



# The Magus of Freemasonry: The Mysterious Life of Elias Ashmole--Scientist, Alchemist, and Founder of the Royal Society

By Tobias Churton

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A comprehensive look at the life of Elias Ashmole, who represents the historic missing link between operative and symbolic Freemasonry

- Explores the true role of occult and magical studies in the genesis of modern science
- Explains the full meaning of the term *magus*, which Ashmole exemplified

Elias Ashmole (1617-1692) was the first to record a personal account of initiation into Accepted Freemasonry. His writings help solve the debate between operative and “speculative” origins of Accepted Freemasonry, demonstrating that symbolic Freemasonry existed within the Masonic trade bodies. Ashmole was one of the leading intellectual luminaries of his time: a founding member of the Royal Society, a fellowship and later academy of natural philosophers and scientists; alchemist; astrological advisor to the king; and the creator of the world’s first public museum. While Isaac Newton regarded him as an inspiration, Ashmole has been ignored by many conventional historians.

Tobias Churton’s compelling portrait of Ashmole offers a perfect illustration of the true Renaissance figure--the magus. As opposed to the alienated position of his post-Cartesian successors, the magus occupied a place at the heart of Renaissance spiritual, intellectual, and scientific life. Churton shows Ashmole to be part of the ferment of the birth of modern science, a missing link between operative and symbolic Freemasonry, and a vital transmitter of esoteric thought when the laws of science were first taking hold. He was a man who moved with facility between the powers of earth and the active symbols of heaven.

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#### Review

"Reads like an adventure novel. Ashmole was one of the leading intellectual and spiritual lights of the time, an accomplished alchemist, and close friend to some of the most brilliant men in England. Churton has given us a compelling picture of Ashmole's life, the city in which he lived, and the guild structure of the time."  
(*Scottish Rite Journal of Freemasonry, Southern Jurisdiction, USA*)

"This book is not only an excellent reference on the life of Elias Ashmole but also a most needed, in-depth study into the early transition from Operative to Speculative Freemasonry. It is highly recommended reading for the Masonic scholar." (*Gigi Minor, Ladyfogg's Reviews, Sept 2006*)

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#### HISTORY / SECRET SOCIETIES

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TOBIAS CHURTON is an Honorary Fellow of Exeter University where he is a course lecturer on Freemasonry and Rosicrucianism and teaches in England's first master's program in Western Esotericism. He studied theology at Oxford University and created the award-winning documentary series and accompanying book *The Gnostics* as well as several other films on Christian doctrine, mysticism, and magical folklore. He is the founding editor of *Freemasonry Today* magazine and author of *Gnostic Philosophy*. He lives in England.

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