



# Alchemy Tried in the Fire: Starkey, Boyle, and the Fate of Helmontian Chymistry

By William R. Newman, Lawrence M. Principe

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Winner of the 2005 Pfizer Prize from the History of Science Society.

What actually took place in the private laboratory of a mid-seventeenth century alchemist? How did he direct his quest after the secrets of Nature? What instruments and theoretical principles did he employ?

Using, as their guide, the previously misunderstood interactions between Robert Boyle, widely known as "the father of chemistry," and George Starkey, an alchemist and the most prominent American scientific writer before Benjamin Franklin as their guide, Newman and Principe reveal the hitherto hidden laboratory operations of a famous alchemist and argue that many of the principles and practices characteristic of modern chemistry derive from alchemy. By analyzing Starkey's extraordinary laboratory notebooks, the authors show how this American "chymist" translated the wildly figurative writings of traditional alchemy into quantitative, carefully reasoned laboratory practice—and then encoded his own work in allegorical, secretive treatises under the name of Eirenaeus Philalethes. The intriguing "mystic" Joan Baptista Van Helmont—a favorite of Starkey, Boyle, and even of Lavoisier—emerges from this study as a surprisingly central figure in seventeenth-century "chymistry." A common emphasis on quantification, material production, and analysis/synthesis, the authors argue, illustrates a continuity of goals and practices from late medieval alchemy down to and beyond the Chemical Revolution.

For anyone who wants to understand how alchemy was actually practiced during the Scientific Revolution and what it contributed to the development of modern chemistry, *Alchemy Tried in the Fire* will be a veritable philosopher's stone.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

"*Alchemy Tried in the Fire* takes us on a fascinating voyage into the laboratory of the seventeenth-century alchemist George Starkey. Two of the most learned and original historians of pre-modern science at work today, Newman and Principe, use the rich evidence preserved in Starkey's notebooks to recreate his practices as a 'chymist' - and the intellectual and technical foundations on which these rested. Their work sheds a powerful light on Starkey's own private science - a rare achievement in any period, and especially before the twentieth century. This is the history of science at its best: erudite, wide-ranging, and convincingly iconoclastic." - Anthony Grafton

#### From the Inside Flap

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#### About the Author

**William R. Newman** is professor of history and philosophy of science at Indiana University. He is the author of *The Summa Perfectionis of Pseudo-Geber: A Critical Edition, Translation, and Study* and *Gehennical Fire: The Lives of George Starkey, An American Alchemist in the Scientific Revolution*.

**Lawrence M. Principe** is professor of the history of science and technology and of chemistry at The Johns Hopkins University. He is the author of *The Aspiring Adept: Robert Boyle and His Alchemical Quest* and coeditor of *The Correspondence of Robert Boyle*.

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**Henry Major:**

The publication untitled Alchemy Tried in the Fire: Starkey, Boyle, and the Fate of Helmontian Chymistry is the guide that recommended to you to study. You can see the quality of the book content that will be shown to you actually. The language that publisher use to explained their ideas are easily to understand. The article writer was did a lot of exploration when write the book, so the information that they share to you is absolutely accurate. You also can get the e-book of Alchemy Tried in the Fire: Starkey, Boyle, and the Fate of Helmontian Chymistry from the publisher to make you more enjoy free time.

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**Nancy Herman:**

This Alchemy Tried in the Fire: Starkey, Boyle, and the Fate of Helmontian Chymistry is brand new way for you who has curiosity to look for some information given it relief your hunger associated with. Getting deeper you onto it getting knowledge more you know or else you who still having little digest in reading this Alchemy Tried in the Fire: Starkey, Boyle, and the Fate of Helmontian Chymistry can be the light food in your case because the information inside this book is easy to get by simply anyone. These books produce itself in the form which is reachable by anyone, yep I mean in the e-book web form. People who think that in publication form make them feel tired even dizzy this publication is the answer. So there isn't any in reading a guide especially this one. You can find actually looking for. It should be here for a person. So , don't miss it! Just read this e-book variety for your better life along with knowledge.

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