

Contemporary Mystic Christianity **Bible Self-Study Supplement**

Songs of The Old Testament

Under the general heading, Songs of the Old Testament, we have ventured to include much that is not ordinarily thought of in that connection, but in so doing we have tried in each case to make clear the reasons for such inclusion.

In view of this fact a preliminary word may serve the useful purpose of making it clear to the student at the outset that the material which follows is geared to the central theme of Initiation. Hence the Books of the Bible taken up for discussion are not treated in the order in which they come in the Scriptures. Nor are they arranged in either historical or chronological sequence. The arrangement has been determined solely by the place occupied in relation to the theme treated, namely, Initiation.

Obviously, such a selection would include the Psalms which are true lyrics, and Job, which biblical scholars have spoken of as the "most splendid creation of Hebrew poetry". The Book of Judges qualifies for inclusion because it contains the Song of Deborah, together with a number of passages which were undoubtedly chanted by the early poets of Israel and which are, moreover, important in a study of the power of rhythm and music in the spiritual life.

The part of judges dealing with Jephthah and Samson are not regarded as authentic by some Bible critics, but this is because the Initiation key has been lost to both the higher critics and the orthodoxy of our day. It is only as this is used that the true meaning which these stories are intended to convey can rightly be grasped,

The Book of Ruth which outlines an important phase of esoteric development was formerly a part of judges. Thus from the viewpoint of Initiation, judges stands pre-eminent, being one of the most deeply mystical books in the entire collection.

The Book of Esther has been included because it reveals so clearly the meaning and nature of the Four Sacred Seasons, which were so very important in the interior work, as well as in the exterior ceremonial of Solomon's Temple. Although supposed to depict an incident of the Exile, the story of Esther undoubtedly contains elements which go back to very ancient times in Palestine, as we endeavor to make clear in the interpretation that follows.

The two Books of Ruth and Esther also have an important bearing on the problems of Mystic Masonry as both show the operation of the feminine principle in inner development. In the soul world, which is the locale of the true Temple of Light, sex is no barrier to admission and membership.

Like the Book of Ruth, the Book of Esther is given in prose form in our Bible. But, to the interior ear of the soul, it is a great and stirring rhythmic chant. Perhaps it will not be understood for what it really is until some great poet of the future translates it into poetic form, and some master musician clothes it in New Age music. We suspect that the story of Esther, like that of Ruth, was the subject of many ancient poems in Israel which have failed to come down to us.

The Song of Solomon, greatest of all Songs of the Mystic Marriage, has a connection with the visit of the Queen of Sheba to Solomon's Court. We therefore give it only passing mention in connection with the Songs of Initiation.

These Songs of Initiation, as we choose to call them, reveal a very important phase of the Temple work. They show us many secret things not given in the prose accounts, for they are, as it were, the Voice of the Temple, which speaks to us across the centuries. This Voice is to be thought of as emanating not from the material Temple of Solomon, but rather from the interpenetrating etheric structure, the Invisible Temple not built with hands, but which is eternal in the heavens. This is the true Temple, being indeed that holy Archetype which David beheld in the Interior Light of the spiritual world.

What we have said of the other Books applies also to Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, which are traditionally attributed to Solomon, but which the esotericists consider as coming rather from this School, or, in other words, from the Invisible Temple. As we speak of the School of the prophets, so also, we speak of the School of the Temple, the Invisible Temple, which in the more familiar vernacular of our time is one with the Church Invisible.

The poetry of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes quite naturally take their place in the present volume.

In conclusion, there is the Masonic Addendum which provides the reader with a resume of the esoteric principles involved in Mystic Masonry. Not all of these principles are recognized or admitted by, the exoteric Mason. But Mystic Masonry is the Masonry which is in heaven, the true Masonry. So long as the emphasis is on the exoteric Masonry, women will continue to be excluded from the Fraternity; but when the emphasis shifts to esoteric Masonry, as it most certainly will in the coming Aquarian Age, woman will be admitted to an equal status with man. Then and then only, can the true and full work of Masonry be accomplished.

Music Is Magic

The Occult Power of Music

Our present materialistic age has all but forgotten the divine power of music which was a well known and demonstrated fact among the ancients. The musicians who took part in Temple rites were Initiates who knew how to employ both rhythm and harmony to promote the highest spiritual good of all the assembly, both participants and spectators. Plato states that the Egyptians accredited their sacred melodies to the goddess Isis. Their music, he adds, "had power to subdue man's passions and to purify his spirit." With Egypt's downfall, the best and highest in her sacred music passed into Greece and Palestine.

The musical rites and forms of Solomon's Temple were adopted largely from the temples of Egypt. When Solomon was married to the daughter of Pharaoh, Magsara, legend has it that she brought to Israel a thousand varieties of musical instruments. It is stated further that one of the principal reasons for Sheba's visit to Solomon was her interest in the esoteric power attainable by the right use of the proper Temple music, in which Solomon was an adept. The Psalms which have come down to us include many sacred songs which were originally intoned in particular keynotes and particular rhythms and these were known to affect the mind and character of the worshippers and neophytes.

Hebrew kabbalism, like Egyptian occultism, recognizes three principles of man: spirit, soul and body. The Egyptians depict in their tomb-paintings the "double" of the man which leaves the body at death but which must be reckoned with even during the lifetime on Earth when that "double" is part of the living organism. This double is the particular part of man's invisible structure most affected by the repetition of strong rhythms and the intoning of specific keynotes. Even slightly sensitive people feel vibrations within the body aroused by the impact of musical sounds and distinct rhythmic patterns. Deaf people feel the vibrations of music through the floor, or by touching the musical instrument from which the music proceeds, and some of them are greatly disturbed by the disruptive vibrations of jazz but show tranquility and joy when they feel the tones of classical melodic music. The "double" here spoken of is etheric in substance, and, therefore, entirely physical. It is not a spiritual principle. It is not immortal. It is the "soul" "which dies." It can be shattered by destructive vibrations. It can be made relatively immortal by constructive vibrations such as constitute sacred music. As it is the matrix which holds the physical, visible body, the condition of the double determines health and longevity. Any vibration which affects the etheric double adversely affects the body adversely as well. Hence we see that the music used in Temples, or in churches today, has a very real effect upon our lives.

Examples of this kind of music in the Old Testament are the "Hallel," Psalms 113-118, and the Song of the Exile in Exodus 15. The books for which music was obligatory were Psalms, Ecclesiastes, Proverbs, Ruth, Job, Lamentation, the Song of Solomon and certain portions of the Pentateuch and the Prophets. Historically, we find the earliest reference to this Old Testament music bears the date of the first century; but that does not mean the occult power of music was not known and used in the centuries between the building of Solomon's Temple and the time of Christ. There have been many books written and many lost; and we may add that contrary to popular opinion, the Old Testament literature shows every evidence of having been radically and extensively edited, by many succeeding generations of editors. This accounts for its unity of thought and structure, which, as has been pointed out by orthodox commentators, is very different from the heterogeneous structure of other great scriptures of the world. Moreover, there are many scriptures more ancient than the Old Testament, and we should expect the more modern writings to show a greater coherence of thought.

The traditions concerning these Temple cantillations are as follows: Lamentations and Job were chanted in the Temple both on the morning and evening of the ninth of Ab (July) to commemorate the destruction of the First Temple. There is a marked similarity between the rhythms of

Lamentation and the Gregorian chant, denoting an occult similarity of design and purpose if not actual derivation of the one from the other. Proverbs were chanted on Sunday afternoons between Passover (the Spring Equinox) and the Feast of Weeks (the Summer Solstice). Esther was read on the fourteenth day of Adar (February).

Biblical cantillation is a vital, creative power and one of the Bible's most fascinating approaches to the initiatory Mysteries.

The close structural relationship which exists between the medieval chants of the Church and ancient Hebrew cantillations gives added testimony of their occult origins. The early Christian Church forbade any interference with the recitative which was a revered part of Old Testament tradition. In some of the ultraconservative cloisters the primitive canticle was preserved intact into the late Middle Ages.

Little of the music of the ancient world has come down to us, because the ancients possessed no such system of music notation as we now have. We do not, for instance, actually know just what Grecian music sounded like, although it is thought it might have resembled Chinese music. Neither do we have any transcripts of Hebrew music. We do know something of the instruments used in the

Hebrew worship, however, and the arrangements of the choirs.

David placed the singers in true esoteric order relative to their spiritual attainment, and appointed to them their parts and places in accordance with an esoteric design. He divided the singers into three groups,, each accompanied by a certain type of music, which was keyed to one of the spiritual vehicles of man. Cymbals (asaper) were used, and other percussion instruments, to punctuate and emphasize proclamations and the announcement of ordinances; these were attuned primarily to the desire body. Stringed instruments, harps (heman), accompanied meditative prayer and healing, and directly affected the etheric body. The third, lutes (jeduthur), esoterically the highest, affected the mental states. It is said that so powerful were the magnetic currents sent forth by the singers and musicians that sometimes both congregation and priests fell prostrate, which perhaps refers to a ritual prostration, but was literally true in individual cases.

In addition to the instruments mentioned above, the Hebrews possessed an instrument like our saxophone which, with the trumpet (formerly a ram's horn), was capable of sending out a thunderous blast of sound. The double flute was known, and among percussion instruments were drum and sistrum, or castanets.

The principal musical instruments used in the worship were the nevel, a large harp of twelve strings, and the kimors, a small harp of ten strings. Here we find the twenty-two strings corresponding with the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet upon which the path and process of true esoteric development was based.

All exoteric (public) Temple work demanded the use of two nevels and nine kimors. The latter was without question the harp of David famed in sacred legend. "Let our lord now command thy servants, which are before thee, to seek out a man, who is a cunning player on an harp: and it shall come to pass, when the evil spirit from God is upon thee, that he shall play with his hand, and thou shalt be well." (Samuel 1:16-16)

The two kinds of wind instruments used in the Temple were the shofar and the shofaroth. The former was made of the curved male ram's horn and was attuned to the masculine or fire rhythms of Spirit, whereas the latter was formed of the straight female ram's horn and was attuned to the feminine or water rhythms of Spirit. The shofar was made of gold; the shofaroth of silver. The two were always used together on special fast days.

In the use of these instruments the neophyte was instructed that the blowing of the shofar gave high and holy thoughts to man and reminded him at all times of the

rightful performance of his duties. As the instrument keyed to the positive, masculine force it was used in driving away evil spirits. The shofaroth, carrying the feminine principle, was used to purify the aura and also in connection with the inner and secret part of the Temple work.

From a rare and curious old manuscript dating back to 1706, titled Temple Musick, (its author one Arthur Bedford by name, a vicar of the Temple in Bristol) we quote the following:

"Moses inaugurated two processions attuned to the rhythms of the Song of the Red Sea Victory. He led the men and Miriam the women. The voices of the men were grave, that of the women acute. From both together came a mixture of a fit and sweetly joined melody. During the entire night they sang hymns and songs of thanksgiving."

The famous Te Deum Laudamus of St. Ambrose is set to the rhythm in use for ages as a recitative for Zechariah's Song: "Rejoice, ye daughters of Zion."

The rhythms of Jeremiah's Lamentation are identical with those of certain very early Hindu and Greek sacred hymns, thus showing their universal recognition and use in the expression of the human spirit. Jeremiah's chant was used in the age of St. Gregory as a general elegy, and in later times came to serve as a lament for the deceased.

The traditional reading of the Old Testament was never a mere monotonous prose reading but took the form of cantillation, that is, chanting. On this point the Talmud states: "He who reads the Bible without tune shows disregard for it and for the vital value of its laws." It is true that the responsive readings familiar in our churches are a remnant of the occult use of rhythm which goes back to the time when Temples were places of genuine spiritual instruction and their services were ceremonials of true esoteric development. There can be no question but that much of the mystical glamour of the Roman Catholic Church, and similar bodies, is due to the singing of high mass. Even in the ordinary low mass, the chanting has a powerful effect upon the etheric double of the assembled worshippers, and even more upon the officiant himself since the keynote for the development of the etheric double is "harmony", and its growth requires the application of the law of "repetition."

A group of aspirants coming together for spiritual instruction are generally attuned to the same vibratory rhythm, hence in the innermost circles of esoteric schools there exists what may at first sight appear to be a narrowness, in that others not so attuned must be excluded. This works no hardship, however, on the neophyte thus excluded: it means merely that he must continue to seek his own "house" and his own "brethren". It

was a knowledge of this law of group rhythm which occasioned the great exclusiveness of the early Egyptians, an exclusiveness which the Jews adopted and carried throughout their known history. It is again the reason for the so-called "secrecy" of the esoteric work of the Mystery Schools. In fact, there can be little doubt that in many Mystery cults today, neophytes who find after many years of labor that they are still far from the threshold of the unseen are probably in the wrong circle, and must therefore continue their Quest until they find another house, another home, where among true brethren they may know the joys of esoteric fellowship.

The same principle applies also to orthodox churches: there are many people who, through conservatism, cling to a phase of religion they have long outgrown, thus hindering their own spiritual progress.

In such groups whether exoteric or esoteric, the characteristic keynote of the assemblage is struck not once but many times in the course of a service. This is particularly to be noted in the celebration of mass in any Roman Catholic Church. It is this repetition of identical rhythms impinging upon the etheric body which draws Catholics into such close bonds of loyalty and reverence for the Church. In the higher processes of esoteric individual development, the disciple's own individual keynote is

employed, its power stimulated until the spiritual glory of the ego is able to transmute the lower self.

Relative to the power of music to promote spiritual discernment, Clement of Alexandria, one of the most noted of all the early century leaders, writes: "Praise Him on the chords and organs: Our body He calls an organ, and its nerves are the strings by which it has received harmonious tension, and when struck by the spirit, it gives forth human voices. Praise Him on the clashing cymbal: He calls the tongue the cymbal of the mouth which resounds with the pulsation of the lips. Therefore He cried to humanity, Let every breath praise the Lord, because He cares for every breathing thing which He hath made. For man is truly a pacific instrument, while other instruments, if you investigate, you will find to be warlike, inflaming to lusts, kindling up amours, or rousing wrath."

The etheric double to which we have had reference is fourfold in its structure. The initiatory disciplines of the New Age have to do largely with this fourfold etheric structure. These four parts, or functions, of the etheric double are designated as "four ethers," since they are actually independent of one another, although found associated in the one structure relative to the human organism.

The four ethers may be divided roughly into those functions which promote the animal propensities and those

which promote the mental or spiritual. The "animal" ethers are denoted as the chemical and life ethers, respectively. It is the chemical ether which binds the atoms of the body together, although in a truer sense we may say that this ether actually constitutes the material form, for it is the ether, or field, of chemical activity. The life ether is visible as a delicate orange-pink fire, although its color varies somewhat in the various kingdoms of nature, and even from one individual to another in the human species. It is in any case rightly called the fire of life. It is the cause of all growth.

The two higher ethers are designated the Light and Reflecting Ethers, respectively. Of these two ethers' the latter is not properly speaking an "ether" at all, for it partakes rather more of the quality of the inner or soul world, being the channel through which thought makes its impression upon the brain. We are not to assume from this that the Reflecting Ether (which is basically blue in color) surrounds the head alone. Psychologists know that the "mind" is not in the brain, but that mental activity is accompanied by chemical changes in the brain, and that is as far as they can go. The Reflecting Ether comes into evidence first about the head and the nervous system; but in due course its volume includes the whole of the body. When the clairvoyant speaks of the "mind" extending partially around the body, it is generally this Reflecting

Ether which is meant. It persists with the ego after death, rising into the higher worlds of the soul.

The Light Ether, although associated with the sense life, since without this ether the sense organs could not have been developed (particularly the eye), is also the channel for the inflow of psychic energies which pour through the nerves and sensitize them to the point where they are able to report the presence of so-called psychic phenomena.

Thus the Light and Reflecting Ethers are more especially the avenues through which spiritual thought and ideal emotion flow in upon the body, and they are therefore the means by which transmutation is accomplished.

Transmutation thus begins in the ethers and later includes the dense body itself which becomes etherized and consequently immortal, a body formed of celestial fire. In the sensualist or materialist, however, it is the two lower ethers which are attracted and are predominant in the etheric double, whereas it is the two higher ethers which are attracted and become predominant in the etheric double of the spiritual aspirant.

In addition to the functions noted above, we observe that each of the four ethers possesses a positive and a negative pole or function, like the two poles of a magnet. In occult literature, the positive pole is always designated as masculine, or fiery; the negative pole feminine, or watery.

It is the perfect equilibrium between these two poles of the spirit which forms the immortal or Initiate-body. Solomon's Song of Songs, as explained at another point, is the Chant Triumphant of this consummation. Proverbs and Ecclesiastes are also valuable texts for the aspirant who is working toward the use of these subtle forces. In them we find the familiar Wisdom Teaching, in which Wisdom is the feminine principle of God, and Understanding the masculine.

— ***Corinne Heline***