

Review: Lois Martin, *The History of Witchcraft, Pocket Essentials, Harpenden, Herts, 2002 (2007 edn.)*

Pages: 143

Old Age Religion Becoming New Again

A standard history, but one which busts the big myth of holocaust-sized witch trials at Salem where only twenty were killed (the Witch Craze of 40,000 deaths mostly happened in Strasbourg, Germany, in the Late Middle Ages).

Unfortunately, it falls into misinformation trying to find malice behind the Cathars, Bogomils, and Waldensian Christians, who were in reality persecuted by Rome then subjected to her post-persecution propaganda.

Given the rise of Harry Potter (an accurate portrayal of witchcraft) and New Age pagan religions, this is a worthwhile read as the world heads back to the future, or descent into the spiritual sewers of Wicca.

“Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.”
Deuteronomy 22.18, Authorized Version

Introduction (pp. 9-17)

Harry Potter is in the ascendant and Wicca is a fast-growing religion.

Witchcraft is the only religion England gave the world.

Historical witchcraft is found in medieval Aristotelian thought, however, Middle Age scholars believed demons must be summoned.

The Neo-Platonic system sees witchcraft as entirely natural. There is no good or evil, only alienation from nature and ‘the force’.

Modern ‘witchcraft’ has witches making pacts with the Devil, flying to Sabbat meetings on broomsticks, and eating unbaptised babies. The Devil

would appear as a man dressed in black, goat, dog, cat, or toad and baptised witches with a Devil's Mark. Witches would perform *maleficia*, and keep demonic pets called familiars.

The Witch Craze or Burning Times happened in the 16-17th C, mostly in central Europe, and even more restricted to a 300-mile radius around Strasbourg. About 40,000 witches were killed.

II) A Brief Guide to the Devil and All His Works (pp. 19-34)

Melek Ta'us is "God's Angel" or the Peacock Angel and is the god of the Yazidi religion. He betrayed God but after repenting for 7,000 years was forgiven.

The Book of Enoch tells of 200 angels called Grigori, or 'Watchers' set by God over humanity. However, they rebelled and came to earth to mate with women to create the giants.

The Zoroastrian god of light, Ahura Mazda, battles Ahriman, the Spirit of Falsehood.

The Devil is subject to God's control and operated in the air where he can create illusions and compress vapours into aerial bodies.

The Gauls hunting god was Cernunnos.

Sayed means 'prince'.

The Templars were suppressed between 1307 and 1314 for heresy, for worshipping a disembodied head they called *Baphomet* (derived from *Mahomet*). Evidence of the head was found in the 'Panel Painting'.

Like the Templars, witches practice the *osculum infame*.

III) The Pact (pp. 35-49)

Necromancers use Solomon's seal when summoning, which is based on a grimoire *The Lesser Key of Solomon* which holds that Solomon captured 72 fallen angels and sealed them in a container.

In 1634, Father Urbain Grandier was famously tried at Loudun, France. A written pact with Lucifer (right to left in Latin) stolen from a demon Asmodeus was used to convict him.

Jesuit Jean-Joseph Surin claimed there was a Trinity in Hell: Lucifer; Beelzebub, and Leviathan.

IV) The Sabbat (pp. 51-61)

Meetings were held every Thursday night also May Eve (April 30 or Walpurgisnacht), and Halloween (31 October). Numbers could reach into the thousands.

The earliest reference to the devil as a black man and magical flight was a trial in 1022 at Orleans.

The first witchcraft trial was Lady Alice Kyteler in Ireland, 1324. She and her associates were accused of renouncing Christ and sacrificing to an incubus named 'Robin', 'Son of Art', or 'Robin Artissor'.

V) Night Flight (pp. 63-70)

Blood sucking *strigae* or *lamiae* were flying owl-like demon women under Lilith and Lamia's influence.

Lilith in Hebrew legend was also created from the earth and resented having to be under Adam's authority.

Lamia was a Libyan queen-turned-bay-killer.

Flying ointment was said to be used to enable magical flight.

The Devil was thought to be able to levitate people.

French and Italian witches or *bonae* were part of the Good Society.

Fourteenth-century Milan housed the society of Signora Oriente, a Diana-like goddess. 'God' was very offensive to Signora.

VI) Legal Remedies (pp. 71-90)

Prior to the 13thC, crime was prosecuted based on private individuals who would accuse before public tribunals. God was believed to protect the innocent and trials by ordeal were popular (e.g. whether the accused sank or floated on water).

In 1231, Gregory IX formally created the inquisition in *Excommunicamus*.

Papal inquisitor Nicholas Eymeric published a manual for inquisitors in 1376.

Continental witch trials convicted at a rate of 95%.

VII) Witchcraft in Britain and the Colonies (pp. 91-120)

Henry VII drafted the first statute against witchcraft in 1542.

Scottish witch trials were characterised by belief in the faeries their Queen Elphame.

Salem's witch trials in 1692 began with a West Indian slave Tituba who confessed she was a witch. In total, 185 were accused, 59 tried and 20 hanged.

VIII) The Search for Real Witches (pp. 121-132)

Modern witches are described as free-spirited, anti-establishment, pro-woman, and pro-nature.