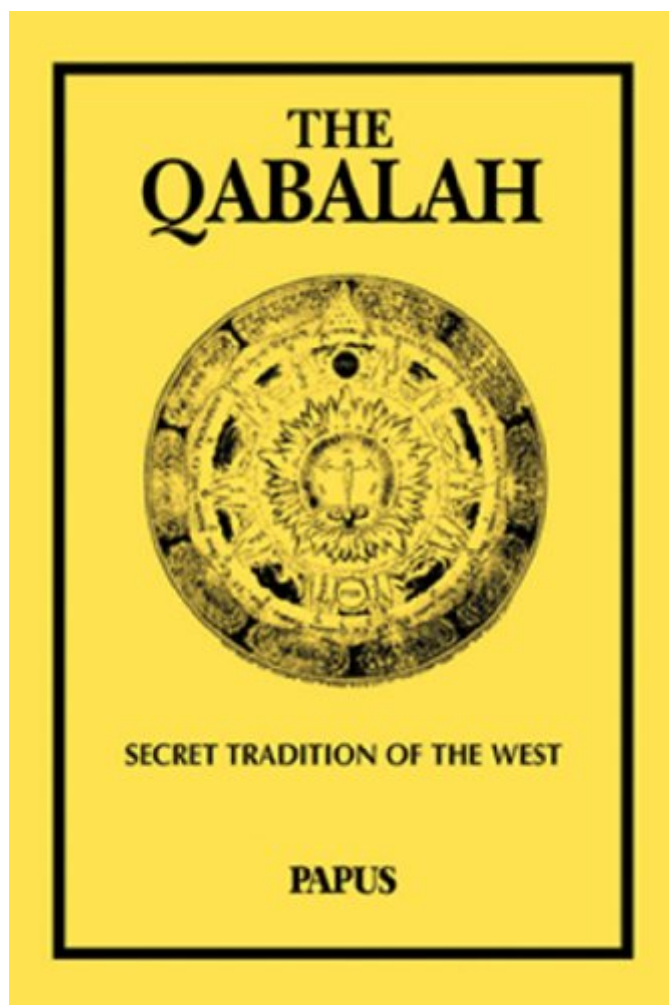


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The Qabalah: Secret Tradition Of The West



Synopsis

Papus (Dr. Ge'rard Encausse 1865-1916) was one of the great occultists of France, and was instrumental in developing and popularizing Eliphas Levi's earlier suggestions of a link between the Hebrew alphabet and the twenty-two trumps of the tarot. The Qabalah, first published in 1892, is particularly valuable because, along with his original theoretical explorations of the Qabalah, it also contains his complete translation of the Sepher Yetzirah, Eliphas Levi's famous Ten Lessons on the Qabalah, Rabbi Drach's important and rare treatise, The Qabalah of the Hebrews, and an extensive Qabalistic bibliography. This book gives a concise and valuable introduction to the sacred science of the Hebrews, and thus to the esoteric teachings of Christianity.

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Customer Reviews

This book is great! It is one of the few books on the Hermetic Qabalah that is out there. Sure you can find tons of books on Kabbalah but it is very hard to find books on Esoteric Qabalah, which is a completely different thing all together. Papus is a very important author in the study of Occultism. Papus was in close contact with Eliphas Levi and many other very interesting french occultists of his

day. I highly suggest all of his works, especially this book "The Qabalah" and "The Tarot of the Bohemians", Classics in their own right.

Papus writes brilliantly for his chosen audience: people who like to think, who like to develop very complicated mental maps, people who enjoy to explore the limits of the world while resting in their armchairs. What seems to be missing, in my opinion, is any sort of practical use for this information. He does a so-so job of summarizing the basic principles of the Qabalah (talking about the esoteric and exoteric aspects, discussing basic philosophical issues), but it seems to be a lot of gentleman lecturing without anything of true value to be gained. If one wants to learn about the Kabbalah, it is difficult to go wrong with Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan. The Kabbalah is, after all, so strongly located within the Jewish tradition that to extricate it seems to destroy much of the system. Rabbi Kaplan was an intellectual, a scholar, and an actual practicing Kabbalist.

You might wonder why the author calls the Qabalah the "secret tradition of the west" when he seems to believe it originated with Abraham, Moses, or the Egyptians. "Middle east" would seem more appropriate, but actually the subtitle is correct, because this is definitely Qabalah from a western occult viewpoint. Papus includes huge quotes from other occultists, most notably Eliphas Levi. Levi gives high praise to the Catholic religion and encourages initiates to continue practicing the religion they were born into. Of course, he also says that Osiris and Jesus represent the same thing. The author's real name was Gérard Encausse. Papus was a name taken from a book by Eliphas Levi. Anyway, the book really is quite interesting if a bit difficult to wade through. It doesn't help that some of the diagrams are still in French. The first part of the book consists mostly of letters from other authors which you can read later. I think maybe pages 74-91 were put there to scare off the casual reader. This section is quoted from somebody called Sédir. (Sédir was a pseudonym for Yvon Le Loup - a member of Fabre des Essarts's Eglise Gnostique Universelle together with Papus as well as the Ordre Martiniste.) Sédir's writing is very difficult to understand. You could easily read that whole section and not have any idea what you read except to know that the worthy Qabalist is somebody advanced in years, with knowledge in all manner of subjects, and who possesses "absolute purity". I would recommend skipping directly to page 92 (the beginning of part 2) where Papus begins his actual introduction to the topic. Of course, the included translation of the Sepher Yetzirah is a big selling point, but I must confess I haven't gotten that far yet. The large bibliography was another selling point, but it is of course outdated as this is such an old book. I had to laugh at his comment on Blavatsky's Isis Unveiled: "Confused

compilation of French writers on the Qabalah. - No orderly method." I thought this was funny for two reasons. First of all, because Papus undoubtedly knew Blavatsky, and secondly because some are likely to think this accurately describes at least 1/3 of his book as well. I'd give the book three stars for being hard to understand except that so many other books on the topic seem to be nothing but fluff. So, at least the book provides a lot to chew on and doesn't try to overly simplify a complex subject. However, if you're interested in Jewish Qabalah without the western occultism, you'd better look elsewhere.

This book gives a clear picture of the Hermetic Qabalistic teachings given in the French mystery schools, which are somewhat different than in the English orders such as the Golden Dawn. The interested Qabalist may learn new information and new ways of considering the ancient tradition of the Jews. The material on the Shem ha Mephorash angels alone is worth the price of the book.

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