

A Brief History of the Gnostic Church

by Reginald Freeman

The history of the traditional Apostolic churches (i.e. Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, etc.) has been well-documented throughout the ages; albeit typically from a point of view that is sympathetic to the “correctness” of Church doctrine and policy. Nevertheless, the Apostolic tradition remains as one of the oldest continually perpetuated spiritual systems. With very little discrepancy, the Apostolic lineage may be traced back to the original followers of Jesus, known as “Apostles” or “messengers.” What is less well documented, however, is the equally ancient Apostolic tradition known to us as Gnosticism. It is true that there are many books now available on the subject, offering a clearer view of the Gnostic movements and traditions than has ever been available. But these works, for the most part, are painstaking reconstructions of Gnostic history, taken largely from the biased accounts of the early heresiologists, scattered accounts and traditions, and newly discovered ancient documents.

This short treatise, while briefly addressing the ancient and medieval movements, is largely concerned with the modern Gnostic traditions and the Orders and Societies which often form their inner circles. Today's Gnostic churches derive largely from 19th century Masonic, Rosicrucian, Templar, Theosophic, and Martinist groups in France. These esoteric Orders and Societies have been crucial in preserving and transmitting the Gnostic doctrine, and inner spiritual traditions. Likewise, the exoteric Apostolic churches have played a vital role in preserving the succession of bishops. The reunification of the sacramental with the initiatic represents a true restoration of the Gnosis.

The 20th century brought many hardships and struggles to the Gnostic and esoteric movements, but it also saw many rich rewards. In spite of two World Wars, collapsing economies, and other sorts of social and political upheaval around the globe, the sacred flame of Truth was never extinguished. The advent of personal computing helped usher in the Information Age, which has also helped to facilitate the reconnecting of the disparate facets of the Gnostic gem. In these early years of the 21st century, Gnosticism has grown exponentially, yet remains firmly rooted in the ancient traditions and customs.

Pre-Christian and Early Christian Gnosticism

There are three principal components which seem to have most influenced Christian Gnosticism: Persian, Semitic, and Graeco-Egyptian mysticism. This, of course, is an oversimplification of the matter, but I merely want to introduce the general concepts here, not to elaborate upon their myriad intricacies. That is, our survey will begin in around the 6th century B.C., and examine some of the prominent movements that have left the strongest echo in Gnosticism. Know, however, that these traditions are tied to even older ones originating in Egypt, Sumeria, Akkadia, et al. In fact, tradition unites all ancient theosophies in the legends of Atlantis and Lemuria. But, let us limit our discussion to more verifiable historic eras.

By the 6th century B.C., several sophisticated religious and philosophical systems were thriving in Persia, Palestine, and northern Africa (and much of Asia as well, but that is beyond the scope of our present study). The Persian prophet Zoroaster (Zarathustra) founds a religion that emphasizes the dualities of nature: good/evil; light/darkness; summer/winter; heat/cold. This duality was personified in the perpetual conflict between Ahura-Mazda, who represented the True God, and Ahriman, the adversarial deity who would seek to bring darkness and suffering into the world (but who ultimately loses to the True God of Light). The Zoroastrian teachings are, of course, much more complicated, but this fundamental duality underlies the whole system. This type of duality is prevalent throughout ancient Gnostic doctrines. Although Gnosticism, in most of its forms, is not dualistic in an absolute sense, it strongly emphasizes the relative duality as observed from a corporeal perspective.

In mystical and apocalyptic Judaism of the 6th century B.C., we can find the roots of both Gnostic, and later Qabalistic doctrine. Ezekiel's vision of the Son of Man becomes the prototype for the Gnostic Geradamas, as well as the Adam Qadmon of the Qabalists. By the 2nd century B.C., this figure has made it into *Daniel*, and appears in later apocalyptic texts. At this time, the Qabalah does not yet exist as a fully developed doctrine, such as its current state. But, Merkavah mysticism certainly exists, as well as an inner, oral tradition from which the Qabalah derives its name.

Meanwhile, in 6th century Greece, Pythagoras is teaching a system of mystical philosophy which includes the study of reincarnation, mystical numerology, and emanationist cosmology, as well as the practice of theurgy. Pythagoras is said to have been initiated into the Mysteries of Egypt, and those of the Chaldean Magi. Pythagoras taught that geometry was the basis of all creation, and is said to have referred to God as the “Grand Geometrician.” Outside of the students of mysticism and ancient philosophy, Pythagoras is probably best known for his theorem which states that in a right triangle, the sum of the square of two sides is equal to the square of its hypotenuse ($a^2 + b^2 = c^2$). This is also sometimes referred to as the 47th Proposition of Euclid, but Pythagoras was the first to expound it. Pythagoras also made an in-depth study of the relationship between the intervals of musical tones and harmonies. Both the scientific and mystical aspects of Pythagoras' doctrine (which were inextricably linked) would greatly influence later Greek philosophers, such as Plato, and would blend

harmoniously with Gnostic and Hermetic doctrines in Alexandria, Egypt.

By the 3rd century B.C., the Astrological Hermetica was emerging in Alexandria. While the Greek influence on the Hermetic doctrine cannot be denied, the underlying principles, especially concerning the astrological schema, are undoubtedly of a purely Egyptian origin. It seems fitting that the greatest mystical and philosophic doctrines of the Greek philosophers, who claimed to have received secret teachings from the Egyptian priesthood, would find their greatest expression in Alexandria in the form of Hermetic philosophy.

In the 1st century A.D., Neoplatonism, Pythagoreanism, Hermeticism, and apocalyptic Judaism meet and mix in Alexandria to form the basis of Gnostic doctrine and philosophy. In Palestine, the Essenes practice a form of apocalyptic Judaism that may have also contributed proto-Gnostic elements. John the Baptizer likely taught some form of these doctrines, as evidenced by the teachings of Jesus, as well as those of the Mandaeans, whose very name translates to "gnostic."

Certain traditions hold that another disciple of John the Baptizer was Simon Magus of Samaria. Simon taught a Gnostic doctrine concerning the descent of Spirit into matter, and its ultimate liberation and return to the Light; themes echoed throughout nearly all of the Gnostic writings. Although Simon is spoken of disparagingly in the *Acts of the Apostles*. I don't think we can take this as much more than a petty rivalry. This is really no stretch of the imagination when we consider the situations that exist in the present day, with individuals and groups denouncing one another as "inauthentic" while teaching identical doctrines; or doctrines so similar as to be virtually indistinguishable, one from the other. Some of the well-known successors of Simon Magus include Menander, who established himself in Antioch, and whose teachings spread throughout Asia Minor (roughly, the area occupied by modern-day Turkey); and Saturninus, a student of Menander who further refined and expanded upon the Gnostic doctrine.

Another 1st century teacher to contribute much to the terminology and philosophic basis for Gnosticism is St. Paul. The letters attributed to Paul are full of examples of this, such as the distinction made between the psychic and pneumatic; and many other elements both subtle and blatant. Much of this is exposed in Elaine Pagels' work, *The Gnostic Paul*.

The 2nd century can rightly be seen as the Golden Age of Gnosticism. At this time, Gnosticism is widely spread throughout Christendom. There is, as yet, no distinct "orthodoxy." There are numerous Christian sects from north Africa, through the Middle East, Asia Minor, and into the Mediterranean. Basilides was an extremely important and influential teacher of Gnosis in Alexandria. He claimed to have received his Gnostic doctrine from Glaucias, a follower of St. Peter, and from Matthias. Shortly after, or perhaps during the period Basilides was teaching, the North African, Valentinus, was receiving his education in Alexandria. Valentinus moved to Rome, where he very nearly became Bishop of Rome; the office now referred to as Pope. The Valentinian school produced sublime texts of Gnostic teaching and exegesis, and has continued to influence Gnostic groups throughout history, up to the present day.

St. Thomas is credited with bringing Christianity to Syria. From this school came many important mystical tests and teachers, such as the luminous Bardaisan (Bardesanes) of Edessa, who taught a Gnostic doctrine containing many elements similar to those of Simon Magus, Basilides, and Valentinus. He also wrote many early hymns, including, very likely, the "Hymn of the Robe of Glory" found in the *Acts of Thomas*. Although many modern scholars attempt to dissociate Thomasine Christianity from Gnosticism proper, I think that the early writings and practices of Syrian Christians suggest otherwise.

Around 180 A.D., the "orthodox" heresiologist Irenaeus (in truth there is yet no true orthodoxy at the time, but Irenaeus represents the doctrinal school which will ultimately establish itself by force) composes *Adversus Hæreses*, denouncing various Gnostic sects. Ironically, his work, and those of later heresiologists, will unwittingly preserve many key Gnostic doctrines. Through, because the works are decidedly biased against Gnosticism, the doctrines are often preserved imperfectly; containing both errors and outright fabrications. This has become especially evident as more ancient Gnostic texts have come to light. Still, these damning tomes of the early heresiologists are a wealth of information about various forms of early Christian thought.

At the dawn of the 3rd century, Clement of Alexandria develops a type of Christian Neoplatonism and self-identifies as Gnostic. He expounds the supremacy of gnosis over mere faith, but does not seem to have taught a doctrine of the Demiurge, or many other elements of classical Gnosticism. It is probably for this reason that he was never denounced as a heretic by the "orthodoxy."

The 3rd century brought continued development and growth of Gnostic doctrine and literature; but, also continued and growing opposition from the emerging orthodoxy. While Hippolytus was composing venomous tirades against the Gnostics and other "heretics," the Persian prophet Mani begins having angelic visions instructing him to found a new faith. Mani's system has many Gnostic elements, such as the liberation of the Divine Spark from the darkness of matter, but is more radically dualistic than other Gnostic sects. Mani's syncretic system incorporates elements of Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, and Christianity. Mani's religion spread far and wide, and survived in east Asia for centuries.

The 4th century would bring the eventual suppression of the vast majority of Christian Gnosticism. An orthodoxy was established with the support and strength of the state. The Nag Hammadi scriptures date from this period; though, these Coptic texts are translations of older Greek texts. This vast collection, which lay undiscovered for over 15 centuries, shows the unique mixture of Christian, Jewish, Hermetic, and Neoplatonic sources that make up the Gnostic tradition. Ironically, considering the harsh suppression of Gnosticism, the Hermetic texts gain a wider acceptance throughout mainstream

Christianity.

During the 5th century, Iamblicus and Proclus perpetuate a form of Gnostic/Hermetic theurgy; and Pseudo-Dionysius composes the work, *Celestial Hierarchies*, largely influenced by Gnostic cosmology, but eventually to be accepted by St. Thomas Aquinas as orthodox theology. But, as the Dark Ages descend upon Europe, the dissemination of the genuinely Gnostic teachings is greatly inhibited. Many Gnostic themes are found in superstitious practices and beliefs, but the Gnostic current is largely preserved in the East among Jewish and Islamic mysticism. If the Mysteries survive at all during this period in Europe, it is deep within the confines of the monasteries, or secreted away in the Masons' guilds.

Gnostic Currents In Medieval Through Renaissance Times: 12th-17th Centuries

The 12th century saw the emergence of the Cathars in the Languedoc region, with a Christian dualism that was similar, in many ways, to ancient Gnosticism and Manichæanism. It is widely held that the Cathars were inheritors of the "heretic" faith brought to the area by Bulgarian Bogomil clerics; and, while the Bogomil influence is not generally disputed, there also seems to be some evidence suggesting a pre-existent Cathar movement into which the Bogomil doctrine was incorporated. In any case, their teachings included certain Gnostic elements, such as the distinction between the True God of Light, and an imperfect demiurgic god, in this case, Lucifer. They also taught that souls had been trapped in the material world by Lucifer, and required liberation through successive incarnations. Although revered by local populations, and even many mainstream clergy, these heretical teachings (which often denounced the opulence of the Roman Church) incurred the wrath of the Papacy. Edicts were issued against the Cathars, and in the early 13th century, Pope Innocent III commissions "St." Dominic to wage spiritual (and literal) warfare against the Cathars. These efforts culminated in the infamous massacre at Montségur, where, on the 16th of March, 1244, hundreds of Cathar Perfecti (those who had received the sacrament of the Consolamentum) were burned alive. Cathars in other parts of Europe are forced into secrecy, re-emerging later among the Rosicrucians.

Another important 12th century movement developed within the very bosom of the Roman Catholic Church. I am referring to the founding of the Poor Fellow Soldiers of Jesus Christ, on Christmas Day in the year 1118 (or 1119 by some accounts). This religious military order was formed under papal decree in Jerusalem for the purpose of protecting Christian pilgrims during their voyage to the Holy Land. They became known as the Knights of the Order of the Temple, or Knights Templar, because of their association with the old Temple mount. While in the Holy Land, the Templars encountered mystical Isma'ili sects, as well as "Johannites" who were quite probably Mandaeans. The teachings of these groups were said to be preserved and perpetuated in secret by the Templar Order. It is interesting to note that the Templars were composed largely of Frenchmen. The French have a long and mysterious history of being the conservators of the ancient Wisdom Traditions. While it is difficult to know the absolute truth about the claims of the various Templar esoteric activities, it is important to keep in mind that the lines between legend and historically verifiable fact often become so blurred as to be considered virtually non-existent.

Later, in the early 14th century, King Philippe IV (le bel) of France would seize upon the rumors of the Templars' mysterious rites, and amplify them with outright fabrications. The true motive of the king's denouncement of the Templars had less to do with heresy than with greed for the Order's vast wealth. Pope Clement V, to whom the Templars answered directly and solely, allowed their harsh suppression through either collaboration or complacency. On Friday, October 13th, 1307, Jacques de Molay (the last Grand master of the Order of the Temple) and all of the Templars in France were arrested. Many Knights throughout the rest of Europe managed to escape the arrest orders. They found refuge in countries less sympathetic to the Papacy, such as Scotland; and continued on in other countries under different names, such as the Knights of Christ in Portugal. Legend maintains that when de Molay was burned at the stake, he called out for the Pope and King to join him before the throne of God within one year. Indeed, both the King and the Pope were dead within one year's time. The Templars, and their rites, emerge later among the Masonic and occult bodies all across Europe.

While the Cathars were struggling for their very existence, and the Templars were receiving secret initiations in the Holy Land, and possibly Persia, the Spanish Moors and Jews (under Moorish protection) were introducing all forms of Arts and Sciences into Europe; including Alchemy, which had been preserved within the Islamic sects since the suppression of the ancient Gnostics, and Qabalism, which thrived within the Jewish communities of Moorish Spain. These philosophies and practices, along with Astrology, Theosophy, and other mystical Arts and Sciences, would form the foundation for the doctrine known generally as Rosicrucianism. They are the same elements that had come together over a millennium prior to give rise to Gnosticism.

It is impossible to say, with absolute certainty, when exactly the rose and cross began to be used together in such a way as to represent the Hermetic Tradition. One can be certain, though, that the history of the Hermetic Tradition is, in essence, the history of Rosicrucianism. According to John Yarker, in *The Arcane Schools*:

It may be mentioned here that the Syrian Mysteries of Adonis represented the slain God as changed by Venus into a red rose; and Theodoratus, Bishop of Cyrus in Syria, asserts that the Gnostics deemed *Ros* to be a symbol of regeneration and love, and as the Latin word *Rosa* is derived from *Ros*, the dew, it has a relation with baptism; hence the rose-tree in Christian symbolism

is the symbol of the regenerated, whilst dew is the symbol of regeneration.

Some of the famous alchemists of the period, who would be considered forefathers of Rosicrucianism include: Roger Bacon, Albertus Magnus, Raymond Lulli, and Nicholas Flamel. The founding of the Rosicrucian Fraternity is traditionally attributed to one Christian Rosenkreutz. Rosenkreutz is said to have been born to a German Cathar family in 1378. The story of Christian Rosenkreutz (also called the Father C.R.C.) is often thought to be purely allegorical; but, although the name of the legendary founder is undoubtedly symbolic, there may very well have been an actual personality behind the myth.

Whatever the literal truth may be of the Rosicrucian tales, there can be no doubt that there were several alchemists and initiates of the Ancient Mysteries who worked quietly throughout the 15th century to bring together the elements of a true Rosicrucian Fraternity. By the early 16th century, Henri Cornelius Agrippa had established Communities of the Magi in Paris and elsewhere throughout Europe. There is a record of the establishment of such a Community in London in 1510. This Society was concerned with things such as Alchemy, Qabalah, and Theurgy; in other words, Gnostic-Hermetic-Rosicrucian Arts and Sciences. According to Michael Maier, alchemist and physician to Emperor Rudolph II, the German branch of the Community of the Magi reorganizes as the Brethren of the Golden Rosycross in 1570. Another society is formed in Germany around the same time called Militia Crucifera Evangelica. The founder of the MCE is said to be Simon Studion, who wrote a book entitled *Naometria* in about 1604, and mentions the Rose and Cross in connection to the MCE. Within a year of the publication of this work, the MCE seems to have officially adopted the Rose-Cross as a symbol of the Order.

The 17th century would be extremely important to the shaping and structuring of the schools of the Western Mystery Tradition as we know them today. At the crux of the whole Tradition is the Rose+Croix. In the years 1614-1615, three Rosicrucian manifestos appeared: *Fama Fraternitatis*, *Confessio Fraternitatis*, and *The Chymical Marriage of Christian Rosencreutz*. The *Fama* deals primarily with the initiatic journey of “The Highly Illuminated Father C.R.C.” who, like the Buddha, was of noble birth, but renounced material wealth and traveled the world in search of true wisdom. Eventually, C.R.C. returns to his native Germany where he quietly established a small “Fraternity of the Rose Cross” to preserve the knowledge imparted to him. In short, the *Fama* consists of the traditional, or legendary, founding of the Rosicrucian Order. The *Confessio* lays out many of the aims of the Fraternity, and strongly denounces the Papacy, as well as those so-called alchemists who were only interested in the transmutation of base metals, without gaining the inner knowledge, which is the true Work. The *Chymical Marriage* is an allegory of the Alchemical Conjunction – the mystical union of Spirit and Soul; a fascinating topic, but one that strays from our present discourse.

Perhaps the single most important society to emerge in the 17th century is the Order of Unknown Philosophers, formed in 1643. Associated with this Order, we find some of the most illustrious names: Jacob Böhme, the Gnostic and Qabalist whose works influence Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin as much as, if not more than, his master, Martinez de Pasqually; Heinrich Khunrath; Alexander Sethon “the Cosmopolite”; Michael Sendivogius; Rudolph Salzman; etc., etc. Louis-Claude himself becomes connected with this Order, and so embodies its principles that the term “Unknown Philosopher” came to represent all that he stood for and taught.

One last topic that we should touch upon before moving on, is the origin of the relationship between the Rosicrucians and Freemasonry. The earliest connection remains shrouded in mystery and speculation. But, there is one individual who can be connected to both Rosicrucianism and “Speculative” Masonry; that is, Philosophic Masonry, as opposed to Operative Masonry. That person is Elias Ashmole, who, with others in 1645, formed a society that was outwardly dedicated to the study of Nature, but actually transmitted a secret, occult teaching, oriented toward mysticism, Qabalah, and Gnosticism. In 1646, Ashmole receives Masonic initiation as an “Accepted” (i.e. Speculative/Philosophic) Mason, and requests that the society of the Rose+Croix be allowed to meet at the guild’s headquarters. This Rose+Croix society eventually gives birth to various other societies dedicated to mysticism and to the phenomena of the natural world, such as the Royal Society which received a charter from King Charles II.

The Gnosis Restored: 18th-19th Century

In the year 1705, there was supposedly a Templar Convention held in Versailles wherein Philippe, Duc d’Orleans, was elected as the 40th Grand Master of the “Ordre du Temple.” This succession of Grand Masters is based upon the so-called “Larmenius Charter” of 1324. In this Charter, John-Marc Larmenius is designated as the successor to Jacque de Molay, last Grand Master of the old Templar Order. Both the Larmenius Charter and the 1705 revival have had their authenticity called into question frequently. I do not intend to revisit this controversy here. I only mention it because it will serve as the basis for another Templar revival a century later, as we shall see a little further on. What is certain is that in the early 18th century, various forms of Templarism and the Rose+Croix were popular throughout Europe, and were becoming very influential in the Fraternity of Freemasons.

Beginning with this period, Freemasonry becomes the conduit which will channel the transmission of the various branches of the Mystery Schools. Papus (Dr. Gérard Encausse) states in his *The Tarot of the Bohemians*, “The Gnostic sects,

the Arabs, Alchemists, Templars, Rosicrucians, and lastly the Freemasons, form the Western chain in the transmission of occult science.” As we have seen, the truth of this statement is borne out upon an examination of the historical evidence. And, as we continue our journey through the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries, up to the present day, we shall see not only the modern influence of Freemasonry, but also the resurgence of those original Gnostic principles, and how all of these worthy elements come together in the modern Gnostic churches.

Returning now to the 18th century, let us take a look at how the Rose+Croix influenced Freemasonry and was perpetuated through Masonic rites. The Master Mason degree, added in 1723, is based upon a death and resurrection rite of Rosicrucian inspiration. Even the Opening and Closing rituals are full of alchemical symbolism. I cannot give details of these rites, but there are some aspects which are commonly observed, even in public ceremonies. For instance, it is no real secret that the staves of the Jr. and Sr. Deacons bear the images of the Moon and the Sun. These officers move about the Lodge in such a way that the true Initiate cannot help but to see therein the dance of Mercury and Sulphur; the alchemical Conjunction. In fact, a careful study (including experiential study, not just academic) of the Masonic rituals will reveal the whole essence of the Hermetic Tradition.

It is likely for this reason that Masters of the Qabalah, Theurgy, and the Magical Arts and Sciences in general, such as Martinez de Pasqually, would couch their teachings in the system of Freemasonry. Pasqually is named in a Masonic Patent issued to his father by Charles Stuart in either 1738 or 1758 (the '58 date is considered by many scholars to be the more likely). In this Patent, Pasqually is to receive authority as “Deputy Grand Master” upon his father's death. During the late 1750s through the early '60s, Pasqually travels throughout France recruiting followers and opening Lodges. In 1760 he forms a chapter of “Le Temple Cohen”; and in 1761 opens the Lodge “Le Perfection Elue Ecossaise” in Bordeaux. On March 21, 1767, Pasqually founds the Sovereign Tribunal of l'Ordre des Chevaliers Maçons Elus-Cohen de l'Univers with de Lusignan, de Loos, de Grainville, Jean-Baptiste Willermoz, Fauger d'Igneacourt, and Bacon de la Chevalerie as his Deputy.

This Order was open only to Master Masons, and taught a peculiar system of Theurgy, or Ceremonial magic. Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin was initiated a year later by Pasqually himself. Saint-Martin, and the other disciples of Pasqually, would attest to the miraculous and phantasmagorical nature of Pasqually's Theurgic Operation. An entity, referred to as the Unknown Agent, appeared often during the workings to give instruction. Few of Pasqually's students would ever be able to repeat his works, but all would testify to the veracity of the claims. Pasqually left for Santo Domingo in 1772 to claim an inheritance, but he would never return to Europe. Pasqually died on September 20, 1774, in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, after founding Elus-Cohen Temples throughout the country.

It is interesting to note that the West Indies, and Haiti in particular, have been instrumental as a port of entry into the New World for the old French rites. The mere fact that it was a French colony does not seem to account for the mysterious magnetism that has drawn to it every major stream of the Mystery Tradition. The Masonic Rite of Perfection of 25° came to San Domingo and Kingston, Jamaica in the 1760s, and is finally brought to the United States at the beginning of the 19th century, where it was transformed into the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of 33°. So, in an environment of High-Grade Masonry, it is not surprising that Pasqually's Elus-Cohen would thrive. Even after the white European colonists were ousted from Haiti, the Cohen Temples continued to influence the secret initiatory rites of the black Haitians, and became integrated into some esoteric Voodoo practices.

After the death of Pasqually, the work of the Elus-Cohen in Europe was primarily carried on by Jean-Baptiste Willermoz and Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin. The approach of Willermoz was to incorporate the rites into a Strict Observance Lodge (a German Masonic Templar rite) from which emerged the Chevaliers Bienfaisant de la Cité Saint (Knights Beneficent of the Holy City) in 1778. It is said that later in his life, Willermoz began to develop some of the powers possessed by his former master.

Saint-Martin, on the other hand, seeks to perfect his master's work by shedding extraneous elements that he feels are not essential to the goal of the Work, which is Reintegration and Regeneration. Saint-Martin never speaks disparagingly of Pasqually, nor does he doubt the efficacy of his methods. He feels, however, that the complex ritual and phantasmagoric projections are not necessary to the attainment of gnosis. The works of Jacob Böhme becomes a second master to him. From 1777 to 1790, Saint-Martin travels Europe extensively, gaining disciples and becoming connected to the aforementioned Order of Unknown Philosophers. Saint-Martin develops a system that has but a single initiation, having stripped away much of the Masonic and Theurgic pageantry. His system comes to be known as the “Way of the Heart,” because it is a path of inner contemplation, reflection, and rectification. When Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin dies in 1803, he leaves behind many initiated disciples in numerous countries.

A year later, in 1804, Bernard-Raymond Fabré-Palaprat and others found a “restored” Ordre du Temple, based on the Larmenius Charter. This Templar Order was said to be a reconstitution of the Duc d'Orleans' Templar revival of 1705. As stated previously, there was, and continues to be, much controversy regarding the legitimacy of this Templar lineage. It does indeed seem difficult to believe, even if the 1705 revival *did* occur, that de Molay would have been in any sort of position to issue rights of succession before his execution. It is not impossible, of course, as we know that the Knights were able to secret away the vast treasures of the Order, thus foiling the French King's plans to usurp the Order's wealth. But, even if we remove the question of succession from the equation, we find that the Ordre du Temple has many other interesting connections, especially to Freemasonry, even though it was not a specifically Masonic rite. A number of historians have

traced the Order's foundation to the hidden influence of certain prominent Freemasons and High-Grade Masonic rites. In any case, we should probably not judge its value solely upon the legitimacy of the so-called Larmenius Charter.

What interests us more than Palaprat's Ordre du Temple at the moment, however, is the foundation of his Johannite Church, or l'Église Johannite des Chrétiens Primitif. Although the Church was not officially formed until 1828 or 1830, its foundation goes back to several years previous. In 1810, Fabré-Palaprat received valid apostolic episcopal consecration from Guillaume Mauviel. Mauviel himself had been consecrated ten years prior into the *Rebiba* succession (Scipione Cardinal Rebiba), from which over 90% of current Roman Catholic bishops derive their succession. The fact that Mauviel had been consecrated as "Constitutional Bishop of Cayes in Haiti" I think draws another interesting link between Haiti and the transmission of the Mysteries. On the same day that Palaprat received his episcopal consecration (July 29, 1810), he consecrated Jean Machault. It is these three, Palaprat, Mauviel, and Machault, that would found the Johannite Church upon the principles of a version of the *Gospel of John* and its commentary called the *Levitikon*. This church was Gnostic in character, and tied into the Ordre du Temple. The church claimed an apostolic succession from St. John through a Templar lineage – the same lineage that was supposed to have preserved the succession of Grand Masters. This lineage, however, is almost certainly a fabrication. There are Johannite successions that are valid – such as the one derived from Polycarp – but this contrived Templar lineage is not one of them. Even if we admit the possibility of an actual succession of Templar Grand Masters from Larmenius, which is highly suspect at least, the idea that this succession additionally transmitted a valid apostolic succession of any kind seems to be beyond the realm of serious consideration. Nevertheless, the Johannite Church of Primitive Christians did, as we have seen, possess a valid apostolic succession; even if it was not as they claimed.

Machault was a Primate of the Church, and in 1831 he consecrated François-Ferdinand Toussaint Chatel to the episcopacy with the title of "Primate of the Gauls." It is known that Chatel had created his own church, l'Église Catholique Francais. It is widely understood that his time with the Johannite Church was short-lived, but some historians have posited that he went on to lead the Church after Palaprat's death in 1838. It would also seem that the Templar Order had schisms while Palaprat was yet alive. Apparently some members of the Knighthood were not willing to accept the Johannite faith which Palaprat, as Patriarch of the Church and Grand Master of the Order, required of them.

A couple of the well-known survivals of the succession from the Johannite Church include the line that was incorporated into Jean Bricaud's Église Catholique Gnostique of 1907 (which will be discussed further on), and the line that became fused with a Spanish neo-Albigensian church with connections to the esoteric Egyptian Masonic obedience of The Ancient and Primitive Rite of Memphis-Misraïm. This latter succession comes to be when Michel Henri d'Adhemar (1801-1900, who had been consecrated by Chatel in 1836 (two years before Palaprat's death), consecrates Manuel Lopez de Brion (1830-1874) under the episcopal nomen of Orfeo V in 1857. Then, in 1860, de Brion (who is also a Memphis-Misraïm initiator) consecrates Paul Pierre de Marraga (1823-1901) as Orfeo VI, and initiates de Marraga into Memphis-Misraïm. We shall see, later, how these currents have come to us in the present day.

A year after Palaprat's death, Pierre-Eugène-Michel Vintras (1807-1875) has visions of St. Michael, St. Joseph, the Virgin Mary, and the Holy Spirit. He is told of the coming of the Paraclete, and of the Age of the Holy Spirit. This principle echoes concepts found in ancient Gnosticism, such as is found in the work, *Tripartite Tractate* (which was unknown at the time) and the doctrines of Joachim of Fiore, a 12th century Christian monk who, like the ancient Gnostic work mentioned above, divided history into three "Ages": the Age of the Father, which referred to the era before Christ; the Age of the Son, referring to the period of time since the incarnation of Jesus; and the Age of the Holy Spirit, which was an Age yet to come.

Vintras then founded a movement based upon these visions called l'Oeuvre de la Miséricorde (Work of Mercy), which apparently attracted a number of Roman Catholic Priests. It seems also that numerous people witnessed many instances of "miracles" of bleeding hosts, wine turning to blood, apparitions, and the like. The popularity of Vintras' movement incurred the ire of the Papacy. His work was denounced by Pope Gregory XVI in 1841, and again, ten years later, by Pope Pius IX. Around the time of the second condemnation, Vintras was traveling Europe, founding several branches of his work which he had now organized as the Sanctuaire Intérieur du Carmel d'Elie, or the "Church of Carmel."

After Eugène Vintras' death in 1875 (the same year in which the Russian mystic Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and the American Colonel Henry Steel Olcott would found the Theosophical Society in New York) the Carmelite Church would survive in a fractured form, owing to disagreements over the succession of leadership. The splinter groups seem to have been just as controversial as Vintras' initial movement, involving individuals such as the Abbé de Boullan (Joseph-Antoine Boullan) and Louis Van Haeckel. At least one branch of the Carmelite Church was later incorporated into Bricaud's church mentioned previously.

Beginning in about 1880, a series of very important events begins to unfold that will help shape the face of the Western Mystery Tradition for the foreseeable future. In this year, Dr. Gérard Encausse (1865-1916), better known as "Papus" receives the initiation transmitted by Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin from Henri Delaage. At the time, there was no formal school or Order of Martinists; only individuals who were linked through the Initiatic Chain to Saint-Martin, who gave but a single initiation, that of the Supérieur Inconnu (Unknown Superior). One day, not long after receiving this initiation, while discussing esoteric and occult topics with some of his peers in a Paris café, Papus discovered another man, Pierre-Augustin Chaboseau, who had also received this special initiation, via Amélie de Boisse-Mortemart.

Papus and Chaboseau exchanged initiations in order to solidify the Martinist initiatic lineage, and began seeking out other SS:::II:::. The two desired to gather these Initiates into an organized group that could serve as a vehicle for the

transmission of the Martinist Initiation, was well as the preservation and perpetuation of the Martinist doctrine. In 1884, a Constitution was drafted adopting the name l'Ordre Martiniste (Martinist Order). By 1891, a Supreme Council had been formed consisting of 12 members: Papus (President and Grand Master), Augustin Chaboseau, Stanislas de Guaita, Chamuel (Lucien Mauchel), Paul Sédir (Yvon Le Loup, 1871-1926), Paul Adam, Maurice Barrès, Jules Lejay, George Montière, François-Charles Barlet, Jacques Burget, and Joséphin Péladan. Barrès and Péladan are soon replaced by Dr. Marc Haven and Victor-Emile Michelet. This new Martinist Order conferred Saint-Martin's Initiation in three degrees instead of just one, as Saint-Martin had done.

Péladan's departure from the Ordre Martiniste also coincided with his departure from l'Ordre Kabbalistique de la Rose+Croix, which had been founded by Péladan (1858-1918) and Stanislas de Guaita (1861-1897) in 1888. The same year (1891), Péladan forms the Ordre de la Rose+Croix Catholique et Esthétique du Temple et du Graal, and adopted the mystical nomen of Sâr Merodack. And a year later, he inherited the Grand Mastership of Palaprat's Ordre du Temple. All of these Orders continue to be relevant and important in the years to come for the French neo-Gnostic revival.

In the same year as the founding of the OKR+C, Jules-Benoît Stanislas Doinel du Val-Michel (1842-1903), known commonly as Jules Doinel, has a vision of the "Aeon Jesus" and is spiritually consecrated as "Bishop of Montségur and Primate of the Albigensians." He adopted the episcopal nomen Tau Valentin II, in honor of the great second-century Gnostic teacher, Valentinus. The "Tau" is a reference to the Tau cross, which has been used since remote antiquity to represent the mystical; especially in Egypt, where it appears in the simple tau (T) form, and also as a component of the ankh. In another such vision, he had been instructed to re-establish the Gnostic Church. These visions occurred at the residence of Maria de Marietegui, Lady Marie Caithness, Duchess of Pomar (1842-1895), a friend of Madame Blavatsky and an early member of the Theosophical Society. It is widely believed that Doinel's visions occurred during séances hosted by Lady Caithness, but Bishop Stephan Hoeller (Tau Stephanus) refutes this assertion in his work, *Gnosticism: New Light on the Ancient Tradition of Inner Knowing*. No reason is given for his correction, but one should consider the fact that the French word "séance" merely means "session" or "meeting" and was not necessarily a Spiritualist séance. On the other hand, it is reported that a system of pendulum divination was used to commune with the spirits at these sessions. In any case, Doinel believed in the message he received from Sophia-Acamôth to "establish my Gnostic Church."

In 1890, Doinel fulfilled his mandate by officially founding the Church (which existed under various names during his Patriarchate, but which is generally known as l'Église du Paraclet or l'Église Gnostique) and proclaimed 1890 to be the beginning of the "Era of the Gnosis Restored." (Incidentally, this would make 1890 "Year One" of the Era of the Gnosis Restored. I have seen several documents and certificates misdated because the author has merely counted the number of intervening years between 1890 and the present. For example, there is before me a Bull of Election that was issued "on the second of October, of the year of our Lord, two-thousand and two, the Feast of All Holy Souls, the One Hundred and Twelfth year of the Era of the Gnosis Restored..." Since 1890 would have been "the First year of the Era..." then 2002 would be the 113th year.) By 1892, Doinel had consecrated the following bishops: Gérard Encausse (Papus) – Tau Vincent, Bishop of Toulouse; Paul Sédir (Yvon Le Loup, 1871-1926) – Tau Paulus, Coadjutor of Toulouse; Chamuel (Lucien Mauchel) – Tau Bardesanes, Bishop of Béziers; Albert Jounet (1863-1929) – Tau Theodotus, Bishop of Avignon; Marie Chauvel de Chauvignie (1842-1927) – Esclarmonde, Sophia of Varsovie; Léonce-Eugène Joseph Fabré des Éssarts – Tau Synésius, Bishop of Bordeaux; François-Charles Barlet; and Jules Lejay. You will notice that many of these names are identical to those of the Martinist Supreme Council. This is no coincidence. The Gnostic Church and the Martinist Order quickly formed a relationship that has endured for over a century. Doinel himself was appointed by Papus to the Martinist Supreme Council, sometime after 1892. To emphasize this intimate relationship, in 1893 the "Holy Gnostic Synod" of Doinel's Église Gnostique publishes a list of decrees in the Martinist journal, *L'Initiation*, Article Seven of which states: "The Martinist Order is declared to be of gnostic essence." There are also several rights and privileges given to those who have attained the Supérieur Inconnu degree of the Martinist Order. It is also interesting to note that Article Eight states that, "The Gospel of John is the only Gnostic Gospel." This illustrates the recurring importance of the Johannine tradition within Gnosticism. It should also be stated, though probably needlessly, that Doinel and others in that circle, were Freemasons; and it is well-known that Masonic Lodges are dedicated to the Holy Saints John; that is, the Evangelist and the Baptizer. Freemasonry, of one sort or another, has always been closely associated with the Gnostic Church, which has often been referred to as a Church of Initiates.

The year 1895 would bring many changes to the Gnostic Church. As the "fin de siècle" was drawing to a close, the currents flowing within the Gnostic Church would become rather tumultuous. Doinel suddenly abdicates the Gnostic Patriarchate, and converts to Roman Catholicism! Doinel seems to have succumbed to paranoia, induced largely by the Masonophobic ravings of Leo Taxil (G.A. Jogand-Pages). This, evidently, caused a crisis of faith in Doinel, severe enough that he would renounce Gnosticism, Freemasonry, and all things esoteric. It has also been suggested that Doinel never actually left his faith, but merely put on the appearance in order to expose the exposé, so to speak. Doinel did finally seek re-admission to the Gnostic Church in 1900, and was re-consecrated as Tau Jules, but would never return to the patriarchal throne.

In order to fill the vacancy left by Doinel's defection, the Synod of Bishops held an election in 1895. The High Synod would elect Léonce-Eugène Joseph Fabré des Éssarts – Tau Synésius – to the Gnostic Patriarchate. Fabré des Éssarts was a close friend and personal student of Abbé Julio (Julien-Ernest Houssay, 1844-1912). Abbé Julio was a Roman Catholic

priest until he was strong-armed out in 1885 for openly criticizing the corrupt Roman Catholic clergy. The Abbé became a close associate to the mystical healer Jean Sempé, who seems to have based his teachings upon those of Origen, and the occult value of the Psalms for healing and Spiritual attunement. Abbé Julio would also become associated with the Syro-Jacobite bishop, Joseph-René Vilatte (1854-1929), and receive episcopal consecration from him; but we will return to that at a later point.

Returning to the 1895 election of Tau Synésius, this occurred at the oratory of Lady Caithness, where Doinel first had his visions some years prior. The Duchess would die later that year, as would Monseigneur Chatel of the Église Johannite. It has been stated that the 1895 Synod included the incorporation of the lineage of Fabré-Palaprat's church from Mgr. Mauviel and Mgr. Chatel. Since bishop Mauviel had died some 80 years prior, I think we can assume that he did not personally transmit this lineage. It is possible, though, that an aged Mgr. Chatel could have passed on the succession. If that transmission occurred at that time, then the Gnostic Church under Synésius had a valid apostolic succession; although they may not have realized it at the time, especially due to the Johannite Church's insistence upon the contrived Templar succession.

1895 is also the year that the *Pistis Sophia* was first translated into French. This becomes an important document in establishing a firm doctrine for the Church. Under Doinel, the Church had been more oriented toward a pseudo-Catharism than a true Gnosticism. This re-organization was accomplished with the help of Tau Sophronus (Louis-Sophrone Fugairon), who wrote the "Catéchisme Expliqué de l'Église Gnostique" in 1899. This was one of many changes that the turn of the century would bring to the Gnostic Church.

The year 1899 also saw the French and Spanish Gnostic successions passed to the Haitian Lucien-François Jean-Maine. Jean-Maine was born in 1869, in Léogane, Haiti. He had received the highest Voodoo initiations in his father's temple before traveling to Europe in search of additional Gnostic and occult currents. The Voodoo of his father and grandfather had been interwoven with the remnants of the Elus-Cohen work established there by Pasqually, so it is quite natural that those initiatic currents would lead him to seek out like currents. Having been previously ordained into the subdiaconate, diaconate, and priesthood by Orfeo VI (Paul-Pierre de Marraga), he received episcopal consecration in 1899 by both Orfeo VI and Tau Synésius, thus uniting the Spanish Memphis-Misraïm / Johannite succession with that of the French Gnostic Church. Jean-Maine took the episcopal nomen of Tau Ogdoad Orfeo I. He spent the next several years working with various followers of Pascal Beverly Randolph's (1825-1875) Fraternitas Lucis Hermetica in France. The Jean-Maine line of succession will be of the utmost importance in transmitting the Gnostic and Apostolic current to many of the modern-day Gnostic churches, including our own Apostolic Church of the Pleroma.

New Alliances and the Spread of the Gnostic Church: 1900s-1920s

As we progress along our time-line into the 20th century, we find that Jean Bricaud (1881-1934) is consecrated by Tau Synésius in 1901 as Tau Johannes, Bishop of Lyon. Two years later, in 1903, the year of Doinel's death, Bricaud receives the Martinist S::I::: degree. Bricaud, who had studied for a time in the Seminary of the Roman Catholic Church, had also worked with Vintras' "Work of Mercy" and "Church of Carmel" as well as Palaprat's Église Johannite.

In 1906, Synésius drafted a Constitution and Bylaws for his reformed Église Gnostique. It seems, however, that not everybody was entirely happy with the changes instituted by Synésius. For instance, he never received Martinist initiation, nor does it seem that he ever desired it; therefore, the Gnostic Church, under his direction, no longer enjoyed the close relationship with Martinism it had under Doinel. Needless to say, this did not set well with those who held to the original principles laid out in the Decrees of 1893; especially the ones having to do with the special connection existing between Martinism and the Gnostic Church. The result was that Bricaud, with the assistance of Papus and Fugairon (who had written the 1899 Catéchisme) founded his own branch, the Église Catholique Gnostique, in 1907. The new Catholic Gnostic Church of Bricaud, Papus, and Tau Sophronus, incorporated successions from Palaprat's Johannite Church via Bernard Clement, and Vintras' Carmelite Church via Marius Breton and Edouard Souleilon, two of the "Pontiffs" consecrated by Vintras himself. In 1908, Bricaud was elected Patriarch of the new Church, and adopted the new episcopal nomen, Tau Jean II.

The momentum created by the intense spiritual activities of those couple of years culminated in a very important "Congress Maçonnique Spiritualiste" organized by Papus and his secretary, an influential Martinist of the time, Victor Blanchard. Some of the visitors, participants, and Orders represented at the Congress: Charles Henri Détre (Téder), René Guénon (Tau Palingénus), Theodor Reuss (co-institutor of the Ordo Templi Orientis, which was in essence a condensation of the Memphis-Misraïm Rite), Edgardo Frosisi (of the Italian M-M), Henri Durville (representing Péladan and his Rose+Croix Order), Albert Jounet, Arnoldo Krumm-Heller, and several others. Many Masonic and esoteric Orders and Rites were represented at the Congress, including (in addition to what has already been mentioned) Le Droit Humain (who hosted the Congress), the Swedenborgian Rite, various Masonic Grand Lodges from across Europe, the Sons of Ismael (Arabic Masonry), and of course, the Ordre Martiniste and the Ordre Kabbalistique de la Rose+Croix.

The Congress was intended to create an "International Esoteric Federation," which it did not really accomplish. But, many important connections were made, and there were a number of significant events. One interesting occurrence was that Bricaud changed the name of his church from l'Église Catholique Gnostique to l'Église Gnostique Universelle. Some of the

other events, though, were more substantive. For instance, among the many lecturers was Fabré des Éssarts, Tau Synésius, who reasserted his position as the sole Patriarch of the Gnostic Church, and denounced Bricaud's church as "a schism and a heresy." One can imagine that the tension in the room must have been palpable. Although Synésius' church had been fairly radically modified, in comparison to the Church under Doinel, Bricaud's and Papus' EGU became the first real break (in France) from the Patriarchal authority. That is, although Synésius' EG looked very different from Doinel's EG, Synésius was, nevertheless, Doinel's elected successor. The EGU, therefore, represents a truly new and unique Gnostic Church; carrying the episcopal succession of the EG, but in no way perpetuating its authority. This should be remembered when evaluating any claims of a direct Primatial or Patriarchal line from Doinel to Bricaud to the present. In other words, from at least 1907 onward (actually much earlier when considering the Spanish, Haitian, and other branches), the "Gnostic Church" has not referred to a single Church, but rather a collection of independent and autocephalous churches which together represent the modern Gnostic Tradition. Sometimes this tradition is called the "French Gnostic Church" but, in fact, is an assembly of bodies that have emerged from a common source. Unfortunately, this simple principle has been misunderstood, ignored, or even willfully suppressed by some who have wished to subtly twist historical fact into a scenario that supports their claims to authority and power, to the exclusion of others equally qualified. Alas, such is the nature of the human animal, which threatens all works of the Spirit.

Another important event of the 1908 Congress was the exchange of authorities between Papus and Theodor Reuss (Peregrinus). Papus received a charter for a Supreme Grand Council of France for the Ancient and Primitive Rite of Memphis-Misraïm (33°-90°-95°), authorized by Reuss and John Yarker, as well as X° authorization for Reuss' OTO. In return, Papus grants Reuss episcopal and primatial authority in Bricaud's Gnostic Church. Based upon this episcopal authority, Reuss forms his own German branch, Gnostische Katholische Kirche, which he would incorporate into the OTO.

Reuss had also issued an OTO charter to Dr. Arnoldo Krumm-Heller at the '08 Congress. Krumm-Heller also received Martinist initiation from Papus, and was associated with the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor, Memphis-Misraïm, and other traditional orders and societies, including the Theosophical Society, into which he had been personally initiated by Henry Steel Olcott in 1897. Dr. Krumm-Heller, under the authority of Papus and Reuss, spread Martinism, Memphis-Misraïm, the OTO, and later, the Gnostic Church and his own Fraternitas Rosicruciana Antiqua, throughout South America and the Spanish and Portuguese-speaking world. His organizations still have many thriving branches throughout South America.

George Lagrèze, who had received Martinist initiation from Téder in 1906, also received a Memphis-Misraïm charter from Yarker in 1909. This is the same year that the American, Harvey Spencer Lewis, claims to have founded the Ancient Mystical Order Rosæ Crucis; though it would be several years before the Order would gain recognition by the European Orders. Although Lewis claimed to have received initiation in Toulouse in this year, the story probably belongs more to the realm of myth than of historical fact. He could also have been referring to some sort of astral initiation, or psychic attunement, which would not have been an unusual claim for the period.

It is said that Papus met with the Haitian, Lucien-François Jean-Maine (who, as previously stated, had been consecrated as a bishop by Tau Synésius and P-P de Marraga in 1899) in 1910, and conferred upon him the X° of Reuss' OTO "for Haiti and the French West Indies." Reciprocally, Jean-Maine conferred additional high degrees upon Papus of de Marraga's Spanish Memphis-Misraïm rite. It is possible that they also may have exchanged Martinist initiation. The transmission of these rites and successions to Jean-Maine is significant, not only because of their increased accessibility to people of African descent, but in their preservation and eventual transmission to the United States; a topic to which we shall return later.

The next major advancement within the French Gnostic Tradition would come in 1913, when Jean Bricaud would receive an additional episcopal consecration from Louis-Marie-François Giraud. This consecration brings the "Vilatte Succession" into the Gnostic Church. Joseph-René Vilatte (1854-1929) had received episcopal consecration as Mar Timotheos in 1892 by Mar Julius I (Antonio Francis Xavier Alvares), Bishop of the Syrian Jacobite Orthodox Church, and Metropolitan of the Independent Catholic Church of Ceylon, Goa, and India. Vilatte makes the acquaintance of several prominent clerics and occultists of the day, and is well-known and respected throughout France and America. We have already mentioned that Abbé Julio had become associated with Vilatte. In 1904, Abbé Julio is consecrated as a bishop by Mgr. Paolo Miraglia Gulatti, who had himself been consecrated by Vilatte in 1900. It is Abbé Julio who passes the Apostolic Succession to Giraud, Bricaud's consecrator. This consecration was significant in that it brought a recognized, valid Apostolic Succession into the EGU. This is also further evidence that the French Gnostics at the time were unaware that they already held a valid succession through Palaprat's Johannite Church. In any case, this succession, and the Church's official relationship to the Martinist Order, would definitively unite the inner, secret, initiatic Tradition with the exoteric, sacramental Tradition as preserved through the Apostolic Succession of bishops. Thus, the Initiatic and Sacramental are functioning within the same church, a Gnostic Church, for the first time since the suppression of the ancient Gnostics; except perhaps in isolated pockets of activity throughout history.

But, just as if the Demiurge himself had reached out to take vengeance upon those who would dare to restore the Light of Gnosis, the first World War broke out, disrupting activities and taking the life of the Very Illustrious Papus. Dr. Encausse was serving as a medical doctor on the front lines in the French Army. He died in 1916 after contracting tuberculosis in the trenches. There were other deaths to follow during the years of the War (1914-1918). And, while many of them may not be obviously attributable to the War, not all effects have immediately apparent causes. Some of the others to die during this

period include: Tau Synésius (1917), Téder (1918), and Joséphine Péladan (1918).

With the death of Papus, Téder (Charles Dêtre) would succeed him, briefly, as Grand Master of the Ordre Martiniste (with Victor Blanchard as Deputy Grand Master), as well as the French sections of Memphis-Misraïm and the OTO. Lucien-François Jean-Maine continues his own branch of the French OTO which, upon his return to Haiti in 1921, he will transform into the Ordo Templi Orientis Antiqua (OTOA); which expands the OTO into a system of XVI° and is incorporated within Jean-Maine's M-M rite and his Ecclesia Gnostica Spiritualis. However, before returning to Haiti, he travels once more from France to Spain in order to consecrate his European successor, Martin Ortiere de Sanchez y Marraga as Tau Ogdoade Orfeo II on December 27, 1918. Sanchez y Marraga is then appointed Primate of the Ecclesia Gnostica Spiritualis for Spain in 1921. In 1922 Jean-Maine created an order of esoteric Voodoo, "La Couleuvre Noire" (The Black Snake). These various currents, the OTOA, the EGS, La Couleuvre Noire, and the Fraternitas Lucis Hermetica, were organized within the Memphis-Misraïm Rite and, collectively, are commonly referred to as the Franco-Haitian Gnostic Tradition. And the descendants of this Tradition are often referred to as "Jean-Maine bishops." while in Haiti, Jean-Maine married (1921) and had a son in 1924, Hector-François Jean-Maine.

Returning now to the activities in France, when Fabré des Éssarts (Tau Synésius) dies in 1917, it seems that he was succeeded (perhaps reluctantly) by Tau Théophile (Léon Champrenaud). The details are murky, and there are conflicting accounts, but it looks as if Théophile held the patriarchate of the Église Gnostique de France until 1921, when Patrice Genty (Tau Basilide) took up the mantle until 1926, when the Église Gnostique de France was put permanently to rest. At some point, though, it seems that Chamuel (Lucien Mauchel – Tau Bardesanes), one of Doinel's original bishops, instituted an Église Gnostique Universelle that was distinct from Bricaud's church of the same name.

Téder dies in 1918, just two years after succeeding Papus as Grand master of the Martinist Order. Téder is succeeded by Jean Bricaud (who is already Patriarch of the EGU) as Grand Master of the Martinist Order, Memphis-Misraïm, and the OTO for France. Theodor Reuss shows his approval of this succession by making Bricaud "Delegate General" of the OTO for France, and issuing him a warrant for a French Sovereign Sanctuary of Memphis-Misraïm. Bricaud reciprocates by naming Reuss "Gnostic Legate for Switzerland." Also, in this year, Bricaud consecrates Blanchard as Tau Targelius.

After the death of Péladan in 1918, his Ordre de la Rose+Croix Catholique fractured into several branches. One of the more prominent branches, headquartered in Belgium, was carried on by Emile Dantinne (1884-1969). Dantinne, also known as Sâr Hieronymous, reorganized the Rose+Croix Order into l'Ordre de la Rose+Croix Universelle, l'Ordre de la Rose+Croix Universitaire, and l'Ordre de la Rose+Croix Intérieur. R+C Universelle and R+C Universitaire served essentially the same purpose, and were each composed of 9 degrees, but the R+C Universitaire was reserved for only those who had received University training. The R+C Intérieur served as an inner Order of 4 degrees. These additional developments were implemented in 1923.

The FUDOSI Years: 1930s-1940s

The next major developments occurred in 1934; but there are a number of meaningful events in the interim that should probably be mentioned. In America, H. Spencer Lewis' Ancient Mystical Order Rosæ Crucis (AMORC) was gaining some popularity domestically and internationally, but still lacked the sort of "validation" from the European Orders that Lewis desired. In the early '20s he tried to work with Theodor Reuss (who had issued Lewis an honorary VII° OTO charter) and Heinrich Traenker (1880-1956), who had worked with Reuss, Krumm-Heller, and Karl Germer, among others. Neither of these contacts seemed to pan out for Lewis. But Lewis would soon find the European contacts he so earnestly sought.

Lewis' Rosicrucian contacts in Europe were initially facilitated by the Belgian Freemason and historian, François Wittemans. Through Wittemans, Lewis made contact with Jean Mallinger, who was a member of the Belgian Memphis-Misraïm Rite (which had broken away from the French Obedience of Bricaud), and Emile Dantinne in 1932. Dantinne had been trying to organize a congress similar to that of 1908. Dantinne had also contacted Victor Blanchard, and the three of them – Dantinne, Lewis, and Blanchard (who was secretary of the '08 Congress) – would go on to organize a legendary collaboration known as FUDOSI. This collaboration seems to have strengthened the Belgian orders, and Belgium begins to emerge as a new hub for esoteric activity. It is in Belgium, in 1932, that Palaprat's Ordre du Temple is reorganized as the Ordo Supremus Militaris Templi Hierosolymitani, or, Sovereign Military Order of the Temple of Jerusalem (OSMTH/SMOTJ).

1934 would be an historic year for the Traditional Orders and Societies. Sadly, this is also the year of Jean Bricaud's death. The succession of Grand Master of the Martinist Order passes to Victor Blanchard, but he declines and is replaced by Constant Chevillon (1890-1944). Chevillon (Tau Harmonius) also becomes Patriarch of Bricaud's EGU, as well as inheriting the leadership of the French M-M, OTO, etc. One of the reasons Blanchard refused the Grand Mastership of the Ordre Martiniste is because he had been more or less operating his own Martinist activities independently of the Order. This is because Bricaud had led the Order away from its founding principles, requiring Masonic prerequisites, and denying full membership to women. It was not until Bricaud's death, through, that Blanchard would "officially" constitute the Ordre Martiniste et Synarchique. The OM&S, then, would be the first real branching off of the Martinist Order. However, the practice of "Free Initiators" ensured that there were many practicing Martinists that may have operated outside the bounds

of any Lodge or official Order. And, of course there were the many Russian Martinists, whose practices were largely isolated from Western Europe, and developed along slightly different lines.

In Belgium, 1934 would see the realization of the *Fédération Universelle des Ordres et Sociétés Initiatiques*, or *Federatio Universalis Dirigens Ordines Societatesque Initiationis*. The first FUDOSI convention occurred in Brussels, Belgium from August 8 through August 16, 1934. The Federation was headed by 3 “Imperators”: Sâr Hieronymous (Emile Dantinne); Sâr Alden (H. Spencer Lewis); and Sâr Yesir (Victor Blanchard). The Orders and Societies represented at the 1934 convention are as follows:

1. Ordre de la Rose+Croix Universelle (Sâr Hieronymous – Dantinne)
2. Ordre de la Rose+Croix Universitaire (Sâr Hieronymous – Dantinne)
3. Ordre Kabbalistique de la Rose+Croix (Sâr Yesir – Blanchard; representing Lucien Mauchel)
4. Confrérie des Frères Illuminés de la Rose+Croix (Sâr Artemis – August Reichel)
5. AMORC (Sâr Alden – Lewis; Sâr Emmanuel – Many Cihlar; Sâr Iohannes – Hans Grueter)
6. Militia Crucifera Evangelica (Sâr Alden – Lewis)
7. Ordre R+C de Suisse – AMORC Switzerland (Sâr Artemis – Reichel)
8. Société Alchemique de France (Sâr Artemis – Reichel)
9. Ordre des Samaritains Inconnu (Sâr Artemis – Reichel)
10. Ordre Hermetiste Tetramegiste et Mystique / Ordre Pythagorien (Sâr Succus – François Soetewey; Sâr Helios)
11. Ordre Martiniste et Synarchique (Sâr Yesir – Blanchard)
12. Fraternité des Polaires (Sâr Yesir – Blanchard)
13. Ordre Maçonnique Oriental de Memphis-Misraïm – Stricte Observance (Sâr Iohannes – Grueter; Sâr Ludovicus – Luis Fitau)
14. Co-Masonic Order of Memphis-Misraïm (Sâr Laya; Sâr Fulgur – Maurice de Seck)
15. Église Gnostique Universelle (Tau Targelius – Blanchard, representing Tau Bardesanes – Lucien Mauchel)

There are many interesting stories and facts concerning the various Ordres and Societies of the FUDOSI. However, we shall not get bogged down with too many of the finer details, which can be easily discovered by the interested student in many books, documents, and internet sites. We only want to examine some of the major events that would significantly impact the future of the Gnostic Church and its related initiatic movements. It is remarkable that so many Orders were able to come together in fraternal union. Blanchard, who was Secretary to the 1908 Congress in Paris, must surely have seen the FUDOSI as the realization of the dream set forth by Papus years prior. One of the down sides of the whole thing, though, was that in declaring the FUDOSI members “the authentic Initiatic Orders and Societies,” every other Traditional Order must therefore be *inauthentic*.

There were two individuals who were particularly outraged. The first, as one might expect, was Constant Chevillon who, as stated before, was Bricaud's successor to the French Orders. From Chevillon's perspective, the FUDOSI members were undoubtedly seen as apostates. Memphis-Misraïm, Martinism, and the Gnostic Church had all formed “schismatic” branches which had all united in Belgium to claim the initiatic throne of authenticity. One may well imagine that Chevillon must have been livid. The second individual to whom I have referred is the American, Reuben Swinburn Clymer (1878-1966). Clymer was an American Martinist S::I:: (though he never seems to have affiliated with the Martinist Order) who founded the *Fraternitas Rosæ Crucis*, which he claimed was a perpetuation of P.B. Randolph's “Brotherhood of Eulis.” Clymer and Lewis had been bitter rivals since the '20s, each claiming that the other was a fraud; a situation that unfortunately is all-too-common within fraternities of “enlightenment.”

Clymer and Chevillon began working together toward the development of an organization to rival the FUDOSI. With the help of August Reichel (Sâr Artemis), who left the FUDOSI after the first convention, and others, such an organization came into being as the *Fédération Universelle des Ordres, Sociétés et Fraternités des Initiés*, or FUDOFSI. The first (and only) meeting of the FUDOFSI occurred in 1939 in Paris. In addition to those individuals already mentioned, other members present included: Charles-Henri Dupont (1877-1961); Raoul Fructus (who had been a member of FUDOSI); Camille Savoie (famous Freemason and head of the Rite Ecossais Rectifié, or Scottish Rectified Rite); Alfred Sharp; Count Jean de Czarnomsky; Henri Dubois; Antoine Fayolle; Hans Rudolph Hilfiker-Dunn (Swiss OTO); Arnoldo Krumm-Heller (*Fraternitas Rosicruciana Antiqua*); and others. In all, the following Orders were represented:

1. Église Gnostique Universelle
2. Ordre des Chevaliers Maçons Elus-Cohen de l'Univers
3. Ordre Martiniste-Martineziste de Lyon (as Chevillon's reformed Martinist Order was now known)
4. The Antient and Primitive Rite of Memphis-Misraïm
5. Ordre du Saint Graal
6. Ordo Templi Orientis (French and Swiss sections)
7. *Fraternitas Rosicruciana Antiqua*
8. *Fraternitas Rosæ Crucis*

9. Ordre Kabbalistique de la Rose+Croix Gnostique
10. Rite Ecossais Rectifié
11. Confrérie des Frères Illuminés de la Rose+Croix

The year 1939 saw other rivalries as well. Apparently, Victor Blanchard had had some sort of vision, and informed his fellow FUDOSI brethren that he had been designated the “Universal Grand Master of the Rose+Croix and all of the Initiatic Orders of the World.” This outrageous claim earned him expulsion from the FUDOSI, and several OM&S members defected as well, including George Lagrèze (Sâr Mikael). Lagrèze associated himself with another Martinist Order that had been founded in 1931 by Victor-Emile Michelet and Augustin Chaboseau (co-founder, with Papus of the original Ordre Martiniste), the Ordre Martiniste Traditionnel. The OMT had been founded by those who accepted neither Chevillon's Ordre Martiniste-Martineziste de Lyon, nor Blanchard's Ordre Martiniste et Synarchique. So, when Blanchard was expelled from FUDOSI, he was replaced as Imperator by Augustin Chaboseau, and the OM&S was replaced by the OMT.

Shortly before the '39 convention, Imperator H. Spencer Lewis dies. His son, Ralph M. Lewis, replaces him as Imperator of AMORC. At the FUDOSI convention, he is also installed as an Imperator of FUDOSI to replace his late father. Emile Dantinne remained as the only original Imperator of FUDOSI. At this time, Ralph Lewis, who had already received Martinist Initiation in the OM&S in 1936 by Blanchard, received as well the S::I::: Initiateur of l'Ordre Martiniste Traditionnel from Lagrèze, under the authority of Chaboseau. Lewis receives a charter authorizing him as “Sovereign Delegate and regional Grand Master of the OMT for the United States.” In the US, the OMT is known as the Traditional Martinist Order (TMO), and functions under the direction of AMORC.

The Spiritual warfare waging among the occult societies has its parallel on the geopolitical scene. The very month of the '39 conference (September), Germany invades Poland and the War is in full swing. The Second World War soon spreads across Europe, driving the esoteric Orders, Societies, and Churches underground. Mussolini's ban on Freemasonry, and Hitler's complete intolerance of all esoteric and fraternal Orders and Societies, would bring scrutiny, imprisonment, and even death upon many prominent occultists. Several FUDOSI dignitaries died during the War, and Constant Chevillon was brutally murdered on March 23, 1944, by French Nazi sympathizers. The Gestapo did not seem to discriminate between the “authentic” or “inauthentic” Orders and Societies.

Post-War Reconstruction and the Emergence of the American Gnostic Churches

With the death of Chevillon, the group of “Lyon” organizations is left in relative chaos. Charles-Henri Dupont succeeded Chevillon as Grand Master of the OM de Lyon; and M-M was carried on by George Lagrèze (who invoked the rights of his 1909 charter from John Yarker) and Camille Savoie (of the Scottish Rectified Rite). Although Lagrèze had been a rival of Chevillon throughout the 1930s, he was now working closely with Chevillon's people in an attempt to repair some of the damage caused by Nazi occupation. Perhaps the War put things into a different perspective; perhaps the petty squabbles of years past didn't seem quite so threatening.

Lagrèze had conferred the S::I::: Degree on Robert Ambelain in December, 1940, and made him a Delegate of the M-M Rite (95°) after Chevillon's death. Ambelain had been a close friend of Chevillon. So, the fact that he was working closely with Lagrèze, who was still a FUDOSI member, I think is very telling of the spirit of fraternal cooperation inherent in Ambelain's character. Ambelain became, through the M-M rite, and, as we shall see a bit later, the Gnostic Church and Martinist Order, a great force for the unifying of disparate branches of the French esoteric tradition.

The matter of Chevillon's EGU is a much more messy matter. The fact is, there was no clear successor. Chevillon had not appointed a successor, and there were no other bishops in his church at the time. Some sources suggest that René Chambellant succeeded Chevillon in 1945 (when the War ended), who then passed the Patriarchate to Dupont in 1948. It is unclear, though, whether or not (or if so, when) Chambellant was ever consecrated as a bishop. Though it appears that he may have been consecrated by Edouard Gesta of Blanchard's EGU. Another source has Antoine Fayolle as Chevillon's successor. Fayolle seems to have received consecration by a Marcel Cotte, of the original Doinel succession. This, of course, raises the question of valid apostolic succession. If Cotte's succession came from one who had received Fabré-Palaprat's Johannite succession, which seems plausible, then it is a non-issue. It is said then that Charles-Henri Dupont succeeded Fayolle. So, either way, it seems clear that Dupont, ultimately, was considered as the legitimate successor of Chevillon by 1948.

In 1945 Blanchard's EGU was still active, and he (who had been consecrated by Bricaud himself, remember, in 1917) consecrated Robert Amadou, Edouard Gesta, and Roger Ménard as Tau Eon II. Ménard, in turn, consecrates Ambelain in 1948 as Tau Jean III. Just after the dreaded War ends, the Light of Gnosis is able to peek through once more; no, not a peek, but a full ray of Holy Illumination, for it is then that 13 volumes containing over 50 Gnostic texts are discovered near Nag Hammadi, Egypt. Although it will be another 30 years before a full translation is made available to the public, it is nevertheless a hugely significant discovery – both academically and spiritually – and a symbol of Gnostic rebirth.

A year later, in 1946, Augustin Chaboseau dies, and the Grand Mastership of the OMT/TMO passes to Lagrèze. Lagrèze's reign would be short-lived, however, as he himself died just a few months later. He would be succeeded by Jean

Chaboseau, Augustin's son, as Grand Master. That summer, the FUDOSI held its first convention since the onset of WWII. Apparently, the mood was still that of reconciliation, as Victor Blanchard was once again a member of FUDOSI, though he would never again become Emperor. So now the OMT and the OM&S were both present within the FUDOSI. For some reason or other, Jean Chaboseau is not recognized by the FUDOSI council as Grand Master of the OMT. This causes schisms within the OMT. Chaboseau resigns a year later, in '47, and many other members leave for other Martinist obediences. The only branch left functioning was the American TMO, operating within AMORC.

After WWII it becomes increasingly difficult to follow all of the sub-branches of the Martinist Order and the Gnostic Church. We shall not try to trace the myriad permutations, but only those which are most pertinent to the development of our own Apostolic Church of the Pleroma. Therefore, the next year that we are going to look at is 1953. In January of this year, Hector-François Jean-Maine (1924-1984), son of Lucien-François Jean-Maine, is consecrated into the episcopate by his father, with Robert Ambelain (Tau Jean III) and Charles-Henri Dupont (Tau Charles-Henri) as co-consecrators; thus uniting the Bricaud/Chevillon and Chamuel/Blanchard lines with the original Doinel/Synésius line, within the Ecclesia Gnostica Spiritualis. H-F Jean-Maine takes the episcopal nomen of Tau Ogdoade Orfeo III. He also, at this time, receives Ambelain's Martinist lineage.

Victor Blanchard dies a few months later, and is succeeded as Grand Master of the OM&S by Edouard Bertholet (Sâr Alkmaion). There doesn't seem to have been a clear successor to his EGU, but after Blanchard's death, Ambelain founds his own branch: l'Église Gnostique Apostolique.

One last event of 1953 that is significant, is the consecration of the Australian Ronald Powell (Richard Duc de Palatine) by Mar Georgius (Hugh George de Wilmott-Newman). The Duc de Palatine forms the Pre-Nicene Gnostic Catholic Church in England. This branch will later come to the United States as the Ecclesia Gnostica, which we will address a bit further on.

In 1958, a Federation of Martinist Orders is created to unite the bodies headed by Ambelain, Dupont, and Philippe Encausse, son of Gérard Encausse. In 1960, the Orders of the Federation merge into the Ordre Martiniste de Paris, also known as the Ordre Martiniste de Papus. Philippe Encausse is chosen to head up the newly re-formed Martinist Order, with Ambelain leading Elus-Cohen activities. Also this year, Dupont's EGU and Ambelain's EGA unite under Ambelain as the Église Gnostique Apostolique Universelle. This branch will go through further permutations, and its branches will ultimately be declared "autocephalous"; that is, independent, without a central Patriarchate.

On April 30, 1960, Lucien-François Jean-Maine dies while visiting students in Boston, Massachusetts, USA. Two years later, his son, Hector-François, is elevated to the Patriarchate of the Ecclesia Gnostica Spiritualis (EGS) by Lucien's Spanish successor, Martin Ortière de Sanchez y Marraga (Tau Ogdoade Orfeo II). Not long after this, Hector-François takes on a young American student with a background in Martinism: Michael Paul Bertiaux. In 1966, Bertiaux is consecrated by H-F Jean-Maine as Tau Ogdoade Orfeo IV. Bertiaux helps to further develop Jean-Maine's system, and is appointed heir to the Patriarchate of the EGS, as well as to the Grand Mastership of the OTOA, Memphis-Misraïm, La Couleuvre Noire, and other associated rites, such as the Monastery of the Seven Rays, which Bertiaux inherited from other sources, etc.

In 1967, Forest Ernest Barber and Dr. Stephan A. Hoeller are consecrated by Richard Duc de Palatine into the Pre-Nicene Catholic Church. Hoeller's American branch is known as the Ecclesia Gnostica, and still thrives (mostly in the western United States) under the Patriarchate of Tau Stephanus (Hoeller) as of the time of this writing. Dr. Hoeller has done much to bring an academic respectability to the modern Gnostic Church through his writings and lectures.

Fr. Roger St. Victor-Herard of Haiti, Apostolic Prefect of North America for the Église Gnostique Catholique Apostolique, is consecrated in 1970 as Tau Charles, Primate of the West Indies, by Willer Vital-Herne (Tau Guillaume). Vital-Herne had been consecrated in 1967 by Roger Pommery who, in turn, had been consecrated by Robert Ambelain in 1958.

During the 1970s, since Ambelain's Church had abolished the patriarchate and declared all branches "autocephalous," it seems that René Chambellant decided to "take back" the title of "Primate of the Gauls," and declare himself Patriarch of the EGA according to the Constitution of Synésius of 1906. I really don't want to spend too much time on this convoluted claim, but we shall look briefly at these puzzle pieces and attempt to untangle them a bit. First, the title of "Primate of the Gauls" as used by Synésius, referred only to the Patriarchate of the Église Gnostique (de France), whose last Patriarch, Patrice Genty (Tau Basilide) put the church "to sleep" permanently in 1926. Therefore, although there were spiritual successions from the EG (such as the Jean-Maine line, received from Synésius himself), there were no successors to the Patriarchate of this church. The only Patriarchal seat held by Chambellant was that of Bricaud's EGU, which Synésius himself declared a "schism" and a "heresy." Therefore, the Patriarchate of the EGU would in no way carry any legitimate succession of "The Primate of the Gauls" of the church of Synésius, and thus, there would be nothing to "take back." In addition, Chambellant had not held the Patriarchal seat of the EGU in decades. Back in 1960, the legitimate Patriarch of the EGU, Charles-Henri Dupont, personally authorized the absorption of the EGU into Ambelain's EGA (EGAU). So, unless the current successor of the Patriarchate were to empower Chambellant, which does not seem to have happened, there is actually nothing for him to reclaim; especially anything having to do with Synésius! We see, then, that if we look at these puzzle pieces, we realize that they are pieces of different puzzles that have been forced together in order to give the illusion of a cohesive whole. This is not to say that Chambellant's work was in any way illegitimate, only that his church was in fact a *new* church that drew upon the older traditions. This new EGA was legally incorporated in France in April of 1982, then

dissolved and reincorporated again in 1993. Chambellant died the same year without naming a successor.

Back in the United States, Michael Bertiaux received sub-conditione consecration from F.E. Barber in 1979, thus uniting the English Gnostic succession (Duc de Palatine) with his own Franco-Haitian succession. A few years later, in 1984, Hector-François Jean-Maine dies. The EGS, OTOA, LCN, etc., are inherited by Bertiaux who, at the time of this writing, remains the Patriarch of the EGS, though many other activities (LCN, OTOA, etc) have been delegated to his heir-apparent, Courtney Willis (Tau Ogdoade Orfeo VIII).

1984 was also the year that another Haitian succession was introduced to the United States. The aforementioned Roger St. Victor-Herard was a Haitian expatriate living in the United States. On November 4, 1984, he consecrated Robert Cokinis, Tau Charles Harmonius II, as a regional bishop for the autocephalous EGCA. In the following January, Herard consecrates Jorge Rodriguez-Villa as Tau Johannes XIII, Primate of Columbia and Latin America. Rodriguez seems to be the only Primate consecrated by Herard. Rodriguez also received several sub-conditione consecrations from bishops such as Michael Bertiaux and Roberto de la Caridad Toca y Medina.

Gnosis in the 21st Century

The Apostolic Church of the Pleroma derives its apostolic succession from multiple sources. While its primary episcopal source is through the "Bertiaux" lineage, the ACP holds successions from Herard (via lines from Rodriguez and Cokinis), Hoeller, and virtually every other major line of both Gnostic and Orthodox Apostolic lineages due to sub-conditione consecrations of its Patriarch, Tau Phosphoros. In addition, the ACP maintains the Christian Knights of Saint-Martin as an appendant body, preserving the historical link between Martinism and the Gnostic Church. The CKSM holds multiple French and Russian lineages derived principally from the lineages of the Ordre Martiniste des Chevaliers du Christ.

The ACP works quietly and resolutely, always striving to put quality over quantity. The ACP is not isolationist, though. The Church is always willing to maintain fraternal relations with those who share the goal of universal regeneration and reintegration. Consequently, the ACP is in full ecclesiastical inter-communion with several Gnostic and Apostolic jurisdictions.

This paper has barely skimmed the surface of our rich and varied tradition, but hopefully it gives a glimpse of some of the ideas and movements that have persisted throughout the ages; in various places and under different names, but always maintaining a link to the Masters of the Past, and always to the Greater Glory of the Eternal, and the Benefit of Mankind.