

ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΙΚΟΣ ΠΛΗΡΩΜΑΤΟΣ
Apostolic Church of the Pleroma

*Delivered by Tau Phosphoros
to the Parish of St. Ambelain
on Sunday, December 18, 2016*

YEAR A - FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Greetings and welcome to this celebration of the fourth and final Sunday in Advent. Last week, in keeping with the theme of the Advent Season, we talked a little about the importance of patience and perseverance in our seeking of spiritual reward. This week, our first reading from the Gospel of Thomas continues with this theme, telling us succinctly: "Let the one who seeks not stop seeking until he finds." We could add further that once one has attained to the salvific gnosis, this is not the end, but rather merely the beginning of a new phase of the Work.

Not only is there always new work to be done, we must be ever watchful to retain the advances already made. What is gained can be lost. When we experience a profound gnostic illumination, we are really only in that heightened state for a brief time. Most of what we gain from that experience in the long term is the memory of the experience. Now, the experience itself, if it is genuine, can certainly have a lasting impact, changing the very way that we process information. And the more frequently that this genuine experience can be repeated, the more thorough will be our psychic transformation. But we are also largely reliant upon our memory of the experience, which is secondary and must not be confused with the experience itself.

Memories can become distorted and warped over time. If one merely relies upon the memory of an experience, without seeking to repeat that experience, the original meaning and value will degrade over time. The authority derived from such an experience is only valid so long as one retains the power to repeat that experience at will. This is maintained through daily study, meditation, and practice. Surely, most of us cannot devote every moment of every day to such practices. But it is nevertheless true that every moment that our attention is away from the Work, is a step backwards that must be regained. Because of this, true spiritual progress is very difficult to make. Much of what is considered progress by many aspirants is merely regaining what was lost. Now, don't get me wrong, this constant reclaiming of our attainment is utterly necessary, but there is further work to be done.

Our tradition teaches us that a true and permanent Election is possible; but it seems to me that it is better to assume that our illumination is fleeting. We can use a model similar to Paschal's wager to validate this point. That is, if we assume that our election is impermanent, and strive ever to maintain it, and if it turns out to have been permanent after all, then we are no worse off for having devoted ourselves to the Work. If we assume that it is impermanent, and if it is indeed impermanent, then we have done exactly what was necessary, and no more or less. If we assume our election to be in perpetuity, and if it is in fact permanent, then our understanding was perfect, and we have attained true reconciliation and reintegration. But if we assume it to be permanent, and it turns out to have been impermanent, then we have deluded ourselves and likely others as well. The hubris of this last scenario, because it is bound to effect other would-be seekers on the path, is sure to leave one in a worse condition than they were in before having their first taste of gnostic enlightenment.

This argument, of course, is much more reasonable and practical than Paschal's, because it does not concern blind faith; it merely deals with "acting as if..." in order to avoid the self-delusion that can creep in when we leave ourselves unaware. The only real way to ensure the permanency of our gnosis is to "act as if" it were to slip away at any moment. Otherwise one becomes susceptible to complacency and being lulled into a somnambulistic false confidence. So stay awake my brethren! The day of the Lord is at hand!