Latin Old Roman Catholic Church
of Flanders
(Independent from Rome and Utrecht)
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Monsignor Joseph René Vilatte,
Mar Timotheus,
Old Catholic Archbishop of North America,
And First Primate of the American Catholic Church
and
Monsignor Jean Bricula
Founder of Gnostic Catholic Church
(Biographical and Historical Accounts from various sources)

Compilation by Mgr. Philippe L. De Coster, B.Th., DD

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Joseph René Vilatte was a Catholic of the Latin rite. As the direct or indirect progenitor of many Catholic and Orthodox Churches in America, France (his last years), and all over the world eventually. He is, so to speak, also the « father » of the Apostolic Succession of the Gallican Church of Mgr. Giraud and the Gnostic Church, in its apostolic branch, of Mgr. Bricaud and Mgr. Constant Chevillon only. His life and his work in Europe and in the United States are well-known from many books and articles, but there is a period that the historians seem to neglect: his return to Paris in 1924, his retirement in Versailles and his death.

He was born in Paris, the son of a butcher, on January 24, 1854. His parents belonged to the region of La Maine in north-west of France, and adhered to “La Petite Eglise”. As the last priest of this Church died, he may have been baptised by a layman at first. His mother died soon of his birth, and Joseph’s boyhood and early youth were spent in an orphanage at Paris under the charge of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. The sons of St John the Baptist de la Salle saw to it that he was baptized conditionally (sub conditione), and that he was confirmed at Notre Dame Cathedral, Paris, in 1867. During the latter part of the Franco-Prussian War he enlisted in the “Garde National”. After the siege of Paris and the horrors of the Commune, he decided to leave France for Canada, having been attracted by the appeals for settlers in rural districts. Soon after landing on Canadian soil Vilatte found that a teacher was needed for a school near Ottawa at some distance from the nearest Catholic Church. He acted as catechist, and on Sundays when there was no chance of getting to Mass conducted services. A certain priest seems to have been impressed by this pious young Frenchman, and taught him Latin privately, not unusual in those days. After two years, having received his calling papers for military service the young Vilatte returned to France. On arriving at Paris, he was told that seven years in the army would be required. To quote his very own words: “The spirit of liberty which I had imbibed in America, together with the memories of the horrors of the Franco-Prussian War, made me determined to leave my native land rather than re-enter the army. I went therefore to Belgium, and after a few months entered the Community of the
Christian Brothers, a lay teaching Order at Namur.” Whether as a conscientious objector or a simple deserter, he was in danger of arrest and imprisonment, just as the future cure d’Ars, St John the Baptist Vianney, had been about sixty years before this, when he evaded military service.

Vilatte did not find his vocation with this institute, but left Belgium in 1876, feeling that he was called to the secular priesthood, and sailed for Canada again. His next step was to offer his services to Monsignor Fabre, Bishop of Montréal, who sent him to the College of Saint-Laurent, conducted by the Holy Cross Fathers, where he studied for three years. Vilatte relates that ‘the teaching of the seminary was so rabidly Romanist that all other beliefs were condemned as heresies, which brought eternal damnation to all that accepted them. He said: “During my second vacation I learned that a famous French priest, Father Chiniquy, who was devoting his life to preaching against Roman error, announced in Montreal a series of lectures…I attended with great fear several of them and returned to the seminary with my mind much disturbed”.

According to his own story he left the Seminary, and sought the advice of a French Protestant pastor in Montreal, a professor at McGill University (founded in 1821), who helped him to continue his studies there for two years. Bishop Grafton of Fond du Lac, who later on must have gone to infinite trouble to investigate Vilatte’s past history, tells that after he returned to Canada in 1876, in addition to being a student at the College of Saint Laurent at Montréal (1876-1879), he also passed in and out of the Congregation of the Holy Cross, the Dominicans, Friars Minor, Brothers of the sacred Heart, Brothers of St. Vincent de Paul, and the Alexian Brothers. It is more than likely that he was the guest of these religious institutes at one time or another, but one ventures to think that the canonical conditions normally imposed would have been made invalid, if not impossible, for him to be admitted to their respective novitiate all within four years. Bishop Grafton also reports that Vilatte worked with Congregationalists in Brooklyn, with the Presbyterians in Montreal, and that during the same period he was reconciled with the Roman Church more than once, (in the religious way of thinking of those days, led by fear, as at that time he was much troubled by religious doubts). He relates that he ‘saw plainly that while on the other hand Romanism had added much error and corruption to the primitive faith, Protestantism had not taken away Roman errors, but also a part of the primitive deposit of faith. In an effort to tranquil his mind round about 1882, he abandoned his studies at McGill University and, having been reconciled with the Roman Church, retired to the house of the Clerics of St Viator, at Bourbonnais, Illinois, a community of teaching priests and brothers, founded in 1835 by the Rev. Louis-Joseph Querbes in the Archdiocese of Lyon, which soon made foundations in Canada, and later in the U.S.A. After about six months, still in a very worried state, he met Pastor Chiniquy again, and discussed his spiritual problems with him. The advice given was that Vilatte should not return to Bourbonnais but should go to Green Bay, Wisconsin, where there awaited him a wonderful field of apostolate among Belgian settlers, who, so it appeared, were ripe for conversion to Protestantism, for they were drifting from Romanism into spiritism and infidelity.

Chiniquay also advised Vilatte to write to Hyacinthe Loysen (1827-1912), who had been a Carmelite friar and a famous preacher until he was excommunicated in 1869. After he married an American widow, and three years later he constituted a Church known as the Gallican Catholic Church.

So it was in March 1884, with the blessing of two priests of the Latin rite, that Vilatte, still a layman, went northwards from Illinois to Wisconsin. He regarded himself as a freelance
Presbyterian missionary. The city of Green Bay (incorporated in 1854) had developed from a fur-trading settlement started in 1745, and it was the oldest French-Canadian settlement in Wisconsin. Vilatte’s flock had their widely scattered homes on the peninsula between Lake Michigan and the 120 miles long inlet of Green Bay, the city which name lies at the southern end of the inlet. The first group of Belgians had arrived in this district in 1853. So numerous were Catholics in the Northern part of Wisconsin by 1868 that a new Diocese of Green Bay was formed from the territory of the Diocese of Milwaukee. By that time Vilatte arrived on the scene many Belgians had ceased to practice their religion, some having become Spiritualists. At Duval forty families of former Catholics had opened a place of worship. Vilatte hoped to convert these people to Presbyterians. Before long, so he expected, Mgr Krautbauer, who had been appointed second Bishop of Green Bay in 1873, would find his flock reduced yet more in numbers. This prelate died on December 17, 1885, and was succeeded by Mgr Kaizer, with whom Vilatte was later to have dealings.

After about a year trying to convert the Belgians on the peninsula north of the city of Green Bay, he saw that matters would not work out. On the advice of Loyson, he approached Bishop John Henry Hobart Brown, the Episcopal Bishop of Fond du Lac. He pointed out that in the northeast part of his diocese there were many hundreds of Belgian and French settlers who had already withdraw from communion with Rome, and that they wanted nothing to do with a church ruled over by an Italian pope. That, here in deed was an opportunity to organize a purified Catholic church which would present the Gospel to the people as did the primitive Church, and exercise authority according to the spirit of free America. Vilatte suggesting that the Presbyterian mission should be taken over by the Diocese of Fond du Lac as an Old Catholic outpost.

Bishop Brown, who was a broad-minded High Churchman, replied that he had already heard of Vilatte's mission work, and that he would be glad to help the movement. He explained that it would help promote good relations between the Protestant Episcopal Church and the Old Catholic Churches, which in Europe were doing so much to break down the power of the papacy. Loyson had already written to Vilatte, asking him to come to Paris, so that he could discuss the possibility of his becoming a priest by Bishop Herzog at Berne. This would be the first step at setting up an Old Catholic Church in North America. Vilatte had replied that he did not want to abandon his little flock.

Bishop Brown informed Vilatte that he was willing to support the missions, but that, he must be examined by two professors at Nashotah House (Seminary) on his theological knowledge. The test being satisfactory, Bishop Brown wrote that he would consult with some of his fellow bishops regarding Loyson's advice that Vilatte should be ordained by Bishop Herzog. (Herzog, by law was not allowed by the Swiss Government to perform Episcopal acts outside Switzerland, but he ordained for the Gallican Church in France, some men who were sent to him by Loyson. He died in 1924).

Word came on May 27, 1885, that the bishops (consulted by Bishop Brown) had decided that this was the wisest course to follow; but Vilatte was then told that the Standing Committee of the Fond du Lac Diocese was convinced that “the Anglican succession of Apostolic authority” was “preferable to that of the Old Catholics”. Vilatte did not accept this proposal, as his followers did not want to be part of any church that may have question of orders. However, Vilatte did ask Bishop Brown for a testimonial letter and the following was written:

My dear Brother,
Permit me to introduce to your confidence and esteem bearer of this letter, Mr. Rene Vilatte, a candidate for Holy Orders in the Diocese of Fond du Lac. Mr. Vilatte is placed in peculiar circumstances. Educated for the priesthood in the Roman Catholic Church, he found himself unable to receive the recent Vatican Decrees, and for a short time associated himself with the Presbyterian communion, but at last, by the mercy of God, was led into contact with this branch of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. He resided for a while at Green bay, a city of this diocese. In the neighborhood of this place there are settled about 30,000 Belgians. Of these a large number, probably 8,000, are believed to be inclined to the principals of pure primitive Catholicism. Several delegations of these Belgians have waited Mr. Vilatte and besought him to become their priest. Mr. Vilatte's character for piety, sobriety, purity, intelligence and prudence has been attested to the satisfaction of this diocese. Our canons, however, require a longer probation as a candidate then the exigency of circumstances will bear. At the suggestion of Pere Loyson, approved by the Bishop of Connecticut and other Bishops, at the faculty of Nashoth House Seminary, and by me. Mr. Vilatte approaches you, requesting you to ordain him to the priesthood, as speedily as you can find possible that he may enter upon the great work to which he seems to be especially summoned. It has been expedient to us to send him to you that he may learn personally something of the aims and spirit of the great movement of which you are a recognized leader and to be fitted to cooperate with you in some degree in this country. Mr. Vilatte's pecuniary means are limited and he desires to be absent from this diocese as short as time as possible. I ask you to ordain him to the priesthood and attest his character, briefly but sufficiently, by saying that I am willing to ordain him, if it should not seem expedient to you to do so.

Truly a loving brother and servant,
in the Holy Church of Our Lord,

J.H. Hobert Brown,
Bishop of Fond du Lac.

Armed with this letter, Vilatte arranged to return to Green bay, confident that the road was clear, so he planned to sail for Europe. But the Bishop accompanied him to the railroad depot, and before the train started, said: I will ordain you a priest tomorrow, if you will be satisfied with your ordination and rest here. To this Vilatte replied: No! Old Catholic I am and Old Catholic I will be”. Then came the assurance of the Bishop that he would nerve be subject to the Standing Committee of the Diocese of Fond du Lac. Even this did not satisfy Vilatte, who travelled to Switzerland as soon as he raised the money for the trip.

He was ordained deacon and priest by Bishop Herzog on June 6 and 7, 1885. According to his own statement, he did not take the oath of canonical obedience to a diocesan bishop, but Bishop Grafton, wring nearly twenty years later, said that he took a canonical oath of obedience to the Bishop of Fond du Lac. (How did he know for sure after twenty years?) Anyway, if Vilatte’s statement was true, then his ecclesiastical status remained undefined; in fact, the only Episcopal superiors who could claim any sort of canonical authority over him were Bishop Herzog and Bishop Brown, for the Archbishop of Utrecht does not stand in any metropolitan relationship to the other Old Catholic Churches.

On his return to Wisconsin, Father Vilatte opened a mission church for the Belgians at Little Sturgeon (Gardner). He dedicated it to the Precious Blood in order to stress that communion was given in both species. His first parish was located between two Roman Catholic
Churches. The House of Bishops of the Protestant Episcopal Church granted him permission to use the French version of the Swiss Christian Church Liturgy, issued by Bishop Herzog in 1880. The Chapel was built with money donated by Episcopalians and the priest in charge (Vilatte) was paid a salary from the funds of the Diocese of Fond du Lac also gave his imprimatur to “Catechism Catholique”, compiled by Vilatte, which rejected the doctrines of Immaculate Conception and papal Infallibility, and laid down that the Sacrament of Penance was not obligatory. Not long after the mission of the Blessed Sacrament was opened in Green Bay.

For the first three years all went well for the Old Catholic Missions. In September 1887 the Fond du Lac diocesan magazine referred to Vilatte as "The young pioneer priest of the Old Catholic work in America, tall with a winsome countenance and enthusiastic manner, a model of a priest and pastor. A young man of energy and dignity, culture and education, he has sacrificed his life to the cause of Old Catholic reform. We pray God to open the hearts and hands of all churchmen all over the land to the aid of his noble work".

Bishop Brown died May 2, 1888, and was on November 13, succeeded as Bishop of Fond du Lac by Charles C. Grafton, who had been one of the first members of the Crowley Fathers, founded at Oxford in 1866. Grafton was a rigid High Churchman. He at first supported Vilatte in his mission and most of all, did not want any Catholics to become part of the Roman Catholic Church. Grafton and Vilatte continued with their differences throughout the rest of his stay in Wisconsin.

Twenty-one months after his appointment as Bishop, Grafton realized that the Old Catholic missions of Northeast Wisconsin were not actually under his Episcopal command that they were more or less "Free Lance". The Bishop managed to persuade Vilatte to transfer the legally to the trustees of the Diocese of Fond du Lac, to be held in trust for Old Catholicism. In return for this, the trustees agreed to pay stipend to Old Catholic clergy and finance their work. This soon proved to be a fatal error on the part of Vilatte.

In 1889, Vilatte published a pamphlet entitled 'A Sketch of the Belief of Old Catholics' In it, Vilatte was still quite convinced that he had a vocation to be an Old Catholic mission priest in the United States. He also promoted the idea of a Democratic Catholic Church in America. Nor Roman Catholic and not Protestant Catholic, but American Catholic (This is his first mention of the American Catholic Church).

In Dykesville, Kewaunee Co., Vilatte established the first Old Catholic religious order and monastery. The Society of The Precious Blood ("SPB") he and two other members made up the first members.

When Archbishop Heykamp, Old Catholic Archbishop of Utrecht, heard of the goings on in Wisconsin between Vilatte and Bishop Grafton, he wrote to Vilatte on September 19, 1889, to break off relations with the Protestant Episcopal Church (at that time the Old Catholics did not recognize the PEC orders as valid). On October 8, 1889, Bishop Dipendaal, Bishop of Deventer wrote a letter stating that the Old Catholic hierarchy of the Netherlands regarded Father Vilatte, SPB, as one of their priests, and the recognized leader of the Old Catholics in North America.

The following April, Vilatte told Grafton about the correspondence with the Church of Utrecht, and suggested that he be raised to the Episcopate; The Bishop of Fond du Lac hardly
knew what to do, but he wrote to Archbishop Heykamp: “It would be open to you to proceed to consecrate him and send him to America as ‘episcopus regionarius’. He explained that there might be considerable opposition if Vilatte were to be made an ‘Abbot-Bishop’ of the Society of the Precious Blood’, and given the rank of suffragan to the Bishop of Fond du Lac’, adding that in this case he might ‘be forced to leave his present position and begin work elsewhere. He would also be cut off from all financial support of every form, as it is only through his connection with us and by reason of our commendation that he has been hitherto sustained. It would be very hard upon the people to lose the pastor to whom they are attached’. Grafton then offered to transfer Vilatte to the jurisdiction of either Heykamp or Herzog, but hinted that this would involve losing financial support from Episcopalian sources.

It is clear that Grafton was now trying to rid himself of this difficult French priest who showed no signs of settling down as one of the clergy of the Fond du Lac diocese. On August 8, 1890, he wrote to Archbishop Vladimir, the Russian Orthodox Bishop of the Aleutian Islands and Alaska, who resided at San Francisco, and said: ‘Mr Vilatte, who has had a strange history, has shown little steadfastness of purpose, except in trying to push himself into prominence’. Having given the Archbishop (unsuccessfully, as it happened) a brief summary of all the worst aspects of Vilatte’s career, he ended his letter with the words: ‘It is a sad pity that a man who, if he applied steadfastly to his work, might be a useful priest, shows so many qualities of a mere adventurer.’

So, after twenty-one months the former Cowley Father summed up Vilatte’s character. He was then aged thirty-five and extremely good looking, with an irresistible charm of manner, and piety. It is not surprising that Crafton was fascinated by his personality and accepted him at his face value, but now he was on the warpath, and in September 1890 he circulated a warning which was printed in all the newspapers of the Episcopal Church. Readers were asked not to send any more contributions to the Old Catholic mission of Dyckesville. The Bishop stated that the Rev. R. Vilatte had been during the past year, seeking to obtain the Episcopate at the hands of the Church in Holland. Failing this he applied to Bishop Vladimir, asking to be admitted into the Orthodox Eastern Church. Lately I discovered that he was making proposals to the Roman Catholic Bishop at Green Bay, with a view to return to Rome.

This last accusation was true, for on August 15, 1890, Vilatte had written to Mgr Katzer, Bishop of Green Bay, saying: ‘Being finally determined not to agree with the 39 Articles of the Episcopal Church, I insist on what I have already published in the English papers. We are accordingly determined never to become Protestants, and would prefer to see our people under the rule of Rome, rather than to see them turn Protestant, no matter of what form or colour.

But the Bishop of Green bay was too cautious to open his arms wide to this Catholic. All he could suggest was that the first step would be for Vilatte to retract publicly, and then retire to a religious house under probation. After this it would rest with the Holy See to judge whether the orders conferred by Bishop Herzog were valid, and to prescribe what further theological studies were necessary. Whether it would be prudent for him to remain at Dyckesville, or even in the Diocese of Green Bay, could be settled later. Vilatte answered the letter at once in a non-committal manner, and nothing materialized. He had no intention of doing penance, and there is no reason why he should have.

And rightly, as over in Europe, Archbishop Heykamp, and some of his clergy, had been urging Vilatte to cast aside the Episcopalian yoke, and to free himself of all pretence of being
under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Fond du Lac. They assured him that there would be little difficulty in arranging for his Episcopal consecration. Early in September 1890, Bishop Grafton, accompanied by several of his clergy, visited the parish of Duval. The local ordinary was both surprised and indignant when the pastor informed him that there were no candidates for confirmation, because the Old Catholic bishops of Holland had forbidden him to accept any sacraments from a Protestant prelate. Nevertheless Grafton insisted on addressing the congregation, stressing that he was their true Bishop, and reminding them of all the financial help they had received from him. The same scenes were repeated the following day at Fr Gauthier’s church at Little Sturgeon, where once again the Bishop was told that he could not confer the sacrament of confirmation. Vilatte had so little faith in the validity of Grafton’s orders that he took care from Holland the holy oils he required for use at baptism.

**Latin Old Roman Catholic Doctrine around the validity of the Sacraments.**

For the *valid* confection of a Sacrament, it has always been believed and the Church has solemnly defined that *three things* are required:

1. The proper **matter** (e.g., bread and wine in the Eucharist);
2. The proper **form** (i.e., the words pronounced over the matter, for example: "This is my Body", etc., in the Eucharist);
3. And in the minister (i.e., in him who confects the Sacrament), the proper **intention**.

The Church, whether Rome or the Old Catholics have solemnly defined, what all Catholics must believe, that for the valid confection of a Sacrament *neither faith nor the state of grace* is required in the minister. Therefore, both sinful and heretical, schismatical and apostate priests or bishops can still validly (though sinfully and illicitly according to Rome) confect the Sacraments, provided, of course, that they use the proper matter and form and have the necessary intention.

Secondly, let us formulate more precisely the question of the **REQUIRED INTENTION.** We shall distinguish the **external intention** (by which the minister wishes to accomplish properly **the external ceremonies and rites** of the Sacrament, but inwardly wishes not to confect the Sacrament); and the **internal** (by which the minister truly and interiorly wishes to do what the Church does). The question is, does the **external intention** suffice? That is, will a Sacrament be valid if the minister properly performs all the necessary external rites and ceremonies (with the proper matter and form), if within himself he wishes **not** to confect the Sacrament?

The Church has defined that the minister must have the intention of **doing what the Church does** (Trent, sess. 7, can. 11). Therefore, **at least the external** intention of doing what the Church does, and thus of accomplishing the ceremony properly, is required. For one reason, because the minister of the Sacrament acts only as the **minister of Christ**, and thus must intend to act as such, and not simply to perform a natural action, or to act in his own name or by his own power.

But, furthermore, today theologians commonly hold, and the declarations of the Church seem to confirm, that the **external intention does not suffice**, but that to confect a Sacrament validly, the minister **must have**, at least implicitly, the **INTERNAL INTENTION** of doing what the Church does.

Why?
The Church solemnly requires matter, form and intention for a valid Sacrament. But if no internal intention were required, there would be no reason to include intention as the third element in the list, for the external intention of accomplishing the ceremony properly is actually nothing more than the use of the matter and form.

Therefore, this required intention must be something more: internal.

Furthermore, if the minister had no internal intention, he would simply be acting in his own name, or by his own power, performing a natural and not a supernatural act.

The central question, then, will be: How are we to recognize the presence of this internal intention required in the minister for the valid conferment of a Sacrament?

Pope Leo XIII answers clearly and with solemn authority:

"Concerning the mind or intention, inasmuch as it is in itself something internal, the Church does not pass judgment; but in so far as it is externally manifested, she is bound to judge of it. Now, if in order to effect and confer a Sacrament a person has seriously and correctly used the due matter and form, he is for that very reason presumed to have intended to do what the Church does. It is on this principle that the doctrine is solidly founded which holds as a true Sacrament that which is conferred by the ministry of a heretic or of a non-baptized person, as long as it is conferred in the Catholic rite."

Saint Thomas Aquinas, the Prince of Theologians, says the same thing (III, Q. 64, A. 8 ad 2):

"In the words uttered by (the minister), the intention of the Church is expressed; and this suffices for the validity of the Sacrament, EXCEPT THE CONTRARY BE EXPRESSED EXTERIORLY on the part of the minister" [emphasis given by author].

Therefore, in the conferral of the Sacrament of Holy Orders (or of any other) as long as the ordaining bishop, be he Catholic or apostate, observes externally the rite prescribed for the Sacrament, he MUST be presumed to have the right intention, and the Sacrament MUST be accepted as valid.

Let us recall one more time that there is not the least question of the possibility of receiving valid ordinations from a bishop who has abandoned the faith. In fact, such ordinations received from heretics or others are normally valid.

In defining this truth of faith, Pope Paschal II does not add the least qualification, not even an implicit reference to cases where such ordinations might not be valid:

"Therefore, instructed by the examples of our Fathers, who at diverse times have received Novatians, Donatists, and other heretics in their orders [i.e., acknowledging the validity of the orders which they had received in their heretical sects]: We receive in the episcopal office [i.e., as valid bishops] the bishops of the aforesaid kingdom, who were ordained in schism ..." October 22, 1106.

Let us consider momentarily a few more points on the intention required in the minister of a Sacrament.
A. We shall distinguish the intention of doing what the Church does, and the intention of doing what the Church intends. The Church does (performs) a sacred rite instituted by Christ, and by this rite she intends to confer grace—and in some Sacraments, the character. The minister does not at all need to intend to confer grace by the rite which he performs. It suffices that he intend to perform a sacred rite. (So teach all theologians.)

B. Indeed, he does not even have to believe that the rite which he is performing is sacred. It suffices that he intend to perform seriously a rite which Christians hold as sacred. Thus, for example, a Jew can validly baptize a Christian child, even though he believes that Baptism is a completely meaningless ceremony, if he intends to perform a rite which Christians hold to be sacred. Thus, also a priest who has lost the faith in the Sacraments can still confect them validly as long as he has the intention of performing seriously the rites which the faithful ask of him and which they consider sacred.

Saint Thomas teaches the same thing (in IV Sent., dist. 6, Q. 1 A. 3, sol 2, ad 1):

"Sometimes he [the minister] intends to do what the Church does, although he considers it to be nothing."

The minimum intention required in the minister of a Sacrament is, then, this: That he intends to perform a rite which the Church considers sacred, and to accomplish seriously all the prescribed externals.

Indeed, who could possibly lack this minimal intention in administering a Sacrament? We have seen that the Church considers the presence of the required intention the normal case as regards Sacraments administered by heretics, schismatics, etc.

According to the solemn teaching of the Church, therefore, and the conclusions of sound theology, there is ABSOLUTELY NO JUSTIFICATION for any doubts on the validity of the Holy Orders of Joseph René Vilatte, as we will see later on.

IF there were any justification for questioning the validity of for instance Joseph René Vilatte Orders—and we have seen that there is not—the question would concern his sacerdotal ordination rather than his Episcopal consecration. (Let us recall, however, that cases where Orders conferred by heretics, etc., are invalid are so rare that Pope Paschal II in defining the Church’s doctrine on this point does not even envisage the case.)

The question—if there were any—would concern his ordination to the priesthood more than his consecration to the episcopate, because a single minister, a single Bishop — Joseph René Vilatte — confers the Holy Priesthood, and thus all depends upon the intention of this single minister of the Sacrament. (We have seen, however, that all are bound to presume that he had the necessary intention.)

If it is almost impossible for a sacerdotal ordination to be invalid, an invalid Episcopal consecration would be even more impossible for this reason:

In accordance with the most ancient tradition of the Church, a new Bishop is always consecrated by THREE other Bishops. The Pontificale Romanum refers them as assistentes, but since, as the rubrics prescribe, all three Bishops impose hands on the Bishop-Elect (the matter of the Sacrament), and recite the form of consecration, Pope Pius XII (Episcopalis consecrationis, Nov. 30, 1944) insists that they are to be referred to as co-consecrators. Thus,
as this was already obvious, all three concur in the consecration (where only one would suffice for validity), and, therefore, even in the unimaginable case where two of the three Bishops would lack the necessary intention, the remaining Bishop would still validly consecrate the Elect. (Cf. also Pius XII, Allocution to the International Congress of Pastoral Liturgy, Sep. 22, 1956.)

If I remember correctly, based on a misunderstanding of the nature of the episcopate, Hugo Maria Kellner seems to be of the opinion that a Bishop lacking jurisdiction cannot confer the episcopate on another. The constant practice of the Church, however, disproves this curious theory: if it were true, NO Bishop consecrated in heresy or in schism would ever have been validly consecrated; but the Church has constantly received such Bishops as valid Bishops. (Cf. Decree of Paschal II.).

To pursue Joseph René Vilatte’s biography, shortly after this stormy Visitation, Grafton wrote to Vilatte, insisting that he should give up his work and hand over the properties to the diocesan authorities, including all house furniture, altar vessels, and vestments. He ended his long letter with the words:

“A clergyman, entrusted as you are, by me, over the people at Dyckesville, is bound to instil into them love and loyalty to me and to the Church which I represent. If he cannot, then he is bound to go, and in the meantime say nothing that would unsettle them or lead them to Rome or away from their allegiance to me.

On September 19, Vilatte informed Grafton that he felt it his duty to sever this connection with the Episcopal Church. The Bishop replied that in order to effect this canonically it would be necessary for Vilatte to state in writing that he had renounced the ministry of the said Church to the Bishop of which he had made his oath of canonical obedience when he was ordained. It is probable that Grafton made a mistake in stating that Vilatte had taken an oath of obedience to his predecessor when Bishop Herzog raised him to the priesthood in Switzerland.

Let us have no misunderstanding about the sacramental validity and Episcopal authority, looking at the Western understanding of the Order of Bishop as described above. In that perspective, we first will look at what Tertullian had to say: "Tertullian," is considered to be the first great Latin theologian. Tertullian says and we quote:

"We hold communion [ie. shared communion] with the apostolic churches because our doctrine is in no respect different from theirs. This is our witness of truth."

Tertullian's twofold test of apostolicity includes:

1. The apostolic succession of Bishops, and;

2. The apostolic FAITH as held and taught by the Apostles.

It further becomes incumbent up us, to state publicly that in the western tradition of the apostolic church, the following proofs of valid apostolic order and heritage that have been held as the norm for valid apostolic succession and that have been witnessed to for centuries
within the Church, are, as Rome has always believed and taught, represented by the following three main points:

1. That Old and Independent Orders are valid if apostolic succession can be proven, and upheld and

2. That the Scholastics, notably Aquinas, drew upon Tertullian and Irenaeus to distinguish between the "material" validity of Orders, whereby there is a proven and valid reception of the Sacrament of Orders, and the "formal" validity of orders, wherein there are valid orders, as well as communion with the college of Roman bishops under the Pope, and

3. That the "regularity," or "licitness" of orders has no bearing whatsoever upon their validity. The former is a purely political and jurisdictional judgment; while acknowledgment of the latter is in keeping with both the Augustinian canon and the Nicene Creed.

For the "licit" conferring of the Episcopal Order from the western or Roman perspective and understanding it is necessary that a consecration to the episcopacy be performed by three bishops. For valid conferring, however, a single bishop suffices, since the individual bishop possesses the full power of ordination.

If the co-consecrating bishops are not merely witnesses, it is necessary that they form the "intention of consecrating and of conferring the Sacrament conjointly with the consecrator, not only by imposing their hands conjointly with him, but also by pronouncing the prayer of consecration (softly) with him, together with the Preface of Order.

In 1896, the various powers of the Bishops were once again addressed in the Papal Encyclical "Satis cognitum," of Leo XIII.

1. "Bishops have immediate power, that is, it is not practiced via the permission of a superior. Thus bishops can never be simply delegates (agents) or vicars (representatives) but are indeed independent pastors of the flocks entrusted to them."

2. "They have power appointed by God; for the Apostles, on the grounds of Divine ordinance, whether in the immediate commission of Christ, or on the direction of the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:28) have passed on their pastoral office to the bishops. The bishops are the successors of the Apostles, not in such a manner that an individual bishop is a successor of an individual Apostle, but that the bishops in their totality (together) are the successors of the College/Gathering of the Apostles."

The issues of continuity and accountability are extremely important. Thus the following must be within the Consecration of a Bishop:

1. **FORM:** The rite of consecration to the Order of Bishop takes place with the imposition of hands and prayer. [2 Timothy 1:6 and 1 Timothy 4:14]. The Consecration must be done in the context of the Eucharistic Liturgy to be valid. This emphasizes the connection of the Ordination/Consecration with the Eucharistic Community. A consecration done secretly, out of the context of the Eucharistic Liturgy or privately away from the Church and its worshipping community would or could therefore be considered flawed or invalid.
2. **MATTER:** There must be an actual laying on of hands by a Bishop during the Eucharistic Liturgy. Prayer is not sufficient in and of itself.

3. **MINISTER:** The one who performs the consecration must himself be a validly consecrated Bishop within the Apostolic Succession, and possess jurisdictional authority to pass along not only Sacramental Consecration but also to pass jurisdictional authority [i.e. what territory/Diocese/Archdiocese] which already exists, will this Bishop be consecrated for.

4. **INTENTION:** The intent of the Laying On of Hands and the prayer within the Eucharistic Liturgy must be to ordain or consecrate the person to Holy Orders. One could conceivably lay hands on someone during the Eucharistic Liturgy for prayer for healing, for blessing, or for some other worthy propose, without the intent to ordain or consecrate. This criterion removes the possibility of someone claiming to be a Bishop or priest simply because he had received the "Laying On of Hands" in the Liturgy. The intent must be to ordain or consecrate and to so state the same in the Ordination or Consecration documents.

Note: According to the precepts of the undivided church, the Continuity [Apostolic Succession] must be always viewed within the context of Eucharistic Community [i.e. thus leading also to valid jurisdiction and authority via Bishops functioning only in their own Dioceses or other designated territories. The Order of Bishop, priest and deacon are intrinsically tied to the Holy Eucharist and its celebration -- in community.

As a proof that he no longer accepted the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Fond du Lac, Vilatte opened a new mission station near Green Bay. On hearing of this the Bishop inhibited him until he had obtained authorisation. On October 30 he informed this now, said free-lance priest that Bishop Herzog had written that ‘there was no necessity or even possibility of giving a Bishop to the Old Catholics in the United States’. Grafton commented that ‘the Old Catholics of Europe have no right to interfere over here. If the Bishop of Rome has not, certainly the Archbishop of Utrecht has not’. From 1909 until his death in 1912, the Bishop held the status of Titular Abbot of an Old Catholic Benedictine monastery at Fond du Lac. (See p. 416.) Grafton appears to have believed firmly that the Protestant Episcopal Church was the only true Catholic Church in North America, and that it had exclusive territorial jurisdiction. At that date he could not even find room for ‘The Three Branch Theory’ of the Catholic Church, and he regarded the Roman Catholic hierarchy in the United States as schismatics, and probably as heretics. After the Old Catholic Congress held at Cologne, Germany in 1890, the bishops had decided that it was inexpedient to carry out the consecration of Vilatte as their only official representative in the United States. It was not until 1867 that they appointed Stanislas Kozlowski as the first Old Catholic bishop of North America, with a roving commission over groups of scattered Poles. In his latter years Grafton’s conception of Catholicity grew much broader, and he was prepared to accept practically all religious bodies which could prove a valid apostolic succession. There were, so he maintained, various branches of the Church united to Christ, and having His life flowing, as it were, in their veins, from one body in His sight. (cf. A Journey Godward, p. 245.)

Realizing that he had been rejected by both Episcopalians and the Old Catholics, Vilatte appealed to Bishop Vladimir for the second time. The latter replied that he would communicate at once with the Holy Synod of Moscow, and if no answer was received after a reasonable time, he would re-ordain him “sub conditione”, and receive him as a priest of the Russian Orthodox Diocese of the Aleutian Islands and Alaska.
Matters dragged on until February 20, 1891, when Grafton informed Vilatte that he had been ‘removed from the mission station of St Mary’s, Dyckesville’. Vladimir on hearing of this, assured Vilatte of his support, and urged him to ‘fight against impostors who change the authority of the Ecumenical Councils on the authority of private opinions, and because sectarians and nihilists inside the Christendom, because they annihilate the one true only Catholic Orthodox Church’. Moreover, he promised to write a pastoral letter to the Old Catholics, defending Vilatte’s Christian piety’.

On March 11, 1891, the Bishop of the Aleutian Islands and Alaska dispatched from San Francisco an impressively worded letter addressed to ‘The Pious Old Catholic Parishioners and Trustees of the Church at Dyckesville’, in which he said that it was ‘a great joy’ for them ‘to be a branch of the great body of Jesus Christ, and members of the Church of Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, and Constantinople, where are the seats and cathedrals of Patriarchs and Holy Synods of the Ecumenical Orthodox Church’. It would be ‘a great honour to have their pious disposition to the brave soldiers of Christ’. Bishop Vladimir also asked God to help them ‘to defend Christian truth against the errors of Papist and Protestant sectarians’, who ‘do not belong to the true Catholic Church of Christ and must disappear in time, like many other heresies’. He prayed fervently that they would defend with all their might ‘the worthy and pious superior’ of their mission ‘against the persecution and encroachments of Anglican Protestants’, who could not be regarded as their ‘true brothers in Christ, because of heresies and lack of Apostolic Succession.

It would be interesting to know what were the reactions of the simple and uneducated French and Belgian settlers in the north of Wisconsin to this Pastoral Letter from a Russian Orthodox Bishop nearly two thousand miles away on the coast of California. Few of them could have understood a word of it.

Bishop Grafton obviously was furious. He lost no time in writing to Vilatte that if he were an honest man he must do one of three things: (1) Return to a loving and loyal obedience to him; (2) take a letter of transfer to the Archbishop of Utrecht, or to Bishop Vladimir: or (3) leave the country.’ On April 13, 1891, he suspended him for a period of six months from all priestly ministrations of all kinds whatsoever. Vilatte merely replied that he did not recognise Grafton’s authority, and that he refused to leave the mission. On May 9, Bishop Vladimir issued an official document in which he stated:

‘By the Grace of God, and the Authority bestowed on me by the Apostolic Succession, I, VLADIMIR, Bishop of the Orthodox Catholic Church, announce to all clergymen of different Christian denominations and to all Old Catholics that the Reverend Joseph René Vilatte, Superior of the Old Catholic Parish of Dyckesville, Wisconsin, is now a true Old Catholic orthodox Christian, under the patronage of our Church, and no Bishop or priest of any denomination has the right to interdict him or to suspend his religious duties, except the Holy Synod of the Russian Church, and myself. Any action contrary to this declaration is null and void on the basis of liberty of conscience and the laws of this country.’ (The Russian Orthodox Church established its first mission on what is now United States territory in 1794, when a band of monks settled in Alaska. A See with its seat at Sitka was erected in 1840, transferred to San Francisco in 1872.)

From the worldly point of view it was tragic that Vladimir did not manage to control Vilatte. Had it been possible to raise him to the episcopate, his exceptional gifts might have proved
extremely valuable to what at that date was perhaps the most Erastian Christian body in the world.

Vladimir’s assumption of jurisdiction over the length and breadth of the United States may have alarmed Grafton, even making him fear that the Ober-Prokurur of the Holy Synod might yet prove a greater menace to freedom in the Diocese of Fond du Lac than either the Bishop of Rome or the Archbishop of Utrecht. But there was little he could do about it, except to publish further warnings, describing him as a swindler who kept bad company, and whose associates, some of whom he mentioned by name, were his equals in crime and debauchery, which was the first mention of this sort of thing.

It was one of these men referred to by Grafton – a certain Harding, formerly a member of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, and a missionary in India, but who had ceased to be a practising Catholic – who inspired Vilatte to pursue a line of action which might prove more to his advantage than remaining under the protection of the Russian Bishop of the Aleutian Islands and Alaska.

The story told was as follows: In 1888 about 5,000 Catholics of the Latin rite in Ceylon and South India had formed a body, known as ‘The Independent Catholic Church of Ceylon, Goa, India. The reasons for this break with the papacy were political rather than religious. From the sixteenth century there had existed a concordat between the Holy See and the King of Portugal which allowed the latter to nominate bishops to the dioceses of the Latin rite in India, as well as in all other countries which had formerly been Portuguese colonies. This arrangement was known as the ‘Patronado’ (patronage). By the second half of the nineteenth century it had become obvious that it was high time for the Patronado to be abolished. On January 2, 1887, Leo XIII set up a new Latin hierarchy for India and Ceylon, with the bishops (except in the province of Goa) directly dependent on the Congregation of propaganda. This change aroused considerable indignation, because there still existed a strong sentimental link between Indian Catholics and Portugal. Many native priests were indignant at being transferred to the jurisdiction of French or Italian bishops. So, came into being what was called the ‘Patronado Association’. Its leaders petitioned King Luis I of Portugal to use his influence at Rome to have the royal patronage restored. On February 10, 1888, a Goan priest who had been a Brahmin, Antonio Francisco-Xavier Alvarez, was elected by the Association as first bishop of a Church separated from Rome, called schismatic. He applied to Mar Dionysios V, Jacobite Metropolitan of Malankara since 1876, to consecrate him, but with no result. His appeal to Mar Ignatius Peter III, Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch, was more successful. It was this same prelate who as Bishop of Emesa (Homs) had raised Julius Ferrette to the episcopate as Bishop of Iona in 1866.

**THE VALIDITY OF THE SYRIAN JACOBITE SUCCESSION**

The validity of the Syrian Succession (Jacobite) and therefore the eastern succession of the Church of Antioch founded by the Apostle Peter during his stay there for six years, has repeatedly been recognised and acknowledged by the Roman Catholic Church which has admitted into its fold bishops of the Antiochean Succession without re-ordination or consecration; by the Old Catholic Church of Holland; by the Church of England, which in 1870, welcomed the visiting Patriarch of Antioch, Ignatius Peter III—the same who ordered the consecration of Archbishop Vilatte and enthroned him in Canterbury Cathedral to bless the people; by the Armenian, Russian Orthodox, Greek and in fact, all branches of the Catholic Church which have undoubted Orders themselves.
The charge that the Consecration of Archbishop Vilatte was null and void, made by the Protestant Episcopal Church of America (Bishop Grafton), because the Syrian Jacobite Church of Antioch, from which his Orders were derived, was "Unorthodox," is answered by the Church of England.

The Lambeth Conference of Pan-Anglican Bishops of 1920, in their Encyclical letter—pp. 150-151—to the Christian world, declared that the accusations of heresy against "the Jacobite or Western Syrian Churches are false. It is also the same for the Christians of St. Thomas of Malabar." Let it be recorded however that not all Episcopalian sympathized with the colossal blunder of their House of Bishops. The Reverend Doctor Ritchie, acknowledged chief among Catholic-minded Episcopalian theologians and scholars in the United States of America, wrote a forceful editorial in the "Catholic Champion" in which he asserted: "Vilatte is as true a Bishop as ever wore a mitre." And a member of the House of Bishops, Bishop Coxe, of Western New York, in a letter to Archbishop Vilatte declared February 24, 1896 --- "Whatever the House of Bishops may say to the contrary, no Roman prelate in the United States has an Episcopate as valid as yours."

If further evidence of the canonical and valid Consecration of Archbishop Vilatte were required, it is found in the invitation he received to go to France and found a non-Papal Catholic Church for France. After the separation of the Church and State in France by the laws of July 1, 1901, a League of Catholics of France was formed to establish a French Catholic Church independent of Rome, the National Committee of which was under the presidency of Henri des Hou (Kt. of Legion of Honour and decorated with the Royal and Imperial Orders of Spain and Russia) and included such men of note as Senators Reveilland and Guiesse. But the one point of interest to us is the fact that these men of France, in their search for a non-Papal bishop who would give them the Apostolic Succession, sent to Ceylon and to Malabar through the French Consulate to verify Bishop Vilatte's Consecration, and to obtain official copies of the Acts of Consecration, the Edict of the Patriarch of Antioch sanctioning it, and the attestation of the United States Consul Morey of Ceylon, who was present at the consecration and one of the witnesses to the event. Through the influence of M. Briand, Minister of Public Instruction and Worship, these indubitable documents were obtained. Archbishop Vilatte was most earnestly invited to come to France and help establish an independent non-Papal Catholic Church; the rest is history which anyone can look up.

The Syrian (Jacobite) Succession can be traced from Jerusalem where the Apostles, equally called, commissioned and inspired, and their sacred office perpetuated by the election and consecration of Matthias, went forth preaching, healing, baptizing, laying on of hands, consecrating and establishing churches, the first was the Syrian Church of Antioch, founded by St. Peter about A. D. 38 and over which he reigned as Bishop and Patriarch for six years before the time tradition says he became Bishop of Rome. Antioch thus became the Mother-Church of Gentile Christendom, and consequently if any primacy or supremacy were possessed by Peter, and continued in his successors and the Church founded by him, then Antioch has a right to claim that supremacy. However not supremacy but priority and absolute equality with all other valid branches of the Apostolic Church, is our claim and glorious heritage. St. Peter's successor as Bishop and Patriarch of Antioch was EVODIUS, who in turn was succeeded by ST. IGNOTIUS the martyr, and so on down the Christian centuries until the present day. Without giving the names of all the Patriarchs who, as successors of St. Peter, have presided over the Antiochean Church, and kept alive the Apostolic Succession in that Church, we begin with the one from whom the Latin Old Roman Catholic Church of Flandres
derives Canonical commission and Episcopate, in direct line from St. Peter, IGNATIUS PETER III. IGNATIUS PETER III, Patriarch of Antioch and the East, assisted by two Bishops, consecrated Paul Athanasius in 1877 and appointed him his Legate. Metropolitan-Archbishop and Legate of Ignatius Peter III, Paul Athanasius, assisted by Metropolitan Archbishops George Gregorius and Paul Evanius, consecrated Francis Xavier Alvarez, Archbishop of Ceylon in 1889. Archbishop Alvarez, in accordance with the edict issued by His Holiness, Ignatius Peter III and assisted by the Syrian Metropolitan Archbishops, Gregorius and Athanasius, in his cathedral at Colombo, Ceylon, on May 29, 1892, consecrated Joseph Rene Vilatte as Metropolitan-Archbishop for the Old Catholics of America, viz. those adhering to the Orthodox Faith of the early undivided Church; thus antedating by twenty years all other Old or Non-Papal Catholic movements in America. Metropolitan-Archbishop Vilatte, on December 29, 1915, consecrated Frederic E. J. Lloyd. D.D., first bishop of the AMERICAN CATHOLIC CHURCH, of which, in 1920, he was elected Archbishop and Primate. Archbishop Lloyd on July 1, 1923 consecrated Samuel Gregory Lines, who was made Archbishop of the Province of the Pacific on October 11, 1925, in the Armenian Church of Los Angeles, California, kindly loaned by the authority of the Armenian Bishop of America, and the kindness of the rector the Reverend Father Milikian. Archbishop Lloyd also consecrated Archbishop Hinton, who later became the second Primate. Archbishop Lines consecrated Bishop Boyle; and Archbishop Hinton consecrated Bishop Clarkson who became third Primate. Bishop Boyle consecrated Bishop L. P. Wadle. On the death of Archbishop Metropolitan Clarkson, Archbishop Wadle became Archbishop Metropolitan and fifth Primate for he was coadjutor and co-occupant of the See with the right of succession to Archbishop Clarkson, etc.

Archbishop Joseph René Vilatte, during his life time, headed four ecclesiastical organizations: The American Old Roman Catholic Church, the continuation of the Swiss Christian-Catholic movement in which Vilatte had been ordained Priest and to which was added the word "North" when this Church defected from the Vilatte movement. The African Orthodox Church (Coloured): The Order of the Crown of Thorns and the American Catholic Church. The latter had its inception with the consecration of Frederic E. J. Lloyd in 1915. The American Catholic Synod of April 10, 1920 named Archbishop Joseph René Vilatte, Exarch, in respect to the American Catholic Church. This office Archbishop Lloyd was himself to assume in the latter part of his life.

As for France and Belgium up to Mgr. Philippe Laurent De Coster, Mgr. Joseph René Vilatte is, so to speak, the « father » of the Apostolic Succession of the Gallican Church of Mgr. Giraud and the Gnostic Catholic Church, in its apostolic branch, of Mgr. Jean Bricaud and Mgr. Constant Chevillon.

His life and his work in Europe and in the United States are well-known from many books and articles, but there is a period that the historians seem to neglect: his return to Paris in 1924, his retirement in Versailles and his death.

Let us look at some dates:

Joseph - René VILATTE was born on 24 January 1855 in Paris – and died 1 July 1929 in Versailles. (Some biographies indicate 2 July?)

Mgr. Herzog, Old Catholic Bishop of Bern conferred upon him Minor Orders, the Sub-Deaconate, the Deaconate and the Priesthood in three days, 5–6–July 1885.
Mgr. Antoine François Xavier Alvarez (Julius I) consecrated him a bishop in the cathedral of Notre Dame de la Bonne Morte in Colombo (Ceylon), 29 May 1892, under the name of Mar Timotheus I.

Louis Marie - François GIRAUD, was born in Pouzauges (Vendée), 6 May 1876 – and died in 1951.

Mgr. Vilatte ordained him a Priest 21 June 1907 in Paris; having transmitted to him the Sub-Deaconate on 14 October 1906 and the Deaconate on 19 March 1907.

He received the episcopate from Mgr. Jules Houssay (Julio), in the Vilatte lineage, in Aîre, close to Geneva, 21 June 1911.

Jean BRICAUD, was born in Neuville-sur-Ain on 11 February 1881 – and died in Lyon on 21 February 1934.

He was ordained a Priest 25 July 25 1912 by Mgr. Louis Marie François Giraud, after having received (also from Mgr. Louis Marie François Giraud) the Deaconate.

French authority in the matter confirms:

1. Le certificat d'ordination (diaconat et presbytérat) de Jean Bricaud, par Mgr Louis-Marie-François Giraud, daté de la Mine-Saint-Amant (Puyde-Dôme), le 25 juillet 1912.

2. Le certificat de consécration (épiscopat) de Mgr Jean Bricaud, par Mgr Louis-Marie-François Giraud, daté de la Mine-Saint-Amant (Puyde-Dôme), le 21 juillet 1913. Cette pièce était signée de: Louis, évêque Gallican; Jean, évêque des Gaules; Jean, Comte de Saint-Sever, témoin.

Consecrated a bishop on 21 July 1913 by the same Mgr. Louis Marie François Giraud, the two ceremonies took place in Mines-Saint-Amand-Roche-Savine (Puy de Dôme). Unfortunately his certificate of ordination disappeared after a search of his widow's domicile during the occupation (1941). Because of this, the priesthood of Jean Bricaud was contested by the opposition; in 1946, Robert Amadou edited a « Notice on the Priesthood and Episcopacy of Mgr. Victor Blanchard » (out of print), endeavouring to justify the validity of Bricaud’s episcopacy, and also did Robert Ambelain in the most trustworthy French periodical, l’Initiation (Organe Officiel de l’Ordre Martiniste, 1952, page 61, “L’Episcopat de Mgr Jean Bricaud”) and reference found about Monsignor Jean Bricaud around his death, funeral and memorial service in the “Le Gallican”, March 1934, on “Necrology”, and April 1934, mentioning the “Anniversary Service” on Sunday April 8, 1934. It says, “Mgr Bricaud was not only a personal friend of our Patriarch (Mgr. Louis Marie François Giraud), but he also was his spiritual son, as our venerable pastor was himself, his consecrator.” The periodical can still be copied from the site of “The Gallican Church”, and also found in our archives. Mgr. J.M. Lescouzères, Patriarch of the Gallican Church tried to spread errors, refusing to return documents. Not long after, Mgr. Lescouzères left the Gallican Church. After his consecration Mgr. Jean Bricaud remained in contact with Mgr. Joseph René Vilatte, as this letter, among others, dated 1916, preserved in the Municipal Library of Lyon, attests:
In answer to your letter of 19 October I inform you that all the American newspapers have published that Monsignor Miraglia never made «full and complete submission» to the schismatic Roman church. For six months bishop Miraglia has been at my home, paralyzed, but with God's help we hope by next spring to see him in perfect health again. All the news that you have shared with me on this topic is a lie and a Roman fabrication.

Imploring your prayers for this dear Bishop Miraglia. I remain in Jesus Christ.

Your humble servant.

+ J. R. Vilatte Catholic Archbishop

We, now, pursue again where we left with the Vilatte history. Realising that there was no further hope of being raised to the episcopate by any of the Old Catholic bishops in Europe, and possibly doubtful of the prospects of preferment in communion with the Patriarchate of Moscow, since he had no further word of this from Vladimir, Vilatte decided to write to Alvarez – who now styled himself ‘Mar Julius I’ and the Metropolitan of the Independent Catholic Church of Ceylon, Goa, and India – asking if he would be willing to consecrate him. The answer, to the request, dated May 10, 1891, was so expressed as to make Vilatte feel that, at long last, he had found a prelate after his own heart, and a kindred spirit.

Alvarez wrote:

‘We from the bottom of our hearts thank God that He has mercifully shown us the way out of the slavery of Rome; and we rejoice to see a large number of Christians making heroic efforts in the same direction as ourselves in the New World. And we feel confident that the good God will deign to mercifully help these holy endeavours… If necessary arrangements could be made we would overlook the hardships connected with the voyage and go across the seas to confer the episcopate on such a worthy minister of God as yourself, particularly as Dr Lisboa Pinto urges us in the strongest terms to forget everything and think of America…’ (Lisboa Pinto was a medical practitioner, and the leading layman in the Patronado Defence Association, and also in the newly formed independent Catholic Church.)

Vilatte replied that he would be better if he went to Ceylon, which would save Alvarez the hardship of going to North America. In a second letter Alvarez said he would be delighted to welcome the ‘worthy minister of God’ from Wisconsin.
No time was wasted, Vilatte placed his Old Catholic missions under the care of a certain Brother Augustine (apparently the same person as Harding), and explained to his flock the reasons for making the long voyage to the Far East. They were as follows:

(1) Because the Old Catholics in America were forbidden by the Archbishop and Bishops in Holland to present their candidates to Anglican Bishops for confirmation, or to use holy oils blessed by them.

(2) The fear that in the case of his death, his people would be without pastoral care, in which case he would be responsible should they be compelled to submit to Roman Catholic bishops.

(3) The long silence of the Holy Synod of Moscow, and the apparent indifference of the Orthodox Church towards the Old Catholic Movement in North America.

(4) The expressed Orthodoxy of the Independent Catholic Church of Ceylon, together with the urgent invitation to go there and receive the Apostolic Succession.

There is a story that before leaving Green Bay, Vilatte held a Synod at which he was elected bishop, and begged to obtain an indisputable Episcopal consecration as soon as possible. Obviously, Grafton’s version of the story was slightly different, for he told that Vilatte ‘carried around a paper amongst the people under his charge, which he demanded they should sign. Most of them agreed to this, even children. There was only one clergyman’s name on this petition, and that, according to the statement of the clergyman so named, was forged. Doubtful that this accusation is true, but Vilatte recorded that the people around Dyckesville donated $225 towards the expenses of his voyage to Ceylon. For the sake of economy he had to travel third class on the steamer. He sailed from New York on July 15, 1891, and was away from North America for over a year.

It was not until May 29, 1892, that Mar Julius felt justified in raising the French priest Joseph René Vilatte, now an American citizen, to the episcopate. For he took the precaution to consult the Patriarch Ignatius Peter III of Antioch. There was a long delay before his reply reached Ceylon. Writing to Fr Ignatius of Llanthony on November 21, 1898, Mar Julius said: ‘We may, in this connection, inform you that just about the time of Mgr Vilatte’s arrival in Ceylon we received a telegraphic message from Bishop Grafton asking us not to consecrate Mgr Vilatte. On enquiry from parties disinterested, and facts patent to us, we found to our satisfaction that Bishop Grafton was only trying to pay off a private grudge… The ceremony finally took place in the former Portuguese Catholic Church of Our Lady of Good Death, Colombo, which the Independent Catholic Church had managed to retain. Mar Julius was assisted by his own consecrator, Mar Paul Athanasius, Bishop of Kottayam, and Mar George Gregorius, Bishop of Niranam. The Roman Pontifical was used.
In the alleged Bull of His Holiness Peter III, signed and sealed from the Patriarchal Palace at the Monastery of Sapran at Mardin on the borders of Syria and Kurdistan on December 29, 1891, the consecration of Monsignor Joseph René Vilatte was granted for ‘the Arch-Episcopal dignity, Archbishop Metropolitan, in the name of Mar Timotheos, for the Church of the Mother of God in Dyckesville, Wisconsin, United States, and the Churches of the Archdiocese of America, viz. the Churches adhering to the Orthodox Faith’.
We, the humble servant of God, hereby allow the consecration by the Holy Ghost of the Priest Joseph René Vilatte, elected for Archiepiscopal dignity, Archbishop Metropolitan, in the name of Mar Timotheus, for the church of the Mother of God in Dyckesville, Wisconsin, United States, and other churches in the Archdiocese of America, viz, the churches adhering to the Orthodox Faith, in the name of the Father, Amen, of the Son, Amen, and of the Living Holy Ghost, Amen.

We stand up before God’s majesty, and, raising up our hands towards His grace, pray that the Holy Ghost may descend upon him, as He did upon the Apostles at the time of the ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom they were made Patriarchs[,] Bishops [sic] and Priests, and were authorised to bind and loose, as written by St. Matthew.

We, therefore, by virtue of our authority received from God, authorise him to bind and loose, and, elevating our voice, we offer thanks to God, and exclaim, “Kyrie eleison, Kyrie eleison, Kyrie eleison.” Again, we pray to God to grant him cheer of face before His throne of majesty, and that at all times for ever and ever.

Given on the seventeenth of Conoon Kadmayo, of the year of our Lord, eighteen hundred and ninety one (corresponding to twenty-ninth of December, eighteen hundred and ninety-one), from the Patriarchal Palace of the monastery of Mardin.

(Seal) IGNATIUS PETER III
(Seal) Mar DIONYSIUS
Metropolitan of Malabar

True translation E.M. Philip.,
Secretary to the Metropolitan of Malabar
Syrian Seminary
(Seal)

Moran Mar Ignatius Yacob II (Ignatius Ya'qub II), Patriarch of Antioch and All The East, consecrated to the Sacred Episcopate:

Joseph Mar Dionysios V (Joseph Pulikottil, 1832 - 7/11/1909), as Metropolitan of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church on 12 February 1865 in Omeed (Deyarbekir), Turkey. He took the ecclesiastical name of Joseph Mar Dionysios V. Mar Dionysios consecrated to the Sacred Episcopate:

Mar Julius I (Antonio Francisco Xavier Alvarez, 1837-1923), in the chapel of the Syrian seminary in Kottayam as Archbishop of Ceylon, Goa and India on 29 July 1889, assisted by Paulose Mar Athanasius (Paulose Kadavil Kooran), Paulose Mar Ivanios (Paulose Murimaton), and Geevarghese Mar Gregorios (Geevarghese Pallathitta Chaturuthil), all Bishops of The Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church. He took the ecclesiastical name of Mar Julius I. Mar Julius consecrated to the Sacred Episcopate:

Mar Timotheus I (Joseph Rene Vilatte, 1/24/1854 - 7/8/1929), in Ceylon (nor Sri Lanka) as Archbishop-Exarch of North America for The American Catholic Church on 29 May 1892, assisted by Paulose Mar Athanasius (Paulose Kadavil Kooran) and Geevarghese Mar Gregorios (Geevarghese Pallathitta Chaturuthil), Bishops of The Malankara Orthodox Syrian
Church, in accordance with the Patriarchal Bull of Moran Mor Ignatius Peter III dated 29 December 1891.

On May 30, 1892, so it is related, an Agreement was drawn up between Alvarez and Vilatte, in which the latter acknowledged the Confession of Faith, the canons and Rules of the Syrian Jacobite Church and rejected all the doctrines which are declared heretical by the said Church. He promised that he would be subject and obedient to the Patriarch, and to his successors in the Apostolic See of Antioch. In return for this he would receive from the Antiochean Patriarchate the necessary supply of ‘Mooran’ (holy oil) which the Patriarch alone is allowed to consecrate. Vilatte also promised to remit to Antioch the annual collection of Peter’s Pence.

Finally, he acknowledged that if he ever severed himself from communion with the Monophysite Churches of the Antiochean Rite, or deviated from their Canons and Rules, he would be subject to dismissal from the dignity of Metropolitan. Mar Julius is said to have presented Mar Timotheos with a certificate of consecration, dated June 5, 1892, which conferred upon him the title of ‘Archbishop of the Old Catholic Church of America’, together with ‘the power to consecrate churches, chancels, cemeteries, etc. and to perform all functions appertaining to Metropolitan rank’. The witnesses to this document were alleged to have been the U.S.A. Consul for Ceylon, and Dr. Lisboa Pinto.

It was suggested that Alvarez and Vilatte composed between them the wording of the Bull, and sent it to the venerable Patriarch, being fairly certain that he would sign it without asking any awkward questions about the antecedents of a priest in North America, who had been ordained by an Old Catholic bishop in Switzerland, and who had tried unsuccessfully to be raised to the Old Catholic episcopate. On the other hand, we have to remember that it was the same ‘Peter the Humble’, who when Bishop of Emesa (Homs) consecrated the former French Dominican Julius Ferrette, and so it is said, sent him to Western Europe as Patriarchal legate. According to Brandreth’s book, “Episcopi Vagantes and the Anglican Church, second edition, 1961, pages 50-52: “So far as is known no bishops of the Vilatte succession have ever produced the original Syriac document when challenged to do so. All that has been shown is a translation of the Bull of Ignatius Peter III, authorising Vilatte’s consecration, likewise copies of the certificates of his consecration by Alvarez.” (Obviously, photocopies as we have today could in those days not been made.)

The newly consecrated Old Catholic Archbishop of North America felt it would be worth while to break the return journey to the United States in Holland, where, so he related in after years, he was received by the Old Catholic clergy, and stayed with the parish priest at Delft. There is also a tale that this priest and bishop Diependaal of Deventer gave him the money for his first crosier, which was bought in Antwerp before sailing. It is also gossiped that, Vilatte visited his “alma mater”, the College of Saint-Laurent at Montreal, where he tried to impress the Holy Cross Fathers and the students by displaying his ring and pectoral cross. Having reached Green Bay, he found awaiting him notice of the threatened deposition which had been pronounced by Bishop Grafton in his Cathedral Church of St. Paul, Fond du Lac, on March 21, 1891.

This stated:

‘In virtue of the authority left by Our Lord Jesus Christ to his Church of binding and loosing and of putting away every brother that walketh disorderly, we do HEREBY DEPRIVE the said René Vilatte of all privileges and powers of the ministry of the Church and DEPOSE him from his office as Priest… And we call upon all the faithful to keep themselves from any
ministrations at his hands, and we do erase and blot out his name from the Register of the Clergy of this Church, in token that if he repent not and amend, God will blot out his name from the Book of Life.’

The Old Catholic Archbishop of North America also found awaiting his return to Wisconsin a Report issued by the House of Bishops at the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church, presided over by Dr Doane, Bishop of Albany, which read:

‘It appears that the bishops from whom M. Vilatte claims to have received consecration belong to a body which is separated from Catholic Christendom because of its non-acceptance of the dogmatic decrees of the Council of Chalcedon as to our Blessed Lord’s Person:

‘These bishops had no jurisdiction or right to ordain a bishop for any part of the diocese under the charge of the Bishop of Fond du Lac:

‘M. Vilatte was never elected by any duly accredited Synod.

‘It appears that M. Vilatte, in seeking the Episcopate, made statements not warranted by the facts of the case, and seemed willing to join with any body, Old Catholic, Greek, Roman, or Syrian, which would confer it upon him.

‘More than two months before the time of his so-called consecration, he was disposed from sacred ministry. In view of these facts we propose the following resolutions:

‘Resolved. That, in the opinion of this House, the whole proceedings in connection with the so-called consecration of J. René Vilatte were null and void, and that this Church does not recognise that any Episcopal character was thereby conferred.

‘Resolved. That a statement of the above-recited facts be sent to Archbishop of Utrecht, to the Old Catholics of Germany and Switzerland, and to the Metropolitans and Primates of the Anglican Communion.’

In spite of all this opposition by Bishop Grafton and Episcopalian clergy, “Orthodox” lines of Apostolic Succession descend from the four original Eastern Patriarchates, and although at odds with the Bishop of Rome on aspects of theology and practice, since 1054 AD, these lines by the standards of St. Augustine are undeniably "valid". The lawfulness and orthodoxy of any consecration also has much to do with issues of theology, historical jurisdiction, lawful election, the form and intention of the consecrating bishops regarding the maintenance of the direct and unbroken continuity of the Apostolic Succession, Creeds and the Faith "once given" to the continuing Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. The Church of Rome accepts our Apostolic Successions as being unquestionably valid (but, “unlawful” as our bishops are not elected by the Pope, but what does that really matter), we will see the subject in detail later on in this biography of Monsignor René Joseph Vilatte. However, St. Augustine articulated the doctrine that the orthodoxy and the validity of the apostolic succession of a bishop were two separate issues. Bishops who were consecrated in direct Apostolic Succession although "heretics" could still exercise their office as stewards of the sacraments in a valid manner. This means, from this perspective they could still "validly" ordain and consecrate priests, bishops and confirm children even if they were not "orthodox" in their own lives and beliefs. Read the following declaration:
Declaration of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith

Dominus Iesus
ON THE UNICITY AND SALVIFIC UNIVERSALITY OF JESUS CHRIST AND THE CHURCH
(Extract)

17. Therefore, there exists a single Church of Christ, which subsists in the Catholic Church, governed by the Successor of Peter and by the Bishops in communion with him (58). The Churches which, while not existing in perfect communion with the Catholic Church, remain united to her by means of the closest bonds, that is, by apostolic succession and a valid Eucharist, are true particular Churches (59). Therefore, the Church of Christ is present and operative also in these Churches, even though they lack full communion with the Catholic Church, since they do not accept the Catholic doctrine of the Primacy, which, according to the will of God, the Bishop of Rome objectively has and exercises over the entire Church (60).

Another prominent document:

Taken from the Bayerischer Kurier, July 11, 1925, No. 189

Apostolic Nunciature

Paris France

6 July 1925

Information No. 5,900: Mgr. Vilatte’s Orders

Mgr. Vilatte received the Minor Orders and the Order of the Subdeacon on June 5th, 1885, the Order of Deacon on June 6th of the same year and on the following day, i.e. June 7th, 1885, the Ordination to the Priesthood. All these Ordinations were conferred on him by Mgr. Herzog (Old Catholic Bishop) in the Old Catholic Church at Berne. This is provided by documents bearing the seal and signature of Mgr. Herzog.

Concerning his Episcopal Consecration, it took place on May 29th, 1892. Mgr. Vilatte was consecrated by three Jacobite bishops in the Cathedral of Archbishop Alvarez (Julius the First), i.e. in the Church of Our Lady of Good Death in Colombo (Ceylon). Mgr. Vilatte is likewise in possession of the consecration deed in question bearing the signature of the three above named bishops and of the American Consul who was present at the ceremony.

+ B. Cerretti

Archbishop of Corinthia

Apostolic Nuncio

There is a story that when the Archbishop of North America visited the College of Saint-Laurent on his arrival in Canada from Ceylon, he remarked with a smile: ‘Life is but a farce!’ After all, what right had these prelates, whose first bishop was consecrated in 1784 by bishops of the Episcopal Church in Scotland, to pass judgment on an archbishop whose consecration had taken place with the express permission of the 126th successor of St. Peter as first Patriarch of Antioch?

Before proceeding further, it is necessary to explain the validity of Anglican Orders as seen by the ‘Apostolicæ Curæ’; (the Vatican) around the years 1896 by the Pope Leo XIII, even up to these days. Mgr. Joseph René Vilatte was absolutely correct about the invalid Orders of the Episcopal Church presided by Bishop Charles Chapman Grafton.

**On the Nullity of Anglican Orders**

*Apostolicæ Curæ*

*Promulgated September 18, 1896 by Pope Leo XIII*

**In Perpetual Remembrance**

1. We have dedicated to the welfare of the noble English nation no small portion of the Apostolic care and charity by which, helped by His grace, we endeavor to fulfill the office and follow in the footsteps of "the Great Pastor of the sheep," Our Lord Jesus Christ. The letter which last year we sent to the English seeking the Kingdom of Christ in the unity of the faith is a special witness of our good will towards England. In it we recalled the memory of the ancient union of the people with Mother Church, and we strove to hasten the day of a happy reconciliation by stirring up men's hearts to offer diligent prayer to God. And, again, more recently, when it seemed good to Us to treat more fully the unity of the Church in a General Letter, England had not the last place in our mind, in the hope that our teaching might both strengthen Catholics and bring the saving light to those divided from us. It is pleasing to acknowledge the generous way in which our zeal and plainness of speech, inspired by no mere human motives, have met the approval of the English people, and this testifies not less to their courtesy than to the solicitude of many for their eternal salvation.

2. With the same mind and intention, we have now determined to turn our consideration to a matter of no less importance, which is closely connected with the same subject and with our desires.

3. For an opinion already prevalent, confirmed more than once by the action and constant practice of the Church, maintained that when in England, shortly after it was rent from the center of Christian Unity, a new rite for conferring Holy Orders was publicly introduced under Edward VI, the true Sacrament of Order as instituted by Christ lapsed, and with it the hierarchical succession. For some time, however, and in these last years especially, a controversy has sprung up as to whether the Sacred Orders conferred according to the Edwardine Ordinal possessed the nature and effect of a Sacrament, those in favor of the absolute validity, or of a doubtful validity, being not only certain Anglican writers, but some few Catholics, chiefly non-English. The consideration of the excellency of the Christian priesthood moved Anglican writers in this matter, desirous as they were that their own people should not lack the twofold power over the Body of Christ. Catholic writers were impelled by
a wish to smooth the way for the return of Anglicans to holy unity. Both, indeed, thought that in view of studies brought up to the level of recent research, and of new documents rescued from oblivion, it was not inopportune to re-examine the question by our authority.

4. And we, not disregarding such desires and opinions, above all, obeying the dictates of apostolic charity, have considered that nothing should be left untried that might in any way tend to preserve souls from injury or procure their advantage. It has, therefore, pleased Us to graciously permit the cause to be re-examined, so that, through the extreme care taken in the new examination, all doubt, or even shadow of doubt, should be removed for the future.

5. To this end we commissioned a certain number of men noted for their learning and ability, whose opinions in this matter were known to be divergent, to state the grounds of their judgment in writing. We then, having summoned them to our person, directed them to interchange writings, and further to investigate and discuss all that was necessary for a full knowledge of the matter. We were careful, also, that they should be able to re-examine all documents bearing on this question which were known to exist in the Vatican archives, to search for new ones, and even to have at their disposal all acts relating to this subject which are preserved by the Holy Office or, as it is called, the Supreme Council and to consider whatever had up to this time been adduced by learned men on both sides. We ordered them, when prepared in this way, to meet together in special sessions. These to the number of twelve were held under the presidency of one of the Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church, appointed by ourself, and all were invited to free discussion. Finally, we directed that the acts of these meetings, together with all other documents, should be submitted to our venerable brethren, the Cardinals of the same Council, so that when all had studied the whole subject, and discussed it in our presence, each might give his own opinion.

6. This order for discussing the matter having been determined upon, it was necessary, with a view to forming a true estimate of the real state of the question, to enter upon it, after careful inquiry as to how the matter stood in relation to the prescription and settled custom of the Apostolic See, the origin and force of which custom it was undoubtedly of great importance to determine.

7. For this reason, in the first place, the principal documents in which our predecessors, at the request of Queen Mary, exercised their special care for the reconciliation of the English Church were considered. Thus Julius III sent Cardinal Reginald Pole, an Englishman, and illustrious in many ways, to be his Legate *a latere* for the purpose, "as his angel of peace and love," and gave him extraordinary and unusual mandates or faculties and directions for his guidance. These Paul IV confirmed and explained.

8. And here, to interpret rightly the force of these documents, it is necessary to lay it down as a fundamental principle that they were certainly not intended to deal with an abstract state of things, but with a specific and concrete issue. For since the faculties given by these pontiffs to the Apostolic Legate had reference to England only, and to the state of religion therein, and since the rules of action were laid down by them at the request of the said Legate, they could not have been mere directions for determining the necessary conditions for the validity of ordinations in general. They must pertain directly to providing for Holy Orders in the said kingdom, as the recognized condition of the circumstances and times demanded. This, besides being clear from the nature and form of the said documents, is also obvious from the fact that it would have been altogether irrelevant thus to instruct the Legate one whose learning had
been conspicuous in the Council of Trent as to the conditions necessary for the bestowal of
the Sacrament of Order.

9. To all rightly estimating these matters it will not be difficult to understand why, in the
Letters of Julius m, issued to the Apostolic Legate on 8 March 1554, there is a distinct
mention, first of those who, "rightly and lawfully promoted," might be maintained in their
orders: and then of others who, "not promoted to Holy Orders" might "be promoted if they
were found to be worthy and fitting subjects". For it is clearly and definitely noted, as indeed
was the case, that there were two classes of men; the first of those who had really received
Holy Orders, either before the secession of Henry VIII, or, if after it, and by ministers infected
by error and schism, still according to the accustomed Catholic rite; the second, those who
were initiated according to the Edwardine Ordinal, who on that account could not be
"promoted", since they had received an ordination which was null.

10. And that the mind of the Pope was this, and nothing else, is clearly confirmed by the letter
of the said Legate (29 January 1555), sub-delegating his faculties to the Bishop of Norwich.
Moreover, what the letters of Julius m themselves say about freely using the pontifical
faculties, even on behalf of those who had received their consecration "irregularly (minus rite)
and not according to the accustomed form of the Church," is to be especially noted. By this
expression those only could be meant who had been consecrated according to the Edwardine
rite, since besides it and the Catholic form there was then no other in England.

11. This becomes even still clearer when we consider the Legation which, on the advice of
Cardinal Pole, the Sovereign Princes, Philip and Mary, sent to the Pope in Rome in the month
of February, 1555. The Royal Ambassadors three men "most illustrious and endowed with
every virtue," of whom one was Thomas Thirlby, Bishop of Ely were charged to inform the
Pope more fully as to the religious condition of the country, and especially to beg that he
would ratify and confirm what the Legate had been at pains to effect, and had succeeded in
effecting, towards the reconciliation of the Kingdom with the Church. For this purpose, all the
necessary written evidence and the pertinent parts of the new Ordinal were submitted to the
Pope. The Legation having been splendidly received, and their evidence having been
"diligently discussed," by several of the Cardinals, "after mature deliberation," Paul IV issued
his Bull Praeclara Charissimi on June 20 of that same year. In this, whilst giving full force
and approbation to what Pole had done, it is ordered in the matter of the Ordinations as
follows:

Those who have been promoted to ecclesiastical Orders . . . by any one but a Bishop validly
and lawfully ordained are bound to receive those Orders again.

12. But who those Bishops not "validly and lawfully ordained" were had been made
sufficiently clear by the foregoing documents and the faculties used in the said matter by the
Legate; those, namely, who have been promoted to the Episcopate, as others to other Orders,
"not according to the accustomed form of the Church," or, as the Legate himself wrote to the
Bishop of Norwich, "the form and intention of the Church," not having been observed. These
were certainly those promoted according to the new form of rite, to the examination of which
the Cardinals specially deputed had given their careful attention. Neither should the passage
much to the point in the same Pontifical Letter be overlooked, where, together with others
needing dispensation are enumerated those "who had obtained both Orders as well as
benefices nulliter et de facto." For to obtain orders nulliter means the same as by act null and
void, that is invalid, as the very meaning of the word and as common parlance require. This is
specially clear when the word is used in the same way about Orders as about "ecclesiastical benefices". These, by the undoubted teaching of the sacred canons, were clearly null if given with any vitiating defect. Moreover, when some doubted as to who, according to the mind of the pontiff, could be called and considered bishops "validly and lawfully ordained," the said Pope shortly after, on October 30, issued a further letter in the form of a brief and said:

"we, desiring to wholly remove such doubt, and to opportunely provide for the peace of conscience of those who during the aforementioned schism were promoted to Holy Orders, by clearly stating the meaning and intention which we had in our said letters, declare that it is only those bishops and archbishops who were not ordained and consecrated in the form of the Church that can not be said to be duly and rightly ordained..."

14. Unless this declaration had applied to the actual case in England, that is to say, to the Edwardine Ordinal, the Pope would certainly have done nothing by this last letter for the removal of doubt and the restoration of peace of conscience. Further, it was in this sense that the Legate understood the documents and commands of the Apostolic See, and duly and conscientiously obeyed them; and the same was done by Queen Mary and the rest who helped to restore Catholicism to its former state.

15. The authority of Julius m, and of Paul IV, which we have quoted, clearly shows the origin of that practice which has been observed without interruption for more than three centuries, that Ordinations conferred according to the Edwardine rite should be considered null and void. This practice is fully proved by the numerous cases of absolute re-ordination according to the Catholic rite even in Rome.

16. In the observance of this practice we have a proof directly affecting the matter in hand. For if by any chance doubt should remain as to the true sense in which these pontifical documents are to be understood, the principle holds good that "Custom is the best interpreter of law." Since in the Church it has ever been a constant and established rule that it is sacrilegious to repeat the Sacrament of Order, it never could have come to pass that the Apostolic See should have silently acquiesced in and tolerated such a custom. But not only did the Apostolic See tolerate this practice, but approved and sanctioned it as often as any particular case arose which called for its judgment in the matter.

17. We adduce two cases of this kind out of many which have from time to time been submitted to the Supreme Council of the Holy Office. The first was (in 1684) of a certain French Calvinist, and the other (in 1704) of John Clement Gordon, both of whom had received their orders according to the Edwardine ritual.

18. In the first case, after a searching investigation, the Consultors, not a few in number, gave in writing their answers or as they call it, their vota and the rest unanimously agreed with their conclusion, "for the invalidity of the Ordination," and only on account of reasons of opportuneness did the Cardinals deem it well to answer with a dilata (viz., not to formulate the conclusion at the moment).

19. The same documents were called into use and considered again in the examination of the second case, and additional written statements of opinion were also obtained from Consultors, and the most eminent doctors of the Sorbonne and of Douai were likewise asked for their opinion. No safeguard which wisdom and prudence could suggest to ensure the thorough sifting of the question was neglected.
20. And here it is important to observe that, although Gordon himself, whose case it was, and some of the Consultors, had adduced amongst the reasons which went to prove the invalidity, the Ordination of Parker, according to their own ideas about it, in the delivery of the decision this reason was altogether set aside, as documents of incontestable authenticity prove. Nor, in pronouncing the decision, was weight given to any other reason than the "defect of form and intention"; and in order that the judgment concerning this form might be more certain and complete, precaution was taken that a copy of the Anglican Ordinal should be submitted to examination, and that with it should be collated the ordination forms gathered together from the various Eastern and Western rites. Then Clement XI himself, with the unanimous vote of the Cardinals concerned, on Thursday 17 April 1704, decreed:

"John Clement Gordon shall be ordained from the beginning and unconditionally to all the orders, even Holy Orders, and chiefly of Priesthood, and in case he has not been confirmed, he shall first receive the Sacrament of Confirmation."

21. It is important to bear in mind that this judgment was in no wise determined by the omission of the tradition of instruments, for in such a case, according to the established custom, the direction would have been to repeat the ordination conditionally, and still more important is it to note that the judgment of the pontiff applies universally to all Anglican ordinations, because, although it refers to a particular case, it is not based upon any reason special to that case; but upon the defect of form, which defect equally affects all these ordinations, so much so, that when similar cases subsequently came up for decision, the same decree of Clement XI was quoted as the norm.

22. Hence it must be clear to everyone that the controversy lately revived had already been definitely settled by the Apostolic See, and that it is to the insufficient knowledge of these documents that we must, perhaps, attribute the fact that any Catholic writer should have considered it still an open question.

23. But, as we stated at the beginning, there is nothing we so deeply and ardently desire as to be of help to men of good will by showing them the greatest consideration and charity. Wherefore, we ordered that the Anglican Ordinal, which is the essential point of the whole matter, should be once more most carefully examined.

24. In the examination of any rite for the effecting and administering of Sacraments, distinction is rightly made between the part which is ceremonial and that which is essential, the latter being usually called the "matter and form". All know that the Sacraments of the New Law, as sensible and efficient signs of invisible grace, ought both to signify the grace which they effect, and effect the grace which they signify. Although the signification ought to be found in the whole essential rite, that is to say, in the "matter and form", it still pertains chiefly to the "form"; since the "matter" is the part which is not determined by itself, but which is determined by the "form". And this appears still more clearly in the Sacrament of Order, the "matter" of which, in so far as we have to consider it in this case, is the imposition of hands, which, indeed, by itself signifies nothing definite, and is equally used for several Orders and for Confirmation.

25. But the words which until recently were commonly held by Anglicans to constitute the proper form of priestly ordination namely, "Receive the Holy Ghost," certainly do not in the least definitely express the sacred Ordel of Priesthood (sacerdotium) or its grace and power, which is chiefly the power "of consecrating and of offering the true Body and Blood of the

26. This form had, indeed, afterwards added to it the words "for the office and work of a priest," etc.; but this rather shows that the Anglicans themselves perceived that the first form was defective and inadequate. But even if this addition could give to the form its due signification, it was introduced too late, as a century had already elapsed since the adoption of the Edwardine Ordinal, for, as the Hierarchy had become extinct, there remained no power of ordaining.

27. In vain has help been recently sought for the plea of the validity of Anglican Orders from the other prayers of the same Ordinal. For, to put aside other reasons when show this to be insufficient for the purpose in the Anglican life, let this argument suffice for all. From them has been deliberately removed whatever sets forth the dignity and office of the priesthood in the Catholic rite. That "form" consequently cannot be considered apt or sufficient for the Sacrament which omits what it ought essentially to signify.

28. The same holds good of episcopal consecration. For to the formula, "Receive the Holy Ghost", not only were the words "for the office and work of a bishop", etc. added at a later period, but even these, as we shall presently state, must be understood in a sense different to that which they bear in the Catholic rite. Nor is anything gained by quoting the prayer of the preface, "Almighty God", since it, in like manner, has been stripped of the words which denote the *sumnum sacerdotium*.

29. It is not relevant to examine here whether the episcopate be a completion of the priesthood, or an order distinct from it; or whether, when bestowed, as they say *per saltum*, on one who is not a priest, it has or has not its effect. But the episcopate undoubtedly, by the institution of Christ, most truly belongs to the Sacrament of Order and constitutes the *sacerdotium* in the highest degree, namely, that which by the teaching of the Holy Fathers and our liturgical customs is called the *Summum sacerdotium sacri ministerii summa*. So it comes to pass that, as the Sacrament of Order and the true *sacerdotium* of Christ were utterly eliminated from the Anglican rite, and hence the *sacerdotium* is in no wise conferred truly and validly in the episcopal consecration of the same rite, for the like reason, therefore, the episcopate can in no wise be truly and validly conferred by it, and this the more so because among the first duties of the episcopate is that of ordaining ministers for the Holy Eucharist and sacrifice.

30. For the full and accurate understanding of the Anglican Ordinal, besides what we have noted as to some of its parts, there is nothing more pertinent than to consider carefully the circumstances under which it was composed and publicly authorized. It would be tedious to enter into details, nor is it necessary to do so, as the history of that time is sufficiently eloquent as to the animus of the authors of the Ordinal against the Catholic Church; as to the abettors whom they associated with themselves from the heterodox sects; and as to the end they had in view. Being fully cognizant of the necessary connection between faith and worship, between "the law of believing and the law of praying", under a pretext of returning to the primitive form, they corrupted the Liturgical Order in many ways to suit the errors of the reformers. For this reason, in the whole Ordinal not only is there no clear mention of the sacrifice, of consecration, of the priesthood (*sacerdotium*), and of the power of consecrating and offering sacrifice but, as we have just stated, every trace of these things which had been in
such prayers of the Catholic rite as they had not entirely rejected, was deliberately removed and struck out.

31. In this way, the native character or spirit as it is called of the Ordinal clearly manifests itself. Hence, if, vitiated in its origin, it was wholly insufficient to confer Orders, it was impossible that, in the course of time, it would become sufficient, since no change had taken place. In vain those who, from the time of Charles I, have attempted to hold some kind of sacrifice or of priesthood, have made additions to the Ordinal. In vain also has been the contention of that small section of the Anglican body formed in recent times that the said Ordinal can be understood and interpreted in a sound and orthodox sense. Such efforts, we affirm, have been, and are, made in vain, and for this reason, that any words in the Anglican Ordinal, as it now is, which lend themselves to ambiguity, cannot be taken in the same sense as they possess in the Catholic rite. For once a new rite has been initiated in which, as we have seen, the Sacrament of Order is adulterated or denied, and from which all idea of consecration and sacrifice has been rejected, the formula, "Receive the Holy Ghost", no longer holds good, because the Spirit is infused into the soul with the grace of the Sacrament, and so the words "for the office and work of a priest or bishop", and the like no longer hold good, but remain as words without the reality which Christ instituted.

32. Many of the more shrewd Anglican interpreters of the Ordinal have perceived the force of this argument, and they openly urge it against those who take the Ordinal in a new sense, and vainly attach to the Orders conferred thereby a value and efficacy which they do not possess. By this same argument is refuted the contention of those who think that the prayer, "Almighty God, giver of all good Things", which is found at the beginning of the ritual action, might suffice as a legitimate "form" of Orders, even in the hypothesis that it might be held to be sufficient in a Catholic rite approved by the Church.

33. With this inherent defect of "form" is joined the defect of "intention" which is equally essential to the Sacrament. The Church does not judge about the mind and intention, in so far as it is something by its nature internal; but in so far as it is manifested externally she is bound to judge concerning it. A person who has correctly and seriously used the requisite matter and form to effect and confer a sacrament is presumed for that very reason to have intended to do (intendisse) what the Church does. On this principle rests the doctrine that a Sacrament is truly conferred by the ministry of one who is a heretic or unbaptized, provided the Catholic rite be employed. On the other hand, if the rite be changed, with the manifest intention of introducing another rite not approved by the Church and of rejecting what the Church does, and what, by the institution of Christ, belongs to the nature of the Sacrament, then it is clear that not only is the necessary intention wanting to the Sacrament, but that the intention is adverse to and destructive of the Sacrament.

34. All these matters have been long and carefully considered by ourselves and by our venerable brethren, the Judges of the Supreme Council, of whom it has pleased Us to call a special meeting upon the 16th day of July last, the solemnity of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. They with one accord agreed that the question laid before them had been already adjudicated upon with full knowledge of the Apostolic See, and that this renewed discussion and examination of the issues had only served to bring out more clearly the wisdom and accuracy with which that decision had been made. Nevertheless, we deemed it well to postpone a decision in order to afford time both to consider whether it would be fitting or expedient that we should make a fresh authoritative declaration upon the matter, and to humbly pray for a fuller measure of divine guidance.
35. Then, considering that this matter, although already decided, had been by certain persons for whatever reason recalled into discussion, and that thence it might follow that a pernicious error would be fostered in the minds of many who might suppose that they possessed the Sacrament and effects of Orders, where these are nowise to be found, it seemed good to Us in the Lord to pronounce our judgment.

36. Wherefore, strictly adhering, in this matter, to the decrees of the pontiffs, our predecessors, and confirming them most fully, and, as it were, renewing them by our authority, of our own initiative and certain knowledge, we pronounce and declare that ordinations carried out according to the Anglican rite have been, and are, absolutely null and utterly void.

37. It remains for Us to say that, even as we have entered upon the elucidation of this grave question in the name and in the love of the Great Shepherd, in the same we appeal to those who desire and seek with a sincere heart the possession of a hierarchy and of Holy Orders. Perhaps until now aiming at the greater perfection of Christian virtue, and searching more devoutly the divine Scriptures, and redoubling the fervor of their prayers, they have, nevertheless, hesitated in doubt and anxiety to follow the voice of Christ, which so long has interiorly admonished them. Now they see clearly whom He in His goodness invites them and wills them to come. In returning to His one only fold, they will obtain the blessings which they seek, and the consequent helps to salvation, of which He has made the Church the dispenser, and, as it were, the constant guardian and promoter of His redemption amongst the nations. Then, indeed, "They shall draw waters in joy from the fountains of the Savior", His wondrous Sacraments, whereby His faithful souls have their sins truly remitted, and are restored to the friendship of God, are nourished and strengthened by the heavenly Bread, and abound with the most powerful aids for their eternal salvation. May the God of peace, the God of all consolation, in His infinite tenderness, enrich and fill with all these blessings those who truly yearn for them.

38. We wish to direct our exhortation and our desires in a special way to those who are ministers of religion in their respective communities. They are men who from their very office take precedence in learning and authority, and who have at heart the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Let them be the first in joyfully submitting to the divine call and obey it, and furnish a glorious example to others. Assuredly, with an exceeding great joy, their Mother, the Church, will welcome them, and will cherish with all her love and care those whom the strength of their generous souls has, amidst many trials and difficulties, led back to her bosom. Nor could words express the recognition which this devoted courage will win for them from the assemblies of the brethren throughout the Catholic world, or what hope or confidence it will merit for them before Christ as their Judge, or what reward it will obtain from Him in the heavenly kingdom! And we, ourselves, in every lawful way, shall continue to promote their reconciliation with the Church in which individuals and masses, as we ardently desire, may find so much for their imitation. In the meantime, by the tender mercy of the Lord our God, we ask and beseech all to strive faithfully to follow in the path of divine grace and truth.

39. We decree that these letters and all things contained therein shall not be liable at any time to be impugned or objected to by reason of fault or any other defect whatsoever of subreation or obetration of our intention, but are and shall be always valid and in force and shall be inviolably observed both juridically and otherwise, by all of whatsoever degree and preeminence, declaring null and void anything which, in these matters, may happen to be
contrariwise attempted, whether wittingly or unwittingly, by any person whatsoever, by whatsoever authority or pretext, all things to the contrary notwithstanding.

41. We will that there shall be given to copies of these letters, even printed, provided that they be signed by a notary and sealed by a person constituted in ecclesiastical dignity, the same credence that would be given to the expression of our will by the showing of these presents.

Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, in the year of the Incarnation of Our Lord, one thousand eight hundred and ninety-six, on the Ides of September, in the nineteenth year of our pontificate.

-- Leo PP. XIII

By way of defiance one of the first things Vilatte did was to raise the wooden chapel of St Louis at Green Bay to the status of a pro-cathedral. He had two other little chapels under his jurisdiction: St Joseph's, Walhain, and St Mary's, Duval. It is recalled that he used to wear a Roman purple cassock in the streets, which happens to any bishop for one reason or another as to step in a car, and so on and forth, so as to make people realise that he was an archbishop. Nonsense, because every bishop wears a purple cassock within church grounds, and ecclesiastical performances outside. He started to publish a little magazine, ‘The Old Catholic’.

To counteract proselytism, Mgr Mesmer, who had succeeded Mgr Katzer as Catholic Bishop of Green Bay on the latter’s translation to the archiepiscopal see of Milwaukee on January 30, 1891, asked the Premonstratensian Canons if they could spare a few Flemish and French-speaking priests to work among the Belgians. One priest, Fr Pennings, and a lay-brother from Holland, came at once, and more sons of St Norbert followed them across the Atlantic. The former became some years latter the first Premonstratensian abbot in the U.S.A.

Vilatte did not have a large following in Wisconsin, though he claimed that they numbered between six and eight thousand, as much as has these days on paper, in 2007, the Old Catholic Church of Utrecht, in Holland. However, there were many staunch Catholics who refused to have anything to do with him, even when offered presents and “unpaid” (so it should) religious services. In some places the ‘Archbishop of North America’ was driven away by the fanatics among the Belgians. In some places the ‘Archbishop of North America’ was driven away by the fanatics among the Belgians. But whenever he heard of dissatisfaction about church regulations, and so on, he was sure to turn up, organising meetings, urging people to throw off the yoke of Rome. Vilatte did not manage to make financial ends meet, and he was obliged to go from one place to another to avoid creditors at least for a time, who were on his track. (These facts, and much that follows, have been supplied by the Right Reverend Mgr Joseph A. Marx, Vicar-General of the Diocese of Green Bay, who, in the course of his long life has made exhaustive research into Vilatte’s career in Wisconsin).

In an exhausting way, finding himself at the end of his tether less than two years after being consecrated, Vilatte decided that the best thing he could do was to be reconciled with the Roman Church. On March 26, 1894, Archbishop Satolli, the first Apostolic Delegate to the U.S.A., informed Mgr Messmer that Vilatte wished to submit to the Holy See. About three weeks later Vilatte wrote to the Bishop of Green Bay that he was already preparing his people for reconciliation with Rome. Further correspondence took place between Satolli, Messmer, and Vilatte. All looked hopeful, but behind the scenes the ‘Archbishop of North
America’ was watching which way the wind was blowing, not wishing to commit himself, before he was sure it would pay him to become once again ‘a slave of the Vatican’.

Vilatte could not decide whether to trust his luck to the Pope or to the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch, but in August 1894 matters had got as far as the Apostolic Delegate advising Bishop Messmer to finance Vilatte’s journey to Rome, because he could not afford the cost himself. No doubt Propaganda would refund the money. But the Roman authorities appeared to be in no hurry, and merely enquired about Vilatte’s manner of ordaining priests, and other details of no immediate importance.

Matters dragged on like this for nearly four years. In February 1998 the Apostolic delegate wrote to the Bishop of Green Bay that Vilatte was now quite ready to recant his errors and submit to Holy Mother Church as a layman. These two prelates, however, did not fully fathom the man they were dealing with. In the interval Vilatte had published a prayer book and catechism for his Old Catholics. He had also announced the foundation of a religious order: ‘The Knights of the crown of Thorns’, which would have a monastery at Green Bay, as soon as he could find the money to build it. It appears that after his consecration in Ceylon, Vilatte was made Grand Prior of the Order of the Crown of Thorns. It was said at the time that the Jewel of this Order carried with it the honorary title of ‘Doctor Christianissimus’, and that the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch was the Patron.

Archbishop Vilatte, during his life time, headed four ecclesiastical organisations: The American Old Roman Catholic Church, the continuation of the Swiss Christian-Catholic movement in which Vilatte had been ordained Priest and to which was added the word "North" when this Church defected from the Vilatte movement. The African Orthodox Church (Coloured): The Order of the Crown of Thorns and the American Catholic Church. The latter had its inception with the consecration of Frederic E. J. Lloyd in 1915. The American Catholic Synod of April 10, 1920 named Archbishop Vilatte, Exarch, in respect to the American Catholic Church.

In spite of the offer of a journey to Rome, at the expense of either the Diocese of Green Bay or the Congregation of Propaganda, Vilatte continued to waver. Eventually Mgr Messmer realised that there was no hope of a sincere conversion, and wrote to Mgr Satolli: ‘For the present he has an asylum among the schismatic Poles (probably Mariavites), who will pay him court until he will be infatuated, and consecrate one of them for the episcopate. Then they will cast him out, and being in such an extremity, he will probably have one more recourse to the Catholic Church, asking for money and pardon. But will it be sincere? This is exactly what happened, but not until about six years later, and even then the terms offered by Rome did not satisfy Vilatte.

After the Old Catholic Archbishop of North America left Wisconsin, some of the former followers joined a spiritist movement. A few returned to communion with the Holy See, and the remainder submitted to the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Fond du Lac and ended their days as Episcopalians.

Having failed to show to many Belgians the way out of the slavery of Rome, and somehow it seemed indifferent to his obligations towards the Syro-Jacobite Patriarchate, Vilatte turned his attention to a much larger body of people, optimistic of gaining support from them. These were the now widely-spread Polish Catholics. There had been a fairly steady immigration of
Poles into the USA since about 1830, and the first Polish priest arrived in 1851. More and more Poles crossed the Atlantic in the hope of making their fortunes in the New World after the war of 1863. A large number moved on to the Middle West, having heard that there was plenty of work to be had in Chicago and other big cities. After 1873 began a series of difficulties between Polish priests and the American Catholic bishops. So fused were religion and nationalism with the Poles that most of them were determined not to be integrated with other Catholics. They wanted a Church of their own, and to the extremists communion with Rome was almost a matter of indifference. Towards the close of the century Polish congregations outside the jurisdiction of Rome, called schismatic, existed in Baltimore, Buffalo, Chicago, Cleveland, New York, Toledo, and elsewhere. The chief leader of these congregations was Antoni Kozlowski, who procured Episcopal consecration from the Dutch Old Catholics on November 17, 1897.

It appears that Vilatte’s first direct service to the Poles was in 1894, when a certain Fr Kolaszewski invited him to dedicate a church at Cleveland. Shortly after Kozlowski’s consecration, Vilatte was approached by Stephen Kaminsky, pastor of the Church of the Holy Mother of the Rosary, Buffalo, New York. This priest had failed to persuade the Old Catholic Archbishop of Utrecht to raise him to the episcopate. Archbishop Joseph René Vilatte arrived in Buffalo, and on March 21, 1898, consecrated Kaminsky in his own church, giving him the title of ‘Assistant Bishop’. The consecration was reported in detail both the “Buffalo Enquirer” and “Courier and Herald”. Bishop Kaminsky had no opportunity to make himself useful to his consecrator; with creditors on his track he fled to Canada, and then to Europe. He was excommunicated by the Holy See, and abandoned by Vilatte. Bishop Kaminsky returned to the USA later on, and remained in charge of his parish until he died in 1911. Vilatte felt it safer to lie low until the storm had blown over, and he decided to have no more dealings with the Poles for the time being. His escapade in Buffalo had attracted too much undesirable publicity.

But it would have been unlike Vilatte not to have found another opening for his talents as an ecclesiastical pioneer, and he did so quickly. During the years 1890-1891, when he had been trying to find a bishop to consecrate him, he had heard of, and possibly met, Fr Ignatius of Jesus, O.S.B., who was recuperating in North America, preaching and giving missions to raise money for his monastery at Llanthony in the Black Mountains of South Wales. During his tour he had been publicised as ‘The Evangelist Monk of the British Church’, or ‘The Druid of the Welsh Church’, and he had informed Press reporters that he belonged to an elusive Ancient British Church, which was ‘the oldest in the world after Antioch and Jerusalem. (It is not certain if Fr Ignatius meant by this term the Ancient British Church, said to have been revived by the Rev. R.W. Morgan in 1874.)

The reason why Vilatte felt it might be to his advantage to link up with Fr Ignatius remains uncertain, but here is the most probable explanation. Having heard of Ignatius’s obsession with the views of Dr Fremantle, the dean of Ripon, and other Anglican clerics in high places, he was prepared to help this eccentric monk supporting him in setting up and Old Catholic Church in Britain, of which he would become the Primate and Metropolitan. It has also been suggested that Vilatte had been told that Ignatius was wealthy and his Abbey richly endowed; also that this missionary monk seldom failed to collect money by his eloquent preaching. Vilatte thought better to raise Ignatius to the priesthood, for the good of his ecclesiastical work.
We do not know when Vilatte sailed for England, but he turned up in London within three months of his consecration of Kaminsky at Buffalo. He laid his plans carefully, and managed to persuade Dr F.G. Lee, the Order of Corporate Reunion, Bishop of Dorchester, upon whom he called, to give him a letter of introduction to Ignatius. Not satisfied with this, he dispatched a telegram, signed MAR TIMOTHEOS, announcing that he would visit Llanthony within a few days. Unfortunately the Abbot, who had taken the title of Dewi-Honddu (‘David of the Honddhu’), when he was initiated into the Gorsedd of the Bards of Wales by the Archdruid Clwydfordd in 1889, was away at the National Eisteddfod. His handful of monks had no idea who was the sender of the telegram, until they read Dr Lee’s letter, vouching for the claims of this prelate, and hinting that it might be to their advantage to entertain him. No bishop – far less an archbishop – had ever deigned to stay at Llanthony since the monastery was founded in 1870, so one can picture the excitement.

Mar Timotheus arrived in the Black Mountains on July 18, and Dewi-Honddu – Fr Ignatius – was now back to welcome him. He had brought, not only his archiepiscopal regalia, but also what are described as ‘most interesting Syriac documents with their authorised English translations, with the seals and signatures of the ecclesiastical and civil authorities concerned. Archbishop Joseph René Vilatte explained that he was in a hurry, on his way to Russia at the special invitation of the Holy Synod of Moscow; but if ‘The Reverend Father’, or any of his monks would care to avail themselves of this unique opportunity to receive absolutely ‘valid’ Holy Order, he would be delighted to supply them, there and then.

The rest of the story is told in the words of father Iltud Mary of the Epiphany, Monk, O.S.B., as he signed his name to a newspaper-article.

‘After the Old Catholic Archbishop’s arrival at Llanthony there went up to God a ceaseless stream of prayer from 5 am to 5 pm, besides the midnight services, daily, that God’s will might be done at the present crisis in our history that our Lord Jesus might be glorified. The Archbishop daily pleaded in the Eucharistic Memorial (the Sacrifice of the Holy Mass) for the illumination of the Divine Paraclete (Holy Ghost). Our Superior presented three objections to the Archbishop.

(1) He could not follow Old Catholics in their excessive rancour against the Church of Rome. The Church of Rome was a bulwark of Orthodoxy and Bible defence, and contained countless saints of God.

(2) He could never be other than a faithful son of the Church of Britain, and must use the “Filioque” until the National Church permitted its erasure from the Creed.

(3) Was not the Syrian Patriarch and his Church Monophysite?’

Mar Timotheus managed to convince Fr Ignatius that he need not worry about such trivial details, and Fr Iltud continues:

‘We were satisfied. The ordinations were arranged to commence the next day.’

‘The original consecration documents of Archbishop Vilatte’s were sent to the Vatican Secretary of State: Raphael Cardinal Merry de Vel by Archbishop Vilatte through the Roman Catholic Bishop of Green Bay. After looking at the papers, the eminent Cardinal declared that the orders of Vilatte are valid. Once again, in 1926, the Apostolic Delegate to Paris reviewed documents of Vilatte and accepted him as a ‘Bishop in Good Standing’ into the Roman
Catholic Church. PP XI issued a yearly stipend to the Archbishop. The above documents and others are stored in the Vatican Marianist Library. DW.

‘A Monk who has been in our Monastery for some years (apparently Dom Ilud Mary himself), and is noted for his gravity, piety, and holiness of life, was to receive the five minor Orders the following day, Monday, July 25th. On Tuesday he was to be ordained deacon. The Reverend Father’s Diaconate from the English Church being fully acknowledged, he and the other monks would receive the Priesthood on the Wednesday. The Latin rite was used. To us it did not seem half so satisfactory as our own Prayer Book rite (Anglican). The word “priest” was not even used, and at the laying-on of hands not a word was said (not due in the Roman Pontifical for the Priesthood, providing the ‘preface for the priesthood’ is said.) However, the validity of the rite is questioned by none, though that of the English ordinal is; and we are, of course, satisfied. We may question whether in future we in the Monastery may choose the rite as well as “choose the Bishop”. We were too grateful to our dear Archbishop, however, to question or choose anything, for he won all our hearts by his humility and gentle courtesy.’

“The validity of the Antiochian Succession has repeatedly been recognised and acknowledged by the Roman Catholic Church, which has admitted into its fold bishops of the Antiochian Succession without re-ordination or consecration; by the Old Catholic Church of Holland; by the Church of England, which in 1870, welcomed the visiting Patriarch of Antioch, Ignatius Peter III -- the same who ordered the consecration of Archbishop Vilatte -- and enthroned him in Canterbury Cathedral to bless the people; by the Armenian, Russian Orthodox, Greek and in fact, all branches of the Catholic Church, which have undoubted Orders themselves.

The charge had erroneously been made by the Protestant Episcopal Church of America that the consecration of Archbishop Vilatte was null and void because the Church of Antioch, from which his Orders were derived, was "unorthodox." This charge, however, was disputed by the Church of England itself. The Lambeth Conference of Pan-Anglican Bishops of 1920, in their Encyclical Letter To The Christian World (pp. 150-151), declared that the “accusations of heresy against the Western Syrian Churches are false.” It is also the same for the Christians of St. Thomas of Malabar. American Episcopalian the Reverend Doctor Ritchie, acknowledged chief among Catholic-minded Episcopalian theologians and scholars in the United States of America, wrote a forceful editorial in the "Catholic Champion" in which he asserted: "Vilatte is as true a Bishop as ever wore a mitre." And a member of the House of Bishops, Bishop Coxe of Western New York, in a letter to Archbishop Vilatte declared in February 24, 1896 -- "Whatever the House of Bishops may say to the contrary, no Roman prelate in the United States has an Episcopate as valid as yours."

Vilatte was kept busy during those last three days at Llanthony. He was ‘confirmed a boy, lately converted by the Grace of God’. He consecrated veils for the Nuns, gave every one separately his solemn Benediction, and consecrated the holy oils. But this was not enough to pay for the generous hospitality: Vilatte had failed to persuade Bertie Cannell, the ex-Brother Gildas, who had returned to the monastery for a holiday, to accept all minor and major orders to the priesthood. This ex-monk saw much of the Archbishop, because both found smoking necessary, and Fr Ignatius held the opinion that God would have provided man with a chimney if he had intended him to smoke tobacco. So Mar Timotheus and young Cannell had to creep out on the mountain side, and on one of these walks the former turned to his companion, and said: ‘I make Father Ignatius a priest tomorrow, and I make you a priest too!’ Before leaving Llanthony, Mar Timotheus blessed Ignatius as abbot, according to the “Pontificale Romanum”. It was hinted afterwards that he was paid (granted a gift) for his
services to the community, but as Mr Calder-Marshall remarks: “Such an idea, in the terms of a crude bribe, is unthinkable; but it is probable that out of the love of Jesus Christ Father Ignatius pressed on Lord Timotheus some of the Abbey funds to defray his expenses. It is a tradition at least in France and Belgium, that a bishop having ordained or consecrated someone receives a “gift” in the form of money, handed in a sealed envelop to the bishop, certainly not for his services but in thankfulness for what the ordained or consecrated has freely received. However, the amount cannot have been very much.

News of these ordinations in South Wales reached the ears of Bishop Grafton in Wisconsin. he felt obliged to write a very long letter to ‘The Church Times’ which was printed in part, with the comment: ‘The whole is very melancholy reading, and we can well understand that nothing but a stern sense of duty would have induced the Bishop of Fond du Lac to write in such uncompromising terms.’ Grafton was disproportionately filled with hatred against Vilatte, and we are certainly note printing the article as found in Peter F. Anson’s book, “Bishops at Large”.

It is improbable that he ever got as far as Russia, which he stated was his destination when he left South Wales in the last week of July 1898. The next country in which he appeared was Italy. By the end of January 1899 most Catholic newspapers in Europe and North America had reported that Archbishop Vilatte was seeking reconciliation with the Holy See of Rome, instead of union with the Holy Synod of Moscow. On February 2, Fr David Fleming, Definitor General of the Friars Minor, and Consulter of the Congregation of the Holy Office, issued a statement to the effect that Joseph René Vilatte had expressed under pressure his most sincere and heartfelt regret for having taught many errors and for having attacked and misrepresented the holy Roman Catholic Church; that he withdrew any such teaching, and regretted that he had obtained Holy Orders in an unlawful and irregular ways, which was obviously not true, as not standing under the jurisdiction of Rome, but of Antioch, his ordinations coming from the Swiss Old Catholic Church, and his consecration from Antioch. How could he have disobeyed the Holy See of Rome, just because he was baptised and confirmed in the Rome Church in childhood? The book by Peter Anson also states, “And that he had illicitly and sacrilegiously conferred upon others various orders.” Our various Episcopal Churches can quite and lawfully live without having anything to do with the Vatican Church, that is clear once for all. Apparently, the penitent Vilatte called upon all those with whom he had co-operated in the past, especially those whom he had raised to the priesthood, to submit themselves unreservedly and unconditionally to the authority of the Vicar of Christ. Why should they have submitted themselves to Rome? Such, in 2007 would be completely absurd. On May 25, Bishop Zardetti wrote to Mgr Messmer that Fr David Fleming had the case well in hand.

Then came reports from Rome that Archbishop Vilatte had not yet made his formal abjuration, or been reconciled with the Church of Rome. It was explained that he was awaiting the result of the Process before the Holy Office. As soon as a decision had been reached about the validity of his Orders, he would be received back into communion with the Holy See. Meanwhile the Holy Office had received an eight-page digest from the Bishop of Green Bay in which he laid stress on Vilatte’s insincerity in the past; suggesting that he merely wanted the Roman authorities to say that his orders were valid, so that he might go to England and ‘validate’ the Orders of Anglican clergymen. Mgr Messmer disclosed that Archbishop Vilatte had admitted to him personally that he had never been in good faith. Mgr Katzer, now Archbishop of Milwaukee, with whom Vilatte had been in contact many years...
before, also advised the Holy Office to delay passing judgment on his orders in order to test his sincerity.

**Special Note:** The original consecration documents of Archbishop Vilatte’s were sent to the Vatican Secretary of State: Raphael Cardinal Merry de Vel by Archbishop Vilatte through the Roman Catholic Bishop of Green Bay. After looking at the papers, the eminent Cardinal declared that the orders of Vilatte are valid. Once again, in 1926, the Apostolic Delegate to Paris reviewed documents of Vilatte and accepted him as a ‘Bishop in Good Standing’ into the Roman Catholic Church. PP XI issued a yearly stipend to the Archbishop. The above documents and others are stored in the Vatican Marianist Library. DW.

If further evidence of the canonical and valid Consecration of Archbishop Vilatte were required, it is found in the invitation he received to go to France and found a National Catholic Church for France. After the separation of the Church and State in France by the laws of July 1, 1901, the League of Catholics of France was formed to establish a French National Catholic Church, independent of Rome, the National Committee of which was under the presidency of Henri des Hou (Kt. of Legion of Honor and decorated with the Royal and Imperial Orders of Spain and Russia) and included such men of note as Senators Reveilland and Guissée. These devout men of France, in their search for a valid non-papal bishop who would give them the Apostolic Succession, sent to Ceylon and to Malabar through the French Consulate to verify Bishop Vilatte’s Consecration, and to obtain official copies of the Acts of Consecration, the Edict of the Patriarch of Antioch sanctioning it, and the attestation of the United States Consul Morey of Ceylon, who was present at the consecration and one of the witnesses to the event. Through the influence of M. Briand, Minister of Public Instruction and Worship, these indisputable documents were obtained. After the issue of his consecration was definitively settled, Archbishop Vilatte was most earnestly invited to come to France and help establish an independent non-Papal Catholic Church and so was born the Independent Gallican Apostolic Catholic Church.

The validity of the **Antiochian Succession** has repeatedly been recognized and acknowledged by the Roman Catholic Church, which has admitted into its fold bishops of the Antiochian Succession without re-ordination or consecration; by the Old Catholic Church of Holland; by the Church of England, which in 1870, welcomed the visiting Patriarch of Antioch, Ignatius Peter III -- the same who ordered the consecration of Archbishop Vilatte -- and enthroned him in Canterbury Cathedral to bless the people; by the Armenian, Russian Orthodox, Greek and in fact, all branches of the Catholic Church, which have undoubted Orders themselves.

It looks as if Archbishop Vilatte had hopes of persuading Fr Ignatius of Llanthony to become the first archbishop of an autocephalous Old Catholic British Church, and letting him perform consecration. This project had been in the air since November 1898. Ignatius wrote to an archbishop (apparently Alvarez in Ceylon) on October 9, 1900, suggesting that the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch (correctly, not the Holy See of Rome) might allow the consecration of a bishop of Llanthony Abbey, and ‘thus preserve for us the true priesthood for all time to come’. It is not certain just how far Vilatte was mixed up with this project. Donald Attwater, *Fr Ignatius of Llanthony* (1931): Vilatte could have found good reasons for persuading Ignatius to become the Episcopal head of the loyal remnant of the Ancient British Church, alleged to have been revived by Mar Pelagius Morgan in 1874. For in 1897 the Armenian Uniate Church, Leon Chechemian, had managed to get constituted an amalgamation of the Ancient British Church, Nazarene Episcopal Ecclesia, and the Free Protestant Church of
England, which was given the title of “The Free Protestant Church of England”.

Mar Chechemian was elected the first Archbishop in 1898.

Nevertheless, apparently regarding the whole world as his province, and possible to defy Mar Jacobus, Bishop of Mercia and Middlesex (Vernon Herford), who since his consecration in South India in December 1902 had been able to supply Syro-Chaldean (Nestorian) Orders at Oxford, Mar Timotheus turned up again in South Wales in the summer of 1903. On June 14 he raised to the episcopate the Rev. Henry M. Marsch-Edwards, with the title of Bishop of Caerleon. Here, we record no more on Peter F. Anson’s historical account, even going as far as gossiping, the more because he himself writes, “But documentary proof is lacking”.

France

A series of conflicts between the Church and the State in France, arising from anti-clerical legislation of Waldeck-Rousseau and Combes, gave Archbishop Joseph René Vilatte the idea that it might be to his advantage to return to his native country. This he did in the summer of 1906. The previous December a separation bill had become law, proclaiming that the Republic did not recognise any form of religion. It appears that Vilatte was already on friendly terms with Aristide Briand, who had been appointed Minister of Education in 1903, and probably thought that this astute politician would be able to make use of his services. There were rumours of the setting up of a National Church on Gallican lines. The State now had the power to sequester property administered by church councils, and pass it over to welfare and charitable institutions under the control of local authorities.

Archbishop Joseph René Vilatte, soon after his arrival in Paris, took advantage of this new law, and managed to obtain possession of the Barnabite church in the Rue Legendre, which he reopened for Old Catholic services. He contributed articles to a review of Gallican tendencies, called “L’Eglise Catholique Française”. One of his former priests in Wisconsin, a certain Florent, who had also returned to France, wrote for “La Libre Parole”. Obviously, debts accumulated, however, and on March 2, 1907, the police in Paris took away the archiepiscopal mitres and crozier for default in payment. It looks as if Vilatte managed to retrieve his regalia before, when he ordained priest, Louis-Marie François Giraud, formerly a Trappist monk of Fontgombauld, but who had since made a name for himself in esotericism, and who was later associated with the prelates and priests of the Universal Gnostic Church, an authorised branch “under well-respected condition” of l’Eglise Catholique Française (otherwise the “l’Eglise Gallicane”). Louis Marie François Giraud received the subdiaconate on October 14, 1906, the deaconate as he himself March 19, 1907, and was raised to the priesthood by Villate on June 21, 1907, but it was l’Abbé Julio who decided that this candidate had the vocation to become a bishop, for pastoral work and his rare spiritual gifts, as the Abbé also had. On June 21, 1911, he raised Giraud to the episcopate in the Old Catholic chapel at Aire, near Geneva, Switzerland. With the consent of Archbishop Giraud, and under condition of plain “Roman Catholicity in Faith, Doctrine and Order “, Jean Bricaud was allowed to found, the “Gnostic Catholic Church”, later the “Gnostic Universal Church”, and still later as we know it today, the “Apostolic Gnostic Church”.

Jean Bricaud was ordained to the deaconate and priesthood, at Mine-Saint-Amand (Puy-de-Dôme), July 25, 1912; and, to the episcopate, same place, July 21, 1913, one year later, receiving the Gnostic name of Tau Jean II, by Archbishop Giraud. Primate Jean Bricaud (Tau Jean II) gathered round him near Lyon a group of fervent Gnostic clergy and lay folk, and on May 5, 1918, consecrated Victor Blanchard, under the name of Tau Targelius. The Patriarch
published several books on White Magic and against Satanism, as Christians often do, in the way a prominent American Christian writer and many others did, burning Christian subject, Jeffrey Burton Russell, B.A., M.A., degrees from the University of California at Berkeley, and his Ph.D. degree from Emory University. He taught at the University of New Mexico, the University of California at Riverside, and the University of Notre Dame before joining the faculty of the University of California at Santa Barbara. Also, the French author, the late Stanislas de Guaita (fourth quarter 1800), wrote on (not for) “Black Magic”. They were conscientious historians, anxious to examine in texts, myths, legends, art and literature the persistence and transformation of a particular idea. They are introspective essayists, acknowledging their continuing struggle to understand the nature and source of evil. Primate Victor Blanchard (Tau Targelius) ‘passed on’ in 1934, and was succeeded by Constant Chevillon, raised to the episcopate by Archbishop Giraud on January 5, 1936, with the name of Tau Harmonius. He was killed by German soldiers on March 22, 1944, after the Vichy government had suppressed the Gnostic Church. We keep in our archives, also published on this website, a letter written by Madame Jean Bricaud, Tau Jean II’s wife, about her husband and Constant Chevillon. (L’Initiation, No. 1, 1962, a very important document). Two incontestable apostolic lines derive respectively from Victor Blanchard (Tau Targelius) and Constant Chevillon (Tau Harmonius), who have helped to spread the Gnostic Church from France to Portugal, Italy, Belgium, North Africa and South America. The names of most of these prelates have been kept secret, but all have been given the honorary name of “Tau”. We must add here a prominent name, the Patriarch and Primate Armand Toussaint (Tau Raymond Panagion), who received his Holy Orders in the Gnostic Apostolic Church of Belgium, who later founded the Rosicrucian Apostolic Church, now spread in many countries. Armand Toussaint was twice consecrated “sub conditio” by Archbishops Roger Caro and Philippe Laurent De Coster, in order to be attached to their apostolic filiations as well. He died before Archbishop Philippe Laurent De Coster could pass Archbishop Bertil Persson’s apostolic filiations to him.

To continue Archbishop Joseph René Vilatte’s biography, shortly after a notice was issued by Cardinal Richard as they would do in the Roman Catholic Church and other established Orthodox and Anglican Churches, warning the faithful against apostate priests who were celebrating Mass under cover of a religious association directed by ‘un unofficial-American bishop’. We remember that Archbishop Vilatte was rightly ordained by the Old Catholics In Berne (Switserland), and elected and consecrated by bishops of the Church of Antioch (Syria) in Ceylon, and obviously counted as valid, and very official. Roman Catholics, for their own benefit, never makes openly the distinction between “licit” (valid) and “illicit” (invalid). Archbishop Vilatte’s orders are unquestionably “valid” for Rome, but for the Vatican, “illicit”, because he was not appointed by the Holy See of Rome, the Pope at that time. However, what matters? The Holy See of the Orthodox Church of Antioch known as the “Jacobites” duly appointed him, and that was plainly official enough. The Cardinal stated that ‘this plot hatched in the silence characteristics of masonry will not succeed. Catholics will not let themselves be deceived. Clemenceau and Briand may rob us of our churches, but not of our consciences’. The Archbishop of Paris then excommunicated Vilatte for a second time. How could the Archbishop excommunicate him, as Vilatte belonged to another Church?

He again crossed the Atlantic to North America.

Chicago became the headquarters of the Archbishop Vilatte, who by this time had severed all associations with the Independent Catholic Church of Goa and Ceylon, the Syro-Jacobite Patriarchate of Antioch, as well as with the Old Catholic Churches in Europe. The
consecration of Francis Hodur at Utrecht by three Dutch Old Catholic Bishops on September 29, 1907, followed by the organisation of the Polish National Catholic Church in America, had been some kind of final blow for him. He moved around the country, and more than once found reasons to cross the border into Canada. It appears to have been at Winnipeg in 1909 that he ordained two monks from Llanthony Abbey – Dom Asaph Harris and Dom Gildas Taylor. The former returned to his Welsh monastery as Superior; the latter went to Mexico, where for some years he worked with independent clergy who were being sponsored by Archbishop Vilatte as the head of a national church. Both monks joined the Benedictines of Caldey later on, but neither before nor after the community had been reconciled with the Roman Church in 1913 did they make use of their Syrian-Malabar Orders.

It was at Chicago a year or two after this that Mar Timotheus raised to the priesthood Dom Francis Brothers, Prior of St Dunstan’s Abbey, Waukegan, Illinois. This was an Old Catholic fraternity, legally incorporated at Fond du Lac in 1909 by Bishop Grafton as ‘The American Congregation of the Order of St Benedict’, and of which he acted as Titular Abbot until his death in 1912. In 1911 it was formally united with a remnant of Kowlowski’s Polish Old Catholic Church, then under the jurisdiction of Mgr J.F.Tichy. After his resignation in 1912, Prior Francis was elected as his Episcopal successor. But Mar Timotheus and the future Metropolitan of the Old Catholic Church in America soon parted company; and in May 1915, the former was protesting against the activities of ‘an Italian ex-Roman priest who is masquerading as one of our bishops’. This was probably Miraglia Gulotti, who, having had difficulties as Bishop of Piacenza, had migrated to New York. Or it may have been Carfora, who seems to have been associated with Archbishop Vilatte in France.

Archbishop Vilatte probably realised that it was useless trying to return to Europe, at least for the time been, since most of the countries where he might have found friends and benefactors had been at war since August 1914. The only thing he could do was to devise some organisation in the United States, of which he could be the head. By 1915 the former Old Catholic Archbishop of North America had launched a new ecclesiastical body which in agreement was called ‘The American Catholic Church’ which still is a flourishing Church. Let us summarise again what is said before in this long biography and historical account:

The Apostolic Succession of the Bishops of ‘The American Catholic Church’ (non-papal).

The churches of Antiochian Succession in the United States, including the American Catholic Church and elsewhere in Europe, traced apostolic succession through eastern sources, notably through Archbishop Joseph René Vilatte, who is often credited with bringing the Antiochian Succession to North America and Europe as already mentioned, and also in his latter years when he was friendly with the Primate of the Gnostic Apostolic Church, Jean Bricaud.

The validity of the Antiochian Succession has repeatedly been recognised and acknowledged by the Roman Catholic Church, which has admitted into its fold bishops of the Antiochian Succession without re-ordination or consecration; by the Old Catholic Church of Holland; by the Church of England, which in 1870, welcomed the visiting Patriarch of Antioch, Ignatius Peter III -- the same who ordered the consecration of Archbishop Vilatte -- and enthroned him in Canterbury Cathedral to bless the people; by the Armenian, Russian Orthodox, Greek and in fact, all branches of the Catholic Church, which have undoubted Orders themselves.
Especially significant and conclusive was the experience of His Grace Archbishop Lloyd, the first married Archbishop of the American Catholic Church, during his visit to the Holy Land in 1923, when the Patriarch of Jerusalem, the Antiochian Metropolitan of Jerusalem and the Archbishop of India, received and entertained him with all the honours due an Archbishop of the Holy Catholic Church.

The charge had erroneously been made by the Protestant Episcopal Church of America (see above, through Bishop Grafton) that the consecration of Archbishop Vilatte was null and void because the Church of Antioch, from which his Orders were derived, was "unorthodox." This charge, however, was disputed by the Church of England itself. The Lambeth Conference of Pan-Anglican Bishops of 1920, in their Encyclical Letter "To The Christian World (pp. 150-151)", declared that the "accusations of heresy against the Western Syrian Churches are false." It is also the same for the Christians of St. Thomas of Malabar. American Episcopalian the Reverend Doctor Ritchie, acknowledged chief among Catholic-minded Episcopalian theologians and scholars in the United States of America, wrote a forceful editorial in the "Catholic Champion" in which he asserted: "Vilatte is as true a Bishop as ever wore a mitre." And a member of the House of Bishops, Bishop Coxe of Western New York, in a letter to Archbishop Vilatte declared in February 24, 1896 -- "Whatever the House of Bishops may say to the contrary, no Roman prelate in the United States has an Episcopate as valid as yours."

If further evidence of the canonical and valid Consecration of Archbishop Vilatte were required, it is found in the invitation he received to go to France and found a National Catholic Church for France. After the separation of the Church and State in France by the laws of July 1, 1901, the League of Catholics of France was formed to establish a French National Catholic Church, independent of Rome, the National Committee of which was under the presidency of Henri des Hou (Kt. of Legion of Honour and decorated with the Royal and Imperial Orders of Spain and Russia) and included such men of note as Senators Reveilland and Guiesse. These devout men of France, in their search for a valid non-papal bishop who would give them the Apostolic Succession, sent to Ceylon and to Malabar through the French Consulate to verify Bishop Vilatte's Consecration, and to obtain official copies of the Acts of Consecration, the Edict of the Patriarch of Antioch sanctioning it, and the attestation of the United States Consul Morey of Ceylon, who was present at the consecration and one of the witnesses to the event. Through the influence of M. Briand, Minister of Public Instruction and Worship, these indisputable documents were obtained. After the issues of his consecration were definitively settled, Archbishop Vilatte was most earnestly invited to come to France, help establish an independent non-Papal Catholic Church, and so was born the Independent Gallican Apostolic Catholic Church. The Apostolic Succession of our Bishops is of unquestioned validity from the successors of St. Peter in the See of Antioch, the original mission to Gentile Christendom. The ACC was founded and originally headed by His Excellency, the Most Reverend Joseph Rene Vilatte in 1909 when he united his various independent Catholic churches and missions in Wisconsin, Illinios, New York, California, Arizona and Canada into one ecclesiastical family.

Although originally Antiochian in succession, as a result of multiple concordats of intercommunion and shared consecrations, the American Catholic Church (non-papal), as the Latin Old Roman Catholic Church of Flanders (non-papal) is not dependent upon any single line of Apostolic Succession but can trace Antiochian, Old Catholic (Matthew Line), Roman (Duarte-Costa Line), Celtic, Gallican and Orthodox lines to name but a few. We all acknowledge the primacy (not supremacy) of the Bishop of Rome and respect his position as
an important voice of Catholic Christianity as well as his authority when he speaks in union with the Catholic Bishops and expresses the “sensus fidelium” of the Catholic Church.

Although Archbishop Vilatte was ordained to the priesthood under His Excellency Bishop Edward Herzog, a Swiss Old Catholic bishop, the ACC has never been a member of the Union of Utrecht, nor does it subscribe to the Declaration of Utrecht.

Archbishop Vilatte was consecrated in 1892 under a Bull of authority of Ignatius Peter III, Patriarch of Antioch and titled "Mar Timotheos, Metropolitan Archbishop for the Old Catholics of America adhering to the faith of the undivided church.” At the end of his life Archbishop Vilatte was reconciled with the Holy See of Rome, receiving a full Bishop’s pension from the Vatican until he died in a Cistercian Abbey in France on July 1, 1929. He was buried according to the simple rite, mitred, with all the Episcopal dignity due him. May he rest in peace.

During that same year 1915 Archbishop Vilatte received a most distinguished convert into this organisation, this was Reverend Frederic Ebenezer Lloyd, whose career had been as difficult as his own had.

The American Catholic Succession, like the European Vilatte Succession can be traced from Jerusalem where the Apostles, equally called, commissioned and inspired, and their sacred office perpetuated by the election and consecration of Matthias, went forth preaching, healing, baptising, laying on of hands, consecrating and establishing churches, the first of which was the Church of Antioch, founded by St. Peter about A.D. 38 and over which he reigned as Bishop and Patriarch for six years before the time he became Bishop of Rome. Antioch thus became the Mother Church of Gentile Christendom, and consequently if any primacy or supremacy were possessed by St. Peter, and continued through his successors and the Church founded by him, then Antioch has a right to claim that supremacy.

However priority and absolute equality (not supremacy) with all other valid branches of the Catholic Church, is the claim and glorious heritage of the American Catholic Church which spread its wings in Europe through the Antiochian Succession of Vilatte. St. Peter’s successor as Bishop and Patriarch of Antioch was Evodus, who in turn was succeeded by St. Ignatius “The Martyr”, and so on down the Christian centuries until the present day. Without giving the names of all the Patriarchs who, as successors of St. Peter, have presided over the Antiochian Church, and kept alive the Apostolic Succession in that Church, it is practical to begin with the one from whom the American Catholic Church derives Canonical commission and Episcopate, the one hundred and forty-fourth in direct line from St. Peter, Ignatius Peter III.

**Bene, bene respondare:**

Ignatius Peter III, Patriarch of Antioch and the East, assisted by two Bishops, consecrated Paul Athanasius in 1877 and appointed him his Legate. Metropolitan-Archbishop and Legate of Ignatius Peter III, Paul Athanasius, assisted by Metropolitan Archbishops George Gregorius and Paul Evanius, consecrated Francis Xavier Alvarez, Archbishop of Ceylon in 1889. Archbishop Alvarez, in accordance with the edict issued by His Holiness, Ignatius Peter III and assisted by the Metropolitan Archbishops, Gregorius and Athanasius, in his cathedral at Colombo, Ceylon, on May 29, 1892, consecrated Joseph Rene Vilatte as “Metropolitan-Archbishop for the Old Catholics of America”, adhering to the Faith of the early undivided
Church; thus antedating by twenty years all other Independent or Non-Papal Catholic movements in America.

Vilatte Ivaniyos  Divanyosious Athanasious Gregorius Alvarez

The photography originates from the magazine “Ancient Christian Fellowship” Vol II-I, 1949, page 1. The photograph is taken outside the Syriac Seminary, Kottayam, and has no link with the episcopal consecration of Monsignor Joseph René Villatte.

Archbishop Frederic E. J. Lloyd, D.D.

Archbishop Vilatte, on December 29, 1915, consecrated Frederic E. J. Lloyd, D.D., first Bishop of the American Catholic Church. In 1920, he was elected Archbishop and Primate of the ACC. On July 1, 1923, Archbishop Lloyd consecrated Samuel Gregory Lines, who was made Archbishop of the Province of the Pacific on October 11, 1925, in the Armenian Church of Los Angeles, California, kindly loaned by the authority of the Armenian Bishop of America, and the kindness of the rector the Reverend Father Milikian. Archbishop Lloyd also consecrated Archbishop Hinton, who later became the second Primate.

Archbishop Lines consecrated Bishop Boyle; and Archbishop Hinton consecrated Bishop Clarkson who became third Primate. Bishop Boyle consecrated Bishop L. P. Wadle. On the death of Archbishop Metropolitan Clarkson, Archbishop Wadle became Archbishop Metropolitan and fifth Primate for he was coadjutor and co-occupant of the See with the right of succession to Archbishop Clarkson. Herman Adrian Spruit, who was co-consecrated by Wadle and Boyle, later went on to become primate of the Catholic Apostolic Church of Antioch (in America), the cousin church.

By way of remedy, Archbishop Wadle initiated a series of Concordats of Inter-communion with other Bishops and Archbishops as the result of which the American Catholic Church is now not dependent upon a single line of Apostolic tradition. In 1998, (then) Presiding Archbishop Robert J. Allmen (of the reorganised American Catholic Church) initiated Concordats of Inter-communion with The Catholic Apostolic Church In North America.
(CACINA) and The Celtic Christian Church and through mutual consecrations of bishops adding both Celtic and Roman Lines of Succession. The American Catholic Church shares in the Episcopal Successions of: Rome through the Duarte-Costa Line and the Old Catholic Church of Holland; Greek through Cyrill VI and Herman A. Spruit (through H. Francis Marshall); and Orthodox through both Russian and Syrian sources.

**The Apostolic Succession of Archbishop Philippe Laurent De Coster as from the American Catholic Church:**

**ARCHBISHOP JOSEPH RENÉ VILATTE,** Primate of the American Catholic Church, consecrates in Chicago, 29th December 1915:

FREDERICK-EBENEZER J. LLOYD, Bishop of Illinois, succeeds Archbishop Joseph René Vilatte, as Primate of the American Catholic Church. He consecrates 29th September 1929:

CHURCHIL SIBLEY as Archbishop and General Vicar of the British Order of Antioch (+ 1939), who the 6th October 1935, consecrates:

JOHN-SEBASTIAN-MAELOW WARD. He founded the Abbey Christ the King, under the name Mar John. The 25th August 1945, he consecrates:

GEORGES DE WILLMOTT-NEWMAN, who consecrates 27th May 1950:

HAROLD-PERCIVAL NICHOLSON, who consecrates 14th April 1952:

PHILIP CHARLES STUART SINGER, who consecrates 14th November 1954:

CHARLES E. BREARLEY, who consecrates 14 May 1968:

ANDRE BARBEAU, who consecrates 31st July 1973:

JOSEPH, PAUL, FERNAND DUPUIS (Victor Solis II), who consecrates 6th November 1973:

ROGER CARO (Pierre Phoebus, later Stephanos in Orthodoxy), who consecrates 7th June 1974, assisted by the following Bishops present at the Holy Synod: Bishop Jean-Paul CHARLET (JETHRO), Bishop Maurice AUBERGER (THEOPHOREONAI), Bishop Robert RAGUIN (EREBUS), Bishop Etienne NEGREL (Nr' PALINGA DHARA) all co-consecrators, ... also the Bishops coming forward to lay-on-hands: Mgr Marc OSIER (PROMOTHEE), Mgr Denis CLAING (PETRUS DE LUMINE), et Mgr Yvon PETIT (EMANUEL):

Philippe Laurent De Coster (Philippus-Laurentius), Archbishop of the latine Old Roman Catholic Church of Flanders.

The Patriarch and Archbishop Roger Caro had many more re-consecrations for ecumenical reasons, also when visiting Canada, and at last consecrated “under condition” (sub conditione) Archbishop Philippe Laurent De Coster, on June 30, 1979, to have all the Apostolic lines he himself had. In London, Archbishop Philippe Laurent De Coster was consecrated “under condition” (sub conditione), by Archbishop Bertil Persson, on June 25, 1995 at an Ecumenical Reunion.
In fact, Archbishop Vilatte, during his life time, headed four ecclesiastical organisations: The American Old Roman Catholic Church (the continuation of the Swiss Christian-Catholic movement in which Vilatte had been ordained Priest and to which was added the word "North" when this Church defected from Bishop Vilatte's Episcopal jurisdiction); The African Orthodox Church; The Order of the Crown of Thorns and the American Catholic Church. The latter had its inception with the consecration of Frederic E.J. Lloyd in 1915. The American Catholic Synod of April 10, 1920 named Archbishop Vilatte, Exarch, in respect to the American Catholic Church. This office Archbishop Lloyd was himself to assume in the latter part of his life.

The American Catholic Church was reorganised in 1989 and in 1995 Bishop Robert J. Allmen was consecrated Presiding Archbishop. The ACC was nationally centred at Good Shepherd Cathedral in Hampton Bays, New York. The reorganized ACC spread quickly and by 1996 had diocese / churches in many U.S. states. In 1999, a number of factors led to resignations, annexing of a diocese and some bishops. In the summer of 2000 after prayerful discussion of the Synod of Bishops of the American Catholic Church, Presiding Archbishop Robert J. Allmen resigned his position and retired from the American Catholic Church. He is currently the Presiding Archbishop of the Reformed Catholic Church. In November of 2000, the Synod of Bishops elected The Most Reverend Sharon DiSunno Presiding Archbishop of the American Catholic Church International (as it had been renamed), succeeding +Allmen. On December 21, 2000, Bishop Patrick E. Trujillo, Co-Adjutor Bishop with Right of Succession, through the Board of Directors of the Archdiocese of Our Lady of Guadalupe of New Jersey, "severed ties" with the American Catholic Church International. The extant Concordats of Inter-communion remained intact.

In January 2002, the Synod of Bishops of the American Catholic Church International: Most Reverend Sharon DiSunno, Presiding Bishop; Most Reverend Charles Grande; Most Reverend Osmel Valera d’Abela; Most Reverend Raymond Kelly; Most Reverend Anthony Hash began to experience differences of canonical leadership style. The American Catholic Church is divided into jurisdictions under each Bishop as Ordinary.

To further the account where we left, to give some room to the most important Vilatte’s ecclesiastical activities, Mgr Mundelein, Auxiliary Bishop of Brooklyn, had been translated to the archiepiscopal see of Chicago, where another ceremony took place in this same city, reported as follows in “The American Catholic Quarterly”:

‘By far the most important event in Ecclesiastical history of the United States of America was celebrated on Wednesday, December 19th, 1915, when the Reverend Frederick E. J. Lloyd, Doctor of Divinity, was Consecrated as first Bishop of the American Catholic Church, in St David’s Chapel, 536 East Thirty-sixth Street, Chicago, Illinois. A day of rare, though wintry, loveliness, added to the interest of the occasion.

The Consecration service began at 10.30, and continued about the space of two hours. The chapel was filled with worshippers, who were largely friends of Dr Lloyd. The entire Pontifical service was celebrated according to the Latin Rite, though, of course, in English. The Consecrator was the Most Reverend Archbishop Joseph René Vilatte, Primate and Metropolitan, and the Assisting Bishop, the Right Reverend Paul Miraglia [Gulotti] of New York. It will be noticed that Miraglia-Gulotti had now been translated to New York from the titular see of Piacenza, Italy.
At the conclusion of this long function, Mar Timotheus addressed the newly consecrated prelate, saying:

“It needs no prophet to foretell for you and the American Catholic Church a great future in the Providence of God. The need for a Church both American and Catholic, and free from papacy and all foreign denomination, has been felt for many years by Christians of all denominations. May your zeal and apostolic ministry be crowned with success.”

By the time that the USA had joined forces with the Allies in April, 1917, Vilatte had already begun to fade out of the picture. He had reached the age of sixty-one in 1914, and the dynamic energy was already diminishing through health reasons. At a Synod held in Chicago on April 10, 1920, three months after the Peace Treaty had been ratified in Paris, he offered for honorary retirement, and nominated Lloyd as the successor as Primate and Metropolitan of the American Catholic Church. The clergy present granted Vilatte the honorary title of Exarch. (Normally the primate of an independent church, between the patriarch and an archbishop a title of honour in the Eastern Churches.) He lived in retirement at 4427 North Mulligan Avenue, Chicago, and does not seem to have performed any more Episcopal functions until September 22, 1921, when he helped to launch the African Orthodox Church, by consecrating in the Church of Our Lady of Good Death, Chicago, a coloured person from Antigua, George Alexander McGuire, as the first bishop of another Christian and Episcopal denomination.

**Apostolic Succession from “The African Orthodox Church”**

**Mar Timotheus I** (Joseph Rene Vilatte, 1854-1929), Archbishop-Exarch of North America for The American Catholic Church, assisted by Bishop Carl A. Nybladh of The Swedish Orthodox Church, consecrated to the Sacred Episcopate:


Bishop William Russell Miller (03/02/1900 - ?) as Bishop of The African Orthodox Church on 6 August 1950 and as African Orthodox Rector in Brooklyn, N.Y. Bp. Miller became Primate of The African Orthodox Church in 1976. Ptr. Miller, assisted by Bp. George. Duncan Hinkson, consecrated to the Sacred Episcopate:

**Bishop Peter Paul Brennan** as Bishop in Our Lady Queen of Heaven Church, Long Island, N.Y. on 10 June 1978. Bishop Peter Paul Brennan consecrated at the Holy Angels Chapel in Glendale, California, March 14, 1987 the two following bishops:

**Bishop Ernest Forest Barber**, and Bishop Paul, Christian Schultz G.W. Jr. It was a mutual consecration of five bishops. Bishop Peter Paul Brennan was the first consecrated, and then Bishop Paul, Christian Schultz G.W. Jr., followed by Bishop Ernest Barber, Bishop Daniel Nelson McCarty, and Bishop Jürgen Bless.

**Archbishop Nils, Bertil Alexander Persson** was consecrated sub conditione on June 14, 1987, by Forest Ernest Barber of the Holy Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Church in the Philippines, assisted by Emile Federico Rodrigues y Fairfield and Paul G.W. Schultz.

**Archbishop Nils, Bertil Alexander Persson**, with co-consecrators, Bishops Hans Dieter Sauerlandt, and George Boyer, June 25, 1995:

**Archbishop Philippe Laurent De Coster**, of the Latin Old Roman Catholic Church of Flanders (Non-Papal).

It may be assumed that the funds at the disposal of the American Catholic Church (even with a generous donation from Mrs Lloyd), were not sufficient to allow the Eparch and adequate old-age pension. Not long after his consecration of McGuire, Vilatte decided to return to his native France.

**Archbishop Joseph René Vilatte final return to Paris 1924-1929.**

Vilatte’s life and work in Europe and in the United States are well-known from many books and articles, but there is a period that the historians seem to neglect: his return to Paris in 1924, together with his retirement in Versailles and his death. Mgr Vilatte came back to France, hoping, with a new ‘leftist’ government, to reactivate his religious associations, but a wave of anticlericalism antagonised his plans. A religious Frenchman, Father Eugene Prévost, with the approbation of Pope Pius XI and Cardinal Gaspari, his secretary of State, attempted to obtain the abjuration of Vilatte. He succeeded, and on the 1st of June 1925, Vilatte made a formal declaration before Mgr Ceretti, the Apostolic Nuncio in Paris, regretting and repenting having received Holy Orders and having conferred them on others contrary to the teaching and codex of the Holy Roman Church in which he hoped, by the Grace of God, soon to be received. He asked forgiveness to God, for the scandal he had given, and promised to repair it by the example of his life, inviting all those who had followed his errors to imitate his example. In the mind of the twenty-first century average man and religious people, this was an absurd step, the more that he only received baptism and confirmation as almost everyone in France in the Roman Church, while he received the Minor and Major Orders the priesthood included in the Old Catholic Church in Berne, Switzerland, and the Episcopate in Colombo (Ceylon) (Sri Lanka) in the Antiochian-Jacobite Succession as we have seen previously. He had no reason at all to abjure his life work in front of a Roman Catholic prelate as before the Nuncio at Paris. This is unthinkable today. (The writer would never do this, as we are entirely independent from established religious authorities as the Roman Catholic Church. We respect
the Holy See, and pray for him in our celebrations, but we are not under his ecclesiastical legislation.)

The newspaper “The Cross” (La Croix) gave the text of this on 23 June 1925:

« I express my regrets at having taught errors and having misrepresented the Holy Church. I repent at having received Holy Orders and having conferred them upon others. I deplore the past, I ask for forgiveness for the scandal and I invite those who followed my example to now follow my example. I make this declaration freely and spontaneously, to rectify the ills that I have caused and the scandals to which I have given rise. »

Another longer text exists:

« I, Joseph René Vilatte, wish to express my most sincere regrets at having erred in my teaching and at having attacked and presented in a false light the Holy Roman Church. Unreservedly, I withdraw all similar teaching. I believe in and profess the Holy Roman Church and I submit wholly and without condition to her authority, recognizing and confessing that she is Christ's only true Church, outside of which there is no salvation. In submitting myself, I regret and repent having received Holy Orders and having conferred them to others outside the Holy Roman Church into which, by the grace of God, I hope soon to be received. In giving this solemn declaration, by which I deplore the past, I ask for forgiveness for the many scandals to which I have given rise and I promise to rectify them by the good example of my new life and I invite all those that followed my errors to imitate my example. I make this declaration freely and spontaneously to rectify all the wrongs I have done and the scandals I have caused. »

A still a week later “La Croix” and other newspapers announced that Mgr Vilatte, with an American butler, was staying with the Cistercian monks of the Common Observance at the Abbey of Pont-Colbert, near Versailles. There were rumours that it was at the request of Pius XI that the Prior had offered the ex-Archbishop of the American Catholic Church an eventide home. Another bit of gossip was that the Pope had granted him a pension of 22,000 French francs annually in recognition of his Episcopal status.

On June 23, 1925, the “Bayerischer Kürier” published a statement, at the orders of the Swiss Christian Catholic Church, to the effect that Vilatte had never been a priest of this body or any other genuine Old Catholic Church. Mgr Ceretti, the Nuncio, representative of the Vatican in France, felt it worthwhile to reply to this newspaper as follows:

“Mgr Vilatte received the Minor Orders and the Order of Sub-deacon on June 5th, 1885, the Order of Deacon on June 6th of the same year, and the following day, i.e. June 7th, 1885, the Ordination to the Priesthood. All these Orders were conferred on him by Herzog (Old catholic Bishop) in the Old Catholic Church at Berne. This is proved by documents bearing the seal and signature Mgr. Herzog.”

“Concerning his Episcopal Consecration, it took place on May 29th, 1892. Mgr Vilatte was consecrated by three Jacobite Bishops in the Cathedral of Archbishop Alvarez (Julius First), i.e. in the Church of Our Lady of Good Death in Colombo (Ceylon). Mgr Vilatte is likewise in possession of the consecration deed in question bearing the signatures of the three above-
mentioned bishops and of the American Consul, who was present at the ceremony. So much for explanation, should you deem it appropriate for your use.”

This letter from the Apostolic Nuncio at Paris was printed in the “Bayerischer Kürrier” on July 11, 1925. Vilatte must have been very pleased about this, and about the Nuncio’s honesty, supporting Vilatte’s ecclesiastical documents of ordinations and consecration.

For the next four years, he led a quiet and secluded life in a cottage within the monastery grounds, waited by his butler. He was still addressed as “Monsignore”, or referred to as “Sa Grandeur” (His Greatness) as this was in use at that time. His ordinary costume was a cassock, though without any Episcopal insignia. The aged prelate usually attended the daily conventual Mass, sitting in a remote corner of the chapel, receiving Holy Communion only on Sundays.

He would remain there four years until his death, without the church examining the validity of his Episcopal consecration. We will see, by the letters that he sent to Mgr Jean Bricaud, Primate of the Gnostic Catholic Church, the conditions of his retirement. Living in relative liberty, but not allowed to celebrate Mass, he suffered greatly. Mgr Jean Bricaud would make several trips to Versailles, and will we learn that the brochure that he had printed in 1927: ‘Notice on the Priesthood and Episcopacy of Monsignor Vilatte’, which bore his name and title: Mgr. Bricaud – Gallican Catholic Bishop (not Gnostic?) had actually been written by Mgr. Vilatte. Finally, we will have the certainty that before dying suddenly, Mgr. Vilatte had the desire to once again taste freedom. It is certain that from the moment of his return to France (1924), Mgr Joseph René Vilatte maintained constant relations with Mgr Jean Bricaud.

Thinking of being treated as a layman by Roman Catholic Church authorities, he managed to procure a chalice and vestments, and started celebrate Mass in his cottage. According to the late Mgr Chaptal, Auxiliary Bishop of Paris, he got hold of a mitre and crosier (if he had not brought them with him from Chicago), and presumably having consecrated the holy oils, gave minor and major orders up to the priesthood to one of the Cistercian novices, and later raised him to the episcopate. This was kept quiet, but if this is true it is amazing that the Abbot (or Prior) of Pont-Colbert did not order Archbishop Joseph René Vilatte to leave the cottage and clear off the premises, there and then.

The end came suddenly, Archbishop Joseph René Vilatte (Mar Timotheos) died of an heart failure on 1st of July 1929. **Contrary to all expectations, Mgr. Vilatte died July 1st, 1929.** (According to some biographies 2 July (?), and Peter F. Anson, in his controversial book at times, if certain nasty remarks and short passages would suit better his Roman Catholic Church).

In the archives of Mgr. Jean Bricaud, a small business card is preserved, could this be the one by which he learned of the death of his friend?

He was buried in the cemetery at Versailles. Few people attended the burial of Mgr. Vilatte, his remains were exposed, with pontifical ornaments as a mitre on his head on the order of abbot Dom Janssens, general of the
Cistercians. According to a note: on behalf of researchers and the curious: « Les funeral took place in the presence of a few rare persons: Dom Janssens, general of the Cistercians; a civilian, in black, wearing a pastoral cross around the neck; another civilian—a perfume maker from Paris, we believe, who wept heavily. »

There is another testimony, still preserved in the Library of Lyon, a letter dated January 12, 1930 is addressed to Mgr. Jean Bricaud (Certainly of one of the above-mentioned « civilians »), with two ink stamps at the top:

JOUANNY
PUBLICIST
19, Rue Gabrielle, 19,
PARIS–18th

REMOVABLE
CONSTRUCTIONS
for All occasions
A. JOUANNY
19, rue Gabrielle, 19
PARIS–18th

Paris, Jan. 12, 1930

Monsignor,

It is from Mgr. Giraud that I received your address. I sympathize with his Church, and he honours me with his friendship. But here is the object of this letter.

I was one of the few friends of Mgr. Vilatte, and was one of a small number who accompanied him to the cemetery ‘Gonars’ in Versailles. His sudden death was a detriment to his memory. I could only tell you in person what his frame of mind was and what moral pains he endured since his union with Rome. He was on the verge of reclaiming his liberty. After his quasi exile to the Pit of Versailles, his death has been kept as secret as possible, and his funeral was that of a layman. Of course, all his papers and documents disappeared. In short, it was an order to extinguish coming from the Nuncio. On his tomb is a simple cross of wood.

His communion was an insult and calumny during his long ministry, a brimade during his retirement and a black silence after his death.

It is in an attempt to react against all that that I took the initiative to group together some of his few intimates (because at the end especially he mistrusted nearly everybody) into a modest association, «THE FRIENDS OF MGR. VILATTE». Each would assist, according to his means, in providing and maintaining his modest burial, and defending his memory.

Do I dare to solicit the help of your encouragement and advice to this end? And tell me if there is not a duty of charity and justice to fulfil towards this Archbishop who was good, of a truly apostolic spirit, and who fought so long for the Independent Catholic Faith against the Roman empire.

Please accept, Eminence, the assurance of my respectful sentiments.

A. Jouanny
On reading these few letters, we can conclude with certainty that Mgr Joseph René Vilatte, residing at the monastery of Versailles for four years, wanted to leave it to regain his full liberty. Several reasons incited him to this departure: if the Roman authorities provided him lodging and a pension, they refused to recognise officially as from the Holy See in Rome, the validity of his consecrations, except Mgr Ceretti, the Nuncio, representative of the Vatican in France. Roman Catholic ecclesiastics forbade to him to say Mass, this last is evoked in a letter, not dated, and which lack the conclusion:

Very dear Monsignor,

I have to thank you for the information that in your goodness you sought to give me about this small booklet. Without a doubt, in Paris or in Lyon, printing is unapproachable. Thank you very sincerely.

I shall take advantage of this letter to share with you an response I sent a few days ago, it may be too late to be useful. Here it is «Eminence, in answer to your letter about my celebration of the Mass. I am happy to make know you that I have every divine right to do so and that neither the Pope nor the Roman Curia have anything to do with it. I simply asked the Holy Father to authorise saying Mass in properties rented by the Republic or owned by the Roman Catholic Church.

Considering that this divine right seems to be continually postponed, I have my own Church, my room and the nonconformist chapels which I am offered with all Christian charity. But I have too much confidence in my benefactor in Rome to speak any longer of this. Is it a material question, of an inhabitable construction...[?] 

The doubts concerning the authenticity of the episcopate of Mgr. Bricaud, his ordination in 1912 having been cast in doubt after the last war, by badly-intended and dishonest Roman Catholic clergymen, still existing in this present age even at the decline in Europe, the West as a whole of the Roman Catholic Church and other traditional Protestant Churches (except Orthodox Churches where true spirituality prevails). If these two letters to quote only a few do not bring material evidence of these ordinations to the Minor and Major Orders, Priesthood included, and the Antiochian Jacobite Episcopate, they permit some « intimate conviction ». Indeed, how could Vilatte have carried on such a friendship, of very deference, with a «false» bishops as Monsignor Louis François Giraud and Monsignor Jean Bricaud, if he had had any incertitude of his validity, while he was engaged in proving his own?

Archbishop Vilatte, during his life time, headed four ecclesiastical organisations: The American Old Roman Catholic Church, the continuation of the Swiss Christian-Catholic movement in which Vilatte had been ordained Priest and to which was added the word "North" when this Church defected from the Vilatte movement. The African Orthodox Church (Coloured): The Order of the Crown of Thorns and the American Catholic Church. The latter had its inception with the consecration of Frederic E. J. Lloyd in 1915. The American Catholic Synod of April 10, 1920 named Archbishop Vilatte, Eparch, in
respect to the American Catholic Church. This office Archbishop Lloyd was himself to assume in the latter part of his life. In France, the “Eglise Catholique Française” was founded by Archbishop Joseph René Vilatte (Mar Timotheus), and from this Church came the “Eglise Gallicane Autocéphale”, and the “Eglise Catholique Gnostique” into being.

Apostolic Succession from The Syrian Patriarchate of Antioch and All the Domains of the Apostolic Throne

Moran Mar Ignatius Yacob II (*Ighnatiyus Ya'qub II*), Patriarch of Antioch and All The East, consecrated to the Sacred Episcopate:

Joseph Mar Dionysios V (*Joseph Pulikottil, 1832 - 7/11/1909*), as Metropolitan of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church on 12 February 1865 in Omeed (Deyarbeikir), Turkey. He took the ecclesiastical name of Joseph Mar Dionysios V. Mar Dionysios consecrated to the Sacred Episcopate:

Mar Julius I (*Antonio Francisco Xavier Alvarez, 1837-1923*), in the chapel of the Syrian seminary in Kottayam as Archbishop of Ceylon, Goa and India on 29 July 1889, assisted by Paulose Mar Athanasius (*Paulose Kadavil Kooran*), Paulose Mar Ivanios (*Paulose Murimattu*), and Geevarghese Mar Gregorios (*Geevarghese Pallathitta Chaturuthil*), all Bishops of The Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church. He took the ecclesiastical name of Mar Julius I. Mar Julius consecrated to the Sacred Episcopate:

Mar Timotheus I (*Joseph Rene Vilatte, 1/24/1854 - 7/8/1929*), in Ceylon (nor Sri Lanka) as Archbishop-Exarch of North America for The American Catholic Church on 29 May 1892, assisted by Paulose Mar Athanasius (Paulose Kadavil Kooran) and Geevarghese Mar Gregorios (Geevarghese Pallathitta Chaturuthil), Bishops of The Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, in accordance with the Patriarchal Bull of Moran Mor Ignatius Peter III dated 29 December 1891 at Mardin. Mar Timotheus I consecrated to the Sacred Episcopate:

Paul Miraglia Gulotti, from the Catholic Italian Church, who consecrates December 4, 1904:

Jules Houssaye (*l'Abbé Julio*), Archbishop of the Catholic French Church (Gallican), who in Geneva (Switzerland), consecrates on June 21, 1911:

Louis François Giraud, Patriarch of the Gallican Catholic Church, who consecrates on July 21, 1913:

Jean Bricaud (*Tau Jean II*), who consecrates May 5, 1918:

Victor Blanchard (*Tau Targelius*), who consecrates January 7, 1945:

Roger Menard (*Tau EON II*), who consecrates on June 10, 1946:

Robert Ambelain (*Tau Robert-Jean III*), who consecrates May 31, 1959:
Roger Deschamps (Tau Jean Rudiger), who consecrates June 1, 1963:

Armand Toussaint (Tau Raymond Panagion), who consecrates June 10, 1972:

Roger Caro (Pierre Phoebus, later Stephanos), who consecrates June 7, 1974, assisted by the co-consecrators Jean-Paul Charlet (Jethro), and Maurice Auburger (Theophoreonai), and all bishops present at the Synod same day (see “Apostolic Successions” on PDF on this website):

Philippe Laurent De Coster (Philippus-Laurentius), Archbishop of the Latin Old Roman Catholic Church of Flanders (non-papal). To obtain all other Apostolic Lines of Roger Caro, because of his many re-consecrations in France and Canada (André Barbeau through Joseph Paul Fernand Dupuis (Victor Solis II); André Barbeau through Georges Bellemare; Robert Schuyler Zeiger through Rainer Laufers and George Bellemare, etc.), he was consecrated a second time by Roger Caro, together with same co-consecrators and bishops present at Synod on June 30, 1979; and, June 25, 1995 by Nils Bertil Persson and co-consecrators in London (UK).

BIOGRAPHY OF JEAN BRICAUD (TAU JEAN II)
Jean Bricaud (Tau Jean II)
Born 11.February 1881 at Neuville sur Ain (Ain).

Jean Bricaud was and remained an employee of the Bank Crédit Lyonnais from the time he was 16 years old, after being indentured for seminary studies for the Roman Catholic Priesthood by his pious parents. While still attending his seminarian studies in Lyon, he frequented the circles of Elia Alta, a bookseller who is also a spiritualist - and the therapeutist Bouvier, who were a pupil of Eliphas Jacques Charrot. Bouvier shared his passion for the traditions of the Kabbalah and occult philosophy with the young man.

In 1899 he became acquainted with Papus who at that time held lineages from many esoteric colleges and orders and where, as of 4 years earlier, installed as Gnostic Bishop for his own district. Like his friend he was early in his life fascinated with the growing attention to the science interior and universal represented in the Occult literate circle and sought like him access to the secrets of God, the universe, life and everything.
else in books, in initiations, in personal pupilship to more or less dependable modern teachers. While Papus trailed behind him a mass of pamphlets and treatises addressed to a larger audience, Jean Bricaud focused on those circles in which they both moved, drawing a select audience for his insights and discoveries.

**Tau Synesius** (Léonce-Eugène Fabre des Essarts), the elected successor of **Tau Valentin II** (Jules Doinel) to the Patriarchate of *L’Eglise Gnostique* nominated him Bishop for the diocese of Lyons, afterfirst becoming associated with the **Ordre Martiniste** of **Papus** (Gerard Encausse) and arranged for his consecration and installment for this office with the assistance of **Tau Vincent** (Papus) in 1901 with the ecclesiastical name **Tau Johannes**, when Bricaud was 20 years old!

In 1907 he along with several of his Bishop colleagues, among them Papus split from Synesius’ church, and founded the *Eglise Gnostique Universelle*. This would become the Church which received mandate and assent from four specific currents of contemporary neo-gnostic traditions: The Primitive Johannite Church, the Vintrasian Interior Sanctuary of the Carmel Elie, the *Eglise Gnostique* of Doinel and a fourth unknown and apparently secret Neo-Valentinian "school".

You can get an impression of where Jean Bricaud thought this new Gnostic Church was heading by reading the Patriarchal Homily of Tau Jean II on his installment 25.February 1908,

It concludes with this supplication:

*My very dear Brothers, raise your eyes toward the heights, turn your sights toward the true Light side, intoxicate yourselves with the ineffable delights of the spiritual Pleroma, and you will acquire strength to complete the holy work, the real work, the divine work. Ah, my Brothers, through all the tempests and storms that are unleashed upon our hylic world, when false doctrines try to lose souls, do not lose sight of the high summits, and if you touch the earth, may it be as the dove of the ark that remains only an instant to clasp the peaceful branch of the olive tree! To you, my very dear Sisters, I make a more particular call. I know very precious is your course in this apostolate and I know how much our feminine world hides in her salons and her mystical retreats the noble and courageous emulators of **Maximilla** and **Ésclarmonde de Foix**. Better than we, you know how to find the soul’s path! We are but the Word that conquers; you are the Heart that persuades. Unite with our brothers to re-establish the community on a strong and profound foundation, the visible church of the Pneumatics that the manifestations from on High announce and promise to us.*

Jean Bricaud moved in many circles - from the most conventional and devout of Catholic intellectuals, to eccentric and mysterious sages, tricksters and phantasts. With his introduction to the Western Gnosis, be it the masonic illuminism of *the Ancient and Primitive Rite of Memphis-Misraim*, the internal therapeutic theurgy of **Elie Alta, Bouvier** and **Maistre Anthelme Nizier Phillipe**, the enthusiastic messianism of the followers of **Pierre-Michel Eugene Vintras** who had a French headquarters in the city of Lyons - the path of the heart of Martinism as administrated by his friend **Papus** or the charismatic ritualism of **Tau Synesius** Gnostic Church, he discovered a richness and diversity he prior to this thought he could only encounter in the Far East.
Among his friends and associates later in life where Bishop Louis-Marie-François Giraud (d. 1951) who after having lived for many years as a Trappist Monk had joined the fray with the Gallican Catholic Church under the Apostolic protection of Archbishop Joseph René Villatte, from whom he could trace his Apostolic succession as a Bishop. Bishop Giraud’s consecrator was also a famous "Mage" the Abbe Julio (Jules Ernest Houssay, 1844-1912), who through the introduction of Giraud, Jean Bricaud befriended. Louis-Marie-François Giraud consecrated Jean Bricaud, already a Gnostic Bishop with three verified lineages from heterodox and esoteric lines of succession on the 21st of July 1913, as Apostolic Bishop, with a fraternal affiliation with the Gallicanne communion. Thus in the history of the visible modern manifestation of the Gnosis, a Communion of Gnostics where again reunited with the Communion of Christians of the Apostolic and Catholic Church; a situation which Saint Valentine invested so much into preserving, but which were destroyed by countless schisms and resulting persecutions of outsiders and esoterics in the Church of Rome as well as the Church of Constantinople.

On February 21st 1934, 70 years hence in a few days time - Tau Jean II were received in the higher Assembly in the Pleroma, to, within the Heart of God, watch over us in the company of victors, saints, holy men and women - and the entire cosmos of angels, archangels, principalities, thrones, cherubim, seraphim and the entirety of entirities. Jean Bricaud, in ecclesia named Tau Jean II was succeeded, of his own wish and election, as Patriarch by Constant Martin Chevillon, a man of the same fervour, solemnity and rectitude as himself, who was sadly martyred on the 22nd of March 1944 by partisans to the Nazi occupant powers and mock governent, in Lyon.

The Patriarchal Homily of Tau Jean II

Upon his ascension to the throne of the Universal Gnostic Church.

Very Dear Collaborators, Brothers and Sisters, By your will and by the will of the most Holy Pleroma, I find myself elevated to the supreme rank of the Gnostic hierarchy and have ascended to the patriarchal throne of the Holy Church of the Paraclete. It is, I believe, more for my religious zeal than my experience in life that I must have been designated by your suffrage. And it is a very heavy task that is incumbent upon me! However, with much rejoicing I accept it, having the unshakable conviction that God’s work be accomplished in spite of all human weakness.

You will assist me, very dear collaborators, by gathering fraternally around your Patriarch and publicly multiplying our apostolic works.

All those who clearly see the religious situation of the European peoples have been persuaded that Catholicism as it is understood and taught today, no longer fills the needs of modern society. It appears to them like an oppressive force that keeps people in ignorance to dominate them. Also, they repudiate the religious inheritance of their forefathers, and one can foresee the moment where Catholic orthodoxy will have died having been deserted by all religious
minds that dare to think, no matter the few exceptions one can mention. And if these religious thinkers, if the men of science abandon the Catholic orthodoxy, it will inevitably fall, because it is from them that spiritual movements are raised. What's more, is a religious confession that attracts the contempt of everything intelligent in modern society?

The religious evolution of which we are a part shows us that a new religion is necessary. Gnosticism offers itself as the desired religion. Gnosis is the complete and definitive synthesis of all beliefs and all ideas of which humanity has need to realize its origin, its past, its end, its nature, the contradictions of existence and the problems of life. To know this is to know the only things necessary.

Gnosis is the pearl of the Gospel for which the Man truly worthy of this name must sell and give away all that he has.

"My soul, from where do you come? Said Saint Basil. Who assigned to you to bear a cadaver? If you are something celestial, oh my soul! teach me."

And Gnosis answers: "In contemplating the Pleroma, you will know all things."

"Gnosis," said Ephram the Syrian, "weaves a crown for those who love it and makes them sit upon a King's throne."

The doctors and bishops of this Gnosis are the repositories of the esoteric sense of Christianity. It is to us, pontiffs according to the order of Melchizedek, that the angels confided the pectoral whereupon blazes the Urim and Thummin. It is we who read from the book of the true law. Is it of us that it is written: "Those that are donned in garments of white, who are they and from where did they come? These are those who have endured the great Tribulation and have washed their tunics in the spiritual blood of the lamb (Ram), and are virgin to the superstitions and sins of the Hylic world!"

Gnosis is the very essence of Christianity. Here, my beloved, is the just definition of Gnosticism. But, by Christianity, we do not only mean the doctrine taught since the arrival of the divine Saviour, but also the one taught before Jesus' arrival, in the old temples, the doctrine of Eternal Truth!

Our Church is the antinomy of that of Rome. The name of that one is Force; the name of ours is Charity.

Our Sovereign Patriarch is not Peter, the impulsive, who denied three times his master and took up the sword, but John, the Saviour's friend, the apostle who relied on his heart and in it knew best the immortal sentiment, the oracle of light, the author of the Eternal Gospel, who took up only Speech and Love. Our Church is the Celestial City upon earth and in the heavens, this kingdom of Justice of which is spoken in the book of Revelation. She is also the church of the Paraclete of which she has the virtues. She is pure and peaceful, holy and sanctifying, the comforter and the comforted in the exile of the world.

With your support, very dear Collaborators and Brothers, our Holy Church will spread and will develop branches, as the mustard seed spoken of in the Gospel, and will become an immense tree on which the birds of the sky will come to take rest. However, for God's work to
be accomplished, we must remain united in the love of Gnosis as the Holy Aeons are united in the Father's will.

It is necessary that, dispersed throughout the world, we let no opportunity escape to expose the truth, to divert our stray brothers from the path of darkness, to affirm who we are, what we desire and where we are going. Times are difficult, we know; the occult forces are united against us, we cannot ignore it. However, we cannot allow the idea for which so many martyrs died to remain unproductive.

Also, my very dear Brothers, raise your eyes toward the heights, turn your sights toward the true Light side, intoxicate yourselves with the ineffable delights of the spiritual Pleroma, and you will acquire strength to complete the holy work, the real work, the divine work. Ah, my Brothers, through all the tempests and storms that are unleashed upon our hylic world, when false doctrines try to lose souls, do not lose sight of the high summits, and if you touch the earth, may it be as the dove of the ark that remains only an instant to clasp the peaceful branch of the olive tree!

To you, my very dear Sisters, I make a more particular call. I know very precious is your course in this apostolate and I know how much our feminine world hides in her salons and her mystical retreats the noble and courageous emulators of Maximilla and Ésclarmonde de Foix. Better than we, you know how to find the soul's path! We are but the Word that conquers; you are the Heart that persuades. Unite with our brothers to re-establish the community on a strong and profound foundation, the visible church of the Pneumatics that the manifestations from on High announce and promise to us.

And now, Very Dear Collaborators, Blessing on you! Blessing on you, Very Dear Brothers and Sisters! Blessing on all those who work with us in the fields of the Lord! Blessing on all those who fill themselves with the goodwill of the house of God! And Blessings also on our enemies, so that the light from on High illuminates them and so that they will know who we are, that by so doing they come to love us, as we love them. Amen.

+ JEAN II, Bishop Primate in France,
Patriarch of the Universal Gnostic Church
Lyon, 25 February 1908.

The Catechism of the Gnostic Catholic Church in the light of Monsignor Jean Bricaud’s original work

Christian Gnosticism in Brief

Sometime during the third century a group of outcast Christians who called themselves Gnostics, a word that means knowledge or acquaintance, buried papyrus scrolls of their sacred documents so that the "orthodox" Christians would not destroy them. Those documents, discovered in 1946 at Nag Hammadi in Egypt, disclose a kind of Christianity that is different from the Catholic/Protestant religion based upon the "orthodox" New Testament, and reveal an approach that may, in fact, be as old if not older than what is now called Christianity.
This Gnostic Christianity invites people to seek within themselves a deeper sense of self that leads ultimately to the revelation that within each of us is a "True Self" that is a spark of divinity. Within this "True Self" God is known. In the Gnostic approach, the world is not viewed as a good place that was driven into sin by the acts of human beings, but rather is a place that lacks the fullness of love and moral sense that is at the heart of the divine. It is not so much that human beings are sinners, but that the world itself is deficient, and only when one touches their innermost "True Self" does serenity and love truly become known to each person. For Gnostic Christians, Jesus Christ is a revealer of this "True Self" that is divine, and leads people into an awakening of their true nature.

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**PRAYERS AND CREEDS**

**The Sign of the Cross**

In the name of the Father, + and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**The Gnostic's Prayer**

Almighty God, whose footstool is the highest firmament: Great Ruler of Heaven and all the powers therein: Hear the prayers of Thy servants who put their trust in Thee. We pray Thee, supply our needs from day to day: Command Thy heavenly host to comfort and succour us: That it may be to Thy glory and unto the good of man. Forgive us our transgressions as we
forgive our brothers and sisters: Be present with us: strengthen and sustain us: For we are but instruments in Thy hands. Let us not fall into temptation: Defend us from all danger and evil: Let Thy mighty power ever guard and protect us, Thou great Fount of knowledge and wisdom: Instruct Thy servants by Thy holy presence: Guide and support us, now and forever. Amen.

The Hail Sophia

Hail Sophia, filled with light, the Christ is with Thee, blessed art Thou among the Aeons, and blessed is the Liberator of Thy light, Jesus. Holy Sophia, Mother of all gods, pray to the light for us Thy children, now and in the hour of our death. Amen.

Glory Be to the Father

Glory be to the Father, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. (or "throughout the Aeons of Aeons") Amen.

An Act of Gnosis

We know Thee Thou eternal thought immovable, unchangeable, unlimited and unconditioned remaining unchanged in essential essence while forever thinking the mystery of the universe manifesting three extensions of cosmic power creation, preservation and destruction – Thou, Lord of all. We know Thee Father Thou secret, supreme and ineffable Maker unchanging in essence yet ever-changing in appearance and manifestation visualising as an act of consciousness the mystery of creation and by an act of will absorbed into life - Creator. We know Thee Son Thou Word, Thou Logos divine manifestation of the Lord alone-begotten of the great stillness begotten by an act of consciousness alone coming to the flesh to destroy incarnate error- Sustainer. We know Thee Holy Spirit Thou giver of life and goodness principle of love, beauty and compassion remaining here on earth to guide and care for us Thou, with the Father and the Son art the wholeness upon which the manifested universe is erected - and Destroyed. We know you Messengers custodians of the essential wisdom of the race Preachers of the great Law containing within yourselves spiritual insight and courage living and labouring unselfishly mediating between the supreme source and its creation dedicated to the advancement of all. We look to the union of the self with the Fullness and thus liberation from the infinite chain of attainment. Amen.

A Brief Credo

We acknowledge one great invisible God, the Unknown Father, the Aeon of Aeons, who brought forth with His providence: the Father, the Mother and the Son. We acknowledge the Christos, the self-begotten Son, born from the virginal and ineffable Mother in the high Aeons: who in the Logos of God came down from above to annul the emptiness of this age and restore the fullness of the Aeon. We acknowledge the Holy Spirit, our celestial Mother and consoler, who proceeded from Herself, a gift of Herself out of the silence of the unknown God. We seek the gathering of the sparks of light from the sea of forgetfulness and we look to the glories of eternal life in the Fullness. Amen.

A Prayer to the Supernal Parents

All-powerful Lord, Our Father; All-wise Lady, Our Mother; Supernal parents of all that was, and is, and is to come; sustain us, your children this day. Give us the wisdom to see your path,
and the strength to prevail in the darkest hour. We thank you for the joys we have, And for your grace bestowed on us This day and every day. May we thrive and grow in knowledge, wisdom and understanding. Now and forevermore. Amen.

**An Act of Contrition**

*(Especially important when in danger of death)*

Oh my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee and I detest all my faults which I have committed, not because of punishment which I may receive but chiefly because with my faults I have turned away from Thee, my God, who art all-good, and who art wholly deserving of my love. I firmly resolve with the help of Thy grace to sin no more, and I ask to be forgiven even as I forgive those who have offended against me. Amen.

**A Morning Prayer**

On waking, Heavenly Father, I sing Thy praises and I dare say to Thee again with confidence the prayer that the divine Master taught us:

Our Father who art in the depths of the Aeons, may Thy Holy Logos and Christ be understood and adored in the Universe; may the kingdom of Thy Holy Spirit come to us, may Thy will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us this day our spiritual nourishment, the strength and courage to earn the bread for our body. Forgive us for our digressions from Thy laws, as our assembly forgives those who repent of their sins. Support us in our state of weakness so that we may not be carried away by our passions and deliver us from the deceptive mirages of the Archons. For we have no other ruler than Thy beloved Son, Christ our Saviour whose is the kingdom, the triumph and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Lord, our divine Propator, hear my prayer, listen to my supplication; let me hear the voice of Thy mercy from the morning, for it is in Thy hands that I place myself. I adore Thee, I praise Thee, I give Thee thanks from the morning.

I thank Thee for having protected me during the night from all the dangers and all the evils which could have harmed me and from which Thou hast covered me with Thy protection. During this day, remain my support, my strength, my refuge, my salvation and my consolation.

Oh my Father, I thank Thee for all the good things that I have received from Thee so far. It is also by an effect of Thy goodness that I have come to see this day; I want to use it to serve Thee. I devote to Thee all my thoughts, words, deeds and sorrows. Bless them, oh my God, so that there will be none which are not activated by Thy love and which do not tend to glorify Thee. *(From the usage of the French Gnostic Church)*

**An Evening Prayer**

*(With examination of conscience)*

Night has spread its veils over us, everything invites us to meditate. I raise my thoughts to Thee, oh divine Propator, and I come into Thy presence to examine my conduct this day. Did I not hide my religious thoughts when, on the contrary, I should have expressed them clearly?
Have I not mixed the name of God with words of impatience, anger, untruth or thoughtlessness? Have I at all times had a firm will, and have I always subjected it to the light of Gnosis? Have I always preserved my spiritual dignity? Have I always been moderate in prosperity and patient in adversity? Have I been angry? Have I been proud, vain and ambitious? Have I always treated my neighbour like a brother or sister and with love? Have I acted out of hatred or vengeance? Have I abstained from gossip, from slander and from rash judgments? Have I put right the wrong caused to my fellowman? Have I always told the truth? Have I always kept my word when it has been given? Finally, have I spent my day well? These, oh my Father, are my faults; I admit them before Thee, and even though Thou hast no need of my confession, and Thou seest into the depths of my heart, I confess them to Thee nevertheless and I admit them to heaven and to earth because I have sinned in words, in thoughts, in deeds and omissions, and this is my fault, my grievous fault. Oh my God and my Father, I have missed the mark Thou has set for me; break the hardness of my heart and by Thy infinite strength and goodness, bring forth from it tears of penitence. Forgive me, oh my God, for all the wrong that I have done and caused to be done; forgive me for all the good I have not done, and which I should have done, or that I have done badly; forgive me for all the transgressions which I know and also for those which I do not know; I feel sincere repentance for them and I wish to make an effort to put them right. Lord, oh divine Propator, who art the Father of the Lights and the Protector of all those who trust in Thee, deign to take me in Thy holy protection during this night and keep me from all earthly dangers and spiritual perils. During the sleep of my body make my soul watch in Thee. Subdue in me all wrong desires; make my conscience enjoy a holy tranquillity; take far from me all evil thoughts and all the dangerous illusions of the Archons. Grant Thy powerful protection to all whom I love; my parents, my friends and to all those who make up the household of the Gnosis and to all human spirits still wandering in this place of exile whether they be in the body or out of the body. Father of the Lights, as I fall asleep, I place my trust in Thee and in the double and shining star of the Pleroma. Amen. (From the usage of the French Gnostic Church, slightly modified)

LESSON I

OF GOD AND THE UNIVERSE

1. What is God?
The infinite and eternal Reality behind all phenomena, known to the Gnostic under several names, such as the True God, the Unknown Father, the King of Light and many more.

2. What are some further characteristics of God?
Although being infinite, God is in a sense beyond all qualities; one may nevertheless affirm that God is the highest, perfect transcendental Existence in Whom everything originated and by Whom everything is sustained.

3. What is God essentially?
Essentially, God is potential Being, for in Him all potentialities are present.

4. What is God secondarily?
In a secondary sense God is Being in activity; He is Being in actuality.

5. How does the potentiality of God make its to actuality?
The word whereby we express the passage from potential Being to actualised Being is the term "to emanate". It is by such emanation (pouring forth) that the multitude of spiritual and material worlds and their fashioners emerge from the original potentiality of God.

6. Can there be more than one God?
If under "God" we understand the ultimate and true Reality then the answer is no. If the lesser emanated deities should be called "Gods" then the answer would be yes. It is also possible to envision the ultimate God as the first God, and the Demiurge, the lesser god of this world, as the second god.

7. Is God a Holy Trinity?
Yes. The Gnostic tradition has always affirmed the existence of God as the Holy Trinity consisting of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

8. What are the properties of the three persons of the Holy Trinity?
The Father is characterized by activity, the creation of beings and their attraction; the Son by articulated intelligence (LOGOS) and the will to redeem; and the Holy Spirit by inspiration, fortification and vivification. In short: The Father is creator, the Son redeemer and the Holy Spirit sanctifier.

9. God being called "He" and Father and Son being masculine names, do we need to assume that the godhead is of the male gender?
No. God is totally beyond the limiting characteristics of gender. The ineffable qualities of the Divine, when receiving names in human language, have come to receive the common articles of "he", "she" and "it". It is not uncommon to find terms for God in Gnostic scriptures which are androgynous such as "Mother-Father" (METROPATOR), and the third person of the Holy Trinity (the Holy Spirit) is regarded by Gnostics as feminine.

10. Why is it that Gnostics do not apply "gender neutral" terms to God?
Traditional names such as "God the Father" or "God the Son" are instrumentalities whereby qualities and keynotes of profound mystical subtlety have been expressed within the limitations of human language. To substitute for them arbitrary products of human thought would almost certainly lead to the loss of these qualities and keynotes.

11. Is this the only reason?
No. Gnostics know that ancient Divine Names are Words of Power, which, when uttered, bring forth from the Aeonial regions specific responses of grace. (A good example is to be found in the scripture Thunder, the Perfect Mind, where a Divine Being says: "I am the utterance of my name"). The effectiveness of such sacred theurgy should not be jeopardized by a change of names.

12. How did this universe come into existence?
Like all other things and beings, this universe was emanated by God.

13. Does this mean that the universe is God, or part of God?
The universe is not God in the exclusive sense, for God is by no means confined to this or any other universe. The universe, however, consists of the substance of God. It came forth from Him and to Him it shall return.

14. Is the universe good?
Since God is good and the universe was emanated by Him, it would be reasonable to assume that the universe is good. Yet we find that the universe contains some qualities that are good, others that are evil, and yet others that are indifferent.

15. Where do these qualities originate?
In contrast with the good qualities, the evil and the indifferent ones originate not in the goodness and wisdom of God, whose substance underlies the universe, but in the blindness and wilfulness of certain spiritual entities who fashioned this substance into a universe. These half-makers (Demiurges), or false rulers (Archons), are the cause of the ambivalent nature of the worlds of matter and mind.

16. Is God present in the universe?
Yes. God is present because He is everywhere. He is present as the source and end of all; He is present because ultimately all things are under His dominion; and He is also present because nothing is hidden from Him. This presence is known as omnipresence, which,
however, does not denote omnipotence, since effective control of our universe is not exercised by God, but by the Demiurge and Archons.

17. **Is this the only way in which God is present in the universe?**
No. God is not only omnipresent but also immanent in the universe, for the underlying essence of all things is none other than God. Once again, this underlying essence does not imply effective control over the forms within which the essence is embodied.

18. **Is God present within the human being?**
God is present in the human being in a very special way, for the spirit in man contains God's effective presence. This is also at times called the Christ in us, described by St. Paul as our "hope of glory".

19. **What will happen to the universe at the end of time?**
When the present Aeon comes to an end, the seeds of light (redeemable spiritual portions) in the universe will be lifted up into the fullness of God (PLEROMA) while the darkness present in the universe will be left behind.

20. **What is to be the fate of the unredeemed darkness of the universe?**
Gnostic revelation is not unanimous on this question. There are indications that at least some portion of the darkness of the universe will go into a state of purificatory suspension to be redeemed in some future cycle. Other indications intimate that much of such darkness, particularly the material (HYLIC) world will be dissolved so that its existence will only have been an accident in limitless time.

**LESSON II**

**OF THE SPIRITUAL WORLDS AND THE DEMIURGE**

21. **What is a spirit?**
A spirit is a being that has a measure of consciousness and free will, but no material body, and thus will never die.

22. **Are there many spirits?**
Their number is immeasurable and they form both within and beyond the universe a vast, luminous realm which is called heaven by many traditions. Not all spirits are in this beneficent, luminous realm, however.

23. **What are the spirits and their habitations called by Gnostics?**
Both the spirits and their habitations are frequently called Aeons. (In a derivative sense, an age is sometimes also called an Aeon.)

24. **How many categories are the spirits divided into?**
The categories and hierarchies of spirits are very numerous and only a few are explicitly known. They range all the way from the highest deific Aeonial beings who dwell in perfect harmony, balance and bliss in the Fullness (PLEROMA), to the various kinds of angels, down to elementals and spirit-denizens of nature.

25. **What are angels?**
Angels are spirits, upon whom great power, wisdom and holiness have been bestowed by God.

26. **What does the word "angel" mean?**
It means "messenger", for the most frequent role of angels is that of messengers and mediators between the PLEROMA and the world of humans.

27. **Which angelic hierarchies and individual angels are known to us?**
There are nine orders or "choirs" of angels: Seraphim, Cherubim, Thrones, Dominions (or Dominations), Virtues, Powers, and Principalities (Kingdoms), Archangels and Angels. The canonical scriptures mention three angels by name: the Archangels Michael, Gabriel and
Raphael. The Gnostic church adds to these a fourth: Uriel. Gnostic scriptures mention most of these angels and add numerous others such as the rescuer of Gnostics, Eleleth, and many others.

28. How do angels help humans?
Angels help humans by praying for them, by acting as messengers between the PLEROMA and our earthly dwelling place, and by serving as our guardian angels.

29. In what special ways do our guardian angels help us?
Guardian angels pray for us, protect us from spiritual harm (or at times also from physical harm), and inspire us to aspire to Gnosis.

30. Does each individual human have a guardian angel?
It has been commonly held by tradition that each person has a special guardian angel. Experience both Gnostic and otherwise bears this out. By the same token it must be recalled that the concept of the guardian angel has been influenced by a yet more profound mystery, i.e. that of the Divine Twin, or Twin Angel.

31. What is the Divine Twin or Twin Angel?
There are reports in Gnostic scripture and tradition about a celestial twin spirit who overshadows the human and at certain special times manifests to him. In *Pistis Sophia* such a twin comes to Jesus early in his life and unites with Him. The Holy Prophet Mani experienced several manifestations of his twin who finally united with him and took him to heaven.

32. Can spirits including angels be seen?
Not ordinarily. However, under special circumstances, angels have visibly manifested to humans. The visitation of the Holy Virgin Mary by the Archangel Gabriel and the revelation of the Koran to Mohammed by the same Archangel are two examples.

33. Are there spirits involved in our lives that are not good?
Yes. There are spiritual beings who have become estranged from God and from the PLEROMA and who are thus at best unwise and at worst evil.

34. Where are these estranged spiritual beings to be found?
They are found primarily in connection with the material universe and its mental and emotional aspects, for they are primarily responsible for the creation and management of these realms and for the suffering and sorrow that abide therein.

35. Are these estranged spiritual beings the same as the fallen angels that some Christians believe in?
There can be little doubt that the myth of the war in heaven and of the fall of Lucifer are but a form of the Gnostic statements about the estrangement of the Demiurge and his Archons from the PLEROMA.

36. What is the Demiurge?
He is called Demiurge or "half-maker" because he had taken the divine substance and fashioned out of it a world. He is the spiritual being who had become forgetful of his origins, even of God. He thinks that he is God and there is no other God before him.

37. By what names is the Demiurge known?
In Gnostic scriptures he is called YALDABAOTH (child of chaos), SACLAS (fool) and SAMAEL (blind one). In later Gnosticizing lore he was at times identified with LUCIFER or SATAN, the prince of the powers of air.

38. Is the Demiurge evil?
He is classically regarded as flawed and foolish but not utterly evil. In medieval Gnostic traditions he became increasingly identified with evil.

39. Does the Demiurge have associates?
Yes, they are the Archons (rulers), and their desire is to rule over humans and other beings.

40. What is the relationship of the Demiurge to YAHWEH, the God of the Old Testament?
Not all the images of God in the Old Testament come from the same source. A good many are descriptions of the Demiurge. Some, such as those in the Wisdom Literature and in some Psalms, are of a much more exalted nature. Some Gnostic teachers held that the teachings of the Old Testament were a mixture attributable to three sources: the Demiurge, the elders of Israel and the True God.

41. If the Demiurge and his Archons are power-hungry and arrogant but not truly evil, are there, in addition, truly evil demons?
Yes. There exist monstrous species of evil which populate hellish regions in association with earth. Their origins are unknown. The name of one demon mentioned in Gnostic scriptures is YACHTANABAS, although there are others.

42. Can the Demiurge and his Archons be redeemed?
This possibility is alluded to in some Gnostic writings. At least one such being, the brother of the Demiurge, has turned to the good and been redeemed. His name is SABAOTH and also ABRAXAS. Cognate theories of universal redemption, even of demons and of the Demiurge, were articulated in early times by Origen (APOKATASTASIS PANTHON) and in our days by C. G. Jung (in Answer to Job).

LESSON III

OF THE HUMAN BEING

43. What is the human being?
The human being is a spirit (PNEUMA) endowed with reason and with free will combined with a soul and an animal body.

44. What is an animal?
It is a certain kind of soul (ANIMA, PSYCHE) combined with a body (SOMA).

45. In what way does the human differ from the animal?
The human being differs from the animal in that the human is connected with his true nature which is spirit.

46. Where does the spirit of the human being come from?
The spirit of the human being originates in the Divine Fullness (PLEROMA), from whence it descended into the soul and body.

47. How may the spirit (PNEUMA) of the human being be described?
The human spirit is a spark of God's light, an effective part of God, separated from God in outer manifestation, but retaining a living connection with its ultimate source.

48. How may the soul (PSYCHE) of the human being be described?
The soul consists of several components which at the present stage of human development are largely dominated by the thinking principle and to some extent by the feeling principle.

49. How may the body (SOMA) of the human being be described?
The body of the human being is composed of flesh (SARX) which is a form of matter (HYLE) albeit endowed temporarily with biological life.

50. Where do the soul and the body of the human being come from?
The soul is composed of immaterial substance brought about by the prolonged interaction of spirit and body (or bodies). The body is the product of biological evolution that has taken place on earth; a process influenced by the Archons.

51. For what reason did the spirits of human beings come to embody themselves on earth?
The classical scriptures of the Gnosis are not explicit on this subject. Other scriptures (The Hymn of the Pearl; the revelations of The Holy Prophet Mani) indicate that human beings
come into souls and bodies in order to rescue earlier emanations of the divine light by refining and purifying the darkness.

52. **Was the aim achieved which was set for the human spirits when they came down to earth?**
Only in a very few instances. Almost all those which came down failed. Tempted by the deceptive mirages here below, they yielded to the impulses of the soul and body instead of retaining spiritual mastery over them. Thus the first or heavenly man became the man of earth.

53. **How do some kindred traditions describe this calamitous event?**
The Hermetic Gnosis states that charmed by the universe the human being yielded to the attractions of physical matter and identified himself with it, and so was trapped in the body. The Jewish and Christian traditions call it the Fall.

54. **How can the human being recover his original condition?**
By Gnosis, this is the knowledge of his true nature and original condition, a portion of which is ANAMNESIS, the remembering of true things forgotten.

55. **What stands in the way of humanity's recovery of its original condition?**
The obstacle is ignorance (A-GNOSIS) manifesting in the forgetting of the real (AMNESIS).

56. **Is there an original sin?**
Yes and no. Being trapped in the body and deceived by the Archonic part of the soul, all humans suffer from a deficiency which they share with all of creation. This deficiency, however, is not the result of any particular sinful act on the part of human ancestors (Adam and Eve). Rather than being a sin (moral failing), it is an unfortunate existential condition.

57. **What are the results of this existential condition?**
As the result of this condition, humans are born as slaves of the earthly Demiurge and his Archons.

58. **What sufferings do these Archonic powers make us undergo?**
The afflictions attendant upon life in the realm of the Archons are very numerous. Some of these are: gravity (being earthbound), heat, cold, natural disasters, diseases, pain, death and the torment of re-embodiment in successive lives.

**LESSON IV**

**OF GNOSIS AND SALVATION**

59. **What is Gnosis?**
Gnosis is the revelatory and salvific knowledge of whom we were, of what we have become, of where we were, of wherein we have been thrown, of whereto we are hastening, of what we are being freed, of what birth really is, and of what rebirth really is. This is an ancient definition which is still accurate.

60. **Is there more than one kind of Gnosis?**
The experience of Gnosis comes to human beings in individual manifestations, yet it always has common features and a common keynote.

61. **Is Gnosis an experience or a doctrine?**
It is both. The experience of Gnosis is mystical knowledge that liberates. This is both accompanied and preceded by a kindred kind of Gnosis that informs. These were called (by Clement of Alexandria) the Divine Gnosis and Human Gnosis respectively. The human or doctrinal part of Gnosis consists of a certain kind of knowledge of the spiritual, psychic and material worlds and their relationships.

62. **How is Human Gnosis acquired?**
Primarily by way of the study and assimilation of the teachings of the Messengers of Light and of the seers and sages of the Gnostic tradition and by way of the amplification of these by individual insight.

63. **How does one come to Divine Gnosis?**
By divine grace combined with sincere and informed human aspiration.

64. **What specific help is there available to us in order to receive both Divine and Human Gnosis?**
Such help comes to us from Messengers of Light and other enlightened teachers of Gnosis.

65. **Was there a time when humans were without Gnosis?**
From the beginning of the human race, some people were in possession of Gnosis. These early Gnostics were at times symbolically called the "Great Race of Seth", after Seth, the third son of Adam, who was recognized as the prototype of all Gnostics.

66. **Who was the latest great revealer of Gnosis?**
It was the Lord Jesus Christ, who acted both as the rectifier of the existing tradition of Gnosis and as the revealer of new elements of Gnosis.

67. **Can Gnosis be given by another?**
A Messenger of Light comes to enlighten humans by his teachings and to transform their spiritual lives by the mysteries he bestows on them. But only those in whom the true spiritual intuition ("the Light Mind") is awakened will welcome the message and benefit from the mysteries.

68. **What are we to be saved from?**
We are to be saved first from ignorance which prevents us from knowing our true source, our real nature, our condition and our destiny. At last we shall also be saved from the burden of earthly existence with its attendant conditions of suffering and exile from our true home.

69. **What brings about salvation?**
Salvation is brought about neither by faith (belief in God, or Christ) nor by works (the performance of good deeds), but by Gnosis.

70. **Why is this so?**
Because faith and works do not result in a radical change in the being of one's consciousness, but Gnosis does.

71. **What does the radical change of consciousness brought about by Gnosis accomplish?**
It establishes a renewed link of the soul with the spirit and of both with God. This breaks the bonds that have shackled our true being to the forces of earth. Ultimately it brings liberation from all earthly things.

72. **What are the further benefits of salvation by Gnosis?**
A turning away of the soul from the attachments of life, a constant straining upwards to the pure Divine Spirit, wherein is our true home. Also, God's friendship in this life, a good death, and after that a swift passage through cleansing regions to God's presence in the Fullness (PLEROMA) of divine glory, goodness and love.

**LESSON V**

**OF THE LORD CHRIST**

73. **Who is the Lord Christ?**
He is one of the High Aeons of the Fullness (PLEROMA); being the articulated thought (LOGOS) of God and the expression of God's redemptive power (SOTERIA), for which latter reason He is also called the Saviour (SOTER).

74. **Are the Lord Christ and Jesus one and the same person?**
Jesus is the earthly manifestation of Christ, the celestial Aeon.
75. Did the celestial Aeon Christ manifest fully and equally during the earthly existence of Jesus?
No. The celestial Aeon Christ came to fully manifest in Jesus beginning with the baptism of the latter in the river Jordan at the hands of Saint John, the Baptist. Yet, Christ was present in some measure and manner in Jesus before His baptism also.

76. Did the celestial Aeon Christ ever depart from Jesus?
It appears He did withdraw, at least to some degree, at the time of the crucifixion and death of Jesus, as indicated by the exclamation of Jesus; "Aeon, Aeon, why have you departed from me" (ELI, ELI, LAMA SABAKTANI).

77. Did the celestial Aeon Christ return to Jesus after Jesus' crucifixion and death?
Yes, He fully returned at the time of the resurrection when Jesus became "the Living One" (REDIVIVUS).

78. Did Jesus save humankind by His physical death on the Cross?
No. His physical death was merely a tragic incident in the sublime drama of His life.

79. Why have so many Christians come to assume that it was by His physical death that Jesus saved humankind?
Because many of them possess a consciousness that appreciates only physical reality and ignores the greater realities which are spiritual.

80. What is the spiritual reality of the suffering and death of Jesus?
The true sacrifice of the Aeon Christ and of His manifestation, Jesus, was not His physical death and the torments He endured prior to the same. His true sacrifice was His willing entry into the horrendous limitations of earthly embodiment. All spirits suffer grievously when entering into earthly embodiment; the sufferings endured by a high celestial Aeon of Christ's stature are incomprehensibly great.

81. It is true then that Christ sacrificed Himself for us?
It is most certainly true, but His sacrifice was a spiritual one.

82. What was the mission of Christ the Saviour (SOTER) on earth?
It was threefold: (1) to deliver us from the slavery of the Demiurge and the Archons and to rejoin us to our original state; (2) to contribute to the enlivening of the spiritual influences on earth (this has been at times interpreted as the restoration of God's kingdom on earth); and (3) to bring us back to the spiritual Fullness (PLEROMA), our homeland.

83. What were the means whereby Christ the Saviour (SOTER) fulfilled His mission on earth?
The means were two: (1) He taught His teachings of liberation through the law of love, and (2) He bestowed illuminating and liberating mysteries on His qualified disciples. Both teachings and mysteries were to be handed down to God's people throughout the ages.

84. What do we learn from the sufferings of Christ?
From the sufferings of Christ we learn of the great love of God and of all the great Aeonial beings for humanity, who have sent the Saviour (SOTER) to us. We also learn that earthly life is suffering for all spiritual beings, including Christ and ourselves.

85. What do we learn from the life of Christ?
From His life we may learn the pattern of the great drama of the life of spirit in material confinement; its vicissitudes and triumphs. This is what has been called the imitation of Christ (IMITATIO CHRISTI).

86. Is it true that Christ descended into hell?
In addition to descending into this hell we call the world, He also descended after the crucifixion into a state where the spirits and souls of many disembodied humans dwelt and waited for Him. The instructions He gave to and the mysteries He conferred upon these beings liberated many of them from the underworld (HADES, SHOEL) where they were. This journey of Christ is sometimes known as "the Harrowing of Hell".
87. Did Christ rise from the dead?
All the scriptures affirm that He came back to earthly life after His death and burial. The historic creeds say that He rose "according to the scriptures" (SECUNDUM SCRIPTURAS).

88. Why is Christ's resurrection of importance to us?
Because it serves as our example for our own resurrection.

89. How and when is our resurrection to take place?
It takes place by Gnosis while we are still in earthly life.

90. Did Christ remain on earth for some time after His resurrection?
At that time Christ remained on earth in order to impart the Gnosis to certain disciples. It is traditionally held that this time lasted for forty days, but longer time periods are mentioned in Gnostic scriptures.

91. How did Christ depart the earth?
After the time He spent on earth after the resurrection, He ascended in glory into the Fullness (PLEROMA).

92. Did Christ occupy a fleshly body like ours?
It is most unlikely that He occupied a body quite like ours. He walked on water, passed through walls, made His body shine like the sun; none of these can be done by way of a body of flesh. Valentinus stated that Jesus did not have a digestive system like other humans. Therefore Jesus' body has been called an appearance (DOKESIS).

93. Does this deny the incarnation (becoming flesh) of Christ, the Logos?
No, for there can be many kinds of different substances He may have used for His embodiment and they all would have served as His "flesh".

LESSON VI

OF OUR LADY SOPHIA

94. Who is our Lady Sophia?
She is a high Aeon of the Fullness (PLEROMA), whose name means Wisdom and who is of a feminine character.

95. Is Sophia only known to Gnostics?
Although She is known to Gnostics in a special way, Sophia was known to certain Biblical authors who wrote the Wisdom literature (Book of the Wisdom, Ecclesiastes, Ecclesiasticus and Proverbs, and also the Song of Songs), to ancient philosophers such as Philo, and to certain theologians known as Sophiologists.

96. How is Sophia related to Christ?
She is His close associate (Sister Aeon or Twin Aeon) in the Fullness (PLEROMA).

97. Is Sophia "the Goddess" as some modern opinions imply?
No. Sophia is not a female counterpart to God, but rather She is a great and holy emanated aspect (HYPOSTASIS) of God.

98. Is Sophia then a goddess?
If by "a goddess" is meant a deity, or one among numerous deific beings then She may be called one.

99. Has Sophia ever been incarnate in human form?
None of the scriptures have intimated that She has.

100. Is there a narrative concerning the events in the story of Sophia after the fashion of the gospel narratives concerning Christ?
Yes. It is the book "Faithful Sophia" (PISTIS SOPHIA), although elements of Her story appear in other scriptures also.

101. What is the beginning of the story of Sophia?
Sophia's tale begins with Her going forth from Her Aeonia habitat in search of the Light. This going forth results in Her catastrophic fall from on high and into the torment of the lower Chaos.

**102. How does the story of Sophia continue?**
In Her state of anguish and affliction, Sophia gives birth to a hybrid being who becomes the Demiurge. She also exudes the elements from which the Demiurge subsequently fashions the world.

**103. What does Sophia do after that?**
She continues to call out to the Light for help in Her affliction. The Light hears Her and sends forth the Aeon Christ to console Her and to rescue Her. After many efforts, the work of rescue is accomplished and Sophia is restored to Her original dwelling place.

**104. Has Sophia then totally departed from the manifest realm?**
No. Her involvement in creation, especially of humans, and Her other deeds, indicate Her continuing care for Her children who are trapped in the world and in the bodies created by the Demiurge.

**105. What are some of Her actions which indicate Her involvement with creation and with humanity?**
There are many. One is Her rebuking of the Demiurge when he declares that he is the only God and there are no other gods before him. Another is Her gift of the spirit of the higher life to Adam, who was created as a witless cripple by the Demiurge. She also inspired Eve and the serpent in order to facilitate the exit of the first human pair from the fool's paradise where they were confined.

**106. Has Sophia continued to aid humanity?**
Yes. Scripture declares that She "enters holy souls and makes them friends of God". There is much evidence of Her helpful presence among us to this very day.

**107. Is Sophia identical with the Virgin Mary?**
No. Mary "the mother of the Lord according to matter" is an honoured figure of the Gnosis, but she is a human woman, while Sophia is celestial.

**108. Has Sophia overshadowed any human beings?**
There are indications that such may have been the case. One example may be Helen in the story of Simon Magus, and another, Mary Magdalene, the chief disciple of Jesus.

**109. Does Sophia appear to and communicate with humans?**
Yes. She has done so to the Russian philosopher Solovyev (late 19th Century) and Her manifestations are not unknown today.

**110. Do the contemporary teachings about the Virgin Mary (Mariology) have a relation to Sophia?**
Yes. Such teachings as those about Mary's Assumption, and her role as joint redeemer (CO-REDEMTRIX) and mediator between God and humans (MEDIATRIX) can easily be applied to Sophia.

**111. Why are the actions and roles of Sophia seemingly confounded with those of the Virgin Mary?**
Because the Western exoteric church has suppressed and forgotten the figure of Sophia and was left thus with the lone figure of Mary to whom all feminine holiness and mysteries are now ascribed.

**112. What is the duty of Gnostics toward Sophia today?**
To render Her due reverence in prayer, liturgy, meditation, study, thought and action, and also to guard Her true identity in the confusion of tongues wherein She is confused with goddesses, earth mothers, Madonna’s black and otherwise, and the politically motivated mythologizing of our era.
LESSON VII

OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AND GRACE

113. What is the Holy Spirit?
The Holy Spirit is God and the third aspect (Person) of the threefold Godhead, or the Holy Trinity.

114. By what other names is the Holy Spirit called?
The Holy Spirit is also called the Comforter (PARACLETE), the Advocate, the Spirit of Truth, the Spirit of God, the Creator Spirit, the Holy Mother Spirit, also by the Greek name PNEUMA HAGION, and the older English name Holy Ghost.

115. What polarity or spiritual gender is ascribed to the Holy Spirit?
In Gnostic usage the Holy Spirit is referred to as feminine.

116. What does the Holy Spirit do for creation and for humanity?
The Holy Spirit permeates and beneficently alters the archonic structures of the universe. (For this reason it is said that the Holy Spirit "renews the face of the earth"). The Holy Spirit also dwells in the Church as the source of her spiritual life and sanctifies souls through the gift of grace.

117. What are some of the special signs of the sanctification of souls by the gift of the grace of the Holy Spirit?
Some of these are: The fortifying of the soul, and the bringing of insight, wisdom and prophecy by way of Gnosis.

118. Does prophecy consist of foreseeing the future?
No. Prophecy is a special disclosure of Divine things to a human by way of Gnosis and only incidentally and occasionally involves glimpses of the future.

119. Is there an expected Age (AEON) of the Holy Spirit in human history?
Very probably. The medieval prophet Joaquin of Flora declared that the Age of the Father is past, the Age of the Son is passing and the Age of the Holy Spirit is approaching. The detailed interpretation of this teaching is a matter of opinion.

120. What is grace?
Grace is the effective manifestation of the supernal Life of God, appearing to us as a supernatural gift of God bestowed on us through Gnosis and also other means.

121. Is grace necessary for salvation?
Yes. Human beings cannot attain the eternal life and freedom of the Fullness (PLEROMA) by powers that are purely natural. Were this possible all humans would already be redeemed and have returned to their home. Therefore we need to be elevated to a transcendental plane through grace and we constantly need spiritual stimuli which come to us by grace.

122. How many kinds of grace are there?
Two kinds of grace are distinguished by tradition. They are: sanctifying grace and actual grace. There is also special grace which is a variety of actual grace.

123. What is sanctifying grace?
Sanctifying grace (also called habitual grace) is the grace that flows from the spark of God within our own spiritual natures. It is a permanent quality that is stimulated by God through His gifts and can be lost only through a lasting turning away of the soul from the spirit.

124. What is actual grace?
Actual grace is transcendental (supernatural) help coming from God that enables us to experience states of consciousness and perform acts that are beyond our natural powers. Souls in a state of relative separation from their spirits need the help of actual grace to gain access to sanctifying grace.

125. In what manner does actual grace come to us?
Primarily by way of the Messengers of Light and the liberating teachings and salvific mysteries they bring to us.

126. Can we resist the grace of God?
Because of the weaknesses implanted into our souls by the Archons we often resist the grace of God. We can do this because grace does not impose itself upon us by force but descends upon us gently in response to our free cooperation.

127. What are the principal ways of obtaining grace?
The principal ways of obtaining grace are three: (1) by the diligent study of the teachings of the Messengers of Light and of their agents; (2) by prayer, and (3) by the sacraments, particularly the Holy Eucharist.

LESSON VIII

OF THE CHURCH AND THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS

128. What is the Church?
The Church is the assembly of persons who follow the same tradition, and practice the same sacraments; in short, of those who follow the same religion.

129. What is the meaning of "religion"?
The word "religion" is derived from the Latin RE-LIGERE, meaning to re-join or to join-back. Religion is the effort to effectively join the human soul to the human spirit and to join both of these to God.

130. Of what religion is the Gnostic Church?
The Gnostic Church is of the Christian religion (although it is also true that she is of the eternal religion of Gnosis that was always in the world).

131. Is this not a sign of limitation or of sectarian exclusiveness?
No. One can respect and study many religions, but one can effectively practice only one.

132. Is the Gnostic Church Christian in the same sense in which other churches call themselves Christian?
No. The Gnostic Church is Christian by her own definition, based on Gnosis.

133. Does this place the Gnostic Church outside of the fellowship (EKUMENE) of Universal Christendom?
No, because the criteria of what constitutes a Christian vary greatly among Christian people. The variations introduced by Gnostics are one set among many.

134. Who founded the Church?
The Lord Jesus Christ founded the Church. He did this when just before His ascension, He commissioned His apostles to make disciples of all nations. Earlier in His public ministry He instituted sacraments, chose the twelve apostles, and conferred sacred powers on them.

135. Why did Jesus Christ found the Church?
Jesus Christ founded the Church as a vehicle to bring human beings to redemption from the shackles that confine them to the realm of the Archons and to open to them the freedom and the glory of the Fullness (PLEROMA).

136. Have there been or are there other such vehicles besides the Church founded by Christ?
Since Messengers, Saints and Prophets have been sent by God from age to age to instruct and to assist human beings regarding salvation, it is understandable that there should be other vehicles of a kindred nature.

137. Why do Gnostics then belong to the Church founded by Christ in preference to any other such vehicle?
Because Christ is the latest of the supernal Messengers Whom in our age and place we recognize as our Redeemer (SOTER).

**138. How is the Church enabled to lead souls to salvation?**
The Church is enabled to lead souls to salvation by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit who gives the Church life. This was first visibly manifested at Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descended in the form of tongues of fire.

**139. Does the Holy Spirit still indwell in the Church as a whole?**
Yes, but only in a general sense. The degree to which the Holy Spirit is effectively present in the various branches of the Church varies considerably.

**140. What determines the degree to which various branches of the Church are enlivened and guided by the Holy Spirit?**
There are two determinants: (1) the amount of Gnosis present, and (2) the purity and holiness of the leaders and members.

**141. How does this pertain to the existence of the Gnostic Church?**
Ever since the leaders of the exoteric (or mainstream) church cast out the Gnostics from their midst, they progressively excluded the guidance of the Holy Spirit from their assemblies. The need for a Gnostic Church thus became ever greater.

**142. How did the Gnostic Church function throughout history?**
At times in secrecy as a covert effort concealed within the body of the exoteric church, at other times as a fully separate and distinct body such as the Manichaean and the Cathar churches, and many others.

**143. What traditionally are the chief marks of the Church?**
There are four such chief marks of the Church: (1) that the Church is one; (2) that she is holy; (3) that she is universal (catholic); and (4) that she is apostolic.

**144. How are these marks present in the Gnostic Church?**
The Gnostic Church is one because all her members aspire to the same Gnosis and have the same sacraments; the Gnostic Church is holy because her members aspire to a wholeness and integrity of life; she is also universal, or catholic, because she teaches and practices the faith of Gnosis which is not bound to time or to place; finally, she is apostolic because her authority proceeds from the apostles and their successors.

**145. Is the visible Church connected with other invisible assemblies?**
Yes. The earthly Church is the Church Militant, because she struggles against the evil of the Archons in the world; joined to her we find the Church Triumphant consisting of the liberated spirits in the Fullness (PLEROMA) and the Church Suffering, which consists of the souls and spirits of those who are neither in earthly embodiment, nor in the freedom of the Fullness (PLEROMA) but in the purgatorial immaterial realms. This is also known as the Communion of Saints.

**146. What are the results of the Communion of Saints?**
The results of the Communion of Saints are that the members of the one visible and the two invisible Churches are able to actively help each other.

**147. How do the members of the Communion of Saints help each other?**
The liberated spirits in the Fullness (PLEROMA) pray for and assist both their incarnate and discarnate brothers and sisters, while the incarnate faithful can also by their prayers and good thoughts relieve the suffering and assist the purgatorial journey of those who have laid aside their vestures of flesh.

**148. Where do the members of the three Churches dwell?**
The members of the Church Triumphant dwell in eternal life in the blissful Land of Light (the PLEROMA) with God, His Aeons and Angels and happy souls. We of the Church Militant experience the suffering and conflict attendant upon earthly life, while the discarnate souls are torn between their desire for the Land of Light and their attraction to the realm of darkness.
149. Does the Gnosis hold to the teaching of reincarnation?
Many Gnostic scriptures are silent on the subject. Others state that reincarnation exists as a hell, or as a purgatorial suffering involved in being attached to the fleshly body and to the turbulent mind or soul.

150. Does reincarnation merit the enthusiasm often lavished on it?
By no means. This teaching was long unknown to Western cultures and when rediscovered from Eastern sources, its value came to be exaggerated. Gnostic teachings have always regarded reincarnation as a calamity to be overcome by liberation.

151. What is death?
Death can be one of two things: (1) It can be the temporary release of the spirit from its material-psychic prison to be followed by return to some form of embodied wretchedness; (2) If the Light spark is purified and resurrected by Gnosis, death will be its entry into eternal bliss and glory in God's Kingdom of Light, there to join the highest order of the Communion of Saints.

LESSON IX

OF THE SACRAMENTS OR MYSTERIES

152. What is a sacrament?
A sacrament is a sacred rite; the visible and outward sign of an invisible, inward grace of God. Anciently, a sacrament was called a mystery.

153. Is a sacrament always effective?
Yes, a sacrament is always effective and produces the result which it is designed to accomplish. The effectiveness of a sacrament can be reduced, however, when its recipient puts obstacles in the path of the workings of the sacrament, or when its ministering agents are insincere.

154. Are there preparations necessary for the reception of the sacraments?
Yes. Preparations are always necessary. To receive a sacrament in an unprepared state is a sacrilege, a profanation of a sacred thing.

155. Does the efficacy of the sacraments depend on the character or merit of the person who administers them?
No. The person administering a sacrament is only an instrument, or ministering agent. It is certainly desirable that such an agent should be in a holy state of consciousness but the effectiveness of the sacrament is not taken away by such matters, although it might be diminished.

156. What is necessary for the administration of a sacrament?
A sacrament first requires an outward sign, that is some external thing or action (such as the sign of the cross, or the anointing with oil). This is called the matter of the sacrament. Second, it requires a set formula or words, which is known as the form of the sacrament. To these is added the intention of the ministering agent which must be that of doing what the Church intends. These three are required for the workings of grace.

157. How many sacraments are there?
There are five initiatory sacraments to which are added two sustaining sacraments, thus adding up to seven. There are also two secondary or substitutional sacraments.

158. Which are the five initiatory sacraments?
The five initiatory sacraments (as explicitly stated in the Gospel of Philip) are: Baptism, Chrism (Confirmation), Holy Eucharist, Redemption and Bride-Chamber.

159. Which are the two sustaining sacraments?
They are the sacrament of Holy Orders and the sacrament of Extreme Unction and Healing.
160. Are there any other sacraments?
There are two other sacraments which may be called secondary or substitutional. These are
the sacrament of Penance and the sacrament of Matrimony.

161. Why are these sacraments called secondary or substitutional?
Because Penance has been substituted for the sacrament of the Redemption, while Matrimony
has been substituted for the sacrament of the Bride-Chamber.

162. How many sacraments do the exoteric churches administer?
The Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Anglican exoteric churches administer seven sacraments,
to wit: Baptism, Confirmation (Chrismation), Holy Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction,
Holy Orders and Matrimony. Many Protestant bodies have reduced the number of sacraments
further. All of the exoteric churches have suppressed and forgotten the two greater sacraments
of the Redemption and the Bride-Chamber.

163. Who has instituted the sacraments?
In a general sense the Lord Jesus Christ instituted the sacraments. The institution of only
some can be found in sacred scripture; however, in some form most of them existed since the
beginning of creation.

164. Do the sacraments confer grace?
Yes. They confer sanctifying grace and a special grace called sacramental grace.

165. From whom do the sacraments receive their power to give grace?
The sacraments receive their power to confer grace from God through the agency of the
LOGOS of God, who is Jesus Christ.

166. Why are Baptism and Penance often called sacraments of the dead?
Because they are administered to souls who either have not come to life by way of the spirit
(Baptism) or have become spiritually dead through grave sin which needs to be absolved
(Penance).

167. Why are all the other sacraments often called sacraments of the living?
Because their chief purpose is to give more grace to souls and spirits already spiritually alive
through sanctifying grace.

168. Which are the sacraments that usually can be received only once?
They are Baptism, Chrism (Confirmation) and Holy Orders because they imprint upon the
soul an indelible spiritual mark, called a character. (Exceptions to this rule are when there is
reason to believe that any of these sacraments have been administered in a deficient manner,
such as Baptism or Confirmation without the sacred oils, or ordinations performed in an
incomplete manner.)

169. What is the general effect of all sacraments?
The grace of God is the life of God. Christ said that He came so that we may have life and
have it more abundantly. He also said that He loved us and longed to give us life. The means
whereby He gives us this divine life are the sacraments. It has also been said that just as an
artist, using his brush as an instrument, paints a beautiful picture, so God through the
sacraments draws His own image on the soul of man. Such is the sublime effect of the
sacraments.

LESSON X

OF THE SACRAMENTS, CONSIDERED SINGLY:
PART I

170. Which is the first initiatory sacrament?
It is the sacrament of Baptism, also known as the Baptism of Water because it employs water.

171. At what age should one receive the sacrament of Baptism?
Preferably when one has reached the age of reason, but infant Baptisms, using a simpler formula, are permissible.

172. **What are the effects of the sacrament of Baptism?**
Baptism liberates the body (SOMA) and soul (PSYCHE) from the dominion of the Archons, under which they fell at physical birth. (This perilous condition is called "original sin" by the exoteric church.) Baptism also washes away actual faults which the person may have committed prior to baptism. Baptism also joins an angel to the baptized soul, and facilitates the entry and exit of the soul from the body. It is this sacrament that affords us entry into the stream of Gnosis.

173. **Who can administer Baptism?**
A priest or deacon is the usual minister of Baptism, but in an emergency anyone may and should baptize.

174. **What is a person to do after receiving the sacrament of Baptism?**
A baptized person should participate diligently in sacred practices, particularly the Holy Eucharist. Such a person should also continue to study the sacred literature of the Gnosis.

175. **What is the sacrament of Chrism or Confirmation?**
Chrism or Confirmation is the sacrament through which the Holy Spirit comes to us and strengthens us in our determination to persist in the Gnostic life.

176. **At what age should one receive the sacrament of Chrism or Confirmation?**
Not before the time of adolescence.

177. **Who is the usual minister at Confirmation?**
It is the bishop.

178. **What does the bishop do when he gives Confirmation?**
He lays his hand on the head of each person and anoints his forehead with holy chrism.

179. **What is holy chrism?**
Holy chrism is a mixture of olive oil and balm, blessed by the bishop on Maundy Thursday. Unlike the element of baptism which is water, the chrism is combustible and thus symbolizes the fire of the Holy Spirit. Therefore this sacrament is sometimes called the Baptism of Fire.

180. **What is the Holy Eucharist?**
In the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist the bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Christ and are then received into the human organism. This sacrament unites us in a very special way with Christ the Saviour and through Him with the Fullness (PLEROMA).

181. **Is it the physical body and blood of Christ that we partake of in the Holy Eucharist?**
No. It is His spiritual (PNEUMATIC) body and blood that we partake of under the appearance of the bread and wine.

182. **How can the spiritual (PNEUMATIC) body and blood of Christ take on the appearance of the bread and wine?**
Through the sacred phenomenon of Transubstantiation or Transelementation, this is brought about by the Holy Spirit.

183. **Who instituted the Holy Eucharist?**
Christ instituted the Holy Eucharist at the Last Supper, the night of Maundy Thursday. When He said, "This is My Body", the entire substance of the bread changed into His spiritual (PNEUMATIC) body, and when He said "This is My Blood", the entire substance of the wine was changed into His spiritual (PNEUMATIC) blood.

184. **How is the Holy Eucharist of Christ perpetuated?**
Christ said: "Do this in remembrance of me" and therefore His representative, the duly ordained priest, repeats Christ's Eucharistic sacrifice within the context of the ritual of the Mass.

185. **Is the Mass called the Holy Eucharist?**
Yes, both the ritual of the Mass and the sacred substance of the consecrated bread and wine are usually referred to as the Holy Eucharist.

186. What did the Gnostic Church at times call the Holy Eucharist?

It was called the Ineffable Mystery.

187. Should we be frequent participants in the Ineffable Mystery of the Holy Eucharist?

Yes, for not to take advantage of this great gift would be to scorn the words of Christ the Saviour (SOTER): "If you do not eat of my flesh and if you do not drink of my blood, you will have no true life in you".

188. How is one to prepare oneself for the reception of the Holy Eucharist?

By prayer and sincere contrition that purifies one of the stains of faults and unworthiness. Otherwise, in the words of St. Paul, we eat and drink our own judgment and condemnation.

189. What is the sacrament of the Redemption?

The sacrament of the Redemption is one of the two greater or esoteric sacraments practiced by Gnostics and mentioned in the Gospel of Philip. It has been repressed by the exoteric church. It is the first of the greater or esoteric sacraments.

190. What other names are used to describe the sacrament of the Redemption?

APOLYTROSIS, the CONSOLAMENTUM, the Renunciation, the Baptism of Air.

191. What is the effect of the sacrament of the Redemption?

The intention of the sacrament of the Redemption is to deliver a person from the shackles of the Demiurge and the Archons. The effects traditionally hold are: (1) It remits all of one's faults and gives one the strength not to commit grave offences; (2) It perfects in one the change produced by the Baptism of Water; (3) It makes one the temple of the Holy Spirit; (4) By its effects we become complete Christians (PERFECTI); (5) It renews the link between one's soul and the Twin Angel or Deific Double from whom one has been separated at one's descent into the Archonic realm; (6) Finally, it assures one of one's liberation from the cycle of birth and death and thus frees one of the necessity of future embodiments on earth.

192. Who is eligible for the sacrament of the Redemption?

Adults over twenty years of age who have been baptised and confirmed and who are diligent practitioners of the Gnosis. (However, it is generally preferable to confer the sacrament on persons at or past mid-life.) Candidates should also demonstrate an unalterable conviction of not wishing to be re-embodied in the world.

193. What is the sacrament of the Bride-Chamber?

It is the second of the greater or esoteric sacraments, and is the final and the greatest of the initiatory sacraments. Like the Redemption, it also has been repressed by the exoteric church.

194. By what other names is the sacrament of the Bride-Chamber known?

The Bridal Chamber, the Sacred Wedding (HIEROS GAMOS) and the Mystery of the Syzygies.

195. What is the effect of the sacrament of the Bride-Chamber?

It completes all the effects of the sacrament of the Redemption and seals them for all eternity. Particularly it unites the soul in a final union with the Twin Angel or Deific Double and similarly also unites the soul with God in the Fullness (PLEROMA).

196. Who is eligible for the sacrament of the Bride-Chamber?

One who has received the sacrament of the Redemption (CONSOLAMENTUM).

197. How is the sacrament of the Bride-Chamber conferred?

At this time in history, the sacrament of the Bride-Chamber is not conferred in earthly form, but is received by the soul in its own realm, usually after bodily death. It is not impossible, however, that the Bride-Chamber may return in earthly manifestation when God so decrees.

LESSON XI
PART II

198. Why are the sacraments of Holy Orders and Extreme Unction and Healing called sustaining sacraments?
Because by Holy Orders the administering of grace in the Church is sustained, while Unction sustains the dying and the sick.

199. What are Holy Orders?
“Holy Orders” is the sacrament through which human beings receive the power and grace to perform the sacred duties of the clergy of the Church.

200. By what other term has the Gnostic Church sometimes referred to Holy Orders?
As the Mystery of the Great Name.

201. How many grades or offices of Holy Orders are there?
Nine, to wit: cleric, doorkeeper, reader, exorcist, acolyte, subdeacon, deacon, priest and bishop.

202. Which among the grades is qualified to celebrate the Holy Eucharist, and thus change bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ?
The grades of priest and bishop.

203. What duties is a deacon qualified to perform?
A deacon may perform many duties, such as read the gospel, preach, and serve Holy Communion with the reserved sacrament, but may not celebrate the Holy Eucharist.

204. What are the duties of the lesser grades or orders?
They assist the bishop, the priests and deacons in various ways.

205. What are the effects of the sacrament of Holy Orders?
The effects of ordination to the holy orders are: (1) an increase in sanctifying grace; (2) the gift of sacramental grace, through which one in holy orders receives divine help in the performance of the ministry; (3) an indelible imprint that impresses itself forever on the soul; (4) the authority to perform certain sacred actions appropriate to the office concerned.

206. What are some of the requirements, that a person may receive Holy Orders worthily?
To receive holy orders worthily it is necessary: (1) that one be of good character and in a state of grace; (2) that one be informed in the Mythos of the Gnosis; (3) that one have the intention of devoting one's life to the sacred ministry; (4) that one be determined to teach and serve the Gnosis according to the teachings and practice of the Gnostic Church; and (5) that one should have the inward call from one's spirit and the outward call from one's bishop.

207. Who confers the sacrament of Holy Orders?
The bishop in his capacity as successor of the apostles, is the one who confers the sacrament of Holy Orders.

208. What is the apostolic succession?
The apostolic succession is the mechanism whereby the Holy Orders instituted and administered by Christ are transmitted to His sacramental servants throughout the ages. The Gospel of Philip says: "The Son anointed the apostles and the apostles anointed us".

209. What is the sacrament of Extreme Unction and Healing?
This sacrament is one, where, through the anointing with blessed oil by the minister and through certain special prayers, strength of soul and body are increased in ill or dying persons.

210. What has the sacrament of Extreme Unction and Healing been also sometimes called in the Gnostic Church?
It has been called the Mystery of the Pneumatic Unctions.

211. What are the effects of the sacrament of Extreme Unction and Healing?
The effects are: (1) an increase in sanctifying grace; (2) the gift of comfort and serenity in sickness; (3) preparation for entry into the higher worlds, and (4) healing of the body when expedient for the soul and spirit.

212. Who can administer the sacrament of Extreme Unction and Healing?
Only those in major orders (deacons, priests and bishops) can administer this sacrament.

213. What is a public healing service?
A public healing service consists of the administering of the unction and prayers to persons not necessarily in danger of death.

214. Should sacramental healing be used so as to take the place of medical help?
No. Spiritual means of healing exist to work along with and not to replace physical medicine.

215. What are the substitutional or secondary sacraments?
They are Penance and Matrimony.

216. Why are they called substitutional?
Because Penance came to substitute for Redemption and Matrimony for the Bride-Chamber, and also because their forms of administration underwent many vicissitudes and were subject to doubt and argument.

217. Have the two substitutional sacraments always been considered true sacraments?
No. But there always existed formulae of absolution (Penance), and nuptial blessings for couples.

218. Why do we consider them sacraments today?
Because the higher esoteric sacraments are not generally available, and these two sacraments symbolically represent and foreshadow them.

219. What is the sacrament of Penance?
Penance (absolution) is the sacrament whereby one is cleansed of faults which bind one to the realm of the Archons. (This is known popularly as the remission of sins.)

220. What is the effect of the sacrament of Penance?
Its effect is the experience of divine forgiveness.

221. What must one do to receive this sacrament fully and worthily?
One must: (1) examine one's conscience; (2) be contrite (sorry) for one's offences; (3) have the firm purpose of not committing offences again. (Verbal confession is not necessary, although it is sometimes desirable.)

222. What does the Gnostic regard as an offence (sin)?
Gnostics are concerned chiefly with offences against the supreme commandment given to us by Christ Himself, namely to love God with the totality of our being and to love our neighbour as ourselves. This is the commandment that has replaced all others; therefore to offend against it is the only true sin.

223. What is guilt?
Guilt is the condition of the mind of the unforgiven. Gnostic Christians have no need of guilt, only of contrition whereby they gain forgiveness.

224. What is the outward sign of divine forgiveness?
It is the sacrament of Penance, or more correctly of absolution.

225. What is the sacrament of Matrimony?
Matrimony is the sacrament whereby two persons enter into a condition of marriage and thereby foreshadow under an earthly semblance the mystery of the Bride-Chamber.

226. What are the effects of the sacrament of Matrimony?
The effects of this sacrament are the presence of sanctifying grace and divine help for the married state.

227. Who administers the sacrament of Matrimony?
The two marital partners administer the sacrament to each other, with the priest acting as a solemnizing agent.
APPENDIX A

PRAYER

a.) What is prayer?
Prayer is the lifting up of our minds and hearts to God.

b.) How many forms of prayer are there?
There are two forms of prayer: vocal prayer and mental prayer.

c.) How many categories of prayer are there?
There are three principal kinds of prayer: (1) prayers of petition and intercession; (2) prayers of adoration and praise; (3) prayers of contemplation. The former two are vocal, the latter one is mental. Prayers of intercession are addressed to Aeonian beings, saints and angels; all other prayers are addressed to God.

d.) What do we need to keep in mind when uttering prayers of petition?
We have to keep in mind that God alone knows what is truly useful to the welfare of our spirits and that thus our petitions are contingent upon the will and wisdom of God. (Witness the prayer of Jesus in the garden: "however, not my will, but Thine be done.")

e.) What is mental prayer?
Mental prayer is that prayer wherein we inwardly unite our hearts with God. Sometimes it is called meditation.

f.) Are vocal and mental prayer both necessary?
Both are necessary facilitators of grace and Gnosis.

APPENDIX B

THE Gnostic IN THE WORLD

g.) Do Gnostics strive to improve the world?
Yes, by improving themselves through Gnosis.

h.) Why is this so?
The world is in large part the domain of the Archons. As such it is not perfectible. Still it can be somewhat improved and its inherent deficiency diminishes every time a human spirit attains to liberating Gnosis.

i.) Are Gnostics inclined to any particular system of worldly government?
Individual Gnostics may support any worldly cause or none. The Gnostic world view, however, advises caution concerning all such involvements.

j.) Does the Gnostic world view uphold or rebel against worldly "establishments"?
It does neither, for its attitude is well stated in one of its scriptures: "Do not put your trust in the potentates, rulers, and the rebels of this world, for their authority passes away and comes to an end and their works are as naught."

k.) What is the chief requirement of the Gnostic in worldly society?
The chief requirement of the Gnostic in worldly society is an optimum degree of freedom, for without freedom the pursuit of Gnosis becomes very difficult. Since the freedom of Gnostics cannot be separated from the freedoms of all others, the freer all human beings are, the better this is for Gnosis and for Gnostics.

Gnosticism Yesterday and Today
Founder: Some consider Simon Magus to be the Father of Gnosticism. However, Gnosticism has also been defined as a mystical religion said to be "as old as humanity itself." (Ellwood and Partin: 95-96) Gnostic beliefs can be "found in all religions and religious philosophies, from Upanishads to the wisdom of ancient Egypt, and from the Gathas of Zarathustra to the mystery-cults of Greece and Rome." (Ellwood and Partin: 96) There are others who say that Gnosticism was built upon the combined teachings of its important leaders. Some of these include Basilides, Valentinus, Marcion, Ptolemaeus, Cerinthus, Menander, Simon Magus, and Saturninus (Grant: 30-43).

What is Gnosticism: As noted, Gnosticism has been defined as a mystical religion (Ellwood and Partin: 96). It is a mixing of rites and myths from a variety of religious traditions, combining Occultism, Oriental Mysticism, astrology, magic, elements from Jewish tradition, Christian views of redemption, and even aspects of Plato's doctrine that man is not at home in the bodily realm (McManners: 26). Despite the fact that many Gnostic systems vary, they all have in common "a world view shaped by Hellenism and Neoplatism" and "esoteric Judaism, Zoroastrianism, and the ancient heritages of Egypt and Mesopotamia." (Ellwood and Partin: 92) One can directly trace some of the individual aspects of Gnosticism to their roots. Their beliefs in the resurrection of the dead and dualism come from Iranian-Zoroastrian religious ideas (Rudolph: 282). Their communities are organized like the Hellenistic Mystery religions (Rudolph: 285). Orphism and Greek background influenced the Gnostic belief that the soul suffers in this world and it is fate that man should have to endure it. In turn, living a righteous life leads to salvation (Rudolph: 286).

Gnostics consider themselves "people in the know. [They] are the elect, their souls fragments of the divine, needing liberation from matter and the power of the planets." (McManners: 26) They believe that God is found in the self as well as outside the self (Ellwood and Partin: 96). The greatest hope for the Gnostic is to attain ultimate, first-hand knowledge so that they may be freed from this world and return to the world of God.

History: Gnosticism has changed over time and through different leaders, however it flourished during the first several centuries (Edwards). There were two major parts of Gnosticism: the Syrian Cult and the Alexandrian Cult. The Syrian Cult was led by Simon Magus, while the other was led by Basilides. Basilides impressed "Egyptian Hermetizism, Oriental occultism, Chaldean astrology, and Persian philosophy in his followers." (Davies) Also, his doctrines intertwined early Christianity and pagan mysteries (Davies). Aside from his Gnostic leadership Basilides remained a member of the church in Alexandria until he died (Eliade: 571). When Basilides died, Valentinus took over leadership of Gnostics, incorporating some of his own ideas (Davies). He was born in Egypt, familiar with Greek culture, and was nearly a bishop (being passed up for a martyr). He then separated from the church (Foerster: 121). Valentinus incorporated the pleroma, or heavenly world, into Gnosticism. The pleroma consists of at least thirty aeons (worlds). He also believed that ignorance is the root of the world and if it no longer existed, the world would cease to exist (Foerster: 122).

During the 2nd Century, several systems of Gnosticism grew in Alexandria and the Mediterranean area, most of which were closely related to Christianity. This was a period in which Gnosticism came to focus on Gnosis itself, as a goal for Gnostics to reach (Edwards). This century was also a period when Pagan, Jewish and Christian forms of Gnosticism had the most influence on the doctrine and structure of the Christian Church, even though critics treated it a Christian heresy (Crim: 277). Valentinus and another strong Gnostic leader,
Marcion, were the most feared by the Catholic church (Crim: 278 and Rudolph: 296). They offered an alternate or rival form of Christianity, which caused the church to begin setting up barriers to Gnosticism (McManners: 27).

Mani came into leadership, and "Gnosticism became a world religion when Mani (216-277) founded his alternative Christian Church."(Eliade: 572) Mani, the Jewish-Christian raised in a Baptist community, started Manichaeism. It existed for over one thousand years (Eliade: 572). However, Manichaeism disappeared in the West during the Middle Ages. When Roman Catholicism became the state church in Armenia, the Gnostics hid in the outskirts and mountains (Eliade: 572).

After the 3rd Century, Gnosticism practically disappeared. There was some attempt to revive it during the Middle Ages, but this was nearly impossible because any documents or material about Gnostics had been buried in the desert.

The recent revival in interest was due to the discovery of the Nag Hammadi codices in 1945, revealing the writings and beliefs of the Gnostics (Davies). One sign that there was still interest in Gnosticism between these periods was the fact that William Blake, the poet and artist, was a known Gnostic during the late 1700's and early 1800's. Also, a man by the name of Jakob Boehme was noted as starting up modern Gnosticism in the early 1600's (Eliade: 572).

Cult or Sect: Negative sentiments are typically implied when the concepts "cult" and "sect" are employed in popular discourse. Since the Religious Movements Homepage seeks to promote religious tolerance and appreciation of the positive benefits of pluralism and religious diversity in human cultures, we encourage the use of alternative concepts that do not carry implicit negative stereotypes. For a more detailed discussion of both scholarly and popular usage of the concepts "cult" and "sect," please visit our Conceptualizing "Cult" and "Sect" page, where you will find additional links to related issues.

Sacred or Revered Texts: The Nag Hammadi codices were discovered around 1945 in Egypt, along with other manuscripts found in Medinet Madi in 1930 and in Turkistan between 1902-1914. The Nag Hammadi texts contain 52 sacred texts, which are the "Gnostic Gospels." It had been speculated that they were buried in a jar around 390 AD by monks from St. Pachomius (Nag Hammadi). Little was known about Gnosticism until the documents were found. Previously, the only evidence about Gnostics was from their critics, who regarded them as Christian Heresy, such as Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and Epiphanius (Gnosticism). An important aspect of the Nag Hammadi documents is their ability to tie Gnosticism to its roots. Many of the books are not actually Gnostic. The Gospel of Thomas is encratitic, Thunder, Whole Mind is Jewish, Acts of Peter and the Twelve Apostles is Jewish-Christian, Prayer of Thanksgiving is Hermetic, and Authoritative Teaching is early Catholic (Eliade: 567).

The contents of the Nag Hammadi codices illuminate the beliefs of the Gnostics. They describe the "unfolding of Divine Powers (called 'Aeons') from the Unknowable Godhead; the Cosmos as the result of a pre-creation error of crisis, and therefore evil; and the fall of the Light -- the essence of the Spirit or Divine Soul -- into the Darkness of matter, where it remains trapped until liberated by saving knowledge (Gnosis)."(Gnosticism) In Christian Gnosticism, Jesus is the Divine Messenger who brings Gnosis to humans. However, in Non-Christian Gnosticism it could be Seth (from the Bible), Zostrianos (a form of the prophet from the Persian religion Zoroastrianism), or a mythological entity (Gnosticism).
The Cathar Texts are also Gnostic writings from the medieval resurgence of Gnosticism through the group the Cathars. The writings of the Corpus Hermeticum belong to one of the non-Christian forms of Gnosticism, the Hermetics (Davies).

Modern Issues: Gnosticism is still present in modern times. Richard, Duc de Palatine established the Order of the Pleroma in the 1950's in England. He had Stephen Hoeller go to the United States to continue their work. Hoeller separated from Duc de Palatine in the 70's and started the Ecclesia Gnostica, a church, and the Gnostic Society. Hoeller's gnostic "church celebrates the Holy Eucharist every Sunday and Holy Days." (Elwood and Partin: 95) Their ceremonies and vestments are similar to the Roman Catholics, but the language uses Gnostic terminology. The scriptures are generally from Pistis Sophia or Gospel of Thomas (Ellwood and Partin: 95). There are other such gnostic churches. The American Gnostic Church in Texas was started in 1985 and their teachings reflect those of the 2nd Century Gnostic teachings of Basilides (Melton: 761). Rosamonde Miller started the Ecclesia Gnostica Mysteriorum in Palo Alto, CA (Borce).

While there are example such as these in the West, there are also gnostics in "several Sufi orders of Islam."(Edwards) Also, at present there are approximately "15000 Mandaeans (Aramaic word for Gnostics) liv[ing] in Iraq and Iran."(Eliade: 570) In a more general sense there is "gnosticism in Jewish wisdom tradition, Kabbalah, Mahayana, and Vajrayana Buddhism" as well as in Sikhism (Edwards).

**Beliefs**

Gnosis refers to a knowledge that is essential to free oneself from the evil material world and bodily existence (Crim: 277). Gnostics believe humans err because they are ignorant, unlike the Christian belief that man is sinful by nature. Gnostics will receive salvation when they gain knowledge, gnosis. The knowledge must be of their inner self or soul. It is similar to the Hindu definition of meditation (Borce).

**Some of the basic beliefs of Gnosticism are as follows:**

"Between this world and the God incomprehensible to our thought, the 'primal cause,' there is an irreconcilable antagonism.

The 'self,' the 'I' of the gnostic, his 'spirit' or soul, is unalterably divine.

This 'I,' however, has fallen into this world, has been imprisoned and anaesthetized by it, and cannot free itself from it.

Only a divine 'call' from the world of light loosens the bonds of captivity.

But only at the end of the world does the divine element in a man return again to its home.‘(Foerster: 9) Another unique aspect of the Gnostic belief system is their view of the creation of the world. They believe that the true God has a feminine side, Sophia, the Spirit part of God. Jesus was a product of God and Spirit, and joined them to make up the Trinity. Sophia wanted to give birth to a being like herself. She proceeded without permission from God. The result was imperfect and she was ashamed of it, so she hid it in a cloud away from
the other immortals. The child was the Demiurge. He was born with some power (from the Spirit) and used it to create the physical world. This trapped the "spirit in matter" (Borce). The view of the imperfections of creation are similar to those in Hebrew scripture, just as the Creator is incompetent (McManners: 27). The Gnostics taught that the Demiurge was Yehovah from the Old Testament. Jesus, on the other hand, they believe came from God and the Holy Spirit, not from the Demiurge. Jesus taught Gnostics the secret knowledge (gnosis), which he did not teach to the church. This belief created animosity between the church and the Gnostics. Also, contrary to Christian teachings about Jesus being born of the virgin Mary, Gnostics believe that Jesus entered Mary's body via sexual intercourse between Mary and Joseph (Borce).

Gnostics had several other beliefs that dismayed early Christians. They scorned bishops, priests and deacons, however, they let women hold leadership and liturgical positions (McManners: 28). Many Gnostics would not make the sign of the cross, because to them the "suffering of Jesus was no actual event but a symbol for the universal condition of the human race." (McManners: 28) Christ could not have become flesh in order to be crucified, since they believe that there is a separation of spirit from matter. They view flesh as polluting (McManners: 27). This belief would also support why they do not put faith in the eucharist, which is supposed to be the body of Christ. Mani, the leader of the Manicheaists, also did not believe in the drinking of wine, the blood of Christ, because he saw it as an invention of the devil. Many Gnostics also do not recognize the significance of baptism in water (McManners: 27). They also believe they are the elect group that will gain salvation, via gnosis, and everyone else will be annihilated. "Moral virtue was of little interest to Gnostics, whose confidence in their own salvation made all that seem a matter of indifference." (McManners: 28)

Gnostics also have a different view of the make up of the world. Aeons are worlds, or "distinct spiritual entities," which all together make up the pleroma, or fullness (Foerster: 24). The pleroma is above the cosmos and is the "spiritual Divine Reality," the true God's realm (Gnosticism). This is the place a Gnostic hopes to return to through salvation.

Important Conclusion:

**Gnostic Apostolic Christianity today** is an objective body of knowledge that Jesus taught. It is not a mystery religion or heretical cult. Gnostic Christianity teaches a non-judgemental "process" of reasoning. This new process, is justified by a natural principle that Jesus revealed and contemporary physics demonstrates is a scientific fact. Combining non-judgemental reasoning with the current judgemental process expands our consciousness of reality. In this enlightened consciousness we are personally empowered to resolve all problems and as Paul said "live the good life as from the beginning He [God] had meant us to live it." (Eph 2:10)

Evidence that Jesus taught a process of reasoning that could expand consciousness surfaces in Jn 8:31-32 jbv, where he says, "If you make my word your home... you will learn the truth and the truth will set you free [word or will of God is the English translation of the Greek term logos, which refers to the logic or reasoning of God]." And in Rm 12:2 (rsv) Paul said "do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind..."

The Gnosis, or reasoning process, that Gnostic Christianity introduces, does not contradict Jesus' spiritually-centred public teachings. It documents what scholars refer to as Jesus' oral or logos/logic tradition, which he taught in private (Mk 4:33-34). These teachings elevate our
reasoning mind to that of the will/reasoning of God. In this renewed mind, our reasoning supports spiritual values. This is the truth that can set us free. For when mind and spirit seek the same ends (syzygy) doing "on earth as it is in heaven" will no longer be an idealistic goal, it will be a practical reality. (Matt 6:10)
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