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Allison P. Coudert

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The progressive nature of Francis Mercury van Helmont's thought was based on his deep commitment to the esoteric doctrines of the Lurianic Kabbalah. With his friend Christian Knorr van Rosenroth, van Helmont edited the "Kabbalah Denudata" (1677-1684), the largest collection of Lurianic Kabbalistic texts available to Christians up to that time. Because the subject matter of this work appears so difficult and arcane, it has never been appreciated as a significant text for understanding the emergence of modern thought. However one can find in it the basis for the faith in science, the belief in progress and the pluralism characteristic of later western thought. The Lurianic Kabbalah thus deserves a place it has never received in histories of western scientific and cultural developments.

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