

THE HIDDEN CHURCH OF THE HOLY GRAAL Its Legends
and Symbolism Considered in Their Affinity with Certain
Mysteries of Initiation and Other Traces of a Secret
Tradition in Christian Times

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[Podcast 1]

Vel sanctum invenit, vel sanctum facit [“Either one finds
the holy, or makes the holy”]

PREFACE

If deeper pitfalls are laid by anything more than by the facts of coincidence, it is perhaps by the intimations and suggestions of writings which bear, or are held to bear, on their surface the seals of allegory and, still more, of dual allusion; as in the cases of coincidence, so in these, it is necessary for the historical student to stand zealously on his guard and not to acknowledge second meaning or claims implied, however plausible, unless they are controlled and strengthened by independent evidence. Even with this precaution, his work will remain anxious, for the lineal path is difficult to find and follow. Perhaps there is one consolation offered by the gentle life of letters. In matters of interpretation, if always to succeed is denied us, to have deserved it is at least something.

Among our aids there is one aid which arises from the correspondences between distinct systems of allegory and symbolism. They are important within their own sphere;

and it is by subsidiary lights of this nature that research can be directed occasionally into new tracks, from which unexpected and perhaps indubitable results may be derived ultimately. When the existence of a secondary and concealed meaning seems therefore inferentially certain in a given department of literature if ordinary processes, depending on evidence of the external kind, have been found wanting its purpose and intention may be ascertained by a comparison with other secret literatures, which is equivalent to saying that the firmest hermeneutical ground in such cases must be sought in evidence which inheres and is common to several departments of cryptic writing. It is in this way that the prepared mind moves through the world of criticism as through outward worlds of discovery.

I am about to set forth after a new manner, and chiefly for the use of English mystics, the nature of the mystery which is enshrined in the old romance-literature of the Holy Graal. As a literature it can be approached from several standpoints; and at the root it has a direct consanguinity with other mysteries, belonging to the more secret life of the soul. I propose to give a very full account of all the considerations which it involves, the imperfect speculations included of some who have preceded me in the same path writers whose interests at a far distance are not utterly dissimilar to my own, though their equipment has been all too slight. I shall endeavour to establish at the end that there are certain things in transcendence which must not be sought in the literature, and yet they arise out of it. The task will serve, among several objects, two which may be put on record at the moment on the one hand, and quite obviously, to illustrate the deeper intimations of Graal literature, and, on the other, certain collateral intimations which lie behind the teachings of the great churches and are, in the official sense, as if beyond their ken. Of such

intimations is all high seership. The task itself has been undertaken as the initial consequence of several first-hand considerations. If I note this fact at so early a stage as the preface, it is because of the opportunity which it gives me to make plain, even from the beginning, that I hold no warrant to impugn preconceived judgments, as such, or, as such, to set out in search of novelties. In my own defence it will be desirable to add that I have not written either as an enthusiast or a partisan, though in honour to my school there are great dedications to which I must confess with my heart. On the historical side there is much and very much in which some issues of the evidence, on production, will be found to fall short of demonstration, and, so far as this part is concerned, I offer it at its proper worth. On the symbolical side, and on that of certain implicits, it is otherwise, and my thesis to those of my school will, I think, come not only with a strong appeal, but as something which is conclusive within its own lines. I should add that, rather than sought out, the undertaking has been imposed through a familiarity with analogical fields of symbolism, the correspondences of which must be unknown almost of necessity to students who have not passed through the secret schools of thought.

It will be intelligible from these statements that it has not been my purpose to put forward the analogies which I have established as a thesis for the instruction of scholarship, firstly, because it is concerned with other matters which are important after their own kind, and, secondly, as I have already intimated, because I am aware that a particular equipment is necessary for their full appreciation, and this, for obvious reasons, is not found in the constituted or authorised academies of official research. My own investigation is designed rather for those who are already acquainted with some part at least of the hidden knowledge, who have been concerned with the study of its

traces through an interest proper to themselves in other words, for those who have taken their place within the sanctuary of the mystic life, or at least in its outer circles.

In so far as I have put forward my thesis under the guidance of the sovereign reason, I look for the recognition of scholarship, which in its study of the literature has loved the truth above all things, though its particular form of appreciation has led it rather to dedicate especial zeal to a mere demonstration that the literature of the Graal has its basis in a cycle of legend wherein there is neither a Sacred Vessel nor a Holy Mystery. This notwithstanding, there is no scholar now living in England whose conditional sympathy at least I may not expect to command from the beginning, even though I deal ultimately with subjects that are beyond the province in which folk-lore societies can adjudicate, and in which they have earned such high titles of honour.

After accepting every explanation of modern erudition as to the origin of the Graal elements, there remain various features of the romances as things outside the general horizon of research, and they are those which, from my standpoint, are of the last and most real importance. A scheme of criticism which fails to account for the claim to a super-valid formula of Eucharistic consecration and to a super-apostolical succession accounts for very little that matters finally. I have therefore taken up the subject at the point where it has been left by the students of folk-lore and all that which might term itself authorised scholarship. *Ut adeptis appareat me illis parem et fratrem*, I have made myself acquainted with the chief criticism of the cycle, and I have explored more than one curious tract which is adjacent to the cycle itself. It is with the texts, however, that I am concerned only, and I approach them from a new standpoint. As to this, it will be better to specify from the

outset some divisions of my scheme as follows: (1) The appropriation of certain myths and legends which are held to be pre-Christian in the origin thereof, and their penetration by an advanced form of Christian Symbolism carried to a particular term; (2) the evidence of three fairly distinct sections or schools, the diversity of which is not, however, in the fundamental part of their subject, but more properly in the extent and mode of its development; (3) the connection of this mode and of that part with other schools of symbolism, the evolution of which was beginning at the same period as that of the Graal literature or followed thereon; (4) the close analogy, in respect of the root-matter, between the catholic literature of the Holy Graal and that which is connoted in the term mysticism; (5) the traces through Graal romance and other coincident literatures of a hidden school in Christianity. The Graal romances are not documents of this school put forward by the external way, but are its rumours at a far distance. They are not authorised, nor are they stolen; they have arisen, or the consideration of that which I understand with reserves, and for want of a better title, as the Hidden Church of Sacramental Mystery follows from their consideration as something in the intellectual order connected therewith. The offices of romance are one thing, and of another order are the high mysteries of religion if a statement so obvious can be tolerated. There are, of course, religious romances, and the Spanish literature of chivalry furnishes a notable instance of a sacred allegorical intention which reposes on the surface of the sense, as in the Pilgrim's Progress. Except in some isolated sections, as, for example, in the Galahad Quest and the Longer Prose Perceval, the cycle of the Holy Graal does not move in the region of allegory, but in that of concealed intention, and it is out of this fact that there arises my whole inquiry, with the justification for the title which I have chosen. The existence of a concealed sanctuary, of a Hidden Church, is

perhaps the one thing which seems plain on the face of the literature, and the next fact is that it was pre-eminent, ex hypothesi, in its possession of the most sacred memorials connected with the passion of Christ. It was from the manner in which these were derived that the other claims followed. The idea of a Graal Church has been faintly recognised by official scholarship, and seeing, therefore, that there is a certain common ground, the question which transpires for consideration is whether there is not a deeper significance in the claim, and whether we are dealing with mere legend or with the rumours at a distance of that which "once in time and somewhere in the world" was actually existent, under whatever veils of mystery. Following this point of view, it is possible to collect out of the general body of the literature what I should term its intimations of sub-surface meaning into a brief schedule as follows: (a) The existence of a clouded sanctuary; (b) a great mystery; (c) a desirable communication which, except under certain circumstances, cannot take place; (d) suffering within and sorcery without, being pageants of the mystery; (e) supernatural grace which does not possess efficacy on the external side; (f) healing which comes from without, sometimes carrying all the signs of insufficiency and even of inhibition; (g) in fine, that which is without enters and takes over the charge of the mystery, but it is either removed altogether or goes into deeper concealment the outer world profits only by the abrogation of a vague enchantment.

The unversed reader may not at the moment follow the specifics of this schedule, yet if the allusions awaken his interest I can promise that they shall be made plain in proceeding. But as there is no one towards whom I shall wish to exercise more frankness than the readers to whom I appeal, it will be a counsel of courtesy to inform them that scholarship has already commented upon the amount of

mystic nonsense which has been written on the subject of the Graal. Who are the mystic people and what is the quality of their nonsense does not appear from the statement, and as entirely outside mysticism there has been assuredly an abundance of unwise speculation, including much of the heretical and occult order, I incline to think that the one has been taken for the other by certain learned people who have not been too careful about the limits of the particular term to which they have had recourse so lightly. After precisely the same manner, scholarship speaks of the ascetic element in the Graal literature almost as if it were applying a term of reproach, and, again, it is not justified by reasonable exactitude in the use of words. Both impeachments, the indirect equally with the overt, stand for what they are worth, which is less than the solar mythology applied to the interpretation of the literature. My object in mentioning these grave trifles is that no one at a later stage may say that he has been entrapped.

It is indubitable that some slight acquaintance with the legends of the Holy Graal can be presupposed in my readers, but in many it may be so unsubstantial that I have concluded to assume nothing, except that, as indicated already, I am addressing those who are concerned with the Great Quest in one of its departments. There is no reason why they should extend their dedicated field of thought by entering into any technical issues of subjects outside those with which they may be concerned already. I have returned from investigations of my own, with a synopsis of the results attained, to show them that the literature of the Holy Graal is of kinship with our purpose and that this also is ours. The Graal is, therefore, a rumour of the Mystic Quest, but there were other rumours.

In order to simplify the issues, all the essential materials have been so grouped that those for whom the bulk of the original works is, by one or other reason, either partially or wholly sealed, may attain, in the first place, an accurate and sufficing knowledge of that which the several writers of the great cycles understood by the Graal itself, and that also which was involved in the quests thereof according to the mind of each successive expositor. I have sought, in the second place, to furnish an adequate conversance with the intention, whether manifest or concealed, which has been attributed to the makers of the romances by numerous students of these in various countries and times. In the third place there is presented, practically for the first time since all strictures of scholiasts the mystic side of the legend, and with this object it has been considered necessary to enter at some length into several issues, some of which may seem at first sight extrinsic. In pursuance of my general plan I have endeavoured in various summaries: (a) To compare the implied claim of the Graal legends with the Eucharistic doctrine at the period of the romances; (b) to make it clear, by the evidence of the literature, that the Graal Mystery, in the highest sense of its literature, was one of supernatural life and a quest of high perfection; (c) to show, in a word, that, considered as a mystery of illumination and even of ecstasy, the Graal does not differ from the great traditions of initiation. Whatever, therefore, be the first beginnings of the literature, in the final development it is mystic rather than ascetic, because it does not deal with the path of detachment so much as with the path of union.

It must be acknowledged assuredly that the first matter of the legend is found in folk-lore, antecedent, for the most part, to Christianity in the West, exactly as the first matter of the cosmos was in the TOHU, BOHU of chaos; but my purpose is to show that its elements were taken over in the

interest of a particular form of Christian religious symbolism. That advancement notwithstanding, the symbolism at this day needs re-expression as well as the informing virtue of a catholic interpretation, showing how the Graal and all other traditions which have become part of the soul's legends can be construed in the true light of mystic knowledge.

I have demonstrated at the same time that among the romancers, and especially the poets, some spoke from very far away of things whereof they had heard only, and this darkly, so that the characteristic of the Graal legend is, for this reason, as on other accounts, one of insufficiency. Yet its writers testify by reflection, even when they accept the sign for the thing signified and confuse the flesh with the spirit, to a certain measure of knowledge and a certain realisation. It is only in its mystic sense that the Graal literature can repay study. All great subjects bring us back to the one subject which is alone great; all high quests end in the spiritual city; scholarly criticisms, folk-lore and learned researches are little less than useless if they fall short of directing us to our true end and this is the attainment of that centre which is about us everywhere. It is in such a way, and so only, that either authorised scholar or graduating student can reach those things which will recompense knowledge concerning the vision and the end in Graal literature, as it remains to us in the forms which survive in which forms the mystery of the Holy Cup has been passed through the mind of romance and has been deflected like a staff in a pool.

I conclude, therefore, that the spirit of the Holy Quest may be as much with us in the study of the literature of the Quest as if we were ourselves adventuring forth in search of the Graal Castle, the Chalice, the Sword and the Lance. Herein is the consecrating motive which moves through the

whole inquiry. So also the mystery of quest does not differ in its root-matter, nor considerably in its external forms, wherever we meet it; there are always certain signs by which we may recognise it and may know its kinship. It is for this reason that the school of Graal mysticism enters, and that of necessity, into the great sequence of grades which constitute the unified Mystic Rite.

If there was a time when the chaos magna et infirmata of the old un-Christian myths was transformed and assumed into a heaven of the most holy mysteries, there comes a time also when the criticism of the literature which enshrines the secret of the Graal has with great deference to be taken into other sanctuaries than those of official scholarship; when some independent watcher, having stood by the troubled waters of speculation, must either say: "Peace, be still"; or, indifferently, "Let them rave" and, putting up a certain beacon in the darkness, must signal to those who here and there are either acquainted with his warrants by certain signs, which they recognise, or can divine concerning them, and must say to them: "Of this is also our inheritance."

So much as I have here advanced will justify, I think, one further act of sincerity. I have no use for any audience outside my consanguinities in the spirit. As Newton's Principia is of necessity a closed book to those who have fallen into waters of confusion at the pons asinorum of children and as this is not an impeachment of the Principia so my construction of the Graal literature will not be intelligible, or scarcely, to those who have not graduated in some one or other of the academies of the soul; it is not for children in the elementary classes of thought, but in saying this I do not impeach the construction. The Principia did not make void the elements of Euclid. I invite them only

for their personal relief to close the book at this point before it closes itself against them.

I conclude by saying that the glory of God is the purpose of all my study, and that in His Name I undertake this quest as a part of the Great Work.

BOOK ONE THE ROOTS OF THE HOUSE OF MEANING

CHAPTER ONE SOME ASPECTS OF THE GRAAL LEGEND

The study of a great literature should begin like the preparation for a royal banquet, not without some solicitude for right conduct in the King's palace which is the consecration of motive and not without recollection of that source from which the most excellent gifts derive in their season to us all. We may, therefore, in approaching it say: *Benedic, Domine, nos et hæc tua dona, quæ de tua largitate sumus sumpturi* ["Bless us, Lord, and these gifts of yours, which we are about to receive from your bounty"].

But in respect of the subject which concerns us we may demand even more appropriately: *Mensæ cælestis participes faciat nos, Rex æternæ gloriæ* ["Make us partakers of the heavenly table, O King of eternal glory"]. In this way we shall understand not only the higher meaning of the Feeding-Dish, but the gift of the discernment of spirits, the place and office of the supersubstantial bread, and other curious things of the worlds within and without of which we shall hear in their order. Surely the things of earth are profitable to us only in so far as they assist us towards the things which are eternal. In this respect there are many helpers, even as the sands of the sea. The old books help us, perhaps above all things, and among them the old chronicles and the great antique legends. If the hand of God is in history, it is also in folk-lore. We can scarcely fail

of our term, since lights, both close at hand and in the unlooked-for places, kindle everywhere about us. It is difficult to say any longer that we walk in the shadow of death when the darkness is sown with stars.

Now there are a few legends which may be said to stand forth among the innumerable traditions of humanity, wearing the external signs and characters of some inward secret or mystery which belongs rather to eternity than to time. They are in no sense connected one with another unless, indeed, by certain roots which are scarcely in time and place and yet by a suggestion which is deeper than any message of the senses each seems appealing to each, one bearing testimony to another, and all recalling all. They kindle strange lights, they awaken dim memories, in the antecedence of an immemorial past. They might be the broken fragments of some primitive revelation which, except in these memorials, has passed out of written records and from even the horizon of the mind. There are also other legends strange, melancholy and long haunting which seem to have issued from the depths of aboriginal humanity, below all horizons of history, pointing, as we might think, to terrible periods of a past which is of the body only, not of the soul of man, and hinting that once upon a time there was a soulless age of our race, when minds were formless as the mammoths of geological epochs. To the latter class belongs part of what remains to us from the folk-lore of the cave-dwellers, the traditions of the pre-Aryan races of Europe. To the former, among many others, belongs the Graal legend, which in all its higher aspects is to be classed among the legends of the soul. Perhaps I should more worthily say that when it is properly understood, and when it is regarded at the highest, the Graal is not a legend, but an episode in the æonian life of that which "cometh from afar"; it is a personal history.

The mystery of the Graal is a word which came forth out of Galilee. The literature which enshrines this mystery, setting forth the circumstances of its origin, the several quests which were instituted on account of it, the circumstances under which it was from time to time discovered, and, in fine, its imputed removal, with all involved thereby, is one of such considerable dimensions that it may be properly described as large. This notwithstanding, there is no difficulty in presenting its broad outlines, as they are found in the texts which remain, so briefly that if there be any one who is new to the subject, he can be instructed sufficiently for my purpose even from the beginning. It is to be understood, therefore, that the Holy Graal, considered in its Christian aspects and apart from those of folk-lore, is represented invariably, excepting in one German version of the legend, as that vessel in which Christ celebrated the Last Supper or consecrated for the first time the elements of the Eucharist. It is, therefore, a sacramental vessel, and, according to the legend, its next use was to receive the blood from the wounds of Christ when His body was taken down from the Cross, or, alternatively, from the side which was pierced by the spear of Longinus. Under circumstances which are variously recounted, this vessel, its content included, was carried westward in safe guardianship coming, in fine, to Britain and there remaining in the hands of successive keepers, or, this failing, in the hands of a single keeper, whose life was prolonged through the centuries. In the days of King Arthur, the prophet and magician Merlin assumed the responsibility of carrying the legend to its term, with which object he brought about the institution of the Round Table, and the flower of Arthurian chivalry set out to find the Sacred Vessel. In some of the quests which followed, the knighthood depicted in the greater romances has become a mystery of ideality, and nothing save its feeble reflection could have been found on earth. The quests were to some

extent preconceived in the mind of the legend, and, although a few of them were successful, that which followed was the removal of the Holy Graal. The Companions of the Quest asked, as one may say, for bread, and to those who were unworthy there was given the stone of their proper offence, but to others the spiritual meat which passes all understanding. That this account instructs the uninitiated person most imperfectly will be obvious to any one who is acquainted with the great body of the literature, but, within the limits to which I have restricted it intentionally, I do not know that if it were put differently it would be put better or more in harmony with the general sense of the romances.

It might appear at first sight almost a superfluous precaution, even in an introductory part, to reply so fully as I have now done to the assumed question: What, then, was the Holy Graal? Those who are unacquainted with its literature in the old books of chivalry, through which it first entered into the romance of Europe, will know it by the Idylls of the King. But it is not so superfluous as it seems, more especially with the class which I am addressing, since nominally this has other concerns, like folk-lore scholarship, and many answers to the question made from distinct points of view would differ from that which is given by the Knight Perceval to his fellow-monk in the poem of Tennyson:

“What is it? The phantom of a cup which comes and goes?
Nay, monk! What phantom? answered Perceval. The cup,
the cup itself, from which our Lord Drank at the last sad
supper with his own. This, from the blessed land of
Aromat... Arimathæan Joseph, journeying brought To
Glastonbury.... And there awhile it bode; and if a man Could
touch or see it, he was heal d at once, By faith, of all his

ills. But then the times Grew to such evil that the holy cup
Was caught away to Heaven and disappeared.”

This is the answer with which, in one or another of its forms, poetic or chivalrous, every one is expected to be familiar, or he must be classed as too unlettered for consideration, even in such a slight sketch as these introductory words. But it is so little the only answer, and it is so little full or exhaustive, that no person acquainted with the archaic literature would accept it otherwise than as one of its aspects, and even the enchanting gift of Tennyson's poetic faculty leaves and that of necessity something to be desired in the summary of the Knight's reply to the direct question of Ambrosius. Those even who at the present day discourse of chivalry are not infrequently like those who say “Lord, Lord!” but for all that they do not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven or the more secret realms of literature. And this obtains still more respecting the chivalry of the Graal. In the present case something of the quintessential spirit has in an obscure manner evaporated. There is an allusiveness, a pregnancy, a suggestion about the old legend in its highest forms: it is met with in the old romances, and among others in the longer prose chronicle of Perceval le Gallois, but more fully in the great prose Quest, which is of Galahad, the haut prince. A touch of it is found later in Tennyson's own poem, when Perceval's sister, the nun of “utter whiteness,” describes her vision:

“I heard a sound As of a silver horn from o'er the hills....
The slender sound As from a distance beyond distance
grew Coming upon me.... And then Stream'd thro' my cell a
cold and silver beam, And down the long beam stole the
Holy Grail, Rose-red with beatings in it.”

And again:

I saw the spiritual city and all her spires And gateways in a glory like one pearl.... Strike from the sea; and from the star there shot A rose-red sparkle to the city, and there Dwelt, and I knew it was the Holy Grail.

So also in the chivalry books the legend is treated with an aloofness, and yet with a directness of circumstance and a manifoldness of detail, awakening a sense of reality amidst enchantment which is scarcely heightened when the makers of the chronicles testify to the truth of their story. The explanation is, according to one version of the legend, that it was written by Christ Himself after the Resurrection, and that there is no clerk, however hardy, who will dare to suggest that any later scripture is referable to the same hand. Sir Thomas Malory, the last and greatest compiler of the Arthurian legend, suppresses this hazardous ascription, and in the colophon of his seventeenth book is contented with adding that it is "a story chronicled for one of the truest and the holiest that is in thys world."

But there is ample evidence no further afield than Sir Thomas Malory's own book, the *Morte d'Arthur*, that the Graal legend was derived into his glorious codification from various sources, and that some elements entered into it which are quite excluded by the description of Sir Perceval in the *Idylls* or by the colophon of Malory's own twelfth book, which reads: "And here foloweth the noble tale of the Sancgreal, that called is the hooly vessel, and the sygnefycacyon of the blessid blood of our Lord Jhesu Cryste, blessid mote it be, the whiche was brought in to this land by Joseph of Armathye, therefor, on al synful souls blessid Lord haue thou mercy."

As an equipoise to the religious or sentimental side of the legend, it is known, and we shall see in its place, that the Graal cycle took over something from Irish and Welsh folk-

lore of the pagan period concerning a mysterious magical vessel full of miraculous food. This is illustrated by the *Morte d Arthur*, in the memorable episode of the high festival held by King Arthur at Pentecost: in the midst of the supper "there entred in to the halle the Holy Graal couered with whyte samyte, but ther was none mighte see hit nor who bare hit. And there was al the halle fulfyllled with good odoures, and euery knyzt had suche metes and drynkes as he loved best in this world." That is a state of the legend which has at first sight little connection with the mystic vessel carried out of Palestine, whether by Joseph or another, but either the simple-minded chroniclers of the past did not observe the anachronism when they married a Christian mystery to a cycle of antecedent fable, or there is an explanation of a deeper kind, in which case we shall meet with it at a later stage of our studies. For the moment, and as an intimation only, let me say that the study of folklore may itself become a reverence of high research when it is actuated by a condign motive.

We shall make acquaintance successively with the various entanglements which render the Graal legend perhaps the most embedded of all cycles. I have said that the Sacred Vessel is sacramental in a high degree; it connects intimately with the Eucharist; it is the most precious of all relics for all Christendom indifferently, for, supposing that it were manifested at this day, I doubt whether the most rigid of the Protestant sects could do otherwise than bow down before it. And yet, at the same time, the roots of it lie deep in folklore of the pre-Christian period, and in this sense it is a dish of plenty, with abundance for an eternal festival. So also, from another point of view, it is not a cup but a stone, and it would have come never to this earth if it had not been for the fall of the angels. It is brought to the West; it is carried to the East again; it is assumed into heaven; it is given to a company of hermits; for all that we

know to the contrary, it is at this day in Northumbria; it is in the secret temple of a knightly company among the high Pyrenees; and it is in the land of Presbyter Johannes. It is like the cup of the elixir and the stone of transmutation in alchemy described in numberless ways and seldom after the same manner; but it seems to be one thing under its various ways, and blessed are those who find it. We shall learn, in fine, that the Graal was either a monastic legend or at least that it was super-monastic and this certainly.

CHAPTER TWO EPOCHS OF THE LEGEND

A minute inquiry into the materials, and their sources, of a moving and stately legend is opposed to the purposes and interests of the general reader, though to him I speak accidentally, and apart from any sense of election I must in honesty commend him to abstain, resting satisfied that for him and his consanguinities the Graal has two epochs only in literature those of Sir Thomas Malory and the *Idylls of the King*. As Tennyson was indebted to Malory, except for things of his own invention, so it is through his gracious poems that many people have been sent back to the old book of chivalry from which he reproduced his motives and sometimes derived his words. But without entering into the domain of archæology, even some ordinary persons, and certainly the literate reader, will know well enough that there are branches of the legend, both old and new, outside these two palmary names, and that some of them are close enough to their hands. They will be familiar with the Cornish poet Robert Stephen Hawker, whose "Quest of the San Graal" has, as Madame de Staël once said of Saint-Martin, "some sublime gleams." They will have realised that the old French romance of *Perceval le Gallois*, as translated into English of an archaic kind, ever beautiful and stately, by Dr. Sebastian Evans, is a gorgeous chronicle, full of richly painted pictures and endless

pageants. They will know also more dimly that there is a German cycle of the Graal traditions that Titirel, Parsifal, Lohengrin, to whom a strange and wonderful life beyond all common teachings of Nature, all common conventions of art, has been given by Wagner, are also legendary heroes of the Holy Graal. In their transmuted presence something may have hinted to the heart that the Quest is not pursued with horses or clothed in outward armour, but in the spirit along the *via mystica*.

There are therefore, broadly speaking, three points of view, outside all expert evidence, as regards the whole subject, and these are:

1. The Romantic, and the reversion of literary sentiment at the present day towards romanticism will make it unnecessary to mention that this is now a very strong point. It is exemplified by the editions of the *Morte d Arthur* produced for students, nor less indeed by those which have been modified in the interests of children, and in which a large space is given always to the Graal legend. Andrew Lang's *Book of Romance* and Mary McLeod's *Book of King Arthur and his Noble Knights* are instances which will occur to several people, but there are yet others, and they follow one another, even to this moment, a shadowy masque, not excepting, at a far distance, certain obscure and truly illiterate versions in dim byways of periodical literature.
2. The Poetic, and having regard to what has been said already, I need only for my present purpose affirm that it has done much to exalt and spiritualise the legend without removing the romantic element; but I speak here of modern invention. In the case of Tennyson it has certainly added the elevated emotion which

belongs essentially to the spirit of romance, and this saved English literature during the second half of the nineteenth century. But taking the work at its highest, it may still be that the Graal legend must wait to receive its treatment more fully by some poet who is to come. The literary form assumed by the Graal Idyll of the King a tale within a tale twice-told leaves something to be desired. Many stars rise over many horizons, including those of literature, but there is one star of the morning, and this in most cycles of books is rather an expected glory than a dawn now visible

3. The Archæological, and this includes naturally many branches, each of which has the character of a learned inquiry calling for special knowledge, and, in several instances, it is only of limited interest beyond the field of scholarship.

Outside these admitted branches of presentation and research, which lie, so to speak, upon the surface of current literature, there is perhaps a fourth point of view which is now in course of emerging, though scarcely into public view, as it is only in an accidental and a sporadic fashion that it has entered as yet into the written word. For want of a better term it must be called spiritual. It cares little for the archæology of the subject, little for its romantic aspects, and possibly something less than little for the poetic side. It would scarcely know of Hawker's Quest not that it signifies vitally and would probably regard the Graal symbol as I have otherwise characterised it as one of the legends of the soul I should have said again, sacramental legends, but this point of view is not usual, nor is it indeed found to any important extent, among those who hold extreme or any Eucharistic views. In other words, it is not specially a high Anglican or a Latin interest; it characterises rather those who regard religious doctrine,

institute and ritual, as things typical or analogical, without realising that as such they are to be ranked among channels of grace. So far as their conception has been put clearly to themselves, for them the Graal is an early recognition of the fact that doctrinal teachings are symbols and are no more meant for literal acceptance than any express fables. It is also a hazardous inquiry into obscure migrations of doctrine from East to 'West, outside the Christian aspects of Graal literature. This view appreciates, perhaps, only in an ordinary degree the evidence of history, nor can history be said to endorse it in its existing forms of presentation. At the same time it is much too loose and indeterminate to be classed as a philosophical construction of certain facts manifested in the life of a literature. It is a consideration of several serious but not fully equipped minds, and in some cases it has been impeded by its sentimental aspects; but the reference which I have made to it enables me to add that it should have reached a better term in stronger and surer hands. No one, however indifferent or, indeed, of all unobservant can read the available romances without seeing that the legend has its spiritual side, but it has also, at the fact s value, that side which connects it with folk-lore. No further afield than the Morte d Arthur, which here follows the great French Quest among many antecedents, it is treated openly as an allegory, and the chivalry of King Arthur s Court passes explicitly during the Graal adventures into a region of similitude, where every episode has a supernatural meaning, which is explained sometimes in rather a tiresome manner. I say this under the proper reserves, because that which appears conventional and to some extent even trivial in these non-metaphrastic portions might prove, under the light of interpretation, of all truth and the grace thereto belonging.

Superfluities and interpretations notwithstanding, it is directly, or indirectly, out of the recent view, thus tentatively designated, that the consideration of the present thesis emerges as its final term, though out of all knowledge thereof.

It has been my object to remove a great possibility from hands which are worthy, and that certainly, but unconsecrated by special knowledge, and it is my intention to return it thereto by a gift of grace after changing the substance thereof.

In searching out mysteries of this order, it must be confessed that we are like Manfred in the course of an evocation, for, in truth, many things answer us; amidst the confusion of tongues it is therefore no light task to distinguish that which, for my part, I recognise as the true voice. The literature does, however, carry on its surface the proof rather than the suggestion of a hidden motive as well as a hidden meaning, and three sources of evidence can be cited on the authority of the texts: (a) Confessed allegory, but this would be excluded, except for one strong consideration. The mind which confesses to allegory confesses also to mysticism, this being the mode of allegory carried to the ne plus ultra degree. (b) Ideological metathesis, the presence of which is not to be confused with allegory. (c) Certain traces and almost inferential claims which tend to set the custodians of the Holy Graal in a position superior to that of the orthodox church, though the cycle is not otherwise hostile to the orthodox church.

It must be understood that the critical difficulties of the Graal literature are grave within their own lines, and the authorities thereon are in conflict over issues which from their own standpoint may be occasionally not less than vital. This notwithstanding, the elements of the Graal

problem really lie within a comparatively small compass, though they are scattered through a literature which is in no sense readily accessible, while it is, for the most part, in a language that is not exactly familiar to the reader of modern French. It has so far been in the hands of those who, whatever their claims, have no horizon outside the issues of folk-lore, and who, like other specialists, have been a little disposed to create, on the basis of their common agreement, a certain orthodoxy among themselves, recognising nothing beyond their particular canons of criticism and the circle of their actual interests. To these canons there is no reason that we should ourselves take exception; they are more than excellent in their way, only they do not happen to signify, except antecedently and provisionally, for the higher consequence with which we are here concerned. The sincerity of scholarship imputes to it a certain sanctity, but in respect of this consequence most scholarship has its eyes bandaged.

The interpretation of books is often an essay in enchantment, a rite of evocation which calls, and the souls of the dead speak in response in strange voices. To those who are acquainted with the mysteries, perhaps there are no books which respond in the same manner as these old sacraments of mystic chivalry. They speak at the very least our own language. I conclude, therefore, that the most decorative of quests in literature is that of the things that are eternal; God is the proper quest of the romantic spirit, and of God moveth not only the High History of the Holy Graal, but the book of enchantment which I have proposed to myself thereon.

And even now, as if amidst bells and Hosannahs, a clear voice utters the Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus because by this undertaking we have declared ourselves on God s side.

