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JOSEPH SMITH
AND KABBALAH: THE OCCULT CONNECTION

by Lance S. Owens

This work was originally published in Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Vol. 27, No. 3, Fall 1994, pp. 117-194. The paper received considerable notice, and in 1995 the Mormon History Association recognized Joseph Smith and Kabbalah: The Occult Connection with its annual award for the best article in Mormon studies. The paper now has an extensive citation history. Most academic libraries will have Dialogue in their collection of journals for those seeking a print copy. A digital reproduction of the original print article is available on academia.edu, on researchgate.net, and for direct download here. (The edition given below may vary slightly from the print version in wording of a few footnotes.)

For convenience, the paper is presented here in three parts: Part 1, which begins below, includes pages 117 to 134; Part 2 includes pages 134 to 166; and Part 3 includes pages 166 to 194. The work uses extensive notes and illustrations which are linked in the text. The illustrations all have captions; access the caption along with a larger reproduction of the image by "clicking" on the figure.

Those interested in this subject might also enjoy the much shorter introductory article by the same author, published in Gnosis: A Journal of Western Inner Traditions, Spring 1995 and subsequently republished in the book The Prophet Puzzle: Interpretive Essays on Joseph Smith (edited by Bryan Waterman, Signature Books, 1999): Joseph Smith: America's Hermetic Prophet.

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by Lance S. Owens

IN 1973 RLDS HISTORIAN PAUL M. EDWARDS identified a fundamental deficiency of Mormon historical studies: "We have not allowed," says Edwards speaking of Mormon historians, "the revolutionary nature of the movement from which we have sprung to make us revolutionaries." He continued:

> The one thing about which we might all agree concerning Joseph Smith is that he was not the usual sort of person. He did not approach life itself—or his religious commitment—in a usual way. Yet the character of our historical investigation of Joseph Smith and his times has been primarily traditional, unimaginative, and lacking in any effort to find or create an epistemological methodology revolutionary enough to deal with the paradox of our movement. The irony of our position is that many of our methods and interpretations have become so traditional that they can only reinforce the fears of yesterday rather than nurture the seeds of tomorrow's dreams.[1]

More than two decades have passed since those words were penned, years marked by a veritable explosion in Mormon studies, and yet Edward's challenge "to find or create an epistemological methodology revolutionary enough to deal with the paradox" of Joseph Smith remains a summons largely unanswered. Revolutions are painful processes, in measure both destructive and creative. The imaginative revisioning of Joseph Smith's "unusual approach" to life and religion, demands a careful—though perhaps still difficult and destructive—hewing away of an hundred years of encrusting vilifications and thick layerings of iconographic pigments, masks ultimately false to his lively cast. Smith eschewed orthodoxy, and so eventually must his historians. To that end, there is considerable value in turning full attention to the revolutionary view of Joseph Smith provided by Harold Bloom in his critique of The American Religion.

Broadly informed as a critic of the creative imagination and its Kabbalistic, Gnostic undertones in Western culture—and perhaps one of the most prominent literary figures in America—Bloom has intuitively recognized within Joseph Smith a familiar spirit, a genius wed in nature to both the millennia-old visions of Gnosticism in its many guises, and the imaginative flux of poesy. Individuals less informed in the history and nature of Kabbalism—or of Hermetic, Alchemical and Rosicrucian mysticism, traditions influenced by a creative interaction with Kabbalah—may have difficulty apprehending the basis of his insight. Indisputably, the aegis of "orthodox" Mormon historiography is violently breached by Bloom's intuition linking the prophet's visionary bent with the occult aspirations of Jewish Kabbalah, the great mystical and prophetic tradition of Israel.

Bloom is, of course, not a historian but a critic and interpreter of creative visions, and his reading of Smith depends perhaps less on historical detail than on his intuition for the poetic imagination. The affinity of Smith for these traditions is, nonetheless, evident to an educated eye.

> What is clear is that Smith and his apostles restated what Moshe Idel, our great living scholar of Kabbalah, persuades me was the archaic or original Jewish religion. . . . My observation certainly does find enormous validity in Smith's imaginative recapture of crucial elements, elements evaded by normative Judaism and by the Church after it. The God of Joseph Smith is a daring revival of the God of some of the Kabbalists and Gnostics, prophetic sages who, like Smith himself, asserted that they had returned to the true religion. . . . Either there was a more direct Kabbalistic influence upon Smith than we know, or, far more likely, his genius reinvented Kabbalah in the effort necessary to restore archaic Judaism.[2]

While I would not diminish the inventive genius of Joseph Smith, careful reevaluation of historical data suggests there is both a poetic and an unsuspected factual substance to Bloom's thesis. Though yet little understood, from Joseph's adolescent years forward he had repeated, sometime intimate and arguably influential associations with distant legacies of Gnosticism conveyed by Kabbalah and Hermeticism—traditions intertwined in the Renaissance and nurtured through the reformative religious aspirations of three subsequent centuries. Though any sympathy Joseph held for old heresy was perhaps intrinsic to his nature rather than bred by association, the associations did exist. And they hold a rich context of meanings. Of course, the relative import of these interactions in Joseph Smith's history will remain problematic for historians; efforts to revision the Prophet in their light—or to reevaluate our methodology of understanding his history—may evoke a violently response from traditionalists. Nonetheless, these is substantial documentary evidence, material unexplored by Bloom or Mormon historians generally, supporting a much more direct Kabbalistic and Hermetic influences upon Smith and his doctrine of God than has previously been considered possible.

Through his associations with ceremonial magic as a young treasure seer, Smith contacted symbols and lore taken directly from Kabbalah. In his prophetic translation of sacred writ, his hermeneutic method was in nature Kabbalistic. With his initiation into Masonry, he entered a tradition born of the Hermetic-Kabbalistic tradition. These associations culminated in Nauvoo, the period of his most important doctrinal and ritual innovations. During these last years, he enjoyed friendship with a European Jew well-versed in the standard Kabbalistic works and possibly possessing in Nauvoo an extraordinary collection of Kabbalistic books and manuscripts. By 1844 Smith not only was cognizant of Kabbalah, but enlisted theosophic concepts taken directly from its principal text in his most important doctrinal sermon, the "King Follett Discourse."

Smith's concepts of God's plurality, his vision of God as anthropos, and his possession by the issue of sacred marriage, all might have been cross-fertilized by this intercourse with Kabbalistic theosophy—an occult relationship climaxing in Nauvoo. This is a complex thesis; its understanding requires exploration of an occult religious tradition spanning more that a millennium of Western history, an investigation that begins naturally with Kabbalah.

THE NATURE OF KABBALAH

The Hebrew word kabbalah means "tradition." In the medieval Jewish culture of southern France and northern Spain, however, the term acquired a fuller connotation: it came to identify the mystical, esoteric tradition of Judaism. Between the thirteenth and seventeenth centuries, this increasingly refined spiritual heritage was an important force in European and Mediterranean Judaism, competing with and often antagonistic to more rationalistic and Rabbinical trends. By the sixteenth century, Kabbalah had infused not only Judaism, but Renaissance Christian culture as well. Starting first with the Florentine court of Lorenzo de Medici at the end of the fifteenth century, Kabbalah became a potent force inseminating the Renaissance world view. Ultimately this movement engendered during the late Renaissance a separate heterodox tradition of Christian Kabbalah. From this period on, Kabbalah has been a major creative force in Western religious and poetic imagination, touching such diverse individuals as Jacob Boehme, John Milton, Emanuel Swedenborg, William Blake, and perhaps Joseph Smith.

An understanding of Kabbalah starts with an understanding of "tradition." Contrary to the word's common connotation, the tradition of Kabbalah was not a static historical legacy of dogma, but a dynamic phenomenon: the mutable tradition of the Divine mystery as it unfolds itself to human cognition. Kabbalah conveyed as part of its tradition a complex theosophic vision of God but simultaneously asserted that this image was alive and open to further revelation. Thus the Kabbalist maintained a creative, visionary interaction with a living system of symbols and lore, and—most importantly—new prophetic vision was intrinsically part of the Kabbalist's understanding of their heritage.[3]

How long and in what form Kabbalah existed before blossoming in twelfth-century Spain is uncertain. Kabbalists themselves made extraordinary claims that require our understanding before being discarded: Kabbalah was—said adepts—the tradition of the original knowledge Adam received from God. Not only was Kabbalah guardian of this original knowledge, but it preserved the tradition of prophecy which allowed a return to such primal vision: "Kabbalah advanced what was at once a claim and an hypothesis, namely, that its function was to hand down to its own disciples the secret of God's revelation to Adam."[4]

In keeping with its own mythic claims, Kabbalah has been accorded fairly early origins in Judaic culture. Some modern authorities—Moshe Idel is a notable representative—identify roots of Kabbalah in Jewish mythic motifs predating the Christian era and suggest that the tradition emanated from archaic aspirations of Judaism.[5] In a more conservative posture the eminent authority Gershom Scholem dates first threads of Kabbalah to the initial centuries of the Christian era. With origins cryptically entwined in Gnostic traditions and Jewish myths coursing through that early epoch, Kabbalah became in its mature form what Scholem describes as the embodiment of a "Jewish gnosticism."[6]

In recent years, this identification of Kabbalah with Gnosticism has been a source of controversy.7 Noted Swiss psychologist C. G. Jung commented, "We find in Gnosticism what was lacking in the centuries that followed: a belief in the efficacy of individual revelation and individual knowledge. This belief was rooted in the proud feeling of man's affinity with the gods."8 While classical Christian Gnosticism vanished from the Western world by the forth or fifth century, this Gnostic world view was not so easily extinguished. Historicity here, however, becomes a vexing problem. Under what circumstances should anything occurring after the disappearance of classical Gnosticism be called Gnostic? Was the Gnostic world view transmitted to later ages through historically discernible influences and communications or, instead, was something similar continually and independently recreated, reborn time after time? What now are the proper bounds for using the term, "Gnostic"?

Questions like these animate modern Gnostic and Kabbalistic studies, and the types of answers offered often reach beyond history into human psychology. The proper historical definition of Gnosticism has generated wide variances of opinion during the last several decades, and yet remains a fluid area. In the second century, Gnosticism clearly produced an historically manifest movement: it had specific myths, rituals, schools, teachers, and enemies. Some scholars have felt it most expedient to artfully delimit all discussions of Gnosticism with taxonomic dissections rooted exclusively in these ancient manifestations and, having so done, declare the old heresy long dead in its grave. But while this kind of a strictly delimiting approach was not uncommon three decades ago, other and much more insightful thrusts have recently developed in Gnostic studies.[9] As Dan Merkur summarizes,

> The Gnostic inventory should not be defined too rigidly. . . for it was not fixed and immutable, as scientific and metaphysical categories may be. Gnosis was and is a historical phenomenon that has undergone change over the centuries. A detailed definition for the gnosis of the second century will not fit the gnosis of the eighteenth, but the process of change can be traced. Gnosticism appears to have made its way from late antiquity to modern times, in a manner and by a route that compares with the transmissions of both Aristotelianism and the practice of science.[10]

To be sure, Gnosticism was always at core an independent product of primary, creative vision; by definition, devoid of this experiential ingredient there was no Gnosis. And perhaps it could be argued that whenever this primary Gnostic vision is found, it is in essence new creation. If such a view of Gnosis is granted, the precise part played by historical individuals, rituals, myths or texts as conveyors of tradition must remain problematic. Nonetheless, as Merkur suggests, there is substantial evidence to argue that a Gnostic world view was transmitted by historically identifiable sources coursing from antiquity into more recent times, and that Kabbalah was one of the principal agents of this transmission.[11]

In the thirteenth century, the oral legacy of this Jewish gnosis increasingly took written form and several Kabbalistic manuscripts began to circulate, first in Spain and southern France and then throughout Europe and the Mediterranean. By far the most important text emerging in this period was the Zohar, or "Book of Splendor". This massive work first appeared in Spain just before the year 1300. Internally it presented itself as an ancient work, a lost record of the occult and mystical oral teachings given by one Simeon ben Yochai, a notable second-century Rabbi, as he wandered about Palestine with his son and disciples, explaining the hidden mysteries of the Torah. The Zohar's significance in the evolution of Kabbalah cannot be overstated; it played a preeminent role in the development of Kabbalistic theosophy, and soon took on both canonical rank and unquestioned sacred authority—a status it retained for nearly five centuries. Thousands of manuscripts would eventually be added to the corpus of written Kabbalah, but none rivaled the Zohar in dissemination or veneration.

The Zohar was, however, what a modern student might call a forgery: it was a pseudoepigraphic work—a work written in the name of an ancient author by a contemporary figure. This was a literary device popular with Kabbalists, as it had been with Gnostic writers in earlier centuries. Though probably based on oral tradition, Scholem argues that the majority of the Zohar is the work of a single thirteenth-century Spanish Kabbalist, Moses de Leon. To understand how a pseudoepigraphic work—a "forged book"—could remain at the center of a religious tradition for centuries requires consideration of the Kabbalistic experience.

Kabbalah used the term "tradition" in a radically deconstructed sense. The tradition it guarded was not a dogmatic or theosophical legacy, but a pathway to prophetic consciousness. The teachings of Kabbalah were not dogmatic assertions, but maps intended to lead a dedicated and worthy student to experiential cognition.[12] Unlike the rabbinical tradition which placed the prophets in a past age and closed the canon of revelation, Kabbalah asserted that the only valid interpretation of scripture came when the individual passed beyond words and returned to the original vision. Though such a visionary experience was shared in full measure only by a vital elite among Kabbalists, it nonetheless was the sustaining heart of Kabbalah. In the inner sanctum of his contemplation the adept Kabbalist found—so he claimed—no less than the vision granted the ancient prophets; with them he became one. To speak pseudoepigraphically with their voice was a natural expression of the experience.

Kabbalah thus arose from oral traditions extant in medieval Judaism—and possibly of even earlier origin—which proclaimed both special knowledge of the Divine and possession of ecstatic or mystical gifts similar to those enjoyed by the ancient prophets, gifts which allowed men (in measures varing with their own natures) to achieve knowledge of God or even union with God.[13] In this affirmation, it shared some bond to earlier Gnostic traditions. Now the majority of Kabbalists were not full-fledged mystics or prophets, and a great deal of Kabbalistic teachings was purely intellectual theosophic speculation. At the heart of the tradition, there nonetheless was a prophetic aspiration, and several Kabbalists left intimate records—material preserved in manuscript and often held in restricted circulation—of visions, angelic visitations, ecstatic transport, and divine anointings.[14] These individuals saw themselves, and were sometimes seen by others, in the same mold as Israel's ancient prophets. A rationalistic approach to history might judge such phenomena as aberrant, even pathological. But within the scholarly study of Kabbalah, these phenomena are so well witnessed and so central to the tradition, that they require acceptance at very least as empirical psychological realities.

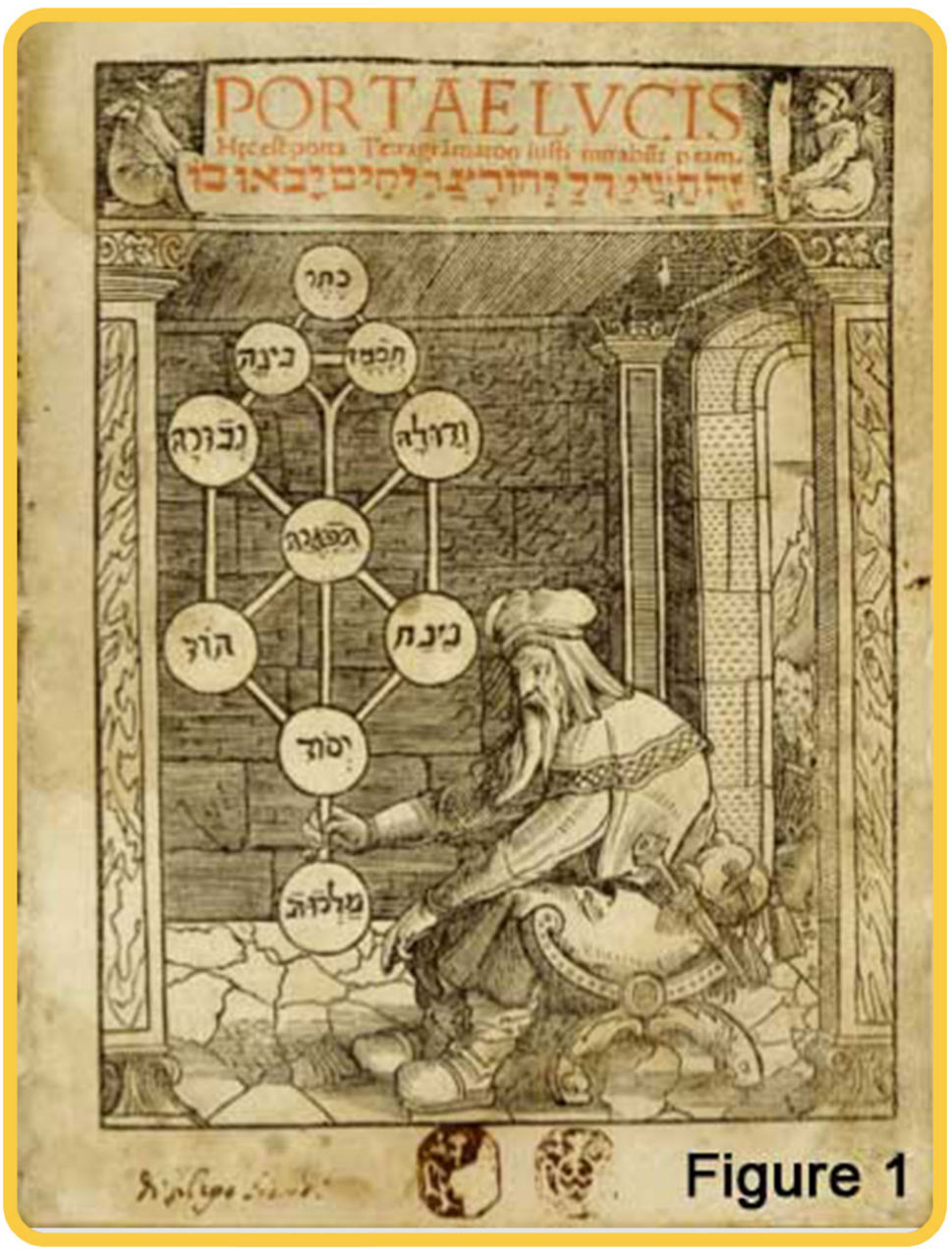

Figure 1

Kabbalistic experience engendered several perceptions about the Divine, many of which departured from the orthodox view. The most central tenet of Israel's faith had been the proclamation that "our God is One." But Kabbalah asserted that while God exists in highest form as a totally ineffable unity—called by Kabbalah Ein Sof, the infinite—this unknowable singularity had necessarily emanated into a great number of Divine forms: a plurality of Gods. These the Kabbalist called Sefiroth, the vessels or faces of God. (See Figures 1 and 2.) The manner by which God descended from incomprehensible unity into plurality was a mystery to which Kabbalists devoted a great deal of meditation and speculation. Obviously, this multifaceted God image admits to accusations of being polytheistic, a charge which was vehemently, if never entirely successfully, rebutted by the Kabbalists.[15]

Not only was the Divine plural in Kabbalistic theosophy, but in its first subtle emanation from unknowable unity God had taken on a dual form as Male and Female; a supernal Father and Mother, Hokhmah and Binah, were God's first emanated forms. Kabbalists used frankly sexual metaphors to explain how the creative intercourse of Hokhmah and Binah generated further creation. Indeed, sexual motifs and imagery permeate Kabbalistic theosophy, and the Divine mystery of sexual conjunction—a hierosgamos or sacred wedding—captured Kabbalistic imagination. Marital sexual intercourse became for the Kabbalist the highest mystery of human action mirroring the Divine: an ecstatic sacramental evocation of creative union, an image of God's masculine and feminine duality brought again to unity. Of interest to Mormonism, among several groups of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Kabbalists, polygamous and variant sexual relationships sometimes served as social expressions of these sacral mysteries.[16]

The complex Divine image composed of the multiple vessels of Divine manifestation was also visualized by Kabbalah as having a unitary, anthropomorphic form. God was, by one Kabbalistic recension, Adam Kadmon: the first primordial or archetypal Man. Man shared with God both an intrinsic, uncreated divine spark and a complex, organic form. This strange equation of Adam as God was supported by a Kabbalistic cipher: the numerical value in Hebrew of the names Adam and Jehovah (the Tetragrammaton, Yod he vav he) was both 45. Thus in Kabbalistic exegesis Jehovah equaled Adam: Adam was God.[17] With this affirmation went the assertion that all humankind in highest realization was like God: the two realities shadowed each other.

The Kabbalist saw himself intimately involved in a story told by God—he heard the divine voice and followed. He saw that in the redemption and knowledge of creation, God depended on man, just as man turned his eye to God. History came from two realms: man's burden was to wed this mysterious dual story in his own flesh.

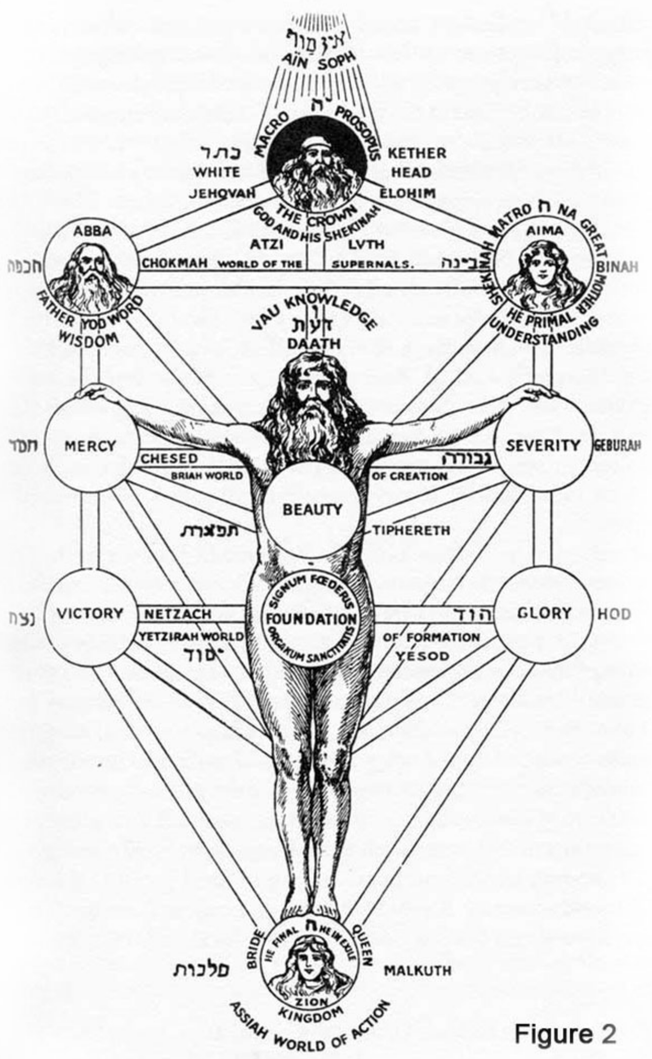

Figure 2

THE RENAISSANCE AND CHRISTIAN KABBALAH

Kabbalah was a growing force in Judaism throughout the late medieval period and by the beginning of the Renaissance had gained general acceptance as the true Jewish theology, a standing it maintained (particularly in the Christian view) into the eighteenth century.[18] Only in the last several decades of the twentieth century, however, have historians begun to recognize the importance of Kabbalah in both the history of religion and in the specific framework of Renaissance thought. Frances Yates, one of this century's preeminent historians of the period, emphasized "the tremendous ramifications of this subject, how little it has been explored, and how fundamental it is for any deep understanding of the Renaissance." She continued,

> Cabala reaches up into religious spheres and cannot be avoided in approaches to the history of religion. The enthusiasm for Cabala and for its revelations of new spiritual depths in the Scriptures was one of the factors leading towards Reformation. . . . The Cabalist influence on Renaissance Neoplatonism . . . tended to affect the movement in a more intensively religious direction, and more particularly in the direction of the idea of religious reform.[19]

Yates has delineated how understanding Kabbalah and its penetration into Christian culture are essential not only for comprehending Renaissance thought but also for studies of the Elizabethan age, Reformation religious ideals, the seventeenth-century Rosicrucian Enlightenment, and much that followed, including the emergence of occult Masonic societies in mid-seventeenth century England.

From its early medieval development in Spain, Jewish Kabbalah existed in close proximity to the Christian world and inevitably aroused notice among gentile observers.[20] During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Kabbalists increasingly established a presence in several areas of Europe outside Spain, the most consequential of these perhaps being Italy, where Kabbalah soon touched the vanguard of Renaissance life. Then in 1492 came one of the great tragedies in Jewish history: the violent expulsion of Jews from newly unified Christian Spain. Forcibly expelled from their homeland, they fled to Italy, France, Germany, to the England of Henry the VII, and to Turkey, Palestine, and North Africa. With them went Kabbalah.

> European culture in the fifteenth century had been animated by explorations, sciences, and bold visions reborn. Man stepped out from the shadow of the Creator and found himself master of worlds, capable of knowing God's handiwork. He discovered himself: the jewel of creation, the measure of all things. Perhaps no place was ablaze in this creative fire more than the Florentine courts of Cosimo and Lorenzo de' Medici. Cosimo had assiduously collected the rediscovered legacies of Greek and Alexandrian antiquity (an effort facilitated by the exodus west after the Turkish conquest of the Byzantine Empire in 1453). But most important, in 1460 he acquired and had brought to Florence the Corpus Hermeticum, a collection of fourteen ancient religious treatises on God and man. Authoritatively mentioned in the early Christian patristic writings of St. Augustine and Lactantius, these "lost" texts were thought to have been authored in antiquity by one Hermes Trismegistos ("Thrice Great Hermes"), an ancient Egyptian prophet older than Moses, a knower of God's ancient but forgotten truths, and a seer who foretold the coming of Christ.[21] Though eventually dated to the Gnostic milieu of the second century C.E., sixteenth-century scholars believed that Hermes Trismegistos and the Hermetica were an occult source that nurtured true religion and philosophy from Moses to the Greek philosophers of late antiquity.[22]
>
> The influence of the Corpus Hermeticum was remarkable, its diffusion among intellectuals immense; it epitomized the Renaissance world view, a reborn prisca theologia, "the pristine font of ancient and Divine illumination." In a variety of ways, Renaissance thought was radically transformed by the Hermetic doctrine that man was infused with God's light and divinity: "You are light and life, like God the Father of whom Man was born. If therefore you learn to know yourself . . . you will return to life."[23] Man was a divine, creative, immortal essence in union with a body, and man reborn "will be god, the son of God, all in all, composed of all Powers."[24]

Kabbalah made a dramatic entry on the Renaissance stage at almost precisely the same time the rediscovered Hermetic writings were gaining wide dissemination in the elite circles of Europe. The initial impetus for study of Kabbalah as a Christian science and for its integration with Hermeticism came from Florentine prodigy Pico della Mirandola (1463-94). Pico's philosophical education was initiated under the Hermetic and Platonic influence of the Medici Academy and court, of which he became an intellectual luminary. About age twenty he began his studies of Kabbalah, a pursuit furthered by Jewish Kabbalists who assisted him in translating a considerable portion of Kabbalistic literature into Latin and then aided his understanding of their occult interpretations.[25] In 1486 Pico penned the "Oration on the Dignity of Man"—one of the seminal documents of the Renaissance—as an introduction to the famous 900 theses which he intended to debate publicly in Rome that year. More than a hundred of these 900 theses came from Kabbalah or Pico's own Kabbalistic research.[26] "The marrying together of Hermetism and Cabalism, of which Pico was the instigator and founder," notes Yates, "was to have momentous results, and the subsequent Hermetic-Cabalist tradition, ultimately stemming from him, was of most far-reaching importance."[27]

Hermeticism found a perfect companion in Kabbalah. Sympathies that can be drawn between the two occult sciences, both supposed ancient and divine, are remarkable, and it is easy to see how they would have impressed themselves upon sixteenth-century philosophers: Kabbalah originated with God's word to Adam and the ancient Jewish prophets after him; Hermeticism was the sacred knowledge of the ancient Egyptian Gnosis, the legacy of a thrice-great prophet, transmitted to the greatest pagan philosophers, and foretelling the coming of the divine Word (Logos). Both placed considerable interest in a mystical reinterpretation of the Creation; the Hermetic text Pimander, often called "the Egyptian Genesis," complimented the new vision gained from a Kabbalistic revisioning of the Hebrew Genesis.[28] Each taught the great "Art" of Divine knowledge based on the tenet that man is able to discover the Divine, which he reflects within himself through direct perceptive experience. And both offered paths to God's hidden throne, the divine intellect, where humankind might find revealed the secrets of heaven and earth. Element after element of Renaissance thought and culture is linked to the force of a new religious philosophy born of these two Gnostic traditions intermingling in the cauldron of Western culture's rebirth. Indeed, Yates suggests that the true origins of the Renaissance genius may be dated from two events: the arrival of the Corpus Hermeticum in Florence and the infusion of Kabbalism into Christian Europe by the Spanish expulsion of the Jews.[29]

Christian Kabbalah advanced an innovative reinterpretation of the Jewish tradition. For Pico and many influential Christian Kabbalists after him this ancient Gnostic tradition not only was compatible with Christianity but offered proofs of its truth. Many early Christian Kabbalists were, like Pico, not only scholars but Christian priests investigating remnants of a holy and ancient priesthood, rife with power and wisdom endowed by God. Their cooptation of the tradition was of course disavowed by most Jewish Kabbalists—though some aided and encouraged the development and a few converted to Christianity. But to the Christian scholars and divines who embraced it, Kabbalah was

> a Hebrew-Christian source of ancient wisdom which corroborated not only Christianity, but the Gentile ancient wisdoms which [they] admired, particularly the writings of "Hermes Trismegistus". Thus Christian Cabala is really a key-stone in the edifice of Renaissance thought on its "occult" side through which it has most important connections with the history of religion in the period.[30]

This was not just a speculative philosophy, but a new (though cautious and often occult) religious movement which radically reinterpreted normative Christianity. In some fashion it touched every important creative figure of the Renaissance. To an age seeking reformation and renewal, there had come forgotten books by prophets of old—pagan and Hebrew—who foresaw the coming of the Divine creative Logos, who knew the secret mysteries given to Adam, who taught that man might not only know God, but in so knowing, discover a startling truth about himself. These ideas reverberated in the creative religious imagination of the Western world for several centuries, perhaps even touching—though illusively and attenuated by time—the American religious frontier of the 1820s.

THE HERMETIC-KABBALISTIC WORLD VIEW

Christian Kabbalah was not a recapitulation of the Jewish tradition, but its creative remolding, a metamorphosis engendered by newly aroused religion-making vision. Though it would be too bold to judge Gnosticism a legitimate historical parent, this movement was arguably encouraged and fostered by distant transmissions and legacies of the old heresy. In the broad creative confluence of Kabbalah, Hermeticism, and alchemy were numerous eddies and counter-currents. Like early Christian Gnosticism, the tradition reborn had a dynamism which bred creative reinterpretation, and the important and subtle distinctions among its various redactions form the subject of specialized study. Nonetheless, there are a few themes echoed so often by sixteenth- and seventeenth-century proponents of this alternative, reformative philosophic and religious vision (which I hereafter refer to simply as Hermeticism) that they may serve almost as its hallmarks.

The first of these essential elements was mentioned above: humankind is the bearer of an uncreated, divine, immortal spark. This theme was mirrored in the next keynote, developed in both Kabbalistic and Hermetic sources: there is a duality in creation. Says the Zohar: "The process of creation has taken place on two planes, one above and one below . . . . The lower occurrence corresponds to the higher." This dictum appeared in almost identical wording in the earliest Hermetic works. The revered text of the Tabula smaragdina—considered the summation of Hermetic wisdom and attributed to Hermes Trismegistos—echoes this cryptic formula as its central mystical truth: "That which is below is above, that above is also below."[31] The exegetical possibilities of this simple text plied the imagination of new Hermetic philosophers. There are, they suggested, two realms of reality—call them heaven and earth, spirit and matter, God and man—in relation to each other, shadowing each other. What happens in one realm echoes in the other, the Divine life reflects itself in the life of women and men, and they by their intentions and actions affect the Divine.

This idea infused Kabbalah, one example being the image of God as archetypal Man, the Adam Kadmon: Man below reflected the Divine form above. The influential seventeenth-century Hermetic philosopher Robert Fludd interpreted this idea to imply a spiritual creation which preceded the physical. God's first creation, stated Fludd, was "an archetype whose substance is incorporeal, invisible, intellectual and sempiternal; after whose model and divine image the beauty and form of the real world are constructed."[32] The terms macrocosmos and microcosmos—the outer form and the inner form—also reflected this duality. The outer formed creation of the universe—the macrocosmos—reflected (and was a reflection of) the microcosmos—the inner mystery of creation and seed of God in man. To this view, both microcosmos and macrocosmos ultimately were dual mirrors of the Divine. These concepts resonate in Joseph Smith's theosophy.[33]

The correspondence of above and below molded the foundations of two influential disciplines flourishing in the creative society of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: natural science and magic. In the Hermetic world view, each was in part a scientific and a spiritual study. Science meant "knowledge," and knowledge led to Intelligence, the Divine glory uniting all truth into the wholeness of God's consciousness.[34] Whether the Hermetic-Kabbalistic magus ventured to explore the divine hierarchies by magical invocations or the structures of matter by natural science, he found mirrored the same light-dark face of God.[35] Magic and science each offered methodologies for investigating heaven and earth, the mind of God and the structure of nature, microcosmos and macrocosmos. As Pico della Mirandola explained, "Magic is the practical part of natural sciences."[36]

The Hermetic scientist-philosopher-magus reasoned, given the correspondence between the two realms, creative manipulation of the one affected the other. Theurgic actions influencing the divine hierarchy were mirrored outwardly in nature; transformations effected in nature, or in the nature of man, were reflected in the supernal sphere: spirit and matter were coupled, even interdependent. To several leading figures of the age, this vision was a high spiritual calling; it evoked the desire to reach upwards, to join in the eternal intelligence, the knowing vision of God's All-Seeing Eye.[37] By piously pursuing occult knowledge of the archetypal structure of creation, the adept could find reflected the innermost secrets of nature. Of course, for individuals of less lofty aspiration, the concept of correspondences devolved to particular concerns—the common magic rejected and ridiculed in subsequent and more rationalistic times.[38]

This was an occult philosophy reborn into an age longing for spiritual regeneration, and its effects were far-reaching. Quite naturally, men and women sharing this vision sought techniques of communicating with the divine hierarchies; Kabbalah provided both a framework for seeking such intercourse and an image of the divine order awaiting encounter. The wedding of Kabbalah with the Hermetic image of man gave birth (among many offspring) to the magical traditions contrived in this period, represented by Cornelius Agrippa's immensely influential work, De occulta philosophia, first published in 1533. "Agrippa's occult philosophy," notes Yates, is "in fact . . . really a religion, claiming access to higher powers, and Christian since it accepts the name of Jesus as the chief wonder-working name."[39] Three centuries later these ideas and this text would order the magical rituals and ceremonial implements possessed by members of the Joseph Smith family on the religious frontier of early nineteenth-century America.

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ALCHEMY

Essential to understanding the themes animating the Kabbalistic-Hermetic world view is a discussion of alchemy. In popular misconception, alchemy is an immature, empirical, and speculative precursor of chemistry having as its primary concern the transmutation of base metals into gold.[40] This simplification touches at only the most superficial veneer of alchemy; in stark contrast, current historical and psychological readings of the alchemical tradition suggest it had complex roots delving into the religious or philosophical subsoils of Western culture and aspirations far more subtle than the production of gold. Indeed, the dictum of medieval alchemists themselves avows this fact: Aurum nostrum no est aurum vulgi ("Our gold is not vulgar gold").

The historical foundations of alchemy rest in the same early Christian epoch and Gnostic cultural milieu that generated the texts of the Corpus Hermeticum and nurtured the early mystical roots of Kabbalah.[41] As with Gnosticism and Hermeticism, after the emergence of Christian orthodoxy, alchemy submerged into the darker subsoil of Western culture until the Middle Ages. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries renewed contacts with Arabic and Greek alchemical materials, together with a reawakening interest in heterodox classical knowledge, inaugurated a new study of this ancient "Art." And to this study was eventually add-mixed Kabbalah. No less a figure than Albertus Magnus (1193-1280) became an adept of alchemy and authored numerous alchemical works. To Thomas Aquinas, the great student of Albertus and the signal theologian of the age, alchemical texts are also attributed—a fact suggesting the philosophical and religious tenor of alchemical thought.[42] For the next four hundred years, alchemy ran like Ariadne's thread in a labyrinth of creative vision. As the Age of Reason dawned, Isaac Newton, Robert Boyle, and John Locke would secretly correspond on alchemy's occult mysteries; Newton is now well known to have penned more than a million words on the great Art.[43] A century and a half later its mystery would command Goethe's masterwork, Faust, considered by C. G. Jung "the final summit" of alchemical philosophy in its last creative extensions.[44]

Central to alchemy was the declaration of the Tabula smaragdina: That which is below is above, that above is also below. In the alchemical view, matter, the substance below, was the compliment and reflection of the divine realm above. This perception was sometimes daringly extended in the face of Christian dogma to assert that matter was eternal and uncreated, a complement and mirror to the equally divine and uncreated spirit. As Jung observed, "Matter in alchemy is material and spiritual, and spirit spiritual and material."[45] Within matter resided a light, the lumen naturae, which was both a reflection and eternal compliment of heaven's celestial glory, the lumen dei. This strange perception was amplified in an array of alchemical metaphors; the core image was a complexio oppositorum—expressed by dualities such as "light and dark," "material and spiritual," "wet and dry," "sun and moon," "manifest and occult," "feminine and masculine"—seeking transformative, salvific, and ultimately creative union. This mending of divisions, above and below, required a work in proxy to be performed by living men and women. Unaided by the alchemist—and his mystical sister and feminine companion—it could not be accomplished. (See Figure 3.)

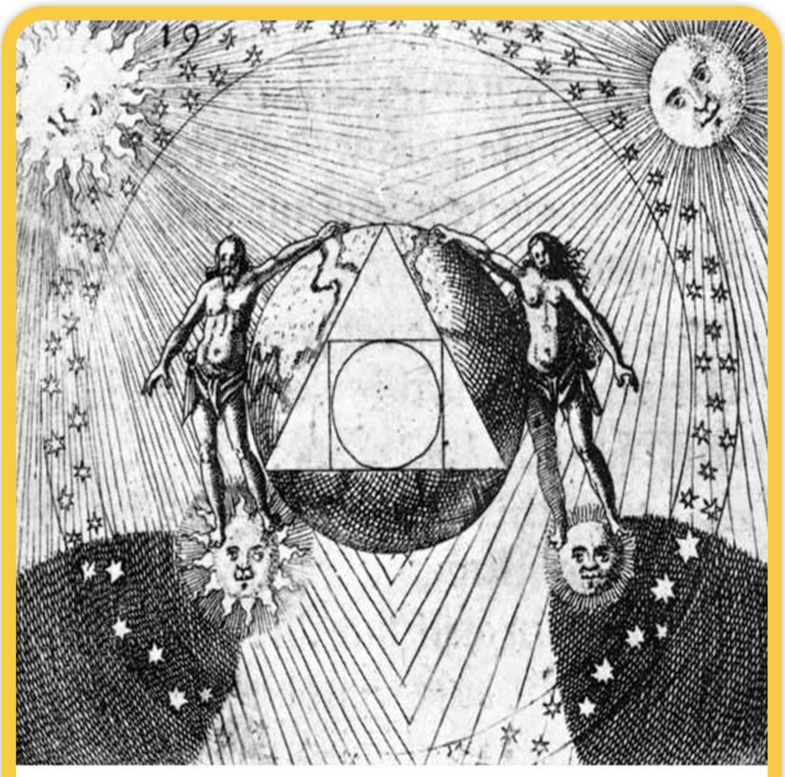


Figure 3

The treasure sought by the alchemist was often termed the "philosopher's stone" (the antecedent of Joseph Smith's "seer's stone"): the pearl of great price, the stone rejected by the builder, the *filius philosophorum*.[46] Though the alchemical transformation was often described as a transmutation of base metal into gold—and though early alchemists had experimental laboratories and engaged in empirical exploration—the late alchemical literature reveals that ultimately it was the alchemist's own human baseness which sought transmutation into something divine. Thus the alchemist was a necessary agent of creative transmutation: a priest in a hallowed, ancient priesthood; a son of the Widow; a knower of creation's ancient secret; a digger after hidden treasure.[47] The heart of this tradition was embodied in its ultimate mysteries: the *hierosgamos*, or "sacred wedding," and the *mysterium coniunctionis*, a mysterious union of opposites that eternally wed male to female, matter to spirit, above to below, *microcosmos* to *macrocosmos*, humankind to divinity.

A LEGACY OF OCCULT SOCIETIES: ROSICRUCIANS AND MASONS

By the seventeenth century, the creative mix of Kabbalistic, Hermetic, and alchemical religious philosophies had nurtured among important sectors of Europe's intellectual elite broad aspirations for a more general religious reformation, even a restoration of the ancient and true religion. Insightful individuals at the creative edge of the culture judged their times and urgently sought an alternative to the vehement Reformation and Counter-Reformation madness which would soon bathe Europe in blood. One might easily comprehend how this anxious age would be excited by the mysterious announcement of a noble, secret, and ancient brotherhood calling itself the fraternity of the Rose Cross, summoning the elite of Europe to join in a new reformation.[48] Thus began the Rosicrucian enlightenment.

> In 1614 the first of the enigmatic documents that would become known as the "Rosicrucian manifestos" was published at Cassel, Germany. Titled the *Fama Fraternitatis, or a Discovery of the Fraternity of the Most Noble Order of the Rosy Cross*, this strange work was a
>
> trumpet call which was to echo throughout Germany, reverberating thence through Europe. God has revealed to us in the latter days a more perfect knowledge, both of his Son, Jesus Christ, and of Nature. He has raised men endued with great wisdom who might renew all arts and reduce them all to perfection, so that man "might understand his own nobleness, and why he is called Microcosmus, and how far this knowledge extendeth into Nature."[49]

The Fama proceeded to introduce the history of a mysterious individual called "C. R." Born in 1378, C. R. was the founding father of the Rosicrucian order, a man who had labored long, though unrecognized, towards the general reformation now declared. C. R. (or Christian Rosencreutz as he was subsequently identified) had been an "illuminated man." As a sixteen-year-old boy he had traveled to the East where "the wise received him (as he himself witnesseth) not as a stranger, but as one whom they had long expected; they called him by his name, and showed him other secrets," including an important text called only "the book M." The boy became skilled in language and translation, "so that the year following he translated the book M into good Latin, which he afterwards brought with him." (The "book M" continued to play an important part in the Rosicrucian mythos as one of its treasures; of course, a vague outline of the story told by Joseph Smith might here also be discerned.) C. R. then traveled across Africa to Spain,

> hoping well (that since) he himself had so well and so profitably spent his time in his travel, that the learned in Europe would highly rejoice with him, and begin to rule and order all their studies according to those sound and sure foundations. He therefore conferred with the learned in Spain. . . . But it was to them a laughing matter, and being a new thing unto them, they feared that their great name should be lessened, if they should now again begin to learn and acknowledge their many years errors.

Rejected, Brother C.R eventually returned to Germany and quietly established his order among those few men who "through especial revelation should be received into this Fraternity." Among these men alone were shared and transmitted the secrets of the order. After death, C. R.'s body was concealed in a tomb and eventually forgotten; but this lost vault, declared the Fama, had around the year 1604 been again found, opened, and entered. Within its miraculously lighted geometric confines C. R.'s followers discovered an altar, a "brass plate" upon which were engraved mysterious words and glyphs, several records of the order, and the book M. And now, the Fama continued,

> like as our door was after so many years wonderfully discovered, also there shall be opened a door to Europe (when the wall is removed) which already doth begin to appear, and with great desire is expected of many. . . . Howbeit we know after a time there will now be a general reformation, both of divine and human things. . . . Our Philosophy also is not a new invention, but as Adam after his fall hath received it, and as Moses and Solomon used it.[50]

Upon close examination the Fama Fraternitatis presents itself more as an allegory than as actual history, and this was probably its intent. The Rosicrucian mythos was connected closely with the mysteries of alchemy where allegorical legends of buried treasures miraculously rediscovered were particularly prevalent.[51] However, the story was generally interpreted literally. And the excitement it incited grew the following year with the publication of the second Rosicrucian manifesto, the Confessio Fraternitatis.[52] This second manifesto repeated the message of the first, interpreting and intensifying it, and added a powerful apocalyptic and prophetic note: a great millennial reformation was at hand, and with it, a return to an Adamic knowledge revealed by God:

> We ought therefore here observe well, and make it known unto everyone, that God hath certainly and most assuredly concluded to send and grant to the world before her end, which presently thereupon shall ensue, such truth, light, life and glory, as the first man Adam had . . . . So then, the secret hid writings and characters are most necessary for all such things . . . . What before times hath been seen, heard, and smelt, now finally shall be spoken and uttered forth, when the World shall awake out of her heavy and drowsy sleep, and with an open heart, bare-headed, and bare-foot, shall merrily and joyfully meet the new arising Sun.[53]

One year later, in 1616, a third and final Rosicrucian document appeared, The Chemical Wedding of Christian Rosencreutz. Cast in the form of a long allegory in alchemical symbolism, it bid the wise of Europe approach a sacred royal marriage, a hierosgamos of mysterious mystical intent:

> This day, this day, this, this The Royal Wedding is. Art thou thereto by birth inclined,
> And unto joy of God design'd Then may'st thou to the mountain tend
> Whereon three stately Temples stand, And there see all from end to end.[54]

The Rosicrucian manifestos caused a furor throughout Europe and England. Individuals espousing sympathy with Rosicrucian ideals published numerous works lauding the brotherhood's purposes and petitioning acceptance into the order. But to the dismay of all, the Rosicrucian brotherhood never declared itself, never accepted or acknowledged the many aspirants to its fellowship, and indeed perhaps never even really (at least outwardly) existed. While history has identified both the author of the manifestos—Johann Valentin Andreae—and a wider group of individuals sharing in "Rosicrucian" aspirations, the deeper sources and purposes of the movement remain enshrouded in layers of mystery and supposition.

Whatever their actual intent or origins, the manifestos crystallized a broad preexisting alternative, reformative inclination in European society. This was a new/old religious vision steeped in Hermetic, Kabbalistic, alchemical, and in the broader definition, Gnostic, symbolism; a mythos that had been brewing in the pregnant retort of European creativity over two prior centuries.[55] The tradition's "doctrines"—imbued as they were with an experimental, experiential, creative and immensely personal vision—found expression in a peculiar symbolic or hieroglyphic language, an idiom alchemical in nature but ever more religious-philosophic than physical-chemical in intent. And interwoven in all was a new working of the old sacred mystery of Kabbalah. This infusion of Kabbalah was aided in the later seventeenth century by Knorr von Rosenroth's translation into Latin of several key Kabbalistic works, including large sections of the Zohar—an effort that was immensely influential in the literate circles devoted to these studies.[56] There followed in the mid-to-late-seventeenth century, particularly in England, an alchemical renaissance. During this period the Hermetic "religion" of alchemy was augmented by Kabbalistic imagery and fermented by a high spiritual quest for ultimate, individual knowledge of God. It was this expansive alchemical Hermetic philosophy into which Isaac Newton and his fellows in the new Royal Society delved.[57]

Figure 4

The arcane Hermetic books produced by Christian philosophers during this period circulated widely among the elite societies and intellects of Europe. These were works composed in the idiom of symbolic language, replete with allegorical pictures hinting at humankind's noble mystery.[58] The "hieroglyphic" engravings often play at the theme of the complexio oppositorum, opposites seeking union, a motif conveyed by (or accompanied with) the arcane symbols of Sun and Moon (See Figure 4.) In several figures trumpets herald the new dispensation, an image offered by the second Rosicrucian manifesto.[59] Emblematic of humankind having again remembered God's messengers, angels ascend and descend from heaven.[60] We repeatedly find illustrated a sacred wedding of King and Queen, their holy conjunction being oft pictured as a carnal coupling which leads through hermaphroditic forms to a new and regal heavenly being. Here too we encounter a symbolic beehive. The industry this beehive metaphorically bids, however, was misunderstood in latter days. In its primary context the "industry" was a secret, laborious concern of alchemical transmutation: a transformation of dark matter into a pure and vital golden elixir—an alchemical opus performed within the alembic "hive" of the soul.

Figure 5

[61] (See Figure 5.) Intimately associated and reigning over all the emblems of this occult hieroglyphic tongue was the supreme "All-Seeing Eye" of God, the sacred emblem of a perpetual divine and uncreated intelligence, humankind's single unfailing light (See Figure 6). This time, these emblematic books, this philosophy: these are the propagating sources of the symbols finally carved in stone upon Joseph's Nauvoo temple. To this Hermetic-alchemical tradition and its unique vision alone did they pertain, from it alone came an assertion of their sacred import. Early Mormonism's affinity for and incorporation of the same symbolic motifs strongly evidences its intrinsic link with the Hermetic tradition.[62] (See Figure 7 & 8.)

The import of myth and metaphor as a vehicle of the Hermetic-Kabbalistic tradition cannot be overstated. In Gnostic studies the function of myth and symbol as a conduit for the expression of primary vision is well accepted, and classical Gnosticism is now usually classified in terms of its mythic motifs. Likewise, within the Hermetic-Kabbalistic tradition the intricate interplay of "above and below" bred a unique matrix of myths: stories and symbols which onveyed by metaphor the savor of a primary and encompassing vision of God and humanity. Integrated and developed over several hundred years, this Hermetic-Kabbalistic mythos reached maturation during the seventeenth century. It is during the early and middle years of this key century that the mythos most fully flowered, enveloping the separate traditions of Kabbalah, classical Hermeticism, and alchemy.

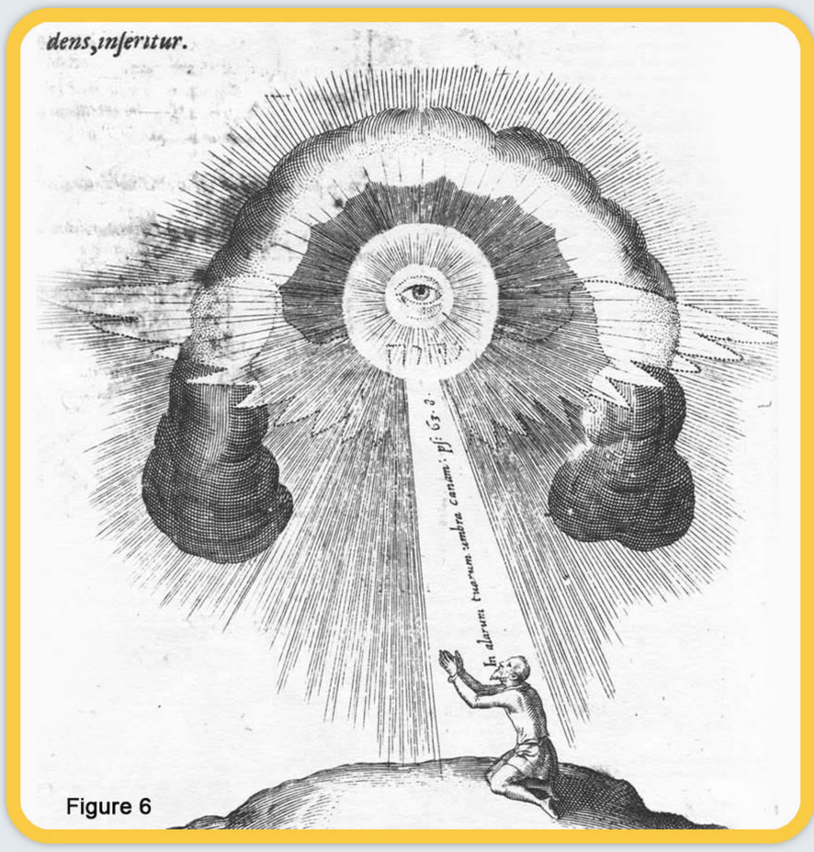


Figure 6

A creative mix of symbols and stories played variations on core archetypal themes during this period. Detailed examination of these is beyond this essay. But there is one image which runs as a pervasive subtext, defining the tradition's fuller mythos: the motif of the mysterium coniunctionis. On earth and in heaven two paths intertwined; Man and God echoed to each other a flux of conjunctions. Matter and spirit, light and dark, masculine and feminine: all mingled in the mystery, face to face. An array of opposites were personified as vehicles for the metaphor of this conjunction. To these was linked the companion image of the hierosgamos. It was a mystery foreshadowed by man and woman in first conjunction as Adam and Eve, proxies of creation's primary conundrum. It became the sacred wedding of a King and Queen, the Rex and Regina of alchemy.[63] (see Figure 9.) Of course, there followed a parallel theme of the great mystery's knower, the philosopher-priest-king who was the human mediator of conjunction. And playing an important role in the specific form of several motifs (particularly those within the occult fraternities) came variations on the story of Christian Rosencreutz, the book M, the sealed text awaiting translation, the hidden tomb, and the lost buried treasure.

Figure 7

Perhaps in imitation of the mysterious Rose Cross brothers, and certainly in rational response to political exigencies, reformative religious aspirations increasingly inclined during the subsequent century towards the formation of occult brotherhoods and societies. Incongruent as it seems, this expansion of occult interests appeared hand-in-hand with the so-called "Age of Enlightenment." A group of highly informed Englishmen influenced by, or perhaps sharing in, Rosicrucian aspirations and symbolic language probably engendered the first secret Masonic lodges during the mid-seventeenth century.[64] The earliest generally accepted documentation of a Masonic initiation is found in the dairy of Elias Ashmole in 1646. Ashmole (1617-92) was an influential scholar and collector of books, a founding member of the Royal Society, and a man with an unquestionably extensive knowledge of Rosicrucian materials. Among the documents preserved in his impressive library are the texts of the Rosicrucian manifestos carefully copied in his own hand; to these manuscripts Ashmole had appended a letter, also in his own hand but apparently addressed to no one, praising the Rosicrucian fraternity and petitioning admission.[65]

By the late seventeenth century, several occult Hermetic brotherhoods, including Masonic and Rosicrucian societies, existed in England. The relationship these fraternities had to the first Grand Masonic Lodge organized at London in 1717 remains unclear. Although noting that "Masonry underwent gradual changes throughout a period of years stretching from well before 1717 to well after that date," modern authorities on Masonic history usually mark the beginnings of "speculative Masonry" to the decade following organization of this first Grand Lodge.[66] Not long after this, around 1750, a specifically Rosicrucian order had been incorporated into French Masonry. Within the initiatory structure of the occult lodges, allegorical "mystery plays" were used to convey, through symbolic ritual, the grounding mythos of Masonry—a mythos which appears to have been fundamentally Hermetic-Kabbalistic.[67] Though several renditions of Masonic history still emphasize the role of earlier "craft guilds" as a source of Freemasonry, relatively little evidence supports this claim. Even if one grants the existence of some linkage of eighteenth-century Masonry with earlier craft guilds, this does not diminish the molding force Hermeticism, alchemy and Rosicrucianism had on the fraternity's symbolic and philosophic development. (See Figure 10.) Simply put: Eighteenth-century Masonry was forcefully shaped by esoteric Hermetic-Kabbalistic traditions. While emphasizing this, I allow that several Masonic Lodges eventually evolved with less esoteric underpinnings and much simple fraternal intentions.

Taking note of the increasing influence of Freemasonry in politics and society, German historians began attempting during the latter part of the eighteenth century to trace the historical roots of Masonry. Evidence compiled during this period suggested those roots led not to King Solomon or the craft guilds, but to Rosicrucianism. This view was in wide circulation by the early nineteenth century, and in 1824 the prominent English essayist Thomas De Quincey published a detailed restatement in London Magazine.[68] While A. E. Waite rejected this assertion in 1887,[69] Frances Yates recently restated a strong case for it. "The European phenomenon of Freemasonry," she concluded in 1972, "almost certainly was connected with the Rosicrucian movement."[70] Whatever judgment one favors, it remains clear that during the period of Joseph Smith's life Masonry was not uncommonly believed to be associated with a Rosicrucian legacy of alchemical, Kabbalistic, and Hermetic lore and its reformative religious aspirations.[71]

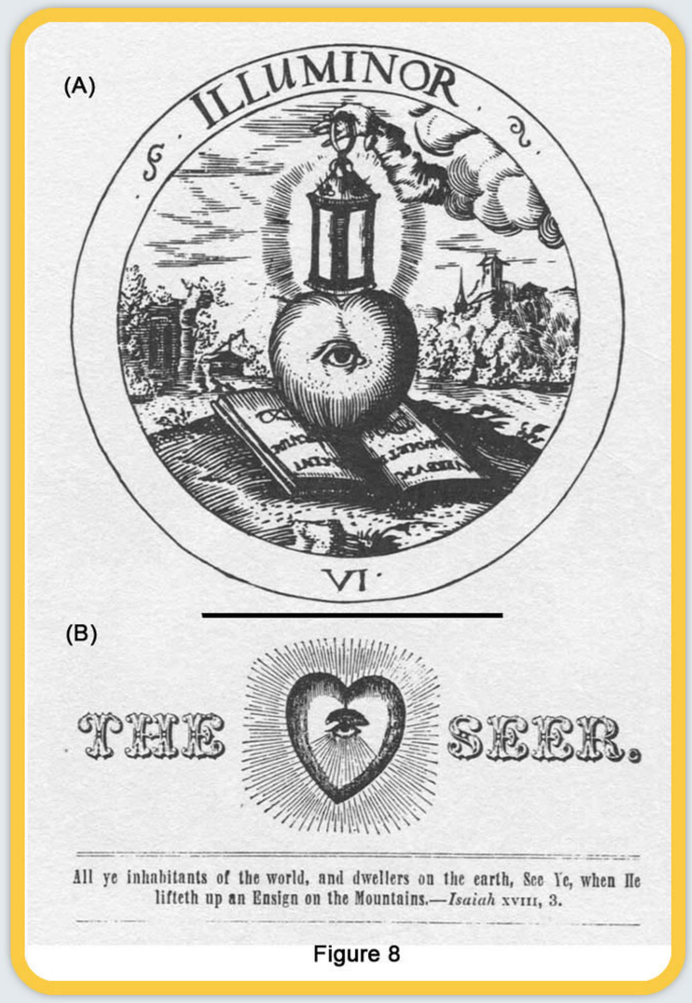


Figure 8

The eighteenth century was a fertile breeding ground for occult societies, almost all of which had groundings in a Hermetic-Kabbalistic framework and upon a bedrock of Masonry and Rosicrucianism. Students unfamiliar with their history too commonly assume a consistency and cohesion in these movements, or confound them with the charitable fraternities that are their distant modern cousins. On the contrary, a creative heterogeneity and religion-making mysticism was rampant among these groups.[72] Existing orders and lodges were not uncommonly transmuted by the force of strange individuals, new visions, and claims of ever more enlightened, ancient origins. Examples come easily: Adam Weishaupt who sought through his Masonic order of the Illuminati, founded in 1776, to transform German politics and society; the mysterious Comte de Saint-Germain (ca. 1710-85), a devotee of alchemy and occult arts, who widely influenced continental lodges of Masonry; Count Alessandro di Cagliostro (ca. 1743-95) who blended Egyptian and Kabbalistic symbolism into his Egyptian Masonic rite, an order which included men, women, and rumors of ritual sexual liaisons[73]; Martinez de Pasqually (ca. 1715-79) and his Order of Les Elus Cohen (the Elect Priests), claiming a Kabbalistic, Masonic restoration of the ancient priesthood of Judaism, a notion echoed in other esoteric manifestations of Masonry; and Louis Claude de St. Martin (1743-1803), disciple of de Pasqually, who long remained an influence upon French occultism. To these must be added the brilliant Swedish seer Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772), founder of a religious movement that touched esoteric Masonry.[74] Though several visionary figures stood in this rank of illuminates, eventually the broader manifestations of the movement attracted more than a few opportunistic charlatans. Separating the two is no easier for historians today than it was for their contemporaries.

In summary, common threads of a specific mythos weave through these movements and societies, even if they are not of one common cloth. In the occult inclinations of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries one finds a recurrent theme of restoration: restoration of a more perfect, ancient order; of forgotten priesthood; of secret mysteries and rituals; and of lost occult words and powers. Often there mingles in the visionary fabric a practical thread: Man is intrinsically and eternally imbued with uncreated divine intelligence, an elixir by which he may alchemically transmute the dark material world—including its social and political structures—and thus restore Zion upon the earth. It was an opus reflected in allegories, glyphs, and symbols, by a canon reopened and reinterpreted, and in ancient lost books again found: buried, hidden, golden treasures all awaiting men and women who would delve. For seers of this age the tasks at hand were personal, but by nature the inner opus was reflected outwardly: microcosmos and macrocosmos were inextricably linked. This broad world view engendered laborers in an ancient craft, builders of a new temple—a mystical structure ordered above and below by living links of light and vision—and in the Holy of Holies of this sanctum they sought a sacred wedding of transformative union, a mysterium coniunctionis. It was in sum a Hermetic-Kabbalistic mythos, deeply admixed with alchemy, reformed by Rosicrucianism, and conjoined with a Mason's compass and square. And at its esoteric core there shone a distant Gnostic spark.

Figure 9

HERMETICISM AND THE MAGIC WORLD VIEW

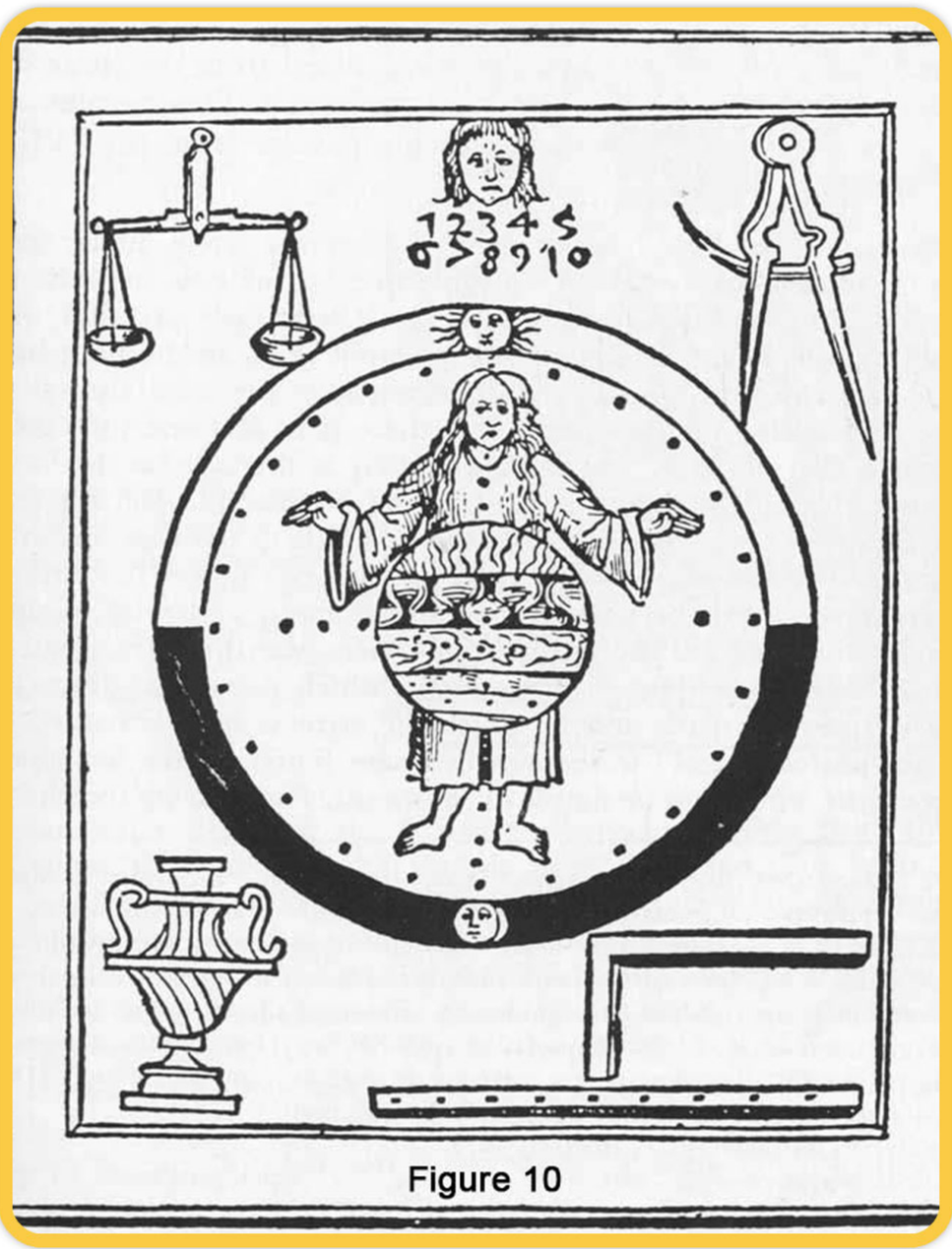


Figure 10

A decade ago Mormon historians were forced to confront the subject of Joseph Smith and the occult or magic world view, a confrontation caused in part by the "discovery" of the so-called "Salamander" letter. Replete with references to seer stones, treasures, and enchantments, the letter also related that Joseph Smith obtained the Book of Mormon not from an angel, but from a magical white salamander which transfigured itself into a spirit.[75] Though the letter was subsequently proved a forgery, for two years historian labored under the assumption that the letter and several companion forgeries were genuine. In the wake of these events the prophet Joseph Smith's spiritual roots came under a careful scrutiny. Ironically, investigators soon brought to the surface a wealth of unquestionably genuine material—much of it long available but either misunderstood or ignored—substantiating that Smith and his family had a variety of interactions with non-orthodox Western religious traditions generally termed "occult." Repercussions from this difficult period in Mormon studies are still playing out.

Cast into the realm of occult history, historians tried to make sense of this "occult" Joseph Smith and early Mormonism. The general interpretation eventually adopted by many investigators structured Joseph Smith's links to the occult within the sociological context of New England folk magic and its "magic world view." D. Michael Quinn's seminal study *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View* was initiated during this period. In his introduction, Quinn began by exorcising the forgeries and summoning the facts:

the historical issues these forgeries raised . . . require, I believe, a careful re-evaluation of evidence long in existence regarding early Mormonism and magic. . . . Sources [whose authenticity are beyond question] provide evidence of Joseph Smith's participation in treasure digging; the possession and use of instruments and emblems of folk magic by Smith, his family members, and other early LDS leaders; the continued use of such implements for religious purposes in the establishment and early years of Mormonism; and the sincere belief of many early Mormons in the magic world view.[76]

Subsequently, Quinn moved beyond these simple data. Indeed, "comprehensive" is hardly an adequate description of his survey. Magical rituals, Kabbalah, Hermes Trismegistos, Rosicrucians, Seer's stones, divining rods, Masonic lore, and astrology: Quinn binds them all, by evidence weak and strong, to Joseph. Less integrative than extensive, his study is a foundation work which—as any such work should—leaves far more questions unresolved than answered.

The subject broached by this effort demands further evaluation. A crucial correction, however, must be made to the methodology used in examining the data: the concept of a magic *Weltanschauung* or "world view" must be balanced with an intensive historical casting of early nineteenth-century occultism's lineages and mythos. Particularly important is a careful examination of Hermeticism and the nature of the religious vision it encouraged.

Faced with a vast subject, Quinn constructed an arena for its study by circumscribing the concept of a "magic world view" within the culture of early America, and then summoning the various facts that drew Joseph Smith and other early Mormons into that circle. The definition of "magic" came from *Webster's Third International Dictionary*, augmented and slightly expanded. Magic is (and not to quote the whole definition given by Quinn, I will abbreviate) the "use of means . . . that are believed to have supernatural power to cause a supernatural being to produce or prevent a particular result"; the control of natural forces "by the typically direct action of rites, objects, materials, or words considered supernaturally powerful." Later Quinn adds that magic tends to incorporates an animistic world view and a sense of a chain of causation behind event. Though it can be supplicative, its intent is often coercive.[77] One is ill-advised to argue here with Quinn's general approach or definition of magic and its world view; given the many constrains upon such a path-breaking investigation, both are well enough chosen. Nonetheless their static sociological and philological correctness partially obscures a more complex process at play.

Magic came in many forms, high and low. As discussed earlier, in Europe the medieval legacy of magic was transformed between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries by an influx of the highly refined Kabbalistic, Hermetic, and alchemical traditions. During that time magic became—at least for scholarly adherents like Pico della Mirandola, Giordano Bruno, and John Dee—something akin to religion.[78] In the Hermetic-Kabbalistic interpretation magic had more to do with obtaining experiential knowledge of God and the celestial hierarchies than with particularistic goals of control and coercion—the "digging for vulgar gold." Both Jewish and Christian practitioners of the "high magical arts" would have judged Webster's definition as applicable more to a reprehensible form of popular or folk magic than to their own pursuits.[79] By the seventeenth century this Hermetic magic had become thoroughly intertwined with a wider reformative religious vision and a coherent foundational mythos. This view asserted the human potential for divine communication, progression to ultimate knowledge and even union or identity with God.

Certainly popular magic with its less refined concerns continued to exist; and in terms of pure numbers of practitioners it most likely dominated in the common culture. But British historian Keith Thomas notes the important distinction that must be developed between popular magic and the separate intellectual or elitist trends. Speaking here of developments in the seventeenth and early eighteenth century, Thomas notes:

> It would thus be tempting to explain the practice of popular magic as the reflection of the [alchemical and Hermetic] intellectual interests of contemporary scientists and philosophers. But such a chain of reasoning would almost certainly be mistaken. By this period popular magic and intellectual magic were essentially two different activities, overlapping at certain points, but to a large extent carried on in virtual independence of each other.[80]

What Thomas calls "intellectual magic" was of course the seventeenth-century mix of Hermeticism, Kabbalah, and alchemy. The point I am making is that magic could be more and less than "magic": whatever terms one may use to define the noun, from the sixteenth century into the early nineteenth century it had at least two different historical manifestations, each with different aspirations and lineages. Popular or folk magic with its magic world view was undoubtedly common in early nineteenth-century America. But there had also entered into the matrix of American religion elements of this other "intellectual" Hermetic mythos. And its world view was much more complex.

By the dawn of the nineteenth century the Hermetic tradition had developed sub rosa several elements characteristic of an incipient heterodox religion, including clear restorational aspirations. From this fertile bed sprang numerous occult fraternities and societies: societies Kabbalistic, alchemical, magical, and Masonic. And though they generally used a Christian vocabulary, the intentions they fostered could appear antithetical to orthodox Christianity. Most particularly, it was a view of man and God intrinsically hostile to dour Puritan presumptions.[81] Classic Protestant thought accepted no theogony (genesis or genealogy of God), and in orthodox judgment new divine revelation was, as Meric Casaubon expressed, nothing "else but imposture or melancholy and depraved phantasie, arising from natural causes."[82] By contrast, in the Hermetic tradition there emerges a coherent and radically alternative vision which, as Joscelyn Godwin explained,

combines the practical examination of nature with a spiritual view of the universe as an intelligent hierarchy of beings; which draws its wisdom from all possible sources, and which sees the proper end of man as the direct knowledge of God. This kind of belief underlies the [Rosicrucian] manifestoes; it is presupposed in [Robert] Fludd's works and in those of the alchemists; it reappears in the more esoteric aspects of Freemasonry.[83]

By the late eighteenth century, elements usually associated with the formation of a new religion were present in this alternative tradition: an intricate and extensive mythic framework (derived from Kabbalistic, Hermetic, alchemical, and Rosicrucian materials); an extra-canonical corpus of "sacred" texts (drawn from archaic Hebrew and Hermetic sources); a new symbol system (conveying esoteric meanings); detailed initiatory and ritual formulas; a claim to lineages of ancient priesthood; an affirmation of renewed communication with the celestial realms; and a thoroughly articulated reformative, even millennial, aspiration for a new Adamic restoration. (See Figure 11.)

Figure 11

When I speak of the Hermetic (or Hermetic-Kabbalistic) tradition in the early nineteenth century, I mean this amalgamation of elements along with their underpinning Hermetic mythos. Though any backwoods rodsman divining for buried treasures in Vermont in 1820 may have known about the tradition, it would be erroneous to lump him into it or to see it necessarily reflected in him. Yet here the distinction must be drawn: in this same general time and place there undoubtedly existed individuals who were deeply cognizant of Hermeticism, its lore, rituals, and aspirations. And this group probably included an occasional associate of treasure diggers. Such individuals would have learned about the Hermetic tradition in varying degrees and from various lineages (including esoteric Masonic and Rosicrucian orders), but most certainly not as a transmission of popular magic and folk lore alone.

In summary, the treasure digger's "magic world view," the supernatural method to means, must be distinguished from the more complex Hermetic vision conveyed in the mix of Kabbalah, ceremonial magic, Paracelsian medicine, Rosicrucianism, alchemical symbolism, and several esoteric brands of Masonry. And what a young Joseph Smith could have learned from a rodsman, ensconced only in a magic world view, is less important to his religious development than the kinds of ideas a Hermetic initiate might have stimulated.

JOSEPH SMITH, HERMETICISM, AND KABBALAH

In the period before 1827 Joseph Smith probably had some passing interaction with individuals knowledgeable of Hermeticism and Kabbalah. But to reconstruct the history of that exposure demands consideration of contexts and hypotheses tied to a thin heritage of fact: it is a type of connection that appears likely but which cannot be documented with certainty. The situation changes a bit after 1840. During those last years of Joseph's life evidences linking him to the Hermetic-Kabbalistic tradition can, when placed in context, appear substantial. In the following discussion, I will sketch some of the evidences linking Joseph to the Hermetic tradition, both early in his prophetic career and later in Nauvoo. And though the shading of fact may seem too light or dark, or in proportions skewed, this is a way of drawing Joseph Smith within his own history that I believe must be confronted by Mormon historians.[84]

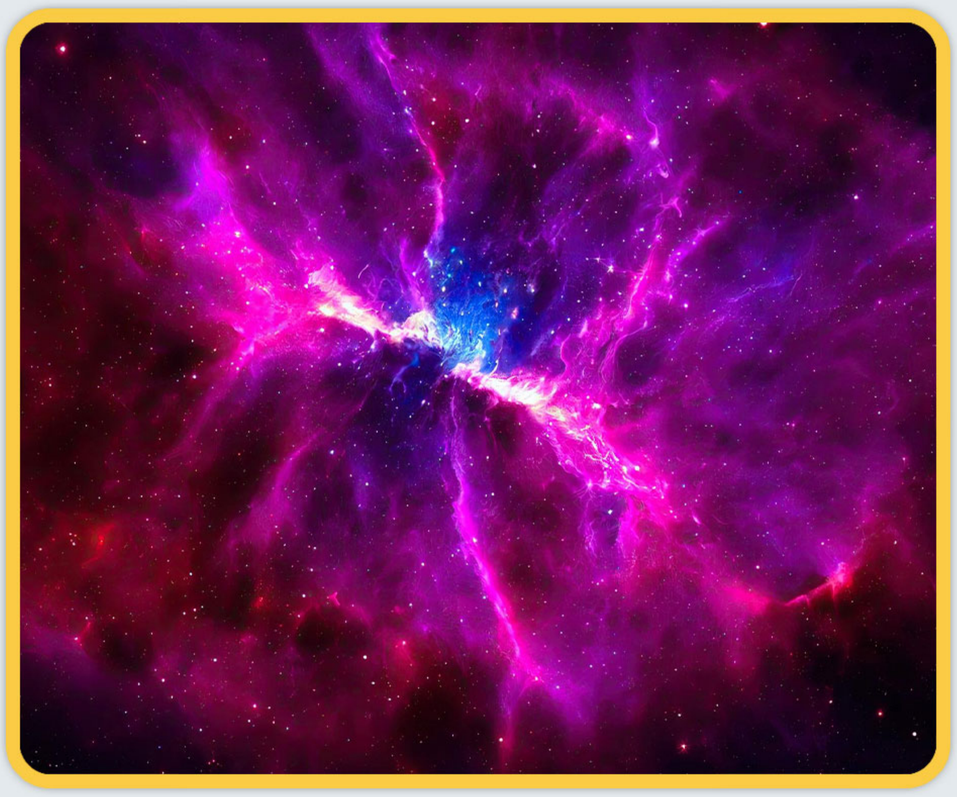
Of course a question arises that lingers as a subtext to the material that follows and must be addressed before proceeding: If Joseph Smith had significant interactions with the Hermetic-Kabbalistic mythos, did they impact his religion-making vision? While it seems to me that they probably would or did, I also acknowledge another possibility: Despite any apparent historical interactions, common patterns connecting Smith's vision to the Hermetic-Kabbalistic mythos may be entirely synchronous (or parallel) rather than causal. And if synchronous, they further could be classed as archetypal manifestations consistent with a recurrent type of "revelatory" experience (such as is witnessed elsewhere in the history of the tradition) or, instead, as pure happenstance.

If one is inclined to look for links, deeper levels of complexity soon intrude. The Hermetic-Kabbalistic tradition not only affirmed the existence of an archetypal structure accessible to independent, personal cognition or "revelation": it sought through combined modalities of ritual, symbol, and myth to aid an individual's encounter with this core reality, a reality mirrored in the celestial realm and in the seeker's own self. Accepting that some individuals obtained these experiences, the question of causal versus synchronous links becomes circular: One can argue that contact with various Hermetic ideas, symbols, ceremonies, and myths could (at least occasionally and in the properly predisposed individual) help invoke a numinous and uniquely individual experience. The experience, though personal and self-contained, might become the substratum for creative development of further intuition and insights inherently present in the inciting mythos. Thus a tradition breeds an experience which then replicates anew the tradition. This whole issue recalls the question plaguing historical studies of Gnosticism and its various manifestations: is the tradition conveyed through historically identifiable transmissions; are various historical manifestations of "Gnostic vision" instead creations of a reborn and independent "Gnosis" imbued with similar core insights (what depth psychology calls archetypal patterns); or are both modes of transmission, inner and outer, intrinsically coupled? To these questions I can give no answers; I offer only my intuition that they lurk behind any interpretation of evidences "linking" Joseph Smith to Hermeticism.

D. Michael Quinn extensively details evidences of Joseph's early contact with Hermeticism, though he emphasizes the folk magical aspect. He offers the Smith family's carefully preserved magical parchments and dagger, and the talisman Joseph carried on his person.[85] One recognizes the prominent use of Hebrew on both the parchments and talisman, although the reason for this has not been put in clear context by Mormon historians: the Hebrew came from Kabbalah.[86] As Quinn documents, knowledge necessary for the preparation of the Smith family magical implements could have been obtained from books of magic available in this time and region, and such materials might have been acquired specifically to aid magical activities associated with treasure seeking. Preparation for and proper performance of a magical ritual—including production of a ceremonial dagger or parchment—was, however, a lengthy and complicated venture demanding knowledge of an arcane vocabulary. The vast host of angels and spirits addressed in different magical rituals had specific names (again drawn from Kabbalah), elaborate magical signs, and varied functions within the natural and celestial hierarchies. From this complexity, magic lore made it clear that there were definite existential dangers in getting the details wrong. It thus seems likely that in addition to information gleaned from books, family members would have augmented their knowledge by associations with individuals experienced in ceremonial magic and the occult arts. In this company Joseph Smith might have first been exposed to a person versed in the deep breadth of Hermeticism.

One individual fits this description: the "occult mentor" identified by Quinn, Dr. Luman Walter(s). Reputed to be a physician and magician (the two were sometimes closely associated in that age), Walter is known to have been in Joseph's and his family's circle of acquaintances prior to 1827. He was also a distant cousin of Joseph's future wife, Emma Hale.[87] As Quinn notes, "Brigham Young described the unnamed New York magician as having travel extensively through Europe to obtain `profound learning,'" and others identified Walter as "a physician who studied Mesmerism in Europe before meeting Joseph Smith."[88] Walter family records and legend called him "clairvoyant."[89] If these statements are generally accurate, Walter had considerable knowledge of Hermetic traditions. During this period in Europe (and to a lesser degree in America) a physician with interests in Mesmer, magic, clairvoyance, and "profound learning" moved in a milieu nurtured by the legacies of Hermeticism. By definition, such a physician stood in a tradition dominated by the medical and esoteric writings of Paracelsus, steeped in alchemy, and associated closely with Rosicrucian philosophy.[90] As an individual also interested in hidden treasures, Walter might have taken particular note of Paracelsus' admonition on Kabbalah's import:

> All of you . . . who see land beyond the horizon, who read sealed, hidden missives and books, who seek for buried treasures in the earth and in walls, you who teach so much wisdom, such high arts—remember that you must take unto yourselves the teachings of the cabala if you want to accomplish all this. For the cabala builds on a true foundation. Pray and it will be given you, knock and you will be heard, the gate will be opened to you. . . . Everything you desire will flow and be granted you. You will see into the greatest depth of the earth . . . The art of the cabala is beholden to God, it is in alliance with Him, and it is founded on the words of Christ. But if you do not follow the true doctrine of the cabala, but slip into geomancy, you will be led by that spirit which tells you nothing but lies.[91]



If Walter did have contact with the young Smith, he might have shared some interesting ideas about the occult reformative tradition that had for three centuries been a force working on the creative edge of the Western religious imagination, concepts which might have had influenced a prophetic imagination. Here is the tentative early connection to a legacy of ancient priesthoods, lost books, sacred weddings, modern seers, co-eternal matter, golden treasures, angelic messengers, rebuilt temples, dawning dispensations, and God's glorious intelligence. Perhaps Walter might even have had something to say about the story of the sixteen-year-old Christian Rosencreutz who journeyed to the East and translated the Book M, only to be rejected by the learned of his age. This was a legacy of ideas about man and God unlike anything in the texts of revivalism and seekerism sweeping New York's "burned-over district"[92] and yet so much like the religion embraced by the prophet-to-be.

In addition to early influences from a possible occult mentor such as Walter, other eddies of the Hermetic mythos swirled near the young Joseph Smith. Quinn notes, "Pennsylvania was the focal point of ceremonial magic in early America," and "several sources indicate that Joseph Jr. engaged in folk magical activities during the summers of the 1820s away from Palmyra, often in Pennsylvania."[93] What Smith encountered in Pennsylvania may again be better termed Hermeticism than folk magic; there is even some possibility that he had direct contact with Rosicrucian ideas. German Pietists who had immigrated to Pennsylvania in the previous century were deeply influenced by Rosicrucianism and the Kabbalistically flavored mysticism of Jacob Boehme. (See Figure 7.) This is a repeat citation) The first American Rosicrucian group had been founded on Wissahickon Creek near Philadelphia just before 1700 by a learned band of theosophists and German Pietists headed by Johannes Kelpius. In 1720 the German mystic and Pietist Johann Conrad Beissel immigrated to Pennsylvania seeking to join that group. He subsequently associated himself with a few of the remaining Wissahickon mystics and later organized a Rosicrucian society, the Ephrata commune, near Lanchaster, Pennsylvania.[94] Alderfer notes in his study of the movement, "Ephrata itself, though an inheritor of many strains of mysticism, was a latter-day haven of essentially gnostic ideas and terminology."[95]

The community survived into the early nineteenth century. During its peak in the mid-eighteenth century it proselytized widely, sending disciples on "pilgrimages" through the surrounding countryside and even into New England.[96] Alchemy, Kabbalah, and perhaps Freemasonry all played roles in the mystical philosophy taught at Ephrata.[97] A few tentative evidences suggesting loose association of Smith with Rosicrucianism, and perhaps even some residual of the Ephrata commune, are introduced by Quinn.[98] But specific contacts aside, one must recognize that the sophisticated Rosicrucian, Kabbalistic, and alchemical ideas represented at Ephrata had been quilted into Pennsylvania's esoteric lore for over one hundred years prior to Joseph's summer visits in the 1820s. If Smith did have contact with individuals influenced by these traditions (of which there must have been more than a few), his knowledge of things Hermetic, Kabbalistic, and alchemical would have been augmented.

Joseph Smith's possible direct exposure to Kabbalah before 1840 deserves specific comment (I will later discuss in detail his studies in Nauvoo). The role of Kabbalah in magic was pervasive enough that even with a curtailed involvement in ceremonial magic, Smith would have heard of the subject. Paracelsus's admonition to treasure seekers (quoted above) represents the importance with which Kabbalistic knowledge was imbued by occultists; in fact, in the period's vocabulary "cabala" was often used as a synonym for "magic" and "occultism." Those Christian esotericists who knew of Kabbalah in the early nineteenth century would have known it principally through Christianized interpretations by then thoroughly amalgamated with Hermetic, alchemical and Rosicrucian notions. While an occasional American occultist might have had some knowledge of Kabbalah in its original Jewish form, study at this basic level required some knowledge of Hebrew, access to original Hebrew Kabbalistic texts or the Latin translations in the Kabbalah Denudata, and (at least in traditional view) an adept Kabbalist as guide.[99] Nonetheless, within the context of prevalent transmissions, it is possible Joseph encountered and took interest in some outline of Kabbalah. The most basic form available to him would have been simple representations of the "Tree of Sefiroth" found in Hermetic works published in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[100] (see Figure 2.) This depiction of the Sefiroth alone could conveyed a wealth of ideas about an emanational structure in the divine life—ideas which perfused Hermetic ideas and symbols, and which were like those developed in Mormon theology. The power of this archetypal pattern of the Sefiroth to stimulate a religious imagination is witnessed by occasional later Christian "Kabbalistic" works, some of which appear to be almost entirely free associations built from meditations on this structure of the Sefiroth and devoid of any relation to traditional Jewish or Christian Kabbalistic commentaries.

In this vein, a work recently published by Mormon author Joe Sampson is interesting.[101] Sampson evaluated Joseph Smith's writings, including the Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants, and noted a pattern of word and concept usage in several verses which reproduces both the common English names and the general hierarchical structure of the Kabbalistic Tree of Sefiroth.[102] While Sampson carries his argument beyond what a less intuitive student might discern, several of his examples deserve consideration. And though this Kabbalistic pattern in Smith's revelatory writings may be accidental, it also could suggest some earlier exposure at least to the concept of the Tree of Sefiroth. Sampson extends his thesis by suggesting that Smith's translation of the Book of Abraham from the Egyptian papyrus was a Kabbalistic work in the classic sense. Though Sampson's development of this argument is itself cryptically Kabbalistic, his theme again deserves scrutiny. Kabbalah was, as he notes, the tradition of prophetic interpretation. It encouraged a creative rereading of sacred texts in the quest for a return to the primary vision which was the single source of knowledge and scripture. In nature (if not in content) Smith's translation of the Book of Mormon, his retranslation of Genesis, and his interpretation of the Book of Abraham papyruses all can be seen as expressions of the primary interpretive vision Kabbalah mandated from prophetic consciousness. Whether this was a reflection of Joseph's contact with Kabbalah, or just of Joseph, remains an open question.[103] But beyond doubt, this interpretive activity fits within the evolved Hermetic-Kabbalistic vision of a true prophet's work.

JOSEPH SMITH AND KABBALAH: THE OCCULT CONNECTION

by Lance S. Owens

Part 3: Includes pages 166 - 194 (end)

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PROPHET AND FREEMASONRY

Whatever one concludes about the varied hints of scattered early associations with Hermeticism, Joseph Smith had well-documented connections with one of the tradition's major legacies, Masonry. The prophet's associations with the Masonic tradition are thoroughly documented and discussed by Michael W. Homer in this issue of Dialogue. It is unlikely that Smith would have so fully involved himself and his church with the Masonic tradition if he had not sensed therein some intrinsic compatibility with his own religion-making vision. As Homer demonstrates, the prophet said that Masonry was "taken from priesthood," and his followers continued quoting that observation for fifty years after.[104] It is possible that Joseph's interpretation of Masonry as a legacy of ancient priesthood was based in his own understanding of a history extending back hundreds of years, a history entwined with the Hermetic mythos and with Kabbalah, alchemy, and Rosicrucianism. The alliance of this occult legacy with Masonry was well understood by esoterically-inclined Masons; assertions of such links were bandied about by American anti-Masonic publications in the late 1820s.[105] As noted, Joseph's own history several times touched Hermetic-Kabbalistic traditions. One could argue that he even interacted with them in a creative, visionary sense.

Joseph's contacts with the Hermetic mythos were sufficient to generate vague assumptions about Masonry's earlier roots, and these assumptions could have been an historical subtext to his remarks about Masonry being a remnant of ancient priesthood. Interestingly, modern historical examination of the occult tradition suggests a shadow of truth in Joseph's statement: Kabbalah and Hermeticism, as representatives of a historical stream of occult knowledge (or as reservoirs of Gnosticism) did claim ancient lineages of "priesthood." Joseph had every reason to take those claims seriously, as do historians today, albeit within a narrower interpretive context. In this light, Joseph's connection to Masonry takes on several different shades of meaning.

The ubiquitous influence of Kabbalah upon the occult traditions of the nineteenth century has been stressed, but its specific import in Masonry requires repeated emphasis. Noted historian of occultism Arthur Edward Waite suggested in his 1923 encyclopedia of Freemasonry that much of the "great" and "incomprehensible" heart of Masonry came from Kabbalah, "the Secret Tradition of Israel."[106] He finds such important Masonic symbols as the Lost Word, the Temple of Solomon, the pillars Jachin and Boaz, the concept of the Master-Builder, and restoration of Zion, all derived from the lore of Kabbalah. The organizer of Scottish Rite Freemasonry in America, Albert Pike, manifested a similar sentiment and indexed over seventy entries to the subject of Kabbalah in his classic nineteenth-century study, Morals and Dogma of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry.[107] Though Pike's work was published in 1871, his views reflected lore already established in Masonry during the period of Joseph Smith's Masonic initiations three decades earlier. Indeed, one of the earliest documentary mentions of Masonry appearing in 1691 specifically linked it with these Jewish traditions.[108]

As Homer notes, the Scottish Rite developed by Pike was an evolution of the eighteenth-century French Masonic Rite de Perfection, which in several degrees was influenced by Kabbalah.[109] Kabbalah's importance in Masonic lore is also witnessed by Maritnez de Pasqually and his late-eighteenth century Kabbalistic-Masonic restoration of ancient priesthood in the Order of Les Elus Cohen. Much of this Kabbalistic influence upon Masonry may have come from Rosicrucianism (again recalling their close association), infused as it was with alchemical and Kabbalistic symbolism. But some additional influence might be attributed to esoteric sources like the Frankist movement. The Frankist—followers of Jacob Frank, and successors to the Kabbalistically inclined Sabbatean heresy—had become active in Central European Masonic organizations in the late eighteenth century.[110] Given the wide diffusion of a Christianized and Rosicrucian version of Kabbalah into Masonry, Joseph Smith probably heard something about the tradition during the course of his almost twenty-year association with Masons and Freemasonry.

It might be argued that these occult Masonic inclinations were all part of a sophisticated, esoteric form of European Masonry foreign to the world of frontier America. To the contrary—and though not yet fully investigated—there are several reasons to believe that what Joseph Smith encountered in Nauvoo was an esoteric interpretation of Masonry. As mentioned earlier, between the mid-eighteenth and the beginnings of the nineteenth century a multitude of occult orders rose from Masonry. Each of these tended to develop its own interrelated system of symbolic ceremonies for conveying distinct esoteric visions. The different rites also often claimed variant "authentic" Masonic origins: in ancient Egyptian mysteries; in the lineages of the medieval Knights Templar; in Kabbalistic transmissions; and in Hermetic-alchemical-Rosicrucian traditions. Robert Macoy's 1872 encyclopedia of Freemasonry cataloged over forty-five distinct systems of Masonic rites developed during the period from 1750 to 1820.[111] In retrospect one might suggest that during this unusual epoch a creatively elite group of individuals coming from many sectors of society encountered in the Masonic mythos a new medium for expressing their visions. Though basic York rite (or Blue Lodge) Masonry with its three degrees was a common grounding for most of these, around that foundation appeared many layerings of esoteric accretions. With the tools of allegory, symbol, and imagination, and in a format suggesting great mysterious antiquity, men touched by the Masonic mythos began producing new "ancient" rituals. One is reminded of Ireneaus' complaint about the Gnostics responding to the creative muse of their times: "every one of them generates something new, day by day, according to his ability; for no one is deemed mature, who does not develop . . . some mighty fiction."[112]

John C. Bennett, one of the more enigmatic figures in Mormon history, was the indisputable impetus to Masonry's introduction in Nauvoo. Bennett's mercurial career among the Mormons has fascinated and bewildered historians. Seemingly from out of the blue, Bennett appeared in Nauvoo and was baptized into the Mormon church in the summer of 1840. Within less than a year he became mayor of Nauvoo, chancellor of the University of Nauvoo, major general of the Nauvoo Legion, Assistant President of the Mormon church, and an intimate friend and counselor to Joseph Smith. In June 1841, less than three months after becoming Assistant President, he began attempts to organize a Mormon Masonic Lodge. But the Masonry he brought to Nauvoo had several unusual occult aspects. Less than a year later, he made an equally dramatic exit, excommunicated amid a flurry of allegations suggesting widespread sexual improprieties.

By the time he arrived in Nauvoo, the thirty-five-year-old Bennett had attended Athens state university; studied medicine with his uncle, the prominent frontier doctor and Ohio historian, Dr. Samuel Hildreth; helped to found educational institutions in West Virginia, Indiana, and Ohio; organized at Willoughby College the medical school and served as first dean and professor of gynecology and children's diseases; been a licensed preacher in Ohio; been appointed brigadier general of the Illinois Invincible Dragoons; and in 1840 become quartermaster general of Illinois state militia.[113] He had also apparently abandoned a wife and children, been ejected from at least one Masonic Lodge for unbecoming behavior, and been accused of selling medical degrees. Bennett's interests, including religion, medicine, the military, and Masonry, suggest a person inclined towards investigating the more esoteric aspects of Masonry. His apparent libidinous proclivity may also have aroused his curiosity about unorthodox sexual practices associated with more creative Masonic rites.

Given the relation between Bennett and Smith, Bennett probably had communicated some Masonic ideas to Smith before petitions were made for the formation of a Nauvoo Masonic Lodge in mid-1841. That the temple endowment ceremony developed by Smith in May 1842 was influenced by Masonry cannot escape notice. But beyond the temple endowment, several other components were developing in Joseph's vision during this period that sounded an even stranger resonance with ideas from esoteric Masonic quarters. Two stand out: organization of an "Order of Illuminati" or political Kingdom of God, and introduction of "Spiritual Wifery."[114]

Bennett claimed that in a revelation dated 7 April 1841—the day before he was made Assistant President of the church—Joseph Smith personally commissioned him to establish an "Order of the Illuminati" in Nauvoo.[115] Though the organization was not then specifically called by this name, a revelation received by Joseph on 7 April 1842 commanded formation of "The Kingdom of God and His Laws with the keys and powers thereof and judgment in the hands of his servants."[116] More commonly called the Council of Fifty, the organization finally took form in March 1844. Joseph was soon thereafter ordained King of the Kingdom, a ritual of coronation also performed for each of the next two presidents of the church, Brigham Young and John Taylor. Whether Bennett got the idea for an order of Illuminati from Smith, or Smith from Bennett, is open to argument. But Ebenezer Robinson, editor of the Nauvoo Times and Seasons until February 1842 and a contemporary observer, thought the stimulus arrived with Bennett: "Heretofore the church had strenuously opposed secret societies such as Freemasons . . . but after Dr. Bennett came into the Church a great change of sentiment seemed to take place."[117] Subsequent history links the idea with Bennett. After Smith's death, Bennett sought out the charismatic claimant to Smith's prophetic mantle, James Strang, and convinced him to establish an "Order of the Illuminati."[118]

The Council of Fifty in Nauvoo manifest a distinctly Masonic character, and Masonic ceremonial elements were incorporated in the council's meetings. A similar tenor emerged in Strang's Order of the Illuminati. It was only a few months after the claimed revelation commissioning him to organize the "Illuminati" at Nauvoo that Bennett initiated efforts to form the Masonic lodge. But Mormon historians have yet to specifically explored implications of another fact: both the name given by Bennett for the organization, "Order of the Illuminati," and the political concept embodied by the organization had a clear Masonic heritage.[119] The parallel is so close that one wonders whether Bennett might have brought this and other more esoteric Masonic concepts with him into Nauvoo. At about this same time the practice of "Spiritual wifery" or plural marriage was also introduced. Bennett made several exaggerated claims in his later exposés about libertine sexual practices, claiming the women of Nauvoo were inducted into three ritual orders based on the sexual favors expected of them. Such claims are not tenable, but nonetheless recent historians have noted the apparent association of the Relief Society with Masonry. And Bennett's more slanderous claims aside, it is a fact that the female leaders of the Relief Society in Nauvoo were at one time all wives of Joseph Smith. Whatever the actual relationship to the practices in Nauvoo, Masonic lodges had existed which did indulge in such practices, the most specific example being Cagliostro's Egyptian rite.[120] By all reports, Bennett would have intimate interest in this sort of Masonry—or this sort of Mormonism—and it would be hard to imagine him not encouraging Joseph's ideas about new forms of ritual marriage.

In this context, another question lingers: Is it possible Bennett's meteoric rise to prominence in Nauvoo was related to some unsuspected Masonic factor? Did he arrive in Nauvoo claiming independent esoteric lineages of Hermetic or Masonic priesthood, or some ancient and occult knowledge—declarations that Joseph, because of prior life experiences and associations, choose to honor? Though Bennett finally may have been nothing but a talented charlatan, it must be granted that a complex legacy of spiritual insight was embedded in Masonic rituals, myths, and symbols; they had a history and a lineage reaching back many centuries into Hermetic, Kabbalistic, and alchemical Gnosis. John C. Bennett may have brought something more than Blue Lodge Masonry to Nauvoo. And, regardless of his true intentions, what he brought may have been useful to a prophet.

In Nauvoo, in 1842 and after, I suggest Joseph Smith encountered a reservoir of myths, symbols, and ideas conveyed in the context of Masonry but with complex and more distant origins in the Western esoteric tradition. They apparently resonated with Smith's own visions, experiences modulating his spiritual life from the time of his earliest intuitions of a prophetic calling. He responded to this stimulus with a tremendous, creative outpouring—the type of creative response Gnostic myth and symbol were meant to evoke, and evidently had evoked across a millennium of history. But, leaving Masonry, there was still another, more primary transmission of this esoteric tradition that would touched Joseph's creative imagination during his last years in Nauvoo.

JOSEPH SMITH AND KABBALAH IN NAUVOO

By 1842 Joseph Smith most likely had touched the subject of Kabbalah in several ways and versions, even if such contacts remain beyond easy documentation. During Joseph's final years in Nauvoo, however, his connection with Kabbalah becomes more concrete. In the spring of 1841 there apparently arrived in Nauvoo an extraordinary library of Kabbalistic writings belonging to a European Jew and convert to Mormonism who evidently new Kabbalah and its principal written works. This man, Alexander Neibaur, would soon become the prophet's friend and companion.

Neibaur has received little detailed study by Mormon historians, and his knowledge of Kabbalah has earned only an occasional passing footnote in Mormon historical work.[121] Neibaur was born in Alsace-Lorraine in 1808, but during his later childhood the family apparently returned to their original home in eastern Prussia (now part of Poland). His father, Nathan Neibaur, was a physician and dentist, who family sources claim, was a personal physician to the Napoleon Bonapart and whose skill as a linguist made him of "great value" to Napoleon as an interpreter (claims perhaps inflated by posterity). Like his father, Alexander became fluent in several languages, including French, German, Hebrew, and later, English. He also read Latin and Greek. Family tradition claims that as the first child and eldest son, his father wished him to become a rabbi, and that the young Neibaur was begun in rabbincal training. However, at age seventeen he instead entered the University of Berlin to study dentistry, and completed his studies around 1828. Sometime shortly afterwards, he converted to Christianity and migrated to Preston, England. There he established a dental practice and married in 1833. In mid-summer 1837, Heber C. Kimball, Orson Hyde, and Joseph Fielding arrived in Preston. Neibaur had been troubled by several dreams about a mysterious book, and his first question for Joseph Smith's apostles was whether they had a "book" for him—which of course they did. He was baptized with his family the next spring. On 5 February 1841 they departed for Nauvoo, arriving in Quincy, Illinois, on 17 April. Four days later Neibaur met Joseph Smith, and on 26 April he notes in his journal, "went to work for J. Smith." Two day later he acquired a quarter-acre lot in Nauvoo, and on 1 June moved his family into their newly complete Nauvoo home on Water Street, a few blocks from Joseph Smith's residence.[122]

Where and how Neibaur first came in contact with Kabbalah remains a mystery, though a careful evaluation of his history and personal travels offers a few hints. Given his father's position, his childhood in western Poland, his studies in Berlin and his subsequent conversion to Christianity, some contact with a reservoir of Kabbalistic knowledge among Sabbatean or Frankist Jews should be considered.[123] If he did indeed undertake rabbical studies in Poland prior to his university education, he could not have avoided some exposure to the subject. That Neibaur brought a knowledge of Kabbalah to Nauvoo has been mentioned in several studies of the period. For instance, Newel and Avery note in their biography of Emma Smith, "Through Alexander Neibaur, Joseph Smith had access to ancient Jewish rites called cabalism at the same time he claimed to be translating the papyri from the Egyptian mummies [which became his Book of Abraham]."[124] That he not only knew something of Kabbalah, but apparently possessed a collection of original Jewish Kabbalistic works in Nauvoo, is however documented in material almost totally overlooked by Mormon historians.

In June 1843, Neibaur published in Times and Seasons a short piece entitled "The Jews." The work ran in two installments, in the issues of 1 June and 15 June. As to why he wrote this piece, he states only that his effort was inspired by a talk he had heard Joseph Smith present.[125] His essay deals ostensibly with the concept of resurrection held by the Jews. What he discusses for the most part is, however, the Kabbalist concept of *gilgul*, the transmigration and rebirth of souls.[126] The essay is interesting not because of his comments on resurrection, but because of his repeated citations of classic Jewish Kabbalistic texts. In the course of his four-page piece, Neibaur cites over two dozen texts and authors. Of the citations I have been able to identify, at least ten are to Kabbalistic authors or works.[127] The tone of the entire piece, and the authoritative use of Kabbalistic materials, suggests Neibaur's respect for Kabbalah.

Neibaur's notations to these Medieval and Renaissance Jewish works illustrates that he probably both possessed the texts and had a general knowledge of their contents. Although transliterations of Hebrew into English remain variable even in modern publications, Neibaur's renderings into English of the titles and authors cited are fairly consistent and accurate to the original Hebrew. The general precision of his numerous citations suggest Neibaur had access to the works he quoted.[128] Included among his citations are several "classic" Kabbalistic texts—the most important Jewish Kabbalistic manuscripts circulated between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries—works such as the *Zohar, Midrash Ha-Neelam, Menorat ha Ma'or, Emek ha-Melekh, and the 'Avodat ha-Kodesh,* as well as a few rarer documents. Much of the material he cites was available only in Hebrew, and to this date has not been translated and published. By any standard, these were unusual works to possess on the American frontier, and certainly an extraordinary collection of texts to be found in the prophet Joseph's Nauvoo.

Joseph Smith and Alexander Neibaur were frequent associates. Neibaur had been engaged by Joseph a few days after his arrival in Nauvoo in April 1841. During the last months of the prophet's life, both his and Neibaur's diaries indicate that Neibaur read with and tutored Smith in Hebrew and German.[129] Given this friendly relationship, the interests of the prophet, and the background of Neibaur—and perhaps even the books in Neibaur's library—it seems inconceivable that discussions of Kabbalah did not take place. Kabbalah was the mystical tradition of Judaism, the tradition which claimed to be custodian of the secrets God revealed to Adam. These secrets were occultly conveyed by the oral tradition of Kabbalah throughout the ages—so it was claimed—until finally finding written expression in the *Zohar* and the commentaries of the medieval Kabbalists, books Neibaur possessed. Kabbalah was the custodian of an occult re-reading of Genesis and the traditions of Enoch, it contained the secrets of Moses. And it was a subject that Joseph Smith had probably already crossed in different versions several times in his life. Can anyone familiar with the history and personality of Joseph Smith—the prophet who restored the secret knowledge and rituals conveyed to Adam, translated the works of Abraham, Enoch, and Moses, and retranslated Genesis—question that he would have been interested in the original version of this Jewish occult tradition? And here, in Neibaur, was a man who could share a version of that knowledge with him.

Whatever the reasons for the similarities, it should be remembered that the Hermetic-Kabbalistic world view parallels Joseph's vision of God in many particulars. Not only might Joseph have been interested in this material, but he would have noted how similar this sacred, secret tradition was with his own restoration of ancient truth. And perhaps Neibaur, on a religious quest—from Judaism and Kabbalah, Europe and England, to Christianity and Mormonism and a new home in Nauvoo—saw or even amplified that intrinsic sympathy in his explications of the tradition for Joseph.

Certainly the first text Joseph Smith would have confronted was the *Zohar*, the great heart of the Kabbalah. This is one of the works Neibaur cited repeatedly in his article and, as the central text of Kabbalah, is the key book any individual with Kabbalistic interests would have preserved in his library. Familiarity with the *Zohar* was a given for a Kabbalist, particularly one with knowledge of works as divergent as those cited by Neibaur, all of which expounded in some degree upon themes in the *Zohar*. If Neibaur had read to Joseph from any single text, or explained Kabbalistic concepts contained in a principal book, the *Zohar* would have been the book with which to start. This might explain why in 1844 Smith, in what may be his single greatest discourse and in the most important public statement of his theosophical vision, apparently quotes almost word for word from the first section of the *Zohar*.

KABBALAH IN MORMON DOCTRINE: THE KING FOLLETT DISCOURSE

On Sunday afternoon, 7 April 1844, Joseph Smith stood before a crowd estimated at 10,000 and delivered his greatest sermon, the King Follett Discourse.[130] Dissension, rumor, accusation, and conspiracy all abounded in Nauvoo on that pleasant spring day, and Joseph was at the center. This would be Joseph's last conference, ten weeks later he lay murdered at Carthage Jail. In this atmosphere of tension, many in the congregation probably expected a message of conciliation, a retrenchment. Instead, the prophet stunned listeners with his most audacious public discourse—a declaration replete with doctrinal innovations and strange concepts that many of the Saints had never before heard. As Fawn Brodie noted, "For the first time he proclaimed in a unified discourse the themes he had been inculcating in fragments and frequently in secret to his most favored saints: the glory of knowledge, the multiplicity of gods, the eternal progression of the human soul."[131]

Van Hale, in his analysis of the discourse's doctrinal impact, notes four declarations made by Joseph Smith which have had an extraordinary and lasting impact on Mormon doctrine: men can become gods; there exist many Gods; the gods exist one above another innumerably; and God was once as man now is.[132] Interestingly, these were all concepts that could, by various exegetical approaches, be found in the Hermetic-Kabbalistic tradition. But even more astoundingly, it appears Joseph actually turned to the *Zohar* for help in supporting his introduction of these radical doctrinal assertions.

The prophet begins his discussion of the plurality and hierarchy of the Gods with an odd exegesis of the first words of Genesis, *Bereshith bara Elohim*:

> I suppose I am not allowed to go into an investigation of anything that is not contained in the Bible. . . . I will go to the old Bible and turn commentator today. I will go to the very first Hebrew word—BERESHITH—in the Bible and make a comment on the first sentence of the history of creation: "In the beginning. . . ." I want to analyze the word BERESHITH. BE—in, by, through, and everything else; next, ROSH—the head; ITH. Where did it come from? When the inspired man wrote it, he did not put the first part—the BE—there; but a man—a Jew without any authority—-put it there. He thought it too bad to begin to talk about the head of any man. It read in the first: "The Head One of the Gods brought forth the Gods." This is the true meaning of the words. ROSHITH [BARA ELOHIM] signifies [the Head] to bring forth the Elohim. If you do not believe it you do not believe the learned man of God. No learned man can tell you any more than what I have told you. Thus, the Head God brought forth the Head Gods in the grand, head council.[133]

By any literate interpretation of Hebrew, this is an impossible reading. Joseph takes *Elohim*, the subject of the clause, and turns it into the object, the thing which received the action of creation. *Bereshith* ("in the beginning") is reinterpreted to become *Roshith*, the "head" or "Head Father of the Gods," who is the subject-actor creating *Elohim*.[134] And *Elohim* he interprets not as God, but as "the Gods." Louis C. Zucker, who published an insightful examination of Smith's study and use of Hebrew, notes that this translation deviates entirely from the interpretative convention Joseph had learned as a student of Hebrew in Kirtland. Joshua Seixas, the professor who had instructed Joseph and the School of the Prophets in early 1836, used in his classes a textbook he had written, *Hebrew grammar for the Use of Beginners*.[135] In the Seixas manual (p. 85), this Hebrew text of Genesis 1:1 is given along with a "correct" word-for-word translation: "In the beginning, he created, God, the heavens, and the earth." Seixas would not have introduced in his oral instruction a translation entirely alien to the conventions of his own textbook. Zucker comments on Smith's strange translation of the verse: "Joseph, with audacious independence, changes the meaning of the first word, and takes the third word `Eloheem' as literally plural. He ignores the rest of the verse, and the syntax he imposes on his artificial three-word statement is impossible."[136]

But Zucker (along with Mormon historians generally) ignored another exegesis of this verse—an exegesis which was a basic precept of Jewish Kabbalah from the thirteenth century on and which agrees, word for word, with Joseph's reading.[137] In the tradition of Kabbalah, *Bereshith bara Elohim* was most emphatically not an "artificial three-word statement," as Zucker implied. Gershom Scholem, in the middle of a long discussion, explains this other view:

> The Zohar, and indeed the majority of the older Kabbalists, questioned the meaning of the first verse of the Torah: Bereshith bara Elohim, "In the beginning created God"; what actually does this mean? The answer is fairly surprising. We are told that it means Bereshith—through the medium of the "beginning," [Hokhmah, or "Wisdom," the primordial image of the Father God in the Kabbalistic Sefiroth]—bara, created, that is to say, the hidden Nothing which constitutes the grammatical subject of the word bara, emanated or unfolded,—Elohim, that is to say, its emanation is Elohim. It [Elohim] is the object, and not the subject of the sentence.[138]
>
> Scholem's point is perhaps made clearer by restatement. In the Zohar, and in the commentaries of the majority of older (that is, thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Kabbalists), the verse Bereshith bara Elohim is grammatically turned around. Bereshith is understood to refer to the Sefirah of Hokhmah, translated as "Wisdom" and identified in Kabbalistic theosophy as the Supernal Father—the figure who is usually interpreted in Kabbalah as the First of the Godhead. Hokhmah then emanates, or "creates" in the sense of unfolding, the Elohim.[139] As Scholem notes, the interesting thing here is that Elohim has become the object of the sentence, and is no longer the subject. This is precisely Joseph Smith's reading.

This interpretation of Genesis 1:1 is not deeply hidden in the Zohar, but constitutes its opening paragraphs, and is the central concern of the entire first section of this long book. The Zohar begins with a commentary on Bereshith bara Elohim:

> It is written: And the intelligent shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness like the stars for ever and ever. There was indeed a "brightness" *[Zohar]*.[140] The Most Mysterious struck its void, and caused this point to shine. This "beginning" *[Reshith]* then extended, and made for itself a palace for its honour and glory. . . . Thus by means of this "beginning" *[Reshith]* the Mysterious Unknown made this palace. This palace is called Elohim, and this doctrine is contained in the words, "By means of a beginning *[Reshith, it,]* created Elohim."[141]

So far this is exactly Joseph Smith's reading. In his exegesis Joseph takes *Elohim*, the subject of the clause, and turns it into the object which received the action of creation from the first god-image (here called *Reshith*), just as does the *Zohar*. Indeed, his words as transcribed by William Clayton, "Rosheet signifies to bring forth the Eloheim," are almost identical with the *Zohar*'s phrasing of the interpretation.[142]

In his next step of translation, Smith interprets *Bereshith* to become *Rosh*, the "head" or head God. As Zucker objected, orthodox standards of translations do not yield the word *Rosh*, or "head," from *Bereshith*. But it was not "audacious independence" alone that led Smith to changed the meaning. A basis for this reading is actually found in the next verse of the *Zohar*: By a Kabbalistic cipher of letters—a technique used in Kabbalah to conceal deeper esoteric meanings—the *Zohar* explains that the word *Reshith* "is anagrammatically Rosh (head), the beginning which issues from Reshith."[143] (To understand the fuller intent of this phrase, one must again remember that *Rosh* or *reshith* is here interpreted by Kabbalah to be *Hokhmah*, the first god-image, the Supernal Father.) Thus in this text *Reshith* has been interposed as an anagram for *Rosh*—who is understood to be the "Head God," *Hokhmah*. Could this be what Joseph means when he says "a man, a Jew without authority" changed the reading of the word, perhaps by failing to understand this ancient Kabbalistic anagram?

Finally, Smith translates *Elohim* in the plural, as "the Gods." The word is indeed in a plural Hebrew form, but by the orthodox interpretative conventions Joseph was taught in his Kirtland Hebrew class (which remain the norm) it is read as singular. In the *Zohar*, however, it is interpreted in the plural. This is witnessed throughout the *Zohar* and appears clearly in the following paragraph from the opening sections of the work, where the phrase "Let us make man" (Gen. 1:26) is used as the basis for a discussion on the plurality of the gods:

> "Us" certainly refers to two, of which one said to the other above it, "let us make," nor did it do anything save with the permission and direction of the one above it, while the one above did nothing without consulting its colleague. But that which is called "the Cause above all causes," which has no superior or even equal, as it is written, "To whom shall ye liken me, that I should be equal?" (Is. 40:25), said, "See now that I, I am he, and Elohim is not with me," from whom he should take counsel. . . . Withal the colleagues explained the word Elohim in this verse as referring to other gods.[144]

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Within this passage is both the concept of plurality and of the hierarchy of Gods acting "with the permission and direction of the one above it, while the one above did nothing without consulting its colleague." This interpretation is of course echoed in the King Follett discourse and became a foundation for all subsequent Mormon theosophy.

Two months after giving the King Follett Discourse, Joseph returned to these first Hebrew words of Genesis and the subject of plural Gods. Thomas Bullock transcribed his remarks on the rainy Sunday morning of 16 June 1844. This was to be Joseph's last public proclamation on doctrine; eleven days later he lay dead. Joseph first introduced his subject—the plurality of Gods—then again read in Hebrew the opening words of Genesis and repeated his interpretation of *Bereshith bara Elohim*, using much the same phrasing recorded two months earlier in the King Follett Discourse. He then turned to Genesis 1:26, "Let us make man," the same passage interpreted in the *Zohar* to imply a plurality of Gods. After reading the verse aloud in Hebrew, he interpreted the text and found in it the same occult import given by the *Zohar*: The God "which has no superior or equal" (the *Zohar*'s words), the "Head one of the Gods" (Joseph's term) addressed the "other Gods," *Elohim* in the plural translation, saying "let us make man." Bullock transcribed his remarks thus: "if we pursue the Heb further it reads [here he apparently read in Hebrew Genesis 1:26] The Head one of the Gods said let us make man in our image. . . . in the very beginning there is a plurality of Gods—beyond power of refutation—it is a great subject I am dwelling on—the word Eloiheam ought to be in the plural all the way thro."[145]

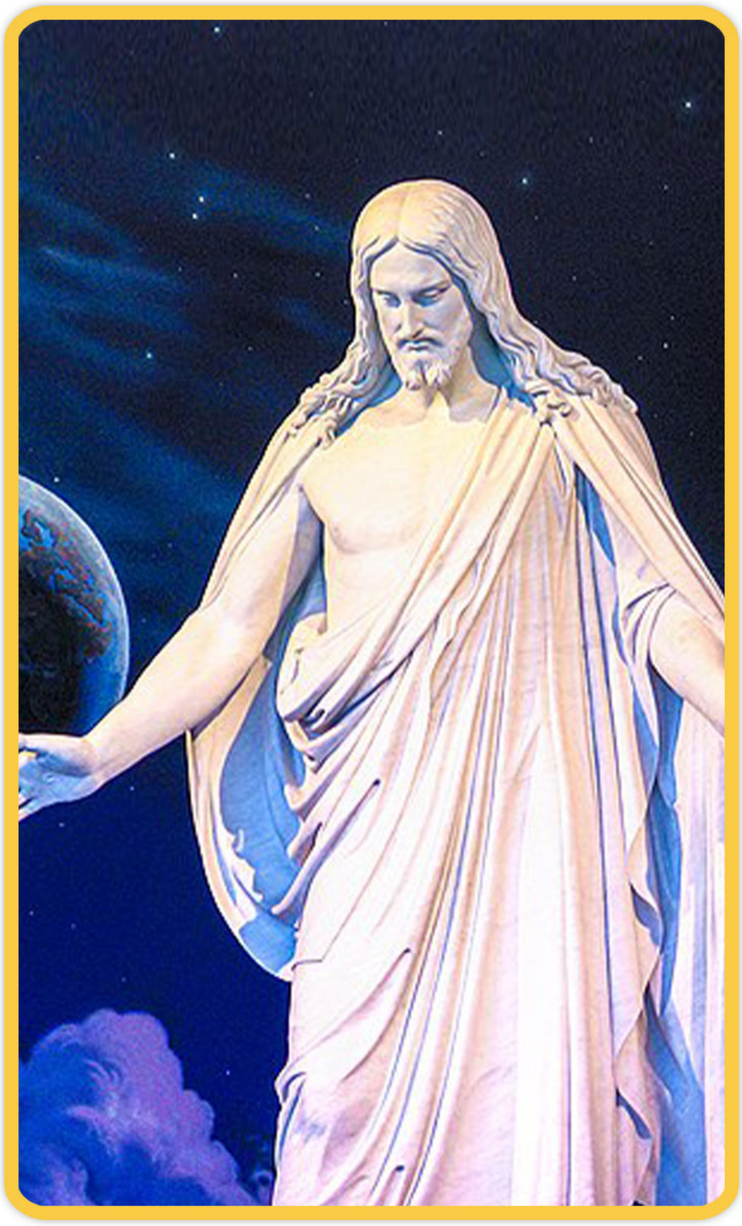
As he began his exegesis of the opening Hebrew phrase of Genesis in the King Follett Discourse, Joseph stated that he would go to the "old Bible." In Kabbalistic lore, the commentary of the *Zohar* represented the oldest biblical interpretation, the secret interpretation imparted by God to Adam and all worthy prophets after him. Joseph certainly was not using the knowledge of Hebrew imparted to him in Kirtland nine years earlier when he gave his exegesis of *Bereshith bara Elohim*, or plural interpretation of *Elohim*. Was then the "old Bible" he used the *Zohar*? And was the "learned man of God" he mentioned Simeon ben Yochai, the prophetic teacher attributed with these words in the *Zohar*?

Joseph wove Hebrew into several of his discourses during the final year of his life. In these late Nauvoo discourses, however, he interpreted the Hebrew not as a linguist but as a Kabbalist—a reflection of his own predilections and of the fortuitous aid of his tutor, Alexander Neibaur.[146] But in conclusion, we need to step back from this discussion of words and see that behind them resides a unique vision, a vision characteristic of the occult Hermetic-Kabbalistic tradition. Harold Bloom called the King Follett Discourse "one of the truly remarkable sermons ever preached in America." It is also a remarkable evidence of the prophet's visionary ties to the archaic legacy of Jewish Gnosticism and to the single most influential force in the evolution of Christian occultism: the Kabbalah.

KABBALAH AFTER JOSEPH: A LEGACY MISUNDERSTOOD

Kabbalistic theosophy was, if nothing else, complex. Different interpretations abounded among Christian Kabbalists removed from the original Kabbalistic foundations of Jewish culture and halakhic observance. We can imagine how easily such ideas might have been misunderstood by a concretely minded Yankee disciple of Joseph Smith. This may help explain a troubling conundrum of early Mormon theology: Brigham Young's assertion that "Adam is God." Brigham claimed that Joseph had taught him this doctrine—although there is no evidence that Joseph ever publicly avowed such a view.[147] In Kabbalah the theme is, however, prominent: *Adam Kadmon* is indeed "God," and His form is in the image of a Man—as noted earlier. Given the evidence that Joseph did know some elements of Kabbalah and had access both to the *Zohar* and to a Jew familiar with a wide range of Kabbalistic materials, it seems probable that Brigham heard this concept in some form from Joseph. The Adam-God doctrine may have been a misreading (or simplistic restatement) by Brigham Young of a Kabbalistic and Hermetic concept relayed to him by the prophet.

More than one element in early Mormon theology suggests that subtle visions could be made grossly concrete. Perhaps the most striking example is sacral nature of marital sexual union and the human potential for multiple sacred marriages, a potential shared in Joseph's time by both women and men. As Bloom noted, in Kabbalah and perhaps in Smith's practice "the function of sanctified human sexual intercourse essentially is theurgical."[148] This was an important undertone in the wider circles of Christian occultism, eventually manifest in several occult Masonic societies. How Joseph interacted with this tradition and vision is the single most interesting and important issue awaiting historians of Mormonism. That this was an issue early in his life is witnessed by the need to marry and have Emma with him prior to obtaining the golden plates of the Book of Mormon.[149] That the preoccupation persisted throughout his life needs little argument. Ideas of sacred sexuality permeated Kabbalah, Hermeticism, and alchemy, perhaps touching even the mystical vision of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart in his overtly Masonic opera, *The Magic Flute: "Mann und Weib, Weib und Man; Reichen an die Gottheit an!"* ("Man and Woman, Woman and Man, Together they approximate the Divine!").[150] By investigating in depth the legacy of ideas and experiences of Kabbalah and Christian occultism, we might begin to understand this perplexing vision shared by the prophet Joseph Smith.



That Kabbalistic ideas persisted among Joseph's disciples is suggested in an intriguing piece of evidence appearing three years after the prophet's martyrdom. To understand this item, a more detailed understanding of Kabbalah as Joseph may have heard it is necessary. Briefly summarized: the most important symbolic representation of the structure of "the Kingdom of God" in Kabbalah was the "Tree of the *Sefiroth*" (See Figure 1 and 2.). The Tree was re-drawn by Robert Fludd (an important English Kabbalist and Rosicrucian of the seventeenth century) in a slightly different fashion.[151] (See Figure 12.) In his figure, Fludd uses the allegorical image of a Tree with roots in heaven above and palm-like "branches" at the bottom (in the *Sefirah* of *Malkhuth*, meaning "Foundation"), extending into the earth. The tree is crowned; the crown representing *Kether* (meaning "Crown"), the first *Sefirah* and primal god-image. Below this crown, the tree branches into the other nine *Sefiroth*.

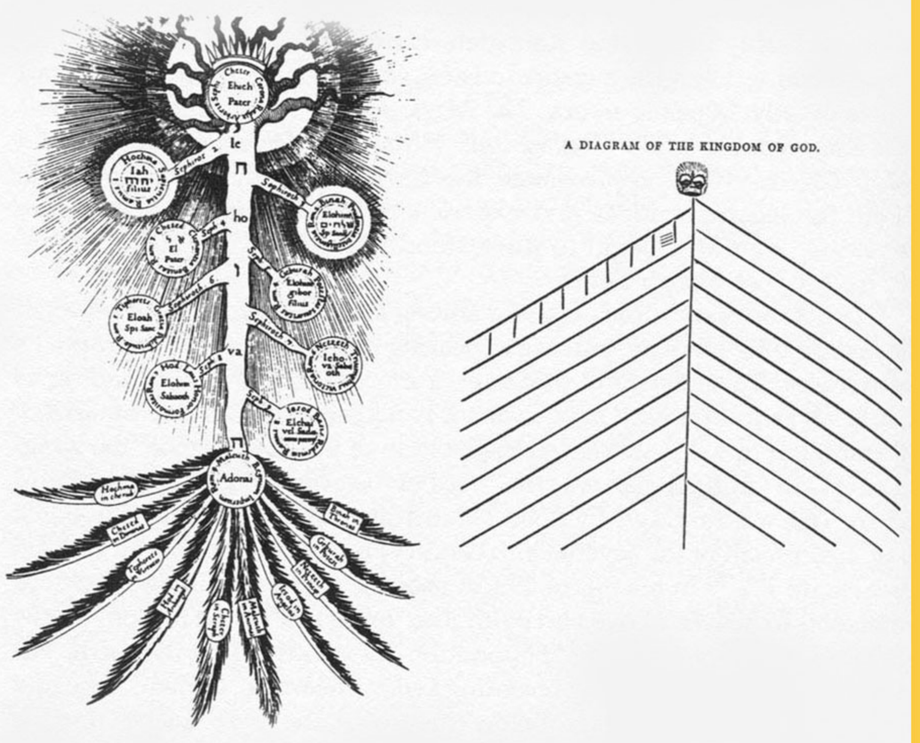


Figure 12

In the *Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star* in 1847 an interesting figure appears, titled "A Diagram of the Kingdom of God" (Figure 12).[152] The artist and author of this small piece was probably Orson Hyde. Hyde's tree is also crowned, and branches in precisely the fashion of Fludd's tree. The only difference is that the Hyde tree has twenty-two branches. This is a remarkable choice of numbers, as any student of Kabbalah will recognize. In Kabbalah there are two important numerical aspects of the Tree of *Sefiroth*: the first is the number ten, the number of *Sefiroth*, the second is the number twenty-two, the number of paths between the *Sefiroth*, one for each letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Thus Joseph Smith may have conveyed to one his apostles—or Hyde may have independently found compatible with the prophet's teachings—the most essential symbolic element of Kabbalah, the "mystical shape of the Godhead" contained in the image of the *Sefiroth* as redrawn by a principal and very influential seventeenth-century Christian Kabbalist, Fludd.

That interest in the subject of Kabbalah and Hermeticism persisted in at least one disciple of Smith's is witnessed by William Clayton. Clayton was Smith's personal secretary and one of his intimate associates during the prophet's last years in Nauvoo.[153] Few, if any, individuals had a closer view of Joseph Smith in the Nauvoo period. This may explain Clayton's otherwise unusual interest in Kabbalah and alchemy manifest in his later years. In 1864 someone in Utah loaned Clayton a guidebook of "Cabala," a tract apparently containing several advertisements for esoteric materials relating to "Cabala" and alchemy. As one of Clayton's biographers write, "Though the record is not clear, it may be that . . . he wanted . . . something akin to the so-called Philosopher's Stone of the ancient alchemists—a substance that supposedly enabled the adept, when applied correctly, to transmute metals." Clayton subsequently organized an alchemical society in Salt Lake City, with himself as corresponding secretary, and purchased several mail-order alchemical outfits. The group, which numbered at least twenty-six members, spent months attempting to transmute metals without success before finally abandoning their project.[154] Though it appears Clayton was simply duped by a mail-order shyster, his esoteric interests and his faith in them might also be explained by some recollection he harbored about Kabbalah and the prophet in Nauvoo.

A LEGACY OF OCCULT SOCIETIES: ROSICRUCIANS AND MASONS

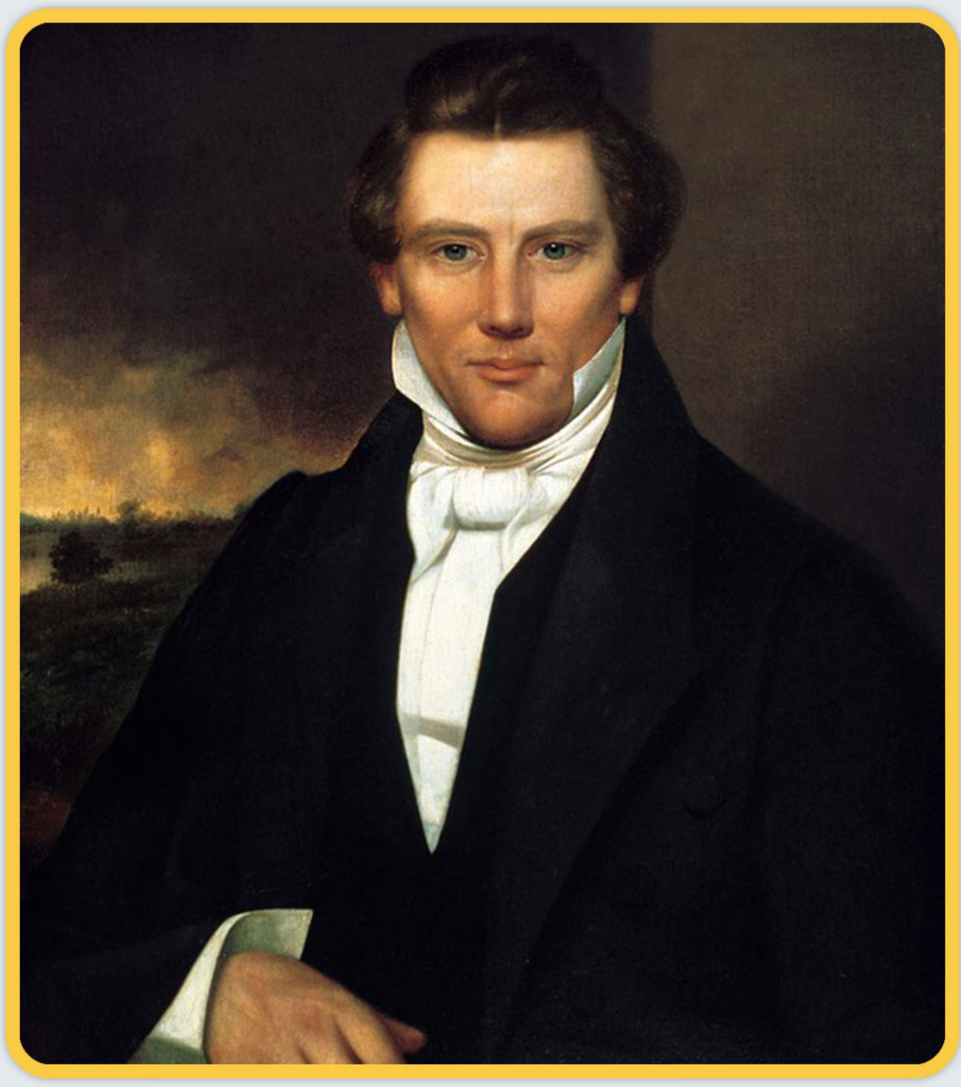
In attempting to understand Joseph Smith and his religious vision, historians have examined both the religious sparks kindled by his time and the social soils from which the young prophet sprang. As useful as some of these efforts have been, I still agree with Paul Edwards: our methods so far have been too "traditional and unimaginative" to comprehend Joseph's history; we remain, even now, blinded by the fears of yesterday—or biased by its erroneous judgments. Chief among the subjects that might be "feared" in Mormon history is Joseph's apparent recurrent association with the "occult" traditions of Western spirituality, and this remains the area of his history least examined and understood. It is impossible for me to present fresh evidence which seemingly links Joseph Smith to what might be interpreted as "the occult" without addressing this wider issue.

The historical record witnesses that Joseph Smith had some intercourse with at least three important manifestations of the alternative and non-orthodox religious traditions that blossomed in the Renaissance and post-Renaissance period, traditions sometimes labeled as "the occult": ceremonial magic, Masonry, and Kabbalah. These associations extended throughout his life, and his liaison with each constituted more than casual acquaintance. This is an area of history to which Mormon historians have been hesitant to turn full attention—an area where our fears (or ignorance) have delimited our understanding.

It would be foolish at this late date to maintain that any single tradition engendered Joseph Smith's religious vision. Joseph was an American original—and we need not fear him being cast as a Masonic pundit, folk magician, Rosicrucian mystic, medieval Kabbalist, or ancient Gnostic. Nonetheless, we must recognize that something in the nature of the prophet, some element of his own intrinsic vision, did resonate with the occult traditions of the Western spiritual quest. Into the spirit and matter of his religious legacy, he wove these sympathies. Joseph carried his silver talisman, inscribed with the sigil of Jupiter and Hebrew letters cast in a magic square, upon his person to his death. He called Masonry a remnant of true priesthood, and over a thousand of his men in Nauvoo, including nearly every then current or future priesthood leader of his nascent church, went through the three separate steps of ritual initiation leading to the degree of Master Mason. In his last months, amid dissension and danger, he found time to sit and read Hebrew and perhaps study Kabbalah and the *Zohar* with Alexander Neibaur. In April 1844, when his congregation expected retrenchment and reconciliation, he turned to that Hebrew, and bequeathed to his disciples an extraordinary vision of God—a theosophical pronouncement which echoed the tones of Kabbalah even to the ear of a critic so far removed in time and culture as Harold Bloom.

It is this last link—Joseph's sympathy for Kabbalah—which may be the key that finally unlocks a pattern, and opens a new methodology for understanding the prophet Joseph Smith. As Richard Bushman noted:

> The power of Enlightenment skepticism had far less influence on Joseph Smith. . . . Joseph told of the visits of angels, of direct inspiration, of a voice in the chamber of Father Whitmer, without embarrassment. He prized the Urim and Thummim and the seerstone, never repudiating them even when the major charge against him was that he used magic to find buried money. His world was not created by Enlightenment rationalism with its deathly aversion to superstition. The Prophet brought into modern America elements of a more ancient culture in which the sacred and the profane intermingled and the Saints enjoyed supernatural gifts and powers as the frequent blessing of an interested God.[155]



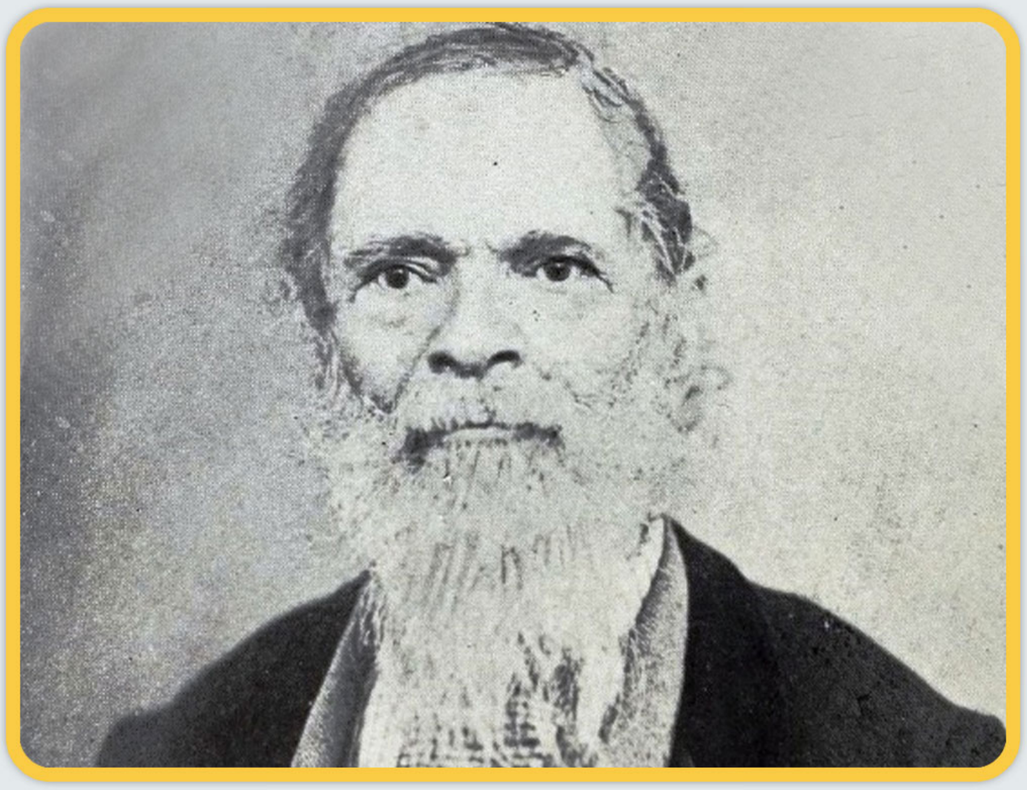
Joseph Smith did indeed bring into America elements of an ancient culture—but that culture was not temporally very distant from the prophet. When Joseph was introduced to Jewish Kabbalah in its classic form in Nauvoo, he found—consciously or unconsciously—the fiber of a thread woven throughout the fabric of his life. The magic he met as a youth, the prophetic reinterpretation of scripture and opening of the canon to divine revelation, the Masonic symbol system: all of these were reflections of an heterodox Hermetic religious tradition that had persisted in various occult fashions within the Western religious tradition for centuries, a tradition of which Kabbalah was a most important part. Call the tradition "occult" if you wish—certainly to survive it was at times hidden—but do not error by seeing it as simply a legacy of ideas from which the young prophet might pick and choose.

This tradition—as is now well accepted by scholars—was driven by the phenomenon of a rare human experience. As interwoven into Hermeticism, Kabbalah was a tradition not just of theosophic assertions, but of return to prophetic vision. For a millennium or more—perhaps dating all the way back to the suppressed heresy of the Gnostics—men and women within this larger tradition asserted the reality of their vision—and sometimes even used what now seems modern psychological insight in dealing with their experiences.[156] Individuals caught in this experience not uncommonly saw themselves as prophets, though the force of the tradition sought to maintain a balance in the face of such realizations. Many of them thought themselves kings and queens before God, and some openly proclaimed their royalty.[157] They probed the mystery of Adam and Eve, and primal creation, they embraced rituals and symbols as non-verbal expressions of ineffable insights. Their sexuality was sacralized, and not infrequently their sacred sexual practices ranged beyond the bounds of expression accepted by the societies of their times. Their most sacred mystery, the great mysterium coniunctionis, was sometimes ecstatically mirrored in the holy union of a man and a women. They authored pseudoepigraphic works, invoking ancient voices as their own. They told new stories about God because for them God was a living story: and they found their own lives mingled within a story being told by a living God. When Joseph sought a mirror to understand himself he found reflections in a history not so distant as that of ancient Israel. His story, the prophet's story, lived within the occult legacy of his time. He touched that legacy often, and he saw in it the image—even if dimmed and distorted—of a priesthood he shared.

Joseph Smith's life reflected the nature of an unusual human experience, and to understand his history we must understand his experience in the context of history. The Swiss psychologist Carl Jung dedicated the last half of his long life to elucidating the nature and psychological insights of the Kabbalistic-Hermetic-alchemical tradition. He felt it held the pearl of great price, the treasure forgotten by Christianity in its enlightened Protestant evolution. It was at the Eranos conferences dominated by Jung, that Gershom Scholem, the preeminent pioneer of Kabbalistic studies, opened the eyes of Western scholarship to the tradition's import in our history.[158] Moshe Idel, Scholem's brilliant and independent protégé, has subsequently reaffirmed the value of a psychological perception in understanding its phenomena.[159] With insights augmented by Scholem's work, the historian Francis Yates pioneered a new understanding of the vast influence of the occult tradition in Renaissance and Reformation culture.[160] And recently Harold Bloom has pointed to its import in the creative vision of more modern times.[161] Perhaps the thrust of this scholarship is now reaching the cloisters of Mormon history. But should that indeed be the case, Mormon historians must understand that they are embarking into a different methodology of history. A prophet's history flows from two springs, one above and one below, both melding in currents of his life. What story from above the prophet may have heard will remain his secret, the history no man knows. But by turning to the larger realm of prophetic history and its occult legacy, the record of its aspirations, its symbols and lore, and the enigmatic histories of the women and men who have been caught in this unique human experience, we may begin to find a methodology that leads us with new wonder into the unknown history of Joseph Smith.

A LEGACY OF OCCULT SOCIETIES: ROSICRUCIANS AND MASONS

Below is a summary of citations given by Alexander Neibaur in his article "The Jews," *Times and Seasons* 4 (1 June 1843): 220-22, and 4 (15 June 1843): 233-34. They are listed in order of first occurrence in his text. When an author or text is cited more than once, only the first is listed. These citations include several of the "classic" Kabbalistic texts circulated between the fourteenth and eighteenth centuries—works such as the *Zohar, Menorat ha Ma'or, Emek ha-Melekh*, and the *'Avodat ha-Kodesh*—as well as a few rarer documents. I have noted several citations to these important texts in recent of Kabbalah by Moshe Idel and Gershom Scholem.



"Rabbi Manasse Ben Israel says in Nishmath Cajim": R. Manasseh Ben Israel, *Nishmat Hayyim*, a work published in Amsterdam in 1652 in defense of the Kabbalistic concept of *gilgul*, the transmigration of souls. (Neibaur specifically mentions the term "Gilgool".) (Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 349.)

"R. Issac Aberhaph in his Menorat Hamorr": Israel al-Nakawa is the true author of this important fourteenth-century work, *Menorat ha Ma'or*. I have not yet identified the author cited by Neibaur, "R. Aberhaph," which is apparently in error. (Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 66.)

"R. Baccay" (later cited as "R. Bacay" and "Rabbi Bachay"): Possibly R. Samson Bacchi of Casale Monferrato. A seventeenth-century Italian Jew and Kabbalist, and a disciple of the leading Kabbalist in Italy, R. Moses Zacuto. R. Bacchi had intimate knowledge of the Sabbatean movement and several associations with followers of Sabbatai Sevi. (Scholem, Sabbatai *Sevi*, 501-3) He had studied Lurianic Kabbalah with one of Luria's disciples, Joseph ibn Tabul. (Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 424.) Another possibility is the twelfth-century philosopher Bachya Ben Joseph ibn Pakuda.

"R. Isaac Abarbanel": R. Isaac Abrabanel (or Abravanel) was a prominent commentator on Kabbalistic eschatology and messianism active in late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Idel notes Abarvanel as one of the commentators who tended to add a Platonic interpretation to Kabbalistic ideas. (Idel, *Kabbalah*, 3, 144, 281; Scholem, Kabbalah, 71; Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, 14.)

"R. D. Kimchi": R. David Kimchi, a thirteenth-century grammarian and biblical commentator.

"Rabbi Naphtali in Emakhamelek": *Emek ha-Melekh* by Naphtali Bacharach, published in 1648 and considered "one of the most important kabbalistic works." A German kabbalist active in the first half of the seventeenth century, "Bacharach appears as an enthusiastic and fanatical kabbalist, with a special flair for the mystical and non-philosophical traits of Kabbalah. . . . The book *Emek ha-Melekh* had a great impact on the development of the late Kabbalah. It was widely recognized as an authoritative source on the doctrine of Isaac Luria, and kabbalists from many countries . . . quoted him extensively. His influence is also noticeable in Sabbatean literature" (Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 394-95).

"Jalkut Kodosh" (later cited "Jalkut Kadash" and "Talkut Kadash"): *Yalqut Khadash*, a seventeenth-century anthology of Kabbalistic material. This anthology contained a most interesting text on the mystical and salvific intention of sexual union between male and female (Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, 61-62).

"Medrash Neelam": *Midrash* Ha-Neelam is a principal section of the *Zohar*, the central Kabbalistic collection of esoteric teachings. Scholem argues that it may be temporally one of the oldest constituent sections of the *Zohar* (Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 181-88).

"R. Joseph Albo": Spanish philosopher and Kabbalist (ca. 1380-ca. 1435) whose principal work, *Sepher ha-Ikkarim*, achieved considerable popularity with both scholars and laymen. (Idel, *Kabbalah*, 144.)

"Aphkat Rackel" (later also cited as "Ophkat Rochel"): *Abkat Rokhel*, a Kabbalistic book in circulation in the seventeenth century (Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, 661n.)

"R. Jacanan": R. Yohanan ben Zakkai is a Talmudic figure, and this reference is most likely to him.

"Talmuh Tract Sanhedrin": Talmudic text. (Idel, *Kabbalah*, 403.)

"Bereshith Rabba": The *Bereshith rabbati* by R. Moses ben Isaac ha-Darshan of Narbonne, France (eleventh century). (Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead*, 156). R. Moses was a primary source of early gematriot, the cipher of letters to find hidden meanings in scripture. (Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 338.)

"R. Levi ber Gerohonon": Levi ben Gershon (also Gershom or Gersonides) lived in the South of France (1288-1344), and is often considered the greatest Jewish philosopher after Maimonides. Working in an intellectual atmosphere charged with Kabbalistic and Aristotelian influences, he authored philosophic and scientific works which had a wide influence.

"R. Jonathan": Not yet identified.

"Talmud Tract Resokim": Talmudic text.

"R. Elias": Not yet identified.

"Rabbi Akiba": R. Akiba (or, R. 'Akiva), a second-century Jewish hero and early midrashic commentator, revered in later commentary to have been a source of both halakhic and esoteric knowledge. (Scholem, *Sabbatai* Sevi, 78-79).

"Avodath Hakodash" (also cited as "Abodah Hakadash"): '*Avodat ha-Kodesh*, by R. Meir ibn Gabbay. Written in 1531 in "Palestine or Egypt by the leading kabbalist of the generation before Luria" (Scholem, *Sevi*, 47), this is a "classic exposition of theosophical kabbalah" (Idel, *Kabbalah*, 399), and "made an especially impressive summary of the teachings of the earlier Kabbalists" (Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead*, 81). It was published in Venice in 1566 (Scholem, *Sevi*, 47). Ibn Gabbay in this and other works developed the theurgic concept of man as divine in form, influencing the divine. (Idel, *Kabbalah*, 176).

"Talmud Tract Ketuboth": Talmudic text

"Sohar": The primary text of Kabbalah, the *Zohar*. The first printed edition of the *Zohar* appeared almost simultaneously in two different place, Mantua and Cremona, in 1588-90. Several later editions appeared, but the Mantua edition had the widest influence, and most subsequent editions were based on its text. Portions of the *Zohar* appeared in Knorr von Rosenroth's Latin *Kabbalah Denudata*, first published at Sulzbach in 1677.

"Rabbi Simeon, son of Jacay": R. Simeon b. Yochai, the central figure in the text of the principal Kabbalistic text, the *Zohar*.

"Pesikta Raba": This is the *Pesiqta Rabbathi*, one of the late midrashim, notable for the impressive eschatological sections and messianic exegesis. This particular midrash was important to Sabbateans, who used sections of it to explain the messianic burden born by Sabbatai Sevi. (Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, 54, 146, 175.)

"Rabbi Jehuda": Not yet identified.

"Rabbi Joshua ben Menaser": Not yet identified.

"The Book Siphri": *Sifrei*, a midrashic-talmudic text. (M. Idel, *Kabbalah*, 403.)

"Book Rad Hakemah": Possibly *Kad ha-Kemah* by Bachya Ibn Pakuda, a thirteenth-century philospher whose work had a strong spiritual affinity with the Arab mystics, and influenced subsequent Jewish mysticism.

JOSEPH SMITH AND KABBALAH: THE OCCULT CONNECTION

by Lance S. Owens

Notes and Captions

CAPTIONS TO THE ILLUSTRATIONS

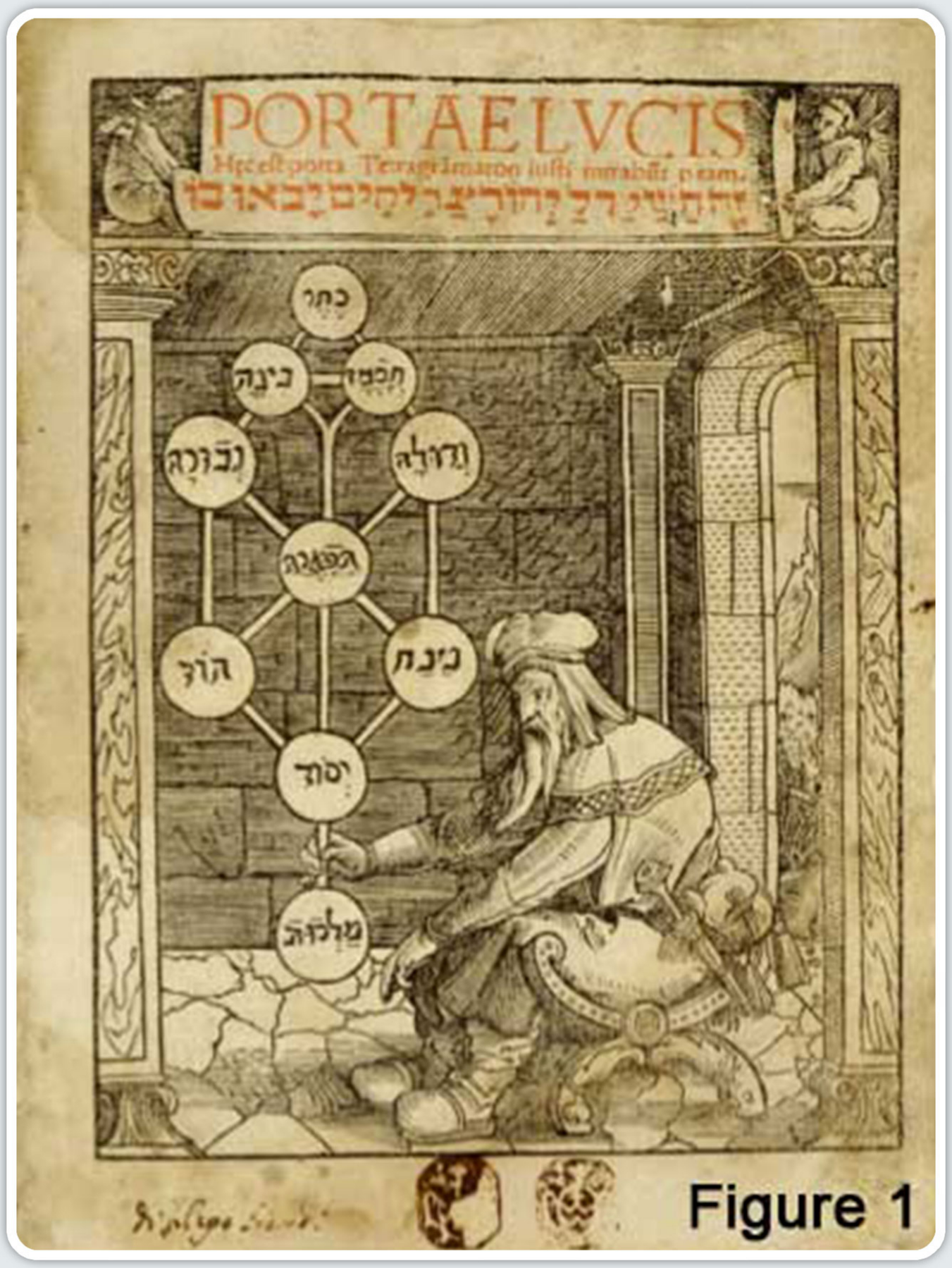


Figure 1

A Kabbalist contemplates the "tree" of the ten *Sefiroth*, the Kabbalistic Tree of Life. One of the first printed illustrations of the *Sefiroth* in this form, it appeared on the title page from a Latin translation of a Kabbalistic work by J. Gikatilla. Paulus Ricius, *Portae Lucis* (Augsburg, 1516.)

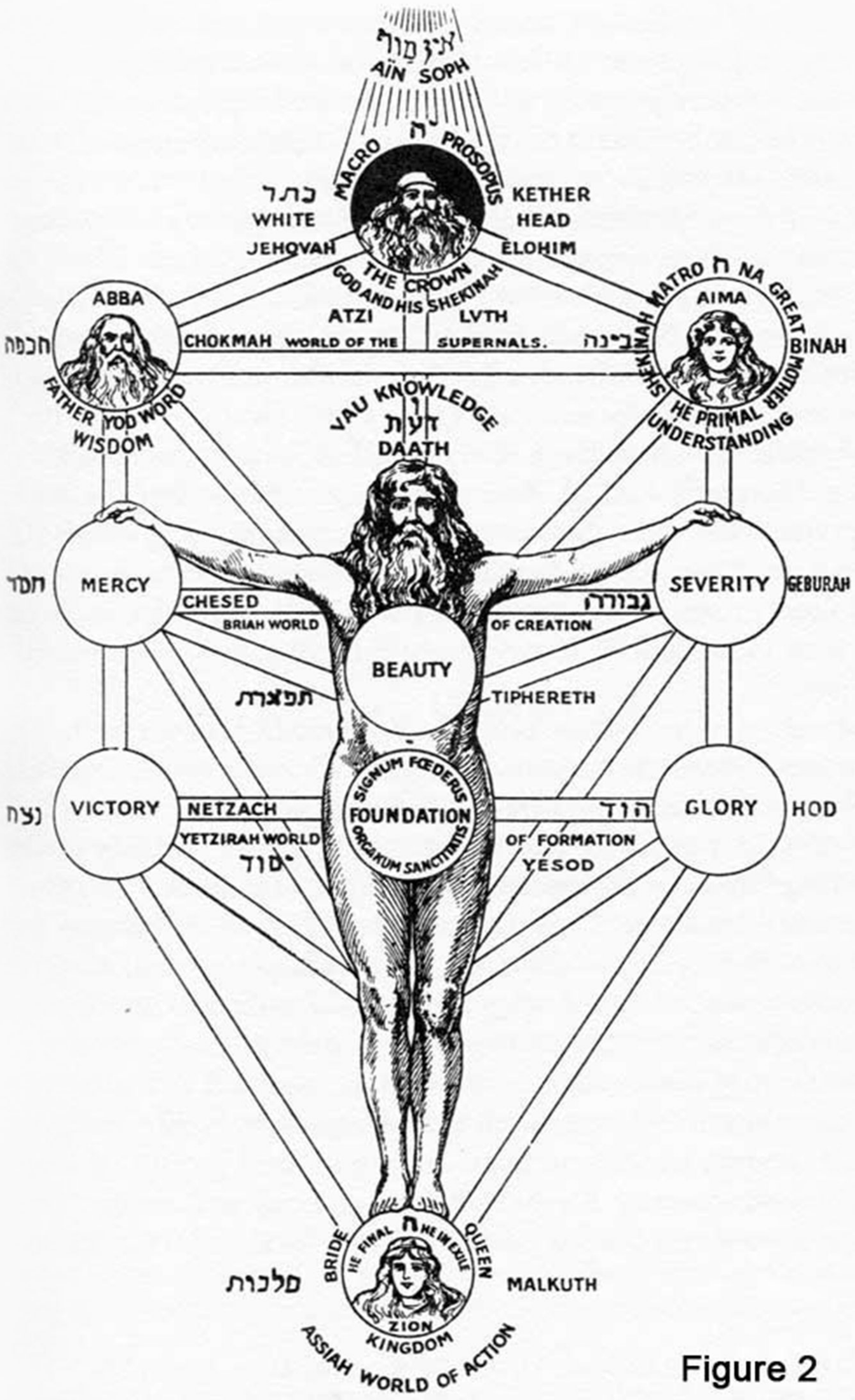


Figure 2

Figure 2

The sacred "Tree of *Sefiroth*", superimposed upon the *Adam Kadmon* (as drawn by the early twentieth century student of occultism, A. E. Waite in *The Holy Kabbalah*.) At the top of the tree is *Kether*, "the Crown", the first form of God. Below are *Hokhmah* and *Binah*, the supernal Masculine and Feminine image of the the Divine. From these pfotencies emanated the other *Sefirah*, the vessels of Divine manifestation.

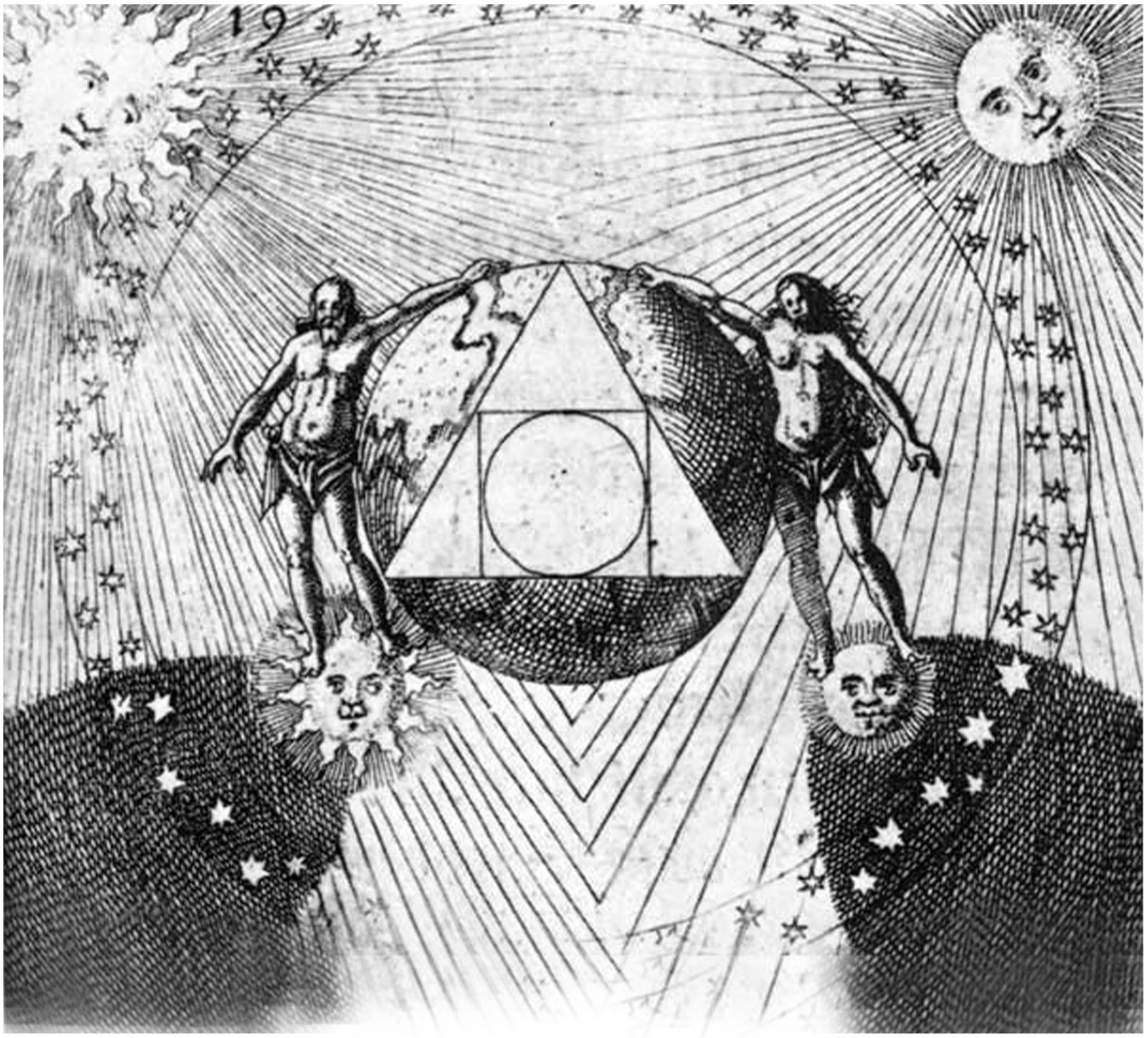


Figure 3

Figure 3

The world within the *complexio oppositorum*, a creative embrace of masculine and feminine natures, here accompanied by their symbolic counterparts, the Sun and Moon. These symbols combined upon facade of the Nauvoo temple embodied in sacred architecture a vision of Divinity unique to Hermetism, Rosicrucianism and alchemy. From a seventeenth century alchemical work. Herbrandt Jamsthaler, *Viatorium spagyricum* (Frankfurt, 1625)

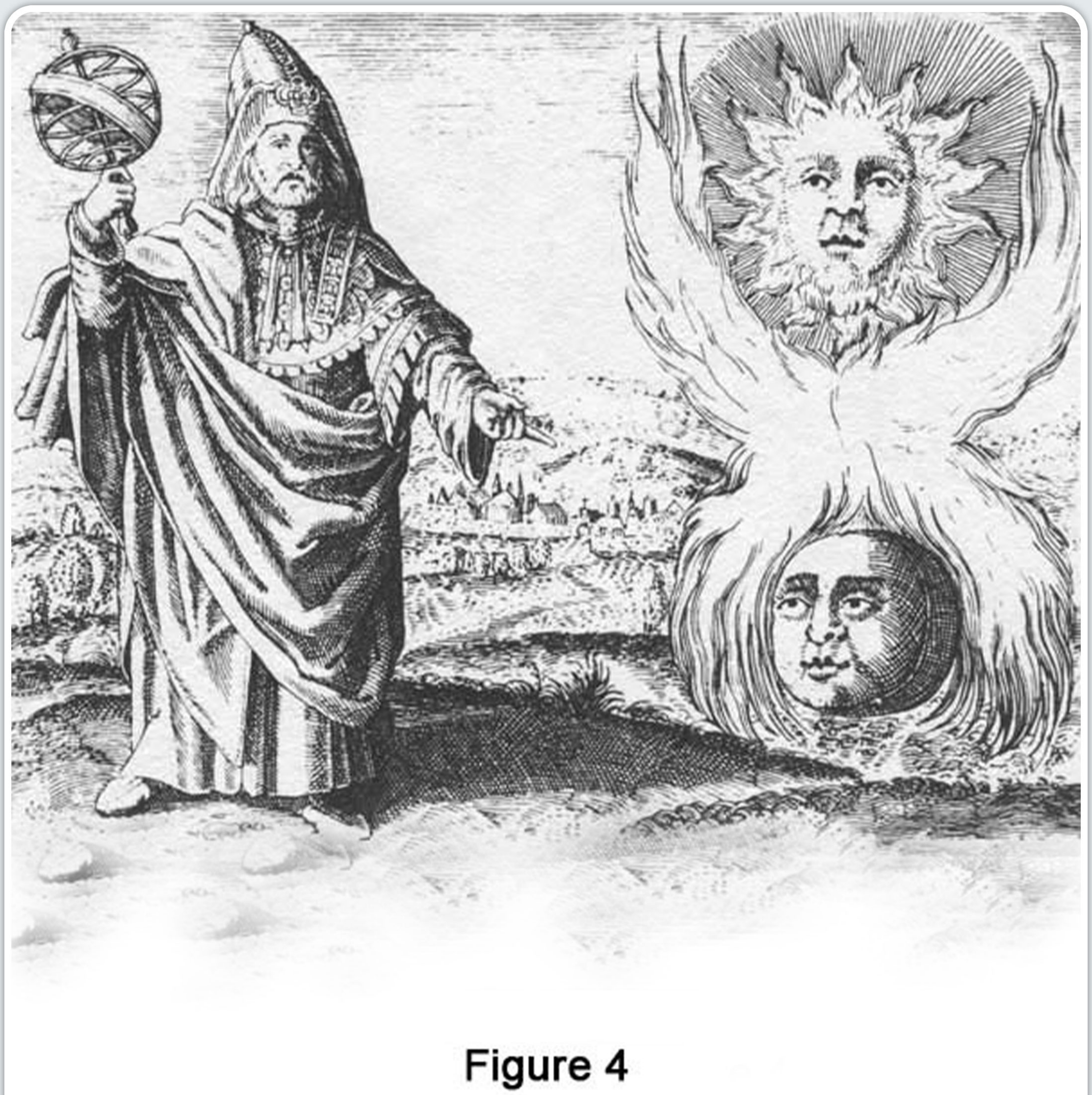


Figure 4

Figure 4

Hermes Trismegistus (identified by his traditional priestly robes and head-dressing) indicates the twin principles, allegorically represented by Sun and Moon, conjoined in the divine fire of the *complexio oppositorum*. In his right hand he holds an armillary, indicative of the celestial agencies indispensable to this mysterious, transformative and creative union. Michael Maier, *Symbola aureae mensae* (Frankfurt, 1617).

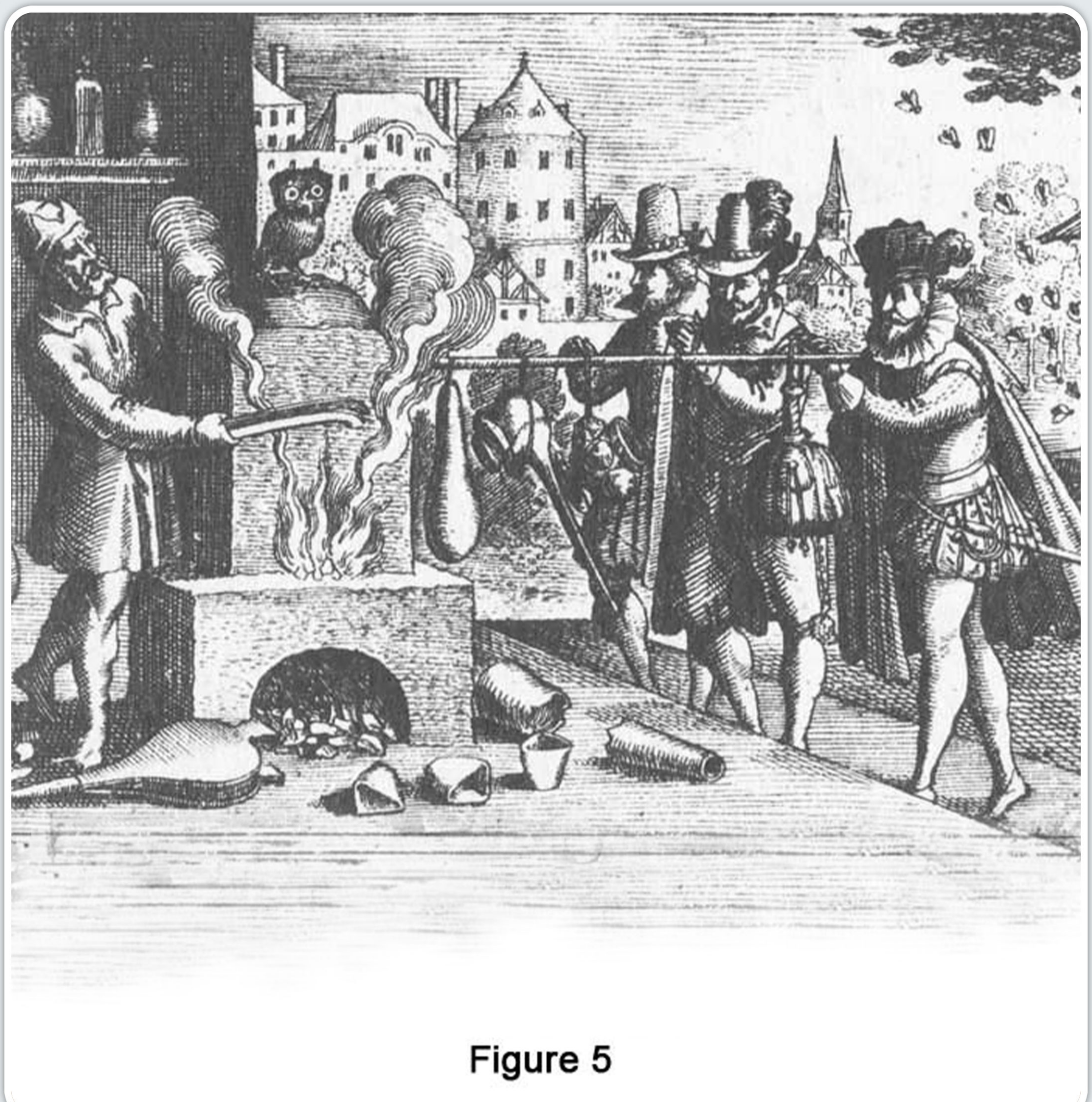


Figure 5

Figure 5

The allegorical beehive (far right) is juxtaposed with the alchemical oven (left), within which the transmutation of matter into the "stone of the philosopher's" takes place. The "false alchemists" (in the center) who misunderstand the Divine nature of this work and seek only vulgar gold, are compared to the useless drones of the hive. From an alchemical work published at the height of the Rosicrucian enlightenment. Michael Maier, *Examen fucorum* (Frankfurt: Nicholas Hoffman for Theodor de Bry, 1617).

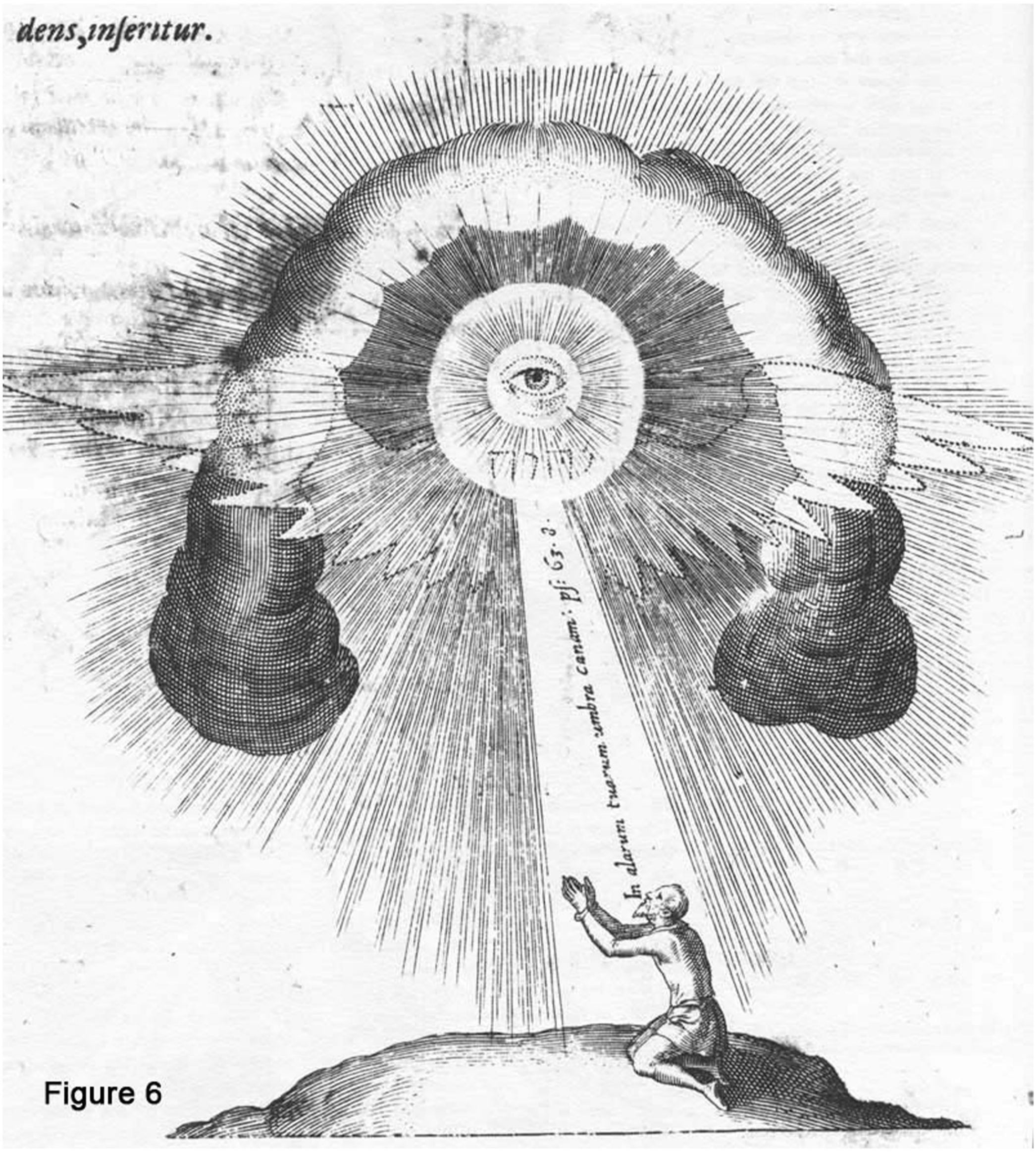


Figure 6

Figure 5

The All-Seeing Eye of God as it appears on the title page of Robert Fludd's 1621 treatise on theosophy and Kabbalah. The words ascending from the prophet, "*In alarum tuarum umbra canam*" are a direct reference to a theme in the Rosicrucian *Fama Fraternitatis*, "Under the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice" (Ps 63:7). Robert Fludd, *Utriusque Cosmi Maioris... Tomi Secundi Tractatus Secundus* (Frankfurt: Johann Theodore de Bry, 1621)

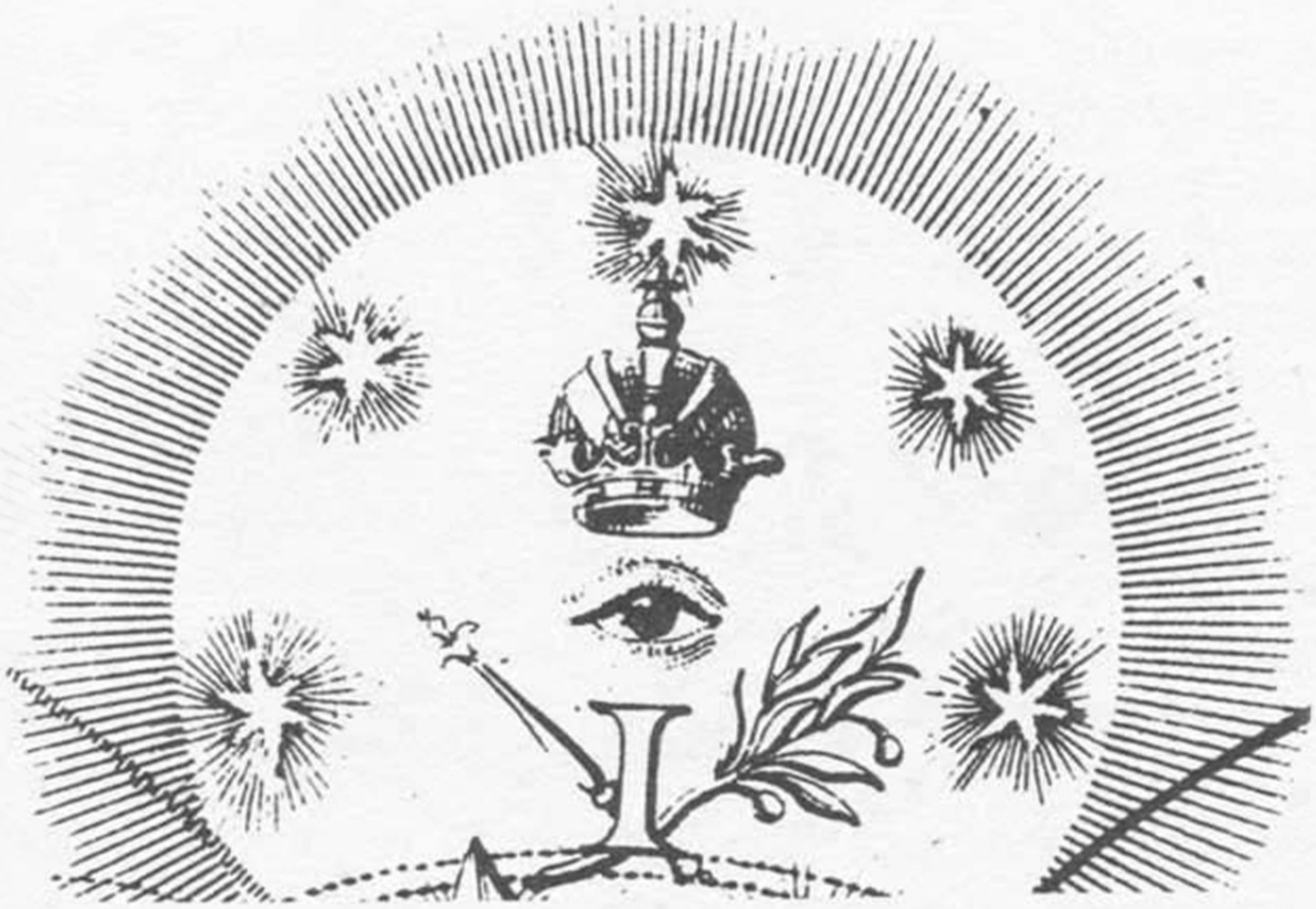


Figure 7

Figure 7

"The Seal of the Priesthood" consists of a phrygian cap or crown over the All-Seeing Eye of God; the private seal of the Twelve Apostles is composed of this same emblem surrounded by sixteen letters, an abbreviation for "Private Seal of the Twelve Apostles, Priests of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, in the Last Dispensation All Over the World." The seal was apparently first engraven in Nauvoo under the guidance of John Taylor and Brigham Young in January of 1845. (Dean C. Jesse, ed., "Nauvoo Dairy of John Taylor", *BYU Studies* 23 [Summer 1983]: 34.) It subsequently appeared on the first gold coins minted in Utah in 1849 and 1850, as illustrated here. This same relatively rare symbol is found in a superior positon on the title page of the 1682 edition of Jacob Boehme's collected "Theosophical Works" published at Amsterdam, a book important to German Pietist, strongly influenced by Rosicrucianism and by Boehme's kabbalistically toned writings, who immigrating to Pennsylvania during the eighteenth century. Jacob Böhme, *Theosophishe Wercken* (Amsterdam, 1682).

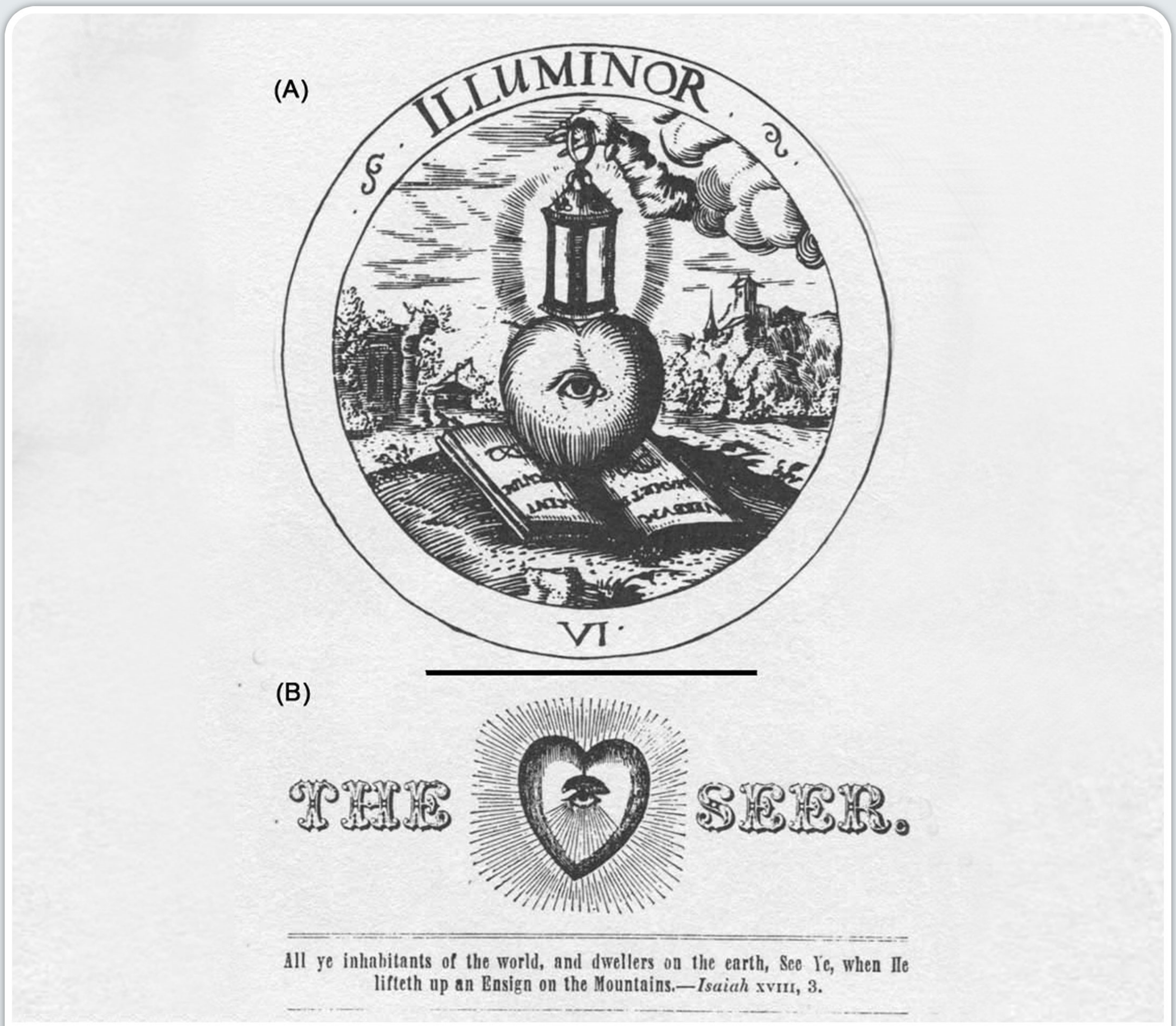


Figure 8

Figure 8

Mormon Apostle and theologian Orson Pratt chose this unusual emblem *(B)* -- the All-Seeing Eye within a heart -- for the banner head of his paper, *The Seer*, published at Washington D.C. in 1853-4. The figure is a near-exact replication of a Rosicrucian emblem *(A)* from Daniel Cramer's Latin *work, The True Society of Jesus and the Rosy Cross*, published at Frankfurt in 1617. This small work contained forty allegorical engravings developing Rosicrucian themes, each associated with a scriptural verse and a motto. To this emblem was associated the verse "In thy light shall we see light" (Psalm 36:9), and the motto, "I see the light in your light, let darkness be far away. He is wise who gains wisdom from the book of the Lord." (Daniel Cramer, *Iesu et Roseæ Crucis Vera: Decades quatuor emblematum sacrorum...* (Frankfurt, 1617), reproduced in, *The Rosicrucian Emblems of Daniel Cramer* (Grand Rapids, MI: Phanes Press, 1991), 29.) The image of the Eye within the Heart again appeared in the 1682 edition of Jacob Boehme's collected works. (Frontispiece to Von *Christi Testamenten*, in Jacob Böhme, *Theosophishe Wercken* [Amsterdam, 1682].)

Figure 9

The alchemical King and Queen, *Rex* and *Regina*, standing upon the dual eternal principals represented by sun and moon, join in the holy wedding, the *hierosgamos*. The image of this eternal, transformative union was perhaps mirrored in Joseph Smith's ritual of celestial marraige. Trismosin, "Splenor solis" (MS., 1582)

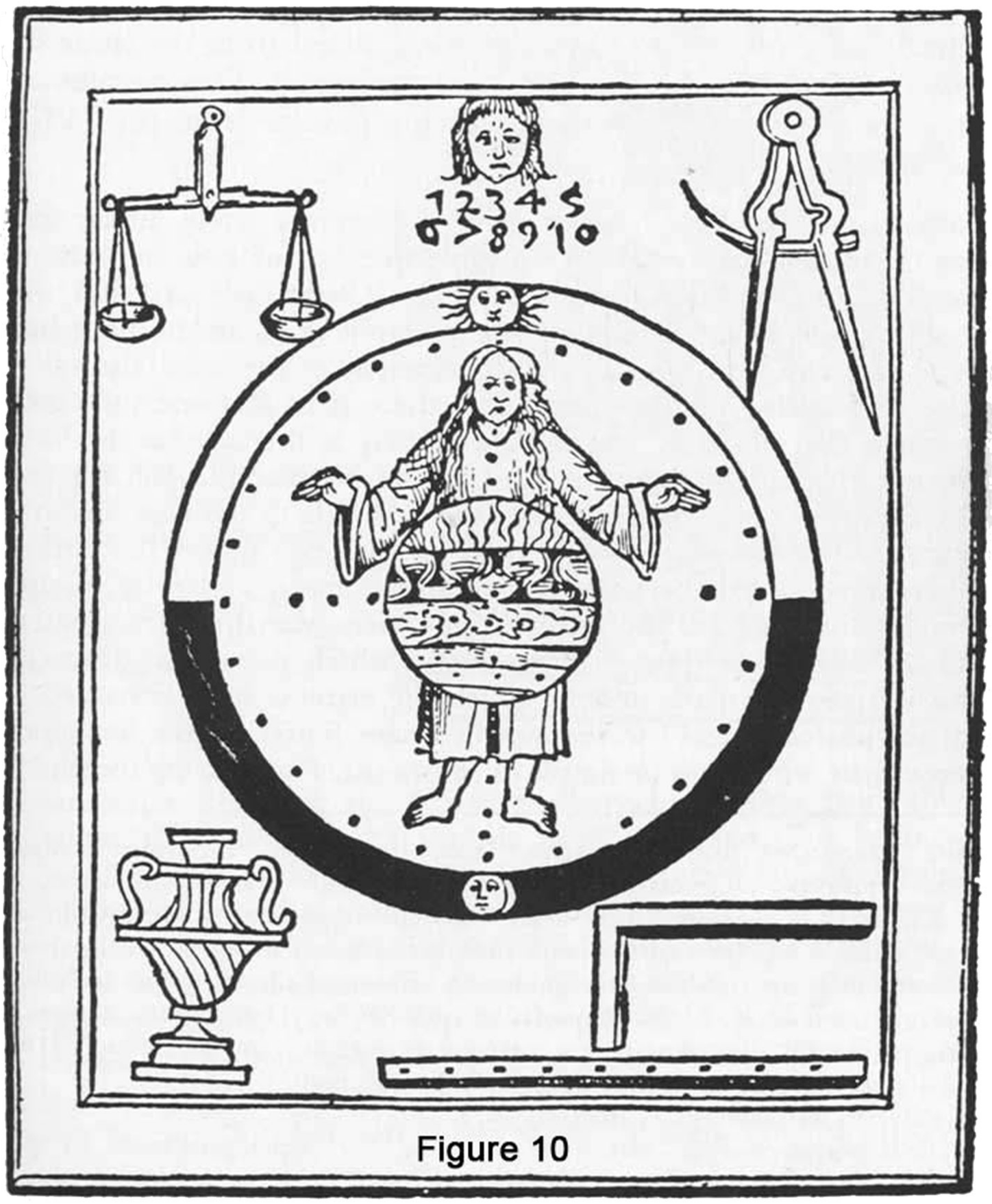


Figure 10

Figure 10

The 1650 edition of a thirteenth century alchemical work by Albertus Magnus contains one of the earliest allegorical representations of the key symbols later subsumed by both Masonry and Mormonism: the compass and square. Christ as *Adam Kadmon* appears within a sphere of light and dark, marked with the ubiquitous sun and moon, suggesting the *complexio oppositorum* manifest in creation. Within his body are encircled the four primal elements: fire, air, water, and earth. In the four corners of the madala are placed symbols of the divine work: the compass, the square and ruler, the scale of justice, and (perhaps) the vessel of chrism--an anointing oil of mercy balanced against the scale of justice. At the top appear the ten sacred numbers (represented also by the ten *Sefiroth of Kabbalah*) by which creation was mediated. Albertus Magnus, *Philosophia naturalis* (Basel, 1650).

Figure 11

Figure 11

The prophet being anointed by Elijah, as imaged in a 1619 work by the Rosicrucian and Christian Kabbalist, Robert Fludd. Fludd explained: "The gift of prophecy can come directly from God, or else indirectly, through the ministration of [spirits]. Examples are to be found in many biblical figures, and also in those of Antiquity, such as Mercurius [Hermes] Trismegistus.... Just as the Sun shines perpetually on all men, so God incessantly offers his pearls of wisdom, and those who receive them become prophets. Robert Fludd, *Utriusque Cosmi Maioris... Tomi Secundi Tractatus primi* (Frankfurt: Johann Theodore de Bry, 1619), 3-11.

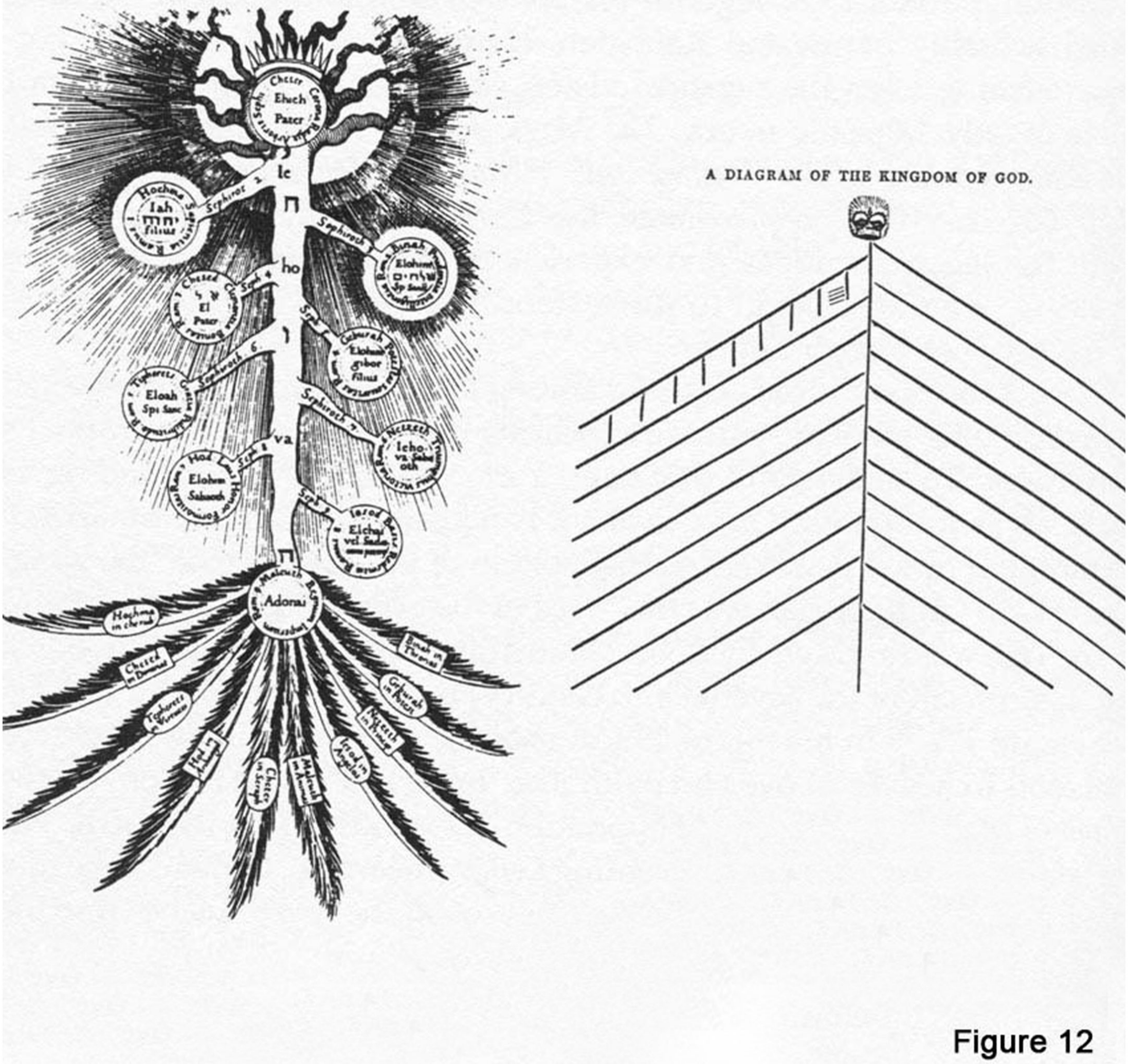


Figure 12

Figure 12

The Kabbalistic "Tree of Life" from Fludd's 1621 Rosicrucian work, and the "Kingdom of God" as drawn by Orson Hyde in an 1847 number of the *Millennial Star*. The crown represents *Kether* (which means in Hebrew "crown"), the first emanation of Divinity.

NOTES

1 Paul M. Edwards, "The Irony of Mormon History", in George D. Smith, ed., *Faithful History* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992), 26.

2 Harold Bloom, *The American Religion: The Emergence of the Post-Christian Nation* (New York: Simon & Shuster, 1992), 99, 105.

3 Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988), 260.

4 Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1974), 21.

5 For a discussion of the antiquity of Kabbalah and Kabbalistic myth, also see Yehuda Liebes, Studies in *Jewish Myth and Jewish Messianism* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1993), 65-92.

6 G. Scholem, On the *Kabbalah and Its Symbolism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1965), 97; Scholem, *Major Trends*, 75.

7 For example, see David J. Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot: Early Jewish Responses to Ezekiel's Vision* (Tübingen: J. C. Mohr, 1988); Peter Schafer, *Gershom Scholem Reconsidered: The Aim and Purpose of Early Jewish Mysticism, the Twelfth Sacks Lecture Delivered on 29th May 1985* (Oxford, Eng.: Oxford Centre for Postgraduate Hebrew Studies, 1986), 3; David Flusser, "Scholem's Recent Book on Merkabah Literature," *Journal of Jewish Studies 11* (1960): 65; Ithamar Gruenwald, "Jewish Merkavah Mysticism and Gnosticism," in *Studies in Jewish Mysticism*, eds. Joseph Dan and Frank Talmage (Cambridge, MA: Association for Jewish Studies, 1982), 41-55. Dan Merkur reviews these objections in Gnosis: *An Esoteric Tradition of Mystical Visions and Unions* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1993), 155-80.

8 C. G. Jung, *Psychological Types* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971), 242.

9 For a recent summary of these approaches, see Merkur's chapter "Defining Gnosis," 111-16. Couliano provides a variant but equally insightful view, emphasizing the theory of independent reoccurrence in Ioan Couliano, *The Tree of Gnosis: Gnostic Mythology from Early Christianity to Modern Nihilism* (San Francisco: Harper, 1990), 23-63; also see Stephan Hoeller, "What is a Gnostic?" Gnosis: *A Journal of Western Inner Traditions 23* (Spring 1992): 24-27.

10 Merkur, 116.

11 Three traditions historically linked to the Gnostic milieu of antiquity are often listed as agents of this transmission: Kabbalah, Hermetism, and Alchemy.

12 Underpinning this declaration is an assertion that men can have experiences--call them intuitions or visions--that carry revelatory power and the savor of divine origin. It was the topography of this experience that the Kabbalist sought to explore, and perhaps to map. See Idel, *Kabballah*, 29.

13 Idel, *Kabbalah*, 59-73.

14 Moshe Idel, ed., *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1988), 1-31.

15 Scholem, On the *Kabbalah*, 94; see also Scholem, *Major Trends*, 225.

16 See Scholem, *On the Kabbalah*, 155. Moshe Idel discusses the sexual polarity of divine qualities in Jewish mystical tradition. Most striking of such evidence is the image of the cherubim that adorned the Arc of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies in the Temple of Solomon. In talmudic tradition the cherubim were male and female and were sometimes found in sexual embrace (see G. Scholem, *Kabbalah* [New York: Dorset Press, 1987], 130). The Talmud states, "When the Israelites came up on the pilgram Festivals the curtain would be removed for them and the cherubim shown to them, their bodies interlocked with one another, and they would say to them, `Look, you are beloved of God as the love between man and woman'" (Yoma 54a, Bababatra 99a). For a detailed discussion of the symbolic history of the cherubim and this sexual image, see Raphael Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, 3d ed. (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1990), 67-95.

17 Scholem, *On the Kabbalah*, 103-104. Each Hebrew letter has a numerical value; words carry the value of the sum of their letters. These numerical sums are used in Kabbalah to extract various relationship and occult meanings from biblical texts, a practice called gematria. The numerical value of the Tetragrammaton (the name of God composed of the four letters, Yod he vav he, and read as Yahweh or Jehovah) is 45, exactly the same value carried by the name Adam; thus "Jehovah" = "Adam."

18 Scholem, Kabbalah, 190.

19 Frances A. Yates, *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), 3-4.

20 Though Kabbalah entered into the Christian consciousness mostly by passive transmission and assimilation, this was not always so. Abraham Abulafia, a seminal thirteenth-century Kabbalist, considered himself a prophet sent to Jew and gentile. This belief led him--despite warnings he would be burned at the stake--to Rome in 1280 on an ill-fated quest for audience with Pope Nicholas III, an adventure from which he escaped alive only by the good fortune of the Pope's sudden death. (Idel, *The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia*, 3). From the end of the thirteenth century, a number of Jewish converts to Christianity also brought with them into the gentile fold a knowledge of Kabbalah and christological speculations on Kabbalistic texts (Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 197). The works of Catalan philosopher and Christian mystic Raymond Lull (1232-ca. 1316) witness that elements of Kabbalah began penetrating Christian thought as early as 1300. Lull exhibits the influence of several Kabbalistic concepts on his quest to develop a universal system of science and religion--a philosophy he hoped would reconcile religious conflicts among Jews, Moslems, and Christians (Yates, *The Occult Philosophy*, 17-22).

21 Walter Scott, ed., Hermetica (Boston: Shambhala, 1993), 31-2. Through patristic sources the name Hermes Trismegistos was well known in the Middle Ages; Roger Bacon called him "Father of Philosophers." The meaning of "Thrice-Great" was variously explained. Marcilio Ficino suggests it refers to his triple capacity of priest, philosopher, and king, a divine triad that recurs in various manifestations throughout the Hermetic-Kabbalistic tradition (including perhaps the 1844 coronation of the Joseph Smith). See Frances A. Yates, Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 48-49.

22 In 1614 Isaac Casaubon correctly dated the works to the early Christian centuries. This, however, did not entirely or quickly penetrate into the more devoted Hermetic circles. See Yates, Giordano Bruno, 16, 398-431.

23 Corpus Hermeticum I, Poimandres, 21 (this translation in Yates, Giordano Bruno, 25).

24 Corpus Hermeticum XIII (Yates, 29).

25 Yates, The Occult Philosophy, 17-22. Yates provides an earlier and more tentative evaluation, but with great detail, in Giordano Bruno, 84-129. Scholem gives a summary, from the view of Jewish Kabbalah, in Kabbalah, 196-203.

26 Scholem, Kabbalah, 197.

27 Yates, Giordano Bruno, 86.

28 See ibid., 85.

29 Yates, Occult Philosophy, 14.

30 Ibid., 19.

31 The Tabula smaragdina or "Emerald Tablet" was supposedly engraved by Trismegistos himself with the essence of all truth. Its content was known to medieval scholars, and this, its central dictum, is often repeated in Hermetic writings from the Renaissance on. As with other Hermetic texts, the Tabula smaragdina probably dates to the first or second century C.E.

32 Robert Fludd, Utriusque Cosmi Maioris . . . (Oppenheim: Johann Theodore de Bry, 1617), sec. a, 145, translation in Joscelyn Godwin, Robert Fludd: Hermetic Philosopher and Surveyor of Two Worlds (London: Thames and Hudson, 1979), 14.

33 In Joseph Smith's translation of the Book of Genesis, begun in 1831, one finds a clear parallel. Smith gives this new reading for Genesis 2:5-9: "For I the Lord God, created all things of which I have spoken, spiritually, before they were naturally upon the face of the earth . . . for in heaven created I them, and there was not yet flesh upon the earth . . . . all things were before created, but spiritually were they created and made, according to my word." In Genesis 6:66 he continues the idea, "And behold, all things have their likeness . . . . both things which are temporal and things which are spiritual; things which are in the heavens above, and things which are on the earth...both above and beneath, all things bear record of me." (*Joseph Smith's "New Translation" of the Bible*, [Independence, MO: Herald Publishing House, 1970], 30.) Brigham Young developed the idea: "We cannot talk about spiritual things without connecting with them temporal things, neither can we talk about temporal things without connecting spiritual things with them. They are inseparably connected...." Leonard Arrington emphasized the importance of this concept for an understanding of early Mormonism's evolution: "Joseph Smith and other early Mormon leaders seem to have seen every part of life, and every problem put to them, as part of an integrated universe in which materialities and immaterialities were of equal standing, or indistinguishable, in God's kingdom. Religion was relevant to economics, politics, art, and science." (Leonard Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom: Economic History of the Latter-Day Saints* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958; reprinted Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press], 5-6.) It is a view closely parallel by the Hermetic tradition.

35 The Latin terms used were sciencia, intellectus and mens.

35 See Peter French, *John Dee: The World of an Elizabethan Magus* (New York: Dorset Press, 1972), 19.

36 Yates, *Giordano Bruno*, 88.

37 See Moshe Idel, "Jewish Magic from the Renaissance Period to Early Hasidism," in Jacob Neusner, ed., *Religion, Science and Magic in Concert and in Conflict* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 83.

38 The legacy of this strange vision, itself transmuted, was a foundation of the science leading our own age to summon from a metamorphosis of mathematical symbols the dread dream of nuclear fire.

39 Yates, *Occult Philosophy*, 46.

40 Stanislas Klossowski de Rola, *Alchemy: The Secret Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973), 7.

41 Although a few authors (the most notable being C. G. Jung) have seen alchemy as a direct offspring of classical Gnosticism, this is problematic. For a critique of this view and a summary of Gnostic elements in alchemy, see Merkur, 37-110.

42 The works of Magnus remained important to seventeenth-century alchemical scholars, as evidenced by the inclusion of two of his works in the influential compendium *Theatrum Chemicum*, vol. 2 (Usel, 1602), xxii, and vol. 4 (Strasbourg, 1613), xxxvii; another of his alchemical works was published as late as 1650: Albertus Magnus, *Philosophia naturalis* (Basel, 1650). (See figure 9.) Several alchemical treatises were attributed to Aquinas. Though probably all pseudoepigraphic, the *Aurora Consurgens* does date to a time close to his death in 1274 and could have been by his hand (as von Franz believes) or from the school surrounding him. Marie-Louise von Franz, *Aurora Consurgens*: *A Document Attributed to Thomas Aquinas on the Problem of Opposites in Alchemy* (New York: Princeton University Press, Bollingen Series LXXVII, 1966).

33 In Joseph Smith's translation of the Book of Genesis, begun in 1831, one finds a clear parallel. Smith gives this new reading for Genesis 2:5-9: "For I the Lord God, created all things of which I have spoken, spiritually, before they were naturally upon the face of the earth . . . for in heaven created I them, and there was not yet flesh upon the earth . . . . all things were before created, but spiritually were they created and made, according to my word." In Genesis 6:66 he continues the idea, "And behold, all things have their likeness . . . . both things which are temporal and things which are spiritual; things which are in the heavens above, and things which are on the earth...both above and beneath, all things bear record of me." (*Joseph Smith's "New Translation" of the Bible*, [Independence, MO: Herald Publishing House, 1970], 30.) Brigham Young developed the idea: "We cannot talk about spiritual things without connecting with them temporal things, neither can we talk about temporal things without connecting spiritual things with them. They are inseparably connected...." Leonard Arrington emphasized the importance of this concept for an understanding of early Mormonism's evolution: "Joseph Smith and other early Mormon leaders seem to have seen every part of life, and every problem put to them, as part of an integrated universe in which materialities and immaterialities were of equal standing, or indistinguishable, in God's kingdom. Religion was relevant to economics, politics, art, and science." (Leonard Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom: Economic History of the Latter-Day Saints* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958; reprinted Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press], 5-6.) It is a view closely parallel by the Hermetic tradition.

35 The Latin terms used were sciencia, intellectus and mens.

35 See Peter French, *John Dee: The World of an Elizabethan Magus* (New York: Dorset Press, 1972), 19.

36 Yates, *Giordano Bruno*, 88.

37 See Moshe Idel, "Jewish Magic from the Renaissance Period to Early Hasidism," in Jacob Neusner, ed., *Religion, Science and Magic in Concert and in Conflict* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 83.

38 The legacy of this strange vision, itself transmuted, was a foundation of the science leading our own age to summon from a metamorphosis of mathematical symbols the dread dream of nuclear fire.

39 Yates, *Occult Philosophy*, 46.

40 Stanislas Klossowski de Rola, *Alchemy: The Secret Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973), 7.

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43 Richard S. Westfall, *The Life of Isaac Newton*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 141-6. Frank E. Manuel, *A Portrait of Isaac Newton* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), 160-90. A summary, with references, on the alchemical studies of Locke and Newton appears in, Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 10. Yates suggests, "Behind the great exoteric movement typified by Newton's achievements in the fields of mathematics and physics, there was also an esoteric movement, connected with the exoteric movement through the importance which it attached to number, but developing this through another approach to nature, the approach through alchemy" (*Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, 204).

44 Edward F. Edinger, *Goethe's Faust: Notes for a Jungian Commentary* (Toronto: Inner City Books, 1990), 9.

45 C. G. Jung, *Alchemical Studies* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967), 140. The concept of matter as uncreated caused considerable tension during the early Christian centuries, the period of alchemy's earliest evolution. Augustine attributed the idea to the Manichaeans (*De Actis cum Felice*, 1:18) and specifically attacked the concept of co-eternal matter and spirit expressed by Simon (*Contra Faustum*, XXI, 1, in Willis Barnstone, ed., *The Other Bible: Jewish Pseudepigrapha, Christian Apocrypha, Gnostic Scripture* [San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987], 680). That a figure named "Faust" would subsequently emerge as the archetypal literary image of the alchemist is a complex and interesting historical side note to Augustine's comments. Hippolytus attacked this same heresy expressed by the Gnostic Hermogenes (a name meaning "born of Hermes"): "God created all things from coexistent and ungenerated matter" (*Refutation of All Heresies*, 7:10, 10:24). The concept of the increatum as the mother of all created things is fully developed in later alchemy, particularly in the work of Paracelsus; for a discussion, see C. G. Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, 2d ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968), 320-23.

46 That the stone was the "pearl of great price" is evidenced by the early sixteenth-century Aldine edition of a treatise by Giano Luciano, *The New Pearl of Great Price: A Treatise Concerning the Treasure and Most Precious Stone of the Philosophers* . . . , trans. A. E. Waite (London, 1894). I know of no association between this metaphor and the Mormon Pearl of Great Price, first published in London in 1852.

47 In alchemy, the stone was the "orphan"; the term "son of the widow," now associated with Masonry, may be of Manichaean origin. For an evaluation of this theme in alchemy, see Jung, Mysterium Coniunctionis, 17 ff.

48 The best recent scholarly summary of the Rosicrucian movement is in Francis Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972). Still useful, though dated, is Arthur Edward Waite's *The Real History of the Rosicrucians* (London: George Redway, 1887). In these comments I rely heavily on Yates and her analysis of the movement, but I emphasize that all scholarship on this realm of history--including the work of Yates--involves conjecture and interpretation.

49 Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, 42.

50 All quotations above from the Fama are from the English translation of the manifestos published by Thomas Vaughn in 1652, as corrected and presented by Yates in her appendix to *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, 238-51. The texts of the original Vaughn translations, as well as the 1690 Foxcroft translation of the *Chymical Wedding* which Yates omits, appear in Waite.

51 See Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, 49.

52 Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, 45. The full title, as given by Vaughn, is *Confessio Fraternitatis or The Confession of the Laudable Fraternity of the Most Honorable Order of the Rosy Cross, Written to All the Learned of Europe*, in Yates, 251.

53 *Confessio Fraternitatis*, in Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, 256-57.

54 This text is from the first English translation, *The Hermetic Romance: or The Chymical Wedding, trans*. E. Foxcrort (London, 1690), reprinted in Waite, 101.

55 So proclaimed the *Fama*, "...for Europe is with child and will bring forth a strong child, who shall stand in need of a great godfather's gift."

56 Christian Knorr von Rosenroth (d. 1689) traveled widely throughout Europe. Having been greatly impressed by the writings of Jacob Boehme, he later influenced the Cambridge philosopher Henry More, the Rosicrucian mystic Franciscus Mercurius Van Helmont, and the philosopher Leibnitz. During his last two decades, his role as a senior official and close adviser to Prince Christian August in Sulzbach, Bavaria, gave him prominence in broader cultural and political circles as well. His *Kabbalah Denudata, The Kabbalah Unveiled, or The Transcendental, Metaphysical, and Theological Teachings of the Jews* was published in Sulzbach in two large volumes, 1677-84. Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 416-18. A complete English translation of this important work has yet to be accomplished, but an excerpt appeared in S. L. McGregor Mather, *The Kabbalah Unveiled* (London, 1887).

57 Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, 200-202.

58 This was in line with the declared Rosicrucian program: "Also we do testify that under the name of Chymia many books and pictures are set forth in Contumeliam gloriae Die. . . . And we pray all learned men to take heed of these kind of books" (*Fama Fraternitatis*, in Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, 250). The *Confessio* explains further that the books are "so we may verily foreknow and foresee the darkness of obscurations of the Church, and how long they shall last. From the which characters of letters we have borrowed our magic writing, and have found out, and made, a new language for ourselves, in the which withall is expressed and declared the nature of all things. . . . We speak unto you by parables, but would willingly bring you to the right, simple, easy and ingenuous exposition, understanding, declaration and knowledge of all secrets" (*Confessio Fraternitatis, in Yates, The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, 257, 259). A detailed survey of the evolution of this hieroglyphic tradition during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, along with reproductions of its principal works, appears in Stanislas Klossowski de Rola, *The Golden Game: Alchemical Engravings of the Seventeenth Century* (New York: George Braziller, 1988). A large collection of alchemical engravings and pictures, along with a complex historical and psychological critique, is found in C. G. Jung's *Psychology and Alchemy* (Princetion, NJ: Princetion University Press, 1968).

59 See *Confessio Fraternitatis*, in Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, 254-55.

60 Writes Elias Ashmole, "And certainly he to whom the whole course of Nature lyes open rejoyceth not so much that he can make Gold or Silver or the Divells [devils] to become subject to him, as that hee sees the Heavens open, the Angells of God Ascending and Descending, and that his own name is fairely written in the Book of Life" ("Prolegomenia," in *Theatrum Chemicum Bitannicum* [London, 1652]).

61 A symbol's "meaning" is perpetually open to interpretation, but in this particular case there is strong historical precedent for assuming a deeper allegorical text. This exact metaphor of the honey bee as the alchemist and the hive as the alchemical retort is presented on the title page of Michael Maier's *Examen fucorum* (Frankfurt: Nicholas Hoffman for Theodor de Bry, 1617), facsimile in Klossowski de Rola, *The Golden Game*, 65. (See Fig. 5.) The bee and beehive seems to have entered the symbolic vocabulary of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries through a rediscovered and influential work of the third century Neoplatonist Porphyry, *De Antro Nympharum* (*On the Cave of the Nymphs*). In this short essay, Porphyry examined several verses from the thirteenth book of Homer's *Odyssey* and showed how they were to be interpreted as an allegory of the immortal soul's passage through mortality and on to liberation. The bees and hive are among the objects encountered in this "cave of generation." As Kathleen Raine notes in her introduction to Thomas Taylor's translation of the work, "Porphyry's interests in symbols and myths is central--in what Henry Corbin has called the mundus imaginalis, the imaginal world where sensible images are informed with meaning, and where higher worlds may be discerned under symbolic forms. . . . With the revival of Neoplatonic learning in Renaissance Florence, *De Antro Nympharum* spoke immediately to the imaginative genius of those gifted painters whose works communicated the profoundest philosophic realizations in the lightest vestures" ("Introduction" in, Porphyry, *On the Cave of the Nymphs* [Grand Rapids: Phanes Press, 1991], 10, 13.) It is this same intent to convey an understanding of "higher worlds" through symbolic forms that subsequently animated the seventeenth-century genre of "hieroglyphic" alchemical emblems; and it is only natural that they would pay homage by echoing imagery from De Antro Nypharum. *Porphyry* associated Homer's Cave of the Nymphs with the cave-temples of an ancient mystery religion and gave a long discussion to the symbolic, allegorical meanings of the bees and honey combs found there. The web and beehive were subsequently linked together in emblems identifying the royal patron of the Rosicrucian enlightenment, Fredrick V, Elector Palatine and King of Bohemia (this linkage helps identify their joint origin in Porphyry, a fact I have not seen elsewhere noted). Fredrick's reign became the focal point of reformative aspirations, and under his patronage in Oppenheim several of the most influential emblematic "Rosicrucian" books were published. These included works published by the de Bry firm and several authored by Michael Maier (*Examen fucorum*, noted above, is an example--on the title page Maier identifies himself "Count Palatine, Free Knight of the Empire, Doctor of Medicine"). The Rose Cross, spider's web, and beehive are again linked on the title page of Robert Fludd's and Joachim Frizius's collaboration, *Summum bonum*, The True Magic, Cabla, and Alchemy of the *True Fraternity of the Rose Cross* (Frankfurt, 1629) (Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, 72, 102). The symbol of the beehive subsequently entered into Freemasonry as one of the ten emblems (including the "All-seeing Eye") given to a Master Mason at the time of his ceremonial initiation; in Masonry it was associated with the motto "industry" (Jabez Richardson, *Richardson's Monitor of Free-Masonry* [facsimile reprint, Chicago: Charles T. Powner, Co., n.d.], 40). Nearly every priesthood leader of Joseph Smith's church present in Nauvoo was "given" these two symbolic emblems when entered as Master Masons (see discussion below). In a bizarre historical twist, after the failure of the reign of Fredrick V, the next political kingdom to which this symbol would be widely linked was Brigham Young's Kingdom of Deseret. The beehive and the motto "Industry" remain today the emblem and motto of its successor, the State of Utah.

62 Upon a dwindling remnant of Utah's nineteenth century Mormon facades these symbols still remain. See Allen D. Roberts, "Where are the All-Seeing Eyes?" *Sunstone 4* (May-June 1979): 22-3

63 Jung gives extended discussion and documentation to each of these specific themes in *Mysterium Coniunctionis*.

64 Yates touches some of these issues in her chapter "Rosicrucianism and Freemasonry" in *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, 206-19. For further discussion of the Hermetic tradition's influence on Masonry, see Yates, Giordano Bruno, 214, 414-16, 423, and The Art of Memory (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), 303-305.

65 Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, 210.

66 Douglas Knoop and G. Jones, The Genesis of Freemasonry: An Account of *the Rise and Development of Freemasonry in Its Operative, Accepted, and Early Speculative Phases* (Manchester, Eng.: Manchester University Press, 1949), 274.

67 The allegorical nature of Masonic rituals is thoroughly evidenced in records of the eighteenth century. When these the rituals took form is a matter of supposition; Gould posits an origin of the Masonic rituals in the seventeenth century, but subsequent historians have suggested that the rituals as currently recognizable originated during the 1720s (see Michael W. Homer, "`Similarity of Priesthood in Masonry': The Relationship between Freemasonry and Mormonism," in this issue of Dialogue: *A Journal of Mormon Thought;* Robert Freke Gould, *The History of Freemasonry*, 4 vols. [New York: John C. Yorston & Co., 1885-89]; Knoop and Jones, 274-75, 321-22).

68 Material published in German by J. G. Buhle in 1804 served as the foundation for De Quincey's work "Historico-Critical Inquiry into the Origins of the Rosicrucians and the Freemasons," reprinted in *Collected Works*, ed. David Masson (Edinburgh, 1890), 13:384-448.

69 Waite, 402-407.

70 Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, 218

71 This association, though recognized, was not cast in a positive light by the wider culture. Quinn provides several examples of America anti-Masonic material from this period associating Masons, Kabbalah, and Rosicrucians in a negative context (164-65). Much of this material probably took form from the evidence provided by Buhle and De Quincey. Links to Rosicrucians and Kabbalah were also variously affirmed in esoteric Masonic myth.

72 In his nineteenth-century encyclopedia of Freemasonry, Macoy gives a partial summary of these, listing forty-eight rites or systems of symbolical ceremonies designed to convey "Masonic ideals"; the vast majority of these originating between about 1750 and 1810 (Robert Macoy, *General History, Cyclopedia and Dictionary of Freemasonry* [New York: Masonic Publishing Co., 1872], reprinted as *A Dictionary of Freemasonry* [New York: Bell Publishing, 1989], 326-29). As Ellwood notes in his review of the movement, "There was no unity of rite or structure among groups using that title [of Mason]. The name was immensely popular, and so was adopted by any sort of society with a secret handshake and pretension to ancient lore. These ranged from the Swedenborgian rite lodges . . . to the inimitable Cagliostro" (Robert S. Ellwood, Jr., *Religious and Spiritual Groups in Modern America* [Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1973], 64).

73 Massimo Introvigne, "Arcana Arcanorum: Cagliostro's Legacy in Contemporary Magical Movements," *Syzrygy: Journal of Alternative Religion and Culture* 1 (Spring/Summer 1992): 117-35.

74 A review of these various movements is in Ellwood, 60-69.

75 Linda Sillitoe and Allen Roberts, *Salamander: The Story of the Mormon Forgery Murders* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1988), 183-360.

76 Quinn, ix-x.

77 Ibid., xi-xiii.

78 Yates, *Occult Philosophy*, 46.

79 See n60. "The appearance of ancient bodies of literature, Neoplatonic and hermetic, in Latin and Italian translations, together with the rendering of a significant corpus of Kabbalistic literature into Latin and Italian, precipitated the emergence of a new attitude toward magic, first in the circles of the Florentine literati, and afterward, under their influence, in a long series of European Renaissance and post-Renaissance figures all over Europe. . . . For them, magic was the lore taught by ancient masters like Hermes Trismegistus. . .a lore based on a vast knowledge of the universal order, a knowledge that culminated in actualizing the potentiality inherent in human nature. Instead of being the practice of obscure and peripheral persons, the Renaissance magician came to designate the apex of human achievement, to be cultivated by the elite in order to exercise the human qualities that testify to the fullness of human perfection. It was not so much the subjugation of the material world to which the learned magicians of the Renaissance aspired, as to the fulfillment of their spirit." Moshe Idel, "Jewish Magic from the Renaissance Period", 83.

80 Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), 228. Thomas's study is itself dominated by an interest in the folk magical.

81 At the same time, it must be recognized that there was an important mystical and alchemical element in some sectors of seventeenth-century Purtianism. See Yates, *The Occult Philosophy, 167*.

82 Meric Casaubon (1599-1671) was both the son of Issac Casaubon, the distinguished philological scholar who had dated the Hermetica, and a staunch Anglican critic of the *Hermetic* and magical movement. Quoted in French, John Dee, 13.

83 Godwin, *Robert Fludd,* 11.

84 In evidence, as this paper went to press I received an advance copy of a comprehensive and very important new study of Mormonism's relationship to Hermeticism: John L. Brooke, The Refiner's Fire: *The Making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644-1844* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994). Prof. Brooke reviews much of the material I have presented above, and draws very similar conclusions: "The Mormon cosmology constructed by Joseph Smith was as optimistic as Renaissance hermeticism and shared with it a startling number of common themes. . . . [Smith] reproduced the three heavens of the Cabala and hermeticism in the three Mormon heavens, the telestial, terrestial, and celestial kingdoms. Both hermeticism and Mormonism celebrate the mutuality of spiritual and material worlds, precreated intelligences, free will, a divine Adam, a fortunate, sinless Fall, and the symbolism and religious efficacy of marriage and sexuality. And, as in hermeticism, Adam, 'the father of all, prince of all, that ancient of days,' would occupy a central position in Mormon cosmology. . . .Three centuries after the height of the Renaissance, Mormonism echoed the hermetics--and explicitly rejected Calvinism. . . . Joseph Smith gave Mormon hierarchy the same authority that the hermetic alchemist assumed: human means to immortality, indeed divinity." (Ibid., 13.) See my review of Brooke's work in this issue of *Dialogue*.

85 These are discussed and illustrated in Quinn, 53-111.

86 The magical square on the back of Joseph's talisman appears, pregnant with symbolic meaning, in one of Albrecht Dürer's most famous engravings, "Melancolia" (Horst Michael, *Albrect Dürer: The Complete Engravings* [Artline Editions, 1987], plate 72); for a discussion, see Yates, *The Occult Philosophy*, 135 ff. See also the chapter "Cornelius Agrippa's Survey of Renaissance Magic" in Yates, *Giordano Bruno*, 130-56.

87 Quinn, 81-97.

88 Ibid., 96.

89 Ibid., 83.

90 Paracelsus (ca. 1493-1541) was a seminal figure in the alchemical and medical tradition. Paracelsian alchemy was central to Rosicrucianism. His works were even among the items supposed to be in the mythic tomb of Christian Rosencreutz. During the early and mid-nineteenth century in England and Europe Mesmerism was closely linked with spiritual alchemy by occultists interested in visionary states, and as Merkur notes, "In the Gold und Rosenkreuz, a development of the alchemical tradition of Paracelsus and Boehme in late eighteenth-century German, the insignias of the ninth and highest degree, Majus, consisted of a `gleaming and fiery' Urim and Thummim with a Schemhamphorash. It is at least probable that the German alchemists named their engraved brooches in allusion to their use in crystal-gazing and scrying" (55).

91 Jolanda Jacobi, ed., *Paracelsus: Selected Writings* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979), 134, emphasis added. Paracelsus also prophesied of the coming of the prophet "Elias" as part of a universal restoration, another idea possibly affecting the work of Joseph Smith (Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, 93).

92 Dan Vogel offers an exception by briefly noting the influence of spiritual alchemy on the important seventeenth-century Seeker John Everard. See Dan Vogel, *Religious Seekers and the Advent of Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1988), 9n50.

93 Quinn, 80.

94 E. Gordon Alderfer, *The Ephrata Commune: An Early American Counter Culture* (Pittsburgh: Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, 1985), 27-30.

95 Ibid., 6.

96 Ibid., 62, 122-23.

97 The commune apparently possessed Kabbalistic texts, including the *Zohar* (ibid., 87), and may have even instituted an order associated with one of the Rosicrucian variants of Freemasonry (ibid., 70; Julius Friedrich Sachse, *The German Sectarians of Pennsylvania, 1708-1800; A Critical and Legendary History of the Ephrata Cloister and the Dunkers* [Philadelphia: Printed for the author, 1899-1900], 1:354f.). That Sachse, a late-nineteenth-century Masonic historian, would perceive a variant Masonry in practice at Ephrata again indicates both the wide acceptance of Rosicrucian ties in Masonry in the nineteenth century and the wide latitude of esoteric things allowed classification as "Masonic."

98 Noted are: the presence of a Rosicrucian cross on the Smith family "Holiness to the Lord" magical parchment; the similarity of rituals used in the Ephrata commune for conveying Melchizedik priesthood and performing proxy baptisms for the dead to forms later incorporated by Joseph Smith; the use of pseudonyms exactly like those adopted in early Mormonism ("Enoch" as a code name for Joseph Smith) within the Ephrata Rosicrucian society; and the similarity between one of Joseph Smith's 1829 revelations (recorded as D&C 7) and a Rosicrucian legend (Quinn, 133, 180-81, 169; Alderfer, 88).

99 As unusual as this combination would be, Joseph Smith did apparently come close to having all three in Nauvoo during the last two years of his life, as will be discussed below.

100 The "Tree of Sefiroth" is a diagram depicting the ten *Sefiroth* or divine emenations within the archetypal structure of the Godhead (see Fig. 1). For a example, see the illustration in Robert Fludd, "Aboris Sephirothicae," in *De Praeternaturali utrusque mundi Historia*, Vol. 2, 157, part of the larger work, *Utruiusque cosmi maioris* . . . (Frankfurti, 1621). This image or an image like it seems to have been copied by Orson Hyde in 1847, as discussed later.

101 Joe Sampson, *Written by the Finger of God* (Sandy, UT: Wellspring Publishing, 1993).

102 Ibid., 87-104.

103 This situation also has precedence in the Hermetic-Kabbalistic tradition. The writings of the German mystic Jacob Boehme have such a strong Kabbalistic flavor that his students have long thought he must have had some direct contact with Kabbalah, even though no firm historical evidence of this has yet been developed. (Interesting in the present context is that the most likely source identified by historians from whom Boehme might have learned about Kabbalah is a "Dr. B. Walter" who had traveled widely in the East and collected esoteric knowledge of magic, alchemy, and Kabbalah.) Andrew Weeks, *Boehme: An Intellectual Biography of the Seventeenth-Century Philosopher and Mystic* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1991), 43, 147.

104 In 1842 the Apostle Heber C. Kimball quote Joseph Smith saying: "thare is a similarity of preast Hood in masonary. Br Joseph ses masonry was taken from preasthood but has become degenerated. but menny things are perfect" (Quinn, 185). In 1899 Apostle Rudger Clawson related the opinion that "Joseph . . . was aware that there were some things about masonry which had come down from the beginning and he desired to know what they were, hence the Lodge. . . . Joseph inquired of the Lord concerning the matter and he revealed to the prophet true Masonry as we have in our temples" (in Stan Larson, ed., *A Ministry of Meetings: The Apostolic Diaries of Rudger Clawson* [Salt Lake City: Signature Books in association with Smith Research Associates, 1993], XXX).

105 Quinn, 164-65. This same assertion had been widely publicized by De Quincey in his *London Magazine* piece, "Historico-Critical Inquiry into the Origins of the Rosicrucians and the Freemasons."

106 Arthur Edward Waite, *A New Encyclopaedia of Freemasonry* (London: William Rider and Son, 1923), 1:47.

107 Albert Pike, *Morals and Dogma of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry* (Charleston, SC, 1871), cited in Hoeller.

108 Robert Kirk, *The Secret Commonwealth of Elves, Fauns and Faires* (Stirling: Eneas Mackay, 1933), 107-108. Kirk's original manuscript is dated 1691.

109 Homer makes particular note of the 28th degree of the Scottish rite, which is based on the 23rd degree of the Rite de Perfection. This degree is known as the "Knight of the Sun," "Prince of the Sun," or "Key to Masonry." As Homer suggests, the ritual of this degree has several motifs familiar to the Mormon temple ceremony: Father Adam is the presiding officer, accompanied by seven angels, including Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, and Auriel; and the rite is to be administered in a room painted like a vast garden, with open fields, forests, and mountains. The rite has an obviously alchemical and Hermetic flavor, leading Macoy to suggest the "28th degree of Freemasonry must have been composed by Freemasons who were also members of the Order of the Rosy Cross." The seal of the degree (illustrated in Macoy) is emblazoned with the Hermetic motto of the *Tabula smaragdina* ("That which is above is also below"); over and under the image of God reflected in himself as dual white and black triangles interwoven in the Seal of Solomon are inscribed the terms common to Rosicrucianism and alchemy, "Macroprospus" or macrocosm and "Microprosupus" or microcosm. In the ceremony, a five-pointed star represents man, the microcosmos, and the staff of Hermes, the caduceus, sits at the right hand of Adam. The collar donned in the rite bears the single "All-seeing Eye" of God, and the medal worn is a golden Sun similar to the Nauvoo temple sunstones. Macoy, 209-11, 331.

110 Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 284, 304.

111 Macoy, 326-29.

112 Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses*, 1.18.1.

113 Hill, 279.

114 A third issue deserves brief notation: the "Joseph Smith to Joseph Hull" letter, mentioned by Durham, said to have been written by Joseph Smith about Freemasonry. A copy of the original is in my possession, and a transcript (with some errors) was published with the Durham paper as Appendix A (*No Help for the Widow's Son: Two Papers on the Influence of the Masonic Movement on Joseph Smith and His Mormon Church* [Nauvoo: Martin Publishing Co, 1980], 29.) This torn and undated letter was discovered around 1966-67 in a group of miscellaneous manuscript materials by George Rinsland, an Eastern manuscripts dealer. In April 1967 Rinsland sent it, unsolicited and free of cost, to Steve Barnett, then an active collector and dealer of such materials in Salt Lake (Barnett to Lance Owens, 12 Feb. 1991). I have made an extensive study of the Smith-Hull letter's content and handwriting. It is my opinion that the letter is not in the hand of Joseph Smith, though the similarities are strong enough to suggest a period forgery of his hand. The signature essentially matches Smith's post-1840 signature (when he ceased to append "Jr.").

The letter itself is interesting, regardless of the author, and represents the type of esoteric Masonic thought to which Joseph Smith might have been exposed. In an esoteric disquisition, the Masonic temple is metaphorically interposed upon the world and the offices of the temple are placed geographically over the face of the globe, as they are arranged within the Masonic temple ceremony. Symbolically, Masonic ritual is seen as an image of greater forces working historically in human society--a telling example of esoteric Masonic thought. This is just the type of expanded, esoteric interpretation one might expect Joseph Smith to impose upon Masonic ritual.

The dualistic view of humankind's guiding genius is also interesting: "Mankind is guided through this life by two Spirits viz light & Darkness two opposites & Thay appear in ten-thousands Shapes & thay have as many names as thay have Shapes." This theme of a *compexio oppositorum*, played against the image of the single all-seeing "Eye/I" of God, is echoed again in the cryptic poem on the last page of the letter: "that our 2 eyes Sprang from his 1; that our 2 Spirits did the Same; Light; Darkness." This dualism of two natures within the single "I" of God, of two eyes and two spirits, of Light and Dark, being born from his singleness, is the crux of an ancient heresy echoed in Joseph's vision of God: a holy wedding of uncreated matter's darkness with the supernal light of consciousness, intelligence or knowing, a creative union ceaselessly bearing new Gods in the dark/light transformation of man/woman.

115 Klaus Hansen, *Quest for Empire: The Political Kingdom of God and the Council of Fifty in Mormon History* (Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1970), 55-71.

116 Minutes of the Council of Fifty, 1880, cited in Hansen, 60-61. Given the forty years elapsed between the events and this recording of the history in 1880, it is possible that the date of the revelation was 1841, as Bennett claimed, and not 1842.

117 The Return 2 (June 1890):287, cited in Robert Flanders, *Nauvoo: Kingdom on the Mississippi* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1965), 249.

118 Prior to joining Strang, Bennett asked, "Can I depend upon my old place? . . . While you will be the Moses of the last days, I hope to be your Joshua, my old position, while you stand as the crowned Imperial Primate, I will be . . . your General-in-Chief." Noord notes, "With the arrival of John Cook Bennett in Voree came stirrings of a royal order, of a kingdom, and of power for James Jesse Strang. [Wrote Bennett:] `I have many things to tell you when I come that I cannot commit to paper--some very important indeed.' " One thing Bennett told Strang after his arrival to Voree, Wis. in the Summer of 1846, was the details about an "Order of the Illuminati". Shortly after his arrival, the "Order of Illuminati" was formed, with Strang as imperial primate and Bennett as his general-in-chief: Bennett was indeed again "Joshua" (Roger Van Noord, *King of Beaver Island: The Life and Assassination of James Jesse Strang* [Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988], 45, 48-49.) Among Strang's followers were others who remembered the organization in Nauvoo, including another prominent disciple of Joseph Smith, George Miller, first Worshipful Master of the Nauvoo Masonic Lodge, member of the "Holy Order" that first received the endowment in 1842, and an original member of Joseph's Council of Fifty in 1844.

119 The most specifically example is Adam Weishaupt's prominent Masonic organization of the same name founded in 1776 in Bavaria. The concept of the Illuminati appeared in varied forms and was widely attacked in anti-Masonic material circulating in the period. Ellwood, 64.

120 In Cagliostro's Egyptian rite the female Masonic consorts were known as "doves." Quinn illustrates a "masonic medal" Smith gave to his plural wife Eliza R. Snow; though otherwise unidentified as to origins, it is interesting that the medal is of a dove. Timothy O'Neill, "The Grand Copt", *Gnosis: A Journal of the Western Inner Traditions 24* (Summer, 1992), 28; Introvigne, 117-35.

121 Brief notations on Neibaur and Kabbalah are found, for example, in Newell and Avery's biography of Emma Smith (325n36). Susa Young Gates presented the first published biographical note on Neibaur in the *Relief Society Magazine* 9 (1922): 132-40. Gates apparently obtained much of her material from Neibaur family sources. A typescript biography of Neibaur is found in LDS archives. This is the most complete biography I have found and contains several stories about Neibaur attributed to family recollections. These sources of information on Neibaur are supplemented by a biographical note in the papers of Louis C. Zucker, a Jewish scholar and Professor of English at the University of Utah who researched Joseph Smith's contacts with Hebrew (see Louis C. Zucker Papers, Special Collections, Marriott Library). A brief recension of this material appears in Theda Lucille Bassett, *Grandpa Neibaur was a Pioneer*, (Salt Lake City: Published by the author, 1988).

122 The biographical material contained here is obtained principally from the undated typescript in LDS archives.

123 Frankist Jews in this area had nominally converted to Christianity. A Sabbatean or Frankist source would have interesting implication for Joseph Smith's understanding of Kabbalah as interpreted and presented by Neibaur--particularly with regard to the concept of the mystical intent of sexual intercourse and anomian sexual relationships. For discussions of these issues, see G. Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973), and his notes on Sevi and Frank in *Kabbalah*, 244-309. Niebaur's parents were both Jew's born around 1780 in western Poland (then part of Prussia) during a period of intense Frankist foment. Though Alexander was born in Alsace-Lorraine, the family apparently had returned to and remained in Unruhstadt (now Kargowa, Zielona Gorz, Poland) after 1814. Kabbalistic interests fostered by the Hasidic movement also were present in this area, and the young Neibaur might have had some contact with them in his studies. Neibaur Family Group Sheet, LDS Geneological Library.

124 Newell and Avery, 325n36.

125 "The Jews," *Times and Seasons* 4 (1 June 1843): 220-22; 4 (15 June 1843): 233-34. The article is introduced by editor John Taylor: "The following very singular notions of the Jews, with regard to their resurrection, will no doubt, be read with interest by many of the curious, especially the lovers of Jewish literature." On the composition of this piece, we have only Neibaur's brief explanatory endnote: "Having commenced this sometime since--and having had the privilege, a few Sundays back, to hear our worthy prophet on the same subject, I was determined to go on with it, and hand it over to you. If you think it will be of any interest to your readers, I shall take another time to continue the subject, and tell you the means, as held by my brethren the Jews, whereby the Lord will bring to pass this glorious work." The proposed continuation never appeared.

126 See G. Scholem, "Gilgul: The Transmigration of Souls", in *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead* (New York: Schocken Books, 1991), 197-250. The concept of transmigration of souls received further discussion in early Mormonism. William Clayton records in his diary arguments among Mormon companions over the idea of "baby resurrection," or rebirth as a mortal infant. See George D. Smith, ed., *An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books in association with Smith Research Associates, 1991), 429-30.

127 Given the importance of this material to the discussion that follows, I have provided an Appendix to this essay listing each citation made by Neibaur in his *Times and Seasons* article.

128 If he did not have the works at hand, then it would appear he either possessed an exceptional memory or had previously compiled and maintained a fairly comprehensive set of notes listing his citations. A third option, that he relied on a single secondary source which provided all of the citations remains possible. His own note on the essay's composition suggests that he took some time and effort with its compilation, perhaps supporting the view that he labored to collate sources. A single work containing this wide collection of citations has not yet been brought to my attention. If Neibaur was quoting from a compilation instead of using the original texts, it is apparent by the material contained therein that his source or sources were Kabbalistic in nature, and that he would have recognized them as Kabbalistic. I have found no mention of Neibaur's books after the Nauvoo period, and at his death documents relating to his estate of do not list personal effects such as books. See documents relating to the estate of Alexander Neibaur, LDS archives.

129 Alexander Neibaur Journal, 26 Apr. 1841, and entries between 24 May 1844 and 17 June 1844. Neibaur's journal begins with his departure from England, and has sporadic entries made throughout 1841, 1842, and 1844. There are no entries for 1843. The more frequent entries made during May and June 1844 indicate Neibaur was a regular companion to Smith. On 24 May 1844 Neibaur also records Smith's recounting to him of the "First Vision". Neibaur Journal, 1841-62, LDS archives. Smith's journal records several additional study sessions between the men during the spring of 1844: on 18 March, "At home reciting German with Neibaur"; 23 May, "reading Hebrew with Neibaur"; and 3 June, "read German with Neibaur." Scott Faulring, ed., *An American Prophet's Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books in association with Smith Research Associates, 1989), 460, 481, 487. On 23 March 1844 William Clayton notes that Neibaur accompanied Smith on a sensitive trip to confront Robert Foster about allegations of Smith's sexual improprieties. Smith, *An Intimate Chronicle*, 127.

130 A newly amalgamated and authoritatively edited text of the King Follett Discourse appears in Stan Larson, "The King Follett Discourse," *Brigham Young University Studies* 18 (Winter 1978): 179-225. Three excellent interpretive articles appear in conjunction with the discourse's text in the same issue.

131 Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1945), 366.

132 Van Hale, "The Doctrinal Impact of the King Follett Discourse," *Brigham Young University Studies* 18 (Winter 1978): 213.

133 Larson, "King Follett Discourse", 202.

134 The phrase "Rosh--the Head Father of the Gods" is used by Smith to clarify his translation shortly after the above text. Ibid, 203.

135 The *Hebrew grammar for the Use of Beginners* was published in 1833 and 1834, and a copy is found in Special Collection, Marriott Library. See the discussion in Louis C. Zucker, "Joseph Smith as a Student of Hebrew," Dialogue: *A Journal of Mormon Thought* 3 (Summer 1968): 41-55.

136 Zucker, 52-53.

137 Steven Epperson's recent study offers an example of the failure by even a well-trained Mormon historian with interests in Judaism to recognized the Kabbalistic sources in Neibaur's essay. Epperson makes brief mention of Neibaur and his article, but essentially quotes Zucker. Steven Epperson, *Mormons and Jews: Early Mormon Theologies of Israel* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992), 101.

138 Scholem, *Major Trends,* 221. Yehuda Liebes also comments on this same Kabbalistic interpretation of Genesis 1:1 in *Studies in the Zohar*, 153-54.

139 In Kabbalistic interpretation, the "Hidden Nothing" in Kabbalah is not "nothing" in the common sense, but the vast unorganized mystery preceding creation. There is no truly *ex nihilo* creation in Kabbalah. Thus Joseph's translation "organized" accords with Kabbalah. Scholem, *On the Kabbalah*, 102-103. See also Idel, *Kabbalah*, 220.

140 Interpretively, this verse can be read in Kabbalah to mean that the brightness or *Zohar* from which creation emanated is Intelligence, the first Being of God. The sympathy of this view with Mormon theology is apparent now, as it perhaps was then.

141 Zohar I:15a. All translations used here and below comes from the Sperling translation of the Zohar: Harry Sperling and Maurice Simon, trans., *The Zohar*, in five volumes (London: Soncino Press, 1931).

142 In the amalgamated text, the phrase is taken from William Clayton's transcription given here (Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *The Words of the Joseph Smith* [Orem, UT: Grandin Press, 1991], 358). In Larson's amalgamation, the bracketed words in the reconstructed text "ROSHITH [BARA ELOHIM] signifies [the Head] to bring forth the Elohim" are interposed by Larson based on the assumption that in the original other Hebrew words may have been spoken but not recorded (Larson, 198 n15). Clayton's transcription stands well without these interpolations. Joseph's use of the words "bring forth" is also significant; this is a closer translation of the Kabbalistic concept of emanation implied in the verse and perhaps a better choice than the word "created" used by the Sperling translation of the *Zohar* quoted above (Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 98-99).

143 The full text of this passage in the *Zohar* is as follows: "A further esoteric interpretation of the word bereshith is as follows. The name of the starting-point of all is Ehyeh (I shall be). The holy name when inscribed at its side is Elohim, but when inscribed by circumscription is Asher, the hidden and recondite temple, the source of that which is mystically called Reshith. The word Asher (i.e. the letters, Aleph, Shin, Resh from the word bereshith) is anagrammatically Rosh (head), the beginning which issues from Reshith" (*Zohar* I, 15a). It should also be noted that each Hebrew letter has an independent meaning; the letter *resh* has the meaning "head."

144 *Zohar* I, 23b.

145 Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph*, 379.

146 In the King Follett Discourse on two occasions Smith noted he had been recently "reading from the German," and he does actually read aloud in German near the end of the discourse. Neibaur was Joseph's tutor in German and Hebrew, and was the only person in Joseph's immediate company who knew German, Hebrew, Latin, and Greek, the languages Smith mentions or uses during his oration. And Neibaur was the figure in Nauvoo who knew Kabbalah and perhaps even possessed a copy of the *Zohar*, containing the exegesis Smith used in his greatest doctrinal discourse. Hale notes that the sections of the King Follett Discourse containing foreign languages probably receive some advanced preparation (Hale, 210). It seems probable that Neibaur helped.

147 See David John Buerger, "The Adam-God Doctrine," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 15 (Spring 1982): 14-58.

148 The *Zohar* says, "The King [God] seeks only that which corresponds to him. Therefore the Holy One, may He be blessed, dwells in him who (like Him) is one. When man, in perfect holiness, realizes the One, He is in that one. And when is it that man is called one? When man and woman are joined together sexually. . . . Come and see! At the point at which a human being as male and female is united, taking care that his thoughts are holy, he is perfect and stainless and is called one. Man should therefore act so that woman is glad at that moment and has one single wish together with him, and both of them united should bring their mind to that thing. For thus has it been taught, `He who has not taken a woman is as if he were only a half'" (*Zohar* III, 81a).

149 See Quinn, 138-40.

150 Mozart was of course a Mason, and his royal patron, Joseph II of Austria, (reign 1780-90) was both a Mason and a patron of Masonry (Ellwood, 64).

151 Robert Fludd, "Aboris Sephirothicae," in *De Praeternaturali utrusque mundi Historia,* Vol. 2, 157, part of the larger work, *Utruiusque cosmi maioris* . . . (Frankfurti, 1621). One also notes that Joseph Smith's presidential campaign poster (illustrated in Smith, lxxxvi) is similar to several other illustrations in this volume by Fludd.

152 *Millennial Star* 9 (January 15, 1847): 23-4.

153 "Since Clayton attended virtually all meetings from general chruch conferences to Joseph Smith's private prayer circle, and was often appointed to take minutes, he was usually present when Smith delivered prophecies and revealed new doctrines" (Smith, *An Intimate Chronicle*, xxiii).

154 James B. Allen, *Trials of Discipleship: The Story of William Clayton, a Mormon* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 331-36.

155 Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 184.

156 "The theosophical system of the Sefiroth was interpreted by Abraham Abulafia as referring to human actions and psychological states . . . [I]n principle, the psychologizing of Kabbalah in the ecstatic trend served to bridge the immense gap between it and philosophical psychology, which never emphasized the esoteric nature of this realm of speculation" (Idel, *Kabbalah*, 254-55).

157 For example, see Scholem's discussion of this practice among the Sabbateans in his *Sabbatai Sevi*, 426-32.

158 The Eranos Society met each summer in Ascona, Switzerland, beginning in the 1930s. From 1933 through the 1950s Jung was a dominant presence in these conferences--gatherings which united many of the great minds of the time. In 1949 Gershom Scholem first lectured at Eranos and continued to lecture almost annually until 1961. These eleven lectures now compose the body of two books by Scholem, *The Mystical Shape of the Godhead and On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism*. Jung and Scholem shared a warm intellectual friendship, though Scholem was hesitant to develop his studies of Kabbalah using purely psychological terminology. See William McGuire, *Bollingen: An Adventure in Collecting the Past* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982), 152-54. See also Joseph Dan's foreword to Gershom Scholem, *The Mystical Shape of the Godhead*, 1-14. A six-volume collection of papers from the Eranos conferences edited by Joseph Campbell has been published by Princeton University Press as Bollingen Series XXX.

159 "Analysis of the psychological implications of using Kabbalistic techniques to attain paranormal experiences cannot be avoided. If the approach proposed here to see Kabbalah more in terms of experiential phenomena than has been previously done is correct, then psychology, as an invaluable tool, must gradually be integrated into future study of this kind of mysticism." Idel, *Kabbalah*, 25.

160 For a summary of Yates's debt to Scholem, see the introduction to her *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age*, 1-3.

161 In addition to *The American Religion*, see Bloom's *Kabbalah and Criticism* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975); and his critical interpretation titled "A Reading," in Marvin Meyer, *The Gospel of Thomas: The Hidden Sayings of Jesus* (San Francisco: Harper, 1992), 111-21.