

The **SECRET FIRE**

An Alchemical Study:

BY

By E. J. LANGFORD GARSTIN

The Secret Fire of the Alchemists has been described by them as "The All in All," and, next to the solution of the Sophic salt, it is said to be the greatest difficulty in the whole art, Without knowledge of the Fire nothing can be attained, even if the Matter be known.

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Edward John Langford Garstin was a prominent member of the A.:O.:, a later development of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. He was the author of two published works primarily on Spiritual Alchemy. The other being "Theurgy" (1931), which we also plan to publish in the near future.



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THEURGY : OR THE HERMETIC ART



*In Torches, Candles, Spectacles
What Help may be
If People are Determined
Not to See*

PREFACE

In a previous work entitled *Theurgy, or the Hermetic Practice*, we have endeavoured broadly to indicate the Telesitic or or Perfecting ground of Alchemy in its Spiritual aspect. In the present short treatise the object we have proposed for ourselves is a more particular consideration of one of the great principles underlying the Art than was previously possible.

In this we shall employ much the same methods as those brought to bear in the more general analysis, and would, therefore, reiterate our previous statement that our attention has been focussed principally upon the Egyptian, Semitic and Greek systems, rather than upon the sacred and mystical writings of the East. Also that of these three, the Qabalah has been our chief guide.

That the Qabalistic Tradition is of extreme antiquity is steadily becoming more and more evident, and in this connection we would refer the reader to *The Titled Bible*, by Dr. Moses Gaster, whose researches regarding the relationship between the Tittles and the Oral Law are of very great interest and importance.

At the same time we do not wish to suggest that the value of this Key is in any sense directly proportional to its age, for it is, on the contrary, our firm opinion that its worth is an inherent quality, independent of its date, but self-evident to those who are familiar with it. And though the Sephiroth have been described by some as arbitrary distinctions and a gratuitous multiplication of entities, we feel that such criticism arises rather from a lack of familiarity with the subject than from any real understanding.

For the word "arbitrary" is an assertion that we are convinced requires considerable qualification, so that the alleged "gratuitous multiplication" hardly arises. At the same time the Qabalah deals with Mathesis, or the doctrine of the Whole, as well as with Ontology, or that of the Parts or Singulars, of which latter the whole creation is an example, the apparent, real or material being, as Oken phrases it in his *Physio-Philosophy*, the ideal, non-apparent or spiritual in a state of definition and limitation of Form, dissevered and become finite. While, therefore, the ideal, which is the object of our quest, exists under an indefinite, eternal, single form, the Real exists, *ipso facto*, under the form of multiplicity.

This fact we cannot afford to ignore, and we conceive ourselves, consequently, to be justified in taking the system of the Sephiroth with their connecting Paths as having some real existence in the sense outlined above. The even greater reality that they may assume as a result of study and further knowledge, hardly falls within the scope of our present subject; but if they do nothing more than furnish us with a key to the Art under investigation, they will have fulfilled their purpose as far as we are here concerned.

INTRODUCTION

Many secrets appear to have been carefully concealed by the old Alchemists, and not the least jealously guarded of these was their Fire. This is described as the all in all and, next to the solution of the sophic salt, it is said to be the greatest difficulty of the whole Art.

Obscurity of terminology is a charge frequently laid against alchemical writers, and it would be idle to deny the truth of such assertions. On the other hand the difficulties arising from such methods are largely superficial, at least as far as the genuine student is concerned; for familiarity with the so-called "envious" style adopted by the various authors, coupled, it must be admitted, with some glimmering of understanding as to the end proposed, enables the careful and methodical reader to gather together the scattered clues, which were deliberately distributed through the different portions of their works.

Nor can the masters of the Art be blamed if the unskilled practitioner, taking their recipes and instructions literally, fails to achieve any result; for time and again the warning is repeated not to mistake the shadow for the substance, not to imagine that in the preparations of the apothecary is to be found the First Matter. Nevertheless, even though armed with some clue or intuition as to the meanings which underlie the written words, progress is not easy; for some essential was always reserved, without knowledge of which nothing can be accomplished. These reservations varied to some extent, however, with the different authorities, so that much may be discovered by meticulous comparison; but it would appear that with regard to two points at least, there was complete unanimity. These were the secrets of the Fire and of the Solution, which, in fact, are mutually dependent upon one another.

Since, however, without the knowledge of the Fire, nothing can be attained, even if the Matter be known to the student, it may be of interest to see what information concerning it may be gleaned from a study of a few of the sources available. Such an inquiry, owing to limits of space, must of necessity be more or less superficial, as anything in the nature of a complete survey would require a volume of some considerable size. On the other hand, although thus circumscribed, it is to be hoped that the present endeavour will prove of assistance to some, while its very condensation may render it more acceptable than the more diffuse and prolix originals.

Let us, as a preliminary, make it quite clear that in our present quest, at any rate, we are concerned with Spiritual and not Material Alchemy. Indeed, we would give it as our considered opinion and firm conviction that the physical practice is impossible for those who have not already made some progress along theurgical lines, and may, in fact, prove to be full of danger.

Nor need the reader suppose that the imposition of such limits to our inquiry is in the nature of a restriction. On the contrary, it will be obvious that the problem we are to investigate is the greater of the two, and infinitely the more important. And that it was thus regarded by the philosophers is everywhere apparent when we come to study their writings seriously. Not that the work has not been dealt with from the point of view of physical transmutation, to deny which would be an absurdity, but simply because allusions to the spirit and to the Spiritual are of constant occurrence even in the more material treatises.

As bearing on the foregoing, we will, before proceeding to our main theme, quote an extract from the *New Pearl of Great Price*, by Peter Bonus of Ferrara, edited by Janus Lacinius, the Calabrian Minorite Friar. He says: "Our Art is more noble and precious than any other science. Art or system, with the single exception of the glorious doctrine of Redemption through our Saviour Jesus Christ. it must be studied, not, like other Arts, for gain, but for its own sake; because itself has power to bestow gold and silver, and knowledge more precious than either gold or silver. It may be called noble, because there is in it a Divine and supernatural element, it is the key of all good things, the Art of Arts, the science of sciences. There are, according to Aristotle, four noble sciences: Astrology, Physics, Magic and Alchemy — but Alchemy bears the palm from them all. Moreover, it is a science which leads to still more glorious knowledge; nor can there be found a branch of human wisdom, either speculative or practical, to equal it. We naturally desire, says Aristotle (*de Animal.*, 10), to know a little of a noble and profound science, rather than to understand thoroughly some commonplace branch of knowledge. Our Art frees not only the body, but also the soul from the snares of servitude and bondage; it ennobles the rich, and comforts and relieves the poor. indeed, it may be said to supply every human want, and to provide a remedy for every form of suffering."

Now three principles are everywhere admitted to be the foundations of this Art, namely the Salt, the Sulphur and the Mercury of the Adepts; and it will be at once apparent that, from its very nature, this Sulphur, which we know in advance to be no common Sulphur, will be our principal interest, although it is, naturally, impossible to deal with it entirely apart from the others.

Even though this is the case, before proceeding to attempt any detailed analysis of the many statements about Sulphur to which the Sages have committed themselves, it may be as well to review some of the information relating to this subject, which is to be found outside the purely Alchemical writings, amplifying it where need be, however, by reference to the latter. From such considerations we may hope to find some clue to the maze that confronts us, some guidance enabling us to penetrate its dim recesses.

With this object in view, it will be necessary for us to devote a certain amount of space to Fire when considered in its principal aspects, such as Divine, Creative, Spiritual, Solar, Purificatory, Sacrificial, Baptismal and Elemental, together with its symbolical forms as Lion and Serpent. In addition to these we must also mention Kundalini Shakti and its Western counterpart, the Speirema.

And such a search, although at first sight a departure from a theme avowedly alchemical, is none the less in harmony with it. For the Great Work, though variously described as Alchemy, Theurgy or Yoga; as the Telestic, Spagyric or Separative Art; as Esotericism, Occultism or Mysticism; is everywhere in essence one and the same, a striving towards union with the Higher. Nor is it possible to make those distinctions between the Mystic and the Occultist that have from time to time been attempted; as when it is averred that the former follows the path of Love and the latter the path of Power and Knowledge. For such alleged differences are, in reality, purely superficial, the true Occultist — as distinguished from the dilettante dabbler, the merely curious, and those in search of power only — is of necessity a Mystic, and, to succeed in his quest, must be every whit as much actuated by the power of Love as the earnest Mystic, who says he is not an Occultist — who, again, must be distinguished from those whose mysticism is merely a cloak for idleness or woolly-mindedness.

We will, we trust, be pardoned these remarks by those to whom they will seem too obvious, as well as by any to whom, unintentionally, they may give offence, but Alchemy and Magic are out of favour in these days. And though, in the light of modern scientific discoveries, the former is, as it were, a candidate for rehabilitation, the latter is still looked at askance, despite the fact, which passes unrecognised, that many of the processes of Alchemy cannot be brought to a successful conclusion without the aid of the despised Magic.

And lest, after such a statement, we may be asked why we have omitted the Magical Fire from our catalogue of the principal aspects of Fire, which we have proposed to discuss, we hasten to assert that we have not, in fact, been guilty of any such neglect, as we shall hope to show in the chapters which follow.

CHAPTER I

On examining the Bible we find that without any apparent regard for portraying Him as being wrathful or otherwise, the appearances of God to mortal man seem almost always to have been in Fire or Flame, frequently synonymous with what is termed the Glory of the Lord. And the same applies to His Angelic

It is thus possible to envisage how the practices of fire-worship originated, first in the vision, or in the attempted description of such vision, and how they altered in the gradual mistaking of the symbol for the reality, a process with which we are all too familiar in the history of religion, culminating in a false magic based on mistaken analogies, and the dreadful and degrading ceremonial in regard to a fire revered as the actual, extreme physical form of God, including the awful rites of human sacrifice as a means of propitiation.

Nevertheless, before such depths were reached, there can be no doubt, in fact it is quite apparent, that a high and pure form of religion using fire as a symbol of Divinity, existed in ancient times, and, indeed, still exists ; traces of it being discoverable even in Christianity, though the main stream is naturally to be found in the Parsi religion, which is the lineal descendant of the ancient religion of Persia, the religion of Zoroaster. In the former, however, we may still trace it in the New Testament, as in the Revelation of St. John, and in the likening of the Holy Ghost to Fire, who descended upon the disciples in the form of tongues of flame (Acts ii, 5) ; also in the lights and incense employed in High Anglican, Roman and Greek Orthodox Churches.

Coming, on the other hand, from generals to particulars, and to considerations more in harmony with our main theme, we arrive at the Fire-Philosophers, Philosophi per ignem, or Theosophists, as they were alternatively called, who appeared during the sixteenth century. They were also known as Paracelsists, after Theophrastus Paracelsus, Bombast of Hohenheim, the celebrated physician and chemist, who was one of the prime movers of this sect, among whom have been numbered such distinguished men as Robert Fludd, the English Rosicrucian, Oswald Croll, Severinus, Khunrath, Jacob Boehme and many others. With the exception of Fludd, it may be mentioned, none of those others we have named were said to be Rosicrucians; but of Paracelsus we are told in the *Fama Fraternitatis* (Thomas Vaughan's English Translation, p. 10) that he had diligently read their Book " M."

These all taught that human reason was an insufficient guide, and that by its means the true wisdom was unobtainable. According to their teaching the only means of arriving at the truth was by interior illumination through the noetic or epistemonomic faculty of direct cognition, and they sought, therefore, after the divine light or fire, through which such understanding can be obtained. This is that light or fire of the mind, which is spoken of in the *Divine Poemander* of Hermes Trismegistus thus :

" Then, said I, Who art thou ? I am, quoth he, Poemander, the Mind of the Great Lord . . . and I am always present with thee . . . and whatsoever thou wouldst learn I will teach thee. . . . And straightway, in the twinkling of an eye all things were opened to me; and I saw an infinite Light, all things were become Light, both sweet and exceedingly pleasant. And I was wonderfully delighted in the beholding it. . . . Then from that Light a certain holy Word joined itself unto Nature, and out flew the pure and unmixed fire . . . upward on high. It was exceedingly light, sharp and operative withal, and the air, which was also Light, followed the spirit, and mounted up with the Fire. . . . Then said he, I am that Light the Mind thy God . . . and that bright and lightful Word from the Mind is the Son of God. . . . Conceive well the Light in thy Mind, and Know It . . . (it) is innumerable and the truly indefinite ornament or world, and . . . the fire is comprehended or contained in and by a most great Power and constrained to keep its station. . . . And let him that is endued with Mind know himself to be immortal . . . let (him) . . . mark, consider and know himself well. Have not all men a mind? Have a heed what thou sayest, for I, the Mind, come into men that are holy and good and pure and merciful, and that live piously and religiously, and my presence is a help unto them and forthwith they know all things But to the foolish, and evil, and wicked, and envious, and covetous, and murderers, and profane, I am far off, giving place to the revenging Demon."

But in addition to these more recondite mysteries, there is something mysterious also about the purely physical flame, the " Kitchen Fire " of the alchemists, apart from its colours and multiform shapes, as of serpents, wreaths, spires, stars, sparks and so forth; for what is Fire? It is hardly sufficient to reply that it is an effect of combustion; that it is heat, light and motion, a combination of chemical and physical forces in general, for this is no real explanation. Fire, and the lighting of a fire by a flame, is a great scientific difficulty, though we are so accustomed to the phenomena that the majority of people never give it a thought.

That such apparently unresolvable problems were presented even by this most material, this mundane expression of Fire, was but natural to the Fire-Philosophers; something to be expected; rather would it have been curious were it not so, for it was but the physical manifestation of their Arcane and Holy Fire, the nature of which transcended all human intellect.

Can we not, then, begin to understand something of the wonder and glory of their vision of the Secret and Sacred Flame, and sympathise when they demanded that it should be regarded with other eyes than

those of the flesh, and pointed out that to the chemists it was a mystery regarding which, despite all their mechanistic ingenuity, they were rendered silent? Were they not justified in asking the anatomists and physicians to describe that spark or flame of life, which alone, burning upright in the human clay, animated it and made it live? For the principle of life and mind escaped, and still escapes, the most penetrating researches of Science.

It is, indeed, not surprising that our more primitive ancestors, as well as the Magi and the later Illuminati, adopted this mysterious principle as the type and image, as nearly as it could be expressed in visible symbol, of God and of the Soul or Spirit. On the contrary, if we are honest with ourselves, it is not unlikely that we may even admit that it is preferable to the anthropomorphic ideas, which have for so long dominated the minds of the bulk of humanity.

CHAPTER II

Perhaps some of the finest expressions of the Fire Philosophy, which we have had under consideration in the previous chapter, are to be found in the Chaldean or Zoroastrian Oracles. These, unfortunately, exist only in a fragmentary form as quotations in the books of various writers, principally the later Platonists, but it has been established that although such quotations are generally vaguely introduced as sayings of the Chaldeans, the Oracles, the Gods, etc., they existed at one time as a single poem. The date or origin of this is unknown, but the philosopher Porphyry considered it to be very old. In any event it should be remembered that the Chaldean Magi preserved their Occult wisdom by a continual Oral Tradition from father to son, just as the Qabalah was passed on in Israel.

These Oracles are so full of a majestic and lofty inspiration and imagination—using the latter term in its true sense of "the power of seeing images," as distinct from its usual meaning of "speculation"—that we will quote many of them *in extenso*, with such comments as may be found necessary. Those we shall use are to be found principally in the works of Porphyry, Proclus, Psellus, Damascius, Simplicius, Julian and Synesius, while one or two are anonymous. The principal translations of them are in the collections of Kroll, Cory, Mead and Westcott. We have selected the more poetical translations, with a few emendations, as being the more suitable to the subject, and have arranged them in a rather different order to some versions, with a view to getting more sequence. They will repay careful study, as they are a fruitful source of inspiration, and, like so many mystical writings, contain more meanings than words.

"There is above the Celestial Fire an Incorruptible Flame, always sparkling; the Spring of Life, the Fountain of all Being, the Original of all things! This Flame produceth all things, and nothing perisheth but what It consumeth. It maketh Itself known by Itself. This Fire cannot be contained in any place; It is without body and without matter. It encompasseth the Heavens. And there goeth forth from It a little Spark, which maketh all the Fire of the Sun, of the Moon and of the Stars. Strive not to know more of Him, for that is beyond thy capacity, how wise soever thou art.

"There is in God an Immense Profundity of Flame! Nevertheless the Heart should not fear to touch this adorable Fire, or to be touched by it; it will never be consumed by this so sweet Fire; whose mild and tranquil Heat maketh the Binding and Harmony and the Duration of the World. Nothing subsisteth but by this Fire, which is God Himself. No Person begat Him. He is without Mother. He knoweth all things and can be taught nothing. He is Infallible in His designs and His Name is unspeakable."

Qabalistically speaking, this is Macroprosopus, the Vast Countenance, which is Kether, the Crown or First Sefira, the first manifestation of the Ain Soph Aur or the Limitless Light. He is the whole world of Atziluth, or pure Deity, which is above the Heaven World or Throne—which is called Briah and comprises the next two Sephiroth—the habitat of that Sacred Flame which is Ruach Elohim.

From this Supreme and Unimaginable Source streams forth all Mercy and Benignity, so that when Microprosopus, the Lesser Countenance, looks upwards to Macroprosopus, the Vast Countenance, the Influx passes over, and those below are mitigated. He is spoken of as Hoa, He, not as Ateh, Thou, and He is beyond all time and space and form. Of Him Eliphas Levi has aptly said: "He is the Space containing the Universe, but the Universe is not His space."

But to continue:

"For not in Matter did the Fire which is in the Beyond first enclose His power in acts, but in Mind; for the Former of the Fiery World is the Mind of Mind. Who first sprang from Mind, clothing the one Fire with the other Fire; binding them together so that He might mingle the Fountainous Craters, while still preserving unsullied the Brilliance of His own Fire. And thence a Fiery Whirlwind drawing down the Brilliance of the

Flashing Flame, penetrating the Abysses of the Universe; for thencefrom downwards all extend their wondrous rays, abundantly animating Light, Fire, Ether and the Universe. From Him leap forth all relentless thunders, and the whirlwind-wrapped, storm-enrolled Bosoms of the All-Splendid strength of Hecate, Father-begotten; and He Who encircleth the Brilliance of Fire, and the strong Spirit of the Poles, all Fiery beyond."

Hecate, of course, is the same Goddess as Proserpine and Diana, and is connected with Luna and Isis. Mr. Mead says that she seems to have been the best equivalent the Greek mystics could find in the Hellenic Pantheon for the mysterious and awe-inspiring Primal Mother of Oriental mystagogy. She is the ineffable power of the Paternal Mind, he says, and fills all things with Intellectual Light. She is the Great Mother or Life of the Universe, the Magna Mater, or Mother of the Gods and all creatures. She is the Spouse of Mind. This is comparable with the Great Supernal Mother of the Qabalah, Binah, who is Aima Elohim.

Here may be seen the tremendous importance attached by the ancients to the unthinkable Mind, of which we shall see more anon in these Oracles. And we are reminded of the saying of the Rabbi in the *Zohar*, "Thought is the Principle of all that is." (*Zoh.*, Part I, fol. 246—*La Kabbale*, Franck), where it is first spoken of as unknown and shut up in itself, then developing itself forth and becoming Spirit, when it takes the name of Intelligence and is no longer immured within itself. At this stage, therefore:

"The Mind of the Father whirled forth in re-echoing roar, comprehending by invincible Will Ideas omniform, which, flying forth from that One Fountain issued; from the Father alike was the Will and the End; (by which yet are they connected with the Father, according to alternating Life, through varying vehicles). But they were distributed into other Intellectuals. For the King of All previously placed before the Polymorphous World a type incorruptible, the imprint of whose form is sent forth through the World, by which the Universe shone forth, decked with Ideas all various, of which the Fountain is One, One and Alone. From this the others rush forth distributed and separated through the various bodies of the Universe, and are borne in swarms through its vast Abysses, ever whirling forth in illimitable radiation. They are Intellectual conceptions from the Paternal Fountain, partaking abundantly the brilliance of Fire in the culmination of unresting time. But the Primary, self-perfect Fountain of the Father poured forth the Primogenial Ideas. These being many ascend flashingly into the shining worlds, and in them are contained the Three Supernals."

One can sense here the tremendous, whirling, fiery life emanating those archetypal forms, which were the inner worlds, on which the universe is based. And while the Qabalistic World of Atziluth, pure Deity, is the Archetypal World, the World of Briah, composed of the Sephiroth Chokmah and Binah, Wisdom and Understanding, the Father and Mother—who, be it understood, are not themselves the Supreme, but, with Kether, form the Three Supernals—is the Creative World, the Throne, as we have said before. In Revelation (xxii, i) the River of Life is said to flow forth from the Throne of God, and this is the same as the Qabalistic River Nahar, which issues from Binah. The primary movement of creation, too, is given in the name of the Order of Angels attributed to Kether, which is Rashith Ha-Galgalim, the Beginnings of Whirling Movements.

"The Creator of all, self-operating, formed the World, and there was a certain mass of Fire; and all these, self-operating, He produced, so that the Kosmic body might be completely manifest and not appear membranous. And He fixed a vast multitude of unwandering Stars, not by a strain laborious and hurtful, but to uphold them with stability void of movement, forcing Fire forwards unto Fire.

"And He congregated the Seven Firmaments of the Kosmos, circumscribing the heaven with convex form. He constituted a septenary of wandering Existences, suspending their disorder in well-disposed zones. He made them six in number, and for the seventh He cast into the midst thereof the Fire of the Sun, into that centre from which all lines are equal. That the swift Sun may come around that centre, eagerly urging itself towards that centre if resounding Light.

"As rays of Light his Locks flow forth, stretching to the confines of space. The wholeness of the Sun is in the Supermundane Orders, for therein a Solar World and endless Light subsist. And his disk is in the Starless, above the Inerratic Sphere, and he is the centre of the Triple World. The Sun is Fire, and the Dispenser of Fire, he is also the Channel of the Higher Fire."

In these sections is outlined the secondary creation, that of the Elohim and of Tetragrammaton Elohim, for the Qabalah deals with another and prior creation than that which is here described, which latter is the Demiurgic creation of the Gnostics, the creation of Yetzirah and Assiah, the two lower worlds of the Zohar, the Formative and Material respectively, known also as Microprosopus and His Bride.

We also note the distinction between the "Sun visible to sense" as Philo terms it, and the hidden Sun which is "the centre of the Triple World." In a sense this Sun is Microprosopus, through Whom, as we have previously indicated, the Divine Influx descends, so that He is "the Channel of the Higher Fire."

And if we might enlarge yet a little farther, we would say that in these and the preceding sections a distinction is made between the Mind in its more potential aspect, and the Mind in operation, which is the Formative Mind. These are the "Hidden" and "Manifested" Fires of Simon Magus, mentioned in *The Great Announcement*, where he says:

"The hidden aspects of the Fire are concealed in the manifest, and the manifest produced in the hidden. . . . And the manifested side of the Fire has all things in itself which a man can perceive of things visible, or which he unconsciously fails to perceive; whereas the hidden side is every thing which one can conceive as intelligible, or which a man fails to conceive." It is therefore called the Ever-living or Holy Fire, and was taken to be both intelligible and immaterial as well as sensible and material, according to its plane of operation.

And lest any should doubt that a Second Father is intended, let him hear what follows:

"The Father hath hastily withdrawn Himself; but hath not shut up His own Fire in His Intellectual Power. All things are sprung from that one Fire. For all things did the Father of all perfect, and delivered them over to the Second Mind, Whom all Races of Men call First. The Mind of the Father, riding on subtle guiders, which glitter with the tracings of inflexible and relentless Fire. The Soul of the All, being a brilliant Fire, by the power of the Father remaineth Immortal, and is Mistress of Life and filleth up the many recesses of the Bosom of the World. The Channels being intermixed therein. She performeth the Works of Incorruptible Fire."

Here we have the Second Mind, which is Chokmah, Wisdom, otherwise called Ab, the Father, the Second Sephira, to which is attributed the Element of Fire; and Binah, Understanding, Who is called Aima, the Mother, the Great Productive Mother, the Mistress of Life, previously alluded to as Hecate. And in the Channels, which are so frequently mentioned, may we not see an analogy with the Paths of the Tree of Life of the Qabalah, which, with the Sephirorh themselves, are thirty-two in number?

Appropriately enough the Oracle continues:

"But these are Mysteries which I evolve in the profound Abyss of the Mind. Such a Fire existeth, extending through the rushings of Air, or even a Fire Formless, whence cometh the Image of a Voice, or even a flashing Light, abounding, revolving, whirling forth, crying aloud. Also there is the Vision of the fire-flashing Courser of Light, or also a child borne aloft on the shoulders of the celestial steed, fiery, or clothed with Gold, or naked, or shooting with the bow shafts of Light, and standing on the shoulders of the Horse. But if thy meditation prolongeth itself thou shalt unite all these Symbols in the form of the Lion."

In the above we make acquaintance with the supreme mystery of the Theurgist, his Formless Fire, which is the ultimate *secretum secretorum*, wherein is the Voice that is not a Voice, but is the very Word of the Self-transcending Self, whose Apocalyptic Image is Aries, the Lamb of God. Balancing this we have the other two signs of the fiery triplicity, Sagittarius and Leo. We learn more about this Theurgic Epopteia in what follows.

"Then when no longer are visible unto thee the Vault of the Heavens, the Mass of the Earth ; when to thee the Stars have lost their Light, and the Lamp of the Moon is veiled; when the Earth abideth not, and around thee is the Lightning Flame; then call not before thyself the Visible Image of the Soul of Nature! For thou must not behold it ere thy soul be purged by the Sacred Rites. Since ever dragging down the Soul, and leading it from Sacred Things, from the confines of Matter arise the terrestrial dog-faced demons, never showing a true image unto mortal gaze.

"So therefore, first the Priest who governeth the Works of Fire, must sprinkle with the Water of the loud-resounding Sea. And when, after all the Phantoms, thou shalt see that Holy and Formless Fire; that Fire that darts and flashes through the hidden depths of the Universe: Hear thou the Voice of Fire."

Here the allusion is to the Sacred Trance, the Mantic state, when, after the Alchemical Solution, the Soul or Spirit, withdrawing from the lower vehicles, penetrates into the hidden worlds. Therefore the warning not to attempt to draw the Veil of Isis until the necessary purgations have been successfully performed, for She is not lightly to be profaned. Nor must the soul be led away by the delusive and phantasmal appearances which beset it on its passage through the Astral World "wherein continually lieth a faithless Depth, delighting in unintelligible Images."

In view of the nature of our further inquiry, it would be inappropriate if we did not revert to the idea of the Three Supernals, that Sacred Triad which is almost everywhere to be encountered in the Religions of the world. The Oracle deals with them at some length as follows:

"Where the Paternal Monad is, the Monad is enlarged and generateth Two. And beside Him is seated the Duad, and glittereth with Intellectual Sections; also to govern all things and to Order everything not Ordered. For in the whole Universe shineth the Triad, over which the Monad ruleth. This Order is the beginning of all Sections.

"For the Mind of the Father said that all things should be cut into Three. Whose Will assented, and then all things were so divided. For the Mind of the Eternal Father said into Three, governing all things by Mind. And there appeared in IT, in the Triad, Virtue, Wisdom and Multiscient Truth. Thus floweth forth the Form of the Triad, being pre-existent. Not the First Essence, but that whereby all things are measured.

"For thou shalt know that all things bow before the Supernals. The first course is sacred; but in the midst thereof another, the Third, Aerial, which cherisheth Earth in Fire. And the Fountain of Fountains and of all Fountains. The Matrix containing all. Thence abundantly springeth forth the Generation of Multifarious Matter."

Examining these sayings in the light of what we have previously put forward, the Three Supernals are the first three Sephiroth, Kether, Chokmah and Binah, of which the first is the Vast Countenance, the Father of All, Himself emerging from the Triadic Veils of the Negative existence. This is the Paternal Monad, for Kether is the number One. The Duad referred to would seem to imply the next two Sephiroth, Wisdom and Understanding, for they are the Intellectual Sections or parts, the Elohim governing and ordering, under the power of the Supreme, throughout the Universe. These, then, represent Virtue, Wisdom and Multiscient Truth, which latter is the Understanding. From these "abundantly springeth forth the Generation of Multifarious Matter."

Before leaving the subject of the Oracles, we would venture to instance two more sayings bearing on the Theurgic side, and consequently upon our main theme. They are as follows:

"If thou extendest the Fiery Mind to the work of Piety, thou wilt preserve the flexible body.

"The Telestic life, through a Divine Fire, removeth all the stains, together with every foreign and irrational nature which the Spirit of the Soul attracteth from generation."

The Fiery Mind is that quality in Man which is the counterpart of the Divine Understanding, Binah; that which, according to the Qabalistic division of the Soul is termed Neshamah; while the flexible body would appear to be what is more commonly called the Subtle Body. Telestic, as we have elsewhere indicated, means perfecting, and was applied to the Theurgical practices. Such a life, we learn, removes "all stains, together with every foreign and irrational nature." Compare this with that saying of St. Thomas Aquinas: "The Stone is One, the Medicine is One, to which we add nothing, only in the preparation removing superfluities."

Much more might be said about this remarkable and inspiring poem, but it would not fall properly within the limits of the inquiry we have proposed for ourselves, and we must pass on to other and more immediate correspondences, remarking only, in passing, that the passages we have selected, are those which actually bear closely upon our main theme; and that the very scanty notes we have supplied, are designed particularly to draw the attention of the reader to those ideas to which we shall have occasion subsequently to refer.

CHAPTER III

We will now turn our attention to the Purificatory Fire, with its subsidiary correlative the Sacrificial Fire, the prime object of which latter, except in certain cases of a propitiatory nature, usually wrongly conceived, was as a rule connected with the purging and cleansing of the spiritual nature, symbolising the destruction of the impurities and defilements of the soul.

Porphyry, in his letter to Anebo (Iamblichos, *De Mysteriis*), says that he is in doubt in regard to the sacrifices, what utility or power they possess in the world and with the Gods, and for what reason they are performed, appropriate for the beings thus honoured, and advantageously for the persons who present the gifts. He also adds that the Gods require that the interpreters of the oracles observe strict abstinence from animal substances, in order that they may not be made impure by the fumes from the bodies; yet they themselves are allured most of all by the fumes of the sacrifices of animals.

Such questions cannot but appear essentially reasonable, but Abammon the Teacher, in his reply, makes it perfectly clear that they are founded on a misconception, and proceeds to deal with the problem raised at considerable length, going into elaborate detail about the various types of sacrifices and the objects for

which they were celebrated. It will suffice if we bring out some of the main points briefly, for with many of them we are not here concerned.

In the first place he points out that the higher Divinities are not in any way affected by such exhalations, and adds that their purpose "is by no means to offer them for the sake of honour along in the same way that we honour benefactors; nor for the sake of grateful acknowledgment of benefits which the Gods have bestowed upon us; nor yet as a first-fruit or gift by way of recompense for older gifts which the Gods have made to us," going so far as to state that "the offering of anything belonging to the realm of matter is alien and repugnant to the Divinities of the supra-material world." With this we may well compare (Isa., i, 11-14): "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me saith the Lord? I delight not in the blood of bullocks or of lambs or of goats. Who hath required this at your hand? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; your appointed feasts my soul hateth." And (Amos v, 22): "Yea, though ye offer me your burnt offerings and meat offerings, I will not accept them; neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts." Also (Jer. vi, 20); "To what purpose cometh there to me incense from Sheba, and the sweet cane from a far country? Your burnt offerings are not acceptable, nor your sacrifices sweet unto me." Lastly (ibid. vii, 22): "I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices."

Abammon points out that the true sacrificial fire is a type illustrating the process—or one of the processes—which inducts the soul towards the higher, for as fire transforms all hard and refractory materials to luminant and tenuous bodies, so the characteristics in us become like the Gods. We are therefore led up by the sacrificial Fire to the Fire of the Gods in the same way that Fire rises to Fire, by leading and drawing upward those qualities which drag downward and are opposed to the divine and celestial essences.

Marsilio Picino, the Italian Platonist, says, according to Wilder, that the Fire which is kindled by us is more like heaven than what is left behind. It is made participant of light, which is something incorporeal, the most powerful of all things, and, as if alive, perpetually moving, dividing everything, yet not itself divisible; absorbing all things into itself, yet evading every alien mixture; and suddenly, when it is fully set free, flying back to the celestial fire which is latent everywhere.

"As the Gods cut the matter away with the electric fire, and separate from it whatsoever things are non-material in their essence, but yet are firmly held and fettered by it," says Abammon, "and as they likewise evolve impassive natures from the impassible—so also that fire that is with us, imitating the operation of the divine fire . . . releases us from the bonds of generated existence, makes us like the Gods, and likewise renders us fit for their friendship, and our material nature near to the non-material essence."

This is why, speaking of the kind of sacrifices most proper, he says: "The human being is everywhere sacred." This never meant originally that human sacrifices were to be offered, although when religions became debased such practices were instituted, owing to the ignorant or evil-minded mistaking the symbol for the fact. But it signified that the most acceptable sacrifice to the Superior Divinities is everywhere the human or material part of man; his desires, lusts, passions and so forth. As it is written (Ps. li, 17): "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart O God, thou wilt not despise."

This is what Plotinus means (*Ennead iii.*, 6, sect. 5) when he says: "To purify the soul is to isolate her, preventing her from attaching herself to other things ... in raising her from the things here below to intelligible entities; also to wean her from the body; for in that case she is no longer sufficiently attached to it to be enslaved to it, resembling a light which is not absorbed in the whirlwind (of matter)... To purify the soul is to ... hinder her from inclining towards lower things, or from representing their images to herself; it means annihilating the things from which she is thus separated, so that she is no longer choked."

The Sacrificial Fire, then, we may conclude, was in essence a Purificatory Fire, at least in the higher Theurgical sense that we are considering, and therefore a Spagyric or Separating Fire, truly Telestic or Perfecting in its nature, and we have therefore to turn our attention to the mystery of the Baptismal Fire, concerning which, as a matter of fact, we have comparatively little data.

It is obvious that in the New Testament two forms of Baptism are indicated, namely those of Water and of Fire, for John the Baptist says (Matt. iii, ii): "I indeed baptise you with water unto repentance, but He that cometh after me is mightier than I. ... He shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost and with Fire." This prophecy is taken by many to have been fulfilled when the Holy Spirit descended upon the Disciples at Pentecost in the form of Tongues of Fire (Acts ii, 3). It is, however, only fair to say that the Church Father Origen does not subscribe to this view, for in Horn. xxiv in Luke he says: "The apostles were baptised with the Holy Ghost after the ascension (of Jesus); but where and when they were baptised with Fire, the

scripture does not say." This, naturally enough, raises the point of whether there may not be three Baptisms intended, but for the moment we will restrict our attention to two, namely Water and Fire.

And the Holy Hierotheos, dealing with this point says (*The Book of the Holy Hierotheos*, Discourse iii, 4): "Now concerning Holy Baptism, my son, for my part I say that no man can be saved if he be not accounted worthy of Holy Baptism; but it is easy for us to learn from our Lord that there is a Second Baptism; for when he wished to teach the band of the Apostles the secret of this Baptism, he spoke thus, 'For I have a Baptism to be baptised with which ye know not.' "

We must here advise the reader that Hierotheos indicates that this Baptism, which is of Fire, took place with the majority of mankind after they had left the physical body, there being but few who, in life, could attain to the degree of separation necessary to receive this Sacrament. The quotation from the sayings of Jesus will not be found in the Gospels, unless, as Mr. Marsh, the translator of the book, suggests, it is a combination of Luke xii, 50 with John iv, 52. It may, however, come from some other collection.

Hierotheos continues: "Now if there were no other Baptism than Baptism with water, would not the Apostles have said, ' We ourselves. Lord, saw thee baptised ' ? So it is evident that He spoke of the Second Baptism of which Divine Minds are accounted worthy in the regions which are above the heavens; for therein Minds are accounted worthy to be baptised with Spirit and with Fire and not with water. ... It is evident to us, therefore, O my son, that the Baptism with water is the Baptism of the body, and that it is only the symbol and type of the glorious and real Baptism, of which all divine Minds are accounted worthy in the place that is above the heavens. And let us, therefore, hope to be baptised in the heavens, inasmuch as it is known to us that this, verily and holily, is the great and divine Baptism. Now the former (Baptism) gives repentance, but that which is above unites (us) with the Good."

Now John baptised in Jordan, but there is also a heavenly Jordan, which is one with that River of Life proceeding from the Throne of God and of the Lamb. And this, as we have elsewhere shown, is the same as the Qabalistical River Nahar, flowing forth from Binah, the Great Supernal Mother. This is the River of Spirit, Ruach, whose symbol is Fire. And we would remind the reader again that the letter Sh (Shin), which is one of the three Mother Letters of the Hebrew alphabet, and is referred to the element of fire, is, among the letters, the symbol of Ruach Elohim, the Spirit of the Elohim, the Spirit of God, as it is translated in Gen. i, 2, or the Holy Ghost, RVCh ALHIM and Sh being numerically equivalent; and that these agree in their least numeration with NHR, Nahar, the River.

The preceding paragraphs should be compared with what Origen has to say regarding the Baptism by Fire (ed. Lommatzsch, v, p. 179 ff.); " Even as John was waiting at the shore of the Jordan for those that came to be baptised . . . even so the Lord will stand in the River of Fire beside the Flaming Sword, and will baptise in this River everyone . . . who is still in need of purgation." Now the Flaming Sword is a familiar symbol of the Tree of Life of the Qabalah, for it is usually portrayed in the form of a flash of forked lightning, and thus traces out the ten Sephiroth (which form the Tree) in their natural order. Compare also (the *Zohar* II fol. 247a): "The Soul is thereupon led to the ' River of Fire,' through which all souls must pass to be purified. ... If the soul is worthy and comes up out of the river, it is again clad in its garment and brought to the High Priest, Michael, who offers it as a burnt offering to the Ancient of Days, before Whom it remains eternally." Concerning this river the Midrash tells us that "if even the angels bathe in this stream of fire to renew themselves, how much more should the children of man long after this purification."

We do not find any actual account of the Baptism of Fire in the *Book of the Holy Hierotheos*, but in the *Pistis Sophia*, Book III, chap. 114, we read: "Now, therefore, he who shall receive the mysteries of the baptism, then the mystery of them becometh a great fire, exceedingly fierce and wise, which burneth up the sins and entereth into the soul secretly and consumeth all the sins which the counterfeiting spirit hath implanted in it. And when it hath finished purifying all the sins which the counterfeiting spirit hath implanted in the soul, it entereth into the body secretly and pursueth all the pursuers secretly and separateth them off on the side of the body. For it pursueth the counterfeiting spirit and the destiny and separateth them off from the power and from the soul, and putteth them on the side of the body, so that it separateth off the counterfeiting spirit and the destiny of the body into one portion; the soul and the power, on the other hand, it separateth into another. The mystery of the baptism on the contrary, remaineth in the midst of the two, continually separating them from one another, so that it maketh them clean and purifieth them, in order that they may not be stained with matter."

This Fire, we learn later on (in the Fifth Book), is the Fire which He came to cast on the earth (Luke xii, 49), and the Living Water—*vide supra* concerning the River of Life—that the Samaritan woman should have asked for (John iv, 10-n and 14); also the Cup of Wine of the Eucharist.

According to Hierotheos, this Baptism takes place after the second Ascent, and after it there is nothing at all to prevent the Mind from becoming in everything like Christ, for which reason it puts away the designation of ' Mind ' and is called ' Christ,' and is considered worthy, divinely and holily, to effect unification with the Good. Now this unification is not the highest stage, as we have explained in our *Theurgy*, for beyond it is what is termed ' Commingling.' We need, therefore, not be surprised to learn that Christ is nothing else than the Mind that is purified, and that at the unification Christ is no longer worshipped, "but those Minds are worshipped which are accounted worthy of Unification; and Christ is no longer their Head, because Christ is ' the Head of them that sleep,' but of those that have been awakened Christ is no longer the Head."

At first sight, indeed, such statements may, to some, appear rather startling, but it must be remembered that they are taken out of their context, which it is naturally impossible to give here at any length. We would therefore explain that Christ, as the Son, is Microprosopus, the Lesser Countenance, and is to be regarded as the Perfection of Being in each of the four Worlds; that is to say, the perfect Microcosm in each. It is therefore a different aspect of a Universal Spirit that is described in the different stages of this remarkable book, and this is the key to its apparent lack of sequence, and to many of its seeming contradictions.

At the epoch in its evolutionary history which is under consideration, the Soul, having transcended the world of Assiah, the material world, and having passed through the various stages of the Yetziratic World, or world of formation, stands on the threshold of the Briatic World "and sets out to pass beyond the place of Sacraments," says Hierotheos, "being divinely and highly exalted to see the Essences that are above these; and perhaps it also sees Christ preparing the way before it"—by which is meant the Christ of Briah, the formless and creative world of the Elohim—"and other Essences also, which say to it, ' come up on high and take thy seat.' . . . With wondrous pomp, then, the divine Mind is exalted as far as (the place) where it finds ' appearance '—"that is to say form—" no more; and it also says, ' There is no appearance before my eyes ' " (Job iv, 16—LXX and Pesh.) "and it burns holily and divinely, in spiritual contemplation, to come to the Tree of Life, and to be united with it. These things it does with divine comprehension and mystical understanding of the significance of its journey; and so in glory (most glorified, it arrives at the Essence which is called ' Universal.' "

We must here point out that the Universal Essence is not the Supreme, nor would we expect it to be so if this were the World of Briah as we have asserted. But Hierotheos tells us that this Essence exists after separation from One (which is Kether) and before the distinctions of Form (Yetzirah). We note also the coincidence—if it be nothing more—of the words used, comprehension and understanding, which are so similar to Wisdom and Understanding, namely Chokmah and Binah, the Sephiroth comprising this world of Briah, and further the desire of the Soul to be united to the Tree of Life, which, in Revelation (xxii, 2) grew on either side of the River.

We will now revert to the question previously raised concerning a triple Baptism. This, though not named as such, is hinted at by the Holy Hierotheos in the Commingling, which is above Unification. But here, as in the *Pistis Sophia* (Book V, chap. 143), the order is Water, Fire and then Spirit, so that Origen would appear to have been mistaken in his statement previously quoted by us at the beginning of this chapter. Again, in *The Book of the Great Logos*, otherwise described on its first page as *The Book of the Gnosés* (pl.) of the Invisible God, we are given descriptions of the three Baptisms in this order. The Baptism of the Spirit is, of course, that of the "Pneuma" or "Ruach," both of which mean Wind, Breath, or Air, and the third Baptism is alluded to in such terms in various allegories and accounts of the Mysteries. For example, in the Sixth Book of the *Aeneid* Souls are described as being purified by being exposed to the winds; and to this passage the learned commentator Servius adds: " Every purgation is effected either by water or by fire or by air; therefore in all the Mysteries you find these three methods of cleansing; they either wash you with water or disinfect you with sulphur (burning) or ventilate you with wind; the latter is done in the Dionysiac Mysteries."

Now a little earlier we have pointed out that Fire and the letter Shin are symbols of the Ruach or Spirit, and it may be thought that we are here contradicting ourselves by separating the two Baptisms. But we are not guilty of any such carelessness, for as the First Baptism, that of Water, is, by its cleansing nature, symbolic of the further purgation by Fire, so is the Second Baptism, that of Fire, the type and symbol of the Third Baptism, that of the Pneuma, Ruach, Spirit or Air, the last stage in the apotheosis of Man. But

with this last we are not immediately concerned and we must leave this subject, despite its extraordinary interest, and proceed to consider our next point.

CHAPTER IV

We come now to the stage where we must consider the Solar aspects of fire, for it is but natural that among those who regarded fire in the way we have attempted to indicate in the earlier chapters, the Sun should be regarded as a very special symbol of the ideas they held. And this we find to be the case in very many instances, and especially among the Egyptians and Persians, to whom, principally, we will confine our attention.

Ra, and the personification of his various forms, together are the greatest of all the Gods of the Egyptians, and it is he who must be regarded truly as the Father of the Gods. Solar worship in Egypt is of extreme antiquity, and appears to have been universally practised, and at a very early period the adoration of Ra was connected with the cult of Heru, the Hawk-God, who personified the height of heaven, and seems to have been a symbol and type of the Sun. Strictly speaking his worship is probably the oldest in Egypt, older even than that of Ra himself, but from all practical points of view the latter was the oldest of all the Gods of Egypt, for the first act of creation was the appearance of his disk above the abyss of the waters of creation.

This idea is, of course, almost identical with the Qabalistic doctrine of the appearance of the Vast Countenance, the "Head desired by all desires" of the *Siphra Dtzenioutha* or *Book of Concealed Mystery*, which Head is, as it were, the first limitation of the boundless Light, although the Sun is more usually typified by the sixth Sephira, Tiphareth or Beauty, which represents Microprosopus, the Lesser Countenance. On the other hand, the analogy is quite reasonable, for the Vast Countenance emerged, as it were, above the Chaos or Ocean, the Waters of Creation, the Tohu Ve-Bohu of Gen. i, 2, for this was the fragments of those prior worlds which were unable to subsist until the Head, which is Kether, or the ten Sephiroth of the World of Atziluth, was fully conformed.

In any event Ra was much more Macroprosopus than Microprosopus, for he was regarded as the maker and creator of everything including heaven and the Gods. He was One, self-begotten, self-created and self-produced. He was the God of the unborn, the living and the dead. He had existed for ever, and would exist for all eternity. From him flowed forth all life and light, and he was right, truth and goodness personified.

On the walls of royal tombs of the nineteenth and twentieth Dynasties at Thebes are to be found inscribed the Seventy-Five Praises of Ra, which are really quite remarkable. It would be inappropriate to quote them here at length, but excerpts from one or two may prove interesting.

Ra is described as the "Creative Force, who spreadest out thy wings. . . The World-Soul that resteth on his high place. Thou art he who protecteth thy hidden spirits, and they have form in thee. . . . Thou dost give breath to the souls in their places, and they receive it. . . Thou raisest thy head and thou makest bold thy brow, thou ram. . . . Praise be to thee, O Ra, exalted Sekhem (Power); thou art the Soul exalted in the double hidden place. . . . Thou art the Soul who movest onwards. . . . Thou, O Ra, hast created the things which exist, and the things which do not exist, the dead and the Gods and the Spirits. . . . Thou art the doubly hidden and secret God, and the souls go where thou leadest them, and those who follow thee thou makest to enter in. . . Thou art the Aged One. . . . Thou art the Soul on high. . . . Thou sendest forth the light, and thou lookest upon the hidden places. . . . Thou art the Lord of Souls who art in the House of thy Obelisk. . . . Thou art indeed the Lord of Souls. . . . Thou art the Lord of Light, and declarest the things which are hidden, and thou art the Soul that speaketh with the Gods."

And in the legend of Ra and Isis, which is to be found in the Turin Papyrus, the title reads: "The Chapter of the God Divine, self-produced, the maker of heaven and earth and the breath of life, of fire, of gods, of men, of beasts, of cattle, of reptiles and creeping things, of the fowl of the air and of fishes, the king of men and of gods, in form One, to whom one hundred and twenty years are but a year; his names are many and unknown, yea, even the gods know them not."

In the foregoing quotations we would lay stress on the aspect of Ra as the World Soul, the source of souls, giving breath, which is Pneuma, Ruach or Spirit, to souls. Even when he is described as the Ram, the Egyptian word is Ba, which also means Soul. We would also note that the Ram is Aries, the Exaltation of the Sun, which is in harmony with the description given, " Thou raisest thy head and thou makest bold thy brow."

But when we come to "the double hidden place," "the Soul who movest onwards," " who art in the house of thine obelisk," we are irresistibly reminded of the theories of Mr. Marsham Adams regarding the connection between the so-called "Book of the Dead" and the Great Pyramid. And here we touch upon the telestic side of our subject once more, for according to Mr. Adams the Pyramid was used as a Temple of Initiation, and the Grand Gallery corresponded to the Hall of the Two Truths. What is this but " the double hidden place," and what is the Initiate but "the Soul who movest onwards" ; and is not " the House of thine Obelisk " the Pyramid itself?

On the other hand, the "doubly hidden and secret God" suggests the Qabalistic " Concealed of Concealed," while the " Aged One" resembles the " Ancient of Days." Further parallels, we have no doubt, will also occur to the thoughtful and observant student, but we must pass on to other considerations.

We are naturally attracted to the Magian or Magusasan tradition, and the Mysteries of Mithra. Unfortunately, the information we possess is very meagre, although at one time this cult was most widely spread throughout the Roman Empire. This is primarily because the secrets of these Mysteries were most jealously guarded, so that not even the most enterprising of Church Fathers was able to get possession of their carefully concealed rites and doctrines with a view to denouncing them publicly, and thus, all unconsciously, preserving something of their wisdom for posterity.

It may, however, be helpful to remember that Simon, who is said to have been the earliest Gnostic Heretic, was called Magus, or the Magian, and that, as Mr. G. R. S. Mead suggests, there may be some connection between the Aeons and the Amshaspands in the Avestas. Then, too, the Zoroastrian or Chaldean Oracles have come down to us in some part at least, and we know that these were highly esteemed by Porphyry, who, like most of the philosophers of the Later Platonic School, was an initiate of the Mithraic Mysteries, wherein alone, it was claimed, was to be discovered the Arcanum Arcanorum.

Apart from this, it is generally held by most students of the Zend and Pahlavi books, that the Avestan tradition is in the main stream of Mazdaean descent, and it has been suggested by Darmsteter that Avestan Mazdaism is a development and an attempted systematisation of the cult of the Zoroastrian Magi.

Mithra, even in the Zend books, is placed almost on an equality with the Supreme, and in the earliest days was regarded as the God of Light and Lord of the Heavenly Light. He is not the Sun, but the Sun is his Chariot or Charioteer. He is also Heat and Life, and corresponds in some cases to the Orphic Eros. He is Agathodaimon, the Good Spirit, and not merely does he bestow material benefits, but spiritual. Mithraism was thus a Mystery of Spiritual Regeneration and Rebirth, and from the one Ritual which is preserved to us, we can see that it was a Magical Religion, using Theurgic Practices as its basis, all else being but subordinate.

Zozimus, one of the earliest of the Alchemistic writers, in a treatise *On Asbestos* says: "And if thou dry it in the sun thou shalt possess the mystery that no man can impart, in which no one of all the wisdom-lovers hath ventured to initiate in words; but only by the sanction of their own divinity have they imparted its initiation. For this they have called in the scriptures the chief of all mysteries ; the Stone that is no Stone, the unknowable unto all, the that which hath no honour yet is of greatest honour, the that which none can give but God alone, the one thing in all our operations which is superior to all that is material. This is the remedy which doth contain all power—the Mithraic Mystery."

Here we have a direct allusion to our Secret Fire, our Incombustible Sulphur, for it has been said by Porphyry that "a dry soul is best," implying that the lust of generation moistens the soul, making it watery, while the Fire dries and lightens it. This is the Sacred Living Fire, to be adored and tended in the shrine of the innermost nature. As Proclus says, apparently basing himself upon the Oracles : "Let us then offer this praise-giving to God— the becoming like unto Him. Let us leave the Flowing Essence and draw nigh to the true End ; let us get to know the Master, let all our love be poured forth to the Father. When he calls us, let us be obedient; let us haste to the Hot and flee the Cold ; let us be Fire ; let us ' fare on our Way through Fire. 'We have an' agile Way' for our Return. 'Our Father is our Guide,' who ' openeth the Ways of Fire,' lest in forgetfulness we let ourselves flow in a downward stream."

It is probably needless to point out that the "Flowing Essence " is the River of Generation, the same as is the "downward stream," the divine creative powers turned earthwards.

The Symbol of this force is, of course, the Serpent, with which we shall have to deal in rather more detail a little later on. For the moment we will merely point out that the Good Serpent, which is Fiery and even Solar, reappears in Alchemy as the Lion, for the two are one, though the stages they represent are different. As we said in our *Theurgy* (chapter iv, page 57): "In Astrology the sign Leo is the Kerubic Emblem of Fire, while the form of the sign is the glyph of a serpent, and the Hebrew Letter Teth, to which

it is referred in the *Sepher Yetzirah* or *Book of Formation* (probably the oldest book of the Qabalah), means a serpent and is also a glyph of one. . . . Leo is also the Astrological House of the Sun."

Now one of the Grades of the Mithraic Initiation was called the Leontica or Lion Grade, and in this was celebrated a honey-rite. It will be remembered that in the story of Samson (Judges xiv, 8), "There was a swarm of bees and honey in the carcase of the Lion." The letter Teth, to which, as we have said, the Sign of Leo is referred, is stated to be the Foundation of Taste, which is alleged to have some connection with Samson's saying (ibid. 14): "Out of the strong came forth sweetness." We may also remark that in the highest grade, that of the Fathers, the Initiates were called Eagles or Hawks, which is reminiscent of the forms of Ra and Horus.

Limits of space prevent any detailed description of the Mithra Ritual, but the curious reader can refer to the complete translation published in the *Echoes from the Gnosis Series*, by G. R. S. Mead. We will merely give two short extracts from the invocations and pass on. They are taken from the first and third invocatory utterances respectively.

"O Primal Origin of my origination ; Thou Primal Substance of my substance ; First Breath of breath that is in me; First Fire, God-given for the Blending of the blendings in me, of fire in me. ... Translate me now ... by virtue of the Deathless Spirit ... in order that I may become reborn in Mind. . . . Initiate, and that the Holy Breath may breathe in me ; in order that I may admire the Holy Fire."

"Hear me ... O Lord, Who with Thy Breath hast closed the Fiery Bars of Heaven; Twin-bodied; Ruler of the Fire; Creator of the Light; O Holder of the Keys; In-breather of the Fire; Fire-hearted One, Whose Breath gives Light; Thou Who dost joy in Fire; Beauteous of Light; O Lord of Light, Whose Body is of Fire; Light-giver, Fire-sower ; Fire-loosener, Whose Life is in the Light; Fire-whirler, Who sett'st the Light in motion; Thou Thunder-rouser; O Thou Light Glory, Light-increaser; Controller of the Light Empyrean; O Thou Star-tamer!"

Now one of the most extraordinary and awe-inspiring of the sculptured symbolical figures that we find in the ruins of the Mithraea, is that which Mr. Mead has described as "the mysterious Aeon, transcending Gods and men. He is the Ever-living One, the Lord of Life and Light—the Autozoon, He that gives life to himself, and is the Source and Ender of all lives. He is Zervan Akarana, Boundless Time, and also Infinite Space, the Ingenerable and Ineffable, the Pantheos."

It must be remembered that this account of the statue is conjectural, and that, therefore, its signification may have been somewhat different; but before discussing any other possible meanings it may have had, it will be as well to describe the general form in which it is found.

The body, which is that of a lion-headed man (the head being thickly maned) is frequently engraved all over with the signs of the Zodiac, and bears a bolt or solar emblem on its breast. The feet vary in form, being sometimes human and sometimes animal. From the shoulders spring two pairs of wings, the one pair pointing upwards, while the other pair hang down. A great serpent is coiled round the body, usually in seven coils, and the head of the serpent lies on, or overhangs the head of the image—in one case bending round into the mouth. In either hand is a key, and in the right hand there is also frequently a rod or sceptre.

This should be compared with the remarkable Orphic Cult-Image in the Royal Museum at Modena, which is said to represent the birth of the God Phanes-Dionysos from the World-Egg. This sculpture was later used as a Mithraic Symbol, where, of course, it is supposed to have represented the birth of Mithra.

Here the whole figure is human, and is surmounted by a globe. Only one pair of wings are portrayed, and the Zodiacal signs form an oval surround. The Serpent coils about the image, as in the previous case, and the bolt, or solar emblem is on the breast. The left hand holds a long staff, while the right is furnished with a torch. The feet are those of an ox, and are standing in fire, while the globe surmounting the head rests in a nest of fire.

Now while the sculptures may quite well have represented the Aeon or the birth of Phanes-Dionysos or Mithra from the World-Egg, it is quite conceivable that they were rather types of the Initiate, the awakened man, and in particular the lion head suggests this when we remember that one of the highest grades was the Leontica. Furthermore the Zodiacal symbols, and the emblem of the Sun on the breast suggests the deathless Solar Body, while the serpent may well be a representation of the Speirema or Serpent Coil, now fully aroused, the wings pointing out the spiritual and volatile nature. The keys, of course, would be those of knowledge, and in the other figure are symbolised by the torch. The staff, rod or sceptre, naturally enough, represents power.

This, again, is conjectural, but in any event the re-born man is the true Microcosm, the image of the Creator. On the other hand, the serpent suggests—especially when in conjunction with the Solar and

Zodiacal symbols present in both examples—a number of considerations which we must now proceed to discuss.

CHAPTER V

At the point in our investigation at which we have now arrived, we shall have to make some inquiry into that mysterious force said to be resident in man, which is so often called the Serpent Power. This is the Paraklete of the New Testament, the Speirema of the Greeks and the Sanskrit Kundalini. But before we can deal with this question we must remind ourselves that man is to be regarded as multiplex and not simple, as possessing—at least—three bodies, and not one.

These three correspond to the three divisions of the Soul according to both the Platonists, the Qabalists and others. In accordance with the lines we have laid down for ourselves we will deal only with the two systems we have named. Here we find that the three parts are the Nous, the Phren and the Epithumia, which correspond with the Neshamah, Ruach and Nepesch. These are, roughly speaking, the Higher Mind, the Reasoning Mind and the Animal Mind, including the passionate nature, and in chapters I and II we have already shown how the Higher Mind was regarded by the ancient philosophers. In the Qabalah they correspond to the three lower Qabalistic Worlds, which we have mentioned in chapter II, the Worlds of Briah, Yetzirah and Assiah, which are, respectively, the Creative, Formative and Material Worlds, and in extension of this we will merely add that Neshamah itself is subject to a triple division, so that its three parts correspond to the Three Supernals.

The three bodies mentioned in the New Testament, corresponding to these three principles, are the spiritual body, the psychic body and the physical body, *soma pneumatikon*, *soma psychikon* and *soma sarx*, which, in the Upanishads, are called the Causal, Subtile and Gross Bodies. Of these the first is called a body for want of a better term to describe it, for it belongs properly to the Archetypal World, and is, therefore, virtually beyond form. It may, however, be said to engender the others and is alleged to be visible to the highly developed seer as an oviform luminosity, corresponding thus to the egg.

Within this, in a more or less semi-latent state, is that portion of the Creative Lux, or Light of the Logos, which is the regenerative force in man, the Paraklete, the good serpent within the egg. This is the Speirema, or serpent-coil, otherwise Kundalini or the annular or ring-form force. According to certain schools of thought this, during the telestic work, prepares the ideal, archetypal form contained in the ovum, which is called the solar body, because it is self-luminous, with a golden radiance of its own like the sun.

Unfortunately, although we know that the Speirema played some part in the Theurgical Rites of the Mystery Schools of antiquity, we have virtually no data upon which to build, and as it is no part of our design to be unnecessarily speculative in our investigation, we shall get a better idea of the supposed workings of this force if we devote ourselves for the time being to the Eastern Schools, where Kundalini plays an important part down to our own days. It is, in fact, one of the few forms under which the Secret Fire is more or less openly spoken of, and if the suggestion put forward in the previous paragraph is approximately correct, it is at least an example of the volatilising of the fixed and the fixing of the volatile, which is the function of the Hidden Sulphur of the Alchemistical Adepts. And as this latter is to be the subject of our consideration at a later stage, the present inquiry would seem to be appropriate.

At the same time we would point out that the question is really so vast, that to do it justice in the short space at our disposal is impossible, and that we venture to deal with the matter at all simply because so much appalling rubbish has been written about it that we do not, ourselves, wish to be misunderstood. For a detailed and scholarly exposition of the subject, we would refer our readers to *Shakti and Shakta* and to *The Serpent Power*, both by Sir John Woodroffe (Arthur Avalon).

As a beginning we may ask ourselves what is Kundalini Shakti and why is it said to be coiled like a serpent? What is the nature of this power and what are the Chakras? Why is this force in the Muladhara, and why, when awakened, should it go upwards? What is the effect of its going to Sahasrara?

In the first place it seems to be generally imagined that there are many Shaktis, for this word means Power, and that Kundalini is, therefore, but one among several others which go to make up the Universe. This is an erroneous idea, for Shakti, who is Herself Chidrupini, or pure, blissful Consciousness, is also the Mother of Nature, and is, in fact, Nature itself, born of her own creative Thought. She is thus one with all the other forms of the Great Mother to be found in the different religions, the Divine Understanding,

Binah or Aima Elohim of the Qabalah; Isis, Hathor or Tef of Egypt; Aphrodite of the Greeks; Ashtoreth and Astarte; Babylonian Mylitta, Roman Juno and so forth.

Philosophically, this energy may be regarded as polarised in two forms, namely as static or potential, which is Kundalini, and dynamic, which is Prana, the latter, in the body, being the working forces. But man is the Microcosm, and whatever exists in the external universe exists also in him, so that we may consider the processes of universal and human evolution as being the same for all practical purposes. These processes begin with the creation of mind, after which follows the creation of matter, which may be regarded as including the four elements of the Ancients, Air, Fire, Water and Earth, representing an increasing density until the solid form is reached. In their total analysis these stages correspond to the six days of creation, after which there is nothing further for Shakti to do, and She is again at rest as She was prior to the commencement of all generation. That is to say. She is represented as a coiled and sleeping serpent, and in man Kundalini represents, as it were, the Shakti left over after the creation, yet still to be regarded as a whole and not a part.

First of all, then, we have this tremendous energy, the Great Kundali (Mahakundali) at rest as Chidrupini Shakti in the Sahasrara Chakra, or Point of Absolute Rest, where it represents the Nature of the Great Mother in Man, and is analogous to the Neshamah of the Qabalah, whereas in the body proper there is Kundalini, the residual Shakti, in a state of relative rest, coiled in the Muladhara Chakra, where it is the static pole in relation to the whole of the bodily forces, which form the dynamic pole. They are also Shakti, be it remembered, moving around this centre of relative rest, the difference between them and Kundalini Shakti being that they are differentiated and specific forms in movement, while she is undifferentiated, residual Shakti at rest. Thus in the body we find the phenomena of the dual polarity of the magnet.

Having mentioned the two Chakras at either end of the scale, it would be as well if we now dealt briefly with the series. In the first place the body may be considered as divided into two main portions, namely the head and trunk together, and the legs. The centre between them is at the base of the spine, and running throughout the whole trunk is this spinal cord, the axis of the body as Mount Meru is that of the earth.

In the trunk are the seven Lokas or regions to which the seven Chakras, Centres or Lotuses correspond. These, working from the base up, are Muladhara, Svadisthana, Manipura, Anahata, Vishuddha and Ajna, the highest being Sahasrara. This latter is the highest centre of the manifestation of consciousness in the body, and is thus the abode of the supreme Shiva-Shakti. Working downwards again, these correspond to the seven Tattvas, Brahma, Avyakta, Akasha, Vayu (Air), Tejas or Agni (Fire), Apas (Water), and Prithivi (Earth), the latter thus corresponding to Muladhara, which is why Kundalini, or the residual Shakti, is said to lie coiled there.

These seven principal Chakras correspond also with the seven principal ganglia of the body, though they are not these ganglia. Working upwards from Muladhara these ganglia are respectively the Sacral, Prostatic, Epigastric, Cardiac, Pharyngeal and Cavernous, while Sahasrara corresponds to the Conarium. These, as we have indicated, are not all the Chakras, of which there are said to be fifty, reminding us of the Fifty Gates of Wisdom of the Qabalah.

In Svadisthana is the junction of the three principal Nadis (pipes or tubes), Sushumna, Ida and Pingala, of which the first corresponds to the spinal cord, while the other two are the left and right sympathetic chains respectively. These latter cross the spinal column from one side to the other, making with Sushumna and the two-lobed Ajna, the figure of the Caduceus of Hermes, which is itself another form of the Tree of Life of the Qabalah, with which latter all that we have said is in harmony, though it would involve too technical a discussion fully to explain the correspondence, though we must touch on it briefly towards the end of the chapter.

Now the object of Kundalini Yoga is to awaken this coiled and sleeping force by Pranayama and other Yogic practices, so that it shall become dynamic. She is thereupon immediately drawn upwards to that other static centre in Sahasrara, the Thousand-petalled Lotus, which is, in fact, Herself, but in union with the Shiva-consciousness, or the consciousness of ecstasy beyond the world of forms. When she sleeps man is awake in the material world, but when she awakens the Yogi loses all consciousness of the world and enters his causal body, passing thus to formless consciousness.

This process of arousing Kundalini has to be repeated constantly, so that the act becomes thoroughly natural, when at length she returns only at the will of the Yogi. And this constant repetition finds its parallel in the various stages of the Alchemical processes, not merely in the purificatory, but in the multiplication.

This is, in brief, the theory underlying this particular practice as far as it may be gathered from books. But although there are many treatises among the works on Tantrik Yoga which deal with the arousing of Kundalini, it would appear that, as one would naturally expect, they are written with considerable reservations, and the art cannot be mastered without an instructor.

Nevertheless, there are those among the Western peoples, who claim to have made use of this force successfully, and to have achieved to a state of Manteia, the sacred Mantic Trance of the Mysteries, where, however, complete self-consciousness and self-command are retained. There is, therefore, some difference in the result attained, and, as far as can be judged from a comparison of their writings with those of the East, there is also a difference in the method employed.

This, however, does not concern us in our present investigation, for we are not dealing with the actual *modus operandi* of such practices. We would merely warn the student not to dabble in them unaided, for they are extremely dangerous unless carried out under skilled supervision. It also follows from this that in the selection of a teacher the utmost care should be exercised, for not all who profess knowledge are really in possession of it.

One need hardly add that a careful preliminary training of a purificatory nature is also a pre-requisite, and that the unpurified man who attempts contacts, such as those indicated, runs a risk that we do not care to contemplate.

Now we were led to the consideration of this Serpent Power by the Orphic and Mithraic sculptures portraying the reborn man with the serpent coiled around him. And when we remember that in many instances it is coiled in seven coils, we must admit that the similarity to Kundalini is marked, which confirms our introductory statement at the beginning of this chapter, that She is the same as the Speirema of the Greeks.

In addition to this, in certain Sanskrit works the seven planets correspond to the Chakras, and there is, therefore, a correspondence with the Signs also, which, as we saw, were placed either around the image, or engraved upon it. And as the Planets are allotted to the Chakras in an order beginning with Saturn and Muladhara, the starting-point of Kundalini, it has been suggested that there is here at least a parallel with the Black Saturn of the Adepts so familiar in Alchemical literature.

Without wishing to enter upon any complicated or technical Qabalistic explanations, we cannot leave this particular branch of our inquiry without pointing out that this Good Serpent has its analogue in the Qabalah in the Serpent Nogah, the Serpent of Wisdom, which is that serpent which Moses was ordered to set upon a pole that the people might be healed.

Now the ten Sephiroth are arranged in three Columns, right, left and central, which is in a manner analogous to the Nadis, Ida, Pingala and Sushumna ; and while Kundalini, when awakened, passes along the latter, which is the central nadi, the serpent of Moses was twined about the Central Column of the Sephiroth. Again, while Kundalini Shakti is a form of the Great Mother, the Aphrodite of the Greeks, Nogah is the name of the Sphere of the Planet Venus, which is another name for the same Goddess.

Mr. J. M. Pryse, in a most interesting book entitled *The Apocalypse Unsealed*, has drawn many interesting parallels between this Kundalini or Speirema and the symbolism of the Revelation of St. John, demonstrating that it is a theurgical treatise of considerable importance. This work we have found particularly interesting for the reason that, basing his deductions primarily upon the doctrines of the Upanishads and the form of Yoga we have been examining, in combination with the Platonic and kindred teachings, he arrives at conclusions almost identical with those that may be obtained from purely Qabalistic considerations, a fact which is at least strikingly significant.

Finally, we feel it necessary in the interests of truth and justice to say a word regarding phallic practices and Kundalini, for so much of a misleading nature has been said on this subject. There are some who go so far as to state that the whole of Kundalini Yoga is nothing but the conversion of the body into a glorified or deified lingam; that the currents dealt with are purely sexual; and that the result is therefore Onanism on an unheard of scale. Like all such mistaken and misleading statements, there is just sufficient truth at the back of it to convince the unwary. The forces involved are creative and therefore allied to the sexual. But they are not sexual in the ordinarily accepted sense of the word, any more than it is really possible to attribute our human sex concepts to the Deity. Unfortunately there are always to be found, in connection with any cult, debased forms which have no real relationship with the pure original.

Mr. Leadbeater speaks of Schools of Black Magic which use Kundalini for the purpose of stimulating the sexual centre, and that such teachings are promulgated—often masquerading as highly spiritual—is as undeniable as it is unfortunate. This is what Mr. Pryse means when he says in his *apocalypse Unsealed*;

"The mere dabbler in the pseudo-occult will only degrade his intellect with the puerilities of psychism, become the prey of the evil and phantasmal world, or ruin his soul by the foul practices of phallic sorcery." Such statements, however true, regrettably, they may be, cannot and are not intended to be taken as condemning in any wholesale manner the theory and practice of Kundalini Yoga, and it would be unfair to judge any system by the abused and debased forms in which it is to be found. While, therefore, we unhesitatingly assert that physical sex practices in any form, and especially attempted introversions of sexual forces, such as endeavouring to draw these up the spine and into the brain, were never part of the truly sacred mysteries, and can lead but to disease, madness, death and worse, we are bound to point out that such condemnation does not, in fact, apply to Kundalini Yoga. We would, nevertheless, reiterate our warning that no student should attempt to experiment with these practices without the guidance of an experienced teacher, who has himself mastered the intricacies of the subject, both theoretically and practically. Failing this, there is no doubt that such studies will probably prove exceedingly dangerous.

CHAPTER VI

In the previous chapter we have considered certain aspects of our Secret Fire, which associate it in our minds with the Isis of Nature, Aphrodite and Venus (and we might have added Rhea, Ceridwen, Hertha and others). Now while Aphrodite and Venus were born of the Sea, Isis was regarded as the primeval abyss of water, from which sprang all life. We have also said that these correspond to the Sefhira Binah, the Great Supernal Mother, and She is called the Great Sea. There seems, also, to be little or no doubt that the various pictures and sculptures representing Isis with the child Horus in her arms have formed the foundation for the figures and paintings of the Christian Madonna and Child. Added to this, the Catholic doctrine of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary has its parallel in the Qabalistic doctrine of the exaltation of Malkuth (the Inferior Mother) into Binah, and it is quite obvious that Mary is Mare, the Sea. Also the characteristic colour of the Virgin is blue, which is almost universally attributed to the element of Water.

But where, then, is to be found the idea of Fire? We would reply that it is in the water, for just as Jacob Boehme tells us that "the watery matrix holdeth the Fire captive" (*The Threefold Life of Man*. Cap. vii, para. 70), so we have fire produced from water in II Maccabees i, 19-20, while the *Sepher Yetzirah*, i, 10, says that "from the water He formed Fire."

Furthermore, according to the one purely Alchemical treatise of the Qabalah, the *Ash Mezareph*, or Purifying Fire, Sulphur is referred to the Sefhira Binah, and it must be remembered that Ruach Elohim, whose symbol, as we have previously explained, is Fire, is also similarly referred.

Now one of the many links with all these ideas, which we find in the writings of the Alchemists, is the use of Venus as a symbol, though naturally enough allusions are to be found to Aphrodite, Diana and Binah; and Venus is usually interpreted to mean Copper. But an interesting speculation concerning the relationship between Venus and Sulphur arises out of the considerations which we have already elaborated, and it would be advisable to examine this most carefully, for, as we know only too well, the writers on the Hermetic Art were expert in the use of such inner meanings, employing them to mislead and discourage the uninitiated.

In the first place the symbols of Sulphur and Venus are much alike, that of the former being an upright triangle above a cross, while that of the latter is a circle above a cross. But the upright triangle is the symbol of fire, while the circle is the symbol of the Sun, which is another type of fire.'

But this may be regarded as somewhat superficial, and we must therefore see whether there is not corroborative evidence to be obtained from the actual alchemical writings. As a suitable starting-point we may as well take the oldest known Latin treatise on the subject, which incidentally appears to be far older than its Latin version. This is the *Turba Philosophorum* or "Assembly of the Sages," and in the fifty-first Dictum we find that Horfolcos (or Morfoleus, according to the second recension) says of the Flower of Copper, that it has also been called "the water of our Copper, a fiery venom . . . which further they have termed Ethelia." Later on in the same Dictum he says : "For whatsoever words ye shall find in any man's book signify quicksilver, which we call water of sulphur, which also we sometimes say is lead and copper and copulated coin."

In the fifty-second Dictum Ixumdrus, continuing with the regimen of copper, adds that "this Ethelia, which you have previously mentioned and notified, which also the envious have called by many names, doth whiten, and tinge when it is whitened; then truly the Philosophers have called it the Flower of Gold." And a little further on in his discourse he says that "this quicksilver, when it is whitened, becomes a sulphur

which contains sulphur, and is a venom that has a brilliance like marble; this the envious called Ethelia, orpiment and sandarac, out of which a tincture and pure spirit ascends with a mild fire, and the whole pure flower is sublimated."

We observe from these remarks that both the copper and the sulphur are at least approximately identified with one another through Ethelia and quicksilver and venom, while they also agree in their watery nature. This, of course, refers us back to Binah, the Great Sea, to which Sephira, as we have previously indicated, Sulphur is referred.

It may be pointed out to us that both Sulphur and the Copper are said to be Mercury or quicksilver, and this is indeed obvious; but, as we shall hope to establish later on, when we come to consider the matter of the Stone, it is because Copper may be regarded as Sulphur that it can with any degree of accuracy be called Mercury. And in case we are told that Orpiment and Sandarac are similarly said to be our Mercury, it should be noted that the latter is Realgar, and that both Orpiment and Realgar are akin, the former being Arsenic Tri-sulphide, while the latter is a sulphuret of Arsenic, containing about seventy per cent. of arsenic and thirty per cent. of sulphur. In either case the nature partakes both of sulphur and what may aptly be described as "venom." We may therefore assume that the object in naming these particular substances was to indicate to the reader a certain sulphurous venom, and at a later stage it will be part of our inquiry to deal with this "theriac" as it is elsewhere called.

But to resume our evidence, Synesius, in his *True Book concerning the Philosopher's Stone*, tells us that the calcinations and whitenings one and all signify the decocting of nature until such time as she be perfected ; and he adds that "to extract the soul or the spirit ... is nothing else than the aforesaid calcinations (or whitenings) in regard they signify the operation of Venus. It is through the fire of the extraction . . . that the spirit comes forth gently." This is in agreement with the *Turba*, where Arisleus in the tenth Dictum says : "Cook it, therefore, until it be deprived of blackness, and the whiteness appear." And Lucas, more tersely, in the sixty-seventh Dictum begins : " I signify that to whiten is to burn." Solomon Trismosin also, in his *Splendor Solis* (Fourth Treatise, sect. 2), indicates the same thing, quoting Senior to the effect that "heat turns every black thing white." And if we may quote a more modern authority, Mrs. Atwood, in her *Suggestive Inquiry*, commenting on the statement in the *Hermetic Triumph* that "the Stone of the Philosophers ... is a pure petrification of the Spirit . . . prepared by those who trace nature with the assistance of the Lunar Vulcan," points out that this is also called Diana, and the secret, natural, interior Fire of Adepts. Nor, we suppose, will the reader be surprised to find that in the *Turba* this Fire or Whitening Agent is frequently plainly alluded to as Sulphur.

Now the fact that Venus is frequently to be regarded as identical with Sulphur, together with the allocation of the latter to Binah, is of extreme importance in the development of our main thesis. Therefore, as a part at least of our argument rests on the assertion that Sulphur is referred to Binah in *Ash Mezareph*, it will be as well, before we proceed further, to see what other reasons can be adduced for such an attribution.

We may begin by restating the fact that Binah, in the Soul, is Neshamah, the highest of the three main divisions of the Soul, corresponding to the Nous in the Platonic system. Now "Sulphurs are Souls," says Dardaris in the forty-third Dictum of the *Turbo*, which suggests that our correspondence holds good. And if we are reminded that the Nephesch, which corresponds to Malkuth, is also the soul, we are able to reply that while this is indeed so, nevertheless we are here principally concerned with the higher aspect, and that in any event the alchemists are unanimous in asserting that there are two Sulphurs, the one combustible and impure, the other incombustible and pure, which latter alone can be described as their Hidden Sulphur or Secret Fire.

Again, in the other form of the Alchemical attributions of the Tree of Life, we find that Tin is referred to Binah. We would, therefore, expect, if these are correct, to find that tin is of a sulphurous nature, and in point of fact we do find it so described in *Ash Mezareph* (cap. iv.). This, however, is hardly to be regarded as a reason for allocating Sulphur to Binah, and we mention it chiefly to show that the symmetry of the two forms alluded to is carefully maintained. On the other hand Qabalistic reasons, supported by outside evidence, are not far to seek.

For example, since Sulphur is Fire, it is properly referred to the left side, which is the side of Binah, to which, also, Gold is referred; and ChRVTz, Charutz, one of the ten orders of this metal, is also allocated to the same Sephira, and agrees in its lowest number, 7, with GVPRIThA, Gophritha, Sulphur. This type of Gold has to be dug out we are told, and the same is said of Sulphur, for "it is to be dugged out of the Water, that you may have Fire obtained from Water" as in II Mace. i, 19-22, and the *Sepher Yetzirah*, i, 10, which is in keeping with the nature of Binah as the Great Sea.

We also recall the fact that with this Sephira is connected Ruach Elohim, whose symbol is Fire, and would refer the reader to the Hermetic injunction "Include, therefore, and conserve in that Sea the Fire," which occurs in the *Tractatus Aureus* or Golden Treatise of Hermes Trismegistus. Eirenasus, too, speaks of "the sulphur of thy water," while Basil Valentine alludes to "the Fiery bath of Love." And Eudoxus, to mention another authority, describes somewhat pointedly the stage when "your Water shall be animated with this Fiery Essence, which works all the wonders of our Art," referring later to that Sulphur which is "their Chaste Diana, who washes herself in the bath." But Senior is the plainest of all, for he says bluntly : "Our Fire is a Water."

Other examples of a similar nature could be adduced in plenty, but it would be but tedious to multiply them, and it is unlikely that they would serve to convince any who are so far reluctant to accept such evidence as we have already brought forward. We will therefore endeavour on somewhat different grounds, to strengthen the thesis already put forward, which is, ultimately, that our Sulphur or Secret Fire is connected with Neshamah or the Nous in the part that it plays in the Telestic Work. We would also warn the reader, in order to avoid needless repetition, to remember that Venus is not merely to be regarded as Copper, but frequently as a synonym for our hidden principle. As Jacob Boehme expresses it in his *Clavis*, "The fire of love ... is the true soul of man, namely the true spirit which God breathed into man for a creaturely life." For when it is said (Gen. ii, 7): "And breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul," the word used for breath is Neshamath, while those used for living soul are Nephesch Chiah.

CHAPTER VII

"fire", says Thomas Vaughan in his *Lumen de Lumine*, notwithstanding the diversities of it in this sub-lunary kitchen of the elements, is but one thing from one root . . . (and) our Secret Fire is at the root and about the root—I mean, about the centre—of all things both visible and invisible. It is in water, earth and air ; it is in minerals, herbs and beasts ; it is in men, stars and angels. But originally it is in God Himself, for He is the Fountain of heat and fire. . . . The Magicians afford us but two notions whereby we may know their fire. It is—as they describe it—moist and invisible." This, he explains, is the philosophical Vesta, the magical agent, in which the moisture and warmth are equal and balance one another. It is a humid, tepid fire, which the philosophers call their bath, because of its moist nature. "But in very truth," he adds, " It is no kind of bath—neither of the sea nor of dew, but a most subtle fire and purely natural; but the excitation of it is artificial."

It is thus to be recognised as a Divine Fire, and Vaughan tells us that it is that which the Jews call *Lumen Vestimenti*, the Light of the Vestment, the very first receptacle of the influences and derivations of the supernatural world.

This is, of course, the Sephira Chokmah, Wisdom, the second Sephira, and the first receptacle of the influences from Kether or the World of Atziluth, the supreme world. To it is attributed, indeed, the element of fire, balancing the element of water in Binah. This *Lumen Vestimenti* is also, according to the *Zohar*, the Robe of Glory which awaits the Neshamah in its higher state. It is Chiah, the living principle, which links Neshamah with Yechidah, the highest principle of all, the Divine Soul or Self, corresponding to the first Sephira, Kether, the Crown.

Compare this with the " Hymn of the Robe of Glory," by the great Gnostic poet Bardesanes, in which the descent of the soul into the realms of matter, and its ultimate re-ascent, is most beautifully described. This is available for the student in G. R. S. Mead's *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten* and in Vol. X of his *Echoes from Gnosis Series*, and contains much highly suggestive symbolism. It is too long for us to deal with in any detail, and contains matter that is irrelevant to our present inquiry, but one or two comments may not be inappropriate, seeing that they confirm, or are at least based upon ideas similar to those we have been considering.

The few lines on which our remarks will be made are as follows :

" From the East our home,
My parents having equipped me sent me forth
And they took off from me the bright robe,
Which in their love they had wrought for me,
And my purple toga,
Which was measured and woven to my stature.
And they made compact with me,

' If thou goest down into Egypt,
And bringest the one pearl,
Which is in the midst of the Sea
Hard by the loud-breathing serpent,
(Then) shalt thou put on thy bright robe
And thy toga, which is laid over it,
Thou shalt be heir in our kingdom.'
I went down into Egypt,
I forgot that I was a son of kings,
And I forgot the pearl,
I lay in a deep sleep.
My parents perceived and were grieved for me;
And they wrote me a letter,
Which the King sealed with his right hand.
It flew in the likeness of an eagle,
The king of all birds;
It flew and alighted beside me
And became all speech.
I remembered that I was a son of kings,
And my free soul longed for its natural state.
I remembered the pearl,
And I began to charm him,
The terrible loud-breathing serpent,
And I snatched away the pearl,
And I took my way straight to come
To the light of our home, the East.
And my bright robe, which I had stripped off,
And the toga wherein it was wrapped,
My parents sent thither.
On a sudden, as I faced it,
The garment seemed to me like a mirror of myself.
I saw in it my whole self.
Again I saw that all over it
The motions of knowledge were stirring.
And as if to speak
I saw it also making itself ready.
I heard the sound of its tones,
And I perceived also in myself
That my stature was growing according to his labours.
It was spreading itself out towards me,
It hastened that I might take it on.
And I stretched forth and received it,
With the beauty of its colours I adorned myself.
And my toga of brilliant colours.
I cast around me, in its whole breadth.
I clothed myself therewith, and ascended
To the Majesty of my Father who had sent it to me.
And I was with him in his kingdom.
And he promised me also that to the gate
Of the King of Kings I should speed with him,
And bringing my gift and my pearl
I should appear with him before our King."

This is not, of course, a continuous portion of the poem, but it is an epitome of it, the different parts of it being taken from the beginning, middle and end of the whole.

In the opening, then, we see the soul about to descend from the Supernal World, described as the East, reminding us of the forty-first of the *Conchisiones 'Philosophical, Cabalisticce et Theologies* of Picus de

Mirandula, " Every good soul is a new soul coming from the East," which is based on the fact that Chokmah, the second Sefhira, is called the Supernal East. This Sefhira, as we have repeatedly stated, is the Father, and with the third Sefhira, Binah, the Mother, we have here the parents of our quotation. Now the Robe, as we have seen, is the *Lumen Vestimenti*, Chiah, the second highest of the three parts of Neshamah, the Higher Soul, corresponding to Chokmah in the self, while the Purple Toga is Neshamah itself, or Binah, the idea of Purple being Qabalistically the feminine aspect, alluded to in I Mace. iv, 25, as " Purple of the Sea," this Sefhira being, of course, the Great Sea. These are two of the vestures of the true self, of which there are three in all corresponding to the three divisions we have enumerated previously.

It will be observed that the Robe is described later as being wrapped in the Toga, the higher vehicle being naturally sheathed in the lower. Further that it is a mirror of the self, containing all knowledge, which it communicates to the re-ascending soul, which thereupon grows in stature.

Egypt, whither the soul descends, is, as usual, the material world, the pearl being the Gnosis, which is of such a nature that it can only be obtained through incarnate experience and the overcoming of the serpent, which represents the passional nature.

The letter in the form of an eagle is the volatile, spiritual nature in man, the link between the higher self and the lower, the Neshamah and the Nephesch. It is therefore the Ruach, by virtue of which it is possible to arouse the soul to remembrance of its true nature and sonship, whereupon is born that longing for its true state which prompts it to the overcoming of the serpent and the attainment of the pearl.

The ultimate promise at the end of the poem, that the soul is to pass beyond the Father, recalls the ideas expressed by the Holy Hierotheos, and the distinction between the First and Second Mind in the Chaldean Oracles.

Now lest it should be imagined that we have been getting very far away from our Fire, we must revert to the purple colour of the toga, for this is a very important symbol in some of the alchemical works, as we may learn from the *Tractatus Aureus*, sect. 3, where we read: "The king comes forth from the fire and rejoices in the espousal; the occult treasures will be laid open and the virgin's milk whitened. The son, already vivified, is become a warrior in the fire and over the tincture super-eminent. For this son is himself the treasury, even himself bearing the Philosophic Matter. Approach, ye sons of Wisdom, and rejoice: let us now rejoice together ; for the reign of death is finished and the son doth rule, and now he is invested with the red garment, and the purple is put on."

Here two degrees of this mystical colour are mentioned, and, as we shall learn, there is a third, namely black, these three corresponding to the three worlds, material, formative and creative. And this colour, which in its various stages is described as most precious, is produced, according

to Acsubofen in the fourteenth Dictum of the *Turbo*, from Sulphur, and prepared -with Water of the Sea. In other words the secret lies in our moist fire, whence the use of purple, which is a blend of red and blue, which are almost universally used as the symbolic colours of fire and water. The use of red and black as alternative forms is more difficult to understand, but the tenth Sefhira, Malkuth, the Material World, is, in the *Zohar*, and the *Ash Mezareph*, called the Red Sea. On the other hand, when we are told, with an apparently naive simplicity, that speaking of purple "they have called it black, because it has been extracted from our sea," the allusion is to the dark womb of the Great Supernal Mother, whence issued all manifested creation, the warm humidity of which is a fitting type of our Hidden Fire.

Vaughan also tells us of "a certain black Sulphur," which is one of the great arcana of the Art; and this is manifestly connected with the "blackest of the Black " of Hermes. It is described as a mineral nature, and so reminds us of the description in the *Zohar (Ha Idra Rabba Qadlsba*, xxxi, 652-4) of the "Stone which goeth forth . . . into the Great Sea . . . and is so great a blackness that beside it all other blacknesses are as nought . . . because all the other paths are hidden and enshrouded by it." The allusion here is unmistakably to Binah, both as the Great Sea and because she contains the other Paths, a term commonly used for Sephiroth—as well as connecting Paths.

It would seem, therefore, that although there may be other fires and other sulphurs, the true reference of our Secret Fire and Hidden Sulphur is to the Neshamah or Nous ; the Mind in its highest aspect; the Higher Soul of man, by virtue of which alone he may aspire to the Mystical Marriage of the Philosophers, and to unity with his Divine Self, the Commingling as it is termed by the Holy Hierotheos. And for this reason does Jacob Boehme tell us in his *Incarnation*, Part I, cap. iv, 46, that "the soul is out of the eternal magic fire," which statement should be compared with his *Forty Questions*, xxxvii, 7: "The Soul is the centre of nature, the original of life and mobility, namely God's Fire," and his *Mysterium Magnum*, cap. xxvi, 7: "The fire-soul is a root proceeded from the Divine omnipotence."

And having thus, at some length, and at the risk of seeming tedious, explained the grounds of our further inquiry, we are free to devote our attention to an examination of the more important and enlightening statements of the Alchemists regarding the constitution of their Stone.

CHAPTER VII

At first sight, and without that clue to the solution of the problem, which we have obtained from our previous considerations, we might well be appalled by the apparent magnitude of the task that now confronts us, especially when Sages like Hermes, Barsenus, Rhasis, Rosinus and others affirm that, failing an ocular demonstration, it is only by Divine inspiration that the student can understand the directions of his teachers.

While this is in a great measure true, nevertheless it seems to be the almost unanimous opinion of the Philosophers that such inspiration frequently, if not invariably, comes about through study, application and prayer. And it should be noted that the second of these does not mean merely assiduity, for as Theophilus says, in the twenty-second Dictum of the *Turba*, no one will fully apprehend the meaning of the Wise, as narrated in their books, without constant experiment as well as reading. Geber also, in the Epilogue to the *Investigation of Perfection*, writes: "Therefore let the Sapiient Artificer studiously peruse Our Books, collecting Our dispersed Intention, which We have described in diverse places, that We might not expose it to Malignant and Ignorant Men ; and let him prove his Collection even unto Knowledge, Studying and Experimenting with the Instance of Ingenious Labour."

Nor are we to understand that their instructions are merely scattered through their works, for such an artifice would be too transparent, and would not long resist the ingenuity of the curious, despite the opinion expressed by Norton in his *Ordinall*, cap. iv. :

" If you consider how the partes of the Werkes
Be out of Order set by the old Clerkes,
As I said before, the Masters of this Arte,
Every each of them disclosed but a parte :
Wherefore though ye perceived them as ye would,
Yet ye cannot order and joyne them as ye shulde."

On the Contrary, as Arthephius asks: "Is not our Art cabalistic and full of mysteries? And you, fool, believe we teach the secret of secrets openly, and understand our words according to the letter; be assured we are not envious, but he that takes the philosopher's sayings according to the outward sense and signification has already lost the clue of Ariadne, and wanders up and down the labyrinth, and it would be of the same benefit to him as if he had thrown his money into the sea." While Sendivogius, in the Preface to the *Twelve Treatises*, says: "I would have the candid reader be admonished that he understand my words as from the possibility of nature; let him consider that this Art is for the Wise, not for the ignorant; and that the sense of philosophers is of another nature than to be understand by vapouring Thrasces, or letter-learned scoffers, or vicious, against their own consciences ; or ignorant mountebanks, who, most unworthily defaming the most commendable art of Alchemy, have with their Whites and Reds deceived almost the whole world."

It is not, therefore, surprising to find that Morien and others assert that we must not limit ourselves to the alchemical writings in order to understand them, but warn us that a knowledge of other branches of learning is necessary; and it is with this saying in mind that we have sought for indications of their meanings elsewhere than in purely alchemical literature.

As for the last part of our three causes of inspiration, prayer, Kirchringius, in his commentary on Basil Valentine's *Triumphal Chariot of Antimony*, tells us, regarding enigmatical writings, such as these Hermetic treatises may well be called, that " if you burn with a great desire of knowing them, that is prayer." And while this need not be taken as a complete definition, it would seem that the reader who has persevered thus far with us has, in some measure at least, fulfilled all three conditions.

One of the greatest difficulties that confronts us is the apparent disagreement of those who have professed to exercise the Art, both as to their terminology and as to the methods which they claim to have proved to be successful. As Peter Bonus of Ferrara puts it: "The expressions used by the different Masters often appear to be in open contradiction one to another; moreover, they are so obscurely worded that of ten readers each one would understand them in a different sense. Only the most ingenious and clear-sighted men have a chance of finding their way through this pathless thicket of contradictions and obscure metaphors."

He is himself, however, among some of the least envious of alchemical authors in many ways, and warns us that the Sages vary deliberately in naming the substance from which the Stone is elaborated in order to mislead the ignorant and foolish. "In reality," he adds, "there is only one substance of our Stone; nothing else upon earth contains it; it is that which is most like gold, and from which gold itself is generated, namely pure quicksilver, that is not mixed with anything else. . . . The Substance of Alchemy—though called by a variety of names—is the substance of Nature. . . . Were it otherwise, it would be impossible for Art to imitate Nature."

It must, however, be remembered that substance is not everything, for as no matter forms or perfects itself, but is developed and moulded by its own proper agent, there is also, necessarily, an active principle which supplies it with the needful form. And this, we learn, is properly described as an intelligent influence, which is called Sulphur, and by it the quicksilver is digested, developed and moulded in Nature as in Art. By the inherent virtue of this Sulphur the quicksilver is coagulated, but, as we shall see later, there are two principal sulphurs, an external and an internal, of which the latter is our mysterious indwelling, natural agent, by which, and by which alone, the whole work from beginning to end is really brought about.

In a sense, of course, although we have emphasised that our agent is natural, the Magistry may be regarded as an artificial process, without the aid of which the action of Nature either could not proceed at all, or else would not be accomplished so rapidly. But the moving principle and our Vulcan, which stirs up the motion, are undoubtedly natural, and it is only the excitation of the one by the other that could be described as anything else.

It should now be clear why it is that, although nothing can be achieved without Sulphur, the Stone is said by some to be made from Mercury alone. And we observe that, although Geber says that all is made of Mercury, and Aquinas that it is Mercury alone which perfects in our Work, and Arnold that you shall have all your desire from our Argent Vive, nevertheless one and all indicate the function of the Sulphur in one way or another.

For example, Geber continues by telling us that by manifest and open proof we conclude that our Stone is no other than a Foetent (or fruitful) Spirit and Living Water, which we have termed dry Water. Aquinas rather more plainly states that in the Mercury we find all we have need of, so that working with Mercury and his sister we are adding nothing different from Mercury. Arnold is, perhaps, more subtle or he employs the "word " from " ; nevertheless, in his *Rosary*, he tells us that all is generated from Quicksilver and Sulphur. Ripley, however, is quite understandable, for in his *Medulla Alchimia* he speaks of the elements of Mercury, which are to be separated and again commixed, making the elixir complete. But Sendivogius is certainly the most outspoken of all on this point, for, speaking of the pure and clear Mercury he says that he who knows the red Sulphur which it contains, has within his power the whole foundation.

But it is more puzzling to understand why we are almost universally told that no nature is perfect and complete from which the sulphur has not been removed; that this sulphur is one of the great occasions of corruptibility and so forth ; and that the process of transmutation, therefore, consists in the elimination of this sulphur.

The solution lies, however, in the existence of an impure, combustible sulphur, which is foreign to the substance of our Stone and is not to be confused with our Ferment or Vulcan. This is not native to the body, and has access to it only accidentally, through contact with unclean, not rightly inspissate nor fixed earth.

It is thus plain that our earth is sulphur in an impure state; not physical earth, of course, but our Nephesh or Malkuth, awaiting transmutation. This is the cause of the blackening which is apparent in the earlier stages of the work, but when the regimen of the fire is continued it is whitened; for, as we have seen, to burn is to whiten. Finally, it is reddened and itself becomes the tincture or ferment, the true philosophical earth wherewith the water or mercury is tinged.

It should now be apparent why Mercury is so often called Water of Sulphur, or a Sulphur containing Sulphur, the Igneous. It is naturally also the Thick Water from which Fire is taken, while because of the coagulating effect of the Sulphur it is Permanent Water, which both Mundus, in the *Turba*, and Zozimus identify as Gum, while Zimon adds that it is a spirit concealed in the body.

We refrain here from multiplying the names of this Essence Royal, but we cannot ignore Magnesia. For we have previously stated that Mercury can be coagulated by Sulphur alone, whereas certain authorities have plainly stated that this can be brought about by Magnesia.

This term, it should be observed, is frequently used either as a general expression for the First Matter of the Stone, or to describe that substance during the Putrefaction. Both White and Red Magnesia are described, which are different stages of the Sophie Sulphur. Zozimus also understands by it Molybdochalchos, which is Black Lead, implying, therefore, yet a different stage. This explains an instruction quoted in the *Turba*, to take Lead and Quicksilver, which is explained to mean Copper and Permanent Water.

According to the school of Democritus Magnesia is Cinnabar, which is, of course, a Sulphuret of Mercury, and is more popularly known as Vermilion. It is interesting, therefore, to note that in an unassigned fragment in the Byzantine collection, the following reference to the fixation of Mercury is given:

"Mercury is obtained in like manner with artificial cinnabar, a rare substance, that is one met with rarely. I refer to cinnabar obtained by the dry way and a suitable roasting. It is that above all which is termed dried and easily volatilised, employed in the treating of souls. Having become an etherised spirit, it darts towards the upper hemispheres; it descends and ascends, avoiding the action of the fire, until, quitting its role of fugitive, it reaches a state of wisdom. Until it has attained this condition, it is difficult to retain, and is mortal."



THE COAGULATION OF THE MERCURY

from

The Book of Lamspring

Compare this with Hermes: "Take the flying volatile and drown it flying, and divide and separate it from its rust, which yet holds it in death; draw it forth and repel it from itself, that it may live and answer thee, not by flying away into the regions above, but by truly forbearing to fly. For if thou shalt deliver it out of its straitness, after this imprisonment, and in the days known to thee shalt by reason have ruled it, then will it become a suitable companion unto thee, and by it wilt thou become to be a conquering lord, with it adorned."

Or, again, with our Byzantine fragment: "Unless bodies lose their corporeal state, and unless bodies again assume their corporeal state, that which is desired will not be attained."

And Olympiodorus, quoting Maria, in almost the exact words of Menabdis in the *Turba*, says: "Except you convert corporeal substances into incorporeal and incorporeal into corporeal, and unless you make

two bodies into one body, no desired result will be achieved." While Geber asserts that "imperfect bodies are not reducible to Sanity and Perfection unless the contrary be operated in them; that is the Manifest be made Occult, and the Occult be made Manifest; which operation or Contrariation, is made by Preparation, therefore they must be prepared. Superfluities in them removed, and what is wanting supplied; and so the known Perfection inserted in them. . . . (Even) Perfect Bodies need . . . such Preparation, as that by which their Parts may be more Subtiliated, and they reduced from their Corporeality to a fixed Spirituality. The intention of which is, of them to make a Spiritual Fixed Body, that is, much more attenuated and subtiliated than it was before."

All of which is, of course, none other than our old and familiar maxim, "Volatilise the Fixed and Fix the Volatile," amplified and with greater detail, so as to give us an admirable, if subtle, description of what may and must be done, namely the purification of the Ruach and its separation from the passional nature, so that it becomes ready and willing to abdicate its own seeming omnipotence, the power of the self-will, and allow the influx from Neshamah to pass over.

This Magnesia, then, is the same as our Sulphur, and we must return again for a moment to the question of an Internal and an External Sulphur, for the latter, though not entering into the composition of the Stone, is not identical with the impure sulphur we have recently considered.

It is necessary to understand the difference between our two Sulphurs, for otherwise much will appear incomprehensible and contradictory that is, in fact, quite logical and sequential. In the first place we have found it unanimously agreed that quicksilver and sulphur are our two first principles, the former being developed by the latter, which, we are also told, is the coagulating agent. Furthermore, it is the Sulphur that tinges and colours the Mercury.

After all this, it seems rather strange to find it equally emphatically asserted that if the Sulphur be not separated from the Mercury, but remains mixed with it, an imperfect form results; and that both Art and Nature proceeds similarly by imparting to the quicksilver in an instant the form of gold, leaving the sulphur separated off.

The accuracy of this statement lies, however, in the fact that the coagulation is produced by the actual presence in the Mercury of its own perfecting agent, which is our Internal Sulphur and the Hidden Gold or Fire of the Philosophers, incombustible and normally inseparable from it.

This, nevertheless, cannot be active without some outward impulse, which is provided by the External Sulphur, which stirs it into action, causing it to inform, colour, coagulate and fix the quicksilver into the Stone of the Philosophers. In this process the whole of the generative force of the Outward Sulphur is absorbed by its counterpart within the Mercury, after which it is that the former, being no longer needed, is purged away. We have thus the secret of the two Vulcans and Fires, which have given rise to so much confusion. The same name is quite aptly applied to both, for they are of the same nature, if not quite of the same essence, as otherwise the one could not truly inform the other in this spiritual generation, any more than it could in a physical generation. This fact has enabled many of the philosophers to baffle the unwary, while remaining clear to the initiated; for when once the distinction is grasped, it is quite simple to appreciate which is being spoken about.

At the same time many of them used, as we have already seen, a variety of terms in lieu of sulphur, in order further to disguise their meaning, of which, perhaps, the following, in addition to these already mentioned, are the most common. Seed, Sperm, Ferment, Theriac, Male, Shadow of Gold, Flower of Gold, Key of the Sages, Vinegar of the Sages, Acetum, Vitrolem, Golden Tree, Body, Quintessence. Some of these were, of course, used to signify other things as well, but the context is usually sufficient to allow the intelligent reader to discriminate, and we give them here as an approximate guide.

The reason why the terms Venom, Theriac and Poison are used to express our Seed, Sperm or Ferment, is because the quicksilver, by common consent, is to be joined to its body and mortified. It has to be killed by its body, which is therefore in a second, or even proper sense, a poison. But as the death tends to healing and a glorious restoration or rebirth, it is also called Theriac for its medicinal virtues.



“ WITHOUT THE FERMENT OF GOLD NO ONE CAN COMPOSE THE STONE OR DEVELOP THE TINGEING VIRTUE. . . . BE THIS MEDIUM COMMENDED UNTO YOUR FAITHFUL CARE ”

The Twelfth Key of Basil Valentine

We must, however, trespass yet a little longer upon the patience of the reader, to detain him still with the intricacies of our two principal sulphurs; for as he will be aware from the general trend of our earlier Chapters, we are all the time dealing with the mysteries of Rebirth, though we are, of necessity, during this part of our inquiry, confined to the apparently chemical terminology of the Hermetists.

We hope, therefore, that we will be pardoned for devoting our attention for a short time to the idea of the Seed, Sperm or Ferment, which is, naturally, of considerable importance in such a context.

These are all, as we have said, our sulphurs; and we must confess that they are used for both the Internal and the External. This, however, should not occasion surprise, for it is essentially logical that it should be so, seeing that our Hidden Sulphur is that which impregnates and coagulates the Mercury, fixing and tingeing it into most pure Gold.

Yet, as we have pointed out, it requires itself to be stirred into action by its own External Vulcan before this result can be achieved, so that it is Male with regard to the Mercury, but Female in the relationship which it bears to its own activator. It is thus at once the Serpent and the Egg, the Active and the Passive, the fixed and the volatile.

Therefore, although it may be truly termed a Ferment, after the analogy of leaven and dough, yet it too must receive a new quality which it did not possess before. For just as ordinary leaven cannot ferment its

dough save through the digestive virtue of heat, so also our inward, philosophical ferment requires the stimulus of an applied fire or sulphur.

CHAPTER IX

At this stage, then, we are presumably prepared for the statements of Hali, Morien and Albertus Magnus, that the place is the principle also of the supernatural generation, which Hermes likewise affirms saying, *vas philosophorum est aqua corum*, the vessel of the philosophers is their water. For this, allowing for the interchange of terms, which we have seen to be of such frequent occurrence, agrees with Vaughan, who alludes to this thing which they call their vessel and sometimes their fire.

And when he tells us that in it lies the whole secret, he is but echoing Maria, who says that Philosophers have spoken sufficiently of all that is necessary concerning the work, with the exception of the vessel; which is a divine secret, hidden from idolaters, and that without this knowledge no one can attain to the Magistry.

"Fire begins every motion and motion begins every generation," says Vaughan, while Basil Valentine asserts that the fire is, as it were, the key which opens, adding that Vulcan is the Master and Revealer of all Arcana, though despised by the wise of this world because, through their own carelessness and stupidity, they have learned nothing of him.

It is, in fact, the Sophie Salt itself, for we read in the introduction to the *Fama et Confessio* of the Fraternity R . : C . : that "this salt is the true grain, the seed not only of this world, but of the next; and it is the mystery that God hath made. It is a living water, wherein there dwells a Divine Fire, and this Fire binds the parts thereof to himself, coagulates them and stops their flux. And salt is the water that wets not the hand. This fire is the life, and therefore it hinders death. Nay, it is such a preservative against it that the very gross body of salt prevents corruption wheresoever it comes. But if any man fully know the power of this fire, let him wisely and effectually dislodge him."

All this is in strict agreement with what we have already ascertained, but Pontanus in his *Epistola de Lapide Philosophico* takes us yet more intimately into the very nature of our essence. "Our fire"—he says—"is mineral, equal, continual; it vapours not, unless the heat be too great; it participates of sulphur; it dissolves, calcines and congeals all; it is artificial to find and not chargeable; and it is taken elsewhere than from the matter. . . . This fire is not altered or transmuted with the matter."

Here we have, indeed, much that confirms our previous conclusions, but also, which is more important at the moment, much that will be of interest when we come to consider the regimen or operation of the fire, which study awaits us at a subsequent stage. For in the Telectic Work that saying of Democritus holds good: "Lapis noster, hie est ignis, ex igne creatus, et in ignem vertitur, et anima ejus in igne moratur." Our Stone is fire, created out of fire and converted into fire, and his soul dwells in the fire; which should be compared with the Chaldean Oracles quoted in Chapter II.

We are not now furnishing the reader with abstracts taken at random from the works of the Sages, but are choosing such as will be of assistance in our further inquiries; and with this object in view we cannot do better than use the admirably worded dissertation on fire given us by Sendivogius in his *New Eight of Alchemy*, which leads us on easily towards the practice. He says that "Fire is the purest and most worthy of all the elements, and its substance the finest of all; for this was first of all elevated in the creation with the throne of Divine Majesty. This nature is of all the most quiet and like unto a chariot, when it is drawn it runs; when it is not drawn it stands still. It is also in all things indiscernibly. In it are the reasons of life and understanding, which are distributed in the first infusion of man's life, and these are called the rational soul, by which alone man differs from other creatures and is like God.

"This soul was of that most pure fire, infused by God into the vital spirit, by reason of which man, after the creation of all things, was created into a particular world or microcosm. In this subject. God, the Creator of all things, put His seal and majesty, as in the purest and quietest subject, which is governed by the will and infinite wisdom of God alone. Wherefore God abhors all impurity; nothing that is filthy or compounded or blemished may come near Him, therefore no mortal man can see God or come to Him naturally. For that Fire which is in the circumference of the Divinity, in which is carried the seal and majesty of the Most High, is so intense, that no eye can penetrate it; for Fire will not suffer anything that is compounded to come near to it; but is the death and separation of everything that is compounded.

"We have said that it is the most quiet subject; so it is, or else it would follow that God could not rest; but it is of a most quiet silence in itself more than any man's mind can imagine. Thou hast an example of this in

the flint, in which there is fire, and yet is not perceived, neither doth appear until it is stirred up by motion, and kindled in it that it may appear. So the Fire in which is placed the sacred majesty of our Creator, is not moved unless it be stirred up by the proper will of the Most High, and so is carried where His Holy will is.

"There is made by the will of the Supreme Maker of things a most vehement and terrible motion. Thou hast an example of this when any monarch of this world sits in state; what a quietness there is about him, what a silence, and although some one of his court doth move, the motion is only of some one or other particular man, in an order which is not regarded. But when the Lord Himself moves, there is a universal stir and motion, then all that attend on him move with him. What then, when that Supreme Monarch, the King of Kings and Maker of all things (after whose example the princes of this world are established) doth move in his own majesty? What a stir! What a trembling, when the whole guard of this heavenly army moves about Him! But some one may ask, how do we know these things, since heavenly things are hid from man's understanding? To whom we answer, that they are manifest to philosophers into whom the incomprehensible Deity has inspired His own Wisdom."

The reader will probably at once recognise that here we have much Qabalistic symbolism. The Throne of God, under which imagery our Fire is presented to us, is the Briatic World. And this is composed of the Sephiroth Chokmah and Binah, the Father and Mother, Wisdom and Understanding, Chiah and Neshamah, the positive and negative aspects of the Divine Mind of the fully initiated and regenerated man, which form, as it were, the Mercava or Chariot of Yechidah, their synthesis and the Divine Self.

Of these, Chiah as we have pointed out, is, as it were, the living vital principle, so that they correspond almost word for word with our quotation "life and understanding." They form the soul of man in his higher aspect, as Sendivogius tells us, whereby man is distinguished from other creatures and resembles his Creator; and its fiery nature is indicated in that Ruach Elohim, whose symbol is the letter Shin, the Mother Letter of the element of Fire.

And noting that man is the Microcosm, may we not see in the paragraphs that follow, an indication as to the nature of our Vulcan, our stirrer-up of motion, and realise that latent within ourselves, as the spark in the flint, is not merely the essence that is so vainly sought without, but also the means of bringing it from potency into action?

"Non igitur externus solis coelestis calor est, it is not the external heat of the Celestial Sun which makes hot the depths of the earth," says Van Nuysent, "but rather the internal heat of the terrestrial Sun; for heat is two-fold, one of reverberation, which is external, the other of influx and penetration which is internal, concerning which I speak, the nature of which is to vivify, augment, conserve, by the sustaining power of the radical humidity contained in this fire." Concerning which interior and self-perfect and, at the same time, perfecting fountain of energy, Vaughan says that "the Almighty God placed in the heart of the world, namely in the earth—as He did in the heart of every other creature—a fire life, which Paracelsus calls the Archæus and Sendivogius the Central Sun."

So singularly striking is the unanimity of these authors, so much in harmony their expressions when, almost without disguise, they deal with this primary secret of their Art, that we are tempted to illustrate it yet further, and trust that the reader will bear with us yet a little while, for in the *Anthroposophia Theomagica* we find an extract from an author who is, apparently, elsewhere unknown, one Georgius Venetus, who, in his book *De Harmonia Mundi*, says: "Whatsoever liveth doth subsist by virtue of its inward heat. Thence that substance of heat, indifferently distributed through the world, is held to contain within itself a vital strength. Yea, Zoroaster witnesseth that all things were made from a single fire, from that fire, namely, which God, the dweller in the fiery essence—as Plato hath it—did ordain to appear in the substance of heaven and earth, at that time created rude and formless, that it might assume life and form. Hereupon the Fabricator did straightway give forth the *Sit Lux*, for which a mendacious rendering hath substituted *Fiat Lux*. For the Light is in no wise made, but is communicated and admitted to things heretofore obscure, that they may be brightened and glorified in their forms."

Here is portrayed the Ruach Elohim, which, according to Genesis, vibrated upon the face of the waters, coming forth as Light and the true fermental principle. Now according to the *Zohar*, Chokmah and Binah, the eternally conjoined Father and Mother, are, together, Elohim, that plural noun compounded of two genders, Briah, the fiery and luminous throne of the Ancient of Days, Nor is Venetus alone in the use of Light as a symbol, for Eirenæus, in his *Marrow of Alchemy*, says:

"Nor can one be so stupid as to think
That water of its own accord should cause

Within itself so great a change, and link
Sulphur and Mercury with so firm laws,
Its own dimensions to penetrate
So many times a metal to create.
No, there must be an inward agent granted,
Else would a thing unchanged still remain;

This agent is the form the matter wanted,
While it its proper nature did retain:

This Form is Light, the source of central heat,
Which clothed with matter doth a seed beget.

This seed no sooner is produced, but soon
Essays to bring the matter to a change,
On it it stamps its character, which done,
The matter lives, and that which may seem strange,
Co-worketh with the Form t'attain the end
To which the seed implanted doth intend."

But we must leave these more general descriptions of our Secret Fire, and lead up to the operation or practice, and it will therefore be well to note the different functions that the fire performs in the Work. It has not idly been said that the gold must be tried seven times in the fire, nor are we to imagine that the Solutions, Dissolutions, Putrefactions, Calcinations, Sublimations, Decensions and Coagulations mentioned, are but reiterations of an identical process. Exact details of them are, as we know only too well, not anywhere given; nevertheless, it is possible to glean from different sources the various functions of the fire, and this should at least serve us as a guide.



THE GOVERNMENT OF THE FIRE

from
the title-page of
The Golden Tripod
edited by
Michael Maier

Firstly there is required a heat powerful enough to soften and dissolve, loosening, as it were, the thick, caked and hard earth, opening it up to receive the influences that it is proposed to administer. Then heat is necessary to remove the blackness attendant upon the earlier process, giving the light access and driving away the initial darkness. For fire is said to whiten all things black and redden all things white, by which we are to understand giving them life.

Then the heat, having opened up the substance, and animated its hitherto atrophied nature, causes the material parts to be penetrated by a Spiritual Essence. This, itself, is of a fiery nature, and although it may appear to be different under its different forms, it is none the less one and one only. As Hierotheos says, "The Essence of Fire is one and the same everywhere ; but if thou distribute it in (many) materials, and kindle it (in many flames) it may seem to thee, perhaps, to be as many different (fires) as it has undergone divisions : and if it is divided, the division lies (only) in the materials and not in the Essence; for the number of the flames is (exactly) as great as (that of) the divisions of the materials, but in all the divisions thou canst see the self-same Fire." And this penetration or spiritualising is that oft-mentioned volatilising of the Fixed.

"Separate the subtle from the gross," says Hermes, echoed by the other Sages. This is the cleansing from impurities by purging them away, burning off the impure, combustible sulphurs, which is manifestly a proper function of our fire.

Then, after the subtiliation of the matter, there follows its elevation or sublimation, the spiritual parts being raised up by the action of heat, which also acts upon the *fæces* or *caput mortuum*, those dregs that we are told not to despise, but carefully to preserve, rendering them more subtle than before, penetrating them and preparing them to receive back the volatile, spiritual part at a later stage.

Lastly, as we are already aware, it is our fire which is the ferment or coagulating agent in the final perfection of the work, imparting the pure form of our Philosophic Gold, which is the *Summun Bonum* of our Magistery.

Much of the above is applicable to the following quotation from Eirenæus' *Ripley Revived*, which should serve us as an excellent introduction to the actual practice. He says: "Our fire is the true sulphur of Gold, which in the hard, dry body is imprisoned, but by the mediation of the water is let loose, by rotting the moles of the body under which it is detained; and after separation of the elements (of the same body) it appears visibly in our Third Menstrual. But the means to discover this is not a light work, it requires a profound meditation: for this is the seed of Gold, involved in many links, and held prisoner, as it were, in a deep dungeon; he that knows not our two first menstruals is altogether shut out from attaining to the sight of this Third and last: yet he who knows how to prepare the first water and to join it to the body in a just pondus, to shut it up in its vessel philosophically, until the infant be formed, and, what is greater than all, to govern his fire dextrously, so as to cherish internal heat with external, and can wait with patience till he see signs; he shall perceive the first water will work on the body till it hath opened the pores and extracted partly the tincture of Sol. Take counsel: be not so careful of the Athanor as of your internal Fire. Seek it in the house of Aries, and draw it from the depths of Saturn; let Mercury be the interval, and your signal the Doves of Diana."

In considering the above, it should be remembered that our Fire is a Water, and that the body indicated is the subtle body and is not to be confused with the physical. Our fire or true sulphur of Gold appears visibly, of course, where it truly belongs, and it must not be expected that it will manifest elsewhere, hence we may readily deduce the meaning of the three Menstruals. With our internal Fire we are already thoroughly familiar, and the injunction to seek it in the house of Aries is obviously a reminder that it is to be sought within, this being the first house of the heavens, the native, the alchemist himself. Saturn is the analogue of Salt and Lead; it is the Will, that powerful instrument—when purified—of the Mind, which here is Mercury. As for the Doves, we learn from *Ash Mezareph* that they are ministering and preparing forms of Nature, so that their association with Diana, who is Venus and, as we hope we have sufficiently established, Sulphur, is quite natural.

CHAPTER X

We have now arrived at a stage where we must consider the Operations of the Fire, which, broadly speaking, are three-fold. It is, in the first place, the mysterious solvent; next it is the agent bringing about the sublimation; lastly it is the coagulator.

Eudoxus, in his First and Second Keys, which are really only two sections of one operation, namely the Solution, and an introduction to the Sublimation, tells us that "the First Key is that which opens up the dark prisons in which the Sulphur is shut up; this it is which knows how to extract the seed out of the body, and which forms the Stone of the Philosophers by the conjunction of the spirit with the body—of sulphur with mercury. Hermes has manifestly demonstrated the operation of this First Key by these words: 'In the caverns of the metals there is hidden the Stone, which is venerable, bright in colour, a mind sublime and an open sea.' This Stone has a bright glittering: it contains a Spirit of a sublime original: it is the Sea of the Wise, in which they angle for their mysterious Fish. . . . Take heed, therefore, not to be deceived here; for it is a truth that in each work the Wise Artist ought to dissolve the body with the spirit. . . . Apply yourself, then, to know this Secret Fire, which dissolves the Stone naturally and without violence, and makes it dissolve into Water in the great sea of the Wise by the distillation which is made by the rays of the Sun and Moon... . The Elements of the Stone cannot be dissolved but by this Nature wholly Divine; nor can a perfect dissolution be made of it, but after a proportioned digestion and putrefaction, at which the operation of the Second Key of the First Work is ended."

Compare this with the description given by Thomas Vaughan in his *Cælum Term*, where he says: "Divide the essences thereof, not by violence, but by natural putrefaction, such as may occasion a genuine

dissolution of the compound. Here thou shalt find a miraculous White Water, an influence of the Moon, which is the mother of our chaos. It rules in two elements—earth and water. After this appears the sperm or influx of the Sun, which is the father of it. If is a quick, celestial fire, incorporated in a thin, oleous, aerial moisture. It is incombustible, for it is a fire itself and feeds upon fire; and the longer it stays in the fire the more glorious it grows. These are the two mineral sperms—masculine and feminine. If thou dost place them both on their crystalline basis, thou hast the philosopher's flying Fire-Drake, which at first sight of the sun breathes such a poison that nothing can stand before him."

Not less plain is Jean de Meung, who tells us that after putrefaction succeeds generation, and that because of the inward, incombustible Sulphur that heats or thickens the coldness and crudities of the Quicksilver, which suffers so much thereby that at last it is united to the Sulphur and made one body therewith. All this—namely the fire, air and water—is contained in one vessel. In their earthly vessel—that is, in their gross body or composition—I take them, he says, and then I leave them in one alembic, where I concoct, dissolve and sublime them without the help of hammer, tongs or file ; without coals, smoke, fire or bath; or the alembics of the sophisters. For I have my heavenly fire, which excites or stirs up the elemental one, according as the matter desires a becoming agreeable form.

There is but little disguise about such statements, as the reader who has carefully digested our previous Chapters will probably admit; nevertheless we venture to give yet another quotation, which deals with certain aspects still more openly, and at the same time illustrates the use of some of the terms we have been considering.

Basil Valentine, in his *Triumphal Chariot of Antimony*, puts it thus: "Therefore we admonish all and everyone, that all venomous impurity is totally to be taken away from Antimony, before it can either be called a medicine truly or administered with safety—in other words that all arrogant self-will, sensuality, folly, avarice and variability of purpose, all but the one voluntary faith to rectify and perfect, be removed from the mind of him who is to enter into the radical dissolution of Life. For the weapons of this warfare are not carnal, as the Apostle teaches, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against: the Knowledge of God, and bringeth into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. And for this cause the good must be separated from the evil, the fixed from the unfixed, the medicine from the venom, with all diligence, if we hope, by the use of Antimony to obtain true honour and true utility; but Fire only can effect that, and Vulcan is the sole and only master of all these. Whatsoever the Vulcan of the Greater Orb leaves crude and perfects not, that in the Lesser World must be amended by a certain other Vulcan, ripening the immature, and cocting the crude by heat, and separating the pure from the impure. That this is possible no man will doubt; for daily experience teaches the same, and it is very apparent in the corporeal aspect of colours which proceed from the Fire. For by Separation and Fire, which perfects its fixation, venomosity is taken away, and a change is made of the evil into the good; therefore Fire is the Separation of Venom from Medicine and of good from evil; which, however, is a thing that none can truly and fundamentally own or demonstrate, unless he who hath firmly contracted friendship with Vulcan, and instituted the Fiery Bath of Love, wherein the Bride is cleansed of all impurity and enabled to lie in the bridal bed with her chosen Spouse."

We cannot, after such statements, be left for one moment in doubt concerning the nature of this Solution, which is the same as the Separation and the volatilising of the fixed. Indeed, it has been said by some authorities that this is the Sublimation also. But though such a statement is in a sense quite accurate, it leads to confusion; for the Sublimation cannot—at least with safety—be achieved till after some measure of preparation; until such a loosening of the subtle within the gross has been arrived at that it will come forth gently. And this is a change that must be effected in the "innermost chamber" of Hermes, the "deep dungeon" of Eirenæus, the "dark prison" of Eudoxus.

The knowledge, therefore, of this Secret Fire—which is the agent in this and the subsequent stages—and how to prepare it and use it in this work includes the whole art of perfection, so that it should be no cause for surprise that we find it to have been most jealously guarded by the Philosophers, none of them having ever openly revealed it. As Eudoxus expresses it; "He who knows how to sublime the Stone philosophically, justly deserves the name of a philosopher, since he knows the Fire of the Wise, which is the only instrument which can work this sublimation." On this account, however, we must search for our further indications by passing on to the Sublimation and thence to the Coagulation, considering finally the effects produced by these operations.

Our above-cited authority is not, as a rule, one of the easiest writers to understand, but in his Third Key, which is too long for quotation here, he has several illuminating remarks on this section of the work, which are worthy of our attention.

The separation and the purification of the principles of our Mercury, we learn, is made by a perfect dissolution and glorification of the body and by the intimate union of the soul with its body, in which conjunction the Spirit is the only operative tie. "This," he says, "is the Intention and the essential point of the Operations of this Key." After the Artist has effected the Solution and has brought forth from the Stone a spring of living water, he is to take note that this apparently homogeneous substance contains three natural principles. Salt, Sulphur and Mercury, spirit, soul and body, which, though they seem pure and perfectly united are far removed from being so. For distillation removes the water, that is the soul and spirit, leaving the body as a Caput Mortuum which is, nevertheless, not to be despised, for it also is made perfect by the subsequent action of our Fire. This takes place in the reunion or Coagulation, for the power of the subtle is not integral, as Hermes says, until it be turned into earth.

This is the same as the saying of Trisomsin in his *Splendor Solis*, the Fifth Treatise, Part I, cap. ii, that "the next is Coagulation, which is turning the Water again into the Corpus or Matter, meaning thereby that the Sulphur, which before was dissolved by the Living Silver, absorbs the same and draws it into itself."

The sons of science, therefore, ought not to be ignorant that the Fire and the Sulphur are hidden in the centre of the Earth, and that it must be washed with its spirit so as to extract from it the Fixed Salt, which is the Blood of the Stone, this being the essential mystery of the operation.

The reader will, we trust, not have been misled here by the use of the terms Fire, Water and Earth, but will have noted that the Fire is sometimes Water, while the latter is sometimes Earth. This distinction is essential, for we are told that the contrary natures of fire and water have to be made to love one another vehemently, which they will readily do, after purification, in their earth.

With this object in view, the earth must be repeatedly moistened with its water, so as to make it fit for the generation we seek to bring about. For as Eve is the Spirit and Adam the Body, they must be joined in order to propagate.

In effect these opposites are of the same nature, but of opposite polarity as it were, and ascend naturally together, leaving but little fæces, so that at a further stage of the work they at length appear inseparably united under a more noble and more perfect form.

It should be plain from the foregoing that the sublimation effects a binding between the soul and spirit by the Theurgical processes of the Art, and that we have been brought insensibly to the stage of the coagulation or reunion, when these two must be recombined with their own earth ; when the Ruach, having contacted and been penetrated by the Neshamah, must return to the Nephesch.

Concerning this, Thomas Vaughan in *[Euphrates]* advises: "Take therefore water of air, which is a great dissolvent, and ferment it with earth; and, on the contrary, earth with water. Or to speak more obscurely: ferment Mercury with Sulphur and Sulphur with Mercury. And know that this congealing faculty is much adjuvated by heat, especially in such places where the sperm cannot exhale, and where the heat is temperate. But if the place be open and the heat excessive, then it dissipates. ... By earth I understand not this impure, feculent body on which we tread, but a more simple, pure element, namely the natural, central salt-nitre. This salt is fixed or permanent in the fire, and it is the sulphur of Nature, by which she retains and congeals her Mercury. When these two meet, I mean the pure earth and the water, then the earth thickens the water, and—on the contrary—the water subtiliates the earth; and from these two arises a third thing—not so thick as earth nor so thin as water—but of a mean, viscous complexion—and this is called Mercury, which is nothing else but a composition of water and salt."



THE FERMENTATION

from

The Book of Lambspring

This, of course, is the perfect Mercury, the final product of Art and Nature, which we find to be very properly referred in *Ash Mezareph* to the highest principle of all, Kether. And we need hardly add that these terms indicative of density are to be treated as purely relative in one sense, and metaphorical in another, seeing that we are dealing with non-physical entities. Regarded in this light they are, indeed, surprisingly accurate descriptions of a state where seemingly opposite qualities may be attributed without self-contradiction to our arcane entity.

The use of the terms Coagulum and Milk, which are frequently employed to express the secrets of the Art at this stage, while furnishing a perfectly good analogy, have often misled the student. Indeed it must be admitted that his erroneous deductions have been deliberately stimulated by the use of the word rennet. Our attention is drawn to this fact by the rather generous Peter Bonus, who, in his *New Pearl*, is at pains to clear up this point. As his remarks have a distinct bearing upon our last quotation, we venture to offer the reader a part of Mr. Waite's abbreviated translation of what he has to say on this point, which runs thus: "We say that the coagulum of the Sages is that which, in the preceding Chapters, has been called the ferment or the body or the poison or the flower of gold, which is hidden in the Mercury of the Sages when it arises, and that Mercury is called the Milk. The Coagulum is that which coagulates the Mercury, and the Milk is that which is coagulated by the Mercury, and the two are one and the same in substance, i.e. Mercury coagulates itself, and is not coagulated by any foreign substance. . . ."



THE AUGMENTATION OF THE STONE

from

The Book of Lambspring

"Moreover, as the coagulum is made of milk alone, but receives the power of coagulation by means of a certain digestion and decoction, so this coagulum which arises in the Mercury of the Philosophers by means of a certain digestion and decoction, receives power to coagulate the Mercury in which it is; and as the coagulum changes a large quantity of milk into its own nature, so it is with the coagulum of Mercury and its substance. Mercury, thus coagulated, is no longer volatile, but has become the gold of the Sages, and their poison.

"Know that this coagulum is the Key of the Sages, because when it coagulates the spirit, it at the same time dissolves the body, the coagulation of the spirit and the solution of the body thus being the same thing, whence the philosophers have laid down that the spirits cannot be detained except with the water

of their bodies. Our gum coagulates our milk, says Rhasis, and our milk dissolves our gum, after which appears the morning redness. When I saw water coagulate itself, says Senior, I was sure that all I had been told was true; this coagulated water they call the male, and they espouse it to a female, whose son he is, and also his root and coagulation. Female they call the milk which is coagulated, and male that which coagulates; for activity belongs to the male and passivity to the female. The first is the fixed part of quicksilver, and the second its liquid and volatile part—out of their mixture arises the Stone."

All that we need say further, before proceeding to investigate the results of these processes in more detail, is that they must each be many times repeated. Only by constant repetitions of the purifications, separations, sublimations and coagulations can any effect worthy of the careful Artist be obtained. And this notion is symbolized to us by the Multiplication of our Stone, where, by oft-repeated projections—a word not inadvertently or in-advisedly used—its virtue is immeasurably augmented until it is said to be impossible to calculate its tingeing powers. No dilettante methods are, therefore, effective, but only a firm determination to persist in the face of obstacles and difficulties. For which reason, and apart from any necessity for safeguarding their secrets, the Masters of our Art have purposely veiled their meaning in envious phraseology; at least they form some sort of test of the capacity and pertinacity of the student, replacing in a small way the more rigorous and drastic tests of the older Mystery Schools, and making sure that he possess some of the necessary qualities.

CHAPTER XI

When discussing the results or spiritual implications of the various processes involved in the Great Work, the reader will remember that when the Alchemists convey to us the impression of many substances and many methods, they only mean different aspects or stages of the same thing. Therefore throughout the following sections we shall take it for granted that he has thoroughly assimilated this idea, and understand that, save for distinctions that are verbal and logical rather than real, Solution, Sublimation, Distillation, Coagulation, Calcination, Coction, Calcification, Dealbation, Attrition, Affusion and Tingeing are all phases of the regimen of Fire.

In a sense the same applies to body, soul and spirit, though in this case the distinctions made are rather more real.

Body is the name given by the Ancients to the fixed nature which resists the action of heat; furthermore, it is said to have the power of retaining the essentially incorporeal and volatile, namely the Soul, which attempts to volatilise it. The Spirit, on the other hand, constitutes the link or bond between the Soul and the Body, and can compel the former to return to the latter.

The Qabalistic system, which deals with Nephesh, Ruach and Neshamah, corresponds, therefore, far more accurately with the ideas of the Alchemists than the ordinary terminology of to-day, which, in most cases, is loose and misleading. With the Qabalists, as with the Alchemists, body, soul and spirit are regarded not as three things, but as different aspects of one thing.

Among our Sages, the spirit, in its capacity as that which unites soul and body, is said to be pre-eminent in the Magistry from start to finish; the soul is the substance for so long as it is volatile and fleeing from the fire; when, however, it is able to withstand the fire, it is known as body. This is the fixation aimed at, and is the explanation of Hermes in the *Tractatus Aureus*: "Take the flying volatile and drown it flying . . . draw it forth and repel it from itself, that it may live and answer thee, not by flying away into the regions above, but by truly forbearing to fly."

The force of the body, therefore, is to be understood as prevailing over the soul, so that the latter remains with it, the spirit being joined with both in an indissoluble union which is the crown of the work.

Seeing, then, that the body, as it were, perfects and retains the soul, imparting to it and the whole operation a real being; and since, on the other hand, the soul manifests its power in the body, and that all this is brought about by the mediation of the spirit, the body and the form are spoken of as one and the same thing, while the other two are called substance.

Hence in the sublimation we are said by Peter Bonus to have the creation of a soul, through the mediation of the spirit, rising heavenward with the latter, while in the coagulation which follows they are permanently fixed.

This is brought about by the action of the Hidden Stone, which is not to be apprehended by the senses, but is known only intellectually, by revelation or inspiration. As Locusta has it in the seventh Dictum of the *Turba*, "it is a sublime creature, and as such, is neither seen nor felt, but is perceived by reason alone, of which reason Nature confesses that God is a partaker. . . . (This) sublime creature . . . has no need of the

light of this Sun, because the Sun is beneath that creature, which is more subtle and more lucid. This light, which is more lucid than the Light of the Sun, they have taken from the light of God, which is more subtle than their light."

But this, taken in conjunction with what has gone before, should enable us to understand what they mean by body, which cannot, of course, be taken as the physical. For the Stone which we seek, concealed from the senses, but manifest to the mind, the very form and flower of gold, is, as we have already seen, the ferment. And this itself is the body which retains the soul, thus enabling it to manifest its power. It is nothing new or foreign, but the hidden, spiritual body, become manifest, the Garment of Light or Robe of Glory.

Now it is a Qabalistic maxim that no soul can operate without a garment, yet all the time it must be clear that the prime mover in these processes, the real, extrinsic, moving cause, is the soul or Intelligence of the Artist, imparting its purpose to the different elements, co-ordinating and combining, subtilizing and fixing, until its end is achieved and the work crowned with success.

There is not much more that we can say, but the reader may find himself able to derive some inspiration from the following analysis of the ideas of Plotinus regarding the soul, more especially as he is in almost complete agreement with the Qabalistic scheme with which we have been most concerned.

He points out that the indivisible part of the soul consists in reason, which is not divided in the bodies, while the part of the divisible soul in the bodies (which, though being one in herself, nevertheless divides herself in the bodies, because she sheds sentiment everywhere), must be regarded as another power of the soul ; likewise the part which fashions and produces the bodies is still another power. At the same time this plurality of powers is not to be taken as destructive of the essential unity of the soul.

Not the whole soul enters into the body. By her higher part she ever remains united to the intelligible world; as by her lower part she remains united to the sense-world. If this lower part dominates, or rather, if it be dominated by sensation and troubled, it hinders us from being conscious of what the higher part contemplates, for it is insensible to the attraction of these transitory pleasures and leads an undisturbed life.

When the soul descends here, it is by a voluntary inclination, for the purpose of developing her own power, and to adorn what is *below* her. Such souls descend for the perfection of the universe, and proceed with their labour by the actualisation of intelligence, which, remaining in themselves, nevertheless embellishes everything by the administration of the souls, which, being immortal, ordain everything with immortal power.

If, when on waking from slumber, we turn from external things, and concentrate on the inward self, we become conscious of an alluring beauty and an innate nobility. We live out a higher life and experience atonement *with* divinity. Still further fortifying ourselves within it, we arrive at an actualisation which raises us above the intelligible.

To rise to this contemplation, however, the soul must be worthy of it by nobility, must have liberated herself from error, and must have withdrawn from the objects that fascinate the glances of worldly souls, must have immersed herself in a profound meditation, and she must have succeeded in effecting the silence not only of the agitations of the body that enfolds her, and the tumult of sensations, but also of all that surrounds her.

Then, since the nature of the soul is so divine and precious, we may be assured of being able to reach the divinity through her. With her we can ascend to Him. We will not have to search for Him far from ourselves; nor will there be several intermediaries between ourselves and Him. To reach Him we take the divinest and highest part of the soul as our guide, the power from which she proceeds, and by which she impinges on the intelligible world.

He who achieves this will not doubt that he is immortal, when he sees himself in the world of intelligence. He will see his intelligence occupied, not in the observation of some sense-object that is mortal, but in thinking the eternal by an eternal faculty. He will see all the entities in the intelligible world, and he will see himself become intelligible, radiant, and illuminated by the truth emanating from the Good, which sheds the light of truth on all intelligible entities. Then he will have the right to say: "Farewell, I am now an immortal divinity." For he has ascended to divinity and has become assimilated thereto.

For this reason do the Sages, Philosophers, Prophets and Apostles continually point to man himself as being both the source and the end, the matter and the laboratory. "But the universal orb of the earth," says Alipili in his *Centrum Natura Concentratum*, "contains not so great mysteries and excellences as Man reformed by God into His image; and he that desires the primacy among the students of nature, will nowhere find a greater or better reserve to obtain his desire than in himself, who is able to draw to himself

the Central Salt of nature in abundance, and in his regenerate Wisdom posscsseth all things, and with this light can unlock the most hidden and recluse mysteries."

And Basil Valentine in the *Stone of Fire* is almost equally explicit. "All metals and minerals have one root from whence their descent is; he that knows rightly needs not to destroy metals in order to extract the spirit from one, the sulphur from another, or the salt from another ; for there is a nearer place yet in which these three, namely the mercury, salt and sulphur—spirit, soul and body—lie hid together in one thing, well known, and whence they may with great praise be gotten."

While St. Paul asserts quite bluntly: "It is sown in corruption. It is raised in incorruption; It is sown in dishonour, It is raised in glory; It is sown in weakness. It is raised in power; It is sown a natural body. It is raised a spiritual body. The first man is of the earth, earthy ; the second man is the Lord from Heaven."

