

The Tetragrammaton in the Three Worlds

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As modern Gnostics, we are inheritors not only of the Gnostic traditions and teachings of our ancient forebears, but also of those teachings and practices known to us as the Western Mystery Tradition. The Western Mysteries, as they have come down to us in the present day, consist principally of Hermeticism and the Qabalah. By the term *Hermeticism* we mean both the doctrines expounded in the Hermetic scriptures and the practices and disciplines that derive from the Hermetic principles, such as astrology and alchemy. Likewise, by *Qabalah* we mean the mystical interpretation of the Hebrew scriptures, especially the Torah, and the writings and practices that have derived from that doctrine, such as the Tarot, pathworking along the Tree of Life, and certain forms of theurgy or ceremonial magic. In modern Gnosticism we find ourselves wedding these doctrines and practices to the older forms of Gnosticism, such as is found among the Nag Hammadi texts. The problem that arises, as we briefly alluded to in our treatise, "A Gnostic Exposition of the Three Alchemical Essentials," is that while Hermeticism and Qabalah have had centuries to develop and mature together, on complement to one another, the Gnostic doctrine is largely frozen in time, in the 4th century when it was definitively suppressed.

One of the challenges that arises when syncretizing these various theosophies into a workable, coherent system, is how we are able to reconcile doctrinal elements of each that are different or even seemingly contradictory to one another. In the aforementioned treatise we attempted to do a little toward this effort of reconciliation as concerns - as the title suggests - the three alchemical essentials and their relation to Gnostic terminology. In the present work we are going to try to advance this reconciliation a little further by looking at the Tetragrammaton - יהוה - in the light of Gnostic philosophy and language. This is why the title of this paper is "The Tetragrammaton in the *Three Worlds*" as opposed to the traditional Qabalistic concept of *Four Worlds*.

An immediate difficulty we face is that to the ancient Gnostics, the god of the Old Testament is not the true God of Light, but an inferior Demiurge. Even modern Gnostics generally adhere to this concept, though we also recognize that the Qabalah opens up a new level of interpretation of the Torah that often flatly contradicts the surface message and reinforces the older Gnostic viewpoints. Over the years I have had many discussions about the nature of the Tetragrammaton, and how it should be interpreted by Gnostics. Some argue that it represents the Demiurge, and should not be confused with the True God of Light. Others state that it does indeed refer to the True God and was merely misappropriated by the Demiurge, or misapplied to him by ignorant mortals. Still others argue that it represents the four Elements of the physical world. All of these viewpoints have merit, yet none of them, alone, seem to encompass the whole picture. What we shall attempt, then, is to posit a workable theory that accounts for all of these viewpoints, without being self-contradictory, and while being reconciled to both Gnostic and Qabalistic doctrine.

Let us begin by looking at a very general Qabalistic concept of the four-letter Name. Upon the Tree of Life, the Tetragrammaton can be arranged so that each letter corresponds to each of the four "worlds." As mentioned above, we will be looking at the Gnostic "three worlds" model, but we are beginning here because it shows from a Qabalistic perspective that the Tetragrammaton is present within all worlds or realms, from the archetypal down to the material. This gives us a starting point, and the hope and expectation that the various viewpoints may be reconciled and rectified under a single philosophy. Let us look, then, at how the Tetragrammaton manifests on the pneumatic, psychic, and hylic planes. We must state here that the letters YOD-HE-VAV-HE, while composing what we consider to

be a "Name," is actually more akin to a *formula* than to a *name* in any conventional sense of the word. We nevertheless call it a Name because of the intimacy implied by that word. Regardless, let us start with the pneumatic realms and work our way down.

The whole of the Pleroma - the Fullness - can be summed up in the Tetragrammaton. In this, YOD corresponds to the Father; the first HE corresponds to the Mother, that is, Barbelo, the Holy Spirit; and VAV corresponds to the Son, the Logos. The final HE may be seen as a type of the first, best represented by the aeon Sophia. This gives us a view of the Pleroma that is not nearly as comprehensive and complex as the descriptions given in the Gnostic texts, but one that succinctly encapsulates the prime forces at work.

According to our Gnostic scriptures, the perfect equilibrium that we call the Pleroma was disturbed when Sophia attempted to create, according to the Secret Book of John, "without consent of her partner." In other words, just as the masculine and feminine principles represented by YOD and HE were united to issue forth the VAV and final HE, so would the secondary feminine principle, in order to produce a perfect offspring, have had to have been united with the masculine principle - VAV. Sometimes we call this the Logos/Sophia syzygy. As we know, this disruption caused an imbalance or "breaking" of the Pleroma, resulting in the creation of the psychic and hylic planes, and the Demiurge. It also placed Sophia "outside" the Pleroma - that is, out of harmony - until such time as the equilibrium can be restored.

We thus have the Demiurge as the lord and ruler of the lower realms, for although Sophia is outside the Pleroma, she has not descended so far as to become enmeshed in her creation. We are told, therefore, that she resides in the veil between what is above and what is below. The Demiurge, being an offspring of Sophia, bears within himself an image, albeit imperfect, of the whole Pleroma. We may see, therefore, how the Tetragrammaton is represented in the psychic realm as the Demiurge. But this expression of the Tetragrammaton is a distortion of the pneumatic archetype. And his creations are likewise distortions of the pneumatic aeons.

In the hylic, or material, world, we see that Tetragrammaton manifest as the four elements. In this (not to be confused with the attributes given in the Sepher Yetzirah of the archetypal Elements represented by ALEPH, MEM, and SHIN), YOD corresponds to Fire, and HE corresponds to Water. As we have discussed elsewhere, these are the two "pure" or primary elements. The secondary elements of Air and Earth are represented by the VAV and final HE respectively. That is, the heat of YOD and the moisture of HE united a VAV, and the dryness of YOD unites with the coldness of HE to produce the final HE (see "Alchemy of the Eucharist" in the *ACP Clergy Handbook* for a discussion on how the elements are derived from the more basic principles of heat, moisture, coldness, and dryness). The Tetragrammaton is also expressed on this plane in the form of the natural reproductive cycle: Father, Mother, Son, and Daughter.

We can see, therefore, that attributing the Tetragrammaton to either the psychic or hylic planes is not incorrect, but that this attribution - this formula - is based upon a pneumatic archetype. And let us return to a discussion of this archetype so we can look at how this broken Pleroma may be ultimately restored. When the Demiurge fashioned a creature from the psychic substance to resemble the heavenly, or Pleromic Man (Geradamas), he could not cause it to live. Barbelo, the Holy Spirit, then instructs the ignorant Demiurge (who remains ignorant of this divine assistance) on how to infuse the psychic Adam with pneuma (spirit or breath) to make him a living soul. This descent of Spirit into the psychic realm is represented by the VAV, which we connected earlier to the Logos. But before the psychic Adam, enlivened by the power of the Logos, is able to accomplish the mission of the restoration of the Pleroma, the androgynous Adam is cast into the hylic realm, there to be imprisoned in matter, and no longer whole, but divided among myriad cages of flesh.

With this further degradation, man is no longer capable of uniting the male principle directly with the fallen Sophia (who is still above the psychic realm). But another aspect of Sophia is sent into the lowest realm to find Adam before he is completely trapped in matter. That is, while Adam is yet in the psychical form, a form of Sophia, referred to as Zoe (Life) is joined to him and, according to the Secret Book of John, "helped the whole creature, laboring with it, restoring it to its fullness, teaching it about the descent of the seed, teaching it about the way of ascent, which is the way of descent." But when Adam is finally imprisoned in a body of flesh, the once-androgynous nature is divided into male and female. The feminine spiritual component, Zoe, returns to the Pleroma, and the masculine component becomes dormant once again.

This entire Gnostic tragedy is but an elaborate explanation of the breaking of the divine equilibrium and the need for its restoration. It is also to show the significance of the coming of Jesus Christ as the great Reconciler. And it is to the very name of Jesus that we must look for a clue to his true nature. We render this Name, in the Hebrew, as יהושע - transliterated as Yeheshuah, or some similar pronunciation. But what we notice immediately in the Hebrew is that the name consists of the Tetragrammaton with the letter SHIN placed in the center. This configuration is significant to us on multiple planes.

Let us consider, for a moment, the letter SHIN. In its very shape we can see the image of three VAVs. Now, we have already associated the letter VAV with the Logos, and have shown that the Logos resides within each of us as the life-giving, vivifying force and our link to the divine gnosis. But wait, you may say, isn't Jesus Christ the Logos incarnate? How is this so if the Logos is already present within? Perhaps here would be a good place to borrow some terminology from our Orthodox brethren. In Eastern Orthodoxy they distinguish between divine *energy* and divine *essence*. Now, we are not using the words here in exactly the same way as the Orthodox usage, but they are convenient terms to describe what we are talking about. That is, it could be said that the *energy* of the Logos is present within every person, giving rise to the personal logos. In Jesus, however, we have not merely the energy or power of the Logos, but an embodiment of the very *essence* itself. It is this essential or archetypal Logos that manifested in the world, wearing the body of the psychic Christ, who is the son of the Demiurge, the messiah promised by the prophets of old (see "The Devil's Passion in the ACP Clergy Handbook for a discussion of the union of the pneumatic Logos with the psychic Christ). Again, if you look at this letter SHIN, we see not only the VAV, but in fact a representation of the YOD and HE as well. It is really a perfect hieroglyph for the triune power of God.

We are also told of Jesus that, "in Him all the Pleroma was pleased to dwell," (Col. 1:19), and then in chapter 2 of the same text, "In Him dwells bodily, all the Pleroma of God." Now remember that we said the "Pleroma" is representative of the divine equilibrium. This is possible because Jesus is the embodiment of that equilibrium. He is both Logos and Sophia, or as she is known when descending to the lower planes, Zoe - Life. The Gospels bear out this truth, for in the 14th chapter of John, Jesus states: "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life [Zoe]." And Paul writes in 1st Corinthians, "Christ is God's Power and God's Wisdom [Sophia]." So it is through the vehicle of Jesus Christ that Zoe is reintroduced into the cosmos, as it states in the prologue to John: "In Him was Life [Zoe], and the Life was the Light of men."

Now let us consider the placement of the letter SHIN within this Holy Name. YOD and HE are to one side, while VAV and HE are to the other. The YOD and HE to the right are emblematic of the supernal masculine and feminine aspects remaining in the Pleroma; while the VAV and HE to the left are representative of the fallen Sophia and the power of the Logos that was sent to redeem her but ultimately became trapped itself and fragmented. The SHIN between them, then, represents the Logos united with Zoe in perfect equilibrium, full of the power

of the whole Pleroma, which can awaken the logos in Man so that it can reunite with Sophia and accomplish the restoration of the Pleroma. The SHIN is therefore appropriately placed as the reconciler and restorer of the divine equilibrium. This is acknowledged in our Eucharistic rite when the Priest says, "by partaking of this Mystery, we may reunite within ourselves the fragments of Your Divinity dispersed throughout the Cosmos."

There is also a significance on the psychic plane of this Name. Remember that the Tetragrammaton manifests on the psychic plane as the Demiurge, the father of the psychic Christ. Thus, when we read in the Gospel of Philip that, "The Son would not be the Father without wearing the Father's name," we can see that it is referring simultaneously to both the psychic and pneumatic "father." And when Jesus says, "I and the Father are one," he is telling us: 1) that he is one with the Unknown Father of Light, from which the Logos proceeds; and 2) that his psychic and pneumatic natures have been reconciled and rectified.

On the hylic plane we see this Name most recognizably in the image of Jesus crucified. It is also portrayed more mystically as the rose blooming upon the cross. In some of our theurgical workings, this image is presented even more blatantly as a cross with the Tetragrammaton inscribed upon its arms and the letter SHIN placed in the very center. It is, in fact, this latter arrangement that is dramatically enacted during the "Theurgic Consecration" section of our Mass. Truly, the manifestations of the Holy Pentagrammaton on the physical plane are nearly infinite, for it is the Name by which all is reconciled. St. Paul, in his Letter to the Philippians, calls it, "The Name above every name," and that in this Name, "every knee should bend, those in heaven and on earth, and under the earth." It is the power of this Name that effects the miracle of transubstantiation, and to which angels and archons alike humbly submit in service to the Most High.

We must acknowledge that this short paper does not provide a complete reconciliation of Qabalistic principles to historic Gnosticism. But it does go a little way towards showing how the creation, breaking, and reconstitution of the Pleroma can be expressed within the Tetragrammaton (and, ultimately, the Pentagrammaton). We have shown also how this Name is in fact a formula that manifests on all planes. And we have tried, wherever possible, to illustrate our assertions with reference to both Gnostic scripture and the orthodox canon. This paper is not intended to be the final word on the matter, but rather to begin a conversation. We therefore invite our friends and colleagues to use these ideas as a springboard for further explorations into the subject, and help to ensure that ours remains a living tradition.