

Gnostic Priestess

- Geyraud, Pierre. *Les Petites Églises de Paris (Parmi les sects et les rites)*. Editions Emile-Paul Frères, Paris, 1937; pp 76-83.

It was a young Gnostic priestess who wrote me, a letter that was if nothing else charming, this austere summary of her doctrine:

“Salvation comes not from Faith, from blind faith in a God of Revelation, but from Knowledge (*Gnosis*, in Greek), knowledge of the real mysteries hidden to vulgar humanity.

“And of this salvific Gnosis, here are a few words.

“God, the Absolute, disperses itself through emanations, Eons, in couple – one male and one female. The Eons emanate other Eons in extremely complicated series’. Their ensemble constitutes the Most Holy Pleroma, or the divine fullness. One of these Eons is Sophia (Wisdom). This Heavenly Sophia, after a series of events, gave rise of her own accord to a female Eon, Achamoth, the Earthly Sophia

“Sophia Achamoth emanated three elements: Spirit, Soul and Matter: from these elements were formed the Demiurge, who created the universe. And this Universe, the dwelling place of evil, cannot be conceived of as the work of the Absolute.

“Now, one of these couples within the Pleroma is that of the Eon Christ, who is male, and the Eon Pneuma (Spirit), who is female.

“The Eon Jesus did bring about our Redemption by incarnating in the body of a man. But our Reintegration into the Most Holy Pleroma, beyond the Shadows of the Demiurge, will come about through Sophia. She will come among us when the Perfecti are illuminated by the Spirit.”

This Holy Gnosis was dispersed in ancient Egypt, in Syria, perhaps even in Celtic lands. It permeated the emerging Christianity. But Christianity wound up diverging from this Gnosis: for Christianity, Salvation came from Faith and not from Knowledge; and Creation was the work of God.

In the middle ages, Gnostic ideas re-emerged with the Albigensians and the Cathars. The armies of France lead by Simon de Montfort came in, mounting dreadful sieges and combats like that of Montségur, to “cleanse” the heresy with blood.

Gnosis does not live a latent life, without organization, without liturgy.

But, in 1888, Jules Doinel, working at the library in Orléans, discovered a charter dated 1022, written by the hand of chancellor Etienne, one of the Cathar martyrs burned that same year in this city. The divine inspiration took hold of Doinel.

This Jules Doinel was an astonishing man! Rather stocky, majestic, a sincere air about him and his pointed beard: I had in my hands several photographs of him, given me by his son who was presently an engineer for a large Civil Service firm. He led a rather hectic existence. A pious student of the Jesuits, he then became a *prophet* in the Monodist movement, then a Freemason and a Martinist.

Here he is, then, carried away by a new grace. The Eon Jesus himself laid hands upon him (thus conferring upon him the priestly authority through divine influx), and consecrated him Bishop of Montségur. Right away, the Gnostic bishop took the name of His Grace Valentinus II, and preceded this nomen with the *Tau* (the letter T in Greek) which corresponds, for the Gnostics, to the cross of Catholic bishops, created a brilliant Episcopal seal with arms and a Latin motto (I have a reproduction), gathered together some of the most renowned and cultured people, brought them in to the Gnostic Church whose noble doctrine captivated them, consecrated from among them, in a meeting room at 29 rue de Trevisé, several bishops and a Sophia, a female bishop, and constituted a Holy Synod for which he became the President, and established a new Gnostic era, in the year 1890, C.E.

Then, catastrophe! Six years later, the Restorer of the Gnosis, the President of the Holy Synod, the Patriarch of the Eglise Gnostique, returned to the Roman church. Under the pseudonym of *Jean Kostka*, he published an extraordinary book, *Lucifer Démasqué*. Therein he tells the story of how Lucifer used him and the hypocritical Gnostic Church, among other infernal machines, to oppose the Church of Rome. And his violet patriarchal *pallium*, he laid down in penance upon the altar of Saint Philomène, in the little church of Ars. The vicar at present, abbé Convert, in a recent letter, confirmed for me the odyssey of this Gnostic pallium become a Catholic altar ornament.

And so, the 4th day of the 1st month of the 7th year of the Restoration of the Gnosis, the newly elected Gnostic primate, T Synésius, summoned to his provisional primatial palace, the Sophia, the Bishops, Deacons and Deaconesses, and all the Perfecti, to beseech the blessings of the Most Holy Pleroma upon the well-trying Church. This T Synésius was none other than the poet Fabre des Essarts. His primatial palace being his 4th floor apartment at 17 rue des Martyrs.

The patriarch at this writing is His Grace T Basilide. The Holy Eons elevated him to the supreme dignity in 1926. He is a man of remarkable culture: his little book on *Gnosticisme* (published by Chacornac) is a marvel. He collaborates on the journal *Voile d'Isis*, where he has provided some solid research on the Celtic Tradition. I have been in communication with him for some time concerning the various elements of the Gnosis, and have been able to appreciate directly his wisdom. Well! This sage (whose mundane civil status I shall not repeat) is employed by the Société du Gaz, as a meter-reader! He was wearing his uniform upon our meeting at the National Library, his flat cap resting on the books!

But T Basilide has determined that the hour has not yet arrived for the Gnostic Church to manifest itself within the shadows of the Kenoma. And so he has put his Church to rest.

However, in order to maintain some activity within the Community, the Gnostic Bishops, among whom are an important director of a literary review, the former director of one of our National Theaters, etc., have elected a President of the Holy Synod, in the person of T Bardesane. But T Bardesane (the editor Lucien Chamuel) has just died. As I write this, there is a meeting of the Holy Synod preparing for the election of a successor.

Perhaps the time has arrived to bring about some sort of unity. The friends of T Basilide and the friends of T Bardesane have both spoken to me of this. It's difficult. There are positions taken, situations have arisen. I find myself being a disinterested hyphen (partly due to my own disbelief) between the Patriarch and the Holy Synod of Bishops among whom there is no clear identity who is the dissenter. I have consented to try – without much hope.

Once, I attended the consecration of a Gnostic bishop using the rite established by Doinel.

His Grace Valentin II constituted a ritual partly inspired by the Roman liturgy and partly by the liturgy of the Cathars. The Holy Synod recently reworked this liturgy, a copy of which every bishop now has either in manuscript or print. Would their Lordships permit me to say here that they wanted to take into consideration a few points of pure form that inspired me to study their ritual?

There is majesty in this liturgy: for example, when, after the imposition of the hands of the bishop being consecrated, the consecrating Bishop and the two assisting Bishops embrace their new brother in gnosis and anoint him with holy oil in the shape of the *Tau*, upon the forehead, lips and Heart.

I was, however, much more responsive to the strangeness of a Mass celebrated for me, alone, by a Priestess of the Eglise Gnostique Universelle (I promised not to indicate her name), assisted by a Bishop.

It was at her home. Also, the decorations and implements were reduced to the bare essentials. Covering a table pushed against the wall there was a white cloth, upon which were a bun and a silver-plated metal cup containing a small amount of wine. Near-by was the Gospel of John, which is the Gospel of the Gnostics, opened to the Prologue: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

The Priestess, in a yellow chausuble, slightly lifted the white veil over her face, and genuflected before the Bishop. The Bishop blessed her by tracing the sign of the *Tau* upon her head.

She stood up, walked toward the center of the table, with the Bishop just off to her right, also standing. I, too, was standing, a little ways away, so that I could easily see the ceremony of the Fraction du Pain.

Both of them recited the canticle: *Beati vos, Aeones!* "Blessed, o ye Eons, animate with the true life!..." Then the both recited the Prologue of John. The Bishop then stepped aside.

With the help of a type-written text, the Priestess recited the Our Father in Greek: *Pater hémon, o en tois ouranois...*

-*Amen*, responded the Bishop.

The august assistant carried the bread and wine to the officiant for the consecration. She raised her hands over the elements, and said in Latin:

-The Eon Jesus, before mystically suffering, to the bread and wine into His holy and venerable hands, and, lifting His eyes to heaven, broke...

(She split the bread.)

-...blessed...

(She formed the *Tau* on the bread and the cup.)

-...and gave it to His disciples saying:...

(The Bishop bowed low.)

-"... All of you, take and eat and drink!"

She took the bread, and, turning to us, elevated it, and said in Greek:

- This is the spiritual body of the Christ.

She replaced the bread upon the corporal and bowed low, adoring for a moment.

Rising again, she took a small portion of the spiritual body of the Eon Jesus, devoutly ate it, then she took a drink of the spiritual blood.

A pause. Then, turning to her side, she gave a piece of the bread to the kneeling Bishop and held out the cup from which he took a sip.

I had explained in advance to the Priestess that I would not participate in communion. Could she have been thinking that I might have changed my mind at the last minute? Without turning completely toward me, she questioned me with her eyes. I made a subtle sign of denial.

The Priestess replaced the bread and wine on the altar. Then, extending her hands, she said:

-May the Grade of the Most Holy Pleroma be always with you!

She burned the rest of the consecrated bread upon a small brazier, because the spiritual body of the Lord must not be profaned. Then she gave us the Gnostic benediction.

I asked an eminent theologian who was a professor at a Catholic institute:

-The Roman Church recognizes the validity of Episcopal consecrations and ordination, even if they are done outside of her auspices, provided that the consecration is linked to the apostolic succession. So, you recognize the sacerdotal powers of Bishops and Priests of many schismatic churches.

-That's correct.

-So, you know, the Gnostic episcopacy held by Jules Doinel, besides the imposition of hands upon him directly by Jesus (which you could easily question), also received a regular consecration at the hands of an eastern Bishop assisted by two Priests.

-That is not well established.

-I know. I will not argue the research I have made on the authenticity of this consecration, performed at the residence of Lady Caithness, who, after her marriage, was called the Duchess of Pomar. Aside from all that, for one of the Gnostic Bishops, at least, T Harmonius, his apostolicity cannot be doubted, because among his consecrators we find Mgr. Vilatte, attached to the Old Catholic Church of Holland, and whose apostolicity you fully admit.

-What of it?

-So the Priests that he ordains are real Priests in your eyes?

-Certainly.

-And what's more, any Priestesses that he would ordain would have the power, according to you, to really and substantially transform the bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus Christ; and you would take heed to adore them... What would you say about this priesthood of both sexes?

Priestess, young priestess of a religion which suggests that Man, lost at the beginning of time because of Woman, should recover his salvation at the end of time through Woman, - via a Woman in whom is incarnate the Holy Spirit just as Man incarnated the Word - do you doubt, when you elevate the chalice with your delicate female hands now become the hands of a theurgist, that your priesthood is the most marvelous sacrament of religious gallantry?