MAGICK WITHOUT TEARS
By Aleister Crowley

Chapter IX: The Secret Chiefs

Cara Soror,

*Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law.*

Very glad I am, since at one time I was obliged to be starkly stern about impertinent curiosity, to note that your wish to be informed about the Secret Chiefs of the A.'.A.' is justified; it is most certainly of the first importance that you and I should be quite clear in our minds about Those under whose jurisdiction and tutelage we both work.

The question is beset with thickets of tough thorn; what is worse, the path is so slippery that nothing is easier than to tumble head first into the spikiest bush of them all.

You justly remind me that one of my earliest slogans was "Mystery is the enemy of Truth;" how then is it what I acquiesce in the policy of concealment in a matter so cardinal?

Perhaps the best plan is for me to set down the facts of the case, so far as is possible, from them it may appear that no alternative policy is feasible.

The first condition of membership of the A.'.A.' is that one is sworn to identify one's own Great Work with that of raising mankind to higher levels, spiritually, and in every other way.

Accordingly, it stands to reason that those charged with the conduct of the Order should be at least Masters of the Temple, or their judgment would be worthless, and at least Magi (though not that particular kind of Magus who brings the Word of a New Formula to the world every 2,000 years of so) or they would be unable to influence events on any scale commensurate with the scope of the Work.

Of what nature is this Power, this Authority, this Understanding, this Wisdom—Will?

(I go up from Geburah to Chokmah.)

Of the passive side it is comparatively easy to form some idea; for the qualities essential are mainly extensions of those that all of us possess in some degree. And whether Understanding - Wisdom is "right" or "wrong" must be largely a matter of opinion; often Time only can decide such points.
But for the active side it is necessary to postulate the existence of a form of Energy at their disposal which is able "to cause change to occur in conformity with the Will"—one definition of "Magick."

Now this, as you know, is an exceedingly complex subject; its theory is tortuous, and its practice encompassed with every kind of difficulty.

Is there no simple method?

Yes: the thaumaturgic engine disposes of a type of energy more adaptable than Electricity itself, and both stronger and subtler than this, its analogy in the world of profane science. One might say, that it is electrical, or at least one of the elements in the "Ring-formula" of modern Mathematical Physics.

In the R.R. et A.C., this is indicated to the Adept Minor by the title conferred upon him on his initiation to that grade: Hodos Camelionis:—the Path of the Chameleon. (This emphasizes the omnivalence of the force.) In the higher degrees of O.T.O.—the A.'.A.'. is not fond of terms like this, which verge on the picturesque—it is usually called "the Ophidian Vibrations," thus laying special stress upon its serpentine strength, subtlety, its control of life and death, and its power to insinuate itself into any desired set of circumstances.

It is of this universally powerful weapon that the Secret Chiefs must be supposed to possess complete control.

They can induce a girl to embroider a tapestry, 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.

(It should go without saying that the adroit use of these vibrations enables one to perform all the classical "miracles.")

These powers are stupendous: they seem almost beyond imagination to conceive.

"Hic ego nec metas rerum nec tempora pono; Imperium sine fine dedi."

as Vergil, that mighty seer and magician of Rome at her perihelion says in his First Book of the Aenead. (Vergil whose every line is also an Oracle, the leaves of his book more sacred, more significant, more sure than those of the Cumaean Sibyl!)

These powers move in dimensions of time and space quite other than those with which we are familiar. Their values are incomprehensible to us. To a Secret Chief, wielding this weapon, "The nice conduct of a clouded cane" might be infinitely more important than a war, famine and pestilence such as might
exterminate a third part of the race, to promote whose welfare is the crux of His oath, and the sole reason of His existence!

But who are They?

Since They are "invisible" and "inaccessible," may They not merely be figments invented by a self-styled "Master," not quite sure of himself, to prop his tottering Authority?

Well, the "invisible" and "inaccessible" criticism may equally be leveled at Captain A. and Admiral B. of the Naval Intelligence Department. These "Secret Chiefs" keep in the dark for precisely the same reasons; and these qualities disappear instantaneously the moment They want to get hold of you.

It is written, moreover, "Let my servants be few & secret: they shall rule the many & the known." (AL I, 10)

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.

You have already in these pages and elsewhere in my writings examples numerous and varied of the way in which They work. The list is far from complete. The matters of Ab-ul-Diz and of Amalantrah show one method of communication; then there is the way of direct "inspiration," as in the case of "Hermes Eimi" in New Orleans.* Again, They may send an ordinary living man, whether one of Themsevles 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?

I have never attempted to pursue any such enquiry. It was not forbidden; and yet I felt that it was! I always insisted, of course, on the strictest proof that He actually possessed the authority claimed by Him! But I felt is improper to assume any other initiative. Just a point of good manners, perhaps?

You ask whether, contact once made, I am able to renew it should I so wish. Again, yes and no. But the real answer is that no such gesture on my part can ever be necessary. For one thing, the "Chief" is so far above me that I can rely on Him to take the necessary steps, whenever contact would be useful; for another, there is one path always open which is perfectly sufficient for all possible contingencies.

Elsewhere I will explain why they picked out so woebegone a ragamuffin as myself to proclaim the Word of the Aeon, and do all the chores appurtenant to that particular Work.

The Burden is heavier as the years go by; but—Perdurabo.

Love is the law, love under will.

Fraternally,

666

P.S. Reading this typescript over for "literals," it struck me that you would ask, very reasonably: "But if the Secret Masters have these boundless powers, why do They allow you to be plagued by printers, held up for lack of secretaries, worried by all sorts of practical problems? . . . Why, in a word, does anything ever go wrong?"

There are several lines of reply; coalescing, they suffice:

1. What is "wrong?" Since four wars is Their idea of "right," you may well ask by what standard you may judge events.

2. Their Work is creative; They operate on the dull mass of unrealized possibilities. Thus they meet, firstly, the opposition of Inertia; secondly, the recoil, the reaction, the rebound.

3. Things theoretically feasible are practically impossible when (a) desirable though their accomplishment may be, it is not the one feat essential to the particular Work in hand and the moment; (b) the sum total of available energy being used up by that special task, there is none available for side-issues; (c) the opposition, passive or active, is too strong, temporarily, to overcome.
More largely, one cannot judge how a plan is progressing when one has no precise idea what it is. A soldier is told to "attack;" he may be intended to win through, to cover a general retreat, or to gain time by deliberate sacrifice. Only the Commander in Chief knows what the order means, or why he issues it; and even he does not know the issue, or whether it will display and justify his military skill and judgment.

Our business is solely to obey orders: our responsibility ends when we have satisfied ourselves that they emanate from a source which has the right to command.

P.P.S. A visitor's story has just reminded me of the possibility that I am a Secret Chief myself without knowing it: for I have sometimes been recognized by other people as having acted as such, though I was not aware of the fact at the time.

* I will remember to give you details of these incidents when the occasion arises.

† One thing I regard from my own experience as certain: when you call, They come. The circumstances usually show that the call had been foreseen, and preparations made to answer it, long before it was made. But I suppose in some way the call has to justify the making.