

Simon Magnus

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[Page 14] THE Magus of Samaria is the first doctor of the Gnosis. His teaching contains the germ of that grand philosophy which we, towards the end of this nineteenth century, after an eclipse of several hundred years, recognise as the most perfect and luminous expression of the absolute.

I say an eclipse, but in reality the Gnosis has never been without its disciples and its apostles. Both, through persecution and what is even worse, ridicule, have been obliged to protect themselves by maintaining an inviolable silence, wrapt in the obscurity of uncomprehended symbols.

A sovereign interest draws us towards the high priest of Samaria. Not that he has invented the Gnosis, for it was taught under another form in the temples of Egypt, in India and Chaldea, the Gnosis being in fact as old as the Truth, of which it is the mystic garment. But Simon was the first to draw up its dogmas in their esoteric shape, and he is, as his name indicates, the ancestor, the first parent of the Gnosis posterior to Jesus Christ.

He was born at Gitta in Samaria, which, proud of his celebrity, called him the Great Virtue of God. After having lived at Tyre, where he met Helen, his lovely and mysterious companion, he went to Rome and for a time rivalled the renown of the Apostle Peter.

Simon was deeply versed in Oriental and Greek culture. Empedocles and Stesechorus were known to him, and he also was imbued with the ideal philosophy of Plato. A contemporary of Philo the Jew, he had frequented the school of Theosophy at Alexandria. He knew anatomy, having written a celebrated treatise on the circulation of the blood and the physical system of the female body. He was equally well grounded in practical Theurgy. Magus, littérateur, physiologist, mathematician and orator, this great man was cut out for the performance of some special mission.

Already celebrated in the early days of Christianity, Simon devoted to the service of the Gnosis a soul grandly simple and single-minded and of the purest honesty.

Many even of his enemies have been obliged to acknowledge this, and M. Amélineau proves this to be the case in his book on "Gnosticisme Égyptien". Simon, being present at the wonders worked by the deacon Philip, asked to be baptised. Like all Initiates, he only saw in this ceremony a form of initiation. He in no wise pretended to turn from the Gnosis.[Page 15]

In the request he made to Peter to confer upon him the Holy Ghost by the placing of hands, he never recognised a departure from his original principles. Nor did he offer money to buy the Holy Ghost, as the ignorant and the malicious say, but simply the customary and legal price of initiative societies for the possession of the symbolical degree, which he wished to obtain. A European adept would act in a precisely similar manner, if he wished to be admitted to mysteries which were still unknown to him. In the division which subsequently took place between the apostles and the magi, the former were in the wrong, and Simon gives a touching example of his humility and gentleness in the words he addressed to the dark and bigotted Cephas: "Pray for me, so that nothing of that which you predict for me may happen".

Tradition says that Simon of Gittha made the acquaintance of Helen in a brothel; that he reclaimed her and placed her amongst the initiated. But there is a great deal more than this meant by the tradition, for she was to him the symbol and living image of the fall of thought into matter. Nobly as was possible to such a man, did he love this woman, and she requited his love with marvellous intelligence and profound affection for him.

We know nothing as to his death. The fables which are told concerning his end being apocryphal inventions of narrow-minded Christians, based on the theurgical power of levitation often possessed by theosophical adepts.

Simon wrote the "Anthiretica: and the Great Apophasis of which the author of "Philosophumena" has preserved some fragments. By the aid of these we may obtain a fairly correct idea of the doctrine of the Samaritan doctor. The Gnosis claims to explain everything. It is active in every department of human thought, being equally concerned with that which belongs to heaven as with that which is of the earth. The Gnosis, as its name shows, is *Knowledge*. God, man, the world, are the trinity of which it is the grand synthesis.

Simon Magus places Fire at the beginning, Fire having been the first cause of the cosmos. God, says the initiate Moses, is a consuming fire. This fire, very different from the earthly fire which is merely its symbol, has a visible and a hidden existence. Its occult and secret essence hides itself behind its material manifestation or visible appearance; which latter again withdraws itself into its hidden essence. In other words, the invisible is visible to the initiate while the visible is invisible to the profane, which means that the profane are unable to recognise the spirit, disguised under its outward form: the Vedas taught in earlier times this original dogma when they treated of Agni, the supreme fire. This fire of Simon is the same as that of Empedocles; it is that of the fire-worshippers of [Page 16] Iran. It is the burning thicket of Genesis. It represents the Intelligible and the Sensible of the divine Plato, the Power and the Act of the profound Aristotle; and it is also the flaming star of the masonic Lodges.

In the external manifestation of the primordial fire we have all the seeds of matter, while its interior manifestation evolves the world of spirit. So that this fire containing the absolute and the relative, matter and spirit, is at once multiple and one, or God and that which emanates from God. This fire, the eternal cause of all, expands by emanation. It is eternally becoming. But while developing, it itself remains stable and permanent. It is in fact that which is, has been, and shall be, the immovable, the infinite, the substance of all.

But while thus immutable it is not inert. The Infinite may act because it is intelligence and reason. From the potential it passes to the active, and thought becomes an expression: the word. Thus Intelligence becomes aware of itself and by so doing acts, evolves, emanates. In formulating its thought, Intelligence unites the moments of this thought and binds its ideas one to another by the tie of reason, and as two comes from one, because one in emanating must become two, fire emanates by couples, of which one is active, the other passive, one male, the other female, one *he* and one *she*. The Gnosis calls this two-fold emanation the Eons. Thus the sphere of the absolute, the superior world, was peopled by six Eons, or six first emanations from God. Simon called them Nous and Ennoïa (spirit and thought), Phone and Onoma (the word and the name), Logismos and Enthumêsis (reasoning and reflection), and in each of these six emanations is God in a potential state.

"In each of these roots", said the Sage, "the Infinite Power was in its entirety. It had to be formulated by a shape in order that it might appear in all its essence, virtue, grandeur, and effects so that the emanations would become equal to the infinite and eternal Power. If on the other hand it were not to be manifested by a form, the Power could not become active and would be lost for want of being used; just as a man who having an aptitude for grammar and geometry, if it is not used obtains no sort of benefit from it and it becomes lost to him and he is just as if he had never had those powers."

By this Simon meant that the Eons in order to be God-like must create. So that just as God passed from the potential to the active state, so the Eons must do likewise. And this is required by the divine law of analogy, and thus the six first emanations became the cause of six new emanations.

The Syzygies, like the six first, continued to emanate male and female, active and passive entities. "It is written", says Simon, "that there are two kinds of Eons having neither beginning nor end and issuing from one [Page 17] common root, the Silence (the great Sige) which is the invisible and incomprehensible power", one of these seems superior to the other; it is the great Power characterised as the Intelligence of all things; it orders everything and is male and positive, the other is inferior and is called the great Thought or female Eon. These two Eons are complementary and manifest between them the middle region, the incomprehensible air which has had neither beginning nor end.

See what a wonderful picture is presented to us in the divine ladder which Jacob saw in a dream as he slept with his head pillowed on the sacred stone of Bethel beneath the starry firmament which spanned the Desert. The Eons mount and descend this most mysterious ladder in pairs and constitute the links in the chain which stretches from God to Earth and back again to God, and each two are male and female, associated forms or united thoughts. They weave the woof of spirit and of matter, realising God in things and carrying these back again into God, and the law which knits and directs them elevates and abases them and works as the sacred and primordial fire which, as God, is infinite and absolute and as expressing which in its highest expression may be called Love.

Next Simon opens to us the second world. It is peopled by six Eons, the reflection of the first six and bearing the same names.

The incomprehensible air or second world is inhabited by the Father, he who is, was and shall be, without beginning or end, male and female living in one unity. He develops in the same way as the fire of the first

world, for he manifests by the power of thought. The Father, which is the Power, and the *thought* which it produces, are complementary, being in reality one, as represented in the male which envelopes the female, the Spirit in the idea, or Nous in the Epinoïa. In other words, the Spirit has a thought which it proclaims by the word or the name Father. This Father is also Σιγή or silence.

Epinoïa, the female Eon, enticed by love, leaves the Father and emanates angels and powers from which proceed the world which we live in. These angels, forgetting the existence of the Father, have wished to keep amongst themselves Epinoïa, and from this cause we have their fall and the necessity for a redemption.

Man is the product of one of these angels, the Demiurgus, which the Bible calls God. By him man is made double, after his own image and appearance. The image is the spirit which circles the waters of the abyss of which Genesis speaks. *Spiritus Dei ferebatur super aqua*. Man is an Eon, because in him there is the likeness of the Father, and like the Father, he will produce other beings. He will in fact reproduce himself.

This brings us to the anthropological doctrine of the Samaritan Magus. Fire is the principle of the act of generation, for to desire to be [Page 18] united to a woman is called "to be on fire" (πυροῦσθαι). This fire is one in itself but double in its effects. Man transmits in the seed the hot red blood, while the woman becomes the laboratory where the blood is turned into milk. It was thus that the sword of Fire which flashed before the gates of Eden in the hands of the Archangel typified by the quivering of its living flame the transformation of blood into seed and milk. Without this circulation of blood the tree of Life would die and the icy hand of death would congeal the World.

Continuing his subtle and profound analysis, Simon explained the development of the foetus after its conception.

Interpreting the words addressed to Jeremiah, "I have formed thee in the bosom of thy mother", he explained that man in Eden meant the foetus in the matrix, and he saw in the four rivers which fertilised the terrestrial paradise the ducts which adhere to the child and bring him nourishment.

How strange and original a conception of a great mind is this inspiration of genius drawn from the physiological meditations of a superior man in a primitive age. Let us now return to Epinoïa which the Angels, the ancestors of man, have retained captive. The Power of Thought drawn backwards by its celestial instincts is ever sighing after Sige and striving to return to the Father. The Angels hold it fast, however, and make it suffer that they may keep it amongst them, and finally they succeed in imprisoning it in a human body. This is the commencement of that long pilgrimage which the divine exile makes through a series of transmigrations and long ages of suffering. This fall of Intellect into matter is the origin of evil. It is forfeiture and to such there must be redemption; Enoïa transmigrates from woman to woman through the ages like a scent which passes from vase to vase. The day on which Simon penetrated into the syrien den he met the migratory "thought" in the form of this Helen, of this prostitute whom he loved and whom he transfigured by his love. Loving her he applied with practical exactness the parable of the lamb who was lost and found. Thus runs the allegory. Just as Simon saved Helen from final degradation in taking her from the slough into which she had fallen, the Saviour sent by the Father descended to the

world and delivered Thought from the tyranny of the lower Angels. In order to accomplish this act of infinite love Soter, the Saviour, the Son left the One, the Silence, the Fire, and passed through the first world down to the second where he incarnated in the world of Bodies, burying himself in the Astral Form or Perisprit. In Judea he was called the Son. In Samaria the Samaritans called him the Father. With the Gentiles he was the Holy Ghost. He was in fact the Great Virtue of God and Simon Magus knew himself in Him.

Just as Simon set himself to seek Helen, so the Saviour seeks the [Page 19] human Soul. He found her in a house of ill-fame, that is to say in Evil, and as Simon married Helen so the Saviour married the Soul. "In truth", says the wise Amélineau, " this myth of Epinoïa is very beautiful. The divine Thought held in bondage by inferior beings who owe it their very life and who wish to become its equal; degraded by these Angels and debased to the lowest degree, it forms a sublime allegory of the futile efforts of the human soul struggling towards God, of which it is the image, and falling from one abyss to another, from crime to crime, held in control by jealous spirits who, full of envy, endeavour to impede its upward progress towards him whom it resembles ".

Each one of us, for we are Eons, may become the Simon to a Helen or, reversing the parts, a Helen to a Simon. In order to fulfil our mission of Saviour, we, the initiates of the Gnosis, must appear to the profane as similar in form to them but their superior in spirit. Simon and Helen have taught us, and we in our turn must teach, the liberating power of the Gnosis, the illuminating science, the law or the lost Word of the Rosicrucians. We will deliver our brothers and our sisters from the yoke of ignorance and superstition, of gross materialism and haughty scepticism. We will dress them in the white robes of Initiation. No matter where the seed is sown, so long as it is sown; saved by the Gnosis we become saviours, happy if we possess, perhaps not the genius of Simon Magus, but his great heart and wide charity.

Man comprises all three principles; the principle of darkness or fire, from which originates his soul; the principle of light, from which his spirit originates; and the third principle, which is the basic element of his body.

In the life of man there are three states to be distinguished from each other — first, the *innermost*, that is to say, *God being eternally hidden within the fire*; secondly, the *middle part*, which from eternity has stood as an *image* or likeness in the wonders of God, comparable to a person seeing himself in a mirror; thirdly, has this living image received still another mirror in creation, wherein to behold itself, namely *the spirit of the eternal world*, or the *third principle*, which is also a form (state) of the eternal.

Life and Doctrines of Jacob Boehme, by FRANZ HARTMANN, M.D