

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 19]

BOOK NINE SECRET TRADITION IN CHRISTIAN TIMES

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CHAPTER FIVE THE CLAIM IN RESPECT OF TEMPLAR
INFLUENCE

I suppose that there is no one at this day, even on the outermost fringes of the wide world of books, who willed to be acquainted with the fact that the old chivalry of the Temple was instituted as a protection to the Christian pilgrims who visited the Holy Places of Jerusalem in the first quarter of the twelfth century. It was a military and religious organisation ab origin symboli, differing as such from the Hospital of Saint John, which at its incorporation was a healing fraternity, and only assumed arms following the example of the Militia Crucifera Evangelica which had arisen suddenly at its side. Templar history is a great storehouse of enchanting hypothesis and also of unreclaimed speculation repeated from writer to writer. I know no greater sea on which ships of imagination and fantasy have launched more boldly; if they have reached no final harbour, they have paused to take in further stores at

innumerable “summer isles” of an imaginary Eden “lying in dark purple spheres of sea,” and if in some undemonstrable way they have slipped their cables and eluded sporadic hostile vessels, this has been because the equipment of the latter has not been better than their own, while as regards credentials the letter of marque carried by the unwelcome visitor would often not bear much closer inspection than their own unchartered licence. Now, an Order which was established in the East for a specific Christian purpose, which embodied ideas of devotion that were ecclesiastical as well as religious, which accepted monastic vows—even those counsels of perfection that qualified for the Quest of the Graal—yet, in spite of these, which became wealthy in the corporate sense beyond the dreams of avarice, insolent and haughty beyond the prerogatives of feudal royalty, and had darker charges looming against it, does assuredly offer a picture to research the possibilities of which are likely to be exploited in all directions. The story of the brotherhood and the things implied therein have been therefore approached from many points of view, enforced by many considerations and by much which passes for evidence. I speak—as it will be understood—here of the things recognised or divined beneath its external surface, for on that side there is nothing more direct and more simple. We know that the Latin Church has a heavy account to balance in respect of the Order, and by the characteristics of the charges preferred it is also responsible for having brought it—whether warrantably or otherwise, but at least all unwittingly—within the dubious circle of the Secret Tradition in Christian times, for a considerable proportion of those who recognise the fact of the Tradition. It remains, however, that from this standpoint the story has never been told at all by any one who spoke with knowledge on so involved a subject. Here there is no place to attempt it, but the Mystery of the Temple in a minor degree interpenetrated the Mystery of the Graal, and something

must be said concerning it in this connection. There is at the present time in England (a) an extending disposition to appreciate remotely and dimly an imbedded evidence that the romance-literature did somehow shadow forth an initiatory process—but this I have hinted previously; and (b) that in some manner not yet understood the Knights Templars and the Graal legend grew up together, and will answer with strange voices if set to question one another across the void which intervenes between an externalised chivalry in fact and an ideal knighthood in books. In a word, the literature has been held sometimes to represent, within clouds and under curious veils, something of the imputed Templar subsurface design, or alternatively certain Graal texts do at least indubitably reflect in their own manner, on their own authority, the Knighthood of the Morning and of Palestine raised from the world of reflections into the world of the archetype. The Longer Prose Perceval is not only a work with an allegorical and also a mystic motive; it is not only the story of a suppressed word, of the sorrow and suffering which were wrought by that suppression, and the joy and deliverance which followed the recovery of the word; it is not only the prototypical correlative of the legend of the Royal Arch and the eighteenth degree in a form not less clear because it can be traced only by a specialist; but—at least in adventitious ways—it has ever-recurring characters of Templar symbolism. But that which wears herein—and so through the French cycle—little more than the aspect of accident, passes in the Parsifal of Wolfram into the appearance of a preconceived plan. Herein is the story of a confraternity, partly military but in part also religious, connecting by the legend of its lineage with a kind of secret history in Christendom written under the guise of knight-errantry; it is the romance of an Order of the Holy Graal whose members are chosen out of thousands, dedicated, set apart, and sometimes terrible in power, almost “like Cedron in flood.” I do not wonder that

before the face of this picture the criticism of the Graal literature has been haunted here and there with the dream of Templar intervention, and the only question which concerns us is the extent to which such an hypothesis can be justified. Even in the least illuminated circles the possibility is regarded with increasing respect, and apart from any claims on its own basis it would be difficult for this reason to pass it over entirely. The imputed fact, or the likelihood, that the literature was a vehicle, officially or otherwise, of some mystical tradition, without depending for any one on the merits of this hypothesis, would in certain minds be enhanced substantially thereby. But it is desirable to note, in the first place, that it is now an old speculation; secondly, that recent years have not brought to light, that I am aware, any new facts on the subject; and, lastly, that in so far as the contention is put freshly there is a disposition to dwell on the Templeisen depicted in the Parsifal as not only a militant body but also a governing theocracy, and one which above all things was not ecclesiastical. It is just this which impresses me as perhaps a little exaggerated in tone: I do not know that Amfortas and his chivalry can be called a governing power any more than the company over-ruled by King Pelles of Lytenoys, of whose warfare we hear in the Vulgate Merlin. If Mont Salvatch was anything of the kind, it was obviously a secret kingdom, and as much might be said of Corbenic and the realm to which it belonged. Seeing also that the keepers of the Graal and the cohort of their ministers had at no time a sacerdotal aspect—some express claims notwithstanding as to their geniture and their ministers—the ecclesiastical note therein is wanting through all the cycles; the distinction in chief between the Templeisen and the other knights of the Graal is that in Wolfram the former are elaborately organised, while the latter are either an inchoate gathering or they are merely the retinue which would be attached to a feudal castle. In one case, which is

that of the Didot Perceval, the House Mystic is perhaps a simple tower, which, from all that we learn by the context, might be little more than a hermit's hold.

It is obviously one thing to say that Wolfram modelled his chivalry on the prototype of the Knights Templars—which is an interesting fact without consequence—and another that the modelling was inspired by a familiarity with Templar secret intention, and it is on this point, which is obviously the hypothesis in its motive, that reasonable evidence is wanted. The next step is to recognise tendencies suspected in the poem of Wolfram, to predicate them of Guiot, his precursor, and to regard the Templar design—whatever otherwise it was—as anti-Catholic in its spirit. With the first ascription I have dealt in discussing the German cycle in general; of the second we can divine little, and then but darkly; while in respect of the third I recur to that canon of criticism which has served me well already: in so far as the Templar Order is held to be anti-Catholic, it is antecedently and proportionately unlikely that any evidence will connect it with the Graal literature. Whatever the origin of that literature, as we now have it, in one and all its forms, it is not merely a Catholic legend, but it seems so to have issued from the heart and centre of Catholicity that it is almost in the likeness of an exotic, as if from some sanctuary behind the external and visible sanctuary of the universal Church. If this is the heart of romance going out in its yearning towards God, there was never a heart in Christendom “which warmer beat and stronger.” It is like the voice of that ideal city, the first city, the spiritual city, of which Wagner spoke, and it is seldom heard on earth; it seems to speak from the pictured home of the soul, the place of pre-existence, with all the mystery and wonder of enchanted Hud and of Irêm in the Land of the Morning. And in the melody of that voice, within the verbal message thereof, we know that the country deep in Asia is not to be found in any

Highlands beyond the Himalayas, or in the fabled Sarras. Again, it is the country of the soul and of the soul's legend; it is the Kabalistic place of the palaces at the centre of the dimensions, sustaining all things. We know also that we shall look vainly for Corbenic on the wild coast of Wales, and for the local habitation of the Graal Castle of Mont Salvatch at any of the grand passes of the Pyrenees into Spain; for this also is like the Rosicrucian mountain of Abiegnus and the mystic Fir-Cone, a mystery enfolded within and without by many meanings.

But if such is the position in respect of the Holy Graal, and if it follows therefrom that in some hands it has rested under a serious cloud of misapprehension, there is something to be said on the same subject, though not in the same sense, in respect of the Knights Templars. The eye which has turned from the Graal literature to the records of the great chivalry has been drawn in that direction because of the charge of heresy which was preferred of old against it. I am not designing to suggest that the side of criticism which is prominent in the open day is interested—or much less concerned seriously—in heresy as such, though I confess—if it be fitting to say so—that next to the truth which is of God and the deeps therein, whereof simple minds dream nothing, I am conscious of few things more fascinating than the story of the bad old doctrines and of those who loved, followed and honoured them. It draws the mind for ever with vague and preposterous hopes; and seeing further that I am on the side of the orthodox faith only in so far as the old mule which carries the mysteries can be shown to be on God's side—as the High History testifies—I do not doubt that many are the choses suspectes which might be gleaned from this book, and many there may still be who could wish to include its writer in the annals carried forward of Smithfield or Tyburn and those who went thither in the days of Mary or Elizabeth.

Here is cleansing confession; but scholarship, as I have intimated, is detached, subject to its inoculation by the notion of pagan faiths perpetuated through Christian centuries—the stilettos of which virus have pierced me also in both arms. But I believe, apart from such images, that I carry a lamp which enlightens these obscure ways, and much as I may love their crookedness, they do not deceive me. It is on this account precisely that the heresy of the Temple, so far as it concerns the Graal, can be dealt with shortly here, for which purpose I will go back as early as my knowledge of the criticism extends along these lines.

The summary of the particulars in chief may be grouped together as follows: (1) In the year 1825, Von Hammer, an orientalist of the period, identified certain baptismal fonts or vases—which he included among antique memorials of the Templars—as examples of the true San Graal vessels, and as he connected Templar secret doctrine with that of the Gnostics, he remembered that, according to Epiphanius, the Marcosians made use of three large vases in their celebration of the Eucharist. These were filled with white wine, which was supposed to undergo a transformation of colour and other magical changes. (2) In the year 1828, the Abbé Grégoire expressed a conviction that Christ transmitted to Saint John the Evangelist a secret doctrine which descended ultimately to the Templars. (3) In the year 1834 Gabriele Rossetti affirmed that the Templars belonged to secret societies, and that they professed doctrines inimical to Rome; but though much has been hazarded concerning their opinions, nothing has been ascertained conclusively. He held further that they were of Egyptian derivation and that from them the Albigenses emanated. Here I am reminded of a rumour regarding a manuscript said to be in the Louvre, but of which I know nothing, either as to title or claims; it is reported to state that the Templars originated from a more

ancient Order, called the Magian Brothers. (4) In the year 1854 it was sustained by Eugene Aroux that all the archaic romances of the Holy Graal were written to glorify the Order of the Temple and to present its doctrine in the form of romance. (5) In the year 1858 the same writer went further and suggested that the Templars were parties to a concealed programme for the creation at Jerusalem of a religious and military rival of the power and orthodoxy at Rome. (6) In the year 1842 Dr. K. Simrock expressed an opinion that the doctrine and tradition of the Templars were based on the tradition of the Graal; that Christ had been instructed by the Essenes; that he confided a secret knowledge to some of his disciples; and that this was imparted subsequently to the priests of the Temple chivalry. (7) In 1844, writing on the influence of Welsh tradition, it was hazarded by A. Schulze that the symbols and doctrines of the Templars might have been borrowed from the Graal. (8) In 1865 Louis Moland in his *Origines Littéraires* considered that the Graal legend and the Templar Order were expressions in literature and life of the same ideal, being the union of knighthood with sanctity, and he further stated (a) that there was a strange Templar reflection in a literature which was unquestionably and closely related with the principles of that Order; (b) that the Roman Curia interdicted the Graal romances coincidentally with the suppression of the knightly Order. It will be seen that the root of this thesis is identical with that of Schulze.

The summary above has of necessity omitted many allocations and many hazards of hypothesis which might have been collected from other sources. Our next step is to ascertain from the charges against the Templars in the course of the processes instituted by the ecclesiastical Courts of France, and elsewhere, what were the heresies of doctrine and practice imputed to the chivalry. Setting aside

those which constituted infringements of the Decalogue and sins crying to heaven for vengeance, the major accusations were two—that candidates for reception into the Order were required to deny Christ and offer a ceremonial outrage to the Cross, as the symbol of his Passion. The minor accusations were many, but after disentangling the alleged cultus of the Baphometric head and some other things which I rule outside our concern, they are reducible also to two, being (1) the secular absolution from sin which was said to be given by the Grand Master in open chapter, or alternatively, I believe, by the preceptors of local commanderies and encampments; (2) a practice in respect of the Eucharist which did not involve exactly a denial in doctrine, but exhibited hostility thereto. The first is important because in a qualified form it was the only charge which was held proven against the Templars as a result of the examinations in England; but it is on the second that the whole thesis with which we are concerned breaks down. The accusation was that in consecrating the Blessed Sacrament, the necessary and efficacious words were omitted. The evidence adduced on this question included that of an English priest who had once officiated for the Templars and who was forbidden to recite the Clause of Institution.

I do not propose to report upon the validity of the charges in whole or in detail; those who are concerned must be referred—if they can summons such patience for their aid—to the Latin process of the trial, which was published many years since in France. The Templars have been accused by learned people of Gnosticism, Manichæanism, Albigensianism, on the authority of those memorials; but there is no evidence for such charges; it is wanting also for the other speculations which are included in my summary above; and, in fine, there is none also for the suggested Graal connections, though I confess that my researches

were begun in an expectation of the kind. The Templars, if guilty, as affirmed of old on the worst of all possible authority, were in the position of the heresies in Southern France; they reduced, denied, derided, or stood in fear of the Eucharist, and therefore the abyss intervenes between them and a literature which existed to exalt it. As regards the German Parsifal, it possesses the putative tendencies suspected to which I have referred in more than one connection. It may be said that the Host which came from heaven was a designed antithesis to the Host consecrated on earth, but I believe that this is fantasy, because to hear an ordinary Mass was as much a duty of knighthood according to Wolfram, as we find it in the Quest of Galahad, the Longer Prose Perceval and any of the other romances. I believe in my heart that the instituted analogy between the Templeisen of Mont Salvatch and the great Order of Chivalry was natural and irresistible in the mind of the poet who conceived it—whether Wolfram or Guiot; I believe that it is the only connection and, as I have said, that nothing follows therefrom. I believe that the sole Eucharistic privilege enjoyed by the Templars was a decree which permitted them to celebrate one Mass annually in places under interdict; that they were militantly papal; that there were next to no instances in which they renounced their faith, much as they may have dishonoured it by their lives; and that their foundation under the patronage of la douce mère de Dieu [“the sweet mother of God”] represented their ecclesiastical ideal. I believe in fine that their first principles were expressed on their behalf in the Epistle of Saint Bernard ad Milites Templi. It was written at the instance of Hugo, the first Commander, and this fact is all that need be derived from the prologue. The text itself exhorts the new institution to strive with intrepid souls against the enemies of the Cross of Christ, because those to whom death is a reward and life is Christ need fear nothing. Let them stand for Christ therefore, rather

desiring to be dissolved, that they may be with Him. Let them live in good fellowship, having neither wives nor children. A later section concerns that external Temple from which their particular title was taken, and it compares the glories of the House built by Solomon with the inward grace of that to which the Order was attached in the spirit. In other words, this was for Saint Bernard a house not made with hands, since the chivalry was itself a Temple, and, like that of Masonry, the edifice was erected in the heart. The brethren are in fact described as a Holy City; they are connected with the idea of the Church itself; and the enumerated details of the Holy Place are used for spiritual exhortation addressed to the knighthood. The promise to Zion that its wilderness shall become an abode of all delights, its solitude a garden of the Lord echoing with joy and gladness, with thanksgiving and the voice of praise, is said to be the heritage of the Order, and to watch over their heavenly treasure should be their chief care—so acting that in all things He should be pleased Who guides their arms to the battle and their hands to the warfare.

Whether it profits to add more I question, but this I will say at least—that I am sacrificing all my predilections and making my task in the next book much harder by throwing over the Templar hypothesis, not alone in its connection with the Graal on the historical side, but as one of the channels through which the Secret Tradition may have passed in Christian times. I cannot say even that I speak under correction, for I question that correction is possible. I have searched many of these byways with an anxious eye for the evidence, and I have been haunted with the dreams of those who went before me in the way, but I have returned so far with hands empty. I can therefore say only: *magis amica veritas* [“a more friendly truth”].

CHAPTER SIX THE GRAAL FORMULA IN THE LIGHT OF OTHER GLEANINGS FROM THE CATHOLIC SACRAMENTARY

The Secret Orders illustrate the realised life of sanctity on the plane of symbolism, but if it were tolerable to suppose that the literature of alchemy was put forward by an instituted confraternity, then that would be the one association which per doctrinam sanctam had gone apparently beyond symbolism and reached the catholic heart of all experience. On the question of fact, I believe that the Hermetic adepts had a *via secretissima* which was communicated from one to another under self-enforcing covenants—because it was *Sacramentum Regis*—and that at least the best among them were not incorporated formally. The adepts of the physical work had successive fellowships—and so also had the seekers thereafter—which we can trace at different periods; but these do not concern us. The others exchanged the watchwords of the Night and the vision of Aurora breaking in the soul; they left their memorials in books as guides one to another, saying what they best could about that which was never expressed openly and caring little, except under God's will, whether there were any listeners, since it could not fail that the light should remain somehow in the world. Outside the wisdom of the very Church itself, they are the greatest witnesses in the age of Christ to the truth of its greatest experiment. The literature of the Holy Graal—in some of its aspects—is also a witness, and chiefly to the depth and wonders of the Catholic Mass. After all the worlds of language have been exhausted, I conceive that we have approximated only to those wonders and have sounded, here and there, only with short lines and unadapted plummetts those immeasurable deeps. The keyword of the whole Mystery is *sacramentum mirabile*. O *mirabile* indeed and *sacramentum* in all truth, but because of the words

that fail us, we must perforce fill the great intervening breaks even with the little books of popular devotion; and when the dark sayings of Paracelsus in *De Cœna Domini* have failed to satisfy us, we must even see whether the learned Dr. Ralph Cudworth on *The Lord's Supper*—demonstrating many follies—may not have a chance word there or here in his pages which will open, outside all knowledge of his own, some gate that we had passed without thinking! Here therefore are a few gleanings from the Catholic Sacramentary as further sidelights on the most catholic of all experiments—the Quest of the Graal.

If ever there was a verbal formula of Eucharistic consecration concealed by some school in the Church—if ever a time came when there was something missing from any Mass, Celtic or another—I believe that God has filled the vacant space with channels of sufficing grace, and that grace efficacious is not so very far away from any illuminated heart. The fact however remains that it is not ready to our hands, and that though we say *Introibo* we do not enter and go in, except into the outer sanctuary. For this reason we feel a divine and loving envy when we hear what Galahad and Perceval saw after the material visions had passed away, when there was no longer any doctrine of transubstantiation made sensible, but only *les esperitueus choses*. So also the gracious and piteous legend haunts us for ever, and we are aware that we have dwelt overlong in Logres and know the loss thereof.

It has been said, I believe, by a certain school of interpretation, which has not so far satisfied the other schools in respect of its titles, that the Graal vessel is that which contains the universe. There is unfortunately some disposition to put forward suppositions on the basis of research in other fields, and without specific acquaintance with the field covered by the speculation taken thus lightly

in hand. The statement in question is not true in the sense that is intended, though it is exhaustive in its accuracy from another standpoint, and this in a dual manner: (a) because those who receive that Eucharist of which it is the symbol, in the highest grade and manner of reception, do behold the beginning and the end; and (b) because man in this manner enters into the consciousness of himself as being actually the vessel of reflection which testifies of everything without to the centrum concentratum within. In such sense we may all pray that the time shall come when man will reflect in his universal glass of vision that truth which is within the universe and not only its external impressions. When this comes to pass it can be said of him, as it was said once of Perceval: *Et li seintimes Gréax ne s'aperra plus çà dedanz; mès vos sauroiz bien trusqu'à brief là où il ièra*— And the most Holy Graal shall appear herein no more, but in a brief space shall you know well the place where it shall be.

The age which saw the production of the Graal literature was, in all the public places, far from this goal like ourselves; the communication of Him who is Alpha and Omega, who brings with Him the knowledge of the beginning and the end, took place in the symbol, not in the life essential, and the first-hand revelation of Mysteries was therefore wanting. That which doctrine and ordinary devotional practice contrived to impress upon men's memories and to impose on their faith offered an exercise to their intelligence, but in the activity intelligence was baffled. The sword of the spirit broke upon the ineffable mystery of the Kingdom of Heaven, as the symbolic sword of Perceval broke upon the gate of entrance to the Earthly Paradise. The hermit-priest who tells his wonderful story at the inception of the Book of the Holy Graal is in labour with the problem of the Trinity, and when his praying and longing have carried him to the Third Heaven, it is this

secret of the Eternal Sanctity which is unveiled before the eyes of his soul. Many noble and learned clerks, hermits and anchoresses innumerable, did not toil less hard, but without reaping so high a reward. They also who wrote of these wonders in the best sense thereof had their limitations, and keenly defined enough. It is so that we must account for certain grave confusions in respect of the Divine Personality of Christ, and perhaps not differently for those vague traces of doctrine belonging to a very early period and abandoned as the mind of the Church grew clearer in the comprehension of her own dogmas.

It is so also that I account personally for the material side of the Graal wonders; to say that they have come over from folk-lore is a statement of fact simply, and does not explain their toleration not only by side and by side therewith but as a part of the Mystery of Faith. Yet there was also a superincession of the gross old pagan myth and the recognised implicit of Eucharistic doctrine that the nourishment of the soul has a reflex action by which it contributes to physical welfare. The man who attends Mass, prepared suitably thereto, profits in all degrees, and for him who communicates in the higher state of grace it must be remembered that the consecrated symbols of Bread and Wine, through which the Divine is conveyed to the man within, pass through the mouth and the reins and may, as tradition and experience have testified, convey to the natural humanity some part and reflection of that grace which is declared abundantly in the other side of his being. It is in this sense that the body as well as the soul can testify at the altar rails that it is good to be here. A very subtle point is developed in this connection by the mystic and theologian Görres, who affirms that in ordinary nourishment he who eats being superior to that which is eaten assimilates the elements which he receives, but in the Eucharist the transmuted nourishment is more potent

than is he who partakes, and instead of being assimilated by him, it is the nutriment which assimilates the man and raises him to a superior sphere. Because of the solidarity between body, soul and spirit, I say therefore that the *salus, honor, virtus quoque* which descend upon our higher part have also their operation below. The food-giving powers of the Graal are not therefore a reflection of the *epulum ex oblatiis* but a *reductio ad fabulam* of the spiritual truth that Grace sustains Nature, and a guarantee in perpetuity that the Quest of the Kingdom of God will never fail for the want of external taverns carrying a full licence at all points of the way. The Dish of Plenty is therefore the simulacrum of *Manna abscondita*, and the priest who says Mass in his chapel carefully and recollectedly, and with illumination, by word and by word, turning at the due time to utter his *sursum corda* in the right sense, is doing more in the fellowship of humanity than all the corporal works of mercy pressed down and overflowing. He will be assuredly inspired in his reason to organise charity, so that his people shall be fitly prepared to receive the Eucharist worthily, that he may give it freely with open and venerable hands. As regards the lesser and material side of charity, the broken meats and the garlic, with the tokens of *Cæsar*, he will probably adopt some rule of relaxed observance, as it is good enough in these minima for God to find out His own, and He will give anywhere.

In respect further of the Manna itself, the Longer Prose Perceval gets, sacramentally speaking, nearest of all to the Mystery when it indicates the exaltation of the recipient by five in the five manifested changes. The text indeed is like a prolonged Hosannah or a Gloria in excelsis chanted from scene to scene in a great cycle of questing. The same note runs through all the legends, and its last echo is heard faintly in the late Lohengrin romance. In this Swan story, the chain of one of the Swans was made into two chalices,

and, Mass being said therein, the bird was restored to his proper and human form. This is an Eucharistic allegory concerning the deligation of the body by Divine Substance communicated to the soul, putting a period to the enchantments and sorceries of the five senses.

I conclude therefore with Saint Dionysius that the Eucharist is the first of the Divine Mysteries which now are; with the Paraphrase of Saint Maximus, that it is the consummation of all other sacraments; and with official doctrine in the Latin Church, that it operates by intrinsic efficacy, *ex opere operato*, in virtue of its institution by Christ.

CHAPTER SEVEN THE LAPIS EXILIS

According to Wolfram von Eschenbach, the Graal was the crown of desire understood on the material plane, but it would also respond to the title which was given by Heinrich to his independent version of the legend, for it was certainly the crown of adventure, and on more planes than one. It was borne aloft on a green cushion by the maid who was chosen for the office, and this suggests that the object was, speaking comparatively, small—that is to say, portable. There is nothing in the whole poem to make us connect it with a jewel in the conventional sense, and it is nowhere described actually: it is simply that, object of wonder to which the name of Graal is given. It was light as wool, as we have seen, in the hands of its licensed bearer, but an unprepared person could not move it from the place of its repose. This is rather, however, a question of magic than of variation in specific gravity. *Ex hypothesi*, it was large enough on one specific occasion to hold a considerable inscription on its surface—that is to say, when the King's healing was promised as the reward of the mystic question. At the same time its possible dimensions

were restricted by the counter fact that it could and did repose in the nest of a bird which tradition describes as about the size of an eagle. Indeed, the stone which renewed the phoenix recalls the Lapis Aquila, which, according to another, tradition, was sought by the eagle and used to assist the hatching of its eggs.

This enumeration is made to preface some reflections upon the Latin term which Wolfram applied to his talisman. What he wrote—or his scribe rather—we have to divine as we can from the choice of impossibilities which are offered by the extant manuscripts, and that which has received most countenance among the guesswork readings is Lapis exilis, meaning the slender stone. The scholia of lexicographers on the second of these words indicate some difference of opinion among the learned on the question of its philology—*de etymo mire se torquent viri docti* [“Learned men wonder about the etymology”]—and as an additional quota of confusion one of them has placed the significance of slender upon the word exile as it is used in English. I do not know of such an adjective in our language and still less of one bearing this interpretation; but this apart it would seem that the slender stone connecting with the conception of the Graal is even more disconcerting than any philological difficulty. Further, the word *exilis* suffers the meaning of leanness, and this in connection with a stone of plenty which paints in the Parsifal an eternal larder, *à parte ante et à parte post* [“on the front side and on the back side”], is not less than hopeless. It may be said that Wolfram’s intention was to specify by Lapis *exilis* that his talisman was least among stones in dimension yet great in its efficacy, even as the Scriptures tell us that the mustard seed is least among grains and yet becomes a great tree. There is a certain plausibility in this, and students of another school will know that Lapis *exilis* is a term which corresponds wholly to the great talisman of metallic

transmutation, for no adept experienced any difficulty when he carried the powder of projection—which, as we have seen, was in fact the Stone—in his wallet, or even his girdle, yet this was also great in its efficacy, as there is no need to insist. The explanation is shallow notwithstanding, when we know that the true description of the Graal Stone on the historical side, or rather the accurate statement of fact, would be *è cœlo veniens* [“coming to heaven”]. But it is understood of course that this does not enter the lists as a construction of the chaotic readings found in the manuscripts. Their only possible rendering to preserve the verbal similarity with a reasonable consonance in the root-idea of the subject is *Lapis exilii* = the Stone of Exile, or *Lapis exsulis* = the Exile’s Stone. The correspondence is here twofold, for in the first place there is the exile of Lucifer, who—if the jewel was once in his crown—lost it on expulsion from heaven, and in the second place there is the exile of humanity, which is *ex hypothesi* a derivation from the fall of the angels. It was given to men as a palladium [something that affords protection and safety]—perhaps even as a gage of their final exaltation to the thrones vacated above [sic]. It so happens that there are some curious lights of symbolism which illustrate a reading that I put forward under every reserve and tentatively. No one will believe at first sight that the Graal Stone and the Graal Chalice can have any affinity between them, unless indeed the cup was hewn—let us say—out of jasper or chalcedony. This notwithstanding, we shall find the analogy rather in unlooked-for places. Let us recur for a moment to the Lesser Holy Graal and its comparison of the Mystic Vessel to the Stone in which Christ was laid—an imputed analogy which is put into the mouth of the Master when He discourses to Joseph of Arimathæa, delineating the purport and perfection of the whole mystery. It seems assuredly the most extraordinary analogy which it is possible to institute, and I do not pretend that it assists us to understand the

substitution of a Stone for a Chalice in Wolfram's version of the legend, which is devoid of any connection between the Graal and the Passion of Christ—almost as if the Repairer had returned to the heights after the institution of the Eucharist and henceforward Himself—as Pontifex futurorum bonorum [“Bridge builder of the future good”]—sent down the efficacious sacrament for the sustenance of his chosen people. In the ordinary Eucharistic Rite one would tolerate the comparison in respect of the Pyx, though the elucidation of things which ex hypothesi are alive by means of things which are dead is scarcely in the order of enlightenment. One thing at least seems to follow from all the texts, and this is that the sacramental Chalice in the Graal Mass was rather the receptacle of the Consecrated Bread than of the Consecrated Wine. The Chalice, which corresponds to a Stone, and this Stone the Rock in which Christ was laid, must symbolise the Vessel of the Bread. In the Book of the Holy Graal and in the Quest of Galahad, Hosts were taken from the Chalice; in the Parsifal, Bread in the first instance was taken from the Talismanic Stone; in Heinrich, that Reliquary which was itself the Graal had a Host reposing therein; Chrétien is vague enough, but his undeclared Warden in prostration seems to have been nourished after the same manner as Mordrains and Heinrich's ghostly Keeper.

The analogy of these things, by which we are helped to their understanding at least up to a certain point, is Scriptural, as we should expect it to be; it connects with that other Stone which followed the people of Israel during forty years in the wilderness, and the interpretation is given by Saint Paul. “Our fathers... did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.” It will be inferred that the root-idea of the story is based upon the natural fact that torrents

or streams flow occasionally through rocky ground, but the masters in Israel knew of the deeper meaning, or divined it at least in their subtlety, seeing that their whole concern was with a spiritual pilgrimage. It is said in the Zoharic tract entitled The Faithful Shepherd, that a Stone or Rock is given, and yet another Stone is given, the Name of which is the Name of Tetragrammaton. Now, this is a reference to the Prophecy of Daniel which says that the Stone which struck the statue became like a mountain and filled the whole earth. It is applied to Messiah and his Kingdom by the preface to the Zohar, which says further that the Israelites, during their exile in Egypt, had lost the Mystery of the Holy Name. When, however, Moses appeared, he recalled this Name to their minds. It follows herefrom that we are dealing with another legend of the Lost Word, and of course if Christ was the Rock or Stone which supplied sustenance to the Jews, we can understand in a vague manner not only the correspondence between the Graal and a Mystic Stone but also the manner—otherwise of all so discouraging—in which the cycle ascribes to its Great Palladium, whether Stone or Cup, a marvellous power of nourishment. The allusion is therefore to the Corner Stone, which is Christ and which became the head of the building. It is the old Talmudic and Kabalistic tradition that the Lapis fundamentalis was set in the Temple of Jerusalem under the Ark of the Covenant, even as the Rock of Calvary, by another legend, is called the centre of the world. All these stones in the final exhaustion of symbolism are one Stone, which does not differ from the white cubic stone which the elect receive in the Apocalypse together with the New and Secret Name written thereon. This stone in its symbolic form would no doubt be the least possible in cubic measurement—that is to say, in the correspondence between things within and without, even as that which is given, strangely inscribed within, to the recipient in one of the most deeply symbolic of the Masonic High Grades.

Analogies are subtle and analogies are also precarious, but those which I have traced here are at least more in consonance with the spirit of the Graal literature than (1) The Sacred Stone, called the Mother of the Gods, which is mentioned by Ovid and of which Arnobius tells us that it was small and could be carried easily by a single man; (2) the Roman Lapis manalis, which brought rain in drought, as it might have brought food in famine; (3) the Bœtilus or Oracular Stone which gave oracles to its bearer, speaking with a still small voice.

