



A
Special Report
from
The Institute for Hermetic Studies



Death, Dying, and Immortality
in Qabala and Alchemy

By
Mark Stavish
Director of Studies



Institute for Hermetic Studies
P.O. Box 513, Wyoming, PA
18644-0513
info@hermeticinstitute.org
www.hermeticinstitute.org



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Mark Stavish
Director of Studies

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“[This is] the essential teaching of Egyptian esotericism as well as that of the Greeks: the knowledge of states after death, in order that to overcome fear of this death, psychological, and human fear. The initiate had knowledge of what awaited him; what could he be afraid of?” Jean Marques-Rivere, *Histoire des doctrines esoteriques*

Report Summary

- Meditation, Sleep, Sex, and Death
- Stages of Dying in Alchemy and Qabala: Crossing Over Intact
- Incorruptibility, Resurrection of the Dead, Physical Immortality
- Creating the Body of Light and its Use at the Time of Death

Introduction

Despite Western esotericism’s focus on the invisible worlds there is scant discussion of death and dying in its literature. This is presumably because past generations of students and scholars were educated in the prevailing Christian or Jewish religions of Europe and North America. Esotericism was studied to ‘fill in the gaps’ created by those nagging questions that Sunday School sermons or theological seminaries could not or would not answer. Unfortunately, as we enter into the “Age of Aquarius,” many of these structures are collapsing, and with them the social, religious, and moral understandings that held society together. With this commonality being displaced, individuals are left to their own devices, for better or worse, to not only ‘fill in the gaps’ but to often create the needed spiritual superstructure for daily living as well. While new myths and forms of worship *may* be needed to assist us in this time of collective death and initiation, it is important that these be based on a working experience of the transcendent and not just wishful thinking. To be able to enter into the World of the Dead and to return is critical in our growth as individuals, and as a society. It is important that those who act as *Psychopomp* be able to transmit this knowledge in a manner that allows continuity with the past, and not seek a complete, and thereby artificial, break from it. Only death conveys immortality and adeptness. Only meditation on our personal death, and meditations that involve going through all of the stages of death and experiencing the emotional reactions that accompany each stage, can prepare us for our inevitable death, and initiation (either while alive or at the moment of death) into the ranks of the adepti.

Memory and Immortality

True death does not always happen with the end of the physical body. For many death comes while the body still lives. The brain dies slowly, and with it, the traces of life

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lived, or our memories. The fear of ‘forgetting’ is so profound that many would prefer actual physical death to living with the knowledge that they will slowly forget who they are and what they have done on this earth. Alzheimer’s Disease is a perfect example of this kind of living death, and painful experience for anyone who has had to witness it.

Memory is the link we have with the past, and it alone forms the continuity we call ‘life.’ Without memory it is as if something or someone never existed. In *Meditations on the Tarot – A Journey into Christian Hermeticism*, the author states that there are three kinds of memory: mechanical, intellectual, and moral. Mechanical memory is the memory of the body, and brain.¹ It is strongest in youth. Intellectual memory is developed from the ability to think and solve problems, to make connections between ideas. Moral memory is the strongest of the three, and is the only one linked to the soul, in that moral memory is the memory born of deep emotion. The deeper we feel about an experience, person, or place, the more permanent it is for us. For this reason alone we can see the importance of artistic, devotional, and emotive forms of worship and creativity if we are to truly awaken our immortality through memory.

The Egyptians erected massive monuments to their dead and developed the most intricate cult of the dead the world has ever seen. It was thought that through keeping the memory of ancestors alive they could not only guide the living, but also that they would exist in a sort of otherworldly state where their personalities would survive.

Dreams we are told are our gateway to this ‘other world’ while we still live. Through dreams, we can communicate with the gods, other beings, and get a hint of what awaits us in death. Tibetan Buddhism is replete with practices under the heading of ‘dream yoga’ that are designed to increase one’s gradual state of lucidity and clarity in the dream state. Similar practices exist in Western esotericism, and like their Tibetan counterparts can eventually lead to lucid dreaming, astral projection, and a complete experience of the dying process while still incarnate. Key to all of these practices is increasing the ability of the practitioner to remember their experiences, so as to be able to transfer information between the dense physical world and the subtle realms of the psychic.

However, emphasis on the development of memory has always been on being able to remember what was done in a dream state upon awakening. This continuity allows for an extended state of consciousness or sense of being. This directional emphasis is a result of our being here on earth and seeking some sense of security regarding our mortal nature. Equally, if not even more important, is our ability to transfer information and skills from our material domain into the psychic. This not only allows for a continuity of consciousness, but also fulfills the very reason we have taken human existence to begin with.

What Did We Come Here To Find?

It is critical that we ask ourselves the most important question there is: why do we live at all? According to alchemy the answer is that the physical world exists so that we can develop our consciousness through the sequences of the experiences physical life offers. Through these experiences we develop our freewill. Among the things we came here to develop is personal and direct experience of our authentic 'self.' Only by the experiences offered through physical incarnation, its limitations, struggles, friction, and density can we discover it.

Our Inner Self, or the six levels of duality above physical matter (Malkuth) and the three levels of primordial unity (Binah-Hockmah-Kether) of Qabala, has access to all the knowledge of nature but is unable to use it because it does not possess the necessary "mental and intellectual" functions. Individuals must acquire these functions through work and effort and give them to themselves as working tools for consciousness. For example: if we dream, or if during an astral projection we see a written document, we find that for a long time we are unable to read it. It is the same for numbers as simple addition or subtraction. Over time however this changes, as does our awareness of the invisible worlds. The things acquired by the brain of the earth must be transmitted, as a function, to our Inner Self as well and thus the faculty of reading or adding in the astral world appears. As one authority put it:

"The brain of the earth is the school teacher of the Inner Master, but there is from the part of the Inner Master a concern to help the self of the earth in this work. However, languages being different, communication can only happen through one symbol or a series of symbols. So, progressively the transfer of the work of the brain of the earth allows direct conversation to become possible and this is an important phase of the Initiation which authorizes us to draw from Universal Knowledge what is necessary for our Growth."ⁱⁱ

Just as our Inner Self needs and want to communicate information to our waking brain, it also needs the mechanisms of the waking brain to make use of that information. The progressive dissolving of the barriers between sleep and wakefulness is an important step in developing a powerful memory that aids in the transfer of knowledge between the instinctual energies of the soul and waking experiences of material life.

The Seeds of Life and the Seeds of Death

Qabala seeks to open the interior world through the power of symbol, ritual, and devotion. Alchemy seeks to open the invisible world through understanding the fundamental essence of the physical domain. This fundamental essence being identical in all areas of consciousness and activity, only different in expression, is found in the Hermetic axiom, "As above, so below; as below, so above." In fact, alchemists know that

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if they are able to achieve some kind of exceptional experience, or even a transmutation, it is only because they have achieved an inner evolution first. The outer experiences and the inner experience reinforce, support, and guide one another.

The ‘Essence’ alchemists seek to work with in the various Kingdoms (Plant, Mineral, and Animal) is the Quintessence, or perfect balancing of the Elements, or qualities and expressions of energy and matter. This Quintessence has within it, or more rightly can be said to be, the Seed of Life. Through this Seed of Life, all alchemical healing and transformation take place. Counter to it, is the Seed of Death. Matter is meant for a purpose, and that purpose is progressive experiences that lead to the evolution of both matter and consciousness. If death is not present, then material life would be eternal, and progress could not be made.

However, alchemy recognizes that the ‘normal’ process of evolution used by nature takes billions of years. Through the careful study and imitation of nature, alchemy (like others systems) can speed up the terrestrial time involved in the evolution of consciousness. To do this, practices are undertaken that seek to demonstrate the ever-present powers of the Seeds of Life, and to transform the Seeds of Death into useful energies and tools.

Everything we eat, drink, and breath contains a small portion of ‘death’ within it. As these seeds accumulate our hold on physical life eventually weakens and we die. In practical laboratory work these ‘seeds’ can be seen in some of the final oils that float on top of red wine when it is being distilled for use in spagyric tinctures. However, in alchemy, toxic energies, be they mineral or emotions, are not ‘evil’ or ‘bad’ only very powerful and possibly chaotic. When properly understood and utilized they can give us tremendous energy for our journey. In doing so, we transmute the Seeds of Death into the Seeds of Life. In this, we understand what is meant by Jesus Christ having descended into Hell to preach to the demonic and fallen spirits, and the apostolic statements, “I have the keys over hell and death.” Peter, or *Petros*, the foundation Stone of the Christian Church, is seen as holding the Keys to the Kingdom. These keys are also found on the *Hierophant* Tarot Card, also known as ‘The Pope,’ and are also seen on the Papal coat of arms and flag.ⁱⁱⁱ

“I am the Resurrection and the Life. Whosoever believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, the same shall never die. I am the First and I am the Last. I am He that liveth and was dead – and behold! I am alive forever more, and hold the keys of hell and of death.”^{iv}

It is interesting that Peter is the ‘Rock’ upon which Jesus said he would build his church. Esoterically this Stone represents the light of inner perception (Peter said, “You are the Christ”) as well as the Foundation Stone, or Yesod on the Tree of Life.

Meditation, Sleep, Sex, and Death

It is stated that the clarity of mind experienced in meditation is similar, if not identical, to the clarity of mind we experience just before we fall asleep, for a split second after orgasm, and during the death process. The relationship between death and sleep is so well established that we have even used the term ‘eternal rest’ as a euphemism for death. The relationship between sex and death is described in detail in various texts on yoga, and the French term – *l’ petite morte*, or the ‘little death’ refers to the act of orgasm. The fundamental relationship between sexual, creative, and psychic energies is well known in alchemy and qabala, and is the primary reason for the development of periods of sexual restraint, and even renunciation, so that sufficient physical energy is available for ritualistic and alchemical work. Herein the primary reason is simple: the sexual fluids are the most powerful force we have available to us. With proper nutrition and care a single egg and sperm cell can grow to create a human body. For males however, there is tremendous waste involved in sexual activity – an activity designed primarily to continue the existence of the human race. While only one sperm is needed to accomplish the task, millions are wasted in the process. This waste of energy is said to be slowly debilitating and depleting.^v Here again, we see the idea that within the very Seed of Life is planted the Seed of Death so that change, evolution, and progress can continue.

Death in Qabala

In qabala when we die the etheric body gives up its claim to the physical, in fact, the polarity that initially allowed, even forced the spiritual energies into matter, has now been reversed. As such, the strong attraction to matter no longer exists and the spiritual energies are progressively ejected from the physical body. The body itself is a manifestation of dense energy, and eventually breaks down and returns to the energetic level. As each of the etheric Elements withdraws, their physical counterparts cease to function, and the dying process is underway. When the dissolution of the Elements is complete, only a little energy will remain in the heart area, connecting the consciousness to the body, thereby allowing a focal point of stability amidst the difficult process of physical death. This focal point in the psychic heart is what is used as the basis for all Death Practices. When this last remaining connection to the physical body is ejected, the actual journey into the Invisible, with its choices of continuing onwards to the Nothingness or preparing for rebirth, begins.

Once this ejection occurs the consciousness will be drawn to experience the invisible world in one of three principal ways: the Path of Air, the Path of Water, and the Path of Fire. These Paths are the three lower paths leading to physical life on the Tree of Life. The Path of Air is the most common, the Path of Water the next common Path, and the Path of Fire the least chosen. The Path we take is a reflection of our deepest held values while in life, and our desire to create balance and harmony within consciousness. For someone skilled in esoteric practices there is the possibility of a choice in which Path they will take.

The Path of Air

The 32nd Path is the pathway linking the material to the lowest levels of the psychic. Often called “The Great One of the Night of Time” it reflects the vastness of creation. The material sphere has several titles given to it that reflect the transient nature of material life, as well as the idea that to take on material consciousness, is in some fashion to ‘die’ temporarily in a psychic sense. Dion Fortune lists several of these titles in *The Mystical Qabala* which include: The Gate, the Gate of Tears, the Gate of the Shadow of Death, the Gate of Death, The Gate of the Garden of Eden, The Gate of Justice, and the Gate of Prayer. These titles could as easily apply to the 32nd Path as well as the Sphere given its function as a conduit of energy and consciousness between the visible and invisible worlds.

The Path of Air is the most common Path undertaken at the time of death and is often experienced as a tunnel of gray-blue color (the color of the mineral antimony used in alchemy for purification), yet is very luminous and bright as if lit from within. The symbol of this Path is the Hebrew letter *Tau*, also written in its most primitive form as either an “X” or equal armed cross. It is for this reason that we find the symbolism of meeting points and crossroads in particular as being given psychic or occult significance. Through them it is sometimes hoped that entry into the invisible can be experienced.

For the person who has had little or no significant spiritual training, or is a practitioners of one or more of the larger religious movements that encourages devotion but does not supply the tools for direct personal experience, this is the path they will chose. It will be comforting because it is filled with the thought forms they have created while alive, reinforced by similar thought forms of fellow believers, and in this manner is not very different from material life. It is a comforting path and good for those who want an easy transition.

It is also here that one can experience great terrors if they believe themselves to have sinned, or done immoral or unethical acts in life, as their entire cosmology is present in this the Sphere of Illusions. They experience a complete and total projection of their deepest held subconscious beliefs, alive and present around them. Here the dying person will meet Judgment, their idea of God, Good and Evil, or anything else that has been an important driving force while alive. In esoteric circles this is also called The Guardian of the Threshold.

If one has been inwardly devote and sincere then the transition will be easy and they will enter their vision of Heaven. If they have been an average person, they will experience some remorse, but will experience the power of forgiveness and love, and move on. Others may feel that they deserve to be punished and place themselves in self-imposed exile in their vision of Purgatory or Hell. After a while, a time frame that has little meaning in the material world, they will move on and into the higher aspects of these self-created illusions, thereby preparing for their return to material life.

The Path of Water

The 29th Path is the Path of Water and is called “The Child of the Sons of the Mighty” and refers to the path taken by heroes into the Elysian Fields in classical antiquity. The Path is described as being very lush, green, and filled with natural beauty and wonders. It is a pleasant path and very enjoyable and invigorating, but the influences of Venus limit this path and make it one of a higher illusion than the Path of Air. For those who have experienced great pain and suffering in life, this Path is often the one chosen. It is the reward for those who sacrificed for the many, the Paradise of the earthly delights. In this Path, the memories of human life are erased, leaving only the seed ideas of lessons learned, to ease the consciousness of those who travel it. In doing so, they are not burdened by painful emotions in their return journey to earth. This Path requires that those who take it return to the physical world to complete unfinished business.

The Path of Fire

The 30th Path is the Path of Fire and is called “The Last Judgment.” This Path is the path of the alchemist, the qabalist, or anyone who has experienced contact with their Inner Self while incarnate. This Path leads to the Sphere of Splendor on the Pillar of Rigor, and is concerned with the nature of form and materializing energies. Whereas the Path of Water links to the energies of pleasure to ease consciousness into a state of relaxation and sleep, the Path of Fire links to energies of purification and increased wakefulness. The purifying aspects also make it a Path chosen by those who have lived a lazy and debauched life and have inwardly felt unable to move towards a balanced lifestyle, or as Jesus said, “The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.” For this reason, it is often confused with the idea of ‘hell’ and punishment rather than purification and balance. This way is a true occult path, and the Path of Light (‘hell’ is derived from the Old German word for ‘concealed’). It is the only Path that offers us conscious memory during the after-life experiences, and up to and including our re-birth. By taking this Path we can ensure that we will consciously have an opportunity to survive the ‘Second Death’ or the death of the ego.

Whereas the Path of Air is concerned with self-reflection, judgment, and evaluation after death has already been experienced; and the Path of Water is concerned with easing the emotional burdens of certain aspects of consciousness; the Path of Fire is concerned with releasing any excessive pull of matter, and entering into a state of wakefulness or genuine spiritual Illumination. From the perspective of qabala this is the only Path that allows for the following choices: (1) rebirth with full consciousness, (2) rejection of rebirth and movement towards the Nothingness.

The Second Death

The Second Death is mentioned in many texts, but rarely explained. In the *Revelation of John*, or the *Apocalypse* in the *New Testament*, it is said, “They shall wear a white stone upon their head, and will not taste of the second death.” Just as we pass through one barrier or veil between the material (Assiah) and psychic (Yetzirah) worlds, we all pass through another barrier between the psychic (Yetzirah) and the world of

archetypes or ideas (Briah). The third and final veil is between the world of ideas (Briah) and that of pure consciousness (Atziluth). Each of these Veils forms a kind of Abyss or gulf between the two worlds it stands between, but also acts as a great synthesizer of all the previous experiences that are transferred to the world that consciousness is moving towards.

In the passing from the material to psychic world there is a progressive distillation of life experiences that takes place thereby creating the context for one's experiences in the invisible. Just as this distillation of experiences and lessons learned happens between the physical and psychic, so does it happen again between each of the other worlds, until everything is assimilated, understood, and pure consciousness alone exists. This progressive digestion of images, emotions, and experiences is what allows us to grow as Beings.

By rejecting the Second Death, we avoid the erasure of memories as experienced in the Path of Water, and are able to make a conscious decision as to what we will do rather than an unconscious one: symbolized by the Wheel of Fortune in the Tarot Trumps. We become the master of our destiny, of our consciousness. We are the incarnation of the Paths and as such, the Light Bearer, Awakened, Illumined, and fully responsible for ourselves and our own unfoldment.

Those who take the Path of Air or the Path of Water experience the Second Death as they enter into bliss and Illumination in the Sphere of Beauty. Here inner and outer harmony reign, and peace fills the consciousness of those who experience it. During the return to material life, this experience may be vaguely remembered and act as the seed for a spiritual life, or it may be slowly forgotten, and simply act as one's 'conscience' helping to guide one towards actions that are harmonious. Sometimes it may be heard as the voice of intuition, but more often as a vague feeling.

In this way our conscience is really like attuning to a radio station. When we are acting in accordance with those things that remind us of our experience in the Sphere of Harmony, we feel happy and expansive. When we act in a manner that takes us away from that distant memory of bliss, we feel disturbed. In this way, the experience between lives helps to act as an unconscious guiding force to remind us of our spiritual origins.

Qabala and the Invisible Worlds

According to Qabala upon death we leave the physical world of Malkuth, shedding our physical body or *Guf*, and our consciousness ascends into the invisible world of *Yetzirah*. This journey takes place in several stages. The first being identical to the Alchemical path, in that the Elements which compose our body break down, and the control of the mind over the life force itself is relinquished. Earth collapses into Water; Water collapses into Air (or Fire); Air collapses into Fire; and finally, Fire dissolves into the pure energy of Spirit that unites them. This final stage is nearly identical to the one

that follows it, or the withdrawal of energy into Yesod. As the energy withdraws the consciousness accompanies it. This collapsing of the energies is the withdrawing of the vital energy of the etheric and lower astral body, the *nefesh*, from the physical body, so that it might disintegrate and return to the matter from which it was formed. This process is a slow one, and during it a variety of visual, auditory, and emotional experiences are had that are both psychic, and physical in nature.

Once freed from the material body, the consciousness, or *Ruach*, is destabilized as it enters a new environment, and unless there has been significant training prior to death, a confusing and frightening one as well. For this reason, the Spiritual Seed, or *Neshamaha*, will create for itself a simulacrum of a spiritual being, such as an angel, god, Master, or loved one, to help escort the newly deceased through the rough transition period of death. Some even suggest that the Neshamaha creates a sort of psychic shell around the newly released Ruach.

It is important to note that this guide is none other than the Self, assisting in the process of the lower mind or ego back into the spiritual world. The ego, or sense of self, unconsciously creates a variety of personalities to deal exclusively with material life. These personalities can become so habitual that the ego forgets that they are a tool and not reality. Thus, when they are no longer needed, such as in the invisible realms, the ego feels threatened. Even if the ego is capable of transitioning without this problem it may still have a significant enough sense of independence causing a separation from the spiritual realms, that a different kind of trauma is encountered.

The Second Death

The Second Death however is tricky, in that it requires that we surrender our astral, or emotional-psychic structures. If this is done, and all who take the 31st and 29th Paths do it unconsciously, we have to rebuild them during our next incarnation.

The Paths traversing the Worlds of Yetzirah to *Briah*, specifically leading to the experience of bliss and light that Tiphareth brings, bring with them the Second Death. It must be clear that here we are talking of the Sepheroth, or spheres of the Tree of Life, according to the pattern of Four Worlds, One Tree. If we opt to stay in the realm of Yetzirah, we find that our experience will take on a specific environment equivalent to the Sepherah or level of our development. As such we may attain to a strong Jupiter or Saturn development, but it will be specific to the World of Yetzirah.

Once in the Briatic World our astral vehicles are destroyed and we exist as a being of pure light. This is equivalent to the yogic doctrine of enlightenment, but not a perfect enlightenment. It is also temporary, and brings a sense of balance to our Being, but not a permanent readjustment in consciousness. Only through our own efforts and personal interior initiation can that be achieved.

When we leave this Solar domain, we begin to take on emotional, and then mental characteristics, and finally, instinctual attractions to the material realm, and then re-birth. We have with us specific expressions of consciousness as illustrated in our Natal Chart, as well as potential expressions, and areas we can best direct our attention towards. The Birth Chart represents the moment of birth is limited to being a mirror of the energies present in our incarnation at that moment; it reflects and indicates future potential, but does not dictate.

Alchemy and the Stages of Dying

The alchemical Elements of Earth, Water, Air, Fire, and their absorbing into Spirit, are identical to the Elements presented in Tibetan Buddhism. In the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* it is said that after the dissolution of the Elements, consciousness goes through three distinct phases of White, Red, and Black.

Stages of Death in Alchemy and Tibetan Tantra

Phase	Alchemy	Qabala	Tib. Tantra	Results
Four Elements dissolving into Spirit	Black Stage	Malkooth	Dissolution of the Elements	Death of the physical and etheric bodies.
Awakening in the Subconscious	White Stage	Yesod	White Stage	Death of the personality.
Awakening into Self Awareness	Red Stage ^{vi}	Tiphareth	Red Stage	Death of the ego.
Stabilizing and Realization of pure being.	Multiplication of the Stone ^{vii}	Daath ^{viii}	Black and Clear Light	New birth and Illumination.

The Secret Name

“Behold the servant of the Lord, I will do according to your Word.”

This Solar domain, or the experience of a centralized life force, is also the source of the energy that becomes matter for the material world. As such, as we move away from its intense magnetic field, irregularities arise, which form the imprint of our horoscope, or unique expression of consciousness we project. Another expression of these irregularities is in our personal Elemental balance, or ordering of the basic building blocks of creation.

This gives rise to the notion of the Lost Word, or Secret Name, that each of us carries within us, and seeks to discover, for in doing so we find a direct means of expressing the centralized Life Force we moved away from. Or more accurately, were pushed from.

This ordering of the Elements takes its origin in the Primordial Being, or *Adam* (Hebrew for man, or first being). When Adam “Fell,” he is said in some traditions to have fallen into pieces. Those pieces combine to form variations of the Original Being, or expressions of consciousness. The First Ordering was *Yod-Heh-Vau-Heh*, and corresponds to the astrological sign of Aries, a Tribe of Israel, and a Disciple of Christ. These twelve archetypes form the basic personality types of all humanity. Each of us will go through each permutation of these types at least once, and as some symbolically suggest 144 times. This, however, is a symbolic number. It is theoretically possible that one Being may have perfected themselves in 12 or 144 incarnations, but it is unlikely that this is the Path of the majority. This does give us some insight into how we can assess our place on the Path. If we have a proper ordering of the Names, and discover our own Inner Name, then we can estimate how many incarnations we have left, from between one and twelve. This being said, the closer we are to the final destination, the less likely we will care about such a thing, and it is only of interest and use to us alone.

Discussing this or other esoteric Names that we may receive or discover with others is dangerous, in that it inflates the ego, or material personality. If this, or any additional Name is revealed it is best understood by working with it in meditation rather than analysis or discussion. When this Name is discovered, we no longer need to act or invoke ‘in the Name of’ God, the angels, Christ, or some invisible beings, but instead can act in our own name, for our ‘name’ or worldly personality, and Inner Name are united.

As a substitute for this Inner Name esoteric students, and religionists alike, use the names of saints, sacred people, angels, and archangels to comfort themselves in times of distress. During death, if our Inner Name is not know, we may use the name of some one spiritually special to us to assist in focusing our mind for the journey.

Death and Initiation

It is this ‘Second Death’ and the resurrection of the human consciousness into a more distinct and clear form that the great initiatic traditions of Freemasonry and Rosicrucianism are based on. Rooted in the Egyptian traditions, there is a similarity between these modern and contemporary expressions of initiation and their ancient predecessors. For this reason, some schools refer to death as ‘The Great Initiation.’

In schools of initiation of a Christian character, or that have been heavily influenced by the forms, symbols, and in some instances, the doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church, each of the Seven Sacraments is attributed to one of the Spheres of the

Tree of Life, and through it a planetary influence. Death corresponds to Saturn, and the Rite of Extreme Unction, or Last Rites as they were previously called.

As an esoteric practice, we can assist the dying who have come from a Christian background, or an esoteric background rooted in Christian tradition with a simple ritual, prayer, and readings of the Psalms or sections of the New Testament. This is a *defacto* recognition of the importance of death as the final step in our earthly journey as we travel on the Path of Return, and the profound power of faith as represented by Jesus Christ and the Communion of Saints, regardless of an exoteric religious significance placed on them by more doctrinal authorities.

Death Trumps Us All

The Thirteenth card of the Tarot's Major Arcana is Death. Typically portrayed as a skeleton wielding a scythe with the ground spotted with the heads of nobility and peasant alike this card has come to be associated with the Sign of Scorpio, the Hebrew letter Nun, and the 24th Path of the Tree of Life which leads from Netzach to Tiphareth. It is easy to interpret this Trump in a simplistic fashion, either literally as physical death, or in a more abstract way as transformation, change, and the creation of new forms. A careful look at the various decks shows the skeleton of death with a scythe. However, as Aleister Crowley points out in *The Book of Thoth*, Saturn has no direct relationship to the Sign of Scorpio, making the symbol somewhat anachronistic according to Qabalistic iconography. Long associated with Saturn, the planet of fundamental essence, the scythe points to the real purpose and power of death – the revealing of the elemental, unchanging nature of Being. Scorpio is also the second most powerful Sign in the Zodiac, behind Leo, making this Card “of greater importance and catholicity than would be expected from the plain Zodiacal attribution. It is even a compendium of universal energy in its most secret form.”^{ix}

Oswald Wirth the father of the modern Tarot, states that there is a connection between the Thirteenth Trump and the Fourth Trump, or Emperor. Wirth states that whereas the Emperor signifies alchemical Sulphur, or the power of individuation and life, Death signifies the setting free of these energies that have become not extinguished, but instead:

“...overwhelmed by the weight of Matters increasing inertia. Far from killing, Death revives by disassociating what can no longer live. If it were not for the intervention of Death everything would wilt, so that life finally would not be distinguishable from the common image of Death. So, it is quite right that Arcana 13 should relate to the active generator of Universal life, permanent life, of which Temperance (Arcana 14) symbolizes the moving dynamism, whereas the Devil (Arcana 15) shows its static accumulation. The profane must die to be born to the superior life which initiation confers.”^x

To know how to die is therefore the great secret of the Initiated, for, by dying he frees himself from what is inferior to rise through sublimation... This voluntary death is demanded of the Freemason so that he can say that he is 'born free' as he strikes the door of the Temple. The symbolism [is]... what his passage through the funeral cave, called the Room [Chamber] of Reflection, signifies."^{xi}

The Hebrew Book of the Dead

The author of *The Hebrew Book of the Dead* gives an interpretation of the first six books of the Bible from a Qabalistic view, with the idea that these books describe not only the history of the Jews but also describe the journey of the soul across life and into the invisible realms. The author suggests several movements of the soul's journey, corresponding to the Paths and sepheroth of the Tree of Life. The author shows Mt. Sinai as symbolic of the Middle Pillar. In addition, she firmly states that the early Jews believed in reincarnation, and up until the writing of the *Sepher Bahir*, was a generally accepted concept. This is important for Qabalists who have wrestled with this idea, or may belong to initiatic societies deeply embedded in more mainstream religious views.

Resurrection of the Dead, Physical Immortality, and the Body of Light

One of the more interesting aspects of Western esotericism is its relationship to traditional Western religious practices as born in the Middle East. While many countries and cultures have held a belief in reincarnation, it is in India, China, and Tibet where this doctrine has been most clearly elucidated and with whose teachings modern students of esotericism are familiar. Within these cultures, specific systems of philosophy developed, and along with them, practical methods of realizing the ideas presented. The majority of Eastern thought seem to look poorly upon the body, viewing at best as a prison house for the soul, or as something to be neglected, and even outright evil. Despite this there are schools of Indian, Chinese, and Tibetan esotericism that view the body as essential to personal development. These schools fall under the classification of *tantra*, and include practical experimentations in alchemy.

The common thread among them is their belief in the realization of the *Diamond Body*, or the *Body of Light*, while physically incarnate or at the moment of death. This Diamond Body is created out of the energy that forms the very material substance of the physical body. Reports of the Body of Light have occurred until recently, and it is stated that all that remains is some hair and nails. The process of 'dissolving the Elements' takes several days, and upon completion bright lights, or a rainbow, are reported to be seen over the area where it took place. If the practitioner is interrupted during their practice, or

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fails in some crucial stage, it is said that a puddle of fluid, or a small, child like shrunken corpse is all that will remain.

These reports have been taken seriously enough to warrant investigation by Father Francis Tiso, and Bro. David Steindl-Rast, Roman Catholics, under the joint sponsorship of the *Esalen Institute* and the *Institute of Noetic Sciences*.^{xiii}

According to Cornelius Agrippa, “In the human body there is a very small bone called Luz by the Hebrews, which is the size of a pea, and is incorruptible, also it is not capable of being damaged by fire, but always remains unhurt. According to Jewish tradition, when the dead are raised, our new bodies will sprout from it as plants do from seeds...However, these powers cannot be fathomed by the mind, but have to be verified empirically.” *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, Chapter XX.

In Hebrew *Luz* means almond, and is translated as nut, seed, or bone.^{xiii} Luz is also the name for the town Beth-El, or ‘House of God.’ It was in Beth-El that Jacob wrestled with an angel, his Higher Self/Holy Guardian Angel, after which he received the name Israel (“He shall rule as God”). Jewish folklore states that Azrael, the Angel of Death, has no power in the city of Luz, and that its citizens are immortal. Entrance to Luz is gained through a secret cave hidden by the trunk of an almond tree, wherein there is a hole that gives entry to the cave. Almond has come to represent the sphere of Kether, or Crown, the highest psychic center man possesses, connecting him to the absolute nothingness (Ain Soph Aur). Staffs and wands of almond are used in the *Tanakh* (Old Testament) when entering into the Holy of Holies. Almond is the preferred wood for constructing a wand in Medieval magical systems, particularly that of *The Sacred Magic of Abramelin the Mage*.

Occult philosophers locate the Luz bone along the spine or in the skull at various locations. For our purposes we will discuss the symbolism of the *luz* from the perspective of Agrippa. Luz means ‘Inward curving’ and it is easy to see how it can refer to the base of the spine. However, folklore and traditional Jewish law are in disagreement on what is required for resurrection. According to Jewish law only the thighbones and skull are needed for physical resurrection. Together they form the famous pirate flag, originally the naval flag of the Knights Templar fleet. The skull and crossed thighbones are found in modern Freemasonic York Rite rituals related to the Knights Templar. It may be that the *luz* represents a genuine *spiritual and physical regeneration* rather than a physical resurrection from the dead, and that the latter concept is a degeneration of it in the popular mind. In fact, it would be easy to dismiss the idea of resurrection from the dead if it were not for its widespread occurrence throughout the Jewish and Christian Bibles.

Rosicrucianism and Physical Resurrection

In May 1920 the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC, then located at 1255 Market Street, San Francisco, California, published its monthly magazine under the title, *The American*

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Rosae Crucis – An Official Publication of Rosicrucian Mysticism. While written primarily for members of the organization, it bore a cover price of thirty-five cents. *The American Rosae Crucis* in later years would change its title to *The Mystic Triangle*, and finally its current name, *The Rosicrucian Digest*.

The May 1920 issue carried an article titled, *The Raising of the Dead – A Supplement to “Jesus as a Normal Man”* and stated that it was a continuation of the April issue. The article points out that according to the Christian Gospel, Jesus raised the dead on at least three occasions: (1) The widow’s son (Luke 7:11-16); (2) Jairus’ daughter (Math. 9:18, 19); (3) Lazarus (John 11:1-46). In addition, there are references to Elijah (1 Kings 17:17-24); Elisha (2 Kings 4:18-37); Peter (Acts 9:40); and Paul (Acts 20: 9-12). The power to raise the dead was not limited to Jesus or his predecessors, and he instructs his disciples to do it as well (Math. 10:8). The author of the *Epistles to the Hebrews* refers to this power as one of the outward signs of inner faith (Hebrews 11:35).

When analyzed, each instance gives us a clue as to the process involved. When taken synthetically, they present the method in total. According to the author, physical death is the result of the polarity between the body and conscious breaking down, and consciousness essentially becoming passive in relation to the spiritual worlds. This passivity creates a strong attraction that pulls it from the body and returns the soul, or consciousness, to the spiritual domain. Therefore, if this polarization can be maintained, so can health. If it can be restored, then (the recently) dead can be returned to physical life. For this to work, the operator must have a through understanding of the subjective understanding and be completely confident in their reality and practical application. They must also open themselves completely as a channel for the manifestation of ‘Vital Life Force’ (as AMORC refers to it), or Universal Mercury of the alchemists. In addition, the following steps are given:

1. Motivated by a pure desire and sympathy for the deceased and surviving family and friends.
2. A pure will must be expressed, in an unwavering and overwhelming intention to restore physical life.
3. The operator must be alone with the deceased, or only with those that are in harmony with the operator and the operation.
4. Verbal instruction should be given to the soul, urging it to return to physical life, and presenting an overwhelming reason to live.
5. The operator should lie next to, or on top of the deceased, *heart to heart* (italic original), using deep and retained breath, to vitalize the body.
6. Mentally, the “Lost Word” should be pronounced. This word is somewhat unique to AMORC, in that it is delivered in the Fourth Degree, and further explained in the Ninth Degree. The word is *Mathra*, or *Mathrem*, and is found in the *Gathas of Zarathustra* from the *Zend-Avesta*.^{xiv}
7. Call the soul forth by its familiar name, while taking the deceased’s hand (right to left, or left to right).

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The author further points out that Jesus specifically commanded his disciples to raise the dead as if it were within their power, as well as their duty, and the Gospel gives record of it having been achieved. While some of these instances may have been resuscitations rather than resurrections, it is clear from some of the accounts, such as Lazarus, that the deceased in question were already displaying signs of decay.

In *Ways to Self-Realization – A Modern Evaluation of Occultism and Spiritual Paths*, Mouni Sadhu recounts a meeting between Paul Sedir and who would become his spiritual Master. During the meeting, Sedir, a physician, states that he was present for the resurrection of a recently deceased woman living in Paris prior to the First World War. Sedir was a leading force in European Martinist and Rosicrucian circles, however, by the time of this strange meeting, he had sold or given away his library, and demitted his membership in the esoteric organizations that had come to define his life, many of which he was a founding member.

Sedir states:

“I told the Man that the woman had been dead about an hour. A strange almost inevitable smile crossed his powerful features. He spoke to the grief-stricken husband, and his voice sounded grave. “Do you want your wife alive? Will you swear to me now, that you will always be good to her, if she comes back?”

The poor man was astonished and almost afraid. “It is not possible! See for yourself! Surely she is dead.” The voice of the stranger went on pitilessly: “I ask you only if you want to have her back again? And will you swear that she will never again suffer from your behavior?”

The man replied that he would take an oath on the Holy Cross, only that it was too late and he could not believe in the impossible. Then the Unknown Man went close to the bed, took the head of the dead woman gently in his hands, bent down and whispered to her; but everyone in the room could hear his words clearly.

“My dear, my daughter, come back again, return, they need you. It will be favorably counted to you, this sacrifice which you make.”

When we heard that whisper, there was no doubt in us but that she must rise from the dead. There was no power which could oppose the words of the Unknown. The dead woman immediately lifted her head and opened her eyes, looking around as though from another world. “I was dreaming,” she whispered.”^{xv}

Incorruptibility

A phenomenon peculiar to Roman Catholicism and certain schools of Buddhism and Vedic yoga is the notion of incorruptibility. This is clearly different from the normal process of mummification, mummification by natural means, or the practice of ingesting tar pine to mummify oneself while still alive as done by at least one Japanese sect. Here, the body of those considered to be saints, holy people, or completely awakened beings stay in various forms of completion centuries after their death. There are also instances of this occurring in the Twentieth Century. Several Indian yogis have been reported to be incorruptible as well as recently, that of several leaders of Tibetan sects.^{xvi} According to reports, their flesh was still supple and elastic despite being dead for several years and no attempts at preservation being made. While there are no reports of Western adepts outside of the Christian churches performing the same feats, there is reason to believe that these reports support the theory that genuinely spiritually minded people effect a marked and lasting change on their physical bodies.^{xvii} This is an area that needs considerably more research from an esoteric perspective as the etheric body of these individuals is still in varying degrees of intactness. This intact nature of the etheric is vital to connecting with the astral realms, and the reason why the actual flesh, organs, and bones of deceased Saints are highly prized as relics. The most common of these naturally forming talismans are bone fragments, however, soft tissue and organs, such as the heart are well known and preferred. Bones will naturally last for millennia whereas their soft tissue should completely decompose within several weeks. Clearly if it has not, there must be either a physical or supra-physical reason to explain it.

Preparing for the Great Initiation

Each of us must die. That is the fundamental necessity of life. In order to fully grasp being alive it is important that we come to grips with our physical mortality. Even if the alchemist is able to confect the Red Stone of the Philosophers he or she still must reach a point where physical life is no longer desirable or necessary; or if the qabalist is able to perfectly create the Body of Light and dissolve all of their physical elements into spiritual ones at the time of death and leave nothing behind death, still is the final form of initiation.

In qabala there are three fundamental Paths that are addressed during death. In alchemy the process is almost identical to what is described in the *Tibet Book of the Dead*. The reason for this similarity is quite simple: alchemy addresses the mineral energies of nature to create a feedback loop with the psyche and the body; Tibetan yoga uses the energies of the body (essentially mineral) to create a feedback loop with the psyche and nature. The approaches of qabala and alchemy (and their relation to the better known *Tibetan Book of the Dead*) will be examined and their overlaps demonstrated so that each person reading this Special Report will have the necessary tools to be prepared for their inevitable journey into the invisible.^{xviii} Immediately upon dying our consciousness is ruled by the same influences that affect our dream life. As such, skill in

Lucid Dreaming is essential in preparing to die consciously and without regret or fear. Given that experience in Lucid Dreaming is among the easiest skills to acquire, and takes no time out of our day, it is among the most beneficial and important of spiritual practices.^{xix}

Even if you have not achieved a high degree of technical skill in the occult arts, or can deeply elucidate on the theories and philosophies esotericism has spawned, you can still derive a great deal of meaningful experience from the exercises presented in this Special Report. Healing is about healing the relationships and attitudes we have between 1) our various expressions of consciousness; (2) our relationship to our physical body and material life; (3) other beings both human and non-human; and (4) God, the Cosmos, the Primordial Being. The more effort we put into regular daily practice, the better healers we will become, because we will become whole ourselves. This expression of personal wholeness can, and must manifest in the ability to assist others when the need or opportunity arises.

Caring for the Dead

It is important that the dead be treated in a manner that allows for their peaceful transition from physical to spiritual life. This requires that even after breathing has stopped, the body has grown cold, and stiffening of the muscles has set in, that the corpse remain undisturbed and in a peaceful environment for up to three days. While this is unheard of in contemporary life, it is essential that the corpse be left undisturbed for as long as possible to allow for a smooth separation of the etheric and astral forms. This is exceptionally critical for those who have undertaken practices involving the Body of Light, and who are attempting to dissolve their physical Elements at the time of death. For this reason, they may choose to die alone and in isolation if they are aware of their impending death. Such a sudden disappearance of a loved one can be very disturbing to those left behind, but if it is not done, and the proper environment secured from intrusion, the Adept risks having their efforts completely destroyed by well meaning, but unhelpful well wishers and mourners.

For those who are not adept at such methods, and who have not died quietly in the dark hours of the night, or while at rest, environment is critical for their passing. In the Appendix there are several suggestions for how to assist the dying in their journey. For those who live in or are planning to live in spiritual communes, or are active in lodge work, it is important to learn how to care for your dead, as well as the laws governing it if you are to be truly beneficial in aiding in the passing of your fellow members.

Conclusion

Since World War Two the United States (and many of the industrialized countries as a whole) has gone from having fifty per-cent of its population living and working on

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farms to less than two per-cent. This movement away from the land, and towards concentrated urban living with its high technology and ‘on demand’ lifestyle has insulated the majority of the population from the daily realities of life and death.

Few people actually see babies being born, and few are with people as they die. These frightening and life defining tasks being left to the ‘professionals.’ This breaking of the cycle of life has broken our individual and collective connection to life itself. It allows us to live in a mirage, a fantasyland of clean death, antiseptic odors, creating a framework wherein the fragility of human life becomes an afterthought at best.

For a student of practical esotericism to be serious about their studies they must address the nature and function of death, their own mortality, and immortality. Any spiritual practice that does not directly address the nature and function of death and its role in our spiritual progress is a false path, and cannot offer genuine initiation no matter what it claims. It may offer fellowship, religious worship, genuine support and studies, but initiation requires that death be confronted and assimilated into daily living at some point along the journey.

It is important that we address death for what it is and not what we would like it to be. New Age parlance of calling it ‘transition’ softens the psychological reality and is more destructive than useful. It is another form of denial. Death is terminal, permanent for body and personality, and inevitable. It is better to spend time meditating on these realities and to prepare for them than to sugarcoat them with a newer, kinder, gentler, name that is little more than a psychological reincarnation of our ancient fear of death.

As stated in the Introduction to this Special Report, only death conveys adepthood and only meditations on death can prepare us for the Great Initiation. Within some schools of occultism hundreds of hours are spent memorizing and practicing systems of divination such as astrology, tarot, geomancy, and other obscure forms. Extensive research is done into the ‘Inner Worlds’ through skrying giving results that read like scenes from fantasy novels as they reveal more about our subconscious than they do about spiritual or mundane truths. Deep debates on authenticity waste time, energy, paper, and bandwidth on the Internet. Yet none of this, no amount of divination, questionable skrying, historical research, consecration of talismans, evocations, or collecting of initiations can prepare us for death. Only our personal meditation on our inevitable death can do that for us. Even if long life or some form of physical or psychic immortality is possible; even if the resurrection of the dead can be achieved, they all require that we die first, in order that we may truly live. Christians are admonished to ‘die daily in Christ.’ The exoteric as well as esoteric meaning of this statement is clear – and not just on a psychological level. If daily we practice meeting our savior, be it our Inner Self, spiritual teacher, or a god, we come closer to that ideal, and learn to live more fully.

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Suggested Reading

Book of the Dead by Dion Fortune. Weiser Books, York Beach, Maine. 2005.

Caring For Your Own Dead by Lisa Carlson. Upper Access Publishers, Hinesburg, Vermont. 1987. Legal, medical, and spiritual considerations in caring for your dead.

The Hour of Our Death by Philippe Aries. Barnes and Noble Books, New York. 2000. Translated from the French by Helen Weaver. The Classic History of Western Attitudes Towards Death Over the Last One Thousand Years

People Who Don't Know They're Dead by Gary Leon Hill. Weiser Books, York Beach, Maine. 2005.

The New Book of the Dead by Dolores Ashcroft-Nowicki. Aquarian/Thorsons, London. 1992. A landmark work on the esoteric considerations of death.

On Death and Dying by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross. MacMillian Publishing Co., New York. 1969. A classic book, and essential reading for understanding the death process.

PDA – Personal Death Awareness by J. William Worden, PhD and William Proctor. Prentice-Hall, Inc. Englewood Cliffs, NJ. 1976.

The Art and Practice of Astral Projection by Ophiel. Samuel Weiser, Inc., York Beach, Maine. 1998.

Summary

- Contemporary esoteric teachings do not do a good job of preparing students for their inevitable physical death.
- The use of soft language, such as ‘transition,’ around the topic of death does more to create conditions of denial than psychological preparation.
- Every thing contains the seeds of life and death within it. Occult practices single out the seeds of death and utilize their energies for creating life, both physically and psychically.
- The experience we have during deep meditation, sleep, and orgasm, are identical to the experiences of death. The key is in retaining consciousness throughout and after the event.
- The Tree of Life shows three possible Paths for experiencing the death experience: consciously (Fire), unconsciously (Water), and semi-consciously (Air).
- Avoiding the Second Death is key to conscious survival of the astral matrix and can only be done by taking the Path of Fire and consciously reincarnating.
- The entire alchemical process is about the death and resurrection process. Meditation on its color scheme is nearly identical to Tibetan practices, and delivers the same results.
- The Tarot card Death is one of the most powerful and significant cards of all of the Major Trumps and signifies the Universal Energy, or Mercury, in its most secret and powerful form.
- The *Hebrew Book of the Dead* describes the first six books of the Bible as an allegory of the death process.
- The Bible has numerous recorded events of physical resurrection of the dead. Eastern teachings are filled with ancient and modern reports of the successful completion of the Body of Light, and its manifestation after the physical death of adept that created it.
- Only regular meditation on death can prepare us for death, and free us so that we can live life more fully, and die with consciousness and purpose.
- In preparing ourselves for our personal death, we learn how to assist others during their death, and thereby render one of the most important services we can as students of practical esotericism.

Appendix - Practices and Meditations

Exercise One – Preparing for the Unexpected

Death can come at any time. Our preparedness for its arrival is important. While this doesn't mean that we should obsess about the natural uncertainty of life, we should prepare for ourselves a certain amount of 'death insurance' within our psyche so that should we die suddenly and without notice, we will not be caught unguarded on the other side. In her work, *The Ritual Magic Workbook*, Dolores Ashcroft-Nowicki discusses the problem and solution to the possibility of 'sudden death' through *The Rite of Withdrawal*. Mrs. Ashcroft-Nowicki describes the Rite as "a ritual pathworking which is then time-locked by intent, so to work at the moment of his [the magician's] death. If that death is a sudden event, it will snap into operation just before the consciousness goes, if there is time to reflect, the working can be done in full consciousness, which is the way all initiates should 'go out'."xxx This process can also be done for another as a thought form, that assists someone who is not even familiar with the process, but who like everyone, is in need of an 'afterlife game plan' to aid their transition from material to spiritual consciousness. This process is analogous to the Middle Path, or the Path of Air.

1. Pick a time and place that you enjoy. Imagine yourself there, younger and in the prime of life.
2. Imagine that someone special comes to greet you. This can be one person, or a small group. It can even be a pet.
3. Take a short walk with them to somewhere special, such as a beach, resort, fabulous house, or anywhere that you and your many friends can gather comfortably.
4. Image that they are having a welcoming party for you.
5. Greet them all, and proceed to go to a special room just for yourself. Lie down, and know that when you wake up, everything and everyone will be available to you.
6. With the beginning and end point firmly in place, freeze the visualization, and affirm to yourself that this Pathworking will activate in the event of a sudden death event.
7. When you are done, stand up, ring a small bell, or stamp your foot, and become clearly present in the material world.

Exercise Two – A Short Ritual for Helping the Dying

1. Play a little music, soft, soothing, and in a low, barely audible tone. Burn a little incense, or preferable use a diffuser with some essential oils of frankincense, myrrh, and benzoin. This should be just enough to provide an environment and not overwhelm the dying person or others present. Dispense with any unnecessary metals in the room or on your person or that of the dying.
2. Bow at the waist, head level, to the Four Cardinal directions, starting in the East, turning to the South, the West, and North, and returning to the East. Say, “Lift up my prayers before thee O Lord, like this offering rising to the heavens!”
3. “May it be forgiven to (name of person) all transgressions, sins, misdeeds, and errors committed in thought, word, or deed; with knowledge or in ignorance; of free will or by compulsion.” Continue facing East and repeat this seven times, bowing after each completion.
4. “May it be given to (name of person) to find the supreme rest in the Lord’s blessed abode, where there is no maladies, no grief, no suffering, or complaints; but only Infinite life, peace, and joy.” Repeat this seven time, bowing after each completion.
5. “Grant (name of person) Eternal Peace O’ Lord, and may the perpetual Light enlighten (name of person) forever.” Repeat this seven times, bowing after each completion.

With this environment created, you can now proceed to read selections from Holy Scriptures or similar texts that are of importance to the dying person. If they are not conscious but still present, the following Psalms are useful: 17, 38, 113; and 38, 48, and 54 to overcome fear of death. The numeration given is from the King James Bible. Use of the Psalms for magical and healing practices is common in French, German, and American (Pennsylvania German) traditions.

Exercise Three – Qabalistic Meditation on Personal Death

1. Experience the dissolution of the Elementals as your Earth center (perineum) dissolves into your Water center (sexual center, at the public bone). Feel your Water center dissolve into your Fire center (slightly below the heart or solar plexus). Feel your Fire center dissolve into your Air center (throat), and Finally, Air into Spirit (crown). There is still a thin line of psychic energy connecting you to your physical body at the level of the heart. Sense the Elemental colors of red, blue, yellow, and green flash brilliantly from your psychic heart and a deep sense of bliss and peace pervade your consciousness. You may also add their complimentary colors and white the color of ‘spirit’ that binds them all.

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2. There is momentary Blackness (Black Stage) as you pass into the white light of the lunar realm. There may be a transition of color to a blue-gray before the white. You may imagine your Master, Teacher, or a Divine Being (such as Hermes, Anubis, Jesus) there to assist you. It is important that you realize this is a projection of your mind created to assist you and not an objective reality. Focus on this being to the exclusion of all other images or sensations that might arise. Stabilize your consciousness.

3. Image that there is a Path of brilliant flame before you. This fire arches up and forms a canopy. Even the ground is brilliant orange and red coals. The heat is intense and penetrates your consciousness, purifying your Body of Light.

4. Walk down the Path absorbing the heat and flame becoming overjoyed at its intensity and the feeling of new found strength and focus that it gives you.

5. Enter into the Temple of Splendor (Hod). This may be imagined as a simple fountain in the middle of an eight-pointed star made of two intertwined squares. The star is blue and the tile floor it rests on is orange. The fountain is of a similar shape, and its water sparkles with luminous light. An orange priestess may hand you the cup with which you drink, or you may simply use your hand as a cup. If you are greeted, all that much better. This is where the Waters of Wisdom are kept, and by drinking of them, we come to understand our reason for Being. You may pause here for a while, but do not tarry.

6. Leave the Temple of Hod and continue towards the brilliant sun. Do this by entering into the underworld. Pass into a void, or darkness, noticing that you also feel that you are not alone, and that all around you is power, energy, and life. This void is both expansive and confining, you move through it absorbing its dual nature of expansion and contraction, of pure life energy.

7. As you leave the void, you enter into the luminous Sphere of Harmony, of the Sun. You pass into the Solar Temple. This is a brilliant, luminous, white, gold, and yellow domain with a central point that awakens within you a sympathetic resonance. These expanding heats, warmth, love, and harmony permeates your being.

8. Rest in this feeling for a while.

9. If you have a specific time, place, and location wherein you would like to reincarnate perform the following before returning. State your intention in a clear, simple, and declarative tone, visualizing the key point – your chosen goal or Life Mission - as you mentally make your affirmation. Example: “It is my desire to reincarnate wherein I can most quickly, efficiently, and meaningfully express my inner creative powers as a concert pianist.” If you like, you can even be more

specific, and name a city, state, country, or persons you would like to return with. Of course, this can also be used to further your esoteric studies as well.

10. Now, either return the way you came, or if you are an experienced qabalist, use the Formula of the Rising on the Planes in its descent mode to return.

11. If you are returning by the reverse Path, re-enter the Void, feeling it being impregnated with the seed though form you created of your future life, return to the Temple of Splendor, drink again, this time of the Well of Memory so that you remember your expanded states while incarnate, thereby bringing the worlds closer together, descend through the tunnel of Fire, and return to you body.

12. When you are done, breath deep, stand up, ring a small bell, or stamp your foot, and become clearly present in the material world.

Exercise Four – Simplified Alchemical Meditation on Personal Death (Part I)

1. Experience the dissolution of the Elementals as your Earth center (perineum) dissolves into your Water center (sexual center, at the public bone). Feel your Water center dissolve into your Fire center (slightly below the heart or solar plexus). Feel your Fire center dissolve into your Air center (throat), and Finally, Air into Spirit (crown).

2. There is still a thin line of psychic energy connecting you to your physical body at the level of the heart. Sense the Elemental colors of red, blue, yellow, and green flash brilliantly from your psychic heart and a deep sense of bliss and peace pervade your consciousness. You may also add their complimentary colors and white the color of 'spirit' that binds them all.

3. There is momentary Blackness (Black Stage) as you pass into the white light of the lunar realm. There may be a transition of color to a blue-gray before the white. You may imagine your Master, Teacher, or a Divine Being (such as Hermes, Anubis, Jesus) there to assist you. It is important that you realize this is a projection of your mind created to assist you and not an objective reality. Focus on this being to the exclusion of all other images or sensations that might arise.

4. Move through the whiteness to the Red Stages of the Solar Light. Here you join with the being, and become it, and your psychic body is pervades with a red or pinkish light.

5. Now there is a period of darkness (first multiplication) followed by a clear light of the morning sky (second multiplication or Chesed on the Tree of Life, Jupiter, the Sky God).

6. This is followed by a sense of great bliss and peace as the remaining energies of the heart are released, and all connection to the material world is severed. Rest in this peace.

7. When the impulse moves you, often a point of light (sometimes blue), feel yourself moving from the abstract to the more concrete images of the psychic world. Using a Divine image and Assumption of the Godform can strengthen this stage of the practice.

8. Maintain awareness of this expanded state, its expression through the godform you've re-assumed. After a period of time feel it become concrete, in and through your physical body. Rest in that expression of Illumination as you sit in meditation, aware of the room around you, and of the insight attained.

9. When you are done, breath deep, stand up, ring a small bell, or stamp your foot, and become clearly present in the material world.

10. Leave meditation with a renewed sense of unity, and that all sense of separateness, duality, or life and death, are just illusions.

The importance of the Heart in the work and the Clear Light Stages.

In alchemy the Philosophers Stone is conected when we balance the Elemental energies of our psychic heart. It is as considered the location of consciousness in Egyptian cosmology. In Tibetan Buddhism the heart is the key to unlocking the secret or inner fire located at the navel, and is the center most focused on at the moment of death. It contains the mechanism to experiencing pure consciousness, just as the philosophers stone contains the mechanism to uniting the inner and out worlds. A common symbol used for meditation in Tibet to represent this union will not be lost on practical alchemists: the union of the moon and sun, and their conjoined white light with hints of red and pink. The Wedding of the Solar King and Lunar Queen is the focal point of alchemical symbolism, and as demonstrated earlier, can be utilized in purification practices. The Star of David is also used to represent this union.

The following meditation is taken directly from the alchemical stages, and can be seen in column form as being similar to the Tibet Buddhist practices involving the Bardo realms. This meditation should be practiced regularly in preparation for death, but also as a means of more deeply and personally experiencing the alchemical path of personal transformation.

1. Experience the dissolution of the Elementals as your Earth center (perineum) dissolves into your Water center (sexual center, at the public bone). Feel your Water center dissolve into your Fire center (slightly below the heart or solar plexus). Feel

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your Fire center dissolve into your Air center (throat), and Finally, Air into Spirit (crown).

2. There is still a thin line of psychic energy connecting you to your physical body at the level of the heart. Sense the Elemental colors flash brilliantly from your psychic heart and a deep sense of bliss and peace pervade your consciousness.

3. There is momentary Blackness (Black Stage) as you pass into the brilliant white light of the lunar realm. You may imagine your Master, Teacher, or a Divine Being (such as Hermes, Anubis, Jesus) there to assist you. It is important that you realize this is a projection of your mind created to assist you and not an objective reality. Focus on this being to the exclusion of all other images or sensations that might arise.

4. Move through the whiteness of the Lunar realm to the Red Stages of the Solar Light. Here you join with the being, and become it, and your psychic body is pervades with a red or pinkish light.

5. Now there is a period of darkness (first multiplication) followed by a clear light of the morning sky (second multiplication or Chesed on the Tree of Life, Jupiter, the Sky God).^{xxi} This is followed by a sense of great bliss and peace as the energies of the heart are released, and all connection to the material world is severed. Rest in this peace. When it is time to return to earth, to assist others in your new found wisdom, so we practice reversing the current.

6. Imagine the clear, luminous light reversing itself, in its nature, moving from the abstract and becoming concrete in the form of the Divine being who assisted you earlier. Remember, you are this being, you are expressing the divine.

7. This concrete image stays with you as and becomes dense and physical as you move from the Red Stage back into the White Stage, it is the physical expresses the abstract in Divine Form. You are expressing the divine in your psyche but also into the world.

8. Imagine now that you are seated in your chair as this Divine Form, and that all of your psychic center are open and harmonious, starting at the crown and working down to the perineum.

9. Hold this image for a while, and then arise.

10. When you are done, breath deep, stand up, ring a small bell, or stamp your foot, and become clearly present in the material world.

11. Leave meditation with a renewed sense of unity, and that all sense of separateness, duality, or life and death, are just illusions.

The Importance of the Teacher, Guide, or Friend in the Death Stage

Why we need to identify with the tradition for practical reasons – to have a boat when we cross the astral waters to the shore of primordial consciousness. The importance of a spiritual teacher or friend is to help you in death even more than in life. Many people report seeing friends, relatives, spiritual figures such as Jesus or Mary, during near-death-experiences (NDE's). These people appear and help them adjust to the new environment. The role of comforter is critical at this time, as our thoughts create our experiences, and fear, anger, attachments all can make it harder to move through the invisible realms.

However, we should not play-dice with our death anymore than our life, and to pick our guide a head of time is critical. If we are fortunate enough to have a good spiritual friend then they will be there for us. If not, we need to pick one, even if it is a symbolic figure such as a Saint, Jesus, or an Archangel, so that we can transition easily. Now it is important to know that these figures, even if real people who we know, in most instances do not meet us in the invisible, but instead are projections of our own mind. This is ok, as the entire experience is a projection of our mind, only this one, this person, gives us a focal point so that we can avoid the waves of chaos that seek to distract us.

If we can blend with this figure, just as we do in Assumption of the Godform, during our actual death experience, we can then move forward more easily. Ideally however is to die either consciously in the Assumption of the Godform, or as a being of pure light – as a self-created god.

Exercise Five – Meditation on The Teacher at the Time of Death

1. Prepare as usual. After the dissolution of the Elements, imagine that you are exiting out the Crown of your head, and into a brief blackness, and brilliant light.
2. Imagine a large figure before you. It is your spiritual teacher, chosen divinity, an ideal teacher from the past, or a brilliant sphere of white light.
3. Merge with this figure and become one with it.
4. Move along your chosen Path as this being, or simply a point of light.

This exercise can be done in conjunction with Exercise One, so that should you die suddenly there will be a trigger mechanism to allow you to recognize your new state and move on.

- ⁱ *Meditations on the Tarot – A Journey into Christian Hermeticism* by an anonymous author. Element Books, Rockport, Mass. 1985. P. 346.
- ⁱⁱ *The Philosophers of Nature Qabala Lessons* by Jean Dubuis. Triad Publishing, Wheaton, Ill. 1996. Lesson 59, p. 4-5.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Tradition states that the keys are made of lead, the metal of Saturn. Saturn is associated with Binah, “Queen of Heaven and Earth” as well as death and renewal.
- ^{iv} *The One Year Manual* by Dr. Israel Regardie, Samuel Weiser, Inc. York Beach, Maine. 1981. P. 66.
- ^v See: *The Zodiac and the Salts of Salvation – Homeopathic Remedies for the Sign Types* by Goerge Washington Carey and Inez Eudora Perry. Samuel Weiser, Inc. York Beach, Maine, 1996. P. 219.
- ^{vi} Sometimes a fourth stage is inserted between White and Red, or Yellow, indicating perfect fecundity. This is a brief stage and passes quickly, and not mentioned in all sources.
- ^{vii} After the creation of the Red Stone, it is multiplied twice more to perfect its power. This pushes the Stone from the level of Tiphareth, to Geburah, and finally Chesed. Beyond this is the Firestone of which little is said.
- ^{viii} This maybe by way of the Dark and Light Angels of Geburah and Chesed, or by way of their synthesis in a direct ascent up the Middle Pillar.
- ^{ix} *The Book of Thoth* by Aleister Crowley. Samuel Weiser, Inc. York Beach, Maine. 1995.P. 101
- ^x *The Tarot of the Magicians* by Oswald Wirth. Samuel Weiser, Inc., York Beach, Maine. 1985. P. 114
- ^{xi} See: “The Chamber of Reflection” by Mark Stavish, at: www.hermeticinstitute.org, Articles Section.
- ^{xii} See: THE SNOW LION NEWSLETTER - CHRISTIAN BUDDHIST EXPLORATIONS
”The Rainbow Body” by Gail Holland. This article appeared in IONS Review, No. 59, March-May 2002. Reprinted in Snow Lion Newsletter with permission of the author and the Institute of Noetic Sciences www.noetic.org.
- ^{xiii} Could this be the seed Jesus referred to when he said, ‘If you have the faith of a mustard seed you could command the mountain to come down and it would.’
- ^{xiv} See: *Notes and Commentary of the Ninth Degree of AMORC* by Mark Stavish. Available in the Files Section of VOXHERMES, at www.yahoogle.com, for a full explanation of this Word and its various applications.
- ^{xv} *Ways to Self-Realization* by Mouni Sadhu. Wilshire Book Company. Los Angeles, Ca. 1962. p. 229.
- ^{xvi} See: “The Body of Light” by Mark Stavish, at: www.hermeticinstitute.org. Articles Section.
- ^{xvii} Christian Rosenkreutz is reported to be incorruptible, but to date CRC has not been definitively identified as a historical person, or his tomb actually located. See: *Opening the Vault: Rosicrucianism for the 21st Century* by Mark Stavish, at: www.hermeticinstitute.org.
- ^{xviii} *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying* by Songyal Rinpoche is a clear and concise elucidation on the Tibet practices surrounding death. It also exists as seminar presentation on cassette and audio CD.
- ^{xix} For more information see: “A Qabalistic Guide to Lucid Dreaming” by Mark Stavish, at: www.hermeticinstitute.org , Articles Section.
- ^{xx} *The Ritual Magic Workbook* by Dolores Ashcroft-Nowicki, Samuel Weiser, Inc. York Beach, Maine. 1998. p. 237.
- ^{xxi} The image of the sun rising in the morning, or the ‘Golden Dawn,’ is replete throughout alchemical literature and the writings of theosophists such as Jakob Boehme. Emphasis on the brilliant reds colors of the morning, here again, reference to the Red Lion, or the Red Stone of the Philosophers.