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Source: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 40 (1977), pp. 189-211

Published by: The Warburg Institute

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/750995>

Accessed: 14/03/2011 05:46

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LEFEVRE D'ETAPLES, SYMPHORIEN CHAMPIER, AND THE SECRET NAMES OF GOD

By Brian P. Copenhaver

For understanding how the revival of occultism of the late Quattrocento rested on previous accomplishments of Christian scholarship and anticipated later movements of religious reformation, Lefèvre d'Etaples's *De magia naturali* (1492–94) is an important source. But his six books on natural magic were never printed, and survive today only in three manuscripts: one a fragment, one partially illegible, and another only recently discovered.¹ Full appreciation of Lefèvre's treatise awaits labours of editing and interpretation which will make *De magia naturali* widely accessible to students of Renaissance thought. Here my intention is simply to shed light on the significance and depth of the work by studying Lefèvre's development of one Cabalist theme—the secret names of God—in the final chapters of book two of *De magia naturali*. The argument of these chapters is terse and deliberately obscure, so I beg the reader's indulgence in opening this essay with a description of mysteries which I hope eventually to make less dark than the mysteries themselves.

Lefèvre titled his second book *De Pithagorica philosophia quae ad Magiam introducit*, and devoted its first thirteen chapters to astrological and theological implications of numerology.² In chapter fourteen this investigation of the power and meaning of numbers leads to a new topic, the 'mysterious Cabala' through which 'the more secret Hebrews' claim to be able to 'call up the secrets of all wisdom and work all miracles—even more than the magicians.' This Hebrew magic depends on certain divine numbers, for 'just as . . . words which do not form the divine names are empty, inefficacious, and powerless, so those numbers not drawn from the divine numbers are . . . ineffectual for the secret work of magic.' On this mystical combination of words and numbers depends 'the secret philosophy of Pythagoras,' who learned the magic of numbers from the arcana of the Syrians and Egyptians. Lefèvre seems to have

The following abbreviations are used in the footnotes:

MPL and MPG = Migne, *Patrologia Latina* and *Patrologia Graeca* respectively.

A-NCL = *Ante-Nicene Christian Library*.

CCSL = *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina*.

CSEL = *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*.

¹ The fragment is in Brussels, MS lat. 10875; Vaticana, Regin. lat. 1115 has books i to iv, chapter 19; Olomouc, Státní Vědecká Knihovna, M 119/1 has all six books. I am grateful to Professor Eugene Rice for enabling me to see fols. 198–222 of the Olomouc manuscript, which was discovered by Professor Kristeller. I have seen the whole Vatican MS but circumstances have limited me to book two in the Olomouc copy, which I have followed below in most cases. On *De magia naturali*, see: Rice, *The*

Prefatory Epistles of Jacques Lefèvre d'Etaples and Related Texts, New York 1972, p. 20; Rice, 'The *De Magia Naturali* of Jacques Lefèvre d'Etaples,' in *Philosophy and Humanism: Renaissance Essays in Honor of Paul Oskar Kristeller*, ed. Edward P. Mahoney, Leiden 1976, pp. 19–29; Lynn Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, New York 1934, iv, pp. 513–16; Augustin Renaudet, *Préforme et humanisme à Paris pendant les premières guerres d'Italie*, 2nd ed. rev., Paris 1953, pp. 150–53.

I should also thank Prof. Rice for having first brought the Cabala material in *De magia naturali* to my attention; and Profs. D. P. Walker, Frances Yates and Raphael Loewe for encouraging and criticizing my essay, most of which was written when I was a fellow of the American Council of Learned Societies.

² Olomouc M 119/1, fols. 198–217.

thought that Cabala was originally concerned with letters and that it became magical only after *Cabala litteraria* was associated with numbers. Some of these numbers appear in chapter fourteen: the series 10, 5, 6, 5 through which 'all miracles are worked', and the number 26 which 'completes the Tetragrammaton'.³ The significance of the series 10, 5, 6, 5 is the subject of chapter fifteen, which shows how the presence or absence of these numbers either increased or diminished the power of the biblical heroes Joshua, Abraham and Sarah.⁴ Chapter sixteen begins with the display of a new series, 10, 5, 300, [6], 5, alongside 10, 5, 6, 5. Lefèvre claims universal wonderworking power for 300, the new number in the series; he sees in it the mystery of the Word made flesh and the derivation of the 'name of the mediator from the name of the mind of the father', the name which commands spirits, drives out disease, raises the dead, the name about which the magicians, the prophets, and David have sung.⁵ In chapter seventeen Lefèvre reveals that he has been talking about

³ *Ibid.*, fol. 217: 'Nec iniuria profecto magi contendunt, nam contendunt secretores Hebrei ex divinorum nominum elementis [e]um qui arcanam eorum Cabalam profunde calleret posse omnis sapientiae secreta elicere et omnia miracula supra magos operari. At vicenarius senarius Tetragrammaton implet per coniunctiones aut compositiones; omnia operari miracula et credunt et hactenus crediderunt, quatuorque his implent numeris: 10 Quod Pythagoras ad Egiptios 5 peregrinus vicinosque Syros, 6 studio cognoscendi flagrans 5 profectus cognoscens, numeros ex eorum arcanis elicit per quos suo more omnia posse cognosci contendit. Voluntque Cabalam litterariam in numerorum secretam philosophiam magic[a]mque traducere. Hinc pendet secreta Pythagorae philosophia. Hinc arcana numerorum singula in solo silentio discenda. Et quemadmodum verba vana putas nullaue probari virtutis efficacia quae divinum nomen non formant, ita qui numeri, qui ex divinis non eliciuntur numeris, ad secretam magiae operationem inefficaces esse probantur.'

The phrase *vicenarius senarius*, which I translate above as '26', actually means 'belonging to the number 26', a reference to the relationships between numbers and letters upon which Gematria (see below, p. 192) is based; I have used this simplified translation throughout.

⁴ *Ibid.*, fols. 217^v-18; the chapter is entitled 'Additio et ablatio divinorum numerorum efficax et mirifica.'

⁵ *Ibid.*, fols. 218^v-20; the chapter is entitled 'Sacramentum' and begins: 'Inter divinos numeros benedicti

10	10
5	5
6	300
5	[6]
	5

quibus si inter[venerit] trecentenarius medius in hoc potissimo quinario . . . cui omnis iam potestas in celo et in terra concessa est. Nascitur ex ineffabili effabilis et invisibili in terris visibilis Deus conversatur, nomen audibile, visibile verbum. In quo quinario imo qui super omnem quinarium virtutemque atque potestatem exaltat omnis benedictio seritur. Et ex hoc sacratissimo quinario mediatoris nomen ex paternae mentis nomine deductum cognoscitur, nomen quod est super omne nomen, et in quo omne genum flectitur, celestium, terrestrium, et infernorum, in quo ineffabile benedictum paternum nomen residet, suaeque [trans]fusa illic est virtus. Nomen ergo sanctum, benedictum, potentissimum in quo spirit[us] impera[n]tur, morbi effugantur, mortui suscitantur, omnia operantur fiuntque miracula; cui [?] omnia, estque idem nomen inquam eius de quo magi prophetaeque omnes cecinerunt, de quo et David in hymnis et nomini sancto eius psallendo commemorat. . . .'

For the fourth term of the new series, both the Olomouc and Vatican MSS have 5, but it is clear that this ought to be 6 from context and from later computations in the same chapter: 'Et si sacramentales numeri in una summa colligantur, evadunt ad numerum ccc^o xxvi, qui ex xxvi collecto Tetragrammati numero, ter quaterna multiplicatione, hoc est duodenaria [nun]tiali numero aucto addito quaternario denario, surgit.'

the greatest mystery (*sacramentum maximum*) . . . in whose movement toward the light our age is to be believed more blessed if it perseveres fervently enough in devotion to a religion now almost elicited from these letters and from the sanctuaries of sacred numbers . . . , especially if [one] . . . goes on to understand the mystery of 300. For 300 and the middle letter of 'Jesus', man's mediator, are one and the same thing, mean one and the same thing. . . .

Lefèvre closes this chapter by confessing his joy in the expectation of a reformation to be wrought by 300, 'the number of redemption and renewal.'⁶ In chapter eighteen he explains how the union of the numbers 300 and 400 indicates the victory of immortality over mortality in man: ' . . . the sting of 400 passes away and death-Thau is absorbed in life-[Sin.]' This obscure reference to the sign (Heb. שֵׁן , Tāw means 'sign') which marked the foreheads of the good men in Ezekiel ix is illuminated by a marginal gloss, but the reader gets no help with the mysteries of 'Syrian counting' expressed in the last chapter of book two.⁷ He has only Lefèvre's assurance that obscurity is appropriate in such sacred discourse and that men of understanding will penetrate the darkest language. The 'number which has made an end of talking' ends the second book:

VIIII	VIII	VII	VI	V	IIII	III	II	I
LXXXX	LXXX	LXX	LX	L	XXXX	XXX	XX	X. ⁸

⁶ *Ibid.*, fols. 220-21: 'Sacramentum hoc inquam o Germane maximum est, et eius ad Lucem intentione nostra tempestas credenda est beator, si in religionis pietate iam ferme ex ipsis elementis et sacrorum numerorum aditis eruta ferventior perseverat. Tum sit Germanus beator, et maxime quid si intelligere pergit trecentenarii mysterium. Nam trecentenarius Jhes[u] hominis mediatoris medium elementum unum idemque sunt, unum idemque portendunt. Sum enim ut diligentissima perquisitione huius rei cognoscendae percupidus. Comperi hominem recuperatum in arcanis; [por]tendit designatque Trecentenarius ergo redemptionis recuperationisque numerus quod qua[m]primum propense tanta protinus me subito occupavit mentis laetitia, ut tantae vix capax ipsae fuerim. . . . Salus parta est omnis, summus atque optimus rerum status atque reformatio estque per ipsum revera recuperatus homo.'

The Vatican appears to read 'usum' where the Olomouc reads 'Jhesum'.

⁷ *Ibid.*, fol. 221; the chapter begins with a table of 'four unities', 1 to 7, 10 to 70, 100 to 700, and 1 to 7 again; Lefèvre tells us that these represent the realms of the super-intelligible, the intelligible, the intellectual world, and all insensible, perishable and

corrupt things. He emphasizes the fourth number, or quaternary, in each series; and goes on to say: ' . . . mors per quod quadringentenarium designatur, quo fit si quadringentenarius trecentenario iungetur ut mortali immortale copuletur et Thau dissolvat S[in]. Hinc Thau timent demones omnes, quo in fronte sunt signati mediatoris electi, quod signum sit quo trecentenarii recuperatrix felixque et beatissima nostra hominem perditum recuperavit. Quod si trecentenarius se rursus in se colligit, perit stimulus qu[a]dringentenarii, mor[s]que thau in vita S[in] est absorpta.'

I have read 'Sin', where both the Olomouc and the Vatican manuscripts have 'Sum', because this Hebrew letter makes sense of the numerology of the chapter (see below, pp. 207-8). The marginal gloss reads: 'Thau enim signum aut signatus, et de hoc conspiciatur Ezechiel propheta Ca: 9;' cf. Ezek. ix: 3-6. In transliterating the Hebrew, I have followed the conventions in Thomas O. Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew*, London 1973, pp. xv-xxviii.

⁸ *Ibid.*, fol. 222; the chapter is titled: 'Numeri secundum Syriorum Arithmetica ad precedentia et pleraque alia mysteria pondus habentes,' and the text reads: 'Sed obscura haec inquam sunt o Germane nisi

Even in the few chapters under study here, *De magia naturali* poses more riddles than I have space or wit to answer. The solutions I can offer will take us on an intricate journey through the histories of biblical exegesis and occultist speculation.

Our best beginning is with chapters fourteen and fifteen, in which it becomes clear that Lefèvre understood Cabala as a way of manipulating the numerical values of Hebrew letters, especially those in sacred names, in order to work wonders of learning and magic. The word 'Cabala' occurs only twice in chapter fourteen and not at all in the remaining chapters of book two; the content of these chapters, however, is clearly related to the 'associations and arrangements' of numbers and letters which Lefèvre took to be the basis of Cabala and which were, in fact, the chief business of the kind of Cabala called Gematria. Chapters fourteen and fifteen begin to lay bare the wonders latent in the ineffable name of God, יהוה, spelled (without points) yōd hē wāw hē, for which another word, 'ādōnāy, אֲדֹנָי, is substituted when reading the Bible aloud. The Gematria in Lefèvre's chapters is the normal one which assigns to the letters of the Hebrew alphabet their standard numerical values.⁹ Yōd has the value ten, hē five, and wāw six, so that letters whose numerical values total twenty-six 'complete the tetragrammaton': yōd-10 + hē-5 + wāw-6 + hē-5 = 26. To reveal the power of the tetragrammaton's letters, Lefèvre points out that neither Joshua's military exploits nor Isaac's birth in the old age of Abraham and Sarah would have been possible without the aid of these numbers and letters. In Abraham's case he mentions *quinarius* (hē-5), in Joshua's *denarius* and *senarius* (yōd-10 and wāw-6), and in Sarah's *denarius* (yōd-10). Lefèvre makes no direct reference to the names of these heroes, but context together with the mention of *Additio et ablatio* in the title of chapter fifteen should have been enough to send his readers to the stories told in Genesis xvii and Numbers xiii. The Genesis narrative of Isaac's miraculous birth and God's covenant with Abraham mentions two name-changes symbolic of these events. God commanded 'ābrām, אַבְרָם, meaning High Father, to call himself 'ābrāhām, אַבְרָהָם, meaning Father of a Multitude; this entailed the addition of a hē-5 to 'ālep-1, bēt-2, rēš-200, mēm-40, thus transforming the total value of the letters in the patriarch's name from 243 to 248.¹⁰ God also ordered that Abraham's wife be called Sārāh, שָׂרָה,

hii numeri aliquo ex fonte scaturiant. Obscura inquit et arcanorum ubi ea amplius quam par est reteguntur maiestasque minuitur, etiam omnino tecta, viris contemplativis (qui secretis digni sunt) multum fructum afferunt, et qui ex parvis plerumque ad magna assurgunt et ex humilibus ad ardua. Proinde si Syriorum numerandi fons quicquam conducere valet, illuc age vela hucque demitte, et figuratus modo qui sequitur numerus finem dicendi fecit:

VIII	VIII	VII	VI	V	III
III	II	I			
LXXX	LXXX	LXX	LX	L	XXXX
XXX	XX	X			

⁹ On the different varieties of Gematria, see Gershom Scholem, *Kabbalah*, Library of Jewish Knowledge, Jerusalem 1974, pp. 337-343; this book is a collection of Scholem's important *Encyclopedia Judaica* articles on Cabala and is invaluable for students of the subject.

¹⁰ Olomouc M 119/1, fol. 218: 'Abrahamum senem, facile crediderunt magi, prolis generationisque mansisse impotentem, nisi quinarium beneficio fuisset adiutus. In quo numero, sibi divinitus elargito, vidit paternae mentis ideam, tota mente iubilans. In quo numero facta est Abrahæ benedictionis gentium repromissio, in quo benedicuntur omnes gentes'; cf. Gen. xvii: 1-6.

meaning Princess in the absolute sense, instead of Sāray, שָׂרַי, meaning My Princess. Tradition explains that God had divided the yōd-10 in Sāray into two hē-5's; one of these He gave to her husband, the other He left to her. This reduced the total value of Sarah's name by hē-5 but kept the sum of the names of man and wife unchanged, so preserving some arcane parity.¹¹

In Numbers xiii: 16 '... Moses called the son of Nun Joshua, not Hoshea,' and so set him apart from the other young warriors sent out to explore the land of Canaan. This foreshadowing of Joshua's greatness can be explained on the same principle as Abraham's and Sarah's name-changes: the addition of sacred letters from the tetragrammaton gives power to the person whose name is changed. Hōšē'a, הוֹשֶׁעַ, became Yehōshu'a, יְהוֹשֻׁעַ, by the prefixing of a yōd-10 and—as Lefèvre mistakenly thought—the insertion of a wāw-6 between 'āyin and šin. This transformation—'denario auctus pariter et senario'—could prepare Joshua to vanquish kings, command the sun, cross rivers with feet unwet, and bring down the walls of Jericho.¹²

Read in the context of Midrashic and Talmudic commentary, these passages in Genesis and Numbers become rich not only in Cabalist significance but also in astrological meaning, a valuable insight for the author of *De magia naturali*, were he somehow privy to these rabbinical traditions. Both the *Babylonian Talmud* and the *Midrash Rabbah* explain that Abraham had concluded from observation of his planet, Jupiter, that he was doomed to infertility. When he complained of his fate to the Holy One, the divine response was to lift him '... high above the vault of the sky and ... [to say] to him, "From that very planet which showed you that you are not destined to have any progeny, I will prove to you that you will have progeny."' 'Abram and Sarai cannot beget,' said the Lord, 'but Abraham and Sarah can beget.' God also ordered Abraham to 'go forth from ... thy planet [gazing,] for Israel is free from planetary influence.'¹³

The Lord had 'crowned' Abraham with a hē and made him 'Father of a Multitude', but his crowning was at the expense of the yōd removed from Sarah's name.¹⁴ Afraid for the integrity of the Torah,

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 'Sed per ablationem denarii a Sara Abraham uxore, magi Machumetheorum infecundam longe et prorsus divinitate exortem abhorrenter fugerentque, docerentque non esse fecundam. In Sara enim eius lumen extinctum est quo luceat divinum imputatum es[se], quo rite ad Deum assurgat, plenitudo diminuta est, quo vacua inanisque cadat'; H. Freedman and Maurice Simon, eds. *Midrash Rabbah: Gen. (Lech Lecha)* 47.1-2, London 1939, i, 399-400, n. 1; cf. Gen. xvii: 15-21.

¹² Olomouc M 119/1, fol. 218: 'Ut amplius ammireris numerorum portenta, additio plerumque miracula operatur et ablatio mysterium suum retinet. Dux Hebreorum Josue nunquam tot reges edomisset, nunquam amnem siccis pedibus transgisset, neque eo duce, sine illa Arietis aut machinae

concussione, Hierichontis moenia coruissent, neque sol in suo orbe fixus stetisset, nisi denario auctus pariter et senario fuisset. Haec tamen universa per 10, 5, 6, 5 paterna mente volente sunt operata'; *Midrash Rabbah*, loc. cit., n. 3; cf. Num. xiii: 1-16; Josh. iii: 14-17; vi: 1-21; x: 12-15; xii: 1-24. Joshua's name can be written יְהוֹשֻׁעַ, but in Num. xiii: 16, where the name-change takes place, the Masoretes specified יְהוֹשָׁעַ.

¹³ *Midrash Rabbah: Gen. (Lech Lecha)* 44.10, 12; *Exod. (Tetzaven)* 38.6-8; *Num. (Bamidbar)* 2.12; *Eccles.* 5.6.1 [Freedman and Simon, i, 367-8; iii, 454; v, 42, n. 1; viii, 134]; i. Epstein, ed., *The Babylonian Talmud: Shabbath* 156^{a-b}; *Nedarim* 32^a, London 1936-38, pp. 96, 800.

¹⁴ *Midrash Rabbah: Gen. (Lech Lecha)* 39.11;

the yod . . . soared aloft before God and protested: 'Sovereign of the Universe. Because I am the smallest of all letters, Thou hast withdrawn me from the name of that righteous woman!' Said the Holy One . . . : 'Hitherto thou wast in a woman's name and the last of its letters; now I will set thee in a man's name and at the beginning of its letters,' as it says, *And Moses called Hoshea the son of Nun Joshua* . . . R. Mana said: Formerly she was a princess [Sarai] to her own people only, whereas now she is a princess [Sarah] to all mankind.

Another version of the yōd's indignation has it springing from Solomon's breach of commandments laid down in Deuteronomy xvii: 16-17, a sin which changed the verb form yarbeh to the form rābāh, entailing the loss of a yōd. 'Who knows?' asked the yōd,

'Today he has abolished one letter, tomorrow . . . another until the whole Torah will be nullified?' God replied: 'Solomon and a thousand like him will pass away, but the smallest tittle will not be erased from thee.' Whence do we know that he did erase it from the Torah and put it back again? Because it says: *As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah*. . . . Where did He put it back again? *And Moses called Hoshea the son of Nun Jehoshua*. . . .

Both stories end with Joshua's name-change, which helps restore the balance upset by previous displacements of the yōd. According to one rabbinical comment, yōd was the appropriate letter to add to Hoshea's name because its value was 10 and ' . . . Joshua received the reward which would have gone to the ten spies . . . ' who failed in their reconnaissance of the Promised Land.¹⁵

The concern of these *midrashim* for the inviolability of words and names in the Torah points toward the Cabalist principles that the Torah and God's mystical name are identical and that the speech of God in the Torah is infinite in its meaning. The *Sha'arei Oraḥ* of Joseph Gikatilla, a Spanish Cabalist of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, puts it this way: 'The entire Torah is like a . . . commentary on the [ineffable] name of God.'¹⁶ It is no surprise that the earliest Christians came to comparable conclusions about the powers of names and their changes. Reflections of New Testament accounts of the name-changes of Peter and Paul, along with the primitive Christian conviction that the name of Christ was potent against demons, appear in the works of Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Chrysostom, and other early exegetes.¹⁷

46.7-8; 47.1-2; *Lev. (Metzora)* 19.12; *S. of S.* 5.11.4 [Freedman and Simon, i, 321, 393-4, 399-400; iv, 239; ix, 242]; the second of these passages also justifies the use of *notarikon*, a kind of Cabala, as an exegetical method.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, *Gen. (Lech Lecha)* 47.1-2; *Exod. (Va'era)* 6.1; *Lev. (Metzora)* 19.2; *Num. (Shelach Lecha)* 16.9; *S. of S.* 6.11.3 [Freedman and Simon, i, 399-400; iii, 103-4, n. 4; iv, 239; vi, 680, n. 2; ix, 242, n. 3]; *Talmud: Sanhedrin* 107^{a-b} [Epstein, pp. 732-3]. The editorial note to the last of the passages from the *Midrash* explains, somewhat cryptically I find, that Solomon ' . . . was accused because

he broke the commandment, *He shall not multiply* (yarbeh) etc., Deut. xvii: 16; by removing the yod the word reads *rabah*, he did multiply'. Deut. xvii: 16 begins with the words: *רַבִּינִי לֹא יִרְבֶּה*; the note thus

accounts for the shift from imperfect to perfect but not for the removal of the negative.

¹⁶ Scholem, *Kabbalah*, p. 171.

¹⁷ Justin Martyr *Dial. Tr.* 111, 113, 126 [A-NCL, ii, 238, 240-41, 259-60]; 2 *Apol.* 6 [A-NCL, ii, 76-77]; Tertullian *Adv. Mar.* 4.13 [MPL 2: 386-8]; Chrysostom *De mut. nom.* 1.6, 2.2-4 [MPG 51: 123-30]; Origen *Con. Cels.* 1.25 [MPG 11: 343].

Origen was especially taken with the magic of names. He noted that the names of God, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and other biblical heroes retained their power only if preserved in their original Hebrew form. His claim that such names 'possess . . . [great] efficacy when united with the name of God' sounds like an anticipation of Cabala, but Origen was thinking not of an exchange of letters but of a combination of these holy names in prayer: 'God of Abraham, and God of Isaac, and God of Jacob.' Origen knew that one of God's ten names was the tetragrammaton. He saw Joshua, whom he knew from the Septuagint as Jesus Nave, as a type of Jesus; and in his *Homilies* on Genesis he commented on Abraham's and Sarah's name-changes. In *Contra Celsum* he warned that the names of Abraham and other patriarchs were so potent that they could be misused even by those ' . . . who work with incantations and magical arts.'¹⁸ From Evagrius, a late fourth-century theologian, later condemned as an Origenist, we have a fragment titled Εἰς τὸ ΠΙΠΙ which adds an important new dimension to the early Christian interest in divine names. 'The unutterable name assigned to the Lord is written with four letters,' Evagrius explains:

ioth, *he* ^π, *waw*, and *heth* ^π; in the middle of them, after the first two, the letter called *sen* by the Hebrews is inserted and this means 'teeth', so that there is this sequence of the five letters: 'this beginning', 'teeth in it', 'the one living'. The four letters are interpreted: *ioth* 'beginning', *he* 'this', *waw* 'in it', and *heth* 'the one living'.¹⁹

Evagrius's mention of a medial *šin* between *yōd* *hē* and *wāw* *hēt* leads one to the word ^{יהוה}, approximately the Hebrew spelling of the name 'Jesus' which was to become an object of reverence and a source of fascination for Lefèvre and other Christian students of Cabala.

But there was no edition of Evagrius's fragment until the seventeenth century; and it was St. Jerome who, in his *Hebraicae quaestiones in libro Geneseos* and other works, provided the main channel for the transmission of this patristic material to Christians of the medieval West. He knew that Sarah's name had lost a *yōd*, that a *hē* had been added to hers and Abraham's, and that Hebrew scholars claimed that the *hē* had come from the tetragrammaton; he also explained the semantic differences between Abram/Abraham and Sarai-Sarah.²⁰ In *Ep. 25 ad Marcellam* Jerome included that

¹⁸ *Con. Cels.* 1.21, 24, 4.33, 5.45; *In Gen. hom.* 3, 6, 8; *Comm. in Gen. ad.* 48: 14; *Comm. in Joan.* 4.26; *Comm. in Ep. ad Rom. praef.*; *Sel. in Num. ad* 13: 17; *Sel. in Ps. ad.* 2; *Sel. in Ezech.* 8; *Hom. 4 in Ezech.* 7; in *Num. Hom.* 14; *Hom. in lib. Jesu Nave* 1 [MPG 11: 338, 341-2, 526-7, 611-13; 12: 52, 76-77, 80-81, 270, 322, 397-400, 539; 13: 421, 702; 14: 144, 460].

¹⁹ Paul de Lagarde, *Onomastica sacra*, Göttingen 1887, pp. 229-30: Τὸ ἐπὶ τοῦ κυρίου ταπτόμενον ἀνεκφώνητον ὄνομα διὰ τεσσάρων γράφεται στοιχείων, διὰ τοῦ ἰωθ, διὰ τοῦ ἥ π, διὰ τοῦ οὐάβ καὶ διὰ τοῦ ἥθ π. τούτων μέσον παρενθεθὲν μετὰ τὰ πρῶτα δύο παρ' Ἑβραίοις στοιχεῖον

καλούμενον σέν, ὃ ἐστὶν ὀδόντες, ὡς εἶναι τὸν εἰρμὸν τῶν πέντε γραμμάτων οὕτως· ἀρχὴ αὐτῆ, ὀδόντες ἐν αὐτῇ ὁ ζῶν. ἐρμηνεύεται τὰ τέσσαρα στοιχεία, τὸ ἰωθ ἀρχή, καὶ διὰ τοῦ ἥ π αὐτῆ, καὶ διὰ τοῦ οὐάβ ἐν αὐτῇ καὶ διὰ τοῦ ἥθ ὁ ζῶν. The word ΠΙΠΙ is a Greek approximation of יהוה, whose final ה Evagrius mistook for π.

²⁰ *Heb. quaest. in Gen.* 17.3-5, 15 [CCSL 72: 21]; Matthias Thiel, *Grundlagen und Gestalt des Hebräischkenntnis des frühen Mittelalters*, Biblioteca degli 'Studi Medievali' iv, Spoleto 1973, pp. 224-5, 407-8; François Secret, *Les Kabbalistes chrétiens de la Renaissance*, Paris 1964, p. 5.

list of the ten names of God—among them ‘the ninth, tetragrammum, which . . . is ineffable, . . . and is spelled with these letters: iod, he, vau, he’—which was best known in the early Middle Ages.²¹ A more striking contribution to the exegesis of sacred names was his treatment of Joshua as a type of Christ in his tractates on the Psalms. His comment on Psalm lxxvi explains that

the Jews saw the Promised Land, but could not enter. . . . But under Jesus our commander (*Iesu duce*) we his sons have come to the Jordan and entered the Promised Land. . . . Jesus himself, then, our commander, holds the sword, goes before us always . . . conquers the enemy, and for seven days we have gone about Jericho, this world, that is. . . . He [Joshua] commanded the sun to stand still, and it did, and he was a great forerunner of Jesus. . . . He killed the five kings in the cave. . . . He is the son of Nun, whom we call Nave, and he was called Osee . . . or Saviour.²²

Jerome opened this exegesis to future Cabalist interpretation in *Tractatus de Psalmo X*, which he introduced with some speculations on the power of the number ten ‘. . . which is both beginning and end, in which all calculation is repeated. . . . And to mention something more curious,’ he added, ‘the name of Jesus, the Saviour, and the ineffable name written ioth, he, vau, he, by the Hebrews begin with this [letter, yōd-ıo].’²³ Thus Jerome had not only linked the names of Abraham, Sarah and Joshua with the powers of the tetragrammaton but had also gone the extra steps of associating the names of Joshua, Jesus and Yahweh and of treating the latter two in a numerological context. In *Ep. 30 ad Paulam* Jerome prepared the Hebrew alphabet itself for numerological analysis by dividing its twenty-two letters into seven *connexiones* and supplying an interpretation for each *connexio*. The seventh *connexio* is qōp, rēš, sîn, tāw,

. . . and in that seventh number there is also a mystical meaning, ‘the calling of the head, the signs of the teeth.’ Spoken sound is produced through the teeth and through these signs one arrives at the head of all things, who is Christ. I ask you, what could be more sacred than this mystery? (*Quid hoc sacratius sacramento?*)²⁴

²¹ *Ep. 25* [CSEL 54: 218–20]; Thiel, *Hebräischkenntnisse*, pp. 69, 74–75, 221.

²² *Tract. Ps. LXXVI* 21 [CCSL 78: 63]: ‘Iudaei uiderunt terram repromissionis, et intrare non potuerunt. . . . Nos filii sub Iesu duce uenimus ad Iordanem, et intrauimus in terram repromissionis. . . . Tunc ipse Iesus dux noster gladium tenet, et semper nos praecedit, et pugnat pro nobis, et uincit aduersarios, et septem diebus circumimus Hiericho, hoc est, istum mundum. . . . Ille imperauit soli ut staret, et stetit, et istius typo ille magnus erat: ille imperabat, sed Dominus efficiebat. Ille uictor extitit: ille, quod frequenter dixi, in spelunca quinque reges interfecit. . . . ille est filius Nun, quod nos legimus Naue: ille est qui dicebatur Osee . . . hoc est saluator’; *Lib. int. heb. nom.* ad. I Reg. 1 [CCSL 72: 104]; Thiel, *Hebräischkenntnisse*,

pp. 334, 337.

²³ *Tract. Ps. X* [CCSL 78: 355]: ‘Nunc ad decimi psalmi ordinem reuertamur: qui numerus et finis est et principium, in quo omnis supputatio reuoluitur. . . . Et ut aliquid curiosius inferam, ab hoc Iesu, id est Saluatoris incipit nomen, et illud ineffabile quattuor litterarum apud Hebraeos exinde habet exordium, quod scribitur per ioth he uau he . . .’; Thiel, *Hebräischkenntnisse*, p. 328.

²⁴ *Ep. 30* [CSEL 54: 246–8]:

‘7 coph uocatio Septima conexio est, quae res capitis et extrema, quo et in ipso sen dentium quoque septenario numero tau signa sit mysticus intellectus, ‘uocatio capitis dentium signa,’ per dentes articulata vox promitur et his signis ad caput omnium, qui Christus est, peruenitur. Oro te, quid hoc sacratius sacramento?’

Like Evagrius, Jerome had noted that the Hebrew word (𐤅 𐤑𐤍) for the letter 𐤅 𐤑𐤍 means 'tooth', and on this etymology he built an association between 𐤅—which appears in Jesus's name—and the mystery of Christ, the Word, as *vox articulata*. Now the numerical value of 𐤅 is 300, the magical number of chapters sixteen to eighteen of *De magia naturali*. Lefèvre's *sacramentum maximum* has its roots, then, in the mystery of Jerome's seventh *connexio*; but before we can move closer to the core of this holy enigma there are more byways to travel.

If it is safe to be guided by Walafrid Strabo's *Glossa ordinaria*, Nicholas of Lyra's *Postilla* and the biblical commentaries of the Victorines, then it seems that later medieval exegesis (at least through Nicholas's time) had little to add to Jerome's handling of the sacred names.²⁵ However, as early as the twelfth century Christian biblical scholars had begun to take notice of an important new source of literal, *halachic* and *aggadic* exegesis in the works of Rashi (1040–1105), or Rabbi Shelomo Izhaki of Troyes. Nicholas of Lyra came to be called 'Rashi's ape' for using him so often; and many other Christian scholars, most notably the Victorines, seem to have taken advantage of the abundant manuscript circulation of his writing. Rashi appeared in print in Hebrew for the first time in 1475.²⁶ His *Commentary on the Pentateuch* deserves our attention because Christian scholars who had access to it could have learned of the *midrashim* which recounted Abraham's liberation from astrology, Isaac's conception after Abraham's and Sarah's name-changes, the complaint of the yōd and the consequent association of Joshua's name-change with Sarah's.²⁷ Another line of interpretation which bears mention appears in the succession of anti-semitic tracts which followed on the works of Petrus Alfonsi (*b.* 1062, Moses Sefardi) and Raymond Martini (1220–85). This literature, much of it composed by men who were conversos or Dominicans or both, was particularly sensitive on two points of doctrine: the Trinity and the truth of Christ's claim to be the Messiah. Thus there is a great deal of searching in these polemics for important words which exhibit threenesses—like 'Yahweh', which has three different consonants—and for similarities between names like Yahweh and Jesus. One finds reflections of these speculations in the works of Joachim of Flora, Arnaldus of Villanova and Nicholas of Cusa as well.²⁸

What did Lefèvre know of these various exegetical traditions when he wrote *De magia naturali*? The Cabalist chapters of that work are silent on his sources; but more than a dozen years later, when he was working on his *Quincuplex Psalterium*, Lefèvre briefly reawakened his interest in God's secret names. The *Psalter*, published in 1509, falls into two parts: the first prints the

²⁵ *Glossa ord.* ad. Gen. xvii: 5–7, 15–16 [MPL 113: 123–4]; *Post.* ad. Gen. xvii: 5–7, 15–16, Num. xiii: 16; Hugo of St. Victor *Adnot. eluc. in Pent.* ad. Gen. 15, 17; *Alleg. in Vet. Test.* 4.1 [MPL 175: 51, 671]; Peter Comestor *Hist. schol. lib. Gen.* 50; *Lib. Num.* 17; *Lib. Jos. praef.*, 1 [MPL 198: 1098, 1227, 1259–1261].

²⁶ Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, 2nd edn., Oxford 1952, pp.

150–1; Herman Hailperin, *Rashi and the Christian Scholars*, Pittsburgh 1963, pp. xii, 10–11, 103–4.

²⁷ R. Salamonis *Jarchi commentarius in Pentateuchum Mosi, Latine versus . . . a Joh. Friderico Breithaupto*, Gotha 1710, pp. 94, 118, 131, 186, 1120, 1507–8.

²⁸ Secret, *Kabbalistes*, pp. 8–17; Bernard Suter, 'Martini, Raymond,' *En. Jud.*, xi, 1066; 'Petrus Alfonsi,' *ibid.*, xiii, 347.

three versions of Jerome's *Psalter* (*Romanus*, *Gallicanus*, and *Hebraicus*) together with Lefèvre's commentary; the second contains the version of the old Latin *Psalter* which Augustine used for his *Ennarationes in Psalmos*; and the Vulgate *Psalter* corrected against Jerome's *Hebraicus*. As part of an introduction to the second part of his *Psalter*, Lefèvre prepared a full folio of analysis of the divine names in order to explain why he had used them to gloss the second part.²⁹ God's names, he explains, are full of 'mysteries useful to our religion and worth knowing'. He notes that the Psalmist used more of the names than Jerome had listed in his letter *ad Marcellam*, and after he confesses his inability to penetrate all their mysteries he calls on Petrus Alfonsi (Rabbi Moses) to reveal the trinitarian secrets hidden in the tetragrammaton's three consonants.³⁰ 'Since this name is ineffable,' he adds,

they apply to it, as if it were pronounceable, the breathings (*spiritus*) seva '·' and comes '·' which . . . are the breathings of the name Iesua, 'the healer' (*salutaris*), that is, or of Ihesuha, our Saviour's proper name, as some would have it. . . . So what do these breathings mean, but that Messiah, Word, and Spirit are part of the great and arcane name of God? . . . But here you ask whether or not the name 'Iesus', which the prophet uses so much in the Psalms to glorify Christ as 'healer' and 'saviour', has a breathing or not. No, it has not, but it corresponds to the word which the Greeks write *ἰησοῦς*, or Iesus, without any breathing; this name does not conceal the tetragrammaton, and yet, as I have said, it does conceal the breathings of that great name. But following the old usage of the Latins, I rather frequently give a breathing (*aspiro*) to that proper name, [Jesus], and then I understand that it conceals the whole tetragrammaton, as can be understood more fully from the book *De verbo mirifico*, as I have often said elsewhere in the notes. The Jews, however, would take our Saviour's name, Iesus, as without breathing and spelled Ioth, Sin, Vau, Ain; they would reject the other—Ioth, He, Sin, Vau, He—as fictitious and too nicely worked up by us. Either way, it is an august and venerable name.³¹

²⁹ *Quincuplex Psalterium: gallicum, romanum, hebraicum, vetus, conciliatum*, Paris (H. Estienne) 1509, fol. 231; Rice, *Epistles*, pp. 198–201; Henri de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale: les quatre sens de l'Écriture*, Paris 1959–64, iv, 411–27.

³⁰ *Psalt.* fol. 231: 'Et ad conciliatum nomina dei quibus propheta per spiritum sanctum in hac tota psalmodia laudat deum annexum tum quod frequenter aliquorum in annotationibus meminimus tum quod non parva mysteria et tam nostrae religioni utilia quam scitu digna continere viderentur. Et nomina dei ad Marcellam scribens sacer Hieronymus decem enumerat . . . et his omnibus in psalmis utitur propheta, eo excepto quod sexto loco . . .; verum in psalmis utitur insuper propheta his pro nominibus dei, Eloha, Sur, Abir. Erunt igitur duodecim nomina quibus egregius movente spiritu sancto psaltes in divina sua hymnographia

celebrat deum: El, Elohim, Elohe, Eloha, Sebaoth, Elion, Adonai, Iah, יהוה, Sadai, Sur, Abir. . . . Sed quaeres quae mysteria haec continent? Maiora profecto quam nostrae potestatis sit enucleare. Nitemur tamen pauca edisserere de magno nomine dei יהוה quod Rabbi Moses . . . dicit trinum esse et unum . . .; Petri Alphonsi ex iudeo Christiani dialogi lectu dignissimi . . ., Cologne (Ioan. Gymnicus) 1536, pp. 176–8.

³¹ *Psalterium*, fol. 231: ' . . . cum hoc nomen sit ineffabile, illi quasi effabile hos spiritus supponunt, seva '·' et comes '·' quae . . . sunt spiritus nominis Iesua, id est salutaris, sive ihesuha, proprii nominis salvatoris nostri ut nonnulli volunt. . . . Quid igitur spiritus illi designare videntur, nisi Messiah, verbum, et spiritum esse magni et arcani nominis dei. . . . Sed hic quaeres nomen IESUS quo in psalmis tantopere Christum ut salutarem

Earlier, in commenting on Psalm lxxi in the first part of the *Psalter*, Lefèvre had provided some other material on divine names and had referred to Paulus Hebraeus or Pablo de Santa Maria (c. 1350–1435), author of a polemic *Scrutinium fidei* as well as of *Additiones ad postillam magistri Nicolai de Lyra*, the source of Lefèvre's citation.³²

In November 1509 Beatus Rhenanus wrote to his old teacher, Johann Reuchlin, to tell him that he had just received a gift from Lefèvre, a copy of the *Psalter*, just published in the preceding August. In his letter Beatus included some lines from Lefèvre's comment on Psalm lxxi which paid honour to that '... most tasteful and unarguably most learned of the Suevi, Ioannes Capnion, . . . [who] called his book *De verbo mirifico* after that blessed and wondrous divine name.'³³ Lefèvre's commentary set forth the relationship

et salvatorem propheta celebrat aspiratum ne sit an secus? Minime est aspiratum, verum respondet vocabulo quod graeci absque ulla aspiratione scribunt $\iota\epsilon\varsigma\upsilon\varsigma$ [!], id est Iesus, et hoc nomen in se non claudit tetragrammaton, etsi ut dictum est magni illius nominis spiritus claudit. Verum proprium illud nomen iuxta vetustam latinorum consuetudinem frequentius aspiro, et tunc nomen intelligo quod totum in se claudit tetragrammaton, ut ex libro de verbo mirifico amplius intelligi potest utque saepe alias in annotationibus dictum est. Iesus tamen ut non est aspiratum recipere Iudaei nomen esse salvatoris nostri cuius elementa sunt Ioth, Sin, Vau, Ain; alterum autem Ioth, He, Sin, Vau, He repudiarent quasi fictitium et a nobis curiose commentatum. Et sive hoc sive aliud, nomen augustum est et venerandum.

This passage is somewhat confusing in that Lefèvre seems to have conflated three distinct orthographic entities into his *spiritus*: the Greek rough breathing, the Hebrew guttural consonant hē, and the Hebrew vowel points. He also has in mind the theological meaning of *spiritus*. The 'breathings' he mentions, the vowel points qāmeṣ and šewā, were the ones the Masoretes applied to the Tetragrammaton to indicate that it was to be pronounced 'ādōnāy'; they also appear in the word for 'salvation', יְשׁוּעָה .

Lefèvre's statement that the Psalmist uses the name 'IESUS' can be understood by referring to the margins of the second part of the *Psalter* where he glosses the appearances of the word 'Christus' with 'Messiah' and those of 'Salutaris' with 'Iesua'. Both $\chi\rho\iota\varsigma\tau\omicron\varsigma$ and מָשִׁיחַ mean 'anointed one,' and the Hebrew spelling of Jesus's name as יֵשׁוּעַ contains the root consonants which appear

in the verb יָשַׁע , 'to save', and the noun יְשׁוּעָה , 'salvation'. The similarity of these forms to יְהוֹשֻׁעַ , Joshua's name, explains his being linked with the Saviour, but it also raises questions about Lefèvre's use in the first half of the *Psalter* of the forms IHESU and IHSUH, from the Hebrew יְהוֹשֻׁעַ , which lacked the 'āyīn of the salvation-words but contained, as Lefèvre pointed out, the ineffable tetragrammaton with a šīn in the middle to make it pronounceable. For these points and other echoes of Nicholas of Cusa and Reuchlin, see *ibid.*, fols. 5^v, 7, 17, 32, 35, 37^v, 55^v, 58, 76, 80, 95, 97, 107, 113, 125, 139^v, 143^v, 147^v, 155^v, 167^v–8, 266^v–7.

³² *Ibid.*, fol. 109^r; J. Kaplan, 'Pablo de Santa Maria', *En. Jud.*, xiii, 3; *Secret Kabbalists*, pp. 14–15; *Additiones ad postillam magistri Nicolai de Lyra super biblia, editae a reverendo patre domino Paulo de Sancta Maria . . .*, Venice (F. Renner von Heilbron) 1483, ad Ps. lxxi: 17, sig. kvi.

³³ Beatus to Reuchlin, 10 Nov. 1509, in Adalbert Horawitz and Karl Hartfelder, *Briefwechsel des Beatus Rhenanus*, Leipzig 1886, p. 25: 'Qui de te in quincuplici Psalterio (quod ad Hebraici et Graeci exemplaris archetypam veritatem fidelissime recognitum et venustissimis notis informatum, mihi nuperrime muneri misit) ita honorificam mentionem facit, ut libeat eius hic verba recensere. . . . "Illud idem scripsit Mirandula et de eodem librum edidit elegantissimus et sine controversia inter Suevos doctissimus Ioannes Capnion, cuius paulo ante meminimus, quem quidem libellum ab illo divino et benedicto et mirando nomine de verbo mirifico nuncupavit." Hactenus Faber. Quin aliis in locis Reuchlinianorum rudimentorum (sic enim nominat) saepe meminit'; cf. Lefèvre, *Psalterium*, fol. 109^r.

between the name of Jesus, which could be rendered IHESVHE and Yahweh or IHEVHE; Lefèvre attributed this information to Nicholas of Cusa (whom Beatus did not mention in his letter) and added that Reuchlin and Pico della Mirandola (whom Beatus did mention) had written about the matter as well. We recall that when Lefèvre raised the question of divine names more fully at the beginning of the second section of the *Psalter*, he cited *De verbo mirifico* again.

Augustin Renaudet knew of the references to Reuchlin's book in the *Psalter* and also recognized the Cabala material in *De magia naturali*. Perhaps it was because he believed that *De verbo mirifico* was published in 1496 that he did not think to associate the two works.³⁴ A more likely date for *De verbo mirifico* is 1494, some time after 21 April.³⁵ In the text of his *Préréforme* Renaudet writes that Lefèvre '... composed ... [*De magia naturali*] in the early months of 1493 ...', but the relevant footnote places the composition of the manuscript between 10 October 1492 and 16 December 1494. Renaudet's evidence for these dates is a reference of Lefèvre's to the Dauphin, Charles-Orland, who actually died in December 1495.³⁶ In either case, Lefèvre could have had time to see *De verbo mirifico* in print before he finished *De magia naturali*. Reuchlin's book was published in Basle, a printing centre whose books were readily available in Paris; the publisher was Johann Amerbach, who had particularly good connections with Parisian scholars through Johannes Heynlin, Amerbach's teacher as well as Reuchlin's. From after mid-century until 1479, Heynlin had spent most of his time in Paris, where he obtained his doctorate in theology, became rector of the university and helped found the Sorbonne press. After 1479 he lived mostly in Basle; and until his death in 1496 he advised Amerbach on his publishing work. These and other connections between Paris and Basle could have brought Lefèvre news of Reuchlin's work on the divine names even if *De verbo mirifico* was published too late to have influenced *De magia naturali*.³⁷ This evidence of printers, places and dates of publication is, of course, circumstantial, as is Lefèvre's mention of Reuchlin, Pico and Nicholas of Cusa in a book published a decade-and-a-half after his work on *De magia naturali*. A look at the speculations of these thinkers on the names of God, however, supports the possibility of their having influenced *De magia naturali*.

Given his deep interest in mathematics, Nicholas of Cusa could not go unaware of the Pythagorean number mysticism which Lefèvre associated with Cabala.³⁸ Nor could a preacher of his range and power avoid the drama of Abraham and his family, another key topic in Lefèvre's chapters. In the

³⁴ Renaudet, *Préréforme*, pp. 150-1, nn. 3-4; pp. 640-1, n. 3.

³⁵ Reuchlin, *De verbo mirifico* (n.p., n.d.), sig. a^v, a letter dated 'Spirae xi kal. Maias M.cccc.xciii'; Josef Benzing, *Bibliographie der Schriften Johannes Reuchlins in 15. und 16. Jahrhundert*, Bibliotheca Bibliographica, Band xviii, Vienna 1955, p. 5.

³⁶ Renaudet, *Préréforme*, p. 150, nn. 4-5; Rice, *Epistles*, p. 20; Rice, 'De magia', p. 20, n. 7; *Dict. de biog. fran.*, vii, 1959, col. 533.

³⁷ Peter G. Bietenholz, *Basle and France in the Sixteenth Century: The Basle Humanists and Printers in their Contacts with Francophone Culture*, Travaux d'humanisme et Renaissance 112, Geneva 1971, pp. 167-9, 175; Renaudet, *Préréforme*, pp. 640-1.

³⁸ *Haec accurata recognitio trium voluminum operum Clariss. P. Nicolai Cusae Card. ex officina Ascensiana recenter emissa est*, ed. Lefèvre, Paris (Badius) 1514, i, fols. v, lxxxv, xcvi, clxvii.

Psalter Lefèvre cites Cusanus's *Sermons*, where Abraham's faith in the covenant is described as a kind of vision (in language not unlike Lefèvre's in chapter fifteen of *De magia naturali*) and in his *Cribratio Alchoran* Cusanus retells Abraham's story at great length, mentioning the transformation of his name.³⁹ But the most likely source of Nicholas's influence on Lefèvre's treatment of Cabala is his lengthy analysis of the tetragrammaton in his *Sermons*. Cusanus regards the divine name as a *maximum mysterium* and gives details on its Hebrew spelling and on the analogy of 'Yahweh' and 'Jesus'. His sermon *Dies sanctificatus* envisions a light-filled cosmic hierarchy, populated by angels whose names signify God as light and crowned at its apex by a *deus lux* whose name one cannot speak

because it encloses every vowel-sound within itself. . . . It is, then, the form of words, whence comes the form without which a word cannot be vocalized, for there is no word without a vowel. And so it is the Word of God, that Word through which and in which every word is. But in Hebrew the name IHESUS is IESUA and is the Word of God with the letter 's', which is called 'sin'. And 'sin' means 'utterance' (*elocutio*), the Word of God spoken, so to speak, and so IESUA or IESUS is the spoken Word of God.⁴⁰

Cusanus also teaches that the understanding of certain divine names has been passed on to us '... through persons of vigorous intellect more illustrious than the rest in the sanctity of the light of revelation. Other names are from

³⁹ *Ibid.*, ii, fol. lxxxiii: 'Abraham vidit Christum, quando fide non haesitavit, in semine suo esse Christum promissum. . . . Christus uti fuisset Isaac voluntate patris Abraham, ita voluntate patris sui, fuit immolatus et gavisus est. . . .'; cf. above, n. 10.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, fols. lii-lv: 'Collige mysterium quomodo angeli non habent nisi nomina quae sonant terminum lucis, scilicet Michael quasi fortitudo dei, Raphael quasi medicina dei; hoc est ubi relucet in termino fortitudinis lumen illud aut in termino salutis secundum interpretationem nominum illorum. Et non reperiuntur nomina esse intellectualium spirituum nisi quidam terminationes lucis divinae, secundum regionem intellectualem. Sic etiam de aliis in sua regione, quemadmodum in mathematicis ex terminatione superficiei figura nomen sortitur, trigona, tetragona, hexagona, quia tot angulis clauditur. Sicut etiam aurum varie terminatum in figuris varie nominatur; nam nominatur calix, vel candelabrum, vel anulus, vel crather, vel quippiam similitum. Sic etiam divinum lumen licet sit unum, ex termino tamen vario nominatur varie. Ille autem qui scit quod candelabrum illud est ex auro, nominat candelabrum aureum. . . .

Habemus igitur quomodo in lumine gratiae, seu lumine revelato, seu in luce stellae si diligenter ambulaverimus et quaesiverimus, poterimus ad aliquem locum perducere ubi est rex Judaeorum. . . . Sed ducit nos lumen ad IHESUM. . . . Et hoc est nomen supra omne nomen coelestium terrestrium, et infernorum, neque est aliud nomen in quo est salus. . . . Qui igitur sitit apprehendere sapientiam uti Magi et illam diligenter inquit, ducitur lumine gratiae ad IHESUM ut ad mediatorem perveniat, sine quo incapax esset natura a quaerentis quaesitae gloriae. Nomen tetragrammaton dicitur ineffabile forte quia non est nisi unitas omnis vocis. . . . Ineffabile igitur est hoc nomen quod omnem vocalitatem in se complicat. . . . Est igitur forma verborum, unde est forma sine qua non potest verbum vocale fieri; sine enim vocali, non sit verbum. Unde est verbum dei, scilicet verbum per quod omne verbum et in quo omne verbum. IHESUS autem vocatur hebraice IESUA et est verbum dei cum 's' litera quae dicitur sin, et interpretatur sin elocutio, quasi verbum dei elocutum. Est igitur IESUA seu IESUS verbum dei elocutum. . . .'

Chaldaeans, Greeks, Egyptians, . . . ' and so Christians have something to learn in these matters from pagan seers like Hermes Trismegistus, the Erythraean Sibyl, and the Magi.⁴¹ These allusions to ancient theologians seem friendly, but in a sermon on the Magi Cusanus (citing Chrysostom) attacked the sort of verbal and demonic magic which was to frighten some Christian humanists away from Cabala. 'It must not be believed that there is any power in these words,' he warned, 'which God has not put there, [and] . . . the mixing of sacred words with anything false is also to be shunned. . . .'⁴² This note of caution in the *Sermons* means that of the three fifteenth-century Christian sources which Lefèvre mentions in his *Psalter*, Cusanus is the most apt to have tempered Lefèvre's willingness to meddle with the powers of divine names.

Pico's treatment of sacred names and mystic numbers is bolder and in general closer to the language of *De magia naturali*. Most of the relevant passages occur among the *conclusiones* which Pico had planned to defend publicly in Rome in 1486. In them the daring and erudite young Count of Mirandola first combined two of the more important traditions which were to colour the late fifteenth-century renaissance of occultism: Christian Cabala and the Hermetic tradition. But Pico's thought seemed audacious to his church, and so a papal commission condemned several of the nine hundred theses.⁴³ Fourteen of these notorious *conclusiones* were written 'according to the mathematics of Pythagoras,' the topic of Lefèvre's second book, and in his seventy-two theses from the Cabalists 'according to his own opinion' Pico also associated Pythagorean numerology directly with Cabala. In the same place, he claimed that Cabala was the key to understanding the universal and marvellous power of Christ's name, that the ineffable tetragrammaton contained the promise of the second and third persons of the Trinity, and that the medial šin in 'Jesus' concealed the mystery of God become man. In another set of Cabalist theses he pointed out that Abraham could not have begotten Isaac without the addition of 'littera He' to his name, and in the *Oration on the Dignity of Man* he tells us that Joshua received the Cabala from Moses.⁴⁴ Any of this fundamental material on Christian Cabala could have supplied Lefèvre with the inspiration for the final chapters of book two; further resemblances of detail support the conclusion that *De magia naturali* does, in fact, depend on Pico's pioneering work in Cabala. The term *paterna mens*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, fols. xi^v-xiii, lii: 'Et sic scimus ex traditione sacrarum literarum revelationes aliquas circa nomen dei ut de nomine tetragrammato et aliis divinis nominibus. Et non est nisi unum nomen supra regionem intellectualem, scilicet IEHOVA. . . . Alia sunt nomina divina sed de regione intellectuali, quorum aliqua sunt nobis explicata per vigorosos intellectus qui sanctitate luminis revelationis prae caeteris claruerunt. Alia sunt nomina sapientium, Chaldaeorum, Graecorum, Aegyptiorum, Paganorum, nationum, linguarum. . . .'

⁴² *Ibid.*, fols. xxix^v-xxx: 'Nec credendum est verbis illis aliquam virtutem inesse

quam Deus non dedit. . . . Cavendum etiam ne sacris verbis aliqua vana sint commixta. . . .'

⁴³ Frances Yates, 'Giovanni Pico della Mirandola and Magic', *L'Opera e il pensiero di Giovanni Pico della Mirandola nella storia dell'umanesimo: Convegno internazionale (Mirandola: 15-18 Settembre 1963)*, Florence 1965, i, pp. 162, 174, 188, 190-4; cf. Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*, London 1964, pp. 84-116.

⁴⁴ Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, Gian Francesco Pico, *Opera omnia (1557-1573)* (rpt. Hildesheim 1969), i, pp. 1-2, 79, 83, 105, 108-9, 328-9.

appears frequently in Lefèvre's chapters and is associated with the tetragrammaton: Pico calls it a Zoroastrian idea and finds an analogue for it in Cabala. There are also important parallels between the astrological terms which Lefèvre uses in chapter sixteen and the language of Pico's Orphic and Cabalist conclusions.⁴⁵ And Pico's notion that '... the songs of David are wonderfully suited to the work of Cabala, just as the songs of Orpheus are to the work of truly licit and natural magic' may well have prompted Lefèvre to read the Psalms in Cabalist terms, a project he hints at in chapter sixteen of *De magia naturali* and again in his *Psalterium*.⁴⁶ But nothing Lefèvre said was as bold as Pico's confident assertion that 'there is no science which gives us more certainty of Christ's divinity than magic and Cabala.' On the contrary, in chapter fourteen he warns that the arcana are 'to be learned only in silence' and the Pythagorean reticence which encloses the remaining chapters of book two is dense indeed.⁴⁷

To understand what lay behind the Pythagorean silence which Lefèvre enjoined in chapter fourteen, we can turn to the *De verbo mirifico* of Johann Reuchlin, whom his contemporaries called 'Pythagoras reborn.' Like Pico, Reuchlin was more willing to proclaim than to honour the Pythagorean injunction to silence. He closed his book with the command to 'be silent, conceal, hide, cover, be quiet, say nothing,' and yet he openly claimed that Pythagoras sought some of his Eastern wisdom among the Hebrews and that his tetractys was an analogue of the tetragrammaton.⁴⁸ He also announced that God had opened the secret of His name to men as a source of occult power (*virtus occulta*) and that many wonders, including prophecy, could be wrought by one who knew the powers of divine words (*virtutes verborum divinorum*).⁴⁹ The numerical values of the sacred letters yōd, hē and wāw, he made the subject of a long section of *De verbo mirifico*, a section which included an account of Isaac's begetting as a result of the addition of hē to Abraham's name.⁵⁰ Lefèvre could have used any of this material, but the most striking similarity between his work and Reuchlin's comes in the third book of *De*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 107–8; in chapter sixteen (fols. 219^v–20), Lefèvre mentions the following series while talking about the significance of 14:

2	3	4	5
Lucina	Pallas	Ceres	Dionisius
Rhea	Saturnus	Iupiter	Hyperion
	Oceanus		

This corresponds to an earlier list (fol. 207) of 'simple inferior and superior celestial numbers':

2	3	4	5
Apla[n]es	Saturnus	Jupiter	Mars
Luna	Mercurius	Venus	Sol

Except that the sum of the numbers in both series is 14, I am unsure of Lefèvre's meaning. The terminology in Pico's eighteenth and twentieth Orphic conclusions is similar.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 106: 'Sicut hymni David operi Cabalae mirabiliter deserviunt, ita hymni

Orphei operi vere licitae et naturalis Magiae'; cf. above, n. 5.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 105: 'Nulla est scientia quae nos magis certificet de divinitate Christi quam Magia et Cabala'; cf. above, n. 3.

⁴⁸ Reuchlin, *De verbo mir.*, sigs. ab, c3, c5, c8, c3^v, e4^v–e6, g8: Sile, cela, occulta, tege, tace, mussa; Secret, *Kabbalistes*, p. 51; Charles Zika, 'Reuchlin's *De verbo mirifico* and the Magic Debate of the Late Fifteenth Century', this *Journal*, XXXIX, 1976, pp. 112, 116, 120, 129, 134; Lewis W. Spitz, 'Reuchlin's Philosophy: Pythagoras and Cabala for Christ', *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, xl, 1956, pp. 6–13; L. Geiger, *Johann Reuchlin* . . . , Leipzig 1871, pp. 187–9.

⁴⁹ Reuchlin, *De verbo mir.*, sigs. b4, d2, e^v, f7^v, f8^v; Zika, 'Reuchlin', pp. 111, 115, 118–119, 127.

⁵⁰ Reuchlin, *De verbo mir.*, sigs. e4^v–e6; see sig. e6^r for Abraham's name-change.

verbo mirifico in a long, culminating section on the name of Jesus, 'the wonder-working Word.' Here Reuchlin recounts the exploits of Joshua in language much like Lefèvre's, calls him a 'type of Christ', and points out the close relationship between his name and those of Jesus and Yahweh. Citing Jerome's description of his seventh *connexio*, Reuchlin argues that a 'sin' had to be added to the tetragrammaton to make it capable of pronunciation, and that this addition produced the name 'ihseh', which Greek scholars connect with 'healing' and 'health-giving' (*medendo et sanando*), but Hebrews with 'saving', '... so that they regard ihseh as the same as saviour'. Like Lefèvre, Reuchlin saw a sign of the incarnation of the Logos in the derivation of the pronounceable 'Jesus' from the ineffable 'Yahweh'. 'If you are amazed', he tells his partners in the dialogue,

let me add just this—that what had been unspeakable for so long a time ... was now made speakable. And if you are still astounded, I will add this—when Word descended into flesh, then letters changed into sound. See how openly and truly I spread the whole arcanum before you.⁵¹

Tradition remembered many heroes called 'Jesus' or 'saviour', but Reuchlin points out that some variation in the spelling of these names always prevented their being identical with the name of Jesus. Some particularly holy men were given the honour of having letters from the tetragrammaton added to their names. Abraham was given an 'h' and Hosea an 'i', the latter a gift from Moses which fortified Joshua before he set out to explore in Canaan. Powerful as Joshua's name was, it was only a shadow of the wondrous name of Jesus and spelled differently since '... its last breathing was changed into another guttural and "sin" was transposed behind "vau".' If Lefèvre knew

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, sigs. g^v-g³; 'Nomen summum et exuperantissimum ... quod est super omne nomen, quod nominatur in caelo et in terra etiam in futuro saeculo. Nomen miraculorum et mirificum. Nomen sono vocis enunciabile non ultra ineffabile, non Tetragrammaton sed pentagrammaton. Nec est ulla virtus in caelo et in terra quae nomini ihseh resistere audeat. Nec est ullum aliud nomen quod sanctius et religiosius constat, cuius litterae deus, cuius syllabae spiritus, cuius dictio deus et homo est. Quid attoniti obstupescitis? ... Si miramini, vel hoc addam: quod prius tanto tempore immo tot saeculis fuit ineffabile, iuncta nunc una non sonante sed consonante littera, effabile factum est. Est si adhuc admiramini, adhuc addam: quando verbum descendit in carnem, tunc litterae transierunt in vocem. Videte quam aperte vobis et quam fideliter totum pando arcanum. ... Sunt autem quatuor solae, IHVH, quibus Tetragrammaton ineffabile constat et quae divinam naturam propriissime commonstrant. ... Quae cum dici humana et voce et facultate nequeant, opportune quidem decebat incarnandum

deum praeter eas alium cum carne assumere characterem, quo inenunciabilis sonus ac tunc invisibilis dei inenarrabilis nota inter humanos nunc posset dentes stridere aliquando et sic effabiliter vocari, quatenus ante invocabile modo sentiat vocabile. Apellant vero eam hebraei consonantem Sin, quod dentes Hieronymus presbyter interpretatur ad Paulam Urbicam sic scribens. Septima *connexio* [etc., see above, n. 24]. ... Si nomen ineffabile Tetragrammaton oporteat fieri effabile, necessario vocabitur per consonantem quae appellatur Sin, ut fiat ihseh, qui erit supra te, caput tuum, et dominus tuus. ... Hoc enim nomen a medendo et sanando derivant graecorum auctores. Hebraeorum vero grammatici a salvando, ut idem esse ihseh putent quod salvator.' This interpretation of Reuchlin's also depends upon Ambrose's notion that *šîn* meant 'super vulnus', an idea that leads him to associate *šîn* with Jesus, who heals the wounds of the soul; see *Expositio Psalmi CXVIII* 21.1-5 [CSEL 52: 474-6]; Thiel, *Hebräischkenntnisse*, pp. 87-93.

and fully understood this text of Reuchlin's, he should not have made the mistake of inserting a wāw as well as a yōd in Joshua's name. On the other hand, Reuchlin's language is not crystal clear (especially to one as unfamiliar with Hebrew as Lefèvre must have been in the early 1490s) and the form of the text of Numbers which Reuchlin cites—'vocavitque Hosee filium Nun Ihosue'—seems to support Lefèvre's error: the difference between 'Hosee' and 'Ihosue' seems to be 'i' (yōd) and 'u' (wāw).⁵²

In any case, I believe that Lefèvre intended his analysis of Joshua's name in chapter fifteen as a quiet allusion to a Cabalist derivation of Jesus's name from Yahweh's, a derivation he makes more explicit in chapter sixteen. The impulse to single out Joshua could have come from Reuchlin or Jerome or both, but neither of these sources explains Lefèvre's having mentioned Joshua's name-change along with Sarah's and Abraham's.⁵³ Given the prominence of these characters in the Pentateuch, it may be that no explanation is called for, but one recalls that Rashi's *Commentary* had publicized the midrashic tale of the indignant yōd and the consequent association of Sarah's name-change with Joshua's. Only a Hebrew text of Rashi was in print in Lefèvre's lifetime, but his influence among Christian scholars was nevertheless great.

Can anything else be said about the possibility of Lefèvre's having known Rashi's commentary? If we ask this question in the context of Lefèvre's interest in the occultist tradition in the early 1490s, at least one interesting possibility presents itself. We know, to begin with, that Lefèvre travelled in the winter and spring of 1491–92 to Italy and to Pico's and Ficino's Florence (as Reuchlin had in 1482 and 1490).⁵⁴ A letter of 1493 to Jean de Ganay, brother of the Germain de Ganay to whom *De magia naturali* is dedicated, testifies that shortly after his Italian voyage Lefèvre was thinking about Pythagoras, the *prisca theologia*, the mysteries of number, and the applications of numerology to *sacras litteras*.⁵⁵ During the next year, while working on *De*

⁵² Reuchlin, *De verbo mir.*, sigs. g3^v–g4: 'Fuerit . . . plures salvatores Iesu vocati sed aliis litteris et aliis syllabis. . . Sed quisquis aliqua sanctitate praeditus existimabatur, is aliquam ex iis sanctis characteribus litteram nomini suo nancisci vehementer optavit, ut Abram 'h'. Dixit enim ei deus: Non ultra vocabitur nomen tuum Abram sed appellaberis Abrham. Et Hosee adeptus est 'I'. Cum enim Moyses ad explorandum terram Chanaan viros mittere deliberasset, praefecit eis Hosee filium Nun de tribu Ephraim cui, ut foret salubriori fortitudine, mutato nomine addidit 'I', litteram nominis ineffabilis primam vocavitque Hosee filium Nun Ihosue, quod nostri etiam transtulerunt Ihesu. . . Tantam vim de se praebet illud nomen, ut ad eius quandoque vel effigiem vel umbram solam et admiranda et magnalia fiant. Legitur enim Iosue, qui et translaticio more Iesus filius Nave dicitur, quoniam solum Christi typum et quandam umbratilem in nomine figuram gerebat, transiisse

Iordanem, hostium regna subvertisse, victori populo terram divisisse, Soli et Lunae imperasse, Deum eius voci obedivisse. Cui ad integritatem veri nominis ihsuh tantum hoc deerat, quod extrema eius aspiratio in aliam gutturalem versa, et Sin post Vau transposita est, ne creatura nomen creatoris integrum ferret, putaturque id sibi cognomento sumpsisse, qui prius Hosee vocaretur, ut tam potentis nominis assidua recordatione res memoratu dignas gereret.'

⁵³ Justin Martyr discusses all three name-changes in one place (*Dial. Tr.* 113 [A-NCL 2: 240–1]), but since his text was the Septuagint he talks about the addition of an *alpha* to Abraham's name and of a *rho* to Sarah's name.

⁵⁴ Renaudet, *Préforme*, pp. 136–45, 640–641; Geiger, *Reuchlin*, pp. 9–12

⁵⁵ Lefèvre to Jean de Ganay, [Paris 1493], in Rice, *Epistles*, p. 18: 'Et arithmetica contemplatio rite cognita facilem praebet musicarum modulationum intelligentiam

magia naturali, Lefèvre also prepared an edition of Ficino's translation of *Mercurii Trismegisti liber de potestate et sapientia Dei*; and the work Ficino had begun on Dionysius the Areopagite's *De nominibus divinis* could have stimulated Lefèvre to explore the mysteries of divine names.⁵⁶ But Lefèvre was teaching as well as writing in 1494, and one of his students around this time was Leonard Pomar, a Spaniard and a new Christian. Could Pomar have helped Lefèvre's study of Cabala and of Jewish scholars like Rashi? Beyond the bare fact of their being together as student and teacher, the only evidence is a letter from Lefèvre to Pomar which served as a preface to Charles de Bouelles's *In artem oppositorum introductio*, published in 1501. The letter dwells heavily on the Pythagorean silence which was on Lefèvre's mind as he composed his Cabala chapters and which remained there, no doubt, as he chose not to have *De magia naturali* published.⁵⁷

We know today of only one complete manuscript of *De magia naturali* and this may indicate that the work was not widely disseminated in its own time. Perhaps it was the *cause célèbre* of Simon de Phares, a physician whose astrological researches got him into trouble with both the Lyonnais and Parisian authorities in the early 1490s, which convinced Lefèvre to treat his occultist learning with discretion.⁵⁸ Or perhaps events turned Lefèvre's attention to the prosecutions for witchcraft and sorcery in southern France which seemed to be making the possession of occult wisdom a perilous attainment at best:⁵⁹ a woman was burned at the stake as a result of witch-trials in the Vivarais in

astronomicarumque subtilitatum ingressus; et prisca theologia numeris olim, ut quibusdam ad divina gradibus, tota innitebatur. Quamvis et nunc in sacris litteris sua retineant mysteria numeri. Tolle igitur numeros numerorumque disciplinam, leges imperficis, iustitia caeca relinquitur, nulla modulationum reperitur regula, nullus caelestium contemplationum aditus, sacrarum litterarum delitebunt mysteria, immo et universa philosophia quae pariter humanorum divinorumque cognitio describitur. . . . Pythagoras enim sine numerorum praesidio nihil posse sciri contendebat. . . .

⁵⁶ Besides his commentary on Dionysius (*Marsilii Ficini . . . opera . . .*, 1576 [rpt. Turin 1959], ii, 1024-1128), see his *Comm. in Philebum* 1.12 (*ibid.*, 1217-18), titled 'Esse vivam in nominibus virtutem, praesertim divinis,' which mentions the power of the tetragrammaton but gives no clear account of its Hebrew spelling. Describing the faith of Abraham and Sarah in his commentary on the Pauline epistles, Ficino also mentions Pythagoras, whose father he thought was Hebrew and who 'carried over much of the Mosaic Law into his philosophy' (*ibid.*, i, 1-2, 30, 466-8; ii, 1217-18); Secret, *Kabbalistes*, p. 77.

⁵⁷ Lefèvre to Pomar, Paris (c. Dec. 24) 1501, in Rice, *Epistles*, pp. 95-96: ' . . . in

rationali [philosophia] valuit Aristoteles, in intellectuali forte Parmenides, Anaxagoras, Heraclitus, et Pythagoras. . . . Aristoteles studiorum vita est, Pythagoras autem studiorum mors, vita superior; hinc rite docuit hic tacendo, ille vero loquendo, sed silentium actus est et vox privatio. Et ut tibi et multis hac in parte prosim, in Paulo et Dionysio multum silentium, deinde in Cusa et Victorini *ὑποσώσις*, in Aristotele autem silentii perparum, vocum multum; nam silentium dicit et tace[n]t voces, siquidem voces dicere[n]t, simpliciter taceret; ita aperte tecum loquor'; *ibid.*, pp. 78-79, 94; Secret, 'Glanes pour servir à l'histoire des juifs en France à la Renaissance,' *Revue des études juives*, n.s. cxv, 1956, pp. 96-107.

⁵⁸ Renaudet, *Préréforme*, pp. 152-3.

⁵⁹ Joseph Hansen, *Zauberwahn, Inquisition und Hexenprozess . . .*, Munich and Leipzig 1912, pp. 308-9, 358-9, 413-15, 420-4, 428, 440; Hansen, *Quellen und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der Hexenwahn und der Hexenverfolgung im Mittelalter*, Bonn 1901, pp. 99-104, 118-22, 124-30, 133-45, 149-84, 188-95, 227-31, 241, 408-15, 445-516; J. B. Russell, *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages*, Ithaca 1972, pp. 126-7, 181-7, 202, 216-20, 248; cf. Norman Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons: An Inquiry Inspired by the Great Witch Hunt*, London 1975, pp. 126-46.

1490: in the same year the *Flagellum maleficorum* of Pierre Mamoris was first printed in Lyons, and a decree of Charles VIII ordered the arrest of all 'enchanters, diviners, invokers of evil spirits'; the Council of Langres of 1491 forbade all resort to 'sortilegia et maleficia' and directed priests to make this prohibition known in their parishes; in the summer of 1493 the Cri du Prevôt de Paris promised the full weight of the King's wrath to all 'charmeurs, devineurs, invocateurs de mauvais et dampnes esprits, nigromancieus et autres tres-mauvaises et tres-pernicieuses personnes usans de mauvais arts, sciences et sectes prohibees.'⁶⁰ It was about this time that Pico composed his *Disputationes adversus astrologiam divinatricem*, a work which has convinced some readers that Pico had repented of his earlier enthusiasm for the magical arts. Perhaps Lefèvre heard rumours that some such change of heart had come upon Pico.⁶¹

Whatever the external motives, we can see perfectly good reasons in the work itself for Lefèvre's keeping *De magia naturali* from public view. To imply in a work with such a title, that the Christian might find help toward salvation in traditions which were not only magical but Jewish as well, was a dangerous enterprise.⁶² Granted, Pico and others had already said as much, but what they said was novel and quickly became unorthodox. Like most of his countrymen, Lefèvre seems to have sensed these dangers; he erected defences against them in the elusive language of his chapters on Cabala.⁶³ Though he had the courage to associate the name of Jesus with the number 300, he actually mentioned the holy name only once and then much more guardedly than either Reuchlin or Pico or even Cusanus.⁶⁴ His treatment of two other sets of sacred numbers—the pair 300–400 and the 'Syrian' numbers 1 to 9 and 10 to 90—is even more enigmatic.

Lefèvre's argument in chapter eighteen, that the union of šîn and tāw symbolizes a victory of life over death for mankind, assumes a reader who knows first that the Hebrew word תָּו tāw (the name of the letter תָּ tāw) means 'sign' or 'mark' or 'cross'; second that Jerome's commentary on Ezekiel said that in ancient Hebrew writing tāw was shaped like the cross with which Christians marked their foreheads; third that the numerical values of šîn and tāw are 300 and 400; and fourth that šîn symbolizes Christ the lifegiver.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ Hansen, *Quellen*, pp. 208–12; H. C. Lea, *Materials toward a History of Witchcraft*, New York 1957, i, pp. 298–9; iii, pp. 1286–7.

⁶¹ There has been some disagreement on the question of Pico's consistency in these matters: Yates, 'Pico', pp. 190–203; Paolo Rossi, 'Considerazioni sul declino dell'astrologia agli inizi dell'eta moderna', in *L'Opera . . . di Giovanni Pico*, pp. 317–18, 322–330; Eugenio Garin, *Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, Vita et Dottrina*, Florence 1937, pp. 167–8, 181–5; Hans Baron, 'Willensfreiheit und Astrologie bei Marsilio Ficino und Pico della Mirandola', *Kultur- und Universalgeschichte . . .*, Leipzig and Berlin 1927, pp. 155–7; Donald Weinstein, *Savonarola and Florence: Prophecy and Patriotism in the Renais-*

sance, Princeton 1970, pp. 212–15.

⁶² See above, n. 6.

⁶³ On the caution of the French who were interested in occultism, see: D. P. Walker, *The Ancient Theology: Studies in Christian Platonism from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Century*, London 1972, pp. 63–131; Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella*, Studies of the Warburg Institute, 22, London 1958, pp. 119–26, 167–70.

⁶⁴ See above, n. 6.

⁶⁵ See above, n. 7; Jerome, *Comm. in Hez.* 3, ad. 9: 4–61 [CCSL 75: 106–7]: 'Et ut ad nostra veniamus, antiquis Hebraeorum litteris, quibus usque hodie utuntur Samaritani, extrema 'tau' littera crucis habet similitudinem, quae christianorum frontibus

This last should have been clear from Lefèvre's earlier statements, but the other three pieces of information were also necessary to the conclusion that the addition of 300 to 400 signifies Christ's victory over death on the cross. For a reader unfamiliar with Hebrew orthography, Gematria and patristic interpretations of the Hebrew alphabet, chances of comprehending Lefèvre's remarks were small.

Smaller still in the case of the 'Syrian' numbers.⁶⁶ A curious reader might ask himself why the two rows of Roman numerals (from 1 to 9 and from 10 to 90) were written from right to left, as they would be written in Hebrew. He might also recall that Reuchlin and earlier writers had identified the Hebrews with the Syrians in describing the origins of language, and so conclude that Lefèvre was really talking about Hebrew numbers.⁶⁷ Then, remembering the attention paid to relationships between numbers and letters in the final chapters of book two, he would go to his lexicon and learn that the series 1 . . . 9, 10 . . . 90 (eighteen numbers in all) corresponds precisely to the numerical values of the first eighteen Hebrew letters. What then? If one looks for the four remaining numbers, which Lefèvre did not write—the ultimate reticence—one finds qōp-100, rēš-200, šin-300, tāw-400. Their sum, 1000, seems an excellent number to finish a book on numerology, and they have a deeper meaning: they are Jerome's seventh *connexio* and so express once again the mystery of the spoken name of God.⁶⁸

I hope that this reading of Lefèvre's Syrian numbers is not as fanciful as the exertions of my curious reader. I think it evident, in any event, that the closing chapters of book two of *De magia naturali* are an exercise in Christian Cabala and that their presence alone is sufficient explanation for Lefèvre's failure to publish. I also believe that there is a good case for the influence of Jerome, Cusanus, Reuchlin, Pico and perhaps Rashi and Ficino on Lefèvre's Cabalist chapters. These points seem particularly worth making because they revise the conclusion of François Secret, author of the most important book on Christian Cabala, that Symphorien Champier's *Ars parva Galeni* (1516) contained the first description of Cabala in Renaissance France.⁶⁹

pingitur, et frequenti manus inscriptione signatur'. On the last page of *De verbo mir.* (sig. g8), Reuchlin also mentions the tāw in Ezekiel as a sign of the cross.

⁶⁶ See above, n. 8.

⁶⁷ Reuchlin, *De verbo mir.*, sig. c6v: 'Syriae vero nobilissimus est ager damascenus Persis vicinus unde Judaeorum gens prima Trogo et Justino et item pluribus historicis non contemnendis attestantibus originem duxit. Ergo Judaei qui et Syri et Assyrii fuerunt multo vetustiora linguae suae monumenta hoc modo possiderent etiam si externis autoribus credamus quam Aegyptii'; cf. Eusebius, *Praeparatio evangelica* 10.5.2 [MPG 21: 787-8].

⁶⁸ See above, pp. 196-7.

⁶⁹ Secret, *Kabbalistes*, pp. 151-3 credits Champier's *Ars parva Galeni* with 'la première présentation de la kabbale par un Français';

the honour of 'la première mention de la kabbale' by a Frenchman goes to the *De judaeorum ritibus* (1508) of François Tissard. Though he seems to have been unaware of Champier's letter in *De triplici disciplina* (see below), Secret does call attention to Renaudet's claim that Lefèvre had dealt with Cabala in *De magia naturali*. He notes the appearance of Lefèvre's protegee, Josse Clichetove, in *De magia naturali* and seems to conclude that it was number mysticism, one of Clichetove's principal interests, which Renaudet saw and mistakenly identified as Cabala. For the history of Cabala, Secret says, Renaudet's allusion to Lefèvre's work is 'une fausse piste'. Thorndike (*History*, iv, p. 515), on the other hand, also found Cabala in Lefèvre's treatise, and so does Rice ('*De magia*', p. 27, n. 28). As Secret says, Clichetove's *De mystica numerorum significatione*

In fact Champier himself had written about Cabala eight years earlier in one of three letters prefatory to the section of his *De triplici disciplina* (1509) titled *Theologiae Trimegisticae . . . de secretis et mysteriis Egyptiorum particulae XII*.⁷⁰ Champier's letter, which opens with praises of Lefèvre's researches in theology, philosophy and the *Hermetica*, is largely an attempt to explain away two habits about which he always felt half-guilty: his continuing interest in Hermetic wisdom, an interest which to some strait-laced Catholics might seem dangerously unorthodox, and his close dependence on other scholars who had written on the Hermetic tradition—notably Lefèvre and Lodovico Lazarelli.⁷¹ There may be, he confesses, many elements in the Hermetic literature which run contrary to Christian piety, but these are late corruptions added by Greeks and Romans, especially the infamous Apuleius. To illustrate the history of the *Hermetica*'s corruption, Champier recalls the similar fate of Cabala. Originally a useful technique of scriptural exegesis, Cabala eventually fell prey to men unscrupulous enough to misuse its powers in sinful acts of theurgy and magic. Neither Cabala nor the Hermetic literature is, in itself, to be condemned entirely; but the Christian scholar must always be ready to recognize in these bodies of antique wisdom the impious perversions of more recent writers. 'Among the Egyptians,' Champier writes,

there were mysteries as there was Cabala among the Hebrews. In Latin this means 'reception', and through it in ancient times, according to the Hebrews and our authorities, the meaning of sacred letters handed down from Moses and received in succession was understood. And it happened that the Jews came to abuse the name of Cabala and transferred it even to illicit and profane matters, only they were learned secretly and privately. And thus beyond that more secret understanding of divine letters properly called Cabala by the ancients, beyond the art of transforming letters, and beyond that study which deals with the virtues of superior things, which later men somehow understood by the name of Cabala, these younger men, pretending that they had the secret names of God with which they would coerce demons and work wonders, also ascribed to Cabala a thousand insanities picked up from the Jews. This they called Cabala and mendaciously asserted that by its power Christ had done his miracles.⁷²

opusculum, Paris (H. Estienne) 1513, dedicated like Lefèvre's work to Germain de Ganay, does not deal with Cabala, but it does bring up Joshua's destruction of Jericho in a chapter (fols. 9^v–11^r) titled 'Spiritualis quinarum et senarii designatio.'

⁷⁰ *Symphoriani Champierii de triplici disciplina . . .*, Lyons (Claude Davost for Simon Vincent) 1509, sigs. hh–hhii; Cabala is also mentioned on sig. hhv.

⁷¹ On Champier's attitude toward occultism, see above, n. 63; Cesare Vasoli, 'Temi e fonti della tradizione Ermetica in uno scritto di Symphorien Champier', *Umanesimo e esoterismo*, ed. Enrico Castelli, Archivio di Filosofia, Padua 1960, pp. 235–89. The same

subject is treated in my own *Symphorien Champier and the Reception of the Occultist Tradition in Renaissance France*, now in the press (Mouton: The Hague).

⁷² Champier, *De triplici disciplina*, sig. hh^v: 'Nam apud Egyptios mysteria erant quemadmodum apud Hebreos Cabala. Quod latine receptio atque per eam antiquitus, apud Hebreos et nostros, sensus sacrarum litterarum a Mose traditus et successione receptus intelligeretur. Factum est ut nomine Cabalae Iudei postmodum abuterentur illudque transferant ad res etiam illicitas et prophanas, modo clam et secreto perciperentur. Quare praeter sensum illum divinorum eloquiorum secretiorem qui

Champier's wish to distinguish between a good Cabala and a bad reflects Pico's *Apologia* of 1487, his imprudent response to the condemnation of some of his theses. When Champier sees Cabala as somehow comparable to the tradition of ancient Hermetic philosophy, not only is he influenced by the general drift of the *Apologia* but also he actually reproduces some of Pico's phrases and sentences.⁷³

Lefèvre's account of Cabala in *De magia naturali* can be called evasive and cautious, but it is not hostile, as is Champier's in *De triplici disciplina*. The difference between the two may indicate that by 1509 the case against the use of occultist techniques by Christians had become firmer in the minds of French humanists than it was in the early 1490s. Champier's picture of Cabala is much the blacker. Lefèvre's analysis of Cabala supports the arguments of magicians, while for Champier the attempt to do magic was clearly an abuse of Cabala and a turn to 'illicit and profane matters'. This hypothesis of a French humanism grown less receptive to the temptations of magic is supported in Lefèvre's case by a letter of 1504 in which he flatly asserted that '... there is no good magic, and it is a fiction that any magic is natural or at all good'.⁷⁴ Against this we must set not only Champier's continuing interest in the occultist tradition but also Lefèvre's own *Psalter*. If Lefèvre's Pythagorean silence had hardened into an absolute rejection of magic, then why should he have brought up the mystery of Jesus's name, complete with references to Pico and Reuchlin, in the *Psalter*? Why should the issue of Cabala have come up at all in this book? The second question is the easier. Lefèvre's work on the text of the Psalms naturally brought him so close to the Hebrew tongue that he could not help remembering what he had learned of Cabala years earlier. The old need for silence, certainly, had not left his mind as he added to his *Psalter* the long note on God's names. 'There are many mysteries which escape me,' he admitted, 'and where they do not they must none the less go unheard for brevity's sake.'⁷⁵ And yet Lefèvre found enough space in his *Psalter* for things left unsaid about the names of God in *De magia naturali*, room enough for speculation on a theme which became a favourite of Christian Cabalists. On the whole, it looks as if the spiritual atmosphere had come to seem chillier to imaginative souls like Lefèvre but that magical experiments like the new Christian Cabala still had the power to fascinate. And finally there is the fact of context to consider: a psalter was a safer place than a tract on magic for allusions to the Cabalist understanding of God's secret names.

A later work of Champier's, *Pronosticon libri tres* (1518), also contains a section, actually a full chapter, on Cabala. In the *Pronosticon* it is evident that

proprie Cabala nuncupatus est a veteribus et praeter artem revolutionis litterarum atque illam disciplinam quae de virtutibus rerum superiorum disserit, quae quomodo posteriores Cabalae nomine censuerunt, mille quoque Hebraeorum insanias Cabalae acceptas iuniores rettulere, fingentes habere secreta dei nomina quibus demones illigarent et mirabilia operarentur. Atque hanc Cabalam nuncuparunt et Christum illius ope mendaciter affirmauerunt miracula

fecisse.

⁷³ Pico, *Opera*, i, pp. 180-1.

⁷⁴ Lefèvre to Jacobo Ramirez de Guzman, Paris, 10 Feb. 1504, in Rice, *Epistles*, pp. 117-118: '... nam profecto nulla bona [magia] est, et figmentum est ullam esse naturalem ullamve bonam....'

⁷⁵ *Psalterium*, fol. 231: 'Multa alia sunt mysteria quae me fugiunt, et ubi non fugerent brevitatis causa nichilominus reticenda.'

Champier had continued to read about Cabala, most notably in the *In cabalistarum seu allegorizantium eruditionem isagogae* (1515) of Paolo Ricci, but there is nothing in the work to indicate that his views on Cabala had changed substantially. As in *De triplici disciplina*, he finds something worthwhile in an original, hermeneutic Cabala while insisting that the more recent uses of Cabala are magical and blasphemous and hence sinful.⁷⁶ There is an ambivalence here which matches Champier's generally indecisive approach to occultism, and yet his discussions of Cabala are clearly more anxious than Lefèvre's taciturn remarks. Champier has come a longer way than Lefèvre from Pico's bold proclamation of the primacy of magic and Cabala. It is Champier's consistent admiration for Lefèvre's work which inclines me to see the difference between his letter in *De triplici disciplina* and Lefèvre's position in *De magia naturali* as evidence that the early sixteenth-century climate of opinion was becoming less free and spacious than that of the late fifteenth century. Champier followed Lefèvre, even copied him, on so many issues that his departing from him on this one makes one want to know the reasons for the departure.⁷⁷ In this case, of course, the chance to follow may not have been present simply because Lefèvre kept his chapters out of print, but then this choice itself may be even weightier evidence for the same conclusion. Champier's statements are in themselves nothing more than the forgotten traces of a minor humanist, but they may be part of the more important story of the mounting perils which lay in the path of religious innovators in the later Renaissance. That such innovation seemed possible or necessary or both is evident from Pico's theses, from Ficino's *Theologia platonica* and *De triplici vita*, and from Lefèvre's *De magia naturali* and *Psalter* (which deserve further study). But both Pico and Ficino felt compelled to compose apologies in defence of their experiments with the new occultism. Perhaps Lefèvre was wisest of the three in not allowing his treatise on magic to come to light at all. Recalling their decisions and revisions, Champier, the admirer and imitator of these three humanist heroes, could only see the question of the place of Cabalist and Hermetist innovations in Christianity as becoming more closed and at the same time more vexed.

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⁷⁶ *Pronosticon libri tres* . . . , Lyons (Vincent de Portonariis) 1518, fol. ii; Paolo Ricci, *In cabalistarum seu allegorizantium eruditionem isagogae*, Augsburg 1515, fol. 5; from a letter to Erasmus from Champier printed in *Duellum epistolare*, Lyons 1519, sigs. gv^v-gvi, Secret notes that Champier had also seen Reuchlin's *De arte cabalistica* by the autumn of 1517. See Secret, 'Notes sur les hébraisants chrétiens', *Revue des études juives*, iii, 1964, pp.

150-3; Joseph Leon Blau, *The Christian Interpretation of the Cabala in the Renaissance*, New York 1944, pp. 18, 67-76.

⁷⁷ Renaudet, *Préface*, pp. 374, n. 6; pp. 669-71; the epistolary introductions to Champier's books are a good guide to his relations with Lefèvre; see also Rice, *Epistles*, pp. 53-55, 74, 97, 136, 166-9, 174-6, 183, 187-9, 263, 266, 322-4, 400.