

FREEMASONRY AS THE HERMETIC ART

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Part 1. ANALYSIS

"It is necessary that the soul, when purified, should associate with its Generator."

PORPHYRY. "Auxiliaries to the Perception of Intelligible Nature."

"...... What is a man, If his chief good and market of his time Be but to sleep and feed? A beast, no more. Sure, he that made us with such large discourse, Looking before and after, gave us not That capability and godlike reason To fust in us unused."

SHAKESPEARE. " Hamlet, IV. iv."

"Man, in a state of Happiness, recovers all that he observed and experienced in every mode of existence through which he has migrated since his coming into being in Abred (The World of Matter)."

Druidic fragment. D.DELTA EVANS. "The Ancient Bards of Britain."

"The state of humanity is a state of probation and instruction." "BARDDAS."

"Death does not put an end to things by annihilating the component particles but by breaking up their conjunction. Then it links them in new combinations, making everything change in shape and colour and give up in an instant its acquired gift of sensation."

LUCRETIUS. "The Nature of the Universe." Book 2.

"Hear, therefore, but believe what is true. The Priest then, all the profane being removed, taking me by the hand, brought me to the penetralia of the Temple. I approached the confines of death, and, having trod the threshold of Proserpine, I returned from it, having carried through all the elements. At midnight I saw the Sun shining with a splendid light: and I manifestly drew near to the gods above and beneath, and proximately adored them. Behold, I have narrated to you things of which, though heard, it is nevertheless necessary that you should be ignorant."

APULEIUS. "Metamorphoses, Bk. XI."

"But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet our inner, closed or middle chamber), " and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret."

ST. MATTHEW, vi, 6.

The Smaragdine (Emerald) Tablet of Hermes, says

"True without error, certain and most true; that which is above is as that which is below, and that which is below is as that which is above, for the performing of the miracles of the One Thing: and as all things were from one, by the mediation of One, so all things arose from this One Thing by adaptation; the Father of it is the Sun; the Mother of it is the Moon; the Wind carried it in its belly; the nurse thereof is the Earth. This is the father of all perfection, and consummation of the whole world. The power of it is integral, if it be turned into Earth. Thou shalt separate the earth from the fire, the subtle from the gross, gently and with much sagacity; it ascends from earth to heaven, and again descends to earth: and receives the strength of the Superiors and of the Inferiors. So thou hast the glory of the whole world; therefore let all obscurity flee before thee. This is the strong fortitude of all fortitudes, overcoming every subtle and penetrating every solid thing. So the world was created. Hence were wonderful adaptations of which this is the manner. Therefore am I called Thrice Greatest Hermes, having the three parts of the philosophy of the whole world. That which I have spoken is consummated concerning the operation of the Sun."

BRETHREN,

I do not suppose that there is any Brother here present who has reached his present status in the Craft without, at some time or another, having heard or read references to our Science under the title of The Hermetic Art. But, commonplace as are such references, I do not think that I would be very far wrong if I suggested that not one in a hundred has ever taken up the matter seriously and given consideration to the question of just why this title is ascribed and of how it arose.

I am one of those who are fully persuaded that great body of teaching which is now enshrined in the Craft of Freemasonry has, under many different forms and guises, existed since the beginning of Time or, as we commonly say, from Time Immemorial. On this Earth, so far as Man is concerned, I believe it to be coexistent with him. In this teaching was, and still is, enshrined the whole secret of man himself, his divine origin, the reasons and method of his descent into the realms of matter and, above all, the key to the means by which he can, if he so desires, return, as a regenerated and self-sufficient entity, to the place of his origin.

As the various bodies of man developed, and as his sense of union with the One Life became more veiled, as his sense of separateness grew more insistent, the true facts of his origin were relegated to the realm of tradition and some means had to be devised for the perpetuation of the tradition, if only under veils of symbolism and allegory. The reality being lost to view, the only possibility of preserving the knowledge of the facts lay in the devising of some "peculiar system of morality, veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols." This would have to serve the purpose of conserving and communicating "substituted secrets" which should serve "until time and circumstance should restore the genuine." These would unfold the underlying truth as man, in the course of his

evolution, became able to make once more the necessary contacts with the higher vehicles of his being.

These "peculiar systems of morality, have subsisted under many different veils of allegory and have been illustrated by many different systems of symbology, but the fundamental facts of the teaching have remained the same because, in essence, truth can only be truth, however much it may be disguised, and even distorted, by veils and illustrations. There can be only one Truth, but man, so long as he remains mere man, can only assimilate portions of that truth. When, in due course of his evolution, he develops his faculties to the point where he is capable of grasping and assimilating the whole, he will hardly be recognisable in a form which we would designate as human. He will have returned to his Father and will have reached Atonement, full Union with God.

The natural tendency in incarnate man is to attempt to preserve the traditions which have been handed down to him with regard to his origins and growth, and this has made him seek out, as a means to this end, materials which gave the greatest promise of being lasting and permanent. Thus, he naturally turned to the primeval rocks and stones which appeared as the most fixed portion of his environment, All else about him appeared as subject to change, to birth, growth and decay, but the rocks remained, so far as he was able to judge, comparatively unchanged, throughout the period of his occupation of his changing body. To preserve his traditions, therefore, he turned to monuments; probably, at first, mere chunks of rock set up in such place and position as would serve to draw attention and, then, as reminders of certain communicated traditional facts. In the full story to be preserved, such stones might, so to speak, represent one letter of the word, one word of the sentence, one phase of the tradition, a grouping of such parts, relatively, serving to convey the underlying tradition. And so a system of hieroglyph comes into being, maintaining the idea or group of ideas, telling of something higher, supporting the traditional story much as the columns, in classical architecture, support the superimposed entablature, with its various phases of architrave, frieze and cornice.

The menhir or upright stone is found universally spread over the four quarters of the globe; it appears on every continent, from Northern Siberia, through Europe, Africa, Asia, America, Australasia and the lonely islands of the seven seas. From this single stone may have developed the idea of groups of stones, of piling one stone upon another to illustrate the full tale, and we have developed the cromlech and dolmen of the Celtic peoples, the gilgal of Asia Minor, the tumulus of Northern Italy in Etruscan times and so on, all expressing somewhat of Universal Truth, and many of them used as places of Initiation to which the Aspirant who possessed the necessary qualifications might be brought and admitted to receive instruction and, doubtless, in many cases, much more than mere instruction. Such would appear to have been the foundations of that coordinated teaching which today we know in the Craft of Freemasonry. On this line

of development, from the single stone has arisen a whole Art and Science of Architecture and Building. The Temple of Solomon traditionally embraced the whole truth, the various stages being represented by the courts and enclosures, narrowing the return until, symbolically at least, the High Priest could grasp the kernel of truth in the final tabernacle, and reach the most concrete manifestation of the presence of God. There, the last truth, the Word Itself, was enclosed in an architectural setting, shell within shell, each shell being adapted to the understanding of those who had reached some necessary stage of spiritual growth.

Architecture has been described as the Manuscript of Humanity, written in stone, from the most primitive single block to the magnificent elaboration of a Gothic cathedral. Every phase of human thought and evolution has its place in that great manuscript. Therein may be read the whole history of humanity in most intimate and precise detail, not only in regard to his religious and philosophical ideals, but down to his most ordinary, general, daily activities, his work and his play, even to the most petty incidentals of his daily life. Religions and philosophies come and go; empires and kingdoms rise and fall; civilisations wax and wane; and habits and customs develop and decline, but all, in minutest detail, remain recorded in the traditions and remains of the builders. These are the records for those to read who have the eyes to see and the understanding to interpret what they see. Tradition is here, in every grade, in every sphere, in every detail, all coalesced in one great and lasting expression, architecture. In the architectural remains of the races and sub-races, of the nations and communities of mankind, we can read the working of their minds and their efforts to preserve the tradition of Truth, each in so far as they were able to contact that truth.

After the turning point in the descent into matter, we can read of the gradual development of the powers of man, of his growth through periods of theocracy, aristocracy, democracy and caste, through unity, dogma and diversity; through slavery, charity and liberty; through all the diverse phases which go to the making up of the curriculum of this University of the World, wherein man must learn to control and to rule on all levels of being, must learn to know himself for what he really is, the immortal, creative being, made in the image of the Most High, capable of developing in himself every attribute of Deity, and destined to become one with The Absolute, Which is God.

All through this great Book of Architecture we find stages wherein growth and change are manifest, followed by stages of consolidation, wherein we see a tendency towards fixity, finality and immutability, coupled with a pious horror of change. Dogma, fixity and strict adherence to tradition and authority lead inevitably to decline and to break-up. But such stages of what we may well designate as death are always followed by a resurrection into a new and better manifestation of life, wherein progress, diversity and a new richness and variety in design are manifested in continual change, until, again, a period of set ideas culminates in a finality, leading to stagnation and death with another

following period of resurrection and growth. And so the cyclic growth goes on, the vast spiral of the Winding Staircase that sweeps towards the Sanctum Sanctorum and the Throne of God Himself.

It has been suggested, and perhaps with some truth, that the coming of the printed book in the Fifteenth Century changed all this and diverted the focus of tradition and learning from the book of Architecture to the written word; but, Brethren, the great book of Architecture continues to add chapter upon chapter to its annals as recorded by the Scribe of Humanity, and, in these present days, we can see indications of the initiation of a new period of growth which lies before us. This is the teaching of the Craft and it is eternal.

Let me take two typical instances which have lately come before us, before I pass on to the main theme of this paper. First, as an example in symbol, let us take notice of the star symbol of the successive races of humanity. In the Fourth Root Race, that which we call the Atlantean, the symbolic star had Six Points. It survives and is venerated today in the Jewish Shield of David and in the interlaced triangles and central point so universally revered in Islam and in all the Eastern countries. In the West, it is the essential basis of that peculiar traditional survival, the Symbolic Mime of the Harlequinade. In Freemasonry, it is the jewel of that final goal and consummation of the Craft, which we recognise in the Holy Royal Arch of Jerusalem.

With the coming to dominance of the Fifth Root Race, the Aryan, the Star drops one point and becomes fivepointed. The star of Vishnu is five-pointed and is blue; the star of Bethlehem has also five points, but it is silver. The Pentalpha, or five-pointed star, upon which you tread as you enter and leave that home of the Temple of the Mysteries which stands in Great Queen Street, in the very centre of our civilisation, in the heart of London, Lud's Dom or the House of the Lord, that pentalpha is the same great symbol. Upon your entrance to the Temple of Perfection you meet and transgress the Goat of Mendes, the symbol of the animal nature of man. In the ceremonies worked in the precincts of Freemasons' Hall you learn to "Ride the Goat," to get control of these passions which mark man as still partaking of the animal. But, as you leave the building, passing to the place of the Goat you meet the same symbol, the other way up and, as you transgress or walk over it you symbolise and represent the perfected five-fold man.

The star of the Sixth Root Race, now being born into the world of men, should, logically, have four points only. It is surely significant that, of late, we have seen so much of just such a star, as the badge of the Festival of Britain, the badge chosen to designate what we hope and trust is to be the opening of a new era in this old country, and thus in the world of men, wherever scattered to the four points of the compass.

My second illustration is in the realm of Architecture. In some of the earliest temples and places of worship which we know, the entrance would appear to have been in the

East and the worship directed towards the West, possibly largely as a propitiatory rite, symbolically seeking to prolong the light of day and, hence, the light of the divine in the worshipper, by delaying the setting of the Sun and petitioning its return. Gradually the orientation seems to change, and we find the worship directed towards the Sun at its meridian, in the South. Still continuing the same process, the focus changes into the East, towards which we find it directed in most places of worship today. And, now, the very latest accepted design for a cathedral, to replace the cathedral of Coventry which was destroyed by enemy action in the last war, shows the next step in the same scheme. The High Altar is placed in the North, and the whole building so designed that, from the rising to the setting of the Sun, the light will be concentrated upon the Altar, as the focus of worship.

In Freemasonry we enter the Lodge in the West; we learn the great lessons of the Craft in meridian sunlight of the Southern perambulations; we attain to the various grades or degrees in the East and, having become Master Masons, we settle down to carry out our work as such, until the time when the Brethren may decide that we have made such progress as will enable us to become worthy rulers of our brethren. In some lodges - would that it were so in all - there is, in the centre of the Northern side, a chair which is normally unoccupied. Here, when he has been duly elected to Mastership of his Lodge, is seated the ruler of things to come, before passing again to the East to be duly installed in the Chair of King Solomon, as representative of the sun, the ruler of the symbolic lodge of the present age. This "Empty Chair" is the Siege Perilous of the Arthurian Rite, wherein only he who shows mastership may be seated in safety. The North has been denominated the Place of Darkness, and so it is, for those whose spiritual eyes are yet insufficiently developed, so that the majesty of the Eternal Light is so blinding to them that what is indeed perfect light seems to be the most profound darkness. Here, as elsewhere, extremes meet. Perfect Light can only be appreciated in perfect darkness; perfect harmony heard only in the most profound silence; perfect knowledge attained only in the realisation of abysmal ignorance; perfect bliss in the Spirit found only in the experience of crucifixion in Matter. God Himself, be it said in all awe and reverence, can only attain to full selfconsciousness by manifesting His Unity in multiplicity, becoming Man and growing to self-consciousness as such on all the levels of gross matter, that, reuniting the Unity, It may be "perfect and entire, wanting nothing." The S.W., as representative of the aspect of Strength or Power, performs his functions in our ceremonies both in the West and in the North, and the Candidate enters between his two points or powers to make contact with the East.

The symbolic and ceremonial exemplification of all the teaching and tradition behind these facts is that which has been termed the Hermetic Art and many of the old writers on Freemasonry use the term freely. Albert Pike, in speaking of the reputed founder of the Hermetic School of Philosophy in connection with the Craft, says

"from the bosom of Egypt sprang a man of consummate wisdom, initiated in the secret knowledge of India, of Persia and of Ethiopia, named Thoth or Ptah by his compatriots, Taaut by the Phoenicians, and Hermes Trismegistus (Thrice Great Hermes) by the Greeks. In Egypt he instituted hieroglyphics: he selected a certain number of persons, whom he judged fitted to be the depositaries of his secrets, of only such as were capable of attaining the throne and the first offices in the mysteries, he united them in a body, created them priests of the Living God, instructed them in the sciences and arts, especially astronomy, music (which he is said to have invented), arithmetic and work in metals, etc. Under him Egypt paid homage to seven principal deities."

These were the representatives of the seven planets, the seven rays and all the other sevens which make up our environment.

The reputed writings of Hermes Trismegistus had a tremendous influence upon most of the early Fathers of the Christian Church. St. Augustine especially held them in great reverence. The word Hermetic had grown to be synonymous with concealed or mysterious. This arose principally from two causes. First, because the inner teaching of the perfectibility of man and the methods of attainment taught by the disciples of Hermes were communicated only under oath of secrecy, some of the teaching imparted and of the powers released carrying with them real danger unless the aspirant was properly prepared, and, secondly, from the more material idea, associated with the chemical and alchemic activities of the philosophers, of the Hermetic Seal. The phrase "Hermetically sealed" comes from the method used for the sealing of glass flasks by heating the neck until plastic and giving it a twist to seal the orifice. "My lips are Hermetically sealed" was a phrase in common use, and the same idea was carried into the Christian Church in the Seal of the Confessional, under the symbol of the Black Rose of Secrecy, worn originally on the forehead or hatband by those only who were entitled to hear confessions. From this we derive the well-known Latin phrase *sub rosa*, under the rose, denoting any communication given and received in strict confidence or as in the confessional. Much of the teaching involved control over the powers of Nature, the power to work Magic. In this context, I would like to define Magic as "the production of phenomena by the acceleration, retardation or reversal of the action of natural forces by superphysical means." This would include much which we would now designate as Science, including, as it did, many of the laws which govern Physics and Chemistry and, more especially, those pertaining to the Transmutation of Metals now approached more materially.

Before we go any further on this line, let us try to get some clear idea of Hermes himself. As a Greek god, he was recognised as the Messenger of the Gods. As such, he is probably better known generally under his Latin name, Mercury, and in many of our lodges the Deacons, in their capacities as the messenger linking the three Principal Officers, bear his image upon their wands of office. According to Cicero there were no

less than five who bore the name of Hermes; (i) A son of Coelus or Uranos (the Heavens) and Lux (Light); (ii) A son of Valens (a form of Apollo, denoting Healthy Vigour) and Coronis (mother of Aesculapius, whose rod of power is the badge of our medical profession); (iii) Son of Jupiter and Maia (names having the same roots as Joseph and Mary); (iv) Son of the Egyptian Nile and messenger of Ra, he would appear to be identified with the Scribe of the Gods, known to us under the various names of Tahuti, Ptah, Thaut and Thoth, and often referred to as Thoth-Hermes; (v) Son of Bacchus and Proserpine.

To the son of Jupiter and Maia have been attributed all the actions and activities of all the others. As Messenger of the Gods, he was messenger of Jupiter in particular. He was patron of all travellers and of shepherds. Here we may note that, in our capacities as aspirants and candidates, we are all fellow travellers upon the Path of Initiation and, in so far as we serve and tend the wants of others, we are shepherds of the flock, true pastors. We may note here also the link with the Bethlehem story of the travellers from the East and the shepherds, who have special mention as those to whom the truth was revealed.

Hermes was the conductor of souls to Hades; he was patron of orators, declaimers and also of merchants. But he was also the god of thieves and pickpockets and of all dishonest persons, which reminds us of the claim of Krishna, as representative of the Second Person of the Trinity, in the Bhagavad Gita, when he says, "I am the gambling of the cheat."

The name Mercury is perhaps derived from a mercibus, because he was the god of merchandise among the Latins, but the more probable derivation is from the Syrian Mar Kurios, meaning "Son of the Lord" or the Sun, this being, in turn, a literal translation of the Egyptian Hermes, or Chr-Mes, i.e. Horus-Moses or the Son of Horus.

Mercury, as son of Jupiter and Maia, was born traditionally in Arcadia, on Mt. Cyllene, and, as an infant, was entrusted with the care of the Seasons. His first effort, however, on the day when he was born or, as some say, on the following day, was to show his craftiness and dishonesty by stealing away the oxen of Admetus, which were being tended by Apollo. He appears almost as an inveterate kleptomaniac, stealing the quiver and arrows of the divine shepherd, the trident of Neptune, the girdle from Venus, his sword from Mars and even his sceptre, the rod of power, from Jupiter himself. Vulcan was ever the greatest sufferer, losing many of his instruments and tools. All of which tales tend to show allegorically that man, the latest creation, the new born, as Mercury, the Son of the Lord and, hence, the Aspirant for spiritual growth and for Initiation, must himself take over all the attributes of Deity, must realise that in himself lie the full powers of the Godhead, only awaiting the proper environment to be awakened and realised that they may function in fullness. Many of these acquisitions are mirrored in our masonic ceremonies and it is an interesting exercise to try to trace them there.

Vulcan is, of course, named in the Craft, appearing as Tual-Cain or, as we say, Tubal Cain, who, be it particularly noted, comes to us in his particular guise as the First Artificer in Metals, conveying the same meaning as that other well-known title, "the first among many brethren" and, as such, the first to succeed in the grand experiment of transmutation, with which, in its various aspects we will have to deal more fully in due course.

As a result of his childish pranks, it is said that Mercury attracted the attention of Jupiter, who appointed him his messenger, interpreter and cupbearer in the assembly of the gods. In this last office he was ultimately superseded by Ganymede. From Jupiter he received the winged cap called petasus, the winged sandals called talaria, and the short sword called Herpe, which later he lent to Perseus. He was thus enabled to pass instantaneously from point to point in the Universe and had the power of making himself invisible and of assuming any shape he might choose. All of which is an allegory of the powers latent in man, awaiting unfoldment during his journey as aspirant to Godhead. As messenger to Jupiter, Mercury was entrusted with all his secrets, whether good or bad. To Mercury was attributed the invention of the lyre, which, of course, was seven stringed, as emblematic of the seven-fold vestures of man, in which he must learn to function on the seven planes of Nature. This Lyre he gave to Apollo and received in exchange the Caduceus or Staff with which the god of poetry tended the flocks and herds of Admetus. It carries with it, in symbol, the power to develop and control the Serpent-power, known to us as Kundalini, the symbolism of which is clearly portrayed in the Craft, for those who have eyes to see, in the peculiar modes of preparation of the Candidate.

Mercury was depicted as being brave, spirited and active, showing these qualities in the many feats attributed to him. He it was who delivered Mars from confinement when overpowered by the Aloides; the bastard twins of Iphimedia, wife of Aloeus, son of Titan and Terra, by Neptune. He purified the Danaides of the murder of their husbands. He tied Ixion to his wheel in Hades, destroyed the hundred-eyed Argus, sold Hercules to Omphale, queen of Lydia, conducted Priam to the tent of Achilles to redeem the body of Hector, and carried the infant Bacchus to the nymphs of Nysa. He would always seem to have been busy about something. He rejoiced in many surnames and epithets, indicating his many powers and functions and, in several cases, indicating his essential triplicity as, for instance, Triplex or three-fold and Tricephalus or three-headed. He was credited with many children, most of whose names are associated with phases in the evolution of man. His Roman festival, celebrated by the merchants, was on May 15th. As a god, he is always associated with fertility and is sometimes even referred to as a youth fascino erecto. Sometimes we find him depicted with the head of a dog and so he is sometimes confused with the Egyptian Anubis, or with Sothis, the dog-star. Above all else he was god of eloquence, his powers of speech being sweet and persuasive. On occasion he has even been represented as without arms, indicating that the power of

speech can prevail over everything without physical assistance, and we all know how important it can be under certain circumstances, to overcome any defect in speech, if we hope to reach the status of Fellowcraft.

As Hermes Trismegistus in Egypt, he is credited with the introduction of the olive, with the origination of the measurement of land, geometry and hieroglyphics. Traditionally, he lived in the time of Osiris himself and is credited with having written forty volumes on theology, medicine and geography, from which Sanchoniathon the Phoenecian is reputed to have taken his Theologia.

As Thrice-Greatest, he is chief among the eight gods of Heliopolis, the City of the Sun. His title "Lord of the Divine Words" and his voice "of just intonation" link him closely with the masonic aspirant. He acted as Scribe to the gods, as god of all wisdom and learning, inventor and teacher of all the arts and sciences, personification of reason and intelligence as attributes of the divine. He alone was self-created, rising with Ra in the beginning of time. It was his "voice of just intonation," what we would call his "tongue of good report," which uttered the word of creation, by which all things that have being were brought into manifestation and the whole ordering of the Universe was in his hands. He it was who was arbiter between the gods of light and of darkness. He was possessed of all knowledge of spells and words of power. He could pronounce them aright, as was necessary to enable him to pass through the underworld in safety and, ultimately, to reach his desired goal. His word also had the power to resuscitate the dead. Herein he appears once more as the fully developed mason, son of God and perfected in His Image.

Once more we see him, now with the head of the sacred ibis, as he stands waiting beside the scales in the Judgment Hall of Osiris to receive and record the verdict after the weighing of the heart against the feather of Maat, a verdict communicated to him through the dog-headed ape so frequently associated with him. The name Tahuti or Thoth signifies the measurer and, as such, he was a Lunar god and wore the lunar crescent and disc. He carries a pen or stylus and a notched palm branch. He is verily Horus-Arnun or ChR-Amun, which was translated by the Tyrians into Chur-Om and further modified by the Phoenicians to Khuram, and this became the Hebraic Hiram or Hiram.

The name Horus was written in two hieroglyphs. The first, Ch, represented a triply coiled cord, and the second, R, an open mouth. Written together as a name, the cord of the Ch is passed through between the lips of the R and herein we have a close resemblance to the well-known eastern emblem of fertility, the Lingam-Yoni.

Summing up, then, as "Son of the Lord" Horus becomes Horus-Moses or ChRMes or Hermes, and, as Hermes, is linked with the planet Mercury, Mar Kurios, again the Son of the Lord." He is credited by some writers as author of 20,000 volumes," and almost all

ancient literature has been attributed to him, just as, in Babylonia and Assyria, all such was attributed to Nebo, as representative of the same planet. Hermes then is the Great Teacher, the Messenger sent to Man by the Gods, and his name is derived from the same roots, and with the same hieroglyphic spelling, as that of our Masonic Exemplar, Hiram. In many of our Christian churches today we find representations of the same two letter sounds, now in their Greek form, embroidered upon frontals and altar-cloths. These, the Chi. X, and the Rho. P, were the traditional symbols carried upon the Labarum, the sacred banner of Constantine, after his conversion. The linked symbols have, mathematically, a close association with the Craft, since the proportions of the banner are those of the symbolic squared pavement, three by four, and are found also on the breastplate of the Jewish High Priest. The Ch is formed on the diagonals, giving angles of intersection of 72 degrees and 108 degrees, the one being the number of the perfect 6-foot man, 72 inches, and the other being the internal angle of the regular pentagon, another symbol of human perfection, and the basis of the Pentalpha, the five-pointed star or pentagram and also of that solid which was the final goal of the old Geometers, the compelling reason which gave rise to the thirteen books of the Elements of Euclid, the Dodecahedron, which links the 5 and the 12, having 12 faces, each of which is a regular pentagon.

"Almost every tablet of importance in the royal library of Nineveh has upon it the following words, 'The palace of Ashur-Ban-I-Pal, King of Hosts, King of Assyria, who putteth his trust in the gods Ashur and Belit, on whom Nabu and Tashmetu have bestowed ears which hear and eyes which see. I have inscribed upon tablets the noble products of the scribe, which none of the kings who have gone before me had learned, together with the wisdom of Nabu (Nebo-Hermes) so far as it existeth.'" So says the British Museum catalogue, and these tablets date from about 700 B.C. Among them is the famous Creation tablet.

Thus Nebo in Assyria, with Thoth (and, later, Serapis) in Egypt, Taaut in Phoenecia, El Daud (David) in Palestine, The Buddhi (not to be confused with the Buddha) in India, Apollo and Hermes in Greece, Mercury in Rome, such gods as Odin in the North, Esus or Hesus in Gaul, Hu and Arthur in Britain, and so on, all link up as the Messengers of God to Man and aspirants for initiation into their Mysteries, in each case, became the representative of the deific messenger, in his capacity as candidate. In Egypt, for instance, the aspirant was linked with Thoth himself in the process of becoming Osirified.

In the astrological zodiac of the Chaldeans we find the attribution of the houses or mansions to the planets showing the day-house of Mercury in Gemini, leading into Cancer and Leo, the houses respectively of the Moon and Sun, followed by the night-house of Mercury in Virgo. Thus we have the centre of the Zodiacal East marked by a trinity of Sun, Moon and dual Mercury, the lesser lights of the early rituals,

representative of the Hermetic and Rosicrucian fundamentals. In Alchemy they are the Salt, Sulphur and Mercury with which you are all familiar, and, in Freemasonry, "the Sun, the Moon and the Master of the Lodge." Freemasonry being a cult of the Second Person of the Trinity, we find the duality in the West and North, in which quarters the S.W. exercises his functions as representative of Strength and Power. To the right of the House of the Sun, Leo, is Cancer, the House of the Moon, which, shining with borrowed light, gathers up the gold of the sun to give forth her silver light. This, then, is the place of the Treasurer.

Virgo is, of course, Demeter or Ceres, the WorldMother, and links with Kubele or Cybele, from whom we derive the name of the squared stone, the Cube. Gemini, the Twins, represents the youthful Hercules and Apollo. Hercules is, again, the type of the Aspirant and, as such, is an equivalent of Hermes, who, in the House of Demeter, becomes the Divine Wisdom.

The secret wisdom of the Alchemistical Philosophers, developed from the Kabbalah of the Hebrews, tells us that it is the combination of the Salt, Sulphur and Mercury which produces the "living gold." The signs used for these elements link again with the Sun, the Moon and the planet Mercury, as representatives of the four elements-Earth, Fire and Air-Water.

Alchemy was, and still is-perhaps it is necessary to make this quite clear-a School of Philosophy, differing principally from other schools in that it found it advisable to keep its teachings secret, or, at least, veiled sufficiently to prevent their profanation by the un- worthy and the unprepared. It taught the basic truth of the perfectibility of man, in the same way as does our Masonic Craft, but veiled in terms of Chemistry where we use those of Building.

Man, as a trinity, is made up, as we say, of Spirit, Soul and Body; the body being especially under the influence of the Moon, the soul being of the substance of the Sun and the spirit manifesting as mentality and intelligence, the especial gifts of the dual Hercules-Hermes or Mercury, embodied in Manas, that attribute which distinguishes man from all his younger brethren in the other kingdoms of nature, and from which he derives his very name, Man.

There can be no possible doubt that the whole fabric of ancient philosophy, however much we may dub it as pagan, rested upon this doctrine of the perfectibility of man, and the reason why the teaching has not come down to us more clearly in classical literature is the obvious one that it was "Hermetically Sealed." It was the Hidden Wisdom, that which was, in its very essence, Hermetic.

One of the chief emblems of the Hermetic Art was the Cubic Stone. At first it was black, but later, white. There is at least one degree worked in Freemasonry today, in which the

Candidate is obligated upon just such a black stone. It is precisely similar to that stone which is held in such veneration throughout Islam, and which rests in the Kaaba at Mecca. The building itself is rectangular, being 23 cubits in length, 24 cubits in breadth and 27 cubits high. There is but one aperture, in the East to admit light. In the N.E. corner is the black cubic stone of Kaaba, traditionally lowered down direct from heaven. On its arrival it was as white as snow but subsequently it became black as a result of the sins of mankind. Another white stone is on the North side. This is the reputed tomb of Ishmael. The place of Abraham is in the East.

I need hardly remind you of the numerous scriptural references to a white stone, as the reward promised to "Him that overcometh," nor to the naming of Simon Peter, from the Greek Petra, a stone, as the foundation upon which the Christian Church was to be built up. In Freemasonry, the story of the stone runs throughout the Craft and almost all other degrees and this our Dormer Masonic Study Circle owes its inception and present existence largely to the influence of that Great Brother who founded the Lodge of Living Stones in Leeds, our late W. Bro. W. L. Wilmshurst, whose deep inspiration lies behind so much of the revivification of Freemasonry today.

That branch of the Hermetic Art which dealt most peculiarly with the physical aspects of the stone, so far as the outer world was concerned, was known as Alchemy, and all the various aims of its followers were summed up in the term "The Philosophers' stone." In its purely physical aspect, the search for this stone was the origin of the first of the exact sciences, Chemistry, and from the growth of Chemistry all the other sciences may be said to have originated. At the other end of the scale, in its spiritual aspect, this same search was for the key to spiritual rebirth and the becoming to perfection of man himself. Mrs. Atwood, the gifted author of that wonderful work which was recovered and given to us again by our Bro. Wilmshurst, "A Suggestive Enquiry into the Hermetic Philosophy and Alchemy," in a letter written to C. C. Massey, says "The common faith is mystery without a fulcrum in this life, whereon to rest the lever of the will." Jesus of Nazareth strongly urged the doctrine that "ye must be born again," and was not understood. W. L. Wilmshurst speaks of the doctrine as the "vague, mysterious, metaphysic counsel of perfection, capable of being satisfied by living an ordinary, natural life as far as possible in accordance with the standard of conduct indicated in the Gospels," and suggests, not only that the doctrine of rebirth entails much more than this, but that it is capable of literal fulfilment, and that the necessary fulcrum would be provided if there were "a definitely recognised method of giving the Lord's injunction effect." He points out that, even if this method were generally known "it would still be impracticable, in the present state of the world, to put it into general practice. The science of this rebirth has always been practised and taught under conditions of strictest seclusion and secrecy, but, in itself, it is age-old. Never was there a time when the seeker who was really in earnest -and, be it noted, "properly prepared" could not hope to find a Master, ready and willing to impart the necessary instruction and training.

The secrecy and mystery surrounding the Great Science have been due to the mental and moral unpreparedness of those who have been content to live the normal life of the world, even though they may have dreamed of better things. The details of the actual empirical processes of rebirth could only be made public "veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols." The injunction remains valid "Bind up the testimony; seal the law among my disciples," and "cast not your pearls among swine..... it is not meet to take the children's bread and give it to the dogs," and so on, and so on. "Because," comments Bro. Wilmshurst, "apart from the privacy inevitably attaching to sacrosanctities, it involves perils personal and general; it lays open the most secret recesses and properties of the human organism, stripping bare the quivering roots of the physical and psychic life: it leads into contact with magnetic forces of terrific potency, from the knowledge and effects of which we are at present providentially sheltered and safeguarded by the grossness of our sense bodies and the limitations these impose upon us until such time as we become fitted to function in independence of them."

Candidates must always be properly prepared before they can be initiated, and we are told that "many are called but few be chosen." The step to be taken is relatively final. It entails renunciation or transvaluation of almost everything sought after and prized in ordinary mundane existence, a stepping out of the current of the world-stream, by which we are normally carried along. It involves apparent contradictions, in the necessity for the complete discarding of evidence of the senses, evidence which the senses and the natural reason show as palpable truth. Phenomenal existence appears in a completely new light and ceases to be of any importance except as an indispensable foundation upon which to build. As the building itself rises in all its splendour, the foundation passes out of sight beneath the ground and, if it has been well and truly laid, should appear no more.

The Alchemistical Philosophers were men of real worth, who were concerned only with realities. Their motives were completely unconnected with any ideas of personal salvation or spiritual superiority over their fellow-men. The outstanding qualities which distinguished them were their piety and their humility, coupled with their reputation for great and unusual wisdom. Their religious outlook was not to be evidenced in a mere being good, had no credal nor dogmatic basis, had in it none of that complacency which turns things aside and says "God's in His heaven; All's right with the world." Their attitude was rather that the whole world was "out of joint," disunited from God and from His righteousness and sorely in need of humble service from men who were prepared to renounce everything, even their own salvation, if only they could do something to save humanity from its only real enemy, humanity itself. So different was their outlook from that of their fellows that it was, and always will be, incomprehensible to the "man-in-the-street," who meets it with derision and, more often than not, with persecution.

The path of the man who decides, finally and at all costs, to reach firm ground while still immersed in, and being carried along by, the torrent of ordinary human thought and action, is hard; must, of necessity, always be hard. He has, as it were, to cut across the stream and sometimes to struggle in direct opposition to its flow. It is almost as if he were dead to the world, for he is actually and consciously experiencing the tomb of transgression in that he is trans-gressing - literally cutting across - the general course of the stream. We have all heard it said that "the way of the transgressor is hard," and it may often be seen at its hardest where the transgressor, he who is moving across the current, is the greatest saint. The outstanding example of transgression in this sense is, of course, Jesus of Nazareth. His whole life and teaching cut clean across all the cherished and accepted values of his time and threatened to undermine all the powers upon which the rulers of the people set such store. No matter how palpably foolish, how plainly ridiculous, how definitely evil, may be that upon which a man sets store, as being necessary or conducive to his happiness, he will fight to keep it, will hold it to the last gasp and will put every obstacle in the way of anyone who threatens its possession, even though that person may offer something infinitely better in its place. Truly there is no man so blind as he who is determined that he will not see. Humanity, as a whole, is much in the position of the man with the muck rake in the "Pilgrim's Progress." It is so fully occupied in raking up the muck it has created, and so intent upon wallowing in its own filth, that it has no eyes for the crown of glory offered, nor ears to hear the voice of him that offers it.

In talking here of Alchemy and the Alchemists, I must make it perfectly clear that I am referring only to the genuine science and the genuine practitioners, and not to any of the pretenders to the art who have, throughout, deluded their fellows - and, quite often, themselves - by trickery, charlatanry and deception, thus lowering the standards in the eyes of men and bringing disrepute upon the whole idea. So much was this the case at one time that the Pope was obliged to issue a bull prohibiting the practice. But, paradoxically enough, that same Pope was himself reputed to be a most successful practitioner.

Let us, for a few minutes, look at some of the men who were outstanding in the field of Alchemy, in the later centuries of the Christian Era. But first, let us recall that about the year A.D. 284, Sindas relates the facility with which the Egyptians were able to make gold and silver and thus were able to levy forces against Rome, thereby so exciting the envy and annoyance of the Emperor that he caused every chemical book that could be found to be publicly burned, hoping thereby to mitigate the trouble. (Sindus in Verbo Chemeia.) He also attempts to account for the silence and secrecy which surrounded this Egyptian Art, that art which survived in places throughout the years of the final decline of Egypt. Among the scanty surviving records we have the story of Cleopatra, the last of the Egyptian monarchs, dissolving her ear-ring in such sharp vinegar as was known only to the genuine practitioners of the philosophy. The survival of the art in the

Roman world is evinced by the continual recurrence of stories of perpetual-burning lamps. St. Augustine mentions the case of one which was dedicated to Venus in his day, and which was inextinguishable. In the year 1500, a rustic, digging deeper than usual near Alestes, came upon an earthen vessel or urn, containing another urn in which was a lamp, placed between two cylindrical vessels of gold and silver respectively and each full of a very pure liquor, by virtue of which it is probable that the lamp had continued to burn for 1,500 years, and might have continued so to burn indefinitely, had it not been for his barbarian curiosity. From the inscriptions upon the vessels, it would appear that they were the work of one Maximus Olybius. These inscriptions are still, I am told, extant, preserved in full.

Hermolaus Barbarus, speaking of water in general, refers to

"a celestial, or rather, a divine water of the Chemists, with which both Democritus and Trismegistus were acquainted, calling it divine water, Scythian latex, etc., which is a spirit of the nature of ether and quintessence of things, whence potable gold and the stone of the Philosophers takes its beginning." H. Kunrath affirms that "the ether in this praeter-perfect aqueous body will burn perpetually, without diminution or consumption of itself, if the external air only be restrained."

There are also later well-authenticated cases of such lamps.

In Alexandria we find many Christian Platonists studying and discussing these occult arts. St. John the Apostle was reputed to have practised them "for the good of the poor; not only in healing the sick but also confecting gold, silver and precious stones for their benefit." There is an ancient hymn for the honour of St. John's Day which commemorates this. Much is to be learned from the Fathers and the Apostles themselves left some clear ordinances and hints. But, our reformers, mistaking everything which they themselves were unable to grasp for merest superstition, brushed all such aside as meaningless and retained little but a traditional and unsupported faith in place of the true mystery of regeneration. The direct result of this was the ascendancy of a rank superstition which led to a slavish and senseless idolatry and the exercise of a credulity and ignorance which is almost unbelievable. The letter came to be revered and worshipped, in the complete absence of the spirit which should have dwelt therein. If truth is ever to be re-established it must be on a sure foundation of understanding and cooperation, and on no mere basis of authority.

In this Alexandrian period there was a great revival of philosophy. We find associated with it such famous names as Plotinus, Philo-judaeus, Proclus, Porphyry, Jamblicus, Julian and Apuleus, each and every one of whom professed a knowledge of the Hermetic Arts. And we must not leave Alexandria without mention of that most excellent lady, Hypatia, so famous not only for her outstanding wisdom and

acquirements but also for her tragic and untimely end at the hands of the materialistic and power-intoxicated bishop and his mob. It was from this marvellous lady that Synesius himself learned the hidden truths of the philosophy to which he dedicated his life, pursuing it even more zealously after his conversion to Christianity and his becoming Bishop of the Church in Alexandria. He was ever careful to protect the mysteries of his religion from public abuse, and would not publicly expound even the Platonic philosophy. No one was admitted to the Conclave except on the unanimous vote of its members.

One could mention name after name in this field; Heliodorus, Zozimus, Athenagoras and on ad infinitum. The loss of the great library of Alexandria, destroyed by the orders of the mad Calif Omar, after the taking of the city in A.D. 640 was more than a disaster. It is said that he heated the public baths of the city with its contents over a period of over six months and the loss was irreparable and is one of the chief reasons for the backward state of the world of today. This wanton vandalism let loose a wild and unrestrained period of religious fanaticism, founded upon and accentuated by a most complete and abysmal ignorance upon both sides, Mohammedan and Christian, in the blind struggle for temporal supremacy.

But, behind it all, the flame of truth remained unextinguished. In England, such men as Roger Bacon carried the torch high. In Arabia, the famous Prince Geber - from whose name and obscure writings the word gibberish is said to be derived - had the reputation of being the greatest adept after Hermes himself. Later, we find Albertus Magnus, Nicholas Flamel, Raymond Lully, Avicenna, Paracelsus, Cornelius Agrippa and many other well-known names. Roger Bacon most carefully concealed the practice, while clearly stating the roots of the Hermetic Art, for, as he himself wrote, "Truth ought not to be shown to every ribald, for then that would become most vile which, in the hand of a philosopher, is the most precious of all things." The works of Arnold di Villa Novo are very numerous but of greatest interest to us, here in Britain, is, perhaps, the work of one of his pupils, Raymond Lully, his teaching in support of Alchemy bearing the greater weight from the widespread fame of his Christian zeal, his blameless life and his great wisdom and talents. He met Arnold late in life and, unlike most of his immediate predecessors and contemporaries in the art, who were cloistered, was a great traveller. There is very sound evidence to show that he was in possession of the material philosophers' stone.

John Cremer, then Abbot of Westminster, had worked for thirty years on this problem and without success, having been led widely astray by the enigmatic writings of the old adepts; but he had discovered sufficient to make him firmly convinced of the reality of that for which he sought. He heard of Lully and determined to seek him out, even undertaking a journey to Italy for the purpose. He was so fortunate as to meet with him and to gain his confidence, obtained the instruction he sought but was as much edified and delighted by the pious and charitable life of Lully himself. Lully was persuaded to

accompany him to England, where he was presented to the king, Edward II, who had previously, and in vain, invited him to visit him. Filled as he was with zeal for Christianity, Lully promised to produce the necessary gold for Edward, if he, on his part, would promise to revive the Crusades. Edward accepted every condition and supplied the necessary appliances and fittings for a laboratory in the Tower of London, wherein, true to his promise, Lully produced from base metals-lead, tin and quicksilver - supplied, no less than 50,000 lbs. weight of the purest gold. But then the King broke faith with Lully and held him prisoner in the laboratory, demanding more gold. Cremer lamented this base conduct and openly expressed his indignation in his Testament. He succeeded in engineering the escape of Lully. A gold coinage was minted from this particular gold, pieces each of about 10 ducats weight and called Nobles of the Rose, an inscription on them detailing their miraculous origin. It has been said that a fully competent metallurgist can generally recognise the place of origin of any specimen of gold submitted to him, but that this particular gold is more pure than any natural metal. Dickenson relates that, sometime after the escape of Lully, when some repairs were being made to the cell at Westminster which he had occupied with Cremer, a quantity of the powder of transmutation was found, by means of which the workmen and architects were greatly enriched.

Before leaving the Alchemistical Philosophers, I think that we should recall one other. This is Nicholas Flammel, who, with his wife Pernelle, lived and worked in Paris in the XIV Century. Being people of humble origin, they lived quietly and unostentatiously, but let him speak for himself. He writes:-

"I, Nicholas Flammel, Scrivener, living in Paris, in the year of our Lord, 1399, in the Notary-street, near St. James, of the Boucherie, though I learned not much Latin, because of the poverty of my parents, who notwithstanding, were, even by those who envy me most, accounted honest and good people; yet, by the blessing of God, I have not wanted an understanding of the books of the philosophers, but learned them, and attained to a certain kind of knowledge, even of their hidden secrets. For which cause's sake, there shall not any moment of my life pass wherein, remembering this so vast good, I will not render thanks to this my good and gracious God. After the death of my parents, I, Nicholas Flammer, got my living by the art of writing, ingrossing and the like; and in the course of time, there fell by chance into my hands a gilded book, very old and large, which cost me only two florins. It was not made of paper or parchment, as other books are, but of admirable rinds, as it seemed to me, of young trees; the cover of it was brass, well bound, and graven all over with a strange kind of letters, which I took to be Greek characters, or some such like. This I know, that I could not read them, but as to the matter which was written within, it was engraven, as I suppose with an iron pencil, or graver, upon the said bark leaves; done admirably well, and in fair neat Latin letters, and curiously coloured. It contained thrice seven leaves, for so they were numbered on

the top of each folio, and every seventh leaf was without writing; but in place thereof were several images and figures painted."

Further describing this volume, Flammel tells of long and fruitless toil until a Jewish stranger, whom he met on his travels, explained the meaning. On his return home he says:-

"He that would see the manner of my arrival home, and the joy of Pernelle, let him look upon us two in the city of Paris, upon the door of the chapel of St. James', in the Boucherie, close by one side of my house, where we are both painted, kneeling, and giving thanks to God: for through the grace of God it was that I attained the perfect knowledge of all that I desired. I had now the prima materia, the first principles, yet not their preparation, which is a thing most difficult above all things in the world; but in the end I had that also, after a long aberration and wandering in the labyrinth of errors, for the space of three years. During which time, I did nothing but study and search and labour, so as you see me depicted without this arch, where I have shown my process, praying also continually unto God, and reading attentively in my book, pondering the words of the philosophers, and then trying and proving the various operations which I thought they might mean by their words. At length I found that which I desired; which I also soon knew, by the scent and odour thereof. Having this, I easily accomplished the magistry. For knowing the preparations of the prime agents, and then literally following the directions in my book, I could not miss the work if I would. Having attained this, I came now to Projection; and the first time I made projection was upon mercury; a pound and a half whereof, or thereabouts, I turned into pure silver, better than that of the mine; as I proved by assaying it myself, and also causing others to assay it for me, several times. This was done in the year A.D.1382, January 17th, about noon, in my own house, Pernelle alone being present with me. Again following the same directions in my book, word by word, I made projection of the Red Stone, on a like quantity of mercury, Pernelle only being present, and in the same house, which was done in the same year, April 25th, at five in the afternoon. This mercury I truly transmuted into almost as much gold, much better indeed than common gold, more soft also, and more pliable. I speak it all truthfully. I have made it three times with the help of Pernelle, who understands it as well as myself; and, without doubt, if she would have done it alone, she would have brought to the same, or full as great perfection as I had done. I had truly enough, when I had once done it; but I found exceeding great pleasure and delight in seeing and contemplating the admirable works of nature, within the vessels. And to show you that I had then done it three times, I caused to be depicted under the same arch, three furnaces, like to those which serve for the operations of the work. I was much concerned for a long time, lest Pernelle, by reason of extreme joy, should not hide her felicity, which I measured by my own; and lest she should let fall some words amongst her relations, concerning the great treasure which we possessed. But the goodness of the great God had not only given and filled me with this blessing, in giving me a sober,

chaste wife; but she was also a wise, prudent woman, not only capable of reason, but also to do what was reasonable; and made it her business, as I did, to think of God, and to give ourselves to the work of charity and mercy. Before the time wherein I wrote this discourse, which was in the latter end of the year 1413, after the death of my beloved companion; she and I had already founded and endowed with revenues fourteen hospitals, three chapels, and seven churches, in the city of Paris; all which we had built new from the ground, and were able to enrich with gifts and revenues. We have also done at Boulogne about the same as at Paris, besides our private charities, which it would be unbecoming to particularise. Building, therefore, these hospitals, churches, etc., in the aforesaid cities, I caused to be depicted under the said fourth arch, the most true and essential marks and signs of this art, yet under veils and types of hieroglyphical characters; demonstrating to the wise and men of understanding, the direct and perfect way of operation and lineary work of the philosophers' stone; which being perfected by anyone, takes away from him the root of all sin and evil; changing his evil into good, and making him liberal, courteous, religious, fearing God, however wicked he was before, provided only he carries through the work to its legitimate end. For from thenceforward he is continually ravished with the goodness of God, and with his grace and mercy, which he has obtained from the fountain of eternal goodness; with the profundity of his Divine and adorable power, and with the contemplation of his admirable works."

So much for the testimony of Nicholas Flammel.

Elias Ashmole, that great light in Freemasonry and true lover of occult science, published a volume containing a collection of English Alchemy in verse. Of Alchemy itself he writes, "I must profess I know enough to hold my tongue, but not enough to speak." He appears to have been completely convinced of the reality of the practice even if he did not succeed in it himself, but caution held him back, "lest, being not wholly experienced, I should add to the many injuries the world has already suffered."

A contemporary of his, although 25 years his junior, there is, admittedly, no shred of evidence that Sir Isaac Newton was a Freemason, but there is very convincing evidence that, in his later years, he devoted a large proportion of his time to the Hermetic Arts, wrapping himself for a matter of about sixteen years in a scientific oblivion totally foreign to the trend of his earlier life. The only link with science which he appears to have retained was his presidency of the Royal Society. When he finally left Cambridge to take up the work of Warden, and, later, Master of the Royal Mint, his whole thought direction seems to have undergone a change. From being the outstanding Mathematician and Physicist he went into a seclusion in which his chief interest appeared to be Chemistry, or perhaps it would be better to say outright, Alchemy. Now, during all that time he produced no tangible results and published nothing, and I, for one, cannot reconcile this with his character and abilities. It would appear to be quite inconceivable that a mind of his capacity and temper should spend so much time upon

any subject without result, and I have a theory that it is not without significance that, during the long tenure of office at the Mint, the currency of this country, which had been in a very unstable condition, was stabilized and finally established upon a basis which, if it tends to be lost today, remains traditional. The evidence of his brother and amanuensis, Humphrey Newton, makes it perfectly clear that Sir Isaac was seeking to perform the transmutation of metals and was in search of the philosophers' stone, and my firm belief is that he found it and was successful in the great work. Further, I believe that, behind the revival of Freemasonry in 1717 were some of the greatest brains that this country has ever seen, but that, for obvious reasons, others, of less profundity and more in touch with the outer world, were appointed to carry through the work, and it is these whose names have come down to us as the founders of Freemasonry as we have it today. Such a theory, if founded upon truth, would explain much that has remained inexplicable, such as the obvious fact that not one of these founders appeared to have the necessary qualifications to originate the work which they undoubtedly carried out.

Our Masonic Craft possesses all the essentials of the Hermetic Art. Freemasonry is essentially a life to be lived and not a creed to be taught. It is truly a peculiar system of morality: It is veiled in allegory: It is illustrated by symbols: Its allegories and symbols tell the same old story as do the allegories and symbols of the Hermetic Schools, Its symbols are derived from the building trade, but correspond closely to the relevant symbols derived from Chemistry. The central theme in both is the creation and bringing to perfection of a Stone. All such teachings cannot be otherwise than non-credal, since they seek to bring together and to interpret all creeds in terms of ultimate truth, asking every man to live his religion in the spirit that stands behind the letter, realising that unity can manifest only through multiplicity and that, whatsoever the creed adopted, it can only stand as each man holds to his own interpretation of it, to that interpretation which best serves to aid him in his search for happiness for himself and for all that lives. When men realise that unity can never be accomplished through any kind of uniformity, that it must grow up spontaneously within each molecule that goes to make up a part of the whole and that it can never be imposed from without, then all tension and all friction will cease and strife and war will have no more place in the thoughts of men: The great transmutation will have been effectually performed and the kingdom of God will be established on Earth.

The method pointed by the Craft for the accomplishment of these things we must leave until we meet again.

Part 2. SYNTHESIS

By W. Bro. J. R. Cleland, P.P.A.G.Chap., (Kent).

"Wonders are many and none is more wonderful than man."

SOPHOCLES. "Antigone" 302

Progress is The law of life, man is not man as yet."

BROWNING. "Paracelsus."

Love Virtue, she alone is free. She can teach ye how to climb Higher than the Sphery
chime Or, if virtue feeble were, Heaven itself might stoop to her."

MILTON. "Comus" 1019.

"All progress is based upon the universal innate desire on the part of every organism to
live beyond its income."

SAMUEL BUTLER. "Note Books. Life, xvi."

"The world will, in the end, follow only those who have despised it, as well as served it."

SAMUEL BUTLER. ib. "Life of the world to come."

"It is necessary that the soul, when purified, should associate with its generator."

PORPHYRY.

"Man is the measure of all things."

PROTAGORAS. (Quoted by Plato in "Theaetatus.")

"All is flux; nothing is stationary."

HERACLITUS. (Quoted by Aristotle in "De Caelo.")

HO BIOS BRACHUS HE DE TECHNE MARKE." "The Life so short, the Craft so long to
learn."

HIPPOCRATES. "Aphorisms." (Motto of the Royal College of Surgeons.)

"Where I may oft outwatch the Bear, With thrice great Hermes, or inspire The spirit of
Plato." MILTON. "11 Penseroso, 87."

If I stoop Into the dark tremendous sea of cloud, It is but for a time I press God's lamp
Close to my breast its splendour, soon or late, Will pierce the gloom; I shall emerge one
day."

BROWNING. "Paracelsus."

"Love Life, for he is the Great Teacher; but love Death also, for he is the other self of Life,
who alone can teach nothing."

HERMETIC MAXIM.

"Knowledge of a thing engenders love of it: The more exact the knowledge, the more fervent the love."

LEONARDO DA VINCI.

"The perfect knowledge of the Universe and the perfect love of God are one and the same."

LEONARDO DA VINCI.

"In order to seek truth, it is necessary, once in the course of our life, to doubt, as far as possible, all things."

RENE DESCARTES. "Discours de la Methode."

BRETHREN,

We have analysed the evidence of the Hermetic Tradition through the ages to the Alchemists and have considered much of that which concerns the more material side of the Art, in respect of such matters as the Transmutation of Metals, adducing several well- authenticated cases in support of the contention that such transmutation has been possible, and has, indeed, been accomplished in times past. We have noted, in passing, some points, in which this evidence and the traditions associated with it make contact with Freemasonry, and have seen that those who have claimed to have succeeded in the performance of the physical transmutation have all been men of noted piety and good name.

I, for my part, implicitly believe that the transmutation of metals is possible and that it has been accomplished by the use of the methods recorded, veiled though these records may be, by the actual practitioners of the Hermetic Art. I believe also that these methods, although finally physical in the means used, are only one approach to the subject, the approach which we may label as "the approach from above," and that other approaches are possible. These the Science of to-day is beginning to investigate from a purely physical standpoint. This may be labelled as "the approach from below." Finally, I believe that the Great Work is on the eve of being accomplished once again, and that, most probably, by both these methods.

So, now, I propose to attempt to bring together the various threads which we have been following and to try to show that in Freemasonry we have the very synthesis of the teachings ; that in our Craft is enshrined all that is necessary for the Great Work of the Hermetic Art and Alchemy.

If, however, there is any among you who expects to be given any simple formula for the production of metallic gold from the base metals, I fear that he will be disappointed, although a full appreciation of all that I propose to outline will place in his hands the

clues, which, if followed up carefully and correctly, could naturally lead to that result, if he himself is "properly prepared."

The Alchemy, as an Hermetic Art, with which I propose to deal to-day, is that which applies to the transmutation of the man himself, the changing of his whole Animal Nature into the Fine Gold of the Spiritual Man.

"As above, so below," the ancient Hermetic maxim remains true always and, by putting first things first and thus arriving at the accomplishment of Transmutation of the Self on the highest levels, man can learn to control Nature on all levels and, thus, can have no difficulty in moulding all types of matter to his will, by which means he will, necessarily, gain the power to perform the lesser transmutations.

One can only trust and pray that, should the science of the day succeed in its approach from the material angle, the accomplishment of that approach will bring with it the higher accomplishment which will certainly be necessary, if mankind is not to finish himself off. The approach from above of the Alchemist is, obviously, less likely to do harm in the arousing of the lower acquisitive and predatory instincts of the less developed among men.

The recognition that the manifested Universe is inherently a duality is by no means a new thing. The fact was recognised and recorded by some among the ancient Greeks, and even earlier. But the point which must be of most interest to us to-day is the fact that this same duality is being put forward in recent years as a scientific fact of recent discovery. It is coming to be generally recognised that the two components - ENERGY and MATTER - are interchangeable, that they are constantly changing, or being changed, the one into the other.

Each is a different form of the other; so that, if there were no such thing as Energy, there could be no such thing as Matter, and vice versa. The relative amounts of these two components of the universe are constantly changing, but it would seem that the sum total of matter and energy in the universe may be a constant.

Let us take a simple example of such changes : Plants absorb energy from the Sun, in the forms of heat and light, which they transform into material substance, so that the total weight of the plant at any moment is greater than the total weight of its elementary material constituents, which consist chiefly of water and carbon-dioxide. When the material of the plant is broken up by burning, the residual ash and gases weigh less than the original material of the plant, by the amount of the weight of matter which has been transformed into heat and light.

All the Energy of which we can be aware shows itself in motion or in a physical or chemical change of state of the matter involved, or in both. Heraclitus, a Greek philosopher of about 2000 B.C., as I have quoted above, noted that all is in a state of

flux, and that nothing can remain static. Elsewhere he remarks, "You cannot step twice in the same river, for fresh waters are ever flowing in upon you."

If we wish to obtain energy for our use, we must have : -

i. Matter in a state of motion or changing its physical state. We call this physical energy; or

ii. chemical modification of the state of matter giving rise to, or resulting from, chemical energy; or

iii. a combination of these two energies. And we find that physical and chemical energy are interchangeable, as we have experienced in the case of heat and light.

The mechanism in plants which we denote by the term photosynthesis uses the heat and light of the sun to manufacture complexes such as sugars, starches and cellulose from carbon-dioxide and water, converting physical energy, actuated by heat and light, into chemical energy to hold the constituents together. Ultimately these constituents may be chemically converted into coal and oil, from which, by oxidisation, we may recover the heat and light and use the stored energy to meet our needs.

Water power and wind power are also ultimately dependent upon the energy of the sun, but these use, not the direct energy from the sun but, the dependent forms of energy which we call gravity and magnetism. Once again the original energy comes from the sun and is stored. The stored energy is transformed by chemical action to give heat and light, and by mechanical means to give electricity, which, again, can be transmuted into heat and light.

In this Universe, emanations reach us, of course, from other sources as well as from the sun, but all have their origins in the transmutations of natural elements, whether in the sun, in nebulae or elsewhere. In chemical transmutations the matter lost in the emission of energy is not nuclear, but electronic, and so its weight is quite negligible. Energy released in nuclear changes is millions of times greater than that released by chemical action. Each atom of matter has been likened to a miniature solar system, the nucleus taking the place of the sun and the electrons those of the planets circling round it. I would remind you that here we are dealing with bodies which, to us, are almost infinitely small. If, for instance, a single drop of water were enlarged to the size of this earth, the atoms which compose it would then have grown only to the size of oranges, and each of these oranges would contain a nucleus with electrons circling round it at distances proportional to the distances of the planets in our system from the sun. The Ultimate Physical Atoms, with which our Science has not yet made acquaintance, probably bear somewhat the same relation to the scientific atom as that atom bears to the Earth.

All manifestation in this Universe of ours being based upon the number THREE, we find, as we would naturally expect, three basic types of energy:-

- i. Physical energy, manifesting as Electricity or power and Strength.
- ii. Chemical energy, manifesting as Magnetism, attraction and repulsion or Love-Wisdom and
- iii. Atomic energy, manifesting as what is now known as Nuclear Energy, corresponding to our Beauty. The analogies are tentative.

These three energies are, of course, in close correspondence with all the other triads, such as Body, Soul and Spirit in man and, as noted above, our masonic Wisdom, Strength and Beauty or Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth, and so on.

In accordance with our Hermetic Axiom "As above, so below," everything manifests in threeness and the relation between the three aspects of each unit remains constant upon all levels. Before Synthesis can take place there must be full Analysis. In any religion, such as Christianity, there must necessarily be a fall before there can be any thought of a redemption. Now, we find full confirmation of this in the latest investigations in that newest of our sciences, Nuclear Physics, especially obvious in the case which is probably most often in our thoughts, the case of the Hydrogen Bomb. The principle underlying the Hydrogen Bomb was recognised before there was any thought of the possibility of the Atom Bomb, which is now so much an established fact with which we have to reckon. It was known, theoretically at least, that the vast energy and influence emitted from the Sun was not diminishing, as had for so long been assumed and envisaged, but that its strength was being kept up-might even be increasing-by the energy released by the combination of four hydrogen atoms to form one atom of helium, the gas first discovered in the Solar Spectrum and named from the Greek word for the Sun-HELIOS (the theory being fully expounded by Bethe in 1938). But it was later calculated that this fusion was only possible at temperatures quite outside the apparent range of scientific possibility of attainment on this Earth. Fusion - or, to use our more general term as applied to these papers, Synthesis - was apparently possible only at a temperature somewhere in the region of 50 million degrees Centigrade; and this temperature would have to be maintained over a perfectly definite period of time, although that period might be comparatively short. The process of bringing about the necessary interaction has been compared to the lighting of an ordinary household fire, the fuel, in this case, being the Hydrogen, and the match the source of heat to set the process of combustion in action. But, whereas there was no difficulty in finding a match with sufficient heat, and retaining that heat for a sufficient time, to start the ordinary fire, there seemed to be no possibility whatever of even approaching the temperature necessary to start the process of hydrogen fusion, and far less possibility of maintaining that temperature for the time necessary for the conversion of the hydrogen into helium.

No such match was available, nor could Science conceive the possibility of its attainment, at any rate in the near future.

That was roughly the position, theoretically, when Atomic Energy - or, more accurately, Nuclear Energy - began to be taken really seriously and to be closely studied. With the isolation of Radium and the recognition of the radio-active elements, the aspect of things had begun to change. Things began to happen, and, with the isolation of Uranium 238 from the mass of ordinary Uranium, with its great preponderance of Uranium 235, and the study of Nuclear Fission, analogous to our Analysis, came the possibility of the Atom Bomb, with its tremendous release of energy taking place automatically wherever the necessary critical mass of such a fissile element was brought into being, when the whole mass would immediately and instantaneously break up, by fission of its nuclei, into equivalent masses of other and lighter elements, this fission being accompanied by the release of energy unprecedented in the history of physical science. And, with the explosion of the first so-called Atom Bomb, came the realisation that such a temperature as that required for nuclear fusion was now a practical possibility. Thus, there came about the immediate and renewed interest in the Hydrogen Bomb, as at least a potentiality, for, at the moment of fission in the Atom Bomb, the temperature reached was 50,000,000 degrees Centigrade, or, just the temperature required for the match for which Science had been searching.

But the researchers had by no means reached the end of the difficulties in the way of producing the Hydrogen Bomb, for, although the required temperature had been reached instantaneously, it was only instantaneously, and you are all aware of how often your lighters produce perfectly good sparks which do not keep their heat long enough to ignite the fuel. So the high temperature produced in the Atom Bomb was too evanescent to act as match for ordinary hydrogen. There was, however, another hydrogen known. In the normal hydrogen atom there is one Proton only in the Nucleus and its positive charge is balanced by a single negative charge or electron circling round it. Interspersed with these ordinary hydrogen atoms were found a few that were different. They were still hydrogen, giving all the reactions of that element, but they were just double the weight. Their nuclei were the same as those of ordinary hydrogen, but with the addition of a neutron, carrying no charge, in the nucleus. This heavy hydrogen is called Deuterium, and is that which, combined with oxygen, gives us the famous - or should one say, notorious - heavy water used in nuclear research. The atoms of this heavy hydrogen can be brought to the point of fusion much more quickly than those of ordinary hydrogen, so that our match would be required to persist for a much shorter period. But heavy hydrogen is fairly expensive and the atomic bomb match still keeps up the necessary heat for too short a time to produce the required result. The next step was that the Atomic Researchers found that it was possible to produce a yet heavier hydrogen artificially. This has two neutrons in each of its atoms, making it three times as heavy as ordinary hydrogen and it can be brought to the point of fusion still more

quickly, so that the flash from the Atomic Bomb would be sufficient to set up the reaction, but Tritium, as it is called, is so expensive to produce that its price would be quite prohibitive for it to be used as the fuel in the Hydrogen Bomb. So, now, so far as one can gather, what is happening in Nuclear Circles is that the researchers are trying to establish the minimum possible requirement of Tritium that can be used to set in motion the fusion reaction in Deuterium. Unlike the case of the Atom Bomb, in which the critical mass of the fissionable element limits the size of the bomb, there need be no limit to the size of the Hydrogen Bomb, if only the necessary temperature conditions can be met, except the lifting capacity of the aircraft destined to deliver the bomb and, of course, the question of finance.

I am afraid that this has been rather a long diversion, but it seemed best to try to give a comprehensive view of the matter, since it is such an excellent illustration of the law which we are considering. Here we have something which looms very large in our world of to-day, the Hydrogen Bomb, a thing which functions wholly through fusion or, to use our more general term, Synthesis; and we find that it cannot be brought into use unless it is set off by an Atomic Bomb, which functions through fission, or Analysis. This is the Hermetic teaching, the teaching of religion in general and of Christianity, the essential teaching of Freemasonry which, with the Synthesis or Brotherhood in view, as the final goal of its present efforts, commences, in the symbolism of the Lodge and its Officers, to make full Analysis of man himself, in the person of the Candidate. He must learn, so to speak, to take himself to pieces ; he must learn not only to know the function of each part, but how to function as each part, in the process of passing through the various offices, so that in time he may himself become the Perfect Lodge. He must learn that he is not only the septenary represented by the seven officers but also the Triunity which rules the Universe, Trinity manifesting in Unity - the Lodge: He himself is the Salt, Sulphur and Mercury of the Divine Alchemist, the Three Aspects of Deity, manifest in the Three Fellowcraft Lodges, composed of the "Fifteen Fellowcrafts of that superior class appointed to rule over the rest": He is Creative in the Three who Rule his Lodge, Preservative in the Five who hold his Lodge, and Transmutative in the Seven who make his Lodge perfect. These are summed up once more in the fifteen steps, which, according to tradition, led to the Temple and which it is necessary should be trodden and ascended to reach the Middle Chamber on the Path of Return. I might perhaps remind you at this point of the three, five and seven Psalms appropriate to the three Craft degrees and which are numbered from CXX to CXXXIV inclusive and each labelled "A Song of Degrees." The fifteen reminds us of that body of conspirators as a result of whose plotting the Master, representing the Spiritual Man, made the descent into the Tomb of Transgression, but it also refers to those making up the three Fellowcraft Lodges, who set out in search of him and whose work we hear recorded in the Traditional History of the path of return.

Every known religion contains references to this return journey which must be undertaken in the search for perfection and each one implies that this journey is a retracing of one's steps over a road which has already been trodden in the opposite direction, a climb to regain a height from which one has previously fallen. As Heraclitus remarks, "The way up and the way down is one and the same."

Freemasonry, as we are constantly being told, is not a religion, and, of course, for the majority of brethren it is not a religion. But, to some, it can be a religion and there is no valid reason why it should not be adopted as such by any brother whose immediate spiritual needs it can satisfy. It contains the pure essence, and covers all the fundamentals of that universal Religion, of which all the religions of men are partial statements, each emphasising some particular aspect of the whole, which required such emphasis to meet the needs of its times. Hence it is a truism that "Freemasonry does not ask a man to leave his religion, but it does ask him to live it." When men say that Freemasonry is not a religion, what they really mean to convey is that it is not a Creed. This, of course, is true for again it has been said, "Freemasonry is a life to be lived and not a creed to be taught."

The whole aim and object of those who were ultimately responsible for the revival of the Craft of Speculative Masonry, as we have it to-day, appears to have been to give to those who were in a position to benefit, having eyes to see and ears to hear, the broadest possible statement of universal religious principle, without limitation to any particular credal form or belief. The point stressed by those who appear to have been able to judge of the lasting reality of masonic teaching is just this fact of masonry being a life rather than a creed. It cannot conflict with any creed which is based upon truth, for truth cannot contradict itself, however paradoxical it may appear when viewed in the dim light of human consciousness. Faith and belief should, in the opinion of these founders, be based upon experience, and not wholly upon authority.

In these fundamental facts lies the reason, or one of the chief reasons, why the Mystery Teachings, the Secret Doctrine, the Hermetic Philosophy or the Craft of Freemasonry has always been, and must, of necessity, always be, incomprehensible to the man-in-the-street, to all who are not "properly prepared," no matter how anxious they may be to share in it and join its ranks. Should these unprepared ones succeed in becoming members of the Order, its teachings will still remain incomprehensible, however far they may progress exoterically, however high their attainment of external status. A Brother may be a first-class ritualist, may perform our ceremonies with dignity and even with complete perfection of wording, he may be a Grand Lodge Officer of high rank and of long standing, and yet he may still have not the remotest idea of the meaning, the implications and the powers involved in the ceremonies he performs. He may have no knowledge of the realities of Freemasonry nor of the Grand Transmutation which it exists to bring about. He may even Initiate and consolidate this transmutation in others

and yet have no intention of so-doing, just as a Christian Bishop may confer valid Orders upon his candidates and may transfer to them the powers which go with Holy Orders, not only without intention of so doing but even firmly disbelieving in the possibility of performing the act of Transubstantiation involved in the Sacrament of the Eucharist. It is here that we come up against the paramount difficulty with regard to the validity of any such Orders, for the only proof of validity lies in the cultivation of the ability to see the change taking place in the Elements. No chemical test can show any difference, yet he who has developed the required faculty can say immediately, at a glance, whether or not actual consecration has taken place. All men have this faculty as a potentiality, but few have developed it so that they can use it at will.

We have come from a divine world of light and bliss, as potential selves, and our ultimate inheritance lies therein. We have the power within us to become self-conscious entities. The object of our standing out - our existence - is that we may reach definition, that we may find ourselves and obey the ancient maxim, " Man, know thyself."

This was impossible of accomplishment so long as we remained static on those high levels of light and bliss. We lived in that light and we shared in that bliss, certainly ; but we were incapable of being conscious of so doing and it required neither effort nor knowledge on our part. We were incapable of knowing and of being known ; so, down through the Planes of Being we came, into our self-created world, this hand-made prison of our own limitations, with its four great Kingdoms of Manifestation, culmination in our humanity. In these various kingdoms, from the moment of leaving the Elemental to journey through the Mineral, the Vegetable and the Animal Kingdoms to reach individualisation in the Human, we find the only possible environment wherein to build up that individuality and reach self-consciousness. In this sense only is humanity a culmination and a goal. Man is the culmination and goal of the state of "properly-preparedness," that the Spirit within him may begin to hold sway as the goal advances from the material world of man and as, in the higher levels of spirit, it becomes God.

During the successive phases of learning to master the conditions and limitations imposed by matter, man forgets the God within him and loses touch with his birthright of light and bliss, because, only when shut away in his self-made prison of banishment can he learn to build himself up upon a sure foundation. For the time being, God and all reality is shut out and remains beyond his ken.

In the opening of the *Phaedo*, Plato, by the mouth of Socrates, asserts that it is the business of all who would aspire to be Philosophers to study how to be dead. Plotinus, in reprobating suicide, yet enunciates the same doctrine. Porphyry, in his "Auxiliaries to the perception of intelligible nature," explains that there is a two-fold death ; the one, universally known, in which the body is liberated from the soul, and the other, peculiar to philosophers, in which the soul is liberated from the body. Nor does one necessarily nor entirely follow upon the other. That which nature binds, that also she dissolves; that

which the soul binds, that also it dissolves. Nature, he says, indeed binds the body to the soul, but the soul binds herself to the body. For so long as we are in the flesh, we must be, to some extent, spiritually dead, for full spiritual life can only be known when the body is dead.

The entrance upon the Path of Return is the opening phase of the final Transmutation. History and Myth, Legend and Folk-lore, Prophetic vision and Apocalypse all bear witness to the Path, in some cases quite openly but sometimes by veiled hints and allusions.

That which the Alchemist symbolises in his Salt, Sulphur and Mercury is symbolised likewise in our Craft in the Sun, the Moon and the Master of the Lodge. The symbols used to express these three items in the Tracing Board of the First Degree are, the Solar Circle, the Lunar Crescent and the Greek, equal-armed cross of Mastership. This Tracing Board contains the complete map to guide us on our way to perfection and union with this Trinity, mirrored, as it is, in the three pillars, which are shown surmounted by the human emblems of Wisdom, Strength and Beauty in the persons of Solomon, king of Israel, Hiram, king of Tyre, and Hiram Abiff. The pillars rest upon the pavement of manifested life, with its balance of forces, of pairs of opposites. In the centre, surrounded by the implements of morality, is the Altar, the gateway of the Sun upon the pathway of Light. On the frontal we have the Sun-circle, source of all energy, contained between the parallels, the boundaries between which we must walk if we are to attain to the Volume of the Sacred Lore, and the Ladder which rests upon it. In the older alphabets, I, J and Y were all the same letter in Hebrew the Jod, and short O, V and U likewise, the Hebrew Vau, so the symbols have several interpretations. For example, in some Christian Sunday schools, I have heard it said to the children, "J stands for Jesus and Y stands for You and, if you have nothing (O) in between, you have pure JOY," That is a simple illustration of such readings. In another aspect the IOI spells IVY, and the ivy or fig leaf is the veil used for the genitals in ancient art, It is also the pentalfa or five-pointed star, with the single point down, the symbol of the goat and mirror image of the Blazing Star above, emblem of human perfection. We have already found this symbol on the pavement at the entrance to Freemasons' Hall in London and have studied some of its implications. In Hebrew, IOI or Jod Vau Jod is 10, 6, 10 = 26, and, as such, is a Tri-grammaton equivalent to the Sacred Tetragrammaton or four-lettered name of God, Jod He Vau He or 10, 5, 6, 5 = 26, which we meet in the Fellowcraft Tracing Board as equivalent of the Sacred Symbol found in that degree. The IOI illustrates also the symbolism of the three pillars of the Sephiroth and of the Serpent Fire. It is the gateway to the commencement of the Ladder. Between lies the foundation upon which the ladder rests, the Volume of the Sacred Law, or, better, of the Sacred Lore. The term Law is apt to be misleading, as implying obligation or enforcement. No man is forced to enter upon the Path. He must come to it of his own volition, "of his own freewill and accord" as being "free and of good report." Volume here implies something more than a

mere book, and perhaps a better word would be "content." The accumulated mass or content of the Sacred Lore is something far more widespread and all-embracing than any one book of rules or guidance. No written word could contain or comprehend it in its fullness. The most that any Scripture can do is to demonstrate certain preliminaries for the guidance of its readers, since so much of the Sacred Lore can be contacted and assimilated only by individual contact and personal experience.

Upon the sure foundation of the Sacred Lore rests the ladder which we must learn to ascend, rung by rung.* We are told of three principal rungs which we must surmount or make our own. In most of the Tracing Boards in use to-day, five rungs are shown clearly, but the whole are seven, the first of which is the Sacred Lore itself, its full volume. From this, as a starting point, we pass to the first of the three principal rungs. This is marked with the cross-symbol of the Master of the Lodge and this Master-Cross we are told is representative of Faith. Astrologically it is the part of Fortune, Pars Fortunae, and represents the testing ground of this Earth. In manifestation it is matter and the physical vehicle of Life ; in man it is the physical body. The next rung is an intermediate step and, upon it, in some Boards, we find hanging a Key. This is symbolically composed of the Sun-Circle surmounting the Master-Cross. Astrologically it is the planet Venus and, in manifestation, the Emotional Body or vehicle of Desire. The next step takes us to the second principal rung, and on it we find the anchor of Hope. But the anchor is made up of the Master-Cross over the Moon- Crescent. Astrologically it is the planet Saturn and, in manifestation it is the Soul. In man it is the dual Mental

- W. Bro. G. E. W. Bridge dealt with this ladder and its symbols a few years ago in his Prestonian Lecture.

Vehicle, Passing on, we come next to another intermediate step. In our Tracing Boards this step is, normally, unmarked, but it has its appropriate symbol, which appears in other contexts. It is the sign of Mars and consists of the Master-Cross surmounting the Sun-Circle and denotes rulership. It appears as such in our Coronation Rite, in the form of the Orb. In man it denotes the level of Intuition or Buddhi. Personally, I am inclined to think that its omission from our Tracing Boards was, originally, intentional, since, in one sense, it is symbolic of that to which we refer as the " lost word," the restoration of which is one of the avowed objects of the Craft. The next step is the third of the principal steps or rungs. It is marked by the Chalice of Charity and this is made up of the Master-Cross surmounted by the Moon-Crescent. Astrologically this is the symbol of Jupiter, the Father of the Gods. In Manifestation it is the Spirit and, in man, the highest vehicle of spirit, Atma. From this point we take the seventh step upwards to reach the Blazing Star, sometimes, as we have seen, represented by the upright pentagram, symbol of "man made perfect."

Under some Masonic Constitutions, this five-pointed star is the jewel worn by the Past Masters, symbolic of passing to Immediate Past Master, as we in England use the

Theorem of Pythagoras (Euclid 1, 47). It is the symbol of final attainment in this particular phase and we now find it flanked by the basic symbols of Sun and Moon. In ancient times the Moon was traditionally the Mother, the source of material manifestation and she is often represented as accompanied by seven stars. These are not the seven planets and, although they have been referred to as the seven stars of the Pleiades, their real function would appear to have been to represent the seven planes or vestures governed by the Moon. It should be noted here that the ancient tradition which makes the Moon the material planet of the last Round, from whose disintegration was built up the nucleus of this Earth, the most material planet of this present Round, appears to be gaining ground in certain scientific circles.

Faithful Service is the Key-note by the practice of which the aspirant can hope to gain the commendation, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant; enter thou into the JOY of thy Lord!" Thus, entering upon the Path, he may aspire to reach that culmination where the three symbols come together, giving the Sun-Circle, surmounted by the Moon-Crescent and surmounting the Master-Cross to form that great Hermetic symbol, the symbol of Mercury. Neither the Sun nor the Moon are, as we know, planets; but each, when treated as such, covers the existence and working of a hidden planet, not physically existent. These have strong influence in astrological workings. There are three principal steps in our ladder, which itself holds five steps, but the seven, making it perfect, comes from the addition of the first and last steps, each the opening or apprentice step of an evolutionary phase.

We reach a further development of the same teaching in the Fellowcraft Tracing Board, which again covers the whole Craft system. Here, the two pillars are, of course, the parallels or Jods and the stairs represent the developments in the three degrees, as indicated by their key numbers 3, 5 and 7, but we are told that they "consist of 3, 5, 7 or more steps." This "or more" veils the most important number, the 9, or 3 multiplied by 3. This is the linking of the material, evanescent trinity with the Absolute, the Eternal. The number nine is paramount in symbolism, part and parcel of the great harmony of the Universe itself. The nine digits form the basis of all number. Time, space, proportion and relationship cannot be expressed except in terms of numbers. All number symbolism is based upon the nine, and in Geometry it is also fundamental. It sounds the key-note in every system, wherever situated or emplaced on this earth, through all the ages of man's existence. The fact that any number, whether great or small, multiplied by 9, will give a number whose digits, when reduced by successive additions, become 9, was likened to the activity of fire, so that 9 became the number of Vulcan, Tubal Cain, the Semitic "Spirit of Fire." I cannot go into the full implications here, but must leave it at that for the present.

The stairs lead to the Middle Chamber, above the door of which we find the Tetragrammaton, the divine number, 26. In the First Board we met it as Jod Vau Jod,

which now we find to be Jod He Vau He. As Entered Apprentices we reached a point at which we were "restored to light;" now we are enabled to develop that light in interior illumination in our middle chamber, and the payment of our wages consists no longer of mere sustenance of corn, wine and oil, but of an "earned increment" which we may use as we will, as it is paid in specie, that metal which, properly prepared and transmuted by the Artificer, Vulcan, will produce the "potable gold" of the spiritual man.

And so, in the Third Tracing Board we come to the point at which we must apply that which is, literally, the crucial test, the test of the cross itself, "that last and greatest trial," wherein the aspirant learns for himself that reliance upon the lower vehicles, the Bodies, cannot but "prove a slip;" that, equally, reliance upon the Spirit alone must "prove a slip, likewise;" that it is only by the full cooperation of these two, in conjunction with the ruling link, the Soul, that he can be "raised from the Tomb of Transgression, to a reunion with these former companions of his toil." Thus only can his base metal be cleared and dispelled in the Alembic of the Tomb, to rise as the pure gold of perfection.

I have already, on several previous occasions, shown how the Third Degree Steps take the aspirant on to the arms of the Cross and thence into the cruciform sarcophagus, before entry into the Sanctum Sanctorum of his inner being, the centre in which he can know all that seems hidden and incomprehensible to him in the idea of God. It is here that he finds the DORMER from which our Circle takes its name, that window which can only convey light to the innermost self when we learn to live therein, out of the body in sleep at first, until custom shall enlarge our capacity. This is the light of real knowledge, for the attainment of which it is necessary to be able to function independently of the lower vehicles which cannot find resting place within the Sanctum Sanctorum. This knowledge is permanent, in contrast to the impermanence of that which we gain through the senses. It has been written that, "Knowledge differs much from sense, for sense is of things that surround it, but knowledge is the end of sense," that is to say, it is the end of the illusion of the physical brain and of the intellect, of which the brain is the channel. This explains the perpetual conflict between the laboriously acquired knowledge of the senses and lower mind, and that which can be attained by raising the higher mind to the limit to contact the intuitive wisdom of the spirit.

The Third Tracing Board, intimately associated as it is with the Traditional History, should make it clear that the Ritual is correct when it declares that "the immoveable jewels are so called because they lie open and exposed for the brethren to moralize upon." The word moralize is here used in its older significance. We would now probably say meditate or contemplate, just as the older use of morality would now be designated meditation or contemplation, although neither completely fulfils requirements. The obvious discrepancies between the Traditional History and the historical evidence, and, indeed, the discrepancies and contradictions within the Traditional History itself are clear indications that it was never intended nor expected that anyone would take it at its

face value. If anyone does so, he does it at his own risk, and that risk is the undermining of his faith. The whole story carries a blatant challenge to acceptance and insists that one asks questions. The same sort of challenge appears clearly in most of the religions of the world and their Scriptures, and it is from the too material and historical interpretation, and the too ready acceptance of such as the only interpretation of such Scriptures that the common heresy-hunt comes into play. At the moment of writing there is just such a heresy-hunt in full blast against Freemasonry, sponsored by a priest, nominally Catholic, of the Church of England, who is not a Mason, and who appears to have made a rehash of the old arguments advanced by previous heresy hunters along the same lines. Now every heresy-hunt that is, or ever was, has the immediate effect of convicting its authors of instability in their own faith and of inherent doubt of its validity. If any man is in possession of any portion of truth and is firmly convinced of its truth and fully established in it, then he can have no fear that any heresy can undermine it or endanger it in his eyes. If he is not fundamentally and completely convinced of its truth, then, and then only, can it be open to successful attack. In taking open steps to counter the assumed danger, he tacitly assumes that his beliefs are open to attack and proves to the world that their foundations are uncertain and, to his own inner consciousness, unsafe. Freemasonry is put forward in such a manner that, if any brother thinks about it and meditates upon its precepts, he builds up an attitude of questioning which leads to a state of mind which can be satisfied only with "the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth." If he has anything less, he remains in a state of QUEST. The heresy hunter, on the other hand, is generally completely self-satisfied and is prone to have reached final decisions upon subjects which, on the face of things, cannot be finally decided. I am reminded of an old story, recently revived by John Bouverie in the "News Chronicle," and re-quoted in the June number of the "Old Contemptible."

"A negro preacher was telling some children the story of the creation. 'When God created the world there was nothin' and nobody in it. So He took some loam and some mud and he made a man and a woman and put them up against a fence to dry.' 'But, massa,' said his smallest pupil, 'if there was nobody in the world before Adam and Eve, who made the fence?' 'Boy,' said the preacher, 'it's questions like that that's just ruining religion.' "

This is the true attitude of the heresy hunter. He dislikes questions, because, as a rule, he is afraid that his faith will not stand up to questioning. Freemasonry asks one to moralize upon its allegories and symbols and moralize is here used in its older sense which covers both meditation and contemplation. The ritual is, in the oldest and best sense of the word, a Morality, a dramatic representation of fundamentals inexpressible in words. Thus, the basis of Freemasonry is so firm that such attacks as we are considering can only make their authors ridiculous and, in the long run, do harm to their own cause. If, for a moment, I may again bring in my own experience, when I left

Christianity for a time, because, go where I would, I could get no reasonable answers to my questions, all those whom I had questioned, and they covered a field which embraced most of the leading denominations and sects, came to a point where they gave me the same answer couched in many different forms of words. It might be summed up as "We are not intended to enquire too closely into such matters" and was generally followed by the injunction "We must have faith!" I came away with the feeling that they were afraid to ask questions and that they had not begun to understand the meaning of faith. Freemasonry brought the answers to my questionings and pointed the way to the answers to which my own state of development formed the barrier. It had one message for me; it said clearly "God placed you in a Christian environment in this life because it was the best environment to promote your growth. So you have got to get back to Christianity." But for Freemasonry I would not be a Christian by profession to-day, far less an ordained Priest in the Church of Christ. I bow in gratitude to the Craft.

But, now, let us get back to the Hermetic Art.

Matter is eternal; it is the UPADHI, we have no one word in the West that covers the concept but might describe it as the physical basis upon which the Infinite Universal Mind can build its ideations. Thus it is that the esoteric worker maintains that there is no such thing as matter which is wholly inorganic or dead to be found in nature. The distinction made between organic and inorganic, made by Science, is unfounded, unreasonable and wholly arbitrary. This is the occult teaching, tracing back to time immemorial, through Manu and Hermes and throughout the ages to Paracelsus and his successors. Thus, Hermes the Thrice-Great, Trismegistus, teaches :-

"Oh, my son, matter becomes; formerly it was, for matter is the vehicle of becoming. Becoming is the mode of activity of the universe and foreseeing God. Having been endowed with the germ of becoming, objective matter is brought to birth, for the creative force fashions it according to the ideal forms ; matter, not yet engendered, had no form : it becomes when it is put into operation."

Dr. Anna Kingsford points out that, in Greek, the same word denotes to be born and to become, the idea being that the material of the world is eternal in its essence but that, before Creation or becoming, it is in a passive, static, or motionless condition. Thus it was before it was put into operation, but now it becomes, that is to say it is mobile, dynamic and progressive. To this she adds that Creation covers the whole period of the activity of God, the MANVANTARA, and God, according to Hermetic thought, has two modes of expression :-

- i. Activity or existence, God evolved or DEUS Explicatus, close to the theological idea of God Immanent, and
- ii. Passivity or Being, the Eastern PRALAYA or period of rest, God involved or DEUS Implicatus, God Transcendent,

Each, in itself, is perfect and complete, as is the case with the sleeping and waking states in man. Fichte, the German philosopher, explained being (sein) as one which we can only know through existence (dasein) as manifold. This is a thoroughly Hermetic view.

The ideal forms are the architypal or formative ideas of the Neo-Platonists, the eternal and subjective concepts of things subsisting in the Divine Mind prior to Creation or becoming.

Paracelsus writes :-

"Everything is the product of one universal creative effort ... there is nothing dead in nature. Everything is organic and living and, consequently, the whole world appears to be a living organism."

In all such matters it is always difficult to pin-point the teaching but the general trend appears to be clear, and it is certain that, for those who claimed to have interpreted it properly, results followed, by which the transmutation became an observed fact on both the physical and spiritual levels. The chief difficulty lies in some apparent contradictions which, as has been pointed out, seem to show that, first, Hermes was a nom-de-plume adopted by a whole series of generations of mystics and occultists of every shade of outlook and, second, it is necessary to exercise the greatest care and discernment before accepting any fragment as authoritative, however obviously correct, merely on account of its age and traditional source.

Throughout the ages attempts have been made to limit and organise the Hermetic truths, but, as Krishnamurti once remarked, "Truth knows no limit and cannot be organised." There is a verse from "The Light of Asia" by Sir Edwin Arnold, which expresses this

"OM, AMITAYA! Measure not with words

Th' Immeasurable; nor sink the string of thought

Into the fathomless. Who asks doth err,

Who answers, errs. Say nought."

In the consideration of such a subject as this which I have tried to put before you, I am up against one outstanding difficulty. Any man who sets out to impart teaching of the realms of the Absolute can do so only within the limits of his own absolute, which, of course, is a variable quantity, growing as he himself grows. He cannot avoid a certain apparent intolerance of outlook, both in his conduct and in the doctrine which he sets out to impart, unless he is to leave the value of the teachings open to doubt in the minds

of his hearers. He is forced, by the very circumstances of the case, to be didactic and personal in his presentation of such a subject. The Lord Buddha, for instance, does not teach that "the Law is the law of grace for all" but that "My Law is the law of grace for all." Similarly, the Master, Jesus of Nazareth, does not say "I am a way, a truth and a life," but "I am the way, the truth and the life." Thus the teacher, if he has a message which embodies some portion of truth itself, is compelled to appear as an autocrat and to speak, as though in terms of finality, of the absolute. He must travel a straight path, leaving aside much which lies beyond the limits or confines of the particular path, things, good in themselves, but, apparently, contradictory to his teaching or parallel to it, yet which all lead towards the same goal. These other teachings may be equally true but may be of such a nature that they can remain only theoretical to the majority of listeners, until such time as there is forth-coming inner proof of their truth. If all lines of approach are attempted together at one and the same time, only utmost chaos and confusion can result. No man can accept as other than mere speculation that which lies completely outside his own experience.

For us, as Freemasons, this Universe, in which we live and move and have our being, must become one living vibrant unity. In our studies it is necessary that we aim to get beyond the mere intellectual outlook and make ourselves sensitive to the meaning hidden in each fact and in each group of facts. Herein we will find the source of that creative faculty which we find developed in the great poets, the great painters, the great composers; in all creative art. It is, therefore, fundamentally important that Freemasonry, if it is to remain a true guide, pointing the way to God, by whatsoever road the individual aspirant may approach, should not commit itself in any way to any single line of action, to any one opinion upon any debatable subject, nor, indeed, to any one uniform and set way of carrying out the ceremonies and ordinances of the Craft. Latitude in interpretation is essential to individual growth and fruition. Freemasonry, then, asks the individual brother to live his religion, to make it, whatever outer form it may take, the central fact of his being: it does not ask him to leave it. If a brother comes to Freemasonry having no credal attachments, it provides the fundamental basis upon which he can either build up a religion for himself or find one to suit his needs among the multitude of creeds offered by the religions of mankind. Only by the practice of this all- embracing and universal outlook can Freemasonry become and remain a living influence for good in all such bodies as profess and embody the divine virtues of Tolerance, Compassion, Service and True Brotherhood.

The ultimate aim of Freemasonry, as of all Hermetic Art, is UNITY, the recognition of the Universal Brotherhood of all that share in the One Life of God. All the great religions, even the highest expression of Religion which I, personally, believe to be that true Christianity which is enshrined in the Sermon on the Mount - all, without exception, have their origins and their goals in TRUTH, and any limitation of outlook must prevent the living to the full of any one of them.

One of the great ones of our humanity once said:- Universal Brotherhood is no idle phrase; humanity as a whole has a paramount claim upon us. . . . It is the only secure foundation for universal morality. If it be a dream, it is at least a notable one for mankind; and it is the aspiration of the true adept."

The influence of Freemasonry, as also of some other bodies with the same ends and objects in view, is making itself felt in the world of to-day. Gradually - all too gradually, owing to the tough opposition set up by established "closed shops" (if one may apply a modern phrase) in the churches and by the self-centredness of individuals - gradually, but surely, there is being built up an atmosphere in which true brotherhood can germinate and grow and those of us who have been privileged to live through the last half century have seen real, if largely abortive, attempts to bring it about. Do you remember the words of Lord Tennyson, in Loxley Hall:-

"Saw a vision of the world and all the wonder that would be
Saw the heavens fill with commerce, argosies of magic sails,
Pilots of the purple twilight, dropping down with
costly bales ; Heard the heavens fill with shouting, and there rained a ghastly dew

From the nations' airy navies grappling in the central blue
Far along the world-wide whisper of the south-wind rushing warm,

With the standards of the peoples plunging thro' the thunderstorm;

Till the war-drum throb'd no longer, and the battle-flags were furled

In the Parliament of man, the Federation of the world,

There the common sense of most shall hold the fretful realm in awe,

And the kindly earth shall slumber, lapt in universal law."

Later in the same poem, he expresses his profound belief in the growth of the thinking principle in man.

"Yet I doubt not thro' the ages one increasing purpose runs, And the thoughts of men are widen'd with the process of the suns."

President Wilson of the United States of America dreamed the same dream and tried to put it into effect. It came to life in the League of Nations, but his influence was not sufficiently strong to keep his country upon the road to safety and brotherhood, and the League, in all except some minor details which happily survived, was a failure. Greed, self-seeking and selfishness were momentarily triumphant.

But the Elder Brethren, who work behind the scenes to influence humanity for its own good, carried on their good work and, through travail and bloodshed, the ideal came to life again with a new name, the United Nations Organisation, UNO, with new, and still unwitting, instruments of the Great Ones, as its sponsors, in the persons of Franklin

Delano Roosevelt and Winston Spencer Churchill. They also were tuned in to the vision of the Great Plan by which alone can come the Unity of all the peoples of mankind and the reign of Peace on earth. The laying of the foundations of the Great Work lies, partially at least, in our hands, it is part and parcel of our Masonic heritage.

To bring it into being, it is necessary that each unit, whether it be Brother, Lodge, Province or even Constitution, should learn to stand firmly upon its own feet, in order that it may give full attention and all its energy to the furtherance of the plan as it affects Freemasonry as a whole, and mankind as a whole. Each unit can learn only through its own mistakes and, so long as there is any trace of self-interest in its attitude, it can never fully gain that peace and happiness which it seeks. Always the normal tendency for the human being is to "sell his birthright for a mess of pottage." Herein lies the eternal paradox, the great tug-of-war, for the greater the effort he puts into the furtherance of his own ends, the more strength he gives to the forces which oppose those ends.

Each human being, gross metal though he be, is an embodiment of the pure gold of the Divine. Each is capable of such a transformation as will enable that pure gold to shine through him in all its splendour. The lowest and most degraded, the most savage and uncultured of men, have still, behind their outer coarse and even repellant features, the lineaments of God, in whose true image they are made. Man has this mysterious attribute of divinity, the attribute of that life in which every living thing has its share. Differently expressed although it may be, this same idea is formulated in every religion and philosophy worthy of the name. In Christianity we speak of "Christ in you, the hope of glory"; in Buddhism there is the Buddha-principle in all that has existence; in Islam, although there would seem, at first sight, to be an unbridgeable gulf set between Man and Allah, yet there are sects which express the close link of union spanning that gulf. The Shiah sect, for instance, which has some 30 millions of followers in Persia and India, gave birth to the Sufi teaching of God as the beloved and the soul of man as the lover and this led to the realisation that, to be able to know God to the fullest possible extent, Man must have the very nature of God within himself.

The Christian Master expressed the brotherhood which exists in the apparent diversity very clearly, although, alas, so many of His followers either ignore the teaching or deliberately narrow it down or misrepresent it to meet their own requirements. You will find it in the parable of the sheepfold where He makes the position quite clear (St. John, x, 16). "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd."

The key-note of the coming age, the Aquarian Age, from the birth-pangs of which we are suffering to-day, has been beautifully condensed into two words by Dr. G.S. Arundale, who took as his slogan "TOGETHER DIFFERENTLY," and, if you think of it carefully, this is a very useful paraphrase of the old Hermetic Axiom "SOLVE COAGULA," which sums up

the situation very well, telling us that we must dissolve to coagulate, analyse to reach synthesis, fall as a prerequisite to redemption, differentiate to unify, accomplish fission in order to bring about fusion, put it how you will. The stone must be rejected by the builders before it is fit to become the headstone of the corner. The lesson which Freemasonry, as the Hermetic Art, has to teach is the same, that, before we can hope to reach synthesis, true brotherhood, we must first practice analysis, in each one learning to know himself ; the part must come before the whole to reach full understanding. When the aspirant has mastered to the full all the most intimate details of his own make up, when he really knows his own potentialities, gaining control of his vehicles of consciousness on all levels, then, and then only, can he bring all together into the complete synthesis, knowing himself as ONE with all his brethren, uniting in the consciousness of brotherhood in the common fatherhood of God. Then can he say, with full appreciation of the implications of the words :-

"God is All, and In all, and, before all things were, by Him they all consist. He Is all of me. I am an individualised part of Him. The real self, the 'I AM' within me, is not only made In the image of God, but is a veritable part of Him, therefore I and the Father are ONE. The Spirit of God is omnipresent and pervades every atom of my being as well as every atom of the Universe. Hence, I am at one with the all, in touch with all that lives. All that lives, being permeated by the Spirit of the living God, is working for my good, aids me in doing good. My environment and the things that come to me are required for my assistance, for the purification of my character. Nothing comes into my life that is useless. All men and all circumstances are my teachers, for all are in God, and God is In all."

I do not know who wrote those words but, to me, they sum up the idea I want to express, better than I could do it in words of my own.

Self-knowledge has been defined as the first contact of consciousness in the ground of life. "We are all," says Mrs. Atwood, "compounded in a certain petrification, i.e., life in each is as a stone in its first being : therefore they (the Alchemists) say 'take that stone,' meaning life as it is, I and ferment it,' that is by another life, which will dissolve and kill it as well as itself both will be reproduced in a third."

The Vulcan of the Alchemists is Motion. He is represented in the Greek myths as a lame god, because all motion and action in life is of a halting character; it is always chasing something that it never catches ; it runs on a line without return, circumbending into its own principle, but nothing here contains its own principle in itself. So Vulcan is not the fire, Ignis Philosophorum, but that which stirs up that fire: he is the agent of mind by which motion may be created in the spirit in terms of the Hermetic Philosophy. The key-note here is the Light, and that to which the E.A. is restored is but a substitute for the real thing. Something of the reality is apparently reached in the F.C. degree, but when the F.C. presents himself to face that last and greatest trial which culminates in his raising, he finds that even the light of a M.M. is but barely sufficient to make darkness

visible. This may, at first sight, appear as disappointing, but, in reality, it is a tremendous step forward. Sophocles went about proclaiming the fact that he was but an ignorant man, his only claim to be fitted to teach lying in the fact that he knew that he was ignorant, whereas others, being also ignorant, were unaware of the fact. Similarly, it is absolutely necessary for us, as Freemasons and students of the Mysteries that our own state of darkness should become visible to us. Until and unless we reach this state of realisation of "darkness visible," there can be no real incentive to seek the light. Yet all progress must be made decently and in due order. Festina lente, make haste slowly, and Ne Quid Nimis, nothing in excess, are watch-words always applicable in the great work and of the utmost importance in its conduct, whether on the lowest or on the highest levels. "For, had you rashly attempted to rush forward, you would have been accessory to your own death by stabbing, whilst the brother who held the poignard would have remained firm and done his duty" and the C.T. "about your neck would have rendered any attempt at retreat equally fatal." Before entering upon the process of transmutation to which Freemasonry furnishes the key, it is required of the aspirant that he should be desirous of being completely purified, that he should already have made such progress towards purification that he is free from the allure of all baser lusts and desires, symbolised by "all metals and valuables." He must be at least symbolically pure, for only then can the pure gold of the Spirit be distilled in the alembic of physical incarnation, as represented by the Lodge, opening up the way for the descent upon him of the Spirit of the Living God, to rest upon him as it were in tongues of fire, purifying and refining the basic metallic substance that the pure gold from within may shine out with all the beauty and radiance of true godliness and divinity. Herein lies the goal of perfection, the Hermetic transmutation, towards which we are all, in our own particular and diverse ways, pursuing our journeys. And with the attainment of that goal will come also the full realisation within ourselves of all the powers of the Divine Life, giving complete control on all levels, so that the goal of the material Alchemist, the transmutation of the base metals into material gold, being no longer of any interest save in so far as it can be of service to humanity as a whole, becomes completely easy of attainment. The great experiment becomes as child's-play to perform. "If the salt have lost its savour wherewith shall it be salted?" The answer is now clear, for the salt itself will be so changed that it will distil and bring forth its own savour, in true fullness of the spiritual attainment. Therein is the goal attained, the lost word is found and man returns whence he came, now clothed in the power of the Sun, able and willing to sacrifice himself that new worlds may come into being that the work may go on unto the perfecting of Eternity. Of such is the essence of Brotherly Love and, as Robbie Burns says :-

"It's coming yet, for a' that,

That man to man, t' the world o'er

Shall brithers be for a' that"

and

For a' that and a' that,

The rank is but the guinea's stamp,

The man's the goud for a' that "

Yes, brethren, man himself is the pure gold for the finding of which he set out upon his long pilgrimage through the planes of manifestation.

The real difference between orthodox religion, whichever you may choose of its multitudinous manifestations - and the Craft of Freemasonry lies in this. While each is a quest, the orthodoxy chosen will emphasise the highest point or conception which it has reached and is, normally, satisfied to rest there in a settled finality, but Freemasonry, and kindred movements, attempt to explain and lay emphasis upon the unfinished quest itself.

Brethren, if we are really in earnest and if our desire is sufficiently strong to support us through the arduous experience that lies ahead of the true aspirant, the secret of transmutation can be ours and we, individually, can perform the "miracle of the one thing," by virtue of our own inherent divinity,

You yourselves are the Alembic, The "potable gold of the Alchemists is potentially yours, for the base metals are ever your own and in Freemasonry you have the complete guide to their transmuting.

Brethren! Together differently, the Quest is yours.

Peace to All Beings. So mote it be.