi?

A: Hedge Magi are children playing with matches. On their own, they can do little damage, but they hold the potential for great destruction. Some of these minor sorcerers — Gypsies, folk doctors and what have you — command only limited ability, and limited potential for destruction. However others — particularly those who seek the practices of ritual magic and other emasculated arts of the Hermetic Orders — can grow too swiftly in power without maturity or morality to wield their magics without harm.

Some within the Chorus contend that such magic must be judged in the light of the person wielding it, and that it is not, of itself, inherently evil. I answer that this is naive; such relativism will be our downfall. Those who seek magic are granted it, and not by Heaven. Very few of these Sleepers have reached their powers through recognition of the Divine. Instead, their darkest wishes for power are granted by the Adversary to lead them toward damnation. They are like those of the Many who sought their own song purely for the power of it, and they must be watched carefully.

Q: What of Infernalists?

A: The Infernalists, the Diabolists, the demon-summoners and devil-worshippers, the Satanists — these are

the very fulfillment of the threat of hedge magic. They are Sleepers who have had their Divine Shard simultaneously roused and shackled, who have sold their immortal souls in exchange for the powers of witchery.

Remember this: every soul bartered to the Devil is another piece of the One which will be absent during the Reconciliation. Some apocalyptic visions even speak of a Reconciliation in which the Enemy is the victor, because he has enchained enough souls to dethrone God. Of course, this cannot possibly be, but such tales serve as reminders of what we must prevent.

When you encounter would-be Infernalists, steer them clear of their intended Path. When you meet up with committed Infernalists, immolate them.

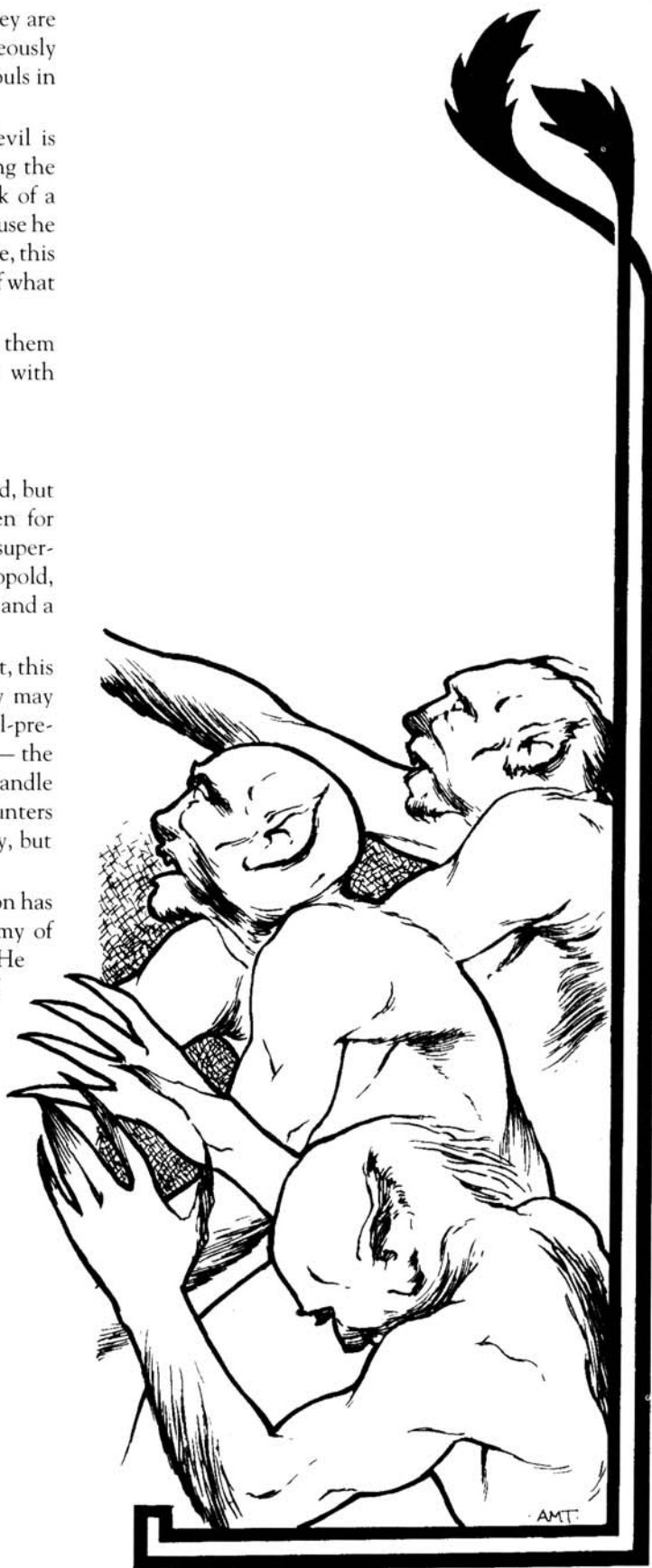
Q. What of the Inquisition?

A: By this term I refer not to that historical period, but to a group of mortal witch-hunters who have taken for themselves the mission of protecting their kind from supernatural predators. This group includes the Society of Leopold, a religious order affiliated with the Catholic Church, and a disparate grouping of like-minded associates.

Of this phenomenon I have two things to say. First, this is akin to the sheep guarding the sheep; while they may develop formidable teeth, such guardians are still ill-prepared to fight the waiting wolf-pack. Their Theurgy — the only marginally acceptable hedge magic — is still a candle compared to the bonfire of our might. Thus, witch-hunters are to be commended for their piety and their bravery, but should not be encouraged in their mission.

This being said, I must also add that the Inquisition has produced many firmly committed soldiers in the army of Heaven. This may be part of the Lord's grand plan, and He is even now shoring up his Hosts. Likewise, some of these mortals show such faith in the Divine that their faith is a weapon itself. Even now, some few of our Chorus actually came to us from the Inquisition, and these are among our greatest soldiers.

Praise be to God!





Chapter Four: Hagiography



Allah hath not sent a Prophet except with a beautiful voice.
— Mohammed



The Celestial Chorus, like every other Tradition, suffers from negative stereotypes. And as is often the case, these stereotypes may bear the grain of truth in them. Too often, Choristers are portrayed as narrow-minded zealots who wish nothing but to enforce their own beliefs and views on others, through either persuasion or coercion. And typically, Choristers are seen as Christian fundamentalists, Bible-thumping fanatics who would deny freedom of belief to all in favor of a simplistic, overly moralistic “fear of the Lord.”

Are any Choristers like this? Certainly.

Is this the norm? Certainly not.

While religion is the heart of a Chorister's life, ideology and avocation, do not assume that “religion” automatically means “organized religion” or “orthodoxy.” While the Third Age was an unfortunate example of how power can corrupt religion, people too often overlook the fact that many

Singers were consigned to the flames of the Inquisition. Those who wandered the countryside, preaching nothing but a simple love of God and eschewing all political favor and material gain, were just as suspect of heresy as were folk healers and crones.

But realize that the Chorus is far greater than the stereotypical closed-minded religious zealot; just as it is theologians and crusaders, it is also humanitarians, social activists, protectors of mankind, teachers and caregivers. The Celestial Chorus is an anomaly in the World of Darkness; although it recognizes the darkness within the world, it sees the light unnoticed by so many. It offers hope in a world thirsting for it, and represents a beacon of safety in an otherwise hollow and meaningless world.

This chapter portrays some of the diversity within the Chorus, both in the form of notable Choristers throughout history as well as templates for starting mages which may be used by Storytellers or players.

Kshatriya

In accordance with the usual rites of their order, they engaged themselves in study and the observance of vows;... they were expert in athletic feats, adept in archery, learned in the scriptures, and skillful in fighting with club, sword and shield... They shone equally in history, mythology, and many other branches of learning, and mastered the inner meaning of the scriptures.

— *The Mahabharata*, Adi Parva VII

Quote: Don't give me any more of your parochial Western snobbery. My civilization is far older than yours, yet you consign us to your "Third World."

Prelude: You still remember childhood, sitting at your father's feet as he read from the *Vedas*, the *Ramayana* and the *Bhagavad Gita*. And you remember feeling fear on the morning your mother woke you early, and walked you through the twilight streets of Benaras, City of Light, to an unknown temple for your formal presentation to an ancient Brahmin priest.

You looked around the crumbling temple for other children — schoolmates, neighbors and playmates — but recognized none of the handful of youths present. You were surrounded by strangers; even Mother had disappeared in the moment you glanced away from her.

Over the years, you were taught the sacred sciences, the mantras of battle and warfare, skills to read the sacred books — including some previously unheard of — in their ancient tongues, ayurvedic healing and other practices long ignored by the "modern world." The Brahmins taught of the single unifying reality behind the multiplicity of forms and of the singing Avatar of the Godhead within all aspects of creation. You learned of the true Song of God, and discovered you were one of His Singers.



As you grew, you also learned how your people had been alternatively ignored or dismissed by your Western counterparts, who grew fat in the luxury of their power. But the Brahmins also said that your destiny would take you to the West, where dark powers were stirring and your talents would be needed.

Concept: You are the embodiment of the ancient Indian philosopher-warrior, trained in scripture and warfare, thought and action. Magick is more difficult in the secular West, where Reason reigns supreme. Unfortunately, the ethnocentrism of many Western Choris-ters is just as chafing as the sexism of many Indian Singers.

Roleplaying Tips: You are now an ambassador to the West, and you treat this position with pride and dignity; occasionally haughty, but with good reason. History insists that your people's age of glory is long past. Thus, you rarely ignore an opportunity to prove the superiority of ancient Vedic ways. Although Hindi is your native tongue, your English is superb — probably better than most native speakers can manage.

Magick: Your magick — typically consisting of Sanskrit chanting — is ancient, rooted in the *Vedas* and other books older than most Western scriptures. You have tried to diversify your magickal studies, but excel in Prime, the stuff of creation.

Religion: You practice the Hinduism of your ancestors. Your holy symbol is a sun-encircled image of Vishnu, the Preserver.

Equipment: Mace, saber, luxury car, incense, library of philosophical and religious works.



Celestial Chorus

MAGE: The Ascension™



Name:
Player:
Chronicle:

Nature: *Judge*
Essence: *Dynamic*
Demeanor: *Bravo*

Concept: *Kshatriya*
Mentor:
Cabal:

Attributes

Physical

Strength _____ ●●○○○
Dexterity _____ ●●●○○
Stamina _____ ●●●○○

Social

Charisma _____ ●●○○○
Manipulation _____ ●●○○○
Appearance _____ ●●○○○

Mental

Perception _____ ●●●●○
Intelligence _____ ●●●●○
Wits _____ ●●●○○

Abilities

Talents

Alertness _____ ●●○○○
Athletics _____ ●○○○○
Awareness _____ ○○○○○
Brawl _____ ●●○○○
Dodge _____ ○○○○○
Expression _____ ○○○○○
Instruction _____ ○○○○○
Intuition _____ ○○○○○
Intimidation _____ ○○○○○
Streetwise _____ ○○○○○
Subterfuge _____ ○○○○○

Skills

Do _____ ○○○○○
Drive _____ ●○○○○
Etiquette _____ ●○○○○
Firearms _____ ○○○○○
Leadership _____ ●●○○○
Meditation _____ ●●○○○
Melee _____ ●●●○○
Research _____ ○○○○○
Stealth _____ ○○○○○
Survival _____ ○○○○○
Technology _____ ○○○○○

Knowledges

Computer _____ ○○○○○
Cosmology _____ ●●○○○
Culture _____ ●●●○○
Enigmas _____ ●●○○○
Investigation _____ ○○○○○
Law _____ ●○○○○
Linguistics *Sanskrit* _____ ●●○○○
Lore _____ ○○○○○
Medicine _____ ●○○○○
Occult _____ ●○○○○
Science _____ ●○○○○

Spheres

Correspondence _____ ●○○○○
Entropy _____ ○○○○○
Forces _____ ●○○○○

Life _____ ●○○○○
Mind _____ ○○○○○
Matter _____ ○○○○○

Prime _____ ●●●○○
Spirit _____ ○○○○○
Time _____ ○○○○○

Advantages

Backgrounds

Avatar _____ ●●●○○
Destiny _____ ●●●○○
Resources _____ ●●●○○
_____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○

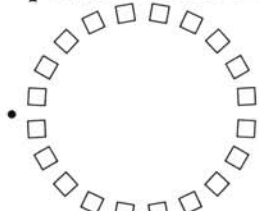
Arete

● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Willpower

● ● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

Quintessence



Paradox

Health

Bruised -0 ☐
Hurt -1 ☐
Injured -1 ☐
Wounded -2 ☐
Mauled -2 ☐
Crippled -5 ☐
Incapacitated ☐

Combat

Weapon	Difficulty	Damage
<i>Mace</i>	4	<i>Str</i> +2
<i>Sabre</i>	6	<i>Str</i> +4

Experience

Tribal Visionary

As a child I understood how to give, I have forgotten this grace since I have become civilized.

— Chief Luther Standing Bear

Quote: *Your words are wasted on me. You say one thing, but your deeds prove otherwise.*

Prelude: You always felt pressure from your people, the Crow — pressure to conform, pressure to be one of them. Why leave the reservation? Were the old ways not good enough? You looked around at the despair and desolation and thought, “These are what the old ways have brought us.”

So you abandoned your native culture and went off to Chicago to study information science and multimedia design. The Web, Perl, CGI, HTML — these were the ways for you. In four years, you graduated *cum laude* and were offered a promising job at an up-and-coming online firm. The future was yours!

So why make that one last trip to the reservation? Why visit the town elder, who had always tried to send you on visionquests as a child, to teach you the way of the eagle and the bear? And why agree to that one last visionquest to Pretty Eagle Point — just to prove the futility of the old ways?

There was no way to prepare for the visions received during the four-day period. Your Avatar awakened, appearing as a Plains warrior from the past, teaching the ways of the *Ah-badt-dadt-deah*, He Who Makes all Things. You discovered your medicine, met your familiar spirits and learned your power song. The old ways, you now know, did not bring your people their fate; *abandoning* those ways did the deed.

You turned the job down and now travel the countryside, bringing hope to other native peoples, ushering them into the 21st century and restoring them their ancient past.

Concept: You're young, hip and full of attitude; most people just pass you off as a tattooed “urban aboriginal.” That's fine. You know you have what it takes, so who cares if you don't “look the part” of a medicine man? There are more important things than filling a stereotype, and you know that the wine is more important than the bottle. You have the spirit and knowledge of a shaman, if not the appearance.

Roleplaying Tips: Keep people on their toes. Your concern for folks is honest, but you won't put up with nonsense. You can see past peoples' facades, and expect others to as well. While few things perturb you, certain issues bring you to a sudden fury.

Magick: The Spirit world holds many keys to the ways of flesh and matter. You've already gained a reputation among other Singers for your Spirit wisdom.

Religion: You practice the tribal beliefs of your people, though you understand those beliefs better than do most of

your tribe — the interrelationship of people and nature, the Creator's place in all things, and the sacred nature of all reality. Your holy symbol is a medicine bundle, containing (among other things) the feather of an eagle — the bird which flies closest to Heaven.

Equipment: Laptop computer, medicine bundle, herbs, knife, sunglasses.





Celestial Chorus

MAGE: The Ascension™



Name:
Player:
Chronicle:

Nature: *Visionary*
Essence: *Dynamic*
Demeanor: *Rebel*

Concept: *Tribal Visionary*
Mentor:
Cabal:

Attributes

Physical

Strength _____ ●●○○○
Dexterity _____ ●●○○○
Stamina _____ ●●○○○

Social

Charisma _____ ●●○○○
Manipulation _____ ●●○○○
Appearance _____ ●●○○○

Mental

Perception _____ ●●●○○
Intelligence _____ ●●●○○
Wits _____ ●●●○○

Abilities

Talents

Alertness _____ ●○○○○
Athletics _____ ●○○○○
Awareness _____ ●●○○○
Brawl _____ ●○○○○
Dodge _____ ●○○○○
Expression _____ ○○○○○
Instruction _____ ○○○○○
Intuition _____ ●●○○○
Intimidation _____ ○○○○○
Streetwise _____ ○○○○○
Subterfuge _____ ○○○○○

Skills

Do _____ ○○○○○
Drive _____ ○○○○○
Etiquette _____ ○○○○○
Firearms _____ ○○○○○
Leadership _____ ○○○○○
Meditation _____ ●●○○○
Melee _____ ●●○○○
Research _____ ○○○○○
Stealth _____ ○○○○○
Survival _____ ○○○○○
Technology _____ ●●○○○

Knowledges

Computer _____ ●●●○○
Cosmology _____ ●●○○○
Culture _____ ●●○○○
Enigmas _____ ●●●○○
Investigation _____ ○○○○○
Law _____ ○○○○○
Linguistics *Latin* _____ ●○○○○
Lore _____ ○○○○○
Medicine _____ ●○○○○
Occult _____ ●○○○○
Science _____ ○○○○○

Spheres

Correspondence _____ ○○○○○
Entropy _____ ○○○○○
Forces _____ ○○○○○

Life _____ ●○○○○
Mind _____ ○○○○○
Matter _____ ●○○○○

Prime _____ ●○○○○
Spirit _____ ●●●○○
Time _____ ○○○○○

Advantages

Backgrounds

Avatar _____ ●●●○○
Dream _____ ●●●○○
Mentor _____ ●○○○○
_____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○

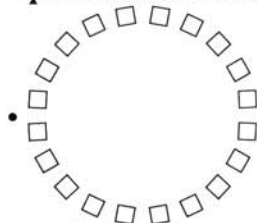
Arete

● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Willpower

● ● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

Quintessence



Paradox

Health

Bruised -0 ☐
Hurt -1 ☐
Injured -1 ☐
Wounded -2 ☐
Mauled -2 ☐
Crippled -5 ☐
Incapacitated ☐

Combat

Weapon	Difficulty	Damage
<i>Knife</i>	4	<i>Str+1</i>

Experience

Itinerant Healer

Here is a test to find whether your mission on earth is finished: If you're alive, it isn't.

— Richard Bach, *Illusions*

Quote: *Just relax. Leave this to me.*

Prelude: Born to an irreligious family, you grew up an utter atheist, debunking anything religious or spiritual as superstition or stupidity — until the night you drove home drunk from a party, and had the accident that should have been fatal. The car wrapped itself nicely around a dented street light, flinging your body across the street. When the paramedics came to the accident scene, you were unhurt, save for a few tears in your clothing.

You could pass off anything to luck, but this was too much. And nothing could explain your vision: a brilliant burning light surrounding you, healing you, silently announcing that your life had greater purpose. The only word you actually heard was “Believe,” the same message you saw in the classifieds of a newspaper a month later, accompanied by a phone number. You called the number, and a woman spoke with you. She told of a dream she had, a vision of a young woman whose hedonistic ways came to an end after a near-fatal accident.

You still don't know what healed you that night; perhaps a wandering healer, or the direct power of the One. Either way, you understand your duty now, and travel the country with few belongings and fewer needs, offering your healing voice and soothing touch as it is required; sometimes to the wounded body, but just as equally to the ailing soul.

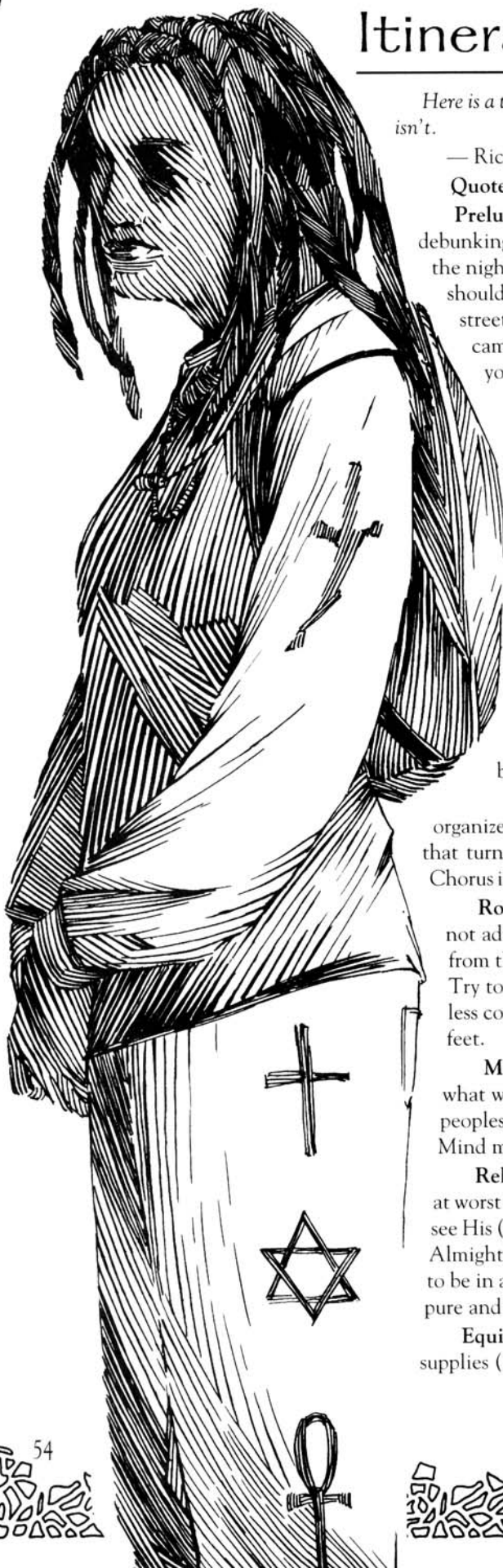
Concept: Although you recognize how wrong you once were, organized religion still reeks too much of the holier-than-thou attitude that turned you off to the church. Likewise, your relationship with the Chorus is fragile; it has the best mission, but it also has the spottiest history.

Roleplaying Tips: Listen more than you talk. Offer a helping hand, not admonishments or recriminations. People will either learn lessons from their own lives or they won't — giving them lectures won't help. Try to be a good example of open-mindedness and acceptance. You're less concerned with kicking ass than with getting people back on their feet.

Magick: Your focus is Mind and Life — those things which make us what we truly are. You had always been remarkably perceptive to other peoples' feelings; you now recognize that empathy as the first stirrings of Mind magick.

Religion: Religion is personal; at best it could be called “New Age,” at worst it could be called indiscriminate. Whatever! You believe in God, see His (or Her?) hand in creation and feel pretty much in touch with the Almighty. Everyone has their own Path to the Divine, and it doesn't have to be in an established religion. Your holy symbol is a simple gold sphere, pure and lacking ornamentation, like your own beliefs.

Equipment: Used Jeep Wrangler, casual traveling clothes, medical supplies (antibiotics, bandages, etc.), a few Richard Bach books.





Celestial Chorus

MAGE: The Ascension™



Name:
Player:
Chronicle:

Nature: *Deviant*
Essence: *Dynamic*
Demeanor: *Loner*

Concept: *Itinerant Healer*
Mentor:
Cabal:

Attributes

Physical

Strength **●●●●●**
Dexterity **●●●●●**
Stamina **●●●●●**

Social

Charisma **●●●●●**
Manipulation **●●●●●**
Appearance **●●●●●**

Mental

Perception **●●●●●**
Intelligence **●●●●●**
Wits **●●●●●**

Abilities

Talents

Alertness **●●●●●**
Athletics **●●●●●**
Awareness **●●●●●**
Brawl **●●●●●**
Dodge **●●●●●**
Expression **●●●●●**
Instruction **●●●●●**
Intuition **●●●●●**
Intimidation **●●●●●**
Streetwise **●●●●●**
Subterfuge **●●●●●**

Skills

Do **●●●●●**
Drive **●●●●●**
Etiquette **●●●●●**
Firearms **●●●●●**
Leadership **●●●●●**
Meditation **●●●●●**
Melee **●●●●●**
Research **●●●●●**
Stealth **●●●●●**
Survival **●●●●●**
Technology **●●●●●**

Knowledges

Computer **●●●●●**
Cosmology **●●●●●**
Culture **●●●●●**
Enigmas **●●●●●**
Investigation **●●●●●**
Law **●●●●●**
Linguistics **●●●●●**
Lore **●●●●●**
Medicine **●●●●●**
Occult **●●●●●**
Science **●●●●●**

Spheres

Correspondence **●●●●●**
Entropy **●●●●●**
Forces **●●●●●**

Life **●●●●●**
Mind **●●●●●**
Matter **●●●●●**

Prime **●●●●●**
Spirit **●●●●●**
Time **●●●●●**

Advantages

Backgrounds

Allies **●●●●●**
Arcane **●●●●●**
Avatar **●●●●●**
Dream **●●●●●**
●●●●●

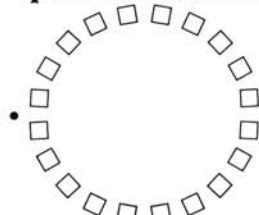
Arete

● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

Willpower

● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

Quintessence



Paradox

Health

Bruised -0 ☐
Hurt -1 ☐
Injured -1 ☐
Wounded -2 ☐
Mauled -2 ☐
Crippled -5 ☐
Incapacitated ☐

Combat

Weapon	Difficulty	Damage

Experience

Sibyl

O people, listen to the Sibyl in all things as she pours forth true speech from her holy mouth.

— *The Sibylline Oracle*, Book 4

Quote: *I offer not opinion, but revelation.*

Prelude: Everyone always thought you were a weird child.

They were right.

You learned early enough to stop talking about your bizarre dreams, filled with vivid images of conflagration and overwhelming destruction. Soon enough, your parents got used to your enigmatic phrases and cryptic utterances. It didn't matter; you knew that they, like most people, were so blind that they not only couldn't *grasp* the truth, but couldn't even recognize it was there to be grasped!

And so it went, growing up on the fringes of society, keeping your visions and private revelations to yourself. Until the mail began — each hand-written and illustrated note postmarked from different parts of the country with no return address, discussing in great detail your most private dreams.

Then the notes began to tell of events that would happen, from minor events and chance encounters to more significant incidents. Finally, when you were convinced you were insane, another decorative note arrived in the mail, requesting your presence at a certain park at dawn.

You went fearfully, eagerly, hoping to find answers. The answers were there in the form of four women in long robes and hooded veils, who greeted you with a Song that grew in strength and power. A Song which you too began to sing, even though you knew not the words. In time, you would learn the language, and your heritage, but what mattered most was that you finally found peace.

Concept: You're a Sibyl, a spokesperson for the Divine, a prophetess in the tradition of ancient Rome and a sisterhood of seers that lives on only in the Chorus. Your visions now have meaning, and you regularly offer your observations and consultations to those in need —



regardless of whether or not they ask for it. Unfortunately, you can't always tell whether what you offer is personal opinion or Divine inspiration.

Roleplaying Tips: Freely offer your opinion. If people find later that they should've listened to you, shrug noncommittally. Occasionally sputter forth a stream of unannounced visions. Even though you're concerned with people's destinies, don't act like a sidewalk fortune-teller. You frequently zone out, and most people think you're on drugs.

Magick: Sibyls traditionally focus on Time and the prophetic arts. You also have some interest in the Mind, realizing that it could aid you in your understanding of people's motivations, both seen and unseen.

Religion: Raised a Catholic, you still think Catholicism is pretty cool; you just don't toe the party line. At first it felt unusual reconciling "pagan prophecy" with the Catholic Church, until you learned about the Christian *Sibylline Oracles*. Your holy symbol is a small round disk with the head of Christ surrounded by a burning corona.

Equipment: Latin dictionary, robes and hooded veil (for ritual use), candles, various divinatory aids. Thumb-rings and other hip jewelry, jeans and T-shirts for regular wear.





Celestial Chorus

MAGE: The Ascension™



Name:
Player:
Chronicle:

Nature: *Survivor*
Essence: *Primordial*
Demeanor: *Avante-Garde*

Concept: *Sibyl*
Mentor:
Cabal:

Attributes

Physical

Strength ●●●●●
Dexterity ●●●●●
Stamina ●●●●●

Social

Charisma ●●●●●
Manipulation ●●●●●
Appearance ●●●●●

Mental

Perception ●●●●●
Intelligence ●●●●●
Wits ●●●●●

Abilities

Talents

Alertness ●●●●●
Athletics ○●●●●
Awareness ●●●●●
Brawl ○●●●●
Dodge ○●●●●
Expression ●●●●●
Instruction ○●●●●
Intuition ●●●●●
Intimidation ○●●●●
Streetwise ○●●●●
Subterfuge ○●●●●

Skills

Do ○●●●●
Drive ●●●●●
Etiquette ○●●●●
Firearms ○●●●●
Leadership ○●●●●
Meditation ●●●●●
Melee ○●●●●
Research ○●●●●
Stealth ●●●●●
Survival ○●●●●
Technology ○●●●●

Knowledges

Computer ○●●●●
Cosmology ●●●●●
Culture ●●●●●
Enigmas ●●●●●
Investigation ●●●●●
Law ○●●●●
Linguistics *Latin* ●●●●●
Lore ○●●●●
Medicine ○●●●●
Occult ●●●●●
Science ○●●●●

Spheres

Correspondence ○●●●●
Entropy ○●●●●
Forces ○●●●●

Life ○●●●●
Mind ●●●●●
Matter ○●●●●

Prime ●●●●●
Spirit ○●●●●
Time ●●●●●

Advantages

Backgrounds

Allies ●●●●●
Avatar ●●●●●
Dream ●●●●●
Sanctum ●●●●●
○●●●●

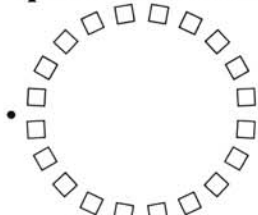
Arete

● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Willpower

● ● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

Quintessence



Paradox

Health

Bruised -0 ☐
Hurt -1 ☐
Injured -1 ☐
Wounded -2 ☐
Mauled -2 ☐
Crippled -5 ☐
Incapacitated ☐

Combat

Weapon	Difficulty	Damage

Experience

The Children of God



Then the Lord raised up judges to rescue them from the marauding bands...

— Judges 2:16

Excerpts from the Book of Ages

The Book of Ages is filled with the lives of the saints, those men and women of the Chorus who have gone before us and whose lives serve as models of inspiration to us all. We recognize that we all have human limitations that we must struggle to overcome; no one is perfect in behavior and temperament, and we must accept that we have faults. There are some texts that indicate that Valoran was at times an irascible codger, but this does little to diminish the overall significance of his role in the unification of our Chorus.

The First Age: Mitras, the Shining Son

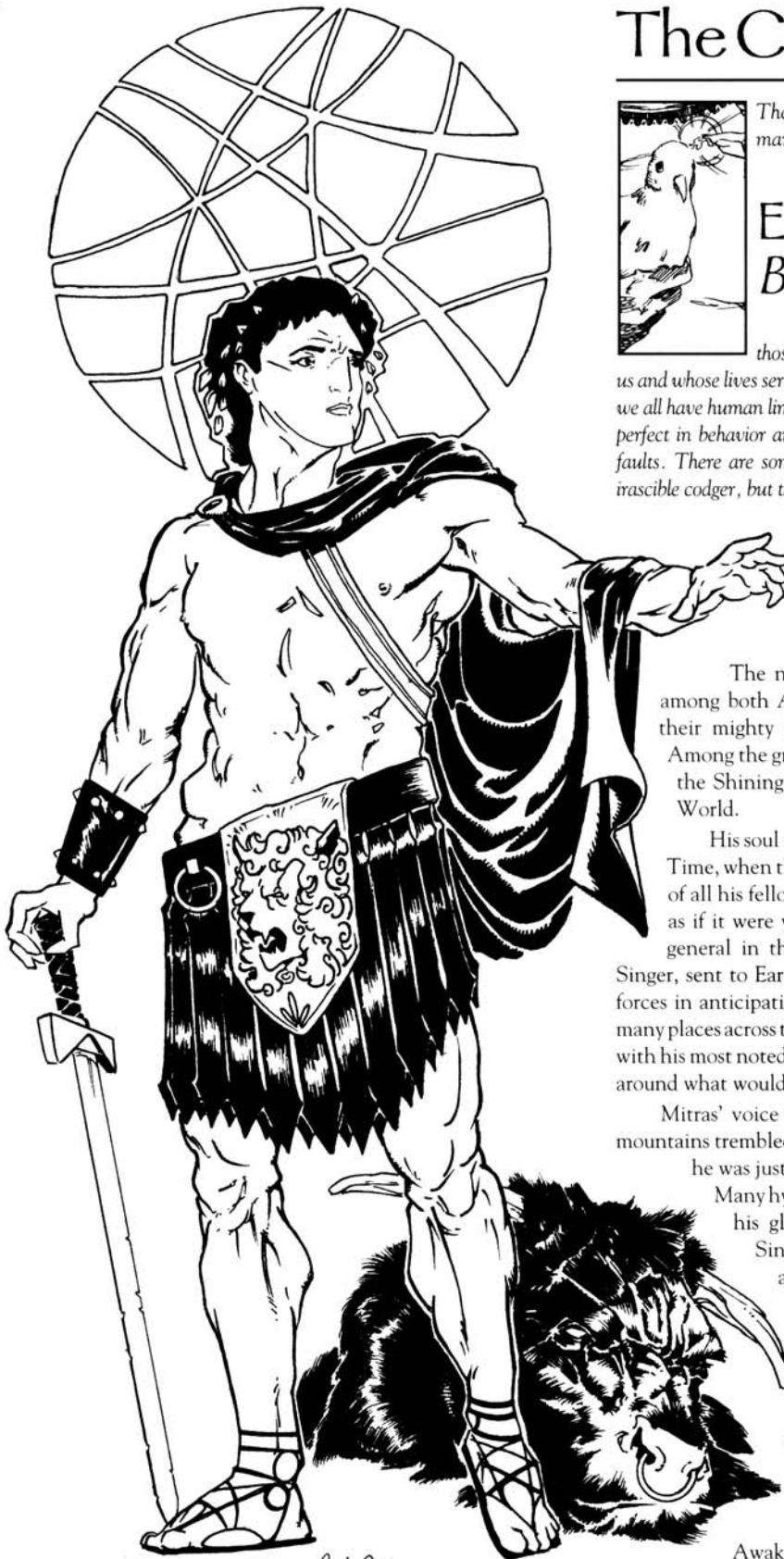
The names of many of the First Singers are legend among both Awakened and un-Awakened alike, as tales of their mighty deeds passed down through the generations. Among the greatest and most-beloved of the First was Mitras, the Shining Son, the Protector of Truth, the Light of the World.

His soul was noble, and pure. His memories of the Before Time, when the Many sang with the One, were the most vivid of all his fellow Singers. He spoke often of the Celestial War as if it were yesterday; his followers claimed he had been a general in the Hosts of Heaven and our Maker's favored Singer, sent to Earth in almost-pure form to marshal His worldly forces in anticipation of the End Times. Mitras' travels took him many places across the world, but his career was mostly spent in Asia, with his most noted deeds in the ancient lands not yet called Persia, around what would be dubbed one day the Zagros Mountains.

Mitras' voice was clear and strong, and when he Sang the mountains trembled. He was skilled at arms, but no simple warrior; he was just and honorable, a champion of truth and order.

Many hymns were composed in his honor, immortalizing his glorious deeds. He gathered many of the First Singers under his banner, and they spread his word across the land. His name took many forms, and he was honored by many epithets. The most well-known of his many deeds was the slaying of the bull-demon. Some tales claim that he died from mortal wounds received in battle, while other tales insist that he lived on. Yet other tales indicate that his mortal flesh did indeed die, but his Shard was so great that he rose again in the same flesh.

Mitras had many devotees among the un-Awakened, from Persia to the early Roman empire. He has always had a strong following within the Chorus; at



Paul Phillips 1996

one point, his followers rivaled those of Christ's, and only the smallest twist of fate prevented our Third Age from being Mithraic and not Christian. Now, however, he remains venerated only by the Chorus, particularly by the militant Sons of Mitras, who proclaim that Mitras' return shall herald the Reconciliation, when he will once again lead the armies of God against the forces of darkness.

— introduction to *The Paraphrase of Mitras*

The Second Age: Gabrielle

Her past is a mystery; she appeared to the Roman Adytum early in the third century of the Common Era, fully Awakened but with no knowable background. Gabrielle professed no particular creed, but was strong in her faith and devotion to the Creator, whom Gabrielle (oddly for that era) referred to as "She." Even more peculiar, she claimed total ignorance of Christianity, which by this time was a widely known religion with many followers.

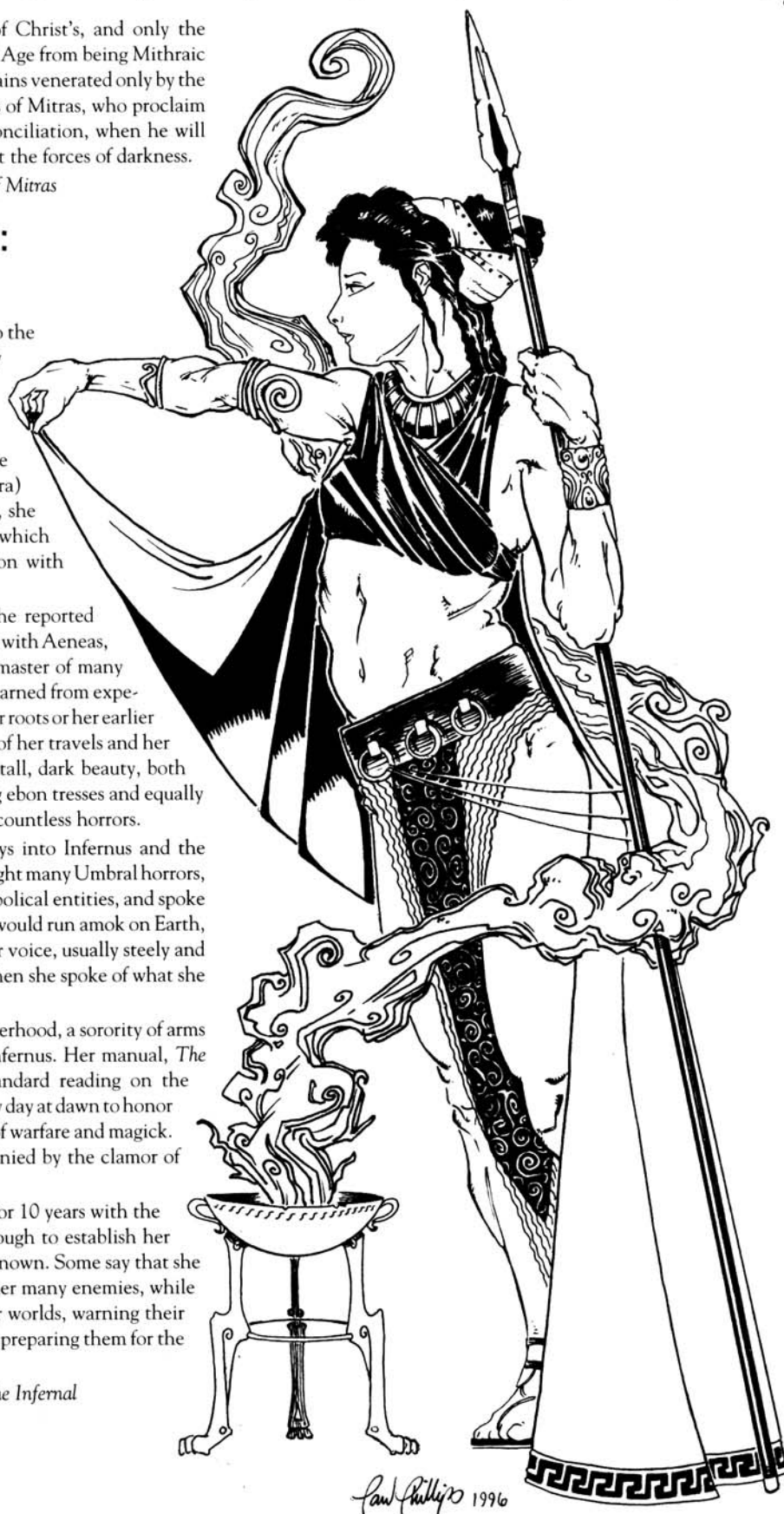
Gabrielle claimed ancient roots. She reported having sailed from the burning city of Troy with Aeneas, but was not herself a Trojan. She was a master of many ancient tongues, which she claimed she learned from experience, not study. But she talked little of her roots or her earlier years or her homeland; she instead spoke of her travels and her duty to the All-mother. Gabrielle was a tall, dark beauty, both strong of arm and strong of will, with long ebon tresses and equally dark eyes — eyes which, sadly, had seen countless horrors.

Her narratives included her journeys into Infernus and the hellish realms of the High Umbra. She fought many Umbral horrors, demons and devils and all manners of diabolical entities, and spoke of the shadowy times when these horrors would run amok on Earth, leaving blood and tears in their wake. Her voice, usually steely and without tremor, would quaver at times when she spoke of what she had seen and learned.

Eventually she formed a militant sisterhood, a sorority of arms dedicated to combating the horrors of Infernus. Her manual, *The Treatise on the Infernal*, has become standard reading on the Umbral hells. She and her sisters rose every day at dawn to honor the All-Mother and practice at the skills of warfare and magick. Their Songs were battle-hymns accompanied by the clamor of arms.

Gabrielle disappeared after serving for 10 years with the Roman Adytum; she was active long enough to establish her sisterhood and see it grow. Her fate is unknown. Some say that she was forcibly taken to Infernus by one of her many enemies, while others assert that she still travels to other worlds, warning their inhabitants of the dark times to come and preparing them for the Good Fight.

— introduction to *The Treatise on the Infernal*



The Third Age: Giacomo of Padua

Many are the martyrs of the Chorus Celestial, and the loss of each one is a heartfelt blow; the names of Singers who have died for their Faith are said to be sung *in perpetuum* on the tongues of angels. None hurt more, however, than those who suffered at our own hand during the dark times of the Inquisition, when some of our number allied with Church Inquisitors.

Giacomo of Padua was one of our itinerant brothers who felt the stirrings in his heart to travel Europe and spread the good news to those in need. Though deformed in body, his frail mortal sheath crippled and bent under hereditary illness, his spirit was pure. He owned little, but shared what he had with those who had less. He did unto his neighbors as he would have done unto the Lord, for he truly saw the spark of God in everyone. And those who were in his company soon felt the stirrings of our Maker's love, for Giacomo was love incarnate.

Unfortunately, his travels led him to Languedoc, and he took to the Albigensians, the dissident Cathar sect which advocated strict celibacy and vegetarianism and claimed the world was a battleground between the evils of the material world and the glories of the spiritual world. It is unlikely that Giacomo was one of the Sons of Albi; he had little interest in doctrinal matters, but was no doubt attracted to the spiritual intensity of the Cathari. He helped care for them, healing and guiding them as they needed. And his life was happy and filled with joy.

Until the Inquisitors came.

Our records show little of this period of his life, but we suspect that Giacomo was actually identified by one of the Cabal of Pure Thought, who feared that the presence of the Sons of Albi would further propagate the Cathar dualism which was hotly contested even within the Congregation.

Why did Giacomo not fight those who came for him? Some would say that his pacifism was utter and complete, and he could not harm another even in self-defense. But one of his own letters reveals a more likely answer; he saw that the Inquisitors were following their own hearts, and were being true to their own religious convictions. "We are called by the Lord to a duty," he said, "and that duty may be to live as the sacrificial lamb, the offering of another to God. So be it. My soul is my Maker's, and it shall return to Him as He calls for it."

Testimonies reveal that when one group of Cathari was put to the flame, they sang a song of forgiveness for the Inquisitors. And loudest among them, according to one Inquisitor, was "the deformed heretic, whose ugly face was twisted into a monstrous parody of joy as he sang."

— Introduction to *The Letters of Giacomo*



Law Phillips 1996

The Fourth Age: Maria Vasquez

For some, Maria Anna Vasquez was among the greatest Singers of the modern day, and a shining example of what the Chorus can still accomplish. For her critics, she was a loose cannon more likely to ignite controversy and strife. We have included her in this volume, despite the protests of the conservatives in our midst, because we feel that her life has much to teach our generation and those to come, in spite of any of her personal faults.

Maria was the product of two religions and two seemingly disparate Traditions. She was the daughter of two Singers whose holy union serves as an example of what we have ever striven to accomplish. Her father was a devout Christian Chorister; her mother was a Dreamspeaker, one of the last practitioners of classical Maya religion. These two met in Central America, and after an initial period of argument and conflict, they soon saw past their religious and ideological differences to a common, greater goal. In time, they married and Maria was born, raised as a Mayan-Christian fusion who strode the line between two Traditions. Brought up in the emerald forests of Central America, she learned the way of the spirits from her mother while her father taught her to love the One. In time, she began to see Ixchel, the Mayan goddess of fertility, as yet another manifestation of the One, perhaps one of His (or Her) greatest shards, and she grew angry at humanity's careless devastation of the planet.

Given this upbringing, it was no secret that she would declare war on the soulless mechanistic facilities of the Technocracy which had systematically raped her homelands for decades. That she would do so by bombing one such facility was unexpected; some Choristers, particularly those who feared the loss of innocent life, considered her actions an outrage. Maria rebutted that this particular factory reeked of corruption and malfeasance, and no innocence was anywhere to be found.

Maria ignored her detractors, and soon gathered a coterie of allied Choristers and Dreamspeakers in addition to Garou and Bastet (wolven and feline shapeshifters) who shared her vision. She constantly pressed the Curia for more decisive action against "those who defiled the land," tying the destruction of the Earth's ecology into the upcoming decimation of the Reconciliation. She, in turn, was accused of spiritual eco-terrorism and was given any number of injunctions to act with more restraint. Maria was summoned by the Pontiff to the Grand Adytum, where she participated in a series of debates on the ecological crisis. The debate spread throughout our Congregation, finally forcing everyone to consider the spiritual ramifications of environmental destruction.

Maria disappeared in the early 1990s in a strike against a Mexican factory. Most believe her to be dead, a martyr to her cause. Some contest that she is in hiding, covertly directing her operations until December 24, 2011 — the traditional end of our current cycle of Creation according to the Maya calendar, and the date she predicted for the Reconciliation. Regardless of her true fate, her value cannot be disputed. Many Choristers carry on in her name, and her legacy remains. We now must contemplate the interrelationship of spiritual and ecological wholeness.

— introduction to *The Gaian Debates*





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Appendix: The Song of Songs

Then Jesus said to the centurion, "Go your way and as you have believed, so let it be done for you."

— Matthew 8:13

The Spheres of Magick



Each Tradition views magick in a slightly different light, with unique interpretations and emphases. For the Celestial Chorus, magick is the Divine Song, and the various Spheres are nothing more than attempts to understand the many ways in which that Song manifests.

Naturally, the Chorus considers the 10th Sphere to be *Unitas*, or Unity. Through the ultimate union of all things, anything is possible. Whether or not the Divine Will really wants all things to be one remains open to debate.

Correspondence — Sacred Pattern

Everything is part of a pattern, Chorister mages insist, though the pattern is not always apparent. Everything is linked as though by strands of a web, and each of those strands plays a role in the cosmic drama of Creation and Reconciliation. Through this manifestation of the Song, symbols are imbued with the essence of the things they represent, even if they do not seem to be so at first glance.

Entropy — The Path of Destiny

For many Choristers, Entropy is nothing more than understanding destiny and the Divine Will. Some still refuse to dabble in the Entropic Arts, however claiming such magicks are the antithesis of the sacred order. Decay, they maintain, is abhorrent to the One, and comes from the Rebels instead.

Forces — The Elemental Powers

The First Singers were supposedly masters of the elemental powers, able to command them at a moment's notice for either boon or bane. Tales tell of pillars of fire summoned by prayer or storms calmed by comforting words. Unfortunately, such miraculous powers are too dangerous to manifest in the modern world, and few Choristers attempt such displays even if they have the knowledge to do so. In extreme peril, however, Choristers still remember how to draw down the might of Heaven in all its fury.

Life — Vis Vitalis

The body is the temple of the soul, or so the maxim goes, and the Life Arts are means of tending to this temple — rebuilding it, repairing it and improving it if necessary. Although Chorus mages rarely master all variations of the Life Arts, they are among the most renowned of healers.

Matter — The World of Forms

Matter commands the material world, which is our prison and our home. Some Choristers say Matter is evil, while others retort, *are our chains evil for binding us?* Though the Chorus as a whole regards the study of Matter as a study of all Creation, few Choristers master this Sphere, claiming that the material world is an ephemeral distraction.

Mind — The Divine Intellect

There is only one true Mind, that of God. Our own minds are merely reflections of the Divine Intellect, fleeting bits of thought and consciousness empowered by the mind of

God. The Chorus believes that peeling away the ego and confronting the Divine Intellect lies at the heart of Ascension, so many Choristers focus on Mind magick as part of their spiritual pursuits. In reaching one's own inner mind, however, a person learns how to touch others' inner minds and control their thoughts. Less scrupulous mages use such magick to indoctrinate new converts.

Prime — The Divine Essence

God is all things, and all things are of God. His essence lies at the heart of all creation, and dealing with Prime is dealing with the power of God in its purest form. The mages of the Chorus claim that no other Tradition understands Prime as they do; they alone remember the Divine. Studying Prime, they argue, is in effect studying all magick — for it alone lies at the heart of reality.

Spirit — The Heavenly Choir

To understand Spirit is to comprehend the Hosts of Heaven, Hell and the myriad worlds between. The rituals, songs and chants that deal with Spirit magick — often wildly divergent and even contradictory — are among the Tradition's most ancient workings. An individual Chorister's view of the Spirit world depends, of course, upon his religion. A Christian Chorister, for example, might be more concerned with angelic and demonic Realms and entities, while a tribal Chorister focuses on the more neutral spirits.

Time — The Eternal Now

Mages of the Chorus view Time as one of the symptoms of human imprisonment; "before" the Shattering there was no Before, and "after" the Reconciliation there shall be no After. No tomorrow or today exists in the Lord, and becoming one with Him means stepping out of time. The Chorus often views Time-related magick in terms of prophecy rather than divination — as receiving the gift of a vision, as opposed to actively seeking the future.

Rotes

Some Traditions distinguish themselves by the magicks they pursue. Despite its extensive history, the Chorus seems to prefer improvisational Effects to studied rotes. This preference reflects their overall viewpoint of the Arts: The One will provide whatever becomes necessary. Writing down your contributions smacks a bit too much of hubris for most Choristers' tastes; it's like saying "I did this," as opposed to "God did this." All the same, a few rotes have proven useful or popular throughout the Tradition's history.

Fiat Lux — "Let There Be Light!" (•• Forces, or ••• Forces, •• Prime)

Perhaps the oldest magickal Effect in existence, this rote dispels darkness. A simple application may increase nearby light sources' power, while greater versions produce illumination from darkness itself.

[The lower-powered version intensifies existing light, doubling its power for every success gained. More experienced Choristers can produce light from nothingness. A single success produces the light of a single candle, while five or more rivals a halogen searchlight. The caster decides what form she wants this light to take — low-level ambient illumination over a wide area, an explosion or a narrowly focused spotlight beam.

[Sudden bursts of light may disorient opponents for a turn or two. Such blasts last a moment, then go out. Intense light may drain a normal power source quickly. Beings susceptible to sunlight might take one Health Level's worth of normal damage for every success over the fifth, at the Storyteller's option. This Effect does not duplicate the effects of sunlight, though can it be used to intensify existing sunshine (add one more Health Level for every success).]

Death Song (•• Life, •• Time, • Prime, • Mind)

The Theophanies tell of Mentu-hetep's final Song, when he chanted the tale of his life for nearly two hours before perishing. Forever after, the Death Song became an important way to pass confessions, visions, plans or histories along to future descendants. The most famous ones include Valoran's *Epiphanies*, *The Testament of Ahu* and the *Song of Bernadette*.

Choristers with no hope or desire to prolong their lives may sing such a Song before passing on to their reward. Doing so is a good way to preserve your last remembrances and assure yourself a place in later histories. Although such confessions are usually kept within Chorus lore alone, a proper dispensation from an archivist or confessor may release the Death Song to the Council at large (as was done with the testimonies of Valoran and Bernadette). Bernadette's final Song was recently collected and published by Hermetic Master Porthos Fitz-Empress in *The Fragile Path: Testaments of the First Cabal*.

[While using Life Arts to prolong his life and control his breathing, the Singer races backward through his memories with conjunctional Time and Mind Effects. An additional **Multi-Tasking Effect** (*Mage Second Edition*, pg. 209) allows him to sort through the memories and compose them into verse. Prime lets him draw upon his inner strength until he finishes. Naturally, the better he is at composition (his Expression, Artistic Expression or Singing rating), the more memorable the song will be. Occasionally, Time may extend his vision forward, granting the mage a dying prophecy. Once the Death Song has begun, it cannot end until the Chorister stops singing, at which point he dies.]

Speaking in Tongues (••• Mind)

A common missionary gift, this rote is first recounted in *The Travels of Ecumenidies*, when that respected prophet calmed a mob of angry Celts by singing to them in Gaelic, even though he had never heard their dialect before. Since then, it has kept travelers in good stead, especially during the

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turbulent days of the Grand Convocation. Valoran himself was said to have mastered it, though his emissary, Bernadette, never learned.

[This rote allows a Singer to speak in her native language while her listeners hear her speak in their own. Conversing with more than one person at a time requires several successes (see **Mage Second Edition**, pg. 165). This translation lasts for the spell's duration, even if the mage stops speaking, so long as she speaks to the same person or people.]

Eternal Flame (••• Prime, •• Forces)

Since the days of Akhetaten, a devotional flame has been a fixture in most Chorus sanctuaries. Such fires often remain lit long after any sort of fuel has been consumed.

[By channeling Quintessence into the fire, this rote keeps it burning. The caster must gain at least 10 successes on an extended roll to keep the Effect perpetual. Although the Prime Force may be channeled into other things without extinguishing the flame, an act which cuts off the flow (such as Node draining, a massive Quintessence shunt or isolation from other sources of energy) will put out the flame forever.]

Wrath of Heaven (••• Forces, •• or ••• Prime.)

The ultimate weapon of crusading mysticks, this fire column often sweeps from the skies, incinerating the target. Variations include exploding powder magazines, flaring bonfires, icy winds and bolts of lightning. Although the obvious application remains vulgar in most societies, God works in mysterious ways.

[The extra success level from Forces magick makes this Effect quite potent. With Prime 2, the fire (or other element) created inflicts normal damage; Prime 3 intensifies the Quintessential flow, raising the damage to aggravated levels. Naturally, creatures who already take aggravated harm from fire (like vampires) suffer the same regardless of the power level. Overuse of this dramatic Effect is considered the mark of a weak and clumsy Singer — and a Paradox magnet.]

See the Light (••• Mind, ••• Entropy, or •••• Entropy)

This insidious rote is said to have originated within the Cabal of Pure Thought, and is rarely used within the Chorus, which prefers genuine conversion over coercion. Typically, it destroys a rival's thinking process, unraveling his logic and giving the Chorister the upper hand in a debate. One priest, Diocletes by name, was said to have been punished severely by Valoran for using the spell during the Convocation debates. When he tried it against Nightshade, she revealed his manipulation and nearly withdrew the Verbena from the Council on the spot.

[By disrupting the usual flow of the target's thoughts, the Chorister can turn her normal reasoning to mush. This usually triggers insecurities, which lead to further gaffes, and so on. Meanwhile, the Chorus mage remains free to reason

as he will. The higher rote level, which involves only Entropy, actually distorts the target's ability to reason coherently. Neither version leads to actual religious conversion without further mental manipulation. Although a defeated subject will be more susceptible at first, she'll soon begin to question her devotion.]

Foci

Although light, fire and prayer are the most obvious Chorus foci, many clerical mages use different ones, which can be grouped into a few common categories. Each character should choose appropriate foci for his religious beliefs and personal background.

Prayer

Many prayers are already memorized from childhood. Such declarations vary in language: Latin, Greek or a vernacular language for Christians, Hebrew for Jews, Arabic for Muslims, etc. Some prayers may come from sacred scriptures, others from tradition (e.g., the "Hail Mary," composed of various Biblical verses but not a prayer from the Bible), and still others may be unique.

Song

Song itself is a metaphor for Creation and magick. This focus need not even be "music" per se, but may be poetry, the music of language. Songs vary in style and language, according to a Chorister's religious or personal inclinations. Christ-Singers may use gospel music, Gregorian chants or even folk music ("Kumbaya!"). Hindu Kshatriyas will rely upon Vedic and Sanskrit chanting, while the Chosen of Abraham prefer traditional Hebrew psalmody (which corresponds to musical notes when sung).

Fire

Fire is the light of heaven, commonly used as both focus and weapon. Typical fire sources include ornate braziers or bonfires for formal ritual work, although more portable forms (a torch, or a Zippo lighter in a moment of desperation) are acceptable.

Incense

Incense smoke wafting to heaven is a traditional symbol of the embodiment of prayer. Chorus Adytums often have incense burners, although a handful of herbs tossed into an open flame will also suffice.

Water

A common symbol of purity, water forms a focus for many kinds of magick. Exorcists may require a vial of holy water (for Spirit), healers may rely upon a baptismal font (for Life), and prophets may actually immerse themselves in large bodies of water (for Time).



Holy Symbol

Choristers almost always use a holy symbol as a focus, often for Forces or Prime. These symbols may range from the common (a cross for Christians, a David's star for Jews) to the uncommon (a medicine pouch for tribal shaman, a lingam for Hindus).

Touch

The healing touch, "laying on of hands" — such channels befit helpful Life magicks (although a back-hand or punch may just as easily bear harmful effects). Touch also works as a conduit of Mind magick; as two bodies physically link, the connection between two minds becomes infinitely stronger. Manipulative Choristers may use a friendly touch to establish a link for Mind magick.

Fasting

Fasting is often done as a preliminary to prophecy (Time or even Entropy), as a requisite for Spirit work or a necessary condition for healing (Life).

Others

Miscellaneous Foci may develop from a Chorister's religious or ideological beliefs. For example:

Hair: Merovingians often use their own hair as a focus for Prime, hence their association of hair with magical strength.

Tattoos: Certain Choristers — particularly tribal ones — rely upon tattoos as foci for various magicks. Symbols of animals or mythical creatures are common: an eagle for Prime, an owl for Spirit, a snake (as agent of change) for Entropy, etc.

Weapons: Militant Choristers — e.g., Paladins or the Knights of St. George — may choose certain sanctified weapons as foci for Forces or Prime. These are typically archaic melee weapons with some historic association; Paladins may bear broadswords as symbols of Durandal (the sword of Roland), while Sons of Mitrás might wield maces patterned after the weapon they believe their founder wielded.

Recommended Readings



I would be remiss if I did not mention a few pertinent references. A truly valuable list would be many pages long, so this partial listing must include only those works which I found immediately useful or inspirational.

Sacred Scriptures

It would be hard to fully understand a Chorister without reading something from this category.

- **The Bible** — Enjoy the *King James Version* for the power of the language, although the *New Revised Standard Version* is recommended as a better translation. Other candidates include the *New Jerusalem Bible* or the *Revised New English Bible*. A scholarly Bible (e.g., the *Oxford Study Bible*) is useful for its maps, introductions and footnotes.

- **The Koran** — A number of translations abound, though I'm not qualified to recommend any in particular.

- **Apocrypha** — These are the books that didn't make it into the Bible. (Some works have made it to deuterocanonical status, and can be found in the *Oxford NRSV Study Bible* or any Catholic Bible.) They can still be edifying, and various collections can be found that contain such morsels as the *Book of Enoch*.

- **The Bhagavad Gita**, or the *Song of God* — Krishna's discourse to Arjuna on the field of battle. *De rigueur* for Hindu Choristers.

- **The Other Bible** (Willis Barnstone, editor) — a useful compilation of various Gnostic and Apocryphal writings, including the *Gospel of Thomas*.

Mythology

- I recommend almost anything by Mircea Eliade; in particular, **The Myth of the Eternal Return**, about the axial role of mythology in primitive/ancient societies.

- J.F. Bierlein's work **Parallel Myths** is an interesting introduction to mythology, discussing common themes, images and meanings.

World Religions

A number of primers on the religions of the world can be found, including:

- Huston Smith's **World Religions** is a cursory though insightful examination of various world faiths.

- Geoffrey Parrinder's **World Religions: from Ancient History to the Present** is a useful text on the history of religions.

Religious History

- A notable entry for the discussion of the early days of Christianity and the religious crucible of the ancient Near East is Howard Clark Kee's **The Origins of Christianity: Sources and Documents**.

- Morton Smith's controversial work **Jesus the Magician** is a scholarly work asserting that Jesus appears in some early documents as a sorcerer.

- Jane Bobko's **Vision: The Life & Music of Hildegard von Bingen** is useful reading, and comes with a CD of her music (somewhat... modified). If anyone in history was a Chorister, it was Hildegard. A number of Hildegard's visions (e.g., *Scivias*) are available as well.



Perennial Philosophy

Works under this category posit a transcendent unity of religions.

- Whitall N. Perry's **A Treasury of Traditional Wisdom** is a compilation of sacred sayings which show common themes emerging from the mystics of various world faiths.
- S. H. Nasr's **Knowledge and the Sacred** is a discussion of the sacred role of knowledge in "traditional" societies — those centered on a religious (non-secular) tradition, such as medieval Christendom or the Islamic world.

Miscellaneous

- Richard Bach's **Illusions: The Adventures of a Reluctant Messiah** talks about personal enlightenment bereft of religious orthodoxy.
- Paolo Coelho's **The Pilgrimage** is the tale of a man's journey across Spain in pursuit of self-mastery. The subject matter floats somewhere between "Religion," "New Age" and "Occult."
- Encyclopedia articles on "Mithraism," "Cathars," "Gnosticism," "Akhenaton" and more.

Go in Peace.

— James Estes, Looking Eagle



Merits & Flaws

Mystic Songs

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible on each side of the central vertical fold. The paper appears to be a standard notebook or a sheet of stationery designed for writing.

Talismans

Name	Level	Arete	Quintessence	Appearance

Combat

[illegible]

Brawling Table

Maneuver	Difficulty	Damage
Punch	6	Strength
Grapple	6	Strength
Kick	7	Strength+1
Body Slam	7	Special

Armor: _____



Celestial Chorus



MAGE: The Ascension™

Expanded Background

Contacts, Sleeper

Contacts, Awakened

Influence, Sleeper

Allies, Awakened

Resources

Mentor

Familiar

Chantry

Acolytes

Node(s)

Possessions

Gear (Carried)

Equipment (Owned)

Foci

Faith/Style



Celestial Chorus

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History

Awakening

Goals/Destiny

Seekings

Quiets

Description

Age _____
Apparent Age _____
Date of Birth _____
Age of Awakening _____
Hair _____
Eyes _____
Race _____
Nationality _____
Height _____
Weight _____
Sex _____

Appearance/Nature of Avatar _____

Visuals

Cabal Chart

Character Sketch





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ISBN 1-56504-411-8
WW 4008 \$10.00



Printed in Canada