

Why Work with Demons? (part two of two)

Aaron Leitch



("Conquering Daemons – The Touch" by Michael Parkes')

In my last blog post, "Why Is Satan in the Grimoires?", I addressed the curious presence of Satan in the Solomonic grimoires. I asked why a group of devout Christians would even produce books that teach how to summon (rather than banish) demonic entities. We found that grimoire mages were simply exploring the underworld as shamans before them had done for thousands of years. That the entities who dwelt in that underworld (and in nature) were given names like "Satan" and "Belial" instead of names like "Hades" and "Pan," and were declared universally evil by the Church, was really beside the point.

But, what about the modern world? We certainly do not have the same Church-controlled culture that existed when the grimoires were written. And, yet, an overwhelming number of today's occultists seem to flock to the dark and demonic. And

I'm not just talking about self-styled Satanists. Even perfectly non-dark-n-scary practitioners, for some reason, often choose to work with the darker entities of our tradition. As I questioned in my last post:

"Why in the world would anyone, knowing the Lovecraft mythos, actually desire to make contact with a destructive chaotic force like Cthulhu? Why do some people choose to focus their studies and practices on infernal demons, fallen angels, the Qliphothic realms, and even the dead? Frankly, there are plenty of very powerful spirits out there who actually like humans—or at least tolerate us for some reason—so why should you purposefully invoke the meanest, nastiest human-haters our mythologies have to offer?"

Most of you probably know me primarily as an angel-worker, which you might assume means I stay away from the demons in favor of celestial spirits. But you may be surprised to find I delve into goetia myself—as it is outlined in the final portion of the Book of Abramelin. As an initiate of that system, I not only have intimate contact with my Holy Guardian Angel, but I also have chthonic familiar spirits who stick with me wherever I go. So, the question remains: why would someone with easy access to an extremely powerful archangel have any need of such familiars at all?

Looking back on history, you will find that holy men and women have always been expected to work with lower spirits. My last blog post covered much of this, explaining that ancient shamans had to enter the underworld and befriend the spirits there for various reasons. Plus, as part of their daily duties, they were charged with confronting and defeating any hostile spirit that might assault the tribe. This is why, in the Book of Abramelin, you begin with establishing contact with your Guardian Angel and then turn immediately to conjuring the chthonic and infernal spirits. Those lesser spirits are the ones you need on your side, working for you, so they do not attack you or your community.

In short, exorcism is at the heart of the practice of spirit-working. Whether you are conjuring them to bind and cast them out, or conjuring them to request a favor, the practical methods are the same. Therefore, it is only natural that one practice would lead to the other. And, in the case of the grimoires, that is precisely what took place. Clergy charged with the duty of exorcism began to develop their own techniques and to learn occult mysteries from the spirits—all of which caused the Church to respond with the medieval inquisitions.

But, why should we need the lower spirits at all, when we have access to celestial beings? Simple: The angels and deities of the celestial realms are in charge of vast cosmic forces—like the movement of stars and planets, the destinies of nations, etc. These aren't the beings we should pester with our petty desires; they should be called in times of greatest need. And, even then, when you ask an angel for something it is hardly the angel that goes and does the grunt-work of accomplishing your goal. No, even the angel sends out subordinates to take care of the job, while he returns to (for instance) worrying about whether or not the Earth is going to

crash into Venus.

Therefore, in practice, it is proper to call upon your angelic friends for spiritual or otherwise important matters. Your familiars, meanwhile, handle the day-to-day chores. They can bring in money, or sex, or entertainment, or perform healing, provide protection, general divination, etc., etc. These are the spirits through whom Witchcraft (by its classical definition) is performed. While your Patron or Guardian Angel is your guide and teacher, your familiars are your workers.

There is also another reason to work with chthonic entities—and this covers those who work exclusively with them (that is, no celestials involved) and probably a good number of “Left Hand Path” practitioners as well. Simply put: some people are just naturally attracted to the dark, the chthonic, the gothic, etc. Yes, this is the source of the “dark fluff” (that is, wannabe dark-n-scary nonsense) that pervades modern occult literature like a weed. For the consumer of dark fluff, the point is to appear mysterious and dangerous to your peers—because, you’re just so evviiiiiii, baby!

However, we can’t paint the entire subject of goetia (the art of working with chthonic spirits) with that brush. There are perfectly serious magicians out there working with spirits like Bael, Lucifuge, Adramalius, Scirlin, even Satan, Leviathan, Belial, and others without engaging in “dark fluff.” So why appeal to the likes of Lucifer, Oriens, Paimon, Amaymon, and Ariton in place of the more celestial angels and gods?

To understand this, you must first grasp the fact that the association between the underworld and “evil” is entirely modern. (Again, see my previous post on this subject.) There was a time before the Church declared the entire chthonic realm synonymous with Hell. Chthonic deities were still deities—Hades (the earth and underworld) was no less powerful than his brothers Zeus (the sky) and Poseidon (the sea). Fallen angels were still angels in the employ of God. Even Satan—in pre-Christian sources—was not the source of evil in the universe. As we can see in the Biblical Book of Job, even he is just another angel acting on orders from God. Likewise, day of the dead celebrations (upon which much of Halloween is based) have been observed around the world throughout history—and a quick study of such festivals shows that “death” and the denizens of the underworld were not attributed to “evil” at all in the ancient world.

Some people are simply—and quite naturally—suited to underworld symbolism. I can relate, as I have spent much of my youth in haunted houses (both real and amusement-park types), reading Lovecraftian fiction, watching horror movies, using spirit boards, etc. I can dig the attraction to the chthonic aspects of life, though I’ve never felt it had the least to do with “evil.” Death is simply part of the natural cycle of things, and it should be honored as surely as we honor Life.

Therefore, it shouldn’t surprise us that some shamans are naturally inclined to be

goen—chthonic spirit workers. It doesn't mean they are seeking evil. It doesn't even mean they are followers of the "Left Hand Path" (which is more focused on what is shocking or extreme than any real focus on what is chthonic). All it means is that they are modern shamans exploring the pathways of the underworld, and befriending the demons that live there.

Hey, somebody has to do it...

About the Author

Aaron Leitch has been a scholar and spiritual seeker for nearly three decades. He is a member of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, the Gentlemen of Jupiter and the academic Societas Magica. His writings cover such varied fields as ancient Middle Eastern religion and mythology, Solomonian mysticism, shamanism, Neoplatonism, Hermeticism and Alchemy, Traditional Wicca and Neopaganism, The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, Thelema, Angelology, Qabalah, Enochian, African Diaspora Religions, Hexcraft and Hoodoo folk traditions, Psychology and Consciousness Expansion, Cyberspace and Virtual Reality and modern social commentary. He is the author of *Secrets of the Magickal Grimoires*, *The Angelical Language* (Vols. I and II), *The Essential Enochian Grimoire* and most recently, *Ritual Offerings* (editor)

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About the Artist

Michael Parkes is a talented and versatile traditional artist working both in painted and sculptural medias. Today Mr. Parkes is America's leading 'Magic' Realist. Having deeply studied the esoteric doctrines of the East and the West, his imagery is drawn from a range of wisdoms including the Cabalistic and the Tantric, but embodied in forms from his own imagination which are immediately accessible

His works can be viewed and purchased from the Pierside Gallery – 800 – 959 – 7979
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