

# The Pseudo-Matthean Doxology from the Lord's Prayer, Sephiroth, and Classical Hebrew in the "Qabalistic Cross" and other Golden Dawn Rituals

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Among scholars of the Bible and its languages, one major instance of the reception of biblical material and Classical Hebrew is, to this day, relatively unknown. This is the use of biblical phraseology and Hebrew (or Hebrew-based wordings) in the rituals and speculations of Western Esotericism, that great current of religious thought and practice that formed during the Renaissance and has been an integral (though sometimes overlooked) part of the European and American religious landscape ever since. Because of the influx of Kabbalistic and biblical references in many of the various (and quite diverse) forms of Western Esotericism – and because of the general respect held in learned Christian circles of the Renaissance and Enlightenment towards the Hebrew language – the classical tongue of Judaism and the Old Testament has been featured in many expressions of this religious current, from its inception up to the present day. My purpose in this article is to study and discuss one such instance, viz. the use of the Hebrew language – and of a biblical quotation – within the so-called Golden Dawn tradition, the initiatory and very Kabbalistically inclined cur-

rent of Western ritual magic going back to the original Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn founded in England in the late nineteenth century, especially in one of its rituals, the so-called Lesser (Banishing) Ritual of the Pentagram.

In many ways, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn<sup>1</sup> constitutes the major impetus for almost every form of (especially English-speaking) Western Esoteric ritual magic during the twentieth century.<sup>2</sup> Its rituals, philosophical ideas, and general religious outlook have influenced most later movements and currents within this field: Movements such as Thelema (the religion founded by Aleister Crowley in 1904), Wicca, and even various so-called Left Hand Path-movements (such as the Swedish-based but internationally successful order Dragon Rouge)

<sup>1</sup> Given recent political developments, it perhaps bears mentioning that the Golden Dawn Order has nothing to do with the Greek neo-fascist organization *Chrysi Avgi*, whose name happens to mean the same thing.

<sup>2</sup> Although there are, of course, exceptions, like the French-based Martinist current, which includes a ritual magic component of its own.

have all looked to the Golden Dawn for many parts of their ritual structure, and sometimes their ideology. Even though the original Golden Dawn order collapsed at the beginning of the twentieth century (due to numerous internal feuds), groups and individuals attempting to keep its legacy alive have been active almost continuously since then, themselves multiplying into manifold offshoots, thus truly creating a Golden Dawn *tradition*, that is represented by many tens of different groups active today.<sup>3</sup>

The respect accorded to the Hebrew language by the founders of the Golden Dawn tradition can be readily seen not only from the role it played (and still plays) in its rituals, but also from the weight which was given to some (superficial) knowledge thereof as a part of the initiatory curriculum of the organization. Thus, a person initiated into the beginning degree of the order (the degree of Neophyte) was instructed to learn not only such overtly esoteric subjects as the symbols of the planets and the zodiac, but also the Hebrew alphabet. The juxtaposition of these elements gives us a clear indication of how Hebrew was viewed in the Golden Dawn: Not as a language *per se*, but as a tool of spiritual development and power. It is this complex of language-as-symbol that I shall explore in this paper; my goal is not so much to say something new about the Golden Dawn – but to say something about how Classical Hebrew and biblical texts have been used in a Western Esoteric context.

### The “Qabalistic Cross” and the Pseudo-Matthean Doxology

We shall begin by looking at how the Golden Dawn ritualists used both a biblical text and the Hebrew language to create a ritual structure. Because of the somewhat artificial way in which Hebrew was used in the Golden Dawn rituals, the grammar and pronunciation of the language

was less than standard. This is highly apparent in the text of what is probably the most famous Golden Dawn ritual of all, as well as the one certainly most practiced widely today: The so-called Lesser Ritual of the Pentagram (the most common version is the “Lesser Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram,” often initialized as LBRP). This ritual contains a fair bit of Hebrew, in the form of what was called the “Qabalistic Cross,” and also a number of divine names, they too in Hebrew.<sup>4</sup> The ritual begins with the practitioner,

<sup>4</sup> The Qabalistic Cross, the Lesser Ritual of the Pentagram, and the introduction to the Hebrew alphabet are found in the “First Knowledge Lecture,” most easily available in Israel Regardie, *The Golden Dawn*, 6<sup>th</sup> corrected edition (Llewellyn: Woodbury, 1989), 50–59. In this article, I have mainly based myself on the versions of the Golden Dawn material published by Israel Regardie following his membership in the Golden Dawn-derived order Stella Matutina (which he joined in 1933), as this is the most commonly available corpus of Golden Dawn texts. However, one should be aware that Regardie’s material does not strictly derive from the original Order but rather from one of its successors and from various collections that he consulted later, which means that subtle changes in the material may have crept in both between the original formulations of the Golden Dawn texts and their use by Stella Matutina and during Regardie’s editing process. My reason for mainly using Regardie’s versions is not only that they are the most easily available, but also that (because of this availability) it is the edition of the Golden Dawn material that most starting practitioners meet today (and this has been going on for a rather long time). Irrespective of their textual history, therefore, Regardie’s versions have become a sort of *Textus Receptus* of the Golden Dawn material. In certain cases, I also refer as a comparison to the versions of the relevant material that were published by Aleister Crowley, and to other material published by early members of the original Order. There is also a publication of much of the Golden Dawn material by R. G. Torrens, which is said to derive from pre-1900 manuscripts, and I have consulted this also. Cf. R. G. Torrens, *The Secret Rituals of the Golden Dawn* (Wellingborough: The Aquarian Press, 1973). In the case of the “First Knowledge Lecture,” Torrens does not give the entire text but merely a paraphrase (on pp. 90–93). However, it should be emphasized that the main point of this article is not necessarily to analyze only the earliest historical manifestations of the Golden Dawn material but to see how the Golden Dawn tradition generally has used and transformed biblical

<sup>3</sup> On an intriguing, if somewhat humorous, side-note, one of the above-mentioned modern revivalist groups has even acquired the legal rights to the name of the original Order, styling itself The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, Inc.

dagger in hand, performing a cross-like motion across his or her body, touching forehead, breast, right shoulder and left shoulder and finally clasping the hands before him or her. During each of these motions, a Hebrew phrase is uttered. These are given by Israel Regardie as:

ATEH (*thou art*), MALKUTH (*the Kingdom*),  
VE-GEBURAH (*and the Power*), VE-GEDULAH  
(*and the Glory*), LE-OLAM (*for ever*), AMEN

The debt in meaning to the doxology added in some manuscripts to the end of the Matthean version of the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9–13) is quite apparent and has been noted many times. The doxology in question, often appearing in the Prayer as used in Christian worship, runs:

ὅτι σοῦ ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία καὶ ἡ δύναμις καὶ ἡ δόξα  
εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας· ἀμήν.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the  
glory for ever; amen.

The quotation is striking. There are, however, interesting differences between the biblical version and the Golden Dawn text derived from it. First, of course, is the fact that the Golden Dawn version has been put into Hebrew, interesting enough in itself. But the differences are greater than that. In the Qabalistic Cross, the statements of “thine is the kingdom” et cetera, have been transposed into “thou art”-statements, identifying the divine attributes of Kingdom, Power, and Glory with the corresponding Kabbalistic Sephiroth (*malkhûth*, *gēbhûrâ* and *hesed/gēdhûlâ*) from the Tree of Life.<sup>5</sup> Thus, what is in the New Testament a general doxology on the power and

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material and the Hebrew language. On the difficult situation concerning sources for the Golden Dawn rituals, see Henrik Bogdan, *Western Esotericism and Rituals of Initiation* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 127–128.

<sup>5</sup> In this article, I have (for practical reasons) adopted a sort of cross between the standardized scholarly transcription system employed for Biblical Hebrew and the more simple rendering common in Jewish studies. This means that I provide full diacritics, indicating matres lectionis using circumflexes et cetera, but I still mark postvocalic spirantization of stops in a more “simple” manner, using the letter h for this purpose.

might of God becomes – by the transposition of the text into Hebrew – a statement of Kabbalistic theology.

This creative reinterpretation of the Sign of the Cross and of the (pseudo-)Matthean doxology can be found earlier, in the writings of French occult writer Éliphas Lévi (pen name of Alphonse Louis Constant), and this is probably the source of the Golden Dawn usage. In the English version of his famous work *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie* (translated into that language by Golden Dawn member Arthur Edward Waite), a similar description is given:

The sign of the cross adopted by Christians does not belong to them exclusively. It is also kabbalistic, and represents the oppositions and tetradic equilibrium of the elements [...] For example, the initiate said, raising his hand to his forehead, “For thine,” then added “is,” and continuing as he brought down his hand to his breast, “the kingdom,” then to the left shoulder, “the justice,” afterwards to the right shoulder, “and the mercy”—then clasping his hands, he added, “in the generating ages.” *Tibi sunt Malchut et Geburah ct* [sic!] *Chesed per aeonas*—a sign of the cross which is absolutely and magnificently kabbalistic, which the profanations of Gnosticism have completely lost to the official and militant Church.<sup>6</sup>

In this older version, the Latin-Hebrew invocation is closer to the biblical version in that it uses the dative (*tibi sunt*) and thus *ascribe* the various Sephirothic faculties to God rather than identify them with him, as is done in the fully Hebrew Golden Dawn version. The change to the Hebrew *'attâ* (or, in Regardie's transcription, “ATEH,” meaning “you”) could be caused either by an inability on the part of the Golden Dawn ritualists to construct the correct Hebrew form *lēkhā* (“to you”) or, on a more intriguing note, on a wish to begin the first part of the ritual with a word beginning with *'āleph*, the first Hebrew letter, which is the one normally associated with the first and highest Sephira, *kether* – a concept which fits well with this word being spoken when the practitioner touches his head, the part of the body associated with that Sephira (as the

<sup>6</sup> Éliphas Lévi, *Transcendental Magic: Its Doctrine and Ritual* (London: George Redway, 1896), 222.

highest point in the Sephirothic "Tree of Life"). In any case, the Hebraization of the entire phrase probably serves to sacralize it even more – and, indeed, to divest it of its more overtly Christian or even Roman Catholic association, which Lévi's Latinized version could be said to carry.<sup>7</sup> Note also that the Golden Dawn version has inverted the Sign of the Cross, touching the right shoulder before the left one. The idea is to paint a picture of the Kabbalistic Tree of Life on the body of the practitioner in a way reminiscent of the *nyāsa* of Indic Tantrism, in which sacred syllables are symbolically placed on the body of the one performing a ritual.

It is again to be noted that the practice of artificially re-Hebraizing an addition to the Lord's Prayer is, historically speaking, a rather interesting endeavor. There is, of course, nothing to suggest that this text was ever in Hebrew originally. Using Hebrew, the Jewish language *par excellence*, to express originally Christian terminology is in itself almost a sort of example of what Agehānanda Bhāratī referred to as the "Pizza effect": Reimporting cultural material that has previously been lent to another culture.<sup>8</sup>

## Phonology and Pronunciation

The pronunciation used for these words is also worthy of consideration. Israel Regardie states that the Order taught the Sephardic pronunciation of Hebrew, a fact that he (probably correctly) ascribes to the Mediterranean provenance of

<sup>7</sup> It is, however, interesting to note that the "ascribing" of these Sephirothic qualities to the Deity occurs at other places in the Golden Dawn material. At the end of the "Ritual of the Portal," all the celebrants say: "Unto Thee Tetragrammaton, be ascribed Malkuth, Geburah, Gedulah, unto the ages, AMEN" (Regardie, *Golden Dawn*, 220). This is closer to the Lévi version. An almost identical phrase can be found in the "Consecration Ceremony of the Vault of the Adepti" (Regardi, *Golden Dawn*, 260).

<sup>8</sup> The term originates in Agehānanda Bhāratī, "The Hindu Renaissance and its Apologetic Patterns", 267–287 in *The Journal of Asian Studies* 29 (1970), 273, especially n. 19. The example giving rise to the term is the exportation of the pizza from Italy to America and its subsequent reimportation to Italy when it had become trendy among the expatriates.

the major Kabbalistic writings of the Middle Ages – and he writes that he has followed this practice in his publication of the Golden Dawn rituals.<sup>9</sup> However, when one looks at the text presented above, one does notice discrepancies and deviations from this principle. One such instance can be noted in the very first word of the Qabalistic Cross, the second person singular masculine personal pronoun ("you"), which Regardie renders "ATEH." The standard Sephardic pronunciation of this word is *'attā* (a pronunciation which also occurs in some versions of the ritual, though the "ATEH" one is certainly the most common). The version given by Regardie seems more reminiscent of Ashkenazic pronunciation, with the second vowel being reduced, perhaps after Ashkenazi-style retraction of the stress to the penultimate syllable.<sup>10</sup> It might be easy to attribute this aberrant pattern of pronunciation to Regardie himself, who does after all admit to his own vacillating between the systems.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Regardie, *Golden Dawn*, 52, n. 104. One important instance of more pure Sephardi pronunciation may perhaps be in evidence in the pronunciation of "soft" bēth as b instead of v in words such as "Geburah." The inability to differentiate between the hard and soft versions of this letter is characteristic of Spanish Sephardi reading traditions.

<sup>10</sup> For an overview of the various Jewish traditions of Hebrew pronunciation, see, for example, Hans Bauer & Pontus Leander, *Historische Grammatik der Hebräischen Sprache*, vol. 1 (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag 1965), 170–172 (§§ 10 c'–n'). For a detailed and specific overview of the Ashkenazic system, see Dovid Katz, "The Phonology of Ashkenazic", 46–87 in *Hebrew in Ashkenaz: A Language in Exile* (ed. L. Glinert; New York: Oxford UP, 1993), especially 68–74.

<sup>11</sup> Regardie, *Golden Dawn*, 52, n. 104. One may also note that in the late so-called "Golden Dawn audio tapes," Israel Regardie himself pronounces many of the words of the Qabalistic Cross with penultimate stress, even though the words themselves are mostly Sephardic in vocalization. Whether this is a function of Regardie's Ashkenazic background or merely a result of his imperfect knowledge of Hebrew is, of course, an open question. It should also be noted that, due to the lateness of Regardie's editions, his comments are not necessarily valid for other Golden Dawn tradition sources.

However, there is an earlier source for the ritual: Aleister Crowley's publication in his 1929 book *Magic in Theory and Practice*, where the form used is also "Ateh."<sup>12</sup> It is, however, interesting to note that Crowley's version translates the word as "Unto Thee," which is closer to the version of Éliphas Lévi (see above) but less true to the actual Hebrew text given. The question may be posed whether this change was due to a more accurate understanding of the Hebrew words or to a wish to identify the divine person with his Sephirothic attributes. Another interesting facet of Crowley's version of the ritual is the fact that he argues that the divine name IHVH (YHWH) should be read "Ye-ho-wau," a rather strange pronunciation which appears to try to combine the Christian misreading "Jehovah" with a sort of Hebrew letter-by-letter pronunciation (this does at least seem to be the only point of the syllable "wau," which is, after all, the name of a Hebrew letter – unless "wau" is intended crudely to indicate the English "wah" sound).<sup>13</sup>

### The View of the Hebrew Language and Transcriptions in the Golden Dawn Material

The attitude held by the Golden Dawn with respect to the Hebrew language and its alphabet can be clearly seen in the First Knowledge Lecture, in which it is stated that "Hebrew letters are *holy symbols*" (italics in original). This insistence on the symbolic meaning of the various letters is probably reflected in the fact that the table giving the letters in the lecture also includes supposed meanings of the signs ("ox" for 'āleph, "house" for bēth, et cetera), even in cases where

these actual meanings are far from clear (as in the case of tāw, explained here as "cross").<sup>14</sup>

The (Kabbalistically based) concentration of the letters themselves as symbolic characters rather than as primarily communicative devices can be seen in some of the transcriptions given of the Hebrew terms in the Golden Dawn material. In the Fifth Knowledge Lecture, the expression אין סוף אור ("limitless light," a somewhat mangled version of a Kabbalistic expression for the highest, unmanifested stage of divinity) is transcribed as "AIN SOPH AUR," a rather crude representation of the actual Hebrew words intended (ʿēn sōph ʾōr). The appearance of the A:s and diphthongs in "AIN" and "AUR" could be explained as remnants of the Ashkenazic diphthongized pronunciations of the vowels *ṣērê* and *ḥōlem*, but as previously stated (and noted by Israel Regardie himself), the Order mainly used some form of Sephardic pronunciation (with occasional lapses). This makes it much more probable that the aberrant spellings are based not on a difference in reading traditions but in a wish mechanically to replicate the structure of the Hebrew words on a letter-for-letter basis.

The Golden Dawn writers are simply reproducing the letters according to the table in the First Knowledge Lecture (where 'āleph is, somewhat erroneously, given as "A" and wāw as "O, U, V");<sup>15</sup> a similar phenomenon occurs when the angelic order of the 'ōphānīm (אופנים) is transcribed "Auphanim."<sup>16</sup> The same thing happens to words such as "AATIK" (i.e. עתיק, "old," "an-

<sup>12</sup> Aleister Crowley, *Magick in Theory and Practice: Part III of Book Four* (privately printed, 1929), appendix VII, "Liber O vel Manus et Sagittae", section IV.

<sup>13</sup> Regardie's version of the LBRP recommends the pronunciation "YOD HE VAU HE," simply the names of the four letters of the divine name.

<sup>14</sup> Regardie, *Golden Dawn*, 51–52. The edition of Torrens only includes a paraphrase of the Lecture, as mentioned above, which does not include the reference to "holy symbols" but merely says that the Hebrew letters must be learned since they "may be recognized as the basis of many of the magical formulae of the Golden Dawn workings" (Torrens, 95). He does, however, include the list of supposed meanings of the Hebrew letters (Torrens, 94), giving "sign of the cross" for the letter tāw.

<sup>15</sup> Regardie, *Golden Dawn*, 52. The version of the table of the alphabet in Torrens, 92, is a little more forthcoming, and adds "a (soft breathing)" as the pronunciation of 'āleph.

<sup>16</sup> Israel Regardie, *The Complete Golden Dawn System of Magic* (Tempe: New Falcon Publications, 1984), 33, 42, 46.

cient”,<sup>17</sup> note the superfluous “A” used to crudely indicate the ‘*ayin*’) and the Aramaized אַיִם (“mother”), given as “AIMA,” which replicates the letter-structure of the word but obscures its actual pronunciation, ‘*immâ*. On the matter of the letter ‘*ayin*, one may perhaps see a testament to the pronunciation system used by the Golden Dawn in the fact that the alphabet table in both Regardie’s and Torrens’ editions use “aa” and “ng(h)” as a rendering of the sound.<sup>18</sup> The tradition of pronouncing ‘*ayin*, originally a voiced pharyngeal fricative, as a velar nasal (the sound rendered in English as “ng”) goes back to certain Sephardic reading traditions (Italian, Portuguese, and Dutch).<sup>19</sup>

The mechanical equation between the Hebrew and Latin alphabets used in these transcriptions can also work the other way around: As a “masculine equivalent” of “AIMA,” the Fifth Knowledge Lecture gives “ABBA,” the famous Aramaic word for “father,” which must have been well known to the Golden Dawn members because of its occurrence in the New Testament. But the Hebrew letters given to represent this word are אבבא , with an erroneous and superfluous extra *bēth* to show the doubling of the *b* instead of the actual spelling, with a single *bēth* but a *dāghēš forte* dot to indicate the gemination. The only possible reason for such a spelling would be to make the Hebrew and Latin alphabet versions coincide precisely. But in other cases (even on the same page in the Knowledge Lecture!) a phonetic rendering is used instead of this mechanical approach: Thus אלהים is given as “ELOHIM” (and not as “ALHYM” which would be the equivalent in the system used for the other words).<sup>20</sup> No doubt the familiarity of this word is

what prompted the inconsistency.<sup>21</sup> Another example of the above-mentioned over-extended and simplified equation between ‘*aleph* and the letter *a* can be found in the “SECOND MEDITATION” of the First Knowledge Lecture, in which the Hebrew word ראשית (*rē’sīth*, “beginning”) is transcribed as “Rashith,” reading each letter as an alphabetical symbol in the Latin sense.<sup>22</sup> This phonetic transcription occurs in much earlier Golden Dawn material as well, going back to the founders of the Order.<sup>23</sup> Even stranger is the alphabetic rendering “OVLMBRIA” for עולם הבריאה (*’ōlam habbēri’ā*, “the world of creation”), in which the letter ‘*ayin* is reproduced as an “O” in an attempt to communicate the vowel (which actually follows the ‘*ayin*).<sup>24</sup> One should note that, although the examples here enumerated come mainly from Regardie’s late and eclectic edition of the Golden Dawn material, idiosyncratic use of Hebrew goes all the way back to the so-called “Cipher Manuscript,” the document upon which the entire Golden Dawn tradition was allegedly founded.<sup>25</sup>

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as “Elohim”) in Crowley, ch. IV. The same rendering (“ALHIM”) can be found in the Introduction to the translation of the *Kabbala Denudata* published by one of the original Golden Dawn founders, S. Liddell MacGregor Mathers, *Kabbala Denudata: The Kabbalah Unveiled* (London: George Redway, 1887), Introduction, paragraph 11.

<sup>21</sup> All these transcriptions are found in Regardie, *Golden Dawn*, 77.

<sup>22</sup> Regardie, *Golden Dawn*, 63.

<sup>23</sup> Mathers, *Kabbala Denudata*, Introduction, paragraph 20 (and throughout).

<sup>24</sup> Regardie, *Complete Golden Dawn System*, 53. Note also that Torrens, 92, gave “o” as a possible pronunciation of ‘*ayin*. Could this involve a mechanical equation with omikron, the descendant of the letter in the Greek alphabet?

<sup>25</sup> A transcription of the Cipher Manuscript (by Jeffrey S. Kupperman) can be found online at <https://hermetic.com/gdlibrary/cipher/index>. That site originally had facsimiles of the cipher texts (also showing the words in Hebrew script), but these are no longer available there. They can, however, be studied at <https://www.scribd.com/document/45717082/The-Golden-Dawn-Cipher-Manuscript> (both sites accessed April 18, 2017). A print edition is Darcy Kuntz, *The Complete Golden Dawn Cipher Manuscript* (Edmonds: Holmes Publishing Group, 1996).

<sup>17</sup> This word, though appearing in a similar form in Hebrew, is actually strictly speaking Aramaic in the context, as the text refers to the Aramaic expression ‘*attiq yōmīn* (“The Ancient of Days”) of Daniel, ch. 7.

<sup>18</sup> Regardie, *Golden Dawn*, 52: “Aa, Ngh.” Torrens, 92: “o, aa, ng (gutt[ural]).”

<sup>19</sup> On the velar nasal pronunciation of ‘*ayin* and its history, see Aron di Leone Leoni, “The Pronunciation of Hebrew in the Western Sephardic Settlements (16<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> Centuries): The Pronunciation of the Consonant ‘*Ayin*”, 163–208 in *Sefarad* 68 (2008).

<sup>20</sup> Note, for example, that Aleister Crowley renders the word as “ALHIM” (though explained in parentheses

In that text collection, there are Hebrew phrases interspersed here and there among the coded cipher words; one such expression (in folio 10 of the manuscript) is when the divine title *'ādōnay hā'āreṣ* (“Lord of the earth”) is written with Hebrew characters as אֲדֹנָי הָאָרֶץ, with a superfluous *'aleph* in the definite article.

One may, however, note that the mechanical, alphabetizing transcription of the words mentioned above is not a feature of the initiatory rituals themselves, but only of the Knowledge Lectures. In the grade rituals, a number of Hebrew words are used, but these are given in a more “pronounceable” form. In the beginning of the ritual of the grade of Theoricus, we have, for example, “KERUBIM,” “QLIPPOTH,” and “SHADDAI EL CHAI.”<sup>26</sup>

Sometimes, the forms given of the Hebrew words seem to represent a strange mix between renderings of Sephardic or Ashkenazic pronunciations and common pronunciations of well known Judeo-Christian terms as received through the medium of Greek or Latin: Such is the case with the word given as “TZABAOTH” in one of the degree rituals.<sup>27</sup> This form does not conform to any form of the Masoretic Hebrew *šēbhā'ōth* (“hosts, armies”), but appears to be based on the Greek/Latin form *Sabaoth*, but with the initial sibilant “Hebraized” into “TZ” for greater perceived authenticity. This means that the inventors of this spelling have artificially crossed a Latin and a modernized Hebrew pro-

nunciation of the same word, thus creating a hybrid form, which in itself becomes an interesting illustration of the dual influence from the Christian tradition and actual Hebrew, Kabbalistic thinking. Also, it is notable that the entire divine designation constructed using this word is “ELOHIM TZABAOTH,” which is ungrammatical in Hebrew (the word *'ēlohīm* should have been in the construct state to form the phrase *'ēlohē šēbhā'ōth*). It is certainly no coincidence that the Grimoire known as *The Key of Solomon the King*, which was translated into English by S. Liddell MacGregor Mathers, one of the founders of the Golden Dawn, also includes the phrase “ELOHIM TZABAOTH.”<sup>28</sup> The phrase also occurs (in Hebrew letters) in the Cipher Manuscript (folio 23). One may also note that a version of the above-mentioned “Auphanim” occurs in the Manuscript, spelt “auphaeim” (folio 30, cipher), among other unusual transcriptions.

The fact that the Knowledge Lectures and the degree rituals render Hebrew words in different ways becomes a fascinating illustration of the different layers that must lie behind the Golden Dawn textual corpus. Different principles seem to have been at work, underscoring that the texts were written at different times and probably by different people. The intentions of transcribing the words also differ: In the degree rituals, they are meant to be read and pronounced, while the Knowledge Lectures treat them as objects of theoretical study of a Kabbalistic nature, which explains their preoccupation with exact renderings of the alphabetic structures of the Hebrew words. Again and again, it appears that one of the most important parts of the Hebrew language to the Golden Dawn writers was the alphabet itself, or rather the use of short letter combinations for mystical purposes. Actual texts are not in focus: Names and cipher-words seem to be more important.

<sup>26</sup> Regardie, *Golden Dawn*, 155. In the version of the ritual published earlier by Aleister Crowley (1909), the spelling “Qliphoth” occurs; the other words are identical with the versions given by Regardie. Crowley’s version was published in Aleister Crowley, “Ritual of the 2°=9° Grade of Theoricus”, in *The Equinox* 1 (1909), available online at <http://www.the-equinox.org/vol1/no2/eqi02020f.html> (accessed January 21, 2017). The version in Torrens’ edition (of the Theoreticus ritual, as he writes it), the spellings are identical with those of Regardie (see Torrens, 119). In the latter two cases, there are also some differences in capitalization, but this is without relevance for the present purposes.

<sup>27</sup> Regardie, *Golden Dawn*, 167. In Torrens, 147–148, the equivalent place in the Practicus initiation ritual, the form used is the even stranger “TZABOTH,” which could have presumed to be a simple misspelling, had it not occurred thrice in a row!

<sup>28</sup> S. Liddell MacGregor Mathers, *The Key of Solomon the King (Clavicula Salomonis), Now First Translated from the Mss. in the British Museum* (London: George Redway, 1888), 26.

## What "Was" Hebrew in the Golden Dawn Texts?

My point here is not to criticize Regardie or the Golden Dawn writers for their sometimes non-standard use of the Hebrew language; such an effort would be rather pointless from a scholarly point of view. Indeed, renderings and transcriptions such as the ones enumerated above appear in other non-Jewish Kabbalistic writing as well. Rather, what I want to underscore is the way in which the Golden Dawn material used the language as a way of establishing symbolism. To the compilers of the Golden Dawn texts, Hebrew was perhaps not a language in the normal sense of the word – in their usage, it did not obey its own rules or follow any system of consistency. It worked as a mirror in which to reflect the ideas of the Order and sanctify them in the minds of the members and practitioners. In that sense, the Hebrew of the Golden Dawn was not a *lingua sacra* in the usual sense – such a language, such as church Latin, liturgical Sanskrit, et cetera, is often an actually studied and known tongue which for some reason is kept alive in a religious setting, a language which is studied and analyzed and in which texts are recited and often learned by heart.<sup>29</sup> Rather, it functioned as a symbol system, not very deeply understood by many of the practitioners on a purely linguistic level. One is here reminded of the use of Western African languages such as Yoruba by priests in the Afro-Cuban religion Santería, in which the Yoruba texts are not normally understood by those active in the religious tradition. This lack of knowledge was definitely not universal among the Golden Dawn membership and among latter practitioners in the Golden Dawn tradition, but it was certainly common enough. When the Golden Dawn material teaches (pieces of) Hebrew, it does not teach a language – it teaches religious symbols.

One should perhaps distinguish between the way Hebrew was/is used in the Golden Dawn groups and the general approach to the language in Kabbalistic thinking. In medieval and early modern Jewish mystical writings such as the *Sepher Yešîrâ*, the *Zôhar*, the *Bâhîr*, the medita-

tive/extatic works of Avraham Abulafia, and the writings of the Safed mystics, the Hebrew language does of course play a very explicit role as an object of mystical contemplation and esoteric speculation, but in all of these cases, the intended audience of the texts may be presumed to have been well-versed in Hebrew, having studied the language from an early age and possessing a firm grounding in Jewish exegetical tradition. The classical view that Kabbalistic studies ought not to be undertaken prior to thoroughgoing biblical study is an example of this attitude. This means that – despite the mystical and esoteric views of Hebrew words and letters expounded in the texts – the Jewish students of Kabbalah could normally associate what they were reading about with an existing linguistic reality with which they were acquainted. A very telling instance of this state of affairs can be found in the *Sepher Yešîrâ*, which openly uses Hebrew phonological analysis as a basis for metaphysical speculation centered on the Hebrew letters (the author is aware of the special status of the *Bēghadhkēphath* letters, for example).

To many members of the Golden Dawn Order, however, Hebrew seems to have been more of a “non-language” – it was more a cryptic code than a language in the conventional meaning of the term. It is perhaps no coincidence that the “Cipher Manuscript” upon which the Golden Dawn rituals were allegedly based did not put their Hebrew words into code as they did with the rest of the text – the Hebrew passages were already in code, so to speak!<sup>30</sup> Whereas the Hebrew language to the mediaeval Jewish Kabbalists represented the very building blocks of creation and a direct connection to a religious practice and reality, to the Golden Dawn writers it really was a “magical language,” gaining its relevance mainly through the esoteric context in which it was used. The classical Kabbalists performed esoteric analysis because they knew that Hebrew was the

<sup>29</sup> For examples and further thoughts concerning this, see John F. A. Sawyer, *Sacred Languages and Sacred Texts* (London: Routledge, 1999), especially 23–43.

<sup>30</sup> The same is, it must be granted, the case for a few isolated words in Classical Greek as well, but Hebrew is much more prominent in the Manuscript. One may note with some interest that one of these Greek words is written backwards (right to left) as is the English part of the cipher text, providing a sort of code in that way. This, of course, could not be an issue for the Hebrew words.



language of revelation and the basis of the manifest world – for the Golden Dawn practitioners it was, in a sense, the other way around: Their magical and esoteric use of a “foreign” and ancient language was partly what served to sanctify it (though it worked both ways). This, of course, is nothing unique to the Golden Dawn tradition – the same phenomenon occurs in many kinds of western esoteric thinking. In Jewish, Kabbalistic sources, this symbolic use of Hebrew is, of course, also present, but then in a context constantly bolstered by use of the language in biblical reading, liturgy, and other types of writing (poetry, commentaries, et cetera).

In a famous article, Edward Ullendorf posed the question: “Is Biblical Hebrew a language?”<sup>31</sup> His point was that the scattered linguistic records that we today refer to as Biblical Hebrew are too fragmentary and unrepresentative actually to be called a language in any real sense. To this, John Wansbrough objected that a *lingua sacra* is a special category, which does not need the trappings of an everyday language. He posited that such a language has other characteristics and that “it is a matter of literary imagery, of symbolism, of the immediate and imperative need for exegesis.”<sup>32</sup> However, the Golden Dawn use of Hebrew studied in this article does not necessarily have these features (at least not the literary and exegetical ones) to a great extent. It appears in many ways to have been similar to the use of Hebrew phrases (without always understanding their content) in quite another “magical” setting, viz. that of the magical formulae of late antique syncretism. Gideon Bohak makes the point that these ancient magical uses of Hebrew actually occur more often in Greek texts produced by non-Jewish practitioners than in those of undisputed Jewish origin, a situation that appears in some ways to parallel that concerning the Gold-

en Dawn’s infatuation with the Hebrew language.<sup>33</sup>

### Again: The “Qabalistic Cross” – Matthew and Jewish Devotional Practice

Let us go back to the Lesser Banish Ritual of the Pentagram with these ideas in mind. Another interesting reinterpretation of the Matthean doxology as used in the Qabalistic Cross is the very centrality afforded to the first word uttered, ATEH/’attâ/“you,” mentioned above. In the original text of the Gospel (or rather, in the doxological addition to it), this differs from the Golden Dawn version not only because it uses a genitive pronoun instead of a nominative one (as implied by the Golden Dawn version), but also because the emphasis is very much on the words that follow, and not on the pronoun itself:

ὅτι σοῦ ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία καὶ ἡ δύναμις καὶ ἡ δόξα εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας· ἀμήν.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory for ever; amen.

In the Qabalistic Cross, it appears that ATEH/’attâ/“you” is, in a sense, quite as important a part of the proceedings as are the Sephirothic qualities themselves – it is itself a “fourth” of the cross, so to speak (hardly surprising, given that the physical gesture corresponding to it consists in touching the practitioner’s head, the highest point in the Sephirothic tree, as mentioned earlier). Yet, the connection to the pseudo-Matthean text is clearly meant to be understood, as shown by the fact that the last Sephira mentioned (touching the left shoulder) is not called *hesedh* (as it more often is) but is referred to by its alternative name, *gēdhûlâ* (“greatness”), clearly intended as a rather literal

<sup>31</sup> Edward Ullendorf, “Is Biblical Hebrew a Language?”, 241–255 in *Bulletin of the School of African and Oriental Studies* 34 (1971).

<sup>32</sup> John Wansbrough, [Review of] Edward Ullendorf, *Is Biblical Hebrew a Language? Studies in Semitic Languages and Civilizations*, 356–357 in *Bulletin of the School of African and Oriental Studies* 41 (1978), 356.

<sup>33</sup> Gideon Bohak, “Hebrew, Hebrew Everywhere? Notes on the Interpretation of Voces Magicae”, 69–82 in *Prayer, Magic, and the Stars in the Late Antique World* (eds. S. Noegel, J. Walker & B. Wheeler; University Park: State University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 73–74.

rendering of the Greek δόξα (or at least as literal as it was possible to be while still keeping to the terminology of the Sephiroth). Note that the Lévi version actually used *hesedh* (or, rather, *Chesed*), whereas the Golden Dawn version has actually made the phrase closer to the pseudo-Matthean *vorlage*! So, despite the fact that the Golden Dawn ritual semi-translated Lévi's Latin into Hebrew (and thus, in a sense, "de-Christianizing" it), it also brought the text in a sense closer to the New Testament source.

Given the attitude of the Golden Dawn ritualists to Hebrew as an ideal spiritual language, it may perhaps be surprising to note that one of the subsequent parts of the LBRP is not given in Hebrew even though it is clearly based on a Hebrew original. As has been noted many times,<sup>34</sup> the invocation of the archangels in different quarters of the compass (which makes up the last part of the ritual) is based on Jewish devotional practice, more specifically the invocation of the angels often included in the "Bedtime Šēma'," which involves calling the archangels into the various quarters around the petitioner (though quite different in details from the Golden Dawn version, as the directions of various angels are not the same):

*Běšēm YHWH 'ēlōhē Yiśrā'ēl*  
*Mīmīnī Mikhā'ēl*  
*ūmiššēmō 'lī Gabhrī'ēl*  
*ūmillēphānāy 'Ūrī'ēl*  
*ūmē'āhōray Rēphā'ēl*  
*wē'al rō'sī šēkhīnath 'ēl*<sup>35</sup>

In the name of YHWH, God of Israel  
 At my right hand Michael  
 And at my left hand Gabriel  
 And before me Uriel  
 And behind me Raphael  
 And above my head the *Šēkhīnā* of God.

Yet, in the LBRP version, this part is in English:

BEFORE ME	RAPHAEL,
BEHIND ME	GABRIEL,
AT MY RIGHT HAND	MICHAEL,
AT MY LEFT HAND	AURIEL,

BEFORE ME FLAMES THE PENTAGRAM—  
 BEHIND ME SHINES THE SIX RAYED  
 STAR<sup>36</sup>

One can also note with some interest that the Golden Dawn ritualists have not included the reference to the *Šēkhīnā* in their text; one would have guessed that this rather mystical reference to the feminine presence of the deity would have sat well with the Kabbalistically inclined Golden Dawn magicians. One possible (though, of course, not certain) explanation for this could be the fact that *Malkhūth*, the lowest Sephira on the Tree of Life, is the one usually identified with the *Šēkhīnā* in Kabbalistic tradition and was symbolically "placed" at the lowest point of the practitioner's body in the Qabalistic Cross. Thus, in the context of the LBRP, it would be rather incongruous to ask for the *Šēkhīnā* to be present above the practitioner's head.

As the rest of the LBRP is made up of the pseudo-Matthean doxology (in Hebrew) and drawing pentagrams in the air and chanting Hebrew divine names, this "lapse" in Hebrew is rather remarkable. My analysis would be that the other parts of the ritual, the Qabalistic Cross and the divine names, contain "loaded" terminology. They are, so to speak, made up of symbolic language: Names of Sephirothic emanations and of deity. More mundane expressions, such as "before me" and "on my right" were not as loaded with lexical-ritualistic importance, and thus, they were excluded from the use of Hebrew in the rest of the ritual. This, again, shows how the central meaning of Hebrew to many of the Golden Dawn practitioners was apparently not linguistic, but symbolic. The more mundane words of the ritual did apparently not need to be Hebraized; it was only the "words of power," so to speak, that needed to be put in the "language of power."<sup>37</sup>

<sup>34</sup> See, for example, <http://www.digital-brilliance.com/kab/faq.htm> (accessed January 17, 2017).

<sup>35</sup> The Hebrew text can be found, for example, in Rabbi Nosson Scherman (ed.), *The Complete Artsroll Siddur: Weekday/Sabbath/Festival*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Mesorah Publications, 1990), 294.

<sup>36</sup> Regardie, *Golden Dawn*, 54.

<sup>37</sup> However, one notes with some interest that when Aleister Crowley later wanted to create his own, totally de-Judeo-Christianized version of the LBRP for his own order A.A. (a ritual known as *The Star Ruby*), he

And, with this goal in mind, an early Christian doxology written in Greek could be transformed into Classical Hebrew. The sacred, coded language became the key to creating an Esoteric meta-world, beyond both the Judaism and Christianity out of which it was born.<sup>38</sup>

### *Summary*

The article examines the use of Classical Hebrew and a biblical quotation in the rituals and materials of the esoteric-magical order The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn (originating in late nineteenth-century Britain) and the tradition deriving from it. The text focuses on how the Order seems to have viewed Hebrew as a “magical language” and especially on its perhaps most famous ritual, the Lesser Ritual of the Pentagram, the reworking found in that ritual of the concluding doxology in the Matthean version of the Lord’s Prayer (rendered in a kabbalistically infused Hebrew version in the Golden Dawn text). It is argued that the Hebrew language was to an extent used in a largely symbolic (as opposed to a purely linguistic) way within the Golden Dawn, and the use of the Hebrew language and originally Hebrew sources in the Pentagram ritual is analyzed as constituting a fusion of the Christian and Hebrew heritages on which the Golden Dawn ritualists drew. The phonologies of the “Golden Dawn Hebrew” words are also discussed, as are the methods of transcription employed in the ritual and educational materials of the Order and its offshoots. This helps provide a perspective on the various ways in which Hebrew material may have reached the Golden Dawn tradition.

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even had the part where various powers are called into the quarters (beings from the *Chaldean Oracles* in that case) expressed in an ancient language – Classical Greek.

<sup>38</sup> I would like to thank Andrea Lobel and Johan Nilsson for important discussions and suggestions concerning this article. Also, I extend my thanks to the anonymous reviewer(s) of STK, as well as to two reviewers from another journal, who made important suggestions on an earlier, unpublished and rather different version of the text a few years back.