

Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia - Reading List

Books on the Kabbalah

The Purpose of this part of the list is to provide a basic guide for Fratres who wish to study the Kabbalah. It is confined to books in English that are more or less readily available, and many of which are to be found in the High Council Library. [See Ordinance VI para 5 for the borrowing rules]. Fratres seeking more specialised works, or those in languages other than English, should contact the Librarian General. Who will be happy to offer assistance.

It should also be noted that the choice of books on this list and all comments upon them reflect the personal opinions of the compilers and do not necessarily reflect those of other members of High Council.

Kabbalistic Texts

BAHIR: The Bahir

An authentic kabbalistic text attributed to Rabbi Nehuniah ben Hakanu. Translation, introduction and commentary by A Kaplan (New York 1979). Possibly the oldest kabbalistic text, dating from the first century A.D.

SEPHER YETZIRAH:

Akiba ben Joseph, Rabbi. The Book of Formation (Sepher Yetzirah)

Translated from the Hebrew by Knut Stanring. Including the 32 paths of wisdom. With an introduction by A E Waite (1923).

This is the basic text for an understanding of the Tree of Life and the Paths upon it. A modern reprint exists. Among other translations is one by Dr. W Wynn Westcott (1911 3rd edition, later reprinted) which is of historical interest within the Society)

ZOHAR: Mathers S L M The Kabbala Denudata Translated from the Latin version of Knorr von Rosenroth (1887). There are many later reprints. This contains three texts, the Greater and lesser Holy Assemblies and the Book of Concealed Mystery that are looked on as spurious by many orthodox Jewish Kabbalists. Nonetheless, it has been influential among western esotericists ever since its first publication.

ZOHAR: The Zohar.

Translated by H Sperling and M Simon (1931 - 1934).

Five volumes. Often reprinted. The standard English version containing all the commentaries on the Books of the Pentateuch.

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Commentaries and Studies

FORTUNE Dion: The Mystical Qabalah (1935)

A classic interpretation of the Tree of Life by one of the major exponents of the traditions of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn.

GINSBURG C: The Kabbalah: its doctrines, development and literature.

(1865) Often reprinted this is a concise and still useful study. It was the first objective work on the Kabbalah to be published in this country and it was used extensively by the founders of the Society.

KNIGHT Garth: A practical Guide to Qabalistic Symbolism (1965).

Two volumes. The author (Basil Wilby) is the most influential of post-Dion Fortune practical occultists who attempt to syntheses traditional ideas with ritual practices developed in the last century.

MUELLER E: A History of Jewish Mysticism (Oxford 1946).

A difficult book to find but one of the best overviews of the subject, setting each era of kabbalistic thought in its place.

SCHOLEM Gershom: Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism (1946)

On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism (1965)

Origins of the Kabbalah

Edited by R J Zwi Werblowsky (1987)

Scholem was unquestionable the greatest kabbalistic scholar of the 20th century and all of his books are of immense value to the student. They are, however, densely written and tend to assume a certain knowledge of Hebrew. Nonetheless they are to be recommended highly as the acme of critical scholarship.

WAITE A E: The Holy Kabbalah, a study of the Secret Tradition in Israel

(1929) As a Christian interpreter of the Kabbalah from the mystical standpoint, Waite has no equal. His prose is difficult but it will repay careful study. A modern American reprint is currently in print.

All of the above can be recommended without reservation, but there are many other works which the student will encounter that should be approached with a certain degree of caution. These are often well-written, usually from a standpoint of the occultist, but should not be looked upon as

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academically reliable studies. If this is borne in mind, also that the views of the authors in question are often highly idiosyncratic, they can be read with enjoyment and may prove beneficial.

Examples of these are:-

SUARES Carlo: The Cipher of Genesis (1970)
The Song of Songs (1972)
The Resurrection of the Word (1975)

SCHAYA Leo: The Universal Meaning of the Kabbalah (1971)

REGARDIE Israel: A Garden of Pomegranates (1932)
Regardie's odd transliteration of Hebrew proper names tends to confuse the student new to the Kabbalah. It is otherwise a good introductory work.

PAPUS (Gerard Encausse): The Qabala. Secret Tradition of the West (English translation 1977). As a supposed version of two books of the Zohar this is a nonsense, but it is extremely entertaining and illustrates well the manner in which Levi's mind worked.

Books on Alchemy

Alchemical Texts:

ASHMOLE Elias: Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum
Containing several Poetical Pieces of our famous English Phillosophers.
A reprint of the London edition of 1652 with a new introduction by Allen Debus (New York 1967)
Includes the texts of Norton's Ordinall of Alchemy and the works of Sir George Ripley, Edward Kelly and others.

BACSTROM'S: Alchemical Anthology
Edited and with an introduction by J W Hamilton-Jones (1960).
A useful collection of minor pieces edited by a late Frater who was our most distinguished student of alchemy.

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BERTHELOT M P E : Collection des Anciens Alchimistes Grecs
(Paris 1888) 3 volumes (Reprinted in one volume in 1963).

A standard collection of texts and translations of Greek and Graeco-Egyptian works (variously Hermetic and purely technical)

The HERMETIC MUSEUM Restored and Enlarged (1893) 2 volumes
(Several later reprints exist)

Now first done in English from Latin of 1678. Edited by A E Waite, containing 22 texts this is one of the more important Latin alchemical collections and is the only one available in English.

PARACELSUS: The Hermetic and Alchemical Writings of Paracelsus.

Translated into English and edited by A E Waite (1894) 2 volumes.

With several reprints it is the only substantial English translation of the most influential of the Renaissance alchemists. It is based on the 1658 edition of the works, which is not the most reliable, and it may be useful also to consult J Jacobi's Selected Writings of Paracelsus (1969)

VAUGHN Thomas: The Works of Edited by A E Waite (1919) A modern reprint exists.

This is the most readable and accessible edition of Vaughn. The standard scholarly edition (by Alan Rudrum, Oxford 1984) is both difficult to use and expensive.

The titles listed above are merely representative of the enormous number of extant alchemical texts. Others that may be usefully consulted are those in the series of translations published by A E Waite (1893 - 1896; with later reprints) and the excellent series of reprints issued in Adam McLean's Magnum Opus Hermetic Sourceworks.

Critical studies and interpretations of Alchemy:-

ATTWOOD Mary Anne: A Suggestive Inquiry into the Hermetic Mystery with a Dissertation on the more celebrated of the Ancient Philosophers. With an introduction by W L Wilmshurst (Belfast 1918).

A seminal work first issued - but hastily withdrawn and most copies destroyed - in 1850. Its thesis is that alchemy is a path to regeneration of the soul by way of altered states of consciousness. The student should note that it is a most difficult book to read and digest.

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BURCHARDT Titus: Alchemy. Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul (1967) later reprints.

A sound and reliable spiritual interpretation by a modern mystic.

DE ROLA Stanislas K: The Golden Game. Alchemical Engravings of the Seventeenth Century (1988).

An extensive selection of alchemical emblems and most useful as an introduction to the pictorial imagery of alchemy.

HOLMYARD E J: Alchemy 1957

A Sound and accurate historical introduction to the pictorial imagery of alchemy.

JUNG Carl C: Psychology and Alchemy 1968

Alchemical Studies 1967

The interpretation of alchemy in terms of the archetypes of Jung's psychology and in relation to his form of psychoanalysis.

LINDSAY Jack: The Origins of Alchemy in Graeco - Roman Egypt 1970

A popular but reliable work, with detailed analysis of esoteric ideas in the Hellenistic world.

NOTE:

For information on early printed texts the one invaluable work is:-

FERGUSON John: Bibliotheca Chemica. A catalogue of the Alchemical, Chemical and Pharmaceutical works in the collection of the late James Young. (Glasgow 1906) (Currently reprinted) two volumes.

The student will also become aware of numerous works advocating alchemy as a practical science dedicated to physical regeneration as well as to spiritual enlightenment. Opinions of their value are necessarily subjective, but among them the works of the American 'Frater Albertus' may be noted and there is one English author, Archibald COCKREN, who claims to have produced "results of a tangible, definite and practical nature" which he set out in his book Alchemy Rediscovered and Restored 1940 (later reprinted).

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The Rosicrucian Tradition.

Rosicrucian Texts

FAMA and CONFESSIO: The Fame and Confession of the Fraternity of R:C: Commonly of the Rosie Cross With a preface by Eugenius Philalethes (i.e. Thomas Vaughn) 1652. Now reprinted in facsimile together with an Introduction and notes etc. by Frater F N Pryce.

Frater Heron J Lepper: Problems of the Fama 1989

The first two of the Manifestos giving the life, work and aims of the Fraternity. Originally published in German in 1614 and 1615
Available from the Secretary General.

THE CHEMICAL WEDDING: The Hermetic Romance or the Chemical Wedding. Written by(?) Christian Rosencrutz, translated by E Foxcroft 1690
(Facsimile text printed in MONTGOMERY, Cross and Crucible, see below).

The third of the Manifestoes, this allegory was the work of the Lutheran scholar, J V Andreae (he later denied being the author to his wife), who incorporated complex alchemical and hermetic symbolism into the text.

MAIER Michael: Laws of the Fraternity of the Rosie Crosse (Themis Aurea)
Facsimile reprint of the original English edition of 1656. Introductory preface by Manly P Hall 1976.

Maier was among the most important of early apologists for the fraternity.
His book first appeared in 1618.

VILLIARS N: Montfaucon de Comte de Gabalis newly rendered into English with commentary and annotations (by Mrs C T Dudley) 1913.

First published at Paris in 1670, the Comte de Gabalis is concerned chiefly with the idea of Elemental Spirits - a doctrine traditionally associated with Rosicrucianism.

SECRET SYMBOLS of the Rosicrucians of the 16th and 17th Centuries.
An exact reproduction of the original but with the German text and terms literally translated 1936.

The best English edition of the Geheime Figuren der Rosenkreuzer, a pictorial anthology of alchemical, hermetic and Rosicrucian symbolism

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originally published at Altona in 1785-88. There is a coloured issue of this translation but the colours are inaccurate and it is suggested that Fratres may wish paint the diagrams themselves on the basis of the coloured German facsimile of 1919. An edition issued by Franz Hartman in 1888 is both incomplete and inaccurate. [A translation, with modern explanations, was given by Frater Norman Hackney (a metallurgical engineer) in 'Quarterly Notes' 1921 - 1931]

ALLEN Paul M (Ed.): A Christian Rosenkreutz Anthology. Revised 1981. A valuable collection containing translations of the three Manifestoes and Robert Fludd's The Rosicrucian Brotherhood (1629), together with a reduced facsimile of the Secret Symbols and two pictorial alchemical texts: Khunrath's Amphitheatre of Eternal Wisdom and Stolcius's Pleasure Garden of Chemistry. It also contains a series of essays on Rosicrucianism by Rudolf Steiner - necessarily from a partisan point of view.

Historical Studies

WAITE A E: The real history of the Rosicrucians 1887. Modern reprints exist. An early study, superseded by the following title but still of use. It was written to counterbalance the lunacies of Hargrave Jennings's work (see below).

WAITE A E: The Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross 1924 Reprinted in the U.S.A. in 1961.

The definitive history, in English, of the entire Rosicrucian movement, although more recent historians have disputed some of Waite's conclusions about the early history of the Fraternity. (Copies in many Masonic libraries)

McINTOSH C: The Rosicrucians. The History and Mythology of an Occult Order Revised edition 1987.

More limited in scope than Waite's work but useful for the chapters on more recent developments.

YATES Frances M: The Rosicrucian Enlightenment 1972 And in paperback. A scholarly analysis of the Manifestoes and the milieu in which they appeared, seeing them as an integral part of a scheme to promote a tolerant Protestantism in central Europe, tinged with the hermetic ideas of Dr. Dee.

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JACKSON A C F: Rose Croix . The History of the Ancient and Accepted Rite for England and Wales Revised and enlarged edition 1987.

Although the Masonic Rose-Croix Order has no direct connection with Rosicrucianism, it is so seen by the general public and this excellent history enables us to understand its true relationship and to explain this to others.

Histories of the S.R.I.A.

GREENSILL T M: History of the S.R.I.A. (Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia) 1987.

Frater Greensill's work is now the standard history of our Society and it has superseded the various brief and unreliable histories of Frater Westcott.
(Available from the Grand Secretary)

WILSON H C B: Early History of the S.R.I.A. (1937 - 1944)
The Origin of our Rosicrucian Society (1947)

Fratre Wilson's extremely detailed accounts of the earliest Colleges supplement the preceding work.

VOORHIS H V B: Masonic Rosicrucian Societies (in *Rosicrucian Fama*, 41/42, 1971). An earlier edition of 1958 has illustrations.
A prime source for the history of our sister Society in the U.S.A. and for the Society in Scotia.

Commentaries on Texts, and Studies of Rosicrucianism

GARDNER F L: A Catalogue Raisonne of works on the Occult Sciences.
Volume 1 Rosicrucian Books. Second edition 1923.

A bibliography listing 761 titles; it is useful for the student seeking information on early works.

BENNELL M & WYATT I: An Introductory Commentary on The Chemical Wedding. c.1960

Based exclusively on the ideas of Rudolf Steiner, but useful for its sensitively abridged translation of the text.

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CASE Paul Foster: The True Invisible Rosicrucian Order. An interpretation of the Rosicrucian Allegory and an Explanation of the Ten Rosicrucian Grades, 1985 Fourth edition.

It should be noted that the Grades are linked to those of Case's B.O.T.A. and not those of the S.R.I.A.

HALL Manly P: Codex Rosae Crucis. A rare and curious manuscript of Rosecrucian interest, published in its original form (with) Introduction and Commentary, 1938. Later reprints exist.

A manuscript similar to the Secret Symbols with an excellent critical commentary.

KNIGHT G & McLEAN A: Commentary on the Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz. 1984

With a revised and modified version of Foxcroft's translation.

MONTGOMERY J W: Cross and Crucible, Johann Valentin Andrese (1586-1654) Phoenix of the Theologians. 1973 in two volumes.

A biography and critical study with a facsimile text of The Chemical Wedding and an exclusive commentary.

NOTES

There are many papers on various aspects of Rosicrucianism throughout the '*Transactions of Metropolitan College*'. They can be located through Frater Keith Jackson's index of Papers published in the Metropolitan Transactions to 1980. Fratres will also find many valuable papers in issues of the Hermetic Journal.

Inevitably Rosicrucianism has attracted bizarre, fanciful and idle speculation from many sources over the years, and much has been written on the movement and its alleged history and beliefs that is both academically and spiritually worthless. It would be invidious to specify the latter but fratres would do well to approach the following samples of the genre with due caution.

HEINDEL M: The Rosicrucian Cosmo - Conception 1908. Many reprints
The author's ideas do not represent in any way Rosicrucianism in a guise recognisable as such.

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JENNINGS Hargrave: The Rosicrucians, Their Rites and Mysteries. Third edition 1887 in two volumes. Later reprints exist.

A nonsensical work which has nothing whatsoever to do with its supposed subject.

WITTEMANS Fr: A New and Authentic History of the Rosicrucians. 1938

A highly misleading title, the 'history' being neither new nor authentic.

A.M.O.R.C. Fratres will inevitably encounter works issued by the self-styled Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis. This order is rightly proscribed by the United Grand Lodge of England, and fratres will gain little or no benefit from a study of its publications

GNOSTICISM, NEO PLATONISM and THE MYSTERIES

Classical Paganism (General)

a) Texts

LUCK George: Arcana Mundi. Magic and the Occult in the Greek and Roman Worlds. (Wellingborough 1987.)

A well annotated collection of ancient texts in translation.

b) Studies

FERGUSON B: Religions of the Roman Empire (1982)

GRAVES Robert: Greek Myths (1958)

A carefully annotated presentation of Greek mythology which includes all the tales of gods and heroes. On this level it is invaluable; however Grave's interpretation of the myths tend to be highly idiosyncratic and should be treated with a degree of caution.

HARRISON Jane E: Prilegomena to the Study of Greek Religion (Cambridge 1908) 2nd edition, reprint available.

The best and most detailed of the older works on Greek religion.