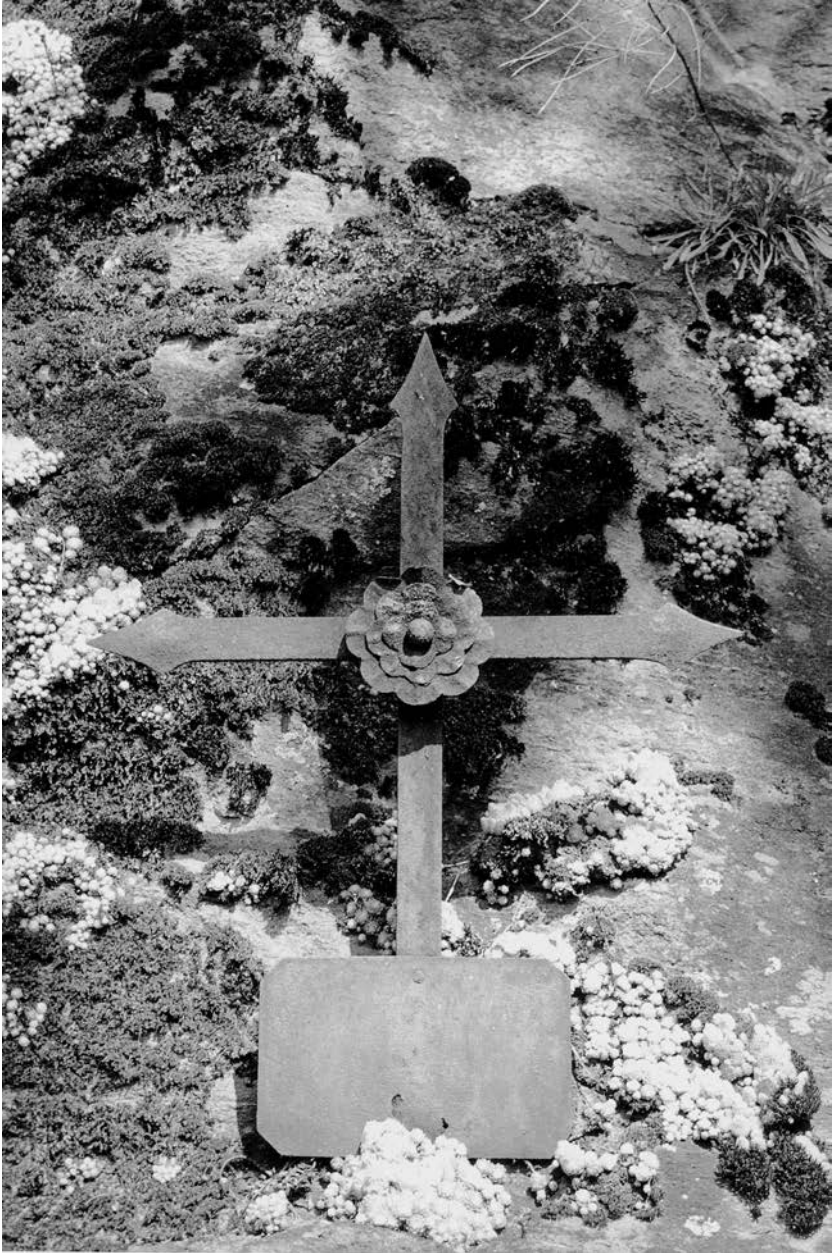


GNOSIS – RAYS OF LIGHT PAST AND PRESENT



GNOSIS
RAYS OF LIGHT
PAST AND PRESENT

PETER F. W. HUIJS

Edited by
Herbert Horn

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Edited by Herbert Horn.

Frontispiece: *An age-old wrought-iron depiction of the Rosycross, found along a mountain trail near Chiavenna, Northern Italy.*

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Introduction

Without a reasonable level of culture, people cannot live, socialise, and communicate on the same level with others. Culture is necessary. However, culture alone leads nowhere. History teaches us that eventually it always turns into its opposite. Culture is therefore to be regarded as a basis, a starting point from which something else must develop. That something else is what this book is about. It aims to open a window on what has currently come to be termed, after religion and science, 'the third stream in Europe', the Gnosis. It aims to make visible the extent of the efforts that have been made to bring Europe to a new spring in which people can follow their spiritual purpose guided by their own inner compass. A landscape full of life unfolds, but at the same time, it is marked with the scars of devastation

One can find the residue of powerful ideas, ruins of once majestic strongholds of the spirit, and acres of overgrown wilderness where once were gardens full of poetic beauty and in which an occasional rose still blooms amidst the tangle of thorns and weeds, the gardeners having been driven out with a ruthless hand. If we dig in this landscape, we can sometimes happen upon a shimmering pearl, or a root that can be replanted, and sometimes we find a mirror that when held aloft reflects the entire universe. When we pause and look at how much has been halted, denied, buried, or swept away in the course of centuries, the realisation of what might have been takes the breath away.

And yet, the hidden life of the spirit pulses continuously and urgently just beneath the surface of the history of Europe, in the same way that the life force waiting to burst out of the seeds becomes almost tangible in a ploughed field: One knows that at a certain moment, the field will bear a rich harvest.

The history and events that are outlined in this book tell of the liberation of the spirit, the spiritual, the other in the human being. It is a dramatic history full of majestic highlights. Through the stories of the many pioneers who have carried out the work of the liberation of the Soul, the task of becoming spiritually conscious, the reader becomes acquainted with western Gnostic esoteric thinking.

The Dutch author Teun de Vries in his book, *Heretics, Fourteen Centuries of Heresy, Popular Movements, and Inquisition* (1982), writes about close to a hundred significant figures and many more less well-known people. They are indeed innumerable who sail the hidden river over the earth, and this book endeavours to cast a more expansive light on some of them who mark a new development of consciousness.

The first part of the book deals with the conditions that were of significance before our calendar begins, sometimes referred to as the time of the cosmic-mythic consciousness, when people were motivated and directed by their beliefs in the stars and the myths that were formulated around them. The second part recounts how in the first centuries after Christ the Gnostic idea of the two nature orders received its form and content. It deals with the people who experienced and explored this idea in groups, in churches and schools, during the process of their development from group consciousness to individual consciousness. In the third part, we look at the individuals who propagated the Gnostic idea in their times. They lived accordingly and tried to make others receptive to the call, as the driving force of the spirit has sometimes been referred to since the appearance of the classical Rosicrucians.

The fourth part deals finally with the birth of the modern Gnostic consciousness and shows how the modern Gnosis came into being in the International School of the Golden Rosycross. Before 1940, Z. W. Leene and, in the second half of the twentieth century, Jan van Rijk- enborgh and Catharose de Petri, gave form to the new world-wide work of the Brotherhood of the Rosycross. In our view, this is the culmination of the endeavour in the West of all 'the workers of the hidden Spirit' who travelled upstream in the current of this universal river towards the source.

This book is dedicated to all who protect and continue this work.

PART I
PREHISTORY



Symbolic representation of the Universal Brotherhood. Painting by Johfra, 1962, private collection.

CHAPTER I

The Universal Brotherhood

In order to gain an understanding of the Gnostic and liberating elements in some of the past world religions, we shall often in this book refer to 'the Brotherhood'. In our view, humanity's existence throughout the ages has been powerfully influenced by the Brotherhood, especially during crucial phases in its development.

This Universal Brotherhood represents the pure, inviolate part of our planet – a concept that is unknown to most people. Its representatives are born again and again among humanity in order to work for the reinstatement of the unity that has been violated in every human being. The Brotherhood is a higher unity of free human beings, both male and female, that maintains a uninterrupted inspiring link with the life of the spirit. It does not link itself with any individual person but supports every effort towards true liberation with its mighty soul potential, which surrounds such work as a protecting field.

An individual generally lives in the visible world for barely a century, if he is lucky. A human life is a series of incidents; it moves from event to event. In that multihued kaleidoscope of events, it is often difficult to discern a development that lifts the person above the level of an 'incident'. During his century, he uses up the energy given to him at the outset. He uses the combustible materials, the air, and the fruits of the earth and then disappears again. On the whole, a human being does not seem to add or contribute anything to improve the world or even to maintain it. It is rather the other way around: If we weigh up the good and the evil, the balance could well tip in the negative direction.

If it were not for the care and almost incomprehensible patience and intelligence from above through which certain traces of the Divine Only Good have been sown in human beings, it would be diffi-

cult to discern anything beyond the animal, and a very dangerous animal at that. The human being as an animal appears to mobilise everything towards bringing about his own downfall closer, particularly through the unbridled workings of his intellect and the consequences this brings.

We call everything that has contributed to promote and stimulate the development of this Only Good in the biological human being the activity of 'the Brotherhood'. It is with deep respect and some diffidence that we write about this Brotherhood. Where we often look on helplessly and without hope at the shortcomings of many a human life, the Brotherhood notices each tiny spark of light, the minuscule profit of such a life, and guides it further towards that environment where the human being as a small world, as a microcosm, can best develop.

Yet the Brotherhood does not work solely on the microcosmic level with individual human lives; it also works on the grand scale. In order to elucidate further, this book enters into the universal thoughts of wisdom. According to esoteric thinking, the earth period is divided into epochs in each of which a specific human aspect develops. We should not imagine each epoch having a label upon which is written 'heart epoch', 'thought epoch', 'action epoch', or 'energy body phase'. It is not like that. Rather, in each epoch, a specific basic radiation condition predominates that is appropriate to the period. This condition is then extraordinarily favourable to the development of one or another faculty or body of the human being, just as in the sea, the flora and fauna adapt to the saline environment, and freshwater fish will not evolve there.

Why is this so? What determines the basic radiation condition of each epoch? Gnostic science has an explanation. Those versed in the universal knowledge generally accept the following theory. In the coming period, phenomena will come to light that will considerably strengthen the acceptance of this point of view.

The earth's North Pole attracts pure magnetic forces from the universe around it, primarily from our solar system. These forces are not yet coloured, not yet divided into a spectrum, and not yet distorted by the many pollutants and movements in the earth's atmosphere. The greater part of these pure forces is radiated into the heart of the earth,

into its fiery core. From there, the earth is fed from within outwards.

Part of this force, however, a combination of seven rays with a high vibration spreads in the earth's atmosphere, in the air that we breathe. So one can well imagine how in this way, we human beings are directly connected or confronted with a particular radiation condition that reigns in the whole universe. We also call this force the Seven Spirit.

We see how a very specific magnetic atmosphere rules in each period on earth, which is completely determined by the momentary quality of the Seven Spirit, which stands in direct connection with the entire solar universe.

When the radiation conditions change at the beginning of each new epoch, human beings are often not immediately capable of adapting appropriately to the changed environment. In fact, a great number of human beings have still not adapted fully to these conditions by the middle or even the end of it. Think of the classic words at the beginning of the Gospel of John, 'The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it' and in the Old Testament Book of Hosea, ch. 4, v. 6, 'My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.'

Well, it is the Brotherhood that transmits, explains, and translates the radiation requirements to the level of understanding of the material human being, so that all who both wish and prepare for it can fully understand and realise them. The Brotherhood does this with not only beautiful words or only in theory, however.

It would be a mistake to form a too mystic picture of these liberated human beings, of this Brotherhood. In essence, those that form the Brotherhood originally lived through the same experiences as everyone else, but at a certain moment each of them individually went a step further. They grew beyond a life lived only for themselves, materially and socially. They dedicated themselves to the service of a higher necessity.

In the furtherance of their task, they make use, often in a very inventive way, of the circumstances of the humanity at any given moment. They can work like this because they are purely attuned to the cosmic light forces and have full knowledge of the radiation laws of the Seven Spirit.

- During the oldest, the Lemurian, epoch, the Brotherhood drove humanity into matter in a very specific way.
- In the days of the legendary Atlantis, the Brotherhood awakened human beings and drove them to change and purify their lives.
- At the time of the sinking of that continent, the Brotherhood saved a small group of human beings from areas that were to submerge, in order to form a new race for the next epoch in what is now East Asia, on the Pacific coast.
- During the present Aryan period, the Brotherhood sent seven world teachers to young humanity whose work extended from east to west with names such as Rama and Krishna, the most recent being the Buddha.
- The Brotherhood spread the light of the sun-teachings of Zoroaster or Zarathustra over Persia. Zarathustra announced that the high sun-being would one day truly live on earth.
- In the years long before our current calendar, the Brotherhood stimulated the Egyptian realm with its extraordinary history.

These representatives of another, a higher form of living together are constantly seeking for opportunities to instruct humanity by ever new means in its natural surroundings in the sole task of its existence. They aim to bring humanity, which has forgotten its high lineage and calling in the desert sands, to a conscious higher soul life from which it can start on the path of return. Look at the Cathars: They lived their path of liberation in the ancient cave sanctuaries of the Pyrenees and elsewhere. Or if we turn to Egypt, we see an example of how the entire structure of a realm can serve as a symbol for a specific inner path.

The essence of the Brotherhood is a continuous call to reinstate the lost link between the soul and the spirit. Its aim: to shepherd the human being as a microcosm into starting the development that will take him into the life field intended for him from the very beginning, the field of the soul with its unsuspected perspectives and opportunities. ~



Akhenaten. Detail of a colossal sculpture from Karnak, ca. 1350 BC, Egyptian Museum, Cairo, Egypt.

CHAPTER 2

Egypt

The fertile banks of the Nile were inhabited long before our earliest records began, and from the beginning of recorded time, events in ancient Egypt have had great significance in the history of the western world. The entries in the exhibition catalogue 'Pharaohs of the Sun' (Leiden, Netherlands 2001) show that settlements already existed in Egypt 6,000 years BC. Some 5,000 years ago, a number of small states were amalgamated into one, and the dynasties of the Egyptian Pharaohs began: Egypt – the land of the two riverbanks; Egypt – the land of the river, the long stream from south to north, the life-bringer, the source of our civilisation and at the same time the cradle of western teachings of liberation.

Perhaps you, too, have been puzzled by the apparently unrealistic, yet magical phrase 'as above, so below'. If we take 'as above' to refer to the heavens, or to heaven, the 'pure, unknown half' of our planet, then what appears around us down here cannot be compared to what we think is 'above'.

Yet it is one of the most important statements that the Gnosis, the Hermetic Gnosis of ancient Egypt, brings to us. In antiquity, the land of Egypt itself was 'the below'; the Egyptian priests and sages saw their land as an embodiment, a trustworthy reflection, of the cosmos above the land. The initiated Egyptians saw the Milky Way as a river of stardust that stretched across the dark night sky and magnificently illuminated the earth. Just above the Egyptian horizon was the constellation of Osiris. The Greeks – who adopted their wisdom from that of Egypt – called it Orion, the name we still use for it today. Around mid-June, the star Isis – which we know as Sirius – appeared above the horizon, signalling a celebration; it represented Isis, as faithful spouse, coming to Osiris to heal his injuries.

Osiris, the heavenly light, was murdered by his brother Seth, the

darkness, and then hacked to pieces to prevent his resurrection posing any further threat to Seth's dominion. Isis collected all 14 pieces from the river Nile where Seth had hidden them. Isis symbolises the soul, the 'life-bringer', the wisdom that is a precursor to the coming of the spirit when what has been broken is healed again. Spirit is more than wisdom: It is the essence and power of life; it is regeneration and transfiguration. That which has died recovers and comes to life again on a higher plane, gifted with creative power.

When Isis appears, the land lives again, for when her star, Sirius, appeared above the horizon in Egypt, the population knew that the Nile was about to burst its banks. Then the land becomes 'black' with silt, and that is why the Egyptians called their land *Kemet*, the black land. For seventy-two days, the Nile was tens of kilometres wide. In those seventy-two days, farmers could not work the land and spent their time building temples, dwelling places for the gods or for their representatives, the Pharaohs, for use after death. This was also the time when the marriages of the gods were celebrated. The statues of the gods were taken out of the holy of holies of the temples and transported by boats to visit their partners. For instance, Shu (air) visited Tefnut (fertility) and their child was Geb (earth). Isis (love) visited Osiris (death, but also might) and their son was Horus (life).

When the floodwater receded, signalling the start of the second season, it left behind a life-giving layer of rich and fertile silt that they then ploughed and sowed. The third and last season was the time of harvest, which was accounted for carefully as part of it was due as a tax payment.

In this way, ancient Egypt demonstrated that 'as above, so below' had a deep meaning. There is also another way in which the Nile symbolises the river of life: through its remarkable resemblance to the body of a serpent, that forms, so to speak, the spinal column of the land. Immediately the relationship to the human spinal cord springs to mind, in which the serpent fire vibrates as the life essence of the human being.

Esoterically inclined explorers have pointed out this similarity. They noticed that there were temples at significant places along this tree of life, each reflecting and accentuating an important human aspect, and that people travelled to these places for healing.

In the south, there was the temple of Khenoum, the creator god who modelled the human being on his potter's wheel and into whom Ptah, the life-bringer, blew life. The temple of Philae was dedicated to Isis, to the life that brings forth fruit, and visitors sought cures for infertility there. Those with heart problems went to Luxor, the great temple in the centre of the richest part of the kingdom.

The temple at Kom Ombo, dedicated to Sobek, the crocodile god, can be compared to the solar plexus in the human being. The digestive system was the focus of this temple.

Healing was achieved by presenting oneself to the temple priests and above all, by spending the night in the forecourt of the temple. Healing took place during sleep; the dreamer experienced what was lacking in his health. If someone did not understand, the priests would help by interpreting the dream. The treatment was supported by aphorisms and prayers, and strengthened with herbal draughts, compresses, and balms.

In the temple forecourt, you can see how the people – in order to shorten the long, hot nights – have etched backgammon games in the large stone slabs that covered the ground. Surviving legends and tales describe the miraculous healings that took place there.

The temples in Sakkara correspond with the larynx and with speech, and the three pyramids at Giza represent the focal points in the head. In this way, the Nile formed a real serpent fire system with active power centres brought to life by the local population. In the temples, they came into contact with the purest conditions existing at that time, and the population attended them regularly, participating in devotional celebrations. Those who are sensitive to it can still experience the last remnants of this energy in the holy places of these temples.

The basis for the wisdom in the west will always be Egypt. She may fade into the background, like a good mother who gives her child its freedom at a certain moment, but, like any good mother, she is also always there. Our ideas took form there, and the esoteric consciousness of every century has always been based on the wisdom that came out of Egypt, on the Hermetic principles that were set down at the beginning of our calendar but that actually date back to a much older time.

The river was the dominating aspect of life. The annual flooding deposited thick layers of silt that covered the banks every winter, through which the earth became fertile. One sowed in it, one harvested from it. The Nile was the most important traffic route. It provided drink and the water necessary for the growth of vegetation.

Papyrus grew on the banks and was used to make boats, sandals, and many other objects, including the scrolls from which we can read something of the history of Egypt today. With its source in Ethiopia and its mouth in the Mediterranean, the Nile runs almost perpendicularly from south to north, separating the kingdom of Egypt into an eastern and western half.

The sun rises in the east and sets in the west. The dead were buried on the western bank, where the sun set. The last episode of the life journey for the Egyptian was to cross the river that had played such an important role in his life.

In *The Egyptian Book of the Dead*, which the Egyptians themselves called 'The Ritual', we read how the deceased sailed to the other shore in Isis' boat to appear before Osiris, the god of life, before the spirit that was itself dead and came back to life again. The heart was weighed before the countenance of the spirit. On the one side of the scale lay the heart and on the other, a single feather, light as the wind, as transparent and clear as the truth it represented. When every condition was fulfilled, when no further bonds from the lower life remained and the heart itself was as light as the wind of pure ethers, only then did the new arrival enter the land of the west. There, free from the heavy material garment, he lived a new and lighter life in the company of the gods, in the original realm of humanity.

When we reflect on this, the simplicity and purity of the symbols at the beginning of the Egyptian kingdom are astounding. From the perspective of the one task that we all have – to reach a higher soul life – life must have been much easier then than it is now, provided that one kept to the guidelines and laws of the spirit.

Jan van Rijckenborgh wrote in this context, 'The great teacher of the Egyptian period is Hermes. Hermes taught his followers that if they lived in the right way, entirely in conformity with the spiritual laws, they would be united after death with spiritual power and might.'

Just as the caves of initiation in Ussat-les-Bains in the south of France or the Valley of the Seven Lakes in the Rila mountains in Bulgaria can be seen as symbols of the inner development of the human being, the land of the two riverbanks symbolises, in its original simplicity and clarity, the spiritual striving of the humanity of that time.

Let the symbols of ancient Egypt work in you once again:

- The Nile, the life-bringer, a serpent fire system that brings the Living Water into all parts of the kingdom;
- the eastern bank – the field of activity, the field of realisation;
- the western bank – dying, the fate of human beings;
- but also shedding the old, the crystallised; shaking off the sand in order to enter the heavenly ship, the ark of Isis, for the voyage over the Nile, which is now no longer the separator of east and west but is instead the joiner of the soul (Ba) with the spirit (Ka) within and outside the human being.
- When the heart has been purified and returned to its original state, then the homecoming on the western bank follows with certainty. The human being is then born as a child of the love of Osiris and Isis, as Horus. He has crossed over the horizon.

One could fill pages with the many captivating esoteric aspects of ancient Egypt, and there is much fascinating literature on this topic.

The bulk of the population lived as a group and had little individual consciousness; they allowed themselves to be moulded by the gods and priests. Yet Egypt is also the land of the dawning birth of the human intellect and testifies of the incredible scientific achievements of its long vanished people. The function of the Pharaoh is captivating; the word means '*He who is in the (spiritual) house*'. The Pharaoh was the king-priest who reigned over the two realms of Upper and Lower Egypt but also over spiritual and material Egypt. He was the direct representative of the Brotherhood in the kingdom, and the people therefore saw him as the son of the gods.

In the later periods of Egyptian civilisation, the pure and liberating aspect of the culture declined and was lost, just as every effort of the Brotherhood to work in a liberating way is eventually imitated, distorted, and stifled.

In time, the priesthood seriously misused the unbelievable magical knowledge and power about which we spoke to make the people (including the Pharaohs) subservient to them, in order to create an important political power for themselves. Through the over-glorification of Amun, the divinity of the 'invisible force in the air', it became impossible for the ordinary person to live freely. From that moment on, priests were needed who could explain and interpret the hidden. The priests of Amon misused their power to the extent that no liberating work was possible, a drama that would repeat itself many centuries later in the Christian churches.

Exhibits of Egyptian idols, erotic charms, and magical invocations abound in the museums of Europe and America, but people know much less about the true Egypt, its high calling and the life that the population could live there. There was one more mighty attempt to halt this downward slide.

In about 1350 BC, Akhenaten reigned over the two kingdoms. He broke in a truly liberating sense with the old by dispensing with the Amun priesthood in order to re-establish the Sun religion with power. He founded a completely new city, Akhetaten (Horizon of Aton), the present-day Tell el-Armana. He broke with tradition, with the crystallised culture, and inspired artists to a new use of form and image, more true to life. The bust of his wife Nefertiti in Berlin is a beautiful example of the art of his time, full of inner power and fresh beauty, and looks very modern. The sandstone sculpture of Akhenaten himself in the Louvre has a very sensitive, wise expression. And Akhenaten's *Hymn to the Sun*, quoted at the end of this chapter, forms proof of his inspiration and knowledge of the world as a cohesive entirety, a sun-centred universe, where the earth belongs to the sun completely. He felt it his responsibility to allow his kingdom to take a step in the direction of a reinstated unity. He wrote:

*There is no other that knows you
except your son Akhenaten.
You have made known to him
your advice and your strength.
The earth rests in your hand
for you have made her.*

On a boundary stone from shortly after his death, a tribute to him reads:

*Sin has disappeared from the land;
the truth is upheld and lies are something dreadful.
The land is again as it was in the time of origin.*

Shortly after that, all traces of his impulse were violently erased with the usual thoroughness; the city of Akhetaten was razed to the ground. Yet the call of the Brotherhood had resounded then, just as it always does, and led many human souls home out of the Egyptian desert sand. The desert sand is always a tell-tale symbol for dialectics as nothing of eternal value can grow in it.

In an exhibition in Leiden, The Netherlands, in 2001, Akhenaten's *Hymn to the Sun* was described as a poem 'that gave expression to the ecstatic joy of creation, the creatures, and the god who created everything. The world suns itself in the divine light. Human beings and animals live in a state of adoration, and the world panorama is one of abundance and order. There is a feeling of holy enthusiasm in the essence of the poem.'

*In the horizon of the sky,
Your dawning is beautiful,
O living Aten,
beginning of life!
When You rise on the Eastern horizon,
You fill every land with Your beauty.
Beautiful, great and glittering are You,
high above every land.
Your rays, they encompass the lands,
even all that You have made.
You are Ra, and You carry them all away captive;
You bind them with Your love.
Though You are far away,
Your rays are upon the earth;
Though You are on high,
Your footprints are the day. ↪*



Seahenge – oakwood druid circle near Holme-next-the-Sea, Norfolk, 2050 BC. © John Sayer, Norwich, Norfolk, United Kingdom

CHAPTER 3

The Druids

Hallowed Woods

I

It is challenging to picture the situation in northern Europe during the roughly 20,000 years before the start of the classical period, the period during which the birth of Christ took place. Several sophisticated cultures arose in southern Europe around the Mediterranean. In the previous chapter, we talked about the Egyptian civilisation. This was contemporary with the Babylonian-Assyrian civilisation, a society that invented the cuneiform script, the main precursor of the western European script we use today. There was also major cultural development in India, where great spiritual minds such as Rama and Krishna provided both guidance and inspiration.

It would be easy to assume that no notable civilisation existed from Ireland in the west to the Russian east and from the north of Scandinavia to Iberia – present-day Spain – in the south. Across this landscape stretched woods: vast, impenetrable tracts of forest with a relatively small population. This wilderness aroused fear in the inhabitants of the Roman Empire, the civilised world of that time. Imagine endless oak forests with the occasional clearing letting in the daylight, bisected by rivers along the banks of which primitive settlements were clustered.

The civilised world referred to these people as ‘barbarians’, a word with Greek origins. The Greeks coined this term with reference to the guttural sounds, the ‘brrraarbbra’, of the languages of neighbouring countries, and the word ‘Barbarians’ has stuck and remains the term with which we designate these people who lived in relative peace in Europe for centuries. Officially, archaeology still describes the Celts as a people with hardly any civilisation, practising idolatry, character-

ising their society as subject to much internal warfare, governed by a primitive hierarchy of nobles with a group of priests below them, above the ordinary people. Science also dismisses as primitive their custom of regarding rivers, open spaces, and woods as 'sacred'.

There lies the difficulty. To form an idea of the Celts in the spirit of this book, we must let go of preconceived ideas, of our western vision of ourselves and of history. We must have the courage to see that our progress, our technology and even our economy are mixed blessings and do not make us superior human beings.

These days such a statement generally prompts a response along the lines of 'I understand: The environment is in a bad way, but we are recycling our refuse, so in time, we will solve that problem'. However, this is not the point, nor will such a perspective enable us to penetrate to the core of the matter in hand. To gain an impression of the Celts that, to our understanding, does justice to this people – or rather, this group of peoples – that inhabited the regions of Central Europe for so many thousands of years, a completely different point of view is necessary. We must begin with the concept that there is behind each people a mighty idea, a basic pattern, a certain ensoulment, and century after century each people is driven to follow a certain path of development in accordance with this idea or pattern. This point of view can be found in the ancient wisdom teachings that preserve hidden knowledge now lost to the vast majority of human beings currently living on earth. This knowledge describes the seven worlds of which the earth is composed. It explains that life on earth encompasses seven different worlds, that it is lived on seven different levels, on seven fields of existence. Mani also used a similar picture.

There are detailed expositions of the seven fields or spheres of development in *The Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception* by Max Heindel and *The Secret Doctrine* by H. P. Blavatsky.

The druids were the Celtic sages. They explained to their people, 'The earth exists on seven different levels, and when it disappears, a new one appears in the circle of *Gwynfyd*, the circle of human perfection, the circle of bliss.' This is the world view of the druids. According to the wisdom teachings, the human being is also sevenfold in the beginning, and the perfect human being exists in seven worlds simultaneously.

Is this difficult to understand? Maybe comprehension becomes simpler when we realise that the human being already inhabits four worlds: the material world via his physical body; the ether world via his vital body, which gives life to his physical body; the desire world via his astral vehicle, making possible feelings and the functioning of the senses; and the lowest level of the mental world via his mental body, enabling him access to any idea present in this sphere, via media such as books, the internet, etc. Our consciousness operates on all four levels, receives impulses from them, and reacts to them, but we only have 'eyes' for the physical world, the visible, external world of appearances. It will take quite some time before human intuition has developed sufficiently to make direct observation possible within the world of ideas. With the druids, intuitive ability was much more strongly developed, and their link with the 'unknown half' was very direct. The strength of their power of imagination was the result of their tradition of oral communication: They committed to memory the many thousand verses of their wisdom teachings and then passed them on.

As mentioned earlier, there is, behind each people, a mighty idea, a basic pattern, a certain ensoulment, and century after century each people is driven to follow a certain path of development in accordance with this idea or pattern. Just as the higher self and the microcosm drive the personality to a certain development, a certain activity, so a similar great power and inspiration works behind a nation or race.

Modern archaeology has a tendency to value modern culture above that of the peoples it researches, and the history of the Celts is couched only in negative terms. This is mainly because they did not leave any literature or writings behind them. The modern human being cannot believe that there is also a living knowledge! We will return to this later in this chapter.

The current western view of the Celts takes it so much for granted that they were inferior, that in only a very few places can anything positive be read about them. As a result, the film *Gladiator*, for example, includes a battle scene where a tightly organised Roman army defeats a group of Gauls who are portrayed as near-savages.

This view started with the writers of the Classical Period. At the

time, the Roman Empire's urge for expansion was so great that the area around the Mediterranean was no longer sufficient. They had already conquered the northern coast of Africa, and various raids had also been carried out in Persia and the Near East.

Since it was politically advantageous to be a great general, whose success was measured by their ability to return home triumphantly laden with plunder, the commanders also marched northwards to spread the 'advantages' of their civilisation to the northern tribes.

When Roman authors wrote about the Celts and the druids, Celtic culture was already past its prime. The civilisation of the Celts had reached its peak, and was following a downward trend. The end was greatly accelerated by the rising materialism of the Romans, their military insight, and the violence that accompanied it, not so much through their proverbial cruelty as through the relentless energy with which they burned down and destroyed the Celtic environment – the woods. Around 150 BC, the Romans occupied Gaul and the Iberian Peninsula. In 51 BC, they occupied the north of France and the region around the *Île de France* and *Belgica*, which included what is now the Netherlands. In 142 AD, they moved on to England. The remaining druids and Celts then withdrew further into Ireland, where they lived into 500 AD.

II

Julius Caesar's determination that all religious cultures had to be destroyed effectively put an end to the religious and political privileges of the druids. Druidism was branded a dangerous heresy (a well-trying and proven method). The protectors and practitioners of the collected wisdom of thousands of years were outlawed and persecuted as common criminals. As a result, some fled to Great Britain and central Germany, while others withdrew to the foot of the Pyrenees. In spite of this threat the druids continued to be supported and venerated by the local population. Their political and mystical world view struck a chord in the heart of people that remains to this day, and it is no exaggeration to state that their special knowledge has been sorely missed ever since.

However, the Romans did not immediately succeed in wiping out

the druids entirely. From the first to the fifth century AD, for instance, a college of renowned druids lived near Toulouse, whose activities are not known to us. They were finally won over by the teachings and the pure perception of the first Christians, as they spread through Occitania. Here they found a sense of kinship and recognized the glow of a new impulse. It was to the Christians that they passed the torch that they had managed to keep burning for such an unbelievably long time.

After that, druids no longer ventured from their dwellings to the woodland fringe to celebrate their sacred ceremonies, and the beautiful rite of the mistletoe fell into disuse. During this rite, a triangular altar was erected on the grass by a holy oak at the edge of a wood. On each of the three corners a fire burned. Behind the altar, a goblet was placed, containing mistletoe that had been pruned with a golden sickle. Now, the druids no longer gather at their holy places to throw a piece of bread into the goblet and then pour wine over it. Considering this rite, is it any wonder they felt a kinship with original Christianity?

Where did this tradition originate? The Universal Doctrine indicates that the druids were the guardians of ancient wisdom, the origin of which lies in the mists of time before our present Aryan era. It is supposed that they brought civilisation to Gaul, which tends to suggest that they either pre-dated the Celts or were in contact with yet another civilisation.

Celtic civilisation did not express itself in the creation of structures such as buildings or temples – unless we are to include dolmen, generally understood to be large grave stones. The true purpose of stone circles like Stonehenge and Woodhenge, which indicate a sophisticated astronomical knowledge, remains a mystery, as does the reason behind the construction of the cromlechs; a kind of monumental gate of uncut stone, consisting of one or more large stone blocks placed horizontally across two or three vertical ones. Equally mysterious are the forests of stone in Carnac, Brittany, erected in a uniform pattern using vertical stones, menhirs. There are only a few of these constructions, located mainly in the countries inhabited by the ancient Celts. They date from well before the Christian era, being between 3,000 – 6,000 years old. Hardly anything is known of their function and meaning, however.

What modern archaeology tells us is that the druids formed an integrated part of the social structure of Celtic Gaul, in which three strands can be separately identified. Firstly, there are customs and traditions that we generally find in cultures of Indo-European origin. Below that lies a layer that has its foundations in the period of the early Neolithic agricultural peoples, who were merging eastern and western elements from around 5,000 BC onwards. And below that there are the signs of rites and customs of hunter-gatherers, the origin of which may go back a good 20,000 years. The universal wisdom, which deals with the *hidden* history of humanity, tells us that their origin lies back even much further and stems from the times of the lost continent of Atlantis. It is there that we have to look for the source of their hidden knowledge, as well as for the origin of the special link they possessed and maintained with the supernatural.

Recently, at Holme-next-the-Sea – a small village on the coastline of Norfolk, England – a circle of 54 tree trunks was discovered, all of them massive oaks, with an upside down oak tree in the centre, of which the root structure forms what appears to be a kind of table. After Stonehenge, a circle of stones, and Woodhenge, a circle deep in a wood, this circle of wood was baptised Seahenge. It surfaced in 1998, due to the scouring action of the tides and, since it was feared that the circle, exposed after thousands of years of anaerobic concealment underneath the sand, would rot within a few years, it was removed for preservation work, and has subsequently been placed in a museum near its original location. With the help of the growth rings, this circle has been dated at precisely 2050 BC. The central oak was over 150 years old when it fell, most likely as a result of a storm, and the surrounding trees were felled exactly a year later. It is supposed that the central oak served for ceremonial purposes. Is there more to it? Did it mark a sacred site? Was it a focal point where the gods had pulled down a holy oak to make contact with the inhabitants of *Abred*, i.e. this earth? Is it another example of their impressive, lost knowledge? A silent power, touching the heart, issues from the circle of Seahenge.

III

The druids' understanding of flora and fauna and of the medical ap-

plication of plants and herbs was impressive and was based on a deep knowledge of the human system. Today's scant knowledge of Druidism comes to the youth of the twenty-first century in the form of caricatures: Just hearing the word mistletoe can bring cartoon figures to mind. How many people are aware that the druids venerated the mistletoe or bird glue not to concoct a 'magic potion', but for completely different reasons? For the druids, in addition to its valuable therapeutic properties, mistletoe was a symbol of higher life: a plant that never touches the earth, being supported by the life force and the wealth of life of the centuries-old oaks in the holy woods. In the same way, the earthly personality carries the Spirit-Soul of the original human being, which will never want or be able to inhabit this earth!

Mistletoe is a parasite, though not in the full sense of the word. It obtains water from the oak, but does so without endangering the tree and, containing chlorophyll, synthesizes some of its own food. The sages and the priests, who knew and greatly respected the healing power of the mistletoe, regarded it as a gift from another world, the world of the living, a gift from the Circle of *Gwynfyd*. Mistletoe is not dependent on the changing of the seasons. Its berries ripen in the coldest period. It avoids everything that has to do with the earthly cycle. Its leaf growth does not recognise up or down and its form is spherical. The shoots of the mistletoe grow in all directions, unlike those of all other plants. It is directed at perfection, does not relate to the earth, and maintains a special relationship with the light. The wise druids saw in the mistletoe a palpable token of the divine help offered to us human beings, who are of necessity present in the cycle of experience.

The tiny plant grew in gigantic woods comprising thousands of hectares, hosting countless remote places where the clamour of tribal warfare hardly penetrated, where the silence – scarcely disturbed by the rustle of the wind – was endless, and where the violence of rising and falling civilisations passed unnoticed.

Thrushes eat the berries of the mistletoe, and the seeds, unaffected by the rapid digestive process, are left behind, or wiped by beaks on which they have stuck on the branches of other trees, thus spreading the mistletoe from host to host.

These days, how many people still know how to mix from mistletoe

a particularly effective ointment for wounds? Who can competently apply mistletoe as a healing agent for the 'holy' disease, epilepsy? The druids presumably did not know that mistletoe contains polypeptides, viscin, and biogenic aminocholine, but they did know that it helps to reduce high blood pressure and restricts the growth of tumours, having a great capacity to retain light and the warmth of life. Is it any wonder therefore that these holy men and women with their tremendous insight, transcending time and space, and their impressive knowledge of the cosmos regarded this plant as a gift, a universal remedy, originating directly from the 'endless planes' or, as they were sometimes known, 'the land of the living'?

Their knowledge has been lost to present-day humanity. In encyclopaedias, we read that the Celtic religion has a particularly complicated system of animal and war gods, far more colourful than the old Egyptian pantheon, but showing a great deal of similarity to the ancient Hinduism of the Brahmins. Science therefore supposes that both had a common Indo-European origin. In the view of the hidden wisdom, this conclusion is not unjustified, for both have a foundation, a root, that lies much deeper. We should see the faith of the Gallic Celts as flowing from the original, pure wisdom teachings, as well as from a degeneration of these teachings. Already at the beginning of our era, in the first and second centuries, the last of the original druids merged with and blended into the early Christian communities as they arose in the eastern part of the Roman Empire.

This is why some remnants from their teachings (engraved in stone) have been found preserved with the Bogomils of the Balkans and why a few of their ceremonies were inherited and kept alive by the Cathars of Occitania. Much of the knowledge of the art of healing possessed by the higher levels of the *bonshommes* originated in the esoteric sciences, of which the druids possessed the key. Ample signs and figures proving this have remained behind inscribed on rocks, and the same message is contained in the few 'heretic' documents, confiscated and hidden out of the reach of ordinary people, in the libraries of the medieval cloisters and those of the Vatican.

IV

Anyone who has the key, who understands the two nature orders, will be able to recognise this original foundation. He will also recognise that in our society, this esoteric wisdom and special knowledge of God, from which the teachings of the druids stem, will not become a living factor in modern times, even though in 1717 in England, a form of Neo-Druidism was established and officially founded. Photos of men and women walking through London in white garments or gathering at Stonehenge may give a strong impression that modern druids are out of place in our time, even if it is well worth reflecting upon some of their insights.

For the druids, time as we know it did not exist. They only knew recurrence in the changing of the seasons and in the changing of human bodies. Here on the earth of their birth, the first earth, where people must live, regardless of their own will, they live in the circle of necessary changes called *Abred*.

The second circle is called *Gwynfyd*. It is the circle of blessedness, where the striving human beings see their ideal become reality. This is where everything germinates from the One Life, and this is where the human being has a body of light, a light garment.

The third circle is that of *Ceugant*. It is the circle of God, the One, who is in and around everything, who holds everything, who gives life to *everything* living, and who is, without ever becoming less.

In *Abred*, the first circle, the human being has freedom of action but is bound to necessity.

What does this mean? Simply that the human being is free to act, but the consequences of his actions will rebound on him, and these consequences will determine how he can and will be able to proceed further. We recognise in this the ancient law of karma, the law of cause and effect of the Brahmins of prehistoric India: You will reap what you sow. The choice is freedom, the basic human right. The change resulting from this choice can be broadening, but can also be limiting. The choice is forever between good and evil. Choice on the small scale, for oneself, is limitation. The good choice is on the larger scale, the well-being of others, which brings with it moral growth. The morally mature person will never make a choice contrary to the well-

being of others. The more he has realised this moral maturity within himself, the greater his ability to understand the three privileges that will aid him in *Abred*:

- divine aid;
- the privilege of participating in divine love;
- and the ability to act in accordance with God's will, for the purpose of reaching one's own life ideal and the ultimate purpose of all life.

In the same way, his level of moral maturity governs the depth of his understanding of the three necessities that are conditions for inner growth within the earthly circle:

- suffering;
- bearing the changes of fate in silence;
- and freedom of choice, through which one determines above all one's own fate.

With such a robust philosophy, is it any wonder that the Celts were regarded as a proud and courageous people that did not fear death? Would not a Celt, after all, always want to enter the circle of *Gwynfyd* in a new vehicle? In the second circle, the human being does not encounter a static situation, but a new development, higher and loftier. This is where the human being learns to know himself, with no concealment, no veil. He sees and experiences; he becomes one with the origin of his being.

He will regain all his memories of every state of being. His faculty of observation will be unique and entirely unprejudiced. Here he will be able to realise his own ideal completely.

In the circle of *Gwynfyd*, three privileges are granted to the human being:

- freedom from evil;
- freedom from all want and deprivation;
- and freedom from death.

The result is *Awen*, love, life, inspiration. The original Spirit rules and shines in all-embracing love for the one life.

These are some elements of the wisdom kept alive by the druids for

century after century. They were etched as a living knowledge into the independent spirits of the sons of the Celtic nobles. In their well-hidden dwellings in the depth of the sacred woods, they learnt to understand these things and make them their own.

The doctrine of the triads, from which the above is taken, is much more extensive and embraces a great deal more. When you explore it, you will surely do so with a sense of recognition, and you will once again be amazed at the consistent involvement of the Brotherhood with the people of the first circle, the circle of *Abred*.

And yet, in the inexorable rhythm of time, which was so unimportant for them, the curtain fell for this mysterious generation of priests that was so greatly feared by the Romans. Why did they not continue to exist? To understand this, we need to return to the idea that behind every people there is an animating force, which is necessary for the existence of any people. The manner in which the Celts protected and preserved their wisdom was based on oral transmission. The twenty or thirty thousand verses they learned by heart were transmitted in a personal contact from teacher to pupil. The knowledge of the Circle of Blessedness as described above came to them as 'revelation'; they saw its reality intuitively, in visions.

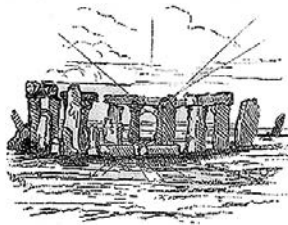
Modern science says that they disappeared because they were not equal to the strategic insight, military supremacy, and technical ingenuity of the Romans, and this is certainly true. However, the ancient wisdom gives another reason, which we consider the more important of the two. Humanity cannot continue to develop when it restricts itself to the passive transmission of the wisdom of centuries, for that keeps the human being dependent. The energy field that had protected human beings for so long now had to let them go, it had to leave them to learn to stand on their own. Each individual human being needed to learn, by himself, from the longing within his own being, out of his own experience, to approach the Divine. In the new period, he had to learn to find God within himself in order to win the soul. At the end of pre-Christian times, the Brotherhood considered that the time was ripe. The human being could do this if he allowed his intellect to be guided by the impulse of universal love, of true brotherhood, arising in his heart. The human being could do this if he used his powers of observation to gain insight into the causes of

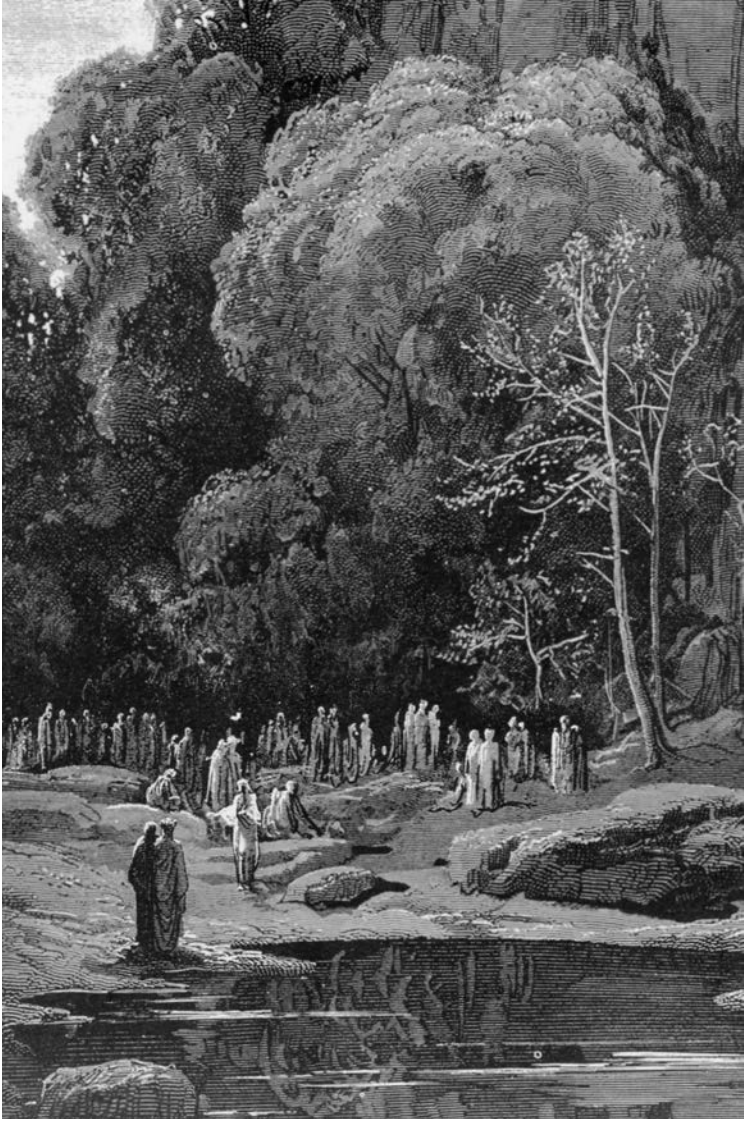
suffering. The human being could do this if he learned to recognise that God, the Divine, exists submerged within him, awaiting the opportunity for regeneration.

This is the change that heralded the end of the Celtic role as guardians of the old wisdom. It was not the Romans who brought about this development. The Romans raised materialism to great heights. They sharpened the intellect by applying it to technical problems, for which they devised excellent solutions. Through sheer determination, they achieved impressive feats of architecture and construction. They built kilometers-long aqueducts; their roads crossed and recrossed much of Europe and Asia Minor. Their passion for earthly beauty and the psychology of the human being was also impressive.

Although they did not have a good feel for the deeper mystery of the human being, they did have a kind of curious interest in it. This can be seen in the enormous number of cults they attracted from all conquered countries. By the time their civilisation fell, there were dozens of them, but nowhere were they accompanied by a mode of life that was in accordance with them.

The first to practise this new lesson of life were the followers of the Nazarene, as they were called at that time, the followers of Yeshua the Crucified, the pupils of Jesus the Lord, as we call him nowadays. When they landed at Marsilia – present-day Marseille – in the first century of our era, they brought the grail and its extraordinarily beautiful wisdom along with them to the land of the setting sun. The druids had already known for quite some time that the end of their cycle was near. They recognised in the early Christians the purity and the beauty of the new ritual, offered by the converted and purified human heart. Knowing that they had brought their centuries-old task to a good end, the druids passed on the torch of inner wisdom.





The Late Repenters, engraving by Gustav Doré for Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Purgatorio, Canto V, 19th century

CHAPTER 4

The Essenes

Over a hundred years before the gospels were first written down and more than two hundred years before the Christian Gnostic schools came into existence, some of the same ideas were alive, in their purest essence, among the Essenes.

The ceremony or ritual equivalent to the Last Supper is used in every church in our time, whether Protestant, Orthodox, or Catholic. This custom was also used by the Essenes. It was adapted from the communion of bread and wine that they called the 'Meal of the Messiah', 'the Meal of the Redeemer' or 'of Redemption'. Jesus lifted the chalice in what was both an Essene and an Egyptian way when he assured his faithful that they would sit at the table with him in the kingdom.

The Manual of Discipline is a preserved Essene text that was among the Dead Sea Scrolls. These scrolls caused a great stir when they were discovered in the period 1947-1956 some twenty kilometers east of Jerusalem at the northwest shore of the Dead Sea. Historians tell us that they must have been the library of a Jewish sect, the Qumran community, whose settlement was nearby. When the Roman army tried to suppress the First Jewish Revolt (66-70 AD), the texts were hidden away there, well preserved in large earthenware jars, deep in the back of the caves of Wadi Qumran.

The Manual of Discipline was found in the first of the eleven caves in which the library was hidden. This text is now generally referred to as the *Community Rule*, and it deals among other topics with ritual purity by immersion, ritual baths, and communal meals. In it, we read, 'When the table is prepared for the meal and the new wine is ready, the priest shall be the first to stretch out his hands and bless the bread, the wine, and the first fruits.' Among the early Christians, the celebrations of the Lord's Supper the *Agapae* or Love Feasts as they

were also sometimes called were the most important events of the year.

Another striking similarity between the Essenes and the first Christians was that they both formed communities with shared possessions, and both felt a deep desire for the New Kingdom that would come.

Just like the Essenes, the church of James the Just (one of the original Christian communities in Jerusalem) called themselves 'the Poor'. Their outward poverty reflected on the one hand their negation of the world and on the other hand the consciousness of being deprived of 'the Spirit, the Comforter'. They focussed the entire aim of their being on this comfort, this immersion, this spiritual 'nourishment' of love, of light.

II

The brotherhood of the Essenes prepared for the new era for several centuries by living lives that were as pure as possible. Like every true current of wisdom, that of the Essenes consisted of an outer and an inner teaching. Centuries of pure and natural living enabled them to see life in its original purity, just as it was at the very beginning of creation. Their goal was to bring about the coming of the Messiah, a teacher, one of the Great Ones, who would bring the kingdom of the Heavenly Father so close that anyone could enter.

As we can gather from the first fifteen lines of the *Community Rule*, in which the ideals of the community are set out, the Essenes seemed to be able to perceive, before their inner eye, human existence in all its original purity, but the world in which the community lived had long since ceased to be pure. The common people only half understood why they were alive, and their lives consisted of work and suffering. The Romans ruled the country. It was neither the first nor the last time that the Jewish people were subjects of a foreign power. All this made it very difficult for them to express their very special spiritual nature.

In the Judea of the pre-Christian era, there were three groups of some significance. The Jewish historian Flavius Josephus wrote about this:

For there are three philosophical sects among the Jews. The followers of the first of which are the Pharisees; of the second, the Sadducees, and the third, which pretends to a severe discipline, are called the Essenes.

The Pharisees formed the strict and austere priesthood, following both the Torah, or written law, and the oral law given by Moses at Mount Sinai. They taught that everything was under divine control but that God had provided everyone with the ability to choose between good and evil. They believed in the physical resurrection of the dead and a coming day of judgment followed by reward or punishment. They had many followers and great popular influence.

The second sect, the Sadducees, formed an elite group of learned men of law who rejected the oral law of Moses and accepted only the Torah, the five books attributed to Moses, also known as the Pentateuch. They did not believe in an afterlife, as it was not mentioned in the Torah. According to them, God did not occupy himself with either good or evil, and nothing like predestination existed. The Sadducees were wealthy men who loved debate. They were very assertive in discussions and vehement in their skirmishes with others.

Together, these two groups had a strong grip on social life, and the rules and regulations contained in the sacred scriptures played a dominant and stifling role.

Judea was a province of the Roman Empire, and the Romans tended to look down upon the Jewish population. They disliked the hot and dusty country, fertile only along the banks of the river Jordan. The province was forced to accept the Roman authority and pay very high taxes, but the population was allowed to retain its own religious beliefs and follow its own laws, provided that they did not conflict with key Roman laws. The most important Roman law was that the provincial population could not apply the death penalty.

Incidentally, that was why Jesus, although arrested by the order of the highest Jewish court, had to be condemned to death by the Roman governor of the country before he could be executed.

The Essenes, the third group, were a closed community with goals that were largely spiritual. Their aim was purity, based on the concept that a human being exists from two principles: the principle of the light, of the Living God; and the principle of the world of darkness,

the adversary who must steal the light from humanity in order to maintain his existence turned away from the light.

By living lives that were as pure as possible, the Essenes liberated themselves from the restrictions imposed by the two principles. As a group, they enjoyed the respect of the population but were regarded with suspicion by the ruling class of priests and men of law. As in the school of Pythagoras, their first test was silence, and they did not eat the flesh of slaughtered animals. They gave their possessions to the community and lived a simple life of manual labour, study, and contemplation. Their attitude of life was without compromise, and their abilities as healers were undeniable.

In those days, a community offered stability and protection, and they lived simply, maintaining a subsistence lifestyle. They would eat in silence and customarily rose at dawn. Every day, starting before dawn, they would devote themselves to study and would commune with the empowering forces of nature, following Moses' original law that he gave to the children of Israel. They would bathe themselves in cold, pure water as a ritual. They worked in the fields, on the mountain slopes, and in the vineyards. They were vegetarians and did not drink alcohol. They also spent time in study, inner contemplation, making music – several musical instruments have been found, in healing the sick, on the healing science of plants, in communal activities, and in teaching. Their 'holy day', the Sabbath, began on Friday evening.

For almost four centuries, from 300 BC to 100 AD, they lived in a world that had turned away from the light, but one that was not as yet so condensed into matter as it is now. Among their contemporaries, the Essenes were known for their great strength and power of endurance. Again, according to Josephus, they were 'an independent race by themselves, more remarkable than any other in the world'; they were 'the oldest of the initiates, receiving their teachings from Central Asia', and their 'teaching had been perpetuated since time immemorial'.

The inner teachings of the Essenes did not come solely from Moses and Enoch. They were also inherited from a much earlier tradition of holy men and women who had never forgotten their connection with

the light, with the original nature. They were the successors of the Chaldean priests and Persian sages who studied the stars. Although their main centre was close to the Dead Sea, near the river Jordan, their communities also existed in Syria and many other countries. In Egypt, they were referred to as the Therapeutae. They lived on the banks of rivers and lakes, always in the form of communities. They kept no slaves, and they held no personal possessions, recognising neither riches nor poverty, but each devoted everything to the service of the entire group. As a consequence, each was duly supported by the entire group. Many teachers were sent out by the Essenes, and the impeccable life of these teachers was an example and often a vexation to those who were unable, yet, to commit to the Essene way of life, but trusted in its results. John, who was called 'the Baptist', may have been an Essene.

III

Via a complicated line of descent and preparation, the Essenes were in the line of Levi, who was referred to as a priest in the order of Melchizedek. As soon as we speak of this order, we know that we are connected with the very first Brotherhood of the Light, which accompanied humanity on its long way through the world of opposites. Therefore, it is written in the sacred language:

This 'King Melchizedek of Salem, priest of the Most High God, met Abraham as he was returning from defeating the kings and blessed him' [...]. His name, in the first place, means 'king of righteousness'; next he is also king of Salem, that is, 'king of peace'. Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God, he remains a priest for ever.

And in another Dead Sea Scroll text, he is referred to as a leader of God's angels in an ongoing heavenly battle, combatting the angels of darkness (instead of the more familiar Archangel Michael):

And the Day of Atonement is the end of the tenth Jubilee, when all the Sons of Light and the men of the lot of Melchizedek will be atoned for.

[..] For this is the moment of the Year of Grace for Melchizedek. And he will, by his strength, judge the holy ones of God, executing judgement as it is written concerning him in the Songs of David, who said, Elohim [here referring to Melchizedek according to the author of the scroll] has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods he holds judgement. [Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*]

The Essenes were the Sons of Light, originally descendants of Levi, priests of Melchizedek. In the Ark was the covenant of the Brotherhood of the Light with the people. It was the men of Levi who carried the famous Ark of the Covenant through the desert to the Promised Land.

The covenant – this was the promise of the light, and the promise was that the Expected One, the Messiah, Christ, would come from within their people. And the Essenes as a group would, in a manner of speaking, disappear again after the appearance of the Expected One and become ‘people of the Way’. They would become his followers for through him, all would be changed because the light thrusts all values out of their former context and brings completely new relationships and justice. This is why he who would come would also be called a ‘just one’ or a ‘teacher of righteousness’, for Melchizedek was this as well: king of righteousness. And to bring this king nearer or rather, to bring this spiritual atmosphere of a new justice, there were the Essenes. Jesus was not necessarily an Essene. The Essenes lived so purely, as purely as possible to prepare the spiritual way, a spiritual atmosphere, to form a group that was pure and devoted. Then ‘his coming’ would be justified also. That Jesus was finally ‘coincidentally’ born in the southern region near Bethlehem is therefore of little regard: His parents were probably closely affiliated with the Essenes and lived according to their principles.

When we read the inspired books about that exceptional life of this so extraordinary man, then the entire heart opens. Then it is possible to inhale the particular spiritual essence in unison, and so we read with the heart. It is a life example, this life of the Expected One, and the Rosicrucians speak of Jesus as of a ‘prototype’ of the life of the soul!

When the special body of ‘the Expected One’ came into the world, it was finally possible that the highest possible vibration of the spirit of

the light Christ was able to develop and 'build a home' therein. This was the fulfilment of the spiritual expectation of the group of the Essenes; for this reason, they were chosen: so that the long-Expected One would be able to arise from among them.

Jesus personally, sitting on a mountain, gave his audience a new law, the law of love, recorded in the Sermon on the Mount, which you can read in the Gospel of Matthew, chapters 5 through 7, portions of which are also found in Luke, such as in the Sermon on the Plain in Luke 6:17-49. By understanding and following the guidelines in the Sermon, you will be able to leave the old law behind and allow entry to the law of love of the new soul, which may resound within you as light, as pre-remembrance, and as your conscience. This Sermon on the Mount, spoken by Jesus and reflecting the highest essence of Essene life, can also be perceived as the light giving the new soul its first lessons.

This new soul is not an improved version of the old soul but a completely new being that can only be born from the Rose-of-the-Heart, the germ of the true being, which we have received from the light and carry around within us as human beings of this world.

And while Jesus taught on this mountain, he not only gave the life lessons for the most advanced ones in the Age of Pisces, of the Fishes, but at the same time for the new period, which dawns in our time and which we call the Age of the Water Bearer, Aquarius.

To clarify this, Jesus placed against the 'you must' of the old law the 'but I say to you' of the new soul, the soul he fully is. The old, earthly human being rightly tries to curb his aggressions. 'You shall not kill' said the stone tablets of Moses in the Old Testament.

The new human being in whom the soul comes alive, however, does not know aggression. He is at rest; he moves along with the energies that flow in from the divine nature. How could he be angry anyway? He truly has no personal interests! He stands in the creative power of the All and lives out of that, similar to the rays of the sun and their connection to the sun.

The new soul does not hanker after other people's possessions. This urge is no longer a part of its being. It longs to be able to work together with the powers of the divine nature and thus to make 'the kingdom' a reality in itself and in others.

The new human being does not need to occupy himself with honesty. His words and deeds flow forth from the fact that he conforms totally to the laws of the light; he stands in the truth, and he is true.

The old human being lives according to the principle of 'an eye for an eye' and 'a tooth for a tooth'. The new human being, however, does not know retaliation. Should he react to evil with evil, then he himself would first of all have to be part of that; in that case, he would not be moving with the divine and thus not be a new human being!

'Love your enemies', Jesus said to the new soul. The human being of the old nature loves his friends and hates his enemies. The new soul, however, loses itself in the divine love and cooperates with this power. It does not differentiate between people who serve its purposes or who just sabotage it.

After all, the true evil is ignorance. Jesus said on the cross of those who crucified him, 'Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing'. Where the light shines, the darkness disappears and thus, the evil.

Light is love.

Light is insight.

The light of the new soul being is impersonal and for everyone without exception. When the old human being gives something, he usually speculates about his own benefit. But the new soul gives from the fullness of its new powers and characteristics because it cannot do otherwise. Its life is giving, to give away what it receives from the spiritual life. Therefore, it can only give the divine only-good. The more it gives, the greater its joy. Whoever is able to do this experiences the heavenly law that came from Hermes: Receive everything; relinquish everything, and through that, renew everything.

The old human being focussed on his ego continuously worries about his life, his possessions, his future. And rightly so! For everything in his earthly existence is being constantly affected and assailed and will disappear eventually. The new soul lives out of the fullness of God and stands consciously in the energy streams that flow out of this source. It does not need to worry that this source will ever be depleted. It fulfils its obligations in the world when being faced with them, and it

does this with consideration of the laws of the earthly nature, but it will harm no one, nor seek its own advantage.

It realizes that it is unable to add one day to its own life.

The earthly human being is constantly criticizing. After all, he has his standards! He has been taught how people and things ought to be and to which requirements they must conform. And he measures his own attitude by these requirements and standards. The new soul sees things and people as they really are, not hampered by restrictive judgements of others. Therefore, it has no prejudices. Its judgement is just like the eye, which itself is without colour, just observes all colours. The new soul does not bother its fellow human being with ideas, standards, criticism, or guidelines. It is available for everyone and helps everyone in their quest for 'the kingdom'. This living out of the new soul with its beautiful characteristics is within reach of everyone if they open the heart and want to follow the soul's longing. And whoever walks on this road will make a great, new discovery. It begins to dawn on him that he is steadily less and at a certain moment, no longer to be defined by and in the movement of opposites. He becomes free; he breathes once more in the clear atmospheres of spirit life and overcomes all anxiety, worry, and fear with all their consequences because he gradually recognizes, sees through, and understands.

In the new soul, truth is working, that is, the new law as a measure of its insight. It recognizes what is true and untrue. It distinguishes what flows towards it out of 'the kingdom' and what arises out of the self-interest of people. It does not boast about its capabilities but lets them speak for themselves.

Being after all represented by Jesus – the new soul is the 'light of the world' and 'the salt of the earth', which presently are so extremely necessary to put human development on the right track and to keep it there. In the new soul, God's spirit is active.

This is the greatest joy in the cosmos.

And so it turns out that the history of the light is a very different one than the history as told by the 'conquerors' or as the 'churches' are telling it, and it follows different paths and a very different pattern. ~

PART II

TIMES OF CHANGE



Seal with a Gnostic depiction of Abraxas. About second century AD

CHAPTER 5

What is Gnosis?

In a book dealing with the living Gnosis, which one could define as the ever-flowing, liberating stream or current of wisdom of all ages, a closer definition of the concept 'Gnosis' cannot be omitted. All the more so because we will discuss in some depth a few of the groups and individuals who, in our era, have endeavoured to spread and give depth to this Gnosis as a living knowledge of the heart and to make it known to their fellow human beings.

These words already encapsulate a significant part of its meaning. 'Knowledge of the heart' is in stark contrast to 'knowledge of the head'. In the twenty-first century, knowledge is often strictly intellectual, controllable (others must be able to readily reach the same conclusion when researching the same thing), and does not permit sentiment or the weighing of feelings. Intellectual knowledge is important; it is indispensable for technical and logistical purposes. There would be no cars on the road and no premature baby would survive without the results of this intellectual knowledge. We could die of pneumonia or some other minor ailment, were there no simple yet very important medicines to prevent this.

But when it comes to the why and wherefore of life, the beauty and the depth of life, then the knowledge of the head advances the true seeker no further. It cannot do so, no matter how much people try with the scientific method, thus with the mind, to grasp the secrets of this life. The reason for this is not so difficult to understand. It is evident in the fact that life is more than the mind. A small child understands this spontaneously, entirely from within, because it exists and lives fully from the heart. However, this is not the same thing as Gnosis.

Life is full of powerful events. Sometimes they leave the human heart totally indifferent. At other times, they move the heart strongly.

And such impressive moments can occur even though we do not lift a finger, even when we take no action, and they can change our entire world view in a flash. This is because the essential issues of life happen in our innermost being, in those areas where thinking does not operate, or rather, where thinking alone has no access, because the inner life, by definition, is experienced with the heart.

We may have numerous images in our heads, and many people take this to be a kind of inner life. Yet if we take a closer look at ourselves, we discover that what we have in our heads consists mostly of fragments, ideas that may carry a 'trace' of feeling, but that generally contain no real life. In the simple, purified heart, another kind of knowledge can arise. There, a living soul will experience its first beginning. There, a bridge can be built to the Gnosis or a link made with it.

What really is Gnosis? In the words of Jan van Rijckenborgh:

Originally, the Gnosis was a summary of the primal wisdom, the combination of all knowledge that pointed directly to the original, divine life. In this way, the divine wisdom was and still is brought to humanity, and the way was shown to those wanting to return to the original Fatherland.

Valentinus, one of the most important Gnostics of antiquity, said:

Gnosis is liberation of the inner being, not from the body, because the body is perishable; it is not psychic, because even the soul is of the perishable, the transient [...]. Therefore, liberation is pneumatic, that is, of the spirit. Thus through Gnosis, the inner spiritual human being is born, so that for us, the Gnosis of the universal being is sufficient. And that is the true liberation.

And Theodotus, who lived in Asia Minor, wrote around the year 150, 'A Gnostic is someone who has learnt to understand who we were, what we have become, and where we are at now, whereto we are so hastily heading, of what we are being set free, what birth is, and what re-birth means.'

Looking at this, we see that it does not suffice to say merely that Gnosis is 'knowledge of the heart'. For every human being has a

heart, and all human beings have particular feelings in their heart – some people are full of them – but very few people experience the power of the Gnosis in their inner being.

The first step in this knowledge, this Gnosis, is the recognition of being separated from the 'original kingdom'. This implies that the world in which humanity now lives is not the original kingdom, and therefore we can speak of (at least) two worlds: the original kingdom and a 'foreign' land. To this 'foreign' land also belongs the so-called 'heaven', a kind of reflection sphere, mirroring everything on earth, that region where the soul is thought to go when a person dies.

The schools of the Gnostics also used the concept of body, soul, and spirit, just like the official Church. The body did not raise a lot of controversy; after all, it dies, which proves its mortality. The great difference between the two systems lies in the concept of the soul. The established Church thought and still thinks that the soul cannot die but is moved to heaven or hell to remain there forever. The Gnostics rejected this. The earthly soul, with its emotions, its imperfections, and everything that plays a part in this, is mortal, because it has been built up by the (seven) 'nature' powers. And within this, the Gnostics assure us, lies enclosed one spark of the Spirit (thus, of the Father), also known as the *pneuma*. This is the only immortal element of or in the human being. The Church did not see it like this. At a certain moment, it even discarded the 'spirit' in relation to the human being, acknowledging only the body and the soul.

And this spark, this *pneuma*, has become entirely unaware of itself. It virtually no longer knows that it exists! It is 'benumbed, asleep, kept unconscious by the poison of the world' (the forces of nature): it is, in one word, 'ignorant'.

For, as the *Gospel of Truth* from around 145 AD, also from the school of Valentinus, assures us:

Forgetfulness did not exist with the father, although it existed because of him. What exists in him is knowledge, which was revealed so that forgetfulness might be destroyed and that the father might be known. Since forgetfulness existed because the father was not known, if the father comes to be known, from that moment on forgetfulness will cease to exist.

It is a knowledge that destroys ignorance, just as darkness disappears when a light is lit. This is Gnosis. How can we (learn to) know the Father anew?

Through what emanates from him. And it emanates from him in order to search for what has been lost.

This is what the Gnostics called the Son, Jesus, who has been 'liberated'. A particularly consoling thought is that this 'knowing' is fully mutual. The moment a human being knows the Father again, he is known by the Father. This is why the letter to the Corinthians about love can certainly be called Gnostic. Paul says (in 1 Corinthians 13:12):

For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face [because the divine in the human being has become perfect]. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.

Thus, we are able to establish that a true Gnostic movement has a number of characteristics. First of all, it brings a *liberating religion*, a religion that reunites the heart or rather the spark, the *pneuma*, in the heart with the Father. Secondly, it is *transcendental*, not because it is mysterious, but because it literally 'transcends the senses', for the senses are part of the seven forces of nature and not from the Father, who cannot be known by the head but is first known by the heart. This is what is meant by 'knowledge of the heart'. Thirdly, a movement that is truly based in the living current of the Gnosis transcends the ordinary, knowable world. It points at a wholly other world: Thus, it teaches *the principle of the two nature orders*. And finally, fourthly, it is an individual and very personal affair. Nobody can liberate another person; that is to say, every human being can only find, confirm, and realise liberation in their own being, while each one voluntarily connects himself to it in group-unity.

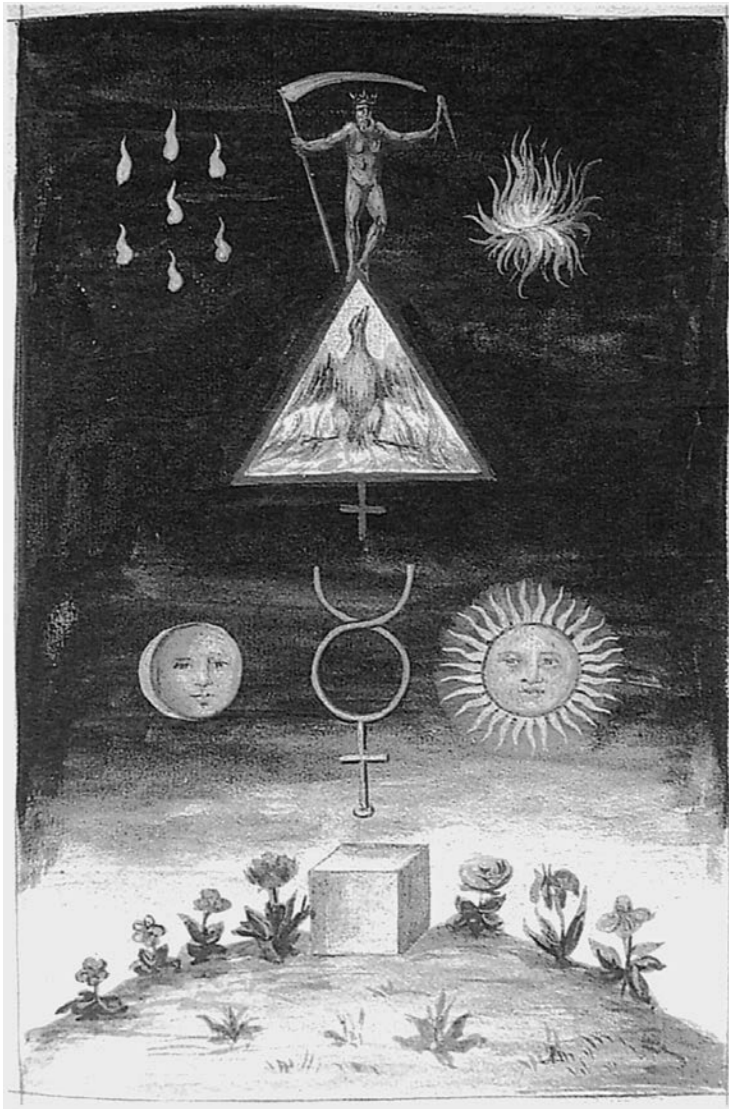
These characteristics are found in any of the many Gnostic movements that existed in the first centuries of our era. They also form the absolute basic principle, the foundation, of the School of the Rosycross. Every truly Gnostic movement answers the universal questions in its own way: Human being, who are you? Where do you come

from? How do you obtain knowledge? Where are you going? Whoever is able to understand this understands the principle with which the great ones of the (Gnostic) spirit have always started, and we shall encounter this in many variations on the following pages.

At present, there are many authors who write about the Gnosis. A very accessible and clearly written book that at the same time provides an overview and gives many quotations from the Nag Hammadi scriptures is, for example, *The Gnostic Gospels* by Elaine Pagels. ↪



Illustration of the ouroboros, the world snake, which represents unending return. Third century BC. The Bollingen Foundation, New York City.



Hermetic-chemical depiction of the rebirth of the phoenix liberated from the old forces of Saturn. From a manuscript from 1760. Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica, Amsterdam.

CHAPTER 6

Hermes Trismegistus

Hermes the Thrice Great

Already in antiquity, Hermes was regarded as the sage who approached everything from a different perspective, who turned everything around. This became a major bone of contention between the proto-orthodox Christians within early Christianity and the Gnostics of Alexandria. To the former, Christ was a human being and at the same time the Son of God who had been born on earth in something as insignificant as a human body, afterwards returning to his Father's house in heaven.

To the so-called Gnostics, the Christ was the mysterious force sent down by the Creator, the Father of Lights. This one light penetrates right through all the (invisible) spheres of the earth to where the human being is wearing himself out and where scores of powerful, often violent forces, mostly invisible, try to hold him captive in all sorts of ways.

Yet this same human being continues to long for light, for a way out, for liberation. He renews his attempts time and again to overcome what holds him back, with vigour and esprit, but each attempt ends in failure with iron regularity. The Gnostics – and with them Hermes – attributed this to the influence of the aeons, twelve principles that have the whole world under their control. Together with their helpers, the archons (literal translation 'the rulers'), they try to prevent the escape of any original light soul from their sphere of power. How very often human beings are robbed of their light power! In Hermes' vision, the aeons' intention is not to maltreat or make man ill, rather, there exists an organised plan to keep human beings busy day and night, from youth to old age and from cycle to cycle: to continuously inspire them with new desires, new tasks they need to complete and things for which they feel responsible, and this to such an extent that

they simply find no time for the eternal, original flame or soul.

They called this soul the *nous*, the one that is. When someone finally finds that time, when he finally begin to question the meaning of life, then the archons show him, through experience, that he is an earthly being, completely ruled by the senses. If he nevertheless perseveres in his longing to link the spirit flame with its origin, then new (dream) images will be presented to him by the archons: Power and fame, for instance, are brought within his reach. 'Aim for this; develop yourself', they suggest.

Should he, notwithstanding, continue to set his hopes on liberation, the one thing necessary, then the aeon forces start working on the soul. Then they try to make him change the direction of his striving. If he is susceptible to this temptation, then he will be persuaded to invest all his energy into illusions, into building castles in the air, evoked for him in the twelve spheres of the aeons. Again, he can barely escape from this, and the end threatens. Despair brings him to the edge of the abyss. But 'if you are discouraged, still take courage', as we hear Jesus say in the Gnostic Gospel of Mary. The other, the *nous*, is *not* of this world and certainly not of the invisible half of it either.

And thus it is also in the human being. The other is not of the body, neither of the earthly soul, nor of the organs ruled by the twelve aeons (or the forces active in the signs of the zodiac). 'Still take courage' for the Christ has broken through all these forces. And moreover, he has weakened the fatal force of these powers. In the Gnostic Gospel of Pistis Sophia, it says that he took away one third of their forces and turned them to the left, except those of the Thirteenth Aeon, which he had created for the sake of salvation. Its pure force, which wants to liberate the spiritual from the earthly (from the captivity of the body), has been strengthened even more by the power of the Christ.

Already since the beginning of the seventeenth century, it has been known that the Hermetic texts could not originate from one source. Thinkers from the first centuries of Christianity tried to bring the ancient Egyptian ideas or, rather, the ideas that were popular in dynamic and effervescent Alexandria into agreement with the new insight that Christ signified salvation. In their work on the *Corpus Hermeticum*, Roelof van den Broek and Gilles Quispel wrote:

No hermetic writing can be dated with certainty. The Platonic ideas apparent in the Hermetica only received their specific form after the revival of Platonism in the first century before Christ. It is hard to imagine that the strong influence of Jewish esoteric speculation on *Poimandros* (also often referred to as *Pymander*) continued after the virtually complete downfall of Alexandrian Jewry during the Jewish rebellion of 115-117 AD, which means that this manuscript most likely originates from the first century after Christ. So many Hermetic works appear to have been in circulation around 300 AD that we may assume the majority of the treatises of the *Corpus Hermeticum* to have originated between the first and third centuries AD.

The Hermetic Christians continued as before to reflect on the value of the Jewish, old Egyptian, and Greek-Platonic wisdom, and, according to scholars, all three of these spheres of influence can be traced in the *Corpus Hermeticum*. The small groups studying Hermeticism in Egypt did not stop at a Christ who had solved the world problem for all people when he died on the cross. That was a later (Roman) view, a view that turned into dogma. For the Hermeticists, there was a direct connection between the human being, Christ, and the cosmos and it was the task of every human being who seeks true happiness, true salvation of the soul, to solve this riddle.

Once the riddle has been solved, Hermes, like the person of Christian Rosycross or Jesus, becomes a symbolic figure, indicating a certain type of human being, one who is on the verge of a wholly new understanding. In those earliest centuries after Christ, there were Hermetic communities that gathered together and held 'brotherhood' meals, a beautiful tradition also found among the Essenes. Similar was the 'agape' or early Christian meal of love of which images can be found in the catacombs of Rome. Such events have a sacred character, and it is likely that during their gatherings, the Gnostics gave expression to their idea of an 'offering', in the spiritual sense, in the form of song. Several of their hymns have been preserved in the form of texts.

II

A typical Hermetic question is, for example (quoting from Jan van Rijckenborgh's *The Egyptian Arch Gnosis, Book 4*, page 65):

Why do you possess a body? Is it so that you can kick your heels here for a few years, going through trouble and strife of every possible variety, and to pursue some career in society, to keep your head above water, only to die in the end? And so that you can spend all those years just drowning in your nerve-ether, in evil? Just fighting and struggling? Is that the aim of your life?

Why does the human being have a physical form? Hermes said that the body is an instrument. It is even a *property* of the soul. This is not a comfortable thought; it requires deep consideration. Property is subject to ownership. The human being, he therefore implied, has a body that must ultimately act in the service of the soul, as a servant of the soul. Hermes thus turned the question around: not a body with perhaps a soul, depending on the scientific point of view, no: The body is a property of or stems from the soul! The body has become so crystallized that it knows nothing of this any longer, but in many places, the universal wisdom says: First there is a soul, an ensoulment, and then a body. A wandering microcosm, on its infinite journey through the no-man's-land between death and a new life, unites once again with a child, that is, a completely new child enters the microcosm.

Imagine: A child is born. It is entirely new, entirely original, full of life, wholly open and direct. It is endearing and sparkling at the same time and at times, also annoying. A little child like this knows nothing and yet it can often react in a remarkable way; very quickly it learns to talk and make amusing remarks; it can have such a cute look in its eyes, etc. And one could say that it has a freshly washed, original soul but is nevertheless unable to live in the original divine nature. And now, this soul, via the body, comes into contact with dialectical nature. Must the whole process described above start all over again?

What happened to the previous soul? It has been washed away completely in the process that takes place between the last death and the new life, the new birth. But the momentum, the train, continues. The

Amsterdam station has been left behind; now the train is in Utrecht, and you, the passenger, have forgotten about Amsterdam, and you learn all about Utrecht. But after that, the train moves on again, and when it arrives at Maastricht, it turns back. It serves no purpose at all if you do not get off, out of the train, out of the station into the free world. Just like a trip by train is not travelling the whole country, your course of life is not the whole of life. The full life is after all *sevenfold*.

From a certain point of view, this is not so difficult to understand. In the fourth book of *The Egyptian Arch-Gnosis*, page 65, Jan van Rijckenborgh explained this. He wrote there that every person as a soul entity (actually meaning, as a person who is really a soul being) is subjected to a *dictatorship* of the bodily being, the bodily figure. And now comes the crucial point: Will this new being, this child with that original soul, during its development be able to keep on struggling against the getting accustomed to what comes with age, or will it allow itself to follow the line of least resistance?

The microcosm repeatedly hands the original soul to the new child, and up to now, this original soul usually retreats into the background in favour of the natural soul. A natural soul cannot live forever because the dialectical life ultimately suffocates it; it becomes so full and heavy from all that happens to it and everything it longs for. If the same thing happens again in this life, then the human being goes exactly the same way as his predecessors. If this is not the case and the human being continues to resist the life of blind obedience to all that the body dictates, then at a certain moment, there is a tremendous opportunity. Then the human being will experience the moment of grace in which he begins to understand something of this state of affairs in which head and heart understand something of that new soul. And at that same moment, he changes from belonging to *one* world into an inhabitant of *two* worlds, and he can be and work in the world in an absolutely new way.

A young personality is normally full of life energy and is very eager to learn: It just wants to know how everything works, how it is made up, including itself. And such a human being is eager to learn because he cannot be satisfied with his present situation and with the way he is at present. 'What am I doing here? Who am I?' are questions that occupy

him at a certain moment. Possibly, he is also eager to learn about the nature of the ideas offered by the teachings of the universal wisdom. 'What is a soul? Why does Hermes turn things around? Why does he say that there is a soul and a physical form, but the soul comes first? What is meant by, The body is a property of the soul, and, when all is well, the servant of the soul?' These are not the easiest questions, but he tries to think about them.

Now imagine that the human personality is not the only thing in the microcosm that needs to learn. Think back to that little child, born with an original soul. This child does not want to be loaded with all the things dialectical life brings to it. The original soul within it – the flame of the Gnostics – is not waiting for this, but it has no choice. A little child must grow. Ultimately, it reaches adulthood and wants to be in charge of its own life. The odds are high that by its eighteenth or twentieth birthday, it no longer even knows that there was ever anything like an original soul – a soul that it may have experienced very clearly in its younger years. Nowhere have we found such an apt description of this as in the book *Jeugd* ('Youth') written in 1940 by the Flemish author Ernest Claes:

I longed for something; I did not know what, but it existed, somewhere. [...] In those years, a child can long painfully for happiness, complete happiness. A child can be very happy, totally, nothing but happiness, in such a way that it will never experience again in later life. As soon as understanding has come to a person, then even in his most wonderful moments there will always be something that engages that person, coming from far or near, from others, from himself, from the past or from the future, which dampens his bliss. But a child can lose itself completely in its joy, just as the grief of a child can be complete, all-encompassing. We have no device in ourselves to measure either the longing or the sorrow of a child, because in our most grievous moments, we have some other thing ahead or with us, even if it is just an ordinary task or duty that alleviates the sorrow, preventing its full impact. A child does not have this. It fully surrenders to its sorrow without reasoning. This is why the sorrow of children is so true and so great. The lost toy about which it is crying was for the child one hundred percent of its happiness. It is gone, and there is one hundred percent sorrow.

The longings that can go through a child's soul can be so overwhelming that they press on its heart like a heavy load, in the face of which it feels its complete powerlessness, becoming silent and sorrowful. This cannot be fully explained by physical ailments; the child can be in perfect health, inwardly and outwardly.

Look at little tousle-hair, one moment charging noisily through the garden and the next moment sitting against a tree, staring ahead, and all of a sudden, there are tears in his eyes. His father passes by and says, 'Why are you crying?' And tousle-hair sobs, 'I don't know.' 'Then you mustn't cry!'

Of course, he does not know. In the language of little tousle-hair, there are no words to express it; there are not even thoughts for it. And yet, tousle-hair must cry in sorrow. Not only the past but also the future throw shadows over our inner being.

During the time a child passes from being purely a child to the understanding of life, a reformation and a hardening take place in its soul, and the last wing beat of the white angel touches its soul. The child looks back, and its heart cries, 'I don't know.'

These sorrows and joys are wiped out and fade from our memory.

How well this illustrates what we are writing about. How often, in such a case, is the original soul too weak to play a role in the life of that human being? When will 'the wing of the white angel' touch him again? Perhaps hopefully it may happen with such a person that at a certain time, an undivided joy, a total gladness, or a heavy shock in life sets that 'other' soul to move, to vibrate again. It can also happen that through a particularly favourable circumstance, the young human being has continued listening to the wholly other in him, or to put it more strongly, that right through everything, a certain longing, possibly even a great longing, has continued to speak in him, a kind of knowledge that tells him, 'It is good for you to grow up, to learn how to use and apply everything in this world, but *allow me to learn, too!*' This knowledge says, 'Do not forget that there is still another layer, another level, on which you have to learn.' This cannot be expressed in words because it lies deep below the surface. It resides deep within the human being. It is certainly there, though only a beginning. This is the original soul with which he started and which

makes everything possible, has made everything possible. It is this that provides the human being with *everything* that he needs to live.

For example: the heart beat.

For example: the breath.

For example: the ability to hear, to speak, to see.

For example: the ability to experience beauty, even to recognise gradations of beauty and finally: the ability to perceive *light*, to respond to it, and to start building with it.

It is breathtaking to penetrate into these thoughts. Only consider all that the original soul gives to the human being at the beginning of his journey, his unique and, moreover, only life. At the outset, he is supplied with all the attributes to live a decent life. With them, he starts his learning process *and he continues to learn*. In this way, the original soul has done nothing less than to give itself captive to the human being! It cannot do otherwise, as it is presently too weak to live independently in its own life fields. This is its only possibility. The human being on this earth is its only opportunity.

This is what Hermes meant with, 'First the soul, then the body'. For the flame of the soul is the beginning. But he also meant: This body, this human being, must not merely fill itself with the things of this life. It would be so wonderful if the human being could resist the dictatorship of the earth, of the body. For then, an entirely new development could start. For in spite of all the gifts it receives, the bodily form (read: the human being, the personality) cannot be satisfied or happy in and with its life when it does not place itself fully in the service of the soul. The human being will never be complete as long as he does not realise that *the original soul* also needs to learn, must also undergo a certain schooling, must develop in a certain way.

What is it that the soul must learn? It must learn once again everything that it has given to the human being. Thus, it first has to learn to recognise its heartbeat: that is to 'open the rose'. Then it must learn how to breathe again. Then it must begin to observe: I exist. Fourthly, it then has to become conscious of the beauty of the world of light from which it has come, and finally, it will build a completely new body with the light from within itself and from the original realm, which completely surrounds it. Then the circle is closed. Then the ori-

ginal figure is resurrected in the microcosm. And the body, the human being who has offered the soul this opportunity will merge with the other one in complete and perfect happiness. And in an unprecedented way, it can, while living and working in today's society, liberate power and light on earth for all other human beings who experience the need for it.

Thus, the modern Rosycross indicates the soul as *Jesus* and interprets the Bible in the same way. The School of the Rosycross usually means 'the new soul' when it mentions 'Jesus' and rarely the historical person.

When we consider the Biblical stories, we see that Jesus was always teaching his disciples or the people, showing his audience how things fit together. John, on the other hand, is depicted as someone who directed people to 'one who is coming after' him, as it is written. John pointed to Jesus while Jesus always pointed again to the original light and linked the human being with the power of the original life. His whole life is a luminous example of a soul being.

Is this not normal Christianity? After all Hermes never mentioned Jesus? What then is Gnostic or Hermetic about this? The answer lies in the immediate applicability of it in our own life. The power from the original, universal life can be experienced directly in our own life, can be active in it, because the microcosm through its origin in the distant past is made out of it. This Jesus is not outside the microcosm. That would make no sense at all. The best pop star has more influence on many teenagers than the figure of Jesus as a helping outsider. *In modern times, Christ can become the highest, most divine aspect of consciousness within the microcosm.* Its pure, intact etheric soul can be designated as 'Jesus', and 'John' is the aspect of the human personality that lives in the expectation of 'the other, who is to come' and that knows very well that he, as a person of flesh and blood, is not of the original kingdom.

John spoke of himself as someone calling in the desert of earthly existence. He said to make straight the way for the one coming after him, who was greater than him. It is not so that John lived before Jesus. No, it is said that they grew up together. For instance, there are many well-known paintings where the two are depicted as children

playing together. In a certain way, they belong together. One could say that by Jesus is meant the original soul and by John, the type of human being who wants to do something for that soul, who wants to open possibilities for it or, to quote Hermes, the bodily figure that does not bow before the dictatorship of the earth.

That figure of John possibly stands the closest to us. Perhaps you would say that we are no longer journeying through the desert, but we should not forget that we can only understand the meaning of these things when we can see them as special symbols. In the Bible, we find, so to speak, a blueprint for the process of the soul. The present era began close to the year of the birth of Jesus. John and Jesus began their lives nearly at the same time. So it is with the human being. At the beginning of his own personal era, both of them are present in the human being. Both are still young, and without help, they cannot grow. John grows up, and Jesus grows up. Does this also apply to the human being? Do they remain friends – or does the one forget the other? When all is well, we recognise something of John in our own being. And we also recognise something of that longing that makes him look forward to a soul-being whom he regards as being much greater than himself, whom he sees as the light of the world. John came, as the Bible tells us, to testify of the light. He was not that light.

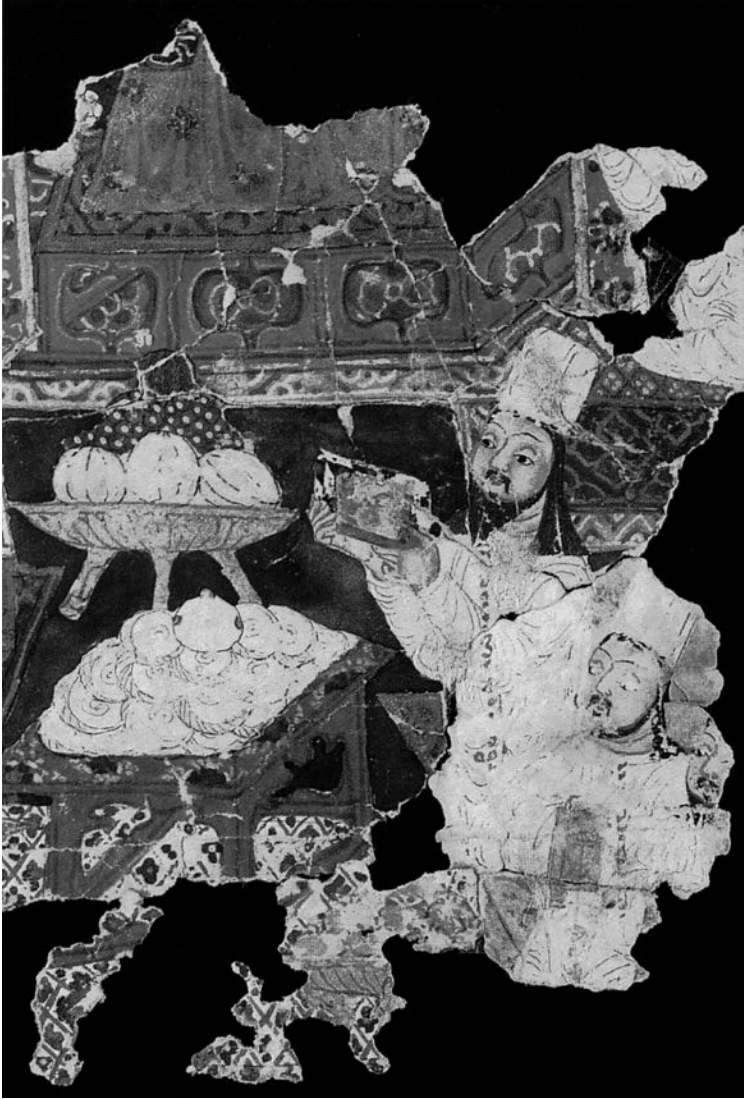
What is that, to testify? The Bible was written in words that we can understand, while it speaks of things that are not of this world. Therefore, we cannot take all of it literally. Yet the First Epistle of John says, 'God is light'. So a description has been chosen that in one way or another is in harmony with that Being. Why light? Light is vibration. We speak of the speed of light. Faster is not possible. Also associated with light are joy and gladness. Light gives beauty to the earth. Through the light, its beauty becomes visible. If we switch on the light in a room, we can see how beautifully it is furnished.

Sometimes, when we hear or experience something, it is as if a light switches on in us. We, as human beings, as microcosms, originate from the light. The light is our father – try to understand this in a new way. This light is everywhere. It permeates the whole universe and all of creation. Light is enclosed in every atom; otherwise, it would not be able to exist. When we walk through a forest, we some-

times notice how extraordinarily the light falls through the branches on the leaves, plays with the dew on the leaves; it glitters and dances a million-fold, and countless rays reach the ground through the branches. Every step you take shows a new palette, a new immensely rich patterning of rays and of light. Yet the original light of the Father is vastly more vital and alive.

Now just imagine that you are beginning to see that you, through the process, through the path, may experience, comprehend something of this light. Would you then say, This is me? I have accomplished that? Of course not. It is once more a gift from the original soul to you because you are making it possible for it to awaken again in its own world. But deep within, you know for certain, I will not let go of this light, and the light will not let go of me anymore, will not desert me anymore. It is bound in my blood. This is what is meant by the biblical term 'testifying'. When the light becomes active in your blood, you automatically begin to testify of the light! Not by peddling it on the streets, but it becomes active in everything you do in a completely natural way.

Because you know of the two worlds, of the two natures, because you have kept that knowledge alive, and because you have been able to resist the dictatorship of the physical form, you can then say that the two friends, John and Jesus, have become one being. And they will never need to vanish from the microcosm but, on the contrary, will lead it to glorious developments in the new life field. Someone who has learned to understand this has gained access to a wholly different kind of insight, to a new kind of living knowledge. This is Gnosis, now again entirely new, but just as active as in the days of Hermes Trismegistus. We have gotten to know this as the modern Gnosis, and it is the same wisdom that worked in the original Hermetic communities. ~



Depiction of Mani during a Bema festival from Turfan, 11th century

CHAPTER 7

Mani of Ctesiphon

If we want to deepen our knowledge of Mani and want to understand this important propagator of *Gnostic* Christianity of the third century, we soon realise that this is not an easy task. The drama surrounding Mani is not easy to comprehend.

Why not? The answer lies in the seventeen centuries of western Christianity that have shaped us, shaped our parents, and coloured and determined our genes. This Christianity has interwoven the entire culture in which we live and in which our ancestors were born and died. This Christianity in its executive power could make and break countries and as such ultimately determined the economy of the West, which in its turn has had a decisive influence on the face of the modern, western world.

To be able to see clearly and understand how much Mani and his very intense and abundant wealth of ideas have a universal value, it would actually be necessary to free ourselves of all of that Christian ballast, the entire construction of inherited prejudice.

But in trying to do so, it quickly becomes apparent that it is not so easy to free oneself of the heritage of the country and continent in which one was born. Experience will show us that this requires much more than a brief hour's reflection.

This demands the whole human being. This demands an orientation with heart and soul towards another principle in the human microcosm, to 'the twin brother' as Mani expressed it. We would call it the soul, the new soul, because in it lies the only possibility of rising above blood and background; only therein lies the possibility to connect to Gnostic revelations from the past with a free and open outlook.

II

The Persian Empire was very large in the days when Mani was proclaiming his teaching of the two worlds. In 216, the year of his birth, in those regions where the sun was rising over the land of Bactria, India, and Turfan, the people followed the teachings of the Blessed One, the Buddha. In the regions of the setting sun lay Aram and Osrone, where the Nazarenes, who worshipped the crucified one, were as plentiful as daisies in the grass. Mani himself wrote that in his time, the world was ruled by four great powers: the Roman Empire to the west, where Jupiter was worshipped as the creator; the Persian Empire with its main devotion to Zarathustra also called Zoroaster; the mighty Chinese empire, far to the east; and in the south-west, the Aksumites, people as black as ebony and named after their capital Aksum. Their empire lay in the region of the source of the Blue Nile and bordered the Red Sea.

The names are exotic, and in the Persia of the Sassanids, the temperatures were on average a lot higher than in the temperate regions. The Sassanids, this enterprising and vigorous dynasty of rulers, wanted to return to the days of Persia's greatness when Darius and Xerxes ruled and to that end re-establish Persepolis as their capital. With Shapur as the ruling *Shahanshah* or king of kings, these 'new' Persians knew that their country was a central kingdom. Their wealth and prosperity were derived from trade, from the forwarding of goods in transit with its abundant profits. Besides this, they waged war to expand their territory and defeated the Romans in an important battle: As a result, Caesar paid them an annual tribute.

In that immense realm, Mani was born, the son of a Persian nobleman and a woman called Maryam. From the age of four, together with his father Patik, he came under the influence of the strict environment of the 'white mantles'. This group, the Elkasaites, practised baptism like John the Baptist, and a strong connection with the Essene brotherhood is not unlikely. They gathered around a guru-like leader who demanded strict obedience. Yet, Mani was not convinced. In his opinion, an important element was missing, for John had also said,

I baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. (Matthew 3:11)

And this fire, this binding with the spirit, Mani missed. At the age of twenty-four, he left the Elkasaites to found the 'Religion of Light'

The teaching of the two worlds that Mani brought to Persia was not new, and he never claimed that it was. In a direct sense, it came from Scythianus, a wise Saracen who had searched for wisdom in Egypt around 50 AD and moved from there to Persia. According to himself, his insights came indirectly from Pythagoras.

Thus, it is a long tradition that flowed out to Mani. But Mani was not a follower, on the contrary. With him, this tradition found an active, bubbling, and inspiring centre, a new, shining core full of renewing ideas and impulses. For all these concepts, all these opinions and teachings, and even all these great religions do not mean anything and have no power, if there is not a living, magnetic connection with the original Immovable Kingdom. Mani himself was this connection. And moreover: Mani came to fulfil. He called himself 'the last apostle of Christ', and he perceived his task to be the bringing together of his mission with the ones of the Buddha and of Zoroaster. And all who joined together with him, Mani, were to see and enter the New Realm, the 'Gardens of Light', as he preferred to indicate it.

Researchers have sometimes explained that in fact there are two histories of Christianity. The straightforward and true history is the one of the groups that were condemned as heretics and exiled. Christianity as a state religion had other interests, political interests, as many centuries of church history have shown and is nowadays still immersed in these. Perhaps it has achieved great and shining results in our civilization, but at its basis, it diverged from the pure Christianity of absolute non-aggression and of loving 'the Lord your God above all and your neighbour as yourself'. To rediscover the origin of the teaching of the two worlds in a Gnostic sense, we need to travel out of Persia to the southwest, as we mentioned earlier. We journey across the Mediterranean and dock at the harbour at Alexandria.

In the first two centuries AD, official Christianity and Gnostic Christianity developed together. They influenced one another. These were eventful years, and that initial period of budding Christianity in the vast Nile delta was a turbulent youth. Different movements were active there, movements for whose origin we must again look in the centuries before Christianity, such as to an Essene-Jewish group and the greater Persian influence of great Zoroaster. Even Buddhism was known in this metropolis. But the real *Gnostics* of Alexandria recognized the source, the originality, and the pure intention of Jesus.

Into the Roman world to which Alexandria belonged, around the year 40 or 50, the first reports appeared of a Nazarene, a man, more than a prophet, named Yeshua or Jesus (the latter is based on the Greek rendition), who had been executed by the local authority in Judea. Some Jews saw him as an agitator, although it is reported in the Bible that the prefect Pilate found him not guilty of the charges brought against him and that some of his own people demanded his execution!

His teachings are remarkable: 'For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it' is one of his incomprehensible sayings. And he did not have any gods, whereas according to him, the abode of God was with the people, for as he said, 'the kingdom of God is among (or within) you' (Luke 17:21) or as Paul said, 'God's temple is holy, and you are that temple (1 Corinthians 3:17) and 'we are the temple of the living God' (2 Corinthians 6:16).

The followers of the Nazarene were noteworthy for their simple way of life and for discarding the old gods who ceased to have any value for them.

In itself, this was nothing new in Alexandria and in Rome, the fashionable capital of the old world. In those days, there were always a number of greater and lesser movements just like now. Members of the elite paid little attention to the gods and went their own way. The Romans were no exception to this rule and turned a blind eye to such behaviour, as long as it did not conflict with the law. It became incomprehensible to the inhabitants of the Roman Empire when Paul, during one of his travels, talked in Athens about the altar to 'the unknown god'.

If you have penetrated the spirit of this book a bit, it is clear in the blink of an eye that the translation here should read 'the unknowable God' and that we are here dealing with an altar to the Most High One,

to the one we know as the Father, who is always hidden. The people of Athens could not understand this, in spite of their clever reputation.

What can you do with an unknowable god? He would be good for nothing! People laughed about it: incomprehensible, for sure. What was more dangerous was that this new sect attracted people from all strata of the population some of whom then turned their backs to the rest of society. Their inclination to reject the world posed a potential threat to the state. They did not want to do military or civil service. It was unacceptable that they refused to accept the divine status of the emperor. Only their 'unknowable' god, who was considered to be above the old gods, was to be granted honour in their eyes. In so doing, they declared themselves to be outside society, and thus the persecutions began.

III

In the thinking of the Alexandrian philosophers, the concept of Gnosis played a major role. Their libraries contained more than six hundred thousand manuscripts. Their long tradition of reflecting on the nature of the divine and the relationship of the human being toward this led them to discover a power that was not of this earth. They attuned themselves to this unearthly power, a hidden, unearthly knowledge that descends directly from 'the unknown' or the 'unknowable god', coming from beyond the cosmos with its twelve aeons and twelve zodiacal signs.

The Alexandrian sages indicated this power as the *pleroma*, the fullness, which has 'six emanations', six activities that flow out from it.

This original fullness exists outside the twelve aeons. Its power cuts like a blinding light right through the aeons and reaches the hearts of the cleansed and purified human beings. The twelve mighty fields ruling over the earth and humanity are then split and pitted against each other, which causes them to fight. For because of the blinding light that radiates from the *pleroma*, they do not know against whom they are fighting, and they waste their powers against each other as is stated in the Gospel of Pistis Sophia, attributed to Valentinus. A fight that allows a moment of grace to the human beings who having simplified their lives, inwardly looking forward to libera-

tion. In this way, they get the space to put their first, perhaps hesitating steps on the path. This is how the mystery of the Christ must be understood, the Gospel of Pistis Sophia explains.

And another Gnostic, Marcion, a sage and a merchant from around the Black Sea, stated it in the second century thus: By a persevering striving, the human being is able to endure the 'law', the existence in this world; through striving, he can rise above the 'existing creation' and return close to the 'gentle stranger', whose burden is light and whose loving nature is tender. Because of these and other statements, Marcion was expelled from the official church. For in the opinion of the church, this rising above cannot be the purpose of the creation of the world as we know it. Christianity – still in the process of establishing itself – only wanted one hero, the Christ (and his family), and insisted that his heaven could only be reached via the church.

In the beginning, the Christian communities retained their simplicity and kept their purity. As a result, various outbursts of violence were directed at them. Gradually, the new current became stronger and more influential and merged more and more with mainstream social life. Instead of changing water into 'wine', the 'wine' was watered down. In the end, the Roman emperors became Christian and young Christianity became the state religion of the Roman Empire in AD 380. This marked an end of Christianity as a movement in the service of the two world orders.

After Marcion's expulsion from the church, many others endured the same fate. Soon after his death, Mani's movement also met the same lot, and of all 'deviating' groups, his was the most vigorously opposed. This was because potentially it had such a tremendous strength, exactly because it had been one of the most important Gnostic systems, which remained faithful to the concept of the two worlds. It was of such importance that from the fourth century until the Second World War, some of those who thought differently from the church or the state were called Manicheans or dualists. Such expulsion was not often a gentle affair, because those times were not gentle. The altar of 'the unknown god' became the altar of a church that began to worship Christ as a divinity far, far 'outside us humans'. And the churches were built (not coincidentally!) in the locations where the temples of the Roman gods had stood, and gradually the saints of the

Church took on the protective role of the Roman family of gods.

The teaching of the two worlds was lost for Italy up to the time of Dante (approx. 1320) and Marsilio Ficino (15th century). As will be shown, the idea was also lost for all of Europe, with the exception of a few groups in the Balkans and in Occitania.

The true Gnostic knows this and understands it. The person who in our times would search for 'the miracle' would surely not expect his salvation from society and even less would he idolise it. Yet it is possible to participate in the social process. One does not become a member of the universal brotherhood by completing an application form. No, a member of this group is someone who under any circumstances remains faithful to the Christ-light, the light of the original life field, which he has learned to know as the highest good, and who by his manner of being brings it directly into his life. He conveys it, without any forcing, even into the social circumstances in which he finds himself.

But let it be said, Your centre of gravity would certainly not be found in that society. It is an activity, a service to be rendered, from which one learns much during one's path through life and which has to be accomplished, for it is something that flows forth from the new approach to life that one has chosen. Your centre of gravity is the same as that of the Gnostic from the beginning of our era, namely, to participate in the original, inner kingdom of which Jesus said,

If your leaders say to you, Look, the kingdom is in the sky, then the birds of the sky will precede you. If they say to you, It is in the sea, then the fish will precede you. Rather, the kingdom is inside you and outside you. When you know yourselves, then you will be known, and you will understand that you are children of the living Father.

This is Gnosticism without any chance of misunderstanding. The quote comes from the Gospel of Thomas, a Gnostic gospel written in Syria and according to some scholars perhaps by a close follower or even a member of the family of Jesus, and thus, it may date back to the first century.

IV

The greatest Gnostic was Mani of Ctesiphon. From his first activities at the age of twenty four, his mission was a new world religion, based on the teachings of Jesus, through which all who wished would be able to enter the kingdom of the light, a world religion for those who recognised themselves as sparks of light of the One! From the middle of the third century to the sixth century, his religion was an important movement in the West, until the combined hatred of church and state wiped them out. In the East, in Central Asia, the influence of Manichaeism equaled that of Buddhism. In China, its influence continued into the *sixteenth* century, until it was forcefully forbidden there also. In the eighth and ninth centuries, it was for over three-quarters of a century the state-religion of the Uighur Empire.

From the very beginning, Mani wrote his own texts and spread them among and through his immediate pupils. His followers were divided into three groups: the listeners, the believers, and the chosen ones, the *electi*, or the perfect ones, a term we encounter again centuries later in the *parfaits* of the Cathars.

These texts are purely Gnostic, and it is remarkable that in many places Mani's views and concepts are strikingly identical to the core principles of the modern Rosycross. It is no wonder that Jan van Rijckenborgh called his school for a time 'The (modern) Order of the Manicheans'.

The first similarity we can recognise is the powerful concept of the new life field, which Mani called 'the gardens of light'; secondly, the rose – the *nous*, the 'eternal being'; thirdly, the *other one* in the human being – the twin brother, the 'gentle stranger'; fourthly, the new soul – the light soul; fifthly, the harvest, the light souls who enter a ship of light, the kingdom of light.

The human beings who have been awakened by the *nous*, the nucleus of light in them, will not only be saved themselves, but they will at the same time help with the gathering of all the fallen light sparks or light elements of which the flame, the last glimmer of light, is under threat of being stolen and extinguished in this world of mat-

ter in which they, virtually without fuel, are imprisoned. They will leave behind the earthly human being (the garment of matter) and will be clothed in the divine garment of the soul, which will be perfect and totally liberated.

To do this, human beings need to possess the liberating knowledge of the origin of the soul and to lead a life that follows on from this learning, this knowledge. They must strive to separate the two natures within themselves and unite them in a new way. They have to enable a new inspiration with its characteristics or virtues to rise above the old, flawed human being. They will not suppress evil with violence. Instead, they will 'gather' so much light in themselves that it will outshine the 'evil' completely.

The fundamental thought of Mani's attitude of life is that it avoids everything that might hinder the light in the human being and in the world. Even in plants, even in a grain of wheat, the light is enclosed, as he said. Like himself, his followers, the *electi* or perfect ones, were obviously strict vegetarians and they abstained from alcohol.

On the other hand, Mani was aware that even the most devout human being living in this world cannot avoid harming the light, due to its imprisonment in even the smallest particle of matter. This is why he prayed and asked for forgiveness from the 'Fivefold God (in which the sum of all light sparks imprisoned in this world merge), that is, the beauty and the essence, the power and the light, the origin and the root of all that is on earth'.

Mani's mode of life consists of five principles:

1. Truth
2. Non-violence
3. Purity and chastity
4. Purity of the mouth (not partaking in slander and lies)
5. Sacred poverty (no possessions)

And a person can achieve this, as he said, through:

1. Love
2. Godliness
3. Faith
4. Wisdom

Having penetrated into his world of thought, it will not surprise us that he saw the earth as a sevenfold development, not occurring one after the other but existing within each other. He said, 'Know that there are seven earths!'

The knowledge that Mani proclaimed, the Gnosis, which touches the lost nucleus of light, reaches the farthest corners of the microcosm. It makes the incomparably beautiful *spring of secrets* well up, which unveils each secret, but also shows without mercy every dark stain. It is a knowledge that has to be bought, however. It is the pearl that the merchant found and was willing to give all he had to obtain. This knowledge has to be paid for by the natural self. This is the basis of the original, liberating Christ idea.

It is the price Mani himself paid, firstly, during his life, by dying as to the world in his earthly body while living, and afterwards, by giving up his body to the Persian ruler, the *Shahanshah*. He died bound in chains after twenty-six days of imprisonment. His closest followers were with him, and many wrote his name on potsherds and ribbons, painted it on walls, and carved it in trees when the word Mani was forbidden to be pronounced. 'Mani Chavy', they wrote, 'Mani, the Living One', and this is the origin of the name 'Manichaeans'.

But Mani had completed his task, faithful until the end to the voice of the Other One whom he always with so much love called his inner twin. His shining spirit-soul had been liberated, and the magnetic wave carrying the light power that was liberated in the atmosphere because of this has touched many, many light souls and bought their freedom in the centuries that followed.

Some beautiful words from a hymn by Mani conclude this chapter, words that explain why Mani's language and range of thought and the wealth of ideas of the modern Rosycross seem to be so closely related: They stem from the same source of *universal* soul life.

Hymn of Mani

*Take up your cross;
shake off the world.
Release the bond of the blood.
Subdue the old man,
and build the New Man.*

*Fulfil the holy commandment;
make room for the dove
with the white wings.
Place no harmful snakes next to it.
Rejoice, my beloved.*

*The Light Cross that gives life to the Universe,
I recognise it and believe in it.
For its reflection is the essence of my soul,
and all of life is nourished by its Light.*

But the blind cannot understand.

*Do not praise the world
for nothing here is worth your praise.
Praiseworthy for his fame is the light-bearer.
Praiseworthy for the joy is the Perfected Man.*

*Light your lamps;
let us quickly break the chains of the body
to liberate the new man lying bound in them.*

*Struggle, my beloved ones, to become beautiful pearls
that will be guided to heaven by the pearl fishers of the light,
that you will find peace in eternal life. ↪*



*Stele symbolizing man being equipped with the new thinking faculty.
Bogomilian stele in Istria, Slovenia, 13th century. © Bojan Breclj, Ljubljana,
Slovenia*

CHAPTER 8

The Brotherhood of the Bogomils

The Bogomils were rather remarkable. Not much is known about them and although much literature has been published, the same few facts are repeated by all. They are considered by many to be the successors of the *Manicheans*, a view that contains an element of truth. They were persecuted from all sides by the western Roman Catholic Church, the Greek Orthodox Church, and by the state, but they somehow contrived to survive all until well after their hey-day.

Their influence and spread was at its height from the tenth to the twelfth centuries. In 872, a group of Manichean brothers, the Paulicians, was expelled from Turkey, and their first messengers arrived in Bulgaria. The first record of them still in existence is a letter from the Patriarch of Constantinople to the Bulgarian Tsar Peter, sent in the year 954, warning him about 'the new heresy, a mixture of Manichaeism and a touch of Paulicianism'. Thus, they were already then labeled as heretics and categorised with the Manicheans.

They were described more elaborately about 20 years later, in 972, in a letter from the priest Kosma. 'It happened', the letter began, 'that during the reign of the true believer Tsar Peter, a priest with the name Bogomil appeared [...] who for the first time started to preach his heretic teachings in Bulgaria'. Further on, he wrote,

With whom shall I compare them? They are worse than the deaf and blind effigies of false idols. These cannot see nor hear. But these heretics, because they have human thoughts, are calcified by their own will and have not embraced the true teachings.

Their leader called himself Bogomil, which means translated 'friend

of God', but according to Kosma it would be better that he were to be called 'Bogunemil', meaning 'not-pleasing-to-God'.

One should take these accusations with a grain of salt. It has been stated that he got excited over corruption and the misuse of power of the nobility of that time. In his view, slavery, exploitation, and serfdom could not be congruous with original Christianity, which expressly stands for freedom and neighbourly love. It is said that the Bogomils' enormous following was attracted through their populist political views, that they mobilised the poor against a rich elite of the aristocracy and the priesthood, which sounds very much like the socialist slogans of the emerging labour movement at the beginning of the twentieth century. This has nothing to do with the mode of operation and the intentions of the Gnosis. Not at that time either! The same early sources also tell us that the Bogomil communities had 'apostolic and monk-like characteristics, and that they dressed like monks'; the essence of their ideas were Christian poverty and an 'apostolic life as a travelling messenger'. The Bogomils themselves said that their only reason for preaching the real gospel was the disastrous development of the Church, which no longer had anything to do with true Christianity. In the original communities, they called each other brothers, disciples, believers, the chosen (elect), and the called. They demanded neighbourly love, humility, no slander but speaking the truth, no killing, enduring evil. They wanted to be better Christians by making good and evil the personal responsibility of each human being.

After 1018, the teachings of the Bogomils spread over the entire Byzantine Realm. One encountered their ideas in the monasteries. In Constantinople, there were followers even among the noble families and sympathisers in the court of the emperor. However, in the second half of that century, the persecutions began, not so much because of their teachings but because of the privileges and the rights that were in the hands of the established order. Around the year 1100, Emperor Alexios invited the then head of the Bogomils, Basileios, to his court under the pretence of wanting to know more about the teachings. Basileios, a physician, was already getting old, a skinny, tall figure with a long beard. He had been teaching the way of life of the Bogomils for fifteen years and had proclaimed it for forty. He was invited to the emperor's dinner table. Basileios had complete trust in the emperor and

responded freely and willingly to the questions that were asked.

However, behind a curtain sat a stenographer who recorded the entire conversation. At a certain moment, the curtain was pulled aside and Alexios dropped his pious mask. He had the senate and the clergy gathered and began a trial. After all efforts to conversion proved to be fruitless, of course the pyre was waiting for Basileios.

The views of the Bogomils differed from those of the Cathars but had a great influence on them. At an early stage, both 'churches', if we can use the term, maintained relations with each other, and when the persecution of the Bogomils became increasingly severe, some of their leaders took refuge in the West and greatly inspired their Cathar brothers and sisters. An important source from 1230 notes that the Cathar communities originated in the Bulgarian and Drugunthian Churches.

It is known that in 1167, a significant meeting took place between the Bogomil bishop Nicetas and representatives of the Cathar Church at the castle of St-Félix-de-Camaran in the neighbourhood of Toulouse, in Occitania in southern France. Nicetas managed to bring together the most important representatives from the north and south of France and from Lombardy. There, the various streams within the Cathar Church were encouraged to join in a communal effort.

We read in an article in the magazine *Pentagram* (Volume 18, Number 5, 1996):

The Bogomils mostly exerted their influence in the Balkans. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, Bulgaria, Thrace, and Macedonia were their most important centres of activity. As Bulgaria was then a province of the Byzantine Empire, they could easily spread their teaching there. [...] From the twelfth century to the end of the fifteenth century, Bosnia and Herzegovina were the bastions of the Bogomils. There was even some talk of a Bosnian Church in which the faithful called themselves *pravi krstjani*: true Christians.

In many important aspects, their religion and life were strikingly similar to that of the Cathars. A document dating from 1199 advised Pope Innocent III that a significant heresy had taken hold and one of the counts was already sympathising with it. There was mention of

10,000 followers. That was motivation for the pope to instruct the king of Hungary and Croatia to drive the heretics from Bosnia and confiscate their belongings. Some fled to the east and some to the north, while some ended up in German towns along the Rhine.

In 1463, a Turkish invasion brought a decisive end to the Bogomil church in Bosnia, after which the majority of the followers voluntarily turned to Islam. English travellers in the seventeenth century reported that the Bosnian Muslims read not only the Koran but also the New Testament but even that was not the last that was heard of them; the Bogomil stream had not yet come to its end. In fact, a hidden movement of the entire Bogomil ethos has been kept alive right into our century. People who perhaps officially belonged to Islam or Greek-Orthodox Christianity nevertheless kept the original Gnostic Bogomil teachings alive. This was possible because they were not overly conspicuous. It was possible because they formed in principle a rural movement, far from the clamour of the cities, far from the cultural influences and the rapid changes of government in Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. They were overlooked and therefore able to continue their work quietly for a long time.

II

Not that Pop ('Father') Bogomil had been the first to proclaim the teachings of the immortal spirit-man in an attempt to awaken the light in the hearts of the Balkan people. In the Byzantine Empire already for many centuries, a Gnostic-Manichean activity had been fermenting. Pop Bogomil, understanding these teachings and seeing the immeasurable wealth and inner happiness they contained for the individual person, spread them for that reason. He brought unity into these teachings, and the results became known in those days as the Bulgarian Church (in the west) and the Drugunthian Church (in the east). These two churches can be seen as two mainstreams within an extensive network of loose 'brotherhoods' that more or less followed the same principles of life. Bogomil formed the glowing new nucleus among them.

What little we know about these brotherhoods comes from the reports of their opponents. Some of their concepts originated directly

with the first Gnostic Christians; other ideas are clearly Manichean. It is not surprising that the quarrel between the state church and the Bogomils was above all about the understanding of the creation of the world. According to the established church then and now, *this* world is the one God intended, and heaven is a place where you go after death, thanks 'to the Redeemer, who has taken upon himself our sins and original sin'. The role of the Church is to ensure that the people live a civilised life, do good, and eschew evil. But according to the Bulgarian Church, this world is the result of the activities of the opponent, whom they called Satan or Satanael. All human beings, all carriers of light, are caught in a mixture of good and evil, whereby evil predominates. According to them, the world created by God lies outside our world.

This is clearly Gnostic. Their teachings say that in the very beginning, God ruled as the only good, having no form or body and creating seven heavens, which were limitless and had no beginning or ending. Satanael, the primal adversary, however, came forth from the God of Light and created his own world in self-will. Thus Satan, originally a brother of Christ, became an angel who brought death into the world. 'My Father', says Christ in these teachings, 'took away his light for this presumption!'

The role of the human being in this primeval drama is presented thus:

The spirits of darkness wanted to invade the realm of light. They reached the borders but could do nothing against the realm of light. As a result, they had to be punished, but since the realm of light consists entirely of the good and the very notion of punishment is unknown there, the spirits of darkness could only be touched by something that is not in them. Then the spirits of the realm of light allowed some of its light sparks to mingle with the realm of darkness. A fermentation arose in the realm of darkness. A vortex came into being that contained the germ of self-extinction – death. Slowly it decomposed. Consequently, the human race came into being, the primeval humanity originating from the realm of light that wanted to merge with the realm of darkness and therefore has to overcome it.

III

When politics mix with the life of a Gnostic community, a free undisturbed development comes to an end. This is why these communities, where truly liberating work was done, moved further and further eastward, away from the centres of civilisation and power, seeking the peace to devote themselves to their task, and were entirely self-supporting. There, in natural surroundings, yet fully directed towards the life of the soul, the minimum that a human being needs to sustain life was sufficient for them. By not stoking their desires, a great inner longing enflamed in them. Their activities were directed at purifying the heart, entirely in accord with the life of Jesus, which they took as their example. Thus, as if of its own accord, they relinquished the old. In the power field and the wisdom of those who led the group, they entered into the new life-field. The New Testament was their guide, especially the Gospel of John. They called this apostle 'John Bogoslov', meaning: 'The Word of God'. The Bogomils understood his book through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

The only true Bogomil book is the *Liber Secretum* ('Book of Secrets'), also called the *Interrogatio Iohannis* ('John's Inquiry') and *The Secret Supper*. In it, John and the risen Christ converse together, with the master answering the questions of 'the disciple whom he loved' concerning creation and the end of the world, the fall, and the creation of the second world, known to us as the earth.

The Bogomil communities were small-scale, but knew themselves to be united in the one greater body of the Bulgarian Church. They practiced the necessary trades. They studied nature, the art of healing, song and music, the order of the cosmos, the human being, the soul, and the life of Jesus, the Master. They were not interested in the world and its social demands, although they were often pulled into political conflicts. To modern eyes, they sacrificed a great deal, but they gained a lot more thereby. 'The kingdom of God is within you!' The words of Christ set their simple hearts ablaze.

Only through freeing the light-man *in* human beings can God be found, known, and experienced. As soon as the light-man has come back to life, he will live in the soul-light-world that knows no shadows and where a

complete and harmonious unity-of-soul of all the light-bearers who have returned home manifests in wisdom, truth, and love.

These words could easily have come directly from Mani. In the various *communities*, members lived a life of sobriety, seclusion, and contemplation in harmonious unity, without the misuse of power, without possessions, in order to thus approach the new day of soul-consciousness. Civilisation spread, however, and the Bogomil communities had to fall in line with the legal authorities. Remote areas became more and more scarce. The pressure to move ever further eastwards continued, and the Bogomil communities gradually decreased in number. Jan van Rijckenborgh, in Chapter 14 of *The Egyptian Arch-Gnosis, Part III*, wrote:

In certain parts of the world, such as Siberia, the local wisdom bears traces of the Bogomil way of life. These traces are found everywhere, even under metres of snow and ice. But even in these places the law opposed them, and even today this is so. As far as we know, a Bogomil sect emigrated to Canada at the end of the last [nineteenth] century and built there a close, pure and noble community, surrounded and protected by deep forests and mountain ranges.

It was evident that this method of work for liberating humanity was coming to a close.

The gnostically directed person too, will find himself in conflict with these laws from second to second. Not because he actively wants to break society's laws, but because he wishes to rise above that society and ascend into the world of God. But the lawgiver cannot be concerned with all that. Every transgression of the law is punished. Therefore one is bound to accept the laws of society, at least if one wishes to remain at peace with the world.

Where could we still find inaccessible regions in which to build such a community now? New ways had to be found.

During the Second World War, a great leader of a group akin to the Bogomils, the master Peter Deunov, died. He lived from 1864 to 1944.

In 1900, he founded the 'Fellowship of the Light'. Around him grew a new, modern centre of esoteric Christianity, completely based upon the spiritual past of the Balkans. In the years before the Second World War, Peter Deunov spent several months every summer in the region of 'the seven holy lakes', a sublime landscape in the Rila Mountains of Bulgaria. There, far away from the noise and the din of the lively Balkan cities, he taught his pupils. When he became older, hundreds of people came to listen to him every year at the foot of the mountains. First Nazism, and later the rise of communism, which had a particularly great impact in the countryside, caused the centre of this modern Bogomil-like movement to move to France, although thousands of sympathisers are still to be found in Bulgaria.

IV

In the light of the foregoing, it will not surprise us that traces of the remarkable teachings of the Bogomils have been found in remote regions of Russia, Bulgaria, Rumania, and in Bosnia-Herzegovina. For the Bogomils have always combined their religion of 'true Christianity' with a natural life, as simple and as pure as possible. For example, they said that humanity has lost contact with the cosmos. It is a concept we also encounter in the West: The cosmic influences on the growth of vegetation, sowing calendars with the phases of the moon, all of this is again of great interest. But this was not of prime importance for the Bogomils. What they meant is that not only is the human being no longer an inhabitant of the original life field, which is bad enough. One could still understand this, for there were always also other kinds of beings, angels, spiritual beings that are totally different from normal people. However, beyond this, he has even lost the awareness that he is an inhabitant of the cosmos. He thinks he is the centre of the world. He thinks the earth is the centre point of the universe. Although science contradicts this and although in his mind, he truly knows that not everything revolves around him, there is still no room in his way of life, his attitude, and particularly in his feeling for the consciousness and behaviour that would correspond to this.

Just go to the open fields one morning shortly before sunrise, then a thought of the Bogomils may arise in you. Direct your gaze to the East,

where the sun rises. See how, shortly before it rises, the horizon begins to glow. Feel the force, the enormous power that accompanies this. The darkness disappears! And not only force, no, joy and new life also enter the atmosphere with the light, with great speed and vibration. Birds do not start to sing when the sun is already up; they respond to the new sun ethers that appear in the atmosphere of the earth. This is why they sing already *before* the day breaks. Their anticipation of the coming sun awakens them and makes them jubilate. The whole earth and all of nature rejoice. The death of one night has again been conquered.

Then you realise, you experience again the power of everything that has to do with the sun. Then you know again that your life originates there. But the Bogomils went beyond this: Imagine you are standing there, watching the sun, how it moves in a curve through the sky. Yet this is an illusion. It is not the sun that moves. In relation to the earth, the sun is the centre point. It is like an unyielding beacon in the whole wide universe, the only 'static' thing in what, for us, is an ever moving, whirling solar system. It is the one thing in this dialectical world that can remind us that there is an 'immovable' kingdom. The sun does not go around the earth from east to west, no, the earth turns in an endless dive from west to east, rejoicing every morning in the radiant glow of the sun and drinking in its new life, turning its face away again every evening from the sun's divine glow, ashamed because of the many errors, mistakes, and cruelties perpetrated on its surface.

And you, a human being, stand on this earth. You too are part of this merry-go-round. You too experience light and darkness. You too are a mixture of good and evil, light and darkness. And your consciousness also experiences the light of the day and the darkness of 'it not being there'. For it is said sometimes that your life is as a day, your day, and that you must take heed to make the right decisions while you can, 'before your day slips once more away into the past'.

The Bogomils possessed an enormous wealth of ideas, all of them directed at living as purely as possible in a hostile world. That is why they lived in isolated communities, as close to nature as possible. But Western man cannot live like that anymore. It is no longer possible and no longer meaningful. In fact, his course of life has become

much more difficult, albeit, if at all possible, also more valuable. For precisely in this time, when everything is coming to a head, an unbelievably great deal of good can be done. In principle, our mode of life can liberate us from the world, while we continue to live and work in it. We can be a real support for fellow human beings by demonstrating a completely different kind of life. And, though it is different from that of the Bogomils, in it can be recognised what Mani practised in his life, a wisdom that one also finds in the School of the Golden Rosycross: 'Do not fight evil; tolerate it'. This was also one of the rules of life of the Bogomils. Evil needs to be dissolved, being unable to save itself. Real evil is not merely the glaring contrast between rich and poor, although this injustice is certainly a result of fundamental evil, of the fall. The Bogomils taught how to grasp evil by the very roots. This resulted in a peace-loving way of life, based on compassion for all creation. By this way of life, the Bogomils set themselves beyond the strife that is a characteristic of the 'world of wrath' in which we live.

V

What, in fact, are the new ways that the Universal Brotherhood has sought out for today's humanity? In an essay on the Brotherhood of the Bogomils, Catharose de Petri, one of the founder members of the School of the Golden Rosycross, quoted a short excerpt from *The Grain of Wheat* by master Peter Deunov:

A great change must take place in the human mind. A great transformation of parents, children, professors, and educators is necessary. It is not sufficient to recognise our errors and weaknesses; we have to dedicate ourselves to eradicating them, to broadening our consciousness, and raising it, to depart from the circumstances of our present-day narrow and unstable lives. The good and the bad circumstances of life are transient; this is the process of the lower ego, the paying of old debts, the purification and preparation towards the new life.

The times have come in which humanity prepares with various means to enter the third principle of life, to raise itself from the restrictions of the

lower self and approach the cosmic or divine consciousness. In the language of the gospels, this means that man is to be 'reborn from water and of the spirit', that he strives with all his might for love, wisdom, truth, righteousness, and all virtues, whereby his soul shall unfold in cosmic consciousness following the eternal principle, which is all in all.

There have always been groups that have sought the one liberating path. The Bogomils formed a religious movement that wanted to spread the original teachings. They were strongly related to the Cathars, and at times, they also exchanged workers with them. But however close the Brotherhood of the Bogomils seems to be to the young Gnostic Brotherhood of the Rosicrucians, on closer examination, the modern human being cannot apply the new way of life that the Bogomil Brotherhood practised.

Why then does this book mention the Bogomils, if the modern human being cannot follow their way of life?

This is to develop the right discernment that every era has different requirements for going the path. If we do not take this into account, we will be looking at the situation only from the outside. The people of the Bogomil Brotherhood have isolated themselves from modern society for many generations, and the present-day representatives of the brotherhood are nowhere near as much tied to the nature of death as the average Westerner. Westerners have imposed their will upon virtually all the world's peoples for centuries. The greed, the lust for power, and the materialism of the Westerner are more than evident. For the Bogomil, the challenge is, 'How do I get pulled in as little as possible by the nature of death and keep as much distance from it as possible?' For the Western Gnostic seeker, the problem is, 'How do I become liberated from this nature of death as soon and as fully as possible?' The Bogomil perspective is, 'How do I keep danger at a distance?' as opposed to the Westerner's perspective, 'How do I liberate myself from danger?' The Bogomil aim, 'How do we retain our purity?' compares with the Westerners' aim, 'How do we become pure?'

This helps to show that we can no longer apply the methods of the past and that we are obligated to seek out our own method for solving our problem. We need to accept the fact that due to ourselves and our society, it is no longer possible to give up or to distance ourselves from

the entire nature of death. This is because our developing human type is bound up with physical nature to such an extent that we need forces, atoms, and fluids of this nature to maintain our life. Even without raising the social problem itself, it is apparent that our dialectical personality daily seems to require the elements of physical nature to be able to maintain its existence.

The human being striving for the new life of the Divine Nature would, for example, at the beginning of his soul's journey to the Father, not be able to live entirely from pure ethers and pure astral substances; his body would not be able to endure it. His vehicle would very soon burn out through such powerful influences. This is why the seriously striving pupil of the Gnostic Spiritual School will have to rely on a compromise. This is an ugly word in this context! But to prove its validity, we draw your attention to the well known phrase from Matthew 22:21 (RSV), 'Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's'. In one sense, Caesar represents the authorities and the laws regulating social life. In another sense, he can represent a necessary force for the maintenance of life.

For example, strictly speaking, whatever precautions we may take and whatever vegetarian and dietary measures we may observe, the food we eat is absolutely and exclusively of this unholy earth. Moreover, the excessive radioactivity present in our atmosphere in our time somewhat neutralises the rules regarding the nutrient values of food. Thus, even the most responsibly prepared meal can contain deadly poisons not only for your body, but also and especially for your sensory and mental faculties. This is why the mode of life of the Bogomils is outdated in our modern times. Their homegrown wheat is also not free of atmospheric poison.

That is why we must not turn to matter in our search, because whether fine or coarse, cooked or raw, it all remains the same. Humanity has damaged nature to such an extent that it is being poisoned and suffocated by the backlash of matter. All of us are succumbing to it. Therefore, do not worry about having to give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar! It is the toll that the human being has to pay to his nature-born self and to maintain himself in the nature of death. For the one is as bad as the other!

Are we therefore fatalists? 'Let us eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die?' No, absolutely not because the position of Jesus is to give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God. What does belong to God? What is it that can reach towards the divine? What is it that can unfailingly attain this aim?

Only the soul! Bring your soul to life. Only it can give to God what belongs to God when you unconditionally surrender to its demands with your whole personality. Then the body and the personality can suffer damage, can possibly be wounded by an enemy, or wrecked by radioactivity. Then the bodies of the Cathars can be burnt and the bodies of the Bogomils can be beaten to death, but for their reborn souls, this will be fundamentally a minor matter. As long as the soul does not suffer damage, this is what counts!

This is why the mode of life in this nature is a matter of intelligence. What we mean is that the ensouled human being uses his nature-born personality to serve God for as long and as well as possible, to carry out God's plan for world and humanity, and to endeavour to fish from the sea of life those who are truly searching. And for the rest, you should devote to nature only the attention it deserves. We therefore give this urgent advice: Place the soul in the centre of your life; then you will find true happiness. When you follow this advice, you will truly give to God what belongs to God. For only the soul can lift itself up to God; only the soul can penetrate into the divine world.

Only the soul can bring about the link with the spirit. Only the soul can celebrate the alchemical wedding with the spirit. 'Give to Caesar what is Caesar's' is only a side issue. 'Give to God what is God's' refers to the eternal reality. ~



Siege of Carcassonne during the crusade against the Albigenses, 1209. Relief, thirteenth century, Toulouse

CHAPTER 9

A Church of Pure Love

It must have been a truly progressive time when the Bosnian heretics founded a church in which women enjoyed the same rights as men. It was a church in which women could occupy the same positions, had the same duties, and the question whether they could be liberated and enter the Kingdom simply did not exist. Women were even revered to a high extent for their great sensitivity.

This characteristic of a true religion is a basic condition that is found again in the long historical line of another church. Every island, every larger movement in the stream of light, attributed the same place to the man as to the woman – such a modern idea, actually one should be able to say, such a normal idea, for that is how it should be.

This equality between the sexes originated directly from the oldest Gnostic communities. This was also one of the most vehement objections of the – male-dominated – Roman Church. As early as 190 AD, Tertullian reproached the Gnostics:

... those heretical women – how courageous they are! They know no modesty; they are forward enough to teach, to exchange thoughts, [...] to heal, and – just imagine! – even to baptise!

The Bulgarian Church, or *Ecclesia Slavonicae*, was a church of the poor, a church of ‘good Christians’, of people who concentrated on purity, simplicity, and true neighbourly love. Ultimately, every true religion has love as its source, but what is the meaning of this word? ‘Love’ was also the point of departure for all ‘heresies’ of that period. It seemed as if these groups were trying to say, ‘Leave us in peace. We do not need you. We leave you alone, so leave us alone too. Our religion is one of simplicity and inner directedness. Our aim is not the same as yours; we are not seeking the Kingdom on this earth, as you do.’

In the Balkans, there were the Bogomils; in Italy, the Patarenes; in the east, in Asia-Minor, the Paulicians: All of these groups were different (and there were many more). They were all linked by this one ideal: earthly existence scaled down to a certain simplicity, to a minimum, and a growing inner world that offered a prospect of eternal life for the soul by the source of love: God.

All were also connected by a common origin and strangely enough had developed alongside the official Christian church. It seemed as if these heretical sects and movements came into being time and again, no matter what the state or the established church used to get rid of them. Yet it was unmistakably so that each one of them took on remarkable elements directly originating from the sacred acts of those who preceded them.

When we think of the concept 'church', we generally almost always measure this against the one, large, Roman Church: a solid organisation, centrally managed, and with a substantial doctrine to which every believer, preferably every human being on the planet, should adhere. To achieve this aim, successive leaders of this organisation have effectively fought the competition. Countless groups and movements have been rendered harmless over the centuries, and truly innumerable people have lost their lives on this account.

Why ever is this the case? Where does this evil genius come from? What threat could these relatively small groups possibly pose to that mighty Roman bulwark?

The brotherhood of the Bogomils was never as cohesive as the organisation of Rome. Their predecessors, the Paulicians of the Near East, were also a significantly smaller group, and the Patarenes of Piemonte and Lombardy who came after them were even more of a minority movement. But they were minority movements that shared in a way a common past, that of Mani and Marcion. We have already seen that Marcion was the first to understand what Paul had done for Christianity: He had divested the person, the teachings, and the uniquely universal concept 'Jesus' of a strictly Jewish context and placed the Christ in the centre of the great world of the Roman Empire. And Mani had *proven* that the teachings of the Nazarene were not simply a personal nine days wonder but had universal validity. The world is twofold, not only in the time of Jesus – it will always remain so. The creation was

created twice: once intact and perfect, and once damaged, subject to evil, sickness, and decay; once heavenly, divine, and once earthly, mortal. This is equally true of the human being: once a heavenly being, now a mortal being, prey to numerous mistakes and many deliberate errors.

This is what all those early medieval currents to the east of Italy had in common. In the course of centuries, many variations come into being and perish again, while the theme remains invariably classic. In the centuries in which they were active, these groups, which were in principle not political – but did have an aversion to the authorities – were the playthings of a colourful succession of rulers. Sometimes the groups were aligned with the rulers, but more often they were not, and then the persecution started afresh. This was part and parcel of the Middle Ages: The human being was small, and he had to be subordinate to the great entity of Church and state.

So repeatedly during these hundreds of years, two churches stood diametrically opposite to each other, while they had the same Christ as their cornerstone, quoted from the same scriptures by the same apostles, and lived in the same regions and countries. The great difference between the two was therefore not in their origin but must be looked for elsewhere. The best way to measure this is to examine the goal toward which they aimed.

Rome has always had a political purpose. As we have seen, ever since Theodosius I made Christianity a state religion in the fourth century, the history of the Church has been that of a political organisation with a material purpose. The strong convictions and courage of the early Christians appealed to the Roman citizens. The conservative veneration of the emperor, elevating him into a God, had fallen hopelessly out of fashion. And Constantine's incentive was equally pragmatic: In a dream, a vision, he had seen that he would be victorious in a battle if he embraced the cross.

The scholars of the fourth century made an end to all confusion by compiling a definitive canon into which the permitted books of the state church were entered. These became the sacred books of the Church. The priests used these and told the believers what the teachings of the Church were. The church of Rome had a political goal and a doctrine that fit this exactly and in principle disliked dissidents, be-

cause these could always throw a spanner in the wheels of power politics.

The church of the *Amicx de Dieu*, which we now call the church of the Cathars, did not do this. It connected its believers to a way of life by means of personal example. The leaders of this church were to be found among the people, leading the same life, enduring the same poverty, and offering help where possible.

Like an oasis, like a utopia within barbaric medieval Europe, a special culture had developed in the county of Toulouse: an oasis of modernity, a haven of humanity, of emancipation, of inner civility and a refined courtly culture – and this in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Imagine that this development could have continued throughout Europe, which was to a certain extent the intention: The present-day world would look completely different.

The subtle faith that was part of this, that fit in this culture, was not one that was imposed as an authoritarian doctrine. It was lived by example by ‘good Christians’, men as well as women. It was a living foundation of spirituality, simplicity, and neighbourly love. It was a church of pure love, following the gospel of the ‘beloved disciple’, John.

Was the Bogomil church the same as the Cathar brotherhood? Although there were important similarities, it is better to say that they were two independent movements, which perhaps shared a common origin. As early as 1012, there are references to a group in the Limousin, near Bordeaux in the northern part of southern France, that followed heretical ideas.

There is not a lot of evidence that one resulted from the other. It might be the fact that the bishop of the ‘seven churches in Asia’, Nicetas, made an attempt to restructure the church of the Albigensians in 1167 and to emphasise the inner alliance of the various Gnostic churches: the Bulgarian, the Dragovitian, the Paulician and the now emerging church of Albi in the south of France. Travelling between Constantinople and Occitania via northern Italy, he linked them directly with the origin of their religion. He gave important directions for the arrangement of their organisation and strengthened the spiritual construction of their brotherhood.

Ultimately, their common origin is the thousand-year-old ideal of a pure Christian life. In the various stories and in the backgrounds, there were definitely differences according to national character and region. The brotherhood of the *Amici Dei*, or the *Amicx de Dieu*, the 'Friends of God' (the name has the same meaning as 'Bogomil') as they referred to themselves, moreover was distinguished by a strong inner coherence, for the first time since the Manichaean brotherhood, and to some extent their organisational structure and ideas were similar.

While the various Bogomil sects were relatively dependent on the action of a powerful leading figure, the Cathars were much stronger, as there was a core of initiated *bonshommes* and *bonnes femmes* who trusted each other blindly and who maintained their inner unity in a manner inexplicable to the outside world. Death at the stake was less terrifying than having to give up their inner unity. Moreover, they knew the inner structure of the first Christian societies, which had been kept through the ages in just as mysterious a manner. They knew the same structure of three circles as the powerful movement of Mani from the third century: of seekers, of believers or *credentes*, and of perfects or *electi*. They knew the five sacraments, which also went back to the beginning of Christianity. These were the *orasion* (the prayer of the bread), the *melioramentum* (the salutation of the spirit, the awakened light human being in a *parfait* or *parfaite*), the *apparelhamentum* (the communal entreating of grace), the *kiss of peace*, and the *consolamentum*. They knew the same lofty tradition of the communal meal of *credentes* and *parfaits*, which was preceded by the breaking of bread carried out by Jesus in the Essene manner at the last supper he shared with his friends. It was pure, because their hearts were *katharos*, following the words of the Sermon on the Mount, 'Blessed are the pure (Greek: *katharos*) in heart, for they shall see God'. It was simple and because of that so wholesome and so healing, and comforting and supportive when times became more dire. Their greatest strength lay in their most important sacrament, however: the *consolamentum*, the sacrament of consolation.

This sanctification was in fact twofold. After a period of intense preparation, the 'good Christians' received this gift, which they regarded as a direct link with the supernatural and compared to the

'grace of the Holy Spirit'. The *credentes* or believers received it on their deathbed. All inhabitants of Occitania who believed in the Cathars knew that their life would come 'to a good end' if one of the 'good people' could be at their deathbed, who would sanctify them with the gospel of the beloved disciple and bring about a complete purification by connecting them to the higher 'food of the spirit'. If they had led the life of a *credente*, they would no longer have to return in an earthly body. It would even be possible that their light-spark, imprisoned for so long in that earthly prison, could set foot on 'the way of the stars'.

This was their hope. A 'good Christian', as a Cathar brother or sister was also called, meant much more than a Roman priest. The latter cooperated after all with the bailiff, with the feudal lord, with the hated north, which steadily gained more influence in the in fact much larger region of Toulouse. The *bonshommes* worked together with the ordinary people, on *their* land, at *their* sickbeds, at *their* marriages and births, with their flocks of sheep on the mountain slopes, and at the weaving looms in their homes. They always came in pairs; their wages were a meal and a place to sleep. During the harvest, they helped out. In difficult times, they were there. During the cold winters, they were the people's contact with the outside world.

Their reward was the bond with these people, simple like themselves, and the shining of their eyes when the Cathars could share their spiritual joys so abundant in the inner state of their soul.

When they say to you, the Kingdom is in the heavens, then the birds will go ahead of you. Do not look far beyond yourself; the Kingdom is within you. Whoever learns to know himself will find it. The Kingdom is the talent everyone has received from the Father. He who works with it will see it increased; he who hides it, from him it will be taken away.

Herein we must look for the legendary treasure of the Cathars: the simple wealth of their inner life, in imitation of Him who represented the inner kingdom of the spirit on earth but nevertheless washed the feet of the least of his disciples. This is the essence of their second 'sacrament', the veneration of something that is divine in the most humble form of life. Every form can show how God expresses himself, on condition that it does not 'come between' God and that form. God,

the unknowable, eternal, unborn, formless, and unlimited, is nevertheless here on earth expressed in 'good people' who are looking for him. This is the suffering of the Christ: to be divine in essence, unlimited in love, and nevertheless here on earth, lying imprisoned in the earthly human being, until this human being sets him free.

When 'the inner pearl of incomparable beauty', as they called their teachings, was not 'bought' by the people to whom it was offered, then their sorrow was great and they regarded their mission as a failure. Only they, themselves, were at fault, their own faith being too poor and their ensoulment deficient when this communication did not come about.

No wonder that these 'good people' were loved and in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries could count on the unconditional support of the population. No wonder that Rome, as quickly as it could, established and allowed orders within its organisation that quickly copied some of the Cathar habits, traditions, yes, even some of the Cathar way of life. They imitated what they saw of the Cathars – for in the Languedoc, the Roman church had long since lost the bond with the ordinary people. People and perfects turned out to be bound by an unbreakable tie, and other measures had to be taken.

In 1204, in Fanjeaux during a meeting of all the *perfecti*, the Princess of Foix, Esclarmonde, was given the *consolamentum* of the living. She was a beacon, a concentration of light that pulled the other brothers and sisters up. She was involved in the initiative to rebuild the castle of Montségur, the fortress that would be known as the 'lighthouse' of Catharism, on the Pog, a mountain twenty kilometres from her ancestral stronghold. Although the Catholics had always treated the faith of the mild-mannered ones with an undisguised suspicion (there had been burnings of heretics already in the eleventh century), it was still possible during the first decade of the thirteenth century to hold in relative openness seven public debates between the Cathar *parfaits* and the Roman clergy, all of which were 'won' by the Catholics, if we may believe the chronicles. The first one took place in Carcassonne, the last at Pamiers, at a castle belonging to the count of Foix, where Esclarmonde was one of the ones explaining the viewpoint of the Cathars. The chronicles that recorded this, this much must be clear, were written, every one of them, by the victors. Do-

minic Guzman from Spain, better known as Saint Dominic of the 'Friars Preachers' or Dominicans, appeared there as the most important advocate for Rome. Guilhabert de Castres, perhaps truly the soundest *parfait*, formulated during one of these debates in a most moving way the practice that the following of the life of Jesus entailed:

Father, mother, and children I have left behind; I have given up everything the Gospel has asked of me; you will find no gold or silver in my purse. I am perfectly happy with my daily bread, and I do not worry over what to wear tomorrow or what I shall eat. You see in me the blessings Jesus Christ preached and which make up his Gospel. You see me poor, meek, peaceful, pure of heart, and you see me in tears, hungry and thirsty, and burdened under the world's persecution for the sake of righteousness.

The victory of the debates may have been Rome's, but the local population remained unaffected by them. Dominic travelled for ten years through the region, preaching all the time, and at the end of these ten years, he had around ten followers. Only in Italy did his movement attract more followers, when as mentioned earlier, he imitated in detail the Cathar way of life and deeds, persuading the people there to abandon the Patarenes and other heretics and to embrace the faith of Rome.

But intellectual victory, achieved during the debates, which were even accompanied by 'miracles', was not enough for Rome. The potency of the Church of Love, regarding itself as the 'true Church' and having passed on the original traditions of the apostolic chain from generation to generation, was much too dangerous, firstly because of this claim, but secondly, as we saw, because of the natural way in which the people were inclined towards them.

As far as Rome was concerned, the cup was full. The pope, Innocent III (1198-1216), brimming with zeal and convinced that it was his holy mission to make southern France Catholic, called for a crusade. He lobbied northern France's sovereign, Philip the Second, to join in, but Philip did not see any merit in doing so. Nevertheless, he delicately pointed out to the pope that he should not even think about having at his disposal any land over which Philip ruled in name, if the pope conquered it. On this condition, he allowed his northern

barons the pursuit of lands and plunder in the south. Simon de Montfort would be the military leader of the crusade.

And thus, the conflict became a political one. The rather weak Raymond VI of Toulouse, instead of combining the southern forces, became bogged down in internal discords and tried to keep the peace. He consented to a humiliating agreement that outlawed the Cathars. But Rome's word had not much value. A little later, without allies, he found himself facing the army of crusaders.

They had gathered in 1209 in the neighbourhood of Lyon, and from there, they travelled southward. Béziers was the first town they besieged. Thanks to a careless sortie, they were able to take the city, after which a revolting blood bath followed. 'Kill them all', the papal envoy is reported to have said in answer to the question of how the heretics could be distinguished from the papists, 'the Lord will recognise his own!'

Out of terror, the next town surrendered without any resistance, after which, led by de Montfort and his barons, the gang of adventurers (for the crusaders' army largely consisted of these) moved on to Carcassonne. This town, too, was forced to surrender by poisoning the drinking water. This way, town after town and all the castles in between suffered the same fate. At each town, the rule was that all combatants went free, for the Church was merciful. All believers in the Cathar faith had to swear allegiance to the Roman church (while seeing all their possessions confiscated), and those who did not do this, plus of course all the *parfaits*, were condemned to the pyre, unless they renounced their faith. In that case, they would be incarcerated for the rest of their lives and given only bread and water. They did not live long after that. In every town, hundreds of 'good men and women' were murdered. Scholars estimate that in those first 30 years of the thirteenth century, of the estimated 3000 *perfecti* of that time, 1000 to 1500 were burned at the stake. An unknown number of hundreds were burned at Béziers. In 1210, 140 men and women were burned in Minerve. Also in this case, men and women were equal. In the year 1211, the highpoint of the year was in Lavaur: This time, 350 Cathars died. In 1213, Pedro II of Aragon with a Spanish army came to the aid of the Cathars. But also now, de Montfort was too strong. He won the battle, and Pedro fell in the fight over Muret.

The remaining 'good Christians' had to hide in anonymity. The population sheltered them to the best of their ability, endangering their own lives. Some Cathars travelled to their brothers in Lombardy (northern Italy) with whom they had been in constant contact. Some travelled to inhospitable and as yet unsubjected regions. Some arrived in the remote areas of Corbières. Some surfaced in the valley of the Ariège, south of Foix, and in the district around Montségur. They shed their sober outer garments and now wore beneath their ordinary clothes their inevitable belt, which was both the symbol of their connection with the supernatural and of their vow, exactly as with the Esenes, the Gnostics, and the Bogomils.

After seven years of fighting, with the fluctuating fortunes of war, the situation was reversed. The son of Raymond VI, Raymond VII, managed to keep Toulouse free, and de Montfort fell before the gates of Toulouse. Raymond rapidly reclaimed all the land his father had lost. In principle, Rome had little objection to Raymond, seeing him as a useful buffer between Italy and the strength of northern France, as the fighting had become political. Raymond had not taken a strong anti-Rome stance, for his fight was mostly directed against the north that wanted to annex Toulouse. Thus, they reasoned that they could let him be. But when he refused to actively persecute the Cathar heretics, the Church remembering that this Raymond too had been excommunicated, confirmed the excommunication once more in 1225 and went on to invite the son of the in the meantime deceased Philip, Louis VIII, to come 'to take possession of his lands'. Louis needed little encouragement and entered Languedoc at the head of an impressive army. With Simon de Montfort's murderous expedition still fresh in their memory, one castle after another surrendered to the approaching king. By himself surrendering, Raymond managed to keep only Toulouse in his possession. The powerful county of Toulouse, in the eleventh century still the most important power in the former Gaul, was now reduced to a city-state in the province.

But the resistance was not yet broken. During the crusades, quite a lot of barons and feudal lords, the *faidits* as they were called, had been expelled from their castles. At the end of the 1230's, they regrouped around the son and legitimate successor of the murdered Trencavel, to whom the important city of Carcassonne officially belonged.

While Raymond VII picked up and delivered one group of Cathars after another to the Church, which, in its turn, handed them over to the worldly powers (a much subtler way than themselves sending them to the pyre), only Foix and Carcassonne supported the Cathars. Protests ignited incidentally in Albi, Narbonne, and Toulouse, but an organised opposition had become impossible. A part of the *faidits* had gathered around the castle of Esclarmonde on the Pog, which was considered impregnable. From there, they undertook a sortie in which they put to the sword the hated inquisitor of Toulouse and his entire entourage. This was the overture to the grand finale Rome had in store for the 'Church of Love': the subjection and the destruction of Montségur. The castle was under siege for a year. Opposing them – bitter irony – the *Amicx de Dieu* found the united French armies under their former patron, Raymond VII. The flamboyant Cathar sympathiser Raymond de Perelle, who had given up the fortress to the Cathars, defended the stronghold. Sympathisers repeatedly broke through the blockade and supplied the Cathars with provisions and their defenders with ammunition.

Walter Birks, in his book *The Treasure of Montségur*, quoted the preserved Inquisition archives of 1244:

Pierre Roger had had the Cathar treasure carried away. About Christmas in particular, the deacon Matheus and his companion Bonnet took away an enormous quantity of gold and silver. The men of Camon, who formed the blockade in the Ers gorge, secretly devoted to Pierre Roger their former lord, let the sacred treasure pass. The two deacons transported it to the cave of Ormolac in the Sabarthès.

For an entire year, the people of Montségur hoped for help from northern Italy, from where the emperor Frederick II, who was well-disposed towards the Cathars and continuously at war with the Pope, might send a liberation army. This help did not come. Around Christmas of 1243, it became clear that the stronghold could not be held and action had to be taken. For unknown reasons, after surrendering on March 1, the Cathars received about a two weeks extension of their hopelessly doomed lives on the top of the mountain. During the night of March 15, 1244, four *parfaits*, among them their bishop Amiel Aicard, mana-

ged to slip out of the besieged stronghold along the slope of the Pog. They would have much preferred to remain there in order to choose together with their brothers and sisters 'the good end' over a life that from that moment on would be marked by the loss of all who were dear to them and who would precede them by years on 'the way of the stars'. But faithful to the necessity of the moment, they accepted the task that the elder one asked of them. They took with them the holiest objects of their faith such as perhaps the granite cup and the stone from heaven, a hematite that fitted exactly in the cup, symbol of the earthly human being and the light spark from the original world, which becomes enveloped by the former – simple but pure symbols, not only for the elite but that spoke to every sensitive heart. They probably also took the book of John, the beloved disciple, and the other sacred texts that were used during the sacraments. But even more important was that there would be living, initiated *bonshommes* remaining, to keep the flame of the spirit burning and to testify of the unbroken spirit of the two hundred and five *parfaits* of Montségur.

For the two hundred and five *parfaits* and *parfaites*, holy men and women who in their conscious life had neither harmed any person nor killed any animal, first there were other flames before 'the way of the stars' could be entered, forever free from their earthly bodies. At the foot of the steep slope of the Pog, where it levelled out a little, a gigantic pyre was ready. There, with them, the last of the free Church of Love, the Church of the Spirit, went up in flames.

From that moment on, the belief in the two principles in the human being, of which Catharism was one of the most beautiful and clearest expressions, was reduced to an existence in the twilight. Most of the remaining *parfaits* fled to Lombardy and to the banks of Lake Garda. They were betrayed there also. In Vicenza, twelve years later, 30 perfects were burned. Twenty years later, the last centre on the peninsula of Sermione on Lake Garda was destroyed, and a pyre stood ready for almost 80 *parfaits* and *parfaites*, men and women alike.

They, who once were the glory of the county of Toulouse, examples and helpers of the entire population, supported, carried by, and stemming from the highest nobility of the county, were now vagrants that had to be avoided like lepers. Anyone who took them in was arrested and his goods confiscated by the town or the state. Anyone who knew

of houses where heretics were given shelter and did not act as informers had the same fate. The fate of those of the population of southern France sympathetic to the Cathars can be compared to that of the Jews under the Nazi regime, the main difference being that the Cathar holocaust lasted for the best part of a hundred years. The Inquisition closed the net on them as ingeniously as they bricked up the entrances of the cave of Lombrives with 500 (!) people inside. There is no proof of this; perhaps it is one crime that they did not commit, to be set against those countless crimes they did commit but which have not been recorded anywhere. The country was paralysed, brought to a standstill. Whereas the parfaits amongst the Cathars were at least knowingly aware and understood what their fate was, after 1244, trembling people, having hardly any notion of what it was about, underwent the same fate.

So the suffering of the Cathars is forever linked with the political unification of France. The church of the 'Friends of God' does not need a neo-Catharism and no romanticised past. The church of the 'Friends of God' did not long for an independent state but for liberation of the inner kingdom, by following a pure though difficult path. This is why the call for a free Occitania is possibly understandable but somewhat belated. The Gnostic river had withdrawn once more, to break out again in other times and new places. For after seven hundred years, as the promise did after all proclaim, the laurel would bloom again. But seven hundred years is a long time. ~

PART III

A NEW FUNDAMENT

Daz ist swest' katrei maist' Eckhartes rōcht' von
 elobt vñ geewet si d' nā maiz' h're ihu strazbiurd
 xpi dar. h' vñ dar bilde d' war' hait
 hat vor getragē dar. h' selv' ist dar an
 vñ niemā geirē mach. oian liser in dē
 heilige. sw. Das vñ h're spire mit
 fünf' worten vñ mit zwen' gebiarnē
 wische vil volles. Das erstu brot sülle
 wir alle vstan dar. wir pauen sullen
 was wir ewichlich in got sin' gewesen
 vñ was wir nu in got sin'. Das and' brot
 ist dar wir pauen sülle vñ' tebe ind' zu
 wie wir alle was' zu han vstan h' zu
 bedurften wir ~~aus~~ helpe dar ist ein erb'
 bilt'. dē bilt' sülle wir pauen h' an
 iar h' an im dar zu d' war' hait gehoret
 so muge wir in d' war' hait geruē
 Das sülle wir pauen an dem stulen
 dar orste ist dar h' si ein gur' pfaffe
 Das and' dar h' si bewir an ein volkome
 lebentē vñ dar h' habe den gewalt dē
 ein gur' hiter zu selte habe sol. dē
 solr on sochen an wels' stat du in.

The Song of the 'Friends of God'
Meister Eckhart and Johannes Tauler

Generally speaking, a seeker searching for the spirit as the driving force behind everything has often researched an astonishing amount of influences, especially on the basis of having sensed or suspected that 'there is a lot more behind things' than at first meets the eye or can be imagined. At a certain moment, all these influences – assuming that the seeker perseveres – lead to a clear and bright picture, a vision, in the first place of himself, but at the same time, also of part of the surroundings, the thinking and emotional to-do of humanity around him. Thus, by choosing, by doing, but also by weighing up, ultimately one arrives at one choice, a choice that in the first place has to do with simplicity, because a person who knows himself – and this implies nothing denigratory – is a simple being, a choice that secondly has to do with longing, because the greatest force lying deep within the human being is 'craving', and thirdly, it is a choice that for the first time has to do with a 'certain knowing': There is another, untarnished, and pure life, somewhere, perhaps still elusive for him, but the foreshadowing thereof is already felt as grace.

These are human processes that were known to and analysed by many great thinkers in Western history. Sometimes, these processes have been taught in a speculative sense, often to be rejected again, or traded in once more for the rigid dogmatism of a church. These are processes that on the other hand not only have been taught by all truly Gnostic schools but were also skilfully applied in a long, unbroken chain. The spiritual force of their always original thinking came forth from their connection to the spirit, which gave and still gives a powerful direct inspiration and splendour to anyone who approaches it. If we may quote a title that struck us, this really is 'the splendour of the real'.

At the end of the Middle Ages, we see how the straitjacket of rigid

ecclesiastical thinking started to become oppressive to many. It was not only the thinking that started to be regarded as too dogmatic. The excesses shown by the ecclesiastical way of life also no longer agreed with the expectations of people looking forward to a better world and hoping for a liberation from their perilous situations. And perilous they were, the times of the fourteenth century. Europe was ravaged by two devastating epidemics of the bubonic plague in 1347 and 1360-61, by earthquakes in 1356 and, as if that was not enough, by many conflicts, civil wars, and large financial crises. Literally hounded, thousands were doomed to roam the countryside of Europe in the winter in great physical discomfort, whereby their souls and peace of mind were burdened moreover by the terrible anathemas from the side of the papacy. Church and nobility were running the show and that often with the gloves off. The nobility possessed the land, but through inheritances, more and more land had come under control of the many monastic orders. It was not so simple to become a monk: An order offered protection and also provided a certain status. Whoever had an aptitude for learning and a family who could afford it could join, could enter a monastic community. Within this community, one was very industrious. Entirely within the existing order of the society, one applied oneself in the monastery gardens, in the scriptoria, on the estates, and in this way enlarged the material wealth of the order. Since the tenth and eleventh centuries, when some new orders were founded, they had become a not to be underestimated economic and influential factor. Whoever wanted to study anything or just simply wanted to learn to read and write had to make use of a private teacher or of schooling within a monastery.

Amongst these orders of monks, the Dominicans stood out by their intellectual aspirations. In the thirteenth century, they had supplied the largest part of mental ammunition – and from Spain and the south of France incited the hatred – to begin the crusades against the Albigensians and in doing so, had sharpened their thinking to rescind the sayings of the Cathars. Also in the now emerging century, it was again members of this order who combated the last outlying and fragmented groupings of the Cathars – with in-depth interrogations – and who made their still remaining individual members die a most cruel death.

And yet, it happened that the activity undertaken by the Brother-

hood for the West often found form within these orders, mainly for the simple reason that no other opportunity existed elsewhere.

This is why, after the fall of the 'Church of Pure Love', important attempts to arrive at renewal and reformation found their origin within the monastic orders. Think of Luther. Think of the Hermetic thinkers like Ficino and Pico della Mirandola. It is strangely ironic that the order of the Dominicans, after all founded to combat 'heretics', Manicheans, and Gnostics, turned out to be one of the breeding grounds for new impulses to achieve a larger inner freedom. It is miraculous and sometimes hard to understand how the universal knows time and again to break straight through everything to the hearts of those individuals who are prepared to devote themselves entirely to approach that which transcends the nature soul.

But back to Germany, to the regions centred around Cologne, Basle, and Strasbourg, which were becoming increasingly important. Evident from the pyres in Cologne, Cathar sympathies had even penetrated that far.

At the beginning of the fourteenth century, the Dominican Order was only moderately active in the region of Strasbourg. Religion had already become an affair of the theologians at the universities at the time that Meister Eckhart (about 1260-1327), on the basis of a rediscovered inspiration, freed the living faith from the fantasies of the science of those days. He had to pay for his courage and frankness with the revocation of his teachings. Eckhart was accused, persecuted, and ultimately it got so far that he needed to appeal to the pope to defend himself, but he never learned of the latter's final decision. On the return journey from Avignon (in those days the seat of the papal chair and court), he died in a mysterious manner.

In the meantime, the church was at a loss what to do about the new mystics who found such large audiences. Already immediately after the death of Eckhart, a number of his doctrines were condemned as heresy. But that did not stop the flow. An event in the fourteenth century shows how important religion was for the people. Pope John XXII had proclaimed a strike over the dominions of Louis of Bavaria and his adherents in 1324; he attempted to bring the entire priesthood in those areas to a standstill. He had issued an 'interdict', an edict that meant that from a certain day onwards no holy mass would be read, no bell

would chime, no sermon would be held in much of the German Empire. The faithful were also deprived of the other sacraments, except for baptism and extreme unction. If the dying, who had been terrorised all their life with visions of hell, had to pass on without the last rites, called the 'extreme unction', this would have been the worst that could happen to a person in those times.

The effect of this strike, which was not lifted until 1347, was enormous. The poor people, who had no idea what struck them, begged their priesthood and worldly leaders to put an end to this emergency situation. The bishops were to some extent still sensitive to the needs of their people and went for an audience to His Holiness to ask him to lift the ban. But John stuck obstinately to his decision. Then the people started to grumble and became rebellious. Hatred flared up against the church prelates: The people began to compare them to robbers and thieves who had sneaked into the sheepfold of the Christ as in the parable in the Bible and to the usurers and merchants who ought to be chased out of the temple, again a reference to the Holy Scriptures. Part of the priesthood – headed of course by those who had the greatest affinity with the Friends of God – went even as far as turning their backs on the pope under this pressure and joined the people. Others had to flee from the villages where the church was renounced and had to seek their safety in regions still loyal to the Roman church.

The middle of the fourteenth century, around 1350, was a period in which cloisters and churches were in dire straits, while the lay groupings on the contrary became stronger. The Friends of God had pointed out that religion was a matter of the inner being, a very intimate matter of the individual human being with God, with the Divine in him, and now the pope himself had forced the people into this direction. And so, three new streams developed: the mystics of Eckhart, a number of groups very quickly branded as 'sects', and the so-called 'free thinkers' or 'free spirits'. For instance, included in the sects was the older group of Waldo, known as the Waldensians.

Of great significance for the development of Eckhart's mystical teachings has been the contact he maintained as vicar-general of the order of the Dominicans, at that time still young, with many cloisters under his control. What made him so well known were his sermons, which

he held in the German language for the nuns of the convents and which were recorded by them (an example of this you find on the illustration belonging to this chapter). 'The Godhead nobody can know', so he said, and he spoke of the 'abyss of nothingness' or also the 'nameless nothing'. He explained:

The human being cannot know God because the Godhead does not possess any human characteristics like truth, goodness, justice. One can only say of Him what He is *not*.

Mysticism is becoming one with God beyond images and words. In the soul is 'something' that Eckhart calls the 'light', the 'highest mind', the 'foundation', the 'fortress', but preferably, the 'little soul-spark'.

This 'little spark' sees God directly if the human being does not obstruct its action. The 'little soul-spark' is therefore foreign to everything that has been created, and it stands free of time and space. It is encased in the limited, natural human being. Eckhart encouraged his listeners to direct themselves towards this principle, this little spark that is within the human being. When alive, it can light a limitless divine fire.

What constitutes the freedom of the soul? When it no longer finds guilt within itself and no spiritual imperfection. But an even greater freedom is: not to cling to all that is named, nor to oneself. However, the uppermost freedom lies in this: to rise above oneself and to thrust oneself with everything one is into the bottomless abyss of one's archetype: God.

You have all truth within you, in your own being; why then are you looking outside yourself? Why do you not stay with yourself and take from your own treasure?

Everything earthly is only a parable. If you want to get to the core, you have to break through the shell. If you want to find nature, then you have to penetrate all parables. It is a shortcoming of nature that we can only explain God with sense imagery. God is neither this nor that; He does not take pleasure, until he has withdrawn from all defined being

into pure unity. There all blades of grass and trees and stones and all things are one. This is the very best.

His contemporaries Heinrich Seuse (Henry Suso, about 1300-1366) and Johannes Tauler (about 1300-1361) are regarded as Eckhart's best-known followers and pupils. They were part of a circle of people who called themselves the 'Friends of God'. The 'Friends of God' lived in Switzerland, in southern Germany, and downstream along the Rhine and were in contact with the mystic Jan van Ruusbroec (John of Ruusbroeck, about 1293-1381), who lived in Flanders. His most important work, *Het Cieraad van de Geestelijke Bruiloft* (The Adornment of the Spiritual Marriage), was read and studied by them. Among the twelve known works of Ruusbroec is one that he compiled from Eckhart's work, which has been translated into various languages. With Ruusbroec, medieval mysticism came to an end actually at its peak. This is the background we will have to bear in mind to be able to place the appearance of Johannes Tauler.

Johannes Tauler was born around 1300 in Strasbourg as son of a family of burghers, a class of people recently grown into importance, having gained their wealth within the towns through trade. At his fourteenth birthday, he was accepted into the order of the Dominicans – and he remained a member of this order all his life. But besides this, he was an important and stabilising factor within the circle of the Friends of God, the *Gottesfreunde*. This was a remarkable grouping, which for various reasons deserves our interest.

It concerns a group of men and women, a cross section from all layers of society, who 'wanted to put a life of inner devotion and intensive and soulful prayer opposite the external unrest of this time'. As mentioned before, another well-known mystic, Henry Suso, was also a member of this circle.

Tauler's merit was that he tried in imitation of his teacher Meister Eckhart – always within the confines of the church – nevertheless to bring the human being once more in direct contact with the 'bottom of the soul' or the 'soul's basis', as he called it, the light principle lying within the innermost self, that which lies anchored in the heart or in the soul of the human being. His speeches were full of recognisable,

sincere, and deep stirrings of the soul, and his words and the images he called up had great power.

It was this religion for simple people that was so greatly appealing to Luther. It was Tauler's uprightness that touched Johannes Arndt and later Johann Valentin Andreae directly in the heart. This was then really 'a religion of the heart'. Tauler brought this to the ordinary people, who understood German and not Latin, note well, a century before Martin Luther. 'God is a God of the present', his master, Eckhart, had taught him. 'As He finds you now, so He accepts you.' But this is not the same as, 'You can stay like this'. Because the human being must come to a no-longer-wanting-anything: 'They who seek nothing, not honour, not purpose, not inner submission, not holiness, not reward, nor the Kingdom of Heaven, but who have given up all of this, even that which is their own, in such human beings, God is being praised. For', as both Eckhart and Tauler indicated, 'where the creature ends, God begins.'

With these simple words, which are so very true, the problem of mysticism has been perfectly put into words. There exists no possibility to know God with the consciousness system of the earthly human being. The head cannot understand him; the heart is not fit for him and most likely not pure enough. One can perhaps research what God is not, and this is already quite something, but does it bring him any nearer? Yet, when one reads the reports of the mystics, this is always what comes to the fore. In a certain way, feelings of longing, of devotion, of asceticism, of detachment, and of self-effacing became rather inflated in order that the person reaches a sort of nervous exhaustion. It was hoped that then in this way, a glimpse of what God is would descend upon them.

This is why mysticism always remains a difficult affair. It is not a matter of an effort of consciousness in order to make one's finer faculties more susceptible. This is after all so individual, so small. Rather, it is the other way around. Do not fruitlessly tire yourself; do not force anything, but begin to work where it is simple, logical, and obvious, and allow the Other in you to do its work. Amazingly enough, this will place you already on the banks of that supernatural river flowing from the Gnosis. And with so much 'pure water' close to you, the picture of what you need to do will become clear. This is why mysticism

is certainly not the same as Gnosticism, but it does show very well the psychology and the pitfalls of the human being's search for God.

The movement of Eckhart, Tauler, and their spiritual sympathisers in the fourteenth century has played quite a tremendously important role in the breaking open of the church. It gradually loosened the human being from the institution of the church and drew his attention to his own inner soul basis. The church, which should have been a bridge, had become like a solid wall between God and the human being. The merit of Johannes Tauler has been that he showed how the individual can break through all time-restricted forms and formulas to pure religion, to a direct, restored, but living bond with the universal. This was also what the circle of the Friends of God aimed for: the internalizing of the human being, no longer by fleeing from the world (in the cloisters), but by the conquering of the world. Tauler was someone who drew on the experience of the oneness with God (of his inner being) and who, in this way, could ignite many hearts. The external being was not important to Tauler. We hardly ever hear him mention himself, and today we have only a modest biographical knowledge of him.

The Friends of God found their unity in the one invisible church and in the true imitation of Christ. It does not depend on outer regulations and exercises, Tauler stated, but it concerns the power of the inner human being, who leaves the imperfection, the suffering, and the incompleteness of the world behind. Thereby, the inner human being, as Tauler said, leads the earthly being to the 'heavenly not-being'. In this not-being, humankind finds its origin, or, as Tauler put it, its 'formless divinity'.

*Gott is mir näher
als ich mir selber bin!
Wer dessen inne ward,
findet zur Freiheit hin.*

*God is nearer to me
than I am to myself.
Whoever knows this inwardly
shall enter freedom.*

These are lines that are remarkably close to the words of that other *philosophus Teutonicus*, Jacob Böhme, when he wrote more than two centuries later, 'The divine birth is within you, and it is nearer than hands and feet!' True religion and inner Christianity, Tauler ex-

plained, are far removed from extrasensory, occult, or magical practices and events. They are equally far from ecstatic, exaggerated expressions of asceticism or self-castigation, which were prevalent in those days. They do not make use of extrasensory powers or clairvoyant glimpses of unseen worlds, and neither do they long to see Christ in visions or to receive his message by the way of a medium. All this would rather hinder than help on the inward path. It would lead to a path full of wrong tracks, instead of the one path of the inner light birth of the soul.

This was not so with Tauler. Himself a man of the middle way, he tried to protect the people around him as much as he could from overreacting. As for instance J. Burke and M. S. Berry wrote in 1994, he appears to have been on the contrary a peaceful and stabilising factor within his own order as well as in the circle of *Gottesfreunde*. But he did know the meaning of the soul. He spoke of the 'weight of the soul' that cannot be measured.

The soul weighs more than heaven and earth and everything contained in them. For the divine spirit is in it. This is why it weighs as much as God. Its substance is the gold of the divine essence that has descended into it and that wants to change the entire human being and clothe him in this gold.

The individual lives here in this temporary existence solely for the purpose of making this possible, not for the sake of himself or his works, but to become aware of God and his realm within the human being. 'For only from this knowing', Tauler said, 'issue the right works and can the human being live from the spirit of unity.' Ultimately, this means for him to definitely respect the individuality of every human being, but especially to bear in mind inwardly the oneness in Christ. When human beings live from this oneness, the various human characteristics that keep them separated will disappear more and more into the background.

The divine light guides everything inward, not outward. Then high and low, love and suffering, man and woman no longer exist. Then everything external will be forgotten; no one still seeks his own due – but everyone seeks his divine origin, his divine foundation.

*Wenn er nach innen schreitet,
erscheint ihm ein Licht,
das ihn zu Gott geleitet
und alle Fesseln bricht.*

*When he goes within,
a light appears to him,
leading him to God
and breaking all bonds.*

Yet how does one become aware of this 'divine foundation'? Tauler stated that this happens by turning inward, whereby the human being connects with the middle of his heart where the 'soul principle' is situated. Here, the human being gets an inkling of his inborn light principle, the light and the power of the spirit spark, or as Tauler called it after Meister Eckhart, of the spark of God. Once this light is burning, then the human being learns to view many of the things of the world in another and new way. He recognises the fleetingness of the earthly and temporary works of humanity. He sees that the world wants to tie him down: by entertainment, by activities, by distractions, by words and images, and by all sorts of other basically unimportant diversions. When this insight can break through in a human being, then slowly but surely, the desire is awakened to no longer waste the powers of his soul on this kind of thing. This is why he turns away from the world in a way in which he tries to engage himself in it no more than necessary.

Likewise, through Tauler it becomes clear that the human being needs to overcome both the world and his biological self. For the human being is a child of external nature, and his ego originates from it to such an extent that one can say that our ego and our outer nature are in fact one. This is why the human being first of all seeks fulfilment in this world, why he tries to prove himself here, strives to mean something here, and to be something, and the world becomes the stage of his will to live. However, the human being is not only a child of this world when he is attached to the status derived from material goods. He is this also when he, as Tauler said, is attached to the 'lust for spiritual goods and abilities'.

This lust controls many people, who are more attracted to this than to God. And when these are taken from them, their faith and goodwill also leave them.

Sometimes, there are also people, according to Tauler, who cannot let go of the world because they make themselves too dependent on the help of others for the perfecting of their soul. This is another, more subtle way of searching outwardly: They seek the truth in others instead of in their own 'soul principle'. And Tauler did not tire in stressing:

Whoever thinks in this world that he is something, while he is still nothing, is deceiving himself. Everyone must examine his doings and must seek his perfection in himself and never in or through others.

Every human being carries all the wealth he needs within himself: It is the lively activity of the soul directed toward the spirit. In other places, Tauler also called this the 'true soul'. He said furthermore about this, 'The true soul can never be made to abandon its base, for it has the divine spark in itself, and God can never satisfy its longing except with Himself.'

*Ich muss die Kreaturen fliehen
und suchen Herzens Innigkeit.*

*Soll ich den Geist zu Gotte ziehen
auf dass er bleib' in Einigkeit.*

*I must flee that which is created
and seek the heart's greatest depth.*

*I must drive the spirit upwards to God
so that it remains in unity.*

Tauler noted that the mind of the ordinary human being is full of 'images of creatures and things', and this leaves no place for God. This does not mean that the creature themselves, that is, everything that is alive and created, are bad, but rather:

In every creature reside some good and love as well; but it is nevertheless not *the* good or love as such. However, the essence of good, of love, is the divine spirit. And it is to the divine spirit that the human being must turn in full surrender, to enable its essence to descend into him and renew him.

Tauler spoke of a life of surrender and balanced detachment and of the most intimate and most tender longings of the heart. He characterised it as a letting go of the ego nature of the human being – and

in particular a letting go that is possible especially for the sake of the spirit – and exactly because of this, allowing God to work. In this surrender, in this letting go, we are dealing with much more and also with a completely different aim than only the steadfastness of the mind for which the Stoics strived, for example. Tauler wanted to let go of everything that does not lead to God!

How much effort, time, work, and diligence the human being still spends day after day on nonsense, so Tauler thought, and how little on that which leads to God! The poor human exerts himself and tires himself as if this existence would last forever, as if it would depend on himself and not on the One who is eternal. Tauler made it clear that almost everything that moves a human being is his self-will. In self-will, he discovered one of the greatest weaknesses of the human being and saw this as the most important obstacle to the going of the inner path.

Yet how can the human being handle his shortcomings and weaknesses, which he does have after all? Tauler always had only one answer:

The human being, supposing that he is gaining insight and recognising possible shortcomings, must not conquer these in the human way, by opposition and strife, but in the spiritual way, by letting go. The human being must refer each recognised weakness back to its nothingness; they should be incentives to go the inner path with even greater determination.

*Die Einheit, die er findet,
ist ewig, ohne Grund.
Sie wohnt in ihm selber.
Das Wie is niemand kund.*

*The oneness that he finds
is eternal, without base.
It lives within himself.
The how of it nobody knows.*

Tauler explained:

Self-will covers the inner eyes of the human being, which have to be purified from all willing and not-willing if the human being would want to see and find his path. All willing of the human being must become less so that the divine basis can develop and we can speak in the true sense of, Not what I want, but what you want.

Tauler also pointed time and again to the dangers on the path. For example, he spoke of people who believe that they have found the complete truth when touched by the first rays of light power, after which they surrender to self-satisfaction. Often they think that they have risen above everything and regard themselves as superior to others. Tauler said about this:

In fact, they are standing in the natural light and did not achieve a breakthrough. They still love themselves and are far from God.

When the human being creates from the power of the basis of his soul, then this power gives him the possibility to leave behind his lower self. In the light of the divine power, he receives more and more power of discrimination between the inner and the outer human being. Such a person will then be able to determine with Tauler:

What the exterior human being does without the inner human being is of little or no accord. The exterior human being resembles the Pharisee: He inflates himself and counts his good deeds. The inner human being, however, resembles the tax collector: He looks into his nothingness, knows his petty insignificance, and surrenders completely to God.

True resignation, Tauler explained, is that state of the human being in which he is everywhere and always prepared for quiet repose in himself, for contemplation of his soul, which then is in his true self.

*Hast du dich entblößet
aller Geschaffenheit,
dann wird dir eingeflößet
Gottes Unendlichkeit.*

*Have you detached yourself
from everything that drives you,
then you will hear the whispers
of God's infinity. ~*

Johānem dēm Tauler



The Villa Medici, the premises of the Platonic Academy of Cosimo de' Medici and Marsilio Ficino in Careggi near Florence. © Jacek Soltan, Amsterdam/Milan

CHAPTER II

Marsilio Ficino

An Academy for the Soul

I

At some point on our way to the heart of Gnostic and Hermetic philosophy, we will certainly encounter the classical phrase, 'Everything comes from God; everything returns to God', a saying that can be traced back to a thought of Paul. This idea, which also existed with the alchemists of the seventeenth century, was laid down in a slightly different way in an old Rosicrucian prayer that the *Gold- und Rosenkreuzer* of the eighteenth century included in their *Geheime Figuren der Rosenkreuzer* (Secret Symbols of the Rosicrucians). A fragment of this is as follows:

Lord, all blessings and all grace radiate from your being. You have written the character of nature with your finger, and no one can read it who has not learned in your school. Everything is from you; everything returns to you.

In this prayer, the realisation is expressed that nothing can exist that does not have its origin in God and that everything that exists will eventually return to him.

But what do the Rosicrucians mean when they speak of the character of nature? 'Nature' can mean so much. Until recently, science was of the opinion that four billion years were needed for nature to get where it is now. New insights tell us that the universe must have come into existence fourteen billion years ago: Space telescopes catch light waves and radio waves from the outer limits of the universe, which possibly may have begun their journey twelve to thirteen billion years ago. 'Nature' also includes the human being. Being part of it, how can he then learn to know this nature of such enormous size? The school

that is meant here can therefore not be an educational institution, no, this school is life itself. Every human being learns in this school. But, for example, not everyone has the wish to learn. There are people who enjoy learning. There are also those who are different, who prefer to make money or war and do want to avoid lessons. There are quite a few who think that there is not much to learn in life. Yet, everyone learns, slowly or quickly. Sorrow and grief often shape the pen that does the writing, pleasure and joy the hues that colour the pages of life. Some people do not seem to progress at all or seem to experience the same thing repeatedly. Others learn faster.

What must the human being learn? Is this written down somewhere? And, if he must learn anyway, how might he learn faster? For example, in seventy years, that is, within a lifetime? Because four or fourteen billion years is not really overly fast. To start with the last question: Every human being learns more effectively when he knows the plan and knows what is possibly requested of him. And what is requested is that he learns to know the character of nature as it is written by God. As already stated, this idea was also not new in the seventeenth or eighteenth century. Some centuries earlier, this same idea had been on the minds of the thinkers of the *Accademia* in Florence. This academy was founded by Cosimo de' Medici in 1462, after the example of the great Plato, to promote thought and literature and to stimulate the liberal arts, as they are generally described. Back in the fifteenth century, they possibly formulated the question in a slightly different way: 'If everything issues from God, of whom it is said that he is the only good, how then can it be that there is so much evil, so much misery and suffering in this world?'

These questions were not asked by people of minor importance. One of them, for example, was Marsilio Ficino, the man to whom this portrait is dedicated, a man with a mind like a diamond and the soul of an angel, a man who in 1473 became a priest and later a canon in the famous cathedral of Florence and whose sermons attracted people from far and near to that cathedral. A physician by profession, he refused payment for his healing practice all his life. As such, he practised one of the six golden basic rules of the classical Rosicrucians two centuries before they were printed: to heal the sick free of charge.

In fifteenth century Italy, Florence, the city-state of the de' Medici,

was its absolute centre, the heart of civilisation at the time. Through the economic genius of the various descendants of the de' Medici family, trade was booming and drawing arts and literature in its wake. Architecture flourished; many of the buildings to which Florence owes its fame were built in this brief period. Many well-known figures were at work in the Florence of that time, because the magnificent splendour of the de' Medici brought the most creative spirits together. Ficino called his time 'the golden era', especially because of the countless brilliant minds who devoted themselves to the ideals of the *Accademia*, to mention but a few: the poet Poliziano, the classical scholar Bembo, the philosophical poets Lorenzo Lippi and Cristofori Landino, and, for example, the painters Pollaiuolo and Botticelli, who painted the famous birth of Venus from the crest of the waves.

Also the famous and at a young age deceased Count Giovanni Pico della Mirandola was a dear friend, who in 1486, brought Christianity in harmony with the Arabian wisdom and the Cabala of the Jews in his *Conclusiones philosophicae, cabalasticae et theologicae*, a set of 900 theses, and because of this had to flee from Florence. His treatise *Oration on the Dignity of Man* is the introductory text that accompanies his 900 theses, sort of subjects for discussion, in preparation for an international debate. Scholars of all universities in Europe received an invitation; where necessary, Pico would have covered all costs for transportation and accommodation. The debate intended to examine why the human soul should be regarded as immortal. The beginning of the *Oration* is a quotation from Hermes:

Great is the miracle of the human being, Oh Asclepius. Because all properties of the universe have been granted to the human being, he has the ability and the moral duty to achieve the ultimate.

Ultimately, the Church censored the text. After a completely disgraceful examination by the Inquisition in Rome, Pico had to flee to France in great haste.

In spite of the material wealth and the abundance acquired by the de' Medici with their remarkable trading spirit and their financial foresight (for example, they created one of the earliest modern banks in Europe), they never let go of the thread of spirituality. This in itself

is a typical Renaissance ideal, given form also by the de' Medici. The *uomo universale* will not regard his possibly great personal wealth as his property, but as working capital serving the realisation of higher purposes. And just as Ficino was such a universal human being in the highest sense, in a spiritual way, so Lorenzo de' Medici was the living example of this type of human being in a material sense.

Of this group in fifteenth century Florence, Marsilio Ficino (October 19, 1433 – October 1, 1499) was the inspiring intellectual and spiritual centre. His importance transcends the simple influence of a spiritual centre in the social structure of that time and reaches much further than just the fifteenth century. He explained that the human being naturally inclines toward religion, which distinguishes him from animals. The highest form of love and friendship is a form of fellowship that finds its basis in the longing and the love of the soul for God, a theory that has permanently influenced literature since the fifteenth century, and traces of this can still be found in the nineteenth century.

But let us first of all see how simply and clearly he approached the question asked above, What is it then that the human being must learn? How should we understand the character of nature, of human nature? For that is what Ficino did: He shifted the focal point of the question to the human being himself. He wrote to 'his unique friend Cavalcanti':

How pitiful are mortal human beings! They should be continuously ashamed of themselves, I would say. Entirely and only because of this: They find pleasure in ephemeral things and as such deny the eternal, good self from which all earthly things derive their goodness. All things are good in themselves, for they have their origin in the good self. And they will regain their goodness of their own accord, when we return them to the good self. But they become rightfully devilish and prickly when we pursue these things from an attitude of the greatest arrogance, because we have turned away the good in which they are contained naturally and by which they are maintained. How surprising it is, Giovanni, or rather, how sad that these things cut us off fully from the good, although they are themselves completely one with it.

In fact, this can never be the complete answer. It is seen correctly that the human being can determine for himself if what he thinks, does, and wants originates out of the good, or put differently, out of the soul, or that it bubbles up out of the bad, or rather, out of the selfish image (of course also a sort of ensoulment) that always must see itself as the centre. When something goes well for a change, the human being is inclined to overestimate himself seriously and then begins to behave arrogantly. Even if he would not want to do so, the human being sometimes needs to stand up for himself, which may turn out rather unpleasantly for others. Moreover, even if a human should get it right all the time, then there is still sickness and death, which even under the best circumstances can surely not be called 'good'. And if there should be no more people, then still the animals would tear each other apart for food. 'All existence is a burning sorrow', an idea of the Buddha and one of his four noble truths, does hit the nail on the head.

Well, this was certainly also how Ficino looked at things. But to him, the human being was not only a natural being. He was convinced that the human being is a spirit, a spiritual being. The spirit was to him the origin of the human being, which he tried to show in many places. It is an element of being that lies imprisoned in the mortal body. Marsilio called this body an instrument of death that is so heavy and strong, however, that it causes the spirit to fall asleep and become sick and thus saturated via its senses with dreams. And yet, the real thirst is not quenched. For, as Marsilio wrote:

When the human being thus nurses himself (with dreams), the thirst merely increases and the spirit itself pines away. Through the unfulfilled craving, the unhappy spirit becomes ill and cannot find rest anywhere, but roams about restlessly hither and thither in vain. And when it thinks that it can rest somewhere comfortably, it falls downwards. When the spirit hopes for a remedy to restore its health, it drinks a deadly poison.

Thus, we can easily imagine that the spirit gets enough of being caught time and again in that which is fleeting. The spirit no longer finds satisfaction in transient things, which are merely reflections of the eternal; it wants the eternal itself. Marsilio continued:

For when someone is thirsty, he prefers to empty two cups rather than one. But a thirsty person will not be satisfied with the idea of wine, regardless of whether this idea originates in seeing or thinking (thus reflecting), because that will not quench his thirst. On the contrary, it will even make him thirstier. We are all thirsty for the true and the good, yet we all drink dreams. But because the spirit is eternal, it cannot live on dreams, but on the contrary, requires food that is eternal.

In our time, the concept 'spirit' is by no means as obvious as it was for the wise but modest Marsilio Ficino, a philosopher who had done all his life little else than think, write, research, heal, and teach. What was obvious to him and his contemporaries is a critical point for us in the twenty-first century. Whoever tries to look through Ficino's eyes at the society of the beginning twenty-first century will notice a number of things. The ease with which Marsilio and his like-minded friends could exchange opinions is presently hard to find. Sometimes, it seems as if an underlying level of mutual understanding is missing, a certain respect for the thinking of others, the feelings of others, and the 'presence' of others or of those who think differently.

The above-mentioned 'deficiencies' find their origin in the disturbed development of the human heart. The qualities mentioned are therefore properties that are immediately present when the heart, the emotional centre of the human being, opens itself for a new en-soulment as a result of the flowering of the rose. In connection with this, it is also very strange that the modern human being is satisfied with the society he creates and maintains together with others. It is strange that the human being works and works to live and, conversely, lives to work. It is strange that so far, present-day society only sporadically shows more than an economical basis for its existence. Obviously, there needs to be a healthy and well-developed economical side to society. This is a necessity. The market economy ensures (in the West) most everyone's existence, although this market economy certainly also has its more questionable sides.

Fortunately, the tide seems to be turning. Perhaps, an art form will arise that through its inspiration will open up the wonderful inner beauty and emotion that can be awakened in the soul, in Ficino's view, an art that reflects the image of the divine world in physical mat-

ter, which causes the soul to remember its divine origin once more. Surely, a new architecture will arise that creates buildings, structures, or spaces to bring people together in one great unity where in communal experience, a flame can burn of quiet, clear, and conscious longing for a more complete life. One day, there will again be a true religion that can bring the purpose of divine worship closer: to once more connect the new human soul with the spirit.

These also existed in the days of Marsilio Ficino, or better said, they came again because of him. The exceptional and brilliant men and the one woman that made up the *Accademia delle Arti del Disegno* (Academy of the Arts of Drawing) and the Platonic Academy of Cosimo de' Medici realised new forms of religion, art, and architecture. Among them, Ficino was the pure source of inspiration, the modest but always attentive, the always mildly judging yet critically contemplative centre.

This also existed three centuries earlier, in the highly developed cultural and social structure of the Occitania of the Cathars. The same culture was supported in Italy by the Patarenes, 'the ragpickers', who were of the same mind. The name originated in Milan, on the rag market of the textile quarter. Patara is also the name of a town in Asia Minor from where remaining Manicheans and Paulicians had fled to Italy. There, also some of the last groups of the Bogomils settled, who together with the last of the escaped Cathars tried to remain faithful to 'the Church of Love'. Was there not a separate class of troubadours, a very secret group of love poets and minstrels, who performed in Italy after the Roman period of France? They were the *Fedeli d'Amore*, 'the faithful of love'; this is what they called themselves. Their names? The famous architect Alberti belonged to them, the painter Botticelli, Cavalcanti, Dante Alighieri, Francesco Petrarca, Angelo Poliziano. Amazing, how the *Gnosis* has drawn its lighting track of love in all times.

The community in the south of France, under the inspiration of the Cathar faith, was also called the 'realm' or the 'community of love'. The minstrels or troubadours sang, for example, of the high or Platonic love, the *amor castida*, the pure or chaste, non-physical love, and they travelled from the court of one castle to another one, or they were in the permanent employment of their patrons.

Love was also for Ficino the essence and the fuel of his *Accademia*. The *Accademia* was entirely formed after the example of the philoso-

phical schools of antiquity, and its purpose was to strengthen all good qualities in the human being, but most of all, to awaken in every soul the longing for the world of the light. For ‘the divinity of the soul’ was for Ficino the basis of human dignity. It was this idea that became the basis for what was in those days regarded as the *uomo universale*, the universal human being who would at any desired moment have ready every good quality and be capable of doing at any moment what would be necessary, useful, and under the circumstances, the best and most laudable.

Three functions in which the human being distinguishes himself from the animal, the art of building, religion, and music, were of course present in Occitania, because there at its centre was the church of pure love, the church of the Cathars. This is what inspired many of the troubadours, and to them, we owe some of the grail legends.

Many of the sons and daughters of the aristocratic families were taught by the *bonshommes*, the *parfaits*. The fortresses and castles themselves offered hospitable accommodation to the *bonshommes*, as they travelled the country in pairs and assisted the simple population in sickness, gladdening them with their tales and parables and sealing them in their last hour with their holy *consolamentum*, which would safeguard every budding development of the soul after death.

As a matter of course, these population developed a certain understanding of the two nature orders, the two principles from which the human being lives. They understood this because of the living example of the *bonshommes*, who showed how the spirit, the spiritual centre in the human being, lies imprisoned in our nature order but not forever. Liberated and purified souls would go the ‘way of the stars’ and ultimately complete that path in the original kingdom. The Cathars, who devoted themselves to the *endura* (the ‘tolerating’, the ‘enduring’ of the world until the light of the other world appeared), had nothing sad about them, but helped and supported wherever they could, actively where possible, with understanding where necessary. Moreover, they had knowledge of plants and herbs and besides words of hope, also brought physical relief. In this way, the population was at that time fully familiar, as listeners or believers, with the pure teachings of the two worlds, the same teachings that Jesus had shown to his

disciples through the example of his life. As such, they felt a strong relationship with the works of the first apostles.

It is not the intention here to try and depict a naïve historical image that fully ignores the many wars and the scheming and internal power struggles that played in those days in the Languedoc (another word for Occitania) or in fifteenth century Tuscany. But there is an essential difference between a society, or a form of community, that is only interested in the battle for survival and one that it is able to create over and above a healthy economy, an additional value, offering its people a perspective that rises above the solely material.

We still know the names of some of these communities. Some of them flourished briefly, like the one of Akhenaton; others have known a longer period of influence, like that of the Indian monarch Ashoka, who adhered to the teachings of Buddha and who was called 'the wise one'. Of many other realms, equally special, not only the names are forgotten, but also their meaning and everything they experienced and realised. Just think of the countless principalities that flourished in Central Asia, of which some adhered to the teachings of Mani, as has again become known in recent times. Think of the many civilisations of South and Central America, of which every now and then, only fragments come to the surface. Our society is far removed from them. Although it may, perhaps, not return directly to the basic principles of earlier civilisations, a turning point is on its way, and at the beginning of the twenty-first century, an absolutely critical point has been reached.

Marsilio explained that the spirit becomes ill when it feeds on too many dreams. Sickness through undernourishment weakens one, and a weak voice grows increasingly weaker. It is not heard; it cannot be heard, because the noise of society with all its fascinating but often also heartrending manifestations will drown it out as loudly as possible. Ultimately, it will thus grow silent, and the people will no longer be able to be bearers of the spirit-spark, the last principle of the light soul. As life-sparks, they will then continue on their merry-go-round on earth, whereby they drive themselves and each other crazy, seek to kill each other, and eventually bring civilisation to an end. Those who look around must brace themselves; they can see it happening, because guidance from above, inspiration by those who know, the *bons-*

hommes or the initiated, has vanished. And this has to be so, for the human being is not yet complete, and he must undertake the second part of his development himself, albeit under the stimulation and ultimately under the guidance of his inner inspiration, his living new soul. This is why our era is so critical. It is still possible to hear this inspiration, this voice of the innate soul spark, but the time is becoming increasingly precarious. It is certainly an exciting time in which we live. Something fundamentally different needs to be learned and this at short notice. What is it? What needs to be learned?

Let us take another look at the fragment of that eighteenth century Rosicrucian prayer that says that we may learn the character of nature as written by God. A character is the essence of something. It is the essence of nature that we must learn to know. We can also switch it around: The human being himself is from nature. Everything contained in nature is also in him: growth and blossoming, learning, living, reproduction, and ultimately, also sickness, decline, and finally, even death. By learning to know himself, he learns to know the essence of nature, of the earthly nature and thus of the earth itself. By learning to know himself through and through, he learns to know four billion years of the earth.

Then that special psychological moment arrives in which the human being, deep within himself, recognises, 'I am not yet complete; my development is not yet at an end, not at its peak. For the earth is also only half way developed.' Is it then possible that he is also only half way, like the earth? That depends. There is something more to it. The human being must learn to know himself, certainly, but he must learn to know all of himself. For he is inclined to look always only at one half, to nature, being so close, while another, unknown half is certainly equally important. The human being is indeed nature and of nature, but not exclusively so. In the magnificent physical body he has at his disposal, another principle is present. Deeply hidden, there is a divine nucleus, a divine principle that in world literature is sometimes called the rose of infinite beauty and also called the sacred lotus flower floating on the water. The human being must learn to know this as well. Actually, this is what he should learn to know first of all. Being so near, it is a miracle that this rose is not known, for it has inspired us with its life through which we can

live. And also, this rose of another nature has a plan and is destined to follow its own development. Its existence is founded in a mighty, divine plan, not in time, but in the eternal.

In fact, it has not been given to the human being to know what 'eternal' is. This is the prerogative of the rose of the heart, the *other one* in the microcosm. And this one has been waiting. For how long? What for? Until the human being is finally able to read the character of nature!

It is sometimes said that this *other one*, this 'stranger' of the Gnostics, once underwent a divine development, in a long forgotten time, or rather, not long ago, but differently, entirely outside of time. The rose existed in eternity. However, it was looking too much into the river of time, too long, too intensely, causing the subtle balance of the mighty energies in which the microcosm was taken up to break, and the microcosm lost itself in time. The human being lacks the senses to catch hold of how it was, or is, over there outside of time. But the other one knows and with its sensitive impulses, it awakens in the earthly human being that strange, inexplicable longing for unknown wide vistas, unknown beauty, for the eternal.

But the other one knows! Whoever can see this is able to recognise two parts, two principles, in the human being that are both engaged in a mighty learning process. On the one hand, there is the human being arisen from earthly nature and on the other hand, the divine rose of the heart, originating in the eternal, in the other. Without this divine rose, we would be at the end of a long process of development. With it, the human being will experience standing at the beginning of a grand new phase in life. The human being who decides to learn to know as well as possible both his own nature and that of the rose, through and in the school of life, also with the help of a true spiritual school, will certainly understand from within the ending of that special Rosicrucian prayer from the eighteenth century. For this prayer was written by someone who understood the essence of the earth, because he unfolded his inner self fully, and together with it, he went towards unknown horizons:

*Lord, all blessings and grace radiate from your being,
You have written the character of nature with your finger,
and no one can read it who has not learned in your school.*

*Everything is from you; everything returns to you.
Live thou in me, so that I may live in thee.*

This is also the way Marsilio Ficino looked at it. He quoted Plato, who wrote, 'God, as the ancient tradition explains, holds the beginning, the middle, and the end of everything that exists in his hand'. And furthermore, Ficino himself wrote:

There is one God in all things and above all things. There is one light in all things and around all things. The light in the things that are made by God is a reflection of the divine brightness. One could also say that this light is God, who binds himself to the measure and adjusts himself to the magnitude of his works. God himself is nevertheless an immeasurable light that exists in itself and exists through itself both within as well as outside of everything. 'For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see the light', as David sings. He is also the eye through which all eyes see, and as Orpheus says, 'The eye of all things sees in each thing separately, and in truth sees all things in itself, because it perceives that all things are itself.'

It is interesting to see in Ficino and generally in his contemporaries the drive for knowledge in relation to the human being as the mathematical centre point of creation. It is the same desire for knowledge and understanding that ever since drove the human being to penetrate into the core, the first cause, of every phenomenon in the world around him. It is a search that has ultimately led to the impressive and meticulous knowledge of physicists, biologists, and medical scientists so characteristic of our time. This is certainly a knowledge that is of great benefit, but that at the same time shows an enormous shortcoming.

It so happens that it supplies no real answer. It is an abundance of food, but the deepest hunger of the human being cannot be satisfied by it. The thirst of the human being, this timeless wanderer on planet earth, for 'a draught of immortality' is not quenched by it.

Ficino was the first one to recognise this. He, too, was a seeker, but he returned to the source. With Plato, Hermes, and Christ, he found true values. And what he found reaches so far that with his blessed

writings, his crystal clear expositions, and his loving ways, he showed the ability to inspire and lift above themselves the most enlightened characters of his time. However, the secret of Ficino is greater than Hermes, greater than Plato. For ultimately, Marsilio arrived at the same premise to which they had also penetrated: 'The human being himself is the greatest wonder'. And what he found and wherein he penetrated was the microcosm wherein the earthly human being through personal effort brings about the birth of the god-in-him. This is what we can call the true meaning of the concept 'Renaissance'. In the first place, Ficino understood this. Secondly, he realized this by overcoming his own nature. Thirdly, he was able to propagate this insight and by means of his Platonic Academy bring it to life in many hearts. Thus, at that time, a real knowledge of the creation was released again. It is the same that the classical Rosicrucians referred to with 'so that ultimately man might understand his own nobility and worth, and why he is called microcosm', that is, 'small world'. Also in our time, the original purpose of human existence is referred to in this way.

The great Ficino, who brought so much light to the budding modern Europe, was of small stature, friendly in company, but melancholy in lonely hours. This is why he worked exceptionally hard, and he wrote his famous essay, *On Love*, a commentary on Plato's Symposium, on the urging of his friend Cavalcanti, who wanted to help him get over his depression. His health was moderate, and he lived moderately: 'Moderation is renouncing everything, in so far nature allows this, with regard to physical needs'. After the example of Pythagoras, whom he saw as the third in the line of Hermes, Orpheus, Pythagoras, Plato, he was strictly vegetarian.

II

How can we sketch a picture of the Florentine Academy from a present-day point of view? We could mention the names of the people who belonged to Ficino's circle and as mentioned above, these names are impressive. His letters alone were written to more than one hundred illustrious characters, of whom the portraits, poetry, philosophy, and in many cases, the biographies are known to us down to this day,

for a staggering amount has been written about the Renaissance in Italy. It is possibly more interesting to find out how Ficino himself saw this; the manner and form in which these friends gathered may tell us more. In this, he had taken Plato, Hermes, and Christ as examples and prototypes; Ficino organised his circle following their example. Its highlight was a festive meal, the symposium, certainly not only meant as a celebration with friends and likeminded souls, but so that a person could gather forces to nourish the soul and his thirst could be quenched with a 'draught of immortality'. We can perfectly savour the spirit of this *Accademia* in the sympathetic guidelines and advice that Ficino gave concerning the satisfaction, the conclusion, the form, the food, the rules, and the influence of the festive meal. The festive meal meant in Ficino's words:

A rest from work, freedom from worry, and nourishment of talent, it is a paragon of love and splendour, food of benevolence, spicing of friendship, gives lustre and brilliance, and is the comfort of life. The number and quality of the participants are of the greatest importance. The aim is not only the sharing of food, but the exchange; the merging in a mutual emotion, the sharing of life experience and especially of spiritual goods. And the results are then that the limbs are strengthened, the life juices are activated, the spirit recovers, feelings turn to joy, and reason becomes cultivated.

Do we not immediately see the similarity with the symposia of Plato, where Socrates offered his wise and at the same time clever lectures, and was the academy not therefore called the Platonic Academy? Divine matters were discussed by those who were moderate – what a blessing. The conversation needed to be varied, pleasant, and short.

Let the speakers take Nature as an example, for it, mistress over the creation and lover of life, produces the sweetest of fruits; well then, similarly the speakers shall awaken love and joy with their words. Of course, they may mix love with sharpness, humour with earnestness, profit with pleasure. Let them be witty and seasoned in their cleverness, but never insulting or bitter. A festive meal can certainly bear vinegar, but not vitriol.

A festive meal in our sense is not aiming for pomp and glory, nor shall

it lead to slavish poverty. We wish for a carefully laid and clean table, and everything must be seasoned with the salt of talent and lighted with the rays of attention and good manners, so that the fragrances spread themselves and are even sweeter the next day.

Marsilio Ficino found ample justification for the festive meal:

The heavens themselves include the Milky Way, the wine jar of Father Libra, Jug and Crab, Fishes and Birds; besides, it is a form that is reminiscent of the Last Supper of the Master and the twelve, which occupied a central place. And who does not know that Christ, the master of life, often attended a festive meal and at one of these performed his first miracle for the people, when he changed water into wine? Also, he fed around the Lake of Galilee many thousands with a few loaves of bread and fishes. What more can a honeycomb wish for itself? And was it not during a meal that he revealed the highest mysteries to his disciples in well-chosen words? This way, he has given us the wonderful sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

He concluded:

And why all this writing about the festive meal? Just to achieve that we may once more share in the unity of happiness, because usually we live in the misery of a divided and separated existence. But most of all, let us not forget that the real food for a person is not so much plant or animal, but the human being himself, and that the most perfect food for the human being is not so much the human being, but God himself, who continuously arouses and increases human hunger and thirst with his Heavenly Foods, until they will be finally satisfied in a miraculous and abundant way. Thus only in Him does the highest delight always go hand in hand with the highest satisfaction.

Thus, Ficino formulated over 500 years ago the conditions for a successful symposium. Ficino inspired his fellow partakers and managed to connect their thoughts time and again with the Most High. And really, the participants were certainly not of the lesser kind, and the concept *uomo universale* obtained in this light a totally different and deeper

meaning. How are we then to view the contributions of this little man from Careggi? In three ways:

- For the mind, he opened up the original Plato, who connected the human being with the world of pure ideas, and Ficino was pre-eminently a neo-Platonist.
- For the impersonal self, he referred you to *Hermes Princeps*, the source, so he was the first pansophist.
- For the microcosm, he referred the human being to the Christ, the master, who through his love opens the mystery of life and who sets the little world alight in spirit fire, so he was truly Christian.

Through the harmonising of these three in an enlightened and effective unity, he was an absolute innovator.

Ficino was a priest and a Dominican, and Gnostics have learned through pain and suffering to be weary and have reservations toward everything that comes from this order. In a spiritual sense, however, he may be called an innovator, because he linked science to Christian Hermetism and gathered his sympathisers into a brotherhood: the *Accademia*. And by this, he did exactly what Andreae and his followers once again envisioned in the seventeenth century and what the modern Rosicrucians of the Lectorium Rosicrucianum, to be sure from yet another point of view, still have in mind.

So, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the *uomo universale*, the universal human being, is still standing before us as an ideal to be realised, but not understood as the central point of the intellectual world. Certainly, the knowledge in every field of study and in all the sciences has grown and increased a thousandfold. But the concept of unity, the sense of human dignity, the strength of a purified will, and the healing power of love, these are characteristics that still need to be largely developed – characteristics that adorn the universal human being. This book is about the universal human being seen as a focal point in a restored, benevolent, and active little world. As its basis, the same spiritual fire of love burns in this microcosm as in the cosmos.

‘The masses’, Ficino wrote, ‘live from nonsense’, whereas the festive meal gives a deep meaning to life. To be able to bring this depth into life is also the sole purpose of those who unite in a higher brother-

hood: to bring truly active light that can lead many divided and separated lives back to unity. For also in the twenty-first century, the indispensable food for the soul must once again be found through knowledge of the light and through the correct effort. Some words that Ficino derived from the by him so venerated and often commented on Plato:

Let each of us leave behind any other kind of knowledge and search for and follow one thing only, when he happens to be able to learn ... the distinction between good and evil. This requires the discerning light of love that enflames the heart in the all-good.

And then it can happen, as Marsilio said, 'that the person who would usually get drawn gently to the fire is seized unexpectedly and set on fire by the flaming magnificence of the divine ray, which illuminates us so splendidly in its beauty!'

Epilogue

At the end of his life, it became quiet around Marsilio Ficino. His final years were spent retired at his villa in Careggi, on the estate presented to him in 1462 by Cosimo de' Medici and where he established his *Accademia* and carried it to great heights. Lorenzo de' Medici had died in 1492, and his son and successor had been ousted as sovereign. Ficino had lost a number of friends through death. Others, like Bembo and Pico della Mirandola, had been reined in by the Church or by the fanatical monk Savonarola. There was little money and little exchange and little activity left around the *Accademia*. Ficino's last work was an uncompleted explanation of Paul's letter to the Romans.

Thus ended the life of a man to whom Europe owes an enormous amount of gratitude, a man with a mind like a diamond and the soul of an angel, who made the works of Zarathustra, Hermes, Plato, and many others accessible to the West, a man who proved that true philosophy is one with religion and that true religion can only mean one thing: through mode of life, that is through the observance of wisdom, moderation, courage, and justice, to connect the soul once again with God. ↪



Portrait of a Young Man (*Paracelsus*) by Hans Holbein, ca. 1530

*Theophrastus Paracelsus,
the First Rosicrucian
Hermes is the Source*

I

The Renaissance has been divided into a southern and a northern stream. The southern stream was characterised by a renewal of forms, colours, images, myths, and stories from antiquity, which were given new life through the youthful minds and the capable hands of the fifteenth century artists who inhabited Florence, Sienna, Rome, and the surrounding regions. Artists from all over Europe, travelling to Italy on their Grand Tour to study the heritage left to them by an earlier classical civilisation, endlessly copied the forms, ideas, and principles of measurement in the images and architecture of their predecessors. All over Europe, the art of antiquity was revived. The early masters from Belgium, Germany, and the Netherlands responded to what they had found in Rome and Florence with their own new northern variation. In this way, the northern Renaissance, if we may call it such, showed a more strictly applied rule – perhaps somewhat less lovely, but a rule in which beauty was combined with a firmer, more forceful way of expression.

The rebirth was also reflected in the philosophical point of view. At the beginning of the fourteenth century, Petrarch was still highly praising his brother's priesthood. It seemed to him then the highest state of existence on earth, while less than a century later, Cosimo de' Medici, Ficino, and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola focussed on the rebirth *in* the human being and *through* the human being.

They showed the path on which the human being could choose for himself.

We have made you a creature neither of heaven nor of earth, neither mortal nor immortal, in order that you may, as the free and proud shaper of your own being, fashion yourself in the form you may prefer. It will be in your power to descend to the lower, brutish forms of life; you will be able, through your own decision, to rise again to the superior orders whose life is divine.

Oh unsurpassed generosity of God the Father, Oh wondrous and unsurpassable felicity of man, to whom it is granted to have what he chooses, to be what he wills to be!

Pico della Mirandola wrote this new insight in his treatise of 1486, *On the Dignity of Man*. The human being could determine his life, his future, himself. Did he want to be an animal or something even lower? The choice was up to him. Did he want to transform into a heavenly being? If he could willingly entrust himself fully to the idea and to the knowledge, the gnosis, of transfiguration, he would experience the blessing of the rebirth of the soul.

It was truly an era of hope, of new insights, although remaining entirely within the strong political orientation of the Church of Rome, which remained all-powerful in virtually every respect. These ideas, developing in a relatively short period, had an equally immense influence in the northern countries of Europe, in the places that were to compete with each other in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries for the leading role in European history. These ideas also formed the basic tenets of the first Rosicrucians of the seventeenth century, of Freemasonry and the Illuminati of eighteenth century Germany, and of every movement that sought a direct link with the divine, with the supernature.

In the Europe of that time, an enlightened group of people existed, who – as long as they remained discreet and circumspect – could engage in spiritual matters.

A second group, who held sway over religious ideas and practice, kept the population quiet and under control with the assurance of a heaven *after* this life and by threatening them, whenever necessary, with hell.

How was it possible that the people of the Middle Ages and those first years of the Renaissance could believe so unconditionally in,

and be subject to, these invisible influences, and how could they accept being treated in such a way by those in power? What fears afflicted people to such an extent that they did not dare to say what they thought, even recoiling from their own thoughts? With fondness, they imagined what hell would look like – and trembled at their imaginings. Think of those Romanesque churches with their tormenting devils and monsters, portrayed in great detail. Think of the famous first part of the *Divina Commedia* (The Divine Comedy) of Dante Alighieri, *Inferno*, in which the writer made every famous person known to him from his hometown undergo the most terrible tortures. In the late medieval paintings of Hieronymus Bosch, we see bizarre monsters and monstrosities depicted so realistically, it is as if the artist had been there himself.

Perhaps it is even better to ask how it could have been possible that large sections of the population – until recently – were so superstitious that they were of the opinion that witches had to be burned, thieves had to be branded, and unmarried mothers had to be chased out of villages and towns and have stones thrown at them? Or was it, perhaps, not fear but greed that motivated them? According to the surviving documents, the money and goods of heretics and witches were declared forfeit and, after deduction of the costs of jail accommodation, professional torturers' salaries, and henchmen's fees, fell to the Church, the accusers, the judges, the physicians, the jailers, and even (in a highly exceptional case) to the lawyer of the accused.

Is it strange that the persecutions stagnated and fervour declined as soon as there was a lack of wealthy burghers? It is also not surprising that when the Emperor of Austria awarded the forfeited properties to himself and nothing remained to be gained by the city councillors, they discontinued their witch hunts, to resume them again when the emperor rescinded his right. When Emperor Ferdinand II (1619-1637) declared this confiscation unlawful and prohibited it, the witch burnings stopped altogether. Such Christian fervour!

This is only one example of the darkness of medieval society in Europe. That something like this was possible can mainly be blamed on ignorance and on a power system based on fear. The popular worldview was determined by anxiety over where the next meal would come from, over how to pay tithes and other taxes, and over the work

to be done for the landlord. Hygiene in the towns and villages was abysmal, not to speak of the smell! Nor was there any popular education; few learned to read or write. Aside from oral transmission, there was no way of acquiring knowledge. Where necessary, people learned practical arithmetic. Knowledge of the immediate world came from parents, family, neighbours and was very limited. Knowledge concerning life itself, other than that acquired through life experience, was supplied by that other authority, the Church.

Everything one knew about life and death, about birth, growing, aging, and dying, one knew from the clergy. The prelates taught about heaven and earth. They were the ones who thundered about devils, witches, and magic. They preached about souls that were doomed, about heretics, about crusades and about burnings at the stake. They strongly emphasised that it was less serious to steal or murder than to stray from accepted doctrine, to believe in something different. They themselves were the best examples of this.

How could a sensitive human being grow into a seeker under these circumstances? How could he acquire knowledge? Surely, this was virtually impossible?

He had to believe blindly, not to seek the secret of life. He was not even to think. The population did not think. The population was kept under control, and that control extended to their thoughts. Their actions were largely directed by their emotions and these were cleverly manipulated, not with evil intent, but entirely in accord with the understanding of the times. This is how the world is and how God intended it, they thought.

In those days, faith had little to do with the enormous power that is released at the birth of the spiritual human being. Instead it consisted of learning a 'confession of faith' by heart or learning absolutely nothing and simply doing what one was told.

In fact, it was not faith at all. Dogma and superstition clouded the spiritual eye. Dogmatic thinking easily leads to superstition. Then, the development of the human being stagnates, and it becomes dangerous because reality can no longer be perceived. To put it another way, when people have not learned to think deeply, as was then the case for the majority, they live instead through powerful emotional impulses from the immediate environment. Such people are excellent

members of society, but not strong individuals with a strongly developed 'ego'. People generally followed their instincts, physically and emotionally. The ego had little independence and submitted easily to the ruling order, perhaps in part for fear of punishment.

Yet examples of people of that time who freed themselves from this unconscious life do exist. These were the people who have left their mark on history, people who worked in science, who stood up for their own vision, for freedom of thought, and for a new, humane society. In the 15th century, scientists did not differentiate between 'ordinary' and 'secret' sciences. Many things could not be explained, and by the turn of the 16th century, this resulted in an elaborate science of magic, the science of 'invisible', but nevertheless real, forces and effects. Scientists then, as now, searched for tangible, verifiable facts, and this led ultimately to a way of thinking in which people only studied those things that could be observed with the senses. From this, our science developed and became what it is now.

The first impulse towards a more or less objective, verifiable astronomy came from such people as Nicolaus Copernicus, Tycho Brahe, and Johannes Kepler, scholars who also were still very much engaged in astrology – not secretly, but as counsellors and confidants of princes, kings, and highly placed church authorities. They based their advice on moral and emotional values that were determined through the study of the stars and planets following the methods common at the time.

Chemistry developed in a similar way. Through the search for plants and metals, seeking the mysterious laws governing the transmutation of those metals, and through the studying and experimenting required to find the philosopher's stone – the universal remedy – they arrived at the formulation and application of objectively verifiable facts and repeatable processes. This was not only the origin of chemistry; modern medicine was also based on the work of such men as Paracelsus.

It is said that Theophrastus Paracelsus laid the basis for modern pharmaceuticals and for chemistry in general. For him this meant the meticulous study of nature and of the human being, examining the workings of plants and of minerals, and applying them in the healing process. It meant understanding how the human being functions in

order that it would be possible to heal him. Know the soul of the human being, and you may also be able to help in other ways. Know the spirit, the essence of the human being, and you may be useful in the gathering of all monads in the spiritual field.

If he could see what became of the science he started or, rather, to which he gave a new foundation, he would feel a stranger to it. At the very least, he would point out that the modern way of preparing medicine utilises only a third of the potential of plants, minerals, and metals offered by nature. He would certainly be impressed by the meticulousness with which modern pharmaceuticals has managed to reduce matter to its active constituents and applies these with demonstrable effect. But, he would say, compare it to a tree: We can study all the processes that are taking place in its root system. We can chart them and know exactly which part is doing what and what it is transporting, yet the tree is more than that. A tree consists of a powerful trunk, which connects heaven and earth, and a mighty crown of foliage, which gathers the light of the sun, transmutes it, and lends it special properties. Anyone who overlooks this may be engaged in researching the tree but will never unveil the secret of its life, the essence of the tree. If the human soul and the human spirit are not considered when you examine the human heart and the human head, then achieving the complete unity of the human being is out of the question.

It is now impossible to imagine life without modern science. The early scientists, living in a world of hidden connections and mysterious influences, began to work towards a rationally controllable way of carrying out research. As this process developed, human intuition was increasingly excluded from scientific thinking, until the present where it has little or no role to play. The American historian Larsch points out that the result of this is a culture focussed on self-reflection and self-development, where people are overly concerned with themselves and consequently no longer able to recognise nature, culture, and also *the other* as important as themselves. The environment, society, and the human body, according to Larsch, now pay the price for this unbalanced perspective.

II

The classical Rosicrucians, Johann Valentin Andreae and his contemporaries, recognised that science held great promise, but was also impoverishing. While not opposing it, they recognised that the lack of *true* knowledge of nature contributed to the difficult circumstances of their time. They emphasized the reading of the *liber naturae*, the book of nature, the knowledge and investigation of nature. The Rosicrucian Michael Maier, in his book *Atalanta Fugiens*, illustrated this with an image of the alchemist, lantern in hand, following the 'footprints of nature'. Paracelsus said about this:

Whoever wants to study nature must step on her books with the feet. Writing is learned letter-by-letter, nature on the contrary from land to land: so many lands, so many pages. This is the codex of nature, and this is how one must turn the pages.

For the classical Rosicrucians, the world of modern science is only half the story, the 'knowable half' of the world. The 'unknown half' can be understood only when one can read the 'Book T', the *liber theos*, the Book of God. This book consists of the symbols God has written within the human being. Scientists have increasingly forgotten this book, and in doing so, caused its wisdom to recede into the background, where it is no longer recognised. It reveals its contents only to those who, from a state of simplicity and of longing for the welfare and salvation of humanity, allow their inner being to speak.

Paracelsus was such a human being, the classical Rosicrucians wrote. He said:

In wonderfully beautiful words the message of Christ reveals the most remarkable things. Also the art of healing is full of secrets, and they must be deeply understood, just like the words of Christ. Both vocations – to proclaim God's Word and to heal people – must not be separated from each other. For the body is the dwelling place of the soul, and both are closely connected; that is why the one has to give access to the other.

Tobias Hess was another such a man, according to Johann Valentin Andreae. For people living according to these words, the saying of Christian Rosycross, *Jesu mihi omnia*, Jesus (the soul) is everything to me, is self-evident. The impulse comes from the depth of the heart and is understood by the head. Such people also recognise that the price for spreading their conviction is high.

They come into conflict with the ruling social norms, not because they are quarrelsome or militant revolutionaries, but because they cannot deviate from this one principle, *Jesu mihi omnia*. For them, Jesus represents *the other*, the Immovable Kingdom, something that is not of this world. Anyone with this conviction will sooner or later experience friction in everyday life.

Paracelsus belonged to that group of people who opened up new ways of understanding in the fifteenth century. His new art of healing took the patient, rather than contemporary medical theory, into account, and his wisdom lay in focussing on their essence. He distinguished five forms of illness:

- in the *physical body*: broken bones, muscle injuries, and external and environmental damage to the body;
- in the *etheric body*: disorders of life functions (digestion, blood, hormones, and the immune system);
- in the *astral being*: disorders of the respiratory system, the senses, and the heart;
- in the *thought and will aspects*: disorders that concern thoughts and the will;
- in the *essence*: disorders of the core of the human being if this is unable to find expression.

In Paracelsus' view, no doctor could cure this last ailment. In this case, the desire to get better *and* the universal remedy have to be developed by the person concerned through a life directed to the Christ within and the transformation of this attitude of life into a healing and renewing factor in the person's daily actions.

Paracelsus called this the doctrine of the five *entia*: the *ens naturale*, causing deviations in human nature and constitution; the *ens venemi*, the influence of polluting and poisonous material affecting the human being from the outside; the *ens astrale*, the influence of the

stars, which also manifests in meteorological phenomena and is the cause of such ailments as the common cold; the *ens spirituale*, which causes sick ideas and the resulting ailments of the psyche; and finally the *ens deale* (from *deus* = God), the influence of the Supreme Being.

It was said that when Paracelsus entered a sick person's home, it was as if a fresh wind blew through the house, and his presence made all darkness disappear around the sickbed. The classical Rosicrucians felt a great kinship with Paracelsus. Someone who renewed science in this way knew 'how the world fit together'. This is why they wrote,

Although not a member of our brotherhood, he had diligently read the Book M [the book of the World], whereby his sharp insight was exalted.

Many of Paracelsus' ideas are reflected in the three books of the classical Rosycross. When the brothers discovered the grave of Christian Rosycross in the *Fama Fraternitatis R. C.*, they also found the *Vocabularium* (dictionary) of Paracelsus. Next to it, they found the Book T, the Book M, and the three books written by Christian Rosycross himself, the Canon, the Travel Guide, and the Biography. Paracelsus was born in 1493 in Einsiedeln in Switzerland and died in 1541 in Salzburg. Small in stature, he said of himself,

Nature has not formed me all that subtly; it is after all not in the nature of our country to achieve something by spinning silk. Moreover, we are not brought up on figs, mead, or white bread, but on cheese, milk, and oat bread.

Although his father, Wilhelm von Hohenheim, probably belonged to the aristocracy, he married Elisabeth Ochsner, a peasant maidservant at the Benedictine monastery in Einsiedeln. This may explain Paracelsus' lifelong craving for the simplicity of outdoor living, his urge to travel, and for 'learning to read nature by reading with one's feet the pages she has written'. He meant,

A human being can only be a medical doctor when he learns the illness and the art of healing while practising on the people who have the illness. For at the place where the illness manifests itself, the remedy itself lies

hidden. The art is to find it, remove its poisons, and apply it purified and powerfully.

From his early youth, he learned to know plants, being taught by his father, who became the town physician of Villach in 1502, and who took the child with him on his trips to gather medicinal flowers and herbs. Young Theophrastus went to school in Sponheim, learning mathematics from the great Trithemius. He studied medicine in Germany and France, and he went to Ferrara in Italy to obtain his doctor's title and to study the first of the two arts of healing, namely the one from the books of antiquity. It was in Ferrara where he encountered his first great challenge.

When plague broke out, everyone who could afford it fled to the countryside. The city council offered the title of doctor to those students who would return to the city to combat the illness to the best of their ability. Paracelsus, who could not bear muddling with expensive and useless prescriptions, studied the disease with his own immense concentration and recognised that it was in fact a malicious being, a kind of inner fire. This is why it had to be treated with 'fire' and not with ointments and plasters. He developed a prescription that was many times more effective than anything available at that time, and he healed many who were close to death.

When the epidemic was over, the euphoria in the city rapidly disappeared. Paracelsus 'had been lucky', they said and he had to take his exams after all. Fortunately, the university was in the charge of the humanist Niccoló Leoniceno (1428-1524), a declared opponent of theorising on the basis of the ideas of the ancient Greek Galen. One of Leoniceno's first works, in 1490, identifies the mistakes in some of the simplest medicines of Pliny and other writers from antiquity.

After some time, Paracelsus received the title of doctor without having had to pay a large sum of money. He received it for both methods of healing: for the medical science according to theoretical book wisdom as well as for the practical experience of the everyday treatment of wounds, as carried out by barbers, sheep shearers, and surgeons, in the days when theory and practice were kept entirely separate.

With the energy of someone who knew he was right, he rebelled against the superficiality of the established medical pecking order.

He proved what was right by means of the art of true healing. To his sorrow, people only praised him when he healed them and had no further use for him beyond it.

He criticised his colleagues for their ignorance, for their laziness, for their blind reliance on the theories of healers such as Galen, Hippocrates, and Avicenna, whose prescriptions were issued without the physician ever visiting the patient. He criticised the pharmacists for their ruthless avarice and their ridiculous prescriptions, which contained as many expensive materials as possible.

He also greatly despised the inflated arrogance of his colleagues, preferring the simple and the down-to-earth. His journey to the Netherlands led him to the Brethren of the Common Life, the School of Geert Groote. This movement, also called the 'modern devotion' (*devotio moderna*) had also produced the modest but singular Thomas à Kempis (1379-1471), who had written the little book *The Imitation of Christ* in the years 1424-1427. In the fourteenth century, the School of Geert Groote was a centre of religious renewal. It aimed at restoring the core values of original Christianity from the apostolic days, less by means of self-knowledge than by virtue, the renunciation of the self, and meditation. The Brethren were also very practical; their renunciation of self included care for others, which led them to develop a deep and practical knowledge of herbs and the art of healing. Four times Paracelsus praised the schools of Deventer and Schmollen (present-day Zwolle), contrasting their teachings and their drive for research with those of the Galenist School of Montpellier. He had this to say about the latter school:

They do not even know that they do not understand pure and impure; what can they then understand of the true cause? In Deventer, they have (in all their simplicity) most likely founded a better school than the medical faculties of the high schools (he meant the universities of Leipzig, Montpellier, or Vienna), which is more useful than the faculty-academies.

After Ferrara followed journeys to Ireland, the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, and to Croatia and Dalmatia via Poland.

Paracelsus was a dedicated researcher. He investigated surface mining, travelling to the little town of Villach where zinc, lead, iron

ore, alum, sulphates, and gold were mined, and where a mining school was established. He went to the silver and copper mines at Schwaz near Innsbruck. He studied mining techniques and the properties and the qualities of the stone and ore mined as well as the illnesses of the miners. For a doctor in the making, this was a rich source of experience. In 1533, he wrote *Von der Bergsucht* (On Mining Sickness) in which he described the origin, the course, and the symptoms of this illness. He was inquisitive and industrious and had as his motto, 'Always learning, always asking, always independent, never sitting still'.

He first settled as a physician in Salzburg, caring for the local peasants. He was obliged to flee Salzburg in 1525 when he was accused of sympathising with the peasant revolt. Again, years of travel followed. He settled eventually in Strasbourg. There he encountered Humanists such as Frobenius, a printer from Basle, whom he helped back on his feet after a stroke. Erasmus, another Humanist and a great scholar educated at the School of Deventer, who also lived at that time in Basle and who was friends with the influential Frobenius, was greatly impressed by Paracelsus' written analysis of Frobenius' weak health. His friend Bonifacius Amerbach, in whose house the famous artist Hans Holbein (1497-1543) stayed for quite some time, also lived there at that time. Hans Holbein was the artist of the beautiful portrait of Paracelsus at the beginning of this chapter.

Through the influence of these men, Paracelsus was granted a post as the city physician and began to lecture at the University of Basle. These lectures caused a great stir. In the first place, they were no longer given solely in Latin, but were for the most part held in the modern vernacular, German – that is to say, in a German dialect similar to what is still in use in present-day Switzerland. 'The art of healing must be taught loud and clear in the language of the fatherland,' he proclaimed, 'so that a German can understand an Arab and a Greek a German, and their art and wisdom must be such that all their scholars are respected for their ability and that their high art (read: science) demands admiration.' This alone was as shocking to the medical class (the most important class after the aristocracy) as Luther's Reformation. As if this was not sufficient, on June 24, 1527, amid great public interest, he flung Avicenna's Canon of Medicine into the St. John's Day fire in the marketplace. By this, he wanted to express that the

old methods of healing as they are described in the works of Galen and Avicenna would no longer serve him. He wrote:

I have thrown the sum of the books into the Saint John's fire so that all misfortune would go up in smoke. Thus, these teachings have ended and need not be consumed by fire again.

He could not have done anything more dangerous, for the whole medical practise and educational system of those days rested on this *summa*, this scholarly pillar of antiquity, and on Galen. Galen came from Pergamon in Asia-Minor, and Avicenna was an Arabian philosopher – theirs were the only works approved by the Inquisition. 'Pagan' as they were, they constituted the canon of 'Christian' medical science.

Theophrastus von Hohenheim's lectures were a continual source of unrest and controversy. He taught:

A physician should first of all look at the human being, not only at books. The sick must be his book; from them he will not learn wrongly. One does not heal a broken bone with a theory!

The true art of healing originates in life itself. Paracelsus had found this by merging theory and practice. He had learned from the mountains where he had lived, from the monks who had passed on to him enormous knowledge of plants and herbs, from the mines where he had learned to help in a practical way. He wrote:

From time to time, one should also go to school with the old women, and one should learn from the gypsies, from the black magicians, from vagabonds, as well as from all kind of peasant people, and from all insignificant people you may encounter, for these often have more knowledge of medical science than the academies.

One of his most important sources was the pure and revolutionary Christian teachings rediscovered and spread half a century before his birth by Ficino, Cosimo de' Medici, and the Platonic Academy and which had been well received by many of the great thinkers of Renaissance Italy.

With the help of this fresh view on Christianity, Paracelsus created a new unity in thinking and experience. He was the first physician who had dared to take the patient, rather than the theory, as his reference. He started with the beginning, with the monad. *'For the human being is a microcosm, and his greatest suffering is to be separated from God!'*

Just as the voices of the great Italian thinkers became silent, so did that of Paracelsus. The time for the great revolution – *'the General Reformation of the whole world'* – had not yet come. Once barred from entering the town and the University of Basle, he roamed from town to town, not as a punishment but simply following his natural inclination, believing that a physician should travel and learn continually. He served as an army doctor in the Netherlands; he went to Hungary, to Sweden, to Poland, and to the German empire. Everywhere he brought new insights to his patients, easing with his skills the many diseases from which they suffered. His manner was like a fresh wind blowing, and he also healed the souls of the people through his wisdom.

In 1541, the newly appointed Archbishop of Salzburg invited him to come and work and teach under his patronage. He accepted. He was glad to be able to work in Salzburg again. Little is known about his last days. It is generally understood that he was writing on theological topics. He was certainly still active as a physician.

For five centuries, the rumour has persisted that Paracelsus (he was not yet fifty years of age) was murdered, but there is no real evidence. Envy is always the reason suggested. According to a document from 1662 (121 years later), colleagues hired vagabonds who 'have thrown him down from a height and have so broken his neck'. Another old but undated report states that he was thrown down two staircases in a faked burglary and received a blow to the skull. A third story says that he was poisoned by envious doctors. Research on his remains has shown that there are certainly indications for this, but there is no conclusive evidence. A fourth version is that he was knifed while in bed by a bribed servant, who robbed him of the elixir of life that he was popularly supposed to possess. All of it speculation and superfluous.

Yet it seemed that Paracelsus knew that his hour had come. He had moved into the inn *Zum weissen Ross* (At the white horse). There, on September 21, 1541, he dictated his will to a lawyer in front of seven

witnesses, and he divided all his possessions amongst the poor. His most important bequest, more than two hundred unpublished manuscripts, he bequeathed to Count Ernst, a fervent alchemist and book collector. He died on September 24 and was buried at his own request in the cemetery for the poor at St. Sebastian's church.

Whether he was murdered or not is of little importance when we consider what another great man, Rudolf Steiner, said about him:

Even if these stories (concerning his death) are only a legend, it needs nevertheless to be established that it was not necessary at all to cleave his skull; his life had been made so difficult, so bitter, that we can understand his early death only too well.

Theophrastus von Hohenheim, named Paracelsus, was a man who did not want to be subordinate to anyone and upon whose work, modern medical science, modern chemistry, and the classical Rosicrucian teachings are based.

III

Three quarters of a century later, the first brothers of the Rosycross saw in Paracelsus a kindred spirit and predecessor. We may suppose that Paracelsus was regarded by these first brothers as a prototype of Christian Rosycross, the mythological founding father of the order (who may be seen as a prototype of the human being as spirit-soul). Paracelsus' spirit is that effervescent force that touched the classical Rosicrucians of the seventeenth century to such an extent that they connected Paracelsus with Christian Rosycross. In this way, they could give form to their threefold reformation.

Paracelsus was descended from an impoverished family of knights – the same is said of Christian Rosycross. In 1536, almost 80 years before the first book of the Rosicrucians, he predicted that a renewal and change of the entire world was coming, a true renaissance, and that soon a new, golden era would begin. For in his imperfection, the human being does not know of his true faculties, but in the golden era, 'when the prophet Elijah returns', we shall have all faculties at our disposal, 'for Elijah controls this art', he wrote.

The ‘golden era’ – these words are quoted in the *Fama Fraternitatis* and have been made familiar to us by the Rosicrucians. Through Paracelsus, among others, the concept of the microcosm reached northern Europe. He wrote:

Just think how great and noble the human being has been created, and how grand his structure must be understood! No mind is able to measure the construct of his body or the degree of his virtues (properties); he can only be understood as a copy of the macrocosm, the great creation. Only then does what is within him unfold. For as without, so within, and what does not exist external to him also does not exist in him.

This cannot be said in a more hermetic way.

The first distinction we need to make begins with the human being himself: he is called microcosm, which means: little world. Surrounding him, the macrocosm, the big world, has been created so that within it, he can learn to distinguish himself. The ultimate separation of (the personality and) the microcosm only occurs at death, for in death the bodies of the human being separate, the divine part and the physical part, which means the eternal body and the elemental body. The one is taken up to heaven like an eagle, and the other falls to earth like a block of lead.

From where did Paracelsus get his wisdom? We can read this in the *Alchemical Wedding of Christian Rosycross*, ‘Hermes is the source’. His wisdom came from the hermetic teachings, which became available through the Academy of Cosimo de’Medici and Ficino. ‘As above, so below; and what is within is also without.’ This is the ultimate hermetic axiom. One of Paracelsus’ books is called *Concerning Long Life*. In it, there is a reference to a work by Ficino, *Concerning the Threefold Life*, in which he makes the link with Hermes. And with what does he link Hermes? With the Christ, who is in his view the greatest and most noble of healers. This completes the circle. ‘Hermes is the source.’ This is what Christian Rosycross reads on a memorial stone at the end of his seven-day journey to the Alchemical Wedding. In Hermes, we find the source of the philosophy of the two worlds: the world of composite things and the original world where the

Spirit is life and moves the angels, creatures, and human beings with his breath.

According to the Brothers of the *Fama Fraternitatis*, who find the burial temple of their Father Brother Christian Rosycross, Paracelsus is not a brother of the Rosycross. However, as the modern researcher Carlos Gilly pointed out, this is true only in the way in which Jesus Christ cannot be called a 'Christian': both are the source of the inspiration for the movements that came after them.

On the same memorial stone where Christian Rosycross reads that Hermes is the source, he leaves his motto behind, 'The highest form of knowledge is to know nothing.' This is also an idea we find in the work of Paracelsus:

Concerning the soul, the human being knows nothing, and is not able to understand its needs and complaints, what is ultimately awaiting it, and how great the suffering it will still have to undergo. Because the human being knows nothing of this, he must flee the doctrines of human beings and not turn to them. For he does not even understand himself. We do not know anything ourselves and can only judge that which is transient.

The friends in Calw and in the university town of Tübingen near Calw who formed the classical Brotherhood of the Rosycross knew of Paracelsus, healed in the manner of Paracelsus, thought like Paracelsus, and they could do no other than write, speak, and act in his spirit. This is not surprising, for this scientist, renovator, and physician from the sixteenth century knew humanity and his time. He understood the multiple composition of human beings. He knew the cause of their illnesses and the cause of their present condition. He also – and this is their main similarity – understood the fundamental human need for healing:

If we had wanted to write as a Christian, we would not have mentioned the four principles: the astral, the veneral (etheric), the natural, and the spiritual (mental), for these are not Christian ideas, but pagan. Yet the highest principle ultimately is certainly Christian. The pagan conception of the four principles we have described does not at all hinder us in our faith, but merely sharpens our mind. This is why it seemed right to me

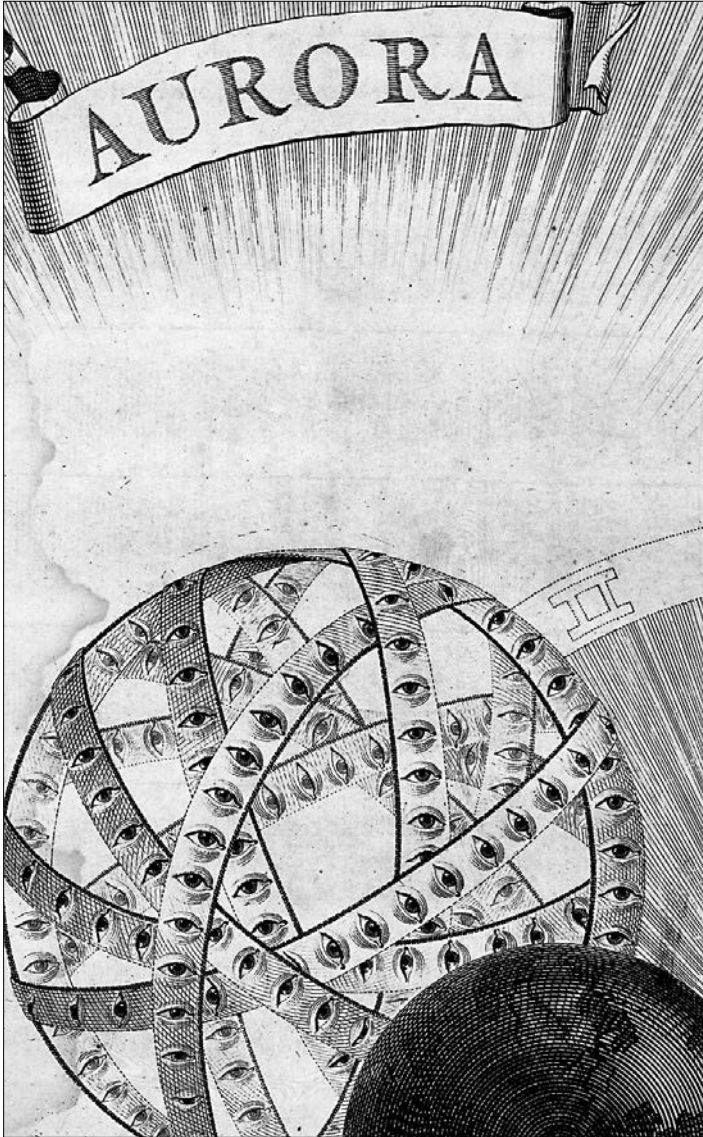
not only to describe the natural human being, but more so and with more joy, the eternal human being, the heavenly human being in his new birth, so that the old human being would see what the human being really is and can be; how he can direct himself on this and know what such a newly born human being is capable of, here on earth and after this life in eternal life.

This is what the brothers of the first Rosycross recognised. It was *that* particular healing agent they wanted to foster. Their striving was always the same. The new, developing science was to have a strong moral base: hermetic Christianity, which was to see the human being as a *minutus mundus*, a 'small world', in which the Christ would be the central sun as in the motto of Christian Rosycross: *Jesu mihi omnia – Jesus is everything to me*.

The brothers felt stimulated by Paracelsus' lifelong battle against the old and inflexible science and the Church, which did not allow progress and renewal, fearing that it would threaten its position and the regard in which it was held. Paracelsus' life had been one unbroken chain of strife, conflicts, and differences of opinion. He was extremely outspoken. He branded his opponents as simpletons, as pseudo-scientists, as organised good-for-nothings, etc. When he started on their hobby, religion, then he knew well how to parry their blows. They were fools who still nailed the Christ to the cross and who understood nothing of his lofty teachings or of his healing of the human race.

In view of his times, we can imagine that he was repeatedly chased away. He was lucky that he was 'only' chased out of the towns and was not thrown into prison or even burned at the stake.

It is fortunate that his torch has been kept alight by such people as Johann Valentin Andreae, Christoph Besold, and Tobias Hess, who pointed out the problems and abuses in the still youthful church of Luther. These people formulated Paracelsus' ideas anew and presented them in the symbolic form of Christian Rosycross in a manner and with an inspiration that can still kindle the monad in every human being into a spiritual fire that enlightens consciousness in the 21st century. ☞



Aurora, engraving from Jacob Boehme's Theosophical Works. Amsterdam, 1682.

CHAPTER 13

Jakob Böhme

I

The same distinct characteristics appear time and again in the course of the stream of light of which we show only a few prominent episodes in this book, characteristics that point to the source of which each messenger speaks. One of those characteristics is the fundamental reaction that a ray of light causes over and over again in the darkness: fear, resistance, and glaring contrasts.

Darkness is a state of blindness. Blindness cannot perceive the truth. Someone who does not see the truth cannot believe in it either. With 'seeing', we mean in this case a state of inner experience, an inner sense, a movement in the innermost self. Inner experiences can even be stronger, more intense, than outer forms of pain and can have great consequences. This is why the title, *Aurora, or Dawn Rising*, that accompanies Jakob Böhme's first writing in 1612 is wonderfully beautiful and right, for it is the dawn that sweeps away the dark. Jakob Böhme said of the experience he underwent in his twenty-fifth year, 'The gate was opened to me so that in a quarter of an hour I saw more and knew more than if I had been for many years at a university'. This gate had opened twelve years before the writing of *Aurora*, in 1600, when Jakob Böhme was about to start his own shoe factory.

Already as a child, Jakob was gifted with a great feeling for spirituality, for the depth of the mystery of life, for the 'hidden wisdom of God'. His parents, Jakob and Ursula, had a relatively large farm and lived at the foot of the castle of Alt-Seidenberg. They sent him to school – unusual for that time – where he learned to read and write and where he mastered the trade of shoemaker. He found inspiration in the life and example of his friend and teacher, Martinus Moller, who, in this last quarter of the sixteenth century, was the pastor of the little town of

Görlitz, Böhme's hometown. In this little border town, Moller encouraged the reflection on and study of many directions of thought among which were also the teachings of Paracelsus and the texts of the early Christian writers.

In 1594, Böhme completed his education and married Katharina Kuntzschmann, the daughter of the village butcher, who bore him four sons and two daughters. 'But', this was the question put to Böhme many times, 'should a shoemaker not stick to his trade? Is it not a fable that revelation teaches more than years of university education? Is this not the yearning of a simple soul who lacks sufficient intellect to acquire knowledge?' We are of the same opinion as Böhme that this is a second characteristic by which the source can be recognised: All knowledge learned and taught at all the universities of the world pales into nothing at the truth and its hidden wisdom.

In the century before Böhme, a kind of patriarchal apostolic community appeared in the duchy of Liegnitz, very pious and searching for a new form of Christendom. At a later stage, this community was interdicted by the official Reformation. Caspar Schwenckfeld, who became a kind of *Angstgegner* (opponent of whom you are afraid) for Luther, originated from this region. A personal friend of Caspar Schwenckfeld lived in the Neiße Street where also Böhme's house stood. Public gatherings were conducted in that house, a few doors away from Böhme. The mayor of Görlitz, Bartholomäus Scultetus, and also the head-vicar of the Peterskirche, Martin Moller, belonged to this group of Schwenckfeldians. Other well-known members were Karl Ender and his sons Michael and Johann Ender who would later copy and distribute Böhme's *Aurora*.

In 1602, the town-pastor, Martin Moller, became involved in a court-case against the teachers of the Görlitz Gymnasium and the clergy of the town. They were accused of being crypto-Calvinists (crypto means hidden), secret supporters of the teachings of Calvin, Zwingli, and Valentin Weigel. If one was tolerant, one was called to order, for one had to conform to the state religion, which had only recently come into existence and which created a true tyranny over the towns. It was not possible to lead an active, inner Christian life, or one would have to venture outside the wall of the official Church – which would be equal to banishment. The friendly and gentle Moller, who

was also Böhme's pastor, was regarded as the chief suspect in the lawsuit. This is certainly what generated Böhme's aversion for the 'wall-church', that is, a church full of prescriptions, prejudices, and intolerance. An important role amongst the accusers was played, for example, by Gregorius Richter, who we will meet a little further on.

Batholomäus Scultetus, mayor of Görlitz, was among the defenders of freedom of conscience and took a tolerant position on the subject of religion. Filled with the same free spirit, he defended Moller through thick and thin so that Moller could remain head-pastor, pastor primarius, until his death in 1606. After that, the city could escape it no longer: Politically and economically, there was no other way for the city council than to choose the official Lutheran declaration, the Augsburg Confession. The alternative – in final consequence, this would have been a kind of Münster of the Anabaptists – was equal to political suicide. Therefore, while grinding their teeth, the city council had to choose Gregorius Richter, who would play a major role in the Böhme drama.

Let us be clear on the situation – for matters are often more complex than one thinks. When we try to place ourselves in the position of Richter, we see that Richter, who already had played a role in the lawsuit against Moller, was faced with an impossible task. He knew that he would never be able to count on the city council. He knew that the population of Görlitz represented a confident, emerging bourgeoisie. At the same time, he had to struggle with the landed nobility who were not at all keen on fanatic clergymen wanting to lay down the law for them. This was asking for a conflict, especially in the light of Richter's character.

The stumbling block for Richter, seven years after his appointment, was nevertheless not Schwenckfeld, nor the Paracelsists who were present in large numbers in the duchy, nor was it Kepler with his new-fangled ideas concerning the course of the planets, ideas that had made the rounds in Görlitz for a time. The stumbling block did not come from a scholar or a nobleman but from a shoemaker who to top it all had previously been convicted of violating the monopoly of the city and guild on the trade in yarn. For Richter, the stumbling block was Böhme's *Aurora*. Richter thought this was something he *could* handle.

For the city council of Görlitz, however, the stumbling block was Richter. As the son of a smith, he had also been trained as a smith before he had felt a vocation for the clergy. Thus, Böhme humorously characterised him as the ‘sledge-hammer’ that had to drive the work forward. Richter, as a church tyrant, had made himself extremely unpopular with the burghers with his long sermons and his moralising. In the notes of the mayor of Görlitz, one can read, for example, that Richter should keep his sermons shorter and should not thunder so much, because it offended the burghers.

What irritated Richter so immensely in Böhme’s *Aurora* was that it completely denied Luther’s command that only the Scriptures could be linked to God. He had forced a colleague also to bring charges against Böhme, so that he could lodge a complaint with the city council, otherwise his request would not have been legal in the first place. Scultetus was really troubled by this case on that 26th July of 1613. The mayor knew Böhme well and sympathised with him rather than with Richter. He was really caught in the middle. It was impossible to ignore the complaint, for it would stir up a great deal of political trouble if Richter should go to the government. Therefore, Scultetus did what was most wise and sensible under the circumstances: He called Böhme in, talked with him about being more careful, arrested him for five minutes, and sent a few men to his home to confiscate the manuscript of *Aurora*. The case never went to court, but they did agree on the following: Böhme would write no more, and he, Scultetus, would warn Richter not to scold Böhme any longer in the Peterskirche. Then he let him go.

Böhme never saw his *Morgenröte* (Dawn) again. The manuscript was not released until 1641, and on November 26, 1641, it arrived via Heinrich Prunius in the reliable hands of the Amsterdam businessman, van Beyerland.

After Richter’s second complaint, caused by the publication of his *Der Weg zu Christo* (The Way to Christ) – the only booklet that would appear in print during Böhme’s life – Böhme was summoned for a hearing by the city council. It was a confrontation that did not scare Böhme in the least. The day before, he wrote to Karl von Ender:

As he (that is Richter) is terribly indignant, the city council is annoyed,

and the gentlemen have decided that I should come before the council tomorrow to explain myself in everything. I have the intention of revealing the blunt truth, without respect of persons, even if it would cost me my life.... For the hour of the reformation has come.

Again Böhme was warned to be careful. The final reckoning Böhme had hoped for did not come. The council merely asked who had written the booklet and who published it. Again, for political reasons, as little as possible publicity was given to it. However, this did not satisfy Richter. He had been thwarted in his hatred for the second time. The large-scale scandal he had hoped for had not happened, and instead of receiving a heavy judgement, Böhme had been allowed to walk away. Now Richter showed his true nature. As a real demagogue, he swept up the emotions and made the rabble chase Böhme out of town and break the windows of his house at the Neißé Bridge. A day later, the city council nevertheless called him back.

Time and again, we read that Böhme was a poor shoemaker, an image that is not correct. He was not a hermit who sat writing at his shoemaker's last by candlelight. Böhme was an active, enterprising businessman who fully carried his responsibility in society. Although he was a modest businessman, he had learned the shoemaking trade and was a recognised craftsman. In 1599, not yet twenty-five years old, he bought one of the forty-four 'shoe-banks' that were in Görlitz and started his business. He did the buying, and his wife was already trading in yarn. That same year, in August, he bought his first home in Görlitz. He earned more than most of the master shoemakers. At times, he acted as a spokesman on behalf of the guild, or he bought up large batches of leather when a shortage threatened. When he received his maternal inheritance in 1608, he entered the list of the (although modestly) well-to-do of the city.

In 1613, he sold his shoe-business for more than double of what he had paid for it. Jakob Böhme wanted to be free from the rigorous rules that were imposed by the shoemaker's guild and the city. He wanted to be able to travel and to trade, and he was successful in this. He sold his first house and bought a second one, half of which he rented out. He fathered four sons and cared well for them. All four of them were

educated in a trade. Two died before him, and one of them is said to have married the daughter of Richter, Böhme's greatest enemy. During his travels, he bought products that were crafted on the quiet farms and estates in the regions about and sold them in the city where there was a great need for them. He wanted to free himself from restrictions to developing his talent, that is, his philosophical work. On his travels, he could meet his many friends and like-minded souls, and he wanted to be able to talk about what engaged him most of all: the coming general reformation.

With this, we arrive at a completely different milieu that had influenced him. For in the years of 1615-1620, this general reformation was typically the terrain of the Rosicrucians, whose fame had certainly travelled as far as Dresden and Görlitz. Researchers write that it is absolutely certain that Böhme knew them and had read their writings. He must have joyfully found in them like-minded souls from a totally different side of Germany, people who had been influenced by the same ideas as he had been. Some of these influences were: the alchemy of Paracelsus, the 'universal study' of Valentin Weigel, the 'Four Books of True Christianity' of Arndt, and ultimately, Hermes, the source, and the 'true, inner, pure' Christianity of humility, conversion, earnest living, study, and rebirth. This was the great reformation he was looking forward to. Especially at the end of his life, he often referred in his *Sendbriefe* (circular letters) to this coming reformation in which he firmly believed.

Therefore, with his incomparable depth, a totally different figure than a mere philosopher appears before our eyes. This is important, because it makes us realise that Böhme was not merely passing on lofty teachings from above, but rather that he was dealing with something that originated in the time in which he lived and that related to that time and to the circumstances that formed his background. Jakob Böhme is a figure that stood at the crossroad of several important social currents, between the old aristocracy and the *nouveau riche*, between municipal rules and free entrepreneurship, between Church dogma and free religious experience. From a social point of view, Böhme was not a failed shoemaker, who moreover got into trouble with the clergy and the authorities. On the contrary, he was a meticulous tradesman who borrowed and paid back, who made profits and

could live from them. However, most of all, Böhme was the genius whom it was given to observe the depths of God and who had the talent to describe this in his works. *Aurora* was his first work, written for himself entirely from inspiration and the spirit, as he himself said. Not only for himself but also to make clear to his friends, very clear, what is involved in rebirth. This was the genius as he was seen by the people around him. In the especially fruitful period of 1618-1624, there were moments that his friends were literally sitting around him, and as soon as two or three pages were finished, they would take them from him and copy them. Although they were by no means always in agreement with him, they understood very well the extent and the absolute novelty of what Böhme wrote. For Böhme was extremely modern. He developed a new language, a new philosophy, a new way of portraying abstract concepts that had never been put into words before him. His friends Franckenberg, Tober, and the brothers Ender saw this clearly. Nobody before him – apart from Paracelsus maybe – had written in this way about creation and the new creation in Christ, which, moreover, obviously had also taken place in Böhme himself.

In this context, it is also right to clear away another myth. It is remarkable how Böhme's destiny ran parallel to that of the first brothers of the Rosycross, five hundred kilometres to the south in Germany. This is a proof of the mighty impulse that broke through in people who wanted to accomplish the inner rebirth and who wanted to pass that new possibility on to anyone searching for it.

Although *Aurora* stood at the very beginning of Böhme's total output and was only being copied and circulated with utter care and in a modest way (just as the Rosicrucian manifestos during the same years!), Böhme himself was very conscious of the effect of his work, and he followed a meticulous and well-planned method of working. From 1618 onwards, there was no stopping him. He himself organised the copying; he tried to keep control over it. He wrote instructions: Do not give my work to just anyone but only to people of whom we both may expect that they can understand it. When there were questions, he referred the people to his closest friends so that he himself could continue to work. Copiers came to offer their services and even people who wanted to print his work, but he shied away from this for a long time; he felt that the right time had not yet arrived. He

allowed only the booklet *Der Weg zu Christo* (The Way to Christ) – which deals with the practice of rebirth – to be printed, and we read in the 46th *Sendbrief* (circular letter) of December 27, 1623, ‘My booklet *On Repentance and True Meekness* (another title for the same booklet) will be published within a few days from now.’ It contained three of his treatises: *On True Repentance*, *On True Resignation*, and *On the Supersensual Life*, to which were added *On the New Birth* and other smaller pieces when the work was reprinted in 1628.

This little work indeed appeared in January 1624, but the entire edition was confiscated almost immediately. Of the few copies that Böhme had handed to friends, only two have been preserved, one in the university library of Harvard University (USA) and one in the Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica in Amsterdam.

Thus, we see that Böhme regarded the new time, the ‘time of lilies’ as he called it, not in the least in a manner of ‘wait and see’. On the contrary, he worked with people, friends of various denominations, as long as the ways were open. He conducted meetings. He created a kind of circle around him, whom he wanted to guide further along. He was not an unworldly mystic, but he initiated *and* organised a liberating activity. Many of his works were therefore a result of discussions with friends and interested parties in which he tried to clarify his points of view. Ultimately, however, he stopped this. At the end of his life, he turned inward more and more and only still wrote for the contemplative soul. As he himself said, he wanted to write once more a book like *Morgenröte* (Aurora) but then more clearly and after that burn all his other works.

Fortunately, this did not happen. His last booklet is the *Prayerbook for Each Day of the Week*, and in the last autumn of his life, in October 1624, he started on a new work: *Reflections on the Divine Revelation*. In this, he hoped to answer 177 theosophical questions of a hungry soul, of which he only managed to complete thirteen.

Nobody understood better what Böhme had in mind than Abraham Willemszoon van Beyerland, the wealthy Amsterdam businessman and translator, who had all of Böhme’s work printed in the Dutch language.

Böhme said:

That which I write about is not a thing of reason, purely of the mind. The mind is in the wrath, in self-centeredness. The salient point is for the will to die daily in its egotism, its selfishness, and to lead the longing to God and how from this dying, a new spirit-soul and a new will are to grow and unfold in God. It will have to be born within the wrath, but the wrath will neither understand it nor even notice it. Exactly as it is written in the Gospel of John, 'The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.'

This concerns a mode of life, a new way of living. When one can see this, then one is a friend of Böhme. Then, Böhme is no longer difficult to understand, for then a new birth can take place in the human being out of the Seven Spirit. This is why Beyerland wrote in the preface of his translation of *The Threefold Life of Man*:

The reader is warned (besides reading this book) to put the booklet *On Repentance and True Meekness* into practice, not only to read and understand it, but to follow the author closely in his process, which in itself is obvious. Yet what the sincere soul will experience, when reading these writings, is like wanting to clean a coarse, rusty piece of iron. First of all, there seems to be little hope, but in perseverance lies the victory. The sincere will and diligent desire can do much to reach grace and high knowledge, which doubtlessly has also been the only high school and study of the Fathers, of the prophets, and of the Apostles of Christ.

II

A friend of the shoemaker from Görlitz was allowed to borrow his *Aurora*. Deeply impressed by the essence of it, he had it copied and circulated among friends and pupils of Böhme within days. It also ended up in the hands of the dean of the Lutheran congregation of Görlitz, head-pastor Richter, the successor of Moller. At that moment, the classical drama began. Gregorius Richter, blind in the sense of truth, was going to be the next of the so many performers of the song of hate that resounds wherever the unadulterated truth wants

to dispel blindness. His performance was not admirable, as the following will show. On the contrary, it was one of the poorest exhibitions, moreover narrowed by alcoholism and self-interest, pathetic, and devoid of any kind of understanding of life. The prophetic power and the light that reached Richter via Böhme's text made him so furious that his pulpit was too small to spew the self-acclaimed 'judgement of God' into the church.

Jakob Böhme is sometimes also called the 'Philosophus Teutonicus', the philosopher of the German nation. Seated below the pulpit, he quietly let 'God's judgement' pass over him. Yet he was soon placed under arrest, and his *via dolorosa* began. It was the beginning of a development with disastrous and tragic consequences that darkened the external circumstances of the future course of the life of the gentle shoemaker. However, the dawn, the *aurora*, had come, a rising of the sun in its purest spiritual meaning, a light that never deserted him.

As a ray of truth, *Aurora* cut through the darkness of crystallised orthodox Christianity and clarified the insight of many sympathetic intellectuals of that time. In the little town of Görlitz, nevertheless, the situation was somewhat different. Richter, as all earthly mortals, believed only he knew the rising of the sun around which our globe turns, an event that neither he nor anyone else could do anything about.

Yet the sun that had risen for Jakob Böhme was the birth of true abstract thinking, a birth as of a new soul, which anyone can experience who is willing to devote his life to it.

In the words of Jakob Böhme, the birth of true thinking is an ocean of light in which he saw the interrelationships of things as in a vision. After the now infamous church service, a deep and intense pity moved him to go to the enraged pastor to let him share in this wonderful revelation. Richter, however, was beside himself with indignation. He passionately rejected him and flung – not to yield to vulgar name-calling – a biblical text at him, 'Away with you, Satan'. For twenty-seven years, until far beyond his death, the church authorities were agitated about Jakob Böhme. Jakob Böhme, however, could count on many influential friends amongst his acquaintances, and he was admired and respected all over Europe. One of them wrote several pages with a careful overview of the many biblical curses with

which the pastor wanted to damn Böhme, and he mentioned the gentle 'angelic' disposition of Böhme in the face of it all.

What was it that shook Richter so badly that he was no longer himself? In holy writ, Jesus says, 'Whoever is not with me is against me'. This is a saying that also became a startling truth in the life of Böhme. It is a saying that represents a primordial law, a law that shows at once the reason why it has never been otherwise in history. In fact, it *cannot* be different in a world of two poles. The world of the two poles, the world of dialectics, is one of the fundamental principles formulated by Jakob Böhme. He called it '*Realdialektik*' (reality dialectics). Jakob saw this thought, this principle, going back to the primeval beginnings of creation. He said, 'All things exist in yes and no'. For, he explained, from the eternal nothing, God creates the eternal something. That 'something' is the solely-good (a concept we have encountered before with Hermes). It is simultaneously the solely-beautiful, the solely-harmonious, and the *only* or *one* Life. Everything exists in this, all life, all spirits, also the spirit of the Prince of Darkness. This Prince of Darkness denies the unity, the life, the harmony, and the beauty of God. This is the very first impulse towards a contra-development in that divine consciousness, not outside of God, but within God.

The contra-development is the nature of death, the nature of wrath, as Böhme liked to call it. This Lord of Darkness has taken along all those other spirits (human beings) in his (contra-) development. That is why we cannot see God but are *in* Him nevertheless. This is why God contains the all and every atom within this all, and He is also within us. The consequence of this thought is, 'Who is not for me, will be against me'. Gregorius Richter, in essence a man with a strict sense of duty who had the best of intentions for his parish (as long as he had not been drinking too much), perhaps had never been aware of this. If someone had told him that he, by being against a servant of the Gnosis, in fact was against the brotherhood-in-Christ, he certainly would not have been able to believe it. This is why, to some extent, a deep pity is appropriate here.

Yet Richter had allowed himself to be used by people with a more poisonous tongue and a sharper intellect than his who incited him to

infamous libel and persecutions at moments that wine befuddled his reason. This resulted in Böhme being summoned to a kind of court on Friday, July 26, 1613, by members of the city council of Görlitz, who in their turn had been incited by their clergy. The shoemaker of Görlitz was banned and had to leave his little town as soon as possible. He hardly got the time to take leave of his wife and family. Moreover, the common people had been so stirred up by the poisonous sermon of Gregorius Richter that the house of Jakob Böhme had to pay for it and was bombarded with stones. He had to leave it to his wife and family to bring the shoemaker's workshop back into its former condition. Although this simple workshop was at the mercy of the fury of the public, it was nevertheless here that a large part of the truth and the wisdom that burned in Böhme was to be put on paper.

While he roamed the fields, the shoemaker was nevertheless filled with a great inner joy, because the knowledge that had befallen him would never leave him. When he sat down under a tree, he remembered a strange incident of many years before when all these things were prophesied to him. It happened on a morning when Jakob Böhme was still working as an apprentice to a master shoemaker and happened to be entirely alone in the workshop. A strange man had entered the workshop intending to buy a pair of shoes. Young Jakob was alarmed, and because he had no idea of the prices, he had mentioned a ridiculously high amount, for he did not want to cause a loss to his master by selling the shoes too cheaply.

The stranger had paid the amount without batting an eyelid. Only then it appeared not to be the real mission of the man. He left the shop, but in the middle of the deserted and sunbathed street, he turned around and called with a loud voice, 'Jakob, come out!'

This is how it had been literally described in the chronicle of Böhme's friend and right-hand man, Abraham van Frankenberg, still written in the year of Böhme's death, to prevent the knowledge of the life of the Philosophus Teutonicus from getting lost. After the man had looked at Jakob Böhme long and hard, he said, 'Jakob, you are still young, but you will become a great man. You will be different from others, and the world will wonder about you. Be pious, remain obedient to God, and honour His word. I especially admonish you to read the Bible. Herein you will find comfort and consolation, for you will

be persecuted, mocked, and vilified. Nevertheless, be brave and persevere, for God surrounds you with His love, of which you will testify.'

All of this went through him, while he was lonely and deserted, banned from his hometown, and sitting under the open sky with its sparkling stars. He saw the face with the sincere eyes again before him. Young Böhme realised very well that this event had linked him to his great purpose in life: to confront anew a depraved Christianity, wrapped up in literalness, hair-splitting, and interpretations, with the power of the original light. But where to go from here?

Early in the morning, a messenger from the town came to visit the man in the field with the announcement that the conscience of the council had stirred itself and that the mayor of Görlitz allowed Böhme to return home. This was a very joyful moment for Jakob Böhme. He could come back but was nevertheless forced to make a compromise with the council. To ensure peace in the town and to calm down people's feelings once and for all, the town had thought up a different solution. In this compromise, the shoemaker was banned from putting his convictions on paper and from publishing them. The pastor Gregorius Richter was requested to refrain in future from using such seditious language from the pulpit against the shoemaker.

Both prohibitions were doomed to fail. Jakob Böhme of course *could not* be silent; Gregorius Richter proved not to be strong enough and did not have the courage in the presence of the entire congregation to correct the mistake he once had made. His hatred for this heretic and servant of Satan, as he continued to call Jakob Böhme, filled every inch of his body. This is the reason why it was impossible for him to stick to the prohibition laid on him. On the contrary, until his death, he would trample it underfoot. It is another example of the delusion burdening humanity, of its terrible bewilderment, of the useless and unnecessary struggle it is going through. The modest and gentle man, who was so moved by the great unhappiness and ignorance of humanity, had already deeply felt this as a shoemaker's apprentice, wandering through villages and among farmhouses. On these trips, he continually encountered poverty and need, anxiety and unbearable sorrow, struggle for survival and bitterness in life. How often he must have sighed, 'Why, oh God?'

He saw how the people were burdened by the heavy pressure of the

taxes that were continually increased by the war-loving electors. He saw the entirely pointless burning down of farmhouses, purely for the fun of the soldiers. He saw the mean cunningness and machinations of the rulers, who enriched themselves on the backs of the population and sent others to their death over a ducat. Did he not see the people flock to their churches to forget their suffering in their faith? However, also here they were being deceived. Church prelates poured their rhetoric over the poor populace out of self-interest and in their craving to be important. In this way, apart from the people's anxiety for their lives and livelihood, also a faith filled with fear was bound to develop. Who was their God?

All this fell on the shoemaker's apprentice like an avalanche on his trips into the countryside. He never remained long in one place. Often he continued his journey during the night to be able to practise his shoemaker's trade again early the next day. Time and again, he saw different places, with every time again different people, but there was no difference in their suffering. In the loneliness of the night, under the stars sparkling high in the sky, he held his dialogue with his deepest self, with an inner voice. From this *self*, he called on the Lord of Truth. In such nights, comfort and knowledge came to him and also the deep understanding of the why. This is why he could not be silent. Moved by the lot of humanity, blessed with the insight of the why, Jakob could only stick for five years to the ban of the council. He *had* to free himself from his straightjacket. No power in the world could stop him from writing, from responding to what he experienced as his mission. He already felt so guilty over having defaulted these five years that he was afraid that the mission might be taken away from him. Someone who saw himself as standing in and being surrounded by the streams of light and felt the mighty truth burning in his chest could not possibly be silent about it. This book shows this in typical examples. Such a person *cannot* be silent, and certainly not when it is being made even more difficult for him, in Böhme's case by the many who during these five years came to his simple workshop to receive from him the light of the truth. Böhme himself said about this:

After the persecution, I had firmly intended not to undertake anything anymore than to treasure God in silence as an obedient human being,

but it happened to me just like a grain of wheat that is planted into the earth. It continues to grow in spite of all storms and bad weather, regardless of derision and ridicule, and breaks out into a hundredfold fruit of deep insight and burning desire.

The desire in him to spread the light of the 'new birth' in his time became so strong that he again took up his pen to 'obey God above the people', as he expressed it. According to him, he had been enveloped three times by that stream of light, by this great Light-without-shadow, which had surrounded and filled him with grace and made such a strong impression on his inner spirit that he had received from it all the power he needed to persevere.

III

For five years, some say seven years, Jakob Böhme remained silent. As he himself indicated, this had been a heavy burden on him. When we try to find an answer to the 'why', to what was the reason for so much resistance called up by Böhme's activities, various thoughts offer themselves, as often happens when one sees a result whose cause still lies in the dark. A young person with the heart in the right place will question a great deal when seeing or reading about injustices. Maybe he even stands still for a moment in his rush through life. Then thoughts arise that are later discarded. He would think for example: 'Why is the world the way it is? Why do people make things so difficult for each other?' At this moment, after reading the above, he would certainly ask: Why was Gregorius Richter the lifelong enemy of Jakob Böhme? Why could he not recognise that Böhme's knowledge could have renewed the orthodox, crystallised dogmas? Why did he not gladly embrace this renewal if he were truly inspired by 'faith'? When no answer follows on these questions, he very soon forgets this 'why'. Jakob Böhme himself wrote about this:

If Mr Primarius (that is Gregorius Richter) is right with his warnings, then he should not slander me from the pulpit but invite me to come to him to point out my errors. Should I then realise that he has a real case against me and can show me a better way, oh, how I would love him for

this and would be sincerely grateful to him. Yet he is only pleased when he has something with which to slander me. Originally, after his first slander, I stooped down for six years and did not write a word. Why did he then not stop his slandering? Who has done something to him? It was not to be. Why? Because God had made him into a sledgehammer that was to drive the work forward. His slandering has been my strength and my growth. Through his persecution, my pearl has grown. He has forced it out, and for that I wish him God's mercy that he may also enjoy that God has used him as my work instrument.

This explanation is of a startling simplicity and testifies of a true Christian spirit. To understand the interrelationship of the thoughts of Jakob Böhme, we need to bear in mind the colourful thought world of sixteenth century humanity, to which Böhme closely adhered. As a short introduction, we quote here a part from his *Aurora*:

The 'Prince of Darkness' has tried to get the Tree of Life into his power: the tree we also read about in the creation story of the Bible, the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Thus it is the tree from which humanity picks its 'fruits', fruit that grants life. Whoever does the picking with the Knowledge once given to humanity by God, will pick life as it was meant by God. Whoever picks without being in possession of this faculty, will pick a life knowing sorrow and pain.

The Prince of Darkness has cleverly made use of the ignorance of humanity, of their errors. He placed one of his most faithful accomplices beneath the Tree of Life as a merchant. Everyone who would want one of the fruits could buy it from the merchant and so saved himself the trouble having to do the picking himself.

What the consequences of this were, we can read in Böhme's 'answer' in the preface of *Aurora*:

But when God saw, that Man was thus dead in his Knowledge, He moved Nature again, and shewed unto Man, how there was good and bad therein, that they should avoid Evil, and live unto the Good; and he caused Fire to fall down out of Nature, and fired Sodom and Gomorrah, for a terrible Example to the World.

But when the Blindness of Men grew predominant, and refused to be taught by the Spirit of God, he Gave Laws and Precepts unto them, showing how they should behave themselves, and confirmed them with Wonders and Signs, lest the Knowledge of the true God should be quite extinct.

But for all this, the Light did not manifest itself, for the Darkness and wrathful Fierceness in Nature struggled against it, and the Prince thereof ruled powerfully.

But when the Tree of Nature came to its middle Age, then it began to bear some mild and sweet Fruit, to show, that it would henceforth bear pleasant Fruit. Then were born, the Holy Prophets, out of the sweet Branch of the Tree, which taught and preached of the Light, which hereafter should overcome the wrathful Fierceness in Nature. And then there arose a Light in Nature among the Heathens, so that they knew Nature, and her Operation, although this was only a Light in the wild Nature, and was not yet the holy Light. For the wild Nature was not yet overcome, and Light and Darkness wrestled so long one with another, till the Sun arose, and forced this Tree with its Heat, so that it did bear pleasant sweet Fruit: that is, till there came the Prince of Light out of the Heart of God and became Man in Nature, and wrestled in his human Body in the Power of the Divine Light, in the wild Nature.

That same Prince and Royal Twig grew up in Nature, and became a Tree in Nature, and spread its Branches abroad from the East to the West, and encompassed the whole Nature, and wrestled and fought with the fierce Wrath which was in Nature, and with the Prince thereof, till he overcame and triumphed as a King in Nature, and took the Prince of Wrath or Fierceness, Captive in his own House (Psalm 68:19).

This being done, there grew out of the Royal Tree, which was grown in Nature, many thousand Legions of precious sweet Twigs, all which had the Scent and Taste of that precious Tree. Though there fell upon them Rain, Snow, Hail and tempestuous Storms, so that many a Twig was torn and beaten from the Tree, yet still others grew in their Place. For the Wrath or Fierceness in Nature, and the Prince thereof, raised great Tempests, with Hail, Thundering, Lightning and Rain, so that many glorious Twigs were torn from the sweet and good Tree. But these Twigs were of such a pleasant sweet and curious Taste, that no human nor angelical Tongue is able to express it: For there was great Power and Virtue in them, they were

good to heal the wild Heathens. Whatever Heathen did eat of the Twig of this Tree, he was delivered from his wild Nature in which he was born, and became a sweet Tree in this precious Tree, and sprung up in that Tree, and did bear precious Fruit, like the Royal Tree.

Therefore many Heathens resorted to the precious Tree, where the precious Twigs lay, which the Prince of Darkness by his Storms and tempestuous Winds had torn off; and whatever Heathen did smell to the Twig so torn off, he was healed of his wild Wrath or Fierceness, which he had brought from his Mother into the World.

But when the Prince of Darkness saw that the Heathens strove and contended about these Twigs, and not about the Tree, therein he found great Loss and Damage, and then he ceased with his Storms towards the East and South, and placed a Merchant under the Tree, who gathered up the Twigs, which were fallen from the precious Tree.

And then when the Heathens came, and enquired after the good and virtuous Twigs, then the Merchant presented and offered them, for Money, to make Gain of the precious Tree. For this, the Prince of Wrath or Fierceness required at the Hands of his Merchant, because the Tree was grown upon his Ground and Land, and spoiled his Soil.

And so when the Heathens saw that the Fruit of the precious Tree was put to Sale, they flocked to the Merchant, and bought of the Fruit of the Tree; and they came also from foreign Islands to buy, even from the Ends of the World.

Now when the Merchant saw that his Wares were in Request and Esteem, he plotted, how he might gather a great Treasure to his Master, and so sent Factors abroad, everywhere, to offer his Wares to sell, praising them highly: But he sophisticated the Wares, and sold other Fruit instead of the Good, which were not grown on the good Tree; this he did to increase his Master's Treasure.

But the Heathens and all the Islands and Nations, which dwelt on the Earth, were all grown on the wild Tree, which was good and bad: and therefore were half blind, and did not discern the good Tree, (which however did spread its Branches from the East to the West), else they would not have bought of the false Wares.

But because they knew not the precious Tree, which spread its Branches over them all, all of them ran after, and to the Factors, and bought of them mixed false Wares instead of good; and supposed they

served for Health. But because all of them longed after the good Tree, which however moved over them all, many of them were healed, because of their great Desire they had to the Tree. For the Fragrance of the Tree, which moved over them, healed them of their Wrath or Fierceness and wild Nature, and not the false Wares of the Factors: this continued a long Time.

Now when the Prince in the Darkness, who is the Source or Wrath or Fierceness, Malice and Perdition, perceived that Men were healed of their Poison and wild Nature by the Fragrance of the precious Tree, he was enraged, and planted a wild Tree towards the North, which sprung up and grew in the Fierceness or Wrath of Nature, and made proclamation, saying: This is the Tree of Life; he that eateth of it, shall be healed and live eternally. For in that Place, where the wild Tree grew, was a wild Place, and the People there had the true Light of God from the Beginning, even unto that Time, and to this Day, though unknown: and the Tree grew on the Mount Hagar in the House of Ishmael the Mocker.

But when the Proclamation was made of the Tree, Behold, this is the Tree of Life!, then the wild People flocked unto the Tree, which were not born of God, but of the wild Nature, and loved the wild Tree, and did eat of its Fruit.

And the Tree grew to a mighty Bigness, by the Sap of Wrath or Fierceness in Nature, and spread abroad its Branches, from the North to the East and West: But the Tree had its Source and Root from the wild Nature, which was good and bad, and as the Tree was, so were its Fruits.

But though the Men of this Place were grown out of the wild Nature, yet the Tree grew over them all, and grew so huge, that it reached with its Branches even unto the esteemed precious Land or Country under the Holy Tree.

But the Cause, that the wild Tree grew to so great a Bigness, was because the Nations under the good Tree ran all after the Factors, which sold the false Wares, and did eat of the false Fruits, which were good and bad, and supposed they were healed thereby, and meddled not with the holy good effectual Tree. In the mean while, they grew more blind, weak and faint, and were disabled to suppress the growing of the wild Tree towards the North. For they were too weak and faint, and they saw well enough, that the Tree was wild, and bad, but they wanted Strength, and could not suppress the Growing of the Tree. Yet if they had not run after

the false Wares those Factors sold, and had not eaten of the false Fruits, but rather eaten of the precious Tree, then they might have got Strength to oppose the wild Tree.

But because they ran a whoring after the wild Nature in human Conceits and Opinions, in the Lusts of their Hearts, in a hypocritical Way, therefore the wild Nature did predominate over them, and the wild Tree grew high and large over them, and spoiled them with its wild Rankness.

For the Prince of Wrath or Fierceness, in Nature, gave his Power to the Tree, to spoil Men which did eat of the wild Fruits of the Factors: Because they forsook the Tree of life, and sought after their own Fancy, as Mother Eve did in Paradise, therefore their own innate Quality predominated in them, and brought them into strong delusions, as St Paul saith (2 Thess. 2:11): 'And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie'

And the Prince of Wrath or Fierceness, did raise Wars and Tempests from the wild Tree towards the North against the People and Nations, which were not born from the wild Tree; and the Tempest which came from the wild Tree overthrew them in their Weakness and Faintness.

And the Merchant under the good Tree dissembled with the Nations of the South and West, and towards the North, and highly commended his Wares, and cunningly deceived the simple Ones; and those that were witty, he made them his Factors, that they also might have their Livelihood or Living out of it, and he brought it so far, that no Body saw or knew the holy Tree any more, and so he got all the Land to himself, and then made Proclamation, (2 Thess. 2:4). I am the Stock of the good Tree, and stand on the Root of the good Tree, and am in-grafted into the Tree of Life, buy my wares which I sell: and then you shall be healed of your wild Birth, and live forever. I am grown out of the Root of the good Tree, and the Fruit of the holy Tree is in my Power, and I sit on the Throne of the divine Power; I have Power in Heaven and on Earth, Come unto me, and buy for Money, the Fruit of Life.

Whereupon all Nations flocked to him and did buy and eat, even till they fainted. All the Kings of the South, West, and towards the North did eat the Fruits of the Factors, and lived under a great Faintness; for the wild Tree of the North grew more and more over them, and made waste of them a long Time. And there was a miserable Time upon Earth, such as

never was, since the World stood, but Men thought that Time to be good; so terribly the Merchant under the good Tree, had blinded them.

But in the Evening, God in his Mercy took Pity on Man's Misery and Blindness, and stirred up the good Tree again, even that glorious Divine Tree, which did bear the Fruit of Life; then there grew a Twig nigh unto the Root, out of the precious Tree, and was green, (Isaiah 11:1-2) and to it was given the Sap and Spirit of the Tree, and it spoke with the Tongue of Man, and showed to everyone the precious Tree, and its Voice was heard in many Countries.

And when Men resorted thither to see and to hear what the Matter was, and there was shown unto them the precious and vigorous Tree of Life, of which Men had eaten at the Beginning, and were delivered of their wild Nature, and they were mightily rejoiced, and did eat of the Tree of Life with great Joy, and Refreshing, and so got new Strength from the Tree of Life, and sung a new Song (Revelation 5:9) concerning the true real Tree of Life, and so were delivered from their wild Birth, and then hated the Merchant and his Factors, as also their false Wares.

But all those came, which did hunger and thirst after the Tree of Life, and those that sat in the Dust, and they did eat of the holy Tree, and were healed of their impure Birth and Wrath or Fierceness of Nature, in which they lived, and so were in-grafted into the Tree of Life.

But only the Factors of the Merchant, and his and their Dissemblers, and those that made their Gains with false Wares, and had gathered Treasure together came not, for they were drowned and quite dead in the Gain of the Merchant's Whoredom, and lived in the wild Nature, and so their Anguish and Shame, which was discovered, kept them back, because they went a whoring so long with the Merchant, and seduced the Souls of Men, notwithstanding they gloried, that they were in-grafted into the Tree of Life, and lived in Sanctity by a divine Power, and set to Sale the Fruit of Life.

Now because their Shame, Deceit, Covetousness, Knavery and Wick-edness were discovered, they waxed dumb, and stayed behind; they were ashamed, and repented not of their Abominations and Idolatry, and so went not with the Hungry and Thirsty to the Fountain of Eternal Life; and therefore they grew faint also in their Thirst, and their Plague rises up from Eternity to Eternity, and they are gnawed in their Conscience.

Now the Merchant seeing that the Deceit of his false Wares was discov-

ered, he grew very wrath, and despaired; and bent his Bow against the holy People, who would buy no more of his Wares, and so destroyed many of the holy People, and blasphemed the green-Twig, which was grown up out of the Tree of Life. But the great Prince Michael, which stands before God, came and fought for the holy People, and he overcame. (Revelation 12:7)

But the Prince of Darkness perceiving, that his Merchant had a Fall, and that his Deceit was discovered, he raised a Tempest from the North out of the wild Tree against the Holy People, and the Merchant of the South made an Assault upon them: then the Holy People grew greatly in their Blossom, even as it was in the Beginning, when the holy and precious Tree grew, and that overcame the Wrath or Fierceness in Nature and its Prince; thus it was at that Time.

Now, when the noble and holy Tree was revealed to all Nations, so that they saw how it moved over them, and spread its Fragrance over all People, and that any one that pleased, might eat of it, then the People grew weary of eating of its Fruit, which grew on the Tree, and longed to eat of the Root of the Tree; and the cunning and wise People sought after the Root, and contended about the same: So the Strife was great about the Root of the Tree, insomuch that they forgot to eat the Fruit of the sweet Tree, by Reason of the Controversy about the Root of the Tree.

And now they minded neither the Root nor the Tree, but the Prince of Darkness had another Design, intending something else: when he saw, that they would eat no more of the good Tree, but contended about the Root, he perceived that they were grown very weak and faint, and that the wild Nature had the Predominance in them again.

And therefore he stirred them up to Pride, so that everyone supposed he had the Root at Hand, everyone must look after and hear him, and reverence him. Whereby they built their Palaces and great Houses, and served in Secrecy their Idol Mammon, whereby the Lay people were troubled and caused to offend, and so lived in carnal Pleasures, in the Desire of the wild Nature, and served their Belly in Wantonness, confiding in the Fruit of the Tree, which moved over them all, though they fell into Misery, that thereby they might be healed.

And in the mean while they served the Prince of Darkness according to the Impulse of the wild Nature, and the precious Tree stood there only for a May-game or Mocking stock, and many lived like wild Beasts, and led a wicked Life, in Pride, Pomp, Stateliness and Lasciviousness, the

Rich consuming the Labour and Sweat of the Poor, forcing them there-
unto.

IV

As in our times, science is at the centre of attention and entirely directed at the successes of technology in all its facets, so in the days of Jakob Böhme, there was a great deal and a variety of investigating and seeking in the field of religious studies. Europe was shaken to its foundations because of all the tensions that arose out of the urge of people to grasp and understand the Christian teachings correctly. They were looking for new directives in which they could trust in good conscience. They were of the opinion that the time had come that all these things were on the verge of revealing themselves: The Millennium was about to begin. They were living (already in those days) under the impression that the apex of human thinking had been reached.

Who were 'they'? They were largely that group of the population for whom money did not play a role, the upper crust, for the 'ordinary' populace had no education. It had no opportunity to develop itself. The authorities needed the youth as a cheap workforce, and parents together with their children earned their daily bread only with the greatest difficulty. This will certainly have been one of the causes of the hatred of Gregorius Richter for the shoemaker Böhme, who had risen above his status as a peasant boy and had the audacity to write about religion. In those days, Europe was flooded with manifestos, treatises, theses, stipulations, and many other forms of writing, all made public and printed, and every piece claimed to have the one and only truth. The Church of Rome, like all worldly authorities continuously directed at keeping humanity in its entirety under its control, defended itself by all possible means against these expressions of freedom of speech. Its first great defeat, the 'Reformation' of Martin Luther, was still fresh in its memory. Luther after all had brought about an irreparable breach with the Catholic Church.

Jakob Böhme lived in a time when the consequences of this breach were increasingly being felt. Many were in the process of struggling free from the hold of the Church of Rome. In all expressions of life,

this drive could be found, for example, in art. Until the sixteenth century, art had been determined by the Church. Up to that time, it had solely been in the service of the Church. Here we can see the influence of the Reformation slowly manifested itself. Now we see numerous secular paintings came into existence. The same thing happened in music. For example, in this time the first opera was written, a completely 'worldly' musical play, torn free from the strict principles of the Church.

Such a struggle to free oneself from a church, Catholic or, as in Böhme's case, Lutheran, was usually accompanied by much suffering and tremendous effort. Jakob Böhme, in fact, did not need a church. For sure, he submitted entirely to the ruling authorities – and in Görlitz this included the Lutheran Church – but he really stood apart from it; he stood above it. He only pointed to the necessity of a completely Christian way of life. This is what Pastor Richter felt and what made him furious. This person was free! Richter was not. Richter was a person who could not do otherwise than to hold on dogmatically and inflexibly to the reformed Lutheran theses. However, Böhme received help from an unexpected corner. The danger of blinding through dogma was known to the authorities, as it could repeatedly cause much of the suffering that had not yet been overcome. Right-minded people and dignitaries had created a high council that was to judge all writings according to their spiritual value. Moreover, this high council had the task of overseeing that the followers of the Reformation did not succumb to the same mistakes of which the Church of Rome had been accused. Dresden was a city that harboured such a council. This is where Böhme wanted to go.

Jakob Böhme, who was now forty-three years old, had for some time taken up writing again. His first book, *Aurora*, had become known even beyond the borders of the Germany of that time – in handwritten form only. He developed an enormous productivity, as if he had to catch up with the five years of silence. Görlitz was flooded with strangers who wanted to pay him a visit to hear the high spiritual teachings from his own mouth. Jakob received letters from and wrote to many princes, nobles, clergymen, and doctors, who all had questions concerning his now famous *Aurora*. Their interest was not limited to his first work, for in a time-span of three years, he wrote fifteen books,

some quite thick, all equally brilliant and with a high spiritual content. Jakob Böhme was then, as one calls it, at the summit of his life. From all over Europe, he received recognition and admiration. In his hometown, he was nevertheless surrounded by hatred. The more the interest in Jakob Böhme increased, the greater was the opposition of the town pastor and his friends. It again reached the point that the situation for Böhme and his family became unbearable, but Böhme did not let it get him down. The now famous shoemaker had great plans – plans that would never have entered his mind, if the situation for him and those close to him would not have been so untenable. He decided to travel to Dresden to obtain from the high council of the clergy recognition and the right to speak and write. On May 9, 1624, he left his wife and children in God's care, and seven months later, he returned to Görlitz.

We may well ask, why does this man devote so much effort to do justice to his teachings? The answer must be, because he realised that it was extremely important that his insights and the teachings of purification, meekness, and neighbourly love, as recorded in his writings, could be published freely. He did not want them to sink into oblivion. Following his own guidelines, he was not justified in keeping to himself the revelations he had been granted to experience: the truth of things, his threefold great vision, his insights in the spiritual sciences. This Gnostic idea, as we doubtlessly may call his teachings, had to gain a foothold in the development of the times following the Reformation. Although the Lutheran Church had liberated itself in that period from the dogmas of Rome, it had firmly entered the danger zone of crystallisation. Böhme felt that before a general rigidity struck home, the Gnostic idea of the two creations, the two nature orders, had to be firmly established.

Many have devoted themselves to this work together with Jakob Böhme, and he has had many disciples, amongst whom were Angelus Silesius in Germany, Spinoza in Amsterdam, and later Jan Luyken, also in the Republic of the Netherlands. When all the upheavals around the writer had quieted down, Dr Paul Scipio sent the manuscript of *Aurora* to Amsterdam on November 26, 1641, where the merchant Abraham Willemszoon van Beyerland published it. Van Beyerland also bought a chest with manuscripts and copies of Böhme's

works for one hundred thalers (two hundred and fifty guilders) and had it sent to Amsterdam. In the turbulence of the Thirty Years' War, it was not surprising that the convoy, along with which also the chest of books was travelling (for Böhme had written almost four thousand pages), was looted somewhere along the way to Hamburg. When Johannes Rothe, who had sold the books, heard about this disaster, he wrote to van Beyerland that he unfortunately had to assume that the chest was lost. However, by 'coincidence', on the same day that the Amsterdam merchant received this letter, he found the chest in the front portal of his house when returning in the late afternoon from the stock exchange. This 'little wonder of Amsterdam' had saved the life work of Jakob Böhme for posterity.

Apart from the churches, Böhme mentioned a second danger to the idea of liberation: the caricature of imitation-alchemy, practised by those who wanted to make material gold. Above all, the classical Rosicrucians fulminated against this bastardisation of true alchemy. Many educated seekers also appreciate Jakob Böhme because of his great insight and knowledge of the natural science of that time. He was an excellent scholar of the works of Paracelsus, whose insights he used in his later works in a more in-depth way. His alchemy had of course nothing to do with the making of gold in an earthly, material sense.

When Böhme arrived in Dresden after some detours, he was received by the personal physician and court alchemist of the prince-elector of Dresden. This doctor-chemist, who of course had heard a lot about Böhme, invited Böhme to stay with him during the time of his sojourn in Dresden. In this way, he hoped to get information about the making of gold from this expert on Paracelsus' works. The modest Jakob Böhme, in good faith, accepted the invitation. This stay ended in disappointment for the doctor, for Böhme directed all his attention to the purpose for which he had come: to find recognition for his teachings.

The high council of the clergy in Dresden, or the high consistory, had in the meantime become extremely interested in Jakob Böhme, and for the purpose of study, each member already had a copy of one of his works in his possession. All of them turned out to be very enthusiastic about the works of Böhme, and they determined unani-

mously that the accusations and persecutions of Richter were completely unfounded. His hatred had no basis at all. Thus, Richter was reprimanded over his unreasonable behaviour and again ordered to leave Böhme in peace in the future. Understandably, Böhme was greatly pleased with the result he had achieved. Life, as it were, was starting anew for him.

In the meantime, the prince-electors of Dresden returned from a journey and also wanted to be personally informed of the situation. He arranged that two important theologians would conduct a question and answer conversation with Böhme, whereby Böhme would have full opportunity to defend his teachings. It was the second trial by fire for our shoemaker – and this trial also was a success. Böhme made a special impression by his natural and non-aggressive tone with which he pointed out that every human being is himself responsible regarding the new life-in-Christ. He put it as follows: ‘So I confess the temple of Christ in the human being and that we need to learn to understand Christ in our heart.’

This is the same as the powerful language, the ‘living word’, of the Rosycross. It is the same spirit of the original life that speaks in Jakob Böhme.

His motto was, *Unser Heil liegt im Leben Jesu-Christi-in-uns* (Our salvation lies in Jesus Christ living in us). The similarity to the maxim of Johann Valentin Andreae is remarkable: *Jesu mihi omnia* – Jesus is everything to me. The great modesty and clarity of Böhme’s arguments created such an impression that he was recognised also by these people.

Thus, the moment arrived when Jakob Böhme could return home. The doctor-chemist was pleased to see him go, for he quickly regretted his invitation when he discovered that little material gold was to be had from a shoemaker. Jakob could not stay at home with his family in Görlitz. It was made impossible for him to work there. Forced by the situation, the persecuted man accepted an invitation to go to the castle of Schweinsburg belonging to a friendly monarch. On his way there, he was attacked by two murderers, who had been paid by friends of Richter. They beat him up, and supposing him to be dead, they threw him heavily-wounded in a grave that had been dug beforehand. Jakob Böhme was saved from certain death because

the bandits were disturbed just in time in their 'activities'. More dead than alive, he was carried into Schweinsburg. Fortunately, he recovered, and taken into the family circle of the lord of the castle, he continued to work without pause. Yet even here, he was not left in peace. A final trial of life was still awaiting Böhme. A conceited type of squire, also a guest at Schweinsburg, soon felt obliged to make Böhme's life impossible by pestering him. Through the imperturbable friendliness of the wise shoemaker, this became worse by the day. The squire mocked the 'prophet', as he called him, and tried several times to force Böhme to predict his future for him. Jakob Böhme refused every time. He knew that he was dealing with a bad human being. However one evening, it came to a crisis. The drunken squire drew his sword. With the point of the sword on the throat of the 'prophet', he tried to force him to tell him his fortune. Böhme looked deeply into his eyes and told him his entire shady past. 'The future', the squire hissed, 'I want to know my future!' Then Böhme told him that he would die a violent death within the next three days. The public exposure of his black past filled the squire with such fury that he threw himself on Jakob Böhme to silence him once and for all. The onlookers nevertheless managed to free Böhme in time, and the squire was taken out of the house by his host. Cursing Jakob Böhme and his friends, the squire rushed out of the castle gate. His disgraceful and hurried departure caused his horse to stumble, and the squire was thrown off. He landed in such an unfortunate manner that he broke his neck and died. This tragic ending so moved Böhme that he wished for nothing else but to return home. Sick and broken by sorrow, the fighter for truth, love, and meekness arrived in Görlitz for the final act of the drama of his life.

With the first step by which he entered his home, he already knew that in Görlitz nothing had changed in the situation. On the contrary, during his absence, Gregorius Richter had incited the populace to such an extent that Böhme was in danger of his life. The crisis came when it appeared moreover that Böhme had his first, and during his lifetime only, book published in print (*Der Weg zu Christo*, or *Christosophia*) (The Way to Christ, or Christosophia). This recognition of Böhme's authority, as well as the verdict of the council of Dresden, doubled Richter's hatred, and he rejected the insights of the consis-

tory entirely. He managed to get virtually the entire congregation of Görlitz behind him, and the house and possessions of Böhme were being badly attacked again.

Now the last chapter of the drama of Gregorius Richter contra Jakob Böhme began. Richter was dying. A life made bitter by hatred got its saddest epilogue in the discovery that his own son was a follower and diligent spreader of Böhme's teachings. One of the chroniclers even mentioned that he was in love with Böhme's daughter Anna. For Gregorius Richter, it must have been a trial from hell when his son admitted this and cried out in despair, 'Father, father, how could you persecute this man?' Also this event touched Jakob Böhme deep in his heart. It broke at the thought that he would no more be successful in finding peace with the poor city pastor. Yet his ability to forgive was so great that he wrote an obituary for Richter after Richter's death.

Three months later, he himself fell ill, and on November 17, 1624, Jakob Böhme took leave from his family and friends with the words, '*Jetzt fahr ich hin ins Paradis*' (Now I will go to paradise). A *via dolorosa* had come to an end, walked in the service of the one idea, the one truth, founded in the Gnosis, interpreted by the Logos itself, written down by a pen, dipped in the heart blood of Christ, as it was put poetically at that time. He had brought many again into contact with this idea, this Gnosis.

The grave of Böhme and the vault of Christian Rosycross showed a remarkable similarity. The cross on Jakob's last resting place carried the inscription, *Born of God, died in Jesus, sealed with the Holy Spirit*. In the special vault of Father Brother Christian Rosycross was written: *Ex Deo Nascimur, In Jesu morimur, Per Spiritum Sanctum reviviscimus: Born of God, died in Jesus, reborn by the Holy Spirit*.

Furthermore, a verse was written on Böhme's gravestone that in a wonderfully beautiful way conveys the essence of his life:

*Im Wasser lebt der Fisch, die Pflanze in der Erde,
der Vogel in der Luft, die Sonn' im Firmament.
Der Salamander muss im Feuer erhalten werden,
und Gottes Herz ist Jakob Böhmes Element.*

(The fish lives in the water, the plant in the earth,

the bird in the sky, the sun in the firmament.

The salamander needs to live in fire,

and the Heart of God is Jakob Böhme's element.)

Thus, it can be read in an edition of his works of 1676, for the grave itself was destroyed by fanatical Lutherans. However, Jakob Böhme's grave is not a dark crypt in the earth. Radiant like the dawn, it stands inviolable in his books in which he had laid down his wisdom and by which he had fulfilled his task. The flame is kept burning.

CHAPTER I4

Jakob Böhme's Understanding of the Seven Spirits

Böhme is a figure in the European religious life and thought who, today, is remote enough from us to be called old or antique, yet close enough to be still directly understood without any explanatory words from others. His language is old, certainly, but if the heart is sensitive, it will experience a flood of light with each of his words, a balm of comfort and understanding and joy for a mind that penetrated into the foundations of its own existence, of all that is, and of the unknowable, of God.

Böhme's philosophy is difficult, it is said. Certainly, one has to become familiar with some ideas, concepts that at the time were more common than today.

Böhme ventures to talk about Satan, about Lucifer, about a world of wrath, worlds and words that no longer appeal or mean anything to us, perhaps because they have become too familiar to us. However, Jakob Böhme would rather speak and write about the world of the light, about the realm of joy, as he would call it, in order to rejoice in the joy of seeing and understanding that world.

He can never sufficiently explain how extraordinary God and the seven original spirits are. He addresses the simple-minded, he says, because he himself is simple-minded, too, and only knows while 'the Spirit is with him'; without it, he is a hollow vessel. These are his own words.

God is the unknown 'Ungrund' (no-ground), as he calls it. From God, the Son is born. The Son is a quality of light and consists of seven original spirits. How may this be understood?

The first miracle already is the birth of the Son. Perhaps we had better cite him. In his *Aurora*, he compares the seven original spirits to seven wheels:

85. But if I should describe the Deity in its birth or geniture in a small round circle, in the highest depth, then it is thus: In a Similitude.

86. Suppose a WHEEL standing before thee, with seven wheels one so made in the other that it could go on all sides, forward, backward and cross ways, without need of any turning back or stopping.*

87. In its going, that always one wheel, in its turning about, generateth the others, and yet none of them vanish out of sight, but that all seven be visible or in sight.

88. The seven wheels always generating the naves in the midst or centre according to their turning about, so that the nave stand always free without alteration or removing, whether the wheels go forward or backward or cross ways or upward or downward.

89. The nave always generating the spokes, so that in their turning about they stand right and direct from the nave to the fellies of the wheel: and yet none of the spokes to be out of sight, but still turning about thus one with another, going whithersoever the wind driveth it, and that without need of any turning back or stopping.

Now observe what I shall inform you in the application of this.

90. The seven wheels are the seven spirits of God, the one always generating the others, and are like the turning about of a wheel, which hath seven wheels one in another, and the one always wheeleth itself otherwise than the others in its station or position, and the seven wheels are hooped round with fellies, like a round globe.

91. And yet that a man may see all the seven wheels turning round about severally apart, as also the whole fitness or compass of the frame, with all its fellies and spokes and naves.

92. The seven naves in the midst or centre being as it were one nave, which doth fit everywhere in the turning about, and the wheels continually generating these naves, and the naves generating the spokes continually in all the seven wheels, and yet none of the wheels, as also none of the naves, nor any of the fellies or spokes, to be out of sight, and as if this wheel had seven wheels, and yet were all but one wheel, and went always forward, whithersoever the wind drove it.

* See Ch. 19, par. 81 et seq.*

Now behold, and consider:

93. The seven wheels one in another, the one always generating the others, and going on every side, and yet none out of sight, or turning back; these are the seven qualifying or fountain spirits of God the Father.

94. They generate in the seven wheels in each wheel a nave, and yet there are not seven naves, but one only, which fitteth in all the seven wheels: This is the heart or innermost body of the wheels, wherein the wheels run about, and that signifieth the Son of God.

95. For all the seven spirits of God the Father generate continually in their circle, and that is the Son of all the seven spirits, and all those qualify or act in his light, and [the Son] is in the midst or centre of the birth, and holds together all the seven spirits of God, and they in their birth turn about therewith thus.

96. That is, they climb either upward or downward, backward or forward, or crossways, and so the Heart of God is always in the midst or centre, and fitteth itself to every qualifying or fountain spirit.

97. Thus there is one Heart of God, and not seven, which is always generated from all the seven, and is the heart and life of all the seven.

98. Now the spokes, which are always generated from the naves and wheels, and which fit themselves to all the wheels in their turning, and are their root, stay and fastening in which they stand, and out of which they are generated, signify God the Holy Ghost, which goeth forth from the Father and the Son, even as the spokes go out from the nave and wheel, and yet abide also in the wheel.

99. Now as the spokes are many, and go always about with and in the wheel, so the Holy Ghost is the workmaster in the wheel of God, and formeth, imageth and frameth all in the whole or total God.

100. Now this wheel hath seven wheels one in another, and one nave, which fitteth itself to all the seven wheels, and all the seven wheels turn on that one nave: Thus God is one God, with seven qualifying or fountain spirits one in another, where always one generateth the others, and yet is but one God, just as these seven wheels are but one wheel. Now observe:

101. The wheel in its incorporated structure and frame signifieth the as-tringent quality, which attracteth or draweth together the whole corporeal being of the Deity, and holdeth it, and drieth it, so that it subsisteth.

102. The sweet spring or fountainwater is generated by the driving about or rising up of the spirits, for when the light is generated in the heat, then

the astringent quality is amazed or terrified for great joy, and this is a submitting or lying down or growing thin, and the hard corporeal being sinketh down like a meekness or mildness.

103. Now the terror^{*} or the glance of the light riseth up in the astringent quality very gently and shivering, and trembleth, which now in the water is bitter, and the light drieth it, and maketh it friendly and sweet.

104. Therein standeth life and joy; for the terror or flash riseth up in all the qualities, like the wheel before mentioned which turneth about, and then there all the seven spirits rise up one in another, and generate themselves, as in a circle, and the light is shining in the midst or centre of the seven spirits, and reshineth back again in all the spirits, and all the spirits triumph therein, and rejoice in the light.

105. As the seven wheels turn about upon one nave, as upon their heart, which holds them, and they hold the nave, so the seven spirits generate the heart, and the heart holds the seven spirits, and so there arise voices, and divine joy fulness of hearty loving and kissing.

106. For when the spirits with their light move or boil, turn about and rise one in another, then the life is always generated; for one spirit always affordeth to the others its taste or relish, that is, it is affected by the others.

107. Thus one tasteth and feeleth another, and in the sound one heareth another, and the tone presseth forth from all the seven spirits towards the heart, and riseth up in the heart in the flash of the light, and then rise up the voices and joyfulness of the Son of God; and all the seven spirits triumph and rejoice in the Heart of God, each according to its quality.

108. For in the light in the sweet water all astringency and hardness and bitterness and heat are mitigated and made pleasant, and so there is in the seven spirits nothing else but a pleasant striving, struggling and wonderful generating, like a divine holy sport or scene of God.

109. But their sharp or tart birth, of which I have written above, abideth hidden as a kernel, for it becometh mitigated by the light and the sweet water.

* The terror (der Schreck). This word, peculiar to Bohme, is very aptly rendered by St M., explosion or bursting forth. In the next part it is made identical with flash, Schreck oder Blitz.

110. Just as a sour bitter green apple is forced by the sun, that it becometh very pleasant or lovely to be eaten, and yet all its qualities are tasted; so the Deity keepeth its qualities also, but striveth or struggleth gently, like a pleasant lovely sport or scene.

111. But if the qualifying or fountain spirits should extol or lift up themselves, and penetrate suddenly one into another, driving hard, rubbing and thronging, crowding or squeezing, then the sweet water would be squeezed out, and the fierce heat would be kindled, and then would rise up the fire of the seven spirits, as it did in Lucifer.

112. This is now the true birth or geniture of the Deity, which hath been so from eternity in all corners and places whatsoever, and abideth so in all eternity.

That is Böhme's language. He cannot get enough of explaining that wonderful birth of God over and over again. For God is born all the time! And – what is far more important yet – likewise God is re-born in the human being, in the heart, in the sevenfold rotating wheel, that is to say, in the sphere of the microcosm! As Jan van Rijckenborgh explains the mysteries of the Rose again and again, in his extensive literature, from different points of view all the time, so Böhme explains the wonderful birth of God again and again. And each time he is carried away in the joy of that birth, in the glory, which he calls 'sweet' or 'lovely' or 'tender'!

Does Böhme now speak of one world, or two, or three? Böhme explains to us how there is 'an all and nothing', how there is a non-revealed, unknowable no-ground, 'Ungrund'. From this originates a creation, a sevenfold creation. This is already the first miracle. This creation is the son! And in this son, the seven original spirits originate as described above. They are again the son, and they again create the consciousness of the son. 'Understand it magically!' Böhme would say. The creation, creating, is to be understood as pulling together, driving together. Consciousness originates due to the seven spirits interacting and producing in each other knowledge (recognition), joy, light, life, taste, sound, and form. And the universe is love, the beginning, the hub, the heart, of God. The son was Lucifer before his fall. Böhme says about Lucifer:

126. When the king was thus incorporated or compacted together, as one comprehending his whole kingdom, then instantly, the same hour, and in the same moment, when he was incorporated or compacted together, the birth of the Holy Trinity of God, which he had for a propriety in his body, rose up and generated itself without, distinct from the creature, in God. [Understand, for a propriety in the liberty, not essentially, but as the fire shineth forth or gloweth through the iron that is flaming hot, and the iron remaineth iron still; or as the light replenisheth or filleth the darkness, the dark source or quality being changed into light, and so becometh joyful, and yet in the centre remaineth a darkness, which is understood to be nature; for a spirit is replenished only with the Majesty.]

127. For in the driving together of the body, presently likewise rose up the birth also in great triumph, as in a newborn king, in God; and all the seven qualifying or fountain spirits shewed themselves very joyful and triumphing.

128. And instantly, in the same moment, the light was generated and rose up out of the seven spirits in the centre of the heart, as a newborn son of the king, which also instantly, in a moment, transfigured the body of all the seven qualifying or fountain spirits from the centre of the heart; and externally from without the light of the Son of God transfigured it. [...]

131. Now here standeth the beauteous bride: what shall I write of her now? was she not a Prince of God, as also the most beautiful, moreover, in God's love also, and as a dear son of the creatures?

Then Böhme explains how the fall has to be understood.

147. But when his light was generated in him in his heart, and that his qualifying spirits were instantly affected or environed with the high light, they then became so highly rejoicing that they elevated themselves in their body against the right of nature, and presently began as it were a higher, statelier, more pompous or active qualifying or operation than God himself exercised.

148. But these spirits elevating themselves thus, and triumphing so eagerly and vehemently one in another, and rising up against the right of nature, by that means they kindled the qualifying or fountain spirits an exceeding deal too much; viz. the astringent quality attracted or compacted the body too hard together, so that the sweet water was dried up.

149. And the powerful and great bright flash, which was risen up in the sweet water in the heat, from whence the bitter quality existeth in the sweet water, that rubbed itself so horribly hard with the astringent quality, as if it would break in pieces for great joy.

150. For the flash was so bright, that it was as it were intolerable to the qualifying or fountain spirits, and therefore the bitter quality or source trembled and rubbed itself so hard in the astringent, that the heat was kindled contrary to the right of nature, and the astringent also dried up the sweet water by its hard attracting together.

151. But now the quality of heat was so severe, furious and eager, that it bereaved the astringent quality or source of its power; for the heat existeth in the fountain or source of the sweet water.

152. But the sweet water being dried up through the astringent attracting together, therefore could not the heat any more rise to a flame or to any light (for the light existeth in the unctuousity or oiliness of the water), but glowed like a redhot iron, or like iron not quite glowing, but very dimly and darkly; or as if you should put a very hard stone into the fire, and should let it lie there in great heat as long as you please, yet it would not be glowing light, because it hath too little water or oiliness in it.

153. Thus now the heat kindled the dried water, and the light could no more elevate and kindle itself, for the water was dried up, and was quite consumed by the fire or great heat.

154. The meaning is not here, as if the spirit of the water were swallowed up or devoured, which dwelleth in all the seven qualities, but its quality or upper place or predominancy was changed into a dusky hot and sour quality.

155. For here in this place the sour quality hath taken its first original and beginning, which now also is inherited in this world, which is not in heaven in God after such a manner at all, nor in any angel; for it is and signifieth the house of affliction, trouble and misery, and is a forgetfulness of all good.

156. Now when this was done, the qualifying or fountain spirits rubbed themselves one upon another in that manner and way as I have mentioned above, concerning the figure of the sevenfold wheel, for they ever do, and rise up one in another, to taste one another, or to affect one another, from whence life and love exist.

157. Now in all the spirits there was nothing else but a mere hot, fiery, cold

and hard corruption, and so one evil quality tasted the others, whereby the whole body grew so very fierce and wrathful; for the heat was against the cold, and the cold against the heat.

158. So the sweet water being dried up, the bitter quality (which existed and was generated by the first flash, when the light kindled itself) rose up in the body through all the spirits, as if it would destroy the body, and so raved and raged like the rankest or worst poison.

159. From thence existed the first poison, wherein we poor men now in this world have enough to chew upon, and thereby the bitter poisonous death is come into the flesh.

Böhme says in a subtle way:

160. Now in this raging and tearing the life of Lucifer was generated, that is, his dear little son in the circle or centre of his heart; and what manner of life and dear little son came to be, I offer to any rational soul to consider of. [...] But how welcome a guest he was before God, and in God, also before the holy angels of the other kingdoms, I leave to thee to consider of.

164. He should now have united with the Son of God, as one heart and one God: Alas for ever! Who can write or express this sufficiently?

Herein lies in first outline the principle of the two nature orders. In humanity, both worlds are active. Contemporarily, both interact and influence each other. Which spirit will ascend from this? Which principle is handled? To which goal will it lead? Behold, in Böhme's visionary view, the cosmic tragedy, but at the same time also the miracle of humanity. Böhme tries to depict it as simply as possible.

But the mystery remains that something was created from nothing, from the Ungrund. This cannot be understood, and even Böhme, with his really fabulously writing goose-quill, cannot explain this mystery. He says so in many places. He says that we can only stand in that mystery. We can only become part of it, be part of it, by sinking down our will into it! The fact that the very first mystery cannot be understood, not even by something that emanated from that mystery, is the central issue of the fall of Lucifer.

Lucifer, as Böhme says, was the most elevated divine creation that came into existence out of Non-Being. However, he could not accept

that he did not understand and that he was not the first mystery.

This is why he urged up all the seven spirits within him, and they burnt to be a fierce fire, to an enormous heat, a heat not quenched by love, the fifth spirit, but a heat getting hotter and hotter due to the incapacity to be God and thus be able to govern beyond himself – like God – in God's Space.

The seven spirits could not bear the sound thus produced. This caused the beginning of an explosion, due to which the material world, the world of wrath, in which God cannot be, came into existence.

If he would have accepted the mystery, he would have been God's most beloved and most beautiful creation and world. But due to pride, as Böhme says, he went out of God. And in that heat, in that wrath, we, people, burn. But we can say goodbye to presumptuousness. We can say goodbye to pride, because something of that world that existed prior to Lucifer's fall has been laid in us. We can enter the other creation of God, the new birth. This is the third creation, the third world.

What a miracle in which we may stand! In us the divine human being can be reborn, in a magical way, from the seven spirits, from the sevenfold latent fiery principle that corresponds with the human heart.

This still holds good. As earthly appearance, every human being is a creation in a state of becoming. However, he is not finished yet. Just imagine: Four spirits are active in us.

- The first force that Böhme mentions is the astringent or sour force. It produces hardness and coldness: our bones, the material body.
- The second property is sweetness. It is warm, mild, soothing: It produces life in the material.
- The third force is the bitter force. It is the spirit that gives mobility, that determines our sensorial perception, that lets us feel and desire.
- The fourth property or force is heat, the igniter of life, due to which the spirit becomes active in the body: the natural consciousness.

Thus we may understand Böhme's explanation of our momentary existence. What matters now is, Can we rise beyond this? For this is what it is all about! Can the spirit of the lovely, celestial life of joy of Christ be born in us as a fifth property.? As the love? Or do we ignite ourselves

in Lucifer, that is, in the possessive self-seeking, in the separative? This is the question that every human being faces and that nobody else than he himself can answer through his will.

If the answer is positive, the sixth spirit will become active in a powerful vibration of sound. This sixth spirit will eventually unfold the rebirth as a new nature, as a new creation – Böhme's 'new birth'. And this is the third world, the divine human state, the consciousness and the vehicle of Böhme's Realm of Joy. ∞



Johann Valentin Andreae at about 35 years old. In Mythologiae Christianae, Strasburg 1619

Johann Valentin Andreae
A New Brotherhood

I

Every person occasionally has a moment where he asks himself if there is a purpose to his life. Is there perhaps a plan, a line, that once having been plotted caused it to develop along that course, a plan that likely cannot be named, on which one cannot exactly put one's finger but which is still unmistakable? What the head considers and wants to execute has been inspired firstly in the heart, which follows the inclinations that are present in the person. 'These are the genes', as is said presently, formerly expressed as, 'It runs in the blood' or, 'The apple does not fall far from the tree'. Is this the plan? Or is there more behind it? It is a question that concerns many of us time and again.

Would it be possible that in a similar way, during a certain time period, there is 'something in the air'? Just think back to the sixties, when in California a real movement of 'love, peace, and happiness' started, and at the same time in Prague, a revolution broke out among the youth, which was called the 'Prague Spring'. At the same time, the German student Rudi Dutschke and in Paris, Daniel Cohn-Bendit incited their fellow students to radically change course. In the Netherlands, under the same wave and to the sound of the same music, the Provo movement arose, and one was extremely susceptible to 'flower power', 'happenings', and 'sit-ins'.

In the seventeenth century, a similar thing happened. It was at a different level, but at that time, it touched the people where they were most sensitive: in their religious life. Nowadays, some may have difficulty imagining this, but in that time period, religion was very important. It touched everybody; it moved people in their hearts and minds. In the Netherlands, for example, there were the Remonstrants and the

Contra-Remonstrants, the Arminians and the Gomarists, who could happily wring each other's necks. They harassed each other for decades on the question of whether 'salvation', the deliverance in the hereafter, was predestined or not. This was possible because people thought that the salvation of the soul was far more important than the relatively short lifespan (average 45-50 years) on earth. And mainly, because the leaders did not believe with the heart, but with the head. Then such things are important, just like numerous other small points of cleverness.

The same disheartened atmosphere corrupted the university in the south German town of Tübingen where we find Johann Valentin Andreae in the second decade of the seventeenth century. Born in 1586 and endowed with an inquiring mind and a free spirit, he quickly figured out what the general trend was: hairsplitting, hunting for official positions and the sale of these, narrow-minded people scoring off one another, who drove families to despair by firing the breadwinner on a whim because of a misunderstanding or a difference of opinion, and on top of that, threatening at the slightest opportunity with hell and damnation, as we have already seen. One does not feel the latter, one might think, but to a person of the seventeenth century, this was equal to standing outside the community: an unbearable existence within such a small community as the little town of Tübingen was. In spite of this, there were in that time people who carried a living faith in their hearts and those who with a clear insight saw a road before them that emanated from the heart and who did everything to explain this to their fellow citizens.

In that little town, Johann Valentin Andreae studied. In our time, we would call him a radical, a revolutionary, and at the same time, a humanist and an advocate of human rights. He would not be out of place in our time in Greenpeace, for example. But he would also encounter problems in our time. He was often indignant about many things and could put this on paper in unvarnished, humoristic sketches and biting commentaries with his sharp pen. It brought him several times on a collision course with the local authorities and his later superiors in the church.

His friends and acquaintances, however, enjoyed the enormous knowledge of Johann Valentin, who already at the age of twenty grad-

uated *extremissimo doctus* (exceptionally learned). They admired his great and gentle wisdom; he shone in mathematics but also in horse-back riding. Theological points of disagreement were less interesting to the young Andreae. Later on, yes, and he threw himself several times into the breach for thinkers who professed the Christian faith differently than prescribed by the orthodoxy. Thus, he wrote that the Anabaptists were good people but that they did 'not have a chance against the established powers' and that he 'would prefer to associate with the Waldensians and have life and doctrine in agreement with each other, than to proclaim the right belief with many books full of orthodoxy, while neglecting life's simple rule of love for one's neighbour'.

II

The Brotherhood

Andreae had learned and experienced this himself during the many times he visited his great friend and source of inspiration, Tobias Hess, and this is how he viewed education. He had known Hess already since 1607 and praised him for his 'excellent' mind.

It was no wonder that the young Johann Valentin admired Tobias Hess in this way. Hess was a marvellous scholar, an alchemist and physician, that is, a medical doctor in the ways of Paracelsus, and an even better theologian. On top of this, he was known for his gifted mechanical inventions, was extraordinarily tolerant and kind, and particularly well-versed in the Bible. What would have attracted the in his younger years somewhat rebellious Andreae even more was that Tobias Hess was embroiled in a lengthy conflict with the university of Tübingen, especially because he firmly believed in a 'new, golden era' and in a 'judgement' that would come in the year 1613 when the third era or period would dawn: that of the restoration of state and church. The first two periods were the one of the Old Testament, wherein the coming of Christ had been announced, and the one of the New Testament, wherein the Christ had actually lived among the people. In the third period then, the glorious age of God's people on earth would come.

Another friend of Johann Valentin was Wilhelm von der Wense, a nobleman from Lüneburg, who studied with him. Wilhelm came to know Andreae when the latter gave lessons in mathematics, and they stayed friends for the rest of their lives. Each time when Andreae appealed to him, he was ready to financially support one or another worthy initiative of Andreae. Still during the forties of the seventeenth century, long after the great rumour of the *Fama* of the Rosicrucians, this Wilhelm von der Wense urged Andreae to try one more time to form a circle of friends who would be able to steer the nation and the church from above, in order to turn back the decline in those times. It was also the young Wense who brought Andreae in contact with the third important man in the circle wherein the Rosicrucian manifestos originated. This was Christoph Besold, an excellent author and jurist. With the same Christoph Besold, Andreae had in his turn to appear before the tribunal of theologians of the university, who suspected the two friends to be followers of Schwenckfeld, Weigel, and Paracelsus, all three of whom were exemplary doer-philosophers, followers of Hermes and of the Hermetic principle, 'As above, so below'. The accusation was actually not so illogical (in the *Chymische Hochzeit*, Christian Rosenkreuz finds a maxim: *Hermes princeps*, Hermes is the first or the source), but it shows the theologians' paranoid fear of heresy.

Andreae and Besold stood in every way for tolerance and moderation in intellectual matters, but argued fiercely against the deterioration of morals, the loss of pure religion, and the nauseating corruption and lies in science and government. They declared their sympathy for free expression of opinion in many places. They wrote that thoughts are free and never to be restrained. This group, together with a few other friends, is nowadays called the Tübinger circle. They were seized by the idea of a new time. It was a sort of German spring that they envisioned, just like some five hundred kilometres further away, Jakob Böhme envisioned 'the time of the blooming lilies'. Their confidence in the church of Luther, which saw its centenary approaching, was greatly being undermined, and they wanted to forcefully restore the sincerity of a pure religiosity, paired with a morally unsullied, pious life. To serve this, a threefold basis was needed.

First of all, there was the Word, the Holy Scriptures: '[N]ot since the

beginning of the world has man been given a greater, more admirable or more beneficial work than the Holy Bible: Blessed is he who possesses it; more blessed is he who reads it; most blessed is he who becomes thoroughly acquainted with it; while he is most like unto God who obeys as well as understands it'. This they wrote in the tenth chapter of their *Confessio*.

Secondly, there were the *Four Books on True Christianity*, written by Johann Arndt. Arndt was a minister in Celle and wrote these four books, later supplemented with two more, in 1605-1610. They became unprecedentedly popular and went through more than eighty printings. The four books that made such an impression on the Tübinger circle of friends were: The Book of the Conscience, The Book of Life (Christ), The Book of the Inner Human Being, and fourthly, The Book of Nature.

The third side of this *trigonum igneum*, as Hess phrased this flaming triangle, was: the teachings of Paracelsus, which one could actually find almost to the letter in the fourth book of Arndt.

We must approach that special moment in history, the beginning of the seventeenth century, somewhat closer. The natural sciences had progressed with leaps and bounds. New ideas about the course of the sun, the stars, and the planets made the hearts of researchers beat faster, but at the same time, they felt ever more hemmed in by the narrow restraints that the churches put upon free and exploratory thought.

The friends of the Tübinger circle wanted to develop with an open mind the new insights of the sciences. But they also recognized the danger of a purely materialistic scientific development. Thinking should be free and unbridled, surely, but never without the Christ. For if both head and heart, through inner knowledge and through knowledge of nature, develop together, then unknown new possibilities would open up in the person – as microcosm and as personality. And in their eyes, this could powerfully and dramatically change the world. This they discussed many times; this was the milieu wherein the idea of the Rosicrucian Brotherhood originated, modelled around the life of a German knight, Christian Rosencreutz, of an impoverished noble lineage.

We might just as well write, modelled after the appearance, the life, and the work of Paracelsus. For he was the great example, the Christian Hercules, who was the centre of their musings and who united everything in him that was holy to them: scientific knowledge, applied medicine, combating injustice, in all matters considering Christ central, complete knowledge of the essence of the two nature orders, and through alchemy proving the transformation of the lower human being into the higher one. These were the same characteristics, moreover, that the friends also encountered in their slightly older friend Tobias Hess.

If we now take another look at our time, it is perhaps at first glance remarkable that at the basis of the work of soul liberation for the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries lie a number of books from the seventeenth century. Especially three texts, which are called the manifestos of the Rosicrucians, have become known. They are fairytale-like, spiritual, and dynamic, and at the same time magical and inspiring. They appeared very shortly after each other: in 1614, 1615, and 1616.

Johann Andreae had just turned thirty when the last volume appeared, a novella named *Die Chymische Hochzeit Christiani Rosencreutz anno 1459*, in English known as *The Alchemical Wedding of Christian Rosycross*. This Christian Rosycross had been introduced in the first manifesto, *The Call (or Fame) of the Brotherhood of the Rosycross*, as the founder of the order. In the second manifesto, the *Confessio* or *The Confession of the Brotherhood of the Rosycross*, the principles of the order were explained. These books created a furore, and they were also immediately translated: Already in 1615, the year of the publication of the *Confessio*, its translation appeared in Holland, published at the same time with a Dutch *Fama (The Call)*.

The manuscripts of these writings and a few copies of them circulated already in the years before 1614, limited to a small circle of acquaintances and kindred spirits. This controlled circulation certainly had been the intention of the authors as well. Their call was directed towards 'the rulers, governments and learned men of Europe'; in a word, to those of whom one could expect that they were able to read the 'character of nature' and understand the 'signs of the times' and thus, in service of a higher ideal, would like to and also would be able to lighten the human lot.

But because of an enthusiast, who took off with a copy and printed this as a book, this plan was thwarted, with all the ensuing consequences. Andrae never wished for fame or a large association. He and both of his friends and sources of inspiration envisioned a change, a 'great revolution' that would make understanding in the head possible and that would be able to open the hearts for a liberating Christianity. In this manner, each person could bring about his own happiness, his own salvation as one said at that time, and that of others as well. Andrae, obviously an excellent authority on the Bible, knew the range of the quote, 'Work for your own salvation in fear and trembling'. He thought that for the improvement of the human lot and for a correct understanding thereof, in the first place, a circle of incorruptible leading personalities and of sound scholars would have to be formed.

All three books of the new brotherhood were published anonymously, but from the day after the first publication, especially Andrae had to exonerate himself, make up excuses, and deny that he had anything to do with the Rosycross. His position as minister made it unthinkable that he would be associated with this movement, which already very quickly was rumoured to be 'occult' and 'nebulous'.

One has to realize that in those days, it was quite usual to be quickly labeled. One could be called an Anabaptist, a Zwinglian, a Paracelsian, a Calvinist, a prophet, a false prophet if you went too far, a follower of Böhme, a chiliast, and still much else, all belonging to the nebulous region or the sphere of occult matters. It did not even depend on what you wrote; what you were reading could be enough. On top of that, you had to be lucky enough not to be a woman, otherwise you might be accused of witchcraft.

Johann Valentin had a double handicap. He also happened to be the grandson of the great Jakob Andrae, Luther's friend. This had been the man who spread Luther's new, reformed Christian religion in the greater Germany of the sixteenth century and put it in a Formula of Concord, a kind of charter that around 9000 church communities underwrote. In 1554, he was awarded a 'hereditary family crest'. The crest is – very appropriately – formed by a Saint Andrew's cross (an X), with four roses in four fields, a rose in each field.

With such a family crest, a cross with four roses, it would of course

be quite a job to maintain that one had nothing to do with the ‘Rosicrucians’. Especially if one considers that the description of the protagonist in the *Alchemical Wedding*, Christian Rosycross, almost literally points to this family crest. When the latter set out on his way to the royal wedding (to which he was invited by letter), he had girded his loins with a sash and draped it crosswise over his shoulders, and he wore four roses on his hat. Besides, the Andreaes’ family crest points directly to Luther’s own crest, which shows a cross in a heart, surrounded by a rose with five petals. With it belongs a motto, ‘Des Christen Herz auf Rosen geht, wenn’s mitten unterm Kreuze steht’ (The heart of a Christian walks on roses, if it stands under the cross). Luther had this crest reproduced at the end of most of his publications.

Modern researchers like Martin Bech and Carlos Gilly have demonstrated irrefutably that the author of the *Call* and *The Confession of the Brotherhood of the Rosycross* and *The Alchemical Wedding of Christian Rosycross* certainly had been Johann Valentin Andreae, possibly together with some friends. This had then been generally known in Calw and Tübingen but never been proven.

Johann Andreae was just thirty years old, as we mentioned earlier, when *The Alchemical Wedding* appeared and at that age, still had most of his life ahead of him. If we take into consideration that all three works had been written already some time earlier (it is thought around 1605-1610), it becomes easy to imagine that the young minister was still full of ideas. For certainly, a genius of Valentin Andreae’s calibre would still not be spent for a long time with just the three manifestos. Also, the most vehement criticism turned out to not being able to break him. On the contrary, with much dynamism, he resumed his efforts to found a brotherhood-in-Christ, in spite of the sabotage he experienced at his attempts. The realisation of his ideals did not go easily, however, and Andreae turned out to have been a typical worker for the future. This is expressed poignantly in a lament during a look back on his life, ‘My entire life I have had to bear more than my shoulders were able to carry’. With these words, did he not lay bare the signature of a worker in the service of humanity? One can well imagine the lament: The scope of the work is so large that it can barely be overseen; the quantity of work is so great that, no matter how much one accomplishes, it seems that often one has not even made a dent.

What does a worker in the service of humanity actually do? In fact, he does not do anything else than introduce liberating, spiritual values, *which are of the Gnosis*, into the human circumstances of a certain moment through the deeds in his own life. How does he do this? He uses the magic of the four active roses that adorn the cross. In Andreae's own ideas, this consists of:

- firstly, the magic of the indissoluble love for the Divine, which wants to break through in every human being;
- secondly, steadfast loyalty towards a task once it has been accepted;
- thirdly, the handling of the magic of friendship as the basis for getting along with everybody; and Andreae added
- fourthly, conveying God's word unadulterated to the youth. God's word: In the present time, we would say, conveying and explaining unadulterated in transparent clarity the universal teachings.

III

Young People

With regard to the last point, the efforts Andreae went through to give youth a chance for a better future were enormous. 'A true educator can never be somebody who failed somewhere else and for that reason is now teaching', as he said, pointing to a practise that was quite common in those days.

No, such a person needs to be well-balanced and radiate four virtues: dignity, sincerity, diligence, and magnanimity. A good teacher leads; a bad one drags. The first one enlightens, and the second one darkens. The first one educates, while the latter causes confusion. The first one steers; the latter drives. One inspires; the other stifles. One creates joy; the other torments. One builds; the other destroys. In short, if the teacher himself is not a book, yes, a walking library and a walking museum, and thereby an ornament for the fatherland and the church, then he is not fit for our purpose.

For Andreae, the question here was the real understanding of what gets passed on to the children. In his view, it is of the greatest impor-

tance that in the so receptive years of youth, a natural piety is learned as a kind of natural respect for the higher. At the same time, a child should not be damaged inwardly but should stay receptive and be responsibly supported through the living example and manner of adults with a greater knowledge. He wrote:

For urging on to work, giving and imprinting rules and regulations, dictating, anyone can do these, but indicating the main things, supporting efforts, generating diligence, teaching the correct use of resources, being an example, and finally relating everything to Christ, these are lacking, and this is the Christian work that cannot be paid with any of the treasures of the earth.

According to him, children need to receive an education from the age of seven. In a time when the position of women was pitiful, he took up the cudgels for equal opportunity: 'I also do not know why this sex, which is by nature not less inquisitive, is denied an education in our times'. Boys and girls are equal, for 'together they form the core of the future salvation'. And in his ideal state, Christianopolis, all positions can also be filled by women. He followed this line of thinking in his booklet *Christianopolis (Reipublicae Christianopolitanae Descriptio*, 1619) quite far. Look, he explained, the essence of the human being is arranged in such a way that in the end, he should leave the earthly behind. For the earthly, the world, is not the reality. A person has to search for the reality of the Good, the True, and the Beautiful within himself. Whoever seeks the outer ends up betrayed, because *being in the world* obstructs pure perception.

Especially the youthful inhabitants of Christianopolis get the chance to witness the pure idea within themselves, independent of the confusion of the world, and this happens the more successfully, the more the light of the soul increases in them. It is of great importance that children, besides all other qualities that can and have to be learned, get to know this basic thought at a young age. He posed it thus:

For children are more sensitive than hardened adults when we consider the Kingdom. Does not the Bible already say, Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of

God belongs? Just like Christ can again become the centre in the middle of the human being in order to bring the human being home again, so the new city of Christianopolis is constructed perfectly symmetrically around the Temple of Christ.

And he explained further:

Therefore, a person who leaves nature behind and submits himself to the spirit liberated thereby will stand fast in the one true and good God. He will be unspeakably joyful and experience how the whole world is firmly based in its centre, and this not under a clouded or coloured heaven, but in crystalline clarity. Thus, in highest ecstasy, he will discover the first lines of art, the first beginning of things.

Such a deep insight into the difficult art of education and the repeated reference to the higher life of the soul as inspiration for a constructive life stood in sharp contrast with an era that had the mouth full of orthodox teachings but had already shown on various fronts that it hardly valued Andreae's genius.

Nowadays, there are only a handful of people who recognise of what fundamental importance Andreae's thoughts have been in regard to working with and for youth. As innovator and thinker of the educational system that has proven its validity up into our time, it is mostly Jan Amos Komenský (Comenius) who gets all the praise. But his ideas on upbringing and education came directly from Andreae, and Comenius never claimed otherwise. His *Orbis Pictus* (The World in Pictures), which was used for over a century, represents a linguistic method where the student learns the name of an object in a different language through a picture. Already close to fifty years earlier, Andreae had used the same manner of visual education in teaching mathematics. One learns easier what one sees than what one hears. At any rate, when it is in Latin!

Yet for Andreae, the purpose of education was never to obtain socially balanced and reasonably educated adults that society could put to use. In the very first place came the inner kingdom, God-in-the-human-being, or, in the words of the *Fama*, the Golden Age.

IV

A New Hope

Johann Valentin Andreae was a minister and spoke from the pulpit. One could say that being a minister is not such a dynamic profession. However, one author says about him that he stepped onto the pulpit with a sword under his coat at times when soldiers threatened to invade the church: The service had to take place! For Andreae possessed an ideal. The ideal that he already had carved out in visionary beauty in the three books of the Rosicrucians.

From all this, his ideal speaks of hope for a new time carried on a wave of love. It radiates from every paragraph of the *Fama* and of the *Confessio*. But it is also evident from such a simple thing as the remarkable picture at the end of the *Chymische Hochzeit*. One sees an anchor, a serpent or dolphin, and a dove. *Spes simplex* is written there, 'our only hope', and *Prudentia firma*, 'determined but with wisdom'. It is a figure that weaves two ancient symbols together. On the one hand, it refers back to the printer's mark of Andrea Alciati, a publisher in Milan in the sixteenth century, and it was also already known by the first Christians. A text below says, *Festina lente*, 'Hurry slowly' or in another interpretation, 'Be slow in a conflict (the stable anchor) and fast as a dolphin in being watchful and careful'. During the Middle Ages, it was thought to be a reproduction of Augustine's motto, *Semper festina tarde* ('Always hurry slowly'). On the other hand, the anchor is also seen together with the dove. With this, hope is portrayed in a double manner. The dove returned a small olive branch to Noah's ark after the Flood, making the dove a symbol of hope besides the anchor, which is a symbol of hope as well. At the same time, the dove is a symbol for innocence and humility, for only with these characteristics could the new land be entered after the Flood. Thus, the dove has also been seen as a symbol for the soul. Another reason for this is that the dove flees from its attackers in the direction of the sun (the spirit) by which these pursuers get blinded and have to let the dove go. In other words, the era of hope has dawned!

Whoever wanted to partake in this hope and wished to belong to the brotherhood was asked to make himself known, preferably in printed form, then one would hear more from the Rosicrucians, as was stated

at the end of their first manifesto. Hundreds and hundreds of answers came in reaction to the *Fama*, *The Call of the Brotherhood of the Rosycross*, in the years after 1614.

At present, more than two thousand printed reactions are known, mainly of proponents, but also of numerous opponents. Every dreamer of those days seized upon the *Fama* to attach his own ideas to it. Opponents branded the young brotherhood as devil worshippers, magicians, and fornicators, to use a somewhat decent expression. But hope and enthusiasm definitely speak out of one of the five or six Dutch responses that are known. For example, Michel le Blon let his reply be published simultaneously in Amsterdam and Frankfurt. He wrote that he had first read the Dutch translation after which he as quickly as possible ordered the German original publication. He sent his reply with some merchants who were on their way to Frankfurt. Had he had time, he wrote, he would have personally brought the reply to Germany.

In 1620, the flow of reactions gradually stopped, among other reasons because of the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War. But with that, Andreae's task did not stop, nor did his vision. Until the final part of his life, he strove for a similar brotherhood, a group of striving friends who wanted to go into action for others and wished to place themselves 'at the foot of the cross where it smells of roses', as he expressed it at that time. Nevertheless, he understood that working further with the lofty idea of the Rosycross, which through his genius and talent as author became public for the first time in history, was impossible for the time being.

There is a saying, 'The time is not ripe for it yet!' Johann Valentin Andreae had to experience to the full what this expression means and likewise what it means to step forward with the power of the Rosycross. Envy, opposition, disgusting personal attacks, and the near impossibility to function socially were the results. Therefore, he looked for another way. Already in a previous year, in 1617, he had found a different form. He would no longer stray outside the Lutheran Church with an individual, new religious direction that reached far beyond the common ecclesiastic understanding of 'paradise', 'happiness' and 'human dignity'. No, his reply was a small book called *Invitation by the Brotherhood of Christ to Candidates for the Sublime*

Love, published by Zetzner in Strasburg, actually the same publisher as for the *Alchemical Wedding*.

Try to distance yourself from the commotion and the jumble of opinions about the brotherhood of Christian Rosycross. Rather join together in a group that actually is able to bring the time of a happier humanity closer through their own effort.

This was the tenor of Andreae's initiatives until his old age. With the help of this new invitation, which appealed to a tight band of friends who together wanted to give their all for the realisation of a 'Christian life', one would return to simplicity and come to introspection. The excess of luxury had to be put aside, and brotherly love and prayer would bring them still closer to each other and lead them to the soul life.

From the year 1619 stems the already mentioned booklet *Reipublicae Christianopolitanae Descriptio*. Already two years earlier, in 1617, in the middle of the greatest rumours about the Rosicrucians, Andreae had written this description of an ideal state, which however, as he said, can hardly be realised on earth and also should not be understood on an earthly level. Andreae openly dedicated this book to Johann Arndt, whom we viewed earlier as a co-inspirer of the Rosicrucians.

The atmosphere is different than in the Rosicrucian manifestos, the intention the same. We do not find any mythology in these invitations, no Lady Alchymia or beautiful water nymphs who sing an ode to love. Christian Rosycross is not mentioned anymore, but we find also here the latter's motto from his grave: *Jesu mihi omnia*, Jesus is everything to me. The longing for a golden age, a new life atmosphere, has been put in the background while the fullest attention has been directed exactly to the realization thereof, to the inner possibilities of a striving person.

Once again, just like the *Fama*, this text is also directed toward a select company from among his friends and to bonafide scientists. Two small books by him from 1620 show the same picture: *Christianae societatis idea* (*Picture of a Christian Society*) and *Christiani amoris dextera porrecta* (*The Extended Hand of Christian Love*). How An-

dreae envisioned this in practise is clearly shown by a list of 24 of the most dignified persons who were to be invited for this, among them Arndt, Hess, Besold, and of course his friend Wense. Also the Dutchman Joachim van Wickefort, whose family had done much for the build-up of the Lutheran community in Amsterdam, was included in it. The accent of these 'invitations' was on doing what is possible. For writing is easy; carrying out the written word in practise adds a totally different dimension.

Let us take another look at the little village of Calw, in southern Germany, at the beginning of the seventeenth century. It was actually a small town, and in 1620, it was reasonably thriving. It counted no more than 2500 souls, divided among close to 400 families. The prosperity was owed to a blossoming trade in wool, and like a magnet, this prosperity attracted people from the surrounding area. But far from everyone was able to profit from the favourable circumstances. The poor lived in hovels, and the hygienic conditions were more than pathetic. In the year 1620, when almost all the states in Germany were at war and the rumour about the Rosicrucians had disappeared into the background, Andreae stepped forward as superintendent, a title for the chief minister in Calw.

Although Johann Valentin Andreae was not a wealthy man (and travelling was expensive), he nevertheless crossed his native land's borders several times. Mostly, he accompanied different trade delegations who travelled to faraway towns: Venice, Rome, Padua, Paris, Salzburg, Munich, Nuremberg, Geneva. These were opportunities where Andreae could extend his contacts. Many friendships that he made were begun during these travels, friendships that he maintained with a striking diligence by an intensive correspondence. They turned out to be very useful when he took up his position in Calw. For already during one of his travels, Johann Valentin had convinced a group of wool-traders of the necessity of collecting funds in order to establish a society for the poorest. The foundation of the so-called *Färberstift* (named after the wool-dyers who donated the most money) was one of the first great activities Andreae undertook in Calw. Up to the 1920's, this organisation was able to do its charitable work. It was not just a hospital where the financially weak and handicapped were

nursed, but it also included a municipal library. At the same time, poor students were given financial assistance. With a great business sense and diligence, Andreae succeeded in expanding it so that during the entire Thirty Years' War (which had just broken out), the organisation supported not only the poor within the town but also many foreigners. Within five years, thousands of people (he himself spoke of more than a hundred thousand) received help and assistance from this organisation! Attracted by the relative prosperity of the town, hundreds of hungry rural people migrated to within the walls of the little town, and Calw became overpopulated. The rents rose; the squalid living conditions and poverty in general increased.

In 1634, the little town where he was minister came face to face with the armies of General von Werth of Bavaria. After the defeat of the Swedish armies at Norderstedt, who had been fighting for the freedom of the Protestants, the Bavarian armies had a free hand. Calw was plundered and torched on four sides, while the soldiers guarded the gates and exits watching that nobody could escape the flames, and all of this happened in the wake of the great war between the Habsburgs and the Protestants. With great sorrow, Andreae had to watch how the Catholic profiteers once more occupied the monasteries and churches that had been handed over to the German-speaking church of Luther half a century earlier with the help of his grandfather. Since the Battle of White Mountain near Prague (1620), these armies had already moved quite some time through the German lands murdering and looting, if they were not busy with regular battles. Hunted by the Bavarian soldiers, Andreae and his family members together with other families from Calw wandered for days and nights through the surroundings, through the hills and forests, without food, without shelter. With him were a host of hungry men, women, and children who were trying to flee the bloodthirsty soldiers. For General von Werth was angry because Calw had not allowed his armies quickly enough inside the gates, and he had sent his men out to murder any citizens of Calw who might be still alive after the looting.

In this misery, also the Andreae family was not spared. Two times already, they had experienced a burning of the town. In both cases, Johann Valentin's beloved library had gone up in flames. In 1634, he

again lost everything, including a collection of paintings, among them *Mary* by Albrecht Dürer ('a present so beautiful that you cannot pay for it in gold', as he later wrote of it) and *Conversion of Paul* by Hans Holbein. Other more technical instruments and artefacts also went up in flames. Moreover, Agnes and Johann Valentin lost several children during these episodes; in the end, only three of their nine children would survive.

When General von Werth and his mercenaries moved on because there was nothing left to get, Andreae once more played an important role in the reconstruction of Calw, and he exercised a large influence on the refurnishing of the church in his town and on the whole state. He managed to establish a compulsory school attendance rule for all children, and he received substantial sums of money from his friends to give relief and education to the poorest, orphaned children. Under extreme difficulties, he used this money, adding the remnants of his family's capital to it and arranging it so that in the end, eighty orphans could be taken care of. He even built a house next to his own, in order to be able to take care of these children. In a short time, order had been re-established in Calw while the rest of the country was still in chaos.

Never hold on to the past; always start anew to bring the light into the circumstances of the moment, however dismal these may seem to be. Thus, Andreae proved by a practical attitude of life what he meant by 'the Christianity of the deed'. He was a worker, indeed. 'Instead of pretend and twaddle Christians, we have to become sincere, true, living, and effective Christians.' This sentence, which had already been incorporated in the founding statutes of the *Färberstift*, was also his motto in this difficult period.

Yet also here, his goal in life lay elsewhere. Like no other, he knew that whoever lived in poverty would not easily take the opportunity to direct his attention toward his inner, spiritual life. To even begin with this, the basic prerequisites are cleanliness and the absence of bodily discomfort and hunger. It is not the case that through this kind of suffering, one can build a strong character and a soul body. How could this happen? Exactly these have to be approached with care and must be 'constructed' in stillness and purity.

Andreae did not tire explaining, ‘One who knows the microcosm (the small world) knows the macrocosm and thus can grow beyond it’. One does not learn this in hunger and misery; then the only thing one hears is the cry of the natural human life suffering deprivation. Andreae wrote in *Reipublicae Christianopolitanae Descriptio*:

We strive [...] to provide a quiet shrine for the Trinity, a pure dwelling place for our neighbor, breathing-space for all creatures, to devote our time only to the Divine Word. [...] We strive to propagate the light of truth, the purity of conscience, the integrity of bearing testimony freely and correctly, to reverence the presence of God at every time and place.

V

The End of His Life

Andreae was rather weak in body and had a hard time tolerating cold, as he himself said. Until 1645, he was not often sick, which he attributed to moderation and physical exercise (he rode horses all his life). In spite of his kindness, he must have been somewhat serious in his facial expression, so that even his own children, however lovingly he treated them, only ever approached him with a certain respect. It is also said that the children in the streets ran toward him and kissed his hands, so fond were they of him for what he was doing and had done for them.

After 1645, his health became seriously impaired. This was not caused by the many physical discomforts he had been through. It was the bitterness over his experience that whatever he tried, his ideal of the world and his surroundings did not seem to have gotten any closer at all. What hurt him the most was that his initiatives for the improvement of the inner Christian life, customs, and morality of both the believers and the ministers were delayed, obstructed, and finally rejected by the superiors of the church to whom he remained loyal until his last breath. Beside this, there was another blow, with which he could only deal with great difficulty: His friend from the start of it all, the man who had formed him and who together with him had spent days and nights thinking about the improvement of the world, Christoph Besold, had become a Catholic in 1637. Johann

Valentin relativised this conversion by saying that Besold inwardly never really was of one mind, because through his great amount of reading, everything had become a muddle to him. But this was not all: This excellent jurist, after Hugo de Groot the most impressive of Protestant Europe of that time, had collaborated with all his sagacity in the attempt to betray and relay to the Catholics all that the Lutheran church possessed, a betrayal that touched Andreae to the depths of his soul.

These were matters that did manage to seriously weaken the fire so that we can really understand why he sighed several times, 'My entire life I have had to bear more weight than I was able to carry; I no longer can.' Yet his other old friend, Wilhelm von der Wense, could still make the fire flare up when in 1642, he persuaded Andreae to launch yet one more time an initiative for a brotherhood-in-Christ that aimed to unite all the wise people from all of Germany into a group. The purpose was to get an exchange of thoughts going in friendship in order to further the future and happiness of humanity. Until the final years of his life, Andreae tried to realize his vision and to get others interested in it. The exchange of letters between him and Duke August von Anhalt from Wolfenbüttel, which were the joy of the last years of his life, bears witness to that. It is a picture with a magnetic attraction that coloured his whole life and that had never left him during his entire life. This hope remained unfulfilled; in spite of the enormous amount of work that this worker of the spirit had done, the foundation of a brotherhood-in-Christ, which he envisioned spiritually, was not granted to him during his lifetime.

In 1656 Andreae died. During his last years, it had become more and more difficult for him to eat; the least amount of food caused him great pains. However, in the last few days of his life, an indescribable calm and mildness came over him, a chronicler wrote. All earthly concerns and all slander meted out to him slid off of him. He was completely happy. On the eve of his death, he repeated once more the formulas of his church, and after he dictated a final letter to his friend and protector August von Anhalt, he had only strength left to write two letters of his name.

VI

Love

The key concept of all works of Johann Valentin Andreae has been the concept 'love'. Earlier, we quoted:

He will be unspeakably joyful and experience how the whole world is firmly based in its centre, and this not under a clouded or coloured heaven, but in crystalline clarity. Thus, in highest ecstasy, he will discover the first lines of art, the first beginning of things.

This starting point is love, an all-encompassing love for creation, for the human being as the miracle of creation, for the inner Christ. In his many books, he has confronted the reader with this uncountable times. The profound poem about love found at the beginning of the fifth day of the *Alchemical Wedding* is a good example of his way of thinking. Without love, nothing exists that makes life's troubles worthwhile. Herein Andreae was unique at the beginning of the seventeenth century, just as Böhme also was unique. In the church of that time, the word 'love' was almost a curse; it was used so sparingly. A scholar once researched that in 357 pages of religious text from that time, in approximately 120,000 words, the word 'love' appears exactly seven times. Words like revenge, penance, jealousy, hell, devil, and even more of that ilk, however, appear innumerable times.

Then one fares a whole lot better with the manifestos of the Rosicrucians according to the scholar, Paul A. Ladame. Already in the first sentence, Andreae has sent his brotherly love to his readers. To understand the message of the writings of the Rosicrucians, he writes, the concept 'love' is the key. The immense impulse of Andreae, inspired by the Christ, and with the motto *Jesu mihi omnia*, resounds and makes itself felt, until today. ↪



Portrait of Robert Fludd.

CHAPTER 16

Robert Fludd

'I doe yet flÿ on mine owne wings'

In every form of scientific study, the human being does maintain a duty not to forget why he was placed in the world, what he owes to the here and now and presently to eternity, what constitutes nourishment for his soul and where the borders lie for his hardly to be satisfied spirit, of what God's contact with human beings consists. And moreover, let him not be found as one to whom the divine fatherland is nothing of importance.

(Johann Valentin Andreae, *The Immortality of Tobias Hess, a Peerless Man*)

I

The person who devotes an entire day to an Englishman from the 17th century, to Robertus Fluctibus, Robert Fludd, who lived from 1574 to 1637 and who is rather unknown, must have good reasons to do that. It is not so much his excellent learning or his many publications that are of great importance. Often he is seen as a belated Renaissance philosopher, a bit out of touch with his times, while conversely, he tried to prove hermetic ideas with the most up-to-date scientific methods. With that, he is placed as someone who did not yet regard the new times of the 'only-believe-what-you-can-see science', empirical science, as his own. On the contrary, he believed only in what he saw, what he experienced, what he really knew. What a visionary! For this reason, we appreciate him differently, and a rehabilitation is in order. Precisely in the concept 'hermetic' and in a broader context 'Renaissance' lies this justification. We will need to make a small detour of about a century and a half in order to understand the connection from which this enthusiastic and pure man Fludd acted and wrote.

The point of departure is 1461, when Cosimo de' Medici was handed by a monk from Macedonia a manuscript, a copy of a text of one of the most profound philosophers from antiquity. It was a document from the eleventh century, in the handwriting of a monk from a monastery like one on Mount Athos, and it concerned a text of Hermes, the Thrice Great One, who was at that time thought to be a contemporary of Moses and perhaps even his teacher.

What an upheaval this caused in the circle of friends that Cosimo, proceeding from an ideal, had gathered around him! People like Pico della Mirandola, Pollaiuolo, Bembo, a group of prominent artists, scholars, poets, printers, and theologians. It was a circle, an academy modeled after Plato's academy, friends who gathered often on the estate of Marsilio Ficino and who all experienced the spring of the *Uomo Universale* i.e. not the human being of the Renaissance, but the spiritual being, the one who clearly appears in the manuscripts of Hermes. This *uomo universale*, a name later applied to the much talented man-of-the-world who is interested in everything, who bears knowledge of all things, was depicted totally differently in the Renaissance. The friends of the *Accademia* envisioned the spiritual being, the human being as microcosm who is an exact replica of and therefore equal to the cosmos, the solar macrocosm, the solar universe, hence *universale*.

In the spirit of the *Accademia*, this universal being was kindled, and participants of the academy searched for its qualities with all their thirst of learning, their being, their soul. It is known that their versatility was so great that for centuries, Europe has milked their inheritance and has undergone their influence. In that spiritual, central inspiration, they found their inner connection. On the one side, they saw the human being as a microcosm, a spiritual being. Aside from this, the human being has a soul, a soul-figure, and a body, a composite form that in the end disintegrates. The consciousness is the force that determines to which of these two the human being will belong.

Just like the sun was the joy of the day in the eyes of the 15th century, they perceived in Christ the centre, the highest aspect of love in the human being, the point of concentration. It was a point of contemplation within that small group of friends of the *Accademia* who truly picked up an impulse. For Christ is not only the great master of love;

to them he also formed the substance, the essence, of the domain of the soul. 'Up here is the domain of peace, righteousness, joy, wisdom, learning.' Not the dark earth, with its laborious progress, but the bright sunny world of Christ – the *empyrean* as Fludd called this in hermetic tradition – is the true destination of the human being.

Therefore, their basic assumption was, Let us make the laws of the universe known and apply them on the earth, to the people, in the first place to ourselves, by banishing the lower aspects and at the same time by applying the universal, spiritual basis. Let us follow these laws of harmony and connection, fulfill them, and make them known to all persons of learning, of any excellence, and to those of whom we may expect that they have good intentions for mankind. Let us convey the harmony of proportions in all aspects of our social occupation, implement the golden section in architecture, define the scientific background of the art of painting. In the theoretical work of architects like Palladio and da Vinci and others, in the work of artists like Botticelli and Bembo, let the sound of harmony reverberate as the music of our time and give voice to the joy of our soul in poetry and song.

The young and exceptional Count Giovanni Pico della Mirandola baffled friends and many enemies with his effort to build a bridge between Kabbala, the hidden Jewish wisdom, Islamic learning, and the thinking of true Christianity. All religions and all sciences had universality in them, as he put it. He envisioned one great connection of people who were not occupied with the differences, but with the possible mutual harmony of all these potentially liberating movements that humanity has produced, leading to liberation from the disgrace of ignorance not only of the earthly laws, but especially ignorance of the brilliant aim of the original, universal human being, who after all goes beyond all bounds and all limitations as well.

The group of friends to whom Pico belonged worked straight through the church, alongside the church, in the church, and against the church where necessary; it mattered not one bit to them. After the example of Marsilio's academy, many academies formed, first in the city states of Italy, later in many places in Europe. Precursors of the sensational Brotherhood of the Rosycross? We shall see.

The 'free spiritual being of the microcosm' reverberated as an impulse from Florence through Europe but was extinguished in the diffi-

cult political circumstances of the Italy of the 16th century. Albrecht Dürer was one of the northerners who picked up on it, Erasmus and Holbein somewhat later, and Thomas More in England. In Basle, Paracelsus was the northern Renaissance incarnate, a physician and theologian who brought the purest of all, the divergent Rosicrucian Christianity before there even was talk of a classical Brotherhood of the Rosycross. In the Netherlands, there was the House of Love (Huis der Liefde) with a similar train of thought; in England, the 'Family of Love'. Giordano Bruno went through Europe like a comet with his adage of the infinite universe that finds its midpoint in the human being, in each human being to be exact. One speaks of a northern Renaissance; one speaks of the upcoming humanism, but even so, it was one and the same spirit and one and the same longing for a new kind of society and a new sort of higher human inspiration that we see making itself felt. The concern of the real workers was always the Human Being with capital letters. But by the year 1600, when Bruno was burnt, these brilliant torchbearers with a working soul-activity and universal wisdom had also disappeared.

Some years later in Prague, Rudolf II created at his court a 'Kunst-kammer', a room of art that was supposed to be an outer reflection of the concept of the microcosm. He was advised in this among others by his personal physician, Michael Maier, a friend of Fludd. If Rudolf's attempt to pronounce his experience was authentic and powerful, after his death, Protestants and Catholics fought like dogs, thirty years long, for the inheritance and fragments of his realm. Many studies exist that have researched in detail how the 'Kunst-kammer' was organised, but the *microcosmic concept* was even so hardly understood. We are dealing here with the hermetic idea of the universal human being, the Being of Magnanimity! 'Hermes is the Source' relates both to the individual human being and the collective one, and to the great spiritual upheaval and movement of that time in Europe. Those who do not possess the key or do not want it will not fully understand the two centuries that we are dealing with in this chapter.

Now let us direct ourselves to a small town in Germany, which in connection with this also needs our attention. Around that time – the first ten years of the 17th century – Tobias Hess lived in Tübingen.

In those days, he was close to forty years old, and all the threads of which we have just spoken reconnect in him anew, as it were. Tobias Hess had a never failing absolute visual memory: He recited effortlessly each requested passage from the Bible in German and in Latin. In a manner of speaking, he carried a living concordance of the Holy Word inside himself. He possessed the wisdom of pure justice, the humanity of Erasmus, the mathematical knowledge of Maestlin, the universal meekness of Ficino, and the classical medicine of Galenus, as well as the more modern alchemical medicine of Paracelsus, and besides all these, the patience and the compassion of his greatest teacher: the Christ. We encounter again the hermetic knowledge of the two previous centuries, concentrated as though through a magnifying glass, a burning-glass, in this man. Around him was also a circle. Its members? Consider Wilhelm von der Wense, the jurist Christopher Besold, and others like Abraham Hölzl, the already mentioned mathematician Maestlin (instructor of Kepler), figures like Tobias Adami and Wilhelm Bidenbach, the translator of Boccacini's *General Reformation of the Whole Wide World*, which preceded the *Fama*. And especially think of Johann Valentin Andreae, who took an important share of the Rosicrucian manifestos on his shoulder.

They were friends, all of them students at the University of Tübingen, and they came and went freely at the welcoming and creative home of Tobias Hess. For in that home, all recognised knowledge flowed into a synthesis, united into something that was more beautiful than the sum of the individual pieces. It literally blossomed, like a flower, a rose. They were animated; they inspired each other enthusiastically for the universal, Hermetic-Christian body of thought. Andreae was from the outset filled with the idea of assembling a group of excellent people who would promote science, morality, and pure, applied Christianity. When writing about that period and Tobias Hess, Andreae sighed,

'Let us follow our own rules under Christ, in these licentious times. Let us in virtuousness be separate, amidst such rubbish of riff-raff. Let us be visionaries on the subject of the higher, in these materialistic times. Let us love just like Him, and after casting down the adornments of titles and the pride of honorary posts. Let us call each other 'brothers' (are you

laughing, Satan?). Let us together take the oath of service to Christ, to scorn the world, and let us register as inhabitants, not of the realm of Utopia, but of that of the Christ, even if that has been nearly invisible throughout the age of the world. Thus we have lived. God is our witness that our life was filled with simplicity, innocence, and good intentions. Might I hope to gain Him as a friend with such behaviour, then all of the world's gold could be stolen from me.'

This was the atmosphere of the fiery glow, of the concentrated solar force, under which between 1605 and 1611 the manifestos of the Rosicrucian Brotherhood came to light. There Christianity, science, and hermetic philosophy were reborn like in an alchemical wedding, after which a shockwave of hope, of light, but also of upheaval engulfed Europe.

The idea that the human being is a microcosm that belongs to 'the other, the unknown half of the world' (*Fama*) – meant here is the sun-universe of the Christ – and the idea that there is hope for a damaged humanity did cause the hearts of many thousands of Europeans to beat faster with joy. Indeed, the Brotherhood received many hundreds of replies to its request to make known possible interest and well-disposition in print. However, the early death of Hess in 1614 and the enormous opposition of scholars, incited by church and state, made sure that an organised new liberating work was out of the question. Whereas it is exactly the recovery of humanity to which the three manifestos have appealed, and of course, this has formed the goal of the spiritual impulse that has been the driving force behind it.

This was precisely the spiritual atmosphere around Robert Fludd. It is not that he came in touch through the manifestos with the hermetic way of thinking of the Renaissance. He already had a thorough command of this; at that time, he was more than saturated with it. '*But have sored, and doe yet fly on mine owne wings*' (I have plodded and yet do fly on my own wings), he wrote in his *Declaratio Brevis* of 1620, when he was reproached that the 'Brothers of the Rosy Cross' had helped him with his great works concerning the macrocosm and the microcosm. But Fludd recognised the new impulse; he experienced the greatness of the idea. He caught the impulse, just like his close friend Michael Maier, also perhaps in a somewhat different way but

just as importantly, like Amos Comenius. Perhaps these were not seekers like us, but very learned spirits, workers who recognised the similarity to the source of their own work in the impulse going out from the Rosicrucian Brotherhood. Already in 1616, Fludd published in Leiden not only one answer, but actually five.

If we view Hess, together with his young friends Andreae and Besold, as the first circle, as the focus of the new impulse of the hermetic gnosis in Europe, then people like Comenius, Maier, and Robert Fludd formed a second circle of people who caught this light and spread it over Europe. They explained it; they looked for its relevance in their time; they gave it depth in their time, exactly as the Lectorium Rosicrucianum does now, in its turn, in our time. Moreover, Fludd also tried to prove it in every branch of science that he studied.

All the personalities and movements that are presented in this framework were not incidental figures about whom it is interesting to supply pieces of information. They stood in one inner connection. Their central starting point, which shows indeed individual variances, their central point of departure was one and the same. They tried to make known the universal greatness of humanity, of the human as the reflection of the One Spirit, of the All-Good. Fludd wished to drive people by practical life action to a new birth, not only himself, for he had been working at this already enough, but all those people who just look for their salvation in the dark earthly nature order.

In this vein, we must also understand the following illustrations. Fludd placed them in a central position in his famous work *History of the Macrocosm and Microcosm*. With these, he did not follow the world history of the earth of nature, nor of the human being as only a body, but viewed both from their inner basis.

In addition to this, he made an effort to prove with experiments and chemical tests that the Hermeticists are correct as far as the material is concerned, whereby history overtook him on several points. He devoted his life to the demonstration that the light is working as far as inside the smallest atom and laid down its laws. It turned out to be too early for the 17th century; first the properties of the natural world had to be discovered. Perhaps the 21st century, with its photon theory, its light therapy, and many other scientific light research projects, shall yet agree with him.

II

With the following illustrations, we follow partly the explanations of Joscelyn Godwin in his 1979 book about Robert Fludd. In this book, its author selected some texts and pictures from Fludd's work.

On this title page of his works about the two cosmoses *Utriusque Cosmi... Historia*, which portrays both the microcosm as well as the macrocosm, we see Chronos, Time, shown as Pan, unreel all the spheres of the two cosmoses, until all of creation is once more merged in the unpronounceable eternal infinity. Fludd has shown in this illustration clearly how the microcosm is a reflection of the macrocosm. The clouds surrounding the two cosmoses are the 'uncreated light', as Fludd expressed it.

What existed before the creation? Fludd called this situation the *materia prima*, which has no dimensions, knows no characteristics or properties, is neither large nor small, neither moving nor still. It is what Paracelsus and after him Jacob Boehme called the 'great mystery' or the *mysterium magnum*: It is uncreated, while others claimed that it is God's first expression or creation. Fludd lets us make our own decision here and depicted it as the deepest darkness, the darkest abyss, that extends from infinity to infinity.

The creation is a creation *ab unum ad unum* – out of the one towards the one. It is enclosed by a circle of God, originating with the Word, *FIAT, let there be*. On the first day, with the words 'Let there be light', the highest heaven appeared. This is the *empyrean*, filled with pure light that cannot be seen by mortal eyes but can only be experienced by the spirit-soul. It rests on the crystalline sphere, described by John in Revelations (15:2) as 'a sea of glass mixed with fire'. On the second day, God's Spirit made its second revolution (Genesis 1:6-8), and the heavenly firmament appeared, separating the uppermost heaven (the *empyrean*) from the bottommost ones, which would become the elemental realm on the third day.

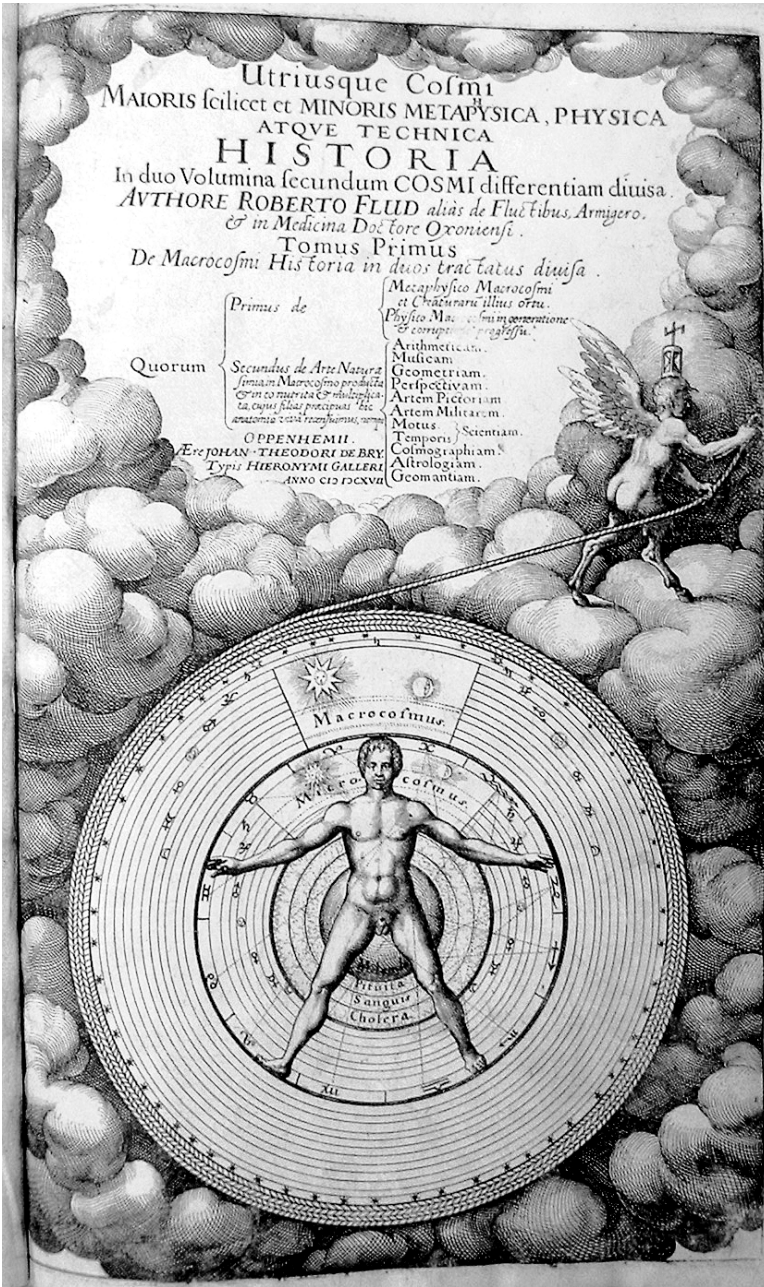


Illustration 1: Title plate

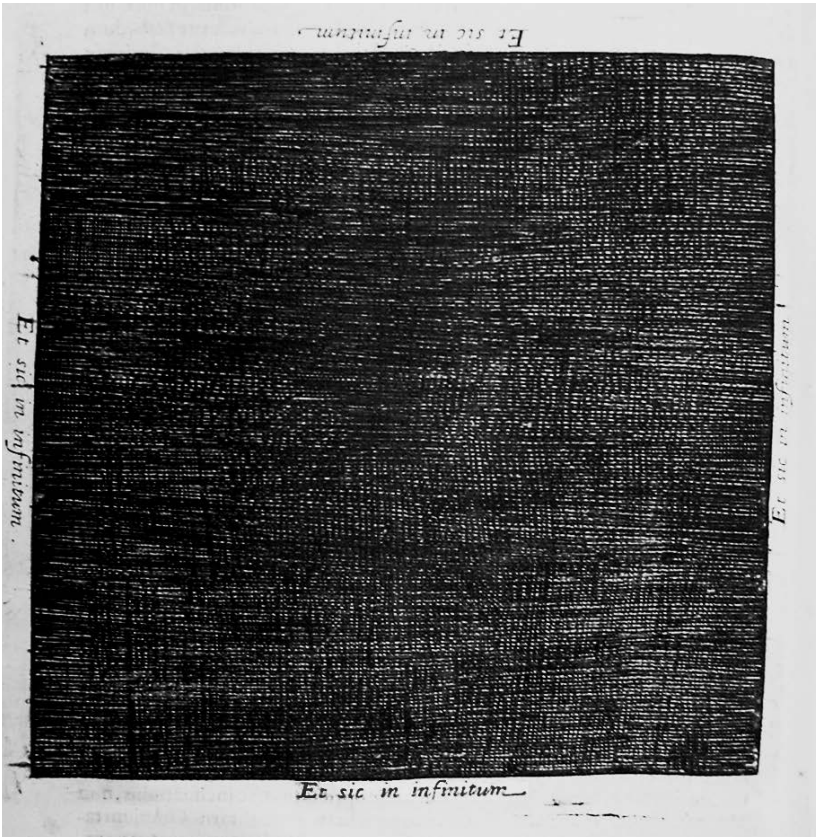


Illustration 2: 'Et sic in infinitum' – (And thus, to infinity)

Moses, Plato, and Hermes agree that the first deed of creation is the creation of the light. This light, which is neither created nor uncreated, is the intelligence-wisdom of the angels, the vivifying virtue of heaven, the spirit-soul in the human being, and the essence of life in the lower realms of nature. It becomes more and more enclosed on the downward scale of crystallization, and the degree of perfection of beings is in accordance with its conscious presence. Thus in stone, it is in a deep sleep. It dreams in plants. It is asleep in the animal king-

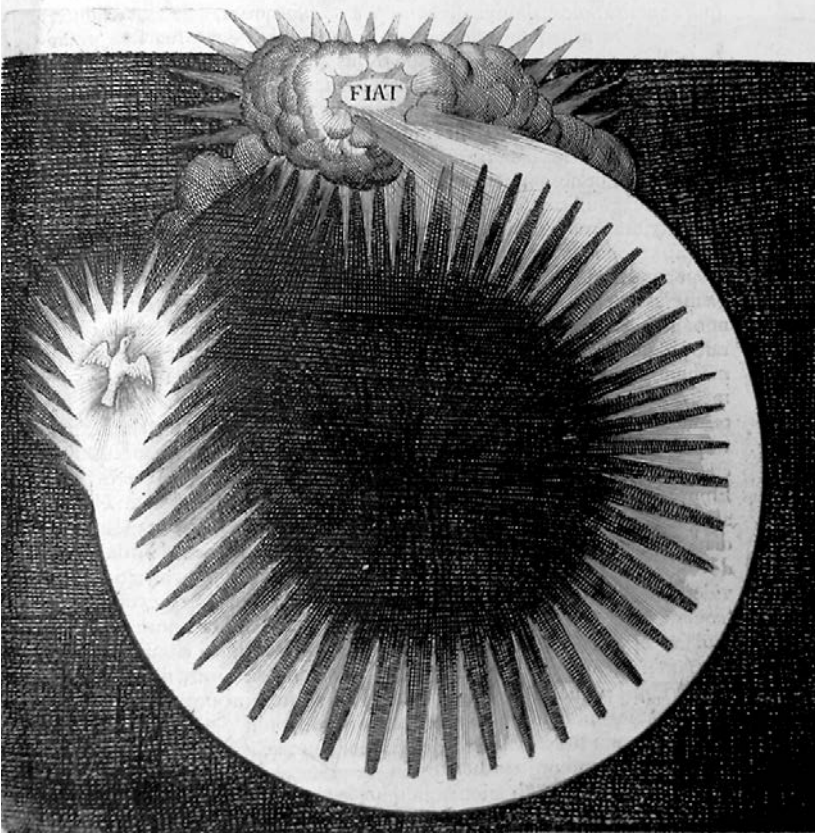


Illustration 3: Fiat – Let there be

dom in all its variety and in the human realm as well, until it consciously awakens and finds its reflection in the spirit-soul person. This human being is here the first appearance of light in the darkness. When it allows its virtue and glory to emanate from the centre, the waters separate themselves into those farther from it and those nearer to it.

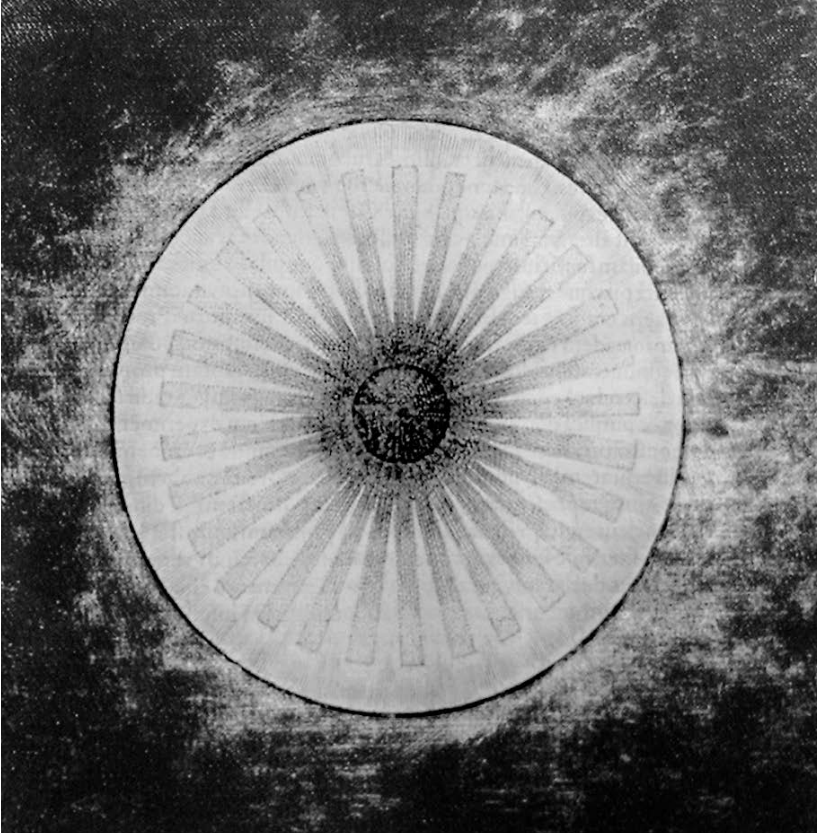


Illustration 4: The appearance of the light

The primordial matter, fertilised by the divine light, divides into two. The part that is furthest removed from the light (the dark cloud in the centre of the illustration) remains passive, while in the surrounding part, an active fire of love reigns and works. These are the bottommost and uppermost waters. The light cloud between the two is a mysterious state that is neither physical nor spiritual. It is called the 'spirit of the earth', or also in an alchemical sense, the 'spirit of mercury', 'ether', or 'quintessence' to distinguish it. It has the ability to pene-

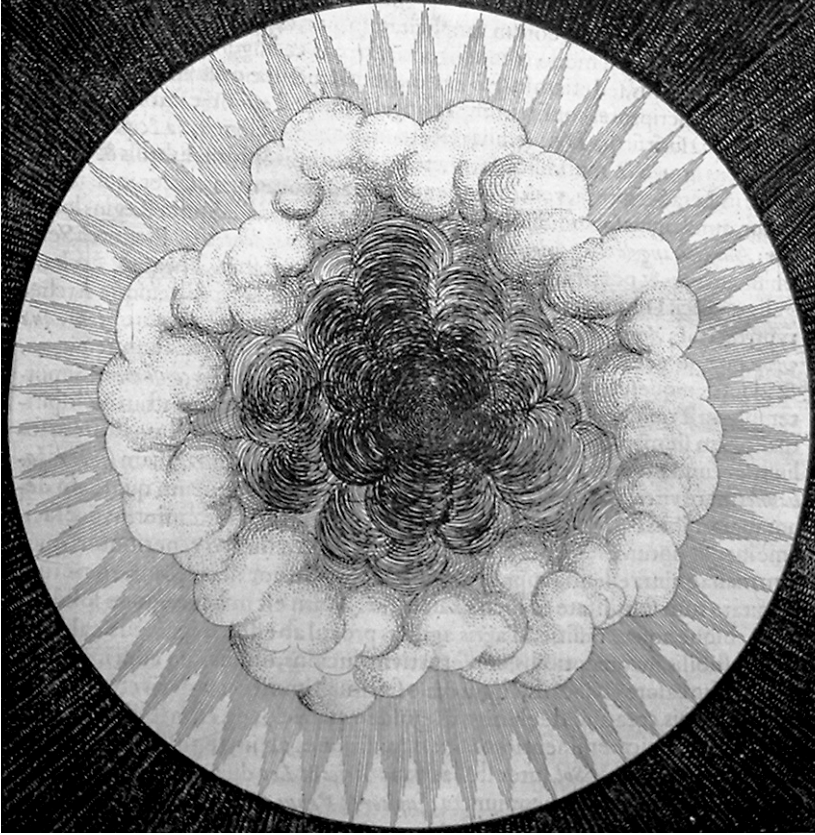


Illustration 5: The separation of the waters

trate every form (read: body) and in this way is able to serve as a vehicle for the soul in its descent into matter, involution.

In a manner of speaking, in illustration 6 we zoom in on the dark cloud of the bottommost waters of the regions (see illustration 5). These are now stirred into a confused and 'undigested', not-converted mass, in which the four elements fight each other: hot against cold, humidity against drought.

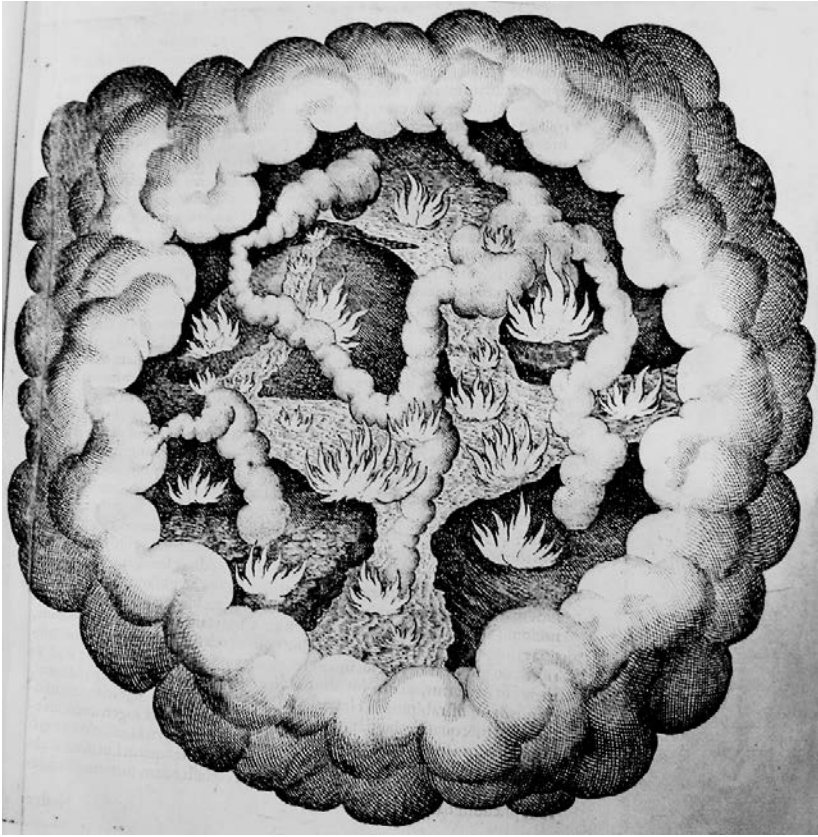


Illustration 6: The chaos of the elements

The chaos and struggle are ultimately resolved by the appearance of the central sun, after which the four elements harmonise into concentric circles of fire, air, water, and earth, while in their midst, as a new and valuable quintessence, the sun appears. Fludd developed this perspective out of an alchemical experiment that he executed together with a friend, and he described in minute detail the struggle of the elements that was imitated in a retort.

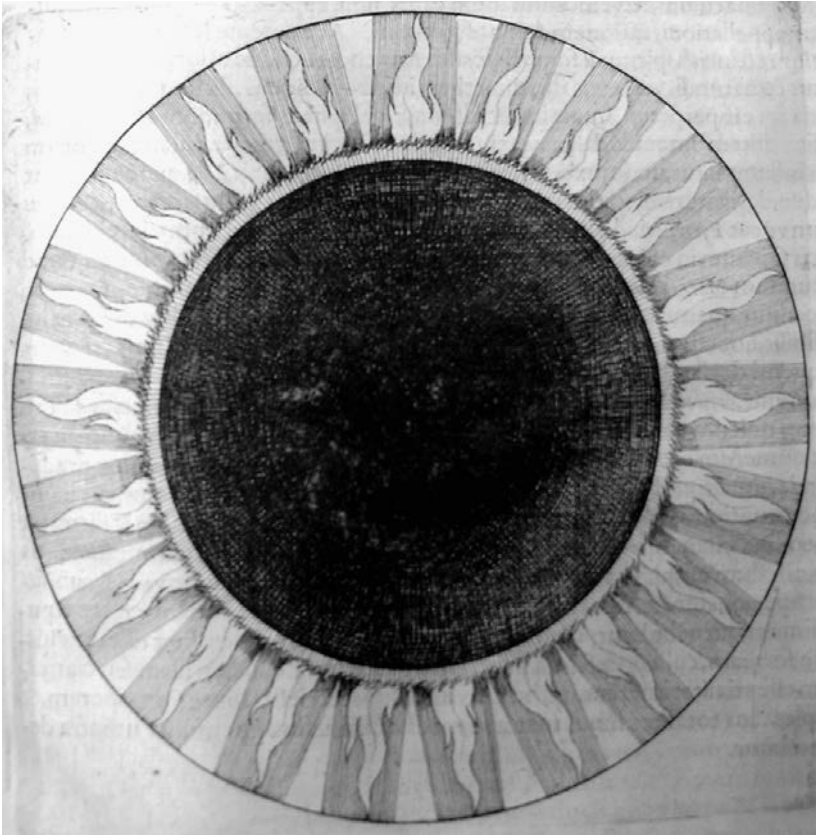


Illustration 7: The central sun

At the end, as he described, they extracted from the centre of the liquid a 'solar substance', a precious stone, 'like Lucifer fallen from heaven.'

III

A second series of illustrations depicts the coming into existence of the three realms, as this was seen in the Renaissance, a view that was derived from antiquity: the *empyrean* or the world of the angels, the heavenly or sidereal-astral world, and the elemental or etheric/material world, to which also our earth belongs.

Robert Fludd here meticulously followed the book of Genesis. On its basis, he considered the creation of the first three days. Each day was defined, we had better say ‘crowned’, by a circuit of the Spirit, starting from the Word, FIAT, let there be (illustration 3).

On the first day, with the words ‘Let there be light’ appeared the uppermost heavens. This is the *empyrean*, filled with pure light, which cannot be seen by mortal eyes but can only be experienced by the spirit-soul. It rests on the crystalline sphere, which was described by John in Revelations (15:2) as ‘a sea of glass mixed with fire’. On the second day, God’s Spirit made its second revolution (Genesis 1:6-8), and the heavenly firmament appeared, separating the uppermost heaven (the *empyrean*) from the bottommost ones, which would become the elemental realm on the third day.

The existence or the countenance of the One (the appearance of the first One) created the light. In an almost Jewish-cabbalistic vision, in a holy glow, Fludd described how the Spirit etched the spheres of light in the darkness, in the *Ungrund* of Böhme. This illustration shows the void and the depth, which later would form the lower realms, surrounded by the *empyrean* of the first day of creation. ‘The uncreated light of the Spirit is reflected in the *empyrean* sphere as in a mirror, and these reflections are in turn the first manifestation of *created* light’, he wrote. ‘Without this light’, he rightly wrote, ‘no creation or creature could exist for a moment.’ Nothing can exist if it is not maintained and illuminated by divine reason.

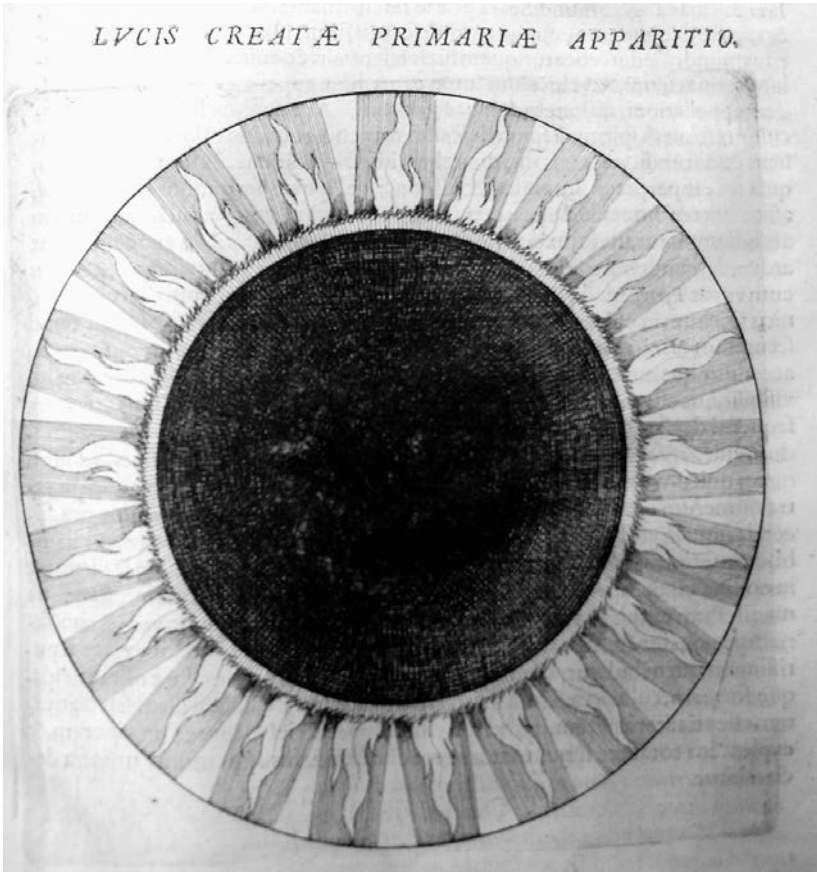


Illustration 8: The sphere of the empyrean

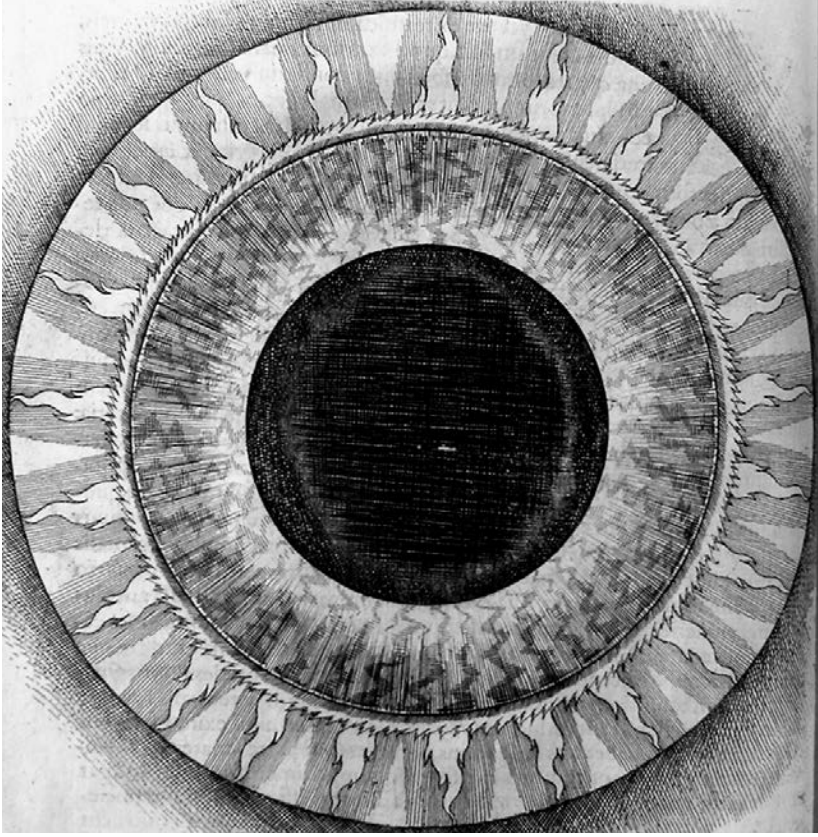


Illustration 9: The crystalline heaven

On the second day, the creation of the ether-heaven is seen, the sphere that contains the substances of the fixed stars and the wandering planets. This sphere consists completely of imperishable ether and cannot pass away like the four lower elements. This is described as the quintessence of creation or also as the spirit of creation. It forms the original realm of humanity, where the spirit-soul has its abode. This sphere is a region where both form and inspiration exist in complete harmony. In the highest sphere, there is no material form at all, but only spirit-essence. In this second region, the perfect form is revealed.

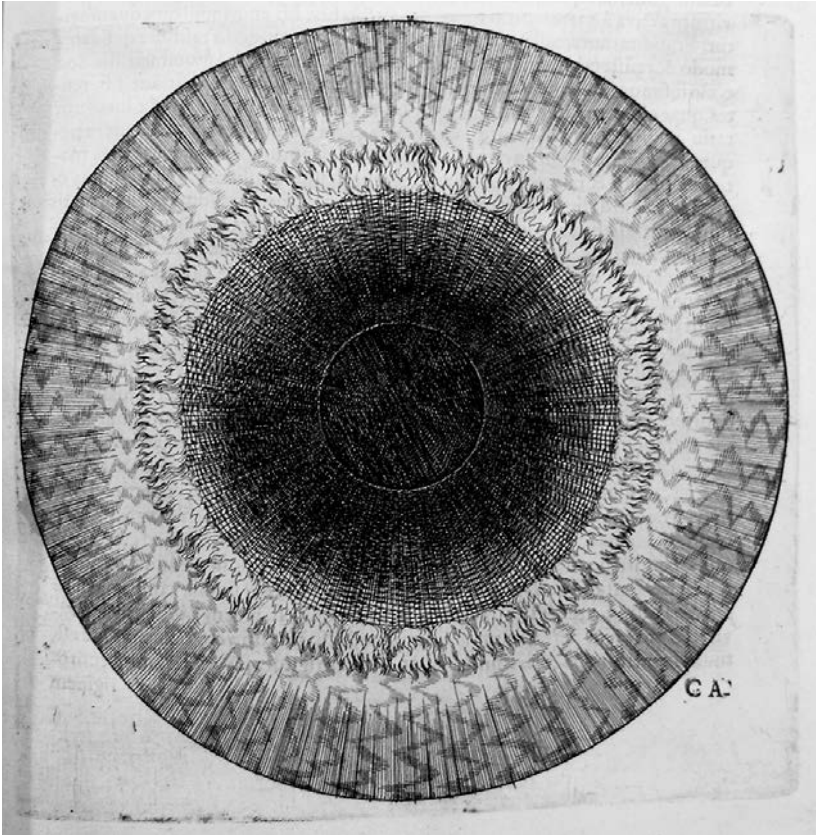


Illustration 10: The elemental sphere I: fire

We now see in illustration 10 the genesis of the etheric-material world of the elements. At this point, you should not yet think of our earth, but of a subtle, pure, very movable and rarefied nature. First, the most subtle and volatile of the four elements comes into being: fire, and this is able to reach as far as the most exterior borders of the sphere. Although closely related to the ether substance of the crystalline heaven, it is not the 'invisible fire' of the philosophers by which they say all has come into being. It is, in our region, ultimately the dry and hot fire by which everything is purified and by which, finally, all matter shall perish.

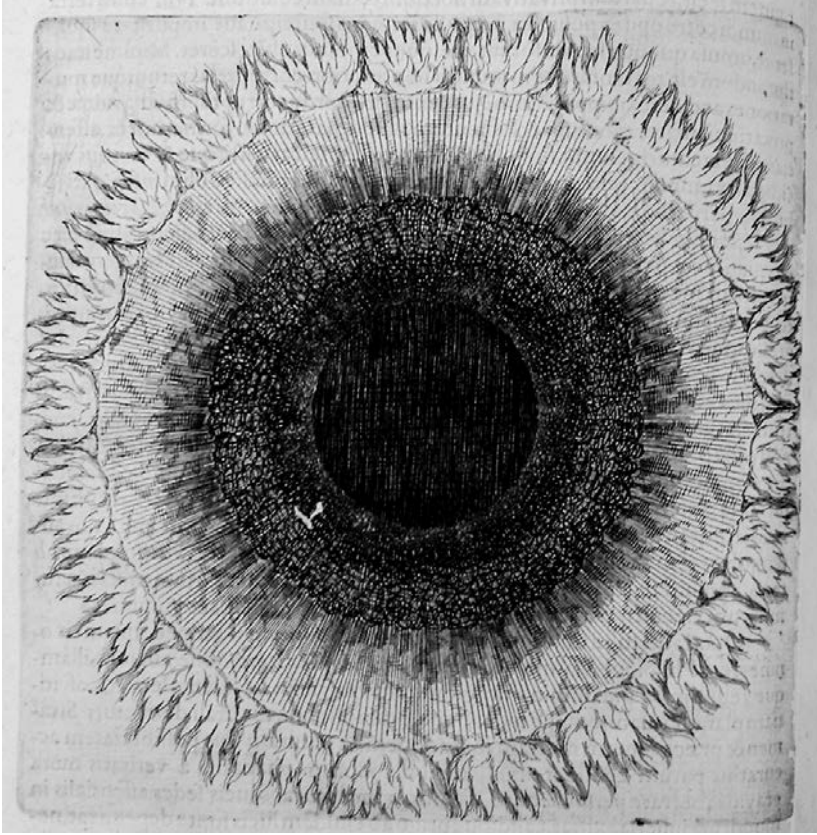


Illustration 11: The elemental sphere II: earth

Rather remarkable in Fludd's vision, the earth is now born first. The qualities of the earth are cold and dry, and as the heaviest element, it sinks, as it were, to the centre of the universe. Our illustration depicts the earth as a dark ball condensed in the middle of the circle of fire.

'No wonder', according to Fludd, 'that the earth is such a vale of misery, since it is formed from the very dregs of creation and contains the Devil himself, enemy to God and man.'

'But you, o celestial creatures', thus he exclaimed, 'inhabitants of the sweetest Paradise, thrice blessed and more beyond human telling:

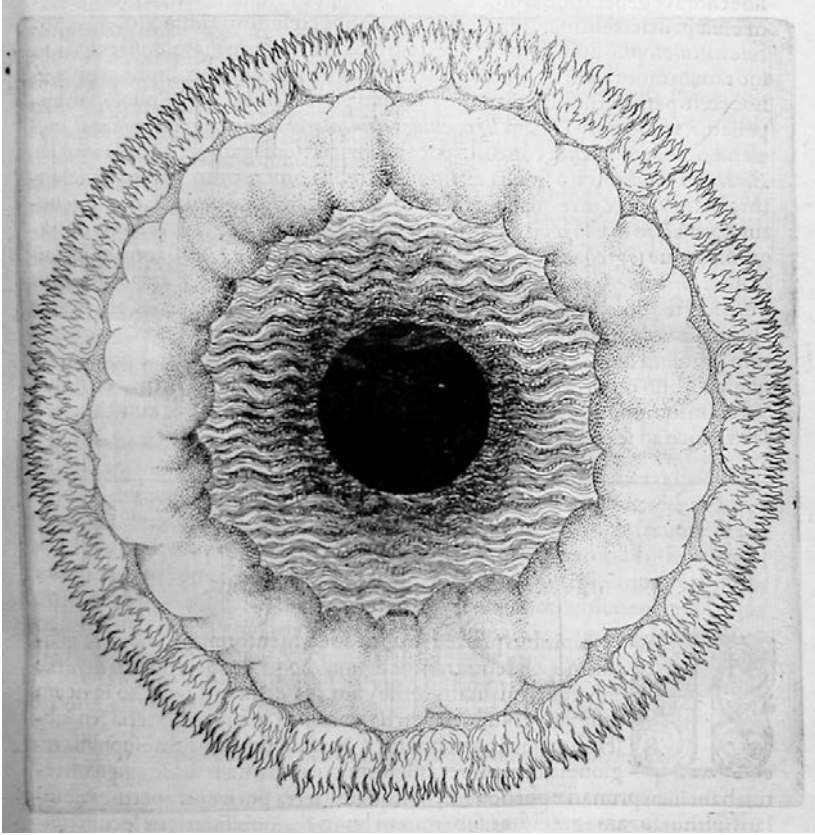


Illustration 12: The elemental sphere III: air and water

you are freed by the ineffable power of light from the miseries and chains that shackle us!

Between the fire and the earth is a zone that consists of a mixture of the cold of the earth and the heat of the fire somewhat 'like the coitus of male with female'; posed Fludd. Three parts of the fiery heat and one part of earthly cold give the element air, and the reverse proportion give the element water. Liquid is thereby not so much an archetypal quality itself but rather an incidental form of matter: It is not productive, but differentiating between two extremes.

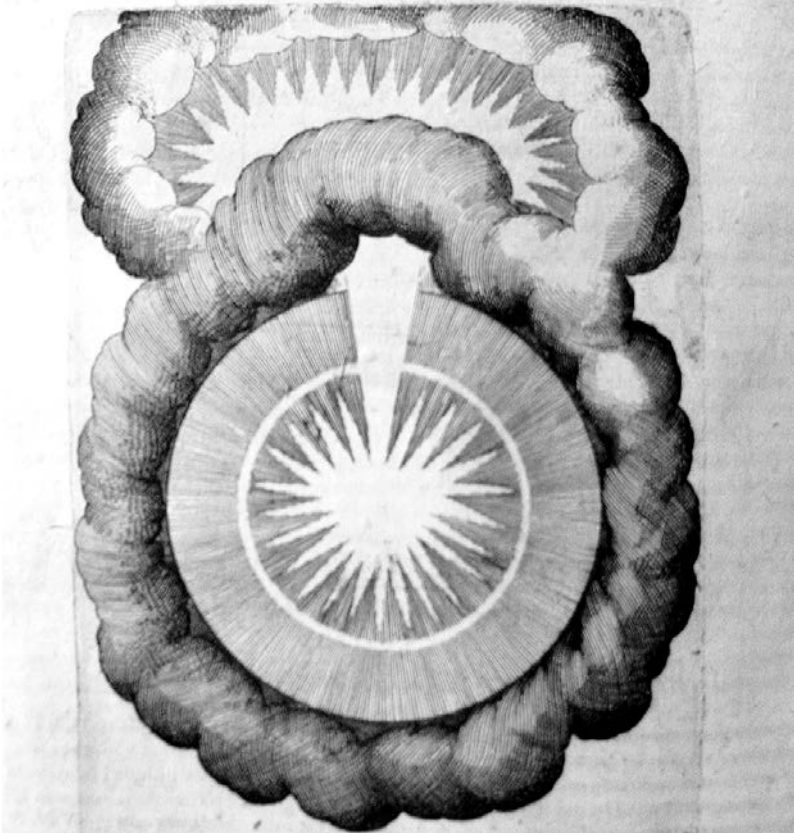


Illustration 13: The creation of the primum mobile – the first mover

'When the darkness had been dismissed to the region of the Earth, God made the primum mobile [or the first mover], which gives movement and life to all the interior spheres.' It is the wave that carries His wisdom and will, which are recognizable to every creature that wants to. This wisdom and will 'are effected here below by the angels', according to Fludd. 'For want of words to describe how God's wisdom acts in the Primum Mobile, and how it filled the whole world before the creation of the Sun, we depict it thus with the pen.'

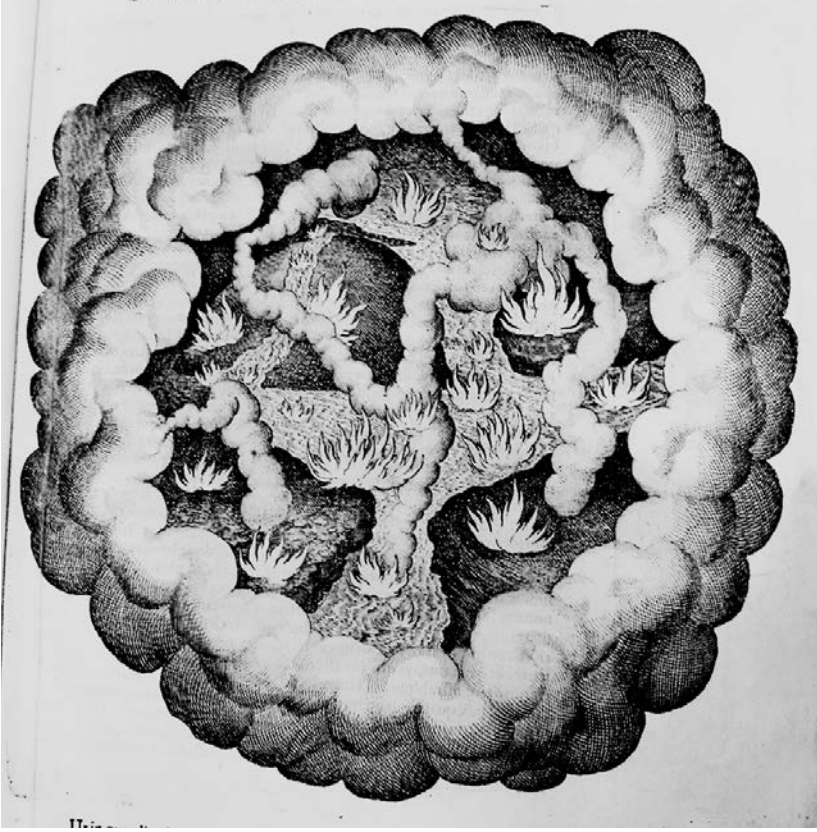


Illustration 14: The human being (See illustration 6.)

Here we find proof that Fludd definitely designed his diagrams himself, at least in the rough. Words failed him, thus he sketched his vision (as Boehme saw the creation in a vision in front of him, reflected in a pewter dish), a vision of the proto-cosmic light, penetrating the dark womb of the as yet uncreated universe, the *Ungrund* of Böhme.

IV

And now, let us view some of these illustrations in a somewhat different context.

The chaos of the elements can also be found in relation to the human being. More specifically, the dark cloud of the bottommost waters or regions on which we focussed is also the reach of human consciousness located in the lower belly (see illustration 14), as we say in modern times. There, the four elements battle with each other in the person and are responsible for all the contradictions, all our discomfort, all our unprocessed emotions: continuously 'stirred into a confused and undigested', not-converted 'mass, in which the four elements fight against each other: hot against cold, wet against dry.'

Look, life itself keeps the elements moving. If we, as faithful alchemists, are able to bring some quiet into that by letting the invisible light work in us, then at a certain moment, the central sun will rise, that is, will rise in us. This light turns us into 'enlightened' beings; it enlightens the whole being: thinking, feeling, and doing. Chaos and strife are then completely dissolved, after which the four elements harmonise with each other in concentric circles of fire, air, water, and earth. In the heart, still deeply sunken in the earth, a solar substance appears that brings light, peace, and harmony.

Here we see how that alchemical miracle takes place.

Fludd wrote, 'The perturbations attendant on creation had caused some of the celestial light to be trapped in the cold mass of the central earth. Obeying the law of gravity [He reverses our image of the world completely!], this celestial substance began to rise towards its rightful place in the heavens.'

Thus the sun was created, and so the spirit-human being is also formed.

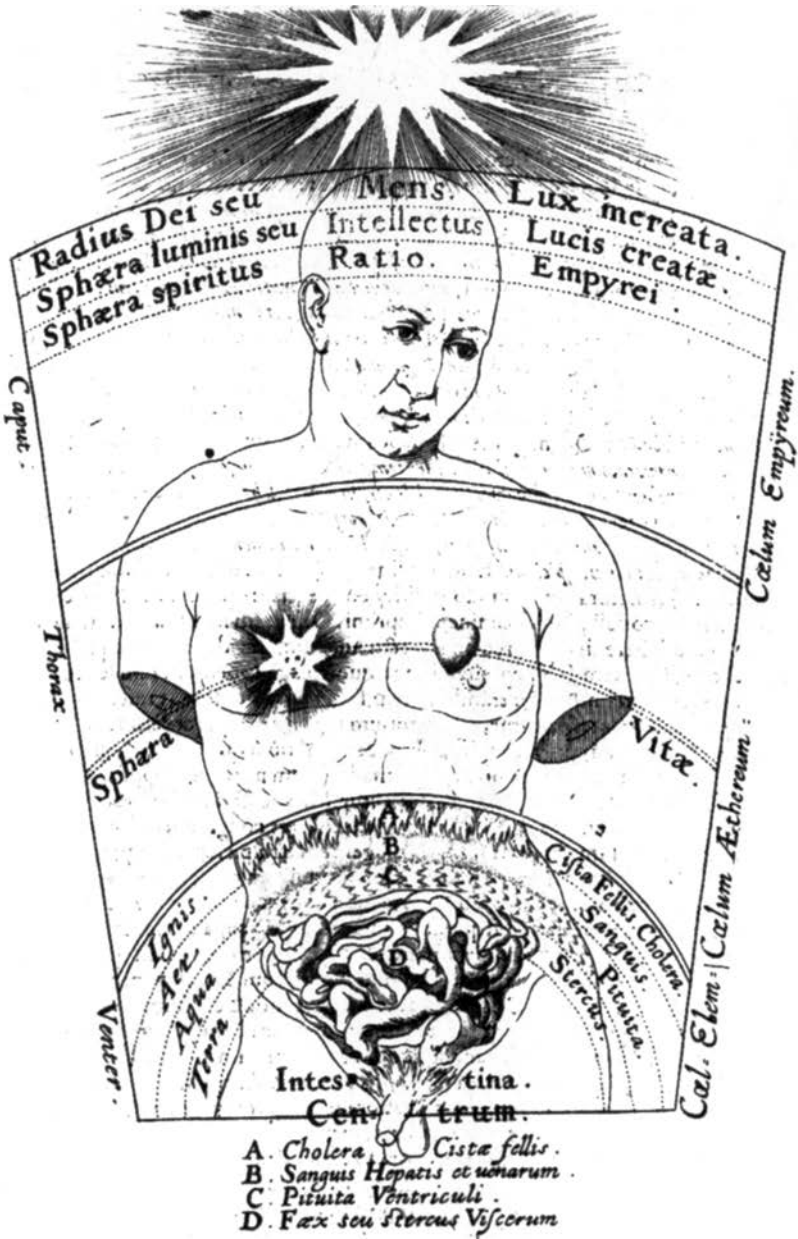
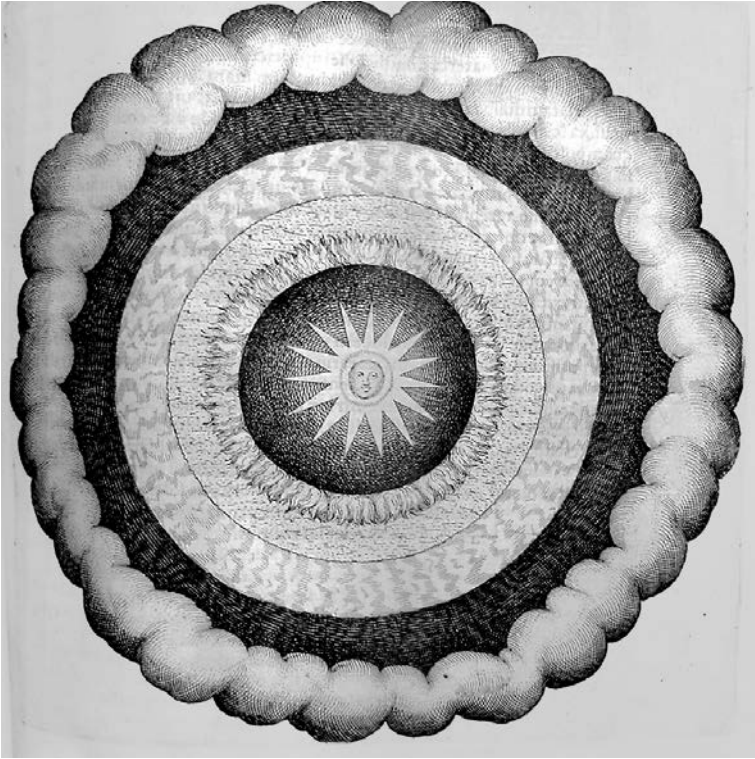


Illustration 15: The 'chaos of the elements' in the human being



*Illustration 16: The central Spirit: The mover of the elements
(See illustration 7)*

One would expect that this sun-principle would rise far above the perishable human being, up to the region of the *empyrean*, but as it still is connected with its faithful servant-chemist, it illuminates his earthly figure and does not return to its own realm.

If we then look once more at the illustration of the ‘*primum mobile*’ (illustration 19), we are also able as human beings to relate this to ourselves. From the immovable kingdom, the Spirit touches the heart, which then experiences the birth of the light or regeneration. Immediately, the elements will arrange themselves magnetically around that light and return to some form of harmony. The Spirit itself is situated outside the elements. Perhaps this is even more clearly depicted in illustration 20.

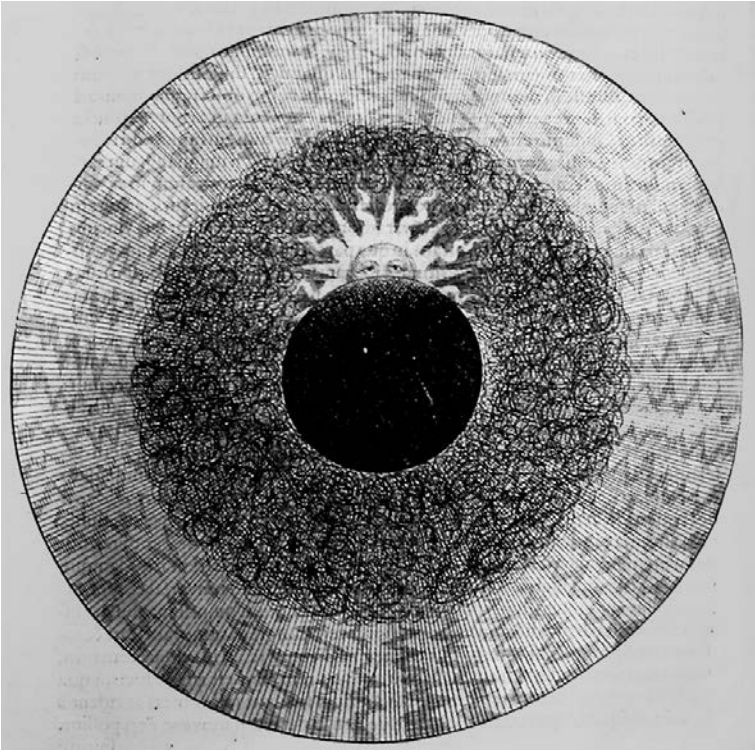


Illustration 17: Alchemy: How the spirit-human being is liberated

V

The human being as microcosm

Fludd, as self-investigating medical doctor, follower of Paracelsus, and very well-versed in human anatomy, placed his microcosmic concept over the earthly human being and showed in this way as far as the material, how the hermetic principle of 'as above, so below' – fundamentally – also really pertains to the material human personality that we are.

This becomes immediately true, as he seemed to prove, when regeneration, the recovery, starts. Then the elements come to rest, to order, to 'cosmos' – a word that means 'order' as well as 'world' and 'ornament'. He recognised this ideal, this 'Magnum Opus', in the

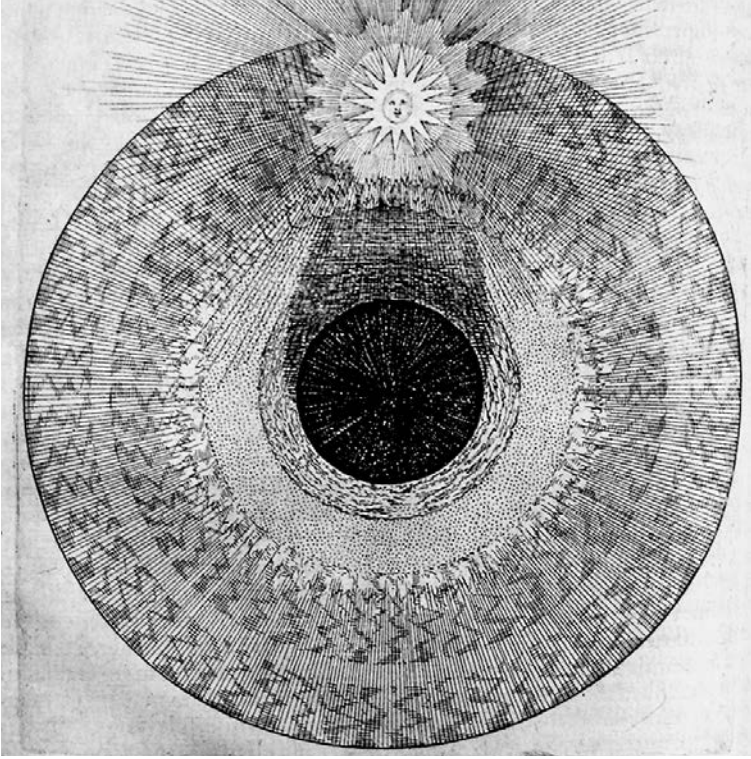


Illustration 18: Alchemy: The spirit-soul consciousness

work of the Rosicrucians. He referred to this in his *Tractatus* of 1617: 'In the original nature, the spirit of man was an abode for the light. Through his preference for the material, he must now walk in ignorance and in darkness, but if the divine spirit can gain entrance again, as fire and flame and light, a pure state of consciousness can be restored in man.'

Do you see here an image of yourself, of yourself as earthly personality, and of yourself as potential spirit-soul being, when the central sun of the spirit-spark atom arises in you? Then the region of the heart changes into the life sphere (*sphaera vitae*), the ether sphere, which is the region of the Christ, the sun sphere. And when the spirit-soul has been born in you, you are once more an inhabitant of the *empyrean*, the undamaged and light-filled world of the Kingdom

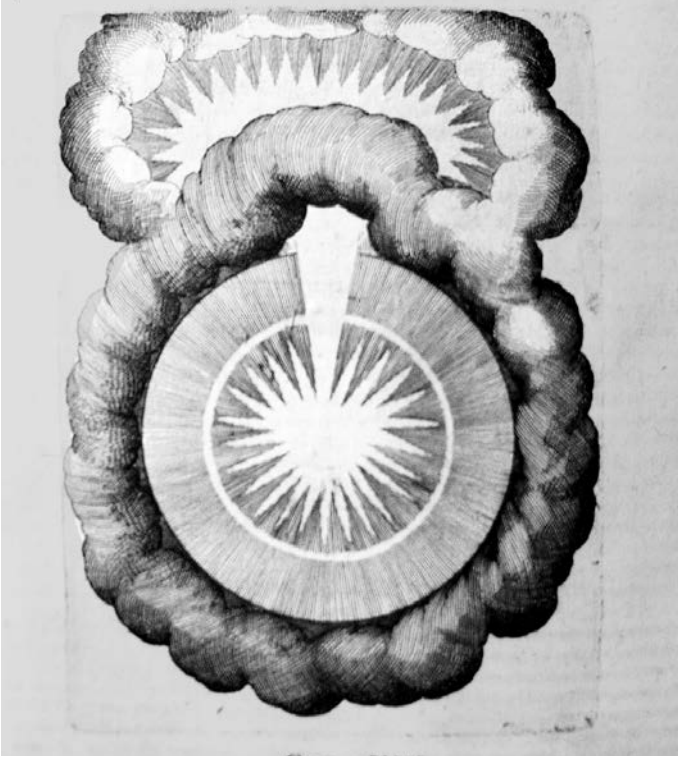


Illustration 19: The creation of the spirit being (Compare to ill. 13)

of Immortal Souls, of those beings 'thrice blessed and more beyond human telling' and who 'are freed by the ineffable power of light from the miseries and chains that shackle us'.

That is why we end with this image of the microcosmic human being, which turns out to be easy to read and to understand. How clear it is that the people of the Renaissance were not people who due to a lack of empirical (experimental) knowledge just kind of fantasised about the human being as a reflection of the great world or about a never-proven divine being. Look how gloriously he stands here before us. See the seven spheres of perfect circles out of which the spirit-soul being is constructed and in which he lives completely, in which he is totally conscious.

It is not a reflection of what we are at present. The earthly person consists of the first circle, in the *diapason* or the keynote of body and feeling. Through the heart runs the circle of the course of the sun, of the sun sphere, the life sphere of the Christ. The latter has to spread its light over us again! In Fludd's words, in the English of his time: 'Wherfor I do admonish thee to ascend from this world unto God, that is to penetrate quite through thýself: for to clime up unto God, is to enter into thýself, and not only inwardly to visit thý Dearest soule, but also to perce into the verý centre thereof, to view and behold ther thý Creator.'

In this manner, one finds the original human being. In 'the way of the sun', the connection with the third or highest circle is possible, the sphere wherein the spirit-soul being is able to be expressed. *Ortus et occasus* means ascend and decline or birth and death. But watch out: The three circles out of which the microcosm, in a more precise sense, consists float above this dialectics, this world of birth and death. Out of these three circles, the microcosm, according to the text, has been put together. It is in a sense a projection from the *empyrean*, the light-filled world of the Original Kingdom, and can become known to the earthly human being. And above all this floats the Unspeakable, Jehova, under the shadow of whose wings the Brotherhood of the Rosycross is gathered. And see how out of one ray of the Unspeakable, a middle line appears. This is Fludd's famous *monochord*, the spiritual principle that penetrates the entire miraculous microcosm and which down to the lowest circle, to the humblest revelation of the human being, nevertheless forms the axis, the plumb line. This is the learning, the liberating grace, and ultimately the universal cure that the Brotherhood of the Rosycross brings to mankind, which Robert Fludd professed, to which he dedicated his whole life, and into which he hoped to be admitted. ~



Portrait of John Amos Comenius, engraving, circa 1660

*Jan Amos Komenský –
John Amos Comenius*

Having Assumed the Torch and Kept It Burning

I

On the portrait from the school of Rembrandt van Rijn, a man with a long, full beard looks seriously at us, almost a Biblical figure, a kind of patriarch, a patriarch with a well-worn face, a face that however is extremely harmonious, amiable, even spiritual, a scholar, one would think. And yet this figure was also a man of action. One must truly reach this conclusion, if one reviews all his work, all his trips, and all his contacts. Also, a man of the light, a bringer of the light, a combatant for the *Way of the Light* – this was John Amos Comenius.

Jan Amos Komenský, better known as Comenius, who lived from 1592 to 1670, was an outspoken figure, and during his long life, he wrote a lot. More than two hundred titles carry his name; as a theologian, he devised a theological-philosophical system with the purpose of improving the world through educating people to be free beings who make their own decisions and are able to choose voluntarily for the good. With his ideals, he strove for a world where war and oppression would make place for peace and justice. Besides this, he was a reformer of pedagogy; he was one of the first who introduced the method of teaching with visual aids, and he wrote several textbooks. With these areas of attention, his interests were not at all exhausted. Comenius occupied himself with cartography, music and medicine, astronomy and philology, politics and political science. He wrote theatrical plays and had an intense interest in the printing and publishing of books.

What this European thinker envisioned, 320 years before the inception of the United Nations, was a peace that had to be founded upon a supranational authority, thus an authority that would be assumed be-

yond national boundaries, a federation that culturally would form a unity and would know a church that was tolerant. In his vision, the elementary schools in this society would be accessible to everyone. His highest aspiration was the ‘improvement of all things human’, and he wrote about this in a systematic and well thought-out work with the title *General Consultation on an Improvement of All Things Human*.

Comenius stood firm by his convictions in the written and spoken word, even though, because of this, he had to endure persecution for a long time. This took place mainly in connection with the Unity of the Brethren, also known as the Bohemian Brethren (a ‘heretical’ church going back to Jan Hus, who had been burned in 1415 in Konstanz for heresy), of which Comenius became a minister in 1614 and later its most well-known bishop. After The Thirty Years’ War had erupted, he was forced to wander through Europe, robbed of all his worldly possessions. No matter where he went, at each place, he promoted both the spreading of peace and unity among the people as well as the spirit of a tolerant Christianity. For from the lack of the latter stemmed this horrible war. But to be able to find the divine in human beings, they must first of all be in the right circumstances. This begins with their education, primarily, of course, to help them find their way in the earthly life, but once this basis has been laid, their education needs to continue and take a spiritual turn.

John Amos was born on March 28, 1592, probably in Nivnice, close to Uhersky Brod, a hamlet in the Carpathian Mountains near the border between what is now the Czech Republic and Slovakia. At the recommendation of a local ruler, the influential Karel Older of Zierotin, Comenius, who had lost his parents at a young age, attended the Latin school in Přerov (Prerau) in Germany. Later he studied at the Calvinistic Herborn Academy not too far from Frankfurt, where a few of his teachers were followers of *millennialism*, a movement that believed that soon God’s thousand-year realm would begin.

Just like his great example, Johann Valentin Andreae, Comenius had never abandoned his hope, his expectations of a nobler, more spiritual type of human being who would be able to live together with others. But he not only expected this, he also worked for it. This man did not hesitate to approach the great ones of his time directly

with proposals for peace negotiations, a better system of education, and a more social politics. His belief in a universal Christian church was as steady as a rock, but he rejected dogmatism, be it Roman Catholic, Lutheran, or Calvinist. 'Allow all to develop itself freely, and let violence be absent from it' was his life's motto. According to Comenius, God lives in the human being, and whoever finds him there is able to conquer the world – meaning, he can become free of all evil.

He remained dedicated to the organization of public education and eventually launched his plan for a *collegium lucis*, which was to become a kind of international ministry of education. For education and instruction were key concepts for him. The germs of the new and the good must be sown as early as possible in young people, and through education, these youngsters should stay receptive to these. Mainly because of these broadly put socio-political and pedagogical ideas, Comenius was in fact the theoretical and practical trailblazer for the modern educational system. With astonishingly sharp insight into pedagogy as it is still being used today, he pointed out the necessity of informal, child-oriented teaching methods, where objects were the basic principles. Famous is his *Orbis sensualium pictus* (The Visible World in Pictures), published in 1658, a reader full of pictures of objects that spoke to the imagination. He was an outspoken opponent of corporal discipline, which was very common at that time.

From his point of view, self-motivation was of much greater importance. In his opinion, in a just society, the education of the less able-minded and an education that was open to everyone was an inherent right. With this, he envisioned a 'far-reaching democratization'. According to Comenius, this education for everyone had anyway to be adapted emphatically to different stages with respect to age. He put it thus:

We must distinguish four clearly different age groups: the infant/toddler age, childhood, the more mature youth, and the almost adult youth. For each of these groups a six-year education in a school, intended especially for them, is necessary:

1. the pre-school (from age 1 to 6),
2. the elementary school where one learns to master his mother tongue (from age 6 to 12),
3. the Latin school (from age 12 to 18), 3. the university (from age 18 to 24).

But at the same time, as he explained it, there is a much more important education. After all, the whole world is a school of apprenticeship for the divine wisdom, which one has to pass through before one is allowed entrance to the heavenly alchemy. God has supplied this school with three books:

the book of the visible world; the human being created in God's image or the book of conscience; and, in order to be able to understand well the first two, the Holy Scriptures. All human beings have the first book always before their eyes. The second one is engraved in their hearts. Let us hope that they also have the third one always handy.

These were also the beneficent and well-known thoughts of Johann Arndt, who wrote the *Four Books of True Christianity*, and of Johann Valentin Andreae, who wrote the manifestos of the Brotherhood of the Rosycross. Therein was also some talk of *The Book of the World* and *The Book of God*. And about the Bible, they said:

Blessed is he who possesses the Bible; more blessed is he who reads it diligently, but the most blessed is he who studies it with all his zeal. However, the most equal to God is he who understands and applies it.

Comenius often found an audience, but was also reviled and persecuted. Especially in connection with the already earlier mentioned religious society, the Unity of the Brethren of which he was a bishop after all, he had to suffer greatly. This Unity of the Brethren based itself on the Sermon on the Mount, that exceptional piece from the Gospel of Matthew. They had come into being in Bohemia around 1457 as distant forerunners of Luther. The first Brethren in Bohemia and Moravia tried to *fulfil* the law of Christ in Christian community, as they found it in the New Testament and particularly in the Sermon on the Mount. In their midst arose a new communal way of life that only wanted to be bound by the law of Christ and therefore had no space in the existing church of that time. They followed the tradition of Jan Hus, but different from the Hussites, who undertook a powerful worldly rebellion against Rome.

Poverty and non-violence together with a devoted life were the ideals

of the Unity of the Brethren. Since 1517, the year that Martin Luther nailed his theses on the door of the church in Wittenberg to discuss them, their stance was close to the Lutherans, but religious differences remained. They chose and ordained their own priests. Thus, the Brethren became an independent church community, which called itself *Jednota bratrská* (Unitas Fratrum or Unity of the Brethren) and which soon got many followers. The brothers severed all ties with the Roman Catholic Church. By the end of the fifteenth century, the Bohemian Brethren abandoned their rigorous stance on non-possession, and their following expanded to all levels of the population.

Already from the start of Luther's Reformation, the Unity was in contact with the other Protestant churches. The power of the old church of the Brethren stemmed from its parish life, and Martin Luther and later also Johann Valentin Andreae found its strict parish discipline exemplary. To the Brethren, much depended on proving by their way of life the truth of their convictions, on realising them. In their songs, the Bohemian-Moravian Brethren allowed their longing and their homesickness to rise upwards, and they tried in this way to bring the life of the soul nearer. To them, the lost Fatherland was not only purely symbolic, not only a reference to the new life field, but also a bitter remembrance of their reality here on earth: Because even here, they had been driven from their native lands. These beautiful songs have been preserved until today as a living witness of a true community-in-Christ. In them speaks the profession of faith of the community of the Brethren, and their inner life is expressed in them.

Out of the numerous documents of the Bohemian-Moravian Brethren, the first translation of the Bible into Czech is of importance, the *Bible kralická* or the Bible of Kralice, having appeared between 1579-94. Of enduring importance for the continued existence of their community was the insight that emerged on September 16, 1741, at a conference of the leadership in London as imperative: Jesus Christ is and remains as the eldest, Lord and Head of the Unity of the Brethren. According to this liberating power, they arranged their life.

In their country of origin, the Brethren perished under the violence of the Counter Reformation, the offensive that the Catholics under the leadership of the Jesuits mounted against the Protestants, the Hus-

sites, and the Lutherans. The all-time low of this movement really was the Battle of White Mountain in 1620, where the Protestant King Frederick V lost pitifully to the Roman House of Habsburg. Comenius' native land and his religious community also suffered a definitive defeat there. As a result of this, Comenius wrote *The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart*, still being read today, wherein he paints a lively and realistic picture of human shortcomings and of a disrupted and disorganised society that is the result of acting with a lack of wisdom, moderation, and charity.

The enmity of the established church turned the community of the Brethren into a church of martyrs. We saw how after 1620, many of the Bohemian Brethren were forced to leave their native land. Their flight over all of Europe, mainly during the Thirty Years' War, led to the birth of new branches of the Unity in Poland and Prussia. With many secret Protestants, their consciousness remained firm in the face of the larger events. With his fellow believers, Comenius had to flee Moravia, presently part of the Czech Republic. He fled with them to Poland; and later, the members spread to many parts of the world.

Thanks to Comenius, the Unity was able to survive, and in the course of history, it has played an important role for many suppressed beliefs and churches of Central Europe, especially in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. For as it based itself directly on the Christ, those who rejected the strict 'church of wood and stone' often found a safe haven in the Unity of the Brethren. As a church, the Bohemian Brethren continued its existence in the underground. Many refugees established themselves in Saxony and in Upper Lusatia, the region of Jakob Böhme. A carpenter who had converted to their beliefs, Christian David, had led them across the border into Saxony beginning in 1722. In this region lived Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, who had thoroughly studied the works of Böhme. Von Zinzendorf and the Moravian outcasts, descendants of the old Bohemian Brethren, met, and he developed a great sympathy for the Unity of the Brethren, which, possibly in a slightly different way, still put into practice the same new attitude of life that Böhme had indicated. Zinzendorf, who later was ordained as bishop of the new Unity of the Brethren, gave them permission to establish a settlement at Herrnhut on his Berthelsdorf estate. This was located in Upper Lusatia, a short dis-

tance from the small town of Görlitz, which had been the setting of Böhme's drama a hundred years earlier.

Finally, via Germany, France, Sweden, and England, Comenius came to Amsterdam, the capital of the Republic of the Seven United Provinces, which had struggled to freedom from the Spanish-Roman yoke and counted at that time as a haven of refuge for persecuted and banished people. The atmosphere there was extremely tolerant, and Comenius also found a safe shelter there. The last fifteen years of his life, when he lived in the home of the steel magnate De Geer, were the most peaceful and happy years of his life. Here, he could start writing again, and some of his most penetrating texts, like *Unum Necessarium* (The Only Necessity), were written here.

Other than the already mentioned works and his *Orbis*, of interest are his *Didactica magna* (The Great Didactic) of the 1630s, *Ianua linguarum resertata* (The Gate of Languages Unlocked) of 1631, and *De rerum humanorum emendatione consultatio catholica* (General Guide on the Improvement of All Things Human) on which he worked until his death and which was rediscovered in an orphanage in Halle in 1934.

In his last book, *Unum necessarium* or *The Only Necessity*, which he sent into the world one year before his death, Comenius summarised his insights as follows:

1. Do not burden yourself with things that fall outside of what you need, but be content with the little that serves your comfort, and praise God.
2. If you are lacking all conveniences, then be content with the strictly necessary.
3. Were this also taken away from you, then see that you hold on to yourself.
4. Would you not be able to hold on to yourself, just release yourself, but make sure that you hold fast to God. He who has God can do without all else. He possesses the highest good and eternal life with God and in God, for eternity and for aye. And this is the aim and the end of all that one might desire.

II

The most important and most beautiful work by Comenius is perhaps his *Via Lucis* (The Way of Light). Scholars have remarked at times that this is the *Fama* of Comenius, ‘an effort of reformation that equals in deepest essence the one of the Rosicrucians’. Comenius dedicated it to the Royal Society when it was finally published in 1668, and he wrote it in the fall of 1641 and the spring of 1642, while he stayed at his friends Samuel Hartlib and John Dury. He lived there because the English parliament was going to decide on his proposal to establish a universal college of academics from different countries, exactly the proposal about which Andreae had also written and spoken so much. This did not happen, not even in England, but in the meantime, the friends had concluded an agreement of brotherly help, to continue together the programme for the *education of the human being* towards universal insight proposed in Comenius’ book. The ‘Hartlib Circle’ was one of the foundations of the Royal Society of London, and this Royal Society had many links with the Order of the Freemasons.

That Comenius’ proposal was likewise a continuation of *A Model of a Christian Society* (*Christianae Societatis Imago*) by Johann Valentin Andreae, published in 1620, is beyond doubt, and this is very logical, too. Had Comenius not been handed the torch; had he not in a manner of speaking inherited Andreae’s ‘entire order’? In their exchange of letters of around 1628, Valentin Andreae had shown himself at first tired, despondent; he only had enough strength left for his own community, as he wrote. He had reacted with reservation to the request of Comenius to especially continue with his battle against the meanwhile unmasked monsters. It is true that Andreae had no regrets, and he was not ashamed either of what he had started, on the contrary, he would devote himself to it until the twilight of his life. But starting over? No, that was asking too much.

However, Comenius persevered, and in a second reaction, Andreae replied more or less that the *Societas* had come into being about eight years prior, when after the sad business with the insignificant *Fama* of the Rosicrucian brotherhood, some important men had united in a society and many others had wanted to join. However, they had been taken by surprise by the perils of war in Germany and had been nearly totally scattered. Presently, many of them had already passed away

and others had succumbed to their sorrows. Still other ones had changed their convictions or gone as far as losing all hope. He, Andreae, was ready to strike sail. Comenius and his friends could read and improve upon the report of this shipwreck as they deemed necessary (these were the programmes and the laws of the society of 1620). The knowledge alone that the whole ship with all souls had not perished would bring him the joy of a seaman who despite many wanderings had opened the way to new horizons for his fortunate followers. For the goal had been to knock the idols off their pedestals in both religion and in science and to return Christ to his place.

III

In this way, Comenius carried the torch further, and there certainly are indications that the Rosycross and Freemasonry have stood close together. If you start looking for connections between Freemasonry and the Rosicrucians, you will almost trip over the lines that go back and forth. One could say that, in a way, both orders are children of the same parents. These parents are, via Andreae and Comenius, on the one side, Hermes, and on the other, the ancient mysteries from the times before Christ. And there are more relations. Just think of the first three degrees in Freemasonry: entered apprentice, fellow craft, and master mason. They relate back to the guilds and lodges of the master-builders in the Middle Ages, the renowned and very profound builders who gave a breathtaking beauty to the cathedrals with their mystical and occult secrets. It is remarkable that these powerful edifices all have been in the hands of Rome and that Rome, as was recently confirmed in 1981 and 1983, considers the Masonic orders as very sinful and deviant from the proper doctrine. But this is only an aside. An esoteric researcher once wrote:

It is known that there existed a School of Master Builders. Of course it had to exist, because every master lived normally with his pupils. All guilds operated in this way. But behind these independent schools stood institutions of a very complicated origin. These were not just schools for architects or masons. The construction of the cathedrals was part of a tremendous and intelligently devised plan that guaranteed the existence of

completely free philosophical and psychological schools in the coarse, foolish, cruel, superstitious, hypocritical, and scholastic Middle Ages. These schools, which built the ‘Gothic’ cathedrals, were so well hidden that traces of them can only be found by those who already know that such schools exist. For the Church did not build the cathedrals!

And why were they built? Because the universal laws of religion, science, and the art of construction were not allowed to be lost. These laws, which are based on the connection between microcosm and macrocosm and which contain the psychological, liberating education of the human being (note: also Comenius’ most important work!), were not allowed to be lost. For exactly these connections were being blocked through organised religion.

These builders thought as follows: Even though we cannot proclaim externally and openly our teachings of a liberated humanity, nor of a construction of an inner temple, we shall heed our assignment by building temples, cathedrals, that will carry inside of them as a solidified witness all of the inner teachings, and every person who passes or goes through or stays in them will experience these laws imprinted upon his being, until possibly facing reality, he will see the unknown possibilities of an inner development.

Just imagine: During the first thousand years of our era, the monasteries had collected much knowledge, much science, and much art in their abbeys and libraries, and among these also belonged all traces of introductions into the liberating teachings, to the extent that this was accessible to Western man. However, after the Church gave its consent (incidentally, already in 900 A. D.) to hunt down heretics, to question them, and to deliver them to the civil branch – which, if merciful, meant death by burning – this knowledge could not possibly remain in the monasteries.

A new shape was found for this knowledge. Perforce the knowledge of liberation left the monasteries and was transferred to the schools of the master builders. Their way of expression became the cathedral: the one-pointed longing for the light hewn in stone, towards the higher, toward the spiritual worlds of *the supreme architect*. The lodges were the outermost circle of the schools, which kept the knowledge of the relationship between God, the human being as a micro-

cosm, and the macrocosm as a *living entity*. The great architects, of whom not one name remains, were completely acquainted with religious symbolism and analogies. They were educated in the mysteries of the soul, of genesis, of birth and rebirth. They were the keepers and representatives of *true Christianity*. Their purified mathematical minds mated themselves with an inner rapture, and so they created the temples of the Gothic age, and at the same time, they put down the foundation on which eighteenth-century freemasonry knew to base itself.

Enter a cathedral, and try to see the symbolism with your mind's eye: It is the portrayal of the perfect creation hewn in stone that the supreme builder laid in the macrocosm and that at one time gave to the human microcosm glory and harmony, before the human temple became so badly desecrated. See how the complicated character of the human soul has been laid down in it. Also see how from the spire of the tower, teachers of humanity descend, they who were living directly around the Christ, bringing the message of liberation to the little person of the masses, who not seeing anything passes by it. For who wants to see? And who wants to know?

The schools of the master builders tried to maintain this knowledge until the moment that the human being would raise his eyes. From where did this knowledge come? one could ask. It was a gift from their 'parents'. It came from the hidden Christian teachings and from the ancient mysteries, which taught the principle, *the joy of living and the wisdom of dying*. Death and initiation into the mysteries are in the ancient schools the same thing! Initiation meant to them dying consciously and continuing to live as a changed human being, as a noble, responsible being, a part of and inextricably connected to the great universe.

Looking back once more, for example, to the second century, Apuleius of Madaurus in North Africa, who visited a temple of initiation in Egypt around 150 A. D. (and had to appear in court on accusation of sorcery), wrote about the experience:

I approached the borders of death. I entered the threshold of Proserpina. I was carried through all the elements and returned to earth. I beheld the

sun, radiating in splendid brilliance, in the middle of the night; I approached the gods above and the gods there below and honoured them face to face.

What a powerful picture: the sun at midnight. You might also say, the secrets of the eternal return, the rhythm of the seasons, the cross of nature, the rhythm of life, and the return of life after death, seen in nature, and known inside the human being. According to yet another researcher:

The old sages and seers taught that the universe is a living being and the visible firmament only a garment, a locked whole, a garb that keeps the spiritual creation hidden from us, a creation of unknown elevated and scientifically lawful becoming, which is living and timeless and rises far above it. The human being is a reflection of this, an image.

It is a staggering perspective! Whatever are we doing then down here below? Think about the beautiful legend from ancient Egypt about Osiris, usually identified as the ruler of the dead, but sometimes also called 'king of the living' because the ancient Egyptians thought of the blessed dead as 'the living ones'. In a slightly different version, the Egyptians saw in Osiris the first pharaoh, preceding any human rulers. Under his dominion, there was peace and prosperity for all living beings, who lived and developed in him, Osiris. How cruelly that development was disrupted! How cruelly the living beings, who had received life from Him, killed the bringer of life, in order to glorify themselves in material egocentricity. Even he, the deity, could die. According to the legend, his body was spread a millionfold over the universe. Isis searched for and found the spiritual seed of the power of creation, which had become passive, and buried it in all living beings. As a distant promise, all living beings living anew in the original world of humanity will one day behold the countenance of Osiris in the divine child Horus. This is the essence of all mysteries. *Osiris and the supreme builder are in deepest essence the same figure.*

Do you see how time and again a new way was being sought to make the truth known? As seeker, as a human being on the way, on the path, do you recognise our mutual spiritual parents? Here fit some words

from a possibly still more ancient tradition, which convey the substance, the essence, of the true teachings of Krishna:

Among the created, I beget myself, O son of Bharata, while in the world the good is weak and injustice reigns.

Thus, I embody myself from age to age, the faithful to maintain, the wicked to ruin, and for the protection of eternal righteousness.

In whatever way people approach me, in this manner I help them; whichever path they follow, that path is Mine, O son of Pritha.

IV

And thus, we come closer to hallowed ground, the level where the truth takes place. There are no more exterior temples where the human being can expect salvation and solace. He needs to discover, to erect, and to enter the inner temple, which he is himself. There is a power that is liberating. And this is again the essence of the alchemical wedding that Christian Rosycross experienced. An era presents itself wherein *the Supreme Architect* can be served in a completely new way, an era that places us before inner temple building. Certainly, the perfection of the universe by means of living builders needs the help of all responsible builders. The first task is, however, self-freemasonry. And then, what exactly must be 'freely' built? Well, what else can it be than Osiris who has passed away in the human being? What else can it be but the light from the original, undamaged life, the one remaining atom of light, this spark of virginal spirit, which is the centre of the microcosm, just as the sun is the centre of the macrocosm? If this flame can burn freely again, if the personality has again become a temple, silent, but vibrating with power and life, if this flame has a large range, then life has once more become intact life.

Many orders know three steps, and similar to the Freemasons, the Rosicrucians also recognise three steps. There is talk about three temples, and in the *Alchemical Wedding of Christian Rosycross*, Andreae had the main character receive a letter, an invitation to a royal wedding: 'Art thou thereto by birth inclined', and this is every human being who wishes this. 'Then thou may'st to the mountain wend, on which three stately temples stand...'

You will not find these three temples anywhere but in the human figure. They are the temple of the heart, the temple of the head, and the temple of the creative life. The third temple is the one of the now lost Word. Jan van Rijckenborgh wrote:

The Order has three temples. A temple is a place of work, a place of service in which one works very hard indeed. The first temple is the temple of faith: of insight and self-surrender. The second temple is the temple of hope: of sanctification and re-creation. The third temple is the temple of love: of fulfilment.

In the first temple, the old person gives himself up to the Gnosis, to the sanctifying forces of Christ. In the second temple, he perishes through the enduristic life, while at the same time the new man, the other one, the immortal one, arises. In the third temple, the work is completed and the feast of victory and the feast of entry are celebrated. Every pupil has to pass through these three temples, these three places of work.

It is Horus, who is one with Osiris, who is being born; Christ, who is one with the Father, fills the whole human being as the new sun in the microcosm, like the firebird Phoenix of Thebes. In this way, it is the empty tomb in the Great Pyramid, dedicated to Osiris, at the same time, the empty grave of Christ, and in modern times, the grave temple of Christian Rosycross. But we are no longer staring into the emptiness of the grave, as if we are guilty of his death, but we embrace the *libertas evangelium*, the freedom of the Gospel. Because the veil of the temple, as the wisdom of ages puts it to us, has been rent, not because of one or another grief from heaven, but in order that each person who like Christian Rosycross knows to approach 'with a bared head, open eyes, and shoeless feet' will see the truth of the light.

The light inside the human being lives where freedom lives. In an old ritual of the Freemasons, one can read:

Living in the days of struggle between light and darkness, I try to find as much truth as possible, to honour, and to proclaim. I attempt to preserve the light that is threatened with destruction, yes, to bring it back to its former lustre, just as Jesus did. I am looking for the lost word...

And the answer of the Master:

Thus, in this loving hour in which the human being may witness that he has learned and demonstrated that he is human, I call to you: Preserve the found word! Do not permit the light to be extinguished!



Portrait of Karl von Eckartshausen, engraving, about 1790, Munich, State Archives

Karl von Eckartshausen

The human being is a composite being; after reading the previous pages, you will have become sufficiently familiar with this picture. Just as the brain is built up layer upon layer, the brainstem, the cerebellum, and the cerebrum, so we also recognise a similar layering in the soul.

Try to imagine what the human soul is, of what it consists. We can find several layers in it. One layer encompasses all that relates to the maintenance and the survival of the body and the species. Another layer deals with the wellbeing and the feelings of the person. There is a magnetic directedness that relates to a higher kind of desire: with art, with architecture, with music. Another layer encompasses all memories. We indicate another function with the term reason or intelligence. Finally, there is a focal point of the consciousness, which we usually indicate with the term 'ego' or less accurately with self-awareness or individuality. All this – and even more – shapes the human being, as we know him.

Unceasingly and over long periods of time, different parts were added, sometimes in great leaps and sometimes in smaller, more subtle steps of progress, as we have already seen in the first chapter. Layer upon layer, created in and by nature, the biological human being developed into a rational being that imposes his will upon nature, into a rational being who can think about himself but who – as history proves – does not do this correctly. In philosophy and also in psychology, the process of this development is studied in all its facets: from the haze in front of the eyes during war and bloodshed to the history of art and architecture, culminating in studies of western philosophy that try to catch the madness of the times in clearly defined systems.

All these are still the earthly characteristics of the nature-born human being that are only too well-known. However, the human being also exhibits properties, or better, characteristics, that correspond to the light principle. They are a few leftover, sensitive points in his being, which live in him like memories of a mysterious light and a pure and full life in the divine nature. He fell out of this world in which he once lived as a being with a totally different consciousness.

In earlier times, man had more of a preference for the terms darkness and light. What was earthly was called dark, and the higher aspirations in the human being and their objects were called light. Alchemists like Paracelsus and many on the same track pointed out that one had to separate the coarse from the fine, the light from the dark, but also heaven from earth in order to rejoin these cleansed and purified parts on a higher plane. Until the nineteen-sixties, it was believed in many circles that alchemists were dreamers, utopian eccentrics, who were determined to manufacture gold out of lead in a mysterious way. Presently, humanity is generally more inclined to view this symbolically: We are only dealing with the soul who for its eternal happiness must try to liberate the gold of the spirit from of its existence on earth.

Even if we formulate this so simply, we still do an injustice to the true alchemists, for their aspirations reached further. They not only wanted a spiritual, moral cleansing. According to them, it was possible to restore the entire earth to its original lustre by 'fire'.

Alchemy believed strongly in essences. The entire world, all of existence, shows a mixture of essences. Everything on earth is a mixture. Something that has been mixed is necessarily less pure than its original components. Why then is something mixed? To transform something, to attain something. To attain what?

This mixing is a great possibility created in an immeasurable wisdom by the Divine to transform again everything that is still dark, that had once fallen into unconsciousness in an infinite mixture of elements and essences, into the light-essences of the beginning. According to the alchemists, this was possible, and not only possible, rather this was the crucial problem to which all science should apply itself.

Pharmaceutics is the result thereof. Exceptional results have been

reached in this field. However, there is one essential difference to original alchemy. Pharmaceutics has always searched for the active component in a certain material. The alchemist looked for more, for three things to be exact. First of all, he searched for the salt, the active component. This he saw as the body. At the same time, he also looked for the soul or the sulphur of a plant or metal, and then for the mercury or the spirit of the plant or the mineral, which he 'cleansed'. After these three had been cleansed, they were again joined together in an exponentially reinforced remedy. This way they tried to purify the earth (by earth was meant all of nature, everything that one can find on earth) and lead it back to its original nature. This is totally in line with the world of pure ideas, as Plato had once explained at the dawn of western thinking.

The alchemist wanted to copy God's laboratory, the earth, God's great workshop – for thus he perceived this planet – in the alchemical laboratory. His aim was to extract the pure essences from plants, minerals, and metals, to combine them afterwards into the best remedies, or even into the universal remedy, the panacea.

Chemistry, which has evolved out of this, is the art of separation, the reduction of a certain material back to its active components. Alchemy adds to this the art of combining all these different elements on a higher plane, not only materially but also in the sphere of the soul and the spirit.

Gold, the noble metal, lies latently hidden in the earth. Only in the earth or also in the human being? At the end of the eighteenth century, some tried to answer this question. The scholar Eckartshausen, as we are told, assumed that in everything something of the original purity remains, but that everything also contains a certain impurity. In a certain experiment, he assumed that our earth, in this case, literally the composition of earth, also contains an element that causes the earth to be impure, less pure than it could be. Researchers of nature, who purified a certain amount of soil according to his directions, sowed one single seed of grain in a flowerpot that was filled with this earth and placed the pot outside. In this soil, the seed grew many times faster than under normal circumstances, and it yielded about 100 ears that exceeded all known grains in thickness, size, and beauty.

The kernels that were harvested hereof had such a natural and beautiful golden colour that you could have thought that they were painted with a wafer-thin layer of gold leaf. Their taste was sweeter and more pleasant than regular flour, which usually sticks a bit mushily to the tongue.

After a chemical analysis, it turned out that the flour paste, or the gluten, which has been implicated as a factor in bread getting stale, was lacking. Similar results were found in linseed. The flax that was planted in this purified soil was of a special beauty and extremely strong. This soil even had other special properties. Insects and worms fled this alien soil as fast as they could according to the reports. On top of that, it had the property of converting one part of regular soil that was mixed with two parts of cleansed soil into three parts of pure soil. That which was not equal to the lighter soil disappeared like moisture in the air. Later researchers concluded based on this that there are definitely grounds for the possibility that eventually, the entire earth will become a better planet through transformation. A further conclusion might be that already by improving our knowledge of the earth, a better human being will develop, freed from a large number of his present ailments and incompleteness.

II

Who was then this Karl von Eckartshausen? He was born June 28, 1752, as the son of Count Karl von Haimhausen and the daughter of his estate overseer, Maria Anna Eckhart. As his birth was illegitimate, he would later be unable to take the count's name and title. In his mother's honour, the count therefore joined her name to his and called him Eckartshausen. At the age of eighteen, he registered at the University of Ingolstadt in Bavaria, where he studied philosophy and law. At the age of twenty-four, he was elevated to the nobility and appointed aulic advisor and councilor to the court of the prince-elector, count of Palatine, and duke of Bavaria, Karl Theodor. His writings testify of a fiery inspiration and of an impressive esoteric and theosophical knowledge. The nice thing about von Eckartshausen is that he had the ability to make these mysteries accessible to his readers in a practical and logical way.

Nowadays, we hardly know what a court advisor was, or as it was

also called, a private advisor. One might compare this profession with that of a private secretary of a high-ranking person. It is someone who wrote a lot, who maintained the archives of his lord or of the court of his lord and the large household that it included. Such a person naturally got involved in matters that one did not want broadcast and often played a role of trust. At the same time, Eckartshausen was a kind of bookkeeper, and he held a certain amount of control over the finances of the estate and (later) of the town. There are often changing titles for what he did; his entire career consisted of professions that we no longer recognize.

Eckartshausen had studied law in Munich and Ingolstadt in Catholic Bavaria. At the age of twenty-five, he became a member of the Academy of Sciences, after he had been elevated to the nobility one year before. From 1780-1783 he was censor of the library in Munich. Thereafter, also the year he married Gabriele, the daughter of the medical doctor of the prince-electors of Bavaria, he was appointed to the office of the Keeper of the Archives of the Electoral House and three years before his death in 1799, as First Secret Archivist. Inside the princely court of Bavaria, he had established and organized the state archives in a way that even now, two centuries after his death, he is still praised for it. Indeed, you could compare his career to that of bookkeeper but not only restricted to financial matters. An important part of his job was the maintenance of the personal correspondence of his masters.

Karl von Eckartshausen began his studies under Jesuit teachers, but already during his studies, his sensitive and acute mind underwent an important change. Antoine Faivre, an expert on Eckartshausen in our time who has written a thick book about him, put it this way: In his time, religion became religious sciences, and the university where he studied turned into a battlefield where the supporters of the Enlightenment and those of the traditional way of teaching fought for preference. The spiritual development of the young Eckartshausen was a reasonable reflection of these contrasts. As a young man, he read everything. He was intensely interested in alchemy and had an inquisitive mind. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Friedrich Schiller, his contemporaries, heard of the 'palingenetic' experiments of Eckartshausen whereby a plant was pulverized to ashes and the spectrum of

its colours appeared. They smiled about this. However, these experiments have been important for the development of our knowledge of electricity.

However, Karl von Eckartshausen was above all an author. This was imperative in his profession, because his job as court advisor demanded that he had to write a lot. If the duke had to give speech somewhere, then von Eckartshausen had written it, and he himself also gave many lectures and official speeches. At a very young age, he was accepted into the prestigious Bavarian Academy of Sciences. At one point, Adam Weishaupt, a freethinker who initially exercised a great influence on him, was appointed at his school. In 1776, this man had established a secret society with different grades and steps similar to freemasonry. Its members called themselves the enlightened ones or the Illuminati. The members were promised that important mental or spiritual secrets would be revealed to them in the higher degrees. At the age of twenty-four, the spiritually receptive Karl von Eckartshausen loved to hear this and became a member of the Illuminati. However, the promises turned out to be swindle. Furthermore, he discovered that the organisation functioned as a cover for a political organisation. Its purpose was to dethrone the king as well as to abolish religion, and instead to enthrone 'enlightenment' – whose aim was that humanity had to follow reason in everything. This was one of the precursors for the Age of Reason, which simultaneously met with approval in France and which finally paved the way for that dark page of European history, the French Revolution, where the slogan liberty, equality, and fraternity was interpreted so cynically.

From the moment that Karl had access to the archives, he saw through this plan and warned the prince-electors that important documents were missing from the archives. He played a prominent role in the dismantling of the order, but at the same time, his investigative drive was intensely stimulated. Did there not have to be a doctrine behind the doctrine, behind the 'outer' religion? For does not all religion emerge from the One? This searching led him along many ways. First, the indignation over his 'illegitimate' birth, which was never recognized by his father or his family. Then, it led him along all the ways of natural magic, which we would now classify as the 'occult'. He wrote gripping stories about appearances of spirits. He wrote about

the morality of his times. He wrote a booklet about moral philosophy for 'youth who would dedicate themselves to chivalrous aspirations'. In the period between 1788–1792 appeared his first esoteric work, *Aufschlüsse zur Magie* (*Magic – The Principles of Higher Knowledge*), which consisted of four parts.

At a certain moment, he and some other friends discovered the work of Jakob Böhme, the Teutonic philosopher about whom you have read already a lot in this book. Böhme was again becoming more known during the period of German romanticism and in some circles even fashionable. For instance, the famous and at a young age deceased poet Novalis was an absolute fan of Böhme. Böhme's work also made a deep impression on von Eckartshausen, and in his studies and in the books he published afterwards, one often encounters the doctrine of the two worlds within the human being almost in the same way as Böhme had rendered this. In the style of Böhme, he wrote:

Let yourself not be confused, dear pupil, by those who are outside. You see that in our inner school, everything takes its course according to plan and that we know neither raving nor supernatural phenomena but explain everything according to the true and eternal laws of nature.

At first, the inner being is a silent figure, but soon enough, it increases in power, beauty, and life. At first, it is immovable and distant, but gradually it becomes more alive than the old earthly personality. At first, it is an idol, at the end, a living reality. Regarding the above, a beautiful letter that Eckartshausen wrote in 1798 to his friend Conrad Schmid has been preserved. Therein he said:

Recently, I saw it in front of me. A little boy taught me about the following: In the innermost of our heart lies the divine, hidden, as below the rough bark of a tree. Then comes faith, the only remnant that is left to us in our ignorance, and this brings this divine spark into movement. And with it, love grows. This rising love meets the spirit from above, and creates the waters of mercy with the love in this mercy. This dissolving is the shedding of the old human being. Then the spirit of the light starts to work to manifest itself in us. In this way, we change into a pure being. This is the law of regeneration. To convince you, says the boy, I'll show

you that the physical bodies can be regenerated and elevated to the highest perfection in physical light according to the same law. Thus, I learned from the law of spiritual rebirth, the law of the physical. I saw with physical eyes everything that until then I had only seen with the eyes of my soul. Trust in the Lord. Amen, hallelujah.

Several contemporaries of Eckartshausen testified of his generosity and his behaviour that was inspired by compassion. Thus, the count of Stassart who knew him personally wrote:

The author knew how to write eloquently about the duties of humanity. We add to that, that he set an even better example: Every month, as a true Christian, he contributed from his earnings to alleviate certain needs. Prisoners of war, and especially the wounded, were the subject of his care. One day, he was seen removing part of his clothing despite the wintry weather to supply clothes to unhappy French soldiers who were being sent via Germany to Hungary in 1795.

III

Free Thought, which had the point of view that the human being had to find explanations by means of reason itself, did not attract him. For him, reason was not the final goal, and he had serious qualms over the pride that may go hand in hand with it. In reality, the acuteness of reason had already reached its temporary pinnacle a century earlier with Baruch de Spinoza and René Descartes.

For Spinoza (1632-1677), reason was the absolute precursor for the soul. Whoever used pure reason and kept it pure would find the true good. In the introduction to his *Ethics*, Spinoza wrote:

After experience had taught me that all that occurs in ordinary life is vain and insignificant, and I saw that all which and for which I feared, did not contain anything good nor anything bad, [...] I finally decided to research if there existed something that was truly good, that one might become part of, and through which only by discarding everything else, the soul can be realized.

The Divine nature reveals itself then because the soul rises in His love, finally guided by reason. Then soul and reason together discover that God is all, the only true, pure substance that is the first cause of everything and finally also its fulfilment. The personality, which is full of conflict, is then totally dissolved in the new that has been born.

When the divine principle in the human being stirs, the first thing that shows itself according to Spinoza is reason. From this reason then develops the pure, spiritual love for God. Only on this basis can the whole human being be liberated and undergo a total transfiguration. Spinoza was so noble, pure, and straightforward in his modesty and non-argumentative attitude of life that until today very few people can tread in his footsteps.

René Descartes (1596-1650) is a very different figure. This soldier and thinker introduced a different way to look at reason. He brought a new element to the fore in a new philosophy wherein reason begins to think about itself. *Cogito, ergo sum*. I think, therefore I am. Descartes drew a line. He truly tried to view reality in a totally new way. He started with doubting everything; nothing exists that is indisputable. To start with, he was sceptical about the senses, then about dreams, then about the world and its elements, then about mathematics and geometry. He reasoned,

Because it is possible that God or a deceitful powerful spirit lets me make mistakes while I think I am measuring very exactly. Even the body wherein I think could be an illusion.

But there is one thing that I cannot doubt: Even if I would think that everything is unreal, then it must still be so that the ego, which thinks, is something. When I then noticed that this truth, I think, therefore I am, is so unassailable and so definite that even the most farfetched hypotheses of the sceptics could not shake it, then I thought that I could without objection accept it as the first principle of the philosophy I was looking for.

This is the nucleus of his philosophy. With this, a development began that has led ever further into abstraction. It would take us too far to follow all these steps, but it came about that at a certain moment, the philosopher Hume claimed that, 'All is matter; the spirit is matter',

and someone else, 'All is spirit; matter is spirit'. Subsequently, the scholar Locke familiarised the world with the thought that the properties of things (colour, sound, taste, and the like) are subjective and do not belong to the object itself. This means that you give colour to things in your head when you see them. Of course, this cannot be denied. Lastly, Immanuel Kant asserted with finality, 'As a thing by itself I am nothing, and nothing exists outside me.'

This is the way that the human being tried to understand the truth and reality concerning himself. In the century and a half before the eighteenth century, one thought first, 'If we let reason prevail over superstitions, urges, and feelings, we are enlightened', to then pose the following question, 'What really is reason?' This led the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau to draw the following conclusion:

No, we have to reverse it. In all things, we should start from ourselves, and exactly culture and the compulsion of reason have driven us away from the deepest and purest. That is why we, together with reason, have to return to nature. Let us be guided by it to begin to lead a life as pure, somewhat civilized natives.

This has become one of the principles of romanticism, with which all of us may be somewhat more familiar. However, this same romanticism has caused in its turn a remarkable division.

This kind of attitude of life is impossible to follow for a simple human being. Now that heart and head are so disconnected, there is for each – as is only natural – a new horizon, a new possibility, in the distance, and each will follow a separate development. On the one side, we see an unbridled spiral of feelings emerge, on the other side, a great rationality that led to the industrial revolution. On the one side, there were the sublime beauty, the feelings, and the swooning subtlety in the music and paintings of that time, the aesthetics in almost everything, and on the other side, the chilly beauty and the inhumanity of the for that time very advanced steam engines, the first experiments with electricity, and Frankenstein-like devices.

Still, also in those times, impulses emanated from the true life that showed themselves to the seeker who managed to penetrate behind the fascinating veil of a world 'under steam'. Then too, the same call

to return to unity resounded, to the inner connection of all that share in the mysterious 'life'. Certainly, efforts were made in the 18th century to come to a simple and pure morality.

The hidden history is always at work, the stream of light always finds people who allow themselves to be taken up in it and through whom it is able to do its work.

Thus, we may draw once more one of the oldest conclusions from the history of western thought with regard to humanity: The human being is a creature with reason, which elevates him above all other creatures of this nature. For with reason, he himself quickly becomes the reason for everything. Has the world not been created for him, in order that he can manifest himself, can create through reason? For about 100,000 years, the human being has had at his disposal the cerebrum with which he thinks. Therefore, he wants to understand why something happens, and because he wants to understand, he poses questions. He poses big questions or small questions to ask finally himself what the truth is. The researcher can make use of the most advanced equipment, but his brain is his most important tool.

Whoever views the world picture, then and now, must wonder what will become of reason and of human reason? The human being possesses reason, but does he know what its purpose is? Has he yet understood what the first letter to the Corinthians means with the words,

For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.

In order to find something, the starting point of the search has to be correct. Whoever does not hold on to the inner being as the starting point can only maintain the consequences of his arguments with extreme suppression. With biting mockery, Karl von Eckartshausen wrote and prophesied in 1785 in his booklet *Concerning Religion, Free Thought, and Enlightenment*, 'He becomes a tyrant, or he loses his mind, or both'. How right he was!

The religion of reason culminated in the satanic period of the French revolution. Some astrologers defend this period as the first be-

ginning of the Age of Aquarius, especially because of the slogan *Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité*. With that, they completely lose sight of the fact that there is hardly a more cynical and bloody episode to be found in the west in the time before the Second World War. In Paris, the revolution had made a clean sweep of the ruling classes. The king, the nobility, and the priests had all disappeared. The citizen was the new centre, and therefore the new republic had a constitution, a new administration of justice, new laws, and even a new almanac.

However, something was missing: a new religion, no longer with a god this time, for a god, a male father figure, means majesty, power, kingship – literally everything that the French people had rejected so bloodily. No, it could not be a god, but it should be a goddess: a goddess, an idol, a toy! When Robespierre noticed that the masses, although now living in the new and enlightened times of the new order, were not able to be without religion, he took a prostitute of the masses and appointed her as the goddess of reason. In honour of her celebration, on one day 10,000 people would be decapitated under the so 'merciful' guillotine, and that evening, as the greatest apotheosis, some hundreds of tied-up men, women, and children would be slowly sunk on ships in the middle of the Loire estuary during the so-called 'Noyades' surely, the goddess of reason and Robespierre her prophet!

This was the practical result of the Enlightenment based on reason. The prophecy of von Eckartshausen of 1785 had been fulfilled almost too exactly.

IV

It is worthwhile to follow Eckartshausen's struggle for inner knowledge. His sensitive nature had received much of what he wrote through inspiration. Especially in the latter part of his life, he made great leaps forward and was he able to confirm through inner observation what he always had suspected:

The ways on which God has led me and still leads me are surprising, but therefore full of experiences. He let me drink the cup of different kinds of suffering through some experiences of illness – to learn to understand the world and God's intention. He also put me in the most bitter situa-

tions so that through my suffering, I would learn to know the suffering of thousands, in order to work even harder for the lessening of all suffering. Everything He did to me, He also healed again.

All what I wrote, what I suspected – what I saw and felt in my inner self, have been games, contrary to that what I have really found – rather what God let me find. Constantly I begged the Lord to have mercy upon suffering mankind, and to provide us with means to fulfill the temporary and physical work of charity, and He has done so. But because darkness and light are always struggling against each other, I had to pass through three temptations. The first one was connected with the decrease of my strength, the second with the misuse of the works and the secrets of God and of nature for sensual purposes. After I with His assistance helped to conquer both of them, the third one came in which I have been for some time: terrible storms from outside, weariness of living, powerlessness under various outer persecutions. God will help me also in this case, however.

On September 2, 1797, his wife, Gabriela von Wolter died, an event that touched him greatly because she had been his support in a spiritual sense as well. He wrote to a friend:

My life companion has passed away. She is not here anymore for me, in her mortal shell. [...] May every tear that human sentiment presses from my eyes be a sacrifice to Him. She died peacefully. Her last words to me were, God is the simplest being! We do not understand him, because we are complicated. If we open ourselves up completely to him, he will express himself totally in us, as he is. He is calling me. Farewell; I shall eternally pray for you!

Eckartshausen found the real key to the higher world only at the end of his life. He received more and more answers to his unceasing desire for knowledge. He wrote:

For several months, I have been receiving multiple lessons from above, and since the 15th of March, these have been getting more peculiar. I do not know the words in our language to explain how this happens, for the secrets of the pneumatic world [he means the real world] cannot be under-

stood by the brain without seeing them.

I received the following revelations in regards to this: 1. There exists a communication between the spirits and the physical world. 2. One can really speak through the Lord with the higher being and can receive various instructions. 3. There exists a pneumatic world of which the brain has no idea, unless it has learned to see this world. 4. How man can behold this vision, test it, and is able to convince himself. 5. I learned that every human being has a spiritual number with which he can connect through the inner being with heaven. 6. I was taught how three becomes united with four, and four with three, in order that the triangle stands in the square. 7. I was introduced to the language of nature and to the character and seals of objects that only the Lamb opens, as well as still other and hidden things that I am allowed to share for the glorification of His holy name with all who honour Him in spirit and truth.

Who then was Karl von Eckartshausen? We asked this question at the beginning of the second section of this chapter. He himself replied to this question once as follows:

Question: Who are you?

Reply: I am a person who knows the light and follows it.

Q: Who is such a person?

R: It is a person who, after having recognised the light, has been enlightened by it and follows it completely; a person who knows everything and practises what the community of light always knew and practised, be it written in the book of light or not.

Q: By what signs does one recognise the follower of the light?

R: By that he knows the sign of the cross of nature, the great symbol of the power of separation of the pure from the impure, of the perfect from the imperfect. That he avoids all counterfeit works and errors that the true teachers of the genuine community of light unanimously reject.

Q: How does the person who follows the light characterize himself?

R: He characterizes himself by the great sign of the cross of nature, by the sign of the great power of separation. He says and undertakes everything in the name or by the properties of the fire, the light and the spirit through which he brings everything to its Amen or completion. Beginning to view God in his spirit, he then recognizes that God is outside of all

space, time, place, and movement, and that all the same there must be something in God that moves and orders space, time, place, and all things. This something is the Word, the wisdom and glory of God. This Word is not an imaginary being but something bodily wherein the divine works united with the human being in purest form, the supersensory with the sensory, the spiritual with the bodily, on the human receptivity to the divine, on the capacity to elevate the sensory human being to the supersensory, and on the capacity of the material to glorify itself into the spiritual.

This great man, who during his life held a number of important offices but was always poor and suffered deprivation, died in 1803 in sad circumstances. After Gabriela, he was married for a third time, this time rather unhappily, and he left six children in needy circumstances. We read about his death on May 13, 1803, in the diary of another courtier, General Louis de Clérambault:

A cold day, with every other minute rain. Today Karl von Eckartshausen passed away, at the age of 51. He was the natural son of the Count of Haimhausen. He was aulic counselor and archivist. He has written much, including books of prayer. His second wife was a Wolter and a proud lady who did cost him a lot, but to his great chagrin, he married the third time with a miss Weiss, daughter of a financial counselor who was nicknamed The White Lady because she travelled the whole world as a companion of the Countess Litta, born Haimhausen. This last wife led a rather loose life and has ruined him, because for her sake, he did mislead many and died bankrupt. There was something light and cheerful in the theatre.

How very much this stands in contradiction to the open and light atmosphere of von Eckartshausen's thinking as it is revealed in his writings. In these, von Eckartshausen liked to quote Francis Bacon who said that only a weak philosopher who does not know Christianity despises it; that whoever looks deeper inside nature, returns from his error and is surprised by the great mysteries that are hidden within it.

I speak of an artless, ineradicable desire lying deeply hidden in the soul to

become a worthy and true friend of the higher, more alive spirits who stand nearer to God. This desire alone is a higher touch. The human being who is of heavenly descent and belongs to the select family of God is receptive to true spiritual influences.

He dealt with this wisdom in his book *The Cloud over the Sanctuary*, which was written in the form of 'Six Letters from the Inner Temple'. In 1797, another small work of his appeared called *Some Words from the Innermost*. Therein he described the threefold way in which all liberating work is set up. At the conclusion of this chapter, we give an excerpt from that text:

Has there ever existed a school for the general education of human beings, a general school of wisdom? And what were its secrets?

This has been the question for several centuries already, and one has contemplated about it in various ways. Was this school of truth – if one ever existed – established by human beings? Was it a combination of understanding and acumen? Or was it the result of experience? Or was it only a well-intended attempt by noble-minded people? Who has replied adequately to these questions? And who could answer them at all?

There exists a general school of wisdom, and it has a heavenly chair in the innermost part of the spirit, from which all realisation comes. This school of wisdom has

its exterior,

its interior,

its innermost,

and this exterior,

interior,

and innermost

are chained to each other. Only he who knows the exterior, the interior, and the innermost, is able to answer the questions referred to above, because only he knows the whole. The time has not come yet that those who knew the whole spoke about this.

What is present in the innermost of this school as power is expressed in the interior as effect and in the exterior as form or hieroglyph. Thus, this

school of wisdom had
its forecourt,
its temple,
its sanctuary.

Only those who in a particular era were in the innermost sanctuary looked through the temple into the forecourts. The innermost sanctuary was still locked to those who were in the forecourts and in the temple.

In a particular era, few penetrated from the interior into the innermost. The majority remained in the forecourts. All changes and confusion that occurred in this school only involved the forecourt. The temple and the sanctuary always remained unchanged. Only the form is subject to the laws of time and to its changes. The spirit in the interior is unchangeable and eternal. The forecourts could be defiled, defaced, and desecrated, but never the inner temple and the innermost sanctuary.

Wisdom reigns in the innermost,
love in the interior,
and the spirit emanating from wisdom and love should reign over the exterior.

The human being – nature – God – these are the subjects of the schools of wisdom: the human being in the forecourt, nature in the temple, and God in the sanctuary. It has always been the intention of the schools of wisdom to guide the human being out of the forecourt of his own self into the temple of nature and through nature into the innermost sanctuary to God. The school of wisdom accepts people of all religions in its forecourt because its purpose is to connect people with people and people with God. The differences of religion remain in the forecourt. Brothers enter the temple with brothers, however, and they unite as anointed ones, as Christians, in the sanctuary.

Wisdom, love, and truth were the means and will always remain the means of the schools of wisdom to guide people to the great end of the highest perfection.

These three trainings schools were more or less connected with each other as long as the world has existed. They only reach their highest perfection if the innermost is closely linked with the interior, and the interior with the exterior.

The Confession of Faith of Karl von Eckartshausen

I believe in a creative firepower out of which heaven and earth arose or the fleeting and the firm.

I believe in a light begotten by this firepower, the ruler over the world or the omnipotent power in nature.

This pure light that has issued from the fire is received by the spirit and reveals itself in the purest form.

However, it has to suffer in the realm of impurity and be separated, killed, and buried in the earth.

Then the light descends into the innermost of matter, and after three periods, that is, after three unions of three spiritual powers with three purified forms, it awakens once more to life.

It exalts itself to highest perfection as a shining light power of the almighty fire.

After reaching this highest perfection, it is able to make everything dead alive and everything imperfect perfect.

I believe in and know the spirit of light that emanates from fire and warmth; the holy, general, true community of light, the community and union of those with the faculty of light;

the healing of illnesses and the extinction of misery;

the renewal of our being;

as well as the highest felicitousness of life. ~

PART IV

THE LIBERATION OF THE BEING OF LIGHT



Antonin Gadal explains an Egyptian Ushapti figure around 1955. Photo: Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica, Amsterdam.

CHAPTER 19

Antonin Gadál

I

In the last part of this book, we arrive in the modern era. With images from various times and some personal portraits, we have seen how the current of gnostic developments has made headway and how it manifested itself in a splendid and powerful way in the seventeenth-century's young but nevertheless ancient brotherhood of the classical Rosycross. This stream has finally also claimed the attention of those who are reading this book.

With this, it is good to bear in mind two things. With these portraits of time, it is not history as such that speaks to you, anyway not primarily. It would not be strange if you would also experience a stimulus not to forget the original but unknown life while reading these lines.

Such a stimulus, which could be the answer to a certain discontent with daily life or with whatever you are at this moment, the modern Rosycross refers to as 'the call'. This is the only, the essential characteristic that you are able to know in the beginning of the two worlds inside of you.

We look back in time to see how the same call sounded under different circumstances, what the reactions to it and the results were. We are impressed with the heavy load and great suffering that many of the workers were subjected to. We are impressed by the beauty and the fiery force that resound in many of the splendid works written by them. In the preceding parts, you were able to read some small excerpts from them. What is crucial is whether you are able to hear this call also in our time and then can answer it with human deeds that can transform an inner picture of life into a reality that will give life radiance, depth, and fullness.

There is another important reason to look back. We can of course

understand very well that the call is a thing of all time and in a certain way, is not bound by time. But there is a difference between the call in its generality and the applied knowledge of those who begin the road of return. The call in its generality sounds for everyone. The path of return, we are forced to admit, is walked by relatively few. For then, it appears that there are a great many aspects that we encounter on the spiritual path about which we have never thought before. How difficult it can be if your heart is filled with real yearning but your life seems to erect all kinds of obstacles. How do you deal with this? And also, even if your yearning is great, are you seeing matters as they truly are? It is not for nothing that one says, 'Love is blind'. Should you hold on or just go with the flow? Is what you perceive as light actually light or are you misleading yourself? Should you study or not study, or should one plan a career? And then, once you are on your way and, for example, you are doing really well in society, are you then still inclined to be steadfast? Through all this, are you still caring about the so delicate and sensitive soul life? From where, in a practical sense, do you get wisdom? In such a case, books often are no longer helpful; the answer has to come from within yourself. Because for what you are on the lookout, for what you are really looking, this is what you will be at some point. But then, this must truly come from your heart.

We already have spoken extensively about the high-principled civilization which blossomed during the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries in Occitania, the region surrounding the Pyrenees. These were really remarkable years. So much happened in those years, on the slopes and the foothills of the Pyrenees mountains. Names with a strange mixture of Spanish, Latin, and French caress the ear: Ornat, Carcassonne, Peyrepertuse, Pog, Montréal-de-Sos. In the castles, the love poetry and the songs of the troubadours came into being, and some of the legends of the grail were generally situated there, although important parts of the Parcival legend were already known in the Persian language.

It is said that love poetry formed the basis of the development of national languages. It is one of the first, if not the first, form of poetry and literature in some languages. Presently there are voices who claim that in turn, some love songs originated from the fervent love

of the *bonshommes* for the higher, spiritual life, for the striving after the lady inside the human being, the soul. The *bonshommes*, or *bonomini*, these were the *perfecti*, the perfect ones of the Cathars. The group of the *fidèles d'amour* formed one of the last representatives of the Brotherhood who were active in Europe during that time. In a certain way, that Church of Love, as it called itself, was so important through its influence on the population of northern Spain and a large part of southern and central France that the regular church and the rising kings from northern France considered it significant enough to put an end to it by sword and fire. Nowadays, we call them the Brotherhood of the Pure Ones, of the Cathars, a name that was given to them by their opponents. They only knew themselves as the 'loyal' or 'faithful' ones: *fidèles d'amour*. The people knew them as the *tisserands* or 'weavers', which is also, beside their way of making a living, an indication of their most important activity, namely of their striving to weave a new soul garment for the light soul.

We were able to read earlier about this. In addition, there is one of the loveliest books, the book that Antonin Gadala wrote in the 1920s about Matthew, a boy who in his youth prepared himself for a life as a pure one, as a *parfait*. *On the Path to the Holy Grail* is an inspired and understandable book that deepens the insight into the pure, Christian, and Gnostic thinking of the Brotherhood of the Cathars. A beautiful description of the history of the Cathars is found in the book by Bram Moerland, first published in 1992, *Montségur – Katharen en de val van Montségur*.

In this part, we would like to show how the Gnosis, the Grail, and the impulse of the Brotherhood of the Cathars have been forged in modern times into a real synthesis, into a long awaited unity that irrespective of time and place is continuing to work. Actually a real miracle! 'Try to reach renewal', it seems to say. 'Shift to a purification of your motives; direct yourself toward the Gnosis – that unknown inner force, foreign to the world. Realize, build in this way a soul; develop thus a certain wisdom and self-knowledge, not through others, but out of yourself, out of your heart.'

II

At the start of the last century, a group of people in the south of France, in the valley of the Ariège, wanted to carry out a similar vision or ideal. One of them was Antonin Gadal, a teacher and speleologist from Ussat-les-Bains. This vision became reality when this historian came in contact with the school of the modern Rosycross, in the persons of Catharose de Petri and Jan van Rijckenborgh.

Antonin Gadal knew the value of the spiritual history as we have described it above. He was looking forward to the moment when the Gnosis of the Cathars would once more find its way into the hearts of humanity. In the early 1950s, he came into contact with the modern Rosycross, and the joy of Gadal, then 77 years old, knew no bounds. On the personal level, it was a mutual recognition. Jan van Rijckenborgh and Catharose de Petri saw in him an older brother, who with a well-founded and inner knowledge could confirm their work. And Gadal recognized in his Dutch friends the leaders of a group who not only had kept the memory of the Gnostic idea, but at the same time were to their hearts' content active with propelling it into life and workability: not only as a memory of the past, but as an adaptable force in the new times that were at the door. And not only all this just for a small group of people in Haarlem, or for an even smaller group who had heard of the Cathars in Ussat, but for a group that had to be the start of a worldwide development. Gadal held many speeches, naturally about the so long-preserved wisdom and history of the Cathars and their roots, some of it rediscovered by him. At the same time, he pointed out that the basic values for spiritual life have remained the same throughout the centuries, similar to a river on the earth's surface that at expected and also at unexpected moments floods and leaves the surrounding fields fertile.

With the portrayal of his tutor, Adolphe Garrigou, Antonin Gadal himself gave an example of a 'keeper' of the type we wrote about in the foregoing. Recently, this inhabitant of Tarascon received recognition as a pioneer of the opening up of the caves in the valley of the Ariège and in general, as an important stimulator of the research into the history of the south of France. In a sympathetic and inspired article that Gadal wrote about Garrigou, we encounter all the characteristics that

one admires so much in Gadal, also a similar struggle, which he lived through in the first half of the twentieth century. He sometimes called him 'Papa Garrigou' and later, more respectfully, 'the Master' or also 'the patriarch of the Sabarthez'.

Gadal told how as a youth he had become a reader and secretary for the then already ancient Garrigou, who had been born in the early days of the nineteenth century, on January 10, 1802. In his younger years, Gadal had tagged along with Garrigou. Gadal had been a kind of private secretary to Garrigou, and he had to read to him because his eyesight had become weak. Garrigou in his turn found in Gadal a spirit susceptible to the new ideas about history that he had gained over the almost one hundred years of his life, ideas partly based on an even older source, Napoléon Peyrat, a Protestant minister with a fondness for the native, national history of the Languedoc. With his *History of the Albigenes*, he wrote a fervent discourse against the Roman version of the history and showed with romantic and patriotic words a very different and older France: that of Aquitania, fighting for its independence.

From the outset, the young Antonin was immersed in this spirit: With the ancient Garrigou, his principal task was to listen and read curious texts from the unusual books that Garrigou possessed. He also had to write: He recorded what old Adolphe told him and whatever occurred to him.

III

Adolphe Garrigou passed away in Tarascon at the age of 95. Once, Gadal briefly summarized in a commemorative text about his master the problems of 'maintaining the heritage of the Cathars', with which also he was confronted all of his long life. For Garrigou has been tarred by the same brush as Gadal by subsequent scholars, often in a derogatory and venomous way: 'There is no proof for all that you tell about the caves of Bouan, Ussat, and Ornlac; you invent your own history about the Cathars who are supposed to have had their centre here in the South.' Garrigou was similarly reproached, for example, by Abbot Duclos, another historian, that he had not sufficiently researched the historical treasures he had discovered.

Gadal defended his old master. He explained,

For here we are dealing with the centuries-old question: Show us then that spiritual world order, that other realm. Give us proof! Then, perhaps, we might direct ourselves that way, too.

Gadal continued,

This weighty reproach is without doubt impossible to maintain when one knows the public and especially the private life of the master. What is the labour that resulted from the functions he had in society compared to the work he has done in his private life? From where should the proofs and the means come to bring the beauty of the sublime spiritual life that blossomed in the eleventh and twelfth century on our mountains before the footlight of the world stage? That is a research that takes an enormous amount of time. An exact account is a time-consuming business, often difficult, and always swallows up money. And all help was lacking: Garrigou had always financed all his research himself until he could not anymore. His capital shrunk, and the taxes increased. The situation of the master was deplorable in the last years of his life, but his courage was stronger and his faith more powerful than ever. He gave the very best example of a modest life that from start to finish was devoted to the religion of love, the Cathar faith.

Without doubt, one can determine that Adolphe Garrigou was the first one who collected all this invaluable material for the history of the Sabarthez and duchy of Foix. When one knows the unbelievably big role that this little piece of France has played in the higher spiritual life of France, then one can only admire the master who brought all this to light. In 1821, Garrigou began with the uncovering of the beautiful cave of Lombrives, the cathedral of the Albigenses. Thereafter came the turn of the three churches of the Albigenses: Ussat, Ornolac, and Bouan, and some smaller caves, rich in history, but perhaps less important.

And he was aware that he built, reconstructed. And when, at a certain moment, each stone was fitted exactly in its place, the treasury was all ready. From this, everyone must draw who wishes to follow the new road that has been paved by the patriarch and which takes the place of the old ways that were dictated by sectarian thinking and intolerance.

He knew; he wanted.... He was aware that this was once more the way of the Holy Grail, no more, no less, and cutting straight through suspicion, disappointments, and misery, he wanted to make it known.

In 1936, Gadal wrote prophetically:

Without doubt, in a different spiritual climate, it would have been possible to accomplish better things. Let us be modest, like the master; let us have an understanding for the way he did it and be content with what there is. The remainder is in the hands of fate and shall emerge from the dark at the right time. Isn't the year 1937 *the Year of the Grail*? And has this movement, which has been seen earlier, not taken shape as a large movement all over the world?

In a few lines, he sketched the bitterness of Garrigou's lot:

Garrigou's shadow, like the shadows of the other protectors of the Sabarthez, has not left his so beloved places. One gets a taste of him, one feels him, in the Cathedral as well as in the Trois Eglises. How else could it be? Hasn't he fulfilled the role of arbitrator, impressed upon him by the God of Love, until the very end? If in the material world the title of *Conservateur des Grottes du Sabarthez* (meaning: Keeper of the Caves of the Sabarthez) was withheld from him, is that his fault? This title, which he coveted, he who otherwise did not attach any value to numerous decorations, even though his fellow citizens would really have appreciated if he had accepted them, this title is expensive in our beloved France – one has to pay, what a horrible irony – to obtain the right to take care of our beautiful and honored grottoes and of our smaller caves, the *spoulgas*. The master could not afford this luxury anymore for himself. His sorrow may be over, because dedicated pupils have taken the necessary steps in his memory to rectify this deplorable situation. The wonderful library of Garrigou has ended up at an antiquarian bookshop however; his speleological collection has been stored somewhere in unknown warehouses; his manuscripts have disappeared; they have even been hidden by experts. The house on the *Place de la Cite du Vieux Tarascon* threatens to go to ruin, and his numerous relatives have not the least interest to commemorate the venerable patriarch.

And in spite of all this, his work remains, and it shall live! This is the most important.... His pupil knows that it must be so, and thus it shall be!

IV

The circumstances under which schoolteacher Gadal lived before the war were plainly poor. His salary was barely enough for a minimal sustenance of life. During the winter, the valley of the Ariège was completely isolated, and nobody came there. From surviving letters of his extensive correspondence, it appears that often there was not even enough wood to burn throughout the winter. Then what did he envision as his task? Why is he also called, like Garrigou before him, the protector of the Sabarthez?

He found himself placed before a number of problems. In the first place, like Eckhartshausen, Gadal lived in a predominantly Catholic region. How could he in such a case talk about the religion of freedom? This was not without real danger. It becomes even more difficult, if you want to show secondly how systematically, thoroughly, and bloodily the perfect ones of Catharism, the pure ones of the Templars and the Rosicrucians, their pupils and their sympathisers were exterminated. Gadal accomplished this by exposing the Douad archives of the Inquisition, which were kept in Toulouse and Paris. For the Inquisition was very thorough and effective, not only in the hunting of heretics, but just as precise in recording all trials.

Thirdly, after all these centuries, he wanted to show what the real religion of the Church of the Cathars was, the Church of Love, of the Paraclete, not as described by opponents, but conveyed in a way that the beauty of the eternal longing radiated through it. On top of that, already before the war, he envisioned the idea of a spiritual Triple Alliance. He was aware that in the coming times, a triple bundling of spiritual force would take the real liberating work in hand. Before the Second World War, he thought that this concerned a cooperation between the Templars, the Rosicrucians, and the Cathars reverting, according to him, to a prior existing secret union of the three movements in the Middle Ages.

A fifth problem was that he might have been able to do all this and that it was important that these matters were rediscovered, but there

also had to be a receptive ear; there had to be found a circle of people who could descry the line of the gnosis and at the same time could understand it. In the years before the war, he had a great respect for the line of thinking of Rudolf Steiner, and he had even tried to make the gnosis known in France in that vein. However, in the end, this could not be the way of the new times, because Steiner thought an *evolution* was possible in the direction of the spiritual being, while according to Gadal an *endura*, a total yielding of the I-personality had to precede a total submerging in Christ, like the *fidèles d'amour* had also lived it.

He had influence on many other presently well-known persons. With each of them, he waited, and he hoped. This comes to light again in his correspondence of which a part is kept in the Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica in Amsterdam. We find among them names like Maurice Magre and Otto Rahn, René Niel and Deodat Roché. They had visited him more than once, and through him, they learned about the caves and their background. On top of this, he kept up a substantial correspondence with many thinkers in Europe who were interested in the Cathar past. Out of England, the interest came in the person of Walter Birks, who was sent by his esoteric order to the south of France with the mission to find the grail.

All his life, Antonin Gadal never deviated from the line of the gnosis, which stands diametrically opposite any 'normal' religion. This line and the history of Catharism as he perceived it ran along four points. Following this, he tried to further execute the task he experienced.

First: The terms 'Albigensian' and 'Manichean' as the Cathars were called in the melee of history until then, were unjust according to him. 'Dualism ended with the school of Alexandria,' he wrote, 'and furthermore, the Cathars of Aquitania and of France only knew one essence: God, the Spirit!' He saw the historical line before him as follows:

- Novatius, active in Alexandria between 236 and 253, founded a rival church, alongside the Roman one, the church of the Cathars or the pure ones. This church had auxiliaries in Africa, Asia Minor, and in Galicia, a region in the western part of present-day Turkey. (See Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* VI-43, x-20.)
- From 300, Marcos of Memphis preached in Spain. Priscillianus came with his Gnostic message as far as Germany. He was decapitated with two of his supporters in Trier in 382.

- The Bogomils were neither Manicheans nor Cathars. After all, the latter were not able to recognize a God of evil: God is love. The Bogomils suppressed the evil God by purifying themselves, which one calls 'moderate' dualism.
- The idea of Mani, who called himself the representative of Christ on earth, was to found a universal theocracy, well before the time that Rome would establish a church-ruled world power. But as far as the West is concerned, he did not succeed.
- Nicetas, who arrived in 1167 in Narbonne to organize the Catharism in the Pyrenees, was no Bogomil; he was bishop of the seven churches of Asia, meaning of the line of John! He was sent by these seven churches from Constantinople, where all the Manicheans had been burnt and where the Bogomils met the same fate as they were in a sense followers of Basilides, to Bosnia-Herzegovina, to the Bulgarian church, which is as confusing a name as that of the Albigenses.

The first Bogomils, who stem from the schools of John and the Paulists of Armenia (please note: not the Paulicians, who came at the end of the tenth century 980), came to Arbanasi above Tirnovo, and later their centre became Sofia in present-day Bulgaria. Later, the Bogomils developed in a Cathar direction. Gadal wrote in the early 1940s, 'I am in contact with their master in Sofia and with their French representative in Paris. Peter Deunov, a true initiate, has founded the White Brotherhood. In Paris is a good centre of theirs. They aim for a high morality and a well-defined goal.' In the 1990s, a number of Peter Deunov's followers were absorbed as a group into the Lectorium Rosicrucianum.

V

Gadal indicated by this information the sources that show that already much earlier, a pure Mani-belief was active in Aquitania. From 700 to 1200, some of its inhabitants tried with tooth and nail to resist the Roman influences, so that the blossoming and spiritual Occitania, with its inheritance of the grail, its religion of the pure ones, and the cradle of European literature, would not be overrun by the Carolingians and the barbarism of their even more primitive successors.

The Jaounas Cantabres of Toulouse, a people that professed a kind of Manichean-Catharism, already fought against Pepin the Short, and they won in 778 the battle near Roncevaux, where they defeated the rearguard of the Carolingian army. They subsequently prevented for five hundred years that the Roman bishops (after all, Charlemagne was crowned emperor by the pope in 800) established themselves at the foot of the Pyrenees.

In this way, Gadal distilled from the range of ideas of the keepers, the guardians of the Grail, a different vision of recorded history, totally in line with Garrigou and Peyrat. This might be a somewhat romanticised history, here and there closer to the ideal than historical controls would allow. However, Gadal's simplicity and personal integrity gave it great value. His ultimate aim was not science, but to give a new and living impulse in the twentieth century, and to re-ignite the glow of the 'good Christians', which had lain hidden so long. This body of thought became his own during his extensive studies and the many long treks through the caves of Ussat-Ornolac. But let us see what he himself had to say about this:

And so, very naturally we arrive at our spiritual centre Ussat-Ornolac. And then if we follow there a pupil who brought to an end those hard years of initiation in the subterrain of the spirit, then we see with him from the height of his isolation the valley and the lake, which appeared to him very, very small; opposite him, on yonder side, he saw the mountain and the pile-ups of rocks on its sides. His thoughts took him back to the most ancient times, to the natural rock temples of central Asia of which the elders spoke:

- to the mysteries of the Atlantean era,
- to the gods Sol and Luna (sun and moon) who showed themselves from behind the mountains,
- to the mystery places of the ancient Celts,
- to the caverns, filled with flowers and springs, dedicated to the Creator,
- to the old custom of making use of the inside of the mountains in the service of the mysteries; and he understands that also the oldest services of worship already took place in caves and caverns, because they are suitable, or rather predestined, for meetings with the almighty creative essence.

And another impressive report:

I had been, as was my habit, in Bethlehem, to succumb for a while to my thoughts. I love to steep my spirit in restful meditations, at the feet of the ancient relics of the *parfaits*. The holy pentacle has formerly presented me with its ritual consecration: And so it gives me joy to prepare there presently the sanctification in Christ, the highest aim and reward of the way to the Holy Grail!

In these moments of spiritual rest, it also happens to me that memories of meetings of days of yore, events that have made a deep, unforgettable impression on me, place themselves in full force and with great clarity before my consciousness. Then it seems to me as if I am making a wonderful trip, with very beloved friends from a more or less distant past. What beautiful moments are then my share! They are like repetitions, as a reliving of studies and reflections with teachers and pupils of our centre of initiation! It is as if spiritual treasures were presented anew!

Well, thus I was once on a Saturday before Palm Sunday in Bethlehem, when in a moment of serene contemplation, I don't know how and by what, a contact with a very beloved friend who had already years ago left this world of matter came to mind. Allow me to give you the first impressions of this novice on his trip through the Pyrenean Tabor. Perhaps you know that by this name is indicated the foothills of the Pyrenees that stretches from Ussat-Ornolac to Montségur, across the St. Barthélemy: the pathway of the Cathars!

I have climbed the way of the Cathars! The ruins of the castle of Montségur, which was the last refuge of the Albigenses, were already hidden behind the proud summit of St. Barthélemy, which was covered with a white coat of snow. The way I took was only a rough and difficult to negotiate path, and the farmers of this desert of rocks only speak its name hesitantly and with a certain superstitious respect: the way of the Cathars!

The fires that devoured thousands and thousands Albigenses have been extinguished, forgotten... even forgiven. But... the rocks keep the memory of them alive! Blacker than the dark mouths of the entrances of the caves that open onto the banks of the Ariège, the traces of the fire have put their mark upon the very steep walls of limestone. At first, this ground was cursed but how beautiful it is! As beautiful as a tomb, guarded by cypresses.

Amongst box trees and broom, holly and gorse at which countless herds

have rubbed themselves, I descended into the shady valley of the Ariège. At the side of the road, a strange-looking cross caught my attention: a double cross, a cross with two horizontal bars, the cross of the Albigenses. That cross in France and imagine, still in our times! My astonishment would increase later on, in the bowels of the mountains of Ussat and Ornlac. Not far from this forged cross, I rested a bit in the shade of an enormous nut tree. Along the way came a farmer's wife, who through pulling and lashing with a whip made her stubborn mule move forward. She made the sign of the cross and prayed with devotion... in front of the outlawed cross! A little later, a priest passed. Slowly and devoutly, he removed his hat, bowed before the cross of John, the well-beloved one!

This is a beautiful land, and how mysterious!

The historians declare that in 1244, Montségur fell through treason into the hands of the crusaders, and that 205 *parfaits* and *parfaites* were burnt on an immeasurable pyre. Almost a century later, the bailiff of Toulouse and his troops killed 500 Cathars, who as their last recourse had fled from the destroyed Trois Eglises to the cave of Lombrives, by bricking them in. I have climbed the Tabor to view this tomb in the rock: I did find it...

More often than once have I shivered in the caves of the Ariège. Not that I am afraid of not beholding the broad daylight again, not that. But the fact that my feet stepped over human bones and that I, in spite of my attention being full of piety and respect for this tomb of our ancestors, crushed some bits of them will explain the uneasy feeling I experienced now and again. The mountainous landscape through which the pathway of the Cathars winds resembles a funerary way out of a sorrowful past: The caves of Ornlac and Ussat are tombs.

The cave of Lombrives, which has kept the secret of those who were killed by bricking them in, is one of the most beautiful caves in the world. Its darkness enfolds majestic igneous rock; a stream lets you hear a muffled rumbling out of the depths of an abyss. The arched roofs of our cathedrals are less impressive than these of which the eye sometimes is hardly able to estimate the tremendous height; the walls of its enchanting halls reflect the sound of the voice like a multiple echo, heavy and soft.... Yes, certainly more than once I have shivered!

At Lombrives, in the lovely Cathedral, I experienced my unity with the mystery of the underground world for the first time. A German fairytale is entitled 'The Story of a Boy Who Went Forth to Learn Fear'. He would

only have had to go as far as the Galerie de la Mamelle, also called the Galerie des Cathares, and seat himself on one of the myriad of stalagmites... and light his candle: His heart would have contracted poignantly at the sight of *la fenno penjado*, the hanging woman. Without doubt, one shall never know if this hanging woman is not a masterpiece of the great artist Mother Nature, or... that indeed here we refer to a woman whose bones have been petrified. What sinister dramas are hidden in our lovely galleries!

She is very beautiful, this hanging woman of Lombrives; however, her unexpected appearance has been to me like a blow with a club: She has made me undergo the baptism of the caves! The enormous hall, the Cathedral, is an immeasurable dome of over 80 meters height. The impression this gigantic dome of rocks makes is tremendous. The ceiling looses itself in the impenetrable darkness; the water leaks from the stalactites and causes peculiar shapes to rise from the bottom. The pulpit of Amiel Aicard, the bishop who brought to safety the holy treasure of Montségur, dominates the majestic hall. The white walls show numerous inscriptions, drawings, and signs, drawings the likes of which one only finds in sacred documents, letters that show a likeness to those on yellow parchments, names without importance, signs that bring memories of the catcombs....

In the hidden corner of a recess in the wall, an arrow draws my attention; amongst a mass of inscriptions stands a cross with two arms, the cross of the Albigenses! A bit further, in a deeper situated spot, I see another sign that at that time I did not understand yet, but that I met later in a cave, which carries Satan's name!

The cave of Satan is beautiful, but I find it gruff, grim, and everything collaborates to strengthen this impression. It is situated above the Eglises of Ussat, at a staggering height. The wind that has swept away the snow from the upper Pyrenees howls through there, whistling with a biting coldness. In the centre lies an enormous stone with the ominous inscription: O M E, meaning 'Altar of Satan'! In another part is located a dreadful charnel and in a crease of the rock, the sign of Saturn.... Is this related to the explorers of the treasure of the Cathars? Or ones poking around for the philosopher's stone? Vanity of vanities, it is all vanity!... What has gotten into these people? Greed? Black magic? On its own stands the cross with the two bars, depicted beautifully, the cross of the

Albigenses, this time decorated with the year 1753, and with a symbol, a cup, the grail-cup of the Templars!

The Albigenses (that is to say, the Cathars, the Rosicrucians, and the Templars) or even better, their *parfaits*, their pure ones, were also magicians: magicians of the pure and high magic derived from the Egyptian mysteries. They adored gold, the gold of the spirit, and divine love, contrary to material gold and revenge. 'God is love', they said. He is so good that Satan shall some time return remorseful to his master and lord, to him who grants fatherly forgiveness! Was Satan flattered when he saw me baptize his cave? Certainly, because he allowed me to visit his realm! But even so, he was not able to deny his nature, for rascal as he has always been, he had me plod away and toil before allowing me to enter.

The cave of Fontanet (Fontane la Salvatge) is of all the caverns of the Sabarthez the most mysterious and most dangerous one. When I visited it, I was fortunate enough to find arrows, even though always in the corners lying farthest apart. It is a joy to walk in the subterranean galleries, those high, wide galleries with their sandy bottom. One experiences the attraction of the mystery and the ever-changing décor. But the joy turns into a passion when the heat that reigns there starts to feel like that of an oven; when one is forced to crawl on one's stomach through small, narrow, long passageways, over a rocky bottom, while the flickering candle in your hand flutters right in front of your nose; or when the stalactites with their sharp points make your head bleed. Anyhow, such is the way when looking for the unknown! What matter tiredness and danger? In short, proceeding from arrow to arrow, I arrive in a magnificent hall with numerous columns and ever-changing shapes. In the middle, separate from the whole group, stands a stalagmite of a blinding whiteness. Every time the light from my candle illuminates it, it shows a year that has been engraved in the calcite: 1848. Well, well, the year of the revolutions.

My curiosity and my eagerness double: Forwards! I enter an enchanted world, a fairy-like palace of crystal and marble. Again, I have to clamber upwards: The heat becomes oppressive. But then the decor changes: A round hall opens up, and a provocative inscription shocks my eyes: the realm of Satan! Beneath that, a date, 1843, followed by two signatures and a cry from the heart: Long live the Republic! This cry, in 1843!... Whatever did these strange cave dwellers expect from Satan? Gold? ... Hardly!

It is without doubt that after the destruction and ruin of Occitania, there

was only one refuge left for the wretches sentenced to death: the caves of Ormolac. It is also without doubt that the Albigenses kept their religious ideal and that the Universal Brotherhood was not dead. The Order of the Templars had been dissolved. The Cathars were doomed to die. The Rosicrucians had been outlawed. But the SPIRIT cannot be destroyed. Underneath the ashes of the pyres, a little glow always smoulders! The initiates knew 'the flight towards the divine sun', which always illuminated these lovely 'cave dwellers of the Sabarthez'!

It had been a long time since the double cross with the grail cup was drawn: In 1753, it happened again. How remarkable that a hermit used to live in these caves, which as a result still carries the name 'Hermit', and that he especially chose one with three exits. It is a pleasant cave, comfortable for a recluse, which in the middle of the flank of the mountain shows as the three small caves of the mystery of death: Kepler, Mes-Naut, and Ka. I dare to state that the hermit not only drew this cross with the grail cup but also signed the year 1753 in different caves he knew.

He left his grave-dwelling suddenly, shortly after the revolution made all of France shudder. It is known that among the enraged crowd there was a man dressed in a long black habit who acted severely towards the priests: With each cruelty he committed against them, he called out, 'This one is for the Templars' and 'That one for the Albigenses'! And when the head of Louis XVI fell under the guillotine, this same 'avenger' threw himself on the scaffold, dipped his thumb in the blood of the poor king, and cried, 'People, I baptize you in the name of Jacques de Molay (the last grandmaster of the Templars, who lost his life on the pyre in 1314) and in the name of liberty!'

It was thus a man who made himself the avenger of the Albigenses and the Templars! These are bloody events of which a Cathar conscience obviously cannot approve but which have been laid down by an invisible force, for are these not the 'ashes of the pyres', which give new life to its glow? Is it not as if a condensed stream, a spiritual explosion, burst after the spirit itself also had been suppressed for seventeen centuries?

Finally, let us establish without explaining it: 1843: the realm of Satan!
1850: A freethinker writes on a cave wall:

What is God?

Let us, instead of just declaring something about this highest being,

maintain a profound silence and worship Him.
The mystery is immeasurable and brings the spirit into confusion!

To be able to say what God IS,
it is necessary for ONESELF to be God!!
And ineradicably it resounds once more in me:
'To be able to say what God IS,
It is necessary for ONESELF to be God!!' Amen.

VI

The vision that speaks from these words was the result of an entire life in service of hermetical philosophy. But before Antonin Gadal was able to write these thoughts in this way, much had happened beforehand.

In a letter to Jan van Rijckenborgh and Catharose de Petri, Gadal wrote how he first of all had to prepare the ground to be able to occupy himself with this. From a historical viewpoint, this letter joins seamlessly to the episode that ended above. In it is described how stifling the atmosphere was that prevailed south of Toulouse during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. He wrote:

To be able to just talk freely, to pour your heart out once in a while, as an inhabitant of the Sabarthez, one had to look for a remote spot, a cave, that was difficult to reach, in the solitude, the silence, and the freedom of darkness. Poor children of the Sabarthez. Only in 1889 was freedom of expression allowed.

But then at last, a movement of free thought could be formed. Now I speak of a group that I have known very well: the one of 1895.... The citizens [of Sabarthez, predominantly of Tarascon, the old capital of the Tarusks] gathered to finally be able to speak freely, to be able to reflect upon how to let the gnosis, which had been asleep for 700 years, unfold freely.

The director of this movement was Gadal's father-in-law Bonnans; the president was a doctor [Dr Pujol]. One of the points of departure of these Libre Pensee du Tarascon was to be able to be buried independently of the church, free, without one single priest. And while almost everywhere else, a funeral flag is black, the movement of free thought

had a red flag. The French tricolore with a red vane added moved ahead of the procession. A simple address in brotherly fashion would replace the singing and mumbling at the cemetery! Gadal continued:

Perhaps it sounds strange, but it was really a revolution. And the enemies of the gnosis and as a result also the enemies of the freethinkers let it be well noted that a freethinker was a worthless good-for-nothing, a communist, no, even worse, an anarchist. Since then, your name at the record's office was accompanied by a red mark, strictly hidden of course, also in the police records and on other papers at city hall; you received a red card. I would be immensely happy and proud, if through the activities of these freethinkers, some people were freed from their shackles and were able to begin their spiritual evolution! I received my red card when I was eighteen! However, that little card and I have since gotten somewhat pale.

Gadal wrote these words in 1956, when he was well advanced in his seventies. In the 1930s, he belonged to an association, a brotherhood, which was called the 'Polaires': people whose aim was to revive Catharism and who were searching within for the grail. But the goal cannot be reached without the *endura* – the giving up of the lower earthly personality, and Gadal, an extremely amiable and modest person, knew that the time for revival was to be soon but had not yet come. Too many were after personal gain, and the Church of Love could not lend itself to this. Patience was the motto and keeping the flame burning the requirement....

In 1937, the Englishman Walter Birks came to the region of the Sabarthez. Antonin Gadal thought to have found in him someone who would be able to help him with the realization of his task, and he greeted him as 'someone for whom he had waited'. In his turn, Birks saw in him the master for whom his esoteric order, the 'White Eagle', had instructed him to look. Together with the Swiss Rinderknecht, they were Gadal's closest co-workers before the war, and they did much research. The eruption of the Second World War and the changed insights of Birks caused an early end to this cooperation. We digress; let us return to Gadal's own words. He continued:

Free thought.... the drive of the spirit of the ancient centre of Ussat, of the

gnosis, has not suffered from these skirmishes. *Mès Naut!* 'Ever higher' is its motto, and it perseveres with this beautiful lesson: *Mès Naut!*

VII

This gentle schoolteacher, Antonin Gadal, was at the same time an excellent speleologist. On his many excursions through the caves, he thus discovered the underground connection between the Cave of Lombrives and the Cave of Niaux, right through the mountain range. Presently, the latter cave, whose entrance lies at the opposite side as Lombrives, is famous for its pre-historic pictures, and it is very well possible that via this connection, people who looked for refuge in the caves exited at the other side.

It does not seem so strange anymore for us to meet Gadal, with his pure sense of symbolism and beauty, on March 16, 1944, at the foot of Montségur. After all, this was exactly 700 years after the murder of 205 Cathars, the last group of the true core of the Cathar religion, which were burnt on an immense pyre at the foot of Montségur. After a months-long siege and after Amiel Aicard had brought the famous 'treasure of the Cathars' to safety (according to the legend, he fled via the Pic de St. Barthélemy to Lombrives), the initiates, who had all received the *consolamentum* of the living, surrendered Montségur and gave themselves as ransom for the remaining population. Seven hundred years later, their spiritual relative Gadal would bring to fulfilment the prophecy that once was connected with this mass murder and with the religion that was so violently suppressed: 'After 700 years, the laurel will once again bloom on the ash-heaps of the martyrs.'

Gadal loved his region; he loved the simple people of the area, and he had a lot of contact with them, as we are able to read in his own words. Conversely, the eldest among them still remember today how as children during the war, they saw Gadal busy sustaining the morale of Ussat, which was at the time totally isolated from the outside world, and how he organized everything to take care of the Polish refugees, who stayed there during those years. He even played the accordion for them!

But back to the special date of March 16, 1944. In the still hesitating

daybreak of a winter morning, seven men walked with a certain slowness towards the sacred place. Seven centuries, day after day, had passed since the first crack of dawn on that March 16, 1244, that gave light to the long line of Cathars destined for the pyre whose silhouette can still be guessed, a little lower, below the castle. Despite the difficult hour – it was after all in the middle of the war and very cold for the time of the year – these seven men, all of them Occitanians, gave clear proof of the immortality of their beloved Aquitanian native land and of its secrets. Among them were Maurice Magre, Antonin Gadal, and Alain Hubert-Bonnal. Their presence underscores the importance of the homage that was given, and Joseph Delteil, the speleologist, remembered with emotion that silent climb:

.... there were seven of us. Coincidence? I do not think so, for it seemed certain to me that Mr Gadal had asked me to join this small group because he wanted to have exactly this symbolic number. Thus, we made our way to the fortress of Montségur; we had agreed to gather at the place of the ultimate sacrifice. And exactly at that moment, a strange phenomenon occurred in the sky, which had been empty until then. A plane with black crosses flew a circle around the ruins. And shortly thereafter, it let a plume of smoke escape that looked like it formed a Celtic emblem.

We still do not know who was aboard that plane and what were his or her profound intentions. Different, more or less plausible suppositions have been voiced. Until now, the archives have kept their silence.

There in the early morning of March 16, 1944, Gadal planted some branches of a laurel, which he had brought from Bethlehem, the cave of initiation, as a symbol of what 12 years later would become a reality.

Delteil concluded his report thus: 'This is why we keep our dream alive and pause every now and then to contemplate the unknown actualities of this place, this name, which was so fated and keeps so much sealed in it'

Epilogue

The grandmasters of the Spiritual School of the Golden Rosycross de-

clared several times that in the new period, the Aquarius period, a mystery school would form, the Brotherhood of Christian Rosycross, which would be inspired by its founder. Several times, Jan van Rijckenborgh also said that many esoteric streams would be gathered in it. It would in time deliver proof that the labour that has taken place in the last two thousand years will then be combined in the work of the Young Gnostic Brotherhood, the Western mystery school.

And so the extraordinary life of Antonin Gadal led to a very delightful and a special crowning. After the many people who tried, in one way or another, to appropriate the Cathar inheritance, in Catharose the Petri and Jan van Rijckenborgh, Gadal finally saw the dawn of a new world activity: The first new branches had sprouted from the laurel, because their movement had already taught for many years the realization of the diminishing of the 'I'. For Gadal, it must literally have been that the prophecy had become reality! In this also for the Spiritual School eventful period of the 1950s, he confirmed his new friends, his brother and sister, in their task at a number of ceremonial gatherings and officially connected them as far as this was possible with a long line of previous brotherhoods. Antonin Gadal, as the last representative of one of the streams that flowed into the Rosycross, the preceding brotherhood, bestowed in the fall of 1955 in the Renova Temple the rank of grandmaster to Jan Leene (Jan van Rijckenborgh) and the title of archdeaconess to Henriette Stok-Huyser (Catharose de Petri). Presently, they are both referred to as 'grandmasters'. Also, the Lectorium Rosicrucianum was connected by Gadal to the *spiritual* inheritance of the Cathars.

He spoke several times in the centres and the temples of the Rosycross, and in May 1956, the construction of the conference centre Galaad started on a piece of land owned by Gadal. The meeting between the grandmasters of the Young Gnostic Brotherhood as a purely Christ-oriented community and Gadal was confirmed by the establishment of the Galaad monument on May 5, 1957, in Ussat-les-Bains, which is dedicated to the Triple Union of the Light: Grail, Cathar, and Cross with Roses. After this, Gadal came to the Netherlands a few more times; one of these was for the consecration of the Noverosa temple in Doornspijk.

It is the tragedy of every worker in the service of the other one, that all his labour is not more than 'one hammer-blow on the anvil of eternity', as Van Rijckenborgh expressed it. This applied in 1938 to Zwier Willem Leene; this applied to himself, and this applied in 1962 surely to Antonin Gadal. Honesty forces us to mention that in the later years, a certain melancholy beset his life, because he had expected that the work in the south of France would have taken wings to a greater degree and he had hoped that the Lectorium Rosicrucianum would concentrate its efforts more towards southern France. However, the organisation was not yet strong enough. And its results were still lacking. In 1962, the last 'initiate' of the preceding periods, who had grown into a truly universal human being, passed away. The limited minds of the fortune-hunters and of the envious with whom he had to deal so often could not tie him anymore in any way, for his liberated spirit was already since long looking over the valley of the Ariège and was and is connected with the 'Way of the Stars'. ~



Jan van Rijckenborgh and Catharose de Petri on the property of the conference centre 'Renova' about 1958. Photo: Pentagram.

CHAPTER 20

Z. W. Leene, Jan van Rijckenborgh, and Catharose de Petri

1

One morning, sometime in the beginning of the 1930s, somewhere in London, some men were walking on a street on the way to the library of the British Museum, three friends from Holland. Their pace was relaxed but not hesitant or slow; their clothing was neat but not remarkable. They were on the way to the renowned institution and gathering place of knowledge and wisdom, which the British Museum Library of course is, a daily scene in a large metropolis.

We follow one of the three a little closer. Judging from the exterior, a spectator would have seen only an average citizen of an average country, taking a stroll on a typical English morning. A few things, however, cannot be called typical. They were especially characteristics that are not visible on the outside. Take the eyes: clear and pensive, with a light twinkling of irony. Someone who could have perceived it would have especially noticed a strikingly different activity of the heart, different from that of his contemporaries, a light, benevolent place, almost a space, among the many anxious and small-minded hearts of the people of the metropolis. All that went on in this heart: It is difficult to describe. As one does not encounter such hearts very often, its characteristics are not very well known. What was not to be found in it: jealousy, selfishness, fear, or worry. Also, one would not have been able to find coldness and definitely not indifference.

This man was moved. He saw the worries and heavy burdens of many of his contemporaries, their basic lack of knowledge, and he searched. Every now and then, he thought of what lay ahead of him, of the future. All of the world, all of society, was still securely anchored

in what is called the Pisces era. Here and there, there had been some indications of the coming of a new period: the French Revolution and the Russian Revolution, in the end, smothered in blood and suppression. Now and again in world events, a call had resounded for the freedom and equality of all people. Clearly, humanity was not ready for it, but it was in line with the development that in several decades the Aquarius era would make its entrance. How much still has to happen, he thought, how much has yet to change! Nevertheless, the wheels of change had been brought into action; the big solar wheel would irresistibly lift a new time, a new era, 'into the light'.... A dark shadow passed over his face when he thought about Europe. A hard war would come.... It could not be stopped anymore.... He had warned against it; he had talked and written a lot about its causes, but there were only so few who truly understood....

But then, he thought again of the goal of his searching. Money did not appeal to him; he knew too well what was attached to that. Power, fame, or honour did not pose any attraction to him. He did not search for himself. He knew since long an inner equilibrium, and the treasures he knew made everything else appear like empty tin cans. It was a totally different force that drove him, that determined his actions, fuelled by a special energy, which also at this moment showed him the way in London.

At this point, the man, who presently called himself John Twine, thought of his kindred spirits, as he liked to indicate his circle of friends. There, in the sphere of his circle of friends, lay the cause of his journey of exploration. He was looking for a new way to support his kindred spirits in their search for new values of life. If anything was needed in the coming period, this was definitely it. For those who have values of life are able to change their life. Those who have a perspective before them are able to draft their plans. Those who in addition to this are driven by pre-remembrance, an ancient awareness in the microcosm of a totally different existence, have in the coming times possibilities, assuming that these values of life are pure and sincere.

In the small group of which he was one of the leaders, they knew the important works of world literature thoroughly. They knew them in their original meaning; they knew the enormous potential power

that was sealed in them. They definitely knew as well how they had been dealt with over the years, how from time to time, they had been translated wrongly, sometimes in good faith, but just as often wilfully mutilated. They knew that they had often been distorted, just as the original Christian life values had been misinterpreted and explained anew so far that they seemed to have the exact opposite meaning. In their work, not a day passed without the opportunity to point out these distortions and clarify the real meaning.

This is why their group was so pleased to discover the writings of Johann Valentin Andreae. The language of the Rosicrucian texts, the *Fama* and the *Confessio*, is so dynamic, clear, and full of fire that the outside world until then had not dared to use them for its own views. The *Chymische Hochzeit Christiani Rosencreutz* could not be understood at all. 'A confused fantasy', thus sounded the official criticism at the beginning of the seventeenth century, 'the product of an overstrained mind'. Nothing was and is less true.

But a text or a book or a whole library is one thing; to change the searching life into the self-liberating life is something else. Nobody else knew this better than this man in London. The searching for writings of similar groups on former days, he realized, had been without merit and a waste of time. To get to know how these groups were working earlier can be exceedingly beautiful and inspiring. But their tracks have disappeared behind the veil of the other nature, and what is left of them, we already mentioned, is often mutilated. What counted now is, how and especially that one does it now. Later, he had expressed it himself as follows:

We have explored this dialectical nature in all its appearances. We were able to do that, because we are in this nature. Out of the lower self, we could search thoroughly and taste thoroughly everything that this world has to offer. And everything was.... trouble and sorrow. [...] We concluded after many years of random checks that this could not be the meaning of the true life, and that it was not right to continue to participate with those who delude, make fools of the people in this nature-of-death.

And so you have to make a choice; irrevocably, you have to make a decision. And he continued:

At a certain moment, one has to be able to reign over the present existence. Therefore, we were obliged to fathom the Tao of antiquity, objectively and not based on authorities. In addition, we soon discovered that from all sides, all sorts of things were done to obstruct such discoveries. Many sources were destroyed, other sources not within reach. The rest was heavily mutilated. We started with fragments from the Holy Language that remained. From the investigation, it clearly showed that besides this nature order, there is an original realm, a realm very far outside the most elevated region of Nirvana, a realm that distances itself emphatically from this nature-of-death with its two spheres.

Once we found this, we went on to examine, to verify if there had been people, or groups of people, who had striven after that other realm, what course of life they had, and which characteristics this course of life showed. We examined if people of this disposition, although very far removed from each other and separated by centuries, still went the same ways. And we discovered that all these groups strove in an organized way, in a completely similar sense. Then we moved over to self-freemasonry. For who knows the beginning of the original, holds the thread of Tao, of Ariadne, in his hands.

And what is the beginning? This is a key question. How you start determines everything that follows. Let us return to the moment where John Twine was on the verge of entering the library. He took a minute while gazing up at the impressive entrance. He deeply inhaled once more, as if he would be deprived of fresh air for quite a while, and then with determination walked inside. In a later report, he wrote:

On a research trip in the world-famous library of the British Museum in London, we discovered a few years ago the little known work *Christianopolis* by Johann Valentin Andreae, author of the *Fama Fraternitatis*. This document of the Rosicrucian brotherhood dated 1619 had possibly been around in this library for already a few hundred years, without anybody bothering with it. We were allowed to take an English translation with us to Holland, inwardly feeling that we had to bring its contents to light and provide it with a commentary, in order that each pupil would be able to attune his work to that and thus be of better service in the Great Work.

John Twine, who later adopted the spiritual name Jan van Rijckenborgh, kept his word and the book *Christianopolis* is now available in bookstores. The 'vision' Andreae unfolded in his *Reipublicae Christianopolitanae Descriptio* is one of the pillars on which the modern Rosycross founded its work. The reader of this book is also on a search. Just like the main character of this afore-mentioned book, he boards the good ship Fantasia to travel to, yes, to where? A trip to an exciting life? Travelling to a life full of motion, full of admiration and distinction? A life with lots of money and as little rest as possible and, when it has come so far at last, a stormy end?

Or... does the human being finally need to take the road to the beginning? Everywhere, one sees efforts to put an end to the washed-out recurrences, the TV quizzes, and a human behaviour that makes your toes curl with temporary embarrassment. Music? Often a renewed performance of a rerun. The arts? Let us again create something sparkling new, that lifts us from our chairs in enthusiasm. Literature? Often good, but also often gloomy, or superficially funny, but then just a bit banal... We wish again for brilliance, distinction, esprit!

In the nineteen-forties, Jan van Rijckenborgh called the little bit of culture that remained in the West a withering bouquet on a dung heap. He said, 'If the youth of the Rosycross were to assail this culture with an axe, then – we say this honestly – then we glow with glee!' (There were adults who thought that the youngsters were lashing out too strongly in the periodical of the School of that time.) For him, the youth was most important. He wrote:

If the younger generation does not put an end to the increasing ignorance of the masses *en gros*, the suffering of humanity shall be incalculable. For that reason, dear youngsters, gladly make mincemeat of these sacred cows and on that account: *in the struggle for goodness, truth, justice...*

Because this is of course what it is all about. Demolition only is done by enough people, which can be very understandable, because generally speaking, what values does the older generation offer to the youth? An education towards an economic race that always leaves one exhausted; joining in one or another war (there are enough of

them). However, destruction only, out of aggression, cannot be the standpoint. The important thing is to bring an end to the great numbing of the masses. Let there be again clear, thinking people! But for this, you need to have looked for and have found a beginning.

In the same text, he tore to shreds the so-called objection that a young person between the age of twenty and thirty would lack experience and therefore needed to be placed under the guidance of the older and 'more experienced' ones. His argument was:

On Gnostic-scientific grounds, we are squarely opposed to this. The young person between twenty and thirty years of age does not need any dialectical experience. That experience is a twisting and mutilating of the glimmer of spiritual consciousness that remains in the earthly human being. [...] We are of the opinion that the bourgeois experience rather makes one crazy. Above experience stands 'wisdom' and wisdom is never the fruit of experience. Only experience that is the result of a calling is beneficial to a person. Wisdom is the fruit of millions of years, of soul quality and spiritual potential. And this wisdom, which is always inborn, puts its most dynamic demands in the learning years between twenty and thirty. Those ten years are decisive in a person's life. It is of the greatest importance that the young person has a chance to learn to obey this 'wisdom'.

What then is the beginning, the beginning that was applied by all the groups who went before us? What else could it be than the application of the fivefold Universal Gnosis: insight, desire for salvation, self-surrender, new mode of life, and through this, the becoming conscious of the soul, of the wholly Other One, of the wisdom within oneself. And for this, the coming years are of enormous importance. Van Rijckenborgh said:

For the Spiritual School is aware that the Brotherhood of the Light calls its workers exactly from that age group of between twenty and thirty years old, and only experience that is the result of a calling is beneficial to a human being. How many poets and thinkers, authors and artists have there been who exactly at that age produced their masterpieces?

This is why he so often directed himself to the youth. An example of this, from the end of chapter IX of *Christianopolis* (note: 1939):

We turn ourselves toward our young friends, whose whole life is spread out before them. And we want to ask you, if you have understood us well, to cast off the shackles with which you have been chained since birth; refuse to step towards growing accustomed to this sunken world order; reflect upon your calling as God's children. Perhaps in that case, you may end up poor and with difficulties, measured by the standards of the inhabitants of the concrete jungle, but you will be rich, fabulously rich, like the inhabitants of Christianopolis.

This is the language from before the war; the contents, however, are fiery and extremely modern:

Workers are requested who have the courage to shake off the delusions, right through all adversity.

'O God, set me free from this delusion and this urge of nature. Make me realize the beauty of your original plan of creation to which you, by means of your sacred servants, through the grace of Christ, wish to reconnect us.'

II

Presently, the School that was started by Jan van Rijckenborgh (1896-1968), his brother Zwier Willem Leene (1892-1938), and Catharose de Petri (1902-1990) is a living and substantial organisation, active in many countries of the world, and many tens of thousands have made its acquaintance over the years. This has not been always the case. In the first period of the work, one only had a few centres at one's disposal, and from 1934, one place for conferences. The latter was in Doornspijk and could only be used during the summer. There, the first conferences were given. The few simple buildings that were there were destroyed in the war, and in the period after the war, a piece of the grounds was sold so that a larger and more centrally situated conference place could be purchased.

On the former grounds of 'De Haere' in Doornspijk, later a conference center for the youth, Noverosa, was created, at the start, in 1951,

with tents: a tent camp for boys, a camp for girls, a cooking tent, and a dining tent. A water pump was installed, and the children washed themselves in the early mornings with the ice-cold water that came up from 40 meters deep. Stories for the youngsters and services were held in a tent that served as a temple. Meanwhile, as the work grew, nationally and internationally, with conference centres in Germany (in Calw and Bad Mündler) and in France (in Ussat-les-Bains), also the accommodations at Noverosa were steadily improved, a process in which countless young people have worked together and have joined in the construction.

On June 29, 1958, a Temple was consecrated here. An eyewitness gave a lyrical report:

The doors of the temple were opened, and all of us entered. We sat there closely together and waited, with hearts beating with joy and inner gratitude for the moment that the holy flame, the divine present from the Gnosis, was lighted. And now, the flame is burning there, and we all together have the tremendous and delightful task to keep it burning, through a caring attitude-of-life, so that its radiating warmth and golden glowing light may be a blessing for countless others!

On the spot where for 24 years, annually (except during the war years) the Temple-tent had stood, a garden was laid out, Noverosa's rose garden, a place that is highly revered by the modern Rosycross.

Why did the brothers Leene start the School? At the beginning of the twenties of the last century, they had discovered the teachings of Max Heindel, who had founded the Rosicrucian Fellowship in 1909 in the United States. On some land in California, this esotericist, who had never severed his connection with Christianity, had started a centre. His perception was that the West was ready for a new and more profound form of Christianity. His aim was to give original Christianity a new meaning with the help of an esoteric background, or better yet, to show this meaning which had always been hidden in it in order that the human being would understand that he is the captain of his own soul. Heindel saw the connection of the whole, and he showed that it

certainly makes a difference what a person undertakes and from what he refrains, and especially how this is done. 'A sane mind, a soft heart, a sound body', this was Heindel's message and mission. This was the motto accompanying his work, and this was surely what appealed to the brothers Leene.

Heindel made this clear through letters, courses, by astrological study, by lectures, and through services. With minimal means, he organised a great work that knew many branches in Europe, Brazil, and India. The way of thinking connected actually quite well with the theosophical range of ideas, except for one great difference: Heindel put the mission of Christ at the centre. Max Heindel, who was well-informed of the teachings of the Theosophical Society, was quite convinced of the great value of the theosophical school. Heindel even wrote a small book about H. P. Blavatsky. Both worked in a similar manner; both also had to deal with some of the same difficulties: a fragile health and a continuous lack of funds to carry out the work.

He wrote,

It is first necessary for us to realize that Madame Blavatsky, or as she liked to be called, H. P. B., was, as she herself often expressed it, only the compiler of the work. Behind her stood the real teachers, the guardians of the Secret Wisdom of the ages, who taught her all the occult lore which she transmitted in her writings. She had a threefold ability which eminently qualified her for the task. First, she was able to assimilate the transcendental knowledge which came to her. Second, she was a worthy messenger of the Masters. Third, she had a marvelous aptitude for rendering abstruse Eastern metaphysical thought into a form intelligible to Western minds, and for verifying and comparing Eastern Wisdom with Western Science. She also deserves great credit for her high moral courage in representing to the world thoughts and theories wholly at variance with materialistic science.

It had cost her her life.

Blavatsky's and Heindel's lots were in many respect the same. H. P. Blavatsky's mission was to call a definite halt to Western materialism.

Max Heindel's mission was to deliver the first hammer-blow for an esoteric Christianity that in the same Western world was to become a living factor to help humanity take another step to prepare for a new era. For this reason, Theosophy had one drawback, for it also proclaimed the idea that Christianity was reprehensible. Heindel could not accept this. It would be equal to declaring that two millennia of human development in the West did not have any purpose.

It was this combination of esoteric wisdom and pure Christian principles that put Jan and Z. W. Leene on the right track. As they had been raised in the Reformed Church, they had discovered at some point during their search the extraordinary clergyman Arnold Hendrik de Hartog. They drank in each flaming word that this dynamic speaker and professor pronounced in the Dutch Reformed Church. In Amsterdam at the lectures of this man, one could see both brothers, painstakingly taking notes.

De Hartog was a man whose sermons caused quite a stir in the Old Round Lutheran Church in Amsterdam. He was a man who on his own tried to bring a Christian and at the same time social attitude of life, contrary to socialism and communism, and he was a gifted speaker. He had the courage in those days to set into motion a 'spiritual' movement against the far-reaching socialism of Troelstra. On his own, he filled magazines. He pointed out that the Christian teachings of salvation had to do with people and not with abstract concepts. Theology, meaning the knowledge or the teachings of God, had to be in the first place realistic, for ordinary people. Once, close to Christmas, he had entered the St. Bavo church in Haarlem, where he was to preach. The church looked like a trimmed Christmas tree. The women had decorated the pulpit with holly, branches, and garlands. De Hartog took a good look at all this. Did all this have truly anything to do with Christmas, the birth of the Christ, the other, spiritual element in the human being? While walking to the front, he pulled the decorations off the benches and the staircase. The congregation became dead silent. But according to De Hartog, now the service could really begin. He let the silence linger a little longer. Then he started:

'If Christ were born a thousand times in Bethlehem,
And not in you,

You would still be forlorn...!

These words from the seventeenth century by Angelus Silesius described exactly what it was all about! Christ in the human being, not somewhere far removed, with God the Father, or, more abstractly, with the Word. Even so, De Hartog was not able to break loose from the Church. This freethinker was even badgered by his fellow pastors that he was unfaithful.... This great man, one of the founders of the International School of Philosophy, pointed out that liberation is the divine becoming 'revealed', plainly, in the world, in the soul, right through the earthly human being. But yet as an institution, the Church was too dogmatic for the two brothers. They wanted to go further, looked also further. For the brothers found the same words about where Christ had to be born in Max Heindel. But there, the possibilities were nevertheless impressive. Heindel's work was so fresh and novel that both brothers felt, This is what we have waited for. To this they wanted to devote their energies.

Their first contact with the Rosicrucian Fellowship was through the *Studiecentrum* in Rotterdam, which had translated some works by Heindel. After this, they joined the centre starting in Amsterdam that was led by Mrs Van Warendorp. And from when they entered, the work got more zest. From the moment that Mrs Van Warendorp became ill, both brothers with great energy, but not without great difficulties, realized in a short time a national network.

The *Rozenkruisers Genootschap* in Holland in the 1920s was not a tight organisation; more or less independent centres existed in a number of places in Holland. With an enormous effort, the brothers got to work in order to guide them to a unity, to bring them under one denominator. In the middle of the 1930s, they succeeded, and Jan Leene became the first General Secretary of the *Genootschap*, earning a pittance.... Now the real work could begin.

III

The moment the brothers Leene had their first contact via Rotterdam with the Rosycross, a shock went through them. Jan Leene experienced it as if at last he had arrived in a milieu of kindred spirits. He knew that his task lay here. From the beginning, he was given the pub-

licity department. 'You are young; it is good that you take this over.' New centres were at that time called study centres.

The first periodicals were mostly filled with translations of Heindel's writings, but also with the Dutch translations of the manifestos of the Rosicrucians of the seventeenth century. Needless to say, both brothers were very dedicated to the work of the American Rosicrucian Fellowship. At a certain point in time, however, an internal battle erupted over the rights of Heindel's work (Max Heindel had passed away January 6, 1919) between his widow and the Fellowship. At this point, they knew that the time had come to let their own voices be heard, to give heed to their inner task: to found a community that would prove the living, original Christianity, worldwide, the Christianity of the Gnosis.

It was a fact that Heindel and Blavatsky despite their incredible effort and dedication had not been able to reach their goal, or better put, the goal that was received as an inner task. Through them, there surely was a contact with the Universal Brotherhood, but from the moment that they were no longer there, it was logical that their organisations were fated to fall back into the dialectical laws, with all its consequences.

This is why the new era needed a different shape. The times of a few leaders and a large group of followers have gone. Each human being must be able to liberate the conscious universal soul in his own being and thus to become an inhabitant of the original field of life, if he would take the proper steps to do so. Therefore, he had to be built up from the bottom up. There had to be a core community that showed this way by living it. This was the great merit of the brothers Leene and together with them, of Catharose de Petri. This community became a reality, and still now, it maintains the connection between two fields of life.

The proof of a truly great work is of course that it has its own voice, its own identity. You can find this voice increasingly in the different periodicals of the Spiritual School. The School also carried different names before the Second World War. For a quite a while, it was thus called the Mystery School and also for some time, the Order of the Manicheans and the Jakob Böhme Society.

Beginning in 1927, the periodical *Het Rozenkruis* was published. This was a monthly magazine wherein often a temple service of Heindel was published but where one could also find announcements concerning the work. Thus, we read, for example, in the issue of December 1934 that:

Tuesday, January 1, 1935, 11 am, for the occasion of the transfer of the purchased lands to the Max Heindel Foundation, there will be a consecration service at 'De Haere' [where Noverosa was later built] in Doornspijk. We hope that many friends of our work will want to witness this ceremony, which indicates the beginning of a great and important work that in the near future shall be performed at 'De Haere'. From Haarlem, Amsterdam, and The Hague at 7 o'clock am, coaches will depart for 'De Haere'.

This great work involved the 'summer school', weeks of camping that from 1935 were held yearly at De Haere. It is interesting that on the same page, right underneath, was announced that:

Starting January 1, 1935, the *Publicatiebureau* (Publications office) will be organizing a national youth work. Already for a long time, the possibility of youth work has been experimentally explored in various centres, whereby it soon appeared that we need to address this not as 'wishful' but as a 'necessity'. Right away, we will be starting with an in every sense modern youth work. [...] In the near or far future, we will see the establishment of Rosicrucian education.

And from the November 1936 publication:

The centre leadership of Haarlem, with permission of the Board of Management, has now rented premises next door, namely Bakkenessergracht 11. This house will be furnished for a bookshop and publishing office and for the youth work. There will be a showroom, a reading room, a shipping department, and a cosy little room for the youth clubs.

As a result of 'the great success of the weekends in 1933', Z. W. Leene decided that in 1934, there would be held 'conferences of more than one day, in unrestricted nature, in full camping ambiance'. With this

in mind, for the first few months of 1934, he had been searching high and low in the surroundings of Haarlem to find a suitable place for a summer camp. He wrote:

All our attention was concentrated on a camp in Kennemerland, and we would surely have succeeded if not, by one of those unexpected events to which in our work we had become so used to, a complete change of plans had appeared. Through an extremely valuable and extraordinarily acceptable offer, our total Kennemerland camp plan was lifted and placed in the middle of the Veluwe.

And further on:

'De Haere' is a country estate near Nunspeet, at Doornspijk, of 250 hectares and so exceptionally suitable for the purpose that there could not exist any moment of doubt at the sight of such a gorgeous piece of unblemished nature, where one is able to roam for hours and hours without meeting anybody. A tidal wave of fresh air, filled with the scent of heather, with far spread-out forests of coniferous and deciduous trees, where the warm sun, vibrating above the sandy surface of the sand drifts with a lilac haze over it, offers such a rare enchantment that we ask ourselves how we can get through the next few months that still separate us from this wonderful natural delight. There is at 'De Haere' such a pure atmosphere of virginity that even after a visit of a few hours one feels oneself a changed being, and in fact, it seems that one thinks clearer there. [...] When one peers keenly at the horizon, one discovers a blue haze, secretive and tremendously tempting, and still more forests and still more heather and still more delight. Friends, we will be camping at 'De Haere'!

Every year, the summer school consisted of first four and later on, of five weeks of summer, during which time the group was intensively forged together into a group of pioneers who were able to absorb the higher teachings of the Rosycross in group unity. Hundreds of visitors, in ever increasing numbers, took part in this. In 1934, the summer school stood under the sign of 'Aspiration and Tolerance'. Besides deepening of insight and perception, sparkling humour had an important place. In a report about the summer school, we read:

... And here on these pages, we wish to testify once more of everything that the camp brought us in friendship, spiritual deepening, and soul growth. We would like to try to share one more time what our weeks of camping gave us in quiet and loud cheerfulness and sparkling humour.

In 1936, Z. W. Leene, as camp leader, wrote:

The work of the summer school will be completely in the sign of these times of fierce emotions, in addition to which, for and with all things, we will be seeking and finding 'elevation'. In the year 1935, the key thought of the summer school was 'Reality'; now, on the basis of reality, 'Elevation' will strengthen us for our difficult work.

The summer school was like an inhalation and all was concentrated on the powerful spiritual impulses that were received there during the weeks of summer; all work at the centres lay dormant in the summer. The summer school of 1940, the seventh and last one, which took place already under the occupation, carried the motto, 'The Practical New Life'.

IV

We also find many contributions in *Het Rozenkruis* over the years by Jan Leene under his penname John Twine. Already years before the war, the periodicals of the Rosycross warned about the threatening danger from the right. Continually, it was pointed out to pupils to not let themselves be dragged along by fear for their existence and to remain free of hatred against their fellow human beings, equally so regarding Nazis, members of the NSB, Christians, or Jews, but to totally reject fascism. On August 27, 1935, in Düsseldorf, the International Federation of the Rosicrucian Brotherhood was founded. Twelve countries represented by 40 centres of intense work with thousands of students and probational pupils joined this fellowship. The esoteric headquarters were established in Haarlem, the Netherlands. The five centres in Germany, however, were not able to do their work for long. In *Het Rozenkruis* issue of June 1936, one can read under the heading, 'The Black Hand of Fascism':

In these past days, we received the long-expected news that our German organisation has been forbidden by the government and that all possessions of our German brothers have been confiscated. On the one side, we rejoice deeply; after all, being tolerated, being allowed by the brown terror is a vile-smelling honour, however, as goes without saying, our heart goes out with deep regret to our friends across the borders. We emit helping and supporting thoughts to all victims of fascism. Without doubt, the work shall continue illegally.

For a period of more than ten years, Jan Leene wrote every week a lesson based on the Bible, which was sent out in a weekly leaflet called *Aquarius* for a dime. Under this name, the deeper background of the Bible, of the Old and the New Testaments, was explained.

In the periodical *Het Rozenkruis*, one could read that both brothers gave courses almost every evening or at least twice a week. These were public lectures or centre services, also short courses that could serve as introductions to the teachings of the Rosycross, further courses in astrology. To do this, they travelled from centre to centre, to the centres that had developed in the 1930s. Furthermore, one notices in these papers the revolutionary tone with which they bombarded the decayed, smug, and lethargic Holland of Colijn: anything to drive the people towards renewal, to inner revolt! Also in many places, the inevitability of future events was indicated, many of which indeed became reality, not in the least, the Second World War.

In 1937, the character of the magazine changed. *Het Rozenkruis* from then on dealt in each issue with one single theme that might serve the esoteric development of all seekers of the truth. From then on, this publication appeared monthly.

When Z. W. Leene passed away in 1938, many expected that this sealed the fate of the Rosicrucian Fellowship. They did not believe that the modest figure of Jan Leene would be able to continue the work without his brother. But already since 1930, both brothers had been assisted by Henny Stok-Huizer, who later adopted the penname Catharose de Petri. At first, this exceptional woman did not want anything to do with a group, as she felt that this would pose an obstacle towards the ability to follow a spiritual path. But at the insistence of her husband (who actually began the first youth work of the Rosy-

cross), both brothers had a conversation with her, and she was so struck by the fiery arguments of Z. W. Leene and the modest but powerful demeanour of his brother Jan, that she decided to put her hands to the plough. For Z. W. Leene told her, 'Look, if we now join our heart flames together, we will generate a much stronger fire, and we will be able to bring more light into the darkness!'

From 1939, the magazine of the School was called *Licht van het Rosycruis* (Light of the Rosycross), and it appeared until May 1940. After that, it continued as *Nieuw Esoterisch Weekblad* (New Esoteric Weekly).

In October of 1940, all public work of societies like Freemasonry and the Rosycross was officially forbidden in Holland, and the School complied with this order, seemingly. But also during this dark period, the work went on. Van Rijckenborgh spoke in 1943 to the youth about his spiritual affinity. Throughout the war years, he wrote his 'Van Rijckenborgh Letters', which were sent to only a few people, however. Also until into the year 1944, he still published a journal, *Nieuw Religieuse Oriëntering* (New Religious Orientation) which appeared irregularly and for free, published by Evangelisation for the Thinking Human Being. In the winter of 1944 when many went hungry, he wrote on November 22:

Now that as a result of a lack of electricity, practically all printing presses have been immobilized and the instalments of our book appearing weekly cannot be published anymore, we would gladly maintain contact with you in this manner, as you have not heard from us for some weeks now. As long as the present situation continues, our plan is to convey to you the ideas of the *New Religious Orientation* by letter in the unwavering confidence that we provide a service to you and also that we together can promote our great idea. Furthermore, we beseech you urgently to pass on all your read specimens to possible kindred spirits.

He wrote about the vibration number of the coming new times and about the preparation of the group for a totally new work that was coming.

The new time that is approaching and of which the morning sun has already risen shall be a completely different one than the one that set in 1940, both as to its nature as to its spirit. If the human being decides for the 'new spiritual order of the coming era', then this choice is one with far-reaching consequences, then a marked attitude of life is absolutely necessary, an attitude of life that must show in these dark hours of our countrymen. In the dark night of these times, you must make your decision. Now, your inner state-of-being has to come to expression.

V

The war years were very important in the consciousness of Jan van Rijckenborgh and Catharose de Petri, because while the old order went down, the active power of the old occult systems also succumbed, and they were not able to play an important role in the new era. Immediately after the liberation on May 5, 1945, the fundamental principle of the new work was applied. On August 16, 1945, Jan van Rijckenborgh wrote:

The new fundamental principle is '*being reborn as to nature*'. This is the task that the third magic system assigns to us through Christianity. Thus it is a matter of the birth of a new (heavenly) personality while we are still residing in the old one. The construction of the new personality is bound to totally different laws; it is these laws that the candidate must study and apply. The genesis of the new being takes place from above to below. First, the thinking faculty – then the desire body – then the ether body as the matrix for the material body. To conceptualize the new being, a fundamental change is needed first of all, the fundamental denial of the old I, the saying farewell to all old magic, which accented the old I. [...] It will be clear that there shall be in no way a neglecting of the dialectical personality and of the necessary dialectical life. But we need to place the accents in such a way that we do choose an attitude of life that promotes the true purpose of the rebirth.

Again a shock went through the School: The entire study and teachings of astrology were now categorically rejected. For, according to the leaders, all that has to do with the old dialectical personality and

the Higher Self and not with the central spiritual nucleus, which was to awaken as a completely new personality in the microcosm.

The magazine that the School published beginning in 1946 is called *De Hoeksteen* (The Corner Stone). This title symbolizes how all further work builds in and on Christ. It is remarkable how the development of the School in a way can be followed literally by its publications. The corner stone in the material world is the conference centre Elckerlyck, the former school of architecture of Wijdeveld, which was purchased that same year with the moneys that had been freed by the sale of a large part of the land of 'De Haere' in Doornspijk. The new conference centre in Lage Vuursche was centrally located, easy to reach, and one was able to undertake conference work not only in the summer but also during the rest of the year. In the first years of the Elckerlyck-era, the pre-war rhythm of six summer weeks was resumed, with longer weekend conferences in between. After this, it turned out that a more regular contact with the pupils was necessary; and from the end of the 1940s, the conferences lasted from Saturday evening until Wednesday morning. After the consecration of the Renova Temple in 1951, the name of the conference centre became Renova, and the magazine became *Renova-nieuws* (Renova News). We encounter the themes of the conferences that were held in the early 1950s again in the books *The Coming New Man* and *The Gnosis in Present-Day Manifestation*.

From 1956 on, there was an extensive and profound contact with Antonin Gadala and with the preceding Brotherhood of the Cathars to which much consideration has been given in the previous chapter. The spread of the Spiritual School in Europe held equal pace with the inner deepening and growth of Van Rijckenborgh and Catharose de Petri, who first envisioned a fivefold and later on a sevenfold school. The circle of interested people and the first years of pupilship were to form the first and second 'working fields'. In 1948, the work of the *School of Higher Consciousness* began as the third working field. In July of 1955, *the Ecclesia Secunda*, also indicated as the fourth working field, was constructed and consecrated. It was a new concentration point in the consciousness of the Spiritual School, completely in the service of a new kind of inner work. A large window that depicts the

double cross of the Cathars was set in the *Rozenhof* in Santpoort.

We can recognize this new step also in the magazine that the School now published. The publication of that time, which looks very professional, was called *Ecclesia Pistis Sophia* from 1957 on. In it, the entire history of the Cathars was told in instalments. Van Rijckenborgh also began to include therein the explanations of the Gnostic gospel written by Valentinus, the Gospel of the Pistis Sophia. These explanations were given as services on Sunday evenings in Haarlem and then on Tuesday nights at Renova. To be participants at these services, the pupils covered dozens of kilometres on their bikes or mopeds! This was the theme of the services when there were no four-day conferences.

The major conferences of that time dealt with the Egyptian and Hermetic gnosis and concerning gnosis, Van Rijckenborgh and Catharose de Petri proved to be pioneers in modern Europe. When a fifth working field could be realized in 1958 that took form as the 'Community of the Golden Head', the working apparatus of the School had become a true fivefold living body and the direct connection with the original field of life, the field of resurrection, a fact. In those days, as at present, each working field buzzed with activity, with movement, with life.

In 1959, both Jan van Rijckenborgh and Catharose de Petri let it be known that they would withdraw from all external work, from all organisational aspects of the work, and that they wished to leave this part to others. The background for this step was that they wanted to still develop the fivefold Spiritual School into a sevenfold one. Seeing that the sixth and seventh working field mainly concerns the work of the inner degrees of the Mystery School and demanded very pure and spiritual directions, this required an even greater effort and brought with it much work. At the same time, Jan van Rijckenborgh had one more task: to proclaim, at a sevenfold series of summer conferences at home and in foreign countries, the demand of the new times and the essence of pupilship.

As the Aquarius conferences began in 1963, a magazine appeared in many languages, the *Aquarius News*. Therein one could always read an article by Jan van Rijckenborgh, and furthermore, it consisted of articles about the organisation of these conferences for several thousand people.

In 1968, after having been able to realize only five of the seven planned Aquarius conferences, Jan van Rijckenborgh passed away. However, precisely through his death, the seventh working field became active and the Spiritual School proved itself as a sevenfold pyramid, a new pyramid, which just like the pyramids in Egypt was to be a beacon for all seekers on their way to a liberated spirit-soul life. But for the School itself, a difficult period dawned. Now the evidence had to show if the project was sound, if there existed enough quality, and if the stones of the pyramid contained sufficient hardness. The fire of the tests would reveal its durability.

VI

A review of the history of the Spiritual School actually shows that there were three great periods of roughly twenty-one years each. There was the pre-war and war period from 1924 to 1945 wherein the whole esoteric field of the world was researched until the right basis had been found. There was the great era of the construction of the sevenfold School from 1946 to 1968. It was the period of the freeing of the Gnosis, of placing its radiating and actual reality in the present. At the same time, it was the period of the construction of the inner work of the School, the genesis of the Living Body. Thirdly, there was the period of stabilisation and expansion of the inner work, at home and in foreign countries, from 1969 to 1990, the year Catharose de Petri passed away.

The death of Jan van Rijckenborgh delivered to the group as big a shock as the passing away of his brother did about thirty years earlier. Again, there were many who thought and said that the Spiritual School could not survive without this leader. Some cracks had already appeared in the ark during the last years of his life because of the fact that some close co-workers wanted to take a direction of their own. These were severe blows, which had affected Jan van Rijckenborgh's strength severely. But these had still been overcome during his life, and in his last speech, he testified of the joy he underwent when the Brotherhood of the Grail confirmed its confidence in the work of the Young Gnosis and admitted the School into the world work of liberation. And yet after his death, there were again noises of 'wanting to leave a sinking ship'

It was the great merit of Catharose de Petri that she stayed unconditionally faithful to the call of the Brotherhood and the work of her brothers. As the proverbial rock which is part of her name she pointed out the impersonal character of the work. Whoever wants the inheritance of Van Rijckenborgh, she maintained, has to dig inside himself.

His testament, his spiritual Testament, is namely that he wishes to be buried *in you, in his work*, a work that he has performed for the liberation of *your* soul for forty years in the desert of this earthly life. [...] He lived his life here in the material world out of the being of the new soul state, and through this, he brought into practice *teachings and life*. For him, God's Kingdom was very near, because it was at work in him. Therefore, Mr van Rijckenborgh assumed this one thought that life's actions must be accomplished with the imperishable power working in us. He often posed these two figures:

the Johannine-man and the Jesus-man:

the old I, as focus of an emergency order, which had to serve in order to realize the Gnostic order of life;

and the Jesus-man, the soul man, guided by God's spirit, who through a life of soul actions has already entered the domain of the spirit-field.

In the twenty-one years of her diligence as grandmaster, Catharose de Petri wrote hundreds of rituals and guarded the Gnostic structure, the purity, and the high level of the Spiritual School. Time and again, she indicated to the pupils their responsibility, the new attitude-of-life, and a high moral standing.

Live like, act like, a soul-being would act. Live as if the new soul-being were already in you. In this manner, you will bring it as quickly as possible closer, and the new life will become a reality for you shortly.

And now, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, a sevenfold worldwide work stands strongly in the world, to be of service to seekers and to show people the liberating possibilities that exist in life, which each person has in his own hands, which everyone has to grasp himself. A fellowship of like-minded people exists. In the inner self of

each participant burns the one flame; in them, the earthly nature is neutralized and driven into the background. The life and the works of the Gnosis stand in broad daylight. The vision of Andreae; the Forecourt, the Temple, and the Holy of Holies of Eckartshausen; the Triple Union that Gadal envisioned; all have become reality through the work of Z. W. Leene, Jan van Rijckenborgh, and Catharose de Petri.

Van Rijckenborgh once spoke to the youth, in the temple tent at Noverosa. He touched upon the fact that he told many pupils about the path back to the light and that everyone found this very beautiful and nodded, 'Yes, yes', but that almost nobody went that path. At that moment, a farmer was at work on the field behind the temple tent, on a tractor that made such a noise that Van Rijckenborgh hardly could make himself heard above it. So he came down and stood among the youth, in the middle of the centre aisle, and continued his talk:

You can imagine that it is really difficult for the soul if someone hears about the possibilities to bring it back into the light, but just does not do it. Look, every human being possesses a rosebud, a spirit spark. Also this farmer out there has a rosebud, but he has no inkling.

Then, he shouted over the tractor's noise,

But you, you have already heard much about it, here at Noverosa or from your parents or elsewhere. So, do something with it!

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