The Study of Christian Cabala in English

Don Karr


Part 1

Anyone who has read a few books concerning the Western esoteric tradition has encountered, at the very least, references to cabala. The spelling varies: In this paper, kabbalah, for the most part, refers to Jewish doctrine; cabala refers to Christian developments. The trend among academics, however, seems to favor Christian kabbalah for references to the latter.¹

Cabala figures into many tenets and methods central to Western esoteric thought and practice. Unfortunately, what is meant by term is not always clear and may vary from one reference to another. Those readers who enter an investigation of (Christian) cabala after having studied (Jewish) kabbalah may well become impatient at the outset with the misreadings and deformations characteristic of “Christian developments.”²

Perhaps even more frustrating, after co-opting such kabbalah as was desired, virtually all Christian Cabalists sought to transform it into a dogmatic weapon to turn back against the Jews to compel their conversion—starting with Ramon Llull (ca. 1232-1316), “the first Christian to acknowledge and appreciate kabbalah as a tool of conversion.”³ In his book, The Art of


Conversion, Harvey Hames demonstrates, however, that Llull was “not a Kabbalist, nor was he versed in any particular Kabbalistic approach.”

The strand of cabala which has become best known began in Renaissance Florence with Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494). Pico sought to harmonize Christian beliefs with kabbalah, which he considered a primal form of Jewish doctrine which originated with Moses and thus long presaged the teachings of Jesus. This parallels the treatment of the Hermetica by the circle around Ficino, namely the movement to recover the prisca theologia (the ancient theology) and philosophia perennis (perennial philosophy), thought to be the fountainheads of religion and philosophy.

There was, however, an earlier expression of cabala among the Spanish conversos in the late 1200s which continued until the expulsion of the late 1400s. There is not a whole lot on these early Spanish Cabalists, e.g., Abner of Burgos (b. ca. 1270) and Pablo de Heredia (140?–1486), in the English literature available. On Burgos and de Heredia (as well as Pico and his contemporary Abraham Farissol), see Gershom Scholem, “The Beginnings of the Christian Kabbalah,” in The Christian Kabbalah: Jewish Mystical Books and Their Christian Interpreters, edited by Joseph Dan (Cambridge: Harvard College Library, 1997); this article was originally published in German: “Zur Geschichte der Anfange der Christlichen Kabbala,” in Essays Presented to Leo Baech in the Occasion of His Eightieth Birthday (London: East and West Library, 1954); then in French: “Considerations sur l’Histoire des debuts de la Kaballe chretienne,” in Kabbalistes Chretiens (Paris: Albin Michel, 1979).

4 Refer, in particular, to Hames’ CHAPTER THREE: “Into the Gates of Wisdom.” On Llull, see ADDENDUM A, ITEMS OF INTEREST: “Goodrick-Clarke,” “Herrera,” “Llull,” “Man, Myth & Magic,” “Rossi,” and “Vega.” Llull was further associated with cabala through the work De auditu caballistico, which was erroneously attributed to him. “Modern scholarship has shown that this work ... was written by an Italian doctor and scholar, Pietro Mainardi (1456-1529) from Verona, who taught in Ferrara and in Padua. His point of departure seems to have been an attempt to carry out Pico della Mirandola’s ideal of harmonizing the Lullian Art with the Cabala,” (—Anthony Bonner [trans./ed.], Doctor Illuminatus: A Ramon Llull Reader, with a new translation of The Book of the Lover and the Beloved by Eve Bonner [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993]), page 60.


On Burgos and Heredia, see ADDENDUM A, ITEMS OF INTEREST: “Grätz” and “Sirat.” Refer also to


The promising title, Spanish Christian Cabala by Catherine Swietlicki (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1986), worthy as it is, deals with later (namely, sixteenth-century) manifestations of Christian cabala in Spain. While Swietlicki’s book might not generally be thought of as a primer on cabala, it does contain a good overview of the Renaissance period as its opening chapter, which could help those approaching this subject for the first time to get their bearings. Swietlicki goes
Two letters in Hebrew, purportedly written by Tanna Nehuniah ben Hakanah, were “discovered” — more likely forged — translated into Latin, and commented upon by Pablo de Heredia: The Epistle of Secrets [Iggeret ha-Sodot or Epistola of secretils] and The Declaration of Truth (1487 or 1488). The letters were put into English from de Heredia’s Latin by Rodney G. Dennis (Oxford: The Jericho Press, 1998); regrettably, de Heredia’s commentary is not included in Dennis’ translation. The Epistle represents “the first recognizable work of Christian kabbalah.” It got wide exposure through being quoted in the works of Franciscan theologian Petrus Galatinus, which, in turn, influenced Athanasius Kircher (see below, §§ PETRUS GALTINUS and ATHANASIUS KIRCHER). It is worth noting, though, that Heredia’s cabala consists largely of (1) quotes from non-existent kabbalistic works (e.g., Galerazaya, which Heredia attributed to “Rabbi Haccados,” namely Rabbi HaKadosh) and (2) distorted or fake quotes from real kabbalistic sources, such as the Zohar.

Ideally, we would find sources which led us in a nice straight line from the Renaissance to the present day. Alas, the material available on the subject and the history of cabala itself conspire to make our effort one fraught with cuts and detours, though a certain shape to it all does emerge.

At the outset, the limitations of an English-only bibliography should be noted, for any short list of books on Christian cabala consists largely of works in other languages. A selection of standard works—listed chronologically—would include


on to summarize “The Diffusion of the Christian Cabala in Renaissance Culture” in Chapter 2. For more on Teresa of Avila, see ADDENDUM A, ITEMS OF INTEREST: “Burgeson” and “Green.”

Regarding early Spanish Christian-Jewish cross influence, see Elliot R. Wolfson, “The Tree That is All: Jewish-Christian Roots of a Kabbalistic Symbol in Sefer ha-Bahir,” in Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy, volume 3, issue 1, eds. Elliot Wolfson and Paul Mendes-Flohr (Harwood Academic Publishers GmbH, 1993); also in Along the Path: Studies in Kabbalistic Myth, Symbolism, and Hermeneutics (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995). Wolfson speculates that the motif of the cosmic tree combines Jewish and Christian influences. While doing so, he calls into question traditional lines of inquiry into certain subject matter (namely, the ten sefirot) as the major indication of the origins of kabbalah. Wolfson says, in effect, that if Sefer ha-Bahir is the earliest known work which can properly be called kabbalistic, its own contents suggest that something more—if not something other—than the sefirot comprises kabbalah’s primal swirlings.


Heredia’s invented Galerazaya should not be confused with the mid-sixteenth-century work, Galya Raza, “written under the influence of dreams, visions, and illuminations possessing the power of celestial revelation” by an anonymous author.


New Grail has become part of New Cultures Press at http://www.newcultures.org/.


• Christliche Kabbala, ed. Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann (Ostfildern: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 2003), which contains papers in French (i), German (13), and English (2); the English articles are Sarah Hutton’s “From Christian Kabalism to Kabalistic Quakerism: The Kabalistic Dialogues of Anne Conway, Henry More, and George Keith,” and Moshe Idel’s “Jewish Thinkers versus Christian Kabbalah.”

Standard works in English include the following (listed chronologically), all of which are discussed in greater detail below:9


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9 In spite of its “assertive title” (the author’s term—p. ii), The Rape of Jewish Mysticism by Christian Theologians by Robert Wang (Columbia [MD]: Marcus Aurelius Press, 2001) is a rather drab summary of well-known—and well-worn—sources. Moreover, Wang does not really engage his thesis (i.e., the rape of Jewish mysticism) anywhere through the book save the preface and the brief conclusion. The book comes to an anticlimactic halt with “Christian Kabbalah becomes Rosicrucianism,” “The Fama Fraternitas,” and “Robert Fludd.” Wang’s omission of developments through the 17th–19th centuries is all the more puzzling given the book’s subtitle, How the Modern Occult Movement Grew out of Renaissance Attempts to Convert the Jews.


Christian Kabbalists: John Donne, Giordano Bruno, Ramon Lull, Paracelsus, Athanasius Kircher, Robert Fludd, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola... (Memphis: Books LLC, 2010) offers incomplete reprints of Wikipedia articles with an index. The articles are sketchy and inconsistent, some showing no connection with cabala whatsoever. The same description could apply to The Esoteric Codex: Christian Kabbalah by Sarai Kasik (Lulu.com, 2015), though this book offers numerous illustrations.
SOME USEFUL INTRODUCTORY BOOKS, CHAPTERS & ARTICLES

LISTED CHRONOLOGICALLY


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The debt that the early Christian cabalists owe to Jewish teachers should not be overlooked. In a discussion of the Renaissance period, Eisig Silberschlag writes:

Many outstanding teachers who taught some eminent Christians were in the forefront of their age: Maule de S. Miniato, the erudite banker and teacher of the Florentine statesman Giannozzo Manetti; the philosophical scholars Elijah del Medigo and Yohanan Alemanno, teachers of Giovann Pico della Mirandola; Obadiah Sforno, the physician, the commentator on the Pentateuch and the teacher of Johannes Reuchlin; Elijah Levita, the itinerant scholar, grammarian and teacher to such eminent personalities as Edigio da Viterbo, the General of the Order of the Hermits of Saint Augustine, who became cardinal in 1517, Mario Grimani, the patriarch of Aquila, George de Selve, bishop of Lavaur, Sebastian Münster, the humanist of Basle and Paul Fagius, the reformed minister; Leone Modena who taught Giovanni Vislingio, professor of anatomy in Padua, Vincenzo Noghera, the scholarly Theologian.

• Bogdan, Henrik. *Western Esotericism and Rituals of Initiation* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007); see in particular CHAPTER 3, “Historical Background,” and the last section of CHAPTER 4 (pp. 89-93).


• Rosicrucian Digest, Vol. 90, No. 2: KABBALAH (San Jose: Rosicrucian Order AMORC, 2012); contains a mix of Jewish and Christian occult kabbalah with articles from a broad spectrum of authors: from Papus and Ralph M. Lewis to Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke and Daniel C. Matt.


SOME HISTORIANS

ARTHUR EDWARD WAITE (1857-1942)

Though written from within the Western esoteric/Golden Dawn tradition, Arthur E. Waite’s *Holy Kabbalah* (London: Williams & Norgate, Ltd, 1929) offers a remarkably clear-minded critical survey of the topic. Waite’s analysis is limited and occasionally skewed, however, by his reliance on the Latin, French, and English sources available to him.

**BOOK X** of *The Holy Kabbalah* is entitled “Some Christian Students of the Kabbalah.” Therein Waite gives spot-on sketches of Ramon Llull, Pico della Mirandola, Johannes Reuchlin, Paracelsus, Cornelius Agrippa, Guillaume Postel, Robert Fludd, Henry More, Thomas Vaughan, Knorr von Rosenroth, Ralph Cudworth, Thomas Burnet, Louis Claude de Saint-Martin, Éliphas Lévi, Papus (Gerard Encausse), Stanislas de Guîta, H. P. Blavatsky, and a few others. Waite’s survey is quite useful, for its parade of names connected with *cabala*—whether by fact or fancy—takes us from the Renaissance to the end of the nineteenth century. Waite’s descriptions of these characters give some idea of the range of *cabala*’s seepage into occult and theosophic endeavor, including the symbolism of the Freemasons and the Rosicrucians.

For more information on the components of Waite’s *Holy Kabbalah*, see below, Part 2: “1902 Waite.”

JOSEPH LEON BLAU (1909-1986)

Reliable (even if not unbiased) scholarship on *cabala* might be said to have begun in the 1940s with Joseph L. Blau’s *Christian Interpretation of the Cabala in the Renaissance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944; rpt. Port Washington: Kennikat Press, 1965; rpt. Brampton: Ballantrae Reprints, 1998). Subsequent writers on the subject, while often disagreeing with Blau on many key points, freely use such words as “groundbreaking,” “essential,” and “pioneering” when referring to his study.

To provide a brief outline of Christian *cabala*, the contents of Blau’s work are summarized here: The first chapter recapitulates the history of the *kabbalah* within Judaism, following Gershom Scholem. The second chapter takes up the beginnings of Christian interest in the *kabbalah*, stating that Ramon Llull “did not write of the Cabala in the thirteenth century” and that the pseudo-Llullian *De auditu kabbalistico* is somewhat *kabbalah*-like, but not kabbalistic; Blau then considers Pico della Mirandola in some detail. The third chapter discusses those whom Pico influenced, directly or from a distance. The fourth chapter focuses on Pico’s most important follower, Johannes Reuchlin. Chapter Five summarizes Paolo Ricci’s *De coelesti agricultura* and from it offers a translation of “Introduction to the Lore of the Cabalists or Allegorizers.” This fifth chapter finishes with a survey of others who “followed the path of cabalism to Christianity.” The sixth chapter, “The Fantastic Cabala,” discusses how *cabala* became entangled with magic, referring to, among others, Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa and Paracelsus. Chapter Seven treats Jean Thenaud and his work, *The Holy and Very Christian Cabala* (Appendix D of Blau’s study contains selections from this work in the original French). The continued diffusion of “the Christian interpretation of the cabala” by a range of relatively obscure 16th- and 17th-century expositors is discussed in Chapter Eight, “The Erudites.”

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Finally, Chapter Nine offers Blau’s conclusions, namely that *cabala* was treated and shaped in many ways for many different purposes by many Christian interpreters, none of whom knew very much about *kabbalah*. Several appendices follow: A, on Moses Cordovero; B, on whether Ramon Llull was a cabalist; C, on the identity of Archangelus of Burgo Nuovo; and D, selections from Thenaud. An impressive bibliography lists Jewish and Christian primary and secondary sources.

In addition to *Christian Interpretation*..., there is Blau’s article, “The Diffusion of the Christian Interpretation of the Cabala in English Literature,” in *The Review of Religion*, volume VI, number 2 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942). Here Blau concludes,

> This study has shown few actual Cabalists among the writers of English literature, but many writers to whom Cabalism was familiar. ... For Cabalism, specifically, it can be said in summary, that Fludd, Thomas Vaughan, and Henry More were the only Christian Cabalists who wrote in English. ... Cabalism was an intellectual fad, a day’s fashion. (—pages 167 and 168)


Certainly, the third statement has been proven untrue, not just by the current paper but even in the scant evidence that Blau himself provides at the close of “Diffusion...,” § VII, where he mentions Madame Blavatsky, Anna Kingsford, Edward Maitland, and Wynn Westcott. These names are all familiar to us today.

**DAME FRANCES AMELIA YATES (1899-1981)**

The “classic” English-language resource for our subject is Frances Yates’ *Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979 and 2001; rpt. London: Ark Paperbacks, 1983), which is divided into three parts: PART 1 covers the Renaissance and Reformation periods, discussing Llull, Pico, Reuchlin, Francesco Giorgi (or Zorzi), and Agrippa; PART 2 takes up the Elizabethan period, treating, most significantly, John Dee and Shakespeare; PART 3 moves into *cabala*’s connections with Rosicrucianism, occult philosophy and Puritanism (John Milton), and the return of the Jews to England in the seventeenth century. From reading Yates, we see how *cabala* got smeared together with other pressing religious and philosophic concerns of the day (Hermetism, alchemy, astrology, and magic), and how the term “cabala” came to be used quite loosely, referring at times to stuff which no Jewish kabbalist would recognize as *kabbalah*.

Other books and articles by Frances Yates are of great value to us here:

- **Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition** (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964; rpt. 1991). Yates paraphrases the Hermetic writings which were most important to Ficino and company, treats Pico’s “Cabalist Magic” in some detail, and summarizes the contents of Agrippa’s *De occulta philosophia*. This all leads to a discussion of Bruno’s *cabala*, which, according to Yates, was derived primarily from Agrippa and remained rather dilute, being far less important to Bruno than his “Egyptianism.” See below, § GIORDANO BRUNO.

- **The Art of Memory** (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966; rpt. 1994). *Art...* follows the methods of “artificial memory” from the ancient Greek rhetoriticians to the seventeenth-century scientific philosophers. Of particular interest to us here are Yates’ chapters on Giulio Camillo’s *Memory Theatre*, which fused the Hermetic-Cabalistic tradition to the art of memory. There are also chapters on the Art of Ramon Llull as a memory method, the memory systems of Giordano Bruno, and the Memory Theatre of Robert Fludd.


  Theatre... picks up where Art of Memory leaves off concerning Robert Fludd and John Dee, considering both as perpetrators and propagators of “the Renaissance revival of Vitruvius.” As with Giordano Bruno and Art of Memory, Theatre of the World “carries” Yates’ series on Renaissance thought “in the direction of the English theatre, and another step towards Shakespeare.”


  Yates discusses the Rosicrucian Manifestos of the early seventeenth century and the reactions which they stirred; the whole commotion was quite well entangled with the Hermetic-Cabalistic tradition. In this work, Yates further emphasizes (or, as some think nowadays, exaggerates) the importance of John Dee. See the comments of Didier Kahn: “Even if the many works of Frances Yates have often shown themselves to be beneficial, and even if several of these works are now considered classics, there is no choice but to accept that The Rosicrucian Enlightenment, published in 1972, has scarcely done anything but add to the reigning confusion on the topic”—“The Rosicrucian Hoax in France (1623-24),” § PRESENT STATE OF RESEARCH ON THE ROSICRUCIAN MOVEMENT; in Secrets of Nature: Astrology and Alchemy in Early Modern Europe, eds. William R. Newman and Anthony Grafton (Cambridge – London: MIT Press, 2001).

For recent reviews of Yates’ works, along with Didier Kahn’s comments mentioned above, see


• ______. Lodovico Lazzarelli: introductory chapter (discussed below, § LODOVICO LAZZARELLI)


**DANIEL PICKERING WALKER (1914-1985)**

Inevitably cited along with Yates’ studies is D. P. Walker’s Spiritual and Demonic Magic: From Ficino to Campanella (London: Notre Dame Press, 1958, rpt. 1975; rpt. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000). Between Ficino (1433-99) and Campanella (1568-1639) occurred developments of crucial importance to our line of inquiry, namely, the mixing of the demonic and the astrologic (as derived from Ficino), a mixture which turns up in one form in Agrippa’s synthesis
of Medieval magic, De occulta philosophia, but in quite another in Francesco Giorgi’s De harmonia mundi totius. In the first section of Spiritual and Demonic Magic, Walker focuses on Ficino, in the second on what became of his magic in the sixteenth century, and in the third on the “Telesians” (named for Bernardo Telesio, philosopher and scientist, noted less for his ideas than for his methods of empirical science) and Tommaso Campanella.


PHILIP BEITCHMAN (1939- )

Criticisms of Joseph Blau’s conclusions are sprinkled through one of the more recent books given notice here, Alchemy of the Word: Cabala of the Renaissance (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998) by Philip Beitchman, who draws on the research of the last 150 years, making full use of scholars ranging from Heinrich Grätz to Arthur Waite to Harold Bloom. Most of the contentious comments regarding Blau are derived from François Secret, whose works were among the most important sources for Beitchman. Indeed, from Beitchman’s book one gets a sense of how much the English-only reader is missing in not having Secret’s studies available.

Alchemy of the Word is presented in four sections: The first, “In the Beginning,” traces kabbalah and its influence from the Renaissance to the present-day. Beitchman puts some emphasis on the kabbalah of the Zohar, treating a range of this central text’s concepts and difficulties. Included are arresting discussions of kabbalah’s sexual symbolism and of the stress between (and attempted resolutions of) the notions of God’s immanence and transcendence.

The second section, “The Secret of Agrippa,” begins with Pico, even while calling attention (relying on Secret) to cabalistic developments which predate Pico; it goes on to Reuchlin, as one would expect. Then to Agrippa; however, Beitchman does not dwell so much on De occulta philosophia as on Agrippa’s apparent self-refutation in De certitudine et vanitate omnium scieniarum declamatio inuectiva (On the Uncertainty and Vanity of the Arts and Sciences), which Beitchman considers a manner of further cabalistic development on Agrippa’s part.

The third section, entitled “Bibliographica Kabbalistica,” lists and, to one extent or another, describes a number of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century works which treat cabala, whether sympathetically or otherwise. The promise of the chapter is undermined somewhat by Beitchman’s inconsistent treatment of the items included and his veering off the subject-at-hand so frequently.

The final section, “The Kiss of the Spouse,” deals with (as the subheading suggests) “Cabala in England (1497-1700),” discussing Shakespeare, John Dee, and Thomas Vaughan, among others.

Throughout the book, themes and methods of kabbalah/cabala (which is spelled “cabala” through the text, yet, peculiarly, “kaballah” through the bibliography and index) are set against the notions of modern thinkers, philosophers, and writers (Freud, Kierkegard, and Kafka, to name a few). Beitchman freely and effectively draws on Gershom Scholem, Frances Yates, (as mentioned) François Secret, Harold Bloom, Lynn Thorndike (see below, ADDENDUM A: ITEMS OF INTEREST) and others to compose this ranging view of cabala and its diffusion.

Alchemy of the Word is not a good introductory book; it would be best to have been through some of the other studies before engaging this one, i.e., Blau’s Christian Interpretation..., and Yates’ Occult Philosophy. It is something of a shame that Beitchman’s keen observations, insights, and humor are buried in such cumbersome prose, strained with interjections and qualifiers. (I do hope that he

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12 On Ficino’s magic, see Brian Copenhaver, Magic in Western Culture: From Antiquity to the Enlightenment (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), PART II.
doesn't feel that there is some form of *ars caballistica* in his over-interrupted sentences.) Moreover, there is Beitchman's infatuation with the word ineluctable, which seems to appear at least once on nearly every page of the book. All the same, there is a wealth of valuable information and fine synthesis here. In the end, the book is well worth the discomfort.  

Further, see:


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Also included in **ADDENDUM F** are descriptions submitted to E-IDRA:


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“A survey of Christian Cabala that could supersede the books by Joseph L. Blau (1944) and François Secret (1958) is desirable, but *Alchemy of the Word* is not that book. Discussion of dozens of authors requires a great deal of connecting historical narrative, and in this narrative stream the short passages of explanation and evaluation rush past too rapidly. The book offers many provocative statements, many informative ones, and many that are avoidably erroneous or obscurely brief. To undertake such an ambitious task without access to Hebrew for primary sources and modern scholarship; to characterize Kabbalah by relying heavily on the old studies of A. E. Waite, Adolph Franck, and Blau; and to ignore such important recent scholarship as *Pico della Mirandola’s Encounter with Jewish Mysticism,* is to attempt too much on an insufficient foundation. The learning, energy and wit that the book displays could have achieved more if directed towards a more modest goal.” —Arthur M. Lesley, REVIEW ESSAY: “Jews at the Time of the Renaissance,” in *Renaissance Quarterly*, Volume 62, Issue 3 (The Renaissance Society of America, Fall 1999), pages 845-846.
CHRISTIAN INTERPRETERS OF THE CABALA

DANTE ALIGHIERI (1265-1321)

In From the Tree to the Labyrinth: Historical Studies on the Sign and Interpretation (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), Umberto Eco concludes CHAPTER 7, “Dante between Modistae and Kabbalah” (pp. 286-308).14

“Before its rehabilitation by the Humanists, Christian notions of the Kabbalah were hazy, and it tended to be lumped together with the black arts. On the other hand, it has been suggested (Gorni 1990: ch. VII) that Dante refers a little too insistently to various divinatory and magical arts… He [Dante] appears to have been somewhat familiar with an underground and marginalized culture of which the Kabbalah was confusedly a part, at least in popular opinion. ... The only drawback is that, in the absence of concrete proof of these contacts, this is all merely conjecture—as Busi (2004) pointed out in his review of Debenedetti Stow’s (2004) book on Dante and Jewish mysticism.”

Jewish mysticism as a source for Dante has been explored in a few other works:

  “We can postulate a ‘Dante’s mysticism’ thanks to its precise background, the Neoplatonic philosophy, which is shared among Occitan and Sicilian texts as well as the Jewish mysticism. From the latter the Florentine poet adopts proper techniques to reach step-by-step the intellectual ecstasy towards the Wisdom, mystic’s ultimate aim, a voyage commencing from Vita Nuova and concluding to Comedy through the Convivio. Professor Sandra Debenedetti Stow is perhaps the first scholar who attempted to demonstrate Dante’s and Stilnovists’ knowledge of cabalistic methods and of Kabbalah too.”
  (Jewish Mysticism in Dante Alighieri’s Works—page 4)


  “This study will present a comparative analysis between the practices advocated by Jewish mysticism in the quest for spiritual elevation and those described by Dante in The Divine Comedy. This analysis will be based on the historical premise discussed by Moshe Idel, according to which, the traditions of Jewish Hekhalot literature were present in the cultural fabric of Italy from the 10th century onward.” (from the ABSTRACT)

  “My speculations on Dante and the erotic vibrations of the Commedia recalled to me the reading I had done in the Zohar, where dreams speak of knowledge of God through a spiritualized sex. I began to wonder whether Hell, Paradise, and Heaven in Dante were constructed out of similar ideas.

  “Moses de Leon, the reputed author of the Zohar, was dependent on Maimonides. Dante’s philosophical tutor, Thomas Aquinas, was a careful student of the twelfth-century Jewish philosopher. Shlomo Pines, in the introduction to his translation of Maimonides’ The Guide of the Perplexed, speculates on the basis of a designation of the prophet Moses in the Inferno that Dante had read Maimonides in Latin translation. The Neoplatonism of the thirteenth century underlay both the new mysticism of the Kabbalists and the dreams of the poets of Sicily and Bologna—texts that sought to draw together philosophic and erotic longing.

  “It was to Dante’s advantage to know and absorb the lessons of the Kabbalah.”

  (Dante, Eros, and Kabbalah—pp. 18-19)

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Also in Italian, see Giorgio Battisoni, Dante, Verona e la cultura ebraica (Florence: Giuntina, 2004).

  “I will confine my argument to the description of the use of mental images by the Stilnovisti and Dante and to its comparison to the role mental images fulfill in Jewish mysticism, especially in the system of the Spanish kabbalist, Abraham Abulafia.” (—page 85)


**LODOVICO LAZZARELLI (1447-1500)**

Lodovico Lazzarelli “played a central role in the rediscovery of Renaissance hermetism by Italian scholars since 1938; but he was entirely marginalized by [Frances] Yates and his name fell into oblivion after the 1960s” (Wouter Hanegraaff, *Lodovico Lazzarelli*..., p. 2).


Also look for

• Beitchman, Philip. § RADICAL CABALA on Lazzarelli’s *Crater Hermetis*, in Alchemy of the Word (pp. 117-120)


• Walker, D. P. Spiritual and Demonic Magic, pp. 64-72.
GIOVANNI PICO DELLA MIRANDOLA (1463-1494)

One impressive study deals with Pico’s contact with kabbalah in great detail: *Pico della Mirandola’s Encounter with Jewish Mysticism* by Chaim Wirszburgski (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), which discusses Pico’s sources and, in particular, his mentor/translator, the Sicilian convert Flavius Mithridates (see below: PICO’S MENTORS). Throughout, Pico’s famous *Conclusiones* are drawn upon for analysis. The appendices to this book, of which there are twenty-three, cover points of doctrine and history connected with Pico’s knowledge and development of kabbalah. (It is interesting to note that Pico’s main sources for kabbalah were Abraham Abulafia, Joseph Gikatilla, and Menahem Recanati, and that Recanati’s writings contain numerous quotes from the *Zohar.*) One drawback to Wirszburgski’s fine work: One needs to know Latin to read all the extracts from Pico and his translated sources.

See also Wirszburgski’s articles:


A translation of Pico’s *Conclusiones Cabalisticae* (extracted from the 900 Theses) appears in Arthur E. Waite’s *Holy Kabbalah* on pp. 445-452 (cited above in § SOME HISTORIANS).


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On Pico (listed chronologically):


• Lelli, Fabrizio. “Poetic Theology and Jewish Kabbalah in Fifteenth-Century Florentine Speculation: Giovanni Pico della Mirandola and Elijah Hayyim ben Benjamin of Genazzano,” in *Studia Judaica* 16 (Krakow: Polish Association of Jewish Studies, 2008), pages 144-152.


PICO'S MENTORS


• VOLUME 1: The Great Parchment: Flavius Mithridates’ Latin Translation, the Hebrew Text, and an English Version, ed. Giulio Busi, with Simonetta Bondoni and Saverio Campanini (2004)—a text, not treated by Wirszubski in Pico della Mirandola’s Encounter with Jewish Mysticism, which has been all but unknown until recently.


• VOLUME 3: Menahem Recanati: Commentary on the Daily Prayers – Flavius Mithridates’ Latin Translation, the Hebrew Text, and an English Version, edited with introduction and notes by Giacomo Corazzol (2008)—the only English-language source for any of Recanati’s writings, accompanied by a full introduction on Recanati and his works.


• VOLUME 5: The Gate of Heaven – Flavius Mithridates’ Latin Translation, the Hebrew Text, and an English Translation, edited with introduction and notes by Susanne Jurgan and Saverio Campanini with a
Text on Pico by Giulio Busi (2012)—not the work by Gikatilla. “[P]robably written in Italy around the end of the 14th century by an author unknown to us” (p. 11).

(For brief reviews of Corazzol’s Menahem Recanati and Martini’s Yosef Gikatilla, see ADDENDUM F of the present paper, at http://www.digital-brilliance.com/contributed/Karr/Biblios/ccineb.pdf.)

On Mithridates’ translations, see also


Further regarding Mithridates and Pico, along with Wirszubski’s Pico della Mirandola’s Encounter... (noted above), refer to CHAPTER 4 of David B. Ruderman’s World of a Renaissance Jew: The Life and Thought of Abraham ben Mordecai Farissol (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1981).

Mithridates’ Sermo de Passione Domini, a sermon on the Passion delivered before Pope Sixtus IV, Good Friday, 1481, was edited with notes and commentary by Chaim Wirszubski (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1963). The text is in its original Latin; the 76-page introduction is in English, though most citations are in Latin. Wirszubski shows that the thrust of Mithridates’ sermon derives, unacknowledged, from Raymundus Martini’s Pugio Fidei (Dagger of Faith, ca. 1280). Wirszubski points out, however, that in the Sermo there is “a shift from refutation of Judaism to proof of Christianity” (Frances Yate’s review of Wirszubski’s edition of Sermo, “Flavius Mithridates,” which is CHAPTER 7 of Renaissance and Reform: The Italian Contribution, COLLECTED ESSAYS, VOL. II [London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983]).

Yohanan ben Isaac Alemanno: sources listed alphabetically by author


• “The Magical and Neoplatonic Interpretations of the Kabbalah in the Renaissance”—the first entry noted above under “On Pico.”


  In The Song of Solomon’s Ascents (SHIR HA-MA’ALOT LI-SHLOMO), “drawing from the most diverse sources, Alemanno both defined his conception of the complete wise man and praised an historical figure as the model for Jewish virtue in fifteenth-century Italy. The Song of Solomon’s Ascents is, in addition, a compendium of the syncretistic teachings of Alemanno, one of the eminent Jewish teachers of his time, and a figure notable to investigators of the Florentine Platonists as Pico’s consultant on Hebrew letters after 1488.” (—pp. 2-3) … Along with background material, Lesley offers a detailed (153-page) summary of The Song of Solomon’s Ascents stating, “The length, embellishment and verbosity of Alemanno’s Hebrew composition precluded making a translation. … [I]t is to be hoped that pruning can better expose the sense and structure of the original.” (—p. 2)


Chapter 2, § A VISIT TO FLORENCE (pp. 44-51) discusses Yohanan Alemanno and his kabbalistic pursuits, Pico della Mirandola’s contact with him, and “the misuse of Kabbalah for Christian missionizing.”
**Elijah del Medigo**: listed alphabetically by author


**JOHANNES REUCHLIN** (1455-1522)

Johannes Reuchlin, whose main sources for kabbalah were the writings of Menachem Recanati (*Commentary on the Torah, Commentary on the Daily Prayers*) and Joseph Gikatilla (*Sha’are Orah, Gimmat ‘Egoz*), wrote two books on cabala.

The first, *De verbo mirifico* (1494), speaks of the “wonder-working word,” YHShVH, the miraculous name of Jesus derived from the tetragrammaton of the Old Testament, YHVH, with the letter shin added in its midst. Refer to Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann’s “History and Prehistory of the Cabala of JHSVH,” In *Hebrew to Latin, Latin to Hebrew: The Mirroring of Two Cultures in the Age of Humanism* [BERLIN STUDIES IN JUDAISM, 1], ed. Giulio Busi (Berlin: Institut für Judaistik, Freie Universität Berlin – Torino: Nino Aragno Editore, 2006), 223-241.

The second, *De arte cabalistica* (1516), is a broader, more informed excursion into various kabbalistic concerns, which appeared in English (translated by Martin and Sarah Goodman) in 1983 (New York: Abaris Books, Inc.); this translation was reprinted with a new introduction by Moshe Idel in 1993 (Lincoln: Bison Books, University of Nebraska Press) as *On the Art of the Kabbalah*.

On Reuchlin (listed chronologically):


Blau, Joseph Leon. The Christian Interpretation of the Cabala... (1944), CHAPTER IV, “Pythagoras Redivivus,” pages 41-64, describes in some detail De verbo mirifico and De arte cabalistica.


Reuchlin’s Recommendation Whether to Confiscate, Destroy and Burn All Jewish Books: A Classic Treatise against Anti-Semitism, translated, edited, and with a forward by Peter Wortsman; critical introduction by Elisheva Carlebach (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2000), written in 1510.


Rummel, Erica. The Case against Johann Reuchlin: Religious and Social Controversy in Sixteenth-Century Germany (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002); includes 13 documents concerning the Reuchlin-Pfefferkorn conflict.


JACQUES LEFÈVRE D’ÉTAPLES (ca. 1455-1536)

“Jacques Lefèvre d’Étapes can be regarded as one of the most versatile editors of classical works of philosophy and religion from the learned world of French humanism” (—E. Oosterwijk-Ritman, ‘Drink from this Fountain’, page 13). Along with his many editions of philosophical works, Lefèvre compiled a volume of Llull’s “thoughts,” penned a defense of Reuchlin, and wrote on natural magic and cabala. While he remained a Roman Catholic, he is considered a forerunner of Reformation thought in France. He was, indeed, accused by the Sorbonne faculty of theology of being “a Lutheran.”

As for the narrow selection of English sources addressing Lefèvre on magic and cabala, find the following:

“Here my intention is simply to shed light on the significance and depth of the work [i.e., Lefèvre’s De magica naturali] by studying Lefèvre’s development of one Cabalist theme—the secret names of God—in the final chapters of book two of De magica naturali” (p. 119).

Copenhaver asserts that De magica naturali (1492-94) was the first description of cabala in Renaissance France as a correction to François Secret’s contention that Symphorien Champier’s Ars parva Galeni (1516) was “la premiere presentation de la kabbale par un Français” (in Les Kabbalistes Chretiens de la Renaissance [Paris: Dunod, 1964] p. 152).

- ‘Drink from this Fountain’: Jacques Lefèvre d’Étaples. Inspired humanist and dedicated editor, “an exhibition to honour Frans A. Janssen, retired director and at present member of the Board...,” text and catalogue: Theodor Harmsen (Amsterdam: Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica, 2004).


PETRUS GALATINUS [or PIETRO COLONNA GALATINO] (ca. 1460–ca. 1540)
The Franciscan convert Galatinus compiled De arcanis catholicae veritatis: contra obstinatissimum Judaeorum nostrae tempestatis perfidiam... (On the Secrets of Catholic Truth..., 12 volumes, [Ortona]: Impressum vero Orthonae maris, summa cum diligentia per Hieronymum Sunicum, 1518) for the purpose of showing that “Judaism before Christ was Christianity” (—Beitchman, Alchemy..., p. 120). De arcanis... offers excerpts from the Zohar, and it quotes and defends Reuchlin’s De arte cabalista. De arcanis..., in fact, presents a dialogue between Reuchlin and Belgian theologian and controversialist Jakob van Hoogstraten (ca. 1460-1527). It also introduces passages from Paul de Heredia’s Epistola de secretis, in particular those from the spurious kabbalistic text Galerazaya by the fictional Rabbenus Haccados (see p. 3 above). De arcanis..., however, is more generally based on the cabalistic Apocalypsis nova, attributed to one Blessed Amadeus, and even more so on Dominican Friar Raymundus Martini’s handbook for missionizers, Pugio fidei (Dagger of Faith—composed ca. 1280)17 and Porchetto de Salvatici’s Victoria adversus impios Hebraeos (Victory over the Impious Hebrews—1303, printed in Paris, 1520).

In English, we find mostly shreds here and there; however, see
- Beitchman, Philip. Alchemy of the Word, pp. 120-121 et passim.

• Leftley, S. A. Millenarian Thought in Renaissance Rome with special reference to Pietro Galatino (c.1464-c.1540) and Egidio da Viterbo (c. 1469-1532) ([UK]: University of Bristol, 1996).

In French:

JOHANNES TRITHEMIUS (nee Johann Heidenberg) (1462-1516)

Trithemius’ “magical theology” was indebted to cabala, particularly as declared by Pico della Mirandola. Trithemius absorbed not only cabala’s angelic magic and rituals, which utilized divine names, but also its ciphers and cryptological methods. Scholarly debate over the beliefs and intentions of Trithemius comprise the discussion in the final chapter of Noel L. Brann’s book, Trithemius and Magical Theology: A Chapter in the Controversy over Occult Studies in Early Modern Europe [SUNY SERIES IN WESTERN ESOTERIC TRADITIONS], (Albany: State University of New York, 1999).

Trithemius’ most significant text, The Steganographia of Johannes Trithemius, BOOK I, has been translated by Fiona Tait and Christopher Upton, with BOOK III (translated by Dr J. W. H. Walden) and an extract from a commentary (from BOOK IV of Cryptomenytices et cryptographia) by Gustavus Selenus (also translated by Dr J. W. H. Walden), edited with an introduction by Adam McLean (Edinburgh: Magnum Opus Hermetic Sourceworks [No. #12], 1982), which is, unfortunately, no longer available from McLean’s Alchemy Website. Supplementing this is Wayne Shumaker’s Renaissance Curiosa [MEDIEVAL & RENAISSANCE TEXTS & STUDIES, Volume 8] (Binghamton: Center for Medieval & Early Renaissance Studies, 1982), CHAPTER III: “Johannes Trithemius and Cryptography.”

FRANCESCO GIORGI [or FRANÇOIS GEORGES DE VENISE] (1467-1540)

Francesco Giorgi (or Zorzi) “has been considered a central figure in sixteenth-century Christian Kabbalah both by his contemporaries and by modern scholars. ... After Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, who was the founder of the Christian kabbalah, Zorzi can claim second place,” writes Giulio Busi in “Francesco Zorzi: A Methodical Dreamer,” in The Christian Kabbalah, edited by Joseph Dan (Harvard College Library, 1997).

Giorgi’s major work, De harmonia mundi, “a massive and curious book, all Hermetic, Platonic, Cabalistic, and Pinchian,” has been given detailed—albeit messy—treatment in Francesco Giorgio’s De Harmonia Mundi by Yona Dureau (Lewiston – Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2011). The publisher’s description of the book is misleading, for this work is not a straightforward “translation from the original Latin of Francesco Giorgio’s De Harmonica (sic) Mundi that establishes its connections to Christian Cabbala in the early Renaissance” (from the Mellen Press website). Dureau’s forty untitled appendices offer facsimiles of key passages from Giorgi’s Latin text (Venice: 1525) and English translations of these, along with French translations from Guy Lefevre de la Boderie’s L’Harmonie du Monde (Paris: 1582); such facsimiles and translations (without Guy’s French) are also interspersed through the book. A CD is included, Voces Harmoniae Mundi/Choirs of Harmony—to listen to while reading—which features “music from Zorzo’s (sic) time and dreams.”

On Giorgi (listed chronologically):


Readers of French, refer to the chapters on Giorgi in François Secret’s works:


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CARDINAL EGIonio DA VITERO [or GILES DE VITEURO (1469–1532)]


In English, see (listed chronologically)
• Leftley, S. A. MILLENIARIAC THOUGHT IN RENAISSANCE ROME WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO PIETRO GALATINO (c. 1464-c. 1540) AND EGIonio DA VITERO (c. 1469-1532) (Ph.D. dissertation, [UK]: University of Bristol, 1996).

Some enduring sources on Egidio are François Secret’s works:
• Le Zôhar chez les kabbalistes chrétiens de la Renaissance (Paris: Durlacher, 1958), pp. 34-42.
Egidio’s Commentarium ad mentum Platonis, in Latin, has been published as Giles of Viterbo – The Commentary on the Sentences of Petrus Lombardus, ed. Daniel Nodes (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2010). Nodes’ twenty-four-page introduction is in English.

AGOSTINO (or AUGUSTINO) GIUSTINIANI (1470-1536)
Undoubtedly acquainted with the “kabbalistic circle” which included Egidio da Viterbo and Pietro Galatino, Dominican Agostino Giustiniani, a noble Genovese scholar of Greek and Hebrew, compiled Psalterium hebraeum, Graecum, arabicum, et chaldaeum, cum tribus Latinis interpretationibus et glossis [The Psalter of Hebrew, Greek, Arabic, and Chaldean, with three Latin interpretations and glosses] (Genoa, 1516). The Psalter included the original Hebrew and Latin translations of kabbalistic passages from R. Isaac ibn Avi Sahulah and Abraham Abulafia. Augustino’s works may, in part, be the source of kabbalah for Leone Ebreo.


ALBRECHT DÜRER (1471-1528)
Quite a few researchers have speculated on Dürer’s connections with the Jews and cabala, but none has presented the idea as bluntly as Zhenya Gershman’s “Dürer’s Enigma: A Kabbalistic Revelation in Melancholia § 1, in Aries: Journal for the Study of Western Esotericism [NEW SERIES], Volume 18, Number 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2018). The section heading, “Dürer’s Melancholia § 1 as a Tribute to Pico’s Legacy” places the oeuvre from which Dürer’s cabala arose. Gershman follows the lead of Frances Yates’ “suggestion that Melancholia § 1 was philosophically linked to ‘Christian Cabala as understood by Pico, Reuchlin, and Agrippa’” (Gershman, p. 221, citing Yates’ Occult Philsophy, p. 69). Note the brief report on Gershman’s “Dürer’s Art of Revelation: Revelation of Dürer’s Art,” presented May 27, 2016, at the Masonic Center in Santa Monica > http://www.projectawe.org/events/2016/5/16/drers-art-of-revelation-revelation-of-drers-art.

JEAN THÉNAUD (ca. 1480-1542)
Franciscan Jean Thénaud, “voyager and cabalist,” was the author of La sainte et trescrestienne cabale (The Holy and Very Christian Cabala—1519, also called La cabale métrifée) and Traité (or Traicté) de la cabale (TREATISE ON THE CABALA—1521). Six-hundred lines of the former, in French, comprise APPENDIX D of J. L. Blau’s Christian Interpretation of the Cabala. Thenaud’s “The Very Christian Cabala” is discussed in Blau’s CHAPTER VII.

In his article, “Renaissance Kabbalah” (in Modern Esoteric Spirituality, eds. Antoine Faivre and Jacob Needleman, New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1995), G. Mallary Masters singles out Thenaud’s Traité de la Cabale chretienne as “one very typical ‘popularizing’ treatise from early sixteenth-century France.” After summarizing its contents, Masters reviews its sources, which amounts to a survey of the key figures of Renaissance cabala: Pico, Reuchlin, Agrippa, Ricci, and Giorgi (or Zorzi).


GIULIO CAMILLO (1480-1544)

Giulio Camillo, colorful alchemist and philosopher, was both praised and scorned in his day. He is most noted for his work on Memory Theatre, L’idea del teatro (Florence: Lorenzo Torrentino, 1550), which serves as a window into the intellectual and spiritual urgencies of his era, for Camillo engages the full gamut of the “Hermetic-Cabalist” tradition.

For the few sources in English (listed chronologically), see

  “The Memory Theatre of Giulio Camillo asks the question: How is the motion of the memory connected with the motion of history? How is the personal political? Is the story of a man with perfect memory who is haunted by the memory of a murder he may have committed. As he searches his memory he is confronted by events that he denies. Amnesia begins to set in as his denials grow until the mind of a man who could focus his entire memory in a single moment is in danger of shattering. ... The Memory Theatre is structured as a play within a play within a play.” (—The Memory Theatre..., pp. 2 and 3)
  “There is evidence, however, that the cabbalah was not a subject that was wholly to absorb Camillo, and that he later felt that the references to it in L’Idea del Teatro were more like spice than the meat of the work.” (—Robinson, A Search..., page 26)
  Also see Robinson’s brief “Giulio Camillo’s L’idea del teatro,” in eSharp, Issue 1 (University of Glasgow, Autumn 2003): MAGIC, at http://www.gla.ac.uk/research/az/esharp/issues/1/robinson/.

Camillo’s works were published in Italian as L’idea del Teatro e altri scritti di retorica (Turin: Edizioni RES, 1990). Lina Bolzoni has edited a Spanish version: La Idea del Teatro [BIBLIOTECA DE ENSAYO/ESSAY LIBRARY], translated by Jordi Raventos (Madrid: Ediciones Siruela SA, 2006 &
HEINRICHE CORNELIUS AGrippa (1486?-1535)
Following on Pico, Lazzarelli, Giorgi, and Reuchlin was Trithemius’ student, Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa of Nettesheim. His major work, De occulta philosophia (in three books), is a compendium of occult sciences. Agrippa’s account of cabala is found in Book III, coupled as it is with medieval angelology and demonology and the magic connected with these.


Tyson’s edition of De occulta philosophia supplements Agrippa’s text with a substantial amount of well-researched support material covering such topics as “Practical Kabbalah,” “The Sephiroth,” “Magic Squares,” “Geomancy,” and others, in eight appendices, which makes this particular edition a valuable reference book.


A new English translation of the first tome of De occulta philosophia from the original Latin has been published: Three Books of Occult Philosophy: Books One, A Modern Translation (ACADEMIC EDITION), translated by Eric Purdue, preface by Christopher Warmock (Renaissance Astrology, 2012). Note Warnock’s critique of “Donald Tyson’s Annotated Edition” on page 5.

Starting with with Blau’s Christian Interpretation... (CHAPTER VI, “The Fantastic Cabala”), Yates’ chapters on Agrippa in Giordano Bruno... (CHAPTER VII) and Yates’ Occult Philosophy... (CHAPTERS V & VI), see (listed chronologically)


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56 See below, ADDENDUM B: SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY PRINTED WORKS ON CHRISTIAN CABALA IN ENGLISH, for the complete text of the title page of the 1651 English edition of De occulta philosophia (p. 128).


The van der Poel and Lehrich books complement each other nicely: The former concentrates on Agrippa’s philosophical and theological thought via his correspondence, orations, and declamations (i.e., De incertitudine et vanitate..., De nobilitate et præcellentia fœminei sexus, etc.); the latter focuses on De occulta philosophia. The bibliographies in van der Poel and Lehrich are immensely useful: see van der Poel (pp. 277-280) for a complete list of Agrippa’s works, and Lehrich (pp. 240-243): WORKS ON AGrippa.

Particularly on matters of Agrippa’s biography, van der Poel and Lehrich defer to Nauert as supplemented by the numerous articles of Paola Zambelli, only a few of which are in English:


Online, see Henry Morley’s Life of Henry Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim, Doctor and Knight, Commonly Known as a Magician, 2 volumes (London: Chapman & Hall, 1856), digitized by Google, at INTERNET ARCHIVE >


PHILLIPUS THEOPHRASTUS AUREOLUS BOMBASTUS VON HOHENHEIM
known as PARACELSUS (1493–1541)

Another student of Trithemius, Paracelsus is generally—and correctly—associated with alchemy; the term cabala can be attached to him only in its broadest, most inexact sense, i.e., referring to astronomical and magical practices.
On or by Paracelsus (listed chronologically):

- Pachter, Henry M. *Magic into Science: The Story of Paracelsus* (New York: Henry Schuman, 1951)

PAUL RICIUS [or RICCI] (fl. 1506-1541)

“The years between” Reuchlin’s De verbo mirifico and De arte cabalistica “also witnessed the appearance of a number of works by the learned convert Paul Ricius, the private physician of Emperor Maximilian, who took Pico’s and Reuchlin’s conclusions and added to them through an original synthesis of kabbalistic and Christian sources” (—Scholem, Kabbalah, p. 198). Ricius’ four-volume De cælesti agricultura was included in Johannes Pistorius’ compendium, Artis cabalisticaæ (Basileæ: per S. Henricpetri, 1587)—see my outline of the contents of Artis cabalisticaæ at http://www.digital-brilliance.com/contributed/Karr/Biblios/ccineb.pdf, § SOME OTHER CABALISTIC CANONS IN LATIN.

A “complete translation” of “PAUL RICI’S INTRODUCTION TO THE LORE OF THE CABALISTS OR ALLEGROZERS” (Pauli Ricii in cabalistarum seu allegorizantium eruditionem isagogæ, Augsburg: 1515) is presented in Blau’s Christian Interpretation of the Cabala in the Renaissance (pp. 67-74). On this work, see Beitchman’s Alchemy of the Word: § THE DISSEMINATION OF CABALA (p. 169), along with his numerous other references.

See also (listed chronologically)


Readers of French, see § PAUL RICI in François Secret’s Kabbalistes chrétiens de la Renaissance (pp. 87ff).

JOHANN ALBRECHT WIDMANSTETTER [or WIDMANSTADT] (1506-1557)

One of the most remarkable of the foreign humanists working in Italy at this time [1529-1555] was the German, Johann Albrecht Widmanstadt, later Chancellor of Lower Austria and Rector of the University of Vienna, who went far beyond the rudiments of Jewish scholarship and enjoyed the advantage of instruction by a number of distinguished teachers.


“As a young man he knew of Reuchlin. ... [1]n Naples... he met Pico della Mirandola’s teacher of Kabbalah, Rabbi Dattilus [or Dattilo], and it was here that Widmanstetter’s kabbalistic education began. ... [Egidio da Viterbo] invited Widmanstetter to Rome to further his Arabic


With guileless irony, Widmanstetter “warned his coreligionists that ‘from the Kabbalah of the Jews will spring, as from a Trojan horse, an infinite number of startling opinions which will serve as weapons for attack upon the Church of Christ’”—Salo Wittmayer Baron, A Social and Religious History of the Jews: Late Middle Ages and Era of European Expansion 1200-1650, VOLUME XIII: INQUISITION, RENAISSANCE, AND REFORMATION (New York – London: Columbia University Press/Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1969), p. 180. Scholem reiterates Widmanstetter’s warning in “The Beginnings of Christian Kabbalah,” noting, “Widmanstadt’s criticism shows, at least on this particular point, an unusual understanding both of the kabbalah’s true character, and of the ambiguity inherent in the Christian kabbalist project, especially when, as in Pico’s case, that project was grounded in a belief in syncretism as a positive value.”

Readers of French can refer to the segment of Secret’s Kabbalistes chrétiens de la Renaissance (Paris: Dunod, 1964), pp. 121-123 on Widmanstetter.

GUILLAUME POSTEL (1510-1581)

Guillaume Postel produced a Latin translation of the Sefer Yezirah and penned some comments on it. “In addition, he translated the Bahir, part of a commentary of Menahem of Recanati, and a part of the Bereshith Rabba.” (—Marion Kuntz, Guillaume Postel, p. 85—cited in detail below). Postel also translated portions of the Zohar, receiving guidance in understanding them from an unlikely tutor: an illiterate woman, though something of a sixteenth-century Mother Teresa (perhaps in both the best and worst sense), called Madre Zuana, or Mother Johanna—the “Venetian Virgin.” At various times, Postel identified her as mother of the world, the shekhinah, and the second messiah. Marion Kuntz writes, “As [Postel] worked on his translation of the Zohar, he became ever more convinced that the restitution of all things as interpreted by his Mother Johanna was confirmed not only in the ‘most divine and rare books of the Zohar,’ but also in the books of the ancient [Jewish] interpreters...” (—Kuntz, Guillaume Postel, p. 84). Alas, none of Postel’s translations has ever been published.

On Postel, in chronological order:


• Kuntz’ collection, *Venice, Myth and Utopian Thought in the Sixteenth Century: Bodin, Postel and the Virgin of Venice* [VARIORUM COLLECTED STUDIES SERIES CS668, Aldershot – Brookfield: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2000; of the 8 articles on Postel, 6 are in English, 2 in Italian).


• Brach, Jean-Pierre. “Son of the Son of God: the feminine Messiah and her progeny, according to Guillaume Postel (1510-1581), in *Alternative Christs*, edited by Olav Hammer (Cambridge – New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 113-130.


Readers of French, refer to the works on Postel written or edited by François Secret:
• Le Zôhar chez les kabbalistes chrétiens de la Renaissance (Paris: Durlacher, 1958), SECTION VI, “Les traduction du Zôhar de Guillaume Postel” (pp. 51-78) and APPENDIX I, “Préface de Postel à sa traduction du Zôhar sur la Genèse” (pp. 104-114).
• Bibliographie des manuscripts de Guillaume Postel (Genève: Droz, 1970).
• Guillaume Postel: apologies et rétractions; manuscrits inédits publiés avec une introd. et des notes par François Secret (Nieuwkoop, B. de Graaf, 1972).

Also in French,

JOHN DEE (1527-1608)

In Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age, Frances Yates calls John Dee a “Christian Cabalist.” Indeed, Dee seems to have drawn his cabala fully from Christian sources, primarily Reuchlin, Agrippa, and Postel. There is a well-developed literature on Dee—quite a few more items than are listed here—including his own writings in reprint as well as studies of his work and influence. First, note the references above in § SOME HISTORIANS: FRANCES YATES.

Recent publications and reprints include these works by Dee:

A “completely new & reset edition” of A True and Faithful Relation... published as Dr John Dee’s Spiritual Diaries (1583-1608), ed. Stephen Skinner (Singapore: Golden Hoard Publishing, 2011); supplemented by Skinner’s Key to the Latin of Dr John Dee’s Spiritual Diaries (Singapore: Golden Hoard Publishing, 2012), “a full translation of the more than 50,000 words printed in Latin in Dee’s Diaries.”  

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• There is a discussion of A True and Faithful Relation... in Wayne Shumaker’s Renaissance Curiosa [MEDIEVAL AND RENAISSANCE TEXTS AND STUDIES, Volume 8] (Binghamton: Center for Medieval & Early Renaissance Studies, 1982), CHAPTER I: “John Dee’s Conversations with Angels.”


• The Secrets of John Dee, introduction and commentary by Gordon James (Edmonds: Holmes Publishing Group, 1995)


An interesting addition to the Dee magical material is Stephen Skinner and David Rankine’s Practical Angel Magic of Dr John Dee’s Enochian Tables, TABULARUM BONORUM ANGELORUM INVOCATIONES [SOURCEWORKS OF CEREMONIAL MAGIC – Volume 1] (London: Golden Hoard Press, 2004): “…the present manuscript is a working expansion of the Book of Invocation or Calls, the last of the four manuscripts found in Dee’s secret chest.” (—p. 37) “The two manuscripts transcribed in Part 3 of this book are Sloane MS 307 and Sloane MS 3821, both from the British Library.” (—p. 53) It is strongly suggested that the author of the “extensive expansion” was one Thomas Rudd (1583-1656), whose manuscripts are also featured in volumes 2 and 3 of SOURCEWORKS OF CEREMONIAL MAGIC: Keys to the Gateway of Magic: Summoning the Solomonic Archangels & Demon Princes AND The Goetia of Dr Rudd: Angels and Demons. Add to these Colin D. Campbell’s Magic Seal of Dr. John Dee: The Sigillum Dei Aemeth (York Beach: Teitan Press, 2009), which presents the history of Dee’s sigillum, suggests corrections which might be made, then shows how it can be put to ritual use.

About Dee (listed chronologically)


• Clulee, Nicholas H. John Dee’s Natural Philosophy: Between Science and Religion (London: Routledge, 1988)—Cabala is most often mentioned in Clulee’s discussion of Dee’s Monas hieroglyphica. It is pointed out that Dee believed that he had superseded the “vulgar linguistic discipline” of Hebraic kabbalah with his own “real” kabbalah.

• James, Geoffrey. *Angel Magic: The Ancient Art of Summoning and Communicating with Angelic Beings* (St. Paul: Llewellyn Publications, 1995)—James refers to the principle based on Hebrew *cabala* “which says that the name of an object is inextricably linked with that object. To know the true name of something is to be able to control it completely.” (p. 16)

• Harkness, Deborah. *John Dee’s Conversations with Angels: Cabala, Alchemy, and the End of Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999)—*Cabala* is dealt with throughout; see in particular CHAPTER 5, “The True Cabala: Reading the Book of Nature,” which describes “angelic cabala and explains how it is similar, and dissimilar, to the Jewish and Christian cabala of the early modern period.” (—p. 5)

• Håkansson, Hakan. *Seeing the Word: John Dee and Renaissance Occultism* [UGGLAN MINERVASERIEN, 2] (Lund: Lunds Universitet, 2001)—Dee’s uses of *Cabala* are discussed in numerous sections toward the middle of *Seeing the Word*, in particular pp. 170-199.

• Woolley, Benjamin. *The Queen’s Conjurator: The Science and Magic of Dr. John Dee, Advisor to Queen Elizabeth I* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2001)—CHAPTER IX opens with a brief account of Dee’s exploration of “a new field of research: the Cabala.”

• Szonyi, György E. *John Dee’s Occultism: Magical Exaltation through Powerful Signs*. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004)—See pp. 90-104, where there is a “sketchy outline of the cabala” within a segment called *PICO’S ECOMIUM OF EXALTATIO*.


Significant short works, articles, and chapters on Dee (listed chronologically):

• James, M[ontague] R[hodes]. *Lists of Manuscripts Formerly Owned by Dr. John Dee*, with preface and identifications (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1921).


• Clucas, Stephen. “‘Non est legendum sed inspicendum solum’: Inspectival Knowledge and the Visual Logic of John Dee’s Liber Mysterium,” in Emblems and Alchemy, edited by A. Adams and S. J. Linden (Glasgow: Glasgow Emblem Studies, 1998), pages 109-132; reprinted in Clucas’ compendium Magic, Memory and Natural Philosophy in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries (Surrey – Burlington: Ashgate, 2011)—hereafter Magic, Memory and Natural Philosophy.


• Stuckrad, Kocku von. “Scientific Encounters” = CHAPTER SEVEN of Locations of Knowledge in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Esoteric Discourse and Western Identities [BRILL’S STUDIES IN INTELLECTUAL HISTORY 186] (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2010).


Charlotte Fell Smith’s John Dee (1527-1608) (London: Constable & Company Ltd, 1909) is also at this site: click “Charlotte Fell Smith book.” Indeed, quite a bit of material on Dee is available on the Internet at not only the John Dee Society but also the John Dee Publication Project (for Enochian material in particular) at www.john-dee.org and at Twilit Grotto (selected writings) at www.esotericarchives.com/dee/index.html.

Dozens of books have been written about Enochian magic as derived from Dee’s work with Edward Kelley for the simple reason that the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn (see Part 3, below) incorporated a portion of it into their teachings. The Golden Dawn’s manner of Enochia was further developed by Aleister Crowley and subsequent authors and magickians, many of whom added elements which are quite alien to Dee’s work even while omitting well-nigh half of Dee’s original system. For an accurate impression of Dee and Kelley’s entire system, see Donald Tyson’s Enochian Magic for Beginners (St. Paul: Llewellyn Publications, 1997). The title is misleading: Tyson’s book is a thorough introduction, description, and appraisal.

“Enochian” literature spinning off from the Golden Dawn’s use of Dee material is extensive. Some examples:
• Crowley, Aleister; DuQuette, Lon Milo; and Hyatt, Christopher S. Enochian World of Aleister Crowley: Enochian Sex Magick (Scottsdale: New Falcon Publications, 1991).
• ______. Enochian Physics: The Structure of the Magical Universe (St. Paul: Llewellyn Pubs: 1985).

JEAN BODIN (1530-1596)

Bodin was a more accomplished Hebraist than most around him, including his older contemporary Guillaume Postel. In his works, especially *Colloquium heptaplomeres de rerum sublimium arcans abditis* (COLLOQUIUM OF THE SEVEN ABOUT THE SECRETS OF THE SUBLIME—1588), Bodin cites a wide range of Jewish sources, including the Talmud, Maimonides, and the Zohar. Of the seven fictional discusants of the *Colloquium*, the most prominent—and portrayed as the most learned—is a Jew named Salomon Barcassius, “whose bearing and erudition command general respect and who argues that the religion of Moses, the most ancient, remains superior to all others” (—Frank E. Manuel, *The Broken Staff* [Cambridge – London: Harvard University Press, 1992], p. 55). The “others” are a rich Venetian host, a convert from Catholicism to Islam, a Calvinist, a Lutheran, a skeptic, and a “deist.” The *Colloquium* was put into English by Marion Leathers Kuntz (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975; rpt. University Park: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

Note Kuntz’ articles in her collection, *Venice, Myth and Utopian Thought in the Sixteenth Century: Bodin, Postel and the Virgin of Venice* (full bibliographic details above in § POSTEL):

1. “The Home of Coronaeus in Jean Bodin’s *Colloquium*”
2. “Structure, Form and Meaning in the *Colloquium Heptaplomeres* of Jean Bodin”
3. “Harmony and the Heptaplomeres of Jean Bodin”
4. “The Concept of Toleration in the *Colloquium Heptaplomeres* of Jean Bodin.”

See also


GIORDANO BRUNO (1548-1600)

According to Frances Yates, Bruno’s *cabala* was derived primarily from Agrippa and remained rather dilute, being far less important to Bruno than his “Egyptianism” (see above: § SOME HISTORIANS: FRANCES YATES • Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition).
In his *Cabala del Cavallo Pegaseo* he appears to be totally rejecting Cabala for his purely Egyptian insights, an attitude which accords with his highly unorthodox view of the history of *prisca theologia*, or *prisca magia*, in which, according to him, the Egyptians are not only earliest but best, and the Jews and Christians later and worse. (—Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition, p. 257)

Compare Yates’ conclusions about Bruno with those in Giordano Bruno and the Kabbalah: Prophets, Magicians, and Rabbis (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997) by Karen Silvia de Leon-Jones, who contends that Bruno’s knowledge and development of the kabbalah were far more extensive than Yates suggests. In de Leon-Jones’ words,

Bruno does not merely present or discuss the kabbalah, he transforms it, manipulates it, makes it his own, does it.

(—Giordano Bruno and the Kabbalah, p. 5)


Another Bruno dialogue has been put into English: *The Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast*, translated and with an introduction by Arthur D. Imerti, foreword by Karen Silvia de Leon-Jones (Lincoln – London: University of Nebraska Press, 2004).

Other Bruno works in translation:

  This title, translated as *The Heroic Frenzies*, can be found at Joseph Peterson’s ESOTERIC ARCHIVES, at http://www.esotericarchives.com/bruno/home.htm, along with ten other Bruno works in Latin. Peterson reproduces the translation of Paolo Eugenio Memmo, Jr. (1964).


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20 On Leone Ebreo, see *ADDENDUM D: THE PROBLEM OF LEONE Ebreo’S DIALOGHI*. 

41
Studies on Bruno (listed chronologically):

  Gatti treats Bruno the scientific thinker and mathematician rather than Bruno the “Hermetic Magus”—the title Frances Yates gave him.


• Rowland, Ingrid. Giordano Bruno: Philosopher/Heretic (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2008). “In its multiple worlds, its combinations of Hebrew letters, and its interconnections, in addition to its affinities with the Neoplatonic interplay of darkness and light, Kabbalah bore an uncannily close relationship to the way of thinking that Giordano Bruno came to identify as the Nolan philosophy. Bruno’s was certainly not a Christian Kabbalah; if anything it was more identifiably Jewish. Neither alternative would find any approval within the walls of San Domenico. As a student, Bruno restricted his energies to a less dangerous pursuit: the material exercise known as the art of memory.”

—Rowland, Giordano Bruno, p. 61.


SHAKESPEARE (1564-1616)

Quite a few works discuss the occult in Shakespeare; for example,

• Frances Yates’ Occult Philosophy..., CHAPTER XII, “Shakespeare and the Christian Cabala: Francesco Giorgi and The Merchant of Venice” and Yates’ The Theatre of the World (both titles mentioned above, § SOME HISTORIANS)


Two writers have given Shakespeare’s connections with kabbalah, or cabala, book-length consideration: Daniel Banes and Yona Claire Dureau.

Regarding cabalistic influence upon “The Bard of Avon,” Banes’ Shakespeare, Shylock and Kabbalah (Silver Spring: Malcolm House Publications, 1978) begins with a discussion of John Dee and Robert Fludd to establish the existence of cabala in England. Banes then goes on to the purpose of his book: “to identify some of the kabbalistic themes in The Merchant of Venice, and to relate them to antecedents in the literature of Kabbalah.” From Banes’ analysis, it would appear that Shakespeare was most indebted to Francesco Giorgi’s De harmonia mundi (1525) via the French version of it rendered by Guy Lefèvre de la Boderie (1578).

Banes’ earlier work, The Provocative Merchant of Venice (Silver Spring – Chicago: Malcolm House, 1975), begins with a dismissive critique of Charles and Mary Lamb’s prose retelling of The Merchant of Venice and concludes with his own “vagrant speculations” regarding the dependence of this famous work upon the Kabbalah. Indeed, Banes sets up a variant tree of life showing correspondences between the sefirot and the play’s dramatis personae.

Banes’ “commentary” on The Merchant of Venice is critiqued by Yates in Occult Philosophy..., CHAPTER XII.

We will use the chapter titles of Yona Dureau’s Christian Cabbalah Movement in Renaissance England & Its Influence on William Shakespeare (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2009)—with a few notes—to compose our description of her work:

CHAPTER I. “Favourable Circumstances for the Development of Christian Cabbalah in England”
CHAPTER II. “Translators of Christian and Jewish Cabbalah and Their Relationship to Writing and Writers”

CHAPTER III. “The Impossible Quest for Lost Shakespeare”

CHAPTER IV. “The Metaphysics of Prophecies and Free Will in Richard III”

CHAPTER V. “Julius Caesar: Representation of History and the Talmudic Combination of Divine and Human Time” ... “...shows how Julius Caesar can be read according to seven levels of spiral time structures...” (—INTRODUCTION, p. 13)

CHAPTER VI. “As You Like It as a Kabbalist Teaching on the Impact of Sacred Study” ...
...focuses on As You Like It and its intertextual connections with Cordovero’s manuscript Or Ne’erah” (—INTRODUCTION, p. 13).

CHAPTER VI opens Renaissance Europe bore the print of many trends and influences in the realm of esoteric teachings. It would probably be a comfortable hypothesis for the critic to look for Christian cabalistic elements in Shakespeare’s plays, to support and complete the imaginary image of the playwright established by generations of critics. Yet, just as intellectuals sometimes turned to kabbalah with no clearly defined religious purpose, and probably mostly for primarily intellectual stimulation, Shakespeare’s plays display a variety of influences. Some plays nevertheless are definitely more kabbalistical than others, some obviously influenced by the syncratic dimension of Christian Cabbalah. (—p. 197)

CHAPTER VII. “Antony and Cleopatra and Christian Cabbalah’s Hercules”

CHAPTER VIII. “Richard II, the Cabbalistic Loss of the Crown and the Rise of the Antichrist, or the Failure of the Way of Milderness and the Forecast of the Way of Severity”

A chapter which is summarized in Dureau’s INTRODUCTION (—p. 13), which “offers a reading of Twelfth Night in view of Christian Cabbalah’s theory of death by the divine kiss,” is missing from the book. Indeed, content descriptions in the INTRODUCTION conflate CHAPTERS IV and V and incorrectly number the chapters thereafter—fleeting indications of the pervasive sloppiness of this otherwise intriguing book.


JOHANNES BUREUS (1568-1652)

“Scandinavia was the land of the Hyperboreans who had migrated to the Baltic shores before the fall of the Tower of Babel and who therefore possessed the original, uncorrupted culture and spirituality of mankind,” recounts Susanna Åkerman (—“The Gothic Kabbala: Johannes Bureus, Runic Theosophy, and Northern European Apocalypticism,” in The Expulsion of the Jews: 1492 and After, eds. Raymond B. Waddington and Arthur H. Williamson, New York – London: Garland Publishing, 1994; p. 177). “The most striking of the theorists of the new Baltic imperium was Johannes Bureus” (p. 178).

Bureus “is the most important non-Jewish Swedish Kabbalist. In Bureus’s work older Gothism along with runic and linguistic research blended with his strong interest in all forms of esotericism: astrology, magic, alchemy, and above all the Kabbalah” (—Thomas Karlsson, “Kabbalah in Sweden,” in Western Esotericism, Based on Papers Read at the Symposium on Western Esotericism Held at Åbo, Finland, on 15-17 August 2007, ed. Tore Ahlbäck [SCRIPTA INSTITUTE DONNERIANI ABOENSIS XX], Åbo/Turku: Donner Institute in Religious and Cultural History, 2008; p. 88).

**PAUL YVON (c.1570-1646)**


**ROBERT FLUDD (1574-1637)**

The *cabala* of Robert Fludd is a mixture of all sorts of stuff. Fludd did, however, expound upon the *sefirot* and the Hebrew letters in the second book of *Summum Bonum* and charted their correspondences with the planets and holy names in *The Mosaicall Philosophy*. Cabalistic material appears as well in *Utriusque cosmi...historia*. Interestingly, while Fludd claimed Menahem Recanati as his kabbalistic authority, his sources were more apparently Pico and Reuchlin (both of whom drew extensively, albeit selectively, from Recanati), and Agrippa.

Out of print and difficult to find these days is Adam McLean’s edition of *The Mosaicall Philosophy: The Cabala of Robert Fludd* [MAGNUM OPUS HERMETIC SOURCEWORKS #2] (London: The Hermetic Research Trust, 1979), which reproduces Books 1 and 2 of the second section. Fortunately, the 1659 edition of *The Mosaicall Philosophy* has been reprinted—in full—by Kessinger Publishing Company (2003); *cabala* is given its most direct treatment in the second section: Book 2, starting at CHAP. II, pp. 171ff of the 1659 (= Kessinger) edition.


Along with Craven’s treatment of *Utriusque cosmi...historia* (in *Dr. Robert Fludd...*, CHAPTERS 9 through 13), sections of this work have been put into English:


Utriusque cosmica...historia, VOLUME I, TRACTATE 1, Book 1 (CHAPTERS 1, 4, 6-7, 9-10) and Book 2 (CONTENTS, CHAPTERS 1, 3-4, 6-8, 10, and 15) are given in Huffman’s Robert Fludd: Essential Readings (noted above). Alas, Fludd’s most concentrated treatment of cabala within Utriusque cosmica...historia resides in VOLUME II, TRACTATE II, has not yet, to the best of my knowledge, been put into English. See Craven’s CHAPTERS 11-13 and Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann’s “Robert Fludd’s Kabbalistic Cosmos” (listed immediately below).

On or by Fludd (listed chronologically):

- the antique but adequate Dr. Robert Fludd: The English Rosicrucian, Life and Writings, by J. B. Craven
- Frances Yates’ works, especially Art of Memory and Theatre of the World.
  Debus includes a full BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY covering scholarship on Fludd to 1979.
  This article discusses the cabalistic content of Utriusque Cosmi historia II: Tomi Secundi Tractatus secundus, Sectio prima: De Theosophico, Cabalistico et Physiologico utriusque mundi discursu (Frankfort: 1621).
Also find at THE ALCHEMY WEBSITE:
• “Titlepages to Robert Fludd’s Books” at www.alchemywebsite.com/fluddtit.html
• articles on Fludd by Ron Heisler and Sharon M. W. → SCHOLARLY ARTICLES ON ALCHEMY at http://www.alchemywebsite.com/articles_scholarly_individuals.html.

JACOB BÖHME (1575-1624)

My ADDENDUM D: THE PROBLEM OF LEONE EBREO’S DIALOGHI sets out an array of quotes from books and articles on Leone and his work which, on many points, contradict each other. A similar compilation could be arranged regarding Böhme and his connections to kabbalah. To illustrate, Gershom Scholem notes (—Kabbalah, p. 200),

...students (as well as opponents) of Jacob Boehme had discovered the inner affinity between his own theosophical system and that of the Kabbalah, though there would seem to be no historical connection between them. In certain circles, particularly in Germany, Holland, and England, Christian Kabbalah henceforward assumed a Boehmian guise.

Yet, we read,

Of those learn’d men that convers’d with [Böhme] in the greatest familiarity was one Balthasar Walther ... an apparent expert in kabbalistic tracts... who had poisoned Böhme’s pious Lutheran thoughts with its teachings.


With Böhme’s “curious assertion concerning the globe [as opposed to tablets—DK] of the covenant,” T. I. Penman shows a bridge from Reuchlin (De arte cabalistica) via Walther to Böhme, who “could not speak Latin, let alone Hebrew, and therefore could have had no direct access to Reuchlin or his sources.” (All quotes are from Penman’s article. See XL. Questions concerning the soule : propounded by Dr. Balthasar Walter, and answered by Jacob Behmen.,, London: Matth. Simmons.,, 1647).

Here is a trim selection of sources on Böhme biased toward our focus on kabbalah/cabala:

  The sources outlined are the Spanish conversos, along with Llull, Pico, and Reuchlin. The philosophical recipients include Oetinger, Böhme, Saint-Martin (via Böhme), and Schelling (via Oetinger).


  “One of the more important sources of Behmenist thought on gender is to be found in the Jewish mystical tradition.” (p. 69)

  See especially CHAPTER 9, “Kabbalah in Boehme’s Discourse and its Valentinian Enlisting.” O’Regan concludes—in so many words—that Böhme was more kabbalah-like than genuinely kabbalistic.


• Wolfson, Elliot R. “The Holy Cabala of Changes: Jacob Böhme and Jewish Esotericism,” in Aries – Journal for the Study of Westen Esotericism, Volume 18, Number 1 (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2018), pages 21-53. Aries 18:1 is devoted to Böhme; the other articles are
  - Penman, Leigh. “The Broken Tradition: Uncovering Errors in the Correspondence of Jacob Böhme”

Perhaps the most instructive works on Böhme and his descendents, e.g., John Pordage, Johann Georg Gichtel, Friedrich Christoph Oetenger (on Oetenger, see below), are Arthur Versluis’ companion volumes, Wisdom’s Children: A Christian Esoteric Tradition (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999) and Wisdom’s Book: The Sophia Anthology (St. Paul: Paragon House, 2000).

ATHANASIUS KIRCHER (1601-1680)

Athanasius Kircher is described by Frances Yates as “a most notable descendant of the Hermetic-Cabalist tradition founded by Pico.” She also points out that “Kircher maintained the full Renaissance attitude to Hermes Trismegistus, completely ignoring Casaubon.” (Yates makes similar comments about Robert Fludd.) It was Isaac Casaubon who, in 1614, through careful and thorough scholarship, showed that the Hermetica were “not the work of very ancient Egyptian priests but written in post-Christian times.” Kircher maintained similar erroneous attitudes toward cabala and Hebraica. See Yates’ discussion in Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition (pp. 416-423).

There are five illustrated works on Kircher:


• Athanasius Kircher (1601-1680): Jesuit Scholar. An Exhibition of His Works in the Harold B. Lee Library at Brigham Young University, introduction and descriptions by Brian Merrill, which was originally published by The Friends of the Brigham Young University Library (Provo: 1989), and more recently reprinted by Martino Publishing (Mansfield Centre: 2003).
  An exhibition catalogue of “Kircher’s amazing world of magic lanterns, volcanoes, fossils, flying cats, hieroglyphics, and practical jokes with the most serious of intentions.” Also find Rowland’s article, “Athenasius Kircher and the Egyptian Oedipus” (2004) at the University of Chicago’s FATHOM ARCHIVE, online at http://fathom.lib.uchicago.edu/content.shtml.

  A series of articles which serves as an exhibition catalogue to and celebration of Stanford’s 1998 acquisition of all but one of Kircher’s works in first editions. In connection with this, online see THE ATHANASIUS KIRCHER PROJECT AT STANFORD UNIVERSITY at http://kircher.stanford.edu/.

• Godwin, Joselyn. Athanasius Kircher’s Theatre of the World: The Life and Work of the Last Man to Search for Universal Knowledge (Rochester [VT]: Inner Traditions, 2009)
  A grand summary of previous studies on Kircher housed in a generously illustrated over-sized book. One is tempted here to resort to the old reviewer’s cliché, “If you buy one book on....”

The Vulcans: Or, Burning and Fire-vomiting Mountains Famous in the World (1669), which offers material “collected for the most part out of Kircher’s Subterraneous World,” has been reprinted by Kessinger Publishing (2009).


Make sure to read through Christopher Lehrich’s Occult Mind: Magic in Theory and Practice (Ithaca – London: Cornell University Press, 2007), in particular pages 91-131. Then see

• Åkerman, Susanna. “Queen Christina’s Esoteric Interests as a Background to Her Platonic Academies,” in Western Esotericism, Based on Papers Read at the Symposium on Western Esotericism Held at Åbo, Finland, on 15-17 August 2007, ed. Tore Ahlbäck [SCRIPTA INSTITUTE DONNERIANI ABOENSIS XX] (Åbo/Turku: Donner Institute in Religious and Cultural History, 2008): § THE JESUIT MISSION IN STOCKHOLM AND ATHANASIUS KIRCHER, pp. 22-3


In ADDENDUM A: ITEMS OF INTEREST, find “Ennemoser,” “Hornung,” and “Thorndike.”

Two items at Mats Rendel’s Homepage, http://www.phonurgia.se/rendel/, treat Kircher: “Athanasius Kircher” (biography, translations) and “Kircherianum Virtuale,” an extensive index of web links. One site not listed by Rendel is the attractive MUSEUM OF JURASIC TECHNOLOGY, which has a series of articles on Kircher’s life and works in “Collections and Exhibitions, Gallery 6”: http://www.mjt.org/exhibits/kircher/Knots.html.

JACQUES GAFFAREL (1601-1681)

On this French orientalist, see Jacques Gaffarel: Between Magic and Science, edited by Hiro Hirai (Pisa – Roma: Fabrizio Serra Editore, 2014), which contains three papers in English:


• Odgers, Juliet. “Resemblance and Figure in Garden and Laboratory: Gaffarel’s Influence on John Evelyn,” pages 85-108.


JOHN MILTON (1608-1674)

If Shakespeare and, as we shall see below, Blake can be dragged into our cabalistic procession, then Milton too must be considered. Milton’s cabalism has certainly been a matter of pointed debate.

In Milton: Man and Thinker (New York: The Dial Press, 1925; rpt 1935), Denis Saurat begins § II, “Contemporary Sources and Influences,”

Milton’s relationship to movements of his own time may be summed up thus: roughly speaking, the whole of Milton’s philosophy is found in the Kabbalah, except his materialism; his materialism is found in Fludd, except his mortalism; and his mortalism is connected with ideas of the contemporary English Mortalist group. The three stages are connected and form developments, one from the other: Fludd starts from the Kabbalah, and the Mortalists have their general principles in common with Fludd, and probably derived them from him.

—Milton, p. 280)


In “The Theology of Paradise Lost,” which is CHAPTER XII of A Preface to Paradise Lost, (London: Oxford University Press, 1942), C. S. Lewis comments on Saurat, writing, “Milton studies owe a great debt to Professor Saurat, but I believe that with the enthusiasm incident to a pioneer he has pressed his case too far” (page 82). Lewis goes on to develop a critique of Saurat’s finding doctrines derived from kabbalah in Milton’s magnum opus (see, in particular, Lewis’ pages 87-89).


Michael Lieb writes,

Although Blau sees Milton in the kabbalistic line, he does not view Milton as a “kabbalist.” Whereas Yates accords Milton more of a kabbalistic bent than does Blau, she is generally inclined to agree (Blau, “Diffusion,” pp. 163-65, Yates, Occult Philosophy, pp. 177-81).


Note the comments of Frank E. Manuel in The Broken Staff (Cambridge – London: Harvard University Press, 1992), pages 145-146: “Scholars have demonstrated of late that the Jewish cabalist Luria’s conception of tsimtsum was not the direct inspiration of John Milton in some of his verses on the creation in Paradise Lost, as once was supposed.”


This chapter explores two diametrically opposed conceptions of angels and analyses their ramifications for such explanations. (page 57) … I shall argue that Milton’s use of angelology falls into a homunculus fallacy, whereas Luzzatto defines the angels’ function in logically independent terms. Luzzatto positions angels in a subtle median position from which they are able to provide an explanation of human evil in epistemological terms and clarify existential tensions of the human condition.

ANTONIA OF WÜRTMBERG (1613-1679)

Antonia of Würtemberg was “a learned expert of historical and genealogical sciences. The particular inclination of Princess Antonia, however, was applied to theology, and in particular to the Kabbalah” (—Ernst Benz, Christian Kabbalah [St. Paul: Grafton Press, 2004], p. 60). Antonia is noted for having commissioned and donated a “Kabbalistic-Alchemical Alterpiece in a small church in the town of Bad Teinach near Cawl in Germany” (—Adam McLean, “The Kabbalistic-Alchemical Alterpiece in Bad Teinach,” in Hermetic Journal 12 [Edinburgh: Summer 1981], pp. 21-26. The image can be viewed online at McLean’s ALCHEMY WEBSITE: http://www.alchemywebsite.com/bad_teinach.html).

The central panel of the alterpiece is a painting by Johann Friedrich Gruber entitled Turris Antonia (TOWER OF ANTONIA) which “represents pictorially the secret, hermetic, cabalistic road to ‘initiation’ and spiritual advancement of the self within the Christian framework” (—Lu Ann De Cunzo, Therese O’Malley, Michael J. Lewis, George E. Thomas, and Christina Wilmanns-Wells, “Father Rapp’s Garden at Economy: Harmony Society Culture in Microcosm,” in Landscape Archaeology, eds. Rebecca Yamin and Karen Bescherer Metheny [Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1996], p. 107).

“[O]ne of Oetinger’s most important works, Öffentliches Denckmal der Lehrtafel (1763),” is a commentary on Antonia’s kabbalistic painting (—Glenn Alexander Magee, Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001], p. 65).

“We have already mentioned that Antonia occupied herself with the study of the Cabala: and evidence thereof is even now preserved in the Royal Library at Stuttgart. At that place there is an Unterschiedlicher Riss zu Sephiroth (‘Diagrams to the Sephiroth’), containing Cabalistic diagrams…. These diagrams were drawn by Princess Antonia of Würtemberg, who delighted in Cabbalistic and Rabbinical lore” (—M. Kayserling, “A Princess as Hebraist,” in The Jewish Quarterly Review, VOLUME IX, NUMBER 35 [New York: The Macmillan Company, 1897], p. 510).

THOMAS VAUGHAN (1622-1666)

Alchemist Vaughan may be best known for translating Fama Fraternitatis and Confesio Fraternitatis (1614) from German into English (1652).

See ADDENDUM B at http://www.digital-brilliance.com/contributed/Karr/Biblios/ccineb.pdf (pp. 133-134) on Vaughan’s treatment of kabbalah in Magica Adamica (1650) and Lumen de lumine (1651).

THE 17th CENTURY: FRANCIS MERCURY VAN HELMONT, KNORR VON ROSENROTH, & THE CAMBRIDGE PLATONISTS

In the seventeenth century, two men account for the most significant promulgation of kabbalah outside Jewry: Francis Mercury van Helmont (1614-1698) and Christian Knorr von Rosenroth (1636-1689). Van Helmont’s influence was surprisingly broad: from the Cambridge Platonists—in particular Henry More—to Leibniz. Kabbalah, as gathered through his contact with van Helmont and Anne Conway, is thought to have influenced Leibniz’ concept of monads and his notions of free will.

A number of items by Allison Coudert deal with all of this (listed chronologically):


Works by F. M. van Helmont published in English:
• Alphabet of Nature (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2007). With Taylor Corse, Allison Coudert has produced an annotated translation.
• Two hundred queries moderately propounded concerning the doctrine of the revolution of humane souls and its conformity to the truths of Christianity (1684) (Ann Arbor: EEBO Editions/ProQuest, 2011)—“an authentic reproduction.”
• One Hundred Fifty-Three Chymical Aphorisms (Octob. 1687) / One Hundred Fifty-Seven Alchemical Aphorisms (Octob. 1687), edited with additional material by Prince Karl Hildebrand von Niebelung (FBN Press VisionCon, 2004), printed as a chap book.


KNORR VON ROSENROTH (1636-1689)

Christian Knorr von Rosenroth, as translator, annotator, and editor, published the massive two-volume Kabbala denudata (KABBALA UNVEILED, Sulzbach: 1677 & 1689), which virtually alone represented authentic (Jewish) kabbalah to Christian Europe until the mid-nineteenth century. These tomes contain a range of kabalistic texts: sections of the Zohar, Pardes Rimmonim by Moses Cordovero, Sha’ar ha-Shamayim and Beit Elohim by Abraham Kohen (or Cohen) de Herrera, Sefer ha-Gilgulim (a Lurianic tract attributed to Hayyim Vital), and others, with commentaries by Rosenroth himself and Henry More, and— appended to some later editions—a “sketch” of Christian cabala (Adumbratio Kabbalæ Christianæ) by F. M. van Helmont—all in Latin translation.

ADDENDUM C of the present paper (which can be found at http://www.digital-brilliance.com/contributed/Karr/Biblios/ccineb.pdf, pp. 136-146) outlines the contents of Kabbala denudata and lists sources in English. Refer to the items by Allison Coudert noted above, especially The Impact of the Kabbalah in the Seventeenth Century, which devotes a substantial

Further see


Knorr is described as “…perhaps the last of those who still adhered to the tried and true Christian theory of the Kabbalah as an aspect of divine, archaic wisdom…who tried to support that theory with new arguments” (p. 26).


“Rosenroth’s diagrammatic representation of Lurianism constitutes a juncture where the parallel evolving discourses of Lurianism and early modern natural philosophy converges, en route to a meeting with the makers of modernity if not modernity itself.” (page 118)


THE CAMBRIDGE PLATONISTS (chronologically)


HENRY MORE (1614-1687)


On More’s “Cabbalistical” works, see ADDENDUM B: SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY PRINTED WORKS ON CHRISTIAN CABALA IN ENGLISH (pp. 132-133) on his Conjectura Cabbalistica, and KNOTS AND SPIRALS at http://www.digital-brilliance.com/contributed/Karr/ks/index.php for English renditions of More’s writings within Kabbala denudata.

Further, see


RALPH CUDWORTH (1617–1688)

One becomes frustrated trying to find evidence of any sustantive cabalistic influence in Cudworth. A. E. Waite correctly acknowledges that “Cudworth connects but superficially with Kabbalism” (—The Holy Kabbalah, p. 480; on Waite, refer to § SOME HISTORIANS, above). Thus, beware of Kessinger’s pointless offprint of less than three pages of Waite’s Holy Kabbalah entitled Ralph Cudworth: A Christian Student of the Holy Kabbalah (2006).

On Cudworth, see


  (2) Breteau, Jean-Louis. “Chaos and Order in Cudworth’s Thought”

  (3) Attfield, Robin. “Cudworth, Prior and Passmore on the Autonomy of Ethics”
ANNE CONWAY (1631-1679)

As a student of both More and van Helmont, Conway refuted the major philosophers of her time (Descartes, Hobbes, Spinoza) with an arsenal which included concepts from Lurianic kabbalah (as found in Rosenroth’s Kabbala denudata). As did van Helmont, Conway became a Quaker; also, as van Helmont, she appears to have had some influence upon Leibniz.

On Conway, start with Sarah Hutton’s “intellectual biography,” Anne Conway: A Woman Philosopher (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), and Conway’s own Principles of the Most Ancient and Modern Philosophy, eds. Allison Coudert and Taylor Corse (Cambridge University Press, 1996). In addition, refer to

- Byrne, David. ANNE CONWAY: AN INTELLECTUAL PORTRAIT OF A SEVENTEENTH CENTURY COUNTESS. PhD. dissertation (Claremont: Claremont Graduate University, 2005)


THOMAS BURNET (1635-1715)

Theologian Burnet was a contemporary of the Cambridge Platonists, though not one of them. In Archeologiae Philosophicae (London: 1692: LIBRI I. CAP. VII. De Hebraeis, eorumque Cabala—which is not included in Foxton’s 1729 English translation reproduced by Kessinger, 2003), Burnet expounds upon kabbalah, dividing it into the Nominal and the Real, the former being the hermeneutical devices gematria, temurah, and notaricon, along with vocabula (names), the latter being the doctrine of the sefirot and the four worlds. Given that Burnet’s primary, if not sole, source on the subject was Kabbala denudata, his “slender knowledge” is more of kabbalah than of cabala.

In his “best-seller,” Telluris theoria sacra (London: 1681) [English edition: SACRED THEORY OF THE EARTH, London: 1684, with several subsequent editions into the early 1700s], Burnet writes

There has been a great fame, ‘tis true, of the Jewish Cabala, and of great mysteries contain’d in it; and, I believe, there was once a Traditional doctrine amongst some of them, that had extraordinary Notions and Conclusions: But where is this now to be found? The Essenes were the likeliest Sect, one would think, to retain such doctrines, but ‘tis probable they are now so mixt with things fabulous and fantastical, that what one should alledge from thence would be of little or no authority. One Head in this Cabala was the doctrine of the Sephiroth, and though the explication of them be uncertain, the Inferiour Sephiroth in the Corporeal World cannot so well appli’d to any thing, as to those several Orbs and Regions, infolding one another, whereof the Primigenial Earth was compos’d. Yet such conjectures, I know, are of no validity, but in consort with better Arguments. I have often thought also, that their first and second Temple represented the first and second Earth or World; and that of Ezekiel’s, which is the third, is still to be erected, the most beautiful of all, when this second Temple of the World shall be burnt down. If the Prophecies of Enoch had been preserv’d, and taken
into the Canon by Ezra, after their return from Babylon, when the Collection of their Sacred Books is suppos’d to have been made, we might probably have had a considerable account there, both of times past and to come, of Antiquities and Futuritions; for those Prophecies are generally suppos’d to have contain’d both the first and second fate of this Earth, and all the Periods of it. But as this Book is lost to us, so I look upon all others that pretend to be Ante-Mosaical or Patriarchal, as Spurious and Fabulous. (—Sacred Theory..., chapter IX, pp. 200-201)

On Burnet, see

- Burnet’s Sacred Theory of the Earth is available in print (Gale ECCO Print Editions, 2018) and as an Amazon Kindle text and at THE INTERNET ARCHIVE, at www.archive.org/search.php?query=thomas%20burnet%20sacred%20theory%20AND%20mediatype%3Atexts.

ISAAC NEWTON (1642-1727)

Of course, part of the seventeenth-century fray was Isaac Newton, who, “in formulating the factors in the corruption of the primitive church, found the influence of metaphysical emanation cosmologies, such as those in the kabbalah, the main culprit. Newton came to the kabbalah through Knorr von Rosenroth’s Kabbala denudata, but his criticisms of it were formed through his preconceived notion of the role of emanation in the church’s corruption and through the influence of [Histoire des Juifs (1716) by Jacques] Basnage, who dedicates considerable space to criticizing Kabbalah,” [my brackets—DK] writes Matt Goldish in Judaism in the Theology of Sir Isaac Newton [INTERNATIONAL ARCHIVES, 157] (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1998: p. 161). Goldish suggests that fanning the flame of Newton’s criticisms of kabbalah was his desire to undermine a key source of Leibniz’ “emanational cosmology,” which Newton could not abide.

On Newton and kabbalah,


On other aspects of “esoteric Newton,” see

GOTTfried Leibniz (1646-1716)

On Leibniz, along with the numerous articles by Allison Coudert already listed and her book, *Leibniz and Kabbalah* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1995), see (listed chronologically)

  
  The “circle” Brown refers to here comprised of Francis Mercury van Helmont and Knorr von Rosenroth. Whether Leibniz’ philosophy was the result of direct influence or convergence is the gist of Brown’s discussion; Brown highlights the latter.
  
  See in particular Stuart Brown’s “Some Occult Influences on Leibniz’sMonadology”—the influences discussed are alchemy and kabbalah—AND Marcia (sic—it should be Marsha) Keith Schuchard’s “Leibniz, Benzelius, and the Kaballistic Roots of Swedish Illuminism.”
  
  “The thesis proposes that the proximity of these two doctrines is such that Christian Lurianic Kabbalah can be regarded, in many ways, as a mystical exoteric parallel to Leibniz’s.” (—ABSTRACT)

THE 17th & 18th CENTURIES: KEMPER – OETINGER

In the late seventeenth century, Rabbi Johan Kemper [the Christian name taken by Moses ben Aaron of Cracow, 1670-1716], a Polish Jew who immigrated to Sweden and converted to Christianity, was appointed professor of Hebrew at the University of Uppsala. ... During Kemper’s long tenure at the University of Uppsala he “trained a whole generation of Swedish scholars in Oriental and Rabbinic studies.”


Marsha Keith Schuchard refers to Kemper as “a crypto-Sabbatian” who “infused Sabbatian themes into his kabalistic writings” (—“Leibniz, Benzelius, and Swedenborg,” in *Leibniz, Mysticism and Religion* [Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1998], p. 97).

In *Mapping Messianic Jewish Theology: A Constructive Approach* (Milton Keynes – Colorado Springs – Hyderabad: Paternoster/ Authentic Media, 2009), Richard Harvey writes (p. 115),

Christianizing the mystical tradition was the goal of Johann Christian Jakob Kemper of Uppsala, a 17th century Jewish Christian who established the truths of Christianity on the basis of Jewish sources, particularly the *Zohar*, to show that the messianic faith of the Christians was, in fact, the truly ancient *Kabbalah* of Judaism. His commentary on the *Zohar* [Mateh Moshe – THE ROD OF MOSES] published in 1711, begins with three initial chapters, on the Trinity, the divinity of the Messiah, and on *Metatron*, the embodiment of the Messiah.

On Kemper, see


Ernst Benz’ *Christian Kabbalah: Neglected Child of Theology*, translated into English by Kenneth W. Wesche, ed. Robert J. Faas (St. Paul: Grailstone Press, 2004), opens with “The Beginnings of Christian Kabbalism,” a rather swift chapter following Scholem’s article of the same name. Benz then treats developments of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, with chapters on Knorr von Rosenroth, Koppel Hecht, Isaac Luria (whom Oehtinger “counted next to Jacob Böhme and Swedenborg as principal witnesses of spiritual knowledge”—p. 43), and “The Kabbalistic Master Tablet of Princess Antonia” (the image of which, with key, is appended to the text). Benz pays special attention to the theosophist Friedrich Christoph Oetinger (1702-1782) throughout the book and in the chapters “Oetinger’s Path to Kabbalah” and “Oetinger’s Doctrine of the Sephiroth.”

Note, however, Wouter J. Hanegraaff’s remarks in *Swedenborg, Oetinger, Kant: Three Perspectives on the Secrets of Heaven* (West Chester: The Swedenborg Foundation, 2007), “Oetinger has often been presented as one of the main representatives of a Western esoteric tradition known as Christian Theosophy, and of another one known as Christian Kabbalah, but as will become clear from our discussions, there is much reason to see him as a remarkably orthodox representative of biblical fundamentalism as understood in the Protestant tradition” (—p. xxii). Hanegraaff, however, acknowledges Oetinger’s “kabbalistic interests” and his contact with Knorr von Rosenroth’s *Kabbala denudata*.


**THE 17th & 18th CENTURIES: THE CONFLATION OF CABALA & ALCHEMY**

Toward the end of his sub-chapter on Christian cabala (—Kabbalah, pp. 196-201), Gershom Scholem writes of the blending of cabala and alchemy:

As early as the late 16th century [with, for example, Paracelsus] a pronounced trend had emerged toward the permutation of Christian Kabbalah with alchemical symbolism, thus giving it an oddly original character in its final stages of development in the 17th and 18th centuries. This mélange of elements typifies the works of Heinrich Khunrath [1560-1605], *Amphitheatrum Sapientiae Aeternæ* (1609)31, Blaise de Vigenere [1523-1596], *Traité du Feu* (1617), Abraham von Frankenberg [1593-1652], Robert Fludd (1574-1657), and Thomas Vaughan (1622-1666), and reaches its apogee in Georg von Wellin’s [1655-1727] *Opus Magico-

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Cabbalisticum (1735)24 and the many books of F. C. Oetinger (1702–1782), whose influence is discernible in the works of such great figures of German idealist philosophy as Hegel [treated below] and Schelling.25 In yet another form this mixture reappears in the theosophical systems of the Freemasons in the second half of the 18th century [and on into the nineteenth century, as indicated below in Part 2].

(—Kabbalah, p. 200)


Further on Heinrich Khunrath and his Amphiltheatre sapientiae aeternæ,


- Szułakowska, Urszula. The Alchemy of Light (Leiden – Boston – Köln: Brill, 2000), CHAPTERS 8 & 9 on the 1602 and 1604 editions of Amphitheatre sapientiae aeternæ, respectively.


**THE ‘UNKNOWN SUPERIORS’: SWEDENBOURG, CAGLIOSTRO, & FALK**

In the eighteenth century, quite a bit of kabbalistic influence appears to trace to a single individual. There are indications that, among others, Emanuel Swedenborg26 (1688-1772) and

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26 Introductions to Swedenborg:


Alessandro Cagliostro (1743-1795) were indebted to Samuel Falk (ca 1710-1782), a Polish Kabbalist known as the “Ba’al Shem of London” (ba’al shem, “master of the name,” i.e., one who uses holy names in performing magical operations and writing amulets). Falk supposedly introduced aspects of kabbalah to a number of Christian scholars.

Falk, Swedenborg, and Cagliostro are discussed in Joscelyn Godwin’s Theosophical Enlightenment (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994: CHAPTER 5). Godwin’s main sources of information on this trio were two items by Marsha Keith Schuchard:


  Schuchard’s dissertation contains such chapters as I. “The Cabala, Sexual Magic, and the Jewish Visionary Traditions,” II. “The Christian Interpretation of the Cabala in the Renaissance, and the Development of the Syncretic Occult Tradition” (based primarily on Scholem, Yates and Waite) and VIII. “Cabalistic and Magnetic Visions among the London Swedenborgians in the 1780’s and 1790’s,” before giving “special emphasis ... to William Blake from 1780 to 1827” in CHAPTERS IX through XIII.


  Schuchard provocatively suggests that the Unknown Superiors (of illuminist masonry, Falk in particular) may lurk in the obscure origins of the Golden Dawn. This piece is an expanded version of the article of the same name, subtitled “A short paper read at the Golden Dawn 100th Anniversary Conference organised by Hermetic Research Trust on 25th and 26th April 1987,” in The Hermetic Journal, Issue Number 37, ed. Adam McLean (Tysoe: The Hermetic Research Trust, Autumn 1987).

Further on Swedenborg and Falk, see Schuchard’s articles,


  This article discusses, among other things, Swedenborg’s “access to kabbalistic exegetical and visionary techniques and to traditions of Jewish sexual theosophy.”


Schuchard’s “elaborate reconstruction of Falk and his associates” is discussed in David Ruderman’s Jewish Enlightenment in an English Key (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 156-169. While quite intrigued by Schuchard’s portrait of Falk, Ruderman expresses a desire for more research and firmer evidence.

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- Swedenborg and His Influence, gen. editor: Erland Brock (Bryn Athyn: Academy of the New Church, 1988).

- Synnestvedt, Syg. The Essential Swedenborg (West Chester: Swedenborg Foundation, 1977)

- Warren, Samuel M. (ed) A Compendium of the Theological Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg (New York: Swedenborg Foundation, 1875, reprinted frequently). Complete works by Swedenborg in English translation:

  - Apocalypse Explained (6 volumes) Conjugal Love Heaven and Hell
  - Apocalypse Revealed (2 volumes) The Divine Love and Divine Wisdom The Spiritual Diary (5 volumes)
  - Arcana Coelestia (12 volumes) The Divine Providence True Christian Religion (2 volumes)

  These works are all perpetually available from both The Swedenborg Foundation in West Chester (Pennsylvania) and The Swedenborg Society in London. Not usually carried in bookstores, all of the titles listed here can easily be mail-ordered from The General Church Book Center, 1100 Cathedral Road, Box 743, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009-0743 or on-line at http://www.newchurchbooks.com/.

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For more on Falk, see


Regarding other likely sources of kabbalah for Swedenborg, see Schuchard’s “Leibniz, Benzelius, and the Kabbalistic Roots of Swedish Illuminism” in *Leibniz, Mysticism and Religion* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1998). “From 1703 to 1710, as Benzelius led Swedenborg through the university [Uppsala] ... [i]t is almost certain” that Swedenborg studied under the convert Johann Kemper (—Schuchard, “Leibniz, Benzelius...,” p. 97), a “crypto-Sabbatian” and author of an extended commentary on the Zohar. On Kemper, see above § 17th & 18th centuries: Kemper – Oetinger.

All of the research by Marsha Keith Schuchard which has been mentioned thus far—plus a great deal more—has been woven into her monumental *Emanuel Swedenborg, Secret Agent on Earth and Heaven: Jacobite, Jews, and Freemasons in Early Modern Sweden* (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2012). This work is by far the most extensive treatment of both “occult” and “clandestine” Swedenborg:

The following study of the role of esoteric intelligence in exoteric politics will raise many questions about our preoccupations of the rationalist, scientific mentality of the “enlightened” eighteenth century. In tracing Swedenborg’s long career, we come upon the persistence of early modern—even pre-modern—religious and philosophical beliefs, which fueled the imaginations of major thinkers as well as the machinations of major political players. (—p. xvi)

For a detailed preamble to Schuchard’s items above, see her hefty *Restoring the Temple of Vision: Cabalistic Freemasonry and the Stuart Culture* [BRILL’S STUDIES IN INTELLECTUAL HISTORY, v. 110] (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2002), which takes the reader from the influence of “Jewish mathematical and architectural mysticism” upon medieval Masonic guilds (CHAPTER ONE) to “The Ruined Temple and the Flight of Knights” of the seventeenth century (CHAPTER TWELVE). Schuchard “concentrate(s) on certain themes that define the Stuart Masonic mentality—i.e., Jewish and Scottish architectural mysticism; Jewish and Llullist mnemonic-visualization techniques; Cabalistic and Hermetic sexual theosophy; Rosicrucian and Masonic scientific schemes; crusader chivalry and illuminated knighthood; liberty of conscience and universal brotherhood” (INTRODUCTION, p. 7).

In *Swedenborg, Oetinger, Kant: Three Perspectives on the Secrets of Heaven* (West Chester: The Swedenborg Foundation, 2007), Wouter J. Hanegraaff calls into question the conclusion that Swedenborg is, in essence, an exponent of the Hermetic-Cabalist tradition—as opposed to his having remained in basic continuity with his scientific background. Noting “the paucity of explicit references on Swedenborg’s part to Western esoteric authors and traditions,” Hanegraaff concludes that his own “close study of *Secrets of Heaven* [Arcana Cælestia] and other works, as well as the relevant secondary literature, has convinced him [Hanegraaff] that the ‘esoteric’ Swedenborg defended by [Swedenborg biographers] Lamm and Jonsson is much closer to the truth than the ‘esoteric’ one [of Benz and Schuchard]” (—pp. xx-xxi).

—pp. xx-xxi. With his
strong emphasis on *Secrets of Heaven*, Hanegraaff seems to overlook—or dismiss—key writings in the Swedenborg corpus, in particular *Apocalypse Explained* and *The Spiritual Diary*, in which the influence of esoteric traditions is more apparent. See also Hanegraaff’s “Emanuel Swedenbord, the Jews, and Jewish Traditions,” in *Reuchlin und Seine Erben: Forscher, Denker, Ideologen und Spinner*, edited by Peter Schäfer and Irina Wandrey (Ostfildern: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 2005), pp. 135-154.

Of particular interest in the present context are four articles by Swedenborgian Professor Emerita from Bryn Athyn College, Jane Williams-Hogan:


Note also two chapters in *Lux in Tenebris: The Visual and the Symbolic in Western Esotericism*, edited by Peter Forshaw (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2016):

- Crasta, Francesca Maria; and Follesa, Laura. “The Arcanes of the World. Symbols and Mystical-Allegorical Exegesis in Emanuel Swedenborg’s *De Cultu et Amore Dei*,” pages 220-239.

**CAGLIOSTRO (1743-1795)**

Cagliostro (born Giuseppe Balsamo) is treated as either an occult genius or a charlatan. *Cabala* resides rather dimly here—more tone than substance. On Cagliostro, see (listed chronologically)

LOUIS CLAUDE DE SAINT-MARTIN (1743-1803)

Here again is a figure who in one place is described as “steeped in Kabbalistic doctrines and rituals”—Liz Greene, Magi and Maggidim (Ceredigion: Sophia Centre Press, 2012), page 316, yet in another it is stated, “There is nothing to indicate that he [Saint-Martin] had read Kabbalistic literature: there is every presumption that he did not”—A. E. Waite, The Holy Kabbalah (London: Williams and Norgate Ltd, 1929), page 486. Alas, it is from within Greene’s discussion of Waite that the quote from her about Saint-Martin is drawn.

In his ample volume, The Life of Louis Claude de Saint-Martin, The Unknown Philosopher and the Substance of His Transcendental Doctrine (London: Philip Welby, 1901), Waite states that this “Lover of Secret Things” “differs somewhat conspicuously” from (among others) those “who connect with the higher school of Kabalism” (pages 113-114); “Saint-Martin ... has little apparent connection with this school of mystic thought” (pages 239-240); “I take leave to doubt whether he had heard of the Zohar, except in [a] distant and unmeaning way” (The Life..., pages 241-242).

WILLIAM BLAKE (1757-1827)

If we follow this line of Cabalists, Swedenborgians, and Freemasons, we eventually trip over William Blake, who, as we have seen, is discussed in Marsha Keith Schuchard’s dissertation. See also Schuchard’s articles:

  —on-line at www.esoteric.msu.edu/VolumeII/BlakeFull.html.
- “Why Mrs. Blake Cried...” was immensely expanded—and then, I’ve been informed, somewhat reduced—into a most intriguing book: Why Mrs. Blake Cried: William Blake and the Sexual Basis of Spiritual Vision (London: Century, 2006); released in the US as William Blake’s Sexual Path to Spiritual Vision (Rochester [VT]: Inner Traditions, 2008).


Alas, one can sift through the daunting tonnage of Blake studies and find scant mention of kabbalah/cabala, even where it is acknowledged that esoteric currents are reflected in Blake’s work. Thus, most welcome is the recent study of the influence of kabbalah/cabala on Blake: Sheila Spector’s well-illustrated companion volumes “Wonders Divine”: The Development of
Blake’s Kabbalistic Myth AND “Glorious Incomprehensible”: The Development of Blake’s Kabbalistic Language (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2001).\(^a\)

Spector writes (“Wonders Divine,” p. 25)

...even though he [Blake] explicitly, often even emphatically, rejected many aspects of what might be called normative Christianity, he still found himself trapped within what had become the oppressive archetypal framework he repudiated, and it was only through a concerted life-long effort, first to recognize the bonds, and then, to seek out alternate modes of thought, that Blake was able, finally, to create his own system. But that new system, contrary to popular belief, was not an original creation. Rather, when Blake finally liberated himself from the exoteric myth structure that dominates Western thought, he turned to its esoteric counterpart, the myth that, though originating with Jewish mystics, had been adapted by Christian Kabbalists to conform with their—and, in fact, with Blake’s—own brand of Christianity.

Along these lines, Spector has published a number of articles:

- “Kabbalistic Sources—Blake’s and His Critics,” in Blake: An Illustrated Quarterly 67, volume 17, number 3 (Winter 1983-84), an extremely useful article which contains
  1. a review of scholars who broach the issue of kabbalah in connection with Blake;
  2. a discussion of the problems surrounding the scholarly approach to kabbalah itself;
  3. a survey of sources of kabbalah which could have been available to Blake.
- “The Reasons for ‘Urizen’” in Blake: An Illustrated Quarterly 21, no. 4 (Spring 1988);
- “Hebraic Etymologies of Proper Names in Blake” in Philological Quarterly 67, no. 3 (Summer 1988).
- “Sources and Etymologies of Blake’s ‘Tirzah’” in Blake: An Illustrated Quarterly 23, no. 4 (Spring 1990).
- “Blake’s Milton as Kabbalistic Vision” in Religion and Literature 25, no 1 (Spring 1993).

In Blake: An Illustrated Quarterly 46 (vol. 12, no. 2 [Fall 1978], an issue which focuses on The Four Zoas, a long poem among Blake’s “major prophecies”) see Terrence Allan Hoagwood’s article, “The Four Zoas and ‘The Philosophick Cabbala’.” Hoagwood writes (p. 87):

“The Philosophick Cabbala,” part of [Henry] More’s retelling of the fall of man as narrated in the Book of Genesis, bears close resemblance in many points to Blake’s retelling of the fall of man in The Four Zoas.

I have seen two other book-length treatments of Blake’s kabbalah:

1. James, Laura DeWitt. William Blake: The Finger on the Furnace (New York: Vantage Press, 1956), which “is the result of ten years of intensive research on the interpretation of Blake’s didactic and symbolical works.” James writes (p. 62)

   So it is with the underlying pattern of Blake’s Prophetic and Symbolic Poems. It is surprisingly harmonious with qabalistic lore; and anyone familiar with that basic pattern can supply many a missing piece. In fact some of the most subtle points will never yield their hidden meanings without those shadowy outlines to connect the pieces that are given.


Then, there is Asloob Ahmad Ansari’s article, “Blake and the Kabbalah,” in William Blake: Essays for S. Foster Damon, ed. Alvin H. Rosenfeld (Providence: Brown University Press, 1969). Neither the James, Bowman, nor Ansari, however, is as useful—or stimulating—as the works by Schuchard and Spector listed above.

Refer also to Jos van Meurs’ deft “William Blake and His Gnostic Myths,” in Gnosis and Hermeticism from Antiquity to Modern Times, eds. Roelof van den Brock and Wouter J. Hanegraaff (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998). This article emphasizes Böhme as a major influence on Blake—an influence acknowledged by Blake himself.

Online via Amazon Digital Service is a Kindle edition of Daniel Buchanan’s 11-page Blake’s Use of Kabbalistic Imagery, AKA Blake’s Kabbalistic Influences: A Practical Application of the Sacred Tree of Life ([n.p.]: Magic Beanstalk Publishing House, 2013).

Finally, we have “Wheels within Wheels”: William Blake and the Ezekiel’s Merkabah in Text and Image [THE PÈRE MARQUETTE LECTURE IN THEOLOGY 2007] (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2007) by Christopher Rowland. Rowland intrigues us with references to “thirty years of studying Jewish mysticism” (that is, by the theology department at Marquette) and ma’aseh merkabah in his opening section, but then he somehow gets from antique apocalyptic to Blake without mentioning kabbalah at all. After Spector’s substantial description of Blake's amalgam of Lurianic kabbalah, van Helmont’s cabala, and merkabah, Rowland’s lecture is something of an anticlimax.

GEORGE WILHELM FRIEDRICH HEGEL (1770-1831)

Bound to the esoteric stream is Hegel, who drew upon Böhme, Ramon Lull and other Pansophists (e.g., Fludd, Comenius, Leibniz), and Lurianic kabbalah by way of Kabbala denudata and F. C. Oetinger. All of this is very efficiently discussed in Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition by Glenn Alexander Magee (Ithaca – London: Cornell University Press: 2001); see in particular CHAPTER FIVE: “The Kabbalistic Tree: The Science of Logic” and CHAPTER SEVEN, § 3. “Hegel’s Philosophy of History: The Influence of Isaac Luria and Jewish Eschatology.”


Online:


W. B. YEATS (1865-1939)

With William Butler Yeats, we are getting ahead of ourselves, for Yeats really belongs to the element discussed below in Part 3. However, following the broad outlines of esoteric—if not purely (or really) kabbalistic—developments described above (§§ THE ‘UNKNOWN SUPERIORS’ and WILLIAM BLAKE), the formula SWEDENBORG → BLAKE → YEATS could be advanced.
In Kathleen Raine’s words (quoted on the end flap of her *W. B. Yeats & the Learning of the Imagination* [Dallas: Dallas Institute Publications, 1999]),

Yeats did not possess Swedenborg’s psychic gift, nor Blake’s soaring imaginative vision. States of expanded consciousness came to him seldom, and then through magical techniques, mediumship, and other aids towards opening of the mind. Yeats was, one might say, a scientific investigator, but winged by that attitude of imaginative assent which serves to create the reality towards which it is directed—nothing less than the building of worlds—the heaven’s and the earth’s—the soul inhabits.


In *A Above, So Below: Yeats, Crowley, and Qabalah* (Ph.D. dissertation, Binghamton: State University of New York, 1996), Charles Nicholas Serra II, offers the thesis, “...if one comes to Yeats's texts with an understanding of Qabalah in application (*via* Crowley) then one should be able to reconstruct Yeats’s deliberately fragmented overstructure or didactic message” (**page v**). Refer also to Serra’s MA thesis, *A Reevaluation of the Literary Works of Edward Alexander (Aleister) Crowley* (Des Moines: Drake University, 1991), Section One: “Yeats and the Golden Dawn.”

Further on Yeats:
The nineteenth century opened with the production of a book which is, for the most part, an unacknowledged copy of Agrippa’s *De occulta philosophia* and the pseudo-Agrippan *Fourth Book*, along with material from *The Heptameron* (attributed to Peter of Abano), Giambattista della Porta’s *Magia naturalis*, and other sources—namely, Francis Barrett’s tome, *The Magus*, or *Celestial Intelligencer* (London: 1801). While no great school accumulated around Barrett that we know of, his book inaugurated an era of renewed interest in medieval and Hermetic-Cabalistic magic, which seems to have been as uncritically accepted in the early 1800s as it had been in the Renaissance.

Several reprints of *The Magus* have gone to press in the last several decades, such as the 1967 edition of University Books (New Hyde Park), the once-ubiquitous 1975 oversize green-covered paperback of Citadel Press (Secaucus), and the Samuel Weiser reprint (York Beach: 2000) which includes full-color reproductions of the plates. *The Magus* can also be viewed on-line at the SACRED TEXTS site: www.sacred-texts.com/grim/magus/.

The always readable Francis X King (aka Francis King) composed a slim book about Barrett, *The Flying Sorcerer* (Oxford: Mandrake, 1992), based on the rather limited documentation concerning his being a daring, though failure-prone, experimental balloonist as well as a plagiarizing occultist; appended is “Barrett’s Hitherto Unpublished Skrying Manuscript.”


When the nineteenth century was at its midpoint, there began a fairly steady stream of European and American works on *kabbalah* and *cabala*. Some of these were serious, even if not entirely successful, attempts to present the Jewish *kabbalah* on its own terms, such as the works of Adolphe Franck, C. D. Ginsburg, and A. E. Waite. Others knotted together various Christianized strands, adorning them with other esoteric doctrines and currents, as did Éliphas  

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The first division of § O, “Primary Sources,” begins with “J.F.’s” 1651 translation of Agrippa’s *De occulta philosophia*; ironically, the second division, “Secondary Sources,” begins with Francis Barrett’s *Magus* (1801). Spector’s listings go through 1983. She includes—and comments on—quite a few items not given notice in my paper:

- 19th- and early 20th-century books which touch upon *kabbalah*, or *cabala*, briefly or incidentally, such as William Story’s *Proportions of the Human Figure...* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1866) and George Alexander Kohut’s *Ezra Stiles and the Jews* (New York: Philip Cowen, 1902).
- works which I have never encountered, for example Laurel Miller’s *Kabbalistic Numerology* (New York: Metaphysical Publishing House, 1921) and F. Schneider Schwartz’ *True Mysteries of Life: The Psychology of the Bible, the Kabbalah, and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York: Vantage Press, 1957).
- 19th- and 20th-century articles.
Lévi, H. P. Blavatsky, Papus, the founders of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, and Golden Dawn member Aleister Crowley. Some notable authors had Masonic agenda, like Albert Pike, Ralston Skinner, and co-authors Bond and Lea. Works from this array remain the basis of kabbalah/cabala study among great numbers of (primarily non-Jewish) esoteric readers and researchers—even today—often pointedly in spite of the contributions of Jewish and Christian scholars of the last hundred years.

This fertile period is quite thoroughly, albeit imaginatively, treated in Magi and Maggidim: The Kabbalah in British Occultism, 1860-1940 by Liz Greene (Ceredigion: Sophia Centre Press, 2012).

What follows is a selection of works from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries which treat kabbalah/cabala and were written in English or have been translated into English. These are given in roughly chronological order; the bold italicized date in the left margin generally indicates the first edition of the earliest—often the only—work listed by each writer noted.

1819


“The Jews pretend to derive their Cabbala from Esdras, Moses, Abraham, and Adam: but it is very evident from the Cabbalistic doctrine concerning Divine emanations ... that it originated in Egypt, where the Jews learned, by the help of allegory, to mix Oriental, Pythagoric, and Platonic dogmas with Hebrew wisdom.” (VOLUME II, p. 184)

1843


Despite his errors, Franck still commands a fair amount of regard. As noted by Moshe Idel (Kabbalah: New Perspectives [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988]: pp. 7-10) some of Franck’s conclusions bear notable similarities to those of Gershom Scholem, most importantly that kabbalah was a vital force at the “heart and soul” of Judaism, not the aberrant and heretical sideshoot which historians such as Heinrich Grätz and other “enlightened” scholars of the nineteenth century thought it was. Franck brought to a common modern language (French—and a year later Adolph Jellinek put Franck’s Kabbalah into German) a reasoned account of kabbalah with informed descriptions of Sefer Yezirah and the Zohar.

Franck’s major error was finding in Zoroastrian lore the source of kabbalistic concepts. His mistakes notwithstanding, Franck’s serious attempt to present the kabbalah from its own sources stands in marked contrast with another French writer who began to publish some dozen years later: Éliphas Lévi, who took every liberty his imagination could conceive in presenting kabbalah/cabala and other esoteric subjects.


The Book of Splendours contains a compacted paraphrase of Idra Rabba from the Zohar (though Lévi refers to it as “The Idra Suta”) and the oft-reprinted short piece, “The Elements of the Qabalah in Ten Lessons: The Letters of Éliphas Lévi” (1891), which also appears in Papus’ Qabalah (listed below), and independently as The Elements of the Kabbalah in Ten Lessons, ed. Darcy Kuntz [GOLDEN DAWN SERIES 13] (Edmonds: Holmes Publishing Group, 1997).


Lévi’s works are eloquent, fascinating—and highly influential—mayhem. On Lévi and his milieu (works listed chronologically):

“The disciples of the Tanaim and Amoraim, as we have seen, hold by tradition. The Karaites maintain the sole authority of the written word. Between these two there is also an intermediate class, who do not constitute a corporate sect, and who are orthodox in their belief of the verities of the Hebrew Scriptures and of the great facts of tradition, but who claim at the same time the right of rationalizing upon them. They are represented by such writers as Saadja Gaon, Bachja, and Maimonides. But in addition to these, there has been always for the last two thousand years a mystical school, more or less numerous, who have treated the written word as the symbolic vehicle of an esoteric doctrine. This school may be said to consist of two classes. 1. Those with whom that interior spiritual signification shapes itself into a philosophical system, which they nevertheless hold either from, or in connexion with, a foreign or Gentile teaching, such as Platonism. Their representative is Philo. They blend the Mosaic law with the Gentile monotheism. 2. The other class are the KABBALISTS, properly so called, who, from the impulse of the mind after a deep and satisfying knowledge of the inmost mysteries of being, have given themselves up too much to the tutelage of the imagination, and constructed a system which combines, at once, the sublime and the despicable.” (Jerusalem and Tiberias, pp. 296-7)


One might assume that Ginsburg was a sympathetic commentator, for he outlined the traditional history of the kabbalah “as told by its followers”; but obliquely in this book and more openly in subsequent articles, Ginsburg showed his hostility toward kabbalah to be equal to—and perhaps derived from—that of Grätz. In an article which Ginsburg co-wrote with S. A. Cook, there is a reference to the Zohar as “that farrago of absurdity,” Ginsburg considered the Zohar a fraud perpetrated by Moses de Leon. Even so, Ginsburg’s Kabbalah gives an admirable account of its subject. This book is, in form, an expanded outline, so its manner is somewhat clipped, though dense with information. There are lots of biblical and Zoharic references, and great detail on such topics as the 72 names of God and the hermeneutical conventions gematria, notaricon, and terumah.

NOTE: Gematria, notaricon, and terumah predate kabbalah by centuries. Gematria in particular, which is so often treated as central to the kabbalah by Christian commentators, plays only a limited role in such kabbalistic classics as the Zohar, the works of Moses Cordovero, and the Lurianic compendia assembled by Hayim Vital.


Jennings says of The Rosicrucians, “[T]his whole Book is but the translation and exposition of his highly-prized and very scarce works ... our own countryman, Robert Flood or Fludd (Robertus de Fluctibus), the famous physician and philosopher (1574-1637)” (—PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION, p. xi. See also VOLUME II [3rd edition], Chapter the Twenty-First, “Remarks Relating to the Great Mystic—Robert ‘de Fluctibus’”—p. 235 ff).

Jennings’ ranging—or rambling—survey of symbols, concepts, and myths never quite gets to
Rosicrucian rites as such. A cabalistic undercurrent courses through these volumes. Focused treatment of cabala appears in the final chapters of the second volume (3rd edition): Chapter the Twenty-Third, “The Outline of the Cabala, or Kabbalah,” and Chapter the Twenty-Fourth, “Cabalistic Profundities.” Extracts from Kabbala denudata are included—in Latin though. (One gets to brush up on one’s French in Chapter the Fourteenth.)

The sacred fire is at the core of Jennings’ mysteries; he saw its most blatant symbol in just about everything higher than wide. Rosicrucians... and Jennings’ other books served as source-works for the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor and Mme. Blavatsky. (Indeed, in Women of the Golden Dawn [Rochester: Park Street Press, 1995], Mary K. Greer includes Jennings’ Rosicrucians... on her “Timeline of Western Magic” [pp. 60-61] at 1870, between Éliphas Lévi’s Dogma and Ritual of High Magic [1854] and Mme. Blavatsky’s Isis Unveiled [1877]. Oddly, nothing of Jennings’ is included in the expanded timeline, The Chronology of the Golden Dawn, by Mary Greer and Darcy Kuntz [GOLDEN DAWN SERIES #10], Edmonds: Holmes Publishing Group, 1999.)


1871


Pike steeps his descriptions of Masonic grades in kabbalah/cabala and other esoteria. Already on page 15, the 1st degree Apprentice is told, “...you must open the pages of the Sohar (i.e., Zohar) and Siphre de Zeniutha, and other kabbalistic books, and ponder deeply on their meaning.” From there on, the book is quite full of kabbalistic references and passages. Unfortunately, the bulk of these were lifted from one of the most unreliable sources: Éliphas Lévi, whom Pike quotes freely without acknowledgement. (See “Lévi’s Kabbalistic Thought in America: Albert Pike,” in Uzzel, THE KABBALISTIC THOUGHT OF ÉLIPHAS LÉVI ... – ÉLIPHAS LÉVI AND THE KABBALAH, noted above: 1855-6 : Lévi.)

Pike also borrows from Adolph Francell: On page 256 of Morals and Dogma, Pike writes of Jewish families who had familiarized themselves with the doctrine of Zoroaster and, subsequently, developed those parts which could be reconciled with their faith; this sounds like Francell’s conclusion regarding the “traces that the religion of Zoroaster has left in all parts of Judaism,” stating later that “this borrowing did not destroy the originality of the Kabbalah,” for it was reconciled with the Jews’ concept of “the unity of cause” (Franck, Kabbalah, Bell edition, p. 224).

Pike also makes numerous references to works which appear in Knorr von Rosenroth’s Kabbala denudata.

Further see

1872

Greene, William B. The Blazing Star; with an appendix treating of the Jewish Kabbala, also a tract on the Philosophy of Mr. Herbert Spencer and one on New-England Transcendentalism. Boston: A. Williams and Co., 1872; rpt without the tracts on Spencer and Transcendentalism: The Blazing

An unusual, albeit engaging, take on kabbalah emerging from a mixture of the French occult scene around Éliphas Lévi, Freemasonry, and New England Transcendentalism (1830s-60s), which included Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry Thoreau, and early feminist Margaret Fuller.


Mackey includes a fairly substantial article on kabbalah (vol. 1, pp. 439-443) apparently derived from C. D. Ginsburg.


Originally published as installments in Masonic Review, Skinner’s book “constitutes a series of developments, based upon the use of geometrical elements, giving expression in a numerical value. These elements are found in the work of the late John A. Parker ... setting forth his discovery (but, in fact, the rediscovery) of the quadrature value of the circle” (p. 1). The “geometrical elements,” measures, and numbers are drawn mainly from the Great Pyramid and the Old Testament. Wizards Bookshelf, the reissuer of Skinner’s Key, refers to it as “the most esoteric work we sell.”


The two articles from Kabalah and Kabalism are reprinted in Zohar by Nurho de Manhar (San Diego: Wizards Bookshelf, 1978), pp. 396-424 (see below). The other articles in Kabalah and Kabalism are “Isis Unveiled and the Visishtadwaita,” “Stray Thoughts on Death and Satan,” and “A Posthumous Publication.”

Where were the builders, the luminous sons of Manvantaric dawn? ... In the unknown darkness in their Ahhi Paranishpanna. The producers of form from no form—the root of the world—the Devamatri and Svabhavat, rested in the bliss of non-being. (Book of Dzyan, Stanza II, § 1)

Throughout the compendious works of Mme. Blavatsky (hereafter HPB), Isis Unveiled and The Secret Doctrine, are numerous references to kabbalah, and some passages which deal at length with kabalistic doctrine. But in the collection of articles published together as Kabalah and Kabalism, HPB made it most clear that she believed that

1. “Kabalah” was inferior to “our (Eastern) septenary system”;
2. kabalistic writings had “all suffered corruptions in their content by sectarian editors”;
3. there was “evidence of occult knowledge in the West,” even though HPB saw fit to expose “[kabbalah’s] limitations” and point to “the misleading character of Kabalistic symbolism.”

With all of this, HPB claimed to be restoring the true meaning of kabalistic doctrine according to Chaldean originals known to her—and only to her. She did condescend to say that “the Jews can claim the Zohar, Sepher Yetzirah, Sepher Dzeniuta and a few others, as their own undeniable property and as Kabalistic works,” referring to the Zohar and Sifre Detzeniuta as if they were separate
works. HPB’s attitude would raise eyebrows had she been the all-knowing scholar that she claimed to be. However, these statements come from one whose references to kabbalah are shot through with serious errors and misunderstandings. HPB had but a cursory knowledge of the subject, and that from easily traceable sources.

For our own part we regard her neither as the mouthpiece of hidden seers, nor as a mere vulgar adventuress; we think that she has achieved a title to permanent remembrance as one of the most accomplished, ingenious, and interesting impostors in history.

(Society for Psychical Research: 1883, report)

Gershom Scholem writes (Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism, pp. 398-9)

There can be little doubt in my opinion that the famous stanzas of the mysterious Book Dzyan on which Mme. H. P. Blavatsky’s magnum opus, The Secret Doctrine, is based owe something, both in title and content, to the pompous pages of the Zoharic writing called Sifra Di-Tseniutha. The first to advance this theory, without further proof, was L. A. Bosman, a Jewish Theosophist, in his booklet The Mysteries of the Qabalah (1916) p. 31. This seems to me, indeed, the true ‘etymology’ of the hitherto unexplained title. Mme Blavatsky has drawn heavily upon Knorr von Rosenroth’s Kabbala denudata (1677-1684), which contains (vol. II, pp. 347-385) a Latin translation of the Sifra Di-Tseniutha. The solemn and magniloquent style of these pages may well have impressed her susceptible mind. As a matter of fact, H. P. B. herself alludes to such a connection between the two ‘books’ in the very first lines of Isis Unveiled (vol. I, p. 1) where she still refrains from mentioning the Book Dzyan by name. But the transcription used by her for the Aramaic title shows clearly what she had in mind. She says: ‘There exists somewhere-in this wide world an old Book... It is the only copy now in existence. The most ancient Hebrew document on occult learning—the Sipra Dzeniuta—was compiled from it.’ The Book Dzyan is therefore nothing but an occultistic hypostasy of the Zoharic title. This ‘bibliographical’ connection between fundamental writings of modern and Jewish theosophy seems remarkable enough.

If one takes a lenient view, HPB’s sources could be blamed for the bulk of her errors, for many of these had indeed “suffered corruptions in their content by sectarian editors”:

1. from Lull to Pico and Reuchlin to Knorr von Rosenroth, Christian cabalists believed that with kabbalistic methods rightly used, Jews could be shown the “truth” behind the Old Testament and won over to Christ. Indeed, some editions of Kabbala denudata concluded with F. M. van Helmont’s Adumbratio Kabbalæ Christianæ, namely, translating the full title, an Outline of Christian Cabala which is the Hebraic Conception or Brief Application of Doctrines of Hebrew Cabalists to the Dogma of the New Covenant; to Form a Hypothesis proficent for converting the Jews.
2. Éliphas Lévi, who “[n]ever made an independent statement upon any historical fact in which the least confidence could be reposed,” and who “never presented the sense of an author whom he was reviewing in a way which could be said to reproduce that author faithfully” (Waite, The Holy Kabbalah, p. 489).
3. S. L. MacGregor Mathers, who was also dependent upon Rosenroth and Lévi.
4. Isaac Myer, whose earnest study contains many errors, some of which even HPB did not commit, as, for example, Myer’s mix-up of the roles and order of the sefirot, calling binah the second and hokhmah the third (Myer, Qabbalah, pp. 259-63).

But with these sources and others in a similar vein, we cannot account for all of HPB’s bumbles. She alone refers to the Talmud as the “darkest of enigmas even for most Jews, while those Hebrew scholars who do comprehend it do not boast of their knowledge” (Isis Unveiled, vol. I, p. 17), and she is unique in considering Liber Drusim as part of that murky Talmud (The Secret Doctrine, Adyar edition, vol. 2, p. 156). The nature of the Talmud is well known. As for Liber Drusim (= Sefer ha-Derushim), it is a sixteenth-century tract of the Lurianic school which HPB undoubtedly encountered in Rosenroth’s Kabbala denudata. Further, her statements regarding the authorship of the Zohar, which are sprinkled through The Secret Doctrine, contradict one another, mixing history, legend, and imagination differently with each reference.

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The most recent study of HPB is Julie Chajes’ *Recycled Lives: A History of Reincarnation in Blavatsky’s Theosophy* [OXFORD STUDIES IN WESTERN ESOTERICISM] (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), which references to HPB’s notions of *kabbalah* throughout. However, Chajes’ introduction states,

> Although the limitations of space require us to restrict the historical contextualization to these four main subjects [*i.e.*, Spiritualism, science, Platonism, and Orientalism], two omissions deserve special mention, namely Kabbalah and Egyptology, both of which Blavatsky discussed in relation to her rebirth theories. (—page 6)

**1877**


Pancoast makes two remarks in his introduction which, along with his ties with Mme. Blavatsky (as her physician) and the apparent influence of Hargrave Jennings, indicate his perspective:

> ...the grand old Kabbalistic Theosophy was the native root, the central trunk, whence *all* the religions the world has ever known sprang, as shoots and branches from a parent tree...

> ...the special purpose of this volume is to promote the well-being of mankind in this probationary world, by advocating Light and its Rays as the best remedial means for the Human Organism, when from any cause, internal or external, the equilibrium of health is disturbed, and disease wastes the body and deranges the mind—nay, even when there is no clearly defined disease, but only feebleness and indisposition for physical and mental effort.

These ideas are bridged in statements such as

> Light is the foundation upon which rests the superstructure of the Kabbalistic Theosophy—Light the source and centre of the entire harmonious system. Light was the first-born of God—His first manifestation.

Pancoast combines Kabbalistic Theosophy, the science and medicine of his day with their fascination with magnetism and electricity, and esoteric methods of “assisting nature” with “applications of Light” for the purpose of physical and mental health.


**1880**


After some “Preliminary Remarks,” CHAPTER XVI, “Extracts from the Kabbalah,” gives excerpts, primarily from “An Epitome of the Two Tables of the Covenant,” *i.e.*, a summary of Isaiah Horowitz’ *Sh’nei Luhot ha Brit*. 

A translation of *Sefer Yetzirah* appears in Appendix V, § 4.30


Westcott’s Introduction... was highly regarded by occultists of the Golden Dawn strain. Aleister Crowley, in *The Equinox* (vol. 1, no. 5, 1911) writes, “For the student unacquainted with the rudiments of the Qabalah we recommend the study of S. L. M. Mathers’ ‘Introduction’ to his translation of the three principle books of the Zohar, and Westcott’s ‘Introduction to the Study of the Qabalah.’ ... Dr. Westcott’s little book is principally valuable for its able defense of the Qabalah as against exotericism and literalism.”


Mathers is a particularly important figure in that he, with William Wynn Westcott, was one of the founders of the Golden Dawn. As author of most of the Golden Dawn rituals and many of its instructions, he was instrumental in laying the groundwork for modern occultism. However, as a translator and commentator in the field of *kabbalah*, he was prey to—and perpetuator of—much misunderstanding and misinformation. An easy way to demonstrate this is to look at a couple of lists which Mathers gives in *The Kabbalah Unveiled*.

On page 14, as the most important kabbalistic books, Mathers lists the following:

(a) The Sepher Yetzirah and its dependencies.
(b) The Zohar with its developments and commentaries.
(c) The Sepher Sephiroth and its expansions.
(d) The Aesch Mezareph and its symbolism.

For further comments on all of the translations on *Sefer Yetzirah* mentioned within Part 2 marked with a superscript 5Y, see “Notes on Editions of *Sefer Yetzirah* in English,” PART 1: TRANSLATIONS, at http://www.digital-brilliance.com/contributed/Karr/Biblios/syie.pdf.
With the first two entries, there can be no argument: the Sefer Yeẓirah and the Zohar are two of the most important and influential works in kabbalah. But the third and fourth entries simply do not belong. With evidence of Mathers’ dependence on Rosenroth, we can fairly assume the “Sepher Sephiroth” refers to the section of Kabbala denudata which treats of the unfolding of the tree of the sefirot, in outline, then diagrammatic, form based upon Israel Sarug’s version of the teachings of Isaac Luria. It is an item of considerable interest, but not one of the canons of kabbalah. “Asch Metzareph” (Esh M’zar’ef) is a rather unusual example of the merger of kabbalah and alchemy. As such, it is something of a peripheral curiosity, not a central work.

On pages 14 and 15, Mathers gives a list of “the most important books” contained in the Zohar:

(a) The SPRA DTzNIOVThA, Siphra Dtznenioutha, of “Book of Concealed Mystery,” which is the root and foundation of the Zohar.

(b) The ADRA RBA QDISHA, Idra Rabba Qadisha, or “Greater Holy Assembly”: this is a development of the “Book of Concealed Mystery.”

(y) The ADRA ZVTA QDISHA, Idra Zuta Qadisha, or “Lesser Holy Assembly”

(δ) The pneumatlical treatise called BITH ALHIM, Beth Elohim, or the “House of Elohim,” ...from the doctrines of Rabbi Yitzchak Loria...

(e) The “Book of the Revolutions of Souls” ... an expansion of Rabbi Loria’s ideas.

It is true that by the time we get to Luria (= Loria), the themes begun in Sifra Detzniuta and the Idrot [(b) and (γ)] were considered central to the Zohar, but in a purely zoharic context these texts are something of an oddity. Mathers ignored, or was ignorant of, the real core and bulk of the Zohar: the running commentary to the Torah. As with the previous list, the last two items simply do not belong. As Mathers even notes, they are Lurianic, which separates them from the Zohar by over 300 years. Bet Elohim was written by Abraham Cohen Herrera (157?-1639), who was a student of Israel Sarug and his version of Lurianic kabbalah. The first half of Sefer ha-Gilgulim (BOOK OF REVOLUTIONS, or REINCARNATIONS) is Hayyim Vital’s version of Luria, Sha’ar ha-Gilgulim, as redacted by Meir Poppers; the second half of Sefer ha-Gilgulim is not Lurianic, but rather based on older traditions.

Quite a few subsequent writers have accepted Mathers’ lists, especially the first, as authoritative. For instance, Charles Ponce in Kabbalah (San Francisco: Straight Arrow Books, 1973), pp. 50-52, includes Esh Mezaref in his list, “Other Main Works of Kabbalism.” Typical of Ponce, he sets two perfectly viable choices (Sefer Bahir and Cordovero’s Pardes Rimmonim) against two items with no real place on the list (Esh Mezaref and The Thirty-two Paths of Wisdom). Mme. Blavatsky, too, referred to Esh Mezaref as one of the most important books in kabbalah. As noted above, she and Mathers both made heavy use of Rosenroth’s Kabbala denudata.

Mathers’ Kabbalah Unveiled is an English translation of (α), (β), and (γ) of the second list as rendered from Knorr von Rosenroth’s Latin: Kabbala denudata. The translation is full of extranea—some Rosenroth’s, some Mathers—so it is hardly a fair representation of these complex texts. I recommend instead the translations of Roy A. Rosenberg in The Anatomy of God (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1973), or those of Daniel C. Matt in VOLUMES V, VIII, and IX of The Zohar [PRITZKER EDITION] (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009, 2014, and 2016).

1888


Myer’s book discusses ibn Gebirol’s work in relation to the Zohar and analyzes his *Mekor Hayim*. The bulk of the book is a survey of *habbalah’s* history and relationship to other religious systems. Myer’s last chapters are devoted to translated excerpts from the Zohar (*Zohar* excerpts also appear in Chapters 3, 4, 18, 19, 20, and Appendix A). Myer confused, or reinterpreted, some doctrine, e.g., the roles and order of the second and third sefirot: hokhmah and binah (pp. 259-263).


A few paragraphs (from pages 10 and 11) suffice to illustrate the tone and approach of Page’s *Golden Fleece*:

There is no Hebrew, but what more Hebrew can be taken from it. That language which is understood to be Hebrew at the present day, can be treated in the same manner, and it is all of it, the explanation of the explication of the connection betwixt this life and the life beyond the grave.

The history of the Jews is obscure, for the very reason that all races of men have in their turn been Jews and Hebrews, as will be shown in this work. They are numerous as the sands of the sea (C), and scattered over the earth.

Letters were named abominations, at a time when people had an understanding of their astrological meaning. Abomination, is defined as odious. O die us. When a good soul goes forth from the house of clay, it sees these letters in the light of that word in all of its meaning.

The present use of the word comes down from an age when the masses did arise against the abominable use to which they were part.

These things “which shall be an abomination unto you,” are for the Jews to study; both the name and letter, and the thing of life, as the parts of that thing of life fit the law of language by names and anatomy. See the kidneys and the kid (goat) and the knees—the kneepans—the sign Capri. See capricious.

1892


Through its associations with the Hebrew letters, tarot is here cabalized in the tradition of Etteilla and Éliphas Lévi.


Qabalah is a hodge-podge of Jewish and Christian, cabalistic and non-cabalistic elements. Several writers contributed to the work: Éliphas Lévi, Saint-Yves d’Alveydre, and “Sedir.” Papus himself drew on the works of Kircher, Lenain, Stanislas de Guaita, Heinrich Khunrath, and others, primarily Christian occultists, putting this work firmly in the Hermetic-Cabalist vein. Papus’ eclectic bibliography includes all sorts of stuff, much of which has nothing whatsoever to do with cabala.

1896


Masonic rituals—featuring a “M[aster] Cabalist”—in a code reminiscent of IF U CN RD THIS, with a few other signs and symbols (such as X and Δ) thrown in. Thus, the query “W-t. ws. th-n. s-d. t. u-.” expands to “What was then said to you?” Assuming a familiarity with Masonic rites and a little practice, *Cabala* is almost readable. One of these days, someone will pore over Masonic tomes and manuscripts and match it with an un-coded text.
Davidson, P[eter]. *The Sepher Jetsirah or Book of Formation*, to which is added *The Thirty-Two Ways of Wisdom* and *The Fifty Gates of Intelligence*, translated and annotated by P. Davidson (Louisville, White County [GA]: Peter Davidson / Glasgow [Scotland]: Bernard Goodwin, 1896).

1897


Regarding Agrippa, see the comments in Part 1 above, § AGRIPPA, and ADDENDUM B.


The ancient “canon of the arts” and knowledge through the ages of significant ratios and measures are considered via the proportions of ancient monuments and the numerical values of biblical names. The book attempts to establish that a standardized sacred geometry, which was applied in the construction of holy sites and in the writing of holy names, reflects key proportions of the universe.

1900


For each of the Hebrew letters, Farr, a Golden Dawn member, presents a brief paragraph; she promotes these epitomes as comparable to the statements of the intelligences in *The Thirty-Two Paths of Wisdom*—or the last twenty-two of them, anyway. She then sets the twelve simple letters in correspondence to the twelve symbols of the Buddhist Wheel of Existence.


Nurho’s work is a translation of the first sections of the Zohar rendered in the light of Mme. Blavatsky’s teachings. Nurho was a member of the Golden Dawn whose real name was William Williams.

1901

Harris (or Harry), Maurice H. *Hebraic Literature. Translations from the Talmud, Midrashim and Kabbala*. Washington & London: M. Walter Dunne, Publisher, 1901.

Harris’ § “The Kabbala” contains the same extracts given by Paul Isaac Hershon (1880). See above.

1902


The subtitle reads, “Comparative Metaphysics and Ethics, Rationalism and Mysticism of the Jews, the Hindus and most of the Historic Nations, as links and developments of one chain of Universal Philosophy.”


Waite made a serious attempt to set the record straight about what true kabbalah was and what it was not. His effort was hampered by his falling prey to the unreliable Latin and French translations available to him, in particular Jean de Pauly’s Le Livre de la Splendeur (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1906-1911), a Christianized French rendering of the Zohar which has unfortunately been relied upon by a host of twentieth-century occultists, historians, and writers, including Denis Saurat and Anais Nin. However, Waite’s knowledge and understanding of kabbalah far exceeded that of anyone else within the Golden Dawn circle (Westcott, Mathers, Farr, Crowley, Pullen-Burry, Fortune, etc.)

1903


Written “for lovers and collectors of literary curiosities,” this book treats “HOW THE VARIOUS NUMERICAL CABALAS HAVE BEEN CURIOUSLY APPLIED TO THE HOLY SCRIPTURES” (from the preface and title page). According to Begley, there is an old cabala and a new cabala. “The first is mainly Hebrew, and occasionally Greek; the second is almost entirely Latin, and of much later invention, not being heard of till about A.D. 1530” (p. 3). Begley’s book treats the latter, “the record of Christian fancy on Christian themes”—primarily by way of gematria. Knowledge of Latin and German is helpful.

1908


Infusions of Christian doctrine, coinages such as “Sephiroths” and the dedication to Dr. Gerard Encausse (= Papus) give apt clues regarding this work’s viability and orientation.

1909


In CHAPTER VII, “The Kabbalah,” Bayley writes, “The points of contact between the Kabbalah and the Albigensian Church of the Holy Spirit are therefore so numerous that the two systems may be said at times to merge completely into one another” (—page 99). He goes on to describe the use of notaricon (stating “Dante made frequent use of this Kabbalistic system of notaricon...”—page 100) and theruma, the meanings of the letters as numbers and shapes (illustrating, however, with Latin letters), and the indications of certain two-fold “veiling terms” (such as “sun and moon,” “active and passive,” leading up to the point that “Swedenborg expressed the same duality by the terms ‘Will’ and ‘Understanding,’ by the reconcilement of which man becomes an angel”—page 106).


Bennett expands on the meaning(s) of Genesis 1:1 “by applying to the Text the Keys of the Qabalah,” showing that “[c]ontained therein also are the Divine, Magical, and Terrestrial Formulae of the Passage of the Incomprehensible Nothingness of the Ain Soph to the Perfection of Creation....”


The *Equinox* is a grandiose esoteric miscellany which includes Golden Dawn materials (as reworked by Crowley), rituals, essays, “knowledge lectures,” stories, plays, tables, charts, poetry, etc. Two items of particular interest in the present context were extracted from *The Equinox*, namely “Gematria” (from vol. 1, no. 5) and “Sepher Sephiroth” (from vol. 1, no. 8), reprinted with *Liber 777*


As the title suggests, the “Kabbalah Unveiled” in this volume is S. L. M. Mathers’ translation of The Lesser Holy Assembly.

1910


On the first page of this 32-page history, Sperling writes that “mysticism is the raw material of religion” (p. 145). He concludes, “For there is in Judaism a wholesome synthesis of legalism and mysticism, which has saved it from becoming either a visionary castle in the air or a petrified body of formulas” (p. 176).

1912


(—also titled Numbers and Their Practical Application)

“In treating in an entirely elementary fashion a subject so vast as that of numbers, it is in my opinion necessary that the wisdom of Quaballistical lore should be presented in an easy and intelligible form” (p. iii). The “Quaballistical lore” referred to is principally numerology, or number/letter equivalents, as in the conventional Hebrew values, applied to our Roman alphabet as well as other “systems of valuations set down to the mystic Pythagoras” (FOREWORD, p. 84).


1913


“As soon as the Cabala became better known, Christians betook themselves to its study and paid it greatest attention because of the supposed agreement of its teachings with the dogmas of the Christian Church.” (p. 100)

Cabalistic numerology of the Western esoteric sort, namely, the occult significance of numbers and ratios according to “Greeks, Aryans, and Egyptians,” as well as the Hebrews. The correspondences of numerology and astrology dominate.

1914

Mordell, Phineas. The Origin of Letters and Numerals according to the Sefer Yetzirah. Philadelphia: (self-published), 1914. SY

1916


Coleville’s readable presentation is derived from previous English sources (C. D. Ginsburg, translations of Éliphas Lévi, S. L. M. Mathers, A. E. Waite, etc.). Coleville emphasizes the kabbalistic view of the human soul and includes a chapter entitled “Kabbalistic Doctrine Concerning Cause and Effect (Karma).”

1917


Though some Hebrew gematriot appear toward the beginning, this work is primarily concerned with Greek letters and their values.


The chapter II, “The Kabbalah, or Secret Tradition from unknown date to A.D. 1305,” contains Westcott’s translation of Sepher Yetzirah and Mathers’ translation of Sifre Ditzeniuta (THE BOOK OF CONCEALED MYSTERY) and Idra Rabba (THE GREATER HOLY ASSEMBLY).

1918


Gewurz’ works are of the Hermetic-Cabalist type as influenced by Mme. Blavatsky, Golden Dawn writers, and the Masonic cabalists. One of the “seven pupils of E. G.” who wrote down The Mysteries was L. A. Bosman, mentioned above in Scholem’s comments regarding Mme. Blavatsky. Bosman’s Mysteries of the Qabalah (London: The Dharma Press, 1916; rpt Kila: Kessinger, 2003) is identical to PART II (pp. 54—99) of the 1922 Yogi edition.

1919


The Cabala and Freemasonry is a mere 19 pages, even with illustrations and diagrams. One suspects that it is an excerpt from—or came to be included in—one of Evans’ numerous books.

1921


Refer to Arthur McCalla’s article on Fabre d’Olivet in Volume I of Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism, ed. Wouter J. Hanegraaff (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2005) pp. 350–4, where Fabre d’Olivet is described as an “immensely curious and massively erudite self-proclaimed Neo-Pythagorean.”
thesis of Hebraic Tongue is that “The Mosaic cosmogony ... contains the principle of all science, ancient and modern.” (—McCalla, p. 350)

1922


Hirsch begins the title essay, “It is hoped that the time has passed when the term ‘Jewish Cabbala’ suggested the notion of a store-house of magic, black art, and witchcraft.” (—p. 1).
“The Cabalists” originally appeared in Jewish Quarterly Review, Volume 20, Number 1 (London: October 1907) under the title “Jewish Mystics—an Appreciation.”

Maeterlinck follows Adolph Franck (see above: “1843 Franck”) in his chapter VIII, “The Cabala,” which discusses the Sefer Yezirah and the Zohar. Among the other brief chapters: VII THE Gnostics and Neoplatonists, IX THE Alchemists, and X THE Modern Occultists; chapter X touches on “Éliphas Lévi and his books, with their alarming titles,” “Madame Blavatzky” (sic), and Rudolph Steiner.

1923


Though Stenring’s is a much better piece of work, it has been overshadowed by Westcott’s edition of Sefer Yezirah, which has been reprinted many times and shows up at dozens of sites on the Internet.

The Cosmic Doctrine gives an account of “Inner Plane” teachings, received from “one of the ‘Great Masters,’” covering all aspects of the material and spiritual universe(s), their “evolutions,” “influences,” and “laws.” According to Janine Chapman, “The Cosmic Doctrine is supposed to be a re-written version of The Seven Aphorisms of Creation, which are compilations of notes taken at Dr. Moriarty’s lectures and which are the real ‘secrets of Dr. Taverner,’ the fictitious name Dion gave to Moriarty when she wrote her book, The Secrets of Dr. Taverner” (Quest for Dion Fortune [York Beach: Samuel Weiser, Inc., 1993]: p. 14; for more on Fortune’s “Moriarty period,” see The Story of Dion Fortune by Charles Fielding and Carr Collins [Dallas: Star and Cross, 1985]).

1924


85
Frater Achad is generally considered Aleister Crowley's most important student. Achad expands upon the Golden Dawn qabalah, establishing some of his own variations on such things as the attributions of the Hebrew letters and their correspondences to the paths of the kabbalistic tree of life; in his books of the 'twenties, he turns the attribution system established by the Golden Dawn completely upside-down.


Mention of Crowley, Frater Achad, and Grant inevitably leads to the subject of the O.T.O., Ordo Templi Orientis—a can of worms, indeed. Perhaps the best single book on this still-functioning order is O.T.O. Rituals and Sex Magick, by Theodor Reuss and Aleister Crowley, compiled and edited by A. R. Naylor, introduced by Peter-R. Koenig (Thame: I-H-O Books, 1999). The book almost immediately fell out of print, soon commanding high prices, many times its original $50 cover price. The bulk of the book is O.T.O. documents, which, apparently, the active O.T.O. groups were (are) not pleased to see in print. Further controversy surrounds the introduction—and assessments—of Peter-R. Koenig. Much of the material which appears in O.T.O. Rituals... can be found at Koenig’s well-crafted website, The Ordo Templi Orientis Phenomenon at http://www.parareligion.ch/.

A similar negative reaction greeted Francis King’s edition of the O.T.O. material in 1973, The Secret Rituals of the O.T.O. (New York: Samuel Weiser)—which was reissued in 2004, “REVISED & UPDATED,” as a “deluxe, hand-numbered limited edition to 666 copies” on CD-ROM (Austin: O.T.O. New Media). The CD includes King’s text in two formats (read-only and Microsoft Word), “Scans of documents relating to the work”—G. M. Kelly’s review of the Naylor/Koenig work, two fancy degree certificates, a woodcut of the eastern Mediterranean which supposedly depicts a “symbolic journey (relevant to the Mineral Degree),” a two-page typescript entitled “A Short History of Saladin,” and scans of the CD’s own packaging—plus a three-part photo gallery containing

(i) 16 photos of Crowley from throughout his adult life,
(ii) 16 more photos of Crowley in various ritual postures and costumes, and
(iii) “The Women,” within which is a subsection devoted to Leah Hirsig claiming seven previously unpublished photographs, five of which are quite obviously doctored.

All the while, an unidentified Shostakovich (?) piece drones in the background.

1925

Pullen-Burry, Henry B. Qabalam. Chicago, Yogi Publication Society, 1925.

That which literarians, and bookworms call the Kabalah, is but a strange and more or less valueless set of writings chiefly of Jewish origin; in which scholars, knowing that there is throughout the scripture hidden as well as an open meaning, having striven to discover it; and have recorded their conclusions, often in words as hard to understand, or even get meaning from, as the scriptures themselves. (—p. xi)

Pullen-Burry goes on to give examples of these writings: “the Sepher Yetzirah” and “the Books of the Zohar.”

As a member of the Golden Dawn, Pullen-Burry reached the level of Hierophant in 1894 under the
motto *Anima pura sit.* Qabalism, in spite of the quote above, discusses the *sefirot*, the four worlds, Adam Kadmon, and Philo as “the most important link we have with the Gnosticism of the Jews” (p. 7).


1929


The nature of this work, which is at once eclectic and uncritical, can be exemplified by its CHAPTER III, “Definitions of Letters and Numbers,” where meanings according to the “Hebrew Cabala” and “Chinese Tao and Yi-King” are given for the 26 letters of the English alphabet. Boyle’s sources for “Hebrew” are S. L. M. Mathers, Isaac Myer, Éliphas Lévi, and Papus.

1931


Rabbi Harry Waton was a “Kabbalist, Marxist, Spinozist, Jewish Supremacist” who believed that “the Jewish soul speaks an eternal language; and we saw, on the other hand, that the soul of the non-Jews speaks a temporary language.”—*A Program for the Jews and an Answer to All Anti-Semites* (New York: Committee for the Preservation of the Jews, 1939) p. 101.

Waton states in *The Philosophy of the Kabbalah* (pp. 14-15), Spinoza’s philosophy is the profoundest, sublimest, boldest and most universal system of thought in the realm of philosophy; but the philosophy of the Kabbalah transcends even the philosophy of Spinoza. In the whole range of crystallized thought there is no system that can compare with the Kabbalah.

1932


A *Garden...* is an insider’s summary of the Golden Dawn’s *qabalah*. See below: 1936, this paper’s “Part 3,” and “ADDENDUM A, ITEMS OF INTEREST” for other works by Regardie.

1934

Part One: THE FOUR WORLDS OF THE UNIVERSE; Part Two: THE WORLD OF THE MAN OF FLESH IN ACTION. Quoting such sources as the Bible (Old and New Testaments), the Zohar, The Emerald Tablet, and some Latin Pico-like CABBALISTIC DOGMA(S), Ancona presents “the western tradition” which, by way of “the great works of Éliphas Lévi, Saint-Yves d’Alveydre and Fabre d’Olivet...goes back consistently and without interruption to what was given to the white race by its three great interpreters of God—Rama, Orpheus and Moses—and by direct grace of the Prince of the Archangels, the Son, Jesus the Christ.”

1935

Fortune, Dion. The Mystical Qabalah. London: Williams and Norgate, 1935; reprinted frequently. This work is considered a “classic,” essential reading for students of the Western esoteric stream as exemplified by the Golden Dawn and its heirs.

Regarding Dion Fortune, see the comments below in Part 3.

1936


The Middle Pillar gives instructions for expansions of the “Qabalistic Cross” and “Lesser Banishing Ritual,” both of which are basic to Golden Dawn practice.

1937


Fuller’s Secret Wisdom is an effort to introduce the core of “Qabalistic” doctrine, covering cosmogony, notions of good and evil, fall and redemption, etc., drawing on the Zohar (the translation prepared by Simon, Sperling, and Levertoff, referred to as The Soncino Edition), Ginsburg’s Kabbalah, Waite’s Holy Kabbalah, Lévi’s History of Magic, Myer’s Qabbalah, Ariel Bension’s Zohar in Moslem and Christian Spain, and Knut Stenring’s translation of Sefer Yeziarah.


1941

Doreal, Dr. M. Sepher Yetzirah. The Book of Creation. The Kabbalah Unveiled. A Verse by Verse Analysis (Sedalia: Brotherhood of the White Temple, 1941.)SY

1949

Part 3

The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn was founded in the 1880s by S. L. M. Mathers, W. W. Westcott (both of whom are represented in the list above at 1887), and a third, apparently less significant gentleman named W. R. Woodman. Mathers and Westcott concocted an eclectic program of occult study containing quite a bit of cabala as derived from the Christian sources that we have discussed, especially Agrippa, Dee, and Rosenroth. For better or worse, Golden Dawn teachings have become the cornerstone for much—if not most—of the occult work practiced today.\(^\text{31}\) For the history and development of the Golden Dawn, refer to the following items:


“We will show how this synthesis ['of cabalistic magic...in which many currents of esotericism could be assimilated'] began in the Renaissance by scholars such as Pico della Mirandola, Johannes Reuchlin and Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim, and we will show how the process was concluded by Samuel Liddell MacGregor Mathers... This dissertation builds upon the work of Dame Frances Yates....” (p. ii)


Butler examines not only the personalities involved in the formation of the Golden Dawn but also the influences and motives which shaped their response to “the tightening camps of science and religion in an intellectual environment that heightened the allure of magic.”


Gilbert tells the story from the founding of the order in 1888 to its collapse in 1914. Several important documents are presented, such as the letters from Anna Sprengel, now generally considered fraudulent, authorizing and encouraging William Wynn Westcott to set up the Golden Dawn, and Westcott’s “Historical Lecture.”


“In order to explore the ‘metaphysical and cosmological self-understanding’ of the practitioners of the British occult revival, I have employed the qualitative methodology of the multiple case study to examine the work of six occultists and their perceptions of the Kabbalah [i.e.] ... Éliphas Lévi, ... William Wynn Westcott, Samuel Liddel MacGregor Mathers, Arthur Edward Waite, Aleister Crowley, and Dion Fortune.” (—p. 29)

“The results of my research strongly suggest that the Kabbalah of the occult revival may not, after all, be an occultist Kabbalah divorced from its Jewish roots, but instead displays a surprising fidelity to the complex currents of the Jewish Kabbalah....” (—p. 30)


An account based on careful research, though not fully sympathetic to its subject.


King’s account is a bit more ranging than Howe’s (Magicians of the Golden Dawn). He gets into some of the subsequent Golden Dawn offshoots which appeared after the original order’s demise. In some regards casting an even wider net is The Rebirth of Magic, co-authored by King and Isabel Sutherland (London: Corgi Books, 1982—published only in paperback), which adds a bit more background and detail on the French occult revival and expanded treatment of personalities such as Dion Fortune.

\(^{31}\) See above, page 40, regarding the Golden Dawn’s use of John Dee’s “Enochian magic.”

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The bulk of the Golden Dawn teachings, through its own documents, has been generally available since Israel Regardie’s four-volume edition of The Golden Dawn, 1937-40 (Chicago: Aries Press; frequent reprints were begun by Llewellyn Publications of St. Paul in 1969). Beyond Regardie’s full selection, other books which present Golden Dawn documents of some significance include the following:


Companion is a wealth of documentary minutia on the Golden Dawn's history, structure, workings, membership, and sources.


This book reprints the “Flying Rolls,” i.e., the instructional materials handed around to Golden Dawn members, which are not included in Regardie’s collection. The 2nd edition adds some material.


Torrens gives historical accounts, doctrinal summaries, and alternative (early) versions of the Outer Order rituals.


The grade rituals/initiations from Neophyte (o° = o²) to Magus (8° = 3²) written in the years 1916-1923.


Includes Festivals of the Equinox and Solstices; Consecrations of the Temple for the First, Second, and Third Orders.


“The Golden Dawn Rituals and Commentaries expounds on the structure only up to 5° = 6², but the diligent student in Golden Dawn mysteries who studies this book carefully will be able to extrapolate and develop the 6°=5² and 7°=4² and in due time even the ‘Babe of the Abyss’ (Portal of the Third Order). 8° = 3², and 9° = 2² formulae.” (—Martin Thibault, FOREWORD to the 2010 edition, page 9)


Zalewski gives the 6° = 5² and 7° = 4² (i.e., The Inner Order) rituals not included by Regardie—now supplemented by Zalewski’s Inner Order Teachings of the Golden Dawn (Loughborough: Thoth Publications, 2006), which takes the teachings “back to the original Mathers/Westcott formulae. Included in this book are most of the previous unpublished teachings of Mathers for the Theoricus Adeptus Minor grade of the old Golden Dawn.”

The qabalah of the Golden Dawn is epitomized by its treatment of the tree of life, which merges memory theater, sympathetic magic, and encyclopaedism. The quintessential example of the Golden Dawn’s brand of qabalistic synthesis is Aleister Crowley’s Liber 777, which consists of table after table of correspondence—almost 200 columns—arranged according to the ten sefirot and the twenty-two paths which interconnect them. The EDITORIAL PREFACE (to the 1955 and subsequent editions, probably written by Gerald Yorke) calls 777 a “Qabalistic dictionary of ceremonial magic, oriental mysticism, comparative religion and symbology.” Among the sources which Crowley’s introduction acknowledges are Kabbala denudata, “the lost symbolism of the Vault in which Christian Rosenkreutz is said to have been buried,” Dee, Agrippa, the “Art” of Ramon Llull, Pietro di Abano, Éliphas Lévi, to mention those who have been connected, however loosely, with cabala. The preface of 777 goes on to say, “The Chinese, Hindu, Buddhist, Moslem, and Egyptian systems have never before been brought into line with
the Qabalah; the Tarot has never been made public.” 777 was reprinted with two other “Qabalistic” items as The Qabalah of Aleister Crowley (New York: Samuel Weiser Inc., 1973; this collection has subsequently been reprinted a few times).

Some of the books listed above in Part 2 of the present paper are considered “classics of qabalah”: Mathers’ Kabbalah Unveiled and Fortune’s Mystical Qabalah. A student of Fortune’s, Gareth Knight, produced a compendious study, A Practical Guide to Qabalistic Symbolism (Helios Book Service [UK], 1965; New York: Samuel Weiser, 1978), which offers a thorough compilation of the Golden Dawn’s “qabalah of correspondence” in its 500-plus pages.

Among the books on kabbalah/cabala which are often recommended by students of Golden Dawn-type occultism are Waite’s Holy Kabbalah, Myer’s Qabbalah, and Ginsburg’s Kabbalah; these are thought to be the “serious … difficult … scholarly” books on the subject. Considered more practical are Fortune’s Mystical Qabalah and the popular series by William Gray, which includes The Talking Tree (1977), The Ladder of Lights, or Qabalah Renovata (1981), Concepts of the Qabalah (1984) and The Tree of Evil (revised edition, 1985—all titles, New York: Samuel Weiser). Concepts of Qabalah is Volume 3 of Gray’s SANGREAL SODALITY SERIES: Vol. 1. Western Inner Workings (1983); Vol. 2. The Sangreal Sacrament (1983); Vol. 4. Sangreal Ceremonies and Rituals (1986—all titles, New York: Samuel Weiser, Inc.) Another favorite is W. E. Butler’s Magic and the Qabalah (Wellingborough: Aquarian Press, 1964; rpt. New York: Samuel Weiser, 1972). None of these “practical” books draws much from Jewish sources; each is based instead on Golden Dawn materials, whether first- or second-hand.

One book “presents the majority of the Kabbalistic teachings from the Golden Dawn in one fascinating volume”: Pat Zalewski’s Kabbalah of the Golden Dawn (St. Paul: Llewellyn Publications, 1993). This book may well reflect Golden Dawn teachings, but it also demonstrates that the longstanding tradition of mangling (Jewish) kabbalah—and the stubborn ignorance of it—has not come to an end. The book’s account of the history and major texts of kabbalah is studded with a staggering number of errors; even the titles of the books given in the footnotes contain mistakes. As an inexpensive source showing what has become of cabala, Zalewski’s book may have something to recommend it.

John Michael Greer’s Paths of Wisdom: Principles and Practice of the Magical Cabala in the Western Tradition (St. Paul: Llewellyn, 1996) is a far better, more complete—and certainly more readable—introduction to the Golden Dawn’s Magical cabala. Neither as inclusive nor as well presented as Greer’s Paths of Wisdom is a work of similar intent, Experiencing the Kabbalah by Chic Cicero and Sandra Tabatha Cicero (St. Paul: Llewellyn, 1997), which offers the reader an “easy-to-use beginner’s guide.”


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33 Given that the Hermetic-Cabalist tradition is the major source of notions and practices of the Golden Dawn, it is no surprise that the subject “Qabalah” (i.e., cabala) is also well represented in the other issues of The Golden Dawn Journal: Book I: DIVINATION (1994); Book III: THE ART OF HERMES (1995); and Book IV: THE MAGICAL PANTHEONS (1998; all from Llewellyn Publications, St. Paul). See, for example, Madonna Compton’s article in Book III, “Logos Revealed:
The articles are spotty; some are downright bad. A few are sincere attempts to offer the results of thoughtful research, both academic and practical.

For developments of Western esoteric (i.e., Golden Dawn, Crowley, etc.) kabbalah through the twentieth century, refer to my survey, Approaching the Kabbalah of Maat (York Beach: Black Jackal Press, 2013), pages 3-113.

Some basic readings on the qabalah of the Golden Dawn:

2. Dion Fortune’s Mystical Qabalah (reprinted many times).
5. John Michael Greer’s Paths of Wisdom: Principles and Practice of the Magical Cabala in the Western Tradition (St. Paul: Llewellyn, 1996)—in my opinion, the best of the introductory books.
6. Crowley’s 777 (London: Neptune Press, 1955); included in The Qabalah of Aleister Crowley (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1973), reprinted as 777 and Other Qabalistic Writings of Aleister Crowley (York Beach: Samuel Weiser, 1986); also available on the Internet—search: “Liber 777”
7. Golden Dawn founders’ versions of kabbalistic texts:
   a. Westcott’s Sepher Yetzirah (in print from several publishers and on the Internet at dozens of sites)
   b. Mathers’ Kabbalah Unveiled (available both in print and on the Internet)

Some basic readings on Aleister Crowley:


Hermetic Influences on the Renaissance Humanists,” where there is an effort to affect an academic tone in discussions of Pico, Reuchlin, Henry More, and Rosenrth; or Harvey Newstrom’s article in Book IV, “In the Beginning was the Word,” which draws on the Sepher Yetzirah and Sefer Bahir—along with The Key of Solomon—in a discussion of the sundry epithets for each of the ten sefirot.


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A sampling of Crowley’s works:
1. Gems from the Equinox: All the Magical Writings, Instructions by Aleister Crowley for His own Magical Order, ed. Israel Regardie (St. Paul: Llewellyn Publications, 1974)
3. Magick without Tears (Phoenix: Falcon Press, 1973)