

THE RITES OF ELEUSIS

By P.

"WE are the poets! We are the children of wood and stream, of mist and mountain, of sun and wind! We are the Greeks! and to us the rites of Eleusis should open the doors of Heaven, and we shall enter in and see God face to face. . . .

"Under the stars will I go forth, my brothers, and drink of that lustral dew: I will return, my brothers, when I have seen God face to face and read within those eternal eyes the secret that shall make you free.

"Then will I choose you and test you and instruct you in the Mysteries of Eleusis, O ye brave hearts, and cool eyes, and trembling lips! I will put a live coal upon your lips, and flowers upon your eyes, and a sword in your hearts, and ye also shall see God face to face.

"Thus shall we give back its youth to the world, for like tongues of triple flame we shall look upon the Great Deep. Hail unto the Lords of the Groves of Eleusis!"

ALEISTER CROWLEY in *Eleusis*.

Aleister Crowley is the mouthpiece of a society, the object of which would seem to be the attaining of religious ecstasy by means of Ceremonial Magic.

Dr. Maudsley defines Ecstasy, or Samadhi, as a quasi-spasmodic standing-out of a special tract of the brain. W. R. Inge defines Ecstasy as a vision that proceeds from ourselves when conscious thought ceases. But however you may feel about Ecstasy there is no doubt that it is an essential part of true religious feeling. Crowley says: "True Ceremonial Magic is entirely directed to attain this end, and forms a magnificent gymnasium for those who are not already finished mental athletes." By act, word, and thought, both in quantity and quality, the one object of the ceremony is being constantly indicated. In order to induce this religious Ecstasy in its highest form Crowley proposes to hold a series of religious services, seven in number. These services are to be held at Caxton Hall, Westminster, S.W., and will be conducted by Aleister Crowley himself, assisted by other neophytes of the A. : A. : , the mystical society one of whose Mahatmas is responsible for the foundation of the *Equinox*. The seven services will be typical of Shakespeare's Seven Ages of Man, and each one will

be dedicated to the planet that rules its particular age. For example : Saturn, "the lean and slippered pantaloons," or sad old age ; Jupiter, the solemn and portentous justice, the serious and serene man who has arrived and controls ; Mars, the soldier,



THE GUARDIAN OF THE FLAME.

full of energy and life, vigorous and formidable ; Sol, the man who has still something of youth left and is gay betimes and serious betimes, the man who loves and the man who works. Venus explains itself in Shakespeare's words, "the lover with a woeful ballad" ; Mercury, the schoolboy, happy, careless and

gay, mischievous and full of animal life ; Luna, the age of childhood and innocence, unsmirched and white as the planet herself. Each will have its own ritual, arranged for the purpose of illustrating the particular deity to which it is devoted ; each ritual will be both poetic and musical. Verses of the great poets appropriate to the planet and all that the planet represents will be recited, and the ideas suggested to the spectators will be translated into inspired music by an accomplished violin player. There will further be mystical dances by a brilliant young poet, who thus draws down the holy influence. The ceremonies will commence at nine o'clock precisely, and no one will be admitted after that hour. They will occupy about two hours, and those who attend will be requested to centre their whole minds upon the idea of the evening, the object, of course, being to induce in the spectators a feeling of religious ecstasy. One hundred seats only will be available, and the rent for these seats for the seven ceremonies will be five guineas. The proceeds will be devoted to the *Equinox* and the objects for which the *Equinox* was established.

The following is a description of a ceremony in honour of Artemis held in July at the offices of the *Equinox*. The present series will be even more elaborate and perfect.

A NEW RELIGION.*

A certain number of literary people know the name of Aleister Crowley as a poet. A few regard him as a magician. But a small and select circle revere him as the hierophant of a new religion. This creed Captain Fuller, in a book on the subject extending to 327 pages, calls "Crowleyanity." I do not pretend to know what Captain Fuller means. He is deeply read in philosophy, and he takes Crowley very seriously. I do not quite see whither Crowley himself is driving ; but I imagine that the main idea in the brain of this remarkable poet is to plant Eastern Transcendentalism, which attains its ultimate end in Samadhi, in English soil under the guise of Ceremonial Magic.

Possibly the average human being requires and desires ceremony. Even the simplest Methodist uses some sort of ceremony, and Crowley, who is quite in earnest in his endeavour to attain such unusual conditions of mind as are called ecstasy, believes that the gateway to Ecstasy can be reached through Ceremonial Magic. He has saturated himself with the magic of the East—a very real thing, in tune with the Eastern mind. He is well read in the modern metaphysicians, all of whom have attempted to explain the unexplainable.

He abandons these. They appeal only to the brain, and once their jargon is mastered they lead nowhere ; least of all to Ecstasy ! He goes back upon ceremony, because he thinks that it helps the mind to get outside itself. He declares that if you repeat an invocation solemnly

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and aloud, "expectant of some great and mysterious result," you will experience a deep sense of spiritual communion.

He is now holding a series of séances.

I attended at the offices of the *Equinox*. I climbed the interminable stairs. I was received by a gentleman robed in white and carrying a drawn sword.

The room was dark ; only a dull-red light shone upon an altar. Various young men, picturesquely clad in robes of white, red, or black, stood at different points round the room. Some held swords. The incense made a haze, through which I saw a small white statue, illumined by a tiny lamp hung high on the cornice.

A brother recited "the banishing ritual of the Pentagram" impressively and with due earnestness. Another brother was commanded to "purify the Temple with water." This was done. Then we witnessed the "Consecration of the Temple with Fire," whereupon Crowley, habited in black, and accompanied by the brethren, led "the Mystic Circumambulation." They walked round the altar twice or thrice in a sort of religious procession. Gradually, one by one, those of the company who were mere onlookers were beckoned into the circle. The Master of the Ceremonies then ordered a brother to "bear the Cup of Libation." The brother went round the room, offering each a large golden bowl full of some pleasant-smelling drink. We drank in turn. This over, a stalwart brother strode into the centre and proclaimed "The Twelvefold Certitude of God." Artemis was then invoked by the greater ritual of the Hexagram. More Libation. Aleister Crowley read us the Song of Orpheus from the *Argonauts*.

Following upon this song we drank our third Libation, and then the brothers led into the room a draped figure, masked in that curious blue tint we mentally associate with Hecate. The lady, for it was a lady, was enthroned on a seat high above Crowley himself. By this time the ceremony had grown weird and impressive, and its influence was increased when the poet recited in solemn and reverent voice Swinburne's glorious first chorus from "Atalanta," that begins, "When the hounds of spring." Again a Libation ; again an invocation to Artemis. After further ceremonies, Frater Omnia Vincam was commanded to dance "the dance of Syrinx and Pan in honour of our lady Artemis." A young poet, whose verse is often read, astonished me by a graceful and beautiful dance, which he continued until he fell exhausted in the middle of the room, where, by the way, he lay until the end. Crowley then made supplication to the goddess in a beautiful and unpublished poem. A dead silence ensued. After a long pause, the figure enthroned took a violin and played—played with passion and feeling, like a master. We were thrilled to our very bones. Once again the figure took the violin, and played an *Abend Lied* so beautifully, so gracefully, and with such intense feeling that in very deed most of us experienced that Ecstasy which Crowley so earnestly seeks. Then came a prolonged and intense silence, after which the Master of the Ceremonies dismissed us in these words—

"By the Power in me vested, I declare the Temple closed."

So ended a really beautiful ceremony—beautifully conceived and beautifully carried out. If there is any higher form of artistic expression than great verse and great music I have yet to learn it. I do not pretend to understand the ritual that runs like a thread of magic through

these meetings of the A. A. A. I do not even know what the A. A. A. is. But I do know that the whole ceremony was impressive, artistic, and



produced in those present such a feeling as Crowley must have had when he wrote—

“So shalt thou conquer Space, and lastly climb
The walls of Time;
And by the golden path the great have trod
Reach up to God!”

R. R.

THE WHY AND HOW OF ECSTASY.

“There is a land of pure delight,
Where saints immortal reign,”

so used some of us to sing in our childhood. And we used to think of this land as far away, farther even than death that in those days seemed so far.

But I know this now : that land is not so far as my flesh is from my bones ! it is even Here and Now.

If there is one cloud in this tranquil azure, it is this thought : that conscious beings exist who are not thus infinitely happy, masters of ecstasy.

So to remove this cloud have I cheerfully dedicated all I have, and all I am.

That I do not overvalue ecstasy is shown by this, that I am not one who denies himself the good things of this world.

There are too many mystics going about like the fox who lost his brush. They cannot enjoy life, and so make believe to have something better.

But I dine at the *Café Royal*, instead of munching nuts and "sirloin of carrots" ; I make expeditions to the great mountains of the Himalayas, and hunt buffalo and tiger in the jungles of the Terai ; I love beauty in painting and sculpture ; I love poetry and music ; and I love flesh and blood.

There is nothing that you enjoy that I do not enjoy as much as you do ; and I bear witness that nothing is worthy to be compared with ecstasy.

What is the path to this immortal land ?

To the Oriental, whose mind is, so to say, static, meditation offers the best path, a path which to us seems (and indeed is) intolerably irksome and tedious. To the Western, whose mind is active and dynamic, there is no road better than ceremonial. For ecstasy is caused by the sudden combination of two ideas, just as hydrogen and oxygen unite explosively.

A similar instance in a higher kingdom will occur to every one.

But this religious ecstasy takes place in the highest centres of the human organism ; it is the soul itself that is united to its God ; and for this reason the rapture is more overpowering, the joy more lasting, and the resultant energy more pure and splendid, than in aught earthly.

In ritual, therefore, we seek continually to unite the mind to some pure idea by an act of will. This we do again and again more and more passionately, with more and more determination, until at last the mind accepts the domination of the Will, and rushes of its own accord toward the desired object. This surrender of the mind to its Lord gives the holy ecstasy which we seek. It is spoken of in all religions, usually under the figure of the bride going forth to meet the bridegroom. It is the attainment of this which makes the saint and the artist.

Now in our ceremonies we endeavour to help everybody

present to experience this. We put the mind of the spectator in tune with the pure idea of austerity and melancholy which we call Saturn, or with the idea of force and fire which we call Mars, or with the idea of nature and love which we call Venus, and so for the others. If he becomes identified with this idea the union is one of ecstatic bliss, and its only imperfection is due to the fact that the idea in question, whatever it may be, is only partial. Ecstasy is therefore progressive. Gradually the adept unites himself with holier and higher ideas until he becomes one with the Universe itself, and even with that which is beyond the Universe. To him there is no more Death; time and space are annihilated; nothing is, save the intense rapture that knows no change for ever.

Then what of his body? The body of such an one continues subject to the laws of its own plane. Yet his friends find him calmer, happier, healthier, younger, his eyes bright and his skin clear even when he is old. But he has this which they have not, the power of slipping instantly out of this changeful consciousness into the Eternal, and there abiding, supremely single and complete, bathed in unutterable bliss, one with the All.

The present series of ceremonies is designed for beginners, for those who have as yet no experience at all.

Only the simplest formulae will be used, so that even those who are quite unfamiliar with the methods and aims of ritual may obtain the result, and comprehend the method.

Yet they will be profound and perfect, so that even those who are already skilful may obtain further success.

Let me add a short analysis of the present series of rites; which may be taken as illustrating Humanity, both good and evil.

Man, unable to solve the Riddle of Existence, takes counsel of Saturn, extreme old age. Such answer as he can get is the one word "Despair." Is there more hope in the dignity and wisdom of Jupiter? No; for the noble senior lacks the vigour of Mars, the warrior. Counsel is in vain without determination to carry it out. Mars, invoked, is indeed capable of victory; but he has already lost the wisdom of age; in the moment of conquest he wastes the fruits of it in the arms of luxury.

It is through this weakness that the perfected man, the Sun, is of dual nature, and his evil twin slays him in his glory. So the triumphant Lord of Heaven, the beloved of Apollo and the Muses, is brought down into the dust, and who shall mourn him but his mother Nature, Venus, the lady of love and sorrow? Well is it if she bears within her the Secret of Resurrection!

But even Venus owes all her charm to the swift messenger of the Gods, Mercury, the joyous and ambiguous boy whose tricks first scandalize and then delight Olympus.

But Mercury too is found wanting. Not in him alone is the secret cure for all the woe of the human race. He passes, and gives place to the youngest of the Gods, to the virginal Moon.

Behold her, Madonna-like, throned and crowned, veiled, silent, awaiting the promise of the future. She is Isis and Mary, Istar and Bhavani, Artemis and Diana. But Artemis is still barren of hope until the spirit of the Infinite All, great Pan, tears asunder the veil and displays the hope of humanity, the Crowned Child of the Future.

All this is symbolised in the holy rites which we have recovered from the darkness of history, and now in the fulness of time disclose that the world may be redeemed.

NOTE.

For the Rite of Saturn you are requested, if convenient, to wear black or very dark blue, for Jupiter violet, for Mars scarlet or russet brown, for Sol, orange or white, for Venus green or sky-blue, for Mercury shot silk and mixed colours, for Luna white, silver, or pale blue. It is not necessary to confine yourself to the colour mentioned, but it should form the keynote of the scheme.

The etiquette to be observed is that of the most solemn religious ceremonies. It should be particularly borne in mind that silence itself is used as a means of obtaining effects.

THE RITES OF ELEUSIS

will be celebrated at Caxton Hall, Westminster, S.W., as follows :—

THE RITE OF SATURN.	9 p.m. Wednesday, October 19.
THE RITE OF JUPITER.	9 p.m. Wednesday, October 26.
THE RITE OF MARS . .	9 p.m. Wednesday, November 2.
THE RITE OF SOL . . .	9 p.m. Wednesday, November 9.
THE RITE OF VENUS . .	9 p.m. Wednesday, November 16.
THE RITE OF MERCURY	9 p.m. Wednesday, November 23.
THE RITE OF LUNA . .	9 p.m. Wednesday, November 30.

Tickets will not be sold separately ; the rent for the series is Five Guineas. Tickets are however transferable. The number of seats is strictly limited to one hundred. Early application is most necessary. Doors will be open at 8.30 ; they will be closed and locked at Nine o'clock precisely. The ceremonies occupy from 1½ to 2½ hours.

Application for seats should be made to the MANAGER, *The Equinox*, 124 Victoria Street, London, S.W. Telephone : 3210, Victoria.