

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 22]

BOOK TEN THE SECRET CHURCH

[continues]

CHAPTER FOUR THE MYSTERY WHICH IS WITHIN

On the historical side the Secret Church is then the shadow of an hypothesis at best; on the spiritual side of the intellect it is an implicit, but it is that irresistibly; mystically it is a truth which is not less than obvious, but it should be understood—and I repeat therefore—that it is apart from all forms, conventions and instituted existence. When in our highest moments we conceive with least unworthiness of the Church on the ideal plane, we approximate, but still under the reserves of our own insufficiency, to the Holy Assembly. It is the unity of arch-natural minds. It is that in which, by the mediation of the creeds, we confess our beliefs daily—the communion of saints. If we like to express it in such words—and they are excellent apart from their unhappy associations—it is the choir invisible. It is even like the priesthood of the Graal sanctuary, as we judge by the romances concerning it; it does not ordain or teach; it fulfils its office sufficiently because, speaking symbolically,

it is “in the foremost files of time.” It is like Saint-Martin—its feet are on earth and its head is in Heaven.

The Secret Church has said therefore: “Introibo ad altare Dei,” [“I will enter the altar of God,”] and it has entered and gone in. When it comes out, in the person of one of its members, it carries bread and wine, like Melchisedech. The conditions of its membership correspond to the conditions of finding the Holy Graal, as described in the German Parsifal. If it were possible to regard it as an Order, it might be said that its device is: “Behold, I am with you always, even unto the consummation of the world.” It is the place in which Mary conceived in her heart before she conceived in her body. As already indicated, it has not issued manifestoes, or we should be in a better position to judge regarding it; it has not had its documents abstracted, or we should not have had the Graal romances extant in their present form. But things have transpired concerning it, and thus we have the Characteristics of the Interior Church by Loupoukine, the Cloud upon the Sanctuary by Eckartshausen, Werner’s Sons of the Valley, the Eucharistic side of Alchemy and the rumour of the Holy Quest. It gives to those who can receive it a full answer to the question: “Art thou He that is to come, or do we look for another?” In a word, the natural Graal is everywhere but the supernatural Graal is in the Secret Church.

So far as there has been any evidence offered on the hypothesis concerning it, this has gone entirely astray, because it has assumed that we are concerned with some corporate and organised body, whereas we are concerned only with the course of experience in the higher consciousness. Now, if there is no such experience, the claim of the official Church is at once voided.

The presence of the Secret Church is like that of angels unawares. In the outer courts are those who are prepared for regeneration, and in the adyta are those who have attained it: these are the Holy Assembly. It is the place of those who, after the birth of flesh, which is the birth of the will of man, have come to be born of God. It is in the persons of those who are regenerate that the gates of hell cannot prevail against the Church. The place of the Holy Assembly is the place of Eden and Paradise; it is that whence man came and whither he returns. It is also that place from which the Spirit and the Bride say "Come"; or it is the place of the Waters of Life, with power to take freely. It is like the still, small voice; it is heard only in the midst of the heart's silence, and there is no written word to show us how its rite is celebrated. Its work upon things without is a work of harmony, wherein is neither haste nor violence. There are no admissions—at least of the ceremonial kind—to the Holy Assembly, but in the last instance the candidate inducts himself. There is no sodality, no institution, no order which throughout the Christian centuries has worked in such silence. It is for this reason that it remains an implicit in mystic literature rather than a formal revelation; it is not a revelation but an inference; when it is not an inference it is an attainment. It is neither an interference nor a guidance actually; it is better described as an influence. It does not come down; more correctly it draws up, but it also inheres. It is the place of those who have become transmuted and tingeing stones.

The mystery in chief of the Secret Church is that of Divine communication, of which it has the sanctifying sacraments; but, once more, so far as these are typified symbolically it can have no more efficient and unspotted outward signs than the bread and wine for oblation. It is in this sense that it connects more especially with the Eucharist. Christian temples are oriented to show that there is a light behind,

and by all previous considerations churches with open doors are the thresholds of the Church which is not entered by doors because it has not been built with hands. The Secret Church is the manifest Church glorified and installed in the spiritual kingdom, as this was first set over the kingdom of the visible world. It is therefore the withdrawn spirit of the outward Holy Assembly, and it would be unreasonable for those who acknowledge the visible body to deny that which transcends it. But to speak of a spirit which thus transcends a body is still to say that, because the lesser is contained by the greater, the latter is until now not exactly without the former nor apart therefrom, and its mode of manifestation, in so far as it can be said to manifest, is not otherwise than from within. There is, no separate incorporation. It has no ambassadors nor chargés d'affaires at any court of the hierarchies, nor does it send out visible physicians and healers, for it has no conventional offices either in the interests of things above or even of those below. If some have spoken of it as leading the official Church, there is here an imperfection of expression, because it is speaking after a formal manner concerning modes which are apart from all whatsoever that we understand by convention. Without in any sense representing and much less exhausting the process, I have indicated that it draws rather than leads, and if I may attempt one further definition, as the synthesis of all my statements—echoing and reflecting all—I would describe the Secret Church as the integration of believers in the higher consciousness.

## CHAPTER FIVE THE SECLUDED AND UNKNOWN SANCTUARY

It is obvious that the romances of the Graal are either legendary histories of religion on the external side, and as such are concerned with the quest of conversion—that is,

Christianity colonising—or they are spiritual histories with a strong individual element but a wide field of application on the universal side, corresponding to the province of mysticism—such as the legend of the Church in the world and the soul in its progress. The first class would include the metrical Joseph of Arimathæa and the Book of the Holy Graal, while the most notable examples of the second class are the Longer Prose Perceval and the Quest of Galahad. The idea of their secret meaning must be held to reside, as regards the first class, in the claims which they put forward, and, as regards the second, in the special application of the stories. In our consideration of certain successive literatures which came into existence during the Christian centuries, we have seen that the books of the Graal do enter into a particular scheme, and they are the first in time therein. They tell us—now that the secret words, which were of the essence of the Mystery of Faith, had passed out of all common knowledge; now that the true succession from Christ had been resumed into Heaven; again that the sacred mysteries were reserved in an inaccessible mountain from all but the highest sanctity, or alternatively that the House of Doctrine stood vacant as a testimony to the external world. There was also the literature of alchemy, saying that He is truly here but that the way of His attainment comes only by the revelation which He gives, and for all else there are only the age-long processes of Nature. There was further, the literature of Israel in exile, saying: “By the Waters of Babylon”—yet also to those who could hear it: “Enter into the nuptial joys of Rabbi Simeon.” There was, lastly, as there is also, the great witness of Masonry, saying “Not yet, in quiet lie”—to every heart of aspiration seeking to build the temple otherwise than in the heart. And so from age to age the story of substitution continues, but with a hint everywhere that still there is known somewhere that which the sign signifies. The Wardens are withdrawn, but they are alive. There is a

cloud upon the Sanctuary, but the Sanctuary is within the Church, and other rumours distinguishable throughout the centuries speak of a Holy Place which is behind the manifest Altar, of a deeper mystery of love behind the world of grace—a rumour, a legend, a voice, an unknown witness testifying concerning a more Holy Assembly and an Interior and more Secret Church.

So far therefore an attempt has been made to justify the hypothesis that there were rumours abroad in the world which entered into houses of romance and account for the implicits which have been traced in the Graal literature. All that which lay behind the rumour—an undeclared region, giving forth strange portents under a cloud of mystery—was apart, and that utterly, from the connections of romance, and the story-tellers, working under their proper warrants, went their own way, incorporating, as we have seen, from all quarters. We get in this manner the three schools which I mentioned at the beginning: (a) the school of transition from folk-lore; (b) the school of Guiot de Provence; and (c) the monastic school. The end of these considerations is now upon the very threshold, but before I take the closing it is desirable to set out briefly some possible hypotheses in divergence and decide how far they have any claim on our attention. When the alchemists of old intended more than usually to confuse their various issues in unversed minds, and to distract the curiosity-monger regarding that Mystery which has been termed throughout all Hermetic times the First Matter of the Philosopher, they had recourse to concealment by application thereto of almost opprobrious epithets. It was a vile and unclean matter, a thing of no account and despised, an object that was found everywhere and trodden under the feet of the wayfarer. The uninitiated went astray accordingly in foolish and revolting processes. I do not know whether a similar subtlety might have commended itself to the writers of

Graal romances—supposing that there had been a common understanding between them for the attainment of a specific end—but having regard to the enormous machinery which was put in operation to determine the enchantments of Britain, “the desolation which fell upon Logres” and the adventurous times, it is natural to look about for a causation in proportion thereto—for instance, some event in history; but nothing emerges in response except a possible conspiracy in matters of religion. We will therefore begin by assuming that for what purpose soever the literature concealed in part but in part also put forward an attack upon the Roman Church. The first observation to make in this connection is that those who were concerned with the movement out of which the impeachment originated must have accepted the sacraments and the body of ecclesiastical procedure. This is therefore assumed tacitly, as there would be otherwise no working agreement possible.

Now, seeing that in one case the keeper of the Graal is supposed to have fallen from righteousness, and that—obscurely enough in respect of logic in the scheme—he could only look for healing outside his own House of Doctrine, one might be disposed at first sight to conclude that the Graal Church may stand for Latin Christianity and the Rich Fisherman for its central seat of authority. He is the Keeper of the Divine Mysteries, the possessor of the valid forms, but he and his environment have been laid waste by the spirit of the world. Alternatively, it might be a confession of apparent failure in respect of God’s work in the world. From either point of view the literature would be concerned with the amelioration of the Latin Church by recalling it to its higher part. The position, however, becomes involved curiously, and that at once, for the presence of the Hallows may preserve the king alive, but otherwise they cannot help him. No recitation of the

putative, all-powerful words can ever relieve his sickness, and the House of God is therefore—as it long remains—in mourning. Here also the difficulty of the unasked question—of that question which seems exclusive in symbolism—intervenes for our further confusion. What purpose, in this connection, could it serve the Hereditary Keeper of the Graal, that an apparent stranger should visit him and ask the meaning of the Graal and its pageant? We remember the question in Masonry which is one of violence, doing outrage to the law and the order and voiding the erection of a true temple: there it is simple in symbolism, and thus transparent in meaning; but here is a question which is necessary in some utterly mystical manner, belonging to the law and the order, and one by which the Warden is restored: it is less intelligible on this hypothesis than are darker corners of thought. It follows, however this may be, that there is a heavy cloud on the Sanctuary, and if the symbolism belongs simply to the official Church, it has the Words of Life, but is still, after some manner, inhibited; it must be challenged before it can speak and it must communicate before it can be healed. The Quests are so far external that they involve transit from place to place, as a pageant passes through a temple; but the question is an intellectual research. The heroes of research offer no light on the subject, because Perceval at his highest does not ask in the end and the romance of Galahad confesses to no question. The Didot Perceval leaves the new Keeper, with all to him belonging, in final seclusion, where the evidence of things not seen is put away from the eyes of all, and it is impossible therefore that the Hidden Sanctuary should represent an official Church. To express it in another way, the Son of the Doctrine was received into the House of the Doctrine and had the great secret imparted to him. Faintly and far away the Didot Perceval shows how the æonian Keeper has waited in the castle of the soul till the natural man, who is the scion of his house, comes in and asks the



question of the union. The natural man understands nothing and does not ask till he is driven, but he is driven at last. As faintly and still further away, the Conte del Graal tells the same symbolical story, with many variations; but as it reaches no term till a later period in time, when it is simply a reflection of other texts, and has hence no independent implicits, there is no call to examine it in this connection. It may be noted, however, that the prologue, which is regarded as its latest part, tells of things which exceed experience—that is to say, evidence—of sins against spiritual life and of return to the House of the Father, as aspiration returns to its source. But it is difficult to connect it with any sanctuary doctrine. The German Parsifal tells how the House is always in the world, but that it is only attainable by great sanctity, which is sufficient to show that it does not symbolise the institutes of external religion. It has, however, a strange sacramental side, which seems to indicate that the Eucharist in its highest efficacy comes down from Heaven direct. It therefore incorporates not indeed a distinct motive but the terms of another school. To conclude concerning it, it is obvious from the beginning that the Keepers of Mont Salvatch were a secret order of chivalry, after the manner of the Templars. The Titurel recites the building of the Spiritual House in beauty as a Palace of Art; and its meaning is that the Mystery of Knowledge was in the custody of a special election, though there is nothing to suggest that it was opposed to the official Church. The Longer Prose Perceval lifts up a different corner of the veil, telling how one Keeper died unhealed and that the last Warden of the Mysteries was taken away, though the Holy Things remained. We have now only the great and paramount Quest left for consideration, which is that of Galahad, and it tells how the Warden of the Mysteries, together with the Holy Things, was removed once and for all, as if the House of Doctrine were itself nothing and the term of research everything.

The Great Quest was written with the highest sanctity as its actuating motive, and we can do no otherwise than accept it as an instance of the literature at its greatest. It forms with the Longer Prose Perceval the consummation of the cycle. These quests are mirrors of spiritual chivalry, mirrors of perfection, pageants of the mystic life, and it does not matter what the legend was prior to their appearance. They are the teaching of the Church spiritualised, if I may be pardoned such a term, and they offer in romance form a presentation of the soul's chronicle.

So far therefore from the Graal sanctuary representing the Latin or any other external Church, we find that the mystery of the sanctuary within is written through all the romances, though it is in the words of the sanctuary without and the savour of the external incense is more noticeable in some quests than in others.

In this light we shall still find the Didot Perceval a little wanting in meaning and the Conte del Graal too composite to reflect a full light of intention. As regards the German cycle, it shows how the great mystery descends and abides in us. The High History empties the House of Doctrine and leaves it as a vacant sign before the face of the world. The Galahad Quest says that the world was not worthy. Yet in a sense all this is comparative, constituting the several presentations and various aspects of that which is one at the root, for the Secret Church does indeed say: *Mysterium Fidei* ["Mystery of the Faith"], and the official Church says: *Corpus Domini* ["Body of the Lord"]; but these two are one.

It will be agreed on these considerations that we can only contemplate the Church of the Holy Graal as a mystery of secrecy, but it can be assumed that in this sense it may either have been hostile to Rome or at peace in its mind

concerning it. In connection with the first alternative, let us imagine for a moment that the Welsh or some other Celtic Church was making through the medium of the romances a last bid for recognition. If the prevalence of the Roman Rite constituted the enchantment and desolation; if the questioning of the Wardens of the Mystery, on the Mystery itself manifested, signified the illumination of the elect concerning the faith once delivered to the Celtic saints and now in danger of extinction; we should have a design adequate to the machinery, and should be able to understand the magnitude of the claims in conjunction with the follies which abound in the form of its expression, for it seems difficult to say that, for example, the Sanctuary in Wales had a wise church built about it. It was chaotic rather than in confusion, and in respect of its working was almost a prolonged abuse. The suggestion is otherwise preposterous; but British Christianity generally, and its desire for independence, centralised, by example, in the crown at the period of Henry the Second, may be said to account for a certain complexion sometimes discerned in the literature in respect of Rome, and to explain why, this notwithstanding, it is otherwise so catholic at heart. The speculation at the present time has a certain presumption in its favour because a section of scholarship is inclined thereto, but a slight study of the texts must, I think, dispose of it, once and for all.

The short recension, comprised in the Lesser Chronicles, tells how a warranted company came westward; how it abode for many centuries in a Veiled Sanctuary; how the Quest for this Sanctuary was instituted; how it failed in the first instance, but was achieved subsequently; how the secrets of the Sanctuary were learned; how he who learned them remained within the Sanctuary, and there is no story afterwards. The metrical romance of De Borron and the Lesser Holy Graal are not a legend concerning the

conversion of England, but the prolegomena thereto. They leave the real intention doubtful outside the bare fact that something would be brought into Britain which was unknown to the Church at large, for the canonical apostles were not present when his great mission was conferred on Joseph by Christ. There is nothing on the mere surface to show that any priesthood followed the possession of the Graal Vessel or the knowledge of the Secret Words. Yet these are Eucharistic; according to the Lesser Holy Graal they are a formula of consecration; and in a sense Joseph must have been ordained, because it is obvious that at need he could recite the words effectually. It is certain, moreover, that Joseph and his company carried no official priests westward. A great lacuna follows, and then comes the Early Merlin, showing that the Secret Sanctuary is in Britain, that a firebrand prophet is going about in the land, carrying the warrants of the Graal, and is bent upon fulfilling prophecy by instituting the Third Table for the completion of the Graal Trinity. There are no claims put forward regarding the sanctuary, and the same statement holds for the Didot Perceval. It remains that the Lesser Chronicles generally intimate the existence of a particular Eucharistic knowledge, but not of a Church demanding recognition thereon. As secrecy is the primary seal, it is obvious that the Graal Church is not the Church in Britain, nor do the texts contain any counter-picture, object, or character which might by possibility correspond to the official Church apart from that notion of enchantment which, in the absence of any warrant, it is arbitrary to explain along these lines. For example, it would be madness to suggest that Moses, who was interned in secrecy, represents the Latin Church in apostasy or rejection. It is obvious, in fine, that Robert de Borron was acquainted with no tradition which connected Joseph of Arimathæa with Glastonbury or even with Britain. In the

poem, he remains where he was or returns to Syria, as Moses the Law-giver went up the holy mountain.

The Greater Chronicles bear the same witness, but the evidence of transubstantiation and other matters of doctrine indicate that the major texts are typically and militantly Roman. The long recension tells how the same company, strangely extended, arrived in Britain and there established, in the person of Joseph the Second, the beginnings of a supreme orthodoxy, so that nothing which came after in the name of the Gospel could abide in competition therewith; how the prophet and enchanter Merlin carried a strange warrant to connect his work with the Mystery of the Holy Graal; how he possessed from the beginning of his symbol the power to promise Blaise that he should be united with the secret assembly; how the Castle of the Graal, though not altogether hidden from the world, was encompassed with perils and difficulties, which notwithstanding there were wars or the rumour of wars about it. The Book of the Holy Graal narrates the conversion of Britain by those who carried the license of super-apostolical succession, the design of which may have been pan-Britannic, or conceivably the implicit of a plan of campaign against papal claims over Britain. It is at least the legend par excellence which, if any, would be regarded as devised in this interest; and it would stand alone as such among the Anglo-Norman texts. The colonisation, whatever its design, conquered all Britain in all publicity. When however the later Merlin texts enter the field, everything has passed into seclusion, and the prophet's personation of the character of messenger does not carry public knowledge concerning the Graal further than an echoing rumour. Outside the sacrosaintly character of ordinary Church-practice, the texts offer no ecclesiastical element but the implications which are resident in the notion of the adventurous times and the preparation at the royal court

for the Quest of the Sacred Vessel, the term of which is to break up the Round Table. The intermediate prose Lancelot follows the Merlin texts, working for the same end, and we are already at a far distance from the letter and spirit of the Book of the Holy Graal. In the Longer Prose Perceval the term is to strip the sanctuary, but it remains a consecrated place, and those who enter therein become thereafter men of holy lives and saints of the official Church. The Quest of Galahad offers in the term thereof the instance of a Keeper who is dispossessed without any intimation of his end. It may be said that he is treated with something almost approaching contumely. There is an apparent equivalent of an expulsion of the profane in that command for those to withdraw who are not in the Quest of the Graal. But behind this and behind the unnamed yet acknowledged warrant of the Knights from Gaul, Ireland and Denmark, there is some mystery concealed deeply; the latter took away from their high experience the memory of a glorious vision which could well serve as the basis of a tradition thereafter in various parts of the world; but they had not received communication of the last secrets. The hidden life of the Holy Graal during the Arthurian period seems next after one the most wonderful of all hidden lives. What could King Pellès, with whom the Graal had abode for years, and it may be for centuries, whose daughter had also borne it through all the secret rites from her childhood, what could he learn from the Quest?

I conclude therefore as regards the Greater Chronicles that they offer in one text, which is one of the latest, a certain aggrandisement of British ecclesiastical tradition by the incorporation of a rumour which belonged in its root-matter to a different concern totally; but the remaining branches have little part in the scheme. The Graal Church is held in secrecy and mystery, and when the Quest of Galahad certifies that a certain Joseph, not otherwise particularised,

was the first bishop of Christendom, there is no longer any consequence involved in the ecclesiastical order.

In the German cycle the Graal has nothing to do with any conversion legend and nothing to do with Britain; that country is not entered at all in the Parsifal. The assumption of a particular concern in the aspirations or ambitions of the House of Anjou is an irresistible inference from that portion which contains the Angevin elements; but it is accidental and not essential to the design of the poem, and is not its inspiration but its burden. The poem is to be judged wholly by other standards.

It must, I think, be concluded from this brief and literal schedule that, except by a bare possibility in a single sporadic instance, we are not dealing in the Graal literature with an ecclesiastical conspiracy for the furtherance of any independence in matters of religion; the scheme of the whole mystery is opposed to such a supposition. It seems impossible to affirm that the Graal writers were working a similar scheme under a common agreement, as if all were imbued by a pan-Britannic fever, or were the concealed disciples of an obscure sect in religion. There are few consecutive documents which offer so little trace of a concerted effort. Some writers manifest a very high purpose and some no purpose at all, beyond the true intent which is all for our delight in story-telling. Otherwise than by simple predilection, we shall never understand why these chose for their subject a Mystery like that of the Graal. But the rumours and implicits run through all the texts, as an echo perpetuated, and in their several degrees the stories are plain concerning them. Even the Conte del Graal enshrines them after its own manner, in spite of a piecemeal tradition. Apart from this text, the Didot Perceval tells a plain story by interning the Warden-in-chief, with the Hallows, in that place which it never names;

but it knows nothing of the House made void. The German Parsifal tells a plain story by leaving the great chivalry in the great Temple, all things completed and all things as they were at the beginning. Again there is nothing made void. The removal of the Mystery in the Tituel and the transport of the Sacred House cannot signify more than a change of imputed location and a further withdrawal. The Longer Prose Perceval tells a plain story, but it leaves the voided Castle as a public sign to the nations, taking the Keeper and the Hallows into that great distance which is not in time or place. The Quest of Galahad, in fine, tells a plain story also of the voided House and its vacated offices, but it has byways of allusion from which the infinite opens.

Now, the mystery which covers the sanctuary is never drawn away in the Lesser Chronicles. We know only that the weight of many centuries presses heavily upon the Keeper. We infer that the hermit, Blaise, was taken into the choirs of heaven according to the promise of Merlin, and is, therefore, in la joie perdurable. But we know not of any messenger who has relieved Perceval; so, therefore, in eternal virginity and in utter loneliness he is waiting till the world shall be worthy. His place is not known; he does not come out therefrom; and there is none that goes in.

But in the Greater Chronicles there is another version of his legend which says very surely, although by implication only, that the Didot Perceval is not the whole story, and therein indeed Perceval is taken away, for the Red Cross ship carries him, as the dark barge bears King Arthur. This story stands apart almost from everything and is very difficult to account for, since all things fail therein. The king dies, the question is not asked, the Hallows are parted from one another, the Castle of Souls and the Gate of Paradise are left utterly vacant, as a sign of wrath to the centuries, and the hands of Perceval are empty as he



passes into the unseen. We learn only that he goes through a golden distance and that he knows that which awaits him.

I have said that there are wars and rumours of wars about Corbenic in the Galahad Quest, yet is it found by grace only, or special license, and it is a house of terrors and of marvels. Under these reserves, it is a house of many visitations, nor is it therefore so utterly unknown as is that of the Lesser Chronicles. Its building is described at large, as is that of the Temple in the Titurel, and if its location remains a mystery we are not without some materials for reconstructing its broad environment.

We have now made a circuitous journey and we return to our starting-point, being the evidences of a concealed claim, presupposing its proper custodians working within the Church and in no sort setting it aside. We have found—as I at least should have expected to find antecedently—the rationale of that Mystery of Faith which tells us that the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world. The makers of the Anglo-Norman Graal cycle had heard in some undeclared manner of the secret tradition, and they were so far properly informed that they allocated it to the Holy Eucharist, some of them reflecting it as secret words used in consecrating the elements. They knew also that it was a mystery of orthodox tradition and therefore some others perhaps reflected it as super-apostolical succession, but this particular rumour fell speedily out of sight. The writers did not register their remembrance of the Epiclesis clause in a Celtic liturgy; they never dreamed of a pan-Britannic Church, though one text may have reflected hostility to the executive of Rome. Nothing could be less in correspondence with such an ambition than their conception of a Mystery of Grace which was at no time intended to prevail in public. Notwithstanding a certain quasi-publicity during the adventurous times, to the end it

remained a mystery. There is no suggestion that any sect, company, or institution was intended to replace some public institution, church, company, or sect. Amidst all the diadems and emblazonments of the great, wonderful literature, its concern at the highest emerges in the uttermost clearness, being a tradition of the panis vivus in its deeper understanding. The Mass went on for ever in the lands and the islands; but in a place apart and out of all declaration there was a Secret Ark of Alliance, and those who could be present at its service beheld, in a heart of revelation, how Christ was manifested in the heart and administered His own Eucharist, as He did at the Last Supper. There is no other message put forward by the still more secret literatures, for these testify that he who desires to be dissolved shall be actually with Christ—but whether in passing through literal or mystical death is a great question. Every document comprised in the Lesser and Greater Chronicles may be regarded as beginning in sanctity and culminating in greater sanctity, which term is to be understood in the sense of the Catholic Church. In the last resource, even Secret Words and super-apostolical succession mean only the mind of the Church entering into its higher part, and all the companies of epopts are joined therein in a common act of experience. The official Church at its greatest is not apart really from the Secret Church, and the one is wounded in the other, nor will they be disjoined in their healing. The Graal is the sacred legend of the Eucharist, but as behind its Castle of Souls there was a hidden Paradise, so, as a Graal which is behind the Holy Graal, there is an inward or transcendent sense of the entire Mystery.

The first lesson which we must put to heart from these considerations is one of great caution in applying the actual or possible implicits of the Graal literature. We may suggest in the exercise of our ingenuity that Logres stands

for the colonies of Christianity, as the lesser stands for the greater, but we shall not be counselled wisely if we think that the enchantment of Logres was the prevalence of the official Churches, whether these were Roman or Welsh. We may say that the King's wounding sometimes signified the dereliction of the Great Experiment in the isolation of its concealment; but the King's healing—when it happens that he is healed—was not a dream of some triumph of doctrine over other doctrines in the world at large. We may say that the supersanctified Mystery of Faith located in the House of Doctrine is like the Supernal Sephiroth of Kabalism separated from the Sephiroth below by the serpent spirit of the world; but if we chance to be Kabalists we shall remember that Daath remains as a channel of indirect communication without break or intermission. We must not say that the removal of the Great Palladium signifies the complete denudation of the official Church, but we may "remember of this unstable world" and the spirit thereof. When we say that the House of Doctrine is voided, we must not mean that the official Church has ceased to be holy in its teaching, or that the King of Castle Mortal is the Judas spirit of Rome. Seeing that the Graal Castle is the House of the Great Experiment and that King Fisherman is the custodian of the hidden knowledge concerning it, we may, however, regard the higher Perceval as the mystic spirit and the chivalry of sanctity. The question that he ought to have asked concerned the Greater Office of the Eucharist. This would have caused the Mystery to manifest. His failure brought the House of Sanctity into desolation, because there was no heir found to carry on the great tradition. But when the Keeper of the Hallows perished and the Holy Place fell to the enemies thereof, the tradition did not die, and in the end it was restored thereto. The supplement to these things is the complete agreement in the romances with all church doctrine and practice, from the least even to the greatest. They have, at the same time, their own

insufficiencies, and it is for this reason that they lend themselves readily to misconstruction. When rumours came into the hands, let us say, of some mere neophyte, as it might be Guiot de Provence, we can understand his misconception and confusion, including why he went further, as, for example, to the Chronicles of Anjou; in other words, to the events of the outside world for the explanation of that which happened only in the secret world of initiation. He was in the position of some who at this day go to "those holy fields" for living evidence concerning Him "who brought life and immortality to light." We can understand also that various successive translators and independent tellers of the legend did also, after their own fashion, go further astray, losing all touch with the centre, till the official Church, at once jealous and zealous, stepped in and took over the dismembered body of the legend, putting it to its own use. It discerned something which belonged properly to itself, collected it accordingly out of the débris of romance-literature and put it again into romance. Of such is the Quest of Galahad and of such is the Longer Prose Perceval. The Mystery, qua Mystery of Experience in transcendence, was reflected from scoriated glass to scoriated glass, giving us indeed here and there high intimations of the original, but not a true likeness, so that we are constrained, like Guiot, to look elsewhere for a fuller explanation, not indeed in Chronicles of Anjou, but in unofficial, fragmentary and elusive traces of the true legitimacy in religion which can be excavated by those who seek them from the tombs of other dead literatures.

It is after this manner that we reach by insensible stages that point at which the imperfect testimonies of romance are transferred altogether in our minds, by the light shining from those higher fields of consciousness in the mystery of religion; and allowing them to dissolve for a moment, but in consequence setting aside the literature on its romantic

side, there emerge the grades of the Graal subject in the harmony of all quests equally with all histories. The inward man, as I have said, is the wounded Keeper, and he is indeed in the Castle of Souls, which is the Graal Castle, as it is also Eden, Paradise and the Body of Man. That is to say, it is the Earthly Paradise, but behind it there is another Eden. The Keeper has been (a) wounded for immemorial sin; (b) he is infirm by reason of his long exile; (c) he has become maimed for some obscure profanation of the mysteries, in the unsanctified warfare of this world; or (d) he suffers from the failure to ask one little question. This question is: Who is served of the Graal?—as of those who attain the Divine Life even in the body of them. What part is the Lord? Art thou He that is to come? Who goeth into the Mountain of the Lord? The answer to this last is: The innocent of hands and clean of heart. The Keeper is in fine healed and set free by those who come from without—by Perceval and Galahad, who lay down their arms in a state of purity. Gawain cannot help him, because he is the natural man unconverted, and the day of Sir Bors is not yet. After the former Keeper's healing, he sometimes remains with the new Keeper, his successor, whom he has incorporated into the mysteries, and this represents one stage of the progress; in others he passes away and is forgotten. The explanation in either case is that the bondage, the desolation, the lapse of the immortal spirit into earthly life is here shadowed forth, in which state he can only be helped from without—that is to say, by his mortal half, his external nature; and his great deliverance is in such a transfiguration that the one is succeeded by the other or the two are joined henceforth. Hereof is the tradition of a secret sanctuary, and its application may be found by those who will take out the details, seeing that it prevails through all the quests. There will be no need to say, even to the unversed student, that in the wilderness of this mortal life that which maintains the spirit is that which

is involved by the higher understanding of the Holy Graal. But at the same time it is also a Feeding Dish, a Dish of Plenty, because the life of the body comes from the same source. When the natural man undertakes the great quest, all the high kingdoms of this world, which cannot as such have any part therein, look for the ends of everything. It is the quest for that which is real, wherein enchantments dissolve and the times of adventure are also set over. The enchantments are in the natural world, and so again are the adventures, but the unspelling quest is in the world of soul. The witness of this doctrine has been always in the world and therein it has been always secret. The realisation of it is the Shekinah restored to the Sanctuary; when it is overshadowed there is a Cloud on the Sanctuary. It is the story of the individual man passing into the concealment of the interior and secret life, but carrying with him his warrants and his high insignia. In a word, it is that doctrine the realisation of which in the consciousness I have called, under all reserves and for want of a better term, the Secret Church, even the Holy Assembly—I should say rather, the cohort of just men made perfect.

The Graal literature is not only one of growth, with a great mixture of elements from the standpoint of folk-lore and official scholarship, but it is such also from the ecclesiastical and mystical standpoint. Many lights of the past thereon have proved illusory—as, for example, the western manifestation of Manichæan elements; but the Hidden Church of the Holy Graal is the reasonable deduction drawn out of certain implied claims which are supported by identical inferences from independent evidence, and they do not signify that the rumours with which we are now so familiar were more than rumours or the romances more than romances, except in so far as some of them embody the high life of sanctity manifested in that vehicle. We have seen that the Secret Church is a term of

exaggeration, but it is difficult to characterise exactly by any formal title the Holy School which perpetuated the mystery of the Great Experiment. In that Experiment lies the hope of Western Mysticism, but it does not follow from this statement that I hold a brief for Eckartshausen or for others who in the past have put forward on their own basis the claim of a Secret Church up to the point that they have conceived thereof. The shadows of the Great Experiment which are found in the Graal literature bear witness to that Quest, to the Mystery of Initiation and advancement contained therein, but we know otherwise concerning it. It is in this sense that against all the wonders of a world no longer realised, the lost legends of folk-lore, the putative liturgies which have vanished, the implicits in the villainous transactions of Henry the Second, the power—possibly unscrupulous—behind the fidelity to death of Saint Thomas à Becket, the sectarian ravings concerning Protestant succession from apostolic times, the great dream of undemonstrable archaic heresy behind the Knights Templars, and the other visions *per omnia sæcula sæculorum*, I set the reasonable and veridic intimation of a secret tradition in Catholic experience, the equivalents of which are the super-valid Eucharistic Rite and the direct succession from Christ. If in fine it be said that I have “sat and played with similes,” my rejoinder is that they have not been “loose types of things in all degrees,” but rather consanguinities of the spirit in the following of one quest—we also—unto this last—seeking *le moyen de parvenir*.

