On the Work of the Supernal Grades in Magick & the Secret Chiefs

Two major problems beset the philosophical system that is Thelema. The first is that since Crowley’s death, we can only possibly point to a few adepts, that themselves, are now dead. We can name Kenneth Grant, Charles Stansfield Jones and Marcelo Motta. These men, at the very least, contributed new Gnosis to Thelemic thought and thereby, showed the beauty or Our Order to the world in doing so. And while they showed profound insight in further developing the philosophy of Thelema, their writings fall short of in any way, the thesis of the Exempt Adept and they are certainly not known for the founding of a school of thought. So, at best, we can accept that they have fulfilled the function of the Adeptus Minor, which gives them a strong importance for our philosophical system. Yet, we see no one today, in any way recognized by our slowly growing, collective community.

In light of the above, we present the following quote from Dion Fortune; both to further support part of the point we’ve made above and to provide a bit of foreshadow for where we are going. Addressing the work of the adept, Ms. Fortune purports the following:

This, then, is what manner of person an adept is. There are those who are concerned with the inner governance of the world; not its politics and wire-pullings, but with the secret spiritual influences that rule the minds of men. Behind them are those greater than they, who are concerned with elemental forces and the influences that rule the aeon. These are to those others as the tides are to the breaking waves. Then, upon the physical plane, are those who are sent through into incarnation to co-operate with them. They are sometimes spoken of as initiates, and they are that, but also something more than that. They must, of course, be initiated into the Tradition otherwise they would not have the keys to the contacts and could not command co-operation. There are, of course, also initiates who become adepts, but I am speaking now of what are called the cosmic adepts, and the come in for a purpose, and all the time until maturity is given to preparing the personality as an instrument for that purpose; it would be a cruel training if there were not within one an inner awareness which knows whence one comes, and why—as I had known, even as a child, that I was a stranger and sojourner and did not belong; therefore things do not hurt as they would hurt others. But one is always alone, for there are very few with whom to find companionship, and because one is strange, one is hated.

The key statement relating to what we stated above is when she says: “Then, upon the physical plane, are those who are sent into incarnation to co-operate with [the] [elemental forces that rule the aeon]. We can infer from this the work of the Adeptus Minor can be found in the writings of the three proposed adepts that I listed above. Crowley details the nature of this work in his essay: One Star in Sight.

The Grade of Adeptus Minor is the main theme of the instructions of the A.’. A.’. It is characterised by the Attainment of the Knowledge and Conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel. (See the Equinox, "The Temple of Solomon the King;" "The Vision and the Voice" 8th Aethyr; also "Liber Samekh", etc. etc.) This is the essential work of every man; none other ranks with it either for personal progress or for power to help one’s fellows. This unachieved, man is no more than the unhappiest and blindest of animals. He is conscious of his own incomprehensible calamity, and clumsily incapable of repairing it. Achieved, he is no less than the co-heir of gods, a Lord of Light. He is conscious of his own consecrated course, and confidently ready to run it. The Adeptus Minor needs little help or guidance even from his superiors in our Order.  
His work is to manifest the Beauty of the Order to the world, in the way that his superiors enjoin, and his genius dictates.

Of particular interest in the above description of the Grade is: “He is conscious of his own consecrated course, and confidently ready to run it.” And, as well, “His work is to manifest the Beauty of the Order to the world, in the way that his superiors enjoin, and his genius dictates.” Now, we can’t say that the three colleges of the A.’.A.’. have ever been fully established. So, certainly there were no superiors to enjoin the work of these men, with the possible exception of Crowley over Achad (Jones). Yet, Crowley took issue with Achad; probably more from the imp, Crowley’s own ego issues and most certainly that no proper triumvirate was ever established. However, each of these presented their own, elegant and unique vision within the Thelemic paradigm; fulfilling the dictum regarding the work of the lesser adept in enlarging the breadth and scope of the Thelemic paradigm.

The second issue is that a class of second-handers have emerged to run the several orders and lineages within the philosophical system, and claiming to the Grade of Magister Templi. Though Crowley says in his essay, that we’ve already referred to, “Any neophyte of the Order (or, as some say, any person soever) possesses the right to claim the Grade of Master of the Temple by taking the Oath of the Grade,” he also says: “To attain the grade of Magus he must accomplish Three Tasks; the renunciation of His enjoyment of the Infinite so that he may formulate Himself as the Finite; the acquisition of the practical secrets alike of initiating and governing His proposed new Universe and the identification of himself with the impersonal idea of Love.” And what is this new Universe? This is found in the work of the previous Grade: Adeptus Exemptus, as expressed by Crowley: “The [Exempt] Adept must prepare and publish a thesis setting forth His knowledge of the Universe, and his proposals for its welfare and progress. He will thus be known as the leader of a school of thought. (Eliphas Levi’s "Clef des Grands Mysteres," the works of Swedenborg, von Eckarshausen, Robert Fludd, Paracelsus, Newton, Bolyai, Hinton, Berkeley, Loyola, etc., etc., are examples of such essays.)” So that we must infer that any Adeptus Exemptus attaining to the Grade of Magister Templi has actually developed a new order (not the A.’.A.’.) that further expresses and develops the Thelemic paradigm, but from the new and authoritative perspective of the emergent Magister Templi.

The Magister Templi next attains to the Grade of Magus; though the Grades of the Supernal Triad can really be said to be one Grade. In this, Crowley notes the Magus “utters a Creative Magical Word, which transforms the planet on which he lives by the installation of new officers to preside over its initiation.” And here’s where we can refer back to the Dion Fortune quote that we originally presented. For the Magister Templi, she says: “There are those who are concerned with the inner governance of the world; not its politics and wire-pullings, but with the secret spiritual influences that rule the minds of men.” And for the work of the Magus, she continues: “Behind them are those greater than they, who are concerned with elemental forces and the influences that rule the aeon. These are to those others as the tides are to the breaking waves.” But then to continue, she says: “Then, upon the physical plane, are those who are sent through into incarnation to co-operate with them. They are sometimes spoken of as initiates, and they are that, but also something more than that.”

So that then, we now move to the main theme of this essay; the Secret Chiefs and their work, as they belong to the third and supernal order of the Silver Star. First, we present a perfect description of the Grade of Magus by Henry Thomas Buckle (as presented by Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky); an attainment that comes when someone lives on in more than the minds and hearts of his or her family, but whose thoughts influence the generations that march into the future.

ON THE GREAT THINKERS IN HISTORY

“Owing to circumstances still unknown” (Karmic provision, H.P.B.) “there appear from time to time great thinkers, who, devoting their lives to a single purpose, are able to anticipate the progress of mankind, and to produce a religion or a philosophy by which important effects are eventually brought about. But if we look into history we shall clearly see that, although the origin of a new opinion may be thus due to a single man, the result which the new opinion produces will depend on the condition of the people among whom it is propagated. If either a religion or a philosophy is too much in advance of a nation it can do no present service but must bide its time [1] until the minds of men are ripe for its reception…. Every science, every creed has had its martyrs. According to the ordinary course of affairs, a few generations pass away, and then there comes a period when these very truths are looked upon as commonplace facts, and a little later there comes another period in which they are declared to be necessary, and even the dullest intellect wonders how they could ever have been denied.”

(Henry Thomas Buckle)

NOTE BY H.P. BLAVATSKY:

[1] This is Cyclic law, but this law itself is often defied by human stubbornness.

[The above fragment was reproduced from the book “History of Civilization”, by H. T. Buckle and published by Helena Blavatsky in “The Secret Doctrine”, Theosophy Co., vol. I, p. 298. Also published at "The Aquarian Theosophist", May 2017, p. 4. ]

We would like to assert here that it is upon the death of such great thinkers that they pass into the Universal and Collective Consciousness of the human race to become the Secret Chiefs; praeternatural beings that are enabled to make contact with the adepts of any strong, working mage or magickal order. Yet as Dion Fortune asserts, there may also be those incarnate human beings that may also serve; whether as Secret Chiefs (and thus, not praeternatural) or as messengers for the Secret Chiefs. Crowley echoes this in a letter found in Magick Without Tears:

But are They then men, in the usual sense of the word? They may be incarnate or discarnate: it is a matter of Their convenience.  
Have They attained Their position by passing through all the grades of the A.'.A.'.?  
Yes and no: the system which was given to me to put forward is only one of many. "Above the Abyss" all these technical wrinkles are ironed out. One man whom I suspect of being a Secret Chief has hardly any acquaintance with the technique of our system at all. That he accepts The Book of the Law is almost his only link with my work. That, and his use of the Ophidian Vibrations: I don't know which of us is better at it, but I am sure that he must be a very long way ahead of me if he is one of Them.

Crowley later notes in the same letter:

Again, They may send an ordinary living man, whether one of Themselves or no I cannot feel sure, to instruct me in some task, or to set me right when I have erred. Then there have been messages conveyed by natural objects, animate or inanimate. Needless to say, the outstanding example in my life is the whole Plan of Campaign concerning The Book of the Law. But is Aiwaz a man (presumably a Persian or Assyrian) and a "Secret Chief," or is He an "angel" in the sense that Gabriel is an angel? Is Ab-ul-Diz an Adept who can project himself into the aura of some woman with whom I happen to be living, although she has no previous experience of the kind, or any interest in such matters at all? Or is He a being whose existence is altogether beyond this plane, only adopting human appearance and faculties in order to make Himself sensible and intelligible to that woman?

Carl Jung also weighs in on this to a certain extent; noting what Gurdjieff refers to as ‘meetings with remarkable men’ when he states in Memories, Dreams & Reflections: “

Something else engaged my attention: as I approached the temple I had the certainty that I was about to enter an illuminated room and would meet there all those people to whom I belong in reality. There I would at last understand this too was a certainty what historical nexus I or my life fitted into. I would know what had been before me,

why I had come into being, and where my life was flowing. My life as I lived it had often seemed to me like a story that has no beginning and no end. I had the feeling that I was a historical fragment, an excerpt for which the preceding and succeeding text was missing.

My life seemed to have been snipped out of a long chain of events, and many questions had remained unanswered. Why had it taken this course? Why had I brought these particular assumptions with me? What had I made of them? What will follow? I felt sure that I would receive an answer to all these questions as soon as I entered the rock temple. There I would learn why everything had been thus and not otherwise. There I would meet the people who knew the

answer to my question about what had been before and what would come after.

While I was thinking over these matters, something happened that caught my attention. From below, from the direction of Europe, an image floated up. It was my doctor, Dr. H. or, rather, his likeness framed by a golden chain or a golden laurel wreath. I knew at once: "Aha, this is my doctor, of course, the one who has been treating

me. But now he is coming in his primal form, as a basileus of Kos.[1] In life he was an avatar of this basileus, the temporal embodiment of the primal form, which has existed from the beginning. Now he is appearing in that primal form".

Presumably I too was in my primal form, though this was something I did not observe but simply took for granted. As he stood before me, a mute exchange of thought took place between us. Dr. H. had been delegated by the earth to deliver a message to me, to tell me that there was a protest against my going away, I had no right to leave the earth and must return. The moment I heard that, the vision ceased.

And though I can’t find the quote, Jung also stated that the person truly on a spiritual path will come upon people that will point him or her in the right direction to further one’s development. In a Wikipedia article on the Secret Chiefs we get some background on the subject in terms of how Crowley came upon the notion and that includes another quote from the letter by Crowley that we referenced above:

Secret Chiefs (sometimes "Secret Chiefs of the A.'.A.'.") [Aleister Crowley](https://ascensionglossary.com/index.php/Aleister_Crowley" \o "Aleister Crowley)'s term for those praeternatural entities which direct the progress of humanity for ends that are usually beyond the ken of mortal men. The Secret Chiefs are of at least the grade of Magus and Magister Templi, may or may not be in human form depending on their own needs at the time, and are utterly unknown to the rest of humanity except in the very rare times when they find it part of their plan to reveal themselves to one person. Crowley stated that he believes that [Aiwass](https://ascensionglossary.com/index.php/Aiwass), who dictated The Book of the Law to him, and Ab-ul-Diz and Amalantrah, entities he contacted in other workings, were all Secret Chiefs.

The Secret Chiefs are possessed of immense powers, called the "Ophidian Vibrations" which allow them to "insinuate [themselves] into any desired set of circumstances." These powers allow the Secret Chiefs "to induce a girl to embroider a taperstry, or initiate a political movement to culminate in a world-war; all in pursuit of some plan wholly beyond the purview or the comprehension of the deepest and subtlest thinkers." In his Confessions, Crowley often discusses the events of his own life in terms of what he supposes to have been the plans of the Secret Chiefs. Crowley's immediate source for the idea of Secret Chiefs was the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, which subscribed to the notion, and justified its operation with reference to them. Nineteenth century occultism was full of various sorts of "hidden masters," however. The Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor referred to an "Interior Circle" of enlightened masters who could be contacted clairvoyantly. The Mahatmas (literally, "Great Souls") of the Theosophical Society were another important case. Johnson's Masters Revealed explores the possibility that, rather than otherworldly guides or fictional sources of legitimacy, the Theosophical Mahatmas were historical persons with whom Blavatsky associated.

Possibly the earliest example of the Secret Chiefs concept is found in the "Unknown Superiors" (Superiores Incognitii) of the Rite of Strict Observance, a Templarist Masonic body established by Baron von Hund in the mid-eighteenth century. Some writers (Kenneth MacKenzie, for example) believed that Hund's superiors were the Jesuits. At about the same time, however, the German Gold- und Rosenkreuz order also referred to its own mysterious secret chiefs (unbekannte Oberen).

Yet overall, contact with these beings; praeternatural or human adepts reveals the true Supernal Triad and can only be proven by the production of new Gnosis. And it is this alone that Crowley properly asserts can grant the right of authority to lead a magickal order. He explains this in his rationale for abandoning Mathers and the Golden Dawn, after it was proven that Mathers at least, no longer had any contact with the Secret Chiefs, as was no longer producing new Gnosis. And we must conclude today, that there is no one alive that can speak authoritatively for the A.’.A.’. The best we can hope for in the moment, that the A.’.A.’. finally become capable of filling the triad of seats (Grades) of the College of the Rosy Cross and contact be initiated from this point.

And finally, should one truly emerge as a Magister Templi, a new order will be born to complement the orders of the A.’.A.’. and the Theosophists, as founded by Crowley and Blavatsky; respectively. No matter their corruptions in contemporary expression, they are all we have and only Crowley has truly provided a proper key to the work at hand. All that remains is for “us” to understand (pun) this and to get on with the real work and the adoption of the proper attitude with great solemnity. As Crowley says, all that claim they are A.’.A.’., are A.’.A.’., and we can only hope that they respect and adhere to the tradition of Our Order.