



The Descent Into Matter

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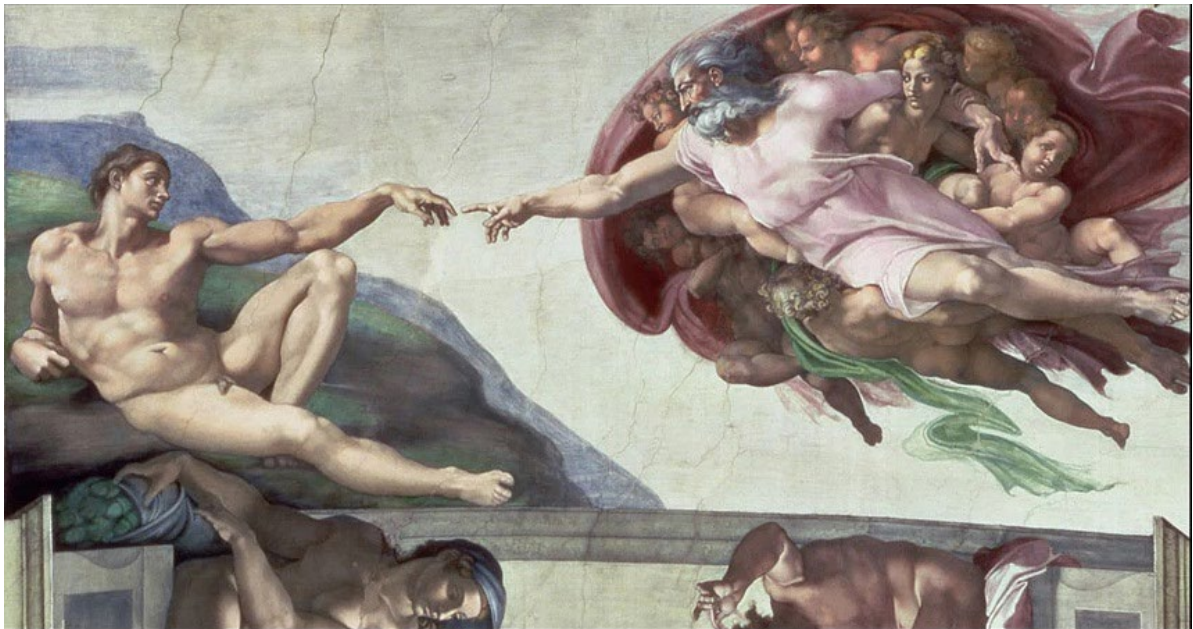
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In The Beginning

What makes Man different from the other creatures in the animal kingdom?

Many of you know the significance of the 47th Problem of Euclid or Pythagorean Triangle. You also may have studied the meaning of the 32nd Degree of the Scottish Rite (Southern Jurisdiction), or considered the significance of our surmounting the Square with the Compasses to signify our status as Master Masons. Our Craft is rife with symbols alluding to the same Secret - but the question is posed: Why do we, as Masons, strive for mastery over the earthly? Why do we seek equilibrium with our earthly passions?



From a foundational perspective, why is the Divine Demiurge even bothering to animate mere dust, which is essentially what our physical bodies are composed of? Think of the phrase “ashes to ashes, dust to dust.” Progress beyond the idea of a Divine essence that animates inanimate material, and the next question is posed: why is man aware of this fact and why do we adore, worship and aspire to Divine attributes?

We’ll start exploring these questions with a highly simplistic, high-level overview of the Kabbalistic Tree of Life (figure 1). In this noteworthy framework are depicted ten sephirot spanning from Kether, which is also called “The Crown,” down to Malkuth, which is also called “The Kingdom.” With each step from the top of the tree as it approaches Malkuth, the Divine force which emanates from Kether becomes increasingly dense, until finally, it reaches the Earthly plane we exist on within Malkuth.¹ We can look at the notion of Malkuth as the material world that we exist in being composed of Divine essence that has been shaped and molded such as a potter would do with clay. In the final step, The Divine then infuses His Creation with spirit to animate it with life. The question remains that, while mankind exists in the

¹ ben Shimon Halevi, Z’ev, *The Kabbalistic Tree of Life*, Revised Edition, (Kabbalah Society 2009) 33-35

same layer as trees and other creatures of the plant and animal kingdom, why is he innately different from them? Why is he aware of those higher, more pure aspects of Divine energy?

Let There be Light

In her book, *The Mystical Qabala*, Dion Fortune summarizes the concept of Creation progressing through the “Four Worlds” of the Kabbalah, where she describes the flow of Divine energy through the groupings of sephirot as follows:

1: Atziluth is the supernal world where God acts directly in the process of Creation.

2: In the second world, Briah, the archangels are active in enacting the Word of God,

3: The angelic orders take control in the world of Yetzirah, and -

4: Assiah represents the physical world, completing the creative journey in the sephiroth of Malkuth. It is in Malkuth that the forces of nature and the elements reign.

Fortune writes that “The great point to remember in connection with Malkuth is that herein is achieved stability. It is in the inertia of Malkuth that its virtue lies. And equally with Malkuth, it is inanimate matter until the powers of Yesod (which is the next sephiroth upwards in the Tree) ensoul it.”²

This describes the process by which the hand of God reaches through the Kabbalistic Tree and leaves traces that we can perceive. It is within the stability of

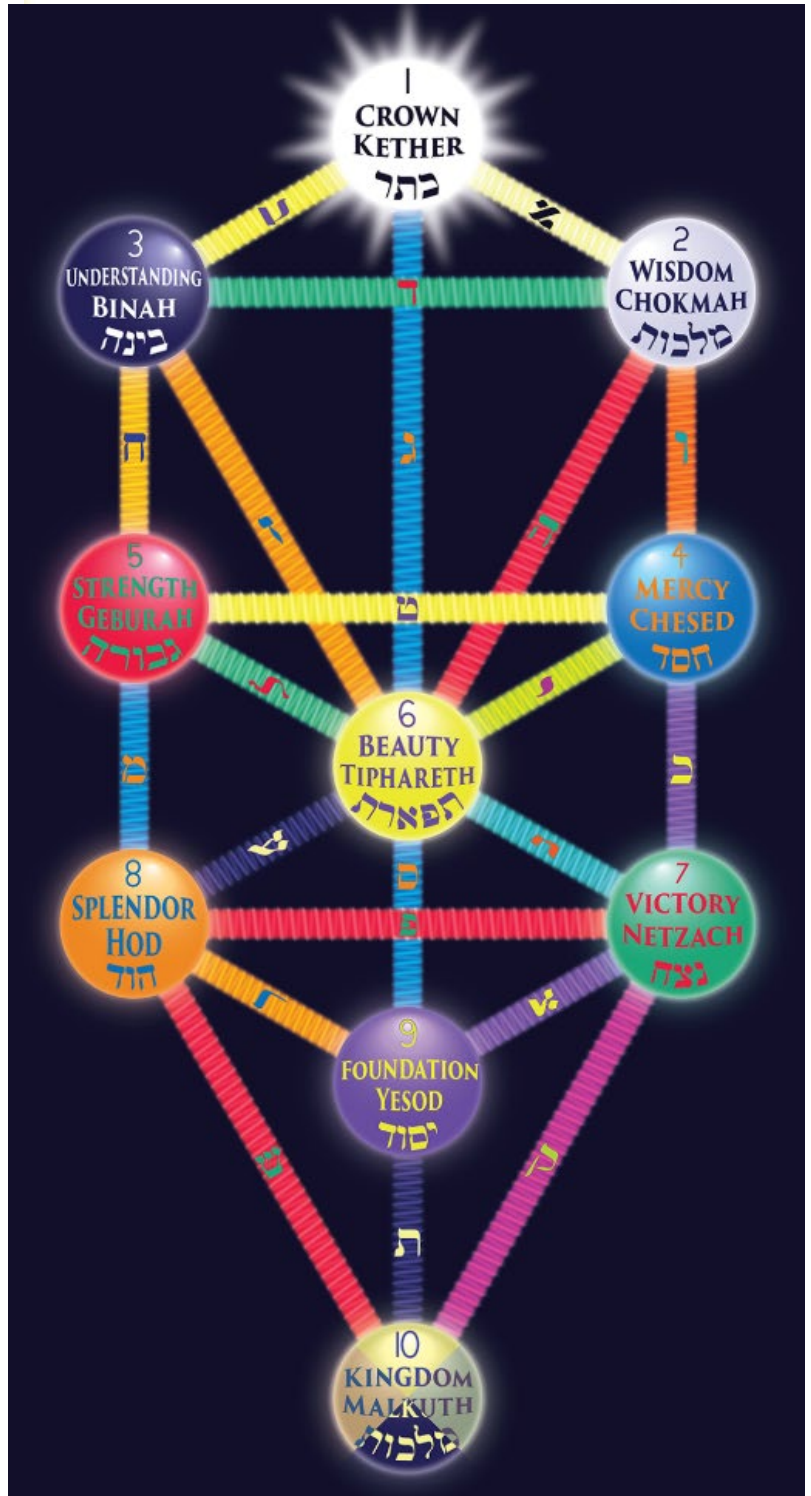


Figure 1 – The Tree of Life

² Fortune, Dion, *The Mystical Qabalah*, (Weiser Books, San Francisco, CA, Newburyport, MA, 1935) 56-59 249-250

material creation where virtue and vice are made visible through the actions of the inhabitants of that sphere.

The Garden

Let's take a look at an alternative representation of the Tree (figure 2). Here, we observe Creation flowing from Kether represented in this model as the Supernal Mother, which, in this context, is sometimes known as Aima.

This version of the Tree of Life depicts the Garden of Eden prior to the fall of man. In this idyllic representation of Creation, all life lives in harmony within its prescribed space. Notice that Eve is shown standing upon Malkuth, the Kingdom, while the Red Dragon of the Qlippoth lies sleeping beneath her feet. This illustrates an earlier stage of the evolution of mankind – with man existing within Creation, but prior to him gaining self-consciousness – otherwise known as the knowledge of good and evil. At this point in creation, mankind did not marvel at Creation, adore or worship God, or exist in any sense of the term any differently than the trees of the forest, or the creatures of the land and sea.³ Notice in this figure that Eve is supporting the left and right columns of the Tree of Life.

The Fall

In Greek legend, it is said that Prometheus defied the gods by stealing Divine Fire from Heaven, and giving it to mankind. According to theological analysts, this Fire took the form of technology, knowledge, and in a more general sense, civilization, itself⁴. Prometheus is known for his intelligence and for being a champion of humankind, and is also generally seen as the

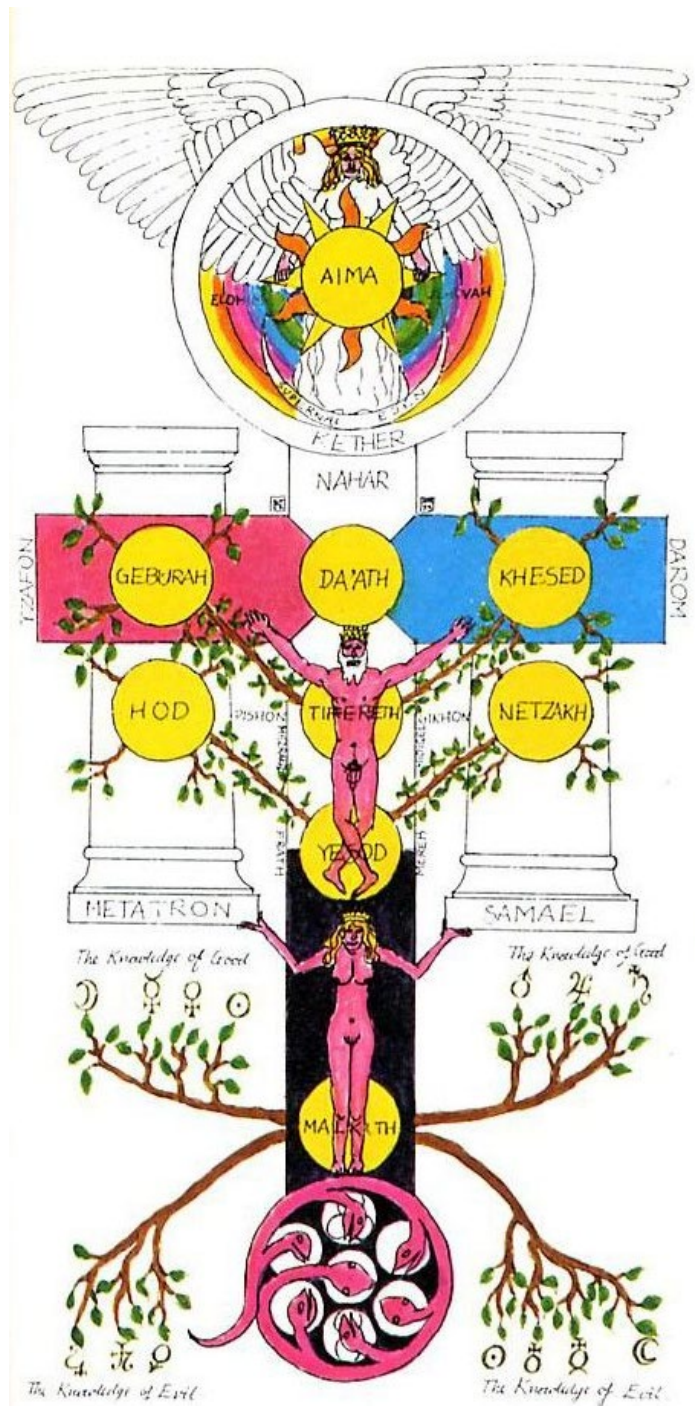


Figure 2 - The Garden of Eden

³ Cicero Chic, Tabitha Cicero, *Self-Initiation into the Golden Dawn Tradition*, (Llewellyn Publications, Woodbury, MN, 2019) 369

⁴ Wikipedia contributors. (2022, December 25). Prometheus. In *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Retrieved 19:01, December 26, 2022, from <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Prometheus&oldid=1129499039>

author of the human arts and sciences. Prior to Prometheus' action, man was considered to be a mere creation of clay, as sentient as the beasts of the fields and fowl of the air.

In Alchemy, fire represents passion and free will. From this perspective, Prometheus' gift of Divine Fire to man can be interpreted as imbuing him with knowledge of the Divine in the form of the knowledge of good and evil. Mankind now was given the ability to choose his destiny – he was no longer like those beasts and plants that he lived among. It may be surmised that the Hebrews assimilated this concept of Creation from the Greek pantheon into their Edenic legend.

In the next figure (figure 3), we observe a representation of the Tree of Life after the Biblical fall of man, where Eve ceased supporting the columns of the Tree as she had done in the previous figure to reach to the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil which grew at her feet. In this action, she ceased supporting the columns of the Tree of Life, thus causing its collapse and awakening the Red Dragon of the Qlippoth⁵. For those who may be uninformed, the Qlippoth is considered to be the place of the shells of Creation, where its densest and most corrupt parts fall, and where can be found manifest a concentrated basis and source of all of evils of Creation. By disrupting the Tree, the demons of the Qlippoth were activated.

Mankind, now possessing the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, was no longer motivated by instinct, but rather had gained self-awareness. He now possessed the ability to think, make tools and to use knowledge – **both for the purposes of good as well as for evil** – with only his free-will to enable him to decide which. Notice in the figure of the Tree after the fall, that man is now

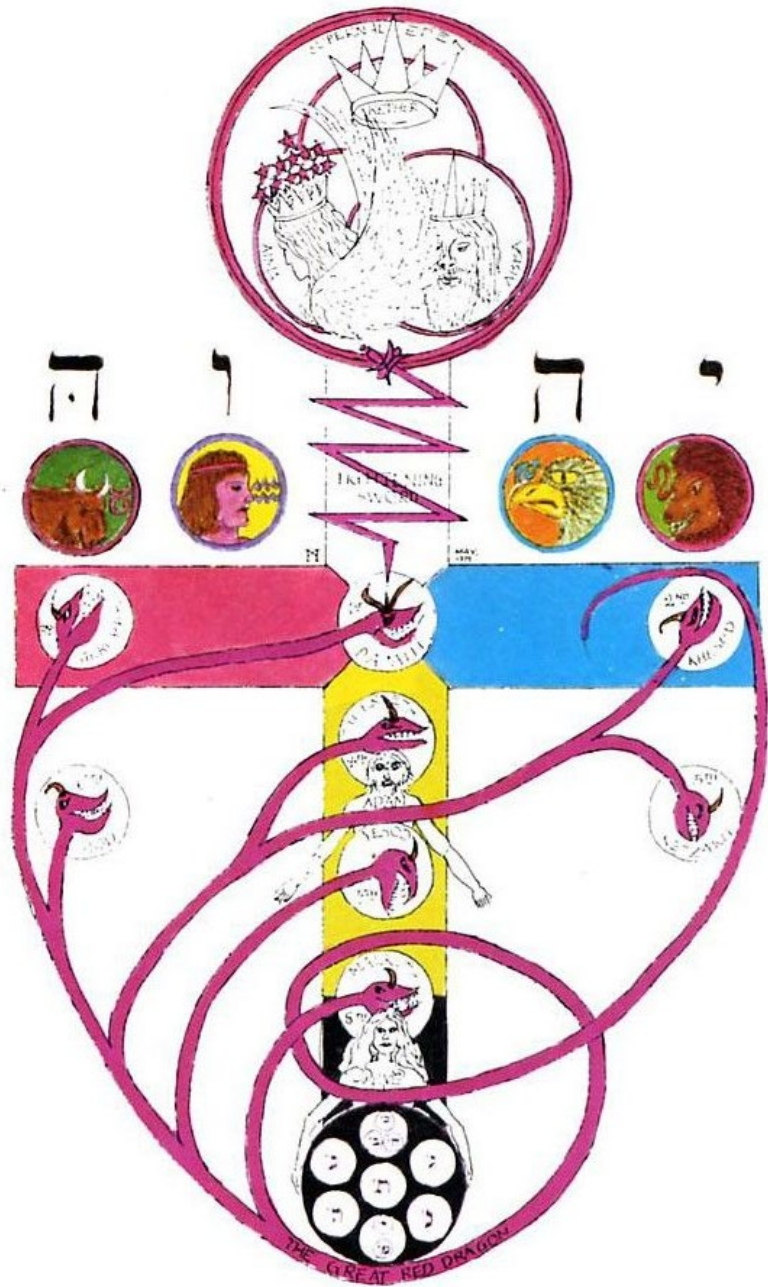


Figure 3 - Eden after the fall of man

⁵ Cicero 510-511

separated from the three supernal sephirot by the elements, with the heads of the Qlippothic dragon barring his path upwards.

Moving onto a parallel line of thought, let's now take a look one of the apocryphal Books of Enoch. In the first Book of Enoch known as the Book of the Watchers, we read that several of the "Watchers" are attracted to the "daughters of men" and descend to Earth so that they may take them as wives. The "Watchers" have been interpreted by some to be akin to angels. There are others who have interpreted the Watchers to be extraterrestrial beings who imparted a degree of intelligence to man so that a race of skilled laborers might be created⁶. Notwithstanding their origin, the progenies of these unions between Watchers and humans were known as the Nephilim, or, sometimes also called giants. The Watchers have been reputed to have taught many skills including farming, animal husbandry, the working of charms and spells, the working of metals into tools and weapons, knowledge of precious stones and creation of jewelry, meteorology and astrology⁷. You might reflect on the professions of Cain, Abel, Seth, Tubal, Jubal, and other early descendants of Adam and find correlation here to these various teachings of the Watchers.

A possible parallel interpretation of the Watchers descending to Earth to take wives of the daughters of men may be compared to the story of the time when the Archangels of Heaven rebelled against God. It was then that there is said to have been war waged between the rebellious factions in Heaven and those who remained loyal to God. In the wake of this battle in Heaven, many rebellious angels were said to have fallen and were cast into a pit by the Lord.

Tangential to the focus of this paper but of peculiar interest to its author, it is said that within this Heavenly melee, a stone known as *Lapis Exilis* is said to have fallen to Earth and from this stone, it is believed, the fabled Holy Grail was wrought. Manly Hall writes in his book *The Secret Teachings of All Ages*, that:

*The Holy Grail is a symbol both of the lower (or irrational) world and of the bodily nature of man, because both are receptacles for the living essences of the superior worlds. The Holy Cup can be discovered only by those who have raised themselves above the limitations of sensual existence. In his mystic poem, The Vision of Sir Launfal, James Russel Lowell discloses the true nature of the Holy Grail by showing that it is visible only to a certain state of spiritual consciousness.*⁸

With this brief account of the War in Heaven, we again observe the angelic realm reaching into the earthly realm. The fable of the Grail being visible only to those who have attained a certain state of spiritual awareness supports the notion of it being an artifact of the higher Kabbalistic world, Yetzirah, that found its way to the earthly realm of Malkuth or Assiah. This fable suggests that the angelic realm perhaps had a part in bringing self-awareness to man, and suggests that the War in Heaven was related in some fashion to the fall of man in the Garden of Eden.

Shifting perspective again, we look to the late 1800's, when Helena Blavatsky wrote a book called *The Secret Doctrine*, where she takes the writings of ancient Eastern and Western theological and

⁶ Sitchin, Zacharia, *The Lost Book of Enki: Memoirs and Prophecies of an Extraterrestrial God*, (Bear & Company; 2nd Edition 2004)

⁷ Lumpkin, Joseph B., *The Books of Enoch – The Angels, The Watchers and the Nephilim*, (Fifth Estate Publishers, Blountsville, AL 2011) 31 - 32

⁸ Hall, Manly P., *Secret Teachings of all Ages*, Dover edition, (Dover Publications, New York, NY 2010), 259-260

theosophical philosophies and combines them with historical and archeological records to synthesize theories concerning the actual process of the Creation of Earth and mankind. In Blavatsky's books, she posits that over the course of 18 million years, Hindu "Pitris," who might be compared to the Hebrew's Elohim, engaged in the work of crafting a creature in the form of the Divine Creator. That creature Blavatsky writes of was a prototype of man. The earliest efforts of the Pitris resulted in mere incorporeal "shadows of shadows of the Lords." Theoretically, this would make sense, since, the progenitor, God, being of the pinnacle of the Tree of Life, has no physical form, so consequently a likeness of Him would lack of matter as well. In order for mankind to walk among the creatures of the physical world, it would be necessary for the Creator to fashion for him a body from the lower formations for him to inhabit. A number of generations of creation from the point where the Pitris encased human "spirit" into matter passed, with each generation yielding advancements until reaching our current archetype – however, while these early generations possessed "spirit," or animating force, they lacked "soul." At this stage, there was not yet any self-awareness; no Divine Fire.⁹

In Blavatsky's commentary concerning the War in Heaven, she asserts that the "obedient" angels could not - or perhaps more accurately - **would** not endow man with reflections of their Divine attributes of thought, as it would leave man still irresponsible and likely impede his potential for higher spiritual progress. These obedient angels were afraid that their creations would succumb to temptation and fail to recognize and tend towards virtue. The "rebel" angels, on the other hand, did not have an appetite to affiliate in the creation of a thoughtless automaton existing miserably in a state of perpetual stasis. These rebellious angels sought to proceed with imbuing mankind with self-awareness.

Blavatsky suggests that the so-called "fallen angels" are Humanity, itself – or at least the product of the actions of those rebellious, fallen angels. She asserts that the knowledge of good and evil paves the road for a noble life, replete with struggle, effort, thought, consciousness, progress, civilization, liberty, virtue, and independence, but it also creates a foundation wherein the demons of pride, lust, rebellion, and hatred may flourish. Prior to man's physical and conscious condition, these latter, darker characterizations have never had any foundation upon which to exist. She writes that it is physical man who has begotten, nurtured and allowed these fiends to develop in his heart and who has contaminated the indwelling god in himself by linking the pure Divine spirit with the impure demon of matter¹⁰. Blavatsky is basically stating that the material world represents the foundation for evil. You might recall the old maxim: money is the root of all evil and perhaps find truth for yourself in her assertion.

In a figure from *The Secret Teachings of All Ages* (figure 4), Manley Hall describes a Rosicrucian diagram that echoes Blavatsky's thesis where he states concerning the portion of the figure labeled 'No. 58', that

⁹ Blavatsky, Helena P., *The Secret Doctrine Vol. 2*, (Forgotten Books, London, England 2008 – originally published in 1888) 76-77

¹⁰ Blavatsky 164-186

Lucifer's abode exists within the central portion marked 'A B' and the Divine outpouring descending from Schamayim (a.k.a. Heaven) passes through the elements prior to reaching the center¹¹.

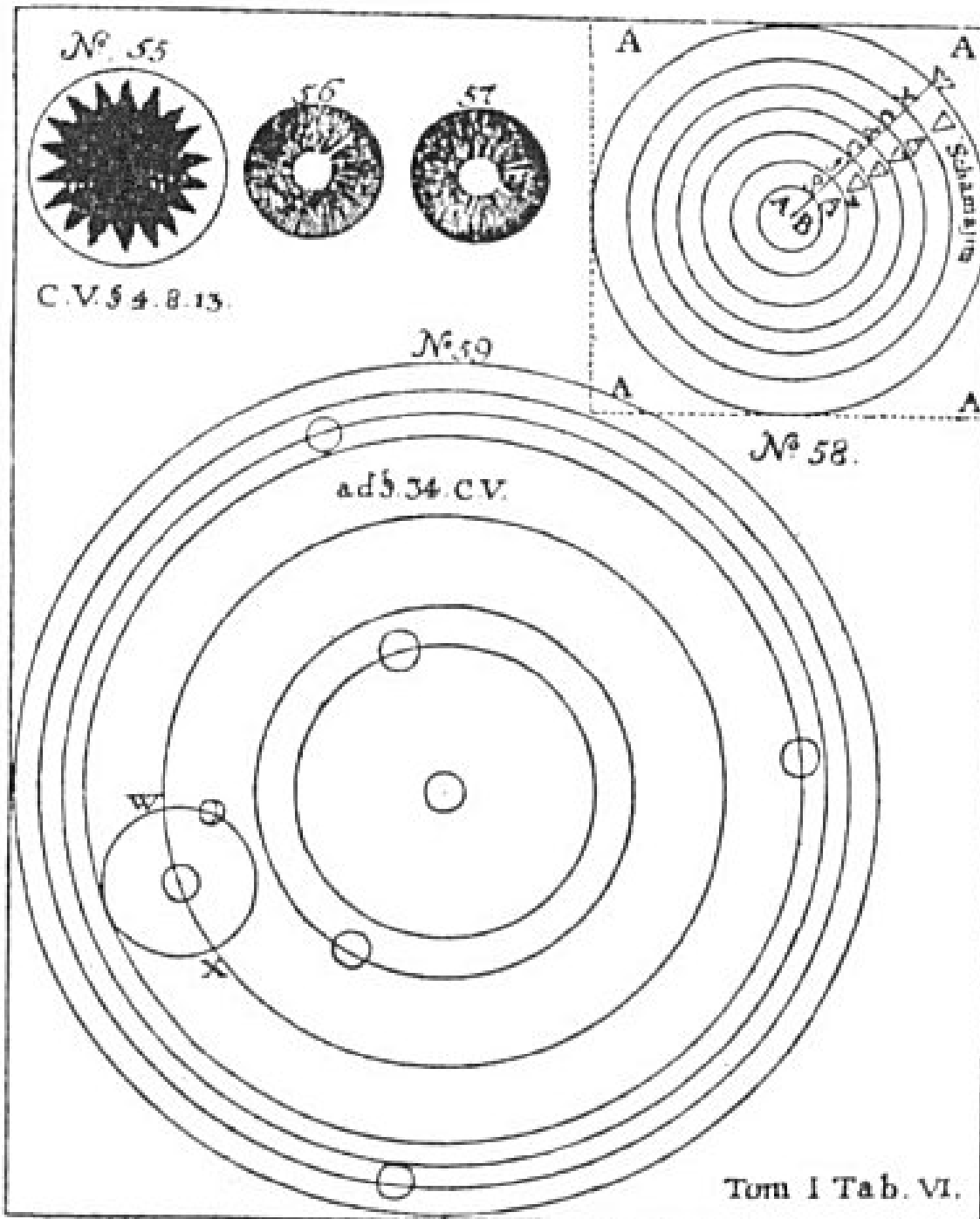


Figure 4 - Rosicrucian diagram of creation

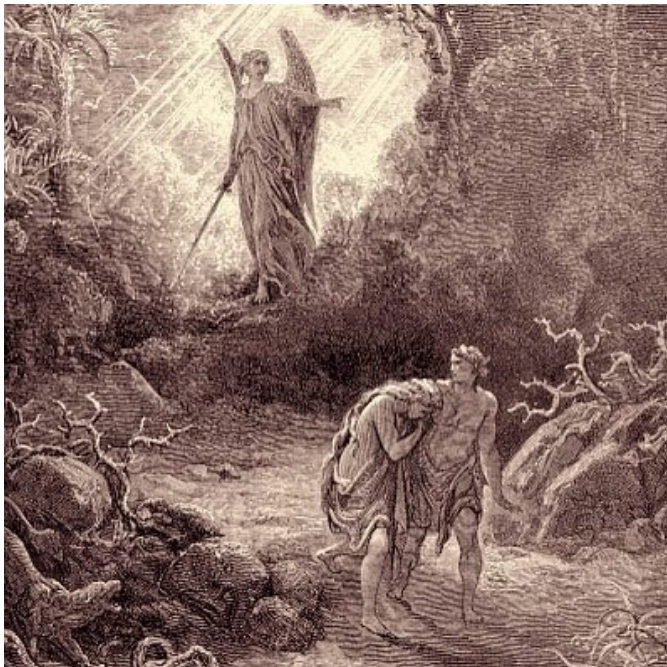
¹¹ Hall, Manly P., *Secret Teachings of all Ages*, Dover edition, (Dover Publications, New York, NY 2010) 416

East of Eden

It seems that the questions of why matter ever became animated with life and why, in all of Creation, only man has awareness of the God who created him, have been considered for perhaps as long as man first actually became self-aware. We find frameworks from many epochs in history that seem to corroborate with each other – often emanating from very different sources. While much of the workings of the Divine are well beyond our ability to comprehend – or at the very least are difficult to convey with our constrained languages or are altogether ineffable, there is agreement in many theologies that matter was imbued with life by an outreach from our Creator and that mankind's awareness of self is a double-edged sword that creates the opportunity for beauty and virtue every bit as much as it does for evil and suffering.

Why Do You Leave the West and Travel East?

In this discourse, we have discussed The Garden of Eden before and after the Fall, the rebellious or fallen angels, and the temptation of the knowledge of good and evil leading to Original Sin. We have considered how the actions of the rebellious angels led the descendants of Adam to seek certain industrial professions. Cain's descendant, Tubal Cain is perhaps one who was a well-known practitioner in one of those professions and one who might be particularly notable to a Freemason. We read in Genesis 3:24, that after the Fall, "So He drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden, Cherubims and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the Tree of Life." Basically, Adam and Eve were cast east out of the Garden, and a flaming sword was employed as a means of preventing their reentry.



Combine these notions with some of the other breadcrumbs left us in the ritual of Symbolic Craft Masonry, such as the seven arts and sciences mentioned in the Winding Stairs lecture. Is Masonry instructing us to accept the fate of fallen man and to tend towards the noble and glorious facets of self-awareness and away from the dark and sinister ones? Consider the directional perspective stated in

Adam and Eve's banishment from the Garden and ask yourself, "why do you left the west and travel east?" Finally, consider also the symbolism of our Square and Compasses. With the Square being representative of the earthly portion of our being, and the Compasses of the spiritual, is a Mason being admonished to not forsake the knowledge of good and evil that is the heritage of man, but to raise our Compasses over the material passions and ambitions of our Square? Perhaps in so doing, we may regain the Garden.



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