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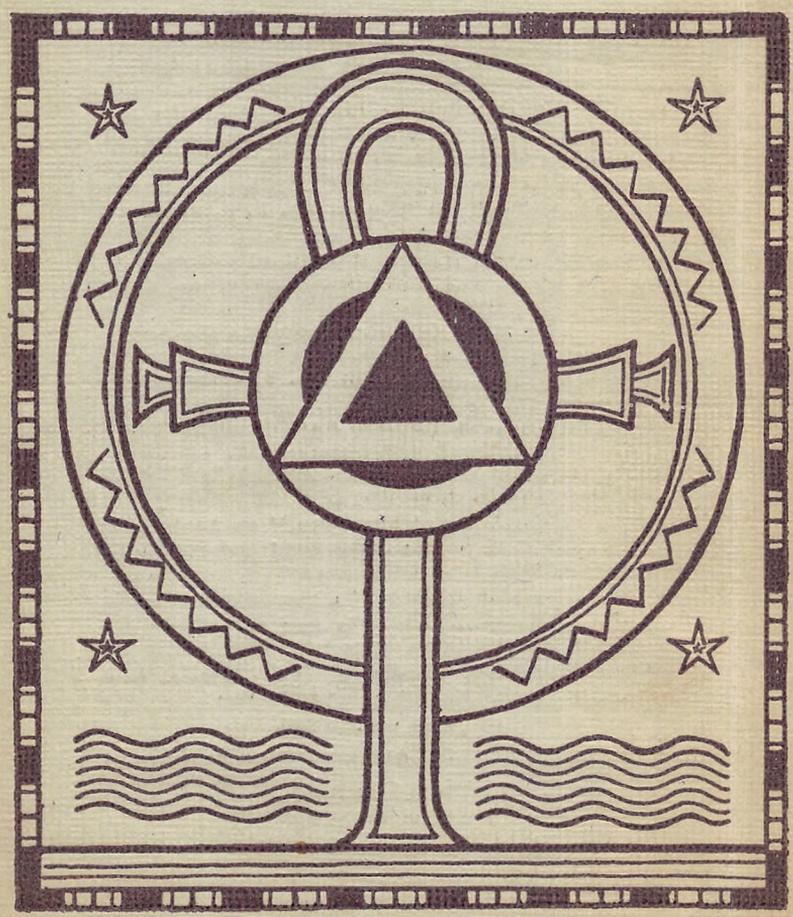
# THE SHRINE OF WISDOM

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PHILOSOPHY RELIGION & MYSTICISM

VOL. VIII

AUTUMN 1926

No. 29



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VOL. VIII

AUTUMN, 1926

No. 29

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## CONTENTS

	PAGE
The Chaldean Oracles - - - - -	133
Druidic Wisdom - - - - -	150
Plato and The Four Inspirations - - - - -	151
Mystic Verse - - - - -	160
To The Muses - - - - -	161
Iamblichus - - - - -	162
Excerpts from Clement of Alexandria - - - - -	165
Editorial - - - - -	168

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# THE SHRINE OF WISDOM

VOL. VIII. No. 29

AUTUMN EQUINOX, 1926

## THE CHALDEAN ORACLES

*Translated and Systematized with Commentary*

### THE ASCENT OF THE SOUL\*

**L**ET the immortal depth of thy Soul lead thee, and open all thine eyes earnestly to the Above."—CXV.

This exhortation, like the voice of the Blessed Ones of the old forgotten past reverberating through all the ages, is the Call to all true Aspirants to make ready for the Great Ascent of the Soul of the Sacred Mountain.

"Socrates, in the Alcibiades, rightly observes that the Soul, retiring into herself, will behold all other things and deity itself. For, verging to her own unity and to the centre of all life, laying aside multitude and the variety of all the manifold powers which she contains, she ascends to the highest watch-tower of real beings. For the Soul, when looking to things posterior to herself, beholds only the shadows and images of beings; but when she turns to herself, she evolves her own essence, and the reasons which she contains. And at first, indeed, she only, as it were, beholds herself, but when she penetrates more profoundly into the knowledge of herself, she finds in herself both Intellect (*Nous*) and the Orders of Beings. But when she proceeds into her interior recesses and into the adytum of the Soul, she perceives, with her eyes nearly closed, the Genus of the Gods and the Unities of Real Beings. For all things are potentially inherent in her according to the Soul's own characteristic, and through this we are naturally capable of knowing all things, by the inspiration of the powers and ideas of wholes which we contain."—(*Proclus on First Alcibiades.*)

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\* The previous articles of this series appeared in issues Nos. 23 to 28, and deal with (1) the Paternal Profundity, (2) Archetypal Ideas, (3) The Sevenfold Creative Fire, (4) The Ruling, Vivific, and Solar Principles, (5) Nature and Matter, and (6) The Descent of the Soul.

CXVI.—“Explore thou the channel of the Soul, whence she cometh, and by what means, when she hath become a slave of the body, thou mayst again restore her to the order from which thou didst draw her, by uniting action with sacred word (logos).”

The eyes of the Soul are her gnostic powers by which she comes to know herself as well as the natures that are prior and posterior to herself; they are primarily threefold: noeric or spiritual and intellectual; dianoetic or rational and discursive; doxastic or opinionative and judicial.

“The one salvation of the Soul herself, which is extended by the Demiurgus and which liberates her from the circle of generation, from abundant wandering, and from an inefficacious life, is her return to the intellectual principle and a flight from everything which naturally adheres to her from generation. For it is necessary that the Soul, which descends like a seed into generation, should lay aside the stubble and bark, as it were, which she obtained from being disseminated into these fluctuating realms, and that, purifying herself from everything circumjacent, she should become an intellectual flower and fruit, delighting in an intellectual life instead of doxastic nutriment.”—(*Proclus on Timaeus*.)

“The stronger Souls behold truth through themselves and are more inventive, being as the Oracle saith:

CXVII. ‘Saved through their own strength’—  
(*Proclus in Alcibiades*.)

“Plato considers Mathesis (instructional discipline) and Heuresis (invention or discovery) as paths of knowledge adapted to our Souls. . . . the human Soul containing in herself all reasons and preassuming all sciences, is indeed darkened from generation respecting the theory of what it possesses, and requires discipline and invention; that through instructional discipline it may unfold its intellections and through invention may find itself and the plenitude of the inherent ideas or reasons. And these are the Gifts of the Gods, benefiting the Soul in its fallen condition and recalling it to an intellectual life.”—(*ibid.*)

CXVIII. "For not by mortals whose thought is of body are things divine attainable, but they who stripped like athletes speed upwards to the height."

"Cathartic virtue alone must be called the salvation of souls, since this cuts off and vehemently obliterates material tendencies and the passions which adhere to us from generation, separates the Soul from body and leads it to intellect (*nous*), causing it to leave on earth the vehicles with which it is invested."—(*Proclus on Tim.*)

In so far as the Soul is liberated from the bondage of the body, so it is said "to die" to the body, even while the body still lives; this, as Plato says in the *Phaedo*, is one of the great objects of the real philosopher, namely, "to study how to die and be dead."

CXIX. "The Souls of those who violently leave their bodies are most pure."

This mystical death is attained, as Olympiodorus declares: "by philosophizing in a manner truly cathartic."

Catharsis is purification or purgation from the attachments and defilements of material existence; it is the result of a telestic life, that is, one characterized by perfecting practices, sacred works, sacramental acts or ceremonies and rites.

"The telestic life, through the divine fire, causes all the defilements due to generation to disappear, as the Oracle teaches, and everything of an alien and irrational nature which the life of the Soul has attracted to itself."—(*Proclus in Tim.*)

"Sacred rites do not permit us to feed on seeds which decline towards the earth: for the earth is the last of things, into which evil, according to Plato, being impelled, perpetually revolves, and the Gods in the Oracles everywhere denominate it 'dregs' and continually exhort us to fly from thence . . .

"For in sacred rites it is well worth extending the will in such wise that it may rise above the power of the body, and may cheerfully endeavour to comply with the divine institutions; for this, indeed, is eminently conducive to the safety of the Soul—to pay a much greater attention to itself

than to the salubrity of the body; and even the body, though in a secret manner, will appear to receive, by this means, greater and more wonderful advantages; for when the Soul gives the whole of herself to the Gods, and wholly delivers herself to the guidance of Superior Natures, to purifying rites, and prior to these, divine institutions taking the lead, nothing further now prohibiting and impeding (for all things are contained in the Gods and subsist about them); when this is the case, the Divine Light will immediately shine through the Soul. But in consequence of her being thus deified, she translates a certain vigorous strength into her connate life, which when included, as it were, possesses dominion, and becomes, through this life, the cause of safety to the body. . .

“ And, indeed, the Oracles of the Gods testify to the truth of these assertions when they declare that through purifying ceremonies, not the Soul only, but bodies themselves become worthy of receiving much assistance and health: for they say—

CXX. “ Even the mortal vesture of bitter matter is by this means preserved.”—(*Emp. Julian. Orat. Sovereign Sun.*)

Thus, by means of telestic practices the Soul has a refined and subtle nature or vehicle, which persists even beyond the life of the ordinary physical body, as such.

CXXI. “ Nor shouldst thou leave the dregs of matter on the precipice; the eidolon (subtle etheric body) also hath its part in the All-radiant Place.”

The precipice is the terrestrial region; the All-radiant Place is the Solar World above the lunar sphere.

“ So that the manifested vehicle (body) may through the visible movement of them receive its fitting care, and the more divine part of it may be invisibly purified, and be restored to its native inheritance, as one of the Oracles of the Gods declares:

CXXII. “ Being drawn up by the aery, lunar, and solar rays.”—(*Proclus in Tim.*)

CXXIII. “ For the spirit which she collected from the spheres attends her when she comes out of the solid body.”

CXXIV.—“ Extending the fiery mind (*nous*) to the work of piety, thou shalt preserve thy flowing body also.”

As the Soul's potentialities are actualized so these are the powers whereby it mounts upward in the Great Ascent, passing through purifications and initiations, and gaining ever fuller and fuller visions of Reality as it approaches perfective union with the Divine.

“ The word *teleté* or perfective initiation, says Hermeas, was so denominated from rendering the Soul perfect. The Soul is potentially perfect, but here below it is divided, as it were, and not able wholly to energize all its powers. But it is necessary to know that *teleté*, *muésis*, and *epopteia* differ from each other. *Teleté* is analogous to that which is preparatory to perfection; but *muésis*, which is so called from closing the eyes, is more divine; for to close the eyes in initiation is no longer to receive by sense those divine mysteries, but to behold them with the pure Soul itself; and *epopteia* signifies to be established in and become a spectator of the mysteries.”—(*Thomas Taylor*.)

“ Wherefore, the Gods exhort us not to look towards Them before we are hedged round about by the powers of the Mysteries.”—(*Proclus in Alcibiades*.)

CXXV. “ Thou shouldst not look upon them before thy body is perfected.”

Because that which is impure attracts to itself that which is of a like nature, hence it is said that evil entities (called evil or terrestrial daemons in the Oracles) molest imperfect man when he strives to reach the Empyrean Realm.

CXXVI. “ Ever do they allure men's souls and lead them away from the Mysteries.”

“ And indeed, as to the theophanies and the life of the Mysteries, this is that which makes the ascent safe and steady, namely, the going forward in an orderly manner. Moreover, as the Oracle also says:—

CXXVII. ‘ For no other cause is the Face of God turned away from man and by His living power doth He send him on vain paths ’—

“ As when we make ascent to the most divine contemplations, or works, in a disorderly and inharmonious manner, and, as it is said, with profane lips and unwashed feet; for of those who thus approach the mysteries, imperfect is the passage, vain are their aspirations, and dark their paths.”  
—(*Proclus on Parmenides.*)

CXXVIII. “ Behold thyself and tremble.”

The more man knows his real Self the more is he inspired with true reverential awe in the presence of the Holy One.

CXXIX. “ Believe thyself to be out of body and thou art.”

But by supernatural faith the true mystic “ loses himself ” and plunges into the Divine Darkness which is before the Pavilions of God.

CXXX. “ Even our ills sprout in us by our own will, for they are born from the nature of the life we lead.”

They are the veils before the eyes of the Soul which obscure the Dazzling Radiance of the Divine Light.

CXXXI. “ Seek Paradise.”

“ The Chaldaic Paradise is the Choir of Divine Powers about the Father of the Universe and the Empyrean Beauties of the Demiurgic Fountains.”—(*Thomas Taylor.*)

CXXXII. “ Stain not Spirit, deepen not the plane.”

The “ Spirit ” here is the “ breath ” or aerial nature of the Soul; the “ plane ” or superficies, refers to the Soul’s differentiations, of an etherial and akashic nature, in the realms of time and space.

“ For this principle of ‘ spirit ’ in the Soul, which the Blessed Ones call the spiritual Soul, becomes both divine and an all-various daemon and an image-body (eidolon), and in this the Soul atones for its misdeeds. The Oracles agree on this, for they compare the life of the Soul there (in Hades) to the fantastic visions of a dream.”—(*Synesius*)

The hosts of the celestial Angels and Daemons assist the Soul when it aspires to climb the Blessed Mountain of the Gods; even as the terrestrial powers minister to man's mundane needs and thus seem to delay his progress by the worldly goods that man accumulates.

CXXXIII. "But when thou shalt behold a terrestrial daemon approaching make offering with invocation of the stone Mnuziris."

"Terrestrial daemons," says Taylor, "are full of deceit, as being remote from divine knowledge and replete with dark matter; he, therefore, who desires to receive any true information from one of these, must prepare an altar and sacrifice the stone Mnuziris, which has the power of causing another greater daemon to appear, who, approaching invisible to the terrestrial daemon, will give a true answer to the proposed question, and this to the interrogator himself." —(*Thomas Taylor.*)

This refers to the power of sacred sympathy in telestic concerns and should be understood in a figurative rather than literal sense as indicative of the necessity of directing the mind to that which is celestial rather than terrestrial, for "the mind touches that which it thinks upon."

CXXXIV. "The Choir of Angels leads up the Soul in a certain manner, appearing about the Soul and causing her to be full of pure fire, thereby imparting to her stable order and power."

In the Soul's mystical ascent it can be conceived as passing upwards and outwards through the various worlds that are unfolded in the Chaldean Cosmology—the Zonic, the Azonic, and the Hyperzonic; thus, first it rises superior to the Zonic world with its sublunary and planetary spheres and wins the freedom of the inerratic sphere; secondly, it gains the liberty of the Azonic Realm, communing with the Angelic Hosts, freed from all the zones of Nature; and thirdly, it attains the Hyperzonic World and enters into more and more intimate relations with the Ruling, Vivific, and Solar Principles and the Gods who symbolize these divine principles, such as

Apollo, Minerva, and Diana or Hecate. Thus, from Apollo comes the "Sounding Light" of the Spiritual Sun; from Minerva comes the power of true virtue and supernal excellence; from Hecate comes the secret of life and victory over death.

"Wherefore the Oracle saith that the ascending Souls sing a paean."—(*Olympiodorus.*)

CXXXV. "The Soul breaks forth into hymns about divine things."

The paean was the measure especially associated with Apollo: it was stately and dignified, and is appropriate to the Soul's ascent from diversity to unity.

Such a Soul is truly inspired, and, with the Angelic choirs, sings the praises of the All-Father.

CXXXVI. "Alive in power he runs as an Angel."

"But the Souls of Theurgists, as Plato says, do not always remain in the Intelligible Realm, but they also descend into generation, concerning whom the Oracle says:

"Let fiery hope nourish thee

CXXXVII. 'In the angelic region.'"—(*Proclus and Olympiodorus.*)

"They (the Oracles) make the Soul descend often into the world either through losing her wings or through the Will of the Father."—(*Psellus*)

"But the Souls that live according to virtue shall, in other respects, be happy, and when separated from the irrational nature and purified from body, shall be conjoined with the Gods and govern the whole world, together with the Deities by Whom it was produced.

And, indeed, though nothing of this kind should happen to the Soul, yet virtue herself, and the happiness and glory resulting from virtue, together with a life free from sorrow and subjection to others, would be sufficient to produce felicity in those who choose, and are able to pursue, a life wholly conformable to virtue itself."—(*Sallust on the Gods and the World.*)

For the fiery breath of angelic inspiration enters the Soul that is purified from unworthy passions.

CXXXVIII. "Lightening her with the warmth of the spirit."

CXXXIX. "That which the Soul projects is easy to dissolve when it is revived."

That is, when it is breathed into by "the warmth of the spirit."

The Oracles also speak of

CXL. "The earth from which it is necessary to lighten the heart"—from earthly things that weigh it down.

CXLI. "Quench not thy heart."

For even as the mind is illuminated by the Light of Apollo, so must the heart be warmed and expanded by the Divine Virtue and Wisdom of Minerva.

CXLII. "Clad in the full armour of the strength of the Sounding Light, arming both mind and soul with three-barbed might, thou must set in thy heart the whole symbol of the Triad, nor wander dispersedly on the fiery ways, but advance with steadfast tread."

CXLIII. "For verily fully-armed and arrayed for battle like unto the Goddess" (Minerva).

"We must show what the armour, and shields, and the spears are, and how these are antecedently comprehended in the Goddess Minerva. . . The divine Iamblichus explains these in an inspired manner, he says: that shields are powers through which a divine nature remains impassive and undefiled, surrounding itself with an infrangible guard; but spears are the powers according to which it proceeds through all things in an exempt manner, and operates on all things, cutting off that which is material and giving aid to every genesiurgic form. These powers, however, are first seen about Minerva, and she is represented in armour, with spear and shield, for she vanquishes all things, and, according to the theologians, remains without declination and with undefiled purity in her father (Jupiter). . . In Minerval

Souls, the shield is the untamed and uninclining power of reason, but the spear is that power which amputates matter and liberates the Soul from fatal passions.”—(*Proclus in Tim.*)

CXLIV. “Urging thyself towards the centre of the Sounding Light.”

“Apollo, subsisting as the principle of the choir of the Muses, which are around him, is—

CXLV. “A harmony of exultant light.”—(*Proclus in Crat.*)

“The Theurgist who presides over the mystic rites of Apollo, begins his operations from purifications and sprinklings.”—(*Thomas Taylor.*)

CXLVI. “First let the priest himself, who presides at the fiery works, be sprinkled with the cold water of the deep-sounding brine.”

By such sacred oblations the Soul is lustrated and made pure to enter into communion with Divine Natures.

CXLVII. “Never change the native names, for there are in all languages God-given names which have ineffable power in the Mysteries.”—(*Psellus.*)

“As the theurgic art, through certain symbols, calls forth the unenvying Goodness of the Gods, in the same manner, the intellectual science of divine concerns, through compositions and divisions of sounds, exhibits the occult essence of the Gods. With great propriety, therefore, does Socrates in the *Philebus* assert that he proceeds with the greatest awe in that which respects the names of the Gods: for it is necessary to venerate the last resounding echoes, as it were, of the Gods, and in consequence of this reverence to maintain them in their first exemplars.”—(*Proclus in Theol. of Plato.*)

But all the Gods are Aspects of the One God, and must be worshipped as such, and not idolatrously.

“Wherefore the Gods exhort us to understand—

CXLVIII. “The form of the Light which They display.”—(*Proclus in Crat.*)

“ For subsisting on high without form it (the light) becomes invested with form through its progression, and there being established, occultly and uniformly, it becomes apparent to us through the influence of the Gods; possessing indeed an efficacious energy through a divine cause, but becoming figured through the essence by which it is received.”—(*ibid*)

CXLIX. “ Energize about the Strophalos of Hecate.”

The Strophalos, which was a revolving sphere of gold with a sapphire in the middle, was a sacred symbol in the Chaldean Mysteries, which referred to the Great World Mother and the Providential Life of which She is the source.

CL. “ For Her hair appears to scintillate with sharp points of light.”

This also, according to Proclus, refers to the Mater Deorum, Rhea-Hecate.

CLI. “ The Soul of those who have speech will clasp God to herself: having nothing mortal she is wholly intoxicated with God.”

CLII. “ To some He granted to receive by instruction the Token of the Light, while to others even while asleep He gave the enjoyment of His strength.”

“ The Demiurgus of the universe impressed these symbols (or tokens) in Souls, by which they might be able to abide in themselves and again convert themselves to the sources of their being; and through the symbol of unity, indeed, He conferred on them stability, but through intellect, He imparted to them the power of conversion.

But to this conversion, prayer is of the greatest utility; for it attracts to itself the beneficence of the Gods, through those ineffable symbols which the Father of Souls has disseminated in them. . . .

To a perfect and true prayer, however, there is required, in the first place, a knowledge of the Divine Orders to whom he who prays approaches, for no one will accede to the Gods

in a proper manner unless he has a knowledge of Their natures. Hence the Oracle admonishes:—

CLIII. That “the fire-warmed conception” has the first rank in sacred worship.

But in the second place there is required a conformation of our life with that which is divine, accompanied by all purity, discipline, and order, through which, our concerns being introduced to the Gods, we shall invite Their beneficence and our Souls will become subject to Them; in the third place, contact or communion is necessary, according to which we touch the divine essence with the summit (*hyparxis*) of our Soul and verge to a union with it.

But there is yet further required, an approximate adhesion, for thus the Oracle calls it when it says:—

CLIV. “For the mortal who approacheth the fire shall have light from God.”

“The Soul when thus converted to herself, finds symbols of the Gods in all things—even the smallest—and through these renders everything familiar and allied to the Gods.”—(*Proclus in Tim.*)

CLV. “For the persevering mortal the Blessed Ones come swiftly into being”; but—

CLVI. “A mortal sluggish in these things spells dismissal of the Gods.”

“The GOOD can only be known by a divine projection of the summit of the Soul, a projection of that which is above intellect, and which Plato calls the ray of the Soul, and says that the Soul inclining this ray should project herself to the GOOD through an oblation of all things posterior to it. . . .

As man is a microcosm, this ray of the Soul will be analogous to Truth or the Superessential Light in the Intelligible World, will be the summit of the Soul and that which the Platonists very properly call *the one* and the flower of our nature, for it is an illumination from the Ineffable Principle of all things.”—(*Thomas Taylor on Republic*)

CLVII. "But the end of such ascents is the enjoyment of divine fruits and the filling of her up with self-radiant fire."

And thus does human emptiness become changed into the divine fullness or pleroma.

CLVIII. "Thou shalt behold a fire extending with leaping flashes through the waves of the air, or a fire without form whence a Voice proceedeth, or a rich light, all-splendid, whirling and circling with a mighty sound. Moreover, thou shalt behold a horse full of flashing light, or a boy riding upon a swift horse, all-flaming, or robed in gold, or naked, or shooting with a bow, or standing on the horse's back."

CLIX. "If Thou dost often commune with Me, thou shalt behold all things grow dark, then doth the curved immensity of heaven vanish, the stars shine not, the moon's light is veiled, the earth is shaken, and all things are thunderously aflame with lightning."

CLX. "But when Thou shalt behold a Sacred Fire without form shining with leaping flashes through the depths of the whole cosmos, HEAR THE VOICE OF THE FIRE."

## EXCERPTS FROM THE COMMENTARY OF PROCLUS ON THE CHALDEAN ORACLES\*

The eternal orders are the courts and dwelling-places of the Gods, and the paternal order is the *all-receiving abode of the Father*, which receives and unites all the souls that are borne upwards. But *the order of the Angels leads up the soul in a certain manner, appearing*, the Oracle says, *about the soul*, that is, shining upon her from every side and causing her to be full of pure fire, thereby imparting to her a stable order and power, through which she is not hurled forth into the disorder of matter, but is united to the light of the Gods; this moreover holds her in her native home and makes her

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\* These Excerpts are all that remains of the ten books of the original work. In this Commentary there are several fragments of the Oracles which have not yet been quoted, but those which have already been given are well worth repetition, especially in the setting given to them by Proclus. The fragments are printed in italics.

to be unmixed with matter, *lightening her with the warmth of the spirit*, and raising her on high through the anagogic life. For the *warmth of the spirit* is participation in life; and all that hastens to the regions above is lightened, just as that which verges to matter becomes heavy. *But the end of such ascents is the enjoyment of divine fruits and the filling of her up with self-radiant fire*, and this is the contemplation of God, since it places her before the Eyes of the Father. And *the Soul* being perfected *breaks forth into hymns about divine things*, according to the Oracle, having before her and offering to the Father the ineffable tokens which the Father placed in her in the first going-forth of being. For such are the noeric and invisible hymns of the ascending soul, which arouse in her the memory of the harmonious reasons (logoi or words), which bear inexpressible images of the divine powers which are in her.

II. The *depth of the Soul* means her triple gnostic powers: noeric, dianoetic, and doxastic; and *all thine eyes* her triple gnostic energies. For the eye is the symbol of knowledge, but life of appetency, and both are triple. But the earth, *from which it is necessary to lighten the heart*, signifies all material and changing things existing in generation, and all corporeal form. There follows *the contemplation of the Paternal Monad*, wherein is *pure joy and tranquillity* from this noeric vision. From which it is clear that the good is mingled from noeric contemplation (noesis) and the joy which accompanies it. For all life, having an energy of its own which is easily liberated, enjoys a pleasure corresponding to it.

The *hymn of the Father* does not consist of compositions of words nor anything laboriously prepared. For since He alone is incorruptible, He does not receive a corruptible hymn. Let us not therefore hope to persuade by some new hurricane of syllables the Lord of True Words, nor by a parade of artificially embellished actions. For God loves unadorned beauty. Let this therefore be the hymn which we dedicate, that of becoming like Him; let us leave behind earth and its fluctuating existence; let us come to the true goal. Let us know our Lord; let us love the Father; let us obey Him Who calls us. Let us run towards the warmth and escape from the cold. Let us become fire, and journey

through fire. We have an easy path for our ascent: the Father guides us, revealing the fiery ways; let us not flow from Lethe, a lowly stream.

III. The *root of evil* is the body, just as that of virtue is the mind (nous). For virtue blossoms out for souls from above, but evil forces its way in from worse natures and from below. But to *hurl it down to earth* is to cut it out of ourselves, and to enable the soul to ascend to her native order. She is allotted in matter to the order of generation, since evils necessarily circulate here and about this region. But our body also is a part of generation, and indeed it is possible to make a part of it unconquerable, but to do this to the whole of generation is impossible, unless we take away its very essence. Into generation, therefore, we must cast down *jealousy and envy*, whence the soul gathered them. For since they are of a material nature they have Matter (Hyle) for nurse. And the *quench not thy heart* with its tendency to descend to the Below does not mean merely rendering this invisible, as passions which are damped down within are wholly contained in any being and fill it with their own heat. But instead of quenching it, cast it out, and do not keep it dammed up within. Wherefore it adds: *Stain not spirit* through having envy within and concealing it. For *envy* is of a hyllic nature. It accompanies a deprivation of goods; and deprivation has its subsistence in unproductive matter. But the race of mystics (theurgists) is free from envy, and zealously exerts itself in imitation of Divine Goodness, nor is it dragged down to the contentiousness and enmity of men. But these passions shut up in souls impart to the spirit a certain material quality of baseness, and qualify it with material deprivation and lifelessness.

IV. *When the soul lives* according to her dianoetic nature, she has the power to know that which is; but when she has established herself in the intellectual (noeric) part of her own essence she knows all things by simple and impartible intuitions. Ascending to The One, and folding up all the multitude in herself, she energizes in a divinely inspired manner and is united with the hyparxes which are beyond mind (nous). For everywhere like is naturally assimilated to like. And all knowledge binds the knower to the known by similitude; sense-perception to the sensible, dianoia to the objects of

reasoning, and noesis to the intelligible. And in like manner *the flower of the mind* to that which is prior to intellect. For as in other things intellect is not the highest, but the cause beyond intellect, so in souls the first form of energy is not intellectual but more divine than intellect. And every soul and every intellect has two energies: first the unitary and that which transcends intuition (noesis), and second the noetic. It is necessary therefore to know That Intelligible as it subsists in itself and at its hyparxis by closing our eyes to all other lives and powers. . For just as by becoming intellectual in nature we approach to intellect, so being unitary we leap up to union, standing upon the very summit of intellect, since even the eye does not see the sun except by becoming sun-like in form, and not by the light from a fire. Wherefore it is clear that that kind of knowing is unknowing. *But if*, the Oracle says, *thou dost force thy intellect within*: that is to say, that if you put the weight of intellectual assaults into the attempt to contact It *and thus knowest That Intelligible, as knowing some one thing*, that is, according to some measure of form and knowledge which requires attention—if thus, *That thou shalt not know*. For even though such intellections (noeseis) may be simple, they fall short of the single simplicity of the intelligible, and are projected into secondary intellectual natures, thus already coming forth into multitude. For nothing knowable is known by a gnostic faculty inferior to itself. That, therefore, which is beyond mind (nous) is not to be known through mind. For immediately mind gives its attention to a certain thing, it pronounces that thing to be the object of intellection (noumenon), and by this very act is secondary to the intelligible. But if it is with the flower of the mind (nous) which is within us that we know This Intelligible, which is established at the summit of the First Intelligible Triad, by what is it that we are united with The One who is exempt from all things and imparticipable? For if the First Father is said *immediately to withdraw Himself from Mind and Power*, Who is He that needs not thus to withdraw Himself, but is completely and utterly withdrawn from all things, and is celebrated as the *God of all*? But is not this elsewhere also said of the First Father of all? And *the First Power of the Sacred Word (Logos)*—Who is He that is beyond this, and of Whom

this First Power participates, and thereby is said to be *sacred*? And if He that manifests That which is more ineffable is named a *Word (Logos)*, it is necessary that prior to the Word there should be *the Silence* which is the hypostasis of the Word, and prior to everything sacred the deific cause. As therefore the things which are posterior to the intelligibles are "words" (logoi or reasons) of the intelligibles, when they (the intelligibles) are united, so the "word" which is in the intelligibles themselves, subsisting from another more ineffable unity, is a word of the Silence which is prior to the intelligibles, but a Silence of the silent intelligibles. It cannot be therefore that *the flower of the mind* and the flower of our whole soul are the same thing. But the one is that which is most uniform in our intellectual life, but the other is the unity of all the powers of the soul, which latter are multiform. For we are not mind (nous) alone; but reason (dianoia) and opinion (doxa) and attention and freewill, and, prior to these faculties, an essence both one and manifold, partible and impartible. And the one, in manifesting, becomes two-fold, and one of these principles is the flower of the first of all our powers, but the other is the centre of our whole being and of all the manifold powers about this centre. But of these the former alone unites us to the Father of the Intelligibles. For one is intellectual, and that too is known by the Mind of the Father, according to the One which is in It; but the one towards which all the powers of the soul converge can by its nature only lead us towards That which is beyond all things that are, and is itself that which brings into unity all that is in us. So that we are rooted in That by our essence, and, through being so rooted, even if we proceed from It, we shall not alienate ourselves from our cause.

V. Philosophy ascribes the departure from the Gods to a forgetfulness of the eternal words (logoi), and the return to Them to the remembrance of these, but the Oracles speak of the *tokens of the Father*. And both of these agree. For the soul subsists from the intellectual (noeric) "words" (logoi) and the divine symbols, of which the former are from the intellectual ideas, but the latter from the divine unities. And we are likenesses of intellectual natures, but statues of unknown tokens. And just as every soul is a pleroma of all

types, but subsists as a wholeness according to one, so also it participates of all the tokens through which it is united to divine things, but its hyparxis is distinguished by one, so that all the multitude which is in it is gathered up into one summit. For it is necessary to know this also—that every soul differs according to its type from every other soul, and that there are as many types of souls as there are souls. For there is first a subsistence of many indivisible uniform natures according to one type (distributed) about matter and the components of things, the one subsisting nature participating variously of the same form; secondly, the being of the soul is a word (or reason), and a pure type; wherefore a soul will either differ according to its essence in no respect from any other, or it will differ according to its type. For this is the only thing which will differ: it is type alone. Whence it is clear that every soul, even though it is filled with the same reasons (logoi), yet is allotted one type distinct from the rest, just as the solar type characterizes the solar soul, and another type another.

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## DRUIDIC WISDOM

### GOD IN THE SUN

**QUESTION:** Why is the face turned towards the sun in every asseveration and prayer?

**Answer:** Because God is in every light and the chief of every light is the sun. It is through fire that God brings back to Himself all things that have emanated from him; therefore it is not right to ally oneself to God, but in the light. There are three kinds of light, namely: that of the sun, and hence fire; that which is obtained in the sciences of teachers; and that, which is possessed in the understanding of the head and heart, that is, in the soul. On that account, every vow is made in the face of the three lights, that is, in the light of the sun is seen the light of a teacher, or demonstration; and from both of these is the light of the intellect, or that of the soul.

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Three things that will never end: life; intellect; and light; but they will improve and increase for ever and ever.

—From Barddas

## PLATO AND THE FOUR INSPIRATIONS

### I. THE NATURE OF INSPIRATION

The part played by Inspiration in perfecting the soul and in restoring her to her true home has been recognized, implicitly or explicitly, by every great religion and philosophy. The ancient Druids aspired to obtain Awen (or Inspirational Genius) from God, while, in the legend of Taliesin, Ceridwen, who symbolizes the Great World-Mother, is said to have boiled a cauldron of inspiration and science, by means of which her ill-favoured son was to be transformed to radiant beauty. The skalds of the Norsemen prayed to drink from the egg-white well of Mimer, who is inspiration and memory, that well by which the All-Father Odin forever broods on the mysteries of life and death.

All true art depends upon inspiration, the mysterious something which, as every artist knows, can neither be commanded nor restrained, but which comes and goes elusive as the wind. Many have been the expedients to which men have resorted in order to make themselves receptive of inspiration, and some have failed lamentably merely through ignorance of its true nature and the means whereby it may be evoked.

Art is the process whereby the eternal ideas and realities of the ideal world are perpetually made manifest in the worlds of form, so that even in the realms of time and space man may be reminded of the beauty of his original home. Inspiration is the stirring within the soul of this ideal beauty of the intelligible world; it is the inbreathing into the soul of transcendent ideas of beauty, goodness, or truth, so that the soul which is possessed by it is lifted up to that which is above itself. The whole being of the artist is dominated by the inspiration; he is enthralled, inspired by a divine enthusiasm and is thus enabled to perform works which are more than mortal.

But although inspiration of every kind is a divine gift, not to be commanded by man, but to be thankfully accepted when present, yet it may be possible for man, by considering the nature of inspiration and how it is produced, so to predispose his soul that he may be perpetually receptive to its

influence, to open, as it were, the portals of his soul to the power which is ever ready to flow into it, and, by directing his gaze to the true source of inspiration, to drink from it at the fountain-head.

In the dialogue Phaedrus Plato distinguishes four kinds of inspiration or "mania." The word "mania" or madness signifies that which completely transcends the consciousness of the individual through whom it is operating, so that he is "not himself." Thus anger is elsewhere spoken of as a mania or inspiration, since under its influence a man may become inspired by Mars in battle and perform deeds of superhuman strength. There are other manias besides the four given in the Phaedrus, but these four are the chief. As Thomas Taylor says, quoting from the Scholia of Hermias on the dialogue: "That there are therefore many other divine inspirations and manias Plato himself indicates as he proceeds, and prior to this, he makes mention of the inspiration from the Nymphs. But there are also inspirations from Pan, from the Mother of the Gods, and from the Corybantes, which are elsewhere mentioned by Plato. Here, however, he alone delivers these four manias because these alone are sufficient to the soul in the attainment of its proper apocatastasis (or complete restoration)."

Socrates is discussing with Phaedrus, a beautiful boy, the nature of love. The conversation arose out of a speech which Lysias, who is in love with Phaedrus, has composed to the effect that not a lover but one who does not love ought to be gratified by the beloved. Phaedrus playfully coerces Socrates into making a speech which shall be better than that of Lysias, and Socrates, inspired by the influence of the place where they are conversing, breaks forth into a dithyrambic oration in which he supports the contention of Lysias, giving more cogent and powerful reasons why not a lover but one who does not love ought to be gratified. But as Socrates is preparing to cross the stream and go away he receives an angelic sign which, he explains, warns him that he has transgressed against one of the Gods, in this case Eros Himself. He therefore purifies himself by uttering a recantation, remarking that both speeches, his own and that of Lysias, showed a great lack of delicacy "as if our idea of love were taken from some haunt of sailors to which good manners were unknown." He goes on:

“ The argument is not a true one, which asserts that when a lover is present one should rather gratify one who does not love, because the one is mad and the other is sane. For if madness were utterly evil it would have been right, but the fact is that the greatest goods come to us through madness, a madness however which is conferred as a divine gift. For the prophetess at Delphi and the priestesses at Dodona, have, when mad, done many honourable services to Greece both publicly and privately, but when in their senses little or nothing. And to speak of the Sibyl and others who by divinely inspired prophecy have foretold much to many persons and guided them aright as to the future, would be to labour that which is obvious to anyone. But it is worth while bringing in as evidence the fact that those of the men of old who assigned names to things considered mania neither base nor shameful. For, had they done so, they would not have connected this very name with the fairest of the arts, that by which the future is discerned, by calling it “ *maniké* ” (the art of madness). For they assigned this name to it considering it a noble thing when it occurs by divine allotment, but the men of to-day, ignorantly inserting the *tau*, have called it “ *mantiké* ” (the art of prophecy). In like manner they named the rational and conscious inquiry into the future by those in their senses, which is effected by means of birds and other signs, *oionoïstiké* (prognostication), since by the use of reason they provide human thought with insight and knowledge, but our moderns, giving it the more portentous sound of the *omega*, call it *oionistiké* (augury).\* And in proportion as prophecy is more perfect and more valuable than augury, the one name than the other and the effect of the one than that of the other, by so much more honourable, as the men of old bear witness, is madness than sanity, that which is from God than that which is of human origin. Moreover “ mania ” has discovered a cure for the worst diseases and afflictions by which certain families have been cursed through ancient guilt, for it has sprung up and prophesied to the proper persons; flying to prayers and the service of the Gods and obtaining from Them purifications and perfective rites, it has rendered him who participates in it free from harm, both for the present and the future, dis-

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\* The play is on the words *οἰσμός* (thought) and *οἰωνός* (bird.)

covering for him who is truly "mad" and possessed a release from the evils present to him. There is also a third kind of possession and madness which is from the Muses and seizes a chaste and tender soul and, arousing and inspiring it to the composition of odes and other forms of poetry, makes beautiful the myriad exploits of the men of old for the instruction of posterity. But whosoever without the madness of the Muses approaches the gates of poesy, imagining forsooth that by means of art he can become an able poet, he himself will fail of his object, and his poetry, being that of a sane man, will vanish before that of those possessed by mania.

These, and even more that I might mention to you, are the beautiful effects of the madness which comes from the Gods. Let us not therefore be afraid of it, and let no argument disturb us and scare us into imagining that we ought to choose as our friend one who is in possession of his senses rather than one who is stirred by inspiration. But let one who argues thus demonstrate in addition, before he carries off the prize of victory, that love is sent by the Gods to lover and beloved for no good of theirs. . . ."

And a little later in the dialogue:

"Our whole argument concerning the fourth kind of madness comes to this, then—through which, whenever anyone sees beauty in this lower world and is reminded of the True, his wings sprout and becoming winged he longs to fly up to it, but being unable to do so he looks upwards like a bird and cares nothing for things below, so that he is accused of being affected with madness—that this is of all the enthusiasms the best and of the best origin both for him who possesses it and him who shares it with him, and that he who participates in this mania and loves beautiful things is called a lover. For, as has been said, every soul of man has by her very nature beheld reality, or she could never have come hither to this form of life. But to regain the memory of that reality from her present surroundings is not easy to all; it is not easy to those who beheld its beauties for but a short time, nor to those who after their fall hither were unfortunate, so that through certain associations they turned to injustice and forgot the sacred vision which they then beheld. Few indeed remain whose memory is sufficient. But these, when they see any resemblance of those heavenly things, are amazed and are no longer masters of themselves, but through

not being able to perceive distinctly they know not what it is that affects them. For in the earthly resemblances of justice and temperance and whatever else is precious to souls there is no brightness, but through the dullness of our faculties, there are few who, on approaching the images, behold in them the nature of that which they shadow forth, and even these few with difficulty. But beauty we could then look upon in all her splendour, when with that happy choir, we indeed following in the train of Zeus but others with some other of the Gods, beheld the blessed sight and spectacle, and were initiated into that mystery which it is lawful to call the most blessed of all, which we celebrated in perfect integrity and untouched by those evils which awaited us in a later time, in rapt contemplation of whole, simple, stable, and blessed visions in pure light, being ourselves pure and unbranded by this which we now carry about with us and call the body, bound to it like an oyster to its shell.

Let this be for memory's delight, through which, in longing for those heavenly things, I have spoken at such length. But beauty, as we said, was with those realities and there shone; and when we came hither we found her gleaming most clearly through the clearest of our senses."

Thus Plato distinguishes the four inspirations: the Musical, which inspires the soul to express itself in song and poetry; the Telesitic, under the influence of which the soul is inspired to perfect itself and take the necessary steps which will free it from the evils and diseases resulting from sin; the Prophetic, which inspires the Soul to interpret the future so that men may direct their lives rightly; and, last and highest, the Inspiration of Love, which arises in the soul as a result of the contemplation of Beauty.

But before considering the four inspirations in detail, it is necessary to examine the nature of inspiration and to enquire how the soul is enabled to participate in it.

In the beautiful and profound passage of the Phaedrus, which comes between the descriptions of the third and fourth kinds of mania, Plato sets forth in veiled language something of the nature of the soul and the part which Inspiration plays in making her perfect. The soul is self-motive, and therefore uncreate, beginningless, indestructible, and immortal. Her nature, he says, would be the theme of a lengthy and divine discourse, but her "form" (*ιδέα*) may be likened to a pair

of winged steeds and a charioteer. Of the two steeds one is beautiful and good, but the other has an opposite character, and therefore the charioteer has difficulty in directing his course. But although soul is immortal, it may put on a mortal nature. "Every soul takes care of all that is without soul and traverses all heaven, appearing at different times in different forms. When therefore she is perfect and winged, she soars to the heights and governs the whole cosmos, but when she loses her wings, she is borne downward until she is brought up against something solid, in which she dwells taking an earthly body, and, as this seems to move itself through the power of the soul, the whole—soul and body knit together—is called a living being and has the name of mortal."

The destiny of the soul is to raise up her earthly part by the power of her wings and follow in the procession of the Gods, when, as Plato mystically expresses it, "they go to their feast and banquet, mounting the steep to the topmost point of the subcelestial arch. . ." The soul that can control her unruly steed and attain to this, beholds reality and is no more subject to the evils of mortal life. "For those who are called immortal, when they come to the topmost point, proceed outside and stand on the back of heaven, and as they stand there the circumference carries them round and they behold the outer courts of heaven."

The Subcelestial Arch, in the Chaldean System, is the third division of the Archetypal world where subsist the proto-types of all that exists in the manifested worlds; but this is not the end of the Soul's journey, for beyond it is the Celestial Arch and beyond that again, the Supercelestial Place, of the glories of which "no poet hath sung nor ever shall sing according to its desert. For the colourless, formless, and intangible essence which has real being, which is visible only to the mind (nous) which pilots the soul, and concerning which is the true kind of knowledge, dwells in this place."

Here the soul, standing "on the back of heaven" and carried round in the circle of the Celestial Arch beholds justice, temperance, and knowledge, not as they appear in generation but as they are in themselves. "And in like manner, having beheld all other things which have real being and having feasted on them, she again plunges into the interior

of heaven and returns home. And when she comes the charioteer brings his horses to the manger, puts ambrosia before them, and thereafter gives them nectar to drink. And this is the life of the Gods."

But the souls who are unable to control their restive horses "are carried round under the surface, trampling on and falling against each other, each one trying to get in front of the other. Hence the confusion and struggling and sweat is extreme, and through the lack of skill of the charioteers many are lamed, and many have their wings broken. And all after much toil depart without attaining the vision of real being, and after their departure they have but opinion for their food."

The two horses symbolize the rational and irrational natures of the soul and their wings the various gnostic faculties whereby it attains to truth. These faculties are described by Plato in the Republic as being four in number, two belonging to the rational part of the soul and two to the irrational. They are Noesis or Pure Intuition, Dianoia or the Reason, Pistis, which is Belief or Opinion, and Eikasia, the knowledge derived from appearances.\* Each of these faculties is reliable in its proper domain, but the full interpretation of the evidence supplied by the lower is necessarily dependent upon the right use of the higher. Moreover, when the unruly horse or the irrational nature is not properly controlled by the charioteer, its desires and passions colour and becloud all species of knowledge that the soul cognizes; hence she is unable to obtain a stable vision of reality, but is tossed about by opinion in the confused medley of those who are borne along beneath the surface.

There is an intimate correspondence between these four faculties and the four inspirations. Thus Noesis, or the vision of universal ideas of real being, corresponds to the inspiration of love; Dianoia to the Prophetic Inspiration, because by means of the use of reason man is able to interpret the significance of that which he sees around him. The Telestic or Perfective Inspiration corresponds in a general way to the faculty of Opinion or Pistis, because both depend mainly upon the will. It is the will which operates when man sets out to ordinate his life, and the will which decides,

\* For a fuller account of these four faculties see Shrine of Wisdom No. 28.

in the absence of rational knowledge, whether a given opinion shall be accepted or rejected. Finally, the Musical Inspiration similarly corresponds with Eikasia, for this inspiration is the least conscious of all and pertains more to the outward than to the inward nature of things. This correspondence is not rigid, for any or all of the four inspirations may operate through any of the four faculties and it is thus possible for the soul to ascend to the heights on the wings of any one of them. Nevertheless there is a certain correspondence, which becomes clearer as the mode of operation of each kind of mania is recognized.

In his translation of the Scholia of Hermeas mentioned above Thomas Taylor says:

“ Since Plato here delivers four kinds of mania, by which I mean enthusiasm, and possession or inspiration from the Gods, *viz.*, the musical, the telestic, the prophetic, and the amatory, previous to the discussion of each we must first speak about enthusiasm, and show to what part of the Soul the enthusiastic energy pertains; whether each part of it possesses this energy; if all enthusiasm is from the Gods; and in what part of the soul it is ingenerated; or whether it subsists in something else more excellent than soul. Where, then, does that which is properly and primarily called enthusiasm subsist, and what is it? Of the rational soul there are two parts, one of which is *dianoia*, but the other *opinion*. Again, however, of *dianoia* one part is said to be the lowest, and is properly *dianoia*, but another part of it is the highest, which is said to be the intellect of it, according to which the soul especially becomes intellectual, which some call intellect in capacity. There is also another thing above this, which is the summit of the whole soul and most allied to *The One*, which likewise wishes well to all things, and always gives itself up to the Gods, and is readily disposed to do whatever They please. This, too, is said to be *the one* of the soul, bears the image of the Superessential One, and unites the whole soul. But that these things necessarily thus subsist we may learn as follows. The rational soul derives its existence from all the causes prior to itself, *i. e.*, from intellect and the Gods. So far, therefore, as it subsists from the Gods, it possesses *the one*, which unites all its powers, and all the multitude of itself, and is the first recipient of the goods

imparted by the Gods. It likewise makes all the essence of the soul to be boniform, according to which it is connected with the Gods, and united to them. But so far as it subsists from intellect it possesses an intellectual nature, according to which it apprehends forms (or ideas), by simple projections, or intuitions and not discursively; and is conjoined to the intellect which is above itself. And so far as it constitutes itself, it possesses the dianoetic power, according to which it generates sciences and certain theorems, energizes discursively, and collects conclusions from propositions. . . . Hence that which is primarily, properly, and truly enthusiasm from the Gods, is effected according to this *one* of the soul, which is above dianoia and above the intellect of the soul; which is at another time in a relaxed and dormant state. This *one*, likewise, becoming illuminated (by the Gods), all the life of the soul is illuminated, and also intellect, dianoia, and the irrational part, and the resemblance of enthusiasm is transmitted as far as to the body itself.

Other enthusiasms, therefore, are produced about other parts of the soul. For dianoia is said to energize enthusiastically, when it discovers sciences and theorems in a very short space of time, and in a greater degree than other men. Opinion likewise and the phantasy (*eikasia*), are said thus to energize when they discover arts, and accomplish admirable works, such, for instance, as Phidias effected in the formation of statues, and another in another art, as also Homer says of him who made the belt of Hercules, 'that he neither did nor would artificially produce such another.' . . . Enthusiasm, however, properly so called, is when this *one* of the soul which is above intellect, is excited to the Gods, and is thence inspired. But at different times it is possessed about the aptitudes of itself by different Gods; and is more or less possessed when intellect or dianoia is that which is moved. . . . You have, therefore, for the producing cause of enthusiasm the Gods; for the material cause the enthusiastically energizing soul itself, or the external symbols; for the formal cause, the inspiration of the Gods about *the one* of the soul; and for the final cause, good.

If, however, the Gods always wish the soul what is good, why does not the soul always energize enthusiastically? May we not say, that the Gods indeed always wish the soul what is good, but they are also willing that the order of the

universe should prevail, and that the soul, through many causes, is not always adapted to enthusiasm, on which account it does not always enthusiastically energize? . . . For what the whole order of things imparts to the soul for a very extended period of time, this the soul is also able to impart to itself for a short space of time when assisted by the Gods through the telestic art."

Thus it may be seen how inspiration, enthusiasm, or mania is, in its highest aspect, a divine gift, which can only be received through *the one* of the soul—that is, the soul energizing as a unity, with all her manifold energies and faculties directed to one end. The same thought is expressed in the Norse legend which tells how Odin, when he would drink from the well of Mimer, gave as the price of the draught one of his eyes. The perfect beauty of reality is unitary, the beauties of the worlds of manifestation being but fragmentary and imperfect reflections of that one beauty of the ideal. And if even these lesser beauties may cause the soul to be inspired by reminding her, though but dimly, of the vision which she once beheld, how much more transcendent must that inspiration be which comes from the contemplation of reality, and in the rapture of which the soul, brought back from multiplicity into unity, beholds and is united with the ONE Who is Absolute Beauty itself.

*(To be continued)*

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## MYSTIC VERSE

Say that we dream? Our dreams have woven  
 Truths that outface the burning sun;  
 The lightnings that we dreamed have cloven  
 Time, space, and linked all lands in one!

\* \* \*

Dreams are they? But ye cannot stay them  
 Or thrust the dawn back for one hour!  
 Truth, Love, and Justice, if ye slay them,  
 Return with more than earthly power;  
 Strive if ye will to seal the fountains  
 That send the Spring thro' leaf and spray;  
 Drive back the sun from the Eastern Mountains  
 Then—bid this mightier movement stay.

—Alfred Noyes

## TO THE MUSES

That light uplifting, light of men, I sing,  
Nine sweet-voiced daughters of the All-Mighty King,  
Who souls ensnared, that life's abysses bind,  
By sacred rites from books that rouse the mind,  
From earth-born fateful woes draw up and save;  
Who teach to hasten o'er deep Lethe's wave,  
Keep the true way, seek, pure, their native star  
Whence they have strayed, whence fallen deep and far  
To generation's shore, where madness runs  
To its inheritance of dust. O Heavenly Ones,  
Quench in my heart this agitated fire,  
With Wisdom's pure noeric words inspire.  
Let none seduce to superstition's sway  
From the all-fruitful, gleaming, sacred way.  
From generation's clamorous mazy night  
Draw up my wandering soul to purest light;  
Grant from ambrosial books deep-laden store  
Of Wisdom and that glory evermore  
Bestow—heart-soothing eloquence. O hear,  
Ye who the barque of sacred Wisdom steer,  
Who souls of men that touch the uplifting flame  
(Made pure by hymns and rites that none may name,  
And soaring from the dark profound abyss)  
Restore to immortality and bliss.  
Hear, Mighty Saviours! Bend your holy light  
From sacred books, and put these mists to flight;  
That I Immortal Gods and men may know.  
Ne'er 'neath the gliding waves of Lethe's flow  
May dæmon work my soul disastrous ill  
And keep me from the Gods far distant still.  
Let no chill Fury overlong enslave  
My unwilling soul that in the icy wave  
Of generation's flood long since did fall,  
Nor with constraining bonds my life enthrall.  
But ye who are bright Wisdom's Hierophants  
All glorious Nine, O hear. My spirit pants  
Upon the path that leadeth to the height—  
Unveil the mysteries of the Words of Light.

—A Hymn of Proclus (Translated by the Editors of "The Shrine of Wisdom")

## IAMBlichus

### *Life and Bibliography*

**I**AMBlichus is one of the brightest links in the chain of Neoplatonic philosophers which began with the great Ammonius Saccas early in the third century A.D. and only ended when the philosophic schools were closed by the edict of Justinian in 529 A.D.

Iamblichus came of a rich and illustrious family. He was born at Chalchis in Coele-Syria about 255 A.D., and died in 330 A.D. His suggested commemoration is August 27th.

He was the disciple and successor of Porphyry, under whom he studied at Rome. Later in his life he returned to Syria and taught there.

His great wisdom was recognized even in his own times. The Emperor Julian admired him profoundly and affirmed that he was posterior in time but not in genius to Plato himself. Thomas Taylor has surnamed him "the divine," because his works, in a unique manner, unfold the mysteries of Divine Manifestation.

Eunapius describes him as socially accessible and genial, living on familiar terms with numerous disciples. He was distinguished by the gentleness of his manners and the benignity of his disposition. He imitated in his diet the frugal simplicity of the most ancient times, and "during his repast exhilarated those who were present by his behaviour, and filled them as with nectar by the sweetness of his discourse."

Among the stories which are related of his life is that of his meeting with Alypius, a dialectician of Alexandria, who was a man of very small stature. As the crush was great Iamblichus would have passed on, but Alypius addressed him and propounded the question: "Whether a rich man is necessarily unjust or the heir of one who has been unjust." Iamblichus at first turned away in disdain, conceiving the question to be beneath the notice of a philosopher; but, perceiving on reflection its depth, he became an admirer of Alypius and later wrote his life. It was thus that Iamblichus was first stirred up to reflect upon political topics.

Another incident recorded is that on one occasion he was asked by his disciples whether it was true that sometimes

during his devotions he was raised in the air. Though not much given to laughter he laughed heartily at this, and said that the story, although prettily invented, was not true.

He spent his time in contemplation, meditation, writing, and teaching. His disciples were numerous, among the most famous being Aedesius, Sopater the Syrian—of whom it was said that he thought to change the purpose of Constantine by reason—Eusthathius, Theodorus, and Euphrasius.

His fame as an original thinker was great, and he made magnificent contributions to the wealth of Neoplatonic thought. As Thomas Taylor says of him "Iamblichus, though attached to the Platonic philosophy, yet explored the wisdom of other sects, particularly the Pythagoreans, Egyptians, and Chaldeans."

He took part in the great work of synthesizing these systems in the light of Platonic philosophy, and made more and more clear the fundamental unity of the Ancient Wisdom, of which the older systems were such mighty but obscure expressions.

He had a great reputation for theurgy and was believed to possess the gift of healing. Various miracles which he performed are also recorded.

After his death in 330 A.D. his school was dispersed over the whole Roman Empire, and several of his disciples distinguished themselves in politics and in other fields. He was succeeded by Aedesius who taught at Pergamus in Mysia and numbered among his disciples the Emperor Julian.

Although many of his works have been lost, enough remains to enable us to estimate in some measure his great genius, and to make us hope that in the future some of the lost books may be discovered.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. On the Mysteries of the Egyptians, Chaldeans, and Assyrians.

This is his best known work. In it an Egyptian priest named Abammon is introduced as replying to a letter of Porphyry's. It has been translated by Ficinus, Gale, Thomas Taylor and others, and has been referred to as "the most copious, the clearest, and the most satisfactory defence extant of genuine ancient theology."

## II. On the Pythagorean School.

This originally consisted of ten books but only five have survived:

- (1) The Life of Pythagoras, which is probably the most complete biography obtainable. A translation by Thomas Taylor was published in 1818.
- (2) An Exhortation to the Study of Philosophy, a version of which was published by T. M. Johnson in America in 1907.
- (3) On the Common Mathematical Science. Of this it has been said—"He who reads and understands this admirable work will clearly perceive the essence, power, and energies of the whole of the mathematical science."
- (4) Commentaries on Nicomachus' Introduction to Arithmetic.
- (5) Theological Speculations on Arithmetic.

The sections which have been lost dealt with the Science of Numbers, in its relation to natural science and to ethics, and with instruction in Music, Geometry, and the Science of Spherical Bodies from the Pythagorean standpoint.

III. On the Divinity of Images, or Symbols. Fragments only remain.

IV. Letters to Macedonius, Sopater, and others.

V. Concerning the Gods. This has been lost, but Julian derived from it most of the ideas contained in his "Oration to the Sovereign Sun."

VI. Commentaries on the Parmenides, the Timaeus, and Phaedo. These, too, have been lost, but they are referred to by Proclus in his works on these dialogues and some admirable passages have been thus preserved.

VII. Concerning the Perfection of the Chaldean Philosophy. Lost. "The twenty-seventh book of this great work is cited by Damascius in his treatise on First Principles, and this whole discourse was studied with avidity by Proclus, and enabled him, as we are told by Marinus, to ascend to the very summit of theurgic virtue."

VIII. Commentaries on the Categories and Prior Analytics of Aristotle. Lost.

IX. On the Soul. Fragments have been preserved by Simplicius and Stobaeus.

X. Monobiblon, showing that the transmigrations of souls are not from men into animals or from animals into men. Lost, but quoted by Nemesius.

XI. Life of Alypius. Lost.

XII. Treatise on the Best Judgement. Lost, but quoted by Syrianus.

## EXCERPTS FROM CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA\*

“ The modes of philosophy are various that lead to the path of truth. Faith is the way.

Faith is defined as a uniting assent to an unseen object, for assuredly the proof of an unknown thing depends upon an evident assent to it.

If then it be choice, being desirous of something, the desire is in this respect intellectual. And since choice is the beginning of action, faith is discovered to be the beginning of action, being the foundation of rational choice in the case of anyone who exhibits to himself the previous demonstration through faith.

Voluntarily to follow that which is useful is the first requisite to the attainment of understanding. Unswerving choice, then, gives considerable momentum in the direction of Knowledge. The action of faith directly becomes Knowledge, reposing on a sure foundation.

Knowledge, accordingly, is defined by the sons of philosophy as an aptitude which cannot be overthrown by reason.

Faith is the ear of the Soul.

We must possess a healthy mind which is fixed on the pursuit of the Good.

For, bound in this earthly body, we apprehend the objects of sense by means of the body; but we grasp intellectual objects by means of the reasoning faculty. But if one expects to apprehend all things by the senses, he has fallen far from the truth.

Real Science (*Epistème*), which we affirm that the Gnostic or Mystic alone possesses, is a sure comprehension, leading up through true and sure reasons to the Knowledge of the First Cause.

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\* Clement of Alexandria, or Titus Flavius Clemens (c.202 A.D.) was a fellow-citizen of Plotinus and is said to have attended the lectures of the God-Taught Ammonius Saccas, founder of Neoplatonism; he is usually described as a Christian-Platonist, but his writings represent not so much the Christian Tradition as the atmosphere of learned and cultured thought of Alexandria at that period. His three principal works outline three successive stages in a philosophical presentation of Christian ethics in its early form.

Ruling, then, over himself, and what belongs to him, and possessing a sure grasp of divine science, the Mystic makes a genuine approach to the truth. For the knowledge and apprehension of intellectual objects must necessarily be called certain scientific knowledge, the function of which, in reference to divine things, is to consider what is the First Cause and what that is "by whom all things are made and without whom nothing was made"; and what things, on the other hand, are pervasive and what comprehensive, what are conjoined and what disjoined; and what is the position which each one holds and what power and service each one contributes. And, again, among human things, what man himself is, and what he has naturally and what preternaturally; and how it becomes him to do or to suffer, and what are his virtues and what his vices: and about things good, bad, and indifferent: and also about fortitude and prudence and self-restraint, and the virtue which is in all respects complete, namely, righteousness.

Further, he employs prudence and righteousness in the acquisition of wisdom: and fortitude not only in the endurance of circumstances, but also in restraining pleasure and desire, grief and anger, and, in general, to withstand everything which either by any force or fraud entices him from the path.

Pain is found to be beneficial in the healing art and in discipline and in purgation: by it man's manners are corrected to their advantage. Forms of fortitude are endurance, magnanimity, high spirit, liberality, and grandeur. And for this reason he neither receives the blame or the bad opinion of the multitude, nor is he subject to opinions or flatteries. But in the endurance of toils and at the same time in the discharge of any duty, and in his manly superiority to all circumstances, he appears truly a man among the rest of human beings.

And, on the other hand, maintaining prudence, he exercises moderation in the calmness of his soul, is receptive to what is commanded, as to what concerns him, entertains aversion to what is base, as alien to him; he becomes decorous and supra-mundane, does all things with order and dignity, and transgresses in no respect.

Rich is he in the highest degree, in desiring nothing, as having few wants, and being in the midst of abundance

of all good, through the knowledge of the good. For it is the first effect of his righteousness, to love to spend his time for and with those of his own race both in earth and heaven. So also he is liberal of what he possesses: and being a lover of all men, he is a hater of evil, and entertains a complete aversion to all inordination. He is faithful both to himself and to his neighbours and obedient to the commandments.

And he who, not through the commandments, but through knowledge, is already pure in heart, is the friend of God.

This is the true Athlete—he who in the great stadium, the fair world, is crowned for the true victory over all passions.

The mystic makes his prayer for the truly good things which appertain to the Soul, and prays—he himself also contributes his efforts—to attain to the habit of goodness, so as no longer to have things that are good as certain lessons belonging to him, but to be good.

Prayer is, to speak more boldly, converse with God.

But if voice and expression are given to us for the sake of understanding, how can God not hear the Soul itself and the mind, since assuredly Soul hears soul, and mind mind? Prayer, then, may be uttered without the voice, by concentrating the whole spiritual nature within, on expression by the mind, in undistracted turning towards God.

The true Mystic asks for the permanence of the things he possesses, for adaptation to all the events of life, and for the eternity of those things which he shall receive.

And the things which are really good, the things which concern the Soul, he prays that they may be his and may remain with him. So he desires not anything that is absent, being content with what is present. For he is not deficient in the good things which are proper to him, being already sufficient for himself through divine grace and knowledge.

But knowing the sovereign will, and possessing as soon as he prays—being brought into close contact with the almighty power and earnestly aspiring to the spiritual—through boundless love he is united to the Spirit.

Thus he, being magnanimous, possessing through knowledge that which is most precious of all, being quick in applying himself to contemplation, he retains in his Soul the permanent energies of the objects of his contemplation, that is, the perspicacious keenness of knowledge.

In all circumstances, therefore, is the Soul of the mystic strong, in a condition of integral health and strength, like the body of an athlete. For he is prudent in human affairs, in judging what ought to be done by the just man.

He possesses all the potentialities necessary for the attainment of the great end and realizes that everything depends upon the use he makes of them. Those events or accidents which are called terrible by the unenlightened, are not formidable to him, because they are not evil to him.

For the Mystic is never, on the occurrence of an emergency, dislodged from the habit peculiar to him.

When, therefore, such a one is righteous, not from necessity nor out of fear or hope, but from free choice, this is called the royal road, which only the royal race travel.

Such is the mystic labourer, who has the mastery of worldly desires, even while still in the flesh; and who, in regard to things future and still invisible which he knows, has a sure persuasion, so that he regards them as more present than the things that are within reach."

## EDITORIAL

With the present number "The Shrine of Wisdom" enters upon its eighth year, and our readers will be interested in the new cover design with which we begin this volume

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We have been compelled, through lack of space, to hold over the third article on Mahâyâna Buddhism, and it will therefore appear in the Winter number.

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The response to our appeal for donations to The Shrine Manual Fund, particulars of which appear on p. ii of the present number, has been encouraging; but further financial support is

still needed, and we therefore once more ask our readers to do all in their power to help, both by subscribing whatever they feel able to give and by introducing the magazine to their friends. The urgent need for the dissemination of the saving truths contained in the great religions and philosophies of the past, but at present obscured by the scientific developments of the last hundred years, is demonstrated more clearly every day, and we therefore rely confidently upon the help and support of those who are in sympathy with our ideals. We take this opportunity of thanking all those who have subscribed to the Fund.

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