

HEINRICH CORNELIUS AGRIPPA

Seals of the Spirits

THE OCCULT PHILOSOPHY · BOOK III · NOTEBOOK 6

Secret alphabets, revealed signs and three bonds

BOOK III · CHAPTERS 29-33

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Seals of the Spirits

HEINRICH CORNELIUS AGRIPPA · THREE BOOKS OF OCCULT
PHILOSOPHY · BOOK III, CHAPTERS 29–33

Every chapter — four parts

IN AGRIPPA'S WORDS

*the complete chapter, from the Latin
edition of 1533*

IN PLAIN WORDS

what Agrippa actually claims

TERMS

the chapter concepts explained

HISTORICAL NOTE

*where the idea comes from and what
modern science says*

A historical text, not a manual.

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FOREWORD

If a name is the "name" of a spirit, a character is its "signature". **In these chapters Agrippa reveals the secret alphabets and seals that were later copied by almost every book of magic in Europe.**

This is the **sixth notebook** in the series "Agrippa · The Occult Philosophy · Book III". It contains **chapters 29–33 of Book III**: the characters and seals of spirits; the "celestial writing", "Malachim" and "Passing of the River" alphabets handed down by the Kabbalists; seals received by revelation, such as the signs of Constantine and Antiochus; how the ancients thought to draw good demons and overcome evil ones; and the binding, adjuring and casting out of spirits. The chapters include nine plates from the original edition.

How to read it. Every chapter has four parts. *In Agrippa's words* — the complete chapter, translated from the Latin edition of 1533. *In plain words* — what Agrippa actually claims. *Terms* — the concepts of the chapter; all of them are collected in the glossary at the end. *Historical note* — where the idea comes from and what modern science says about it.

In the series "Agrippa · The Occult Philosophy · Book III":

1. The Path of the Magus — dedication and chapters 1–7
2. God and the Holy Names — chapters 8–13
3. Gods, Spirits and Demons — chapters 14–19
4. The Guardian Angel and the Language of Angels — chapters 20–23
5. The Names of Spirits — chapters 24–28
6. Seals of the Spirits — chapters 29–33
7. Man, the Image of God — chapters 34–40

8. The Soul after Death — chapters 41–44
9. Ecstasy, Prophecy and Dreams — chapters 45–52
10. Purity and Preparation — chapters 53–57
11. Sacrifices, Consecrations and Holy Days — chapters 58–65

CHAPTER I

OF THE CHARACTERS AND SEALS OF SPIRITS

IN AGRIPPA'S WORDS

Of the characters and seals of spirits we must now speak.

Characters are nothing else than certain unknown letters and writings, which guard the sacred names of the gods and spirits from the use and reading of the profane. These letters the ancients called **hieroglyphics**, that is, sacred, because they were dedicated only unto the holy things of the gods: for they held it a deadly sin to commit the holy mysteries of the gods unto those same characters wherewith all things profane and unseemly are written down among the common people.

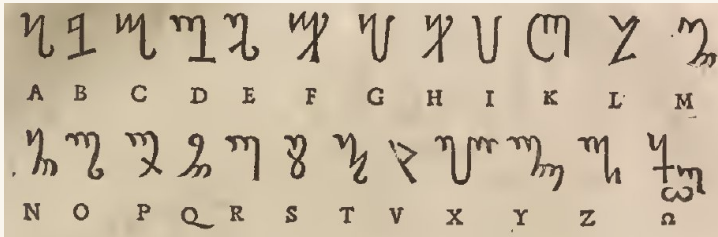
Whence Porphyry saith that the ancients, willing to hide God and the divine powers, signifying the invisible by sensible figures and by those things which are seen, did as it were by sacred letters deliver great mysteries, and did explain them by certain symbolical figures: as when they dedicated the ball and all round things unto the world, the sun, the moon, hope and fortune; the circle unto the heavens; the segments of a circle unto the moon; pyramids and obelisks unto fire and the Olympian gods; the cylinder unto the sun and the earth; the privy member unto generation and unto Juno, to whom also, by reason of the female sex, they gave the figure of a triangle.

Wherefore this kind of characters hath no other root...

...hath no other root than the will and authority of him that instituted it — of him, I say, who hath received the power of instituting and consecrating such letters.

Such among divers nations and sects of religion there have been many masters of holy things, whose institutions have not come down unto us, save some few that have been delivered scattered or in fragments.

Of these kinds of characters there is one which Peter of Abano mentioneth as delivered by Honorius of Thebes, and the form thereof, referred unto our alphabet, is this:



IN PLAIN WORDS

Agrippa begins with a simple thought: sacred things need a script of their own. If the name of a god or an angel is written with the same letters a merchant uses for his bills, it is, as it were, worn out and made available to anyone. So the ancients devised special **characters** — signs that a passer-by does not understand and that both keep and conceal the holy name. As his model Agrippa cites the hieroglyphs of Egypt and the testimony of Porphyry that the ancients expressed invisible divine powers in visible forms: the ball and the circle stood for the world and the heavens, the pyramid and the obelisk for fire, the cylinder for the sun and the earth, the triangle for the feminine principle. The most important sentence in the chapter is about where these signs get their power. They have no "natural" basis, as a plant or a stone does; their value is set only by the **authority of the one who instituted them** — the one who had the right to create and consecrate the sign. In other words, a sacred script works like an agreement confirmed by someone who is believed. Many such systems have been lost, and as one of the few that survive Agrippa shows the alphabet that Peter of Abano attributed to **Honorius of Thebes**: in it every Latin letter has its own strange sign.

TERMS

Character (Lat. *character*, from Gr. *charaktēr* "a cut or stamped mark", *charassō* "to engrave") — in Agrippa's language, a secret sign or letter that stands for the name and power of a spirit or deity.