

## *The Shekinah Glory and The Divine Feminine*

**I**N THIS ARTICLE we will consider the mystical meaning of the Shekinah Glory. Hebrew seers understood that the human intellect and vision, being finite, could not see and know God, either as the Supreme Being or as the Solar Logos in its purest essence; for human reason goes no higher than the World of Abstract Thought, where the Ego functions. Yet they also knew that there is a spiritual perception, or intuition, as far above ordinary reason as that is above cunning; for that perception, or divine knowing, is the fruitage of what Rosicrucian mystics call the Life Spirit or Christ Within—Wisdom or Gnosis. (Greek mythology also tells us of Gnostos, who was the husband of Circe, and from whom one of the Sibyls was descended.) If we call this inward impression *intuition* we shall have perhaps the best approach, though that is but a feeble word to express its cosmic glories.

Now it is by this Mediator, the Christ within, the life spirit or love-wisdom principle, that the human being is able to sense the Presence of God, the One, in mystic communion. Even the humblest of mortals has this power, for it is an innate faculty of the Spirit or Godhead in man, an integral part of his essential Being. It manifests as the sense of unity—a truly universal sense—by which we love our neighbor as ourselves.

Thus, by meditation on the Christ within, we perceive, we actually sense, the Presence of God—but that Presence is invisible. It is a communion at the altar of the heart where Christ is High Priest after the Order of Melchizedek; for as demonstrated in the Western Wisdom Teachings, the messages of



Photograph, Belgrade National Museum

Fresco, Lesnovo, Yugoslavia, 14th century

### ***The Ark of the Covenant***

*The Shekinah appears over the Ark in the Holy of Holies, where the Cherubim is here depicted. This angelic rank is also called the Lords of Wisdom, thus correlating them with Sophia revelations. In the ancient tabernacle, only the high priest was permitted to enter this most hallowed sanctum.*

the Christ within are received first in the heart and afterward in the head.

Therefore the mystic knows God in his heart before he can see any evidence of God either with physical or spiritual eyes. But the time comes when to his awakening perceptions the Presence of God becomes visible. Not as a person, nor as a thing, but as Light: God is Light! Wherever and whenever the mystic feels the Presence in his

heart, Light appears. Light—a radiant, transcendent glory—the glory of Godhead, and in that Light the spiritual universe, the mystic rose, becomes visible to his enraptured vision.

The mystic, in adoration at his heart's altar, realizes his oneness with this spiritual universe and can commune at will with its glorious inhabitants. The *Cosmo-Conception* teaches that before Christ's advent, His spiritual power came to us by way of the Moon, or Jehovistic channel. That is, it came to us indirectly, by reflection from without, by way of the Jehovistic consciousness, the pooled experience of collective race consciousness. Initiation under Jehovah-God was not individual but racial. It was accomplished through the Initiate's union with the Spirit of his tribe, which in the case of the Israelites was the Archangel Michael. Even in the Mosaic period Initiation into the Solar or Christ Mysteries was still received by way of the mediating lunar power. Thus the Zohar states that Moses became the Light of the Moon by reason of his union with Shekinah.

The Shekinah Glory was the visible Presence of God, considered feminine in esoteric (not exoteric) Judaism. So was Moses said to have married Shekinah. In Phoenician theology the goddess was often called the Face, or manifestation, of the god, and the Hebrews speak of Shekinah in exactly the same way. This abstract term tends to supplant all older, more anthropomorphic names for the Holy Spirit. An apocryphal document quotes Jesus of Nazareth as referring to the Holy Spirit as "my Mother." And the Manicheans call the Mother of Christ "the virgin of Light."

This Glory of Shekinah, this Light which signals the Presence of God and in which the living universe is revealed, is always feminine to the ancient seer. She is the Eurydice of Orphism. She is the Queen of the Ocean of Light of Enoch. She is the Egyptian Isis. She is Ishtar of the Stars, the Bride, the Light, with whom the Unknowable is wed at the dawn of creation and from the joy of whose union the spiritual universe is born, alive and glowing as a Holy Child. God and Shekinah (and all things included) are one and indissoluble: "Behold, O Israel, the Lord our God is One." So also the universe, made after His image and in His

likeness, is One, a spiritual Unity.

In the ancient Hebrew dispensation, the Light of the Presence was manifested in its own particular way for the enlightenment of the Israelites. That way, adapted to the evolutionary needs of the Hebrews, was through the earthly mediation of the High Priest once each year in the dark chamber of the Holy of Holies, where God revealed His presence in Light above the Mercy Seat. "And Glory [Shekinah] shone around." In that Light, revealing It and revealed by It, *stood the angel of the Lord* conveying the Teachings.

That this relationship of the Shekinah Glory to Michael and the angelic hosts was generally understood among Hebrew mystics is shown in the apocryphal *Revelation of Esdras* (not to be confused with the famous Apocalypse designated either II Esdras or IV Ezra), where we read: "It came to pass in the thirtieth year....I was in my house. And I cried out and said to the Most High: 'Lord, give the glory, in order that I may see thy mysteries!' And when it was night, there came an angel, Michael the Archangel."

The inner chamber, the adytum, or Holy of Holies, was truly dark to the physical senses, but the High Priest had set alight the Glory of Shekinah in his own heart, and it was that interior light which shone before him as he drew aside the curtain which hung before the Most Holy. That sacred curtain (according to an ancient tradition) was, in the time of Christ, a Babylonian curtain, interwoven with roses of pure gold.

We know that when the vernal equinox (the Passover) preceded from the constellation Taurus into Aries, the Taurean Aphrodite-worship (which includes both Moon and Venus) among the ancient Hebrews was gradually superseded by the Arian Sun-worship. This merely means, however, that the Feminine Principle was worshiped secretly, in esoteric rites, while the Masculine Principle played the dominant role in the exoteric rites. Once each year the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement when the Sun was near the autumnal equinox, which at that time occurred in the constellation Libra, the Sign of Judgment. (It is now in Virgo, but the Scorpio Atonement and Libra Judgment continue as the keynotes of the

holy day, for Judaism has lost the ancient esoteric key to its true meaning.)

The Bible tells us nothing of any celebration at the winter solstice. It was not until the second century B.C. that the Feast of Lights was instituted, supposedly to celebrate the restoration of Jahweh-worship in the Temple at Jerusalem. At this feast devout Hebrews placed lighted candles in the windows of their houses to celebrate the return of the true Light to the sanctuary. Curiously enough, all this took place on December 25th! How can we doubt that an esoteric understanding is the basis of this Feast or that somewhere in ancient Israel it has its counterpart in secret rites and teachings

It is generally known among mystics that Light symbolizes understanding, and therefore Wisdom. Like all genuine mystical pronouncements, this has its foundation in the phenomena of the soul world, which in its turn is governed by metaphysical Law: the Spermaticos Logos (Generative Reason) of the Stoic. Many mystics have seen the interior Sun, the Sun of the soul, which is an emanation from the Christ Sun of the spiritual worlds. Many have seen the Light in which the soul world is continuously bathed. Many have felt, as well as seen, that Light. But few realize that that Light which to the soul sense is so very tangible has a meaning and that its meaning is the presence of Intelligence. A lack of spiritual intelligence is experienced by the soul as darkness, and that is why the Hades of the pagan world was a dim and dusky region where the shades wandered about in pallor and silence, when not in actual torment.

But if the spirit can both see and feel, it can also hear; and there is a "sound" which strikes the interior ear like the sweet chiming of a bell. Now it is interesting to know that in Hebrew tradition the Shekinah Glory was frequently accompanied by the sound of the tinkling of bells, which reveals to us at once the symbolical meaning of the twelve bells which adorned the hem of the High Priest's robe and which gave out their delicate music as he entered the Holy of Holies.

It is a curious fact that jewels owe much of their magical glamour to their likeness to certain aspects of the spirit world; they do, in a very real sense, speak directly into the spirit itself. Thus the crystal



Painting by Johfra, used with permission of the Lectorium Rosicrucianum, The Netherlands

#### ***The Golden Rose Breaks Free***

*While God geometrizes and crystal forms reflect the stellar intelligence that emanates from Thought World archetypes, physical matter as such arrests and encrypts spirit. Above, the spirit of man, symbolized as a golden rose, rises out of the drear and dread dungeon of its dense material confines.*

gives off, when struck, the sound of a little bell, and the purity of the sound is determined by the purity of the crystal. Therefore, in the "new tongue" of mysticism, the crystal is the stone of feminine purity and chastity, and its bell-like tone expresses the utter sweetness which is the spirit-touch of the Divine Feminine. For this reason Elsa, the pure Maiden of the Grail story, when in distress rang a little bell which was heard in the starry interior of the Grail Castle, and upon hearing the sound of that bell the spirit Hero came to her rescue.

But whether the Ego is in a feminine or masculine incarnation, the crystal is always the symbol of that clarity of spirit in which alone the spiritual universe is revealed to the inward vision. For God is the Great Crystal holding within Himself the image of the spiritual universe, like a scryer's [crystal gazer's—Ed.] vision; and in God's likeness are we,

as Virgin Spirits, made—a multitude of living micro-crystals, holding within our transparent orbs a minute reflection of the same spiritual universe, the Macrocosmos, the Divine Man, the Christos. Hence the mystic *Invocation of the Crystal*:

*In clearness and in ultimate purity  
Keep Thou my spirit. Turn it skillfully:  
By Thy touch loosen the ineffable  
Sweet sound of its imprisoned bell,  
O Dweller in the Crystal.*

We may add that hearing the bell sound is a fairly common mystical experience. Theosophists speak of “astral bells” for example; and to the etheric sense the heart may be heard tolling like a church bell in its body fastnesses. A.E., the celebrated Irish mystic, has described an experience of his own in which the Serpent Fire rushed upward in his body to the accompaniment of a sound as of clashing cymbals another aspect of the bell phenomenon.

Now when the Master Jesus descended into the Jordan at the Baptism, we are told in one of the Apocrypha, he was surrounded by fire. When He came up from the fire the Glory of God descended upon Him and from within the Glory Cloud came the Word: “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” Henceforth not Mary, but Shekinah, is the Mother of Christ: “the Holy Spirit, my Mother.” Clement of Alexandria writes, “Baptized, we are enlightened; enlightened, we are made sons; made sons, we are perfected; ‘I’, he saith, ‘said ye are gods and sons of the Most High, all of you.’ This Work has many names; it is called gift (grace), enlightenment, perfection, baptism....the Perfect will give what is perfect.”

Even in the Old Testament proper, as well as in Gnostic documents and various apocrypha, we find Wisdom (She Who enlightens) spoken of as feminine. This is the Gnosis and Sophia of the Gnostics. In Chapter 4 of Proverbs we read: “Wisdom is the principal thing....Exalt her and she shall promote thee; she shall bring thee to honor when thou dost embrace her. She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee.” A crown of glory? Yes, for she is herself Glory: the Light.

Esoteric students often wonder why there is no

mention of the Divine Feminine in Hebrew Scriptures, since it is obvious that a Creator cannot be masculine only. Here we have the answer: the Hebrews *did* recognize the Feminine Principle—under the name of Wisdom. Wisdom is the Comforter, who teaches all things to Her disciples. It was not until after the early centuries of Christianity had passed away that this truth was forgotten by the orthodox Church and the Comforter—truly a feminine concept—looked upon as masculine.

It is interesting to know, too, that recent archeological discoveries in Palestine include at least one inscription in which the name of the goddess *Anath* is coupled with that of *Jahweh* (Jehovah). Now the same name occurs in Phoenician records, and Hellenistic Phoenicians identified Anath with the Greek goddess of wisdom, Athena, she who sprang fully-powered from the forehead of Zeus; that is, from the Mind of God. Thus in prehistoric Israel wisdom is Anath, the wife of Jahweh. The Gnostics identified Jahweh with Zeus, Father of the Greek gods and the “Our Father who art in heaven” of the Greek people. Athena, as we all know, was a Virgin Goddess.

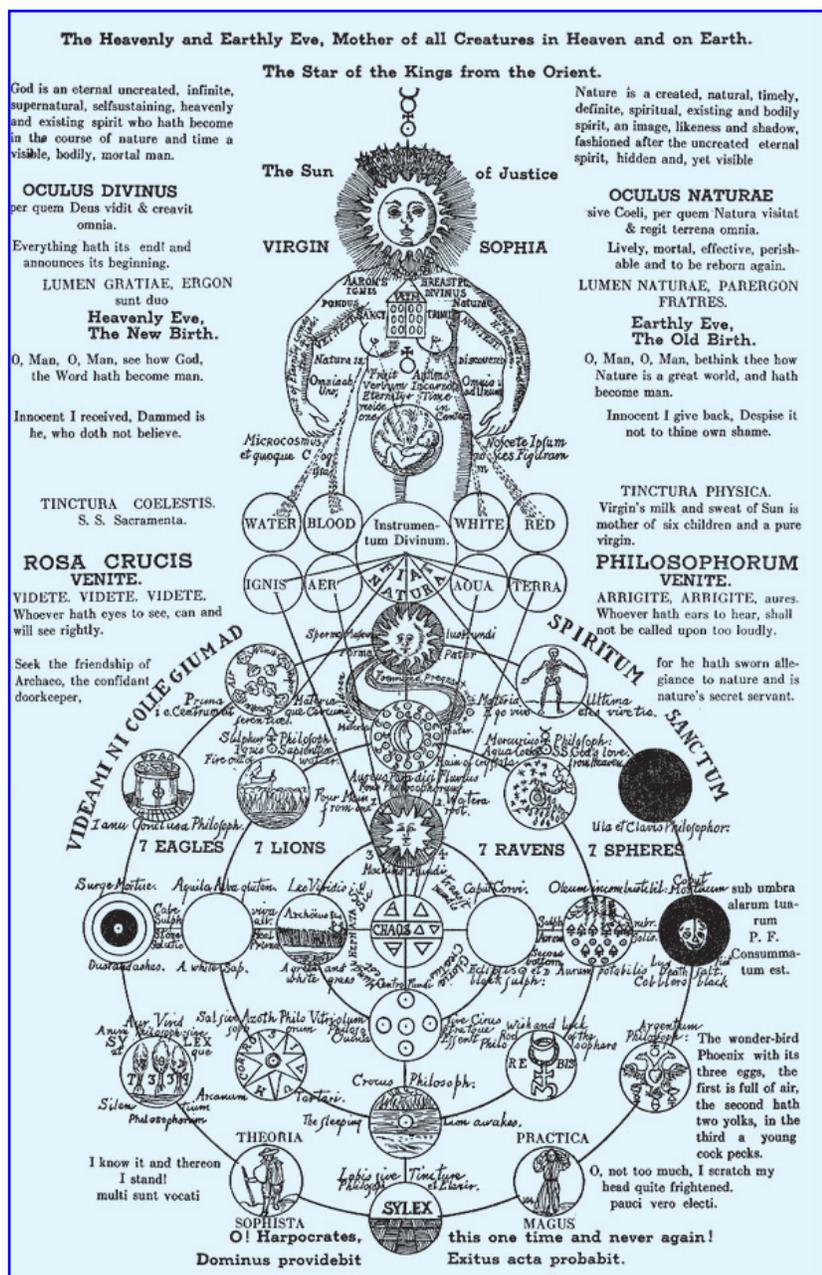
Despite all this, the odd belief in a God without a feminine principle persists with astonishing tenacity among the orthodox. In *Paradise Lost* Milton causes Adam to exclaim reproachfully to Eve: “O that we were as the angels, without a feminine!” Yet Hebrew mysticism most assuredly recognized an angelic feminine as well as an angelic masculine; although the most authoritative opinion seems always to have been that the angelic hosts are not sexed beings in any human sense, but express both the masculine and feminine potencies at one and the same time. Fra Angelico follows this latter tradition in his painting, although to the discerning his angels seem to be quite definitely masculine, for they express the *will* of God, which is like an axis of steel in the spirit, around which the whole consciousness revolves.

Only a little study of ancient literature makes it clear that Hebrew mystics, in common with the rest of the ancient world, did recognize a Cosmic Feminine. Students interested in verifying this for themselves will read carefully the wisdom literature in the Bible, and also apocryphal works like

*Ecclesiasticus, the Book of the Wisdom of Jesus.* This Jesus, who took the Egyptian Initiation, is often confused by occult students with Jesus of Nazareth (see *Cosmo-Conception*, page 379). He was an Alexandrian Jew who lived about one hundred years before Christ. (The *Britannica* says he came to Egypt in the year 132 B.C.) His book purports to be a translation of his grandfather's work in Hebrew, written in Palestine. The grandfather's name was also Jesus. There is much illuminating information on the meaning of wisdom in *Ecclesiasticus*, despite evidence of tampering by the orthodox. The beauty and power of the Alexandrian Jesus' concept of the Eternal Feminine is beyond description, but we must enter into that concept in spirit and in truth if we are really to appreciate it.

Most beautiful and thought-stimulating of all the wisdom writings in the orthodox canon is the *Song of Songs*. This is the love song of the mystic who aspires to union with the Celestial Feminine. Scholars agree that this *Song* could not have been the work of the historic King Solomon, but he is made its hero and central figure because he is Israel's lover of wisdom, par excellence.

At the Council of Jamnia, 100 A.D., this great *Song* was very nearly excluded from the Hebrew canon, but thanks to the impassioned eloquence of the world-renowned mystic Rabbi Akiba (whose influence on Israel was in other respects most unfortunate), it was granted the place which it now occupies in the old Testament. He of course gave it a purely nationalistic interpretation, as being the love song of God for His chosen people. The esotericist sees in it the love song of the mystic marriage of the human spirit with the God within, which is the great mystery of Gnosis.



From *Secret Symbols of the Rosicrucians of the 16th and 17th Centuries*, Altona, 1785

### The Heavenly and Earthly Eve

Wisdom is the female emanation of God, through which his spiritual seed is realized, first in the uttered word of heavenly Gnosis-Sophia, then in matter (mater, mother earth) through the womb of nature. The latter is the fallen, lower Sophia, and, alchemically, is identified with Mercury, the root of all metals.

Or, to use modern terminology, the union of the lower with the higher Self, the little with the great Self, the transmutation of the human into the angelic, the discovery of the Man or Woman (Angel) within, as Max Heindel describes it in his discussion of Tannhauser in *Mysteries of the Great Operas*. □

—Ann Barkhurst