



New York College  
Societas Rosicruciana  
In Civitatibus Foederatis  
Fall 2025



**From the Chief Adept**  
**RW R. Curtiss Montgomery, IX<sup>o</sup> et Philologus Zelator**

Fratres, ego salutant vos.

Our new College year began auspiciously with the annual Winter/Zoom Convocation on January 31<sup>st</sup>. As always, our thanks to the Fratres who shared their research and knowledge with us and several guests from other Colleges at that time. At our Spring Convocation on May 2nd, we will confer the Second Order Grades. Major themes found in these Grades explores death, death's role in life, and society's approach to death, an explication I personally have found most helpful and illuminating. Our Summer Convocation, to be held on July 25<sup>th</sup>, will likely begin the cycle of First Order Grades. We are always looking for interested and competent Brothers to become Fratres and join in our work.

I particularly direct your attention to the excellent articles below by Secretary Rick Powell and Celebrant Myron Deputat. They continue to lead and guide our studies. Thank you.

Editor Bruce Renner has presented us with the usual outstanding issue. Every issue showcases various religions, philosophies, and other germane topics. Of particular interest to me in this issue is the article on Jainism. This series allows us to follow the charge of the Fourth Grade to learn about and understand other religions and philosophies. I also found the essay on determinism vs. free will to be timely and a close tie-in with my own reading in particle physics.

I wish each and every frater, wherever he may be and in whatever circumstances, a thoughtful and reflective season. I look forward to seeing you at our May Convocation.

LVX,

*Curt*



## **From the Celebrant RW Myron J. Deputat, IX<sup>o</sup> et Philologus Adeptus Exemptus**

Cari Worthy Fratres,

As we pass from the cold stillness of winter into the quickening breath of spring and stand once more at the sacred threshold of the Equinox, we witness the emergence of life from dormancy. What seemed barren begins to stir; what lay hidden beneath frost and shadow rises toward warmth and light. In this outward renewal we perceive an inward summons — to emerge from seasons of silence and into conscious illumination.

At the Equinox, Light and Darkness rest in perfect balance, revealing the eternal teachings of reconciled opposites. From this harmony, Light begins its gentle ascendancy — outwardly in the heavens and inwardly within the soul aligned to the Great Work.

The allegory of Christian Rosenkreuz speaks powerfully in this season. His concealed vault, preserved through time and revealed at the appointed hour, signifies not an ending but a sacred gestation. Wisdom ripens in silence followed by illumination, dawning after patient preparation. Therefore, we must trust the unseen labor of winter, knowing that every true resurrection is preceded by holy stillness.

So too does Easter proclaim the central mystery of the Resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ — the triumph of Life over death and of divine Light over the seeming finality of the tomb. For the Christian mystic and Rosicrucian alike, this sacred event is both a historical revelation and a living archetype. The opening of the tomb signifies the liberation of consciousness, the risen Christ within each of us, reflecting the victory of the indwelling Logos within the purified heart.

Thus, Easter unfolds as the supreme emblem of alchemical transmutation. The descent into shadow, the sacred stillness of the tomb, and the rising into radiant life mirroring the inner stages of refinement. In the winter of introspection, the lesser self is reduced to its prima materia within the sealed vessel of contemplation and the hidden fire is tended. The Cross becomes the crucible. The Rose symbolizes the flowering of awakened consciousness.

May this turning of the year deepen our reverence for the Resurrection Mystery and strengthen our resolve to persevere through every inner winter. As the earth emerges from the chill into blossoming life, may the inner Sun ascend within us — dispelling shadow, harmonizing opposites, and guiding our steps in search of further Light.

With the season of Easter dawning upon us, I extend to you a warm and heartfelt greeting in the spirit of Light, Renewal, and Resurrection.

LVX,

*Myron*



## **From the Secretary RW Richard Powell IX° et Philologus Theoricus**

Cari Fratres,

It has been a very long winter, and we may be, finally, beginning to shovel our way out of it. Frater Deputat makes mention of the Equinox in his article. I will add that it is the Ancient of Air who has knowledge of the Vernal Equinox entrusted to him. The Archangel Raphael presides over the Vernal Equinox, the coming of Spring and with it, healing. Look for Raphael in the East.

I have in my possession the latest editions of Ad Lucum (2025) and the Fama (2024). I will bring copies to the next meeting. If you are missing any from the past year or two, reach out to me. If I have what you need, I will bring it as well.

Upcoming 2026 Convocations for the NY College will be (all Saturdays): May 2nd, July 25th, and October 31st.

On May 2nd, we will confer the Second Order (Grades V, VI & VII) to complete our current initiatory cycle. We will likely begin a new cycle at the July meeting. If you have a Brother that you would like to recommend for membership, please reach out to me and I will email you the recommendation form that needs to be completed.

The Celebrant is always looking for Fratres to present papers, lead a practicum, or lead a discussion at our Convocations. Got an idea? Not sure? Check in with Frater Deputat.

I encourage you to consider the Fellowship of the Rosy Cross, which Frater Renner mentions elsewhere in this issue. If you are looking for a rich Rosicrucian/Christian Mysticism experience that has elements of the SRICF but is vastly different, ask us about it. We are hoping to garner enough interest in starting a local group in Buffalo.

Dues Notices for 2026-2027 will be forthcoming in June. If you still haven't paid 2025-2026 (or aren't sure if you did), please check in with me. I do accept dues at every meeting, and you can also mail them to me. We hope to have an electronic payment option at some point - stay tuned.

See you soon...

Sapre Aude...

*Rick*



## From the Editor

RW W. Bruce Renner, IX<sup>o</sup>, KGC, PJDSM et Philologus Adeptus Exemptus

Cari Fratres,

Over the years, I have acquired many compendiums related to the Western Esoteric Tradition, ranging from Manly P. Hall's *The Secret Teachings in All Ages* to Wouter J. Hanegraaff's *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*. A common thread among these works is the inclusion of sections devoted to Freemasonry. This consistent focus suggests that the broader esoteric community regards Freemasonry as a significant part of the tradition.

Despite this recognition from the esoteric community, many Freemasons themselves are less likely to see their organization in this light. For most, Freemasonry primarily serves social and charitable purposes — both of which are, of course, admirable objectives. It is quite plausible that the earliest Freemasons intended nothing more than to emulate these perceived benefits enjoyed by operative guilds. However, the motivations that led to the development of Freemasonry's complex rituals and underlying philosophy remain less clear. The introduction of ritual certainly added an element of mystery, drawing the interest of many members, although for most, these rituals served a performative rather than an esoteric function. Perhaps the reluctance to embrace Freemasonry's esoteric component comes from a misunderstanding of what the term really means.

The terms “esoteric” and “occult” both originate from concepts relating to hidden or restricted information. Over time, their usage has evolved, and they are now often applied to the tools employed in the search for deeper understanding, rather than the understanding itself. For instance, within our Rosicrucian Society, disciplines such as the qabalah and alchemy are considered esoteric; however, these are primarily instruments that facilitate a deeper inquiry into hidden knowledge, not the knowledge itself. The true esoteric element lies in the knowledge, understanding, and wisdom that remains concealed. Similarly, the core teaching of Speculative Freemasonry is embodied in its ritual use of symbols and allegory but employ familiar disciplines like geometry and architecture to point toward more profound truths. Recognizing this approach is the real “secret teaching” of Freemasonry: the imperative to look beyond the surface. Rosicrucianism broadens the symbolic and allegorical tools available for understanding deeper truths. Yet its ultimate secret teaching mirrors that of Freemasonry: the encouragement to continually look beneath the surface for greater meaning.

Scire! Velle! Audere! Tacere!  
To Know, To Will, To Dare, To Remain Silent

LVX,

*Bruce*



# College Happenings

## Overview of the Winter Convocation

Winter has been a bit unpredictable so far this year, which validated the College's decision to hold its winter convocation via Zoom. The use of Zoom not only addressed weather concerns but also allowed us to welcome guests from various locations. We were pleased to have PGM and Frater Bill Thomas join us from Florida, as well as Frater David Walker from Thomas Jannes College in Ontario, just across the border. In total, 17 fratres were in attendance for this virtual gathering.

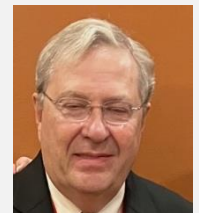
## Presentations

The convocation began with a brief greeting from Chief Adept Curt Montgomery. Following his remarks, the main portion of the meeting consisted of three presentations:

Frater Richard Christian: Presented a paper titled "Theodicy and the Building of King Solomon's Temple." Theodicy—derived from the Greek words for "god" (*theos*) and "justice" (*dike*)—is a theological or philosophical argument that seeks to reconcile the existence of an all-good, omnipotent God with the presence of evil and suffering in the world. This term was first introduced by Gottfried Leibniz in 1710. The paper's subject matter aligned well with the themes explored in this newsletter.



Frater Bruce Renner: Delivered a presentation on the history of Rosicrucianism, titled "Angels and Atoms: The Rosicrucian Ideal." This talk served as an introduction for new fratres and a helpful review for long-standing members of our Society.



Celebrant Myron Deputat: Discussed the U.S. military's real-life, unusual experiments with paranormal abilities during the 1970s and 80s. These efforts included training soldiers to use psychic powers, such as attempting to stop a goat's heart by staring at it—a program inspired by concerns about Soviet psychic warfare. His paper, "Hemi-Sync and the Monroe Institute - THE REAL Men Who Stare at Goats," also explored the life of Robert Monroe (October 30, 1915 – March 17, 1995), an American radio broadcasting executive known for his books on out-of-body experiences and for founding The Monroe Institute. The Institute researches human consciousness and developed the Gateway Program to teach people how to have out-of-body experiences.



## Housekeeping and Announcements

Before the convocation concluded, several housekeeping items were addressed. The dates for future convocations in 2026 were set as follows: May 2nd, July 25th, and October 31st. At the spring convocation on May 2nd, the College will confer the three Adeptus Grades. The summer convocation on July 25th will mark the beginning of a new class. Members who wish to propose a worthy brother Mason are encouraged to request a proposal form and return it to the Chief Adept. Please remember that candidates for initiation must be Christian Master Masons in good standing and should have a genuine interest in the Great Work of the College.

The Secretary announced that, in compliance with the Society's constitution, the initiation fee will be set at \$100 moving forward. He has also received the latest editions of *Ad Lucem* and *Fama*, which will be made available at the next convocation. Members unable to attend due to *personal limitations* should contact the Secretary to arrange for these books to be sent by mail.

### **High Council Update**

The next session of the High Council will take place on November 13–14 in Louisville, Kentucky. It was also announced that our Treasurer, Robert Bowles, has been elevated to the High Council's Eighth Grade of Magister.

### **The Fellowship of the Rosy Cross**

During the announcements, the Celebrant highlighted growing interest in establishing a Fellowship of the Rosy Cross temple in Buffalo. The Fellowship of the Rosy Cross was originally founded in 1915 by Arthur Edward Waite, who was a Freemason, writer, and Christian mystic. Structurally, this organization resembles other Rosicrucian orders and follows the grade progression model set by the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, with which Waite was previously affiliated. However, the Fellowship's focus is distinctly one of Christian mysticism, making it especially appealing to those who prefer a mystical path over a magical one.

The Fellowship of the Rosy Cross operates independently from the College. To become a member, one must apply for initiation regardless of current association with the College. It is a Christian Order with no other prerequisites; you need not be a Martinist, Rosicrucian or Freemason to be initiated. Notably, the Fellowship is inclusive, welcoming both men and women as applicants.

Those interested in learning more or pursuing membership are encouraged to reach out to Fratres Deputat, Powell, or Renner for further details.



# Jainism



## Overview

Jainism is one of the world's oldest religions, originating in India and tracing its roots back to the 6th century BCE. The term "Jain" comes from "Jina," meaning "victorious one." Unlike many religions, Jainism is non-theistic, as it does not recognize a creator God. Instead, it emphasizes self-effort as the primary path to salvation. The core teachings of Jainism center on the pursuit of spiritual purity and enlightenment through disciplined ethical conduct, meditation, and self-control.

## Historical Background

Jainism shares strong historical and cultural ties with Hinduism and Buddhism, reflecting its Indian origins. Its most prominent teacher, Mahavira (599–527 BCE), is regarded as the 24th and final Tirthankara, or spiritual teacher, of the current era. Mahavira, born Vardhamana into the warrior class, renounced his worldly possessions at age 30 and became an ascetic. Through more than twelve years of fasting and meditation, he attained enlightenment and earned the title Mahavira, meaning "Great Hero." Tradition holds that he established a substantial community of followers, with 14,000 monks and 36,000 nuns at the time of his death.

From the 6th to the late 12th century, Jain monks from both major sects transitioned from wandering asceticism to residing permanently in temples or monasteries, a shift likely influenced by support from lay patrons. In the late medieval to early modern periods, Jainism experienced a decline, primarily due to sociopolitical factors such as the arrival of Islam in India during the 12th century. Today, Jainism has spread beyond India, forming diasporic communities worldwide, but it remains a relatively small religion.

## Key Beliefs

- **Tirthankaras:** Jains honor 24 spiritual teachers called Tirthankaras, who have attained enlightenment and shown the path to liberation. Mahavira, the last Tirthankara, was a contemporary of the Buddha.
- **Karma as Matter:** Jainism views karma as a physical, subtle substance that attaches to the soul (jiva) due to one's actions and passions. This accumulation weighs down the soul and hinders liberation. The ultimate religious goal is to purify the soul completely, achieving eternal liberation (moksha) from physical bodies. According to Jain doctrine, liberation is currently unattainable in what is regarded as a corrupt era, but striving for perfection remains central to the faith.
- **Reincarnation:** Jainism teaches that individuals undergo many cycles of rebirth until reaching liberation.
- **Anekantavada:** This doctrine of "non-absolutism" asserts that truth and reality are complex, possessing multiple aspects; no single perspective can claim absolute truth.
- **No Creator God:** Jainism holds that the universe is eternal, uncreated, and self-sustaining. There is no supreme deity who judges or assists humans—souls must liberate themselves.
- **Cyclical History:** Jainism teaches that history progresses through eras that grow increasingly corrupt. After the last of six eras in each cycle, the earth is destroyed by fire, and a new cycle begins. Time itself is eternal and formless, and the Jain world is both eternal and uncreated.



An artist rendering of the 24 Tirthankaras

## Core Principles

### The Three Jewels (Ratnatraya)

Jainism is founded on the “Three Jewels,” which must be practiced together for spiritual progress:

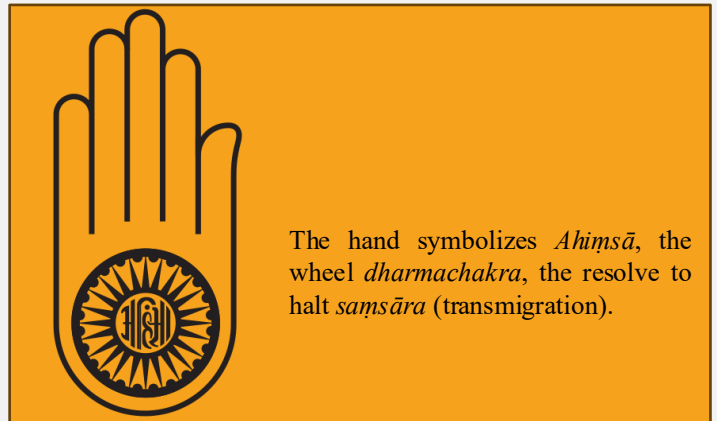
- Right Faith (Samyak Darshana): Pure belief in Jain teachings.
- Right Knowledge (Samyak Jnana): Accurate understanding of the soul and the universe.
- Right Conduct (Samyak Charitra): Living in accordance with the Jain ethical code.

### The Five Great Vows (Mahavratas)

- **Ahimsa** (Non-Violence): The most fundamental principle, extending non-harm to all living beings, even the smallest insects. All living things possess souls and must be respected. Jains are strict vegetarians. They are tolerant of non-Jain teachings and scripture as an aspect of their non-violence philosophy.
- **Satya** (Truthfulness): Speaking the truth and being honest are essential for spiritual advancement.
- **Asteya** (Non-Stealing): Not taking anything that is not willingly given.
- **Brahmacharya** (Celibacy/Chastity): Practicing self-restraint, particularly by monks and nuns.
- **Aparigraha** (Non-Possession/Non-Attachment): Limiting material possessions and overcoming attachments.

### Constituent Elements of Reality (Astikaya)

- Soul
- Matter
- Space
- Time
- Motion and its absence of motion



### Structure of the Inhabited Universe

- The **Lower World** (Adholoka): Consists of seven tiers of progressively worse hells.
- The **Middle World** (Madhyaloka): Made up of numerous concentric continents separated by seas. At its center is the continent of Jambudvipa, which humans occupy, along with the continent adjacent to it and half of the third. Only those in Jambudvipa can ascend further.
- The **Celestial World** (Urdhvaloka): Contains two heavens, one for those not far along their path and another for those who are far advanced.
- The **Abode of Liberated Souls** (Siddhashila): The destination for souls that have achieved liberation.

## Scriptures

The principal scriptures of Jainism are the Agamas, which contain the teachings of Mahavira. These texts address philosophy, ethics, rituals, and monastic discipline.

## Sects and Traditions

- **Svetambara** ("white-clad"): Monks and nuns wear simple white clothing. This sect believes that women can attain liberation (moksha) and accepts a broader range of scriptures, including the Angas. Major subsects include Mūrti-pūjaka (image worshippers) and Sthānaka-vāsins (non-image worshippers).
- **Digambara** ("sky-clad"): Monks practice nudity as a symbol of renunciation and complete detachment from material possessions, while nuns wear white clothes. Digambaras differ from Svetambaras and are known for strict asceticism, such as eating from their cupped hands and using peacock-feather brooms. They also hold that women must be reborn as men to achieve liberation.



## Practices and Rituals

- **Vegetarianism:** As a result of Ahimsa, Jains maintain a strict vegetarian diet and often avoid root vegetables like potatoes and onions to prevent harming soil-dwelling organisms.
- **Fasting and Meditation:** Key practices for purifying the soul from karma.
- **Festivals:** Important observances include Paryushana (a period of fasting and repentance) and Mahavir Jayanti (celebrating Mahavira's birth).
- **Temple Worship:** Daily worship includes hymns, prayers, sacred formulas, recitation of the names of the Tirthankaras, and idol veneration—such as bathing images and offering flowers, fruit, and rice.
- **Family Centricity:** Strong family ties make conversion difficult, as leaving Jainism can result in a loss of social status within the community.
- **Pilgrimage:** Seen as a meritorious activity, pilgrimage is popular among both renunciants and laypeople.
- **Asceticism:** Monks and nuns practice rigorous discipline, renouncing clothing (Digambara) or wearing white (Svetambara). Physical displays of worship are prohibited for monastics in all sects.
- **Self-Control:** Overcoming passions such as anger, ego, and greed is essential.
- **Male Centricity:** Despite a large population of female laity and nuns, Jainism remains male-centric.





## Every picture tells a story...

If you visit your local Barnes and Noble looking for a tarot deck, you will find a large selection, potentially 50 or more. The existence of numerous tarot decks can be attributed to two factors.

One of the important aspects is artistic. Many decks are designed based on an artist's distinctive vision of what a deck should embody. Creating a tarot deck presents a significant artistic challenge, as it requires depicting all the archetypes and themes of the 78 cards in a novel and unique manner.

Many esoteric traditions develop their own decks to complement their practices. These groups may either align their distinctive archetypes with the conventional interpretations of the cards or present entirely new conceptualizations. Given that the SRICF focuses on research and study, analyzing these decks can provide insight into the fundamental principles of various traditions.

## How to use these decks

The decks reviewed include books that explain the meaning of each card and provide suggested uses. Since these decks are primarily intended for practitioners of specific traditions, using them for practical work should be approached cautiously. A Christian Rosicrucian may not find alignment with a Wicca or Druid deck for divination or skrying. However, it is possible that one or more of these decks may resonate with you, allowing for a more general use of the deck.

A thorough approach involves reviewing each card in the deck individually. Reviewing one card per day is a practical strategy, completing the full review in 78 days. The accompanying guidebook typically offers an initial analysis of each card, which can serve as a foundation for deeper contemplation or meditation. The major arcana cards provide insight into the archetypes that underpin the tradition, whereas the minor arcana cards interpret more everyday life events. Minor arcana cards often convey a narrative, sometimes aligned with mainstream decks and sometimes unique to their own tradition. Additionally, you may randomly select a sequence of cards and construct a narrative based on their symbolism.

When reviewing the cards, consider doing a side-by-side comparison with a mainstream deck like the Waite-Smith-Rider. Identify the common themes and examine how their representations differ.

In this newsletter we'll explore the *Druidcraft* deck, based on the Druid and Wicca (modern witchcraft) traditions.



## Oracle of Heaven and Hell

by

Travis McHenry

When editors Robert Maynard Hutchins and Mortimer J. Adler published the Great Books of the Western World in 1971, they pioneered a new way to access the foundational works of Western civilization. Rather than relying on the traditional alphabetical indexing, Hutchins, Adler, and a team of assistants developed an index based on key ideas—a formidable endeavor even by today's standards, considering the advanced AI and text processing resources now available. This idea-based index, named the Syntopicon, encompassed 102 distinct concepts, referencing works ranging from the ancient Greeks to Freud.

Over the years, the selection of topics included in the Syntopicon has sparked debate. Even Adler himself regretted the omission of significant concepts such as equality, and many have critiqued the approach overall. Despite this, the Syntopicon remains a valuable framework for inquiry, often revealing unexpected entries. One particularly surprising topic at the beginning of the alphabetical list of topics is "Angels." Its inclusion is justified by the sheer volume of references to angels in literature and art throughout history. The concept of angels is deeply embedded in the collective imagination, and polls conducted decades ago even indicated that more people believed in angels than in God. Although belief has declined across all aspects of religious life, recent polls still show that belief in angels hovers around 70%, with belief in demons ranging from 55% to 60%. Belief in God generally remains at 75% to 80%, but as with all polls, outcomes vary according to sample size and composition.

Angels and demons have likely been part of human culture since ancient times. Whether viewed as actual beings or as archetypes within our collective unconscious, they hold significant places in art, literature, theology, and philosophy, warranting thoughtful study. The earliest tangible expressions of these concepts emerged in ancient religions. Many scholars identify Zoroastrianism as a primary catalyst for the dualistic "good vs. evil" framework later adopted by Abrahamic religions, noting its structured hierarchy of angels and demons. Zoroaster, the prophet of Zoroastrianism, taught of a supreme good deity, *Ahura Mazda*, served by six archangels (*Amesha Spentas*), and a supreme evil

spirit, *Angra Mainyu (Ahriman)*, who commanded a legion of demons (*daevas*). Jewish communities absorbed these ideas during the Babylonian Exile and Persian rule; prior to this, angels in Hebrew scripture were largely anonymous and impersonal messengers. Other ancient cultures, such as Mesopotamia and Egypt, also contributed traditions of minor spirits and "daemons," which were not strictly categorized as "fallen" or "evil" in a cosmic sense.

Among the ancients, the Greeks were the first to formalize and document the concept of intermediary beings—angels and demons being the most prominent. The word "angel" is derived from the Greek *angelos*, meaning "messenger," which corresponds to the Hebrew *mal'akh*, a supernatural emissary of God. Similarly, "demon" originates from the Greek *daimon*, referring to any supernatural spirit or minor deity, whether benevolent or malevolent. In Christianity, the term "demon" eventually came to signify exclusively evil spirits.

During the Medieval period, theologians from the three Abrahamic religions produced an extensive body of work on angels and demons in the West, with parallel developments in Eastern religions as well. Today, there is a vast array of named angels and demons, organized into complex hierarchies. Some authors claimed direct contact with these intermediary beings, with one of the most notable examples being the Elizabethans John Dee and Edward Kelly's Enochian system. However, the inconsistencies between various systems suggest that they are imaginative attempts to make sense of an enduring and compelling belief that spans millennia and remains influential in our collective psyche. Regardless of their actual nature, these expressions have value, and those interested in exploring the subject should select a method that resonates with their spiritual practices. Tarot is one such tool that offers meaningful avenues for exploration.

For this exploration into intermediary beings, I have chosen Travis McHenry's *Oracle of Heaven and Hell*. Building on his previous tarot decks—*The Angel Tarot* and *The Occult Tarot*—this deck is classified as an Oracle deck, meaning it lacks the rigid structure of traditional tarot and generally focuses on a narrower set of archetypes. The Oracle of Heaven and Hell centers on the Kabbalistic angels of the *Shem HaMephorash* and the 72 Goetic demons. The Shem HaMephorash derives from ancient Jewish mysticism, while the Goetic demons originate from the 17th-century grimoire, *The Lesser Key of Solomon (Lemegeton)*, itself based on legends surrounding King Solomon. Before delving into the deck itself, some background is necessary.

## **The 72 Kabbalistic Angels of the Shem HaMephorash**

The 72 Angels of the Shem HaMephorash—often translated as "the Explicit Name" or "the Ineffable Name"—are key figures in Kabbalistic mysticism. Their names are derived from three consecutive verses drawn from Exodus 14:19-21, where letters from each verse are taken in sequence (forward, backward, forward) to create 72 three-letter names. These are then appended with endings such as IAH or AL (or EL) to complete the angelic names. This process is briefly mentioned in the Adeptus Minor Grade of our Society.

Each angel acts as an intermediary, associated with distinct divine attributes, e.g., personal growth, healing, and protection, and is often considered the angelic counterpart to the 72 Goetic demons.



The English translation of Exodus 14:19-21 is as follows:

- <sup>19</sup> Then the angel of God who was going before the host of Israel moved and went behind them, and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them,
- <sup>20</sup> coming between the host of Egypt and the host of Israel. And there was the cloud and the darkness. And it lit up the night without one coming near the other all night.
- <sup>21</sup> Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the Lord drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided.

These angels are viewed as powerful conduits between humanity and the divine, holding immense spiritual energy. Working with these angels therefore helps activate parts of the self, promote healing, foster personal growth, and manifest divine light. This makes the Shem HaMephorash a significant and powerful system within Kabbalistic and angelic magick, detailed in various grimoires and modern spiritual texts.

The term angel in referring to the angels of the Shem HaMephorash is a generalization. The 72 angels only include 8 actual angels. Angels are the lowest order of the 9 heavenly choirs. All the choirs are represented in the Shem HaMephorash: From highest to lowest they are:

- Seraphim
- Cherubim
- Thrones
- Dominions
- Powers
- Virtues
- Principalities
- Archangels
- Angels

Lookup Shem HaMephorash in Wikipedia for Reuchin's list of all the angelic names.

The Cabala  
Showing at one View the Seventy-two Angels bearing the name of God, Shemhamphorash

Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ	Vehuiah	Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ	Leuiyah	Ⲡ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲡ	Ariel	Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ	Mebahiah
Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲡ	Ietiel	Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ	Pahaliah	Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ	Haumiah	Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲡ	Poel
Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲡ	Sitael	Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲡ	Nelchael	Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲡ	Rehael	Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ	Nemamaiah
Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ	Elemiah	Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲡ	Ietiel	Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲡ	Ihiarel	Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲡ	Ietiael
Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ	Mahasiah	Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲡ	Melachel	Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲡ	Hahahel	Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲡ	Harahel
Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲡ	Lelachel	Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ	Hahuiyah	Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲡ	Michael	Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲡ	Mizrael
Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ	Akhariah	Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ	Nithariah	Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ	Vealiah	Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲡ	Umabel
Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ	Cahethel	Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ	Hahiah	Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ	Ielachiah	Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲡ	Iahhel
Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲡ	Haniel	Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲡ	Ierathel	Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ	Sealiah	Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲡ	Annauel
Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ	Aladiah	Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ	Sechiah	Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲡ	Ariel	Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲡ	Mochael
Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ	Lauiah	Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲡ	Reiel	Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ	Asaliah	Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ	Damabiah
Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ	Hahiah	Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲡ	Omael	Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲡ	Mihael	Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲡ	Menkl
Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲡ	Ietiael	Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲡ	Leocabel	Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲡ	Vehuel	Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲡ	Eiael
Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ	Mebahel	Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ	Vasariah	Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲡ	Daniel	Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ	Hahuiyah
Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ	Haniel	Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ	Iehuiyah	Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ	Hahariah	Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲡ	Rochel
Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ	Hakamiah	Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ	Lehahiah	Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ	Imamiah	Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ	Iibamiah
Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ	Leviah	Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ	Chavakiah	Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲡ	Nanael	Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲡ	Hahiael
Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ	Cahiel	Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ	Monadel	Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ	Nithael	Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ Ⲛ	Mevamaiah

Chart showing the names of the 72 Kabbalistic Angels in Hebrew and English From Francis Barrett, The Magus (1801)

## The 72 Goetic Demons

The 72 Goetic demons are spirits cataloged in the *Ars Goetia*, the first section of the 17th-century grimoire known as the *Lesser Key of Solomon (Lemegeton)*. Of interest to Masons, occult tradition holds that King Solomon summoned and bound these spirits to aid in constructing his temple. This legend originated from extra-biblical and apocryphal texts written centuries after the historical Solomon's death (c. 931 BCE) by medieval Jewish, Christian, and Arab mystics e.g., Johann Weyer's *Pseudomonarchia Daemonum* (1577). Each demon is identified by a unique seal or sigil (see sidebar) used for summoning and control, and they are often viewed as the shadow counterparts to the 72 Angels of the Shem HaMephorash.

While the canonical Bible emphasizes his wisdom and temple-building, it never mentions him using magic or demons.



## Origins

The legend evolved through the following key stages:

- *The Testament of Solomon* (1st–5th Century CE) This is the foundational text for the legend. Written in Greek by an unknown author, it claims to be a first-person account by King Solomon.
- The Magic Ring: The story states that the Archangel Michael gave Solomon a magical ring engraved with the Seal of Solomon (often described as a pentagram or hexagram).
- Enslaving Demons: Using this ring, Solomon "stamped" and bound demons—beginning with one named *Ornias*—forcing them to perform the manual labor for the First Temple.
- Interrogation: The text serves as a manual, describing how Solomon interviewed each demon to learn their names, the afflictions they caused, and the specific angels or charms that could defeat them.

### 1. Jewish Talmudic Lore (c. 3rd–6th Century CE)

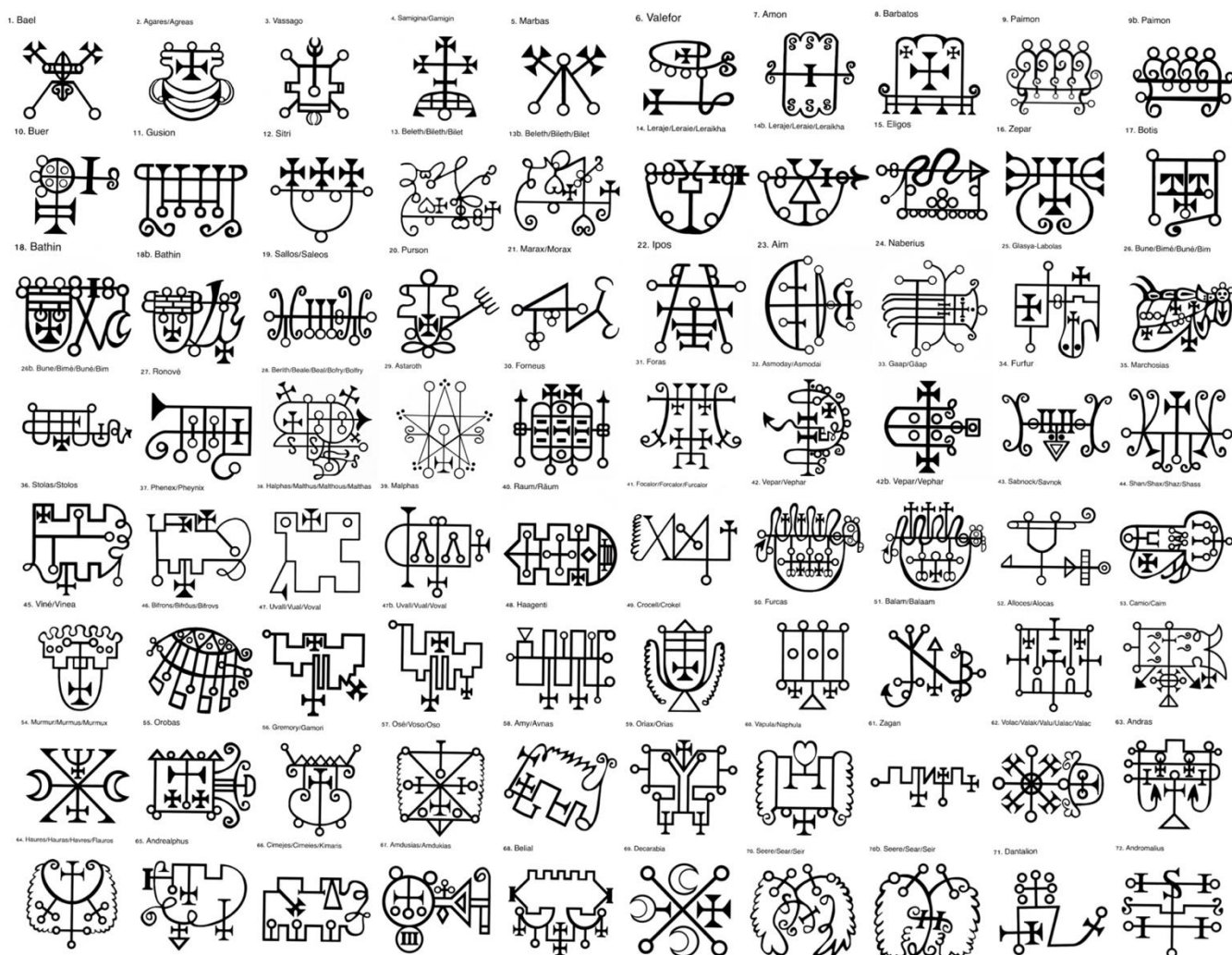
- The Babylonian Talmud contains a famous story (Gittin 68a–b) involving Solomon and the demon king *Ashmedai* (*Asmodeus*).
- The Shamir: In this version, Solomon captures *Ashmedai* to find the *shamir*, a magical worm or stone capable of cutting through the Temple's rocks without the use of iron tools.
- Usurpation: This lore also introduces the "shape-shifting" theme, where *Ashmedai* eventually steals Solomon's ring, casts him into exile, and rules in his likeness for 40 days.

### 2. Islamic Traditions (7th Century CE onwards)

- The Quran and Hadith further popularized the idea of Solomon (Sulayman) commanding supernatural forces.
- Command over Jinn: The Quran (Surahs 21:82 and 34:12-13) explicitly states that God subjected the Jinn to Solomon, who worked for him as divers, builders, and artisans.

### 3. Medieval and Renaissance Grimoires

- In the 16th and 17th centuries, these ancient legends were systematized into "Solomonic magic" texts:
  - The Lesser Key of Solomon: This 17th-century grimoire contains the *Ars Goetia*, which famously lists the 72 demons Solomon supposedly bound in a brass vessel.
  - Shifting Intent: Unlike the early Testament, which was a moral warning about Solomon's eventual fall into idolatry, these later grimoires were intended as practical "how-to" guides for magicians to emulate Solomon's power.



Sigils of the 72 Goetic Demons

### Hierarchy and Ranks

Like Angels, demons are organized into a noble hierarchy, but in Hell rather than Heaven. Each rank corresponding to a traditional astrological planet:

- Kings: (Sun)
- Dukes: (Venus)
- Princes: (Jupiter)
- Marquises: (Moon)
- Earls: (Mars)
- Presidents: (Mercury)
- Knight: (Saturn)



## The Oracle of Heaven and Earth

Travis McHenry previously released two tarot decks—one for angels and one for demons. The first editions were published by Kickstarter as *The Angel Evoking Tarot* and *Demon-Possessed Tarot*, later renamed by Rockpool as *The Angel Tarot* and *The Occult Tarot*. A key issue with these tarot decks was the need to fit the 72 angels and demons into the classic 78-card tarot format, leading McHenry to add 6 archangels and 6 prince demons, respectively. While accepted by some in the tarot community, these additions feel somewhat forced, as the 72 angels and demons form a self-contained group. The assignment scheme for these extra cards remains unexplained by McHenry.

Oracle decks, in contrast, are freeform and can have any number of cards. *The Oracle of Heaven and Hell* contains 72 cards, each featuring both an angel and a corresponding demon, which is a better fit for exploring their pantheons. It should also be noted that McHenry seemed unduly focus on invoking/evoking in his tarot decks and seems confused about the difference (see sidebar for this discussion). Notably, McHenry's booklet for this deck does not emphasize invocation or evocation—a shift from his previous work.

## Invocation vs. Evocation

Invocation and evocation have several meanings, but in this essay they refer to two practices of ritual magic. Invocation brings external energy into your spiritual sphere or in Kabbalistic terms into the World of Yetzirah and primary into the Sephirah of Yesod. Most people engage in invocation in some form throughout their lives without any knowledge of ritual magic, most commonly with prayer. Imagination is an important tool in ritual magic, and those who are naturally imaginative can also spontaneously invoke, again without any knowledge of ritual magic. Seen this way, ritual magic is a tool to hone abilities natural to humans.

Evocation is the type of magic we encounter in works of fantasy such as Harry Potter, where something (often an intermediary being) is manifested in the physical world; in Kabbalistic terms the World of Assiah, and the Sephirah of Malkuth. I've never met anyone who claims to have work this type of extreme evocation, much less seen a demonstration of it, so I remain skeptical. There are, of course, many historical accounts claiming the practice, and a fair amount of literature on the subject. Including it, as possible, in a brief ceremony with tarot cards, as McHenry suggests, is, in my opinion, nonsense. It detracts from other beneficial aspects of his work.

It should be noted, however, that some define evocation more widely to include making changes in one's circumstances – thus manifesting action in our physical world. For example, a talisman is created to encourage success of some type. Here the lines of invocation and evocation become a bit blurred.

## Anatomy of a card

The Oracle cards are larger than standard tarot cards, but nevertheless some information from the earlier decks has been omitted. McHenry does not specify the sources for the information on the cards, though Benebell Wen's review notes several historical texts for the Angel Tarot, including:

- De Arte Cabbalistica (1517)
- Three Books of Occult Philosophy (1531)
- The Magical Calendar (1582)
- The Grimoire of Armadel (1600s)
- Oedipus Aegyptiacus (1652)
- La Science Cabalistique (1823)
- Clefs Majeurs et Clavicules de Salomon (1860)

The demonoc imagery largely aligns with the *Ars Goetia of the Lesser Key of Solomon*.

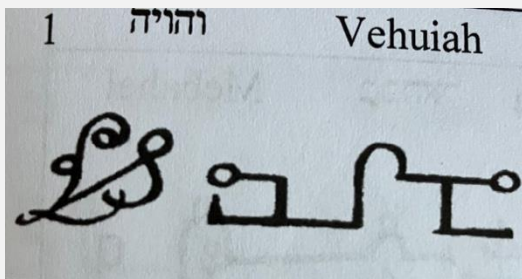
McHenry also mentioned researching unpublished material in Paris, though the provenance of some angelic images remains unverified. The artistic depictions of angels are particularly notable, moving beyond the typical humans-with-wings motif; biblical accounts, such as Ezekiel 1:4-28, describe angels with appearances as striking as any demon.

The following picture shows the layout of the typical card:

Card number	1	VEHUAH	Name of Angel
Angelic image			Sigil of Angel
Angelic Keyword	New beginnings		
Demonic keyword	Anger		
Demonic image			
Sigil of Demon	BAEI		
Name of Demon	BAEI		

Sigils and seals in McHenry's earlier tarot decks were often too small to read, but in the Oracle deck, they are larger and serve as backgrounds to the images, though often partially obscured. The demon sigils can be found online; angelic sigils are harder to locate, but sources such as *Tarot Talismans* by Chic and Tabatha Cicero provide some examples. Above the sigil is the angelic name in *Malachim* characters ("the writing of the angels"). Each card also features an outer inscription, which varies but is untranslated. Another sigil appears in the background of each angel, but not every demon; its identity remains unknown.

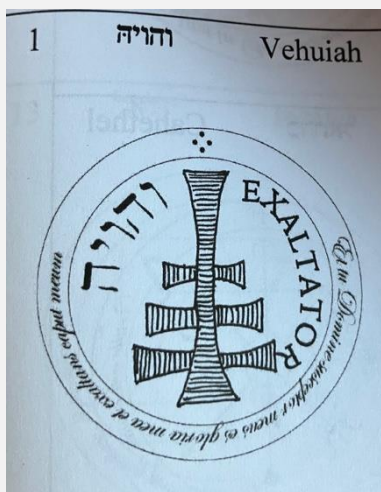
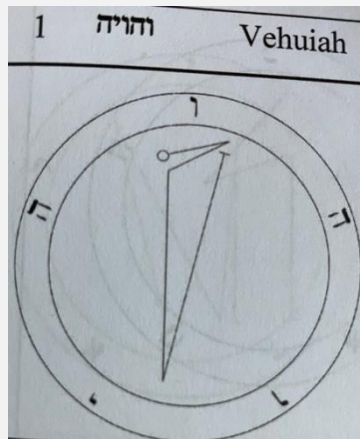
The Ciceros point out that some controversy exists concern the origin and purpose of these sigils. They suggest using the Rosicrucian method of creating sigils, which can be readily found in Golden Dawn literature. A full set of sigils created with this method can be found in *The Science of the Kabbalah* by Lazare Lenain and translated by Piers Vaughan. This book also provides a third set of sigils attributed to Levi.



### Sigil vs Seal

Sigils and seals are both symbolic tools in ritual magic, but they differ in purpose and origin: **sigils** are typically personalized, custom-made symbols designed to manifest a specific, individual, intent or desire (often in chaos magic). **Seals**, conversely, are formal, traditional, and often ancient symbols representing specific spirits, demons, angels, or entities, used in ceremonial magic for invocation/evocation or command, such as those in *The Lesser Key of Solomon*. While some traditions use the terms interchangeably, the core distinction lies in the personalized nature of a sigil versus the authoritative, established nature of a seal.

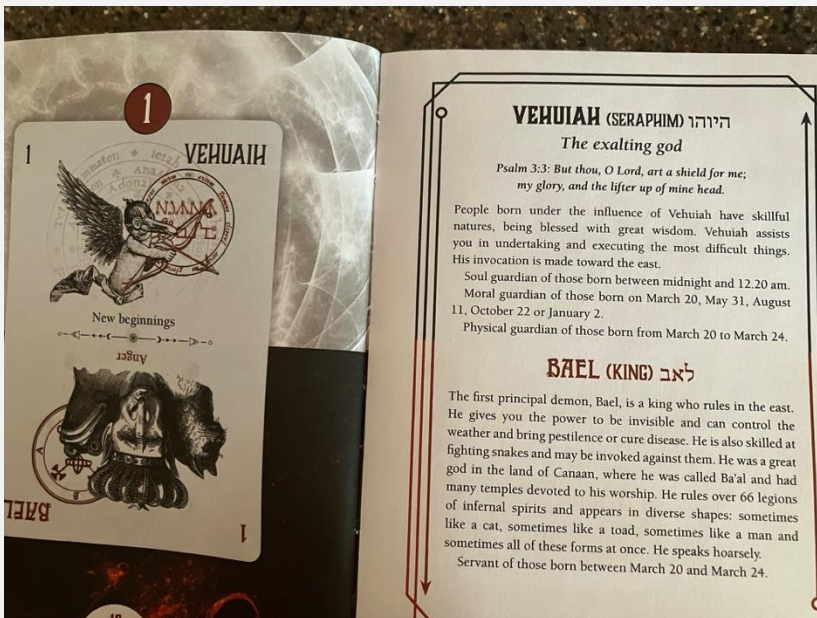
Sigils and seals for for the Kabbalistic angel **Vehuiah** (top) from the *Table des 72 Anges*, MS Arsenal 2495 from the early 18<sup>th</sup> century (right) Rosicrucian sigil (bottom) seal from Lévi's *Clefs Majeures et Clavicules de Solomon* from *The Science of the Kabbalah* by Lazare Lenain



Early editions of the deck featured the Seal of Solomon (see sidebar) on the back, hinting at McHenry's focus on invocation and evocation. Other editions depicted the seal of the Goetic demon and Kabbalistic angel on the card face, which would be useful for researchers. My deck shows two sigils of Asmodeus, the demon who, according to legend, impersonated Solomon—an odd choice and of little practical value.

For light divination, the cards include keywords, purportedly based on astrological attributions from McHenry's earlier tarot decks. However, these do not align with traditional tarot systems, and the Oracle deck does not reassign cards to fit classic tarot structure. The more conventional arrangement assigns the 72 angels and demons to 36 minor arcana cards (excluding aces and court cards), with each pair assigned to two cards.

### The booklet



Example page from the deck – 72, 2 page, explanations are provided

The accompanying booklet contains introductory pages, though some information carries over incorrectly from previous decks. The main content consists of 72 two-page spreads, each detailing an angel/demon pair. The left page displays a card illustration; the right page provides the angel's name in English and Hebrew (with Hebrew written left to right, as in Francis Barrett's *The Magus*), the angelic choir type, a title from the Psalm and the Psalm (serving as an invocation), a brief divination guide, and an exercise to identify your three guardian angels (Soul, Moral, and Physical) and servant demon, based on birth information. The demon section includes its name in English and Hebrew, rank in the hierarchy, descriptive/divinatory notes, and associated birthdates, but lacks invocation/evocation information—which may be for the best.



### The Seal of Solomon

The Seal of Solomon is a legendary signet ring attributed to King Solomon in Jewish, Islamic, and Christian occult traditions. Said to grant powers such as commanding spirits, speaking with animals, and controlling natural forces, it is often depicted as a hexagram (Star of David) or pentagram. Traditionally, the ring was made of brass (for angelic spirits) and iron (for demonic spirits), with interwoven triangles meant to confound spirits and cause them pain upon contact. The Seal has come to symbolize divine wisdom, authority, and the power derived from God, influencing alchemy, magic, and even national symbols.

## How to use this deck as a research tool

These cards provide a unique approach to studying angels and demons compared to traditional texts, though further research is recommended before use. Augmenting card information with sticky notes, journal entries, or spreadsheets can help compile additional insights. The images themselves are valuable for meditation: select a card, contemplate its image, and note what emerges. For angels, the invoking Psalm can aid focus. Meditating on demons is not harmful, but belief is crucial (there is no power without belief!)—if demons are problematic to you, avoid engaging with them beyond intellectual exploration. Alternatively, one might meditate on a demon only after invoking its corresponding angel.



Lastly,  
remember that  
balance is  
observed  
everywhere in  
the universe!

# Exploring Philosophy

## Fate (Determinism) vs Free Will



Philosophy, armchair or otherwise, isn't for the fainthearted. While some may think of adventure as activities like skydiving or bungee jumping, philosophers embark on a different kind of journey—one that takes place within the mind. For these thinkers, the leaps they make are not physical, but rather involve moving beyond established lore, traditions, assumptions, and even personal experiences. Their aim is to question everything, seeking deeper understanding beneath the surface of what is commonly accepted.

Throughout our lives, we are shaped by cultural norms passed down from parents, friends, family, schools, religious institutions, and governments. Philosophers, however, resist simply accepting these influences. They strive to look beyond the obvious, always digging deeper into the foundations of our beliefs and values. This relentless curiosity often yields profound insights, but it can also lead to uncomfortable realizations that challenge our sense of certainty.

### The Dichotomy of Fate versus Free will

One of the most significant examples of this philosophical exploration is the debate between fate and free will. This conflict represents a dichotomy that many people tend to overlook, often preferring the comfort of not questioning such fundamental aspects of existence. Nevertheless, the debate between fate and freewill has fascinated philosophers, writers, and thinkers for centuries.

At the heart of this discussion lies a central question: Are our lives determined by forces beyond our control, or do we have the ability to shape our destinies through our own choices? Grappling with this dynamic is essential not only for philosophical inquiry, but also for personal reflection. The way we understand fate and free will influences how we view responsibility and destiny, shaping the way we interpret our actions and the events that unfold in our lives.

### Understanding Fate

Fate refers to the idea that events in life are predetermined and inevitable. In this view, a higher power, cosmic force, or the structure of the universe dictates the course of our lives. Many ancient cultures, such as the Greeks and Romans, believed in the concept of fate, personified by the Fates or *Parcae*, who controlled the destinies of both mortals and gods. In modern times, fate is often seen as a mysterious force guiding events, sometimes described as "meant to be" or "written in the stars."

## Understanding free will

Free will is the belief that individuals have the power to make choices independent of any preordained plan. This concept supports the idea of personal responsibility and agency. Philosophers who champion free will argue that humans can choose between different courses of action, shaping their futures through their decisions. In legal and ethical discussions, free will is foundational to the idea of accountability. Actions are considered "free" if they align with an individual's own desires, beliefs, and internal history, even if those desires were ultimately shaped by prior causes.

## Traditional views

Belief in fate varies globally but is common, with roughly 44% of U.S. adults believing life's course is predetermined (Pew poll 2021), though this is higher in Black (65%) and Hispanic communities, while a majority of even non-believers in some studies hold some belief in fate. In Muslim-majority countries, belief in fate (Qadar) is very high (70-90%), and many Brits (around half) believe in destiny guiding some aspects of life, often blended with personal choice.

A large majority of the general public (over 80%) believes in free will, often equating it with making choices, while professional philosophers are split, with about 60% leaning towards *compatibilism* (free will compatible with determinism), around 12-14% denying it, and fewer supporting *libertarianism* (true, uncaused free will). Beliefs vary by group, but the common understanding in society supports free will for practical reasons like justice, even as philosophical debate continues.



## The Scientific Perspective

Scientifically, the debate between fate (determinism) and free will involves physics and neuroscience; physics leans towards cause-and-effect, suggesting everything is predetermined (determinism), but quantum mechanics introduces randomness (indeterminism). Meanwhile neuroscience shows brain activity precedes conscious decisions, challenging free will, yet many argue humans possess a degree of agency within biological constraints, suggesting a complex interplay rather than a clear winner, with "fate" often seen as genetics/biology and "free will" as conscious choice within limits.

### Physics

- **Determinism:** Classical physics suggests that if you know the initial state of the universe, all future events are predictable, implying no true free will. In this view, "free" does not mean being free from the laws of physics but rather being free from coercion.
- **Quantum Indeterminism:** In physics, the shift from Newtonian (absolute) determinism to quantum mechanics has introduced probabilistic causation. Because subatomic particles behave randomly rather than predictably, some scientists argue the universe is not a "closed track," leaving room for genuine contingency and choice.
- **Chaos Theory:** Chaos theory doesn't *prove* free will but offers potential explanations for apparent freedom by showing how complex, deterministic systems become practically unpredictable due to extreme sensitivity to tiny changes (the "butterfly effect"). While some see this unpredictability as free will, critics like Robert Sapolsky argue that chaos is still deterministic, just too complex for prediction, not truly free, confusing unpredictability with genuine choice, though some models blend chaos with rationality for a physicalist (a belief that the real world consist simply of the physical world) view of free will.
- **Emergent Property:** Some researchers view free will as an emergent property of a complex system. While individual neurons might follow deterministic laws, the entire human brain—with its unique capacity for introspection and abstract reasoning—may function beyond simple cause-and-effect.

### Neuroscience & The Brain

- **Libet Experiment:** Famous studies show brain activity (readiness potential) begins before a person consciously decides to act, suggesting the brain decides first, making conscious will seem like an afterthought or illusion.
- **Important vs. Trivial Decisions:** Recent studies found that the "readiness potential" (the unconscious brain activity) often disappears when participants make meaningful choices, such as donating to a specific charity. This suggests that "free will" may be a real mechanism that activates only when it matters.
- **Biological Predisposition:** Our genes, brain structure, and electrochemical processes predispose us to certain behaviors, shaping our "choices".
- **Biological Determinism:** Researchers like Robert Sapolsky (see our book review section) argue that every human behavior is "sculpted" by neurological processes and environmental factors occurring beneath conscious awareness. In this view, we are "mere bystanders" in our own lives, and the feeling of choice is an illusion generated after the brain has already acted.

## Synthesis: A Complex Balance

No Simple Answer: Science hasn't definitively proven or disproven free will, but points towards it being more complex than a simple "yes" or "no".

Compatibilism: Many scientists and philosophers adopt a compatibilist view: our choices are influenced by biology and past events (our "fate"), but we still have conscious deliberation and responsibility, giving us a form of free will within these constraints. Others hold incompatibilism views that support free will or fate, but not both.

"Fate" as Biology/Circumstance: In a scientific context, "fate" often refers to genetic makeup, evolutionary pressures, and environmental factors, while "free will" is our capacity to make choices within those boundaries.



## The Religious Perspective

In religious theology, the conflict between fate (divine decree or predestination) and free will (human agency) is often reconciled by viewing them as complementary rather than mutually exclusive. While specific doctrines vary, a common thread across major faiths is that God possesses absolute foreknowledge of events, yet humans remain morally accountable for the choices they make.

## Major Religious Perspectives

- **Christianity:** Views range from Arminianism, which emphasizes the human choice to accept or reject God's grace, to Calvinism, which teaches that God has "predestined" certain souls for salvation. A common "compatibilist" view suggests that while God is sovereign over all outcomes, humans exercise genuine free will within that framework and are responsible for their moral actions.
- **Islam:** The concept of Qadar (divine decree) teaches that Allah has perfect foreknowledge of all things, recorded in a "Preserved Tablet". However, humans are given a delegated will to choose their actions, which is the basis for their judgment on the Last Day. Some traditions distinguish between Qada (fixed fate, like birth and death) and Qadar (destiny that can be influenced by prayer and good deeds).
- **Judaism:** Tradition often emphasizes the "High Holy Days" (Yom Kippur), where it is believed fate for the coming year is "sealed". Despite this, Jewish thought strongly maintains that "all is in the hands of Heaven except the fear of Heaven," meaning humans have complete freedom in their moral and spiritual choices.
- **Hinduism:** Fate is often tied to Karma, where current circumstances are seen as the result of past actions. While destiny may set the "stage" or circumstances of one's life, free will is exercised through how an individual chooses to act and respond within those circumstances.
- **Ancient Religions:** Greco-Roman and Norse mythologies often featured a more rigid "Fatalism," personified by deities like the Moirai (Fates). In these views, fate was often immutable and inescapable, sometimes binding even the gods themselves.

Concept	Religious Definition	Role of Human
<b>Fate/Predestination</b>	Divine foreknowledge or a universal plan that ensures certain outcomes.	Submitting to or accepting the divine will.
<b>Free Will</b>	The God-given ability to make rational choices and moral decisions.	Moral responsibility and accountability for one's life path.
<b>Compatibilism</b>	The belief that divine sovereignty and human freedom coexist in a way that exceeds human understanding.	Striving for righteousness while trusting in a higher plan.



## Implications for Personal Responsibility

- **Agency vs. Determinism:** Critics warn that abandoning the "illusion" of free will could be catastrophic for social order. Studies have shown that individuals who are told they lack free will are more likely to cheat, act aggressively, or feel a reduced sense of motivation and self-discipline.
- **A "Liberating" Perspective:** Conversely, some researchers argue that accepting determinism is liberating. It can lead to greater empathy and less "moralizing" of success and failure, acknowledging that a person's life path is the result of "biological and environmental luck" rather than purely personal grit.
- **The Dilemma of Meaning:** A primary concern is that without free will, personal achievements—and the praise that accompanies them—become as meaningless as the blame for failures. Believing in free will empowers individuals to pursue self-improvement and ambitious goals. A rigid belief in fate can lead to fatalism and nihilism, where individuals may feel their efforts are irrelevant, potentially leading to passivity or resignation.
- **Negotiating with Fate:** Some psychological perspectives suggest that a middle ground—"negotiating with fate"—can be ethically beneficial, allowing people to accept what they cannot change while maintaining agency over their reactions. Stoicism, for example, suggests that while external events are fated, our ethical excellence lies in our internal response—the one area where we maintain true freedom.
- **Society would need to develop new frameworks for "merit" that do not rely on the idea of an autonomous "chooser".**

## Fate and Freewill in Literature and Culture

This theme has appeared in countless stories, plays, and films. For example, in Sophocles' tragedy "Oedipus Rex," the protagonist's attempts to avoid his foretold fate ironically lead him directly to it, questioning whether fate can be escaped. In contrast, modern films like "The Matrix" explore the power of choice and the possibility of transcending perceived destiny. Different cultures interpret fate and freewill in unique ways, often blending the two concepts.

## Implications for Everyday Life

Belief in fate can provide comfort in times of adversity, suggesting that hardship has a purpose or is part of a larger plan. However, it can also lead to passivity if people feel powerless to change their circumstances. Embracing free will can inspire action and personal growth, but it can also create anxiety over the weight of responsibility. Many people find themselves navigating between these viewpoints, believing that some events are fated while others are within their control.

## The Masonic Perspective

Freemasonry draws significant influence from both Judeo-Christian theology and Stoic philosophy. The organization's core values emphasize character development and moral behavior, which often leads most Freemasons to favor the concept of free will. This perspective encourages individuals to take responsibility for their actions and strive toward ethical self-improvement.

However, those who engage more deeply with these philosophical questions may find resonance with the Stoic worldview. According to Stoicism, the universe operates according to a deterministic order governed by fate. Yet, within these fixed external circumstances, humans retain the capacity for free will—specifically in their internal responses, judgments, and the pursuit of virtuous choices. From this standpoint, true freedom is not about controlling external outcomes but about mastering one's inner world or "ruling faculty." By choosing to align one's will with reason, even when external events are unchangeable, individuals exercise genuine autonomy and ethical excellence.

## The Western Esoteric Tradition Perspective

Western Esotericism typically presents a nuanced view in which fate and free will coexist and interact, often suggesting that while external circumstances may be largely determined, the individual's inner response and spiritual potential allow for genuine agency.

This perspective generally falls into a form of compatibilism (or "soft determinism") rather than the extremes of absolute fate or pure free will.

### Core Esoteric Perspectives

The interplay between fate and free will varies across different esoteric traditions:

**Hermeticism:** This tradition is fundamentally deterministic in its description of the physical world, operating through a chain of command: divine Providence (God's will) directs Necessity, which in turn dictates Fate (influenced by celestial bodies, or astrology). However, the human being, through the cultivation of Nous (divine intellect or mind), can achieve a form of free will by aligning themselves with the Divine Mind and transcending the lower, material fate. The pursuit of knowledge and wisdom allows one to become "ruler and not ruled," thus changing one's fate and attaining immortality.

**Gnosticism:** Gnostic worldviews often view the material world as flawed or a prison, created by intermediate, lesser divine beings (the Demiurge and his archons) who impose a rigid, oppressive fate. True free will, in this context, involves a radical rebellion against this cosmic order and a quest for secret knowledge (gnosis) to escape the cycle of material existence and return to the true, highest God.

**Kabbalah:** Traditional Kabbalah (especially Lurianic) offers a different perspective, emphasizing the concept of Tikkun Haolam (repair of the world). While certain aspects of an individual's life (mazal or fortune) are set, the person has a crucial role and free will in performing moral actions and spiritual work to restore harmony to the universe. This view suggests a balance: circumstances are set, but human choice and action within those circumstances are essential.

**Tarot and Astrology:** some believe that divination is an internal process of exploring one's own mind, while others believe that divination offers an external view of the machinery of the universe. The former favors free will, while the latter is more deterministic. They often blend the fate vs. free will question, seeing cards and charts as showing potential or tendencies (fate/determinism) but the querent's choices (free will) shape the outcome, making destiny malleable, a journey of conscious response to fated themes, not rigid scripts, allowing guidance for better choices within cosmic flow.

## Synthesis

Across these traditions, a general consensus emerges:

**Fate Governs Circumstances:** External events, material conditions, birth circumstances, and even certain major life events are often considered fated or predetermined by a higher order, natural law, or past karma.

**Free Will Governs Response:** The domain of human agency (free will) is generally located in one's internal choices, moral alignment, and conscious response to fated events. An individual cannot control every event, but they can control their attitude and actions in response.

**Spiritual Ascent as True Freedom:** The ultimate expression of free will lies not in the mundane ability to choose between two mundane options (e.g., the red or blue pill in *The Matrix* example) but in the capacity to pursue spiritual knowledge and break free from the constraints of the material world and its fated cycles.

In essence, Western Esotericism teaches that while the individual operates within a determined framework, the path to true freedom is an act of conscious will and spiritual transformation.



## The Eastern Esoteric Tradition Perspective

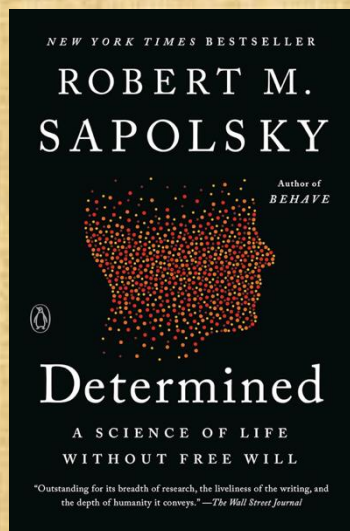
Eastern esoteric traditions generally present a nuanced view where fate (or destiny) and free will coexist and interact, often reconciled through the concept of karma. Fate provides the framework or circumstances of one's life, determined by past actions (karma), while free will determines how one responds to those circumstances in the present moment, thereby shaping future outcomes.

### Key Concepts

- **Fate as the "Hand of Cards":** Eastern thought uses the analogy of a card game: destiny determines the hand of cards you are dealt (your birth circumstances, innate talents, the general trials you face), but your free will determines how you play that hand.
- **Karma as the Mechanism:** Karma (actions and their consequences from this and past lives) creates the predetermined elements of a person's current existence. This is not a rigid, unchangeable force, but rather a set of circumstances and tendencies.
- **Free Will in Response:** The crucial arena for free will lies in the response to these fated circumstances. Individuals have the autonomy to choose between a mundane, ego-driven reaction and a more conscious, spiritually aligned action. These present choices create new karma, which in turn influences future destiny.
- **Destiny as Ultimate Purpose:** Some perspectives differentiate between "fate" (immediate, unchangeable events) and "destiny" (an ultimate, higher spiritual purpose that one can consciously choose to work towards). Free will is the key to aligning one's actions with this higher destiny, thus transcending the constraints of immediate fate.
- **The Illusion of the Ego (Advaita Vedanta):** In philosophies like Advaita Vedanta, the belief in an individual, separate "chooser" (ego) is considered an illusion. From an ultimate, non-dual perspective, everything is predetermined as part of a single, infinite awareness (Brahman). The paradox of fate and free will is seen as a limitation of the finite human intellect that cannot grasp the infinite nature of reality.
- **In essence,** while the grander cosmic plan or the results of past actions set the stage, the individual is an active participant, using their free will in the present to navigate their path and evolve spiritually.

### Conclusion

The interplay between fate and free will remains a profound and unresolved aspect of the human experience. Whether our lives are dictated by destiny, shaped by our choices, or a combination of both, the discussion challenges us to consider the nature of existence, morality, and the meaning we give to our actions.



Determined  
by  
Robert M. Sapolsky

My initial introduction to Dr. Sapolsky came through his engaging lectures offered by the Great Courses—a service I highly recommend to anyone interested in expanding their knowledge. With thought-provoking topics such as "Why Don't Zebras Get Ulcers?," Dr. Sapolsky's work is hard to resist. He carries some of that trademark humor and approachability into this book as well. When "Determined" was first published, I promptly added it to my ever-growing want-to-read list, which, as always, outpaces my available reading time. However, a dramatic, albeit brief, price drop on Apple Books finally moved it to the top of my list. In doing so, it also set the philosophical tone for this newsletter.

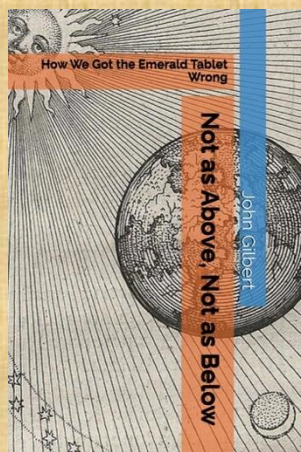
As the title suggests, Dr. Sapolsky firmly aligns himself with determinism—a perspective he claims to have held since the age of twelve. His approach is rooted not so much in philosophy as in science. Interestingly, he begins by examining popular scientific arguments often employed to support either free will or determinism, such as chaos theory, quantum mechanics, and emergent complexity. Ultimately, he concludes that none of these provide conclusive evidence for either side. Instead, he proposes that it is our own biology that delivers the decisive blow to the notion of free will.

The exploration of this argument presents a challenge, particularly for those of us not deeply versed in neurobiology—which, let's be honest, is most readers. In the past, I have set aside similar books out of frustration, but Dr. Sapolsky's engaging writing style carried me through. Thanks to his accessible explanations, I was able to grasp the main arguments and even delve a bit deeper. There may be contradictions that a more astute reader could uncover lurking between the lines, but overall, I found his ideas convincing.

The latter part of the book shifts to examine a central argument in favor of free will: its supposed necessity. The common reasoning is that civilization depends upon the concept of free will—if it does not exist, then holding people accountable for their actions becomes problematic. This is, undeniably, a pragmatically powerful stance. Another argument is rooted in the daily experience that we *feel* as though we possess free will, even while simultaneously entertaining ideas like fate and karma. In this section, I found Dr. Sapolsky's arguments less persuasive. He seems absolutely confident in the scientific foundation of his position but less at ease with the philosophical implications. Nonetheless, the discussion raises intriguing questions for further contemplation. Is the belief in free will a biological necessity? Could it be that, even if free will is not real, the belief in it is an evolutionary survival mechanism? Alternatively, is it possible for humanity to progress without the concept of free will? Perhaps the necessity of free will has been overstated or misinterpreted—maybe it is a belief that can ultimately be replaced without disastrous consequences.

For readers interested in the possibility of reconciling free will and determinism, Dr. Sapolsky explores whether the two can be compatible. He ultimately demonstrates, quite convincingly, that this is not a tenable position.

Recognizing that some readers might find the scientific aspects challenging, the book includes an appendix covering the basics of neuroscience. I also found that reading "Determined" electronically was especially convenient; in Apple Books, the numerous footnotes are easily accessible through pop-up links, allowing seamless reference without interrupting the flow of reading. For this book, I found reading the notes to be essential rather than optional. I highly recommend "Determined" to anyone interested in the science and philosophy of free will and determinism.



## **Not as Above, Not as Below: How We Got the Emerald Tablet Wrong** by John Gilbert

Frater John Gilbert was honored with the first Golden Stone Award for writing excellence at the 2024 session of the High Council for his essay, "Not as Above, Not as Below: How We Got the Emerald Tablet Wrong." At the most recent session of the Council, held in November 2025, this essay was presented as the attendee gift.

The phrase “as above, so below” is deeply ingrained in esoteric circles, often taken for granted as a guiding principle. This saying embodies the concept of correspondence—suggesting that the divine and the mundane are reflections of one another. This notion has allowed magicians and mystics alike to conceptualize spiritual advancement and establish a bridge between the spiritual and physical worlds. The widespread acceptance of this idea frequently relies on a document attributed to Hermes Trismegistus, the *Emerald Tablet*. However, the Emerald Tablet is actually an appendix to a more extensive work, the *Book of the Secrets of Creation and the Art of Nature*. Despite its significance, modern audiences often overlook this larger context, which forms the foundation for Frater Gilbert’s research.

Approximately three-quarters of Gilbert’s book is devoted to a literary analysis of the Emerald Tablet, starting with the original Arabic texts. Demonstrating proficiency in Arabic—a language challenging even for modern English speakers—Gilbert argues convincingly that the Emerald Tablet has been repeatedly mistranslated from Arabic into other languages. His analysis is both compelling and complex, challenging long-held interpretations of the text.

The central takeaway from Gilbert’s analysis revolves around the phrase commonly rendered as:

*That the above is like that below, and the below is like that above*

According to Gilbert, the accurate translation should be:

*That the above is from the below, and the below is from the above*

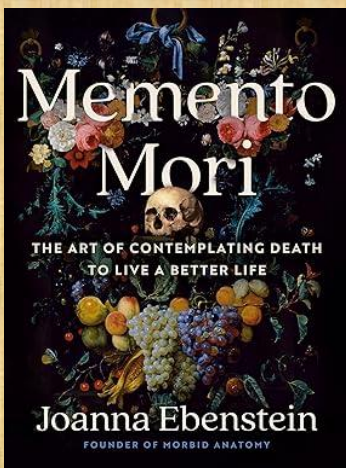
This revised translation suggests that the Emerald Tablet's core message is not about correspondence, but about the continual transmigration of souls between the divine and the mundane realms—reincarnation—rather than a simple mirroring of realities.

The initial part of Gilbert's book required unique talents and scholarly skills rarely found, marking his contribution as significant. The final quarter of the book delves into the implications of the preceding analysis, raising questions about the pitfalls of esoteric research. These pitfalls, according to the author, are sometimes avoidable and other times detrimental to genuine understanding. These are topics in which we all can and should enter the debate.

As in Freemasonry, there is a recurring desire within esoteric traditions to claim ancient ancestry as a means of establishing credibility. Gilbert notes, in passing, that the principle of correspondence holds validity on its own merits and does not require validation from ancient documents. Human knowledge, including spiritual understanding, continues to evolve; it is misguided to believe that early humanity possessed complete knowledge of the divine—just as it would be illogical to imagine that prehistoric people had access to modern technology like cellphones. While some mistranslations occur accidentally, there is also a persistent tendency in esoteric research to force facts to align with preconceived beliefs, sometimes intentionally and sometimes because of confirmation bias.

Although Gilbert's research advances our understanding of the Emerald Tablet, perhaps the most significant lesson is the encouragement to approach esoteric studies with a healthy dose of skepticism.

This book deserves to be widely accessible and read more often. However, the only available purchase option is priced at \$29.99, which may seem excessive in today's economy. Therefore, it is advisable to borrow a copy from someone who attended the last High Council.



**Memento Mori**

by  
Joanna Eberstein

The Latin phrase *memento mori* is derived from the Romans and is commonly translated as “remember you will die.” The underlying concept, however, predates the Romans, originating with the Greek Stoics. The modern use of the phrase is also often associated with symbols of death, such as the skull and crossbones. Artifacts bearing this phrase serve as reminders of mortality, encouraging reflection rather than dwelling on morbid thoughts.

Contemplating mortality can feel unsettling for many, and I am no exception. In 1900, life expectancy in America was just 30 years, making death a more visible part of daily existence. Today, while death still brings sorrow, it is easier for many to keep thoughts of it at a distance until personally confronted. For me, the reality of death became tangible with the loss of my grandfather when I was a junior in college—a significant personal milestone.

For the Stoics, reflecting on mortality was not intended as a source of gloom, but as motivation to live each day to its fullest. Although I found the subject uncomfortable in my youth, my exposure to it through Masonic ritual encouraged me to gradually adopt the Stoic viewpoint. This shift helped me approach death with a new understanding. Later, in our Rosicrucian Society’s teachings, particularly in the Second Order, I came to agree with the view that death is a transition rather than an end. Our rituals are designed to prompt further contemplation, offering instruction without dictating conclusions, and subtly suggesting that we continue to contemplate its lessons. This book serves as an excellent next step.

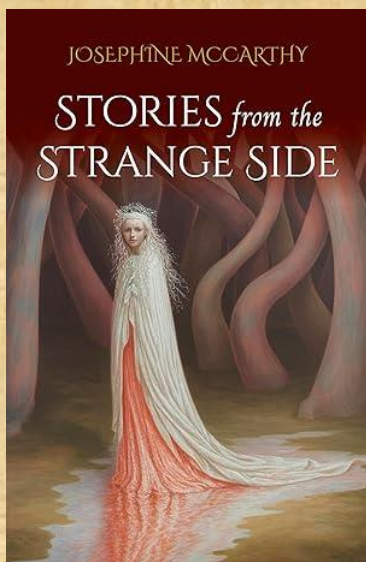
Attempting to thoroughly address a subject as consequential as death is a challenging task for any author. As a reader, I found some parts of the book insightful, while others were less engaging to the point of boredom. Nonetheless, the benefits of reading the book far outweigh any moments of disinterest.

The book is organized into twelve chapters, each concluding with journal prompts and suggested activities. The author recommends dedicating a week to each chapter, though it is not necessary to follow this schedule to gain value from the material—even a straight read-through can still be beneficial. While I was unfamiliar with some of the recommended practices, the included appendices provide helpful starting points. My eBook version allowed for easy navigation between the main text and appendices, ensuring that I did not lose my place. The final appendix offers a comprehensive list of further reading, listening, and viewing resources. Additionally, the numerous quotations from historical figures about death were particularly illuminating.

This book requires a certain readiness to engage with its themes, but for those finding it necessary to engage with the topic in their personal life or seeking to deepen their understanding of the concepts introduced in ritual, it is a valuable resource.



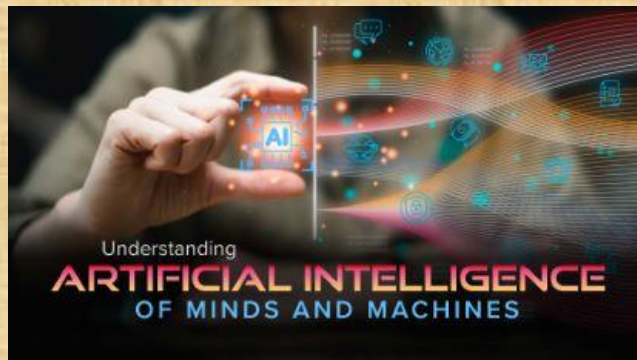
# Short Takes



Josephine McCarthy is renowned within the Western Esoteric Tradition for her innovative, intricate, and entirely unique approach to magical practice. Those interested in exploring her esoteric work further can access her complete system on her website, [Quareia.com](http://Quareia.com). Additionally, her Quareia Magicians Tarot Deck stands out as the most powerful tool of its kind I have ever encountered.

This collection, however, marks a departure from her usual non-fiction work, presenting a series of fictional stories. Comprising seven short tales, the book subtly weaves in elements from McCarthy's magical system. It reflects her openness to the supernatural as an everyday occurrence and encourages readers to embrace the unexpected and pursue wherever curiosity may lead. Themes such as vision quests in various forms and a deep respect for ancient traditions and sacred sites are prevalent throughout.

The prose is clear and straightforward, making the stories easy to engage with and enjoy. While some readers may find the tales to be entirely products of the imagination, I found them to resonate with experiences not wholly unfamiliar to me.



The terms "esoteric" and "occult" both refer to knowledge that is hidden or concealed from ordinary view. While we study subjects such as alchemy and the kabbalah, which are traditionally associated with the occult, these disciplines often serve as additional and subtle veils that obscure the broader purpose of our Society. In essence, our primary goal is to encourage fraters to become lifelong learners, embracing both secular and sacred wisdom. We strive to foster an environment where members continually seek knowledge and understanding, not only within mystical subjects but also throughout all areas of life.

In today's world, artificial intelligence is a prominent topic in scientific circles and a source of concern for many. Yet, for most of us, our understanding of AI is limited and vague. Personally, I am eager to become more informed about this subject, and to that end, I have begun a six-hour course offered by The Great Courses ([thegreatcourses.com](http://thegreatcourses.com)). The course can be purchased for \$23.99—often with discounts—or you may choose to subscribe for \$30 per quarter, granting access to a library of over 1,000 courses. This presents an excellent opportunity to expand one's knowledge and engage with the topic of artificial intelligence more thoughtfully.

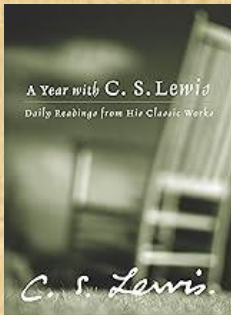


Several years ago, Frater Jeff Williamson introduced me to *The Art of Manliness*. Since then, I have continued to explore the website, listen to its podcasts, and subscribe to the newsletter. The platform's premise is broad and aims to connect various aspects of men's lifestyles and interests.

Because *The Art of Manliness* addresses the entire scope of a man's life, there are naturally some articles that are no longer relevant to me. For example, I no longer participate in weight training, and I have already mastered the art of tying a tie. Nonetheless, I am consistently drawn to the philosophical and literary sections of the site, which I find particularly intriguing. Recently, I received an article about "How to do a Fire Meditation." Among the different forms of meditation, fire meditation stands out as one of the most natural. Many people, myself included, have found themselves lost in contemplation while gazing into a candle flame or a campfire.

It is also worth noting that Brett McKay, the originator of *The Art of Manliness*, is a Mason. Link to the meditation below:

(<https://artofmanliness.us10.list-manage.com/track/click?u=de21c7d1d490ef67077051042&id=74e40d8490&e=c336c390a9>)



I recommended this book of daily contemplations from CS Lewis in a past newsletter. I'm about 4 months into it (started in October). I thought I would end this newsletter with a lesson from February 22<sup>nd</sup>. Lewis was very much a believer in free will.

"Of course God knew what would happen if they [creatures with free will] used their freedom the wrong way: apparently He thought it worth the risk. Perhaps we feel inclined to disagree with Him. But there is a difficulty about disagreeing with God. He is the source from which all your reasoning power comes: you could not be right and He wrong any more than a stream can rise higher than its own source. When you are arguing against Him you are arguing against the very power that makes you able to argue at all: it is like cutting off the branch you are sitting on. If God thinks this state of war in the universe a price worth paying for free will—that is, for making a live world in which creatures can do real good or harm and something of real importance can happen, instead of a toy world which only moves when He pulls the strings—then we may take it it is worth paying."

—from Mere Christianity

Excerpt From

Year with C. S. Lewis, A

C. S. Lewis

<https://books.apple.com/us/book/year-with-c-s-lewis-a/id363689400>

**Philologi Societas**  
**(in order of initial induction)**

VW Frater Joseph F. Oelgoetz, VII° et Philologus Theoricus\*\*  
VW Frater Philip G. Beith, VII° et Philologus Theoricus \*  
RW Frater Gerald T. Coleman, VIII° et Philologus Theoricus  
RW Frater W. Bruce Renner, IX°, KGC, PJDSM et Philologus Adeptus Exemptus  
VW Frater Marlon Gayadeen, VII° et Philologus Zelator  
VW Frater John Comstock, VII° et Philologus Zelator \*  
VW Frater Charles Hancock, VII° et Philologus Theoricus \*  
RW Frater Robert S. Finley, IX°, KGC et Philologus Adeptus Exemptus \*  
RW Frater Richard J. Powell, IX° et Philologus Theoricus  
RW Frater Paul Barrera VIII° et Philologus Zelator  
VW Frater Clyde Card, VII° et Philologus Philosophus\*  
RW Frater R. Curtiss Montgomery, IX° et Philologus Zelator  
VW Frater James N. Stoll, VII° et Philologus Zelator  
VW Frater Richard Simpson, VII° et Philologus Zelator\*  
MW Frater William Howard Koon II, IX, KGC et Philologus Magus (Honorary)  
RW Frater Walter E. Cook, VIII° et Philologus Adeptus Exemptus  
VW Frater Caleb Haines, VII° et Philologus Philosophus  
VW Frater William M. Hodwitz, VII° et Philologus Zelator  
RW Frater Myron J. Deputat, IX° et Adeptus Exemptus  
VW Frater Frank Rice, VII° et Philologus Zelator  
VW Frater Clint Lewey, VII° et Philologus Zelator  
VW Steven J. Joyce VII° et Philologus Zelator  
VW Frater Josh Newman, VII° et Philologus Zelator  
VW Richard Christian, VII° et Philologus Theoricus

In waiting:

VW Richard Christian, VII° et Philologus Practicus

\* Deceased

\*\* Not now a member

**Have a need to communicate?**

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**MARK YOUR CALENDARS!**

Spring Convocation  
May 2, 2026