LATIN MANUSCRIPT · 14TH CENTURY

The Illustrated Ars Notoria

Angelic Prayers and Secret Figures
for Memory, Wisdom and Knowledge of All the Arts



with the medieval gloss and the painted figures

«SACRATISSIMA ARS NOTORIA» · BnF LATIN 9336

BOOKS OF WISDOM

The Illustrated Ars Notoria

Angelic Prayers and Secret Figures for Memory, Wisdom and Knowledge of All the Arts

Latin manuscript, 14th century · BnF Latin 9336. The «most holy Notory Art», said to have been revealed by an angel to King Solomon, together with the medieval gloss that explains how the prayers are said and the figures beheld, and with all the painted figures of the manuscript; complete, translated from the Latin, with notes and commentary

BlusaBooks · MMXXVI

Modern English text, notes, foreword, figure redrawings and commentary © 2026 SIA "Blusa Entertainment".
Source: the Latin manuscript «Sacratissima ars notoria», 14th century, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Latin 9336 (ff. 1–28), public domain. Translated from the manuscript; no manuscript images are reproduced — all the figures (notae) are our own colour redrawings after the lines of the manuscript. Readings were checked against the printed Latin text in Agrippa's «Opera» (Lyon, c. 1600) and Robert Turner's English translation (London, 1657), both public domain. A historical source, not medical or any other advice.

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FOREWORD

The book that promised to know everything. In the Middle Ages a story went round that one night, as King Solomon was praying, an angel laid upon the altar golden tablets bearing prayers and signs. Whoever said these prayers on the right days and beheld the figures that belonged to them would, in a short time, gain memory, eloquence and knowledge of all the seven liberal arts — grammar, dialectic, rhetoric, arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy — and of philosophy and even theology. This teaching was called the *ars notoria*, the "Notory Art", because at its heart are the *notae*: signs or figures to be gazed upon while the prayer is said.

The manuscript. This book is based on a Latin manuscript kept by the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris under the number Latin 9336; its catalogue calls it "Sacratissima ars notoria" — "The Most Holy Notory Art". It is a fourteenth-century parchment codex of 28 large leaves (440 × 290 mm). The library's catalogue lists it among manuscripts made in Italy. The library acquired it in 1799, and in 1819 it was bound in leather bearing the monogram of King Louis XVIII.

The manuscript has two parts. On its first seventeen leaves the text of the *Ars notoria* itself is written in larger letters in the middle of the page, and all around it — in tiny script — runs the **gloss**: the commentary of a medieval teacher, explaining what the text means, how the prayers are to be said, when to fast, how to behold the figures and what to do if the art does not succeed. The last eleven leaves are filled with the **figures**: great circles, rings, lozenges, trees and towers crowded with prayers and magic words, drawn in red and gold, and around them stand angels in blue and red robes holding crosses. It is these painted figures that

make Latin 9336 one of the most beautiful known manuscripts of the Notory Art.

What is new here. Our series already contains *The Golden Flowers* (No. 63) — another version of the same art, from a Munich manuscript (Clm 276), which goes under the name of Apollonius. Many prayers are the same in both. But Latin 9336 is a different redaction of the art, and it contains two things that the Munich manuscript lacks: first, the full **gloss** — a kind of user's manual that shows how a medieval reader understood and practised the art; second, an entirely different set of **figures** — painted, with angels, with other shapes and other inscriptions. To keep the series consistent, prayers that coincide are rendered in the same words as in *The Golden Flowers*, but throughout we have followed what is written in this manuscript.

The figures. No images of the manuscript are reproduced in this book. We have redrawn every figure ourselves: we separated the colours of the manuscript page — the gold and ochre outlines, the blue and red robes, the red and brown ink — and traced each colour as a clean line. The drawings therefore keep the composition, the proportions, the angels and even the text written inside the figures, but not the stains, creases and cracks of the parchment. Where the scribe left a blank or an unfinished frame, it has been left so here too. Each figure is followed by a description, "What is shown", and a translation of all the prayers and inscriptions written in it.

How to read. The book contains only the translation — complete, paragraph by paragraph, readable as a book. Paragraphs of the main text are in ordinary type. The gloss is in smaller type with a red bar in the margin and begins with the word "Gloss"; it is placed directly after the passage it explains. The red rubrics — the headings of the manuscript — are given as subheadings. Magic words are not translated: they are in *italics*, exactly as the scribe wrote them. Where a word or thing appears that is unknown today, a small number stands beside it and the explanation is at the foot of the same page. Our longer explanations — *In plain words* and *What history tells us* — are at the end of the

book under "Commentary". Before each leaf of the manuscript its number (folio) is given: *r* is the front of the leaf, *v* the back.

The gloss is written in very small script, and in places the parchment is worn. Where a reading is uncertain, we restored it from the context and from the printed Latin text (Agrippa's *Opera*, Lyon, c. 1600) and Robert Turner's English translation (London, 1657); where that was impossible, we left an ellipsis.

This is the publication of a historical source, not a manual. We leave the language and views of the manuscript untouched; our own judgement is found only in our notes and commentary. The manuscript promises knowledge and memory, but neither we nor its author can guarantee them — this is a book about how people sought wisdom seven hundred years ago.

THE BEGINNING OF THE MOST HOLY ART AND THE FIRST PRAYERS

In the name of the holy and undivided Trinity. Here begins the most holy Notory Art, which the most high Creator by his angel one night upon the altar of the temple ministered to Solomon as he prayed, that by it he might in a short space of time acquire and possess all the liberal, mechanical and exceptive sciences and their faculties, and that, by uttering the mystical words of the holy prayers and invoking the names of the holy angels contained in it, he might be wholly grounded in all science and wisdom

GLOSS. "In the name of the holy and undivided Trinity etc." At the beginning of the work of this most holy Notory Art[1] the name of the most high Creator is invoked, that the work may take from him its beginning, middle and end, for he is the beginning without beginning, the end without end, and by him all things were created out of nothing. Since, then, the Most High, ordering all created things, made man in this world as the worthier creature and gave all things into his dominion, he also enlightened him, as the worthier creature, with natural virtues. And it pleased the Most High that man himself, whom he had loved so much and had formed after his own image and likeness, being worthier than the rest, should be enlightened with worthier virtues. Therefore the most high Maker alone formed man and resolved to instruct him in the science of natural powers and to enlighten him with all wisdom. And so he set him as lord over all other created things and commanded that all created things should obey this man, and that he should be made instructed in all science and wisdom and be truly wise upon the earth.

1 The Notory Art (Lat. *ars notoria*, from *nota* "sign") — a medieval art which, by prayers, names of angels and the contemplation of drawings (*notae*), promised memory, eloquence, understanding and the mastery of all sciences in a short time. The Church later condemned it as forbidden.

And although the Most High had at first perfectly enlightened the first-formed man[1] himself with all wisdom, yet we find that he ministered his grace, wisdom and science not to him alone but to many others as well. Among them we find one man in particular, namely Solomon, whom the Most High chose in order to ground in him his grace, wisdom and science. And so by his angel Pamphilus[2] he sent him certain golden tablets, on which were written certain names of the holy angels with Greek, Chaldean[3] and Hebrew prayers. And together with those prayers there were figures drawn and traced in divers ways, which the angel himself brought on those same golden tablets upon the altar of the temple that Solomon had built to God, and presented them to him, telling him of those prayers what they signified and of the figures what they showed. And he declared in what order they were to be uttered, teaching him the manner, form and content of the pronouncing. And Solomon, having received the angel's command, received that golden book with great devotion and according to the angelic commands went forward in this work, reading the prayers one by one as the angel had ministered them to him, with their times and lunar days[4], exceeding nothing beyond the form of the command. And so, endowed with divine grace, by the work he merited and received all science and all wisdom.

Afterwards, as we find, after Solomon this most holy art came by the grace of God to the philosopher called Apollonius[5]; he partly elucidated the Greek, Hebrew and Chaldean prayers and expounded them as subtly and briefly as he could. But many of them, because of the difficulties and the length of exposition which they contain, he left aside altogether, as is found written in the book of Solomon. In this most holy art, which Solomon calls the Notory Art and elsewhere the art of memory, the most holy mystery is contained, for in it there is nothing else but most holy prayers and supplications, among which the names of the holy angels are named with the deepest reverence and invoked in supplication. When these prayers, brought to us by the angel, are recited and invoked in their times or lunar days, as is described and plainly shown in the following chapters, memory may be acquired, which in this work must be acquired

1 The first-formed (Lat. *protoplastus*) — the first man formed by God, Adam.
2 Pamphilus (Lat. *Pamphilus*) — the angel's name as it can be read in the manuscript; in other texts this angel remains nameless.
3 Chaldean (Lat. *caldeus sermo*) — the medieval name for Aramaic; also generally "an ancient, mysterious Eastern tongue".
4 Lunar day (Lat. *lunacio*, *luna prima, luna quarta*...) — the day counted from the new moon (1st–30th); in the Notory Art the time for the prayers is chosen by these days.
5 Apollonius (Lat. *Apollonius*) — the "master of arts" to whom the exposition of the *ars notoria* called the "Golden Flowers" is ascribed; in the Middle Ages he was confused with Apollonius of Tyana, the wonder-worker of the 1st century.

> first, and eloquence, utterance, understanding and the stability of both. For all the aforesaid there are special prayers of their own, which you will find in this summa set apart and ordered. When these have first been had and acquired, anyone may, by the memory of the art and by the special prayers for this purpose, have and acquire the science of the seven liberal arts, and of the mechanical and exceptive arts[1], and retain it in memory.

> But for acquiring the sciences it is necessary to look upon the figures drawn and assigned to them for one month, and to utter their prayers in their times, in their lunar days and at the appointed hours, and to rule one's life according to the commands appointed for it. Which prayers are needed for all the aforesaid, in what times and in what lunar days the prayers are to be said and the figures looked upon, and how the operator must rule his life and proceed in this holy work in due order, will be declared in the following chapters in their places, fully and perfectly.

> ... not in order to try it, but by reading it devoutly the whole of this art consists. Note that this art contains prayers and figures; hence all knowledge in this art comes through prayers and figures. It must be known that this work is a great mystery and a sacrament beyond the reckoning of human wit. In this work it must be considered that nothing in it is to be done beyond the form of the command, and that one must work according to the precepts given by God through the angel. And in this art one must first and principally take care to believe firmly, for in working according to all its commands there must be perfect faith. Then the operator must put into the work a great desire and will to grasp and complete the work. For thus it is written of this place: if anyone reads the prayers of this most holy art, even perfectly and with devotion, in order to try it, or learns or teaches them for the sake of knowledge, or if he is in mortal sin or in theft, robbery or any other malice, he brings it about for himself that in the art there is no effect.

Alpha and Omega[2], almighty God, beginning of all things without beginning, end without end, hear today my prayers, most gracious one, and repay me neither according to my iniquities nor according to my sins, O Lord my God, but according to your mercy, which is greater than all things visible and invisible. Have mercy on me, Wisdom of the Father, Christ, light of the angels, glory of the saints,

1 The exceptive arts (Lat. *artes exceptivae*) — a third group of arts beside the liberal and the mechanical; in the tradition of the Notory Art, the divinatory and forbidden arts.

2 Alpha and Omega — the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet; in the Bible (Rev 1:8) a name of God: "I am the beginning and the end".

THE FIGURES: GRAMMAR, DIALECTIC, RHETORIC, MEDICINE AND MUSIC

This prayer is to be uttered first, before this figure and before all the other figures of this art

Light, truth, life, way, judge, mercy, strength, patience, preserve and help me and have mercy on me. Amen.

This second prayer is to be pronounced immediately after the preceding one, a short interval having been made

Lord, holy Father, almighty eternal God, in whose sight are all the foundations of invisible creatures, whose eyes saw my unformed substance[1], of the sweetness of whose love heaven and earth are full, who saw all things before they came to be and see them before they happen, in whose book all days are formed and men are written: look today, Lord, upon your servant, subject to you with all his mind, with all his heart and in deed; through your Holy Spirit confirm me, bless me and protect all my acts of this day in this looking upon, and illumine me with the constancy of your visitation. Amen.

1 "Whose eyes saw my unformed substance" (Lat. *cuius oculi imperfectum meum viderunt*) — from Psalm 138(139):16: "Thy eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect," i.e. while still in the womb.

This is the first figure of the art of grammar. Its prayer, namely "Light, truth" etc., is to be pronounced first, together with the others written: "Lord, holy Father" etc. And, a short interval having been made, let the prayer written within the figure be uttered, in order, and let some interval always be made between the parts; and after the prayer of the figure let the Latin prayer be uttered, namely "God, before whom every good heart" etc. This first [figure] of the art of grammar is to be looked upon first on the first day of some new moon of a month, and on that same day and on the following days up to the fifteenth day let it be looked upon twelve times, namely from early morning until terce three times, from terce until midday three times, from midday until none three times, from none until vespers three times; and at each single looking upon, these prayers that are here are to be uttered twice. On the fifteenth day look upon this first figure once in early morning and, a short interval having been made, go on to look upon the second figure, and do as is written in the rubric of the second figure itself. How to work with these three figures of the art of grammar, seek above in that gloss which begins: "For thus the notae of the art of grammar are to be looked upon" etc. For there you will find how you must work with these three figures.

Note that all the prayers written within this figure and in all the other figures that follow are of no greater virtue or efficacy than if they were written outside the figure in order, as the other prayers are; but they are written inside for this reason, that while reading the prayers and uttering them the figure itself and its signs may be looked upon better and more effectively with the eye of the mind, because while pronouncing the prayers, or straight after them, the figure itself must be looked upon. Likewise it is to be known that, in looking upon any figure of any art, he who looks upon them must not move from the place where he sits until he has uttered all the prayers that the figure contains and has looked upon the same figure as many times as is prescribed above in the working of the figures. But when the first figure has been looked upon, it is then fitting to withdraw and walk about until the next hour, in which the second figure is to be looked upon; and so it is to be done with each. And if some interval must be made between the lookings upon

the figures, let it be short, as is fitting. Likewise, after looking upon the last figure of the art for which one is working, the volumes of that art must be turned over this way and that, reading in some chapters. And this done, one must return to the figures as is fitting. Likewise, if he can, he must keep in memory, in his heart, the signs of those figures that are looked upon. And when the daily work with any figures of any art is finished, those four round signs must be looked upon, with the lookings upon them that are written before the first figure of the art of dialectic. Likewise one must fast on the days on which the figures are looked upon. Likewise let him who works with them be alone until the work of that hour of the day in which he works is complete, unless there were a master of the art to instruct the one working. But it is not permitted to have any other companion besides the master in looking upon the figures or in pronouncing the prayers.

Nota: the first figure of grammar — the great circle of prayer (f. 18r)

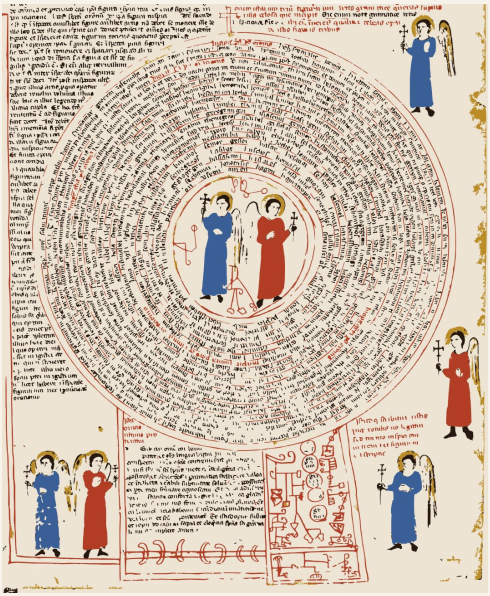


Figure of the manuscript, f. 18r — our colour redrawing

What is shown. A large circle in gold and red lines across the whole width of the page; above it, at the top, a red cross on a staff. Within the circle are about twenty narrow rings in which a single continuous spiral of text runs in black ink, with red rubrics, from the outer edge to the centre. In the centre a smaller circle with two haloed angels holding crosses (left in blue, right in red) and red pseudo-letter signs. Below the circle are three fields: in the left, two standing angels with crosses (in blue and in red); in the middle, a prayer and beneath it a band of red crescents (eight crescents on a double line); in the right, a red "tree" of signs with five roundels containing words. Outside the circle on the right stand three more angels with crosses (top in blue, middle in red, bottom in blue). Seven angels in all.

The first part of the prayer begins.

Helyscemaht. semoht. hazatam. sorihe. theon. hazamaray. Iazaram. helomam. Iemiler. samy. helmasachon. helamam. Ieazunham. theos.[1] God, kind and strong. *Iemathamal. hazauenehe. pirmut. Ienazonahar. leoua. habanahe. basal. chamay. hibnizay. hesmonelar. nebel. legeromelan. hana. Iarinnay. nephamys. salmatanay. Iezep. melar. hana. sarinamar. gnorym. zelemiaht. haman. zama. salmaiero. somay. zamaber. helemay. Iothar. hamnyha. halchi. baham. Iemr. malagn. sanctuoshel. laphna. Iethachy. zoconozay. zamama. heugagal. zomon. zamyn. hayra. manather. neblata. Iamamy. Ieulas. helzamar. zezezonia. malay. chyney. hyelo. maceron. Iethy. corinagin. zemazay. zemaze. banzan. hezelerma. Ieazinay. seleray. selmo. senzi.* You, holy, holy Father, incomprehensible in all your works, which are holy, just and good. Give me grace after Solomon, and the gift and the precept that he had for this — he who at the beginning of your work had the spirit, the gift and the grace to obtain these things. *zegor. zeumagor. Iezamam. gezemel. zachiel. zemalel. gyzemagon. auzehaho. gamezomel. gamazechomos. hazethon. hazomay. zemoshachon. hezomagalhon. Iezomazay. chalion. tharatos. vsyon. tymbo. bohic. hatauathos.* Amen.

The second part of the prayer begins.

1 *Theos* — Greek "God"; often inserted as a divine name in the strings of magic words.