

Materials on the Sun of Righteousness and the Shadow of His Wing

by Tim Maroney, KEW OTO
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Today's Bible reading comes to us from the Book of Malachi. The name of the prophet means "My Messenger," a Mercurial title reminiscent of the messenger spirits of theurgy that whirl between the earth and heavens, and of the messenger roles of angels in Biblical myth. In this short book the prophet begins by condemning those who bring unclean bread and sickly sacrifice to the Lord's table, then segues smoothly to an apocalyptic eschatology much admired by later Christian interpreters. Indeed, "the Sun of Righteousness" was taken as a title of Christ, and it is on His return that the world will be destroyed by fire, as Malachi foretold in his fourth chapter.

- 1. For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.*
- 2. But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up* as calves of the stall.*
- 3. And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the LORD of hosts.*

* "Grow up" is now more commonly translated as "skip about," "leap" or "dance." Thus the treading down of the wicked is viewed as a joyous and sacred activity. We might compare the dance of Shiva upon ignorance, or the trampling of the wretched and the weak lauded by Hadit in His chapter of CCXX.

In his Paris Talks, the Bahá'í `Abdu'l-Bahá elaborates the symbolism of the healing wings through poetic imagery.

Oh! put your faith in the Almighty, for He faileth not and His goodness endureth for ever! His Sun giveth Light continually, and the Clouds of His Mercy are full of the Waters of Compassion with which He waters the hearts of all who trust in Him. His refreshing Breeze ever carries healing in its wings to the parched souls of men! Is it wise to turn away from such a loving Father, Who showers His blessings upon us, and to choose rather to be slaves of matter?

Of these healing wings, Alice Bailey or her master Djwhal Khul writes in "The Externalization of the Hierarchy":

[L]ove, esoterically and in reality, is perceptive understanding, the ability to recognize that which has produced an existing situation, and a consequent freedom from criticism; it involves that beneficent silence which carries healing in its wings and which is only expressive when the inhibition aspect of silence is absent and the man no longer has to still his lower nature and quiet the voices of his own ideas in order to understand and achieve identification with that which must be loved. Can you follow the beauty of this concept and comprehend the nature of this silent depth of true understanding?

We may perhaps be forgiven the answer no to both Ms. Bailey and Mr. Bahá. Returning to the latter, speaking to the Theosophical Society in 1911 at the behest of Annie Besant,

‘Abdu'l-Bahá referred to a different but perhaps related type of wing, and interpreted the prophets (such as Malachi, and to the Bahá'í, Buddha and many others) in solar terms:

Religion and Science are inter-twined with each other and cannot be separated. These are the two wings with which humanity must fly. One wing is not enough. Every religion which does not concern itself with Science is mere tradition, and that is not the essential. Therefore science, education and civilization are most important necessities for the full religious life.

The Reality of the divine Religions is one, because the Reality is one and cannot be two. All the prophets are united in their message, and unshaken. They are like the sun; in different seasons they ascend from different rising points on the horizon. Therefore every ancient prophet gave the glad tidings of the future, and every future has accepted the past.

Some decades before, in her Theosophical Glossary, Madame Blavatsky quotes "our late learned Brother," Kenneth Mackenzie, a high-profile but enigmatic esoteric Freemason who has been implicated in various unsolved mysteries of the occult history of his time:

Ancient and mediaeval mystics divided magic into three classes — Theurgia, Goëtia and natural Magic. "Theurgia has long since been appropriated as the peculiar sphere of the theosophists and metaphysicians", says Kenneth Mackenzie. Goëtia is black magic, and "natural (or white) magic has risen with healing in its wings to the proud position of an exact and progressive study.

The wings of healing in Malachi are often interpreted in Christian preaching as rays of light, much as the rays shining through a cleft in the clouds may render what had blocked the light instead as great feathered wings in the sky. The wings of God remind us of another Biblical passage much beloved of Rosicrucians, who have also adopted the passage from Malachi as emblematic of the traditional healing function ascribed to the Rosicrucian fraternity. This phrase is "under the shadow of the wings," which we find in the book of Psalms:

*16:8. Keep me as the pupil, the daughter of the eye; hide me under the shadow of Your wings,
9 from the face of the wicked who strip me. Those against my soul, My foes, encircle me.*

In the Vulgate Latin translation of the Bible by St. Jerome, Psalms 16:8 reads:

*16:8. a resistentibus dexteræ tuae custodi me ut pupillam oculi sub umbra alarum
tuarum proteges me*

The Latin phrase "sub umbra alarum tuarum" will much later in history be taken up by the Rosicrucians. Originating shortly before 1610 CE, if they existed, this legendary fraternity of wandering, unknown healers took this Latin phrase as a special sign of their Order. It was with these words that the Fama Fraternitas closed: "Sub Umbra Alarum Tuarum, Jehova." An essay by Mather Walker on Francis Bacon, "Messages from The Man in The Moon" (<http://www.sirbacon.org/moon.html>), traces this Latin phrase in the Fama to a political event in summer 1582 involving Sir Walter Raleigh, identified by Walker as the Fama's brother R.

At that time William the Silent of Orange was leader of the Protestant forces in the Netherlands. A small group of Englishmen went to Antwerp to meet with him. Queen Elizabeth herself rode out with them as far as Canterbury..... Raleigh was detained [at

Antwerp] by William after the others had returned, and entrusted with a special verbal message for the Queen:

SUB UMBRA ALARUM TUARUM PROTEGIMUR

*That is, 'UNDER THE SHADOW OF YOUR WINGS WE ARE PROTECTED.' William of Orange was sending both an appeal, and an acknowledgment, to Queen Elizabeth of her support of the Protestant cause. In view of the English connections, and the Protestant activism of the Rosicrucian publications it is evident the postscript of *The Fama* referred to that famous event...*

In the 19th century English Rosicrucian group the Golden Dawn, its Flying Roll No. XVI, "The History of the Rosicrucian Order," discusses the Golden Dawn Adeptus Minor Initiation Ritual, which re-enacts the life and entombment of Christian Rosycross. This document also asks members to use characteristic modes of greeting and departing, among them this:

Members are moreover further requested to endeavour upon all occasions when taking leave of each other to use the old formula Vale, adding Sub umbra alarum tuarum, Jehovah!

Lance S. Owens in his "Joseph Smith and Kabbalah: The Occult Connection" (<http://www.gnosis.org/jskabbfn.htm>) points out the title page of Robert Fludd's *Utriusque Cosmi Maioris ... Tomi Secundi Tractatus Secundus* (Frankfurt, 1621), a treatise on Theosophy and Kabbalah. The prophet kneels praying on the rock of earth, beneath the all-seeing Eye of God. Rising from the prophet along a ray descending from the Eye are the words "*In alarum tuarum umbra canam*," which is the Latin of Ps. 63:7, "*in the shadow of Your wings I will rejoice.*"

The motif of the healing wings appears several more times in Psalms, expanding on its symbolism in a variety of ways, and presenting the shadow of the wing as a remedy for the attacks of one's enemies and one's own fear of them. In the first passage following the wings of Jehovah are discussed together with terrifying details reminiscent of Malachi.

18:8. A smoke went up out of His nostrils, and fire devoured out of His mouth; coals were kindled by it.

9. And He bowed the heavens and came down, and darkness was under His feet.

10. And He rode on a cherub, and flew; yea, He soared on the wings of the wind.

11. He made darkness His secret place, His pavilion around Him, darkness of waters, thick clouds of the skies.

12. At the brightness before Him, His dark clouds passed through, hailstones and coals of fire passed.

13. The LORD also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave forth His voice; hailstones and coals of fire.

55:5. Fear and trembling have come on me, and horror has covered me.

6. And I said, Who will give to me wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest.

7. Lo, I would wander far off; I would lodge in the desert. Selah.

57:1. To the Chief Musician. Do not destroy. A secret treasure of David, when he fled from Saul in the cave. Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me; for my soul trusts in You; yea, in the shadow of Your wings I will make my hiding-place, until these great troubles pass by.

61:3. *For You have been a shelter for me, a strong tower before the enemy.*
4. *I will dwell in Your tabernacle forever; I will trust in the hiding place of Your wings.*
Selah.

63:7. *Because You have been my help, therefore in the shadow of Your wings I will rejoice.*

8. *My soul follows hard after You; Your right hand upholds me.*
9. *But those who seek my soul, to destroy it, shall go into the depths of the earth.*

91:1. *He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall rest under the shadow of the Almighty.*

2. *I will say of the LORD, my refuge and my fortress; my God; in Him I will trust.*
3. *Surely He will deliver you from the fowler's trap and from the destroying plague.*
4. *He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall trust. His truth shall be your shield, and buckler.*
5. *You shall not fear the terror by night; nor because of the arrow that flies by day;*
6. *nor for the plague that walks in darkness, of the destruction laying waste at noonday.*

This last may be of special interest to magicians, particularly 91:1. We find the protective wings not only in Psalms but also in Ruth 2:

2:8. *And Boaz said to Ruth, Do you not hear, my daughter? Do not go to glean in another field, neither go away from here, but stay here close by my maidens.*
9. *Let your eyes be on the field that they reap, and go after them. Have I not commanded the young men that they shall not touch you? And when you are thirsty, go to the vessels and drink of that which the young men have drawn.*
10. *Then she fell on her face and bowed herself to the ground, and said to him, Why have I found grace in your eyes, that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?*
11. *And Boaz answered and said to her, It has been fully shown to me all that you have done to your mother-in-law since the death of your husband, And you left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and have come to a people whom you did not know before now.*
12. *May the LORD repay your work, and may a full reward be given you from the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to trust.*
13. *Then she said, Let me find favor in your sight, my lord, for you have comforted me; for you have spoken kindly to your handmaid, though I am not like one of your handmaidens.*

We will later see, as the wings protect Mary in the Apocalypse, that there may be a special connection between the protection of God's wings and the feminine. In any case, Ruth will become much more than Boaz's handmaiden, bringing in her office of gladness Obed, father of that Eph'rathite of Beth-lehem-judah, whose name was Jesse the father of David. King David would become the putative author of the Psalms, a purported ancestor of Jesus, and a puzzle for gay scholarship due to the intimate bonds of friendship celebrated in his life. There is little indication that Boaz knew that he would live to the present day as a pillar of Freemasonry as well. In all this there may be some further meaning, as indeed in all these verses.

A well-known prayer of Bahá'u'lláh on separation from God laments:

Suffer me, O my God, to draw nigh unto Thee, and to abide within the precincts of Thy court, for remoteness from Thee hath well-nigh consumed me. Cause me to rest under the shadow of the wings of Thy grace, for the flame of my separation from Thee hath melted my heart within me. Draw me nearer unto the river that is life indeed, for my soul

burneth with thirst in its ceaseless search after Thee. My sighs, O my God, proclaim the bitterness of mine anguish, and the tears I shed attest my love for Thee.

In another prayer to God's name, he entreats:

I implore Thee, O Thou Who art the beloved Companion of Bahá, by Thy name, the All-Glorious, to keep safe these Thy servants under the shadow of the wings of Thine all-encompassing mercy, that the darts of the evil suggestions of the wicked doers among Thy creatures, who have disbelieved in Thy signs, may be kept back from them.

As this wealth of usages demonstrates, the symbol of the healing wings has spoken to many people of many faiths. In its original faith, Judaism, the saying remains prominent. Rabbi Joseph R. Black of Congregation Albert, Albuquerque NM USA, writes in his "Shattered and Sheltering Myths" for Erev Rosh Hashanah 5763:

[T]he idea of being “under God” is worth exploring – and possibly even embracing on this Erev Rosh Ha-Shanah. What does the myth of being “under God” mean for us as Jews? The first is found throughout our liturgy on these High Holy Days – that of God as Sovereign of the Universe – in Hebrew: Ol Malchut Shamayim – the Yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven. The second, also a central theme of our liturgy and literature, is the concept of God as a Sheltering presence who protects us under the shadow of the Wings of the Divine Presence: Tachat Kanfei Ha-Shechina

To speak of being “under God” in the context of perceiving God as a Sheltering presence who protects us under the shadow of the Wings of the Divine Presence -- Tachat Kanfei Ha-Shechina -- is to state that God not only exists, but that God cares about us and wants to protect us. But it also means that we are not the exclusive recipients of God’s care and love. All of Humanity is sheltered by God. In the book of Genesis we read that we are created in the Image of God. God’s shelter is a unifying factor. To state that we are a nation “under God” in this context, is not exclusive, but inclusive. We, like all of our brothers and sisters regardless of ethnic, religious or national origin, are sheltered by God’s grace and love.

The *Shechina* to which Rabbi Black refers is interpreted as a feminine divine force in Judaism, even within mainstream commentary, and is sometimes conflated with the Christian Holy Spirit, the divine messenger between heaven and earth in the form of a dove or of a tongue of flame. In the final book of the Christian Bible, Rev. 12:6-14, the wings of God protect another divine female, the woman clothed with the sun, or Mary, from the serpent or dragon, in a much more direct and personal way than the sheltering wings of Psalms that watch over us all. After the Fall from Heaven of Satan and his angels, this primordial Mary is pursued by evil, but God gives her his wings.

6. *Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days.*
7. *And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought,*
8. *But they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer.*
9. *So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.*
10. *Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down.*
11. *And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.*

12. *Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time."*

13. *Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child.*

14. *But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent.*

The dragon goes on to try to drown the Mother of God with a flood from its mouth, from which she is protected by the earth. Enraged, the serpent creates the Beast rising up from the sea. This Beast will carry the Scarlet Woman, Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and of the Abominations of the Earth (Rev. 17:5). The ceremonial magician Aleister Crowley, himself proclaimed the Beast by his mother and his angel alike, believed that the woman clothed in the sun was also the Scarlet Woman, and this Babylon (or Babalon in Enochian) became a central figure in his Aeonian eschatology.

In The Vision and the Voice Crowley gives us the Latin version of the phrase, stating in a footnote that it had to do with the Adeptus Minor initiation, the same ritual discussed in the Golden Dawn's Flying Roll No. XVI. The vision is "Of the 24th Aethyr, Which is Called NIA". Crowley explains it in notes as a vision of the woman clothed with the sun, the Scarlet Woman, and the Beast. It reads in part:

Come, let us mount unto Nuit our mother and be lost! Let being be emptied in the infinite abyss! For by me only shalt thou mount; thou hast none other wings than mine.

All this while the Rose has been shooting out blue flames, coruscating like snakes through the whole Aire. And the snakes have taken shapes of sentences. One of them is: Sub umbra alarum tuarum Adonai quies et felicitas.

In The Passing of the Pylon, a section of the self-initiation ritual Liber Pyramidos, Crowley again employs this traditional Biblical and Rosicrucian motif. It serves as a protective counterpoint against a long litany of accusations. The section involving the wings begins and ends as follows:

*Yea! but I am a Fool, a Flutterer!
I am under the Shadow of the Wings!*

(Refrain "I am under", etc., after each Accusation.):

*I am a Liar and a Sorcerer.
I am under the Shadow of the Wings!*

*...
I am not marked with the white Flame of Breath.
I am under the Shadow of the Wings!
I am a Traitor! - die the Traitor's death!*

*This last raises Candidate erect.
Invoking Spiral Dance. Rubric as before:*

*I am under the Shadow of the Wings!
Now let me pace the Path, bind on
The Girdle of the Starry One!*

This pylon which is passed is that of death and fear, and of the Lurker on the Threshold, here figured as the great Egyptian crocodile demon Sebek, eater of the dead. The wings of protection of the Lord here redeem the unworthy and protect the aspirant in the underworld. Above, the fleecy clouds part before the golden ray, revealing He who rides the wings of the winds. In the Breath of that Aethyr or Air are refreshment and truth. The terrors pass and are done; under the shadow of His wings, no other shadow and no veil of sorrow can abide. The Chymical Wedding of Rose and Cross is the Sabbath of the Adepts. In the name of the Lord of Initiation, Amen.