

# THE LEGEND OF THE LOST WORD

*Ralph M. Lewis, FRC*

*Ralph Maxwell Lewis served as the Emperor of the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC for forty-eight years, from 1939 to 1987. In this article, he explores the power of the word, in various traditions, including Kabbalah.*



THE LEGEND of a Lost Word—of a key to creation by means of which all reality was set into motion—is thousands of years old. Part of the legend is allegorical, and part of it is due to a primitive conception of the efficacy of the spoken word as an energy by which humans are motivated. A similar power, therefore, is attributed to a First Cause, or deity. The first reference to a teleological or mental cause of creation and the relating of it to the spoken word goes back to the Memphite period of Egypt, about 4000 BCE. The chief Memphite deity was Ptah, who headed a pantheon of lesser deities. At first the priests of the Memphite mystery school proclaimed that Ptah was the patron god of the artisans and craftspeople of Egypt.

Centuries later the priests developed a more profound metaphysical conception with respect to Ptah. He then became the artisan, the creator of the universe. In their doctrines the priesthood then claimed that Ptah created the universe by thought. To be more explicit, the thoughts, the ideas of Ptah, were transformed into a spoken word by him, and by means of that word the thought was objectified, that is, became reality.

The following quotation is from an ancient inscription by the Ptah priesthood:

“It came to pass that heart and tongue gained power over every member, teaching that he [Ptah] was [in the form of the heart] in every heart and [in the form of the tongue] in every mouth, of all deities, all people, all cattle, or reptiles, [all] living, while he



Ralph Maxwell Lewis.

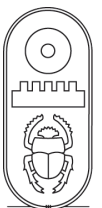
[Ptah] thinks and while he commands everything that he desires.”

The mouth of Ptah “which pronounced the names of all things....”

Egyptologists inform us that the ancient Egyptians used the word heart to mean mind or intelligence. Also, reference to the tongue alludes to the spoken word, the authoritative word by which all thoughts became objectified—made reality.

We can presume that somewhere in these ancient mysteries there were syllables, sounds, mantras which were thought to have special universal powers for the creation of worldly things.

We are, of course, familiar with the statement in the Bible, John I. “In the



beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Was this statement in the New Testament an echo of the doctrines of the Ptah priesthood of centuries before?

### **From the Kabbalah**

We now turn to the Kabbalah, or metaphysical doctrines of the Jews. The *Sepher Yezirah*, one of the chief books of the Kabbalah literally means “Book of Creation” or cosmogony. When the original of this book was written is not known. Hebrew scholars have established different periods for its origin. The exact time is lost in the shades of antiquity. However, a more or less general opinion holds that the book came into existence about the beginning the second or third century of the [Common] era.

The book teaches that the First Cause, “eternal and all-wise, almighty, is the origin and center of the whole universe.” From this First Cause all Being emanated. The book further relates that thought, speech, and action are an inseparable unity in the Divine Being. The Hebrew language and its characters correspond mostly to the things that they designate, and thus “holy thoughts, Hebrew language and its reduction to writing, form a unity which produces a creative effect.”

More simply put, the letters of the language, whether written or spoken, are elements of a potential power which brings into existence the very thing they represent. They are not symbols as in other languages, it was thought, but integral units of cosmic or divine energy.

### *Sepher Yezirah*

It is frequently observed by Jewish and Christian theologians that the Marcionite Gnostic system as well as that of Clementines of the second century contain many analogies and parallels to the *Sepher Yezirah*.

Let us quote a few examples from the *Sepher Yezirah*. In Chapter 1, Section 8, we find, “The spirit of the living God, praised and glorified be the name of Him who lives to all eternity. The articulate word of creative power, the spirit and the word are what we call the holy spirit.”

Then in Chapter II, Section 6: “He created a reality out of nothing, called the nonentity into existence and hewed, as it were, colossal pillars from intangible air....He predetermined, and by speaking created every creature and every word by one name. For an illustration may serve the twenty-two elementary substances by the primitive substance of Aleph.”

### **Powerful Mantras**

The Hindu mantras consisting of combinations of vowel intonations are attributed specific powers in affecting the human emotions and stimulating the psychic centers, and even in having certain therapeutic value. Of course, as Rosicrucians, we know that the vibrations of the human voice in specific combinations of vowels can induce psychical conditions of an exhilarating nature in a person.

With most early cultures, the deities were thought to be anthropomorphic. They were, therefore, conceived to have humanlike qualities. If the deities created, they would use similar functions and attributes to those of humans. In other words, they would think and plan, but how would they objectify their ideas? What would cause it to have reality? Simply, how would thoughts become things? The vocal command carries force, the voice can be heard, it can be felt, and it may move persons to act, to bring about material things that will conform to the idea behind the spoken word. Consequently, it was an easy matter to assume that the deities, in creating, did likewise, that their voice was the medium to convert the idea into a thing.

In the traditions of the various cultures there was believed to be a fiat, a Word that had the vibratory efficacy to have originally brought the Cosmos into existence. It was further held that this word had been known to humankind but, somehow, in the vicissitudes of time and in the degradation of humanity it became lost. Mystically and factually certain words, when uttered, are most beneficial to be heard as sounds. Primitive people learned of the value of these sounds in their exclamations and cries of pain, pleasure, surprise, anger, and so on. In the ancient mystery schools certain intonations of mantras were used to prepare the initiate to attain the proper

state of consciousness and response to the occasion.

We can hold to the view in our modern world that a single word uttered did not create all of reality out of nonentity. However, we do hold to the cosmological concept that the basic or primary reality is a vibratory energy. It is a spectrum or scale of energy out of which all things manifest. Our interpretations of the sensations and the realization we have of such vibratory energy are not exact archetypes of it. In other words, we do not experience directly absolute reality but only those effects which they have on our consciousness.

