us to the Man of Sin and seek to identify by means of *gematria* the person spoken of as ἴδος κατέχων, "he that hindereth," in 2 Thess. ii. 7. "The Holy Names of the ΗΩΣΩΣΙΩ series are all built upon the number Thirty-seven, elsewhere shown to be a geometrical number, as well as one of those of the solar astronomical symbolism. Now it so happens that the word ΚΑΤΕΧΩΝ has the *gematria* value 1776, which is 888+888, the double of ΗΩΣΩΣΙΩ, and stands for other titles of Christ, such as "The Salvation of Israel"—Η ΣΩΤΗΡΙΑ ΙΣΡΑΗΛ. It is somewhat disconcerting at the outset that κατέχων without the definite article is merely a participle and cannot indicate a particular person. But our authors are not deterred by such a consideration. They introduce to us Narcissus, a freedman of the Emperor Claudius, Nero's predecessor. That this Narcissus was a Christian and that "Cesar's household" may have had a restraining influence in the early days of Nero's reign is a fair enough conjecture in the field of history. But it is shown to be more than a conjecture: "for ΝΑΡΚΙΣΣΟΣ=851=37×23, and this equates with that epithet applied to Jesus Christ, our 'substance' or 'possession'—Hyparxis (Ὑπαρξις)." No reference is given us for this "epithet"; and the only occurrence of the word in the New Testament is in Heb. x. 34: "Ye took joyfully the spoiling of your goods (τὸν ὑπαρχόντας υμῶν), knowing that ye have yourselves a better and an enduring possession (ὑπάρξεν)." But there is more. "ΚΛΑΤΙΔΙΟΣ ΝΑΡΚΙΣΣΟΣ ΕΠΙ-ΣΤΟΛΕΣ=2886=ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΣΩΤΗΡ=37×78." And again, "ΝΑΡΚΙΣΣΟΣ ΚΑΤΕΧΩΝ=2627=1ΧΘΣ ΣΩΤΗΡ=ΤΟ ΕΤΑΠΟΣΙΟΝ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΤ." And once more, "ΝΑΡΚΙΣΣΟΣ ΚΑΤΕΧΩΝ ΚΑΙΣΑΡΑ=2960=37×80=1480+1480, a double Christus (ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ)=ΤΙΟΣ ΤΟΥ ΑΝΘΡΩΠΟΤ=Son of Man—this is what Jesus Christ called Himself=Ο ΚΥΡΙΟΣ, Ο ΡΩΜΑΙΟΣ ΕΚ ΣΙΩΝ." It is perhaps useless to protest that νέος τοῦ ἀνθρώπου without the article is not Greek and is not a title of Christ.

We have taken this book seriously, because it is significant of our time. There is a restlessness amongst us which is not content with the plain faith of our fathers, corroborated by results. New and startling proofs are sought by some who fear that the Ark of God is trembling and in need of fresh support. But neither colloquies with the departed nor this belated application of the rabbinic *gematria* to the words and letters of the Sacred Book will ease the burden that is laid upon our faith to-day.


It is very fitting that an Anglican Bishop should have written an *apologia* for Alchemy. In days gone by the art appealed strongly to the learned and spiritually minded Churchman; and many secular clergy, including dignitaries, as well as many "religious," including superiors (among others our great Englishman, Roger Bacon), were among its adherents. Two Popes, at the least, were alchemists, and so too were Albertus Magnus, Bishop of Ratisbon, and St. Thomas Aquinas. But Bishop Mercer himself does not profess to be an alchemist even in its modern sense, though he has not failed to tell, with great sympathy, of all the scientific discoveries of Alchemy, and also much of the romance of its history, while at the same time not omitting to point out with fairness its limitations. Alchemy is the mother of modern chemistry;
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but it is much more than that: it is a branch of hermetic religious philosophy. The alchemists were a mystic order, with a symbolic language of their own, with spiritual *arcana* withheld from the uninitiated, with a scientific and severe mental disciplinary training for their members. The Bishop quotes various extracts from old alchemical writers and regards them as “unintelligible,” “vague and illusive,” “very puzzling,” “antithetic rigmarole,” “a farrago of nonsense,” “passing the wit of man to interpret.” Yet to the initiate they convey excellent sense and enshrine the deepest spiritual and philosophical truths. The really religious alchemists of the past were a body of men who began the practice of the devout life where the majority of mankind leave off; they aimed at being an upper school of the Holy Ghost; and to reach the top of their ladder with its twelve steps (calcination, dissolution, conjunction, putrefaction, congelation, etc.) meant not only the attainment of the Philosopher’s Stone but also the divine gift of spiritual fecundity. Some of the hierophants of Alchemy were among the great Masters of the Spiritual Life; they had transmuted their own base metal into gold, and they also possessed the priceless power of being able to tinge others with the true metal.

Bishop Mercer has done really valuable service in bringing the subject of Alchemy to the notice of Churchpeople to-day. For when the enormous difficulties of its “jargon” have been penetrated, its secrets are found to contain, among many other valuable things, the most exact and scientific description of the various stages in the Interior Life on the Mystic Path that have ever been penned.


It has long been a black mark against the S.P.C.K. that, among all its multitudinous publications, its issue of books by the devotional geniuses of the Catholic Church—the Mystics—could be wellnigh counted on the fingers of two hands. But the Society is mending its ways, though very tardily. Christian Mysticism is “in the air.” People are asking for, and obtaining from other publishers, not the second or third rate books of devotion, but the very pearls of Christendom. The series, the “Translations of Christian Literature,” is, for the followers of the Inner Path, the best thing that the S.P.C.K. has undertaken for many a long day. Therein, some of the writings of Clement of Alexandria, St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Augustine, “Dionysius the Areopagite,” and St. Bernard, among other outstanding worthies, appear in an English dress. The latest volume of the series is an able translation, by Canon Mason, of *Fifty Spiritual Homilies of St. Macarius the Egyptian*. Macarius was a Mystic, and his spiritual conversations are mystical, although the word “mystical” rarely occurs in them. The book has been compared, unwisely, with the *Imitation of Christ*, and it suffers by the comparison. The Homilies of St. Macarius are rousing “mission sermons” to the unconverted, or to the lukewarm who are content to rest on low spiritual levels. “Most men wish to obtain the Kingdom without trouble, or pains, or sweats, and that is a thing impossible.” “To wrestle against sin, to fight against it, to give and receive blows, is thine; to uproot it is God’s.” “The enjoyment of God is insatiable. The more anyone tastes and eats of Him, the more he hungers.” To arouse men from spiritual, or rather unspiritual, lethargy is the object of this Egyptian *abbas*, and few can read his Homilies without being made gently, though thoroughly, ashamed of themselves, without perceiving how small a