

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

By Arthur Edward Waite

[Podcast 17]

BOOK EIGHT MYSTIC ASPECTS OF THE GRAAL LEGEND

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CHAPTER FIVE THE MYSTERY OF FAITH

We have now reached a certain definite stage in the high debate and can institute a preliminary summary of the whole subject. It is known that the mystery of faith in Christianity is above all things the Eucharist, in virtue of which the Divine Master is ever present in his Church and is always communicated to the soul; but having regard to the interdictions of our age-long exile we receive only a substituted participation in the life of the union. The Graal mystery is the declared pageant of the Eucharist, which, in virtue of certain powers set forth under the veil of consecrating words, is in some way, not indeed a higher mystery than that of the external church, but its demonstration in the transcendent mode. We have only to remember a few passages in the Book of the Holy Graal, in the Longer Prose Perceval, and in the Quest of Galahad to understand the imputed distinction as: (a) The communication in the Eucharist of the whole knowledge of

the universe from Aleph to Tau; (b) the communication of the Living Christ in the dissolution of the veils of Bread and Wine; (c) the communication of the secret process by which the soul passes under divine guidance from the offices of this world to heaven, the keynote being that the soul is taken when it asks into the great transcendence. This is the implied question of the Galahad legend as distinguished from the Perceval question. There are those who are called but not chosen at all, like Gawain. There are those who get near to the great mystery but have not given up all things for it, and of these is Lancelot. There is the great cohort, like the apocalyptic multitude which no man can number—called, elected and redeemed in the lesser ways, by the offices of the external Church—and of these is the great chivalry of the Round Table. There are those who go up into the Mountain of the Lord and return again, like Bors; they have received the last degrees, but their office is in this world. In fine, there are those who follow at a long distance in the steep path, and of these is the transmuted Perceval of the Galahad legend. It is in this sense that, exalted above all and more than all things rarefied into a great and high quintessence, the history of the Holy Graal becomes the soul's history, moving through a profound symbolism of inward being, wherein we follow as we can, but the vistas are prolonged for ever, and it well seems that there is neither a beginning to the story nor a descried ending.

We find also the shadows and tokens of secret memorials which have not been declared in the external, and by the strange things which are hinted, we seem to see that the temple of the Graal on Mont Salvatch is not otherwise than as the three tabernacles which it was proposed to build on Mount Tabor. Among indications of this kind there are two only that I can mention. As in the prologue to the Book of the Holy Graal, we have heard that the anonymous but not unknown hermit met on a memorable occasion with one

who recognised him by certain signs which he carried, giving thus the unmistakable token of some instituted mystery in which both shared: as in the Longer Prose Perceval we have seen that there is an account of five changes in the Graal which took place at the altar, being five transfigurations, the last of which assumed the seeming of a chalice, but at the same time, instead of a chalice, was some undeclared mystery: so the general as well as the particular elements of the legend in its highest form offer a mystery the nature of which is recognised by the mystic through certain signs which it carries on its person; yet it is declared in part only and what remains, which is the greater part, is not more than suggested. It is that, I believe, which was seen by the maimed King when he looked into the Sacred Cup and beheld the secret of all things, the beginning even and the end. In this sense the five changes of the Graal are analogous to the five natures of man, as these in their turn correspond to the four aspects of the Cosmos and that which rules all things within and from without the Cosmos. I conclude therefore that the antecedents of the Cup Legend are (1) *Calix meus quam inebrians est* ["How intoxicating is my cup"]; (2) the Cup which does not pass away; (3) the *vas insigne electionis* ["a sign of choice"]. The antecedent of the Graal question is: Ask, and ye shall receive. The antecedent of the Enchantment of Britain is the swoon of the sensitive life, and that of the adventurous times is: I bring not peace, but a sword; I come to cast fire upon the earth, and what will I but that it should be enkindled? The closing of these times is taken when the Epopot turns at the altar, saying *Pax Dei tecum*. But this is the peace which passes understanding and it supervenes upon the *Mors osculi* ["kiss of death"]—the mystic Thomas Vaughan's "death of the kiss"—after which it is exclaimed truly: "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth and for ever." It follows therefore that the formula of the Supernatural Graal is:

Panem cœlestem accipiam [“I will receive the heavenly bread”]; that of the Natural Graal, namely, the Feeding Dish, is: Panem nostrum quotidianum da nobis hodie; and the middle term: “Man doth not live by bread alone.” I should add: These three there are one; but this is in virtue of great and high transmutations. So, after all the offices of scholarship—pursued with that patience which wears out worlds of obstacles—it proves that there is something left over, that this something bears upon its surface the aspects of mystic life, that hereof is our heritage, and that we can enter and take possession because other claimants there are none. The books of the Holy Graal do tell us of a sanctuary within the sanctuary of Christendom, wherein there are reserved great sacraments, high symbols, relics that are of all most holy, and would be so accounted in all the external ways; but of these things we have heard otherwise in certain secret schools. It follows therefore that we as mystics can lift up our eyes because there is a Morning Light which we go to meet with exultation, portantes manipulos nostros [“carrying our teams”]. We shall find the paths more easy because of our precursors, who have cleared the tangled ways and have set up landmarks and beacons, by which perchance we shall be led more straightly into our own, though in their clearing and surveying they did not at all know that they were working for us.

It is recognised by the Catholic Church that the Eucharist is at this time the necessity of our spiritual life, awaiting that great day when our daily bread shall itself become the Eucharist, no longer that substitute provided in our material toil and under the offices of which we die. The body is communicated to the body that the Spirit may be imparted to the soul. Spiritus ipse Christi animæ infunditur [“The very spirit of Christ is infused into the soul”], and this is the illustration of ecstasy. But in these days—as I have

hinted—it works only through the efficacy of a symbol, and this is why we cannot say in our hearts: *A carne nostro caro Christi ineffabile modo sentitur*, meaning *Anima sponsæ ad plenissimam in Christum transformationem sublimator* [“From our flesh the flesh of Christ is felt in an indescribable way, meaning that the soul of the bride is sublimated to the fullest transformation into Christ”]. Hence, whether it is Saint John of the Cross speaking of the Ascent of Mount Carmel or Ruysbroeck of the Hidden Stone, the discourse is always addressed to Israel in the wilderness, not in the Land of Promise. Hence also our glass of vision remains clouded, like the sanctuary; and even the books of the mystics subsist under the law of the interdict and are expressed in the language thereof. Those of the Holy Graal are written from very far away in the terms of transubstantiation, presented thaumaturgically under all the veils of grossness, instead of the terms of the Eucharist in the language of those who have been ordained with the holy oils of the Comforter. In other books the metaphysics of the Lover and the Beloved have been rendered in the tongue of the flesh, forgetting that it bears the same relation to the illusory correspondence of human unions that the Bread of the Eucharist bears to material nutriment. The true analogy is in the contradistinction between the elements of bodies and minds. The high analogy in literature is the Supper at the Second Table in the poem of Robert de Borron. That was a spiritual repast, where there was neither eating nor drinking. For this reason the symbolic fish upon the table conveyed to the Warden the title of Rich Fisher, and it is in this sense—that is to say, for the same reason—that the saints become Fishers of Men. We shall re-express the experience of the mystic life in terms that will make all things new when we understand fully what is implied by the secret words: *Co-opertus et absconditus sponsus* [“Co-covered and hidden spouse”].

CHAPTER SIX THE LOST BOOK OF THE GRAAL

We have seen, in considering the claim of the Celtic Church to recognition as a possible guiding and shaping spirit of the Graal literature, that one speculation regarding it was the existence in concealment of a particular book, a liturgy of some kind, preferably a Book of the Mass. I have no definite concern in the hypothesis, as it is in no sense necessary to the interpretation which I place upon the literature; but the existence of one or more primordial texts is declared so invariably in the romances that, on the surface at least, it seems simpler to presume its existence, and it becomes thus desirable to ascertain what evidence there is otherwise to be gleaned about it. As it has been left so far by scholarship, the question wears almost an inscrutable or at least an inextricable aspect, and its connection with the mystic aspects of the Holy Graal may be perhaps rather adventitious than accidental, but it is introduced here as a preliminary to those yet more abstruse researches which belong to the ninth book.

We must in the first place set aside from our minds the texts which depend from one another, whether the earlier examples are extant or not. The vanished Quest of Guiot—priceless as its discovery would be—is not the term of our research. We must detach further those obviously fabulous chronicles by the pretence of which it is supposed that the several quests and histories were perpetuated for the enlightenment of posterity. No one is wondering seriously whether the knightly adventures of the Round Table were reduced into great chronicles by the scribes of King Arthur's court, for which assurance we have the evidence of the Huth Merlin—among several deponents. There are other source's which may be equally putative, but it is these which raise the question, and I proceed to their enumeration as follows: (1) That which contained the

greatest secret of the world, a minute volume which would lie in the hollow of a hermit's hand—in a word, the text presupposed by the prologue to the Book of the Holy Graal; (2) that which is ascribed to Master Blihis—the fabulator famosus [“famous storyteller”]—by the Elucidation prefixed to the Conte del Graal; (3) that which is called the Great Book by Robert de Borron, containing the Great Secret to which the term Graal is referred, a book of many histories, written by many clerks, and by him communicated apparently to his patron, Walter Montbéliard; (4) that which the Count of Flanders gave to Chrétien de Troyes with instructions to retell it, being the best story ever recited in royal court; (5) that which the Hermit Blaise codified with the help of the secret records kept by the Wardens of the Graal; (6) that which the author of the Longer Prose Perceval refers to the saintly man whom he calls Josephus; (7) that which the Jew Flegitanis transcribed from the time-immemorial chronicles of the starry heavens.

The palmary problem for our solution is, whether in the last understanding a mystery book or a Mass book, these cryptic texts can be regarded as “seven and yet one, like shadows in a dream”—or rather, as many inventions concerning one document. If we summarise the results which were obtained from them, we can express them by their chief examples thus: (1) From the prototype of the Book of the Holy Graal came the super-apostolical succession, the ordination of Joseph the Second, the dogma of transubstantiation manifested arch-naturally, and the building of Corbenic as a Castle of Perils and Wonders girt about the Holy Graal; (2) from the prototype of the Elucidation we have the indicible secret of the Graal, the seven discoveries of its sanctuary, the account of the Rich Fisherman's skill in necromancy and his protean transformations by magical art; (3) from the prototype of

Robert de Borron we have the Secret Words, by him or subsequently referred to Eucharistic consecration; (4) from the prototype of Chrétien we have the history of Perceval le Gallois, so far as it was taken by him; (5) from the putative chronicle of Blaise and his scribes, antecedent and concurrent, we have all that which belongs to the history of Merlin, the foundation of the Round Table and the Siege Perilous; (6) from the prototype of the Longer Prose Perceval we have Perceval's later history, his great and final achievements—unlike all else in the literature, more sad, more beautiful, more strange than anything told concerning him; (7) from the prototype of Guiot, we have the Graal presented as a stone, and with an ascribed antecedent history which is the antithesis of all other histories. Had I set up these varying versions in the form of seven propositions on the gates of Salerno or Salamanca and offered to maintain their identity in a thesis against all corners, I suppose that I could make out a case with the help of scholastic casuistry and the rest of the dialectical subtleties; but in the absence of all motive, and detached as regards the result, I can only say in all reason that the quests and the histories as we have them never issued from a single quest or a single history. We may believe, if we please, that the hook of the Count of Flanders was really the Quest of Guiot, reducing the sources to six, and a certain ingenuity—with courage towards precarious positions—may help us to further eliminations, but the root-difficulty will remain—that the Quests, as we have them, exclude one another and so also do some of the histories. It follows that there were many prototypes, or alternatively that there were many inventions in respect of the sources. In respect of the Perceval legends there was the non-Graal folk-lore myth, which accounts for their root-matter but not for their particular renderings and their individual Graal elements; the nearest approximation to these myths and their nearest issue in time may have been the Quest of

Guiot. One general source of De Borron was transparently the Evangelium Nicodemi, complicated by later Joseph legends, including the tradition of Fécamp, but more than all by another source, of which he had heard at a distance and of which I shall speak at the close. The Quest of Galahad makes no claim to a prototype, but it reflects extant manuscripts of the Greater Chronicles; for the rest, its own story was all important; it cared nothing for antecedents, and it is only by sporadic precaution, outside its normal lines, that it registers at the close after what manner it pretended to be reduced into writing. The prototypes of this text are in the annals of sanctity, except in so far as it reflects—and it does so indubitably—some rumours which Robert de Borron had drawn into romance. As regards Galahad himself, his romance is a great invention derived from the prose Lancelot. The Longer Prose Perceval is an invention after another manner; there is nothing to warrant us in attaching any credit to the imputed source in Josephus, but the book drew from many places and transmuted that which it drew with a shaping spirit; it is an important text for those rumours to which I have referred darkly. It works, like the Quest of Galahad, in a high region of similitude, and its pretended source is connected intimately with the second Joseph of the Greater Chronicles.

We are now in a position to deal with a further ascription which is so general in the literature and was once rather widely accepted—namely, that of a Latin source. It will be noted that this is a simple debate of language and it leaves the unity or multiplicity of the prototypes an open question. It is worth mentioning, because it enters into the history of the criticism of Graal literature. There is no need to say that it is now passed over by scholarship, and the first person to reject it was Robert Southey in his preface to the edition of Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* which

passes under his name, though he had no hand in the editing of the text itself. "I do not believe," he says, "that any of these romances ever existed in Latin,—by whom, or for whom, could they have been written in that language?" For the romances as romances, for Meliadus de Leonnois, Gyron le Courtois, and so forth, the question has one answer only, the fact notwithstanding that the prologue to Gyron draws all the prose tales of the Round Table from what it terms the Latin Book of the Holy Graal. There is one answer also for any version of the Graal legend, as we now know it. Even for that period, the Comte de Tressan committed a serious absurdity when he affirmed that the whole literature of Arthurian chivalry, derived by the Bretons from the ancient and fabulous chronicles of Melkin and Tezelin, was written in Latin by Rusticien de Pise, who was simply a compiler and translator into the Italian tongue and was concerned, as such, chiefly with the Tristram cycle. At the same time it is possible to take too extreme a view. In his preface to another work, Palmerin of England, Southey remarks that "every reader of romance knows how commonly they were represented as translations from old manuscripts," and that such an ascription, "instead of proving that a given work was translated, affords some evidence that it is original." The inference is worded too strongly and is scarcely serious as it stands, but the fact itself is certain; and indeed the Graal romances belong to a class of literature which was prone to false explanations in respect both of authorship and language. Still, there is something to be said for the middle ground suggested, now long ago, on the authority of Paulin Paris, that while it is idle to talk of romances in the Latin language, there is nothing impossible in the suggestion that the sacramental legend of Joseph of Arimathæa and his Sacred Vessel may have existed in Latin. From his point of view it was a Gradual, and he even goes so far as to speculate (a) that it was preserved at Glastonbury; (b) that it was not used by

the monks because it involved schism with Rome; and (c) that, like the Jew of Toledo's transcript, it was forgotten for three centuries—till it was recalled by the quarrel between Henry the Second and the Pope. This is, of course, fantasy, but the bare supposition of such a Latin legend would account in a natural manner for an ascription that is singularly consistent, while it would not pretend to represent the lost imaginary prototypes of the whole complex literature.

In this connection we might do worse than take warning by one lesson from the literature of alchemy. The early writers on this subject were in the habit of citing authorities who, because they could not be identified, were often regarded as mythical; but all the same they existed in manuscript; they might have been found by those who had taken the trouble; and they are now familiar to students by the edition of Berthelot. In matters of this kind we do not know what a day may bring forth, and from all standpoints the existence of a pious legend—orthodox or heretical, Roman or Breton—concerning Joseph and his Hallow would be interesting, as it must also be valuable. Unfortunately, the Quest of the Holy Graal in respect of its missing literature is after the manner of a greater enterprise, for there are many who follow it and few that come to the term of a new discovery. There are authorities now in England to whom the possibility of such a text might not be unacceptable, though criticism dwells rightly upon the fact that there is no mention of the Holy Vessel in the earliest apocryphal records of the evangelisation of Britain by Joseph. We have heard already of one Latin memorial among the archives of Fécamp, but of its date we know nothing, and its conversion legend does not belong to this island.

Having thus determined, as I think, the question of a single prototype accounting for all the literature, we have to

realise that everything remains in respect of the mystery of origin—now the wonder element of things unseen and heard of dimly only, sometimes expressed imperfectly in Nature poems, which have no concern therein; now what sounds like a claim on behalf of the Celtic Church; now sacramental legends incorporated by Latin Christianity into the great body of romances. But I speak here of things which are approximate and explicable in an atmosphere of legend married to a definite world of doctrine. There is nothing in these to explain (a) the report of a secret sanctuary in all the texts without any exception whatever, for even the foolish Crown of all Adventures allocates its house of ghosts to the loneliest of all roads; (b) the Secret Words of Consecration; (c) the arch-natural Mass celebrated in three of the texts; (d) the hidden priesthood; (e) the claim to a holy and hidden knowledge; (f) the removal of this knowledge from concealment to further concealment, because the world was not worthy. These are the rumours to which I have alluded previously, and I have attached to them this name, because there is nothing more obvious in the whole cycle of literature than the fact that those who wrote of them did not—for the most part—know what they said. Now, it is a canon of reasonable criticism that writers who make use of materials which they do not understand are not the inventors thereof. It had never entered into the heart of Robert de Borron that his Secret Words reduced the ordinary Eucharist to something approaching a semblance; to the putative Walter Map that his first Bishop of Christendom put the whole Christian apostolate into an inferior place; to any one of the romancers that his Secret Sanctuary was the claim of an orthodoxy in transcendence; to the authors in particular of the Longer Prose Perceval and the Quest of Galahad that their implied House of the Hallows came perilously near to the taking of the heart out of Christendom. So little did these things occur to them that their materials are

mismanaged rather seriously in consequence. Had the first Bishop of Christendom ordained those whom he intended to succeed him, I should not bring this charge against the author of that text which presents the consecration of the second Joseph in all its sanctity and wonder. But, as a matter of fact, the custody of the Holy Graal passed into the hands of a layman, and we are offered the picture of a priest anointed by Christ who does not even baptize, a hermit on one occasion being obtained to administer this simplest of all the sacraments. And yet this first bishop of Christendom had ordained many and enthroned some at Sarras. There is a similar crux in the Lesser Holy Graal and its companion poem. One would have thought that the possession of the Secret Words would be reserved to those bearing the seal of the priesthood; but it is not suggested that Joseph of Arimathæa was either ordained by Christ or by any bishop of the Church; his successor, Brons, was simply a disciple saved out of rejected Jerusalem; and Perceval, the tiers bons, was a knight of King Arthur's court. Of two things, therefore, one: either the makers of romance who brought in these elements knew not what they said, and reflected at a far distance that which they had heard otherwise, or the claims are not that which they appear on the surface; beneath them there is a deeper concealment; there was something behind the Eucharistic aspect of the mysterious formula and something behind the ordination in transcendence; there was in fine a more secret service than that of the Mass. I accept the first alternative, but without prejudice to the second, which is true also, as we shall see later, still on the understanding that what subtended was not in the mind of romance.

If it is necessary or convenient to posit the existence of a single primordial book, then the Sanctum Graal, Liber Gradalis, or Missa de Corpore Christi contained these elements, and it contained nothing or little of the diverse

matter in the literature. It was not a liturgy connected with the veneration of a relic or of certain relics; it did not recite the legend of Joseph or account in what manner soever for the conversion of Britain. It was a Rite of the Order of Melchisedech and it communicated the arch-natural sacrament *ex hypothesi*. The prologue to the Book of the Holy Graal has what one would be inclined to call a rumour of this Mass, after which there supervened an ecstasy as a foretaste of the Divine Rapture. The term thereof was the Vision which is He, and the motive of the dilucid experience is evaded—consciously or not, but, I say, in truth unconsciously—by the substitute of reflections upon difficulties concerning the Trinity. No Graal writer had ever seen this book, but the rumour of it was about in the world. It was held in reserve not in a monastery at Glastonbury, but by a secret school of Christians whose position in respect of current orthodoxy was that of the apex to the base of any perfect triangle—its completion and not its destruction. There was more of the rumour abroad than might have been expected antecedently, as if a Church of Saint John the Divine were planted somewhere in the West, but not in the open day. There was more of the rumour, and some makers of texts had heard more than others. We know that in the prologue to the Book of the Holy Graal there is what might be taken as a reference to this company, the members of which were sealed, so that they could recognise one another by something which they bore upon their persons. When, in the Quest of Galahad, the nine strange knights came from the East and the West and the North and the South to sit down, or to kneel rather, at the Table of the Graal, they entered without challenge, they took their proper places and were saluted and welcomed, because they also bore the seal of the secret order. King Pelles went out because he was not on the Quest, because his part was done, because he had attained and seen, for which reason he departed as one who says: *Nunc dimittis*

Servum tuum, Domine, secundum verbum tuum in pace: quia viderunt oculi mei [“Now, O Lord, you let your servant go in peace, according to your word: because mine eyes have seen”]—elsewhere or earlier—salutare tuum [“greetings to you”]. The minstrels and romancers knew little enough of these mysteries, for the most part, and on the basis of the rumours of the book they superposed what they had heard otherwise—the legend of Joseph, the cultus of the Precious Blood, clouds of fables, multiples of relics, hoc genus omne. But it is to be noted in fine that the withdrawal into deeper concealment referred more especially to the company as a hidden school, which would be sought and not found, unless God led the quester. And perhaps those who came into contact by accident did not always ask the question: Who administers the Mysteries? Yet, if they were elected they were brought in subsequently.

It will be observed that in this speculation the existence of the rumours which were incorporated does not in a strict sense involve the existence of any book to account for their comparative prevalence.

CHAPTER SEVEN THE DECLARED MYSTERY OF QUEST

There follow in this place certain exotics of the subject which are not put forward as an integral part thereof, but are offered to those only who are concerned in the rumour of the Graal literature—as expressed in this book—so far as it incorporates that literature in the annals of Christian sanctity. They will know that the sins and imperfections of this our human life are attenuated by the turning of our intellectual part towards the Blessed Zion, and that, next after leading the all-hallowed life, the making of holy books to formulate the aspirations of our best part in its best moments is counted in a man towards righteousness. It is

well, indeed, for him whose life is dedicated to the Quest, but at least—in the stress and terror of these our wayward times—in the heart and the inmost heart let us keep its memory green.

1. Faith is the implicits of the mind passing into expression formally, and knowledge is the same implicits certified by experience. It is in this sense that God recompenses those who seek Him out. The Mystery of the Holy Graal is the sun of a great implicit rising in the zones of consciousness.
2. If, therefore, from one point of view we are dealing with great speculations, from another we are truly concerned with great certainties; and Galahad did not question or falter.
3. There is nothing in the world which has less to do with a process or other conventions and artifices than the ascent of a soul to light. Thus, the Quest had no formulæ.
4. The mistake which man has made has been to go in search of his soul, which does not need finding but entering only, and that by a certain door which is always open within him. All the doors of Corbenic were open when Lancelot came thereto, even that sanctuary into which he could look from afar but wherein he could not enter. The chief door is inscribed: *Sapida notitia de Deo* [“Tasty information about God”].
5. It is understood, however, that before the door is reached there are gates which are well guarded. So on a night at midnight, when the moon shone clear, Lancelot paused at the postern, which opened toward the sea, and saw how two lions guarded the entrance.

6. It is true also that the gates are not opened easily by which the King of Glory comes in; yet we know that the King comes. The key of these gates is called *Voluntas inflammata* ["The will is inflamed"]. This will works on the hither side, but there is another which works on the further, and this is named *Benepiacitum termino carens* ["Lacking a favorable term"]. When the gates open by the concurrence of the two powers, the King of Salem comes forth carrying Bread and Wine. Of the communication which then follows it is said: *Gustari potest quod explicari nequit* ["It can be tasted that cannot be explained"]. Galahad and his fellows did taste and saw that the Lord is sweet.
7. For the proselytes of the gate which is external and the postulants at the *pronaos* of the temple, the Crucifixion took place on Calvary. For the adepts and the *epopts*, the question, if it can be said to arise, is not whether this is true on the plane of history, but in what manner it signifies, seeing that the great event of all human history began at the foundation of the world, as it still takes place daily in the soul of every man for whom the one thing needful is to know when Christ shall arise within him. It is then that those on the Quest can say with Sir Bors: "But God was ever my comfort."
8. All that we forget is immaterial if that which we remember is vital, as, for example, the Lord of Quest, who said: "Therefore I wote wel whan my body is dede, my sowle shalle be in grete joye to see the blessid Trynyte every day, and the mageste of oure lord Jhesu Cryst"—in other words, *Contemplatio perfectissima et altissima Dei* ["The most perfect and profound contemplation of God"].

9. The first condition of interior progress is in detachment from the lesser responsibilities which—because they have not entered into the heart of hearts—are external to our proper interests and distract from those high and onerous burdens which we have to carry on our road upward, until such time as even the road itself—and the burdens thereto belonging—shall assume and transport us. From the greatest even to the least the missions of knight-errantry were followed in utter detachment, and those who went on the Quest carried no impedimenta. So also is the great silence ordained about those who would hear the interior Dei locutio altissimi [“God’s most high speech”].
10. The generation of God is outward and so into the estate of man; but the generation of man—which is called also rebirth—is inward, and so into the Divine Union. The great clerks wrote the adventures of the Graal in great books, but there was no rehearsal of the last branch, the first rubric of which would read: De felicissima animæ cum Deo unione [“Of the most happy union of the soul with God”].
11. Most conventions of man concern questions of procedure, and it is so with the things which are above, for we must either proceed or perish. Sir Gawain turned back, and hence he was smitten of the old wound that Lancelot gave him; but no knight who achieved the Quest died in arms, unless in Holy War.
12. In the declared knowledge which behind it has the hidden knowledge, blood is the symbol of life, and this being so it can be understood after what manner the Precious Blood profiteth and the Reliquary thereof. The other name of this Reliquary is Holy Church. But such

are the offices of its mercy that in examine mortis even Gawain received his Saviour.

13. The root from which springs the great tree of mysticism is the old theological doctrine that God is the centre of the heart. He is by alternative the soul's centre. This is the ground of the union: *per charitatem iusti uniuntur cum Deo*. Gawain entreated Lancelot to "prayer some prayer more or lesse for my soule;" King Arthur as he drifted in the dark barge said to Bedivere: "And yf thou here neuer more of me praye for my soule," but Perceval and Galahad knew that their reward was with them; they asked for no offerings and no one wearied Heaven.
14. In the soul's conversion there is no office of time, and this is why the greatest changes are always out of expectation. The Graal came like angels—unawares. The *castissimus et purissimus amplexus* ["the most chaste and pure embrace"] and the *felix osculum* ["happy kiss"] are given as in the dark and suddenly. There is further nothing in the wide world so swift and so silent as the *illapsus Christi in centrum animæ* ["the slip of Christ into the center of the soul"]. So also it is said of Galahad that "sodenely his soule departed."
15. The five changes of the Graal are analogous to the five natures of man, and these in their turn correspond to the four aspects of the cosmos and that which rules all things within and from above the cosmos.
16. The consideration of eternity arises from that of the Holy Graal, as from all literature at its highest, and if I have set it as the term of my own researches, in this respect, it is rather because it has imposed itself than because I have sought it out.

Obiter Dicta[“Said by the way”].

And now as the sum total of these mystical aspects, the desire of the eyes in the seeking and finding of the Holy Graal may, I think, be re-expressed as follows:

Temple or Palace or Castle—Mont Salvatch or Corbenic—wherever located and whether described as a wilderness of building, crowded burg or simple hermit’s hold—there is one characteristic concerning the sanctuary which, amidst all its variations in the accidents, is essentially the same; the Keeper of the great Hallows has fallen upon evil days; the means of restoration and of healing are, as one would say, all around him, yet the help must come from without; it is that of his predestined successor, whose office is to remove the vessel, so that it is henceforth never seen so openly. Taking the Quest of Galahad as that which has the highest significance spiritually, I think that we may speak of it thus: We know that in the last analysis it is the inward man who is really the Wounded Keeper. The mysteries are his; on him the woe has fallen; it is he who expects healing and redemption. His body is the Graal Castle, which is also the castle of Souls, and behind it is the Earthly Paradise as a vague and latent memory. We may not be able to translate the matter of the romance entirely into mystical symbolism, since it is only a rumour at a distance of life in the spirit and its great secrets. But, I think, we can see that it all works together for the one end of all. He who enters into the consideration of this secret and immemorial house under fitting guidance shall know why it is that the Graal is served by a pure maiden, and why that maiden is ultimately dispossessed. Helayne is the soul, and the soul is in exile because all the high unions have been declared voided—the crown has been separated from the kingdom, and experience from the higher knowledge. So long as she remained a pure virgin, she was more than a thyrsus

bearer in the mysteries, but the morganatic marriage of mortal life is part of her doom. This is still a high destiny, for the soul out of earthly experience brings forth spiritual desire, which is the quest of the return journey, and this is Galahad. It is therefore within the law and the order that she has to conceive and bring him forth. Galahad represents the highest spiritual aspirations and desires passing into full consciousness, and so into attainment. But he is not reared by his mother, because Eros, which is the higher knowledge, has dedicated the true desire to the proper ends thereof. It will be seen also what must be understood by Lancelot in secret communication with Helayne, though he has taken her throughout for another. The reason is that it is impossible to marry even in hell without marrying that seed which is of heaven. As she is the psychic woman, so is he the natural man, or rather the natural intelligence which is not without its consecrations, not without its term in the highest. Helayne believes that her desire is only for Lancelot, but this is because she takes him for Eros, and it is by such a misconception that the lesser Heaven stoops to the earth; herein also there is a sacred dispensation, because so is the earth assumed. I have said that Lancelot is the natural man, but he is such merely at the highest; he is born in great sorrow, and she who has conceived him saves her soul alive amidst the offices of external religion. He is carried into the lesser land of Faerie, as into a garden of childhood. When he draws towards manhood, he comes forth from the first places of enchantment and is clothed upon by the active duties of life as by the vestures of chivalry. He enters also into the unsanctified life of sense, into an union against the consecrated life and order. But his redeeming quality is that he is faithful and true, because of which, and because of his genealogy, he is chosen to beget Galahad, of whom he is otherwise unworthy, even as we all, in our daily life, fall short of the higher aspirations of the soul. As regards

the Keeper, it is certain that he must die and be replaced by another Keeper before the true man can be raised, with the holy things to him belonging, which Hallows are indeed withdrawn, but it is with and in respect of him only, for the keepers are a great multitude, though it is certain that the Graal is one. The path of quest is the path of upward progress, and it is only at the great height that Galahad knows himself as really the Wounded Keeper and that thus, in the last resource, the physician heals himself. Now this is the mystery from everlasting, which is called in the high doctrine Schema misericordiæ [“Scheme of mercy”]. It is said: Latet, æternumque latebit, [“It is hidden, and forever will be hidden,”] until it is revealed in us; and as to this: Te rogamus, audi nos [“We beg you, hear us”].

