

THE PANTACLE



THE SIGILLUM DEI ÆMETH, A PANTACLE
MADE BY DR. JOHN DEE.

CHAPTER IX

THE PANTACLE

AS the Magick Cup is the heavenly food of the Magus, so is the Magick Pantacle his earthly food.

The Wand was his divine force, and the Sword his human force.

The Cup is hollow to receive the influence from above. The Pantacle is flat like the fertile plains of earth.

The name Pantacle implies an image of the All, *omne in parvo*; but this is by a magical transformation of the Pantacle. Just as we made the Sword symbolical of everything by the force of our Magick, so do we work upon the Pantacle. That which is merely a piece of common bread shall be the body of God!

The Wand was the will of man, his wisdom, his word; the Cup was his understanding, the vehicle of grace; the Sword was his reason; and the Pantacle shall be his body, the temple of the Holy Ghost.

What is the length of this Temple?

From North to South.

What is the breadth of this Temple?

From East to West.

What is the height of this Temple?

From the Abyss to the Abyss.

There is, therefore, nothing movable or immovable under the whole firmament of heaven which is not included in this pantacle, though it be but "eight inches in diameter, and in thickness half an inch."

Fire is not matter at all; water is a combination of elements; air almost entirely a mixture of elements; earth contains all both in admixture and in combination.

So must it be with this Pantacle, the symbol of earth.

And as this Pantacle is made of pure wax, do not forget that "everything that lives is holy."

All phenomena are sacraments. Every fact, and even every falsehood, must enter into the Pantacle; it is the great storehouse from which the Magician draws.

"In the brown cakes of corn we shall taste the food of the world and be strong."¹

¹ We have avoided dealing with the Pantacle as the Paten of the Sacrament, though special instructions about it are given in *Liber Legis*. It is composed of meal, honey, wine, holy oil, and blood.

When speaking of the Cup, it was shown how every fact must be made significant, how every stone must have its proper place in the mosaic. Woe were it were one stone misplaced! But that mosaic cannot be wrought at all, well or ill, unless every stone be there.

These stones are **the simple impressions or experiences; not one may be foregone.**

Do not refuse anything merely because you know that it is the cup of poison offered by your enemy; drink it with confidence; it is he that will fall dead!

How can I give Cambodian art its proper place in art, if I have never heard of Cambodia? How can the Geologist estimate the age of what lies beneath the chalk unless he have a piece of knowledge totally unconnected with geology, the life-history of the animals of whom that chalk is the remains?

This then is a very great difficulty for the Magician. He cannot possibly have all experience, and though he may console himself philosophically with the reflection that the Universe is conterminous with such experience as he has, he will find it grow at such a pace during the early years of his life that he may almost be tempted to believe in the possibility of experiences beyond his own, and from a practical standpoint he will seem to be confronted with so many avenues of knowledge that he will be bewildered which to choose.

The ass hesitated between two thistles; how much more that greater ass, that incomparably greater ass, between two thousand !

Fortunately it does not matter very much; but he should at least choose those branches of knowledge which abut directly upon universal problems.

He should choose not one but several, and these should be as diverse as possible in nature.

It is important that he should strive to excel in some sport, and that that sport should be the one best calculated to keep his body in health.

He should have a thorough grounding in classics, mathematics and science; also enough general knowledge of modern languages and of the shifts of life to enable him to travel in any part of the world with ease and security.

History and geography he can pick up as he wants them; and what should interest him most in any subject is its links with some other subject, so that his Pantacle may not lack what painters call "composition."

He will find that, however good his memory may be, ten thousand impressions enter his mind for every one that it is able to retain even for a day. And the excellence of a memory lies in the wisdom of its selection.

The best memories so select and judge that practically

nothing is retained which has not some coherence with the general plan of the mind.

All Pantacles will contain the ultimate conceptions of the circle and the cross, though some will prefer to replace the cross by a point, or by a Tau, or by a triangle. The Vesica Piscis is sometimes used instead of the circle, or the circle may be glyphed as a serpent. Time and space and the idea of causality are sometimes represented; so also are the three stages in the history of philosophy, in which the three objects of study were successively Nature, God, and Man.

The duality of consciousness is also sometimes represented; and the Tree of Life itself may be figured therein, or the categories. An emblem of the Great Work should be added. **But the Pantacle will be imperfect unless each idea is contrasted in a balanced manner with its opposite, and unless there is a necessary connection between each pair of ideas and every other pair.**

The Neophyte will perhaps do well to make the first sketches for his Pantacle very large and complex, subsequently simplifying, not so much by exclusion as by combination, just as a Zoologist, beginning with the four great Apes and Man, combines all in the single word "primate."

It is not wise to simplify too far, since the ultimate hieroglyphic must be an infinite. The ultimate resolution not having been performed, its symbol must not be portrayed.

If any person were to gain access to V.V.V.V.V.,¹ and ask Him to discourse upon any subject, there is little doubt that He could only comply by an unbroken silence, and even that might not be wholly satisfactory, since the Tao Teh King says that the Tao cannot be declared either by silence or by speech.

In this preliminary task of collecting materials, the idea of the Ego is not of such great moment; all impressions are phases of the non-ego, and the Ego serves merely as a receptacle. In fact, to the well regulated mind, there is no question but that the impressions are real, and that the mind, if not a *tabula rasa*, is only not so because of the "tendencies" or "innate ideas" which prevent some ideas from being received as readily as others.²

These "tendencies" must be combated: distasteful facts should be insisted upon until the Ego is perfectly indifferent to the nature of its food.

"Even as the diamond shall glow red for the rose, and green for the rose-leaf, so shalt thou abide apart from the Impressions."

This great task of separating the self from the impressions or "vrit-

¹ The Motto of the Chief of the A.·. A.·., "the Light of the World Himself."

² It does not occur to a newly-hatched chicken to behave in the same way as a new-born child.

tis" is one of the many meanings of the aphorism "solvé," corresponding to the "coagula" implied in Samadhi, and **this Pantacle therefore represents all that we are, the resultant of all that we had a tendency to be.**

In the Dhammapada we read:

All that we are from mind results; on mind is founded, built of mind;
Who acts or speaks with evil thought him doth pain follow sure and blind.
So the ox plants his foot, and so the car wheel follows hard behind.

All that we are from mind results; on mind is founded, built of mind;
Who acts or speaks with righteous thought him happiness doth surely find.
So failing not the shadow falls for ever in its place assigned.

The Pantacle is then in a sense identical with the Karma or Kamma of the Magician.

The Karma of a man is his *ledger*. The balance has not been struck, and he does not know what it is; he does not even fully know what debts he may have to pay, or what is owed him; nor does he know on what dates even those payments which he anticipates may fall due.

A business conducted on such lines would be in a terrible mess; and we find in fact that man is in just such a mess. While he is working day and night at some unimportant detail of his affairs, some giant force may be advancing *pède claudo* to overtake him.

Many of the entries in this "ledger" are for the ordinary man necessarily illegible; the method of reading them is given in that important instruction of the A.·A.·. called "Thisharb," Liber CMXIII.

Now consider that this Karma is all that a man has or is. His ultimate object is to get rid of it completely—when it comes to the point of surrendering¹ the Self to the Beloved; but in the beginning the Magician is not that Self, he is only the heap of refuse from which that Self is to be built up. The Magical instruments must be made before they are destroyed.

This idea of Karma has been confused by many who ought to have known better, including the Buddha, with the ideas of poetic justice and of retribution.

We have the story of one of the Buddha's Arahats, who being blind, in walking up and down unwittingly killed a number of insects. [The Buddhist regards the destruction of life as the most shocking crime.] His brother Arahats inquired as to how this was, and Buddha spun them a long yarn as to how, in a previous incarnation, he had maliciously deprived a woman of her sight. This is only a fairy tale, a bogey to frighten the children, and probably the worst way of influencing the young yet devised by human stupidity.

¹ To surrender all, one must give up not only the bad but the good; not only weakness but strength. How can the mystic surrender all, while he clings to his virtues?

Karma does not work in this way at all.

In any case moral fables have to be very carefully constructed, or they may prove dangerous to those who use them.

You will remember Bunyan's *Passion and Patience*: naughty *Passion* played with all his toys and broke them, good little *Patience* put them carefully aside. Bunyan forgets to mention that by the time *Passion* had broken all his toys, he had outgrown them.

Karma does not act in this tit-for-tat way. An eye for an eye is a sort of savage justice, and the idea of justice in our human sense is quite foreign to the constitution of the Universe.

Karma is the Law of Cause and Effect. There is no proportion in its operations. Once an accident occurs it is impossible to say what may happen; and the Universe is a stupendous accident.

We go out to tea a thousand times without mishap, and the thousand-and-first time we meet some one who changes radically the course of our lives for ever.

There is a sort of sense in which every impression that is made upon our minds is the resultant of all the forces of the past; no incident is so trifling that it has not in some way shaped one's disposition. But there is none of this crude retribution about it. One may kill a hundred thousand lice in one brief hour at the foot of the Baltoro Glacier, as Frater P. once did. It would be stupid to suppose, as the Theosophist

inclines to suppose, that this action involves one in the doom of being killed by a louse a hundred thousand times.

This ledger of Karma is kept separate from the petty cash account; and in respect of bulk this petty cash account is very much bigger than the ledger.

If we eat too much salmon we get indigestion and perhaps nightmare. It is silly to suppose that a time will come when a salmon will eat us, and find us disagree.

On the other hand we are always being terribly punished for actions that are not faults at all. Even our virtues rouse insulted nature to revenge.

Karma only grows by what it feeds on: and if Karma is to be properly brought up, it requires a very careful diet.

With the majority of people their actions cancel each other out; no sooner is effort made than it is counterbalanced by idleness. Eros gives place to Anteros.

Not one man in a thousand makes even an apparent escape from the commonplace of animal life.

Birth is sorrow;
Life is sorrow;
Sorrowful are old age, disease, and death;
But resurrection is the greatest misery of all.

"Oh what misery! birth incessantly!" as Buddha said.

One goes on from day to day with a little of this and a little of that, a few kind thoughts and a few unkind thoughts; nothing really gets done. Body and mind are changed, changed beyond recall by nightfall. But what *meaning* has any of this change?

How few there are who can look back through the years and say that they have made advance in any definite direction? And in how few is that change, such as it is, a variable with intelligence and conscious volition! The dead weight of the original conditions under which we were born has counted for far more than all our striving. The unconscious forces are incomparably greater than those of which we have any knowledge. This is the *solidity* of our Pantacle, the Karma of our earth that whirls us will he nill he around her axis at the rate of a thousand miles an hour. And a thousand is Aleph, a capital Aleph, the microcosm of all-wandering air, the fool of the Taro, the aimlessness and fatality of things!

It is very difficult then in any way to *fashion* this heavy Pantacle.

We can engrave characters upon it with the dagger, but they will scarcely come to more than did the statue of Ozymandias, King of Kings, in the midst of the unending desert.

We cut a figure on the ice; it is effaced in a morning by the tracks of other skaters; nor did that figure do more than scratch the surface of

the ice, and the ice itself must melt before the sun. **Indeed the Magician may despair when he comes to make the Pantacle! Everyone has the material, one man's pretty well as good as his brothers; but for that Pantacle to be in any way fashioned to a willed end, or even to an intelligible end, or even to a known end: "Hoc opus, Hic labor est." It is indeed the toil of ascending from Avernus, and escaping to the upper air.**

In order to do it, it is most necessary to understand our tendencies, and to will the development of one, the destruction of another. And though all elements in the Pantacle must ultimately be destroyed, yet some will help us directly to reach a position from which this task of destruction becomes possible; **and there is no element therein which may not be occasionally helpful.**

And so—beware! Select! Select! Select!

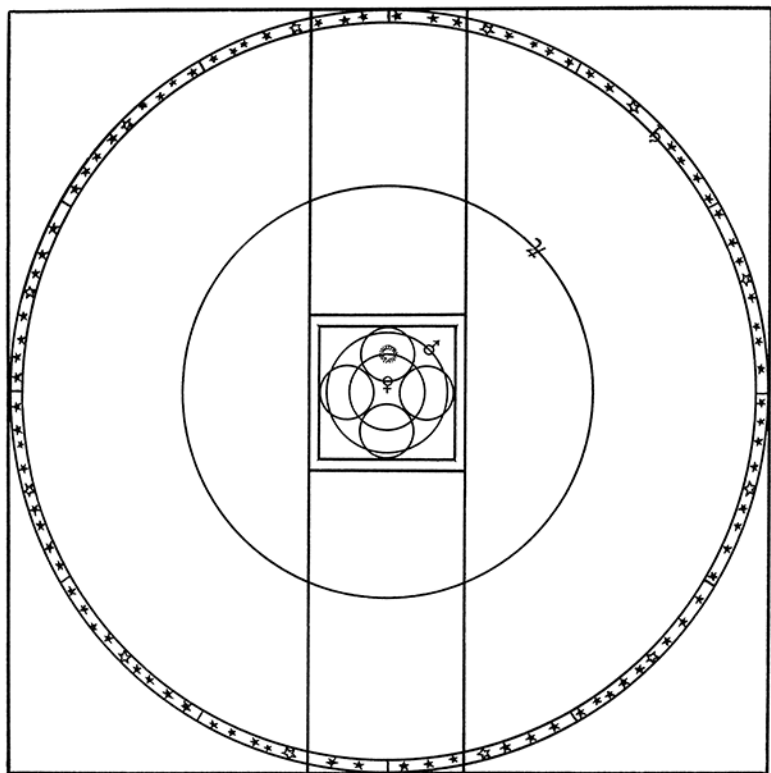
This Pantacle is an infinite storehouse; things will always be there when we want them. We may see to it occasionally that they are dusted and the moth kept out, but we shall usually be too busy to do much more. Remember that in travelling from the earth to the stars, one dare not be encumbered with too much heavy luggage. Nothing that is not a necessary part of the machine should enter into its composition.

Now though this Pantacle is composed only of shams, some shams somehow seem to be more false than others.

The whole Universe is an illusion, but it is an illusion difficult to get rid of. It is true compared with most things. But ninety-nine out of every hundred impressions are false even in relation to the things on their own plane.

Such distinctions must be graven deeply upon the surface of the Pantacle by the Holy Dagger.

There is only one other of the elemental Instruments to be considered, namely the Lamp.



THE HOLY OBLATION

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THE EQUINOX

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