

CHRISTIAN ENCOUNTER WITH THE OCCULT PHENOMENON: A *KABALLISTIC* EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

The idea of mysticism or occultism has always been shrouded in demonic and evil forces by most fanatical and overzealous Christians. The *Kaballah* is an ancient Jewish teaching that uses biblical stories as allegories for human experience, and its primary concern is the knowledge of God, the universe, and humanity. The *Kaballistic* Tree of Life is a complex diagram that serves as a device for understanding the universe and humanity, and its connection to mystical experiences. This article explores the concept of occult knowledge, particularly the Hebrew *Qaballah*, its relevance to Christian scholars. It examines the distinction between mystics and magicians, white and black witches and the concept of white and black magic. The *Kaballa* has contributed to the development of the magic faculty or mystic sense, and has influenced the Christian theology, particularly the works of Dion Fortune and Thomas Aquinas. Basically, the work demonstrates the value of occult knowledge and the *Kaballah* in deepening one's understanding of spiritual reality and the nature of God.

Introduction

Understanding Qaballah: Origins and Core Beliefs

The term *Qaballah* (often spelled *Kaballah*) refers to a form of Jewish mysticism that investigates the hidden, esoteric aspects of God's nature, the universe, and the human soul. It has its roots in early Jewish thought and has evolved over centuries, influencing not only Jewish theology but also Western esotericism, Christian mysticism, and occult traditions. *Qaballah* is a mystical and esoteric system of Jewish thought, which seeks to understand the nature of the divine, the cosmos, and the relationship between human beings and God. Its origins are often traced to the early Jewish texts of the *Merkavah* (or *Chariot*) mysticism in the first centuries CE, but it gained prominence as a distinct spiritual and intellectual movement in the 12th and 13th centuries, particularly with the writings of the Spanish-Jewish mystic *Isaac the Blind* and the publication of the *Zohar* by Moshe De Leon in the late 13th century.

Some of the major elements of *kaballah* include: The first element is the **Tree of Life** which is a symbolic diagram representing the structure of the divine and the unfolding of creation. It consists of ten spheres (called *Sefiroth*) that represent the different attributes of God. These spheres are interconnected by paths that show how the divine energies flow through the cosmos and human existence. The next element is the Emanation of the Divine. In *Kabbalistic* thought, God (often referred to as *Ein Sof*, meaning "infinite") emanates into the world through the *Sefirot*, which allows for the creation of all that exists. This process of divine emanation is not linear or anthropomorphic but rather represents an unfolding of God's divine light and energy into the material world. The third key element is the Esoteric Knowledge. *Kaballah* emphasizes the importance of mystical knowledge and interpretation of sacred texts. Mystics use *gematria* (a system of assigning numerical values to Hebrew letters), *notarikon* (interpreting words based on their initials), and *temurah* (the permutation of letters) to uncover hidden meanings in the Hebrew Bible, especially the *Torah*. The last major element is the Mystical Union and Divine Illumination. Based on this, *Kabbalists* seek a direct, personal experience of the divine through meditation, prayer, and contemplation. They believe that through ascension along the paths of the *Sefiroth*, a mystic can achieve union with God and understand the secrets of creation. While *Qaballah* originated within Judaism, it has influenced many other religious and mystical traditions, including Christian mysticism, alchemy, the occult, and various forms of Western esotericism.

Christian Encounter with Occult Phenomenon: The *Qaballah* Experience

The encounter between Christianity and the occult phenomenon of *Qaballah* is complex, intriguing, and often full of tension, as it raises questions about the boundaries between sacred and profane knowledge, the relationship between faith and mystical experience, and the intersection of religious and occult practices. This work will look into the development of *Qaballah*, its influence on Christian thought and practice, and the ways in which Christianity has interacted with or confronted occult phenomena through the channel of *Kabbalistic* teachings. Occult knowledge as a systematic representation of theory and practice is part and parcel of our human heritage and as such, must claim the attention of christian scholars in particular those who perceive occultism as demonic. One of the basic phenomena in occult theory and practice is the Hebrew *Qabalah*. Pragmatically, all works on magic of the western tradition pay tribute to the *kaballah* as the source of their inspiration. The same Jewish people that gave the world the great religious heritage of the Bible have done no less in contributing the *kaballah* to the wealth of documented occultism (hidden knowledge).

In the occult system of knowledge, the student has to set up the yardsticks with which to ascertain and verify the data he is presented with. An American writer Regardie (1932) on *The Tree of Life: An Illustrated Study in Magic* once said, “on each student, therefore, is the task incumbent to ascertain for himself what must be considered true and reliable, and set up on his own score an incontrovertible standard of reference. And this standard must be spiritual experience. For this reason has the *kaballistic* tree of life been adopted as the model of practical magic, since it is, in the first place, open to systematic and constructive classification, and because it provides what may suitably be called a magical alphabet...”. *Kaballah* is an ancient teachings of the Judaism and how they can be applied universally.

Christian interest in *Qaballah* began in earnest during the Renaissance, when intellectuals and religious thinkers rediscovered ancient texts and sought to integrate mystical and occult traditions with Christian theology. Christian *Kabballists*, or those who engaged with the *Qaballah* from a Christian perspective, often saw *Kabballistic* ideas as a means to deepen their understanding of God, creation, and salvation. They sought to harmonize *Kaballah* with Christian doctrines, often focusing on the mystical interpretation of the Bible and the nature of divine light and illumination.

Renaissance Christian *Kaballah*

During the Renaissance, the work of scholars like Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494) was crucial in bringing *Kaballah* into Christian intellectual circles. Pico, a Christian philosopher and theologian, sought to reconcile various mystical and philosophical traditions, including Neoplatonism, Hermeticism, and *Kaballah*. He argued that all major religious traditions, including Christianity, contained common elements of truth, and that *Kaballah* held hidden keys to understanding God's divine plan.

Pico's interest in *Kaballah* was not just intellectual but also spiritual. He believed that *Kabballistic* teachings could lead to a deeper, more direct experience of God, and he sought to integrate *Kabballistic* symbolism and numerology with Christian teachings, especially those surrounding the nature of Christ and the Trinity. For example, Pico and other Renaissance Christian *Kabballists* interpreted the *Sefiroth* and the Tree of Life as symbols for the Christian Godhead, with each sphere corresponding to a different aspect of the divine. The *Sefiroth* were often equated with the roles of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, while the figure of Christ was seen as the embodiment of divine light.

The Mystical and Occult Use of *Qaballah*

As Christian *Kaballah* continued to develop, it began to influence various mystical and occult traditions, particularly in the fields of alchemy, magic, and the Hermetic arts. During the 16th and 17th centuries, *Kabballistic* ideas were integrated into occult practices such as ceremonial magic, divination, and astrology. Figures like Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa, Christian Rosenkreuz (the legendary founder of the Rosicrucians), and Eliphas Lévi explored *Kaballah* alongside Christian mysticism, seeing it as a tool for achieving spiritual enlightenment and practical power.

In these occult contexts, the *kaballah* was often seen as a system that could unlock the hidden forces of the universe and facilitate communication with divine or supernatural beings. The *Tree of Life* became a symbolic representation of the occult path, with its various *Sefiroth* and paths corresponding to different spiritual or magical stages. Many Christian occultists sought to combine elements of *Kaballah* with Christian rituals and teachings, believing that they could access divine wisdom and transcend the material world.

One of the more well-known manifestations of Christian *Kabballistic* thought in the occult is the practice of *Qabalistic* Christianity. This approach to Christianity sought to blend the mystical traditions of *Kaballah* with Christian mysticism, using *Kabballistic* techniques such as **meditation**, **contemplation**, and **prayer** to access deeper levels of spiritual knowledge and divine truth. In this sense, *Kaballah* was not viewed as incompatible with Christian faith, but rather as a way of enriching and deepening Christian spirituality.

The Hebrew *Qaballah*, a Mystical Structure of the Universe

The *Qabalah* was the artistic description of the mystery of the universe and of its creation by God, in a mandala or image depicted on a canvas as circles of cosmic energy arranged along 3 columns or pillars of cosmic equilibrium. A little knowledge of Hebrew mysticism is very necessary for an adequate appreciation of the art and structure involved in the religious art of the Jews. (Arazu: 2008). According to Halevi (1974), in his book *Adam and the Kabalistic Tree*, *Kaballah* is the name of a body of esoteric knowledge. Its origin is the inner teaching of Judaism. Its concern is God, the Universe and humanity, and their mutual interrelation. Tradition has it that it was given by the archangel Raziel to Adam and Eve, after they had been cast out of Eden, so that they might regain entrance to paradise, which was later found by the prophet Enoch and eventually became a foundation text for *Kabballistic* magic and understanding of the universe. In Jewish *kaballah*, Archangel Raziel is the “Angel of Mystery” and the “keeper of Secrets,” associated with *Chokhmah/Hochman* (Wisdom) in the *Kabballistic* Tree of

Life. Raziel is believed to have stood near God's throne, recording divine secrets that were later compiled into the *Sefer Raziel HaMalakh* (Book of Raziel the Angel). Raziel's name means "God is my Mystery," reflecting his role as the revealer of divine secrets and esoteric knowledge. (<https://www.learnreligions.com>). This Torah or teaching has been passed on over the generations, although nearly lost from time to time. It was believed that Abraham was initiated into the tradition by Melchizedek, who had neither father or mother, indicating that he was a supernatural being. Some say he was Enoch, the first fully realised human being. From Abraham the knowledge was passed on through the patriarchs to Moses, who transmitted it to Joshua and the elders. It was then taught by a line of priests, prophets and rabbis. It had changed its outer form from period to period, the teaching nevertheless maintained its essential instruction on the purpose and composition of existence and humanity's role. By the Middle Ages, it had taken on the language of philosophy which, combined with biblical symbolism, came to be called *Kabbalah* or "What has been received". (<https://www.kabbalahsociety.org/PDFs/halevi1.pdf>). "*Kabbalah*" means "to receive". It is the inner teaching of Judaism. Its concern is the knowledge of God, the universe and man, and their relationship... its basis is in the Bible although the system is never directly outlined except when illustrated by such example as the design of the seven-branched candle-stick of Moses, King David's blessing on Solomon, the vision of Ezekiel, the Book of Proverbs... the Dead sea Scrolls, the Talmud... the *Sefer Yezirah* and the *Zohar*". (Arazu: 2008)

According to Arazu (2008), the *Qabalah* contains a complicated diagram called the **Tree of Life**. This diagram is a device for understanding the universe, God and man. It is a psychological glyph or *mandala* (image) with which the practitioner identifies in moments of mental concentration. Like a filling cabinet, its ten stations or points of energy concentration, which have specific Hebrew names, become the focal areas of attention and for recognizing what is happening to the individual and to his world. With practice, one can experience his higher self where it is located on the Tree of Life. The experiences possible at this point, vary with different individuals and can best be described as mystic. Meditation directed through the glyph of the Tree of Life aims at knowing reality in itself, not depending on ordinary sense knowledge.

The mode of knowing in occultism is spiritual experience which is attained through guided and approved methods of mental and psychological concentration. Depending on the personal gifts of the individual, once the *chakras* (gates) of the inner self are opened, there is no gain saying what insights, communications and extra-ordinary knowledge of reality could follow. The occult mode of knowing gives the christian practitioner a good opportunity for tasting and seeing that the Lord is good.

Occult epistemology harps on the acquisition by the practitioner of a new faculty for knowing or experiencing reality. For lack of better terminology this faculty is referred to as 'magical' not in the pejorative sense. Those who are not able or who are unwilling to acquire this faculty are not prepared to understand or to appreciate what occult science is all about. The magic of the said faculty is explained by another occult scientist, Fortune (1974):

It is the aim of that branch of esoteric science which is popularly called magic, to obtain control of conditions upon one plain by acting upon the force of the plain immediately above it, which acts as causal plane to the lower one. White magic is distinguished as that exploitation of knowledge which aims at harmonising and uplifting existence along the lines of advancing evolution, and which, though it may concentrate its efforts upon a particular point, excludes from its benefits nothing which by its nature is capable of receiving them. Black magic may be defined as that use of superior knowledge which endeavours to cause any section of existence to return to a phase of evolution below that to which it has attained, or which attempts to benefit any special section of manifestation at the expense of the rest.

There is a morality in the above quotation which the christian and any right-minded person must take note of. Magic as a power is an indifferent operation which can follow the right path (white magic) or the left (black magic). The christian is by his calling bound to follow the right path and to do his best to counteract the operations of those who have chosen the left path.

Occult practice involves developing the magical or mystic faculty and using it to apprehend spiritual data and understand the teachings of masters or adepts. The true occult practitioner gets to know and act through the expansion of consciousness beyond the physical plane. Fortune (1974) continues:

those who have the necessary knowledge deliberately entrance themselves in order to obtain extension of consciousness upon planes which they are otherwise unable to contact in the stage of development to which they have attained; but it is little realised the extent to which this expansion of consciousness takes place involuntarily in sleep among persons who have evolved a little beyond the average.

The Magician and the Mystic

St John of the Cross, St Theresa of Avila and of course the recent St Padre Pio are some of the Christian mystics. St Theresa of Vila is More difficult than John of the Cross. This is because St Theresa of Avila speaks under trance and a theologian is called in to take down what she is saying. Those things said under trance are used for mystical

theology. Though She was not well educated in secular studies, yet she teaches PhD students in theology. She was able to get her raised to a level beyond our own ordinary consciousness and she was able to “see”. She saw reality in itself. When she spoke in altered consciousness it was authoritative and so theologians had to take note of what she said. With that we got the seven Castles of the soul which she experienced herself. “In my father’s house there are many mansions”. She saw these mansions within herself. That was her own “tree of life”. That was the *Kaballah* we are talking about. The *kaballah* is you and you can move from the world (mansion) of *Assiah* to *Yetzirah* and from *Briah* to *Atziluth*. (Arazu: 2008)

The mystic experiences that is beyond ordinary human perception, tries to articulate it as best as he could for the benefit of his contemporaries. The magician tries to use such perception to influence events and that is why he keeps the knowledge for himself and for a closed circle of associates.

In her book, *The Training and Work of an Initiate*, Fortune (1930) writes:

The whole subject under consideration is the extension of consciousness to planes of experience which are not available for the physical senses... mysticism aims at the speediest possible attainment of the Divine Union of the soul with its source... The aim of the occultist is to organize and master phenomena and bring them into harmony with the eternal law of the Real.

The Bible’s Book of revelation is a mystico-occult manual. From beginning to the end one is face to face with the messages and visions vouchsafed to an adept, John, on the Island of Patmos.

In his vision of heaven in chapter 4, John heard a voice speaking to him like a trumpet saying ‘come up higher, and I will show you what must take place after this’. John continues to narrate:

“At once I was in the spirit, and lo, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne! And he who sat there appeared like jasper and carnelian, and round the throne was a rainbow that looked like an emerald...”

The voice that John heard invited him to travel upwards. He did not travel physically. That was why he was in the spirit “at once”. What he saw after that, were not perceived with the physical organs of sight. But they appeared in physically describable forms or shape. An occultist would not be mere witness as John seem to be, letting things happen to him. He would participate in the drama in order to return to the physical plane with more than a message. Aristotelians’ disbelieve in the magic faculty as a means of perceiving beyond sense data.

Magic and Aristotle’s Contribution

Scholars of Aristotle and of the scholastic philosophy that got inspiration from his works, could find difficulties with the idea of the magic faculty for perceiving beyond sense data. This is as a result of two key principles which are held sacred by the school men and which most christian philosophers accept as valid:

(a) *Quidquid percipitur, ad modum percipientis percipitur* (Whatever is perceived, is perceived according to the mode of the perceiver) and

(b) *Nihil in intellectu nisi in sensu* (there is nothing in the intellect which was not first in the senses).

The first principle confesses that man does not know reality as it is in itself. It believes that man achieves only knowledge of reality presented to him by his limited (not to speak of defective) sense organs and faculties. It is common knowledge that our senses do not give us objective reality. That is why we speak of optical illusions and hallucinations. The reality we know is not reality in itself but reality as presented to us by the limited means at our disposal. Science tries to circumvent this obstacle constituted by the senses to arrive at what becomes scientific truth. The magical faculty is employed to arrive at spiritual truth and to use that knowledge for good and ill.

For Aristotle and the school men, the soul is **the form of the body**. The soul plus the prime matter (material *prima*), plus existence, equals to the individual man. The soul has spiritual and psychological powers for knowing things but the knowledge is conditioned to depend on the bodily organs and the senses for all of its information. The senses are, therefore, absolute pre-conditions for intellectual knowledge. In this view, Aristotle was reacting against his master Plato, for whom innate ideas were possible and for whom the mind did not come into being in individual human beings as a *tabula rasa* (clean slate).

Magic and Plato’s Contribution

Plato was an occultist. Occultism holds that not all that is in the mind arrives there via the senses and in one life period or time. The magical or mystical faculty has no absolute dependence on sense knowledge. Both the mystic and the occultist are like the unique individual in Plato’s Allegory of the Cave who has escaped from the world of *maya* (illusion) or of the cave to contemplate the essences of things in the reality of sunshine:

The world of our sight is like the habitation in prison, the firelight there to the sunlight here, the ascent and the view of the upper world is the rising of the soul into the world of mind... At least what appears to me is, that in the world of the known last of all (the end of our search), is the idea of the good, and with what toil to the seen! And seen, this must be inferred to be the cause of all right and beautiful things for all, which gives birth to light and the king of light in the world of sight, and in the world

of mind, herself the queen produces truth and reason; and she must be seen by one who is to act with reason publicly or privately. (Great Dialogue of Plato).

“The world of the sight” is this our physical environment and Plato says it is like living in a cave or prison. The candle light in the prison is what the sun is like in this allegory. The physical sun helps our senses to perceive individual things and forms. “The ascent and the view of the upper world”, in other words, the coming out of the cave or prison into the wider world of sunshine, away from the candle light, is the process of acquisition of knowledge of reality beyond sense experience. It is the “rising of the soul into the world of mind”, or “world of the unknown”. The world of the senses is one of shadows. The idea of the Good which is the sun “in the world of mind” produces truth and reason and is the cause of beautiful things and of even the physical sun of our sense experience. To understand Plato, one must make God the take-off point, the Absolute reality, and consider reality as getting less real as one moves from God to the physical entities of our sense experience. (Arazu: 2008)

The human being who arrives at being able to concentrate on spiritual entities in the spiritual planes, to the point where they become real to him as they are real from God’s point of view, is a mystic. Plato was one. If such a human being, like St. Paul and the author of Revelation, goes further to manipulate or use this extra-ordinary knowledge and consequent expertise for the benefit of human society, he is a white magician. Fortune (1974) was very much aware of this development in man:

“Few enlightened people identify themselves with their physical bodies, but many can live in their emotions; some can think freely and coherently upon concrete subjects, but only a few can reason in terms of the abstract, and only one or two in a generation can experience the intuitions of the spiritual plane in such a way as to be able to think in terms of inceptive and unmanifest thought”.

Plato would accept this testimony of Dion Fortune. The mystic and the occult adept are among “the one or two in a generation” who can “experience the intuitions of the spiritual plane in such a way as to be able to think in terms of inceptive and unmanifest thought”. Everybody has the innate ability to achieve this feat, but very few are prepared to undergo the strict discipline in terms of the austere life style and rigorous hours of mental concentration involved. Plato defends the achievements of the few while Aristotle fights for the justification of the experience of the majority who reject or simply ignore the mystic or occult experience. Both are right from their points of view. The Christian is free to follow the platonic (mystic or occult) path or to opt for the more familiar vocation of Aristotle and the school men.

The Kaballistic Contribution

For the development of the magic faculty or mystic sense, the Hebrew *Kaballa* mentioned earlier is very useful. The tree of life of the *kaballa* besides presenting absolute reality as an abstract figure of ten concentrations of cosmic energy (the ten *Sephiroth*), teaches that all reality emanating from God, who is described as veiled by three concentric circles of “negative existence”, subsists in four distinct worlds or planes of existence. These worlds or planes have been experienced by different adepts and mystics who testify to their reality. They encompass the universe of visible and invisible entities and they are realised in man the microcosm (small universe). These planes are demarcated on the *Kaballistic Tree of Life*:

i. The plane of *Atziluth* (*Olam Atziluth* in Hebrew) is the world of emanations in which are found the first triad of concentration of cosmic energy i.e. *Kether* (Crown), *Hochmah* (Wisdom), and *Binah* (Intelligence). On a Christian adaptation of the Kabalistic Tree of Life attributed to St. Thomas Aquinas, *Kether* is reserved for the *Logos*, the word of the Prologue to St. John’s Gospel. This *Logos* multiplies itself as sparks in individual men. *Chokmah/Hochman* (Wisdom) is the realm of the *Seraphim* who contemplate God, while *Binah* is the realm of the *Cherubim* who contemplate law. *Atziluth* is the world of Archtypes involving consciousness of the highest order.

ii. The Plane of *Briah* (*Olam Briah* in Hebrew) is the world of creation. Here, the Archtypes of *Atziluth* begin to attain possibilities of realization through the activities of beings whose nature are summarized in the two *sephiroth* of *Hesed* (Mercy) and *Gevurah* (rigour or justice). The tree of Thomas Aquinas assigns *Hesed* to the angelic forces of Thrones who implement cosmic law, while to *Gevurah* is assigned the angelic forces of Dominations who prescribe actions.

iii. The Plane of *Yezirah* (*Olam Yezirah* in Hebrew) is where the imaginative ideas of the *Logos*, the spiritual monadic sparks already clothed in the subtle mental substance of the Creative World (*Briah*), are formed into definite coherent entities, the astral models of which give rise to, or serve as the stable foundations of the physical world. In the middle of this place is situated the *Sephiroth* of *Tipheret* (Beauty), the oversoul in Man, the witness of the individual’s thoughts, words and deeds which is most probably what the Igbo call *Chi*. The Tree of Thomas Aquinas assigns *Tipheret* to the angelic forces called the power who govern operations.

iv. The Plane of *Assiah* (*Olam Assiah* in Hebrew) is where all the creative force from God takes concrete shape in physical realities. Here we have the lower triad of *Nezah* (Eternity or Victory), *Hod* (Reverberation, Splendour or Glory) and *Malkuth* (Kingdom). In the middle is the location of the cosmic energy of *Yesod* (Foundation) the

psychological realm of the play of imagination whose light is supplied by the sun of *Tiferet* above. On the tree of Aquinas, *Nezah* is the realm of Angelic forces of virtues who distribute energies; *Hod* is the realm of the Angelic forces of Principalities who look after the welfare of nations; *Yesod* is the realm of the Archangels who look after the welfare of great men and movements; *Malkuth* is the location of the Angels who are the messengers and guardians of men. Halevi (1974) writes,

... the *cabala* and its ideas had a powerful influence on christendom. The church was at that point in need of reassurance for its more intelligent clergy, who were being disturbed by the quality of ideas coming from Muslim and Jewish universities and were consequently finding that faith was not enough. Thomas Aquinas the catholic scholar found the solution in his study of Judaism, which combines the *kabalistic* work of Dionysius the Areopagite with that of Aristotle. Out of this, he was able to formulate a whole theology which was later to be grafted into church teaching". Thomas Aquinas himself writes: "The universe is made up of corporeal and spiritual creatures. Consequently the spiritual creatures were so created as to bear relationship to the corporeal creature. Hence, it was fitting for angels to be created in the highest corporeal place, as presiding over all corporeal nature.... They were made in the corporeal place in order to show their relationship to corporeal nature, and they are by their power in touch with bodies. When Aquinas relate angels with corporeal existence it becomes problematic whether the reference is to prime matter (material *prima*) or to existing material beings (material *secunda*). Aristotle's very difficult notion of prime matter can be located on the *kaballistic* plane of *Assiah*. The angelic forces distributed over nine of the ten *sephiroth* of the kabalistic Tree of life became the **nine choirs of Angels**. In antiquity the ten *sephiroth* were god-names.

They were a witness to the doctrine of God's immanence in creation or manifestation. The *kaballa* was unique in teaching about god as both immanent in the universe and at the same time transcendent. The ten *Sephiroth* as the lightning flash of Creative Energy, making a zig-zag progress from *kether* to *Malkuth*, was in the process of which what is above is what is below on a different wave of vibration, proclaim the glory of God who is omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient.

The Kabala and God's Transcendence

The *Kabalistic* Tree of Life insists on God's transcendence in spite of His immanence in creation. Above and outside the glyph of the Tree of Life are the three veils or three concentric circles of Negative Existence. They are referred to as Negative because the uncreated cannot share the term "Existence" with the created in a univocal sense. The scholastic via *Negationis* (the way of negation) as one way of knowing God, which corresponds with the Hindu understanding of the divinity as Not-this-Not. That (*Neti-Neti*) describes the divinity as not comparable with the beings of the world of manifestation. The *Kaballa* describes the three veils that hide the uncreated and does not describe the uncreated itself:

- a) Above the *Kether* is the first veil- *Ain Suph Aur* (Limitless Light);
- b) Above this is *Ain Suph* (Limitlessness)
- c) Lastly comes *Ain* (Void)

In itself the uncreated or the unmanifested is prior to number. Before creation there was no number. The three veils are referred to as three concentric circles prior to number. Before number was zero. When God decided to create, the desire appeared as number one (*Kether*). The other nine *sephiroth* followed, ending in one and zero (ten). The *Kaballa* demonstrates God's existence even in numbers. The *kaballist* thinks God, talks God, proves God, lives God and understands himself and everything else as ultimately God. The Christian is dumbfounded by the data discovered in occultism.

The Problematic Nature of Qaballah in Christianity

While some Christians were drawn to *Kabbalah* as a means of deepening their faith, others saw it as a dangerous and heretical occult practice (Daniels, 2009). The Church's relationship with *Kaballistic* teachings has historically been one of suspicion, largely due to the occult nature of many *Kaballistic* practices and the association of *Kaballah* with magical and mystical traditions that were seen as incompatible with orthodox Christianity. (Idel, 2005).

The Catholic Church, particularly during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, had a long history of condemning occult practices, including astrology, alchemy, and magic, many of which had been influenced by *Kaballistic* thought. The Church viewed these practices as dangerous and heretical, often associating them with witchcraft and the works of Satan (cf. Mbiti, 1969, on African perspectives on spirituality). This created a tension between Christian mysticism and the use of *Kabbalah* in occult rituals

The Protestant Reformation added another layer of complexity to this issue. Reformers like Martin Luther and John Calvin strongly opposed any practices that deviated from scripture, and they were critical of the mystical and esoteric elements that had crept into Christianity (Luther, 1520; Calvin, 1536). For them, the use of *Kabbalah* and other occult systems was a form of idolatry or superstition that threatened the purity of the Christian faith (McGrath, 2004; cf. Idowu, 1962, on African traditional religion and Christianity).

Theological Concerns and the Challenge of Syncretism

One of the primary theological concerns regarding the Christian encounter with *Qaballah* was the potential for syncretism - the blending of Christian doctrine with non-Christian mystical or occult practices (cf. Okure, 2004, on inculturation in African Christianity). Critics feared that such practices would undermine the central tenets of Christianity, such as the divinity of Christ, the authority of Scripture, and the necessity of faith for salvation (Grudem, 1994).

Scholem (1974) was emphatic when he affirmed that the most contentious issue was how *Kabbalah*, with its non-Christian roots and emphasis on esoteric knowledge, could be harmonized with the core message of Christianity. For many, the pursuit of hidden knowledge through *Kaballah* seemed to contradict the Christian emphasis on the simplicity of the gospel, grace, and personal relationship with God through Christ (cf. Elaigwu, 2003, on African Christian theology). The danger of using *Kabbalah* as a tool to gain power or wisdom apart from Christ was seen as a direct challenge to Christian teachings about divine revelation and salvation (Packer, 1973).

Within the Christian circles, however, engagement with *kaballah* is still met with caution. Some contemporary Christian mystics and scholars study *qaballistic* texts from an academic or comparative religious standpoint, while others attempt to integrate certain *Kaballistic* practices (such as meditation and contemplation) with Christian spirituality, viewing them as tools for personal transformation or deeper spiritual understanding.

However, most mainstream Christian denominations maintain a cautious stance toward *Kabalah* and other occult practices, holding that true spiritual wisdom can only be found through faith in Jesus Christ and the scriptures, not through secret or mystical knowledge (cf. Oduyoye, 1984, on African Christian theology and spirituality). Just as the Bible is rooted in Jewish mysticism, so it is with the *Kabbala* except that *kabbala* uses symbolism, meditation and ethical actions to achieve a profound connection with the divine and spiritual transformation. *Kabbala* claims to reveal the hidden, mystical dimension of the Hebrew Bible and traditional rabbinic texts, interpreting their inner meaning through secrete knowledge, numerology and spiritual techniques. According to Arazu (2003), the Jews handed the Bible to the Christian but did not hand in the code for unlocking and understanding the Bible. Reason being that it is not good to hand in the food of the According to the *Kabbalists*, this Bible describes the how of the creation, while the *Kabbala* seeks to explain the why using the divine code names, letters, and accents of the Hebrew text as powerful too to unlocking the spiritual depth. It aims to explain the hidden processes of creation and the nature of the supreme being, God, that are not directly revealed in the biblical narrative. But an ignorant and uninitiated will see *kabbala* as a mystical system that goes beyond and even contradicts the plain and direct teaching of the Bible. Thus, *Kabballistic* practices are sometimes associated with derogative “occult” practices, such as the use of talismans, magical charms, which Christians interpret as an attempt to exert control over man and the world rather than submitting to the will of God. Some Christian views state that kabballa is incompatible with Christian beliefs, citing differences in the understanding of God (*Ain Sof* vs. the Biblical God) the concept of reincarnation versus resurrection, and its perceived focus on secret knowledge rather than faith in Jesus christ, according to Christianity. (<https://www.quora.com/How-do-the-Kabbalah-the-Bible-and-the-Torah-differ>).

The Tree of Life and Adam: Creation and the Fall

In the context of the Adam’s narrative, the **Tree of Life** has a foundational role. According to the Bible, Adam and Eve were placed in the Garden of Eden by God, where they had access to two significant trees: the **Tree of Life** and the **Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil** (Genesis 2:9). The first tree represents eternal life, divine wisdom, and unity with God, while the second symbolizes the choice of human autonomy and moral judgment. The tragic act of disobedience, eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, brought about the fall of Adam and Eve, separating their connection to the Tree of Life and resulting in their expulsion from Eden. (Scholem: 1996)

In the *Kaballistic* interpretation of the creation story, Adam's initial state represents an ideal harmony with divine energy as the image of God and partakes of the divine light. The spiritual fall, as understood in Kabbalah, is not merely a moral failure but a **cosmic disruption** that alters the flow of divine energy. Adam's disobedience interrupts the intended flow of grace and connection from the higher realms of (*Kether, Hockma/Chochmah, and Binah*) to the lower realms of (*Yesod and Malkuth*), causing a spiritual breach. (Kaplan: 1995)

In this case, the Tree of Life in *Kaballah* can be seen as a map of Adam's fall and subsequent hope for redemption. According to Neumann (2018), the *Kaballistic* notion of *Tikkun Olam* (the repair of the world) involves the idea that humanity (as represented by Adam) are tasked with mending the spiritual interruption caused by the fall. This task of restoration is symbolized through the ascent back up the Tree of Life, striving to regain a harmonious relationship with God and divine wisdom. Adam had played significant role in the *kaballistic* episode.

The Role of Adam's Figure in the *Kabbalistic* Cosmology

In *Kabbalistic* thought, Adam is not simply the first human being in a literal sense, but also a **symbolic figure** representing the first cosmic man, known as *Adam Kadmon*. *Adam Kadmon* is a metaphysical archetype of humanity, representing the initial blueprint of creation in which all potential of existence is contained (Scholem, 1941). The etymology of *Adam Ha-Rishon* is dust that is unfit for sowing, as it is written, "And the Lord God formed the man from dust of the earth. (Gen. 2: 7-9) **Adam Kadmon is not the same as the physical Adam Ha-Rishon**. In Lurianic *Kabbalah*, the description of *Adam Kadmon* is anthropomorphic.

Adam Kadmon is sometimes described as a spiritual vessel containing the divine light of the *Sefirot*, and in this way, he is an embodiment of the Tree of Life itself. The structure of *Adam Kadmon* mirrors the Tree of Life, with his head (*Kether*), his mind (*Chochmah* and *Binah*), and his body (the lower *Sefirot*) reflecting the divine attributes in their purest, undivided form (Dan, 2006).

The fall of Adam (as *Adam Ha-Rishon*) in the garden is seen in *Kabbalah* as a tragic event that led to the fragmentation of *Adam Kadmon's* original, unified form. The **breaking of the vessels** (a key *Kabbalistic* concept) is linked to this fall. It refers to the shattered state of the divine light after Adam's disobedience, which scatters the divine energy throughout the world. The *Kabbalistic* task of humanity is to **restore** and **gather** these sparks of divine light, bringing them back together and returning them to their source (Idel, 1990)

Thus, in *Kabbalistic* thinking, Adam's role is central not just in terms of human history but in the cosmic drama of creation, fall, and redemption. He is both the beginning and the end, a figure that contains the divine potential for restoration and unity. In *kaballa*, the symbol of first man was called "primordial man", "most high man" or "supreme man", of which the attributes now infer to divinity.

The *Christological* Dimension of the Tree of Life

In Christian *Kabbalah*, the figure of **Jesus Christ** often plays a key role in the redemptive process of humanity, similar to the story of Adam. Some Christian *Kabbalists* see Christ as the ultimate bridge between the divine and the human, embodying the Tree of Life and providing the means for humans to ascend the *Sefirot* through His life, death, and resurrection (Wolfson, 2006, Couliano, 1987). Here, Christ represents the fulfillment of Adam's potential: He restores the broken connection between humanity and God, healing the wounds caused by the fall. As the "New Adam," Christ's role in Christian *Kabbalistic* thought could be seen as one who transcends the fall, guiding humanity back to the Tree of Life and eternal life (Dan, 2011).

Conclusion

Exploring *Qaballah* and its connection to Christian thought and practice reveals a rich quality of mysticism, theology, and spirituality. Through *Qaballah's* lens, we gain a deeper understanding of the divine, the universe, and our place within it. The Tree of Life, with its ten *Sefirot*, is a powerful symbol of the interconnectedness of life and our potential for growth and transformation. As we ponder the story of Adam and the *Christological* dimension of the Tree of Life, we're reminded of the profound impact these teachings have on our understanding of the human experience. The story of Adam's fall and the concept of *Tikkun Olam* emphasize the importance of our role in shaping our spiritual journey and contributing to the world's healing.

Digging into *Qaballah* and its Christian interpretations offers a significance perspective on spirituality and our quest for meaning and connection with the divine. As we navigate this complex tradition, we're invited to deepen our understanding of life's mysteries and cultivate a profound appreciation for the interconnectedness of all things. The mystery of *Qaballah* and its relationship to Christian thought and practice is a journey of self-discovery and spiritual growth. It's a path that offers insights into the nature of the divine and our place in the world. As we continue on this journey, we may find ourselves more deeply connected to the world around us and more profoundly aware of the mysteries that shape our lives.

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