Giordano Bruno's The Cabala of Pegasus grew out of the great Italian philosopher's experiences lecturing and debating at Oxford in early 1584. Having received a cold reception there because of his viewpoints, Bruno went on in the Cabala to attack the narrow-mindedness of the university—and by extension, all universities that resisted his advocacy of intellectual freethinking. The Cabala of Pegasus consists of vernacular dialogues that turn on the identification of the noble Pegasus (the spirit of poetry) and the humble ass (the vehicle of divine revelation). In the interplay of these ideas, Bruno explores the nature of poetry, divine authority, secular learning, and Pythagorean metempsychosis, which had great influence on James Joyce and many other writers and artists from the Renaissance to the modern period. This book, the first English translation of The Cabala of Pegasus, contains both the English and Italian versions as well as annotations.

“The Day Star Arose In My Heart”: Whitefield's Conversion

This chapter focuses on George Whitefield's conversion to faith in Christ. It begins by considering Whitefield's bodily sickness while studying at the University of Oxford, how his months-long ordeal led to his redemption, and how the Holy Spirit began ministering to him in his illness. It then describes Whitefield's time as a student at Oxford, citing his decision to repudiate plays and the theater and his reliance on godly books such as William Law's A Serious Call and Henry Scougal's The Life of
God in the Soul of Man (1677). It also looks at Whitefield's involvement with the Methodists, his reliance on the Bible as his chief source of guidance, his relationship with John Wesley, and the role of the Holy Spirit in Whitefield's life.

Oxford
Francis J. Bremer
in Building a New Jerusalem
Published in print: 2012 Published Online: October 2013
Item type: chapter

This chapter focuses on John Davenport when he left Coventry to study at Oxford University in 1613. Davenport chose Magdalen Hall as the place to resume his studies because of its puritan orientation. A number of his contemporaries left records that enable us to re-create what his typical day might have been like. Davenport would have arisen at five or six in the morning to prepare for the day and to pray his private prayers. The tensions of academic life were alleviated by opportunities for recreation. Plays, often written by college members, were performed in the halls, and musical performances were common. Many colleges had areas set aside for bowling and tennis.

The Alchemical Heyday
Paul Kléber Monod
in Solomon's Secret Arts: The Occult in the Age of Enlightenment
Published in print: 2013 Published Online: October 2013
Item type: chapter

This chapter discusses the nature of alchemy and argues that, in order to understand the concept, it is necessary to first imagine the lives of the members of a diverse intellectual community before asking what exactly made their work occult. The seventeenth century has shown that alchemists each wear their own masks and did not exactly share the same set of attitudes. Measured in terms of printed works, the high point of alchemy in Great Britain actually occurred in the last half of the seventeenth century. The biggest collection by far of alchemical manuscripts ever held in English hands was assembled by Elias Ashmole, an alchemical adept, between 1648 and 1692. He left 620 volumes of
manuscript materials upon his death to Oxford University, which included hundreds of alchemical works.

“God Is Preparing Me for Something Extraordinary”: Whitefield
The Methodist Missionary

Thomas S. Kidd

in George Whitefield: America's Spiritual Founding Father

Published in print: 2014 Published Online: January 2015
Item type: chapter

This chapter focuses on George Whitefield's life as a Methodist missionary that began on June 27, 1736, when he preached publicly for the first time at the St. Mary de Crypt church in Gloucester, England. Whitefield's first sermon was titled, “The Necessity and Benefits of Religious Society,” which reflected his Methodist experiences at the University of Oxford. The chapter examines how Whitefield turned his sermons into emotional masterpieces and how his conversion, ordination, and impending graduation from Oxford boosted helped him in his evangelicalism. It also considers Whitefield's preaching at London's Ludgate Prison, which was consistent with the Methodists' emphasis on reaching the destitute; his establishment of a Methodist mission in Georgia; and how he earned the ire of some church officials because of his views on conversion. Finally, the chapter examines Whitefield's views on the doctrine of the new birth.