

*Mystery is not
unrevealed knowledge*



Abstract and train of thoughts¹

Inner knowledge is revealed only to those of sufficient intellect, purity, and discretion, who are devoted to the spirit of truth wholeheartedly and with undivided love.

In ancient times man stood in a far simpler position and more in harmony with nature, than he does at present in “civilized” life. 3

Human thought, when written, is to a great extent ambiguous. 4

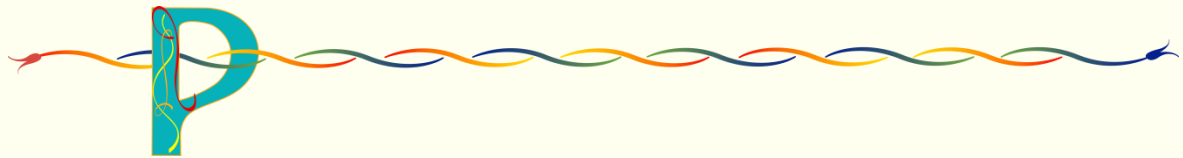
The written symbol, without a constant living oral tradition to infuse into it energy, vitality, and give it concrete value, is absolutely dead. 4

In ancient times the written word was only the symbol, the oral instruction transmitted from master to pupil, was the true secret treasure. 5

The western approach to the study of eastern Secret Philosophy requires an impartial mind that can proceed without bigotry but with discrimination, both analytically and synthetically, discern similarities, make comparisons, and draw conclusions as to the merit or demerit of the eastern lore of Occult Knowledge. 6

Suggested reading for students.

From our Theosophy and Theosophists Series. 8



¹ Frontispiece by Sonia Chivarar.

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From Isaac Myer, LL. B., Member of the Numismatic and Antiquarian Society of Philadelphia, and La Société Royale de Numismatique de Belgique.

Qabbalah. The Philosophical Writings of Solomon Ben Yehudah Ibn Gebirol or Avicebron, and their connection with the Hebrew Qabbalah and Sepher ha-Zohar, with remarks upon the antiquity and content of the latter, and translations of selected passages from the same. Also, "An ancient Lodge of Initiates," translated from the Zohar, and an abstract of an essay upon the Chinese Qabbalah contained in the book called the Yih King, a translation of part of the mystic theology of Dionysios the Areopagite, and an account of the construction of the ancient Akkadian and Chaldean Universe, etc. Accompanied by diagrams and illustrations.

Published by the Author in Philadelphia, 1888 (350 copies), and printed for the Author by MacCalla & Company, 237 and 239 Dock Street, Philadelphia. Reprinted in 1988 by Wizards Bookshelf, San Diego as part of their SECRET DOCTRINE REFERENCE SERIES, with an introductory review by H.P. Blavatsky, published in *Lucifer*, Vol. III (18), February 1889, pp. 505-12. See full text of the latter under the title "Blavatsky on the Qabbalah by Isaac Myer," in our Blavatsky Speaks Series.

This excerpt is from Ch. IX, "The Antiquity of the Qabbalah," pp. 175-80; subheadings and drawings placed by the Series Editor.

In ancient times man stood in a far simpler position and more in harmony with nature, than he does at present in "civilized" life.

In what men now term the ancient, but which in reality was the younger world, man stood in a far simpler position and one more consonant to nature, than he does at present in civilized life. Then the natural accord and affinity of the written to the oral, of theory to practice, was more correctly observed. Then the intent of the written or symbolical compilation was, to present to the mind of the reader only the most fundamental points of the object in hints. Sentences were simple, terse and didactic. Some of the early languages as written, commencing in ideograms, never went beyond the syllabic; *e.g.*, the Akkadian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Egyptian, Chinese. Others advanced to the consonantal but never have reached the vowel or true alphabet. These were the Phœnician, Hebrew, Syriac and Arabic. No Semitic tongue has been written with alphabetic vowels. The Aryan race have always introduced vowels into their written language and are a true alphabetic race. The early writing comprised more especially the essence, and fundamental *indicia* of knowledge, and its symbols were incomprehensible to the uninitiated. Tradition preceded the use of symbolic writing, and was after its introduction [176] necessary to explain it. And tradition, both before and after the introduction of ideograms and other symbols, *e.g.*, letters of the alphabet, was made part of all subsequent writing. Written tradition gives us a lasting efflux and influx within comprehended time, and presents to the eye, in fixed, understood symbols, the imperishable tints of the transiently passing and ever flowing word and language, as a constant, fixed presence; it is therefore the most certain means for preserving in a permanent form the ever tending to be lost oral tradition, through a more fixed symbolism than the sound of the spoken word, by also giving the sense of the eye, an opportunity to fix the hieroglyphic symbol in the sensorium of the human brain.

Human thought, when written, is to a great extent ambiguous.

Yet even the written compilation is, like everything in the matter-world, constantly changing in its spiritual content, in its inner and spiritual shades of meaning, and even in its method of spelling, etc., with the progress of human thought. It is at its best but a deduced picture, made by the writer of a reality, as human life gives it to him in his mind, and it is wholly deficient in all absolute concrete precision and individual specification. Human thought, therefore, when written, even in its most perfect form, is always to a great extent ambiguous, and subject to every species of explanation, misrepresentation and change, from the original spiritual meaning and intent of the writer and his time, and besides, is seen in the mirror of different receptive minds under different meanings, apprehensions and reflections. It is therefore an absolute necessity of writing and of human life and intelligence, that a vitalizing oral or spoken word, be the constant companion and interpreter of the otherwise dead written symbols, the original meanings of which, are ever subject to be changed by the slightest inflections and emphasis of the human voice and by progressive thought.

The written symbol, without a constant living oral tradition to infuse into it energy, vitality, and give it concrete value, is absolutely dead.

The written symbol itself is absolutely dead, and without such a constant living oral tradition to infuse into it energy, vitality and life, and give it concrete value, would not be of any use to mankind. This energetic vitality exists not only in the pronunciation but also in the emphasis, intonation, inflection, etc., which thought naturally takes in our minds even when mentally reading to ourselves. In the archaic periods of the world's history, knowledge was more attached to practical life, and abstract theoretical knowledge did not exist, then it was the ability to do, and that educated the whole character and individuality of the [177] man. Teacher and pupil, stood more in the relation of father and son, and master and servant, as is the case in India today between the *Guru* or Brähmanical master and his scholar. The pupil remained long in his position of pupil, and was obliged to tame the natural, uncultivated animal man, before he could be advanced to and before he could mentally grasp the true sublime earnestness for intellectual contemplation, the pure inner love for study for its own sake, the thorough impregnation of the whole spirit of the disciple with the genius of the subject, without which permanent success, intellectual or otherwise, is not ever possible or assured. The earnest apprentice became gradually assistant, and finally master, and only then had the right to instruct others. If of sound discretion, good judgment, and intellectually receptive, as a reward, the disciple was at last made an initiate, one of the innermost, a companion or *mystes*, and then was taught something of the esoteric as well as the exoteric teachings and traditions of his predecessors, and continued them to those who followed him [and] who were deemed worthy.

Thus the orally traditional in religion, philosophy, science and art, the real, inner, intelligible to the intellect, spirituality of the whole was taught and faithfully handed down and preserved, among the initiates and intellectual workers; and to all the ignorant and uncultivated, that higher spirituality remained inaccessible and closed.

Each religion, philosophy, science, art, had its *disciplina arcana* which in fact largely exists today in the technical methods and language of the religious, scientific and art worlds. This was the real meaning of mystery: the mystery, the inner spirit, was not an unrevealed knowledge; it was revealed, but only unto the man, who showed sufficient intellect and discretion to entitle [178] him to it, and who consecrated himself to it, with his whole soul, heart, and undivided love. The more intelligent men of antiquity drew a veil of secrecy over its more profound metaphysical ideas, granting access only to those found worthy and capable of appreciating and comprehending, the boon granted them by such consecration and initiation. This is fully exemplified in the remarks of Jesus:

Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest haply they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.¹

In ancient times the written word was only the symbol, the oral instruction transmitted from master to pupil, was the true secret treasure.

Jesus spoke to the people (the uninitiated) in parables, which he explained in private to his disciples. For this cause, and the interruptions from wars, revolutions, and persecutions, most of the ancient thought has perished. In our time, reflection threatens to absorb amongst the learned the actual life and vitality of intellection, and to lead everything back to a dead, dry, abstract knowledge of idea only, and believes it can educate man by theory alone. The practical is merged in the theoretical, the connection between the writing and the oral word has been deranged, and but little is left to the vitality of oral repetition and instruction. In ancient times the written word was only the symbol, the oral practical instruction, transmitted by word of mouth through the master to his pupil, was the true secret treasure. If human intellectual culture as an entirety rested more upon oral tradition, we would find, that that which is of the highest and greatest import to mankind, namely: religion, beside the plain symbolism of the written letter, has and must have, to be of any value, a living, vitalizing oral teaching, which is explanatory and makes it a living thing; and must have an esoteric higher disclosure, of which the written word, is only the bark or rind. The sacred oral primitive teaching, oral long before it was placed in symbolic writing, has left its traces among all the races of the Orient. It has come more especially to us through the Oriental books, which we have adopted as our religious mentors, termed by us the Old and New Testaments. The first, the Sacred Writings of the Hebrews; the second, written by Jews, but based on a fusion of Israelitish and Hellenic thought. It is therefore of the greatest importance for those interested in Christianity, which was largely formulated and kept alive by the writings of St. Paul, those by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, those usually attributed to [179] St. John, and some of those by St. Peter;² to investigate the Secret Doctrine of the Hebrews, termed at first Sod or Mystery, subsequently Secret Learning, and afterwards the Qabalah, especially the speculative branch, as in it will be found, that an intimate

¹ [Matthew vii, 6; KJV]

² [Consult "Paul an Initiate and founder of Christianity" and "Peter not an Initiate and the enemy of Paul," in our Buddhas and Initiates Series. — ED. PHIL.]

connection exists between the New Testament ideas and the Israelitish secret philosophy.

The western approach to the study of eastern Secret Philosophy requires an impartial mind that can proceed without bigotry but with discrimination, both analytically and synthetically, discern similarities, make comparisons, and draw conclusions as to the merit or demerit of the eastern lore of Occult Knowledge.

The system of the Speculative Qabalah, appears to Occidental thought, which has been largely formulated and built up, on Greek philosophical modes and methods of thinking, and is unused to the Oriental systems; which are frequently based on parables, allegories and other figurative language; and which is also written, in a veiled form and given in hints, to preserve it from the uninitiates; frequently *bizarre*, strange, perhaps at times, absurd. It is therefore quite difficult to reach the Aristotelian formulations, and those in accord with Western methods of expression, in setting forth the Oriental Secret Philosophy. It also requires an unbiased mind in the student, which can proceed without bigotry and with discrimination, delicacy, and especially impartiality, both analytically and synthetically, and see similarities, make comparisons, and give a perfectly fair opinion as to the merit or demerit, of the content of the Oriental secret traditions: which are not only of great abstruseness, but have been most frequently misrepresented, misunderstood, or misjudged, by even their most ardent votaries. We claim that a thorough study of the Hebrew Speculative Qabalah in its connection with the Oriental books of our own religions, and the systems of other Oriental peoples; will give it a much more elevated position, show that a much greater value is in it and a much greater antiquity, than has been heretofore accorded it, and consider all investigations made by unprejudiced, acute, and unbiased minds, of a sound logical tendency; as a great advance towards a more thorough and correct knowledge of the origin and germs of many ideas now existing in religion and philosophy. To deny this fact, without a more thorough and unprejudiced examination than the Qabalah has heretofore received, would be to display an ignorance of the past intellectual nature and progress of mankind, and of ideas, upon which, we have based some of the most advanced knowledge in modern thought and religion; and indeed of the whole history of the antique intellectual world and its subsequent development. The elements [180] of this Secret Tradition in religion and philosophy, are only to be found in a fragmentary form, in all the writings, which we now have of the ancient Eastern thought- world. The Qabalah asserts that intellectual culture, as the educational institution of the fallen protoplasts, began with a Divine Revelation, and consists of a continued from this, series of traditions. These have been, through the influence of the Kingdom of Obscuration and Evil, acting on the Free Will of mankind, more or less shattered and disfigured. The traditions passing through the prior generations, have been the educators of the succeeding, and largely dependent on the organic development etc., of the preceding, the subsequent have advanced or retarded, the transmitted results of the past; the totality being great thought waves passing through the spirituality of all humanity from its beginning. From time to time, the great love and mercy of God has exerted a more immediate influence upon this great energetic vitalized organic process, this great stream of life coming down from the first living beings; giving it a new and fresh advance-

ment, a new flight, through a new revelation, by which, the totality of the inspired knowledge upon our earth has been increased and extended. More frequently individual minds, influenced from the Above, announce and make plain, the till then only obscurely recognized truths, or invent some useful and beneficent contrivance, whereby humanity is advanced, benefitted and its general condition ameliorated; on the other side, for the fulfilment of the unknown, but wise, purposes of God, the opposition, the spirits of Darkness and Evil, are permitted to try and to retard, the liberty of advance in the stream of humanity, to attempt the destruction of the Divine Tradition, disfigure the Truth, shatter Goodness, Peace and Harmony, and have a scope given them to exercise deception and evil, and to destroy or retard the beneficial inventions, arts and sciences, useful and salutary to mankind, and so keep back progress and advancement.



Suggested reading for students.



From our Theosophy and Theosophists Series.

- A DEBT OF GRATITUDE TO LORD LYTTON
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- ALETHEIA IS OUR GOD AND DOGMA
- ANCIENT ETHICAL WORSHIPS
- ARCHAIC THEOSOPHY IS PRE-BUDDHIST WISDOM-RELIGION
- BLAVATSKY DEFENDS BLAVATSKY
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- BUCK ON THE NATURE AND AIM OF THEOSOPHY
- COLD METAPHYSICS VERSUS DIVINE WISDOM
- CONDUCT AND DUTIES OF A TRUE THEOSOPHIST
- CORY'S ANCIENT FRAGMENTS (1832)
- COSMOPOLITANISM IS FAR HOLIER AND NOBLER THAN GRASPING GREEDINESS CLOAKED IN PATRIOTISM
- DE ZIRKOFF ON CHARLES JOHNSTON
- DE ZIRKOFF ON EDWARD DOUGLAS FAWCETT
- DE ZIRKOFF ON FRANZ HARTMANN
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- DE ZIRKOFF ON HP BLAVATSKY COLLECTED WRITINGS
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- DE ZIRKOFF ON THE DREAM THAT NEVER DIES
- DE ZIRKOFF ON THE SECRET DOCTRINE
- DE ZIRKOFF ON THE SIBYLLINE ORACLES
- DE ZIRKOFF ON THE THIRD VOLUME OF THE SECRET DOCTRINE
- DE ZIRKOFF ON THREE EMINENT THEOSOPHISTS
- DE ZIRKOFF ON WILHELM HÜBBE-SCHLEIDEN
- DE ZIRKOFF RECALLS HIS FORMATIVE YEARS IN RUSSIA
- EASTERN LIGHT SHINES ON WESTERN MINDS
- EASTERN THEOSOPHY IS NEITHER A CREED, NOR A RELIGIOUS BODY
- ESSENTIAL THEOSOPHICAL DOCTRINES
- HARTMANN ON HOW TO ENTER THE PATH TO INFINITE LIFE
- HARTMANN ON THE HARMONICAL SOCIETY
- HOW THEOSOPHY REKINDLED TRUE BROTHERHOOD IN INDIA
- HUMANITY SEEMS TO PROGRESS BY INVENTING ONE DISCOVERY AFTER THE OTHER
- IMPORT AND POTENCY OF NUMBERS AS SYMBOLS
- IN THE EARLY DAYS OF THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT
- ISIS UNVEILED IS THE MAJESTY OF TRUTH UNVEILED
- JUDGE AND DE ZIRKOFF ON GEORGE MEAD
- JUDGE ON THE HEART DOCTRINE
- JUDGE ON THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT
- JUDGE ON THE TRUE THEOSOPHIST'S PATH
- JUDGE ON THEOSOPHICAL STUDY AND WORK
- KEYS TO THE MYSTERY LANGUAGE
- LET THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY PERISH, THAN FORSAKE THE CAUSE OF TRUTH
- OCCULT TRUTH IS NATURE WITHOUT THE ILLUSORY VEIL OF THE SENSES
- OUR GOD IS HUMANITY AND OUR CULT THE LOVE OF OUR FELLOW-MAN
- OUR ONLY DELIVERER AND SAVIOUR
- PLEDGED STUDENTS' PRESCRIBED GUIDE FOR CONDUCT
- PREREQUISITES TO MEMBERSHIP OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY
- SPURNED THE SUBSTANCE AND CLUTCHED THE SHADOW

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- STUDENTS HAVE A CHOICE OF TWO PATHS
- SUBBA ROW DEFENDS ESOTERIC BUDDHISM
- SUBBA ROW'S ESOTERIC WRITINGS (1895)
- THAT WHICH IS FALSE CAN ONLY BE KNOWN BY TRUTH
- THE AIMS AND MISSION OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY FULFILLED
- THE CHALDEAN ORACLES OF ZOROASTER
- THE CROWN JEWELS OF THEOSOPHY (PHOTO ALBUM)
- THE POWER OF THE TRINITY OF KOSMOS MANIFESTS THROUGH THE FOUR PRINCIPLES OF MAN
- THE REVIVAL OF EASTERN OCCULT PHILOSOPHY
- THE SUN OF TRUTH FEARS NO LIGHT AND NEEDS NO LIES
- THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY IS NOT A NURSERY FOR BUDDING ADEPTS
- THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL ARCANE TERMS
- THEOSOPHIA - FOUNTAIN, PERSPECTIVES, PRACTICE (DRAWING)
- THEOSOPHIA: INNER WISDOM
- THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT, THE GREAT MORAL BUT SILENT FORCE
- THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY - ESOTERIC SECTION (LETTERHEAD)
- THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY - MISSION AND FUTURE
- THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY - MONOGRAM 1 (LOGOTYPE)
- THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY - MONOGRAM 2 (LOGOTYPE)
- THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY - OBJECTS AND EARLY ACCOMPLISHMENTS
- THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY - SEAL 1 (LOGOTYPE)
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- THEOSOPHICAL SYMBOLS (TRUE TYPE FONT)
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- THEOSOPHY BRINGS THE WISDOM OF LOVE BEFORE THE EYE OF THE SOUL
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- THEOSOPHY IS THE SCIENCE OF TRUTH AND THE RELIGION OF JUSTICE
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- VERNAL BLOOMS BY WILLIAM QUAN JUDGE
- VISTAS OF VIRTUE AND TRUTH
- WADIA'S RESIGNATION FROM THE TS
- WHAT SORT OF MAN THE REAL PHILOSOPHER SHOULD BE?
- WHEN PURE LOVE IS PERVERTED, HUMANITY QUIVERS
- WHO CAN MEND THE BROKEN SOCIETY?
- WHO CAN READ THE RIDDLE OF THE SERPENT?
- WHO SHOULD BE INVITED TO THEOSOPHICAL MEETINGS?
- WHY A BRAHMIN ABANDONED HIS CASTE
- WHY PAGAN SYMBOLISM IS INDESTRUCTIBLE?
- WILDER ON THE WISDOM RELIGION OF ZOROASTER

