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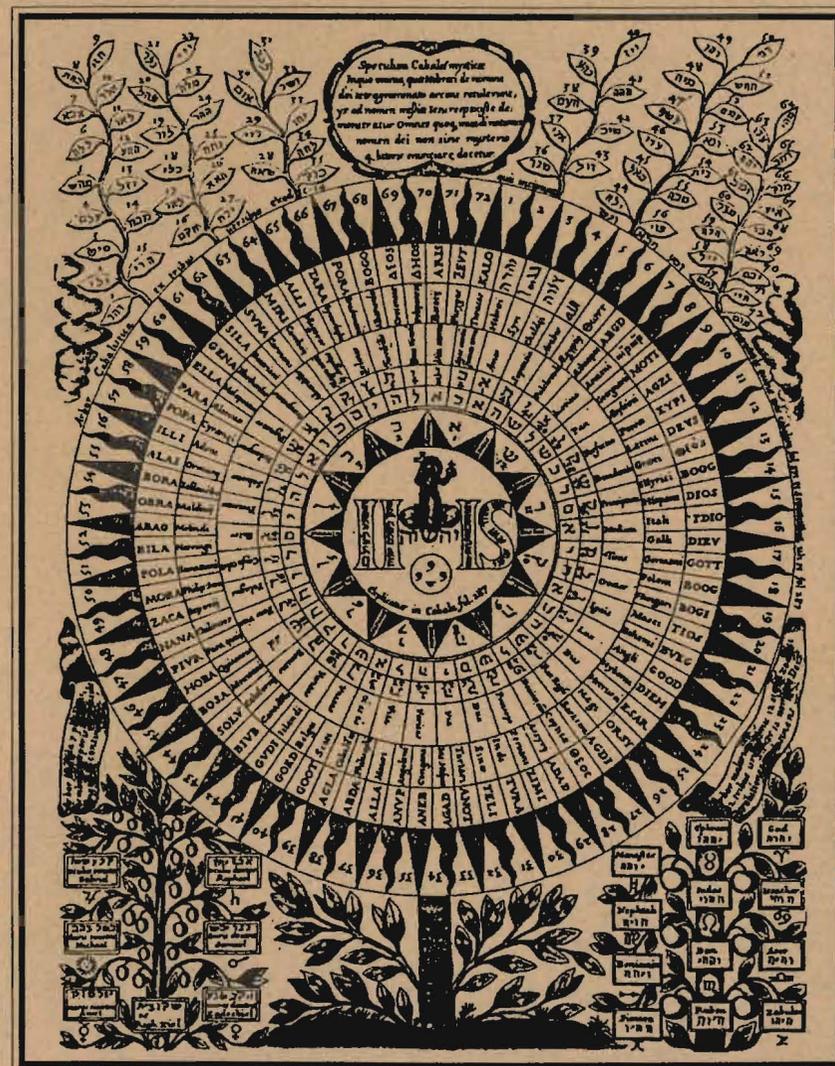
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THE KABBALAH OF THE

GOLDEN DAWN

W. WYNN WESTCOTT



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Kabbalah of the Golden Dawn

THE KABBALAH OF THE GOLDEN DAWN

WILLIAM WYNN WESTCOTT

Edited, with Introductory Note,
by Darcy Küntz

Preface by S.L. MacGregor Mathers



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Preface to the Kabbalah¹

by S.L. MacGregor Mathers

What is the Jewish Kabbalah? To some persons the sound of the word will be familiar, though the ideas which it conveys will probably be vague in the extreme, while to many, indeed, the very name will be unknown. What is the Jewish Kabbalah? If we turn to those general storehouses of all kinds of knowledge, the encyclopaedias, we find but bald and unsatisfactory information. Thus Burrowes' *Modern Encyclopaedia* says: "The Hebrew Cabbala signifies tradition; and the Rabbins who are called Cabbalists, study principally the combination of particular words, letters, and numbers, and by this means pretend to discover what is to come, and to see clearly into the sense of many difficult passages of Scripture. There are no sure principles of this knowledge, but it depends upon some particular traditions of the ancients, for which reason it is termed Cabbala. The secrets of the Cabbala are said to have been discovered to Moses on Mount Sinai; and to have been delivered from him down from father to son, without interruption, and without any use of letters; for to write them down is what they are by no means permitted to do ... There is another Cabbala, called artificial, which consists in searching for abstruse and mysterious signification of a word in Scripture, from whence they borrow certain explanations, by combining the letters which compose it; this Cabbala is divided into three kinds, the gematrie [gematria], the notaricon, and the temura or themura. The first whereof consists in taking the letters of a Hebrew word for cyphers or arithmetical numbers, and explaining every word by the arithmetical value of the letters whereof it is composed. The second sort of Cabbala, called notaricon, consists in taking every particular letter of a word for an entire diction; and the third, called themura, *i.e.*, change, consists in making different transpositions or changes of letters, placing one for the other, or one before the other. Among the Christians, likewise, a certain sort of magic is, by mistake, called Cabbala, which consists in using

improperly certain passages of Scripture for magic operations, or in forming magic characters or figures with stars and talismans."

The *Oxford Encyclopaedia* gives simply a condensation of the above. The *Penny Cyclopaedia* gives a few lines from Dr. Henry More's *Conjectura Cabbalistica*, and a short list of writers on the Cabbala.

The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* has an article identical with that quoted above, from Burrowes' *Modern Encyclopaedia*.

In the *Encyclopaedia Metropolitana* there is a longer article on the subject, which gives a fair definition of its various branches, but denounces the system on the ground that its adoption tends to represent the Scriptures as a collection of acrostics, anagrams, and riddles.

Rees' *Cyclopaedia* has also an article of fair length on the subject, but it is generally adverse to the claims advanced by the Cabbalists. Rees gives the following account of the origin of the Cabbala: "The Jews derive the mysteries contained in the Cabbala from Adam; and assert that whilst the first man was in Paradise the angel Rasiel brought him a book from heaven, which contained the doctrines of heavenly wisdom; and that when Adam received this book, angels came down from heaven to learn its contents, but that he refused to admit them to the knowledge of sacred things entrusted to himself alone; that, after the Fall, this book was taken back into heaven; that after many prayers and tears God restored it to Adam; and that it passed from Adam to Seth. The book being lost, and the mysteries contained in it almost forgotten, in the degenerate age preceding the flood, they were restored by special revelation to Abraham who transmitted them to writing in the book [*Sepher*] *Yetzirah*; and that the revelation was renewed to Moses, who received a traditionary and mystical as well as a written and perceptive law from God. Accordingly the Jews believe, that God gave to Moses on Mount Sinai, not only the Law, but also the explication of that Law; and that Moses, after his coming down, retiring to his tent, rehearsed to Aaron both the one and the other. When he had done, Aaron standing on the right hand, his sons, Eleazer and Ithamar, were introduced to a second rehearsal; this being over, the seventy elders that composed the Sanhedrim were admitted; and lastly, the people, as many as pleased: to all of whom Moses again repeated both the Law and the Explanation as he received them from God. So that Aaron heard it four times, his sons thrice, the elders twice, and the people once. Now, of the two things which Moses taught them, the Law and the Explanation, only the first was committed to writing; which is what we have in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers;

as to the second, or the explication of that Law, they were contented to impress it well in their memory, to teach it to their children, and they in turn to theirs, etc. Hence the first is the written Law, and the second Cabbala."

This word Cabbala is spelt in a great variety of ways by various writers: Cabala, Caballa, Kabbala, Kabala, Kabbalah, Gaballa, Qabala, and Qabalah, which last I myself prefer, as being the truest rendering of the Hebrew word קבלה (QBLH). It is derived from קבל (QBL), meaning "to receive," and denotes "received tradition."

But, notwithstanding the fact that the writers of the encyclopaedias have decided somewhat rashly against its claims as being the true Esoteric interpretation of the mystical passages of Scripture, other men, of as deep minds firm and satisfactory scheme of religious philosophy; and one which, while satisfying the carving of their minds for a transcendent system of religion, could disclose to them in language sublime and logical, the mystical abysses of the Mind Divine. A system which could captivate such men as Reuchlin, Athanasius Kircher, Knorr de Rosenroth (whose *Kabbalah Denudata* is the leading work on the subject). Picus de Mirandola, Dr. Henry More, Cornelius Agrippa, and Robert Fludd, is surely worthy of more than a passing and superficial examination, especially when it is considered that the Hebrew Scriptures require some key wherewith to unlock the mysteries of the Prophecies and the Apocalypse; and that key, I venture to assert, is to be found, and found only in the Kabbalah.

Note:

1. This article is reprinted from *Walfords Antiquarian Magazine*, Vol. XI, No. 65, 1887, pp. 305-8.—D.K.

THE KABBALAH¹

William Wynn Westcott

The members of the Blavatsky Lodge of the Theosophical Society are all to some extent students of philosophy and religion, and although they are associated into a Lodge chiefly to master the *Secret Doctrine*, which has been expounded to them in so learned and yet so interesting a manner by Madame Blavatsky, yet some portion of their time and attention may with advantage be spent in a comparison between the *Secret Doctrine* and other ancient theologies, faiths and philosophies.

Being fully persuaded of the good to be thus derived, I have been desirous of taking advantage of any opportunity that has fallen in my way, of calling attention to the dogmas of the old Hebrew Kabbalah. I had the good fortune to be attracted to this somewhat out-of-the-way and recondite study, at an early period of my life, and I have been able to spare a little time in subsequent years to collect some knowledge of this Hebrew religious philosophy: my information upon the subject has been kept up by my membership of more than one of the present day Rosicrucian Societies, in one of which I have been Præmonstrator of the Kabbalah; and in these studies I have had the advantage of the kindly help of my friend, Brother MacGregor Mathers, who is well known in London as the Translator and Editor of three books of the *Zohar*, which is the chief storehouse of Kabbalistic doctrine. Yet the Kabbalistic books are so numerous and so lengthy, and so many of them only to be studied in Rabbinic Hebrew and Chaldee, that I feel to-day less confident of my knowledge of the Kabbalah than I did ten years ago.

I had the honour last year of delivering a lecture to this Lodge on the far-reaching scheme of the development of Man, with especial relation to the first three Root Races of mankind in the Fourth Round, as taught in the *Secret Doctrine*. It was then suggested that with the descent of Mind into the well-developed material Man of the mid-point between the third and fourth Races, there ensued an incarnation

of some truly great Minds who brought down to the nascent humanity the Wisdom of the more spiritual beings who possessed a mental grasp of the knowledge of the Worlds, and of the true history of the Origin and Destiny of man. Theosophists suppose that this teaching has formed the basis of the 'Wisdom Religion' which has been preserved in every age until now. We believe that Adepts have existed in many lands through all the centuries of change, juvenescence and decay of races and nations: we doubt not that much of the primeval knowledge has failed to be assimilated by the successors of these sublime teachers; but on the other hand there may have been a coincident rearrangement of facts and notions, by means of which a clear stream of the truth concerning the origins of human religions and human knowledge has reached even down to our own time, and that some glimpses of the Secret Doctrine still existing in the fastnesses of Central Asia have been offered for our acceptance. To such as hold this belief, the existence of other systems of religious philosophy which are found to present points of similarity to the Secret Doctrine is explained by the suggestion that they come from the same ancient stock, at some period of the history of man which may be unknown to us; and that lapse of time, and remoteness of dwelling of the custodians of the similar, but more or less divergent, systems will explain at once the similarity and the differences, especially if we suppose that the descent of the divergent system has been marred by the failure, at some period, of the possessors to attain such a stage of moral, mental and spiritual purity, as to enable them to continue to draw inspiration from the fountain head. The connection with the true source once broken, the gradual decadence of a philosophy is easy of conception.

Whether there ever existed such a nexus between the Primary Kabbalah and the Wisdom Religion may never be known, but a study of Kabbalistic books does show that a gradual degradation has been going on in the philosophy since medieval times. Some of the writings of the latest Rabbis sadly differ from the purer and more ancient treatises. Whatever may be the origin of this philosophy, it is undeniable that the most ancient Rabbis did claim a prehistoric date for its conception: and being Hebrews, who no doubt were prominent in the study and the practice of the Exoteric Law of Moses, they claimed for it as distant an origin as they allowed to man himself. They asserted its origin to be from Adam himself, the first human being of their cosmogony, and they asserted that he was instructed by angels sent by the Deity, whom they exoterically described as Jehovah

Elohim, he who they said put the Soul into Man, and made him a living and thinking being. Here then we have a parallel. The *Secret Doctrine* suggests that the earliest thinking men were taught by Solar Spirits of sublime order, the Rabbis said that their Kabbalah, their esoteric doctrine—in contrast to their Pentateuch, their exoteric religion—was given to their earliest man by angelic beings coming from their Creator.

It must be confessed that the origin of the Kabbalah is lost in the mists of antiquity; no one even professes to demonstrate who was its author, or who were its earliest teachers. Considerable evidence might be adduced to show that its roots pass back to the Hebrew Rabbis who flourished at the time of the Second Temple. Of its existence before this time I know of no evidence. One of the chief books, the *Sepher Yetzirah*, is ascribed to Abraham: but modern criticism, which is hardly disposed to grant the existence of Abraham, does not of course assent to this ascription.

It has been suggested that the captivity of the Jews in Babylon led to the formation of this philosophy by the effect of Chaldean lore and dogma acting on Jewish tradition. No doubt in the earliest stages of its existence the teaching was entirely oral, and became varied by the minds through whom it filtered in its course: there is no proof that any part of it was written for centuries after; and it was kept curiously distinct both from the Exoteric Pentateuchal Mosaic doctrine, and from the ever-growing Talmudic commentaries. The *Mishnah* and *Gemara*, which form the *Talmud*, seem to have grown up in Hebrew theology without combining with these recondite doctrines of the Kabbalah. In a similar manner we see in India that the *Upanishads*, an esoteric series of treatises, grew up alongside the *Brahmanas* and the *Purânas*—exoteric instructions designed for the use of the masses of the people.

With regard to the oldest Kabbalistic books still extant, a fierce controversy has raged among critics for the last century. The critics of course all unite in denying the asserted era of each work, and all unite in proving that the assumed author is the only possible person who could not have written each one in question. But these critics show the utmost divergence of opinion the moment it becomes necessary to fix on a date or an author: so much more easy is destructive criticism, than the acquirement of real knowledge.

Let us take a rapid glance at the extant literature on our subject. By common consent the oldest treatise is the *Sepher Yetzirah*, or *Book*

of *Formation*, attributed to Abraham the Patriarch. This is a most curious philosophical scheme of creation, drawing a parallel between the origin of the world, the sun, the planets, the elements, seasons and man, and the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet, dividing them into a Triad, a Heptad and a Dodecad: three mother letters א (A), מ (M), and ש (Sh), referred to primeval Air, Water and Fire; seven double letters referred to the Planets and the seven-fold division of time, etc., and the twelve simple letters referred to the months, zodiacal signs, and human organs.

Modern criticism tends to the statement that the existing ancient versions were compiled about A.D. 200. The *Sepher Yetzirah* is mentioned in the *Talmuds*, both of Jerusalem and of Babylon, and is written in the Neo-Hebraic language, like the *Mishnah*.

We must next consider the *Zohar*, or *Book of Splendour*, a collection of many separate treatises on the Deity, Angels, Souls, and Cosmogony. This is ascribed to Rabbi Simeon ben Jochai, who lived A.D. 160, who was persecuted and driven to live in a cave by Lucius Aurelius Verus, co-regent with the Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus. Some considerable portion of the work may have been arranged by him, and condensed by him from the oral traditions of his time: but other parts have certainly been added by other hands at intervals up to the time when it was first published as a whole by Rabbi Moses de Leon, of Guadalajara in Spain, circa 1290. From that time its history is known. Printed editions have been issued in Mantua, 1558; Cremona, 1560; and Lublin, 1623; these are the three famous Codices of the *Zohar* in the Hebrew language. For those who do not read Hebrew, the only practical means of studying the *Zohar* has been the partial translation into Latin of Baron Knorr von Rosenroth—published in 1684 under the title of *Kabbala Denudata* [*Kabbalah Unveiled*—until the English edition of the treatises—*Siphra Dtzenioutha* or *Book of Concealed Mystery*; *Ha Idra Rabba*, *Greater Assembly*; and *Ha Idra Suta*, *Lesser Assembly*; translated and edited by MacGregor Mathers and published by Redway.

These three books give a fair idea of the tone and style and material of the Kabbalistic Book of the *Zohar*, but they of course do not include a view of the whole subject.

Other famous treatises are:

The Commentary on the Ten Sephiroth, by Rabbi Azariel ben Menachem, A.D. 1200; *The Alphabet* of Rabbi Akiba; the *Book of Enoch*; *The Palaces, Pardes Rimmonim*, or *Garden of Pomegranates*; *Otz ha Chiim*,

or *Tree of Life*; *Rashith Ha Galgulim*, or *Revolutions of Souls*; and especially the writings of the famous Spanish Jew, Ibn Gebirol, who died A.D. 1070, and was also called Avicbron.

The teachings of the Kabbalah has been considered to be grouped into several schools, each of which was for a time famous. I may mention: The School of Gerona, 1190 to 1210, of Rabbi Isaac the Blind, Rabbi Azariel, and Rabbi Ezra. The School of Segovia, of Rabbis Jacob, Abulafia, Shem Job, and Isaac of Cikko. The School of Rabbi Isaac ben Abraham Ibn Latif. The School of Abulafia and Joseph Gikatilla. The School of Zoharists of Rabbis Moses de Leon, Menachem di Recanti, Loria and Vital.

But in the main I say that there were two opposing tendencies among the Kabbalists: the one set devoted themselves entirely to the doctrinal and dogmatic branch: the other to the practical and wonder-working aspect. The greatest of the wonder-working Rabbis were Isaac Loria, who died in 1572; and Sabbatai Zevi, who curiously enough became a Mahomedan. Both of these departments of Occult Rabbinic lore have still their living representatives, chiefly scattered individuals; very rarely *groups* of initiates are found. In Central Europe, parts of Russia, Austria, and Poland, there are even now Jews, known as wonder-working Rabbis, who can do strange things have been the attribute to the Kabbalah, and things very difficult to explain have been seen in England, at the hands of students of Kabbalistic rites and talismans.

The commentaries, many series deep, overlaying each other, which even now exist in connection with the old treatises, form such a mass of Kabbalistic lore as to make it an impossible task to grasp them: probably no man in this country can say what doctrines are not still laid up in some of these works; both in the main it may be stated that the Kabbalah indicates philosophical conceptions respecting Deity, Angels, and beings more spiritual than man, the human Soul and its several aspects or parts; concerning pre-existence and re-incarnation, and the several worlds or planes of existence.

Then the practical Kabbalah teaches the relations between letters and numbers and the modes of their inter-relation; the principles of Gematria, Notaricon, and Temurah; the formation and uses of the divine and angelic names as amulets; the formation of Magic Squares; and a vast fund of allied curious lore, which with the Tarot, formed the basis of Medieval Magic.

For those who do not wish to read any Kabbalistic work as a whole but rather to glean a general view of the Philosophy, there are two

standard works, one in English, by Dr. Ginsburg, a very complete and concise *résumé* of the doctrines; and one in French by Adolph Franck, which is more discursive and less thorough. These works should be read by every beginner.

Many points of the teaching of the *Secret Doctrine* are not at all touched on by the Hebrew system, or are excluded by differences of a fundamental nature: such are the cosmogony of other worlds, or of our own in earlier Rounds, than the present (unless the destroyed Worlds of Unbalanced Force refer to these); the inviolability of law, as Karma, is not a prominent feature; and the number of rebirths is limited generally to three. Some small part of the Kabbalistic doctrine is found in the *Talmud*, but in this collection of treatises there is a grossness that is absent from the true Kabbalah and the Esoteric Eastern system: such are the theories of the debasement of men into animal forms; and of men reborn as women, as a *punishment*² for earthly sins in a previous life: see Rabbi Manasseh in the Nishmath Chiim, or 'Breath of Lives.'

But it must be remembered that many of the doctrines to which we may justly take exception are limited to the teachings of but a few Rabbis: and that the differences between the doctrines on a given point are sometimes very great; as is shewn by a comparison of the books of the Rabbis of different eras and schools. Some of the Kabbalistic teaching has also never been printed nor published, and has been handed down even to this day from master to pupil only: there are some points, not found in any Hebrew Book, which I myself have received in our Rosicrucian and G[olden] D[awn] Hermetic Lodges; and I may not therefore be able to supply chapter and verse for *all* I may say about Kabbalah, or for all that I may answer in response to your questions. An attentive study of some of these old mystical Hebrew Books discloses the existence of intentional 'blinds,' to use H.P. Blavatsky's expression, when it is intended to confine certain dogmas to certain students fitted to receive them, and to preserve them from promiscuous distribution.

A glance at the doctrines of the Kabbalah may be most suitably commenced with the consideration of the ideas of the Divine.

I must premise that although these Kabbalists were Hebrews—teachers of the Pentateuchal laws and dogmas to the people as an Exoteric Religion—yet their Esoteric conception of Godhead has nothing, or next to nothing, in common with the God of *Genesis* or part of the Old Testament. The supreme being of the Kabbalah is

found to be demonstrated after two manners; at one time the Inconceivable Eternal Power proceeding by successive emanations into a more and more conceivable existence; formulating his attributes into conceptions of Wisdom, Beauty, Power, Mercy and Governance; exhibiting these attributes first in a supernal universality beyond the ken of all spirits, angels and men, the World of ATZILUTH; then formulating a reflection of the same exalted essences on the plane of the Pure Spirits also inconceivable to man, the World of BRIA; again is the reflection repeated, and the Divine Essence in its group of exalted attributes is cognisable by the Angelic Powers, the YETZIRATIC World; and then finally the Divine abstractions of the Sacred Ten Sephiroth are by a last emanation still more restricted and condensed than the latter, and are rendered conceivable by the human intellect; for Man exists in the Fourth World of ASSIAH in the shadow of the Tenth Sephirah—the MALKUTH or Kingdom of the World of Shells.

Small wonder then at the slightness of the ideal man can form of the Divine.

At other times we find the metaphysical abstract laid aside, and all the wealth of Oriental imagery lavished on the description of their God; imagery although grouped and clustered around the emblem of an exalted humanity, yet so inflated, so extravagantly magnified, that the earthly man is lost sight of in the grandeur and tenuity of the word painting of the Divine portrait. Divine anthropomorphism it may be, but an anthropomorphism so hazy by means of its unapproachable grandeur, that the human elements affording the bases of the analogy quite disappear in the Heavenly Man of their divine reveries.

Permit me to afford to you an example of one sublime deific dream.

'In this conformation He is known: He is the Eternal of the Eternal ones; the Ancient of the Ancient ones; the Concealed of the Concealed ones, and in his symbols he is knowable although he is unknowable. White are his garments, and his appearance is as a Face, vast and terrible in its vastness. Upon a throne of flaming brilliance is He seated, so that he may direct its flashing Rays. Into forty thousand worlds the brightness of his skull is extended, and from the Light of this brightness the Just shall receive four hundred worlds of joy and reward in the existence to come. Within his skull exist daily thirteen thousand myriads of worlds; all draw their existence from Him—and by Him are upheld. From that Head distilleth a Dew, and from that Dew which floweth down upon the worlds are the Dead raised up in the lives and worlds to come.'

The God of the Kabbalah is 'Infinite Existence': he cannot be defined as the 'Assemblage of Lives,' nor is he truly 'the totality of his attributes.' Yet without deeming all Lives to be of him, and his attributes to be universal, he cannot be known by man. He existed before he caused the Emanations of his essence to be demonstrated, he *was* before all that exists *is*, before all lives on our plane, or the plane above, or the World of pure spirits, or the Inconceivable existence; but then he resembled nothing we can conceive, and was AIN SUPH, and in the highest abstraction AIN alone, Negative Existence. Yet before the manifest became demonstrated, all existence was in him, the Known pre-existed in the Unknown Ancient of the Ancient of Days.

But it is not this dream-like aspect of poetic phantasy exhibited in the Kabbalah that I can farther bring to your notice. Let us return to the Philosophic view of the attributes of Deity, which is the keynote of the whole of the doctrine.

The primary human conception of God is then the Passive state of Negative Existence AIN—not active; from this the mind of man passes to conceive of AIN SUPH, of God as the Boundless, the Unlimited,—Undifferentiated, Illimitable One; and the third stage is AIN SUPH AOUR—Boundless Light, Universal Light—'Let there be Light' was formulated, and 'there was Light.' The Passive has just put on Activity: the conscious God has awaked. Let us now endeavour to conceive of the concentration of this effulgence, let us formulate a gathering together of the rays of this illumination into a Crown of glorified radiance, and we recognise KETHER—the First Sefhirah, first emanation of Deity, the first conceivable attribute of immanent manifested godhead. The devout Rabbi bows his head and adores the sublime conception.

The conscious God having arisen in his energy, there follow immediately two further emanations, the Trio subsiding into the symbol of a radiant triangle. CHOKMAH, Wisdom, is the name of the Second Sefhirah; BINAH, Understanding, is the Third Sefhirah—the Supernal Triad is demonstrated.

Then follow CHESED, Mercy; and its contrast GEBURAH, Severity; and the reflected triangle is completed by the Sixth Sefhirah TIPHARETH, Beauty: considered as a triangle of reflection with the apex below. The third Triangle may be considered as a second reflection with the apex below; it is formed of the Seventh, Eighth, and Ninth Sefhiroth NETZACH, Victory; HOD, Splendour; and YESOD, Foundation.

Finally, all these ideals are resumed in a single form, the Tenth Sefhirah MALKUTH, the Kingdom—also sometimes called TZEDEK—Righteousness.

Almost as old as the Kabbalistic doctrine of the Sephiroth, or Emanations, is the peculiar form in which I have combined them, it is the form of the symbol of the Heavenly Man in one aspect—or of the Tree of Life in another aspect.

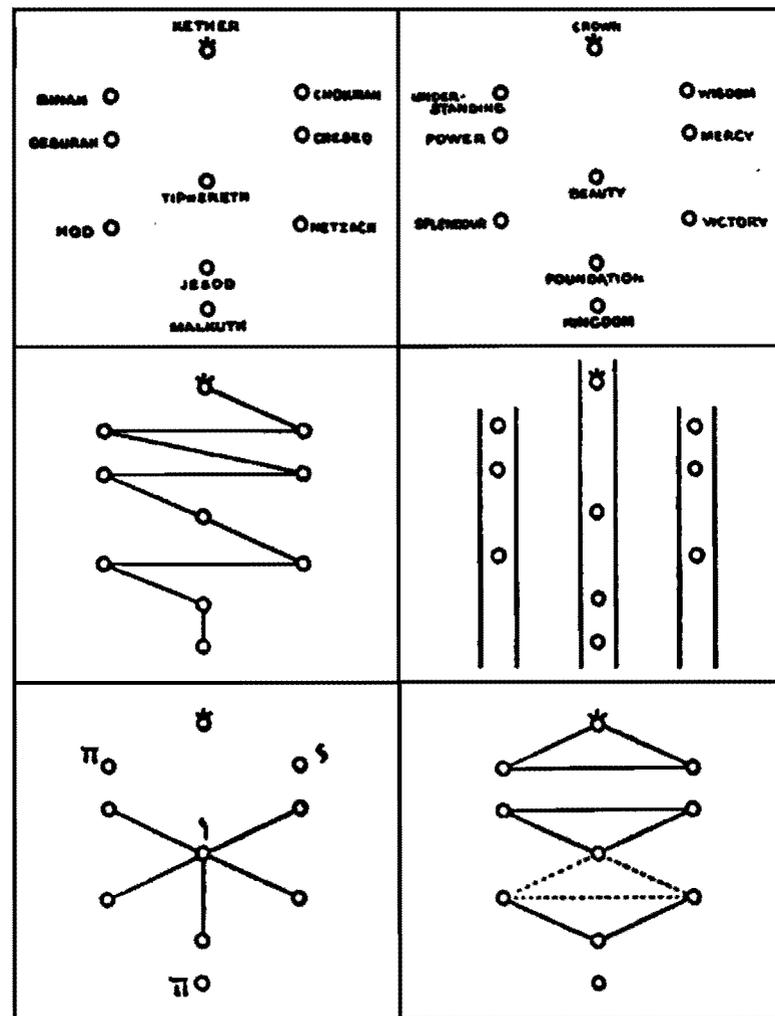


Diagram representing all Kabbalistic Ideas.

This diagram resumes all Kabbalistic ideas, and is an emblem of

their views on every subject. Every deific conception can be there demonstrated; the constitution of the Angelic Hosts, the principles of Man's Nature, the group of Planetary Bodies, the Metallic elements, the Zig-zag flash of the Lightning, and the composition of the sacred Tetragrammaton.

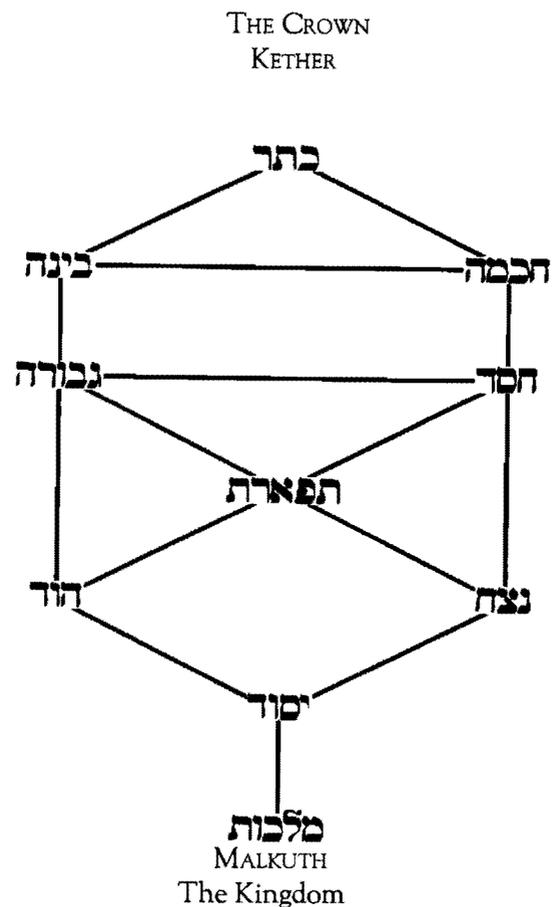


Diagram representing the TEN SEPHIROTH.

This Decad of Deific Emanations is to be conceived as first formulated on the plane of ATZILUTH, which is entirely beyond our ken; to be reproduced on the plane of pure spirituality BRIAHI; to exist in the same decad form in the World of YETZIRAH or the Formative plane; and finally to be sufficiently condensed as to be cognizable by

the human intellect on the Fourth plane of ASSIAH, on which we seem to exist. From our point of view we may regard the Tree of Life as a type of many divine processes and forms of manifestation, but these are symbols we use to classify our ideals, and we must not debase the divine emanations by asserting these views of the Sephiroth are real, but only apparent to humanity.

For example, the Kabbalah demonstrates the grouping of the ten Sephiroth into Three Pillars; the Pillar of Mercy, the Pillar of Severity, and the Pillar of Mildness between them; these may also be associated with the Three Mother Letters, א (A), מ (M), and ש (Sh), Aleph, Mem and Shin. Then again by two horizontal lines we may form three groups and consider these Sephiroth to become types of the Three divisions of Man's Nature, the Intellectual, Moral, and Sensuous (neglecting MALKUTH the material body) thus connecting the Kabbalah with Mental and Moral Philosophy and Ethics. By three lines again we consider a single group of the Sephiroth to be divisible into Four planes, corresponding to the Four planes upon each of which I have already said you must conceive the whole Ten Sephiroth to be immanent. By a series of Six lines we group them into Seven planes referable to the worlds of the Seven *Planetary* powers, thus connecting the Kabbalah with astrology. To each Sephirah are allotted a special title of the Deity, an especial Archangel, and an army of Angels; connecting the Kabbalah with Talismanic Magic. To show the close connection between the old Kabbalistic theology, and the Lower Alchemy, each Sephirah becomes the allegoric emblem of one of the metals: and there is a special Rabbinic volume named *Æsch Metzareph* entirely concerned with Alchemy; its name in English meaning is 'Cleansing Fires.'

These Ten Sephiroth are thought of as being connected together by Paths, or Ways of Wisdom, twenty-two in Number, shown thus on the Diagram; they are numbered by means of the letters of the Hebrew Alphabet, each of which, as is well-known, being equally a letter and a number. The 22 Paths, added to the 10 Sephiroth, form the famous 32 Ways of Wisdom, which descending by successive Emanations upon Man, enable him to mount up to the Source of Wisdom passing successively upward through these 32 paths. This process of mental Abstraction was the Rabbinic form of what the Hindoo knows as Yoga, or union of the human with the divine by contemplation and absorption of mind into a mystical reverie.

The Human Soul is again conceived of as distributed through

several distinct forms of conscious manifestations related to these Ten Sephiroth: the precise allotment which I have received I am not at liberty to disclose; but the several Kabbalistic treatises give several groupings which are all relevant one to the other, the most usual one being a triple division into NEPHESH, the Passions referred to MALKUTH; RUACH the Mind, Reason, and Intellect referred to the group of six Sephiroth lying around the Sun of TIPHARETH; and NESHAMAH the spiritual aspirations associated with the Supernal Triangle.

Frequently quoted Kabbalistic words are: ARIKH ANPIN, Macroprosopus, the Vast Countenance which is a title of the KETHER or Crown—Deity supreme. ZAUIR ANPIN, Microprosopus, the Lesser Countenance is the central TIPHARETH; a conception that has much in common with that of the Christian Christ, the Son of God. [CHOKMAH is the Supernal Father and is called ABBA.] BINAH is the Supernal Mother—AIMA. MALKUTH is the Inferior Mother, [or MALKAH, the Queen, and KALLAH,] the Bride of the Microprosopus.

The Four Letters ' (Yod), ך (Héh), ם (Vau), ן (Héh), or as we say YHVH, of the name, we call Yahveh, or Jehovah, are allotted and distributed among the Sephiroth in a peculiar manner: so that even if to some Jewish Exoteric teachers 'Jehovah' is the name in especial of the so-called Passive Principle, or Female aspect of BINAH—and that this did at times degenerate into the worship of the Groves—yet this stigma does not attach to the Kabbalistic conception of the Tetragrammaton, that dreadful name of Majesty which might never be uttered by the common people, and whose true pronunciation has been for many centuries confessedly lost to the Jews.

Time will not permit me to extend much farther this paper on the doctrines of the Kabbalah; but I may say that the teaching include the following dogmas.

- (1) That the supreme Incomprehensible One was not the direct Creator of the World.
- (2) That all we perceive or know of is formed on the Sephirotic type.
- (3) That human souls were pre-existent in an upper world before the origin of this present world.
- (4) That human souls before incarnation dwell now in an upper Hall, where the decision is made as to what body each soul shall enter.
- (5) That every soul after earth lives must at length be so purified as to be reabsorbed into the Infinite.

(6) That two lives are taught by many Rabbis, to be necessary for all to pass; and that if failure result in the second life, a third life is passed linked with a stronger soul who draws the sinner upward into purity.

(7) That when all the pre-existent souls have arrived at perfection, the Fallen Angels are also raised, and all lives are merged into the Deity by the Kiss of Love from the Mouth of Tetragrammaton—and the Manifested Universe shall be no more.

This short summary of the Kabbalah is necessarily very imperfect, omitting altogether many points of great importance, and is no doubt tintured by my own personal views, which it is very difficult to eliminate from such an essay. But I hope I have succeeded in making you understand that the system is a serious and consistent attempt at a philosophical scheme of the constitution of a universe and its creation, and one of too important a nature to be set aside with the contempt of modern criticism, which is but too apt to condemn as folly any teaching which it does not choose to stamp with its seal of orthodoxy. Many of its doctrines are of course insusceptible of proof, many run counter to the prejudices of public opinion, but these are not reliable evidences of error. Much of the system may be erroneous, but if this be so, there is no standard by which it can be fairly judged—unless indeed there be yet the WISDOM RELIGION within our attainment, and unless the *Secret Doctrine*, of our honoured teacher in this Institution be the demonstration of that Wisdom; for I am not prepared to accept its condemnation at the hands of any other tribunal.

Notes:

1. This paper was originally read before the Blavatsky Lodge of the Theosophical Society. It was later printed in *Lucifer*, Vol. VIII, No. 48, (August 1891), pp. 465-9 and Vol. IX, No. 49, (September 1891), pp. 27-32.—D.K.
2. If not as punishment, yet the majority of female lives are harder to bear than male lives; possible male and female lives are alternative, and complementary to each other, each supplying needful experiences.—W.W.W.

A FURTHER GLANCE AT THE KABBALAH¹

William Wynn Westcott

Upon several previous occasions I have had the pleasure of giving lectures, by special request, upon Kabbalistic Philosophy, before audiences of Theosophists. I have indeed found that the modern Theosophists of the school of the late lamented Madame Blavatsky are fond of wandering from the Sanskrit path of Occult Philosophy into the fields of the Egypto-Hebraic Mysticism of the early Kabbalah. Our respected H.P. Blavatsky herself also has, in her books, made constant references to the philosophic and mystic doctrines of the ancient Rabbinic teachers, and, although we find her condemning many of their more modern vagaries, yet she implied the belief that the pure and ancient Kabbalah was a Western offshoot from the Wisdom Religion of prehistoric times. Had she been of opinion that the system had originated—*de novo* [anew]—at any time since the era of Ezra (who codified the Old—Hebrew—Testament), she would not have made such constant references to the Kabbalah, to throw side lights upon the *Secret Doctrine*, the elements of which she has promulgated with such learning, and with so much gradually increasing success. Several of my previous lectures having been printed, and still accessible, I have felt it necessary this evening to traverse new ground, to eliminate from my purpose the general view of the subject which has been at other times supplied, and to restrict myself within the limits of a consideration only of certain particular Kabbalistic dogmas, and of some historical side lights which can be thrown upon the subject.

Two or three centuries have now passed since any notable addition to the body of Kabbalistic doctrine has been made, but before that time a constant series of additions and a long succession of commentaries had been produced, all tending to illustrate or extend the philosophic scheme, and this growth of the system had, we believe, been in process from before the Christian era.

When the Kabbalah first took shape as a concrete whole, and a

philosophic system, will remain for ever an unknown datum, but if we regard it—as, I believe, is correct—as the Esotericism of the religion of the Hebrews, the foundation dogmas are doubtless almost as old as the first promulgation of the main principles of the worship of Jehovah.

I cannot now attempt any glance at the contentions of some doubting scholars, who question whether the story of the twelve tribes is a historic fact, or whether there ever were a Moses. It is sufficient for my present purpose that the Jewish nation had the Jehovistic theology and a complete system of priestly caste, and a coherent doctrine, at the time of the Second Temple, when Cyrus, sovereign of all Asia, holding the Jews in captivity, permitted certain of them to return to Jerusalem for the express purpose to reestablishing the Hebrew cultus which had been forcibly interfered with by Nebuchadnezzar, 587 B.C..

After this return to Jerusalem it was that Ezra and Nehemiah, *circa* 450 B.C., edited and compiled the Old Testament of the Hebrews, or, according to those who deny the Mosaic authorship and the Solomonic *régime*, it was then that they *wrote* the Pentateuch.

The new *régime* was maintained until 320 B.C., when Jerusalem was captured by Ptolemy Soter, who, however did not destroy the foundations of the Jewish religion; indeed his successor, Ptolemy Philadelphus, caused the Hebrew scriptures to be revised and translated into Greek by seventy-two scholars, about 277 B.C.; this has been known for centuries as the Septuagint Version.

Further Jewish troubles followed, however, and Jerusalem was again taken and pillaged by Antiochus in 170 B.C.. Then followed the long wars of the Maccabees; subsequently the Romans dominated Judea, then, quarrelling with the Jews, the city was taken by Pompey, and not long after again plundered by the Roman general Crassus (54 B.C.). Yet the Jewish religion was preserved, and we find the religious feasts and festivals all in progress at the time of Jesus; yet once more, in A.D. 70, the Holy City is taken, plundered, and burnt, and that by Titus, who became Emperor of the Romans in A.D. 79.

Through all these vicissitudes, the Hebrew Old Testament survived, yet must have had almost unavoidable alterations and additions made to its several treatises, and the more Esoteric doctrines which were handed down along the line of the priestly caste, and not incorporated with the *Bible* of the masses, may, no doubt, have been repeatedly varied by the influences of contending teachers.

Soon after this period were framed the first series of glosses and

commentaries on the Old Testament books, which have come down to our times. Of these, one of the earliest is the volume called the *Targum of Ankelos*, written about A.D. 100.

About A.D. 141 there first come into note the now famous treatise written by the Rabbis of Judah, called *Mischna*, and this formed the basis of those vast compilations of Hebrew doctrine called the *Talmud*, of which there are two extant forms, one compiled at Babylon—the most notable—and the other associated with Jerusalem.

To the original *Mischna* time added further commentaries named *Gemara*.

From this time the literature of Judaism grew apace, and there was a constant succession of notable Hebrew Rabbis who published religious treatises, until, at least, A.D. 1500. The two *Talmuds* were first printed at Venice in 1520 and 1523 respectively.

The Old Testament may be looked upon as the guiding light through the ages of the Jews, but the learned of them were never satisfied with it alone, and they, at all times, supplemented it by two parallel series of works of literature: the one, Talmudic, being commentaries to illustrate the Old Testament, and supply material for teaching the populace and supplementing their material volume, and the other a long series of treatises of a more abstruse character, designed to teach the secret doctrines and esoteric views of the Priesthood, the Rabbis, the teachers of Israel. Foremost among these latter works were the *Sepher Yetzirah*, or *Book of Formation*, ascribed to the patriarch Abraham, and that curious collection of treatises, which, later on, became collected into a single volume and called *Zohar*, or *Book of Splendour*. These two books are the oldest works still extant of the Hebrew Secret Doctrine. They represent the kernel of that oral instruction which the Rabbis in all ages have prided themselves upon possessing, and which they have always claimed as being the secret knowledge which God gave to Moses for the use of the Priests themselves, in contradistinction to the written Law, intended for the masses of the people.

One of the principal conceptions of the Kabbalah is that spiritual wisdom is attained by thirty-two paths, typified by the numbers and the twenty-two letters: these again being symbols of the Divine Emanations, the Sephiroth, the Holy Voices chanting at the Crystal Sea, of the Great Sea, the Mother Supernal—BINAH: and of the twenty-two occult forces of the Nature of the Universe symbolized by the three primary elements, the planets, and the zodiacal influences of

the heavens which tincture human concerns through the path of our Sun in annual course.

Now, to show the close connection between the Kabbalah and orthodox Judaism, we find the Rabbis cataloguing the books of the Old Testament into a series of twenty-two (the letters) works to be read for spiritual life; this twenty-two they obtained from the thirty-nine books of the Canon, by collecting the twelve minor prophets into one treatise, Ruth they added to Judges, Ezra to Nehemiah, while the two books each of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles, they called one each. The Canon of thirty-nine works was fixed in the time of Ezra.

Returning to the books which illustrate the Kabbalah, whatever may be the authenticity of their alleged origins, it cannot be denied that those ancient volumes, *Sepher Yetzirah* and *Zohar*, contain a system of spiritual philosophy of clear design, deep intuition, and far-reaching cosmologic suggestions, that are well worthy of the honor of receiving a special name and of founding a Theological body of doctrine—the Kabbalah—which will be found to illustrate and to reflect light upon the *Secret Doctrine* which has been nursed in Central Asia, and has been now recently introduced into this country as the foundation of modern Theosophy. The parallelism of the Kabbalah and the *Secret Doctrine*, and, indeed, also the divergences which are notable, are the points of interest which are attracting the attention of the members of the Theosophical Society today.

Many of you are passing direct from Christian orthodoxy to the Indian doctrine, but for myself, I was for fifteen years a Kabbalist and Hermetist, before I entered upon the Theosophic path, and so my attitude toward the Kabbalah is one of love and respect, as that of a pupil to a system which has led him from darkness into light, even if it may be that in the future the Eastern Wisdom may overshadow in my eyes the illumination of Kabbalism, my first mystic study—but for that issue I am content to wait. I am not ashamed to have changed the opinions of my early manhood, and I shall not be ashamed to confess the change, if by patient study and self-development I ever discard Kabbalism for the Secret Doctrine of Tibet: our greatest living Englishman, has I believe, said that “a lifelong consistency in matters of opinion is not to be expected of any man,” and apart from party politics, of which I know nothing, I heartily endorse the dictum. True progress cannot be made by a rigid adherence to the ideals of childhood, and I urge upon all of you, my hearers, the duty of forming your own opinion on matters of religion: be not blindly led of any man: search

the scriptures, whether of the Jew, Christian, or of Madame Blavatsky, and hold fast that which seems to you good. The unpardonable sin is knowingly to reject spiritual truth: whether from bigotry, self-interest, or from a policy of *laisser aller* [letting go] is not important: the rejection is the key of the position.

I congratulate you who are present, as those who have come out from among the masses of unthinking beings, and are seeking for Truth, earnest of purpose, and not to be dismayed by the disapprobation of those who prefer the easy, but humiliating path of the many who allow others to do their thinking for them, and of those who are content with the ideal of a happy home to be obtained by means of the bodily sufferings of another.

The bulwark and main foundation of the public Hebrew religion has always been the Pentateuch, five treatises attributed to Moses which contained the Laws of Jehovah given to His chosen people. The Old Testament beginning with these five books is further continued by historic books, by moral teachings and by prophetic works, but the whole group is marked by materialistic characteristics, and an absence of the higher spiritual significance which other books of the great religions are found to display.

The Mosaic Law, eminently valuable for many purposes to a small nation 3,000 years ago, and containing many regulations of a type showing great attention to sanitary matters, is marred by the application of penalties of gross cruelty and harsh treatment of erring mortals, which are hardly compatible with the views of what might have emanated from the personal Designer of the Universe with its million worlds: and the almost entire absence of any reference to a life after death for human beings shows a materialism of a type so gross as indeed to need a Secret Doctrine, or a new Revelation by a Jesus, whose life has earned the title of Christ. Yet the orthodox of England pay so little real attention to their religion that they would hear this statement with incredulity and with denial: but if asked to show the passages in the Old Testament which insist on a life after death, or on a succession of lives for purposes of retribution, or the passages demonstrating the immortality of the soul, they could not produce them, and are content to refer you to the Revd. Mr. _____, who could do so. The answer of the reverend gentleman generally is, "Oh, well, if not plainly laid down, these dogmas are implied." But are they? If they are, how is it that notably clear passages can be quoted which show that important authors in the Old Testament make

statements in direct, opposition to these doctrines? And how is it, again, that a great author of modern times has said, "Prosperity was the blessing of the Old Testament for good works, but adversity that of the New?" This could only be true if there were no future life or lives, or no coming period of reward and punishment contemplated by the Old Testament doctrine.

But the comment is true, and the Old Testament does teach that man is no more immortal than the beast, as witness *Ecclesiastes*, III, 19: "For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that man hath *no* pre-eminence above a beast; for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. ... Wherefore I perceive that there is nothing better, than that a man should rejoice in his own works; for that is his portion: for who shall bring him to see what shall be after him?" Who indeed, except his own Higher Self.

But perhaps this book is from the pen of some obscure Jew, or half pagan Chaldee or Babylonian. Not at all; Jewish critics have all assigned it to Solomon, the king of the Jews at the time of their heyday of glory; surely if the immortality of the soul were the essence of the Judaism of the people, he could not have so grossly denied it.

Go back, however to the narrative of creation and the same story is found; the animals are made from the dust, man is made from the dust, and Eve is made from Adam, and each has breathed into the form, the NEPHESH CHIAH—the Breath of Life; but there is no hint that Adam received a ray of the Supernal Mind, which was to dwell there for a time, to gain experience, to receive retribution, and then another stage of progress, and a final return to its divine source. And yet the authors of these volumes, whoever they were, could hardly have been without the conception of the higher part of man, of his spiritual soul. My contention is that the Old Testament is emasculated, was deprived at some period by designing men of its religious philosophy, which was set apart for a privileged class, while the husk of strict law and tradition was cast forth for vulgar acceptance. The kernel of spiritual philosophy, which is lacking in the Old Testament as a religious book is, I deem, the essential core of the Kabbalah; for these Kabbalistic dogmas are Hebraic, and they are spiritual, and they are sublime in their grandeur; and the Old Testament read by their light becomes a volume worthy of the acceptance of a nation. I speak of the essentials of the Kabbalah, of what I deem the ancient substratum of the

Kabbalah; without any delay I hasten to grant that in all extant treatises these primal truths have been obscured by generations of editors, by visionary and often crude additions, and by the vagaries of Oriental imagery; but the keynotes of a great spiritual divine concealed power, of its emanations in manifestation, of its energizing of human life, of the prolonged existence of human souls, and of the temporary state of corporeal existence, are fundamental doctrines there fully illustrated; and these are the points of contact between the Kabbalah of the Jew and the so-called Esotericism of the teachings of Buddha and of Hinduism.

It might be well argued that the Catholic Church, from which the Protestant Church was derived, was from its origin in the possession of the Hebrew secret of the intentional exotericism of the *Bible*, and of a priestly mode of understanding it, the Esotericism of the Kabbalah, as a key to the true explanations of the Jewish books, which being apparently histories are really largely allegorical. If this were granted, it would be plain that the Catholic Church has for ages acted wisely in discouraging the laity from *Bible* study, and that Protestantism made a great mistake in combining with the reformation of a vicious priesthood the declaration of the profit to be gained by the laity from reading the *Bible*. The literal interpretation of the Mosaic books and those of the Old Testament generally has repeatedly been used as a support for vicious systems of conduct, a notable example of which was seen not even a hundred years ago, when the clergy of Protestant nations almost unanimously supported the continuance of the Slave Trade from arguments derived from the laws of Jehovah.

The Freethinkers of that day were largely the champions of the suffering and oppressed races, and for centuries the wisest of men, the greatest scientists, have maintained, and ever won, struggle after struggle with the assumed infallibility of old Hebrew Testament literal instructions, and assertions, and narratives.

The Old Testament may indeed be, to some extent, the link which binds together thousands of Christians, for Christ founded his doctrine upon a Jewish basis, but the interminable list of Christian sects of today have almost all taken their rise from the assertion of an assumed right of personal interpretation of the *Bible*, which should have remained debarred to the generality by the confession that the keys were lost, or, at least, missing, and that, without their assistance, error of a vital character was inevitable.

The vast accumulation of varying interpretations of the *Bible*,

although a stupendous folly, yet sinks into insignificance as an incident of importance, before the collateral truth that the followers of each of the hundreds of sects have arrogated to themselves, not only the right of personal interpretation, but the duty of condemning all others—as if the infallibility they claimed for the *Bible* could not fail to be reflected upon the personal propaganda or the specialities of a chapel service. Religious intolerance has cursed every village of the land, and hardly a single sect has originated which has *not only* claimed the right to differ from others and to criticize—the claims of a Theosophist—but also to persecute and assign to perdition all beyond its narrow margin.

The Mystic, the Occultist, the Theosophist, do indeed do good—or God—service, by illustrating the basis and origins of all faiths and the mutual illumination that is available, for by tolerance and mutual esteem much good may arise, but by the internecine struggles of religionists, every faith is injured, and religion becomes a byword meaning intolerance, strife and vainglory, and the mark and profession of an *earnest* sectarian is that he is ever ready to condemn the efforts of others, in direct opposition to the precept of Jesus, “Judge not, that ye be not judged.”

We may suitably consider the conceptions of the Divine, and the ideal of the origin and destiny of man as illustrated by the Kabbalah.

The Jehovah of the Old Testament—as a tribal Deity, of personal characteristics, demonstrating His power and glory to a chosen people, oppressing other nations to do them service, and choosing as His special envoys and representatives men whom our civilization would have condemned as not high enough for Spiritual power—is not represented in the Hebrew Secret Doctrine. The Kabbalah indeed is full of Jehovah, of the Divine Four-lettered Name, but it is the name of a group of Divine conceptions, of emanations from a central Spiritual Light whose presence alone is postulated; of an Absolute, which has an infinity of intervals extending downward even to reach Jehovah—the Elohim—the group of Holy Spiritual attributes, which human intellect can alone cognize.

After another manner, Jehovah is the group of the emanations from the Deific source, called the Ten Sephiroth, the Voices from Heaven. These Ten Sephiroth—of which the First is a condensation of the Supernal Glory from the AIN SUPH AOUR, the Boundless Light—appear as a Rainbow of the Divine in a First World, or upon the highest plane above human conception, that of ATZILUTH; by successive reflections, diminishing in brightness, a plane is reached

which is conceivable by man, as of the purity of his highest spiritual vision. The grouping of the Ten Divine qualities, upon this plane, into a Divine Tetrad, is symbolized by י (Yod), ה (Héh), ו (Vau), ה (Héh), the Tetragrammaton, the Kabbalistic Jehovah, or Yahveh of the exoteric critics, the original of that God, whose grosser reflection as a nation's patron is formulated in the Old Testament.

In form parallel to the Theosophic doctrine, we find that the Kabbalah contemplates a period when Pralaya existed, a period of repose and absence of manifestation, when the Negative reigned supreme. From passivity there proceeded emanation, and manifested Deity arose. From AIN—repose, the Negative—proceeded AIN SUPH, the No-Bound, the Limitless, the omnipresence of the Unknowable; still condensing into manifestation through emanation, there appears the AIN SUPH AOUR—Boundless Light, which coalescing on a point appears as KETHER, the Crown of Manifestation. Thence follow the Ten Sephiroth, the Holy Voices, upon successive worlds, and concentrating into four divine conceptions we reach a stage of Spiritual existence which man attempts to grasp, and by defining, to limit, bound and describe, and so creates for his worship a Divine personality.

By gradual stages of development, each farther from the source, there arise the powers and forces which have received the names of Archangels, Angels, Planetary Spirits, and guardians of man; still farther from God, we obtain the human Souls, which are as sparks of light, struck off from the unsupportable Light of Divinity, which have been formulated into egoity to pass through a long series of changes and experiences by which they make the circuit of a Universe, in every stage of existence, of separation from the divine fountain, to be at last once more indrawn to the Godhead, the Father, whence they emerged upon a pilgrimage, following a regular succession of evolution and devolution, as even the Divine passes ever along in successive periods of inbreathing and outbreathing, of Manifestation and of Repose.

Of Repose, or Pralaya, human intellect can form no conception, and only the highly Spiritual man can conceive any of the sublime and exalted stages of manifestation: to the world such notions are but dreams, and any attempt to formulate them leads only to suspicions of one's sanity; still to the metaphysician these ideals supply a theme of intense interest, and to the Theosophist they supply an illustration drawn from a foreign source of the Spiritual traditions of a long-past age, which leads one to accept the Esoteric Indian suggestion that

these Spiritual conceptions are either supplied from time to time by Great Minds of another stage of existence from our own, or are remnants of the faiths and wisdom of a long-vanished era which had seen the life-history of races more Spiritual than our own and more open to converse with the Holy Ones of higher Spiritual planes; for Spiritual Wisdom can only be attained by the man, or earthly being, who becomes able to reach up to the denizens of spheres above, because Spiritual beings above us cannot reach down and help those who do not so purify themselves that they are lifted up to the higher.

The chief difficulty of the beginner either as a student of Kabbalah, or of Esoteric Theosophy, is, it seems to me, to conquer the impressions of the reality and materiality of matter. One must entirely relinquish the apparent knowledge of matter as an entity apart from Spirit. The assertion that matter exists, and is the entity entirely different from Spirit, and that Spirit—the God of Spirit—created it, must be denied, and the notion must be torn out by the roots before progress can be made. If matter exists, it is something, and must have come from something; but Spirit is not a thing, and creative Spirit, the highest spiritual conception, could not make matter, the lowest thing, out of nothing; hence it is not made, and hence there is no matter. All is Spirit, and conception. *Ex nihilo nihil fit* [out of nothing; nothing is created]. All that does exist can only have come from Spirit, from the Divine Essence. That Being should arise from non-being is impossible. That matter should create itself is absurd; matter cannot proceed from Spirit; the two words mean that the two ideas are entirely apart; then matter cannot exist. Hence it follows that what we call matter is but an aspect, a conception, an illusion, a mode of motion, a delusion of our physical senses.

Apart from Theosophy or Kabbalah, the same truth has been recognized both by Christians and by Philosophers. What is commonly known as the Ideal theory was promulgated 140 years ago by Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne in Ireland; it is nearly identical with the Kabbalistic doctrine of all things being but emanations from a Divine source, and matter but an aspect. Other Philosophers have discussed the same theory in the controversy of Nominalism *versus* Realism; does anything exist except in name? Is there any substratum below the name of anything? Need we postulate any such basis? All is Spirit, says the Kabbalah, and this is eternal, uncreated; intellectual and sentient on our plane; inhering are life and motion; it is self-existing, with successive waves of action and passivity. This Spirit is the true Deity, or infinite

being, the AIN SUPH, the cause of all causes, and of all effects. All emanates from That, and is in That. The Universe is an immanent offspring of the Divine, which is manifested in a million forms of differentiation. The Universe is yet distinct from God, even as an effect is distinct from a cause; yet it is not apart from Deity, it is not a transient effect, it is immanent in the cause. It is God made manifest to Man.

Matter is our conception alone; it represents the aspect of the lowest manifestation of Spirit, or Spirit is the highest manifestation of matter. Spirit is the only substance. Matter, says a Kabbalist, is the mere residuum of emanation, but little above non-entity.

From God, and the World around us, let us pass to consider, what the Kabbalah teaches about Man, the human Soul.

It has already been explained that the doctrine of emanation postulates successive stages of the manifestation of the Supreme Spirit, which may be regarded as existing on separate planes. Now the Ten Sephiroth cluster their energy into a formulated Four-parted group, upon Three Spiritual planes, and a plane of so-called Objectivity or of Matter. These Ten Sephiroth, and the planes, each contribute an essence which in their totality, in ever-varying proportion, constitutes Man. At his origin there was formulated what the scientists would call 'Archetypal Man,' and what the Kabbalists call Adam Kadmon, the heavenly man. Successive stages of entities of this type pass along the ages through a descending scale, offering the individual every variety of experience, and then along an ascending scale of redevelopment until human perfection is attained, and ultimate reunion with the Divine is the result of the purified Soul having completed its pilgrimage.

In the *Commentary on the Creation of Genesis*, still allegorical like *Genesis* itself, it is stated:

"There is in heaven a treasury called Guph, and all the Souls which were created in the beginning, and hereafter to come into this world, God placed therein: out of this treasury God furnishes children in the womb with Souls."

A further commentary in symbolic language narrates how the Power, perceiving a child's body to be in formation, sends for a suitable Ego to inhabit it.

"God beckons to an angel who is set over the disembodied Souls,

and says to him, 'Bring me such a soul'; and this has been always done since the world began: he appears before Jehovah, and worships in his presence, to whom Jehovah says: 'Betake thyself to this form.' Instantly the Soul excuses himself, saying, 'Governor of the World, I am satisfied with the world in which I have been so long; if it please Thee do not force me into this foul body, for I am a Spirit.' Jehovah answers: 'The world I am about to send thee into is needed for thee, it is to pass down through it that I formed thee from myself'; and so God forces him to incarnate into the world where matter is known."

This is a parallel doctrine to the Theosophic scheme of Reincarnation—Karma as God relentlessly compelling the Individual Ego to a new earth-life.

The Kabbalah then teaches that the Egos have come out from the Spirit Fountain, suffer incarnation again and again until experience and perfection have been attained, and ultimately rejoin the Divine Source.

Now what is it that dwells for a time in this 'Coat of Skin' as *Genesis* calls it, this so-called material body? It is a Divine Spark, composed of several elements derived from the symbolic Four Parts of Jehovah, and from the Three Worlds, and those are seated in the Fourth World of Effects, the material Universe. Now, it is no doubt true that in the several Kabbalistic schools, the numbers and names of these Essences vary, but the basic idea remains the same: just in a similar way the principles of Man's constitution as stated in different Theosophic books also vary, but the root idea is the same in them all.

The human principles may be stated as three in a fourth—the body; or as five, recognizing astral form and body; or as seven, subdividing the divine principle; or as ten, comparable to the Sephiroth. To explain these fully would take too long, and would cumber you with abstruse words, a jargon to those who are unused to them: one system will suffice as an illustration.

From י (Yod), the *Je* of Jehovah, comes the highest overshadowing of the Divine, comparable to the Atma. From ה (Héh), the *ho* of Jehovah, comes NESHAMAH, the Buddhi, the spiritual soul. From ו (Vau), the *v* of Jehovah, comes RUACH, the Manas, Intellect and Mind. From the final ה (Héh), the *ah* of Jehovah, is derived NEPESH, the Kâma of the Theosophist, the appetites and passions. These are all implanted in the astral shell, which moulds the physical body.

These four principles function in chief upon the Four Worlds, Divine, Moral, Intellectual and Emotional respectively: and either of these Essences may dominate a man, and they do in fact exist in constantly varying proportions. The highest principle overshadows the others, and the central ones may reach up to the higher, or, by neglect of opportunities or by vicious actions, may fall lower and lower, so as to approximate to the seeming matter of the body. As the NESHAMAH draws one to Spiritual excellence, so the NEPHESH leads down to physical enjoyment. In another symbol the Kabbalist tells you a man has two companions, or guides; one on the right, YETZER HA TOB, to good acts; and one on the left, YETZER HA RA, offering temptations to evil.

The Kabbalistic view of Man's constitution, origin, and destiny differs from the Theosophic, then, more in manner of presentation than in principle, and these two schemes may be firstly studied side by side, and each will illuminate the other. There is indeed no sharp line of cleavage between the pure Western mystic doctrines—the Kabbalism of the Middle Ages, related to the Egyptian Hermeticism—and the India or Tibetan Esoteric Theosophy. They are alike presentations of primal truths, differing in language, nomenclature and in the imagery employed in the effort to represent Spiritual ideas to degraded mankind; but there is no sufficient reason for any suspicion, jealousy or condemnation either of the Theosophist by the Hermetist, nor of the Hermetist by the Theosophist. The world of European cultivation is wide enough for both to grow up side by side, and the mere fact that they are philosophic systems in any way comprehensible to men is evidence that *neither* can be composed of pure and unveiled truth. We are still only able to see as in a glass darkly, and must make much further progress before we can hope to see God face to face.

The Theosophist must be content to progress as Hermetists have ever done, by separate stages of development; in each grade the primal truths are restated in different forms, they are revealed, or revealed in language and symbolism suitable to the learner's own mental condition; hence the need of a teacher, of a guide who has traversed the path, and who can recognize by personal communion the stage which each pupil has attained. There is no royal or easy path to high attainment in Mysticism. Unwearied effort combined with purity of life is almost of vital importance. The human intellect can only appreciate and assimilate that which the mind's eye can at any time perceive; the process cannot be forced, Mystic lore cannot be stolen. If any learner

did appropriate the knowledge of a grade beyond him, it would be to him but folly, disappointment and darkness.

I have myself often been offered a doctrine, or assertion, or explanation, which my intellect has rejected as absurd, or as sheer superstition; which same dogma I have later in life assimilated with every feeling of esteem. Occultism in this resembles Freemasonry; we are either admitted to the hidden knowledge, or we are not; and if we are not admitted, we never believe any secret of its ritual even if it be offered to us. The secrets of Occultism are like Freemasonry; in truth they are to some extent the secrets that Freemasonry has lost. They are of their very nature inviolable; for they can only be attained by personal progress; they might be plainly told to the outsider, and not be understood by him. For if any one has been able to divine and to grasp such a secret, he will not tell it even to his dearest friend; for the simple reason that if his friend is unable to divine it for himself, its communication in mere words would not confer the hidden knowledge upon him.

The old Kabbalistic works are of a nature similar to the secrets of Freemasonry; there is much doctrine that is never written or printed: these works often teem with imagery which seems folly, and with doctrines that seems absurd; yet they enshrine the highly Spiritual teachings which I have shortly outlined this evening. The mere reading of these volumes is of little avail; the Spiritual eye needs to be opened to see Spiritual things; and the great Kabbalists of old, like the still living Teachers of H.P. Blavatsky, will not cast pearls of wisdom before the ignorant or the vicious, nor suffer the unclean to enter the Temple of Esoteric Wisdom. Let us each then, make strenuous efforts to attain to the higher life of the true Occultism, and perchance in a distant future, a record of temptations avoided, of earnest effort, of a life of self-sacrifice, may serve as Signs and Pass Words to secure an admission to the shut Palace of the King.

Note:

1. This paper was originally read before the Blavatsky Lodge of the Theosophical Society. It was later printed in *Lucifer*, Vol. XII, No. 68, (April 1893), pp. 147-53 and Vol. XII, No. 69, (May 1893), pp. 203-8.—D.K.

THE TEN SEPHIROTH¹

William Wynn Westcott

The Sephiroth form a decad and constitute the numerical conception of God; He may be known by numbers, and by letters.

The ideas of God by means of numbers are the Sephiroth; by means of letters they are the SHEMOTH.

The SHEMOTH are the explanatory titles of the Great Name, the Shema; this Shema distributed into its elements is the SHEMHAMPHORASCH. The ten Sephiroth bear names. The first is the Crown, the last the Kingdom; KETHER and MALKUTH. The Kingdom suggests the Crown, the universe proves the existence of God, the eye below is illuminated by the eye above, the Son suggests the Father, the equilibrated scale of a balance suggests the existence of its fellow; Humanity points out its Creator.

KETHER, the Crown! But where is the Crown unless on the Kingdom, which is MALKUTH: God is crowned by his works, he is revealed in human thought. Thus that which is above, is like that which is below. KETHER is in MALKUTH, and the idea KETHER is the MALKUTH of human intelligence. God creates the Soul of Man, and the human Soul evolves the existence of God. *Parturit homo Deum* [God creates man]. Infinite Justice equilibrated by infinite goodness, and infinite goodness sustained and inspired by justice, form the ideal of the Beauty which we call the Splendour of God, the SHEKINAH, the *Zohar*, the light of the glory, the TIPHARETH.

It is in the midst of the Sun of human intelligence, that the incommunicable name YHVH, the Tetragrammaton, is written; the name which is never read, but is spelled ʾ (Yod), ה (Héh), ו (Vau), ה (Héh), the Jahouvahou, the *i e o u a*, from which we form the word Jehovah by replacing the four mystic Hebrew letters by the five vowels of our modern languages.

Thus the sacred name, if written only in its first reflection, is the

last word arising from our human intelligence, on quitting the most arduous summits of science, to trust itself to the wings of faith.

It is then but the human name of God, or if preferred, the Divine name of the nature of Man.

ʾ (Yod), the creative activity of Wisdom.

ה (Héh), the incomprehensible understanding.

ו (Vau), the equilibrated union of the two.

Yod is CHOKMAH, Héh is BINAH, the Vau is TIPHARETH, the second Héh is MALKUTH, the Kingdom, in which we see the Reflection, or Rainbow of the Crown, KETHER.

Such is the divine ideal in the three Worlds: three triangles which are as one triangle, three complete ideals, three complete and absolute conceptions of the One God, three in one, and three in each of the Triads, nine and one; the circle, and the axis around which the circle revolves; the essence and the existence of the two hieroglyphic signs of number, of the decad, 10, Φ. The Volatile and the Fixed, the moveable and the stable, Form variable to infinity, and Being unchangeable in its essence, are the eternal balance of life. Form undergoing improvement, and being reborn more full of life, after an apparent destruction, this is progress, this is Victory or NETZACH.

Order always identical, law always stable, existence always indestructible, it is eternity, it is the Yod, it is the harmony of two contraries, it is the law of Creation, the YESOD.

The two forces, and this law of harmony are revealed in all nature, which is the kingdom of God, that is to say Creation is a combination of stability and change. Nothing is immortal in its form, nothing is changeable in its essence. The ephemeral may live but a day, but its type is immortal.

Let us reveal these diverse phenomena. Existence is the cause of that which manifests itself in effect, eternal order proves eternal wisdom.

Progress in formation announces the intelligence, always fruitful and always actively at work.

HOD proves CHOKMAH, NETZACH is the demonstration of BINAH, as MALKUTH is the peremptory reason for the existence of KETHER.

The law of Creation proves the existence of a law-giving Creator.

The kingdom proves the existence of a king, of whom we can only comprehend and affirm the works.

"Confessionem et decorem induisti amictus lumine sicut vestimento."²

NETZACH, HOD, and YESOD, are the three angles of the reversed triangle in the Seal of Solomon, which correspond to the three angles of the erect triangle, that refer to KETHER, CHOKMAH, and BINAH: and between these two triangles as a mediatorial mirage or reflection we find CHESED, GEBURAH, and TIPHARETH. KETHER is the Crown of Wisdom, Intelligence, and Mercy. CHOKMAH is the Wisdom of the Crown, and the Intelligence of Mercy; so on of the others.

Thus is the decad entire, referred to each unity of the decad. The name which is referred to KETHER, is *Eheie asher-Eheie*, Existence is Existence, Being is proportional to Being.

This absolute affirmation is the last word of science, and the first word of faith: science having for its object, truth and the reality of existence; and faith having as its basis, the essentiality, the immutability, and the immortality of being.

Without faith, science perishes in the abyss of scepticism, and does not dare to affirm that even Existence exists; it would then but observe uncertain events, and would no longer rely on the evidence of the senses: it would no longer perceive existence, but only beings, and no longer dare to create synthesis, because analysis had been evaded.

Is matter to us capable of infinite subdivision? Is it perceptible by its nature, or by an accidental circumstance? If matter have no sensible being, it can have nor corporeal existence. What then becomes of the distinction between matter and spirit? The thing we call Soul, is it an immaterial substance, or an attribute of matter?

Confusion alone would exist, all would be doubt, and abyss; life would be a dream, and silence greater wisdom than speech. The entire kingdom must disappear, if the Crown be no more. Existence is a Certainty, and in affirming this, I affirm God, who is the supreme reason for existence.

Eheie is proved by Jehovah.

Notes:

1. This paper was originally printed in *Lucifer*, Vol. VIII, No. 43, (March 1891), pp. 48-9.—D.K.
2. "Revelation and grace put on a clothe of light as clothes."—D.K.