



New York College
Societas Rosicruciana
In Civitatibus Foederatis
Summer 2022



From the Chief Adept
R. Curtiss Montgomery IX^o et Philologus Zelator

Fratres, ego salutant vos,

Fratres, at our last few convocations we have been marking the change of seasons with brief ceremonies commemorating solstices and equinoxes. Early Rosicrucian writings and Enlightenment philosophers tell us that to more fully understand God we need to study his creation, and enjoin us to study the second great book, the Book of Nature. The first two grades of our order give us a basic vocabulary, but each of us carries out further study of Nature in his own way. This is the beauty of living in a climate which has distinct seasons – we get to observe nature in different aspects of its glory, from blistering heat to blizzarding cold, and everything in between.

In my case, the study of nature is mostly a warmer weather process, as I live in the midst of a conservation area of hundred-year-old Carolinian forest full of interesting flora and fauna, and sail on Lake Erie, the most unpredictable of the Great Lakes. Sailing has led me over the years to develop deeper understandings of the physics of wave action, clouds, barometric pressure, weather fronts, and most particularly the wind. I feel closest to nature while punching my boat through steep waves in a good breeze with spray on my face. Each frater in our College will have their own similar moment – a moment when they feel one with God's creation – and these are moments to savor and reflect upon.

Nature occasionally delivers a surprise, and the lake-effect snowstorm of November 18-19 which buried the Western New York and Tug Hill Plateau areas was certainly one of them. In the Buffalo area, snow accumulations ranged from 15" where I live north of the city, to 48" at the home of Past JDSM Bruce Renner in the city, to 59" at my daughter's home south of the city in Orchard Park, where the record for the most snow in 24 hours anywhere in New York State, ever, was broken.

What lesson may we draw from this? That it was the right decision a couple of years ago to plan our January convocations as Zoom events! So set aside the morning of Saturday, January 7, 2023, to join with your fratres of New York College and Colleges in the US, Canada, and other countries for an interesting program. And if you're in a mind to present, let the Celebrant and Secretary know and they will accommodate you.

I wish each and every frater wherever they may be and in whatever circumstances, a contemplative Thanksgiving and a joyous and reflective Christmas.

LVX,
Curt



From the Celebrant **RW Richard Powell VIII° et Philologus Theoricus**

Ave Fratres!

I was one day back from the SRICF High Council in Louisville, KY, when I tested positive for COVID. I believe that I contracted it the day before leaving for Kentucky and to my knowledge no one who was in my company over that weekend has fallen ill since. This is a terrible opening paragraph to begin telling you about the great time we had while in Louisville.

Representing New York College, along with myself, were Fratres Walter Cook, Myron Deputat, (now Past) Junior Deputy Supreme Magus, Bruce Renner and first-timer Caleb Haines. Getting dinner on arrival night proved to be a challenge as many restaurants closed at 9 when we were just starting to look after our long drives, but we did ok.

Friday kicked off with the Procession of Officers and many introductions of Fratres from around the world, as well as other dignitaries. The first presentation of the weekend came from someone familiar to us all, RW Piers Vaughan, IX°, KGC, New Jersey College with "In Measure, and Number, and Weight": The Esotericism of Numbers, Part 2"; followed by "An In-depth Look at Astral Projection - Myth or Science?" from RW Matthew J. McColm, IV°, California College. The afternoon wrapped with yet another engaging practicum from our own RW Myron Deputat, VIII° with "The Use of Sound and Light in Meditation." Myron continues to wow them in Louisville and was invited to present at several other colleges outside the United States. We are waiting for the Hawaiian College to offer an all expenses paid trip (that includes his roadies).

Saturday morning kicked off with some reports before another slate of great presentations. RW Thomas D. Worrel, VIII°, Golden State College (but now living in NYC) presented "The Noble Knights of the Golden Cord: A Lost American Rite of Esoteric Freemasonry" and "A Narrative of the Royal Arch: It's Important Connection in Ancient and Modern Craft Masonry" came from VW Timothy R. Brinkmeyer, VII°, Indiana College.

Despite the (mostly) esoteric presentations, dinners and the pomp & circumstance, the real highlight of attending the High Council is meeting & conversing with Fratres from around the world. While some are truly just there to add another title to their names, most are very engaged in esoteric work and those conversations can be brilliant. Oh, and did I mention the

Hospitality Suites and the Bourbon? Kentucky hosted one Hospitality Suite this year and that was the place to go to sample Bourbon. Myron & I loved one that was from Alabama of all places. Who knew?

All told the weekend was a great success and kudos go to our own RW W. Bruce Renner for planning the session. This was his last year as the Junior Deputy Supreme Magus, so here's a big, virtual Grand Honors to Bruce for the great job he did during his term. His successor is RW Piers Vaughan who I am sure will put together some great programming for next year.

We heard about the Southeastern Regional Conference for the SRICF and its success. I have volunteered to try to put together for the Northeast (NY, NJ, MA, RI, NH, CT, PA) with the idea of Albany being a possible location - it's somewhat central to all those states & reasonably inexpensive for hotels. I am not sure how this will proceed as before we even left the room, the LI College Fratres from NYC were trying to move it to Manhattan. So much for keeping it convenient & affordable. We will see what happens.

Our next NY College Meeting is slated for Saturday, January 7 via Zoom. Keep that morning and early afternoon free as we hope to have 2 very interesting presentations.

I hope you all have a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Sapere Aude...

Rick



From the Secretary

RW Myron J. Deputat, VIII^o et Philologus Adeptus Minor

Cari Fratres,

As many of you know, we have been hit by a major weather event here in the Buffalo area. I trust that everybody has safely weathered the storm. It will take several days for the Valley of Buffalo to be dug out. Fortunately, our next meeting will be via zoom and therefore not require any travel during what looks to be an interesting winter!

On a more positive note, the Thanksgiving holidays are upon us. It is a time when we all spend time with family and friends and remember those things which are most important in our lives. Over this holiday, I will be sending dues notices to all of you along with copies of the *Fama* and *Ad Lucem*. Though they were delayed, our dues cards did arrive. Our new Secretary General now has things well in hand and they should be coming on a more regular basis now.

I look forward to seeing you all soon and wish you all a very happy holiday season!

LVX,

Myron



From the Editor

RW W. Bruce Renner, IX°, KGC, PJDSM et Philologus Adeptus Exemptus

The concept of skepticism has been around at least as long as the ancient Greek philosophical schools. In the millennium since, skepticism has continued to evolve. Today it is part of a major branch of modern philosophical pursue, epistemology, or the philosophy of knowledge. Skepticism is a bit of a thorn in philosophy's side though, as it posits difficult challenges to the idea of knowledge, up to and including, "Can we really know anything?" Those of you intrigued can find many books on the subject, some of which are geared to amateur philosophers i.e., most of us.

Like many high-minded subjects, the term skepticism has entered the vernacular albeit in a simplified way. We all know skeptical people are those that are difficult to convince. Given the subject matter of many of our Convocations, a skeptical Rosicrucian would seem to be an unlikely animal, but I would argue that a good dose of skepticism is a requirement for the Rosicrucian and the truly speculative Freemason. The reason for this is that spiritual matters are largely an internal experience that everyone experiences differently. Sure, we can talk about it (although words often fail to describe), but it is often impossible to demonstrate what is happening to us to other people and is not repeatable even to ourselves.

Take meditation, for example. I've read a great deal on the subject and talked to many folks who meditate. The reports go from a mild relaxation effect, to opening doorways to other planes and meeting with angels. Then there are some folks who don't like it and don't perceive any benefit. Interpreting what people report is difficult. When people report fantastic experiences that we don't have, we may feel our own practice is inadequate. Here a bit of skepticism is in order. The person may indeed have these spectacular results, and just as some of us have a musical ear and never have to read music, so some folks may have way better meditation abilities than average. That doesn't mean the rest of us won't get good results and some benefit with practice. On the other hand, the person might be fibbing or embellishing a bit because they think they're expected to report great results, or embarrassed they haven't accomplished much, or are struggling just like most of the rest of us.

In between there is the issue of self-interpretation. How people interpret and communicate their experiences varies greatly. Even such things as optimism vs. pessimism in the person's makeup can greatly affect how they communicate their experience. The bottom line is that we need to

consciously and conscientiously evaluate our own work and the work of others without blindly taking everything at face value.

Over the next few issues, we will explore this topic more and help you add a robust skepticism tool to your Rosicrucian toolbox. In this issue, check out some recommendations in the book reviews. For example, the book review on *Fooling Houdini* makes us aware that performance magic isn't always a magic show where we expect to be fooled. The roots of performance magic are much darker, as con men, card sharks, snake oil salesman, and tent revivalists use the same tricks to get you to believe and put money on the table.

Let me close by saying that a good dose of skepticism shouldn't lead to cynicism. Nor should it impede your ability to believe in the absence of proof. Where we should be particularly careful is when someone offers apparent proof. As the saying goes, if it's too good to be true, it probably isn't...or at least it needs very close inspection.

Stay your Path, and, especially now, stay healthy!

Scire! Velle! Audere,! Tacere!
To Know, To Will, To Dare, To Remain Silent

LVX,

Bruce



RW Walter Cook, NY College's newest High Council Member

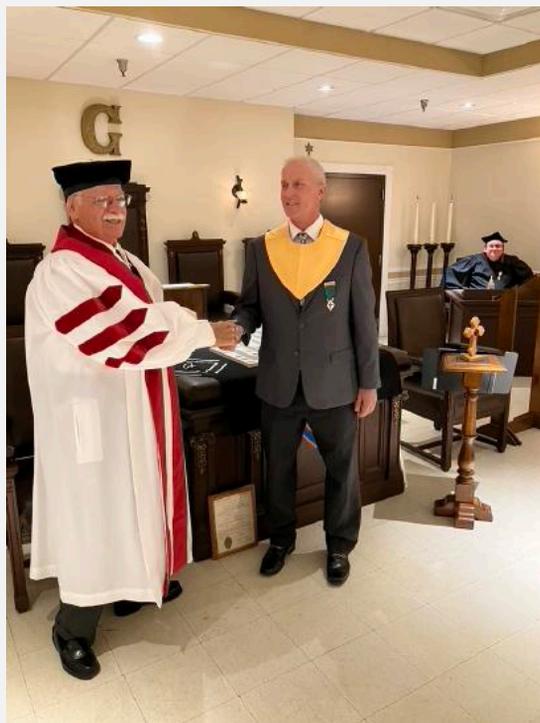
On Friday evening of the recent High Council session, Frater Walter Cook received the Eighth Grade of Magister, becoming Right Worth Walter Cook. Walt has been a faithful supporter of NY College and has presented on many subjects. He also serves as Assistant Editor, and frequently takes part in Grade conferrals. Please congratulate him on this well-deserved honor.

Although the picture is small you may note that he is sporting the new Rosicrucian tie. The Secretary General brought 275 with him and they sold out. Also available as a bow tie while supply lasts. Order through Frater Myron.

Also of interest is the stunning new certificate design by Jeffery L. Cook, IX, KCG.

College Happenings

Due to timing, there were two convocation of the College between newsletters. On July 30, we held our Summer Convocation. The program of the day was the conferring of all the Second Order Grades, thus completing the grade work for our current class of 5 aspirants. As always, we made time for our usual lunch of pizza, salad, and cookies. Congratulations to our new Seventh Grade Fratres: VW Timothy P. Korytko, VW John C. Newmann, Jr., VW Keith Poppendeck, VW Terry A. Byard, VW John I. Morse.



Chief Adept Montgomery presents one of our new 7th Grade Fratres, VW Keith Poppendeck with his jewel while Secretary Deputat looks on



A small portion of the total crystals exhibit on display at our October convocation

On October 29th, our Secretary, RW Myron Deputat gave an interesting presentation on crystals. He brought with him an extensive collection of crystals, and everyone got to take a sample home. Myron also led a practicum on using crystals for meditation. RW Walter Cook was unable to present on further aspects of crystal as schedule, but RW Bruce Renner stepped in with a deep dive presentation on the Adeptus Minor Grade. We look forward to RW Cook's presentation at an upcoming Convocation.

The standard opening on the Grade of Zelator included a short supplemental ritual observing the Autumnal Equinox. There was also plenty of time for our usual lunch!

Our Winter Convocation coming up on January 7, 2023, will be via Zoom. As usual we are always interested in having presenters come forward. If you haven't presented before, why not make it a New Year's resolution, and qualify for induction into the Societas Philologi!



2022
High
Council

Louisville,
KY

See the
Celebrant's
message for
more
Louisville
details!



At the banquet, l-r Jason Sheridan, Piers Vaughan, Myron Deputat, Walter Cook, Bruce Renner, Rick Powell, Caleb Haynes



JDSM Craig McFarland and PSM Bill Koon



From the Brown Hotel roof area



High Council dais



Getting ready to present!



Myron displays his presenter's certificate. Some of his elaborate equipment used in this year's practicum is in front.



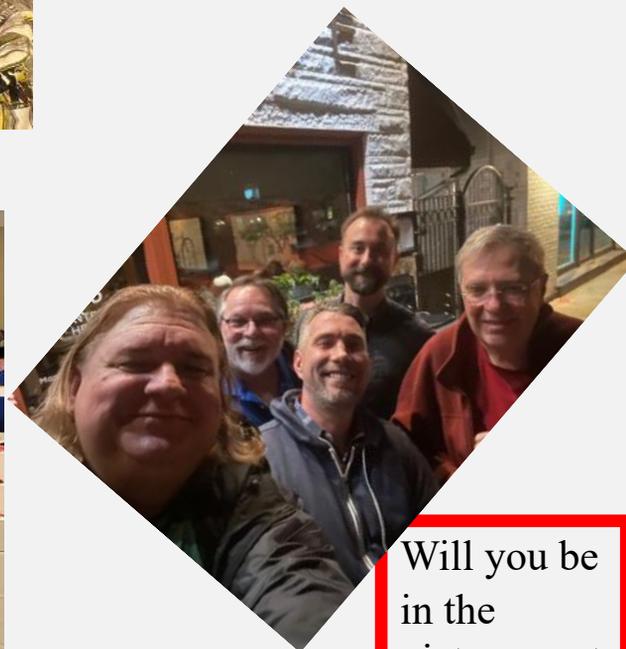
Bruce Renner and Walter Cook with Chic and Tabatha Cicero



Enjoying some conversation at a break



SDSM McFarland and new JDSM Piers Vaughan at the close of the session



Will you be in the picture next year???



Judaism Part 2

Life cycles

Even the mildly religious usually return to the fold for certain life events such as marriage. The Jewish faith is no exception and, in fact, has a robust collection of ceremonies for these occasions.

Let's begin with the birth of a child. For male children, circumcision is ideally performed eight days after birth. Now a practice largely recommended by healthcare professionals, circumcision was historically the ultimate mark of a Jew. Although many reasons are given for the practice, Rabbinic Judaism usually was silent on rationalization. If for whatever reason a male child couldn't be circumcised, he must do so when feasible even if already an adult. All converts must also be circumcised.

The next rite of passage for children is coming of age. For girls, the age is 12 and for boys, 13. At these ages, children are expected to keep all the religious laws and *mitzvot* (commandments). Historically, the coming of age wasn't cause for extraordinary celebration, but today *bar mitzvot* (son of commandment or belonging to commandment) and *bat mitzva* (daughter or belonging to *mitzvot*) often involved elaborate ceremonies. Although less formal, the study of the torah was considered central to the religious obligations of Jews. In early times, this was largely a male pursuit, but increasingly women also are encouraged to such study - even in Orthodox circles.

Marriage is considered the normal and preferable state of life for adults. Marriage is viewed as a source of joy, gladness, mirth, exultation, pleasure, delight, love, and peace, although procreation is considered the main goal. Although not an article of faith, modern Jews are commonly monogamous. In ancient times, marriage took place in stages, but today these are performed at the same time. The first stage was *kiddushin* (betrothal) in which the groom provides the bride with an object of value (today a ring) in front of two witnesses and makes his formal proposal. The next is *ketubah* (marriage document). This document was commitment to pay the wife a specific sum of

money in the case of divorce. Today betrothal and marriage are performed together at the wedding. Divorce is viewed as unfortunate but is an accepted practice. Although anciently it favored men, modern practice provides equal rights to both men and women.

While preservation of life is of supreme importance in Judaic practice, when end of life comes several ceremonial practices are performed. Ideally, a dying person recites the *Shma* confessing their sins. The corpse is cleaned and dressed in plain white shrouds, and men frequently have *tallit* (prayer shawls) placed on them. Burial in the ground is, traditionally, the only system countenanced. After burial, a series of mourning periods commences. This first lasts for seven (*shiva*) days. *Mourners* refrain from everyday activities, remain at home, and receive condolence visits there. Daily prayers are also performed. The next stage lasts 30 days, when mourning ends for all but immediate offspring of the dead. They maintain a third stage for a full year. During the first year (actually eleven months) after death and on the anniversary of the death, a prayer known as the *Kaddish* (sanctification) is recited by the children of the deceased

The relationship between God and Man in Judaism

By their nature, religions accept, as an article of faith, a divine principle at work in the world. (Some would argue that certain forms of human society such as Communism should be considered religions based on the *non*-existence of such a principle, but that is for another essay). In the evolution of Judaism this coalesced around the idea of a monotheistic god, *Yahweh*, albeit with many faces and divine helpers. It should be noted that this foundational principle was accepted without proof, and the Bible doesn't offer any arguments to support such belief. It is a given and cannot be in doubt.

Everything else, however, is conjecture. Every religion, nevertheless, tries to include other articles of faith as other fundamental principles. In Judaism, our present concern, we noted in the first part of this essay that early Jewish thinker Maimonides listed 13 principles of Judaism. The first stated that God exists. The other twelve deal with the nature of God and the



https://www.hebrew4christians.com/Life_Cycle/life_cycle.html#loaded

involvement of God in the life of an individual and of society. We have noted that the Jewish people have a high regard for intellectualism, and, therefore, Jews were encouraged to speculate on their religion. This caused sects to develop which, adhering to the general faith, argued over the small points.

In the immediate post biblical times, three main sects emerged the Sadducees, the Essenes, and the Pharisees. The Sadducees believed in a God that was totally removed from any active involvement in this world, and that there was no form of resurrection, or, indeed, any human existence after death. The Essenes on the other hand, claimed everything was preordained by God, and there was no free will. The Pharisees believed that everything that transpires is the will of God, but man has free will to choose evil or good.

By the middle ages, major problems became apparent to Jewish thinkers. The last of Maimonides points posited reward for the righteous and the punishment of evil. Yet this frequently isn't the case in our dealings with the world. This is one aspect of the problem of evil and the impossibility of absolute good in a dualistic reality. One line of thought suggested that rewards are primarily

connected to future existence, and in any case good deeds serve as their own reward. Nevertheless, this problem has haunted Judaism (and other religions, as well). Going back to biblical times, how can our all-powerful God allow his Temple to be destroyed?

Another area of considerable debate was the notion of resurrection. Biblical sources tend to make this a future societal event and less about personal resurrection, although the existence and persistence of the soul after death seemed to be a largely accepted belief.



Siege and Destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans (1850 painting by [David Roberts](#)). Looking southwest Wikipedia

This brings us to the subject of the messiah. Before the resurrection of the soul (or the collective resurrection of the community) there would first be the appearance of the *messiah* (to anoint), a future heir to the Davidic throne. There are two principal visions of this event. The first, largely Judaic centric, would be a return to the glory of Israel and is referred to as the *restorative vision*. A second vision is referred to as the *Utopian* and is seen as a total revision of the laws of nature where there would prevail as lasting peace between men and between man and nature. These two views probably co-existed among different elements of Jewish Society. Over time, events have served to changed and challenged the idea of what the appearance of a messiah would actually look like. Was the appearance of Zionism the messianic event? If so, it is a double-edged sword between restoration and radically secularization

Three important Judaic philosophers

Greek philosophy introduced a revolutionary way of thinking about the world. It set about not only

investigating the physical universal, but also the divine. As such, it presented challenges to Judaic thought that held that their religion held the truth of divine inquiry as part of their religious tradition. While Greek thinking presented challenges, it also influence philosophical inquiry by Jewish thinkers and often induced them to make a reexamination of their beliefs.

Perhaps the most important early Jewish philosopher was Maimonides, mention in part one of this essay. He attempted to address concerns of Jews exposed to the rational inquiry espoused by the Greeks. For example, many Jews who were versed in biblical scholarship were troubled by various anthropomorphic allusions to God. This led to contemplation of just what can and cannot be known of God. How can God be one yet have so many attributes. The essence of God's unity and existence were major topics that Maimonides attempted to address.

The first great Jewish philosopher though was Philo, an observant Jew living in Alexandria in the 1st century C.E. He had a comprehensive knowledge of the Jewish religious tradition and was a bible scholar (although interestingly he read mostly in the Greek, his Hebrew being rudimentary). He also had Greek philosophical training, and he used an allegorical approach to draw out deeper meanings than would appear at face value. Although he drew no practical conclusion, Rabbinic Judaism frowned on such exercises as they were potentially a challenge to the practice of keeping religious laws. Because of this, his writings were preserved mostly by Christian monks rather than in rabbinical literature.

One other philosopher of note came much later in 10th century Iraq. This was Sa'adya Gaon, the head of the Sura Rabbinic Academy. In his time, Rabbinic Judaism was seriously challenged by Karaism, a form of Judaism that claimed loyalty to the Bible alone. They also challenged the belief that God created the world, suggesting instead a mediation of angels.

Another challenge was provided by Arab thinkers who had rediscovery Greek thinking and their examination of religion by rational thought rather than unchallenged belief. Sa'adya approach was to present rational think and revelation as complementary rather than mutually exclusive.

The mystic tradition in Judaism

The Western Esoteric Tradition relies extensive on the *Kabbalistic* mystic tradition of Judaic theology. The Kabbalistic tradition emerged in Spain in the 13th century with the publication of the *Zohar* (Radiance). Exactly how far back oral traditions involving Kabbalistic think go is unknown. However, other forms of mysticism , based on the image of the four-wheel chariot of Ezekiel (*Merkabah*) originated in the period of 200-700 CE. Followers of this tradition, as "descenders of the chariot," attempt, using all sorts of techniques, to spiritually ascend to the heavens and witness the Divine Throne.



Philo (Wikipedia)



Maimonides (Wikipedia)



Saadiah Ben Joseph Gaon (prabook.com)

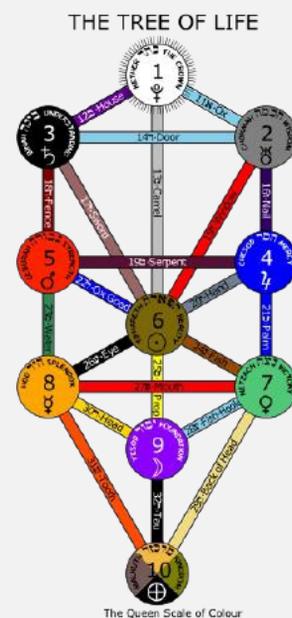
However, in more modern times mystic practices became more centered on the Kabbalah which means *tradition* in Hebrew. Originally, it was used by Rabbis to describe the legal tradition going back to Moses, but mystics co-opted it to suggest a more hidden tradition passed on to worthy initiates. The Kabbalistic Tree of Life, in turn, has been co-opted in the practice of many magical and mystical orders outside of Judaism. The Tree represents the path from God to man and from man to God. It represents how the divine manifests in the physical world or World of Action. It separates out God as he *is* from the aspect of God we can know.

A central figure in the early refinement of the Kabbalah was Isaac ben Solomon Luria (known as “Ari”). He maintained that God had withdrawn into the *en sof* (limitless) leaving a void into which man and the Tree were created. An ongoing process of withdrawal and emanation developed which he connected the ideas of cycles of exile and redemption. This led to another way of considering the problem of evil.

The expulsion of Jews from Spain in 1492 was an event that caused many Jews to embrace the Kabbalah as an alternative to Rabbinical studies. It had far reaching social implications. For example, it is connected to the emergence of Hasidism, which stress prayer and daily behavior over traditional learning.



Rabbi Isaac ben Solomon “The Arizal” Luria findagrave.com



The legal frameworks of Judaism

There are many points of theological, philosophical and mystic Judaism that are quite elegant in their approach to contemplating God. However, for the average Jew, living on a day-to-day basis, an equally elegant system of legal principles (here used in the broadest possible sense) developed under Rabbinic Judaism. There are two components involve here. The first is referred to as *Halakha* (to walk). These laws covered not only religious subjects such as prayers and festivals, but also dietary, family, and civil law. Thus, a Jew’s religious life was and is deeply integrated into his social and even professional life.

The other component is *Aggada* (discourse) and is everything not found in Halakha. This includes, but is not limited to folklore, allusions to history and medicine, tales of the sages, and ethical statements not found in rabbinic literature.

The Halakha considers its roots and divine authority to derive directly from the written Bible. The rabbis were sufficiently sophisticated to realize that not every word or decision formulated in their circles was transmitted verbatim to Moses. In addition, not all of their traditions and decisions could be found explicitly in scripture. Ultimately, they would distinguish between laws that are “from the Torah” and those “from the rabbis.” Although this was accepted, there was a general belief that most of the tradition was divinely mandated. The legal premise for this understanding was that revelation happened only once, at Sinai, and it was there that Israel was commanded to accept all subsequent judges or teachers. As an example, prophets were deemed messengers that provided God’s ethical instruction (or displeasure) but could not add or subtract from the Halakha.

One difficulty is that new situations arise that are not covered in the Torah. This would force the rabbis to make changes or impose restrictions. In some cases, this wasn’t universally applied, so rabbis in one area might make changes that affect only their community.

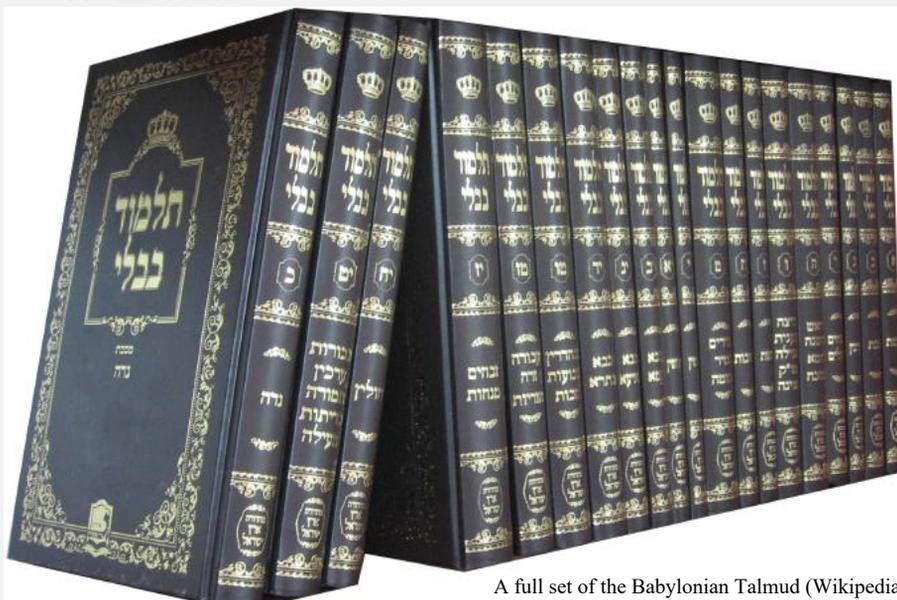
Historically, Halakha started as an oral tradition, but around 220 C.E. the *Mishna*, the first systemic compilation appeared. Study of the Mishna led to the creation of two *Talmuds* - the Palestinian (or Jerusalem) in the 4th century C.E. and the Babylonian in 500-600 C.E. The Talmuds weren’t codes of law, but extremely broad commentary on the Mishna, as well as aggadic material.

In the Middle Ages, the Mishna was systematically codified, and the *responsa* was issued that collected all subsequent deliberations and decisions. Numerous legal codes were produced during this period including Maimonides *Mishneh Torah*, *The Four Rows (Arba’ah Turim*, referred to generally as the *Tur*) by Rabbi Jacob ben Asher, and R. Joseph Karo’s *Bet Yosef* (The House of Joseph). The *Tur* was one of the first Hebrew books to be printed.

Until the 18th century the acceptance of the Halakha was the ultimate sign of proper Jewish behavior. Groups that couldn’t accept this premise were marginalized. The most noted example of this was the Karaite schism, which tried to integrate the modern secular world with traditional Jewish belief.



Presentation of The Torah,
by Édouard Moïse, 1860
Wikipedia



A full set of the Babylonian Talmud (Wikipedia)

In the 19th century Reform Judaism appeared in Germany, which actively questioned the Halakha as the standard for Jewish behavior. One major contributing factor was modern biblical scholarship, which challenged the commonly held beliefs on the origins of the Bible. We find today then that Orthodox Judaism still accepts the Halakha as absolutely binding at one end of the spectrum.

Reform Judaism at the other end stresses the importance of prophetic ethical teaching but doesn't consider the Halakha binding. Between the two is Conservative Judaism which accepts the binding nature of Jewish law but allows for the evolution of such laws in response to changing times.

Judaic Pluralism

Judaism is an old religion. It would be surprising, therefore, if every Jew subscribed to every aspect of the complex faith in the same. There is, in fact, no one authoritative body or person whose decisions are binding on all adherents of Judaism. That is not to say that there haven't been attempts, and indeed the biblical accounts of Judaism seem to have indicated this as a goal.

In the First Temple Period, a unifying factor was the monarchy, but after the death of Solomon the monarchy itself was split into two competing kingdoms. The Second Temple period, by contrast, saw a plurality of Jewish groups. We have already briefly discussed the conflicting views of the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes. With the Dead Sea Scrolls now in our possession, we see there were even sub-divisions in these groups. The Second Temple period, however, did attempt to reconcile these groups through an institution known as the *Sanhedrin*. Although it was imagined as a body that could settle all matters before the religion, it fell far short of the ideal.

	Sadducees	Pharisees	Essenes
Social Class	Priests, aristocrats	Common people	[Unknown]
Authority	Priests	"Disciples of the Wise"	"Teacher of Righteousness"
Practices	Emphasis on priestly obligations	Application of priestly laws to non-priests	"Inspired Exegesis"
Calendar	Luni-solar	Luni-solar	Solar
Attitude Toward:			
Hellenism	For	Selective	Against
Hasmoneans	Opposed usurpation of priesthood by non-Zadokites	Opposed usurpation of monarchy	Personally opposed to Jonathan
Free will	Yes	Mostly	No
Afterlife	None	Resurrection	Spiritual Survival
Bible	Literalist	Sophisticated scholarly interpretations	"Inspired Exegesis"
Oral Torah	No such thing	Equal to Written Torah	"Inspired Exegesis"

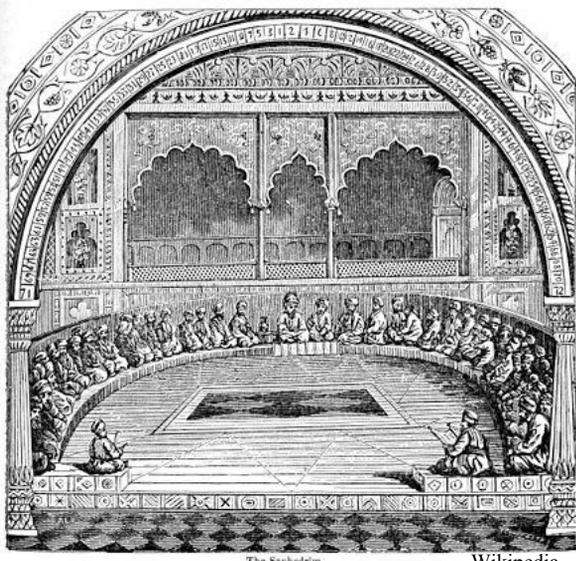
<https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/pharisees-sadducees-and-essenes>

In the Post-Temple period we have seen the emergency of Rabbinic legal literature e.g., the Mishnah. The Mishnah and other output of the period made provision for and even encouraged minority opinion. Although there continued to be endless disagreement between the rabbis of Palestine and Babylonia, the Talmud didn't really consider this harmful.

A bit later in the Geonic period of the 9th century, there was once again an attempt by one establishment, Babylonia, to impose its opinions on the vast majority Jewish communities and disfranchise the Palestinian center. This, however, was the last real attempt at this type of unification.

Although diversity characterized the Jewish world from late antiquity through the early Middle Ages, some groups were marginalized. One of the most prominent were Jewish who

accepted various parts of the Christian doctrine. Another group, briefly mentioned before, were the Karaites, who reject the authority of the rabbis and the binding status of the oral tradition. In large measure, however, and despite opposition, major threads of Judaic thought – philosophical, mystical, and legal – eventually retained major positions and a legitimate status.



The road wasn't always easy. An excellent example is the emergence of *Hasidism* (pious) in 18th century Poland. Influenced by Kabbalistic ideas, it stressed ecstatic prayer, love of God, and maintenance of Joy, as well as adherence to a pious rabbi (*Zaddik*). Hasidism directly challenged the rabbinic learning establishment which became known as the *mitnagdim* (opponents). Also opposing Hasidism was the *Haskalah* (Jewish Enlightenment) movement which saw it as an obstacle to Jewish immersion in modern society. Despite these conflicts, all of these contending ideologies have found a place in modern Jewish culture.

Modern times has brought into sharp focus the conflicting needs of maintaining the core elements of the Judaic tradition with the need to engage with modern society and the non-Jewish world. Reform movements have looked to move services from Hebrew to the language of their country of residence, and to relax certain ceremonial aspects of rabbinic tradition. Modern biblical analysis has shown conclusively that while the Bible might have been divinely inspired, it was written by human beings, and in many cases the traditionally assigned author has been brought into question. This has challenged traditional rabbinic authority based in biblical interpretation. Stress on a national restorative element was abandoned, as was the belief in a personal messiah.

All this, of course, didn't go unopposed. Even among reformers, there was disagreement on how far reform should go. Reform, especially the more extreme form, was opposed by the rabbinic leadership, and many Jews remained traditionalists – known as Orthodoxy. During this period, there was little middle ground between reform and orthodoxy.

More recently, when Judaism took root in the United States, both the Reform and Orthodox groups migrated. The Conservative movement, a largely American phenomena, emerged as a middle ground. Pragmatically, these different threads have challenged modern Jews to define where they belong. Long held traditions continue to be challenged. As an example, whether a Jew must be Jewish on his mother's side, whether either a Jewish father or mother makes one a Jew, or whether Jews can marry outside the faith at all, is now an open question. However, recent events such as the Holocaust and the founding of the State of Israel, have caused Jews to put differences aside and contributed to cohesiveness in an otherwise pluralistic faith.

Judaism and “Others”

One perennial question that all serious inquiry into religion brings to light is why there are so many religions – by some count more than 100,000 in recorded history. Perennialism helps us identify certain basic notions common to all religions, but they are fewer than one might

imagine. Failing to find an answer to this question has cost millions of lives as religious crusaders have attempted to convert by the sword rather than the pen.

Judaism, among contemporary religions, has tried to approach this question intellectually. Pragmatically, this may be due in large part because they have never had the numbers to take more aggressive action, and while largely open to converts, have never been evangelistic.

The God of the Bible is presented as creator of the world and the particular God of Israel. Why God should single out the people of Israel as his people, with the implied exclusion of everyone else, isn't addressed. What is clear is that this was a two-way agreement: God selected the people of Israel, and they chose to follow God, thus establishing a covenant. This was a new perennial notion because for pagan religions, their gods were local to them, and not thought of as universal. Worship was thought of as a given not a choice.

What God's motive was in entering into such a covenant with the Jewish nation is an open question, but Maimonides perhaps addressed it best by claiming that we just can't know what lies behind God's actions. Others, however, thought there was some distinct, although not apparent, reason, for this covenant. One finds echoes of this in Kabbalistic teachings.

Some have then interpreted this election of the Jews as a mission to bring God's intentions to the rest of mankind as a universal message. Judaism certainly didn't create any ethnic or racial barriers to prevent non-Jews from joining the faith and the community. It didn't even claim a necessity for embracing all the tenets. The rabbis did develop a theme of the seven Noahide laws that they believe were incumbent on all mankind (the term Noahide refers to Noah). It was thought that those that followed these laws would have a place in the world to come. There were, of course, those among the Jews who didn't embrace the idea of conversion, even when of proven religious conviction. However, the Bible itself related many righteous converts, such as Ruth the Moabite. Stories developed around the idea of foreign rulers converting, which although largely fanciful, indicated a willingness to indulge in such wishful thinking. Conversion, therefore, was widely accepted, although active solicitation of converts wasn't. Conversion though implies that one can elect to be Jewish after-the-fact and thereby included in the same community that was once set apart by God.

The idea of *particularism*, that the people of Israel have a special, divine destiny, and *universality*, that God's blessing falls on all people, continues to be debated. The threads of both are found through the forms and ceremonies of the Jewish faith. For example, consider a prayer recited at the conclusion of every public service. The first passage reflects a particularism, a hierarchy among the nations. The second passage, however, has a universal theme. Early modernity saw a move toward universalism, particularly by those looking to integrate Judaism more effectively into the mainstream. By the mid-20th century, particularly post-holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel, there was again a reevaluation and a movement from the non-Zionist, or even anti-Zionist culture of the early 20th century, to more of a neo-particularism.

The Seven Noahide Laws

- 1. Removal from Idolatry**
- 2. Aversion to sexual misconduct**
- 3. Aversion to bloodshed**
- 4. Not to blaspheme**
- 5. To maintain a just legal system**
- 6. Not steal**
- 7. Not to eat the flesh cut from a live animal**

Concluding thoughts

I have not been able to identify any period in history where the number of Jewish people exceeded 20 million (the highest is about 18 million according to some demographic studies). This makes Judaism the smallest religion we have thus far discussed. Its importance, however, is outsized in comparison to its demographics. It is the first world religion with a sustainable monotheism (nascent monotheism appeared in earlier cultures e.g., Egyptian, but were non-sustainable). It is the parent of the two largest world religions, Christianity and Islam, comprising together more 5 billion adherents. Its rich culture and devotion to intellectualism has enriched world culture in myriad ways. As Rosicrucians, in particular, we have learned the important contribution the Kabbalah has made to the Western Esoteric Tradition.

Further study and acknowledgements

While I'm doing some of the leg work for you in our exploration of world religions, I am, like you, a student. This essay, like most of the others in this series, is based on a 6-hour course offered by Wondrium taught by Isaiah M. Gafni, Ph.D., a Professor of Jewish Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. This essay, although containing some supplementary text by me, is largely a reduction of the material in this course. Consider it my class notes. If interested in further study, I highly recommend viewing the whole course, and reading the included course guide. Although this course can be purchased as a DVD, I recommend subscribing to Wondrium if you have any interest in continuous learning. For \$30/quarter, you will have complete access to huge library of college level courses, as well as, skill-based subjects from crafts, to learn a musical instrument, to computer programming.

The Jewish people's love of learning and books has created thousands of texts in dozens of languages. In English, you will find books on every aspect of Judaism, from the introductory to the profound. The Wondrium course, it should be noted, provides an extensive bibliography.



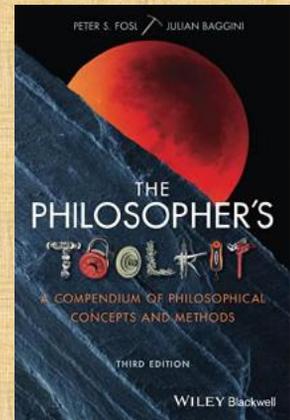
In bibliothecam

The Philosopher's Toolkit A Compendium of Philosophical Concepts and Methods

By

Julian Baggini

Peter S. Fosl



Philosophy is a difficult subject to get a handle on. By some estimates there have been a 100,000 religions throughout recorded history, but as our exploration of the current ones have disclosed, there are perennial themes that run through all of them. Although there are perennial themes in philosophy, it covers just about every human endeavor. This making it a vastly more difficult subject of study.

For beginners, one common approach is to take a course or read a book on the history of philosophical thought. We recently reviewed *The Philosophy Book* which provides just such a high-level overview. There are scores of others to choose from. While I've always found these an enjoyable reading pastime, the material generally doesn't stay with you very long.

Another approach is to explore philosophical works around particular subjects. Mortimer Alder's *Great books of the Western World* is indexed, for example, by ideas which points to different Western works (it also provides summary essays). Take, for example, the subject of beauty. We know it when we see - or do we? Is there a universal, absolute standard for beauty (or for that matter a definition) or is it relative to the observer in each case? You have just entered into the bottomless pit of Philosophy.

I would suggest another approach, one that I wish had been included in my years of servitude in the halls of academia. Learn first how to think. *The Philosopher's Toolkit* is a good starting place. It covers close to a hundred different tools for philosophical (or just good critical) thinking under 5 categories: *argument, assessment, conceptual distinctions, radical critique*, and something called *at the limit*. There is also a list of internet resources. There is a similar book on critical thinking that encompasses this book with additional ideas. As outlined in the JDSM's essay, critical thinking is a very necessary skill for Rosicrucians given our subject areas, but really given the state of the world, everyone could use a lot more of it.

I've read this front to back, and although some may find it boring, I now have a good idea of the tools available, although I admit to not having every method at my fingertips. Everything takes practice, but this is a good reference to use when something seems questionable in your thinking or the think of others. If you're a heavy reader of esoteric literature, you need to have a good nose for baloney (I use polite phasing here!).

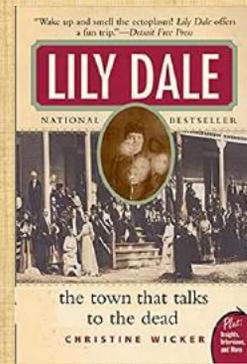
Spicing up the read a bit is some information about the philosophers behind certain methods, and plentiful examples.

Recommended!

Lily Dale: The Town That Talks to the Dead

By Christine Wicker

HarperOne; Reprint edition (September 26, 2006)



Lily Dale, New York, is a small town 60 miles south of Buffalo, New York. Its fame is related to its early and continued involvement in the Spiritualism movement. Spiritualism has as a central tenet that when people die their spirit remains. People who are natural mediums or develop mediumistic talents through training can communicate with these spirits who impart information about mundane and divine matters. There is some debate as to whether Spiritualism is a religion, but in Western New York it certainly was caught up in the “burned-over” era (a slang term for a wave of religious fervency that sweep through Western and parts of Central New York in the mid 19th century) which also saw the raise of Mormonism and Millerism. All of these were basically Christian, albeit with additional trappings. It would be tempting to call Spiritualism a fringe group, but with 7-8 million followers at the turn of the 20th century, they represented at least 10% of the then population of the United States.

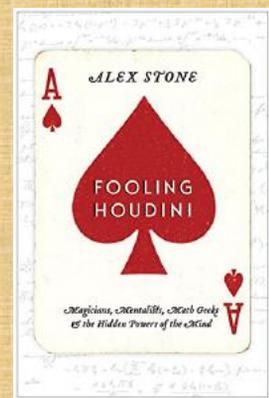
Christine Wexler was a religion columnist for the *Dallas Morning News* when she convinced her editors to allow her to investigate Lily Dale, and as she puts it, get out of the summer heat of Dallas. As it turned out she spent more than one summer in Lily Dale (summer is the peak tourist season there) and a newspaper piece turned into a book. Nevertheless, Ms. Wicker was, and is, a journalist, and her writing reflects it. This book reads as a series of newspaper columns. It is a pleasant and quick read, but a bit disjointed at times.

The book focuses journalistically on four areas. First the inhabitants of Lily Dale itself, mostly those involved in the business of mediumship. The second are those visiting Lily Dale as more than a tourist i.e., those looking to get answers through supernatural means. The third is snippets of the historical backstory of Lily Dale. The fourth and the glue that holds it all together is Ms. Wicker’s own experiences within the Lily Dale community. As mentioned previously, this is at times a bit disjointed. We hear the back story of someone who wants to connect with the spirit of a deceased loved one, but the chapter ends without resolution, and another aspect of the town is picked up. Several chapters later we pick up the story again.

The best part of the book, though, is Ms. Wicker’s own experiences in investigating the claims of supernatural influence. There is an oscillation in her between skeptic and believer. Like many of the historical investigations of the town, there is a sense that even the most scientific of investigators hope to find something substantial. Certainly, the author is hopeful, and there are chapters when she is almost convinced, but not quite. There should be no expectation that this book will provide definitive proof that a hundred and fifty years of investigation hasn’t, but it does reveal a few truths about Lily Dale. One of these is that many of the people seeking the help of a medium come in a state of deepest depression, and leave feeling a sense of resolution and renewal. I can’t help but think that many would spend countless hours and dollars in psychotherapy without the same result. At the same time, for those of us scientifically curious, but not influence by psychological trauma, Lily Dale remains a very elaborate performance of stage magic. That shouldn’t discourage you from read this book, if for no other reasons that it is a fascinating piece of local history. Recommended.

Fooling Houdini: Magicians, Mentalists, Math Geeks, and the Hidden Powers of the Mind

by Alex Stone



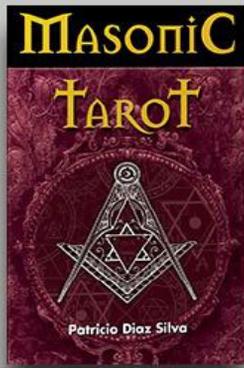
I've always liked a good magic show, but I never thought of it being esoteric until I read this book. Performance magic that goes from large scale stage effects to delicate close-up sleight of hand, is not the type of magic we generally discuss at convocations, but perhaps it should be. This book won't teach you magic tricks (although some are explained at a high level), which will disappoint some readers who will feel they have been fool into buying the book. It is instead the author's journey from a kid interested in and displaying some talent for magic to becoming a professional level performer.

The community of magicians, like any special interest group (the Freemasons come to mind) remains largely unnoticed by the general public. They meet just as we do in hotel conventions, and even have some buildings of their own. Like old time Masons you have to work to join in, but in the "To B1, Ask 1" tradition, not wait to be asked (likely will never happen!). While many of us have learned a trick or two which we might use to entertain family and friends, serious magicians spend the same enormous amount of practice time that concert musicians spend honing their art. And magic is an art form!

Of interest to us is that magic shows how dramatically narrow the scope and limitations of our senses really are. It is challenging to our sense of reality and our conviction that we really know what's going on around us. Modern theories of perception and experimental confirmation have underscored what magicians going back thousands of years intuitively observed – we are easily deceived. Although magic is great as entertainment, history suggest that much of magic was and is employed as cons from cup and pea street betting, to card sharks, snake-oil salesman, and phony religious miracles (see also the review on Lily Dale). Here practice to perfection is an absolute requirement. It is embarrassing messing up a performance, it can be fatal get caught cheating at cards!

This book had many more epiphanies for me such as the role of mathematics and the art of memory in magic. It definitely shows that to become a professional magician (or even a talented amateur), as in art and music, natural talent is required, but honed by countless hours practice, and no little amount of inventiveness. Oh yes, and the showmanship inherent in any stage performer.

I did a quick look on the net to see what Alex was up to these days. In addition to magic, he received a MS in Physics from Columbia. Through out the book he seem to have no trouble getting on a plane and flying across country to a magic convention. How did he make a living? Was he independently wealthy? I couldn't find any current information on him though. So. while he's taken some of the mystery out of magic, he is still a bit mysterious himself. Recommended!



Many of you are undoubtedly familiar with *Brick Masons*, a relatively new Masonic supply house. In addition to the usual rings, pins, and aprons, *Brick Masons* provides an interesting collection of novelty items. As one who has more Masonic bling than I will every need, even I have purchased a few of these items – after all, who can resist a pin of Yoda with a Masonic apron! As such, I receive a continuous stream of email from them, most of which goes directly into my trash folder. Recently, however, my eye caught something interesting – a new Masonic Tarot deck by artist Patricio Diaz Silva.

Given the subject matter of Freemasonry, a Masonic themed tarot deck might seem like an easy task. It's not. The primary issue (although not only) is that Tarot has gender dependent cards. Masonry, as a male only organization has very little female references. It starts out easy, the Fool, the Magician, and then, oh no!, the High Priestess, followed shortly by the Empress, and then, God forbid, the Lovers. Masons, who are also Tarot enthusiasts, admittedly a small group, always hope that someone will come up with a meaningful way to create a deck of their very own. I have thought about how I would create such a deck many times myself without success.

Silva is a good artist, but I found the Masonic Tarot to be not very inspired. Much of it substitutes figures wearing Masonic garb for the traditional figures, and there is only occasional attempts to incorporate the deeper aspects of Freemasonry in the imagery. As for the female components, it is either completely ignored, or is something completely silly like putting a Masonic apron on the Empress. I will allow that this deck is based on Italian Masonry, which incorporates some Masonic ideas not found in the United States. For example, the use of the zodiac on the Wheel of Fortune card is in keeping with Italian Masonry.

The final straw, though, was the 56 Minor Arcana cards that offer no original art at all, just different numbers of the suite symbols. Of the symbols, use of Mallets instead of Pentacles or Coins is the most obvious Masonic allusion. For Wands we have instead Gold (a Fire symbol I suppose), with a Scottish Rite double headed eagle. Swords and Cups (Chalices) are retained.

The Cards are produced in Italy and some Italian instead of English is used on the cards. There is no booklet provided, but you can go to a website to view a poorly formatted and written explanation of the cards.

A bit of a cheat here is that two other decks of the artist are offered by Brick Masons, as if they were also of Masonic interest. They aren't. Of the three decks, *The Marchetti* is the best artistically, However, while *The Architect's Deck* is minimalistic in presentation, it does exhibit some interesting ideas. Neither of the latter two decks are in anyway Masonic, however.

The deck is also available from Amazon, but my advice is to save your money. Not recommended

**Philologi Societas
(in order of initial induction)**

VW Frater Joseph F. Oelgoetz, VII° et Philologus
Theoricus**

VW Frater Philip G. Beith, VII° et Philologus
Theoricus **

RW Frater Gerald T. Coleman, VIII° et Philologus
Theoricus

RW Frater W. Bruce Renner, IX°, KGC, PJDSM et
Philologus Adeptus Exemptus

VW Frater Marlon Gayadeen, VII° et Philologus
Zelator

VW Frater John Comstock, VII°
et Philologus Zelator *

VW Frater Charles Hancock, VII°
et Philologus Theoricus

RW Frater Robert S. Finley, IX°, KGC et
Philologus Adeptus Exemptus *

RW Frater Richard J. Powell, VIII° et Philologus
Theoricus

RW Frater Paul Barrera VIII° et Philologus Zelator
VW Frater Clyde Card, VII° et Philologus

Philosophus*

RW Frater R. Curtiss Montgomery, IX° et
Philologus Zelator

VW Frater James N. Stoll, VII° et Philologus
Zelator

VW Frater Richard Simpson, VII° et Philologus
Zelator*

MW Frater William Howard Koon II, IX, KGC et
Philologus Magus (Honorary)

VW Frater Walter E. Cook, VIII° et Philologus
Philosophus

VW Frater Caleb Haines, VII° et Philologus
Zelator

VW Frater William M. Hodwitz, VII° et
Philologus Zelator

RW Frater Myron J. Deputat, VIII° et Adeptus
Minor

VW Frater Frank Rice, VII° et Philologus Zelator

VW Frater Clint Lewey, VII° et Philologus Zelator

IN WAITING

VW Steven J. Joyce (for Zelator)

RW Frater Myron J. Deputat, VIII° et Adeptus
Minor (for Adeptus Major)

* Deceased

** Not now a member

Have a need to communicate?

Chief Adept

Right Worthy R. Curtiss Montgomery, IX°
716-200-8550
curtiss.montgomery@gmail.com

Celebrant

Right Worthy Richard J. Powell, VIII°
(315) 439-2386
rjpowell@arsmasonica.com

Secretary

Right Worthy Myron J. Deputat, VIII°
(716) 983-2351
mdeputat@mac.com

Treasurer

Right Worthy Paul Barrera, VIII°
716) 627-5148
Barrpjr@aol.com

Newsletter Editor

Right Worthy W. Bruce Renner, IX°, KGC, PJDSM
716-824-1629
k2b.renner@verizon.net

Assistant Editor

Right Worthy Frater Walter E. Cook, IV, VIII °
walter.cook.iv@gmail.com

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