Introduction to Magickal Grimoires

**The Medieval and Renaissance Eras**

The "classical age" of the Grimoire texts is roughly equivalent to the span of the Middle (or Medieval) and Renaissance ages. The middle Ages began roughly in the fifth century CE, when the empire of Rome was both infiltrated and violently overrun by Germanic tribes. This is when the famous sacking of Rome took place at the hands of the Vandals, in the year 455 CE. The established government was slowly inched out of power, and Italy became little more than an extension of a German kingdom. The vast Roman Republic faded away, and was replaced by a wholly agricultural society.

The Roman government, however, was not willing to simply vanish into the pages of history. It quickly shifted from its past political structure and focused upon a theocracy instead. Much of the groundwork for this was set as early as the mid-300s, when the Roman Emperor Constantine decided to take action against the fragmentation of his empire. He saw his chance within the various religious cults of Christianity (which had steadily gained popularity with the people regardless of attempts to exterminate it), and the already widespread worship of Mithras (a rather Christ-like solar God). If the people could be united under one religious structure, then the entire land would finally be controllable again.

In 325 CE, Constantine called together the famous Council of Nice- where four hundred bishops gathered to establish a unified and government-controlled religion. Constantine built churches across the land, and enforced the observance of the new faith. Highly adept at persuading his people, he combined the most popular elements of Christianity with those of other cults such as Mithraism in order to make the new doctrine as attractive as possible. His maneuvering paid off; as this was the foundation of the Holy Roman Empire.

The decisions of the Council- recorded as the *Nicene Creed*- became something of a holy scripture itself. It contained the specific outline of what made one a Christian, in the form of theological beliefs. For example, one line of the Creed reads as follows:

We believe in the Holy Spirit, The Lord and Giver of Life, Who proceedeth from the Father.

The Nicene council is often considered the birth of Catholicism, but this is not entirely the case. Originally, the Christian religion was quite decentralized, and any given church had its own way of doing things. When issues arose that concerned the religion as a whole, large gatherings of Bishops and religious leaders were called together so the issues could be debated and ruled upon. The Council of Nice itself is an example of this process.

It was not until three hundred years later that a major schism took place within the organization, creating two distinct branches of the faith: Orthodox and Catholic. Though it may be hard to believe, the division was created by the inclusion of a single Latin word into a song. This was done by a French priest who was working on setting the Nicene Creed (in Latin) to the music of Gregorian chant. Apparently, he had trouble with the line quoted above, as the meter of the song left a few notes of the chant without lyrics. In order to "flesh out" the words to fit the music, the priest added the four syllable word *filioque* onto the line- changing it to:

We believe in the Holy Spirit, The Lord and Giver of Life, Who proceedeth from the Father, *and from the Son*.

As the song became popular, it brought the theological implications of the lyrical addition into the spotlight. One camp saw little problem with the inclusion, while others felt it inappropriate to alter the Creed- especially where it concerned the natures of both the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ. In 589 CE, the Third Council of Toledo officially accepted the new word into the Creed, and effectively divided the faith in two. Those who refused to accept the new Creed separated into the Eastern Orthodox faith (centralized in Constantinople under the guidance of the "Ecumenical Patriarch"), and those who remained became the Catholic Church (centralized in Rome under the "Pope").

Such was the state of Europe at the beginning of the medieval era, ruled by its Germanic kings and Catholic clergy. The people gathered together upon "manors," which consisted of the landlord's castle, the church, a village, and the farmlands that surrounded them. These manors were actually land grants given by the king to powerful noblemen. In return, the noblemen had to declare loyalty, and promise tribute and access to military troops to the king. The noblemen then divided their land amongst various lesser nobles called "vassals," or land barons. Finally, the land barons contracted peasants ("serfs") to tend and cultivate the farmland in return for military protection. This was the basic structure of the feudal economic system. The serfs were uneducated, traveled very little, and were heavily taxed by their landlords. The rulers themselves were constantly embattled in petty political and military intrigue.

By the seventh century, the religion of Islam arose upon the Arabian Peninsula, and swept through the Middle East. Its armies defeated the Byzantine and Persian kingdoms that ruled there, and took control of the Holy Land by the year 638 CE. Over the next three centuries, the Arabians pushed northwestward onto the continent of Europe- engaging in a holy war against the empire of the Christians.

In the eleventh century, the Christians were experiencing more difficulty at home. The East/West schism that had begun nearly half a century before finally came to a boil in 1054 CE. In an effort to mend the dissolving relationship between the Churches, emissaries from Rome journeyed to Constantinople and visited the Ecumenical Patriarch. Unfortunately, the discussions failed, and ultimately ended with both sides casting anathemas of excommunication at each other. The schism was complete, and the Eastern Orthodox Church had no involvement in the later actions of the Roman Catholic Church.

Meanwhile, the Turks displaced the Arabians as the rulers of Islam. Where Arabian rulers had often been tolerant of the Christians' interest in the Holy Land, the Turks were not so kind. Christian pilgrims to the Middle East soon found themselves traveling in armed bands for protection against Turkish attackers. In the year 1095 CE, the Byzantine emperor, Alexios I Komnenos, sent an urgent plea for help to Pope Urban II. The sympathetic Pope addressed a council of leaders in Clermont, and the Crusades were created in answer. The Holy Land thus became a place of bitter religious war.

There were several Crusades that took place over the next few hundred years, all directed against non-Christian peoples. The warrior class of Europe had become a religious order in its own right, fighting one holy war after another in the name of God and King. Military conquest continued even after the loss of the Holy Land to the Turks in 1291 CE, though this date is often considered the "official" end of the Crusades.

The Knights Templar arose in the environment of the Crusades in 1118 CE. They were a mystery cult of warrior-monks who protected the merchant lanes of the Holy Land, and practiced the rites of ancient Gnostic Christianity. They were established at the site of the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem by the French king Baldwin II. By 1128 they had been confirmed by Pope Honorius II at the Council of Troyes. As the Holy Land fell to Islam, the Templars slowly withdrew toward Paris, and finally established their headquarters at the Temple Monastery there.

The Knights Templar had grown in wealth and power over the years, and eventually excited the greed of the King of France, Philippe le Bel. Declaring that the mystery rites of the order were heresy to the Church, he began to systematically destroy the order one member at a time. All of the treasure of the Templars was to go directly to his coffers, but none of its members could be coerced or tortured into revealing its whereabouts. Philippe had wasted his efforts. In a final maneuver, he attempted to demand judgment against the Templars from the Pope. When the holy man refused to be manipulated, the king dismissed him and instated his own man, the Bishop of Bordeaux, as Pope Clement V. This Pope gladly issued a papal bull suppressing the Templar order in 1312 CE.

This was the basis of the dreaded Inquisitions. Their stated objective was to discover heresy within the Church, and thus rid the world of all rival Christian (i.e.- non-Catholic) groups. The Templars were merely the first to fall, with their Grand Master Jacques de Molay burned at the stake with several others in March of 1314. The order went underground, and its history becomes shaded from that point forward.

The "Holy Inquisition" had been growing since the twelfth century, though it had not become institutionalized (under the governance of Dominican monks) until the thirteenth century. In 1231 Pope Gregory IX declared life imprisonment for heretics who confessed and repented, and death for those who refused. Once rival Christian sects had been obliterated, the Church turned its attentions toward others. Two Dominican monks- Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger- penned the *Malleus Maleficarum* (Witches' Hammer) in 1468 CE; a text of hatred, lies, and methods of torture dedicated to the eradication of pagan practices. It is in this book that we find the stereotypical images of Medieval witches, midnight sabbaths, black witchcraft, and pacts with Satan. It also happened to give exceedingly graphic instructions for torture, and outlined some of the ludicrous "tests" for witchcraft with which many of us are familiar today. Needless to say, this was the textbook upon every inquisitor's desk. As late as 1492, the Queen of Spain established the Spanish Inquisition- aimed at the conversion, expulsion, or eradication of its Jewish and Moslem people. This latter was by far the bloodiest chapter of the inquisitorial period.

This entire episode of human history is known today as the Dark Ages, where we find very little beyond blood and ignorance. There was little cultural advancement, much ancient knowledge was lost forever, and the world existed under the iron fist of a Church gone mad.

However, there was some light during these dark times. The 1200s saw great gatherings of scholars and philosophers in Spain and other areas of Europe. This class of people did not harbor the all-too-common religious bigotry of the day, and they met Christian, Muslim, Jew, and Pagan alike. It was here that the Qabalah as we know it was created, marked especially by the publication of The *Sepher haZohar* (Book of Splendor)- a mystical commentary on Biblical literature- by Moses de Leon.

This was also the time of the famed *Magna Carta*, a human rights contract which the English land barons of 1215 forced King John to sign at peril of his life. It changed little for the serfs, but it greatly restricted the king's right of taxation and required trials before punishment. In many ways, it is the historical forerunner to the American Bill of Rights.

Finally, the domination of the Medieval Church was dealt its greatest blow, in the fourteenth century, by the spread of the bubonic plague from China. The cycle of the virus continued until the seventeenth century, and wiped out a large portion of the population of Europe. For centuries the people had paid heed to the Church's doctrines of the end of the world, and to the armies of Angels who would come to the aid of the faithful in those times. When the black plague struck, the Church lost no time in proclaiming the final rapture, and insisted that only the sinners of the world would suffer.

This was a political disaster. The plague swept through the known world, and paid no attention to the piety of its victims. Worse than this, the one segment of society least affected by the plague were the Jewish peoples, due to their strict religious laws regarding cleanliness. These were the people whom the Church had promised would first fall. Now, if the plague were truly the Armageddon, then it was the Jewish people who were proving themselves the "Chosen." The Church could do nothing, and its armies of Angels languished with sheathed swords. This ultimately broke the spell the Church held over Europe. These sixteenth century people felt that, when the chips had been on the table, their spirituality had failed them. Thus, they slowly began to seek for alternative answers. This ended the Dark Ages, and began the age of the Renaissance.

The invention of the printing press by Johann Gutenberg in 1450 revolutionized communication and scholarship in a manner comparable to our own development of the Internet. Columbus discovered the New World in 1492. On October 31, 1517, Martin Luther nailed a copy of his *95 Theses* to the doors of Castle Church in Wittenberg; leading to the separation of the Roman Church into Catholic and Protestant sects. King Henry VIII created his protestant Church of England, and his daughter Elizabeth established it during her reign from 1558 - 1602. Johannes Kepler, Galileo, John Dee, and a host of others came to the forefront of the scientific world in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries; many times in direct opposition to the Catholic Church. This was also the time of the most famous wizards of history; such as Johannes Trithemius (1462-1516), Dr. John Dee (1527-1608), Giordano Bruno (1548-1600), and others. It isn't taught in our modern schools, but the very men who originally fashioned the basic scientific assumptions about our world had copies of the grimoires upon their shelves, and/or claimed membership to various mystery orders.

One thing for which the Renaissance is particularly known is the shifting of thought from the medieval philosophy based on Aristotle to the more pantheistic Neo-platonic views. In the late 1400s, Marsilio Ficino translated the *Corpus Hermeticum*- believing it was a true reflection of ancient Egyptian religion and the source for the philosophy of Plato and the Greeks. Of course, today we know that the Hermetic Arts arose in the early Common Era, and that it was they who were affected by Plato. However, this was not understood in the fifteenth century, and Ficino's work created something of an Egyptian craze among mystics and occultists.

At the same time that Ficino was disseminating the Hermetic teachings, one Pico della Mirandola was doing the same for the Qabalah. Both of these traditions (Hermetic and Qabalistic) had been in vogue centuries earlier, but had been largely lost due to Church suppression. The efforts of men such as Ficino and Mirandola re-created the mystical movements that gave rise to the spiritual values of the Renaissance mystics. This Neo-platonic Hermetic-Qabalistic philosophy is the very one described in detail by Henry Agrippa in his *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*. (An extremely important book in relation to the Grimoire literature- see below.)

This philosophy endured until the 1600s, where it would culminate in a German mystical movement known as the "Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross." In 1614 and 15, two manifestos (generally known as the *Fama* and *Confessio*) were anonymously published in the name of this Brotherhood. Each of them took a very strong anti-papal stance, and insisted on religious tolerance, the advancement of science as a spiritual art, and the reform of education, religion, and ethics. These "Rosicrucians" were deeply Hermetic (holding Alchemy as the most sacred of sciences) and they drew much from the philosophy outlined by Dr. John Dee in his *Hieroglyphic Monad* of 1564 CE.

It is most likely that the Brotherhood did not exist in any tangible sense. The Rosicrucians claimed to meet only at an "Invisible College"- and there are many subtle hints to suggest that this was meant as an allegory. The Rosicrucian manifestos were addressed to all free thinkers and spiritual seekers in the world; especially those who yearned for the dawning of a new age, the advancement of learning, and freedom from the oppressive Roman Church. The Invisible College was the common ground within the hearts of all who sought such goals. There is no known historical philosopher or Hermetic mystic, who we would call "Rosicrucian" today, who ever claimed membership to such an Order. Instead, it is the results of their Work that make them Rosicrucian thinkers.

This represents the end of the classical period upon which this book focuses. The Rosicrucian movement initiated a new magickal current- much less shamanic in nature than the grimoire material (see chapter two). After the initial furor caused by the publication of the manifestos, the Thirty Years War broke out in Europe, driving the thought movement underground. There it continued until it finally found expression in the Age of Enlightenment and within Freemasonry. It is from Freemasonry that so many of our modern magickal systems descend. Rosicrucianism, therefore, stands as a mid-point between the authors of the grimoires, and the Masonic founders of our own post-Victorian magickal systems.

**The Classical Grimoires**

Though the time of the grimoires rests mainly in the late medieval era, the legacy upon which they were founded extends much further into the past. The methods of magick they utilize are as ancient as the tribal magick of pre-history. Their forms, however, seem to have been set during the first four centuries of our Common Era; specifically within the Greek magickal papyri. These Greek spells drew from such sources as ancient Christianity (Gnosticism), Judaism, and Egyptian magick. Their focus was much the same as the later medieval texts- healing, obtaining visions, exorcism, the destruction of enemies, the gaining of beauty, etc. They incorporated mystical names and words into their prayers- the so-called "barbarous names of invocation" which have no earthly meaning, but indicate magickal formulas of vibration. They insist upon ritual cleansing and purity, and the donning of priestly linen garments. The list of similarities between the Greek and later European literature could continue, though an example would serve as well. Perhaps the most famous Greek ritual today is an invocation performed before attempting an exorcism, known as the *Rite of the Headless One*:

Write the names upon a piece of new paper, and having extended it over your forehead from one temple to the other, address yourself turning towards the north to the six names, saying…

Compare this, then, with a quote from the Key of Solomon the King, Book I, chapter 13:

Write upon a slip of virgin parchment…this Character and Name; ...thou shalt hold with thy right hand the aforesaid strip of parchment against thy forehead, and thou shalt say the following words:

At the same time, another influence played a primary role in the formation of the classical grimoires: the apocryphal biblical text known as the *Testament of Solomon*. Elizabeth Butler considers this work "The turning point between ancient and medieval magic…" The Testament outlines the mythology of King Solomon, from his subjugation of the spirits to build the Temple to his eventual entry into worship of foreign Gods. Most important for our consideration, however, is the fact that the text describes a sophisticated demonology wherein the King summons, questions, and binds several spirits. Each spirit revealed to Solomon his functions, an (often hideous) composite appearance, and the name of the Angel who directly opposes him. For example, one of the demonic princes interrogated by King Solomon was known as Beelzeboul:

I Solomon said unto him: "Beelzeboul, what is thy employment?" And he answered me: "I destroy kings. I ally myself with foreign tyrants. And my own demons I set on to men, in order that the latter may believe in them and be lost. And the chosen servants of God, priests and faithful men, I excite unto desires for wicked sins, and evil heresies, and lawless deeds; and they obey me, and I bear them on to destruction. And I inspire men with envy, and murder, and for wars and sodomy, and other evil things. And I will destroy the world."

Many of the lesser spirits in the book were associated with physical ailments rather than social taboos, and the Angelic names given are regarded as curative formulas. This links the entire tradition to older rites of exorcism:

The third said: "I am called Arotosael. I do harm to the eyes, and grievously injure them. Only let me hear the words, 'Uriel, imprison Aratosael', at once I retreat."…

The sixth said: "I am called Sphendonael. I cause tumors of the parotid gland, and inflammations of the tonsils, and tetanic recurvation. If I hear, 'Sabrael, imprison Sphendonael', at once I retreat.'

The Testament even lists four demonic rulers of the cardinal points of the compass, who were later echoed by a great number of medieval grimoires: Oriens (of the east), Amemon (of the south), Eltzen (of the north), and Boul (of the west).

It would seem that the direct inheritor of this material among the medieval grimoires is the *Goetia*- or Lesser Key- which lists 72 such spirits, along with their characters, functions, appearances, and information on how to bind them to the will of the magickian. The four "cardinal princes" even make an appearance, called here Amaymon, Corson, Zimimay, and Goap. The Goetia, in turn, had a major influence on the texts that followed. Therefore, the demonology of the Testament of Solomon became the Grimoire standard.

This occurred along with another trend that ran throughout the European texts- the assimilation of Jewish mysticism into the primarily Christian material. Even before the rise of the Qabalah in the thirteenth century, there existed a form of Jewish shamanic magick known as *Mahaseh Merkavah* or the "Work of the Chariot." This was a practice of astral travel through the seven palaces of heaven (i.e.- the planetary spheres), where the ultimate goal was the Vision of the Throne of God.

This practice does not seem to have originated with the Merkavah. The oldest examples of such literature we have found to date are the Egyptian Book of the Dead, and the Tibetan Book of the Dead, which both deal with the ascension of the soul through the heavens after death. Apparently, the Chaldean or Babylonian priests of later times made this after-death journey while still alive- creating a kind of controlled near-death experience. The practice was then adopted by both Gnostic and Jewish mystical schools, which have each had a large influence upon Medieval European magick.

The *Ethiopian Book of Enoch*, the *Hebrew Book of Enoch*, the *Pirkei Heichaloht*, and even such canonical Biblical texts as Ezekiel and the Revelation of St. John are all centered upon- or connected to- the Merkavah tradition. The Merkavah's use of ritual drugs, its focus upon talismans and seals, the summoning forth of Angelic gatekeepers and the gaining of mystical visions are elements that run throughout the Grimoire spells.

The fascination of the medieval mages for the Merkavah, and the reputation of its Jewish practitioners as extremely powerful wizards, led to the adoption of quite a bit of Judaic material into the grimoires. Richard Kieckhefer lists several examples in relation to the *Sworn Book of Honorius*, though the ideas extend too many texts. Meanwhile, he explains that Jewish tradition was likely a main source for the grimoires' insistence upon moral purity along with the usual ritual purity. Also, the texts' use of prayers with linguistic variations on similar words is probably derived from the Jewish Qabalah. Even the instructions to bury the grimoires if their owners could not find suitable successors may be a reflection of the Jewish custom of burying (rather than destroying) prayer books containing the Name of God. Professor Kieckhefer suggests that the Grimoire manuscripts, drawing as they do from Judaic magick, are examples of a primitive form of Medieval Christian mysticism that preceded the Christian Qabalah of the thirteenth century. He points out that medieval society had a surplus of clergy, and thus the spawning of an underemployed, largely unsupervised, and frankly mischievous "clerical underworld" was the inevitable result.

It is obvious enough that the grimoires are clerical in nature, beside the borrowings from Judaism. The rites of the Church are mirrored in the texts, such as techniques of exorcism, recitation of Psalms, the Litany of Saints, and other established Catholic prayers and sacraments. In many cases, access to an actual church is necessary: such as placing a grimoire on the altar during a service to consecrate it, the use of the elements of the Eucharist, or the necessity of holy oil used in a church. All of these presuppose that the mage either has close connections inside, or is perhaps employed in the Church itself. Other grimoires instruct the use of Christian observances without describing them, or fully explaining their use in the spell, which indicates that the authors of the texts considered them "given" and felt no need to write them out in full.

Another Christian trend that runs through the texts is the use of pseudepigrapha, or the attribution of a text by its author to someone other than himself. In many cases the supposed author may be a purely legendary figure, and in some cases it might be a historical personage. Most of the books of the Bible fall into this category, starting with the Gospels (at least Mathew, Luke, and John), and continuing into the apocrypha such as the Book of Enoch, or the Testament of Solomon. Where it comes to the grimoires- such as the Key of Solomon, Sworn Book of Honorius, etc- it might be said that tradition was simply followed.

Yet, there were other factors involved as well. Books of "ancient wisdom" tend to sell better when attributed to someone great from the past. Besides this, the books were illegal, and it was a rare mage who could enjoy seeing his name on the title page of such a work. (It may even be true that this is why a tradition of pseudepigrapha arose among the early Christians, as they were also persecuted heavily in their day.)

The existence of the grimoires on the shelves of medieval clergy strikes me as a perfectly natural occurrence. By this, I am not merely indicating the dynamic of a group of mystics caught in a land where magick was illegal, and thus producing a body of underground mystical material. I am also indicating the very nature of Christianity as a written tradition. From the original circulation in Palestine of anti-Roman war literature, known today as the four canonical Gospels, the Christian religion has been dedicated to the written word. From Bibles to prayer books to litanies, Christian magick is very often centered upon its sacred writ. This is no less true of the Judaic tradition, which may have adopted this aspect from Babylonian and Egyptian sources.

The Medieval era saw the advent of paper, a medium much cheaper and convenient than parchment. An explosion of written material and bound books resulted; even if it was a specifically limited explosion. Most of the world remained illiterate, and it was the clergy who were charged with producing and reading written material. Those in Kieckhefer's "clerical underground" were the same monks who took on jobs of transcribing and translating texts on a regular basis. If a literature arose which circulated amongst a reading audience, these men would have been both the audience and the authors. The grimoires were such literature.

It may be true that much of the Grimoire material was originally transmitted orally. Oral transmission might also help explain some of the more blatant corruptions of Hebrew, Greek, Arabic, and Chaldean words in the invocations. It was during the middle to late medieval era that the tradition began to surface on paper thanks to the pen-happy and ambitious monks. Not only this, but the Christian mysticism of the written word had woven itself into the tradition, and the books surfaced as living magickal objects. They were often regarded as alive, or as possessed of spirits. When they were burned, witnesses actually reported hearing screams coming from within the pages even the cleric-mages themselves warned against the opening of the books by those unpracticed in magickal lore.

When the Inquisitions did come, it was indeed the clergy who made up the majority on the prosecution's list. Remember, after all, that it was to ferret out heresy within the Church that the Inquisition was founded, and those who possessed Grimoire texts were highly suspect. Pope John XXII, in 1318, had the bishop of Frejus investigate a group composed of clerics and laymen accused of necromancy, geomancy, and similar magickal practices. In 1406, a conspiracy was uncovered in which another group of clerics was accused of working magick against the king of France and Pope Benedict XIII. By 1409, Benedict himself was charged with both using necromancy and employing necromancers. In 1500, a monk from the Sulby monastery named Thomas Wryght was caught with a book of magickal experiments, and was fortunate to escape with light punishment.

So the grimoires arose in a world of drastic political and religious change. They draw from several sources of mysticism and magick, which we have only begun to cover in this chapter. They were born from the hands of a clerical underground, perhaps even from mystical groups associated in some way with the Knights Templar. They represent a community of mages existing within the confines of its contemporary religious doctrine, experiencing mysteries that lay far outside of that doctrine. This is perhaps the most romantic trait of the grimoires. They embody a rebellion of the human spirit, and a refusal to let go of the Light even in the darkest of ages.

At this point, I feel it will be helpful to offer a list of the most popular and influential of the European grimoires. I will explain what the books contain, when they were published, and how they have transmitted their subtle influences to our modern systems of magick.

**The Picatrix (Ghâyat al-Hakîm fi'l-sihr):**

Recent scholarship on this Arabic text indicates that it may in fact be a major sourcebook for many of the later grimoires (listed below). According to Joseph Peterson, the Latin translation most familiar to scholars of the West dates to 1256 CE, from the court of king Alphonso the Wise of Castille. Unfortunately, we have yet to see an English translation of the book- though copies do exist in Arabic, German, French, and Latin.

According to Martin Plessner, the text is extremely erratic while covering a surprisingly wide range of occult topics. The philosophical doctrines that form the basis of the talismanic art, the theory of magick, astronomy, astrology and love, extensive instructions on practical magick, and anecdotes concerning the employment of the magick are jumbled together throughout the book without apparent rhyme or reason.

The work is divided into four books. The first contains a preface with “autobiographical” information about the author, his reasons for writing the book (i.e to make available the secrets of magick as guarded by the “ancient philosophers”), and a summery of the material found in the four books. The chapters of book one contain large portions of occult philosophy according to its author (largely Neo-Platonic and “pseudo-Aristotelian” according to Plessner), a definition of magick (into theoretical and practical), as well as preliminary information on astrology and the mansions of the moon. The latter is given as vital information for the formation of talismans.

Book two continues the discussions of philosophy above, the correspondences between earthly creatures and celestial archetypes, and gets further into the mysteries of astrology- the triplicities, degrees, conjunctions, the fixed stars, etc- along with (in chapter three) some long and in-depth information about the occult virtues of the moon. Yet another definition of magick follows in chapter five- dividing it this time between the talismanic art, worship of the planets, and incantations. These three, it is suggested, were divided among the human race so that different cultures became the masters of different arts. In the same chapter, material concerning the art of prophecy and divination is related. Chapters six and seven (as well as several following chapters) then go into depth upon the philosophy of talismans, explaining even that “Man makes talismans unawares as soon as he begins to manipulate nature in such processes as dyeing cloth, breeding animals or compounding drugs, as well as in the manufacture of objects of everyday use from the products of nature, as in cooking, spinning and the like.” Beyond this, such subjects as the natures of the four Elements (which Agrippa seems to have adopted- see below) and further astrological information are related.

Book three continues its lessons in astrology- this time treating the planets and signs “more individually, with their specific qualities. The planets are personified to such a degree that they are virtually conjured and worshipped.” The chapters include information on images, inks, perfumes, colors, robes, metals, etc, etc- all used in the worship/invocation of the planets. The dominions (i.e.jurisdiction) of the planets and signs are all outlined, along with magickal hours and the like. From here, about chapter four (which discusses Islam and astrology), the book returns to philosophy, the nature of man, the spiritual essence of the wise man, etc. From there, beginning at chapter seven, the text shifts to more practical concerns. Initiation into the worship of the seven planets is given, along with prayers and adorations, and the gifts to be gained from each. Full ceremonies for each planet are outlined in chapter nine. From chapter ten onward, practical talismans and other information are given for various effects common to the grimoires (love, honor, protection, etc). The final chapter (twelve) returns to philosophical concerns (the absolute need for practical magickal operation, the love of God, etc) that run almost directly into the first chapter of book four.

Finally, book four continues the philosophical discussion, outlining various substances of nature and the theory (history) of creation. It continues outlining the threefold nature of the world which began in an earlier book- dividing creation into Substance, Intellect, and Soul (once again, this seems to have been a probable source for Agrippa- see below). From here, prayers, ceremonies, and information are given for the twelve signs of the Zodiac- along with stories to illustrate the possible effects of these rites. Plessner states that each ceremony is preceded by a seven day fast, and magical characters are used in the ceremonies (pp 319-322). Some aspects of this may be found in various Hermetic manuscripts. I find this suggestive of the Ars Notaria (see below). Chapter four returns to the subject of astrology and talismans (etc), and chapter five outlines the ten disciplines considered necessary before one can become a master in the magickal arts. Oddly, the subjects of the evil eye, heredity, and even bi-sexuality are discussed here. Chapter six returns to the subject of planetary incense, providing rites for each blend. The rather lengthy chapter seven concerns the magickal virtues and uses of plants, and consists mainly of “avowed and verbatim extracts from the *Nabataean Agriculture*” The final chapters, nine and ten, concern the occult virtues of physical substances, and the description of talismans which rely on those virtues.

This, of course, merely scratches the surface of the material contained in the chapters of the Picatrix. Being that it is very much a sourcebook for the Grimoire tradition as we know it, I hope that an English translation will soon be made available for general study.

**Key of Solomon the King (Clavicula Salomonis):**

The antiquity of this French grimoire is not known exactly, though it is often placed somewhere in the fourteenth century. A. E. Waite is willing to allow as much as two centuries before this time for the book to have been created and transmitted (perhaps orally), placing its true origin as far back as the twelfth century. It would seem that scholars generally agree on the idea that the Key (along with the Lemegeton) is the fountainhead of Medieval Grimoire writing; providing the format, style, and even much of the content of those which followed.

The Key is composed of two books. Book one concerns the art of spirit summoning- without offering any set hierarchies of intelligences or the use of a triangle. Instead, the spirits arrive at the edge of the circle, and it is up to the mage to question them about their names and functions. Also given are several planetary talismans to be inscribed upon metal, and shown to the spirits in order to gain their obedience. Each one directs the spirits to perform different functions. Not only this, but “They are also of great virtue and efficacy against all perils of Earth, of Air, of Water, and of Fire, against poison which hath been drunk, against all kinds of infirmities and necessities, against binding, sortilege, and sorcery, against all terror and fear, and wheresoever thou shalt find thyself, if armed with them, thou shat be in safety all the days of thy life.” The remainder of the book is filled with day-to-day practical magick and experiments, such as finding stolen objects, hindering sportsmen from poaching game, and even fashioning a magick carpet.

Book two concerns itself with all ritual preparations- purifications, the construction of magickal tools, incense, holy water, etc. These are the most well known aspects of the book, even used in many instances by modern Hollywood: wands cut from trees at sunrise with one stroke of the knife, thread spun by a virgin, the conjuration of the magickal sword, etc.

Waite felt that the Key is the only (or perhaps merely the first?) magickal text that regulates the operations of magick by the attribution of the hours of the day and night to the ruler ship of the seven planets. These are what we call the planetary hours. While the Key certainly introduced the practice of the planetary hours into the larger tradition, it is likely that the Picatrix stands as an older source for this information.

The Key of Solomon the King is also the book from which Gerald Gardner drew much of his material in his formation of Wicca. Such rites as the blessings of salt and water, and the magickal characters for inscription upon the Athame and Pentacle are found here.

**Lesser Key of Solomon (Lemegeton):**

This is a collection of five magickal texts, *Goetia*, *Theurgia-Goetia*, the *Pauline Art*, the *Almadel of Solomon*, and the *Ars Nova*. It would appear that these were once separate texts (of which, perhaps, the Goetia is the oldest) collected together at some later date into the so-called *Lemegeton*.

**Goetia:**

The meaning of the word “Goetia” has long been a subject of scholarly debate. It is often thought to have derived from the Greek word goaô (to wail, groan, or weep), and is related to the howling of bestial demons. On the other hand, A.E. Waite suggests that the word indicates “witchcraft.” This would derive from the Greek word goes (an enchanter, sorcerer), and from the word goety, indicating the art of the sorcerer- which is witchcraft.

In classical times, “witchcraft” was a direct reference to working with spirit familiars, or the performance of necromancy. Thus, the very name of the text was meant to convey its focus upon infernal spirit working. It is introduced in the Weiser edition: “The First Book, or Part, which is a Book concerning Spirits of Evil, and which is termed The Goetia of Solomon, showeth forth his manner of binding these Spirits for use in things divers. And hereby did he acquire great renown.”

The examples we have today are said to date back only to the seventeenth century. However, Waite suggests that it must be older; due to such earlier texts as *Liber Spiritum*, which mimic the style of the Goetia. Elizabeth Butler was convinced that *Liber Spiritum*, and even *Liber Officiorum*, were earlier names for the Goetia itself. To add to this, I discussed above the relation of the *Testament of Solomon* to the Goetia, with its large collection of demons, sigils, functions, and bindings. The Testament dates itself within the second through fifth centuries of the Common Era, suggesting that the Lemegeton might have enjoyed a rather long tradition both orally and written.

The story (or mythos) within the Goetia is based upon a Talmudic legend, wherein King Solomon sealed a group of spirits (in this case, 72 planetary spirits) into a brass vessel, and cast it into a Babylonian lake. The Babylonians witnessed the king disposing of the vessel, and retrieved it in hopes of finding treasure. Instead, they only succeeded in freeing the demons once more in a fashion reminiscent of Pandora’s Box. Thus, the 72 spirits that Solomon once commanded are available for summoning, and are herein named and described, along with rites and conjurations meant to call them. The Goetia is the home of such popularized demons as Ashtaroth, Bael, Amon, Asmodai, and the four Cardinal Princes Amaymon, Corson, Zimimay, and Goap. With their brethren, they pretty much make up the standard hierarchy of demons from Medieval Grimoire literature.

Perhaps the most fascinating aspect of the Goetia is its obvious tie to the tradition of the Arabian *Thousand and One Nights*. In these tales, mages are often depicted imprisoning jinni (genies) into brass bottles. In the example of *Aladdin and the Lamp*, the prison was a brass oil-burning lamp instead. The powers attributed to the spirits of the Goetia likewise reflect the magick portrayed in the legends: production of treasure, turning men into animals, understanding the speech of animals, etc. Of course, the Arabic tradition focused somewhat on King Solomon, and most of the legends that we remember of him today originated there. I strongly recommend one read Arabic mythology (including the Thousand and One Nights) when studying the Goetia.

The Goetia is the source of the ever-popular Triangle of the Art, into which spirits are generally summoned. This is also the source of the infamous “Greater Curse” where the seal of a disobedient spirit is placed into an iron box with stinking herbs and perfumes, and dangled over an exorcised flame. The Seal of Solomon, which the King impressed upon the brass vessel, is reproduced here; as are the Pentagram, Hexagram, and Disk (or Ring) of Solomon. These magickal tools have been used by various mages, for various purposes, since the publication of the Goetia.

**Theurgia-Goetia:**

In the middle Ages, the term “Theurgy” was usually meant to imply “high magick,” or the methods of working with good spirits. (Literally, theurgia means “God-working.”) Thus, the Theurgia-Goetia was so named to indicate its contents of both good and evil spirits. Unlike the more feral Goetic demons, these spirits were organized into a functional cooperation, assigned to the points of the compass. In total, there are thirty-one chief princes, who are each provided with an incomprehensible number of servient spirits. The name of each chief and several of his servitors, all with seals included, is recorded- making for a shockingly large collection. Conjurations, all identical in form, are provided with each group along the way. Yet, even with this large number of spirits to choose from, the preamble to the text describes them in a very singular fashion:

The offices of these spirits are all one, for what one can do the others can do also. They can show and discover all things that is hidden and done in the world: and can fetch and carry or do any thing that is to be done or is contained in any of the four Elements Fire, Air, Earth and Water, &c. Also, they can discover the secrets of kings or any other person or persons let it be in what kind it will.

The introductory material describes the Theurgia as “…one which treateth of Spirits mingled of Good and Evil Natures, the which is entitled The Theurgia-Goetia, or the Magical Wisdom of the Spirits Aerial, whereof some do abide, but certain do wander and bide not.” This leads me to the suspicion that these spirits are in some way connected to the stars or other astronomical concerns.

**Pauline Art (Ars Paulina):**

This book of the Lemegeton is introduced as follows: “The Third Book, called Ars Paulina, or The Art Pauline, treateth of the Spirits allotted unto every degree of the 360 Degrees of the Zodiac; and also of the signs, and of the planets in the signs, as well as of the hours. Joseph H. Peterson notes that the Pauline Art was supposed to have been discovered by the Apostle Paul after he had ascended the third heaven, and was then delivered by him at Corinth. He also points out that, although the grimoire is based on earlier magickal literature, it is apparently a later redaction due to repeated mention of the year 1641 as well as references to guns.

The book is divided into two principal parts. The first part deals with twenty-four Angels who rule the hours of the day and night. The powers of each Angel changes depending on the day in question, and which planet happens to rule his hour on that day. (See the chapter on magickal timing for charts of these hours.) Each Angel is listed with several serviant Angels (or spirits), and instructions for fashioning astrological talismans for any of the Angels one wishes to work with. At the end of the text, the conjurations (used for any Angel, changing only certain key words) are written out in full.

The second part of the Pauline Arts is extremely interesting- as it concerns the finding of the Angel of the degree of one’s own natal Ascendant. In other words, this is the Angel who was rising above the eastern horizon as you were born. He holds the mysteries of one’s destiny, career, fortune, home, and all such factors that can be outlined by an astrological birth chart. Like the first part, methods of talisman construction are outlined for working with these Angels. The text finishes with a conjuration for the Natal Angel called “The Conjuration of the Holy Guardian Angel,” in which the Angel is invoked into a crystal ball. Apparently, there was either little distinction between the Angel of the Nativity and Holy Guardian Angel at the time this text was composed, or it was simply unknown to the author.

As for current magickal technology that may have originated from this book, I mainly note the “Table of Practice” (or altar) the text instructs one to fashion. I refer specifically to the image on top of the table, which appears to be the oldest known example of the Golden Dawn’s planetary hexagram. In both cases, the sun is assigned the central position within the hexagram, and the six remaining planets orbit this at each of the six points. The only difference is the ordering of planets around the hexagram points.

**Almadel of Solomon:**

The fourth book of the Lemegeton is perhaps my favorite. Weiser’s Goetia includes the following blurb: “The Fourth Book, called Ars Almadel Salomonis, or the Art Almadel of Solomon, concerneth those Spirits which be set over the Quaternary of the Altitudes. These two last mentioned Books, the Art Pauline and the Art Almadel, do relate unto Good Spirits alone, whose knowledge is to be obtained through seeking unto the Divine. These two Books are also classed together under the Name of the First and Second Parts of the Book Theurgia ff Solomon.” The four “altitudes” alluded to above are simply the four cardinal directions, though they are considered as stacked one on top of the other in this instance. It either originates from, or reflects, the Qabalistic tradition of the Four Worlds of creation that exist between the earth and the throne of God. Each world is populated with good spirits (Angels) who can be summoned by the text of the Almadel for a diverse array of benefits.

The magick itself is worked via a fascinating piece of magickal apparatus called an “Almadel.” This is a square tablet of white wax, with holy names and characters written upon it with a consecrated pen. Its main feature is a large hexagram, which covers most of the surface of the tablet, and a triangle in the center of this (reminding one of the triangle used in the Goetia). As a final feature, four holes are drilled through the tablet- one in each corner. When this work is done, more wax is used (specifically more of the same wax from which the tablet was made) to fashion four candles; each with a small shelf-like protrusion of wax (called a “foot”), presumably, half-way up the length of the candle. The four candles are placed in candlesticks, and positioned in a square pattern with the “feet” all facing inward. The Almadel itself is then placed between the candles, so that it rests on the “feet” (taking care they do not block the four holes) and is thus elevated well above the surface of the table or altar. The final components are a small golden or silver talisman which rests in the center of the Almadel, and an earthen censor placed on the table directly underneath.

No less than four Almadels must be made- including the four candles and the earthen censor (but not the metal talisman) so there is one of a different color for each of the four altitudes:

Note; The golden seal will serve and is to be used in the operation of all the Altitudes. The color of the Almadel belonging to the first Chora is lily white. To the second Chora a perfect red rose color; the third Chora is to be a green mixed with a white silver color. The Fourth Chora is to be a black mixed with a little green of a sad color &c

These four colors are alchemical in their symbolism, rather than the common elemental colors of yellow, red, blue, and black or green of modern magickal systems. Once you have chosen which Angels (and thus which Altitude) you wish to work with, you set up the Almadel, light the candles, and burn mastic in the censor. The smoke will rise against the bottom of the wax tablet, and is thus forced to some degree through the four holes. It is within this smoke, and upon the Almadel and its golden talisman, that the Angel(s) in question will manifest.

This text has had a profound, and yet little-known, effect on modern magick. It was never adopted directly into our modern magickal systems by men such as S. L. Mathers or Gerald Gardner. Instead, it had its effect upon Dr. John Dee in the late sixteenth century. The equipment described by the Angels for his Enochian system of magick seems to have been derived largely from the Almadel tradition. However, since I will be explaining the Dee Diaries later in this chapter, I will save the comparisons for then.

**Ars Nova (The New Art):**

“The Fifth Book of the Lemegeton is one of Prayers and Orations. The Which Solomon the Wise did use upon the Altar in the Temple. And the titles hereof be Ars Nova, the New Art, and Ars Notaria, the Notary Art. The which was revealed unto him by Michael, that Holy Angel of God, in thunder and in lightning, and he further did receive by the aforesaid Angel certain Notes written by the Hand of God, without the which that Great King had never attained unto his great Wisdom, for thus he knew all things and all Sciences and Arts whether Good or Evil.” The Ars Nova only appears in one version of the Lemegeton (Sloane MS 2731). It is simply a book of invocations for the construction of the sacred space and some of the tools in the Goetic operation. (Whether or not it is meant for use with the other books of the Lemegeton is unclear, though it should extend by definition to the Theurgia-Goetia.) Prayers are given for the inscription of the Magickal Circle and Triangle of Art, the donning of the Hexagram and Pentagram of Solomon, the lighting of the candles, etc. Then follows an invocation for binding the Goetic demons into the brass vessel. These were perhaps something of an afterthought on the part of the compiler of the Lemegeton, but it does address the glaring omission of such invocations within the Goetia itself. Finally, the short text ends with a “Mighty Oration” that seems to be aimed at the catching of thieves and appears utterly removed from the material of the Lemegeton itself.

When Aleister Crowley published a translation of the Goetia by Samuel Mathers, it came with a copy of part of the Ars Nova. (Not including the Mighty Oration or the invocation against thieves.) However, it is not called such in the Mathers/Crowley text, and stands only as an “Explanation of Certain Names Used in this Book Lemegeton.”

**The Notary Arts (Ars Notaria):**

A wonderful discussion of this tradition can be found in an essay by Frank Klaassen, entitled *English Manuscripts of Magic*, 1300-1500. Another essay by Michael Camille, entitled *Visual Art in Two Manuscripts of the Ars Notoria*, contains more historical analysis along with photographs of the pages of the book itself. Finally, from the same source, we have an equally informative essay entitled *Plundering the Egyptian Treasure: John the Monk’s “Book of Visions” and its Relation to the Ars Notoria or Solomon*, which compares the Notary Arts to a later version of the text (*The Book of Visions*) that focuses upon the Virgin Mary rather than Solomon.

There are approximately fifty different manuscripts of the Notary Arts known at this time, dating from between 1300 to 1600 CE. The Solomonic mythos from which it draws its foundation is found in the canonical Bible:

“Now, O Lord God, let thy promise unto David my father be established: for thou hast made me king over a people like the dust of the earth in multitude. Give me now wisdom and knowledge that I may show myself before this people: for who can judge this They people, who are so great?” And God said to Solomon, “Because this was in thine heart, and thou has not asked riches, wealth, or honor, nor the life of thine enemies, neither yet hast asked long life, but hast asked wisdom and knowledge for thyself, that thou mayest judge my people, over whom I have made thee king. Wisdom and knowledge is granted unto thee; and I will give thee riches, and wealth, and honor, such as none of the kings have had that have been before thee, neither shall there any after thee have the like.” [II Chronicles 1:9-12]

This is the very scene that gave rise to the legend of the Wisdom of Solomon. By refusing to ask for anything beyond self-improvement, he was able to enjoy all the things to which others cling with greed. Only without greed can true happiness be obtained, and physical things enjoyed. Many of us are familiar with the phrase, “ask for wisdom and all else will come.” Solomon learned to stop allowing his physical surroundings to control his actions, and was thus granted the power of controlling them instead. This entire concept has been foundational to similar practices all over the world; from eastern systems such as Bhuddism, to the grimoires themselves, and even many systems of today.

The Ars Notoria is a collection of purification procedures, obscure prayers, and magickal images which promise to result in the understanding of “…Magical Operations, The liberal Sciences, Divine Revelation, and The Art of Memory.” The purifications are composed of fasts, observance of times, confessions, etc. In appearance it very much resembles prayer books or Psalters of the day- and the calligraphy and illustrations were very often commissioned to professional artists (the same men who did in fact fashion Psalters and prayer books). The text itself is arranged into three distinct Parts. Part I contains the prayers to achieve the “general” virtues necessary to attain the higher virtues found later. These are four in number: Memory, Eloquence, Understanding, and Perseverance. Without these, any attempt to produce results with the more advanced prayers will simply come to nothing.

Part II of the operation contains the prayers and magickal images that promise to bestow the “special” virtues. These are specifically the seven Liberal Arts that composed the common educational curriculum for the medieval scholar: Grammar, Logic, and Rhetoric, followed by Arithmetic, Geometry, Music, and Astronomy. It then culminates in Philosophy and Theology. Following this is Part III, or the Ars Nova. This section is composed of ten prayers said to have been delivered to Solomon at a later time, and by different Angels, for the purpose of rectifying any mistakes the aspirant may have made in the previous books. Apparently, they are mainly reprisals of some of the prayers of Part II. Finally, the text ends with the necessary instructions (needed for all three Parts) concerning preparation of the sacred space, consecration of the images, fasting, confession, charity, instructions on using the prayers, etc.

The prayers themselves are arranged within the elaborate magickal images, so that the reading of the prayer also results in the abstract viewing of the image. The effect of these two together is intended to induce trance. (In many cases, it is even necessary to rotate the book as you read- the prayers being arranged in concentric circles or spirals. State of the art hypnosis technology for the 1300s!) Here is an example of the prayers and how they are applied practically:

This following is for the Memory: O Holy Father, merciful Son, and Holy Ghost, inestimable King; I adore, invocate, and beseech thy Holy Name, that of thy overflowing goodness, thou wilt forget all my sins: be merciful to me a sinner, presuming to go about this office of knowledge, and occult learning; and grant, Oh Lord, it may be efficacious in me; open Oh Lord my ears , that I may hear; and take away the scales from my Eyes, that I may see: strengthen my hands, that I may work; open my face, that I may understand thy will; to the glory of thy Name, which is blessed for ever, Amen.

Overall, the Notary Arts stand apart from the usual structure of Grimoire texts, which demand more elaborate efforts for highly specific effects. One who made use of the Memory prayer above was not attempting to remember one specific item, or to pass a single test. Instead, he was acting on the question of what might be gained if only he had a better memory in general. Rather than achieving one single goal, after which the rite would have to be performed again, the idea was to master the entire subject in one fell swoop.

This philosophy of magick is very productive, and highly recommended. It is extremely important to the Grimoire traditions overall, and echoes of it can be found in the introductions to even the most materialistic texts. Those books which have gained reputations of deep mystery- and even danger- are very often just this kind of text. See the Book of Abramelin and the Sworn Book of Honorius below (as well as others in this list) which is such legendary examples.

**Three Books of Occult Philosophy:**

First drafted in 1509-10 by Henry Cornelius Agrippa (student of Johannes Trithemius), this is the single most important Grimoire text in existence. It is not, in fact, a practical manual, but is instead a compendium of the theories and philosophies upon which Medieval and Renaissance magick are based.

Agrippa divided his work into three distinct sections (or books): the first focuses upon natural or earth-magick. The second outlines the more intellectual techniques such as Qabalah, Gematria, mathematics, and divination. The third book concerns religious observances and interaction with Angelic beings. There are no ceremonies outlined, and no chapters dedicated to “how to” instructions. Instead, it is a sourcebook or reference without which the other grimoires would be nearly useless today. One could spend a lifetime with this book, and still discover new treasures of ancient thought within its pages.

More than any other, this book (especially Book II) has had a major impact on our modern magickal cultures. It seems to have been a favorite of John Dee, as many of its correspondences and magickal wisdom appear throughout the Enochian system of magick. It was also a major sourcebook for the founders of the Golden Dawn, and most of their lists of Angels and Divine Names can be found in its pages. The seven magickal squares, or planetary kameas (used in many traditions from the Golden Dawn to Wicca), are found in Agrippa’s work. The four philosophical Elements, the gnomes, sylphs, salamanders, and undines, construction of talismans, gematria, the Shem haMephoresh and more are all outlined here. And these are merely a few examples; due to its overshadowing influence on today, it would be impossible to list all of the modern borrowings from the Three Books in this small space.

**The Magical Elements (Heptameron):**

According to Joseph Peterson, the Magical Elements is a concise handbook of ritual magick, and was translated by Robert Turner in 1655. It appeared in Turner’s collection of esoteric texts along with pseudo-Agrippa's Fourth Book of Occult Philosophy. The text is attributed to Peter de Abano (1250-1316), though Mr. Peterson feels that this is probably spurious, since de Abano’s work betrays “no acquaintance with the occult sciences.” The Magical Elements is primarily based upon Solomonic literature, and even appears in the *Hebrew Key of Solomon* (*Mafteah Shelomoh*, fol 35a ff) under the title *The Book of Light*.

Agrippa published his *Three Books*… without including any practical ceremonies. In the last chapter of the third book, he tells us his reason: “For we have delivered this art in such a manner, that it may not be hid from the prudent and intelligent, and yet may not admit wicked and incredulous men to the mysteries of these secrets, but leave them destitute and astonished, in the shade of ignorance and desperation.”

However, there was apparently some call for a “how to” section of the work regardless of Agrippa’s original intention. Thus the *Magical Elements* was written as a companion volume, including the necessary circle castings, invocations, consecrations, seals, etc. As Mr. Peterson suggests above, the book was very likely not written by the famed physician Peter de Abano. The death of Abano occurred in 1250, while the Heptameron did not make its appearance for another two hundred years.

**Fourth Book of Occult Philosophy:**

This book needs little explanation, as it is basically another version of the Magical Elements, with large portions of the original Three Books... included. Also, the Lemegeton (at least its style) had an influence on this work, as it does concern the evocation of “evil spirits” and even suggests the use of a triangle.

The author is known only as “pseudo-Agrippa,” because he chose to sign Agrippa’s name to the work. According to A. E. Waite, the text appeared only after the death of the famous wizard, and was rejected as a forgery by a student of Agrippa’s named Wierus.

**The Magus (Celestial Intelligencer):**

Published In 1801 by Francis Barrett, this work was meant as a textbook for classes in magick that Barrett was offering at No. 99 Norton St., Marylebone- at any time between the hours of eleven and two o’clock. It would appear that he was attempting to found a magickal order, which may or may not have succeeded.

As for the content of the book, I’m afraid we have to class this text with the others that have taken so much from Agrippa’s Three Books… and those which came directly after. It consists mainly of large portions of Agrippa’s work (specifically portions of the first and second books), along with large chunks of the Magickal Elements and Fourth Book of Occult Philosophy thrown in. Many tend to consider Barrett a plagiarist, as he leaves his sources (which he does indeed quote word for word in most cases) unaccredited. Although, I tend to feel that Barrett (operating as late as the 1800s) was simply compiling a workable textbook for his class from the sources he had personally tracked down and studied. In fact, The Magus seems to represent a last revival of Grimoire material before the Victorian work of Eliphas Levi, and the Golden Dawn after him.

**The Book of the Sacred Magic of Abramelin the Mage:**

S. L. Mathers, in his edition of this text, places the Book of Abramelin at the end of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth centuries. Like the tradition of the Notary Arts, the Abramelin system stands apart from the Grimoire mainstream. Its focus is much more spiritual in nature than one might expect from the Key of Solomon or Goetia. The principal upon whom the text is based is that all material happiness can only come from spiritual evolution.

The text is divided into three books. The first is an autobiography of the author - a man who calls himself Abraham the Jew. There may be a symbolic relation to the father of Judaism, though this Abraham writes of living during the reign of Emperor Sigismond of Germany (1368-1437 CE). Abraham describes his years of wandering in search of the True and Sacred Wisdom (more echoes of King Solomon), and his several disappointments along the way. In fact, the tale takes on the traditional tone of a quest. He learns several forms of magick, but finds them all lacking, and their practitioners to be less than they claimed. At the last moments before giving up the quest, Abraham meets an Egyptian adept named Abramelin, who agrees to teach Abraham the Sacred Magic.

Abraham wrote this text for the sake of his son Lamech (another Biblically-inspired name). According to the story, Abraham had granted the secrets of the Qabalah to his oldest son, in the tradition of Judaism. However, he did not wish to leave his younger son with no Key to spiritual attainment, and thus Abraham left behind the Book of Abramelin.

The second two books, then, are composed of the instructions for the Sacred Magick, which Abraham copied by hand from Abramelin’s original. The first part (book two) describes a heavily involved procedure of purification and invocation, resulting in the appearance of one’s own Guardian Angel. Of course, the concept of the personal Guardian (and the invocation thereof) extends well before the dawn of written history. The system outlined in Abramelin itself shows amazing similarities to tribal shamanic procedures. The purifications take the standard Grimoire forms of seclusion, fasting, cleanliness, and a heavy dose of prayer. A separate room- called an Oratory (prayer room) must be maintained in utmost purity during a six month period, as this is where the Angel will appear and bond with the aspirant at the end of this time. Afterward, the Angel takes over as Teacher for the aspirant, and it is from this being (and only this being) that the True and Sacred Wisdom and Magick will be discovered.

Once the cooperation of the Angel is assured, one continues to summon forth such demonic princes as Lucifer, Leviathan, Astarot, Belzebud, and several others (twelve in all). These beings are commanded to deliver an Oath of obedience to the mage, as well as the use of four familiar spirits for day-to-day practical tasks.

The final book is a collection of magick-square talismans, which the demonic princes and spirits must swear upon when giving their Oaths. Each talisman can then be used to command a spirit to perform a task, in much the same fashion as those in the Key of Solomon the King. The functions of the talismans are those common to Grimoire material- finding treasure, causing visions, bringing books, flight, healing the sick, etc, etc.

There is some speculation that book three was a later edition to the work. I don’t know if this is the case, though it is true that it contains more contradictions and general mistakes than the second. In fact, those who have made use of the Abramelin system have found book three of little concern. Abraham himself hints at the reason for this in Book Two, chapter 14:

Though the following advice may be scarcely necessary for the most part, since I have already explained unto you all things necessary to be done; and also seeing that your Guardian Angel will have sufficiently instructed you in all that you should do…

It is very possible that Book Three represents only “Abraham’s” version of the True and Sacred Magic, which will, of course, be different for everyone.

I also feel I should state that the talismans are specifically useless for those who do not first undergo the six month invocation. They have no power in and of themselves, as they work only by showing them to spirit helpers who have touched them and sworn the Oaths. Of course, that can only be done with the aid of one’s Guardian Angel, which can only be achieved by following the entire six-month operation. Some of the most common urban legends I have heard concerning the dangers of grimoires were centered on those who have attempted to make use of book three of Abramelin by itself. Much more than this, however, I believe people simply find it of little use at all.

The Book of Abramelin granted one major concept to our modern practices- that of the Holy Guardian Angel. The Golden Dawn adopted the “HGA” straight from the pages of Abramelin, and the system of Thelema adopted it from the Golden Dawn. Both traditions agree on the vast importance of gaining Knowledge and Conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel. Abramelin is one of my own areas of focus, and I could not agree with them more. In time, both the Golden Dawn and Thelema have developed their own methods of invoking and working with the Guardian Angel; though I have to admit that I find the Abramelin system to be the most impressive method.

**Arbatel of Magic (Arbatel de Magia Veterum):**

Joseph Peterson describes this text as appearing first in Latin in Basle, Switzerland 1575. It is also mentioned in John Dee’s Five Books of the Mysteries (circa 1583). This was among the rituals classified by A.E. Waite as “transcendental magic”- that is, magick that does not include what he considers black magickal elements (see the *Book of Ceremonial Magic* p. 28.) It was later translated into English by Robert Turner In 1655.

The Arbatel was originally intended to contain nine volumes, though we only know of the first book today. Many speculate that the other eight were never written, and this could very well be true. Although, the magick that is supposedly contained in those eight books would not have been uncommon medieval magickal literature I feel that the author at least intended to write them, if he did not in fact do so after all.

The first book, called *Isagoge* (or *A Book of the Institutions of Magick*), concerns the basics of magickal procedure in general. It contains 49 “aphorisms,” divided into groups of seven called “septenaries,” which must be learned and followed in order to succeed in magickal experiments. A fitting example of the nature of these aphorisms would be number two:

In all things call upon the Name of the Lord: and without prayer unto God through his only-begotten son, do not thou undertake to do or think any thing. And use the Spirits given and attributed unto thee, as Ministers, without rashness and presumption, as the messengers of God; having a due reverence towards the Lord of Spirits. And the remainder of thy life do thou accomplish, demeaning thy self peaceably, to the honor of God, and the profit of thy self and thy neighbor.

The third septenary of aphorisms begins a description of the natures and methods of working with seven planetary Olympic Spirits, who inhabit the firmament (sky), specifically the stars (or planets) of the firmament. Their office is to declare Destinies and to administer fatal Charms as far as God permits them. Their names are Aratron, Bethor, Phaleg, Och, Hagith, Ophiel, and Phul.

According to this text, the universe is divided into 186 “provinces,” which are ruled by the Olympic Spirits. Each Spirit also rules, in succession, a period of 490 years. According to the text, we have been under the general governance of Ophiel, the Spirit of Mercury, since 1900 CE, and will remain so until the year 2390 CE.

The eight non-existent books said to follow the first are described in the introduction of the Arbatel. The second book concerns Microcosmical Magick, and sounds as if it might be an operation of working with one’s Lesser Guardian Angel or Genius (see the Pauline Arts above). The third contains Olympic Magick, or the methods of working with the spirits who reside upon Mt. Olympus. The fourth book contains what it calls Hesiodiacal or Homerical Magick, and focuses upon working with “cacodaimones” (unclean spirits, or demons). It is very likely that this text was (or would have been) somewhat along the lines of the Goetia. The fifth of the nine books contains “Romane or Sibylline Magick,” which concerns work done with Tutelar Spirits- that is, those spiritual entities who guide and protect human beings. The sixth book is called Pythagorical Magick, which promises the appearance of spirits who will teach one all of the “rhetorical sciences” such as medicine, mathematics, alchemy, etc. The seventh book is called the Magick of Apollonius, and claims to work according to the rules of both the Microcosmical (book two) and Romane (book five) Magick. However, this work claims to work with hostile spirits instead of benevolent. The eighth book is called Hermetical or Egyptian Magick, and is described only as being similar to “Divine Magick.” If I were to make an assumption as to what this means, I might assume that it was related in some way to work with celestial beings (“theurgy”), or even devotional religious magick as found in Book III of Agrippa’s Three Books. Finally, the ninth book is “that wisdom which dependeth solely upon the Word of God; and this is called Prophetical Magick.”

**Sworn Book of Honorius (Liber Sacer Juratus):**

The oldest copies of the Latin Sworn Book we have today are Sloane MS 313 and 3854, both of which date to the fourteenth century. Based on evidence in the text itself, Robert Mathiesen suggests that the material was composed “sometime in the first half of the 13th century.” Overall, there are six known copies of the book.

The introduction of the Sworn Book gives the story that the book was fashioned in response to the medieval inquisitions. As the officials of the Church sought to destroy all works of magick, a large council of adepts gathered with the purpose of somehow preserving the sacred science. One among them- Honorius, son of Euclidus- was chosen for the actual performance of the task. As is common in classical Grimoire literature, the master entered into conversation with an Angel who directed the reception of the magick. In this case, the Angel’s name was Hochmel- obviously a version of the Hebrew word “Chokmah” (Wisdom). The Sworn Book of Honorius was the result of this action. Each adept was allowed to make no more than three copies of the book, and each copy was to be either buried before his death, interred in his grave with him, or given into trusted hands.

The Sworn Book is a specifically Catholic text which seems closely related to the Ars Notoria. Joseph Peterson points out the similarities in the prayers used in both manuscripts, and suggests that the two are directly connected. Both texts indeed utilize pure prayer, divorced for the most part from typical Grimoire techniques, in order to achieve their high magickal goals. However, where the Ars Notoria focuses upon the gaining of rhetorical knowledge, the Sworn Book promises the gaining of the “Beatific Vision.” This is simply the Christian version of the vision of the Merkavah- wherein one achieves a vision of the Face of God through purification, fasting, and prayer.

Robert Mathiesen explains that the operation lasts for twenty-eight days. It is divided into two principal parts: the first part lasts twenty days, and concerns the purification of the operator for the work of the second part. The second part (the actual magickal ritual) is a mere eight days long. This appears similar in style to the Book of Abramelin, which instructs one to enter an extended six-month period of purification, followed by a much shorter seven-day rite to gain the vision of the Holy Guardian Angel and to bind the Demonic Princes.

Interestingly, John Dee owned a copy of this work (Sloane 313). Like the tools of the Almadel of Solomon, Dee also adopted an aspect of this work into his Enochian system. The text describes the inscription on parchment of a “Seal of God,” which Dee used as the basis for his “Sigillium Dei Ameth.” I will go into this somewhat below.

**The Dee Diaries:**

In the late 1500s, two alchemist-mages joined their magickal efforts and began to contact Angels. One of these men was Dr. John Dee- the most celebrated scholar of his day. He enjoyed the patronage of Queen Elizabeth I, and was wholly dedicated to the furtherance of the English empire. His goal seems to have been to receive a system of magickal world-domination, by which he could influence the fates of neighboring (and hostile) kingdoms. His partner was Edward Kelley, a dedicated alchemist (who seems to have indulged in alchemical fraud a number of times) who sought the true mysteries of turning base metals into gold.

With these goals in mind, the two men summoned and conversed with a large family of Angels. Like the two mages, the Angels seemed to have an agenda of their own- the transmission of an extremely powerful system of magick that would influence the world forever after. Not surprisingly, of these three goals (military power, gold, and magickal evolution), only that of the Angels came to pass. The Angelic system of magick thus delivered came to be known as “Enochian,” as it was supposed to have been delivered originally to the Biblical prophet Enoch before the Great Flood. It was eventually adopted, in part, by the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn in the late 1800s, and has thus become the very backbone of modern magickal knowledge.

John Dee made only one attempt to produce a Solomonic-style grimoire, which is published today as *The Enochian Magick of Dr. John Dee*, by G. James. However, this text has not been of nearly as much use to us as the journals he kept during his work with the Angels. There we witness Dee and Kelley interacting with the celestial intelligences on a daily basis, and the new system of magick delivered piece by obscure piece. Dee was in charge of summoning the entities (mainly by nothing more complicated than the recitation of Psalms), and Kelley would gaze into a crystal ball and report on what he saw. (In fact, much of the common stereotypes of “the wizard” that exist in our popular culture today- such as the crystal ball- are traced directly to Dee and Kelley and their magickal journals.) The sessions continued on a regular basis from 1581 to approximately 1607- and the heart of the work seems to have occurred between 1582 and 1585. The journals which are of primary relevance are as follows:

**Five Books of the Mysteries (Quinti Libri Mysteriorum):**

These five books (preserved as Sloane MS 3188) cover the years from December 22, 1581 to May 23, 1583. Their subject is the transmission of the “Heptarchia,” a form of magick that centers on the mystery of the seven Archangels who stand before the Throne of God (see Revelation Ch. 4). It focuses upon the seven planets, days of the week, and even the seven Biblical days of creation. The magick itself works through the patronage of 49 planetary Angels, all of whom have very typical (though lofty) Grimoire functions- such as the bestowing of wisdom and knowledge, or military protection.

The tools of Angelic magick are very typical of Grimoire technology. In fact, most of them pre-exist John Dee, having been adopted from various medieval texts. For instance, the influence of the Almadel of Solomon (see above) is quite obvious. Its design- square in shape, a boarder inside its edges containing Divine Names, and a hexagram in its center- is the basis for Dee’s Holy Table (or Table of Practice). Although the Almadel is made of wax while Dee’s Table is made of “sweet wood”, wax is used to fashion the Sigillum Dei Ameth (Seal of God or of Truth). This Seal rests upon the Holy Table and, like the Almadel, is intended to facilitate the scrying of the Angels; perhaps in a crystal ball resting upon it as they did for Kelley. Even the design on the face of the Sigillum is traditional. The “Seal of God” makes its original appearance in The Sworn Book of Honorius, though (like the Table) the names and characters inscribed upon it differ from Dee’s final versions.

Also included is a Ring of Solomon, fashioned of pure gold, and featuring the Divine Name “Pele.” This Name is found in Agrippa’s Three Books, as well as Judges 13:18: “Why askest thou thus after my name seeing it is a secret?” The Hebrew word for “name” (PLE) indicates “a miracle of God.” The Archangel Michael delivered the design of this ring to Dee, stating that this was the actual ring worn by Solomon when he worked his miracles. Dee himself was instructed to attempt nothing without it.

Further tools consisted of seven talismans known as the Ensigns of Creation (corresponding to the seven Biblical days of creation) fashioned from purified tin and arrayed around the Sigillum Dei Ameth, a Lamen written in Angelic characters, several covers of silk, a crystal “shewstone”, Lamens for each planetary Angelic King (and perhaps the Princes of each planet as well), and four miniature wax seals for placement underneath the legs of the Table. Toward the end of the Five Books, the Angels delivered the first of the truly “Enochian” material. This came in the form of a holy book named Liber Logaeth, the Book of the Speech from God. This text consisted of forty-nine pages covered with an indecipherable language arranged in the form of huge magickal squares. The Angels proclaimed that it was a new doctrine, and that it contained the words by which God created the universe (as per Genesis I). From there the records continue with:

**A True and Faithful Relation…:**

The full title of this text is *A True and Faithful Relation of What Passed for Many years Between Dr. John Dee (A Mathematician of Great Fame in Q. Eliz. and King James their Reigns) and Some Spirits.* It is a huge tome published in 1659 by Meric Casaubon, containing a full thirteen books, and covering May 28, 1583 to September 7, 1607.

It is here that we find the famous “48 Claves Angelicai” (Angelic Keys), the Great Table of the Earth (the Watchtowers), the 91 (or 92) Parts of the Earth, and the 30 Aethyrs (Heavens). The Angels related instructions for using the Keys- also known as Calls- to access the mysteries of *Logaeth*. The Celestial hierarchies within the Watchtowers are defined for the most part, along with an extended rite of summoning to establish contact with them.  There are also some rather obscure instructions for scying into the Parts of the Earth- which are actually spiritual reflections of geographical locations. Dee hoped to control any country in the world by simply having access to the Angels who resided in that area of the world.

This, of course, does not even begin to scratch the surface of the “Enochian” material of Dr Dee and Sir Edward Kelley. However, space here would not permit such a massive undertaking. A True and Faithful Relation runs for several hundred pages- filled with magick, mysticism, politics, and intrigue. The study of this book, and the Enochian Angelic system of magick, is the dedication of a lifetime.

**The Grimoire of Armadel (Liber Armadel Seu Totius Cabalae Perfectissima Brevissima et Infallabilis Scientia Tam Speculativa Quam Practiqua):**

This text is very often confused with either the Almadel of Solomon, or the Arbatel of Magic. In fact, it is very possible that the name “Armadel” is a corruption of one of these words- especially of the name Arbatel. The Grimoire of Armadel does happen to borrow its principal conjuration and license to depart from the Arbatel of Magic. However, regardless of its use of material from earlier sources, the Grimoire of Armadel remains a magickal operation distinct from other texts with a similar name.

It is difficult to say exactly when the manuscript first appeared in history. The earliest recorded mention of the book is found in a bibliography of occult works compounded by Gabriel Naude in 1625. We do know that the name “Armadel” enjoyed some popularity among occultists during the seventeenth century, with several unrelated texts attributed to him. Eventually, a manuscript in the French language (MS 88) found its way into the Bibliotheque l’Arsenal; which was then translated into English in the early 1900s by Samuel Mathers. An introduction was then written for the text in 1995 by William Keith.

It is a very simple book, full of colorful Sigils related to recognizable Angels and spirits (such as the seven Archangels: Cassiel, Sachiel, etc), along with borrowed conjurations. Apparently, one is intended to inscribe the Sigils on consecrated parchment, and use them to contact Angels and spirits who have mysteries to reveal. The book begins with a short section outlining the basic ritual procedure, and the afore-mentioned Arbatel conjurations.

The Sigils are then grouped into three categories. The first is called “The Theosophy of Our Forefathers or Their Sacred and Mystic Theology.” It contains Sigils to contact Angels such as Gabriel- whose chapter is called “Of the Life of Elijah.” Raphael teaches the “Wisdom of Solomon.” Other chapters of potential interest are “The Explorer and Leader Joshua”, “The Rod of Moses”, “The Wisdom of Our Forefather Adam”, “The Vision of Eden”, and even “The Beholding of the Serpent [of Eden].” These are only a few of the best examples.

The next section is entitled “The Sacro-Mystic Theology of Our Forefathers.” Herein we can learn lessons “Concerning the Devils and How They May be bound and compelled to Visible Appearance”, as well as “Concerning the Ways of Knowing the Good Angels, and of consulting them.” (The latter is taught by no less than Zadkiel and Sachiel together.) We can learn much “Concerning the Evangelic Rebellion and Expulsion”, and “Concerning the Life of the Angels before the fall.” Again, this merely scratches the surface of available Sigils.

The final section is called “The Rational Table: or the Qabalistical Light; Penetrating Whatsoever Things be Most Hidden among the Celestials, the Terrestrials and the Infernals.” This title represents the universally-typical threefold-world of the shaman. (We will learn much more of the importance of this three-fold division in later chapters.) Here are contained further magickal requisites, talismans, orations, and several chapters that appear to be Christian sermons, or perhaps invocations.

Some scholars tend to suggest that the Grimoire of Armadel is a complete fabrication- akin to the *Grimoirium Verum* and *Grand Grimoire* we shall see below. Armadel flourished during the occult panic that gripped France between 1610 and 1640. The Christian orientation of the text, several Biblical sermons, the invocation of Saints, and its instructions to recite such official prayers as the *Pater Noster*, *Ave Maria*, or the *Creedo* would probably have caught the attention of a public hungry for rumors of necromancers among the clergy.

However, I feel there is some reasonable doubt surrounding objections to this book’s authenticity. The Armadel is indeed a simple text- more akin to a working notebook than a full magickal manuscript. It certainly would have been easy to put together- assuming one could have easily amassed its source material in the 1600s. However, the Armadel still lacks the shock value that is written into other forgeries like the Grand Grimoire, or even our own modern Necronomicon. In fact, the text is highly shamanic- offering to teach one how to contact the spirits in order to be safe from them, to learn mysteries from them, etc. There is  not even any blood sacrifices found in the instructions. The focus of the work seems to be upon visionary quests or spiritual encounters facilitated by the magickal characters, as well as gaining some magickal powers such as healing, alchemy, agriculture, etc.

This kind of straightforwardness would not be expected of the shock-value forgeries. William Keith and several contemporary Grimoire scholars tend to feel the magickal value of this book is “slight, or at best highly dilute.” I feel that the overall simplicity of the book disappoints many occult researchers. However, I am personally fascinated with the implications behind the Sigils and the mystical experiences they promise. It seems just as likely that this grimoire was once a personal notebook used by a working mage. The reader may even agree with me if he encounters the Armadel after reading this book (especially chapters two, three, and ten).

**Grimoirium Verum:**

Here we have one of the famous grimoires of “black” magick. Both A. E. Waite and Elizabeth Butler introduce the work with the text of its own title page: “Grimoirium Verum, or the Most Approved Keys of Solomon the Hebrew Rabbin, wherein the Most Hidden Secrets, both Natural and Supernatural, are immediately exhibited, but it is necessary that the Demons should be contented on their part. Translated from the Hebrew by Plaingiere, a Dominican Jesuit, with a Collection of Curious Secrets. Published by Alibeck the Egyptian. 1517.”

Waite suggests that the date given in the above quote is fraudulent, as the text actually belongs to the mid-eighteenth century. It is written in French, though it very likely has Italian connections, and does in fact seem to have a connection to Rome. It owes a debt, as do so many other grimoires, to the Key of Solomon the King- as some of its material is taken directly there from. The Lemegeton, too, had its influence- as the Grimoirium contains instructions for the evocation of the exact same entities.

Little more needs said concerning this text. This along with other purported “black” rituals has always struck me as somewhat boring, very unoriginal, and rarely of much use practically. Overall, they tend to appear as little more than re-hashes of the Key of Solomon and Lemegeton, with a few dissertations included to give the text a renegade “Satanic” feel. Most of them, in my opinion, do not even make the grade as Satanic or “black.” While it is true that they call upon demonic entities, and usually include prayers and invocations directed to Lucifer, we shall see in later chapters that this does not properly make an operation “black.”

**The Grand Grimoire (Red Dragon):**

This text was published without a date, though Waite suggests that it is about the same age as the Grimoirium Verum. The work is introduced: “The Grand Grimoire, with the Powerful Calvicle of Solomon and of Black Magic; or the Infernal Devices of the Great Agrippa for the Discovery of all Hidden Treasures and the Subjugation of every Denomination of Spirits, together with an Abridgment of all the Magical Arts.”

This is, perhaps, the most well known of “black” grimoires- appearing even in Hollywood next to the Key of Solomon the King. Like the Grimoirium Verum, the Grand Grimoire probably has an Italian origin or influence, as indicated by the name of its editor Antonio Venitiana del Rabina. The book itself is attributed to Solomon and depicts his summoning and binding of the demonic Prime Minister Lucifuge Rofocale, who thenceforth became rather popular among occult authors (such as Eliphas Levi).

What perhaps makes this book so famous (or infamous) is the fact that it deals specifically with making pacts with devils. Other texts, such as Goetia and Abramelin, do not work through pacts at all, and the latter example expressly forbids such action. Meanwhile the Grand Grimoire instructs one to make a conditional pact with Lucifuge:

It is my wish to make a pact with thee, so as to obtain wealth at thy hands immediately, failing which I will torment thee by the potent words of the Clavicle.

The written document to be signed by Lucifuge reads as follows:

I promise the grand Lucifuge to reward him in twenty years’ time for all treasures he may give me. In witness whereof I have signed myself. N.N.

After some dickering, further conditions are added by Lucifuge:

Leave me to my rest, and I will confer upon thee the nearest treasure, on condition that thou dost set apart for me one coin on the first Monday of each month, and dost not call me oftener than once a week, to wit, between ten at night and two in the morning. Take up thy pact; I have signed it. Fail in thy promise, and thou shalt be mine at the end of twenty years.

The Grand Grimoire then proceeds to communicate Solomon’s instructions for the making of a pact. E.M. Butler writes that this is the only complete “and perfect” outline of such a pact of which she is aware (though she does make mention of the similar Faustian ritual). The form of the pact in the Grand Grimoire is deliberately evasive- supposing that the mage is “getting one over” on the demonic forces.

For those who are interested in the darker side of the grimoires, I must recommend *Ritual Magic* and *The Fortunes of Faust*, both by Elizabeth Butler. She is an expert in what is known as the “Faustian” tradition- a Germanic phenomenon based upon the mythos of Faust and his dealings with Satan. A. E. Waite also gives portions of the texts of the above two (and other) grimoires in his *Book of Ceremonial Magic*.

**Conclusion**

The Medieval texts do not (for the most part) contain dark and horrible rites that call upon “Lovecraftian” beasties. They are not all about curses or pacts with “the devil,” and there is no enslavement of innocent spirits. Instead, they reflect the magickal philosophies and wisdom of our magickal ancestors, from whom we have inherited much. It is a system of magick complete unto itself and rich with the influence of tribal magick. Agrippa, in the Three Books of Occult Philosophy, describes what the grimoires promise:

To defend kingdoms, to discover the secret councils of men, to overcome enemies, to redeem captives, to increase riches, to procure the favor of men, to expel diseases, to preserve health, to prolong life, to renew youth, to foretell future events, to see and know things done many miles off, and such like as these, by virtue of superior influences, may seem things incredible; yet read but the ensuing treatise, and thou shalt see the possibility thereof confirmed both by reason, and example. [Three Books of Occult Philosophy, Llewellyn, p lxi]

The schools of magick or “natural philosophy” (that is- Alchemy, Astrology, and Spirit-working) were considered among the respectable sciences from the earliest of times. The Medieval and Renaissance mages I’ve mentioned above, along with numerous others both known and unknown, were also physicists, doctors, astronomers, biologists, mathematicians, philosophers, architects, navigators, etc. The existence of the Notary Arts and related texts makes this point evident. In truth, the men who created most of our modern fields of scientific study were adept mages as well (such as Sir Isaac Newton, who was in fact an alchemist).

For further information on this point, I highly recommend *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, by Frances Yates. The preface, especially, and truly the entire book, contains much information about the magickal nature of the early sciences, and the mystical minds it took to dream of them. The Rosicrucian thinkers of the seventeenth century were the ancestors of the Masons, the Royal Society of England, and of the Age of Enlightenment overall.

Not only was magick respected among the sciences, it was actually considered the highest and most sacred science. The Goetia begins, in some manuscripts, with the following words: Magic is the Highest, most Absolute, and most Divine Knowledge of Natural Philosophy, advanced in its works and wonderful operations by a right understanding of the inward and occult virtue of things; so that true Agents being applied to proper Patients, strange and admirable effects will thereby be produced. Whence magicians are profound and diligent searchers into Nature: they, because of their skill, know how to anticipate an effect, the which to the vulgar shall seem to be a miracle.

One must question, then, why magick fell from its lofty position. Why are the texts considered superstitious rubbish when they were penned by the hands of such as John Dee, Henry Agrippa, and Trithemius? In general, we are given the impression that magick fell by the wayside due to its inability to withstand the scientific process. By applying the steps of experimentation, magick is said to have come up short, producing no results, and was thus abandoned by the educated.

However, that assumption is simply not true. The historical fact is that magick was feared enough by the Medieval Church to outlaw it. Richard Kieckhefer opens his book *Forbidden Rites* with the observation that we are (mentally speaking) what we read, and the power that books hold to transform minds has given rise to anxiety as much as celebration. Various related developments in late Medieval Europe brought about a Renaissance of literature, and brought with it concerns about what people were reading. Magickal books which blatantly called upon demonic powers embodied the worst fears of those who naturally feared a populace that (for the first time in history) could read.

It was not that magick failed to pass the test, but that it passed enough of its tests to make the world-rulers of the day take action against it. It was forced from its position of highest respect into the underground realm of the outlaw and fraud. This is, in fact, no different from the current drug laws, and the treatment received by such educated men as Timothy Leary. History shows us that such arts as magic, alchemy and even a good number of the currently accepted sciences have been regularly repressed by established governing bodies. The scientists of the Medieval and Renaissance Eras necessarily had to distance themselves from the practice of magick (at least outwardly). A world where a man could be executed for suggesting that the Earth revolves around the Sun was no world for the investigations of occult philosophy.

As well, the black plague that decimated Europe at the end of the Medieval Era had shaken many of the peoples’ faith in all things spiritual. Those who continued to insist on its use were often feared by the peasants, and ridiculed by their peers. Thus, a tangible separation began to grow between the studies of magick, and the other- materialistic- sciences.

So, here we stand at the dawning of a new Age, with the fear of the Church and our dependence upon materialistic science receding ever further into the past. We might choose to accept their authority on the uselessness and superstition of the grimoires, or we might instead return to the manuscripts for a second look; to judge them according to our own knowledge and experiences. We might decide to put them to the test- nearly six or seven hundred years after they were written- and see what results they might produce. Though it is common knowledge that they are the origins of many of our current magickal practices, few seekers have taken an interest in learning what deeper secrets they might contain.

In my searches, I found precious few who had taken such an interest. As I stated before, most (even Neopagans) were happy to accept the Medieval Church’s doctrine on the matter. On the other hand, those few who did make the effort to duplicate the experiments of the classical texts seemed to report outstanding results time and again. One might have to get up a little early on a Wednesday morning to find a virgin nut-tree from which to cut a wand. It might take some time to find thread spun by a young maiden. One might even have to dedicate a search by phone and internet to locate rare materials, herbs or perfumes. However, as E. M. Butler suggests concerning the Greek texts that gave rise to the grimoires: the instructions are not prohibitively difficult to follow, but they are by no means easy, and frequently demand considerable physical and mental effort on the part of the aspirant.

If one has “what it takes” to put forth such physical and mental effort, then one can eventually access the treasures of the grimoires. I personally made the decision to test their promises, and to follow their instructions and procedures as completely as possible. What I have found is far from a failed science that can not stand up to scientific process. On the contrary, I have found the results of the practice extremely impressive.

This book is about my experiences with, and discoveries within, the classical art. I have not written this book to explain the process of any single grimoire. Instead, it is about the living tradition of Medieval Grimoire magick that resides within the overall body of literature.

Of course, I understand the difficulty in referring to the grimoires as a “living tradition,” as it has been all but dead now for nearly five centuries. Some of their secrets have faded away, and the culture that gave them life has long since passed. Not only this, but the communities of the modern occult revival are seldom composed of Christian mystics who would find use for the prayers from the Notary Arts or Liber Juratis. Overall, there is no direct link between ourselves and the authors of the Medieval and Renaissance texts.

Yet, they remain in fact our magickal ancestors, and their work has provided the very backbone of our own modern systems. Knowledge of this fact is becoming more widespread today than ever before, and for the first time we have an abundance of information concerning them. Meanwhile, occult students seem to have a natural inclination to seek out the “root origins” of the subjects they study. Therefore, the classical grimoires are just beginning to enjoy their own revival- with their tribal-shamanic magickal secrets appealing to a surprisingly wide (and usually non-Christian) audience. They are, once again, becoming a living tradition.

I, of course, can not hope to cover every detail of medieval practice in this one book. My hope is only to provide a solid background upon which to study and experiment with the grimoires. I have also attempted to share some of my own experiences; especially to illustrate how the techniques must be adopted into their proper modern framework. Only by understanding what these mysterious books once were can we understand what they will (and have) become.

**Medieval - Renaissance Timeline**

**Including Historical Events and Appearances of Grimoires**

325 - Council of Nice called by Roman Emperor Constantine.

455 - Rome sacked by Vandals. Medieval Era begins circa this time.

589 - Third Council of Toledo inserts *filioque* into the Nicene Creed, driving a wedge between the Eastern and Western Churches.

638 - Islamic armies take control of the Holy Land.

1054 - Eastern Orthodox Church and Roman Catholic Church mutually excommunicate each other, and separate into two distinct bodies.

1095 - Byzantine Emperor pleads with Pope Urban II for help against Islamic Turks in the Holy Land. The Crusades are begun.

1118 - Knights Templar isestablished in Solomon’s Temple in Jerusalem.

1128 - Knights Templar confirmed by Pope Honorius II at Council of Troyes.

1215 - King John forced to sign the *Magna Carta*, an early Bill of Rights, by land barons.

1231 - Pope Gregory IX declares life imprisonment for repentant heretics, and death for those who refuse to confess.

1256 - Date of earliest known copy of the ***Picatrix***, from the court of king Alphonso of Castille. The text is likely much older.

Late 1200s - Moses de Leon publishes the *Sepher haZohar*, the principal book of the Qabalah.

1291 - Holy Land lost to the Turks. “Official” end of the Crusades. Knights Templar establishes new headquarters at Temple Monastery in France.

1300s - Bubonic plague spreads from China during this century, and continues until 1600s. The ***Key of Solomon the King*** appears during this century, though it may be quite a bit older. The oldest known copies of the ***Ars Notoria*** also appear during this century.

1312 - Pope Clemet V, at the insistence of French King Philippe le Bel, issues a papal bull suppressing the Templar order.

1314 - Templar Grand Master Jaques de Molay, and others, burned at the stake for heresy.

1318 - Pope John XXII has the bishop of Frejus investigate several clerics and laymen on charges of necromancy, geomancy, etc.

Early 1400s - Suggested origin of the ***Sworn Book of Honorius***.

1406 - Group of clerics accused of working magick against the King of France and Pope Benedict XIII.

1409 - Pope Benedict XIII is himself accused of working necromancy and employing necromancers.

1450 - Johann Guttenburg invents printing press. Renaissance Era begins circa this time.

1462 - Trithemius born.

1468 - Two Dominican monks write the *Malleus Maleficarum* (Witches’ Hammer).

1492 - Nobody expects the Spanish Inquisition; except for the Queen of Spain. Columbus sets out to find shortcut to India.

Early 1500s - Martin Luther instigates schism of Roman Church into Catholic and Protestant sects. King Henry VIII creates the Church of England.

1509-10 - Agrippa writes the ***Three Books of Occult Philosophy***. After his death the ***Fourth Book of Occult Philosophy*** appears, and is rejected as a forgery by Agrippa’s student Wierus.

1527 - John Dee born.

1558 - Henry’s daughter and successor, Queen Elizabeth I, officially establishes her father’s Church circa this time.

1575 - Latin copy of the ***Arbatel of Magic*** appears. (John Dee also mentions the book in his work between 1581 - 1583.)

1581 - 1583 - John Dee scribes the ***Five Books of the Mysteries***.

1583 - 1607 - John Dee scribes further Angelic journals, published by Meric Casaubon in 1659 (see below).

1600s - Earliest known copies of ***Lemegeton*** date to this century, though it is certainly much older.

1610 - 1640 - The ***Grimoire of Armadel*** flourishes in France around this time.

1614 - 1615 - The “Rosicrucian Manifestos” (the *Fama* and *Confessio*) are published in Germany, sparking the Rosicrucian thought movement.

1655 - Robert Turner includes a translation of the ***Heptameron*** in his collection of esoteric texts.

1659 - Meric Casaubon publishes ***A True and Faithful Relation…***, a collection of John Dee’s journal entries (see 1583 above), in order to slander Dee’s memory.

Late 1600s to Early 1700s - The ***Book of the Sacred Magic of Abramelin the Mage*** appears (though it claims to have been written between 1368 - 1437).

Mid 1700s - The probable origin of the ***Grimoirium Verum***, and the ***Grand Grimoire***.

1801 - Francis Barrett publishes ***The Magus***, perhaps attempting to establish a magickal order.