



The Temple of High Witchcraft: Ceremonies, Spheres and The Witches' Qabalah (Penczak Temple Series)

By Christopher Penczak

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Take your spiritual evolution to the next level by mastering the essentials of ceremonial magick. In this much-anticipated fourth volume in Christopher Penczak's award-winning series on witchcraft, he introduces the concepts of the Qabalah and the rituals of high magick, and explores the deeply interwoven relationship between these traditions and the Craft.

The teachings in this book correspond to the element of Air, guiding you into the realm of creative and critical thinking, communication, knowledge, and truth. Four preliminary chapters introduce the basic concepts, history, and skills you will need for your journey. Next, twelve formal lessons, in the witches' traditional year-and-a-day format, provide instruction in the fundamentals of ceremonial magic:

- The Qabalah
- The Tree of Life
- Symbol and sigil magick
- Elemental constructs
- Qabalistic Cross
- The four worlds and their correspondences
- Middle Pillar
- Pathworking
- The Ritual of the Rosy Cross
- Invoking and banishing rituals
- Fluid condensers
- Barbarous words of power, magickal constructs, and the Goetia

The book's thirteenth lesson culminates in a ritual initiation fusing the traditions

of witchcraft and high magick?the creation of your own Reality Map. The cosmology you create will be based on your own spiritual experiences as well as the philosophies and practices of ceremonial magick.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Like his other thorough guides for all things witchcraft, Penczak (*The Mystic Foundation*) offers fans another comprehensive, user-friendly handbook for the aspiring witch, this time for advanced practitioners—what he calls continuing education for followers of his Temple of Witchcraft series. According to Penczak, high witchcraft is quite different from the household magick of the everyday witch. It is known as god magick, involving the use of ritual to align with the divine and seeking divine enlightenment while incarnated in a body. Penczak helpfully likens learning the ceremonies and rituals of high witchcraft to a regular routine of exercise, yet instead of the body, you are build[ing] your psychic and magical 'muscles.' And readers should get ready for a hefty workout. Following several introductory chapters, Penczak provides a highly technical course of 13 lessons designed to provide all the necessary tools and intellectual, academic and ceremonial background information readers need to deepen their connection to the divine and self-initiate into high witchcraft. Audiences looking for witchcraft history will certainly find it here, but this is foremost an engaging textbook designed for home-schooling the advancing witch, and it is encyclopedic in its rituals, charts and even homework assignments. (Oct.)

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About the Author

Christopher Penczak is an award-winning author, teacher, and healing practitioner. He has studied extensively with witches, mystics, shamans, and healers in a variety of traditions from around the world to synthesize his own practice of magick and healing.

Formerly based in the music industry, Christopher was empowered by his spiritual experiences to live a magickal life, and began a full-time practice of teaching, writing, and seeing clients. He is the author of the award-winning Temple of Witchcraft series: *The Inner Temple of Witchcraft*, *The Outer Temple of Witchcraft*, *The Temple of Shamanic Witchcraft*, and *The Living Temple of Witchcraft Volumes 1 and 2*.

His other books include *City Magick* (Red Wheel/Weiser), *Spirit Allies* (Red Wheel/Weiser), *Gay Witchcraft* (Red Wheel/Weiser), *Magick of Reiki*, *Sons of the Goddess*, *Ascension Magick*, *Instant Magick*, *The Mystic Foundation*, *The Witch's Shield*, *The Witch's Coin*, and the forthcoming *The Witch's Heart*. Christopher Penczak resides in New Hampshire. Visit him online at <http://www.christopherpenczak.com>.

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Chapter 1

The Magician and the Witch

When we look at images of the magician and the witch, we see that they are not so different. One of the first images of the magician that I remember from childhood was the wise old wizard. Wizards and witches have always gone together in the minds of our popular imagination. And there is a reason for this link beyond the alliteration of the letter *w*. The magician and witch have much in common.

Both magicians and witches have graying or white long hair, signifying a long life, during which knowledge and wisdom has been accumulated. Coming from a time and place where many die young due to illness, poverty, or war, survival into elderhood denotes a powerful person with a powerful will to live. They often wear a pointed hat that could be seen as a symbol of their place in society or their wisdom. Conical hats have been linked symbolically to the Cone of Power that magickal practitioners raise in a ritual circle and release out into the world to manifest their wishes. Both wear robes of a sort-cloaks, hoods, or capes reminiscent of religious garb, hinting at a religious status of some sort that was lost with the rise of Christianity. Both have a fondness for animals and plants and often will keep a special or unusual animal or grow unusual herbs. Both live on the edge of society. We see the hedge witch in her hut or cottage at the edge of the village, near the forest and the source of her wild herbs and medicines. We see images of the medieval wizard, real or fictitious, living in an isolated tower and surrounded by his books and laboratory. Both are sought after for advice. People visit the village cunning woman for cures, divination, and spells. In the old myths, magicians are the guides and tutors to the heroes and royal courts, pointing them in the right direction but letting them do the work.

Some practitioners think the roots of the words *wizard* and *witch* come from the same source, meaning "wise," though modern scholars would disagree. Even if the etymology doesn't support this theory, the image of each denotes the wise old one, with the witch more often depicted as female and the wizard as male. In the modern era, we know that a woman can be a magician and a man can be a witch, but archetypally they denote two similar but different paths. The hedge witch, with the intuitive feminine mysteries, keeps one path, while the magician, as the forerunner of the scientist, seeks to solve the mysteries of the universe through the study of texts and experimentation.

The division between the two might not be as clear in reality as it is in our mythical images. The magician is very much in tune with the forces of nature, the elements, and intuition. It would be impossible for him to have any mastery of magick without understanding the feminine mysteries. In turn, the witch must study and have knowledge to support intuition and instinct. Ritual books, symbolic charms, secret languages, and incantations are as much a part of the art of the witch as freeform, spontaneous workings. Both of these magickal paths balance and harmonize what we think of as masculine and feminine mysteries. One may be emphasized over the other, but both are paths of balance and recognize the need for both sets of skills.

When I began my study of witchcraft, I looked at a lot of disciplines and drew upon many different traditions, even sources that would not be considered traditional witchcraft. I drew upon the theories and terminology of Hermetic magick. The Hermetic principles (*ITOW*, Chapter 8) influenced me profoundly. They gave me a basis, as a rational, thinking person, to understand how magick could work. My first teachers approached witchcraft as a science, and the Hermetic philosophies were the means of conveying the ideas of the ancient world's scientists-philosophers-sorcerers. As a witch, I saw these ancient researchers into the mysteries as my ancestors. We all practice magick.

The word *magic* comes from the Middle English *magik*, and some prefer that spelling, or the spelling of *magick*, made most popular by Aleister Crowley's work, to differentiate stage show illusionists from spiritual practitioners. We can trace the word to the Old French *magique*, the Late Latin *magica*, and the Latin word *magice*. The Latin use of the word comes from the Greek term *magikos*, meaning "magical," and *magos*, meaning "magician." The history of the word goes back to the Old Persian term *magus*, usually translated as "magician" or "sorcerer" and possibly meaning "to have power." The term *magi*, the plural of *magus*, is identified most popularly with the three wise men from the East, who reportedly visited Jesus of Nazareth at his nativity. Many overlook the fact that these men were Eastern sorcerers or magicians who had far more in common with pagan priests and priestesses than modern-day Christians.

The term *sorcery* comes from the Old French *sorcerie* and from the Vulgar Latin term *sortianus*, meaning

"one who influences fate and fortune." In modern times, the word sorcerer can mean vastly different things, depending on where you are in the world. Some people use the word sorcerer to refer to shamans and holy practitioners of the spiritual arts of healing. Others use the term for those who practice harmful magick. Interestingly enough, it is believed that the feminine sorceress has an older history than the male sorcerer. Throughout history, the terms *witch*, *sorcerer/sorceress*, *wizard*, and *magician* have been used somewhat interchangeably. By looking at all the languages and cultures that had terms for spiritual magick, and the practitioners of this art, we can see that the concept of magick, or working one's will through ritual and charm, was a part of the cultural landscape of many lands and time periods.

My teachers believed in a common spiritual ancestry for both the magus and the witch. This encouraged me to incorporate the ideas of the pagan magicians of the Middle East-of ancient Sumer and Babylon, Persia and Egypt-into the lore of the Europeans. I was taught that the two roles were not as different as they were seen before, and in many ages past, there was not much difference between them in the popular culture of the time. Our modern division between the witch and the mage is just that-a modern division. Differences between traditions grew over the last few thousand years. Some traditions remained wild and primal, and others became more intellectual, but magick was not divided neatly into two camps. The lines between witch, shaman, and magician were not clear-cut in the ancient world. During the Burning Times, the Inquisitors didn't see much of a difference between them. All were considered heretics and devil worshipers, even if the magician was working in a Judeo-Christian context. Those on a more intellectual path were able to hide in the upper echelons of society, while those on the primal paths attempted to blend in with the peasantry. Both continued their traditions in secret. Once the magickal practitioner was no longer a vital and open part of the community, the differences between the two became even more pronounced, but they still came from a similar root, and that common root is the force that continues to bring them together.

Through this holistic viewpoint, I was able to integrate the image of the magician into my identity as a witch. I described myself as a shamanic Hermetic witch, giving references to both the tribal ecstatic mysteries that became a part of my Craft as well as the intellectual and theoretical material of the Hermetics that influenced my way of viewing the work. I've found both to be invaluable to my own spirituality. I don't feel a schism between the study of ceremonial magick and the folk ways of the witch. I don't see a distinct line separating the two. When you compare the images of the magician and the witch, you find that they have far more common ground than most people would think.

The Powers of the Magus

One of the most popular images we have of the magician comes from the tarot deck. The classic image of the magician in the Rider-Waite deck gives us a lot of information about the magician and the magician's powers and teachings. It is also in this imagery that we find a lot of elements common to the witch.

The image on the Magician card, unlike the popular image of the wizard, is usually one of a fairly young man, a man in his prime, not elderhood (figure 1). Before him lies an altar, and on that altar are the four elemental tools of the four suits of the tarot deck. He has a wooden wand, metal blade, chalice, and pentacle, which usually stand for the elemental powers of fire, air, water, and earth, respectively. Here are the elemental "weapons" of ceremonial magick. They are also the ritual tools of the witch.

Skeptics would say that the modern witch's use of these tools is the result of the modern witchcraft founders borrowing from modern ceremonial magicians. I believe the tools to be more universal, showing up in many different forms and cultures associated with both witches and magicians. The witch's magick wand is a popular image from fairy tales, as is the witch's broom, an older version of the wand. The knife can be seen in old images of the witches' goddess Hecate. The cauldron is a popular witchcraft image from many cultures, transformed from the Celtic cauldron of immortality or inspiration into the image of the Holy Grail,

the sacred chalice. The pentagram was drawn on the shields of the Celtic warriors devoted to the dark war goddess the Morrighan. The five-pointed star, the endless knot, is a classic symbol of witches and mages. We find similar groupings of ceremonial tools in the mysteries of the Cult of Mithras. They are not just tools, but four universal powers. Each tool not only represents one of these powers, because its form shares similar characteristics with the element's energy, but it also mediates that particular energy in ritual. Both the magician and witch perform ritual, thereby moving energy, with these instruments.

The magician often carries a fifth tool, a secondary wand that helps mediate the powers of the heavens and the Earth. With his right arm raised to the heavens and his left pointed to the land beneath him, the magician's body emphasizes the Hermetic wisdom "as above, so below." To create in one realm, you must create in both. To master one, you must master both. Some say he takes the heavenly power and makes it manifest his will in the world. Others say he takes his earthly life and raises it to the heavens. One of the lessons of the Magician card, when pulled in a divinatory reading, is of power and its appropriate use. Is the application of our power balanced in both worlds? If not, it will unbalance us. The four elements help us balance the powers of above and below.

The flowers decorating the card also emphasize the dual power. The red roses represent passion and vitality. Red is a color of life, of blood, and is associated with the physical and the sexual. Red is the color of will and power in the material world. In the Western tradition, the image of the rose, at its core a five-petaled flower, is a symbol of the energy centers and the unfolding of spirituality, much as the lotus is used in Egyptian and Asian traditions. Five is the number of the material world and the union of the elements. The white lilies, usually six-petaled flowers, are symbolic of the upper worlds, the macrocosm and the seven magickal planets-six bodies surrounding the Sun. The red outer robe and the white inner robe continue this theme of dual powers. The belt is fashioned as a snake devouring its own tail, an *ouroboros*-an ancient symbol of creation and rebirth, the magick circle between the worlds. The snake is a symbol of knowledge, awareness, and sexuality, strongly associated with witchcraft and the Goddess. Above the magician's head is the infinity loop, similar to the ouroboros but crossed over, showing the cycles between worlds and the infinite potential of magick. The center of the infinity loop is the point of balance between both worlds where anything is possible.

All of these symbols show a similarity between the two archetypal images of mage and witch, drawing them together closer. When we look at the role of the magician, we continue to find similarities to that of the witch.

The Evolution of the Magi

Where did the image of the magician originate? Our first image of the magi, and the word itself, comes from the desert lands of the Middle East. The magi were said to be a caste or order of the ancient Persian society that organized society after the fall of Babylon and Assyria. After political setbacks in the Persian Empire, the magi were said to have spread from Persia to the Mediterranean, carrying the image of the sorcerer with them. The Persian magi most likely were involved in the Cult of Mithras, a mystery tradition influenced by Zoroastrianism that grew to power in the Roman Empire. First mentions of the magi refer to the Persians, but eventually the term evolved into a wider image of strange miracle workers, healers, and ritualists.

From where did this caste of magickal practitioners inherit their wisdom? The priests of the first civilizations, those of Sumer, Assyria, and Babylon, were well known for their star lore and knowledge of spirits. The Chaldeans were a part of Babylon and were known as sorcerers. The classical Roman writers used the term *Chaldeans* for the mathematicians and astrologers of Babylon, showing that they were versed in the sciences. Chaldean also has become a term to describe the mythology of Sumer, Babylon, and Assyria. The Babylonians drew their knowledge from the Sumerians. Many credit the Sumerians with the creation of

the first real civilization on Earth. Though civilization can be defined in various ways, the early Sumerians did possess a technical knowledge and sophistication that marked a shift in human culture. In the practices of Sumer, we can find a foundation that profoundly affected all that came after it. Through the surviving accounts of Chaldean practice and mythology, we know of orders of priests and priestesses, versed in ritual and medicine, summoning spirits and making offerings to the gods. We also find a powerful tale involving the descent of the goddess Inanna to the Underworld, and this tale continues to influence modern witches in their initiation rites.

When we look at the inhabitants of many of the ancient cultures—from the Sumerians and Babylonians, to the Egyptian priests and scribes, to the Persian sorcerers and the keepers of the temples in Greece and Rome—we see a similar archetype. Parallel figures to the old priests of Sumer developed in all of these civilizations, along with similar rituals and myths of the descending deity. The Greeks and later Romans became the recipients of the wisdom traditions of not only ancient Iraq and Iran but also of the Egyptian mystery schools, whose ancient knowledge influenced the Greek philosophers who are renowned to this day for their wisdom and insight.

In the ancient temple clergy, we find the inheritors of the Stone Age shamanic traditions. As human culture developed from a hunter-gatherer society to a settled agrarian and urban society, the mystic traditions moved from a more shamanic tribal practice to temple practices, to suit the changing culture. Those who would have been the shamanic healers, the spirit workers and cunning ones, were trained in the temple as the priestesses and priests. Oral tradition was written down. Rituals became more codified. The mysteries of direct experience became religion and theology. The art and spirituality of the shaman was fused with more scientific pursuits, astrological patterns, and medical knowledge. The temple priestesses and priests acted as the wisdom keepers, guiding the religion of the society, creating a caste of those religiously and magickally inclined and allowing others in the society to focus on other pursuits.

These first magicians were both scholars and ministers. They acted as mediators for sacred energies through rituals, holidays, and rites of passage. These priestesses and priests acted as the storytellers and the record keepers, being some of the most literate members of society. The concepts of written language and magick were quite similar in the ancient world. Records were kept of medical knowledge, including anatomy, medicine, and even primitive forms of surgery. As these esoteric arts developed, they eventually lost more mystical leanings and became the foundations of our modern sciences. Astrology gave way to astronomy. Alchemy gave way to chemistry. Herbal medicine gave way to modern medicine.

The priestly caste often acted as advisers for royalty, from the pharaohs of Egypt, to the oracles of Greece counseling rulers, to the eventual image of the court magician advising kings and queens. Because of their unique perspective, standing between the worlds of matter and spirit, they offered unique advice to those in power. Their secret wisdom guided many cultures until magickal knowledge was no longer valued.

As history progressed, societally sanctioned magician-priests gave way to the priests of the Christian Church. The role of the magician became more internalized, with solitary mystics and small lodges of mystics seeking spiritual enlightenment. The temple priestesses and priests became the laboratory alchemists and medieval magicians. Many members of the upper class and royalty still valued the knowledge of the mage. Looking at the old grimoires, there is evidence to suggest that some magicians even pursued their magick under the cloak of the Church, as the Church has collected many occult manuscripts and the priests and brothers were more likely to be the literate members of society. The image of the magician as male grew, divorcing itself from the pagan priestesses, as at this time men were more likely to be literate, to be scholars with access to magickal texts.

When I look at the collective history of the magi and the witch, I don't see much of a difference. The

common shamanic root links the two together. When I think of my spiritual ancestors as witches, I see their transformation from Stone Age healers to temple priestesses and even medieval scholars. In the ancient Greek world, there wasn't much of a distinction made between the magician and witch figures, as both were seen as practitioners of the night magick. As society settled in to an agricultural model, some of our mystics embraced temple life as ministers, while others remained on the outskirts as the folk magicians, without the temple scholar leanings. When I think of the priestesses and priests of Isis and Osiris, of Inanna, of Dionysus and Apollo, of Demeter and Persephone, spiritually, I see witches. But they are also magicians. When I look at those practicing traditions at the crossroads, with no temple but the bare earth, again I see the same figures, witches and magicians alike.

The Magician and the Priestess

In the tarot, the Priestess card is most likely to be associated with the witch (figure 2). It follows the Magician card and is number II in the major arcana. She is the priestess of the Moon and keeper of the mysteries. In a reading, this card can symbolize the need to listen to your intuition, perhaps over your reason and logic. It also signifies hidden things coming to light. The priestess holds the crescent Moon beneath her feet, symbolizing a mastery over emotions, over part of the celestial realm. Other than her Moon crown, she holds no real ritual tools. She has the equal-armed cross at her heart, the symbol of the Earth and a balance of the four elements within her. She does hold a scroll of knowledge and wisdom in her sleeve. She takes the writing of the magician and guards it. She is a guardian of the mysteries. Her throne sits between the two pillars of light and dark, mercy and severity. Beyond them is the gateway to the mysteries, where one can see the garden of pomegranates, the sacred fruit of Persephone, which kept this goddess in the Underworld. Rather than mediate the powers of above and below, as does the magician, she guards the gateway between the inner and outer worlds. The magician and priestess have similar themes and similar concepts, but different expressions. The magician appears more outwardly motivated, while the priestess is more inwardly motivated. They both move energy from one realm to another.

Many esotericists see the major arcana series as the development of the spiritual initiate, starting at birth, or awakening, as the Fool. We develop from this naiveté into the magician, learning our power-the power of our thoughts and words to manifest our will. Then we approach the priestess, and as we enter the mysteries, we become the mystery. The magician becomes the priestess. Because of this progression, and using the definition of a magician as anybody who does magick, many witches say that all witches are magicians, but not all magicians are witches. Though I understand the sentiment, this is not necessarily true. Many people practice the religion of witchcraft but never really understand or do magick effectively. Many magicians enter the mysteries but never claim the word witch or priest/tess as a part of their identity. And many people do magick but do not recognize its spiritual significance and perform it only for simple gain.

Another way of looking at the magician and the witch is through the lens of their inherent magickal nature. Some traditions believe that one is born into witchcraft, either by genetic lineage, by blood, or by past-life incarnation. Witches are related to the faery folk, or the angels or gods themselves. They are not quite human. Their ability to do magick is inherent, and training and rituals of initiation simply awaken the soul, or awaken the blood, to their magickal nature. Not only do witches walk the crossroads, their traditional meeting place, but in a spiritual sense they are the crossroads, a vortex of change and transformation between the worlds, which explains why many ordinary people not versed in the esoteric arts are uncomfortable around witches, even when they don't know the person is a witch.

Magicians, on the other hand, are fully human beings who, through knowledge, training, and dedication, unlock the mysteries of magick and thereby become something more than human. Through their own will and hard work, they awaken to the true nature of reality, to magick and divinity. Because of the witch's kinship with faeries, angels, and other spirits, witches are more likely to petition and request in ritual, with a

view toward creating partnerships in the unseen realm. The unseen beings are their kith and kin, and doing magick is like calling on family. Some traditions of magicians identify solely with the Creator through ritual, and act as the Creator god manifest, taking the Judeo-Christian concept that humans are made in God's image and are sovereign over nature and the world, commanding and compelling the spirits and angels to do their bidding.

Though I understand the concepts behind these views, I'm not sure I agree with them. Though I had magickal experiences as a child, it still took a lot of hard work and training for me to become a qualified witch. I know many people who identify as magicians, who have an inherent magickal nature. They are not necessarily drawn to witchcraft. I know traditions of witchcraft that compel the spirits by sword or athame point, and mages who are very loving and reverent in their attitudes toward the spirits.

In the end, we all have a pagan ancestry of some sort, so we all have pagan blood and can awaken to the old magick.

I find it more helpful to see the common points between the magus and witch through our tarot imagery. Both are necessary parts of the human spiritual initiation. Ultimately, the tarot archetypes show us that both the image of the magician and that of the witch are linked together and a part of our overall spiritual evolution. The words, titles, and traditions we are drawn to in this life are our choice, and a part of that growth.

When we look at the images of the magician and the priestess through the lens of our collective history, we see similarities and differences. Both have been advisers and healers. Witches have focused more on the lower classes and the magicians on the higher classes, though the community role has fallen more heavily on the witch, being more accessible to more people as a healer and adviser and as the local wise one and herbalist, even in Christian times. Both have been known to do group work and solitary work. Both underwent a transformation from a practitioner honored in society to one who is feared, practicing in secret. Magicians appear outwardly to be less religiously inclined than witches. A key teaching of modern witchcraft is the celebration of the solar and agricultural holidays, as well as the Moons of the lunar year. The magician is practicing a spiritual tradition for self-mastery and enlightenment, to identify with the divine, yet the religious worship of the gods is not always emphasized. The witch appears to be oriented more toward practical and personal aims than a transcendent enlightenment, but the union with nature and the divine that comes with the practice of witchcraft leads to the similar state of enlightenment. The witch's practical aims are often community-oriented, giving them a semblance of altruism. Both the witch and the magician appear to be taking different paths, but they really are taking different approaches to the same place.

Theurgy and Thaumaturgy

One of the often-cited distinguishing characteristics that separate magicians and witches is said to be the type of magick they employ. Magicians are said to practice high magick, or *theurgy*, while witches practice low magick, or operative magick, also known as *thaumaturgy*.

High magick is the use of ritual to align with the divine. The high magick of ceremonial magicians is marked by complex rituals, precise instruments and tools, the inclusion of foreign languages, arcane substances, and either a piety to the divine or an identification of the self with the divine. Theurgy can be thought of as "god magick" and the pursuit of divinity. In its oldest, most primal forms, theurgy has been about asking, persuading, or bribing the gods to do or not do something for you. In a more modern context, it is about aligning your will with the divine will, in essence, seeking divine enlightenment while incarnated in a body. High magick is said to have a religious tone and to be a spiritual art. When looked at from a polarized view,

high magick is considered white magick. While in our popular culture white magick is seen as "good" magick, magicians see white magick as the quest for divinity, to find enlightenment. Magick that causes change in another, or on the physical plane, even done with best of intentions, is considered gray magick.

Low magick is practical magick. It is working energy through simple ritual to create the conditions you want. Rituals can be intuitive and simple, using ordinary household tools and material found in nature. Herbcraft and stone magick are considered thaumaturgy as well as basic sympathetic magick. This is the magick of the local witch, the cunning one and wort curer or herbalist. Though there are basic concepts underlying this form of magick, as well as simple theories and ideas that guide it, there is no strict formula or "wrong" way of doing it. As long as your spell worked, and you manifested what you wanted, then you did it "right." If it didn't work, then some aspect of the spell was not in harmony with the basic theories, or your will was not strong enough to set the forces in motion. There is less of an emphasis on divinity, and more of an emphasis on simply shaping the natural forces and energies around us. Low magick, without the divine emphasis and the focus on producing results, is considered a form of gray magick when done with good or neutral intent, while it is potentially black magick when done with malice or to create harm.

The terms high and low magick are loaded, implying that one is better than the other. At a casual glance, they seem to indicate that high magicians are seeking something far more profound than lowly folk magicians, who simply want what they want for personal gain, having no higher cause. These styles of magick developed for many reasons, and the line dividing them is not as clear-cut as some people might like to make it. When you look up the definitions of both theurgy and thaumaturgy, both are associated with "miracles." Magicians were not always associated with theurgy. In the ancient Greek world, the witches and magicians often were equally scorned by the scholarly classes for practicing superstitions and taking advantage of people. Only later did the scholar's philosophy and ritual become linked with our concepts of theurgy.

A popular modern theory explains that these names were used because the peasants lived in the low land while the wealthier class lived on the higher ground. Others think of it strictly as a class issue and not a geographical one. Those in the lower lands were the lower classes and were more prone to illness and the passing of disease and vermin. They lived hard lives, with little time for leisure or higher education, and were intimately linked to the agricultural cycles. Their magick had to be practical-to cure the ill, keep the family together, and make the harvest grow. They didn't have the money for special temples, lodge buildings, or meeting houses. They practiced outdoors or in their homes. During the persecutions, they didn't have the space to secretly devote part of their dwelling to a magickal practice and go unnoticed, so their tools had to be hidden among common items. Rituals had to be completed quickly and quietly, without attracting a lot of attention. Their magickal practices were colored by the life they led.

Likewise, those of the higher lands were of the higher class, so they had greater access to education, time to ponder religious theology and learn foreign languages, and money to craft specialized tools. Compared to the lower classes, many of their basic needs were already taken care of. These magicians could devote their energy to personal evolution and the exploration of other cultures and states of reality. They were not as intimately linked to the forces of the land. They had more time to train with a tutor and learn the mysteries in a more formalized setting.

This image of low and high magick flips our previous associations of religion and magick with our witch and magician archetypes. It paints the magician as the religious scholar and the witch as simply being out for personal gain, yet we know a key component of witchcraft is the veneration of nature, along with the spirits and deities of nature. The religious aspect of the seasonal rites is a key component to bringing in the harvest and maintaining the balance. But now we have a more spiritual connotation to the scholarly magician image, though his religious impetus is based not necessarily in community but rather in the desire for personal

enlightenment.

In truth, both the witch and magician practice theurgy and thaumaturgy. A good magician who is facing financial problems knows how to cast a spell for money. A good witch has her divine connection in her heart and mind when doing healing. Though we neatly put two different labels on these two forms of magick, they are intertwined, much like our magician and witch. I would argue that all the magick I do is a form of theurgy, even simple spells for money, curing a headache, or getting a parking space at the door. I see magick as a union of my will with divine will. As a priest of witchcraft, I always have divinity in mind when I do anything, but particularly when casting a spell. Magick is magick, regardless of the label you put on it. There will always be an aspect of personal will involved, because you have to personally decide to do the ritual. The power is in your hands, and is your responsibility. But there is always a divine connection, whether you realize it or not. Hopefully, most practitioners consciously recognize their divine connection to everything.

I would argue that the traditions taught in the Temple of Witchcraft series are all forms of theurgy, or divine magick. When you learn to enter a meditative state (*ITOW*, Chapter 6), you continually program yourself to work for the "highest good, harming none." With those words, you are requesting alignment with your higher, divine self and True Will. When you perform magick, you are encouraged to do your spells in a magick circle. Through the ritual of the circle, and in particular the act of the Great Rite, you are identifying with the Goddess and God through this ritual sacrament. When you then perform your seemingly low magick spell, you are aligned with the most profound divine forces. When you do any form of personal magick, expressing your will in the world, with this attitude of divinity, your conscious personal self gets to figure out which of your wishes are parts of your True Will (*OTOW*, Chapter 3) and which need to be transformed, cleared, or released. The theurgic aspects of magick are built right in to your practice.

Just as the polarized definitions of black and white magick do not fit a modern practice, neither does a clear-cut division of theurgy and thaumaturgy. I dislike the terms high and low magick, just as I reject the labels black and white magick. In a simplistic, naive approach, such divisions makes perfect sense, but as you delve more deeply into the practice of magick, such definitions are no longer relevant. We work with a whole spectrum of magick, black to white and all colors in between, as well as high and low with all points in between, depending on the goal of the working. Magick is powerful, and we must take responsibility for how we use it. Magick is both personal and transcendent, and can be used for practical results and transcendental awareness.

The Magick of Initiation

A better way of looking at this division between magick is looking at the differences between operant, or practical, magick and initiatory magick. Operant magick is what most people think of as spellcraft. It is doing magick with some form of tangible, real-world result. You work for something specific in the spell, and you get whatever you asked for. Sometimes you get what you asked for, but not exactly what you want, so the exploration of magick improves your communication skills with the powers of the universe. It helps you align your words with your will.

Initiatory magick has no clear-cut, tangible goal in mind, but focuses on the transformation of consciousness and the refinement of the soul. I've heard the two types of magick defined like this: operant magick is done to get you want you think you want, while initiatory magick is done to find out what you truly want. The rituals of initiatory magick reveal more of your true self, your divine self, and help you discover your True Will.

The rituals of high magick are really the rituals of initiation. We often think of initiation rituals as one person

performing a ritual on another, inducting the second person into a magickal community or raising him or her a level or rank in that community. The priests and priestesses of the old religions, as well as our modern ministers, conduct rites of passage to integrate a person into the main community. Rites of magickal initiation often separate a person from the mainstream community, and integrate him or her into a special group, a brotherhood/sisterhood of fellow initiates.

Rituals from teacher to student, bringing one into the ranks of a mystical fraternity, are not the only rituals of initiation. Any experience that separates you from the seemingly mundane life to gain a greater perspective, to elevate and transform your consciousness, is a form of initiation. Life experiences can be very initiatory. Traumas and trials presented by life circumstances can bring the same benefits, if not even greater ones, as traditional initiation, though you might lack the guidance of a teacher, as you would have in a formal training group. The classic rituals of modern ceremonial magick are also initiatory in many ways. They are rituals that are designed to expand consciousness and prepare the magician for a greater sense of divinity and enlightenment. They often are done as regular exercises, like certain forms of meditation and yoga designed to prepare the practitioner for deeper states of consciousness. They often have no clear-cut, real-world, tangible goal, yet their accumulated benefit can be more profound than any simple spell to change your immediate material reality.

Conservative traditionalists will claim that initiatory magick cannot be done alone, that one cannot have a personal union with the divine forces that results in a change and transformation. They believe it can be done only by lineage holders. It is quite beneficial to have the energetic "current" of a lineage running through your magick, and even more so to have a mentor and teacher to guide you on the path, but the divine powers can reach out and claim any of us whom they seek to guide and transform directly, without an earthly mediator for their energy. Often a magician can intend and initiate this contact. One of the most famous magickal operations known to modern magicians is the Abramelin Operation. Its aim is Knowledge and Conversation with your Holy Guardian Angel. Setting aside the Hermetic mage's jargon, it means to have communion with your higher self, the truest source of your divine will and the best guidance possible for you. This communion transforms you by taking you out of the morass of daily tribulations and framing your whole life in the perspective of your divine purpose. There are several versions of this ritual, but they all involve solitary actions initiated by the will and determination of the practitioner.

The ceremonial magician's rituals can have a twofold purpose, with both initiatory effects and real-world results. One of the first rituals learned in modern ceremonial magick is known as the Lesser Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram (LBRP). It typically is done before and after all other workings. Regular use of the LBRP expands the aura and thereby the magician's consciousness, establishes firm psychic boundaries, and clears the magician and temple of any unwanted influences. The Lesser Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram is considered the first step in high magick for most practitioners. It is defined as white magick. Yet the preparatory ritual can be used to clear a room of unwanted energies and even unwanted spirits. For those sensing malicious spirits or stagnant, sickly energy, this ritual has a very tangible, real-world result. It changes the environment. According to our previous definitions, that would make it a form of low magick or even gray magick. Yet most don't consider it to be such. After prolonged use of the LBRP, a real-world change takes place in the magician that others will notice. Even with the concepts of initiatory and operative magick, there is no clear line dividing the two. Our intentions are like a spectrum, and while our rituals might fall closer to the side of one end of the spectrum or the other, neither polarity can be divorced from the other.

The rituals of what most people would consider high magick are the cumulative rituals of initiation. We find the powers of initiation-both the traditional rituals of passing an energy from teacher to student and the rituals of the student making direct contact with the divine-in the mysteries of the modern witch. While most witchcraft books focus on the role of magick as operative magick, when we look at the rituals of high witchcraft, we are exploring a course of self-initiatory magick, drawing upon the traditions of both high

magick and witchcraft to create a change in consciousness, a shift in awareness, and hopefully taking a step further along the path to divine enlightenment.

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