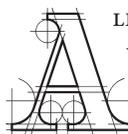


The Transmission of Esoteric Knowledge & the Origins of Modern Freemasonry, or Was Mackey Right?

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 ALBERT GALLATIN MACKEY (1807–1881) PRESENTS A STUDY IN CONTRAST, when it comes to his reputation as a Masonic scholar. In his own day, Mackey was considered a brilliant contributor to Masonic scholarship, for works such as *The Symbolism of Freemasonry* and his seven-volume *History of Freemasonry*. Following his death, with the demise of the “Romantic School” of Masonic history, his star has fallen quite low, as viewed from some quarters. The entry on his life in the current edition of *Coil’s Masonic Encyclopedia* seems typical of the opinions of many of today’s Masonic historians:

[Mackey’s works] contained much error and some of it pronounced. Indeed, it seems that the wider and more obvious the chasm the more likely Mackey was to fall into it. ... His words came faster than his reading could supply facts for them and he must have deceived himself into believing that anything that flowed so smoothly as his rhetoric must necessar-

ily be factually as good.... Oliver had taught him that Freemasonry had arisen from the Patriarchal religion and, therefore, was little more than a Hebrew institution blurred somewhat by the haze of elapsed centuries.... At first, he followed Preston and Oliver. He next succumbed to the Ancient Mysteries, Magism, Paganism, Egyptology, and Hermeticism, so that his *Symbolism of Freemasonry* and *Masonic Ritualist* are in places revolting in their surrender to doctrines of sun-worship and sex worship.”¹

This is a remarkable statement for a reference book, especially in its mind-reading of Mackey (“he must have deceived himself into believing ...”). The entry’s author did not hesitate to impute to Mackey something close to dementia (“He next succumbed ...”) and perversion (his books supposedly being “revolting in their surrender to doctrines of sun-worship and sex worship”). In relation to Mackey’s position on Masonry’s antiquity, the entry’s author felt free to lampoon Mackey’s thought. In short, the entry is noteworthy for its unconcealed disdain of Mackey. Then again, this attitude is reflected in much more contemporary judgments of Mackey, such as that of the author of *Freemasons for Dummies*, who described the work of Mackey and others in this way: “In short, they wrote a lot of crap.”²

It is clear which aspect of Mackey’s writing has attracted this disdain (not that it excuses the vitriol). Mackey did indeed posit a direct connection between the esoteric wisdom traditions of antiquity and modern Freemasonry, a chain starting with the biblical Adam and extending through the patriarchs Seth, Enoch, Noah, Shem, and Abraham, continuing through Moses to Solomon, and continuing through the Roman artificers, the medieval Knights Templar, and the Rosicrucian movement of the late Renaissance and early Enlightenment period. Certainly, considered in a simple manner, this seems ludicrous in the light of contemporary historical thinking.

However, that which seems ridiculous in its simple expression may actually be quite reasonable from a more subtle or sophisticated point of view. As it happens, a number of discoveries over just the last century has cast much of what Mackey had to say in a different light. Thus, we are led to a question that would have been unthinkable to ask in a serious journal even just a few decades ago:

Was Mackey *right*?

In certain ways, Mackey was right about the origins of Masonic history. I do not claim that Freemasonry was passed down wholesale from the biblical Adam to the first Grand Lodge in 1717. (Even Mackey did not make that claim, contrary to his detractors.) However, two things have come to light since

Mackey's death: 1) there were substantial traditions in antiquity about esoteric spiritual knowledge possessed by the biblical patriarchs, including knowledge expressed through symbolic initiatory traditions; and, 2) there were widespread underground movements—some of them spanning millenia and continents—that perpetuated esoteric spiritual knowledge, again, sometimes with symbolic initiatory traditions. Although this is not precisely Mackey's vision, it is close enough to rehabilitate, in some degree, Mackey's intellectual reputation. More importantly, the findings that I relate here provide the basis for a different view of Masonic history than the currently dominant view. In turn, this new approach, if widely adopted, would present several benefits.

MACKEY'S PROPOSITIONS ABOUT MASONIC HISTORY

Mackey's position about the origins of Freemasonry were expressed in nineteen numbered propositions in his work, *The Symbolism of Freemasonry*:

1. In the first place, I contend that in the very earliest ages of the world there were existent certain truths of vast importance to the welfare and happiness of humanity, which had been communicated,—no matter how, but,—most probably, by direct inspiration from God to man.
2. These truths principally consisted in the abstract propositions of the unity of God and the immortality of the soul...
3. These truths of God and immortality were most probably handed down through the line of patriarchs of the race of Seth, but were, at all events, known to Noah, and were by him communicated to his immediate descendants.
4. In consequence of this communication, the true worship of God continued, for some time after the subsidence of the deluge, to be cultivated by the Noachidae, the Noachites, or the descendants of Noah.
5. At a subsequent period (no matter when, but the biblical record places it at the attempted building of the tower of Babel), there was a secession of a large number of the human race from the Noachites.
6. These seceders rapidly lost sight of the divine truths which had been communicated to them from their common ancestor, and fell into the most grievous theological errors, corrupting the purity of the worship and the orthodoxy of the religious faith which they had primarily received.
7. These truths were preserved in their integrity by but a very few in the patriarchal line, while still fewer were enabled to retain only dim and glimmering portions of the true light.
8. The first class was confined to the direct descendants of Noah, and the second was to be found among the priests and philosophers, and, perhaps, still later, among the poets of the heathen nations, and among those whom they initiated into the secrets of these truths...

9. The system or doctrine of the former class has been called by Masonic writers the “Pure or Primitive Freemasonry” of antiquity, and that of the latter class the “Spurious Freemasonry” of the same period....

10. The masses of the people, among the Gentiles especially, were totally unacquainted with this divine truth, which was the foundation stone of both species of Freemasonry, the pure and the spurious, and were deeply immersed in the errors and falsities of heathen belief and worship.

11. These errors of the heathen religions were not the voluntary inventions of the peoples who cultivated them, but were gradual and almost unavoidable corruptions of the truths which had been at first taught by Noah....

12. But those among the masses—and there were some—who were made acquainted with the truth, received their knowledge by means of an initiation into certain sacred Mysteries, in the bosom of which it was concealed from the public gaze.

13. These Mysteries existed in every country of heathendom, in each under a different name, and to some extent under a different form, but always and everywhere with the same design of inculcating, by allegorical and symbolic teachings, the great Masonic doctrines of the unity of God and the immortality of the soul....

14. These two divisions of the Masonic Institution which were defined in the 9th proposition, namely, the pure or primitive Freemasonry among the Jewish descendants of the patriarchs, who are called, by way of distinction, the Noachites, or descendants of Noah, because they had not forgotten nor abandoned the teachings of their great ancestor, and the spurious Freemasonry practised among the pagan nations, flowed down the stream of time in parallel currents, often near together, but never commingling.

15. But these two currents were not always to be kept apart, for, springing, in the long anterior ages, from one common fountain,—that ancient priesthood of whom I have already spoken in the 8th proposition,—and then dividing into the pure and spurious Freemasonry of antiquity, and remaining separated for centuries upon centuries, they at length met at the building of the great temple of Jerusalem, and were united, in the instance of the Israelites under King Solomon, and the Tyrians under Hiram, King of Tyre, and Hiram Abif. The spurious Freemasonry, it is true, did not then and there cease to exist. On the contrary, it lasted for centuries subsequent to this period; for it was not until long after, and in the reign of the Emperor Theodosius, that the pagan Mysteries were finally and totally abolished. But by the union of the Jewish or pure Freemasons and the Tyrian or spurious Freemasons at Jerusalem, there was a mutual infusion of their respective doctrines and ceremonies, which eventually terminated in the abolition of the two distinctive systems and the establishment of a new one, that may be considered as the immediate prototype of the present institution [i.e., modern Freemasonry]....

16. But another important modification was effected in the Masonic system at the building of the temple. Previous to the union which then took place, the pure Freemasonry of the Noachites had always been speculative, but resembled the present organization in no other way than in the cultivation of the same abstract principles of divine truth.

17. The Tyrians, on the contrary, were architects by profession, and, as their leaders were disciples of the school of the spurious Freemasonry, they, for the first time, at the temple of Solomon, when they united with their Jewish contemporaries, infused into the speculative science, which was practised by the latter, the elements of an operative art.

18. Therefore the system continued thenceforward, for ages, to present the commingled elements of operative and speculative Masonry. We see this in the *Collegia Fabrorum*, or Colleges of Artificers, first established at Rome by Numa...; in the Jewish sect of the Essenes, who wrought as well as prayed, and who are claimed to have been the descendants of the temple builders, and also, and still more prominently, in the Travelling Freemasons of the middle ages, who identify themselves by their very name with their modern successors, and whose societies were composed of learned men who thought and wrote, and of workmen who labored and built. And so for a long time Freemasonry continued to be both operative and speculative.

19. But another change was to be effected in the institution to make it precisely what it now is, and, therefore, at a very recent period (comparatively speaking), the operative feature was abandoned, and Freemasonry became wholly speculative. The exact time of this change is not left to conjecture. It took place in the reign of Queen Anne, of England, in the beginning of the eighteenth century. Preston gives us the very words of the decree which established this change, for he says that at that time it was agreed to "that the privileges of Masonry should no longer be restricted to operative Masons, but extend to men of various professions, provided they were regularly approved and initiated into the order."

The nineteen propositions here announced contain a brief but succinct view of the progress of Freemasonry from its origin in the early ages of the world, simply as a system of religious philosophy, through all the modifications to which it was submitted in the Jewish and Gentile races, until at length it was developed in its present perfected form. During all this time it preserved unchangeably certain features that may hence be considered as its specific characteristics, by which it has always been distinguished from every other contemporaneous association, however such association may have simulated it in outward form. These characteristics are, first, the doctrines which it has constantly taught, namely, that of the unity of God and that of the immortality of the soul;

and, secondly, the manner in which these doctrines have been taught, namely, by symbols and allegories.”³

At a high level of abstraction, Mackey’s most important propositions may be reduced, for our purposes, to three basic claims about Masonic history:

1. knowledge of the reality of God and the immortality of the soul was transmitted through a line of biblical personages, from Adam to Solomon and beyond;

2. after the biblical period, this knowledge was preserved, over the course of human history, in the civilizations of late antiquity and on until the European Enlightenment, through societies of esoteric knowledge and initiation, culminating in modern Freemasonry; and,

3. the manner of transmission involved initiations employing symbolism and allegory. In the late nineteenth century, the first claim was attacked when mainstream scholars began to reject the historicity of the Bible. At the same time, the second and third claims were rejected by Masonic historians, because of the lack of documentary evidence. However, in our own era, evidence has accumulated that supports aspects of all three of Mackey’s basic claims.

TRADITIONS OF HIDDEN WISDOM AND BIBLICAL PERSONAGES

It is crucially important to understand that, for the purposes of considering Mackey’s first claim, it actually *does not matter* whether the biblical figures he mentioned (Adam, Seth, and so on) actually existed. What matters is that communities of esoteric knowledge sprung up *around* these biblical figures. These communities passed on their esoteric knowledge *in the name of* these figures. This activity had the same practical effect as if the figures themselves had existed and passed on their esoteric knowledge personally.

Mackey traced Freemasonry back to the person whom he believed to be the earliest human being, Adam. In Mackey’s view, as informed by the Bible, Adam was taught sacred truths by God; Adam taught these truths to his righteous son Seth; Seth taught these truths to his righteous descendants, notably Enoch; Enoch passed these teachings to *his* righteous descendants, particularly Noah; Noah, in turn, passed the teachings to his righteous descendants, especially his son Shem, in whose line of descendants the teaching was preserved, ultimately coming

down to the biblical patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, Jacob—also called Israel—and the twelve sons of Jacob, the progenitors of the twelve tribes of Israel.

Many modern authors simply consider Mackey's notion to be a fairy tale, along with much of the Bible. It is fashionable in our day to consider the narratives of the Hebrew Bible to be simply myths,⁴ which would seemingly make it impossible for Mackey's claim to be true. However, the essence of Mackey's claim does not really require that the biblical patriarchs actually existed; it only requires that certain teachings have been perpetuated in their names.⁵ Let us consider each of these individuals—Adam, Seth, Enoch, Noah, and Abraham—in terms of esoteric knowledge associated with each of them.

ADAM

Adam is only mentioned briefly in the first book of the Hebrew Bible (what Christians would call the Old Testament; see Genesis, chapters 1–5). However, there is a substantial literature regarding Adam as a possessor of esoteric wisdom, although much of this literature has not appeared in English until comparatively recent times. Gnostics of, perhaps, the fourth century AD⁶ (whose writings were discovered in Egypt in the 1940s) claimed that Adam received revelations that he communicated to his son Seth.⁷ Others claimed that Adam received powerful esoteric knowledge from God in a book, delivered by the angel Raziel; this legend is recorded in the Zohar, a central Kabbalistic work first appearing publicly in 1300, although perhaps reflecting much older material.⁸ A work purporting to be the very book delivered to Adam, *The Book of Raziel the Angel*, was published in Hebrew in Amsterdam in 1701 but reflects material composed at least as far back as the early thirteenth century,⁹ and possibly much earlier; this book was published in full in English translation only in 2000.¹⁰

What do we learn from this? *Whether or not Adam existed*, it is certainly the case that there was a substantial tradition concerning his esoteric knowledge, much as Mackey said there was. We have documentary proof of this tradition, reaching at least as far back as the fourth century. The communities that transmitted this tradition—*wherever they received it from*—performed exactly the function that Mackey said the patriarch Adam did: these communities transmitted an esoteric teaching about the existence of God and the immortality of the soul. Judging from the illustrations within *The Book of Raziel*, some of these communities transmitted important symbols, throughout Europe, for centuries.

SETH

The Bible declares that Seth was the surviving righteous son of Adam; Seth's birth is dated in the traditional Jewish chronology to the thirty-sixth century BC, and in the traditional Christian chronology to 3874 BC. The Hebrew Bible has less than ten sentences about Seth (Genesis 4:25–26; 5:3–8). However, as it happens, there was a substantial literature about Seth in ancient times. We see examples of this in the Gnostic library, buried in the fourth century and discovered in the 1940s—a literature that speaks of an initiatic rite of Five Seals.¹¹ As I mentioned earlier, Seth is described in these Gnostic documents as having received revelatory knowledge from Adam. *The Zohar* states that Adam passed on to Seth the book of esoteric knowledge that Adam had received from the Lord through the angel Raziel.¹² According to *The Zohar*, Adam also passed on to Seth an esoteric book of his own, *The Book of Adam*.¹³

Whether or not Seth existed, it is certainly the case that there was a substantial esoteric and initiatory tradition concerning Seth's teaching, much as Mackey said there was. The Sethian community was even identified through that name as a distinctive group, if not by themselves, then by certain of the Fathers of the Christian Church in the era following the age of the Apostles.¹⁴ The difference is that Mackey said there was Seth, the man, and Sethians, the community, who practiced and transmitted the tradition; I am saying, from a practical perspective, that the Sethian community was what really transmitted the tradition, whether or not Seth, the man, actually existed. We may never have conclusive evidence about the existence of Seth, the man. However, we have documentary proof of the existence of the Sethians, at least as far back as the second century. However it was that the Sethian communities received their traditions about Seth's esoteric knowledge, they performed exactly the function that Mackey said the patriarch Seth himself did: here, too, these communities transmitted an esoteric teaching about the existence of God and the immortality of the soul. There is strong evidence that the Sethian communities performed symbolic ritual initiations in transmitting this teaching, to boot.

ENOCH

Now consider Enoch (whose disappearance from the Earth is dated in the traditional Jewish chronology to the twenty-eighth century BC, and in the traditional Christian chronology to about 3013 BC). The Hebrew Bible records but a handful of sentences about Enoch (Genesis 5:21–25). We have a small bit of additional material in *The Zohar*, where the legend is recorded that Enoch was in posses-

sion of a book passed down from the days of Adam, that all hidden treasures and “a thousand keys” (that is, keys of knowledge) were entrusted to him, and that he himself transmitted a book, *The Book of Enoch*.¹⁵ This is not much to go on.

However, anciently, there was a large literature on Enoch, all of it lost until relatively recent times. For whatever reason, this literature vanished from mainstream Christianity by about the end of the sixth century. Manuscripts from this literature began appearing in Western Europe many centuries later. In 1773, James Bruce, the Scot explorer (and Freemason), brought to England copies of the Ethiopian *Book of Enoch* (also known as “First Enoch,” or 1 Enoch), which was published in Latin in 1800, and in English in 1821.¹⁶ In 1892, Western European researchers became aware of a Slavonic book of Enoch (2 Enoch), available in manuscripts deep in Eastern Europe, and dating to the first century.¹⁷ A Hebrew contribution to the Enoch literature (3 Enoch) appeared in English translation in 1928.¹⁸

Thus, there was an esoteric tradition associated with Enoch; a tradition that was considered so important that it was preserved in multiple, widely separated locations, from ancient times. We may never have conclusive proof about the existence of Enoch, the man. However, as shown above, we have conclusive proof about far-flung communities who studied and transmitted esoteric wisdom *attributed* to Enoch, at Qumran in the 1st century (as shown by fragments found there of 1 Enoch), in Egypt and Palestine from the 1st century, and thereafter in Eastern Europe (as shown by 2 Enoch), and in Ethiopia from some equally distant time (as shown by 1 Enoch). Thus, these communities spread the word about the esoteric knowledge of Enoch over an area encompassing Ethiopia, Egypt, Palestine, and Russia, at the very least. In their own way, these communities were spectacularly successful in transmitting some of the esoteric knowledge associated with this biblical patriarch, fulfilling the role that Mackey had assigned to Enoch himself.

Incidentally, given that the content of the Enoch literature was largely unknown in Western Europe at the time of the formation of the first Grand Lodge in 1717, one must wonder: where did Freemasons get the inspiration to make Enoch such an important figure in some of the higher degrees? This opens the possibility that there was indeed a substantial esoteric tradition surrounding Enoch, passed along surreptitiously for centuries, as Mackey wrote.

NOAH

Noah raises two questions, that of the famous flood that the Bible attributed to his lifetime, and that of the esoteric knowledge that Mackey said he had. Concerning the flood, recent publications in anthropology and geology suggest that perhaps the biblical account of the flood is not such a fairy tale after all;¹⁹ however, this is secondary to our purposes. Concerning Noah as a figure of esoteric knowledge, there are some indications of this in ancient literature that has come to light in the last century or so. The Gnostic writings from perhaps the fourth century, discovered in the 1940s, contain references to Noah as being “enlightened” or “illuminated.”²⁰ The controversial *Book of Jasher*²¹, first published in English in 1839, states that Noah was in possession of sacred garments, passed down from Adam and Enoch, which bestowed special powers upon the possessor (*Book of Jasher*, 7: 24–30).²²

This demonstrates that esoteric literature dating at least as far back as the fourth century claimed Noah as an enlightened or illuminated being; other literature suggests he was in possession of special garments—a mark of esoteric ritual. Whether or not Noah actually existed, these ideas—illumination, enlightenment, special garments associated with illumination—all were circulated in Noah’s name. The communities that circulated these ideas were essentially performing the role that Mackey ascribed to Noah himself: transmitting esoteric knowledge about God and the soul.

ABRAHAM

Consider Abraham (born, in the traditional Jewish reckoning, in the eighteenth century BC, and in the traditional Christian reckoning, about 2056 BC). A substantial piece of the first book of the Hebrew Bible, the book of Genesis, is devoted to the life of Abraham (Genesis 11:27 to 25:8). However, a much larger ancient literature concerning Abraham exists *outside* the Bible, in Jewish, Christian, Muslim, and even pagan Egyptian sources; much of this literature is of an esoteric nature.²³ Indeed, the oldest piece of Kabbalistic literature, the *Sefer Yetzirah* (Book of Creation [or Formation]) is traditionally credited to Abraham.²⁴ Whether or not Abraham existed, it is certainly the case that there was a substantial esoteric tradition concerning him and his teaching, much as Mackey said there was. The communities who spread these traditions were performing the role that Mackey assigned to Abraham himself: propagating knowledge about the existence of God, and the immortality of the soul.

In sum, we have clear and conclusive proof that there were ancient traditions of esoteric knowledge (and, in some cases, initiatory practices) associated with the names of Adam, Seth, Enoch, Noah, and Abraham. Whether or not these revered figures actually existed as human beings, the traditions associated with their names perpetuated over centuries the principles that God exists, and that the human soul is immortal. (They perpetuated a great deal more besides, but here I am just focusing on the teachings that Mackey focused on.) Frequently, these teachings were conveyed (sometimes blatantly, sometimes subtly) by symbols, allegory, and initiatory practices. All of this is perfectly consistent with Mackey's first and third claims. The only difference in my approach is that the actual existence of these revered individuals is unnecessary for Mackey's first and third claims to be valid: communities passed on these esoteric teachings in the names of Adam and the others, whether or not these patriarchs existed. Now we shall consider Mackey's second claim.

SOCIETIES OF ESOTERIC KNOWLEDGE & INITIATION

Mackey's second claim was that, after the biblical period, various societies perpetuated truths about the existence of God and the immortality of the soul, from antiquity through the era of the European Enlightenment, culminating in the formation of Grand Lodge Freemasonry in 1717. The existence of a few esoteric groups in antiquity was well-established even in Mackey's day. Mackey was well aware of the historical accounts of the Eleusinian initiatory mysteries of ancient Greece. No doubt Mackey knew that the ancient Greek historian Herodotus (fifth century BC) hinted that he had been received into the initiatory mysteries of Egypt, as well as the Greek mysteries of Demeter.²⁵ However, where Mackey had relatively little material to work with concerning esoteric groups of antiquity, we now have small libraries of primary material—that is, materials generated by these esoteric groups themselves.

Since Mackey's death in 1881, a great deal of material has come forth regarding the esoteric and even initiatory practices of many groups in the ancient world. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls²⁶ in the period 1947–1956 revealed the workings of an ascetic group, now called the Qumran sect, which was possibly the Essene group mentioned by the ancient historian Josephus as existing in Palestine in the first century.²⁷ The great majority of these materials only

became available for public study in 1988, and much is yet to be discovered about them; however, it is clear that the Qumran community practiced rituals of initiation and purification.²⁸

A Gnostic library was buried at Nag Hammadi in Egypt, possibly in the fourth century by Christian monks who were ordered to purge their monastery's library of unorthodox works. The discovery of these materials in 1945 brought forth a wealth of esoteric material about this community that scholars are still laboring to understand.²⁹ However, the initiatory character of much of this material is undeniable, and is evident, for example, in the references to anointing, and the rite of Five Seals.³⁰

A noted scriptural scholar in the 1960s, analyzing Christian literature emerging after the days of the apostles, concluded that *the first Christians themselves* had confidential initiatory rituals that had since been lost to history.³¹ This finding did not involve the discovery of ancient manuscripts, but rather the reconsideration of very old writings that long had been ignored.

The Jews of Palestine and Babylon, between the third and seventh centuries AD, had highly developed forms of what could be considered mystical initiation. These are known to us today through the literature of *Hekhalot* ('palace' or 'temple') and *Merkavah* ('chariot') mysticism, and may be considered as either an early form of, or a precursor to, the Kabbalah proper (which most scholars date to the public emergence of *the Zohar* in the thirteenth century).³² Adherents of *Hekhalot* and *Merkavah* mysticism met in groups, and apparently conducted rituals and spiritual exercises. Certainly they were concerned with the transmission of esoteric teachings about the existence of God and the immortality of the soul (and much else besides), possibly in the context of esoteric initiation.

We have evidence of Hermetic societies in Alexandria, Egypt, that used what is now known as the *Corpus Hermeticum*, the body of Hermetic writings in Greek dating to the second or third centuries, although perhaps reflecting older material.³³ These societies transmitted teachings about the existence of God and the immortality of the soul (and much else besides), from a position that bridged Egyptian and Greek perspectives. The question of whether these groups used ritual initiation is a matter of dispute, with some scholars affirming in the strongest terms that they did, while others deny this equally strongly.³⁴ These writings were lost in antiquity, until their rediscovery in AD 1460 during the Italian Renaissance.

Esoteric initiation was not solely the prerogative of the ancients, either. What we now know of the medieval alchemists in Europe, and such esoteric

groups as the Rosicrucians, indicates that something like esoteric initiation was occurring in Christian Europe from the Middle Ages through the Renaissance. Of course, Mackey knew of the Rosicrucians; what he did not know was the role they may have played in the European Enlightenment.³⁵

The practice of ceremonial magic was premised on the existence of God and the immortality of the soul. We now have evidence for the existence of small esoteric communities of practitioners of ceremonial magic, as shown by a variety of sources: ritual texts used by Coptic Christians in Northern Egypt between the first and the twelfth centuries;³⁶ and, magical manuals dating from the Renaissance (and perhaps reflecting older material)³⁷.

A blossoming of scholarship in the twentieth century concerning the Kabbalah demonstrated that a hidden and sophisticated tradition of esoteric knowledge had existed within Judaism for centuries, perhaps millennia, passed from teacher to student privately or in small groups—one manifestation of the initiatory tradition.³⁸ The earliest manifestations of the Zoharic tradition in Kabbalah date no later than the thirteenth century, and may reach back much earlier; this tradition is active in some areas even today.

The late twentieth century explosion in Asian religious studies demonstrates that the symbolic initiatory traditions of, for example, Tibetan Buddhism have been practiced for many centuries, continuing to our own day.³⁹

Historical information discovered in our era indicates that several key English scholars of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were preoccupied with the pursuit of esoteric knowledge, to a degree somewhere between serious interest and obsession. Two noteworthy examples of this interest were Elias Ashmole and Sir Isaac Newton. This last point is worth some extended consideration.

SEVENTEENTH CENTURY ENGLISH ESOTERICISTS

Understanding the mindset of the seventeenth and eighteenth century Speculative Freemasons means understanding the mindset of English gentlemen scholars of this period. Two excellent exemplars are Elias Ashmole, who was definitely a Freemason, and Sir Isaac Newton, who was a monumental scholar, whether he was a Freemason or not.

ELIAS ASHMOLE

Elias Ashmole (1617–1692) noted his initiation as a Freemason in 1646 at a lodge in Warrington, over seventy years before the organization of the first Grand Lodge; the eight people he mentioned as being in the lodge with him at his initiation have all been determined to be ‘gentlemen’, that is, not operative stonemasons.⁴⁰ The received view of Ashmole is expressed by Coil’s entry concerning Ashmole in *Coil’s Masonic Encyclopedia*—an entry noteworthy, not only for what it emphasizes, but for what it deemphasizes:

ASHMOLE, ELIAS. A celebrated English antiquary ... noted Masonically for his two diary entries of 1646 and 1682, and that fact that the earlier of these is the first record we have of the making of a Freemason in an English lodge.... He became interested in astrology by meeting George Wharton and William Lilly in London in 1646, but that gave way later to heraldry and antiquarian research. A number of unwarranted conclusions have been drawn from Ashmole’s membership in the Society [*i.e.*, Freemasonry], for example, it has been said to show the connection of Freemasonry with Rosicrucianism. But there is no proof that Ashmole was a Rosicrucian, although he delved into that and alchemy and all sorts of mysteries and curiosities as an antiquary naturally would do. We have no information, however, that he devoted any considerable part of his time to them or gave them any credence whatever.⁴¹

The author of this entry seems determined to downplay any interest in the esoteric by Ashmole, particularly interest in—*horrors!*—the Rosicrucians. The entry is actually an exercise in a sort of stuttering contradiction: yes, Ashmole was interested in Rosicrucianism—but that was only because he was an antiquarians, and antiquarians are interested in such things—but no, he was never really *that* interested in it. (A psychoanalyst might interpret this as an expression of fear that Ashmole *was* interested in Rosicrucianism and, by extension, other esoteric areas; one might wonder, why this fear?) Beyond the matter of its style, the content of the entry is highly inaccurate.

For a full and detailed account of Ashmole’s life, his esoteric interests (such as Rosicrucianism, and his involvement in Freemasonry, the reader is well advised to consider the detailed research of Frances Yates and Tobias Churton.⁴² Suffice it to say that Ashmole had been interested in esoteric subjects since youth; that he entered into a teacher—student relationship with the alchemist William Backhouse, a relationship so serious that Backhouse made Ashmole his spiritual heir, obligating Ashmole to refer to Backhouse as “father,” and that on the point of death Backhouse passed to Ashmole what he took

to be the secret of the Philosopher's Stone; that Ashmole apparently studied the Rosicrucian manifestos carefully, and wrote a petition of admission to the Rosicrucian brotherhood, in the belief that somehow they would detect his aspiration without actually seeing the written petition; that his most famous publication, *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum* (1652), is a detailed description of the British alchemical tradition. This does not strike me as the workings of an amateur dabbler into esoterica.

What is the significance of all this? One of the earliest men of whom we have sure documentation as a Freemason was a dedicated esotericist. Ashmole's diary is highly selective in its contents; we do not know *why* he became a Freemason, nor what connection, if any, his interest in the esoteric had with his decision to become a Freemason. However, it is not asking too much to leave open the possibility that the two had something to do with each other.

SIR ISAAC NEWTON

Another figure to consider regarding esotericism among British scholars of this period is Sir Isaac Newton (1643–1727).⁴³ Nearly three centuries after his death, Newton is known, not just as a scholar, not just as a scientist present at the creation of modern science, but as one of the most noteworthy intellectual giants in the entire history of Western civilization. However, as we have come to learn in the twentieth century, in addition to his scientific research, Newton was also very deeply involved in esoteric studies.

Newton poured much energy into researches in esoteric religion, such as the examination of prophecy. Of special interest to Freemasons, Newton focused a great deal of research into calculating the dimensions of Solomon's temple, and determining the symbolic significance of these dimensions. Overall, he devoted more time to his researches of esoteric religion, alchemy, and Hermeticism, than he did to his researches in physics and optics. Newton's unpublished writings on esoteric theology and alchemy are twice the size of his voluminous scientific writings. He possessed and apparently read everything published on alchemy in his day, and many writings that circulated only in manuscript form; in addition, we still have his heavily annotated copy of the Rosicrucian manifestos.

All of this, however, was little known in Mackey's era. Newton's earliest biographers in the eighteenth century seem to have ignored Newton's unpublished esoteric writings. Although some of Newton's alchemical studies were known to (and briefly derided by) biographers in the nineteenth century, the real breadth and depth of Newton's work in these areas was not known until

many unpublished papers by Newton came to light in 1936, and were discussed in a 1942 lecture by the eminent economist John Maynard Keynes, who called Newton “the last of the magicians.”

Of course, we have no evidence that Newton was himself a Freemason. However, it is undeniable that many of his associates, colleagues, and correspondents were Freemasons, including seven men who were both elected to the Royal Society during Newton’s lifetime, on the one hand, and who were also either Grand Masters or Assistant Grand Masters of the first Grand Lodge in London, on the other.⁴⁴ (Newton, of course, served as President of the Royal Society.) Men who were clearly both associates of Newton and Freemasons include Sir Robert Moray (who conducted research in chemistry); it must also be noted that Ashmole himself was a member of the Royal Society, and was likely known to Newton.

What is the point of all of this? Newton, the brightest scientific light of his time, was deeply involved in esoteric study. Several of his colleagues in the Royal Society were Freemasons, and/or known as esotericists. Perhaps they talked with one another. It is no great leap to think that Newton may have supported his colleagues’ esoteric interests. Newton changed the course of Western scientific history; it would be no surprise to find that he exerted some encouraging influence on his Masonic colleagues’s esoteric studies, as well.

Communication & Transmission Between Esoteric Groups

Another aspect of Mackey’s second claim is the idea that some esoteric societies enjoyed a degree of contact with other such societies. This is not out of the question, either, as contact even between distant cultures in antiquity seems more likely, the more the matter is researched. (The impressive geographical distribution of the ancient Enoch literature, mentioned earlier—covering an area from Ethiopia to Western Russia!—comes to mind.) Every year archaeologists and others seem to find that distant parts of the ancient world had, or could have had, surprising connections through exploration, trade, and even accident and exile. (The most spectacular examples of research in this area include the explorations of Thor Heyerdahl and others, who have demonstrated that the ancient civilizations of the Mediterranean may have made contact with the New World millennia before Columbus did.⁴⁵) Recently, Hillel Halkin has presented evidence that some of the refugees of the Assyrian captivity of the Israelites, in the seventh century BC—yes, the so-called “Lost Tribes of Israel”—left descendants who live today in an area along the region between India and Myanmar—descendants who keep some of their ancient traditions alive today,

twent-seven centuries after their ancestors were abducted from Israel, nearly four thousand miles away.⁴⁶ In this context, it seems premature to rule out the possibility that, as Mackey wrote, there were groups that passed their esoteric traditions across centuries of time and continents of space, intermingling their traditions with other esoteric groups.

In considering the transmission of esoteric knowledge between esoteric groups, the meaning of *transmission* itself must be addressed. The simplest way to understand *transmission*, and the way that Mackey seems to have understood it, is to have Group A specifically say to Group B or Individual C, “Here are our truths; Keep them.” This would be direct transmission. Direct transmission occurred every time the Greek mysteries were conferred to a candidate; it occurred every time a new student was accepted into the circle of the *Merkabah* or *Hekhalot* mystics, and so on. Direct transmission is a venerable, time-honored form for the propagation of esoteric knowledge.

However, it is important to note that transmission of esoteric knowledge can occur indirectly, as well. This occurs when a record of Group A’s knowledge comes into the possession of Group B or Individual C—something that can occur even after the total extinction of the original Group A. Of course, indirect transmission has happened frequently throughout history. When monasteries in antiquity copied and shared noncanonical esoteric documents, these were essentially acts of indirect transmission, which can be highly effective, over time, in spreading a group’s esoteric knowledge; the geographical spread of the Enoch literature demonstrates that. Indirect transmission can bridge, not only vast distances of space, but enormous gaps of time. When a monk brought a manuscript of the *Corpus Hermeticum* (dating perhaps to the second century) to Cosimo de’ Medici in about 1460, during the Italian Renaissance, this was an incident of indirect transmission that spanned well over a millenium.

Thus, we find that the realities of the transmission of esoteric knowledge are different from Mackey’s vision in at least two ways. First, in terms of the people involved in performing this transmission, instead of specific famous biblical personalities being involved (as Mackey posited), instead we have extensive evidence of communities of people, performing this transmission on behalf of the famous personalities; for example, instead of Seth transmitting his esoteric knowledge, we have evidence of the Sethian community transmitting this knowledge in Seth’s name, as it were. (The very existence of Seth thus becomes something of a non-issue, irrelevant to the process of transmission itself.) Sec-

only, transmission can occur directly, as Mackey posited, but it can also occur indirectly, spanning enormous distances, and gaps of millennia.

SUMMARY

In sum, aspects of Mackey's three major claims, as I have restated them, actually seem to be supported by a mass of literature and research, much of it emerging after Mackey's era. There really were traditions of esoteric knowledge associated with the biblical patriarchs Adam, Seth, Enoch, Noah, and Abraham (and others who could be mentioned). After the biblical period, there really were communities that perpetuated esoteric knowledge, from late antiquity through the European Enlightenment. The esoteric knowledge mentioned here either directly concerned the existence of God and the immortality of the soul, or presumed these as true; in addition, these teachings were sometimes transmitted through symbolic initiatory practices.

Not even Mackey held that these groups practiced the rituals of Freemasonry as these existed in 1717. They certainly did not. However, that is unimportant for the sake of evaluating Mackey's claims. Rather, what is important is that these groups existed, and passed along the teachings he said they did (some in a purer form, some in a more corrupt form), and in the manner that he said they did. To answer the question in the subtitle of this article: in a sense, Mackey *was* right—not in the precise details of his propositions, but in the broad brush, the overall effects that he posited.

Thus, *contra* Mackey, it may not be the case that Adam passed his esoteric knowledge to Seth, who passed it to Enoch, who passed it to Noah, who passed it to Shem, who passed it to Abraham, and so forth. However, it is certain that there were communities who believed in the esoteric knowledge attributed to Adam, as there were those who believed in the esoteric knowledge attributed to Seth, and so forth. These communities, in turn, perpetuated and transmitted the esoteric teachings they had, for many centuries.

This conceptualization of the transmission of esoteric knowledge is related to but different from the one that Mackey held. Instead of the *direct* transmission of esoteric knowledge by *biblical personalities* and other masters, we have evidence of both *direct and indirect* transmission by *communities* in the *name* of these personalities and masters. In this fashion, as our evidence indicates, esoteric knowledge relative to the existence of God and the immortality of the

soul was transmitted through multiple languages and communities, across continents and through millennia. One hopes that Mackey would be pleased.

THE BASIS FOR A DIFFERENT VIEW OF MASONIC HISTORY

The point of these findings is not just to rehabilitate the intellectual reputation of Albert Mackey. Rather, these findings form the basis for a somewhat different view of Masonic history than the dominant one.

The received notion of the origins of Freemasonry has been put quite succinctly, again by the author of *Freemasons for Dummies*: "... the paper trail and documented evidence that exists in England and Scotland ... really tells the story. Freemasonry descended from the stonemason guilds and was taken over in the late 1600s by philosophers and men of science and learning."⁴⁷ Although this certainly is *part* of the story, in light of the findings mentioned above, the *Dummies* account certainly does not tell *all* of the story. In light of the findings mentioned in this article, perhaps we are ready for a more expansive, yet documentable, view of Masonic origins. It is not the Romantic School, certainly, but neither is it what has been called the Modern or the Realistic School, either. Perhaps we might call this the Esoteric Initiation approach to Masonic history (albeit this is a bit of a mouthful). Whatever it is named ultimately, a succinct statement of the approach I am advocating would run along these lines:

From ancient times, communities and sub-communities have existed that possessed esoteric traditions making the following claims: a) that God exists, and the human soul is immortal; b) that these truths were conveyed to special individuals (such as the biblical patriarchs) through esoteric revelations, visions, sacred and esoteric books, and otherwise; and, c) that these truths were to be conveyed to worthy initiates through the study of esoteric literature, and often through symbolic initiations.

Why these communities would believe these things is itself an interesting question. Some will seek the answer to this in the doctrines of revealed religion; others will seek the answer in the notion that these teachings and practices themselves reflect archetypal ideas that are somehow hardwired into the human mind, in a Jungian fashion;⁴⁸ yet others will take the position that these claims almost inevitably follow upon peak, mystical, or high meditative experiences;⁴⁹ combined positions are certainly tenable, as well.

However it is that these communities came to believe these things, they did—and they propagated these teachings by word and symbol for centuries. These groups included, within the Judaeo-Christian tradition, such groups

as: the Qumran community among the Jews of the first century; the Sethian communities and other Gnostics among the early Christians in Egypt and elsewhere; perhaps even the earliest Christians themselves; and, the *Hekhalot* and *Merkabah* mystics in Palestine and Babylon in the third to seventh century AD. In the pagan world, esoteric teachings and initiations conveying teachings about the existence of God and the immortality of the soul were found among such groups as the ancient Egyptians, the mystery schools of Greece and Rome, and the Hermetic groups that bridged the Egyptian and Greek worlds. These groups perpetuated and transmitted, not only these core teachings about God and the soul, but in many cases also the approach of using symbolic initiation to convey esoteric spiritual teachings. The action of these groups kept alive their core teachings, and the use of symbolic initiation to transmit these teachings, for centuries.

From late antiquity through the period of the European Enlightenment, there existed esoteric groups that propagated spiritual teachings about the existence of God and the immortality of the soul, some of which groups employed some forms of initiation. Such esoteric groups included Kabbalists (including both Jewish and Christian practitioners), alchemists, practitioners of ritual magic, and those who attempted to emulate the group described in the Rosicrucian manifestos.

In seventeenth century Scotland and England, some learned scholars who were familiar with some of the esoteric teachings of their day were attracted to the initiatory traditions of the stonemason guilds, who met in groups called 'lodges.' Why these scholars would be thus attracted is yet unclear; it may be that they felt that the initiatory rituals of the stonemasons themselves reflected some esoteric knowledge. For whatever reason, attracted the scholars were, and ultimately they came to dominate the stonemason lodges, forming what we today would recognize as lodges of Freemasons. In 1717, a few of these Freemason lodges formed the first Grand Lodge.

This view of Masonic origins is defensible and documentable. It is not a view that could have been devised, say, a century ago. To develop this view, a number of discoveries were required: 1) the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947–1956; 2) the discovery of the Nag Hammadi library of Gnostic texts in 1945; 3) the scholarly rediscovery of the history of the Kabbalah, beginning with Gershom Scholem's early work in the 1920s; 4) the emergence of a trove of Newton's alchemical and esoteric religious manuscripts in the 1930s and 1940s; 5) research into the esoteric roots of the Enlightenment, published by Yates in the 1960s and

1970s. All of this was a necessary foundation for the scheme I have outlined above. This approach to Masonic origins still leaves some important questions unanswered, of course, but the point of an approach is to organize information and identify gaps and questions, not to answer all questions preemptively.

There are certain benefits of accuracy to be gained by adopting this position. It has been claimed that today's Freemasonry is afraid of its own shadow, as it were—that is, modern Freemasonry, and many Freemasons, are unable to confront Masonry's heritage in terms of the esoteric traditions that interested so many of the earliest Freemasons.⁵⁰ The position I am advocating accurately puts those esoteric traditions front and center in an account of the origins of Freemasonry—yet without making sensationalistic and unfounded claims.⁵¹ In addition, this account reemphasizes the notion that Freemasonry is supposed to be *about* something: Masonry is not just some sort of social organization, nor is it empty ritualism; rather, Freemasonry is inherently a *spiritual* movement, where ritual is used for inner development.⁵² Any approach taken to the history of a movement should be informed by a thorough understanding of the inner mission of that movement.

Finally, this approach to history may help to address the challenges facing Freemasonry today. An understanding of history will affect one's present, and hence one's future. The crisis in Masonic membership in the United States is a matter of public record.⁵³ I have made the case elsewhere that part of the reason for this crisis is the lack of attention paid by the typical local lodge, in its educational endeavors, to the meaning and application of the esoteric symbolism of Freemasonry.⁵⁴ Perhaps propagating this proposed approach to Masonic history will incline Masons to take their own esoteric tradition more seriously.

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NOTES

1. "Mackey, Dr. Albert Gallatin," pp. 394–96 in Henry Wilson Coil, with editors William Moseley Brown, William L. Cummings, Harold Van Buren Voorhis, and Allen E. Roberts, *Coil's Masonic Encyclopedia* (Richmond, VA: Macey Publishing & Masonic Supply Co., revised edition, 1996). Quotations are from pp. 394–95.
2. Christopher Hodapp, *Freemasons for Dummies* (Hoboken, IN: Wiley, 2005), p. 61.
3. Albert Mackey, *The Symbolism of Freemasonry*. The text is quoted from the electronic edition maintained by Project Gutenberg, retrieved September 15, 2007, from <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/11937>
4. A prominent representative of this position is the book by Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel*

and the Origin of its Sacred Texts (New York: Touchstone/Simon and Schuster, 2001/2002). My problem with much of this school of thought is reflected in the aphorism, “absence of evidence is not evidence of absence”; for example, not being in possession of positive evidence regarding Abraham does not really prove that Abraham never existed.

5. I am not taking a position for or against the existence of the biblical patriarchs; I am simply saying that their actual existence is irrelevant to the point at hand.

6. The author intended to use the more religiously neutral dating of CE (Common Era) and BCE (Before the Common Era). The changes to the more conventional form of BC and AD are the sole responsibility of the editor. It is his view that this is taking political correctness to absurdity unless one is also willing to change the actual number, which points to the same historical situation as the letters BC and AD. Dates not stigmatized are assumed to be AD. The accuracy of the calendar is a matter best detailed elsewhere.

7. This is found in Nag Hammadi Codex V, tractate 5, pages 65 through 67; scholars name the book that contains these words *The Revelation [or Apocalypse] of Adam*. See p. 348 in “The Revelation of Adam” in Marvin Meyer (editor), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures: The International Edition* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007).

8. *Zohar* 1:55b; see also 1:37b. Several English renderings exist, such as that of Daniel C. Matt, translator and editor, *The Zohar: Pritzker Edition*, Vol. 1 (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), where this is found on pp. 311–13 (see also pp. 237–38).

9. Gershom Scholem attributes *Sefer Raziel* to Eleazar of Worms, a scholar active at the beginning of the 13th century AD; see pp. 6, 39 of Scholem’s *Kabbalah* (New York: Meridian/Penguin, 1978; original work published 1974).

10. Steve Savedow (trans.), *Sepher Rezial Hemelach: The Book of the Angel Rezial* (York Beach, ME: Weiser, 2000). The Hebrew name *Raziel* means “Secrets of God.” Copies of *Raziel ha-Malach* in Hebrew are easy to obtain from many Jewish bookstores.

11. See John D. Turner’s essay, “The Sethian School of Gnostic Thought,” in Meyer (2007), pp. 784–89, especially pp. 786–87. Turner calls the rite of Five Seals a kind of baptism; the rite of Five Seals was certainly some kind of initiatory rite, but not necessarily a baptismal one. Meyer’s book has several examples of the Sethian literature, as Turner explains.

12. *Zohar* 1:55b. In Matt (2004), p. 313.

13. *Zohar* 1:72b. In Matt (2004), p. 429. See also Matt’s footnote 668, on pp. 429–230.

14. The best-known of these is doubtless Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyon in present-day France, who wrote his famous work, *Against Heresies*, sometime during the period 182–188; he devoted Book 1, Chapter 30 of this work to the “Doctrines of the Ophites and Sethians.” (There are several English renderings of this work; one popular one is “Irenaeus Against Heresies,” pp. 309–567 in Coxe, A. Cleveland, editor, *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, Volume 1 in Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, series editors, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down*

to A.D. 325 (10 vols.; American Edition; Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956). Four other early Christian writers who wrote against the Sethians during the period ending 475 are mentioned on p. 784 of Turner's essay in Meyer (2007).

15. *Zohar* 1:37b, 1:55b, 1:72b. In Matt (2004), Volume 1, this material is found on pages 238–39, 313, 429.

16. Two translations of 1 Enoch that are easy to find are the translations of R. H. Charles, *The Book of Enoch the Prophet* (York Beach, ME: Weiser, reprint edition 2003; originally published 1912 by Oxford University Press, London) and Richard Laurence, *The Book of Enoch* (Grantsville, UT: Archive Publishers, reprint edition 2001; originally published 1883 in London by Kegan, Paul, Trench, & Co.). Fragments of the Hebrew text that must have preceded the Ethiopic are available in the Dead Sea Scrolls of the 1st century; see Vermes (2004), pp. 545–48.

17. W. R. Morfill (translator) and R. H. Charles (editor), *The Book of the Secrets of Enoch* (London: Oxford University Press, 1896); Charles dates this work to the first century. Excerpts are available in two different sections of a book by Willis Barnstone, ed., *The Other Bible* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005).

18. 3 *Enoch: The Hebrew Book of Enoch* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1973). Some scholars (for example, Dan, 1993, p. 12) this part of the *Hekhalot* mystical literature, discussed later in this essay.

19. Noah's flood is dated, in the traditional Jewish reckoning, to the 21st century BC, and in the traditional Christian reckoning to about 2349 BC. It is interesting that narratives of a global catastrophic flood can be found in many ancient cultures that are widely separated geographically, showing up in the mythology of the ancient Aztecs, Inca, and Maya in the Americas, in the mythology of the ancient Mesopotamians in the Near East, and in the mythology of the ancient Chinese [*World of Myths*, vol. 2 (London: The British Museum Press, 2004)]; see the entries in the index under "flood(s)". This is at least consistent with the notion that a global flood actually occurred. Even if we take the flood to be a phenomenon local to the Near East, it may still have been catastrophic in scope; recently, two geologists at Columbia University have made the case that the geological record shows evidence of an immense inundation, about 5600 BC, in the area of the Black Sea, where water from the Mediterranean broke through at 200 times the rate of water passing over Niagara Falls, for an extended period [William Ryan & Walter Pitman, *Noah's Flood: The New Scientific Discoveries About the Event that Changed History* (New York: Touchstone/Simon & Schuster, 1998/2000)]. Thus, there may well have been a flood of massive scope, such as is mentioned in the biblical narrative; and, if a flood, a Noah to have survived it.

20. This is found in Nag Hammadi Codex II, tractate I, page 29, line 12; scholars name the book that contains these words *The Apocryphon* [or *Secret Book* or *Secret Revelation*] of John. The term "enlightened" is used on p. 130 in "The Secret Book of John," in Meyer (2007). The term "illuminated" is used on p. 76 in Karen L. King, *The Secret Revelation of John* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006); King numbers

the pages and lines differently.

21. The Bible mentions the existence of a Book of Jasher. The *Book of Jasher* mentioned here claims to be that ancient document, but this is a controversial claim; the Hebrew text was published in Venice in 1625, and no earlier text has appeared.

22. *Book of Jasher* (Salt Lake City, UT: J. H. Parry & Co., 1887). This tradition is also briefly mentioned in the *Zohar*, 1:73b; Matt (2004), p. 437; see his note 724 there.

23. John A. Tvedtnes, Brian M. Hauglid, & John Gee (editors), *Traditions About the Early Life of Abraham* (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, Brigham Young University, 2001).

24. Aryeh Kaplan (translator and editor), *Sefer Yetzirah: The Book of Creation* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1995; originally published 1990); concerning Abraham as author of the *Sefer Yetzirah*, see pp. x, xii-xiv, 255. As Kaplan notes, there is dispute among scholars concerning the date of *Sefer Yetzirah*, with estimates ranging from 100 BC to AD 900 (Kaplan, pp. xxii-xxiii); the traditional dating, of course, is much earlier, to the time of Abraham.

25. Herodotus, *The Histories*, Book II, paragraphs 170–71; available in many modern editions.

26. A good orientation to the Dead Sea Scrolls or Qumran community is found in Hershel Shanks (editor), *Understanding the Dead Sea Scrolls: A Reader from the Biblical Archaeology Review* (New York: Random House, 1992). Several translations of the Scrolls themselves are available, including that of Geza Vermes (editor and translator), *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (New York: Penguin, revised edition 2004).

27. Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, Book 2, Chapter 8, paragraphs 2–13; see also his *The Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 18, Chapter 1, paragraph 5. These works are available in many English translations.

28. See the index of Vermes (2004), under the entries for ‘initiation into the sect’ and ‘purity and purification.’

29. The library, and a brief narrative of its discovery, are given in Meyer (2007). A detailed account of the discovery, from the point of view of one person involved, is given by Jean Doresse, *The Discovery of the Nag Hammadi Texts* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2005; originally published 1986).

30. See John D. Turner’s essay, “The Sethian School of Gnostic Thought,” in Meyer (2007), pp. 784–89, especially pp. 786–87. I find it interesting, at the least, that the Gnostic group mentioned here has as its hero the surviving righteous son of Adam, that is, Seth; this is the man whom Mackey credits with the founding of the ancient pure precursor to Freemasonry (see Chapter 1, “Preliminary,” in Mackey’s *The Symbolism of Freemasonry*).

31. Hugh Nibley, “Evangelium Quadraginta Dierum,” *Vigiliae Christianae*, vol. 20 (1966), pp. 1–24. The article is in English; the title, in Latin, translates as, “The Gospel

of the Forty Days,' referring to the teachings of Jesus during the forty days between his resurrection and ascension, as recorded in the New Testament.

32. Basic resources for the study of these groups include: Gershom Scholem, "Merkabah Mysticism and Jewish Gnosticism," pp. 40–79 of his book, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken, 1974; original work published 1954); chapter 2 of Scholem's *Kabbalah* (1978); and, Joseph Dan, *The Ancient Jewish Mysticism* (Tel Aviv, Israel: MOD Books, 1993).

33. The *Corpus Hermeticum* is available in several English renderings, including: Walter Scott, editor and translator, *Hermetica* (Bath, Avon, England, Solos Press/Ashgrove Distribution, 1992; original work published 1924); Clement Salaman, Dorine van Oyin, William D. Wharton, and Jean-Pierre Mahé, translators, *The Way of Hermes* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2004; original work published 1999).

34. Compare Gilles Quispel's preface to the volume translated by Salaman et al. (where he takes a strong position in favor of this community having conducted initiations, p. 10) with Scott's introduction to his volume, where he is struck by a lack of ritual altogether (p. 39).

35. The scholarly work of Dame Frances A. Yates is a good introduction to this area; see her books, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991; original work published 1964), *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 2002; original work published 1972), and *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age* (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 2001; original work published 1979).

36. Marvin Meyer and Richard Smith (editors), *Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994).

37. To mention a few that are easily accessible, roughly in chronological order: for 15th century Bavaria, see Richard Kieckhefer (translator and editor), *Forbidden Rites: A Necromancer's Manual of the Fifteenth Century*, University Park, PA, The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998; for early 16th century Germany, see Donald Tyson's edition of Agrippa's *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Publications, 1993; for 16th century England, see S. Liddell MacGregor Mathers, *The Key of Solomon the King [Clavicula Salomonis]*, Boston: Weiser, 2000; for 17th century France, see S. L. MacGregor Mathers (translator and editor), *The Grimoire of Armadel* (Boston: Weiser, 2001).

38. The history of the development of the Kabbalah is discussed in detail by Gershom Scholem in his books, *Kabbalah*, New York: Meridian/Penguin, 1974/1978 and *Origins of the Kabbalah*, Princeton University Press and the Jewish Publication Society, 1987;. See also Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988.

39. See, for example, Alexander Berzin, *Taking the Kalachakra Initiation*, Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 1997. See also the discussion of different types of initiation in John Powers, *Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism*, Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications,

1995, pp. 232–35.

40. “Ashmole, Elias,” pp. 72–73 in Henry Wilson Coil, with editors William Moseley Brown, William L. Cummings, Harold Van Buren Voorhis, and Allen E. Roberts, *Coil’s Masonic Encyclopedia*, Richmond, VA: Macoy Publishing & Masonic Supply Co., revised edition, 1996.

41. “Elias Ashmole” 1996, p. 73.

42. Tobias Churton, *The Golden Builders: Alchemists, Rosicrucians, and the First Freemasons* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 2006; original work published 2002); by the same author, *The Magus of Freemasonry: The Mysterious Life of Elias Ashmole—Scientist, Alchemist, and Founder of the Royal Society* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2006; original work, titled *Magus: The Invisible Life of Elias Ashmole*, published 2004). Yates’ works are cited above.

43. Concerning the claims that I make in this section, I rely on two sources about Newton’s life: Michael White, *Isaac Newton: The Last Sorcerer* (New York: Basic Books, 1999; original work published 1997); Alain Bauer, *Isaac Newton’s Freemasonry: The Alchemy of Science and Mysticism* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2007).

44. See table, pp. 73–74, in Bauer (2007).

45. Thor Heyerdahl, *The RA Expeditions* (New York: Signet, 1972). The potential for contact among the ancient civilizations from Egypt to Pakistan is demonstrated by the same author in *The Tigris Expedition: In Search of Our Beginnings* (New York: Doubleday, 1984).

46. Hillel Halkin, *Across the Sabbath River: In Search of a Lost Tribe of Israel* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2002).

47. Hodapp (2005), p. 61.

48. The reader who is interested in Jungian psychology might find it helpful to begin with *Man and his Symbols*, which was edited by Jung himself for the general reader. Excerpts from Jung’s writings that address the collective unconscious and the archetypes may be found in Parts I and III of Violet S. de Laszlo (editor), *The Basic Writings of C. G. Jung* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990; original work published 1959), and in Joseph Campbell (editor), *The Portable Jung* (New York: Viking, 1971). The ambitious who wish to explore further the thought of Jung on psychological symbolism may find it useful to consult Jung’s *Collected Works*, including Vols. 5 (*Symbols of Transformation*), 9-I (*The Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious*), 9-II (*Aion: Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self*), 11 (*Psychology and Religion: West and East*), 12 (*Psychology and Alchemy*), 13 (*Alchemical Studies*), and 14 (*Mysterium Coniunctionis: An Inquiry Into the Separation and Synthesis of Psychic Opposites in Alchemy*).

49. Abraham H. Maslow, *Religions, Values, and Peak-Experiences* (New York: Penguin, 1970); Ken Wilber, *Integral Spirituality* (Boston: Shambhala, 2006).

50. Jay Kinney, “Is Freemasonry Afraid of Its Own Shadow? Masonry’s Love/Hate

Relationship with Esoteric Traditions,” *Heredom* 10, 2002, p. 139–53.

51. For example, I do *not* claim that: the specific rituals of Freemasonry can be found in Ancient Egypt; that Freemasons conceal the true descendants of Jesus; that Freemasons, ancient or modern, achieved supernatural powers; and so on.

52. John Belton, “Freemasonry Is?,” *Scottish Rite Journal*, July-August 2007, electronic version retrieved September 15, 2007, from http://www.scottishrite.org/ee.php?journal/pastarticles/freemasonry_is1/

53. Masonic Information Center, *It’s About Time! Moving Masonry into the 21st Century*, Silver Spring, MD, 2005. (Retrieved December 27, 2006 from <http://www.msana.com/downloads/abouttime.pdf>)

54. Mark E. Koltko-Rivera, *Building Freemasonry in the 21st Century: Initiation and Retention* (Winter Park, FL: The Square and Compasses Masonic Publishing Company, 2007). See also, by the same author and publisher, *Masonic Education in the Lodge* and *Masonic Education in the Home*, as well as *The Inner Order of Freemasonry* (this last being an expanded version of an article by the same name published in *The Philalethes*, August 2007, vol. 60, no. 4, pp. 84–87); these are all available on-line (see “Free Downloads”) at: www.thesquareandcompasses.com