

Temple of Set Reading List

Category 3: Religion and Dæmonology in Historical Perspective

Religion und Dämonologie in historischer Perspektive

as of February 26, 2003

Today's philosophical and religious climate derives from the interaction and competition of a great many schools of logic, superstition, science, and intuition throughout history. It is necessary for the Setian to acquire at least a working familiarity with such systems, as the information gained is often useful in the development of both Greater and Lesser Black Magical techniques. Furthermore, while the original Priesthood of Set did not survive the decadence and downfall of Egypt, many of its characteristics were either preserved by other cultures or independently discovered by initiates of other magical/philosophical systems. The works selected for this category are intended to survey the more elaborate and esoteric concepts of intellectual elites throughout the ancient Mediterranean and Western European cultures. [See also Category 24.]

3A. *Religion in Ancient History* by S.G.F. Brandon. NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969. (TOS-3) MA: "This book is worth chasing down through a library. It consists of 25 essays on such topics as the soul, national religions, the Devil, life after death, Dualism, Jewish history to 70 CE, early Christian mythology, Time as God and Devil, origins of religion, the Akhenaten period, early Christian Gnosticism, and angels. Author a Professor of Comparative Religions at Manchester University."

3B. *The History of the Devil* by Paul Carus. NY: Land's End Press, 1969 (paperback reprint 1974 by Open Court). (TOS-3) (SHU-1) (LVT-1) MA: "Still the standard reference work on the topic, containing chapters on the devils and dæmons of many cultures from antiquity to the present. Included are many perceptive observations on the concept of 'evil' in human behavior. In his *Confessions* Aleister Crowley remarked: 'Carus had always interested me as being widely learned, yet understanding so little. After meeting him, I decided that I liked him for it.'" JL: "Occultists of ye olden days believed that to know the name of a demon was to have power over him. They were correct only insofar as their belief was an attempt to define a principle or supposed entity and therefore have the power to use it through understanding it. In the case of #3B, Carus' work has placed a name and brief history with almost every devil for whom one could wish, and with a few for whom one would not. Attractive or otherwise, the demons in #3B are named, traced, and cross-referenced. The Order of Leviathan member can find historical background in the book and use it to follow the trail of the Serpent."

3C. *Christian Mythology* by George Every. NY: Hamlyn Publishing Group, 1970. (TOS-3) MA: "Another in the Hamlyn mythology series [see #2A], updated & reissued in 1986 by Peter Bedrick Books. It exposes the origins and adaptations of Christianity and includes a number of later legends quite at odds with the *Bible*. The author's comments on the psychological need for specific myth-types are quite illuminating. The book is neither pro nor con - merely analytical. Hence it is an excellent source of data for dialogues with Christians; you can respond to theological issues on a historical rather than on an emotional, dogmatic, or æsthetic basis."

3D. *The Romance of Sorcery* by Sax Rohmer. NY: Causeway Books, 1973. (TOS-3) MA: “Better known as the author of the *Fu Manchu* novels [fun to read if you’re into 1890’s ‘Yellow Peril’ themes and heroines who faint a lot], Rohmer was also an initiate of the Golden Dawn who dreamed of writing an authoritative commentary on the occult. This book was the result - an empathetic but not-uncritical profile of history’s prominent sorcerers, including Apollonius, Nostradamus, Dee, Cagliostro, Blavatsky, and Francis Barrett. Written in 1913 and especially commended by Harry Houdini.”

3E. *Secret Societies* by Norman MacKenzie (Ed.). NY: Crescent Books, 1968. [Deutschland: *Geheimgesellschaften*. Ramon F. Keller Verlag, CH-Genf, 1974.] (TOS-3) MA: “While not as extensive as #3F, this book has the advantages of being relatively current and attractively illustrated. Chapters on the Mafia, Ku Klux Klan, Chinese Triads, Freemasons, Knights Templar, Thugs, Rosicrucians, etc. Well-researched and very readable. Three initiatory rituals (KKK, Mafia, and Masonic) are appended.”

3F. *The Secret Societies of All Ages and Countries* (two volumes) by Charles William Heckethorn. New Hyde Park: University Books, 1965. [Deutschland: *Geheime Gesellschaften, Geheimbünde u. Geheimlehren*. Renger Verlag, Leipzig, 1900.] (TOS-3) MA: “Written in 1875 and revised in 1897, this remains the major work on the topic. It does full justice to its ambitious title. In addition to discussing the characteristics of secret societies *per se*, Heckethorn includes comments on the clandestine operations of supposedly above-ground organizations (such as the Jesuits). Literally hundreds of groups are covered. If nothing else, it will leave you with the impression that there have been quite a number of sneaky people around.”

3G. *The Magic Makers* by David Carroll. NY: Signet #E-6556, 1974. (TOS-3) MA: “This little paperback covers somewhat the same ground as #3D and #4C, with the advantage of being less dated. There are chapters dealing with the reality of magic, the magical universe, the interrelationship of magic and science, and the national magical practices of Egypt, Israel, Greece, and Rome. Individual magicians profiled include Apollonius, Dee & Kelly, Cagliostro, Saint Germain, Agrippa, and Faust.”

3H. *The Secret Societies of All Ages* by Manly Palmer Hall. Hollywood: Philosophical Research Society, 1928. (TOS-4) MA: “Available in a variety of sizes and pricetags, this book contains 45 chapters on just about everything remotely connected with the Rosicrucian/Masonic tradition. Hence there is considerable material on Egypt, the Pythagoreans, Atlantis, the Cabala, etc. It is admittedly a treasure-house of sorts, but the intelligent reader will note an abundance of unsupported speculation. There are no footnotes, bibliographical references, or documentary attributions. Accordingly this volume is best used as an introduction to interesting areas of study rather than as a definitive text concerning them. It [particularly the larger/more expensive editions] looks nice on a coffee-table. The biggest one (Golden Anniversary monster edition) is heavy enough so that you can bash a rat with it and be reasonably assured he’s now a two-dimensional rat. The information in this book is also handy for confusing [equates to impressing] Masons and Rosicrucians whose cages you want to rattle. [If you want to understand what Freemasonry and Rosicrucianism are all about, your best bet is #3E.]”

3I. *Encyclopedia of Occultism* by Lewis Spence. New Hyde Park: University Books, 1960 (originally published 1920). (TOS-3) MA: "There are three 'occult' encyclopædias on this reading list, the others being #4E and #4F. Although dated, this one is extremely well researched, objective, and thorough. Its companion volume, Nandor Fodor's *Encyclopedia of Psychic Science*, is less likely to be of interest or practical value. Before acquiring a copy of #3I, consider whether #4E, which reprints extensively from it, will suffice for your needs and interests."

3J. *The Occult Sciences in the Renaissance* by Wayne Shumaker. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972. (TOS-3) MA: "Shumaker is Professor of English at U.C. Berkeley. This definitive work includes sections on astrology, witchcraft, White Magic, alchemy, and Hermes Trismegistus - painstakingly footnoted and with thoughtful critical analyses. 'The analyst does not take for granted the necessary existence of truth, much less of profound, forgotten wisdom in any of the systems, but treats them objectively as historical efforts to understand the world in which man is placed and to use his knowledge for human purposes.' [See also #3N.]"

3K. *The Dark Side of History: Magic in the Making of Man* by Michael Edwardes. NY: Stein & Day, 1977. (TOS-3) MA: "A fascinating investigation by a Professor of History and Political Science into the roles of magic in major social movements of history - from Mesopotamia to the French Revolution to Maoist China. This might be considered a reflective essay rather than a documentary analysis, but Edwardes' work is a commendable effort towards bridging the gap of ignorance that usually separates magic from the social sciences. Not as much fun to read as #4B, perhaps; but one doesn't feel quite so far out on a limb either."

3L. *The Western Mystical Tradition* by Thomas Katsaros and Nathaniel Kaplan. New Haven, Conn.: College & University Press, 1969. (TOS-3) MA: "A very good history of mysticism from Hellenic Greece onwards. Offers the 'mystical perspectives' of many of the philosophers whose more materialistic concepts are treated in tomes such as #16A."

3M. *A History of Magic and Experimental Science* by Lynn Thorndike. NY: Columbia University Press, 1923 (eight volumes). (TOS-4) MA: "Frazier's *Golden Bough* - which would seem to be an inevitable component of a reading list such as this - was ultimately not included because its focus on mythology as such (i.e. as an essentially anthropological phenomenon) offers no thesis which is usable by magicians. 'Magic,' said Frazier in an oft-quoted passage, 'is science that doesn't work.' Since Black Magic as defined by the Temple of Set **does** work, and since we are not interested in variations that don't work, we seek more illuminating histories to trace its development. Thorndike's is one such. In this massive work he shows the complex interrelationships between the magical, the scientific, and the philosophical from the time of ancient Egypt to the 17th century CE - after which the influence of materialism and logical positivism acted to suppress both magic and philosophy in favor of an all-embracing scientific method. Like the unabridged *Golden Bough*, Thorndike's opus is usually to be found only in major libraries. You should be aware of its existence for advanced research purposes."

3N. *Pythagorean Palaces: Magic and Architecture in the Italian Renaissance* by G.L. Hersey. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976. (TOS-4) MA: "According to Pythagorean philosophy, numbers and proportions possess **quality** as well as quantity, and the elements of architecture approach excellence as they maximize incorporation of these elements of quality. In this book Hersey, Professor of Art History at Yale University, analyzes several Italian Renaissance buildings according to the Pythagorean standards employed by their architects. [See also category #12 in general, as well as #3J. See also #6O for observations concerning architecture which is conspicuously lacking in Pythagorean excellence.]"

3O. *A History of Secret Societies* by Arkon Daraul. NY: Citadel Press, 1961. (TOS-3) (COS-3) AL: "A fine essay on the subject, with objectivity and much attention to detail." MA: "This survey includes chapters on such groups as the Order of the Peacock Angel (Yezidi), Knights Templar, Assassins, Sufis, Gnostics, Castrators, Vehm, Rosicrucians, and of course the Masters of the Himalayas. Used by the early Church of Satan as a source document for appropriate magical and ritual material. No documentation is offered, so this book is best considered at face value."

3P. *The Lost Key to Prediction: The Arabic Parts in Astrology* by Robert Zoller. NY: Inner Traditions, 1980. (TOS-3) MA: "The first part of this book is an exacting examination into the philosophical and metaphysical bases for astrological theory, resulting in the author's postulate that the true astrologer deals 'with the material globes in astrology only insofar as they are used to time the movements of the inner "planets" and "stars" that lie hidden at the center of man's being'. Part Two consists of Zoller's translation of a 13th-century Latin astrological text by Guido Bonatti. In Part Three Zoller applies Bonatti's concepts to the construction of horoscopes. One of the most sophisticated conceptual studies of astrology yet penned. Reviewed in detail in *Runes* #III-1. The excellent bibliography is supplemented by extensive notes. The author is an ex-Adept II° of the Temple of Set and a practicing astrologer. [See also his review of #3R, described in that entry.]"

3Q. *Larousse Encyclopedia of World Mythology* by Pierre Grimal (Ed.). NY: Excalibur Books, 1981. (TOS-3) MA: "As the title indicates, this is the 'mythology' volume in the Larousse series of encyclopædias. 550 pages - in fine print - jammed with information. Note that this book focuses on mythology, not on occultism, so it is more descriptive of systems [from an archæological/anthropological/ sociological point of view] than analytical concerning their various merits, drawbacks, substance, etc. The editor is a Professor at the Sorbonne in France."

3R. *The Serpent and the Rainbow* by Wade E. Davis. NY: Warner Books #0-446-34387-0, 1987. [Deutschland: *Die Toten kommen zurück*. Drömer-Knaur Verlag, München, 1986.] (TOS-3) MA: "This is **the** book explaining the Voodoo system of Haiti and the manner in which zombis are actually created - not by supernatural means, but by the secret use of poisons. The book is based upon field research by the author, who holds undergraduate degrees from Harvard University in Ethnobotany and Biology, and more recently a Ph.D. in Ethnobotany. #3R is reviewed in detail by Adept Robert Zoller (author of #3P) in *Scroll* #XII-3, June 1986."

3S. *The Books of the Beast* by Timothy d'Arch Smith. London: Crucible (Aquarian Press/Thorsons Publishing Group, 1987. (TOS-4) MA: "This is a 126-page, high-quality paperback collection of essays on Aleister Crowley, Montague Summers, Ralph Nicholas Chubb, Francis Barrett (author of *The Magus*, the book which revived an interest in sorcery & ceremonial magic in 19th-century England), Florence Farr (author of #10I), and the British Library's catalogue of erotica. This collection is cited here because of some interesting anecdotes it contains re Crowley, Summers, Barrett, and Farr. If you are interested in one or more of them, you might enjoy this book as a 'casual read'. But I would not consider it essential."

3T. *Testament: The Bible and History* by John Romer. NY: Henry Holt, 1988. (TOS-3) MA: "A superb study of the history of the Judæo/Christian *Bible*, to include its sourcing from pre-J/C cultures and mythologies and its assembly and revision over the Christian period in Europe. There is also a companion PBS television series, also excellent, narrated by Romer. This study is valuable for its objectivity; Romer is not unsympathetic to the J/C cultural heritage, but neither does he seek to distort its true historical origins. The author is a distinguished Egyptologist and archæologist."

3U. *Strange Superstitions and Magical Practices* by William J. Fielding. Philadelphia: Blakiston Company (Circle Books), 1945. (TOS-3) Terry Quesenberry II°: "This little book is surprisingly objective and broad in its coverage of superstition and magic in its manifold phases, considering the time it was published. Topics covered include Satanism, Black Mass, Walpurgisnacht, lycanthropy, pentagram (as an emblem of perfection), evil eye, Nietzsche, mysteries of nature, mysteries of number, ancient Egypt, divination, magic of mathematical formulæ, dæmonology, origins of pagan holidays, and witchcraft."

3V. *The Devil in Legend and Literature* by Maximilian Rudwin. La Salle: Open Court, 1989 (latest reprint). (TOS-3) DW: "An alternative to #3B. For my money this volume, dedicated to the memory of Paul Carus, is much the superior volume."

3W. *The Fifth Sun* by Burr Cartwright Brundage. Austin: University of Texas, 1983. (TOS-3) DW: "This book explains the Aztec mindscape rather well and includes great coverage of Tezcatlipoca, the Aztec Set. A good book to read for a cross-cultural perspective on Set."

3X. *The Occult in America: New Historical Perspectives* by Howard Kerr & Charles L. Crow (Eds.). Chicago: University of Chicago, 1983. (TOS-4) DW: "Of historical interest to Setians both socially and in terms of the development of occult wisdom & folly in North America. Of particular interest are the effects of the Hindu Left-Hand Path (Vivekananda), Theosophy, and African religious practices. The opening essay, 'Explaining Modern Occultism' by Robert Galbreath, almost garners the book a TOS-1 rating."

3Y. *Hermetic Magic* by Stephen Edred Flowers, Ph.D. York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, 1995. (TOS-1) DW: "This book is an analysis both scholarly & practical of the Southern tradition's greatest magical success [until the Temple of Set]. It deals with the synthesis of Greek & Egyptian traditions into Hermeticism; with ancient, modern, & postmodern theories of magic; and with practical spell-book methodology. The Hermetic tradition involves gaining & using power, and this is the best gateway in the English language. It is the Arrow handed by Arrabis to me." MA: "The term 'Hermeticism' brings to mind vague, inconsistent, & impotent Judæo/Christian mystical fluff. This book has nothing to do with that. Rather Flowers explores the historical filtering of coherent Egyptian magical theory & practice through a number of later cultures, then explains how the core concepts may be put into effective practice."

3Z. *The Presence of Shiva* by Stella Kramrisch. Princeton: Princeton University, 1981. (TOS-4) DW: "This book, nicely reprinted as a Bollingen paperback, is a study of the figure of Rudra/Shiva, the 'Set' of Hinduism and focus of much historical & current Hindu Left-Hand Path practice. It is another way to get a handle on the Prince of Darkness beyond our usual Satanic & Egyptian lenses. 'Rudra is consciousness, and his actions are its forms.' A useful initiatory model for those drawn to the gate of the East."

3AA. *The Myth of Egypt and its Hieroglyphs in European Tradition* by Erik Iversen. Princeton: Princeton University, 1961 (Mythos Edition, 1993). (TOS-4) (SKM-1) DW: "Iversen looks at Egypt's artistic, philosophical, & magical influence on European thought. A good historical backdrop to Schwaller, the Golden Dawn, Cagliostro, etc."

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F3A. *Masada*. 1981. MA: "This was originally a television mini-series, now condensed into a single videocassette. The fortress of Masada was one of the last strongholds of the Zealots in ancient Israel to be conquered by the Romans, and the film dramatizes this seige. Peter O'Toole is the Roman general and Peter Strauss his Hebrew counterpart. Most relevant to this category of the reading list is the Romans' utilitarian use of religion in contrast to the fanatic belief of the Hebrews. The film does not pass a moral judgment as much as it highlights a ferocious battle fought because of different perceptions of reality."

F3B. *The Devils*. 1971. MA: "Probably the most graphic and horrifying treatment of the Inquisition ever brought to the screen, this film recounts the story of the 17th-century French priest Urban Grandier (Oliver Reed) who was accused of signing a pact with the Devil. The political schemes resulting in Grandier's downfall are developed with cold precision, and his torture, mutilation, and death by burning at the stake are also shown in graphic detail. This is one of the films strongly opposed by the Catholic Church, for obvious reasons! The cast also includes Vanessa Redgrave. Directed by Ken Russell (who also directed *Altered States*)."

F3C. *The Serpent and the Rainbow*. 1988. (07-1587). MA: "This may have started out as an attempt to bring #3R to the screen, but by the time Hollywood was finished with it, it was more of a simple horror movie than a non-fictional study of Voodoo and zombification. Useful perhaps to catch something of the atmosphere of the grip which modern Voodoo has on its adherents in locales such as Haiti."

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P3A. *Freethought Today*. Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF), Post Office Box 750, Madison, WI 53701. Telephone 608-256-8900. MA: “FFRF is a very feisty atheist organization which publishes the bimonthly newspaper *Freethought Today* (subscription about US\$30/year). *FT* is almost completely devoted to exposes of Christian corruption and violations of church/state separation, together with scholarly articles debunking Judæo/Christian mythology and superstition, all done to a professional standard. A major feature is the ‘Black Collar Crimes’ column, which dutifully recounts the ongoing epidemic of sex crimes committed by Christian officials. The Temple of Set does not spend much time J/C-bashing in the way that the old Church of Satan did, so if you’re nostalgic for that kind of confrontation and would like lots of ammunition for debates, an *FT* subscription is essential. It will also astound you to see how much dirt there is to dig up.”