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The Practice of Enochian Evocation by John Dee

There are no descriptions in Dee's extant diaries of actual Enochian evocation rituals, a fact that has led some scholars to conclude that he never attempted the magic. The existence, however, of artifacts such as the wax sigils of Aemeth in the British museum indicate that Dee, at the very least, constructed some of the requisite furniture. In addition, Dee compiled Sloane MSS 3191 (the primary source for this book) to be a working collection of conjurations for use in magical ceremonies. Although it is possible that Dee never went through with the experiments, it is far more likely that he recorded the events in a separate diary that has not survived. Dee was a rabid diarist, and kept at least three concurrent diaries during the period that he was working with Kelly, each diary covering a different aspect of his life. It would be well in character for Dee to initiate a special diary for the practice of the "radical truths" that he had sought for so many years.

There are many clues that assist in uncovering of the operative portions of this arcane branch of magical lore. Sloane MSS 3191, for example, delineates the portions of Enochian evocation that Dee thought were most essential. Other clues are scattered throughout the surviving diaries. Dee describes many scrying sessions, and it is unlikely that the Enochian rituals differed very greatly from those he practiced with his scryers. In addition, many passages from the scrying sessions contain hints and instructions concerning Enochian evocation. Another valuable source of information is the body of magical literature that was available to Dee and Kelly. The effect of Agrippa, for example, upon Dee's philosophical outlook is obvious, and many aspect of Enochian evocation are dependent upon the worldview of the renaissance Magi. Also, Kelly's involvement in black magic indicates influence from other magical texts. When all these sources of information are gathered together, a coherent picture emerges of the practice of Enochian evocation.

Enochian rituals were practiced by two people, a Magus and a Scryer. The Magus chanted the conjurations, compelling the Angels (by the power of the names of God) to appear within the crystal stone. The Scryer gazed into the crystal and related his visions. The Magus doubled as scribe, recording the visions and the results of the ceremony.

Both Scryer and Magus were expected to lead holy lives (at least while practicing the magic), to cultivate piety and humility, and to abstain from the practice of black magic. During the ceremonies, both were dressed in white linen robes, and the magus wore a magical ring with a gold seal (as shown in Book Two, Chapter Two). Other renaissance magical texts recommend that the Magus wear a crown and carry a magical wand and/or sword, but none of these are mentioned in Dee's work.

Before practicing Enochian evocation, the Magus and Scryer located and/or constructed the following items:

1. A crystal ball. This was handled only by the magus or the scryer. Dee's was rather small, about two inches in diameter.
2. A circular wax tablet, 9 inches in diameter and 1.5 inches thick, inscribed on the front with the Sigil of Aemeth and on the back with a cross. These designs are shown in Book Two. The center of the front was hollowed out slightly, so that the crystal ball could easily be placed on top of the Sigil.
3. Four wax tablets, about 4 inches in diameter, similarly inscribed.
4. A red silk "rug", two yards square.
5. A red silk tablecloth, about 1.5 yards square, with tassles at each corner.
6. A table constructed of "sweet wood" (cedar?) a yard (two cubits) square, with yard-long legs. Each leg terminated with a hollow cylinder, slightly more than 4 inches on the inside diameter and about .5 inches thick. The basic structure of this table is shown in Book Two; because of its low profile, two wooden stools were probably also necessary. A set of elaborate sigils were to be painted in yellow oils on the top surface of the table. The arrangement of these sigils is too complex to be reproduced in this volume, but can be found in The True Relation, between the Preface and the first book, on the page labeled "The Holy Table".
7. Twelve banners or flags each embroidered with a name of God as as shown in Book Five, Chapter Three.

This furniture was arranged into a temple where Enochian evocation could be practiced. This may have been intended to be in the open air rather than within a building, as there are no descriptions of candles or torches. Furthermore, the magical circle specifies "Terra" (Earth), which may or may not have been intended symbolically.

The temple was constructed in the following manner:

1. The place of working was enclosed by a circle as shown in Book Five, Chapter Three. The banners were propped at the circle's edge.
2. The red silk rug was laid in the center of the circle.
3. The four small wax tablets were arranged in a square pattern in the center of the silk rug, 1 yard square.
4. The table was balanced upon the wax tablets, so that the hollow cylinders at the end of the table legs overlapped them.
5. The large wax tablet was placed on the center of the table.
6. The silk tablecloth was draped over the table, covering the large wax tablet, so that the tassles dangled almost to the floor.
7. The crystal was laid on top of the tablecloth, balanced on the indentation in the wax tablet.

The Magus was required to have a book in which prayers and conjurations were recorded for use within the temple. For the complete practice of Enochian evocation, it probably would have had the following contents:

PART ONE: PRAYERS

The Oration to God -- as shown in Book Two, Chapter Five.

The Prayer of Enoch -- as shown in Book One, Chapter Two.

The Fundamental Obesance -- as shown in Book Five, Chapter Four.

PART TWO: CONJURATIONS

The Heptarchic Conjurations -- formed by inserting the specific attributes of the each King and Prince (as shown in Book Two, Chapter Seven) with the generalized conjuration (as shown in Book Two, Chapter Six).

The Angelical Keys -- as shown in Book Three. These were to be written in both Angelical and English. Note that the last key was to be repeated 30 times, with the third word altered to indicate the Aire being worked. In Sloane MSS 3191, the various Aires are listed in the margin. The individual names of the Aires are given in Book Four, Column Four.

The Invitations to the Angels of the Quarters -- as shown in Book Five, Chapters Five through Thirteen.

The ordering of Dee's workbooks suggests that he intended a certain cross-semination of the earlier (Heptarchic) and later (Angelical) systems. In any case, the magical book is described in Dee's diaries

as consisting "first of the invocation of the names of God and second of the invocation of the Angels, by the names of God" -- an ordering is preserved in the contents above.

Note that, unlike other renaissance magical systems, Enochian evocation does not include a "Dismissal" or "License to Depart", a conjuration designed to send a spirit back to its dwelling place. Dee evidently felt this to be unnecessary, although most renaissance Magi would have considered this omission dangerous.

Enochian evocation was believed to summon three interrelated hierarchies of angels:

1. The Heptarchical Royalty -- who were believed to govern "all earthly actions", and "disperse of the will of the Creator". One conjured them to obtain "knowledge of God truly, the number and doings of His Angels perfectly, and the beginning and ending of Nature substantially". These angels were based upon the 7 planets and the 7 days of the week.

2. The Angels of the Aires -- who were believed to rule over the various countries of the earth. One conjured them to "subvert whole countries without armies", to "get the favor of all the (human) Princes", and to "know the secret treasure of the waters, and the unknown caves of the earth". These angels were based on the 12 houses of the Zodiac and the 30 Aires, which were evidently subdivisions of the "vault of stars" in which the "fixed stars" were believed to reside.

3. The Angels of the Quarters -- who were believed to have been "put onto the earth so that the Devil's envious will might be bridled, the determinations of God fulfilled, and his creatures kept and preserved". One conjured them to obtain a variety of semi-divine powers and capabilities. These Angels were based upon the 4 Elements and the 4 compass points.

Thus Enochian evocation consisted of a complete panoply of magical art, covering planetary, zodiacal, and elemental operations, and reputed to control hundreds of named and thousands of unnamed Angelic creatures. Because of the complexity of these Angelic hierarchies, I shall discuss each in detail...

(The appendix continues, giving specific details of the angelic hierarchies, probable reconstructions of Enochian talismans, a variation of Enochian script never before published, and the ordering of the days for the practice of Enochian evocation magic.)
