

**ANGLO-CATHOLIC CLERGY AND THE
GOLDEN DAWN: THE RITUAL REVIVAL AND
MODERN MAGICAL ORDERS 1887-1940**

Volume 1 of 2

**Submitted by Anthony Charles Fuller
to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of
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A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Anthony Charles Fuller". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Signed by Anthony Charles Fuller

ABSTRACT

The thesis examines the circumstances under which a group of Anglo-Catholic clergymen were active in two closely linked secret organisations which espoused and practised magic in Victorian and Edwardian Britain and New Zealand. The apparent deviation from orthodoxy to heterodoxy is approached by using a two-fold approach; first, within the context of the relationship between ancient magic and Christianity, and second, within the context of Anglo-Catholicism and the contemporaneous occult revival.

The concept that both Christianity and magic share a common heritage in terms of the attempt to attain contact with Divinity, or with other supernatural entities, is described from the perspective of ancient ritual, and this theme is traced through the Renaissance and beyond. The renewed interest in Hermetic literature during the Renaissance, along with the development of the associated notion of a *prisca theologia*, are examined and considered to constitute a theological and philosophical basis for the *fin-de-siècle* resurgence of enthusiasm for belief in the power of ritualistic spirituality to achieve a form of union with God.

The emphasis which Anglo-Catholicism, and the precursor Tractarian and Oxford Movements, placed on the primacy of sacramental theology is shown to have been particularly receptive to embracing a form of ritualised and magical spirituality. The initiation of a number of Anglo-Catholic priests into magical 'Orders' is seen as an act considered by these priests as being consistent with their Anglo-Catholicism, and not as aberrant eccentricity.

The thesis describes in detail the influences to which both Anglicanism and the occultism of the period were subject, and presents a history of the role played by

identified Anglican clergy within two occult, yet ostensibly Christian Orders. Anglo-Catholic involvement in magical Orders appears to have entirely dissipated by 1940 and this is attributed to a diminished public interest in the supernatural, reflected in both the declining influence of Anglo-Catholicism and the near cessation of the occult groups themselves.

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INTRODUCTION

Summary of the Thesis

My concern throughout the thesis is the unexamined yet remarkable situation of Anglo-Catholic clergy, some of whom were bishops, being members of two closely linked occult 'Orders' in the early twentieth century. These Orders practised ritual magic and espoused a complex and syncretistic amalgam of esoteric beliefs. The latter synthesis purported to be a form of Christian 'gnosis', which embraced aspects of several mythic and doctrinal systems, including the Jewish and Christian Kabbalah, Hermetism, Rosicrucianism, along with such familiar occult subjects as alchemy, astrology and the Tarot. While the two occult groups themselves are increasingly the subject of scholarly interest, particularly the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, the fact of Anglo-Catholic clergy, including members of a monastic, religious Order, being active in such groups does not appear in any study of Anglo-Catholicism and is barely mentioned in works on the Golden Dawn, other than as a brief and passing reference.

The object of the thesis is twofold: to describe and document the history of this apparent deviance from Anglican theology and churchmanship and secondly, to examine its antecedents, the theological and historical framework in which it occurred, and its broader significance and influence, if any. Necessarily this entails, to some degree, the thesis traversing a number of disciplines and distinct areas of religious and cultural history which lie outside of the particular period of this study.

Given the label of 'Christian magician' under consideration an essential starting point is to consider the sense in which this category was applied. To what degree, for example, was the concept of 'magic' employed by these Anglo-Catholic clergy a modern construct and to what degree did this concept bear any relationship to the term

as employed throughout history? An attempt to answer this question in Chapter One has required addressing both scholarly unease with the category of ‘magic’ in the context of ‘ancient magic’ and variants of the ontological question, ‘Was Jesus a Magician?’ Discussion of these definitional problems, and the associated paradigms and paradigm-shifts regarding what constitutes ‘magic’, provides an explanatory framework in which to investigate the belief held by members of the Golden Dawn that they were continuing in both the magical and religious traditions of their ancient forebears.

The investigation into their belief that Christianity was part of an ancient and universally true theology which permeated all religions, and embraced a divine and theurgical magic, is the central theme of the body of the entire thesis but is given close attention within Chapters Two to Five. Because the aspiration of the Golden Dawn members was to ascend closer and closer to God, by means of an ascending series of rituals and corresponding stages of spiritual enlightenment, an examination is made of the notion of what it might mean to have contact with, or ascend to, divinity or God. This is initially described with particular reference both to some of the ways in which adherents of mystical and Kabbalistic Judaism approached this aspiration, and to the apparent relationship between certain ancient Jewish concepts and the seemingly parallel practices of the Golden Dawn.

The concept of an ancient and divine theology being transmitted down through the ages has its origins in the Renaissance notion of *prisca theologia* which is a central theme of Chapter Two. This notion is examined further in Chapter Three in the context of the dependency of Golden Dawn doctrine upon the work of Renaissance scholars in reviving Hermetism, Neoplatonic theurgy and other ‘ancient wisdom,’ and appropriating these for ostensible Christian purposes. Of particular significance for the thesis is the further revival and reinvigoration of *prisca theologia* throughout the nineteenth century which appeared to reach its zenith during the *fin-de-siècle*. It is

argued over the course of several chapters, but especially Chapters Four and Five, that this resurgence of interest in *prisca theologia*, and the concomitant interest in the supernatural, were common factors in both the nineteenth-century occult revival and the emergence of Anglo-Catholicism. Considerable attention is given to both historical developments and it is argued that many of the influences and motivational factors behind *fin-de-siècle* occultism were similar to, if not identical with, those behind the Tractarian and Oxford Movements. Significant examples include: the Tractarian emphasis on adhering to the values and beliefs of the Church Fathers, many of whom appeared to endorse the ancient pagan mystery cults; the emphasis placed by Anglo-Catholicism on the perceived reality of the supernatural and its efficacious role in the Church Sacraments; and the importance ascribed to ritual and its putative power to enable contact with Divinity and with God.¹

While substantial scholarly effort has been expended on numerous aspects of Anglo-Catholic ritualism and on the complex dimensions of *fin-de-siècle* ritual magic, little scrutiny has been devoted to exploring any relationship between them.² In

¹ It should be emphasized that the thesis is not a systemic study or history of Anglo-Catholic ritualism but an examination of those aspects considered germane to the attempt to describe and explain the circumstances in which a number of Anglican clergy, chiefly Anglo-Catholic, were members of two secret organisations which purported to practise magic in Britain and New Zealand. I use the term 'Anglican' to refer to the Church of England as it was in general use by the latter half of the nineteenth century when the two 'occult' organisations were founded. See F. L. Cross and E.A. Livingstone eds. *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (London: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 65. It is recognised that while the Oxford Movement, a later stage of Tractarianism, is not identical with Anglo-Catholicism, the latter is a development of the former and one which emphasizes the revival of Catholic dogma and observance in the Anglican Church, particularly with regard to the significance and efficacy of the Sacraments. As observed by one scholar, 'some have called Anglo-Catholicism "the second stage" of the Catholic revival or the Oxford Movement'. See W. S. F. Pickering, *Anglo-Catholicism – A Study in Religious Ambiguity* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 22. It should also be noted that no attempt is made to assert that Tractarianism, Anglo-Catholicism, or the Oxford Movement embraced or espoused the kind of heterodox expression found in *fin-de-siècle* occultism, but it is argued that they shared to varying degrees sufficient areas of common belief and antecedents of influence to permit individual members of an orthodox faith to engage actively with heterodox expressions of that faith.

² With regard to the expression 'ritual revival' I have intentionally centred my argument on the doctrinal aspects of the ceremonial revival rather than on either its historical development, and the extensive debate which surrounded such development, or the aesthetics associated with the changes made to church interiors and ceremonial during the Victorian period. Each of these latter aspects has a complex and by no means uniform development which is not directly relevant to our subject except perhaps in the sense that the introduction and reintroduction of ceremonial ornaments and vestments undoubtedly carried important symbolic, and in some cases supernatural, significance for many of the clergy, and especially for those who joined the Golden Dawn Order in which the ceremonial aspects and furnishings were of paramount importance. Most, if not all, of the ceremonial restorations and innovations were in place by the time

Chapters Five through to Nine new historical evidence is presented to show that, for a period of time, such a relationship did exist and that it was based on antecedents of influence shared by Anglo-Catholicism and the Victorian occult revival. It is surmised that a likely factor in accounting for the absence of scholarly interest in this subject has been the paucity of either published, or accessible unpublished, material to indicate such a relationship and the few extant sources which are suggestive of such a connection have, until now, gone unnoticed. The lack of source material can be attributed almost entirely to the fact that the two occult organisations, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and the Holy Order of the Sun, were avowedly secret organisations and that the overwhelming majority of information relating to their membership was destroyed when the organisations ceased. Although new information on both Orders is presented throughout the thesis the Golden Dawn is the main focus of Chapters Six and Seven, and Chapter Eight is concerned chiefly with the Holy Order of the Sun.

The thesis has its origin in recognizing the potential significance of the few and scattered references to clergymen being members of the Golden Dawn. Specifically, this began with noting the claim that a certain 'Father' was a leader in a London Golden Dawn 'Temple' and noticing in a separate work that the same 'Father', from the Community of the Resurrection in Mirfield, was instrumental in the opening of a Golden Dawn 'Temple' in New Zealand, which is the subject of Chapter Seven. Based on these two references an extended search was made of published works, mentioning the two Orders, and particularly those which referred to clerical members. While this produced some material both to endorse the proposition of a significant clerical presence within the Golden Dawn, and provide further leads for research, it was access

clergy began joining the Order in significant numbers. See Nigel Yates, *Anglican Ritualism in Victorian Britain 1830-1910* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 333-364. In concentrating on a doctrinal rationale of ritual, rather than on the externals, I have followed the approach of Jeremy Morris who has criticised Nigel Yates in this regard. See Jeremy Morris, *Communicants' Guilds in the Late 19th Century: Implanting Anglo-Catholicism in the Parishes* (Oxford: Anglo-Catholic History Society, 2007), pp. 4, 27 n.36.

to some private collections of unpublished Order material which verified and expanded the information previously gained, but also, more importantly, raised the question of a specific Anglo-Catholic link with occultism. Access to the most significant of the private collections for research purposes was gained when I contacted several elderly ex-members of the New Zealand Temple which closed permanently in August 1978 and was the longest surviving of all the Golden Dawn Temples. The five ex-members I contacted gave me full access to their material and in many cases gave me their original material to keep. Additionally, I contacted and visited several other collectors of original Golden Dawn documents, notably the author of several books on the Order, Robert A. Gilbert, who allowed me to make copies of many documents. Other collectors, who wish to remain anonymous, were also helpful and permitted me to make copies of relevant material.³

While much of this unpublished data did not fill the many lacunae that remained, it did facilitate additional research which led to valuable information from other institutions, including the Warburg Institute, University of London, the Community of the Resurrection, the Anglican St. Raphael's Guild of Healing, and Stony Brook University. The other major contribution of the New Zealand material to the thesis was that it enabled the first presentation, in any depth, of information regarding the Order known as the Holy Order of the Sun which attracted a number of clergy to its ranks. Additionally, it permitted a new historical account of the New Zealand Temple which reveals for the first time the extent of involvement of Anglo-Catholic clergy, notably two bishops and members of the Community of the Resurrection, and an unexpected involvement of Quakers in the Golden Dawn Temple.

The new historical material in the thesis, and a new analysis of existing material on the Golden Dawn, have provided a useful basis to examine closely the orthodox-

³ I have copies or originals of all the documents listed as 'private collections' which are available to other scholars.

heterodox nexus, with particular reference to the degree of tension, or conversely consistency, between being an Anglican priest and being initiated into a secret, magical society. This is examined at some length and takes into account Anglo-Catholic attitudes towards the Sacraments and other doctrinal issues. Such an examination has required an extensive familiarity with both the primary, and the growing, secondary literature dealing with Anglo-Catholicism.

I have consulted extensively many of the relevant works providing the conceptual background for this study, which embraces ancient magic, early Christianity, medieval magic, the Jewish and Christian Kabbalah, and the influence of the Renaissance, but evidently cannot claim any expertise in these areas. Other than those works mentioned in the body of the thesis, a large body of literature in each of these areas has provided valuable background. Within this diverse range are included: the six volume series edited by Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark which survey the supernatural beliefs of Europeans from the ancient world until present times;⁴ Martin W. Meyer's volume of excerpts from the sacred texts of the ancient 'mystery religions' and Brian Copenhaver's useful edition of the *Corpus Hermeticum*;⁵ John Dominic Crossan's volume, *The Historical Jesus*;⁶ Bentley Layton's edition of the *The Gnostic Scriptures* and G.R.S. Mead's *Thrice Greatest Hermes*.⁷

The majority of the research, therefore, has centred on material germane to the Anglo-Catholic ritual revival and its influences where these can be seen to impinge on *fin-de-siècle* occultism in general, and the Golden Dawn in particular.⁸ The volume of

⁴ Bengt Ankarloo & Stuart Clark, *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe*, 6 vols (Philadelphia: University Press, 1999-2002).

⁵ Marvin W. Meyer, *Hermetica* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

⁶ John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991)

⁷ Bentley Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures* (New York: Doubleday, 1987); G.R.S. Mead, *Thrice Greatest Hermes* (London: John M. Watkins, 1964, first published 1906).

⁸ Limitations in space have not permitted attention being paid in depth either to a number of the many tendencies of Anglo-Catholicism or to those of the Victorian occult revival where these have not been considered as directly relevant to the subject. While, for example, considerable interest can be seen to attach to a study of the Church of England clergy who joined esoteric organizations other than the two under scrutiny, such as Freemasonry or Madame Blavatsky's Theosophical Society, their bearing on the

literature consulted in this regard has been particularly large, containing many helpful works not cited directly in the text of the thesis. On the Anglo-Catholic side this includes Alan Wilkinson's *The Church of England and the First World War*, William Maskell's *Monumenta Ritualia Ecclesiae Anglicanae*, Owen Chadwick's *The Victorian Church*, various biographies of prominent figures of the period, and the enjoyable memoirs and accounts of Colin Stephenson and Peter C. Hammond.⁹ Research into the Victorian occult revival, and thereafter, has required a close familiarity with a large range of both primary and secondary sources, only a small fraction of which is mentioned in the thesis. I have not included the bulk of these works in the bibliography but have listed most of the works concerning the Golden Dawn, even where these are not directly cited.

subject of the thesis did not seem to be sufficiently substantial to justify the degree of examination necessary to do them full justice. The same reasoning applied to a considerable portion of the rich and varied history of Anglo-Catholicism. A case in point is the Cambridge Movement, in the form of the Cambridge Camden Society, which undoubtedly had enormous influence on aspects of the developing Oxford Movement, principally Church architecture, ritualistic innovation and the associated aesthetics. Indeed, James F. White has claimed that the early leaders of the Oxford Movement had 'little, if any, interest in ritualistic matters' and he provides significant evidence to demonstrate the central role played by the Society and the Cambridge ecclesiologists in this regard. Nevertheless, in the context of our subject and of the specific period when most of the Anglo-Catholic clergy had joined these occult organizations, it is apparent that the ideals of the Cambridge Movement had already been taken up to a considerable extent by the Anglo-Catholic Movement which developed from the Oxford Movement. See James F. White, *The Cambridge Movement: The Ecclesiologists and the Gothic Revival* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), p.19.

⁹ Alan Wilkinson, *The Church of England and the First World War* (London: SCM Press, 1978); William Maskell, *Monumenta Ritualia Ecclesiae Anglicanae: The Occasional Offices of the Church of England according to the old use of Salisbury the Prymer in English and other prayers and forms with dissertations and notes*, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1882, 1842); Owen Chadwick, *The Victorian Church*, 2 vols (London: A & C Black, 1966); David Newsome, *The Parting of Friends: The Wilberforces and Henry Manning* (Leominster: Gracewing, 1993); Colin Stephenson, *Merrily on High* (New York: Morehouse-Barlow, 1973); Peter C. Hammond, *The Parson and the Victorian Parish* (Sevenoaks: Hodder and Stoughton, 1977).

CHAPTER ONE

AN ANGLICAN ENIGMA

All rituals and ceremonies, whatever explanations of their efficacy may be offered by their official apologists have, and must have, as the rationale of their existence, a magical, i.e. a hypnotic, character, and all persons who are naturally drawn towards ceremonial religion are in this respect really devotees of magic.

Evelyn Underhill

There is no Church of magic.

Emile Durkheim

In the year 2000 a book was published describing the life and work of Frank Selwyn Macaulay Bennett who was Dean of Chester Cathedral between 1920 and 1937.¹⁰ While there is little doubt that this modest volume will hold some interest to those who enjoy studying the history of Anglican cathedrals in England or perhaps to scholars interested in the minutiae of events surrounding the Anglo-Catholic movement during the early twentieth century it seems nevertheless safe to say that this book is not destined to stir controversy in either academia or the public consciousness. Dean Bennett is presented as a kindly and successful Anglo-Catholic parish priest who acquired a reputation in the 1920s and 1930s of having initiated a novel approach to the way cathedrals were managed throughout England. So successful was the Dean that there are indications, outlined in the book, that he was a potential candidate for a Bishopric.

¹⁰ Alex Bruce, *The Cathedral 'Open and Free - Dean Bennett of Chester'* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000).

Accurate as this picture may be of Dean Bennett, however, there was rather more to this devout clergyman than might appear from the plain text of this book. The sole reference that there might be another dimension to the Dean is buried within a note to Chapter Eight where it is stated that Bennett ‘arranged for the publication of an English edition of a little book by Mary Felkin (originally published in New Zealand) which gives specific advice on the making of confessions’. The note goes on to say that some years prior Mary Felkin had taught Bennett ‘the practice of meditation, being herself then a mistress of that difficult but spiritually remunerative art’.¹¹

What is not stated here, presumably because unknown to the author Alex Bruce, is that Mary Felkin was a member of a secret group which purported to practise magic. Initiates of this group, known as the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn,¹² were taught the theory and practice of ritual magic as well as such ‘occult’ subjects as the symbolism of the Tarot cards, divination techniques, the Kabbalah, and ways to invoke angels and various other supernatural beings. Even more surprising than the fact that Dean Bennett studied under a self-professed magician is the evidence found in other sources that the Dean was himself a senior member of the Order.¹³

Yet his membership of this secret Order was not an isolated eccentricity without significance. An equally bland reference occurs in this account of the Dean’s life that while serving as Rector of Hawarden in Wales, Bennett became friendly with members

¹¹ Alex Bruce, *The Cathedral ‘Open and Free*, p.199. In his Bibliography Bruce provides details of the English edition of *The Cup of the Lord* as ‘Chester/Oxford, 1925’. I have not managed to see a copy of this edition but have obtained a copy of its preface written by Dean Bennett. He notes in the unpaginated two page preface that he was sent a copy of the New Zealand edition in the autumn of 1925 and was ‘immensely struck by it’. With reference to Mary Felkin having taught him the practice of meditation some years prior he observes, ‘What she advises in her little book, she has herself tested by experience and she speaks that which she knows, to help people on the lower slopes of a hill, the higher peaks of which she herself has climbed’.

¹² Although the Order underwent several changes of name in the first decade of the twentieth century I intend to use the generic name Golden Dawn except where it is important to make significant distinctions.

¹³ Reference to Bennett’s membership of the Golden Dawn is found in several letters of W. B. Yeats regarding the Order. Relevant excerpts from these letters are published in George Mills Harper, *Yeats’s Golden Dawn: The Influence of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn on the Life and Art and Work of W.B. Yeats* (London: Macmillan Press, 1974), (London: Macmillan Press, 1974). Bennett’s name and details also appear within a set of Golden Dawn card indices recording membership. These indices are unpublished and in the possession of R. A. Gilbert, an authority on the Golden Dawn who has written a number of books on the subject - see bibliography.

of the Community of the Resurrection, including the Superior of the Community, Father Walter Frere. As we shall discuss subsequently in some depth, the Community of the Resurrection played a role of particular importance in the Anglo-Catholic movement of the period but Father Frere also left a lasting impression on Anglican theology and practice. He was a figure of considerable prominence in the Anglican Church and noted for his scholarship as 'a historian, musicologist and liturgist'.¹⁴ Frere played a leading role in revising the Book of Common Prayer and in 1923 he was asked both by the Prime Minister and his Archbishop to accept nomination to the See of Truro.¹⁵ Included amongst Bishop Frere's wide circle of friends and colleagues was Dr. Robert Felkin, husband of the Mary Felkin noted above, and Head of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. Indeed Felkin stayed twice at the Community of the Resurrection in Mirfield for two periods of several weeks and was only dissuaded from attempting to join the Community through the personal advice of Frere.¹⁶ These details might be seen as of little and unrelated consequence were it not also for the fact that during this same period a close friend of Frere, and a senior member of the Community, Father Timothy Rees, later Bishop Rees of Llandaff, was also a senior member of the magical Order.¹⁷

In 1910, and again in 1913, Father Rees was sent by the Community of the Resurrection on a 'Mission of Help to New Zealand'. On both occasions he was

¹⁴ Ronald C. D. Jasper (ed.), *Walter Howard Frere: His Correspondence on Liturgical Revision and Construction* (London: SPCK, 1954), pp. vii-xiii.

¹⁵ Extensive references to Frere occur within most of the literature on Anglo-Catholicism. See especially C. S. Phillips et alia, *Walter Howard Frere, Bishop of Truro: A Memoir* (London: Faber & Faber, 1947).

¹⁶ Felkin was a distinguished physician and a pioneer of scientific tropical medicine. Details of his friendship with Frere can be found in a brief biography entitled "A Wayfaring Man", written by his second wife Harriot and published in several issues of *The Lantern*, a magazine of esoterica edited and produced between 1936 and 1949. The first instalment is in issue Vol 1. No. 8, March 1937. A reference to Felkin's stay at Mirfield is also found in his brief diary notes handwritten in a prayer book now held in a private collection. Felkin is discussed at length subsequently but particularly in Chapter Seven.

¹⁷ Bishop Rees' name and membership details also appear on the Golden Dawn card indices noted above. Details on his mission to New Zealand with Father Fitzgerald appear in J. Lambert Rees, *Timothy Rees of Mirfield and Llandaff* (London: A. R. Mowbray, 1945); Alan Wilkinson, *The Community of the Resurrection* (London: SCM Press, 1992); *The Fellowship of Silence*, edited by Reverend Cyril Hephner, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1915); Patrick Zalewski, *Secret Inner Order Rituals of the Golden Dawn* (Phoenix, AZ: 1988); Matthew Wright, *Havelock North- The History of a Village* (Hastings: Hastings District Council, NZ, 1996); John von Dadelsen, 'The Havelock Work 1909-1939', *Tauhara News* No.57 (April/May 1984), pp. 1-20.

accompanied by a fellow member of the Community of the Resurrection, Father J. Charles Fitzgerald.¹⁸ Father Fitzgerald was not only a close friend of Dr Felkin but also occupied a position of seniority within Felkin's Golden Dawn and at one point¹⁹ was both a 'Chief' (or leader) of a 'Temple' and was in charge of the instruction provided by the Order to newly initiated, aspiring magicians. Indeed, as we shall see subsequently, in addition to carrying out his missionary duties in New Zealand Father Fitzgerald was also instrumental in establishing a new 'Temple' of the Golden Dawn in that country. Over a period of several decades this particular 'Temple' attracted many Anglican clergy to join its membership, including two Anglican New Zealand bishops.²⁰

The phenomenon of members of the Anglican clergy, and specifically Anglo-Catholic clergy, both prominent and less so, simultaneously pursuing 'occult' studies within a secret Order is not just remarkable in terms of both doctrine and theology, but it seems extraordinary. Equally extraordinary is the fact that it is not mentioned in any scholarly work on either the Anglican Church or Anglo-Catholicism.

In 2005 a study was published of an important group within the Anglican Church which in the early twentieth-century advocated the full reunion with the Church of Rome.²¹ The author, Michael Yelton, is a noted historian of Anglo-Catholicism and in this volume he describes the numerous Orders and religious communities which were at the heart of the controversy surrounding the role of Anglo-Catholicism within the Anglican Church, including those which he describes as the 'outer fringes of the Church of England'. Amongst the many interesting individuals who feature in this history is the Reverend A.H. Baverstock who, with eighteen entries in the index, has the second largest number of entries for the 'Index of Persons'.

¹⁸ J. Lambert Rees, *Timothy Rees*, pp. 66-77. See also *CR Diamond Jubilee Book* (Wakefield: West Yorkshire Printing, 1952), pp. 22-23.

¹⁹ R. A. Gilbert, *The Golden Dawn Companion* (Wellingborough: Aquarian Press, 1986), pp. 41, 169.

²⁰ The Temple was called 'Smaragdum Thalasses No.49'. The bishops were Right Reverend William W. Sedgwick, bishop of Waiapu, and Bishop Panapa. Further details are provided subsequently.

²¹ See Michael Yelton, *Anglican Papalism* (London: Canterbury Press, 2005).

Baverstock was a major figure in Anglo-Catholicism and produced a number of books considered by some (including Yelton) to be of lasting value. He was also a dedicated member of the influential Society of the Holy Cross, or *Societas Sanctae Crucis*, of which he was Master from 1921 to 1924 and again from 1927 to 1929. A fact not included in Yelton's book is that Baverstock was also a member of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn.²²

The connection between the Golden Dawn and the Anglican Church, or more specifically, the Anglo-Catholic tendency within the Anglican Church, will be explored in depth in subsequent chapters as will the Golden Dawn itself. At this point, however, it is important to observe that not merely is this connection a neglected area within Anglo-Catholic history but also one within nineteenth-century social history in general, and the Golden Dawn in particular. Indeed, the current scholarly perception of the Golden Dawn seems well expressed in an advertisement for R.A. Gilbert's *The Golden Dawn Companion*: 'The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn epitomized the paradox of an intellectual elite who rejected orthodox religion and yet remained within the social establishment of its day'.²³ The examples of Anglican clergy mentioned above, and we will evidence this further, would seem to indicate strongly that membership of the Golden Dawn did not entail necessarily the rejection of religious orthodoxy. In the case of some clergy and laity, as we shall subsequently demonstrate, membership of the Order apparently served to strengthen their Anglican faith.

In his introduction to *The Golden Dawn Companion* Gilbert argues for more rigorous and scholarly treatment of the Golden Dawn:

²² Baverstock is mentioned in many histories of Anglo-Catholicism besides Yelton's work. For his part in the Society of the Holy Cross see J. Embry, *The Catholic Movement and the Society of the Holy Cross* (London: The Faith Press, 1931). His membership of the Golden Dawn is mentioned in Gilbert, *The Golden Dawn Companion*, p. 164. Baverstock also appears on the unpublished Golden Dawn card indices.

²³ Gilbert, *The Golden Dawn Companion*, pp. 41, 169.

It yet remains as maligned, misunderstood and misappropriated as ever it was during its heyday... Careless references to the Order occur in virtually every academic study that refers to it... Much remains to be discovered about the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and many questions concerning the minutiae of its history and the motivations of its members remain to be answered.²⁴

This study endeavours to fill some of these *lacunae* but we may well enquire at the outset as to the reasons why this connection has not simply been neglected but entirely ignored by scholars. The reasons are various but one undoubtedly relates to the requirement of secrecy by the Order members. Each member, on being initiated as a 'neophyte' was required to give a sworn 'obligation', rivalling that of Freemasonry in its somewhat lurid penalties, to keep secret not just every document, ritual and the identities of members but also the very existence of the Order itself.²⁵ On expulsion, resignation or death all papers and regalia had either to be returned without examination by third parties or destroyed.²⁶ In the overwhelming majority of cases of the several hundred men and women who belonged to the Order over several decades this requirement was fully met. An inevitable result of this secrecy has meant that scholars of the period and potential biographers of interesting historical characters have been deprived of critical material relating to their subject.

A second reason, discussed by Gilbert, is more complex. *Prima facie* it is precisely because a small number of members were not successful in keeping their 'obligation' that any evidence of the Order and of some of its membership exists. This failure takes two forms. On the one hand there were several members who died without

²⁴ Gilbert, *The Golden Dawn Companion*, pp. ix, xi.

²⁵ R. J. Torrens, *The Secret Rituals of the Golden Dawn* (Wellingborough: Aquarian Press, 1973), pp. 78-79; and Israel Regardie, *The Golden Dawn*, 4th edition, 4 vols (St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Publications, 1982), II, 23-24.

²⁶ Elderly ex-members of the Smaragdum Thalasses Temple informed me that almost immediately upon the death of a member the Chiefs of the Order would visit the widow, widower or surviving relative to collect the papers and Order paraphernalia. Predictably, this caused some resentment on occasions.

ensuring that their papers and regalia were either destroyed or returned to the Order. There are approximately eight known 'collections' of such material which are currently located within universities or in private hands.²⁷ This material has formed the basis for several popular histories produced over the past three decades. Some of these histories are valuable, produced by reputable scholars and containing appendices of original documents and identities of some of the members.²⁸ Others, however, appear to be the polemical products of committed 'occultists' and while these do contain details of historical value their accuracy and objectivity are deservedly suspect.

It is likely that the very nature of this type of 'occult literature' has until recently acted as a distinct disincentive for scholars to undertake any serious research into the Order of the Golden Dawn other than as a piece of minor social history or as peripheral aspects of a major study. In the context of the latter, two significant examples are academic studies of the Anglican mystic and theologian Evelyn Underhill and the poet W. B. Yeats. Both were members of the Golden Dawn but it has only been in fairly recent years that scholars have been prepared to investigate the role which the Order played in their lives.

²⁷ This thesis draws heavily on these private collections, principally on those held by R.A. Gilbert who kindly gave me access to them. For the Chapter dealing with the New Zealand Temple and with one of the Orders related to the Golden Dawn I have utilised a collection of documents owned by an elderly ex-member.

²⁸ There are few comprehensive studies of the Golden Dawn that are both accurate and objective. These include the several books by R. A. Gilbert (see Bibliography); Ellic Howe, *The Magicians of the Golden Dawn: A Documentary History of a Magical Order 1887-1923* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972); Virginia Moore, *The Unicorn: William Butler Yeats' Search for Reality* (New York: Macmillan, 1952); and, to some degree, Mary K. Greer, *Women of the Golden Dawn: Rebels and Priestesses* (Rochester, VT: Park Street Press, 1995). These contain many lacunae however and several inaccuracies subsequently revealed through the discovery of new primary source material since their publication. Other popular but important works dealing with the Golden Dawn are: Regardie's *Golden Dawn*; Ithell Colquhoun, *Sword of Wisdom: MacGregor Mathers and the 'Golden Dawn'*: (London: Neville Spearman, 1975); and Francis King, *Ritual Magic in England, 1887 to the Present Day* (London: Neville Spearman, 1970). The many works of Patrick Zalewski, Chic and Sandra Cicero, Darcy Kuntz et al contain valuable historical material but cannot be relied upon uniformly for their historical accuracy. None of these authors is a trained scholar and all are members of occult organisations. Perhaps the prime, or worst, example of such works is "Enquire Within" (ps. for Miss C.M. Stoddart), *Light-bearers of Darkness* (Hawthorne, CA: Christian Book Club, 1969, reprint of 1930). Miss Stoddart was a Chief of a Golden Dawn Temple and although the work is conspiratorial, anti-Semitic and often unreliable in terms of commentary, it contains several important original documents on the Golden Dawn which are not available elsewhere. Comparison of original documents with excerpts in her book have shown the latter to be accurate.

Scholarly discomfort with the subjectivity and the perceived disreputable nature of 'occultism' is also probably related to the second form of failure to keep the Golden Dawn obligations. Three members of the Order deliberately broke their vow and published details of the Order, its rituals and instructional materials. The most notorious of these was undoubtedly Aleister Crowley. Hostile media coverage of Crowley's provocative activities both in and out^{-side} several Court trials and which clearly linked him with 'occult' organisations in general, and with the Golden Dawn in particular, have not projected an image of an organisation worthy of serious consideration and study by academics. Indeed, even much of the recent and mounting literature concerning Yeats' membership of the Golden Dawn provides little or no scholarly examination of the Golden Dawn system of belief beyond a mere description necessary to place the poet's life and work in context.

Such an examination is long overdue. If we are to understand the motivation and intellectual work not simply of a poet like Yeats but that of such acclaimed philosophers as Professor C. D. Broad and Professor Millicent Mackenzie (both members of the Golden Dawn)²⁹ and especially that of devout clerics like Bishop Rees and Dean Bennett we need to investigate the conceptual basis of the Golden Dawn. If the philosophy or theology which underlies the Golden Dawn can be described as just one of the many deviant currents occurring within and without Christianity in modern times it needs to be demonstrated as a minimum how the beliefs and practices associated with membership of the Order were consistent and compatible with Christian orthodoxy. It

²⁹ In *Yeats's Golden Dawn* (p. 154) Harper refers to a letter from Yeats dated 13 October 1929 where he says '... I must meet an old Kabalist in London... In private life he (is), I think, a Hegelian professor – how surprised his pupils would be'. Harper notes (p. 199) that he is unable to identify the Hegelian professor but it is almost certainly Broad. In a letter to Ithell Colquhoun dated 19 September 1974 Israel Regardie writes, 'At this time no harm would be done by stating that Prof Broad who has written on philosophy, etc. was a member, and was present at the time of my consecrating my elemental instruments'. The letter is in a private New York collection. Professor Mackenzie was one of the three 'Chiefs' of the Hermes Temple, Bristol and was a prominent theorist on education and the first woman to stand for election to Parliament in the 1918 General Election (unsuccessfully). A great admirer of Rudolf Steiner, Professor Mackenzie also wrote a book on Hegel. The significance of Hegel to this thesis is discussed subsequently. See Ithell Colquhoun, *Sword of Wisdom*, p.192.

is, of course, evident that a similar demonstration could reasonably be required in terms of the views of the above-named professors, or indeed of the broader membership of the Order which included significant numbers of medical practitioners, lawyers and successful members of various professions.³⁰ Nevertheless, it seems clear that any putative tensions between belief systems are likely to be most stark where the practice of 'hermetic magic' is to be incorporated within, and somehow made consistent with, the day-to-day devotions of an Anglican bishop or, even more strongly, within a strict religious vocation found within the Community of the Resurrection and controlled by vows of poverty, obedience and chastity.

The present academic environment is particularly conducive to such an enquiry. Apart from the desirability of 'rescuing' an intriguing piece of Anglo-Catholic history it is no exaggeration to say that a vast increase in academic research has occurred in recent years in such seemingly diverse fields as ancient (including Christian) theurgy and magic, Gnosticism, angelology, early Jewish mysticism, Christian and Jewish apocalyptic literature, Hermetism and Neo-Platonism, Renaissance magic, and modern Western 'esotericism'. Indeed, as recently observed, the latter has emerged over the past fifteen years as a separate subject for academic research at various universities throughout the world.³¹

In one way or another the significant advances made in all of the areas noted above are relevant to our study of the putative conceptual, societal and historic linkages between the Golden Dawn and Anglo-Catholicism. Clearly, however, in a study with such a limited focus boundaries must be set and thus for most of the above we can do no

³⁰ Although outside the scope of this work the connections between medical doctors, psychological methods of healing and the Golden Dawn have received no treatment and are worthy of critical attention. Several of the Golden Dawn doctors (e.g. William Westcott, R.W. Felkin and W.E. Carnegie Dickson) produced scholarly work in their professional fields which is still cited today. The relationship between the Golden Dawn, the clergy and healing through prayer and occult methods is covered in this study. See Chapters Seven and Nine.

³¹ Kocku von Stuckrad, *Western Esotericism* (London: Equinox Publishing, 2005), p. xi; Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, *The Western Esoteric Traditions: A Historical Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 3-14.

more than convey a brief survey of some of the most important findings made by recent scholars in these fields and demonstrating the illumination these cast on our subject. A particular case in point regarding such boundaries, and one requiring some extended comment, is that of the 'ritual revival' as this term might be applied and understood in the context of what Michael Farrer has described as 'The greatest revolution the Church of England had seen since the Reformation'.³² Farrer is referring to the immense and fundamental changes that occurred within the Established Church over a period of some one hundred years between the approximate dates of 1830 and 1930. These changes were driven by the adherents of what became known as the Oxford Movement, which 'shared common features with earlier movements' concerned with reform within the Church, but which was 'radically different in its rejection of the Protestant Reformation and glorification of the Catholic past'.³³ The 'revival' embraced both theological belief and ceremonial practice and these, as Yates has remarked, 'developed very quickly from the 1830s'.³⁴ The ceremonial aspect of 'Ritualism', in this regard, is taken to refer to the introduction of ceremonial furnishings and practices perceived to be an important part of the Catholic heritage of the Church of England and perceived to be wrongly abandoned or neglected at or from the time of the Reformation.

The impact of ritualism on the Church throughout the Victorian period was so extensive that its history is seen by most scholars in this area as being inseparable from that of Victorian Anglo-Catholicism itself.³⁵ An important question, therefore, can be seen to lie in the possibility that ritualism exerted an influence on the motivation of

³² Michael Farrer, *Faithful Cross: A History of Holy Cross Church, Cromer Street* (London: Cromer Street Publications, 1999), p. 14.

³³ George Herring, *What Was the Oxford Movement?* (London: Continuum Books, 2002), p. 1. Yates has observed, 'It has become part of Anglican mythology that the Oxford Movement had restored to the church a proper understanding of its role as part of the wider Catholic church and as a *via media* between pre-Tridentine Roman Catholicism and the non-episcopal Protestant churches of Europe'. Yates, *Anglican Ritualism in Victorian Britain*, p. 45.

³⁴ Yates, *Anglican Ritualism in Victorian Britain*, p. 3.

³⁵ Yates, *Anglican Ritualism in Victorian Britain*, pp. 1-9; See also, for example, John Shelton Reed, *Glorious Battle: The Cultural Politics of Victorian Anglo-Catholicism* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 1996), pp. 39-40.

those Anglo-Catholic clergy who joined contemporaneous movements which had both an esoterically religious dimension and ritualistic practices.³⁶ In his extensive study on Anglican ritualism, Nigel Yates states that ritualism ‘had both a theological and a psychological base’ and he considers that it is probably the latter that initially appealed to many of those drawn to Anglican ritualism by means of its ‘outward manifestations’ which provided the ‘initial aesthetic attraction’.³⁷ For these ritualists, Yates asserts, the ‘theological framework’ in which the ceremonial development was cast came later. For others, however, Yates acknowledges that it was ‘a developing theology’ which formed an intellectual foundation for ‘a new understanding of liturgy’ that permitted the recovery of Catholic symbolism inherent in forms of ceremonial that were never, so it was argued, ‘wholly rejected’ by the Church of England.³⁸ With regard to our examination of an apparent Anglo-Catholic-Golden Dawn nexus, however, the emphasis is placed here predominantly on the theological framework which was evidently perceived by some clergy to permit the practice of ritual magic. Limited attention, therefore, is afforded the ‘outward manifestations of ritualism’ which Yates links to the psychological base for Anglican ritualism.³⁹ This is not to deny its high importance in terms of either the history or the theology of the Victorian church, but it is to assert that from the perspective of an Anglican priest progressing through the Grades of the Golden Dawn it was almost certainly his Anglo-Catholic belief, rather than his Anglo-Catholic practice, which determined his entry into an Hermetic Order.

³⁶ Apart from the Golden Dawn, which provides perhaps the most extreme case of clergy attracted to ritual outside of the church, there was a significant incidence of high church and Anglo-Catholic clergy initiated into Freemasonry. In his paper on Canon George Raymond Portal, J. W. Daniel has observed ‘The Masonic membership of high church men at this time, when any leaning towards what today might be called Anglo-Catholicism was under attack, suggests that they were attracted by the ancient and “romantic” tradition of the craft and particularly by its relatively colourful ritual.’ As an example, Daniel considers it ‘noteworthy how many priests were early members of the Coeur de Lion Encampment of Masonic Knights Templar’. See J. W. Daniel, ‘Canon George Raymond Portal, MA (1827-89): From Rebel to Ruler’ in Andrew Prescott (ed.), *Marking Well: Essays on the Occasion of the 150th Anniversary of the Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons of England and Wales and its districts and Lodges Overseas* (Hersham: Lewis Masonic, 2006), p. 138.

³⁷ Yates, *Anglican Ritualism in Victorian Britain*, p. 3.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

Nevertheless, the relationship between belief and practice is, as Yates has observed, 'a complicated one'.⁴⁰ It is conceivable, and perhaps even likely, that an attraction towards the external aspects of Anglo-Catholic ritualism might predispose a priest towards embracing the complex and colourful rituals of the Golden Dawn, but no evidence exists to suggest that this was actually the case.⁴¹ What seems inconceivable, however, is any notion that a response by clergy to Golden Dawn ceremony could be divorced from its theological implications. The more plausible hypothesis, which will be argued subsequently, is that they were attracted to the fact that every aspect of the Golden Dawn complex ceremonial had a symbolic importance which was not only seen to be in accord with Anglo-Catholic doctrine but which mirrored a similar approach favoured by many advocates of Anglo-Catholic ritualism. John Shelton Reed has observed in his study of Anglo-Catholicism that 'Most arguments for ...ritual "advance" were variations on the theme that certain ornaments and practices were symbolically important, that they stood for "Catholic" beliefs and thus were not merely matters of taste or preference'.⁴² Reed notes further that 'every detail of ceremonial and decoration' was invested with symbolic importance and that 'symbolic explanations were devised for practically everything'.⁴³

To read an 1857 pamphlet called *The Symbolism of Churches and Their Ornaments*, one would think that everything was as important as everything else:

⁴⁰ Yates, *Anglican Ritualism in Victorian Britain*, p. 2.

⁴¹ It is demonstrated subsequently that while there is firm evidence of specific Anglo-Catholic clergy joining the Golden Dawn, none of their personal documents regarding their activity within the Order, or their attitude towards it, is known to have survived. It is also relevant to note in this context that because of the secrecy of the Golden Dawn, an attraction towards its highly symbolic rituals, along with the colourful robes, symbolic diagrams, wands and ritual apparatus, could not have formed part of the initial motivation of clergy to join the Order. It might, of course, have formed part of their subsequent motivation to remain and progress in the Order but even here, it should be noted, very little colour of any form appeared in the ritual ceremonies until the member entered the Second Order, which was not possible to achieve within at least two years. This was a deliberate part of the Order's symbology marking a transition from darkness to light, which embraced all the colours of the spectrum. A Hebrew name associated with this entry into the Second Order is 'Tiphareth', which means 'beauty'. See Regardie, *The Golden Dawn*, II, 11-244.

⁴² Reed, *Glorious Battle*, p. 43.

⁴³ Reed, *Glorious Battle*, pp. 44-45.

altar crosses and candles, flowers and colored altar cloths were defended as 'symbolic', but so were such things as fonts, spires, bells, and doors.⁴⁴

Such an Anglo-Catholic outlook on church ceremonial, and especially one where 'decorative and liturgical links with pre-Reformation antiquity were valued... as symbols of a doctrinal continuity', would have seemed deeply familiar to any member of the Golden Dawn.⁴⁵ Indeed, as will be discussed subsequently at much greater length, the notion of 'a doctrinal continuity', with its suggestive affinity to the Renaissance concept of *prisca theologia*, is fundamental to understanding the formation of the Golden Dawn and its revival of ritual magic.⁴⁶ And, as will become clear, it is also fundamental to the endeavour to understand how and why Anglican priests were led to the practice of ritual magic. To this degree, therefore, our focus will be placed on the theological basis of the ritual revival rather on than its historical details. Perhaps, therefore, it is the 'emergent subject' of Western Esotericism which best describes the 'formalised discipline' of this study which will need, as noted recently by Professor

⁴⁴ Reed, *Glorious Battle*, p.44.

⁴⁵ Reed, *Glorious Battle*, p.43.

⁴⁶ Although the English Reformation swept away much of Catholic liturgy and the ceremonial decoration of the national Church, it did not remove the historic episcopate as occurred elsewhere in Europe. The retention of the hierarchical structure of bishops, priests and deacons allowed the Oxford Movement reformers to emphasize the concept of historical continuity with the past through Apostolic Succession whilst also providing the opportunity for the concept of *via media*, a notion favoured by some Tractarians, which presented the Church of England as 'a middle way' between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism *per se*. This link with antiquity also provided a standard against which the Tractarians were able to assess the status of the Church of England in terms of both doctrine and practice. As Herring describes it: 'She was not only theoretically the modern embodiment of the early Church, but also that embodiment in practice. She should *look* like the early Church. But in the 1830s she was in reality but a sad and impoverished reflection of antiquity in the view of the Tractarians. The Church of England had the capacity to be the contemporary realization of the early Church, but she had yet to appreciate her true vocation. The Tractarians set out to teach her'. See Herring, *What Was the Oxford Movement?*, pp. 6-7, 37. Yates has challenged some aspects of 'Anglican mythology' regarding the *via media* notion in his *Anglican Ritualism in Victorian Britain*, p. 45. Apart from a perception that the Church had become inert and 'asleep', it faced considerable political dangers in terms of possible disestablishment as well as threats from new forms of Protestant dissent. Ollard argues that the genesis of the Oxford Movement must be seen against this background. See Ollard, *A Short History of the Oxford Movement*, pp. 3-12, 33; and Reed, *Glorious Battle*, p. 4.

Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, to draw equally on 'philosophy, religious studies and history'.⁴⁷

Defining the Boundaries of Magic

The earliest work of any scholarly standing on the Golden Dawn was Ellic Howe's *The Magicians of the Golden Dawn* which appeared in 1972. The very title of this volume exposes a fundamental question that lies at the core of our study. Members of the Golden Dawn were magicians or, at least, would-be magicians. The purpose of becoming an initiate and rising through a series of 'grades' was to become a practising magician. Much of the elementary theory required for the practise of magic was provided to the initiate within the first five grades which constituted the 'First Order'. To receive the large body of advanced theory necessary to become an actual practising magician or 'adept', however, meant entering the first grade of the 'Second Order'. This entailed an elaborate ritual requiring the candidate to be tied to a large wooden cross and undergoing symbolic crucifixion. As we shall see in detail later, however, in the minds of the participants of the ceremony, the crucifixion was more than merely symbolic and involved beginning to acquire the type of spiritual nature or consciousness typified by Christ. In other words, to become the highest level of Magical Adept was to become Christ-like. Moreover, because the highly syncretistic doctrine of the Order embraced Egyptian mythology, amongst aspects of many other mythologies, there was an equation between Christ and Osiris so that the new initiate of the Second Order, known as Adeptus Minor, was also supposed to take on the qualities of Osiris.

Also included in this fusion of mythology, much of which centred on the cultus of the suffering, dying and rising god, was the Rosicrucian legend 'that lay at the very

⁴⁷ Kocku von Stuckrad, *Western Esotericism*, Foreword by Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, pp. viii-ix.

centre of the Golden Dawn system'.⁴⁸ Indeed, the Golden Dawn was purported to be part of the very same Rosicrucian brotherhood described in three 'manifestos' published in Germany between 1614 and 1616.⁴⁹ Rosicrucian symbolism, as described in these original documents and elaborated by subsequent organizations, is itself an amalgam of concepts drawn from Gnosticism, Neo-Platonism, the Jewish and Christian Kabbalah, and from the Hermetic writings.⁵⁰ Comprehensive speculations on such symbolism formed the basis of Golden Dawn doctrine and practice.

Prima facie, it is apparent that for a devoted Christian, and still more for an Anglican clergyman, the act of becoming a member of the Golden Dawn must have raised many difficult questions requiring resolution. In what sense was it possible to be both a Christian and a practising magician? Was there any conflict at all? To what degree was the traditional distinction made by theologians and the Anglican Church between magic and religion, or the various distinctions made by scholars between the two phenomena valid? Given the theoretical and theological beliefs implicit in the Adept ritual of crucifixion noted above, was Jesus himself considered to be a magician? Whatever answers such Anglicans produced to resolve these theological, philosophical and personal issues there is little doubt that they would have been controversial. Indeed, they remain highly controversial and the numerous issues which are deeply embedded within such questions continue to be matters of significant scholarly debate which are examined briefly below.

Some two thousand years have elapsed since the life and death of Jesus Christ. Despite this considerable stretch of time the question 'Was Jesus a magician?' still has the power to shock and offend. In one form or another it was a question raised or an

⁴⁸ Christopher McIntosh, *The Rosy Cross Unveiled: The History, Mythology and Rituals of an Occult Order* (Wellingborough: The Aquarian Press, 1980), p. 115.

⁴⁹ G.H. Frater N.O.M. (William W. Westcott), 'Flying Roll No. XVI: The History of the Rosicrucian Order' in Francis King (ed.), *Astral Projection, Ritual Magic, and Alchemy: Being Hitherto Unpublished Golden Dawn Material* (London: Neville Spearman, 1971), pp. 91-96.

⁵⁰ McIntosh, *The Rosy Cross Unveiled*, pp. 24-31.

accusation made supposedly while he lived but certainly in the period of the early church after his death. As noted by John M. Hull, in his *Hellenistic Magic and the Synoptic Tradition*, 'The belief that Jesus was a magician is an ancient one. It goes back at least as far as the middle of the first century.'⁵¹ In one form or another the question is still being asked, and has received considerable scholarly attention in the past thirty years or so. The problem with the question is not one of ontology in the sense of 'Was Jesus a carpenter?' or even, more topically, 'was Jesus married?' or 'was Jesus a father?' These latter questions have an equal power to offend religious believers but do not possess the problematic features found in 'Was Jesus a magician?'⁵²

The difficulty with this question arises from the term 'magician'. What is a magician? If we can answer this question then *prima facie* we are in a position to answer either 'yes' or 'no' to the query regarding Jesus or again to say that insufficient or no evidence exists to ascribe this term to him. Unfortunately, there is no scholarly or even popular consensus as to what exactly constitutes a magician. Moreover, even if there were such a consensus it is by no means clear that the understanding we may have of the term as used in the twenty-first century matches with or corresponds to the way in which the term, or a cognate of that term, might have been applied two thousand years ago. Thus to say 'yes' or 'no' to the question asked today when presented with certain evidence may have little or no bearing on the answer asserted two thousand years ago when presented with the same evidence.

On one aspect, however, scholars are largely agreed. The term, and its cognates, as applied at the time of Christ's life and for several hundred years thereafter was almost entirely pejorative. Thus to ask the question was as offensive as to enquire whether Jesus was a thief. Yet on the assumption that the term was not then nor now

⁵¹ John M. Hull, *Hellenistic Magic and the Synoptic Tradition* (Naperville, IL: Alec R. Allenson, 1974), p. 1.

⁵² Reaction from the Roman and Anglican Churches to the themes contained in Dan Brown's popular fiction, *The Da Vinci Code* (London: Bantam Press, 2003) is a case in point.

applied solely as a term of abuse the question naturally arises as to what grounds existed to lead people to suppose that the term might correctly be applied to Jesus.⁵³ Were there actions which Jesus was reported to have carried out which were characteristic actions of people labelled as ‘magicians’? In shifting the problem from the application of a label to the grounds or warrant for applying the label little is achieved if the same degree of approbation attaches to the grounds as is attached to the label. Precisely this very problem has confronted both ancient and modern commentators. The casting out of demons and healing through miracles performed by Jesus and his followers look, as noted by Susan R. Garrett, ‘very much like the feats of conventional magicians’.⁵⁴ Morton Smith has argued in several books that Jesus was in fact a magician because he is described in the Gospels as ‘doing the things that magicians do’.⁵⁵ Given the fact that the entire knowledge of Jesus and his actions is derived from the New Testament, and principally from the Gospels, it is evident that any resemblance between the accounts of magicians and sorcerers and those of Jesus and his followers arises specifically from

⁵³ Some scholars deny this possibility on the grounds that the term “magician” has no content or meaning other than as a term of abuse for religious practices which are condemned or criticised. One such example is John G. Gager, *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992). Gager argues (pp. 24-25): ‘We have avoided the use of the term “magic”...it is our conviction that magic, as a definable and consistent category of human experience, simply does not exist... Thus, the use of the term ‘magic’ tells us little or nothing about the substance of what is under description. The sentence, ‘X is/was a magician!’ tells us nothing about the beliefs and practices of X; the only solid information that can be derived from it concerns the *speaker’s* attitude toward X and their relative social relationship – that X is viewed by the speaker as powerful, peripheral, and dangerous’. Gager is also quoted approvingly in Pablo A. Torijano’s *Solomon the Esoteric King* (Leiden: Brill, 2002) where he notes (p. 196): ‘The sociological approach of Gager, even if somewhat extreme and reductionist, is very useful in the study of what is called magic... we use the noun “magic” and the adjective “magical” for texts and techniques that deal with power and with the results and inner working of such power’. We shall discuss this issue at greater length in the body of the text but it is clear that, irrespective of the considerable validity which underlies Gager’s reasoning, his conclusion is not and cannot be warranted without rendering a significant body of scholarship and literature to be without value, if not meaning. A case in point is *Apologia sive de magia* of Apuleius written after his trial for magic which took place between 156 and 158 A.D. (see bibliography). Similarly, given Gager’s recommended prescription, what are we to make of the use of the term and its cognates in *Three Books of Occult Philosophy* by Cornelius Agrippa. The solution adopted by some scholars, particularly sociologists, is to employ ‘magic’ as a modern technical term. The difficulty, however, with creating “a rigid and artificial terminology”, as described by Fritz Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, USA, 1997), p. 19, is that such technical usage fails to address adequately the phenomenon referred to by all previous usages of the term.

⁵⁴ Susan R. Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil: Magic and the Demonic in Luke’s Writings* (Minneapolis, MS: Fortress Press, 1989), p. 3. See also S. Eitrem, *Some Notes on the Demonology in the New Testament* (Oslo: Almqvist & Wiksells, 1950).

⁵⁵ Morton Smith, *The Secret Gospel* (Wellingborough: The Aquarian Press, 1985) and *Jesus The Magician* (Wellingborough: The Aquarian Press, 1985).

these writings. Both ancient and modern commentators and modern scholars alike have either attempted to minimise the similarities through interpretation or apologia⁵⁶ or conversely have maximised the same often to the point of near identity.⁵⁷

At the very core of the issue is the belief, or otherwise, that there is an objective distinction between religion and magic whereby, irrespective of whether or not the latter term is a pejorative one, the two terms denote, or do not denote, characteristically different phenomena. Various scholars have taken distinct approaches in their attempts to describe this objective distinction. Howard Clark Kee claims, for example, ‘Magic is defined by cultural anthropologists – in my view, correctly – as a technique of action or the use of a formula effective for producing certain desired results. In some cases, magic is performed for personal gain; in others, to ward off harm from others; in some instances to effect harm on one’s antagonists’.⁵⁸ It does not require undue reflection to realise that without considerable qualification this definition is wholly inadequate. It could apply, for example to the practice of law or almost any conceivable activity. For similar reasons we must reject the definition of Lucy Mair, who contends that ‘magic is concerned with the manipulation of forces; religion is occupied with communication with beings’.⁵⁹

In order to avoid any proposed definition of magic applying to ostensibly mundane and entirely physical activities it may appear reasonable to suggest that any putatively successful definition or description must, firstly, refer in some way to a supernatural being or beings and secondly, refer to the relationship between the person who practises magic and such a supernatural being or beings. Yet even this broad

⁵⁶ Such as Howard Clark Kee, *Christian Origins in Sociological Perspective* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1980) and his ‘Magic and Messiah’, in *Religion, Science and Magic*, edited by Jacob Neusner, Ernest S. Frerichs and Paul Virgil McCracken Flesher (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 121-141. A more recent attempt is Donald Howard Bromley, ‘Jesus: Magician or Miracle Worker?’ (unpublished Master’s dissertation: Faculty of Ashland Theological Seminary, 2004).

⁵⁷ See Morton Smith, *Jesus The Magician*; John M. Hull, *Hellenistic Magic and the Synoptic Tradition*.

⁵⁸ Kee, ‘Magic and Messiah’ in *Religion, Science and Magic*, p. 122.

⁵⁹ Quoted in Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil*, p. 29. See Lucy Mair, *An Introduction to Social Anthropology*, second edition. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972).

intention will not suffice, however, for the category of magic, whether valid or not, has clearly included instances where, in the words of Brian P. Copenhaver, ‘strange effects come from (the magician) manipulating physical objects rather than (from)... calling on the aid of non-human persons’.⁶⁰ Copenhaver notes that this type of magic was distinguished in Renaissance Europe from ‘demonic’ magic which did involve producing strange effects from conversing with non-human beings. Copenhaver reports that some scholars, such as D.P. Walker, have referred to the former type of magic as ‘natural’ magic in contradistinction to the latter described as ‘spiritual and demonic magic’.⁶¹

Most recent scholarship on the subject of magic refers to the fact that the term ‘magic’ derives from the Persian word *magos* which in the sixth century B.C. was an official title of a member of the priestly Median tribe who ‘is a priest or, in any case, a specialist in religion’.⁶² Thomas C. Romer observes that ‘according to Xenophon, (*magos*) refers to “experts in matters related to the gods”’.⁶³ In the context of the same source Fritz Graf notes the comment of Plato in the *First Alcibiades* (assuming Plato wrote this dialogue): ‘The first one teaches the science of the *magoi*, owing to Zoroaster, son of Oromasdes: it is in fact the worship of the gods.’⁶⁴ There seems to be unanimous acknowledgement by all scholars and commentators, ancient and modern, that irrespective of when the term and its cognates acquired pejorative and condemnatory connotations it did not have these exclusively, or even predominantly, until later in the Greco-Roman world. That is to say, although there is evidence that term was used in a negative sense as early as the end of the sixth century B.C., or even

⁶⁰ Brian P. Copenhaver, ‘Introduction’, in D. P. Walker, *Spiritual & Demonic Magic* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2000; first published as Vol. 22 of Studies of the Warburg Institute, 1958), p. ix.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, p. 20.

⁶³ Thomas C. Romer, ‘Competing Magicians in Exodus 7-9: Interpreting Magic in the Priestly Theology’, *Magic in the Biblical World*, edited by Todd Klutz (London: T & T Clark International, 2003), p. 13.

⁶⁴ Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, p. 20. Zoroaster occupies a major role in an occult Order contemporary to the Golden Dawn, known as the ‘Cromlech Temple of the Holy Order of the Sun’. Many of the senior Golden Dawn membership, including Anglo-Catholic clergy were also members of this Order.

the fifth century, it could equally be used positively at this and later times.⁶⁵ Apuleius, in the mid-second century A.D., defends himself from a charge of being a magician and comments thus:

Listen to this, you who rashly slander magic! It is an art acceptable to the immortal gods, an art which includes the knowledge of how to worship them and pay them homage. It is a religious tradition dealing with things divine, and it has been distinguished ever since it was founded by Zoroaster and Ormazd, the high priests of divinities. In fact, it is considered one of the chief elements of royal instruction, and in Persia no one is allowed lightly to be a 'magus' any more than they would let him be king.⁶⁶

A similar positive claim for magic is made by Philo who writes:

Now the true magic... is felt to be a fit object for reverence and ambition and is carefully studied not only by ordinary persons but by kings and the greatest kings, and particularly those of the Persians, so much so that it is said that no one in that country is promoted to the throne unless he has first been admitted into the caste of the Magi. But there is a counterfeit of this, most properly called a perversion of art, pursued by charlatan mendicants and parasites and the basest of women and slave population, who make it their profession to deal in purifications and

⁶⁵ See Graf, *Magic in the Ancient Worlds*, p. 21 and Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil*, p. 12, who observes that the scholar Arthur Nock had pointed out that 'already in the fifth century B.C.E it (*magus*) is used to mean 'quack'.

⁶⁶ *Apologia* 25-26. Translation from George Luck, *Arcana Mundi*, second printing (London: Johns Hopkins University Press, London, 1986), p. 111.

disenchantments and promise with some sort of charms and incantations to turn men's love into deadly enmity and their hatred into profound affection.⁶⁷

We have quoted this passage at some length because, along with similar remarks by Apuleius, Plato and other ancient writers, it exposes a fundamental weakness in the proposal argued by various scholars that the use of the term 'magic' should be abandoned in academic discourse. We have already referred to the views of John Gager who has asserted that 'magic, as a definable and consistent category of human experience, simply does not exist'.⁶⁸ In a similar vein Jonathan Z. Smith has stated: 'I see little merit in continuing the use of the substantive term 'magic' in second-order, theoretical, academic discourse'.⁶⁹ Again, John Middleton has opined: 'The concept of "magic" is in itself empty of meaning and thus susceptible to the recognition of any meaning we care to give it'.⁷⁰ Although the boundaries of this study do not permit us to enter the various complexities of the reasoning and logic which led these and other modern scholars to such conclusions it is apparent that the undoubted fact that the term has had and still has negative connotations is at the centre of the debate. For these scholars, notwithstanding their acknowledgement of the ambiguity of the term, appear to take it as axiomatic that to label someone a 'magician' is to condemn him or is to level an accusation against him. It is viewed as entirely a polemical term. Indeed, Wouter J. Hanegraaff has argued that the apparent distinction made by academic theorists between religion and magic 'properly belongs to the domain of theological polemics internal to Christianity, and cannot claim any scholarly foundation'.⁷¹ While,

⁶⁷ Philo, 'The Special Laws', *Collected Works of Philo*, 12 vols (London: William Heinemann, 1937; repr. 1962), VII, 539.

⁶⁸ Gager, *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells*, p. 24.

⁶⁹ Jonathan Z. Smith, "Trading Places", in *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power* ed. by Marvin Meyer and Paul Mirecki (Leiden: Brill, 1995), p. 16

⁷⁰ John Middleton, "Theories of Magic", in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. by Mircea Eliade (New York: Macmillan, 1987).

⁷¹ Wouter J. Hanegraaff, "Magic I", in *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, ed. by Wouter J. Hanegraaff et alia, 2 vols (Leiden: Brill, 2005), II, 718.

in Hanegraaff's view, the 'logical step' of discarding the category of magic altogether has not been taken by Western scholars⁷² he asserts that 'if any etic concept of magic is still considered necessary at all, it might be used as the common denominator of "a discursive field, in which Occidentalist definitions of deluded or illusionary beliefs were accompanied by doubts about the extent to which they were deluded, illusionary, backward, or irrational"''.⁷³

The problem with this approach is that it is simply false to claim that the term 'magic' has no content other than as a term of abuse or accusation against a religion or religious practice of which one disapproves. Even a cursory examination of the heated polemics which adherents of various religions or schismatic sects have engaged in against one another over the past two millennia will show this to be so. While 'magic' may be an accusatory charge it has not been, and is not one, which is invariably, or even frequently, deployed. For example, one particular Christian sect may strongly disapprove of another, viewing it as involving false and even blasphemous beliefs but one would not expect the charge of practising magic to be routinely levelled or indeed levelled at all unless certain conditions obtained.⁷⁴ The difficulty is, of course, in specifying what these conditions are and, as agreed by virtually all the academics who have discussed 'the problem of magic' the task of producing a set of sufficient and/or necessary conditions has been consistently unsuccessful. From the fact that a finite and closed set of sufficient and/or necessary conditions has not or even cannot be produced, however, it does not follow that the term is empty of meaning. Indeed, the very existence of a vast literature on the subject would suggest otherwise.

⁷² Presumably Hanegraaff means merely that it has not been discarded by all scholars.

⁷³ Hanegraaff is quoting from Peter Pels, "Introduction: Magic and Modernity", in *Magic and Modernity: Interfaces of Revelation and Concealment* ed. By Birgit Meyer & Peter Pels (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), pp. 1-38.

⁷⁴ Apparently there is something in the vicinity of 100 separate Mormon sects each claiming to be the 'true church' and correctly following the teachings of the founder, Joseph Smith. In the limited survey I have taken of the various criticisms and condemnations levelled mutually I have not yet found one instance of an accusation of magic. See Jon Krakauer, *Under the Banner of Heaven* (New York: Doubleday, 2003); Wallace Stegner, *Mormon Country* (New York: Penguin, 1992); David V. Barrett, *The New Believers: Sects, 'Cults' and Alternative Religions* (London: Cassell & Co., 2001), pp.160-162.

Nor is the problem confined to the term 'magic'. Apart from the fact that 'magic' undoubtedly has had, and continues to have, pejorative connotations there is no evidence that it would be any easier to define 'religion' in such a way that the term has universal content. It should not be overlooked that the very difficulty which sometimes arises in distinguishing magic from religion (and very few scholars would dispute this) entails the equally difficult proposition that if 'magic' has no content and should be discarded as a meaningless term then where does this leave 'religion', at least in some of its applications? A similar case could be argued for the term 'mysticism'.

In his use of the quotation from Peter Pels' article it might be assumed that Hanegraaff is in some way approving or least allowing the legitimacy of the use of 'magic' as an etic concept to denote to varying degrees or not, certain beliefs as 'deluded, illusionary, backward or irrational'. Given his own dismissal of a 'sharp distinction' between religion and magic it is unclear how his suggestion either will facilitate an understanding of magic and religion, or demonstrate the sensitivity he attributes to Western scholars in the post-colonial period 'about issues of ethnocentrism and Eurocentric arrogance'.⁷⁵

Such sensitivity has also been addressed recently by Todd Klutz when he notes '... scholarly references to "magic" and the "magical world view" have normally been accompanied by either explicit or implicit denigration of the mental capacities of people who traffic in such stuff'.⁷⁶ In this context Klutz evidently approves of 'the growing scholarly reticence to continue using words like "magic" to denote the religious beliefs of others (i.e. non-Westerners and ancient peoples)' but raises the question of whether this tendency 'is anything more than an academic fad, inspired less by serious commitment to correcting Western images of the two-thirds world as intellectually

⁷⁵ Hanegraaf, 'Magic I: Introduction', p. 718.

⁷⁶ Todd Klutz, 'Reinterpreting "Magic" in the World of Jewish and Christian Scripture: An Introduction', in *Magic in the Biblical World*, pp. 1-9 (pp. 4-5).

backward than by trying to staunch a global haemorrhage with an anthropological Band-Aid'.⁷⁷

If this is indeed the motivation, worthy as it may be, it is surely both unnecessary and unnecessarily prescriptive. On the one hand it is quite clear from the writings of both Apuleius and Philo that magic was not universally condemned and could be defended. On the other hand, from the fact that many ancient commentators and Christian writers condemned certain practices labelled 'magic' it does not follow that modern scholars are obliged either to use the term in a pejorative or normative sense. Pressure can also be placed on the terms 'Western' and 'non-Western'. Matthew W. Dickie has observed:

The realization that the concept of magic as opposed to religion has no application in many non-Western societies has led some scholars to suggest that the notions should not be employed in the studies of societies in whose thinking they play no part. Critics of this persuasion would argue that applying the notions of religion and magic to societies that lack these categories is tantamount to projecting our own parochial prejudices and attitudes onto these societies.⁷⁸

It may be seriously questioned in what meaningful sense the societies which constituted the 'ancient world' or 'classical antiquity' can be said to be 'Western' (in the light of Dickie's remark) particularly when, as noted by Fritz Graf, 'The practice of magic was omnipresent in classical antiquity'.⁷⁹ And if we cannot employ a term with reference to a society which lacked that term, or apparently lacked 'the' concept associated with it, where will this leave, actually or potentially, scholars when it comes

⁷⁷ Klutz, *ibid.*

⁷⁸ Matthew W. Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World* (London: Routledge, 2003; orig. 2001), p. 19.

⁷⁹ Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, p.1.

to history of ideas, religion, science or mathematics? Moreover, the fact that orthodox Christians in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries embraced the term ‘magician’ to describe a part of their religious activity is one that requires both elucidation and understanding. As will become apparent in this study there have been numerous examples throughout history where ‘magic’ has been employed as a first-person self-designation without any sense of ‘accusation’ or ‘charge’, contrary to the claim of Jonathan Smith.⁸⁰ The Anglo-Catholic magicians of the Golden Dawn were merely one of the most recent examples. But it is clear, as we shall see, that what these modern Christian magicians did was not characteristically different in nature from what such devout Christians as the Abbot Trithemius (1462-1516) or Dr. John Dee (1527-1608/9) did in the early modern period. This too is a matter for scholarly investigation.

Notwithstanding the extraordinary difficulty, even impossibility, of defining ‘magic’ as an unambiguous category with universal content, it is nevertheless essential that an attempt be made to delineate the sense in which what any one of the Anglo-Catholic Golden Dawn members professed or practised was not the same as that professed or practised by their Anglo-Catholic colleagues who were not members of the Golden Dawn. Precisely the same requirement stands for the Abbot Trithemius, Dee, and the numerous other members of the clergy over hundreds of years who were involved in such apparently unconventional religious activity that it would be termed ‘magical’. While we may share the distaste of many scholars at the polemical use of ‘magic’ we do not need to abandon the term but rather endeavour to understand the sense, or rather senses, in which it became and was used pejoratively. And of course it needs emphasizing that our interest is not in the term *per se* nor exclusively or even predominantly in the perceived attitudes of those who have used and continue to use the term. Our concern is both the range of activities and beliefs, albeit a flexible and even

⁸⁰ Smith, “Trading Places”, p. 18.

amorphous range, referred to by the term and the relationship between these activities and beliefs and those attributed to the early Church and the subsequent Roman, Anglican and Anglo-Catholic variations. While care and precision are obvious requisites we need not, and perhaps should not, follow to its full implication the comment of Matthew Dickie:

The student of Greek and Roman magic... needs to be sensitive to the differences that exist between what the ancients saw as magic and what he himself might be inclined to call magic. If he does not make that effort, he will fall into the trap of labelling as magic what in the eyes of those using them were perfectly legitimate, and unobjectionable procedures.⁸¹

Laudable as this advice is, which surely applies in general to any academic pursuit, it implies that there may well be occasions where in applying the term 'magic' the student will view certain activities as illegitimate and objectionable. It is this possibility which must be avoided as polemical and unscholarly. Indeed, we could do no better as students of religion and magic than to follow the advice given to every new initiate or Neophyte who entered the Golden Dawn.

Let me advise you never to ridicule or cast obloquy upon the form of religion professed by another, for what right have you to desecrate what is Sacred in his eyes?⁸²

Insofar as some of these initiates were Anglo-Catholic clergymen, and indeed some of these were also scholars, there seems to be *prima facie* grounds for rejecting the

⁸¹ Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*, p. 20.

⁸² R. J. Torrens, *The Secret Rituals of the Golden Dawn*, p. 86.

validity of the statement by Naomi Janowitz who, like other scholars already noted, asserts that her study of Late Antiquity ritual practices ‘builds on the growing consensus that such labels as “magic” are inseparable from their pejorative use in the past. Modern writers cannot use the term as if it represented more than a polemical distinction about who was permitted to indulge in what activities’.⁸³ Notwithstanding the useful and illuminating technique which Janowitz deploys as a means for avoiding the use of the term ‘magic’, and which we shall consider in due course, it is apparent that her claim above is at least inadequate and at most unreasonably prescriptive. The simple fact is that modern writers can and do use the term intelligibly in the very manner she denies is possible. While it may be the case that what she refers to as ‘classical twentieth-century definitions of “magic”’ are inseparable from their pejorative use it is surely not true that modern scholars are incapable of providing a useful, if not exhaustive, definition which is distinct from pejorative use and which does not entail approbation of some kind. Equally, it does not follow that in using the term either ancient or modern writers are necessarily endorsing, implicitly or explicitly, such a polemical distinction. Indeed, the very existence of magical apologia produced throughout history are proof against such a view.

Whether or not the term ‘magic’ has any future utility as a technical and scholarly category, or is even the most useful taxa to denote a field of human activity which in some way is related to activity typically described as ‘religious’, from the linguistic, and possibly philosophical, perspective it is clear that in one sense there is a clear distinction between magic and religion which is not fully explicated in terms of polemics. No matter how much the term ‘magic’ may shift in its spatio-temporal application it is an indisputable fact that across many cultures language users have not employed and do not employ these terms interchangeably. The question ‘Did Jesus have magical beliefs?’

⁸³ Naomi Janowitz, *Icons of Power* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania University Press, 2002), p. xiv

is for most language users manifestly not the same question as ‘did Jesus have religious beliefs?’ Nor does it follow that an affirmative answer to the first question entails a criticism of Jesus or that any difference is exhausted through any criticism that may obtain. This is evidenced at length in the work of Morton Smith, John Hull and Eugene V. Gallagher.⁸⁴ Similarly, it is meaningful to ask, as many ancient and modern exegetes have done, whether certain of the recorded actions of Moses and Solomon can be described as magical. The contest between Moses and the magicians of Pharaoh, for example, has been described by innumerable commentators as a ‘magical contest’⁸⁵ and it is not apparent that any circumlocutionary description favoured by those scholars who wish to avoid using the term ‘magic’ have removed or significantly clarified the magico-religious distinction.

As will be demonstrated in the body of this thesis, however, it is clear that the extraordinary explosion of scholarly interest in religion, mythology and ancient magic over the past four to five decades, and the associated attempt to reject the opposition between magic and religion, and particularly the rigid evolutionary model portrayed by the classical scholars J. G. Frazer and E. R. Dodds,⁸⁶ has delivered major advances in our understanding of religious beliefs and practices, including those practices labelled as ‘magic’. While it is beyond the scope of this, or indeed of any other single work, to attempt to explicate fully the magico-religious distinction in the context of the Judaeo-Christian tradition it is intended that an analysis of some critical Judaeo-Christian concepts of ritual will evidence a line of continuity in terms of religious belief and practice which extends from Late Antiquity to the Anglo-Catholic magicians of the early twentieth century. While we will not eschew the terms ‘magic’ and ‘mysticism’, a

⁸⁴ Smith, *Ibid.*, Hull, *Ibid.*, Eugene V. Gallagher, *Divine Man or Magician? Celsus and Origen on Jesus* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1982)

⁸⁵ See E. M. Butler, *The Myth of the Magus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1979), pp. 29-34; E. Fleg, *The Life of Moses*, tr. Haden Guest (London: Victor Gollancz, 1929); John G. Gager, *Moses in Greco-Roman Paganism* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1972)

⁸⁶ J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough* (Macmillan & Co. London, 1900); E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997; orig. 1951).

limited use will be made of the illuminating research and methodology produced by such scholars as Naomi Janowitz and Rebecca Macy Lesses which have reinterpreted much of religious expression, and particularly that frequently categorized as 'magic' or 'theurgy', as 'ritualistic practice'.⁸⁷

Ritual as Magic

By subsuming religious, and what may be termed magical, ceremony under the category 'ritual', it becomes possible not merely to avoid entirely the marginalisation of certain practices in terms of condemnation, but to see that such key Christian rites as Baptism,

⁸⁷ Naomi Janowitz, *Icons of Power* and idem, *The Poetics of Ascent: Theories of Language in a Rabbinic Ascent Text* (both Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1989); Rebecca Macy Lesses, *Ritual Practices to Gain Power* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1998). The term 'rite', and its cognate 'ritual', are used here in the sense provided by the *Oxford English Dictionary* where 'rite' is defined as, 'a formal procedure or act in a religious or other solemn ceremony' and 'ritual' is defined as, 'pertaining to, or relating to, rites'. Other relevant meanings of 'ritual' are given as: 'a prescribed order of performing religious or other devotional duties' and 'a book containing the order, forms or ceremonies to be observed in the celebration of religious or other solemn duties'. See *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 715-716. It is notable that neither Janowitz nor Lesses attempt to define 'ritual' in their works although the term is used by them extensively. This is equally true of the vast majority of works on different aspects of religious and magical ritual referred to in this thesis, including those dealing with Christian ritual, such as Nigel Yates' *Anglican Ritualism in Victorian Britain*. It is conceivable that this is because the interpretative models developed by the many different schools of social anthropology to demonstrate the anthropological purpose of ritual are not merely highly debated but are seen to lack a universal explanatory power. The many and varied attempts to separate magic from religion and myth (and science) or to subsume these under a theoretical model invariably flounder on counter examples or entail counter-intuition. The evolutionary model portrayed by the classical scholars J. G. Frazer and E. R. Dodds, for example, manifestly fail to account for the fact of a religious scientist in the twentieth century or, for that matter, an Anglican priest performing ritual magic. In his useful paper 'Rationality, Ritual, and Science' Hans H. Penner provides a brief survey of the inadequacies of many of the anthropological models, including those of the logical positivist. He notes, for example, that functional explanations of ritual (e.g. 'rituals as expressive or symbolic systems function to satisfy certain needs of the individual and society') 'are either invalid, tautological, or trivial'. Penner proposes that ritual be interpreted in terms of rationality and, following criticism of several approaches, including the nomologico-deductive and logical positivist models, advances a definition of his own, based partly on the ideas of the well-known philosopher of science, Carl Gustav Hempel (1905-1997). See Hans H. Penner, 'Rationality, Ritual, and Science', in *Religion, Science and Magic*, pp. 11-24 (p. 17). While Penner's suggested definition of rationality as an approach to ritual is itself lacking a degree of precision, I agree with his claim that it is 'a start in the right direction'. See Penner, 'Rationality, Ritual, and Science', pp. 23-24. Notwithstanding some discussion below of magic and ritual in terms of rationality, or their putative 'irrationality', I have, nevertheless, followed the example of Janowitz and Lesses *et al.*, and not attempted to either discuss the various definitions of ritual or survey the various theories in this regard. It may be noted that Henrik Bogdan provides such a survey, albeit brief and selective, in an early chapter of his *Western Esotericism and Rituals of Initiation* but, in terms of explanation or context, it does not seem to add much of value to an otherwise useful book. His concluding remark to the chapter that 'It emerges from the literature of these academic disciplines that rites are an important aspect of human behavior' would seem to exemplify to some degree Penner's criticism, noted above, of functional explanations of ritual. See Henrik Bogdan, *Western Esotericism and Rituals of Initiation* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2007), pp. 27-52.

anthropo-
logical

Confirmation, and the Eucharistic Sacrifice have the same conceptual basis as any other religious or magical ritual. We will argue that all such ritual is 'theurgy' and that the involvement of clergy in practices condemned, or merely deemed, to be magical is not merely an aberrant eccentricity, even if viewed as such, but actually a logical extension of normative Christianity. Towards this end we will be investigating the notion of ritual as a means of mediation between the natural and supernatural worlds.⁸⁸ Such mediation is described by Janowitz as an 'alliance' between humans and 'superhuman powers' and she observes that religious rituals of a vast variety were employed to achieve contact with such superhuman powers for a diversity of ends.⁸⁹ Although the rituals described by Janowitz were written in the context of the first centuries A.D. her description can be seen as largely applicable to any period, including the twenty-first century.

Once manifested on earth, divine power could be used for everything from settling an old score to changing the nature of earthly existence. Small tasks and major transformations were all enacted in the context of a finely calibrated cosmos where human speech and action were inextricably bound up with divine speech and action. For many Jews, Christians, and Greco-Roman believers, the limits of human access to the supernatural were the limits of the human imagination.⁹⁰

Where any attempt is made to 'marginalise' religious practice and label it 'deviant' or 'magical', in the pejorative sense, this is essentially an attempt to place limitations on 'human access to the supernatural'. And wherever religiously motivated people have deviated from a particular religious orthodoxy by pursuing religious practices considered 'deviant' they are endeavouring to extend these limits. To this

⁸⁸ Janowitz, *Icons of Power*, p. xi.

⁸⁹ Janowitz, *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ Janowitz, *Ibid.* p. xi

extent we can agree with Keith Thomas who observed in his notable book, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 'The Reformation... is justly commemorated for having robbed the priest of his magical functions. His powers of exorcism were taken away, and his formulae of benediction and consecration much reduced...' ⁹¹

As will be evidenced later in this thesis it was through membership of the highly syncretistic magical groups, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and the Holy Order of the Sun that Anglican clergy sought not just to restore the 'robbed' magical functions via the Anglo-Catholic revival but to extend the limits of their access to the divine and supernatural worlds.

⁹¹ Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Europe* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1971), p. 327.

CHAPTER TWO

THE ETERNAL CHURCH

Magic is the search for a close communication with and participation in the divine sphere.

Fritz Graf

In many respects Western esotericism can be defined by the notion of *prisca theologia*, which refers to a body of ancient, spiritual truth supposedly known to most of the great religious systems of belief from the very beginnings of recorded history, and, it is often asserted, preceding even that history. These truths have frequently been described as secret teachings or doctrine conveyed originally by God, the gods or angels, and thereon passed down through successive generations of humanity by such great and possibly mythological spiritual teachers, or founders of religious movements, as Zoroaster, Hermes Trismegistus, Moses, Orpheus, Pythagoras, Plato, and Jesus. In some cases the secret knowledge is said to have been conveyed by angels, daimons or other vice regents of the supreme divinity. The means of transmission of such wisdom has been described in various ways but has often been asserted to have occurred through initiation into mystery cults or schools or through direct revelation from God. Again it has been said to have been passed through communication with supernatural intermediaries or via Masters of wisdom who have communicated their teaching down

through the ages through a secret Order that has existed in parallel with the established religions or been part of an esoteric group within these various religions.⁹²

This chapter provides an overview of some of the more salient points and issues arising out of the *prisca theologia*, which have an important bearing on the question of the tense relationship between Christianity and magic. These will be examined and addressed at greater depth in the subsequent chapters of this study.

Prisca Theologia

If the Anglo-Catholic revival was intended, at least in part, as a restoration of the magical functions of the priesthood of the Roman Church referred to in the previous chapter, membership of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn was purported to ‘restore’ something far more dramatic. During initiation into the Second Order of the Golden Dawn the candidate was informed that, ‘The Mysteries of the Rose and Cross have existed from time immemorial, and that the Rites were practised, and the Wisdom taught, in Egypt, Eleusis and Samothrace, Persia, Chaldea and India, and in far more ancient lands.’⁹³ For the Anglican clergyman therefore, becoming a Golden Dawn adept meant, at least in theory, not simply acquiring a knowledge and tolerance of ancient religious beliefs and practices but rather having the conviction that he was somehow reviving and employing ancient beliefs and practices which were an exemplification of the truths inherent within Christianity itself.⁹⁴

⁹² See Wouter J. Hanegraaff, ‘Tradition’, in *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, 2 vols (Leiden: Brill, 2005), II, 1125-1135.

⁹³ The significant presence of committed members of the Anglican Church within the Golden Dawn, particularly within the New Zealand Temple, where ex-members have claimed that Anglican Ministers and portions of their congregations were Golden Dawn members, seems to run counter to the finding of Kocku von Stuckrad when he states: ‘Esoteric milieus and discourses, as we will repeatedly discover, run contrary to membership of religious denominations.’ See his *Western Esotericism*, p. 5 note 9.

⁹⁴ Many of the Golden Dawn documents illustrate this point but see ‘Flying Roll No. XV—Man and God’ and ‘Flying Roll No. XV—Concerning the Symbolism of Self-Sacrifice and Crucifixion contained in the 5=6 Grade’, in Francis King ed., *Astral Projection, Magic and Alchemy*, pp. 111-130. It will be noted that two papers are described, respectively, as being by N.O.M. and D.D.C.F. These are William W. Westcott (1848-1925) and S. L. Macgregor Mathers (1854-1918), both founders and “Chiefs” of the Golden Dawn.

Membership of the other Order closely associated with the Golden Dawn, the Holy Order of the Sun, entailed embracing the even more ambitious claim that Jesus Christ was himself an Order member and, for a period, the Head of the Order. An instructional document provided to members of the so-called 'Second Grade' of the Cromlech Temple (equivalent to the Second Order of the Golden Dawn) contains the following statement:

The first foundation of our Order was long pre-Christian -- but seeing that our highest Adepts always maintained (as did the Hebrew seers and Prophets -- many of whom were also members of our Order) an intercourse with the spirit world. Our Order recognised only those faiths which had acted on Divine Revelation. Such a revelation, as all Christians admit, was given to the Hebrews. It was also given to some before the Hebrews... Further, it was given to the Egyptians... In all these faiths there were members of our Order, and it was known to us and is recorded in our ancient Archives that in all of them was the prophecy of the coming of the Incarnate Word in Human Flesh. To this, therefore, we ever looked forward, and when the Master came... the Chief of the whole Order... did homage and laid down his office at the feet of the Master -- who became the actual Living Head.⁹⁵

In view of the fact that both the Second Order and the Second Grade were considered to be Rosicrucian and that the associated ritual of entry to the former relied heavily on material contained within the Rosicrucian manifestos of 1614 and 1615, the alleged pedigrees of these two Orders, at least in part, are not unduly remarkable. Indeed, as Christopher McIntosh has noted in his *The Rosy Cross Unveiled*:

⁹⁵ Anonymous paper, 'Various Teaching on Church for Second Grade only' in King, *Astral Projection, Magic and Alchemy*, p. 225.

The Rosicrucian movement is part of a way of thinking whose roots go back far into antiquity and which can be described as the Western esoteric tradition. This tradition, drawing on many sources, has run through European history exercising a strong influence, sometimes underground, at other times flourishing in the open. Frequently it has been in conflict with Christianity, but Christian thinking was often influenced by it, and *vice versa*.⁹⁶

McIntosh describes this 'Western esoteric tradition' as a 'way of thinking' and asserts that it underwent a 'great revival' which 'began in Italy during the Renaissance and opened up a new phase in the development of the tradition'.⁹⁷ Known variously as *prisca theologia*, perennial philosophy, perennial wisdom, *prisca sapientia*, and other similar terms, the tradition is claimed to represent or include the accumulated spiritual wisdom of humanity since ancient times and to have been manifested through ancient and subsequent history in the form of particular religious, spiritual and magical beliefs and practices.⁹⁸ A key element of such a tradition is the notion of 'transmission or initiation through masters' which forms part of an influential definition of 'esotericism' postulated by Antoine Faivre in 1992.⁹⁹ In his discussion of Faivre's definition Kocku von Stuckrad notes the teaching inherent in the tradition 'is frequently transmitted by spiritual authorities and the transformation of the believer becomes externally visible through rituals of initiation'.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ Christopher McIntosh, *The Rosy Cross Unveiled: The History, Mythology and Rituals of an Occult Order*, p. 24.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ It should be noted that these terms are not necessarily interchangeable in every context. As used by several writers and scholars there are distinctions in meaning. They all share, however, a common core relating to the notion of ancient wisdom referred to above.

⁹⁹ Antoine Faivre and Jacob Needleman (eds), *Modern Esoteric Spirituality* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), pp. xiii-xiv. See also Stuckrad, *Western Esotericism*, pp. 56-61.

¹⁰⁰ Kocku von Stuckrad, *Western Esotericism*, p. 4. See also Charles G. Nauert, *Agrippa and the Crisis of Renaissance Thought* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1965), pp.18-19, 45-47; Chaim Wirszubski, *Pico della Mirandola's Encounter with Jewish Mysticism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard

The 'new phase', referred to by McIntosh, is evidently the *prisca theologia* concept itself. For while there is academic consensus that the *prisca theologia* concept is extant in the writings of many Renaissance writers there is little direct evidence to indicate that *prisca theologia*, qua concept, predates the Renaissance. Indeed, it is clear from the extensive literature on this subject in recent years, that the concept of *prisca theologia*, in the sense of a 'primordial or universal tradition of wisdom', has its origins in the Renaissance.¹⁰¹ The point of this is not, of course, to deny the obvious fact that ancient philosophies, theologies and associated theurgic practices were revived in the Renaissance period and beyond, and were considered by many commentators to be entirely consistent, if not identical, with the Christian *Weltanschauung*. Nor is to assert that such consistency and identity are necessarily absent or invariably lacking historical or sociological evidence. The importance of the observation is rather to emphasize the fact that unambiguous evidence for *prisca theologia* as a referential corpus or developed concept prior to the Renaissance is scant. While, for example, the writings and philosophies of the ancients were commented on by many theologians and philosophers prior to the Renaissance, such as Saint Albert the Great and Saint Thomas Aquinas, these commentaries do not appear in any sense to have embraced the notion of 'a chain of wisdom', which characteristically links Zoroaster to Hermes Trismegistus, and thence from Moses to Orpheus, Pythagoras and Plato, and from Plato to Christianity.¹⁰² As recently observed by Wouter J. Hanegraaff, the genealogies of wisdom have their source in the views propounded by the Byzantine Platonist Giorgios Gemistos Plethon (1355/1360-1454), and subsequently adopted and modified by various Renaissance

University Press, 1989), pp. 197-199; Edgar Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967, enlarged and revised, 1958), pp. 17-25; Brian P. Copenhaver and Charles B. Schmitt, *Renaissance Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 146-148, 167-168; Frances A. Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964), pp. 1-19.

¹⁰¹ Hanegraaff, 'Tradition', *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism*, II, 1125-1135.

¹⁰² See, for example, Simon Tugwell (transl. and ed.), *Albert & Thomas: Selected Writings of Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas* (New York: Paulist Press, 1988).

writers, notably Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499) and Henry Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim (1486-1535).¹⁰³

Still less is there any convincing evidence, prior to the Renaissance and the appearance of the Rosicrucian manifestoes, of the existence of the idea that this ancient wisdom was transmitted through successive centuries by a series of spiritual masters or rituals of initiation.¹⁰⁴ Indeed, Hanegraaff considers the role of the notion of *prisca theologia* to have been relatively minor in Rosicrucianism and asserts that it only emerged as a major trend of Western esoteric currents with Freemasonry in the early eighteenth century.¹⁰⁵

Moreover, as will be argued later, the notion of 'tradition', in the sense of ancient knowledge or wisdom being passed down through the ages via a secret chain of initiatory rituals, or through a series of spiritual masters, is similarly grounded in the eighteenth century and subsequently developed in para-masonic, theosophical and para-theosophical writings and movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.¹⁰⁶ It was out of these developments that the Golden Dawn and the Holy Order of the Sun emerged. Yet, as McIntosh rightly observed, Rosicrucian Orders such as these both influenced and were influenced by Christian thinking. This aspect will be examined in more detail later but it can be noted at this stage that the influence exerted by Christian

¹⁰³ Hanegraaff, 'Tradition', II, p. 1127.

¹⁰⁴ This is clearly not to assert that evidence is lacking for the secret transmission of knowledge by initiation in the ancient world. There is abundant evidence to show that such transmission was an integral part of, for example, the mystery cults of Eleusis and Mithra. This was well known to ancient writers of the period and to subsequent scholars even if the details of the secret rites remain obscure. But such knowledge is to be distinguished from the belief in an initiatory chain of wise men or secret adepts providing instruction through successive generations, including the Christian period. This notion found its fullest expression in the theories of nineteenth-century occultists and esotericists, notably in the works of Helena Blavatsky (1831-1891). Her major work *The Secret Doctrine: The Synthesis of Science, Religion and Philosophy*, 2 vols (London: Theosophical Publishing Company, 1888) is a particular case in point. See Edgar Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance*, p. 22.

¹⁰⁵ Hanegraaff, 'Tradition', II, p. 1130.

¹⁰⁶ See Hanegraaff, 'Tradition'. There is a vast literature on this theme but see: Joscelyn Godwin, Christian Chelani, John P. Deveney (eds.), *The Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor* (York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, 1995); Joscelyn Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994); K. Paul Johnson, *The Masters Revealed: Madame Blavatsky and the Myth of the Great White Lodge* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994); Christopher McIntosh, *Eliphas Levi and the French Occult Revival* (London: Rider and Company, 1972); Mark Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World: Traditionalism and the Secret Tradition of the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

thinking was not confined to the esoteric interpretations of Christianity which began to emerge from Renaissance speculation, but also from significant shifts within orthodox Christianity, notably the phenomenon of Anglo-Catholicism.

The Paradox of *Prisca Theologia*

If it is the case, therefore, that the Anglican clergy who joined magical organisations such as the Golden Dawn had not in fact joined an organisation that was part of an ancient ‘chain of tradition’ and that the *prisca theologia* underlying the doctrine of these organisations had its origins in developments that were no older than the Renaissance, in what sense could they be said to be participating in a revival of ancient beliefs and practices? More importantly, how was such a revival, however described, consistent with developments in Christian theology, and particularly Anglican theology, in the approximately two thousand years since Christianity had apparently suppressed, or at least replaced, those very same ancient beliefs and practices?

These questions point towards a supposed paradox which is briefly noted by Hanegraaff and one which he observes has yet to be ‘systematically analysed by scholars’.¹⁰⁷ In the context of *prisca theologia* the paradox is inherent in the view that Christianity was or is superior to the religions it supplanted. This might be seen to imply a doctrine of progress. However, the notion of a ‘superior *prisca theologia* would seem to imply a doctrine of degeneration’.¹⁰⁸ According to Hanegraaff this paradox was first, somewhat implicitly, described by Frances Yates in the opening statement to her *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (1964):

The great forward movements of the Renaissance all derive their vigour, their emotional impulse, from looking backwards... the past was always better than the

¹⁰⁷ Hanegraaff, ‘Tradition’, II, 1126

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

present, and progress was revival, rebirth, renaissance of antiquity. The classical humanist recovered the literature and the monuments of classical antiquity... The religious reformer returned to the study of the Scriptures, and the early Fathers with a sense of recovery of the pure gold of the Gospel, buried under later degenerations.¹⁰⁹

This apparent paradox is considerably more complex than allowed by Hanegraaff. One such complexity is indicated in the last sentence of Yates quoted above, which Hanegraaff does not include in his article. Even if, as claimed by Hanegraaff, the postulation of Christianity as superior to previous spiritual wisdom entails ‘a macrohistory of religious progress’ this does not entail an absolutist macrohistorical concept of progress without any degeneration. This is to say, affirming the Christian revelation as historically progressive does not in any way rule out the degeneration of *the knowledge* of that revelation, or behaviours associated with that revelation. The Protestant Reformation, which partially overlapped with the Renaissance, is a prime example.¹¹⁰ This is surely part of Yates’ point: that the backward looking impetus of the Renaissance also embraced recovery of early Christian wisdom which, by the time of the sixteenth century, could itself be regarded as part of the *prisca theologia*. As will be noted later, the recovery of early Christian wisdom, and reversing a process of degeneration, were precisely part of the motivations underpinning Anglo-Catholicism and in leading Anglo-Catholic clergy to the Golden Dawn.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Frances A. Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*, p. 1.

¹¹⁰ Among several examples indicating a pre-Reformation progressive or regressive reinterpretation of the Christian message, the books of the twelfth-century abbot Joachim of Fiore can be cited. There is some evidence that Joachite ideas influenced the Rosicrucian movement. This is discussed at greater length in Chapter Nine. See Marjorie Reeves, *Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future* (London: SPCK, 1976), pp. 149-50.

¹¹¹ Notwithstanding Nigel Yates’ observation that the Anglican Catholic Revival of the nineteenth century, and its ritualism, were not unprecedented, he notes that the Revival ‘has been seen as an attempt to recover for the Church of England, and those churches descended from it, some of the doctrines and liturgical practices of the medieval church that were discarded at the Reformation’. See Nigel Yates, *Anglican Ritualism in Victorian Britain*, p. 10.

This is exemplified to a degree in the use which the Golden Dawn and its sister Order made of the biblical concept of ‘the Fall’ entailing humanity’s expulsion from Eden. This notion is given particular emphasis within the rituals and is, as will be later demonstrated, closely tied to Christian Kabbalistic explanations of how the human soul can recover the state of consciousness and relationship with divinity which it once enjoyed in the Garden of Eden.¹¹² Within the group of Kabbalist texts known as the *Sefer ha-Zohar*, Eden is identified with the highest form of feminine spirituality and a crucial teaching of the Christian Kabbalah, and especially of the Golden Dawn, is that the symbolic return to the pure spiritual state of Eden can only be achieved through this feminine agency. A significantly large proportion of the symbology of the Golden Dawn relates to this feminine form of divinity who, within the Golden Dawn interpretation of the Kabbalah, became the most powerful spiritual force within the corporeal world.¹¹³

It is also evident that the acknowledgement of a phenomenon as being superior to what has preceded it, does not logically require the complete abandonment and rejection of what preceded it. Thus the retention of the Old Testament and the ‘wisdom’ of such figures as Moses was not seen to undermine Christianity or indicate that the emergence of Christianity was superfluous. In a parallel fashion, notwithstanding the error of Renaissance scholars in dating the *Corpus Hermeticum*, the enthusiasts for the *Asclepius* or the *Pimander* were not endeavouring to replace Christianity with what they

¹¹² Arthur Green, *A Guide to the Zohar* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), pp. 75-76. See also Regardie, II, 146-147. Discussion of the Fall is extensive throughout Jewish Kabbalist and Christian Kabbalist literature. This important notion is closely linked to the theurgic means by which the Golden Dawn adept subsequently attains a ‘god-like’ state. A.E. Waite provides extensive discussion of the notion in his *The Holy Kabbalah* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1929), pp. 277-290. This notion is discussed further in Chapter Nine.

¹¹³ Daniel C. Matt (ed.), *The Zohar: The Pritzker Edition*, 3 vols (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003-2005). See also Maurice Simon and Harry Sperling, *The Zohar*, 5 vols (London: The Soncino Press, 1934). For discussion of the importance of feminine spirituality and its role as an intermediary between God and humanity see: Green, *A Guide to the Zohar*, pp. 94-96; Peter Schäfer, *Mirror of His Beauty: Feminine Images of God from The Bible to the Early Kabbalah* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), especially pp. 79-128 and 169-172; Asphodel P. Long, *In a Chariot Drawn by Lions: The Search for the Feminine in Deity* (Freedom, CA: The Crossing Press, 1993), pp. 165-180; and Raphael Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, third enlarged edition (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1990), especially pp. 96-133.

perceived to be a revived form of the Egyptian religion. In most instances, where they were Christians, they were concerned to show how such ancient wisdom enhanced and vindicated the Christian message.

Seeking contact with the Divine

It is of importance in this context, however, to note that Christianity did reject beliefs and practices of the religions it replaced. Such rejection was clearly and self-evidently selective and based not just on the view that Christianity was superior to what was rejected but rather on the claim that the rejected religious beliefs and practices were, in varying degrees, false and/or evil. It is in this extensive area that the Renaissance scholars and mages, and their successors, have faced substantial difficulties. For while some aspects of recovered ancient wisdom, such as Platonic and Neo-Platonic philosophy may be deemed compatible with and supportive of the Christian revelation others were and are more ambiguous and potentially threatening. It is in this category that we find magic, theurgy, astrology, Kabbalism, Gnosticism, angelology and demonology. Where the endeavour was made to recover and revive these aspects of ancient wisdom questions of legitimacy arose. Was this belief or practice condemned by Christian teaching and if not should it be? The attempt to answer this question in many different contexts presented precisely the types of issues concerning the definition of magic and the differentiation of magical acts from Christian practices including 'miracles', which were discussed briefly in the previous chapter.¹¹⁴ The different approaches taken by religious authorities in endeavouring to answer it and the implications of such answers form the body of this overall study and will be referred in subsequent chapters.

¹¹⁴ See Anton Fridrichsen, *The Problem of Miracle in Primitive Christianity* (Minneapolis: Publishing House: 1972, reprinted from 1925); William E. Phipps, *Paul Against Supernaturalism* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1987); Gerald Thiessen, *The Miracle Stories of the Early Christian Tradition* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983).

A major feature of this problematic question is well described by D. P. Walker in his *Spiritual & Demonic Magic*. In a discussion of the magic of Ficino Walker notes:

This type of magic had many sources. Perhaps the more important, though Ficino does not avow it, and may not even have been conscious of it, is the mass, with its music, words of consecration, incense, lights, wine and supreme magical effect -- transubstantiation. This, I would suggest, is a fundamental influence on all medieval and Renaissance magic, and a fundamental reason for the Church's condemnation of all magical practices. The church has her own magic; there is no room for any other. The effort to make a sharp distinction between Christian rites and any kind of secular magic is, as we shall see, apparent in many 16th century discussions of such subjects. As one would expect, it is rare for anyone overtly to accept the connexion between magic and the eucharist.¹¹⁵

Yet, as it shall be argued later, the connexion is clearly there and any explication of the nature of this connexion will expose not just the difficulty in distinguishing Christian rites from magic but a relationship between magic and religion which is so intertwined as to border on being a logical and necessary relationship. Without anticipating the fuller discussion to be provided on the putative distinction between Christian and magical rites, and between the priest and the magician, it may be noted that both sides of the apparent division share at least one characteristic referred to by Fritz

¹¹⁵ Walker, *Spiritual & Demonic Magic*, p. 36. A notable example of one such sixteenth century effort to sharply distinguish magic from the sacraments of Christ and the Church is the work of Robert Bellarmine (1542-1621) who wrote in his *Disputationes adversus haereticos*: 'For inasmuch as all magic depends upon a covenant with the Devil, and the power of the sacramental words depends upon a covenant with Christ, it clearly follows that either there is no magic in our sacraments, or else Christ is the Devil'. See Noel L. Brann, *Trithemius and Magical Theology* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1999). A similar point to Walker is made by Naomi Janowitz when discussing Origen's attitude towards magic, 'Rituals done by good Christians could not be magic, by definition, for Origen.' See her *Magic in the Roman World* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 19. Morton Smith has also asserted that there are parallels between the eucharistic acts and various ancient magical texts. See his *Jesus the Magician*, p. 123.

Graf in his discussion of the common features of magic and the ancient mystery cults.¹¹⁶

Graf identifies three such features but only one is relevant here. Graf states that 'magic and mysteries... seek contact with the divine'. And so does religion.

This is not to deny, of course, the coherence of explaining the apparent effects of magic in terms of psychological or 'natural' techniques which have no recourse to any supernatural agency. In his discussion of the traditional employment of the term 'magic' D. P. Walker distinguishes *magia naturalis* from those activities which assume God or some other supernatural power as an integral factor in the activities.¹¹⁷ As he rightly points out such a view of magic presents a considerable danger to magic and religion alike for 'its logical consequence is atheism or deism'.¹¹⁸ The attempt by some Christians to dismiss or explain apparent magical effects in terms of natural or psychological occurrences whilst retaining belief in the New Testament miracles 'was not logically tenable... The overlap of magic and religion produced then this dilemma: either a miraculous but plainly magical religion, or a purely psychological religion without a god.'¹¹⁹

It is precisely the assumption of a supernatural agency in the case of both magic and religion which raises the question of their differentiation. Graf is using 'magic' therefore, in the sense in which Walker employs the terms 'spiritual and demonic magic'. But what is meant by the term 'divine'? Whatever else it may mean it seems clear that it must at least refer to an aspect of reality which is 'non-natural' or 'supernatural' otherwise the term could not be distinguished from natural life and would have no content.¹²⁰ This does not exclude the possibility of a pantheistic reality whereby the divinity may have a type of identity with the natural order but the means of access to

¹¹⁶ Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, p. 99.

¹¹⁷ Walker, *Spiritual & Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella*, pp. 75-84.

¹¹⁸ Walker, *Spiritual & Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella*, p. 83.

¹¹⁹ Walker, *Spiritual & Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella*, p. 84.

¹²⁰ It may have content in the sense of a technical term distinguishing some aspect of natural life from another but such a technical use of the term 'magic' would not address the question of sense attaching to the use of 'magic' where there is a supernatural component. The reduction of the latter to the former would, of course, lead, as Walker notes, to 'atheism or Deism'.

this reality, whatever that may involve, must itself be non-natural or supernatural. A similar response can be extended to the notion of divinity being 'within us'. Whether or not 'the divine' entails a supernatural being or beings is not essential although clearly usual. The divine might well be a location or even a state of consciousness. What is necessary, however, is that contact with the divine must make some difference to human beings.¹²¹ And the difference must be discernible or believed to be discernable from the events in an individual's life, which would have occurred regardless in the natural world. The difference will evidently be something valued by the individual or the avoidance of something feared or negative. A 'neutral' effect of contact with the divine which had no bearing whatsoever on an individual's present or future life would hold no interest other than possible intellectual curiosity and indeed would seem to lack any intelligible content.

It seems clear, therefore, that direct or indirect contact with the divine must of necessity be believed to affect the lives of people for good or ill. And such effects will include, *inter alia*, increased knowledge of the natural world or of divinity, increased personal power, achieving desired goals or objects, and happiness, or the avoidance of unhappiness, in this or a future life. The latter may include the perceived ability to merge with and become divinity. These, it may be argued, are the *sine qua non* or primary conditions of religious, magical or mystical motivation. Concepts of 'awe', 'worship', 'adoration', 'love', 'power' and 'mystery' may well play an essential role but these can clearly not function unless the primary conditions are satisfied.

¹²¹ The 'divine', in the sense of an extraordinary power or purpose outside of an individual may be vested in a political party or the State. The sociological behaviour of members of extremist political parties often matches that of extreme religious fervour. Some scholarly attention has been given to the apparent behavioural/ideological parallel that can be seen to exist between membership of totalitarian and certain religious movements and equally the 'counter-revolutionary' match. See Roger Griffin, *Fascism, Totalitarianism and Political Religion* (London: Routledge, 2005); Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, *Black Sun: Aryan Cults, Esoteric Nazism and the Politics of Identity* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), pp. 1-6; David Redles, *Hitler's Millennial Reich: Apocalyptic Belief and the Search for Salvation* (New York: New York University Press, 2005).

The history of religion and its theurgic or mystical associates may be seen, in one sense, to be a record of the methodology of achieving contact with the divine. Assuming the divine to comprise one or more distinct forms of intelligent consciousness, as it is usually taken to be, or a being or beings, the perennial question is what is the correct, recommended or preferred way of making contact with divinity. The answer to this question is partially a function of what it is which divides different systems of religious or magic belief and what seemingly divides magic from religion itself. ‘Partially’ because clearly the methodology and the divisions between different systems will also be determined by the specific and widely varying concepts held as to the nature and qualities of the divine or supernatural world.

Since the ground-breaking work of Frances Yates and her colleague from the Warburg Institute, D. P. Walker, in the late 1950s and the 1960s scholars who have focused on the Renaissance revival of ancient occult doctrine or, to use the term of Noel Brann, ‘magical theology’, have observed that the recovery was perceived by the Renaissance advocates of magic, as enhancing human contact with divinity or, in this instance, with the Christian deity.¹²² Thus Brann comments:

Already as early as 1525 the Venetian Franciscan Francesco Giorgi (1466-1540) had pointed the way to this conciliating potential of magic by calling on a mix of

¹²² The recovery and revival of the study and practice of *spiritual* magic during the Renaissance period does not entail, of course, that magic had been entirely rejected and ignored in the preceding periods of time until the Renaissance. Apart from the extensive popularity of ‘folk-magic’ (see Keith Thomas: *Religion and the Decline of Magic*) the type of learned magic revived in the Renaissance was also manifest at various periods, particularly in the Middle Ages. Norman Cohn notes in his *Europe’s Inner Demons* (London: Chatto Heinemann for Sussex University Press, 1975), p. xi., ‘In the late Middle Ages ceremonial magic became something of a vogue in the upper strata of society, and from the mid-thirteenth century onwards successive popes denounced it as a form of heresy’” See also Noel L. Brann, *Trithemius and Magical Theology*; Claire Fanger, *Conjuring Spirits: Texts and Traditions of Medieval Ritual Magic* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing Ltd, 1998); Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark (eds.) *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: The Middle Ages*; David Keck, *Angels and Angelology in the Middle Ages* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); and Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

Neo-Platonism, Hermeticism, Cabala, and orthodox Catholic doctrine to produce what he termed, in his *De harmonia mundi*, 'a man well harmonized with God'.¹²³

In his defence of magic Agrippa similarly brings together the names of ancient sages and philosophers representing the Neo-Platonic, Hermetic and other religious groupings, to augment his argument and he claims that magic has a unifying, explanatory and activating influence on religion:

Magic is a faculty of wonderful virtue, full of most high mysteries, containing the most profound contemplation of most secret things... Now theological philosophy, or divinity, teacheth what God is, what the mind, what an intelligence, what an angel, what a devil, what the soul, what religion, what sacred institutions, rites, temples, observations, and sacred mysteries are: It instructs us also concerning faith, miracles, the virtues of words and figures, the secret operations and mysteries of seals, and as Apuleius saith, it teacheth us rightly to understand, and to be skilled in the ceremonial laws, the equity of holy things, and rule of religions. But to recollect myself these three principal faculties magic comprehends, unites, and actuates; deservedly therefore was it by the ancients esteemed as the highest, and most sacred philosophy.¹²⁴

Whether or not Agrippa's description matches the type of motivation which led large numbers of Christian priests and clergymen throughout the millennia to practise magic his threefold notion that magic comprehends, unites and actuates is an important

¹²³ Brann, Noel. L. *Trithemius and Magical Theology*, p.55. We may observe in this regard that Church employment of ancient writings to support Christian doctrine occurred at various times long before the Renaissance. For example, Saint Quodvultdeus of Carthage (d. c. 450) is claimed to have used hermetic writings to prove the Trinity. See David. S. Katz, *The Occult Tradition: From the Renaissance to the Present Day* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2005), p. 26.

¹²⁴ Henry Cornelius Agrippa, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, ed. Donald Tyson (St Paul, MN: Llewellyn Publications, 1993), p. 5.

one. For neither Agrippa nor Ficino nor indeed any other Renaissance advocates of magic, whether Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494), Paracelsus (1493-1541) or Johannes Trithemius (1462-1516), argued that magic should be restricted to the priesthood. Even where the written works on magic and the occult were produced by monks, priests and clerics, as in the case of Abbot Trithemius, these were not intended as instructional manuals reserved solely for the ordained. Except where fear of Church censorship, or worse, dictated caution the works appear to have been produced for all interested Christians.¹²⁵ This is particularly significant in the context of the religious desire to achieve contact with the divine. For although the Christian laity were permitted to achieve a level of such contact through prayer and other devotions, the sole vehicle for revealing the Christian revelation and for enabling the Deity to manifest itself was the Church and its ceremonies and rites. As D. P. Walker observed, ‘The Church has her own magic; there is no room for any other’.¹²⁶

Spiritual autonomy

The key term within Agrippa’s description, for the purposes of this study, is ‘actuation’. In reviving the wisdom of the ancients and, to use Brann’s term, the mix of theurgy, ceremonial magic, Neo-Platonism, Hermeticism and the Kabbalah, the Renaissance scholars were not simply providing material which would assist comprehension of the Christian revelation and the mystery of God but actually the means for any suitably

¹²⁵ See Brann, *Trithemius and Magical Theology*, and also his *The Abbot Trithemius* (Leiden: Brill, 1981). This apparent lack of restriction can be seen to apply to those works produced during and following the Renaissance. The numerous magical works produced largely by clerics prior to this period appear to have been solely for the individual concerned and treated with considerable circumspection. This is also not to deny, of course, the considerable caution with which priests and monks exercised at all times with regard to magical works but rather to assert that such works were not restricted to clergy *qua* clergy. See Richard Kieckhefer, *Forbidden Rites: A Necromancer’s Manual of the Fifteenth Century* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998); Don C. Skemer, *Binding Words: Textual Amulets in the Middle Ages* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), pp. 21-73; Joseph H. Peterson (trans. and ed.), *Arbatel: Concerning the Magic of the Ancients* (Lake Worth, FL: Ibis Press, 2009); Benedek Láng, *Unlocked Books: Manuscripts of Learned Magic in the Medieval Libraries of Central Europe* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), pp. 191-208.

¹²⁶ D. P. Walker, *Spiritual & Demonic Magic*, p. 36.

qualified individual to make his or her own contact with the divine without the need for the intercession of a Christian priest or participation in a Church rite. This went far beyond learning God's purpose for us as individuals, how to live the 'good life' and how to deal with the vicissitudes of daily life. It also went far beyond achieving the more mundane goals frequently associated with 'popular magic' of discovering what the immediate future holds for individuals or how to control the events of fortune and misfortune. Even these activities were, to varying degrees, disapproved or condemned by the Church and were often opposed by many of the Renaissance individuals concerned to revive and re-evaluate positively the magical theology and occult knowledge contained within ancient literature.¹²⁷ As Moshe Idel has noted, 'It was not so much the subjugation of the material world to which the learned magicians of the Renaissance aspired, as to the fulfilment of their spirit'.¹²⁸

This 'fulfilment of the spirit' took many forms and virtually none of these drew directly on traditional Christian theology or even the Christian rites and ceremonies. Certainly they were used to provide validation for Christianity. Moreover, rituals and incantations were duly adapted to draw on Christian elements, but the teachings were non-Christian in origin and, significantly, did not issue from the Church nor required a priest to perform.¹²⁹ Indeed, the mysteries of Neo-Platonism, Hermeticism, the Kabbalah and Gnosticism, which later provided a foundational base for Rosicrucianism, embraced a significant variety of methods for achieving an equally significant variety of

¹²⁷ Norman Cohn has observed however, 'In the late Middle Ages ceremonial magic became something of a vogue in the upper strata of society' and 'it is striking how often in the first half of the century (14th) the accused were clerics'. See his *Europe's Inner Demons*, p. xi and p. 195.

¹²⁸ Moshe Idel, "Jewish Magic from the Renaissance Period to Early Hasidism", in Jacob Neusner, Ernest S. Frerichs and Paul Virgil McCracken Flesher (eds.), *Religion, Science and Magic*, pp. 82-83.

¹²⁹ Adaption of ritual magic techniques and content, particularly from Arabic Neo-Platonic and Jewish sources, for Christian purposes occurred long before the Renaissance and many such manuscripts survive from the medieval period and beyond, until the sixteenth century. These were invariably the work of monks and priests. Apart from the monumental study made by Lynn Thorndike in his *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, 8 vols (New York: Macmillan and Columbia University Press, 1923-58), many magical manuscripts have recently received considerable attention from scholars. See Claire Fanger, *Conjuring Spirits*; Valerie I. J. Flint, *The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992); Richard Kieckhefer, *Forbidden Rites: A Necromancer's Manual of the Fifteenth Century*; and W. F. Ryan, *The Bathhouse at Midnight: Magic in Russia* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1999).

ways to achieve either direct contact with God or with supernatural beings such as Angels and Archangels.

Some of these methods will be given detailed treatment in the next chapter but we may note, for example, the comment of the Neo-Platonist Proclus (411-485): ‘Those who are introduced into the mysteries at first meet with manifold and multiform gods, but being entered and thoroughly initiated... they participate (in) the very Deity’.¹³⁰

Again, in the Neo-Platonic context the theurgical writings described methods which would lead not merely to having contact with the divine on earth but even the possibility of becoming one with the divine while still incarnate and thereby securing salvation in the world to come. As Georg Luck comments in his discussion of the Neo-Platonists: ‘... the Chaldeans perfected a technique that could apparently be learned, at least up to a certain point, and more or less guaranteed a manifestation of the divine in a variety of forms on this earth and a union with it in this life as well as salvation in the next’.¹³¹

Just as Neo-Platonism offered the individual mystical doctrines which embraced certain magical techniques to reach spiritual perfection along with, as noted by Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, a ‘theory of the spirit as the vehicle of magical influence’, so too did Hermeticism, the Kabbalah and Gnosticism equally provide a large corpus of theoretical explanation and practical measures to achieve the same goal.¹³² Despite the vast differences between and within each of these spiritual systems collectively they, along with Neo-Platonism, and the practices of alchemy, astrology and theurgic magic which can be found within them to varying degrees, all emphasized directly or indirectly at least one common theme: that the individual human could achieve the highest level of spiritual attainment through his or her own efforts. Whether this was achieved through

¹³⁰ Quoted by Edgar Wind in his *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance*, p. 221.

¹³¹ Georg Luck, “Theurgy and Forms of Worship in Neoplatonism”, in Jacob Neusner, Ernest S. Frerichs, Paul Virgil McCracken Flesher (eds.), *Religion, Science, and Magic*, p. 187.

¹³² Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, ‘The Rosicrucian Prelude – John Dee’s Mission in Central Europe’, in *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, ed. Ralph White (Hudson, NY: Lindisfarne Books, 1999), p. 89.

acquiring *gnosis* or spiritual knowledge, or through communicating with Archangels or gods, or via initiation, or perfecting the philosopher's stone, the critical notion was that this was achieved through an individual's efforts and certainly without the intercession of the Church.¹³³

As *Imago Dei* man or woman was potentially a creator, a Hermetic *magus* or Rosicrucian adept who could rule nature, and who could become godlike, or even a god. 'In every respect,' says Porphyry, 'the philosopher is the saviour of himself'.¹³⁴ With all these influences subsequently feeding into the Golden Dawn in the nineteenth century it is not surprising that the highest Grade was termed *Ipsissimus* and denoted the state of consciousness of God.¹³⁵ In each of the separate Grades leading up to that of *Ipsissimus* the Adept was involved, not as the passive type of worshipper which typically one might expect to find in a Church congregation, but rather as an active participant in what was perceived to be a divine rite. As one ex-member of the Golden Dawn reported of his involvement in a ceremony: 'I felt like I was a junior colleague of God and his angels'.¹³⁶

The 'actuation' of magic and utilising the ancient methods of achieving contact with the divine clearly involved an independence or autonomy from the magic or sacraments of the Christian church even where such methods were synthesized and harmonized with Christian teaching.¹³⁷ At the very least, the implication was that the

¹³³ The goal of achieving spiritual perfection or a form of union with the divine entailed a significant modification of the individual involved. Antoine Faivre has termed this 'the experience of transmutation' where the individual undergoes a 'metamorphosis' or 'second birth'. He considers this one of the four main defining components of modern Western esotericism. See Antoine Faivre and Jacob Needleman (ed.), *Modern Esoteric Spirituality*, pp. xviii-xix.

¹³⁴ Quoted in Gregory Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul: The Neoplatonism of Iamblichus* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), p.13.

¹³⁵ Knowledge of many of the sources conveying the idea of man's potential spiritual autonomy was of course extant long before the Renaissance. This included, for example, the account of Enoch transforming into the Archangel Metatron, the availability of some Hermetic, alchemical and magical texts, and even the ambiguous implications of *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis. See also Chic and Sandra Cicero, *Secrets of a Golden Dawn Temple* (St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Publications, 1992), p. xviii.

¹³⁶ Recorded note held within private collection of Golden Dawn documents.

¹³⁷ As Cees Leijenhorst has observed, while many of the Renaissance scholars were interested in 'a synthesis between old pagan teachings and Christian doctrine', others, such as Giordano Bruno (1548-1600) had no such interest. Even in the former case there is little evidence that such an attempt was either

sacraments and priestcraft of the church were either inadequate or not sufficient for the earnest seeker after spiritual knowledge and transformation. As will be shown, one of the threats to the Christian Church was that resurrection was not necessarily the goal for the next life, but rather for the present one. And the means for enabling such resurrection did not need to involve the Church. Perhaps the culmination of this challenge for the clerical membership of the Golden Dawn is aptly represented by the Second Order initiation of being symbolically crucified and becoming, as it were, an avatar of Christ.

The role of the Renaissance in giving expression to the notion of human autonomy from the pervasive authority of the Christian Church over spiritual matters has been addressed in part by Charles Trinkaus.¹³⁸ Trinkaus refers to the views of Jacob Burckhardt (1818-1897) noting that Burckhardt 'hailed the birth of the self-conscious individualism in the Renaissance' and that his conception of 'Renaissance individualism stressed the element of self-conscious search for the understanding of man and the universe, and the uninhibited pursuit of the secular goals of power, fame and wealth'.¹³⁹ Inherent in this view and its subsequent post-Burckhardtian development, according to Trinkaus, is its freedom 'from the restrictions imposed by theologians'.¹⁴⁰ One can see this individualism most clearly in Pico della Mirandola's 'Oration on the Dignity of Man' where, meditating 'on the marvellous powers of Man, the Magus', Pico holds that Man can 'through his own free will, and because of his divinely given ability to raise himself up or down the hierarchy of being... become like unto Adam Kadmon, celestial

motivated or sanctioned by the Church. See Leijenhorst, 'Neoplatonism III: Since the Renaissance', *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, I, 843-844. Similarly, one could refer to the efforts of Marsilio Ficino to connect natural magic and Christianity thereby 'voyaging through the straits of unorthodoxy'. See Michael J. B. Allen, 'Marsilio Ficino', *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, I, 366.

¹³⁸ Charles Trinkaus, 'Marsilio Ficino and the Ideal of Human Autonomy', in *Ficino and Renaissance Neoplatonism*, ed. Konrad Eisenbichler and Olga Zorzi Pugliese (Ottawa: Dovehouse Editions, 1986), pp. 141-153.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p.141.

Man (Christ)'.¹⁴¹ In this context, and with regard to independence from Church theology, we may note the observation of Frances Yates that Pico's oration rests 'not on a patristic text' but on the *Asclepius*, 'a gnostic text' in which 'man is a *magnum miraculum*, a being worthy of reverence and honour'.¹⁴² Yates further remarks that while Pico's oration includes the orthodox placing of man in a dignified position, as 'the highest of terrestrial beings' it also carries 'the Gnostic heresy' that the 'final revelation of the magician in the Renaissance is that he becomes a divine man'.¹⁴³

The clearest and most important expression of Renaissance individualism, according to Trinkaus, is found in the work of Ficino whom, he states, 'developed the fullest and most far-reaching exposition of the ideal of human autonomy in the Renaissance, and that this was certainly one of the most important contributions of his philosophy to the future of human culture, alongside his great work of textual recovery and dissemination of Platonism and Neo-Platonism'. Although the concern of Trinkaus appears to be to applaud him for initiating a process which would ultimately dispense with God altogether in Western history he notes that, 'Ficino so yearns for this total fulfilment of human autonomy (to become God Himself) that he speculates that, given the proper instruments and material, mankind could recreate the universe itself... Ficino's place in this process is a vastly important one'.¹⁴⁴

Although Trinkaus might be seen as ascribing an excessive importance to Ficino in this regard, there is little scholarly disagreement over the importance of Ficino in promoting the freedom of human beings to pursue a spiritual goal outside of or in parallel with the strictures of Church ritual.¹⁴⁵ Apart from his 'enormously and diversely

¹⁴¹ Frances Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*, p. 90. cf. G. Mallery Masters, 'Renaissance Kabbalah', in *Modern Esoteric Spirituality*, p. 141.

¹⁴² Yates, *Giordano Bruno*, pp.110-111. See also *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, edited by Ernst Cassirer, Paul Oskar Kristeller, John Herman Randall (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), pp. 223-254.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Trinkaus, "Marsilio Ficino and the Ideal of Human Autonomy", p. 149.

¹⁴⁵ See Michael J. B. Allen, *The Platonism of Marsilio Ficino* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984); Michael J. B. Allen and Valery Rees, *Marsilio Ficino: His Theology, His Philosophy, His*

influential' original work in philosophy, theology and magic, of major significance is his role in recovering and translating the neglected or forgotten texts of Neo-Platonism and the *Corpus Hermeticum*, which made available to Renaissance scholars the ancient means of contacting the divine.¹⁴⁶ With regard to the former, Ioan P. Couliano has referred to Ficino's translation into Latin of numerous Neo-Platonic works dealing with communication with supernatural beings: 'These are treatises by Porphyry (*On Sacrifices, Gods and Demons, Opera*, II, p. 1934 sq.), by Iamblichus (*On Mysteries* II, p. 1873 sq.), by Proclus (*On Soul and Demon*, fragment of Proclus's commentary on *Alcibiades* I, II, p. 1908 seq.; *On Sacrifice and Magic*, p. 1928 sq.), and by Michael Psellus (*On Demons*, II, p. 1939 seq.)'.¹⁴⁷ Ficino's revival of the Orphic hymns, which he believed to predate Plato, and his incorporation of 'the Egyptian magical religion described in the *Asclepius*' into his Christian Neo-Platonism, laid the foundation for a syncretistic magical Christianity that took root in the Renaissance and was to re-emerge with vigour in the nineteenth century.¹⁴⁸

The founders and members of the Golden Dawn made extensive use of the writings of Renaissance scholars, albeit often dependent on the work of subsequent commentators.¹⁴⁹ Within several of the rituals of the Order there appear substantial portions of the texts drawn from the Orphic Oracles and from the *Corpus Hermeticum*, mixed with passages drawn from the Bible and other ancient texts. Of particular interest

Legacy (Leiden: Brill, 2002); Angela Voss, *Marsilio Ficino*, Western Esoteric Masters Series (Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 2006); and Michael J. B. Allen, 'Marsilio Ficino' in the *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism*, I, 360-367.

¹⁴⁶ Michael J. B. Allen, 'Marsilio Ficino' in the *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism*, I, 361.

¹⁴⁷ Ioan P. Couliano, *Eros and Magic in the Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 146.

¹⁴⁸ Yates, *Giordano Bruno*, pp. 78-83.

¹⁴⁹ It is probable, however, and as noted by Alison Butler, that some of 'the diverse membership of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn', and those from the less well educated and privileged class, derived their knowledge of the ancient mysteries and magic not from the original texts but from the popular and influential compendium of magical knowledge, *The Magus or Celestial Intelligence* by Francis Barrett which was originally published in 1801. Alison Butler, 'Beyond Attribution: The Importance of Barrett's *Magus*', *Journal for the Academic Study of Magic*, 1 (2003), 7-26. See also Francis King, *The Flying Sorcerer: Being the Magical and Aeronautical Adventures of Frances Barrett author of The Magus* (Oxford: Mandrake Press, 1992). More detailed reference to the sources of Golden Dawn material is made in subsequent chapters.

is the work of Iamblichus which, along with editions of Porphyry, Ptolemy and other ancient texts, appeared in the 'Hermetic Library' of William W. Westcott. Westcott (1848-1925) was one of the original founders and 'ruling Chiefs' of the Golden Dawn, as well Supreme Magus of the quasi-masonic Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia (SRIA). His library was founded in 1891 expressly for the use of SRIA and Golden Dawn members and as at 1897 contained two hundred and eighty-six books.¹⁵⁰ The works of Iamblichus and Porphyry were also of particular interest to another founder of the Golden Dawn, S. L. MacGregor Mathers (1854-1918), and he published excerpts from both, along with commentary, in a series of articles.¹⁵¹

Theurgical mediation between God and the soul

In his recent study of Iamblichus, Gregory Shaw states that the title, *On Mysteries* or more correctly in Latin, *De Mysteriis Aegyptiorum, Chaldaeorum, Assyriorum*, is not that of Iamblichus but that of Ficino who 'attempted to revive Iamblichean Platonism in fifteenth-century Florence... In effect, this treatise, which today has become notorious as an apology for the practice of magic and divination... solved problems that had long vexed Platonists, and he (Iamblichus) provided a philosophically viable framework for a religious way of life that Porphyry himself had longed to create.'¹⁵² The importance of Ficino's attempt, for the present purpose, and this will be detailed further in subsequent discussion of the Golden Dawn *Weltanschauung*, is the major emphasis Iamblichus placed on the necessity for theurgic rituals and 'theurgic communion between gods and

¹⁵⁰ George Mills Harper, *Yeats's Golden Dawn*, p. 304. Westcott also commissioned a series of Hermetic texts written or edited entirely by Golden Dawn members under the title *Collectanea Hermetica*. William Wynn Westcott, *Collectanea Hermetica* (York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, 1998). This edition, with an introduction by R. A. Gilbert, is a facsimile of the collected books published by the Theosophical Publishing Society in London between 1893-1896.

¹⁵¹ S. L. MacGregor Mathers, 'Iamblichos the Chaldean, of Cœle-Syria: His Writings Concerning the Mysteries', *Anubis*, 1 No. 2 (1902), 7-8.

¹⁵² Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, pp. 6-7.

men'.¹⁵³ Unlike theology which, as Shaw observes, Iamblichus considered to be a mere 'discourse about the gods' and a human activity, he considered theurgy to be a 'work of the gods' and 'capable of transforming man to a divine status'.¹⁵⁴

Shaw states that for Iamblichus, 'The goal of theurgy was to awaken the soul to the presence of the One that it bore unknowingly. And by means of the very images that bound the soul to its generative life, theurgy released the soul from their grip. Theurgic ritual transformed the soul's somatic, emotional, and intellectual identity through "symbols"... When the soul activated the power of these symbols their presence in the soul was awakened.'¹⁵⁵ Whether or not the writers or compilers of the Golden Dawn rituals drew explicitly on the work of Iamblichus or other Neo-Platonic writers this particular theme seems present in one of the opening lines of the Golden Dawn ritual for the Neophyte initiation when the 'Hierophant', the principal officer in a Golden Dawn Temple, states:

Let the number of Officers in this degree and the nature of their Offices be proclaimed once again, that the Powers whose images they are be re-awakened in the spheres of those present and in the Sphere of this Order -- for by Names and Images are all Powers awakened and re-awakened.¹⁵⁶

Iamblichus took a different stance on theurgy from that of his teacher Porphyry, for whom theurgy 'functioned as a mere *preparatio* for the philosophic life, and was to be left on the periphery of its higher disciplines. Iamblichus, on the other hand, moved theurgy from periphery to center, not only in the life of the philosopher, but for anyone

¹⁵³ Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, p. 15.

¹⁵⁴ Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, p. 5.

¹⁵⁵ Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, p. 110. See also Naomi Janowitz, *Icons of Power*. Janowitz discusses this theme at length in her book but refers explicitly to this section of Shaw's work on page 59.

¹⁵⁶ Israel Regardie, *The Golden Dawn*, II, 14.

who worshiped the gods'.¹⁵⁷ Indeed, as Shaw demonstrates persuasively, for Iamblichus the human soul cannot progress and reach its fulfilment without theurgy which entailed ritual contact with the material gods and daimons: 'The soul's ascent to the noetic Father followed an unbroken continuum and any attempt to worship the Father directly and without intermediaries was bound to fail'.¹⁵⁸ Again, Shaw states this position of Iamblichus even more strongly; 'Without this collaboration with daimons the soul lacked the foundation necessary to homologize itself to the material gods... Noetic worship was useless without this foundation'.¹⁵⁹

The impact of Ficino's endeavours in reviving the Neo-Platonism of Iamblichus was clearly of major proportion in terms of shaping both Renaissance thinking and that of occult and esoteric organisations up to the present. Apart from the stature of Iamblichus as the 'foremost Platonist of his time' and the considerable regard many Renaissance scholars and theologians had for Platonic and Neo-Platonic philosophy, Ficino was himself a figure of particular influence.¹⁶⁰ 'Unlike most scholars', states Michael J. B. Allen, 'Ficino was able to exert a formative influence on his own age and on two successive centuries... he was one of the first early modern intellectuals to enjoy the accelerated Europe-wide exposure made possible by the invention of the printing press'. Some of his works, Allen notes, 'became bestsellers' and 'his original philosophical, theological, and magical speculations constitute one of the enduring monuments of Renaissance thought and were enormously and diversely influential'.¹⁶¹

The implications for the Christian Church of Iamblichus' views on theurgy were also of immense significance. If noetic worship is useless without contact with divine intermediaries and if any attempt to worship God, the noetic Father, is similarly bound to fail then where does this leave Christian theology and practice? Moreover, if

¹⁵⁷ Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, p. 14.

¹⁵⁸ Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, p. 154.

¹⁵⁹ Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, p. 155.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid. p.155.

¹⁶¹ Michael J. B. Allen, 'Marsilio Ficino', in *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, I, 361.

Iamblichus's advice, and by possible implication that of Ficino also, is followed and theurgical practices and Neo-Platonic beliefs are adopted then what need is there for the Church? It is presumed that similar questioning led the important Greek Neo-Platonist scholar, Georgios Gemistos Plethon (c.1360-1452) to go 'so far as to argue in favour of restoring Neoplatonic paganism and theurgy in place of Christianity'.¹⁶²

While the pious Ficino would never countenance such a view, the affinities he saw between Neo-Platonism and Christianity contributed, in Frances Yates's view, to the revival of interest in pagan cults.¹⁶³ With regard to Ficino's 'deep interest in Egyptian magical religion' Yates remarks, 'When Hermes Trismegistus entered the Church, the history of magic became involved with the history of religion in the Renaissance'.¹⁶⁴

Of equal importance in this context is Ficino's re-translation of some of the works of Pseudo-Dionysius (c. 500) who, like Iamblichus, exerted a profound influence 'in both the eastern and western churches'. Within his mystical theology Dionysius gave considerable emphasis to the hierarchy of angelic powers and the essential role played by such a hierarchy in mediating illumination and sacred knowledge from God to mankind, thereby assisting their perfection and deification or union with God. In this regard David Luscombe has observed that modern scholars have suggested parallels 'between Dionysius' writing about divinisation through sacred knowledge and enlightenment and Hermeticism'.¹⁶⁵ Whether or not this is the case, it is known that Ficino, and other Renaissance scholars, regarded Pseudo-Dionysius as a Neo-Platonist

¹⁶² Robert Mathiesen, 'Byzantium', in *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism*, I, 222. E. R. Dodds was of the view that Iamblichus' *De mysteriis* 'is a manifesto of irrationalism, an assertion that the road to salvation is found not in reason but in ritual'. See his *The Greeks and the Irrational*, p. 287.

¹⁶³ Frances Yates, *Giordano Bruno*, p. 83.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ David Luscombe, 'Dionysius Areopagita (Pseudo-)', in *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, I, 312-313; Frances Yates, *Giordano Bruno*, pp. 124-125.

and identified connections between his negative theology, whereby God can only be defined by negatives, and ostensibly similar notions within the teaching of *Asclepius*.¹⁶⁶

It is possible to argue that in one form or another the early Church had itself, whether stimulated by Platonic and Neoplatonic paganism or not, recognized precisely the problem identified by Iamblichus and addressed this through the doctrine of the Trinity, the prominence given to Mary and to the intercession of Saints and, perhaps, even the manner in which angels and angelology became normative for many members of the church in the medieval West. Because of the importance of this subject for this study, and the vital role which communication with angelic vice-regency occupied in the Golden Dawn, extended discussion will be reserved for the next chapter. It may be noted at this point, however, that it will be suggested later that it was the removal of the Christian intermediaries in the Reformation, apart from the figure of Christ, which was felt to reduce, as it were, the theurgic efficacy of the Christian rites and were contributory factors to the events which led subsequently both to the Anglo-Catholic movement of the mid-nineteenth century and the attraction of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn to a number of Anglo-Catholic clerics. It may be significant to note in this regard that there is no evidence of any Roman Catholic priest ever joining the Order.

Egyptian influence

Part of the attraction might also be seen to lie in the heavy emphasis which the Golden Dawn placed on the Egyptian mysteries. Although a close attention to Egyptian magic and symbolism could be expected to have already arisen from occults texts deriving from Renaissance scholarship, Egyptology became a subject of considerable interest in the nineteenth century. This resulted from the 'Father of Egyptology', Jean Francois

¹⁶⁶ David Luscombe, *Ibid.*

Champollion (1790-1832) publishing his groundbreaking decipherment of the previously unreadable ancient Egyptian scripts between 1822 and 1824. His work provided scholars with undreamt of opportunities for research and many of their findings were the subject of considerable public and media interest.¹⁶⁷ One such scholar was Sir Ernest A. Wallis Budge (1857-1934), Keeper of the Department of Egyptian and Assyrian Antiquities at the British Museum. Although there is no suggestion that Budge was a member of the Golden Dawn he was in correspondence with A.E Waite, who was a member and ended up founding his own Rosicrucian Order.¹⁶⁸ There is little doubt that the published findings of Budge into various aspects of Egyptian religious and magical symbolism were used by members and some references to these can be found in their private papers.¹⁶⁹

Apart from the extensive use of the names of Egyptian deities in several of the Golden Dawn rituals, and particularly that of the Second Order where a type of equation is made between Osiris and Christ, considerable detail regarding the Egyptian gods and the mysteries is provided in the instructional documents issued to the members. Similarly, the Temple furnishings carried Egyptian references and each member was required to wear, in addition to a robe, an Egyptian Nemyss, modelled on the head-dress of the pharaohs. Further, each of the five original Golden Dawn Temples carried the name of an Egyptian god as its identity as did most of the several Temples of the schismatic successions.¹⁷⁰

It should not be assumed that the significant focus on the Egyptian dimension by the Golden Dawn was a mere affectation grounded on a popular fad. As Antoine Faivre

¹⁶⁷ See Antoine Faivre, 'Egyptomania', in *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism*, I, 328-330.

¹⁶⁸ See R. A. Gilbert, *The Golden Dawn: Twilight of the Magicians* (Wellingborough: Aquarian Press, 1983), pp. 72-73. Alex Owen has claimed that Budge was 'a man who was rumoured to be more than sympathetic to the Golden Dawn' She states that Edith Bland, writing as E. Nesbit, was an early member of the Golden Dawn and 'dedicated her Edwardian tale of magical time travel to E. A. Wallis Budge'. Owen gives no evidence for the rumour of Bland's membership. See Alex Owen, *The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2004), p. 307.

¹⁶⁹ Several personal Order papers of ex-members contain excerpts from Budge's work. Private collection.

¹⁷⁰ R. A. Gilbert, *The Golden Dawn Companion*, pp. 30-43

has noted, from the end of the eighteenth century a variety of 'esoteric discourses and practises' in Europe derived much of their inspiration from a considerable body of speculation which already existed about the Egyptian mysteries.¹⁷¹ This included Ficino's translation of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, a number of alchemical texts from the seventeenth century, and particularly the work of the Jesuit, Athanasius Kircher (1602-1680).¹⁷² Faivre observes that a number of masonic and fringe-masonic rites incorporated Egyptian elements and symbols in their rituals in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and in view of the fact that the three founders of the Golden Dawn were all deeply involved in Freemasonry it seems plausible that their construction of the rituals was influenced in this manner.¹⁷³ Their apparent intention was to put into concrete form the Renaissance and Rosicrucian concept of a spiritualised initiatory group which truly embraced *prisca theologia*. In the 'official' history lecture of the Order issued to all newly initiated Neophytes the reader is informed of the Order's Rosicrucian origins and told:

But even the Rosicrucian revival of mysticism was but a new development of the vastly older wisdom of the Qabalistic Rabbis, and of that very ancient secret knowledge, the Magic of the Egyptians in which the Hebrew Pentateuch tells you that Moses, the founder of the Jewish System was 'learned', that is, in which he had been initiated. Through the Hebrew Qabalah indeed Europe became possessed of more of the ancient wisdom, than from any other one source, for it must be borne in mind that the Hebrews were taught at one time by the Egyptians and at a later date by the Chaldee Sages of Babylon.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷¹ Antoine Faivre, 'Egyptomania', *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism*, I, 328-330.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Francis King, *Modern Ritual Magic: The Rise of Western Occultism*, (Bridport: Prism Press, 1989; first published 1970), p. 213.

Moreover, it could point to the numerous references found in Renaissance writings to the importance of Egyptian wisdom, even though, of course, these writings were based on misdated and inaccurate material. B. J. Gibbons has stated of Giordano Bruno, '(He) thought that the secret of true religion could be found among the ancient Egyptians'.¹⁷⁵ Again, Iamblichus in his *De Mysteriis*, writes in the persona of the Egyptian priest Abammon, and, as noted by Shaw, praises the Egyptians and the power of their rites:

Understand that since the Egyptians were first to be allotted the participation in the Gods, the Gods are pleased when invoked according to the customs of the Egyptians.¹⁷⁶

Zoroastrian influence

Reference should also be made at this stage to the significance which Ficino assigned to Zoroaster as the very first of a succession of ancient sages who 'preceded and prepared the way for Christianity as the climactic Platonic revelation'.¹⁷⁷ On the assumption, largely accepted by scholars, that Zoroaster was a genuine historical figure, he is credited with being the founder of the Zoroastrian religion which was the predominant religion of the Sassanian Empire of Persia.

The primacy of Zoroaster in a variety of contexts, notably astrology and the origin of magic, had previously been described by many other scholars and religious writers, and Allen suggests that Ficino derived the view that Zoroaster preceded even Hermes

¹⁷⁵ B. J. Gibbons, *Spirituality and the Occult: From the Renaissance to the Modern Age* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 119.

¹⁷⁶ Gregory Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, p. 3. Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis* (San Diego: Wizards Bookshelf, 1984).

¹⁷⁷ Michael J. B. Allen, 'Marsilio Ficino', in *Dictionary of Gnosis & Esotericism*, I, 362-362.

Trismegistus in the succession of just six ancient sages, from Gemistos Plethon.¹⁷⁸ He also claims that Ficino was:

Following the odd sympathetic references to Zoroaster in Plato's works... and responding too to the authority of the *Chaldean Oracles*, attributed to Zoroaster, a late compilation which he and others deemed authentic... For Ficino, however, Zoroaster's primacy was pre-eminently something that highlighted the centrality of the Epiphany and the Magi. The three wise Chaldeans who had come from the East, following a star, were the followers of Zoroaster... Thus they symbolized the coming of the ancient wisdom to the cradle of the new philosopher-king-magus: the new Zoroaster.¹⁷⁹

He is therefore, Allen says, 'the original *priscus theologus*, the founder of the gentile wisdom that Ficino himself was dedicated to reconciling with the theology of Abraham as perfected in Christ'.¹⁸⁰ Edgar Wind has stated that Ficino wrote of 'the special foreknowledge of the Trinity supposedly shown by Orpheus, Plato, and Zoroaster'.¹⁸¹

The importance of Zoroaster was stressed by many other Renaissance writers apart from Ficino. For the purpose of this overview, which will be expanded later, mention may be made here of Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494) and Cornelius Agrippa who, like other commentators on Zoroaster, gave attention to the *Oracula Chaldaica* or Chaldean Oracles in their works. Mistakenly attributed to Zoroaster by Plethon, the Oracles had achieved a particular degree of popularity in the Middle Ages and especially with occultists. Pico and especially Agrippa were studied by various

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Allen, 'Marsilio Ficino', p. 363.

¹⁸⁰ Allen, 'Marsilio Ficino', p. 363.

¹⁸¹ Edgar Wind, *Pagan Mysteries*, p. 241.

members of the Golden Dawn and their works are present in Westcott's library but it was the Chaldean Oracles which received a special degree of attention.¹⁸² Indeed, portions of the Oracles appear verbatim in two of the Golden Dawn rituals of the First Order and various parts were often used by Second Order members to construct their own magical rituals, which they were required to do in order to progress as Adepts.¹⁸³

Zoroaster's greatest significance, however, may lie in an entirely different but extremely important direction, that of angelology. In a curious but suggestive book Harold Bloom notes that the angelology of the Jews, Christians and Muslims can be traced back to Zoroastrianism, more particularly to the Zoroastrian heretical and revisionary faith of Zurvanism which eventually came to dominate the Iranian empire from the fourth century B.C. onwards. Bloom states, 'Angelology became the largest Zurvanite gift to the Jews, Christians, and Muslims'.¹⁸⁴ Bloom goes on to claim that:

Zoroaster's original ideas reappeared in late apocalyptic Judaism, in Gnosticism, and in early Christianity, and surfaced again in the Shi'ite branch of Islam, which dominates Iran until this day. The scholar, Norman Cohn... recently has argued that what binds together post-biblical Jewish apocalypses like the Books of Enoch and some of the Dead Sea Scrolls, as well as the New Testament, is the Zoroastrian vision, which posits a dualistic struggle between supernatural forces of good and evil.¹⁸⁵

Apart from the vast and immensely important subject of angelology which embraces the Judaic (and Kabbalist), Christian, Gnostic and pagan influences on

¹⁸² A reading list from one of the Temples of the Stella Matutina, which derived directly from the Golden Dawn recommends that members of the Second Order read Pico and Agrippa, amongst other authors. Private collection.

¹⁸³ These rituals are for the Grade of Practicus and Philosophus. They have been published in several works including Israel Regardie, *The Golden Dawn*, II, 92-152. and R. J. Torrens, *The Secret Rituals of the Golden Dawn*, pp. 146-194

¹⁸⁴ Harold Bloom, *Omens of Millennium* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1996). p. 8

¹⁸⁵ Bloom, *Omens of Millennium*, p. 29.

Renaissance and modern magic, along with the vital notion of communication with angelic vice-regents and demons, Bloom appears to view Zoroaster as being the source or inspiration for the angel Metatron. He says, 'The central image of Zoroaster's vision is a cleansing and healing fire, which transforms Enoch into Metatron, greatest of the angels... Metatron, who is crucial in the Kabbalah, particularly in its greatest book, the *Zohar* of Moses de Leon, is an angel unlike any before him in Judaic tradition... His ontological status is both god and angel'.¹⁸⁶ Bloom does not identify his source for this identification and it is likely that it is derived from Western conceptions which, as Albert de Jong has noted, seem to have developed independently of Zoroastrian traditions, particularly from the time of the Renaissance.¹⁸⁷

The role of Metatron

In a number of ways Metatron is extremely important in the Golden Dawn context. He appears in the first ritual following that of Neophyte, which is associated with the astrological Earth and material life and is described as 'the right hand Kerub of the Ark and the Masculine Power who prepares 'the way to the Celestial Light'. Metatron is stated to be the Archangel identified with the power of 'Good' whereas 'Evil' appears in the ritual as the angel Samael. Between these two appears the Archangel Sandalphon who, represented by the chief officer in the Temple, is described as 'the reconciler for Earth, and the Celestial Soul therein' and 'the left hand Kerub of the Ark and the Feminine Power'.¹⁸⁸

It is of interest that Metatron has been variously identified in non-canonical writings with, inter alia, Samael and with being the brother of Sandalphon. This has been noted by Gustav Davidson in his book on angels who has further noted that in the

¹⁸⁶ Bloom, *Omens of Millennium*, p. 8.

¹⁸⁷ Albert de Jong, 'Zoroaster', *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, II, 1182-1183.

¹⁸⁸ Regardie, *The Golden Dawn*, Vol. II, pp. 52-42.

non-canonical literature Metatron is 'perhaps the greatest of all the heavenly hierarchs... he has been called king of angels, prince of the divine face or presence, chancellor of heaven, angel of the covenant, chief of the ministering angels, and the lesser YHWH (the tetragrammaton)... In Talmud and Targum, Metatron is the link between the human and divine. In his earthly incarnation he was the patriarch Enoch'.¹⁸⁹

Amongst the many identifications made with Metatron which Davidson discusses, and some of which also have reference to Golden Dawn teaching, two need to be mentioned here briefly. The first is the identification with 'the Liberating Angel and the Shekhina (who is regarded in some sources as his female aspect)'.¹⁹⁰ The role of the feminine power of Shekhina within the Kabbalah, the Golden Dawn and the Holy Order of the Sun is of major importance and will be addressed further. It is thus of interest to note that the role of the feminine in the ritual mentioned above, Sandalphon, is taken by the chief officer.

The second important reference is Davidson's claim that Charles W. King (1818-1888), in his book *The Gnostics and Their Remains* (1864), says the following of Metatron, 'This is the Persian Mithra'.¹⁹¹ Whether or not such an identification has been made, the links with Zoroaster are apparent. The classical scholar Franz Cumont (1868-1947) has commented: 'Mithra, thus, was adopted in the theological system of Zoroastrianism; a convenient place was assigned to him in the divine hierarchy'.¹⁹² Without entering into discussion here of Mithraism we may note that Mithra occupied a place below that of the Zoroastrian God, Ahura Mazda whose opposing force of evil

¹⁸⁹ Gustav Davidson, *A Dictionary of Angels* (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1967), p. 192. The link with Enoch is also referred to in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, edited by Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. Van der Horst (Leiden: Brill, 1999), p. 303.

¹⁹⁰ Davidson, *A Dictionary of Angels*, p. 192.

¹⁹¹ Davidson, *A Dictionary of Angels*, p. 193. I have been unable to locate this reference of Davidson in my copy of King's book which is a 1973 reprint of what is stated to be the 2nd enlarged edition. *The Gnostics and Their Remains* first appeared in 1864 and the second edition of 1887 was enlarged. The reprint was published in San Diego, Wizards Bookshelf, 1982.

¹⁹² Franz Cumont, *The Mysteries of Mithra* (New York: Dover, 1956) p. 6. Many of Cumont's ideas have been challenged by scholars in recent years. See David Ulansey, *The Origins of Mithraic Mysteries* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 6-14.

was his twin brother known, amongst other names, as Ahriman. Mithra is described, in documents of the Golden Dawn affiliated Holy Order of the Sun, as being a type of Christ. Indeed, while the Order is described as being devoutly Christian it is described in its documents as being the latest successor of a spiritual continuity stretching back to Christ and beyond him to Hermes Trismegistus, to Mithra and to Zoroaster. Indeed, as will be shown, the rituals and instructional documents abound with numerous references not only to a type of mystical Roman and Anglo-Catholicism but also particularly to Mithraism. The names of Ahura Mazda and Ahriman feature prominently. The Chief temple officer is entitled Metatron and the pseudonymous writer of many of the Order documents is called Shemish, which is Hebrew for 'Sun', but is also a designation of Mithras.¹⁹³

In terms of different religions and streams of varying spiritual thought the Holy Order of the Sun displays an eclecticism more extreme than even that of the Golden Dawn with its mixture of Rosicrucianism, Kabbalah, Hermeticism and Neo-Platonism. All these and more are present within the Order of the Sun, including even the Inca religion. Yet the theme of devout Christianity, and an almost Roman Catholic form at that, with a strong emphasis on the place of Mary within the sacred mysteries, continues to run throughout its rituals and instructional papers. One of the Second Grade papers states the following: 'To establish closer and more personal relations with the Lord Jesus, the Master of Masters, is, and ever must be, the ultimate object of all the teachings of our Order'.¹⁹⁴

Developing the major issues

The major concern of this chapter has been to place the Golden Dawn and the Holy Order of the Sun firmly within the category of esoteric groups, which have claimed to

¹⁹³ Cumont, *The Mysteries of Mithra*, p. 10.

¹⁹⁴ Francis King, *Astral Projection, Ritual Magic, and Alchemy*, p. 227.

be the current link in a chain of *prisca theologia*. This particular concept of ancient wisdom has been briefly examined in its Renaissance setting as has the question of an inevitable tension arising between the *prisca theologia* concept and the Christian Church. This is important in the context of the fact that the membership of the Golden Dawn and the Holy Order of the Sun included a number of members of the Anglican clergy some of whom were bishops. These issues will be developed in depth throughout this study but the object of the following chapter is to explore the critical notion of contact with the divine. This will involve examining some of the historical roots of mediation between human and divine forces and utilise the valuable locution ‘ritual of ascent’ which has been deployed in a number of recent studies on the ritual relationship between human and divine forces.¹⁹⁵ This will lay the groundwork for a subsequent critical treatment of Christian ritual in order to establish the degree of validity in the claim that Christian rites and ceremonies are magical. It will be argued that the structure of the Golden Dawn and the Holy Order of the Sun, along with certain of their rituals and instruction material, can be viewed as exemplifying the concept of ‘ritual ascent’.¹⁹⁶ This, in turn, should provide a useful context to appraise the phenomenon of occultism in an Anglo-Catholic setting.

¹⁹⁵ Martha Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Rebecca Macy Lesses, *Ritual Practices to Gain Power*; and Naomi Janowitz, *The Poetics of Ascent*.

¹⁹⁶ It may be noted that the set of several rituals designated for achieving the highest Grades of spiritual attainment in A. E. Waite’s Order, which was one of the schismatic successors to the Golden Dawn, the Fellowship of the Rosy Cross (FRC), is given the titles, ‘Light in Ascension’ and ‘Mysterium Ascensionis’. The adepts who performed these rituals formed an ‘inner Order’ within the FRC known as ‘Ordo Sanctissimus Rosae et Aureae Crucis’ See R. A. Gilbert, *A. E. Waite: Magician of Many Parts* (Wellingborough: Crucible, 1987).

CHAPTER THREE

ASCENT TO THE DIVINE

For practitioners all across the spectrum, rituals were a path of transformation from earthly to heavenly existence.

Naomi Janowitz

The human-divine Nexus

What does it mean to have contact with divinity or with God? How are we to understand the phenomenon of a Christian priest seeking the means to contact divinity which lie outside of the prescribed methods of his own church? In the context of the beliefs and practices of the supposedly Christian Golden Dawn Order this chapter explores some of the ways in which the adherents of mystical Judaism, both ancient and more modern, approached the former question. This will entail demonstrating the apparent relationship between certain ancient Jewish concepts and beliefs and what might appear to be parallel practices of the Golden Dawn. Central to both is the notion of spiritual ascent.

The possibility of a relationship between supernatural or divine forces and humanity requires a solution to the question, 'How can the corporeal interact with the incorporeal?' Any attempt to answer it will require both a philosophy and a theology that will explain the nature of a reality which embraces nature and the supernatural and this, in turn, will determine the form of the nexus between them.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁷ Characteristically, any attempted answer will provoke questions about the existence, nature and definition of God, or Deity. Putative proofs are typically based on logic, ontology, cosmology, teleology, analogy and so forth. Since the early twentieth-century philosophers in the Anglo-American tradition, and the theologians they have influenced, have tended to focus on the meaningfulness of speech about

One method of approaching this problem is to deny the possibility itself of realisation in the natural world. This does not necessarily entail a materialistic position but severely confines human interaction with divinity to experiences occurring after death. Typically, the nature of such experiences will depend on the type of life lived by the individual. On this model divinity is aware of human actions in the natural world but will not or even cannot intervene in the natural world.¹⁹⁸

The post-mortem experience or relationship with the divine may be viewed as the inevitable consequence of the choices made by the individual human in life or as a form of divine reward or punishment. In order to achieve the desired post-death experience the human being will usually be required to conform to a set of prescriptions and refrain from certain behaviour. The former will invariably require the expression of belief in the existence of divinity and in the various attributions ascribed to it, and usually prescribe certain activities for the individual to perform which are distinct from those performed by people who do not share this belief. These may include prayer, attendance

God. The classic arguments for the existence of God made by St. Thomas Aquinas (c.1225-1274), for example, have been criticised by Michael Durrant who asserts, variously, that the term 'God' has no meaningful use and that claims of Aquinas 'cannot be sensibly spoken of', or are 'unintelligible'. See his *Theology and Intelligibility* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), pp. 40, 196. See also his *The Logical Status of 'God'* (London: St. Martins, 1973). A standard philosophical survey of the extensive literature on this subject is John Hick (ed.), *The Existence of God* (New York: MacMillan, 1964).

¹⁹⁸ This position accords with the religious philosophy called 'Deism' and attracted followers in England, France, and the United States in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The first exponent of Deism was apparently Lord Herbert (1583-1648) who presented the Deist view in his *De Veritate* (Paris, 1624; London, 1633). Deism asserts that religious belief in deity must be founded on reason combined with observation of the natural world where supernatural events are excluded. As such it is clearly a logical consequence of a theology based entirely or predominantly on 'faith', where the relationship between human and deity precludes 'miracle' or 'petitionary prayer', and is confined solely to 'worship'. Eleonore Stump, for example, has argued against 'petitionary prayer' on the grounds it assumes that God is, at the moment of prayer, failing to achieve the best good for every type of situation. She considers prayer to be justified as a 'buffer' between humanity and God in order to maintain a 'friendship' relation. See her 'Petitionary Prayer', *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 16 (1979), 81-91. While some philosophers have argued that prayer can influence God, an opposing view is represented by D. Z. Phillips who considers the notion of 'influencing God' to be superstitious and that prayers should be considered solely as a human being's 'devotion to God through the ways things go'. See his *The Concept of Prayer* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965), pp. 120-121. The difficulty with these views is that they appear to reduce severely the potential for deity or the supernatural to interact with humanity. Whether 'friendship' or not, the relationship appears to be entirely 'one-way' and, from the epistemological and experiential viewpoint, seemingly indistinguishable from the notion of having an 'imaginary friend'. An interesting question, which Phillips does not address, is whether or not a person's behaviour in this life should be believed to determine or influence what happens to them after death. It is not clear how affirmation would escape the charge of 'superstition' but negation would appear to have significant implications for the concept of religious morality.

at meetings of like-minded believers, certain ritualistic practices, and the reading of particular texts. Many forms of Protestant Christianity and some variations of Islamic worship would seem to fall into this category but there seems to be little or no evidence that this conception of the relationship between humanity and divinity existed in antiquity.¹⁹⁹

Based solely on belief in the divine existing in a remote supernatural state and in the associated divine surveillance of human activity such an ideological theology permits no interaction between humanity and deity.²⁰⁰ This will not necessarily exclude the potential for supernatural activity to occur within the natural world in the form of extraordinary miracles or acts of evil performed by supernatural beings opposed to divinity. In the case of the former, however, activity has not occurred as a result of human contact with supernatural forces and in the case of the latter such contact is expressly forbidden.

At the opposite extreme to this religious model, which essentially excludes any direct contact between the divine and corporeal humanity, is the concept that not merely can a human being have direct contact with divine forces within the natural world but, in some cases, the human being can experience the divine state itself. Such experience may be limited to a finite period and result in the acquisition of revelatory knowledge about divinity or a feeling of ecstasy and well-being, or it may even extend to the belief

¹⁹⁹ The apparent absence of any meaningful personal relationship with deity or some supernatural agency, in whatever form the deity or agency may take, may well be a contributing factor to both the Renaissance and the subsequent reaction against the more austere and/or minimalist relationship with a supernatural world seemingly entailed by Protestantism. In this situation, which will be explored in greater depth in subsequent chapters, it is conceivable that the Anglo-Catholic Oxford Movement, and the nineteenth century interest in various forms of alternative spirituality, including those of occultism and spiritualism, may well be part of the same phenomenon. For a polemical Protestant viewpoint which argues for the minimalist relationship with divinity see Phillips Endecott Osgood, *Religion Without Magic* (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1954).

²⁰⁰ As exemplified in Deism. Besides Lord Herbert other notable exponents were John Toland (1670-1722), Matthew Tindal (1656-1733) and Thomas Cubb (1679-1747). See Peter Gay, *Deism: An Anthology* (Princeton: Krieger Publishing, 1968). Although clearly distinct from Deism, with regard to interaction between deity and humanity, such a view also seems inherent in some forms of evangelical Protestant Christianity where it is emphasized that conversion and 'salvation' can only come about through faith and not by 'good works' or other forms of action. The relationship and putative interaction with God, or 'His Son Jesus Christ', is predicated entirely on the belief that God exists and will endow the believer with immortality.

that the human being has achieved the status of becoming divine. Such an apotheosis would seem to be the supreme achievement of any religious or spiritual ambition.²⁰¹ Certainly it would fulfil completely one of the four criteria which Antoine Faivre has identified as being 'the intrinsic characteristics' of esoteric spirituality, namely, 'the experience of transmutation'.²⁰² Faivre notes that one might also describe the experience correctly as being one of 'metamorphosis', which does not necessarily imply the changing from one state to another in the sense of an 'unnatural' modification otherwise impossible in the physical world, but may actually entail a process that is part of natural change.²⁰³

Nor does such an apotheosis require that one has actually become God or a god, although in ancient times it frequently did involve such a belief, as in the case of the worship of living Roman emperors. Divinity could be achieved as a temporary status occurring as a result of a type of shamanistic or magical experience or equally it could entail transformation into a powerful spiritual being subordinate to a more powerful god. With regard to the former, for example, reference may be made to the process of 'immortalization' which 'takes place three times a year' and which is described in the 'Mithras Liturgy', one of the Greek magical papyri from Greco-Roman Egypt.²⁰⁴ Fritz

²⁰¹ Georg Luck observes, 'theurgy can be considered the ultimate development of the mysteries, because it represents an initiation into the highest mystery of all, the union of man and god' in his paper 'Theurgy and Forms of Worship in Neoplatonism', in *Religion, Science, and Magic*, pp.185-225 (p. 187). In the context of the Golden Dawn it may be noted that amongst the papers of a Golden Dawn member is his account of the Second Order initiation which is described by him as an 'apotheosis'. This document has not been published and appears in a collection of Golden Dawn papers of George Slater (Fratr Vincit Qui Patitur). Some details of the collection, which surfaced in New York in 1996 have been given by R. A. Gilbert in his article 'Seeking that which was Lost: More Light on the Origins and Developments of the Golden Dawn' in *Yeats and the Nineties: Yeats Annual No.14*, edited by Warwick Gould (London: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 33-49.

²⁰² Antoine Faivre, 'Introduction I', in *Modern Esoteric Spirituality*, pp. xi-xxii (p. xviii).

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ PGM IV, 733-747 in Hans Dieter Betz (ed.), *The Greek Magical Papyri: Including the Demotic Spell* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1986), p. 52. See also Hans Dieter Betz, 'Magic and Mystery in the Greek Magical Papyri', in *Magika Hiera*, edited by Christopher A. Faraone and Dirk Obbink (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 244-259. Georg Luck's *Arcana Mundi: Magic and Occult in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1985) contains useful magical texts and discussion on this theme.

Graf has observed that this process of ‘immortalization’ is one where the magician temporarily ‘leaves his mortal nature to converse with the god’.²⁰⁵

Equally however, spiritual transmutation may involve the acquisition of the status held by such powerful spiritual and divine beings as angels. This was the reported experience of Enoch who, as noted in the previous chapter, was transformed into an angel, and considered by some ancient commentators to be the Archangel Metatron.²⁰⁶ In this context, Martha Himmelfarb has observed that belief in the possibility of such a transformation existed within both Jewish and Christian communities, and she refers to eight early Jewish and Christian pseudepigraphic apocalypses in which there stands the central belief that ‘a human being can become the equal of the angels’.²⁰⁷

If such transmutation to either god or angel can be seen to represent one of the highest spiritual or religious aims it is possible to aspire to, it is clear that for many believers, both ancient and modern, the question of contact with the divine assumed more modest proportions. Himmelfarb has observed, ‘The belief that the boundary between humanity and the divine is permeable was widespread in the Mediterranean world in the centuries around the turn of the era. It takes a variety of forms, from accounts of wonder-working “divine men” like Apollonius of Tyana and Jesus to the allusions to the “descents” to the chariot of the hekhalot texts... and it is by no means

²⁰⁵ Fritz Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, p. 103.

²⁰⁶ Martha Himmelfarb has observed that Enoch becomes an extraordinary angel, ‘According to 2 Enoch he is worthy of hearing secrets never before revealed, even to the angels, while 3 Enoch goes so far as to make the transformed Enoch God’s second in command’. See her *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses*, p. 48.

²⁰⁷ Himmelfarb does not believe that the ascent apocalypses, which are the subject of her study, are either accounts of actual spiritual experience or intended as example of ritual ascent for others to follow. She asserts that they are literature; mere stories intended to inform readers of a mythic past, suggesting to the ancient reader ‘an understanding of human possibility, and of the status of the righteous in the universe’, and ‘taught their readers to imagine themselves like Enoch’. Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven*, p. 114. This view is not shared by a number of other scholars to whom she refers, such as Christopher Rowland who argues that there is no persuasive evidence that the experiences recorded in these apocalypses are not genuine. See his *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), pp. 214-247. While an assessment of the strength of Himmelfarb’s argument, and those of other scholars on this question, cannot be attempted here it may be noted that her position seems partially undermined by her acknowledgement, ‘The meaning of pseudepigraphy for the authors of the apocalypses and for their authors remains obscure’. *Ascent to Heaven*, p. 113.

restricted to Jews and Christians'.²⁰⁸ It may be noted that this widespread belief of a permeable boundary between the human and divine beings was hardly confined either to the Mediterranean world or 'the turn of the era'. While some pressure may be put on the term 'widespread', the persistence of magic, both popular and learned, along with many aspects of orthodox religion itself, throughout two millennia up to the present would seem to suggest otherwise.²⁰⁹

Similarly, 'the variety of forms' of this belief appear to be considerably greater than those discussed by Himmelfarb. The more remarkable characteristic of the widespread belief concerning divines during this ancient period, in contrast to other periods in time and particularly the present, is not the boundary between divine and human but rather the widespread belief that divine forces permeated almost every aspect of existence and had the capability of affecting human lives for good or ill. For this reason, as Rebecca Macy Lesses has noted, making contact with divine or supernatural forces was of fundamental importance to human beings, and sometimes for the most mundane reasons.

How to communicate the needs, desires, and wishes of human beings to the denizens of the celestial realms was one of the great puzzles of religious life in late antiquity. People believed in the existence of powers greater than themselves who could fulfil their wishes if supplicated or compelled with the correct words and gestures. These human concerns ran the gamut from the intimate details of mundane life to the heavenly knowledge that brings salvation. Men and women sought the celestial wisdom that only the angels know, or requested healing from

²⁰⁸ Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven*, p. 4.

²⁰⁹ The prevalence of magic in the Middle Ages, for example, and the obvious implications this has for the permeability of the boundaries between the natural and supernatural worlds, is extensively documented. See *Conjuring Spirits: Texts and Traditions of Medieval Ritual Magic*, ed. by Claire Fanger; Valerie I. J. Flint, *The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe*; and Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*.

a grave illness or protection from demons. They asked for good luck in business, healthy children, and success in the chariot races.²¹⁰

On the assumption that such powers existed and were believed capable of responding favourably to human requests or methods of obtaining assistance (presumably there was a means of measuring success or failure) the behaviour of these people can be seen to hardly differ from those of human beings today who resort to natural and physical powers to achieve very similar if not identical purposes. In this context it does not seem likely that the question of how to communicate human needs to the celestial realms was necessarily a 'great puzzle'. Indeed, the survival of numerous texts, both religious and magical, along with associated objects, designed to assist humans in all these various purposes suggests that there was an abundance of practical advice available. This is obviously reinforced by the almost certain fact that the material which has survived, through nearly two millennia in some cases, must represent only a minute fraction of what actually existed.²¹¹

In this sense, *prima facie*, the greater puzzle, which will be addressed much later in this study, is how and why in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries some religious people revived and practised certain beliefs and methods which are at least based, to varying degrees, on a conceptual view of divinity which has disappeared and, in many respects, has been made redundant by modern science, technology and the services of modern society.²¹²

²¹⁰ Rebecca May Lesses, *Ritual Practices to Gain Power: Angels, Incantations and Revelation in Early Jewish Mysticism*, p. 2.

²¹¹ Large numbers of ritual and magical objects designed to assist people for numerous mundane and spiritual reasons have survived. Modern equivalents of some these were produced and used by members of the Golden Dawn. See John G. Gager, *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World*, E. A. Wallis Budge, *Amulets and Talismans* (Oxford: Macmillan, 1930, Reprinted New York: Collier Books, 1970); T. Schrire, *Hebrew Magic Amulets* (New York: Behrman House, 1966); Michael Howes, *Amulets* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1975); William Pavitt, *The Book of Talismans, Amulets & Zodiacal Gems* (Hollywood, CA: Aquarian Press, 1970, reprinted from 1914).

²¹² Besides clergy, the Golden Dawn and Holy Order of the Sun attracted some prominent medical experts, including William Westcott, Dr. R. W. Felkin, and Dr. W. E. Carnegie Dickson all of whom

A partial answer to this puzzle may be seen in the proposition that, notwithstanding the well documented decline in popular magic designed to cater to everyday human needs and desires, which occurred from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries,²¹³ the revival of occultism in the Renaissance period gave significant impetus to the type of mediation or contact with divinity which led to celestial knowledge and the spiritually transforming experiences sought by the ancients. However, this desire was clearly not to be met within the reforms of Protestant Christianity which, as Keith Thomas has noted, significantly diminished, if not removed, the presence of the supernatural within the natural world.²¹⁴ For the desire for spiritual knowledge and experience had not been met by the Enlightenment and the subsequent developments of modern science and society. While Christianity was undoubtedly able to provide some means of contact with the divine which met the needs of many, and while, for a lengthy period throughout Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, much of the conceptual system involving contact with angelic vice regents existed alongside the church, the epistemological possibility for an individual human being to have direct and personal contact with divinity had been dramatically reduced. Outside of mystical experiences, for which the church provided no formulae, there was no recognised means for attaining spiritual transformation, and still less for 'immortalization'.²¹⁵

With the Reformation and the removal of priestly powers and symbology which, it shall be argued, served a theurgical or magical function, the loss of meaningful contact with the divine accentuated this need amongst many religious people. In this

produced original research in their own fields. Carnegie Dickson acted as physician on occasions to W. B. Yeats. See Ellic Howe, *The Magicians of the Golden Dawn*; and R. A. Gilbert, *The Golden Dawn Companion*, pp. 124-175.

²¹³ See Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*.

²¹⁴ Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, pp. 326-332.

²¹⁵ The perceived need for direct contact with the divine was a significant motivation behind the Protestant rebellion against the Roman Catholic Church. Arthur Versluis has noted Protestantism was 'an extremely serious and sustained attempt to return to the very springs of the Christian tradition, incorporating the works not only of Greek Orthodox ascetics like Macarios of Egypt, but also of Catholic mystics like Johannes Tauler, as well as certain aspects of early Christian Gnosticism'. See Arthur Versluis, *Wisdom's Children: A Christian Esoteric Tradition* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1999), p. xiii.

context, it is hardly surprising, therefore, that the Renaissance emphasis on reviving the teachings, secrets and mysteries of apparently ancient periods where transformational contact with divinity was possible and even routine, fell on particularly fertile ground.²¹⁶

Rituals of Ascent and Descent

Reference has already been made to the highly syncretic nature of the nineteenth-century Golden Dawn rituals and instruction. Apart from the Egyptian elements within the First Order, however, it is notable that there is a complete absence of any Christian aspect but instead there is a heavy emphasis on ancient rituals and themes relating to the notion of spiritual ascent and descent. In addition to the Egyptian motifs, these include symbols drawn from the Chaldean Oracles, but also a considerable number of Jewish mystico-magical concepts derived from the Kabbalah. As many scholars have noted, the Kabbalah itself is considered to have had a significant number of precursors in both Jewish and non-Jewish thought.²¹⁷

²¹⁶ Hence the appeal of Christian theosophy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries of which, as Arthur Versluis has observed, the most 'exemplary representatives' were 'Jacob Böhme and Johann Georg Gichtel in Germany and Amsterdam, Dr. John Pordage in England, and Johann Kelpius in America'. Versluis states: 'the Protestant theosophic tradition is also remarkably rich in iconography, cosmology, and metaphysics, offering far more than has been previously recognized in just the kind of spiritual discipline one finds in such traditions as Sufism, Buddhism, Kabbalism, and Hinduism'. Versluis, *Wisdom's Children*, pp. xi-xiv. As will be subsequently shown, within the nineteenth and twentieth centuries there was considerable intermingling of the doctrines of Christian theosophy, on the one hand, and those of Christian theurgy or magic, on the other.

²¹⁷ An example of non-Jewish influence is that of the Gnostic sects cited by Gershom Scholem in his *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York & Jerusalem: Schocken Books, 1967), p. 14. Moshe Idel has noted that Scholem and Isaiah Tishby 'regarded the encounter between Neoplatonic negative theology and Gnostic pleroma' as contributing to the 'very birth of the most dominant aspect of Kabbalah—its theosophy'. Moshe Idel, *Ascensions on High in Jewish Mysticism: Pillars, Lines, Ladders* (Budapest & New York: Central European University Press, 2005), p. 16. A further example is Adolph Franck's claim that the 'theology of the ancient Persians' influenced the Kabbalists although this view has since fallen out of favour among more recent scholars including Ioan P. Culianu (Culianu varies the way he spells his name and several of his works are attributed to the variants Culianu/Couliano/Culiano. Two of these appear in the Bibliography under Couliano and Culiano). See Adolph Franck, *Kabbalah* (New York: The Kabbalah Publishing Co. 1926, first published in 1843), pp. 306-7. See Chapter II in Ioan P. Culiano, *Psychanodia I: A Survey of the Evidence Concerning the Ascension of the Soul and Its Relevance* (Leiden: Brill, 1983). Ariel Bension has asserted that Moslem and Christian mysticism were influential in the development of the Kabbalah. See his *The Zohar in Moslem and Christian Spain* (New York: Herman Press, 1932, 1974). A useful overview of this theme is also provided in Birger A. Pearson, *Gnosticism, Judaism, and Egyptian Christianity* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1990).

The provenance of the Golden Dawn rituals is unknown, although it is generally agreed by scholars and other writers that the ‘official’ account provided by the ‘Chiefs’ of the Order is, at best, misleading and, at worst, false. Questions of origin with regard to the Golden Dawn will be discussed subsequently but it may be noted here that the Jewish magico-mystical elements are almost certainly derived from the Renaissance Kabbalah and the work of its later commentators.²¹⁸ In particular, the influence of Christian Knorr von Rosenroth (1636-1689) is manifest, especially in the use made by the Golden Dawn in its rituals of many of the Kabbalistic diagrams which appear in Rosenroth’s *Kabbala Denudata* (three volumes published between 1677-1684).²¹⁹

The two Golden Dawn Chiefs who were responsible for creating the Order, and almost certainly influenced, if not wrote, the rituals also translated and/or published material drawn from *Kabbala Denudata*. The major of these works is *The Kabbalah Unveiled* which is a translation of three Zoharatic books appearing in *Kabbalah Denudata*. These were translated into English from Latin by S. L. MacGregor Mathers and were published, along with an extensive introduction and notes by him in 1887, the same year that the Golden Dawn began its existence as a magical Order.²²⁰ Mathers’ co-Chief, W. William Westcott published in 1894 the *Aesch Mezareph or purifying fire* which ‘was a reprint of a translation into English made in 1714 of a treatise from

²¹⁸ e.g. Pico della Mirandola, Johann Reuchlin, Cornelius Agrippa. The powerful reputation which Jews had for their ability to perform magic is likely to have contributed to its ubiquitous popularity in occult manuscripts both prior and subsequent to the Renaissance period. Naomi Janowitz writes, ‘Ironically, at the same time that the rabbis were developing their criteria for why other people’s rituals were magic, powerful stereotypes circulated about Jews as magicians’. See her *Magic in the Roman World*, p.25. Again, Robert Wilken has observed, ‘What distinguished Jewish magic, at least in the minds of many people in the ancient world, was that Jewish magicians were more successful’. Robert Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), p. 85. See also Georg Luck, ‘The Doctrine of Salvation in the Hermetic Writings’ in his *Ancient Pathways & Hidden Pursuits: Religion, Morals and Magic in the Ancient World* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2000), pp. 191-202.

²¹⁹ Many of these diagrams appear in *The Kabbalistic Diagrams of Rosenroth*, translated by Christopher Atton and Stephen Dziklewicz (London: The Hermetic Research Trust, 1987). See also Christopher Atton and Stephen Dziklewicz, ‘Palaces, Mansions and Shells in a Kabbalist diagram of Rosenroth’, in *The Hermetic Journal*, No. 38 (Winter 1987), pp. 20-27.

²²⁰ S. L. Macgregor Mathers, *The Kabbalah Unveiled* (London: George Redway, 1887).

Rosenroth's *Kabbala Denudata*'.²²¹ The *Aesch Mezareph* appeared as Volume IV in an important series edited by Westcott, *Collectanea Hermetica* which included many texts studied by Renaissance scholars and occultists, such as *The Divine Pymander of Hermes*, *The Chaldaean Oracles of Zoroaster*, *Somnium Scipionis and Pythagoras*, and *Sepher Yetzirah*.²²²

Of some interest is the fact that the diagrams, and brief explanations, which appear in the first five rituals of the Golden Dawn contain some of the major motifs appearing in the rituals, literature and theology of mystical and theurgical Judaism, including the so-called Hekhalot literature and the phenomenon known as Hasidism. To the extent that the diagrams are drawn from Kabbalistic sources which, in varying ways, had a significant influence on Hasidism, this may not be entirely unexpected.²²³ It is significant, however, that the diagrams and their ritual context were not intended as mere objects of contemplation and meditation, or forming part of what Moshe Idel has described as 'symbolic theology'.²²⁴ Rather, their purpose was performative. The symbols were to be used as aides for various modes of magical or theurgic activity.²²⁵

This raises an interesting question in terms of possible Christian Kabbalist influence. Moshe Idel has advanced the argument that many modern scholars writing on the phenomenon of Kabbalah have been too ready to identify with the view of Gershom Scholem that the Kabbalah, and particularly that represented in the *Zohar*, is essentially concerned with symbolic theology rather than performative or theurgical activity.

²²¹ William W. Westcott, *Aesch Mezareph* (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1894).

²²² All the texts from the series have been republished in one volume as *Collectanea Hermetica*, edited by William Wynn Westcott.

²²³ See Moshe Idel, *Hasidism: Between Ecstasy and Magic* (Albany, NY: State University of New York, 1995), pp. 209-225.

²²⁴ Moshe Idel, *Ascensions on High in Jewish Mysticism*, p. 13.

²²⁵ In the First Order the members were presented with the diagrams in rituals and instructional papers. In the Second Order the same diagrams were provided with more extensive explanations along with suggested ways in which these could be used in magical ceremonies. Although some of the latter remain unpublished and in private collections others appear in Israel Regardie, *The Golden Dawn*; Israel Regardie, *The Complete Golden Dawn System of Magic* (Phoenix: Falcon Press, 1984); S. L. Macgregor Mathers and others, *Astral Projection, Magic and Alchemy: Important Golden Dawn Material previously unpublished*, ed. by Francis King.

Scholem sees in contemplation the main type of human attitude toward the divine realm, which is not theurgical, anchored in Halakhic forms of performance. Moreover, this mainly eidetic approach to the Kabbalah as interpretation of a theological issue falls short of a vitally mystical experience, and its prevalence in many recent studies demonstrates the tendency to conceive this mystical lore in more theological rather than experiential terms.²²⁶

Describing this approach as ‘pan-symbolic’, Idel notes that in Scholem’s and ‘his school’s’ work ‘explicit descriptions of practices or performances are absent in... analysis of Jewish mysticism’ and that the emphasis so placed is ‘exaggerated’.²²⁷ By such omission, which Idel believes to be attributable to Christian influence, the important performative aspect of Kabbalah is marginalized.²²⁸

It is the marginalization of such modes of activity -- technical, ritualistic, linguistic -- that created an imbalance between the nexus of the theological and the symbolic on the one hand and the energetic or performative aspects of Kabbalah on the other. I see this imbalance to be the result of the impact of the Christian emphasis on theology and faith as central to understanding religion on Jewish scholars’ perception of Jewish mysticism.²²⁹

Whether or not Idel is correct in terms of the broader influence of Christian theology on Jewish or other scholars’ views of the Jewish Kabbalah, it does not appear to be equally true of the influence exerted by the phenomenon of the Christian

²²⁶ Idel, *Ascensions on High*, p. 17.

²²⁷ Idel, *Ascensions on High*, p. 18.

²²⁸ Interesting examples of the performative nature of the Kabbalah are found in Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan, *Inner Space* (Jerusalem: Vagshal Ltd., 1990).

²²⁹ Idel, *Ascensions on High*, p. 18.

Kabbalah. The performance driven nature of the Christian Kabbalist Golden Dawn is the most obvious counterexample but others can be found, to varying degrees in the eighteenth-century German alchemical-Rosicrucian order, the Gold- und Rosenkreuz, Martines de Pasqually's Elus Coëns, or even in the so-called 'angelic workings' of the Elizabethan Dr. John Dee.²³⁰ Insofar as the Christian Kabbalah concept emerged from the Renaissance it is interesting to note Idel's belief that the impact of the Renaissance Kabbalah on the Jewish Kabbalah and mysticism was 'apparently considerable'.²³¹ Whatever the influence was, and Idel noted that it 'has not been investigated closely', it does not appear to be uniform, at least with regard to its performative characteristic, for Idel has also pointed to the significant influence on Scholem exerted by Johann Reuchlin's writings on the Kabbalah where he emphasized 'both theology and symbolism'.²³²

If the central purpose of Christian Kabbalism as interpreted by the Golden Dawn was experiential or performative, the aim of the performance or the experience desired can be seen clearly to be that of ascension to the divine realm. Described sometimes as the 'Path of Return', the goal of the aspiring member was to return to the divine source from which he or she originated. Because this ascension begins on Earth, or the physical realm, and ends in the supernal divinity, the journey was also viewed, with evident Gnostic associations, as beginning in diversity and ending in unity. To this degree the Order members shared the aims of the Jewish Kabbalist Abraham Abulafia (1240-c.1290) who is described by Idel as, 'striving to reach an experience of union that can be

²³⁰ Regarding the Gold- und Rosenkreuz, see Christopher McIntosh, *The Rose Cross and the Age of Reason* (Leiden: Brill, 1992) and Bernhard Beyer, *Das Lehrsystem des Ordens der Gold- und Rosenkreuzer* (Augsburg: Hiram- Edition, 1978, reprint of 1925). As an example of the performative nature of Dee's angelic workings see Deborah E. Harkness, *John Dee's Conversations With Angels: Cabala, Alchemy, and the End of Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 124. Extensive other examples are provided in Gyorgy E. Szönyi, *John Dee's Occultism* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2004); Robert Turner, *Elizabethan Magic* (Shaftesbury: Element Books, 1989); Robert Turner (ed.), *The Heptarchia Mystica of John Dee* (Edinburgh: Magnum Opus Hermetic Sourceworks, 1983); Benjamin Woolley, *The Queen's Conjuror: The Science and Magic of Dr. Dee* (London: Harper Collins, 2001).

²³¹ Idel, *Hasidism*, p. 11.

²³² Idel, *Ascensions on High*, p. 13.

achieved only by the prior process of self-simplification; he flees... from lower multiplicity to the utmost divine unity, which was conceived as a never changing reality'.²³³

This is not to say that everything taught and practiced in the Order specifically related to an ascension on high. Indeed, instructions on many magical techniques were provided to assist the members to achieve their more immediate aims in the physical realm.²³⁴ But the very structure of the Order itself is based on schemata where progress in the Order entails both ascent heavenwards in stages and descent between such stages. The model consists of a supposed 'Tree of Life' where ten essential emanations or characteristics of Divinity, which collectively may or may not be conceived as identical with the divine creator, are arranged in a hierarchy where the highest, Kether, represents the first and quintessential manifestation of deity, and the lowest, Malkuth, can be viewed, in a sense, as the condensation in physical form of the previous nine. Each of these emanations, known as Sephirah, is considered to be essentially male or female in nature, and between Kether and Malkuth are eight Sephiroth which progressively become, in the Golden Dawn scheme, more spiritual and less earthly, as one progresses up the Tree.²³⁵

²³³ Idel, *Hasidism*, p. 84. The notion of a dismembered god being restored to unity was stressed in the Golden Dawn teachings, particularly with regard to the dismemberment of Osiris, and his 're-membering' by Isis who was seen to perform a healing and saviour role equivalent to some of the descriptions of *Shekhina*. It is possible that this idea was influenced by, if not obtained from the views of Pico regarding this motif, in his *Oratio de Dignitate Hominis*. See Idel, *Ascensions on High*, pp. 183-184 and *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, ed. by E. Cassirer, P.O. Kristeller, and J.H. Randall, Jr.. On Abulafia see Moshe Idel, *The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia* (Albany, NY: State University of New York, 1988).

²³⁴ Besides the use of astrology, Tarot readings, and geomantic methods to obtain information regarding human affairs, members were also taught techniques to conduct exorcism and healing.

²³⁵ The Golden Dawn system of Grade rituals based on the Kabbalist sephiroth was adopted, and considerably adapted, from the quasi-masonic Rosicrucian English Order known as the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia (S.R.I.A.), which itself took its system from the German Gold-und Rosenkreuz order. Many of the male members of the Golden Dawn were drawn from the S.R.I.A. as were the founders Westcott and Mathers. See T.M., *History of the S.R.I.A.* (Uckfield, E. Sussex: Broad Oak Press, 1987); Christopher McIntosh, *The Rosicrucians: The History and Mythology of an Occult Order* (Wellingborough: Crucible, 1980; Revised and expanded edition 1987). Until the schismatic offshoots of the Order, which occurred early in the twentieth century, the original Golden Dawn provided grade rituals no higher than the Sephirah Tiphareth on the Tree of Life where the entry into the Second Order took place. The successor groups continued with the scheme with Sephiroth above Tiphareth, which purported to provide initiation into the supernal triad itself, where the divinity dwelt.

It should be noted, notwithstanding the extreme simplification employed here of a very complex and detailed system, that the form of Christian Kabbalism underlying the Golden Dawn doctrine, and indeed much of present day Western esoteric thought, is itself largely drawn from Rosenroth's presentation of the Kabbalah. In his *Kabbala Denudata* (1677-84), Rosenroth gives considerable emphasis to the particular Kabbalistic theories of Isaac Ashkenazi Luria (1534-72). Thus the Zoharic and other Kabbalistic works presented by Rosenroth are based on a Lurianic interpretation which differs widely from the interpretations and theories found in the overwhelming majority of other Kabbalistic and Jewish mystical sources.

What is of particular interest in the Golden Dawn syncretic doctrine and methodology involved in the ascension on high is that it manages to combine a number of different interpretations of the purposes and means of ascent which themselves match different periods of development in the history of both Kabbalah and Jewish mysticism. To varying degrees, in this context, it shares many of the characteristics which Rebecca Macy Lesses has noted of the Jewish Hekhalot (or Heikhalot) texts produced between late antiquity and the early Middle Ages:

The Hekhalot literature... contains a rich combination of mystical, cosmological, and ritual elements that relate God, the angels, and human beings to one another in complex and varied ways. It includes instructions for ascents to the seven heavenly palaces where the initiate can see God and participate in the liturgy of the angels... This literature is replete with divine and angelic names recited to bring angels down to earth and grant wisdom to human beings, used in seals shown to angels to gain access to the Hekhalot, or inscribed on amulets worn for protection. The names empower the initiate's ascent and adjuration because they incorporate the letters of the divine name through which the world was created.

The Hekhalot literature... shares its concern with the heavenly ascent with earlier Jewish apocalyptic literature, Christian apocalypses, some Gnostic texts, and the Greek theurgists. It [...] has methods of ritual action in common with *Sefer ha-Razim*... as well as ritual texts from Egypt in Greek, Demotic, and Coptic.²³⁶

Yet the Golden Dawn straddles other traditions as well. Moshe Idel has referred to the important work on the theme of the ascent of the soul by Ioan P. Couliano and, in particular, Couliano's distinction between the Jewish conception, 'which deals with ascent into the (three or seven) heavens or palaces, and the Greek or Hellenistic which addresses the ascent and descent of the soul through planetary worlds'.²³⁷ Ascension of the spirit in the Golden Dawn system included both aspects, along with many others, insofar as it utilised the Sephirotic system of the 'Tree of Life' to act as a kind of filing system where esoteric correspondences and equivalences could be made between the mystical, magical and theological concepts embraced by different religions and different mythologies.²³⁸ Thus, to ascend to a particular heaven or palace was simultaneously to ascend to a particular planetary system where one would also encounter a particular angel or archangel, an Egyptian and Greek god, and a vast array of other forces and symbols considered to be part of the essential nature of that heaven.²³⁹

²³⁶ Rebecca Macy Lesses, *Ritual Practices to Gain Power*, pp. 4-5.

²³⁷ Idel, *Ascensions on High*, p. 26. See Ioan P. Couliano, *Eros and Magic in the Renaissance*, pp. 3-10.

²³⁸ There are clear affinities with Neoplatonic themes discussed subsequently.

²³⁹ The system of correspondences is extant in ancient magical texts such as the Greek magical papyri, denoted by scholars as *PGM*. The efficacy of magical action often depended on the system of correspondences: see Marvin Meyer and Richard Smith (eds.), *Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power* (New York: Harper, 1994). The system was developed by such Renaissance occultists as Agrippa and in subsequent magical manuscripts: a typical example of the latter is the MS. Harley 6482 in the British Library which was published as *A Treatise on Angel Magic* (Edinburgh: Magnum Opus Hermetic Sourceworks, 1982). Another singular example of the synthesis of correspondences is the Renaissance work, *The Magical Calendar: A Synthesis of Magical Symbolism from the Seventeenth-Century Renaissance of Medieval Occultism*, trans. by Adam McLean (Grand Rapids, MI: Phanes Press, 1994). The Golden Dawn also significantly expanded the system of correspondences. These were partially published by Aleister Crowley in his *Liber 777* (York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, 1973; expanded edition of 1909). Modern occultists have subsequently extended such correspondences further. See David Godwin, *Godwin's Cabalistic Encyclopedia* (St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn, 1989) and David Allen Hulse, *The Key of it All* 2 vols. (St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn, 1993).

Within its particular system Golden Dawn ascension also appears to warrant the application of the ascent terminology employed by Couliano and adopted by Idel, namely somanodia, psychanodia and nousanodia. With regard to the latter two, the entire Golden Dawn programme of instruction, meditation, ritual adjuration, the experience of visions and the reception of supposed divine knowledge exemplifies those types of psychanodia and nousanodia which entail 'the ascent of the intellect, or the nous'.²⁴⁰ The pinnacle achievement of the Golden Dawn adept, for example, was to transform the knowledge (and correspondingly, the intellect) of the corporeal world into the consciousness of divinity itself. This was theoretically achieved through the gradual working through the lower degrees or Grades of the First and Second Orders, and then attaining the highest three Grades considered to be one with the Supernal Triad or Holy Trinity.²⁴¹ Similarly, although less apparent, a variant of somanodia, or bodily apotheosis, can be discerned in the same journey at a critical point, to be described in detail later, when the Golden Dawn aspirant enters the third highest Sephiroth of the 'Supernal Triad', also known as the 'third heaven'. This entails a passing out of physical existence and becoming subsumed by the entirely spiritual 'supernal triad', and thereby dwelling, as it were, with God or the gods. The experience may have been considered the same or akin to that supposedly experienced by Jesus who, according to Morton Smith, was claimed by Paul to have entered the third heaven, 'whether in the body or out of the body'.²⁴²

These three types of spiritual ascent to the divine world are to be found, either individually or collectively, and with numerous variations and different emphases, in

²⁴⁰ Idel, *Ascensions on High*, p. 27.

²⁴¹ The ten Kabbalistic Sephiroth on the 'Tree of Life' were divided into three 'Orders'. The highest 'Third Order' comprised the three Sephiroth, Kether, Chokmah and Binah otherwise known as the 'supernal triad', and the equivalent, within the Christian Kabbalistic view of the Golden Dawn, of the Holy Trinity. It is conceivable that the three Orders also corresponded symbolically with the Kabbalistic 'Three Aspects of the Soul', see Gershom G. Scholem, *Zohar: The Book of Splendour* (New York: Schocken Books, 1949), pp. 96-97. The three Orders are also discussed further in Chapter Nine.

²⁴² Morton Smith, *Clement of Alexandria and a Secret Gospel of Mark* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), pp. 426-28.

the literature of the many religious and mystical systems of antiquity, including Christianity. In the context of Jesus and his period, Morton Smith notes:

Ascent into the heavens (Lk.24.51; Acts I.9f.) is particularly important since it was a major concern of the time -- Apollonius is made to declare it the true test of deification (the goal of magic) and we find it in the magical papyri as the means of immortalization. Consequently, it is interesting that there are traces of stories that credited Jesus with the feat during his lifetime... shamans were also famous for their ascents into the heavens. It was also the claim of the Jewish magician who put together *The Book of Secrets*.²⁴³

Jewish mystical literature is especially rich with allusions to the concept of ascent to heaven. Quite apart from the considerable body of later Zoharic Kabbalist literature, Moshe Idel has observed: 'The theme of the ascent to the divine realm is well represented in Jewish sources of late antiquity: in inter-testamental Jewish literature, in some rabbinic discussions and in so-called Heikhalot literature, written some time between the third and eighth centuries'.²⁴⁴

It is not the purpose of this study to attempt an analysis, exegesis, or even a survey of this material which, as Idel notes, is now the subject of a 'vast literature' and which 'has been analyzed time and again by many scholars'.²⁴⁵ But as a means to gain an

²⁴³ Morton Smith, *Jesus the Magician*, pp. 124-125. *The Book of Secrets*, known variously under several titles including *Sepher Rezial Hemelach* and *Raziel ha-Malach*, has been particularly influential on Jewish magic and is referred to in numerous Jewish texts, including *The Zohar*. There are indications that the Golden Dawn founders utilised some of its material but this may have occurred through secondary sources. It was not published in English until the twentieth century, long after the Golden Dawn was founded. See Steve Savelow (ed. and transl.), *Sepher Rezial Hemelac* (York Beach, ME: Red Wheel/Weiser, 2000) and Michael A. Morgan (trans.), *Sepher Ha-Razim: The Book of the Mysteries* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983).

²⁴⁴ Idel, *Ascensions in High*, p. 28. See also Gershom G. Scholem, *Zohar: The Book of Splendour*, pp. 96-97.

²⁴⁵ Idel, *Ascensions on High*, p. 28. See also James D. Tabor, *Things Unutterable: Paul's Ascent to Paradise in its Greco-Roman, Judaic, and Early Christian Contexts* (New York: University Press of America, 1986).

understanding of the extraordinary amalgam of beliefs and practices found in the Golden Dawn system, however, it is important to see that some of its significant Jewish themes and motifs are found not only in the Kabbalistic sources, as previously noted, but also in the more ancient Jewish literature. While it is likely that these same motifs are derived almost entirely from Christian Kabbalistic and Renaissance sources, it is notable that the references to Christ and the use of Christian symbology within some of the rituals and 'official' instruction papers are minimal to the point of being almost nonexistent.²⁴⁶ In this context it is important also to bear in mind that the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, and the markedly more Christian Holy Order of the Sun, did not exist as, and were not created as, new sects or variants of Christianity or mystical Judaism. A significant proportion, if not the majority, of the membership were also practising members of the Anglican Church and their belonging to these Orders appeared to be perceived as an enhancement and development of their own faith.²⁴⁷ Where mystical Jewish and Kabbalist motifs were presented to the members in ritual, as well as those drawing on Egyptian, Gnostic and Mithraic symbology, these were intended to permit the experience of the ancient mysteries which were believed to underlie or be identical with the mysteries of the Christian faith.

In the very first of the rituals, following initiation into the Golden Dawn, the candidate for advancement in the system, is symbolically, or 'magically', brought into the Sephirah of Malkuth or Earth. This is portrayed as the ancient Jewish Temple and the candidate represents, or is identified with, a Jewish priest encountering the symbolic mysteries of the Temple. Following adjurations made by the senior officiating officer in the Temple to the Archangel associated with Earth, the candidate or 'priest' is allowed

²⁴⁶ Very little of the Kabbalist literature was available in English before the twentieth century. Apart from Rosenroth's Latin *Kabbalah Denudata*, many Kabbalist and Jewish themes were extant in the magical and occult texts and so-called grimoires from medieval times, as well as the considerable body of occult literature that became available from the time of the Renaissance.

²⁴⁷ An elderly ex-member of the Golden Dawn schismatic group, the Stella Matutina, advised me that his father who had also been both a member and an Anglican clergyman had been brought into the Order through the influence of one of his parishioners. Apparently he subsequently discovered that many members of the congregation of the church where he was vicar, were also Order members.

to enter the Temple where he ‘encounters’ other angels and Archangels who challenge his ritual attempt to ascend to the lowest of the Heavens or Palaces associated with Malkuth. Whether believed to be symbolically re-enacted, or ‘magically’ occurring in fact, these angels and archangels descend from the heavens to instruct the priest who aspires to ascend.²⁴⁸ In the course of such instruction he encounters important symbols and receives instruction associated with the Jewish Temple and the mythology behind it. Amongst these symbols are the Garden of Eden, the vision of the Merkabah of Ezekiel, the Ark of the Covenant, the ‘altar of burnt offering’ and ‘the laver of brass’²⁴⁹ found within the Jewish Temple, the Table of Shewbread, the Seven- branched candlestick and the ‘altar of incense’.²⁵⁰

These biblical elements, including the vital concept of ‘exile’, are some of the characteristic notions found in the ascent literature of ancient Jewish mysticism. The Jewish temple is itself a major symbol, representing not merely historical events of supreme symbolic importance to Judaism, but also having iconic, if not magical, significance in representing both the various heavens and the various states of a human being’s soul or consciousness which correspond to those heavens. To be permitted to enter the temple is to be permitted to enter a particular state of holiness, and this can only occur if there is a corresponding state of purity and holiness within the individual human being. Whether or not Jewish mysticism and spirituality in its various

²⁴⁸ See Israel Regardie, *The Golden Dawn*, II, 66, ‘Malkuth...causeth the current of the Divine Influx to descend from the Prince of Countenances, the Great Archangel Metatron’; Gershom Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), pp. 133, 135.

²⁴⁹ The ‘laver of brass’, like most of the other symbols mentioned here is taken from Solomon’s Temple (1 Kings 7:23). Himmelfarb observes ‘the enormous laver in Solomon’s Temple, called the “molten sea” to underscore the cosmic symbolism’. See *Ascent to Heaven*, p. 53. See also Reverend Dr. Edersheim, *The Temple: Its Ministry and Services as they were at the Time of Jesus Christ* (London: The Religious Tract Society, n.d.).

²⁵⁰ See Regardie, *The Golden Dawn*, II, 44-68. Amongst the symbols exposed to the aspirants undergoing the ritual, there were also ‘signs and tokens’ given to them which they had to present to establish the legitimacy of their presence in the ritual. Georg Luck has noted, ‘the category of “symbols” and “tokens”...really could be anything – an object, a magical formula, from the stone *mnizouris* to a *vox mystica*—anything that would establish a contact between a human being and a god. It looks as though the “symbols and tokens” were passwords or guarantees that everything was all right: the god would recognize the theurgist as a legitimate petitioner’. See Luck, ‘Theurgy and Forms of Worship in Neoplatonism’, p. 193; Raphael Patai, *Man and Temple* (New York: Ktav Publishing, 1947; revised 1967), especially pp. 109-117.

manifestations can be viewed as esoteric, this correspondence between the believer, the state of holiness, the temple and the heaven would appear to fulfil the very first of Antoine Faivre's four core characteristics defining esotericism, namely the perceived correspondence between different classes of reality.²⁵¹

Himmelfarb has argued that the correspondence between the soul's ascent and its reception in various temples or heavens is strongly demonstrated in a number of Jewish and Christian apocalypses: 'the depiction of the transformation of the visionary in the apocalypses depends on an understanding of heaven as a temple with angels as heavenly priests, and... the emergence of the idea of heavenly ascent in the apocalypses is closely related to the development of this picture of heaven'.²⁵² Himmelfarb's view seems to be equally applicable to this and other rituals of the Golden Dawn, particularly when this ritual is compared, in this context, with her description of the journey taken by Enoch who, it should be noted, is also mentioned in the Golden Dawn text. In the latter, the candidate aspiring to ascent is initially brought to the 'Court of the Tabernacle' where he is 'purified and consecrated' before being allowed to enter 'the Holy Place'. Once in the Holy Place he is exposed to certain symbolic experiences and then is brought to the 'Altar of Incense' which was placed 'before the Veil of the Holy of Holies'. The candidate is not permitted to pass beyond the Veil or enter the Holy of Holies within this ritual, and these experiences are reserved for subsequent ritualistic ascent to the higher Sephiroth or Heavens.²⁵³

²⁵¹ It is interesting to observe that the inclusion of these symbols, and a vast array of others drawn from other mythologies, appears to demonstrate Faivre's fifth element, *the practice of concordance*. See Kocku von Stuckrad, *Western Esotericism*, p. 4.

²⁵² Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven*, p. 4. John J. Collins has described apocalyptic literature as follows: 'Apocalypse is a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendental reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world'. It would appear that the Golden Dawn rituals satisfy this definition and, in this sense, they are examples of apocalypse. See John J. Collins, 'Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre', in *Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre*, ed. by J. J. Collins, *Semeia* 14, (1979), 4-14.

²⁵³ See Regardie, *The Golden Dawn*; Patrick J. Zalewski, *Secret Inner Order Rituals of the Golden Dawn*; and *Ordo Sanctissimus Roseae et Aureae Crucis* (UK: Privately printed for A. E. Waite, 1928); see R. A. Gilbert, *A. E. Waite: A Bibliography* (Wellingborough: Aquarian Press, 1983), C41, p. 156.

Enoch's ascent to heaven is described in the 'extremely influential' Book of the Watchers which Himmelfarb notes is contained within 1 Enoch and which is itself indebted for some of its themes to the Book of Ezekiel, another major influence on the Golden Dawn ritualistic account of ascent.²⁵⁴ As with the Golden Dawn candidate, Enoch must pass through three temple areas before encountering the highest divinity:

The two houses through which Enoch must pass according to the Ethiopic (vv.10-14, 15-17) to reach the throne of God have been treated by some critics as the *hekkhal*, or sanctuary ('nave' in RSV) and *devir*, or holy of holies ('inner sanctuary' in RSV), of a temple. But the correspondence is more exact than that. Both the First and Second Temples contained a third, outer, chamber, the '*ulam*, or vestibule (First Temple: 1 Kings 6:3; Second Temple: Josephus, *Jewish War* 5.207-19, m. Middot 4:7).²⁵⁵

The theme of exile

The complex and related notions of exile, loss, banishment, and disinheritance are fundamental to the Golden Dawn and the Kabbalistic conception of return to the unity of the Garden of Eden or the divine source. There is a clear, if complicated, relationship between these and the Christian notion of 'salvation' and a connection explicitly drawn by Pico della Mirandola with the dismemberment of Osiris.²⁵⁶ This latter concept was adopted into the Golden Dawn schema as was the dismemberment of Dionysos found in Macrobius's *In Somnium Scipionis*.²⁵⁷ It is also of some interest that none of these ideas, which are also deeply embedded in many Gnostic texts, either figure in or appear

²⁵⁴ Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven*, pp. 14-15.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Idel, *Ascensions on High*, p. 183.

²⁵⁷ Idel, *Ascensions on High*, p. 186.

related to Faivre's characteristics of esotericism.²⁵⁸ Yet, in variant forms, they are either explicit or implicit in the forms of Christian Kabbalism which is the basis for many modern esoteric groups. Indeed, the very notion of *prisca theologia* might be seen to imply a desire to be restored to an ancient but lost tradition.²⁵⁹

The particular Kabbalistic, and indeed Gnostic, emphasis favoured by the Golden Dawn was not simply that humanity had been expelled from the Garden of Eden but rather that all physical manifestation was ejected and cut off. Thus Malkuth itself was in exile, separated from the other nine Sephiroth which were divided into three groups of three. Within the Golden Dawn ritual for the Sephira Malkuth, these concepts of exile and loss are introduced in various ways, some of which are undoubtedly drawn from the mystical traditions of Judaism, irrespective of the particular route of influence. At an important point in the ritual the candidate for ascension is provided with an explanation, along Kabbalistic lines, of the creation of the Garden of Eden and of 'Man being cast out of Eden'.²⁶⁰ The aspirant is told, however, that the plan of the Creator is that Man should not fall into a 'Void':

He has bound Man with the Stars as with a chain. He allures him with Scattered
Fragments of the Divine Body in bird and beast and flower, and He laments over
him in the Wind and in the Sea and in the birds. When the times are ended, He

²⁵⁸ The related concepts of 'loss', 'banishment', 'exile' etc., are discussed in a Gnostic context at length in G. R. S. Mead's *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten* (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1900). Although these concepts are not explicit in Faivre it might be argued that 'separation', 'salvation' and their cognates are related to Faivre's characteristic of 'transmutation'.

²⁵⁹ Arthur Green has noted that, 'Israel's historic exile, however, is itself symbolic, an earthly representation of a still greater exile, that of the *Shekhina* (the divine immanence) from Her divine spouse. The nature and origin of this inner divine "exile" is one of the kabbalists' great mysteries. Some passages, both in the *Zohar* and in earlier sources, attribute it to the sin of Adam and Eve. In this sense, Kabbalah may be said to have a true sense of the "fall" or "original sin" of humans... The world as first created was a true Garden of Eden...' See his 'Introduction', in *The Zohar*, 2 vols (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), I, lxviii.

²⁶⁰ Himmelfarb notes that apocalyptic literature usually provides such an account of creation in various ways. See Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven*, pp. 4-5. An account of creation also appears to be fundamental to Kabbalistic literature and much of *The Zohar* consists of exegesis on Genesis. An interesting account of the relationship between the Temple and creation myths appears in Raphael Patai's *Man and Temple*, pp. 54-104.

will call the Kerubim from the East of the Garden, and all shall be consumed and become Infinite and Holy.²⁶¹

At the conclusion of the initiation into Malkuth, the aspirant is further told 'that on this Earth you are in a wilderness, far from the Garden of the Happy' and 'you are yet far from the goal which has been reached by the complete initiates.' On entering the next Sephirah, Yesod or Foundation, to which was attributed a greater degree of holiness, the aspirant was informed that he now had the title, 'Brought From Among the Rejected'.²⁶² These notions of banishment from the Garden, the Fall of Adam, exile, and loss recur in the succeeding rituals until the point in the higher 'grade' rituals when, variously, there occurs the achievement of the restoration of unity, the re-admittance to the Garden, the re-building of the Temple, the 're-membling' of Osiris, the admittance into the Holy of Holies, and the return to the supernal triad.²⁶³

All the Jewish elements noted above are predominant motifs not merely within the Kabbalistic, Heikhalot and Merkavah literature, but are also found within pseudepigraphic, apocalyptic and Qumran literature. Amongst the numerous works by scholars on these themes is that of Rachel Elijah who has linked many of these diverse texts around a theory she has developed regarding the priestly classes who performed the liturgy and rituals.²⁶⁴ Elijah observes that with the destruction of the First and Second Temples, which lasted for a period of almost one thousand years, the 'priestly classes who, unable to serve in the Temple, replaced the earthly Temple with a heavenly Merkavah and heavenly sanctuaries -- Heikhalot, creating a super-temporal liturgical and ritual relationship between the priests performing the sacred service and the

²⁶¹ Regardie, *The Golden Dawn*, II, 54-55.

²⁶² The names of several Egyptian deities are introduced in this Grade, alongside the Jewish symbology. Regardie, *The Golden Dawn*, II, 88, and R. G. Torrens, *The Secret Rituals of the Golden Dawn*, p. 108; Gershom G. Scholem, *Zohar: The Book of Splendour*, pp. 96-97.

²⁶³ Regardie, *The Golden Dawn*, II, 13-96, R. A. Gilbert, *The Golden Dawn: Twilight of the Magicians*; Arthur Versluis, *The Egyptian Mysteries* (London: Arkana, 1988), pp. 46-48.

²⁶⁴ Rachel Elijah, *The Three Temples: On the Emergence of Jewish Mysticism* (Oxford: Liiman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2004). See also Raphael Patai, *Man and Temple*, pp. 109-117.

ministering angels in the supernal sanctuaries'.²⁶⁵ On a similar theme Himmelfarb states, 'For 2 Enoch, it is a given that to enter heaven is to enter a temple and that to be an angel is to be a kind of priest'.²⁶⁶

While it would be an absurd exaggeration to suggest that the Golden Dawn teachings constitute part of this tradition, nevertheless Elior's observation above would not be an inaccurate description of what the Golden Dawn members believed they were doing. Certainly as Adepts, they considered themselves to be magical priests trained and authorized to make contact with angels, archangels and other spiritual beings. They too embraced the concepts of the Merkavah or heavenly chariot and heavenly sanctuaries which were established whenever and wherever they set up their temporary temples and had performed the necessary rituals of consecration. Moreover, in performing their rituals they believed, or claimed, that they were entering into a spiritualised and 'super-temporal' universal ritual as well as contributing both to the restoration of the once perfect relationship between deity and humanity and, through their repeated acts of purification and of the spiritualization of their being, to their eventual return to the divine unity, Paradise or the Garden of Eden.²⁶⁷

The restoration of the once perfect relationship between human, Adam, and Deity which was originally breached by the Fall of Adam (Genesis 3: 23-24) through his sin of eating the forbidden fruit from the Tree of Knowledge, could only be effected by the birth or rising of a second Adam who needed to be crucified on the desecrated four 'Rivers of Eden.' It should be noted that the myth of the Fall of Adam is closely related to the immensely complex and important symbol of *Shekhina* which is the divine presence and is female. *Shekhina* is identified with the Tree of Knowledge but also with

²⁶⁵ Elior, *The Three Temples*, p. ix.

²⁶⁶ Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven*, p. 46.

²⁶⁷ See Regardie, *The Golden Dawn*, and Arthur Edward Waite, *Inner and Outer Order Initiations of the Holy Order of the Golden Dawn* (Burnaby: Ishtar Publishing, 2005). It should be noted that the rituals contained within this book, while most useful for scholars of the later manifestations of the Golden Dawn, are not actually rituals of this Order but of Waite's Fellowship of the Rosy Cross. Waite did produce rituals for the 'Holy Order of the Golden Dawn' but these are quite different from those in this book.

Malkuth, along with many other important identifications. Although the subject of *Shekhina* will be discussed further when considering the role of the feminine within the Golden Dawn, it should be noted that through Adam's sin there was a separation between humanity and the divine presence.²⁶⁸ Because of this separation humanity and, in a sense, *Shekhina* were in exile as a result. Similarly, although in a different context, the divine presence which dwelt in the Temple, was forced into exile when both the First and Second Temples were destroyed. Such restoration therefore, entailed variously the reunification with *Shekhina*, the Temple rebuilt, the birth and crucifixion of the Second Adam and the reuniting of *Malkuth* with the supernal triad.²⁶⁹

To varying degrees all this mythology was deployed in the Golden Dawn rituals and, as will be discussed in greater detail later, reached a type of zenith in the first of the Second Order rituals where the aspiring initiate is symbolically crucified as the second Adam who is equated with Christ, Osiris and other avatars deemed to be equivalent. Only after such 'crucifixion' could the adept enter the innermost sanctuary of the Golden Dawn which was portrayed as a type of lesser 'Holy of Holies'.²⁷⁰ Such restoration was considered to be essential not merely for the individual adept but for God Himself and His cosmos. As Arthur Green has noted in his discussion of certain Kabbalistic interpretations, '... God has to undergo a transformative act of great pain, one in which the divine becomes separated from itself, its future reunification to depend

²⁶⁸ See A. E. Waite, *The Holy Kabbalah*, pp. 277-290. Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), p. 33. Idel observes, '...the Kabbalistic equation of Metatron with the 'supernal anthropos' is corroborated by several ancient texts, which reflect the existence of Enoch's ascent as a return to the lost state of Adam, viewed as a cosmic 'anthropos'. An equivalence was sometimes made in the Golden Dawn between 'Shekhina in exile' and the myth of Isis, mourning the death of Osiris and seeking to restore him. In this sense, Isis, like Shekhina, was the agent of re-birth, restoration and resurrection. For the relationship between Isis and Christianity see R. E. Witt, *Isis in the Graeco-Roman World* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1971).

²⁶⁹ Isaiah Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), I, 375.

²⁷⁰ Isaiah Tishby notes that the actual Holy of Holies, within the Sephirotic supernal triad, is the second Sephirah Binah which is also the location for *Shekhina*. See *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, I, 257 note.1.

entirely upon the actions of these creatures below. Here exile and suffering are inherent in the cosmos...²⁷¹

Elior has commented that the goal of the literature incorporating the Heikhalot and Merkavah traditions was ‘to preserve and perpetuate the numinous essence of the ruined Temple and the sacred service of old, by mystically transforming them into the heavenly Heikhalot and angelic service. This new goal was... combined with the mystical and liturgical conceptions of “descending to the Merkavah”, “entering the Pardes”, “ascending to the Heikhalot” and “entering the innermost sanctum”... designating the Holy of Holies in the Temple... All these expressions imply freedom of access between heaven and earth, a mutual mystical and liturgical relationship between angels and human beings’.²⁷²

The Golden Dawn shared these goals although blended them into a syncretic system drawing on many other sources which were believed to exemplify the same goals. Such sources ranged from the Hermetic and supposedly Egyptian literature which had been given prominence during the Renaissance to medieval and later works on magic. Indeed, while the syncretism of the Golden Dawn was original in many respects this very aspect was itself drawn from Renaissance writings, particularly those of Pico della Mirandola who equated and corresponded the names and concepts appearing in many different mystical systems within his works attempting to Christianise the Kabbalah.²⁷³ Other sources also included the manuscripts of angelology and demonology which were considered necessary to enable the adepts to establish and maintain a relationship with divine beings, thereby assisting the journey from exile to unity.²⁷⁴

²⁷¹ Arthur Green, ‘Introduction’, in *The Zohar*, I, lxviii.

²⁷² Elior, *The Three Temples*, pp. 237-238.

²⁷³ See Chaim Wirszubski, *Pico della Mirandola's Encounter with Jewish Mysticism*, pp. 106-113.

²⁷⁴ Joseph Leon Blau notes the association of angelology with the ‘the angel Metatron’. See his *The Christian Interpretation of the Cabala in the Renaissance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944), p. 7. See also Joshua Trachtenburg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition* (New York: Atheneum, 1982).

Enoch-Metatron

Reference has already been made in the previous chapter to the important role played by Metatron in the first ritual of the Golden Dawn schema, where he is identified with the ‘Angel of the Presence Divine’.²⁷⁵ In a number of Heikhalot texts Metatron is identified with Enoch who also occupies an important role in the Golden Dawn doctrine and is described by Elion as ‘the hero of the ancient mystical tradition’.²⁷⁶ Viewed as the archetypal model of a human being who ascends to the heavens to achieve both direct contact with divinity and angelic status, the presence of Enoch is ubiquitous in both the mystical Jewish texts and the Golden Dawn canon. In one of the latter texts issued to the new adept, techniques are described to cause to descend upon the adept the ‘tremendous illumination of... Angelic nature.’ And when this illumination occurs, ‘the Man shall become of Enoch. And Chanock (sic) made himself to walk with God, and he was not, for God took him’.²⁷⁷

Although incidental to this context, it should be noted that the name Enoch was also important to the Golden Dawn adepts through their utilisation of the manuscripts of the Elizabethan magus Dr. John Dee who derived information and a unique ‘language’ from his supposed communications with angels. This language was purportedly one of those imparted to Enoch by the angels. One of the manuscripts containing tables or tablets of angelic names written in this language and used extensively by the Golden Dawn was headed, ‘Clavicula Tabularum Enochi’.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁵ Elion, *The Three Temples*, p. 239.

²⁷⁶ Elion, *The Three Temples*, p. 238.

²⁷⁷ Regardie, *The Golden Dawn*, I, 217.

²⁷⁸ See Stephen Skinner & David Rankine, *Practical Angelic Magic of Dr. John Dee's Enochian Tables* (Singapore: Golden Hoard Press, 2004), pp. 58-59. Dee obtained his angelic communications with the help of rituals, crystal balls and ‘scryers’, the most successful of whom was the disreputable Edward Kelley, apparently an itinerant alchemist. A number of Dee's angelic workings and selections from his diary were published in 1659 by Meric Casaubon, who was hostile towards Dee. See John Dee, *A True & Faithful Relation of What Passed for many Yeers Between Dr: John Dee...and Some Spirits*, ed. Meric Casaubon (London, 1659). A facsimile with additional commentary was published in 1992 (New York:

Insofar as the successful Golden Dawn adept was destined to 'become of Enoch', the Enoch-Metatron identification is important as the implication is that humanity can become one with Metatron and godlike. Certainly this is the clear implication in the Holy Order of the Sun where the head of the order is actually called 'Metatron'. Within the Jewish literature the descriptions of Metatron are multifarious but are well described by Elior who notes:

The super-temporal figure of Enoch-Metatron is a unique combination of a threefold existence: divine, angelic, and human-priestly. Indeed, he appears in Heikhalot literature as 'Little YHWH, whose name is like that of his Master', 'Metatron YHWH the God of Israel, God of the Heavens, and God of the Earth', or, as already noted, 'the Angel/Prince of the Countenance', the archangel appointed over all angels, high priest of the supernal sanctuary, one of whose tasks is to teach the cosmic Merkavah tradition.²⁷⁹

Similarly, Ithamar Gruenwald has noted that in the text *Sefer Hekhalot*, Enoch is transformed into Metatron but before that occurred, 'was lifted up together with the *Shekhina*.' As previously noted, the importance of the role played by *Shekhina* will be discussed subsequently but we may take note of Gruenwald's observation that Enoch-

Magickal Childe Publishing Co., 1992). The respected seventeenth-century scholar, Elias Ashmole, greatly admired Dee and there are indications he may have studied and even attempted to repeat Dee's experiments. Through Ashmole's own work and influence Dee became a figure of interest to Masonic Rosicrucians and to subsequent scholars. Macgregor Mathers and William Westcott undoubtedly became aware of Dee through their involvement in Freemasonry, the S.R.I.A., and Masonic Rosicrucianism. See Peter French, *John Dee: the World of the Elizabethan Magus* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984, reprint of 1972), pp. 11-14; Frances Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), pp. 30-40; and Deborah E. Harkness, *John Dee's Conversations with Angels*.

²⁷⁹ Elior, *The Three Temples*, p. 239.

Metatron was 'transformed into a huge angel', placed in a throne 'at the gate of the seventh palace' and was 'appointed over secret knowledge and sciences'.²⁸⁰

One further important identification for the present purpose is the suggestion of J. T. Milik that the name 'Metatron' is a reference to the four faces of the Merkavah.²⁸¹ Whether or not this is the case these 'four faces', which comprise a man, an eagle, a lion and an ox (Ezek. 1:10), have played a major symbolic role in Western occultism and esoteric symbolism in general, and in the Golden Dawn in particular. The French magus, Eliphas Levi (1810-1875), ascribed these to a particular Tarot card which he entitles, the Wheel of Ezekiel. Some Golden Dawn renditions of the Tarot cards used this attribution and also employed it on another card entitled 'The World'. Within this occult milieu the four faces were ascribed to the Jewish *tetragrammaton* YHWH and with the fixed signs of the zodiac, where the lion equated with Y and Leo, the eagle to the first H and Scorpio, the man to V and Aquarius, and the ox to the second H and Taurus.²⁸²

The Pattern of Seven

The mystical significance of certain numbers is repeatedly stressed in virtually all the Jewish mystical literature including the Bible. Indeed, it features in some Christian writings, in ancient and modern magical and theurgical texts, and it permeates the esoteric texts from the Renaissance up to modern times. Within the Jewish texts, however, and particularly those of the Kabbalah it assumed a major importance chiefly because of the immense significance ascribed to sacred names and their spelling, and the fact that there are no separate numerical characters in biblical Hebrew, with each

²⁸⁰ Ithamar Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism* (Leiden: Brill, 1980), p. 47. Also Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, II, 627. Tishby notes that Metatron is the servant of *Shekhina* and is appointed to attend to her needs.

²⁸¹ J. T. Milik, *The Books of Enoch: Aramaic Fragments of Qumran Cave 4* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 12.

²⁸² Paul Foster Case, *The Tarot* (New York: Macoy Publishing Co., 1947), p. 121.

Hebrew letter bearing its own particular numerical value.²⁸³ Within biblical Hebrew therefore, as well as other ancient languages, ‘*every word is a number, and every number is a word*’.²⁸⁴ This situation permitted Jewish mystics and Kabbalists to develop exegetical techniques based on numbers and significant revelatory correspondences to be drawn from letters, words and phrases having the same value.²⁸⁵

There were certain numbers within the ancient Jewish mysteries which appeared to have particular sacred significance. Three of the most important of these, for the purpose of this study, are the numbers four, seven and twelve. The first has obvious affinities with the four major points of the compass, the four seasons, the four ancient ‘elements’ of air, fire, water and earth, whereas twelve links naturally with the twelve months of the solar year, twelve diagonal boundaries, twelve signs of the zodiac and so forth. To these were added many equivalences of religious significance such as the four sacred letters of the holy name for God, YHWH, the four sacred creatures of Ezekiel’s Chariot Throne, the four Rivers of Eden, the four Kabbalist Worlds of Emanation (Atziluth, Briah, Yetzirah and Assiah), and in the case of twelve, the twelve tribes of Israel, the twelve permutations of YHWH, the twelve stones of the priest’s breastplate and a vast number of other equivalences which were perceived to exemplify the sacred qualities of four and twelve.

The number seven, however, was especially holy to the Jewish mystical tradition, as indeed it was and had been to many other ancient religious theologies.²⁸⁶ In her developed study of this phenomenon, which she describes as the ‘sevenfold cycle’, Rachel Elior has made the following observation of the significance of seven:

²⁸³ See Paul Krzok, ‘The Sevenfold Kabbalah,’ in *The Hermetic Journal*, No. 37 (Autumn 1987), pp. 40-44.

²⁸⁴ S. L. Macgregor Mathers, *The Kabbalah Unveiled*, p. 4. The italics are Mathers’.

²⁸⁵ S. L. Macgregor Mathers, *The Kabbalah Unveiled*, pp. 7-14. See Gershom Scholem, *Kabbalah* (New York: Dorset Press, 1987; first ed. 1974), pp. 337-343; Joseph Leon Blau, *The Christian Interpretation of the Cabala*, pp. 8, 16, 32, 57, 106; Paul Foster Case, *The Magical Language* (Los Angeles, Builders of the Adytum, 1961), comprising 52 lessons on Gematria produced by Case’s Order; A. E. Waite, *The Holy Kabbalah*, p. 36; Aryeh Kaplan, *Sefer Yetzirah* (York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, 1990).

²⁸⁶ Elior, *The Three Temples*, pp. 77-81.

A characteristic feature of the priestly mystical tradition is the multiplication by seven in the heavenly cult of almost every element of the earthly cult once performed in Solomon's Temple, or its visionary transformation in Ezekiel's Merkavah...The Mishnah divides the Temple Mount into seven domains, each within another, increasing in sanctity as one approaches the Holy of Holies, and various traditions speak of an association, implicit or explicit, between the Temple and a sevenfold division, referring to seven gates and seven steps in the Temple, or to the seven-branched lampstand and the seven planets, as well as various other septuples associated with the Temple. Perhaps these septuples are simply a representation of sacred time, divided into sevens or Sabbaths of days, parallel to the seven days of the week. Perhaps, moreover, the mystical tradition preserved in literary works of the last centuries BCE and the first centuries CE, referring at different stages to seven firmaments, to seven Chariot Thrones, seven Heikhalot and their cosmic multiples, picturing the heavens as a Temple consisting of seven sanctuaries... These and similar traditions, stressing not only the reflection of the earthly sanctuary but also the sevenfold structure of the heavens—as a Garden of Eden with seven firmaments, or a universe with seven stars, seven heavenly circles, seven heavenly ages, seven appointed ages... postulate a general link between the cosmic order... and the mythical space in which this order is preserved... They point to a perception of the heavens as a Temple of sevenfold structure.²⁸⁷

Without exception each of the septuple symbols referred to by Elion above was employed by the Golden Dawn either in its rituals or in explanatory papers. The full

²⁸⁷ Elion, *The Three Temples*, pp. 77-78.

compliment of ceremonial officers for the initial 'Neophyte' ritual was seven and in the original form of the Order, before the schismatic splits which modified the nature of the Order's structure and rituals, there were seven ceremonies of ascent up the Tree of Life.²⁸⁸ In the rituals and instructions succeeding that of Neophyte the members were provided with symbolic diagrams and explanations relating to the seven-branched candlestick, the seven heavens and hells, the seven thrones, the seven stars and so forth. Upon entering the Rosicrucian Second Order, which involved the crucifixion referred to previously, the initiated Adept was provided with additional material which provided deeper explanations of these same symbols and methods to employ them in magical operations.²⁸⁹

The ritual for entering the Second Order was as dramatic as its Temple furniture. It required the presence of an elaborate seven-sided room or 'Vault'. Based loosely on the description of the 'Vault of the Adepts' given in the *Fama Fraternitatis*, the first of the Rosicrucian 'manifestoes' published in 1614, each of the Vault's seven walls, measuring eight feet by five feet, corresponded to each of the seven traditional planets. Every wall was divided into forty squares, each bearing planetary and zodiacal symbols or Hebrew letters, and each painted in colours associated with the seven planets. The Vault was roofed over and the ceiling was painted with symbols as was the floor. Within the Vault stood the *pastos* (Gk, couch or coffin), which was similarly painted in elaborate colours. Upon the *pastos* was placed a circular altar on which was painted the

²⁸⁸ Reference has already been made to the use made by the Golden Dawn of symbolism drawn from the Mithras cult. In this regard the following comment of Hans-Josef Klauck is relevant: 'The Mithras cult had seven hierarchically ordered grades of initiation, which were considered as having a structure parallel to that of the seven planets. The ascent of the initiand via the various rungs of the ladder of the grades provides an image of the ascent of his soul through the heavenly spheres. Thus he overcomes the power of the heavenly bodies, no longer exposed to the coercion they exert and to the rule of blind chance.' See Hans-Josef Klauck, *The Religious Context of Early Christianity: A Guide to Graeco-Roman Religions* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003), p.142.

²⁸⁹ These include two Golden Dawn papers entitled 'The Seven Branched Candlestick' which trace the influence of the number seven throughout different aspects of the Golden Dawn system, including the Vault walls, colours, and sounds. Although the two papers in question remain unpublished and are held in a private collection the substance of their content appears in Patrick Zalewski's, *Inner Order Teachings of the Golden Dawn* (Loughborough: Thoos Publications, 2006), p. 187.

Hebrew letter Shin, representing Christ, and which was surrounded by symbols of the four creatures of Ezekiel, the Kerubim.²⁹⁰

While the Rosicrucian influence was evidently profound in influencing the particular construction of the Golden Dawn Vault, it seems improbable that its creators were unaware of the immense significance of the seven-fold pattern in relation to the ancient Jewish mysteries and the Temples. Moreover, it is clear from scholarly research that the seven-fold pattern was widespread in the construction of temples in antiquity. In his classic study of twelve volumes, E. R. Goodenough has described a ‘closed Temple’ used by Jewish mystics which contains seven painted walls and which have other seven-fold affinities. Goodenough also notes that this seven-fold association ‘has long been recognized as a feature of Mithraic cult’ and, referring to the classic work of Franz Cumont, notes that he ‘... found a Mithraeum in Ostia in which the worshiper advanced to the sacred scene and altar at the end by going through seven doors, with symbols of the planets and signs of the zodiac on them’.²⁹¹ In a similar vein, Desmond Varley has noted, some 2500 years before the Christian era, a Sumerian King, Lugulamnemundu, built a temple to the goddess Nintu at Adab. The temple had seven gates and seven doors and, at its dedication, seven times seven animals were sacrificed, showing that the ancient Sumerians themselves considered the number to be sacred’.²⁹² Again, François Lenormant writes in his *Chaldean Magic: Its Origin and Development*, ‘... the description which Herodotus gives of the seven walls of Ecbatana, each with the sacred colour of one of the seven planets. The same sacramental arrangement was observed in

²⁹⁰ See Regardie, *The Golden Dawn*, I, 223-230. These symbols are also described in an unpublished Order paper called “The Book of the Tomb” which exists in several private collections of Golden Dawn documents. Coloured illustrations and a description of a Golden Dawn ‘Vault’ appear in Judy Siers, *The Life and Times of James Walter Chapman-Taylor* (Napier: Millwood Heritage, 2007), p. 173. A coloured version of one the Vault walls also appears in Frank Tuohy, *Yeats* (London: Macmillan Publishing, 1976), plate facing p. 69. The number of forty squares appearing on each wall was of significance and related, amongst other attributions, to the days of the Flood, Ezekial’s penitence, the fastings of Moses, Elijah and Jesus, and the days elapsing between the Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus. See Westcott, ‘Numbers’ in *Collectanea Hermetica*, p. 115.

²⁹¹ Erwin R. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period*, 12 vols (New York: Bollingen Foundation, 1964), X, 46.

²⁹² Desmond Varley, *Seven: The Number of Creation* (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1976), p. 24.

the town of Ganzakh, the Gazaca of the classical writers, and in Atropatene, since Moses Chorenensis calls it 'the second Ecbatana, the town with seven walls'.²⁹³

Of importance in the symbology of the Golden Dawn Vault is the fact that entrance to the Vault is effected through the wall or door associated with the planet Venus. This planet is identified with the Sephirah Netzach which is the seventh, counting Kether as the first. The Hebrew word for 'door', *daleth*, is placed on the particular model of the Tree of Life used by the Golden Dawn, within the Supernal Triad, which connects the great Mother energy of Binah, which is also the higher *Shekhina* or feminine divine presence, with the great Masculine energy of Chokmah, being the third and second *Sephiroth* respectively. The Tarot card, which the Golden Dawn associated with this connecting path, is that of the Empress also connected with Venus, and the Empress is often depicted as pregnant. It will be recalled that within the Jewish, and specifically Kabbalistic, mysteries the feminine divine presence or Holy Spirit was *Shekhina*. Amongst many of the Rosicrucian themes adopted from the *Fama Fraternitatis* was the notion that the Vault of Father Christian Rosenkreutz was called Spiritus Sanctus or the House of the Holy Spirit.²⁹⁴ Finally, in this context, the candidates for this initiation could not enter the Vault through Venus until that had first, ceremonially, divided a veil called *paroketh* which, in the ancient Jewish texts, was placed before the Holy of Holies, or *Devir*.²⁹⁵

²⁹³ François Lenormant, *Chaldean Magic: Its Origin and Development* (London: Samuel Bagster, 1877), p. 227.

²⁹⁴ Although there is not an explicit identification in the *Fama Fraternitatis* between the 'house S. Spiritus' (where the brothers should meet every year upon the day C) and the hidden vault in which the body of Christian Rosenkreutz is discovered, this identification was made by the Golden Dawn and subsequent schismatic groups.

²⁹⁵ Regardie, *The Golden Dawn*, II, 155-197. Regarding the *Devir*, see Florentino Garcia Martinez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), p. 423.

Ascension in the Vault

Drawing these symbolic themes together, the Golden Dawn aspiring adepts were brought face to face with the feminine divine presence of God, or the Holy Spirit, who was served by the chief Archangel Metatron, and who was also the ‘countenance of God’. But to do this the candidates had first to prove their fitness to part the innermost Veil and enter the holiest of places, the sanctuary of the Holy Spirit where only the priests could enter. Once within the Veil they had to undergo being ‘crucified’ as the old Adam and as Christ. Thereupon, a new being, a new Adam, was conceived, as pictured in anticipation in the Tarot image of the pregnant Empress. This child was at once the resurrected Christ as well as being the Egyptian Horus, and the new ‘child’ of Europe predicted by the Rosicrucian manifestos. Throughout the ritual and embedded explicitly and implicitly within its symbology is the notion of ascent, or rising up to the Tree in order to enter the Holy Place and to receive the transformation which ensued from the death of the old self, the old Adam, and the birth of the new, the Christ-like Adept. But this also involved descent where, through a particular Golden Dawn technique to be discussed later, the ‘Divine White Brilliance’ of the Holy Spirit is brought down into the body of the adepts in general and the newly initiated Adept in particular.²⁹⁶

Within the Golden Dawn this richly symbolic ritual was the culmination of a series of ceremonial experiences, all involving exposure to symbols perceived to be drawn from the mysteries of antiquity and, as it has been argued, especially those of Jewish mysticism. Each of these ceremonies was believed to effect a particular contact with a different aspect of the divine, where the first four rituals, following that of the

²⁹⁶ Use of the ‘creative imagination’ and conceiving of the ten sephiroth as, to employ Idel’s term, the ‘actualisation of the intellect’ was an important technique in the Golden Dawn. In his *Ascensions on High*, Idel gives an interesting description from Rabbi Hayyim Vital regarding a recommended technique for imaginary ascent: ‘One...should envision the upper worlds, as though he stands in them. And if he performed some unification—he should think about it, to bring down by this light and abundance into all the worlds...’. Idel, *Ascensions on High*, p. 53.

Neophyte, corresponded to the four ancient elements of Earth, Air, Water and Fire. The fifth, which entailed parting the Veil of *paroketh*, was believed to be the Crown of Spirit which descended and thereby qualified the candidate to ascend to the place where the divine spirit dwelt.²⁹⁷

Other important symbols employed within these rituals, and those that relate to the non-Jewish and Christian elements will be addressed in subsequent chapters. Amongst these are the symbolic concepts or images, which also concern ascent to the heavens and communication with the divine, and which played such a vital role in the ascent mythology of many ancient mysteries, including those of the modern Golden Dawn.²⁹⁸ These, in turn, will be considered in the context of the Christian mysteries where the role of the feminine *Shekhina* was seen to have affinity with Mary, the Mother of Jesus.²⁹⁹

In terms of these symbols of both Jewish and non-Jewish ancient mysticism and theurgy, which revolve around the conceptual axis of spiritual ascent, important questions arise with regard to Christianity and the narrower field of Christian occultism. In what sense, if any, were these symbols contained within the Christian revelation? And if they were present, did these motifs remain unchanged or were they subsequently modified or even eliminated in the course of doctrinal change? Is there a concept, and

²⁹⁷ In a Golden Dawn paper discussing the descent of the Crown of Spirit, or the Divine White Brilliance, Dr. Felkin notes that the descent involves the 'redemption of Matter, transforming the human into the Divine'. See Patrick J. Zalewski, *Secret Inner Order Rituals of the Golden Dawn*, pp. 59-60.

²⁹⁸ Idel provides a useful outline of the significance of the pillars in his *Ascensions on High*, pp. 73-100. He observes that this theme has been neglected by scholars. Similarly, the role of the 'sacred mountain' in magico-mystical practices also warrants further study particularly in the present context because of its appearance in the Rosicrucian mysteries.

²⁹⁹ Maxwell Johnson has noted in the context of discussing early Syrian traditions of Christian initiation that 'along with a theological understanding of the rite of Christian initiation as a ritual of new birth in imitation of Jesus' own baptism...it is not without significance that in this early Syrian tradition the word for Spirit, *ruah*, is feminine and that early Syriac texts refer to the Holy Spirit as 'Mother' and invoke her as such in the context of both initiation and Eucharist'. See Maxwell E. Johnson, *The Rise of Christian Initiation* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1999), p. 49. There are numerous references within the literature of both the Jewish and Christian Kabbalah to the Holy Spirit, *ruah* as feminine and where identifications are made variously between *ruah* and *Shekhina*, the Supernal Mother, and Mary, mother of Christ. These identifications were all familiar to Golden Dawn adepts who invoked the divine feminine power. See Mathers, *The Kabbalah Unveiled*, pp. 22-25, 54.

associated practice, of spiritual ascent within Christianity which does not draw on this ancient symbology? The attempt to answer these questions in ensuing chapters should enable a greater understanding of why certain Christians felt the need to combine their more orthodox Christianity with ritualistic practices which, ostensibly, their faith was considered to have supplanted, if not subsumed.

CHAPTER FOUR

CHRISTIAN RITUALS OF ASCENT AND MEDIATION

If ye then (in your Baptism) were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above (Col. I. iii, I)

A satisfactory explanation for the priestly combination of Christian orthodoxy and ritual magic, of the type exemplified in the rituals of the Golden Dawn, must address at least two awkward facts. The first is that within the approximately forty books written on the Golden Dawn within the last twenty years there is barely any reference at all to Christianity.³⁰⁰ On the few occasions where the relationship between the Order and Christianity has arisen, it is categorically stated that no relationship exists other than in a ‘nominal’ sense and that any mention of Christ within the rituals and documents should be understood as referring to an archetypal figure who could equally be represented by any one of a number of other mythological godlike beings.³⁰¹ Some writers, and particularly those in recent years who claim to practice the Golden Dawn system of

³⁰⁰ All or most of these books are referenced in the bibliography and identified specifically as relating to the Golden Dawn.

³⁰¹ See, for example, John Michael Greer, ‘Osiris and Christ’, in *The Magical Pantheons—The Golden Dawn Journal Book IV* (St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn, 1998), pp. 229-251. The notion of Christ as a ‘cosmic archetype’ in the occult context is also discussed at length in the works of Father Anthony Duncan, an Anglican priest who argues for the possibility of a positive view of Christian occultism. See his *The Fourth Dimension* (Oxford: The Alden Press, 1975), p. 62. The ‘Cosmic Christ’ theme is the principal subject matter of *The Perfect Way; or the Finding of Christ* (London: Field & Tuer, 1882) by Anna Kingsford and Edward Maitland. Some attention will subsequently be given in this study to Kingsford who is an important figure in the history of both the Golden Dawn and the Theosophical Society, and the development of ‘esoteric Christianity’. *The Perfect Way* was highly regarded by many leaders of the Golden Dawn, including Dr. Felkin and, for example, W. B. Yeats. One of the two founders of the Golden Dawn, S. L. McGregor Mathers dedicated his work on the Zohar to Kingsford. See Mathers, *The Kabbalah Unveiled* (London: George Redway, 1887). Further useful material on Yeats’ relationship with Kingsford may be found in Virginia Moore, *The Unicorn*, p. 130.

magic, are hostile to any suggestion that the Golden Dawn Order was or is a Christian organisation.³⁰²

Conversely, it is of interest in this context to note the comment of George Mills Harper that ‘the Golden Dawn was conceived as a Christian organisation’ and that there was an ‘emphasis placed upon Christian doctrine, especially in the beginning’.³⁰³ With regard to Christianity, MacGregor Mathers, the onetime head of the Golden Dawn, and the creator of many of its rituals, said the following:

We have profound respect for Christianity and are in *no sense* hostile to the Roman Catholic Church... and we consider especially that the Roman Catholic Church has resolutely preserved in its Ceremonies the August Symbols of the Divine Wisdom.³⁰⁴

Rather than a decline in emphasis placed on Christian doctrine within the later Golden Dawn, as implied by Harper, there was actually a significant increase in the Christian interpretation from 1901 within the Order, and particularly the branch to which W. B. Yeats adhered. Within the set of documents issued to the newly initiated Neophyte was a paper entitled ‘The Order and its Training’. The final paragraph of this paper asserts:

³⁰² See Israel Regardie, *The Complete Golden Dawn System of Magic*, I, 18-19 and Zalewski, *Secret Inner Order Rituals of the Golden Dawn*, pp. 60-61. Regardie’s views fluctuated as to whether or not the Golden Dawn was a Christian organisation. In contrast to his statements in the above reference in a letter to Virginia Moore, he stated ‘The Inner Order of the G.D., the R.R. et A.C., was always strongly Christian’. Moore, *The Unicorn*, p. 396.

³⁰³ Harper, *Yeats’s Golden Dawn*, p. 71.

³⁰⁴ MacGregor Mathers, ‘The Real and True Rosicrucian Order’ in *Azoth Monthly* (April 1917), pp. 210-212. *The Azoth* was a magazine published in the U.S.A. covering esoteric and occult subjects. The editor at this period was Michael J. Whitty, a member of the Golden Dawn and he was succeeded by Paul Foster Case, another member of the Order who subsequently left the Golden Dawn in 1922 to establish his own ‘Rosicrucian’ Order called The Builders of the Adytum (BOTA). A Golden Dawn Temple was established in New York in the late 1890s. When the Order collapsed into schism in 1903 this Temple remained loyal to Mathers and was subsequently part of his renamed ‘Rosicrucian Order of Alpha and Omega’.

And here it may be stated clearly and definitely that the teaching of our Order recognises JESUS of Nazareth, not merely as a Master, however high, but also as the one physical Incarnation of Deity, the Second Person, the Logos. And if you ask us to differentiate between the LORD JESUS CHRIST, the only begotten Son of God and the Cosmic Christ, then I may say that the Cosmic Christ is the Ideal to which all humanity strives, and will one day attain, the ADAM KADMON of the Kabbalists. But JESUS CHRIST, Virgin-born and One-begotten, is the Crown and Synthesis of God-made-man, the Redeemer who came to show us the Way, the Truth, and the Life.³⁰⁵

Notwithstanding these comments, it would seem reasonable to suggest that there is no necessary connection between Christianity and the set of beliefs embraced by this magical Order. Moreover, there is no connection recognized as such by most or all adherents of the derivative Orders over the past thirty to forty years and this lack poses the central question of this study: Why would orthodox and devout Anglo-Catholic Christian clergy become committed to pursuing a system of religico-magical practises, which, at best, could be seen as being outside of the Christian tradition and, at worst, could be seen as antithetical to it?

To grasp the full significance of this question it needs to be understood that amongst this group of clergy were members of a small religious community of celibate priests, the Community of the Resurrection, which, from the time of its founding in 1892, was to exercise considerable influence within the Anglican Church.³⁰⁶ The head or 'Superior' of this religious community for much of the period we are concerned with

³⁰⁵ This unpublished paper was almost certainly written by Dr. Felkin and is known to have been issued to members no later than 1910. Private Collection.

³⁰⁶ Alan Wilkinson has claimed of the Community of the Resurrection: 'For much of the last hundred years it has been the most influential and the best known of the Anglican Religious Communities'. See *The Community of the Resurrection: A Centenary History*, p. ix. The British poet and scholar Kathleen Raine commented on the link between members of the Community of the Resurrection and the Golden Dawn in an article on the latter Order. See Chapter Eight note 1074.

was Walter Frere, later bishop of Truro and a major figure of influence within the church. Notwithstanding his friendship with Dr. R. W. Felkin, who was head of the largest Golden Dawn group, there is no evidence that Frere himself ever joined the Golden Dawn.³⁰⁷ Yet, given the nature of the Community and the monastic rules under which its members lived, it is almost inconceivable that Frere would not have known that several of the Community Fathers claimed adherence to a system of beliefs described as 'Hermetic' and which entailed the practise of magic and ritual ascent to supposed states of higher spirituality. It seems equally unlikely that Frere would not have given his approval for them to be so involved.³⁰⁸

While the nature of various aspects of the Community will be examined later at greater depth it can be noted at this point that there was little opportunity for privacy or leisure within the very small and secluded religious Order. Apart from a demanding schedule of religious duties to be conducted throughout the day and night in which 'each member must learn to merge himself in the Community', each Father was also expected to make a regular 'sacramental confession'.³⁰⁹ These factors, combined with a regular course of religious instruction, training and weekly meditation exclude any reasonable possibility that the occult activities of at least some members were not known to other members and sanctioned by the Father Superior. This apparent anomaly invites the question, therefore, whether or not the very purpose of the Community itself at that period permitted, if not encouraged, a form of spiritual belief and activity which could lead towards the practice of ceremonial or ritual magic which, it was believed, enabled participants to ascend to elevated states of spiritual consciousness.

³⁰⁷ Frere's name does not appear in extant membership rolls of the Order nor in any Order-related material which might imply his membership.

³⁰⁸ This does not entail, of course, that Frere was himself attracted to occult belief or ritual nor that there was a uniform view amongst Community members regarding ritual, whether of occult or Anglo-Catholic tendency.

³⁰⁹ Alan Wilkinson, *Community of the Resurrection*, p. ix. Wilkinson notes that the Rule was later changed to allow laymen to join the Community.

‘The First Christians’

The Community’s Rule, which dictated its overall purpose and specific aims, was written by Frere. It stated:

The Community of the Resurrection shall consist of celibate priests who desire to combine together to reproduce the life of the first Christians of whom it is recorded in the Acts of the Apostles that they were continuing steadfastly in the Apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, the breaking of the bread and prayers and the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and life and no one called any of the things that belonged to him his own but they had all things in common.³¹⁰

In placing emphasis on ‘the first Christians’ Frere was articulating one of the most important themes of early Anglo-Catholicism, and indeed of the Oxford Movement and Tractarianism, which were the driving force in the revival of Catholicism within the Anglican Church.³¹¹ Concern with the theological and liturgical relationship between the Anglican Church and the Church of the first four centuries lay at the very heart of the Oxford Movement and led virtually every prominent figure within the early Oxford Movement to a study of the writings of the Church Fathers, and especially of the Greek Fathers.³¹² As noted by Geoffrey Rowell, ‘The theological vision of the Oxford Movement was in large measure a rediscovery and reinterpretation of patristic theology’.³¹³ Moreover, the Victorian ritual or ceremonial revival, which was later to have such a marked effect on the Church, was itself a direct consequence of this

³¹⁰ H. A. A. Williams, *Some Day I’ll Find You* (London: Collins, 1982), pp. 313-314. See also *CR Diamond Jubilee Book* (Wakefield: West Yorkshire Printing Co., 1952), p. 7 and Alan Wilkinson, *Community of the Resurrection*, p. 41.

³¹¹ Geoffrey Rowell, *The Vision Glorious* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 6-11. See also W. S. F. Pickering, *Anglo-Catholicism—A Study in Religious Ambiguity*, p. 26.

³¹² One of the first of such studies was Cardinal John Henry Newman, *The Arians of the Fourth Century* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1908) which was first published in 1833, the year in which, arguably, the Tractarian Movement can be considered to have started.

³¹³ Rowell, *The Vision Glorious*, p. 9.

‘theological vision’. The influential Anglo-Catholic scholar S. L. Ollard has observed that while the ritual revival was not an intended result of the original leaders of the Oxford Movement ‘it was a very natural, although an undesigned, consequence of the revived teaching’.³¹⁴ Notwithstanding its seventeenth and eighteenth-century precedents and various instances of ceremonial innovation in the decades prior to the first Tractarians, ritualism was not a prominent feature of the early Tractarian phase of the Oxford Movement and indeed, as Nigel Yates has observed, there was little ritualism prior to about 1860, nearly twenty years after the last of a series of ninety tracts was published.³¹⁵ It was not until the late nineteenth century, or even the first two decades of the twentieth, that the external manifestations of ritualism became extensive and commonplace, if still controversial, within the Anglican Church.³¹⁶

This relatively brief period of Anglo-Catholic triumph, during which Ollard’s somewhat celebratory history was first published (1915), was also the same period in which the Golden Dawn attracted the majority of its clerical recruits. It seems difficult to doubt that the high point of Anglo-Catholic ritualism was indeed the logical outcome of the ‘revived teaching’ and ‘theological experimentation’ of the Tractarians,³¹⁷ as

³¹⁴ See S. L. Ollard, *A Short History of the Oxford Movement* (London: A. R. Mowbray, 1915), pp. 152–153. Ollard’s history was written at the high point of Anglo-Catholic achievements and its objectivity has been questioned by some scholars in recent years, notably Nigel Yates. Yates acknowledges, however, that Ollard’s work was ‘well researched’ and while it may be the case that Ollard ‘created a mythology about ritualism’ there seems little empirical evidence to question his claim that ritualism was a logical, if unintended, consequence of at least some aspects of Tractarianism and the Oxford Movement. In particular, ritualism would seem to be entailed, if not exclusively so, by those developments in Eucharistic theology within Tractarianism. See Yates, *Anglican Ritualism in Victorian Britain*, pp. 5–7.

³¹⁵ Yates, *Anglican Ritualism in Victorian Britain*, pp. 10–40; Nigel Yates, *Leeds and the Oxford Movement: A Study of ‘High Church’ Activity in the Rural Deaneries of Allerton, Armely, Headingley and Whitkirk in the Diocese of Ripon 1836–1934* (Leeds: The Thoresby Society, 1975), p. 4.

³¹⁶ Yates, *Anglican Ritualism in Victorian Britain*, pp. 351–364.

³¹⁷ Yates, *Leeds and the Oxford Movement*, p. 3. This is not to suggest that the development of ritualism was solely dependent on the theological work of the Tractarians. Yates demonstrates clearly that the question of influence regarding ritualism is considerably complex and he identifies three contemporaneous movements ‘among High-Churchmen in the 1830s and 1840s’, all separate and yet all interlinked. Besides the Tractarians there were the ritualists themselves who wanted to restore Catholic ceremonial into church services and ‘there were the ecclesiologists’ keen to rebuild and restore old churches ‘along medievalist lines’. Yates dates the ecclesiology movement ‘from the establishment of the Cambridge Camden Society and the Oxford Society for Promoting the Study of Gothic Architecture in 1839’ but notes that these also had their antecedents. Although it is far outside of the scope of our study to attempt to describe this ‘very complicated picture’ it is clear that the theological teaching which permitted the ritual revival flowed from all three movements as well as from other High Church groups or

Ollard evidently believed,³¹⁸ and it is feasible that at least some of the clergy attracted to the rituals and doctrine of the Golden Dawn saw the latter as an equally natural, if not logical, progression of ritualistic Anglo-Catholicism. Certainly, as will be demonstrated subsequently, this was the view of Dr. Robert Felkin, then leader of the Golden Dawn and friend of W. H. Frere, who believed that the Order's doctrines were the secret teaching given by Jesus to the first Christians.

The most fundamental concept in the revival of Patristic theology, and one which was the driving force behind the developing theology and ritualism of the Oxford Movement, was the doctrine of the early Church regarding the Sacraments. The notion that Christ was supernaturally present in the Eucharist was central to this development.³¹⁹ This is discussed at some length below but it may be noted here that acceptance of this doctrine within the Church of England took many years to reach the level achieved by the late nineteenth century.³²⁰ A significant turning point was 1853 when a major figure in the developing theology of the Oxford Movement, Robert Isaac Wilberforce (1802-1857), published his influential *The Doctrine of the Holy Eucharist*.³²¹ Within this volume, which provided a system to the sacramental teaching of the Oxford Movement, Wilberforce states, 'Our Lord's presence in the Holy Eucharist is supernatural, and not natural; that it is sacramental, and not sensible. These

individuals outside them. Yates also notes that 'In these circumstances one would expect a good deal of cross-fertilization between Tractarianism, ecclesiology, and ritualism. And that is what appears to have taken place.' See Yates, *Anglican Ritualism in Victorian Britain*, pp. 48-49.

³¹⁸ Yates, *Anglican Ritualism in Victorian Britain*, p. 5.

³¹⁹ George Herring considers the notion of the 'Real Presence' to be the 'crucial element' in 'the steady advance in Eucharistic doctrine within Tractarianism' and therefore in the ritualism that logically flowed from it. See George Herring, *What Was the Oxford Movement?*, p. 91.

³²⁰ It was also a period in which attempts to introduce ceremonial changes, particularly those related to eucharistic worship, were often highly controversial and met with considerable opposition from the public and the Establishment. As many of the changes were illegal some of the clergy involved were prosecuted, especially in the third quarter of the nineteenth century. See Rowell, *The Vision Glorious*, particularly pp. 127-128. Reaction to ritualism is described in considerable detail in Yates, *Anglican Ritualism in Victorian Britain*, pp. 150-212, and Desmond Morse-Boycott, *The Secret History of the Oxford Movement* (London: Skeffington & Son, 1933), pp. 170-193.

³²¹ Herring, *What Was the Oxford Movement?*, p. 39.

lead to the further assertion that it is real, and not merely symbolical'.³²² George Herring has noted in his brief study of the Oxford Movement that Wilberforce's views were given additional publicity 'in 1853-4... when Archdeacon Denison preached three sermons in Wells Cathedral with the deliberate intention of testing the acceptability of Wilberforce's concepts in the Church of England'.³²³ These led to unsuccessful legal cases brought against the Archdeacon at both a diocesan and archiepiscopal level and the collapse of the last case in 1858 'led some to argue that if Wilberforce's views were now legitimate, the logical conclusion was to adopt the ritual practices that symbolized them'.³²⁴ In the same year there was published *The Directorium Anglicanum*, a ritualistic 'Manual of Directions' intended to assist Anglican clergy to apply pre-Reformation ritual to the ceremonial of the Book of Common Prayer. *The Directorium Anglicanum* was edited by the clergyman John Purchas (1823-1872) who was successfully prosecuted for ritualistic practices.³²⁵ It was subsequently edited for a second edition in 1865 by the somewhat eccentric clergyman F. G. Lee (1832-1902) who achieved a degree of notoriety by founding in 1877 the secretive Order of Corporate Reunion which advocated 'the re-ordination of the Anglican clergy', based on the view that the Anglican Orders were invalid.³²⁶ Although Ollard does not consider the *Directorium* to be the work of a scholar he nevertheless praises Lee for his antiquarian knowledge and it would seem that it was used by many clergy attracted by Catholic ceremonial.³²⁷ The manual contains enormous and minute detail on virtually

³²² Robert Isaac Wilberforce, *The Doctrine of the Holy Eucharist* (London: John and Charles Mozley, 1853), p. 152.

³²³ Herring, *What Was the Oxford Movement?*, p. 91.

³²⁴ Ibid.

³²⁵ *The Directorium Anglicanum; Being a Manual of Directions for the Right Celebration of the Holy Communion. For the Saying of Matins and Evensong, and for the Performance of other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church*, (London: Thomas Bosworth, 1865). Regarding John Purchas see Ollard, *A Short History of the Oxford Movement*, p. 199; and Morse-Boycott, *The Secret History of the Oxford Movement*, pp. 188-189.

³²⁶ Ibid. For details on F. G. Lee and his Order of the Corporate Reunion, see Yelton, *Anglican Papalism*, pp. 21, 193-195; Peter F. Anson, *Bishops at Large* (Berkeley: Apocryphile Press, 2006, reprint of 1964), pp. 73-82.

³²⁷ Ollard, *A Short History of the Oxford Movement*, pp. 199-200; Yates, *Leeds and the Oxford Movement*, p. 5.

every aspect of the ceremony of the Church of England and has the express intention of providing a complete set of 'Rubrics', or 'code of ritual directions', for the Book of Common Prayer, based on 'the traditions of Catholic ritual and the real and ancient Use of the English Church'.³²⁸ Lee states in his preface that he altered the order of Offices in the Prayer Book by placing 'the directions for celebrating the Holy Eucharist' first, as it is 'the centre of all Christian Worhsip'.³²⁹ He asserts that 'Ritual and Ceremonial are the hieroglyphics of the Catholic religion' and, following some criticism of other forms of 'the Communion Service', states his position on the Rite of the Holy Eucharist:

But the Catholic Priest, who knows that this action is done in the Person of CHRIST, who knows his office to be to perpetuate on the altars of the Church Militant on earth the same Sacrifice which the Great High Priest consummated once on the Cross and perpetuates, not repeats, before the Mercy-seat in Heaven, will reverently handle such tremendous mysteries, will be greatly careful that no dishonour be thoughtlessly done unto his LORD, WHO vouchsafes to be present on our altars. How delicately will he approach even before consecration the elements which are thus to be so supernaturally honoured. How will he be exceeding urgent to do all things well as to *matter* and *form*, as to vestment and ritual, whether in his own person or by his assistants, in this wondrous Service. And if in the Sacrament of the altar some things strike the eye as graceful and beautiful, it is well; but this is not their object. The one aim is to offer the Holy Sacrifice in a worthy manner to Almighty God.³³⁰

Given this emphasis placed by Oxford Movement theologians on the 'first Christians' and the importance ascribed to the Sacraments, a potentially fruitful line of

³²⁸ *The Directorium Anglicanum*, p. vi.

³²⁹ *The Directorium Anglicanum*, p. ix.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*

enquiry in the context of the present investigation may be seen to lie in the apparent close connection, observed by many scholars, between the theology of the ancient pagan 'mystery' religions and that of the early Christian church.³³¹ In his *Christian Mysticism* (1899) W. R. Inge observes, 'It is not without a purpose that these writers (Clement and Dionysius the Areopagite), and other Platonising theologians from the third to the fifth century, transfer to the faith and practice of the church almost every term which was associated with the Eleusinian Mysteries and others like them'.³³² Inge also states:

These different conceptions of the office of the Mysteries cannot, as I have said, be separated historically.³³³ They all reappear in the history of the Christian sacraments. The main features of the Mystery-system which passed into Catholicism are the notions of secrecy, of symbolism, of mystical brotherhood, of sacramental grace, and above all, of... ascetic purification, illumination... The great value of the Mysteries lay in the facilities which they offered for free symbolical interpretation... The Mysteries certainly encouraged the idea of communion, and made it easier for the Christian rite to gather up into itself all the religious elements which can be contained in a sacrament of this kind. But

³³¹ There is a vast literature on this subject including works of a scholarly, polemical and even conspiratorial nature. Recent works in the first two categories include: Paul Bradshaw, *Early Christian Worship* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1996); Francis Clark, S.J., *Eucharistic Sacrifice and the Reformation* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967); Maxwell E. Johnson, *The Rise of Christian Initiation*; Hans-Josef Klauck, *The Religious Context of Early Christianity*.

³³² W. R. Inge, *Christian Mysticism* (London: Methuen, 1899), p. 349. It should be noted that Dean Inge was not part of the Anglo-Catholic Movement and it is not being asserted here that his views formed part of Anglo-Catholic teaching. What is being claimed is that extensive interest was stimulated by his lectures at Oxford in 1899 on the relationship between Christian mysticism and the pagan Greek Mysteries. Such interest formed part of a much broader renewal of interest in various mystery and magical traditions at the *fin-de-siècle* and might be seen as an endorsement of such interest from a more orthodox Anglican perspective. The suggestion from an authoritative source of a sympathetic link between the mystery religions and Christianity may well have dispelled fears, if not encouraged, an Anglican priest contemplating membership of the Golden Dawn. This does not entail, of course, any proposition that Tractarians and leading figures in the Oxford Movement necessarily held similar views. See James Webb, *The Flight from Reason: The Age of the Irrational* (London: Macdonald & Co., 1971), p. 179 and Alex Owen, *The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern*, pp. 4, 21.

³³³ Inge is referring to Orphic and Gnostic conceptions. *Ibid.* pp. 352-353.

the scheme of ascent... is the greatest contribution of the Mysteries to Christian Mysticism.³³⁴

Inge's view is supported at length by Samuel Angus (1881-1943) in *The Mystery-Religions and Christianity: A Study in the Religious Background of Early Christianity* (1925). Although his work was published a generation later than Inge's *Christian Mysticism*, and therefore not itself a source of influence for this period, it is noteworthy that Angus, who was Professor of New Testament and Historical Theology from 1915 at St. Andrews College, University of Sydney, broadens the extent of the spiritual influence over ancient Christianity to include Mithraic, Egyptian and other mystery cults.³³⁵ This notion of ascent for the purpose of communion with God, and indeed even for becoming godlike through a process of apotheosis, is considered by Angus to be a major contribution made by the Mystery-cults to Christian philosophy.³³⁶ He notes that the language employed by many of the Church Fathers would be intelligible to pagan and Christian alike. Clement of Alexandria, for example, is quoted as follows:³³⁷

If anyone knows himself he shall know God, and by knowing God he shall be made like unto Him'... 'that man with whom the Logos dwells...is made like God and is beautiful... that man becomes God, for God so wills it'... 'the Logos

³³⁴ Inge, *Christian Mysticism*, pp. 354-355.

³³⁵ S. Angus, *The Mystery-Religions and Christianity: A Study in the Religious Background of Early Christianity* (London: John Murray, 1925). The theme of Christianity being dependent in various ways upon the ancient mystery-religions was particularly developed from the late nineteenth century by a number of influential German theologians. The first of these 'religio-historical' theologians was considered to be Otto Pfleiderer (1836-1900). Other influential scholars who developed this view were Richard Reitzenstein (1861-1931) and Wilhelm Boussett (1865-1920). Many of their claims are covered in Angus's work, described by Stephen Neill and Tom Wright as 'the best survey of this whole field in English'. See Neill and Wright, *The Interpretation of the New Testament: 1861-1986* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964, revised 1988), p.168. Neill and Wright describe the influence of the religio-historical theology on British theologians. Their chapter 'Greeks and Christians' (pp. 147-204) is especially useful.

³³⁶ Angus, *The Mystery-Religions and Christianity*, p. 106.

³³⁷ Clement of Alexandria (Titus Flavius Clemens (150-211/216) was venerated by the Roman Catholic Church as a saint until the seventeenth century.

of God became man that from man you might learn how man may become God'... Further, that the true (Christian) Gnostic 'has already become God'.³³⁸

Angus refers also to the teaching of 'the Master of orthodoxy', Methodius (died c. 311), who stated, 'every believer must through participation in Christ be born a Christ', and again to Lactantius (c. 240 – c. 320) affirming that the chaste man will become 'identical in all respects with God'.³³⁹ Through this God-Man conception, Angus notes, 'heaven was opened to candidates from earth' and the philosophic teaching, particularly of the Platonists and Stoics, that man is truly divine was particularly attractive to the early Christian divines. The Stoic saying, 'We are his offspring' is stated by Angus to be one cited with approval by St. Paul.³⁴⁰

What Angus describes as 'the essential unity of man and God' is attributed by him, in the first instance, to 'Orphic mystic speculations as to the Descent and Ascent of the Soul, emphasizing the native divinity of man, and professing to make initiates divine instead of mortal through sacraments which enabled the soul to make the Ascent'.³⁴¹

The deification of man through the transformation of human nature into a Christlike state of being is considered by Inge to have become increasingly important in the early Church and to have grown as 'chiliastic and apocalyptic Christianity faded away'. He attributes its origins to the joint influence of Neo-Platonic philosophy and the

³³⁸ Angus, *The Mystery-Religions and Christianity*, p. 106.

³³⁹ Angus, *The Mystery-Religions and Christianity*, pp. 106-107.

³⁴⁰ Angus, *The Mystery-Religions and Christianity*, p. 108. Angus gives extensive treatment of the pagan 'sacraments', pp. 76-133, many of which he indicates have evident affinity with the sacraments of the Church. An extensive literature exists on this subject including many hostile to Christianity. Examples of the latter include Rev. R. Taylor, *The Diegesis; being a Discovery of the Origin, Evidences, and Early History of Christianity*, sixth edition (London: E. Truelove, n.d., originally 1823); J. M. Robertson, *Pagan Christs* (London: Watts & Co., 1911).

³⁴¹ Angus, *The Mystery-Religions and Christianity*, p. 107. See also Douglas M. Parrott, 'Gnostic and Orthodox Disciples in the Second and Third Centuries', *Nag Hammadi, Gnosticism, and Early Christianity*, edited by Charles W. Hedrick and Robert Hodgson, Jr. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publications, 1986), pp. 193-219.

Mysteries.³⁴² With reference to the pervasive influence this doctrine had on the ancient church Fathers, Inge quotes from Adolf von Harnack's *History of Dogma*.³⁴³

After Theophilus, Irenaeus, Hippolytus, and Origen, the idea of deification is found in all the Fathers of the ancient Church and that in a primary position. We have it in Athanasius, the Cappadocians, Apollinarius, Ephraem Syrus, Epiphanius, and others, as also in Cyril, Sophronius, and late Greek and Russian theologians. In proof of it, Ps. Lxxxii. 6 ('I said, Ye are gods') is very often quoted.³⁴⁴

Inge also notes that Harnack quotes from Athanasius, 'He became man that we might be deified'; and from Pseudo-Hippolytus, 'If, then, man has become immortal, he will be God'.³⁴⁵

This notion of deification or the 'Divine indwelling' was one of the fundamental tenets of the Oxford Movement and is given prominence in the theological writings of every major representative of Tractarianism and the Oxford Movement.³⁴⁶ Rowell notes that the influence of Athanasius and the Greek Fathers is particularly marked in the writings of John Henry Newman, who was 'the leading spirit' of the Oxford Movement.³⁴⁷ Rowell cites Newman's comment in his *Lectures on Justification*, that

³⁴² Inge, *Christian Mysticism*, p. 358.

³⁴³ Inge, *Christian Mysticism*, p. 258. Adolf von Harnack, *History of Dogma* (New York: Dover, 1961, originally published 1886-1889). It should be noted that von Harnack's views were opposed by at least some members of the Community of the Resurrection. In his paper 'Apostolic Church' Fr. Andrew Blair, C.R. rejects the connection posited by von Harnack between the early Christian Church and the Mystery Religions claiming that this view 'has largely been discarded by scholars in recent years'. While acknowledging 'certain superficial resemblances between the practice of some of the Mystery Cults and the Christian Sacramental System', Blair considers that the 'fundamental difference' is the fact that Christianity is 'based on certain quite definite events concerning a definitely historical person'. See *Mirfield Essays in Christian Belief* (London: The Faith Press, 1962), p. 168.

³⁴⁴ Inge, *Christian Mysticism*, p. 258.

³⁴⁵ Inge, *Christian Mysticism*, p. 258.

³⁴⁶ e.g. Newman, Pusey, Keble, Wilberforce. See Rowell, *The Vision Glorious*, pp. 14-15. Rowell notes '...the roots of Tractarian doctrine are patristic not scholastic', op.cit., pp.17-18.

³⁴⁷ John Henry Newman (1801-90), Tractarian leader and later Cardinal. 'Newman's thought was nourished by the Fathers rather than by the Schoolmen'. See 'Newman, John Henry' in *The Oxford*

God has promised us a 'gift' which is 'nothing short of the indwelling in us of God the Father and the Word Incarnate through the Holy Ghost', and that to merit this gift is 'to receive the Divine Presence within us, and be made a Temple of the Holy Ghost'.³⁴⁸

As previously observed by Inge these mysteries surrounding deification cannot be separated from the equal mystery of the Christian sacraments, and principally that of the Eucharist. Rowell refers to John Keble's 1857 tract *On Eucharistical Adoration* where Keble writes of the Eucharist as being 'the very crown and fountain' of God's gifts 'bestowed on each receiver by way of most unspeakable participation and union, that gift which is God Himself, as well as having God for its Giver'.³⁴⁹ The supposed inability to separate the mystery of deification of man from the reception of the Eucharist implied, of course, the presence of God, or Christ, within the Eucharist itself. This important notion of the Real Presence of Christ within the elements of the Eucharist became an important doctrine of the Oxford Movement and in support of it, the views of the Fathers were considered to provide particular strength.³⁵⁰ Equally, however, insofar as the conferring of the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist were considered to confer immortality and the deification, this doctrine exposed its adherents to the charge of degrading these sacraments into magical ceremonies.³⁵¹ This criticism will be examined in more depth subsequently but it may be noted that while it was repudiated by virtually every advocate of the Real Presence, Inge acknowledges that the notion of the sacraments being of the nature of 'miracle or magical performance' is found in many of the Fathers. With reference to Tertullian, Gregory of Nyssa, Basil and

Dictionary of the Christian Church, ed. by F. L. Cross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), pp. 949-950.

³⁴⁸ Rowell, *The Vision Glorious*, p. 14.

³⁴⁹ Rowell, *The Vision Glorious*, p. 18.

³⁵⁰ Rowell, *The Vision Glorious*, p. 18.

³⁵¹ This charge is widely discussed in both the historical and theological literature regarding Anglo-Catholicism and will be given some treatment in the present study. See, for example, Francis Clark, S.J., *Eucharistic Sacrifice and the Reformation*, pp. 342-364; Rowell, *The Vision Glorious*, p. 17; Inge, *Christian Mysticism*, p. 258.

Ignatius, Inge states, ‘... there is no doubt that both Baptism and the Eucharist were supposed to *confer* immortality’.³⁵²

In the context of both the Golden Dawn purportedly being a modern expression of the ancient mysteries, and the focus of Community of the Resurrection upon the Church Fathers, it is useful to consider some of Inge’s comments on St. Clement:

St. Clement of Alexandria tried to do for Christianity what Philo had tried to do for Judaism. His aim is nothing less than to construct a philosophy of religion – a Gnosis, ‘knowledge’, he calls it – which shall ‘initiate’ the educated Christian into the higher ‘mysteries’ of his creed... Especially interesting... is the use of mystery language which we find everywhere in Clement. The Christian revelation is ‘the Divine secrets’, ‘the secret Word’, ‘the Mysteries of the Word’; Jesus Christ is ‘the Teacher of the Divine Mysteries’; the ordinary teaching of the Church is ‘the lesser mysteries’; the higher knowledge of the Gnostic, leading to full initiation, ‘the great mysteries’. Among other ideas which seem to come from the mysteries is the notion of *deification by the gift of immortality*.³⁵³

The knowledge which Clement of Alexandria evidently had of the ancient mysteries is discussed by the scholars Stephen Neill and Tom Wright who observe: ‘It is evident that the Christian Fathers, especially of the second century, were well acquainted with the mysteries. Clement of Alexandria tells us a great deal about them and claims to speak from special knowledge. Christians could not fail to note certain parallels between the sacred meals of the mystery cults and the sacraments of the Christians’.³⁵⁴ Accordingly, the relationship between Christianity and the mystery cults

³⁵² Inge, *Christian Mysticism*, p. 257.

³⁵³ Inge, *Christian Mysticism*, p. 86-88.

³⁵⁴ Neill and Wright, *The Interpretation of the New Testament*, p. 168. These parallels are discussed at some length by Herbert Leslie Stewart in his *A Century of Anglo-Catholicism* where he notes that ‘in the

has been of particular interest to many Christian scholars and, as Neill and Wright have noted, 'The extent of this mystery-influence from the second century had been generally recognized by Christian scholars'.³⁵⁵ Marvin W. Meyer has asserted that Clement of Alexandria 'may well be right' when he claimed that 'Christianity may be understood as a mystery religion'³⁵⁶ and, more recently, Hans-Josef Klauck has observed:

The mystery cults too are an intrinsic element of the non-Jewish horizon of the reception of the Christian message. They too are embraced by the process of the inculturation of Christianity in its initial phase, and they make their own contribution to this process. In my opinion, the Christian doctrine of the sacraments, in the form in which we know it, would not have arisen without this interaction; and Christology too understood how to "take up" the mythical inheritance, purifying it and elevating it.³⁵⁷

Whether or not Inge presented a view of the Church Fathers and the ancient mystery cults which would be shared entirely by current scholars in this field there is little doubt that his *Christian Mysticism*, published in 1899, was influential and, according to the prolific Anglo-Catholic writer Peter F. Anson, may 'have been

language habitually used by the early Christians about their Sacraments one finds term after term whose technical meaning in the contemporary Mysteries is well known... It becomes all the more plausible to argue that the Christian Sacraments were copied from contemporary pagan rites if to the evidence from such striking similarities of detail we can add evidence from Scripture itself that our Lord never founded a ritual of Sacraments at all.' Herbert Leslie Stewart, *A Century of Anglo-Catholicism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1929), p. 212.

³⁵⁵ Neill and Wright, *The Interpretation of the New Testament*, p. 169. It should be noted that the status and extent of this influence is one on which scholarly consensus is lacking, particularly where the influence is portrayed as a relationship of dependency. Scholastic debate has also focused in recent years on the nature of 'Gnosticism' in this regard. See Karen L. King, *What is Gnosticism?* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), pp. 71-109 and Michael Allen Williams, *Rethinking 'Gnosticism': An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

³⁵⁶ Marvin W. Meyer, *The Ancient Mysteries: A Sourcebook of Sacred Text* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987), p. 252.

³⁵⁷ Klauck refers to the Catholic theologian Odo Casel (1886-1948) who considered 'the classical mysteries as a kind of preparatory school for Christianity'. See his *The Religious Context of Early Christianity*, pp. 152-153.

responsible for increasing an interest in the contemplative life among members of the Church of England'.³⁵⁸ Whatever the particular inspiration it was which guided individuals to join the Community of the Resurrection, adherence to the Community Rule alone would have ensured a familiarity, if not a deep knowledge, of the works of the Church Fathers and their views on the Pagan Mysteries. Indeed, as already noted, such familiarity or knowledge, was deeply imbedded within the development of Anglo-Catholic theology through Tractarianism and the Oxford Movement and as especially represented by the work of Keble, Newman and Pusey.

Interest in this question of the influence of the mysteries upon Christianity also arose from a parallel development occurring in theology which has been termed the 'religio-historical' school. One of the first modern scholars to detail the relationship between the ancient mysteries, and specifically the Greek mysteries, and early Christianity was Otto Pfleiderer who, as noted by Neill and Wright, earned the title of 'the father of religio-historical theology in Germany'.³⁵⁹ Pfleiderer posits an especially close relationship of dependency between the theology of the Apostle Paul and the Eleusinian mysteries, particularly with regard to the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist.³⁶⁰

As already noted, the question of this dependency and the problematic relationship between the ancient mystery schools and Church teachings on the

³⁵⁸ Peter F. Anson, *The Call of the Cloister* (London: SPCK, 1964), p. 497. Anson states, 'Mysticism soon became a fashionable craze and much of it was of an extremely superficial character, often tinged with Theosophy,' pp. 497-498. It may be noted that the links between the Golden Dawn and Theosophy were close, with shared membership in many cases. See R. A. Gilbert, *The Golden Dawn and the Esoteric Section* (London: Theosophical History Centre, 1987). Klauck's extremely detailed study regarding the links between Christianity and the Graeco-Roman religions, and the associated modern scholarship tends to support the general conclusions of Inge although he does not refer to him directly. See his *The Religious Context of Early Christianity*,

³⁵⁹ Neill and Wright, *The Interpretation of the New Testament*, p. 168. Otto Pfleiderer (1836-1900).

³⁶⁰ Ibid, p.170. Pfleiderer's *Das Urchristentum, seine Schriften und Lehren, in geschichtlichem Zusammenhang beschrieben* (1887) was translated into English and published under the title *Primitive Christianity* (1906-1911). A later translation by W. Montgomery was published in two volumes as *Primitive Christianity: Its Writings and Teachings in their Historical Connections*, 2 vols (Clifton, NJ: Reference Book Publishers, 1965, reprint of 1911).

sacraments was taken up by a number of major German scholars.³⁶¹ The radical Protestant church historian Adolf von Harnack (1851-1930) was quoted on several occasions by Inge in his *Christian Mysticism*.³⁶² Von Harnack claims that the initiatory and sacramental rites of Christianity are clearly dependent on the ancient Mystery Religions and he blames the apostle Paul for the introduction of alien material (of which he is highly critical) into the Christian faith. Besides Dean Inge's references to von Harnack, the wider question of the Christian-Mystery Religion nexus, as reflected in the writings of von Harnack and of such subsequent influential scholars as Albert Eichhorn, Richard Reitzenstein and Wilhelm Bousset, was clearly of major interest to many Anglo-Catholic theologians in general, and to some of the Community of the Resurrection in particular.³⁶³

Many of these German ideas regarding the pagan influence on Christianity were taken up by the Biblical and patristic scholar Kirsopp Lake in his influential *The Earlier Epistles of St. Paul* which appeared in 1911 and was especially welcome to many Anglo-Catholics.³⁶⁴ In this work Lake argues that the 'course of primitive Christianity was profoundly affected by the influence of the mystery religions'.³⁶⁵ With regard to its reception Neill and Wright observe:

Anglo-Catholics were perhaps a little incautiously jubilant; their view of the Lord's Supper seemed to go back to much earlier times than had generally been supposed, and it appeared now to be possible to quote the Apostle of the Gentiles

³⁶¹ See above, note 302.

³⁶² Inge, *Christian Mysticism*, pp. 344-345.

³⁶³ See for example, Professor C. H. Turner, 'The Faith and Modern Criticism', in *Report of the First Anglo-Catholic Congress* (London: SPCK, 1920), pp. 20-42, and 'The Apostolic Church' by Fr. Andrew Blair C.R., in *Mirfield Essays in Christian Belief*, pp. 157-169. Frere studied the work of von Harnack and other German theologians while at Mirfield and his reactions to these were influential in his own writing: see *Walter Howard Frere*, ed. by C.S. Phillips et.al. (London: Faber & Faber, 1947), pp. 131-134. Although scholars of more recent times are cautious in asserting a dependency relationship between Christianity and the Mystery cults, that there is a relationship, and possibly a close relationship, is widely acknowledged. See, for example, Maxwell E. Johnson, *The Rites of Christian Initiation*, pp. 92-107.

³⁶⁴ See Neill and Wright, *The Interpretation of the New Testament*, pp. 178-179.

³⁶⁵ *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), pp. 779-780.

in favour of a view with which he was imagined by many to have been unfamiliar. Some Protestants were a little unduly alarmed. Wiser heads thought that, whatever view we may come to hold, the Hellenistic mystery-religions are not exactly the allies we would choose to have in defence of our position.³⁶⁶

Chosen allies or not, the focus placed on the views of the ancient Church Fathers by the original Tractarians, and subsequently by leading members of the Oxford Movement, in conjunction with a school of Biblical research which gave emphasis to the formative influence of the mystery religions, undoubtedly created an environment that can be seen as being especially conducive to the esoteric Christianity implicit within the 'revived' magico-mystery school that was the Golden Dawn.

Integral to this putative alliance was the question of the Church sacraments and their supposed parallels within the mystery religions. That various types of mystery cults had sacraments which bore striking resemblances to those of the Christian Church is not under any scholarly dispute although the degree of semblance and the reasons for any similarities are given a wide range of interpretation by ancient and modern scholars alike.³⁶⁷ Within the context of our enquiry, however, the question of how the Church sacraments were regarded by the Anglo-Catholic Fathers is of major importance. Indeed, the theological priority afforded to Sacramental Christianity within the Anglo-Catholic revival was such that it clearly was the foundational pivot around which all of doctrinal beliefs of the Oxford Movement revolved.

³⁶⁶ Ibid. p. 179.

³⁶⁷ As previously noted, a large literature surrounds this subject ranging from the scholarly to the eccentric. A useful bibliography of the former can be found in Hans-Josef Klauck, *Magic and Paganism in Early Christianity* (London: T & T Clark, 2003). An interesting example of the religio-historical school is the once influential *Kyrios Christos* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1970, translation from 1913 German edition).

The Sacraments

Explicit in the writings of virtually all the Tractarians and leading proponents of the Oxford Movement is the belief that the sacraments of the Church are the means by which God communicates with man, the means by which Christ can act as the mediating saviour of man, and the means by which man ascends to God.³⁶⁸ Many of the most important motifs contained within this belief can be seen in Geoffrey Rowell's description of the Tractarian leader Edward B. Pusey:

Pusey was profoundly convinced of the truth of the indwelling Christ... the very heart of his preaching was 'the inculcation of the Great Mystery, expressed in the words to be "in Christ", to be "Members of Christ", "Temples of the Holy Ghost"... As for Newman, the doctrine of deification -- that our calling was no less than to become 'partakers of the Divine nature' -- was central to his (Pusey's) theology... His high theology of baptism, and his strong defence of baptismal regeneration, was because he saw this as the beginning of the transforming life of grace. The sermon on the Eucharist... was resonant with patristic teaching, particularly that of St. Cyril of Alexandria, who uses the (Greek) word... for 'transfiguration' for the eucharistic change... This theology undergirded Pusey's sense of the supernatural life of the Church, its call to holiness... It was this which led Pusey to be so major a player in the revival of the religious life in the Church of England; to be a supporter of SSC (*Societas Sanctae Crucis*); and to place such a high value on the discipline of sacramental confession as that which enabled baptismal life to be sustained and grow.³⁶⁹

³⁶⁸ This view is pervasive throughout Anglo-Catholic literature but, as an example, see Charles Harris, 'The Meaning of the Sacraments' in *Word & Sacraments – The Anglo-Catholic Congress Books, Volume Two 17-36* (London: The Society of SS. Peter & Paul, no date) No. 24, pp. 3-15.

³⁶⁹ Geoffrey Rowell, 'The SSC in context', in William Davage (ed.), *In this Sign Conquer* (London: Continuum, 2006) pp. 4-5. Pusey's sermon referred to here, was his 'The Holy Eucharist a Comfort to the Penitent' which he delivered in Oxford in 1843. See Nigel Yates, *The Oxford Movement and Anglican*

There are Seven Sacraments of the Church and the fact that seven was a sacred number within various ancient religions, and especially Judaism, has not gone unnoticed by scholars and Biblical commentators alike.³⁷⁰ These are: Holy Orders, Matrimony, Baptism, Confirmation, Penance (or Confession), Unction, and the Eucharist or Holy Communion. It is beyond the confines of this study to attempt to survey the history of the Sacraments but it may be noted in passing that following the Reformation many of these had fallen into disuse within the Anglican Church and even those which were retained were considered by the Tractarian Fathers to be regarded and dispensed in a manner which had no doctrinal justification and which neglected the tradition of the Church, especially that of the ancient Church Fathers.³⁷¹ Above all else, the Tractarian reformers and exponents of the Oxford Movement were concerned to restore the use of all these Sacraments in a manner which they believed to exemplify traditional usage. And that usage entailed a categorical belief in the supernatural efficacy of the Sacraments.³⁷²

Ritualism (London: The Chamelion Press, 1983), p. 18. It should be noted that the SSC had an influence on the formation of the CR and, as will be discussed later, may have indirectly influenced some of the organisational aspects of the Golden Dawn.

³⁷⁰ Arthur Hopkinson, *The Seven Sacraments* (London: A.R. Mowbray & Co., 1940), p. 17.

³⁷¹ In 1916 Dr. R. W. Felkin, head of the Golden Dawn faction, then known as the Stella Matutina, delivered a paper to an Anglican church group in New Zealand, entitled 'The Sacramental System'. Felkin argues for the recognition and use of all the seven sacraments within the church. He does not allude to magic but notes 'Baptism and Holy Communion bring about the transmutation of the gross body into a pure vehicle for the spirit, and Confirmation stamps in the soul the seal of the Letter of the Manifold Name of God which that man is to utter by his life, or which will forever remain unexpressed'. Unpublished manuscript in Private Collection, p. 14.

³⁷² One aspect of the primacy of sacramental theology in the Anglo-Catholic ritual revival was, in Peter Davie's view, the notion that 'pastoral care should be rooted in the sacramental life of the parish church'. He notes that 'by abolishing the Mass and a sacrificial priesthood' the Reformation had 'struck at the roots of the medieval pastoral system. The parson who was now allowed to marry and have a family, no longer belonged to a separate caste with distinctive sacramental powers. He ceased to be a mediator between God and man... The people were now taught that grace was available to them in a direct personal relationship with God and not channelled to them through priests or sacraments'. Davie argues that 'the radical change' introduced by the Oxford Movement was restoring the sacramental life of the Church and the role of priest as possessing mediating powers. In his view, much of the restoration of ritual, church decoration and ceremonial which occurred as a result of Anglo-Catholicism, flowed from this fundamental recovery of eucharistic theology and the re-interpretation of 'sacramentalism and pastoral care'. See Davie, *Sacramentalism and Pastoral Care: The Oxford Movement and the Anglican Pastoral Tradition* (London: Anglo-Catholic History Society, 2002), pp. 1-13.

A typical description of this belief can be found in one of the Anglo-Catholic Congress books, 'The Meaning of Sacraments' by Charles Harris, Examining Chaplain to the bishop of Llandaff:

A sacrament, according to Catholic teaching, is not a bare sign or symbol of grace (as it is in many Protestant systems), but rather an efficacious sign, that is to say, a sign which actually effects or conveys the grace of which it is a sign, provided that the proper conditions are observed. Thus *Baptism* and *Penance* actually confer remission of sins, if the recipient is duly penitent. The *Eucharist*, if duly consecrated, and received by a Christian in a state of grace, is an effectual means of spiritually feeding upon Christ... Sacraments, though ministered and received by men, are acts of God. As covenanted channels of divine grace they always proffer the gift which they symbolize, and even when (owing to the impenitence or unbelief of the recipients) they are unable actually to confer it, they always produce some effect... (The) Anglican catechism singles out the two great sacraments of Baptism and the Supper of the Lord as 'generally necessary to salvation'.³⁷³

Harris cites from the works of both Harnack and Kirsopp Lake to support his claim and quotes the latter as follows: 'The Catholic doctrine of the sacraments is much more nearly primitive than the Protestant... Baptism is for Paul universally and unquestionably accepted as a "mystery" or sacrament which works *ex opere operato*... St. Paul clearly means that the Corinthians know quite well that the Eucharist is a rite which really conveys what the heathen erroneously thought to obtain in their sacrificial

³⁷³ Charles Harris, 'The Meaning of Sacraments' in *Word & Sacraments – The Anglo-Catholic Congress Books, Volume Two* 17-36 . pp. 3-5.

meals -- that is, participation in the divine nature'.³⁷⁴ Within another book of the Anglo-Catholic Congress J. F. Briscoe asserts:

The essential action in the Eucharist is the consecration. The priest says the words of Jesus in his name, and by the power of the Holy Ghost the bread and wine become his body and blood. Under the forms of bread and wine is present Jesus himself, God and Man... In Baptism the Holy Ghost puts each separate child born in sin into touch with the Saviour; in the Eucharist the Holy Ghost so changes the bread and wine that the communicants are made partakers of the Saviour's life.³⁷⁵

These views were undoubtedly shared by Frere and, with regard to the Eucharist, can be found at length throughout his *The Anaphora or great Eucharistic Prayer* in which he recounts the known history of the Eucharist from Apostolic times. At various places he comments on the fact that various Church Fathers drew attention to the resemblance between the Christian rite and pagan sacrificial mysteries. For example, Frere refers to the comments of Justin Martyr (100-165) on the parallel between the Eucharist and the Mithraic mysteries.³⁷⁶ Frere states that by means of the priestly consecration of the Eucharistic elements the bread and wine are actually transformed 'to be the Body and blood of Christ'³⁷⁷ and also notes, with evident approval, that the Church Father Tertullian is clear 'as to the Christian sacrifice superseding the ancient

³⁷⁴ Charles Harris, 'The Meaning of Sacraments', pp. 6-7.

³⁷⁵ J. F. Briscoe, 'Holy Communion', *Word & Sacraments – The Anglo-Catholic Congress Books, Volume Two 17-36*, No. 24, pp. 4-5.

³⁷⁶ Frere, *The Anaphora or Great Eucharistic Prayer: An Eirenic Study in Liturgical History* (London: SPCK, 1938), pp. 30-33. Peter Davie also cites several examples and in particular notes that 'above all' the prominent Oxford Movement leader John Keble 'followed...the Greek Fathers in his use of analogies from nature to point us to spiritual realities. Nature is sacramental—the visible world is transparent to the invisible—and the sacramentalism of nature points to the sacraments of the Church. For Keble poetry and doctrine are alike in pointing to transcendent realities that cannot be fully understood in rational terms'. See Davie, *Sacramentalism and Pastoral Care*, pp. 8-9.

³⁷⁷ Frere, *The Anaphora*, pp. 27-28.

ones' and that Tertullian 'argues for the real effects of Christ's words as transforming'.³⁷⁸

From these descriptions of the Sacraments, and indeed from a large body of similar Anglo-Catholic literature, it is evident that from the Tractarians onwards the predominant view of Anglo-Catholic theology was entirely at one with Patristic theology in holding that the Sacraments, when administered in ways considered to be traditional, actually conferred certain effects by a supernatural agency.³⁷⁹ Thus Baptism initiated a Christian neophyte by actually bringing that person into a genuine relationship with the supernatural being God, via the action of the supernatural being of Christ. In receiving the Eucharist, properly consecrated by a priest, a person actually encountered what was termed the 'Real Presence' of Christ and ate and drank of Christ's body and blood. Moreover, although considerable theological debate has ensued, and still ensues, over the nature of *ex opere operato*, it is clear that these supernatural effects are the direct result of particular actions being performed by a suitably qualified performer, that is, a priest. This is the case even where it is argued that the recipient of the Eucharist must be of a certain state of mind.

This belief invites the almost inevitable claim that to administer the Sacraments is to perform an act of magic. Inge's acknowledgment that this is the view of many of the Church Fathers has already been noted. It is a claim that has exposed both the Roman and Anglo-Catholic churches to attacks from Protestants and secular critics alike.³⁸⁰ In his *Myth, Magic and Morals, a Study of Christian Origins*, for example, Oxford scholar F. C. Conybeare writes:

³⁷⁸ Frere, *The Anaphora*, p. 37.

³⁷⁹ Geoffrey Rowell provides numerous instances of the extensive influence of the Greek Fathers, and especially that of Clement, upon the views held on the sacraments by the Tractarians in his *The Vision Glorious*, particularly pp. 8-18.

³⁸⁰ Rowell observes that Renn Dickson Hampden (1793-1868), 'whose appointment as Regius Professor of Divinity the Tractarians so opposed' argued in his Bampton Lectures that 'sacramental theology had been based on a "theory of secret influences", and suggested that "the general belief in Magic in the early ages of the Church" was sufficient to account for the acceptance of such a theory'. See Rowell, *The Vision Glorious*, pp. 77-78.

When a priest undertakes by certain movements of his hands, by use of certain invocations, of certain names and forms of words, which must on no account be varied, to impart to bread and wine, to water, oil, salt, bells, or what not, certain occult properties and values which they had not before and could not otherwise gain, he moves in the realm of pure magic.³⁸¹

Conybeare's objectivity must be weighed against the fact that his book was intended to be an attack against Christianity and that for some years he was a member of the Rationalist Press Association.³⁸² Moreover, the question of what constitutes magic is clearly relevant. Nevertheless, in the sense of at least the 'higher' magic or 'theurgy' previously noted it is difficult to see how his accusation does not have considerable force, not merely with regard to the actions of the priest administering the sacrament but also to the recipient of it. St. Cyril of Jerusalem (c.315-386), who is treated favourably by Frere in his work on the Eucharist, has the following advice to the newly baptized on how to receive the Eucharist in an appropriately reverent manner:

So when you come forward, do not come with arm extended or fingers parted. Make your left hand a throne for your right, since your right hand is about to become a king. Cup your palm and receive in it Christ's body, saying in response *Amen*. Then carefully bless your eyes with a touch of the holy body, and consume it, being careful to drop not a particle of it. For to lose any of it is clearly like losing part of your own body... After partaking of Christ's body, go to the chalice of his blood. Do not stretch out your hands for it. Bow your head and say *Amen* to show your homage and reverence, and sanctify yourself by

³⁸¹ F. C. Conybeare, *Myth, Magic and Morals* (London: Watts & Co., 1909) p. xiv.

³⁸² *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, p. 340.

partaking also of Christ's blood. While your lips are still moist with his blood, touch it with your hands and bless your eyes, forehead, and other organs of sense.³⁸³

The modern scholar Paul Bradshaw has observed, in commenting on this passage, that for St. Cyril, the eucharistic elements when consumed 'are also regarded as objects of power which can be used to confer blessing on a person's body and protect it against evil and sickness.'³⁸⁴

The charge of 'magic' was, and presumably still is, unwelcome to many, if not most, exponents of Anglo-Catholicism. Charles Harris claims that the charge 'is based largely on misunderstanding'.³⁸⁵ Essentially his denial of the validity of the accusation is based on his claim that whereas the effects of magic are automatically bestowed on all persons, 'regardless of their moral qualities', sacraments produce their 'wholesome effects only in those who receive them worthily' Harris admits that theologians have remarked on the 'supposed close affinity (or even identity of principle) between the Christian sacraments and the heathen mysteries' but dismisses these similarities as superficial, claiming:

In essence the mysteries were charms rather than sacraments. True, they promised fellowship with the gods and a blessed immortality to those whom the priests initiated, but initiation was offered to all, even to the worst characters, such as prostitutes and brothel-keepers'.³⁸⁶

³⁸³ Mystagogical Catechesis 5.21-2 (AIR, pp94-95.) Quoted in Bradshaw *Early Christian Worship*, p. 65.

³⁸⁴ Bradshaw, *Early Christian Worship*, p. 65.

³⁸⁵ Harris, 'The Meaning of the Sacraments', p. 14.

³⁸⁶ Harris, 'The Meaning of the Sacraments', p. 14.

It can be seen that in defending the Church against practising magic this is not an especially strong argument. Putting aside the issue of whether or not the heathen mysteries did in fact admit any person to initiation, it raises the question of whether the restriction of heathen initiation to morally worthy persons would then remove the charge of magic and lead to an equation of the Christian and heathen mysteries. Moreover, the very admiration frequently expressed by the patristic theologians for the mystery religions and the role of the pagan sacraments, along with the patristic adoption of pagan locutions in describing the Christian mysteries, undermine this criticism as they do also the claim that the 'fundamental difference' between the mystery religions and Christianity inheres in the former being based on 'semi-mythical heroes' and the latter on certain quite definite events concerning a definite historical person'.³⁸⁷

It will be noted that within Harris' defence of the Sacraments against the charge of 'magic' there is considerable ambivalence with regard to the equivalent in the ancient mysteries. The claim is not being advanced by Harris that the heathen sacraments do not work nor that, if they do work, this occurs in an entirely different manner from that of the Christian mysteries. The implication is rather that the Christian sacraments, while similar, or even involving 'identity of principle', were superior to the ancient mysteries and replaced them. This notion is found throughout Dean Inge's *Christian Mysticism* and he asserts that the aim of such writers as Clement, Dionysius the Areopagite and 'other Platonising writers from the third to the fifth century' was to prove that the Church offers a mysteriosophy which includes all the good elements of the old mysteries without their corruptions. Observing that the Greek mysteries were 'perhaps survivals of an old-world ritual, based on a primitive kind of Nature-Mysticism' Inge writes, 'A doctrine or custom is not necessarily un-Christian because it is "Greek" or "pagan"'.³⁸⁸

³⁸⁷ Fr. Andrew Blair, 'The Apostolic Church' in *Mirfield Essays in Christian Belief*, p. 168.

³⁸⁸ Inge, *Christian Mysticism*, pp. 349-350.

A very similar view is advanced in Evelyn Underhill's *Worship*, the manuscript of which was read and corrected by Bishop Frere and to whom, Underhill says in her preface, 'I owe much to help from my dear and kind friend... whose work is an inspiration to all who dare to write of worship'.³⁸⁹ Underhill, it will be recalled, was a member of Waite's successor Order of the Golden Dawn, and proceeded through at least the first four ritualistic grades of the Order. She notes that a sacrament 'is a significant deed, a particular use of temporal things, which gives to them the value of eternal things and thus incorporates and *conveys* spiritual reality'. Underhill claims that a valid sacrament 'always leaves the situation different from what it was before' and, with regard to what the essence of the sacramental action consists, she quotes the Archbishop of York (subsequently Archbishop of Canterbury) William Temple, that it is the 'actual conveyance of spiritual meaning and power by a material process'.³⁹⁰ Moreover, she sees the Christian sacraments as being the development of what 'is already seen in embryo, in those primitive rites of initiation and transition, those sacred meals and purifications, which Dr. Marett has well named the "Sacraments of Simple Folk"'.³⁹¹

Recent scholarly works on Anglo-Catholicism have emphasized what Jeremy Morris, for example, has described as 'the centrality of eucharistic theology to Anglo-Catholicism's understanding of the Christian Church'.³⁹² Morris also makes the generally agreed observation that 'the high plateau' of Anglo-Catholic influence began 'in the 1920s and 1930s' before starting its decline in 'the late 1950s or early 60s'.³⁹³ In this context therefore, Underhill's views on the supernatural virtue and efficacy of the

³⁸⁹ Evelyn Underhill, *Worship* (London: Nisbet & Co, 1946, reprint of 1936), p. xv and p. xiii.

³⁹⁰ Underhill, *Worship*, p. 43.

³⁹¹ Underhill, *Worship*, p. 43.

³⁹² Jeremy Morris, *Communicants' Guilds in the Late 19th Century: Implanting Anglo-Catholicism in the Parish*, p. 11. This emphasis can be noted, for example, in the works of Peter Nockles, Nigel Yates and John Shelton Reed and it is ubiquitous within Anglo-Catholic theological literature. Yates has noted the specialised Anglo-Catholic society, the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament, founded in 1862 'to stimulate eucharistic devotion' and which had various parochial wards. See Nigel Yates, *Leeds and the Oxford Movement*, p. 56.

³⁹³ Morris, *Communicants' Guilds in the Late 19th Century*, p. 2.

eucharist are important because, besides her friendship with Frere, and the fact that her *Worship* was first published in 1936, by the end of the 1920s she was becoming increasingly influential as a popular writer on religious themes and a contributor to studies of the Oxford Movement.³⁹⁴ It is worth noting also that in 1927 she presented a paper entitled 'Sacraments and Mysticism' to the Anglo-Catholic Congress in London which was entirely devoted to the subject, 'The Holy Eucharist'.³⁹⁵

Underhill describes the sacramental elements in terms that would apply equally well to the ritual objects and appurtenances employed by members of the Golden Dawn in their ceremonies:

Thus we may say in a general sense, that sacraments convey the numinous, establish a relation between human and Divine, more precisely and more effectively than the most august of symbols; for their contact with our life is more complete. This conveyance is achieved by means of tokens; objects or actions set apart for a special office, and therefore taking rank as effective instruments. These tokens constitute a sacred currency which not only signifies but also conveys to those who take it seriously the wealth for which it stands. Like any other coinage, it may and often does become debased: yet still it is representative of the spiritual gold... For the universality of sacraments is not, as is sometimes thought, a witness to the Divine Immanence. It is rather a proclamation of the Divine Transcendence; a man's realization of the gap between Creator and creature -- a certain tragic disharmony -- and the need of a bridge, an ordained path along

³⁹⁴ This is not to suggest that her views advanced a new position on what Morris has termed 'eucharistic theology'. Indeed they were broadly representative of the views of most Tractarians and Oxford Movement theologians. In terms of her contributions to the study of the Oxford Movement see Margaret Cropper's *The Life of Evelyn Underhill: An Intimate Portrait of the Groundbreaking Author of 'Mysticism'* (Vermont: Skylight Paths, 2003), p.194 and Dana Greene, *Evelyn Underhill: Artist of the Infinite Life* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1991). A review of Underhill's influence on both Anglo-Catholic and 'mainstream' Anglican thought can found in *Evelyn Underhill: Anglican Mystic* by A.M. Ramsay and A.M. Allchin, (Oxford: SLG Press., 1996, Second impression 2002).

³⁹⁵ Evelyn Underhill, 'Sacraments and Mysticism' in *Report of the Anglo-Catholic Congress 1927*, (London: Society of SS. Peter & Paul, 1927), pp. 43-50.

which the Eternal Perfect may penetrate Time and the things of time. Here man is pressed by God immanent to prepare the matrix; but it is God transcendent Who pours into it His quickening love to cleanse, feed, and transform. In the genuine sacrament, this action and this penetration must be so complete, so entirely independent of the worshipper's uneven religious sensibility, that here men can be sure of laying hold of a spiritual reality truly present in its own right; awaiting their recognition, but in no way conditioned by it. In other words, it must be effective *ex opere operato* if it is to meet the creature's deepest need.³⁹⁶

In their brief study of Underhill, A.M. Ramsey and A.M. Allchin note that the theological position taken by Underhill in *Worship* is 'far more liberal and traditional than is the viewpoint reflected in (her) *Mysticism* twenty-five years before' and that her attitude differs widely 'from the aggressive triumphalist style of much Anglo-Catholicism in this interwar period'.³⁹⁷ It is beyond the scope of this study to establish whether or not this assessment of Underhill's views on sacramental theology is sound but it seems unquestionably certain that they would have, at the very least, reflected views embraced by members of the Community of the Resurrection. Undoubtedly also, they would have found a receptive audience in the Reverend Francis N. Heazell who produced a series of instructional booklets on the sacraments for newly baptized (adult) and confirmed members of the Church. In the section entitled 'The Holy Communion', where Heazell provides guidance on the protocol for receiving the Eucharist, he writes:

Of all the Church's Sacraments, the Holy Communion is the greatest and the most precious. In this holy Sacrament man is brought into the closest union with his

³⁹⁶ Underhill, *Worship*, pp. 44-46.

³⁹⁷ Ramsay and Allchin also praise in particular the balance within *Worship* in terms of avoiding a partisan and eclectic approach and speak of 'the two fine chapters devoted to the Eucharist'. Ramsay and Allchin, *Evelyn Underhill: Anglican Mystic*, pp. 24-25.

Lord and Saviour... Our Lord is present in the Blessed Sacrament that we may receive Him as our Spiritual Food... He comes to be a living power within us making us grow gradually more like Himself... He comes to cleanse and sanctify also our bodies and to fit them for the glorious resurrection at the Last Day.³⁹⁸

Rev. Francis Heazell, from St. Michael's Vicarage, Croydon, appears to have been considered an authority on Eastern Orthodoxy and had many dealings with the Archbishop of Canterbury at Lambeth from the late 1890s to the 1930s. He was the Organising Secretary for the Archbishop of Canterbury's Assyrian Missions, made several official visits to the Assyrian Church, and edited scholarly material for publication.³⁹⁹ Heazell had close connections to the Community of the Resurrection but of major interest for the present purpose is his relationship with the Golden Dawn. Heazell was not merely a member of the magical Order but actually 'a Ruling Chief' of the Golden Dawn Amoun Temple in London. This required him to be admitted to one of the highest, and rarely achieved, Grades of the Golden Dawn known as 'Magister Templi' and part of the so-called 'Third Order'. In the symbolic sense at least, this involved being part of the Kabbalistic Supernal Triad where a person was believed to dwell in the presence of, and even become part of, a triune God, sometimes, but not invariably, identified with the Christian Trinity. Known within the Order as Greatly Honoured Frater Evocatus Paratus, Heazell achieved this Grade on 29 May 1912, some three years having passed since his initiation.⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁸ F. N. Heazell, *Confirmation Instructions* (London: The Faith Press, n.d.), unpaginated and in separate instructions.

³⁹⁹ F.N. Heazell & Margoliouth (eds.) *Kurds & Christians* (London: Wells Gardner, 1913).

⁴⁰⁰ Details of Heazell's membership are contained in R. A. Gilbert *The Golden Dawn Companion*; George Mills Harper, *Yeats's Golden Dawn*; Harper, *Letters to W.B. Yeats, Volume 2* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977); and in an unpublished membership roll held in a private collection.

The characteristics of this elevated magical Grade, in terms of the notion of ascent and its implications for Anglo-Catholic belief, will be examined subsequently.⁴⁰¹ For the present it is important to examine more closely how the sacramental theology of Anglo-Catholicism provided a receptive environment for the magical theurgy of the Golden Dawn.

‘Raising the old-world ritual to a higher and holier use’

The notion that the ancient mysteries, and especially the Greek mysteries, in their various forms were individually and collectively some form of precursor to the Christian mysteries has already been noted. This view was addressed in a somewhat different way in the highly influential but controversial *Lux Mundi*, ‘the incarnationalism of which so influenced the ethos’ of the Community of the Resurrection.⁴⁰² In the *Lux Mundi* essay ‘The Incarnation in relation to Development’, it is asserted by J.R. Illingworth that Christianity, and the Incarnation in particular, were the fulfilment of Greek philosophy and religion. Arguing against an interpretation which would make Christianity merely ‘the natural product of the different religions and philosophies which were current in the world at the time of its appearing’, Illingworth proposes that the Incarnation of Christianity was the completion of the goal of Judaism and Greek philosophy.

But no sooner was the Incarnation accomplished, than it flooded the whole past of Greece no less than Judaea with a new light. This was what it all meant; this was what it unwittingly aimed at; the long process of dialectic and prophecy were here

⁴⁰¹ See Chapter Nine.

⁴⁰² Alan Wilkinson, *The Community of the Resurrection*, p.10. It should be noted that *Lux Mundi* was controversial even amongst some members of the Community. Amongst numerous concerns was that raised over Gore’s agreement with biblical critics that Christ was mistaken in assuming Psalm 110 was Davidic. See Wilkinson, *op.cit.*, p. 26.

united in their goal... The pre-Christian religions were the age-long prayer. The Incarnation was the answer... In short, the history of the pre-Christian religion is like that of pre-Christian philosophy, a long preparation for the Gospel. And from this point of view the many pagan adumbrations of Christian doctrine, similarities of practice, coincidences of ritual, analogies of phrase and symbol, fall naturally into place. The fathers and early missionaries were often perplexed by these phenomena, and did not scruple to attribute them to diabolic imitation... But all this is unphilosophical, for in the light of evolution the occurrence of such analogies is a thing to be expected; while to the eye of faith they do but emphasize the claim of Christianity to be universal, by shewing that it contains in spiritual summary the religious thoughts and practices and ways of prayer and worship, not of one people only, but of all the races of men.⁴⁰³

In the sense that Christianity was portrayed as both the summary of previous pagan religions, and indeed the fulfilment of those religions, it is not difficult to see how the syncretic belief system of the Order of the Golden Dawn could be viewed as being entirely consistent with Illingworth's description. For although the rituals of the Grades of the First Order embraced spiritual symbols taken from what was believed to be those of various ancient mystery cults, the Golden Dawn was not attempting to revive these ancient religions. The members did not believe themselves to be adherents of Mithraism, Zoroastrianism, Jewish mysticism or the ancient Egyptian religion. But they did believe that by participating in rituals which utilised the symbols and invocations of those religions they were acquiring the spiritual understanding and wisdom which they believed had previously been imparted in these mysteries. But this was not an end in itself. It was part of a journey of spiritual ascent and advancement which began in an

⁴⁰³ J.R. Illingworth, 'The Incarnation in relation to Development' in *Lux Mundi* (London: John Murray, twelfth edition, 1891), pp. 147-151.

ostensibly pagan environment (but not, in Inge's phrase 'a necessarily un-Christian' environment) and would lead directly to the Rosicrucian Second Order where they would encounter and take part in ritual symbolism pertaining to the death and resurrection of a man become Godlike, or a God incarnate.

To be fully God and fully Man was nothing less than the ambition of the aspiring Adepts of the Golden Dawn.⁴⁰⁴ The most devout Christian adherent of the Order could thus refer at will to the example of his Patristic forbearers, as has been previously noted, and agree that 'every believer must through participation in Christ be born a Christ'. By means of the Order *modus operandi* 'heaven was opened to candidates from earth'.⁴⁰⁵ In his *Divine Immanence* J.R. Illingworth, who was one of the contributors to *Lux Mundi*, speaks of the incorporation into Christianity of the sacred symbols of Jewish and Graeco-Roman worship as 'raising the old-world ritual to a higher and holier use'.⁴⁰⁶ While there is no direct or extant surviving evidence to prove that this was a justification actually used by Christian clergy participating in Golden Dawn rituals it seems probable that similar reasoning would have guided their actions.

The subtitle of *Lux Mundi* is 'A Series of Studies in the Religion of the Incarnation' and it was edited by Charles Gore who, amongst his enormous range of accomplishments, was the founder of the Community of the Resurrection.⁴⁰⁷ Gore has

⁴⁰⁴ See Virginia Moore, *The Unicorn*, p. 395; G.H. Frater D.D.C.F.(i.e. Macgregor Mathers), 'Flying Roll No. X – Concerning the Symbolism of Self-Sacrifice and Crucifixion contained in the 5=6 Grade' in *Astral Projection, Ritual Magic, and Alchemy* ed. by Francis King, pp.138-139. The sixth 'obligation' of the Second Order Grade of Adeptus Minor states. 'I further promise and swear that with the Divine Permission I will, from this day forward, apply myself to the Great Work -- which is, to purify and exalt my Spiritual Nature so that with the Divine Aid I may at length attain to be more than human, and thus gradually raise and unite myself to my higher and Divine Genius, and that in this event I will not abuse the great power entrusted to me'. Israel Regardie, *The Golden Dawn* 4 vols, Vol. II, 214.

⁴⁰⁵ See Angus, *The Mystery-Religions and Christianity*, p. 108.

⁴⁰⁶ J.R. Illingworth, *Divine Immanence* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1898), p. 141.

⁴⁰⁷ See Alan Wilkinson, *The Community of the Resurrection*, pp. 1-37 and 'Charles Gore: Radical Theologian and Defender of the Faith', a lecture given by the Reverend Prebendary Dr. Paul Avis to the Anglo-Catholic History Society on 14 October 2003 (privately printed by the Anglo-Catholic History Society, 2003); A. M. Ramsay, *From Gore to Temple* (London: Heinemann, 1935). Wilkinson has also noted that Gore 'as editor of *Lux Mundi* [...] became the leader of a new phase of Anglo-Catholicism which fused the Greek Fathers, Tractarianism with elements of Broad Church theology'. See Alan Wilkinson, *A Tale of Two Monasteries: Kelham & Mirfield* (Oxford: Anglo-Catholic History Society, 2009), p. 2.

been described as being heavily influenced by Platonism and his 'veneration of the Greek Fathers'. These influences, it has been suggested, along with the emphasis placed on the Incarnation, may have originated with the acclaimed New Testament scholar Brooke F. Westcott who taught at Harrow School which Gore attended.⁴⁰⁸ In his doctrinal works Westcott was particularly interested in the implications of the Incarnation and the Resurrection and 'sought to put the Divine Person of God made Man... on the centre of Christian experience.'⁴⁰⁹

Gore wrote and taught extensively on the subject of Incarnation and popularised the phrase that the Sacraments are 'the extension of the Incarnation.'⁴¹⁰ Undoubtedly his views would have been studied closely by members of the Community he founded and by his successor as Superior, W. T. Frere. If it is possible for Man to become God and for the Infinite supernatural to become merged, or at one with, the finite natural in a particular time and place, then it follows that there are no logical, as opposed to

⁴⁰⁸ Alan Wilkinson, *The Community of the Resurrection*, pp. 4-5. It is of interest to note that at Cambridge University Westcott was a member of a 'Ghost Society' which has been stated to be the forerunner of The Society for Psychical Research which in its later history had links with Golden Dawn members. It has also been claimed that while an undergraduate Westcott founded the 'Hermes Club'. These claims have recently formed part of the basis for conspiratorial criticisms advanced by some 'Christian fundamentalists' (e.g. Barbara Aho) that Westcott, along with the scholars J. B. Lightfoot (1828-1889) and F. J. A. Hort (1828-1892) 'secretly' incorporated Gnostic and occult themes, taken from such Church Fathers as Clement, into their critical editions of the New Testament. See W. H. Salter, *The Society for Psychical Research, an Outline of its History* (London: London Society for Psychical Research, 1948), pp. 5-6; Alan Gauld, *The Founders of Psychical Research* (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), p. 77; Barbara Aho, 'The Nineteenth Century: The Legacy of Westcott & Hort', <http://www.watch.pair.com/occult.html> [accessed 10 October 2007].

⁴⁰⁹ David Newsome has claimed 'Westcott's Christianity was a compound of Plato, St. John and Origen' and that 'The Platonic allusions in Westcott's writings are so many that it would be impossible to enumerate them'. He argues that incarnational theology, with strong Platonic roots, was influential at both Cambridge and Oxford. The former he attributes to the significant influence of Coleridge and the English theologian Julius Charles Hare (1795-1855), both of whom were heavily influenced by German thought and speculation, and both of whom, in turn, 'profoundly influenced' the prominent English theologian and Platonist Frederick Denison Maurice (1805-1872). Hort and Westcott owed much of their theological thinking to Maurice. Newsome states that at Oxford, however, theologians such as Charles Gore and Henry Scott Holland (1847-1918) received 'their formal instruction in Platonism and Hegelianism from the Hegelian philosopher T. H. Green (1836-1882) which influenced the development of their incarnational theology. See David Newsome, *Two Classes of Men: Platonism & English Romantic Thought* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975), pp. 82-83; 'Westcott, Brook Foss', *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, pp. 1448-1449. The significant influence which T. H. Green and his Hegelian teaching had on Gore and the *Lux Mundi* school is discussed in greater depth subsequently. 'Theologically he (Green) owed much to F. D. Maurice'. See 'Thomas Hill Green', *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, pp. 581-582.

⁴¹⁰ 'Incarnation', *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, pp. 684-685. In his *Divine Immanence*, Illingworth states, 'When therefore theologians called baptism and the eucharist extensions of the Incarnation, ... they were literally and accurately correct', p. 142.

doctrinal, grounds for assuming that the phenomenon cannot be repeated indefinitely in bread and wine, or even in other finite bodies.⁴¹¹ In this sense, the Sacraments can indeed be seen as ‘the extension of the Incarnation’. Equally, however, and putting aside all questions of doctrine, there is no logical reason why the same should not apply to other religious systems involving their equivalent sacraments. If the invocation entailed by the *Anaphora* conveys or confers a supernatural quality to the Eucharistic elements in the form of an ‘incarnation’ then why should not another type of ostensibly non-Christian invocation of a supernatural power, appropriately performed, not equally bestow a supernatural quality to, for example, a talisman, wand or symbolic image? ⁴¹² In the circumstance where other ceremonial invocations are not merely viewed as being ‘not necessarily un-Christian’ but as part of a legitimate and even sacred precursor to the final form of the Christian mysteries, at least part of the attraction of the Golden Dawn mysteries to some of those clergy persuaded by the doctrines of the Incarnation and the Sacraments, is not difficult to see.⁴¹³

The doctrine of the Incarnation, and its extension into sacramental theology, is linked to significant issues of Space and Time. It has been claimed that ‘the Incarnation is a special exemplification of the general problems of Time and Eternity, of Finitude and Infinity’.⁴¹⁴ This complex issue has been addressed by philosophers and theologians in a number of ways over a considerable period of time but some Anglo-Catholic scholars in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries expressed the doctrine in terms of the principle of immanence, that is, the omnipresence of God in the universe

⁴¹¹ This is essentially what F. G. Lee claims in his *The Directorium Anglicanum*, p. ix, as noted above.

⁴¹² For examples of Golden Dawn ‘consecrations’ of magical implements see Regardie, *The Golden Dawn*, Vol. III, Book Four, pp. 37-45, 51-78.

⁴¹³ In his doctrinal work *The Gospel of Life* B. F. Westcott devotes considerable space to discussing pre-Christian religions which he comments on favourably insofar as they played a part in ‘the training of humanity for Christ’. He notes, ‘If we understand what whole races of men were feeling after, we shall have a clue to the discovery of mysteries for which we...should not otherwise have sought’. See Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Gospel of Life: Thoughts Introductory to the Study of Christian Doctrine* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1892), pp. 112, 121-122.

⁴¹⁴ ‘Incarnation’, *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, p. 685.

and 'the essential relatedness of man and God'.⁴¹⁵ In terms of the Eucharist and other sacraments the application of the notion of immanence can be seen in Coghill's paper 'The Presence of God in Nature' which appears in the published report of the 1927 Anglo-Catholic Congress:

To the Christian the complete and absolute example of the sacramental principle in operation is the Incarnation of Christ. In that unique event the Will and Presence of God was really, wholly, and exclusively embodied in the flesh and blood of a man, without in any sense abating the omnipresence of God, which... should be taken as meaning the simultaneous presentation of all facts in Time and Space to God who is Love without or beyond Time or Space... And the explanation of how we can grasp the fact that the baptism in Jordan, the wedding in Cana of Galilee, the anointing of Jesus, the commission given to the Apostles, the forgiveness of sins, the sacrifice on Calvary, and all the other benefits of the Incarnation, which to us are in time past, are, in Eternity, that Spaceless Timelessness... present to God for ever, for God needs no book and no recording angel, having the whole expanse of all that ever was and is and ever shall be eternally present to him. Our Sacraments, memorials in form, are by the will of God and promise of Christ *identified with* their prototypes which are present to God, though past for us. For this reason Christ said: 'This *is* my Body, and this *is* my Blood; do this in remembrance of me'. Thus the sacrifice of the Mass is not a new sacrifice, but is identified with the original complete, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice of Christ, in Time, on Calvary, by the supernatural sacramental means of transcending Time and Space (the mere counters by which we feel and think) and

⁴¹⁵ Ibid. See also Rev. Aubrey Moore, 'The Christian Doctrine of God', in *Lux Mundi*, pp. 41-81.

through which God can co-operate with our Faith at his pleasure, for the reception of the benefits of the Incarnation of his Son.⁴¹⁶

The concept of immanence employed in this manner by Coghill provides a parallel basis for members of the Golden Dawn seeking to explain how ancient religions and their gods can become, in a sense, reactivated and invoked when the civilisations in which they functioned, and indeed detailed knowledge of the religions themselves, no longer exist. Because God can be found wherever one seeks Him, and can transcend Time and Space, and can be viewed as eternally present in sacraments and symbols, the particular expression of God identified with a specific culture and civilisation can be effectively invoked if one knows the appropriate way of doing so, as in the case of the Eucharist or, so the Golden Dawn adherents believed, the gods of Egypt and of the Greek mysteries.

For a number of Christian theologians, however, the danger of this position is that it can be hard to distinguish from a type of Christian pantheism, and, as has been observed, it is particularly prone to this tendency when 'held without the parallel doctrine of Divine transcendence'.⁴¹⁷ Within the eclectic system of the Golden Dawn, embracing as it did Neo-Platonic, Hermetic, and Kabbalistic themes, this danger was certainly present yet averted because the entire focus of the progressive Grades of ritual was that of ascending to higher states of spiritual consciousness to the point that the Spirit of the individual man or woman transcended matter and became one with the Spirit of Christ (and the pagan equivalents), and also with the Spirit of the Divine

⁴¹⁶ N. K. H. A. Coghill, 'The Sacraments of the Church and the Presence of God in Nature', *Report of the Anglo-Catholic Congress 1927* (London: The Society of SS. Peter & Paul, 1927), pp. 32-43.

⁴¹⁷ 'Immanence', *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, p. 681. The type of esoteric Christianity espoused by Anna Kingsford (1846-1888) and Edward Maitland (1824-1897) was described by them as 'Christian pantheism'. Kingsford was an important figure in the history of both the modern Theosophical movement and the Golden Dawn and her role will be discussed at greater length subsequently.

Creator.⁴¹⁸ While resembling more the belief system entitled panentheism, which has God creating, interpenetrating and animating every aspect of nature, yet also transcending the universe in space and time, Golden Dawn theory extended this even further because it included the notion of ‘correspondence’, described by Antoine Faivre as one of the ‘four fundamental elements’ of esotericism.⁴¹⁹

Because of the theory that there is correspondence between all parts of the universe, and more particularly because of the ‘ancient idea of microcosm and macrocosm’ applied to the relationship between man and God (‘Man is created in God’s image’), the panentheistic attributes of God noted above are equally applicable to Man, or at least to a man who has ascended all the Christian Kabbalistic Grades of progressive stages of spirituality. In this sense, to use modern terminology, one could say that each human being contains the DNA of Christ, or God, which will express itself in manifestation given the appropriate conditions. And it was these conditions which the Golden Dawn was purported to provide.⁴²⁰

For a member of the Community of the Resurrection, or indeed for any keen Anglo-Catholic, well read in the writings of the ^{Fathers}~~Patristic~~, the notion of man becoming God would be very familiar. The aim of endeavouring to ‘reproduce the life of the first Christians’ by following Clement’s advice to ‘know himself’ and therefore ‘to know God’ and ‘be made like unto him’ would presumably have preoccupied the thoughts of

⁴¹⁸ The revived Golden Dawn groups, which have featured in the last forty years and which eschew any categorisation as ‘Christian’, may be described with some accuracy as embracing naturalistic pantheism. As an example, the modern Rosicrucian group Builders of the Adytum, which was founded in 1922 by the American Golden Dawn member, Paul Foster Case, contains the following in its ‘Qabalistic Sunday Service’ ritual: ‘Beloved Brethren, let us lift our hearts together, to acknowledge the one source of all life, as being the true centre of our beingness. Oh Thou, within Whom all creation resides, where art thou not? We see Thee in the sunrise and sunset; glowing through the Heavens, radiating from the stars; weaving Thy robes of mystery in the lakes and meadows; flashing Thy brilliant hues in bewildering arrays of splendour; singing the melody of creation through flying, creeping and walking garbs of Thy Beingness. Teach us, we pray, to know in ever greater measure that it is Thou who sees through our eyes, hears through our ears, speaks through our lips. Teach us to know that whatever we touch – this is Holy ground’. Official BOTA ritual, Private Collection.

⁴¹⁹ ‘Panentheism’ was a term coined by Karl C.F. Krause (1781-1832). See Antoine Faivre, *Access to Western Esotericism*, p. 10.

⁴²⁰ Because of the eclectic nature of the Golden Dawn teachings, the transmutation from Man to God was described in many different ways, including terms borrowed from Neo-Platonism, alchemy, Gnosticism, Kabbalah, mysticism, Orthodox Christianity, nineteenth and early twentieth-century psychology.

many ardent Anglo-Catholics.⁴²¹ But how to achieve this? The restoration of the 'Church's magic' and the Holy sacraments through the Anglo-Catholic revival was evidently thought to be the supernaturally inspired means of achieving this, but was it sufficient? Was not something else required in order to truly 'know oneself' and 'know God'?

For some of those Anglo-Catholics, and particularly those attracted to studying the ancient mysteries, the answer was clearly 'yes'. It is certain that this impulse to learn more of the Christian mysteries and of one's place within those mysteries was an important part of the motivation to join the various Anglo-Catholic devotional societies, guilds and religious Orders formed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁴²² Within some of these organisations, such as the Community of the Resurrection, there were taught methods of meditation and devotional practices that could be accurately described as forms of Christian mysticism which, through the work of theologians and such authors as Evelyn Underhill and Charles Williams, became increasingly popular in the early twentieth century.⁴²³

The Golden Dawn, however, and the Holy Order of the Sun (which will be examined later in detail), claimed to offer the religious seeker of self-knowledge

⁴²¹ An example of such a desire may be seen in a letter dated 31 May 1876 from Father R. M Benson (1824-1915), founder and first Superior of the Society of S. John the Evangelist, Cowley, to Father O'Neill: 'I cannot help feeling that we need to seek very earnestly for ourselves, who do believe, that we may have a more supernatural conviction of the truth of Christ. It is one thing to be convinced of supernatural truth, it is another thing to be supernaturally convinced...It is that certitude which men's minds are now very much craving after...We want the supernatural no longer as a mere accidental, but as the abiding, and so in some sense a natural principle- really natural, and more intensely natural than anything belonging to the lower nature can be.' *Further Letters of Richard Meux Benson, S.S.J.E., Cowley*, edited by W.H. Longbridge (London: A.R. Mowbray & Co, 1920), p. 104. The SSJE is considered by several scholars to have had a major influence on the formation and ethos of the Community of the Resurrection (see for example, Wilkinson, *The Community of the Resurrection*, p. 32). This influence, along with the notion of Anglo-Catholic 'Christian socialism' and putative Hegelian influence, will be examined subsequently.

⁴²² See W. S. F. Pickering, *Anglo-Catholicism: A Study in Religious Ambiguity*, pp. 129-130; Jeremy Morris, *Communicants' Guilds in the Late 19th Century: Implanting Anglo-Catholicism in the Parish*; Ivan Clutterbuck, *Marginal Catholics* (Leominster: Gracewing, 1993), pp. 54-79; James Webb, *The Flight From Reason* (London: Macdonald, 1971), pp. 77-79.

⁴²³ Some examples from this extensive literature are E. Herman, *The Meaning and Value of Mysticism* (London: James Clarke & Co., 1915); Baron von Hügel, *Eternal Life* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1912); Rev. Cyril Hephner (ed.) *The Fellowship of Silence*. Relevant works of Evelyn Underhill and Charles Williams are listed in the bibliography.

something far more tangible and immediate. Whilst adhering to, or at least being consistent with, the commitment of devout sacramental Christianity, it also allowed the seeker to become intimately acquainted with, not merely the sacred symbols of the ancient mystery schools which had received praise from the patristic fathers and other respected classical thinkers, but actually to join such a school and be guided towards self-knowledge in a coherent and definite manner. Further, because it also embraced the mystical and occult knowledge and practices of other ancient religions, along with the Hermeticism, Rosicrucianism and Egyptology that had developed since the Renaissance, it enabled the participant to feel genuinely part of a grand and satisfying *prisca theologia*, but one which both culminated in and illuminated the Christian mysteries. And perhaps above all else, through its methods of practical occultism and ritual workings, it assisted its members, to use the words of Father R. M. Benson, to become ‘supernaturally convinced’ of the truth of Christ rather than merely ‘convinced of supernatural truth’.⁴²⁴

The Question of Christian Occultism

Whilst acknowledging the experiential and spiritual benefits which membership of both occult Orders were claimed to bring, the fundamental question for any devout Anglo-Catholic, and especially for any members of the Community of the Resurrection, must have been, ‘why is it necessary?’ Given the supernatural efficacy of the sacraments and their alleged effect in providing firstly, true initiation into the Christian mysteries, and then enabling a suitably receptive communicant to ascend to Christ in spirit, what need was there to indulge in secret practices which entailed a return to mysteries which, however lofty, were ones that had been truly superceded? *Pari passu*, were such

⁴²⁴ See footnote 383.

practices legitimate in the eyes of the Church and doctrine, and if they were, why were they not made available to all?

More detailed discussion of how these questions may have been answered, and in some cases were answered, is reserved for later in this study. At this stage, however, we may note that a number of them were by addressed by Dr. Felkin in an instructional paper entitled 'Christian Occultism' which was issued to members of the highest of the First Order Grades, which was called 'Philosophus'.⁴²⁵ Acknowledging and condemning the category of false and fraudulent 'magic', and warning against the dangers of 'evil' magic, Felkin asserts that 'Christian occultism' is not simply lawful and 'expedient' but is actually an essential part of the Church and one that was sanctioned by Christ Himself, through his own actions and various sayings, and by various of the Apostles, particularly St. Paul.

Much of the same obscurity of original meaning (of 'magic') overlays the word 'occultism'. Modern writers have largely associated this word with non-Christian systems; yet originally and rightly the word means 'hidden things', the study and making clear of the hidden things of God. According to the true meaning of the words our Saviour was the greatest magician and occultist of the world, and His immediate followers, apostles and disciples, were magicians and occultists only less in degree and power than their Master... If we are right in our contention and in our practice, the system we study is the Sacramental system of the Church. Our methods are those taught by our Saviour and practised by Him and his apostles, and the results we strive for and partially attain are precisely those promised by Him as inevitably following from His teaching.⁴²⁶

⁴²⁵ This unpublished paper is undated but as Felkin died in 1926 it would have been issued well before that date.

⁴²⁶ Felkin, 'Christian Occultism', p. 6.

Felkin acknowledges that these methods are not appropriate for all Christians and, quoting St. Paul in support of his argument, notes that ‘there are many duties and many functions in the Church of Christ, and each must work according to the measure of gifts bestowed upon him.’⁴²⁷ Felkin also asserts that the valuable and legitimate methods of pure magic, evident amongst the ancient religions and early Christians, have now ‘largely been lost among Christians who have retained in their hands the empty shell, not grasping the wonderful life which might and ought to animate it’. Even worse, these same methods are deployed successfully by both non-Christian religions and people for evil purposes. Felkin’s advice is that Christianity should regain this heritage:

Just as a fair magic toy might be given to a child who scarcely deigned to receive it, who forsook it for a passing pleasure, not guessing the potent charm it held. Others however to whom less has been given have wisely valued it and studied it. Should we not then strive to learn from those who are not Christians to comprehend and value our sacramental graces? Since by our sin, our materiality, our blindness, we have lost grace given to us, we must humble our pride and learn docilely and humbly from those who, if we were but true to ourselves, should be sitting at our feet. But in doing so, we must be careful to test them... Only let us not reject the means of physical and bodily action as superstitious and ridiculous: let us remember that these are the methods of our Church, and of our Church Founder, and set ourselves to learn humbly and patiently what they are.⁴²⁸

There is no surviving evidence to indicate whether any Anglo-Catholic clergy found Felkin’s arguments persuasive but the fact of his friendship with Frere and with

⁴²⁷ Felkin, ‘Christian Occultism’, p. 6.

⁴²⁸ Felkin, ‘Christian Occultism’, pp. 8-9.

other members of the Community of the Resurrection who were Order members for many years might indicate that this was so.⁴²⁹

It is conceivable also that some, and perhaps most, of these clergy who chose to combine their vocation with following an occult path remained ambivalent about their membership of the Golden Dawn. It is certainly the case that their interest is well hidden in their writings and is not acknowledged by a single scholar or author writing about their roles within Anglo-Catholicism. To this degree they may have shared views similar to those of Evelyn Underhill expressed in her *Mysticism*. On the one hand, in an early chapter she roundly condemns magic as being antagonist to mysticism, wanting to 'get' rather than to 'give'.⁴³⁰ On the other, she states in a subsequent chapter:

The starting point of all magic, and of all magical religion -- the best and purest of occult activities -- is, as in mysticism, man's inextinguishable conviction that there are other planes of being than those which his senses report to him... In magic... we have at any rate the survival of a great and ancient tradition, the true meaning of whose title should hardly be lost in a Christian country; for it claims to be the science of the Magi whose quest of the Blazing Star brought them once, at least, to the cradle of the Incarnate God. Its laws, and the ceremonial rites which express those laws, have come down from immemorial antiquity... Orthodox persons should be careful how they condemn the laws of magic: for they unwittingly conform to many of them whenever they go to church. All ceremonial religion contains some elements of magic.⁴³¹

⁴²⁹ Similar arguments are presented in the more recent works of the Anglican priest Anthony D. Duncan who has presented a favourable account of magic and related topics in at least eight books. Duncan's views are heavily influenced by the Golden Dawn conception of occultism. See, for example, his *The Christ, Psychotherapy and Magic* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1969) and *The Priesthood of Man* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1973).

⁴³⁰ Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism* (London: Methuen, 1967 reprint of 1911), p. 70.

⁴³¹ Underhill, *Mysticism* op.cit., p. 152.

An alternative explanation for the almost complete reticence of those Anglo-Catholic clergy with respect to their occult activity might, with some plausibility, be attributed to the notion of 'Disciplina Arcana' advocated by Cardinal John Newman in his *Arians of the Fourth Century* and supported by various Tractarians and Oxford Movement proponents.⁴³² This entailed the concept of 'secret teaching' regarding the Christian mysteries to be held back and 'kept in reserve' from the majority of the Church members and only revealed to the fully initiated 'serious and practiced Christians'. This 'secret teaching' was derived, according to the extremely hostile Protestant critic Walter Walsh, not from the Biblical scriptures but rather from the doctrine and practices developed by the Alexandrian Fathers, and Clement in particular.⁴³³ It must be remembered, of course, that the Golden Dawn and the Holy Order of the Sun, were both secret organisations requiring their members to undertake strict obligations regarding secrecy about every aspect of their working. The remarkable receptivity, and indeed obedience, to these obligations by clergy otherwise committed to their main vocation, may well be understandable in terms of either a perceived equivalence with 'Disciplina Arcani' or even with an identity in principle. This proposal will be investigated further in the context of an examination of curious parallels which can be drawn between organisational aspects of the Golden Dawn and the influential, and initially secret, Anglo-Catholic Societas Sanctae Crucis founded in 1855 and of

⁴³² Within the entry 'Disciplina Arcani' of *The Dictionary of the Christian Church* it is noted, 'I. Casaubon had already explained certain silences of the early Fathers on the supposition that they imitated the secrecy of the mystery religions'. p. 405.

⁴³³ Walsh, *The Secret History of the Oxford Movement* (London: Church Association, Fifth ed. 1899), pp. 2-3. Desmond Morse-Boycott notes that Newman quotes St. Clement to justify both the withholding of 'secret teaching' and more advanced doctrine from those unprepared or insufficiently serious about their faith and the need to lie when the occasion required it. In this context he mentions the imprudence of the title of Tract 80, *On Reserve in Communicating Religious Knowledge*, which 'was written by Isaac Williams and published in 1839'. It attracted a great deal of criticism and, Morse-Boycott notes, 'smacked of Jesuitry and suggested "a love of secret and crooked ways"'. See Morse-Boycott, *The Secret History of the Oxford Movement*, pp. 63-65.

which one of its six founding members was deeply immersed in Christian occultism and one of its later Masters was a member of the Golden Dawn.⁴³⁴

⁴³⁴ Charles Maurice Davies (1828-1910) was one of five Anglo-Catholic clergy consulted by Father Charles Lowder (1820-1880) to form the Society of the Holy Cross (*Societas Sanctae Crucis*). His occult activities and connections with the Golden Dawn are discussed in depth below. See the Rev. Dr. Thomas Hightower, 'A Brief History of the Early Years of the Society of the Holy Cross' www.sscamericas.org/resources/history.htm [accessed 10 February 2010]. A Master of the *Societas Sanctae Crucis* on two occasions was the Rev. Alban Henry Baverstock who was initiated into the Order on 27 June 1908 and adopted the name *Frater In lumine Tuo*. See R. A. Gilbert, *The Golden Dawn Companion*, p. 164.

CHAPTER FIVE

RATIONAL SPIRITUALITY: UNCOVERING THE HIDDEN GLORY

The increasing tendency of all advanced people to be their own saviours.

Hermann Keyserling

In the context of the development of religious belief and practice, and especially that of the more esoteric variety, the period in which both Anglo-Catholicism and the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn flourished has been described recently by Alex Owen as ‘fin-de-siècle spirituality’.⁴³⁵ The period and subject have received considerable scholarly attention in recent years but it still appears customary amongst scholars to maintain a clear demarcation between the significant changes which occurred within orthodox and heterodox spiritual movements.⁴³⁶ With regard to Britain, Owen’s work is one of the few exceptions which endeavours to explore a common intellectual and cultural background which can be linked to the developments in both orthodox religiosity and heterodox spirituality. Nevertheless, her focus is British occultism and she does not investigate in any detail the historical or conceptual connections which may lie between the two. Scholars and writers on the subject of Anglo-Catholicism have

⁴³⁵ Alex Owen, *The Place of Enchantment*, p. 17.

⁴³⁶ While some studies of occultism during this period make occasional references to changes occurring within orthodox religion, the reverse situation is exceedingly rare. Some exceptions are noted in the text of this chapter.

routinely given little or no attention to the potential nexus except, rarely, as the study of a peripheral or eccentric phenomenon.⁴³⁷

Another exception to a certain degree is James Webb's *The Flight from Reason: The Age of the Irrational*, one of the first and most significant works on the subject.⁴³⁸ The title is an accurate reflection of Webb's views for he considers the development of many forms of spirituality between 1820 and 1910, and especially that which he terms 'the occult revival', to be 'the abandonment of reason', 'escapism', 'superstition', and 'a flight from reason'.⁴³⁹ Such development is largely viewed by Webb against the backdrop of heterodox reactions to the secularisation of society and does not appear to take sufficient account of what was occurring within mainstream or orthodox Anglicanism.⁴⁴⁰

The notion of the occult revival of this period being a 'flight from reason' has been challenged by Daniel Van Egmond who states, 'it is also possible to consider them (occult movements) as organisations that attempted to bring the old esoteric traditions within the domain of enlightened reason'.⁴⁴¹ This view, shared also by Owen, is discussed below and developed further in Chapter Six. It will be extended, however, to encompass not just the theological changes within the Anglican Church which can be seen to parallel the occult revival, but also to question the clarity of the theoretical

⁴³⁷ These include such works as: Rene Kollar, *Searching for Raymond: Anglicanism, Spiritualism and Bereavement between the Two World Wars* (Lanham, MN: Lexington Books, 2000); Jenny Hazelgrove, *Spiritualism and British Society between the Wars* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000); Rene Kollar, *Abbot Aelred Carlyle, Caldey Island, and the Anglo-Catholic Revival in England* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995); Peter F. Anson, *Bishops at Large*; Janet Oppenheim, *The Other World: Spiritualism and Psychical Research in England, 1850-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985). To a limited degree some discussion on this theme can be found in Gavin Ashenden's work on the British poet, theologian and novelist, Charles Williams. See his *Charles Williams: Alchemy & Integration* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2008).

⁴³⁸ James Webb, *The Flight from Reason*.

⁴³⁹ Webb, *The Flight from Reason*, pp. ix-xiv.

⁴⁴⁰ Webb provides a brief overview but provides little analysis or comment. See op.cit., pp. 76-83

⁴⁴¹ Van Egmond cites as an example the use made by the notorious 'magician' Aleister Crowley of the term 'Occult Science' and the attempts made by Crowley and others, including the Theosophical Society, to enable students in 'esoteric schools' to experience and presumably 'verify' 'other worlds'. Although outside the scope of this study a more persuasive example to pursue in this context might be seen to lie in the psychological theories of Carl G. Jung (1875-1961). See Daniel Van Egmond, 'Western Esoteric Schools in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries', *Gnosticism and Hermeticism: From Antiquity to Modern Times*, ed. Roelof van den Broek and Wouter J. Hanegraaff (New York: University of New York, 1998), pp. 311-346.

distinction made by many scholars between ‘enlightened reason’ and ‘supernatural world views’. Are the two mutually exclusive and, if so, how are we to account for the deployment of rational and scholarly methodology in the development of supernaturalist concepts?⁴⁴² Moreover, does the potential bifurcation actually match the experience of people who hold or do not hold these beliefs?⁴⁴³

In pursuing these two themes detailed examples are provided of the manner in which some of the key figures within Anglo-Catholicism and the Golden Dawn developed their spiritual views and which, in turn, helped to shape the movement or organisation they were associated with. Some brief attention is given to orthodox Christian interest in the occult, in particular Spiritualism, and also to the genesis of the Golden Dawn, but a more expansive treatment of these topics is presented over later chapters. The chief motif of this chapter is, therefore, exploring some of the main tendencies and associated influences common to both the orthodox and heterodox search for a particular kind of spiritual experience or validation. This quest, perhaps best described in Golden Dawn terms as ‘to be more than human’, or in Christian terms, as ‘becoming like Christ’, is also exemplified in what the German philosopher Hermann Keyserling (1880-1946) called ‘the increasing tendency of all advanced people to be their own saviours’.⁴⁴⁴

As the developing theme of an orthodox and heterodox nexus is concerned with *fin-de-siècle* spirituality in Late Victorian Britain, the perception of this phenomenon needs to be historically divorced to some degree from the later occult revival which occurred in the 1960s. Despite the relatively brief period of time between them there is a

⁴⁴² While this question naturally invites discussion on ‘scientific method’, particularly in terms of post-Reformation conceptions, along with an examination of dualism, and the philosophical contributions made by René Descartes (1596-1650), Gottfried Leibnitz (1646-1716), Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951) et al., this vast and important area cannot be addressed within the focus of in this study.

⁴⁴³ A related but important question outside the scope of this study is whether the abandonment or absence of any form of supernaturalist belief in an individual is the result of ‘enlightened reason’ within that individual or attributable to other societal causes.

⁴⁴⁴ Herman Keyserling, *The Travel Diary of a Philosopher*, trans. J. Holroyd Reece, 2 vols (New York: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1925), I, 158.

danger, especially in the case of the Golden Dawn, of attempting to use an anachronistic paradigm based on current models which, in terms of the motivation of members and even the nature of the organisation itself, may share little in common with their *fin-de-siècle* namesakes. Accordingly, a brief comparison is made of some aspects of the two revivals.

The Question of Rational Spirituality

In many respects Webb's attitude towards the occult is shared by other scholars and commentators. In her study of magic in the early Middle Ages, Valerie Flint makes the uncompromising statement 'Magic and science are, of course, very old enemies, and it will always be the aim of science, in the sense in which we generally understand the term, to eliminate the irrationality and the mysteries of magic'.⁴⁴⁵ Michael Bailey describes the elements of witchcraft, as found in the Late Middle Ages, as appearing 'entirely irrational, and such authorities... who accepted and propounded these notions appear either mad, naïve, or ridiculous'.⁴⁴⁶ And the first book to focus exclusively on the Golden Dawn, which appeared one year following Webb's *The Flight from Reason*, includes the prefatory comment, 'In many respects this is a "mad" chronicle, at least if judged by conventional norms... it will serve no useful purpose if I constantly draw attention to the story's intermittent psychopathic qualities.'⁴⁴⁷ As a last example from a considerable literature containing such views, it may be noted that the Oxford classical scholar E. R. Dodds, in a manner similar to Webb, distinguished aspects of ancient

⁴⁴⁵ Valerie J. Flint, *The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe*, p. 7. This view of Flint is opposed by Daniel Lawrence O'Keefe who observes, 'It may be that there is no determinate or even predominant relation between magic and science: they do appear to react on each other but all possible permutations and combinations may be found in history. Thus: 1. *Magic may depress science*... 2. *Magic may stimulate science*... 3. Conversely, *science may stimulate magic*... 4. Alternatively, *scientific advance may discourage magic*. ' See his *Stolen Lightning: The Social Theory of Magic* (New York: Continuum Publishing, 1982), p. 559.

⁴⁴⁶ Michael D. Bailey, *Battling Demons: Witchcraft, Heresy, and Reform in the late Middle Ages* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania University Press, 1971), p. 7.

⁴⁴⁷ Ellic Howe, *The Magicians of the Golden Dawn*, p. xxiii.

Greek thought on religion and spirituality 'after the third century' as 'the Return of the Irrational'.⁴⁴⁸ Although Webb denied any influence from Dodds he considers that his argument with respect to the Victorian *fin-de-siècle* to be akin to that of the latter's treatment of ancient Greece. Both writers observe in their prefaces that their subject matter had been neglected by scholars for various reasons, and in Dodds's case, somewhat ironically in view of Webb's thesis, it is because the Greek religious ideas he is describing were ones 'in which nineteenth-century rationalism took little interest'.⁴⁴⁹ Notwithstanding his different subject, Dodds adopts a similar stance to Webb and sees a parallel between the Greek 'return of the irrational' and its nineteenth-century equivalent, 'the romantic reaction against rationalist "natural theology" which set in at the beginning of the nineteenth century and is still a powerful influence today'.⁴⁵⁰

In more recent times scholars are beginning to question the validity of equating belief systems which might be loosely described here as 'spiritual', 'religious' or 'occult', with irrationality. Emphasis is increasingly being placed on the need to explain and evaluate the course of religious and spiritual movements within the broader context of other developments within society.⁴⁵¹ In particular, without reference to parallel developments in human thought and activity, there are seen to be major difficulties involved in applying the rational/irrational dichotomy to the supposed distinction between science and occultism, or for that matter, between science and religion.⁴⁵² This characterization, employing the terms 'return', 'flight from', 'reaction to' appears to imply, if not entail, a version of the evolutionary thesis of J. G. Frazer and others, which determines magic and religion as occupying early places upon an historical continuum

⁴⁴⁸ E.R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, pp. 244-245.

⁴⁴⁹ Webb, *The Flight from Reason*, p. 121. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, p. 1.

⁴⁵⁰ Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, p. 248. By 'today' Dodds is referring to circa 1950.

⁴⁵¹ Alex Owen, *The Place of Enchantment*, pp. 17-50. See also Joscelyn Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment*; Brian Inglis, *Natural and Supernatural: A History of the Paranormal* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1977); idem, *The Hidden Power* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1986); Alex Owen, *The Darkened Room: Women, Power and Spiritualism in Late Nineteenth Century England* (London: Virago Press, 1989).

⁴⁵² See O'Keefe, *Stolen Lightning: The Social Theory of Magic*, pp. 158-175.

of progression from irrationality to rationality. Thus, certain forms of religious or spiritual expression, notably those termed ‘esoteric’, ‘occult’ or ‘magical’ are viewed as being regressive in some way and perhaps indicative of a return to a more ‘primitive’ and outmoded way of thinking. Indeed, the same charge has recently been reasserted with regard to religion itself and elements of the evolutionary thesis can be seen to persist throughout much of the literature dealing with the subject up to the present day.⁴⁵³

A major challenge to the evolutionary view, typically dismissive of esotericism in any form, is how to explain the supposed ‘re-emergence’ in modern times of beliefs and practices which embrace the supernatural. It is ostensibly an awkward fact that Webb’s ‘Age of Irrationality’ also coincided with a period which, in Britain and elsewhere, was unquestionably one of extraordinary development in many areas of human endeavour and knowledge. In a seemingly unprecedented short period of history the wealth of discoveries and advances made in mathematical logic, theoretical and applied physics, chemistry, mechanics, engineering, astronomy and medicine, and the application of these to industry, created a physical and intellectual environment in the West vastly different from the experience of previous generations. The gulf between the worlds of 1840 and 1940, for example, appears to have few historical parallels. This same period of scientific specialisation also saw the growth of the social sciences, notably psychology, and witnessed revolutionary changes in the structure and organisation of society, in education and the modes of artistic expression, and in politics and war.⁴⁵⁴ The predominance of science, and therefore, presumably, of rationality in human affairs during this key century can hardly be questioned.⁴⁵⁵

⁴⁵³ Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006).

⁴⁵⁴ One might also make reference during this period to the advances, in both theory and methodology, to archaeology, Biblical scholarship, philology, linguistics and so forth.

⁴⁵⁵ A similar point can be made with equal force to the resurgence of interest in the occult which began in the 1960s.

An attempt to explain in depth the apparent incongruity of history with Webb's description of this period is beyond the scope of this study but it nevertheless remains a matter that needs addressing to some degree, and any putative account may well have implications for those evolutionary minded scholars inclined to ascribe the term 'irrational' to activities typically associated with 'the occult' and its cognates, or even with religiosity.⁴⁵⁶ A common explanatory thread, found throughout much of the serious literature dealing with the less orthodox forms of religious and esoteric belief from the nineteenth century onwards, is that they represented a reaction against other developments in human thought and activity. Typically, this is often described as a response to a crisis in faith engendered by the increasing dominance of materialistic science, or as a reaction to the growing 'disenchantment of the world' which has occurred through its secularisation.⁴⁵⁷

In the case of Webb and Dodds, they attribute these 'flights away from reason' to psychological states of fear and acute anxiety. For Dodds, who leans on the views of the political psychologist Erich Fromm (1900-1980), this fear resides in a rejection of freedom and the individual responsibility and burden of choice which such freedom entails. Although not explicitly stated, it appears to be entailed by Dodds's argument that freedom, and its supposed concomitant feeling of anxiety, is bestowed by accepting the view that rationality automatically excludes an intelligent teleology from the natural world. Without any supernatural design or direction man is simply one part of the

⁴⁵⁶ Given the enormous influence over modern Western philosophy exercised by the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951) it is of interest to note his own well documented ambivalence regarding religious and 'magical' statements. In commenting on J. G. Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, for example, Wittgenstein says: 'I now believe that it would be right to begin my book with remarks about metaphysics and magic. But in doing this I must not make a case for magic nor make fun of it. The depth of magic should be preserved. Indeed, here the elimination of magic has itself the character of magic. For, back then, when I began talking about the "world" (and not about this tree or table), what else did I want but to keep something higher spellbound in my words?' 'Remarks on Frazer's *Golden Bough*', reprinted in *Philosophical Occasions 1912-1951*, edited by Klagge, James and Nordmann (Indianapolis & Cambridge: Alfred Hackett Publishing Co, 1993), pp. 116-117.

⁴⁵⁷ See Oppenheim *The Other World*, pp. 1-4; Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, pp. 248-252; and Alex Owen *The Place of Enchantment*, pp. 10-11. Owen refers to the well known comment of the German sociologist Max Weber (1864-1920) when he stated the 'fate of our times is characterized by rationalization and intellectualisation and, above all, by the 'disenchantment of the world.'"

natural and finite world and the sole arbiter of human conduct. The anxiety stemming from this realisation, and the implication it carries of the total annihilation of the individual at death, become the spur to retreat into a world of irrational supernaturalism. Webb appears to take a similar, if more succinct, view contrasting 'rational' materialism with 'an irrational interpretation of life.'⁴⁵⁸ While apparently more sympathetic to the impulse to adopt 'irrational' explanations' in the face of the supposed anxieties which rational materialism brings, Webb seems to equate rationality with materialism and irrationality with immaterial supernaturalism.⁴⁵⁹

Alex Owen has argued persuasively in her extended study of the period that far from being an exemplar of irrationality, the occultism of the *fin-de-siècle* actually 'worked to reconcile the secular and spiritual' and thereby resolve 'the anxieties about the "irrational"'.⁴⁶⁰ Whatever merit may lie in these largely theoretical explanations which employ psychological, and often sociological, descriptions of human behaviour that is portrayed as incongruous, they rarely address or explain adequately one important fact: namely, that a significant number of the people actively engaged in the secularisation and 'disenchantment' process -- scientists, mathematicians, educationalists doctors and professors -- were also adherents of the very supernaturalist and supposedly irrational world views considered to be in conflict with their science and secularism.⁴⁶¹ Prima facie, the apparent tension is more stark in the case of the Anglo-Catholic clergy who became members of the Golden Dawn. For if, as some have claimed, occult Orders such as the Golden Dawn were part of an anxiety-induced attempt to 're-enchant' the world and provide new meaning to a world made barren of

⁴⁵⁸ Webb, *The Flight from Reason*, p. 237.

⁴⁵⁹ Webb, *op.cit.*, pp. 237-238.

⁴⁶⁰ Owen, *The Place of Enchantment*, p. 114 and 146-147. Daniel Van Egmond makes a similar point, if more briefly, in his paper, 'Western Esoteric Schools in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries, *Gnosis and Hermeticism* , p. 311.

⁴⁶¹ Many examples are noted in this study but also in the works of Webb, including his *The Occult Establishment* (Glasgow: Richard Drew Publishing, 1981). Webb does not comment on the apparent incongruity. Other examples cited of scholars involved in occultism can be found in Corinna Treitel, *A Science for the Soul: Occultism and the Genesis of the German Modern* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2004).

spiritual significance, what are we to make of the relatively orthodox faith held by committed priests who sought to become adepts in magic?

Some issues extend beyond an explanation of the phenomenon of *fin-de-siècle* occultism. Are the motivational drives and causal factors behind modern esotericism also related in some way to developments in mainstream Christianity, and specifically in Anglo-Catholicism? Scholars need to provide a criterion of rationality which can account for religion and its esoteric counterparts coexisting alongside one another and alongside science. In the case of many of the members of the Golden Dawn and the Anglo-Catholic faith, this coexistence occurred within single individuals.⁴⁶²

In his treatment of Iamblichus, whose work was revived in the Renaissance and which became influential within Western esotericism in general and the Golden Dawn in particular, Dodds describes *De mysteriis* as ‘a manifesto of irrationalism’ and gives the following quotation:

It is not thought that links the theurgists with the gods: else what should hinder theoretical philosophers from enjoying theurgic union with them?... Theurgic union is attained only by the efficacy of the unspeakable *acts* performed in the appropriate manner, acts which are beyond all comprehension, and by the potency of the unutterable symbols which are comprehended only by the gods... Without intellectual effort on our part the tokens by their own virtue accomplish their proper work.⁴⁶³

⁴⁶² Owen, *The Place of Enchantment*, p. 11, ‘The “new” occultism in particular co-opted the language of science and staked a strong claim to rationality’.

⁴⁶³ Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, p. 287. There are numerous references to Iamblichus within the writings of a large number of nineteenth century esoteric authors, notably the Theosophical works of H. B. Blavatsky. The principal Golden Dawn founder MacGregor Mathers wrote a series of three articles on Iamblichus under the title ‘Iamblichos the Chaldean, of Coele-Syria: His Writings Concerning the Mysteries’, which were published from July 1902 in the periodical *Anubis: The Occult News and Review*. As noted in Chapter Two, a copy of *De mysteriis* was in the London-based Golden Dawn library for the use of members.

In commenting on the above passage of Iamblichus Dodds says: 'As vulgar magic is commonly the last resort of the personally desperate, of those whom man and God have failed, so theurgy became the refuge of a despairing intelligentsia which already felt *la fascination de l'abime*.'⁴⁶⁴ The difficulty with this view of Dodds is that Iamblichus's description of the means of theurgic union can be substituted almost word for word as a description of Anglo-Catholic (and some Roman Catholic) interpretations of the *ex opere operato* efficacy of the Eucharist encountered in the previous chapter.⁴⁶⁵ This scathing observation would be strongly opposed by Roman and Anglo-Catholic theologians but there is little evidence to suggest that any of the Golden Dawn members, still less the numerous Anglo-Catholic scholars, theologians and liturgists, were either in despair or unduly preoccupied with 'the abyss'.⁴⁶⁶ It can be argued with equal plausibility that the taking up of ancient theurgic beliefs and practices by clergy was at least partly because of the perceived close relationship between these and their Christian beliefs, and that the former would both inform and enhance the latter. Whether or not the renewed interest in the Greek pagan mysteries was itself motivated by 'irrational anxiety', Alex Owen's insistence that a large range of other formative factors need to be taken into account is clearly an approach more likely to do justice to all the facts.

Owen observes that the 'spiritual movement' of the *fin-de-siècle*, embracing occultism, spiritual aspiration, and a 'mystical revival', was influenced heavily by 'late-

⁴⁶⁴ Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, p. 288. Given Dodd's views on magic, theurgy and related phenomena it is curious to note he was President of the Society for Psychical Research between 1960 and 1963 and he had been a member since 1927. Owen says of the Society (op.cit., p.33), 'The Society boasted among its membership some of the most prominent figures of the day... and its founding and status testify to the seriousness with which occult was regarded by educated late-Victorians'. Besides an acquaintanceship with W. B. Yeats and Aldous Huxley, the former being a long term member of the Golden Dawn and the latter having a strong interest in Eastern mysticism, Dodds would also have known Professor C. D. Broad who was President of the SPR between 1958 and 1960 and was also a member of the Golden Dawn.

⁴⁶⁵ For an example of the Roman Catholic view see Monsignor J. D. Crichton, *Understanding the Mass* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1993).

⁴⁶⁶ Dodds offers no evidence for his view with regard to the Greeks or anyone else. With regard to both the occult and the Anglo-Catholic revivals it is evident that their adherents considered the renewal of interest in supernaturalism to be positive and life-affirming.

Victorian scholarship and the opening of academic enquiry. Folklore, anthropology, Egyptology, philology, and the study of comparative religion each had their place in a “mysticism” that looked East as well as West’.⁴⁶⁷ In this context it needs also to be recalled that the late-Victorian ‘revived interest in medieval and Renaissance “esoteric” Christian mysticism (which) spread rapidly through both the Roman Catholic and Protestant communities’ was itself partly grounded on the earlier scholarship of the Tractarian theologians and their recovery of the views of the ancient Church Fathers on the mystery religions.⁴⁶⁸ To this degree it may be argued that no matter how unlikely, or even preposterous, a particular spiritual or religious interpretation of the world may appear to be, it does not follow that the evolution of that explanation, and its being held by one or more individuals, can be described meaningfully as ‘irrational’. On the contrary, there is abundant evidence that certain beliefs regarding supernatural worlds are held, and associated actions performed, precisely as a result of the application of the methods of rational and academic research. The veracity of these beliefs is as irrelevant to the process of rationality as is it is to that of a disproved scientific or mathematical theory.⁴⁶⁹

British Museum Religion and Occult Connections

Much of this late Victorian scholarship was undertaken in the British Museum, whose opening in 1753 created a storehouse of recovered traditions amongst scholars and

⁴⁶⁷ Owen, *The Place of Enchantment*, p. 28.

⁴⁶⁸ Owen, op.cit., p. 48.

⁴⁶⁹ As indicated by the scientific philosopher Karl Popper the irrationality of a view may depend on the grounds for holding that view, particularly in the face of evidence against it. See his *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968). One might compare, in this context, ancient beliefs that invisible beings, such as demons and angels, could affect human beings favourably or adversely, with the modern knowledge that microscopic, and otherwise invisible, life forms can have the same effects. In both cases the ordinary human being was and is reliant on the knowledge of ‘experts’ regarding these ‘facts’ and the appropriate measures human beings should take regarding them (e.g. washing hands).

antiquarian figures in the latter half of the nineteenth century.⁴⁷⁰ One such Museum scholar was the Reverend Percy Dearmer (1867-1936), considered to be amongst the most influential Anglican figures of the early twentieth century. Dearmer read modern history at Christ Church, Oxford and received his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1890, and in 1892 he was ordained to the priesthood.⁴⁷¹ Dearmer's interests and influence extended over a broad range of subjects and causes, including liturgical reform, the ordination of women, Christian socialism, hymnology, spiritual healing, and psychic research.⁴⁷² His reputation was made, however, on the strength of *The Parson's Handbook* which was 'an instant bestseller' within months of its publication in 1899 and went through twelve editions.⁴⁷³ Although a strong advocate of Anglo-Catholic reforms in liturgy and other matters Dearmer argued for ceremonial practice based, not on Rome, but on the English Sarum rite which had been used in Salisbury Cathedral in the Middle Ages and was employed by 'Reformers in the compilation of the 1549 Prayer Book'.⁴⁷⁴ The question of Roman or medieval English usage was controversial within the Church and 'the most damaging of the divisions among Anglo-Catholics'.⁴⁷⁵ Adherents of this view 'were said to be followers of the pure form of Gothic liturgy' and closely connected with both 'the imitation of Gothic architecture' and 'what is

⁴⁷⁰ Obviously the British Museum was in constant use by scholars from every discipline but its extensive use by researchers in the field of religion and the occult is worthy of note. In the Golden Dawn context see Stoddard Martin, *Orthodox Heresy: The Rise of 'Magic' as Religion and its Relation to Literature* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), p. 101. The suggestion is not advanced here that the individuals under discussion are linked by their use of the British Museum except in the sense that the search for traditional authority was shared by influential figures in both Anglo-Catholicism and the occult revival of the period. Moreover, in terms of influence, such research was itself part of a Victorian predilection for antiquarianism. See Philippa Levine, *The Amateur and the Professional: Antiquarians, Historians and Archaeologists in Victorian Britain 1838-1886* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p.1-6. Nigel Yates has described the antiquarian influences on Victorian ritualism and noted the 'involvement of High-Church Anglican clergy and laity in the enormous number of local antiquarian, architectural, and ecclesiological societies that were to emerge during the second and third quarters of the nineteenth century'. See Yates, *Anglican Ritualism in Victorian Britain*, pp. 40-42.

⁴⁷¹ Donald Gray, *Percy Dearmer: a Parson's Pilgrimage* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2000).

⁴⁷² Gray, *Percy Dearmer*, p. 81.

⁴⁷³ Gray, *Percy Dearmer*, p. 37. See Dearmer, *The Parson's Handbook* (London: Oxford University Press, 1889) and W. S. F. Pickering, *Anglo-Catholicism: A Study in Religious Ambiguity*, p. 27.

⁴⁷⁴ Pickering, *Anglo-Catholicism*, p. 27.

⁴⁷⁵ Nigel Yates, *Anglican Ritualism in Victorian Britain* p. 336; Dom Anselm Hughes, *The Rivers of the Flood* (London: The Faith Press, 1961), pp. 50-51.

generally called the Romantic movement'.⁴⁷⁶ It should be noted in passing at this point, and this will subsequently be developed further, that several scholars have referred to the interactions between: Victorian interest in 'medieval romanticism', the Anglo-Catholic revival of religious communities (such as the Community of the Resurrection), the Pre-Raphaelite movement, Christian socialism and the occultism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁴⁷⁷

To varying degrees Dearmer had a connection of sorts with each of these trends. Besides his promotion of Gothic architecture and church furnishings, influenced by his love for romantic English medievalism, and his deep commitment to Christian socialism, or what has been termed 'Spiritual Socialism', he was also a friend of Charles Gore and W. H. Frere and had an association with the Community of the Resurrection.⁴⁷⁸ And like a considerable number of clergymen of this period Dearmer was particularly interested in psychical research. He combined this interest with exploring the efficacy of spiritual healing and produced a lengthy volume on the subject which describes and links the supernatural healing of Christ and the Apostles with similar examples of saintly spiritual healing throughout history until modern times. Dearmer incorporates exorcism and the powers of the Sacraments to heal within his explanation and provides these in a framework described in the psychology of the times. This makes reference to hypnotism and mesmerism and to the views of the English essayist Frederick W. H. Myers (1843-1901) well known for his investigations into

⁴⁷⁶ Pickering, *Anglo-Catholicism*, p. 27. See also Michael Yelton, *Anglican Papalism in Victorian Britain*, pp. 221-222.

⁴⁷⁷ Geoffrey Rowell has observed that the roots of the Oxford Movement 'were many and various—the Romantic movement with its change of sensibility in which emotion was seen as revelatory of the human condition; the Gothic revival with a conscious medievalism expressing both a continuity with the past and a yearning for a more organic, even a sacramental society, existing in tension with increasing technological change and the urbanization consequent on the industrial revolution'. See Rowell, 'The SSC in context', in William Davage ed., *In this Sign Conquer* (London: Continuum, 2006), p. 5. See also Alan Wilkinson, *The Community of the Resurrection*, p. 15; James Webb, *The Flight from Reason*, pp. 77-78, Peter Benedict Nockles, *The Oxford Movement in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 197; Arthur McCalla, 'Romanticism', in *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, II, 1000-1007; Wouter J. Hanegraaff, 'Romanticism and the Esoteric Connection', in *Gnosis and Hermeticism: from Antiquity to Modern Times*, pp. 237-268; B. J. Gibbons, *Spirituality and the Occult*, p. 143-144; Alex Owen, *The Place of Enchantment*, p. 114.

⁴⁷⁸ Gray, *Percy Dearmer*, pp. 20-25, 79, 145.

psychic phenomena and for helping to establish the Society for Psychical Research which attracted prominent individuals, including members of the Golden Dawn.⁴⁷⁹

Dearmer is also important to the history of Anglo-Catholicism to the degree that his methods of painstaking research with regard to the Sarum or English usage attracted criticism of his following 'British Museum Religion.' Although originally a fond comment coined by his friend Father James Adderly, who co-founded the Society of the Divine Compassion, it subsequently received considerable currency amongst the strongest critics of the Sarum usage and is referred to in nearly every recent study of Anglo-Catholic history.⁴⁸⁰ Besides being a backhand compliment to the meticulous research carried out by Dearmer in the British Museum, the accusation is a specific reference to the perception amongst Anglo-Catholics favouring Roman Catholic practice that English usage was grounded on speculative medieval antiquarianism and, as such, inauthentic.⁴⁸¹ The impression gained of such widespread, or widely repeated, criticism is not that its critics necessarily took issue with the quality of the research but rather considered that it was an anachronistic reconstruction of what was considered to be English Christianity in medieval times and, therefore, had no relevance to modern Catholicism which had the Roman variety as a living and genuine model.

There does not seem to be any evidence to suggest that Dearmer was ever a member of any esoteric Order or group. Nevertheless, the views expressed in his writings on the efficacy of spiritual action directed towards healing are entirely consistent, if not identical in substance, with many of those promulgated by such

⁴⁷⁹ See fn. 478. 464.

⁴⁸⁰ Gray, *Percy Dearmer*, p. 2, Wilkinson, *The Community of the Resurrection*, p. 33. Yates, *Anglican Ritualism in Victorian Britain*, pp. 337-338; Hughes, *The Rivers of the Flood*, p. 50; Pickering, *Anglo-Catholicism*, p. 27; and Donald Gray, *The British Museum Religion: Percy Dearmer in Context* (London: Anglo-Catholic History Society, 2001).

⁴⁸¹ Yates, *Anglican Ritualism in Victorian Britain*, p. 336.

Orders, and particularly those of Dr. Felkin and his second wife, Harriot.⁴⁸² Under the heading 'Therapeutic Importance of Religion' Dearmer asserts that:

The 'forces of religion' and 'its rites and sacraments'... have a powerful influence for good upon the spirit of man, and through the spirit upon the body; that therefore these religious influences... when brought to bear upon a sick man *must*, if he duly receive them, strengthen his spirit, and *may* through that inward invigoration bring strange and wonderful recovery of the body. The extent of this power must be left to the future to decide; that there is always *some* physical effect resulting on mental conditions is an accepted fact.⁴⁸³

If not an occultist himself, however, Dearmer was the first Chairman of the Anglican 'Guild of Health' which was the precursor to, and connected with, the subsequent Anglican Healing Guild of St. Raphael. Both Guilds actively promoted a union of effort by medicine and sacramental Christianity to achieve spiritual healing in the manner outlined by Dearmer.⁴⁸⁴ The Healing Guild of St. Raphael, which continues to flourish in a number of countries, was established in 1915 at the direct 'suggestion' of a discarnate esoteric Arab Master known as Ara Ben Shemesh. This communication was received in a psychic fashion by the Golden Dawn Chief of the Stella Matutina faction, Dr. R. W. Felkin on 9 January 1915 and expressed as follows:

The alternative training for those whom we were speaking of should be definitely fixed now and put on the same footing as the Daughter Temples, as a special

⁴⁸² Many examples are found in unpublished Order papers written by the Felkins held in a private collection.

⁴⁸³ Percy Dearmer, *Body and Mind* (London: Pitman & Sons, 1910), pp. 329-330.

⁴⁸⁴ Gray, *The British Museum Religion*, p. 4.

group for healing. It should be called the Healers or Therapists, and Father F. should be made specially and definitely the head of it...⁴⁸⁵

The Father F. in question is Father J. C. (Charles) Fitzgerald from the Community of the Resurrection who, as noted previously, was also a Chief of the Amoun Temple of the Stella Matutina or Golden Dawn. Father Fitzgerald wrote a number of papers on spiritual healing, including one for the Guild of St. Raphael entitled 'The Power of Silence'.⁴⁸⁶ This paper was originally published in the volume *Fellowship of Silence* which concerns an apparently unique series of spiritual meetings in New Zealand of Quakers, Theosophists and Anglicans. Under the guidance and suggestion of Father Fitzgerald many of the individuals involved in what was termed an 'experiment', subsequently formed the nucleus of a new Golden Dawn temple established by Dr. Felkin in 1912.⁴⁸⁷ Included also within this book is a paper by Percy Dearmer entitled 'Outward Signs and Inward Light' where he praises at length the spiritual achievements of the Quakers but argues also for sacramental Christianity.

Christianity... is a sacramental religion. Our religious existence has been bound up with those holy awful mysteries that are the effectual signs, the unfailing channels of inward and spiritual grace. Our lives are centred around the altar; our whole system of teaching... is based upon the fact of Baptism.⁴⁸⁸

⁴⁸⁵ 'Inquire Within' (pseud. Miss C.M. Stoddart) *Light-bearers of Darkness*, p. 102; Margaret Bryant, *The Church Awakes: The Guild of St. Raphael in New Zealand* (Wellington: Kotuku Media, 1992), p. 4.

⁴⁸⁶ Cyril Hephher, *The Fellowship of Silence*, pp. 191-212.

⁴⁸⁷ Howe, *The Magicians of the Golden Dawn*, p. 269; R. A. Gilbert, *The Golden Dawn Companion*, p. 42.

⁴⁸⁸ Percy Dearmer, 'Outward Signs and Inward Light' in Hephher, *Fellowship of Silence*, pp. 165-190, (p.165). It is notable that Dearmer, along with other Anglo-Catholics associated with the 'experiment' and the subsequent Golden Dawn temple, displayed a remarkable tolerance towards other expressions of spirituality. While not necessarily inconsistent with the views of many Anglo-Catholic theologians (e.g. Evelyn Underhill) it was nevertheless uncharacteristic of the views of many Anglo-Catholics who tended towards an exclusivism in their beliefs.

Other aspects of Quakerism which receive the praise of Dearmer in this paper are 'their allowing women a place by the side of men in their worship', their use of spiritual healing, their foreseeing and employing 'the new psychology' in their spiritual work, and their attitude which displays a type of universal sacramentalism in the sense 'that every event of life may be turned into a sacrament and a means of grace'.⁴⁸⁹ It is of interest that all of these aspects were particular features of the Golden Dawn system and especially given emphasis within Felkin's *Stella Matutina*.⁴⁹⁰ Given the characteristic Quaker disdain for formal sacramentalism, it is remarkable that these Anglo-Catholic views were received so favourably but even more remarkable perhaps, and this is discussed in depth later, is the fact that some of the Quakers involved in 'the experiment' were drawn to join the Golden Dawn and practise its ceremonial magic, which might be viewed as formal sacramentalism *par excellence*.⁴⁹¹

A strong motivational force in Dearmer's life was his deep commitment to the Christian Socialist Movement which was based on the writings of the Reverend Frederick Denison Maurice (1805-1872) in the 1850s and 1860s and an instrumental factor, it has been claimed, in the establishment of the British Labour Party.⁴⁹² Dearmer's biographer, Donald Gray, has identified the later and more militant tendency of Christian Socialism with the Anglo-Catholic ritualists and there is no doubt that

⁴⁸⁹ Hefher, *Fellowship of Silence*, p. 188.

⁴⁹⁰ This is covered in detail in Chapter 7. Although the Golden Dawn was created by two active Freemasons and members of the paramasonic S.R.I.A., it allowed the admittance of women on an equal basis. Particular reference is made to this by the founder William Westcott in his 'Historical Lecture' written especially for the newly formed Order. He notes that 'in older times as at the present day, women rose to high rank and attainments in the Secret knowledge of the Order'. See R. A. Gilbert, *The Golden Dawn: Twilight of the Magicians*, p.103. This led to women occupying senior positions in the Order and, especially in Felkin's *Stella Matutina*, to their becoming the heads, or Chiefs, of specific temples. There is no known evidence as to whether this caused tension for the Anglo-Catholic priests placed under the spiritual direction of these women but was clearly a radical departure from the official position of the Church at this time.

⁴⁹¹ See 'The Spiritual Ferment- Lucy Violet Hodgkin in Havelock North, New Zealand', *Journal of the Friends Historical Society*, 56, No. 4 (1993), 296-310. Further detail is provided in Chapter 8.

⁴⁹² Gray, *Percy Dearmer*, p. 19. See also Wilkinson, *The Community of the Resurrection*, particularly pp. 117-126.

Dearmer was a staunch advocate of both.⁴⁹³ Another was the Reverend Will Reason (1864-1926) who was almost a contemporary of Dearmer at Oxford and who, after receiving a rather better degree than Dearmer in Theology, went on to combine very active parish work with writing scholarly and popular books and articles on a range of social issues.⁴⁹⁴ As a committed Christian Socialist he addressed such causes as relieving poverty, women's suffrage, universal education, and the physical and spiritual needs of working class youth. Reason was active in expressing his beliefs, claiming at one time, 'We must capture the churches for Socialism' and he took part in protests and demonstrations, sometimes sharing the stage with well known socialist clergy, such as the controversial Reverend Conrad Noel (1869-1942), a close friend of Dearmer.⁴⁹⁵

Alongside his political and religious interests, Will Reason was also a dedicated member of the Golden Dawn. Indeed, he was not merely an attending member but also a Chief of the Amoun Temple. Initiated into the Neophyte Grade on 26 November 1906 he progressed through the subsequent Grades of the Outer, or First Order, until 29 December 1908 when he was advanced to the Rosicrucian Second Order. At this ceremony he was symbolically crucified and, while hanging from the large wooden cross in the Temple, swore to keep several obligations including the following:

⁴⁹³ James Webb has referred to the close connection between Christian Socialism and the Community of the Resurrection during the early twentieth century. In particular he remarks that Gore and Frere played influential roles. See *The Occult Establishment: Vol II The Age of the Irrational*, pp. 113-114. In his *Anglican Papalism*, Michael Yelton states, 'During the first half of the twentieth century, almost all Socialists in the Church of England were Anglo-Catholics, but there were far more Anglo-Catholics who were not Socialists', p. 11. Reference to another Anglican priest who was both a Golden Dawn member and an alleged socialist is found in Wilkinson's *The Community of the Resurrection*, p. 165. Wilkinson remarks that Frere 'defended Jack Bucknall, an old Mirfield student, when 2,000 signed a petition demanding this curate's removal because of his fiery socialist sermons'. The Reverend Jack Bucknall was initiated into Felkin's Stella Matutina on 12 June 1914. Unpublished membership cards in the collection of R. A. Gilbert.

⁴⁹⁴ See W. B. Stephens (ed.), 'Religious History: Protestant Nonconformity', in *A History of the County of Warwick: Volume 7: The City of Birmingham* (1964), pp. 411-434 <<http://british-history.ac.uk>> [accessed on 5 February 2009]; W. Reason M.A. (ed.), *University and Social Settlements* (London: Methuen & Co., 1898); Will Reason, *Poverty* (London: Headley Brothers, 1909); George Mills Harper, *Yeats's Golden Dawn*, pp. 128-129.

⁴⁹⁵ Webb states that Noel attended a group called 'The Christo-Theosophical Society at which he read papers, along with G. K. Chesterton. It is further claimed that Noel was 'instrumental in turning Chesterton...toward the Christian faith', *The Occult Establishment*, p. 116. Donald Gray has observed that Chesterton was 'one of Dearmer's religious protégés', *Percy Dearmer*, p. 1. Yelton comments that 'The only Papalist priest for whom Noel had much regard was Revd Alban Baverstock', *Anglican Papalism*, p. 13. As previously noted Baverstock had been a member of the Golden Dawn.

That I will keep secret all things connected with the Order, and its secret knowledge, from the whole world... that I will perform all practical work connected with the Order in a place concealed and apart from the gaze of the outer and uninitiated world, and that I will not display our Magical Implements, nor reveal the use of the same, but will keep secret this Inner Rosicrucian Knowledge even as the same hath been kept secret throughout the ages; that I will (keep) strictly concealed from them (the uninitiated) our modes of Tarot and other Divination, of Clairvoyance, of Astral projection, of the Consecration of Talismans and Symbols, and the Rituals of the Pentagram and Hexagram, and most especially of the use and attribution of the Flashing Colours, and the Vibratory mode of pronouncing the Divine Names... I further promise and swear that with the Divine Permission I will, from this day forward, apply myself to the Great Work – which is, to purify and exalt my Spiritual Nature so that with the Divine Aid I may at length attain to be more than Human, and thus gradually raise and unite myself to my higher and Divine Genius, and that in this event I will not abuse the great power entrusted to me... I also undertake to work unassisted at the subjects prescribed for study in the various practical Grades...⁴⁹⁶

This excerpt, lengthy as it is, is still approximately only half of what the newly initiated member of the Second Order agreed to undertake but it gives some impression of the extensive work required of a Golden Dawn Adept and of the notion of ‘becoming more than Human’ which, as will be shown later, is an important thread running through the doctrines of both the esotericism and Anglo-Catholicism of the period. In addition to making, painting and consecrating seven ‘magical’ wands and implements

⁴⁹⁶ Israel Regardie, *The Golden Dawn*, Vol.II, book Two, pp. 212-215.

the Adeptus Minor was obliged to digest a mass of occult material and then demonstrate to the Chiefs his or her 'magical' ability to use this knowledge in ceremonies and practical applications. Like his fellow Chiefs and clergymen, Father Fitzgerald and the Reverend F.N. Heazall, Will Reason successfully completed this curriculum and advanced even further through several 'Adept' Grades to the so-called Third Order Grade of Magister Templi.⁴⁹⁷ He resigned as a 'Ruling Chief' in 1920 but continued to remain active in the Order for some years after.⁴⁹⁸

This occult curriculum ostensibly seems an extraordinary programme of activity for Anglican clergymen to pursue and it is worth noting that there is some evidence that these clergymen did not maintain a strict demarcation between their religious vocation and their occult activities. Although few of the Order's documents have survived, most being deliberately destroyed, those which remain are sufficient to show that on occasions various churches were themselves used for magical ceremonies.⁴⁹⁹ At the Tenebres service on the 17 April 1919, for example, there was held a magical initiation involving the Rev. Will Reason, the Rev. F. N. Heazell and Miss C.M. Stoddart, all three of them being Temple Chiefs.⁵⁰⁰ As an illustration of where the blend of orthodoxy and heterodoxy could lead it is useful to consider a few of the details. The purpose of this ceremony was apparently to elevate Miss Stoddart to the even higher Grade of Magus which, in terms of spiritual consciousness, was but one Grade removed from attaining Divine status, and it involved the three forming a symbolic triangle with Miss Stoddart at the apex, receiving an influx of spiritual power. In the event, the ceremony was unsuccessful, as Miss Stoddart resisted the influx of 'astral light' because she felt under attack and that it was 'evil'. But it was also significant in terms of the

⁴⁹⁷ George Mills Harper, *Yeats's Golden Dawn*, p. 128.

⁴⁹⁸ Papers in a private collection described by Gilbert, *The Golden Dawn Companion*, p. 179 as 'Private Collection A', p. 179.

⁴⁹⁹ In addition to Stoddart's *Light-bearers of Darkness*, see Harper, *Yeats's Golden Dawn*, p. 155.

⁵⁰⁰ This is described in Stoddart's *Light-bearers of Darkness*, pp. 137-138 and at greater length in her unpublished typescript 'Investigations into the Foundations of the Order G.D. & R.R. et A.C. and the source of its Teachings'. See Gilbert, *The Golden Dawn Companion*, p. 178.

history of the Order for it appeared to begin a process of considerable doubt, and even paranoia, in Miss Stoddart, regarding the source of the Order's teachings which she subsequently concluded were 'evil.' This soon led to her expulsion and the temporary closure of the Temple.⁵⁰¹

Placing the Golden Dawn in Perspective

Both Heazell and Reason were orthodox clergy who occupied positions of respect and even influence within the Church. Their involvement in this extraordinary ceremony and their willingness to allow a church to be used in this manner is difficult to assess without a better understanding of the intellectual climate of research and experimentation which surrounded the Golden Dawn, and indeed, *fin-de-siècle* spirituality. There is a danger, however, in attempting to base such an assessment on the current views of the Golden Dawn which are drawn from subsequent knowledge of its considerable influence on esotericism and of the publication of most of its secrets in the late 1930s. It is important to stress that this knowledge was not available to the clergy who ended up in its ranks.

Within the rapidly growing literature dealing with modern esotericism and occultism, the Golden Dawn is portrayed, almost without exception, as one of the most important and influential groups. R. A. Gilbert states that it is the 'foremost esoteric, and later magical, initiatic Order of the late 19th and early 20th centuries'.⁵⁰² Jocelyn Godwin considers that the Order 'would virtually redefine the British occult world for the twentieth century' whereas Daniel Van Egmond has stated that the Order is one of the three 'most influential occults movements of Western Europe'.⁵⁰³ Henrik Bogdan

⁵⁰¹ Miss Stoddart discussed the situation at great length with W. B. Yeats, covered in Harper's *Yeats's Golden Dawn*, pp. 9, 121, 126-145, 147, 160, 162, 175, 193-197, 308. Further detail relevant to the Anglican clergymen involved is discussed in Chapter 8.

⁵⁰² R. A. Gilbert, 'Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn' in *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, I, 544.

⁵⁰³ Joscelyn Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment*, p. 223.

has referred to the Order as ‘the most influential of all nineteenth-century occultist initiatory societies’.⁵⁰⁴ Although this view, which in one form or another is found in many other recent works, is not challenged in its entirety here, it will be argued subsequently that such an assessment must also take account of the fact that the considerable influence of the Golden Dawn on esoteric movements in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries owes a major debt to the renewed interest in occultism which began in the so-called counter-culture of the 1960s and gathered momentum thereafter.⁵⁰⁵

A comparison between Anglo-Catholicism and the Golden Dawn may be useful in this regard. Whereas the modern Anglican Church has demonstrably been shaped by the powerful influence of Anglo-Catholicism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, that influence has continued to decline from the late 1940s onwards.⁵⁰⁶ It remains an influence but one significantly diminished from its heyday between the World Wars. While the two bodies are, of course, entirely different in size and other numerous respects, the situation is almost the reverse with the Golden Dawn.⁵⁰⁷ Between 1888 and 1939 membership of the Order, including that of its three immediate schismatic successors never extended beyond seven hundred men and women, many of whom were inactive in the Order after their initiation, and by the late 1930s the Golden

⁵⁰⁴ Van Egmond, ‘Western Esoteric Schools’, p. 311. The other two ‘most influential’ cited by Van Edmond being the Theosophical Society and the Mystica Mystica Aeterna, which was Rudolf Steiner’s Masonic society within the German Theosophical Society, 1906-1914.

⁵⁰⁵ With regard to the Golden Dawn Christopher McIntosh has observed ‘Mathers created an order of such vitality that its impact is being felt today perhaps more strongly than ever’. See *The Devil’s Bookshelf* (Wellingborough: Aquarian, 1985), p. 112. Emphasis on the growing influence of the Golden Dawn in the second part of the twentieth century is not to deny, of course, that some important occult groups of the early twentieth century, such as Dion Fortune’s ‘Fraternity of the Inner Light’, Paul Foster Case’s ‘Builders of the Adytum’ (BOTA), Aleister Crowley’s ‘Ordo Templi Orientis’ (OTO), and A. E. Waite’s Fellowship of the Rosy Cross (FRC) were particularly influenced by the Golden Dawn and it needs noting that in each case their founder was a member of the Order. Nevertheless, their membership remained extremely small. These, in turn, influenced the formation of other groups. For example, Crowley’s OTO influenced the German ‘Fraternitas Saturni’. See S. Edred Flowers, *Fire & Ice: Magical Teachings of Germany’s Greatest Secret Occult Order* (St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn, 1990).

⁵⁰⁶ As noted in virtually all recent histories of Anglicanism but see Pickering’s *Anglo-Catholicism*; Ivan Clutterbuck, *Marginal Catholics* (Leominster: Gracewing Fowler Wright Books, 1993), pp. 234-275; Reed, *Glorious Battle*, pp. xix-xxiv. Wilkinson has observed that the Community of the Resurrection reached a ‘peak membership of 85 in the late 1950s’ but had declined to only about a dozen active members by the year 2009. See Wilkinson, *A Tale of Two Monasteries*, p. 15.

⁵⁰⁷ The same can be said for the organisations founded by Aleister Crowley.

Dawn in its various schismatic manifestations had become largely moribund.⁵⁰⁸ By 1939 in Britain only the Hermes Temple in Bristol survived with a very small membership of perhaps between 30 and 40 people and it continued a process of slow decline until its closure around 1962.⁵⁰⁹ The publication of most of the Order's secret rituals and instructional papers between 1937 and 1940 was claimed to be justified by the renegade Hermes Temple member, Israel Regardie, precisely on the grounds that he believed that the Order was soon to close permanently and that its valuable teaching would otherwise be lost to the world.⁵¹⁰ Other than Regardie's exposure, until the publication of John Symonds' biography in 1951 of the most notorious member of the Golden Dawn, Aleister Crowley, very little was published which explicitly mentioned the Order.⁵¹¹ From 1888 to circa 1939 such influence as did emanate from the Golden Dawn relates more to the powerful way in which it evidently affected and shaped the lives of some of its individual members who themselves went on to exercise influence in both the esoteric and broader world.⁵¹²

Moreover, if there is a degree of irony in the apparent fact that the influence of the Golden Dawn became directly important only after it had ceased to function, it would nevertheless be mistaken to attribute its posthumous success solely to the widespread revival of interest in occult and esoteric matters which began in the 1960s. Putting aside its unproven and probably false claims to an ancient pedigree, as an organisation the

⁵⁰⁸ The exception is the New Zealand Temple which continued to have a sizeable membership until its closure in 1978. Possibly due to its isolation the Temple had virtually no influence outside of New Zealand. In his *Golden Dawn Companion*, Gilbert states that 'after 1916 nothing further is known of its history'; *Golden Dawn Companion*, p. 42. This is no longer the case and a detailed history is presented in Chapter 7.

⁵⁰⁹ Gilbert states that the Hermes Temple survived until the 'late 1960's', *Golden Dawn Companion*, p. 42. While this may be correct the impression is gained from a letter from one of the Hermes Chiefs dated 1963 that the Temple had ceased to function by 1962. Letter in Private Collection and included here as Appendix Ten.

⁵¹⁰ See Israel Regardie, *My Rosicrucian Adventure* (Chicago: Aries Press, 1936).

⁵¹¹ The exceptions were the works of three ex-members of the Golden Dawn: those of Crowley himself, the writings of Dion Fortune, and the autobiography of A.E. Waite which appeared in 1938. These works appeared to receive minimal public or critical attention and sold very few copies.

⁵¹² Besides the well known examples of W.B. Yeats, Arthur Machen, Algernon Blackwood, A.E. Waite, and Evelyn Underhill, along with the occultists Aleister Crowley, Dion Fortune and Paul Foster Case, there was also a number of professional men and women of high educational attainment who achieved success in their own fields. See chapters 7 and 8.

Golden Dawn was *sui generis*. Until the late nineteenth century no similar organisation is known to have existed in the West.⁵¹³ Certainly, it shared some common features with Freemasonry and with various esoteric and paramasonic organisations in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries but no evidence has emerged, beyond a few superficial similarities, to show that any previous, or contemporary organisation, either developed a similar system of practical occult or spiritual training or served as a realistic paradigm for the Order. Such influence as did emanate from the Theosophical Society founded in 1875 by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, Anna Kingsford's Christian esotericism, and other nineteenth-century esoteric movements, is part of the subject of the next chapter, but an emerging theme of this study will be that the Golden Dawn was the product of antiquarian, if not scholarly, research motivated by a desire to experience supernatural communion with Divinity and, indeed, to become divine. To this degree, it will be argued, the genesis of the Golden Dawn is congruent with that of the Anglo-Catholic revival, differing in scope but not in substance.

Stoddart Martin has observed that 'The Golden Dawn was permeated by an atmosphere of intellectual ardour' and, citing Ellic Howe, states, 'The Golden Dawn has been described as an occult "university", and it had a somewhat academic aura'.⁵¹⁴

While its rituals and theoretical dogma drew on a considerable body of material, both well known and obscure, relating to the occult and theurgy, much of it deriving from Renaissance and subsequent sources, these were syncretized in a way that was

⁵¹³ Excluding the putative ancient mystery schools and assuming that they taught magical techniques. Some of the various organisations claiming to be Rosicrucian have apparently provided some instruction on occult matters, such as alchemy, but there is little observable similarity between these and the teachings of the Golden Dawn. See the following by Christopher McIntosh, *The Rose Cross and the Age of Reason*; *The Rosy Cross Unveiled*; and *Eliphas Levi and the French Occult Revival*.

⁵¹⁴ Stoddard Martin, *Orthodox Heresy*, p. 101. Howe states, 'The detailed study of the principles of Ritual Magic as set forth in the complete G. D. system requires as much application as any academic discipline might require... During the 1890s the Order represented the equivalent of a Hermetic University, with an exacting series of examinations leading to the equivalent of a post-graduate degree... This synthesis was mainly the creation of Samuel Liddell MacGregor Mathers (1854-1918), an extraordinary man by any standard of assessment'. See Howe, *Magicians of the Golden Dawn*, p. xxii.

entirely new and unique.⁵¹⁵ Within the space of a mere four or five years the majority of the Golden Dawn system of magic was fully developed, linking together in a coherent and novel manner such diverse material as: the Chaldean Oracles, the work of the Elizabethan magician Dr. John Dee, the Kabbalistic writings of Christian Knorr von Rosenroth, astrology, geomancy, elements of Jewish magic, Eastern 'Tatwas' taken from the ancient Vedas, Christian and Hebrew angelology, the occult theories of the nineteenth-century French mage, Eliphas Levi, along with concepts adapted from the Rosicrucian manifestoes, Christian mysticism and nineteenth-century Egyptophilia. The synthesis went far beyond producing written manuscripts, and utilised a large numbers of diagrams and physical apparatus, many of which were carefully painted and coloured according to a complex scheme of colouring which was itself a creation of the Order founders, and which was deemed to be an integral part of the theory and practice of magic.⁵¹⁶

Although the sources of much, but certainly not all, of this material can be readily identified, neither the method nor the inspiration behind the manner of synthetic development can be easily seen. A great deal of the material is simply attributed to either MacGregor Mathers or William Westcott, but a significant portion remains without attribution, and no records have survived as to the genesis of the system itself.⁵¹⁷ There is little doubt, however, that a considerable amount of the research necessary for its production occurred in the Reading-Room of the British Museum where Mathers and other members researched rare manuscripts, particularly those from

⁵¹⁵ Most of the Golden Dawn magical techniques and the associated rituals, while drawing on historical sources, appear to be entirely new to the Order.

⁵¹⁶ The origin of or influences on the Golden Dawn theory and system of colouring, along with the application of these to various ritual objects have not been identified.

⁵¹⁷ Claims were made in some of the Order instructional papers that material was received from unknown superiors through the magical efforts of Moina Mathers using an implement known as the 'Ring and Disc' which was supposed to operate somewhat similar to an Ouija Board. No records survive of these supposed sessions, if they ever existed, and it is notable that this method would be extremely time consuming and unwieldy. See Francis King (ed.), *Astral Projection, Ritual Magic, and Alchemy*, pp. 14-19.

Renaissance times, and also, allegedly, actually performed occult work.⁵¹⁸ To the degree that this invites a charge similar to that levelled against the Anglo-Catholicism of Dearmer and those advocating English usage, namely that the Golden Dawn was born out of British Museum or Antiquarian Occultism, it highlights an important fact about not merely the Golden Dawn in particular, but also the *fin-de-siècle* occult revival in general. In contrast to the late twentieth century interest in the occult, which began in the 1960s and was closely tied to changes in Western youth culture, the spiritual and occult revival in the nineteenth century, like that of the Renaissance, was more deeply rooted in the antiquarian research of scholars, both amateur and professional.⁵¹⁹ Daniel Lawrence O'Keefe has described the most recent occult revival as, 'Basically... an interaction between a youth movement and the publishing industry'.⁵²⁰ While this may be an overstatement it may not be coincidental that there is little, if any, evidence that any of the modern occult groups, which base their teachings and ritual practice on the Golden Dawn and are considerably less secretive than the original Order, have been either influenced to any extent by contemporary research or successful in attracting scholars to their ranks.⁵²¹

In terms of comparing the two periods from the perspective of scholarly interest Mircea Eliade has commented that a 'significant difference' lies in the fact that whereas 'the nineteenth-century writers' involvement in the occult was not accompanied by a comparable curiosity on the part of historians of ideas, the reverse situation has come

⁵¹⁸ Florence Farr is supposed to have made magical paintings of Egyptian gods and goddesses in the British Museum and supposedly met an Egyptian adept in astral form. See Mary K. Greer, *Women of the Golden Dawn: Rebels and Priestesses*, p. 86, 166-167.

⁵¹⁹ Besides the work in the British Museum and other libraries by members of the Golden Dawn, reference could be made to vast compilation of material necessary for Madame Blavatsky to produce her well known *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine* (numerous editions) or to the scholarship of the Theosophist G. R. S. Mead (1863-1933) on Gnosticism. Again, A.E. Waite's 'Fellowship of the Rosy Cross' was built on research he had conducted for his books, some of which was undertaken in the British Museum (see page 17). I am not aware of any recent or contemporary occult organisation grounded on such antiquarianism.

⁵²⁰ O'Keefe, *Stolen Lightning: The Social Theory of Magic*, p. 564.

⁵²¹ Examination of their curricula shows that these consist almost entirely of Golden Dawn material with a few minor changes. Notable exceptions are the American organisations Builders of the Adytum,

about in the past thirty or forty years ...' and 'contemporary scholarship had produced a number of invaluable works which radically modified our understanding and appreciation of the esoteric tradition'.⁵²² As examples, Eliade cites the work of Gershom Scholem, Henri Corbin, Antoine Faivre, Gerard van Rijnbeck, Frances Yates and others. Notwithstanding their academic value, described by Eliade as 'invaluable', there is little evidence that the work of these scholars has had any impact on the Western esoteric tradition itself that is comparable to that exercised by nineteenth and early twentieth century writers. This is in contrast to the occasional, and presumably unconscious, academic tendency today to cite works as authoritative references which are themselves part of the most recent occult revival, and suspect in terms of historical objectivity.⁵²³

With regard to British Museum occultism and the Golden Dawn, several associates of MacGregor Mathers later recalled regularly meeting him or seeing him there. The prolific writer on occult, esoteric and Masonic matters, A. E. Waite, was himself a frequent user of the Museum but noted that in comparison with his own labours Mathers was 'a denizen of the Reading-Room' for months at a time.⁵²⁴

It was in or about 1883 -- when I, as a young man, was haunting the British Museum, trying many paths of search -- that I observed continually the lean figure

founded by ex-Golden Dawn member Paul Foster Case (1886-1954) and the Societas Rosicruciana in America founded by George Winslow Plummer (1876-1944) circa 1912 and which survived until the 1980s. Both organisations mixed Golden Dawn teachings with additional material developed by their founders. See R. A. Gilbert, 'The Lost Step-Child: Tale of the Societas Rosicruciana in America' in *Proceedings of the Golden Dawn Conference: London 1997* (Chippenham: Antony Rowe, 1998), pp. 137-157.

⁵²² Mircea Eliade, 'The Occult and the Modern World', in *Occultism, Witchcraft and Cultural Fashions: Essays in Comparative Religions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), pp. 54-55. Eliade may be overstating his case somewhat. A scholarly examination of various European esoteric groups can be found in Thomas Frost's *The Secret Societies of the European Revolution: 1776-1876*, 2 vols (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1876).

⁵²³ O'Keefe, *Stolen Lightning*, p. 564. A number of scholarly publications have made reference to the many works on the Golden Dawn by Patrick Zalewski. Mr Zalewski is a proclaimed occultist and a number of his historical claims for the Order appear to lack evidential support.

⁵²⁴ A. E. Waite, 'Notes of the Month: Appreciation of S.L. MacGregor Mathers', *The Occult Review*, 29, No. 4, (April 1919), pp. 197.

of a fellow-student frequenting the Reading-Room and pursuing kindred quests. He was... a much more faithful visitor than myself, even in those days. He might be found in the early morning and still late in the evening. The closing time was then 7 or 8 pm, according to the season, and at those hours he would be seen struggling with mammoth collections of books towards the central counter. I got to know that they were occult books, like my own gatherings...⁵²⁵

A similar account is presented by W.B. Yeats in his *Autobiographies*:

At the British Museum Reading-Room I often saw a man of thirty-six or thirty-seven, in a brown velveteen coat, with a gaunt resolute face, and an athletic body, who seemed, before I knew his name, or knew the nature of his studies, a figure of romance... He was called... MacGregor Mathers, and he... had copied many manuscripts on magic ceremonial and doctrine in the British Museum, and was to copy many more in Continental libraries, and it was through him mainly that I began certain studies and experiences...⁵²⁶

Amongst others who encountered Mathers for the first time at the British Museum was his future wife Mina Bergson, sister of the philosopher Henri Bergson.⁵²⁷ Mina, or Moina as she preferred to be called, is an important figure in Golden Dawn history as she was the first member to be admitted to the Order and continued to head the schismatic faction remaining loyal to Mathers for ten years after his death until her own in 1928.⁵²⁸ She was also stated to be the source of some of the Golden Dawn teaching which she received by an occult method known as 'the Ring and the Disc', involving a

⁵²⁵ Ibid, pp. 197-199.

⁵²⁶ W. B. Yeats, *Autobiographies* (London: Macmillan & Son, 1961), pp. 182-183.

⁵²⁷ Mary K. Greer, *Women of the Golden Dawn*, p. 45.

⁵²⁸ Greer, *Women of the Golden Dawn*, pp. 348-358; Francis King, *Ritual Magic in England*, pp. 141-151.

laborious method of obtaining the text of documents letter by letter.⁵²⁹ The actress and writer Florence Farr was another prominent member of the Order who carried out a great deal of her own research on occult subjects at the British Museum Reading-Room where she too encountered Mathers.⁵³⁰

If there is abundant evidence, therefore, that Mathers, Westcott and many other members of the Order carried out considerable research on a wide range of occult subjects at the British Museum and which, in many cases, served as the basis for subsequent books by them, such evidence gives few examples, beyond the general study of occultism and magic, of manifest links between their study at the British Museum and Golden Dawn instructional material.⁵³¹ While it may be a reasonable presumption that years of study devoted to esoteric subjects, including time at the British Museum, informed the production of a large body of ritual and magical material between the years 1888 and 1893, few documents survive, if they ever existed, to reveal the genesis of the bulk of this material. Indeed, and perhaps appropriately for an organisation of this

⁵²⁹ See fn. 474. Moina Mathers was a graduate of the Slade School and an accomplished artist. She contributed significantly to the painting and design of the Golden Dawn Vault and produced other diagrams for the instructional papers.

⁵³⁰ Yeats, *Autobiographies*, p. 122. Study at the British Museum also appeared to be a frequent preoccupation of the members of the Hermetic Society of Eight which included amongst its eight members both Westcott and Mathers. This short-lived society was formed in 1883 but dormant a mere two years later. Apparently intended as a 'practical and not visionary' organisation, scholars such as R. A. Gilbert have suggested the possibility that the foundational documents for the Golden Dawn rituals, the so-called 'Golden Dawn Cipher Manuscripts', were derived from 'an outline draft of the intended ceremonies of the Society of Eight'.⁵³⁰ In the few surviving documents and letters relating to the Hermetic Society of Eight there is no evidence to support this suggestion but it is clear from correspondence between the members that several of them, and particularly Mathers, were engaged in studying occult manuscripts and books at the Museum, along with recommending and lending works to one another. None of the works referred to in these letters, however, nor the comments by Mathers and Westcott, reveal a direct and familial relationship with the Golden Dawn curriculum except in the sense of probably providing useful background information on the Western occult tradition. See R. A. Gilbert, 'Provenance Unknown: A Tentative Solution to the Riddle of the Cipher Manuscript of the Golden Dawn', in *The Complete Golden Dawn Cipher Manuscript* by Darcy Kuntz (Edmonds, WA: Holmes Publishing, 1996), pp. 17-26; R. A. Gilbert, 'Supplement to "Provenance Unknown": The Origins of the Golden Dawn' in *The Golden Dawn Sourcebook*, ed. Darcy Kuntz (Edmonds, WA: Holmes Publishing, 1996), pp. 11-13.

⁵³¹ Considerable material was drawn from various sources, such as Agrippa and Dr. Dee but these were then adapted, expanded and deployed in unique ways that are not contained in the original sources.

nature, considerable mystery continues to surround both the origin of the Order, and the manner in which its rituals and teachings were developed.⁵³²

What then was the source of the Golden Dawn corpus? According to the 'official' history of the Golden Dawn, that is to say, the history imparted by its creators MacGregor Mathers and William Westcott, the Order owes its existence to an Anglican clergyman who in the first half of the 1880s came into the possession of documents written in cipher and which, when decoded, describe in abbreviated outline the five rituals of the 'outer' or 'First Order'.⁵³³ The 'history' claims that this clergyman subsequently passed these manuscripts on to Westcott, who performed the decoding 'by the help of a book in the British Museum'.⁵³⁴ The clergyman was the Revd A. F. A. Woodford who had 'taken his Licentiate in Theology at Durham and, after some years as a country vicar, had taken up residence in Notting Hill where he also held a curacy'.⁵³⁵ Available information on Woodford appears limited although he was evidently a keen and respected scholar of Masonic history, a founder of the Masonic research Lodge Quatuor Coronati, and, according to one account, 'a very learned Hermetist and member of a very ancient universal Rosicrucian Society, composed of students of both sexes'.⁵³⁶ Accounts differ as to how Woodford acquired the manuscripts and in recent years alternative and speculative theories have been advanced as to how the Golden Dawn rituals came into existence.⁵³⁷ For the present purpose it is sufficient to note that while there is agreement amongst all commentators that aspects of the 'official' history are the fictional creation of Westcott there does not appear to be

⁵³² Very little work, scholarly or otherwise, has yet been published on tracing the documentary sources of Golden Dawn.

⁵³³ This was the *Polygraphiae libri VI* (Cologne: Apud Ioannem Birckmann & Theodorum Baumium, 1571; first edition, Basel: M. Furter, 1518) of the Abbot Johannes Trithemius (1462-1516) which contained various magical alphabets or codes. See Noel Brann, *The Abbot Trithemius: The Renaissance of Monastic Humanism* and Adam McLean (ed), *The Steganographia of Johannes Trithemius, Book I* (Edinburgh: Magnum Opus Books, 1982), p. 7.

⁵³⁴ A.E Waite, *The Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross* (London: Rider & Son, 1924), p. 584.

⁵³⁵ Francis King, *Ritual Magic in England*, p. 42.

⁵³⁶ Waite, *The Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross*, p. 581.

⁵³⁷ These are discussed in the works previously cited of R. A. Gilbert, Ellic Howe, Francis King, A.E. Waite and that of Darcy Kuntz. Some further attention is given to this question in Chapter 6.

any direct or compelling circumstantial evidence to favour a source alternative to that of Woodford.⁵³⁸

After performing his act of decoding the cipher in August 1887, Westcott showed the results to Mathers and after receiving the latter's report on the manuscripts offered him the role of 'co-adjutor in working up the MSS' which apparently Mathers accepted in October 1887.⁵³⁹ This cooperation entailed expanding the brief and skeletal notes into the five initiation rituals comprising the First Order known as 'the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn'.⁵⁴⁰ Although the agreement was for the pair to be 'co-adjutors' the contemporary reports indicate that Mathers performed this task alone, but it seems likely that Westcott would have contributed to the final result.

The Order was to be ruled by the founders Mathers and Westcott as two of the three 'Chiefs' and they co-opted a fellow Mason, Dr. W. R. Woodman, to complete the triad.⁵⁴¹ These three Chiefs were required to be senior members of the Second Order which consisted of adepts advanced in occult knowledge. Subsequently known as the Ordo Roseae Rubeae et Aureae Crucis (R.R. et A.C.), the ostensibly Christian Second Order consisted of three Adept grades which Westcott and Mathers subsequently added to the scheme, along with a mysterious Third Order for 'the Secret Chiefs... who dwelt solely on the astral plane'. These ten Grades, not counting the entry Grade of Neophyte, were hierarchically constructed to correspond with 'the ten Sephiroth, or Emanations of

⁵³⁸ In his autobiography Waite considers alternatives to Woodford being the source but notes that there is no evidence to favour one theory over another and felt that Westcott had not lied to him regarding the origins, *Shadows of Life and Thought* (London: Selwyn and Blount, 1938), pp. 219-230. Waite also suggests the possibility that one of the codices of the ciphers may have come from the British occultist and Freemason, Kenneth R.H. Mackenzie (1833-1886). See his *The Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross*, p. 584. R. A. Gilbert has taken up this suggestion and has advanced the theory that all the cipher manuscripts came to Westcott from Mackenzie's widow, and that it was Mackenzie who produced them. There is circumstantial evidence to support this view but it is not decisive and the reasons for rejecting Woodford as the source are not readily apparent. Gilbert presents his argument in several of his works but at length in his 'Provenance Unkown: A Tentative Solution to the Riddle of the Cipher Manuscript of the Golden Dawn' in *The Complete Golden Dawn Cipher Manuscript* ed. Darcy Kuntz, pp. 17-26. Gilbert's tentative solution is taken as fact in his *The Golden Dawn Scrapbook* (York Beach, ME: 1997), p. 5.

⁵³⁹ Kuntz, *The Golden Dawn Source Book*, p. 37.

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁴¹ Ibid.

the Kabbalistic Tree of Life'.⁵⁴² With the exception of the lowest and highest Grades, Neophyte and Ipsissimus, the structure was taken directly from the paramasonic and Christian society, Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia (SRIA), which had itself taken these from the eighteenth century German Gold-und Rosenkreuz.⁵⁴³ As will be argued subsequently, there are some indications that organisational aspects of the Golden Dawn and the R.R. et A.C. may have been influenced by the Anglo-Catholic secret society Societas Sanctae Crucis.

On the first of March 1888 a 'Warrant for the Isis-Urania Temple of the Golden Dawn in the Outer' was drawn up and later in March nine members were initiated as Neophytes at the Spring Equinox Ceremony, with Moina Bergson (later Mrs. Mathers) being the first candidate. In the First Order the members did not undertake any magical or theurgic practices until their entry into the first of the Second Order Grades known as Adeptus Minor. Whereas the First Order 'represented theoretical occultism, the Second Order existed for the working of specifically magical rituals'.⁵⁴⁴ However, this was not to occur until 1892 because the Cipher manuscripts contained no information regarding the Second Order ceremonies or curriculum, and thus the Second Order had a mere nominal existence. In that year a fully-fledged Second Order was introduced by Mathers who, according to Gilbert, 'had become dissatisfied with the limitations of the Order' and the fact that it did not 'teach its members practical magic'.⁵⁴⁵ Impressive as the First Order rituals were, at least in terms of synthesising many different mythologies of occultism or esoteric knowledge into a coherent and interrelated system, the scheme of the Second Order was more ambitious still. As noted by Gilbert, 'the Ceremony of the "5=6 Grade of Adeptus Minor" was quite unlike anything that the candidate had experienced before. It was a second initiation, not a mere progression, involving the

⁵⁴² R. A. Gilbert, *The Golden Dawn: Twilight of the Magicians*, pp. 32-33.

⁵⁴³ Christopher McIntosh, *The Rosy Cross Unveiled*, p.112; R. A. Gilbert, *The Golden Dawn: Twilight of the Magicians*, pp. 32-33.

⁵⁴⁴ R. A. Gilbert, *The Golden Dawn Companion*, pp. 98-99.

⁵⁴⁵ Gilbert, *The Golden Dawn Companion*, p. 2.

symbolic death and resurrection of the candidate' intended to lead to the Candidate becoming 'more than human'.⁵⁴⁶

A high proportion of the male members of the Order were drawn from Freemasonry and particularly from the Rosicrucian and ostensibly Christian paramasonic SRIA which in some respects was a formative influence in the origin of the Golden Dawn.⁵⁴⁷ While some of these members were undoubtedly committed Christians the Masonic link does not alone explain the Order's attraction for so many female members who in later years constituted the majority of Felkin's Stella Matutina nor for those clergy and other male members who were not Freemasons.⁵⁴⁸ In terms of obtaining an understanding of the Christian-Golden Dawn nexus it may be useful, therefore, to consider further some of the ways in which the search by many Christians for actual experience and verification of the reality of the supernatural manifested themselves.

Re-enchanting and 'infusing Christianity with new life'.

The Tractarian and Oxford movements leading to the Anglo-Catholic revival, are often characterised as, in part, a reaction to a perceived crisis within the Church and within an increasingly secularised and irreligious society to which the Church had little to offer. The famous sermon delivered to the Judges of Assize in Oxford by John Keble in 1833 is recognized as the catalyst for a far-reaching process of spiritual regeneration within

⁵⁴⁶ Gilbert, *The Golden Dawn: Twilight of the Magicians*, pp. 36-37. It received unusual praise from A. E. Waite, who was generally critical of most matters concerning the Order: '...it could not be denied that the culminating Grade (Adeptus Minor), as the system was then developed, had the root-matter of a greater scheme than had ever dawned in the consciousness of any maker of Masonic degrees under any Lodge or Chapter, Conclave or Preceptory, in the whole wide world'. See Waite, *Shadows of Life and Thought*, p. 161.

⁵⁴⁷ Gilbert, *The Golden Dawn: Twilight of the Magicians*, p. 32.

⁵⁴⁸ Although complete lists of membership of the Stella Matutina are not available, the partial list published by R. A. Gilbert reveals that of forty-three listed members, twenty-three are women. Gilbert also provides a list of those who applied for membership of the 'Holy Order of the Golden Dawn' (also known as the Independent and Rectified Rite) under Waite's governance. Nearly half the eighty-one names are female. See Gilbert, *The Golden Dawn Companion*, pp. 166-173.

the Church, and carried forward by the Tractarian and Oxford Movements.⁵⁴⁹ This regeneration attempted to emphasize, and indeed, elaborate that quality which distinguishes a religious position from a secular one, namely belief in the supernatural. As discussed previously, this entailed a recovery of the beliefs and ideals which enthused the ancient Church Fathers and, accordingly, an emphasis was placed on the importance of making contact with supernatural Divinity through the ancient rituals and sacraments of the Church. An implication of such regeneration was clearly that ancient truths had somehow been lost and therefore needed to be recovered, a theme which was discussed at length in myriad forms throughout the Tracts and such influential works as *Lux Mundi* (1889) and Dean Inge's *Christian Mysticism* (1899). Evidently, such recovery required scholarship and the type of research undertaken by Dearmer in the British Museum.

Equally, the revival of forgotten religious truths and methods was particularly amenable to receiving influence from two other discernable yet inter-related currents of thought: the appeal of Romanticism and its connection with esotericism, and the Renaissance notion of *prisca theologia* which clearly had application to the Anglo-Catholic revival, but was also a formative factor in the occult revival. *Pari passu*, the endeavour to experience the supernatural, and to be worthy of such experience, entailed a role for the individual believer. What could, or should, he or she do to gain such experience? The writings of such a Church Father as Clement of Alexandria, which gave importance to the idea of believers becoming 'godlike' and individually ascending to God through various stages, clearly involved an active role for the individual. Whether or not this would extend as far as, to use Keyserling's phrase, Christians 'becoming their own saviours', it would and did inevitably lead to Christians seeking

⁵⁴⁹ Pickering, *Anglo-Catholicism*, p. 26; Webb, *Flight from Reason*, p. 76.

the means for such salvation, or at least the supernatural experiences which promised such salvation.

The numerous occult movements of the *fin-de-siècle*, and especially those of such importance as the Theosophical Society, Anna Kingsford's Hermetic Society or the Golden Dawn, all of which emphasized the recovery of lost supernatural truths, were evidently tempting alternative or supplementary paths for the Christian aspirant seeking the possibility of contact with Divinity. Others included Spiritualism and psychical research which, for a period, were a significant preoccupation of the Church of England concerned about the degree to which these phenomena were attracting not merely large numbers of people, but Church members and clergy themselves.⁵⁵⁰ Public interest began to develop in the late nineteenth century and is considered to have reached a zenith in Britain in the 1930s with more than '2,000 properly constituted local spiritualist societies' and an estimated 'total number of committed members... in excess of a quarter of a million'.⁵⁵¹ In his recent study of the relationship between spiritualism and Christianity, Rene Kollar has observed that the subject was of major interest to the Anglican Church and a particular focus of the 1920 Lambeth Conference along with the Church's position on Christian Science and Theosophy.⁵⁵² Many bishops, including the Archbishop of Canterbury, discussed at considerable length the merits and otherwise of spiritualism, Christian Science and Theosophy and resolved to establish a committee to consider these three phenomena as separate issues and at greater depth.⁵⁵³ In the account Kollar provides it is of interest to note that while the perceived dangers of these occult movements are raised and discussed the Conference resolved not to present these in a negative light and to avoid any semblance of condemnation. Essentially, they agreed to

⁵⁵⁰ Jenny Hazelgrove, *Spiritualism and British Society between the Wars*; Rene Kollar, *Searching for Raymond: Anglicanism, Spiritualism, and Bereavement between the Two World Wars*.

⁵⁵¹ Kollar, *Searching for Raymond*, p. 77.

⁵⁵² Kollar, *Searching for Raymond*, pp. 33-75.

⁵⁵³ Kollar, *Searching for Raymond*, pp. 58-71.

investigate all three with an open and even scientific, mind but with a view to providing Anglican solutions to the theological, moral and practical issues involved.

This committee was the forerunner to a more comprehensive ecclesiastical committee appointed by Archbishop Cosmo Lang in October 1936 to study spiritualism and related matters, including Theosophy. The committee met for two years and received a vast amount of ‘evidence’ and submissions from spiritualists, occultists and Anglicans both in favour of and opposed to spiritualism. The full report presented in 1939 remains embargoed at the request of Archbishop Lang but leaked copies of a ‘majority’ and a ‘minority’ report show that the majority favoured a relatively uncritical and cautiously positive view of spiritualism.⁵⁵⁴ What is significant about the Committee and its report for the present purpose is the serious interest taken by the Anglican Church in predominantly occult and esoteric matters and a recognition by the majority of the committee that, notwithstanding certain concerns, the ‘modern movements of thought connected with Spiritualism, Christian Science, and Theosophy join with the Christian Church in protesting against a materialistic view of the universe and at some points emphasize partially neglected aspects of truth’.⁵⁵⁵

With a few notable exceptions to be considered later, there is little evidence in present times of any comparable interest in the occult by the Anglican Church and it is difficult to conceive of any contemporary impetus for a similar ecclesiastical investigation, despite an apparent widespread interest in the occult. It is likely that this is at least partially attributable to the dramatic decline in the membership of both the Church and the occult movements in question, along with the increasing secularisation of Western society that has occurred since the latter half of the twentieth century.⁵⁵⁶ The extent of this secularisation might be seen in the comment widely reported in the media and attributed to Archbishop Rowan Williams in the week before Christmas 2007 that

⁵⁵⁴ Kollar, *Searching for Raymond*, p. 60.

⁵⁵⁵ Kollar, *Searching for Raymond*: ‘Resolutions of the 1920 Lambeth Conference’, p. 155.

⁵⁵⁶ A particular exception is the so-called ‘New Age’ movement, discussed in Chapter 9.

the account of the Magi visiting the Christ child is 'nothing but a legend'.⁵⁵⁷ To this degree modern Anglican believers who share the Archbishop's view might be seen as meeting the description of Wouter Hanegraaff made with respect to nineteenth and twentieth century esotericists:

The profoundest irony of the history of Western esotericism is that its 19th and 20th century representatives are largely so deeply influenced by the very worldview to which they object, that what they present as enchanted alternatives turn out to be in fact products of the secularisation process.⁵⁵⁸

In this context Hanegraaff is referring to what he sees as a radical shift in the view of the physical world which has occurred since the period known as the Enlightenment. This change, which Hanegraaff asserts has redefined the conception of 'magic' and, it could equally be argued, has redefined the concept of religion, entails viewing supernatural phenomena as existing alongside, yet entirely divorced from, the non-supernatural, mechanistic processes and events of the physical universe. Whereas previously the objects of magic, and indeed all religious phenomena, were the concomitants of a divinely created physical world which could, therefore, be investigated and regarded as part of a uniform natural order, they are now relegated to being a function of the individual imagination. Their existence, therefore, is defined in terms of social or individual utility, and based on meaning bestowed by convention or individual choice. Thus, unlike the physical world which is considered to have objective existence independently of human or any supernatural consciousness, the world of supernature is entirely subjective and based in the psyche, even when it may be

⁵⁵⁷ Apparently the Archbishop's doubt as to the veracity of the story was grounded on the fact that the sole reference to the story is found only in St. Matthew's gospel, a process of reasoning that clearly has the capacity to be extended to many other Christian beliefs.

⁵⁵⁸ Wouter J. Hanegraaff, 'Magic V: 18th-20th Century', in *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, II, 741.

conceded that the latter can determine effects which have objective existence. Within the terms of Hanegraaff's account, modern magicians and esotericists, and presumably Christians, have since the Enlightenment, either accepted a psychologised reduction of their magical worldview or reacted against it through 're-enchanting' the mechanistic and materialistic world by insisting that scientific and impersonal explanations can be subsumed under valid occult or supernatural worldviews which endow meaning to an otherwise purposeless world.⁵⁵⁹

While Hanegraaff is concerned to describe changes impacting on concepts of magic, occultism and other systems of esoteric thought allied to these, his observations have some applicability to theological and doctrinal explanations put forward by many Christian writers over the past two centuries. Further attention will be given to this important topic subsequently but we may note the growing tendency since the First World War for Christian apologists and theologians to have recourse to psychological explanations for Christian doctrine.⁵⁶⁰ Wilkinson has observed that interest in psychology and psychoanalysis became particularly marked following the Great War and that an 'increasing number of clergy underwent psychotherapy, including Michael Ramsey, Joost de Blank and Henry de Candole.'⁵⁶¹ Typically, such psychologised Christian accounts were not intended to supplant more traditional views but intended to strengthen them and, it is presumed, provide greater appeal through utilising more contemporary, and seemingly more scientific, argument. Amongst many examples can be found Evelyn Underhill's treatment of mysticism and psychology, that of Hugh M. Stuttford, and some of the works of the Dean of Chester, F. S. M. Bennett, in particular his *A Soul in the Making or Psycho-synthesis*, which attempts to blend Anglo-

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁰ For example, Kenneth Kirk, *Some Principles of Moral Theology* (London: Longmans, 1965, originally published 1920); T.W. Pym, *Psychology and the Christian Life* (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1921).

⁵⁶¹ Wilkinson, *The Community of the Resurrection*, pp. 171-173. He refers to Archbishop Michael Ramsey (1904-1988), Joost de Blank (1908-1968), Archbishop of Cape Town, and Bishop Henry de Candole (1895-1971).

Catholicism with psychoanalysis.⁵⁶² The Community of the Resurrection, with which Bennett and other Golden Dawn clergy was closely associated, appeared especially open to 'the new post-war awareness of psychological factors in human motivation' and 'several of the many new books on psychology and religion were given favourable reviews' in the Community's periodical *CR Quarterly*.⁵⁶³

The reaction against the secularisation of modern life and materialistic philosophy ~~were~~^{was} also a constant theme of Christian rhetoric and it is of interest that for many Anglican writers, and particularly Anglo-Catholics, this provided a context in which popular interest in occultism was seen as understandable and not necessarily undesirable. This is apparent in the reports of the committees, noted above, and in the works of many writers including Canon Cyril Hephher who had associations with various clergy who were members of the Golden Dawn.⁵⁶⁴ In his *Fruits of Silence* Hephher states 'Side by side with the synthetic process by which all that is true is recognized and preserved, there is need of a constant revivification and purifying. Of this last Ecclesia Anglicana is at the present time in need. A broom is wanted to sweep away despiritualizing conventions, the *debris* of an age of change from the slovenliness of the eighteenth to the ceremony of the nineteenth century'.⁵⁶⁵ Hephher asks why Theosophy and Christian Science are so attractive to 'so many minds' and concludes:⁵⁶⁶

⁵⁶² F. S. M. Bennett, *A Soul in the Making or Psycho-Synthesis* (Chester: Phillipson and Golder Ltd, 1924). At the time Bennett wrote this volume he was a senior member of the Golden Dawn. For other examples see Wilkinson, *The Community of the Resurrection*, p. 172; Underhill, *Mysticism*, pp. 44-69; Hugh M. Stutfield, *Mysticism and Catholicism* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1925), pp. 39-48. John Gunstone has noted that in the period 1920-1934 'some Catholics, especially those who were experienced in spiritual direction, realized how useful psychoanalysis could be in bringing peace to troubled souls. This point was made by P. T. Browning, vicar of All Saints Hook Memorial Church in Leeds and one of the organizers of the [Anglo-Catholic] Congress in that city'. See John Gunstone, *Anglo-Catholic Congresses in the Provinces 1920-1934* (London: Anglo-Catholic History Society, 2004).

⁵⁶³ Wilkinson, *The Community of the Resurrection*, pp. 171-172.

⁵⁶⁴ Examples include E. Herman, *The Meaning and Value of Mysticism*; James B. Pratt, *The Religious Consciousness* (London: Macmillan, 1920).

⁵⁶⁵ Cyril Hephher, *The Fruits of Silence* (London: Macmillan, 1915), p. 123.

⁵⁶⁶ Hephher, *The Fruits of Silence*, p. 121.

Certainly not the astonishing dogmas that they propound. It is, I believe, the method of spiritual development, the initiation into the mysteries of meditation, and the strong emphasis on the presence of God in the soul and upon the immanence of the spiritual within the material, that is the secret of their power.

Hepher's answer, and his comment that 'the synthetic process by which all that is true is recognised and preserved' points to a motivation towards occult research and practice that appears, at least in the case of Anglican clergy, to fall outside of Hanegraaff's rather sweeping characterization which he ties to the nineteenth and twentieth-century reactions to the Enlightenment. While it is undoubtedly true, and perhaps trivially so, that nineteenth and early twentieth-century clergy were subject to the same societal influences of secularisation as their esoteric counterparts, it does not seem to follow, *pace* Hanegraaff, that their interest in occultism was inexorably 'a product of the secularisation process'. Indeed, in the context of their recognising and preserving 'all that is true', the interest exercised by some Anglo-Catholic clergy appears to be consonant with that of many clergy in preceding centuries, namely that their interest in the occult forms of spirituality arose out their religious beliefs and their undoubted conviction that such occultism was not merely consistent with Christianity but actually strengthened it. Quite apart from the attention paid to the ancient mysteries by the Church Fathers, it is clear from the research of Richard Kieckhefer, for example, that the assimilation of 'certain forms of magic' to Church liturgy in the Middle Ages was largely attributable 'to the practice of magic among the clergy' and 'explicitly demonic magic...was largely the domain of priests,...as well as ordained monks with some education and esoteric interests'. In this regard, it may be noted that John Fisher (1469-1535), Bishop of Rochester and Chancellor of the University of Cambridge, has been shown to have been familiar with the 'basic texts of Renaissance Cabbalism' and

in a letter to Erasmus, Fisher wrote, 'his (Reuchlin's) scholarship delights me so hugely that in my reckoning no man alive comes closer to Pico' (Pico della Mirandola).⁵⁶⁷ Referring to Fisher's contemporary 'fellow pupils', Richard Rex has observed 'it is likely that an inclination to Cabbalistic and cognate studies was common'.⁵⁶⁸

If an interest in the Renaissance notion of a Hermetic *prisca theologia* and the work of Ficino, Pico and Agrippa, could serve as an inspirational force for John Fisher and his contemporaries, it would not be remarkable that such studies would also have found a receptive audience amongst many Anglo-Catholics, and not merely those who may have been attracted to its presence within the nineteenth-century esoteric movements of Theosophy and Hermetic Christianity espoused by Madame Blavatsky and Anna Kingsford.⁵⁶⁹ Moreover, an implied *prisca theologia* can be seen to reside in the Tractarian emphasis placed on the Church Fathers, and the emphasis and value placed on the ancient mysteries within Patristic theology. Geoffrey Rowell refers to the important role of Pusey in this regard:

Pusey was a prime mover in making the works of the Fathers more widely known, emphasizing the patristic interpretation of Scripture as setting out 'our ancient catholic truth'... In an age when Dean Gaisford (1779-1855) could dismiss the Fathers as 'sad rubbish', the forty-eight volumes which eventually comprised the *Library of the Fathers* had a particular importance. Liddon judged that 'it made thoughtful adherents of the (Tractarian) Movement feel that the Fathers were behind them, and with the Fathers that ancient undivided Church'.⁵⁷⁰

⁵⁶⁷ Richard Rex, *The Theology of John Fisher* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 59-60.

⁵⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

⁵⁶⁹ These elements of Blavatsky's and Kingsford's Movements are discussed in Chapter Six.

⁵⁷⁰ Rowell, *The Vision Glorious*, pp. 78-79. Canon Henry Parry Liddon (1829-1890) was an influential Anglican theologian and considered to be a skilled orator. He was a strong supporter of the Tractarians and a great admirer of Pusey. See the Rev. Desmond Morse-Boycott, *The Secret History of the Oxford Movement*, pp. 188-189; and S. L. Ollard, *A Short History of the Oxford Movement*, pp. 142-145.

Romanticist and Idealistic Influence

Recognition and preservation of ‘ancient truths’ was also a central tenet of the Romantic Movement with which, as Nockles has noted, the Oxford Movement was ‘in tune’.⁵⁷¹ The close and cross cultural influences of Romanticism and the Tractarian and Oxford Movements have been noted by several scholars, particularly in terms of a more emotional and ecstatic religiosity found in the later ‘Romanising’ faction of the Oxford Movement.⁵⁷² Nockles refers to Newman defining ‘heart religion’ and ‘play of mind, and elasticity of feeling as being the ‘vital elements of the Tractarian *ethos*.’ Owen has observed that a focus of Romanticism was its emphasis on ‘interiorized experience and the intuitive and emotional’ but while she confines the influence of Romanticism between 1775 and 1830, a view that does not seem to be shared by many other scholars, Webb goes so far as to assert that ‘the Oxford Movement was the product of Romanticism’⁵⁷³.

With the Tractarians the Romantic appeal was chiefly that of escape into an idealised Middle Ages when the faith had reigned supreme. Mingled with this escape there was present an element of Romanticism in its homocentric form: a re-emphasis on personal mysticism deriving on the one hand from France... and on the other from the High Romantic poetry of Coleridge.⁵⁷⁴

Aidan Nichols has taken a similar line to Owen in claiming, ‘In a sense Tractarianism was the ecclesial form of the Romantic Movement in England’, and again Stephen Prickett has stated ‘The Oxford Movement was a religious flowering of the

⁵⁷¹ Peter Benedict Nockles, *The Oxford Movement in Context*, p. 324. See also J. Lewis May, *The Oxford Movement* (London: Bodley Head, 1933), pp. 252-253.

⁵⁷² See Nockles, *The Oxford Movement in Context*, p. 197, and Stephen Prickett, *Romanticism and Religion: The Tradition of Coleridge and Wordsworth in the Victorian Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976).

⁵⁷³ Owen, *The Place of Enchantment*, p. 310; Webb, *Flight from Reason*, p. 77.

⁵⁷⁴ Webb, *Flight from Reason*, p. 77.

English Romantic Movement'.⁵⁷⁵ A similar view can also be found in Wilkinson's history of the Community of the Resurrection where he partly attributes the revival of religious communities in the Church of England, to romantic mediaevalism and notes: 'The Romantic movement... put wind into the sails of Catholicism (both Anglican and Roman). Wordsworth, like Keble, taught that there was a hidden glory in the material world, in ordinary life and people -- a belief which was conducive to the development of incarnationism and sacramentalism'.⁵⁷⁶ Insofar as the discovery of that 'hidden glory', or what Arthur McCalla has termed 'the decoding of the presence of Divinity in the beings and things of the natural world', was clearly the aim of any aspirant attracted to such a theogony, an organisation which purported to provide the means of discovery would evidently have considerable attraction. Such organisations were to be found in abundance during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but it was especially those which offered, to use Hephher's phrase, 'a method of spiritual development' or initiation leading to the actual experience of Divinity which would have had particular appeal for many. While Christianity had always offered such initiation through the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist, the phenomena of both the Oxford Movement and the occult revival would suggest that, for many Anglicans, these had been found wanting. Whereas the former reinvigorated these initiations through an emphasis on their supernatural efficacy, along with practices and doctrine which invoked the legacy of the ancient mysteries, the latter offered a myriad of different methods supposedly drawn from ancient, and often parallel, sources.⁵⁷⁷ In both cases the notion of initiation, defined by McCalla as 'an ontological metamorphosis or purification of being' was

⁵⁷⁵ Aidan Nichols, *The Panther and the Hind: A Theological History of Anglicanism* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), p. 118; Stephen Prickett, *Romanticism and Religion: The Tradition of Coleridge and Wordsworth in the Victorian Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 170.

⁵⁷⁶ Wilkinson, *The Community of the Resurrection*, p. 15.

⁵⁷⁷ The many recommendations for spiritual practices for Anglo-Catholics are too numerous to single out any number. For examples of occult methods see Regardie's *The Golden Dawn*.

influenced by Romanticism and in terms of the Christian aspirant can be seen to have formed an especially attractive nexus in the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn.⁵⁷⁸

Yet the secrecy and exclusivity of the Order were undoubtedly factors in ensuring its membership remained extremely small. Other esoteric movements of the period had a considerably greater appeal to Anglo-Catholic Christians seeking a 'metamorphosis of being' or more simply, verification of the reality of the supernatural. The measurable interest in Spiritualism, Theosophy and Christian Science have already been noted, and this will be examined further in Chapter Six.⁵⁷⁹ What should not be minimised in this context is the degree to which Anglo-Catholicism itself, arising out of the Tractarian and Oxford Movements, was a response to a similar, if not identical, need to make contact with Divinity and uncover 'the hidden glory'. The Anglican revival of such religious orders as the Community of the Resurrection was directly linked to the desire of many clergy to be united by common rules and commitments which would provide a disciplined structure and prescription for spiritual progress.⁵⁸⁰ It was recognized, for example, that the precepts, rules and practices espoused by St. Bernard, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Ignatius Loyola and others constituted disciplined means of cultivating a spiritually interior life which could lead to a mystic communion with the Divine.⁵⁸¹ Indeed, it was a sermon on the 'Disciplined Life' by B. F. Westcott, covering this very topic, which so deeply impressed Charles Gore and influenced his ideas on the establishment of the Community of the Resurrection.

⁵⁷⁸ Arthur McCalla, 'Romanticism', in *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, II, 1003.

⁵⁷⁹ Webb, *Flight from Reason*, p. 80.

⁵⁸⁰ Wilkinson., *The Community of the Resurrection*, p. 14

⁵⁸¹ Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism*, p. 173. The spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius found particular favour with a number of esotericists. Count Hermann Keyserling (1880-1946), for example, who moved widely amongst numerous esoteric and occult circles, wrote in his popular *The Travel Diary of a Philosopher* (1919), 'In the psychic world, desire really creates all reality...What inclines me to accept their (Yogi's) statements are the enormous, scarcely credible changes which are brought about in men who energetically practise the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola. These practices-invented by a psychologist of the first rank-concern themselves exclusively with the power of the imagination. The disciple must experience in imagination what he would experience in reality in case he reached his goal. And eventually he really does become transformed in accordance with his imagined ideal. They are Yogis, they have become the masters of their souls...' op.cit. I, 128.

Another factor which helped to shape Gore's views was the profound effect on him at Balliol of the teaching of Thomas Hill Green (1836-1882) and later, Green's *Lay Sermons* 'with their rejection of hedonism and their appeal for self-sacrifice'.⁵⁸² Wilkinson has observed, 'Green's influence is to be traced therefore not only in *Lux Mundi* but also in the creation of both the Christian Social Union and the Community of the Resurrection'.⁵⁸³ David Newsome has noted, with regard to the teaching of theology at Oxford, that 'as far as the "Holy Party" was concerned, the influence of T. H. Green stands out', and he refers to Melvin Richter's suggestion that Green's teaching 'profoundly affected his Oxonian pupils' in a number of ways which were to emerge in their theological views, particularly regarding the role of the Incarnation.⁵⁸⁴

Of potential interest in this context is Green's Hegelianism and his interest in the idealistic philosophy of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). Although the extensive and diverse influence of the German Romantic philosopher G. W. F. Hegel (1770-1831) on Western thought has been examined at length by scholars, recent research has claimed that Hegel was decisively influenced by the Hermetic tradition and that he was thoroughly familiar with a broad range of the Renaissance occult texts, including the works of Cornelius Agrippa and the Rosicrucian manifestoes.⁵⁸⁵ In his *Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition*, Glenn Magee asserts not merely that Hegel *can* be understood as a Hermetic thinker but *must* be so understood, and that Hegel believed the Hermetic notion that God is complete only when He becomes known by the Hermetic adept.⁵⁸⁶ Given the apparent receptivity of the Community of the Resurrection to some of its members being members of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, the question of

⁵⁸² Wilkinson, pp. 5-6. Most of Green's work, including his various lay sermons, were published after his death in 1882.

⁵⁸³ Ibid. p6.

⁵⁸⁴ David Newsome, *Two Classes of Men*, pp. 83, 119-121.

⁵⁸⁵ Glenn Alexander Magee, *Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2001).

⁵⁸⁶ Magee, *Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition*, pp. 1-17.

whether or not some Hermetic, and even Kabbalistic, influence was exerted on its founder, via T. H. Green, remains an intriguing and significant possibility.⁵⁸⁷

The teaching of both Green and Hegel have been acknowledged as having ‘a great influence on the *Lux Mundi* school’ and it is to be noted that Green’s belief that ‘reality was an organic whole, a “world of thought relations” and not a mere aggregate’ is entirely consistent with Hermetic thought.⁵⁸⁸ Indeed, von Stuckrad, in discussing the influence of the Kabbalah on Christian philosophy and theology, and the assimilation of Kabbalistic ideas by such philosophers as Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz and Hegel’s friend Friedrich Wilhelm Schelling (1755-1854), remarks, ‘When Hegel equates absolute knowledge... with the ‘self-consciousness of God’ in man, and conceives of the essence of God as the ‘thinking of thought’, because God is ‘mind’, he has entered an esoteric field of discourse’.⁵⁸⁹ Another British Hegelian and Kantian scholar, influenced by T.H. Green, and quoted favourably by Dean Inge in his *Christian Mysticism*, is the Oxford philosopher Bernard Bosanquet (1848-1923), whose understanding of religion ‘was essentially pantheistic’.⁵⁹⁰

A symbol is for Kant a perception or presentation which represents a conception neither conventionally as a mere sign, nor directly... but indirectly through a similarity between the rules which govern our reflection in the symbol and in the

⁵⁸⁷ It is of interest to note that in their *The Interpretation of the New Testament: 1861-1986*, Neill and Wright criticise the influential German theologian Ferdinand Christian Baur (1792-1860) for falling under the sway of Hegel noting that the dialectic of thesis, antithesis and synthesis is entirely inapplicable to theology and Christian origins. Whatever truth may inhere in this claim the dialectic can be made to apply to the Kabbalistic emanation theory of the Sephiroth, and therefore also to the Christian Kabbalah. See Neill and Wright, p. 23 and Kocku von Stuckrad., *Western Esotericism: A Brief History of Secret Knowledge*, p. 98. While there is clearly insufficient evidence to assert that members of the Community of the Resurrection were influenced by Hegel’s established interest in the Hermetic and Kabbalistic traditions nevertheless the concatenation of the facts that the Hegelian Green influenced Gore, *Lux Mundi* and the Community of the Resurrection, and that members of the Community joined a Hermetic Order justifies such speculation in the search for an explanation as to why they joined.

⁵⁸⁸ ‘Thomas Green Hill (1836-1882)’, in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, pp. 581-582

⁵⁸⁹ Kocku von Stuckrad, p. 81. Regarding the question of Kabbalistic influence on Leibnitz see Allison P. Coudert, *Leibnitz and the Kabbalah* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1994); Allison P. Coudert, *The Impact of the Kabbalah in the Seventeenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), pp. 308-329.

⁵⁹⁰ ‘Bernard Bosanquet (1848-1923)’, in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, pp. 187-188.

thing (or idea) symbolised... In this sense beauty is a symbol of the moral order.⁵⁹¹

Inge appends to Bosanquet's statement a definition from Goethe which he considers valuable: 'That is true symbolism where the more particular represents the more general, not as a dream or shade, but as a vivid, instantaneous revelation of the inscrutable'.⁵⁹² Whether or not Bosanquet, or Inge, has adequately expressed this aspect of Kant's thinking, it would appear that this view, endorsed by both Bosanquet and Inge, is similar to the point of identity with the first of the four characteristics of esotericism defined by Antoine Faivre. This is the notion of *correspondence* which entails the assumption 'that the various levels or "classes" of reality... similarly the visible and invisible parts of the universe, are linked through a series of correspondences. This connection is to be understood not causally but symbolically, wholly in the sense of the famous Hermetic motto "As above, so below"'.⁵⁹³

In the light of Magee's research and the claim that Hegelian idealism 'exercised a profound influence on English religious philosophy in the years between 1885 and 1914, and provided the philosophical background for the groups which produced *Lux Mundi*,' the possibility cannot be discounted that this influence provided a receptivity within some Anglo-Catholic clergy towards a Hermetic philosophy which, in the Golden Dawn, was blended with the Kabbalah and the essentially Gnostic beliefs of Rosicrucianism.⁵⁹⁴ Similarly, in the context of the Romantic influence on Anglo-Catholicism already alluded to earlier, the role of the poets William Wordsworth (1770-1850) and Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) may also be of some significance in

⁵⁹¹ Inge, *Christian Mysticism*, p. 251, fn.1.

⁵⁹² Ibid.

⁵⁹³ Von Stuckrad, *Western Esotericism*, p. 4.

⁵⁹⁴ As a young man the Archbishop of York, Cosmo Gordon Lang was heavily influenced by the philosophy of Hegel. See J. G. Gordon *Cosmo Gordon Lang* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1949), p. 12 and p.75.

terms of establishing an intellectual background conducive to Hermetic thought.⁵⁹⁵ Neill and Wright observe that Coleridge was one of the first to recognize the importance of contemporary German thought, and specifically that of Schiller, Hegel and Kant, and state that his influence 'on British philosophical and theological thinking can be traced throughout the whole of the nineteenth century.'⁵⁹⁶ In his article 'Romanticism and the Esoteric Connection' Wouter Hanegraaff has noted the importance scholars have given in recent times to the connections between 'western esoteric traditions and specific romantic thinkers' including Coleridge.⁵⁹⁷ Hanegraaff refers to the well-known study of romantic literature, *Natural Supernaturalism* by M.H. Abrams who, as Jos Van Meurs has observed, associates Coleridge together with Wordsworth, Shelley, Schelling and Hegel as 'poet-prophets' and 'philosopher-seers'.⁵⁹⁸ Coleridge has also been cited as an influence by Geoffrey Rowell in his study of the Catholic revival in Anglicanism.⁵⁹⁹ And there is no doubt that the Golden Dawn's most famous Romantic poet, William Butler Yeats, who had extensive links with numerous Anglo-Catholic clergy and some with the Pre-Raphaelite 'Brotherhood', itself linked to Christian Socialism and elements of Anglo-Catholicism, was influenced by Coleridge.⁶⁰⁰ George Harper writes 'As a great Romantic artist, Yeats believed with Coleridge and Shelley and Blake that art itself was an instrument of divinity for imposing order on the chaos of existence'.⁶⁰¹ Gore himself had referred to the interactive connections between 'the aesthetic movement and the revival of Catholic worship'.⁶⁰²

⁵⁹⁵ See H. A. L. Stewart, *A Century of Anglo-Catholicism* (London: J.M. Dent, 1929), pp. 54-72.

⁵⁹⁶ Neill and Wright, *The Interpretation of the New Testament*, p. 3. See also 'Samuel Taylor Coleridge' in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, p.309.

⁵⁹⁷ Hanegraaff, 'Romanticism and the Esoteric Connection', in *Gnosis and Hermeticism: From Antiquity to Modern Times*, p. 237.

⁵⁹⁸ Jos Van Meurs, 'William Blake and his Gnostic Myths', in *Gnosis and Hermeticism*, p. 271.

⁵⁹⁹ Geoffrey Rowell, *The Vision Glorious*, p. 6. See also Newsome's *Two Classes of Men* which examines in some depth the influence of Coleridge and the influences on him, which include Platonism, Neo-Platonism, and occultism. Newsome describes the importance of Platonism with regard to English Romanticism and the influence these, along with Coleridge, had on many 'High Victorians', including prominent members of the Oxford Movement.

⁶⁰⁰ Yeats, *Autobiographies*, pp. 140-141,

⁶⁰¹ Harper, *Yeats's Golden Dawn*, p. 85.

⁶⁰² Wilkinson, *The Community of the Resurrection*, p. 15.

If there are indications that the Anglo-Catholic quest for an effective Christian 'initiation' and transformation of the self, was partially shaped by revived interest in the ancient mysteries, in a Romantic recovery of the symbolic beauty, and in a reception of the Hermetic and Kabbalist traditions through German idealism, the question arises whether any mutual influence was exercised between the more explicit occult revival itself and Anglo-Catholicism. The question is addressed subsequently but it may be noted here that such influence is more readily discernable in the early twentieth century than in the nineteenth as evidenced by previously mentioned Church investigations into Theosophy, Spiritualism and Christian Science.⁶⁰³ These movements, which all have an American origin, certainly acquired considerable support in Britain in the latter part of the nineteenth century but in terms of Anglo-Catholic clergy there is little evidence of significant interest during this period. Such interest as did exist appears to be confined to either hostility and condemnation, as noted by R. A. Gilbert, or to interest on the part of clergy in some of the doctrinal sources, and a small number of clergy did become involved in one or other of these movements.⁶⁰⁴ This is also particularly the case with regard to the early Golden Dawn, prior to its fragmentation in 1903, in which most or all of the twenty-one members who were Anglican clergy had been led to the Order through their membership of Freemasonic bodies.⁶⁰⁵

⁶⁰³ The question of mutual influence between the occult revival and Anglo-Catholicism is covered in more depth in Chapters Six and Seven.

⁶⁰⁴ Archbishop Edward White Benson (1829-1896) had a particular interest in psychic phenomena and some occult works. He owned several works of the Swedish Christian esotericist Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) which he lent to his son Monsignor Robert Hugh Benson. The latter is of interest and will be referred to in Chapter Six. See Arthur Christopher Benson, *Edward White Benson- Archbishop of Canterbury*, 2 vols (London: Macmillan and Co, 1899), I, p. 381; C. C. Martindale, *The Life of Monsignor Robert Hugh Benson*, 2 vols (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1916), I, 92; R. A. Gilbert, *The Golden Dawn: Twilight of the Magicians*, p. 19.

⁶⁰⁵ Gilbert, *Golden Dawn Companion*, pp. 125-175. At least another 20 Anglican clergy were members after 1903, giving a minimal total of 41 Anglican clergy joining the Order.

A notable exception is the Guild of the Holy Spirit which was the inspiration of an Anglican clergyman, the Rev. Charles Maurice Davies.⁶⁰⁶ In January 1881 the first issue of the Spiritualist journal *Light* carried the first public reference to this group:

The Proceedings of the Society are quite private, but it is known that the objects pursued are the study and practice of Christian Mysticism. Although the attainment of startling phenomena was not contemplated, yet some satisfactory results even of this class have been arrived at during the two months sittings.⁶⁰⁷

A further note regarding the Guild from its founder, ‘a Clergyman of the Church of England’, appeared in the third issue of 1881, saying:

I have myself taken a small, private room which I have fitted up as a small chapel or oratory, and, gathering a few earnest people round me, have officiated twice a week at a simple but solemn service, in the interval of which we sit for spirit communion... there are gradations in our guild; but all, from the inner to the outermost circle, are believers rather than inquirers.⁶⁰⁸

In commenting on this group R. A. Gilbert has stated that Davies was ‘anxious to stress that the Guild guarded itself against curiosity hunters; “In that sense only is our society a secret one”’. Gilbert also observes that while Anglican priests were relatively common within Freemasonry, ‘the existence of the Guild of the Holy Spirit indicates the rudiments of a willingness to be part of a hierarchical society devoted to occult pursuits on the part of clergymen without a Masonic background’.⁶⁰⁹ Although Davies

⁶⁰⁶ The esoteric activities of Davies are discussed in more depth in Chapter Six.

⁶⁰⁷ R. A. Gilbert, *Twilight of the Magicians*, p. 19.

⁶⁰⁸ Gilbert, *Twilight of the Magicians*, p. 20

⁶⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

is not known to have been a member of the Golden Dawn, his wife Anna Jane was, and Davies refers obliquely to the Order in his anonymous book *The Great Secret and its Unfoldment in Occultism*.⁶¹⁰ Davies is also of interest in this regard because it was from his home in Kensington that another occult but Christian-based Order was supposed to operate. This was the Order of the Spiritual Temple and is believed to have been the creation of A. E. Waite who was a member of the Golden Dawn at this time. Amongst its various aims were recovering ‘the lost keys of the ancient secret sciences’, ‘attempt to establish a direct correspondence with that (unseen) world and the whole body of humanity’ and ‘the elaboration of Christ in man’.⁶¹¹ Davies’ other interests included the Society for Psychical Research, the Dialectical Society, and the Societas Sanctae Crucis (SSC), or Society of the Holy Cross, of which Davies was not only ‘a stalwart member’ but one of the six founder members.⁶¹²

Societas Sanctae Crucis and the Golden Dawn

The SSC is of major interest in the context of Anglo-Catholicism. Founded in secrecy in 1855 by Father Charles Fuge Lowder (1820-1880), the ritualistic SSC was considered by its opponents to represent the more extreme views of Anglo-Catholicism, and ‘known to the public only a decade later, the SSC was wholly clerical, based on “secrecy and absolute obedience”’ and its members were bound by a number of vows.⁶¹³ With the ostensible aims of bearing ‘witness to Catholic truth’, reintroducing

⁶¹⁰ [Rev. C.M. Davies], *The Great Secret and its Unfoldment in Occultism: A Record of Forty Years Experience in the Modern Mystery* (London: George Redway, 1896).

⁶¹¹ Personal communication from R. A. Gilbert, 13 November 2007. See also Gilbert, A. E. Waite: *Magician of Many Parts*, pp. 167-170.

⁶¹² Personal communication from R. A. Gilbert, 13 November 2007.

⁶¹³ John Shelton Reed, *Glorious Battle: The Cultural Politics of Victorian Anglo-Catholicism*, p. 85. The origins and history of the controversial SSC are outside of the scope of this study but are presented in detail within William Davage (ed.), *In this Sign Conquer*, especially pp. 15-21. The initial secrecy of the society was partly dictated by the fact that many of the practises it desired to promote were illegal. Geoffrey Rowell has observed, ‘The genesis of SSC has to be seen in the context of a concern for mission, a commitment to mutual support and spiritual discipline, and a Catholic conviction of the transforming reality of supernatural grace’. See Rowell, ‘The SSC in Context’, in *In this Sign Conquer*, pp. 1-14 (p. 10).

the sacrament of confession, and providing guidance and instruction to ‘a congregation of priests who would lead a disciplined way of life’, the SSC has proved an extremely influential body within Anglo-Catholicism. Indeed, as Desmond Morse-Boycott has noted, it was responsible for reviving the idea of annual Retreats which ‘have become so useful and permanent a feature of Church life, for children as well as adults, as to call for little comment. There are few Anglo-Catholic clergy who do not attend a three days’ Retreat each year, or repair for a while to such power-houses of prayer as Mirfield’.⁶¹⁴ Nigel Yates has observed that the Society was ‘always the most select in terms of its membership’ and that ‘the aims of the society were more exclusively ritualist than those of other High-Church societies’.⁶¹⁵ Unlike many other Anglo-Catholic Orders which have declined or ceased to exist, the SSC has grown from a small group to over one thousand priests in 2005, with seven hundred and fifty working in the United Kingdom.⁶¹⁶

Despite its subsequent success the SSC was a controversial organisation in the latter half of the nineteenth century and, according to Reed, ‘it is difficult to say whether the activities of the Society of the Holy Cross generally helped Anglo-Catholicism or hurt it’.⁶¹⁷ Reed notes that ‘Time and again, the society displayed a remarkable lack of political sense, surpassing that of the most naïve Tractarians’ and ‘often seemed not so much indifferent as flatly uncomprehending’ with regard to likely reactions to society activities.⁶¹⁸ Much of the controversy and the official and public condemnation of the SSC revolved around efforts to reintroduce such practices as confession and the counter-productive attempts to achieve secrecy which ‘were often singularly inept’ and ‘served mainly to feed the suspicions of the society’s opponents, contributing to the

⁶¹⁴ Morse-Boycott, *Secret Story of the Oxford Movement*, pp. 163-164.

⁶¹⁵ Nigel Yates, *Anglican Ritualism in Victorian Britain 1830-1910*, pp. 70-71.

⁶¹⁶ *In This Sign Conquer*, p. ix-x. Based on Davage’s claim, Reed is clearly incorrect when he states that the SSC was at its peak in the mid-1870s with ‘fewer than four hundred’ members. See *Glorious Battle*, p. 85.

⁶¹⁷ Reed, *Glorious Battle*, p. 86.

⁶¹⁸ *Ibid.*

impression of underhandedness and conspiracy'.⁶¹⁹ Whatever validity this criticism of the SSC may have, it must be placed in the context of the enormous hostility generated in response to the revival of ritual within the Church of England. Although, as Yates has noted, the incidence of increased ritualism within churches before 1860 was relatively minor, such ritual innovations as were introduced caused significant concern not merely within the hierarchy of the Established Church but also excited hostility from the public and politicians. Yates comments that 'as early as 1838 complaints were made in the House of Commons... against the "Romanizing" of the Tractarians' and 'ritual matters were an issue in general election campaigns from 1852'.⁶²⁰ An overwhelmingly large number of ritualistic practices and ceremonial furnishings were either deemed illegal or subject to legal challenge. These included such seemingly innocuous activities as lighting the altar candles, 'excessive kneeling' during the consecration, using incense, and elevating the cup and paten when celebrating Holy Communion.⁶²¹ Numerous clergy were prosecuted for illegal liturgical practices, including John Purchas, editor of the first edition of the *Directorium Anglicanum*, noted earlier.⁶²² Thomas Hightower has stated that the SSC resolved to defy the judgment against Purchas, which outlawed eucharistic vestments, wafer bread, the mixed chalice of water and wine, and the eastward position of the priest during Holy Communion, by 'drawing up a list of priests willing to adhere to whatever Catholic practices they had already begun, and by compiling a second list of those who would, on the occasion of any more ritual prosecutions, begin to wear the eucharistic vestments'.⁶²³ The number and pace of prosecutions of priests had increased significantly by the late 1860s and this tendency was given momentum with the passing of the Public Worship Regulation Act in

⁶¹⁹ Reed, *Glorious Battle*, p. 87.

⁶²⁰ Yates, *Leeds and the Oxford Movement*, p. 4; Yates, *Anglican Ritualism in Victorian Britain*, p. 220.

⁶²¹ Yates, *Anglican Ritualism in Victorian Britain*, pp. 216-217.

⁶²² Yates, *Anglican Ritualism in Victorian Britain*, pp. 217-219.

⁶²³ Rev. Dr. Thomas Hightower, 'A Brief History of the Early Years of the Society of the Holy Cross' www.sscamericas.org/resources/history.htm. Unpaginated section under heading 'Persecution'.

1874.⁶²⁴ The determination of ritualistically inclined priests to challenge the Act, however, and to become martyrs to the cause, effectively rendered the Act largely inoperable because of the unease and sympathy which began to build in the press, with the public, and increasingly within the Church of England itself.⁶²⁵ Within a group, therefore, determined to recover ‘Catholic Truth’ and pursue practices deemed as being commensurate with that ‘Truth’, it is hardly surprising that its activities were governed by secrecy at a time when they were illegal.

Although the Society cannot be described as ‘occult’ or esoteric in the sense in which these terms are usually applied it placed considerable emphasis on the supernatural power of the Church’s sacraments, the use of ritual, and the mystical interpretations of scripture. It encouraged its members to undertake various spiritual practices of a meditational nature, including that of ‘recollection’ where attention is given to the Divine presence within, and for the members to consider their bodies as ‘temples of the Holy Ghost’.⁶²⁶ Ceremonial rituals were also developed within the society but these have not been published and references to them in SSC literature are vague, described in one apologetic work by an SSC member as ‘fanciful yet harmless’.⁶²⁷

Of particular interest in the Golden Dawn context, other than the fact that one of the SSC founders had close connections to the Order and an SSC Master was a member, is the nature of aspects of the Society’s organisation and administration which bear more than a passing resemblance to their Golden Dawn equivalents.⁶²⁸ Like the

⁶²⁴ Yates, *Anglican Ritualism in Victorian Britain*, pp. 241, 269-277; Rowell, *The Vision Glorious*, p. 127.

⁶²⁵ Yates, *Anglican Ritualism in Victorian Britain*, pp. 276-279.

⁶²⁶ J. Embry, *The Catholic Movement and the Society of the Holy Cross* (London: The Faith Press, 1931) p. 15.

⁶²⁷ J. Embry, p. 9

⁶²⁸ Revd A. H. Baverstock was twice master of the SSC, from 1921 to 1924 and from 1927 to 1929, and was initiated into Felkin’s *Stella Matutina* on 27 June 1908. See Yelton, *Anglican Papalism*, p. 15 and Gilbert, *The Golden Dawn Companion*, p. 164. Julian Litten comments that during Baverstock’s thirty-one years at St. John the Evangelist, Hinton Martel, he ‘made it a place of “uncompromising Anglo-Catholicism”’. See Julian Litten, ‘Introduction’, in A. H. Baverstock, *The Eucharistic Year: Seasonal*

Hermetic Order it was divided into two Orders, the second of which contained three progressive stages of initiation and each of which had its own demanding obligation and special rule. These were classed as; Ordinary Rule, Green Rule, Red Rule (First or 'Lower Order') and the White Rule (Second or 'Higher Order') which required a commitment to celibacy. The most committed and prestigious was the White Rule which, like the R.R. et A.C., met separately on occasions and had its own secrets. Indeed, it appears that secrecy of precisely the same nature as that governing the Golden Dawn was required of SSC members and the rules governing the society are set out in its official book, entitled *Societas Sanctae Crucis Statuta*. In 1876 the Master of the SSC addressed the Society and stressed the secrecy of the society since its inception noting, 'The bond of union between the Brethren was to be as strict as possible. None but themselves were to know their names, or of the existence of the Society, except those to whom it might be named to induce them to join: but this only with the leave of the Society'.⁶²⁹ All of this, including the injunction to keep secret and destroy if necessary even the old documents of the Society is paralleled within instructional documents of the Golden Dawn. Along with the requirement that a resigning brother 'shall return to the Master his Cross, and the Book of Statutes and Offices' the following inscription was placed on the outer cover of society documents:⁶³⁰

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL. To be returned to the Secretary by any brother leaving the Society; or by the representatives of a deceased brother.⁶³¹

Devotions for the Sacrament (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2001, published as *Annus Eucharisticus*, 1930), p. xiii.

⁶²⁹ Walsh, *The Secret History of the Oxford Movement*, p. 64. It may be noted that the phrase 'the bond of union' was used extensively within documentation of Waite's Fellowship of the Rosy Cross.

⁶³⁰ Walsh, *The Secret History of the Oxford Movement*, pp. 78-79.

⁶³¹ Walsh, *Secret History*, p. 79.

SSC Confidential membership Rolls were maintained with a special Celibate Roll for the White Rule, the members of which each wore a distinctive cruciform ring.⁶³² This matches similar and separate confidential Rolls for the First and Second Orders of the Golden Dawn. In addition to a similar requirement for Golden Dawn members, and especially those of the Second Order, to return Crosses and other implements, an instruction was placed on the outer cover of Order documents which is interesting to compare with that of the SSC.⁶³³

H.O.49

These papers are private, and have been lent to me on trust, to return on demand. They contain nothing of pecuniary value, and nothing personal to myself. I hereby direct my legal representatives, whomsoever, in case of my death or incapacity, to return the same at once, unopened, to: The Secretary.⁶³⁴

Apart from a discernable similarity of requirements for both the SSC and the Golden Dawn, it is noteworthy that each member of the former was required to wear a distinctive cross which, in shape, is virtually identical to that worn by Second Order members of the Golden Dawn. In the case of the latter this shape has been assumed to have been adapted from that illustrated in the German Rosicrucian book *Geheime*

⁶³² Walsh, *Secret History*, p. 52. Regarding the cruciform ring one of the more extreme critics of the society wrote: 'A gentleman with whom I am acquainted...came into possession of one of these 'rings' made of iron – I understand that others are made of silver, and some of gold – and he could not for some time make out its use. On looking more closely into it he discovered a very tiny indentation; but that was all. Wondering very much what it meant, he secured the assistance of a powerful magnifying glass, and then discovered within the indentation, the magic words "S.S.C." It was the Celibate Ring of the Society of the Holy Cross! Each member of this 'Roll' takes ... an oath of celibacy, 'for a limited period, or for life'. It is made in Latin, of which the following is a translation:- "I, N --, profess and promise to Almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and to all the Saints, that I will lead a life of Celibacy for (so many years, or the rest of his life). So help me God!"' See Walsh, *Secret History*, pp. 52-53.

⁶³³ The label is taken from Felkin's *Stella Matutina* but is almost identical in wording to those used by the Golden Dawn and the Rosicrucian Order of Alpha et Omega. See Gilbert, *The Golden Dawn Companion*, p. 54.

⁶³⁴ Walsh, *Secret History*, p. 48.

Figuren de Rosenkreuzer published in Altona in 1785-8.⁶³⁵ This is undoubtedly true, for the reverse of both the German and Golden Dawn Crosses are identical, but it is also conceivable that any influence which may have flowed from the SSC to the Golden Dawn creators, as a result of the extensive public exposure of the Society's secrets, may well have included the Cross. Until this publicity occurred SSC members were able to wear the cross, and indeed required to do so, with no fear of exposure 'since the outside public are not able to identify it'.⁶³⁶ The cross was to be worn hanging from a coloured ribbon corresponding to the colour of their particular rule and its purpose was to enable members to recognize one another as members of the secret society.⁶³⁷ The Golden Dawn Second Order members wore their cross suspended from a yellow ribbon which was the colour of their particular Grade.⁶³⁸

For both organisations there was the expectation that every effort would be made to attend all meetings but that two meetings per year were compulsory. For the Golden Dawn this meant attending the Equinox meetings in March and September, and for the SSC it was attending the two Synods in May and September, designated 'Feasts of the Holy Cross'. Again in both cases, should such attendance be impossible, members were required to state the reason to the Master (SSC) or the Chiefs (Golden Dawn). At all such meetings of the SSC and Golden Dawn the members were expected to be vested, respectively, in robes and cassocks. On matters of official business members of the SSC were instructed to commence their letters with 'My Dear Brother' and end with 'In D.N.J.C. (in the name of Jesus Christ) whereas the Golden Dawn equivalent was to

⁶³⁵ See *Secret Symbols of the Rosicrucians of the 16th and 17th Centuries* (Chicago: Aries Press, 1935), translation of *Geheime Figuren der Rosenkreuzer, aus dem 16ten und 17ten Jahrhundert* 2 vols (Altona, 1785-1788), p. 36.

⁶³⁶ Walsh, *The Secret History of the Oxford Movement*, quoting from p. 50.

⁶³⁷ Walsh, *Secret History*, p. 48.

⁶³⁸ Gilbert, *The Golden Dawn Companion*, p. 118. It may be noted in passing that Waite's Fellowship of the Rosy Cross, based on the Golden Dawn structure, also required its members to wear a cross with different colours depending on the Grade they occupied. The details are listed in the various Grade rituals for the FRC.

begin with 'Care Frater/Soror' and end with 'S.U.A.T.' ('sub umbra alarum tuarum' or 'under the shadow of your wings').⁶³⁹

Further points of similarity might be seen between the elaborate Golden Dawn or Rosicrucian Vault built specially for Second Order magical ceremonies and the SSC Oratory where it was possible to render 'the sacred Mass which was fully Medieval in the richness, costliness, taste, and perfection of its details'. In the hostile view of Walsh such an Oratory 'was to be a centre for all the advanced Ritualists... at which they meet from time to time, and in which the Ritual should be of the most extreme character'.⁶⁴⁰ Similarly, the Rule adopted by all the Society 'to say a prayer every morning, noon and night' may have set the pattern for the identical requirement for Golden Dawn members.⁶⁴¹

Given the mystery and lack of reliable information regarding the origin of the Golden Dawn it is unlikely that any definitive evidence will emerge proving a flow of influence from the Societas Sanctae Crucis to the founding of the Golden Dawn or its inner Rosaea Rubeae et Aureae Crucis. In view of the fact, however, that identifiable Masonic influences are minimal, as are any substantial connections between the Order and supposed German or other Rosicrucian groups, the possibility that some of the structure and organisation was modelled on the SSC should be considered. The fact that so many of the secrets of the SSC were exposed in controversy throughout the years preceding the establishment of the Golden Dawn is suggestive of a means of influence.

Both Anglo-Catholicism and the parallel Occult revival of the *fin-de-siècle* arose out of a similar, if not identical, impulse which may be described as a search for contact with the divine. Whether or not this impulse is itself deemed irrational, it is clear that both elements utilised developing techniques of scholarship and philosophical theories

⁶³⁹ Walsh, *Secret History*, p. 50. Gilbert, *The Golden Dawn Companion*, pp. 118-119.

⁶⁴⁰ Walsh, *The Secret History of the Oxford Movement*, pp. 65-66.

⁶⁴¹ Walsh, *Ibid.* Unpublished Stella Matutina documents, held in private collections, required members to say a prayer at morning, noon and evening. The prayers varied for the different Grades and were known as 'Daily Rhythms'.

that cannot themselves be viewed as irrational. The fact that they were, to varying degrees, subject to aesthetic, artistic and even emotional factors implicit in the Romanticism of the time is less symptomatic of irrationalism and more of a rational syncretism which recognizes and incorporates all the factors capable of promoting a certain state of consciousness, whether that be 'gnosis', 'knowledge of the self', 'contact with the divine' or 'uncovering the hidden glory'. To this degree there was an anticipation of twentieth-century psychology with regard to the human psyche and its many triggers which have since been applied so effectively, and often disastrously, in the secular fields of politics and advertising. These themes will be examined further and developed in the context of *fin-de-siècle* interpretations of 'gnosis' and *prisca theologia* from orthodox and heterodox perspectives.