

EΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΙΚΟΣ ΠΛΗΡΩΜΑΤΟΣ
Apostolic Church of the Pleroma

*Delivered by Tau Phosphoros
to the Parish of St. Ambelain
on Sunday, February 26, 2017*

YEAR A - LAST SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY
TRANSFIGURATION SUNDAY

Welcome, everybody, to our celebration of the transfiguration of Jesus upon Mount Tabor. This event is recorded in all three of the synoptic Gospels. It relates how Jesus went up the mountain with Peter, James, and John, who were witness to his transformation into a bright shining light. It is curious that this narrative should be absent from John's Gospel, seeing that he would have been one of the witnesses present at this miraculous event. But we do see a reference to it in the Second Epistle of Peter, which also happens to be our Epistle reading for the day.

As we've discussed before, this light witnessed upon the holy mountain is considered by the Church to be uncreated pneumatic Light. It is the Light that must remain veiled to the uninitiated, and which purifies all dross matter. It is because of this very cleansing, purifying quality that one must render oneself exceedingly pure in order to bear the light. Some have even considered this Light to be one and the same as the hell-fire which burns the sinners. This may sound shocking at first, because we don't normally think of pure divine radiance as having anything in common with the destructive fire of the underworld. But it will begin to make more sense when we consider that the hells we experience, though punishing, are not in fact intended to punish per se, but rather to rectify, to purify, and to make the soul suitable for reintegration into the divine realms.

Viewed in this light, we may easily see how the divine light in which the elect bask may have a very different effect upon whatever is yet impure. While in the material world - which is itself a kind of purgatory or hell - our hylic envelope serves as a natural barrier to the pneumatic light. Now, while this may obscure that very light to which we wish to attain, it is also a protective measure for the soul that is not yet ready to receive this light. When the soul sheds its body it is in one sense more free, but it also loses that protection. And if the soul has not, through the process of initiation, attained the vision of the pneumatic Light in its incarnation in this lower world, this soul will suffer when it encounters this Light without the material veil. Whether this suffering will lead to the perfection of the soul or to its destruction, I cannot say. But it is, in any case, preferable to seek the Light now, so that we may recognize it and embrace it later. This is all part of the initiate's imperative to "learn how to die."

This passage from 2 Peter is the basis for the hesychast movement of the Eastern Church, whose ultimate goal is to attain the vision of this light and ultimately divinize the soul. The Roman Catholics describe a similar phenomenon as the Beatific Vision. We refer to it as attaining to the Light of Gnosis, leading to regeneration and reintegration. Whatever apparent theological differences may seem to exist between the various branches of the Church, all are striving towards the same goal of uniting with the fullness of God. May we all one day bathe in this Light without fear, but embracing it as it welcomes us home from our long sojourn in the world of shadows.