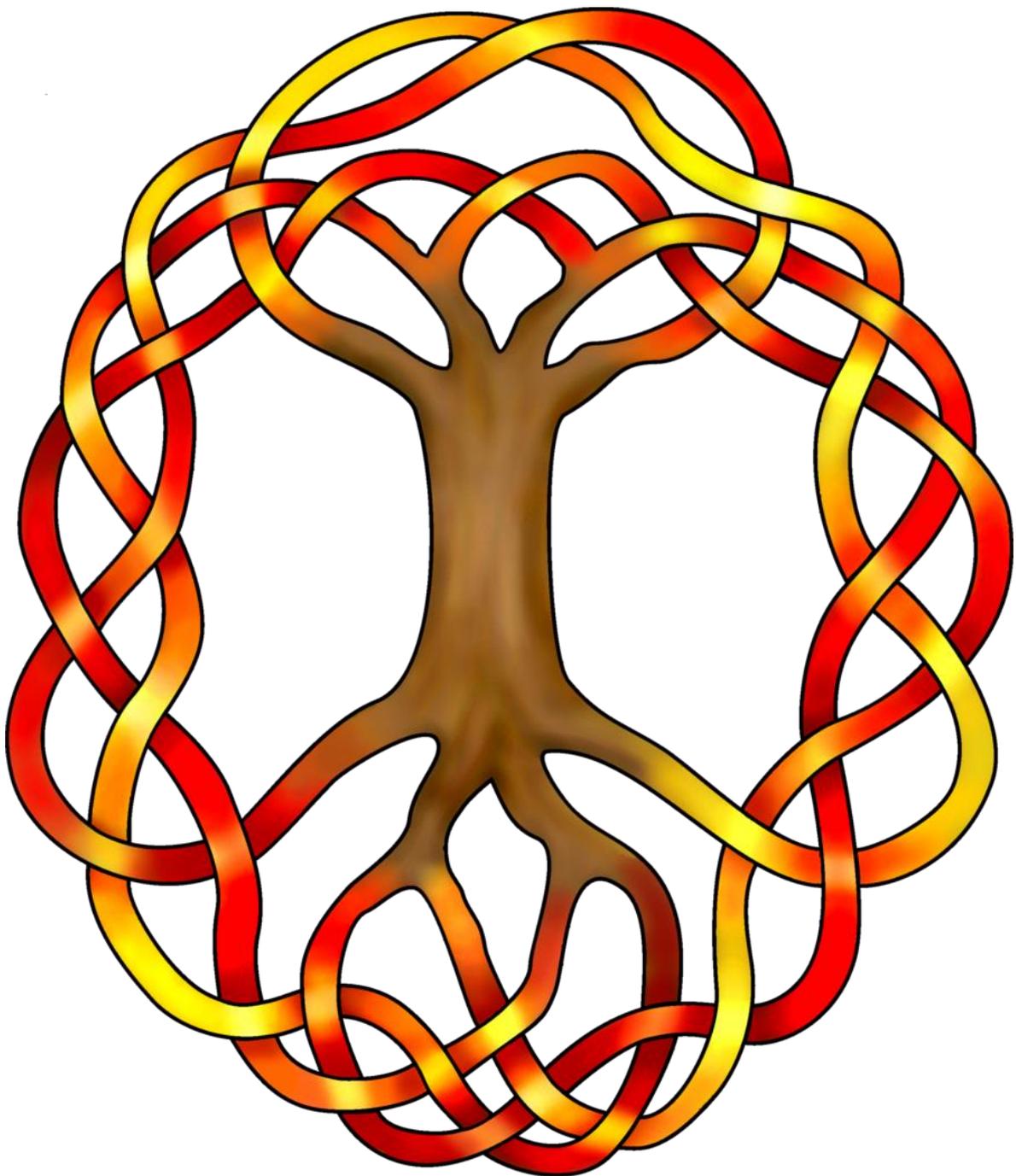


*Occultism and Kabbalah are
only masks to hide the sacred
truth from the profane*



Eastern Occultism has veiled for ages its profound pantheistic Unitarianism with the exuberance of an exoteric polytheism; Jewish Kabbalah, behind the screen of exoteric monotheism, produced a religion of sexual and phallic worship.

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[A careful analysis of this essay makes it appear most likely that it was written much earlier than the actual date of its publication. While it may not be possible to ascertain its correct date, except for the fact that material quoted therein places it after 1885, its similarity to other material on the same subject suggests that it may have been written around 1886-87. For this reason it has been thought advisable to publish this essay at this point in the chronological sequence of H.P. Blavatsky's writings. — *Boris de Zirkoff.*]

The spelling of the word is various; some write Cabbalah, others Kabbalah. The latest writers have introduced a new spelling as more consonant with the Hebrew manner of writing the word and make it *Qabalah*. This is more grammatical, perhaps, but as no Englishman will ever pronounce a foreign name or word but in an Englishified way, to write the term simply Kabbalah seems less pretentious and answers as well.¹

H.P. BLAVATSKY

UNIVERSAL ASPIRATIONS, especially when impeded and suppressed in their free manifestations, die out but to return with tenfold power. They are cyclic, like every other natural phenomenon, whether mental or cosmic, universal or national. Dam a river in one place, and the water will work its way into another, and break out through it like a torrent.

One of such universal aspirations, the strongest perhaps in man's nature, is the longing to seek for the unknown; an ineradicable desire to penetrate below the surface of things, a thirst for the knowledge of that which is hidden from others. Nine children out of ten will break their toys to see what there is inside. It is an innate feeling and is Protean in form. It rises from the ridiculous (or perhaps rather from the reprehensible) to the sublime, for it is limited to indiscreet inquisitiveness, prying into neighbour's secrets, in the uneducated, and it expands in the cultured into that

¹ [Our preferred orthography, throughout our study notes including this one, is *Kabbalah*, *Kabbalist*, etc. — ED. PHIL.]

love for knowledge which ends in leading them to the summits of science, and fills the Academies and the Royal Institutions with learned men.

But this pertains to the world of the objective. The man in whom the metaphysical element is stronger than the physical, is propelled by this natural aspiration towards the mystical, to that which the materialist is pleased to call a “superstitious belief in the supernatural.” The Church, while encouraging our aspirations after the holy — on strictly theological and orthodox lines, of course — condemns at the same time the human craving after the same, whenever the practical search after it departs from its own lines. The memory of the thousands of illiterate “witches,” and the hundreds of learned alchemists, philosophers and other heretics, tortured, burnt, and otherwise put to death during the Middle Ages, remains as an ever-present witness to that arbitrary and despotic interference.

In the present age both Church and Science, the blindly-believing and the all-denying, are arrayed against the Secret Sciences, though both Church and Science believed in and practised them — especially the Kabbalah — at a not very distant period of history. One says now, “It is of the devil!” the other that “the devil is a creation of the Church, and a disgraceful superstition”; in short, that there is neither devil nor occult sciences. The first one forgets that it has publicly proclaimed, hardly 400 years ago, the Jewish Kabbalah as the *greatest witness* to the truths of Christianity;¹ the second, that the most illustrious men of science were all alchemists, astrologers and magicians, witness Paracelsus, Van Helmont, Roger Bacon, *etc.* But consistency has never been a virtue of Modern Science. It has religiously believed in all which it now denies, and it has denied all that it now believes in, from the circulation of the blood up to steam and electric power.

This sudden change of attitude in both powers cannot prevent events from taking their natural course. The last quarter of our century is witnessing an extraordinary outbreak of occult studies, and magic dashes once more its powerful waves against the rocks of Church and Science, which it is slowly but as surely undermining. Any one whose natural mysticism impels him to seek for sympathetic contact with other minds, is astonished to find how large a number of persons are not only interested in Mysticism generally, but are actually themselves Kabbalists. The river dammed during the Middle Ages has flowed since noiselessly underground, and has now burst up as an irrepressible torrent. Hundreds to-day study the Kabbalah, where, scarcely one or two could I have been found some fifty years ago, when fear of the Church was

¹ This is demonstrated by what we know of the life of John Pico della Mirándola. Ginsburg and others have stated the following facts, namely, that after having studied the Kabbalah Mirándola “found that there is more Christianity in the Kabbalah than Judaism; he discovered in it proof for the doctrine of the Trinity, the Incarnation, the divinity of Christ, original sin, the expiation thereof by Christ, the heavenly Jerusalem, the fall of the angels, the order of the angels, purgatory and hell-fire . . .,” and so on. In 1486, when only twenty-four years old, he published “*nine hundred Theses*, which were placarded in Rome [not without the consent or knowledge surely of the Pope and his Government?], and which he undertook to defend in the presence of all European scholars, whom he invited to the eternal city, promising to defray their travelling expenses. Among these *Theses* was the following, ‘*No science yields greater proof of the divinity of Christ than magic and the Kabbalah.*’” The reason why will be shown in the present article.

[In the above footnote, H.P. Blavatsky quotes from Christian D. Ginsburg’s *The Kabbalah: Its Doctrines, Development and Literature*, London, Longmans, Green, *etc.*, 1865; also George Routledge and Sons, 1925 (p. 206 in latter ed.). Ginsburg, who gives the Latin text of Mirándola’s own words, gives as references the *Index a Jacobo Gaffarello*, published by Wolf, *Bibliotheca Hebraea*, Vol. I, p. 9 at the end of the volume, and *Apologia*, p. 42, opp. Vol. I, Basel, 1601. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

still a powerful factor in men's lives. But the long-pent-up torrent has now diverged into two streams — Eastern Occultism and the Jewish Kabbalah; the traditions of the Wisdom-Religion of the races that preceded the Adam of the "Fall"; and the system of the ancient Lévités of Israel, who most ingeniously veiled a portion of that religion of the Pantheists under the mask of monotheism.

Unfortunately many are called but few chosen. The two systems threaten the world of the mystics with a speedy conflict, which, instead of increasing the spread of the One universal Truth, will necessarily only weaken and impede its progress. Yet, the question is not, once more, which is *the* one truth. For both are founded upon the eternal verities of prehistoric knowledge, as both, in the present age and the state of mental transition through which humanity is now passing, can give out only a certain portion of these verities. It is simply a question: "Which of the two systems contains most unadulterated facts: and, most important of all — which of the two presents its teachings in the most Catholic (*i.e.*, unsectarian) and impartial manner?" One — the Eastern system — has veiled for ages its profound pantheistic unitarianism with the exuberance of an exoteric polytheism; the other — as said above — with the screen of exoteric monotheism. Both are but masks to hide the sacred truth from the profane; for neither the Āryan nor the Semitic philosophers have ever accepted either the anthropomorphism of the many Gods, or the personality of the one God, as a philosophical proposition. But it is impossible within the limits we have at our disposal, to attempt to enter upon a minute discussion of this question. We must be content with a simpler task. The rites and ceremonies of the Jewish law seem to be an abyss, which long generations of Christian Fathers, and especially of Protestant Reformers have vainly sought to fill in with their far-fetched interpretations. Yet all the early Christians, Paul and the Gnostics, regarded and proclaimed the Jewish law as essentially distinct from the new Christian law. St. Paul called the former an allegory, and St. Stephen told the Jews an hour before being stoned that they had not even kept the law that they had received from the angels (the aeons), and as to the Holy Ghost (the impersonal Logos or Christos, as taught at Initiation) they had resisted and rejected it as their fathers had done.¹ This was virtually telling them that their law was inferior to the later one. Notwithstanding that the Mosaic Books which we *think* we have in the *Old Testament*, cannot be more than two or three centuries older than Christianity, the Protestants have nevertheless made of them their Sacred Canon, on a par with, if not higher than, the Gospels. But when the *Pentateuch* was written, or rather *rewritten* after Ezdras, *i.e.*, after the Rabbis had settled upon a new departure, a number of additions were made which were taken bodily from Persian and Babylonian doctrines; and this *at a period subsequent to the colonization of Judea* under the authority of the kings of Persia. This re-editing was of course done in the same way as with all such Scriptures. They were originally written in a secret key, or cipher, known only to the Initiates. But instead of adapting the contents to the highest spiritual truths as taught in the *third*, the highest, degree of Initiation, and expressed in symbolical language — as may be seen even in the exoteric *Purānas* of India — the writers of the *Pentateuch*, revised and corrected, they who cared but for earthly and national glory, adapted only to astro-physiological symbols the sup-

¹ Acts vii

posed events of the Abrahams, Jacobs, and Solomons, and the fantastic history of their little race. Thus they produced, under the mask of monotheism, a religion of sexual and phallic worship, one that concealed an adoration of the Gods, or the lower aeons. No one would maintain that anything like the dualism and the angelolatry of Persia, brought by the Jews from the captivity, could ever be found in the *real* Law, or Books of Moses. For how, in such case, could the Sadducees, who revered that law, reject angels, as well as the soul and its immortality? And yet angels, if not the soul's immortal nature, are distinctly asserted to exist in the *Old Testament*, and are found in the Jewish modern scrolls.¹

This fact of the successive and widely differing redactions of that which we loosely term the Books of Moses, and of their triple adaptation to the first (lowest), second, and third, or highest, degree of Sodalian initiation, and that still more puzzling fact of the diametrically opposite beliefs of the Sadducees and the other Jewish sects, all accepting, nevertheless, the same *Revelation* — can be made comprehensible only in the light of our Esoteric explanation. It also shows the reason why, when Moses and the Prophets belonged to the Sodalities (the great Mysteries), the latter yet seem so often to fulminate against the abominations of the Sodales and their “Sod.” For had the Old Canon been translated literally, as is claimed, instead of being adapted to a monotheism absent from it, and to the spirit of each sect, as the differences in the *Septuagint* and *Vulgate* prove, the following contradictory sentences would be added to the hundreds of other inconsistencies in “Holy Writ.”

Sod Ihoh [the mysteries of Johoh, or Jehovah] are for those who fear him,
says *Psalms* xxv, 14, mistranslated

“the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him.”

Again

Al [El] is terrible in the great Sod of the Kadeshim,
is rendered as

God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints.²

The title of Kadeshim (Kadosh, sing.) means in reality something quite different from saints though it is generally explained as “priests,” the “holy” and the “*Initiated*”; for the Kadeshim were simply the *galli* of the abominable mysteries (Sod) of the exoteric rites. They were, in short, the male Nautches of the temples, during whose initiations the *arcanum*, the *Sod* (from which “Sodom,” perchance) of physiological and sexual evolution, were divulged. These rites all belonged to the first degree of the Mysteries, so protected and beloved by David — the “friend of God.” They must have been very ancient with the Jews, and were ever abominated by the true Initiates; thus we find the dying Jacob's prayer is that his soul should not come into the *secret* (*Sod*, in the original) of Simeon and Lévi (the priestly caste) and into their *assembly* during which

¹ This is just what the Gnostics had always maintained quite independently of Christians. In their doctrines the Jewish God, the “Elōhim,” was a hierarchy of low terrestrial angels — an *Ialdabaōth*, spiteful and jealous.

² *Psalms* lxxxix, 7

they “slew a man.”¹ And yet Moses is claimed by the Kabbalists as chief of the Sodales! Reject the explanation of the *Secret Doctrine* and the whole *Pentateuch* becomes the abomination of abominations.

Therefore, do we find Jehovah, the anthropomorphic God, everywhere in the Bible, but of AIN SOPH not one word is said. And therefore, also, was the Jewish metrology quite different from the numeral methods of other people. Instead of serving as an adjunct to other prearranged methods, to penetrate therewith as with a key into the hidden or implied meaning contained within the literal sentences — as the initiated Brahmans do to this day, when reading their sacred book — the numeral system with the Jews is, as the author of “Hebrew Metrology” tells us, the Holy Writ itself:

. . . that very thing, *in esse*, on which, and out of which, and by the continuous interweaving use of which, the very text of the Bible has been made to result, as its enunciation, from the beginning word of *Genesis* to the closing word of *Deuteronomy*.²

So true is this, indeed, that the authors of the *New Testament* who had to blend their system with both the Jewish and the Pagan, had to borrow their most metaphysical symbols not from the *Pentateuch*, or even the Kabbalah, but from the Āryan astro-symbology. One instance will suffice. Whence the dual meaning of the First-born, the Lamb, the Unborn, and the Eternal — all relating to the Logos or Christos? We say from the Sanskrit *Aja*, a word the meanings of which are:

The Ram, or the Lamb, the first sign of the Zodiac, called in astronomy *Mesha*;

The Unborn, a title of the first Logos, or Brahma, the self-existent cause of all, described and so referred to in the *Upanishads*.

The Hebrew Kabbalistic Gematria, Notaricon, and T'mura are very ingenious methods, giving the key to the secret meaning of Jewish symbology, one that applied the relations of their sacred imagery only to one side of Nature — namely, the physical side. Their myths and the names and the events attributed to their Biblical personages were made to correspond with astronomical revolutions and sexual evolution, and had nought to do with the spiritual states of man; hence no such correspondences are to be found in the reading of their sacred canon. The real Mosaic Jews of the Sodales, whose direct heirs *on the line of initiation* were the Sadducees, had no spirituality in them, nor did they feel any need for it apparently. The reader, whose ideas of Initiation and Adeptship are intimately blended with the mysteries of the after-life and soul survival, will now see the reason for the great yet natural inconsistencies found on almost every page of the Bible. Thus, in the *Book of Job*, a Kabbalistic treatise on Egypto-Arabic Initiation, the symbolism of which conceals the highest spiritual mysteries, one finds yet this significant and purely materialistic verse:

¹ (*Genesis* xlix, 5-6) To “slay a man” meant, in the symbolism of the Lesser Mysteries, the rite during which crimes against nature were committed, for which purpose the Kadeshim were set aside. Thus Cain “slays” his brother Abel, who, esoterically, is a female character and represents the first *human* woman in the Third Race after the separation of sexes. See also the *Source of Measures*, pp. 253, 283, etc.

² [J. Ralston Skinner’s essay on “Hebrew Metrology,” in the *Masonic Review*, Cincinnati, Vol. 63, July 1885, p. 323. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

Man that is born of a woman is . . . like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not.¹

But Job speaks here of the *personality*, and he is right; for no Initiate would say that the personality long survived the death of the physical body; the spirit alone is immortal. But this sentence in *Job*, the oldest document in the Bible, makes only the more brutally materialistic that in *Ecclesiastes* iii, 19 *et seq.*, one of the latest records. The writer, who speaks in the name of Solomon, and says that:

. . . that which befalleth the *sons of men befalleth beasts*; even . . . *as the one dieth, so dieth the other* . . . so that a man hath no pre-eminence over a beast,

is quite on a par with the modern Haeckels, and expresses only that which he thinks.

Therefore, no knowledge of Kabbalistic methods can help one in finding that in the *Old Testament* which has never been there since the *Book of the Law* was rewritten (rather than found) by Hilkiah. Nor can the reading of the Egyptian symbols be much helped by the mediæval Kabbalistic systems. Indeed, it is but the blindness of a pious illusion that can lead anyone to discover any spiritual and metaphysical correspondences or meaning in the Jewish purely astro-physiological symbology. On the other hand, the ancient pagan religious systems, so-called, are all built upon abstract spiritual speculations, their gross external forms being, perhaps, the most secure veil to hide their inner meaning.

It can be demonstrated, on the authority of the most learned Kabbalists of our day that the *Zohar*, and almost all the Kabbalistic works, have passed through Christian hands. Hence, that they cannot be considered any longer as universal, but have become simply sectarian. This is well shown by Pico della Mirandola's thesis upon the proposition that "no Science yields greater proof of the divinity of Christ than magic and the Kabbalah." This is true of the divinity of the Logos, or of the Christos of the Gnostics; because that Christos remains the same WORD of the ever-unmanifested Deity, whether we call it Parabrahm or Ain Soph — by whatever name he himself is called — Krishna, Buddha, or Ormazd. But this Christos is neither the Christ of the Churches, nor yet the Jesus of the Gospels; it is only an *impersonal Principle*. Nevertheless the Latin Church made capital of this thesis; the result of which was, that as in the last century, so it is now in Europe and America. Almost every Kabbalist is now a believer in a *personal* God, in the very teeth of the original *impersonal* Ain Soph, and is, moreover, a more or less heterodox, but still, a Christian. This is due entirely to the ignorance of most people,

That the *Kabbalah* (the *Zohar* especially) we have, is not the original *Book of Splendour*, written down from the oral teachings of Shimon Ben Yochai; and

That the latter, being indeed an exposition of the hidden sense of the writings of Moses (so-called) was as equally good an exponent of the Esoteric meaning contained under the shell of the literal sense in the Scriptures of any Pagan religion.

¹ xiv, 1-2

Nor do the modern Kabbalists seem to be aware of the fact, that the Kabbalah as it now stands, with its more than revised texts, its additions made to apply to the *New* as much as to the *Old Testament*, its numerical language recomposed so as to apply to both, and its crafty veiling, is no longer able now to furnish all the ancient and primitive meanings. In short that no Kabbalistic work now extant among the Western nations can display any greater mysteries of nature, than those which Ezra and Co., and the later co-workers of Moses de Leon, desired to unfold; the Kabbalah contains no more than the Syrian and Chaldean Christians and ex-Gnostics of the thirteenth century wanted those works to reveal. And what they do reveal hardly repays the trouble of passing one's life in studying it. For if they may, and do, present a field of immense interest to the Mason and mathematician, they can teach scarcely anything to the student hungering after spiritual mysteries. The use of all the seven keys to unlock the mysteries of Being in this life, and the lives to come, as in those which have gone by, show that the Chaldean *Book of Numbers*, and the *Upanishads* undeniably conceal the most divine philosophy — as it is that of the Universal Wisdom Religion. But the *Zohar*, now so mutilated, can show nothing of the kind. Besides which, who of the Western philosophers or students has *all* those keys at his command? These are now entrusted only to the highest Initiates in *Gupta-Vidyā*, to great Adepts; and, surely it is no self-taught tyro, not even an isolated mystic, however great his genius and natural powers, who can hope to unravel *in one life* more than one or two of the lost keys.¹

The key to the Jewish metrology has been undeniably unravelled, and a very important key it is. But as we may infer from the words of the discoverer himself in the footnote just quoted — though that key (concealed in the “Sacred Metrology”) discloses the fact that “Holy Writ” contains “*a rational science of sober and great worth*,” yet it helps to unveil no higher spiritual truth than that which all astrologers have insisted upon in every age; *i.e.*, the close relation between the sidereal and all the terrestrial bodies — human beings included. The history of our globe and its humanities is prototyped in the astronomical heavens from first to last, though the Royal Society of Physicists may not become aware of it for ages yet to come. By the showing of the said discoverer himself, “the burden of this secret doctrine, this Cabbalah, is of pure truth and right reason, for it is geometry with applied proper numbers, of astronomy and of a system of measure, *viz.*, the Masonic inch, the twenty-four inch gauge (or the double foot), the yard, and the mile. These were claimed to be of divine revelation and impartation, by the possession and use of which, it could be said of

¹ The writer in the *Masonic Review* is thus quite justified in saying as he does, that

“the Cabalistic field is that in which astrologers, necromancers, black and white magicians, fortune tellers, chiromancers, and all the like, revel and make claims to supernaturalism *ad nauseam*”;

and he adds:

“The Christian, quarrying into its mass of mysticism, claims for it support and authority for that most perplexing of all problems, the Holy Trinity, and the portrayed character of Christ . . . With equal assurance, but more effrontery, the knave, in the name of Cabbalah, will sell amulets and charms, tell fortunes, draw horoscopes, and just as readily give specific rules . . . for raising the dead, and actually — the devil . . . Discovery has yet to be made of what Cabbalah really consists, before any weight or authority can be given to the name. On that discovery will rest the question whether the name should be received as related to matters worthy of rational acknowledgment.” . . . “*The writer claims that such a discovery has been made*, and that the same embraces rational science of sober and great worth.”

“The Cabbalah,” from the *Masonic Review* for September 1885, pp. 65-66, by Brother J. Ralston Skinner (McMillan Lodge, No. 141). [Italics are H.P. Blavatsky's.]

Abram: ‘Blessed of the Most High God, Abram, measure of heaven and earth’ — the “*creative law of measure.*”

And is this all that the *primitive* Kabbalah contained? No; for the author remarks elsewhere: “What the originally and intended right reading was [in the *Pentateuch*] who can tell?”¹ Thus allowing the reader to infer that the meanings implied in the exoteric, or dead letter of the Hebrew texts, are by no means only those revealed by metrology. Therefore we are justified in saying that the Jewish Kabbalah, with its numerical methods, is now only *one* of the keys to the ancient mysteries, and that the Eastern or Āryan system alone can supply the rest, and unveil the whole truth of *Creation.*²

What this numeral system is, we leave its discoverer to explain himself. According to him:

Like all other human productions of the kind, the Hebrew text of the Bible was in characters which could serve as sound signs for syllabic utterance, or for this purpose what are called letters. Now in the first place, these original character signs were also pictures, each one of them; and these pictures of themselves stood for ideas which could be communicated — much like the original Chinese letters. Gustav Seyffarth shows that the Egyptian hieroglyphics numbered over six hundred picture characters, which embraced the modified use, syllabically, of the original number of letters of the Hebrew alphabet. The characters of the Hebrew text of the Sacred Scroll were divided into classes, in which the characters of each class were interchangeable; whereby one form might be exchanged for another to carry a modified signification, both by letter, and picture and number. Seyffarth shows the modified form of the very ancient Hebrew alphabet in the old Coptic by this law of interchange of characters.³ This law of permitted interchange of letters is to be found quite fully set forth in the Hebrew dictionaries . . . Though recognized . . . it is very perplexing and hard to understand, because we have lost the specific use and power of such interchange. [Just so!] In the second place, these characters stood for *numbers* — to be used for numbers as we use specific number signs — though, also, there is very much to prove that the old Hebrews were in possession of the so-called Arabic numerals, as we have them, from the straight line 1 to the *zero* characters, together making 1+9=10. . . . In the third place, it is said, and it seems to be proven, that these characters stood for musical notes; so that for instance, the arrangement of the letters in the first chapter of *Genesis*, can be

¹ [*ibid.*, p. 68]

² Even as it stands now, the Kabbalah, with its several methods, can only puzzle by offering several versions; it can never divulge the whole truth. The readings of even the first sentence of *Genesis* are several. To quote the author: “It is made to be read ‘B’rashith bārā Elōhīm,’ *etc.*, ‘In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth;’ wherein Elōhīm is a plural nominative to a verb in the third person singular. Nachmanides called attention to the fact that the text might suffer the reading, ‘B’rash ithbārā Elōhīm,’ *etc.*, ‘In the head (source or beginning) created itself (or developed) *Gods, the heavens and the earth,*’ really a more grammatical rendering.” [*ibid.*, p. 68] And yet we are forced to believe the Jewish monotheism!

³ Before Seyffarth can hope to have his hypothesis accepted, however, he will have to prove that (a) the Israelites had an alphabet of their own when the ancient Egyptians or Copts had as yet none; and (b) that the Hebrew of the later scrolls is the Hebrew, or “mystery language” of Moses, which the Secret Doctrine denies. [H.P. Blavatsky]

rendered musically, or by song.¹ Another law of the Hebrew characters was that only the consonantal signs were characterized — the vowels were not characterized, but were supplied. If one will try it he will find that a consonant of itself cannot be made vocal without the help of a vowel;² therefore . . . the consonants made the framework of a word, but to give it life or utterance into the air, so as to impart the thought of the mind, and the feeling of the heart, the vowels had to be supplied.³

Now, even if we suppose, for argument's sake, that the "framework," *i.e.*, the consonants of the *Pentateuch* are the same as in the days of Moses, what changes must have been effected with those scrolls — written in such a poor language as the Hebrew, with its less than two dozens of letters — when re-written time after time, and its vowels and points supplied in ever-new combinations! No two minds are alike, and the feelings of the heart change. What could remain, we ask, of the original writings of Moses, if such ever existed, when they had been lost for nearly 800 years and then found when every remembrance of them must have disappeared from the minds of the most learned, and Hilkiah has them re-written by Shaphan, the scribe? When lost again, they are re-written again by Ezra; lost once more in 168 B.C. the volume or scrolls were again destroyed; and when finally they reappear, we find them dressed in their Masoretic disguise! We may know something of Ben Chajim,⁴ who published the Masorah of the scrolls in the fifteenth century; we can know nothing of Moses, this is certain, unless we become — Initiates of the Eastern School.

Ahrens, when speaking of the letters so arranged in the Hebrew sacred scrolls — that they were of themselves musical notes — had probably never studied Āryan Hindu music. In the Sanskrit language there is no need to so arrange letters in the sacred *ollas* that they should become musical. For the whole Sanskrit alphabet and the *Vedas*, from the first word to the last, are musical notations reduced to writing, and the two are inseparable.⁵ As Homer distinguished between the "language of Gods" and the *language of men*,⁶ so did the Hindus.

The *Devanāgarī* — the Sanskrit characters — is the "Speech of the Gods" and Sanskrit the divine language.⁷ As to the Hebrew let the modern Isaiahs cry "Woe is me!"

¹ Not the Hebrew helped by the Masoretic signs, at all events. See further on, however. [H.P. Blavatsky]

² And therefore as the vowels were furnished *ad libitum* by the Masorets they could make of a word what they liked! [H.P. Blavatsky]

³ [*op. cit.*, *Masonic Review*, September 1885, p. 67]

⁴ [*Vide Bio-bibliographical Index* under JACOB BEN HAYIM.]

⁵ See *The Theosophist*, Vol. I, November 1879, article "Hindu Music," pp. 46-50.

⁶ *Thes.* xiv, 289, 290

[It is uncertain what is meant here by *Thes.*, unless it be some *Thesaurus* of classical languages or antiquities. However, the following passages in Homer mention several names as being used either by gods or by men respectively; *Iliad*, I, 403; XIV, 290-91; XX, 73; *Odyssey*, X, 305; XII, 61. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

⁷ The Sanskrit letters are three times as numerous as the poor twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. They are all musical and are read, or rather chanted, according to a system given in very old Tāntrika works (see *Tantra Śāstras*); and are called *Devanāgarī* "the speech or language of the Gods." And since each answers to a numeral, and has therefore a far larger scope for expression and meaning, it must necessarily be far more perfect and far older than the Hebrew, which followed the system, but could apply it only in a very limited way. If either of the two languages were taught to humanity by the Gods, surely it is rather Sanskrit — the perfect of the most perfect languages on Earth — than Hebrew, the roughest and the poorest. For once we believe in a

and confess that which “the newly-discovered mode of language (Hebrew metrology) veiled under the words of the sacred Text” has now clearly shown. Read the *Source of Measures*, read all the other able treatises on the subject by the same author. And then the reader will find that with the utmost good-will and incessant efforts covering many years of study, that laborious scholar, having penetrated under the mask of the system, can find in it little more than pure anthropomorphism. In man, and on man, alone, rests the whole scheme of the Kabbalah, and to man and his functions, on however enlarged a scale, everything in it is made to apply. Man, as the Archetypal Man or Adam, is made to contain the whole Kabbalistic system. He is the great symbol and shadow, thrown by the manifested Kosmos, itself the reflection of the impersonal and ever incomprehensible principle; and this shadow furnishes by its construction — the personal grown out of the impersonal — a kind of objective and tangible symbol of everything visible and invisible in the Universe.

As the First Cause was utterly unknown and unnameable, such names as were adopted as most sacred [in Bible and Kabbalah] and commonly made applicable to the Divine Being, were, after all, *not so*,¹

but were mere manifestations of the unknowable, such

. . . In a cosmic or natural sense, as could become known to man. Hence these names *were not so sacred as commonly held*, inasmuch as with all created things they themselves were but names or enunciations of things known . . . As to metrology: Instead of a valuable adjunct to the Biblical system . . . the entire text of the Holy Writ, in the Mosaic books, is not only replete with it, as a system, but the system itself is that very thing, *in esse*. . . .²

— from the first to the last word.

. . . For instance, the narratives of the first day, of the six days, of the seventh day, of the making of Adam, male and female, of Adam in the Garden, of the Garden itself, of the formation of the woman out of the man, of the extension of the time to the flood with the genealogy, of Ararat, of the Ark, of Noah with his dove and raven, of the space and incidents of Abram’s travel from Ur of the Chaldeans down into Egypt before Pharaoh, of Abram’s life, of the three covenants, . . . of the construction of the Tabernacle and the dwelling of Jehovah, of the famous 603,550 as the number of men capable of bearing arms who made, with their families the exodus out of Egypt and the like — all are but so many modes of enunciation of this system of geometry, of applied number ratios, of measures and their various applications. . . .³

And the author of “Hebrew Metrology” ends by saying:

Whatever may have been the Jewish mode of complete interpretation of these books, the Christian Church has taken them *for what they show on their first*

language of *divine* origin, we can hardly believe at the same time that angels or Gods or any divine messenger should have selected the inferior in preference to the superior.

¹ [J.R. Skinner’s essay on “Hebrew Metrology,” *Masonic Review*, July 1885, p. 324]

² [*ibid.*, pp. 324 & 323 resp.]

³ [*ibid.*, p. 323]

face — and that only . . . The Christian Church has never attributed to these books any property beyond this; and herein has existed *its great error*.¹

But the Western European Kabbalists, and many of the American (though luckily not all), claim to correct this error of their Church. How far do they succeed and where is the evidence of their success? Read all the volumes published on the Kabbalah in the course of this century; and if we except a few volumes issued recently in America, it will be found that not a single Kabbalist has penetrated even skin deep below the surface of that “first face.” Their digests are pure speculation and hypotheses and — no more. One bases his glosses upon Ragon’s Masonic revelations; another takes Fabre d’Olivet² for his prophet — this writer having never been a Kabbalist, though he was a genius of wonderful, almost miraculous, erudition, and a polyglot linguist greater than whom there was since his day none, even among the philologists of the French Academy, which refused to take notice of his work. Others, again, believe that no greater Kabbalist was born among the sons of men than the late Éliphas Lévi — a charming and witty writer, who, however, has more mystified than taught in his many volumes on Magic. Let not the reader conclude from these statements that real, learned Kabbalists are not to be found in the Old and New Worlds. There are initiated Occultists, who are Kabbalists, scattered hither and thither, most undeniably, especially in Germany and Poland. But these *will not publish what they know*, nor will they call themselves Kabbalists. The “*Sodalian oath*” of the third degree holds good now as ever.

But there are those who are pledged to no secrecy. Those writers are the only ones on whose information the Kabbalists ought to rely, however incomplete their statements from the standpoint of a *full revelation*, *i.e.*, of the sevenfold Esoteric meaning. It is they who care least for those secrets after which alone the modern Hermetist and Kabbalist is now hungering such as the transmutation into gold, and the Elixir of Life, or the Philosopher’s Stone — *for physical purposes*. For all the chief secrets of the Occult teachings are concerned with the highest spiritual knowledge. They deal with mental states, not with physical processes and their transformations. In a word, the real, genuine Kabbalah, the only original copy of which is contained in the Chaldean *Book of Numbers*, pertains to, and teaches about, the realm of spirit, not that of matter.

What, then, is the Kabbalah, in reality, and does it afford a revelation of such higher spiritual mysteries? The writer answers most emphatically NO. What the Kabbalistic keys and methods were, in the origin of the *Pentateuch* and other sacred scrolls and documents of the Jews now no longer extant, is one thing; what they are now is quite another. The Kabbalah is a manifold language; moreover, one whose reading is determined by the dead-letter face text of the record to be deciphered. It teaches and helps one to read the Esoteric real meaning hidden under the mask of that dead letter; it cannot *create* a text or make one find in the document under study that which

¹ [This, however, is the closing paragraph of J.R. Skinner’s article on “The Cabbalah,” and not the one on “Hebrew Metrology.” — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

² [Fabre d’Olivet is mentioned by H.P. Blavatsky many times in her various writings, sometimes approvingly and at other times critically. Because of the marked influence he has exercised upon the minds of many students, especially in Europe, it has been thought advisable to include in the present Volume a fairly comprehensive survey of his life and work. *Vide* the Bio-Bibliographical Index, s.v. FABRE D’OLIVET. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

has never been in it from the beginning. The Kabbalah — such as we have it now — is inseparable from the text of the *Old Testament*, as remodelled by Ezra and others. And as the Hebrew Scriptures, or their contents, have been repeatedly altered — notwithstanding the ancient boast that not one letter in the Sacred Scroll, not an iota, has ever been changed — so no Kabbalistic methods can help us by reading in it anything besides what there is in it. He who does it is no Kabbalist, but a dreamer.

Lastly, the profane reader should learn the difference between the Kabbalah and the Kabbalistic works, before he is made to face other arguments. For the Kabbalah is no special volume, nor is it even a system. It consists of seven different systems applied to seven different interpretations of any given Esoteric work or subject. These systems were always *transmitted orally* by one generation of Initiates to another, under the pledge of the Sodalian oath, and *they have never been recorded in writing* by any one. Those who speak of translating the Kabbalah into this or another tongue may as well talk of translating the wordless signal-chants of the Bedouin brigands into some particular language. Kabbalah, as a word, is derived from the root *Kbl (Kebel)* “to hand over,” or “to receive” *orally*. It is erroneous to say, as Kenneth Mackenzie does in his *Royal Masonic Cyclopaedia*,¹ that “the doctrine of the Kabbalah refers to the system handed down by oral transmission, and is nearly allied to . . . *tradition*”; for in this sentence the first proposition only is true, while the second is not. It is not allied to “tradition” but to the seven veils or the seven truths orally *revealed at Initiation*. Of these methods, pertaining to the universal pictorial languages — meaning by “pictorial” any cipher, number, symbol, or other glyph that can be represented, whether objectively or subjectively (mentally) — three only exist at present in the Jewish system.² Thus, if Kabbalah as a word is Hebrew, the system itself is no more Jewish than is sunlight; it is universal.

On the other hand, the Jews can claim the *Zohar*, *Sēpher Yetzīrāh* (Book of Creation), *Sēpher Dzeniuta*, and a few others, as their own undeniable property and as Kabbalistic works.



“The Origin of Good and Evil,” and

“The Original Sin is a Jewish invention,” in the same series. — ED. PHIL.

¹ [p. 399]

² Of these three not one can be made to apply to purely spiritual metaphysics. One divulges the relations of the sidereal bodies to the terrestrial, especially the human; the other relates to the evolution of the human races and the sexes; the third to Kosmotheogony and is metrological.

Editorial Notes by Boris de Zirkoff

From *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, VII pp. 269-72.

As many students are unfamiliar with Kabbalistic literature, it has been deemed advisable to append the following succinct information for their benefit. As the subject is a very vast one, only essential data have been included.

The *Zohar*, known also as the *Midrash ha-Zohar* and *Sēpher ha-Zohar*, meaning “Splendour,” is the great storehouse of ancient Hebrew Theosophy, supplemented by the philosophical doctrines of mediaeval Jewish Rabbis. Together with the *Sēpher Yetzīrah*, or “Book of Formation,” one of the most ancient Kabbalistic works, the collection of the *Zohar* represents the oldest extant treatises on the Hebrew esoteric doctrines. It consists of several distinct but interrelated tracts, each discussing some special branch of the subject; each of these tracts consists again of several portions, and contains a kernel of ancient teachings, around which are clustered comments and explanations written by several hands and at very different epochs. There is considerable evidence to show that the kernel of these doctrines is of very remote antiquity, and embodies the remnants of one of the oldest systems of philosophy that have come down to us. Sufficient proof exists to connect some of these tenets with the period of the return from the Babylonian captivity, as they bear the impress of the still more ancient Chaldaean secret lore.

The *Zohar* is largely a mystical and allegorical commentary on the *Pentateuch*. Together with various Appendices that must have been added to the collection at some later time, it deals with a large number of subjects, such as Ain Soph, the Emanations, the Sēphīrōth, Adam Kadmon, the Revolution of Souls (*Gilgulim*), the use of numbers and letters, the casting of lots, good and evil, *etc.* The largest portion of this collection is written in one of the Aramaic dialects; other portions are in Hebrew; the presence of still other dialects adds greatly to the difficulties of an accurate translation.

Tradition current among mediaeval Rabbis assigned the authorship of the *Zohar* to Rabbi Shimon ben Yohai, who lived in the reign of the Roman Emperor Titus, A.D. 70-80, and was one of the most important Tannaïm in the post-Hadrianic period. He was born in Galilee, and died at Meron, near Safid, in Palestine, where his traditional tomb is shown. His principal teacher was Akiba, whose Academy at Bene-Berak he attended for a good many years. Ordained after Akiba’s death by Judah ben Baba, he escaped from Jerusalem during the violent struggle of the Jews with the Romans, and hid himself in a cave for thirteen years. It is here that Shimon ben Yohai, a profound Kabbalist already, was instructed, according to tradition, by the prophet Elias himself. In his turn, he taught his disciples, Rabbi Eleazar and Rabbi Abba, who committed to writing those traditional teachings of the earlier Tannaïm which in later ages became known as the *Zohar*. After his seclusion, Shimon ben Yohai settled in Galilee and founded a school of his own, gaining the reputation of a wonder-worker. He was sent to Rome with Eleazar ben Jose, to obtain the repeal of imperial orders which had forbidden certain Jewish ceremonial observances, and returned after a successful mission.

While the name of Shimon ben Yohai is associated with the history of the *Zohar*, it is nevertheless certain that a very large portion of this compilation is not older than approximately 1280, when it was edited in manuscript form by Moses ben Shem-Tob de Leon. The latter was a famous Kabbalistic writer born at Leon, Spain, about 1250, and who lived in Guadalajara, Valladolid and Avila, and died at Arevalo, in 1305. Familiar with the mediaeval mystical literature, he was especially conversant with the writings of Solomon ben Judah ibn Gabirol (Avicbron), Judah ha-Lévi, and Maimonides. Apart from his work on the *Zohar*, he is known for other dissertations, among them the *Ha-Nephesh ha-'hokhmah*,¹ which deals with the human soul as a likeness of its heavenly prototype, and with the transmigration of souls. He led a wandering life, and was a man of brilliant intellect and lofty religious idealism.

It is most likely that Moses de Leon was the first one to produce the *Zohar* as a whole, but many of its constituent portions date from the time of Shimon ben Yohai and the Second Temple, even though historical evidence is not forthcoming of the many steps in the course of transmission of these doctrines from ante-Roman times.

The *Zohar* in its present Hebrew form was first printed at Mantua (1558-60) and Cremona (1558); only one MSS. of it is in existence prior to the first edition; another edition appeared at Lublin, in 1623. Baron Christian Knorr von Rosenroth (1636-89), a very able and searching Hebrew scholar, translated several treatises of the *Zohar* into Latin, and published them, together with the Hebrew text under the title of *Kabbalah Denudata*.² C. Liddell MacGregor Mathers published under the title of *The Kabbalah Unveiled*³ an English translation of three of these treatises: the *Siphrā di-Zeni'uta*, or "Book of the Concealed Mystery," the *Idra Rabbah*, or "Greater Holy Assembly," and the *Idra Zuta*, or "Lesser Holy Assembly," together with an original introduction on the subject.

Other important treatises making part of the *Zohar* are: "The Hidden Midrash," "The Mysteries of the Pentateuch," "The Faithful Shepherd," "The Secret of Secrets," "Discourses of the Aged in Mishpatim," "Yanuka, or the Child," and the "Aesh Metzareph," the latter dealing with alchemical ideas.

Selected portions of the *Zohar* have been translated into French by Jean de Pauly, and published by Éliphas Lévi as *Le Livre des Splendeurs*;⁴ and into English by Harry Sperling and M. Simon.⁵ Translations of selected passages can also be found in the most valuable and rare work of Isaac Myer, *Qabbalah. The Philosophical Writings of Solomon Ben Yehudah Ibn Gebirol or Avicbron*,⁶ important especially on account of its extensive historical Introductory. H.P. Blavatsky herself reviewed it at considerable length.⁷

¹ Basel, 1608

² Vol. I, Sulzbach, 1677-78; Vol. II, Frankfurt, 1684.

³ London: George Redway, 1887. 8vo., viii, 359pp.

⁴ Paris, 1894

⁵ 5 vols., London, 1931-34

⁶ Philadelphia, 1888, xxiv, 499pp.

⁷ *Lucifer*, Vol. III, February 1889, pp. 505-12; *vide* later volumes of the present Series.

In connection with the above general subject, the student may be referred to the following works: Adolf Jellinek, *Moses ben Schemtob de Leon und seine Verhältniss zum Sohar*, Leipzig, 1851; E. Müller, *Der Sohar und seine Lehre*, 2nd ed., 1923; C.D. Ginsburg, *The Kabbalah: Its doctrines, development, and literature*, London and Liverpool, 1866; Adolphe Franck, *La Kabbale*, Paris, 1843;¹ and A.E. Waite, *The Doctrine and Literature of the Kabalah*, London, 1902; and *Secret Doctrine in Israel*, London, 1913.

As to the *Sēpher Yetzīrāh*, or “Book of Formation,” it is reputed to be the oldest known Kabbalistic work, attributed by tradition to Abraham himself, as also to Aki-ba. It deals with permutations of numbers and letters, and is our first source for the doctrine of emanations and the Sephīrōth. It is written in the Neo-Hebraic of the *Mishnāh*, and is unquestionably of very ancient origin. The *editio princeps* is that of Mantua, 1562, with several subsequent ones. The text and commentary by Dunash ben Tamim have been published by M. Grossberg, London, 1902, and parts of it have been translated by W. Wynn Westcott, London, 1893. — See also the translation of P. Davidson, Loudsville, Ga., and Glasgow, Scotland, 1896.

The earlier issues of several Theosophical periodicals contain valuable essays on the subject of the Kabala in general, as well as various particular aspects of this profound study. In H.P. Blavatsky’s days, several renowned Kabbalists wrote for Theosophical publications. Among these essays, the following deserve special mention, and are listed here for the benefit of the earnest student:

Buck, Dr. J.D.: “The Cabbalah,” *The Theosophist*, Vol. V, November 1883, pp. 44-45; seems to imply that J. Ralston Skinner had one or more unpublished MSS. in his possession.

Lazarus, Montague R.: “The Kabbala and the Microcosm,” *The Theosophist*, Vol. VIII, September 1887, pp. 767-74; Vol. IX, October, November, December 1887, pp. 45-52, 119-24, 167-71 respectively. Copious excerpts from rare Kabbalistic works; valuable as a correlation between Hebrew, Hindu and Greek views of the constitution of man.

Pratt, Dr. Henry: “About the Kabbalah,” *The Theosophist* Vol. X, August 1889, pp. 649-61; “Eloistic Mysteries,” *ibid.*, Vol. XII, July 1891, pp. 591-99; Vol. XIII, November 1891, January, February, April 1892, pp. 77-86, 244-51, 293-96, 418-25 respectively.

Chamier, D.: “The Kabalah and its Doctrine,” *The Theosophist*, Vol. XXIV, November 1902, pp. 90-97.

Pancoast, Dr. Seth: “Kabbalah,” *The Path*, Vol. I, April 1886, pp. 8-14; “The Mystery of Numbers,” *ibid.*, May 1886, pp. 37-41.

Skinner, J. Ralston: “Notes on the Cabbalah of the Old Testament,” *The Path*, Vol. I, July and August 1886, pp. 103-8, 134-39 respectively.

¹ English translation, Leipzig 1844

Westcott, W. Wynn: "The Kabalah," *Lucifer*, Vol. VIII, August 1891, pp. 465-69; Vol. IX, September 1891, pp. 27-32; "A Further Glance at the Kabalah," *ibid.*, Vol. XII, April and May 1893, pp. 147-53, 202-8 respectively.

Leiningen, C. de: "The Soul according to the Quabalah." Translated from the German by Thomas Williams; orig. published in the *Sphinx*. Issued in London, 1890, as *Theosophical Siftings*, Vol. II, No. 18.

Saper Aude: "Some Anomalies in the Biblical Views of the Constitution of Man," issued in 1893 as *Theos. Siftings*, Vol. V, No. 16.

Wirth, Oswald: "Qabbalah," *Le Lotus*, Vol. III, January 1889, pp. 625-32; text in French.

