

Songs of Initiation

BOTH THE PSALMS and the Proverbs of the Old Testament were used in a number of ways in the magnificent Temple ceremonials. However, they were neither read nor spoken, but were sung or chanted, and were usually accompanied by the graceful rhythms of the sacred dance. The aspirants were taught that sound, or intonation, was the emanation or blessing from God, the Father; that harmony was the emanation or blessing of the Cosmic Christ; and that rhythm and rhythmic motion were the emanation or blessing of the Holy Spirit. Thus it was that the threefold power of the Holy Trinity was expressed in all Temple ceremonials.

The Psalms express various degrees of spiritual attainment. The Ninety-first Psalm is a song of protection. By its use the disciple was taught how to flood his body with pure white light of such power that no harm could touch it, by repeating again and again the powerful affirmation of protective security: “A thousand shall fall at thy right side and ten thousand at thy right hand, but it shall not come nigh thee.”

The Twenty-third Psalm is one of promise. “Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies.” These enemies are not merely personal enemies who wish us ill; they are also the more dangerous enemies that exist within oneself—wrong thinking, false appetites, and uncontrolled emotions, especially the destructive emotions of fear, hatred, malice and the coarser desires of the unregenerated personality.

“Thou anointest my head with oil” (the awakening of the spiritual organs in the head). “My cup runneth over. Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord [spiritual Law] forever.”



Illustration for Paradise Lost, John Hayley, Raphael Descending to Earth

The Twenty-fourth Psalm is a Song of Jubilation: “Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and the King of Glory shall come in. Who is this King of Glory?” The answer to the question is that the Lord is the King of Glory; but the aspirant understands that this also refers to the “Christ Within,” for every man is spiritually made in the image and likeness of God.

In our writings we have referred many times to the glorious processions which take place within the inner realms and which are led by the Christ Himself. Those who are worthy are permitted to witness these processions and sometimes to take part in them. This, however, can never be until the Christ is awakened within the aspirant’s own nature. And so it is that this psalm of jubilation carries two meanings: the joy that is known when the Christ Spirit has entered into the heart of the disciple, and the recognition that by this event he has become worthy to stand in the Presence of our supreme Lord

Christ Himself, while he hears the jubilant choring of Angels: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and the King of Glory shall come in."

Proverbs and Ecclesiastes

The Proverbs, as used in the ancient Temple, were powerful healing mantrams. The occult scientist understands that the human body is composed of certain groups of organs which are known as masculine, or positive, and other groups known as feminine, or negative. The former are under the rulership of the brain and cerebrospinal nervous system. The latter are under the rulership of the heart and the sympathetic nervous system.

It is the inharmonious interaction of these two systems that causes most disease. As the disciple progresses spiritually, these two systems are brought into ever closer harmony. A perfect relationship between the two systems is known as the attainment of Balance, or Polarity in the spiritual sense, and with it the body becomes impervious to disease. This is the secret of the perfect bodies possessed by the Masters of Wisdom and high Initiates who have risen in spiritual stature above and beyond disease and death.

Proverbs say truly, "Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars." And for the ready and eager disciple the injunction is given: "Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine that I have mingled."

It is because Proverbs and Ecclesiastes are especially the textbooks of illumination that Wisdom, personified as a feminine being, figures so largely in their pages. Wisdom is the feminine principle of God, while Understanding, as used in Proverbs, is the masculine. Wisdom is the inflow of cosmic revelation, but Understanding is achieved through reason and initiatory work. Therefore Proverbs opens with the command: "Get wisdom and understanding." This is really the keynote of the entire work. Solomon repeatedly declares that Wisdom is the principal object of the quest.

It is significant that the esoteric Temple music was both masculine and feminine, and was played upon instruments attuned to their respective rhythms. For the Temple aspirant, the cantillation used in Proverbs was designed to play directly upon the two chief currents which flow within the etheric

body. Thus the musical theme of both Proverbs and Ecclesiastes may be termed polarity and equilibrium.

The perfect Balance between the two poles of the human spirit can never be effected, however, until the lower feminine has been lifted up through pure and aspirational living. This term, "lower feminine," refers to the emotional nature as still held in subjection by the sense life, and in bondage to selfish aims and purposes. In most ancient writings the human "soul" or "spirit" (ego) was called feminine, and thus the lower aspect of the soul nature was termed the "fallen feminine" which must be lifted up and redeemed.

In the early Church the cantillations of Proverbs were used principally on Sundays between the Winter Solstice (Christmas) and the Spring Equinox (Easter), this being the most favorable transmutation time of the year and the most holy of seasons.

The rhythmic dualism of Proverbs, which plays upon the dual currents of the soul body and the two nerve systems, is clearly discernible in many of its verses. For example, consider Proverbs 14:1; 15:20; 19:26; 6:20-21:

Every wise woman buildeth her house: but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands.

A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish man despiseth his mother.

He that wasteth his father, and chaseth away his mother, is a son that causeth shame, and bringeth reproach.

My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother:

Bind then continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck.

The Song of Solomon—A Mystic Marriage Chant

The word *Sheba* means seven, and Sheba's coming to Solomon constitutes the preparation for the soul delights of the Mystic Marriage, which is the spiritual motif of the Song of Songs.

For those whose eyes are open to the true meaning of the Quest, this ancient legend of Sheba and Solomon contains many hints as to its purpose and the preparation necessary to its successful conclusion. Solomon, the Wisdom-Seer, had found the Way and had learned to walk therein, preparing for the future embodiment of that One who was to come as a more complete and perfect demonstration of



Sophia icon, Novarod type. Pavel Florenski, *La Colonne et le Fondement de la Vérité. L'Age d'Homme, Lausanne, 1975*

Divine Wisdom, or Sophia, is depicted as a crowned Angel. The Logos is above Her. Mary and the Child are to Her right and John the Baptist is to Her left. Sophian iconography is especially prevalent in the Russian Orthodox tradition.

“the Way, the Truth, and the Life.” This sublime “Song of Songs,” attributed to Solomon, sings in its inspired measures of the preparation and the Way.

In this song the alchemist-author has expressed in allegory the formula for making the Philosopher’s Stone. The story itself is quite simple. It tells of King Solomon who, upon visiting his vineyard on Mt. Lebanon, comes by surprise upon a fair Shulamite maiden. She flees from him. Later he visits her disguised as a shepherd and wins her love, after which he comes in state to claim her for his queen. The poem opens with a recital of their marriage in the royal palace.

The Song of Solomon has two principal characters, one masculine, the other feminine. The first bears the name *Shelomah* (peaceable), the second *Shulamith* (perfect). It is significant that both names are variations of the same root word, the terminology varying to indicate the gender. *Shulamith* is the feminine form of *Solomon*. In the English translations the two characters cannot be differentiated as

they are in the Hebrew.

The two poles of spiritual being were recognized in all ancient Temple teachings, and they were symbolized in the two columns or pillars which stood before the Mystery Temples. At the entrance of Solomon’s Temple stood the two pillars Jachin and Boaz, together symbolizing Strength and Stability, and also Beauty; they are also known as the two Columns of Victory. Always the candidate must pass between these two pillars in his search for Light, the Light which is in the East.

Solomon’s mystic Song is a poetic and allegorical delineation of the steps or degrees which lead to the development of Cosmic Consciousness, partly evidenced in seership. These degrees, sometimes termed “veils” in the early Mystery Schools, are seven in number and are enumerated thus:

First Degree: The Quest

Second Degree: The Awakening of Love
(the Mystic)

Third Degree: The Attainment of Knowledge
(the Occult)

Fourth Degree: Detachment

Fifth Degree: Unification

Sixth Degree: Annihilation

Seventh Degree: Consummation

The exultant note which is sounded in King Solomon’s Song takes form in the lovely words repeated so often throughout: “My beloved is mine and I am His,” while the phrase which completes the chant, “and he feedeth among the lilies,” is descriptive of the Path which culminates in the divine Consummation.

This ultimate cosmic blending of the two poles of Spirit which constitutes the Mystic Marriage is represented in the verses with which St. John opens his Gospel: “The Word was with God”; and its music accompanies every verse of Solomon’s beautiful marriage song.

Veiled, for him who is not yet ready to essay the Quest, under the likeness of a tenderly human love song, the Song of Songs is to the illumined a revelation from the very Holy of Holies, wherein he stands in the Light Eternal, now no longer seen “as through a glass, darkly,” but with transcendent clearness, “Face to Face.” □

—Corinne Heline