

ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΙΚΟΣ ΠΛΗΡΩΜΑΤΟΣ  
Apostolic Church of the Pleroma

*Delivered by Tau Phosphoros  
to the Parish of St. Ambelain  
on Sunday, May 14, 2017*

YEAR A - FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Greetings brethren, and welcome. For the past few weeks our First Reading has focused on the Second Treatise of the Great Seth, though we haven't discussed it much. Nevertheless, I hope that you all have been contemplating its message weekly, for there is truly a wealth of knowledge in this classic Gnostic treatise. But let us spend a little time today looking briefly at some of the concepts raised in today's reading.

It begins with the account of the Divine Child coming into this world from the Pleroma. As he passes through the various intermediate realms, he takes on the appearance of their inhabitants; mingling with them and influencing events according to the Divine Will without these archons even realizing what happened.

There is then a brief reference to the "new bridal chamber," which is not like the old and "does not perish." These first couple of ideas are concepts found especially in Valentinian writings, while the title itself would suggest that it is to be taken as a piece of Sethian literature. And indeed, there are terms and themes common to the Sethian corpus. Some have suggested that there are Basilidean elements as well.

None of this should really surprise us, though. Gnosticism in the first and second centuries was likely not all that different than it is today. That is, the esoteric doctrine, the mystery religions, of which Gnosticism is the exemplar par excellence, have always been syncretic and have shared concepts and elements freely. So, to find a text that may have been informed by "Sethian" or "Basilidean" thought, or which itself may have informed some "Valentinian" work is precisely what we should expect to find. For, Basilides or Valentinus did not simply invent a system out of whole cloth, they expanded upon a tradition, a particular branch of which they were the heirs. That is why it is really pointless and fruitless to try to pigeon-hole every Gnostic text into one particular school or another.

At any rate, let us look at a couple more concepts here before we run out of time. We read here, in relation to the crucifixion, that when the veil was rent and when the earth shook, "the souls of the dead were released and resurrected... They laid aside ignorant jealousy and lack of insight by the dead tombs and put on the new man." By this we are to understand the "dead tomb" as our former hylic state. In other Gnostic works we read of the body referred to as a "portable tomb." But more than just the physical body itself, it refers to the "hylic" modes of thinking, such as we discussed last Sunday.

We are then told that those saved from "ignorant jealousy and lack of insight" would "put on the new man." This is a biblical image that was not only favored by the Gnostics of old, but which was elucidated also by great mystics of more recent times, such as our beloved and venerated Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin, le Philosophe Inconnu himself. The putting on of the new man refers to the coming into Gnostic realization, and the regeneration of the soul, which is the rehabilitation of consciousness.