



The 'stone fallen from heaven ? This would seem to be borne out by a statement in Parzival that the stone was a jewel, an emerald which fell from the crown of Lucifer during the war between God and Satan, and which was brought to earth by angels who remained neutral. Without the emerald , Lucifer is doomed to in-

habit the earth as a manifestation of evil; while the stone itself becomes a fallen image which can be raised up only by the Grail quest and redeemed in the act of healing performed by Perceval in its name.

This sounds remarkably like some of the processes of alchemy, and in fact the most generally accepted derivation of Wolframs

- pure stone - is that it is a more or less direct reference to the lapis philosophorum or Philosophers Stone, the quest for which involved the minds and energies of the medieval alchemists almost to the exclusion of everything else.

In spite of the fascination it exerted, the lapis was regarded merely as a stage in the process known as the Great Work, in which they were all involved to a lesser or greater degree.

The Work itself was concerned primarily with transformation of the base elements earth, water, air and fire into higher states of being and in terms of the spirit, the baser elements in man into similarly higher realms.

The part played by the lapis was that of a catalyst, and its creation was the first major step along the path towards realizing the highest aims of the Work , the piritual perfection of the alchemist and his joining of God.

One of the greatest alchemists of the day, Arnold of Villanova, referred to the lapis in his Rosarium Philosophorum, written not long after Wolframs Parzival.

Hic lapis exilis extat precio quoque vilis
Spernitur a stultis, amatur plus ab edoc-
tis

(This insignificant stone is indeed of trifling value / It is despised by fools, the more cherished by the wise)

