



TRADITIONAL MARTINIST ORDER

ORATORY SECTION

SECOND DEGREE



LESSON FIVE

"It is not the head which is necessary to advance in Truth; it is the heart."



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CONCURRENCE

There are relatively few texts dedicated to Sophia, the topic discussed in this monograph. One of the most inspiring can be found in one of the volumes of the collection *Cahiers de l'Hermétisme*, a set of books on various esoteric subjects. It therefore seems appropriate to quote an excerpt in prelude to your study of the day.

To affirm the existence of a soul in the world amounts to saying that not only is the universe alive, but that between God and Creation, there is a mediator, a fundamental relay through which temporal manifestations travel. Therefore God would have put between the Eternal and the Temporal a secret and living relationship. In this relationship, the spiritual universe links with the material universe uniting the Cosmos. This intermediate world between the Intellect and the sensitive nature, the Soul of the World, would then be the precise site of the Revelations, for it is at this level that, just like an image in the mirror, the divine Names, the angels, the spiritual realities of all sort can take shape.

Divine Wisdom called "Sophia," is known as the Soul of the World, however it is "personalized," meaning it is considered in its personal relationship with God and Creation, particularly with the human being, the history, and with the meta history of humanity. Without this personalization Sophia would appear as a fourth Person of the Christian Trinity. Let us remember that it is Sophia that talks about herself in the Bible (Proverbs and the Book of Wisdom):

"The LORD brought me forth as the first of His works, before His deeds of old; I was appointed from eternity, from the beginning, before the world began. When there were no oceans, I was given birth, when there were no springs abounding with water; before the mountains were settled in place, before the hills, I was given birth, before He made the earth or its fields or any of the dust of the world. I was there when he set the heavens in place, when he marked out the horizon on the face of the deep, when He established the clouds above and fixed securely the fountains of the deep, when He gave the sea its boundary so the waters would not overstep His command, and when He marked out the foundations of the earth. Then I was the craftsman at His side. I was filled with delight day after day, rejoicing always in His presence, rejoicing in His whole world and delighting in humankind" (Proverbs 8: 22-31).

Antoine Faivre and Frédéric Tristan



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SOPHIA

Dear Initiate,

I greet you before the Luminaries of the Traditional Martinist Order!

In the previous discourse, we studied the concept of androgyny and we have seen that it symbolizes for Humanity the rupture of inner unity. Today we are going to continue this reflection by evoking the theme of Sophia.

"*We are all widows,*" said Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin. According to him, this is so because we still hold the seed of the primitive Adam, who has lost his Celestial Spouse, Sophia. This mysterious term that the Unknown Philosopher used appears in the Bible under the form of Wisdom. In fact, the word Sophia comes from the Greek *Sophia* meaning *Wisdom*. The Old Testament represents Wisdom as sharing the Throne of God and collaborating with God in the creation of the world. Thus, in *Proverbs* Wisdom tells us: "*The LORD brought me forth as the first of His works, before His deeds of old; I was appointed from eternity, from the beginning, before the world began. When there were no oceans, I was given birth, when there were no springs abounding with water; before the mountains were settled in place, before the hills, I was given birth, before He made the earth or its fields or any of the dust of the world. I was there when he set the heavens in place, when he marked out the horizon on the face of the deep, when He established the clouds above and fixed securely the fountains of the deep, when He gave the sea its boundary so the waters would not overstep His command, and when He marked out the foundations of the earth. Then I was the craftsperson at His side. I was filled with delight day after day, rejoicing always in His presence*" (Proverbs 8: 22-30).

Again in the Old Testament, the *Book of Wisdom* specifies that Sophia is a "... *breath of the power of God, and a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty; therefore nothing defiled gains entrance into Her. For She is a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God, and an image of His goodness. Though She is but one, She can do all things, and while remaining in Herself, She renews all things; in every generation She passes into holy souls and makes them friends of God, and prophets; for God loves nothing so much as the being who lives with Wisdom.*" (Wisdom 7: 25-28).



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Reading these biblical texts, one has the impression that Sophia is the feminine part of God, or even a female being having a Divine Nature. Being present beside the Creator at the beginning of time, She assists in the creation of the world, which She keeps renewing through the ages. If the Old Testament did not completely assimilate Sophia as an aspect of Divinity, the interpreters of the New Testament see in Sophia a prefiguration of the Word. Referring to the prologue of the Gospel according to Saint John, they see in her an image of Christ, through whom all things came to be (John 1: 1-3). Later, starting in the eleventh century, some characteristics of Wisdom will be associated with the Messiah, particularly under the influence of Anselm of Canterbury. The maternal aspect of the Redeemer will then be underlined, to the point that he was referred to as *Jesus-Our-Mother*.

The role of Sophia in the process of creation leads many authors to view her as the Soul of the World that Plato speaks about in the *Timaeus*. In this text, the Greek philosopher tells how the Demiurge had shaped this Soul, which envelopes the body of the world and constitutes the celestial canopy. For Plato, Wisdom was the mediating force between God and Creation, a conduit through which the Divine energies pass, which incarnate in the universe. Philosophers did not unanimously accept this platonic idea, and yet it endured. In fact, after antiquity, it re-emerged during the Renaissance with Marsilio Ficino, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, Giordano Bruno, and Paracelsus. Passing through Christianity, this concept was enriched with elements borrowed from the Kabbalah and was associated with the Shekinah, a Hebrew word that evokes the Divine Presence in the world. We will not linger on this Kabbalistic notion because we will have the opportunity to focus on it in the next degree.

Valentin Weigel, one of the fathers of German theosophy of the sixteenth century, was one of the first mystics to underline the role of Sophia in Creation. In his works, he evokes Her mysterious union with God, a union through which Divinity has come out of eternity to reveal itself in the universe. In the following century, Heinrich Khunrath, the famous Rosicrucian, presented Sophia as the mediator in the alchemical wedding that would occur between Christ and Humanity. During the same period, the theme of Sophia as Wisdom and the Soul of the World assumed a new dimension thanks to Jacob Boehme, the second Master of the Unknown Philosopher.

As Martinists, it is important to understand Jacob Boehme's conception of Sophia. Returning to what is said about her in the Old Testament, he saw in Sophia the Light springing out from the darkness at the moment when God revealed the Divine Self. Celestial virgin, she appeared at the first instant of Creation and constitutes the mirror in which Divinity contemplates



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Itself. By extension, She potentially contains all the Divine manifestations. We should also remember that she is inseparable from the original androgyny of the human being. According to Jacob Boehme, the primordial Adam was a being of light and not of flesh, and Sophia was his Celestial Spouse. It is through Sophia that Adam was united with the Divine.

By falling into matter, Adam lost his body of light and took a body of flesh. From the androgynous being that he was, he found himself separated into two beings: man and woman. Furthermore, his Fall into the material world took him away from his Celestial Spouse. That is why the Unknown Philosopher said that men and women are widows and that they are looking within the other for what is missing in their own being. However, it is only by the union with Sophia that they can recover their completeness. For Jacob Boehme, this spiritual wedding can only be accomplished if we work sufficiently on our inner regeneration. This spiritual union is not easily accessible to the incarnated person. However, despite the exile in matter, men and women can unite with Sophia during particularly intense spiritual experiences. In his books, the German philosopher recalls such moments indicating that he learned more through those spiritual experiences than if he had studied all his life in a university.

The theories of Jacob Boehme had a great effect and led to a true veneration of Sophia in some of his direct or indirect disciples, such as Johann Georg Gichtel, John Pordage, and Jane Lead. In her writings, the latter reports that during a spiritual experience, she saw a majestic woman in the middle of a shining cloud. Her face was as radiant as the sun and her clothing was like gold. She heard her say: "*Behold, I am God's eternal Virgin-Wisdom, whom thou hast been inquiring after.*" During another vision, Sophia gave her a golden book closed with three seals, and declared that she would find within it the profound mysteries of Divine Wisdom. As for the pietist Gottfried Arnold, he gave a poetic dimension to the worship of Sophia in *The Mystery of Holy Sophia*. In this text, Sophia presides at the wedding uniting the soul to its being of recovered light, enabling it to return to God.

The relationship existing between Sophia and the Light was also evoked by Friedrich Christoph Oetinger, a Christian Kabbalist well versed in the doctrines of Jacob Boehme. According to Oetinger, at the beginning of Creation, God revealed the Divine Self in an Original Glory that he compares to Sophia. The latter is the Temple of God, the primordial Space, the Divine Immensity, and the place where angels dwell. It is in this place, after it is consecrated, that all regenerated beings will reign. The Christ initiated this universal regeneration because his risen flesh is the Ultimate Matter, the reconstituted Wisdom. Friedrich Christoph Oetinger saw in



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the resurrection of men and women the process by which they can find their spiritual body and thus participate in the restoration of Celestial Sophia. According to Oetinger, the Celestial Sophia is also the luminous Substance that is at the origin of all; it is Eternal Nature.

When Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin discovered the works of Boehme around 1788, he was fascinated by his reflections on Divine Wisdom. This influence is most clearly evident in his book, *The Ministry of the Human-Spirit*. However, his book *The Natural Table of the Correspondences between God, Man and the Universe* already evoked this Wisdom, without referring to it as Sophia. In this book, Sophia appears under her double aspects: as a universal source of Creation and as mediator in the process of reintegration. In *The Ministry of the Human-Spirit*, the Unknown Philosopher makes direct reference to the theories of Jacob Boehme in order to evoke Sophia. According to Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin, Sophia participates in the Divine Unity, integrates the laws of Creation, and constitutes a mirror in which God's Imagination is reflected and blossoms. He adds that she had privileged relations with the primordial Adam. In fact, she was the Spiritual Earth within which his glorious body was shaped at the beginning. But by trying to contemplate himself in the material world, he committed true adultery, which separated him from his Celestial Spouse and brought about the degradation of his spiritual body into a body of corruptible matter.

As Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin explained, Sophia intervened in the incarnation of the Redeemer-Christ. Taking again an idea from Jacob Boehme, Saint-Martin indicated that the Christ first donned a glorious body by projecting himself into the mirror of Eternal Wisdom and then made himself flesh in the womb of Mary who, because of the virginity of her soul, was in a way an image of Sophia or in other words her human equivalent. Sophia also plays a role in the regeneration of humanity itself. In a letter addressed to the Baron of Kirchberger, the Unknown Philosopher provided further explanations: "*There is no doubt in my mind that she can be born in the center of our beings. There is no doubt as well that the Divine Word can also be born by this means, as it was also born in Mary.*" It is therefore by the union with Sophia that men and women can bring about the birth of the Word within themselves. They can realize this union through a slow evolution and by acquiring purity of soul, obtained by an intense spiritual life. In *The Ministry of the Human-Spirit*, Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin speaks of a parallel between the purification of the soul and the coming of Sophia. He tells us the following: "*We can facilitate this reintegration of principles insofar as we have brought about the rebirth of an eternal virgin in our soul, within which the Son of Man can be incarnated, with his virtues and powers. We can bring about the rebirth within ourselves of this eternal virgin by reanimating within us our original body or the pure element.*" The Unknown Philosopher also explained about the purity of



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the soul that can be acquired by progressively elevating ourselves in the seven circles of the Celestial World. During this elevation, we don Elijah's cloak, our pure and original body, the one that can preserve the Word within us. Thus purified, Saint-Martin adds, we will be ready to be united with Sophia, our Celestial Spouse.

According to Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin, the union with Sophia occurs in several steps. First, the celestial Virgin is born into the soul of a man or woman. Then, Christ descends into the heart. From the union of the Virgin and the Christ, a New Man or New Woman is born. This New Man or New Woman will be able to accomplish the true Ministry that had been given to him or her at the beginning, which is to become a pure mirror for Divinity and to participate in the restoration of harmony in the entire Creation. To the Unknown Philosopher, it is at this time that the Universal Temple will be restored and, as it is said in the *Revelation of Saint John*, a new Earth and a new Heaven will exist.

As we end this monograph, you may consider the ontological and cosmological implications that are drawn through the concept of Sophia. From Plato to Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin, and throughout the Bible, each epoch has underlined one of her essential characteristics. In a general manner, remember that She appeared beside God at the beginning of Creation, that She corresponds to the Soul of the World, that She is the mediator between Humanity and God, and that She is the substance that composes our glorious body.

May you ever dwell in the Eternal Light of Divine Wisdom.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION



A Symbolic Representation of Sophia

SUMMARY

After carefully studying this monograph, read the following summary. It contains the major points that you may want to reflect and meditate on during the coming days. If you have trouble understanding one of the points, return to the explanations given in the monograph. Immerse yourself in learning the points covered in this summary before proceeding with the study of the next monograph.

- The word Sophia comes from the Greek *Sophia* meaning *Wisdom*. The Old Testament represents Her as sharing the Throne of God and collaborating with the Divine in the creation of the world.
- Reading the biblical texts, we have the impression that Sophia is the feminine part of God, or even a female being having a Divine Nature.
- Even if the Old Testament did not completely assimilate Sophia as an aspect of Divinity, the interpreters of the New Testament see in Sophia a revelation of the Word.
- The role of Sophia in the process of Creation led many authors to view Her as the Soul of the World that Plato talks about in the *Timaeus*.
- Recalling what is said about Sophia in the Old Testament, Jacob Boehme saw in Her the Light springing out from the darkness at the moment when God revealed the Divine Self.
- According to Jacob Boehme, the primordial Adam was a being of light and not of flesh, and Sophia was his Celestial Spouse. It is through Sophia that he was united with the Divine.
- The Fall took Adam away from his Celestial Spouse. That is why men and women are widows and they look to the other for what is missing in their own beings. It is through union with Sophia that we can recover our wholeness.
- According to Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin, Sophia participates in Divine Unity, integrates the laws of Creation, and constitutes a mirror in which God's Imagination is reflected and blossoms.
- It is therefore through union with Sophia that Humanity can bring about the birth of the Word within itself. We can realize this union through a slow evolution and by acquiring purity of the soul.

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