

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 21]

BOOK TEN THE SECRET CHURCH

CHAPTER ONE THE HERMENEUTICS OF THE HOLY
GRAAL

Two things follow from the considerations of the ninth book: (a) That there are or there have been custodians of secret knowledge in Christian times, but I express only my personal view if I say that they remain to this day; (b) that the term of their purpose does not differ in kind from that of the external Churches; but (c) by their claim they had carried the Great Experiment further. Their testimony offers therefore (1) deeper intimations of Church doctrine; (2) a contribution in concealment to the annals of the life of sanctity; (3) by the remembrance—in perpetuity of dedication—that there is one thing needful; (4) and this is to partake, if it be possible, of Divine Substance—that is, spirit and life—of which the impermanent consubstantiation with Divine Humanity in the official Eucharist is the vestige in symbolism only. The way of attainment must have had its doctrinal correspondence in the Descent of the Paraclete. It does not follow that the custodians celebrated what we

understand by a Mass, but it is impossible to delineate their process by a stricter, analogy. After exhausting all other considerations we can speak of it only in this manner. I suggest that it was said in the heart, and that Christ came down into the heart. It follows that for those unseen masters, as for us also, the *Mysterium Eidei* was the Eucharist. The Greek *Epiclesis* clause may pass, therefore, among official things as the nearest approach to a rite above all things valid, that is, manifesting supernaturally. Its history is one of the most interesting in the wild garden of liturgical formulæ. It should be understood, in this connection, that during the earlier days of the Church there was not a method of consecration which prevailed everywhere; the Latin rite held, with certain variations, to the canonical words of institution, as I have shown in a previous section; but there are traces of instances in which it was performed by the recitation of an *Oratio Dominica*—possibly the *Pater noster* over the elements, thus by the hypothesis converting the daily bread into heavenly manna. By the hypothesis also, the *Epiclesis* clause brought down upon the elements the influence and even the presence of the Holy Ghost, and it must be admitted that this contains, ritually speaking, a very high suggestion. At the Council of Florence the Latins required the Greeks to expunge the *Epiclesis*, with all forms of invocation, and there can be no doubt that they were doctrinally and technically correct, within the convention of their own order, because it was admitted on all hands that the words of institution produced a valid Eucharist, and the principle of invocation was to give the officiating priest within the range of the convention an express and personal part in the mystery of consecrating, which, by the same hypothesis, must be regarded as superfluous, though we can—on our own part—discern a deeper reason. The clause remains to this day in the Greek Church, and for those who lay stress on its efficacy that Church has therefore the words but not

seemingly more than the outward sign of that life which should be resident therein.

If it be said that in these considerations the Churches are impeached collectively, and because the literature of the Graal creates exactly the same contrast in the same manner exactly, that it therefore concurs in the impeachment, the conclusion on the surface may seem almost irresistible, but that it is untrue is my whole contention. The facts which here follow must be held to silence any voices of dissent. We have seen that there are three literatures which testify concerning the voided House of Doctrine. (a), The first is the Graal literature, and in no uncertain way does it bear witness that the official Church has the efficacious means. (b) The second is Zoharic Kabbalism, with all its connections, but while it tells of the cloud on the official sanctuary of Israel, this also bears witness (1) that Israel is of God; (2) that the Church in Israel contains the Words of the Mystery, with the reflection at least of the cohabiting glory, and (3) that the way of salvation is that Law by which the world was made in Mercy. (c) The third is Masonry, and in the dual schools thereof—which are the Craft and High Degrees—it bears the same witness: (1) that the Symbolic Temple is the Holy Place, but the Spiritual Temple is to come; (2) that the Lord has risen truly, and though at the present time we do not know certainly where we shall find Him, we are on the Quest which does not fail. I say therefore again that there has been no more faithful testimony throughout the centuries. It does not concern a competitive orthodoxy or a distinct process, but the development of the same doctrine and the extension of the same process to what is called in Masonry the ne plus ultra degree. It is not that anything exists outside the Church, but that more subsists within it than is comprehended by the lower grades. The equivalent

is that the Law of Nature reflects the Law of Grace, and the perfect paradox that Nature imitates Grace.

The external Church is therefore, and so it remains, that body in which the first work of regeneration takes place—and this, as one may say, of necessity; it is the reflection of life everlasting projected on the perishable plane. It is in this sense the condign and legitimate governor of all holy external places. The Church is the good husbandman who prepares the ground and tills the earth of humanity. It fertilises that earth after various manners, as, for example, by the laws of moral conduct, by the great literatures, by the high consecration of the seven sacraments, by the water, the oils and the wine. In all these ways it sows with a generous hand the seeds of secret life. But the earth is hard and the earth is also unresponsive. The seed will germinate in many directions, and the earth will therefore be irradiated by a certain undeclared presence of the secret life; but it issues above the ground only in a few cases, and then the individual enters into the manifested life of sanctity. It is a question thereafter of the particular quality of the earth and the environment of the life. Generally the growth is stunted and too weak to put forth its powers. It is only on rare occasions that they spring up into the high light and the clear air, lifting the radiant glory of a perfect head amidst their peers.

The hidden life of the soul is well known to the doctors of the soul, and the Church has also its hidden life, wherein it communicates with all things nearest to the Divine in the higher consciousness. Official doctrine is, however, in the same position as normal consciousness; it covers a part of the field only. There is therefore, on both sides, a certain sense of the incommensurate, and assuredly it is for this reason that the Churches are desolate; such desolation is, however, on account of that which is in hiding, not of that

which is withdrawn. The offices are not abrogated and the sacraments are still administered, being also efficacious up to a determined point. Perhaps indeed the desolation is not less especially in ourselves, so that it is we who individually and collectively have helped to make void the House of Doctrine. The fact that the external Church is from this point of view in widowhood makes its desertion a grave offence against the high unwritten code of chivalry, just as a dereliction of masonic good conduct is implied in forsaking one's mother lodge. At the same time the great work can sometimes be done from without as well as from within, but in this case that work is an approximation towards a higher side of the Church.

It follows that the official Church can act only up to the extent of its consciousness, and the side on which it has derogated has been the side of policy and conduct. We can account in this manner for all its imperfections, for that which we term its abuses, but there will remain the glories of its doctrine as things which, in their proper understanding, emerge apart and unaffected. These are the treasures which it was instituted to preserve, and if it has added some things to the jewel-house which are of secondary or even dubious value, our part is to wait for its wakening in the higher mind. The Greek Rite has slept over-long therein, and the Roman Rite has had nightmares, but the happy Prince, who is a true Son of the House, will arrive one of these days and will ask the unspelling question. Meanwhile, the individual man must be appraised at his highest only, so far as that highest has been indicated, and it is the same with the Church. The lower standards are deceptive, and it is for this reason that conduct—as we understand it conventionally—is comparatively of less importance; it is that which maintains the world and not that which renews it. There is also the irrefutable consideration of all those unhappy sects which

exist for the dissemination of a contracted symbolism under the guise of pure doctrine, thinking that the situation can be ameliorated by taking in their fairyland. The undue multiplication of symbols tends, of necessity, to attenuate their force by spreading it over too large a surface, but it is not to be compared with the malefic dismemberment of symbolism, which produces its paralysis, for the loss of so many limbs causes the body to decay and puts an end to the office of the Wardens.

CHAPTER TWO THE GOOD HUSBANDMAN

At the risk of some repetition on a subject of all so vital, I will put the position thus from another standpoint. The value of the Graal legends resides in their suggestions and lights towards a concordat of Divine Alliance, while the Graal Castle is the House of Alliance and of the doctrine thereto belonging. The same description applies to the Sanctuaries of the other schools, on the understanding that in the last resource all the Sanctuaries are one. They do not differ from the external Houses of Doctrine into which we were born and wherein we were first nourished by the food of souls. Here also—if we set apart innumerable temples of the fantastic spirit—the House of Doctrine is one, and the official does not differ from the mystical; but in the one House there are many chambers, being those of the soul's advancement, and the soul in response to its election proceeds by stage and by stage on the ascent upward—or beyond and further beyond into that more secret place which lies behind the sanctuary of the Visible Church. The correspondence in identity hereto is the oratory of the spiritual alchemist, who testifies by first-hand experience at the Fountain of Nature and Grace that nothing has been lost, that he has himself recovered the working process in which the Trinity is manifested and the plan of redemption is exhibited.

The Graal literature was the spiritual emotion of the Church expressed in romance. The texts which do not correspond to this description are of no importance as mystic texts of the legend. I set apart, however, the lost poem of Guiot, which will be considered in another section. The high texts of all are products of monasticism, and—as they are extant among us—the vision which is the true Graal came out of cells and scriptoria. We must not go further for that which is ready to our hand in the nearest places. The monks conceived the high miracle of sanctity and connected it with a wonderful and pious legend. They knew so much that they knew also the void in the heart of the age and the maiming of the outer Church. The efficacious Graal—that which alone profits us—came out of their fasts, watches and prayers. They did not invent the Secret Words and the super-apostolical priesthood, but they knew of these rumours; they knew that many strange quests were pursued about them; they dreamed of mysteries of sanctity which they had not fathomed, and we can well understand that the story of Prester John re-expressed the dream after a manner of parable in their yearning minds. When they left the House of Doctrine void in respect of its chief Hallow, they meant only that the Church shared on its manifest side the inhibition of the age; they felt all that was wanting thereto. But the first makers of texts had heard of those things more plainly—that is, of a priesthood within the priesthood, of a Mass behind the Mass, or rather the equivalents of these by the pursuit of an experiment which was identical with that of the Church carried—as I have said—to an advanced degree. The putative letter of Prester John was perhaps invented expressly to put this claim forward in a singularly evasive manner, but one certain to attract universal interest and attention.

The experiment had been pursued everywhere, the aphorism which ruled it being *omnia exeunt in mysterium* ["everything comes out in a mystery"], the pursuit of that Mystery to which Saint Augustine alluded when he said that Christianity had been always in the world—to which the New Testament itself alluded when speaking of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the cosmic order. It follows that any one who suggests that the experiment or the school became Christian at a certain epoch is in error over the elements of that subject to which must be attributed in a superlative sense the *locus communis* of the ecclesiastical test: *Quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus* ["That always, that everywhere, that from all"]. We should remember that things which concur with one another do of necessity find one another at a certain point of their extension; the one Quest adopts many veils, but without diminution of identity. It has been disguised very often under the old formula concerning words of power, but though this is a necessary illustration, it carries a suggestion of fatality, because in no instance did the sign survive the idea—and so lapse into superstition—more frequently or with greater facility. In its proper understanding it corresponds to the idea of an union between the expressed consciousness of the soul and the Word of God—the *verbum caro factum* ["the word made flesh"], declaring itself in the world and in the heart of man. Robert de Borron heard or read of the rumour in some such form and he combined it with secret words of Christ. He knew so little of its horizon that he left it an open question whether the words were Eucharistic or not. Those who converted his work into prose concluded that they could have no other office, and so allocated them accordingly. The author of the *Book of the Holy Graal*, having certain materials, including those which were incorporated in his prologue, put forward the rumour in the guise of a sacerdotal mystery and followed those who had

preceded him in developing the conversion legend. Guiot de Provence represented the secret custodians as an autonomous chivalry after the model of the Knights Templars, bringing into it materials from oriental sources. Other traditions had already presented Joseph of Arimathæa as the Grand Master of an instituted knighthood. The authors of the Longer Prose Perceval and the Quest of Galahad saw that the whole subject belonged to the Church, and they connected it with Eucharistic transubstantiation as the most approximate gate through which supernatural faith could follow those things which issue in mystery. They were glad enough when their symbolism had served its purpose to allow its dissolution, as I have shown, and it has been in no sense my design to suggest that they had overcome all burdens of their period by an excess of wisdom; the glass through which they looked was clouded and scoriated enough, and in manifesting the doctrine as they did I suppose that its intolerable sense had never occurred to them. It is sufficient for our purpose that they discerned something of the secrets which lay beyond, to do which they must have travelled far. I am sure also that in common with the independent schools of concealment they distinguished between the Church as the custodian of Rite, Symbol and Doctrine and the seat of government at Rome. In this connection it is wholesome to remember, among many other points that might be enumerated: (1) That before 1000 A.D. Claudius, Archbishop of Turin, characterised the censure pronounced on his anti-papal writings as the voice of the members of Satan; (2) that Arnulph, the Bishop of Orleans, at the Council of Rheims pointed to the Roman Pontiff, saying: "Who is that seated upon a high throne and radiant with purple and gold? ...If he thus follow uncharitableness... he must be Antichrist sitting in the Temple of God; (3) that Everard, Bishop of Salzburg, said much later: "He who is the servus servorum Dei ["the

servant of God's servants"] desires to be lord of lords; he profanes, he pillages, he defrauds, he robs, he murders, and he is the lost man who is called Antichrist; (4) that Cardinal Benno, speaking of Sylvester the Second, said that by God's permission he rose from the abyss; (5) that the same pope was described at the Council of Brixen as the false monk and the prince of abomination. These were the accusations of prelates and with them may be compared the opinion of Figueiras the troubadour, who described Rome as an immoral and faithless city, having its seat fixed in the depths of hell; that of Petrarch, who called Avignon the western Babylon, and—as a comparison by way of antithesis with the Rich Fisherman—exclaimed:

“Here reigns a proud race of fishermen who are poor no longer;” and that of the same poet who described the papal court as a people who follow the example of Judas Iscariot—in other words, selling God for money, like the King of Castle Mortal. So also Saint Bridget termed Rome the whirlpool of hell and the house of mammon, wherein the devil barterers the patrimony of Christ.

I think it has been indicated abundantly in the course of this work, but more especially in the present sections, that the high truth is in all Church doctrine, and therefore in citing these instances I also am far from expressing the spirit of impeachment; but on the side of policy, apart from that of teaching, there is evidence enough that the yoke was no longer easy nor the burden light. It is conceivable that the symbol of the voided House of Doctrine was an appeal against the Church in so far as it had been unfaithful to itself, a protest against the spirit of the world which had invaded the sanctuary. The admission of these facts does not derogate from the claim that the Church had all the means. Even in new definitions and altered practice there may have been a guiding hand. It will be suggested, I

know, that at the period of the Graal literature two unhappy ferments were working in the Western branch: (1) The denial of the chalice; (2) the various doctrinal tendencies which resulted in the definition of transubstantiation. From this point of view the wound of the Latin Church would be that it misconstrued the *Mysterium Fidei* ["Mystery of Faith"]; that it had, in fact, five wounds corresponding to the five changes of the Graal. Of these changes the last only seemed to be a chalice, for at that time it is said that there was no chalice, and the mystic reason of this is that the *Dominus qui non pars est sed totum* ["The Lord who is not a part but the whole"] is not contained in a chalice though the Lord is *Pars hereditatis meæ et calicis mei* ["Part of my heritage and my cup"]. The Latin Church cannot be accused of having failed to discern the Body of the Lord, but it may be advanced that its discernment, like that of the Greek orthodoxy, was apart from the life which their own scriptures tell them is resident in the blood—that is to say, it is the symbolical seat thereof. And yet on the basis of transubstantiation it is difficult to reject the Roman plea, that he who receives the Body receives also the Blood, because that which is communicated in the Eucharist is the living Christ made Flesh. To this it may be rejoined that the implicit of the symbolism is really in the contrary sense, that the elements are dual to show how the flesh of itself profits nothing, while the spirit and the truth are in the communication of Divine Life. By those who regard transubstantiation as the burden of the Church which defined it, there is a disposition to consider the Latin Eucharist as only a dismembered sacrament; by those who look upon it simply as a memorial, all subtleties notwithstanding, there is a feeling that the memory is broken and that the isolated sign does not signify fully. On the other hand, that view which belongs more especially to the Mystics, namely, that the covenant of Christ to his followers concerns what I have

called so frequently the communication of Divine Substance, will, I think, be aware that the accidents of such a communication are not of vital consequence; that perhaps the official Church was even more subtle than it knew, because it is certain that transposition or substitution in the external signs cannot occasion even the shadow of vicissitude in the mystery which is imparted. In fine, to extinguish these questions, those who speak of Christ's spiritual presence say well, but the mystery of abiding redemption is the perpetuity of the incarnation in that Church to which Christ came in flesh.

In conclusion, I do not confess that it would be putting the case truly if it were said that at the period of the Graal literature the highest minds of the Church had grown weary of the Vatican and all its ways. I think that for long, and for very long indeed, there had existed an uncompetitive stream of tendency which raised no voice, but pursued its path unobtrusively towards a very high term. It had no remedies to offer on the practical side of things and it was too wise to denounce abuses which it was powerless to remedy—even as I who write, supposing that I had attained the term of the Great Experiment, should not for that reason be qualified to purify the commercial houses of exchange. That term belongs to a region about which it is idle to speak in connection with schemes of amelioration or the raising of the masses. So far as those who have pursued or do now follow it have led or to-day lead the life of the world, it is implied in their calling that they should do what to do is given them, but in respect of the Experiment itself, those who attain can lead others on the way, but they do not bring back helping hands for the furtherance and welfare of the body politic. So much for the stream of tendency in the earlier times. At a later period I do think that the unknown mystics who wrote upon spiritual alchemy had got to see not only where the path of

sanctity led, but that the Church as a whole had lost the power of leading.

They were made circumspect by the anxiety of their position, and they spoke only in parables.

CHAPTER THREE THE CATHOLIC SECRET OF THE LITERATURE

But if there were custodians of a Secret Tradition at any time during the Christian centuries there arises the inevitable question: Who were these mysterious Wardens and also where were they? Can we learn anything about them? What was this strange power or influence working within the Church? Well, in the first place, it was not a power at all in any acting, governing, or intervening sense. When I speak about the region of a higher consciousness behind the manifest mind of the Catholic Church, it is equivalent to saying that in the uttermost degrees of sanctity, the consensus omnium sanctorum does by a certain participation become the sensus Spiritus Sancti. It is, again, as if within the Church Militant there had been always a little body which had pursued a peculiar path and had travelled a great distance, making no obvious sign. We are faced, however, by the apparent problem of two schools which seem to bear testimony in conflict, and there is the witness to both in the Graal literature. The first is that of spiritual alchemy, which knows not the voice of faltering concerning the terra viventium [“the land of the living”] and the Bona Domini [“Good of the Lord”] therein. Its correspondence in the Graal literature is the grace and secret knowledge behind the Eucharist, when the sensible veils of bread and wine and the ultra-sensible veils of thaumaturgic transubstantiation have utterly dissolved, and God is revealed in Christ. The second is the testimony of Kabalism and Masonry to the glory departed from the

Sanctuary, and hereof the Graal correspondence is the dispartition of the Hallows, the removal of the Sacred Vessel and the voiding of the Holy House. Looking, it will be said, on either side; on the experiment of alchemy, than which nothing seems lost more obviously at this late day; on the Quest of the Graal, over which the chivalry of Logres—except for twelve knights—broke and went to pieces utterly; on the theosophy of Israel, all dead and all forgotten; on the sad confession—*ab origine symboli* [“from the origin of the symbol”]—of loss and dereliction in Masonry; how is there any choice to be taken between either school? If “green’s forsaken and yellow’s forsworn,” in virtue of what melancholy persuasion can we exercise a preference among them? Surely beneath the title of this book there should be written the word Ichabod, “the glory has departed.” On the contrary I have written: *Vel sanctum invenit, vel sanctum tacit* [“Either one finds the holy, or makes the holy”], for the implicits of the Graal literature are the shadowed secrets of a Holy School, or rather their inexpress formulation. I confess that in either school it may seem difficult on the surface to suppose another construction than that of a treasure which there was but a treasure which is now withdrawn. And, as if to accentuate the position, I have said on my own part that the official sanctuary has closed down on its higher consciousness. But in so recording I have testified in the same terms that everything remains. The house is not less mine because I have locked its doors on the outer side; the ancestral heirlooms are still in my keeping, though I have not opened the secret chambers for so many moons or years that I have forgotten the fact of the keys still hanging, with many others, from my girdle. The Church, in like manner, is still the House of Souls; the Castle behind which there is the Earthly Paradise and Eden; the Temple with a Sanctuary on the other side of which there is the Ark of the New Covenant—the Hidden Altar of Repose, wherein is the

Sacred Vessel. It is obvious therefore that no other House of God is possible in this age, and that if I or another were to institute a Church of the Holy Graal, dedicated to the Quest of the Sacred Vessel, and in hope of the grace thereof, I should have my pains for my recompense and I should communicate nothing therein. Our part is therefore one of watching and prayer until such time as the Church herself unfolds from within and all the doors are opened.

In harmony herewith, the characteristic of the Graal literature is its great ostensible orthodoxy, and that which is ostensible I regard also as implied and involved within. Here and there we discern a dubious hint which might signify a subdued hostility towards Rome; but its sacraments are still the sacraments; its doctrines are true doctrines, and its practices are the code of spiritual life. The metrical romance of De Borron is a Catholic poem, and if the Early Merlin and the Didot Perceval are scarcely religious works, there is no tincture of dissent from either institution or dogma; there are only the Secret Words and what is signified therein. The Book of the Holy Graal is a religious romance, and its one questionable element is the meaning of the Super-Apostolical Succession. The zeal of the Graal has eaten up the later Merlin in both the texts thereof. The Longer Prose Perceval is the Church of chivalry spiritualised. The Romance of Lancelot is the ideal spirit in the exile of a morganatic marriage, but still remembering Zion. The Quest of Galahad is of him who came forth from Jerusalem and returned thereto; he was born in the place of the Great Mystery, but it was necessary that he should be put outside the gates thereof and should win his way back; he is the only seeker who belonged to the House from his beginning.

There is another point which is not of less importance, and I hope that this also will be seen to follow with clearness

from what has been said previously. The rumours and implicits of the Graal literature being in no sense the voice of any Christian conclave speaking on its own authority from the hidden places; and Kabalism—though it bears the same testimony—being a confession of insufficiency on the part of a cognate but non-Christian school, and therefore only an accessory deponent; it should be understood further that the voice of Masonry is also not the authoritative voice of such a conclave; it is the testimony of those who knew, who derived their symbolism from the old mysteries of spiritual rebirth, and, for the rest, on their own warrants made an experiment on the mind of their age. The one voice which we can and must recognise as the most approximate echo or replica of the Unknown Voice is that of alchemy—which only adored and exemplified in respect of Church doctrine. It is understood that I do not put forward the literature of spiritual alchemy as the corpus doctrinale of those who in Christian times were the Wardens of the Secret Tradition. Masonry, Kabalism, the root-matter of a few Graal books are all in their special manner and under their particular reserves the independent channels of the doctrine. Deeply imbedded in the higher side of the Hermetic works I believe that we get nearest to the Secret Tradition. A time came when the bare possibility of speaking more openly led to more open speaking, and so in the eighteenth century and the first flush of the age which followed thereafter, we have two or three text-books wherein are put forth the, most express intimations on the subject which have so far transpired in the world. I will speak only of two, which were at once independent and concurrent—Eckartshausen's Cloud on the Sanctuary and Characteristics of the Interior Church, attributed to a Russian named Lopoukine and said to be translated from the Russian. The dates of these works are respectively 1800 and 1801.

Such as are acquainted with the literature of the mystic life will not be unfamiliar with the conception of a Holy Assembly in the hands of which the guidance of the Christian Church is thought to have rested during the ages of Christendom. It is not, by the claim put forward, more especially a corporate union than the life of humanity at large on this earth is also a corporate union. It will not have occurred of necessity to my colleagues in thought, but they will understand what is meant when I say that the hypothetical Holy Assembly should perhaps be described as the sodality of a consciousness in common, and as I have spoken already of a consciousness behind the Church as of a region now untrodden, it will be understood that on the present supposition this region is not vacant. As we have inferred further from the researches of the ninth book that there are in specific literatures the records of a Secret Tradition in Christian times, the written veils of which are actually those literatures, so in the Doctrine of the Holy Assembly we find a late, sporadic, but unusually definite witness which, after an entirely new manner, is saying the same thing. I believe that the mode in which this claim has been advanced, though in one sense it is the most temperate and moderate of all, does tend towards a certain confusion because two streams of influence are identified therein—one being the holy, exalted and saving mind of the official Church at its own highest in the manifest, and the other that of the Hidden School itself as this is presented in the claim. The inference, moreover, seems to be that the Holy Assembly is a kind of head in concealment, and this I reject because of the misconception which it tends to induce of necessity. If we could suppose for a moment that man is the last development and issue from the anthropoid ape—much as one might agree to regard the story of the princess who came out of the water as a little chronicle of fact—that point—and whatever that point might be—at which the animal consciousness passed into the human

consciousness would represent the analogical kind of transition by which the members of the mystical body enter—if they do enter—into the consciousness of the Holy Assembly. But the human being is not leading the anthropoid ape, nor are the adepts who devised symbolical Masonry ruling the Craft from a specific, unseen centre. The worst of all illustrations would be, in like manner, to say that the Visible Church is the body and the Secret Church is the head. The Visible Church has been described most truly as the mystical body of Christ, and the Real Presence in the Eucharist is the mystical communication in perpetuity of Christ's life to that body; but this is on the understanding that the body is the incorporation of souls in sanctity. In respect of the Holy Assembly a similar description may obtain, but also on the understanding that it is a generic union of illuminated spirits in Christ—making use of the term spirit in that sense which attributes to man the possession of a higher soul. The head is Christ in both cases indifferently, but in the case of the Secret Church that Divine Union, which here is of faith or imputation, has been established there under the sun of consciousness.

Perhaps, within the more familiar forms of expression, the idea of the Secret Church corresponds most closely with that which is understood by a school of the prophets, though the term describes an advanced spiritual state by one only of the gifts which belong thereto. The gift itself has little connection with the external meaning of prophecy; it is not especially the power of seeing forward, but rather of sight within. In subjects of this kind, as in other subjects, the greater includes the lesser—it being of minor importance to discern, for example, the coming of Christ in a glass of vision than to realise, either before or after, the deep significance of that coming. So also the interpretation of doctrine is not manifested so much by the

exhibition of meaning behind meaning as of truth understanding truth.

I suppose that it would be almost impossible to undertake a more arduous task than that which is imposed on me in these sections of this last book. My experience in the secret fraternities is that those which work under any warrants, and with any shadow of tradition behind them, suggest, in spite of their divergences, a single root of all, and this is so patent that even in exoteric circles the hand of the Hermetic brotherhoods has been surmised in Craft Masonry; of the Rosicrucians in the high grades; of so-called Magian adepts in Knight Templary—and hence onward and onward. The root fact at the back of all these dreams is the actuality of an experiment which has always existed in the world, which has never changed, which has been pursued unceasingly by a few, the rumours of which are everywhere, which has many literatures, and all these literatures, are veils. When the German poet Werner produced his wonderful legend concerning the Sons of the Valley as the guiding hand behind the old Order of the Temple; when he told how it was afterwards withdrawn, so that they were left to their fate in the power of the French King and the miserable pontiff; he—Werner—was dreaming of this Experiment and those who pursued it. In after-days he struck out this hypothesis and all element of life from his two strange plays; but apart from any Templar hypothesis he knew that he was on the right track, in the light of which knowledge he took the path of Lancelot and died as a priest of the Latin Church, having sung Mass for I know not how many moons. When Eckartshausen, who had been born in the sanctuary, and was filled with the spirit of the sanctuary, made an end of composing little books of popular devotion which took Germany and France by storm, he saw that the Great Experiment and its great tradition were in truth the secret of the sanctuary and the

heritage thereof. People who did not understand him said: "This is Deism"—but it was the higher mystery of the Eucharist in the adyta of a conceived Holy Assembly, and he it was—as I have hinted—who, on the intellectual side, drew nearest of all to the heart of truth within.

The scheme of his interpretation of those Mysteries of Compassion which summarise God's providence towards man for the fulfilment of our return into union may be divided into a part of preamble and a part of definition. The preamble announces the conditions by which an entrance is hypothetically possible into the communion of saints. The requisite faculty is the interior sense of the transcendental world, and the opening of this sense is the beginning of Regeneration, understood as the eradication of that virus which entered into man at the Fall. Rebirth has three stages—that of the intelligence, that of the heart and will, but that in fine which—seeing that it embraces the entire being—is called corporeal rebirth, because the beast is also saved together with the man, and the Great Quintessence by which the soul is converted transmutes the body as well. It is held to follow herefrom that union with God is possible in this life in the opening of the world within us by a triple gradation through the moral, metaphysical and plenary worlds, wherein is the Kingdom of the Spirit. This is the process of Regeneration expressed in other terms. So far as regards the preamble, but the dogmatic part affirms: (1) that an advanced school has existed from the beginning of our history, deriving directly from Christ, as He in Whom there dwells substantially the whole plenitude of God; (2) that this is the enlightened community of the interior Church, disseminated throughout the world and governed therein by one spirit; (3) that it is the most hidden of sodalities; (4) that the outer school, which is the visible Church, is founded thereon, and by its symbols and ceremonies it gives an external utterance to the truth

which abides in the Hidden Sanctuary; (5) that the work of the Interior Church has been the building of a Spiritual Temple of regenerated souls; (6) that it possesses the direct knowledge of those means by which man is restored to his first estate; (7) that the external Church became a subsequent necessity by the frailty of man as a whole; (8) that the external worship fell away automatically from the service within; (9) that the Church which was founded in Abraham was raised to perfection in Christ; (10) that the Inmost Sanctuary is without change or shadow of vicissitude; (11) that it is the union of those who have received the light and share in the communion of saints; (12) that it unites the science of the old, external Covenant with that of the new and interior Covenant; (13) that it has three degrees corresponding to the stages of Regeneration; (14) that herein repose the mysteries of all true knowledge; (15) that it resembles no secret society, for all external forms have passed utterly away; (16) that the path thereto is Wisdom and the way is Love; (17) that although the Inner Sanctuary has been separated from the Temple, they are destined for reunion; (18) that the Way which is Wisdom and Love is also Christ; (19) that the Mystery of the Incarnation is the deep Mystery of re-union with God; (20) that man in his first estate was the Temple of Divinity, and God in His wisdom has projected the rebuilding of this Temple; (21) that the plans of His scheme are in the Holy Mysteries and constitute the secret of Regeneration, which is the royal and sacerdotal science; (22) that man approximates to Regeneration, and does in fine attain it, by the discernment of the Body and Blood of Christ, or, as I have myself expressed it continually throughout this work, by the Mystery of the Eucharist.

The same testimony was given independently at the same time by the Chevalier Loupoukine in his little tract on the Characteristics of the Interior Church. He defined the

higher spiritual mind as that of consciousness in grace only, by which those who participate therein become that which Christ is by His nature. Here also the Great Work is that of Regeneration, which is accomplished in Christ, and the Church within has the keys of the process. The testimony is also identical as to the sanctity and indefectible character of the external Church, which is the means of entrance into the Church of Christ unseen. The way, again, is Love, as the essence of the Body of Christ; by Regeneration that Body is reborn in us; and so the whole process—though in neither case is the truth stated expressly—becomes the arch-natural Mystery of the Eucharist.

There are errors of expression in both these works, and, as I have said, there is a certain confusion; they are not to be taken by themselves or in connection simply with one another; but it will be evident that, after their own manner, they bear the same testimony as the schools of tradition in Christian time and as the higher literature of the Graal.

It will be seen otherwise that the Secret Church is an arbitrary name adopted to describe the penetralia of the tradition in secret; the idea itself does not correspond to any titular description, and in adopting of necessity some distinguishing name, I have chosen one which in several respects is perhaps the most arbitrary of all; but it serves to particularise the school as essentially Christian. Whether in the East or the West, I believe that there are still custodians in the world, for the hidden truth does not perish. It is not a sectarian school, and I think that it has even abandoned all those Houses of Initiation, the fact of which has transpired in the outer world. Its reflections, however, remain imbedded therein. For those secret fraternities at the present day which confess to two incorporated orders and to have recipients in both, it

corresponds to that third Order from which they claim to hold—though how they do not know. For those Masonic Rites of the past which were, by their own imputation, under the obedience of Unknown Superiors, whom they never saw probably, these Superiors would answer to the Holy School. It is the Holy Assembly of Eckartshausen and the Interior Church of Loupoukine; it is the Crowned Masters of Alchemy; it is the Unknown Philosopher of early Martinism, but for Martinism this Leader was the Repairer Himself, who is certainly the first-fruits of the Great Transfiguration. I believe that if any member of this school were authorised to manifest, he would come—and this I shall reiterate—like Melchisedech out of Salem, carrying Bread and Wine. Meanwhile, their old rumours are everywhere, and it is not curious that they are in the Graal literature; having regard to its subject-matter, it would be more curious if they were not. The mystic life is the way of the Secret Sanctuary; it is the way of the opening of consciousness towards the things that are Divine. The makers of the Graal books found certain elements to their hands, and they incorporated them as they best could. The literature expresses after several manners its absolute belief in the truth of doctrinal Christianity, but also that behind all doctrine there was something great and undemonstrable, the direct knowledge of which had departed because the world was unworthy. Like the Graal literature, the Secret Church recognises fully the external Church and presents something from within it. I conclude that a valid Mass has always been said in Rome and the other assemblies, but unfortunately at the present time it is a memorial rather than a realisation. Transubstantiation and reservation are the nearest approaches to the idea of the arch-natural Eucharist. There is also in the Christian Church generally a consensus of sanctity at the height, and it is the reflected glory of a greater height beyond. But this is only an affirmation on the testimony of all the saints,

after every deduction has been made for the decorative renunciations and denials of the self-abnegating mind.

By summary, therefore, the term of research in the doctrine of the Secret Church is no instituted Assembly—not even an orthodoxy in ascension. It does not mean that another Mass is said than that which is celebrated daily at any high altar in Christendom; it does not mean that other elements are used or that the words of consecration differ in kind or genus. The Secret Church is our own Church when it has entered into the deeper understanding of its proper implicits. In so far as it can be said that external forms may remain at all, I conceive that it uses the same forms, but in virtue of interior organs which receive more fully from the immanence of the Divine Will, so that the priest who begins by reciting *Introibo ad altare Dei* has the direct experience that God is truly at His altar, and thus he ascends the steps, discerning the Presence with his eyes in the spiritual part of his nature, rather than with faith. I would that it were here and now given me to say how this condition is reached in the term of sanctity; but I think that it is by the imagination raised in ecstasy. In the normal sense there is imagination, but it is not a pure and constant fire; there is also ecstasy in many stages, and some of these are experienced in the devout life apart from any shaping spirit. I put it forward tentatively as a high speculation that the union of which I have spoken is consummated in the higher consciousness, so that the priest prepared thereto enters and attains. What he celebrates there is a Mass of the Beatific Vision; but this is the Mass of the Graal. At that *Veni Creator* the Lord Christ comes, and the Comforter. I believe further that these things are done in the sanctuary of a man's own spirit, as in an Ark of the Graal.

It is obvious that this is the limit of things at which expression suffers a complete paralysis. If I say with Elias

Ashmole that of what is beyond I know enough to hold my tongue but not enough to speak, even then it is obvious that I exceed my narrow measures: "I know not, God knoweth." It is useless, in any case, to pursue the evidential questions further than I have taken them up to this point. I might have begun by saying that what I proposed to present was an hypothesis only; the true evidences of the Secret Tradition are in the Secret Schools, and of these it is idle to think that one can produce more than the rumour in the open day. I have left nothing unstated that it has been in any sense possible to adduce; those of my own tradition will understand what remains over and what is indeed involved. I put forward no claims; that day has passed long since when one man could be so much as desired to believe on the authority of another where things vital are involved. I invite no verdict; I care utterly nothing for the impression which the considerations of this book may occasion in the academies of external thought, and in the words of one who has preceded me carrying no warrants but those of his own genius: in any case whatsoever, I shall not on my own part be "the less convinced or the more discouraged." The rumours of Graal literature are a part of sanctuary doctrine. I do not know how they transpired; I am not certain that the question is much of my concern; no doubt in the historical sense I could desire that I did know. I am certain that the spiritual alchemists were men after the heart of Christ; I am not less certain that those who created symbolical Masonry were the members of a lower grade; and when the Quest of Galahad takes that high prince and king among all anointed through the veils of transubstantiation into the Divine Vision, I know that the sanctuary is made void for him who has so achieved, the curtains are parted, and it is given him to depart hence, for there is nothing left to detain him.

