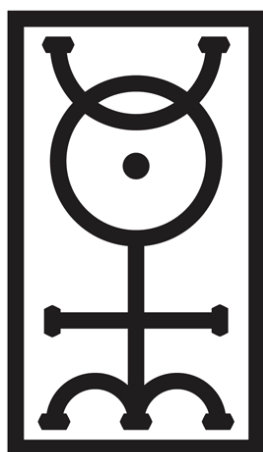


# ENOCHIAN MAGIC IN THEORY



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KERUBIM PRESS

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DUBLIN 2012

## I



## DEE &amp; KELLEY



**T**he Enochian language and system of magic was first delivered, through a series of skrying sessions over a period of five years, to magician Dr. John Dee and his skryer Sir Edward Kelley. Both Dee and Kelley were Protestants, though it might be better to describe them as Deists, for their beliefs and practices did not entirely fall in line with mainstream Protestantism. This will be evident from the material involved with the Enochian system itself.

When Dee neared the end of his life he hid his documents in a secret drawer of a cedar wood chest, perhaps at the request of the angels, or perhaps because he was loath to see his life's work destroyed. In 1642 a Robert and Susannah Jones bought the chest, which had found its way into a shop. It was not until 20 years later, however, that the Jones discovered the secret compartment, which held many of Dee's magical diaries.

The documents eventually found their way into the hands of Elias Ashmole, an antiquarian and alchemist, in 1672. Ashmole already had an interest in Dee, having published two alchemical texts written by Dee's son, Arthur, around two decades beforehand.

The collection was handed over to the British Museum, where

it remains today. It was here that the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn expanded upon the brief mentions of Enochian in its Cipher Manuscript into what would become a major part of the modern occult tradition, and the means by which most people interested in Enochian magic would be introduced to the system.

Another collection of Dee's documents was found by Sir Robert Cotton after an excavation of land surrounding Dee's house. It was this stash that Sir Thomas Cotton handed over to Meric Casaubon, who transcribed and published them, with a number of errors, in *A True & Faithful Relation*.

Unfortunately, many of Dee's diaries were destroyed after they were discovered, with half of the stash discovered by the Jones used as lining for pie tins by their maid, and the remaining number narrowly escaping the inferno of the Great Fire of London in 1666. While this has had little bearing on the overall system, it is possible that answers to some of the major questions and explanations to some of the more obscure parts of the system might have been found in these destroyed texts.

Dee was meticulous in his documenting of the workings, transcribing the communications in almost excruciating detail, with many footnotes and explanatory comments dotted throughout. He even made several copies of his diaries. It was this level of attention to detail that allowed the Enochian system to survive, despite the unfortunate treatment of some of the diaries. In fact, I would argue that Dee's extensive documentation skills were one of the very reasons why he was chosen by the angels for the delivery of this magical system in the first place.

The communications between the angels and Dee are long, spanning many years and hundreds of workings. Some of these sessions were intense, producing a high volume of material that ultimately became the Enochian system. Other sessions were less fruitful, effectively amounting to little more than clairvoyant chit chat. Benjamin Rowe sums it up best:

"Much of the communication was important within the context of the operations, but has no direct bearing on the systems of magick being presented. Of the rest, there are

long periods of communication that, in retrospect, seem to have no purpose but to hold the magicians' attention on continuing the operations. During these periods the angels would present colorful visions, portentous prophecies, and angelic gossip, but very little in the way of solid information.”<sup>5</sup>

This “filler” material often makes the diaries difficult to read, especially when searching for material relating to the magical tradition that we have come to describe by the term “Enochian.” They can often be beneficial for context, but generally speaking they were intended for Dee and Kelley’s eyes and ears, not the thousands of magicians who would follow.

It is impossible to get a full understanding of the Enochian system without exploring the two figures who played such a pivotal role in its delivery and discovery. Without Dee we would not have the religious fervour and urge to commune with the Angels; without Kelley we would not have the psychic capabilities, the ability to make that communion a reality. The intricacies of the relationship between these two men is enough for a book of its own (I recommend *The Queen’s Conjurer* by Benjamin Woolley for more detail), but a brief exploration is necessary.

## JOHN DEE



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5 Benjamin Rowe, *Enochian Magick Reference*, p. 1.

Dee was born on 13 July 1527 in Tower Ward, London to Jane and Roland Dee, the latter of whom worked as a textile merchant and gentleman sewer to King Henry VIII.

Dee studied at Trinity College, Cambridge from the age of 14, where he was exposed to multiple subjects, including mathematics and astronomy, both of which would shape his future. It is likely here that he was first introduced to the occult.

Dee married his second wife Jane Fromond in 1578 and she bore eight children, only three of which outlived Dee, due to disease and plague that ran rampant at the time. Jane also miscarried after being ill for days with another child. His son Arthur wrote a number of essays on alchemy and also acted as a somewhat unsuccessful skryer for Dee towards the end of the angelic workings.

Aside from prayer it is not clear to what extent Dee carried out magical work. Some records exist that show that he carried out exorcisms, including an attempted one on his troubled nurse Anne Frank, whom he believed to be possessed, but she eventually committed suicide. It does not appear that he ever used Enochian magic, but it is likely he at least dabbled in, if not overtly practiced, some other forms of grimoire and Qabalistic magic.

Dee allegedly had one of the largest libraries in the world at the time. Casaubon states that Dee had some 4,000 books, 700 of which were manuscripts. He also notes some 48 books catalogued as written by Dee in *A discourse Apologetical*, which was sent to the then Archbishop of Canterbury.<sup>6</sup>

When Dee returned to his Mortlake homestead in December 1589 he found that it had been ransacked and around 500 of his books and many of his other prized possessions had been stolen. Interestingly, in August of that year he reported being plagued by nightmares that Kelley would “bereave me of my books.”<sup>7</sup> We do not know exactly who carried out this crime, but some reports suggest it was a London mob or people close to Dee, though there appears to be no evidence that Kelley was among this number.

Dee's later years were marred by squalor, a somewhat ironic twist of fate for one who had enjoyed such wealth for much of his life. He found himself in debt to many people and unable to pay his

6 Meric Casaubon, *A True & Faithful Relation*, Preface.

7 Benjamin Woolley, *The Queen's Conjurer*, p. 276.

bills, forcing him to sell much of what little he had left to get by.

Many of Dee's friends donated reasonable sums of money to help him out. Even Queen Elizabeth I came to the rescue with a large sum of money. She also secured him a position as Warden of Christ's College in Manchester, a post he held until his death. In his final days his daughter Katherine sold many of his cherished books, a fact that might have hastened his passing.

Dee died in Mortlake at the age of 81 or 82. The exact year of his death is not entirely known, since the records and gravestone have since gone missing, but it is believed to have been in December 1608 or March 1609.

The first working Dee did with Kelley resulted in an angel telling him he would live "an hundred and odd years,"<sup>8</sup> but that turned out to be a false spirit pretending to be Uriel. While Dee did not quite make that lofty age, his real life span was nearly double the average lifespan at the time, which was around 40 years, and he outlived almost all of those around him, including Queen Elizabeth. Dee might have lived even longer were it not for the relative poverty of his final years.

## A RENAISSANCE MAN

Dee was a typical polymath or *Renaissance Man*, being well-versed in a great array of subjects and hungering for more knowledge, including the secret teachings of the angels. He was like many people of the time, including Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo, who were not only jacks of all trades, but masters of those numerous subjects that they delved in, inspired by the philosophy of the time that we are limitless in our abilities and our capacities for knowledge and development.

Dee was a great mathematician, invented many things, was pivotal in the explorations of the New World (through his cartography, etc.), and, indeed, was heavily involved in the various occult sciences that were part and parcel of the "elite" of that day. He was fluent in many languages, including English, Latin, Greek and Hebrew.

He was also knowledgeable in steganography, a form of encryption that conceals the message in an otherwise mundane text, a

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8 Joseph H. Peterson, *John Dee's Five Books of Mystery*, p. 67.

fact that has partly contributed to a belief that Dee might have also worked as a secret agent for Queen Elizabeth. There is not much evidence to support this claim, besides his contacts with Elizabeth's spies Sir Francis Walsingham and William Cecil. Biographer Richard Deacon<sup>9</sup> claims that Dee employed the number 007, or a symbol of a hand over one's eyes when gazing into the distance, on some correspondence, a rather appropriate signature for what would eventually become the quintessential spy hero James Bond. Ian Fleming is believed to have had some contact with Aleister Crowley, who thought he was the reincarnation of Kelley. This might have been where Dee and 007 came into the equation. It seems likely that this is little more than a myth, however.

Dee was well-respected, not only in England, but all over Europe, where he travelled frequently and enjoyed the hospitality and audience of many nobles and royal families. Indeed, at one stage he was invited to the Vatican, though this was, it seems, an attempt to take his life—luckily for us, he was wise enough to turn down the invitation.

Dee also contributed to the exploration of the New World, helping explorers with his knowledge of navigation and cartography. He even developed some new navigational instruments to help seafarers find their way.

Dee was clearly ahead of his time, seeing the scientific reality of things where others relied on superstitious beliefs. For example, he saw the mathematical element of mechanical creatures that were then being experimented with by various people, while many others still saw mathematics as an occult tradition, if not downright the work of the devil.

It was in Dee's production of the Aristophanes play *Peace* that people got the first glimpse of Dee's "magical" powers, though in reality they were really getting a flash of the future. Dee managed to get a scarab prop to rise into the air, much to the wonder and amazement of the audience. According to Woolley,<sup>10</sup> Dee likely used pneumatics, mirrors, springs and pulleys to achieve this, all of which he wrote about in various papers, but that did not stop him being

9 See Richard Deacon, *John Dee: Scientist, Geographer, Astrologer, and Secret Agent to Elizabeth I*.

10 Benjamin Woolley, *The Queen's Conjurer*, p. 14.

labelled a “conjurer” by those around him.

Dee is also believed to have earned the attention of William Shakespeare, with many people attesting that the character Prospero in *The Tempest* is based on him.

## THE QUEEN’S CONFIDANT

Dee enjoyed some special favour with Queen Elizabeth, who appointed him as her Court Astrologer. He was given the task of finding an appropriate date for her coronation and was consulted for advice on several other occasions. Dee also analysed the astrological significance of Elizabeth’s reign, something that she was undoubtedly very interested in knowing.

Dee was not just a royal astrologer, however. He acted as a confidant to Elizabeth, being summoned by her a number of times to discuss things that were on her mind, suggesting she valued his intellect and insight. She visited Dee’s house at Mortlake many times, a rare honour for anyone concerned. She also seemed to have more than a passing interest in magic, though it is likely she had no intention of ever practicing it herself.

In 1564 Dee wrote *Monas Hieroglyphica*, a magical treatise on the importance of a symbol, the Hieroglyphic Monad, that he believed was the key to understanding the universe. This was such a pivotal element of his work and he shared it with Elizabeth, who seemed so fascinated by its mysteries that she told him she would act upon them if he disclosed the book’s secrets. It is not clear exactly what was meant by this, but it may have been that Dee was offering some potential magical aid in the imperialistic pursuits of England, which Elizabeth was obviously keen to encourage.

Dee’s proximity to the Queen led to him enjoying a certain amount of political ‘invulnerability’, a particularly important necessity given that he had previously been jailed for a period during the reign of Queen Mary on accusations of treason after he constructed her horoscope. While England now had a Protestant ruler Dee still could face religious trouble over his esoteric work, particularly given the numerous assassination attempts on his character, making Elizabeth’s favour more important than ever.



His closeness to the Queen also earned him the trust of many of her top advisors, including Sir Francis Walsingham, William Cecil, Robert Dudley, Christopher Hatton, and Edward Dyer, all of whom were very close to Elizabeth and carried significant sway in the court.

Dee's concern for Elizabeth also spilled over into the angelic workings, where at one point he asked the angel Gabriel if she was alive or dead, to which Gabriel said that she was still alive (which was, of course, true). Dee was in Kraków, Poland at this time and likely would have heard little news about what was happening back home.

Dee's importance to Elizabeth cannot be underestimated. Some of the more interesting reports about his magical work suggest that he was responsible for the sinking of the Spanish Armada, as well as predicting an assassination attempt against the Queen. Elizabeth's financial aid in Dee's time of hardship also shows that she felt she owed him a favour or two, despite a sudden shift in the Queen's court and general society against astrologers and magicians.

## THE ROSICRUCIAN LINK

Rosicrucianism is an esoteric Christian tradition that began in 1614 with the publication of the *Fama Fraternitatis* in Germany, a manifesto that first revealed the existence of the Order or Fraternity of the Rosy Cross, a mysterious group based on a mythical figure called Christian Rosenkreuz, who, tradition claims, lived to the ripe age of 106, an extremely long life for the time period.

This text was followed by the *Confessio Fraternitatis* in 1615 and the *Chemical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz* in 1616, again in Germany, which added fuel to the fire of what was quickly capturing the imaginations of many learned people throughout Europe, with all three texts being translated into numerous languages.

The exact origins of Rosicrucianism are unknown, with some attributing the source texts to a number of famous individuals, including Francis Bacon, who is also believed by some to be the author of the numerous plays traditionally attributed to William Shakespeare. John Dee is also on the list of potential instigators of the Rosicrucian tradition, a theory made popular by the works of scholar Frances

Yates.

In *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, Yates argues that “there can be no doubt that we should see the movement behind the three Rosicrucian publications as a movement ultimately stemming from John Dee.”<sup>11</sup>

She asserts that Dee’s extensive travels throughout Europe, and particularly to Bohemia, may have been what set the Rosicrucian fervour in motion.

“The strangely exciting suggestion is that the Rosicrucian movement in Germany was the delayed result of Dee’s mission in Bohemia over twenty years earlier...”<sup>12</sup>

While there might seem like little evidence to support this, there is a peculiar link between Dee and the *Chemical Wedding* text, the title page of which contains the Hieroglyphic Monad symbol from Dee’s *Monas Hieroglyphica*, a short book that contains a number of esoteric theorems which Dee believed were of extreme importance.

Of course, Dee died in 1608, six years before the publication of the first Rosicrucian manifesto, which suggests that he was not the author of it, unless he wrote it many years prior to its first appearance, which seems unlikely.

While Dee may or may not have influenced the Rosicrucian tradition, his prominence at the time led to claims that he was, at the very least, a member of that fraternity.

“Although Ashmole himself was not a Rosicrucian and does not seem to have associated Dee with that group, some members of the Rosicrucian fraternity adopted Dee as one of their own. Sometime after the publication 1652 of Ashmole’s *Theatricum Chemicum Britannicum*, which included a brief life of Dee, a Mr Townesend wrote to Ashmole that John Dee ‘is acknowledge for one of ye Brotherhood of ye R. CR. by one of that Fraternity, who calleth himself Philip Zeigerus, Francus.’”<sup>13</sup>

11 Frances Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, pp. 55-6.

12 Ibid., p. 56.

13 Peter French, *John Dee: The World of an Elizabethan Magus*, p. 14.

It is understandable why other Rosicrucians would want to associate Dee with the group, given how well-received he was throughout Europe until Casaubon tarnished his reputation with the publication of *A True & Faithful Relation*. Dee's achievements in mathematics, navigation, and astronomy, not to mention his fervent interest in occult studies, made him a perfect example of what a typical Rosicrucian should be. It seems unlikely that Dee was really a Rosicrucian, however, since the texts did not exist during his lifetime, but he certainly fit the bill in every way imaginable.

“Dee can plausibly be identified with the Rosicrucian mode of thinking, which tended towards secrecy and science mixed with magic, but only if Rosicrucian is used as a generic term. It is improbable that he was a Rosicrucian in the sense of belonging to a secret fraternity with formal rules, secret ceremonies, and so forth.”<sup>14</sup>

The enigma surrounding the origins of Rosicrucianism make it ripe for speculation, and it is far more appealing to think of individuals like Dee and Bacon, instead of some lesser known people, as the potential figureheads of the tradition. Unfortunately, there is little to support this assertion, but while it seems that Dee was likely not directly connected with the Rosicrucian movement, the presence of the Hieroglyphic Monad in the *Chemical Wedding* suggests that his works certainly had a major influence on it.

## EDWARD KELLEY

Edward Kelley (or Kelly) was born on 1 August, 1555. Little is known about his life before encountering Dee, but it is believed he worked as an apothecary's apprentice, where perhaps he developed his fervent interest in alchemy.

Kelley also went by the name Talbot, making it more difficult to track down details about him. This was the name that he went by when he first entered Dee's life, but the reasoning for the pseudonym is unknown. It might be that he was wary of revealing his true

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

identity, particularly given some previous run-ins with the law.



What little we know about Kelley's early days is that he was notorious for his deception and fraud. At one stage it appears he was arrested for coining (making false money), for which he was allegedly punished by having his ears cut off.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, it seems evident that Kelley was obsessed with material wealth, as his sole magical purpose seems to have been in finding out how to turn lead to gold, an achievement he is rumoured to have achieved later in life.

Kelley claimed that he had ancestors in the house of "Imaymi," more correctly known as Uí Maine, from the Irish province of Connaught, which Kelley wrote as "Conaghaku," according to Wooley.<sup>16</sup> Unfortunately, we do not know if this claim had any truth to it.

Kelley was a powerful "psychic," with strong skrying abilities that Dee and his previous skryers lacked, a fact that is evident alone in the accounts of the Enochian workings. He had a strong personality and often argued with the angels that he communed with, at times accusing them of being illuding spirits. It seems to me that the angels disliked and distrusted him as much as he disliked and distrusted them, and their mutual rivalry was only set aside because they needed each other; Kelley needed the angels to keep his employment with Dee, while the angels needed Kelley to deliver their material. It was, as it were, a relationship of convenience.

In the later years, when Kelley supposedly discovered the secret

15 Donald C. Laycock, *The Complete Enochian Dictionary*, p. 21.

16 Benjamin Woolley, *The Queen's Conjurer*, p. 268.

of alchemy, he enjoyed the fame and welcome that Dee previously had in the crown courts of Europe, even receiving a knighthood from the Holy Roman Emperor, Rudolf II. It is evident that this was because everyone was interested in figuring out how to turn lead to gold, though it is not clear if this was another ploy by Kelley or a genuine belief in the attainment of this secret.

Neither Dee nor Kelley really utilised the Enochian system, or, at least, no documentation of such has been found. It seems to me that the angels made many promises purely so that these two conflicting figures would work together long enough to receive the full material that the entities wanted humanity to have. Regardless of the whys, it is Dee's careful journaling of the workings that has allowed us to piece together a viable and, indeed, potent practice that has attracted a lot of attention over the last century in particular.

## THE SKRYER AND THE MAGICIAN

It was on 8 March 1582 that Kelley, then known as Edward Talbot, entered Dee's life, a few days later replacing former priest Barnabas Saul, who previously worked as Dee's somewhat unsuccessful skryer and who mysteriously disappeared as Kelley arrived.

It is interesting that when Kelley appeared with one Mr. Clerkson at Mortlake, both of them revealed that Saul was spreading rumours about Dee, effectively axing him from the equation and opening up a position that Dee would desperately want filled. Whether this is coincidence, the manipulation of Kelley, or the work of the angels is a mystery that will likely never be solved.

Kelley was only 26 at this time and had just met Dee, yet he quickly offered to perform some skrying work, clearly eager to prove his ability. Indeed, the apparent wrongdoing of Saul was told to Kelley by "a spiritual creature," an immediate and, we might assume, deliberate hint of Kelley's capabilities.

Dee was initially skeptical and dismissed Kelley's first offer, noting that it was to "entrap" him and find out if he had dealings with "wicked spirits." Two days later, however, on 10 March, and after much reassurance from Kelley, he decided to give the young man a try. It likely did not take much convincing, as Dee clearly wanted a

genuine and skilled skryer as much as Kelley appeared to want to fill that role.

Kelley knelt by Dee's desk and began gazing into the shewstone Dee had set up, while Dee retired to his oratory. Both began intense prayer and within 15 minutes Kelley had established contact with the archangel Uriel, whom Dee questioned about his Book of Soyga, a magical text that contained a number of mysterious tables he could not decipher. Uriel responded that this book was delivered to Adam by angelic beings, the first hint of the Enochian or Adamic tongue and teachings that would follow.

Kelley also received a vision of a Goetic style talisman that was later discredited by Uriel and documented as a false vision in a footnote by Dee. This puts the legitimacy of the entire skrying session into question, but even if the contact proved false, it was evidently a much clearer mode of communication than Dee had experienced with his previous skryers, and by the time Dee had found out that it was an illuding spirit he was already deeply engrossed in workings with the true angels.

Dee continued to perform magical workings until 1607, many years after the departure of Kelley and a year or two before Dee's death, but these were obviously not as fruitful without Kelley's skills, and it is unclear to what extent, if any, they relate to the previous transmissions of the Enochian system.

The swiftness with which Kelley established a connection to the angels and with which Dee threw himself into documenting what transpired is almost unbelievable, as these two men barely knew each other. Yet this strange meeting was to become the beginning of a journey of many years and the first insight into what would be revealed as the system of Enochian magic.

## **A YOUTH OF NECROMANCY & BLACK MAGIC**

Kelley has been widely criticised as a fraudster, not simply because of the allegations that he was charged with coining, but also because of his history with black magic and evil spirits.

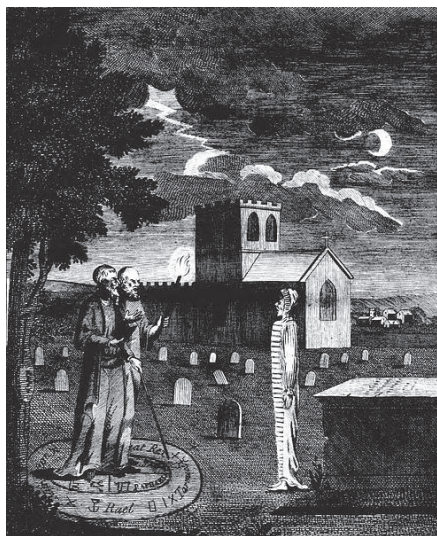
The first day Kelley worked as a skryer for Dee was 10 March 1582. Dee was 55 and Kelley was 26. Uriel appeared within a short

space of time, but it turned out to be an illuding spirit, who delivered a false seal that is Goetic in form. This may have simply been because of the new psychic links being forged or it may have been due to Kelley's past history of working with demons, a history that Dee noted in his diary on that day:

"Note: he had two days before made the like demand and request unto me: but he went away unsatisfied for his coming was to entrap me, if I had had any dealing with wicked spirits as he confessed often times after: and that he was set on, etc."<sup>17</sup>

Two years later, on 8 June 1584, Dee was still writing about Kelley's involvement with evil spirits, commenting that he told Kelley to abandon his "diabolical experiments" and to "renounce the evil angels and all their frauds."<sup>18</sup> Dee recorded this in Latin, most likely so that Kelley, whose Latin was poor, could not read it and take offense.

Kelley's reputation as a necromancer was depicted in a work by Ebenezer Sibly in 1806, which carries the title: "Edw[ar]d Kelly, a Magician. in the Act of invoking the Spirit of a Deceased Person." It is unlikely that Kelley ever attempted any form of necromancy, but clearly he had earned a dark reputation.



17 Joseph H. Peterson, *John Dee's Five Books of Mystery*, p. 66.

18 *A True & Faithful Relation*, p. 164.



Some scholars have recently attempted to re-evaluate what we know about Kelley and whether or not the stories about him are true. Michael Wilding, author of a biographical essay on Kelley,<sup>19</sup> claims that Kelley's reputation was unduly tarnished, in much the same way Dee's was.

It is likely that at least some of the reports about Kelley are exaggerated or completely erroneous, but Dee's accounts appear to be quite clear that Kelley was at least in some way involved with evil spirits at some point in his life.

Regardless of who he was or what he did, he was without doubt a gifted individual, with an ability that few could match, then or now. Depending on which side of the fence one sits on, he was either a cunning and convincing conman or a truly remarkable psychic. Either reality means that we must respect his contribution to magical history, real or feigned.

## THE WIFE-SWAP

One of the most controversial points in the history of Dee and Kelley is what has infamously become known as the "wife-swap," where the duo and their wives agreed to a covenant that would permit them to exchange wives for sexual relations on one occasion.

On 18 April 1587 Kelley received shocking instructions from the angel Madimi, an entity with whom Dee felt a special closeness, so much so that he named one of his daughters Madinia after her. The instructions suggested that the four should be joined in both a spiritual and carnal sense, with Madimi dismissing the notion of sin when it is asked for by and in the name of God.

It has been proposed by many people that Kelley constructed these visions to fulfil his own sexual fantasy. However, on 22 April he wrote a lengthy diatribe, expressing his dislike for the spirits and the covenant they proposed:

"I Edward Kelly by good and provident (according to the Laws and ordinances of God) determination and consid-

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19 See *Mystical Metal of Gold: Essays on Alchemy and Renaissance Culture*, AMS Press, 2007.



eration in these former Actions, that is to say, appearings, shows made, and voices uttered, by the within named in this Book, and the rest whatsoever Spirits have from the beginning thereof (which at large by the Records appeareth) not only doubted and disliked their insinuations and doctrine uttered, but also divers and sundry times (as coverting to eschew and avoid the danger and inconvenience that might either by them, their selves, or the drift of their doctrine ensue, or to my indamagement divers ways, happen) sought to depart from the exercises thereof: and withall boldly (as the servant of the Son of God) inveighed against them: urging them to depart, or render better reason of their unknown and incredible words and speeches delivered: and withall often and sundry times friendly exhorted the Right Worshipful Master JOHN DEE (the chief follower thereof) as also in the Records appeareth, to regard his soul's health, the good proceeding of his worldly credit (which through Europe is great) the better maintenace to come of his wife and children, to beware of them, and withall to give them over: wherein although I friendly and brotherly laboured, my labour seemed to be lost and counsel of him despised, and withall was urged with replies to the contrary by him made, and promises, in that case, of the loss of his soul's health, if they were not of God: Whereunto upon as it were some farther taste of then, or opinion grounded upon the frailty of zeal, he cased not also to pawn unto me his soul, etc. Which his persuasions were the chief and only cause of my this so long proceeding with them: And now also at this instant, and before a new few days having manifest occasion to think they were the servants of Satan, and the children of darkness; because they manifestly urged and commanded in the name of God a Doctrine Damnable, and contrary to the Laws of God, his Commandments, and Gospel by our Saviour Christ as a Touchstone to us left and delivered, and brotherly admonished the said Worshipful, and my good friend Mr. JOHN DEE to beware of them: And now having just occasion to determine what they were, to consider all

these things before mentioned by me, and wisely to leave them; and the rather because of themselves, they (as that by their own words appeareth) upon our not following that Doctrine delivered, gave unto us a *Quietas est*, a passport of freedom: But the Books being brought forth, after some discourse therin, after a day or two had, and their words perused spoken heretofore, did as it were (because of the possible verity thereof, *Deo enim omnia sunt possibilia*) gave us cause of further deliberation: so that thereby, I did partly of my self, and partly by the true meaning of the said Mr. DEE in the receiving of them, as from God; and after a sort by the zeal I saw him bear unto the true worship and glory of God to be (as that was by them, promised) by us promoted, descend from my self, and condescend unto his opinion and determination, giving over all reason, or whatsoever for the love of God: But the women disliked utterly this last Doctrine, and consulting amongst themselves gave us this answer, the former actions did nothing offend them but much comforted them: and therefore this last, not agreeing with the rest (which they think to be according to the good will and wholesome Law of God) maketh them to fear, because it expressly is contrary to the Commandment of God: And thereupon desiring God not to be offended with their ignorance, required another action for better information herein; in the mean, vowing, fasting, and praying, Mrs. DEE hath covenanted with God to abstain from the eating of fish and flesh until his Divine Majesty satisfy their minds according to his Laws established, and throughout all Christendom received. To this their request of having an action, I absolutely answer, that my simplicity before the Highest is such as I trust will excuse me: And because the sum of this Doctrine, given in his name, doth required obedience which I have (as is before written) offered, I think my self discharged: And therefore have no further cause to hazard my self any more in any action. Wherefore I answer that if it be lawful for them to call this Doctrine in question, it is more lawful for me to doubt of greater peril; considering

that to come where we are absolutely answered were folly, and might redound unto my great inconvenience. Therefore beseeching God to have mercy upon me, and to satisfy their Petitions, doubts and vows, I finally answer, that I will from this day forward meddle no more herein.”<sup>20</sup>

If this was a show put on by Kelley it had a lot of potential to backfire, as any attempts to discredit the angels would in turn discredit their command that the four should become as one. Therefore if he really did want to go through with this it would make no sense to make such an effort to dismiss the angels entirely. That said, he was probably well aware that Dee would not so easily abandon communication with the angels and would hope to appease their anger at Kelley’s refusal to give in.

While it is possible Kelley pretended to be dismayed, there is another example of this type of distaste for the angels’ commands in a working from five years earlier, which means that Kelley’s utter dislike of the instructions given to him was not a once off affair.

In this earlier working Uriel was discussing some of the Hepharchic material with Dee and the process was suddenly interrupted by Michael, who spoke to Kelley alone. When Kelley returned, Dee wrote that he was “much disquieted.” Kelley then recounted what Michael had said to him:

“He said that I must betake my self to the world, and forsake the world. That is that I should marry. Which thing to do, I have no natural inclination: neither with a safe conscience may I do it, contrary to my vow and my profession. Wherefore I think and hope, there is some other meaning in these their words.”<sup>21</sup>

Michael responded by saying: “Thou must of force keep it. Thou knowest our mind.” At this point Dee quickly said a prayer praising God and ended the operation, suggesting that he was uncomfortable with this sudden change of direction. It is also likely that he was afraid of upsetting the angels and was worried about Kelley’s reluctance to

20 *A True & Faithful Relation*, Actio Tertia, pp. 17-18.

21 Joseph H. Peterson, *John Dee’s Five Books of Mystery*, p. 172

do what they asked.

All of this could have been an act by Kelley to make it look like he did not want to marry, but if it was, it was a very elaborate and convincing act. The next day Kelley “would not willingly” work with the angels, according to Dee, who said that Kelley was now “utterly misliking and discrediting them, because they willed him to marry.”<sup>22</sup>

It is also possible that since Kelley did not want to marry in the first place he was not keen on being limited to one woman, and that therefore he tired of his wife after several years and yearned to be with another.

There is a gap in the diaries with no records for the day following the wife-swap request, suggesting that Kelley refused to conduct any workings that day, as per his promise. However, there is an action recorded on 24 April, two days after Kelley’s vow, most likely at the behest of Dee, who would undoubtedly have pleaded with Kelley to continue the work and try to find some answers to this problematic command the angels had given.

Dee records that they “cannot find how we may do the thing required,”<sup>23</sup> but then Christ appears before them and speaks in language akin to the gospels, assuring them of the divine origin of the wife-swap request and urging them to carry it out with all due faith:

“He that fasteth and prayeth doth but that which is commanded: He that also fulfilleth my will is justified before me: for who is he that raiseth up, or who is he that casteth down? Yea, even I it is that have taken you four Trees out of the forest of the world, and have covered you hitherto with my wings. And behold, this that is take away shall be restored again to you with more power. And Might shall be in it, and a breastplate unto you, of Judgement and Knowledge. [...] Your unity and knitting together is the end and consummation of the beginning of my harvest.”<sup>24</sup>

An interesting thing that is said by Christ (if it was him) was that “this Doctrine is not to be published to mortal men.” This means

22 Ibid., p. 174.

23 *A True & Faithful Relation*, p. 19.

24 Ibid., pp. 19-20.

that the covenant was to be kept secret, a fact that raises a number of questions. On one hand it could have been a genuine request, for there is power in secrecy. On the other hand, it might have been an illuding spirit which knew well that this proposal did not come from God, or it might have been a ploy by Kelley to ensure that Dee did not reveal what had happened to other people, which could have affected both of their reputations. Dee took this clause so seriously that he beseeched God that if any of them should reveal it they should be “stricken dead by thy Divine power.”

Dee told his wife Jane about the proposal, telling her that “there is no other remedy,” to which she wept and trembled for a quarter of an hour, as one can expect for someone entrusted to do something that she does not want to do for the one she loves. After a time Dee pacified her and persuaded her to agree to the cross-matching.

It seems that both Dee and Kelley were content with Christ’s words and they swapped wives on the night of Sunday, 3 May 1587. It appears the angels were satisfied with this, yet there is a peculiar incident of the angel Madimi taking away Dee’s shewstone, which he later found beneath one of the pillows on his bed where his wife was resting. Kelley might have put it there, but both John and Jane Dee believed it to be an act of God.

Regardless of what one makes of the wife-swapping agreement and who came up with the idea, ethereal or corporeal, it marks one of the most intriguing and unusual incidents in occult history, where a number of people who were extremely devout Christians agreed to perform an act that was quite un-Christian. Yet it is easy to see why Dee would agree to it, having spent several years at these communications and believing them to be true. Whether or not this covenant really came from the angels, however, is a debate that is likely to never end.

## THE ALCHEMIST OF EUROPE

Kelley expressed an interest in alchemy throughout his life, gaining fame and fortune in Europe for his alleged achievements and even writing a book on the subject, *Theatrum Astronomiae Terrestris*, the only text he ever penned. Kelley claimed that he found this book in

a bishop's tomb, but it is likely this was an attempt to add historical credibility to his work.

There are not many mentions of alchemy in Dee's diaries, a fact that Peterson argues is likely due to Dee wanting to keep his alchemical experiments secret from Kelley.<sup>25</sup> It appears that the only direct involvement of the entities with Kelley's alchemical pursuit happened quite early on in the duo's magical career. In 1583, a year after the two met, Dee recorded that Kelley had been instructed by the angels to travel to a "Huets Cross," a monument where he found a red powder, a scroll, and a book of magic and alchemy called *The Book of Saint Dunstan*.<sup>26</sup>

Towards the end of the angelic workings Dee and Kelley travelled around Europe trying to gain the financial support of some of the royalty and nobility. This was particularly difficult on Dee's family, who were forced to move several times, often back and forth from city to city, and frequently at the behest of the angels.

Two places that they travelled to in particular were Poland and Bohemia. The King of Poland did not appear to be impressed by the duo. Count Vilem Rozmberk of Bohemia, however, saw their potential, securing the favour of the Holy Roman Emperor, Rudolf II, who then reversed a previous banishment from the country. Dee and Kelley settled in the Bohemian town of Trebon in 1586, not long before their angelic communications were brought to a close.

Even if Kelley had not discovered this alchemical secret, he certainly enjoyed a lavish lifestyle thanks to the patronage of Europe's wealthy. Rozmberk, in particular, gave him money and a number of estates, while Rudolf made him a baron. Both had already expressed a keen interest in alchemy and were obviously attempting to earn Kelley's favour if the reports they were hearing were indeed true.

Those reports, of course, were that Kelley had managed to produce an ounce of gold from a mixture of a small amount of a red powder with mercury, a mystery that had confounded and eluded alchemists for many centuries. The rumours travelled throughout Europe, even back to England where Edward Dyer tried to convince the Archbishop of Canterbury of Kelley's abilities and where the Lord Treasurer tried in vain to get the skryer-turned-alchemist to return.

25 Joseph H. Peterson, ed. *John Dee's Five Books of Mystery*, pp. 30-31.

26 Ibid., p. 346.

By February 1589 Dee had lost the favour of Rozmberk and saw the last of Kelley, who travelled to Prague alone, less than two years after the wife-swapping incident and not long after he had amassed a wealth that Dee could not approach. Dee was likely furious that Kelley so quickly abandoned him, considering it was Dee's reputation that initially carried favour with the European courts, but this parting was a blessing in disguise, considering what would follow.

Kelley grew increasingly wealthy, with a castle, nine villages and two houses in Prague at his disposal, but he failed to deliver on his promises, which means that it was either an elaborate ruse or that Kelley did not want to or could not share his secret. If it was the latter, we need to ask why he needed the wealth of others if he could make it for himself. If he really was onto something it may have been the case that he ran out of the mysterious red powder and was no longer able to conduct this miracle of metallurgy.

Kelley's failure angered Rudolf, who ordered his arrest on 30 April 1589, only months after he and Dee parted ways. Kelley appears to have been tipped off about this, and disappeared before the contingent of guards arrived. He was found soon afterwards, however, and brought to Krivoklat Castle.

It is interesting that at this time Elizabeth sought for the freedom of some of Kelley's associates, such as Dyer, but never asked for Kelley himself to be freed. This might be because he refused to share his alchemical secrets with England or because she did not want to upset Dee, who likely was not very fond of Kelley any more.

Kelley was released from prison in 1593, but by 1596 he was jailed once more, now at Most Castle, after a spat with the assistant of an influential alchemist, suggesting that he continued his alchemical work despite losing the support of Rudolf II.

Wealth is the most likely reason for Kelley's alchemical experiments, particularly given his earlier alleged crime of coining and the likelihood that he put up with the angels largely for the handsome pay that Dee was affording him.

Another possible aspect to Kelley's obsession with alchemy is its potential for instilling fertility, of transmuting death into life. According to Woolley,<sup>27</sup> Kelley believed his wife Joanna was unable

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27 Benjamin Woolley, *The Queen's Conjurer*, p. 252.



to conceive, and that this fact plagued his mind while in Trebon. He was also potentially influenced by Rozmberk's own fascination by the idea that alchemy might help him produce an heir, something he had failed to achieve on numerous occasions with multiple wives.

## A DEATH PREDICTED

One of the most interesting elements of the life of Kelley was actually his death, which is shrouded in mystery and intrigue.

Kelley died in 1597, aged 42, almost half the age of Dee. The story goes that he tried to escape from Most Castle by drugging the guards and climbing down a makeshift bedlinen rope from his prison window. He fell, broke his legs, and joined the angels (or perhaps demons) in the afterlife.

Interestingly, on 21 August 1584, the angel Uriel predicted that Kelley would "die violently."<sup>28</sup> If the tale of his plummet from the heights of the castle is true, then this is an uncannily accurate omen.

To counter this, however, Uriel failed to get their proposed ages right, suggesting that Kelley would live to 87 and Dee to 122, supporting an earlier claim that he would live past 100. Neither of these ages are accurate, nor even close, but they might have been an attempt to placate the duo with promises of long-life, something that many alchemists had been searching for in vain.

A letter from Sir Thomas Browne to Elias Ashmole alleges that Dee's son Arthur said that Kelley attempted to escape, fell and broke his leg, and was then imprisoned again, suggesting that the story is partially true, but that he did not die in the incident. When and how he died is anyone's guess, but it might have been while still in prison, or he might have been released and died a rather unexciting death in the company of the Rozmberks, with whom he still held favour.

Interestingly, Dee recorded Kelley's death as being on 15 November 1595, but Woolley says that sightings of Kelley were reported as late as 1598.<sup>29</sup> It is not clear why Dee marked such an early date, but it seems likely that he was led by a friend or contact in Europe to believe that Kelley had passed on. Dee uses the word "slain" to de-

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28 Stephen Skinner, ed. *Dr John Dee's Spiritual Diaries*, p. 407.

29 Benjamin Woolley, *The Queen's Conjurer*, p. 272.



scribe Kelley's passing, suggesting he did not die naturally, but rather at the will or hand of another. We do not know what this alternative story of his death is, but it suggests that Kelley could not escape the fate outlined by Uriel all those years before.