

Ophite Diagrams

Celsus' Description of the Ophite Diagrams (according to Origen)

[Short excerpts of text from Origen *Contra Celsus* Book 6, Chapter 24 to 38:] Celsus says there is a diagram consisting of ten [or seven] separate circles, circumscribed by one circle which is said to be the world-soul and is called **Leviathan**. The diagram is divided by a thick black line, which is called Gehenna, or in Greek Tartarus. The "seal" is that of the one who imposes it, who is called **Father**, the one sealed is called **Youth** and **Son**, and he responds, *"I have been anointed with the white chrism from the tree of life"*.

There are seven angels, who delivered the seal; they stand on both sides of the soul set it free from the body; and there are other angels of light who are called **Archontics**. The **Archon** of the so-called Archontics is the accursed god of the Jews, who makes rain and thunder.

He is the **Demiurge** of this world, the God of Moses described in his creation narrative. Of the Seven archontic demons, the first is lion-shaped; the second is a bull; the third is amphibious and hisses horribly; the fourth is in the form of an eagle ; the fifth has the appearance of a bear, the sixth, that of a dog ; and the seventh, that of an ass named Thaphabaoth or Onoel.

Some persons return to the archontic forms so they become lions or bulls or serpents or eagles or bears or dogs. There is a square, and there are words said at the gates of Paradise.

They add still further matters; the sayings of prophets, and circles upon circles, and emanations of the earthly church and of circumcision, and the power emanating from a certain virgin **Prunikos**, and a living soul, and a Heaven slain that it may live, and earth slain with a sword, and many slain that they might live, and death stopped in Heaven, when the world's sin dies, and a narrow way back, and doors opening automatically. Everywhere there is the Tree of Life and a resurrection of flesh of the tree.

They say that some things are written within the two super-heavenly circles, the greater and the lesser, those of the Son and the Father.

Origen's Description of the Ophite Diagrams

[Short excerpts of text from Origen *Contra Celsus* Book 6, Chapter 24 to 38:] In this diagram are the greater and the smaller circle. On their diameters is inscribed "Father" and "Son." Between the greater, in which the smaller lies, and another circle, consisting of two circles, the outer yellow and the inner dark blue, is the barrier, shaped like a two-edged axe. Above it is a small circle, smaller than the larger of those already mentioned, with "love" written on it.

Below it is another with the word "Life" [Zoe] . In the second circle, combining and circumscribing the other two circles as well as another rhomboid shape, is written "Foreknowledge of Wisdom" [Pronoia Sophia] , and above their common intersection is a circle which is written "Knowledge" [Gnosis], and below, another in which is written "Understanding"....