

ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΙΚΟΣ ΠΛΗΡΩΜΑΤΟΣ
Apostolic Church of the Pleroma

*Delivered by Tau Phosphoros
to the Parish of St. Ambelain
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YEAR A - NATIVITY OF THE LORD

Merry Christmas everybody, and welcome! I thought for some time about the direction that I should take the homily today. As Gnostics, there are so many approaches to this richly symbolic holiday. There is the solar/agricultural symbolism associated with the solstice, which would lend itself well to some alchemical correlations. There is the cycle of human gestation, of birth and rebirth; of the death of Christ in the spring being the re-entering to the "womb" of the earth, only to be born again nine months later in the winter, thus showing the eternal Advent of the Lord into the world. But what I want to look at especially today are our readings for the day.

In our first reading from the Vision of the Foreigner, we get right to the heart of Gnostic inquiry: to know the unknowable God. The narrator says, "I was seeking the ineffable, unknowable God." To many, this will seem like a ridiculous quest. How does one know the unknowable? And being ineffable, one could not even speak of what little knowledge one could gain - which is nothing! This is enough to make the sleeper shrug his shoulders and turn his attention to more "practical" matters. But to the aspirant of gnosis, whom Saint-Martin calls the Man of Desire (or woman!), this is the driving question that stirs the very soul.

Now, the rationalist will not like to hear that there are forms of knowledge that cannot be quantified, labeling such things as objectively meaningless. This may be true in part, so far as the actual gnostic experience cannot be communicated objectively, but only experienced subjectively. But there are, nevertheless, tried and tested methods for inducing this state of awareness. So, it is at least in part subjectable to scientific control. At any rate, let's move on.

The beginning of our narrator's vision is more significant, when the Luminaries tell him: "You have done enough to hinder the inactivity that is in you by seeking what is incomprehensible." So, we see here that seeking to know the unknowable is not, as so many would like us to believe, unfruitful. Rather, the very act or attempt to ask that forbidden question is "enough to hinder the inactivity." What a wonderful phrase! The implication here is that man's natural and primitive state is not merely a passive blank slate, ready to be set into motion, but rather that it is an active, living intelligence that has had a veil of inactivity placed over it. Thus, this short phrase cuts to the very core of the Gnostic world-view.

The revelation to follow is largely after the manner of negative theology - what God is not, since one cannot say what God "is." The conclusion is that the Divine can only be known by itself. Thus, the designation of "self-knowledge" is the only positive statement that can be made. Now, since Man bears the resemblance of this Divinity, albeit in a finite form, we may extrapolate that the key to unlocking our innate potential is the same self-knowledge.

When Christ comes, he is the "perfect image of His substantial reality," as our reading from Hebrews tells us. We may understand this "substantial reality" as that one positive statement that can be made: self-knowledge. This self-knowledge should be understood, therefore, not as equivalent to gnosis itself, but as the key and as the beginning of the gnostic experience; for gnosis is not merely an "event" or a "thing"; it is a process, an unfolding, an awakening. And Jesus Christ is, in multiple ways, the key to unlocking this self-knowledge and beginning the process of gnostic revelation in oneself.