A Gnostic Exposition of the Three Alchemical Essentials
by Tau Phosphoros

The venerable Art and Science of alchemy has been associated with Gnosticism and Hermeticism since the earliest days of these religious and philosophical systems. Alchemy could probably be said to be more directly related to the Egyptian Hermetic tradition than to the religious doctrines of the Gnostics proper; but Gnostic and Hermetic doctrines have been so inextricably linked from antiquity until the present day, that it seems reasonable to consider it as a single system, at least for our purposes here. It is not the purpose of this brief article to examine the historical aspects of alchemy, or to get bogged down with academic categorization or arbitrary labels. In fact, whatever historical connection may have existed between alchemy and Gnosticism would have effectively ceased with the suppression of Gnosticism by the emerging "orthodoxy." Alchemy however (and for that matter, the entire Hermetic tradition), has managed to find a way to continue to develop and thrive among numerous cultures and civilizations. So, in the present day we find the situation to be that as Gnosticism has re-emerged as a viable system of spirituality, alchemy has evolved in a way that, while complementary to Gnosticism in its core principles, does not quite match up in language and symbolism as neatly as one might like. I will elaborate upon this shortly.

This article is primarily intended as an examination of the three alchemical principles, or Essentials: Sulphur, Mercury, and Salt, and their correspondences within a specifically Gnostic framework. However, before delving into the meat of the topic at hand, I will give a very brief overview of the alchemical process in general for the sake of readers who may not be familiar with the Royal Art. Alchemy is widely thought of in the sense of attempts to transmute Lead, or other metals, into Gold. It is often depicted as the fruitless efforts of superstitious and misguided exercises in primitive chemistry. Indeed, there were those who sought to make financial gains, and wasted many an hour at the bellows. These types were referred to derogatorily as "puffers" by other alchemists who, while still performing certain physical operations, were more concerned with the internal mental and spiritual processes. That is, the alchemical language was seen as a metaphor for the refinement of one's own imperfections, and the fulfillment of one's potential. It was a mental and spiritual practice above all else; though, many scientific advancements were made which led to the present discipline of chemistry.

Alchemy utilizes a richly symbolic language. Some of the principal aspects of alchemical symbolism include the Four Elements: Earth, Air, Fire, and Water; and the Three Essentials: Sulphur, Mercury, and Salt. Most people have at least heard of the Four Elements, although their nature has often been misunderstood. Remembering that the alchemical language is a symbolic language, it must be understood that these Elements do not necessarily refer to the literal chemical compounds from which their names are derived. They are to be thought of as categories, or classes of substances and phenomena. According to Aristotle, these Elements are derived from the dynamic interaction between more basic principles, namely: the Hot, the Cold, the Dry, and the Moist. Heat and Dryness produce Fire; Dryness and Coldness produce Earth; Coldness and Moisture produce Water; and Moisture and Heat produce Air.

To the ancients, Fire and Water were considered to be the "pure," or primary Elements from which all nature was formed. This is because Heat and Moisture were seen as being the only true attributes. Coldness and Dryness were merely their absence. Thus, Fire was pure Hotness, lacking the presence of any Moisture. Likewise, Water was pure Moisture, lacking any Heat. This view is to be found throughout many ancient mystical traditions, including the Hebrew Qabalah, whose words for Fire (Aesch) and Water (Majim) are joined in the principle of Schamajim, or Fiery Water, from which all ultimately emanates.
Given what we have already stated concerning the symbolic nature of alchemical language, it should come as no surprise that the Three Essentials (Sulphur, Mercury, and Salt) are not identical with their chemical namesakes. For instance, the philosophic Mercury is not the same as common quicksilver found in thermometers; neither is the alchemical Salt merely common table salt, etc. But rather than trying to define these terms individually, it will be better to show their relationship within the context of the various operations of the alchemical process.

Over the centuries, writers on the subject have divided the process into varying numbers of individual operations. Some have claimed there to be seven, while others list twelve, and still others may list fourteen, etc. It is not the case (typically) that the experts are disagreeing about the process as a whole, but rather where certain arbitrary lines are drawn. You see, many of the operations proceed quite seamlessly, one into the next. For the sake of simplicity and clarity, I will describe the process in the three classical Phases, containing seven Operations. In this way, we may also see a clear correlation between the Operations and the seven planets of the ancients; Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Mercury, Venus, the Moon, and the Sun; and their corresponding metals, respectively: Lead, Tin, Iron, Mercury, Copper, Silver, and Gold. One may also extrapolate a correspondence to the seven chakras, as well as many other instances of the septenary, too numerous to mention.

The first phase is known as the Black Phase, or by the Latin, *Nigredo*. The Black Phase is the stage in which impurities are brought to light and ultimately confronted. There are two operations in this phase: *Calcination* and *Dissolution*. Calcination involves burning off, or otherwise removing the dross material, leaving a dry bone-like, or ashy matter that has become impervious to fire. This basic substance is known to the alchemists by the Latin term, *Prima Materia*, meaning First Matter. This corresponds directly with the alchemical Salt. Salt represents the skeletal structure or framework that underlies all constructed edifices, whether material, mental, or spiritual. In its lowest expression, Salt is the "Lead" that must be refined and perfected. It is also, however, in its highest expression, the spiritual "Gold." Salt is, therefore, that which is transformed, as well as that which it is transformed into. The Dissolution is the liquefaction of the Calcinated material in a solvent, such as water. This solution then becomes the basis for the remainder of the operations. It also represents, to the alchemical operator, the stripping away of undesirable habits, ideas, or other personal traits that may impede spiritual development.

The second phase is known as the White Phase, or *Albedo*. Now that the purifications of the Black Phase are complete, the White Phase begins spiritualization of the elements, and of the alchemical operator himself. There are, as previously, two operations in this phase: the *Separation* and the *Conjunction*. In order to help illustrate the remainder of the operations, I am going to use the Eucharistic celebration as an analogy, as well as a practical example of the alchemical process.

The Separation is the dividing of a substance into its essential parts. In the rite of the Eucharist, this is symbolized by the priest removing the veil and paten from the Chalice, and the displaying of the water and wine cruets. At this point, the bread, water, and wine are representative of the Three Essentials: Salt, Sulphur, and Mercury. It is by the proper manipulation of these Three Essentials that the alchemical operator hopes to eventually "Rectify" the First Matter.

The Conjunction is concerned with the dynamic between Sulphur and Mercury. The Mercury is that fluid nature which is always *becoming*: ever changing. Sulphur represents *being*: that Fiery will that imposes fixity. Sulphur and Mercury are a polar dynamic, similar to that represented in the Yin-Yang symbol of the Taoists. They also represent Spirit and Soul, and the Conjunction is often called the Sacred Marriage of Spirit and Soul. In the
Eucharist, this is symbolized by the mixing of the water with the wine. The bread will eventually become the Child of the Conjunction, that is the Lapis Philosophorum, or Philosopher's Stone, in the Red Phase.

The Red Phase, or Rubedo, is a continuation of the White Phase that culminates, if successful, in the creation of the Philosopher's Stone; or in the case of the Eucharistic celebration, the Body and Blood of Christ. The Red Phase consists of three operational stages: Fermentation, Distillation, and Coagulation.

Fermentation is the stage in which our elements begin to transform into an entirely new substance. The beginning of Fermentation involves a process called Putrefaction, which is somewhat like a miniature Black Phase, in that it is a final purification and purgation of any impurities that may have been previously missed, and inadvertently carried over. Spiritually and psychologically, this stage represents what the Christian mystical theologian, St. John of the Cross, referred to as the "dark night of the soul." Emotionally, it may be deep-seated baggage which the mind had kept suppressed until this more advanced stage had been developed. In our analogy to the Mass, this could be represented by the "Lavabo" wherein the priest ritually washes his hands with blessed water. The Fermentation process continues with the Eucharistic Prayer. And with the Words of Institution, we can see the Eucharistic elements coming to life. For the alchemist in the laboratory, this is a time of intense prayer and meditation; for the alchemical workshop is both Laboratory and Oratory.

Distillation is a process of repeated separation and recombination of the fermented substance, so that its perfected form might eventually emerge. This is depicted in the Mass through the rhythmic chanting of the Litanies, and eventually in the Breaking of the Bread. The priest places a small piece of bread in the Chalice, which is symbolic of the emergence of the Rectified First Matter.

The Coagulation is the final operation in the process of alchemical transmutation, or in the case of the Eucharist, transubstantiation. It is the Logos made flesh, and the spiritualization of our own bodies and minds. It is the Resurrection in Christ. The completion of this operation can be best seen in the Communion proper. When the priest elevates the Body and Blood, he is displaying the Philosopher's Stone. Therefore, by partaking of the Eucharist, we are symbolically transforming the Lead of our lower "sinful" natures into the pure Gold of Divine union with Christ.

Now that we have briefly surveyed the overall alchemical process, let us focus more specifically upon the Three Essentials of Sulphur, Mercury and Salt. I am speaking here, of course, with regard to the spiritual and philosophical aspects, not the physical chemical properties. I am specifically concerned here with how the Essentials correlate with the Gnostic symbolic philosophy and mythos; especially the relationship between Divinity and Humanity. Because the alchemical triad may be so conveniently compared to the myriad instances of triplicity in nature and in esoteric philosophy, there have been many writings on the subject, often contradicting one another. One commonly misunderstood and confused issue is the relationship between Spirit and Soul, and whether they should correspond respectively to Sulphur and Mercury, or to Mercury and Sulphur. There has been no little confusion regarding this matter, largely due to the fact that alchemists and mystical philosophers over the centuries have interchanged the two in their charts and discourses, seemingly arbitrarily at times. I am not going to go too far down this rabbit hole right now, except to say that both attributes are correct, depending upon the context in which they are viewed.

As Gnostics, we have very precise definitions of Spirit and Soul, but these terms have also been used in many mystical and alchemical writings to describe other aspects of
duality or polarity, such as Fixity and Changeability, Active and Passive, Masculine and Feminine, Outer and Inner, etc. We can, however, address this within a Gnostic context so that these symbols are relevant to our particular language, methods, and work. That is, the esotericism that has been passed down as the Western Mystery Tradition need not be at odds with the neo-Sethianism or neo-Valentinianism that is practiced by many ecclesiastical Gnostics such as myself. But if we are to attempt a workable synthesis, we must define our terms in such a way that it is internally consistent.

In addition to the Spirit-Soul dichotomy, another critical issue which needs to be addressed concerns the various attempts made in many works to associate Sulphur, Mercury, and Salt with the aspects of the Holy Trinity. Many of these works throughout the centuries tend to make what I find to be a peculiar and, if not entirely erroneous, at the very least incomplete attribution of Salt to the Holy Spirit. A typical example of this can be seen in the tables given in Manly P. Hall's *The Secret Teachings of All Ages*:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Triune Power in Four Worlds</th>
<th>World Of</th>
<th>Father</th>
<th>Son</th>
<th>Mother</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. God</td>
<td></td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>Son</td>
<td>HolyGhost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Man</td>
<td></td>
<td>Spirit</td>
<td>Soul</td>
<td>Body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Elements</td>
<td></td>
<td>Air</td>
<td>Fire</td>
<td>Water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Chemicals</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mercury</td>
<td>Sulphur</td>
<td>Salt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The alternative renderings of 3 and 4 are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements</th>
<th>Father</th>
<th>Son</th>
<th>Mother 3.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. Chemicals</td>
<td>Fire</td>
<td>Air</td>
<td>Water</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hall goes on to list Paracelsus' arrangement as another alternative, though it omits the Holy Trinity. Regardless, I will list it here so that we have another point of reference:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>World Of</th>
<th>Father</th>
<th>Son</th>
<th>Body</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Man</td>
<td>Spirit</td>
<td>Soul</td>
<td>Body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Elements</td>
<td>Air</td>
<td>Water</td>
<td>Earth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Chemicals</td>
<td>Sulphur</td>
<td>Mercury</td>
<td>Salt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the charts above we can see examples of the concerns I mentioned previously. In addition, we see discrepancies with the Elemental attributes as well. Standard rules of logic tell us that all of these tables of correspondences cannot be simultaneously true; that one or another of these combinations must be the right one. Well, the real enigma of this subtle Art is that all of these attributes, as well as additional permutations, are in fact correct. The reason for this is that all of the properties of Sulphur, Mercury, and Salt are present in each of the three Essentials individually. Georg von Welling, in his Opus *Mago-Cabbalisticum et Theosophicum*, emphasizes this point repeatedly in statements such as: "We have sufficiently proved that Sulphur is also in its essence Salt and Mercury, just as Salt is essentially Sulphur and Mercury, and Mercury is Salt and Sulphur." Therefore, simple correspondence charts, like those referenced above, cannot give an adequate representation of the complex dynamic at play here. So, rather than offering refutations of the commonly accepted correspondences, I will instead propose a new set of attributes that takes into account the triune nature of each of the three Essentials, and that may align more closely with Gnostic doctrine. I therefore offer you the following chart with explanatory notes for each of the nine divisions:
As illustrated in the chart, the Realms are divided into Pneumatic, Psychic, and Hylic. The Pneumatic, or Spiritual Realm, being considered a realm of Pure Light, is most similar to the Fiery aspects of Sulphur; although each of the three Essentials is represented therein. The Psychic Realm, being caught in a struggle between what is Above and what is Below, is principally similar to the dual nature of Mercury. But just like the Pneumatic Realm, Sulphur, Mercury, and Salt are each represented in the Psychic. Likewise, the Hylic, or Material Realm, contains the most base forms of the alchemical principles; though as a whole it is most closely associated with Salt, and the Prima Materia which it represents.

Having given an overview of the basic structure and major divisions, let us now look more closely at each of the nine squares of the grid:

1. As the Divine Mind (Nous), that is, the Source of All, the Father can be represented by the alchemical Sulphur. The Unknown Father of Light is that primal Fire (Aesch) from which all ultimately emanates. It is also the Divine Will which sends forth the Seed, and also the Seed itself. This is the Unity, or Monad.

2. The Holy Spirit, Barbelo, the Divine Mother of All, being a polar complement to the Father, is represented by Mercury. The dance of Sulphur and Mercury is represented in all such polar complements, such as the Sun and Moon, or in the Yin and Yang of the Tao. Mercury, however, in addition to being the polar complement to Sulphur, is known to have a unique polar characteristic of its own. This double nature is sometimes depicted in alchemical artwork as a human with two heads, or a man holding a red and white flower, or some other such imagery. This correlates well with the characteristics ascribed to the Holy Spirit, which is principally considered Feminine in relation to the Father, but who is also called Mother-Father; the embodiment of duality. Elementally, the Holy Spirit can be seen as Water (Majim) as compared to the Father, but being of a Pneumatic nature, this Philosophical Mercury is actually the Fiery Waters, Aesch-Majim, or Schamajim, of the alchemists. Von Welling confirms this, stating that the Schamajim is, "generally called Mercury by the philosophers." In the Pleroma, Mercury can also be seen in the Valentinian syzygies, as well as the androgynous spiritual beings of Eugnostos, who have both male and female names.
3. Just as the lower Salt is representative of the unrefined Prima Materia, or First Matter, the Pneumatic Salt is the archetype of the Rectified First Matter. The union of Sulphur and Mercury is the alchemical Salt. In the Holy Trinity, this is the Divine Child, Christ himself. It is Christ alone who is able to transform the Lead of our sinful natures into the pure Spiritual Gold, and give to us eternal, or Aeonic life. Von Welling states that Christ is, "Our savior and mediator, himself the divine eternal Salt, Fiat, or Word, eternally begotten and born from the divine fire of love for our eternal salvation. Unless we really and truly partake of this salt, we can never withstand either in this world or the next, the cleansing fire of his majesty." He also states that this Salt, "is the origin, beginning and end of all creatures, and from which all creatures were created." We can see a parallel to this in the Gospel According to John, which tells us that, "Through him all things came to be, and without him came to be not one thing." We also have here the Logos/Sophia syzygy. Just as the alchemical Salt is both the substance being transformed (Lead) and that which it is transformed into (Gold), we can see the parallel to Sophia and the Logos. In Sophia's descent from the Pleroma, she becomes that which must be redeemed and reconciled to her former estate. In the descent of the Logos we can see the agent of the redemption and reintegration. In the Pleroma we also see this principle of Pneumatic Salt represented in Geradamas, the perfect and archetypal Anthropos. The lower psychic and hylic forms of Man are like dim reflections of this perfect Body of Light. It is this glorious and luminous garment that every soul will don which has ascended to the Aeons. There could also be an argument made for an association here with the four Luminaries as archetypes of the four Elements.

4. As we enter into the Psychic Realm, we must assign the Vital Life Force to the position of Sulphur. The VLF is that Active and Spiritual essence that animates all life. It is the divine Pneumatic spark that was breathed into Psychic Adam to make him a Living Soul (Psyche). Thus, even though it is found here in the Psychic Realm, it is actually of a purely Pneumati
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5. The infusion of Pneuma into the Psychic body of Adam gave rise to consciousness. When Adam was in Psychical form, this consciousness caused him to be instantly enlightened. But since being trapped in the material world, the mind is in a constant struggle between the Mind of God, and the temporal passions of the physical which lead only to decay and death. This dual nature of the mind places it squarely within the Mercurial column of the Psychic Realm, which is itself Mercurial in nature. It is the Rose unfolding upon the Cross. This is where the New Man, the enlightened human, may experience Christ Consciousness. Elementally, it is the Airy aspect of Mercury, since it is a product of the Sulphuric heat of the Pneumatic spark acting upon the Saline fluidity of the etheric substance of which the Psychic body is composed.

6. In the Salt column we place the etheric, or Psychic substance previously mentioned. While the Psychic body is not of the dross nature of the physical or Hylic Body, it yet requires further purification and refinement so that it might be transmuted into pure Spiritual Gold, the Lapis Philosophorum. Only then may the Soul find Eternal Life in the Pleroma.

7. In the Hylic, or Material Realm, the principle of Sulphur is to be found in the creative and generative aspects of man. This Sulphuric Fire is associated with the brain and the genitalia, which are the organs of creation and generation. The entire nervous system would also be included in this category, for the electrochemical neural impulses are a type of Fire.

8. The Mercurial aspects of the human body are the lungs, which draw in the air, and with the air, the Vital Life Force; and the heart and circulatory system, which distributes the VLF throughout the body via the blood and lymphatic systems. Thus, the Elements represented here are both Air and Water.
This brings us, finally, to the First Matter, that dross substance, or Hyle, from which the entire material world is constructed. But as everything has ultimately emanated from the One, which is the All, even this corrupt state of being contains within it the Seed of Goodness. In the body, this corresponds to the digestive and excretory organs, as well as the urea and feces. This is the Element of Earth in its most base form.

Hopefully these attributes given here have not further complicated an already perplexing matter. I have tried, as much as possible, to limit this study to the relationship between God and Man, within a specifically Gnostic frame of reference. However, I am also aware that these correspondences are far from complete. Nevertheless, I believe that by using this system as a basis, many other associations may be extrapolated. We can also see how this system begins to rectify apparent contradictions found in earlier descriptions. For instance, this table addresses the Spirit-Soul problem rather neatly. From a purely Gnostic perspective, the Psychic and Pneumatic are given their own categories wherein we can see how all of the Essentials relate to one another. If we are looking at Spirit and Soul from a more classical alchemical perspective of the dualities of Active-Passive, Being-Becoming, etc., then we can see that in the Pneumatic Realm, the Divine Mind, the "Soul" in this case, is Sulphur, and Barbelo as "Spirit" is Mercury. However, if we look at the dynamics of the Psychical Realm, then we see the mind, or "Soul" in the position of Mercury, while "Spirit" in the form of the Vital Life Force, as Sulphur. The apparent dichotomy therefore, has been reconciled. Martinists and other students of Qabalah will also see how the divisions of Man, including the Elemental correspondences as expressed in the Sepher Ietzirah, have been reconciled to both the Western Hermetic/alchemical tradition, as well as to the schema of the ancient Gnostics.

The one area where reconciliation among systems does not seem possible is in the correspondences to the Holy Trinity. While it is true that the characteristics of all three Essentials may be identified in each aspect of the Trinity, it seems inescapable that the principal correspondence of the Son is Salt. This seems to be borne out in the sacrament of the Eucharist, wherein the Sacred Marriage of Spirit and Soul, symbolized by the mixing of the Wine and Water (Sulphur and Mercury), ultimately gives rise to the Child of the Conjunction, the Body of Christ, which is the alchemical Salt. Thus, the Eucharistic bread is the Prima Materia which, throughout the ritual of the Mass, is passed through various alchemical operations and is eventually transformed into the Lapis Philosophorum. By partaking of the Eucharist, then, the Lead of our Hylic nature is transformed into the pure Spiritual Gold. Our realization of this transformation, though - the attainment of Christ Consciousness - occurs through the Mind in Man as stated in our Fifth point above. It is likely for this reason that the Son is often attributed to Mercury. We can see now, though, that the archetypal Logos is the Pneumatic Salt, whereas the Christ-in-Man manifests as Psychic Mercury.

There is also another reason that accounts for the peculiar attributes of the Trinity as given by former alchemists. This reason has to do with a strict adherence to Western Christian theology. The problem is two-fold, really. The first problem concerns the Church's insistence upon a masculine gender for the Holy Spirit. The Gnostic doctrine rectifies this point very clearly and precisely. The second problem, or more precisely, the second part of the problem (for it would never arise if not for the first) is the fallacy of the "double procession." This refers to a change that occurred to the Nicene Creed in the Western Church (but not in the Eastern Church) sometime during the sixth century. The original form of the Creed states, "I believe... in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life. Who proceedeth from the Father, Who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified." However, in the Western Church, this section was altered to state that the Holy Spirit "proceedeth from the Father and the Son, etc." Now this may seem like a minor or insignificant doctrinal discrepancy, but when taken as a premise, the logical conclusions which follow can have a remarkable impact. And, of course, it is not only the Roman Catholic Church that ascribes to this version of the Creed, but many of the mainstream Protestant sects as well.

Take for example, the writings of the renowned 17th century mystic, Jacob Boehme. Although Boehme expounded a doctrine that was gnostic and hermetic in essence, in style it conformed fairly strictly to Lutheran orthodoxy. If we look at his work, The Clavis, we find a very succinct, yet profound explanation of the process of generation, or manifestation. He
uses the aspects of the Trinity as representatives of the creative process. To the Father he ascribes "Desire" or "Will." To the Son he ascribes "Pleasure," "Delight," or "Love." The Son is also called the "working of the Will." And through the "working..." of the Will, proceeds the Holy Ghost as the "Life of the Will, and of the virtue and Delight." In other words, what he has described here is the double procession. It's not that his model is wrong, per se; but the Gnostic and Hermetic doctrines explain the process much more clearly and logically. In that classic treatise on Hermetic Philosophy, The Kybalion, it is explained quite plainly that it is the Feminine Principle that actually does the work of gestating and manifesting the Masculine Principle, or Will. Likewise, in the Gnostic scriptures, that Feminine Principle is the Holy Spirit. For, we read in the Gospel of Philip, "Some say Mary became pregnant by the Holy Spirit. They are wrong and do not know what they are saying. When did a woman ever get pregnant by a woman?"

It should be clear, therefore, that if we rectify Boehme's attributes according to Gnostic and Hermetic teachings - which actually follow the order of observable nature - we arrive at the more reasonable attribution of "Love" or the "working substance" with the Holy Spirit, and the Son with the "proceeding of the Power," the "Life of the Will." If you look closely at Boehme's attributes, you will also see how they translate to the problematic alchemical attributes of Son=Mercury and Holy Spirit=Salt; and how our corrections concerning gender and the double procession rectify the attributes. "But," you may ask, "have we really solved the problem of the double procession, or have we merely switched the characters around while remaining in the same error?" This is a valid question - and a tricky one; one that perhaps cannot be answered satisfactorily here. In truth, from a Gnostic perspective, neither form of the Nicene Creed really accurately describes the creative process of the Holy Trinity. But let us remember that the Logos was pre-existent with the Father, as we read in the opening of the Gospel of John. The Logos-in-God is what the Hermetica refers to as the "Seed" and the "true Good" sown by the Will of God. So, the origin of the Son is with the Father, as is the origin of the Holy Spirit, which is the First Thought of God. It is through the Holy Spirit, though, that the Power of the Logos is made known to us, as Saviour and Liberator. I will refrain from further comment on this point. For, I have given sufficient evidence for a refutation of the double procession, and further discussion would require a separate treatise.

Before concluding, I want to spend just a little more time examining this crucial Fifth position which sits at the crossroads of all worlds. We have already discussed the horizontal row of the Psychic Realm, and how the Vital Life Force acts upon the Astral body to animate the Soul-Man. We may also see a similar occurrence in the vertical column. Here, the VLF (from the Holy Spirit) is acting upon the Physical body (through the respiratory and circulatory systems) to animate the Animal-Man. Diagonally, we see another interesting dynamic occurring. The Unknown Father of Light, as the Primum Mobile, and the Source of all Spiritual emanation, is opposed to (or complementary to) the Prima Materia, from which all material edifices are constructed. Likewise, the Logos of God is opposed to (or, again, complementary to) the creative and generative functions of the human body that give rise to the logos of Man. And our Mercurial Quintessence is at the crux of the whole scheme, connecting what is Above to what is Below. Qabalists will undoubtedly see a relationship here to the Tiphereth sephira. And students of Freemasonry may also wish to consider that when we add the numbers of the squares in the patterns given above, we arrive at that mysterious and mystical number 15, whether we add vertically, horizontally, or diagonally. And we can further extrapolate that when we realize that the perfected human will, symbolized here by the number 5, exists simultaneously in all three worlds, we arrive at an additional, hidden 15 in the form of 555, which can be found in many 3° Tracing Boards on the coffin of Hiram Abiff.

There are many other patterns and associations to be observed in this system I have proposed; but I will refrain from further comment and leave it to the reader to put this system to the test, and hopefully discover hidden treasures that I have not yet imagined. Again, this is not so much a new system that I am proposing, but rather a reconciliation of ancient and modern symbolic philosophies. In this way, our Western Hermetic Tradition may be understood within the context of Christian Gnostic cosmological and ontological language and mythos; naturally, without being forced, and while maintaining an historical honesty and integrity.


3 Ibid. p. 6.


5 Welling, p. 7. 6 Ibid. p. 65.

6 *The Gospel According to St. John* 1:3


