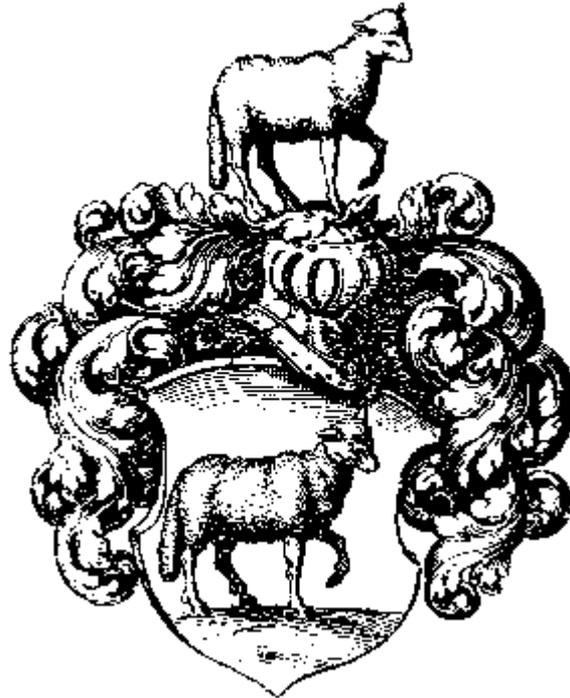


Book of Lambspring

**The Book of Lambspring,
A Noble Ancient Philosopher,
Concerning the Philosophical Stone;
Rendered into Latin Verse by
Nicholas Barnaud Delphinus,
Doctor of Medicine, a zealous Student of this Art.**

PREFACE

I am called Lambspring, born of a Noble Family, and this Crest I bear
with Glory and Justice.



Philosophy I have read, and thoroughly understood,
The utmost depth of my teachers' knowledge have I sounded.
This God graciously granted to me,
Giving me a heart to understand wisdom.
Thus I became the Author of this Book,
And I have clearly set forth the whole matter,
That Rich and Poor might understand.
There is nothing like it upon earth;
Nor (God be praised) have I therein forgotten my humble self.
I am acquainted with the only true foundation:
Therefore preserve this Book with care,
And take heed that you study it again and again.
Thus shall you receive and learn the truth,
And use this great gift of God for good ends.
O God the Father, which art of all the beginning and end,

We beseech thee for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ
To enlighten our minds and thoughts,
That we may praise Thee without ceasing,
And accomplish this Book according to Thy will!
Direct Thou everything to a good end,
And preserve us through Thy great mercy. -
With the help of God I will shew you this Art,
And will not hide or veil the truth from you.
After that you understand me aright,
You will soon be free from the bonds of error.
For there is only one substance,
In which all the rest is hidden;
Therefore, keep a good heart.
Coction, time, and patience are what you need;
If you would enjoy the precious reward,
You must cheerfully give both time and labour.
For you must subject to gentle coction the seeds and the metals,
Day by day, during several weeks;
Thus in this one vile thing
You will discover and bring to perfection the whole work of Philosophy,
Which to most men appears impossible,
Though it is a convenient and easy task.
If we were to shew it to the outer world
We should be derided by men, women, and children.
Therefore be modest and secret,
And you will be left in peace and security.
Remember your duty towards your neighbour and your God,
Who gives this Art, and would have it concealed.
Now we will conclude the Preface,
That we may begin to describe the very Art,
And truly and plainly set it forth in figures,
Rendering thanks to the Creator of every creature.
Hereunto follows the First Figure,

Figure I

BE WARNED AND UNDERSTAND TRULY THAT TWO FISHES ARE SWIMMING IN
OUR SEA.



The Sea is the Body, the two Fishes are Soul and Spirit.

The Sages will tell you That two fishes are in our sea
Without any flesh or bones.
Let them be cooked in their own water;

Then they also will become a vast sea,
 The vastness of which no man can describe.
 Moreover, the Sages say
 That the two fishes are only one, not two;
 They are two, and nevertheless they are one,
 Body, Spirit, and Soul.
 Now, I tell you most truly,
 Cook these three together,
 That there may be a very large sea.
 Cook the sulphur well with the sulphur,
 And hold your tongue about it:
 Conceal your knowledge to your own advantage,
 And you shall be free from poverty.
 Only let your discovery remain a close secret.

Figure II

HERE YOU STRAIGHTWAY BEHOLD A BLACK BEAST IN THE FOREST.



Putrefaction.

The Sage says
 That a wild beast is in the forest,
 Whose skin is of the blackest dye.
 If any man cut off his head,
 His blackness will disappear,
 And give place to a snowy white.
 Understand well the meaning of this head:
 The blackness is called the head of the Raven;
 As soon as it disappears,
 A white colour is straightway manifested;
 It is given this name, despoiled of its head.
 When the Beast's black hue has vanished in a black smoke,
 The Sages rejoice
 From the bottom of their hearts;
 But they keep it a close secret,
 That no foolish man may know it.
 Yet unto their Sons, in kindness of heart,
 They partly reveal it in their writings;
 And therefore let those who receive the gift
 Enjoy it also in silence,
 Since God would have it concealed.

Figure III

HEAR WITHOUT TERROR THAT IN THE FOREST ARE HIDDEN A DEER AND AN UNICORN.



In the Body there is Soul and Spirit.

The Sages say truly
That two animals are in this forest:
One glorious, beautiful, and swift,
A great and strong deer;
The other an unicorn.
They are concealed in the forest,
But happy shall that man be called
Who shall snare and capture them.
The Masters shew you here clearly
That in all places
These two animals wander about in forests
(But know that the forest is but one).
If we apply the parable to our Art,
We shall call the forest the Body.
That will be rightly and truly said.
The unicorn will be the Spirit at all times.
The deer desires no other name
But that of the Soul; which name no man shall take away from it.
He that knows how to tame and master them by Art,
To couple them together,
And to lead them in and out of the forest,
May justly be called a Master.
For we rightly judge
That he has attained the golden flesh,
And may triumph everywhere;
Nay, he may bear rule over great Augustus.

Figure IV

HERE YOU BEHOLD A GREAT MARVEL - TWO LIONS ARE JOINED INTO ONE.



The Spirit and Soul must be united in their Body.

The Sages do faithfully teach us
That two strong lions, to wit, male and female,
Lurk in a dark and rugged valley.
These the Master must catch,
Though they are swift and fierce,
And of terrible and savage aspect.
He who, by wisdom and cunning,
Can snare and bind them,
And lead them into the same forest,
Of him it may be said with justice and truth
That he has merited the meed of praise before all others,
And that his wisdom transcends that of the worldly wise.

Figure V

A WOLF AND A DOG ARE IN ONE HOUSE, AND ARE AFTERWARDS CHANGED
INTO ONE.



The Body is mortified and rendered white, then joined to Soul and Spirit by being saturated
with them.

Alexander writes from Persia
That a wolf and a dog are in this field,
Which, as the Sages say,
Are descended from the same stock,
But the wolf comes from the east,

And the dog 1000 from the west.
They are full of jealousy,
Fury, rage, and madness;
One kills the other,
And from them comes a great poison.
But when they are restored to life,
They are clearly shewn to be
The Great and Precious Medicine,
The most glorious Remedy upon earth,
Which refreshes and restores the Sages,
Who render thanks to God, and do praise Him.

Figure VI

THIS SURELY IS A GREAT MIRACLE AND WITHOUT ANY DECEPTION -
THAT IN A VENOMOUS DRAGON THERE SHOULD BE THE GREAT MEDICINE.



The Mercury is precipitated or sublimed, dissolved in its own proper water,
and then once more coagulated.

A savage Dragon lives in the forest,
Most venomous he is, yet lacking nothing:
When he sees the rays of the Sun and its bright fire,
He scatters abroad his poison,
And flies upward so fiercely
That no living creature can stand before him,
Nor is even the Basilisk equal to him.
He who hath skill to slay him, wisely
Hath escaped from all dangers.
Yet all venom, and colours, are multiplied
In the hour of his death.
His venom becomes the great Medicine.
He quickly consumes his venom,
For he devours his poisonous tail.
All this is performed on his own body,
From which flows forth glorious Balm,
With all its miraculous virtues.
Hereat all the Sages do loudly rejoice.

Figure VII

WE HEAR TWO BIRDS IN THE FOREST, YET WE MUST UNDERSTAND THEM TO
BE ONLY ONE.



The Mercury having been often sublimed, is at length fixed, and becomes capable of resisting fire: the sublimation must be repeated until at length the fixation is attained.

A nest is found in the forest,
 In which Hermes has his brood;
 One fledgling always strives to fly upward,
 The other rejoices to sit quietly in the nest;
 Yet neither can get away from the other.
 The one that is below holds the one that is above,
 And will not let it get away from the nest,
 As a husband in a house with his wife,
 Bound together in closest bonds of wedlock.
 So also do we rejoice at all times,
 That we hold the female eagle fast in this way,
 And we render thanks to God the Father.

Figure VIII

HERE ARE TWO BIRDS, GREAT AND STRONG - THE BODY AND SPIRIT; ONE
 DEVOURS THE OTHER.



Let the Body be placed in horse-dung, or a warm bath, the Spirit having been extracted from it. The Body has become white by the process, the Spirit red by our Art. All that exists tends towards perfection, and thus is the Philosopher's Stone prepared.

In India there is a most pleasant wood,
 In which two birds are bound together.
 One is of a snowy white; the other is red.
 They bite each other, and one is slain

And devoured by the other.
 Then both are changed into white doves,
 And of the Dove is born a Phoenix,
 Which has left behind blackness and foul death,
 And has regained a more glorious life.
 This power was given it by God Himself,
 That it might live eternally, and never die.
 It gives us wealth, it preserves our life,
 And with it we may work great miracles,
 As also the true Philosophers do plainly inform us.

Figure IX

THE LORD OF THE FORESTS HAS RECOVERED HIS KINGDOM, AND MOUNTED FROM THE LOWEST TO THE HIGHEST DEGREE. IF FORTUNE SMILE, YOU MAY FROM A RHETOR BECOME A CONSUL; IF FORTUNE FROWN, THE CONSUL MAY BECOME A RHETOR.



Thus you may know that the Tincture has truly attained the first degree.

Now hear of a wonderful deed,
 For I will teach you great things,
 How the King rises high above all his race;
 And hear also what the noble lord of the forest says:
 I have overcome and vanquished my foes,
 I have trodden the venomous Dragon under foot,
 I am a gre 1000 at and glorious King in the earth.
 There is none greater than I,
 Child either of the Artist or of Nature,
 Among all living creatures.
 I do all that man can desire,
 I give power and lasting health,
 Also gold, silver, gems, and precious stones,
 And the panacea for great and small diseases.
 Yet at first I was of ignoble birth,
 Till I was set in a high place.
 To reach this lofty summit
 Was given me by God and Nature.
 Thence from the meanest I became the highest,
 And mounted to the most glorious throne,
 And to the state of royal sovereignty:
 Therefore Hermes has called me the Lord of the Forests.

Figure X

A SALAMANDER LIVES IN THE FIRE, WHICH IMPARTS TO IT A MOST GLORIOUS HUE.



This is the reiteration, gradation, and amelioration of the Tincture, or Philosopher's Stone; and the whole is called its Augmentation.

In all fables we are told
That the Salamander is born in the fire;
In the fire it has that food and life
Which Nature herself has assigned to it.
It dwells in a great mountain
Which is encompassed by many flames,
And one of these is ever smaller than another -
Herein the Salamander bathes.
The third is greater, the fourth brighter than the rest -
In all these the Salamander washes, and is purified.
Then he hies him to his cave,
But on the way is caught and pierced
So that it dies, and yields up its life with its blood.
But this, too, happens for its good:
For from its blood it wins immortal life,
And then death has no more power over it.
Its blood is the most precious Medicine upon earth,
The same has not its like in the world.
For this blood drives away all disease
In the bodies of metals,
Of men, and of beasts.
From it the Sages derive their science,
And through it they attain the Heavenly Gift,
Which is called the Philosopher's Stone,
Possessing the power of the whole world.
This gift the Sages impart to us with loving hearts,
That we may remember them for ever.

Figure XI

THE FATHER AND THE SON HAVE LINKED THEIR HANDS WITH THOSE OF THE GUIDE: KNOW THAT THE THREE ARE BODY, SOUL, AND SPIRIT.



Here is an old father of Israel,
Who has an only Son,
A Son whom he loves with all his heart.
With sorrow he prescribes sorrow to him.
He commits him to a guide,
Who is to conduct him whithersoever he will.
The Guide addresses the Son in these words:
Come hither! I will conduct thee everywhere,
To the summit of the loftiest mountain,
That thou mayest understand all wisdom,
That thou mayest behold the greatness of the earth, and of the sea,
And then derive true pleasure.
I will bear thee through the air
To the gates of highest heaven.
The Son hearkened to the words of the Guide,
And ascended upward with him;
There saw he the heavenly throne,
That was beyond measure glorious.
When he had beheld these things,
He remembered his Father with sighing,
Pitied the great sorrow of his Father,
And said: I will return to his breast.

Figure XII

ANOTHER MOUNTAIN OF INDIA LIES IN THE VESSEL, WHICH THE SPIRIT AND
THE SOUL - THAT IS, THE SON AND THE GUIDE - HAVE CLIMBED.



Says the Son to the Guide:
I will go down to my Father,
For he cannot live without me.
He sighs and calls aloud for me.
And the Guide makes answer to the Son:
I will not let thee go alone;
From thy Father's bosom I brought thee forth,
I will also take thee back again,
That he may rejoice again and live.
This strength will we give unto him.
So both arose without delay,
And returned to the Father's house.
When the Father saw his Son coming,
He cried aloud, and said: -

Figure XIII

HERE THE FATHER DEVOURS THE SON; THE SOUL AND SPIRIT FLOW FORTH FROM THE BODY.



My Son, I was dead without thee,
And lived in great danger of my life.
I revive at thy return,
And it fills my breast with joy.
But when the Son entered the Father's house,
The Father took him to his heart,
And swallowed him out of excessive joy,
And that with his own mouth.
The great exertion makes the Father sweat.

Figure XIV

HERE THE FATHER SWEATS PROFUSELY, WHILE OIL AND THE TRUE TINCTURE OF THE SAGES FLOW FORTH FROM HIM.



Here the Father sweats on account of the Son,
And earnestly beseeches God,
Who has created everything in His hands,
Who creates, and has created all things,
To bring forth his Son from his body,
And to restore him to his former life.
God hearkens to his prayers,
And bids the Father lie down and sleep.
Then God sends down rain from heaven
To the earth from the shining stars.
It was a fertilizing, silver rain,
Which bedewed and softened the Father's Body.
Succour us, Lord, at the end,
That we may obtain Thy gracious Gift!

Figure XV

HERE FATHER AND SON ARE JOINED IN ONE SO TO REMAIN FOR EVER.



The sleeping Father is here changed
Entirely into limpid water,
And by virtue of this water alone
The good work is accomplished.
There is now a glorified and beautiful Father,
And he brings forth a new Son.
The Son ever remains in the Father,
And the Father in the Son.

Thus in divers things
They produce untold, precious fruit.
They perish never more,
And laugh at death.
By the grace of God they abide for ever,
The Father and the Son, triumphing gloriously
In the splendour of their new Kingdom.
Upon one throne they sit,
And the face of the Ancient Master
Is straightway seen between them:
He is arrayed in a crimson robe.

TO THE INVISIBLE KING
OF THE WORLD,
TO THE ONLY TRUE AND IMMORTAL GOD
BE PRAISE AND GLORY
NOW AND EVERMORE.
AMEN.
0

A Threefold Alchemical Journey Through the Book of Lambspring

Adam McLean ©

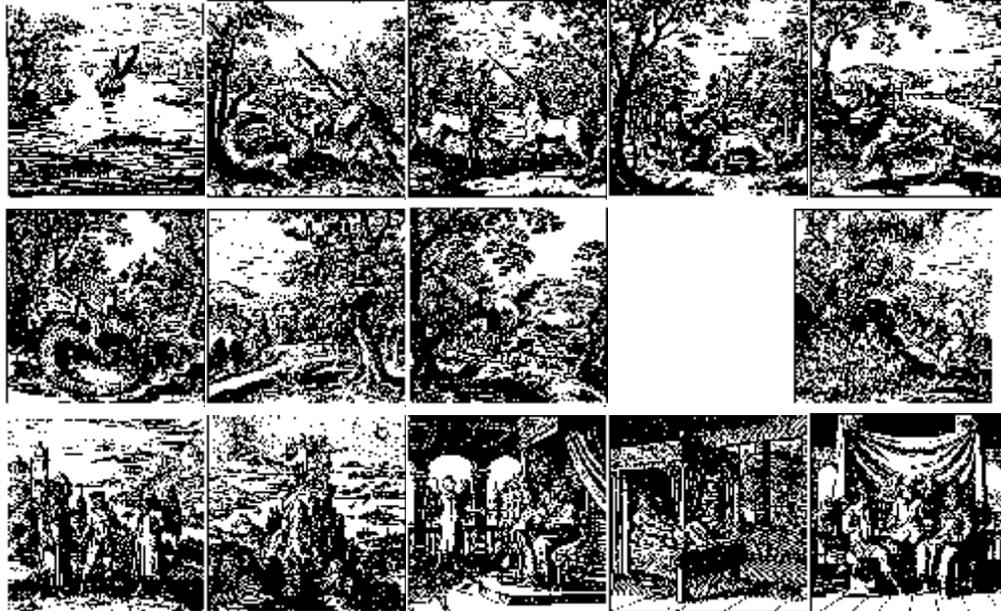
The Book of Lambspring is well known as one of the gems from the *Musaeum Hermeticum* published in 1625 by Lucas Jennis in Frankfurt, especially for its series of fifteen emblematic plates. It seems that this little book was first published, under the title *De Lapide PhilosophicoTriga Chemicum* (Prague 1599) compiled by the Frenchman Nicolas Barnaud prominent in the alchemical circles around Rudolf II. However, this tract and its emblematic drawings circulated in manuscript during the last two decades of the 16th century, as is attested by a number of copies dated to this period which still survive in libraries and special collections today. [Of these we might mention Ms 16752 in the National Museum in Nurnberg, and the manuscript copy in the University of Leiden.]

The Book of Lambspring is a short work with an introductory section in verse and an emblem showing a threefold furnace. Following the tradition of emblem books of the period its series of fifteen emblems each bears a motto or title with a verse on the facing page. The Book of Lambspring is a work of spiritual alchemy, has few references to physical alchemical processes, and it seems unlikely that it could ever have provided any clues that might help someone engaged upon physical experimentation. Instead, it is a clear, powerful and extremely useful statement of the inner work of the spiritual alchemist. Its verses point to the soul and spirit involved in the alchemical transformation and its fifteen emblems are evocative symbols of these inner processes.

Unlike some other series of alchemical emblems (say the Mylius *Philosophia Reformata*, or even the *Twelve Keys of Basil Valentine*), the Book of Lambspring avoids complex layers of symbols, or paradoxical 'surrealistic' images, and presents its message instead through direct simplicity of imagery. It is perhaps this delightful simplicity, joined with the archetypal power of its symbolism that keeps this work approachable by present day consciousness, and ensures the continued use of these emblems as illustrations in popular works on 'occult' and 'mystical' symbolism. Although individual emblems from the Book of Lambspring still seem

to touch our souls through the clean lines of their archetypal symbolism, there does not seem to have been any serious attempt made to reveal the structure of its sequence as a whole and of how to work through the process of inner development sketched by 'Lambspring'.

One way of looking at these emblems, which I believe we will find useful as a basis for our inner work, is to see the sequence as forming three groups of five emblems 1-5, 6-10, 11-15.



A clue to this is given in the title page illustration which shows a threefold furnace,



and this is hinted at further by the fact that Emblems 1-5, and 6-10 have short epigrams placed under each emblem, while the sequence 11-15 does not have this feature.

Once we look at the emblems in this way distinct patterns can be seen. The first layer of five emblems deal with the different facets of polarities in our inner world.



Emblem 1 shows us two fish swimming in opposite directions in our inner sea ("The sea is the body, the two fish are Soul and Spirit" states the epigram). These two polarities coexist though work in different ways.



The second emblem shows a different aspect to polarities in the fight between the inner dragon and an armed knight (a St George figure) in the Forest of the Soul. In this emblem there is a sense that the polarities must struggle to overcome each other.



Next in Emblem 3 we have the beautiful picture of the meeting in a clearing in the forest of a magnificent Stag and a graceful Unicorn. The Stag as a symbol is often associated with the Sun and the Unicorn is usually linked with the Moon. These polarities are to be coupled together through the alchemist's work.



Next, in Emblem 4, the polarities are seen in their manifestation as masculine and feminine, pictured here in the meeting of Lion and Lioness. We note how they raise their opposite paws (Lion - right, Lioness - left) mirroring the posture of the Stag and Unicorn in the previous emblem.



The fifth emblem, which completes this part of the sequence shows the wild Wolf and the tamed Dog fighting for supremacy. These polarities are further linked in the verse with the directions West (Dog) and East (Wolf).

Thus we can see that the first five emblems show us different ways in which the polarities appear in our inner world. The dynamically opposed though balanced way of the two fishes, the battling of the Dragon and Knight elements, or Wolf and Dog, and the meeting and relationship indicated in the Stag-Unicorn and Lion-Lioness emblems.

The next five emblems seem to indicate different ways in which we must inwardly work to unite these polarities in our beings.



Emblem 6 is a clear statement of the Ouroboros, the serpent dragon that siezes its own tail and unites these polarities in forming its circle in the Soul.



Emblem 7 shows us two birds - one sits on the nest and cannot move, tied to its earthly task, while its partner attempts to soar into the heavens. As the associated verse states "The one that is below holds the one that is above" echoing the opening lines of the Emerald Tablet of Hermes.



The next emblem, number 8, the central emblem of the whole sequence, pictures two birds, a red and a white, fighting each other - one above, the other below. The verse indicates that these become transformed into white doves and becomes a Phoenix. Thus at this stage, the polarities fight, absorb each other and are reborn in a new form.



The ninth emblem shows us the King of the Forest seated on his throne with his feet set upon the Dragon he has overcome. This marks the inner stage which completes the integration of the polarities revealed in Emblem 2. Now, no struggle with the Dragon is necessary, for the King has emerged in the Soul as ruler of the dark realm of the Forest. His throne also bears fish upon its arms, echoing the symbolism of Emblem 1. Significantly, seven steps mount up to his throne.



This second sequence ends in Emblem 10 with the image of an alchemical adept roasting a Salamander in the fire. Here the inner fire works upon the Salamander or spiritual remnant of the Dragon, purifying and elevating it, and investing it with a new spiritual energy, till it becomes the glowing living interior source of the Philosophers' Stone, or inner foundation for the solidity of the Soul. This contrasts with the picture of the inner sea of the initial emblem 1, with its implication of the lack of solidity in the flowing soul forces. We can therefore recognise in this second grouping of emblems some indication of ways in which the polarities must be woven together and brought into a relationship through the inner work of the soul alchemist. The first group shows the ways in which these polarities appear in the soul, the second points to ways of working with them towards an integration. We note some cross correspondences between these two groups :-

[1] Water - [10] Fire element.

[2] Dragon/Knight - [9] Dragon/King relationship.

[4] Lion/Lioness - [7] Two birds 'married' together.

[5] Wolf/Dog of East and West - [6] Ouroboros uniting two directions.

The last grouping of emblems introduce a new set of characters - an old King, young Prince,

and winged spiritual guide - and show in sequence the stages an alchemist must go through to complete the work begun in the earliest stages of his inner work. This sequence is rather strange and we will here consider it as a whole.



In Emblem 11, the old King gives his son into the charge of an ancient spiritual guide, who leads him up a high mountain in order to give him a glimpse of the heavenly throne. The young Prince delights in this vision but realises the great sorrow of his father who was not able to undertake this journey, and decides to return to the old King.



In Emblem 12, we see the guide with his charge high upon the mountain standing on the threshold of the spiritual world, the archetypes of the Sun, Moon and Stars around them.



The old King was as dead without his son and when the young Prince returns with his guide, his father is so pleased to see him that he swallows his son. This is pictured in the thirteenth emblem.



Emblem 14 shows the old King lying sweating in his bed, while a gentle dew descends from above softening the father's body so that his son may be reborn from him. The final emblem shows the rebirth of the son from his father, and the verse states "The Son ever remains in the Father, and the Father in the Son", which echoes Christian sentiments.

One interpretation is of the old King or father as the earthly part of the alchemist's soul, or that aspect turned to the body and outer senses - the young Prince or son as that part of the soul that is free to rise to the spirit - and the Guide as the spiritual part of the alchemist. Strangely, this sequence seems to indicate a path of spiritual development which is almost an inversion or mirroring of the christian path. In the tradition of the christian mystical path, there is a sense of the incarnation of spirit in matter, as a sacrifice of the spirit descending from the Heavenly Father to become involved and incarnated in matter as the Christ, to suffer in the body, and to become resurrected and return to the spirit. In the alchemical path outlined here, the father is the earthly King, rather than Heavenly Father, the son is given an opportunity of rising into the spirit to leave the material realm behind, and kneel at the heavenly Throne, but elects to return to the material world and become reabsorbed by his earthly father, who is the suffering one. (We don't have here a picture of the spirit suffering in matter, but of the matter suffering without the spiritual).



The father undergoes a strange process of transformation through the dew that descends, and the sweat that rises out of his body. Eventually the son is emanated again and yet they remain inseparable, and as the text has it "they perish no more and laugh at death". This is not so much a resurrection from death as a transcendence of death. Thus this is a process of excarnation and suffering then incarnation, rather than a picture of incarnation then resurrection through suffering. In some ways this alchemical work is paralleled with the christian idea of the incarnation and resurrection, but here we seem to have a mirror image of the process.

The Book of Lambspring is an important work that points us especially to the inner aspect of

the alchemical process. The indications I have presented here are only hints at one possible way of entering into the Lambspring process. However, as with all such hermetic systems of inner exercises, we cannot entirely grasp it through our thinking and if we wish to work this process we must take an inner journey into the strange landscape of Lambspring's work. By studying the text and meditatively penetrating each emblem in sequence we will be able to experience the symbols working within our souls. The indications I have presented here, hopefully might be a useful map for exploring this process.