

The Great Work

DURING THE MIDDLE AGES that which was called the “Great Work” was prosecuted by a few souls connected with the science and learning of the day. These men were mystics and alchemists, who, being lovers of God and thus His true votaries, knew something of His secrets. The outward claim was that these men converted or transmuted baser metals into gold; yet for the most part all these men died poor. However, all of these souls were the happiest of men.

It is now known to present day scientists that baser metals can be converted into higher ones. It has been the modern fashion of our spiritually ignorant scientists to ridicule the idea of alchemy, looking upon such men as Hermes Trismegistus the father of alchemy, Albertus Magnus, Nicholas Flamel, von Humboldt, Cagliostro, Thomas Vaughan, and many others as helpless fools, self-deluded, or out-and-out imposters. However, with the facts and forces of Uranus positively impinging upon our planet now, the truth of the claims of these great souls will become apparent to even such contrarians.

Alchemy and astrology are so inextricably connected as to be one divine science in truth, for both hold within them the scriptures of the world, their mass of symbols, myths, and allegories, all containing and illustrating the One Great Work. This work is the entry and transmission of the Word—the One Divine Life—in and through matter, and through the long slow process of evolution, transmuting the base and lower into the refined and higher, the human into the Divine, bringing all forms to their ultimate perfection. Thus is the Saturnian lead turned, transmuted into the Uranian

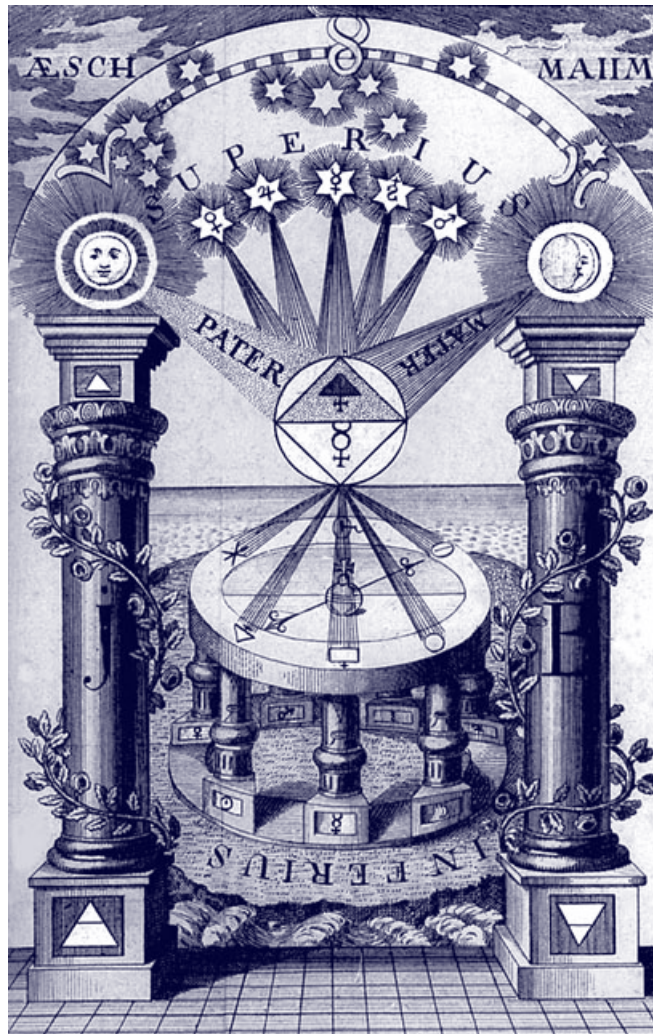


Photo Archive of Alexander Froh

Illustration from *Der Compass der Weisen (Knowledge)*, Ketima Vere, Berlin, 1782

Alchemical and astrological symbolism depicts the “philosopher’s compass” between magnetic poles, represented by the two Masonic columns of Solomon’s temple—Jachin and Boaz. Synthesized stellar (angelic) energies produce the archetypal man or lapis potentiating its individual human counterpart from the quintessence of seven material elements, with antimony, the Saturn source material, said to be the greatest poison and the supreme medicine, shown as the imperial orb.

or spiritual “gold.”

Would that students of Western Wisdom Teachings could understand that both Saturn and Uranus represent the Christ, Saturn being the necessary Darkness and Uranus the Light that shines in that darkness or shadow. But no soul knows the Uranian Christ until the forces of the Great Christ

Teacher are truly earned and His Purity and Truth possessed. Saturn is therefore intrinsically the major benefic in a true astrologer's mind and not the mere malefic of the general run of books on astrology. Never could we take on the Aquarian superconscious state without the work and help of this pedagogue of pain, and Initiator, Saturn.

When we speak of the Great Work, we do not stop at man only, in his transmutation of the lower into the higher, but include all contained in our planet. The "gold" which we seek to make is that spiritual Oneness with our Father in Heaven, the divine union of the whole life wave of our planet producing the ultimate fulfillment of our evolution. Thus the symbols of alchemy which elucidate the Great Work seek to explain and demonstrate, through results, the idea and truth of the One Life, and how man may consciously work upon himself and the lower kingdoms and thus forge far ahead of the ordinary planetary effort of evolution. Through Christ in us we are allowed the sooner to make ascension and union with the Divine; we work with God in cooperation; we cease to be sluggards and become true Masons. Only thus shall we get our real degrees, the degrees of the colleges being so much dross in comparison!

The Great Work recognizes instantly that man is a little cell (microcosm) within the Great Cell (Macrocosm), that we are each living cells in the body of what all alchemists know as the Heavenly Man. All have a part and place in that Heavenly Man. Being thus united above in the One Life, we descend into the Saturnian earth school below and must by the power of true alchemy transmute and at last make the "below" as it is "above."

Why did the great alchemists of the past give up all that man holds dear in physical life? Why did they pass through the most severe tests and trials? Why did they often take the hate and insult of the brawling crowd? Why were they often burned at the stake? Why? Because their souls were free! Christ's truth had made them free, and they carried within themselves the divine poise and balance of power which comes only to those who have accomplished and become victorious in the Great Work. They had made and transmuted the base metal into the Christ Gold.

Through the mediation of a meditation productive of a proper imaginative power working in concert with a firm free-acting powerful will, these souls became conscious of the One Life. They thus discovered at firsthand the truth that there is in fact but One God, and that man is truly made in His image; therefore he has the power not only to accelerate his own evolution, but also that of the lower kingdoms.

The large degree of free will allowed man has produced a distinct arrest in evolution through the Luciferic forces of enmity and selfishness. But now in this new Day that opens to our gaze in splendor there will be no excuse for anyone to know of and use the seeming miracle which turns baser metals into the gold of Christ.

Thus transmutation is a marvelous example of the powers which lie latent in mankind, which powers he may awaken through producing a purified Will in conjunction with an effective Imagination; from this twain is the Christ born.

You who look for the elixir of life, you who seek the fountain of youth, you who would defeat death and overcome the second death ("He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death."), what would you do or pay for this privilege, this Christ boon? There is but one thing you can do to secure the Prize, and that thing is to engage with true earnestness in the Great Work, for it is through the alchemical forces of transmutation that we at last become correlate, at one, with the One Life of Christ. To the extent that we make union with Him do we purify and transmute the atoms of our flesh and once again become young with Him.

The world has moved forward swiftly in extreme intellectual development since the days of the alchemists, and in the pride of its spiritual ignorance it has sought to set aside the idea of God as well as all that has anything of the transcendental attached to it. But as we enter this higher spiral and come into the Aquarian Age, scientists in the fullest sense of the word will appear—scientists who will know of and work in both the form *and* life sides of Life. These and a growing number of other illumined souls will dispose of the jeers and ignorance of this fading dark age, an age of true barbarism wherein we still judicially murder our

brothers and sisters.

Those of us who are aware of the powerful forces of transmutation know that evolution advances in cyclic waves in spirals, so that we ever advance and never stand in the same place twice; it is an upward and onward movement. We have come through the slowest phase of evolution, but through transmutation we attain to perfection and learn to accomplish on every part of the Path and in and through all states of matter, in all worlds, until we attain to the highest rung of the spiral, which is unity with our Father. The time will come when man will have complete dominion over all earth forces and forms, but while in passage through matter, his divine Ego must unfold and use all those faculties he already has within as latent abilities—just as the latent forces of the seed produce the tree or flower. But before the complete tree or flower exists, leaves, trunk, stem, and branches must first form.

Not only do egos reincarnate. So too do ideas, forces, and the Earth itself, during major and minor cycles of manifestation. Today we are witnessing a rebirth of the old alchemistic days, yet on a higher spiral. Increasingly now will mankind's great idol "gold" collapse, its power to become null and void as man earns and puts on the true, the incorruptible gold of the Christed spirit.

To reach that ideal and make it real man learns gladly to give of himself in true sacrifice. He will seek to give and perform for his total environment, for the world at large. He will become Christ-inclusive in his ideas, views, and aims. There will be no aliens or strangers or foreigners in his soul's purview. He will know without doubt that neither he nor the world can grow unless he works for mankind and the world and gives his utmost in joy, the joy of selfless service.

There are many who, realizing the possibility of producing this spiritual gold, set out enthusiastically to accomplish the Great Work, overnight as it were. They eagerly attend every meeting they can, read occult books, wade through courses in philosophy. Yet when it comes to their being asked to throw in all of their life resources into the crucible which produces and accomplishes the Great Work, by giving up many of their habits, pleasures, pur-



Miniature, Jehan Perréal, 1516, court of Margaretha of Austria, Musée Marmottan, Paris

Nature advises the "aimlessly wandering alchemist" to leave the narrow circle of mechanical laboratory chemistry ("opus mechanic"): "You will never attain knowledge of anything if you come not to my forge." This forge is the tree of knowledge that grows from the three roots Mineralia, Vegetative, and Sensitiva (dense physical, vital, and desire bodies). The four (etheric) elements are refined to a "vegetable gold." Alchemy (the path of Initiation) follows the work of nature, but seeks to shorten the ripening process. The angel of the Work, whose lowest body is etheric, wears a crown raying the seven cosmic energies, signified by the seven planetary symbols. Note the lemniscate (figure eight symbol for eternity) and the similarity of the tree's structure to the design on the covers of Rosicrucian Fellowship books.

suit of money, and even surrendering their worries and mean worldly cares to tend this fire, they quickly detach themselves from any attempt at real effort and say that spiritual gold is just an alchemist's dream, or that some other life will do for starting the work. But some other day will not do, for now is the acceptable year of the Lord. And

I cannot impress this fact too strongly, for every earth moment is precious and God-given to produce this essential “gold”; it cannot be made in the spiritual worlds between “death” and a new birth.

In the Great Work we are much helped by a knowledge of the divine symbology of the zodiac, for if we are true alchemists we learn and know of the various imports and impacts of the signs (constellations) and planets. We come to realize the important part that Mercury plays as messenger between earth and heaven; it becomes borne in upon us that we have a lower mind and a higher mind, and that even in the lower aspect of mind there is a very important work to be done. The human intellect is first colored and conditioned by the Moon, then as the Ego works on its vehicles it lifts itself up into Mercury’s sphere. A further elevation is given those who truly work into the consciousness of Neptune, this latter producing that sublimation which is Christ-consciousness. The intellectual faculty in man must learn to obey the voice of the spiritualized Will through Uranus and produce in the world through performance and action the pictures of the spiritualized Imagination through Neptune.

Here occurs the transmutation which produces the sublimate of the true spiritual gold, for now the higher Self is in command of the lower man and mind—the personality.

Over the great gulf between the personality and the higher Christed human there is a bridge being built, a bridge constructed by the great Christ architect, Saturn, the night-side ruler of the eleventh sign, Aquarius. The comprehension of the One Life manifesting through all things and beings is made and realized as a unity through Saturn, working in and upon the concrete or lower mind of man. This is where the true transmutation of the base metals occurs. Because of our sorrows and trials the task may seem hard, but when we become aware of God’s plan for us, then through increasing strength and quality of Will and Imagination do we project a bridge from the lower to the higher mind and take the sacred lance which the Uranian Christ confers—the lance which heals others at a touch but must never be used to profit one’s self.

The attainment of the Great Work and the con-

ferring of Christ Knighthood is well shown by the master mystic Richard Wagner in his treatment of the Arthurian legend of Parsifal, and it is true that one must become this “pure fool” for Christ’s sake; that is, artless and without guile.

If you would get to work in putting your bridge across from the lower to the higher man then you must think of yourself not as a personality but as a spiritual being and one with God. To be a true alchemist you must center your life on one divine idea which is ever the directing idea. So centered you begin to transmute all of the ideas and views and habits of the lower man and make of them the real gold of the spirit.

And remember, we must not get the idea that we have to kill anything we may find in the lower man. Rather do we throw into our Christ-crucible all that is ill and negative in us, allowing the Christ-Fire of Divine Love and Wisdom to redeem this base matter through transmutation. This is the Great Work. And what a large part Mars and Scorpio play in this work of regeneration, and how fast and far this force of Fire and Water in the highly evolved can carry them in their evolution of consciousness! No finer force is in the hands of the wise alchemist than that of Mars-Scorpio to accomplish the Great Work—to transmute the personality into individualized spirituality.

If you would have this priceless pearl, this Divine Love and Wisdom animating your whole being, you must learn to keep no part back for yourself; you must sell all you have of the personality, and follow Christ. You must learn to transmute on all planes—the physical, psychic, mental, and spiritual planes. You must learn of and *know* the *real* in very truth. You must have faith, knowledge, absolute trust, humility, and purity. You must definitely discipline yourself and ever put into practice the law of transmutation which is regeneration. This is the Great Work and the whole boon and burden of life on the Earth plane, for this is the workshop for the soul and spirit. You must learn to know the great Presence, for He was ever with you, and *now* as the Comforter He comes through Uranus to bring all things to your remembrance, for He taught us all things. □

—John Josling