

CHAPTER XX

OF THE EUCHARIST AND OF THE ART OF ALCHEMY

I

One of the simplest and most complete of Magick ceremonies is the Eucharist.

It consists in taking common things, transmuting them into things divine, and consuming them.

So far, it is a type of every magick ceremony, for the reabsorption of the force is a kind of consumption; but it has a more restricted application, as follows.

Take a substance¹ symbolic of the whole course of nature, make it God, and consume it.

There are many ways of doing this; but they may easily be classified according to the number of the elements of which the sacrament is composed.

The highest form of the Eucharist is that in which the Element consecrated is One.

It is one substance and not two, not living and not dead, neither liquid nor solid, neither hot nor cold, neither male nor female.

This sacrament is secret in every respect. For those who may be worthy, although not officially recognized as such, this Eucharist has been described in detail and without concealment, *somewhere* in the published writings of the MASTER THERION. But He has told no one where. It is reserved for the highest initiates, and is synonymous with the Accomplished Work on the

1. This may be of a composite character.

material plane. It is the Medicine of Metals, the Stone of the Wise, the Potable Gold, the Elixir of Life that is consumed therein. **The altar is the bosom of Isis, the eternal mother; the chalice is in effect the Cup of our Lady Babalon Herself; the Wand is that which Was and Is and Is To Come.**

The Eucharist of *two* elements has its matter of the passives. The wafer (pantacle) is of corn, typical of earth; the wine (cup) represents water. (There are certain other attributions. The Wafer is the Sun, for instance : and the wine is appropriate to Bacchus).

The wafer may, however, be more complex, the "Cake of Light" described in Liber Legis.

This is used in the exoteric **Mass of the Phoenix** (Liber 333, Cap:44) mixed with the blood of the Magus. **This mass should be performed daily at sunset by every magician.**

Corn and wine are equivalent to flesh and blood; but it is easier to convert live substances into the body and blood of God, than to perform this miracle upon dead matter.

The Eucharist of *three* elements has for basis the symbols of the three Gunas. For Tamas (darkness) take opium or nightshade or some sleepy medicine; for Rajas (activity) take strychnine or other excitant; for Sattvas (calm) the cakes of Light may again be suitable.¹

The Eucharist of *four* elements consists of fire, air, water, and earth. These are represented by a flame for fire, by incense or roses for air, by wine for water, and by bread and salt for earth.

The Eucharist of *five* elements has for basis wine for taste, a rose for smell, a flame for sight, a bell for sound, and a dagger for touch. This sacrament is implied in the Mass of the Phoenix in a slightly different form.

1. The Cakes of Light are universally applicable; they contain meal, honey, and oil (carbohydrates, fats, and proteids, the three necessities of human nutrition) : also perfume of the three essential types of magical and curative virtue; the subtle principle of animal life itself is fixed in them by the introduction of fresh living blood.

The Eucharist of *six* elements has Father, Son, and Holy Spirit above; breath, water, and blood beneath. It is a sacrament reserved for high initiates.¹

The Eucharist of *seven* elements is mystically identical with that of one.

Of the method of consecrating the elements it is only necessary to say that they should be treated as talismans. The circle and other furniture of the Temple should receive the usual benefit of the banishings and consecrations. The Oath should be taken and the Invocations made. When the divine force manifests in the elements, they should be solemnly consumed. There is also a simpler method of consecration reserved for initiates of high rank, of which it is here unlawful to speak.

According to the nature of the Sacrament, so will its results be. In some one may receive a mystic grace, culminating in Samadhi; in others a simpler and more material benefit may be obtained.

The highest sacrament, that of One element, is universal in its operation; according to the declared purpose of the work so will the result be. It is a universal Key of all Magick.

These secrets are of supreme practical importance, and are guarded in the Sanctuary with a two-edged sword flaming every way²; **for this sacrament is the Tree of Life itself, and whoso partaketh of the fruit thereof shall never die³.**

Unless he so will. Who would not rather work through incarnation; a real renewal of body and brain, than content himself with a stagnant immortality upon this mote in the Sunlight of the Universe which we call earth?

1. The Lance and the Graal are firstly dedicated to the Holy Spirit of Life, in Silence. The Bread and Wine are then fermented and manifested by vibration, and received by the Virgin Mother. The elements are then intermingled and consumed after the Epiphany of Iacchus, when "Countenance beholdeth Countenance".

2. J. K. Huysmans, who was afraid of them, and tried to betray the little he knew of them, became a Papist, and died of cancer of the tongue.

3. The use of the Elixir of Life is only justifiable in peculiar circumstances. To go counter to the course of natural Change is to approximate perilously to the error of the "Black Brothers".

With regard to the preparations for such Sacraments, the Catholic Church has maintained well enough the traditions of the true Gnostic Church in whose keeping the secrets are.¹

Chastity² is a condition; fasting for some hours previous is a condition; an earnest and continual aspiration is a condition. Without these antecedents even the Eucharist of the One and Seven is partially — though such is its intrinsic virtue that it can never be wholly — balked of its effect.

A Eucharist of some sort should most assuredly be consummated daily by every magician, and he should regard it as the main sustenance of his magical life. It is of more importance than any other magical ceremony, because it is a complete circle. The whole of the force expended is completely re-absorbed; yet the virtue is that vast gain represented by the abyss between Man and God.

The magician becomes filled with God, fed upon God, intoxicated with God. Little by little his body will become purified by the internal lustration of God; day by day his mortal frame, shedding its earthly elements, will become in very truth the Temple of the Holy Ghost. Day by day matter is replaced by Spirit, the human by the divine; ultimately the change will be complete; God manifest in flesh will be his name.

This is the most important of all magical secrets that ever were or are or can be. To a Magician thus renewed the attainment of the Knowledge and Conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel becomes an inevitable task; every force of his nature, unhindered, tends to that aim and goal of whose nature neither man nor god may speak, for that it is infinitely beyond speech or thought or

1. Study, in the Roman Missal, the Canon of the Mass, and the chapter of "defects".

2. The Word Chastity is used by initiates to signify a certain state of soul and of mind determinant of a certain habit of body which is nowise identical with what is commonly understood. Chastity in the true magical sense of the word is inconceivable to those who are not wholly emancipated from the obsession of sex.

ecstasy or silence. Samadhi and Nibbana are but its shadows cast upon the universe.

II

If the Master Therion effects by this book nothing else but to demonstrate the continuity of nature and the uniformity of Law, He will feel that His work has not been wasted. In his original design of Part III he did not contemplate any allusion to alchemy. It has somehow been taken for granted that this subject is entirely foreign to regular Magick, both in scope and method. It will be the main object of the following description to establish it as essentially a branch of the subject, and to show that it may be considered simply as a particular case of the general proposition — differing from evocatory and talismanic Magick only in the values which are represented by the unknown quantities in the pantomorphous equations.

There is no need to make any systematized attempt to decipher the jargon of Hermetic treatises. We need not enter upon an historical discussion. Let it suffice to say that the word alchemy is an Arabic term consisting of the article “al” and the adjective “khemi” which means “that which pertains to Egypt”¹. A rough translation would be “The Egyptian matter”. The assumption is that the Mohammedan grammarians held traditionally that the art was derived from that wisdom of the Egyptians which was the boast of Moses, Plato, and Pythagoras, and the source of their illumination.

Modern research (by profane scholars) leaves it still doubtful as to whether Alchemical treatises should be classified as mystical, magical, medical, or chemical. The most reasonable opinion is that all these objects formed the pre-occupation of the alchemists in varying proportions. Hermes is alike the God of Wisdom, Thaumaturgy, therapeutics, and physical science. All these may consequently claim the title Hermetic. It cannot be doubted that such writers as Fludd aspired to spiritual perfection. It is equally sure that Edward Kelly wrote primarily from the point of view

1. This etymology differs from that given by Skeat; I can do no more than present my submission.

of a Magician; that Paracelsus applied himself to the cure of disease and the prolongation of life as the first consideration, although his greatest achievements seem to modern thinkers to have been rather his discoveries of opium, zinc, and hydrogen; so that we tend to think of him as a chemist no less than we do of Van Helmont, whose conception of gas ranks him as one of those rare geniuses who have increased human knowledge by a fundamentally important idea.

The literature of Alchemy is immense. Practically all of it is wholly or partially unintelligible. Its treatises, from the "Asch Metzareph" of the Hebrews to the "Chariot of Antimony" are deliberately couched in hieratic riddles. Ecclesiastical persecution, and the profanation of the secrets of power, were equally dreaded. Worse still, from our point of view, this motive induced writers to insert intentionally misleading statements, the more deeply to bedevil unworthy pretenders to their mysteries.

We do not propose to discuss any of the actual processes. Most readers will be already aware that the main objects of alchemy were the Philosopher's Stone, the Medicine of Metals, and various tinctures and elixirs possessing divers virtues; in particular, those of healing disease, extending the span of life, increasing human abilities, perfecting the nature of man in every respect, conferring magical powers, and transmuting material substances, especially metals, into more valuable forms.

The subject is further complicated by the fact that many authors were unscrupulous quacks. Ignorant of the first elements of the art, they plagiarized without shame, and reaped a harvest of fraudulent gain. They took advantage of the general ignorance, and the convention of mystery, in just the same way as their modern successors do in the matter of all Occult sciences.

But despite all this, one thing is abundantly clear; all serious writers, though they seem to speak of an infinity of different subjects, so much so that it has proved impossible for modern analytic research to ascertain the true nature of any single process, were agreed on the fundamental theory on which they based their practices. It appears at first sight as if hardly any two of them were in accord as to the nature of the "First Matter of the Work".

They describe this in a bewildering multiplicity of unintelligible symbols. We have no reason to suppose that they were all talking of the same thing, or otherwise. The same remarks apply to every reagent and every process, no less than to the final product or products.

Yet beneath this diversity, we may perceive an obscure identity. They all begin with a substance in nature which is described as existing almost everywhere, and as universally esteemed of no value. The alchemist is in all cases to take this substance, and subject it to a series of operations. By so doing, he obtains his product, This product, however named or described, is always a substance which represents the truth or perfection of the original "First Matter"; and its qualities are invariably such as pertain to a living being, not to an inanimate mass. In a word, **the alchemist is to take a dead thing, impure, valueless, and powerless, and transform it into a live thing, active, invaluable and thaumaturgic.**

The reader of this book will surely find in this a most striking analogy with what we have already said of the processes of Magick. What, by our definition, is initiation ? The First Matter is a man, that is to say, a perishable parasite, bred of the earth's crust, crawling irritably upon it for a span, and at last returning to the dirt whence he sprang. The process of initiation consists in removing his impurities, and finding in his true self an immortal intelligence to whom matter is no more than the means of manifestation. The initiate is eternally individual; he is ineffable, incorruptible, immune from everything. He possesses infinite wisdom and infinite power in himself. This equation is identical with that of a talisman. The Magician takes an idea, purifies it, intensifies it by invoking into it the inspiration of his soul. It is no longer a scrawl scratched on a sheep-skin, but a word of Truth, imperishable, mighty to prevail throughout the sphere of its purport. The evocation of a spirit is precisely similar in essence. The exorcist takes dead material substances of a nature sympathetic to the being whom he intends to invoke. He banishes all impurities therefrom, prevents all interference therewith, and proceeds to give life to the subtle substance thus prepared by instilling his soul.

Once again, there is nothing in this exclusively 'magical'. Rembrandt Van Ryn used to take a number of ores and other crude objects. From these he banished the impurities, and consecrated them to his work, by the preparation of canvasses, brushes, and colours. This done, he compelled them to take the stamp of his soul; from those dull, valueless creatures of earth he created a vital and powerful being of truth and beauty. It would indeed be surprising to anybody who has come to a clear comprehension of nature if there were any difference in the essence of these various formulas. The laws of nature apply equally in every possible circumstance.

We are now in a position to understand what alchemy is. We might even go further and say that even if we had never heard of it, we know what it must be.

Let us emphasize the fact that the final product is in all cases a living thing. It has been the great stumbling block to modern research that the statements of alchemists cannot be explained away. From the chemical standpoint it has seemed not *à priori* impossible that lead should be turned into gold. Our recent discovery of the periodicity of the elements has made it seem likely, at least in theory, that our apparently immutable elements should be modifications of a single one.¹ Organic Chemistry, with its metatheses and syntheses dependent on the conceptions of molecules as geometrical structures has demonstrated a praxis which gives this theory body; and the properties of Radium have driven the Old Guard from the redoubt which flew the flag of the essential heterogeneity of the elements. The doctrines of Evolution have brought the alchemical and monistic theory of matter into line with our conception of life; the collapse of the wall between the animal and vegetable kingdoms has shaken that which divided them from the mineral.

But even though the advanced chemist might admit the possibility of transmuting lead into gold, he could not conceive of that

1. See R. K. Duncan, "The New Knowledge", for a popularisation of recent results.

Aleister Crowley held this doctrine in his teens at a period when it was the grossest heresy.

gold as other than metallic, of the same order of nature as the lead from which it had been made. That this gold should possess the power of multiplying itself, or of acting as a ferment upon other substances, seemed so absurd that he felt obliged to conclude that the alchemists who claimed these properties for their Gold must, after all, have been referring not to Chemistry, but to some spiritual operations whose sanctity demanded some such symbolic veil as the cryptographic use of the language of the laboratory.

The MASTER THERION is sanguine that his present reduction of all cases of the art of Magick to a single formula will both elucidate and vindicate Alchemy, while extending chemistry to cover all classes of Change.

There is an obvious condition which limits our proposed operations. This is that, as the formula of any Work effects the extraction and visualization of the Truth from any "First Matter", the "Stone" or "Elixir" which results from our labours will be the pure and perfect Individual originally inherent in the substance chosen, and nothing else. The most skilful gardener cannot produce lilies from the wild rose; his roses will always be roses, however he have perfected the properties of his stock.

There is here no contradiction with our previous thesis of the ultimate unity of all substance. It is true that Hobbs and Nobbs are both modifications of the Pleroma. Both vanish in the Pleroma when they attain Samadhi. But they are not interchangeable to the extent that they are individual modifications; the initiate Hobbs is not the initiate Nobbs any more than Hobbs the haberdasher is Nobbs of "the nail and sarspan business as he got his money by". Our skill in producing aniline dyes does not enable us to dispense with the original aniline, and use sugar instead. Thus the Alchemists said: "To make gold you must take gold"; their art was to bring each substance to the perfection of its own proper nature.

No doubt, part of this process involved the withdrawal of the essence of the "First Matter" within the homogeneity of "Hyle", just as initiation insists on the annihilation of the individual in the Impersonal Infinity of Existence to emerge once more as a less confused and deformed Eidolon of the Truth of Himself. This is the guarantee that he is uncontaminated by alien elements. The

"Elixir" must possess the activity of a "nascent" substance, just as "nascent" hydrogen combines with arsenic (in "Marsh's test") when the ordinary form of the gas is inert. Again, oxygen satisfied by sodium or diluted by nitrogen will not attack combustible materials with the vehemence proper to the pure gas.

We may summarize this thesis by saying that **Alchemy includes as many possible operations as there are original ideas inherent in nature.**

Alchemy resembles evocation in its selection of appropriate material bases for the manifestation of the Will; but differs from it in proceeding without personification, or the intervention of alien planes.¹ It may be more closely compared with Initiation; for the effective element of the Product is of the essence of its own nature, and inherent therein; the Work similarly consists in isolating it from its accretions.

Now just as the Aspirant, on the Threshold of Initiation, finds himself assailed by the "complexes" which have corrupted him, their externalization excruciating him, and his agonized reluctance to their elimination plunging him into such ordeals that he seems (both to himself and to others) to have turned from a noble and upright man into an unutterable scoundrel; so does the *First Matter* blacken and putrefy as the Alchemist breaks up its coagulations of impurity.

The student may work out for himself the various analogies involved, and discover the "Black Dragon", the "Green Lion", the "Lunar Water", the "Raven's Head", and so forth. The indications above given should suffice all who possess aptitude for Alchemical Research.

Only one further reflection appears necessary; namely, that the Eucharist, with which this chapter is properly preoccupied, must be conceived as one case — as the critical case — of the Art of the Alchemist.

The reader will have observed, perhaps with surprise, that The MASTER THERION describes several types of Eucharist. The reason is that given above; there is no substance incompetent to

1. Some alchemists may object to this statement. I prefer to express no final opinion on the matter.

serve as an element in some Sacrament; also, each spiritual Grace should possess its peculiar form of Mass, and therefore its own "materia magica". It is utterly unscientific to treat "God" as a universal homogeneity, and use the same means to prolong life as to bewitch cattle. One does not invoke "Electricity" indiscriminately to light one's house and to propel one's brougham; one works by measured application of one's powers to intelligent analytical comprehension of the conditions of each separate case.

There is a Eucharist for every Grace that we may need; we must apprehend the essential characters in each case, select suitable Elements, and devise proper processes.

To consider the classical problems of Alchemy: the Medicine of Metals must be the quintessence of some substance that serves to determine the structure (or rate of vibration) whose manifestation is in characteristic metallic qualities. This need not be a chemical substance at all in the ordinary sense of the word.

The Elixir of Life will similarly consist of a living organism capable of growth, at the expense of its environment; and of such a nature that its "true Will" is to cause that environment to serve it as its means of expression in the physical world of human life.

The Universal Medicine will be a menstruum of such subtlety as to be able to penetrate all matter and transmute it in the sense of its own tendency, while of such impartial purity as to accept perfectly the impression of the Will of the Alchemist. This substance, properly prepared, and properly charged, is able to perform all things soever that are physically possible, within the limits of the proportions of its momentum to the inertia of the object to which it is applied.

It may be observed in conclusion that, in dealing with forms of Matter-Motion so subtle as these, it is not enough to pass the Pons Asinorum of intellectual knowledge.

The MASTER THERION has possessed the theory of these Powers for many years; but His practice is still in progress towards perfection. Even efficiency in the preparation is not all; there is need to be judicious in the manipulation, and adroit in the administration, of the product. He does not perform haphazard miracles, but applies His science and skill in conformity with the laws of nature.

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THE EQUINOX

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