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The Great Name of God: A Study of the Element of Kabbalah in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's Theogony and Its Influence on the Theodicy and Cosmogony of His Major Poetry

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THE GREAT NAME OF GOD:
A STUDY OF THE ELEMENT OF KABBALAH
IN SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE'S THEOGONY
AND ITS INFLUENCE
ON THE THEODICY AND COSMOGONY
OF HIS MAJOR POETRY

by

William Richard Ploplis

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of Loyola University of Chicago in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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FORWARD

Throughout my academic career, I had been curious to investigate what "Kabbalah" (Cabala, cabbala, Kabala, cabballia) actually involved. Stumbling on the word once or twice in the writings of Coleridge, I thought that if further investigation proved worthwhile I would have an excellent opportunity to assuage my curiosity and also generate a doctoral paper. Ironically, it seems that one never quite knows how worthwhile a subject will be to investigate until one has completely exhausted the topic: having guided oneself through its labyrinthine passages by false and true bibliographical threads and finally having decided whether or not the combat with scores of minotaurs was worth the brutally exhausting struggle. My curiosity has been somewhat stanchd; but the combat with the minotaurs, it seems, has not been concluded to my satisfaction. For I entered the "forbidden arcana" via secondary sources, translations, and incomplete primary research sources. An advanced degree in the Hebrew language and dialects and the history of Hebrew civilization and culture would have provided me with some reassuringly tested arms.

But then the Minotaur--Samuel Taylor Coleridge. At first, he seemed a miniature minotaur: a very minor poet in comparison with Wordsworth, except for The Rime of the Ancient Mariner and the fragments Christabel and Kubla Khan. As a methodically immethodical historian of ideas, Coleridge attempted to trace and interknit all that Great Men had thought, a province which foredooms the explorer to intellectual frustration, a strangling in-

voluted serpentine style, and an ultimate marooning on projects never quite completed. While Fruman in his The Damaged Archangel seems to have uncovered the chinks in the defense of this minotaur, I myself have been overwhelmed by the lightning-like flashes of an unfathomable genius glinting momentarily in the suggestion of an idea or a sketched interconnection of others' ideas that seemed to be the forte of Coleridge's synthetic powers. Sustained development of or a long-term siege on an idea or thesis (except when autobiographically related) seemed to defeat Coleridge, despite his best efforts, while his incisive rapier-like thrust to the heart of a problem revealed a demi-god-like intellect.

Upon the completion of this dissertation, I seem to have advanced from knowledge to ignorance to knowledge to ignorance upon the topics of Kabbalah and Coleridge. What remains after the journey into the labyrinth and a minor scuffle with the "Keeper of the Secrets" is a kind of map written in half light which may perhaps guide those who come armed with more knowledge or persistence than I possessed. Perhaps this map will save them from a few disappointing dead-ends and lead them more quickly to the challenge.

When I first told colleagues and professors about the project, I was startled by the generally understandable ignorant reaction as to the meaning of "Kabbalah" and its position in theological, philosophical, and theosophical history. Many thought Kabbalah was one document. Some thought its contents would bring me either to premature death or long overdue insanity. Most interpreted it as a form of sexual "black magic" that would certainly

make a colorful topic for a paper in anthropology. The "map" that I am presenting future scholars with on the Kabbalah and English letters would seem to be giving directions to the local library via Peking. Indeed, the whole dissertation would seem to be bogged down in tedious documentation, definition, and peripheral qualification. And yet, the general ignorance as to the "true" nature of Kabbalah and its impressive contribution to Western thought and letters, not to mention the miasmatic corpus of "folk wisdom," requires a painstakingly detailed rendering of its progress throughout the ages to the time of Coleridge, my particular focus and end-point of discussion. Thus, at times, the discussion of Kabbalah--its history and doctrine--seems to be of primary concern to the exclusion of its connection with Coleridge. But, it is quite pointless for me to discuss Coleridge in relation to Kabbalah unless the reader has a solid idea of what the Kabbalistic tradition represents, at least in my limited researches.

I myself, upon entering into its complicated history, had relatively little idea of its widespread influence on the ideas of the major thinkers and "scientists" from the time of the Renaissance. It was only after a time-consuming reading in Kabbalah's history, documents, and intellectual interconnections that I was able to pick out from Coleridge's voluminous references which authors were continuous with the orthodox and Christian Kabbalistic traditions. The first three chapters of this dissertation are devoted to providing those interested in the topic, perhaps in connection with other writers, easier access to key Kabbalistic documents and major orthodox and Christian "Kabbalists." And yet, I hope I have provided

more than a "source book" in trying to define the scope and variety of Kabbalah via the great historiographers of its progress and changes: principally, Adolphe Franck, A. E. Waite, and Gershom G. Scholem.

For example, the discussion of the dating and the authorship of the principal Kabbalistic documents proposes to reveal the complex and sophisticated literary history of the tradition obscured by the occult accretions and suspect reputation that Kabbalah has come to be associated with by the less informed scholar. The Dialogues of Safed are as brilliantly cast in philosophical light as the Dialogues of fifth-century Athens. Furthermore, these seemingly peripheral critical discourses seem to bog down in multitudinous quotations. I need not remind the thoughtful reader that, because of its philosophically and morally "suspect" character, Kabbalah's representative documents are difficult to come by, in even major university libraries. I have, therefore, endeavoured to offer the reader of this descriptive source on Kabbalah and Coleridge as much of a genuine flavor of the documents and their commentators as space permits. The Sepher ha-Zohar has yet to be translated in its entirety into the English language; an index to the contents of even the severely edited Soncino edition has yet to be compiled.

I have attempted also to be most circumspect in trying to represent Coleridge's relationship to this tradition and here preface all of my conclusions with the belief that Coleridge was indeed a voracious reader, that he carefully considered what he had read, and finally made original deductions. His familiarity with the Kabbalistic tradition seemed to amount to

more than a casual afternoon's reading in a library and to be essentially free of any indiscriminating "borrowing" of opinions. Moreover, the continuity of his interest in or knowledge of the tradition throughout his lifetime suggested to me the possibility that some of the Jewish mystical tradition's doctrine may have filtered into the essentially "mystical" nature of his finest poetry, proceeding from his "mystical" definitions of the Primary and Secondary Imaginations. My detailed documentation and discussion of the "familiarity" attempts to demonstrate that Coleridge had many opportunities to absorb and recreate anew very fundamental Kabbalistic "approaches" to theogony, cosmogony, and Scriptural exegesis. Thus, a Kabbalistic "reading" of some of his theological thoughts and verse would not be construed as capricious, if not willfully imposed. (I have attempted, as far as possible, to anchor to the letter any reference by Coleridge concerning Kabbalah or its commentators to avoid using Kabbalistic terminology without specific definitions or definitive contexts or implying a generalized influence where another philosophy of theosophy with very similar tenets could equally apply.)

For example, Harold Bloom's study Kabbalah and Criticism (1975) offers a "cabalistic" matrix for discussing the works of Wordsworth but never establishes the fact that Wordsworth was ever remotely exposed to Kabbalistic documents or commentary. And though he offers a truncated precis of the history of the Kabbalistic tradition and its doctrines, Bloom's "cabalistic" matrix has really nothing at all to do with his historiographical sketch and "appreciation" of the sophisticated complexity of the Kabbalah's history and philosophical and philological orientation. Bloom, in

the end, renders "Kabbalah" interchangeable with any other "Platonic" or "mystical" system, and, therefore, equally applicable to a multitude of so-inclined poets.

This dissertation, therefore, has two equally important intents: to provide the reader with a careful discrimination of the essence of Kabbalah as a theosophical and as a literary tradition and to describe Coleridge's understanding of its dogma and his relationship to, and even identity with the aims of, a long-line of Kabbalistic commentators and Christian conservers. The Kabbalistic "reading" of The Rime of the Ancient Mariner should be read with the same "tongue-in-cheek" attitude in which it was written: as a tentative exercise until more convincing evidence is forthcoming (via additional notebook entries, annotations to such works as The Aurora, and documented evaluation of Coleridge's relationship to Hyman Hurwitz and Rabbi Hurwitz's works). The final chapter is a self-indulgent sketch ad libitum of possible future work on the Kabbalistic underpinning in the Kubla Khan and Christabel fragments.

In this difficult time, when the Middle East, the cradle of civilization, is surrounded by the "flaming swords" of Man, when the earthly Garden of Eden is conceptualized in terms of an inexhaustible oil field--one is constantly reminded of Man's gross ignorance of his fellow Man's culture, history, and traditions. (This dissertation hopes to remind anyone, who glances through this historiography of Coleridge's "ecumenical" attempts to appreciate and even to assimilate one of the great streams of Western mystical thought, that the "humanistic" intellectual community has not

sincerely undertaken the task of instructing all ready pupils that we are all "One Life," a responsibility that the thirteenth-century scholar and Christian Kabbalist Raymundus Lull recognized as imperative and somehow related to the rescue of the Temple in Jerusalem from faithless hands.)

VITA

William Richard Ploplis is the son of John J. Ploplis of Granville, Illinois and Frances (Synkewich-Ploplis) Mirowski of Chicago, Illinois and stepson to Casimir C. Mirowski. He was born on March 26, 1949 in Chicago, Illinois.

His elementary education was conducted by the Sisters of Saint Casimir at Immaculate Conception School in Chicago and completed, at the secondary level, by the Jesuits and lay faculty of St. Ignatius College Prep, from which he graduated in 1965 with honors.

In September of 1965, he entered Loyola University of Chicago with the assistance of a Presidential Scholarship and in June, 1969 graduated magna cum laude, Bachelor of Arts in Classics. He was also recipient of the Gerard Manley Hopkins Award for literary distinction. Upon graduation, he was deterred from pursuing graduate studies because of conscription procedures but successfully attained Conscientious Objector status with the assistance of Fr. Gerald Walling, S. J., Drs. Joseph Wolff, Agnes Donohue, and Eileen Baldeswhiler (Loyola), and Paul G. Drake. In September of 1970, he entered the University of Chicago and was granted a Master of Arts in English Studies in June, 1971.

Undecided as to whether to pursue a career in classical ballet, he postponed doctoral studies at the University of Chicago to dance under the surname "Philin" with the Chicago Ballet and the Chicago Concert Dance Ensemble. In 1974, he was selected to be professionally groomed as a performer and instructor by Maria Tallchief-Paschen at the Lyric Opera of

Chicago, at the same time electing to pursue the doctoral curriculum at Loyola University of Chicago as a teaching assistant. While dancing with the Lyric Opera Ballet for two seasons, he was awarded an Arthur J. Schmitt Fellowship at Loyola for 1976-77, under which he completed preliminary research for this dissertation. For the next three years, serious illness curtailed his dance career and prevented him from continuous work on the dissertation which was finally completed in the summer of 1980 in Tampa, Florida.

Nothing can be baser than the Parallelisms, when brought to
invalidate the originality of a certainly original mind--nothing more
pleasing than when they are merely to shew how the hearts of great men
have sympathized in all ages--Samuel Taylor Coleridge
from the Collected Notebooks: October, 1809 (#3364).

CHAPTER I

AN APPRECIATION OF KABBALAH

The word "torah" signifies "direction," "instruction," particularly "divine instruction," or mystically "showing," that is, revealing that which was hidden and unknown. This "instruction" proceeds from the Revelation to Moses of the Law, prescribed on Mount Sinai, and pertains to the prophetic teachings concerning the Will of God. The major written source of this Law is the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Old Testament, though the term is applied to the entire Scripture and is often designated the Sefer-ha-Torah. "'Observe,' he said, 'how God has promised Israel in many places to make them worthy of the world to come, as He has not chosed for His portion any other people or language, but only Israel. It was for this purpose that He gave them the Torah of truth, by whose means they may live virtuously and learn the ways of the Holy One, blessed be He, so that they may inherit the Holy Land; for whoever is thought worthy of the Holy Land has a portion in the world to come'" (Vayishlah, 177B).¹ This instruction contains the historical law of the Chosen People, revered as the unchanging, loving care of the One True God.

To the Kabbalist, however, the Torah is not the "dead" letter of

¹The Zohar, tr. Harry Sperling (I, II, III), Maurice Simon (I-V), and Dr. Paul P. Levertoff (III, IV) (London: Soncino Press, 1949).
(continued)

the Law which is so often misconstrued as the insulating essence of Judaism. The Torah is rather the expression of the cosmic law of the universe, as God's wisdom conceived it. "The Torah is to them a living organism animated by a secret life which streams and pulsates below the crust of its literal meaning; every one of the innumerable strata of this hidden region corresponds to a new and profound meaning of the Torah."²

It is an article of faith that Moses, at the same time that he received the law recorded in the Pentateuch, also received the detailed justification and explanation of religious and legal norms, which sub-

¹(continued from page 1)

Volume One: Genesis--"Bereshith," "Noah," Lech Lecha," "Vayera."

Volume Two: Genesis--"Haye Sarah," "Tol'doth," "Vayeze." "Vayishlah," "Vayesheb," "Miqz," "Viyigash," "Vayehi."

Volume Three: Exodus--"Shemoth," "Waera," "Bo," "Beshalah," "Jethro," "Mishpatim," "Terumah."

Volume Four: Exodus--"Terumah" (cont.), "Tezawe," "Ki Tisa," "Vayaqhel," "P'qude"; Leviticus--"Vayikra," "Zau," "Shemini."

Volume Five: Leviticus--"Ki Tazria'," "Mezora," "Ahare Moth," "Kedoshim," "Emor," "Behar," "Behukothai."

Numbers--"Bemidbar," "Naso," "Beha 'alothekha," "Shelah lecha," "Korah," "Hukkath," "Balak," "Pinhas."

Deuteronomy--"Vaethhanan," "Vayelech," "Hazinu."

The Sepher ha-Zohar (Book of Splendor) is one of the oldest Kabbalistic documents. The Zoharic text quoted in the body of this study will be followed immediately by its location.

²Gershom G. Scholem, Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism, 2nd. ed. (New York: Schocken, 1967), p. 14.

sequently were handed down by tradition as "oral" law, complementing the Torah, the "written" law. Since Esdras, the foundation of the Jewish religious community was the Law. Everything was regulated in accordance with fixed norms; nothing could be added or changed in the Law laid down in the Pentateuch. Yet the ever-changing conditions of life called for new ordinances, and these were decreed in accordance with the needs of the time and the special cases to be determined. There was thus formed a traditional law and custom orally transmitted, continuous with the Mosaic written law.

The codification of Jewish religious and legal norms comprises the Mishnah, and the collection of further discussions and explanations "completing" the work of the Mishnah is known as Gemara. The Mishnah is a collection of Jewish legal material. Compiled in Palestine between 160 C.E. (common era) and 200 C.E., it is arranged into six major Orders (Sedarim): Zera'im (Seeds), laws of agriculture; Mo'ed (Appointed Time), laws of the Sabbath and Festivals; Nashim (Women), laws pertaining to marriage, divorce, and family relationships; Nezikin (Damages), civil and criminal statutes; Kodashim (Sacred Matters), laws of sacrifice and the Temple cult; Tohorot (Purities), laws of ritual uncleanliness. Taken together, the Mishnah and the Gemara are known as the Talmud of the Palestinian and the Babylonian academies, signifying "doctrine," "study," or "unfolding" of the law in accordance with which the conduct of life is to be regulated." Zév ben Shimon Halevi regards the patriarch Rabbi Jehudah "the Saint", the editor of the Mishnah (and perhaps representative of most editors and compilers of a traditional corpus), as a pronounced "rationalist" who dutifully and conscientiously excluded from his

"codification" of the Halakhah and Haggadah (traditional law and legend respectively) elements not compatible with a strictly exegetical deduction from Scripture. He excluded, wherever possible, mystical and erratically symbolical interpretations of the Torah.³

The rabbinic Midrashim (explanations of the Sacred Text) had the traditional purpose of promoting legal righteousness in Israel. The rabbis sought Truth; they strove to know what God really told His people at Sinai and explored every possible implication of the written Torah. In part, their quest was practical; they had decisions to make as judges. As these laws had been passed in view of concrete circumstances of the past, they had to be explained in a more or less artificial way to make them fit the altered circumstances of Jewish life, or serve as a Scriptural basis or support of the various traditional observances which made up the oral law. All such artificial explanations of the Mosaic legislation are legal (Halakhic) Midrashim. Halakhah is derived from the Hebrew root meaning "walk," or the "way to go, the things to do." Every act of every Jew in every generation can be characterized as an act of obedience to God's command or disobedience to the divine law as revealed by way of the Torah. Every act is either a mitzvah (obedience) or an averah (disobedience).

In addition, the rabbis had to teach the Torah to the people. Distinct from this general kind of legalistic Midrashim are those called homiletical or Haggadic ("tell" or "talk about"), which embrace the interpretation, illustration, or expansion, in a moralizing or edifying manner,

³Z'ev ben Shimon Halevi, The Way of Kabbalah (Weiser, 1976), p.82.

of the non-legal parts of Scripture. As the object of this latter kind of Midrashim was not to determine the precise requirements of the Law but rather to confirm in a general manner Jewish hearers in their faith and its practice, Haggadic explanations of the non-legal portions of Hebrew Scripture are characterized by a much greater freedom of exposition than the Halakhic Midrashim. Haggadic expositors have availed themselves of whatever material--sayings of prominent Rabbis (e.g., philosophical or mystical disquisitions concerning angels, demons, paradise, hell, Messiah, Satan, feasts, fasts, parables, legends, etc.)--could render their treatment of those portions of the sacred Text more instructive or edifying. Haggadah subsequently expanded to include all such interpretative thinking, even that not based on Biblical sources; it has never been "official" or dogmatized, and interpretations vary widely. Both kinds of Midrashim were at first preserved only orally; but their recording commenced with the second century A.D.

The Kabbalah, in contradistinction and yet not in antagonism to this far-flung province of derived religious law, constitutes a realm of metaphysical inquiry into the very foundations of the Torah itself but not with the purpose to prescribe or rationally explain. Indeed, the codification and formulization of the Talmud are alien to Kabbalah, which by its very nature has no boundaries, cannot be recorded completely, nor can it even be successfully defined. Kabbalah is much more than the over three thousand documents which profess to record its contemplations. Nor is it an exaggeration to state that each Kabbalistic document expresses a Kabbalistic metaphysics unique to itself. So there are as many Kabbalahs as there have been Kabbalists. The essence of Kabbalah is the individual,

personal assimilation of Divine Will and the symbolical expression of that Will without seeking to encompass it by formalized description, rendering the vision less than it is or may be for another. Kabbalah is non-rationalistic but consistent within its own terms: at times idiosyncratically interpretative but always orthodox in its moral and ethical conclusions. It is diffuse, obscure, and esoteric but never without the purpose to resolve, clarify and uncover the simple "fountains" of Divine Wisdom. Revelation is to the mystic not merely a definite historical occurrence which at a given moment in history puts an end to any further direct relation between God and Man. With no thought of denying Revelation as a fact of sacred history, the Kabbalist still conceives the source of religious knowledge and experience which bursts from his heart as being of equal importance for the conception of religious Truth. In other words, instead of the one act of Revelation, there is a constant repetition of this act. The new Revelation to himself or to his master, the Kabbalist tries to link with the sacred texts of old. To the Kabbalist, the original act of Revelation to the community--the public revelation on Mount Sinai--appears as something of which the true meaning has yet to unfold; the "secret" and personal revelation is to him the real and decisive one. And thus the substance of the canonical texts, like that of all other religious values, is melted down and given another form as it passes through the fiery stream of the mystical consciousness. Most excitingly, Kabbalah is a living tradition which grows, dies, is reborn ever-expanding and ever-changing: Man and, at times, Monster.

Kenneth Rexroth has characterized the Kabbalistic tradition as nothing but a "transcendental way of looking at the formal rites of cir-

cumcision, marriage, and confirmation."⁴ If there is any one theme or concept which does repeat itself in most of the three thousand odd writings distinguished as "kabbalistic," it has been best expressed in the Zohar's statement: "For the Holy One has disposed all things in such a way that everything in this world should be a replica of something in the world above, and that world should be united so that His glory should be spread above and below" (Haye Sarah, 129a)

For example, the circumcision of Abraham, the birth of Isaac, and the covenant with the Ancient of Days revealed in Genesis is regarded as much more than a legalistic or purification prescription. "Observe how the great love of the Almighty towards Abraham was manifested in the fact that Isaac was not born to him until he was circumcised. In this way it was made certain that his seed should be holy, according to the words of the Scripture, 'wherein is the seed thereof after its kind' (Genesis i, 12). For had Abraham begotten before he was circumcised, his seed would not have been holy, as it would have issued from the state of orlah, and thus would have clung to that state here below; but after Abraham's circumcision, his seed issued from the state of holiness and became attached to supernal holiness, and he begat children in the higher plane and thus became attached to his grade in the fitting manner" (Vayera, 104a). In contrast, the following passage from the prescriptive Mishnah is offered: "A child may be circumcised on the eighth, ninth, eleventh, or twelfth day after birth, but neither before nor afterward. Why? Normally, he should be circumcised on the eighth day. But if the

⁴A. E. Waite, The Holy Kabbalah (Secaucus, N. J.: University Books, 1975) p. vii.

child is born precisely at twilight, he is circumcised on what might be considered the ninth day. If he is born precisely at twilight on Friday, the child is circumcised on what might be considered the tenth day. If a Festival falls after Sabbath, the child is circumcised on the eleventh day, and if the two days of Rosh Hashanah fall after Sabbath, the child is circumcised on the twelfth day. If a child is sick, he is not circumcised until he becomes well."⁵

The doctrines of the Kabbalists are at once hypotheses and certitudes, for they proceed from the known (the revealed message of the Torah) to the unknown by the help of analogy. But the Kabbalah has no schematic principles of hierarchy; its own counsel is the study of the Doctrine, and that study continually brings forward new, even contradictory, developments of the deep meanings which lay behind the Law, the Prophets, and the history books of the Old Testament. What the Kabbalists look for in the Bible are not philosophical ideas but a symbolic description of the hidden process of divine life, as it unfolds in the manifestations and "emanations" of Creation. The Kabbalists have attempted to penetrate and even to describe the mystery of the world as reflections of the mysteries of divine life. Thus the true Kabbalah professes the dogmatic essence of the Torah, the repository in the heart of Judaism of the "mysteries hidden since the beginning of time." Its doctrines have spiritual contemplation, pure inspiration, or intellectual intuition" as their points of departure and not the autocratic activity of reason. Quite simply (perhaps not quite "simply"), Kabbalah proposes for

⁵The Mishnah, ed. Eugene J. Lipman (New York: W. W. Norton, 1970), Mo'ed, "Shabbat," 19:5.

its province of contemplation the knowledge (scientia) of things human and divine that Adam, the father of mankind, possessed, the primal tradition of the one and only revelation recorded in the Torah.

Most often Kabbalah has been defined as a fragment of the universal spiritual phenomenon "mysticism." Most scholars who have examined the Kabbalistic movement as one of the major strains of mysticism which like "Kabbalism" has undergone a life, degeneration, and rebirth of its own in men's esteem. A. E. Waite distinguishes two types of mysticism: "a philosophical doctrine, or rather body of doctrine, that is to say, an ordered metaphysics, held intellectually, but also a mode of conduct practiced with a defined purpose, in a word, a mystical doctrine and mystical life, it being understood that the doctrine is rooted in first-hand experience derived from the course of life...the end of which mysticism is the recovery or attainment of consciousness in God."⁶

To Gershom G. Scholem also, the Kabbalah is the tradition of things divine, "the sum of Jewish mysticism." And yet Scholem differentiates the insincere from the genuine mystic whom he believes the true Kabbalist to be. For Scholem, mysticism has two contradictory or complementary aspects: the one conservative, the other revolutionary. The "conservative" mystic seems to rediscover the sources of traditional authority. Perceiving the ancient foundations of this authority, he has no desire to change them. He tries to find the true way back to the forms which lie concealed beneath the narrative, historical images, which is

⁶A. E. Waite, op. cit., p. 557ff.

also the way back to the revelation granted to the community and not exclusively to the individual. The "revolutionary" mystic often serves a prophetic function and may even eccentrically substitute his own personal opinions for those prescribed by authority, at times devaluating the word of the "written law." In both categories, the mystic transforms the holy text: the crux of this metamorphosis being that hard, clear, unmis-takeable world of revelation becomes filled with infinite meanings. The Kabbalistic mystic's discursive thinking becomes a "kind of asymptotic process: the conceptual formulations are an attempt to provide an approximate philosophical interpretation of an inexhaustible symbolic matrix of images to interpret these images as abbreviations for conceptual views."⁷

In reality, Kabbalah is far more than a mystical doctrine of Judaism. Its rich springs of thought defy the attempts of those who study it to order it into any religious or philosophical system; it is not of a dogmatic nature. In fact there is no such thing as the doctrine of the Kabbalists. Actually we encounter widely diversified and often contradictory motivations, explanations, and myth-makings which strangely supplement and complement each other. When put into practice as a conduct of life, Kabbalah does not grant its devotee the sense, otherwise common to mystics, of complete and reassuring union with the Deity; but it is also not restricted to the mere performance of a certain number of rites or rituals to induce an ecstatic state. The Kabbalah deserves to be called "mystical" because of its search for the Absolute and the endeavour to achieve contact with the divine. But, it is also primarily a creative experience of the Practical Jewish Mind.

⁷Gershom G. Scholem, The Kabbalah (New York: Quadrangle, 1974) p. 25.

Kabbalism is distinguished from other species of mysticism by a peculiar self-conscious attitude towards language which is unreservedly positive and exploratory. Whereas the primary purpose of a Kabbalistic contemplation seems to be the total deracination of a divine mystery from the literal text in which it is embedded and therefore a contemplatio formarum separatarum, in reality the contemplation of the etymology and arrangement of the words of a text becomes a mode of creative foreplay, an imaginative, multi-level manipulation of roots, phonemes, morphemes demonstrating a complex linguistic awareness that the concrete can be dissolved into the abstract--a simple image concealing a complex idea. On the passage in Genesis, "And God said, 'Let there be Light'; and there was Light," the following linguistic development is characteristic of the greatest of the Kabbalistic documents, the Sepher Zohar:

Light, and there was Light. These words imply that there had already been Light. This word, awr (light), contains in itself a hidden significance. The expansive force proceeding from the hidden recesses of the secret supernal ether opened a path and produced from itself a mysterious point (or, rather, the Ain Sof (Limitless) clave its own ether and disclosed this point), Yod. When this expanded, that which was left of the mysterious awir (ether) was found to be awr (light). When this first point had developed from it, it showed itself upon it, touching and yet not touching it. When it expanded, it emerged into being. And thus was light (awr) left from ether (awir); and this is what we mean by saying that it "had been" previously; and so it remained. It went up and was stored away, and there was left it one dot, which continually approaches by invisible paths the other point, touching and yet not touching, illuminating it in the manner of the first point from which it issued. Therefore the whole is linked together, and it illumines both one and the other. When it ascends, all ascend and are attached to it, and it reaches the place of Ain Sof, where it is stored away, and all become one. This dot of the word awr is Light. It extended, and there shone forth in it seven letters of the alphabet, which did not solidify and remained fluid. Afterwards Darkness issued, and there issued in it seven other letters of the alphabet, and these too were not solidified and remained fluid. There then issued the Firmament, which prevented discord between the two sides. In it there issued eight other letters, making twenty-two in all (Bereshith, 166).

This expansive mythologizing of the birth of language has gained for the Kabbalistic tradition the title of a "narrative" philosophy, through its symbolic language trying to express the mysterious genesis of the finite in the midst of the infinite. Harold Bloom conceives of Kabbalah as "an extraordinary body of rhetoric or figurative language, and indeed...a theory of rhetoric." For Bloom, "Kabbalah tries to restore the primal meaning that God intended when He gave Torah to Moses. But Kabbalah treats Torah as alphabet, as language itself. God gave writing, which was almost primal, except that writing was what we now would call a compulsive sublimation of a more primal Instruction."⁸

Eventually, Kabbalah became more of an interpretative and mythical tradition, a corpus symbolicum rather than a mystical via spirituale. And with the demise of its mystical dimension in which there was no separation between God, Man, and Nature and in which, epistemologically speaking, the subject and the object become One--Kabbalah slipped into an historical dimension in which it sought vainly for a magical power over nature. It fragmented or rather was dissected, investigated as pristine documents concealing long-forgotten arcana, the clues to an Ur-Religion controlled by an almighty priesthood. The "transcendental" Kabbalah became debased to the purpose of the devotees of the "true science" of universal equilibrium and electro-static balances.

And with this fragmentation of its identity, Kabbalah has come to be known in terms of all of the occult disciplines: chiromancy, astrology, Tarot, theurgy, thaumaturgy, numerology, phrenology, etc. A "practical"

⁸Harold Bloom, Kabbalah and Criticism (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), pp. 18, 80.

Kabbalah of talismanic and ceremonial magic became distinguished from a "literal" (gematria, notaricon, themurah), a "dogmatic," and the classical "unwritten" Kabbalah. A host of demons and homunculi winged their way out of the gaping cracks of the tradition. In an almost diabolical inversion, the mystery of God's Being and manifestation was subordinated to the wisdom of Man. The symbolical or sacramental system which formed the outward vesture of the "mystical" tradition became the magic mantle of the wizard during his evocations by Divine and Angelic Names. The fluid, living presence of the Torah, the infinite meanings of the divine name Tetragrammaton, petrified; a corpse of ritual formulae remained, the well-spring of much Western magic and "Folkwisdom." "R. Simeon said: 'Had I been alive when the Holy One, blessed be He, gave mankind the Book of Enoch and the Book of Adam, I could have endeavoured to prevent their dissemination, because not all wise men read them with proper attention, and thus extract from them perverted ideas, such as lead men astray from the Most High to the worship of strange powers. Now, however, the wise who understand these things keep them secret, and thereby fortify themselves in the service of their Master'" (Noah, 73a)

THE ANTIQUITY OF KABBALAH

The origin of the Book of Adam from the Zohar gives us some idea of the legendary past in which Kabbalah, both sacred and profane, supposedly originated. The following two legends antedate the revelation of Kabbalah on Mount Sinai. Characteristic of most Kabbalistic writings, contradiction between series of legends becomes troublesome to the rationalistic mind. The legends of the origin of the Kabbalah itself are both contradictory (in that Kabbalah is, on the one hand, the sum of the unclouded intellection of Eden, and on the other, the remnant of this un-fallen Wisdom) and yet strangely complementary in the theme that Man, the inhabitant of the lower heavens, needed the Divine Word to fulfill the supernal pattern in Creation.

When Adam was in the Garden of Eden, God sent down to him a book by the hand of Raziel, the angel in charge of the holy mysteries. In this book were supernal inscriptions containing the sacred wisdom, and seventy-two branches of wisdom expounded so as to show the formation of six hundred and seventy inscriptions of higher mysteries. In the middle of the book was a secret writing explaining the thousand and five hundred keys which were not revealed even to the holy angels, and all of which were locked up in this book until it came into the hands of Adam. When Adam obtained it, all the holy angels gathered round him to hear him read it, and when he began they exclaimed: "Be thou exalted, O Lord above the heavens, let thy glory be above all the earth"(Psalms lvii,12). Thereupon the holy angel Hardarniel was secretly sent to say to him: "Adam, Adam reveal not the glory of the Master, for to thee alone and not to the angels is the privilege given to know the glory of thy Master." Therefore he kept it by him secretly until he left the Garden of Eden. While he was there he studied it diligently, and utilised constantly the gift of his Master until he discovered sublime mysteries which were not known even to the celestial minister. When, however, he transgressed the command of his Master, the book flew away from him. Adam then beat his breast and wept, and entered the river Gihon up to his neck so that his body became wrinkled and his face haggard. God thereupon made a sign to Raphael to return to him the book, which he then studied for the rest of his life. Adam left it to his son

Seth, who transmitted it in turn to his posterity, and so on until it came to Abraham, who learnt from it how to discern the glory of his Master, as has been said. Similarly Enoch possessed a book through which he learnt to discern the divine glory (Bereshith, 55a-55b).

The apocryphal Book of Enoch offers a Prometheus-like legend. This legend, perhaps, gives us more of a clue as to the origin of the profane or practical Kabbalah, a lesser thaumaturgical wisdom accessible to the "celestial ministers," surpassed by the unfallen Adam. There were angels who consented to fall from heaven that they might have intercourse with the daughters of earth.

For in those days the sons of men having multiplied, there were born to them daughters of great beauty. And when the angels, or sons of heaven, beheld them, they were filled with desire; wherefore they said to one another: "Come, let us choose wives from among the race of men, and let us beget children." Their leader, Samyasa, answered thereupon and said: "Perchance you will be wanting in the courage needed to fulfill this resolution, and then I shall alone be answerable for your fall." But they swore that they would in no wise repent and that they would achieve their whole design. Now there were two hundred who descended on Mount Armon, and it was from this time that the mountain received the designation, which signifies Mount of the Oath....They took wives, with whom they had intercourse, to whom they also taught magia, the art of enchantment and the diverse properties of roots and trees. Amagarac gave instruction in all secrets of sorcerers; Barkaial was master of those who study the stars; Akibeel manifested signs; and Azaradel taught the motions of the moon. (Noah, 70b)

India, the land East of Eden, whose mysteries are grandiose in their poetry and singularly profound in their allegory, is often mentioned as the land to which the descendants of this angelic revelation migrated and where they held the Kabbalah in profanation.

However, the legends encountered most often concerning the origin of the Kabbalah tradition center on the giving of the Law to Moses on Sinai. Some legends say that Moses was given two sets of Laws. The first

set proceeded from the side of the Sephirah Hesed, the love or mercy of God, and detailed for the Chosen People those mysteries to which Adam possessed the keys in Eden. This set Moses shattered when he saw the people intent on forming an "image" of the Divine Illimitable. Returning from Sinai with a now imperfect set, somewhat recalling the wisdom of the first "laws" but proceeding now from the side of the Sephirah Geyurah or Din, the justice of God--the divine revelation set forth only a stringent legal code. Tradition has it that the second set was formed from the fragments of the first set and that Kabbalistic scholars are engaged in the restoration of the original "merciful" codex. The Zohar teaches that the first Tables emanated from the Tree of Life, but that Israel, by worshipping the golden calf, "was judged unworthy of benefitting from them." Thereupon Moses, following the divine command, gave the people an accompanying set of tables "which came from the side of the Tree of Good and Evil" and destroyed the first set. The law of the second tables is in fact made up of positive commandments and negative precepts: Life flows from what is permitted, Death from what is forbidden. The first tables, say the Kabbalistic traditions, were the light and doctrine of the Messiah, the outpouring of universal deliverance, the source of eternal life on earth. The second tables represented the indirect or "fragmented" manifestation of the light.

Modern scholarship on the dating of the antiquity of the Kabbalistic tradition more realistically tends to agree that the basic themes, concepts, and metaphysics of the historical movement known as Kabbalah are definitely pre-Christian in origin and most likely antedate the time of Zoroaster. Like any living organism that has undergone an uninterrupted evolution

for over three thousand years, the development has been by no means uniform or consistent. At times, because of historical and inimical social forces or mistaken personal motivation, its professors have often dramatically inverted its premises. Often in comparing the documents that date from Talmudic and post-Talmudic times and those of the school which later flourished in Safed, the holy city of Kabbalism in the sixteenth century, there seems to be little resemblance of a continuous tradition.

Unqualified to disentangle the complex controversies that still continue over the mysterious origins of the Kabbalistic tradition, I offer the following summary based on Adolphe Franck's study⁹ because Franck's theory originates in the era which will be the focus of succeeding chapters in this study and because most modern scholars half or wholeheartedly concur with Franck's conclusions.¹⁰

At the time when the Mishnah was edited (no later than the year 3949 after Creation or 189 years after the birth of Christ) by Judah the Holy, the oldest and most respected of all teachers in the line of the Tannaim ("teachers of the tradition"), an esoteric doctrine concerning the

⁹Adolphe Franck, The Kabbalah: The Religious Philosophy of the Hebrews, 2nd. ed. (Secaucus, New Jersey, 1973), pp. 13-65, originally entitled La Kabbale: où la philosophie religieuse des Hebreux (Paris, 1843).

¹⁰Gershom G. Scholem, the most respected of modern scholars on Jewish mysticisms, confirms that Jewish mysticism is the sum of attempts made to put a mystical interpretation on the content of Rabbinical Judaism as it crystallized in the period of the Second Temple. "Obviously the process of crystallization had to be fairly far advanced before such a development could set in. This is equally true of the type of Judaism which centered around the law and which Philo of Alexandria undertook to interpret, and of the more highly developed Talmudic Judaism on which the endeavors of the medieval Kabbalists were based." On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism, 3rd ed. (New York: Schocken, 1972), p. 32.

Creation and Divine Nature had developed. There was agreement on the manner of its study and division, and its name excited a kind of religious awe even among those who could not have known it. But there is no way of determining precisely how long this doctrine existed. The most careful scrutiny of all the books of the Old Testament fails to uncover a single reference to secret teachings or to a doctrine of superior profundity and purity received solely for a small number of the elect. Bearing in mind that Judah the Holy merely collected the precepts and traditions transmitted to him by his predecessors, the Tannaim--one must conclude that the quotations forbidding imprudent disclosure of the Book of Creation and of the Merkabah ("throne" mysticism) are, consequently, older than the book that contains them. Franck points out that the author of these works is not known; this is, in his mind, further proof of their antiquity. Had they been the writings of only one man, they would not have been invested with any kind of legislative authority; and, as is usual under such circumstances, the persons responsible for their origin would, most likely, have been names.

Working from the hypothesis that the doctrine itself necessarily preceded the law that forbids its disclosure, Franck deduces that it must have been known and must have acquired certain authority before the danger of its dissemination among the doctors and masters of Israel, as well as the people, was recognized. Most scholars agree with Franck that the basic elements of Kabbalism were established before the end of the first century *anno domini*. This is precisely the time when the reputed creators of the oldest known monuments of Kabbalism flourished, Rabbi Akiba and the almost mythical Rabbi Simeon ben Yohai. Therefore down the long line of Tannaim

well before the end of the first century, A.D., there circulated among the Jews a speculative science much venerated and carefully distinguished from the Mishnah, the Talmud, and the Sacred Books--a mystic doctrine engendered by the need for reflection and independence as well as philosophy and which, nevertheless, involved in its favor the united authority of tradition and Scripture.¹¹

¹¹One recalls the tradition of the Homeric school and the final recording of the epics and thinks of a long poetic/bardic tradition that sustained the Kabbalistic tradition before it was recorded. Franck notes that besides the prophet and the priest, the poet was an agent of Truth and a minister to the mind from the time of the Hebrew people's origin and through their captivity in Babylon. Evelyn Underhill reminds us that

The great teacher, poet, artist, inventor never aims deliberately at his effects. He obtains them he knows not how; perhaps from a contact of which he is unconscious with that creative plane of being which the Sufis call the constructive spirit, and the Kabbalists Yesod, and which both postulate as lying next behind the world of sense.

BASIC CONCEPTS OF KABBALAH

In spite of its growth over two thousand years and the many attendant theological and philosophical tributaries that have fed into its mighty stream, the Kabbalistic tradition has retained a decidedly uniform character in regard to its basic doctrine concerning the identity of God and the revelation of His presence in Nature. As Scholem remarks, "...Nature is the scene of man's relation to God....Man becomes aware of a fundamental duality, of a vast gulf which can be crossed by nothing but the voice; the voice of God, directing and law-giving in His revelation, and the voice of man in prayer....Mysticism does not deny or overlook the abyss; on the contrary, it begins by realizing its existence, but from there it proceeds to a quest for the secret that will close it in, the hidden path that will span it. It strives to piece together the fragments broken by the religious cataclysm, to bring back the old unity which religion has destroyed, but on a new plane, where the world of mythology and that of revelation meet in the soul of man."¹²

Perhaps the most efficient way to describe the divine identity which speaks from the far side of the abyss would be to paraphrase a segment of text from the Idra Rabba¹³ which almost sums up the entire Kabbalistic view of the Nature of God and the process of divine life. "Before having created any form in the world, before having produced any image, he was

¹²Scholem, Major Trends, pp. 7-8.

¹³Idra Rabba is also known as The Greater Assembly. _____, The Anatomy of God: The Book of Concealment, The Greater Holy Assembly and The Lesser Holy Assembly of the Zohar with The Assembly of the Tabernacle, tr. Roy Rosenberg (New York: KTAV Pub. Hse., 1973) pp. 43-49.

alone, without form, without resemblance to anything." An instance which is common to both Jewish and Christian mystics is that God is frequently described as the mystical "Nothing." In Kabbalah, He is Ain Soph: ain, "nothingness," the absence of any definite or conditioned reality; non-being or super-being, non-cause, the absolute; ain sof, "no end," infinite, raza derazin, "mystery of mysteries," the super-intelligible or super-conscious; mi, "who?", the eternal object of research. So continues the prayer from the Idra Rabba, "Who could conceive Him as He was then, before the Creation, since He was formless? It is therefore forbidden to represent Him as any image, by any form whatever, even by His Holy name, even by a letter or an iota. That is the meaning of the words (Deut. 4: 15), 'For ye saw no manner of form in the day that the Lord spake unto you.' That is to say, you saw nothing that you can represent under any form or by any image."

A. E. Waite's commentary on the identity of the Deus absconditus underscores his contention that the Kabbalistic tradition prided itself as being a system of theosophy,¹⁴ an application of the wisdom of Israel to the mystery of God, beginning, as might have been expected, with a confession that it is unsearchable, that beyond our highest conceptions of all that is divine, as beyond so many veridic illusions, there is the un-

¹⁴Scholem's definition of "theosophy" will be our touchstone.

"By theosophy I mean that which was generally meant before the term became a label for a modern pseudo-religion, i. e. theosophy signifies a mystical doctrine, or school of thought, which purports to perceive and to describe the mysterious workings of the Divinity, perhaps also believing it possible to become absorbed in its contemplation. Theosophy postulates a kind of divine emanation whereby God, abandoning his self-contained repose, awakens to mysterious life; further, it maintains that the mysteries of creation reflect the pulsation of this divine life." Major Trends, p. 206.

known and the unknowable God. He thus summarizes the state of Ain Soph prior to its revelation:

In the eternity which preceded either of the manifestations that have been mentioned, the Deity was withdrawn into Himself and subsisted after a manner which transcends entirely the conception of human faculties. It is said that the Glory of the Holy One is so sublime and so highly exalted that it remains entirely secret; no man can penetrate the deeps of Divine wisdom. The place of its exaltation is unknown to men and angels....The Names which are ascribed to the Deity in this abyssal condition...are not Names which present either the condition or the Divine Nature: they are conventions of the philosophical hypothesis; they are terms which serve to indicate that God, prior to manifestation, is nameless, even as He is beyond reach. He is the Ancient One, and the most ancient of all the Ancients, but this describes only the eternity of His subsistence; and He is the Hidden of all Hidden Ones, but this concerns only his concealment. Ain Sof is understood as the limitless mystery of Divine thought, the centre of all and the secret of all secrets.... It will be obvious that all ordinary notions of a personal God are transcended by the Non-Ens or Non-Ego of the Kabbalists. It is absolutely simple, unity without any multiplication, above all number, above Wisdom, which as we shall see, is, however, one of its first emanations.¹⁵

The prayer from the Idra Rabba continues, recounting the first consequence which followed the operation of Divine Will: in a word, the transistion of Deity from the latent to the active mode (so far as any of these qualifiers can be used in respect of a state where there was no universe in which manifestation could take place, no creative intelligence to cognize it, and no objective for action). As in the postulated state of latency, God was above all number, so in the subsequent activity He is held to have produced numbers; and the Decade--in the sense of the Sephiroth--is brought forth from Ain Soph. Also to be noted in the above verse, is the particular type of Kabbalism represented, namely Merkabah or "throne"

¹⁵A. E. Waite, op. cit., p. 187.

mysticism as opposed to Bereshith mysticism.¹⁶ But after having produced the form of the Heavenly Man (Adam E-lo-eh or Adam Kadmon), He used it as a chariot (Merkabah) to descend; He wished to be known by His attributes, by each attribute separately and permitted Himself to be called the God of Mercy, the God of Justice, the All-powerful God, the God of Hosts, and the One Who Is. His intention was to make known His qualities and how His Justice and His Mercy embrace the world as well as the work of man.

The idea of "emanation" belongs more especially to the Divine Nature unfolding from within itself, that it may be revealed ultimately to and within an external universe, the relation of which to God is not that of a symbolic globe held in a king's hand, nor even a veil or a vesture, but rather a cosmic sacrament of which He is the inward power and the abiding grace. The ten Sephiroth by which the Infinite Being first manifested Himself are merely His attributes, which have no substantial reality of their own. They describe a theogonic process in which God emerges from His hiddenness and ineffable being, to stand before us as a Creator.

The hidden God, Ain Soph, manifests himself to the Kabbalists under ten different aspects, which in turn comprise an endless variety of shades and gradations. In each of these attributes the divine substance is present in its entirety; taken all together, they constitute the first,

¹⁶There are basically two strains of Kabbalism. "Yetsiratic" or "Bereshith". Kabbalism concerns itself with the mysteries of Creation described cryptically in Genesis; "Merkabah" Kabbalism uncovers the mysteries of the pleroma (fullness of YHWH's glory) and its attendants. They are not mutually exclusive since both contemplate the identity of God.

most complete and highest of all the divine manifestations. It is called the archetypal or celestial man (Adam Kadmon or Adam E-lo-eh). This is the figure which dominates Ezekiel's mysterious chariot and of which terrestrial man is but a faint copy. What is called celestial man, or the first divine manifestation, is merely the absolute form of all that exists: the source of all the other forms, or rather of all ideas, the supreme thought otherwise known as the Logos or the Word. The ten Sephiroth, according to the Zohar, are indicated in the Old Testament by as many special names consecrated to God.

Scholem cogently remarks on the complicated history of the interpretation of the theogonic process. He particularly marks the tension between the Illimitable God of the Kabbalistic speculations and the "vital" God of Scripture: the development of the abstract/concrete Sephirothic system attempted to bridge that gap or to resolve that tension.

It is clear that with this postulate of an impersonal basic reality in God, which becomes a person--or appears as a person--only in the process of Creation and Revelation, Kabbalism abandons the personalistic basis of the Biblical conception of God....It will not surprise us to find that Kabbalistic speculation has run the whole gamut--from attempts to re-transform the impersonal En-Sof into the personal God of the Bible to the downright heretical doctrine of a genuine dualism between the hidden En-Sof and the personal Demiurge of Scripture....The mystic strives to assure himself of the living presence of God, the God of the Bible, the God who is good, wise, just and merciful and the embodiment of all other positive attributes. But at the same time he is unwilling to renounce the idea of the hidden God who remains eternally unknowable in the depths of His own Self, or to use the bold expression of the Kabbalists "in the depths of His nothingness."¹⁷

What the Kabbalists looked for in the Bible was not primarily philosophical ideas but a symbolic description of the hidden process of divine life, as it unfolds in the manifestation and emanation of the Sephiroth.

¹⁷Scholem, Major Trends, pp. 12-13

To the Kabbalist, the unity of God is manifested from the first as a living, dynamic unity, rich in content. What to the Jewish theologians were mere attributes of God, are to the Kabbalists potencies, hypostases, states in an intra-divine life-process. The image of Adam Kadmon provided the Kabbalist with a concrete, poetic mechanism to depict the "life-system" of the Illimitable Absolute: each limb representing a different theogonic expression. Every stage in this divine life has its own symbolical name, in strict accordance with its peculiar manifestation. Their sum total constitutes a highly complex symbolical structure, in which almost every Biblical word corresponds to one of the Sephiroth. Every verse not only describes an event in history or nature but in addition is a symbol of a certain stage in the divine process, an impulse of the divine life.

But, let us continue with the section from the Idra Rabba which constitutes a transition from Ain Soph to the God of Sephirothic manifestation. This segment utilizes two images which are the most favored symbols in Kabbalah: light and water. "Had He not shed His light over all Creatures, how could we have known Him? How would it be true to say that 'the whole earth is full of His glory?' (Isaiah 6:3) Woe to the man who dares compare Him even to one of His own attributes. Even less may He be likened to man, born of earth and destined to death. He must be conceived as above all creatures and above all attributes....There is neither attribute, nor image, nor figure when all these have been taken away; what remains may be compared to a sea, for the waters of the sea are in themselves limitless and without form; but when they spread over the earth they produce an image (Dimyon)."¹ It is characteristic of Kab-

balistic commentaries to afford the reader a variety of symbolic metaphrases to elucidate divine mysteries: (contradictory only from a finite mind's perspective. Thus the Sephiroth are often depicted as the organs of a Man, a series of concentric circles, three pillars, etc.) Here follows one symbolic description of Sephirothic (numerical) theogony in the Idra Rabba: "We can make the following calculations: the source of the waters of the sea, and the jet springing from it to cover the ground, make two. Then an immense basin forms, as a basin is formed over a pit of vast depth is dry; that basin is filled by the waters which have sprung from the source-- and that is the sea itself, which should be counted as number three. The vast depth divides into seven canals which resemble seven long vessels. The source of the jet, the sea, and the seven canals, together make ten. If the Master who constructed those vessels breaks them, the waters return to their source, and only the dry fragments of the vessels remain. Thus, the Cause of Causes produced the ten Sefiroth." This may be compared with a similar passage on creation and numbers contained in the Sepher Zohar. Now follows a generalized description of the ten hypostases:

The Crown is the source from which an unending light springs forth, hence the name Infinite (Ain Sof) to designate the Supreme Cause, for in that state it has neither form nor countenance; therefore there is no means of comprehending it and no way of knowing it; and that is the meaning of the verse, "Meditate not upon that which is too far above thee and investigate not that which is covered from thee." Then a vessel comes into existence as tiny as an iota--as the letter Yod--which, nevertheless, the divine light penetrates. This is the source of Wisdom; it is Wisdom, by virtue of which the Supreme Cause takes the name of the All-wise God. After which it constructs a great vessel like the sea, called the Intelligence, whence the name of God as the "Intelligent." However, let us remember that God is good and wise by virtue of Himself; for Wisdom does not deserve its name because of its own virtue; but because of

Him who is wise and who produces Wisdom for the light emanated from Him. Neither is Intelligence conceivable of itself, but through Him who is the Intelligent and who replenishes it from His own substance. He need only withdraw from Intelligence to drain dry. That is the meaning of the verse (Job 14-11), "And the waters fall from the sea and the river is drained dry." Finally, the sea is divided into seven branches: from these issue the seven precious vessels called Mercy or Grandeur, Justice or Strength, Beauty, Triumph, Glory, Kingdom, and the Foundation of Basis. Hence, He is called the Great or Merciful, the Strong, the Magnificent, the God of Victory, the Creator to whom all glory belongs, and the Foundation of All Things. The last attribute sustains all the others, as well as all the worlds. Finally He is the King of the Universe; for all things are in His power. He can diminish the number of vessels, and He can increase the light which breaks forth from them, or the contrary, if He prefers (Bereshith, 22b).

The concept of the Sephiroth is, perhaps, the major distinctive characteristic of all Kabbalistic thought; and critical illuminations of their function in theogony vary according to the basic perspective taken on the Kabbalistic tradition itself. Since the scope of this chapter is to give only a palatable concentration of the Kabbalistic tradition, it seems appropriate to briefly summarize what the major writers on Kabbalah have contributed to the elucidation of, perhaps, the most obscure and mysterious doctrine of Kabbalah.

Adolphe Franck's argument concerning the Kabbalistic tradition intended to distinguish the Kabbalah historically from doctrines that developed simultaneously with it and to somehow trace the Kabbalah to its legendary source. Franck was particularly determined to isolate the Neo-Platonic "emanationist" elements from the genuine Judaic "im-manationist" doctrine.

The Sephiroth, according to Franck, are not equivalent to the Platonic Ideas. "This viewpoint does not consider the Sefiroth to be instruments, creatures and consequently, beings distinct from God, nor is it willing to identify them with God. Those who take this middle position

assert: God is present in the Sefiroth, otherwise He could not reveal Himself through them; but He does not dwell in them in His eternity. He is more than that which is found in the sublime forms of thought and existence. In fact, the Sefiroth can never comprise the Ain Sof, which is the very source of every form and which, in this capacity, has no form."¹⁸

Gershom G. Scholem proposes that most if not all Kabbalistic speculation and doctrine is concerned with the realm of the divine "emanations" or Sephiroth, in which God's creative power unfolds. Scholem concerns Himself with the necessarily "sacramental" function they serve; for the sacramental system is the outward vesture or form of all mysticism. For the Kabbalistic Jew, the Law and the Covenant were signs or mysteries capable of a plurality of interpretations, while the whole outward world was omen and metaphrasis. But Scholem is particularly careful to balance his cogent metaphysical and aesthetic interpretations with solid philology. He notes that the term sefirah has nothing to do with the Greek sphaira, the approximate translation for which would be "sphere" or "region" which Sephirah (pl.Sephiroth) has come down ultimately to mean for most scholars. Rather in the Book of Creation (Sefer Yetsirah) from which it was originally taken, Sephiroth simply meant numbers (safar=to count). This meaning is very consistent with the rest of Kabbalistic doctrine, which seems obsessed with the manipulation of numbers and their sacramental characters.

¹⁸Franck, op. cit., p. 93.

According to the Kabbalists, there are ten such fundamental attributes to God, which are at the same time ten stages which the divine life pulsates back and forth. The point to keep in mind is that the Sefiroth are not secondary or intermediary spheres which interpose between God and the universe....The difficulty lies precisely in the fact that the emanation of the Sefiroth is conceived as a process which takes place in God and which at the same time enables Man to perceive God....These spheres which are often described with the aid of mythical metaphors and provide the key for a kind of mystical topography of the Divine realm, are themselves nothing but stages in the revelation of God's creative power. Every attribute represents a given stage, including the attribute of severity and stern judgment, which mystical speculation has connected with the source of evil in God.¹⁹

Leo Schaya discusses the "symbolic" power of the Sephiroth, in keeping with their total subordination to the unity of the Divine. He reminds us of the passage in the prayer of Elijah in the Tikkune Zohar: "Thou has brought forth ten forms which we call Sefiroth, in order to govern through them the unknown and invisible worlds. Thou didst wrap thyself in them and since thou dwellest in them, their harmony remains unchanging. To imagine them as divided would be as though to divide thine unity." Schaya writes: "The Sefiroth in their totality constitute the doctrinal basis of Jewish esotericism; they are to the Kabbalah, a mystical 'tradition' of Judaism, what the Ten Commandments are to the Torah, as the exoteric law. The ten Sefiroth represent the spriritual archetypes not only of the Decalogue, but also those of all the revelations of the Torah. In a word, the Sefirothic decade is nothing other than the divine unity in so far as it opens itself in one intelligible mode or another, before the created multitude....The Sefiroth, therefore, appear to be multiple only in the eyes of the created multitude; in reality, all the numbers of the metaphysical aspects are inte-

¹⁹Scholem, The Kabbalah, pp. 76ff.

grated without distinction into the One who is without number."²⁰

As will be further discussed in the following segment on the Creation of the World and of Man, the Sephiroth, besides being numbers, have also been regarded as the ten creative words uttered by the voice of God; attempts have been made to find these names in the Mishnah. Likewise the Kabbalist is constantly interested in the deracination of divine mysteries from every jot and tittle in the Torah. The Kabbalists speak of the unfolding of divine language. The secret world of the godhead is a world of language, a world of divine names that unfold in accordance with a law of their own. The elements of the divine language appear as the letters of the Holy Scripture. Letters and names are not only conventional means of communication. Each one of them represents a concentration of energy and expresses a wealth of meaning which cannot be translated into human language. There is, of course, an obvious discrepancy between the two symbolisms. When the Kabbalists speak of divine attributes and Sephiroth, they are describing the hidden world under ten aspects; when, on the other hand, they speak of divine names and letters, they necessarily operate with the twenty-two consonants of the Hebrew alphabet, in which the Torah is written, or as they would have said, in which its secret essence was made communicable. Several ways of resolving this glaring contradiction were put forward. One explanation was that some letters and Sefiroth are different configurations of the divine power; they cannot be reduced to a mechanical identity. What is significant for our present purposes is the analogy between Creation and Reve-

²⁰Leo Schaya, The Universal Meaning of the Kabbalah (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1973), p. 21.

lation, which results from the parallel between the Sephiroth and the divine language.

Harold Bloom, in parallel with the philological metaphysics of Scholem, describes the Kabbalah as essentially a "vision of belatedness" decidedly post-Lurianic²¹ Kabbalistic matrix for literary critical purposes. His conception of the Sephiroth as "poems" perhaps most profoundly indicates that they are more than their sum of letters and numbers yet less than the mysteries they represent:

The Sefirot are primarily language, attributes of God that need to be described by the various names of God when he is at work in creation. The Sefirot are complex figurations for God, tropes or turns of language that substitute for God. Indeed one can say that the Sefirot are like poems, in that they are not allegorical personifications which is what all popular manuals of Kabbalah reduce them to, and though they have extraordinary potency, this is a power of signification rather than what we customarily think of as magic....The Sefirot thus are ten complex images for God in His process of creation, with an interplay between literal and figurative meaning, going on within each Sefirah...the prime spiritual significance of the Sefirot... comes in the inter-relationships of the Sefirot, their reflections of one another within themselves.²²

In the upper world, the Sephiroth are manifested in the theogonic process prior to the cosmogonic Creation or manifestation of the Sephiroth in the lower world. Underlying the whole hypothesis of the Sephiroth, even the very identity of Ain Soph, is the Kabbalistic belief that the finite world is a perfect replica of the infinite world, created according to a "supernal pattern." What transpires in the heavens is perfectly reflected in the lower world; reciprocally, what is effected in the finite cosmos has parallel repercussions in the divine realm. As the upper

²¹See pages 34-35 of this study for a summary treatment of Isaac de Luria.

²²Bloom, op. cit., pp. 25-27.

heavens sustain the lower, so also the lower sustain the upper: "The whole depends upon the impulse from below which is given by the service of the Lord when they bless the Holy Name" (Vayehi, 233a).

Through the impulse from below there is a stirring above, and through the impulse from above there is a stirring higher up still, until the impulse reaches the place where the lamp is to be lit and it is lit. Thus by the impulse of the smoke (of the sacrifice) from below, the lamp is kindled above, and when this is kindled all the other lamps are kindled and all the worlds are blessed from it. Thus the impulse of the sacrifice is the mainstay of the world and the blessing of all worlds...so the impulse rises until the King desires to associate with the Matrona. Through the yearning of the lower world the lower waters flow forth to meet the upper waters, for the upper waters do not flow save from the impulse of the divine from below. Thus mutual desire is kindled and the lower waters flow to meet the upper waters, and worlds are blest, and all lamps are kindled, and upper and lower are endowed with blessings....The most perfect form of praising God is to unify the Holy Name in the fitting manner, for through this upper and lower are set in motion, and blessings flow to all worlds (Vayehi, 244a).

There is no comparable doctrine in Christian mysticism.

Keeping in mind that the Sephiroth are understood by a variety of images in Kabbalistic commentaries (lights, lamps, powers, sayings, names, crowns, qualities, stages, shoots, sources, garments, mirrors, primal days, aspects, inner faces, limbs of God, etc.), the multiplicity of creation and cosmogonic myths can, more or less be reduced to one theme with variations: "When God created the world, He did so for no other purpose than that Israel should one day come and receive the Torah. It was by means of the Torah that the world was created, and it is on the Torah that the world was created (Vayaqhel, 200a).

Similarly, when the Holy One, blessed be He, resolved to create the world, He looked into His plan, and, although, in a sense, it was the plan which brought the palace into being, it is not called by its name, but by that of the King. The Torah proclaims: "I was by Him an architect, through me He created the world!"--for the Torah

preceded the creation of the world by two thousand years; and so when He resolved to create the world He looked into the Torah, into its every creative word, and fashioned the world correspondingly; for all the words and all the actions of all the worlds are contained in the Torah...When the world was thus all created, nothing was yet established properly, until He had resolved to create man, in order that He might study the Torah, and, for his sake, the world should be firmly and properly established. Thus it is that he who concentrates his mind on, and deeply penetrates into the Torah sustains the world; for, as the Holy One looked into the Torah and created the world, so man looks into the Torah and keeps the world alive. Hence the Torah is the cause of the world's creation, and also the power that maintains its existence. Therefore blessed is he who is devoted to the Torah, for he is the preserver of the world (Terumah, 161a).

The book Bereshith of the Zohar renders an exacting account of cosmogony by the manipulation of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet as does the Sepher Yetsirah; both works operate as claves to the secrets contained in the Torah. The Torah is composed of the sacred alphabet. "When the Holy One, blessed be He, created the world, He did so by means of the secret power of letters. The letters were shaken about before Him and He created the world by the tracing of the Holy Name. The letters presented themselves for participation in the world's creation in a variety of permutations"(204a).

The Holy One said that it must end with Yod, and the letter Teth remained hanging alone in the air above that place (Luz). The light of the letter Teth is life; therefore, anyone seeing this letter in a dream knows that it is a good omen for him. Hence it is that death has no dominion over that place over which this letter hangs. When the Holy One desired the world to be firmly established, then took He a stone on which was engraved the mystery of the twenty-two letters of the Alphabet, and threw it into the waters. It drifted from place to place, but found nowhere to settle until it came to the Holy Land, and the waters followed it until it reached that spot where the Altar was to be established. There the stone sank, and the whole world was firmly established on it (Terumah, 151b).

As has already been suggested the theme of the power of letters alternates with the theme of attributes and lights in the Kabbalah; the

theme of creation by light has a complex and profoundly disruptive influence in the tradition, culminating in the doctrines of Isaac Luria. The Zohar offers a "light" variation via the Sephiroth on the theme of creation by letters.

When the Holy One was about to create the world, He robed Himself in the primordial light and created the heavens: shamayim (heavens) is composed of esh and mayim (fire and water, i. e. right and left). He brought them together and harmonized them, and when they were united as one, He stretched them out like a curtain, and formed them into the letter vau. From this letter the light spread, so that 'curtain' became 'curtains,' as it is written: 'And thou shalt make the tabernacle with ten curtains.' Seven firmaments are stretched out and stored in the supernal treasure-house, as has been explained, and over them is one firmament which has no colour and no place in the world of cognition, and is outside the range of contemplation; but, though hidden, it diffuses light to all and speeds them each on its fitting orbit...The ten curtains of the Tabernacle symbolized the ten firmaments, and their mystery can be comprehended only by the wise of heart (Terumah, 164b).

His resplendent light emanates from stage to stage, and the light spreads to ever wider spheres and becomes light ever more thickened. Through the descent of the lights from their infinite source, all the worlds were brought forth and created; our world is but the last and outward shell of the layers of divine glory.

Before Isaac Luria, all of Kabbalah saw creation as a progressive process, moving in one direction always, emanating out from God through Sephiroth to man, a movement in which each stage joined itself closely to the following stage, without enormous leaps or backward recoilings. In a metaphrase of Rabbi Isaac Luria Ashkenazi's speculative doctrine contained in the Liber Drushim and the Book of the Revolutions of Souls, Harold Bloom describes the myth of the Creation by primordial light.

In Luria, creation is a shatteringly regressive process, one in which an abyss can separate any one stage from another, and in which catastrophe is always a central event. Reality for Luria is always a triple rhythm of contraction, breaking apart, and mending--a rhythm continuously present in Time even as it first punctuated eternity. Luria named his triple process: zimzum, shevirah, ha-kelim, tikkun (contraction, the breaking of the vessels, restitution). Zimzum (tsim-tsum) originally seems to have meant a holding-in-of-the-breath, but Luria transformed the word into an idea of limitation, of God's hiding of Himself, or rather entering into Himself. In this contraction, God clears a space for creation, a not-God. This cleared point the Zohar had called tehiru, a fundamental space. Luria saw the zimzum as God's concentration within himself of the Sefirah of Din (rigor), but part of this power of stern judgment remained behind in the cleared tehiru, where it mixed together with the remnants of God's self-withdrawn light, called by Luria reshimu. Into the mixture (out of which a world is to be formed), God sends a simple letter, the Yod, the first of his great name, YHVH, the Tetragrammaton. This Yod, is the active principle in creation even as the reshimu is the passive principle. This creation, according to Luria, was of kelim, "vessels" of which the culminating vessel was Adam Kadmon or Primal Man.²³

The notion of concentration (or contraction) supplies a greater complexity to the once simple progressive revelation of the Torah in cosmogony. In order for a thing other than God to come into being, God must necessarily retreat within Himself. Only afterwards does He emit beams of light into the vacuum of limitation and build a world. Moreover, at each stage there is a need for both the force of limitation and the force of emanation. Without limitation everything would revert to the divine, and without emanation nothing would come into being. The "non-God" is the necessary, even beneficial, result of the contraction. The concept of limitation seems paradoxical, but it has vitality in its expression of the notion of a living God--a God thought of as a living organism, activated by a Divine Will.

The divine light entered these vessels (kelim, kelippoth) in order

²³Bloom, op. cit., pp. 39-40.

to take forms appropriate to their function in creation, but the vessels could not contain the light and thus were broken. This is the phase which the Kabbalists call "breaking of the vessels" (shevirah). The consequence of the shattering of the vessels was the dispersion of the light. Much of it returned to its source; some portions, or sparks, fell downwards and were scattered; some rose upwards. There is nothing that was not damaged by the breaking. Nothing is in the place appointed for it; everything is either below or above, but not where it should be. In other words, all being is in Galut (exile). Into the deep abyss of the forces of evil, the forces of darkness and impurity which the Kabbalists call "shells" or "off scourings," there fell, as a result of the breaking of the vessels, forces of holiness, sparks of divine light. Hence there is a Galut of the divine itself, of the "sparks of the Shekhinah": "These sparks of holiness are bound in fetters of steel in the depths of the shells, and yearningly aspire to rise to their source but cannot avail to do so until they have support"--so says Rabbi Hayyim Vital, a disciple of Luria. The primal flow must be mended so that all things can return to their proper place, to their original posture. Man and God are partners in their enterprise. After the original breaking, God began the process of regeneration, but He left the completion to Man. "Thus Man is after the pattern of that supernal Glory that he may confirm it and make it complete on all sides. Blessed is the man whose works entitle him to be regarded thus" (Terumah, 155a). Man's task is to restore the wholeness of the vessels, and the advent of the Messiah will announce the restitution of this wholeness. If Adam had not sinned, the world would have entered the Messianic state on the first Sabbath after Creation, with no

historical process intervening whatsoever. Adam's sin returned the universe, which had almost been amended, to its former broken state. What happened at the breaking of the vessels happened again. Again the world fell. Adam--who at first was a cosmic, spiritual, supernal being, a soul which contained all souls--fell from his state, whereupon the divine light in his soul was dispersed.

Leo Schaya suggestively captures the mysterious identity of Man and his Sephirothic Divine Archetype.

Now the 'image of God' par excellence is man, whose integral being alone includes all cosmic realities and their uncreated archetypes. There is no other creature which manifests the totality of the Sefiroth so synthetically and at the same time so explicitly as manThe 'figure of the all' in divinis is man's own archetype, his uncreated being: 'Man Above' (Adam E-lo-eh or Adam Kadmon)....God created the world and all that exists in contemplating 'Man Above,' who is none other than the infinite unity of the ten Sefiroth. He created everything in the image of man, for He wished to be glorified by the 'mystery of man'....All that exists aspires, consciously or otherwise, to become integrated into the universal and divine being of man, who links the lowest world with the supreme 'self' of all things; and God has given to each thing according to its particular ability, the power to rise, through manifold transformations, up to the integral form of man, which is the archetype of all archetypes: divine being.²⁴

But between Adam, the pinnacle of Creation, and Adam Kadmon the unbridgeable gap can only be traversed by the Mercy of the Divine Illimitable through the perfect meditation on and practice of the Way of the Torah.

²⁴Schaya, op. cit., p. 117. A doctrine much akin to Chardin's.

SOURCES OF AND INFLUENCES ON KABBALAH

Concerning the origins of the Kabbalistic tradition, scholars may be divided into those who represent Kabbalah as an in toto Judaic phenomenon; or as in parte Judaic but also heavily indebted to other philosophies for concepts; or as in toto a syncretistic blend of contemporaneous religions and philosophical trends. When reading in the Kabbalistic writings, one is overtaken by the feeling that all of the alien typology and exotic terminology has, at heart, a familiar character perhaps most due to the fact that it is a metaphrase of one of the oldest living literary traditions in Western civilization. A. E. Waite best accounts for another dimension of this feeling of familiarity and hints at another question of origins more amenable to the psychological sciences.

The doctrines of the Kabbalah have been referred for their origin to almost every philosophical and religious system of antiquity.... The most reasonable conclusion which can be drawn... is that it is not derived from any one of these sources specifically and exclusively, but rather that the human mind, when engaged in certain fundamental and perhaps insoluble problems of the universe, tends independently to reach conclusions that are similar and may even wear sometimes an aspect of literal identity...²⁵

The following in brief attempts to suggest the "philosophical and religious" systems of antiquity that scholars have noted in historical parallel to the Kabbalistic tradition.

Perhaps the oldest of "sources" to which Kabbalah has been accredited is often ironically acknowledged by the Sepher Zohar itself. In commenting on the ten Sephiroth, the "ten holy crowns above" of Ain

²⁵Waite, op, cit., p. 165.

Soph, the author relates:

The Holy One, blessed be He, has produced ten holy crowns above where-
with He crowns and invests Himself, and He is they and they are He,
being linked together like the flame and the coal. Corresponding to
these are the ten names beneath, which are not holy, and which cling
to the uncleanness of the nails of a certain holy Crown called Wis-
dom, wherefore they are called 'wisdom.' We have learnt that these
ten species of wisdom came down to this world, and all are concentra-
ted in Egypt, save one which spread through the rest of the world.
They are all species of sorcery, and through them the Egyptians were
more skilled in sorcery than all other men....Israel, being subject
to the Egyptians, learnt their ways and went astray after them.
(Ahare Moth, 70a).

Éliphas Lévi (Alphonse Louis Constant), though often restricted by a
half-hearted understanding of the Kabbalah, notes upon solid authority
that the Kabbalistic tradition regards the ancient Egyptian sorcery as
genuine magic but that its "wisdom" was of the lowermost of the pseudo-
Hermetic maxim, "Quod superius est sicut quod inferius, et quod inferius
est sicut quod superius", to the Zoharic key, "That which is above is in
the likeness of that which is below is in the sea...but all is one"--
Lévi examines the Kabbalah as "the remnants of the cults of Ancient Egypt
brought by Moses."²⁶ Moses purified and re-veiled them. The new dis-
guise which he gave them was that of the Holy Kabbalah. As can be imme-
diately perceived, Lévi regards the contemplations of Kabbalah as little
more than a collection of formulae for the evocation of divine knowledge
rather than a total perspective on or matrix for perceiving the reality
above and below. Scholars have also noted that whereas the Kabbalistic
tradition is full of images of life and light, the Egyptian ritual em-
braces darkness and death. The source of Life in Kabbalah is the Stream

²⁶Alphonse Louis Constant (pseud. Éliphas Lévi), L'Histoire de la Magie
tr. A. E. Waite (Los Angeles: Borden, 1953),
p. 40.

from above; in Egyptian ritual the River is a mode of passage from Death to Life, a dark passage.

Adolphe Franck points to the period of the Second Exile of the Hebrews as the seedbed for the growth of the Kabbalistic tradition, founded principally on the teaching of Zoroaster in the capital of the Babylonian empire from 539 to 524 B.C. Franck finds proof even in a Talmudic passage in which the elders of the synagogue openly acknowledge that their ancestors brought with them from the land of the Chaldeans and Persians, united by the arms of Cyrus and the religion of Zoroaster, the names of the angels and the months and even the letters of the alphabet. Particularly persuasive for Franck is the remarkable resemblance of the doctrine of the Zend Avesta to that of the Kabbalistic tradition. Franck attempts to demonstrate a coincidence of the teachings of the Zend Avesta and religious commentaries which depend upon it and the Kabbalah's doctrine on the Ain Soph (an abstract God), Creation by the "Word," Adam Kadmon (Ormuzd in Zoroastrianism), the threefold nature and pre-existence of the soul, and the general cosmogony. More important to his argument is that the great question of the origin of Evil, until then untouched by Judaism, is the center and starting point of the Persian religion. But Franck is careful to qualify the conclusions of his findings, which have been more or less adopted by serious scholars of the origins of Kabbalah, by noting that this new development in Judaism far surpassed its source in sophistication of concepts.

But this borrowing did not destroy the originality of the Kabbalah, for the latter substituted the absolute unity of cause and substance for the dualism in God and Nature. Instead of explaining the formation of beings as an arbitrary act of inimical forces, it presents

them as divine forms, successive and providential manifestations of the Infinite Intelligence. Ideas take the place of realized personifications and mythology is supplanted by metaphysics.²⁷

Although the "emanationist" character of the Zend Avesta seems to qualify it as a direct predecessor of the way of the Kabbalah, its basically pantheistic premise, at once, disqualifies it in most scholars' eyes. As regards Jewish mysticism, while there is always some doubt in what way it made use of the term "emanation," most scholars would agree that there seems to be no question that its system does not answer to what is commonly understood by "Pantheism," though it often has a pantheistic tinge. God was All for the Kabbalists, as He is for the Christians; and yet no theosophical Jew, any more than any orthodox Christian theologian would admit that God was one with the material world. When, therefore, Solomon Munk's Dictionnaire de la Conversation²⁸ says that the Kabbalah issued from the amalgamation of oriental pantheism with the religion of the Hebrews, we can accept this only by supposing that the pantheism in question had suffered a peculiar alteration.

Leo Schaya attempts to refute the charge of "pantheistic," which has never been totally effaced from the Kabbalistic tradition, simply because of its "absolute unity" of cause and substance; but then Schaya involves his argument in an equally confounding dilemma: the transcendence-immanence of the Divine, ultimately resolved only by examining each Kabbalist's unique perspective or emphasis.

²⁷Franck, op. cit., p. 224.

²⁸Solomon Munk, Dictionnaire de la Conversation (Paris: Mouton, 1859), III, 243.

According to the pantheistic view, God is confused with the world, so that all created things are considered as divine, and even as God Himself, in ephemeral envelopes; thus the distinction between good (spiritual, essential, real) and evil (attachment to the ego and the world--to 'vanity') is done away with. Now the distinction between good and evil is the very basis of monotheistic law, while for the Kabbalist it becomes the discrimination between the real and the unreal, and this discrimination allows him to overcome existential illusion by the reintegration or dissolution of his substance in the inner emptiness, and the identification of his spirit with the fullness of essence. The pantheist claims unreservedly that all is God, in that God is all. The monotheist says: in their uncreated state, all things are God; and in their created state, they manifest God more or less perfectly....The Kabbalah affirms that everything is God, whether in His cosmic presence, or in His transcendence; but it is only in His transcendence, in the absolute, that everything is He, and that He is everything, without any difference.²⁹

To gauge the degree of paradox implied by these very influential thoughts, one must remember that in general the mystics in speaking of God's immanence in His creation, are inclined to depersonalize Him: the immanent God only too easily becomes an impersonal God-head. In fact, this tendency has always been one of the main pitfalls of pantheism. All the more remarkable is the fact that the Kabbalists and even those among them who are inclined to pantheism managed to avoid it, for as we have seen the Sefer Zohar identifies the highest development of God's personality with precisely that stage of His unfolding which is nearest to human experience, indeed which is immanent and mysteriously present in every one of us in the Torah. Gershom G. Scholem notes that in the history of Kabbalism theistic and pantheistic trends have frequently contended for mastery and that "In the sight of the mystic the separate outlines of things have become blurred until they, too, represent nothing but the

²⁹Schaya, op, cit., p. 138.

Glory of God and His hidden life which pulsates in everything."³⁰ Scholem goes on to conclude that it was the development of the Lurianic concept of zimzum which, like numerous other concepts, served as a safety valve for the release of cumulative pantheistic connotations.

Apart from its intrinsic importance, the theory of Tsimtsum also acted as a counterpoise to the pantheism which some scholars think is implied by the theory of emanation. Not only is there a residue of divine manifestation in every being, but under the aspects of Tsimtsum it also acquires a reality of its own which guards it against the danger of dissolution into the non-individual being of the divine 'all in all.' Luria himself was the living example of an outspoken theistic mystic. He gave the Zohar, for all its intrinsic pantheism, a strictly theistic interpretation. Nothing is more natural, therefore, than that the pantheistic tendencies which began to gain momentum in Kabbalism, especially from the period of the European Renaissance onwards, clashed with the Lurianic doctrine of Tsimtsum, and that attempts were made to re-interpret it in such a way as to strip it of its meaning.³¹

Perhaps, the most often referred to source has been the Platonic and Neo-Platonic philosophies. The majority of commentators on the Kabbalistic tradition uphold the close analogy between the Platonic philosophy and certain metaphysical and cosmological principles taught in the Sefer Zohar and the Sefer Yetsirah. In both we see numbers serving as intermediaries between ideas--between the supreme concept and the objects which are its complete manifestation in the world. In both we find the dogmas of the pre-existence of souls, of epistemological reminiscence, and metempsychosis. The Porta Coelorum of Rabbi Abraham Cohen Irija, which forms the third part of Knorr von Rosenroth's Apparatus in Librum

³⁰Scholem, Major Trends, p. 223.

³¹Ibid., p. 262.

Sohar (1677-1684),³² was written expressly to exhibit the correspondences between Kabbalistic dogmas and the Platonic philosophy. So also at an earlier period, Thomas Campanella in his De Sensu Rerum et Magia (1620) joined Neo-Platonism and Kabbalism in his attempt to explain the universe. Franck demonstrates, however, the unacceptable affiliation of the Kabbalah with the Platonic philosophy.

The resemblances first noticed between the two doctrines are soon wiped out by their differences. Plato formally acknowledged two principles: spirit and matter--the intelligent cause and the inert substance....The Kabbalists, on the contrary, spurred on by the incomprehensibility of the Creation ex nihilo, accepted absolute unity as the basis of their system; a God who at one and the same time was the cause, the substance, and the form of all that is, as well as of all that can be.³³

When determining the Neo-Platonic elements in Kabbalah, critics regard the system as identical with Plotinus, who technically is a Middle-Platonist. The common touchstones are the doctrines of the divine immanent-transcendent cause of the essential origin of things, the trinitarian form of God, and the generation of beings as the manifestation of God's attributes. A summary of the tenets of Middle Platonism would be most useful in comparing the two systems which seem to accord on all those points.

The first principle of reality for the Middle Platonists is a Transcendent Mind or God. This supreme Divine Mind is the place of Platonic Forms or Ideas. Below the Supreme Mind in Middle Platonism, there is sometimes to be found a Second Mind or God with a world-moving

³²Knorr von Rosenroth, Kabbalah Denudata, ed. Robert Kelum, 3 vols. (London, 1714), Vol. 3: Apparatus in Librum Sohar.

³³Franck, op. cit., p. 146.

or world-ordering system, and below that again the Soul of the World. In middle Platonism the idea of a hierarchy of spiritual powers (daemones) between the Supreme God and our world is always apparent. About matter and the origin of Evil, the Middle Platonists disagreed; but they inclined to a dualist solution of the problem of evil, whether they saw its origin in an evil soul (Plutarch) or in matter itself (Numenius).

The philosophy of Plotinus is an account of an ordered structure of living reality, which proceeds eternally from its transcendent first Principle, the One as God, and descends in an unbroken succession of stages from the Divine Intellect and the Forms therein through the Souls with their various levels of experience and activity to the last and lowest realities, the forms of bodies. It is also a showing of the way by which the soul of man can experience and be active on every level of being and is able, if it will, to ascend by a progressive purification and simplification to that union with the Good which alone can satisfy it. There are two movements in Plotinus's universe, one of outgoing from unity to an ever-increasing multiplicity and the other of return to unity and unification; and, related to his conception to these two movements but not entirely corresponding to these, there is a duality and tension in his own thought. To know the stages of the creative process is also to know the stages of one's return to the root of all existence. In this sense, the interpretation of Maaseh Bereshith, the esoteric doctrine of Creation, has always formed one of the main preoccupations of Kabbalism. It is here that Kabbalah comes nearest to Middle Platonic thought, of which it has been said that "procession and reversion to-

gether constitute a single movement, the diastole-systole which is the life of the universe."³⁴

A number of valid objections have arisen from both scholars of Plotinus and Kabbalah in regard to mutual influences. A. H. Armstrong has discountenanced the view that Plotinus had established any sort of contact with Eastern thinkers. "Any direct and consciously recognized influence of Jewish or Christian ideas on his mind can be ruled out, and though we cannot absolutely exclude the possibility of indirect influence, perhaps through Ammonius or other contacts at Alexandria, we certainly cannot prove that such influence existed."³⁵ And likewise, on the obverse side, Franck concludes from a religious-historical perspective³⁶ that Kabbalah owes nothing to the Alexandrian school: first, because Kabbalah antedates the Alexandrians; and second, because Judaism has always shown a profound aversion to and ignorance of Greek civilization. Thirdly, the very nature of Kabbalah--an esoteric, mystical, oral tradition restricted to an elite who protected the secrets of Israel closely connected with the rabbinical institutions--makes popular dissemination to gentiles unlikely. Likewise the Jews of Alexandria spoke Greek and would never have used the popular and corrupt idiom of the Holy Land: the Jew of the Diaspora had so little communication with their Palestinian brethren that they completely ignored the rabbinical institutions.

³⁴E. R. Dodds, Commentary on Proclus' Elements of Theology (Cambridge, 1933), p. 92.

³⁵A. H. Armstrong, Plotinus (New York: Collier Books, 1953), pp. 23-24.

³⁶Franck, op. cit., pp. 161-164.

More persuasive, however, are the differences in regard to the essential doctrines of "emanation" and the Problem of Evil. For Kabbalah departed both from normative Judaism and from Neo-Platonism in its obsessive concern with evil. For Neo-Platonism, evil has no metaphysical reality; but for Kabbalah, Creation includes evil.

'When God,' he said, 'came to create the world and reveal what was hidden in the depths and disclose the light out of darkness, they were all wrapped in one another, and therefore light emerged from darkness and from the impenetrable came forth the profound.' So, too, from good issues evil and from mercy issues judgment, and all are intertwined, the good impulse and the evil impulse, right and left, Israel and other peoples, white and black--all depend on one another (Kedoshim, 80b).

Plotinus comes closest to the Kabbalistic conception of evil: "Nous is thus the ultimate creative principle of the material universe, which is the last and lowest of existence, but necessary to the perfection of the whole: even the evil in it is part of the pattern, and contributes to that perfection."³⁷ But the premise is wholly dualistic.

While arguing that Kabbalah is a revisionary form of Neo-Platonism, Harold Bloom, on the most striking resemblance between the two, i.e. the theory of "emanations," remarks: "In Plotinus, emanation is a process out from God, but in the Kabbalah the process must take place within God Himself. An even more crucial difference from Neo-Platonism is that all Kabbalistic theories of emanation are also theories of language."³⁸

³⁷Plotinus, The Enneads, tr. A. H. Armstrong (New York: Collier, 1953), 3.17-3.18.

³⁸Bloom, op. cit., p. 25.

Certainly in that case he shall bear his iniquity, but if he pronounce the name of the Lord, he shall be put to death, because on this all faith depends and he can make no excuse. R. Jose said: 'Assuredly it is so, that his name is the basis of faith of higher and lower, and all worlds are established on it. On one tiny letter are suspended thousands of thousands and myriads of myriads of delectable worlds, as we have learnt that these letters are linked with one another, and thousands and myriads of celestials depend on each one, and there is wrapped in them that which is not grasped by higher or lower' (Emor, 107a).

A number of critics represented by Louis Gardet and Y. F. Baer,³⁹ have attempted to find a type of "missing link" that might reconcile the influence of Hellenic civilization in Alexandria and the orthodoxy of rabbinical Judaism and somewhat explain what appear to be Platonic and even Christian elements in Kabbalah. Philo Judaeus is presented as the most probable candidate. Y. F. Baer presumes that in Philo Judaeus the conception of the Torah as an organism may go back to that similar metaphor of the logos as zoon in Plato's Phaedrus; and that Philo no longer, like Plato, interpreted this logos as "discourse," but as God's Word. From Philo this idea of the organism was taken over by Origen--"Scripture is like a man and has flesh (according to the literal meaning), soul (according to the allegorical meaning), and spirit (in accordance with the mystical)"⁴⁰--whose words to some extent anticipate the position of the Zohar. Both Franck and Scholem discount the attempts to demonstrate a profound structural kinship and even identity between the allegor-

³⁹Y. F. Baer, "Philo Judaeus," Diogenes, XIV-XV (1956), 92ff.

Louis Gardet, Themes et textes mystiques: recherches de criteres en mystique comparee (Paris: Alsatia, 1958), p. 16.

⁴⁰Origen, De Principiis, ed. E. Kotschau (Munich, 1921) IV, p. 312.

ical exegeses of Philo and those of the Kabbalists. Scholem remarks that "this parallelism, as far as I can see, does not spring from any historical influence of Philo upon the medieval Kabbalists....Insofar as such parallels exist, they are based on similarity of purpose."⁴¹

A. A. Kennedy makes the strongest point for Philo Judaeus' overwhelming influence on the shaping of the Kabbalistic tradition and a summary of his argument might be helpful in understanding Adolphe Franck's opposing position.

Philo the Greek of Alexandria to some extent Hellenized the Hebrew religion that he might better Judaize the philosophy of Hellas. From this fusion there arose the nearest approach, if not in tone and place at least in form and subject, to Kabbalistic theosophy as regards its sources in Jewry....Philo insists on the antithesis between God and the material world, the infinite and the finite; so let us say, does the Zohar....Philo affirms the absolute transcendency of God; so does Zoharic doctrine. Philo regards the Divine Nature as in itself escaping definition and in itself without quality; Kabbalah denounces those who would attempt to describe God as He is in Himself even by the attributes which He manifests. Philo's descriptions of God are all negative: compare the latens Deitas of the Kabbalah. Philo says that no name can be given Him; all Kabbalism agrees, though its unfolded reveries confer many Names on the Deity and explains their powers and meanings. Philo regards the Scriptural God as anthropomorphic and allegorises upon all the descriptions, attributions and manifestations of Deity in the Old Testament; compares the doctrine of the two countenances....Philo regards the letters of Scripture as veil; so does Kabbalistic exegesis. Philo regards the visible world as the gate of the world unseen; he believes in the possibility of an immediate contemplation of God, in the existence of an archetypal world, and that things seen are a counterpart of things unseen, in all of which we are enumerating express points of Kabbalistic doctrine.⁴²

The premise of the "antithesis" between the infinite and the

⁴¹Scholem, On the Kabbalah, p. 34.

⁴²A. A. Kennedy, Philo's Contribution to Philosophy (New York: Quadrangle, 1962), pp. 78ff.

finite in Kabbalah cannot be granted without great qualification. Franck vehemently denounced such claims a half-century earlier:

The Kabbalah cannot be regarded as the work of Philo, although the doctrines of the philosophical theologian contain a great number of Kabbalistic ideas. What we have called the Oriental aspect of Philo's syncretism is far from corresponding in all important points with the mysticism taught by the Palestinian sages: there are only five divine forces or attributes to Philo's Deity; a certain dualism obcludes; he contemns marriage and urges the gratification of the senses....Also Philo could not have transmitted these ideas to his Palestinian compatriots without at the same time introducing them into Greek Philosophy. Given the nature of his mind, Philo was not capable of founding a new doctrine....We have seen how indiscriminately and with what disregard for sound logic Philo pillaged, so to speak, the entire Greek philosophy....What is more, it is impossible to find in the monuments of Judaism the least trace of his influence. Finally, Philo's writings are of a more recent date than the Kabbalistic principles, found in the Septuagint, in the Proverbs of Jesus ben Sirach, and in the Book of Wisdom.⁴³

The religious system most often compared with the Kabbalistic tradition was also most noted for its anti-Jewish sentiments. Gnosticism which flourished during the first three centuries of the Christian era was one of the last great manifestations of mythmaking in religious thought and is thought to have been conceived in the struggle against Judaism as the conqueror of mythology. According to Anthony Douglas Duncan,⁴⁴ gnosticism and Judaism were very frequently intermingled: gnosticism, however, lost the strong monotheism of the Jews and introduced instead elements of world-rejection on the one hand and pantheism on the other. The Gnostics, who were contemporaries of the Jewish Tannaim of the second century, believed that it was necessary to distinguish between a good but hidden God who alone was worthy of being worshipped by the elect, and a Demiurge or

⁴³Franck, op. cit., pp. 198ff, 223ff.

⁴⁴Anthony Douglas Duncan, Gnosticism (London: Methuen, 1968), pp.235ff.

creator of the physical universe, whom they identified with the "just" God of the Old Testament. (The mystics conceived of God as the union of Absolute Being and Absolute Becoming.) But Gnosticism has always exhibited anti-Jewish sentiments, even when it rose among Jews or Jewish Christians; for its radical dualism of an alien God set against an evil universe is a total contradiction of the central Jewish tradition, in which a transcendent God allows Himself to be known by His people as an immediate Presence, when He chooses; and in which His creation is good except as it has been marred or altered by man's disobedience or wickedness. In effect, the Gnostics did not reject the Jewish Scriptures, whose accounts of events they conceded to be at least partly true, as they denied the superiority of the Jewish God, for whom they reserved the most pejorative terms. Salvation was brought to mankind by messengers sent by the hidden God to rescue the souls from the cruel laws or "justice" of the Demi-urge, whose dominion over the evil material world, as testified by the Bible, was but an indication of his lowly status. The hidden God Himself was unknown, but He had entrusted the Jews and the Gnostic faithful with the task of overthrowing the "God of the Jews." As for the claim of both Jews and orthodox Christians that the God of Israel who created the world and the transcendent God of goodness were one and the same, this was a great falsehood which stood in the way of true gnosis. Since Kabbalah in all of its earlier phases remained a wholly orthodox Jewish phenomenon, in belief and in moral behavior, it seems a puzzle that Kabbalah would have so large a Gnostic content.

Gnosticism, according to Hans Jonas, is the extreme version of the "syncretistic, general religion that dominated the eastern Mediterranean

world during the first two Christian centuries."⁴⁵ Jonas refers to this general religion of that period as a "dualistic transcendent religion of salvation." Though the Christian Fathers attacked Gnosticism as a Christian heresy, it appears to have preceded Christianity both among the Jews and the Hellenes. Some scholars believe that the emergence of Gnosticism may be traced back to the "mysteries" which flourished alongside the popular cults of ancient Greece (Eleusianian, Baccic, Mithraic). Gnostic "knowledge" is supposed knowledge of God, and so is radically different from all other knowledge; for the gnosis is the only form that salvation takes, according to its believers. This is therefore not rational knowledge, for it involves God knowing the Gnostic adept, even as the Gnostic knows Him. The essence of Gnostic belief is that man's place in the next world is determined by the knowledge of it that he acquires in this. Underlying all the Gnostic writings we find this dualism, this world hating, the desperate desire to find an interpretation of the Scripture which is more "spiritual."

Gershom C. Scholem gives perhaps the most pregnant precis⁴⁶ of Gnostic belief and its oft-noted parallel in Merkabah mysticism:

The throne-world is to the Jewish mystic what the pleroma, the "fulness," the bright sphere of divinity with its potencies, aeons, archons, and dominions is to the Hellenistic and early Christian mystics of the period who appear in the history of religion under the name of Gnostics and Hermetics....Originally, we have here a Jewish variation on one of the chief preoccupations of the second and third century gnostics and hermetics: the ascent of the soul from the earth, through the spheres of the hostile planet-angels and rulers of the

⁴⁵Hans Jonas, The Gnostic Religion (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1966) p. 8.

⁴⁶Scholem, Major Trends, p. 44.

cosmos, and its return to its divine home in the "fullness" of God's light, a return which, to the gnostic's mind, signified Redemption.⁴⁷

In all men there was a "spark" of divinity; the Hermetic mystics also saw the divine grace as being embodied in ten "powers" or "rays." In order for man to ascend past the hostile spirits of the "spheres" it was necessary to know their "names." "Certainly the description of this journey, of which a particularly impressive account is found in the second part of the 'Greater Hekhaloth' (Heavenly Palaces), is in all its detail of a character which must be called gnostic,"⁴⁸ as well as Kabbalistic. In the "Hekhaloth" books, the ascent of the soul is resisted by hosts of gate-keepers.

The chief scriptures of Gnosticism are the Pistis Sophia and the Codex Nazareus; the Codex Nazareus has been called the bible of purely Oriental Gnosticism. God is always called the "King and Master of Light." He is Himself Splendor--Infinite and Eternal Light. He is also called beauty, life, justice, and mercy. All the shapes that we perceive in this world emanate from Him. All creatures ask one another for His Name, and they are compelled to answer that He has none. As the King of light, infinite light, He has no name that can be invoked, no nature that can be known; we can reach Him only through a pure heart, an upright spirit, and a faith replete with love. The particular correspondences which can be noted then between the gnostic tradition and the Kabbalistic tradition are: the Unknowable God, the Ain Soph, the manifestation of a Divinity only through cosmogony, a complex hierarchy of angelic beings, the journey of the soul to divine revelation of the "fullness" or pleroma of glory

⁴⁷Ibid., pp. 46;49.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 55.

light, the need to examine scripture for a concealed and higher wisdom. The Adam Kadmon, Divine Intelligence conceived in the form of a Woman, Wisdom as the River of living waters, and a similar species of mystical anthropomorphism expressed in a highly developed symbology can be found in these works.

Arguments against the proposed parallels are urged principally against the "dualism" of the Gnostics and the doctrine of Evil. Most interestingly, Gershom G. Scholem has, however, maintained that the language of the Kabbalistic tradition owes much to the gnostics; and the very use of the language has shaped the Kabbalistic perspective.

The language of the gnostics had to be transformed, for the intention behind those ancient mythical images, which the gnostics bequeathed to the authors of the Bahir and to the entire Kabbalah, was, ultimately, to destroy a law that had broken the mythical order. In large parts of the Kabbalah the vengeance of myths against its conquerors is perfectly evident, and this is the source of the countless inner contradictions in its symbols. Like certain of the earlier gnostic systems, Kabbalistic speculation derives a mythical world by means of a thinking that excluded myths. Here in the realm of mysticism and mystical experience, a new world of myth arose: part of the theosophical contemplation of God's secret life considered as the central religious reality.⁴⁹

Scholem believes that the gnostic correspondences become only the more pronounced during the development of the Lurianic perspective, but are in actuality quite minimal: of a variety described as accountable "not so much by historical contact as by a parallelism of psychological and structural development, which would seem more plausible in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries than direct historical contact." Scholem finds the "dualism" of Gnosticism totally unthinkable to all Kabbalists but

⁴⁹Scholem, On the Kabbalah, pp. 98-99.

not totally without disturbing echoes in the concepts of Luria and, in fact, even in the Zohar. Luria's interpretation of Evil as a "sort of residue or refuse of the hidden divine life's organic process" is strongly reminiscent of the Gnostic myths of antiquity in which Evil is by its very nature independent of Man, woven into the texture of the world or rather into the existence of God. Gnosticism, however, retreated into magic and falso mysticism, surfacing in later days as Quietism and Quakerism with, so often allied to it, a darkening and gloomy world-renunciation, falling through Manicheism to its nadir among the Albigenses of the thirteenth century, among whom the mysterious Kabbalistic Bahir appeared.

THE KABBALISTIC TRADITION AND THE OLD TESTAMENT

When an oral tradition is finally written down, much is conserved and yet, most probably, much is eliminated, partially because of the scribe's purpose to organize and sometimes systematize a vast body of incompletely digested material or through an inability to associate and connect strands of myths, legends, and history which were once part of an integral scheme. Often these strands become knotted and contradictory, or, at best, variations of each other, diminished in credibility. Images and symbols intertwine and amalgamate; images of light gain the properties of water or stone; fire becomes malleable and brittle. The unique nature of the Kabbalistic mode of exegesis which expands and elaborates in ever-expanding circles of allegory and symbol, in its written form necessarily compresses and compounds expansive symbols into shorthand images unfolded only by contemplation. In a certain sense Kabbalistic exegesis "meta-mythizes" on the text it expands and in turn creates a "scripture" of its own. What is charged by the author of the Zohar in regard to the Torah also can be cited of the Kabbalistic writings themselves:

Woe to the man who sees nothing but simple stories and ordinary words in the Law! For were this so, we could even nowadays frame a law which would derive higher praise. Were it our desire to find nothing but simple words, all we would need do is turn to the legislators of the earth, many of whom possess greatness. It would be sufficient to initiate them and to make a law according to their words and their example. But it is not so; every word of the Law holds an exalted meaning and a sublime mystery (Prologue, 66).

Though most Kabbalistic writings focus on the first five books of the Old Testament, a large part of the enormous Kabbalistic literature

consists of fervid commentaries on the Five Scrolls, the Psalms, Proverbs, the Book of Ruth, Daniel, Ezekiel, Isaiah, Job, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs or the Book of Solomon. Of the last, the Book of Terumah characteristically says (as all Kabbalists comment on the text before them) that it contains the essence of the mystical path to God and His Creation.

Then the world was firmly established, and all the supernal casements were opened to pour forth light, and all the worlds experienced such joy as had never been known to them before, and celestial and terrestrial beings alike broke forth in song; and the song which they sang is the 'Song of Songs.' On that day this hymn was revealed and Solomon sang in the power of the Holy Spirit this song wherein is to be found the summary of the whole Torah, of the whole work of Creation, of the mystery of the Patriarch, of the story of the Egyptian exile and the Exodus therefrom, and of the Song of the Sea. It is the quintessence of the Decalogue, of the Sinaitic covenant, of the significance of Israel's wanderings through the desert, until their arrival in the Promised Land, and the building of the Temple. It contains the crowning of the Holy Name with love and joy, the prophecy of Israel's exile among the nations, of their redemption, of the resurrection of the dead, and of all else until that day which is Sabbath of the Lord. All that was, is and, shall be, is contained in it, and, indeed, even that which will take place on the 'Seventh Day,' which will be the 'Lord's Sabbath,' is indicated in this song (Terumah, 142b-143a).

Indeed, the Kabbalist, if he is sincere in his faith, can find all of Creation in a single word of the Torah.

Vast numbers of books have been written by Jewish mystics attempting to find their own ideas in, or read them into, the Biblical texts. For example, the author of the Kaf Ha-Ketoreth (c. 1500 A. D.) commenting on the Psalms tried to force the apocalyptic meanings into every word of the Scripture. For, accordingly, the Scriptures traditionally were alleged to have seventy "faces" and to manifest a different fact to each generation with a different mode of address; for the universe was created by and from

thought.⁵⁰ The authority for this revelation is the prophet Elijah, and the development is an excursus on the words: "Behold Who hath created these things" (Isaiah xxx.26). In Rabbinical Judaism, from which the Kabbalistic system developed, a number of different revelations were recognized as authentic and each in its own way authoritative, namely the revelations of Moses, of the Prophets, of the Holy Spirit (that spoke in the authors of the Psalms and other parts of the Bible), of the receiver of the "Heavenly Voice," and finally "the revelation of the Prophet Elijah." Each of these stages represents a lesser degree of authority than the stage preceding it. The principle remained in force: each generation can claim only a certain level of experience. But the Kabbalists could still make a place for their experience within the traditional framework, provided they defined it in accordance with this descending scale of values. This was why the Kabbalists claimed no more for themselves than the seemingly so very modest rank of receivers of a "revelation of the Prophet Elijah." Since the beginnings of Rabbinical Judaism, the Prophet Elijah has been a figure profoundly identified with the central preoccupation of Jewry: it is he who carries the divine message from generation to generation. And so in the generation of the author of Kaf Ha-Ketoreth, every word of the Bible was assumed to refer to Exile and Redemption. The author of Kaf Ha-Ketoreth, in particular, took up a very radical position. Employing every device of that mystical precision

⁵⁰A similar tradition concerning the creative power of letters forms the basis of the following Midrash on Job xxviii.13 in which what is said in Job of wisdom is applied to the Torah: "No one knows the order, for the sections of the Torah are not given in the right arrangement. If they were, every one who reads it might create a world, raise the dead, and perform miracles."

with which the Kabbalists read the Bible,⁵¹ he infused extraordinary apocalyptic meanings into the words of the Psalms, and held up the Psalter as a textbook of the millenium and the Messianic catastrophe. He furthermore developed an exceedingly bold theory of the Psalms as apocalyptic hymns and of the comfort which these hymns yield to worshippers. The secret function of these hymns was to serve as magical weapons to be wielded in the final struggle, weapons which were endowed with unlimited powers of purification and destruction so that they might annihilate all the forces of evil.

Scholem remarks on this "mythicizing" exegesis, which dangerously hovers between the heights of divine inspiration and reverential humility and the depths of fanatical blasphemy and self-aggrandizement. As in the instance of Sabbatai Zevi, the seventeenth-century pseudo-Messiah, the "inspired" exegesis of one man could lead many into a holocaust of the soul.

Many productive minds among the Kabbalists found this a congenial way of expressing their own ideas, while making them seem to flow from the words of the Bible. It is not always easy, in a given case, to determine whether the Biblical text inspired the exegesis or whether the exegesis was a deliberate device, calculated to bridge the gap between the old and the new vision by reading completely new ideas into the text. But this perhaps is to take too rationalistic a view of what goes on in the mind of the mystic....For one thing that can be said with certainty about Kabbalists is this: they are, and do their best to remain traditionalists, as is indicated by the very word Kabbalah, which is one of the Hebrew words for 'tradition.'⁵²

⁵¹Temurah, gematria, notaricon--see their definitions below.

⁵²Scholem, On the Kabbalah, p. 33.

The "Oral Tradition" proceeds in its interpretation of Scripture by four fundamental modes of exegesis that lead to the sphere of Sod, "mystery," or as the Talmud calls it, Pardes, the "Paradise" of divine knowledge. The four consonants of Pardes (PRDS) are the mnemonic for the four exegetical modes. Peshat denotes the "literal" sense of the word Scripture, the simple interpretation, approaching it by ways available to elementary reasoning. (While this approach is designated as the "simplest" by critics, it remains the most unexplored and, for me at least, only deceptively "simple," as I. A. Richards might agree.) Remez signifies "allusion," the allegorical or "symbolical" sense; exegesis proceeds to uncover the many layers of meaning hidden in every phrase, every letter, sign and point of the Torah. Perhaps, uniquely to Kabbalah, this level of exegesis makes use of the science of "letters and numbers." The three most highly developed procedures in this science are gematria, the science of numerical values of letters; notaricon, the science of the first, median, and the last letters of words; and temurah, the science of the permutation and combination of letters. Examples of all these abound in the Zohar. Principally because these are mechanical devices, they soon degenerated into "magical" manipulations. The enigmatic "allegorical" sense is called derasha; through tropology it engages in moral homiletics, uncovering doctrinal truths in deciding all possible interpretations of the Torah.

The fourth method of interpretation is the mystical or uniquely Kabbalistic sense: sod. Sod crowns the interpretation of Scripture by an initiation into hokhmah, the divine wisdom concealed in the Scriptures; sod embodies the esoteric wisdom of the tradition. It determines the

question of "correspondences" between the lower and the upper heavens and attempts to show in the eloquent manner of symbolism that the Divine Word is truly Divine in all its stages and that its study is an ascent from the world of manifested things to that of the Deity. This fourth method, which teaches the "mysteries of the Torah," consists essentially in the spiritual exegesis and eschatological application of the first chapter of Genesis and of the first chapter of Ezekiel's prophecies. But besides these fundamental teachings concerning the "emanations" from the universal principle and reintegration into it, all of the Scriptures can serve as a point of departure for the exegetical method of sod. So also out of the literal (peshat) sense of Scripture, the Kabbalist can derive his exalted notion of things unseen and of Him who reigns not alone in the world to come but in this which we see before our eyes, "Who fills them both and by Whom the Soul is replenished in all the planes of Being." With the poetic deftness of the Kabbalist, Moses de Leon de Cordoba encapsulizes these four methods in the image of the "nut" with the meat of the nut representing the central mystical Word of the Scripture.⁵³

Dante in a letter to his patron and friend, Con Grande della Scala, writes:

The meaning of this work is not simple for we obtain one meaning from the letter of it, and another from that which the letter signifies; and the first is called the literal, but the others all allegorical or mystical. And to make this matter of treatment clearer, it may be studied in this sense: 'When Israel came out of Egypt, the home of Jacob from among a strange people, Judah was his sanctuary and Israel his dominion.' For if we regard the letter

⁵³The Pardes Rimmonim (The Garden of Pomegranates) circa 1290 A.D.

alone, what is set before us is the exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt in the days of Moses; if the allegory, our redemption wrought by Christ; if the moral sense, we are shown the conversion of the soul from the grief and wretchedness of sin to the state of grace; if the anagogical, we are shown the departure of the holy soul from the thralldom of this corruption to the liberty of eternal glory. And although these mystical meanings are called by various names, they may all be called in general allegorical, since they differ from the literal and the historical....

In Chapter One of the Second Treatise of Il Convito, Dante Alighieri expands on the "anagogical" sense.

The fourth sense is called anagogical, that is, beyond sense (or mystical). It is when a book is spiritually expounded which, although a narration in its literal sense, by the things signified refers to the supernal things of eternal glory, as we may see in that psalm of the Prophet where he says that when Israel went out of Egypt Judea became holy and free. Although this is manifestly true according to the letter, it is also true in its spiritual meaning, which is that the soul, in forsaking its sins, becomes holy and free in its powers.⁵⁴

(Incidentally, two things should be noted about these passages: they were composed circa the first decade of the fourteenth century and they both select passages from the Old Testament for exempla.) Also in the fourteenth century, Nicholas of Lyra quotes a famous pedagogic verse of unknown origin.

Littera gesta docet, quid credas allegoria
Moralis quid agas, quo tendas anagogia

Whether the Kabbalists derived this four-fold exegetical approach from the Christians or vice versa is another complex and, in the end, insoluble question.

Many scholars point back to Philo Judaeus as the most likely

⁵⁴Dante Alighieri, A Translation of Dante's Eleven Letters, ed. S. G. Carpenter (Boston, 1891), p. 98.

originator of the tradition. Bacher⁵⁵ assumed the existence of such an historical connection, while Perez Sandler⁵⁶ has tried to prove that the Kabbalistic doctrine of the pardes developed independently. Of course, it is possible that the Kabbalists arrived at their theory of the four levels of meaning without outside influence, by simply dividing the allegorical interpretation into its two aspects, the one philosophical, the other theosophical. The simultaneous appearance of the idea in kabbalistic authors, all living in Christian Spain and all working with the same theory of the four levels though their classifications differed, suggests that they had somewhere come across this idea of four meanings and adopted it. One is almost forced to conclude that they were influenced by Christian hermeneutics. The Zohar's account of the four levels shows a striking resemblance to the Christian conception.

In the fifteenth century, this relationship between the Zoharic four-fold exegesis and the similar Christian conception had been proposed by the first Christian humanist to take a serious interest in the Kabbalah. In his Apologia, Pico della Mirandola writes:

Just as with us there is a four-fold method of Biblical exegesis, the literal, the mystical or allegorical, the tropic and the anagogic, so also among the Hebrews. They call the literal meaning peshat, the allegorical midrash, the tropic sechel and the anagogic, the most sublime and divine of all, kabbalah.⁵⁷

Pico della Mirandola had been consulting the work of Bahya ben Asher

⁵⁵ Wilhelm Bacher, "L'exegese biblique dans le Zohar" Revue des etudes juives, XXII (1891), 33-46.

⁵⁶ Perez Sandler, "Le-ba 'yath Pardes'" Jubilee Volume for Elias Auerbach (Jerusalem, 1955), 222-25.

⁵⁷ Pico della Mirandola, Opera: "Apologia" (Basel, 1557), 178.

which accounts for the different terminology.

In the two places in the Midrash on Genesis, the late thirteenth-century Abraham Abulafia writes of his connection with non-Jewish mystics. Once, he relates, he talked with them about the three methods of interpreting the Torah; and he noted their agreement with one another: "and I saw that they belong to the category of the 'pious of the Gentiles,' and that the words of the fools of what ever religion need not be heeded, for the Torah has been handed over to the masters of true knowledge."⁵⁸

⁵⁸Abraham Abulafia, Midrash on Genesis (Ms. Parma Dervisi, 141), f.16b, 28b.

THE KABBALAH AND CHRISTIANITY

There are two matters to bring to the fore in regard to Christianity and Jewish mysticism. First, for Christian students, the Kabbalah was either the Sefer Zohar itself or it was developments therefrom, and as we shall see subsequently, the office attributed to it was almost exclusively evangelical: that is to say, the discovery that there had existed in Israel, from time immemorial, a Secret Doctrine which appeared to contain analogies and even identities with fundamental dogmas of Christianity. For it is agreed that Christian doctrine is neither more nor less than a continuation or, as some theologians view it, a completion of Jewish tradition, and that the Zohar--as the reflection of that tradition within certain measures--formulates plainly, amid all the obscurities, the doctrine of the Trinity and of the Man-God, the Messianic incarnation. So Alphonse Constant writes:

To be quite certain on the subject, the Gospel and Apocalypse of St. John must be compared with the mysterious doctrines of the Sepher Yetsirah and the Zohar. It will then be realized that Christianity, so far from being a heresy in Israel, was the true orthodox tradition of Jewry, while it was the Scribes and Pharisees who were sectarians....Considered as the fully realized and vital expression of the Kabbalah Christianity is still unknown, and hence the Kabbalistic and prophetic book called the Apocalypse yet remains to be explained, being incomprehensible without the Kabbalistic Key.⁵⁹

Secondly, and most importantly, we must realize that there is not one line, much less one page, in the Zohar which can be construed according to its proper sense on the assumption that a Messiah has appeared al-

⁵⁹Alphonse Louis Constant (pseud. Éliphas Lévi), L'Histoire de la Magie, tr. A.E. Waite (Los Angeles: Borden, 1953), p.148

ready in Israel: the Messiah of orthodox Judaism and its Kabbalistic expression is not the Christ of Nazareth. The points of analogy between Kabbalistic and Christian doctrine are many and eloquent in their way, but they belong to another order of forced apologetics, characteristic of those proselytizing "dreams" of scholars who filled Europe with their debates in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, such as Benedictus Poscantinus' Dialogum de Messia (Venice, 1548) and Antonius Hulsius' In Theologium Judaicum de Messia (Bremen, 1580).

Notable in these argumentative pleadings is an ignorance of the traditional midrashim and Hebraic significances of symbols and images as they appear in so-called prophetic quotations from the Old Testament: an unsophisticated literal reading with a Christian bias. For example, the words "Lowly and riding on an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass" (Zechariah ix. 9), which are referred to the appearance of Jesus of Nazareth at the gates of the Holy City triumphant on Palm Sunday are interpreted on a literal level only. The "ass", however, traditionally represented that demon which shall be curbed by the King to come, the Messiah (Raya Mehemna, 207a). The fact is, however, that a number of disinterested comparisons have been drawn by reputable scholars, and this segment will briefly suggest the Christian tradition concerning the Kabbalistic concepts of the Sefirothic Trinity, the Messiah, the Shekhinah (Ecclesia), and miscellaneous "contact" points.

As has already been suggested, the Kabbalistic and Christian "mystical" attitudes share many common features, such as the unio mystica and the traditional conception of God as "Un-being." Characteristic of many Christian as well as Kabbalistic mystical authors is the description of

the relationship between the finite and the infinite in terms of erotic passion. Though the older Kabbalists did not interpret the Song of Songs as a dialogue between God and the soul, the book, regarded by the Zohar as the quintessence of Kabbalistic doctrine, came to be interpreted as a complex series of epithalamia. A. E. Waite, along with other scholars, proposes that the key to the Mystery of Faith, the Supreme Mystery, in the Zohar, is the Mystery of Sex, at times metaphysically abstracted to a conception of unity and the resolution of warring opposites and, at times, quite physically related to rituals of copulation, cleanliness, and procreation.⁶⁰

This historical aspects of religion for both Christian and Kabbalistic mystics have a meaning chiefly as symbols of acts conceived of as divorced from Time or constantly repeated in the soul of every man (as has been suggested by the common four-fold exegesis of Scripture). Thus the Exodus from Egypt, the predominant event in Jewish sacred history, cannot, according to the mystic, have come to pass only once and in only one place; it must correspond to an event which takes place in ourselves--an inner Egypt of which we are all slaves. It will be remembered that the doctrine of "Christ-In-Us" acquired so great an importance for the mystics of Christianity that the historical Jesus of Nazareth was quite often relegated to the background.

Since Kabbalah is a living tradition that has developed through many phases, heretical sects, and even orthodox antithetical traditions, it had, of course, come in contact with and been influenced by Christian

⁶⁰A. E. Waite, op. cit., pp. 377-405.

traditions, not more so than in the emotion-charged Sabbatianism of the seventeenth century, as studied by Gershom G. Scholem.⁶¹ In Sabbatianism, as well as in early Christianity, the sudden appearance of the redemptive era, which is embraced as real and full of meaning, created the atmosphere that releases men from the crisis of the tradition of Exile. The Messiah has arrived, in whatever guise he may appear, even demonic.

Inevitably there is a far-reaching and highly illuminating similarity between the religious characteristics and the development of Sabbatianism on the one hand, and of Christianity on the other....In both cases, too, a certain mystical attitude of belief crystallizes around an historical event which in turn draws its strength from the very fact of its paradoxality. Both movements begin by adopting an attitude of intense expectation towards the Parousia....In both cases the destruction of the old values in the cataclysm of redemption leads to an outburst of antinomian tendencies...; in both cases you get a new conception of "belief" as the realization of the new world of Salvation....In both cases, finally, you get in the end a theology of some kind of Trinity and of God's incarnation in the person of the Savior.⁶²

Although there is much that might be evidence of cross-fertilization of mystical concepts on the nature of the Messiah, Scholem prefers to view the two traditions growing simultaneously but separately in somewhat similar religious climates.

In the end, similarities are overwhelmed by differences. One cannot expect the physiognomy of traditional Jewish mysticism to be the same as that of Christian mysticism which is essentially involved in the person of the Savior and Mediator between God and Man, the mystical interpretation of the Passion of Christ, which is repeated in the person experience of the individual. All this is foreign to Judaism and its mystics.

⁶¹Gershom G. Scholem, The Life of Sabbatai Zevi (New York: Schocken, 1977).

⁶²Scholem, Major Trends, p. 307.

Their ideas proceed from the concepts and values peculiar to Judaism, above all from the belief in the supreme unity of God and the meaning of His revelation as laid down in the Torah, the sacred law: a similarity of approach to disparate matter united the two. A fitting example of how the content of a philosophic doctrine has influenced the shape it has taken may be noted by the absence of any women Kabbalists. As Scholem notes,

...Rabia of early Islamic mysticism, Mechthild of Magdeburg, Juliana of Norwich, Theresa de Jesu, and the many other feminine representatives of Christian mysticism have no counterparts in the history of Kabbalism. The latter, therefore, lacks the element of feminine emotion which has played so large a part in the development of non-Jewish mysticism...

Scholem suggests this is perhaps due to "an inherent tendency to lay stress on the demonic nature of woman and the feminine element of the cosmos."⁶³ (Sabbatianism included the appearance of a female Messiah.)

A number of Christian authors have been cited as reinforcing the argument that Christianity is the "lawful continuation" of the Secret Doctrine of Judaism: that is, Kabbalistic traditions were revered by the early Christian Church and even certain rituals and doctrines were incorporated into the beliefs of the early Christian Church, the chief of these being the doctrine of the Trinity. A certain letter to Marcella by St. Jerome refers to ten mystical names consecrated to God which have been compared with the titles of the ten Sefiroth. St. Jerome is also linked incidentally with the Jewish tradition forbidding the study of the beginning and the end of the Book of Ezekiel which contains the merkabah

⁶³Ibid., p. 37.

vision of the hayoth and chariot before the completion of the thirtieth year. Also according to St. Jerome, the transmigration of the soul, a doctrine which is at the core of the salvation mystery in the Zohar, was taught for a long time among the early Christians as an esoteric and traditional doctrine which was to be divulged to only a small number of the elect: "abscondite quasi in foveis viperaum versari, et quasi hereditario malo serpere in paucis."⁶⁴

Origen considered the doctrine to be the only possible explanation of such biblical accounts as the prenatal scuffle between Esau and Jacob, of Jeremiah's appointment while still in his mother's womb, and of a host of other events which would accuse the heavens of iniquity were they not justified by the good or evil actions of pre-existing life. Franck notes⁶⁵ that it is for the very purpose of reconciling liberty with the destiny of the soul and of giving man the means of expiating his faults without banishing him forever from the bosom of God, that the Kabbalists adopted and ennobled the Pythagorean dogma of metempsychosis.

As has already been suggested, the development of gnosticism strongly influenced the development of Christianity as well as later forms of Kabbalism.⁶⁶ One of the elements in the gnostic ritual of baptism was the "putting on" of the mystical Name. Likewise, a theurgic Kabbalistic ritual that has come down to us from the same school gives instructions for "putting on the Name," indeed a purely magical proce-

⁶⁴Erich Herriman, Letters of the Church Fathers (New York: Seabury, 1957) p. 89.

⁶⁵Franck, pp. 121-141.

⁶⁶Quispel, Gnosis als Weltreligion (Zurich, 1951), passim.

dure, a degenerate form of a mystical attitude. But there are a number of manuscripts, particularly of a Book of the Putting on and Fashioning of the Mantle of Righteousness (Sefer ha-Malbush ve Tikkun), in which the ancient Jewish conception that names can be "put on" is taken very concretely. On a garment fashioned into a baptism alb, (which has once again found its way into the baptism ritual in the Roman Catholic rite), the secret names of God are inscribed. The corresponding element is found in St. Paul's Epistles to the Romans xiii.14. and to the Galatians iii.27.

According to Scholem, a great many modern theologians believe that the foundations of Christianity can be found in Onkelos' Chaldaic Translation of the Five Books of Moses, which testifies to the antiquity of the Kabbalistic tradition. This famous translation was looked upon with such great respect that it was regarded as a divine revelation. It is assumed by the Babylonian Talmud that Moses received it on Mount Sinai when he received the written and oral law, that it came down to the time of the Tannaim by tradition, and that Onkelos had only the glory of transcribing it. In keeping with Abelson's thesis on the immanence of the God of the Old Testament--the "Song of Unity," composed by a member of the inner circle of Jehudah the Hasid, glorifies God as even closer to the universe and to man than the soul is to the body. This doctrine, propounded by Eleazar of Worms and accepted by the Hasidim, closely parallels Augustine's thesis--so often quoted by the Christian mystics of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries--that God is closer to any of His creatures than the latter to itself.

St. John the Evangelist has been regarded most often as the direct

link between the teachings of the Kabbalistic sages and the Christian dogma. The Old Testament says that Enoch did not die but that God translated him from one life to another. He is to return and confound the Anti-Christ at the end of time, when he will be one of the last martyrs or witnesses of the Truth, mentioned in the Apocalypse of St. John. That which is said of Enoch in this respect has been said of all the great initiators, the "Sacred Lamps," recorded in Kabbalism. St. John himself, according to the primitive Christians, was saved from death, and it was long thought that he could be seen breathing in his tomb. "Hic intrat vivus foveam"--he, being still alive, enters the tomb (Third sequence for December 27).

Alphonse Constant explains that it is the absolute science of life, the total self-incarnation of the Secret Doctrine of the Essence of the Names, that preserves against death. Constant traced the history of the "true science" back to the Holy Kabbalah, or tradition of the children of Seth, taken from Chaldea by Abraham, communicated by Joseph to the Egyptian priesthood, ingarnered by Moses, concealed by symbols in the Bible, delivered by the Messiah to St. John, and embodied in its fullness in hieratic images, analogous to those of all antiquity, in the Apocalypse of this Apostle. The Apocalypse summarizes, completes, and surpasses all the sciences of Abraham and Solomon.⁶⁷ What the Apocalypse seems to have most in common with the Zohar is its obscurity; for it too is written hieroglyphically in the language of numbers and images, and

⁶⁷ Alphonse Louis Constant (pseud. Éliphas Lévi), The Mysteries of the Qabalah: Correspondences Between the Zohar and the Gospel of St. John (Paris: Mouton, 1856), "Introduction." Constant has drawn the most complete set of correspondences between the Zohar and the Gospel of St. John.

the Apostle appeals frequently to the knowledge of initiates: "Let him understand who has knowledge--let him who understands compute."

The Apocalypse, along with the Sepher Yetsirah and the Zohar, has long been regarded as a masterpiece of occultism, for it conceals much meaning under few words and expresses this meaning figuratively like poetry and exactly like numerical formulae. But most of all, it attained its "occult" reputation for its unique, visionary perspective totally different from that of all the other evangelists' attitudes. St. John's reference to the creative Names of God invokes the metaphysics of the Kabbalah. For God by invoking His creative and redemptive name, YAH, causes everything that exists to issue from Him and to return to Him; by invoking His name, every being is born from Him, lives by Him, and is united with Him. In the Apocalypse xix, 6-7, there is also an allusion to the invocation of YAH by the "waters" of the cosmic ocean. St. John speaks of their "voice" which says HALLELU-YAH! and of the redemptive joy that goes with the invocation: "And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying: 'Hallelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!'" Needless to say, the images of the Hayoth, the four sacred beasts that bear the throne (chariot) of glory onwards, the angelology, numerology, etc., have much in common with the figures in Zoharic Kabbalism.

To understand the Kabbalistic concepts of the Messiah, the Shekinah, and its "Trinity" and the Christian parallels necessitates a more detailed examination of the Sephiroth. The Sephiroth, the metaphysical numbers or numerations of the divine aspects, are the principal keys

to the mysteries of the Torah. They form a ten-fold hierarchy and their names, enumerated from the highest downward, are: Kether, "crown" (or Kether Elyon, "supreme crown"); Hokmah, "wisdom"; Binah, "intelligence", Hesed, "grace" (or Gedullah, "greatness"); Tiphereth, "beauty"; Din, "judgment" (or Geburah, "power"); Netsah, "victory" or "constancy"; Hod, "glory" or "majesty"; Yesod, "foundation" (or Tsedek, "justice"); Malkuth, "kingdom" or "royalty" (or Shekhinah, "divine immanence"). The Sephiroth in their totality constitute the doctrinal basis of Jewish esotericism; they are to the Kabbalah, or mystical "tradition" of Judaism, what the Decalogue is to the Torah, or the exoteric law.

Traditionally, there have been a number of configurations to express the interconnection of the Sephiroth and their ordering: concentric circles, the human body, the tree, triads interconnected by canals, etc.⁶⁸ For example in the concentric circle pictogram, the Sephirothic unity can be contemplated ad intra by regarding all the aspects as enclosed in Kether, the supreme Sephirah. At times, the concentric circles are turned inside out. In this case, Kether becomes the point, the supreme or innermost center, enveloped hierarchically by all its ontological emanations and cosmic manifestations. In the shape of the "man-king" or Adam Kadmon, which has been associated with the Mystical Body of Christ, the Sephiroth are explained as modes of "divine government." God reigns through his right arm or right side, which embraces life and mercy; through his left arm or left side, which contains death and rigour; and through the middle pillar, which balances, harmonizes, and resolves all oppositions in its

⁶⁸Schaya, op. cit., p. 29.

unity. The right or merciful side comprises the Sefiroth Hokhmah, undifferentiated "wisdom"; hesed, unitive "grace"; and netsah, "victory" or the affirmative cosmic power. The left or severe side comprises Binah, discriminative "intelligence"; Din "judgment," which separates one reality from another; and Hod, "glory" or the negative cosmic power. Finally, the middle pillar (the spine) is made up of Kether, "crown," or unity of Hokhmah and Binah; Tifereth, "beauty," or the creative act which unites the affirmative and negative powers of the cosmos (Netsah, "victory," and Hod, "glory"), and finally Malkhuth, "kingdom," the lower unity, recipient of all the divine emanations. The mirroring of Adam Kadmon's attributes in finite man's provided the impetus for the Kabbalah's interest in physiognomy and chiromancy. Kether represents man's pure and divine essence; Hokmah, his knowledge of God; Binah, his ability to discriminate between the real and the unreal. All that is real in man, in his soul and in his body, is "prefigured" and actualized by the Sephiroth. The nearer the "lower man" comes spiritually to the Sephirothic unity, the nearer he comes to his own infinite "figure," "higher man," who is eternally one with God.

Harold Bloom describes the pictorial variations of the Sephiroth in a way which captures the kaleidoscopic, ever-shifting reality of their dynamic presence; for any two or three-dimensional representation cannot depict the "living," breathing character which the mystic envisions.

Below keter as crown, the Sefirot were generally depicted as a 'tree of emanation'; and in the simple vision of influence, this tree grows downward, as any map of influence must. As frequent a depiction of the Sefirot is the 'reversed tree' in which the emanations are arranged in the form of a man. In either image, the right hand side begins with the first attribute proper, hokhmah, generally translated

as 'wisdom,' but better understood as something like God's meditation or contemplation of Himself and frequently called the 'father of fathers' or the uncreated Tables of the Law. Freud's imago of the father is a close enough contemporary translation. The matching imago of the mother on the left side is binah, usually rendered as 'intelligence,' but meaning something more like a passive understanding in which God enjoys contemplating Himself. We can call keter the Divine self-consciousness, hokmah, the active principle of knowing, and binah the known, or reflection upon knowledge, or the veil through which God's 'wisdom' shines. In another Kabbalistic image, certainly derived from Neo-Platonism, binah as mirror acts as a prism, breaking open Divine light into apprehensible colors. The seven lower Sefiroth are the more immediate attributes of creation, moving out from binah in the role of supreme Mother.⁶⁹

Though there are ten Sephiroth, only seven are active in the world. Kether, Hokmah, and Binah all have to do with primordial creation and manifest the latent potencies of God and so have no real analogues in human creativity. The lower seven Sephiroth, called the Sephiroth of "construction," are at work in creation as we know it, from the initial seven days onwards. As mentioned, the Sephiroth, are often represented in the form of triads which inter-connect. The highest triad--kether, hokmah, and binah--is that of the essential and ontological principles; the second triad--hesed, din, tifereth--is that of the cosmological principles; the third--netsah, hod, yesed--is that of the cosmic powers and the creative act; finally the Sephirah Malkhuth is the creative substance or, viewed under another aspect, divine immanence. Also to be noted is that kether and malkhuth often function as independent Sefiroth and often bond with the nearest triad to form a tetrad; most often they are simply excluded from consideration because they contain the mysteries inapprehensible by man. It must be remembered that for each Kabbalistic perspective there is a unique Sephirothic configuration. Each is in-

⁶⁹Bloom, op. cit., p. 29.

adequate in its own way to depict the dynamic circumincession of the Divine Attributes.

The mystery of the transcendent unity of religions, the unity manifested at the beginning of Time and in the presence of a humanity still united by a single primordial tradition, has been explored in the works of Rene Guenon, Frithjof Schuon, and also Ananda Coomaraswamy. They have attempted to demonstrate that the essential principles of the various orthodox revelations are identical, a fact which they discover by metaphysical penetration of dogma and symbols. One of these "constants" of belief in world religions common to Zoroastrianism, Mithraism, the Cabairic mysteries, Kabbalah, Buddhism, and Christianity, among others, is the conception of the Deity in some type or at some stage of a triadic or tetradic form. However, what has come to be considered the "Trinity" or "Quaternity" of the Kabbalistic tradition must be distinguished from all other "anthropomorphic" or "personalized" conceits of a three-personed God by both the basic purity of its ontological and epistemological abstractions and a rigorous insistence on the underlying Unity of the Divine Nature--the only two traits it shares dramatically with the Christian mystical equivalent.

The Zohar speaks of three Supernal Degrees, Divine Hypostases, Supernal Sephiroth. The first of them is called Kether. It is said also that when the world of manifest things was in the state of Tohu, God revealed Himself therein under the hypostasis Shaddai; when it had proceeded to the condition called Bohu, He manifested as the hypostasis Tsabaoth; but when the darkness had disappeared from the face of things, He appeared as Elohim. "And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the

waters." These words are understood as a reference to the sweet and harmonious voice heard by Elijah and termed by him, "The Voice of the Lord is upon the waters." This signifies the completion of the Sacred Name, Jehovah. In the vision of Elijah it is said that "the Lord (Jehovah) was not in the earthquake": it was Shaddai. He was not in the fire: this was Tsabaoth; but He was in the "still, small voice," being that of the Spirit of Elohim, and the Name of Jehovah was complete. It is also said that this Name is composed of four letters,⁷⁰ the relation of which to the Divine Essence is like that of the limbs of the human body;⁷¹ but this notwithstanding, the hypostases are only three. Now, as Kether is the first, it is to be inferred that Hokhmah and Binah constitute the other two, and the world of emanations will be completed in these. They are symbolized by the three bars of the Hebrew letter Shin, "ש", which visibly exhibits this essential unity.

The first three Sephiroth--"Crown," "Wisdom," and "Intelligence"--have to be considered as one and the same reality. They are identical by essential fusion; there is no hierarchical discrimination among these three, though representations place Kether above the other two. The first degree, Kether, represents knowledge as knowing (divine consciousness in itself); the second, Hokhmah, represents that which knows (the active or determinant principle of knowledge); and the third, Binah, represents that which is known (the receptive or reflective aspect of knowledge). In order to make clear to oneself the ontological and cognitive

⁷⁰Cf. Bereshith, 16a; Vayera, 97.

⁷¹Cf. Vayaqhel, 194a.

identity, one must remember that the Creator's knowing (his consciousness) is not like that of His creatures; for in creatures, the knowing is distinct from the subject and is brought to bear on objects which are likewise distinct from the subject. On the contrary, the Creator is Himself knowledge, that which knows, and that which is known--all at the same time. His way of knowing does not consist of applying His thought to objects outside Himself; by knowing Himself and perceiving Himself, He knows and perceives all that is. "Nothing exists that is not united with Him and which He does not find in His own essence."⁷²

Schaya encapsulizes the process of the Kabbalistic Trinity in a highly plastic but "vital" image.

In other terms, Kether wraps itself in the first casual emanation, Hokhmah with its receptivity, Binah; and the radiation of the active principle completely fills the receptivity of the passive cause....Hokhmah and Binah emanate simultaneously from Kether, the dark receptivity of the 'mother' being entirely filled with the luminous fullness of the 'father,' these two complementary principles are never in any way separate. They are not, therefore, really two; the created being, man, sees them as differentiated, being himself subject to distinction. In reality, Hokhmah and Binah are indivisible and inseparable aspects of Kether, the One.⁷³

By His thought, which is the first emanation of His casual being, the first ontological irradiation, God determines all things. By His Word, which is His first spiritual manifestation, He creates all things and at the same time reveals their reason for being. The Word of God is His act of creation, revelation, and redemption. All expressible truths are comprised in this divine revelation. In descending to earth, this

⁷²Moses Cordovero, Pardes Rimmonim (New York: KTAV Pub. House, 1966), p. 33.

⁷³Schaya, op. cit., p. 74ff.

one and universal word is multiplied into different "languages" or revelations, addressed to different sections of humanity.

A brief examination of the characters of each of these Supernal Sephiroth may clarify their unique interrelationship, or, better, identity. Needless to say, the Sephiroth of "construction" are of equal importance in understanding the metaphysics of the Divinity in Kabbalah, but an examination of their characteristics must be foregone.

Kether, the "crown" among all the "crowns," Sephiroth, or universal principles is the uncreated and infinite total reality of God. It is the primal Will of the Creator and is scarcely distinguishable from the Ain Soph, except as being first effect to His first Cause. Nothing is outside of Him, nothingness does not exist, for if it did it would no longer be nothingness but reality. But, though an effect, Kether is no part of the Creation, which reflects Kether but cannot absorb it. As it cannot be compared to any other image, it must be called ayin or "nothingness," an object of quest that is also the subject of any search. Kether, the only reality, on the one hand remains hidden in itself, in its absolute transcendence, and on the other manifests itself as uncreated immanence in the midst of its own transitory reflection: the creation. As a Name of God, Kether is the Ehyeh of the great declaration of God to Moses in Exodus iii.14. God says Ehyeh asher Ehyeh, "I am that I am," but the Kabbalists refused to interpret this as mere Being to them. To them, Kether was at once Ehyeh and ayin, being and nothingness, a cause of all causes and no cause at all, beyond action. Kether in itself is pure "selfness," superintelligible essence, unity without trace of duality. It is a reality without condition, without definition, in which God

is what He is, beyond Being; for Being is not the absolute reality as such, but its first affirmation. A. E. Waite, consistent with his analogue of Kabbalah as the expression of the Mystery of Sex, distinguishes Kether in this way:

...the first hypostasis but not apparently the first cause or cause of causes. The meaning seems to be that the first cause contains within itself two hypostases, understood as male and female. Jehovah manifests with Shekhinah in the degree of Kether. In contradiction it is said that the first and third Sefiroth are united as male and female, that Kether and Hokhman are never in separation. This is true, however, of the whole supernal Triad or first three Sefiroth.⁷⁴

Hokhmah, "wisdom," is the first divine emanation, and issues from the more than luminous "nothingness" of Kether as an infinitely radiant sun, whose innumerable, unbounded, undifferentiated sparks represent all the intelligible aspects, all the Sephirothic splendours, all that bears witness to the only Truth. Scholem describes Hokhmah in the terms of the author of the Zohar:

God's wisdom represents the ideal thought of Creation, conceived as the ideal point which itself springs from the impulse of the abysmal will. The author extends the comparison by likening it to the mystical seed which is sown into Creation, the point of comparison apparently being not only the subtlety of both but also the fact that in either the possibilities of further being are potentially, though as yet invisibly, existent.

Insofar as God appears through the manifestation of Hokhmah, He is perceived as wise, and in His wisdom the ideal existence of all things is as it were enshrined; if still undeveloped and undifferentiated, the essence of all that exists is nevertheless derived from God's Hokhmah. Between this primordial mode of existence in God's thoughts, and the concretest of reality, there is no second transition or crisis, no second creation from the uncreated in the theological sense.⁷⁵

⁷⁴Waite, op. cit., pp. 204-205.

⁷⁵Scholem, Major Trends, p. 219.

Hokhmah is also called makshabah, which signifies "thought," "meditation," and also "art." It is the radiation of the divine being, in which He contemplates Himself, projecting or manifesting all things through the "rays" emitted by His "sparks." Now the mystery of Hokhmah is that each of its sparks, which are the essences or archetypes of all things, is but one with the Divine Being, the universal archetype: each of them is the infinite sun. In Hokhmah, God knows Himself as being all that is, and all that is knows itself as God. There, no difference in being or in knowledge exists between Him and one or another essence; for Hokhmah is the eternal resolution of oppositions, the indifferenciation of every trace of duality, the ultimate meeting of extremes, the principal fusion of all that is. "Even the darkness is not dark for thee and the night shineth as the day: the darkness is even as light" (Psalms 139: 12). The essential mystery of Hokhmah is the One: it knows only the One and all is the One. It is called beatitude or the eternal Eden, the Tree of Life, the "first and uncreated Table of the Torah."

Before manifesting itself to the worlds, the divine being reveals itself, in its wisdom, its act of pure knowledge, to itself, that is, to its own receptivity, its intelligence: Binah. Binah dwells in the luminous pleroma of Hokhmah, like the emptiness or darkness of a hidden "mirror"; and it comes out from the light and envelops it, becoming its supreme plane of reflection, at the moment when the light issues from the more than luminous darkness of essence. Thus Hokhmah pours out of all the intelligible possibilities of Kether into the midst of Binah in a simple undifferentiated emanation. The infinite radiation from the face of God enters the void of His boundless receptivity, into the face of

his supreme "mirror": Binah. A. E. Waite examines the relationship of Hokhmah to Binah in their sexual imagi:

...Chokmah, it is by the sublime and impenetrable mystery of this Sephira or hypostasis and is called Man: otherwise, it is called Abba, the Father. The 'house' is built by Chokmah; it was concealed like the Supreme Point before the Creation, and is called Yod. It is Eternal Wisdom, and therein is concealed the Eternal Thought, which is the Great Voice, meaning the 'still small voice' which is the House of Eternal Wisdom. In contradiction to these indications it is said to be the 'Sister' meaning thereby Shekhinah. It is also Aima, Daughter and Mother. It is the beginning of all....Binah is intelligence or understanding....It is the concealed world, and motherhood is its image. It is also penitence, the degree of the moon, the mystery of the Supreme World, and the Community of IsraelThe House is built of Chokmah and is established by Binah.⁷⁶

The "house," "palace," or "building" image emphasized by Waite is an allusion to the idea that from this Sephirah the building of the cosmos proceeds. The seven Sephiroth which flow from the maternal womb of Binah are the seven primeval days of creation. The name of this Sephirah, Binah, can be taken to signify not only "intelligence," but also "that which divided between the things," i.e. differentiation. What was primarily undifferentiated in the dividing wisdom exists in the womb of Binah, the "supernal mother," as the pure "totality of all individuation." In it all forms are already proposed, but still preserved in the unity of the divine intellect which contemplates them in itself. In a passage from the Zohar, the image of the point (signifying Hokhmah as the point of light) is already combined with the more dynamic one of the "fountain" which springs from the heart of the mystical Nothing (Kether). In many places, the primordial point is direct-

⁷⁶Waite, op. cit., pp. 204-05.

ly identified with this "fountain" from which all bliss and all blessings flow. This is the mystical Eden--Eden meaning literally "bliss" or "joy" --and from here the stream of divine life takes its course and flows through all the Sefiroth and through all hidden reality, until it falls into the "great sea" of Shekhinah, in which God unfolds His totality.

With an almost Shelleyan allusion, Schaya expands on Binah in this manner.

Binah in its function of universal 'mother,' discerns all the 'sparks' or 'seeds' of the created, all manifestable possibilities, in the midst of the undifferentiated and dazzling of light of the 'father.' In this purely causal and eternal act, Binah is like a prism or mirror, broken into a myriad of 'facets' each one of which reflects the divine 'great face' in its own way, as well as the content of every other facet. In this way, God contemplates Himself in Binah, the universal 'mother,' as the One in the multiple, and sees at the same time all the 'shattered fragments' of His mirror, all His innumerable aspects, joined together again in the undifferentiated unity of Hokhmah, the transcendent 'father'...Thus Binah is the principle of all distinctions although the supreme mother is by no means rigorous, yet rigour emanates from her. Binah is unity in multitude and the multitude finding unity in her.⁷⁷

A. E. Waite remarks that "there seems to be nothing more unfortunate in the long attempts to construe the Kabbalah in a Christian sense than the presentation of the Shekhinah as Christ."⁷⁸ In fact, a complete misinterpretation of the term Shekhinah itself, whether or not in its Kabbalistic sense, has misled many a writer to draw mistaken conclusions as to the identity of the Messiah and the prophecies concerning his appearance and the restoration of the primal perfection of Creation. It is most important to remember that the whole impetus of the Zoharic

⁷⁷Schaya, op. cit., p. 41.

⁷⁸Waite, op. cit., p. 588

thesis is that the manifestation of God on earth is in the form of Shekhinah, but Latin theology postulates a Christ form.

Shekhinah is another representation of the final Sephirah, Malkuth. As the passive and receptive principle, the end-point of all the emanations of the Sephirah, Malkuth is called the "woman" or "wife," the "queen" of the divine king. As the generative cause, manifesting by cosmic reproduction all that she has "inherited" from the "father" (Hokhmah), from the "supreme mother" (Binah) and from the "son" (Tifereth), she is called the "lower mother"; and in the aspect of uncreated substance, "pure and incomprehensible," she is called the "daughter" and "virgin of Israel." Finally, inasmuch as she manifests in the midst of the cosmos the unity of the divine emanations--or certain of their aspects--of which she thus represents the descent or direct revelation, she is called Shekhinah, the "immanence" or "real presence of God"; and, when the immanence takes the form of the mystical body of Israel, she bears the name "community of Israel." Malkuth, the "lower mother," is from the cosmological point of view what Binah, the "highest mother," is from the ontological point of view; like the latter, she is on the one hand the "mirror" and on the other the "prism" of divine emanations. The two symbolic representations among many that are singular importance for an understanding of the Kabbalistic Shekhinah are: its identification on the one hand with the mystical Ecclesia of Israel and on the other hand with the soul (neshamah),⁷⁹ the expression of the mystical presence in each man.

⁷⁹The Zohar distinguishes three dimensions of the human soul. In ascending order of spirituality, they are: Nefesh, the "vital" or "natural" soul; Ruah, "spirit"; and Neshamah, the "super" or "innermost" soul that contains the divine "spark."

Gershom G. Scholem magnificently summarizes⁸⁰ the wide variety of images and symbols which the Shekhinah has inhabited, and he proposes the dichotomy of immanence-transcendence, activity-passivity, maleness-femaleness which the identity of Shekhinah brings to the fore. In essence, Shekhinah, like Kabbalah, is composed of a resolution of contrary movements, a reconciliation of opposites. In all the numerous references to the Shekhinah--in the Talmud and the Midrashim--there is no hint that it represents a feminine element in God.⁸¹ For these writers the Community has not yet become a mystical hypostasis of some divine force; it is simply the personification of the real Israel. The introduction of this idea was one of the most important and lasting innovations of Kabbalah. Traces are found already in the Bahir with its gnostic tinct; that is, the "lower Sefirah" of the last aeon on the rim of the pleroma, represents the "daughter of light" who falls into the abyss of matter.

The notion of female potencies in God, which attain their fullest expression in the tenth and last Sefirah, represents of course a re-pristination of myth that seems utterly incongruous in Jewish thinking....In talmudic and non-Kabbalistic Rabbinical Judaism the Shekhinah--literally in-dwelling of God in this world--is taken to mean simply God Himself--His omnipresence and activity in the world and especially in Israel....It is very different in the usage of the Kabbalah, beginning with the Bahir....Here the Shekhinah becomes an aspect of God, or a quasi-independent feminine element within Him.. ..Often regarded with the utmost misgiving by strictly Rabbinical, non-Kabbalistic Jews, often distorted into inoffensiveness by embarrassed Kabbalistic apologists, this mythical conception of the feminine principle of the Shekhinah as a providential guide of Creation achieved enormous popularity among the masses of the Jewish people,

⁸⁰Scholem, On The Kabbalah, pp. 104-8, 138-42, 147-51.

⁸¹See J. Abelson's The Immanence of God in Rabbinical Literature (London: MacMillan, 1912), Chapter Nine.

so showing here the Kabbalists had uncovered one of the primordial religious impulses still latent in Judaism.⁸²

Scholem also notes that with this revelation of the female identity of the Shekhinah through the Kabbalists, the Song of Songs gained an added allegorical dimension in that all the references to the Community of Israel as "daughter" and "bride" were now transferred to the Shekhinah.

In the Bahir and the Zohar, there occurs the symbol of the Shekhinah as the "soul" (neshamah) and anima mundi. The sphere of the Shekhinah as the dwelling place of the soul is an entirely new conception in Kabbalah. The highest abode of the soul known to older Jewish systems was in or under God's "throne." The notion that the soul had its origin in the feminine precinct within God Himself was of far-reaching importance for the psychology of the Kabbalistic tradition. The divine "throne" is the first crystallization of all the creatural possibilities. It synthesizes all their spiritual, subtle and corporeal, or prototypical, celestial, and terrestrial aspect. This synthetic creation serves as a "vehicle" for divine immanence; when the Shekhinah comes down in its "chariot" to the lower limit of the cosmic expanse, all created things issue from it and open out on their respective existential planes. The "throne" is the celestial revelation of the Shekhinah, and God's "footstool" is His terrestrial radiation; in the heavens, the spirit is revealed through subtle and animic substance, and on earth, not only through this, but in coarse matter also.

⁸²Scholem, On the Kabbalah, pp. 105ff. See Raphael Patai's The Hebrew Goddess (New York: KTAV Pub. House, 1967) for an archaeological exploration of the "primordial religious impulse."

Scholem writes of the dual nature of the Shekhinah, as the end-point and resolution of the right (mercy) and left (justice) hands of the Sephirothic hierarchy:

Both as woman and soul, the Shekhinah has its terrible aspect. Insofar as all the preceding Sefiroth are encompassed in it and can exert a downward influence only through its mediation, the powers of mercy and of stern judgment are alternately preponderant in the Shekhinah, which as such is purely receptive and 'has nothing of its own'....As the Zohar puts it: 'At times the Shekhinah is the "Tree of Death," demonically cut off from the Tree of Life. While in most other contexts she is the merciful mother of Israel, she becomes at this stage the vehicle of the power of punishment and of stern judgment.'⁸³

The final "He" of YHVH, Tetragrammaton, represents the pure and imperceptible substance of the Shekhinah. Israel became one and blessed when the Shekhinah entered the Holy Land and took up its abode in the Temple of Jerusalem, where the High Priest blessed all the people with the Shem hamephorash. This conception of the ambivalence of the alternating phases of the Shekhinah is related to its exile (Galut) from the Holy Land and the Temple. The exile of the Shekhinah goes back to the Talmud. "In every exile into which the children of Israel went, the Shekhinah went with them" (Megillah, 29a). In the Talmud this means only that God's presence was always with Israel in its exile.

In the Kabbalah, however, it is taken to mean that a part of God Himself is exiled from God. These two ideas, the exile of the Ecclesia of Israel in the Midrash and the exile of the soul from its original home --a conception found in many religions and not only among the gnostics-- fused in the Kabbalist myth of the exile of the Shekhinah.

⁸³Ibid, pp. 106-07.

This exile is sometimes represented in the banishment of the queen or of the king's daughter by her husband or father. Sometimes the Shekhinah is represented as overpowered by the demonic powers of the "other side," which break into her realm, subjugate her, and make her subservient to their activities of stern judgment. Sometimes Shekhinah is designated in the Zohar as "the beautiful virgin who has no eyes," that is, who has lost her eyes from weeping in exile. In exile the Shekhinah wears the somber dress of mourning.

The created Torah, torah beri-ah, is the outer garment of the Shekhinah. The pure spirituality of the Torah requires the physical garments, the commandments and prohibitions. If man had not sinned, the Shekhinah might have dispensed with such a covering. An unveiled Torah would be the Torah of the Tree of Life. As it is, she needs a covering, like a woman who must hid her poverty. Thus every sinner may be likened to a man who robs the Shekhinah of her garments. The Torah of the Tree of Knowledge is a veiled Torah and its garments are identical with the tradition, with the Judaism of the commandments and the Halakkah, with Judaism as it is known by history. A man who carries out the commandments of the Torah is as one who clothes the Shekhinah in her garments, who causes her to appear in the earthly world. At the time of redemption it will no longer need these garments since that redemption will signify a restoration of the state of Paradise in which Adam and Eve stood naked within the context of the pristine life.

In exile the inner Torah was unrecognizable or rather recognizable only by great initiates. But in the redemption it will be visible to every man. Cardozo says: "When the dross of the husks is removed

(i.e. after the reintegration of all things), the world will no longer need to keep those garments in good conditions."⁸⁴ A Kabbalistic tradition is the rising of the student in the middle of the night to study the Sacred Scripture. In Kabbalah such dedication on the part of Man adorns the Bride Shekhinah with precious stones as the Bridegroom enters the Garden to unite with her and pour forth blessings on the world. At compline, the monk rises and prays "Salve Regina."

The deeper the Community of Israel sank into exile the more radiant became the Messianic hope which burst through it and transfigured it. At the heart of a cheerless reality lay a great image of rebirth, the myth of exile and redemption, which assumed such vast dimensions with the Kabbalists and accounts for their prolonged historical influence, particularly with the development of Lurianic Kabbalism (which at heart is the "Kabbalism" Harold Bloom bases his study on, with Freudian twists). The name of the Messiah is linked chiefly with two of the Sefiroth: Hokhmah and Tifereth. P. L. B. Drach accounts for the confusion of Messiah (as Hokhmah) and Shekhinah (as Malkuth):

He is the man in transcendence, the man who is allocated in one place, to the Sephirah Chokmah as the Logos....He is also the sacred moon on high, having no other light than that which it receives from the Sun above; but it is to be noted that the Shekhinah is also symbolized by the moon and this has led to a precarious and indeed impossible identification of the Messiah as the Shekhinah incarnate as God's sublunary immanence. It might be said on the same evidence that Solomon was an incarnation of Messiah and Moses also, for both had the moon as a symbol.⁸⁵

⁸⁴Gershom G. Scholem's The Messianic Idea in Judaism (New York: Schocken, 1971), pp. 74ff.

⁸⁵P. L. B. Drach, De L'Harmonie entre l'Église et la Synagogue (Paris: Mouton, 1929), I., pp. 184-85. My translation.

Gershom G. Scholem discusses the differences between Rabbinical Judaism's and Kabbalism's unique conceptions of Messianism and, Christianity's.

Judaism, in all of its forms and manifestations, has always maintained a concept of redemption as an event which takes place publicly, on a stage of history and within the community. It is an occurrence which takes place in the visible world, and which cannot be conceived apart from such a visible appearance. In contrast Christianity conceives of redemption as an event in the spiritual and unseen realm, an event which is reflected in the soul, in the private world of each individual, and which effects an inner transformation which need not correspond to anything outside. Even the civitas dei of Augustine, which within the confines of Christian dogmatics and in the interest of the Church has made the most far-reaching attempt both to retain and to reinterpret the Jewish categories of redemption is a community of the mysteriously reduced within an unredeemed land.⁸⁶

However, ironically, the Jewish conception of the personality of the Messiah is surprisingly colorless, one might almost say anonymous, particularly when it is compared with the powerful impact which the personality of Jesus Christ made upon the Christian mind.

As Harold Bloom suggests in the theme of his work, Jewish Messianism is in its origins and by its nature--a theory of catastrophe. This theory stresses the revolutionary, cataclysmic element in the transition from the historical present to the Messianic future. This theory, however, must be related only to Rabbinic Judaism. In the Kabbalistic tradition, there is a concentrated interiorization of these impulses toward the utopian and restorative factors and, in a sense, a reduction of the historical identity of a Messiah. Of course, Sabbatianism alone stands as the major exception in the Kabbalistic tradition; but then

⁸⁶Scholem, The Messianic Idea, p. 1.

Sabbatianism also included a female Messiah.

The spirit of the Messiah is that of the Ancient of Days or of YAH, his real presence in the seventh heaven: the "spirit of Elohim" or of the divine immanence, which "hovers over the face of the waters" and illuminates them. One form of the Messiah is that of the celestial man (Adam Kadmon) seated upon the throne; and his substance is the pure emanation of ether (avir). He is one with but not identified with the triple immanent principle of Shekhinah-Metatron-Avir. He is the universal mediator who enters the "heaven of heavens" or the celestial "holy of holies" and reemerges from it to manifest the divine will to all the created worlds. He performs the redemptive act in the name of the "living God." The mystery of his perfection lies, in fact, not only in the predominance of his uncreated nature but also in that his created nature is purely redemptive; the Messiah precedes, rules, and saves the whole of creation. "When the creation of the world began, the Messiah king (already) was, for he came to the spirit (of God) even before the world was created" (Pesikta Rabba, 142b). He descends and ascends through all the heavens in order to perform with the prophets the universal saving function. This heavenly ministry is reflected on the temporal and terrestrial plane in the succession of prophets who bring the Messianic light, each in a particular form according to the Sephirothic manifestation predominating in that particular time cycle or segment or part of humanity, e.g., the Messiah is the incarnation of Hokhmah, Moses of Binah, Abraham of Hesed, Isaac of Din, Jacob of Tifereth.

Scholem summarizes the early Kabbalists' relationship to redemption and the Messiah:

The early Kabbalists--from the twelfth century until the expulsion from Spain in 1492--had little to add to the popular myth of redemption, for their faces were turned not to the End of Days but to the primal days of Creation. They hoped for a particular and mystical redemption for each individual, to be achieved by escaping from the turbulence, perplexity, chaos, and storms of the actual course of history to the beginnings of history....For they believed that to know the 'ladder of ascent'....would teach us the way back to our inward home....The Kabbalist who was prepared to follow this path of inwardness would be liberated and redeemed by the fact that he himself in the depths of his own soul would seek a way of return to God, to the source whence he was hewn....The Zohar follows talmudic Aggadah in seeing redemption not as the product of inward progress in the historical world, but as a supernatural miracle involving the gradual illumination of the world by the light of the Messiah.⁸⁷

The ethics of such a belief has much in common with that of a "Marxist" Christian: a man who observes a commandment is no longer merely observing a commandment; for his act has a universal significance, he is indirectly amending something. The Messiah himself will not bring the redemption; rather, he symbolizes the advent of redemption, the completion of the task of emendation. It is not surprising that little importance is given to the human personality of the Messiah in Lurianic literature, for the Kabbalists had no special need of a personal Messiah. But like all mystics, they were at once conservatives and radicals. Since tradition spoke of a personal Messiah, they accepted him while revolutionizing the content of the traditional idea.

The appearance of the Messiah is nothing but the consummation of the continuous process of Restoration, of Tikkun. In a sense the Tikkun is not so much a restoration of Creation--which though planned was never fully carried out--as its first complete fulfillment. Thus fundamentally every man and especially every Jew participates in the process of Tikkun.

⁸⁷Ibid, pp. 38-39.

The coming of the Messiah means no more than a signature under a document that all men write. The true nature of the Messiah is therefore mystical, and its historical and national aspects are merely ancillary symptoms which constitute a visible symbol of the consummation. Everything that man does, reacts somewhere and somehow on this complicated process of Tikkun. Every event and every domain of existence faces at once inwardly and outwardly.

The first tables of the Law, say the Kabbalists, were the light and doctrine of the Messiah, the outpouring of universal deliverance, the source of eternal life on earth. In the Messianic age, every single man in Israel will read the Torah in accordance with the meaning peculiar to his root. And thus also is the Torah understood in Paradise in which Man has become a higher spiritual being. The light of the Moon will have been regenerated. In the Messianic age God will also reveal to men the "white" of the Torah whose letters have become invisible to them-- a new Torah of Life and Light.

There is a legend related by Nathan of Gaza, adopted in a perverted manner by the Sabbatians, that bears a striking resemblance to the event that shakes the celestial universe and the Harrowing of Hell on which Dante's Vergil muses:

Or vuo' che sappi, che l'altra fiata
 Ch'io discesi quaggiu nel basso inferno,
 Questa roccia non era ancor cascata.
 Ma certo poco pria, se ben discerno,
 Che venisse colui che la gran preda
 Levo a dite del cerchio superno,
 Da tutte parti l'alta valle feda
 Tremo si, ch'io pensai che l'universo
 Sentisse amor, per lo quale a chi creda
 Piu volte il mondo in Caos converso:
 Ed in quel punto questa vecchia roccia
 Qui ed altrove tal fece riverso (Inferno XII:34-42).

When, following the Breaking of the Vessels, some sparks of the divine light, radiating from Ain Sof in order to create forms and shapes in the primal space, fell into the abyss, there also fell the soul of the Messiah which was embedded in that original divine light. Since the beginning of the Creation, this soul has dwelt in the depth of the great abyss, held in the prison of Kelipoth (the stony shells)...Together with this most holy soul at the bottom of the abyss there dwell the 'serpents' which torment it and try to seduce it. To these 'serpents' the 'holy serpent' is given over which is the Messiah--for has not the Hebrew word for serpent, Nahash, the same numerical value as the word for Messiah, Mashiah? Only in the measure in which the process of the Tikkun of all the world brings about the selection of good and evil in the depths of the primal space, is the soul of the Messiah freed of its bondage. When the process of perfection, in which this soul is at work in its 'prison' and for which it struggles with the 'serpents' or 'dragon' is completed--which, however, will not be the case before the end of the Tikkun generally--the soul of the Messiah will leave its prison and reveal itself to the world in an earthly incarnation.⁸⁸

⁸⁸Scholem, The Messianic Idea, p. 297.

CHAPTER II

THE KABBALISTIC LITERARY TRADITION

While the following discussion of the elementary documents of the Kabbalistic tradition, as Coleridge may have come to know it, can profess in no way to be exhaustive, it aims to provide the reader with some basic descriptions of these documents to enable him to realize the vast influence of the literature that flooded Continental and British religions and philosophical thought during the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries. I hope the discussion will at least sketch the basis for Coleridge's conception of the Kabbalistic tradition.

The main concentration of this segment will be the texts of the Sepher Yetsirah, the Sepher Zohar, the Bahir, and the Pardes Rimmonim. Of the latter two, Coleridge assuredly had no first-hand knowledge--not even in translation; but he was probably aware of their significance to the metaphysics of the Kabbalah from secondary sources. The former two, classified by all authorities as the chief documents of the tradition, were inaccessible to Coleridge in the original, though there is more of a likelihood that Coleridge could have read the succinct Sepher Yetsirah in the original than the voluminous Sepher Zohar in its idiosyncratic Aramaic commingled with classical Hebrew. We know that Coleridge's classical Hebrew equipped him, even in later life, to work on a few verses a day from the Old Testament but that he balked at the difficulty of editing a collection of Judaica which he ultimately turned over to his esteemed friend

and mentor Hyman Hurwitz. "Some years ago Mr. Murray proposed to me to make a Volume of such Tales etc. as those entitled Specimens of Rabbinical Wisdom in THE FRIEND and offered me a fixed Sum--. I found in trying that I had not learning enough, either in my head or in my Library--and that the time, effort and waste of Health in going to town from one Library to another to consult rare books--viz. Latin Translations of the Works in Syro-Chaldaic or Rabbinical Hebrew, would make it a dear bargain for me."¹

By no means can we discount the possibilities of Coleridge's unrecorded consultations of manuscripts in the original and in translation which were so widespread as to even rival the reading of the Bible and the Talmud among Jew and Gentile throughout Europe.² Coleridge travelled extensively and had access to some of the oldest collections of manuscripts available to a voracious "literary comorant": the Universities, Malta, Rome, etc. However, as a later segment of this study will demonstrate, there are no extensive quotations from these documents but only glancing references in his syncretistic endeavors to indicate an eclectic, albeit superficial, acquaintance with these works garnered from translations of the originals or through descriptions of their contents by third and fourth-hand commentators.

This chapter, therefore, first examines the contents and history of the aforementioned cardinal documents of the Kabbalistic tradition and then describes the work of the "Christian Kabbalists" who had first-hand

¹Letter of May 5, 1825 in The Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. Earl Leslie Griggs (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956) IV, 43. Hereafter referred to as CL.

²Scholem, The Kabbalah. This is the pervasive hypothesis.

knowledge of these documents and for whom Coleridge regularly expresses admiration or at least interest in his letters, notebooks, and writings. These Christian Kabbalists were regarded as the foremost thinkers of their times in disciplines other than theology and philosophy. The purpose for this, at times, tedious discussion is to provide the scholar with the groundwork for an understanding of Coleridge's documented association with the leading Christian Kabbalists of Europe and Britain and their individual contributions to the formation of his awareness and appreciation of some of the basic documents and ideas of Kabbalistic theology, philosophy, and theosophy--already in decline and disrepute in his day.

The most important collections of the esoteric doctrine of Judaism are the Sepher Yetsirah, the "Book of Formation," the doctrine of which is believed to derive from Abraham, and the Sepher Zohar, the "Book of Splendor," upon which the present exposition of the mysteries of Israel is chiefly based. These collections and other authoritative mystical treatises, principally the Bahir ("Book of Light") and the Pardes Rimmonim ("The Garden of Pomegranates"), which have been preserved down to our day, make it possible for us to discover the Kabbalah, the true "reception of divine wisdom," behind the letters of Sacred Scripture. But, as the tradition itself has it, the "words" of Torah are ever incomplete, signifying in one age only stern judgment and in another mercy, until the Jubilee when all shall be reconciled; so also it seems that, in the present age, the controversy over the authorship and dating of the basic Kabbalistic documents is doomed to self-complicating hypotheses based on fragmentary evidence and historical hearsay: the documented truth of the genuine origin and authorship veiled in the smoke of cultural holocausts and religious persecutions.

The two seminal doctrines of Kabbalism with which this study is concerned actually represent two different strands, themes, or emphases of the Kabbalistic tradition. The Sepher Zohar explores many of the mysteries involved in the pleroma of God, the nature of the Glory of the Throne or "Chariot" in which the Divine reveals Himself to the heavenly hosts. This Kabbalistic perspective is known as merkabah mysticism. The existence of speculative Gnostic tendencies in the immediate neighborhood of merkabah mysticism has its parallel in the writings grouped together under the title of Maaseh Bereshith, devoted to the contemplation of the mystery of the theogonic and cosmogonic processes. These include the Sepher Yetsirah representing a theoretical approach to the mysteries of cosmology and cosmogony. The Book Yetsirah describes in broad outlines, but with certain astronomico-astrological and anatomical detail, how the cosmos was built--chiefly from the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. According to Phineas Mordell, there is no book in Jewish literature that is so difficult to understand as the epigrammatic Sepher Yetsirah. -- "It was originally written in an obscure, half-mystical style."³

The Sepher Yetsirah is divided into six chapters, the first being concerned with the office of the Sephiroth in creation and the remaining five with what have been termed the Instruments--namely, the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. The word "formation" suggests a work performed on antecedently existing material, e.g., the "formless and void" or "mire and clay." The Yetziratic Lord corresponds somewhat to the Masonic description of God as the Great Architect of the universe. After the first chapter,

³Phineas Mordell, The Origin of Letters and Numerals According to the Sepher Yetsirah (New York: Samuel Weiser, Inc., 1975), p. 54.

no mention is made of the ten Sephiroth.

Two points must be noted in a discussion of Yetsiratic doctrine. One is the absolute distinctness between God and the Instruments of Creation, whether numbers or letters, which is established by this earliest Kabbalistic work. Separated from all number and transcending all expression, He is represented as a Faithful King sojourning in eternity and ruling the Sephiroth from His holy seat. The second point concerns the emanation of the Sephiroth, to which, in preference to their "creation," later Kabbalism inclines. There is little on the face of the Book of Formation to countenance this view. According to A. E. Waite, a literal rendering of the term "emanate" would be better expressed as "go forth." For, the Sephiroth appear as the instruments and servants of the King of Ages, informed by Whose word they do actually go forth "and returning, fall prostrate in adoration before the Throne."⁴ Thus, the Sepher Yetsirah introduces an early form of the doctrine of the Logos; for the universe was created by "three forms of expression: Numbers, Letters, and Words" (I:1). "It is further said that the Word of God is in the Sephiroth, otherwise Numerations or Digits; that Voice, Spirit, and Word are together the Spirit of the Holy One; that creation as it is and all creation to come are already or will be formed by the twenty-two letters." It is said, therefore, that the end of the Sephiroth is bound to their beginning, "as the flame is bound to 'The Firebrand'" (I:7).

While the first work which mentions the Sephiroth leaves their point of origin in obscurity, it depicts God as the active Former, Artificer, and

⁴Sepher Yetsirah, tr. Knut Stenring (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1970) I:6.

Maker, "Who graved, sculptured, and builded." Anthropomorphism is postulated therefore at the very root of Being. From the three "Mother" letters --Aleph, Mem, and Shin--Air, Water, and Fire were created (III:2). The seven planets were brought forth from the seven double letters, as also the directions of Space and that Holy Palace (Hekhalah) in the center which sustains all things, an allusion to the Divine Immanence⁵ operating in created things as an unmanifest behind the manifest; and the zodiacal signs were drawn from the twelve simple letters. To this we may compare later Zoharic doctrine, according to which the letters "had been emanated" one from another; and thereafter the world was created by their help, that it might manifest the Divine Name as an Indwelling Presence therein. Consistent with the general Kabbalistic hypothesis that Man is a microcosmos attuned to the great world, each letter "governs" a part of man. The Hebrew letters which correspond in the macrocosm to Air, Water, and Fire answer in the microcosm of man to head, belly, and chest; the seven double letters which produced the seven planets are in analogy with the seven "gateways," so called, in the human organism, namely, eyes, ears, nostrils, and mouth. So also the celestial zodiac was produced by means of the twelve simple letters, which are in correspondence also and after the same manner with twelve organs--external and internal--of the human economy: hands, feet, stomach, and so on.

Its method of exploring the works of creation and the importance it attaches to numbers and letters are instructive for an understanding of how this principle was later abused by ignorance and superstition. For it is

⁵J. Abelson, The Immanence of God in Rabbinical Literature, pp. 1-12.

by its very concrete and poetic approach to express the mystical vision that the Sepher Yetsirah became regarded as a formulaic expression of the mystery of Creation. Though the treatise is presented as a theoretical but inspired guide to the structure of creation, it came to be regarded as a manual of thaumaturgic practices, or at least as a statement of general principles, to be supplemented by more detailed instructions--perhaps oral--concerning the application of these principles. The affinity between the linguistic theory set forth in the book and the fundamental magical belief in the power of letters and words and their combinations is obvious. Abraham Ben Abulafia, an early Kabbalistic commentator already warns against the thaumaturgic possibilities in a misuse of the combination and correspondence of letters and the members of the body: "...one has to be most careful not to move a consonant or a vowel from its position, for if he errs in reading the letter commanding a certain member, that member may be torn away and may change its place or alter its nature immediately and be transformed into a different shape so that in consequence that person may become a cripple."⁶ "With 'One' the living God of the Universe graved and hewed out voice, air, and speech, and this is the Holy Spirit. With 'Two' God graved and hewed out void and chaos. Void is a green line that surrounds the whole universe, and chaos refers to viscous stones, sunk in the abyss, whence water comes forth. With 'Three' God graved and hewed out mud and clay. He arranged them like a garden bed. He set them up like a wall. He covered them like a pavement and poured upon them snow and the earth was formed. With 'Four'

⁶Quoted in Gershom G. Scholem, Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism, p. 138.

God graved and hewed out the Throne of Glory, the Ophanim, the Seraphim, the Holy Animals (Hayoth), and the ministering angels" (I: 9-12). It was after the revelation of these mysteries to Abraham that he received the manifestation of God and that the Covenant was instituted. According to the expression of the original, God "bound the twenty-two letters" on the tongue of the patriarch and discovered to him His secrets.

There is a dual tradition in Kabbalistic Jewry according to which: (1) Abraham wrote the Sepher Yetsirah, the reason being given by A. Saadya, namely, to defend the unity of God against the dualists and tritheists of Babylon; but alternatively (2) it was committed by God into the patriarch's hands, "as a bride is given to her husband." As has been mentioned, the attribution of the Sepher Yetsirah to the patriarch Abraham is imbedded in the text itself. Depending from this, there arose the rabbinical legend which affirms that Abraham transmitted it orally to his sons by whom it was perpetuated in turn until certain "sages of Jerusalem" committed it finally to writing, so that the tradition might not perish, even when the chosen people themselves seemed on the eve of perishing in 70 A. D. Tradition also refers the invention of letters to Enoch, and it is to him that one must track the teachings embodied in the Sepher Yetsirah. Its compiler, then, is the patriarch Abraham, the heir of the secrets of Enoch and the father of "initiation" in Israel. Other scholars, fascinated by the possibility that the Sepher Yetsirah is the earliest Hebrew grammar--containing not only the fundamental rules of Hebrew orthography but also

an account of the origin of letters and numerals⁷--regard the Sepher Yetsirah as the repository of the hieroglyphical alphabet enshrined by Moses in his Kabbalah, during his sojourn with Sarah in the Nile country. Modern scholarship, however, disregards all of the traditional arguments as the fancies of "romantic dreamers."

Critics from the time of Jacob Franck have been most divided in their opinion concerning the age of the Sepher Yetsirah as well as the identity of its author. Some of them believe it to be a production of the first or second century B. C., pre Christian in character with vestiges of the language and philosophy of Aristotle; others place it between the third and sixth century A. D., composed by some Jewish Neo-Pythagorean. Most ascribe it to the Geonic period, ranging from the seventh to the ninth of the Christian era.

A. E. Waite provides a representative approach to the solution of the problem:

Have we any ground for believing that the doctrine of the Sepher Yetsirah is older than the Egyptian captivity, as its legend affirms? This question must be answered by an emphatic negative. The doctrine under notice gives prominence to the sacred and divine character of the Hebrew alphabet, and we have no warrant for supposing that the art of writing was possessed by Abraham. Every

⁷S. Karppe, Etudes sur les origines et la nature du Zohar, precede d'une etude sur l'histoire de la Kabale (Paris: Ancienne Librairie, 1901), pp. 108-09.

A. S. H. Vincent, "La Kabale et les Numeros," Journal de Mathematiques, (1939), pp. 261-280.

See also Mordell.

probability is against it and every authority is agreed on this point. But the Sepher Yetsirah contains, by implication at least, the doctrine of an occult power and sanctity inherent in certain Divine Names, and we know that this belief is very old in humanity, that it is found at an early period in Chaldea, Akkadia, and so forth. It is ridiculous for modern intelligence, but it is of great antiquity, and as it belongs to those countries with which Israel was in contact, there is reason to think that it may have become part of the religious baggage of the Hebrew people long before any master in Israel dreamed of the Sepher Yetsirah, the alphabet of Akiba, or even the Mishna itself....On the other hand, we have no evidence to show that the doctrine of the Instruments of Creation is much prior to the date of the treatise which develops it, it has no history previously, and can be placed therefore at most in the Talmudic era, *i. e.* in post-Christian times! It should be added that the Sepher Yetsirah is part of a considerable literature of an occult or cryptic complexion covering the period between the Talmudic age and the first report of the Zohar.⁸

The Sepher Yetsirah is supposed to embody a tradition handed down from the time of Abraham, and there is no doubt that the uncritical spirit of several centuries represented the patriarch as its author. This does not seem, however, as some modern criticism has supposed, to have been the view adopted universally by the Jewish learning which accepted the document. That he received and he transmitted it was held undoubtedly, but the work itself is not pretended to have been reduced to writing until after the destruction of Jerusalem, and tradition has ascribed its formal authorship to Rabbi Akiba ben Joseph, the pupil of R. Joshua ben Hananiah, who was himself the successor, as he was also the opponent of Rabbi Gamaliel.

Harold Bloom consigns the composition of the Sepher Yetsirah to no later than the third century and ascribes its authorship to Akiba

⁸A. E. Waite, The Holy Kabbalah, pp. 42ff.

martyred by the Romans, which fact might "account for much of the book's prestige."⁹ Franck's excursion into the problem less readily ascribes the Book of Formation to Akiba:

Akiba is less improbable as the author of Sepher Yetsirah than Abraham, yet we believe this theory to be equally baseless.... Several modern critics have fancied that there were two different works under the same title, Sepher Yetsirah, one of which, attributed to the patriarch Abraham, having long since disappeared, while the other, much more modern was preserved. This opinion is founded on gross ignorance. Morinus borrowed it from a chronicler of the sixteenth century, who, speaking of Akiba, said: 'Akiba is he who composed the Book of Formation, in honor of the Kabbalah; but there is another Book of Formation, composed by Abraham, to which Rabbi Moses ben Nahman wrote a great and marvelous commentary.' This commentary, written at the close of the thirteenth century but printed in the Mantua edition several years after the above-mentioned chronicle, evidently relates to the book now in our hands. It faithfully preserves the expression of the text, and it is evident that it was not read by the sixteenth century historian....So the author of the Book of Formation is yet undiscovered; nor is it we who are to rend the veil which hides his name. We even doubt whether that is possible with the feeble means at our disposal.¹⁰

Franck's evaluation remains to the present-day. Abelson works from Franck's thesis and has rather neatly said the final word on the subject until more reliable evidence is forthcoming.

Mr. Stenring accepts the authorship of Akiba as if it was of common recognition...but it was challenged by Moses of Cordova in the sixteenth century and Mr. Mordell does something to show that the attribution came about through a misconception. He is disposed on his own part to refer the original portion to a pre-Talmudic period and the additamenta to an undetermined date between 750 and 931 A. D. The unknown author of a commentary on the Sefer Yetsirah preserved in the Bodleian and referred to the thirteenth century ascribes it to Joseph ben Uzziel by re-

⁹Harold Bloom, Kabbalah and Criticism, p. 22.

¹⁰Adolphe Franck, The Kabbalah, p. 33.

velation of the prophet Jeremiah--meaning apparently that Joseph was the latter's disciple--or according to another codex by communication from Joseph's grandfather Ben Sira, he being the alleged grandson of Jeremiah and one of the supposed authors of Ecclesiasticus. Hereof is some part only of traditional ascriptions and at this it may be left as neither date nor authorship is likely to reach a settlement.¹¹

One of the earliest references to the circulation of the Sepher Yetsirah in Christian Europe was by St. Agobard Archbishop of Lyons who wrote against trials by ordeal and other superstitions in the ninth century. The evidence is based more in inference rather than clear demonstration and is confined to two short passages in the Epistola S. Agobardi...De Judaeis Superstitionibus.¹² In the first, the Jews are branded for their gross notions of the Deity, on the grounds that they believed Him to be possessed of a bodily form, having distinct members and lineaments, including organs of seeing, hearing, speaking, and so forth. In the second passage it is said: "Further, they believe the letters of their alphabet to have existed from everlasting, and before the beginning of the world to have received divine offices, in virtue of which they should preside over created things."¹³ That the Sefer Yetsirah was already known in Italy in the tenth century is proven by the commentary of Sabbatai Donnolo. Scholem refers to the religious poetry

¹¹Abelson, op. cit., p. 92.

¹²T. Basnage, Histoire des Juifs, tr. Thomas Taylor (London: 1708) pp. 590 ff.

¹³S. Agobardi, Lugduniensis Episcopi, Opera Omnia, Patrologia Cursus Completus, (Paris: J. P. Migne, 1811), pp. 78 ff.

of the Jews of Southern Italy--especially the hymns of Amutai ben Shefatiah--which exhibits traces of Jewish mysticism both in its style and its contents.¹⁴

The Sepher Yetsirah was introduced to formal Christian scholarship in 1552 in a Latin translation by William Postel, ten years prior to the first issue of the printed Hebrew text which took place at Mantua in 1562. The Mantua edition was accompanied by five commentaries. Its full title in Latin summarizes well the belief in the identity of the author and the document's esoteric contents and preservation: Abrahami Patriarchae Liber Jezirah, sive Formationis Mundi, Patribus quidem Abrahami Tempora praecedentibus revelatus, sed ab ipso etiam Abrahamo expositus Isaaco, et per profetarum manus posteritati conservatis, ipsis autem 72 Mosis auditoribus in secundo divinae veritatis loco, hoc est in ratione, quae est posterior autoritate, habitus. Vertebat ex Hebraeis et commentariis illustrabat 1551, ad Babylonis ruinam et corrupti mundi finem, Gulielmus Postellus, Parisiis, 1552. A second Latin rendering¹⁵ belongs to the year 1587, when it appeared in the first and only volume of Artis Cabbalisticæ Scriptores under the editorship of Pistorius, ascribed, however, to Reuchlin and Riccius. In 1642 a further edition was published in Amsterdam which contained the Hebrew text and a Latin translation by Rittangelius with a commentary on the Thirty-Two Paths of Wisdom by Rabbi Abraham ben Dior. Other editions of the Sepher Yetsirah were widespread, attesting to its popularity among esotericists, until virtually every national library contained an edition: Lemberg in 1680, Amsterdam in 1713,

¹⁴Scholem, The Kabbalah, p. 84.

¹⁵Both in the collection of the British Museum.

Constantinople in 1719, Zolkiew in 1745, Korze in 1779 (under the editorship of Moses ben Jacob), Grodno in 1806 (accompanied by five commentaries). The first translations into German and English appeared respectively in 1836 and 1877 (Stenring's). Commentaries were written by Eleazar of Worms, Isaac of Dampierre, Elhanan ben Yashar of London, and Ezra of Montcoutou.

The early editions and students of the Sepher Yetsirah--Postel, Pistorius, Rittangelius--hoped that their own zeal would effect the conversion of Israel to the faith of Christ; it is interesting to contrast this enthusiasm with the various motives which actuate the pseudo-occult interest at the present day, fascinated only by lifeless, indeed meaningless, rituals and jumbled totems. However, the Sepher Yetsirah did not escape for long the taint of misconstrued thaumaturgy. The oldest medieval testimonies to the "magical" interpretation of the Sepher Yetsirah are to be found in the writings of Judah ben Barzilai. The fascination with the legendary fabrication of homunculi and golems can be traced back to the Sepher Yetsirah, through Paracelsus and Reuchlins. But the Sepher Yetsirah and the Sepher Zohar are not magic, and that which drew Christian students of the literature and made them seek to fathom the Kabbalistic mystery was assuredly its theosophical and transcendental and not thaumaturgic possibilities. According to Knut Stenring, "the Sephirotic and Alphabetical Theosophy of the Yetziratic Midrashim was developed in the Zohar, and this storehouse of Kabbalism was in turn developed into a formal system by rabbinical devotees of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The system and its sources, being capable of several constructions, were adapted--as I have explained on more than one occasion--by Christian students, from Mirandula to Baron von Rosenroth, for the purpose of

proving to Israel that their expected Messiah had come already in Christ."¹⁶

The next Kabbalistic book of importance appears in the gap between the Sepher Yetsirah and the Sepher Zohar; this "gap" is as close a reliable scholar, such as A. E. Waite,¹⁷ will come to estimating the date of its origin. Harold Bloom characterizes this span of one thousand years of oral tradition as "a vast labyrinth in which the distinctive idioms of Kabbalah were invented, revised, and transmitted in an area ranging from Babylonia to Poland. In these vast reaches of time and space, even Scholem becomes baffled, for the very essence of oral tradition is that it should defeat all historic and critical scholarship."¹⁸ The first appearance of the Book Bahir was in southern France toward 1180; no one is quite sure where it originated. It is alleged on the one hand to be of higher antiquity than any Kabbalistic book and hence of superior importance to the Sepher Yetsirah itself; on the other hand it is often affirmed to be a manifest forgery, the fruit of the inventiveness of Moses de Leon.

The name Bahir is originated from Job xxxvii. 21: "And now men see not the bright light which is in the clouds." The subject matter of the book, which--like the great bulk of the Zohar--is in the form of a dialogue between certain illuminated doctors, explores the mystery inherent in the Divine Names. It also contains a very full exposition of the celebrated Shem hamephorash, or Expanded Name of Deity. According to Scholem, "The Kabbalah of the early thirteenth century was the offspring of a union between an older and essentially Gnostical tradition

¹⁶Stenring, op. cit., p. 8.

¹⁷Waite, The Holy Kabbalah, p. 100.

¹⁸Bloom, op. cit., p. 23.

represented by the book Bahir and the comparatively modern element of Jewish Neoplatonism."¹⁹ Where the Sephiroth, in the Sepher Yetsirah, were essentially only the ten primary numbers with a neo-Pythagorean creative aspect, in the Bahir they become divine principles, powers, supernal lights intelligently aiding in the work of creation. "All the divine powers form a succession of layers and are like a tree"-- we read already in the book Bahir, through which the thirteenth-century Kabbalah became the heir of Gnostical speculation.

Scholem notes that "Here the doctrine of transmigration, Gilgul, also plays a part. One encounters it first in the book Bahir. Unless it goes back to the literary sources of this work, it is reasonable to assume that the Kabbalists of Provence who wrote or edited the book Bahir owe it to the influence of the Catharists, the chief religious force in Provence until 1220, i. e. during the years which saw the rise of Kabbalism. The Catharist heresy, which was only stamped out after a bloody Crusade, represented a late and attenuated form of Manichaeism, and as such clung to the doctrine of metempsychosis, which the Church condemned as heretical."²⁰ Thus, in the Bahir, we see a complex amalgamation of not only divergent strains of Christianity but also a number of un-orthodox Jewish conceptions particularly on the nature of Evil, the pleroma or throne-world of the divinity, and the mythical structure of God's creative powers in the image of the Tree of the World and the Tree of Souls.

In the Bahir's meditation on the Shem Hamephorash, a tradition is cited concerning a Sacred Palace in which the four living creatures, who are the

¹⁹Gershom G. Scholem, On the Kabbalah, p. 175

²⁰Scholem, Trends, pp. 242-43.

holiest of all angels and also the most ancient, correspond to the four letters of the Sacred Name and constitute therefore its image. They are also the connecting link between the world above and that which is below (a basic Kabbalistic identity) presumably because of their relation to the Divine Name, which unifies height and depth. Accordingly a comparison is drawn between those mysteries of Scripture which are concealed from all but initiates and the mysteries of God hidden within His own glory. Scholem summarizes his impressions of one of the "most astonishing, not to say, incredible books in the Hebrew literature" which forms as it were a transition between the bereshith and merkabah mysticism, represented by the Sepher Yetsirah and the Sepher Zohar respectively. "It is a wretchedly written and poorly organized collection of theosophical sayings in the form of Bible commentaries for the most part imputed to imaginary authorities supposedly living in the Talmudic period. It is a very small book consisting of only thirty to forty pages, but these few pages bear witness to a new force in Judaism...the reappearance in the midst of medieval Judaism of a frankly mythical statement....Written in a mixture of learned Hebrew and vernacular Aramaic, it is difficult for even a specialist."²¹

The dating and authorship have never been effectually estimated and still lie in the province of "tradition." Modern scholars refuse to proceed where clear evidence is not forthcoming, recognizing the complex weaving of several traditions which constitute the doctrine of Bahir. Scholem's

²¹Scholem, On The Kabbalah, p. 90. Scholem has recently translated the Sepher ha-Bahir into German, as has Aryeh Kaplan.

analysis remains exemplary as responsible "conjecture" concerning the extent of murky influences on the Book of Light. "This brief document of Kabbalistic theory consists, at least in part, of compilation and editings of much older texts which, together with other writings of the Merkabah school, had made their way to Europe from the East...It can be taken as certain that in addition to the Raza Rabba which appears to have been a cross between a mystical Midrash and a Hekhaloth text, with a strong magical element thrown in, other similar fragments of ancient writings, with Gnostic excerpts written in Hebrew, made their way from the East to Provence. It was thus that remainders of gnostic ideas transmitted in this fashion entered the main stream of mystical thought via the Book Bahir, to become part of the chief influences which shaped the theosophy of the thirteenth-century Kabbalah."²²

Fragments of the Bahir were brought together into a volume and published at Amsterdam in 1651. A reprint of this volume appeared at Berlin in 1706 and was regarded by Jewish and Christian scholars as of such profound occult significance that it had been preserved among the hidden treasures of Israel, in manu Cabbalistarum Germanorum, according to Johann Christoph Wolf.²³ Shem Tov, Buxtorf, Bartolucci, and Buddaeus relate the same legend and agree that the Bahir was regarded by Kabbalists as their oldest document. Wolf also reports that William Postel had rendered the Bahir into Latin, but no translation by Postel has come to light.

²²Scholem, The Kabbalah, pp. 74 ff.

²³Johann Christoph Wolf, Bibliotheca Hebraea (Hamburg-Leipzig: 1709), p. 233.

In a rather effusively romantic comparison, Alphonse Constant epitomizes the widespread attitude in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century that sought to discover the Ur-religion that would unite the existing disparate "sects." Constant thought to approach the discovery through the comparison of common "scientific" characteristics that certain religious myths concealed, e. g., mathematical proportions, electrico-magnetic phenomena, etc. "The Zohar is a genesis of light; the Sepher Yet-sirah is a ladder of truth. Therein are expounded the two and thirty absolute symbols of speech--being numbers and letters. Each letter produces a number, an idea, and a form, so that mathematics are applicable to forms and ideas, even as to numbers, in virtue of an exact proportion and a perfect correspondence. By the science of Sepher Yetsirah the human mind is rooted in truth and in reason; it accounts for all progress possible to intelligence by means of the evolution of numbers. Thus does the Zohar represent absolute Truth while the Sepher Yetsirah furnishes the method of its acquisition, its discernment and application. The entire occult philosophy of the Zohar might be termed the science of equilibrium. The key of numbers is found in the Sepher Yetsirah..."²⁴ Constant's appreciation of the character of the Zohar is curiously consistent with modern evaluations. "The Zohar which is the head and crown of the Kabbalistic sacred books, unveils furthermore all depths and enlightens all obscurities of ancient mythologies and of sciences concealed in the sanctuaries of old...it is a work of initiation and one of the great books of the world, though Sir John Lubbock and others of kindred enterprise did not happen to know of it...it

²⁴Alphonse Constant, (Pseud. Eliphas Levi), The History of Magic, trans. A. E. Waite, (Los Angeles: Borden Pub., 1952), p. 361.

is not a methodical system and presupposes throughout, on the part of its readers, an acquaintance with the tradition which it embodies in allusive form."²⁵

The Sepher ha-Zohar is in form a commentary on the Pentateuch, and its language is partly Aramaic and partly Hebrew. It purports to be a record of discourses carried on between Rabbi Simeon ben Yochai, who lived in the second century of the Common Era and certain contemporary Jewish mystical exegetes. There is a story in the Talmud that Simeon and his son, in order to escape the fury of the Roman persecution, hid themselves in a cave for thirteen years, during which they gave themselves up to those mystical speculations on God, Torah, and the universe which subjects compose the Zohar. Simeon came thus to be regarded as the author of the Zohar. Abelson notes that even the most superficial perusal of any section of the Zohar will convince the reader of the absurdity of this view of its high antiquity.

"Zohar" means literally "radiance" or "brightness." The title is often referred to a verse in Daniel: "And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament." Accordingly the "radiance" of the Torah's divine light is reflected in the mysteries of the Zohar. But when these mysteries are shrouded in the literal meaning, their light is darkened. The literal meaning is darkness; but the Kabbalistic meaning, the mystery, is the Zohar that shines in every line of Scripture. The Zohar is the first book in which the theory of the four methods of interpreting the Scripture--originally, or perhaps simultaneously developed

²⁵Leo Schaya, The Universal Meaning of the Kabbalah, p. 130.

by Christian exegetes--is taken up by a Jewish author.

The contents of the Sepher Zohar has been arranged in many ways, but Gershom G. Scholem's is the most economical organization²⁶ of a work which sprawls over two thousand pages of minutely printed characters of which the only existing modern language edition reproduces about one-half of the essential elements.²⁷ Scholem organizes the Zohar into three strata: (1) Midrash ha-Nelam ("Recondite Exposition") contains a great deal of Scriptural exposition by the method of gematria, i. e., permutations and combinations of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet and the Hebrew numerals; it also contains some allegorical exegesis of Scripture similar to Philo's; (2) the Idra Rabba ("Greater Assembly"), the Idra Zouta ("Lesser Assembly"), the Sitre Torah ("Secrets of the Torah"); the last of these treats largely of Kabbalistic angelology and the mysteries clustering about the Divine Name and the Divine Unity, and the former two amplify on the contents of the Sifra di-Tseniuta ("The Book of Concealed Mystery"), consisting of five sections devoted to the books of the Pentateuch dealing with the mysteries of creation, the human soul, and the relation between spirit and matter; (3) the Raya Mehemna ("The Faithful Shepherd") and Tosefta ("Additions"), the former laying down definite precepts and rules of conduct, the exegesis being usually introduced with the words "The true shepherd saith..." and the latter elaborating of the Sephiroth and the Hekhaloth ("Halls" or "Palaces") picturing with a dazzling literality on the characters the abodes of paradise and hell, the dwelling places

²⁶Scholem, Trends, pp. 159-163.

²⁷Soncino edition.

of the varying grades of the angelic hosts and their dallings with the souls of man (also in this section several tracts concern themselves with astrological and magical themes under the pretext of scriptural exegesis). It is the Sifra di Tseniuta which, owing to its early Latin translation, has represented the Zohar at large for most readers during the span of some 250 years and is regarded with the Sepher Yetsirah as the "fountain heads of all Kabbalism" for the occult initiates of the past in France and England.²⁸

Louis Ginsburg aptly summarizes the pseudepigraphic, homiletical character of the Zohar and its probable heart-felt appeal to its students. For we must remember that Kabbalah is essentially a "popular" religious tradition.

The Zohar does not propound a regular Kabbalistic system, but dilates upon the diverse doctrines of this theosophy, as indicated in the forms and ornaments of the Hebrew alphabet, in the vowel points and accents, in the Divine Name and the letters of which they are composed, in the narratives of the Bible and in the traditional and national stories. The long conversations between the author, R. Simeon ben Yochai and Moses which it records; the short and pathetic prayers inserted therein; the religious anecdotes; the attractive spiritual explanation of Scripture passages, appealing to the hearts and wants of men; the description of the Deity and the Sephiroth under the tender forms of human relationships, comprehensive to the finite mind, such as father, mother, primeval man, matron, bride, white beard, the great and small face, the luminous mirror, the higher heavens, the higher earth, etc. which it gives on every page--made the Zohar a welcome textbook for the students of the Kabbalah, who, by its vivid descriptions of Divine Love could lose themselves in rapturous embraces with the Deity.²⁹

The fundamental note in the Zohar's treatment of the divine nature is the attempt to combine the transcendent and the immanent aspects of the Deity in a single concept. Scholem remarks: "Taken altogether, the

²⁸Waite, The Holy Kabbalah, p. 134.

²⁹Quoted in Waite, p. 117.

spiritual outlook of the Zohar might well be defined as a mixture of theosophic theology, mystical cosmogony and mystical psychology and anthropology. God, the universe and the soul do not lead separate lives, each on its own plane. The original act of creation in fact knows nothing of such clean-cut division which, as we have seen, was the cosmic fruit of human sin. The close interrelation of all three which we find in the Zohar is also characteristic of all later Kabbalism."³⁰ Moral evil, according to the Zohar, always becomes separated and isolated, or enters into a relation for which it is not made but is also essentially one with YHVH..."Evil is indeed something which has its ordained place, but in itself it is dead, it comes to life only because a ray of light, however faint, from the holiness of God falls upon it or because it is nourished and quickened by the sin of man; by itself it is simply the dead residue of the process of light. A spark of God's life burns even in Samael, the personification of evil... This sinister demonic world of evil which forms the dark side of everything living and threatens it from within, exercises a peculiar fascination upon the author of the Zohar."³¹

Out of the controversy which still rages over the dating and authorship of the Zohar, much discussion has arisen concerning the sources and influences which co-mingle in the Zohar: Christian and non-Christian. Most scholars are agreed that however much the Zohar may appear to have been written or compiled by one man with a series of theosophical themes inter-

³⁰Scholem, Trends, p. 243.

³¹Ibid., p. 239.

lacing the disparate parts,³² the subject matter of the Zohar is the evolutionary product of several generations. As has been already mentioned, Catharist and neo-Manichean elements from Provence shadow the author's conception of Evil in the World of Creation. Abelson concludes that "from a survey of the whole subject, one is drawn irresistibly to the conclusion that the Zohar, so far from being a homogeneous work, is a compilation of a mass of material drawn from many strata of Jewish and non-Jewish mystical thought and covering numerous centuries...A veritable storehouse of anachronisms, incongruities, and surprises!"³³ The Zohar has been regarded as "a deposit of the creative folk spirit, and like the Bible and the Talmud--the anonymous work of centuries." Franck, likewise, thought he saw in the Zohar frequent references to Oriental religious beliefs such as Sabeism and even Islamism but dismisses any allusions to Christianity. Assuming that the Zohar is of Castillian origin, he also elaborates on the hypothesis of Tholuck. Though irrefutable evidence was not forthcoming in Tholuck's time, Franck does not dismiss the Islamic influence as quickly as he would other influences. Thus, he presents the hypothesis as a departure for further investigation which has been followed up by modern scholarship. "We are not forced to admit that Gnosticism borrowed a great deal if not precisely from the Zohar as we know it today, at least from its traditions and theories. We shall not separate the hypothesis here refuted from the one which presented the Kabbalah as

³²Scholem and Graetz theory.

³³Abelson, op. cit., p. xi.

an imitation of the mystic philosophy of the Arabs, which came to the fore during the reign of the caliphs near the beginning of the eleventh century, when the philosophy of the Mussulmen first showed traces of mysticism. This opinion, long ago expressed as a mere conjecture, has recently been resurrected by Tholuck, who has lent it the support of his real erudition."³⁴ The influence of the Islamic civilization on the development of European letters has yet to be systematically explored, particularly in the development of the literary tradition of courtly Provence.

In commenting on the style and language of the Zohar, I rely entirely on the testimony of Jacob Franck and Gershom G. Scholem, each at opposite ends of the spectrum of modern scholarship on Jewish mystical doctrines; both, however, agree that the peculiar power of the Zohar has much to do with the strange quality of its highly figurative language and eccentric style which is, in turn, related to the mysterious identity of its author or authors. Franck notes that the style is remarkably uneven, some passages being written almost entirely in Aramaic while in other passages Aramaic terminations are appended to rabbinical Hebrew. "Something must be said here about the language of the Zohar, which has proved to be one of the most important factors of its influence. The sustained chiaroscuro of this peculiar Zohar-Aramaic has overlaid with a venerable patina and a luster of restrained enthusiasm ideas which, if they had been expressed in the sober Hebrew of the thirteenth century, would have had to speak for themselves; in the form which they assumed, they have,

³⁴Franck, p. 46 ff.

one might say, found their native idiom."³⁵ Scholem remarks: "As a stylist the author is inclined to be verbose and longwinded in contrast to the terse and pregnant style of the true Midrash. Where he employs the pointed language of the ancient sages he is usually less successful than they in making himself understood. Often several discourses are skillfully worked into the pattern of a longer story. The whole of these shorter or longer discourses, stories and monologues is assembled in the form of a Midrash to the Torah, the Song of Songs and the Book of Ruth. But because its parts are strung on a selection of Scriptural sayings chosen at random and are best suited to serve as a vehicle for the writer's own train of thought, it is very far from constituting anything like a real commentary. It remains to be added that from the point of view of style, a highly effective ingredient is supplied by the solemn Aramaic language of the book."³⁶

Many specific authors have been proposed as the originator or compiler of the Sepher ha-Zohar, which is in reality more a library of mystical books rather than one unified document. M. H. Landauer argues that the true author was Abraham ben Samuel Abulafia, but this claim has been generally discredited by Scholem in favor of his own candidate Moses ben Shemtob de Leon, a contemporary of the Italian Kabbalist. Graetz proposes both de Leon and the school of Abraham ben David de Posquiere. Others defend the authorship of Isaac the Blind of Narbonne (circa 1219), and still others see in the Secret Doctrine a mere transcript of the Mysteries of

³⁵Ibid., pp. 20-21.

³⁶Scholem, The Kabbalah, p. 157.

Egypt. Basically, three arguments hold sway: (1) in favor of the aforementioned Moses de Leon (Scholem and Graetz chiefly), (2) the Zohar as essentially an oral tradition directly related to a real Simeon ben Yochai and his followers and edited by an anonymous "traditional" descendant (Franck), (3) an anonymous collection of authors from many centuries and an anonymous collection of editors (Waite).

Scholem argues from linguistic evidence that the writings of Moses de Leon give the key to many of the unusual word formations and syntax in the Sepher ha-Zohar. Moses ben Shemtob de Leon lived until 1290, the approximate time of the first circulation of the Zohar, and was conversant with the doctrines of Moses Maimonides and Plotinus in the Enneads. Yet Scholem does not impute the entire composition or compilation of the Sepher ha-Zohar to Moses de Leon, arguing from a distinction in theological and philosophical perspectives. He concludes that the author of the Zohar proper, that is, the first two strata, inclines towards pantheism; this orientation he concludes is de Leon's. The Kabbalah outlined in the Raya Mehemna and the Tikkune Zohar, he relegates to a strictly theistic author, most probably a student of Moses de Leon or a member of his circle. "The author of the Zohar inclines towards pantheism, a fact made even clearer by the Hebrew writings of Moses de Leon, but one would look in vain for confession of his faith beyond some vague formulae and hints at a fundamental unity of all things, stages, and worlds. On the whole, his language is that of the theist, and some penetration is needed to lift its hidden and lambent pantheistic core to the light."³⁷ "Certain it is that

³⁷Scholem, Trends, p. 222.

the author of the third stratum, who had the second before him in completed form and cites it and rather unsuccessfully imitates it, is not the author of the first two. Everything speaks against this being so: the linguistic character of the third, its strongly apocalyptic tendencies, its laborious construction, the divergent views, and its way of using sources."³⁸

Waite and Abelson disagree with this argument on rather the same grounds: that the expansiveness of the Zoharic writings reduces the probability of one author, particularly an author who had been discredited in the sixteenth century by other scholars such as Moses of Cordoba. "The Kabbalah is much too singular in its mechanism, and far too piecemeal in its numerous texts, to be referable to a solitary author....The theory which accounts for the Zohar on the ground that it was written by Moses de Leon in the latter half of the thirteenth century does not depend merely on internal evidence; it is not exclusively an inference made by modern critics from allusions to late events found here and there in the work; it is not a presumption arising only from an alleged fact that the Spanish Jew who is suspected of the splendid imposture lived by transcribing copies of it; that it had never been heard of previously; or that the original manuscript from which R. Moses claimed to have drawn has never come to light. It is based upon supposed evidence which claims to be contemporary, or thereabouts, with the appearance of the Zohar itself."³⁹ Waite locates some of the material found in the Zohar in the eleventh century A. D. He goes on, however, to state that Jacob Franck on the problem of the dating and the authorship of the Sepher ha-Zohar is "the best and certainly the

³⁸Sperling and Simon, p. 14.

³⁹Waite, The Holy Kabbalah, p. 50-56.

most lucid exposition."⁴⁰ He concludes that the Sepher di-Tseniuta is the most ancient part of the Zohar, possibly containing materials from as early as the sixth century A. D.

Franck's systematic argument proceeds from the only evidence that survives to the present day.

The secret nature and intrinsic value of the book make it easy to prove that Moses de Leon was not the author. But we possess arguments still more positive. The Zohar is written in an Aramean language of no particular dialect....Simeon ben Youchai and his friends, although they spoke Jerusalem dialect, it would have been more natural for them to have written in Hebrew....Some scholars maintain that de Leon really did write in Hebrew, that he did not invent the Zohar, but only falsified it by inserting his own opinions, and that his imposture was soon discovered. As no such Hebrew version of the Zohar has come down to us, this assertion need not occupy us....Another version compels us to view the Zohar as a work composed long before the time of Moses de Leon and far removed from Europe. It does not contain the least vestige of the philosophy of Aristotle nor a single mention of Christianity or its founder. But Christianity and Aristotle exercised absolute authority in Europe in the thirteenth and fourteenth century. How, then, could a poor Spanish rabbi have written it in those fanatical days on religious subjects, without lodging some complaint against Christianity, which the Talmudic and later writers attacked so frequently and without succumbing, as did Saadia, Maimonides, and all others who pursued the same course, to the inevitable influence of the peripatetic philosophy?⁴¹

Franck concludes with an "opinion": "the Zohar is a collection of the traditions of different ages and the lessons of different teachers, bound together by a common principle."⁴²

The report of an esoteric tradition in Israel did not begin to circulate through Christendom until the fourteenth century, and this, as we shall see later on, is explained by the fact that the chief collection

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 58.

⁴¹Franck, op. cit., pp. 36-42.

⁴²Ibid., p. 52.

of its archives, was unknown at least generally in Jewry itself until about 1290 A. D., i. e., with the publication of the Zohar then known as the Work of the Chariot. For Christian students, the Kabbalah was either the Zohar (chiefly the "Book of Concealment") or it was developments therefrom; and the office attributed to it was almost exclusively evangelical: that is to say, the discovery that there had existed in Israel, from time immemorial, as it was alleged, a Secret Doctrine which appeared to contain analogies and even identities with fundamental dogmas of Christianity, put the Jews so clearly in the wrong so that their conversion was inevitable by their own "oral tradition." Thus, the antiquity of the tradition was not at that time challenged in Christendom, and again it was not a period when documentary criticism was pursued with any systematic care.

The first printed edition of the Zohar appeared almost simultaneously in two different places: Mantua and Cremona in 1588-90. Later editions appeared in Lublin (1623), Amsterdam (1714 and 1805), Constantinople (1736), and Venice. The Mantua edition, with a long and elaborate introduction by Isaac de Lattes, has always enjoyed the greatest vogue, nearly all subsequent editions being based selectively on the Mantua text. The study of the Zohar, as well as of the Kabbalistic writings inspired by it, attracted a great many noted Christian scholars. William Postel, who had translated the Sepher Yetsirah into Latin, seems to have been the first Christian scholar to introduce the mysteries of the Kabbalah to the learned circles of Europe. But the first Christian into whose hands the Zohar came was Picus della Mirandula who wrote, among other commentaries, a short thesis in Latin about it. He was also the first Christian to declare that

the Zohar contained elements which were capable of a Christian construction. He offered evidence that the doctrines concerning the Trinity, Original Sin, and the Incarnation could be deduced from its pages. Johannes Reuchlins, the ardent scholar of Jewish occultism, wrote De Arte Cabbalistica (dedicated to Pope Leo X) the object of which was to prove from the post-Zoharic writers on Kabbalism that the Messiah had already appeared. Petrus Galantinus, a contemporary of Reuchlins, published in 1516 the De Arcanis Catholicae Veritatis, in which the Zoharic writings are made to reflect many of the cardinal doctrines of Christianity. The complete list of all the other Christian students would be too long to detail at this point but will be examined in the succeeding chapters, if only in passing. Outstanding names include those of Alabaster, Gasparellus, and Athanasius Kircher. But the greatest of all these was Knorr von Rosenroth, whose Kabbala Denu-data, first published at Sulzbach in 1677-78, contains much valuable material and has historically proven particularly useful to Christian scholars unable to read the Hebrew and Aramaic original.

The Zohar's place in the history of Kabbalism can be gauged from the fact that alone among the whole of post-talmudic rabbinical literature it became a "canonical" text, which for a period of several centuries, from about 1500-1800, ranked with the Bible and the Talmud. This unique position, however, was only achieved gradually. Waite captures the powerful character of the Zohar which, as the depository of the faith of a persecuted people, became more than a "book." "The Zohar gave to Israel the splendid impulsion of the ideal, it gave philosophy; it created a wide horizon; it brought the exiled Jew into correspondence with the thought of the world; it communicated the Eternal."⁴³ In regard to the Sepher Yetsirah and the

⁴³Waite, The Holy Kabbalah, p. 30.

Sepher Zohar, "the product of generations," Franck declares: "Whatever may be the value of the doctrines they contain, they will always be worthy of preservation as a monument to the long patient struggle of a people for intellectual liberty at a time when religious despotism held sway."⁴⁴

Perhaps the only early Kabbalistic text which we can exactly date and ascribe to a specific author is the Pardes Rimmonim ("The Garden of Pomegranates"), already mentioned in the section on Kabbalistic exegesis in connection with the four interpretative modes of PRDS. Besides its central thesis concerning exegesis, as with all Kabbalistic works, much discussion is devoted to the Sephiroth. In the Pardes Rimmonim, much of the discussion concerns the inter-relationship of the Sephiroth, their reflections of one another within themselves. These reflections or aspects are referred to as the behinnoth which operate almost as human agencies, whether psychic or linguistic. The Pardes Rimmonim is the first text to systematically explore the arrangement and ordering of the Sephiroth. Scholem indicates that in the Pardes Rimmonim the Sephiroth "actually become the structural elements of all beings, but they do this only by their aspects or behinnoth."⁴⁵ Bloom describes the author as "the first structuralist, an unacknowledged ancestor of many contemporary French theorists of the 'human sciences.'"⁴⁶

Moses ben Jacob de Cordoba lived from 1522-1570. He is the first of the modern school of Kabbalism and finds most of his inspiration, however in the simple text of the Sepher Yetsirah; but he is also the first

⁴⁴Franck, op. cit., p. 62.

⁴⁵Scholem, The Kabbalah, p. 116.

⁴⁶Bloom, op. cit., p. 32.

commentator on the Zohar. Franck writes that he adhered to the real significance of the original monuments of Kabbalism but complains that such unswerving orthodoxy limited Cordovero's originality. The chief work for which he is remembered is the Pardes Rimmonim which title refers to the verse in the Song of Solomon iv: 13: "Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates." Basnage says that after the traditional manner of the Kabbalists, he discovers a great variety of significances in that simple versicle.⁴⁷

The pomegranate with its innumerable seeds was a symbol dear to the Kabbalists. Likewise the garden orchard of paradise has produced a wealth of imagery for all esoteric, as well as for exoteric visionaries. In the Pardes Rimmonim, the garden orchard is the treasure house of scriptural meanings; the Hebrew word PRDS classifies them into four categories. The Garden of Pomegranates is regarded as an obscure and difficult treatise. Knorr von Rosenroth attempted to dismember it for the purpose of his Apparatus in librum Sohar pars secunda;⁴⁸ and though failing to give any idea of the treatise's contents, he yet, however, managed to capture the idea of its complexity.

The attribution of the letters of Tetragrammaton (YHVH) to the Sephiroth, the mystical meaning of words deprived of their contents, the names applied to the Sephiroth, the superincession of these and their union with Ain Soph, the mystery of the Throne and the Shekhinah, primeval tohu and bohu, the unknown darkness--these are some of the wide-ranging matters of the Pardes. Waite summarizes the essence of the Pardes

⁴⁷Basnage, op. cit., V. p. 1943.

⁴⁸Rosenroth, Kabbala Denudata.

and its author from another perspective:

...The Garden of Pomegranates is dedicated to the subject of the soul, discussing the region from which it emanates, its purpose in the world, the profit of its creation, its union with matter, its superiority over the angels, its chief divisions, their relations one with another, the Sephiroth to which they are referred, the places to which they resort after death, the absence of one or both of the higher divisions in many individuals...and the good and evil angels accompanying each human being. The tract devotes also a very curious chapter to the simulacrum which presides at generation, a phantasman image of humanity which descends on the male head cum copula maritalis exercitur inferius (et superius)... This phantom or imago is prepared for each man before he enters the world, and he grows in the likeness thereof. With the Israelites the simulacrum is Holy, and it comes to them from the Holy Place.⁴⁹

⁴⁹Waite, The Holy Kabbalah, pp. 44 ff. Nefesh (vital soul), Ruah, (spirit), Neshamah (innermost soul--attained by few with much difficulty). See Scholem, Zohar: The Book of Splendor (New York: Schocken, 1963).

THE "CHRISTIAN" KABBALISTIC LITERARY TRADITION

As far as most historical authorities on the literature of the Kabbalah are concerned, the full-blown resurrection of the esoteric philosophy of the Hebrews coincides with the renaissance of Platonism in the Florentine Academy endowed by the Medicis. Yet it must be remembered that this Kabbalah must be always referred to as the "Christian" Kabbalah: for the thought and lore are at best derivative, preserved, edited and notated with Christian and Platonic side interests. "The Florentine circle believed that they had discovered in the Kabbalah an original divine revelation to mankind that had been lost and would now be restored, and with the aid of which was possible not only to understand the teachings of Pythagoras, Plato, and the Orphics, all of whom they greatly admired, but also the secrets of the Catholic faith."⁵⁰

The rumor of a great literature which had subsisted--ex hypothesi--from time immemorial in Jewry may have been heard of first through a signal piece of good luck which befell Giovanni Picus de Mirandula (1463-94), the renowned Florentine prodigy and oft-reputed "founder" of the Christian school of Kabbalah. According to tradition, he purchased from an unknown "Israelite" certain codices in manuscript which Gershom Scholem determines as having been translated into Latin for him by a learned convert to Christianity, Samuel ben Nissim Abulfaraj.⁵¹ It is recorded, however, that Mirandula had been a student of Jewish Theosophy under the direction of

⁵⁰Scholem, The Kabbalah, p. 197.

⁵¹Ibid. Also Ernst Cassirer, "Giovanni Pico della Mirandula," Journal of the History of Ideas, III (1942), 123-44, 319-46.

Elias del Medigo, who filled a chair at Padua and is reputed to have written at Mirandula's insistence two treatises in Hebrew: De Intellectu et Prophecia (1481-82) and De Substantia Orbis (1485). F. A. Yates verifies that "Picus de Mirandula began his philosophical career principally under Marsilio Ficino's influence and imbibed from Ficino his enthusiasm for magia naturalis, which he accepted and much more forcibly and openly professed than did Ficino....This other kind of magic which Picus added to the equipment of the Renaissance Magus was practical Cabala or Cabalist magic."⁵² However, one should note that Mirandula was not attracted to Jewish esotericism by the supposed supernormal powers ascribed to Divine Names or talismans and was only casually interested in gematria or themurah; witness his long-standing criticism of all forms of astrology.

Picus de Mirandula sought to blend with Neo-Platonic philosophy and Christianity the vast agglomeration of the Kabbalah. Likewise he also attempted to incorporate the Hermetic disciplines into Kabbalism since both corroborated one another on a theme which was fundamental to both: Creation by the Word. In his De Dignitate Hominis, Mirandula refers to "Plato, whose principles are so closely related to the Christian faith that our Augustine gives immeasurable thanks to God that the books of the Platonists have come into his hands."⁵³ So likewise the earliest evidence of his interest in the Kabbalah as adjunct proof of the claims of Christianity appears in 1486 in 119 of the famous 900 propositions displayed for public debate in Rome: 47 were taken directly from Kab-

⁵² Frances A. Yates, Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition (University of Chicago, 1964), p. 92.

⁵³ Pico della Mirandola, De Hominis Dignitate, tr. V. M. Hamm (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1945), p. 12.

balistic sources and 72 from his own conclusions based on Kabbalistic research, confirming the Christian religion from the foundations of Hebrew wisdom. Among these conclusions which first brought the Kabbalah to the attention of ecclesiastical authorities was Mirandula's claim that "no science can better convince us of the divinity of Jesus Christ than magic and the Kabbalah."

As has been mentioned, the spirit in which early Christian scholars came to the esoteric tradition must not be characterized as in any way objectively critical. The period in which Picus de Mirandula debated was by no means a period which argued the authenticity of works referred to antiquity either by repute or by the simple audacity of claim, while it was still less concerned with polemics on questions of authorship. Waite in his characteristically inflexible, sceptical critical spirit remarks: "The contribution of Picus della Mirandula to the knowledge of the Zohar in Europe does not exceed to any considerable extent the simple fact of its existence. His Latin thesis on the subject cannot be termed representative, nor can anything else from his pen. It remains that he was the first Christian into whose hands the work came in any guise whatsoever, and it seems to have been that authoritative form which was represented later on by the Cremona and Mantua editions....As he was the first to see the volumes, so Picus was the first to discern in the Zohar that it incorporated various elements which have been held capable of a Christian construction--whatever its value."⁵⁴

The points of correspondence observed by Picus de Mirandula led

⁵⁴Waite, The Holy Kabbalah, pp. xxviii-ix.

him to infer that the Zohar contains: (1) the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, (2) the Fall of the Angels, (3) the Original Sin doctrine, understood as the Fall of Man, (4) the necessity of redemption, (5) the Incarnation of the Divine Word. Among the famous Conclusiones Philosophicae, Cabalisticae et Theologicae (Rome, 1486) are to be found a number of strongly Zoharic propositions. As has been already cited from the Apologia (1487), Mirandula was familiar with the fourfold method of Biblical exegesis, paralleling the method of PRDS. Kabbalistic views can also be detected in the De Hominis Dignitate, the De Ente et Uno (concerned chiefly with the deduction of the tetractys or quarternity of the One God), and the Heptaplum which is a seven-fold exposition concerning the six days of Genesis.⁵⁵ In these Picus de Mirandula defines the term cabala as synonymous with the Latin word receptio. He traces its origin to the revelation made to Moses on Mount Sinai at the same time as the giving of the Law. Moses is then said to have transmitted this knowledge orally to Esdras, who in turn had it written down by the seventy wise men of the Synagogue in sixty manuscripts. Yet Picus did not regard this antiquity as a presumption that Kabbalah was superior to Latin Christianity. Picus maintained that in this section of Hebrew literature, there was as much of Christian doctrine as of the Mosaic religion, and in it he stated that he expected to find confirmation of the holy Catholic faith.

In a library noted for its obscure diversity of manuscripts from which Mirandula syncretistically skimmed Oriental mystery-lore, Plato, Plotinus, Iamblichus, Aristotle, and Kabbalah for intimations of the developemnt of Christian philosophy--Pearl Kibre notes that among the books

⁵⁵Pearl Kibre, The Library of Pico della Mirandola (New York: Columbia University Press, 1936), pp. 44-46.

of Mirandula can be found one Sophyoreth Hebraea, Expositio super Literas Parvia containing an exposition of the letters of the Sephiroth of construction ascribed to Nahmanides, a work entitled Sepherabaik derivative of the Bahir, and other works by Abraham Abulafia, Nathan, Recanati, and the aforementioned Moses Nahmanides.⁵⁶

The only "wisdom" which Mirandula found in Kabbalistic literature was that of Christian doctrine; he sought to establish a via media between Jewry and Christendom. When he presented Pope Julius with the Secret Mysteries of the Torah, the enthusiasm which communicated for a moment to the Chair of Peter--by the sudden discovery of a Jewish tradition that had been completely "unknown"--was that of the evangelist, the servus servorum Dei. Yet V. M. Hamm characterized Mirandula's personal discovery and zeal as out of step with the prevailing trends of Nominalism and pietism, and thus his excursions into Kabbalistic lore were naturally regarded as heretical.⁵⁷ Because of Mirandula, there ensued the first real debate on the subject of the Kabbalah ever to take place in humanistic and clerical circles--establishing the prototype, predisposition, and dedication for succeeding literati. F. A. Yates assesses Picus de Mirandula's contribution as pivotal to the Renaissance divination of Man: "He it was who first boldly formulated a new position for European man: Man as Magus using both Magia and Kabbalah to act upon the world to control his destiny by science. And in Picus, the organic link with religion of the emergence

⁵⁶Ibid. Also Eugenio Garin, Giovanni Pico della Mirandula (Florence, 1937), "Introduction."

⁵⁷Pico della Mirandula, De Ente et Uno, tr. V. M. Hamm (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1978), p. 6.

of the Magus can be studied at its source."⁵⁸

The most famous connection of Samuel Taylor Coleridge with Picus de Mirandula occurs in Charles Lamb's essay "Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago": "Samuel Taylor Coleridge--Logician, Metaphysician, Bard!--How have I seen the casual passer through the Cloisters stand still, entranced with admiration (while he weighed the disproportion between the speech and the garb of the young Mirandula)".⁵⁹ Critics have mostly seen an allusion only to the wealth of oratorical powers exhibited by the young Coleridge and his zeal as a young man preparing for the ministry. Yet in the reference to Mirandula we also can see the pattern of Coleridge's life-long attempt to bridge the gap between Hebraic theology and Platonic-Christian philosophy in his syncretistic reading in a still unfathomed literature. As early as 1798-99, Coleridge refers to his intended readings in De Ente et Uno.⁶⁰ Sections of the Philosophical Lectures in Chapters X and XI are devoted to the exploration of Mirandula's position in the Platonic tradition. Most critics have described Picus de Mirandula as one of Coleridge's lifelong favorite metaphysicians; if so, Coleridge would have been well aware of Mirandula's Kabbalistic preoccupations and zeal.

Just as Picus de Mirandula is said to have led the Italian revival of interest in the Kabbalah, so at the courts of the German emperors Frederick III and Maximilian I Johannes Reuchlin and Paulus Riccius, court physician, initiated and directed the German course. It is believed that

⁵⁸Yates, op. cit., p. 116.

⁵⁹Charles Lamb, The Complete Works and Letters (New York: Modern Library, 1963), p. 21.

⁶⁰Notation #374 in The Collected Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. Kathleen Coburn, (New York: Yale University Press, 1957 ff), I. Hereafter referred to as CNB: ...

Johannes Reuchlins Phorcensis Capnion (1455-1522) met Mirandula in Rome in 1490 and that under Picus' influence Reuchlins also took up the inquiry into the Christian possibilities of the Kabbalah, leading to the publication of De Verbo Mirifico (1494) and De Arte Cabbalistica (1517)--the first two books in Latin ever to be written by a non-Jew on the specific topic of the Christian Kabbalah. Waite characterizes as "epidemic" the fervor which the discovery of the esoteric tradition sparked in the intellectual Christian world. "The rising enthusiasm which may be said to have begun with Mirandula...assumed almost the aspect of a movement between the period of Reuchlins and that of Rosenroth. It was, however, not a concerted movement....The shape which it assumed in its literature was that of a deliberate and successive attempt to read Christian dogma into the written word of Kabbalism."⁶¹

At the court of Emperor Frederick III, also known as the Rex Trismegisti, Reuchlins is said to have been schooled in the tradition of the Kabbalah by one Jehiel.⁶² Reuchlins enjoyed the career of a successful politician and diplomatist, and his reputation as a humanist in the fore of the German-Hebrew revival is attested to by the production of his Rudimenta Hebraica (1506), the first Hebrew grammar composed by a Christian. He also led a successful campaign against the fanatical anti-semitic censor Johann Pfefferkorn, a converted Jew, who incited the ecclesiastical authorities to destroy all of the Hebrew books in the empire. Scholem traces Reuchlins' early inquiries to the writings of Gikatila and to the main doctrines of Kabbalah, the Sepher Yetsirah, and the Sepher Zohar.⁶³ For Reuch-

⁶¹Waite, The Holy Kabbalah, p. 458.

⁶²Basnage, op. cit., p. 2059.

⁶³Scholem, The Kabbalah, p. 201.

lins, the term cabala signified receptio as with Mirandula. However, Johannes Reuchlins also specified cabala as a symbolical reception, signifying that the doctrine is not comprised simply in its surface meaning, no matter how venerable in its antiquity. In other words, the Kabbalist who is contemplating the text in front of him truly uses it as a Sacred Lamp to light his way in the Paths of Understanding.⁶⁴ Reuchlins affirms that "it is of Divine Revelation, and that it belongs primarily to the life-giving contemplation of God."⁶⁵ This contemplation is truly in a "Universal" sense in that it is concerned also with the secret exegesis natura naturans--the contemplatio formarum separatarum.⁶⁶ In comparison with Picus de Mirandula, Reuchlins is learned, laborious, and moderate in his arguments for the viability of the Kabbalistic doctrine in Christian Europe.

The De Verbo Mirifico ("The Wonder-Working Name"), the earliest of Reuchlins' major Kabbalistic studies, is in the form of a quasi-Platonic dialogue, preceded by a summary of its intention and matter.

Receive [emphasis mine], then, in this book the argument on the Mirific Word of three philosophers, who I have figured to be holding such dispute among themselves as the controversies proper to their sects would occasion, as to the best elucidation of the hidden properties of sacred names. Out of which great as they are in number and importance, occasion will be at last the more easily afforded for selecting one name that is above all names supremely mirific and beatific. And thus you may know the whole matter in brief, Sidonius, at

⁶⁴A. Sérouya, La Kabbale: ses origines, sa psychologie mystique, sa métaphysique. (Paris: Editions Barnard Grasset, 1947), p. 480.

⁶⁵Johannes Reuchlins, De Verbo Mirifico and De Arte Cabalistica, ed. R. Kuhne, (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 1964). My translation.

⁶⁶Joseph Leon Blau, The Christian Interpretation of the Cabala in the Renaissance, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944), p. 113.

first ascribed to the school of Epicurus but found afterwards, melius jurare in verba magistri, an unfettered philosopher, travels about to satisfy his thirst for knowledge, and after many experiences enter Suabia, where he meets in the town of Pfortzheim two philosophers--Baruch, a Jew, and Capnio, a Christian--with whom he disserts upon many systems, and presently upon the knowledge itself of divine and human things, upon opinion, faith, miracles, the power of words, figures, secret operations, and the mysteries of seals. In this way questions arise concerning the sacred names and consecrated characters of all nations which have anything excellent in their philosophy or not unworthy in their ceremonies; an emendation of symbols is made by each speaker zealously on behalf of the rites cherished in his sect, until as last Capnio, in the third book, collects out of all that is holy one name, JEHOUSHUA, in which is gathered up the virtue and power of all sacred things, and which is eternally, supremely blessed.⁶⁷

In the second book of the De Verbo Mirifico, a debate on the Trinity occurs and also a discussion of the Sephiroth between Capnion and Sidonius. Capnion and Sidonius argue the respective merits of the Christian Trinity versus the pagan triumvirate of Zeus, the supreme ruler, Athena, the goddess of wisdom, and Aphrodite, the goddess of love. Incidentally the argument reveals Reuchlins' incomplete knowledge of the number, position, and names of the Sephiroth. However, as Scholem writes, "Reuchlins' own main contribution was his association of the dogma of the Incarnation with a series of bold speculations on the kabbalistic doctrines of the Divine Names of God"⁶⁸ and an underscoring of the Trinitarian parallel with the Kabbalistic essences contained in the divine names.

The first of these Trinitarian essences is Jehovah, and is peculiarly attributed to God the Father, being the pure and simple essence of the Supreme Divinity, flowing through the Hayoth Hakados, to the angel Metatron, and to the ministering spirit Reschith Hagagalim, who guides the

⁶⁷Reuchlins, De Verbo Mirifico, p. 1-2.

⁶⁸Scholem, The Kabbalah, p. 198.

Primum Mobile, and bestows the gift of being upon all things. To this spirit is allotted the bringing of the souls of the faithful departed to heaven, and by Him God spake to Moses. The second name is Yah and is attributed to the person of the Messiah, whose power and influence descend through the angel Masleh into the sphere of the celestial Zodiac. This is the spirit of Nature, the Soul of the World, or the Omnific Word which actuated the chaos and divided the wrought matter into three portions. Of the first and most essential part was the spiritual world composed; of the second was made the visible heavens or the celestial world; and of the third part was formed the terrestrial world, out of which was drawn the elemental quintessence, the first matter of all things, which produced the four elements of Fire, Water, Air and Earth by the agency of the Razel, who was the ruler of Adam. The third name in the Trinity of Mirific Names is Ehyeh, the principium generationis, the Holy Spirit.

The De Verbo Mirifico was followed by the De Arte Cabbalistica in 1517, also in a modified Platonic dialogue form involving Philolaus, a Pythagorean, Maranus, a Mohammedan, and Simon of Frankfort, a Jewish Kabbalist. The book is a detailed examination of the basic beliefs of the esoteric tradition which foreshadow the Messianic reality in Christianity. Reuchlins' premise for his esteem of the tradition he is about to expound proceeds from a dualistic exegesis of Genesis. God's creation of heaven and earth Reuchlins interprets to mean spirit and matter--the spirit consisting of the angels and ministers by whom the ways of men and matter are influenced. Magic, he decides, deals with evil spirits; but the true Kabbalah only with the good. Unlike Mirandula, Reuchlins believed in astrology.

His own faith in Kabbalah Reuchlins expressed in terms of God's love for his people. For God has revealed the hidden mysteries to some of them, and these could find in the dead letters the living Truth. Scripture consists of simple letters, visible signs which stand in a certain connection with the angels, as celestial and spiritual emanations from God. By the pronunciation of the one, the others also are affected; but with a true Kabbalist, who penetrates the whole connection of the earthly with the heavenly, these signs rightly placed in connection with each other are a way of putting him into immediate union with the spirits, who through them are bound to satisfy his wishes. Though Reuchlins often acknowledges the supernatural powers which a man can exercise by the proper utterance of the Tetragrammaton, he cautions against the mistaken use of the Kabbalah for worldly gain as is evidenced in his citation of the earliest Christian interpretation of a golem by the use of the alphabets in Sepher Yetsirah.⁶⁹

In the De Arte Cabbalistica, Reuchlins evidences a thorough knowledge of Kabbalistic lore but always with the purpose of elucidating Christian parallels. Some of the outstanding topics which are debated are the Kabbalistic underpinnings of Pythagoreanism, Creation from Nothing, the devices of gematria, notaricon, and themurah following the design of the Sepher Yetsirah, the Messiah and His relationship to the supernal and constructive Sephiroth, the distinction between the Bereshith and Merkabah strains of mysticism, the pronunciation of the names of seventy-two angels and their distribution in choirs, the fifty "Gates of Understanding," Senutae Sapientiae Triginta Duae Admirabilis et Occulta...De Sigilis, Char-

⁶⁹Scholem, On the Kabbalah, p. 181.

acteribus, et Vocibus, and the topic which is the climax of the whole heuristic argument, "Redemptionem Messihæ intelligint Thalmudistæ corporaliter, et Cabalisticæ spiritualiter, itu de eorum captivitate."⁷⁰

A. E. Waite evaluates the De Verbo Mirifico and the De Arte Cabbalistica as "Witnesses of the stand point of Christian students in the sixteenth century."⁷¹ Coleridge devotes sections in the Philosophical Lectures of 1818-19 to the discussion of Reuchlins' position in the furtherance of the Neo-Platonic tradition and religious toleration and also refers to him in the Notebooks⁷² with favor. It is likely that Coleridge was aware of the major distinctions that Reuchlins developed in his Kabbalistic works if but from a desultory perusal of the clearly demarcated arguments in the systematically arranged texts. Note especially Coleridge's reference to the "pure words of God," perhaps denoting the verba mirifica, and the allusion to the "combinations of sounds, figures, and numbers," perhaps drawn from the De Arte Cabalistica, in the Philosophical Lectures.⁷³

Two sections of the De Incertitudine et vanitate scientiarum et actium excellentia Verbi Dei declamatio (1527-28) quintessentialize Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim's position in relation to the tradition of Kabbalah and its Christian interpretation. This work represents a complete reversal of Agrippa's formal position since the writing of his

⁷⁰Reuchlins, De Arte Cabalistica, p. xivi.

⁷¹Waite, The Holy Kabbalah, p. 488.

⁷²CNB: III, #4497.

⁷³Samuel Taylor Coleridge, The Philosophical Lectures: 1818-19, ed. Kathleen Coburn, (New York: Philosophical Library, 1949), pp. 299-300.

De Occulta Philosophia (1510). After a career in Maximilian I's army, his lecture career at Dole, Pavia, and other universities, and his sojourn with the English humanist John Colet, Agrippa refused to accept the superstitions of the time concerning supposed witchcraft and ultimately fell under the ecclesiastical censorship by 1520. "The Kabbalah of the Jews is nothing but a pernicious superstition by which at their pleasure they gather, divide, and transpose words, names and letters in Scripture; and by making one thing out of another dissolve the connections of the truth."⁷⁴ Agrippa, however, also includes in his censure of those accretions which had grown up around the simple doctrines of Christianity the Ophites, Gnostics, and Valentinians who had produced a Greek "Cabala."

He had defended the Kabbalistic art in his 1509 lecture on behalf of the thesis of De Verbo Mirifico; and that which he had "diligently and laboriously sought after," he now dismissed as a "rhapsody of superstition ...wrestled from Holy Scripture"--a play with allegory proving nothing. It may be argued on his behalf that here he only condemns those "fantastic" Kabbalists who had elaborated the complex tables of gematria, notaricon, and themurah which comprise the method of the "practical" Kabbalists of which Agrippa knew an awesome deal. But he goes on: "If the Kabbalistic Art Proceeds from God, as the Jews boast, and if it produces to the perfection of life, the health of men and the worship of God, as also to the truth of understanding, surely that Spirit of Truth which has left their synagogue, and has come to teach us all truth, would not have concealed it from His Church, even until these last times, and this

⁷⁴Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim, De Incertitudine et Vanitate, tr. Willis F. Whitehead, (Chicago: Hahn and Whitehead, 1895).

the more seeing that the Church knows all things which are of God, while His Mysteries of Salvation are revealed in every tongue, for every tongue has the same power, if there be the same piety; neither is there any name, in heaven or on earth, by which we can be saved, whereby we can work miracles, but the one name Jesus, wherein all things are recapitulated and contained."⁷⁵ This, of course, amounts to a total recension of the conclusions of his life-long inquiry into almost every type of esoteric wisdom; but his final conclusions never eclipsed the fame of his widely read summary of the occult sciences which must also be regarded as responsible for the mistaken associations of the Kabbalah in the Christian world with numerology and witchcraft. Perhaps, this misconception of the purpose of Kabbalah results from Agrippa's "scientific" attempt to methodize the vast detail of the Kabbalistic literature he had at his disposal or from his schooling in the *Ars Cabalae* by Trithemius.⁷⁶

Although we owe the first methodical description of the whole Kabbalah as Natural Philosophy, Mathematical Philosophy, and Theology to Agrippa's *De Occulta Philosophia* (1510), which was practically the starting-point of Kabbalistic knowledge among Latin-reading scholars in Europe in the sixteenth century--we find that it is dominated by the motives of a self-serving scholar, one of the earliest of Renaissance experimental "scientists," determined to make a reputation. Unlike Trithemius, who is reputed to have been of an unimpeachable orthodoxy and unimpeachable conduct and who never wrote openly of the occult philosophies, Agrippa pro-

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶See Constant, op. cit., p. 252 on Trithemius and "pentacles."

posed to reveal the Great Secret, and, in so doing, destroyed its true power. On Agrippa's contribution to the study of the Kabbalistic literature, Waite writes:

We must expect therefore that the magical side of Kabbalah, that which deals with the properties and virtues of Divine Names and so forth, is developed much more fully than the cosmology of Sepher Yetsirah or the Divine Mysteries of the Zohar....Of the literature itself he gives no information from which we could infer his textual knowledge; he does not mention the Sepher Yetsirah or the Zohar, both of which were then only accessible in manuscript, and I am inclined to think that his acquaintance with Kabbalistic subjects was formed chiefly through the Conclusiones Cabbalisticæ of Mirandula....The most important gleanings are in the third book devoted to theology and the doctrines, mainly Kabbalistic, concerning angels, demons, and the souls of men, but creating correspondences with classical mythology wherever possible. Thus, Ain Soph is identified with the Night of Orpheus and the Kabbalistic Samael with Typhon. The ten Sephiroth are described as vestments, instruments, or exemplars of the Archetype, having an influence on all created things from high to low, following a defined order.... There are complicated tables of commutations showing the extraction of angelical names.⁷⁷

In a letter of the fifth of May, 1826, Coleridge alludes to his insistence that Giordano Bruno and Cornelius Agrippa be the initial subjects of biographies of revolutionary minds on the order of Meiners' works. He had already devoted an extensive, sympathetic account of Agrippa's life and work in the Philosophical Lectures, in which he referred to Agrippa as "one of the most extraordinary men that ever lived." Though Coleridge professes a contempt for the charlatanism of the career, he could not have been unaware of the instruments of the Kabbalistic tradition Cornelius Agrippa professed to have used to achieve his "extraordinary effects" which Coleridge alludes to in his reference to "HIS 3 BOOKS OF MAGIC."⁷⁸

In a marginal note to Jacob Boehme's Three Principles, Coleridge remarks that the first principles of Boehme are "found...but mixed with

⁷⁷Waite, The Holy Kabbalah, p. 253-55.

⁷⁸Coleridge, Philosophical Lectures, pp. 301, 303.

gross impieties in Paracelsus."⁷⁹ As shall be proposed in the third chapter of this study concerning the probable sources of Coleridge's knowledge or familiarity with the Hebrew esoteric tradition, Boehme should be considered as continuous with the "genuine" sense of the theoretical Kabbalah while Paracelsus--one step lower than H. Cornelius Agrippa in the "practical application of Kabbalistic" propositions, (though professing to have derived his knowledge from the "Hebrew adepts")--must be considered as only a self-deluded alchemist. Coleridge in his notation is referring, in this case, to the elemental building-blocks of the cosmos and their distillation which in Paracelsus are of the utmost practical significance while in Boehme, the theosopher, they are signacula of a divine chemistry.

Aside from a reference to some "books of the Cabbala" by "Paraceluss" now no longer extant, the sole work on the Kabbalah which has been preserved in the name of Paracelsus is a short treatise, which forms a detached portion of the book entitled De Pestilitate. There is also a short section in the Chirurgia Magna entitled "Cabbala." It is not Kabbalistical in the sense which properly attaches to that term, nor does it exhibit any special acquaintance with that section of Jewish traditional literature to which it is referred in name.

In its general outline, the "Cabbalah" of Chirurgia Magna seems to be fairly in harmony with the great body of Kabbalistical cosmology and consonant with the alchemical principles derived by Boehme (of special interest to Coleridge). Earth, water, air, and fire have their origin

⁷⁹Samuel Taylor Coleridge, The Complete Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. W. G. T. Shedd (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1853), I, 325.

from three things, which, however, are not to be regarded as of prior creation, for they are and have been fire, air, water, and earth. The three have all proceeded from one mother. This mother was water. (This is the reverse of the theory in Sepher Yetsirah where the first four elements produced were the first four Sephiroth.) When the world was formed the Spirit of God was borne over the waters, for by the word Fiat water was first created, and thence all other creatures, animate and inanimate. These three are called sulphur, mercury, and salt. Thus for perfect generation in all things, these three things are required. This is especially the case in man himself. The rest of the treatise is devoted to an exposition of the ruling celestial bodies of these elements, their characteristics, and their distillation.

The overriding purpose of this tract is the determination of the procedure for producing the homunculus or in Kabbalistic terminology the golem. The creation of a being in the likeness of the Creator, for the devout Kabbalist, was the supreme expression of Man's own creation in the likeness of His God but never to be recreated even in a pitiably "mortal" process. The tradition of the "golem" created by transformation of the earth through the influx of the alphabets of the Sepher Yetsirah has been traced by Scholem to the apocrypha of early Christianity. The power residing in the Tetragrammaton was superior to life and death. Scholem compares the "vessels" which Paracelsus discusses for the proper separation and distillation of the elements of life to the early retorts employed by the German golem makers.⁸⁰ "To the Cabalists our vessel is perfectly well known, because

⁸⁰Scholem, On the Kabbalah, p. 173. See also Walter Pagel, "Paracelsus and the Neoplatonic and Gnostic Tradition," Ambix, 8 (1960), 125-66.

it must be made according to a truly geometrical proportion and measure, and from a definite quadrature of the circle, so that the spirit and the soul of our matter, separated from this body, may be able to raise this vessel with themselves in proportion to the attitude of heaven."⁸¹

The drama of "Paracelsus'" life⁸² is of more interest than the reliability and validity of his writings. Theophrastus Aureolus Bombast of Hohenheim "Paracelsus" (1493-1541) was naturally aggressive and of the mountebank type; he boasted that his familiar spirit was hidden in the pommel of his great sword and never left his side. His life was an unceasing struggle; he travelled, debated, wrote, taught. He was more eager about physical results than moral conquests and while first among practical magicians he was last among adepts of wisdom. "He divined more than anyone without knowing anything completely. There is nothing to equal his intuitions, unless it be the rashness of his commentaries. He was a man of intrepid experiences, intoxicated with his own opinions, his own talk...He may be called the divine Paracelsus, understood in the sense of 'diviner'; he is an oracle, but not a true master."⁸³ He was famous above all as a physician, for he presumed to have found the "Universal Medicine" in his "methodical" analysis of the constituents of blood and his reduction of its properties to Astral Light. Perhaps, this is what most attracted Coleridge to the obviously suspect "scientist": Paracelsus' attempt to reduce the most complex chemical "life" processes to one non-chemical Theory of Life and his belief that "the manner of the nativity of every-

⁸¹Theophrastus Aureolus Bombast Hohenheim, "Concerning Instruments and the Philosophic Vessel," Opera Omnia (Geneva, 1658), p. 68.

⁸²See Anna M. Stoddart, Life of Paracelsus (London, 1911).

⁸³Ibid., p. 23.

thing has its analogies in the Great World,"⁸⁴ a theory of signatura rerum by which inward or superior processes are suggested by outward signs, the primeval method of the art of curing.

A. E. Waite assesses Paracelsus' contribution to the dissemination of Kabbalistic doctrine as eccentrically "individualistic" and ungrounded in the literary tradition; but this assessment does not discount the fact that Paracelsus was, for at least four centuries, popularly associated with the tradition in whatever respect, even if only astrologically (De Meteoris, Scientia Astronomica).

The Kabbalah, for Paracelsus, when it is not something quite fantastic and unimaginable is a species of Practical Magic....His knowledge of the Kabbalah would be limited to what he could gather from authors who wrote in Latin or some current tongue; but his own works show that he was at very little pains of this kind. The 'Cabal' is in one place identified with Magical Astronomy (De Pestilente) which I presume refers to the Paracelsic theory concerning stars in man and the stars of disease, and connects with the contextual statement that all operations of the stars in all animals center at the heart. But from indications given in another place Kabbalistic Magic seems to have signified some obscure operations with the faculties of the astral body (De Vita Longa). Subsequently this point is exposed more plainly when the Kabbalistic Art is said to have been built up on the basis of the doctrines concerning the sacramental body, which appears after the death of the corruptible, and accounts for the phenomena of spectres, visions, apparitions of a supernatural character, etc. (De Natura Rerum). The art of judging what is concealed by certain outward signs--in a word, the theory of signatures--is said to be the Kabbalistic art, 'once called "Cabballa," afterwards "Caballia."' Finally the use of certain prayers and signacula--i. e. talismans in the cure of disease is connected with the Kabbalah (De Vulneribus).⁸⁵

The earliest reference by Coleridge to Paracelsus, whom he seems to have enjoyed examining throughout his life, appears in the 1801-03 Note-Books in a notation on the reading of Paracelsus' De Meteoris: the theory of th

⁸⁴Paracelsus, "Concerning Instruments...", p. 69.

⁸⁵Waite, The Holy Kabbalah, pp. 456 ff.

"dark stars" (astra tenebricosa) which ray out darkness, obscurity, and pestilence on the Earth. "But I looked again at the Sky--& there were many Stars, so dim and dingy, that they might have put into Paracelsus's Fancy his whim of the Astra tenebricosa, that radiated cold & darkness, with hollow rays, tube-like as Hairs ensheathing the rays of Light & Heat, and so producing cold & darkness."⁸⁶ In the later notebooks of 1809-12, Kathleen Coburn has traced extracts from the Opera Omnia of Paracelsus⁸⁷ concerning alchemical procedure and the development of the logoi spermatikoi (rationes spermaticae) "through which the world soul the active principle, the One of the Creator, acts upon nature. In Philo and Austin God is himself spermatikos logos Archeus," which may be taken symbolically as a purely metaphysical proposition or as an allusion to the material process for the "formation" of the homunculus or golem. In the Anima Poetae, another aspect of Paracelsus' method is admired by Coleridge: "That Eloquent defence of technical new words and of old words used in a new sense."⁸⁸ In the "Lectures of 1818" Coleridge connects the "Kabbala" with Paracelsus and Jacob Boehme,⁸⁹ and concerning a Life of Paracelsus, he describes a chymie celeste, "a philosophic astrology." "I do not hesitate to refer the whole connection between alchemy and astrology, the same divinity in the idea, the same childishness in the attempt to realize it."⁹⁰

⁸⁶CNB, I, #1674; 21.405.

⁸⁷See Coburn's notes on CNB; I, #1674, 21.405, and CNB: III, #3616.

⁸⁸Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Anima Poetae, ed. E. H. Coleridge (Boston: Houghton, 1895), p. 232.

⁸⁹Coleridge, Literary Remains, I, "Lectures of 1818," pp. 186-88.

⁹⁰Ibid., II, p. 382.

Coleridge's attitude to the alchemists and, indeed, we may eventually generalize to the Kabbalists, was one of the mixed admiration and satirical contempt; in the "revolutionary" he recognized a genius of intuition fumbling to freely express itself in awkward neologism or fantastic conceits, which to Coleridge, the distanced historian of ideas, appear ridiculous and yet inspiring when reduced to more familiar, traditional terms--truly rationes spermaticae. He also revered these thinkers for their persistence in spite of reactionary detractors, particularly Established Churchmen. "It is true that the first principles of Behmen are to be found in the writings of the Neo-Platonists after Plotinus, and (but mixed with gross impieties) in Paracelsus; but it is not true that they are easily known, and still less so that they are communicable in common familiar terms. But least of all is it true that there is nothing original in Behmen."⁹¹

Two authors and one editor, who though insignificant in the study of the development of Coleridge's association with the Kabbalistic tradition, made invaluable contributions to the collection of documents, handed down, and also influenced other more prominent Kabbalah-oriented thinkers, particularly Giordano Bruno Nolani, who is not often admitted into the Kabbalistic patriarchy. The two authors, Guillaume Postel and Raymundus Lullius, are outstanding in Kabbalistic annals: the former

⁹¹Ibid., IV, "On Baxter's Life of Himself," p. 90.

for his first translation of the Sepher Yetsirah⁹² into Latin ten years prior for the first issue of the printed text in Mantua in 1562, and the latter not for his alchemical treatises but for his influence on Bruno. Pistorius, the aforementioned "editor," has long been regarded as a storehouse of Kabbalistic literature in Christian Europe. Waite remarks that Pistorius's collection, the Arte Cabalistica⁹³ was undertaken as a "counterblast to the superstition which the Kabbalah had promoted in Christendom."⁹⁴ Pistorius preserved many Kabbalistic books which would have been otherwise burnt; a large part of the Kabbalistic catalogue was proscribed by the Council of Trent. His collection includes the four treatises of Paulus Riccius' De Coelestia Agricultura, Rabbi Josephus Castiliensis' Porta Lucis, the complete De Verbo Mirifico and De Arte Cabbalistica of Reuchlins, and selections attributed to Archangelus de Burgonevo on the Sepher "Iezira."

⁹²Guillelmus Postel, *Author libri titulati candulabris typicii etc...interpretatio, venetiis, editio, 1548, demonstrasse se gloriatur Judacos priscos, nominator in libris Zohar, Behir aliisque cabalisticis merrim in modum cum Evangelie et theologis christianis convenire in caput; de Trinitate, aliisque fidei mysteriis.*

See Franck. Scholem, D. P. Walker's Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella (London, 1958), and Waite's The Holy Kabbalah and Secret Traditions in Alchemy (London, 1926) for evaluations of Postel's outstanding contributions to the preservation of the literary Kabbalistic tradition

⁹³Pistorius, Arte Cabalistica. Hoc est reconditae theologiae et philosophicae scriptorum tomus uno. In quo praeter Pauli Ricci Theologiae et philosophicae libros sunt pene omnes et Hebraici nonnulli praestantissimi scriptores, qui autem commentariis suis illustrarent. Bibliothecae de M. Colbert.

⁹⁴Waite, op. cit., p. 461.

Though Riccius does not figure at all in our discussion of Coleridge's reading of Kabbalistic literature, the following quotation, I think, might be observed as representative of the Christian Kabbalist's argument for demonstrating the "circumincession" of the Trinity from Kabbalistic doctrine. The selection is taken from the De Coelestia Agricultura, which consists of a discussion among three philosophers: Philalethes, Philosomatus, and Gometius.

Gometius: Deus ergo Pater sese optimu pulcherrimumque intelligendo suum in se reflectit amorem: sic et imago ipsa, quae Patris intelligence producitur, summum Patris contemplando decorem in eiusdem pari argumento fertur amorem, unde ex mutua Patris et Filii contemplatione summa procedit delectio et amor, qui quatenus producitur, se ipsa distinctus est a producere: producens autem amore est Pater una cum Filio: ab utroque igitur se ipsa distinguit amor, et quia nihil aliud est amor quam spiratio seu spiritatis processio amantis in amatu: Ido huc ipsum Spiritus Sanctus appellatione vocitari placuit, Deu itaque trinu esse hypostati seu personis: unu vero essentia proma credulitate et intelligentia censemus, que essentii unitate Deus vocamus: personarum vero Trinitate Patrem Filiumque et Spiritum Sanctum dicimus. Philalethes: Per quam claro quidem rationis limine me sensim eo deduxisti, ut id quod paulo ante abstrusum et ultra humanae intelligentiae captu existimabam, huc facile et absque ulla formidine concipiam, et constanti ratione ex ipsa divina natura sumpta affirmem. Superest modo, ut ix corporea natura et mole (posit antea proposuisti) idipsum demonstres... Cognita igitur causa, qua Trinitatis et incarnationis mysterium sub verborum caligini et typo sint tradita, iam redeundum unde digressus et sermo. Et primo quod Trinitatis credulitas modis omnibus necessaria fit ad ingressum viate, ex manifestis sacri eloquentiae et Talmudeorum monstrabo testimoniis: Ex multis vero tria duntaxit brevitatis causa in medium hic proferam. Primum est illud praememoratum Deuteron, oraculum: Audi Israel Deus Deus noster, Deus unus est. Ubi idem Rabi Simeon libro splendoris dicto Zohari, tria haec nomona personarum Trinitati adaptat. Patrem, Filium, et Spiritum Sanctum, palam pronuncians...Secundu individuae Trinitatis testimonium perhibet illud Psalmorum: Deus Deus Dominus Locutus est, et vocavit terram...Tertium constantissimum Trinitatis testimonium est, Esaiae sex oraculum dices, Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus, Deus exercituum, plene est omnis terra gloria eius, quod universa, Judaeorum synagoga bis singuli dei magna veneratione et cultu profert et meditationem Trini autem eiusdem nominiis repetitio, quidnam, quam illam Trinitatem. 95

⁹⁵Paulus Riccius, De Coelestia Agricultura and Artis Cabalisticae, ed. Johan Pistorius (Paris: M. Colbert, 1887), pp. 33 ff.

In preparation for a discussion of Giordano Bruno Nolani and his association with the Kabbalistic tradition, it will first be necessary to refer to an author antedating Picus della Mirandula: Raymond Lully (c. 1235-1315). In the case of Lully, there has been much debate as to who he was and where he came from. A. E. Waite posits two Raymund Lully's: an illuminated Doctor, alchemist, and Christian mystic who flourished in Majorca during the first half of the thirteenth century as a scholastic reformer and evangelist, or an alchemist who as a Jewish neophyte reputedly made gold in England for Edward III.⁹⁶

As in most cases, it is the less fantastical and less romantic character with whom serious historians of the esoteric tradition are concerned with. The Doctor of Majorca was most concerned with the exhortation of princes and prelates to found schools for the study of languages to facilitate the conversion of the heathen. Philosophically, his work was in protest against the school of Averroes. According to Constant, his Ars Magna is "a universal synthesis of human knowledge, and has as its prime object the institution of one language among men as also one mode of thought."⁹⁷ Franck presents Lully as the first to reveal the name and existence of the Kabbalah to Christian Europe; though Waite describes Lully's Kabbalistic borrowings as "superficial," related only to the use of certain words and methods. Levi claims much more for the Doctor of Majorca, who established a central academy at Complute for the study of languages and sciences. "A disciple of the great Kabbalists, Raymond Lully sought to establish an absolute and universal

⁹⁶Alphonse Constant, History of Magic, p. 247.

⁹⁷Ibid.

philosophy by substituting for the conventional abstractions of systems a fixed notion of natural actualities and by substituting a simple and natural mode of expression for the ambiguous terms of "scholasticism."⁹⁸

Though Waite refuses to grant more than a passing indebtedness to Kabbalah in Lully's De Auditu Kabbalistico he cannot reject the evidence that Lully was well aware of the existence of the rival strains of Kabbalistic thought. "Dicitur haec doctrina Kabbala quod, idem est secundum...Hebraeosis ut receptio veritatis cujuslibet rei divinis revelatae animae rationali...Est igitur Kabbala habitus animae rationalis ex recta ratione divinarum cognitivus. Propter quod apparet quod est de maximo etiam divino consequitive divina scientia vocari debet."⁹⁹ But the De Auditu Kabbalistico sive ad omnes scientia introductorium (1310) evidences a wealth of Kabbalistic symbology and methodology, predominantly tables of combination of letters which he entitles "De combinatione primorum principium...De combinatione novem subiectorum cum primis principiis et sigulis." In opposition to Tennemann's¹⁰⁰ account, Waite refuses to identify Lully with a pantheistic identity of God and Nature, but does see in the Ars Magna Sciendi "a very high idea of [Kabbalah], considering it a divine science, a veritable revelation addressed to the rational soul, and it may perhaps be permissible to suppose that the artificial processes used by Kabbalists to connect their opinion with the words of Scripture, such as the substitution of numbers or letters for ideas or words, may have

⁹⁸Ibid., p. 248.

⁹⁹Raymundus Lullius, De Auditu Kabbalistico, sive ad omnes scientia introductorium, trans. E. R. Hernach (Berlin, 1921), p. 432.

¹⁰⁰One of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's major influences during the creation of the 1818-19 Philosophical Lectures.

contributed in no small degree to the invention of the Great Art."¹⁰¹

This treatise found much favor with Picus della Mirandula, Cornelius Agrippa, and Athanasius Kircher, who produced a summa magna on the subjects in one of his vast folios. There are a number of sections which are devoted to the mystical ecstasy, the union of the lover and the beloved, i. e., "quomodo omnis nostra perfectio sit in perfectione nostri Domini Dei."

Owen Barfield was the first to track the significance of Coleridge's marginal notations on Raymond "Lull" in Tennemann. Barfield does not, however, refer to the Sephirothic character of the nine "Dignities" (though Coleridge may have been well aware of the possibility) which he mentions in the following discussion.

The works of Bruno are not easy to come by. In Coleridge's time they were still less accessible. He is most likely to have read them in a volume in which the De Progressu is bound up with a collection consisting mainly of various works of Lull, the only other contribution from Bruno being a little volume called De Lampade Combinatoria Lulliana. This, which precedes the two treatises constituting the De Progressu is in substance a brief exegesis of the 'ars,' or method, developed by Ramon Lull and applied by him throughout his life to a wide variety of topics. A reader would be expected to have mastered it before going on to the De Progressu. Lull's Ars Brevis and Ars Magna in which the 'art' found its final expression, are both printed in the same volume....If this were a full-length book on historical sources and not merely an appendix, it would be appropriate at this point to give some account of Lull's meticulously developed pre-Cartesian system, with its interpenetrating triads and its psychology of intellectual 'descent' and 'ascent' to and from the divine 'Dignities' of the Spirit, which are constitutive of nature and the mind of man. We should be drawing attention, for instance, to his sharp distinction between the Absolute and the Relative principles (corresponding to Coleridge's between reason and understanding) and descent from the absolute to the relative. And we should no doubt be showing how this points us back to the whole long line of Christian Neoplatonism...with which Coleridge was from an early age well-acquainted.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹Waite, The Holy Kabbalah, p. 441

¹⁰²Owen Barfield, What Coleridge Thought (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1971), pp. 180-81.

The Zohar, likewise, is particularly alive with images of "descent" and "ascent" (e. g. Terumah 136a-b)

Before discussing Giordano Bruno Nolani's connection with the Kabalistic tradition and his ultimate rejection of its "evidence," a preview of Joseph Blau's conclusions on the Christian interpretation of the Kabbalah in the Renaissance is pertinent to Bruno's work and will cast into deeper perspective the Christian Kabbalists already examined and their successors. "It is the general theme of this book that the uses of cabala by Christian thinkers was a fad of no lasting significance that, no matter what type of interpretation was momentarily aided by cabalistic speculation, this type of speculation rapidly proved a blind alley. That this proved to be so is unquestionably due to the fact that during the very period in which Pico della Mirandola and John Reuchlins and their followers were attempting to utilize cabalistic thought as a basis for their deductive systems, Copernicus, Kepler and Bruno were building the foundations of scientific systems whose value in use has proved to be so much greater than that of the old systems. Like astrology, alchemy, and other pseudo-sciences, cabala fell a legitimate victim to the development of scientific thinking."¹⁰³ Blau's evaluation of the development of Kabbalah in the Renaissance is, perhaps, most reliable if one grants that "Kabbalah" is a systematic pseudo-science, that is, if regarded only in its eccentric "practical" applications. If, however, one views the "Kabbalah" as a mystical, highly personalized symbolic expression of the living relationship between Creator and created--his criticisms are untenable. It is true that

¹⁰³ Joseph Leon Blau, The Christian Interpretation of the Cabala in the Renaissance (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944), p. vii.

most fervent advocates of "Kabbalah" eventually dismissed the mundane pretensions of pseudo-Kabbalists but never disregarded the power of its "mythus" to express philosophical and theological ideas that evolved from Judaism into Christianity, particularly the doctrines of the Trinity and the Messianic Incarnation.

Indeed Christian Kabbalistic interpreters became interested in Kabbalah and studied it for different reasons. For Picus della Mirandula, Kabbalah was one element in a universal synthetic system of thought. To Reuchlins, it was the repository of the lost documents of Pythagoras. For Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim, Kabbalism was a prop for an occult system. To Riccius, it was an instrument for the moral instruction and edification of his king. While I have suggested, as many have, that a number of the leading names in Renaissance thought found great inspiration in the newly recovered Kabbalistic documents, there were certainly as many detractors. Blau suggests that perhaps those detractors "were far wiser and recognized ...that the use of cabalistic interpretations falsified the true appeal of Christianity."¹⁰⁴ Reuchlins and Picus, in the tradition of Catholic humanism, considered Kabbalah of real value; Erasmus and Mersenne (1588-1648), however, considered it harmful, though Erasmus was tolerant of its evangelical fervor. Pistorius and Philip Nicolai (1556-1608) in the Protestant tradition were defenders of the Kabbalistic system. Luther, greater than both in the same tradition, attacked it. Yet, despite his reductionist approach to Kabbalah, Luther does grant the attractive potency of Kabbalah in attempting to

¹⁰⁴Ibid., p. 77.

resolve theological knots that have often splintered Christianity.

The doctrine of creation by remote control, as represented in the sephiroth, superficially at least, posed more of a problem, because this scheme does not seem to allow of easy interpretation into Christian doctrine. From the time of Pico, however, it was adopted into the Christian system by considering the three highest sephiroth, keter, chochmah, and binah, as the representatives of the Trinity. Keter, the supreme diadem, represented the Father; chochmah, wisdom, represented the Logos, the Son; binah, understanding, headed the left-hand column of mercy, became the representative of the Holy Spirit of Grace. The only other emanation which was treated with any thoroughness was the sixth of the sephiroth, tifereth, glory, which was conceived as the representative of Jesus incarnate. Thus, if anything, the doctrine of the sephiroth aided the Christian interpreters of the cabala, for it gave them the opportunity to distinguish between the Son as the divine wisdom and the Son as the incarnate redeemer; it also resolved the difficulty of explaining the Triune God by making the persons of the Trinity manifestations or emanations of the Limitless God, by considering the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as Three out of One, rather than Three in One. ¹⁰⁵

As can be seen, Blau's own vision of the Kabbalah is highly personal and perhaps not quite traditional; but his description demonstrates the possibilities which intrigued even such an originally "scientific" thinker as Bruno: it supplied a concrete vocabulary and an imaginative visualization upon which more abstruse arguments and abstractions could be founded, ever retaining its poetic freshness. ¹⁰⁶

According to F. A. Yates's study Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition, "Bruno is chiefly celebrated in histories of thought and of science, not only for his acceptance of the Copernican theory, but still more for his wonderful leap of imagination by which he attached the idea of the infinity of the universe to his Copernican sun, an extension of the theory which had not been taught by Copernicus himself."¹⁰⁷ Yates's study demonstrates Bruno's links with the Christian interpreters of Her-

¹⁰⁵Blau, op. cit., p. 15.

¹⁰⁶Karppe, op. cit., p. 498. Alternate arguments.

¹⁰⁷Yates, op. cit., p. 244.

meticism and the doctrines of pseudo-Dionysius, as well as with the Kabbalistic tradition, concluding that "Giordano Bruno is the direct and logical result of the Renaissance glorification of Man as the great miracle, Man who is divine in his origin and can again become divine with divine powers residing in him. He is, in short, the result of the Renaissance Hermeticism. If man can obtain such powers through Hermetic experiences, why should not his have been the way in which Christ obtained his powers."¹⁰⁸ A. M. Paterson concludes from Bruno's statement in the Cabala del Cavallo Pegaseo on the transparency of natural phenomena and the supernatural Dasein: that, "The microcosm of Bruno was an organism which came to know about the macrocosm with its sensibility and intellectual ground mediated through reason or the regolato sentimento, which was the constitutive principle and efficient cause of the microcosm....He taught that the regolato sentimento was nourished on unbiased, open inquiry, and full experience for the organism. The intellect would then create material and virile possibility of forms....These creative forms would be fashioned from the pregnant fabric of the intellect which was material. These basic material forms Bruno called monads....As in the Kabbala, the secrets of the Nature could be known by proper use of the intellect as well as the reason."¹⁰⁹

We know that Giordano Bruno was familiar with the writings of Picus della Mirandula, Paracelsus, Raymond Lully, and Cornelius Agrippa--his structure of Kabbalism, of the Names, the Sephiroth, and orders of

¹⁰⁸Ibid., p. 266.

¹⁰⁹A. M. Paterson, The Infinite Worlds of Giordano Bruno (New York: Chas C. Thomas, 1970), p. 78.

angels are from the De Occulta Philosophia.¹¹⁰ He knew little Hebrew, principally the alphabet used in some diagrams notably for his Thirty Seals,¹¹¹ but is credited with having studied Trithemius' Steganographia, possibly Reuchlins' De Arte Cabbalistica, and segments of the Zohar.¹¹² Bruno was probably also familiar with some of the more widely circulated practical Kabbalistic commentaries on Genesis. Bruno was convinced that the origins of Kabbalah could be traced to the Egyptian Captivity.¹¹³ "Eadem sunt quae aquas omnia appellant, ut Moses uno nomine appellint, pro more Aegyptiorum sapientum, quia et ipsam ignis substantiam aquam intelligit esse: velut et Mercurius Trismegistus naturam humidam, cum quadam a luce actione. Aegypti enim et Cabalistae ignem inter principia seu primas substantias non adnumerant, sed quidam ex illorum concursu proveniens esse intelligunt."¹¹⁴

As has already been intimated, Bruno used the derivative Kabbalistic material that he had access to as the springboard for his own theories on the "innumerable species of things," rejecting his own Hermeticism, "Egyptianism," and Kabbalism once his own system took logical

¹¹⁰Ibid., op. cit., p. 141.

¹¹¹Giordano Bruno Nolani, Thirty Seals, tr. A. E. Waite (London: Soncino, 1933).

¹¹²Yates, op. cit., p. 244.

¹¹³"From hence I believe that Cabala of the Jews, wisdom of which (of whatsoever kind it be) hath proceeded from the Egyptians, among whom Moses was educated." [My translation] Giordano Bruno Nolani, Opera Omnia: Dialoghi Italiani, "Spaccio della bestia trionfante" (Milano, 1902), pp. 78-83.

¹¹⁴Giordano Bruno Nolani, De Immenso et De Monade (Stuttgart: Friedrich Fromm, 1962), p. 376.

shape. F. A. Yates has traced in the Cabala del Cavallo Pegaseo Bruno's eclectic use of Kabbalistic sources, quite independently of the Christian Kabbalistic interpretation. "Agrippa had tried to preserve at least an appearance of Trinitarianism in his expositions of religious magic, stating, for example, that the three guides in religion are Love, Hope, Faith, the orthodox three theological virtues. Bruno, as he takes a wandering course through Book Three of the De Occulta Philosophia, picking out some material altering, rearranging to suit his purposes, always avoids the triads, and his guides in religion become four: Love, Act, Mathesis, and Magic."¹¹⁵

However, it is the quaternity which is more often encountered in Kabbalistic doctrine; the trinity completed by the ineffable fourth element as in the Ain Soph, Kether, Hokhmah, Binah conformation. The principle of "quaternity" Bruno goes on to link synthetically with the development of the Pythagorean conception. "Pythagoricè quaternitatem, plenitudinem mundie tum corporis, tum animi designantem, agnoscebant quatruplicemque naturae perpetuo fluentis fontem praedicabant. Idem Cabalistes, Magis, atque Chaldaei (1) numerus Divinitate (2) in rerum natura (3) praesidi, visus est conveniens: et inde quattuor dicebant esse mundos. Hinc fortasse nomen Dei quadriliterum ubique gentium ab antiqua institutione conferitur, praesertim vero apud Cabalistas ineffabile illud ex decimo, et quinto, et sexto Hebraeorum elementis, cuius loco explicatur illud ex primo, et quarto, et quinto decimo et decimo."¹¹⁶

Bruno, perhaps conferring with the Sepher Yetsirah, adopts the

¹¹⁵Yates, op. cit., p. 272.

¹¹⁶Bruno, De Immenso..., Scalae Tetradis, Primus Ordo, p. 386.

principle of six for the completion of generation (Amor, Coitus, Seminatio, Conceptio, Formatio, Partus), for the six elements (Ignis, Aqua, Oleum, Ventus, Nubis, Lapis) and the hexagonal six angles of direction. In the Cabala Del Cavallo Pegaseo, we encounter Bruno's fullest conception of the Kabbalistic tradition, its Christian extension in the Pseudo-Dionysian hierarchies and in that "religious syncretism" based on the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius, the ultimate sources of which are Ficino and Picus della Mirandula. As in the De Occulta Philosophia, there is a recension of the Kabbalistic doctrine. "He outlines the Cabalist-Pseudo-Dionysian system," according to F. A. Yates, "giving the names of the ten Sephiroth (in their Agrippan misreading), their meanings, the Hebrew order of angels which go with them, and the nine celestial hierarchies to which they correspond... the mystical Nothing, beyond the Cabalist Sephiroth, he symbolizes by the Ass, and this Ass of negative theology or unknowing is the strange hero of the work." In Bruno's analysis of the Sephirothic progression, however, one becomes aware of his basic struggle to avoid the pantheistic trap which so many Kabbalistic interpreters of the "emanation" from the Ain Soph faltered at; it is apparent that Bruno's absorption of the Kabbalistic sources at his disposal involved also a refinement of their corrupt basic "metaphysics" and their degenerate "practical" devices, to produce a pure, Zoharic core upon which he based his "innumerable species of things."¹¹⁷ "In sole affirmant sedem posuisse potentem,/Flammantesque Deos illi virtute ministrant/Adstantes, volucrem coeli hos Cabalistas celebrat Nomine..."¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷Yates, op. cit., pp. 258-60.

¹¹⁸Bruno, De Immenso..., II, p. 50.

I would like here to reproduce F. A. Yates' eloquent evaluation of Bruno's affiliation with Kabbalah, confirming that what Bruno ultimately rejected of Kabbalistic "metaphysics" in the Cabala del Cavallo Pegaseo was actually its degenerate "practical" imitations and that Bruno found in fact a bed of philosophical hard rock upon which to erect certain "modern" perspectives on Man and on his relationship to the Universe and its unseen world of natural and psychological forces.

Bruno has swept away as 'metaphysics' the Cabalistic system of the Sephiroth, the Pseudo-Dionysian hierarchies, the whole superstructure which the Christian Magus had erected upon his natural Magia to guarantee it from demonic influences....By outlining the system of the Sephiroth and the related Christian celestial hierarchies, Bruno is consciously evoking the position of the Christian Renaissance Magia and consciously departing from it....But when Bruno comes to religious magic, he significantly omits all mention of the antiquity, sanctity and power of the Hebrew language of the Sephiroth, and of the Hebrew and Pseudo-Dionysian order of angels....Bruno wants to reach the demons...with images, seals, characters, and so on. Another way is through the imagination, and this was Bruno's chief magical method...the condition of the imagination or of the memory to receive the demonic influences through images or the magical signs stamped on the memory. In the De magia, Bruno relates his magical philosophy of the imagination to the terminology of normal faculty psychology which, however, he transforms by making the imagination and more particularly the animated or excited imagination, when joined to the cogitative power, the source of psychic energy. This magically animated imagination is the "sole gate to all internal affections and the link of links"....We have indeed come a long way from the Magia and Cabala system of the Christian Magus, with its safe guards in natural magic and its Hebrew-Christian angels as guarantees for religious magic.¹¹⁹

The earliest reference to Giordano Bruno in the works of Coleridge, who expressed a life-long admiration of the philosopher of Nola, occurs in his notes for Monday and Tuesday, April 1 and 2, 1801 when he recounts that he "read two Works of Giordano Bruno," the De Monade Numero and the De

¹¹⁹Yates, op. cit., pp. 260-66.

Innumerabile Immenso. These readings are connected at the time with his readings in Hermes Trismegistus. Though he found the works "far too numeral, lineal, & pythagorean for my Comprehension,"¹²⁰ he quotes Bruno's poetic "Anima sapiens...ubique totus": "But in the august palace of the Omnipotent, in the illimitable etherial space, in the infinite power, that creates all things, and is the abiding being of all things....There we may contemplate the Host of Stars, of Worlds and their guardian Deities, numbers without numbers, each in its appointed sphere, singing together, and dancing in adoration of the One Most High" (strongly reminiscent of the Zoharic passage describing the Hosts of Heaven, singing Halle-lu-Yah in unison).¹²¹ McFarland sees in this passage the influence of Coleridge's father in pointing out to the young Coleridge the infinity of the universe. "Not only was the constancy but also the curious intertwinement of Coleridge's concerns is suggested by the fact that it was apparently this childhood image of stars or suns in other worlds that engaged his interest in Bruno, and thus fed back into his concern the doctrine of polar oppositions and their reconciliations."¹²²

In his copy of The Aurora of Jacob Boehme, Coleridge notes: "But in the Deity is an absolute Synthesis of opposites. Plato and Parmenides and Giordano Bruno passim have spoken many things well on this awful Mystery--the latter more clearly."¹²³ It is in the notebook of November

¹²⁰Coleridge, Anima Poetae, pp. 16-17.

¹²¹Samuel Taylor Coleridge, The Friend, ed. Barbara E. Rooke (Princeton University Press: Bollingen Series, 1969), I, 116.

¹²²Thomas McFarland, Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), p. 358.

¹²³A. D. Snyder, "Coleridge on Giordano Bruno," Modern Language Notes, 42 (1927), 426-30.

1803 that we find Bruno's name first linked with Behmen's and Spinoza's;¹²⁴ the notebook is filled with references to Spinoza, images of the Cherubim in Paradise, the arguments on Evil, the Laws of Moses, and Paracelsus.¹²⁵ Coleridge would continue to link the names of Bruno and Behmen, with Spinoza, George Fox and later with Swedenborg¹²⁶ and Cornelius Agrippa¹²⁷ as the third parties in the mystic philosophical triumvirate for a series of proposed biographic studies--preparatory to his Logosophia. In the notebooks dated 1813-15, Coleridge remarks on the pre-existence of the human soul and the problem of pantheism: "Synesius was censured by some for his doctrine of the pre-existence of the Human Soul; but never deemed heretical for his Pantheism, tho' neither Bruno or Behmen ever avowed it more broadly."¹²⁸ This same remark occurs in a footnote to a passage in the Biographia Literaria concerned with Plotinus and the "vital-philosophy of the Cabalists and the Hermetists."¹²⁹ Coleridge was ever interested in the comparison and synthesis of philosophers and their doctrines, in his lifelong struggle to map out a history of Consciousness, "the Mysteries of Religion grounded in or relative to the Mysteries of Human Nature,"¹³⁰ and their reconciliation

¹²⁴CNB: I: #1646: 21.392. Also, see McFarland, op. cit., p. 69.

¹²⁵CNB: I, 1589-1680.

¹²⁶CL: IV, "September 27, 1815."

¹²⁷Ibid., Sept. 5, 1826.

¹²⁸CNB: III, 4189

¹²⁹Biographia Literaria, ed. J. Shawcross (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907), I, 169-70.

¹³⁰CL: III, Jan. 21, 1810. See also McFarland, op. cit., p. 202.

in Christianity.

Owen Barfield has traced Coleridge's indebtedness to Giordano Bruno for his theory of Polar Logic through his readings in Cena de la Generi, De Lampade Combinatoria Lulliana, and De Progressu et Lampade Venatoria Logicorum.¹³¹ Evidence of Coleridge's study of Bruno's "Polar Logic" occurs in passages of The Friend,¹³² notes to Baxter's Life of Himself (the principle of trichotomy and the Pythagorean tetractys), and in the indebtedness cited in Chapter XI of the Biographia Literaria to the "polar logic of Giordano Bruno."¹³³ McFarland traces Coleridge's interest in Bruno through other author's critical writings on Bruno, such as Schelling's "Bruno oder, uber das gottliche und naturliche Princip der Dinge." McFarland emphasizes Schelling's great debt to Bruno, Boehme, and Plotinus and suggests that Coleridge was well aware of this debt to Bruno and also to "Scotus Erigena, the Cabalists, the Hermetics, Swedenborg, and Proclus."¹³⁴ It is in the continuation of that early quotation in the notebooks from De Monade into The Friend¹³⁵ that we can feel the power of a tradition other than that of Sacred Scripture and other than that

¹³¹Barfield, pp. 179-193. Titles of Bruno's works were jotted down in Malta in 1804-05, but perhaps not read until as late as 1810.

¹³²Coleridge, The Friend, I, 94 n.

¹³³Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, p. 185. Also works of Bruno listed in CNB: I, #2264: 21.335.

¹³⁴McFarland, p. 85 ff.

¹³⁵Coleridge, The Friend, p. 118.

of the pagan philosophers; this suggests that perhaps Coleridge was intoxicated by the "vernal fragrance and effluvia" of the Kabbalistic tradition as expressed by Bruno and which McFarland interconnects with Bruno's and Coleridge's conception of the "image-ination" and the polar logic.

"In the multilevel connexion of Coleridge's interests; the 'universal Law of Polarity or essential Dualism' which, as Coleridge says in The Friend, Bruno 'made the foundations both of Logic, of Physics, and of Metaphysics,' ties in with one of the functions of the imagination. For as Eliade points out, 'Images by their very structure are multivalent. If the mind makes use of images to grasp the ultimate reality of things, it is first because reality manifests itself in contradictory ways and therefore cannot be expressed in concepts. (We know what desperate efforts have been made by various theologians and metaphysicians, oriental as well as occidental, to give expression to the coincidentia oppositorum--a mode of being that is readily and also abundantly, conveyed by images and symbols)":¹³⁶ This mode is the medium of the Kabbalah.¹³⁷ Bruno writes:

A wise spirit does not fear death, nay sometimes (as in cases of voluntary martyrdom) seeks and goes forth to meet it, of its own accord. For there awaits all actual beings, for duration an eternity, for place immensity, for action omniformity....There we may contemplate the Host of Stars, of Worlds, and their guardian Deities, numbers without number, each in its appointed sphere, singing together, and dancing in adoration of the One Most High. Thus from the perpetual, immense, and innumerable goings on of the visible world, that sempiternal and absolutely infinite Majesty is intellectually beheld; and is glorified according to his glory by their ineffable Creator in the expressive language of Vision! To Him illimitable, a limited Temple will not correspond--to the acknowledgement and due worship of the Plentitude of his Majesty there would be no proportion in

¹³⁶McFarland, op. cit., p. 359.

¹³⁷Nicholas of Cusa, Vision of God, tr. F. D. Laing (New York: Seabury, 1957), p. 84.

any numerable army of ministrant spirits. Let us then cast our eyes upon the omniform image of the Attributes of the All-creating Supreme, nor admit any representation of his Excellency but the living Universe, which He has created.¹³⁸

In the Zohar we find a passage of comparable poetic expressiveness concerning the immensity and the innumerability of Divine expression. In a comparison of the passages from Bruno's De Immenso and the Zohar, one particularly notes the organic correspondence of the supernal and the terrestrial worlds.

As the stars have no number except to Him, so is His understanding 'without number' (absolutely). Mark this also...Over all these stars and constellations of the firmament there have been set chiefs, leaders, ministers, whose duty is to serve the world each one according to his appointed station. And not the tiniest grass-blade on earth but has its own appointed star in heaven...All the stars in the firmament keep watch over this world; they are appointed to minister to every individual object in this world, to each object a star. Herbs and trees, grass and wild plants, can flourish and grow except from the influence of the stars which stand above them and gaze upon them face to face, each according to his fashion... All those stars which shine in heaven do sing and praise the Holy One, blessed be He, all the time that they are visible in the sky. And the angels above sing the praises of their Lord in successive watches of the night. (Terumah, 171a-b; 172-173.)

Among the volumes in Coleridge's library, has been traced one of the prototypical classics of modern comparative linguistics, philosophy, and theology: the Podromos Coptis sive Aegyptiacus Romae of Anthanasius Kircher (1601-1680). Coleridge's debt to Kircher has been long attested to by Lowes in his The Road to Xanadu¹³⁹ and Kathleen Coburn in her edition of the Philosophical Lectures of 1818-1819.¹⁴⁰ Lowes remarks that Coleridge probably became acquainted with Kircher through his readings in

¹³⁸Giordano Bruno, De Immenso et Innumerabilibus, seu de universo et mundis, (New York: Henry Schuman, 1950), Chapter One, "De Monade numero et figura," p. 39.

¹³⁹J. L. Lowes, The Road to Xanadu (Boston: Houghton, 1927), pp. 355-357.

¹⁴⁰Coleridge, Philosophical Lectures, Lecture XIII, Note 37.

Dupuis and Bruce,¹⁴¹ who make constant reference to Kircher; and, most probably, Coleridge had access to the Oedipus Aegyptiacus, Kircher's most ambitious account of Egyptian language and history.¹⁴² Coburn traces Coleridge's acquaintance with Kircher through his sojourn in Malta, where Kircher had published a scientific work for the Knights of St. John, whose library Coleridge frequently used,¹⁴³ and a probable visit by Coleridge to the Museum Kirchernarum in Rome. Constant credits Kircher, a Jesuit who opposed the Protestants about the time of James the First through his philological and theological scholarship, with one of the primary attempts to note the correspondence systematically of the Alphabet in Sepher Yet-sirah with the Book of Thoth.¹⁴⁴ In his Mundus Subterraneus, Kircher reveals a detailed understanding of the Zoharic concept of the twofold correspondence in Kabbalism between "superior" and "inferior" things: one transcendental, being that of phenomena with their archetypes in the noumenal world, and one natural in the narrower sense of the term, being that which is summed up in the axiom--"There is no herb on earth to which a certain star does not correspond in the heavens."¹⁴⁵

The three chief works of Kircher are the Podromos (1636), and the Oedipus Aegyptiacus (1652), and the Physiologia Experimentalis (1680): they are encyclopedic syntheses of philology, natural philosophy, experi-

¹⁴¹Lowes, op. cit., pp. 123, 212-13, 318.

¹⁴²Ibid., pp. 355-57.

¹⁴³Donald Sultana, Samuel Taylor Coleridge in Malta and Italy (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1969).

¹⁴⁴Constant, op. cit., p. 81.

¹⁴⁵Athanasius Kircher, Mundus Subterraneus (Romae, 1647), ii, p. 4016 (My translation.)

mental chemistry, physics, and sources of anthropology, theology, and theosophy. In the Podromos and the Oedipus Aegyptiacus, occur long commentaries on traditional Kabbalistic lore, with much evidence that the multilingual Kircher had examined primary Kabbalistic documents, most assuredly the Sepher Yetsirah and the Sepher Zohar. The Podromos discourses on the language, the customs, institutions, and Christian rites of the Coptics. It is in this work that Kircher examines the affinities of the Arabic and Hebrew tongues and also the correspondences between the Name of the Hebraeo-Christian God and the symbols representing Phtha, their mutual origins and accompanying "mysteries." Kircher makes a comparative study of the Hebrew letter shin with the Greek alpha and omega, resolving the three vertical strokes of shin \aleph into three yod's linked by a horizontal bar. Relying upon the testimony of Archangelus de Burgonovo, he comments on the obvious Trinitarian significance of the Kabbalistic primary Sephiroth and the letters composing tetragrammaton. "Ac proinde studio summo magnum illud nomine Dei ΤΕΤΡΑΓΡΑΜΜΑΤΟΥ quod Yahweh appellant, tegebant; et sicut ob Supremam Divini Nominis reverentiam id humanis labis pronunciant profanari nollent, ita nec legi. Quam ob causam vanis id modis referebant; nunc per tria Iodim circulo inscripta, ad Tres Divinas proprietates, quas...vocant, in arbore Sephiroth indicando uti apparet....Nam in prima Alphabeti Armeniaci litera, quae tribus lineolis ab basim literae per perpendiculariter erectis effigiata est, trim in unum conveniunt, Pater videlicet et Filius et Spiritus Sanctus; tris unum sint."¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁶Anthanasius Kircher, Podromus, Coptis sive aegyptiacus (Romae typis S. Cong. de propaganda fide, 1636), pp. 156-57.

Kircher offers the traditional Christian Kabbalist's interpretation of the passage in Exodus as additional proof of the Trinitarian dogma concealed in Judaism but revealed by its Kabbalistic gloss.

Itaque clare patet, hos tres apices mysticos esse, et aliud non significare nisi nomen Dei ~~uu~~ Iah, Iah, Iah, ex hisce verbis Exodi 3 v: 14...misit me ad vos ut excitati Rabbini verbis, patet, et pulchre declarant Archangelus Burgus in Cabbalistici dogmatis fol. 152 et l. 2 de declaratione nominis Jesu. Tres igitur apices hosce ide esse sui nomini Dei ex sequentibus clare liquebit. Sicut enim nomen Dei, Tetragrammaton, testi R. Hakkadosch, Deum generatum et per consequi trinu denotat, eo modo ut per principii seu prima persona Patris; per he filius; secunda; per vau, denique; nexus, seu vincula aut amor, videlicet Spiritus Sanctus per suo vero he duplex respectu secundae personae producti scilicet.¹⁴⁷

Kircher goes on to draw correspondences between Osiris and Isis and the Sefirotic "Tree" manifestations, commenting on the revelations possible concerning Christian mysteries through the Kabbalistic methods: he also describes the four worlds of creation of traditional Kabbalah.¹⁴⁸

The Oedipus Aegyptiacus was dedicated to Ferdinand III, Regi Trismegisto. Written in Greek with Latin glosses and footnotes, its subtitle reveals much of its purpose and scope. "Hoc est Universalis Hieroglyphicae Veterum Doctrinae Temporum iniuria abolitae instauratio. Opus ex omnia Orientalium doctrina et sapientia conditum, viginti diversarum linguarum auctoritati stabilitum." The frontispiece drawing of a figure gathering the "omnia Orientalium doctrina et sapientia" includes the "Cabala Hebraeorum." The first volume of four describes Lilith and the three prominent Kabbalistic angels Sanoi, Sansanoi, and Samnagalaph. The second volume details a very complete history of the Kab-

¹⁴⁷Kircher, Podromos, p. 211.

¹⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 260-67.

balah's origins in Egypt, describes the ten Sephiroth and the doctrine of the Pardes, and delves into the practical application of Kabbalah to amulets, prayers, and the evocative possibilities of the combinations of letters and numbers. There is also a section devoted to "De Cabala Pythagorica," concerning the alphabet with numerical signatures. In volume three, Kircher quotes segments of Simeon Ben Yochai's discourses in the Zohar and verses from the Sepher Yetsirah concerning the creation of the universe from the alphabet and the parallel cosmogony in Egyptian hieroglyphic myths, noting the differentiation of the supernal triad of the Sephiroth from the seven of "construction." "Hanc eandem Aegyptiorum de septem mundi et mundo Archetypo triformi positionem confirmant Cabalistsae, qui aiunt, decem esse Mundos, quorum septem revelati, tres absconditi sunt;¹⁴⁹ Kircher in later pages traces the doctrine of the Holy Trinity through "veteres philosophi" including the Kabbalists and the Zoroastrians.¹⁵⁰ In the fourth volume, Kircher reveals an adept's understanding of the behinnot interconnecting the Sephiroth and the thirty-two ways of Wisdom and makes the final statement on the centrality of the light-giving Christ to the mystical trinities of Zoroastrianism and Kabbalism.¹⁵¹ A diagram prefatory to volume two shows Christ as the center of an elaborate "sunburst" diagram, described as "Speculum Cabalae mysticae in quo omnia, quae Hebraei de nomine Dei tetragrammato arcane retulletint ad nomen Messiae Jesu respexisse demonstratur omnes quoque mundis nationes nomen dei

¹⁴⁹ Athanasius Kircher, Oedipus Aegyptiacus (Romae: Vitalis Mascardi, 1652), p. 109.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 132.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., p. 292.

non sine mysterio quater litteris enunciare docetur."¹⁵²

In a letter of January 26, 1824, Coleridge advises that "Of the writers who should be consulted previously to the Understanding Mr. Hartley's scheme...the Lullian and Mnemonical Treatises of Giordano BrunoOf Flavel I know nothing--Fludd I found indigestible--but both the Helmonts should be remembered--."¹⁵³ All of the writers mentioned were dedicated alchemists in the search of the "Philosopher's Stone" as well as adepts in Kabbalistic studies. It was the Dutch theosophist Franciscus Mercurius van Helmont who served as a link between the Kabbalah and the Cambridge Platonists, led by Henry More and Ralph Cudworth, who made use of Kabbalist motifs for their own original speculative purposes. Mercurius van Helmont's father, John Baptist, professed to have touched the "Philosopher's Stone"; Mercurius carried on his father's researches, dividing his laborious existence between a tireless search after the secret of transmuting metals and the study of the kabbalah.

At the end of the third volume of the Kabbala Denudata of Christian Knorr von Rosenroth, appears an essay entitled Adumbratio Kabbalae Christianae attributed to Mercurius van Helmont. Consistent with the intent of the magnum opus of Rosenroth and the writings of Anthanasius Kircher, the essay emphasizes the parallel, drawn for the first time by Rosenroth, between the Kabbalistic doctrine of Adam Kadmon and the concept of Jesus as primordial man in Christian theology.¹⁵⁴ M. H. Nicholson encapsulates the union of the van Helmonts, von Rosenroth, and Henry More in this most

¹⁵²Ibid., p. 287 ff.

¹⁵³CL: V, 326.

¹⁵⁴Scholem, The Kabbalah, p. 200.

important link between the continental wave of Kabbalistic studies and the serious British interest in Jewish mysticism--both spear-headed by Rosenroth's translation. "Then, too, More found in van Helmont one who had not only felt the chain of the rabbinical and cabbalistical writers but who had gone much further than himself in the revival of what they used to call 'the Jewish Philosophy.' Van Helmont was indeed one of the chief links which bound together cabbalistic students in Europe. It was van Helmont, who first interested More in the long and difficult task which in Germany Baron Knorr von Rosenroth was performing--the attempt to translate and edit the Zohar....More's letters afford full and complete evidence of the assistance he gave von Rosenroth, not only in his preparation of the Kabbala Denudata, but in translating some of von Rosenroth's works into English."¹⁵⁵

Rosenroth, like Helmont, was a "chemist"--in the seventeenth-century sense of the word--and in the crowded title page of his great work, we find it described as "Scriptum omnibus philologis, philosphis, theologis omnium religionum, atque philochymicis quam utilissimum."¹⁵⁶ The justification for such an inclusive evaluative subtitle is that the Loci Communes Cabbalistici included for the earlier Christian Kabbalists a Compendium Libri Cabalistico-Chymici, Aesch Mezareph Dicti, de Lapide Philosophico, appended by Agrippa von Nettesheim. Like his countryman Khunrath, Rosenroth was a Lutheran; A. E. Waite characterizes Rosenroth as "actuated by the same missionary enthusiasm which characterized all

¹⁵⁵Letters of Feb. 5, 1671, Nov. 18, 1675, Dec. 29, 1675 in M. H. Nicholson, ed, Conway Letters (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930) Also Scholem, The Kabbalah, p. 201. ff.

¹⁵⁶Rosenroth, op. cit., pp. 301 ff.

Christian expositors who preceded him."¹⁵⁷ In matters of religion his peculiar bent is detected by his Explanation of the Apocalypse, a dialogue on evangelical history in which a Kabbalistic catechumen proposes questions on the four Gospels and a Christian replies. Likewise his evangelical intent is revealed by his treatise entitled Messias Purus, in which the life of Jesus Christ, from his conception to his baptism, is explained according to the doctrine of the Kabbalah.

Whenever there has been a revival of interest in Hermeticism, as in the Victorian Rosicrucian revival, Rosenroth's Kabbala Denudata (1770) has been resurrected. The Kabbalah Denudata is by no means a reliable translation nor a complete redaction of the Mantua edition of the Sepher ha-Zohar. but was edited in a somewhat "modern" scholarly approach with little credulity given to the antiquity of all Kabbalistic documents, though Rosenroth admits that the Book of Concealment is probably the oldest, and most likely, composed by Simeon ben Yochai. The Kabbala Denudata comprises three volumes. Volume One contains the Book of Concealed Mystery and the Liber Drushim (The Book of Dissertations). Volume Two completes the Book of Concealment with a commentary and a translation of the Sifra di-Seniuta; the Greater Holy Assembly, the Porta Coelorum, and the Tractatus de Revolutionibus Animarium (composed by Isaac de Luria) are also included. The Lesser Holy Assembly fills out the Third Volume. Characteristic of the evangelical zeal of the Christian Kabbalists, Knorr von Rosenroth prefaces the Kabbala Denudata with an enumeration of reasons which justify the appearance of a Latin version of the Zohar; he affirmed that at a period

¹⁵⁷ Waite, op. cit., pp. 476-77.

when the divisions of Christendom are traceable to diversity of philosophical opinions and metaphysical definitions it must be important to investigate a philosophical "system" which flourished during the age of Christ and his apostles, and from which fountain the sacred oracles have themselves largely drawn. In the preface to the translation of three texts of the Zohar, he proposes his opinion that Kabbalistic dogma may be of divine revelation on the grounds of its antique sanctity and imaginative sublimity, as well as its great use in explaining the books of the Old and New Testaments. He affirms also that, unlike later Jewish writing, the Sepher ha-Zohar does not contain a single utterance against Christian belief. Finally after enumerating twenty-four reasons why the Jews should enjoy toleration at Christian hands, he mentions the chief points which will assist their conversion. These include, of course, the ordinary commonplaces of piety and the devices of proselytism, but there is stress laid upon the promotion of the study of Hebrew and Chaldean and upon the translation of the New Testament into those languages. Constant appropriately remarks on Rosenroth's endeavors that "he did not wish the Christian to become a Kabbalist, but he longed very much for the Kabbalistic Jew to become a Lutheran."¹⁵⁸

The publication of the Kabbala Denudata was a great impetus to a flurry of discussion and publication on the Kabbalah and the Christian parallels well into the eighteenth century--providing much ground work for heated debate on the mysteries of the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Gordian knot of Jewish and Christian pantheism and "panentheism." The

¹⁵⁸Constant, op. cit., p. 262.

Kabbalistic tradition was extolled in such works as Phosphorus Orthodoxiae Fidei Veterum Cabbalistarum, seu Testimonia de Sacro Sancta Trinitate et Messia Deo et Homine, ex pervetusto Libro Sohar deprompta qua nunc Latine reddita, suis que et R. Johannis Kemperi--Judaeo Christiani animadversionibus concinni explicatur, Judaeis acque ac Christianis speciminis loco edit, Andreas Norrelius Suecus, sui item commentarios Kemperianons suis illustravit notes (Amsterdam, 1720) and the Lux in Tenebris quam Zohar Antiquum Judaeorum Monumentum, genti suae occocotae praebet, indenissimis rerum divinarum tenebris, ad Mysterium SS. Trinitatis eo facilius appraehendendum, et Majestatem Christi Divinam non pertinaciter oppugnandum, et Honorem Spritus Sancti Recentionum more non foedandum...Studio M. Nicolai Lutkens. In the first two chapters of the Lux in Tenebris, there is an attempt to prove that the Mystery of the Trinity is concealed in Leviticus xvi: 18 and Deuteronomy. The third chapter investigates Genesis xix: 24, and the sixth chapter seeks to prove that the three supernal Sephiroth were names and characters under which pre-Christian Jews distinguished the Three Persons of the One Divine essence.

Gershom G. Scholem notes, however, that the enthusiasm aroused by Rosenroth's Kabbala Denudata also produced an opposing reaction. "The appearance of this book aroused the interest of several scholars who had not previously had any attachment to Christian Kabbalah, such as Leibniz. Completely at variance with its premises was Johan Georg Wachter's study of Spinozistic tendencies in Judaism. Der Spinozismus in Judenthumb (Amsterdam, 1699), which was the first work to interpret the theology of the Kabbalah pantheistically, argued that the Kabbalists were not disguised Christians but rather disguised atheists. Wachter's book greatly influ-

enced discussion on the subject throughout the eighteenth century."¹⁵⁹ Wachter's thesis produced a counter-reaction concerning Spinoza's debt to Kabbalah, such as the chapters of Johann Christian Wolf's Bibliotheca Hebraea, V. "An Kabbalistae Atheismi et Spinosismi Rei," VI. "De Wachtero sibi hic non constantae."¹⁶⁰ Henry More would come to regard Spinoza as "in infimas Atheismi faeces immersus."

In England, the Kabbalistic tradition had a following among Christian adherents well before Henry More's Conjectura Cabbalistica and the rise of the Cambridge Platonists. John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester (1459-1535) is reputed to have received Reuchlin's De Arte Cabbalistica from the hands of Erasmus.¹⁶¹ John Colet (1466-1519), renowned as the "chief transmitter of Florentine Platonism," had published his Two Treatises on the Hierarchies of Dionysus, based on Ficino's Theologia Platonica and the Heptaplum of Picus della Mirandula. Closer to More in history, was one Henry Ainsworth (1571-1622 c.), who was regarded as an "estimable exegete" and is considered by Francois Secret as one of the most important links in the development of Christian Kabbalism in England. His Annotations which he wrote on Genesis (1616), Exodus (1617), Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, and the Psalms and the Song of Songs witness to "un gout vif pour la Kabbale."¹⁶² His intention in his clarification of the external ordinances of Moses is "to show how in many words, phrases, and parts of

¹⁵⁹Scholem, The Kabbalah, p. 201.

¹⁶⁰J. C. Wolf, op. cit., p. 90-92.

¹⁶¹Blau, op. cit., p. 34 ff.

¹⁶²François Secret, Le Zohar chez les kabbalistes chrétiens de la Renaissance (Paris: Mouton, 1964), pp. 94-5.

doctrine they approve the New Testament though some times to the condemning themselves."¹⁶³ In his exegesis, Ainsworth translated many passages from the Zohar. Most notably, concerning the Trinity, he affirmed: "The Hebrew Doctors have left records of this mystery though at this day that nation understands it not: Come and see the mysteries of the World (Aelo-him): there are three degrees and every degree by itself alone (that is distinct) and yet notwithstanding they are all one and joined together in one and are not divided one from another saith R. Simeon ben Iochai in Zoar upon the sixth section of Leviticus."¹⁶⁴ Other notable scholars who familiarized themselves with the Kabbalistic doctrines were Hugh Broughton (1549-1612), W. Alabaster (1567-1640), H. Sanford, and J. Dee.¹⁶⁵

It was, however, during the period of the rise of the so-called "Cambridge Platonists" and in the lifetime of Henry More (1614-1687) that the studies in Kabbalistic literature particularly flourished in England. J. B. Beer remarks that, "certain of the Cambridge Platonists, concerned at the widening gap between traditional religion and the new scientific outlook, had tried to build a bridge which should link the empiricism of Bacon and Descartes with Platonic speculation."¹⁶⁶ Henry More's examination of the Kabbalah hoped to establish an identity of the truth's of religion with those of reason. McFarland establishes a relationship between the development of modern German philosophy and the blossoming of English

¹⁶³Henry Ainsworth, Annotationes I, ed. L. Muir, (London: Soncino, 1926), p. 67.

¹⁶⁴Ibid., pp. 79 ff.

¹⁶⁵G. Josten, "Truth's Golden Arrow," Ambix, 3, (1949), 200-34.

¹⁶⁶J. B. Beer, Coleridge the Visionary (London: Chatto and Windus, 1970), p. 49 ff.

Platonism and, we might venture to say, its fulfillment in Coleridge. "The English Platonists are indeed significant--both for Coleridge's development and for the general history of ideas. Koyre has shown how important More was to Newton and the history of science; Feilchenfeld how important he was to Leibniz, in various places we shall suggest his importance as a transmitter of Boehme and the Cabala."¹⁶⁷ In Feilchenfeld's study, the power of the Kabbalistic tradition over the thinkers of the seventeenth century is repeatedly underscored. "More acquainted Leibniz with certain elements of the mystic Neo-Platonic world view, and also spurred him to study Boehme, with whom Leibniz busied himself in the next few years, though without really gaining anything. More also let Leibniz into the world of the Cabala, and for this the philosopher retained his interest."¹⁶⁸

The remaining "Christian Kabbalists" to be examined in this chapter constitute the "Cambridge Platonist" movement: John Smith, Henry More, Ralph Cudworth, Robert Fludd, and Thomas Burnett. John Smith well represents the Cambridge Platonists' conception of the relationship of Man, Divinity, and Truth with a Kabbalistic qualification. "In this state we are not able to behold Truth in its own Native beauty and lustre; but while we are vail'd with mortality Truth must vail itself too, that it may the more freely converse with us. S. Austin hath well assign'd the reason why we are so much delighted with Metaphors, Allegories, etc. because they are so much proportioned to our Senses, with which our Reason

¹⁶⁷McFarland, op. cit., p. 24.

¹⁶⁸Walter Feilchenfeld, "Leibniz und Henry More," Kantstudien, 28 (1923), 331-2.

hath contracted an intimacy and familiarity. And therefore God to accommodate his Truth to our weak capacities does, as it were, embody it in Earthly expressions; according to that ancient maxim of the Cabbalists, *Lumen supernum nunquam descendit sine indumento*; agreeable to which is that of Dionysius Areopagus not seldom quoted by the School-men, *Impossibile est nobis aliter lucere radium Divinum, nisi varietate sacrorum velaminum circumvelatum.*"¹⁶⁹

Regarded by Basnage as a "great Kabbalist" and "his contributions to Kabbala Denudata as discovering the sentiment and spirit of Jewish theosophy"¹⁷⁰--Henry More, perhaps the most renowned of the Cambridge Platonists, had hoped that "Plato should provide the soul, Descartes the body" of the new philosophy and looked to the Kabbalistic tradition for help in this task. A. E. Waite appraises More's research into the Jewish mystical tradition as derivative but underlines More's continuity with the Christian Kabbalistic "evangelical" tradition. "The introduction of More to the Kabbalah was brought about...by means of Isaac de Loria's Liber Drushim. There is no reason to believe that he could or did undertake independent study of the Zohar, and hence as his contributions to the subject are all prior to the appearance of Kabbala Denudata, it follows that his acquaintance was not exhaustive, nor was it altogether good of its kind. At the same time, his study of Liber Drushim called forth a well-reasoned letter from his pen, addressed to Rosenroth....The conclusion entreats Rosenroth

¹⁶⁹John Smith, "Prefatory Discourse, Concerning the True Way or Method of Obtaining to Divine Knowledge, Select Discourses, (London: 1660), p. xi. See Coburn on Coleridge's reading in his Select Discourses, (1660): CNB, II, #2164; K. 19.

¹⁷⁰Basnage, III, 786.

to intimate to his readers 'how beneficiall this may prove for the preparing of the Jews to receive Christianity, the difficulty and obstacles being cleared and removed by the right understanding of their own Cabala.'"171

More demonstrates a critical understanding of the doctrine of the Sephiroth, citing the Zohar (derived) in Amica Responsio in support of the concentric circle configuration of the Sephiroth. In the Mercavae Expositio, More develops a kind of Kabbalistic catechism containing nineteen postulates and fifty-two questions arising out of the text of Ezekiel, and the replies thereto. Though Waite regards More as seeming "securely to have understand the Kabbala" particularly on the topic of Creation ex nihilo, the text reveals how the basic doctrines of Lurianic Kabbalah were not critically absorbed by More and, at times, certainly misread. The subjects of the Four Worlds, the pre-existence of all Souls, and the relationship of the Messiah to the world of Atziluth are gradually reshaped for evangelical purposes "until the Christian Kabbalist introduces the compact of the cross and dissolves all connection with the scheme of Jewish theosophy."¹⁷² In the Song of the Soul and the Psychogogia,¹⁷³ there occur many passages concerning the tri-centricity of human souls¹⁷⁴ which can be related to the Zoharic nefeshruash-neshamah divisions of the soul, the doctrines of R. Menasseh Ben Israel on the pre-existence of the Soul, the garment of the World and tetragrammaton, and an angelology adapted some-

¹⁷¹Waite, The Holy Kabbalah, p. 470.

¹⁷²Ibid., p. 475.

¹⁷³Henry More, The Complete Poems (Blackbury: St. George's, 1878).

¹⁷⁴Ibid., Song of the Soul, Book III, Canto I.

what from Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim's De Occulta Philosophia.¹⁷⁵

Waite rightly accords with Franck's criticism that the exposition of "Kabbalistic" themes in More's Conjectura Cabbalistica became highly personal "having very little in common with any ancient or modern Kabbalah ever received."¹⁷⁶ The title promises more concerning Kabbalah than is offered, other than its general exegetical approach. It is a presentation of the literal, philosophical, and mystical sense of the three initial chapters of Genesis. More also attempted in his Philosophic Cabala to trace the Pythagorean denary to ancient Kabbalistic sources while expounding his own denary based on the Creation of the Universe in a "fantastic manner." More's understanding of Kabbalah has tested in a pamphlet war with Thomas Vaughn concerning the nature of man and the universal spirit of Nature; Vaughn has been considered to be superior to More in his knowledge of Kabbalah, through Agrippa von Nettesheim and through first-hand readings of Sepher Yetsirah and Zohar, but not inferior in his peculiarly personal adaptation of its themes. A commentator on Henry More's Kabbalistic elaborations remarks: "One must smile at his Cabbalistical-Hebraistic lore and credulous interpretations of 'prophecies' and 'visions,' as of the Apocalypse, but you will never read a book of his without coming on original thinking illustrated by recondite quotations....His 'Cabbalistical' reveries (not to call them vagaries) sent him a searching in wasteful places. Many a forgotten folio had the dust blown from it by this eager enquirer. Must it be owned that he saw through his spectacles in all such read-

¹⁷⁵Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim, De Occulta Philosophia, ed. Karl Huse (Stuttgart, 1927), Sec. 2, cap. 7.

¹⁷⁶Waite, The Holy Kabbalah, p. 436.

ing rather than through his own 'cleare eyen.'"¹⁷⁷

Coleridge often expressed admiration for Henry More but with reservations. In a notation of 1801-02 concerning More's "A Brief Discourse of Enthusiasm" in his Collection of Several Philosophical Writings (1662), Coleridge notes the connection of Henry More and Jacob Boehme's The Aurora with Paracelsus's De Meteoris.¹⁷⁸ McFarland reveals that it was More who had early noted the consonance of Boehme with Neoplatonism, particularly with Plotinus; and in the Philosophicae Teutonicae Censura, More also pointed out the similarity of many of Boehme's doctrines to the Kabbalah.¹⁷⁹ In a notation of July-September, 1809, Coleridge proposes "to give the character of all Henry More's Book"; a notation of April-May, 1816, reveals his familiarity with the Song of the Soul. Coleridge also expressed an awareness, rather scathing, of More's eclectic adaptation of Kabbalah and other "mysticism." "The third and last cause, and especially operative in the writings of this author, is the presence and regnancy of a false and fantastic philosophy, yet shot through with refracted light from the not risen but rising truth,--a scheme of physics and physiology compounded of Cartesian mechanics and empiricism (for it was the credulous childhood of experimentalism), and a corrupt, mystical, theurgical, pseudo-Platonism, which infected the rarest minds under the Stuart dynast."¹⁸⁰ Coleridge associatively reflects: "We may draw from this passage (I Thess. iv 16, 17) the strongest proof of the fact of the ascension of Christ, or at least of St. Paul's belief of it. For had they not believed his ascent,

¹⁷⁷More, The Complete Poems, p. xxii.

¹⁷⁸CNB, I, #1000 E 22.6

¹⁷⁹Henry More, Philosophica Teutonicae Censura, p. 558. McFarland, op. cit., p. 381 ff..

¹⁸⁰Coleridge, Literary Remains, Vol. IV, "On Archbishop Leighton," p. 159.

whence could they have derived the universal expectation of his descent-- his bodily, personal descent? The only scruple is, that all these circumstances were parts of the Jewish cabala or idea of the Messiah by the spiritualists before the Christian aera, and therefore taken for granted with respect to Jesus as soon as he was admitted to be the Messiah."¹⁸¹

Claud Howard summarizes Coleridge's affection for and criticism of More: "Now Coleridge despite his affection for the Cambridge Platonists did not find their Platonic transmissions a suitable philosophical ground work for his system. Though Henry More's theological writings contained 'original, enlarged, and elevating views of Christian dispensation'... though he had fine imagination, and both the 'philosophic and poetic genius,' supported by immense erudition, he was made largely useless for Coleridge (as he was for Leibniz) by his lack of a sense of systematic implication. The poet and the philosopher 'did not amalgamate.'"¹⁸²

Muirhead, Lowes, McFarland, Howard, and others note that Coleridge was probably stimulated to search out the Cambridge Platonists' works because of his residency at Jesus College in 1791, because of Thomas Taylor's recent translations of the works of Plotinus and Plato (1787-1797), and because of his readings (c. 1797) in Dupuis who expressed a constant admiration for the Neo-Platonists via Ficino. Howard also proposes Coleridge's "tendency toward mysticism" as a motivating factor. "Among the seventeenth century idealists, mysticism culminated in Henry More. Coleridge's system was differentiated from that of the Platonist's by being more critical."¹⁸³

¹⁸¹Ibid., p. 163 ff.

¹⁸²Claud Howard, Coleridge's Idealism: A Study of Its Relationship to Kant and the Cambridge Platonists (Boston: Richard G. Badger, 1975), p. 65.

¹⁸³Ibid., p. 29.

During the periods of 15 May to 1 June, 1795 and 9 November to 13 December, 1796, Coleridge had been studying Ralph Cudworth's The True Intellectual System of the Universe Wherein All the Reason and Philosophy of Atheism is Confuted and Its Impossibility Demonstrated.¹⁸⁴ Lewis Patton suggests that Coleridge's "use of Cudworth's True Intellectual System reveals further his early connexions with seventeenth-century Platonism."¹⁸⁵ Cudworth's True Intellectual System is virtually an encyclopaedia of ancient philosophical doctrine--one that, moreover, refers not generally but specifically to its sources. Coleridge had a great predilection for encyclopedia works.¹⁸⁶ However, Cecil C. Seronsy's article reveals that Coleridge had read Cudworth's passage in the True Intellectual System on the creation ex nihilo as "a piece of old atheistic cabala" with heated critical sensitivity.¹⁸⁷ In a letter of 19 November 1796, we find him requesting John Thelwall to purchase for him copies of Iamblichus (probably Taylor's translation), Proclus, Prophyry, and Plotinus in Ficino's translation, the very authors Cudworth frequently cited in the course of his long-winded work. The True Intellectual System is a mine of Platonism but connects only tangentially with the Kabbalistic tradition.

However, the chief thesis of Cudworth's work is that behind all the tapestries and evidencies of pagan mythology there is the doctrine of

¹⁸⁴CNB, I, #174, 200-04, 244, 246, 247.

¹⁸⁵Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Lectures of 1795: On Politics and Religion, ed. Lewis Patton and Peter Mann (Princeton University Press: Routledge, Kegan Paul, 1976), p. 1 iv.

¹⁸⁶W. Schrickx, "Coleridge and the Cambridge Platonists," Review of English Literature, VII, i; 71-91. See also R. L. Brett, "Coleridge's Theory of the Imagination," E. and S., NS, II (1949), 78.

¹⁸⁷Cecil C. Seronsy, "More Coleridge Marginalia," Studies in Philology, 52 (1963), 497-501.

monotheism: civilized man in reality has never worshipped but one God, whose threefold Nature was a "Divine Cabala" or revelation, successively depraved and adulterated until it almost disappears, for Cudworth, among the "particular unities" of a Proclus and the later Platonists. In the Preface, he repeatedly refers to the "pagan Cabala" or the "Orphick Cabala" of Pythagoras and the Platonists in reference to their own dim conception of a Divine Triad, with the implication that there was a Hebraeo-Christian Cabala. "It being no way probable, that such a Trinity of divine hypostases should have sprung from human wit, we may reasonably assent to what Proclus affirmeth, that it was at first *θεο παραδοτας θεοδωτα* a theology of divine tradition or revelation; as having been first imparted to the Hebrews, and from them communicated to other nations. Nevertheless, as this divine Cabala was but little understood by these Pagans, so was it by many of them depraved and adulterated....Nor was this trinity of divine hypostases ill-languaged only by the pagans, but also the cabal thereof was much depraved and adulterated by some Platonists and Pythagoreans. As first, such as made the world to the third god. Such a trinity, as compounding God and Creation together....Another depravation of this Cabala of the Trinity...concluding all those several ideas of the divine intellect, or archetypal world, to be so many distinct substances, animals, and gods....A third depravation...asserting an innumerable company of Henades, particular unities, superior to the first Nous." Consulting the Topics of the True Intellectual System, we see that Cudworth makes use of the term "Cabala" in a rather non-specific way though there is ample evidence that he was aware of the Kabballistic tradition. "The suspicion, which Aristotle sometimes had of

Hesiod, and Plato of Homer, seems to have proceeded from their not understanding that Mosaick Cabala, followed by them both, of the world's being made out of a watery Chaos."¹⁸⁸

In the pages in which Cudworth attempts to align the sophisticated "Pythagorick" Cabala with Christian beliefs, he reveals a belief in the Mosaic origin of the Jewish Cabala and the pre-existence of the Trinity, in Judaic mystical doctrine, as well as a preliminary understanding and critical distinction of the Sephiroth and of the Platonic, Neo-Platonic (Plotinian), and Parmenidean Trinities as conceptions from the Kabbalistic tradition. On the Platonic and Locrian consideration of God as the

ἰδέα τῷ ἄνωθι Cudworth notes: "Agreeably with which doctrine of theirs, the Hebrew Cabalists also make a Sephirah in the Deity. Superior both to Binah and Chokmah (understanding and wisdom) which they call Chether, or the Crown, and some would suspect this Cabbalistic learning to have been very ancient among the Jews, and that Parmenides was imbued with it, he calling God in like manner 'Crown.'"¹⁸⁹

Cudworth thus concludes his complicated defence of Christian monotheistic and Trinitarian beliefs as dimly revealed to and conserved by pagans and Jews of superior intelligence and mystical insight: "The Hebrew Doctors and Rabbins have been generally of this persuasion, that the Pagan Nations anciently, at least the intelligent among them, acknowledged One Supreme God of the whole world, and that all their Gods were but Creatures and Inferior Ministers, which were worshipped by them

¹⁸⁸Ralph Cudworth, The True Intellectual System (London: Thomas Birch, 1678), pp. 204-05.

¹⁸⁹Ibid.

upon these two accounts, either as thinking that the honours done them redounded to the Supreme, or else that they might be their Mediators and Intercessors, Orators and Negotiators with Him, which inferior Gods of the Pagans were supposed by these Hebrews to be chiefly of two kinds, Angels and Stars or spheres, the latter of which the Jews as well as Pagans concluded to be animated and intellectual." In support of his argument, Cudworth quoted later Rabbinical writers¹⁹⁰ revealing his curious exploration of the world of Hebrew literature though no direct references are made to the chief Kabbalistic doctrines of the Sepher Yetsirah and the Zohar. A. E. Waite conjectures that Cudworth was, however, familiar with the Zohar.¹⁹¹

In the later work The True Notion of the Lord's Supper (1733), comparing Jewish and pagan sacrificial feasts with the Christian Eucharistic celebration, Cudworth has frequent recourse to the glosses of Nahmanides, Isaac Abravanel, the Mishna, commentaries of Rabbi Obadiah. Also in "A Treatise Concerning Eternal and Immutable Mortality," Cudworth examines the concept of Kether and the pictorialization of the Sephirothic concentricity. "Moreover, it was the opinion of the wisest of philosophers (as we shall show afterwards) that there is also in the scale of being a nature of goodness superior to wisdom, which therefore measures and determines the wisdom of God, as his wisdom and goodness measure and determine his will, and which the ancient cabbalists were wont to call Kether, or crown, as being the top or crown of the Deity, of which more afterwards. Wherefore

¹⁹⁰ Halakoth of Maimonides, the Olat Talmud of Moses Abelda (16th century), the Ikkanin of Joseph Albo (15th century), commentaries of R. David Kimchi, and the book Nitzachon. See Waite, The Holy Kabbalah, p. 181 ff.

¹⁹¹ Waite, The Holy Kabbalah, p. 212.

although some novelists make a contracted idea of God, consisting of nothing else but will and power, yet his nature is better expressed by some in this mystical or enigmatical representation of an infinite circle, whose inmost center is simple goodness, the radii the rays and expanded area-- all comprehending and immutable wisdom--the exterior periphery or interminate circumference, omnipotent will and activity, by which everything without God is brought forth into existence."¹⁹²

Among the names of the great alchemists of the early seventeenth century, Alphonse Constant Lévi lists Robert Fludd (1574-1637), the Kentish "Philosopher by Fire."¹⁹³ Gershom C. Scholem remarks that "as early as the late sixteenth century a pronounced trend had emerged towards the permeation of Christian Kabbalah with alchemical symbolism, thus giving it an oddly original character in the final stages of development in the seventeenth century and eighteenth, notably in Robert Fludd, Thomas Vaughn, Khunrath, Blaise de Vigenère, von Frankenburg, and in George von Welling's Opus Mago Cabbalistarum (1735) and the many books of F. C. Oetinger (1702-1782), "whose influence is discernible in the works of such great figures of German idealist philosophy as Hegel and Schelling."¹⁹⁴

Fludd's connection with the Order of the Rosy Cross (Rosicrucianism) has never been wholly determined; Waite remarks on his defence of its advocates but is doubtful whether he was ever initiated. His earliest work, the Apologia Compendaria (Leyden, 1616), defends the Order a-

¹⁹²Ralph Cudworth, "A Treatise Concerning Eternal and Immutable Mortality," Opera Omnia (London: Thomas Birch, 1690)., pp. 301-02.

¹⁹³Constant, op. cit., p. 267.

¹⁹⁴Scholem, The Kabbalah, pp. 200-201.

gainst Libavius, a hostile German critic, and also exhibits Fludd's vast readings in Kabbalah from which he adopted some of his cosmological hypotheses. Waite summarizes Fludd's debt to the "practical" aspects of Kabbalah, which fired the alchemist in his search for the Philosopher's Stone and the secret processes of Creation--for Kabbalah does suggest many metaphorical descriptions of the elemental processes of Creation and Life and Death. Fludd had

an inordinate passion for the marvellous, which leads him to dwell unduly on the thaumaturgic side of Jewish Secret Knowledge. Having given the usual legend of the tradition, its reception by Moses from God and its oral perpetuation until the time of Esdras, he divides the Kabbalah into two parts. The first is that of Cosmology, dealing with forces operating in created things, both sublunary and celestial....This division, he observes, does not materially differ from the Natural Magic in which Solomon is recorded to have excelled.... The second division is entitled Mercavah, which contemplates things Divine, angelical powers, Sacred Names and signacula. It is subdivided into Notaricon and Theomantica. Notaricon treats of angelical virtues and names of demoniacal natures and of human souls; Theomantica investigates the Mysteries of Divine Majesty, of Sacred Names and pentacles. Those who are proficient therein are invested with strange powers, can foretell future things, command entire Nature, compel angels and demons, and perform miracles. By this art Moses worked his various signs and wonders, Joshua caused the sun to stand still, Elijah brought fire from heaven and raised the dead to life.¹⁹⁵

His works reveal that he was more familiar with the later developments of Kabbalistic tradition, such as the Sepher Raziel which was proscribed as "degenerate" by Reuchlins, Rosenroth, and Postel. But there are also strong evidences of his familiarity with the Sepher Yetsirah, the Zohar, and even the Sepher ha-Bahir and their commentators.

In the Podromus, Dissertationem Cosmographicum continens Mysterium Cosmographicum De Admirabili proportione orbium coelestium, despite its

¹⁹⁵Waite, The Holy Kabbalah, p. 468 ff.

"scientific" pretensions, Fludd proposes a "trinitarian" reduction of the universe to Number, Quantity, and the Movement of the Spheres, "ut hoc auderem, efficiat illa pulchra quiescentium harmonia, Solis fixarum et intermedii, cum Deo Patre, et Filio, et Sancti Spiritu."¹⁹⁶ The work consistently represents the Universe as modelled after the Trinity while comingling with Copernican astronomy, the numerology of the Zodiac and references to the waters of Chaos prior to creation "aquas Mosaicas," which remain as fragments of a type of cosmic creative explosion. In his Cosmology of the Macrocosmos (Utriusque Cosmi Majoris scilicet et Minoris Metaphysics, Physica atque Technica Historia, Frankfort, 1617 and 1629), which deals with the universe's metaphysical and physical origins, he has recourse chiefly to Platonic and Hermetic writings. Although many other authorities are cited, nothing is borrowed from Kabbalah except the tetragrammaton, which figures within a triangle in one of the illustrations. According to Waite's evaluation of the Cosmology of the Macrocosmos (reminiscent of Kabbalah in its doctrine of angels and demons), "Slight correspondences may be noted in his other writings they they indicate no real knowledge. In discovering the properties of numbers (i. e., the Sephiroth) and the Divine Names attributed to these, the diagram which accompanies the remarks shows that he misconstrued totally the Kabbalistic scheme of emanation (Philosophia Sacra, et vere Christiana seu Meteorologia Cosmica, 1629). So also some later observations concerning Metatron and the positive and negative sides of the Sephirothic tree suggest no special knowledge (Medicina Catholica,

¹⁹⁶Robert Fludd, Podromus, Dissertationem Cosmographicum (Tubigen, 1596), pp. 7, 23.

seu Mysticum Artis Medicandi Sacrarum, Frankfort, 1629-31)."¹⁹⁷

In the Mosaicall Philosophy, however, Robert Fludd enshrines the original conception and purpose of the Christian Kabbalists of a former generation in taking over the "Tree of Life" idea from contemporary Judaism; for Fludd was pre-eminently a Christian philosopher, and like other subjects, the Esoteric Tradition of Israel was approached by him from the Christian standpoint. The Mosaicall Philosophy reveals Fludd's consultation of that "excellent philosopher Hermes" and other "ethnick philosophers" in interpreting Mosaic science and positing his highly personalized interpretation of the Kabbalistic tradition. On the concept of Ayin, Fludd is fascinated by its linguistic duality: meaning both nothing and a fountain. This he explains by suggesting that the "fountain" was "nothing" in the darkness prior to Creation, but became infinite when it flowed from dark Aleph to light Aleph. This is suggestive of the Zoharic interpretation of the birth of language and the generation of the Cosmos. With the supernal Sephiroth, Fludd intermeshes the doctrine of the Trinity as absconded in the stillness of Ayin. "For this reason also Reuchlins speaketh of the Beginning, by the mouth of the mysticall and learned Rabbis in these words: It is written in the book of Bahir, Nihil est principium nisi sapientia...Nothing is the beginning but wisdom or sapience, and it is the infinity of the three highest numerations of the Cabalisticall Tree, which yee are accustomed to call the three persons in divinity, the which is an absolute essence, which whilest it is retracted in the abyse of darkness, and resteth still and quiet, or,

¹⁹⁷ Waite, The Holy Kabbalah, p. 469 ff.

as they say, having respect unto nothing; is for that cause termed of the Hebrews, Ain, that is to say, Nihil, or nothing, or no entity: Because that was being affected, with extreme shallowness or poverty of wit and capacity in the conception or apprehension of divine things, do judge of those things which do not appeare, as we are accustomed to do of such things, as are not at all. But when it hath showed forth itselſe to be somewhat indeed, and that it doth really in human apprehension exist somewhat, then is dark Aleph converted into light Aleph."¹⁹⁸ Whereupon he cites verses of St. Paul.

Fludd was also fascinated by the belief that St. Jerome was a Kabbalistic adept and by his sanctity gave his imprimatur to studies in the mysteries of Jewish mysticism. "When Jerom had often turned over the book of Jezira or of the Creation with a nocturnall...hand; it is reported that the daughter of the voice came unto him, which commanded him to take paines in the said Volume for three years space, which when he had effected he said that he was taught by God, the virtues and powers of the Alphabets, and the Elementary Commutations; for he had known the disposition of the conjugation of the book of Creation before. And hereupon did this alphabetory caball or reception spring, by which he did bewray or disclose the great mystery of divine things...you will not deny that he was deeply seen in the profound and arcane meanings of the Scriptures, and therefore he was a man who should not lightly be so deceived or deluded in his Interpretation."¹⁹⁹ Fludd goes on to discuss the Sephiroth and the signifi-

¹⁹⁸ Robert Fludd, The Mosaicall Philosophy, Grounded upon the Essential Truth of Eternal Sapience (London: Humphrey Moseley, 1659), p. 46 ff.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., pp. 61 ff.

cance of certain letters, an alchemical interpretation of the Heavens and Stars by the "Eternal Spirit or Ruach Elohim" by Condensation and Rarefaction, the mirror reflection of the superior and inferior worlds, the respective Divine attributes of the Names Ehieh, Jah, and Elohim, the action and orders of the Angels. In support of his dissertation, he often quotes Reuchlins, Recanatus, and Hermes Trismegistus (giving much credence to the existence of his Smaragdine Tablet). His conclusions drawn from his Kabbalistic researches are consistent with the Christian Kabbalist tradition. "I conclude therefore that both Theology and the mysticall Philosophy do consent that God is well pleased with the Holy Ternary, which is the first odd number in the Arithmetically progression; for we Christians honour a Trinity of Persons in One Deity; and Aristotle saith that we are instructed by a kind of instinct or habit, to honour God after the number three...so that the Trinity in Divinity was the root of all the worlds from all composition...Ye may therefore perceive, that the whole power of the Cabalistical Tree, is comprehended in these three first branches, no otherwise than the typical world is comprehended in the Archetype, which consisteth in a triple property, most aptly referred unto the Trinity of Persons."²⁰⁰ In a letter of 21 January, 1810, Coleridge attributes Jacob Boehme's alchemical knowledge to Fludd or disciples of Fludd, noting incidentally the possibility that Boehme was particularly aware of Fludd "while he was delving into the possible State of Being prior to Consciousness."²⁰¹ This suggests that Coleridge may have been aware of Fludd's Trinitarian thesis and its derivations,

²⁰⁰Ibid., p. 175

²⁰¹Griggs, CL, III.

possibly from Boehme's Three Principles. However a letter of January 26, 1824, reveals Coleridge's characteristic moody disdain of "mystics" (however beloved as in the case of Boehme whom he alternately extolled and ridiculed): "Fludd I found indigestible."²⁰²

The last of the second generation of Cambridge Platonists, Thomas Burnet alone reveals a thoroughgoing critical approach to the Kabbalistic tradition. Free from evangelical intentions and sometimes regarded as "one of the rare precursors of liberal theology," Burnet distinguished between the "Nominal" and the "Real Kabbalah." He disparaged the aspirations of theosophy and is said to have closed the path to his promotion by proposing that the story of the Garden of Eden should not be construed literally. In his Faith and Duty of Christians and the posthumous De Statu Mortuum et Resurgentium, he excluded much traditional belief that he thought "doubtful" and maintained that the punishment of the wicked would terminate ultimately in their salvation, a doctrine held in common with some Kabbalists. "If we attempt," says Burnet, "to separate anything which may remain uncorrupted in the Kabbalah, to divide the genuine from the spurious, we must first of all purge away that numerical, literal, grammatical part which seeks to extract arcane meanings from the alphabet, the Divine Names and the word book of the Scriptures. The magical and superstitious elements must be also purged away." He dismisses Gematria, Temurah, Notaricon, and Vocabula as "worthless," not granting their grounding in the serious belief in the Torah as literally the plan of Creation. "They do not belong to sane literature,

²⁰²Griggs, CL, V.

much less to wisdom." His general hypothesis as to the "tradition" of the oral reception of the "mysteries" Burnet thus sums up: "We know from Maimonides that the Hebrews were possessed of many mysteries concerning things divine, but that they have perished. It is at the same time scarcely possible that all foundation should be wanting to the Kabbalah, yet if its doctrines were openly and clearly set forth, it is hard to say whether they would move us to laughter or astonishment." He remains ever determined to view the tradition as level-headedly as possible to avoid being misled even by the light of reason refracted through the cloudy prism of history. "We are all of us liable some time or another to be distracted by reasoning, but it is a common complaint of the mind among Orientals to be distracted by allegories."²⁰³

However, A. E. Waite reveals that Burnet, had little extensive recourse to the primary documents of Kabbalah and reduced most of his theories from Rosenroth's Kabbala Denudata.

When he comes, however, to consider what he has agreed to regard as the real Kabbalah, his insufficiency is evident, and his slender knowledge, drawn only from Kabbala Denudata, when it does not arrest his judgment, leads him to manifest error. Thus, he tells us that the real Kabbalah contains two things which are important for our consideration, the doctrine of the Sephiroth and that of the four worlds, but he complains that the conception which underlies the former does not appear clearly. With the help of the lexicon of Rosenroth he decides that they are emanations from God (elsewhere he attempts to consider their significance in

²⁰³Thomas Burnet, Telluris Theoria Sacra (With a Review of the Theory of Its Proofs, Especially in Reference to Scripture) (London: J. Hooke, 1726), pp. 60 ff.

connection with the axiom--ex nihilo nihil fit). He sets forth what he can glean from that source concerning Kether and Chokmah, and then surrenders the inquiry in the hope of finding more intelligible statements concerning the Four Worlds.²⁰⁴

Burnet also demonstrates some familiarity with the Thirty-Two Paths of Wisdom from the Sepher Yetsirah and the Fifty Gates of Providence "Through which Moses attained his marvelous science, and concealed the same in the Pentateuch"; he regarded the Book of Concealment as the most profitable of the Kabbalistic books and was aware of the Lurianic commentaries.

Described by Brewster as a "beautiful geological romance" and regarded by S. T. Coleridge as suitable for translation into Epic Verse, Burnet's Telluris Theoria Sacra (The Sacred Theory of the Earth Containing an Account of the Original of the Earth and of all the General Changes which It Hath Already Undergone, or Is to Undergo, Till the Consummation of All Things...With a Review of the Theory and Of Its Proofs; Especially in Deference to Scripture, 1689) concerns itself with the Mosaic scheme of creation. In the Telluris Theoria Sacra, Burnet upholds the traditional view that the "wisdom of Moses" was a derived and yet purified inheritance from the Egyptian education of the Jewish lawgiver. Waite notes that "he differs, however, from Kabbalists by questioning seriously how much of this wisdom came down to the Israelites. Assuming some tradition of the kind, there could be no doubt that it was depraved in the lapse of time (foedissime licet a Noeticis corrupta et adulterata). In particular the Kabbalah as we now possess it abounds in figments of imagination

²⁰⁴Waite, The Holy Kabbalah, p. 484.

and in nugatory methods."²⁰⁵

First, as to Jews, 'tis well known that they have no ancient learning, unless by Way of Tradition...for to speak, the Jews are a People of little Curiosity, as to Sciences and philosophical Enquiries....There has been a great fame, 'tis true, of the Jewish Cabala and of the great Mysteries contain'd in it; and, I believe, there was once a traditional Doctrine amongst some of them, that had Extraordinary Notions and Conclusions....One Head in this Cabala was the Doctrine of the Sephiroth, (Vide Men, Ben Ifr, de Create, pov. 28) and tho' the Explication of them be uncertain, the inferior Sephiroth in the corporeal World cannot so well be apply'd to any thing, as to those several Orbs and Regions, infolding one another, whereof the primigenial Earth was compos'd....I have often thought also, that their first and second Temple represented the First and Second Earthor Worlds; and that of Ezekiel's, which is the third, is still to be erected the most beautiful of all, when this second Temple of the World shall be burn'd down.²⁰⁶

Lowes has already proposed that Coleridge had most likely been reading the Theoria Sacra at the time of the composition of The Rime of the Ancient Mariner.

The quotation from Archaeologicae Philosophicae sive Doctrinae Antiqua de Rerum Originibus (1692), the extension or sequel of Theoria Sacra, verses of which were appended to the 1817 edition of The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, is first found notated in the 1801-02 notebooks.²⁰⁷ Lowes, however, does not note in his Road to Xanadu that the quotation has been curiously expunged of its Kabbalistic significance which is a major component of the Archaeologicae Philosophicae itself. The lines quoted appear in Chapter VII entitled "De Hebraeis, eorumque Cabala."

...Nunquam attigit. Theologi Ethici multa philosophantur circa mundum invisibile, Animarum, Demorum, Manium, Daemonum, Heroum, Mentium, Numinumque, et Deorum. Ut videre est apud Jamblichum de mysteriis Aegyptiorum, apud Psellum et Plethonem in Chaldaicis et

²⁰⁵Burnet, Telluris, p. 482.

²⁰⁶Ibid., 389-91.

²⁰⁷Coburn, CNB: I, 1000 H. 22.9.

passim apud Authores Platonicos. Hoc etiam imitati sunt ex Christianis theologis nonnulli, circa Angelorum ordines: et Pseudo-Christiani Gnostici sub Aeonum et Deorum nominibus, multa Confinxerunt in hac materia. Denique Cabalistsae, in suo mundo Jetzirathico, myriades Angelorum lustrant sub ducibus Sandalphone et Metatrone; pro ut istarum rerum studiosis notum est. Sed ad quid valent haec omnia? Quid sinceri solidique habet haec Philosophia Seraphica? Non sum nescius, mundi Angelici meminisse Apostulum Paulum, et in eo distinxisse plures ordines et classes. Sed in genere tantum; de his non philosophatur; nihil speciatim docet aut disputat; Quin imo repremendo esse senset eos, tanquam vana scientia inflatos, qui in haec incognita et inscrutibilia tenere esse ingerunt. Juvat utique, non diffiteor, quandoque in animo, tanquam in Tabula, majoris et contrahat melioris mundi Imaginem contemplari: ne Mens assuefacta hodiernae vitae minutiis se nimis, et tota subsidat in puiscillas cogitationes. Sed veritati interea invigilandum est modusque servandus, ut certa ab incertis, diem a nocte, distinguamus, Sapientus enim est, non tantum, ea quae sciri possunt, scire; sed etiam, quae sciri non possunt, discernere et discriminare.²⁰⁸

Earlier segments of the chapter "De Hebraeis" discuss the devices of gematria, notaricon, themurah quoting Reuchlins, Schinler, Rittangelius, and Hottinger "qui hanc materiam tractant." His explanation of the Sephiroth as names or "voices" leads him to a discussion of their configurations referring to the Zohar;²⁰⁹ as to their individual properties, he refers to the "Lexicon Zoharis," probably Rosenroth's. Concerning the Four Worlds of Creation, he refers to the Porta Coelorum of R. Abraham Cohen Iriara. His exposition of the Kabbalistic doctrine is also compounded of readings in R. Itzchak Lorjac (Luria), R. Nephthali Hirtz, Barba Macroprosopus, and Moses Maimonides, to whom he is particularly indebted for his basic distinction between the Nominal and the Real Kabbalah.²¹⁰ In further discussions he turns to a comparison of

²⁰⁸Thomas Burnet, Archeologicae Philosophicae, (London: Mead and Foxton, 1692), p. 68.

²⁰⁹Ibid., pp. 45-49 ff.

²¹⁰Moses Maimonides, Guide of the Perplexed, tr. Schlomo Pines (University of Chicago Press, 1963), p. xxiiff.

Pythagorean concepts and the Kabbalah's tetragrammaton, ultimately resolving his syncretistic study with Christian dogmatics. "Denique, ut finem faciem inter legendum hujusmodi scripta, Cabalistica, Theosophica, Hermetica, et omne genus pseudo-mystica, saepe mihi redeunt in mentem verba 'Christi' (John iii: 10-21)."²¹¹ His historical discussion of the progress of the Jewish "mystical" tradition ends with a commentary on the end of the Essenes and the ultimate degeneration of Kabbalah into ritual magic.

Among all of the aforementioned Kabbalists, there can be noted a number of common traits which most likely attracted Coleridge to an examination of their theses and, perhaps only incidentally, furthered and shaped his knowledge of the Kabbalistic tradition: an interest in "comparative" linguistics, philosophy, and theology; an "ecumenical" spirit of toleration for all religious sects; an eagerness to discover the roots of the Hebraeo-Christian tradition and doctrine through Biblical exegesis, particularly Genesis and the Apocalypse of St. John; a "liberal" approach to Biblical exegesis, zealous labour at systematizing the infant "experimental" and "psychological" sciences, a grounding of metaphysics in Platonism; and a fascination with the occult, the esoteric, and the "mystic" in reaction to the reductionistic, rationalistic, and "atomistic." Moreover, this fascination with the unexplained, the supernatural, the "mysterious," Coleridge felt would some day lead him or his successors to a scientific ("natural") description of "the relation between body and mind."²¹²

²¹¹Burnet, Archaeologiae, p. 56.

²¹²Coburn, Philosophical Lectures, p. 45.

CHAPTER III

SUCCESSORS TO THE CHRISTIAN KABBALISTIC TRADITION TO THE TIME OF COLERIDGE

The sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth-century works discussed in this chapter lie two removes from the primary texts of the Kabbalistic tradition. Except for the instance of Baruch Benedict Spinoza, it is unlikely that any of the writers surveyed in this chapter were intimately familiar with either the Sepher Yetsirah or the Sepher Zohar; most were dependent upon the fourteenth and fifteenth-century commentators for their conceptions of the mystical philosophy of the Jews.

Except for Jakob Boehme, who united in himself both Christian and Judaic mysticisms and, in a sense, transformed both traditions, these writers had only a disinterested scholarly regard for a tradition that had long since been discredited, particularly because of the alchemical accretions of degenerate Kabbalism. The general Christian Kabbalist attitude toward Judaic mysticism had always been wonder mixed with disparagement; few were capable of realizing the larger philosophical import of its "metaphysics" and instead abused its doctrines by impressing them into the service of their exegetical arsenals. Essentially, the interest was eclectic and rhetorical: evidence selected out of context, limbs ripped off the practically lifeless corpus. These writers, in con-

trast with their predecessors, are not driven by the obsession to refine gold, to create the homunculus, or golem, to convert the Jewish nation to Christianity, or to persuade Scholastics to Platonism; rather the majority are encyclopaedists, historians, "new" philosophers, literate sermonizers well aware of the scope and unity of the "sciences" they methodically examine. Ironically their estimation of Kabbalah is still wonder mixed with disparagement, but the degree of reaction is much less emotional; for Kabbalah, to each of these writers, is a quite harmless, lifeless system once mechanized by an involved and curious terminology but still, at times, a mystifying link between the Christian and Judaic religions.

As in the case of one of Coleridge's favorite writers, Sir Thomas Browne, Kabbalah could be proposed as evidence for just about any argument; and while its pseudo-scientism could hardly be taken seriously, the very fact that it dealt with the mysteries of God and His universe of souls somehow gave it an antiquated dignity and commanded an amused respect--if not a secret relish for its dynamic mythology and exalted poetry. In support of his botanical theory of pentadicity, Sir Thomas Browne writes: "The same number in the Hebrew mysteries and Cabalistical accounts was the character of Generation; declared by the Letter He, the fifth in their Alphabet; According to that Cabalistical Dogma: If Abrams had not had this letter added unto His Name, he had remained fruitlesse, and without the power of generation; Not only because hereby the number of his Name attained two hundred forty-eight, the number of the affirmative precepts, but because as in created natures there is a male and fe-

male, so in divine and intelligent productions, the mother of Life and Fountain of souls in Cabalistical Technology is called Binah; whose Seal and Character was He."¹

"Technology" is precisely what petrified the profane Kabbalah. On the other hand, Sir Thomas Browne simultaneously expressed the alternate serious attitude toward the Kabbalistic tradition. "The greatest mystery of Religion is expressed by adumbration, and in the noblest part of Jewish types. We finde the Cherubims shadowing the Mercy-seat: Life itself is but the shadow of death, and the souls departed but the shadows of the living: all things fall under this name. The sunne itself is but the dark simulacrum, and light but the shadow of God...the Cabalistical Doctors, who conceive the whole Sephiroth, or divine emanations to have guided the ten-stringed harp of David, whereby he pacified the evil spirit of Saul."²

The necessarily restricted scope of this study precludes a much-needed systematic re-examination of the influence of Jakob Boehme on Samuel Taylor Coleridge's thought and works. It has been presumed if not suggested in a number of critical annotations and articles on Boehme and Coleridge that the Jakob Boehme of The Aurora is in no way different from the Jakob Boehme of the Mysterium Magnum (1623), which, as in the case of all valuable philosophers and artists, is a misleading oversimplification. The preliminary critical assumptions basic to this segment on

¹Sir Thomas Browne, The Cyrus Garden, ed. L. C. Martin (Oxford: Clarendon, 1964), pp. 170-72.

²Ibid., Sir Thomas Browne derived much of his knowledge of the Kabbalah from the works of Archangelus Burgonuovo.

the Kabbalistic underpinnings of Boehme are founded on the Beer-Schneider-Haven discussions concerning the dating of Coleridge's probable reading of Boehme in the 1764-81 William Law edition. In opposition to Fruman's psychoanalytical proposal of Coleridge's Wunderkind obsession reaffirming Haven's "conclusions," the work of Kathleen Coburn and A. D. Snyder well attests that Coleridge had indeed "conjured over" Boehme's The Aurora "at school"³ but that the reading of other Boehme material must not be dated earlier than 1807-08. Needless to say, Jakob Boehme's name recurs constantly in all of Coleridge's major prose works; and Coleridge's interest in Boehme, while having been sparked by his early reading of The Aurora, was most likely fanned by the widespread enthusiasm of others infected with Boehme "fever"--from Milton to the Cambridge Platonists, Goethe, Tieck, Novalis, Newton Schelling, Fouque, Jean Paul, the Schlegels, Franz von Baader, the followers of George Fox, etc.⁴ I am proposing that with Coleridge's fascination with Boehme's "imagination," a good deal of Kabbalistic system and imagery may have been absorbed.

While J. B. Beer asserts that Coleridge "found" Kabbalistic doctrines in Jakob Boehme, he in no way established clearly that indeed Boehme is capable of a valid Kabbalistic interpretation, let alone describes Boehme's actual debt to Kabbalah which still remains a topic of much conjecture. Beer, the first to suggest an affinity between

³CL: IV, "July 4, 1817." De Quincy has also attested that he first introduced Coleridge to the Law edition of Boehme. De Quincy and Coleridge met for the first time in August, 1807.

⁴For further discussion see M. J. Bailey's Milton and Jacob Boehme: A Study of German Mysticism in Seventeenth-Century England, Rufus Jones' Spiritual Reformers in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century, Serge Hutin's Les Disciples Anglais de Jacob Boehme aux xvii^e et xviii^e siecles, Caroline Spurgeon's Mysticism in English Literature, and Nils Thune's The Behmenists and the Philadelphians.

Boehme-Kabbalah-Coleridge, speaks in the most generalized way of "cabbalistic terms" contained in The Aurora and which Coleridge in turn connected with those of the "esoteric Greek mysteries."⁵ The "cabbalistic terms" proposed concerning physical love and the Fall of Man are only indistinctly alluded to and of little use to the succeeding Kabbalistic interpretation of elements in the Kubla Khan. We must thus first examine the evidence for the existence of Kabbalism in Boehme before we can propose that Coleridge was either critically aware of the Kabbalistic perspective in the works of the shoe-maker of Gorlitz or that he had tacitly acknowledged the Kabbalistic element in Boehme as part of a continuous mystical tradition from Paracelsus through Rosenroth and to the Cambridge Platonists.⁶

That Boehme was a Christian Kabbalist with a highly personalized theosophy of his own has been attested to by a number of devotees of his work. F. C. Oetinger related in his autobiography that the Kabbalist Koppel Hecht of Frankfort-on-Main regarded Boehme as the chief contemporary Christian Kabbalist. Though the term "cabbala" is used only twice in Boehme's works⁷ with an acknowledgement that it was the philosophy of the ancient rabbis, his disciples--Abraham von Franckenburg, Johann Jakob Spaeth, and Franz von Baader--attest to a thorough, self-educated knowledge of Kabbalah tempering Boehme's works. Where

⁵J. B. Beer, Coleridge the Visionary (London: Chatto and Windus, 1970), p. 62.

⁶Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Miscellaneous Criticism, ed. T. M. Raysor (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1936), p. 193.

⁷Jakob Boehme, Von 177 Theosophischen Fragen, ed. F. A. S. Noerr (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1960), iii: 34.
-----, Von der Gnadewahl, ed. F. A. S. Noerr (Stuttgart: Reclam 1962), xi: 2.

this knowledge was obtained by the orthodox Christian shoemaker has long been a point of debate. J. J. Stoudt and Hans M. Martensen, the major modern commentators on Boehme, point to one Dr. Tobias Kober, physician and personal friend to Boehme, as his instructor in the Kabbalah of Paracelsus, particularly the Theologia Cabalistica de perfecto homine in C. Jesu printed in Husia's 1618 edition.⁸

In the Memories of the Life, Death, Burial and Wonderful Writings of Jacob Boehme, Francis Okeley describes one Dr. Balthazar Walther of Great Glogan in Silesia in 1617:

This Gentleman was a good Physician and Chymist; who after having travelled through Europe, Africa, and Asia spent three months with Jacob Boehme at his poor habitation near the Neusbridge at Gorlitz, and had many private and intimate conferences with him there. They were afterwards translated into Latin by the noble and very learned Johan Angelius Werdenhagen. This very worthy Dr. Balthazar Walther above said...has on different Occasions and after protested that altho' on his many and extensive Travels, and particularly for six successive years in Arabia, Syria, and Egypt, (where he was in Quest of the genuine Occult Wisdom, under the Denominations of Cabbalah, Magia, Chymia, or perhaps) in it's true Source, Theosophia, which he pursued with extraordinary Care and Diligence; he did indeed meet with some Relics and Fragments of it, intermixed and blended with other things; yet he no where found it in such a consummate Sublimity and Profundity, Solidity, and Purity; in the Simple Man, and rejected Corner-Stone.⁹

This testimony suggests that Boehme had synthesized Kabbalistic knowledge before the coming of Dr. Walther, who in 1620 became the director of the chemical laboratory in Dresden and personal physician to the Prince of Anhalt. Boehme visited Dresden in 1624.¹⁰ But Stoudt and Alexander

⁸J. J. Stoudt, Jacob Boehme: His Life and Thought (New York: Seabury, 1968).
Hans L. Martensen, Jacob Boehme, tr. T. Rhys Evans (London: Rockliff, 1949)

⁹Frances Oakley, Memories of the Life Death, Burial, and Wonderful Writings of Jacob Boehme (Northampton: Thomas Dacey, 1780), p. 13.

¹⁰Bartholomeus Scultetus Rhambau, Balthazar Waltheir, Vera Descriptio Re-
rum (Dresden, 1715), p. 24-25.

Koyre believe it was Walther who found a very ready student of Kabbalah in Boehme. In a 1652 edition of some of Boehme's works, the editor Gregory Richter (ironically the son of his archenemy in Gorlitz) commented on the probable subjects of the three months in question--principally the matter of Johannes Reuchlins' De Arte Cabalistica.¹¹ Stoudt conjectures that Boehme was instructed in Kabbalah without knowing the nature of its origin or name until much later in his life.¹² Other remote sources of Kabbalistic intimations that have been suggested have been Martin Moller, Valentin Weigel, Schwenkfeld, Sebastian Franck, Eckhart, Tauler, Suso, Joachim of Flora, and the unknown author of the Theologia Germanica.¹³

From the modern Jewish scholar's perspective, Gershom G. Scholem draws a very strong argument for a serious evaluation of Boehme's Kabbalistic indebtedness. "...Boehme more than any other Christian mystic, shows the closest affinity to Kabbalism precisely where he is most original. He has, as it were, discovered the world of Sephiroth all over again. It is possible, of course, that he deliverately assimilated elements of Kabbalistic thought after he had made, in the period following upon his illumination, their acquaintance through friends, who, unlike himself, were scholars."¹⁴ Scholem goes so far as to say that

¹¹Alexander Koyre, La Philosophie de Jacob Boehme (Paris: Mouton, 1929), pp. 18-19.

¹²Stoudt, p. 96.

¹³W. A. Schulze, "Jacob Bohme und die Kabbala," Judaica XI (1955): 12-29. W. Huber, "Die Kabbala als Quelle zur Anthropologie Jakob Bohme," Kairos XIII (1971): 131-50.

¹⁴Gershom G. Scholem, Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism, p. 237-38.

Christian Kabbalism developed a definite Boehmean guise in certain circles in Germany, Holland, and England. We must now indicate which elements of Boehme's theosophy are indeed of a Kabbalist nature as opposed to those grounded in the general "mystical" natural philosophy of the hermetic-alchemical tradition.

In the following comparison of resemblances between the Kabbalistic tradition and the theosophy of Jakob Boehme, one must keep in mind that whereas many have noted definite similarities between the two there have been as many who have denied that any serious comparison is possible. A. E. Waite remarks, and perhaps rightly so, that the similarity is one only of philosophical modes both springing parallel from a common source, the Old Testament, so much so that a certain imagery and dialectic produced similar theosophical expressions. However, we cannot discount the possibility of an outside Kabbalist influence on Boehme, principally because he did not live as withdrawn and unscholarly an existence as early pious biographers¹⁵ had recorded and because the Kabbalistic literature abounded in his time. Our examination will proceed from a description of common elements and common methods.

As already described, the characteristic element of the Kabbalistic tradition is the Sephirothic system. A similar system has been universally noted in Boehme's thought, and most often ascribed to his readings in the alchemical writings of Paracelsus; for alchemy and the Boehmean Sephiroth are intermixed with the Days of Genesis. In The Aurora, a chapter is devoted to each of seven "qualifying" or "fountain spirits"

¹⁵For further discussion see Richard Jecht's Jakob Bohme Gedenkgabe ser Stadt Gorlitz (Gorlitz, 1924) and Will-Erich Peuchert's Das Leben Jakob Bohme (Jena, 1924).

that reside in the Divine Power. They are described as "the father of the light, and the light is their son, which they always continually generate thus from eternity to eternity." These qualities which counterbalance each other in alchemical terms are also components of the chariot of Ezekiel. "The seven wheels are the seven spirits of God, they are always generating the others, and are like the turning about of a wheel, which hath seven wheels one in another, and the one always wheeleth itself otherwise than the other in its station or position, and the seven wheels are hooped around with fellies like a round globe."¹⁶ This Sephiroth-like configuration is repeated in many variations throughout The Aurora.¹⁷ The distinctively Kabbalistic character of these elements is that they are part of the "wheel of Birth" generating the universe and that they reflect the identity of God and of Man.

As in the Kabbalistic tradition, the seven "natural" properties are conceptualized by Boehme as two ternaries or triads with an intermediary transition element: one ternary representing the dark or negative elements counterbalanced by the light or positive. The Seven Spirits are reducible to a dualism of Darkness and Light, Light and Fire, a Nature-center and a Life or Light-center: every life has a double center. In Boehme as in Kabbalah, there is also an infernal Sephiroth. Likewise, J. B. Martensen suggests that the seventh property of the

¹⁶ Jakob Boehme, The Aurora, That Is, the Day-Spring, Or the Dawning of the Day in the Orient or Morning Rednesse in the Rising of the Sun. That Is the Root or Mother of Philosophie, Astrologie, and Theologie from the True Ground, ed. C. J. B. and D. S. H., tr. John Sparrow (London: John M. Watkins, 1960), p. 329.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 562, 616. See also Martensen, p. 68.

"Abode of God"--the House of the Holy Trinity, the Uncreated Heaven, the Kingdom--corresponds to the Kabbalists' Malkuth.¹⁸ The Seven Spirits or Qualities are also ethical as well as cosmogonical potencies; but as cosmogonical they are distinctly separate from the theogony. Boehme avoids, as does Kabbalah, an emanatory cosmogony.¹⁹

Beyond these "constructive" potencies which radiate from the Divine Life lies the mystery of the Godhead. Boehme, in what is perhaps most markedly Kabbalistic, posits a Quaternity to conceptualize the movement of God in Himself. As in the Ain Soph-Kether-Hokhmak-Binah configuration in the Kabbalistic tradition, Boehme describes theogony as a process of self-consciousness in the act of Willing. Accordingly, Boehme exhibits two Kabbalistic conceptions in the theogony of his Trinity plus: the process begins in the Ungrund, an Ain-Soph-like condition, and involves an element that is described in feminine terms as is the Aima in Kabbalah. As in Kabbalah, the Boehmean theogonic process is not encoded complete by the theosopher in one vision but is given slight variations consistent with the dynamic, eternally perpetuating process he attempts to describe mystically.

In contrast to Boehme's and Kabbalah's "uncovering" the successive layers of the divine nature (as Berdyaev remarks), the traditional Trinitarian view describes how God acts vis-a-vis His Creation. It does not show how He knows Himself. Boehme's theogony is an unusual attempt to show how in self-contemplation God comes to know Himself, and then,

¹⁸Martensen, p. 50.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 77. See Stoudt for more detailed discussion, pp. 119 ff.

after Creation, how He knows and is known by His creatures. To do this Boehme had to conceive of God's inner life--both conscious and beyond consciousness (the human conception of); he had to postulate a non-rational Ungrund which corresponds to an infinite periphery or a fourth composite part of the Trinity. The analogue in Kabbalah is the Ain-Soph, conceiving of God in "Indifference."

As in Kabbalah, the Sephiroth, whether supernal or constructive, enjoy a dynamic tension among themselves which holds their creative energies, as it were, in check or, better, in a kind of atomic bonding which irradiates the Void with its creative power. This dynamic tension is generated from the first movement of the Godhead in Ungrund, the Bys. Boehme writes in Mysterium Magnum, the work which consummates his thought; "God is the One, the Will of the Abyss, the Will of the Wisdom. The Wisdom is His Delight in Manifestation, He begetteth Himself, from Eternity to Eternity, in which Eternal Generations are 1. The Will. 2. The Mind of the Will. 3. The egress from the Will and Mind."²⁰ Swainson notes that the Will and the Wisdom of the "dark ternary" correspond to the Abba and the Aima of the Kabbalah.²¹ Likewise, Martensen's study of the "turning" of the Godhead in the Ungrund or Ain Soph demonstrates incidentally the common use of the "mirror" in Zoharic and Boehmean imagery to express theogony and more importantly the exact nature of Wisdom-Sophia--identical with Kabbalah's Aima. One should note that in Kabbalah Aima is identified with Shekhinah, the Bride of Messiah,

²⁰Jakob Boehme, Erklärung über das Erste Buch Mosis (Mysterium Magnum), ed. J. W. Ueberfeld (Mainz: 1730), p. 319. (My translation).

²¹Swainson, A. P., Three Famous Mystics, 3 vols. (London: Rider and Company, 1940), II, pp. 129-30.

and not with the Messiah Himself.

In summarizing Boehme's theogony, Martensen relates that the un-originated Will first creates a "mirror" which denoted God's visibility as the eternal Wisdom: the eternal Idea, Sophia or the Maiden. In the Divine Visibility, Wisdom plays with the radiated powers as with one single power. The Wisdom is neither great nor small, has neither beginning nor end but is infinite, and its form is inexpressible. It stands before God as a Virgin; it is still and speechless and, therefore, must not be confounded with the Son who is the Word. Nor is it to be confused with the Spirit, for it is passive, while the Spirit is active. In this mirror the Holy Trinity beholds itself and all the wonders of eternity, the riches of the splendor of God, which have neither beginning nor end. Already in Boehme's mythologizing, God becomes the living and actual Triune by means of the eternal Nature, which as a medium of manifestation provides a contrast to the Maiden of the eternal Idea. When God, in the tranquil delight of contemplation, beholds Himself and His wonders, as the Maiden displays them to Him in the mirror, the Will grows eager and desires that what it sees in the mirror shall become something more than an image, shall become actual. In this mirror of the joy of contemplation and of desire, of imagination and desire, the eternal Nature in God is aroused and now comes forward as the contrast or Contrarium of the Idea. It is one of Boehme's most characteristic features that he interprets Spirit--even the Absolute Spirit of God--as desire and Imagination. Kabbalistically, the Sefirah Tifereth acts as the Boehmean "lightning flash" linkage be-

tween the supernal triad and the inferior Powers.

Most commentators,²² while urging a Kabbalistic foundation for Boehme's Tri-Unity, have been successful in describing the coincidence of Boehme's Sophia with the Kabbalistic Aima-Shekhinah. However, Boehme could have found the idea of a personified Wisdom in the Wisdom literature of Scripture, in the Wisdom of Proverbs or of Solomon as well as in the Kabbalistic literature. Koyre remarks, in spite of his refusal to see much of a Kabbalistic influence in Boehme, that the Sophia-Wisdom of Boehme is eine reine Jungfrau und hat nie etwas geboren and that the term "chechina" in Kabbalah well encapsulates the character of Boehme's Virgin Idea. "Quant a la Chechina, ce terme ne veut pas dire sagesse, mais présence, d'ou gloire, splendeur, et enfin corporéité (l'habit de gloire, du Gottheit lebendiges Kleid de Goethe). Cette conception se trouve bien chez Boehme."²³ Koyre assigns "une influence cabbaliste indirecte" for this important element in Boehme's mythopoesis.

Wisdom-Sophia is the central aspect of God's self-manifestation in a three-fold sense: first, theogonically as His revelation of His Self to Himself; secondly, theodocially, as His revelation of this Self to creation; thirdly, regeneratively, as His revelation of His Self as Grace. Boehme conceived Sophia as feminine; his doctrine of God was androgynous. Sophia, female divine principle, passively bears what the fatherly Will seeks. This relationship is boldly expressed erotically in the terms of "bride" mysticism,²⁴ also particularly char-

²²Koyré, p. 213.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Boehme, The Aurora, pp. 251 ff.

acteristic of the Kabbalah tradition concerning Shekhinah, the Bride of the Messiah. As the Ebenbild of the Unknown God, she was the Mother-Bride of God and the Mother-Bride of Man and thus the revelatress of God in man and of Man in god. She is the form of the God-image in man, the image binding man to God, and the image revealing God's wonders in man.

Unfortunately space does not permit a detailed representation of these three chief elements and their Kabbalistic adumbrations. Likewise, I can only suggest here several other Kabbalistic elements that surface in Boehme's theosophy. Boehme's Christology was dialectical and his Messiah was androgynous. Christ, for Boehme, is the Son of the earthly Virgin and He is the Son of the heavenly Virgin, Sophia. By Christ's androgeneity, Boehme depicted the reduction of all disunity (dualism) to unity or "temperature." Koyre has somewhat traced this distinctive characterization of Christ to the Kabbalistic teachings of Paracelsus and Johannes Scotus Erigena as the projection of the Messiah from the celestial Adam or Adam Cadmon.²⁵

As has been already discussed, the Kabbalistic character of the Messiah is the restitution of primal unity. Boehme glorifies man as the center of the universe: the proud actor in a splendid drama, in a cosmic conflict of gigantic and amoral forces of light and darkness. As in sections of the Sepher Zohar, Boehme depicts man as a transparent being before the Fall and, after, the inhabitant of a coarse body. Man's sense of nakedness is a clue to his consciousness of sin. Likewise the

²⁵Koyré, p. 225.

story of Man's Fall, according to Boehme, shares in several Zoharic theses: the gradual degeneration of Adam before the temptation of the Beast and the emphasis upon the separation and disunity that resulted cosmologically. According to Boehme, Evil is not a semblance but an actual abnormality which has entered the Creation; for it is the result of a real separation, an actual rending asunder of unity and wholeness. It depends upon the perversion of the originally moral and good powers, a perverted relationship of supremacy and subordination. Evil posits itself as a false center, which seeks to gather about itself, both from within and from without, a multiplicity of forces, which constitute its sphere of power. But Evil in the necessity of its existence is good.

Mythologically, the transcendent fall occurred when Adam slept. Already tired of unity, Adam slept and his imagination turned away from God. He broke consciousness with God. Two things resulted from Adam's sleep: first, he lost divine consciousness, the divine image--Sophia; secondly, he received a new kind of life-existence, marked by the dialectical tension between opposing forces, the distinct Eve. Boehme posits redemption or restitution, Kabbalah's tikkun, via the Imagination or Anshauchen. The soul's lost divine image is restored through the Imagination. Yet, as has already been suggested, Boehme's doctrine of sin undergoes a development, particularly poetically. In The Aurora, sin has been dark, mysterious, formless vitality capable of being subjugated by knowledge. But by 1622 and the writings of Mysterium Magnum, sin became for Boehme a separate Will that wanted to be like God. Consequently there is a change in the concretion of Boehme's imagery. Boehme pictured the total restitution of substantial existence in eschatological

symbols: the blooming of the noble lily-twig, the finding of the pearl, the joyous love play of God. The old imagery of Solomon's Song came to picture the union of Sophia and Man.

Concerning Creation and the Creation of Man, Boehme evidences another parallel with the Kabbalistic tradition in regard to his concept of Natursprache. For Boehme, all of Creation is nothing else than the Word of God; even the skeptical Koyre remarks that Boehme might have translated this from his association with the teachings of the Sepher Yetsirah.²⁶ Adam in his Edenic state understood the speech of God and of the angels, just as he understood the language of nature, as is shown by the fact that he gave names to the creatures. He apprehended the sense world in quite another manner than we do; for, to him, all the visible world was illuminated by the invisible. By looking at animals, trees, and plants he could discern the figures (signatura rerum) of their internal divine properties; and the outward did not reveal itself to him, as it does to us, in a false independence but always in unity with the inward.²⁷ The perfect "imaginative" reading of this "alphabet" of Creation enables Man to restore himself to unity with the divine pattern according to which he was created. For as in Kabbalah, "All things in this world are according to the similitude of this Ternary."²⁸ Man too is created in the image of God and must consequently have his eternal pattern in God. This theme is constantly reiterated in the major works of

²⁶Ibid., p. 459 ff. Also see Gershom G. Scholem, On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism, (New York: Schocken, 1969), p. 168.

²⁷Jakob Boehme, Von der Geburt und Bezeichnung oder Wesen (Signatura Rerum), ed. J. W. Ueberfeld (Mainz: 1730), vii: 2.

²⁸Boehme, The Aurora, p. 82.

Boehme as it is also a constant theme in a larger sense in the Sepher Zohar: the higher seeks the lower, in order to impart itself to it and, more significantly, the lower craves the higher, in order to participate in it. Accordingly, Scripture conceals a living Revelation which lies behind its simple language and story.²⁹

And whatsoever is spoken, written, or taught of God, without the knowledge of the Signature is dumb and voyd of understanding, for it proceedeth not only out of an Historical Conjecture, from the mouth of another, wherein the Spirit without Knowledge is dumb; but if the Spirit doth open unto him the Signature, then he understands the speech of another; and further understandeth how the Spirit hath manifested and revealed itself...in the Sound with the voyce. For that I see are to speak, teach, preach and write of God, and albeit I hear and read the same, yet this is not sufficient for me to understand him; but if his Sound and Spirit out of his Signature and Similitude entereth into my own Similitude and imprinteth his Similitude into mine then I may understand him really and fundamentally...and there is nothing that is created or born in Nature, but it also manifesteth its internal form externally, for the internal doth continually labour or work itself forth to manifestation. As we know it in the power and form of this world, how the one only Essence hath manifested itself with the Extern birth in the desire in a Similitude, how it hath manifested itself in so many forms and shapes, which we see and know in the Stars and Elements, likewise in the living Creatures and also in the Trees and Herbs.³⁰

A comparison of this passage from Signatura Rerum with Kabbalist parallels reveals a striking "similitude" of language and theme. Indeed much of what Boehme taught concerning the macrocosmic-microcosmic mirroring and the signatura rerum may be traced to Paracelsus' writings³¹ concerning magia by which man penetrates elemental nature to reveal its sidereal identity. Lengthy sections devoted to elaborate word analyses of the

²⁹Howard Haines Brinton, The Mystic Will, Based on a Study of Jacob Boehme (London: Allen and Unwin, 1931), pp. 92 ff.

³⁰Boehme, Signatura, p. 1.

³¹Martensen, pp. 113 ff.

divine names Jehovah, Adonai, and YHVH appear in The Aurora, The Three Principles, and Mysterium Magnum perhaps revealing Boehme's familiarity with the Kabbalistic exegetical devices of gematria, notaricon, and themurah³²--decoding human language to read the Divine mysteries.

Boehme's complex and systematic angelology, his cosmology of the heavens, his mirror and candle imagery, the constant examination of the vision of Ezekiel concerning the hayoth, his consideration of the significance of the Sun and Moon on the palpable and astral births (a doctrine corresponding to the Kabbalah's four worlds of Creation)--strengthen many critics' suspicions that Boehme had more than a passing acquaintance with the Kabbalistic tradition. The Mysterium Magnum is in a derived sense a "Kabbalistic" exposition or exegesis of the first book of Moses. His doctrine of the three principles, elaborated in the work of the same name, gave Boehme, as he believed, a key to unlock creation's story in Genesis. Each character, incident, figure, or event in Genesis becomes part of his scheme of three principles. Each fact has three meanings in each of Boehme's three worlds.³³ His nature philosophy becomes also a philosophy of history; the order of creation also becomes the order of salvation. The chronological record of creation becomes a transcendental dialectic of Dark and Light forces. Waite sees many recurring analogies between the Zohar's teaching on the first estate of man, on the making of woman, on Paradise and the Mystery of the Fall and

³² Jakob Boehme, Several Treatises of Jacob Boehme Not Printed in England Before, ed. and trans. John Sparrow (London: L. Lloyd, 1661), p. 3. Also, Sparrow's edition of Signatura Rerum (London: J. Maccock, 1651), p. 4 f.

³³ Jakob Boehme, Mysterium Magnum, ed. Edward Taylor (London: Thomas Salisbury, 1685), pp. 427 ff.

the doctrines of Mysterium Magnum.³⁴

Beyond the occurrence of similar Kabbalistic images and schema in the writings of Jakob Boehme, there is a less readily definable similarity of methodology. At its base lies Boehme's exegetical approach, founded on the belief that the Bible cloaks higher spiritual meanings in simple language. The chief aim of his investigation of Scripture, as it is the aim of all theosophy (particularly Kabbalah), is not to cling to the letter or to the merely historical, but to press through the letter and historical narrative of the Bible to the eternal postulates to effect a cohesion between the historical and the metaphysical. He seeks an "intuitive" apprehension of Divine and natural mysteries, on the basis of God's revelation in Holy Scripture and in the book of Nature.

Boehme's is no conceptual, rational theology; Boehme speaks the language of vision, symbol, and myth. For that very reason, Boehme can express truths beyond the reach of such analytical thinking. Just as the rich, folkloristic element of the Kabbalistic tradition affords much insight into the workings of the human psyche, so also Boehme's theogonic process is capable of being related to a human psychological plane.³⁵ For Boehme, the revelation of God's identity necessarily reveals that of

³⁴A. E. Waite, The Holy Kabbalah, p. 225.

³⁵See Boehme's doctrine of the soul, e. g. "God took of the heavenly element and of the earthly, of all the constellations, degrees, and elements, and made a twofold body for man--a spiritual and an elemental. The spiritual body was God's image, clothed with the quintessence; the four elements was the corporeal body. Into these God breathe a living soul, making a man of all three principles...And the soul consists in three kingdoms; the first is...the dark and fire world...the second is the holy light world...the third...is the outward astral and elemental kingdom" (Mysterium Magnum xv). Kabbalah also proposes a tri-partite soul, quite unique in comparison with the Platonic concept.

Man; for Man is the expression of God's power in the lower world.³⁶ Man is thus gifted with a magia by which he places himself in immediate relation with the spirit in Nature, with the mysterious Divine forces, and, indeed, with God Himself, whose mystery is the innermost thing in Nature.

Edward Taylor, "unfolding" Jakob Boehme's theosophical philosophy, notes that Man is gifted with two magia's: "one of the Unity, and the other of the Multiplicity."³⁷ John Martensen, however, in his examination of the central power of God's Revelation and man's meditation on that Revelation, reduces the two to one--Imagination. "We shall be unable to find Beauty in God, if He is merely to be conceived of as thinking and willing; we shall only find it when God is also regarded as imagining, image-forming, figure-shaping. We, therefore, discover the source of Beauty in the Divine Imagination, a conception which is certainly unthinkable, unless there be a Nature in God. We cannot find Beauty in His purely unseen being, but only in the visible and phenomenal element which belongs to His inward Life of Manifestation."³⁸

Boehme's conception of prayer or man's imaginative meditation on the Divine Revelation utilizes an alchemical imagery that is, however, also mystically Kabbalistic and personally Boehmean. "In true prayer the soul becomes a hungry, magical fire which draws the Being of God out of the Incarnation into itself, and the soul becomes clothed with a bright-body, in which it can find rest, while in the world it has only anxiety...

³⁶The correspondence between the world and essential man implies that the world also was created in the image of God; God is threefold; the world has three principles--man has body, soul, spirit.

³⁷Edward Taylor, Jacob Behmen's Theosophic Philosophy Unfolded (London: Thomas Salisbury, 1691), p. 1.

³⁸Martensen, pp. 105 ff.

he himself is in a perpetual process, in order that his gold may be refined, that the hard rock in which it is imprisoned may be burnt asunder, and that the lily within him may succeed in growing."³⁹

While Coleridge often defended "poor Jacob Boehmen"⁴⁰ against skeptical historians of philosophy such as Tennemann, probably identifying with the character of the religiously persecuted shoemaker--an intellectual and mystic castigated by the established religious and academic circles--nevertheless Coleridge suggested that Boehme mistook the peculiarities of his overwrought mind for realities and modes of thought common to all minds.⁴¹ Coleridge asked himself whether Boehme's "visions" were based on experience or fancy, speculating that a second and more serious error is implied in Boehme's apparent confusion of active natural powers with God. Concerning the charge of pantheism levelled against Schelling's system, Coleridge writes in a letter of November 24, 1818: "it is little more than Behmenism, translated from visions into Logic and a sort of commanding eloquence: and like Behmen's it is reduced at last to a mere Pantheism, or 'gemina Natura quae fit et fecit, creat et creatur,' of which the Deity itself is but an out-birth."⁴²

It would be expected that in his critical comparison of Jakob Boehme with other "Pantheists and Mystics" for a work he contemplated throughout his life, the name of Spinoza should arise and with it a dis-

³⁹Jecht, "Epistles," p. xiv.

⁴⁰CL: IV "October 7, 1815," VI, "April 6, 1832," also CNB: III, #3692, 3719, 3975; also Constitution of Church and State, p. 115.

⁴¹For Coleridge's complex reaction to Boehme see: CL:III, January 21, 1810; III: Note to #3692 and Philosophical Lectures, 1818-19. pp. 350-351.

⁴²CL: III.

inction between "real" and "fancied" pantheism.⁴³ Essentially, Pantheism is unable to apprehend God as the Cause of Himself, or as the eternally Self-positing and Self-producing. It is only the ethical conception of God, the conception which views God as the eternally self-realizing, and in Himself eternally realized Goodness and Love, that can hold God to be His own Cause. And, high as Boehme stands above all pantheistic conceptions of God (inasmuch as he defines God as Spirit in inward self-contemplation, independent of temporal existence, and prior to the eternal nature itself), still he is clearly influenced by the pantheistic conception of God; instead of allowing Self-consciousness and Love to mediate themselves by their own instrumentality, he begins by defining God as potentiality, a "dreaming" self-consciousness, which requires the co-existence of Nature before it can gain life, reality, and power of its own. "This is the unhappiness of Boehme's dialectical bold distinction of God and the ground of God."⁴⁴

What redeems Boehme for Coleridge, however, is the fact that God indeed Wills. McFarland remarks that "scarcely less important for Coleridge than Boehme's analysis of the Trinity was his emphasis on 'will.'"⁴⁵ Likewise the Kabbalistic hypothesis presupposes an eternity antecedent to the initial operation of the Divine Will; but in the latent subsistence of Ain Soph, it would appear to be a mistake to conceive of either Will or Consciousness as not co-eternal. The translation of the Divine Being from the state of non ens was accomplished like the metamorphosis

⁴³Coleridge, Biographia, xxii, pp. 112-13.

⁴⁴Literary Remains, III, "Notes on Field on the Church," p. 73.

⁴⁵Thomas McFarland, Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), p. 328.

of man from the condition of a merely material creature by an operation of the mystery of Will.

Coleridge often discusses Boehme in connection with a number of scholars already discussed as part of the Christian Kabbalistic tradition: Paracelsus,⁴⁶ Robert Fludd,⁴⁷ and Giordano Bruno.⁴⁸ That Coleridge clearly connected Boehme with the Kabbalistic and the Christian Kabbalistic traditions is revealed in a "history of ideas" passage concerning the derivation of triadic divine hierarchies--an obsessive scholarly task for Coleridge: "It is not without ground that I direct your attention, under these circumstances, to the probable derivation of some portions of this most remarkable system from patriarchal tradition, and to the connection of the Cabeiric with the Kabbala...No doubt they were propagated in Europe, and it is not improbable that Paracelsus received many of his opinions from such persons, and I think a connection may be traced between his and Jacob Behmen."⁴⁹ Discussion concerning that passage's contents will follow in the next chapter. It is in fact, Boehme's original treatment of the Trinitarian mystery that most interested and pleased Coleridge.⁵⁰

McFarland, in his excellent "Excursus Note" on Coleridge and Boehme, explains that Coleridge's repeated discovery of a Tri-unitarian heart to many pantheists' metaphysics led him to finally concede that the Christian Trinity alone would free the thinker from a pantheistic meta-

⁴⁶CNB: I, #1000 E, 22.6; Literary Remains, I, p. 186: IV, p. 90.

⁴⁷CL: III, "January 1, 1810."

⁴⁸CNB: I, #1646; III, #4189, also The Friend, p. 118.

⁴⁹Literary Remains, I, pp. 187-88.

⁵⁰McFarland, p. 249. See also James D. Boulger, "Coleridge: The Marginalia, Myth-Making, and the Later Poetry," Studies in Romanticism, 2, (1963), 306 ff.

physics. A number of parallelisms are drawn between Coleridge's Triunitarian scheme, recorded in Table Talk, and some of Boehme's trinal formulations in Mysterium Magnum.⁵¹ However, while granting that for Coleridge "the one God of the Hebrews...took precedence over even the triune God," McFarland fails to note that Boehme and indeed Coleridge were also, if not more so, interested in the concept of Quaternity. To recapitulate, just as the Kabbalistic tradition posits Ain Soph as the infinite periphery of the hidden pleroma of supernal Triad; so, in the Boehmean Triune mythology, to God as the central Being in the three centers of manifestation there corresponds an infinite periphery which is a fourth composite part of the Trinity. To the trinitarian mystery, Boehme adds a fourth dimension in that the Ungrund becomes separated from the Father. Thus the problem of Creation becomes that of the archetypes of finite being, the world of forms: Boehme's cosmogony partakes of the Platonic tradition in this respect.

Boehme's whole idea of God is construed with a view towards maintaining two precious divine dimensions: God's Personality and His tender concern for the world. For if we compare Boehme's doctrine of the Trinity with that which is contained in the Athanasian Creed, the latter displays to us the most abstract metaphysic, a God for mere thought, in whom there is nothing for the heart of man and for his religious and ethical consciousness. Boehme, on the contrary, reveals to us a living Trinitarian God, a God in whom there is a Nature, a God who eternally produces not only Himself, but also His Heaven and

⁵¹McFarland, pp. 326 ff.

in whose Life, independent of the Created World, there is, at the same time, an inward and an outward, an esoteric and an exoteric mystery and manifestation.

As in the Kabbalistic characterization of Hokhmah and Binah and the left and right sides of the Sephirothic Tree of Severity and Mercy they govern, a dialectical God reveals Himself in Boehme's Trinity also: a God of Love and a God of Wrath, a God of the Old as well as of the New Testament. As in the many mythopoetic passages on the theogony in Kabbalah, Boehme's theogonic allegories abound in Old Testament images of Fire and Cloud--contributing to the absorbing poetic dynamism of his Trinity or Quaternity.

Now in so far as the one eternal Will enthrones itself as Lord over the Fire--and the Power-principle, God exists as the Father. In so far as the one eternal Will constitutes itself as Lord and Bearer of the Light-Principle, which gathers into its unity the plentitude of power that proceeds from the Father, God exists as the Son. Without the Son, the Father would be only a 'dark valley.' But the Father in His infinite yearning for manifestation and love, begets the Son through the Fire or Lightning, the fourth natural property (Note its correspondence with Kabbalah's Tifereth). He begets Him as the Word of Power. In so far as the Father is contemplated without the Son, His character is severity. The Son is gentleness, is the Father's Heart, Love, Light, Beneficience....The Spirit is the eternal Will, in so far as this sets itself as Lord over the principles of Fire and Light in their union, and develops, shapes, and fashions the manifoldness which is contained in the Son, and thus conforms the eternal Birth of the Trinity.⁵²

Coleridge was well aware of the multi-layers of alchemical and physical attributes which Boehme used to illustrate his Trinitarian and theogonic dialectics⁵³ and was fascinated, for the most part, by Boehme's

⁵²Boehme, Aurora, p. 236.

⁵³CNB: III, #4359.

fantastic inventiveness of terms to "clarify" the timeworn.⁵⁴ But Coleridge's notes on the Boehmean Trinity also reveal a genuine admiration for the "psychological" possibilities Boehme implied. Whereas Boehme enunciates repeatedly that the natural microcosm is a mirror of the macrocosm, the earth of the heaven, so also does he, as does the Kabbalistic tradition, detail how Man is the simulacrum of the Divine--in the measurement of the soul and intellectual faculties as well as of the body. Kabbalah is fed by wellsprings of folklore wisdom and "superstition" concerning the Nature of Man and his position in the natural universe and Man's capabilities to adjust both to return to his Edenic state.

On the topic of Evil in this natural universe, part of Boehme's conception of Evil is related in terms of a self-consciousness, a nay-saying to mystery: Boehme, in visionary terms, attempts to detail the systole/diastole of the divine and human psyches--God in self-contemplation and God in action. For Boehme, Evil is the rebellion of self-centered activity against the passive, unyielding, mysterious power of the self-contemplating God. Coleridge sensed the psychological depths that Boehme, perhaps self-consciously, plumbed. "Boem's (or as we say, Boehme's) account of the Trinity--the Three Fountains as they exist in man--Power, or the Father; Light or the Son; and emanating from these two, the Spirit which has Understanding is masterly and orthodox. Waterland and Sherlock might each have condescended to have been instructed by the humble shoe-maker of Gorlitz, with great advantage to

⁵⁴Ibid., #1835.

themselves, and to the avoidal of the pernicious Error, of which they were at least in jeopardy. Let me add to this Note that there are three analogous acts in the human consciousness, or rather three dim imperfect Similitudes; and if ever we have a truly scientific psychology, it will consist of the distinct Enunciation and Development of the three primary Energies of Consciousness, and be a History of their application and Results."⁵⁵ Although the beginnings of serious reference to the Kabbalah as one of the sources for Freudian psychology have been initiated by David Bakan, an analytical and comparative study of Boehme and Kabbalistic teachings is still much needed and would certainly provide a "missing link" between a hieratic tradition and a "scientific" system and would aid further evaluation of Coleridge's own contribution to the history of the systematic study of human consciousness.

Of the editions of Jakob Boehme's works⁵⁶ that were available to Coleridge in translation in England and from his student days, J. B. Beer has identified the 1764-81 editions by William Law as Coleridge's favorites, an edition filled with annotations. Law's illustrations to the text were greatly admired by Coleridge⁵⁷ and contain a number of drawings that have Kabbalistic significance. From his prefatory notes to The Aurora and The Three Principles, we may assume that William Law was aware of the Kabbalistic possibilities inherent in Boehme's visions and doctrine and may have thus attuned Coleridge to this awareness.

⁵⁵A. D. Snyder, "Coleridge on Bohme," PMLA, 45, (1930): 616-18.

⁵⁶John Sparrow's edition of 1661, John Pordage's of 1770, William Law's in 1764-81.

⁵⁷CNB: III, #3526 L. 39.

And in his Writings he has discovered such a Ground, and such Principles as reach into the deepest Mysteries of Nature, and lead to the attaining of the highest powerful natural Wisdom, such as was among the Philosophers Hermes Trismegistus, Zoroaster, Pythagoras, Plato....These Principles, lead to the attaining such Wisdom as was taught in Egypt, in all which Learning Moses had Skill, to the Wisdom, which was taught in Babylon, among the Chaldeans, Astrologians, and Wisemen, or Magi, among whom Daniel was educated....This is the Wisdom by which Moses wrought his Miracles above Nature, and all the prophets from the first to Christ....By the Study of all Sortes may be reconciled; even the nicest Differences in all Ages, that which seem different in the Writings of the profound magical, mystical, chemic philosophers, from that which we find in others, may be reconciled, by considering what this Author teaches, that the Names which were given to the seven planets, signify the seven properties of the eternal Nature and are the Cause of all those things, which are by Men conversant in Experiments in Nature frequently accounted the first and deepest Causes of all.⁵⁸

Included in these illustrations are drawings of Reuchlin's Philosophic Globe, an inverted Tree of Life composed of the seven properties in a Sephirothic configuration, various figures composed of the Magen David inscribed with the name of Jehovah (one ascribing the numerical identity of God with the cypher rather than with the number one). Particularly interesting is Figure No. 10, a Magen David with an excursus on "the most significant character in the Universe." Law's explanation has characteristic Christian Kabbalistic overtones in the treatment of Man's regeneration, the interpenetration of the upper and lower triangles, and the reunification with Boehme's Shekinah, Sophia, the Celestial Bride.⁵⁹

Thomas McFarland in his Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition theorizes that "this inability to either really to accept or wholeheart-

⁵⁸ William Law, The Work of Jacob Behmen, The Teutonic Theosopher, ... with Figures, Illustrating His Principles, 4 vols., (London: M. Richardson, 1764), p. vii.

⁵⁹ CNB: III, #3263.

edly to reject pantheism is the central truth of Coleridge's philosophical activity,"⁶⁰ and accordingly schematizes Coleridge's philosophical activity into three periods: "a substitution of Boehme's dynamic pantheism for Spinoza's mechanistic pantheism, and the beginning of the final, theosophical phase of Schelling's thought."⁶¹ Throughout his philosophical life, Coleridge was obsessed with explicating Spinoza's pantheism.

From his first contemplation of Spinoza as the subject matter of a poem in 1799 to his oft reiterated admiration of (even identification with) Spinoza's creed,⁶² Coleridge was determined to extricate Spinoza's pantheism from the Ancients' pagan pantheism. "Spinoza is a man whom I most deeply reverence, I was going to say whom I reverence as much as it is possible for me to reverence any creature. He was on the border of the Truth, and would no doubt had he lived have attained it." Commentators on this long, involved relationship, however, have often neglected or minimized the fact that Spinoza was regarded as part of the Kabbalistic tradition, "the last echo of ancient wisdom"⁶³ Coleridge was well aware of this. "God according to the Cabbalists is all in each and one in all. I do not say that there is not a great deal of truth in this; but I say it is not, as the Cabbalists represent it, the whole truth. Spinoza himself describes his own philosophy as in substance the same with that of the ancient Hebrew Doctors, the Cabalists--only un-

⁶⁰McFarland, p. 106.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 150.

⁶²CL: IV, "September, 1817," p. 775. See also Richard W. Armour and Raymond F. Howes, Coleridge the Talker (New York: Cornell University, 1940), p. 216.

⁶³Lore Metzger, "Coleridge's Vindication of Spinoza: An Unpublished Note," Journal of History of Ideas, 21, (1959), 281.

swathed from the Biblical dress."⁶⁴ Coleridge has also noted that Spinoza's doctrine "was in all essentials the same as that of St. Paul's"⁶⁵ and that he had derived from Spinoza's Ethica "important assistance toward a clearer insight into the truth and depth of many passages in the writings of St. John."⁶⁶

Under the tutelage of Moreira, a learned Talmudist and possibly under Manasseh ben Israel, who afterwards was employed to petition from Cromwell the readmission of the Jews into England in 1655--the young Spinoza studied the text of Sacred Scripture, the Talmud, the commentaries of Ibn Ezra, Maimonides, and assorted Kabbalistic texts, the identity of which are still debated. J. G. Wachter's study Der Spinozismus in Judenthumb und dessen Geheimem Kabbala Vergotterte Welt (Amsterdam, 1699) was the first to demonstrate that this heretical "pantheistic" system of Spinoza derived from Kabbalistic sources, particularly Abraham Herrera. In 1706 Wachter rescinded his evaluation and converted his attack into a defence. Scholem has postulated a correlation between Moses Cordevero's statement "God is all reality, but not all reality is God" with the teachings of Spinoza and Malebranche.⁶⁷ Thomas McFarland has also attempted to track the historical commentary on the Kabbalistic indebtedness of Spinoza from Wachter through Leibniz, Jacobi, and Herder, but shies away from drawing his own theoretical comparison.

⁶⁴Literary Remains, IV, "On John Oxlee...", pp. 318-19.

⁶⁵Metzger, p. 291; see also Biographica, xxiv: p. 217.

⁶⁶Metzger, p. 281.

⁶⁷Scholem, Trends, pp. 252-53.

Perhaps most continuous with Spinoza's own statement in the Ethica (I, 25 and V, 24), "The more we know particular things the more we know God," Henry Waton's two-volume study of The Kabbalah and Spinoza's Philosophy remains non pareil. Henry Waton writes:

The Kabbalah and Spinoza's philosophy recognize a fundamental distinction between the Absolute, i. e. substances, and God. While both aspects constitute one reality, they are distinguishable, however, in respect of function. The Absolute or substance is in itself, conceived through itself and its essence involves existence. The only existing reality that is in itself, for life and consciousness are identical; it is in itself because life is the cause of itself and life is perceived through itself because we are aware of life directly and intuitively. Hence, the Absolute or substance is life. That life is the priordial matrix of all reality is a basic truth in Spinoza's thought for Spinoza recognizes the truth that all existence is animate. Life is a power which seeks to persevere in its own being...The Absolute or substance is implicit. But, deep in the essence of life, there resides a principle that urges life to become explicit. This primordial thought to become explicit is even present in life for life is a conscious reality. The thought to become explicit and the will to do so are one and the same principle. When the Absolute becomes explicit, substance passes from its implicit state and acquires the aspect of God. God, therefore, is implicit in substance and substance becomes explicit in God. To become explicit means to acquire a nature. The nature of a reality is its form. Explicitness manifests itself in infinite forms and attributes. The world of forms, however, is the world of Nature. Hence God constitutes the unity of the system of Nature...The whole process of Existence, as well as of human thought is a continuous progressive movement towards even greater explicitness. Whether we accept the Kabbalistic conception, that existence began from a point, i. e. the Absolute of implicitness, and in time the Absolute brought out an explicit world of Sephiroth; or the conception of Einstein, that the universe is an expanding universe, beginning from mathematical zero point, in either case, the movement is towards increasing explicitness.⁶⁸

Waton's analysis calls to mind Boehme's theogony and cosmogony and Coleridge's own essential "Theory of Life" and the movement towards "individuation."

⁶⁸Henry Waton, The Kabbalah and Spinoza's Philosophy As a Basis for an Idea of Universal History, 2 vols. (New York: Spinoza Institute of America, 1932), II, pp. 2 ff.

By Life I everywhere mean the true Idea of Life, or that most general form under which Life manifests itself to us; which includes all its other forms. This I have stated to be the tendency to individuation, and the degrees of this tendency. The power which is acknowledged to exist, wherever the realization is found, must subsist wherever the tendency is manifested... I have shown, moreover, that this tendency to individuate can not be conceived without the opposite tendency to connect, even as the centrifugal power supposes the centripetal, or as the two opposite poles constitute each other, and are the constituent acts of one and the same power in the magnet. Again, if the tendency be at once to individuate and to connect, to detach, but so as either to retain or to reproduce attachment, the individuation itself must be a tendency to the ultimate production of the highest and most comprehensive individuality. This must be the one great end of Nature, her ultimate object, or by whatever other word we may designate that something which bears to a final cause the same relation that Nature itself bears to the Supreme Intelligence.⁶⁹

Though we cannot date Coleridge's serious reading of Spinoza earlier than the summer of 1800, it was not long after⁷⁰ that the name of Spinoza becomes part of the "Trinity," along with Giordano Bruno and Jakob Boehme, that Coleridge contemplated as the matter of the fifth treatise of his Logosophia.⁷¹ In Chapters Ten and Twelve of the Biographia Literaria, the name of Spinoza crops up again in Coleridge's comparative study of the "doctrines...of the philosophical sects," among which "the vital-philosophy of the Cabalists and Hermetists," and in the vindication of "logical" heresy in Chapter Twenty-Two. "SPINOZA and BEHMEN were, on different systems, both Pantheists; and among the ancients there were philosophers, teachers of the $\xi\nu\ \kappa\alpha\lambda\ \tau\alpha\nu$ who not only taught that God was All, but that this All constituted God. Yet not

⁶⁹ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Formation for More Comprehensive Theory in Selected Poetry and Prose of Coleridge, ed. Donald A. Stauffer (New York: Random House, 1951), p. 578.

⁷⁰ CNB: I, #1646 (November, 1803).

⁷¹ CL: IV, "September 27, 1815," p. 590.

even these would confound the part, as a part, with the Whole, as the whole. Nay, in no system is the distinction between the individual and God, between the Modification, and the one only Substance, more sharply drawn, than in that of SPINOZA."⁷²

In the Philosophical Lecture of March 22, 1819, Coleridge remarks that "Leibnitz taught the system of Spinoza, namely that the deity, as the great Mind, not merely modified into thoughts as our minds do, but gave each thought a reality" and that Spinoza "held the opinions of the most learned Jews, particularly the Cabalistic philosophers."⁷³ While Leibniz was quite a serious student of Knorr von Rosenroth's Kabbala Denu-data, it is most unlikely that he would have assented to Coleridge's reduction. For, in the Philosophische Schriften, he comments to Bourguet that "Spinosa vero ex combinatione Cabale et Cartesianismi, in extremitates corruptorum, monstrosum suum dogma formavit"--^{74a} a judgment shared by Henry More, Lady Conway, the von Helmonts, and Cudworth. Leibniz, however, did believe in a philosophical "rational" validity in the pure form of Kabbalah. "The doctrine of a universal spirit is good in itself, for all those who profess it admit in effect the existence of deity, be it that they hold that this universal spirit is supreme, in which case they hold that it is God himself, or that they believe with the Cabalists that God created it, which is also the opinion of the Englishman Henry More."⁷⁵

⁷²Coleridge, Biographia, II, 112-13.

⁷³Coleridge, Philosophical Lectures, pp. 384-86.

⁷⁴G. W. von Leibniz, Die philosophischen Schriften von Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, ed. C. J. Gerhardt (Berlin, 1875-90), III: 545.

⁷⁵Ibid., VI. 529. (My translation.)

Leibniz's respectful interest in the Kabbalistic tradition was won only after he became acquainted with the Cambridge Platonists' attempts to "rationalize" and Rosenroth's attempt to "systematize" its waywardly expansive theology.⁷⁶ Leibniz was fascinated with the collaboration of More and Rosenroth which represented a coalescence of similar German and English philosophical streams. But while he respected their learnedness, he regarded them as "dreamers" incapable of truly clarifying their visions in workable philosophical formulae. Concerning a certain Kabbalist he met in Berlin, Leibniz wrote "Die heute haben keine distinctos conceptus, schleppen sich mit terminis metaphoricis, als lumine, spiritu und dergleichen."⁷⁷ Writing to Bourguet, he treated Boehme as brusquely as Spinoza: "It is known for a fact that when the demi-savants approach the contemplation of the most sublime objects, they lose control of their Imagination. Jakob Boehme is an example: after reading metaphysical, mystical, and alchemical works in his native tongue, he set himself to inventing remarkable drunken dreams, which seemed great mysteries to numbers of men duped by appearances only."⁷⁸ Coleridge's consensus with Leibniz's postulate that "The more reason harmonizes with Religion, the more all things are improved"⁷⁹ does not discountenance the fact that both men believed that Truth, conformable to the dictates of Reason and supple-

⁷⁶Fernand Brunner, Études sur la signification historique de la Philosophie de Leibniz (Paris: J. Vrin, 1951), pp. 392 ff.

⁷⁷Leibniz, II. p. 176.

⁷⁸G. W. von Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz sämtliche Schriften und Briefe (Darmstadt, 1923), Briefe #123. (My translation.)

⁷⁹Ibid. "Refutation de Spinoza par Leibniz," pp. 72 ff. See also Biographia, X: 136; xii: 167.

mentary to the needs of Faith, could lay concealed in the obscure, even confused, visions of the "vital-philosophers," the Kabbalists and Hermetists.

There is also a miscellany of Continental writers, incidentally in the Kabbalistic tradition, with whom Coleridge was quite familiar. The nature of this study does not permit a thorough review of the scope of these philosophers' and theologians' inquiries into Kabbalah; the ensuing remains only a sketch of their Kabbalistic dabbings as evidenced in Coleridge's reading. In the dialogue between F. H. Jacobi and Moses Mendelssohn on the pantheistic foundation of Spinoza's philosophy Jacobi refuted Mendelssohn's individualistic reading of Spinoza in his Ueber die Lehre des Spinoza in Briefen an Herrn Moses Mendelssohn by demonstrating that not only was Spinoza's philosophy pantheistic but that it was theistic and that the Jewish Kabbalah, as a philosophy, is a confused Spinozism. Professor Schrickx has noted that Coleridge, while staying at Gottingen, made extensive notations to the aforementioned Ueber die Lehre of Jacobi, as well as notations on Meiner's work on Picus de Mirandula and Robert Lowth's De sacre poesi hebraeorum.⁸⁰ Coleridge's familiarity with Mendelssohn's works⁸¹ extends from the Morgenstunden to the Jerusalem, oder uberreligiose Macht und Judenthum which evidences an interest in the Lurianic develop-

⁸⁰W. Schrickx, "Coleridge and Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi," Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire xxxvi (1958), 826.

⁸¹A. D. Snyder, "Coleridge's Reading of Mendelssohn's 'Morgenstunden' and 'Jerusalem,'" Journal of English and Germanic Philology XXVIII (October, 1929): 503-17.

ments in Kabbalah.⁸²

It is not surprising to discover that Goethe also enthused over and then rejected the Kabbalistic "terminology." He had read Hebrew while in school and eventually became interested in Kabbalah through the alchemists. Eventually he read in Agrippa von Nettesheim's Vanitate Scientiarum, Theophrastus, Paracelsus, Basilius Valentinus, the von Helmonts, Starkey, and in Welling's Opus Mago-Cabalisticum. Goethe reveals, much like the intellectually sated Faust, his disillusionment with the fantastic elements of the degenerate theosophy. "I procured the work, which, like all writings of this kind, could trace its pedigree in a direct line up to the Neo-Platonic school. My chief labor in the book was most accurately to notice the dark hints by which the author refers from one passage to another, and thus promises to reveal what he conceals; and to mark down on the margin of the number of the page where such passages as should explain each other were to be found. But even then the book still remained dark and unintelligible enough; except that one at last studied oneself into a certain terminology, and, by using it according to one's own fancy, believed that one was at any rate, if not understanding, something."⁸³

⁸²Moses Mendelssohn, Gesammelte Schriften (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1843), p. 302. "Bestreitet sie und schlägt Uänderungen...schranft ihre Unzahl ein, und will num von drei Grundartifeln wissen, die mit dessen, wwlche Herbert von Cherburn in spatern Zeiten zum Katechismus vorgeschlagen, ziemlich ubereintressen, und noch undere, hauptfachlich Loria und sein Schuler, die neueren Kabbalisten, nollen seine bestimmte Unzahl von Fundamentallehren gelten lassen, und sprechen: In unserer Lehre ist alles fundamental. In dessen ward dieser streit gefuhrt, wie alle streitig keiten dieser Art gefuhrt werden sollten...."

⁸³J. W. von Goethe, Autobiography of Goethe, trans. John Oxenford (London: George Bell, 1891), pp. 292-93.

In the voluminous work of Emanuel Swedenborg, the legend of Enoch's recording of the patriarchal wisdom concerning the "correspondences" or Boehmean "signatures" and "temperature" is recounted. The parallel with Kabbalah's teaching regarding the mutual mirroring of micro and macrocosms, spiritual as well as physical, with the doctrine of signatures or correspondences in Teutonic philosophy has already been noted. "Each and all things in Nature corresponds to spiritual things; and in like manner each and all things in the human body....I have been informed that the men of the most Ancient Church, which was before the flood, were of so heavenly a genius that they conversed with the angels of heaven, and that they were enabled to converse with them by means of correspondences; hence their state of wisdom became such that whatever they saw on earth they not only thought of naturally, but also at the same time spiritually, thus in conjunction with the angels of heaven."⁸⁴

On the Continent during Coleridge's own lifetime, Franc von Baader, while exploring the systems of St. Martin, Jakob Boehme, Swedenborg, and the Spanish mystics, concluded that the Kabbalah was the torso of the most ancient philosophy of Nature.⁸⁵ Familiar with the works of Paracelsus, Agrippa von Nettesheim, and Angelus Silesius, von Baader suggested that certain correspondences between Boehme's Sophia and the Celestial Adam could be found in the Kabbalistic tradition. Baader, however, also regarded the Kabbalah as essentially

⁸⁴Emanuel Swedenborg, A Compendium of the Theological Writings (Philadelphia, Lippincott, 1879), pp. 201-02.

⁸⁵Franz von Baader, Lettres Inedites, ed. J. Minim (Paris: Mouton, 1925), I, p. 212.

pantheistic. "The same pantheistic error emerged after all very early in the Indian teachings as Buddhism, just as it already took root in the Jewish Cabala. From this (consequently already corrupted) Cabala Spinoza created his own pantheism, which receives its second edition in German Naturphilosophie (Schelling's), it's third--and God willing its last--in the philosophy of Hegel."⁸⁶

Likewise August Tholuck published two works during Coleridge's lifetime on the importance of a reconsideration of the Kabbalistic tradition: Wichtige Stillen des Rabbinischen Buches Sohar (1824) and Hints on the Importance of the Study of the Old Testament (1833). Two later books, Commentatio de ortu Cabbalae (1837) and Commentary on the Gospel of St. John (1860), reveal Tholuck's endeavor to disengage the study of the Kabbalah from the traditional second-hand commentaries and to re-study the original texts of the Sepher Yetsirah and the Sepher Zohar.

At this point it would be quite impossible, and unnecessary, to review the literature on the complex critical problem of assessing Coleridge's indebtedness to Schelling, I shall here only summarize G. N. G. Orsini's valuable argument concerning Coleridge's use of Schelling's Ueber die Gottheiten von Samothrake (1815).⁸⁷ It seems that Coleridge obtained this pamphlet and made use of portions of it for his eleventh philosophical lecture on the Asiatic religions, as well as for segments of the essay on Prometheus and the motto for the "Sec-

⁸⁶Franz von Baader, Franz von Baader Sämmtliche Werke, ed. Franz Hoffman (Leipzig, 1850-1860), XVIII, pp. 50-60. (My translation.)

⁸⁷G. N. G. Orsini, Coleridge and German Idealism. A Study in the History of Philosophy With Unpublished Materials from Coleridge's Manuscripts (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1969), pp. 234-35.

ond Landing Place, Essay IV," of The Friend. In the pamphlet, Schelling recommended that scholars pay more attention to the Hebrew tradition of wisdom, by which Schelling apparently meant the Kabbalah; Coleridge, however, somewhat adjusted the German text for his motto in The Friend and instead recommends "Rabbinic writings" in general.

Schelling was a great devotee of Jakob Boehme, once remarking that "Boehme anticipated all scientific systems of modern philosophy, in his description of the birth of God."⁸⁸ Frederick de Wolfe Bohman's study of Schelling's fascination with the works of Boehme and Oetinger, through von Baader, reveals an element of Schelling's thought not often noted. "Oetinger, alloying Boehme and cabalistic concepts, reoriented the Leibnitzian idea of life into the primal motion preceding thought and being: God is primordially the unfathomable depth of the via negativa but he becomes the eternal life and movement, the eternal fire and wheel of Ezekiel, from which come the ten reflections or sephiroth, beings between God and the world. With Oetinger too 'naturalism' or God's corporeality is the goal of the divine birth; man's task is to see the divine seal imprinted in nature....One may say that nature mysticism recalled to Schelling his early love of the life and powers of nature."⁸⁹ Considering the via negativa as the de-personified divine Ain Soph of Kabbalah may somewhat clarify Coleridge's paradoxical comparison: "In short Schelling's system and mine stand thus; in the

⁸⁸F. W. J. von Schelling, History of Modern Philosophy, ed. and trans. R. J. Brinshaw (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), p. 190.

⁸⁹Idem, The Ages of the World, tr. Frederick de Wolfe Bohman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942), pp. 19-21.

latter there are God and Chaos: in the former an Absolute somewhat which is alternately both, the rapid leger de main shifting of which constitutes the delusive appearance of poles."⁹⁰

Coleridge was also familiar with a number of English theologians and philosophers who represented the seventeenth and eighteenth-century enthusiasm for the discovery of historical proofs for the validity of Christian doctrine, particularly for Trinitarianism. often in opposition to the claims of the Deists and the Unitarians. Coleridge's beloved Archbishop Leighton in his sermon "An Exposition of the Ten Commandments" refers to the Kabbalistic consideration of the name "Jehovah" in his commentary on the First Commandment.⁹¹ Concerning the Being of God "As to the Mystery of the Sacred Trinity," Archbishop Leighton writes: "This most profound mystery, though obscurely represented by the shadows of the Old Testament, rather than clearly revealed, was not unknown to the most ancient and celebrated doctors among the Jews, nor altogether unattested, however obstinately later authors may maintain the contrary. Nay, learned men have observed, that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are expressly acknowledged in the book of the Cabalists, and they produce surprizing things to this purpose out of the book Zohar which is accribed to R. Simeon Ben Joch, and some other Cabbalistical writers. Nay the book first now mentioned, after saying a great deal concerning the Three in One Essence, adds, 'That this secret will not be revealed to all till the coming of the Messias.'"⁹²

⁹⁰R. Florence Brinkley, "Some Coleridge Notes on Richter and Reimarus," Princeton University Library Chronicle, V, (1958): 1-13.

⁹¹T. Leighton, (Archbishop), The Whole Works, 6 vols. (London: James Duncan, 1830), IV, p. 13.

⁹²Ibid., IV, p. 228. See Coleridge's commendation of in CL: III, Late April, 1814 (922).

As early as 1803, Coleridge was notating Thomas Jackson's A Treatise on the Divine Essence and Attributes (1628)⁹³ which discusses parallels between the philosophy of Plato and the doctrines of Hermes Trismegistus and Christian dogma concerning the identity of the *λογος*. Jackson, however, also quotes the traditional Christian Kabbalistic interpretation of the opening phrase of Genesis, "Bara elohim," via Wolphgangus Capito's Hexameron, to demonstrate the Tri-personeity of the Divine Creator. "To begin with the first words of scripture, In the beginning...bara Elohim, the Lord created...Although these words be assertive, yet the mystery of the Trinity is not avouched in logical assertion or proposition, but only represented or insinuated in the peculiar form or character of the grammatical construction."⁹⁴

While Thomas Jackson sketchily developed his Kabbalistic proofs, the writings of one Dr. Pierre Allix aroused, perhaps, the greatest enthusiasm for a scholarly discussion of the proof shadowings in the Old Testament of New Testament and Athanasian Creed dogma, using Kabbalistic commentaries as supplementary evidence in his Judgment of the Ancient Jewish Church Against the Unitarians in the Controversy Upon the Holy Trinity (1691) and Reflexions Upon the Books of the Holy Scripture to Establish the Truth of the Christian Religion (1688). Although there is no direct evidence that Coleridge was familiar with Dr. Allix's treatises firsthand, as there is in regards to the other theologians in this segment, he would not have been un-

⁹³CNB: I, #1377.

⁹⁴Thomas Jackson, A Treatise of the Divine Essence and Attributes (Oxford University Press, 1844), VII, pp. 68 ff.

aware of Dr. Allix's reputation and arguments which were later seriously examined by the Chevalier A. M. Ramsay, Joseph Priestley, John Whitaker, and others.

In his argument, Discourse in Vindication of the Doctrine of the Trinity With an Answer to the Late Socinians' Objections (1697), against the Unitarians' claim "that the Doctrine of the Trinity is the chief Offence which the Jews take at the Christian religion,"⁹⁵ Edward Stillingfleet reviews the propositions of Rittangelius and the "Books Cosri and Yetsirah" to demonstrate that "The Jews had a notion among them of three distinct subsistences in the Deity suitable to those of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost," which three "subsistences" Stillingfleet also involves himself in the controversy concerning the antiquity of the Sepher ha-Yetsirah, concurring with Buxtorf's conclusions. "Buxtorf saith that the Book Cosri hath been extant nine hundred years, and in the beginning of it, it is said, that the Conference was four hundred years before, and therein the Book Jezirah is alledged as a Book of Antiquity; and there the three Subsistences of the Deity are represented by Mind, Word, and Hand. So that that this can be no late Invention of Cabballistical Jews. But our Unitarians utterly deny that the Jews had any Cabballa concerning the Trinity."⁹⁶

On his training in classical history and language⁹⁷ Coleridge

⁹⁵Edward Stillingfleet, Discourse in Vindication of the Doctrine of the Trinity, With An Answer to the Late Socinian Objection (London: J. H., 1697), p. 203. (Coleridge has annotated Stillingfleet's Origines Sacrae. See Coburn's note #18 to Philosophical Lecture XIII.)

⁹⁶Ibid., p. 205.

⁹⁷A working knowledge of Hebrew was considered essential to the literary profession, as is well exemplified by S. T. Coleridge and his father Reverend John Coleridge. See CL: I, "March, 1777;" VI, "August 11, 1830, also Lay Sermons, p. xxxii.

wrote: "This was one great advantage of our education at Christ's Hospital under old Orbilius Plagosus Boyer--that we were so thoroughly drilled in Greek and Roman History, and in Ancient Geography etc., that we had Potter...Stanley Hooke, and Prideaux (=Connection) at our finger's ends, before we went to the University." Humphrey Prideaux in his The Old and New Testament Connected, in the History of the Jews demonstrated more than an elementary reading fluency in his interpretation of the evolution of the Masoretic points and vowel markings, particularly in connection with the parallel growth of the Kabbalistic tradition. Prideaux recounts the tradition of Moses' reception of two Torahs on Mt. Sinai, one "traditional" reading (Masoretic) and written and the other a "traditional" interpretation, perpetuated orally from generation to generation (Kabbalistic). Prideaux departs, however, from the customary essential distinction of the Masoretic from the Kabbalistic schools of scriptural interpretation--regarding both as "knowledge handed down from generation to generation"--yet distinguishes the ingrained orthodoxy and serious scholarship of true Kabbalism from mystical "dotages." "For although the word cabbala be now restrained to signify the mystical interpretations of the scriptures only, and in the common usage of speech now among the Jews, they alone are called cabbalists who give themselves up to these dotages; yet in the true form and genuine meaning of the word, the cabbala extends to all manner of traditions which are of the interpretative part of the Hebrew scriptures; and the cabbalist is the general name of those who professed the study and knowledge of

them..."⁹⁸

In Coleridge's reading and exegetical commentary on the Holy Scripture, he often had recourse to the works of J. G. Eichhorn,⁹⁹ whom he had met during his studies in Gottingen. As one of the "Neologists of German Theology,"¹⁰⁰ Coleridge sought out Eichhorn's commentaries not only for the "great Oriental Linguist's" advice on the interpretation and translation of the language of the Psalms¹⁰¹ and Prophecies¹⁰² of the Old Testament but also for a direction in theorizing on the real Messiahship and Godhead of Jesus Christ¹⁰³ and the possibility of interpreting the Old Testament as a code of political economy and a bona fide philosophical history.¹⁰⁴ In his Commentarius in Apocalypsin Joannis (1791), Eichhorn interpreted Revelation as a poetic drama symbolically representing the siege and fall of Jerusalem (or the triumph of Christianity over Judaism), the fall of Rome (or the conversion of the Gentiles), and the descent of the Heavenly Jerusalem.

In his Commentarius, Eichhorn made every possible use of the Sepher Zohar midrashim to clarify the text of Sacred Scripture and

⁹⁸Humphrey Prideaux, The Old and New Testament Connected in the History of the Jews, 2 vols., (London: Wm. Baynes, 1831), I, 338-39.

⁹⁹Copies of the following works of Eichhorn in the British Museum collection have been annotated by Coleridge: Einleitung ins Alte Testament 2nd ed., (1787), Einleitung ins Neue Testament (1804-1814), Einleitung in die apokryphischen Schriften des Altens Testaments (1795), Commentarius in Apocalypsin Joannis (1791).

¹⁰⁰Griggs, CL: IV, "January 16, 1818."

¹⁰¹Ibid., VI, "June 2, 1827."

¹⁰²Griggs, CL: IV, "January 16, 1818."

¹⁰³Ibid., V, "May 25, 1820."

¹⁰⁴The intent of the Lay Sermon.

comparatively examined the Sephirothic Tri-Unity with that of patristic formulations of the Trinity, which would undoubtedly have made a lasting impression on Coleridge. "Quod autem mirationem facere potest, complura adeo Cabbalistarum ingeniosa inventa, aut si mavis commenta subtilia et argutias non solum cognitae Noster habuit et perspectas, sed eas etiam in suos usus ad mirabilem carminis ornatum convertit. Ut de incertis ac dubiis taceamus...a Cabbalisticis omnino petiit sollemnem illam nomi-

nis Iehovae circumscriptionum ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν ὁ ἐρχόμενος
(c. i, 4), septem illa Πνεύματα τοῦ Θεοῦ (c. i, r)...."¹⁰⁵

The Commentarius is interwoven throughout with disquisitions on Kabbalistic doctrine and innumerable examples of exegesis culled from the Sepher Zohar.

Not all English divines, however, were disposed to credit the evidence of Christian Kabbalists' exegetics. William Warburton's The Divine Legation of Moses Demonstrated in the Principles of a Religious Deist, From the Omission of the Doctrine of a Future State of Reward and Punishment (1742),¹⁰⁶ ridicules the "crude Nonsense of the Cabala" sublimed by "English Cocceians" (followers of Hutcheson), who would reduce the Bible to "allegory" in their exegesis.¹⁰⁷ [John Hutcheson--who did much exegetical work and was highly praised by Coleridge in The Friend for his argument "that Christianity was exhibited to Adam; In-

¹⁰⁵J. G. Eichhorn, Commentarius in Apocalypsin Joannis (Gottingen: J. C. Dietrick, 1791), pp. xxxiv-v.

¹⁰⁶Examined by Coleridge for his Six Lectures on Revealed Religion of 1795.

¹⁰⁷William Warburton, The Divine Legation of Moses Demonstrated in the Principles of a Religious Deist, from the Omission of the Doctrine of a Future State of Reward and Punishment in the Jewish Dispensation (London: Fletcher Gyles, 1742), II, pp. 451-52.

visibles by Visibles, Past and to come by types; by Cherubim, Urim, Tummim, Sacrifices, Cloud, Etc. that Jews and Gentiles Understood Them"--- was quite familiar with the commentaries of Ibn Ezra, Kircher, Vossius, Capellus, Reuchlin, R. Bechai, Buxtorf, et. alii. on the Sepher Zohar Cosri, Mercavah, etc.] However, while he was determined to use evidence from the Old Testament as proof of the Trinity and all the foundation of the Christian tradition, he repeatedly disparaged the interpretations of traditional Kabbalists as a "bottomless Pit, an inextricable Labyrinth."¹⁰⁸ Rejecting the bulk of Kabbalah as "trifling nonsense," particularly the methods of gematria and themurah, he did derive his own theories of Biblical language that are essentially fundamental to traditional Kabbalistic exegesis as well as comparable to those of twentieth-century developments, such as those of Carlos Suarez.¹⁰⁹ Hutchinson made extensive use of segments of Kabbalistic exegetical etymology which have their source in the numerological schema. "In short, the Hebrew language was form'd by God and was adapted to express material Things by Words, which described the Things by the Condition each of them were in, without paraphrase or enlargement, and so conveyed perfect Ideas of the Things by the Words; and those Words in Scripture which described the condition of each material Thing, and their Actions, are infallibly chosen and employed for the Mind, its Actions, Spiritual Things and their Actions; and thereby from Things which we could understand, convey'd to us the most perfect Ideas we

¹⁰⁸ John Hutchinson, Philosophical and Theological Works, 12 vols. (London, 1748-49), VII, p. 318.

¹⁰⁹ Carlos Suarez, The Cipher of Genesis (New York: Bantam, 1973).

could have of Things and Actions we could not otherwise understand."¹¹⁰ Warburton referred to this as the "low dull Madness of Picking Mysteries out of Letters,"¹¹¹ but Coleridge highly praised Hutchinson's approach to Genesis: "We are far from being Hutchinsonians...But his interpretation of the first nine verses of Genesis XI seem not only rational in itself, and consistent with after accounts of the sacred historian, but proved to be the literal sense of the Hebrew text. His explanation of the cherubim is pleasing and plausible; we dare not say more."¹¹²

In The Philosophical Principles of Natural and Revealed Religions Unfolded in a Geometrical Order (1748-49), the Chevalier A. M. Ramsay surveyed the evidence of the world's religions and philosophies, including those of the Far East, concerning common conceptions of the identity and attributes of God. In the Second Chapter of Volume Two "Of the Sacred Trinity," he writes: "In fine, the cabbalistical Jews that are of a later date, than the Targumists, speak in the same manner. They fix the number of three persons in the divine essence; they speak of the emanation of the two last from the first, and say, that the third proceeds from the first by the second."¹¹³ Ramsay goes on to assign, untraditionally, Ain Soph to the Father, Memra to the Son, and Binah to the Third Person of the Trinity. In actuality the term Meimra is a paraphrase of Onkelos who substituted it for Jehovah as

¹¹⁰Hutchinson, I, xxix.

¹¹¹Warburton, II, 368.

¹¹²The Friend, p. 502.

¹¹³A. M. Ramsay, The Philosophical Principles of Natural and Revealed Religions Unfolded in a Geometrical Order (Glasgow: R. and A. Foulis, 1749), pp. 92 ff.

the Word. In the Sepher Zohar, the Word in Scripture is designated under the term Bereshith. While Ramsay disparages the "mythology" of Kabbalah as "heaps of mudd," he himself, quite uncertain in his use of the terminology and obviously unacquainted with the traditional primary and secondary sources, equivocates in his commendation of the "many precious pearls which seem to be emanations of the patriarchal Noevian tradition... disguised under many allegorical images and fables, that seem as impertinent as those of the Pagans."¹¹⁴ Later, in his work, Ramsay proposes Dr. Allix's proof that the ancient Jews had a distinct notion of the Messiah as a divine Person, the Son of God, and the true Jehovah and discusses the Mosaic distinction of the Nephesh and Ruah aspects of the soul.

"I cannot proceed any farther without noticing the extreme absurdity of maintaining what some have done, viz. that the miracles of Christ may be admitted, and those of Moses rejected as if Judaism and Christianity had no necessary connexion; whereas, they are, in fact, parts of the same scheme, and imply the truth of each other; or, through the former may not distinctly point to the latter, the latter is evidently built upon the former."¹¹⁵ So Joseph Priestley writes in the Discourse on the Evidence of Revealed Religion (1794). Coleridge was fascinated by the works of Priestley, but by 1802 he had finally rejected Priestley's anti-logos arguments and proposed his own Confessio Fidei, "a negative Unitarianism."¹¹⁶ Not surprisingly, however,

¹¹⁴Ibid., pp. 156 ff.

¹¹⁵Joseph Priestley, The Theological and Miscellaneous Works of Joseph Priestley, vol. 15. Discourses on the Evidence of Revealed Religion (London, 1794), p. 253.

¹¹⁶CL: II, "July 26, 1802" See also CNB: I, #2444 17.18.

in his Unitarian argument, Priestley refuses to accept the traditional Christian Kabbalistic proofs for the Trinity and, in so doing, quite incidentally and perhaps unknowingly corrects the Christian perspective on the Kabbalistic tradition and the supernal Sephiroth in his emphasis on the exclusive monotheism of the Old Testament. "The Unity of God is a doctrine on which the greatest stress is laid in the whole system of revelation. To guard this most important article was the principal object of the Jewish religion."¹¹⁷

Priestley pretty much follows the theses of Basnage's Histoire des Juifs¹¹⁸ in refutation of such Christian Kabbalists as Cudworth, Reverend Mr. Taylor of Portsmouth, and Dr. Pierre Allix concerning Kabbalistic proofs for Trinitarianism: namely, that Judaism and Christianity are separated by "the abyss of the Trinity," and this difference can never be reconciled and that those Christians who propose to make Jews appear favorable to the doctrine of the Trinity are deceiving themselves and misusing the supposed evidence of the Kabbalah.¹¹⁹ Priestley identifies the Sephiroth with emanations from the First Cause and resolves, to his satisfaction and by way of Basnage, one of the chief Christian Kabbalistic arguments for the Three-personed God. "But whether God be supposed to speak to all second causes, or to his intelligences only, or to the elements, or to souls, or to use the style of a king, or lastly, whether he be supposed to execute or command himself, all ground

¹¹⁷ Joseph Priestley, The History of the Corruption of Christianity (London, 1782), p. 26.

¹¹⁸ op. cit., passim.

¹¹⁹ Priestley, Theological and Miscellaneous, IV, Chapter 3, sec. i.

of controversy is removed. For it does not follow, that there is any multiplication of the first cause, which is most simple, and one, because the phrase Let us make is used; for Moses might very safely makes use of this language, since he everywhere most clearly teaches, that there is just one God; and therefore, he only will defend his error by these words, who knowingly and willingly errs."¹²⁰

Priestley also involves himself in the more sophisticated argument of the Christian Kabbalists concerning the identification of the Angel Metatron, the Angel of the Presence, with the soul of the Hebrew Messiah and the soul of Jesus Christ. Priestley, in essence, denies the divine nature of the Logos whether in the Platonic, the Kabbalistic, or the Christian traditions. To follow Priestley's complex arguments, it may be useful to understand the identity of Metatron.

Metatron, according to various Zoharic expositors, is the highest in the hierarchy of spiritual beings outside of humanity: as an archangel, he is associated with the first Sephirah Kether as the archangel Sandalphon is associated with the final Sephirah Malkuth and is identified, thus, with the Messias, or the second phase of Metatron. According to Rabbi Isidore Loeb, Metatron operated as a species of Demourgos; and Adolphe Franck defines Metatron as a Divine Hypostasis. In the Kabbala Denudata of Rosenroth,¹²¹ Metatron is described as an aspect of Shekhinah or as the "legate of Schechinah" and is also known as Boy or the Boy-Angel. While the angel Metatron can be associated

¹²⁰Ibid., VI., pp. 391-95.

¹²¹Rosenroth, Apparatus, i. 528.

with the Pitying Shekhinah, he can be represented as the Flaming Sword of Justice which guards the Gates of Eden, turning in every direction, i. e., signifying that Metatron is neither male nor female. In Metatron's charge are the Seven Pillars of the Temple, and as YHVH's "Servant" he prepares the souls for resurrection. In essence, Metatron is a "spiritual shape" or a "vesture" through which YHVH performs as Shaddai, Adonai, Elohim, or Shekinah--the Kabbalistic numerical value of all these Divine names is equal. Thus, Metatron has no divine nature or identity of its own.

Concerning the relationship of Metatron-Messiah-Jesus Christ, Priestley refutes the evidence presented by Dr. Pierre Allix, Reverend Taylor of Portsmouth, and Bishop Pearson¹²² that the "Kabbalists believed El Shaddai to be the same person as the angel Metatron, whom they supposed to be the instructor of Moses, and the Messiah....He was, according to the Christian phrase, the Logos before his incarnation, or according to the Jewish phrase, the soul of the Messiahs; which they look upon as something between God and the angels, whom nothing separates from God." Priestley examines the customary evidence quoted by Allix--the Sepher Ikkarim, Reuchlins, etc.--and reaches his own conclusions. It should be remembered that the Christian Kabbalists, in their zeal to show favorable parallels between Christianity and orthodox Judaism via the Kabbalists, tended to construct elaborate analogies that were at their basis only suggested parallels and not verified identities. So, indeed, Christian Kabbalists did identify Metatron with the Messiah and the Messiah with the Divine Nature without considering the totality of

¹²²R. T. Pearson, On the Christian Creed (London, 1682), p. 148.

the Sephirothic structure which represents the gulf between Ain Soph and the first Sephirah as unbridgeable. However, Priestley conversely, in his Unitarian conclusions, completely ignores the orthodox Kabbalistic belief that Messiah was infinitely more than just "mere man" though his examination of the discussions of Beausobre and Calmet concerning the Kabbalistic tradition on these points is much more valuably meticulous and skeptical than Dr. Pierre Allix's. "But as there is abundant evidence that the Jews in general, and in all ages, from the time of our Saviour to the present, considered their Messiah as a mere man, and a proper descendent of David, and own that I am disposed to examine, with some rigour, any pretended evidence to the contrary; though the speculative opinions of some of the Cabbalists among them is a thing of little consequence, when they can be proved to be different from those that were entertained by the nation in general."¹²³

Concerning the archangel Metatron, which forms the center of Priestley's argument against the Christian Kabbalists, Priestley likens him to Philo's Logos, "an efflux of the divinity," and goes on to distinguish the Messiah's sharing in the name and not the nature of Jehovah. Priestley concludes his defence with evidence culled from Beausobre and Basnage.

The soul of the Messiah was the same that had been the soul of Adam, and like wise that of David. The Cabalistic proof of this mystery, he (Beausobre) says, is the letter A in Adam, meaning Adama; the D, David; and the M, the Messiah. So little dependence is there in the whimsical and uncertain notions of these Jewish Cabalists. However, when they are quoted, they ought to be quoted fairly. Mr. Taylor probably saw nothing of them but

¹²³Priestley, Theological and Miscellaneous, VI, loc. cit.

what he found in Dr. Allix. Basnage gives a large account of the Jewish angel Metatron, showing that he is the same with the angel Michael, concerning whom the Jews had many absurd fancies. He particularly shows, that the name of God being in this angel, means nothing more than that the letters of the word Metatron... and those of Shaddai, considered as numerals, express the same number, viz. 314. Many mistakes on this subject have been occasioned by its being taken for granted, that what is said of the logos may be applied to the Messiah, because the generality of Christians have supposed them to be synonymous. But this was not the case with the Jews. ¹²⁴

While Priestley believed that much of Kabbalism was fatuous, nevertheless he saw the need to return to a serious reexamination of the doctrines misused by the Christian Kabbalists. Priestley's argument was advocated by Drs. Disney and Lindsay, the latter having edited and translated Hermann Olshausen's Biblical Commentary on the Gospels which quotes extensively from Onkelos, the Targum, and the Sepher Zohar. Olshausen, via Lindsay, writes: "...the later Cabbalists... contain much spurious admixture, derived perhaps from the Christian influence, although probably from the Christian Gnosticism alone. For John has placed the idea of the divine Word in such express connexion with the idea of the Messiah, that he points out the Messiah as the incarnate Logos himself. These two ideas do not, indeed, appear without any connexion, even among the Cabbalists, and probably such a combination may have existed among the older Jewish inquirers. It has, however, been falsely maintained that this is identical with the union which John teaches in the Prooemium of his Gospel...." ¹²⁵

In turn, the Priestley-Disney-Lindsay thesis elicited res-

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Hermann Olshausen, Biblical Commentary on the Gospels, trans. Dr. Lindsay (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1855), p. 328.

ponses from Samuel Horsley, George Bull, and John Whitaker.¹²⁶ George Bull's Defensio Fidei Niceanae (1784-86) examines the extant writings of the Church Doctors who flourished during the first three centuries of the Christian era as well as quoting extensively from the Old Testament and Philo and Hermes Trismegistus. He concludes that "the impious Gnostics were the first who separated the Word from God" but also remarks: "From these things, however, it is clear, that, what the primitive fathers taught concerning the appearance of the Word, or Son of God, to the patriarchs and saints under the Old Testament, were no vain imaginations of their own, but derived from the very teachings of the Apostles. There is this further that neither were the Apostles of Christ the first to teach these truths, but that they derived them from the ancient cabala or tradition of the Jews; or, at least, that those things which the Apostles were taught on this subject by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, agrees well with that tradition."¹²⁷ Bull provides little first-hand evidence; and the more serious Trinitarian defence, which included a reevaluation of Dr. Pierre Allix's Judgment of the Ancient Jewish Church Against the Unitarians in the Controversy Upon the Holy Trinity (1691), was John Whitaker's The Origin of Arianism Disclosed (1791). Whitaker's starting-point is the incomprehensibility of denying the Jews their "providential character" as "depositories of the true faith."¹²⁸ If they did not have the doctrine

¹²⁶ Acknowledged by Coleridge as "the classical writers on the Trinity." Table Talk of July 8, 1827.

¹²⁷ George Bull, Defensio Fidei Niceanae, Out of the Extant Writings of the Catholick Doctors Who Flourished During the Three First Centuries of the Christian Church (Oxford: Parker, 1851), p. 29.

¹²⁸ John Whitaker, The Origin of Arianism Disclosed (London: Stockdale, 1791), p. 6.

of the Trinity, then the Patriarchs of Christianity had it not. Whitaker quotes from the Praeparatio Evangelica of Eusebius, the Sepher Yetsirah and the Sepher Zohar, the Bahir, and the notations of Rittangelius in his detailed examination of the Supernal Sephiroth and their correspondence with the Three Persons of the Trinity. Whitaker does not found his entire argument on the traditional literature of the Christian Kabbalists but also discovers hints of the dogma of the Trinity in the Old Testament itself.

Coleridge's reading and researches--while far-flung, eccentrically desultory, and even venally superficial--have been well charted to reveal certain agglomerations of philosophical, theological, and psychological interests that led him to pursue the history of answers given to age-old questions through many individual authors and encyclopaedic histories. Many of the encyclopaedic works Coleridge read in contain sizeable segments devoted to the documents and doctrines of the Kabbalistic tradition which he may have glanced at or examined with care, particularly in his quest to trace the stream of Christianity to its pure fountainhead: to compare the doctrines of Christian belief with those of ancient religions, and to judge which were of human origin and which divinely inspired or revealed.

During the years 1795 and 1796, Coleridge had been reading in four works which contained either sections devoted to a discussion of the history of the Kabbalistic tradition or a commentary on Kabbalistic texts or a synopsis of Kabbalistic belief: William Enfield's translation and adaptation of J. J. Brucker's Historia Critica Philo-

sophiae, Volume One; Thomas Hyde's Historia Religionis Veterum Persarum, C. F. Dupuis Origine de Tous Les Cultes, Ou Religion Universelle, and the already discussed Ralph Cudworth's The Intellectual System.¹²⁹

In Enfield's tri-paritite schema concerning the "history of Philosophy from the earliest times to the beginning of the present century," the second period contains a lengthy analysis of "Jewish Philosophy" in which Enfield, following Brucker, traces the "Cabbala, or mystical interpretation of the law" from Egypt and into Canaan via Simeon Shetach.¹³⁰ Eventually, this "tradition of mystical wisdom," after the destruction of the Temple, was pursued with great industry by Jewish holy men. Enfield follows the progress of the Kabbalistic tradition through "Akibha, the author of the book Jezirah, and Simeon Jochaides, who wrote the book Sohar" until the tenth century when he notes a decline in interest. (In the Historia Religionis Veterum Persarum, Thomas Hyde attributes the authorship of the "Liber Jetsira, seu Creationis" to Abraham.)¹³¹ In the third period, Enfield describes the renaissance of the Platonic philosophy with its Pythagorean admixture by Pletho, Bessarico, and Ficino and the revival of the Kabbalistic doctrine by Picus, followed by Reuchlins, Venetus, Agrippa von Nettesheim, and Henry More. Patricius, Gale, Cudworth, and Bur-

¹²⁹Paul Kaufman, "The Reading of Southey and Coleridge: The Record of Borrowings from the Bristol Library 1795-98," Modern Philology, 21, (1923/24): 317-20. Cudworth--May 15-June 6, 1795; Hyde--March 27-April 6, 1795 and July 4-August 31, 1796; Dupuis--November 19, 1796.

¹³⁰William Enfield, The History of Philosophy From the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the Present Century. Drawn up from Brucker's Historia Critica Philosophiae, 2 vols., (London: J. F. Doves, 1819).

¹³¹Thomas Hyde, Historia Religionis Veterum Persarum (Oxonii, 1760), p. 27.

net are represented as "rejecting the Cabbalistic dreams" and restoring Alexandrian Platonism to its rightful place.

In C. F. Dupuis' mammoth Origine de Tous les Cultes, Coleridge may have first encountered the tradition that the Apocalypse of St. John the Evangelist has Kabbalistic significance, particularly in its complex numerology which Dupuis examines in detail later in the work. Likewise in this work comparing Western and Eastern religions, focussing on the likely origin of Judaism and Christianity in the dogmas of Zoroastrianism--Dupuis suggests a Kabbalistic interpretation of Genesis. "The Hebrew Doctors themselves as well as the Christian Doctors agree that the books, which we attributed to Moses, were written in the allegorical style, that they frequently represent quite a different meaning, than the literal sense would indicate, and that it would lead to false and absurd notions of the Deity, if we should hold on to the rind, which covers sacred science."¹³² Dupuis goes on to a complex astrological interpretation of the seven-branched menorah and its significance for Judaism, as represented by Simeon ben Jochai, in relation to the cosmogonic revelation and the hierarchy of angels and their distribution within the twelve boundaries of the Universe.

It is, however, in another work of comparative religions during this early period of Coleridge's recorded reading that Coleridge may have encountered a more discriminating approach to the Kabbalah. In Samuel Purchas, His Pilgrimage, the subtitle of which is often deleted

¹³²C. F. Dupuis, The Origin of All Religious Worship, trans. C. C. W. Miller, (New Orleans, 1872), p. 226. See Carlo Suares for a comparable twentieth-century Kabbalistic reading of the alphabet.

(Or Relations of the World and the Religions Observed in All Ages and Places), two basic distinctions are made: namely, that the Kabbalists' approach to scriptural revelations is different from the Talmudists' "anagogical" "allegorical" sense,¹³³ and that speculative Kabbalah is distinct from the corrupt practical application. Section Two of Chapter Twelve, "Asia. The Seconde Booke," is entitled "Of the Ancient Jewish Authors and Their Kabbalah."

In this essay, Purchas modestly disclaims "knowledge of those Saints...by reason of my sinnes" but offers the traditional definition of "Cabala" with an emphasis on its "mystical" interpretations. "The word Cabala signifieth a receiving, and in that respect may be supplied to all their traditionall receipts, but in use...it is appropriated to that facultie, which (as Riccius describeth it) by the type the Mosai-call law insinuateh the secrets of divine and human things; and because it is not grounded on reason, nor delivered by writing, but by the faith of the hearer received."¹³⁴ Purchas condescendingly recommends to any who "be in love with these mysteries" to consult Paulus Riccius, Johannes Reuchlins, Picus della Mirandula, Archangelus Burgonouve, "Abrahams supposed Book of the creation," R. Ioseph Castiliensis' Porta Lucis et alii. Purchas suggests that the Jews would most benefit from a study of the Kabbalistic literary tradition "to confound them by their owne testimonie," the obvious Christian Kabbalist's

¹³³ Samuel Purchas, His Pilgrimage, Or Relations of the World and the Religions Observed in All Ages and Places (London, 1626), pp. 161 ff

¹³⁴ Ibid.

intent. In spite of his Christian perspective, Purchas warrants the study of the divinely revealed Kabbalah and encapsulates its basic philosophical perspective on the Sephirothic cosmogony.

As therefore the minde is more excellent than the body, so you must think the Cabalist superior th the Talmudist. For example, in the beginning God created Heaven and Earth, saith Moses: Heaven, here, after the Talmudist, is all that part of the World which is above the Moone, and all beneath it Earth: also by Heaven hee understandeth forme, and by Earth, matter; the composition whereof hee effected not by labour of the hand, but by that nine-fold Oracle of his word; for so often it is mentioned, and God said, likewise hee findeth the foure Elements in those words, Darkenesse, Spirit, Waters, drie Land. But in the Cabalist frameth to himselfe two Worlds, the Visible and the Invisible; Sensible and Mentall, Materiall and Ideale; Superiour and Inferiour; and accordingly gathereth out of the former words, God created Heaven and Earth, That he made the highest and lowest of things meaning by the highest the immateriall, by the lowest the materiall; and this is gathered out of the first letter Beth, which in numbering signifieth two, and insinuateth there these two worlds...Even as, saith R. Saadia, the white of the Egge comprehendeth the yolke, so that first intelligible World infoldeth the second: in this are nine Spheres, moved by the immovable Emphyrean, in that nine order of Angels."¹³⁵

Buxtorf's analysis of gematria-notaricon-themurah is also recommended by Purchas.

Coleridge was familiar with Buxtorf's Lexicon,¹³⁶ the full title of which describes much more than a "dictionary" and suggests that Kabbalistic sources were of value to the scholarly lexiconist and grammarian and the most renowned Hebrew scholar of Coleridge's time: Lexicon Chaldaicu, Talmudicum, et Rabbinicum in quo omnes voces chaldaicae talmudicae et rabbinicae, quotquot in universis vet. test. phrasibus chaldaicis, in utroque talmude, babylonico et hiersolymitano,

¹³⁵Ibid.

¹³⁶CNB: I, #676 10.37.

in vulgaribus et secretioribus hebraeorum scriptoribus commentatoribus philosophis theologis cabbalisticis et jureconsultis extant, fideliter explicantur (1741).

Of Sir Walter Raleigh's "moralistic" History of the World, the first volume is devoted to an historiography of Jewish and Rabbinical learning; in his scheme of composition, Raleigh subordinated the story of other nations to that of the Hebrews.¹³⁷ And though admitting that he was altogether "ignorant" of Hebrew, Sir Walter Raleigh proposes the hypothesis that the Kabbalah was originally delivered to the Patriarchs and inscribed by Enoch before the Deluge. The Kabbalah was then again revealed to Moses on Sinai along with the Torah, a "secretiorem et veram legis enarrationem," and delivered by mouth to Joshua. Raleigh reproduces Picus de Mirandula's history of the latter legend through Esdras, Origen, and Hilarius as support for his argument to credit both legends and to discredit the belief that Kabbalah was an invention "inscribed to Zoroaster, Mercurius, and Cadmus."¹³⁸ Raleigh further associates the invention of letters in the infancy of the world with the secret recording of this divine wisdom, "in ciphers, and characters, and letters bearing the form of beasts, birds, and other creatures."¹³⁹

As early as 1810, one of Coleridge's favorite philosophical surveys and the one which provided information to glean and arguments

¹³⁷Sir Walter Raleigh, History of the World, 2 vols. (London: Conyers, 1786), p. 435.

¹³⁸Ibid., p. 46 ff.

¹³⁹Coleridge reading as late as 1807.

to refute for his Philosophical Lectures was Gottlieb Tennemann's Geschichte der Philosophie. Tennemann had familiarized himself for his section on the Kabbalah with Rittangelius' edition of the Sepher Yet-sirah, the Artis Cabbalisticae collection of Pistorius, Knorr von Rosenroth's Kabbala Denudata, Rabbi Cohen Iriah's Porta Coelorum, and various other commentaries by Eisenmenger, De la Nauze, and J. F. Kleuker. However, Tennemann regarded the tradition with a great deal of skepticism. "Cabbala (that is, oral tradition) is a system of assumed Divine Wisdom, diversified by a variety of fables, which the Jews affect to have received from a Divine source through secret tradition. To treat of it only as far as it belongs to the history of philosophy--it had its origins as early as the first centuries of the Christian era, and was invented or systemized by the Rabbi Akibha (died A. D. 138), and his disciple Simeon Ben Jochai, surnamed the spark of Moses."¹⁴⁰ Tennemann proceeds to give a curt summary of the Sephirothic generation, the four worlds of Creation, a description of Adam Cadmon as the "first man... the first born of the Divinity, the Messiah," identifying the Son of God as the inherent means for the emanation of the universe from the Almighty. Pantheism and gross magic remain, likewise, undifferentiated from pure Kabbalah. Tennemann reduces the Amoraim's "ecstasy" to animal magnetism, recent experimentation in which provided many debunkings of mystical phenomena. He concludes that "the whole is a mass of strange and exaggerated representations, conceived under the influence of the religion of the Persians, but employed by those who advanced them to

¹⁴⁰Gottlieb Tennemann, History of Philosophy, trans. Rev. Arthur Johnson (London: Bell and Dalby, 1873), p. 198.

recommend to general notice the sacred history and doctrines of the Jews; especially with respect to the creation and the origin of evil."¹⁴¹ Tennemann briefly mentions that Christians were aware of the Kabbalistic tradition by name only until the fifteenth century when "The so-called Mosaic philosophy, Theosophy, and Magic were annexed to the theories of the Platonists" in opposition to the Scholastic system.¹⁴² The Geschichte der Philosophie suggests that the revival of Platonism was due, in part, to a mistaken "prejudice" that Platonism was derived from the Jewish philosophy and religion and regards as "extravagancies of their fanciful speculations" the endeavors of the Helmonts, Boehme, and Fludd "to enlarge the 'Holy Art.'"¹⁴³

Besides Josephus', Coleridge was familiar with two historical surveys of the Jewish religion and philosophy: Henri de Bouval Basnage's History of the Jews (so often mentioned in this survey as a well-spring of information) and Henry H. Milman's The History of the Jews. The third volume of the Basnage opus contains a very detailed history of the Kabbalah accompanied by diagrams of the Sephirothic concentric circles and the Tree of Life. In nineteen authoritative chapters, Basnage surveys such topics as Merkabah mysticism, the Chariot of Ezekiel, Zoharic Kabbalism, the Kabbalistic Alphabet of Creation (Sepher ha-Yetsirah) the mysteries of the Names of God, the Sephiroth, the Patriarchal origins of the Kabbalah and its progress among and opposed to the Egyptians, the philosophies of the Apostles and the Fathers of the Church, Jesus

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p. 172.

¹⁴² Ibid., p. 255.

¹⁴³ Ibid., p. 300.

Christ's and St. Paul's association with the Kabbalah, Christian Kabbalah, the Alphabet of St. Jerome, the heretical Basilensian, Gnostic, and Valentinian usages of the Kabbalah, and the proper use of Kabbalistic inscriptions, numerology, and allegory. However, Basnage is a purist and refuses to allow that any part of Christian dogma could be derived from the Kabbalah--particularly the Trinity. As has been recounted, Basnage's work was of great use to the Unitarian argument. "Les trois premieres Splendeurs font beaucoup plus excellentes que les autres....Les Chretiens indiquent par la les trois Personnes de la Trinite dans une seule et meme Essence, qui est infinie. Ils se plaignent meme de l'Aveuglement et de l'ignorance des Cabbalistes modernes, qui regardent ces trois Splendeurs comme autant d'Attributs de la Divinite....Pour moi j'avoue que je ne voi point dans la Cabbale les Mysteres du Christianisme, et je ne concoi pas meme qu'il y ait de la Gloire a les y trouver...D'ailleurs, ne voit-on pas que, comme les dix Splendeurs ne font qu'un Arbre, il faudroit conclure qu'il y a dix Personnes dans la Trinite, si on vouloit adopter la Principes des Cabbalistes?"¹⁴⁴

At the end of his life, Coleridge was reading in the recently published (1829) three-volume The History of the Jews, by Henry H. Milman. It is one of the first books in England discussing the Kabbalistic tradition to critically appraise Franck's work on the dating and origins of the tradition.¹⁴⁵ In essence, Milman recaptulates Franck's argument on the Persian and Zoroastrian origins of Kabbalah's "primary conceptions" and

¹⁴⁴Basnage, pp. 349-373.

¹⁴⁵Henry H. Milman, The History of the Jews, 3 vols. (New York: A. C. Armstrong, 1829), I, 438.

traces their coincidence in the Zendavesta Septuagint, the Book of Ecclesiasticus, the Targum of Onkelos and the writings of Philo. Retaining its monotheistic basis, the true Kabbalah remained unaffected by "Oriental notions" until its degeneration into a theurgic system--a period in which "not only was the Bible one vast allegory, in which the literal sense was cast scornfully aside--a wild arbitrary meaning attached to every history and every doctrine."¹⁴⁶ While emphasizing the venerable antiquity of the Kabbalah, Milman also suggests that the Kabbalah was in the avant-garde concerning scientific issues, partially accounting for its treatment as "heretical" among the orthodox churchmen and thus so long proscribed or neglected. "In the Cabala, too, are some singular premature gleams of scientific knowledge. The Cabala, as well as the Talmud, dares to assert the earth to be spherical and rotatory, and the existence of antipodes. This, too, about the time when, according to the Christian Fathers Lactantius and Augustine, such opinions bordered close on damnable heresy."¹⁴⁷ This statement would have greatly pleased Coleridge; for he loved to discover in the neglected or vilified writings of philosophers, scientists and theologians, persecuted by their times as fantastics, sparks of truths later to be verified and accepted as commonplaces of wisdom or science.

¹⁴⁶Ibid., p. 443.

¹⁴⁷Ibid., p. 438.

CHAPTER IV

COLERIDGE'S APPRECIATION OF THE KABBALIST TRADITION

In an attempt to synthesize what Coleridge actually knew about the Kabbalistic tradition--the intent of this chapter--two questions come to the fore: was Coleridge's knowledge merely a superficial borrowing from some encyclopaedic work or works, and was his interest confined to a single period in his life for some specific scholarly purpose? As has been demonstrated in the two preceding chapters, Coleridge was exposed to many theses of the Kabbalistic tradition in a great number of books; and, as shall be demonstrated in the following pages, he assimilated much of this information to form his own original conclusions concerning this tradition, surprisingly much in keeping with modern scholarship's conclusions. Likewise, Coleridge's familiarity with the tradition extends from at least 1795 to his death, and perhaps, even from his years at Christ's Hospital.

Certain philosophic systems and theosophies, exhibiting some Kabbalistic indebtedness, continued to evoke a lifelong fascination for Coleridge: those of Giordano Bruno, Jakob Boehme, Picus de Mirandula, Baruch Spinoza; while at other periods in Coleridge's "reading life," a number of historians and theologians, expressing a similar keenness for Kabbalah, converge to contribute some partial solution or tidbit of information for a pet project of Coleridge--academic or de fide. Three such periods in particular are notable for their agglomeration

of thinkers continuous with or sympathetic to the Kabbalistic tradition in varying degrees.

During the period of 1795 to 1796 such writers as Cudworth, Boehme, Lowman, Priestley, Estlin, Warburton, Burnet, Dupuis, Kircher, Mendelssohn, Josephus, Ramsay, Law, and Paracelsus in Ficino's collection were conspicuous in Coleridge's reading; likewise in 1801 and 1802 Burnet, Boehme, Paracelsus, Priestley, Horsley, Johannes Scotus Erigena, Disney, and Lindsay recur in Coleridge's notes, letters, and writings during his review of the history of the doctrine of the Trinity; and in 1809 and 1810, during his preparation for the composition of his great Logosophia which realized itself chiefly in the Biographia Literaria and Philosophical Lectures of 1818-19, Erigena, Spinoza, Paracelsus, Bruno, Mendelssohn, Engel, Lightfoot, Schelling, Boehme, Fludd, Tennemann, Hutchinson, Waterland, Sherlock, Bull, Whitaker, Eichhorn, Swedenborg, et. alii., were reviewed by Coleridge.

Precisely because Coleridge was reading in a "tradition" rather than a series of mutually exclusive authors who ranged a span of almost four hundred years, the ideas culled from this tradition cannot be precisely traced to individual authors, isolated from the primary sources or the preceding primary and secondary commentators and historians of the Kabbalistic tradition. But as has been suggested in the preceding two chapters which surveyed the Kabbalistic commentators Coleridge was familiar with, various attitudes and purposes characterize each of the "Kabbalists." These can be traced, if one thought it worthwhile, in continuous lines down to Coleridge, with the addition of his own "poetic"

attitude towards the tradition. In brief, Raymundus Lull of Majorca, the patriarch of the Christian Kabbalist school, conceived the founding of schools for the study of languages to facilitate the conversion of the heathen, particularly the Jews; his purpose in translating documents of the Jewish mystical tradition was primarily evangelical, but he also developed the first systematic commentaries on the Kabbalistic literature in his attempts to codify a universal philosophy through comparative linguistics. The evangelical motivation provided the impetus for Picus de Mirandula's presentation of the newly re-discovered mysteries of the Kabbalah before the Church authorities; and through Mirandula, Lull's systematic attempts to codify Kabbalah's tenets became expressed in two diametrically opposed fashions. Agrippa von Nettesheim renounced his Kabbalistic studies after discovering that his attempts to methodize the theosophy defied the imposition of logical matrices; in a sense he rejected his own Kabbalah. From Agrippa von Nettesheim, it is just one step down to the fantastical prescriptions of Paracelsus, who confounded the superstitions of the "practical" degenerate Kabbalah with the fantastic excesses of alchemy. Giordano Bruno Nolani, on the other hand, approached Kabbalah with a kind of eclectic scientism, purifying the doctrines of "practical" accretions to "sublime" what there might be of a philosophical gold, a docimastic examination of Kabbalah. Both Bruno and Paracelsus express a fervid interest in the production of a new vocabulary to express their original philosophies concerning the Universe and its wonders, in keeping with Lull's belief that the problems of language must be resolved before Man can

proceed to understand the mysteries of his own nature, physical as well as spiritual. In the line of Agrippa, Paracelsus, and Bruno stand the von Helmonts, Fludd, Franz von Baader, and even Boehme via Knorr von Rosenroth. In the courts of Frederic III, Rex Trismegisti, and Maximilian I, a more rarefied philosophical attitude towards the Kabbalah developed--not totally but somewhat divorced from more practical evangelical and "scientific" purposes. Johannes Reuchlins, in his two definitive opera on the Kabbalah, strove to align the tradition with the mystical number philosophy of Pythagoras as well as with the Platonism and neo-Platonism revived by Ficino in the court of the Medicis at which Mirandula was a court scholar. It is this comparative as well as syncretistic philosophical approach to Kabbalah, evidenced as well in the works of Paulus Riccius and the encyclopaedist Athansius Kircher, that had the greatest and most lasting influence on the Kabbalistic heritage in England, via Erasmus and Knorr von Rosenroth who were essential links between the Continent and England passing on the bibliographical collections of Pistorius, Rittangelius, and Burgonovo through Amsterdam, the clearing-house for proscribed literature.

Traditionally, Erasmus communicated Reuchlins to John Fisher, the Bishop of Rochester, and John Colet. More certainly it is through Rosenroth's Kabbala Denudata, derived of Reuchlins, Agrippa, and Mirandula chiefly, that the Cambridge Platonists became apprized of Jewish mysticism and its apparent future echoes in Thomas Taylor's translations of Ficino's collection of Neo-Platonists. John Smith compares the Kabbalistic teachings with those of Dionysius Areopagus while More syn-

cretistically tries to derive defenses against Cartesianism and the degenerate theses of Thomas Vaughan (a successor to Agrippa von Nettesheim) to define a via media for Judaism and Christianity. Ralph Cudworth approaches the Kabbalistic tradition as an historian of ideas and a historian of religions, distinguishing the Jewish Kabbalah from a "pagan Cabala" and an "Orphick Cabala;" while Thomas Burnet assumes a thoroughgoing critical approach, indicative of his liberal symbolical interpretations of the Book of Genesis. Again, there are as many "Kabbalahs" as there are Kabbalistic authors: there are as many attitudes or approaches to Kabbalah as there are commentators on and historians of the Kabbalistic literature. For convenience, we might assign their approaches descriptive titles such as syncretistic, evangelical, scientific, encyclopaedic, bibliographical, alchemical, philosophical, ecumenical humanistic, historical, hermeneutical; but then there is a Boehme self-consciously, intuitively, and revolutionarily uniting all of these attitudes, producing a totally unique approach, and thus demonstrating the futility of "tagging."

As shall be suggested in the following discussion of his knowledge and absorption of the Kabbalistic tradition and subsequently his own "poetic" approach, Coleridge evidences all these attitudes and yet none exclusively. Like Boehme, Coleridge is a part of the Kabbalistic tradition but in a way totally dissimilar from the preceding analytic or "rationalistic" attitudes: Boehme in a mystical visionary way and Coleridge in a visionary poetic. Indeed, it will be seen that Coleridge may well have systematically considered Kabbalistic tenets in his attempts to penetrate the fogs of the early

history of Christian doctrine, but this should be considered of derived and lesser significance than his "poetic" expression of some elemental Kabbalistic metaphysics, to be the matter of the following chapter.

In Prophet and Poet: The Bible and the Growth of Reason, Murray Rosten attempts to align Coleridge's poetic attitudes and devices with those of the Psalmist tradition, working from the premise that "the only romantic poet capable of reading the Old Testament in the original was Coleridge," who described himself as a "tolerable Hebraist" and that "of all romantic poets, Coleridge's concept of God is the least Deistic and the closest to that of the Bible."¹ The thesis of such an argument finds some confirmation in Coleridge's expressed admiration for and even preference for the Hebrew poets versus the classical. "In the Hebrew poets each Thing has a Life of its own, and yet they are all one Life."² Throughout Coleridge's life and writings, one is repeatedly reminded of his wide-ranging knowledge of and admiration for traditional Judaism, particularly as a point of comparison with Christian dogma.³ Coleridge also expresses a burning reprehension against the persecutors of the Jews in Germany and Malta.⁴ Yet there is also an anti-Semitic strain in Coleridge's feelings which crops up crudely in his private conversation and

¹Murray Rosten, Prophet and Poet: The Bible and the Growth of Reason (New York: Knopf, 1962), pp. 173-77.

²CL: II, "September 10, 1802" to Wm. Sotheby. See also CNB: I, #1749, 16.135. "Judaism is but Christianity in the Egg or nidus."

³CNB: III, #4460.

⁴CL:I, "March 10, 1799." Also, CNB: II, #2594, 17.121.

letters, as in his reviling of the foul-smelling "son of Abraham" sharing his carriage⁵ or in his, at time, supercilious disdain of the ignorance of the Jews as to the Christian completion of the Mosaic Revelation and Covenant.⁶ Likewise, Coleridge's attitude towards Kabbalah ranges from unabashed praise of "this most sublime of philosophies"⁷ to abject sarcasm towards "this patch-work of corrupt Platonism or Plotinism."⁸ In an imitation of the grimoires of the Key of Solomon or The Great Grimoire, as a manipulation of the name JEHOVAH, Coleridge parodied the art of the Kabbalist-conjuror in the poem "The Rash Conjuror" (c. 1813-1816): "That the Dragon had scrouched you, squeal and squall--Cabbalists,/Conjurors/great and small,/Johva Mitzoveh Evohaen and all!"⁹

Coleridge was well aware of the distinction between Kabbalah in its pure, speculative state and the multitude of profane accretions that fractured its metaphysical integrity and reduced it to risible degeneracy--the tool of local wizards and conjuring housewives. In keeping with the early Christian Kabbalists' definition of Kabbalah as receptio, Coleridge connects "Cabbala" with an esoteric oral tradition, in direct descent from the primal revelations made to the Patriarchs. Unfortunately, the light of this tradition has been occluded by the time it comes to us

⁵Coleridge, Table Talk, "July 8, 1830."

⁶CNB: III, #3293, 25.19.

⁷Coleridge, Philosophical Lectures, pp. 298-99.

⁸Literary Remains, IV, "Notes on Oxlee," p. 317.

⁹Also see R. Southey's ballad "Cornelius Agrippa."

in Kabbalah, but its essence is one with its pure source. "The more confirmed does my persuasion become of the truth of an oral and traditional, but from its spirituality, esoteric Faith, from the Patriarchs to Moses to the last of the Prophets--and then continued, tho' by refraction, be-dimmed and refracted, yet continued in the earliest Cabbala."¹⁰ What Coleridge regarded as containing "the only intelligible and consistent Idea of that plenary inspiration"¹¹ (i. e. that of the Mosaic Pentateuch), he finds disappointingly confused by such a scholar as Oxlee with "this patchwork of corrupt Platonism or Plotinism with Chaldean, Persian, and Judaic fables and fancies" distinguished from the "original, profound, and pious philosophy in its fountainhead."¹²

Coleridge's respectful, scholarly approach to the Kabbalistic tradition reveals his serious regard for the tradition as truly philosophical and not as an aberrant necromancy or even as theosophy. He cautions the serious observer of Kabbalah to divorce it from its "fanciful superstructure" or its "metaphorical drapery."¹³ In his opinion Kabbalah is "spiritualized Judaism," the province of "the most learned Jews" and the "ancient Hebrew Doctors."¹⁴ As has been suggested, the great intellectual "Enlightenment" had pretty much discredited the Kabbalistic tradition in its corrupt pseudo-scientific state and dis-

¹⁰Quoted in J. B. Beer, Coleridge the Visionary (London: Chatto and Windus, 1970), Note 78, p. 312. From the "Gutch Memorandum."

¹¹S. T. Coleridge, Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit, ed. H. St. J. Hart (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957), "Letter II," p. 46.

¹²"On Oxlee," loc. cit.

¹³Literary Remains, IV, "Notes on Whitaker," 300; Confessions, loc. cit.

¹⁴"On Whitaker," loc. cit; Philosophical Lectures, p. 384; Literary Remains, IV, "On Oxlee," p. 319.

missed it as vain "superstition"; but here we have Coleridge, who has seriously considered all the philosophers of the Enlightenment, proposing a "profitable" and "safe" study of the Kabbalah. Quite unabashedly he proposes treating Kabbalah as an integral philosophy to be examined systematically and weighed epistemologically. "The indispensable requisite not only to a profitable but even to a safe study of the Cabala is a familiar knowledge of the docimastic philosophy, that is, a philosophy, which has for its object the trial and testing of the weights and measures themselves, the first principles, definitions, postulates, axioms of logic and metaphysics."¹⁵

That Coleridge exhibited an academic respect for the genuine Kabbalistic tradition as a "vital-philosophy"¹⁶--not a unique position in the history of its commentators and critics as seen in the preceding chapter--is of less importance than his expressed appreciation of the basis for and real nature of this continuation of the "esoteric Faith, from the Patriarchs to Moses." In his vignette of Luther "conjuring" the meaning out of a passage in the Hebrew Bible, "to make plain to the simple Boor and to the humble Artizan, and to transfer its whole force into their own natural and living Tongue," Coleridge sketches the scholar Luther resorting to the verbal contemplations so characteristic of many passages in the Sepher Zohar, eventually abused by latter-day cabalists as gibberish to invoke demons: "...he counts the letters, he calls up the roots of each separate word, and questions them on the familiar Spirits

¹⁵"On Oxlee," p. 317. Also see the O. E. D. definition of "docimasy" concerning the derivation from alchemical processes.

¹⁶Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, I, xii, p. 170.

of an Oracle." Though Luther nobly fails to "force" the text into meaning, whether in the "heights of Allegory" or the "depths of Cabala,"¹⁷ Coleridge reveals his own understanding of the original emphasis or intent of the speculative Kabbalist: the contemplation of the Revelation of the Pentateuch to uncover the divine significance cloaked in the language of Man. As in the traditional portrait of the Kabbalist, pouring over the sacred text at midnight--bedecking the Bride Shekhinah for the coming of the Bridegroom Messiah--Luther, alone, weighs the letters, roots, and words of the obscure text. It is in the heart of the Sacred Scripture that the Kabbalist finds his being, in that "interior and spiritual sense" for which Coleridge would "risk being called Swedenborgian or Cabalistic."¹⁸

Coleridge indirectly encapsulates (perhaps unconsciously) his appreciation of "the doctrine of the Cabalists" in a quotation strictly in keeping with Kabbalistic tenets: "'The Pentateuch is but one Word, even the Word of God; and the letters and articulate sounds, by which this Word is communicated to our human apprehension, are likewise divinely communicated.'"¹⁹ This doctrine, of course, is the source of much of the superstitious practice that resulted from a literal application of this tenet. As in all Kabbalistic passages, as exemplified by the exegesis of PRDS, there is the shell and the kernel of the revelation. The Kabbalist believes the truth of this statement but in a transcendent

¹⁷Coleridge, The Friend, I, 141

¹⁸Beer, op. cit., p. 312.

¹⁹Confessions, loc. cit.

or mystical sense. The reward of allegory, symbol, and other metaphorical devices does not reside in the expressions themselves. When the Kabbalist opens the earthen door of the letter, another world reveals itself, patterned on the earthly but entirely unique, like the world of the Looking-Glass. It is necessary to enter the mirror--the only means possible--but the passage itself is insignificant. The "letters and articulate sounds" of the Revelation are indispensable, as parts of a riddle to be resolved, as tumblers to a safe to be manipulated, as clues to a mystery provided by the designer to be observed and then forgotten when the solution clarifies. A literal interpretation of this encapsulation of Kabbalistic exegesis could not but have left Coleridge contemptuous of the narrowness of such a belief. But an anagogical understanding reveals the richness possible in the "interior or spiritual" sense of the "one Word," which would have delighted him.²⁰

Since this study tracing the thread of Coleridge's appreciation of the kabbalistic tradition has necessitated the background of a definition of the nature of the Kabbalistic tradition and a rough sketch of the progress of Christian Kabbalism as a basis for future re-evaluations of the position of Kabbalism in English letters, I have perhaps expended too much time on the subsidiary aim to the detriment of the true subject of the dissertation. But on the topic of Coleridge's conclusions on the dating of the tradition--the opinions of two revered scholars, Kathleen Coburn and John Shawcross, must be reconsidered in

²⁰Literary Remains, II, "Notes on Sir Thomas Browne's Religio Medici," S. 34. Also CNB: III, #3401, "
And CL, "October 13, 1806."

light of my researches; and the seriousness of Coleridge's thought on the topic re-estimated. Coleridge was not just a dilettantish scavenger.

Shawcross' note on the Kabbalistic reference in Chapter XII of the Biographia Literaria²¹ is relatively uninformed on the topic and comes short of Coleridge's own expressed theory. Shawcross implies that Coleridge had merely followed the Ueberweg commentary, which totally concentrates on the Renaissance revival of Hebrew learning. Likewise, Kathleen Coburn in her note to Lecture Ten of the Philosophical Lectures of 1818-1819²² implies that Coleridge was arguing with Tennemann's thesis on the dating of the origins of the Kabbalistic tradition as no earlier than the Middle Ages. In fact, as discussed in the preceding chapter, Tennemann, like Adolphe Franck, dates the tradition no later than the first century A. D. and suggests that the tradition only came to be known to Christian Europe in the Middle Ages. Coleridge notes in the margin of Tennemann detailed supplementary consideration concerning the dating he had written about as early as 1810 and may have first considered at Gottingen following the lecture notes of Eichhorn and other scholars, i. e., that the origins of the tradition well antedate the Christian era: "In referring to the Cabala, I am not ignorant of the date of the oldest Rabbinical writings which contain or refer to this philosophy, but I coincide with Eichorn, and very many before Eichorn, that the foundations of the Cabala were laid and well known long before Christ...."²³

Coleridge does not reveal whether he ever seriously credited the

²¹Biographia, I, 266.

²²Philosophical Lectures, p. 444.

²³Literary Remains, IV, "On Whitaker," p. 301.

Kabbalah's legendary origins in relation to Adam, Abraham, and Enoch; but he does definitely conclude that Kabbalah was well established before the writings of Philo Judaeus²⁴ and the Evangelists and St. Paul. "What the origin of the Cabala was I cannot pretend to tell you precisely. I know it is commonly said that it began from the 10th century or even later in the middle ages. This appears to me utterly unlikely. At least I find the same doctrines so plainly marked, even in Philo Judaeus, in works which are supposed to be before the birth of our Lord...."²⁵

It is in the earliest approximated dating of the beginning of the tradition in recorded history that Coleridge so surprisingly concurs with modern scholarship's conclusions, particularly Franck's. As has already been suggested, Coleridge believed in the existence of an oral tradition which continued from the Patriarchs through Moses to the Prophets, "re-fracted" in the "earliest Cabala." In a letter of January 20, 1820 he discusses Swendenborg, Kabbalah, and the "coincidence" of the "First Principle" of his philosophy with the Mosaic Cosmogony. He refers to the "Cabbala of the Jewish Church" as having "existed centuries before the Birth of our Lord."²⁶ In his 1827 "Notes on Oxlee,"²⁷ he suggests that Kabbalah had existed as early as the times of Ezekiel, i.e., the sixth century before Christ and the period of the Babylonian Captivity. This coincides with Franck's recognition of the great Zoroastrian and

²⁴Philosophical Lectures, p. 444. Kathleen Coburn's notes on Coleridge's annotation to Tennemann.

²⁵Philosophical Lectures, p. 299.

²⁶CL: V.

²⁷Literary Remains, IV, pp. 317-18.

Babylonian influence on Judaic spiritualism already discussed. This consideration frees the Kabbalistic tradition in its purest form from the influences Coleridge denotes as "corrupt Platonism or Plotinism" in its later stages of development--most probably during "the first dawning of the Hebrew literature" of the neo-Platonic revival of the Renaissance.²⁸

It is safe to conclude that Coleridge was discriminating in his approach to the antiquity of the Kabbalistic tradition; essentially he recognized three periods in the evolution of its doctrines. The first period dating from the Patriarchs was an unrecorded oral tradition which passed through Moses to the Prophets. (No mention is made of the tradition of the two Laws of Sinai.) To the probability of Egyptian sources for the Kabbalistic approach to the Sacred Scripture, Coleridge does give credence. "And truly, for the first chapter of Genesis I must confess a great deal of obscurity; though divines have to the power of humane reason endeavoured to make all go in a literal meaning, yet those allegorical interpretations are also probable, and perhaps, the mystical method of Moses bred up in the hieroglyphical schooles of the Egyptians."²⁹

The second period extends from Ezekiel and Daniel to the first centuries of the Common Era, during which Coleridge implies a "School of the Cabalists" was founded.³⁰ This period saw the vital intermeshings of Jewish mysticism with early Christian doctrines, especially evidenced in the apocalyptic writings of John and the letters of Paul, and the ultimate

²⁸Philosophical Lectures, pp. 298-99.

²⁹Coleridge, Miscellaneous Criticism, pp. 168-69.

³⁰CL: IV, "January 10, 1818."

decline of Kabbalah into "patchwork." The third period coincides with the revival of neo-Platonic and Proclo-Plotinian thought at the courts of the Medicis and Frederic III, "the first dawning of the Hebrew literature." This period is marked by the persecution of the Jews and Jewish letters, the demise of the pure strains of Kabbalistic speculation, and the mutilation of the doctrine for evangelical, alchemical, and diabolical purposes. Coleridge's speculations are unique for his times and for his purposes in attempting to date Kabbalistic influences from textual evidence,³¹ though without much detailedly convincing proof.

In Coleridge's lifelong struggle to fathom the unfathomable mysteries of the Nature of God, in an effort to identify the God of the Bible with that of the philosophers,³² he compared with meticulous care the contemplations of most of the great theologians and philosophers from Jerome and Plotinus to Leibniz and Kant before evolving his own tetradic formula to represent his own philosophical conception of the Living God, the God of Revelation and of Reason. We shall now begin a comparison of the four elements of Coleridge's tetrad with the Kabbalistic tetrad of Ain Soph-Kether-Hokhmah-Binah. The purpose of this discussion is not to establish an identity between the two tetrads or to demonstrate an indebtedness or to trace direct parallels, but merely to suggest that Coleridge's own lifelong formulization might well have been reinforced, and perhaps unconsciously shaped, by a familiarity with a long line of Christian Kabbalistic illuminations on the nature of the Godhead and to

³¹Literary Remains, IV, pp. 299-300. Also "On Whitaker," pp. 297,300.

³²CL: III, "January 24, 1814."

underline some notable similarities between the two conceptualizations.

Comparable to Coleridge's ultimate description of the Prothesis, the Τὸ Ἄξιον, "the Identity," or the "Ἄξιον , without an article, and yet not as an adjective" of the Formula Fidei de Sanctissima Trinitate (1830) is the Kabbalistic Ain Soph or Boehme's God in Ungrund. Concerning his attribution of pantheism to "Cabalistic theosophy" and the supposed Kabbalistic notion of the creation of the world ex nihilo, Coleridge comments on the nature of Ain Soph: "One of the two contra-distinctions of the Hebrew Revelation is the doctrine of positive creation. This, if not the only, is the easiest and surest criterion between the idea of God and the notion of a mens agitans molem. But this the Cabalists evaded by their double meaning of the term nothing, namely as nought=0, and as no thing; and by their use of the term, as designating God."³³ As has already been fully discussed in Chapter One, Ain Soph is a bit more complex than Coleridge's simplification. Coleridge is accurate in his description of the Ain (ayin), the most inaccessible identity of the Godhead enshrouded in the paradox of its own Being, the focus of all mystical contemplations; but he does not admit, unless implicitly in his second designation, "no thing," the further ramifications of Soph ("limit" or "end").

At this point, one might conclude that Coleridge's knowledge of basic Kabbalistic concepts must have been superficial, if not makeshift; and yet, I think, we would be well advised to see if there is not other evidence in Coleridge's conception of the "Absolute Subject" that

³³Literary Remains, IV, "On Oxlee," 318.

mirrors the Ain Soph of the Kabbalists, "the Root of all Roots," the "Indifferent Unity," the "Absolute."³⁴ It should be noted here that the intent in Coleridge's description of Ain Soph is to depict Kabbalism as an "emanationist" theosophy--his "original" deduction contrary to what he has apparently been led to believe by other Kabbalistic commentators on Kabbalah's orthodox belief in "positive creation."

From the Song of Solomon, already mentioned as a favorite text for Kabbalistic contemplations on Shekhinah, Coleridge seized upon the fundamental identity of Ain Soph: "Space <is one of> the Hebrew names for God and it is the most perfect image of Soul, pure Soul--being indeed to us nothing but unrestricted action. Wherever action is resisted, limitation begins--and limitation is the first constituent of body."³⁵ In a note which follows what is believed to be Coleridge's earliest acceptance of Trinitarianism into his Credo, there is a Lurianic touch to Coleridge's description of the almost universal conception of the Godhead as the center of a Circle (here represented by the Θ Σ Λ).³⁶ From Chapter One, one may recall that Ain Soph is often thought of as the point from which the creative light pours forth into Creation: "...the \odot being a Circle, with the Kentron [Kentrum], or central Point, creating the circumference and both together the infinite Radii/--the Central point is primary Consciousness=living action....--The \odot is I which is the articulated Breath drawn inward, the \odot is the same

³⁴CL: VI, "August 12, 1829," "The Absolute Subject...to Him illimitable...."

³⁵CNB: II, #2402, 21.567 (b). See also CL: VI, "January 11, 1826" on "Space" as the "essentially unutterable." Also, S. T. Coleridge, Aids to Reflection, ed. H. N. Coleridge (London: Pickering, 1843), p. 131.

³⁶See also CNB: III, #4229.

sent outward, the Θ or Theta expresses the synthesis and coinstantaneous reciprocation of the two Acts...."³⁷ The "Breath drawn inward" may be compared to the Lurianic tsimtsum, the Limitless One contracting to fill the Space with Creation or the similar Boehmean conceptualization of the "movement of God within and without the Ungrund, "...so as that by an eternal περι Χωρησις or mysterious intercirculation God wills himself out of the ground--and again by His will, as God existing, gives being to the ground--....Synesius, Jerome, Hilary, and Lactantius and others involve the same conception."³⁸ On the same topic, with which Coleridge was fascinated, he scoured The Oracles of Zoroaster via Franciscus Patricius and Thomas Stanley,³⁹ "Hebrew Wisdom,"⁴⁰ and the Platonic and neo-Platonic philosophies. "By matter Plato seems to have meant no more than the ground of possibility of finiteness and susceptibility of form/instead therefore of limiting Deity & supposing a co-eternal Rival & opponent, his Matter appears to be no other than an enigmatic expression or assertion of a contingent will in Deity, constituting him properly a Creator...."⁴¹

Likewise, Coleridge expresses a belief in the Abyss which separates the "Holy One, the abysmal Will"⁴² from His self-revelation and

³⁷CNB: II, #2784, 16.338.

³⁸Literary Remains, III, "On Hooker," p. 73.

³⁹CNB: III, 4424; the generation of the "Paternal Monad."

⁴⁰Literary Remains, II, "The Idea of the Prometheus of Aeschylus," pp. 340-41.

⁴¹CNB: III, #3824; I 1680, 21.408.

⁴²CL; VI, "August 12, 1829."

Creation, which, as Scholem puts it, the voice of God bridges and the voice of Man attempts to span: "the Free will of Deity, in contradistinction to his Will or necessary Modus essendi--consequently, the infinite chasm between the Begotten and the Commanded, the eternal Son and the Creature in Time...."⁴³ Coleridge "names" this dimension of Divinity in a number of philosophical and ethical terms--"the Good," "the eternal Act of Self-affirmation," "the Prothesis of Unity and Omneity," "the Plenum" --in contradistinction to its primal "manifestation" as *ὁ Θεός* ; and yet, in spite of his metaphysical formulizing, the poetic-mystical utterance escapes in this almost Boehmean contemplation of the "Mystery of Mysteries": "...God waiting and [as it were] yearning for the first epiphany of His Will and Wisdom--and what can that be but the Word?"⁴⁴ The contemplation is antithetical in its philosophically impressive and "blasphemous" anthropomorphic implications but so consistent with the Kabbalistic mythopoetical approach which momentarily ignores "systematics" to achieve a higher consciousness of the Divine Nature (as different as "holy card" art is from iconograph). "Even the worship of one God becomes Idolatry, in my convictions, when instead of the Eternal + Omnipresent, in whom we live + move, + have our Being, we set up a distinct Jehovah tricked out in the anthropomorphic Attributes of Time and Successive Thoughts--+ think of him, as a Person, from whom we had our Being."⁴⁵ Coleridge

⁴³CNB: III, #3824.

⁴⁴CL: IV, "January 12, 1818."

⁴⁵CL: II, "December 7, 1802."

and Kabbalah, in keeping with orthodox Judaism, were opting for "the living I am," "Jehovah Elohim...the Self exist [ent]Strengths" versus the "dead machine" of a "vain metaphysical Vacuum."⁴⁶

Before discussing Coleridge's understanding of the Sephiroth, one must keep in mind two traditional underlying tenets of that doctrine: (1) the Sephiroth have a "mysterious" identity: they are not mere "instruments" of the Ain Soph, but they also do not articulate the "totality" of the Divine Identity--they are part of the theogonic process but express the whole of the cosmogonic process yet are not identical with Creation; (2) the number "ten" chosen to represent them is basically an allegorical identity; the Sephiroth are, most importantly, to be considered as One with Ain Soph "Who is without number."

Concerning the second point, Coleridge reveals some sensitivity in what might be inferred as a "de-anthropomorphizing" approach to the Sephiroth. This may be due to his comparative approach to the philosophies of the world and their historical developments. He considered the "numbers" of Pythagoras, that is, numerical Ideas purely free of a posteriori identities, as comparable to Sephiroth: both systems generated by a "numen numerantis" with which they are One.⁴⁷ "The numbers of Pythagoras and the Cabalists with the equivalent Ideas of the Platonists, ARE not so properly acts of the Reason, in their sense I mean, as they are THE Reason itself in act."⁴⁸ This conception of the Sephiroth, One with a Self-comprehending Creator and devoid of

⁴⁶CL: VI, "February 8, 1826," CL: V, Circa "January 1, 1821," (#1258); CL: IV, "September, 1817, to C. A. Tulk."

⁴⁷Literary Remains, II, "Idea of Prometheus," p. 343.

⁴⁸Coburn, Philosophical Lectures, p. 115.

specific names (compartmentalizations of divine powers, allegorically assigned), beautifully follows in the Kabbalistic tradition. Likewise, the number of Sephiroth he regards as "at least" ten.

However, concerning the first tenet, one must conclude that Coleridge's appreciation of the essentially monotheistic nature of the Sephirothic system was weakened by the bugbear of pantheism which haunted his appreciation of many of his favorite philosophic systems. Coleridge was aware of the basic distinction of the "superior" from the "inferior" Sephiroth, the Divine Trinity and the Sephiroth of Creation. "The Deity considered in himself and in his own essential nature they represented as three in one; but the Deity as manifested, as expanding (in at least (seven) ways, they represented as the seven spirits or the seven Sephiroth."⁴⁹ Coleridge fails to identify the seven "fabricative" Sephiroth as closely as the "superior" Sephiroth with the Godhead, and instead designates them as "expansions" of the Ain Soph in Creation, essentially Divine emanations. His choice of the term "proprietates" to designate the Sephiroth involves him in a misleading systematic analysis of their designedly ambivalent character: they become either identical with the Godhead or identical with Creation--which they are neither univocally in the mystic's contemplations. Essentially it is the Christian perspective on Judaic "foreshadowings" of early Church dogma that deflects Coleridge in his initially correct "docimastic" evaluation. "Thus in words and to the ear they taught that the world was made out of nothing; but in fact they meant and inculcated, that

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 299.

the world was God himself expanded. It is not, therefore, half a dozen passages respecting the first three proprietates in the Sephiroth, that will lead a wise man to expect the true doctrine of the Trinity in the Cabalistic scheme....If the first three proprietates are God, so are the next seven, and so are all ten. God according to the Cabalists is all in each and one in all." Coleridge must have felt some embarrassment at such a simplistic reduction and backhandedly reveals in the following sentence his true admiration for the Kabbalistic metaphysics which he has attempted to rescue from confusion with its ridiculed "practical" counterpart. "I do not say that there is not a great deal of truth in this; but I say that it is not, as the Cabalists represent it, the whole truth."⁵⁰ More on Coleridge's identification of the "superior" Sephiroth with the Christian Trinity will follow.

Though there is no evidence, one might conjecture that the "poetic" representation of the Sephiroth by the Kabbalists might have dissuaded Coleridge from a serious contemplation of their anagogical identities and abstract interrelationships to an allegorical consideration of their part in Creation, Creation alone revealing the Crown, Wisdom, Intelligence, Grace, Beauty, Judgment, Victory, Glory, Foundation, and Kingdom of the One. Kathleen Coburn remarks that he may have intended the Sephiroth in the image of the "Lampads seven" in the Ode to the Departing Year (ll. 76-77), though the "Lampads" also appear in the Apocalypse of St. John. Coleridge was also aware of the Adam Kadmon configuration of the Sephiroth: "...and the seven spirits="

⁵⁰ Literary Remains, IV, "On Oxlee," p. 318.

Sephiroth, constituting together the Adam Kadmon."⁵¹ Coleridge may also have recognized the Adam Kadmon of Swedenborg's "Grand Man: "The universal Heaven is called the Grand Man, especially from this, that the Lord is there, all in all."⁵² Or he may have been hinting at this poetic "identity" in his metastasis $\alpha\nu\eta\rho/\eta\prime\alpha\rho$ ⁵³ or may have drawn a correspondence with Origen's interpretation of the symbolical homo androgynus.⁵⁴ Coleridge may also have applied the "concentric circle" representation of the Sephiroth to describe this theory of the relationship of ΤΟ ΘΕΙΟΝ and Nature; though such a representation is not unique to Kabbalah.⁵⁵

The Sephiroth were also described in relationship to Ezekiel's Vision, (Ez. i:16-21), either as the Adam Kadmon or as the Merkabah (the celestial chariot). There is little need here to detail the evidence of Coleridge's great fascination with this image; but it must be remarked that Coleridge's interpretation of the vision as an expression of the Divine "Imagination" and the $\epsilon\pi\epsilon\alpha \zeta\omega\upsilon\tau\alpha$ ⁵⁶ so perfectly encapsulates the character of the Sephirothic unity, denoting as well their mystical "verbal" potency as pure alphabetic and numerical figurations for God in actio. "In the Scriptures they are the living educts of the Imagination; of that reconciling and mediatory

⁵¹Ibid., "On Whitaker," p. 301.

⁵²Coburn, CNB: III, Note on entry #4030.

⁵³Coburn, CNB: I, #1728.

⁵⁴Aids, p. 197.

⁵⁵Griggs, CL: IV, "September, 1817." Also Coburn, CNB: II, #2316, 21.500; III, #4229.

⁵⁶CNB: III, #4237; I 425, 3½.33. Also Biographia, iv, p. 56 and Aids, p. xv.

power, which incorporating the Reason in Images of the Sense, and organizing (as it were) the flux of the Sense by the permanence and self-circling energies of the Reason, gives birth to a system of symbols, harmonious in themselves, and consubstantial with the truth, of which they are the conductors. These are the Wheels which Ezekiel beheld....the truths and the symbols that represent them move in conjunction and form the living chariot that bears up (for us) the throne of the Divine Humanity. Hence, by a derivative, indeed, but not a divided, influence, and though in a secondary yet in more than a metaphorical sense, the Sacred Book is worthily entitled the Word of God. Hence too, as the Past and the Future are virtually contained in the Present."⁵⁷ The Sephiroth are the Creation Alphabet: each work of the Torah is believed to be composed of the Sephiroth; the Torah is the design of Creation and the design of Redemption to come; in the Sephiroth the Past, the Eternal Present, and the Future of Man are One.

As has already been thoroughly discussed in the chapter "An Appreciation of the Kabbalah," the Kabbalistic tradition is dominated by the image of God as the Word-giver, not only in the tradition of the double Torah of Mount Sinai but particularly in the positive act of Creation. "1. In thirty-two mysterious paths of wisdom did the Lord write....He created His Universe by the three forms of expression: Numbers, Letters, and Words. 2. Ten ineffable Sephiroth and twenty-two basal letters: three mothers, seven double, and twelve simple."⁵⁸

⁵⁷S. T. Coleridge, Lay Sermons: Stateman's Manual, ed. R. J. White (Princeton University Press, 1972), pp. 28-29.

⁵⁸Akiba Ben Joseph, Sepher ha-Yetsirah, p. 17.

From these opening verses of the Sepher Yetsirah, the letters become identified with the Perfections of the Divine and integral elements of His Name, the Directions of the Universe, the Elements, the Times of the Year, and the Organs, Senses, and Activities of Man (attributable to the archetypal Adam Kadmon): these are "living" letters. Just as the "numbers of Pythagoras and the Cabalists...ARE not so properly acts of the Reason... as they are THE Reason itself in act" for Coleridge, so are the Sephirothic letters for the Kabbalist. For Coleridge, Creation is also the "Word": not only in the traditional Old Testament and New Testament significances nor only in the "Lore of Symbols and Correspondences" of Swedenborg⁵⁹ or of a poet like Crashaw,⁶⁰ but also in a philologically "mystical" sense which may very well have been due to his familiarity with the unique "literal" contemplations of the Kabbalistic tradition.

Coleridge did have a working knowledge of Hebrew and derived a theory that the elements of the Hebrew alphabet consisted of "symbols of whole Words": "Words in original Languages are really sentences, each syllable certainly being a distinct symbol."⁶¹ Coleridge also evidences familiarity with the Kabbalistic tradition that to Adam the Alphabet was divinely revealed; this Alphabet in the Zohar detailed the Architecture of the Universe.⁶² Moreover, the Hebrew alphabet suggested to Coleridge the Identity of the Ain Soph in a uniquely Kabbalistic way.

⁵⁹CL: V, "January 20, 1820."

⁶⁰CNB: II, #3107, 19.58.

⁶¹CNB: II, #2450, 17.24; CNB: III, #3789, 18.83.

⁶²CL: III, "December 11-13, 1811." Sepher ha-Zohar, trans. Harry Sperling and Maurice Simon (London: Soncino, 1949), Vol. I, "Bereshith," 55 a-b.

"The Aleph, say the Rabbinical Philologists, is no Letter; but that in and with which all Letters are or become. Even so, there is a higher 1. or the 1. is an equivocal for two most disparate senses: in the nobler of which it is equivalent to the 0 positive, which is no thing because it is the ground and sufficient cause of all things, and no number because it is the Numerorum omnium Fons et Numerus."⁶³

One might very well indirectly trace what has been regarded as a "Romantic" view of Nature as the "unwritten" Bible to the Kabbalistic Yetsiratic Creation myths. In Coleridge there may be a very direct correspondence: "To the pious man all Nature is thus beautiful because its every Feature is the symbol and all its Parts the written Language of infinite Goodness and all powerful Intelligence."⁶⁴ His interconnection of the Divine Nature with the pure elements of Language is more than a Platonic conceptualization; for his thought leads him from a philological consideration of the language of the Old Testament, perhaps through Kabbalah, to a philosophy of science--"And then too shall we be in that state to which science in all its forms is gradually leading us. Then will the other great Bible of God, the Book of Nature, becomes transparent to us, when we regard the forms of matter as words, as symbols, valuable only as being the expressions, an unrolled but yet a glorious fragment of the wisdom of the Supreme Being"--and upwards to a metaphysical, a theological, a poetic contemplation of the Christian *Λογος* : "In looking at objects of Nature while I am

⁶³CL: V, "August, 1820: to C. A. Tulk."

⁶⁴S. T. Coleridge, Lectures of 1795, p. 158. Also Biographia, I, 83.

thinking, as at yonder moon dim-glimmering thro' the dewy windowpane, I seem rather to be seeking, as it were asking, a symbolical language for something within me that already and forever exists, than observing anything new. Even when that latter is the case, yet still I have always an obscure feeling as if that new phaenomenon were the dim Awakening of a forgotten or hidden Truth of my inner Nature/ It is still interesting as a Word, a Symbol! It is *Logos*, the Creator! <and the Evolver!>⁶⁵ The Universe is alive through the Word. Another recurrent theme in Coleridge's thought and in the Kabbalistic tradition characteristic of this passage is that this world has a double significance: as real, it tells of itself alone; but as ideal, it mirrors forth our manifold spiritual experience. "Before God created the world, His name was enclosed within Him, and therefore He and His name enclosed within Him were not one. Nor could this unity be effected until He created the world. Having, therefore, decided to do so, He traced and built, but the aim was not attained until He enfolded Himself in a covering of a supernal radiance of thought and created therefrom a world. He produced from the light of that supernal radiance mighty cedars of the upper world, and placed His chariot on twenty-two graven letters which were carved into ten utterances and infixed there" (Bereshith, 29 a).

Although Coleridge considered the Kabbalistic cosmogony essentially "emanatory" and therefore "pantheistic"⁶⁶--though it is neither-- we can infer that Coleridge's own exegetical approach to the Creation

⁶⁵CNB: II, #2546, 17.104.

⁶⁶Coburn, Philosophical Lectures, pp. 299-300. "On Oxlee," pp. 317-18.

myth of Genesis correlates in a general way with the traditional Kabbalistic perspective reflected in the Sepher Yetsirah and Zohar. "...I had so much to communicate, so many thoughts intimately connected with the works and character of your illustrious tho' grossly misconceived Swede as collated both with the results of my own meditations and the Cabbala of the Jewish church as it existed centuries before the Birth of our Lord....that I had arrived at this conclusion by necessary evolution from the First Principle of my Philosophy before I was aware of its exact coincidence with the Mosaic Cosmogony."⁶⁷ While Coleridge's "scientific" apologetics for the Days of Creation need to be analyzed in terms of Priestley's and Davys' "scientific" terminology, the bipolar dialectic Coleridge implements can be traced in the cosmogonies of Spinoza and Boehme. Indeed, it may have also been through Boehme that the Lurianic tsim-tsum-shevirah-tikkun process filters into Coleridge's systole-diastole (contraction-dilation) rhythm of the birth of the Cosmos. "In this therefore the Dilative Force exists as little as the contractive; both of which are the consequents of Gravitation, as this again necessitates the actuation of the Attractive Force, which again supposes a Creation and a Protoplast....Hence the moving and impregnating of the Spirit is the first act of possibilitation, as the Lucifical Word was the first creative act or ~~the~~ first act of realization."⁶⁸ The following comparison of the Kabbalistic and Coleridgean "orthodox" interpretation of Biblical cosmogony somewhat anticipates the discussion of the correspondence of the superior Sephiroth and the Christian Trinity,

⁶⁷CL: V, "January 20, 1820: to C. A. Tulk."

⁶⁸CNB: III, #4420.

which seems to have occupied Coleridge's more serious attention.

Although much of this dissertation has been devoted to an explanation of Kabbalistic tenets and processes, I here apologetically beg the reader to bear with the following brief analysis of the "dialectics" of the Kabbalistic cosmogony before presenting the Coleridgean "coincidences." Whereas the God of the Sepher Yetsirah is the Architect of the Universe through "Numbers, Letters, and Words," He is also the Creator of the Dimensions in which He works. From the three "Mother" letters, he extends the Dimensions of Height, Depth, and Length and the four directions of the Universe.⁶⁹ Likewise, His hand is shown "equilibrating" the elements of the Universe and the corresponding antagonistic organs of Man. "Three mothers: A M Sh--Fire, Air, and Water. The heavens are produced from Fire, the wind is produced from Air, and the earth is produced from Water: the Fire above and the Water below, and the Air is (an) equilibrating law between the two....A M Sh in Man--the head, the belly, and the chest. The head was produced from Fire, the belly from water, and the chest from Air, which equilibrates the two" (13.4-7). Thus from the Tetragrammaton, vectors of Creation extend counterbalancing each other in dynamic procreative tension--according to the Sepher Yetsirah.

The Sepher Zohar's painstaking analysis of the verses of Genesis, always consonant with the stream-lined paradigms of the Sepher Yetsirah, elaborates the vectors of Creation more eloquently. "Bereshith" of Zohar is a geometrical expression of the generation of the lines of the Universe from a single point: "A further esoteric interpretation of the word Bere-

⁶⁹Yetsirah, 1.13, pp. 18-19.

shith is as follows. The name of the starting-point of all is Ehyeh (I shall be). The holy name when inscribed at the side is Elohim, but when inscribed by circumscription is Asher, the hidden and recondite temple, the source of that which is mystically called Reshith" (Bereshith, 15 a). The connection of this mystical etymology of the word for Creation with the architecture of Yetsirah is resolved in the extension of six vectors from the single point. "Up to this point only extend the allusions to the Most Mysterious who carves out and builds and vivifies in mysterious ways, through the esoteric explanation of one verse. From this point onwards bara shith, 'he created six,' from the end of heaven to the end thereof, six sides which extend from the supernal mystic essence, through the expansion of creative force from a primal point. Here has been inscribed the mystery of the name of forty-two letters" (Bereshith, 15 b; see also 16 b, 19 b). At the very heart of the basic dialectic of Creation as represented by the author(s) of the Sepher Zohar is also the true understanding of Kabbalah as the "tradition" (receptio)--based strictly on the plan of Creation, the Torah. "Moses in his wisdom pondered this and drew a lesson from the work of Creation. In the work of Creation there was an antagonism of the left against the right, and the division between them allowed the Gehinnom to emerge and to fasten itself to the left. Then the central column, which is the third day, intervened and allayed the discord between the two sides, so that the Gehinnom descended below, and the Left became absorbed in the Right and there was peace over all" (Bereshith, 17 a). This "antagonism" the Zohar traces also in the "twinned" patriarchs: Cain and Abel, Esau and Jacob, Aaron and Moses, etc. The

Zohar explains the division of day from night, the firmament from the waters, but at the end of all the descriptions of separation and division represented in the individual elements which constitute the Great Name of God lies one Truth: "The Lord (YHVH) is one and his name is One" (Bereshith, 18 b). "Here is the secret of two names combined which are completed by a third and become one again" is the theme of the individuation and "coadunation" of the Names of the Sephiroth,⁷⁰ a perfect description of the procreative vectors behinnot which extend through them and amongst them in an ever-living dynamism.

Behind all of Coleridge's theorizing on the nature of Creation and the relationship of the Creator to his Creation, as in Kabbalah--there is one aim only, to confirm the Truth of Sacred Scripture: "Above all, to study the Scriptures themselves, with all the aids which ancient and modern Learning have prepared; and to regard all the great Book of natural science but as a Glass enabling them to take a deeper and more exact view of the Law which (as your Sages have profoundly said) was, before the World itself was."⁷¹ Coleridge's consideration of the Book of Genesis ("the first Chapter was probably a Hymn of Moses, after the giving of the Law")⁷² included detailed consultations with Rabbi Hyman Hurwitz on the syntactical as well as lexical implications of the text concerning the metaphysical seeds of Time and Space and the symbolic logic of the text.

While theogony and cosmogony were in the fore of Coleridge's thought

⁷⁰Bereshith, 21 b.

⁷¹CL: V, "January 4, 1820." See also The Friend I, p. 458, on "Law."

⁷²CNB: III, #4325, 19.74.

throughout his life, his most serious contemplation of the mysteries seem to come from the period of 1817-20. While I am not contending that Coleridge derived his theories concerning cosmogony from the Kabbalistic texts, we cannot totally discount the possibility that Coleridge perhaps found confirmation of his contemplations in the Kabbalistic tradition; for the "tradition" certainly is one of the chief "aids which ancient and modern Learning have prepared" towards analytical and poetical discussions of the Mosaic myths of Creation. Setting aside the Electrical and Physical-Chemical Identities Coleridge established, one notices the striking similarity of the fundamentals of Coleridge's interpretation of Genesis with the Kabbalist's: the emphasis on the generation of Dimension, individuating vectors extending from the cataclysmic revelation of the point of Light of the first Fiat and the complementary dialectical counter-movement of the multiplied forces back to a still but dynamic unity. "The Life of Nature consists in the tendency of the Poles to re-unite, and to find themselves in the re-union; but this tendency to find is impossible without a repetition of the act of separation."⁷³ This complex metaphysical, as well as physical, "begetting" of the Universe Coleridge encapsulates poetically, as did the Kabbalists most thoroughly, in the image of the Union of the Male and Female: "the Male and Female of the World of Time, in these wooings and retirings and nuptial conciliations all other marriages *καὶ γένεσις* are celebrated inclusively." To be noted particularly is the configuration Coleridge chooses for the Prothesis-Thesis-Antithesis-Mesothesis-Syn-

⁷³CL: IV, "September, 1817" (#1077). See also CNB: III, #4418, 27.14; CL, January 12, 1818, January 20, 1820 to C. A. Tuik, p. 77, for a general view of Coleridge's cosmogony.

thesis paradigm⁷⁴ which strikingly resembles the Ain Soph-Kether-Binah-Hokhmah-Tifereth diagrams of Sephirothic circumincession, read as both circular and linear.

Coleridge was also well acquainted with the contractive-dilative dialectic of Boehme's theogony and cosmogony which has much in common with the Lurianic tsimtsum-shevirah-tikkun matrix. Concerning the first "Will-ful" contractive movement of the Godhead in Ungrund in Boehme--totally comparable with Isaac de Luria's tsimtsum--Coleridge reveals a full, understanding adaptation in his own terms. "Yet doubtless it was a striving in the Creature to make itself God by an imitation of that eternal Act, in which the ΤΟ ΘΕΙΟΝ comprehends all in himself, and by that contraction dilates by this procession of the Spirit, and thro' generating in himself the ΦΩΣ ΒΟΕΓΟΝ the ΠΕΡΙ ΧΩΡΟΥΣ fills up as it were all the inter-spaces...(infanda vel saltem ineffabilia fari annitor) of the intellectual forms constitutes the heavenly Plentitude."⁷⁵ We find a constant use of this contractive-dilative vocabulary in Coleridge's discussion of his cosmogonic theories.⁷⁶

In the analogy of the Imagination and "the eternal act of Creation in the infinite I AM," Coleridge expressed the mystery of "the noble Being within me, the Veiled Immortal": "...the Man separates from Nature only that Nature may be found again in a higher dignity in the Man. For as the Ideal is realized in Nature, so is the Real idealized in Man."⁷⁷ This mystery is also at the core of the Kabbalistic exegesis of "Let us make man

⁷⁴CL: VI, "September 16, 1825"; also CNB: III, #4418, 27.14, f 14.

⁷⁵CNB: III, #4359.

⁷⁶Ibid., #4420, #4418, 27.14; also CL: IV, "January 12, 1818," p. 808.

⁷⁷CNB: III, #4039; CL: IV, "September, 1817" (1077).

in our image, after our likeness." The author of Zohar writes that "after our likeness" denotes "partaking of six directions, compounded of all after the supernal pattern, with limbs arranged so as to suggest the esoteric Wisdom, altogether an exceptional creature." The "supernal pattern" is, of course, the Mosaic Torah: "It is through the Torah that man can make himself worth of that light. For whoever studies the Torah every day is earning a share in the future world, and is even accounted a builder of worlds, because through the Torah the world has been built and completed; so the Scripture says, 'The Lord founded the earth with Wisdom (i. e. the Torah), he established the heavens with Understanding' (Prov. iii: 19), and again, 'And I (the Torah) was a craftsman with him, and I was his delight everyday' (Ibid. viii: 30). Thus whoever studies the Torah completes the world and preserves it" (Bereshith, 47 a). Coleridge's definitions of the Primary and Secondary Imaginations, "the true inward Creatrix," parallel the Kabbalistic Creation credo in that Man, the pinnacle of Creation per ascensum, is not a "dim reflex"⁷⁸ of the Absolute Ideal but a partaker in the eternal "living act" of Creation--dissolving, diffusing, dissipating, idealizing, and unifying "in order to recreate." Man as Creator turns within himself by an act of the Will to conceive the pure a priori Idea of his Identity, a contemplation of the Divine Self-Consciousness.

Concerning the integral identity of Kabbalah and the suggested sources of and influences on its doctrine from other religions and philosophies, Coleridge regarded the pure Kabbalistic tradition in toto a Judaic expression of Faith: "an original, profound, and pious philosophy in its

⁷⁸CNB: III, #4046; CL: IV, "September, 1817" (#1077); The Friend I, p. 516.

fountain-head."⁷⁹ In his "docimastic" study of Kabbalah, he criticizes Rev. John Oxlee for his indiscriminate acceptance of the degenerate practical Kabbalah--"this patchwork of corrupt Platonism or Plotinism, with Chaldean, Persian, and Judaic fables and fancies"--for the "vital philosophy."⁸⁰

The tradition that Moses brought out of Egypt an esoteric Wisdom which formed the basis of Kabbalah, purified after Sinai, was never expressly credited by Coleridge though he does seem to imply that the second chapter of Genesis seems to reflect the style of a hieroglyphic language and literature.⁸¹ Likewise the theory that Kabbalah derives much from the Zoroastrianism of the Second Exile seems to have been ignored by Coleridge.

However, in regard to Pythagorean and Platonic influences, Coleridge perceives a similarity of methodology and philosophical orientation, particularly in the emphasis on the perception of Nature as Nous and as naturans, rather than naturata. In all three Coleridge seemed to find a reinforcement of his belief that metaphysical speculation actually entails an examination of the faculties of the mind. The numerology of the Kabbalists suggested to Coleridge the Pythagorean development of a mystical, numerological description of the harmonies of the Universe, as is well attested by the simple dyads and triads of the opening chapters of Sepher Yetsirah.⁸² Most of all Coleridge saw a marked parallel between certain doctrines of the "Lower Platonists," Plotinus and Proclus, and the Kabbalists. This is

⁷⁹Literary Remains, IV, "On Oxlee," pp. 317-18.

⁸⁰Biographia, I, 170.

⁸¹CNB: III, #4325, 19.74. Also in the "Idea of the Prometheus of Aeschylus," Coleridge describes the religion of Egypt at the time of the Captivity as essentially pantheistic.

⁸²Coburn, Philosophical Lectures, p. 115.

quite consistent with Coleridge's theory that "the nearest philosophy to Christianity is the Platonic."⁸³ But it was also Coleridge's aim to demonstrate how very distinct the Christian metaphysics of God was from the Platonic.⁸⁴ Coleridge probably noted a corresponding pantheistic basis in the Plotinian and Proclian schemes of intermediary creative forces "emanating" from God to the Universe with the Sephirothic system.⁸⁵ However, Coleridge also distinguished a "corrupt" neo-Platonic from a pure speculative form, suggesting the like distinction concerning the development of the Kabbalistic tradition: both Kabbalah and Neo-Platonism in their pure forms comparable to the metaphysics of orthodox Christianity. "Confining myself to the metaphysics and radical theology of the lower Platonists (not to the magical and cabalistical ceremonies and operations which they thought deducible from their philosophy), I dare affirm that their doctrines are strictly conformable with the true meaning of Plato, and harmonizable with the doctrines of the orthodox Christians/yes, even in the article of the eternity of the World, with which I would begin the Proof."⁸⁶ Whereas Philo Judaeus is often suggested as one of the major shapers of Kabbalistic doctrine, particularly Kabbalistic exegesis, Coleridge discusses him as an Alexandrian member of a "Cabalistico-Platonizing" Jewish sect. However, Coleridge represents the Kabbalistic doctrine as predating the writings of Philo and the author of the Wisdom of Solomon and describes

⁸³Coleridge, Anima Poetae, p. 259.

⁸⁴CNB: III, #4316, 18.294.

⁸⁵CNB: III, #3824; Philosophical Lectures, pp.299-300.

⁸⁶CNB: II, #2447, 17.21.

Philo Judaeus' cosmogony as quite different from that of traditional Kabbalah: "Philo attributes the creation of man to angels; and they infused the evil principle through their own imperfections."⁸⁷

Between Gnosticism and Kabbalah, Coleridge establishes no connection in his writings. Coleridge considered the Gnostics "Arians."⁸⁸ Deriving much of his idea of their doctrines from J. B. Priestley's Early Opinions, Coleridge details in the Lectures of 1795 the Gnostic "emanatory" genealogy of procreative Intelligences and ridicules the extension of this lineage to the Messiah: "I have been particular in my account of the gnostic sect, because their doctrine in its consequences produced all the Mysteries, Impostures, and Persecutions, that have disgraced the Christian Community."⁸⁹ Coleridge appears much more tolerant of Kabbalah, perhaps because it made no Christo-Messianic claims. However, Coleridge did connect Kabbalah indirectly to the ancient line of "mystery" religions from the Phoenician and Egyptian systems through the Cabeiric with a particular common emphasis on divine triads: Coleridge does not detail correspondences nor does he remark on any explicit interdependences.⁹⁰ Therefore, we must conclude from evidence already presented on its dating that Kabbalah in its pure expression as an oral, traditional, spiritual, esoteric Faith was regarded by Coleridge as a uniquely Judaic creation.⁹¹

⁸⁷Literary Remains, IV, "On Whitaker," p. 297.

⁸⁸Table Talk, "January 6, 1823."

⁸⁹"Six Lectures," p. 199. Priestley on Gnostics, Theological and Miscellaneous Works, Bk. 1, ch. iii, sect. 2.

⁹⁰Literary Remains, I, "Lecture XI, 1818," p. 186.

⁹¹Beer, op. cit., p. 312.

Concerning the Kabbalist's four-fold exegesis of Sacred Scripture embodied in the method of Pardes, Coleridge had some limited technical familiarity with it and a good deal of natural sympathy. As has been detailed in the preceding chapter, Coleridge was well-read in the methods of such contemporary "liberal" Biblical interpreters as Eichhorn, Rosenmuller, Hutchinson, Milman, and "the other Neologists of German Theology"⁹² who were impressed by, and in some part, influenced by the anagogical plumbings of Heilsgeschichte by the Kabbalists in an effort to unveil the "interior and spiritual" sense of the Bible. Coleridge had the highest respect for those devoted to the study of Scriptures: the interpretation of the Bible "has occupied, and will occupy all the highest powers of the noblest and best intellects even to the consummation of all things."⁹³ The efforts of "certain pseudophilosophic Jews in France and Germany" who riveted their interpretations on to the literal level and thus rejected the illogical and unscientific content Coleridge found blasphemous: "these semi-demi-philosophists crowing over the Book Jezirah...or R. Abraham Bar Dior in Sefer hakkabalah...or similar Relics of the ancient Hebrew Wisdom."⁹⁴ And the only true value of gnosis Coleridge found in "the science of detecting the mysteries of faith in the simplest texts of the Old Testament history to the contempt or neglect of the literal and contextual sense."⁹⁵

In Coleridge's protrait of Luther "brooding over some obscure text,"

⁹²The Friend I, pp. 502-03; also CL: IV, "January 16, 1818": CNB:III,# 4307, #4325.

⁹³"Six Lectures," p. 180.

⁹⁴CL: V, "January 4, 1820."

⁹⁵Literary Remains, III, "On Donne," p. 113.

he depicts the Reformer engaging in the "science" of extracting the "whole force" of the sacred text by using the techniques appropriate to the level of remez--gematria, notaricon, and temurah: "he counts the letters, he calls up the roots of each separate word, and questions them on the familiar Spirits of the Oracle."⁹⁶ In connection with the composition of his "Whole system for the Press," his Logosophia--in which discussions on the "Word" as the fountain of Ideas and the Deduction of his Dynamic Philosophy were projected--Coleridge may have intended a serious study of the instruments of remez; for he requests "some works on the numerical Cabbala, the Gematria (I think) they call it."⁹⁷ His readings in Sir Thomas Browne, and particularly, Jakob Boehme may also have led him to trace the involuted coils of "the mysticall method of Moses"⁹⁸ to evolve his own hieratic interpretation of Genesis as the "Hymn" of Moses which is primarily metaphysical rather than physical-chemical, perhaps better described as "scientific mythologizing."⁹⁹

Coleridge, however, was also aware of the abuse of these "allegorical" interpretative instruments by "practical" Kabbalism: "But the Cabala likewise possessed certain combinations of sounds, figures, and numbers, by which external nature was to be controlled and governed; and this, too, Reuchlin seriously intended for and practised; or at least sought for, as far as he could, the means of practising."¹⁰⁰ Incidentally, Coleridge

⁹⁶The Friend I, p. 141. See also Coleridge's interest in "etymology" as "suggestive analogy." Also Philosophical Lectures, vi, p. 201 and Colburn's note on CNB II: #3159, 12.74.

⁹⁷CL: VI, "October 29, 1833."

⁹⁸Literary Remains, II, "On Browne," S. 34. Also CL: IV, "August, 1818," f 16 and CNB: III, #4325, 19.74.

⁹⁹CL: V, "February 13, 1824."

¹⁰⁰Philosophical Lectures, p. 300. Also CNB: I, #100 A 22.2.

was also aware that Kabbalistic exegesis was not merely limited to the opening verses of Genesis but extended through the Book of Daniel.¹⁰¹ We can only conjecture without any written evidence that Coleridge was also aware of the voluminous work of the Kabbalists on the other Prophets and the Song of Songs.¹⁰²

Coleridge's approach to the "reading" of the books of the Old Testament is entirely consonant with that of the Kabbalist--I do not dare say "Kabbalistic" but rather "mystical" or "anagogical," characteristic of the level of sod. His reading is modified by the power of the Imagination and the appreciation of the Symbolical, far above the exercise of the Fancy and the entertainment of the Allegorical.¹⁰³ "In the Scripture therefore both Facts and Persons must of necessity have a two-fold significance, a past and a future, a temporary and a perpetual, a particular and a universal application."¹⁰⁴ Concerning the special character of "the Literature of Semitic Nations," particularly the Old Testament, Coleridge remarked "No where do we perceive any connection between sentence + sentence but that afforded by Imagination & Excitement--namely, the poetic connection. And such is the appropriate Language of Religion...."¹⁰⁵ The Kabbalist in his "meta-mythicizing" of Revelation, within strictly orthodox bounds, annihilates the literal to allow the mystical to blossom; he "de-temporizes"

¹⁰¹CL: IV, "January 10, 1818."

¹⁰²CL: III, "March, 1810" f 23 v.

¹⁰³Lay Sermons, "Stateman's Manual," p. 79, on "symbol."

¹⁰⁴Ibid., p. 30. See also Aids, p. 197 on Origen and p. 199 on Augustine. Also CL: VI, "June, 1827" (#1590).

¹⁰⁵Philosophical Lectures, p. 396.

the narrative or chronicle to expound a timeless revelation or embroider a patternless design; he destroys the apparent wholeness of the text to engender or "beget" a greater Whole without Parts. "That in its [Bible's] obvious sense and literal interpretation it declares the being and attributes of the Almighty Father, none but the fool in heart has ever dared gainsay. But it has been the music of gentle and pious minds in all ages, it is the poetry of all human nature, to read it likewise in a figurative sense, and to find therein correspondences and symbols of the spiritual world."¹⁰⁶ For this "sublime" exegesis Coleridge would "risk being called Swedenborgian, or Cabalistic."¹⁰⁷

On the relationship of Jewish mysticism and the development of Christian dogma, Coleridge was convinced of a remarkable affinity between Kabbalah and the teachings of the early Church. In fact, one might even infer that Coleridge saw the Kabbalistic tradition as the contact point for the mighty stream of orthodox Judaism and the philosophy of the Greeks, with Christianity as the result of a Hegelian trichotomy.

Throughout Coleridge's "comparative" contemplations on religions and philosophies, we encounter a number of boldface maxims, dichotomies, analogies, etc., describing the relationship of Judaism, Greek thought, Christianity, and Roman legalism. As did a number of later Victorians, Coleridge regarded the "Hebrew" and the "Hellenic" modes as the polar components of Man's essential nature: Isaiah representing the Sublime, the Imagination, the Will, the Godlike, and Plato the Beautiful, the

¹⁰⁶"Stateman's Manual," p. 70.

¹⁰⁷Beer, loc. cit.

Reason, and the Understanding.¹⁰⁸ At an historical point in time the "co-adunation" of the two primed the world for the birth of Christianity. "Till at length the two great components of our nature, in the unity of which all its excellency and all its hopes depend, namely that of the will in the one, as the higher and more especially godlike, and the reason in the other, as the compeer but yet second to that will, were to unite and to prepare the world for the reception of its Redeemer; which took place just at the time where the traditions of history and the oracles of the Jews had combined with the philosophy of the Grecians, and prepared the Jews themselves for understanding their own scriptures in a more spiritual light, and the Greeks to give to their speculations, that were but the shadows of thought before, a reality, in that which alone is properly real."¹⁰⁹

It was, moreover, Coleridge's particular concern to demonstrate the continuity of Judaism and Christianity: Christianity as the fruit of a sublime patriarchal tree. In the Lectures of 1795, he refers to the Jewish nation as a "safe receptacle of the precursive Evidence of Christianity" and Judaism as a "preparatory" religion.¹¹⁰ The organic evolution of Christianity depended upon the anterior development of Judaism, particularly the establishment of the stringent, proscriptive legality of the Torah. "Legality precedes Morality in every Individual, even as the Jewish Dispensation precedes the Christian in the Education of the world at large."¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸Philosophical Lectures, pp. 86 ff. Also Griggs, CL: VI, "July 25, 1832."

¹⁰⁹Philosophical Lectures, p. 112. See also Coburn, CNB: II, #2447, 17.2.

¹¹⁰"Six Lectures," pp. 118, 137; also "Stateman's Manual," p. 62 and Table Talk, "March 10, 1827."

¹¹¹CNB: III, #4003.

"This then I have clearly shown that the Mosaic Decalogue holds the same proportion to the Gospels that the Rosebud does to the full-blown Rose/it is consummate Wisdom in the matter, consummate prudence in the form."¹¹²

To Hyman Hurwitz, he writes in 1820, "You are not ignorant, with what Zeal I contend for the identity of the doctrines of the Old Testament and of our Gospel,"¹¹³ contending also in the Aids to Reflection: "...the being and providence of One Living God, holy, gracious, merciful, the Creator and Preserver of all things, and a Father of the righteous; the Moral Law in its utmost height, breadth and purity; a state of retribution after death; the resurrection of the dead; and a day of Judgment all these were known and received by the Jewish people, as established articles of the rational Faith, at or before the proclaiming of Christ by the Baptist."¹¹⁴

The doctrine of the Trinity, Coleridge also found intrinsically a part of the Jewish faith, as will be described at length. "And this I confess is among my chief reasons for according to the Cabala a much greater degree of antiquity than is commonly done. For I cannot reconcile it with common sense that the Jews, who are admitted to be the inventors of this doctrine, should have made a doctrine in every respect shadowing out the mysteries of Christianity, and those very mysteries which, after the first conversion, which after the Apostolic times, they made the stumbling block and the cause of the obstinate refusal to receive our Lord."¹¹⁵

In sum, the Kabbalistic tradition expressed the "ideal character"¹¹⁶

¹¹²Ibid., #3293, 25.19 #4.

¹¹³CL: V, "January 4, 1820."

¹¹⁴Aids, p. 146.

¹¹⁵Philosophical Lectures, pp. 299-300.

¹¹⁶"Stateman's Manual," p. 62.

of the Jewish religion which itself "symbolized" the "Beauty of Holiness." Its parallel development with the Judaism of the Mishnah and the Talmuds eventually overlapped with and extended itself into the Christian Era. The Kabbalah's "interior and spiritual" sense of the Old Testament naturally complemented the Christian belief in a covenant not "graven in stone" but in the "heart." "It seems to me therefore that the Cabala must have a traditioning philosophy among them, the likeness of which to Christianity will not be wonderful to any man who has studied the fragments of Heraclitus...."¹¹⁷ The Apocalypse of St. John and the Epistles of St. Paul Coleridge proposes as evidence of the intermeshing of the pure Kabbalistic tradition and Christianity. The teachings of St. Jerome and Origen are also implicitly a part of this evidence.¹¹⁸

Coleridge discriminated between the true conveyors of the Jewish mystical tradition into Christianity and those fanatical Jewish converts to Christianity who, like the overly enthusiastic Christian Kabbalists of the fifteenth century, attempted to derive detailedly exact correspondences between Kabbalah and the Gospels.¹¹⁹ "...With what favor, with what unmingled APPLAUSE the Cabalistic writings of REUCHLIN in defense of all that was visionary and magical were received by Popes, Cardinals, and Bishops...."¹²⁰ Rather, Coleridge saw the Kabbalistic tradition in its true lineage uninterrupted "from Ezekiel to Paul and John."¹²¹ Ironically

¹¹⁷Philosophical Lectures, p. 300.

¹¹⁸Literary Remains, IV, "On Whitaker," p. 300; Aids, p. 197, on the androgyny of Adam. Also, Coburn, CNB: III, #4325.

¹¹⁹"Stateman's Manual," "Appendix," pp. 58-59.

¹²⁰Philosophical Lectures, p. 317.

¹²¹Literary Remains, IV, "On Oxlee," p. 317.

it was Coleridge's combined interest in the teachings of St. Paul, St. John, and Spinoza that determined his intellectual and heartfelt movement from rationalization concerning the Identity of God to Faith. "For a very long time, indeed, I could not reconcile personality with infinity; and my head was with Spinoza, though my whole heart remained with Paul and John."¹²² As has already been noted in the "Appreciation" chapter, St. Paul and St. John were long recognized as the implementers of the translation of genuine Jewish mysticism into the Christian tradition.

Most likely it was Eichhorn who suggested to Coleridge possible correspondences between Kabbalah and the Apocalypse: "I am persuaded that new light might be thrown on the Apocalypse by a careful study of the Book Sohar, and of whatever else there may be of that kind."¹²³ Twice in Coleridge's writings he seriously recognizes a Kabbalistic significance in the opening chapter of John's Revelations. "The introduction (i., 4) is clearly Cabala:--the *ὁ ὢν, καὶ ὁ ἦν, ὁ ἐρχόμενος* = 3."¹²⁴ "Grace and peace to you from Him who is and who was and who is coming, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne." Coleridge also recognized that a Kabbalistic understanding of the Gospel of St. John would dispel the falseness of the "Socinian interpretation" and also resolve the "chronological difficulties that attend the interpretation of the Apocalypse."¹²⁵

Likewise in regard to the Epistles of Paul, Coleridge felt they were testimony to the early vital existence of a tradition that conditioned

¹²²Biographia, I, 134.

¹²³CNB: III; #3966. Coleridge contemplated a poem on the Apocalypse.

¹²⁴Literary Remains, IV, "On Whitaker," p. 301. Also Philosophical Lectures, pp. 299-300.

¹²⁵CL: IV, "January 10, 1818," CNB: III, #3966, 18.173.

and persuaded enlightened Jews to the acceptance of Christian beliefs. "The Cabbala. Grant that the present can be traced no higher than to the second century, yet the undoubted existence of the Apocalypse at an earlier period, combined with the writings of Paul & of Philo (not to speak of Nehemiah) prove the existence of a System fundamentally the same at the Christian Aera, and before the composition of the New Testament Books...."¹²⁶ The Epistles ascribed to St. Paul (yet whose authorship is still contested) Coleridge believed to "contain in the common doctrine of the spiritualized Judaism in the Cabala" and in turn proposed "that Christianity owes its present shape to the genius and rabbinical cabala of Paul."¹²⁷

"We may draw from this passage (I Thess. iv. 16, 17) the strongest support of the fact of the ascension of Christ, or at least of St. Paul's (and of course of the first generation of Christians' belief) of it. For had they not believed his ascent, whence could they have derived the universal expectation of his descent,--his bodily, personal descent? The only scruple is, that all these circumstances were part of the Jewish cabala or idea of the Messiah by the spiritualists before the Christian aera, and therefore taken for granted with respect to Jesus as soon as he was admitted to be the Messiah."¹²⁸ St. Paul's Messiah Coleridge identifies with the Adam Kadmon configuration of the Sephiroth of construction: "...the seven spirits = Sephiroth, constituting together the Adam Kadmon,

¹²⁶ Philosophical Lectures, "Note 21," p. 441. See also Literary Remains, III, "On Hacket," p. 177.

¹²⁷ Literary Remains, IV, "On Whitaker," p. 300; III, "On Hacket," p. 241.

¹²⁸ Literary Remains, III, "On Henry More," p. 163.

the second Adam of St. Paul, the incarnate one in the Messiah."¹²⁹ Behind Coleridge's comparative theologizing lurks the Christian Kabbalist's "evangelical" zeal. Throughout Coleridge's reminiscences, one remarks his interest in discussing the "philosophy" of the Jewish and Christian religions or reading chapters from the Gospels or Epistles to any "learned" Jew, ironically finding the Jew "saved" before his Gentile brethren: "When I read the 9th, 10th, and 11th chapters of the Epistle to the Romans to that fine old man Mr. _____, at Ramsgate, he shed tears. Any Jew of sensibility must be deeply impressed by them."¹³⁰

In his Biographia Literaria, Coleridge reviews his early opinions concerning the mystery of the Triune nature of the Godhead, demonstrating that his final de fide acceptance of the truth of the mystery was preceded by an arduous historical and philosophical survey of Man's expression of this belief, prior to his sojourn in Ratzeburg and Gottingen.¹³¹ "These principles I held, philosophically, while in respect of revealed religion I remained a zealous Unitarian. I considered the idea of the Trinity a fair scholastic inference from the being of God, as a creative intelligence; and that it was therefore entitled to the rank of an esoteric doctrine of natural religion. But seeing in the same no practical or moral bearing, I confined it to the schools of philosophy."¹³² Throughout Coleridge's writings, one is reminded of his eclectic, voluminous reading in

¹²⁹Literary Remains, IV, "On Whitaker," p. 301.

¹³⁰CL: VI, "August 14, 1833.

¹³¹CL: III, "Late April, 1814" (#922), p. 48 on the effort of the human mind to penetrate a mystery of Faith. Also CL: IV, "December 8, 1818."

¹³²Biographia, x, 136-137. See also CL: IV, "October 15, 1833" on the Trinity as "Idea."

classical philosophy and world religions, well substantiating the informedness of his reasoned deduction and exemplifying also his fervent desire to demonstrate how Christianity is not antagonistic to the aims and methods of philosophy.¹³³ Coleridge was intrigued by the triads of the Phoenician and Egyptian systems and connected these with the triads of the early "mystery" religions--Cabeiric, Eleusinian, and Bacchic.¹³⁴ Coleridge also regarded the triadic groupings of the Greek and Roman divinities as expressions of the powers of Man's mind and emotions,¹³⁵ raising them above popular superstition and coarse idolatry. The Platonic and neo-Platonic contemplation on the possible triune nature of God Coleridge considered as "a mysterious way of telling a plain Truth, namely that God is a living Spirit, infinitely powerful, wise and benevolent."¹³⁶ Also the tradition of the "tetradic" divine identity, which forms the quadri-polar design of Coleridge's configurations of the divinity, was traced by Coleridge to Pythagoras, "the proper founder of philosophy."¹³⁷ "...The Godhead he represented...by the famous triad three, while the world as a dim reflex of that was his God in the tetrameter or the four."¹³⁸ "I am clearly convinced,

¹³³Anima Poetae, p. 288.

¹³⁴"Lecture XI, 1818," p. 187. Also Philosophical Lectures, pp. 322-23.

¹³⁵"Lecture XI, 1818," p. 186.

¹³⁶"Six Lectures," pp. 208-09. Also CNB: II, #2445, 17.19: III, #3824. Also Literary Remains, II, "Notes on Browne," p. 405.

¹³⁷CNB: III, #4436 for Coleridge's tetradic Trinity and CL: VI, "August 12, 1829." Also Philosophical Lectures, p. 145.

¹³⁸Philosophical Lectures, p. 109. See also CL: VI, "September 2, 1833."

that the Scriptural and the only true idea of God will, in its development, be found to involve the idea of the Tri-unity. But I am likewise convinced that previously to the promulgation of the Gospel the doctrine had no claim on the faith of mankind; though it might have been a legitimate contemplation for a speculative philosopher, a theorem in metaphysics valid in the Schools."¹³⁹

In his comparison of Paracelsus and Psellus in trinities of theurgic deities, Coleridge contemplated "some connexion <between> the Phoenicians and the Jews" concerning the divinities interconnecting higher and lower "trinities."¹⁴⁰ More clearly, Coleridge had probably recognized this "connexion" in the Sephirothic system. "These mysteries, like all the others, were certainly in connection with either the Phoenician or Egyptian systems, perhaps with both. Hence the old Cabeiric powers were soon made to answer to the corresponding popular divinities; and the lower triad were called by the uninitiated, Ceres, Vulcan, or Pluto, and Proserpine, and the Cadmilos became Mercury. It is not without ground that I direct your attention, under these circumstances to the probable derivation of some portion of this most remarkable system from the patriarchal tradition, and to the connection of the Cabeiric with the Kabbala....No doubt they were propagated in Europe, and it is not improbable that Paracelsus received many of his opinions from such persons, and I think a connection may be traced between him and Jacob Boehme."¹⁴¹ Thus Coleridge follows the history of the "trinity" which in Christianity was refined and transformed into an "exoteric" dogma from its

¹³⁹Aids, pp. 129-30.

¹⁴⁰Philosophical Lectures, pp. 322-23.

¹⁴¹"Lecture XI, 1818," p. 187.

foundations in "natural religion." As has been already hypothesized, Kabbalah or "spiritualized" Judaism seems to provide for Coleridge the determinative link between early Church Fathers and "the tradition from the patriarch Noah."¹⁴² The triad or rather tetrad of superior Sephiroth Coleridge revered as one of the Kabbalistic doctrines "in every respect shadowing out the mysteries of Christianity."¹⁴³ "It is not, therefore, half a dozen passages respecting the first three proprietates in the Sephiroth, that will lead a wise man to expect the true doctrine of the Trinity in the Cabalistic scheme."¹⁴⁴ We may infer that, for Coleridge, it was Christianity that redeemed the doctrine from "Cabalo-Pantheism" and "Anthropomorphism," via the early Church teachings on the Messianic-Incarnation.¹⁴⁵

Kathleen Coburn, in her notations to notes written by Coleridge in January and February of 1805, underlines the probability that the notebook entry #2444 17.18 contains "his first recorded explicit statement of Trinitarianism as having supplanted his earlier Unitarianism." To claim that Coleridge was moved by his knowledge of the Sephirothic "trinity" to an acceptance of the Christian Trinity and to his own personal contemplation on this mystery of Faith would be to ignore Coleridge's extensive readings in the early Church Fathers and all of the aforementioned pagan philosophers; yet one cannot discount the importance of this influence primarily because

¹⁴²CL: IV, "December 8, 1818."

¹⁴³Philosophical Lectures, p. 299.

¹⁴⁴Literary Remains, IV, "On Oxlee," p. 318.

¹⁴⁵Philosophical Lectures, p. 299, and Griggs, CL: IV, "January 10, 1818." S. T. Coleridge, On the Constitution of the Church and State, ed. John Colmer (Princeton University Press, 1976), "Author's Appendix, Glossary to the Appended Letter," 169, Note. Also CNB: III, #3743, #3892, #4385. Also Literary Remains, IV, "Notes on Andrew Fuller."

many of the writers on the mystery of the Trinity with whom Coleridge was familiar affirmed Kabbalah's cogency, and secondarily because Coleridge was concerned with demonstrating the necessary and logical continuity of the Christian and Judaic traditions. Consistently throughout Coleridge's writings his fondness for translating Christian terms into Judaic is expressed: Jehovah for the first person of the Trinity: Shekhinah, Ben Elohim, and what might be a translation of Hokhmah ("Wisdom of God") for the $\lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\varsigma$;¹⁴⁶ Ruah hakodesch for the Sancta Sophia, the Holy Spirit.¹⁴⁷ Coleridge's use of the Hebrew character shin \aleph may also indicate his familiarity with its Trinitarian significance.¹⁴⁸ Particularly, for example, many of the Notebook entries surrounding this "first recorded explicit statement of Trinitarianism" contain allusions to and speculations on Judaic elements.¹⁴⁹ Items #2444. 17.18 and #2445. 17.19 indicate Coleridge's review of the Trinitarian-Unitarian controversy described in the preceding chapter of this dissertation; and item #2447. 17.21 refers to "the magical and cabalistical ceremonies and operations" of the lower Platonists which may indicate that the Judaic Kabbalah, particularly at the recording of this entry, may have been in Coleridge's contemplations--at the surface of the Lowesian wellspring. Coleridge also reveals in a letter of July 16, 1820 that via Swedenborg evidence of the Trinitarian dogma can be found in the first chapter of Genesis which is consistent with his belief in an "interior and

¹⁴⁶Philosophical Lectures, p. 299. Literary Remains, Iv, "On Whitaker," p. 298. "Ben Elohim" in Kabbalah expresses the Shekinah and is not ordinarily used to refer literally to "Son of God," though the translation is just. Philosophical Lectures, Note 27 to Lecture XIII.

¹⁴⁷CNB: II, #2674, 16.273.

¹⁴⁸CNB: III, #3203, 22.28--though here shin (\aleph) is used, perhaps, to indicate "Sara" perhaps, also a type of Shekhinah.

¹⁴⁹Beer, p. 312.

spiritual" sense of the Bible "for which he would risk being called Swedenborgian, or Cabalistic." Such an extraction of the Trinity from Genesis was, of course, foremost in Christian Kabbalists' exegetical and evangelical arguments.

While these considerations offer some limited insight into Coleridge's historical and philosophical perspective on the possible metamorphosis of "spiritualized" Judaism into early Christianity, I ask the reader to consider two points which I hope will demonstrate why Coleridge might have felt a particular affinity with and respect for pure Kabbalah, particularly concerning the dogma of the Trinity. Like the traditional Kabbalist, Coleridge was very conscious of the need to derive his contemplations from the Revelation of Sacred Scripture¹⁵⁰ and then humbly to submit his own "interior" sense of the reading. Coleridge's efforts to study the Scripture through every aid, like the Luther of The Friend, attempt to seek out the root meaning of the sacred text so as to reveal the meaning in all its pristine clarity and splendor which "tradition" may have inevitably clouded. Rabbi Hyman Hurwitz in Coleridge's later years was an invaluable guide, a Dantean Vergil, in Coleridge's metaphysically epistemological study of the opening verses of Genesis. Though self-consciously orthodox, Coleridge in his analogical contemplations on the mystery of the Trinity meta-mythicalizes quite untraditionally--we dare to say "Kabbalistically."¹⁵¹

Two typically Coleridgean themes crop up in his discussion of the Trinity which bear resemblances to two Kabbalistic tenets, both perhaps

¹⁵⁰CL: III, "Late April, 1814" (#922), pp. 480-81.

¹⁵¹Literary Remains, IV, "On Sherlock," p. 210, for Coleridge on expressing the Trinity "analogically"; but also "On Donne," p. 152, versus "analogous."

via Plato and certainly via Boehme. Coleridge throughout his life was concerned with demonstrating that Mind was distinct from Matter and alone Substantial.¹⁵² Thus "All Truths therefore are but deductions from, or rather parts of the History of Self-Consciousness...."; accordingly, "...all knowledge, I say, that enlightens and liberalizes, is a form and a means of self-knowledge."¹⁵³ The Kabbalistic superior triad plus One (Ain Soph) is cast foremost in terms of the power of the Mind and then assigned allegorical identities for poetic meditation. The dynamic circumincession of the superior Sephiroth is generated, in a sense, by the very ambivalence or equivocality of their Names. Kether-Hokhmah-Binah describe One power, yet their Names distinguish interior mystical relationships shadowed forth in the Mind of Man: "they are THE Reason itself in act."¹⁵⁴ Correlative to this theme is the belief that the "trinity" is expressed quite literally in Man and Man's conceptions of Nature. This is the major thesis of Boehme's discussions in The Aurora, and I need not repeat how essential to the Kabbalah of the Zohar and the Yetsirah is the belief that the Torah is the plan, the design, the mirror through which Man discovers that the upper heavens and the lower are One in pattern. Thus in Coleridge we find both themes interfused or commingled in his analogical vision of the Trinity: "the Idea of God involves that of a Tri-unity; and as that Unity or Indivisibility is the intensest, and the Archetype, yea, the very substance and element of all other Unity and Union, so is that Distinction the most manifest, and indestructible of all distinctions--and Being, Intellect,

¹⁵²CL: IV, "Late April, 1814" (#922), p. 483.

¹⁵³CNB: III, #4265; CL: VI, "October 22, 1826."

¹⁵⁴Philosophical Lectures, p. 115.

and Action, which in their absoluteness are the Father, the Word, and the Spirit will and must for ever be and remain the 'genera generalissima' of all knowlege."¹⁵⁵

Thus in Christ, the Messiah, the Revelation is made flesh, the promise made to Abraham in the Circumcision is realized. "I am fully persuaded, that all the Dogmas of the Trinity + Incarnation arose from Jesus asserting them of himself, as man in genere."¹⁵⁶ And for man individuale Coleridge concluded, "There exists in the human being, at least in man fully developed, no mean symbol of Tri-unity, in Religion, Reason, and the Will."¹⁵⁷ This is also Coleridge's "moral demonstration" of the ineluctability of Trinitarian belief: "The conscience is neither reason, religion, or will but an experience (sui generis) of the coincidence of the human will with reason and religion."¹⁵⁸

The nefandum sacrosanctum of the Jews, the Great Name of God of of Kabbalah, is Tetragrammaton: YHVH. As has already been mentioned, Coleridge's Trinity is in reality a Quaternity. "The adorable tetractys, or tetrad, is the formula of God; which, again, is reducible into and is, in reality the same with, the Trinity."¹⁵⁹ In the preceding comparison of the Ain Soph with Boehme's Ungrund and Coleridge's concept of the Prothesis "the Identity," I hopefully suggested that this unique element is

¹⁵⁵CL: II, "October 13, 1806." We must note Coleridge's repeated emphasis on "Unity" as the first consideration in speculations on the Trinity. This is also consistent with Judaism's overwhelming concern with monotheism." Coleridge even describes his burgeoning Trinitarianism as a "negative Unitarianism"--CL: II, "July 26, 1802.

¹⁵⁶CNB: I, #1710, 16.97.

¹⁵⁷"Stateman's Manual," p. 62.

¹⁵⁸Ibid., p. 66.

¹⁵⁹Table Talk, "April 29, 1832."

as much the One God as its usual trinity of counterparts--Jehovah, the *λογος*, and the Sancta Sophia. For Coleridge the "abysmal Ground of the Trinity" was indeed the "yod", the point of revealed light illuminating any further discussion of the Triune Personhood of the Divine Godhead.¹⁶⁰ Coleridge accorded such an importance to this "fourth" element, preceding any discussion of the orthodox Christian triad, that he attempted to define how essential it was to both the Mosaic and the Greek "metaphysics,"¹⁶¹ and, in so doing, again demonstrates his philosophical need to harmonize "Hebraism," "Hellenism," and Christianity.

Coleridge nowhere drew correspondences between the traditional Three Persons of the Christian Trinity and the ontological Sephiroth of Kabbalism; but a comparison of Coleridge's contemplations on the Persons of the Christian Trinity with the Kether-Hokhmah-Binah triad reveals some notable parallels. Also, despite Coleridge's "philosophical" terminology, it is all the more likely that he might have been influenced by a tradition that has as its foundation Sacred Scripture, the revealed Word of God. According to Boehme, the first movement of the Will out of Ungrund is the expression of the First Person of the Trinity; it is the affirmation, the self-distinction of the Godhead from the Byss. Coleridge's "Ipseity," the Father, the "Thesis,"¹⁶² is the Self-Consciousness without material manifestation. Kether, the "Crown," Macro Prosopus, is the "I

¹⁶⁰ See his criticism of Irving's Trinitarian hypothesis in On the Constitution..., Note 2, p. 141. Also CL: IV, "December 8, 1818" and VI, "April 6, 1832."

¹⁶¹ Literary Remains, II, "The Idea of the Prometheus of Aeschylus," pp. 342-43. Also CNB: III, #4418 f 12v-f 14.

¹⁶² Literary Remains, IV, "Formula Fidei de Sanctissima Trinitate," p. 1.

Am in that I am," Ehyeh. Beyond action yet containing the seed of all action, it is Being but from the Creature's perspective it is also Nothing. Kabbalah's Hokhmah is God knowing His knowing; in a sense, it is the thesis of the Thesis: it stands in opposition to Kether and yet resolves all oppositions. Coleridge's "Alterity," "Antithesis," is the "...Supreme Mind, Reason, Being, the Pleroma, the Infinite in the form of the Finite, the Unity in the form of the Distinctity..."¹⁶³ It is the anterior pole of the bi-polar line; it contains and opposes the Thesis; finitude and infinitude are resolved in tension. From this tension evolves all the plentitude of finity and infinity. As in Kabbalah, the compartmentalization of the tetractys constantly collapses into unity. Differentiating "Names" fail to remain individuated, sharing characteristics with each other and overrunning clear borders of definition. Coleridge's "Alterity" is identified with the λογος, ascribed by Christian Kabbalists to Hokhmah. Remarking on the age of the "commencing School of Cabalists," Coleridge notes "that Christians did in that age give to the Messiah the very same attributes that they gave to the Father, self-origination, and fontal Primacy alone excepted--that he was Deus alter et idem."¹⁶⁴ Hokhmah is also related to the manifestation of the point of light, actually originating in Kether; the Sepher Zohar signifies this point of light by the letter yod. According to Coleridge on the theosophy of John the Evangelist "...faith must be a light originating in the Logos, or the substantial reason, which is coeternal and one with the Holy Will, and which light

¹⁶³CL: VI, "April 6, 1832," p. 897.

¹⁶⁴CL: IV, "January 10, 1818."

is at the same time the life of men."¹⁶⁵

Hokhmah is to the "Alterity," equated with Reason (also ens realis-
simum), as Binah is to the "Synthesis," the Comm-unity, the sancta sophia,
and analogically to the "Understanding" in a special sense... "...Reason is
the knowledge of the laws of the Whole considered as One; and as such it
is contradistinguished from the Understanding, which concerns itself ex-
clusively with the quantities, qualities, and relations of particulars
in time and space."¹⁶⁶ Coleridge, most likely through Rabbi Hurwitz, was
well aware of the meaning of Binah. "It is also worthy of remark, that
the Hebrew word for the understanding, Bineh, comes from a root meaning
between or distinguishing."¹⁶⁷ This is perfectly in keeping with the
Zoharic differentiation of Binah from Hokhmah. Binah is the totality of
all individuation: she is the mother of unity in multitude and multitude
in unity, the Shekhinah. In Boehme, the Sancta Sophia is the Eternal Idea
seen in the Mirror of Wisdom: the result of the refracted ray of light
and the Father is drawn towards the Image in Love. Thus in the Unity of
Synthesis one is aware of the prior existence of disparate parts now coming
together to form a renewed unity in an ever-continuing attractive-annihila-
tive process of a dynamic "Perichoreisis or Inter[cir]culation."¹⁶⁸ Hokh-
mah may be to Binah as the Primary Imagination is to the Secondary at a
Divine level.

¹⁶⁵ Literary Remains, IV, "Essay on Faith," p. 438.

¹⁶⁶ "Stateman's Manual," p. 59.

¹⁶⁷ Table Talk, "March 13, 1827."

¹⁶⁸ CL: VI, "April 6, 1832."

While there is no evidence that Coleridge derived his Formula Fidei de Sanctissima Trinitate from elements of the Christian Kabbalistic tradition and then recast them in "respectable" philosophical terminology, one can, however see an overall coincidence of characteristics that can be attributed to Coleridge's familiarity with the Kabbalistic superior Sephiroth. However, there is no trace at all of the Kabbalistic mythopoesis of how the Sephiroth derive from each other and actually "intercirculate," which constitutes the most distinctively "sublime" nature of the Kabbalistic meditations--the allegorical, analogical, and anagogical interconnections and "meta-mythicizing." In Coleridge's analytical "definitions," we are deprived of the "spirit of the living creature." "In the Scriptures they are the living educts of the Imagination; of that reconciling and mediatory power, which incorporating the Reason in Images of the Senses, and organizing (as it were) the flux of the Senses by the permanence and self-circling energies of the Reason, gives birth to a system of symbols, harmonious in themselves, and consubstantial with the truths of which they are the conductors. These are the Wheels which Ezekiel beheld, when the hand of the Lord was upon him, and he saw the vision of God as he sate among the captives by the river of Chebar. Whithersoever the Spirit was to go, the Wheels went, and thither was their spirit to go:--for the spirit of the living creature was in the Wheels also."¹⁶⁹

Concerning the subject of "Shekhinah," the "virgin of Israel," Coleridge's conception and use of the term evidences three distinct traditions: the orthodox Judaic, the mystical Boehmean, and the Christian

¹⁶⁹"Stateman's Manual," pp. 28-29.

Kabbalistic. In the orthodox Judaic sense, Coleridge employs "Shekhinah" to mean the glorious "indwelling" or the light-filled "immanence" of Yahweh in Creation, the sustaining anima mundi: "There is a Light higher than all, even the Word that was in the beginning; the Light, of which Light itself is but the shechinah and cloudy tabernacle."¹⁷⁰ "As often when the Sun rises in sand-or-brass-colored Vapor, we see him only by the greater brightness of his Shekinah, not by any definite form."¹⁷¹ So also, though unnamed, Shekinah is the Zoharic expression of the Divinity: "The sun calls up the vapor--attenuates, lifts it--it becomes a cloud--and now it is the Veil of the Divinity--the Divinity transpiercing it at once hides and declares his presence...."¹⁷² Sara Coleridge in her note to Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit clarifies Coleridge's use of this term: "A spiritual power is present to material things by causing certain material results; it is thus we understand the presence of God in the Material Universe. The Divine Spirit maintains in life the whole frame of visible things, and is, in this sense, the Anima Mundi. Jehovah was said to be present in the burning bush, and in the Schechinah within the Holy of Holies."¹⁷³

In the Boehmean sense which preserves the traditional Kabbalistic female identity and which "psychologizes" Shekhinah as the Imaginative element in the theogony, Coleridge very early in his notebooks refers to

¹⁷⁰Confessions, p. 42.

¹⁷¹CNB: II, #2637, 18.189.

¹⁷²CL: III, "March 12, 1811."

¹⁷³Confessions, p. 100.

"God's Image, Sister of the Cherubim." He expressed great admiration for Boehme's conception of Sophia, equatable with Shekhinah: "Jacob Boehme's is far the nobler nay, even the more poetical conception--the proud Virgin and then the kindled Bride are exquisite."¹⁷⁴ Coleridge's adaptation of the term in his metaphysical contemplations seems to be strongly influenced by Boehme's conception of the Sophia as the manifestation of the Divine from Ungrund into Image, the primal turning to the "fontal mirror of the Idea."¹⁷⁵ "I fall asleep night after night watching that perpetual feeling, to which Imagination or the real affection of that organ or its appendages by that feeling beyond the other parts of the body (tho' no atom but seems to share in it) have given a place and seat of manifestation as shekhinah in the heart....A Consciousness within a Consciousness, yet mutually penetrated, each possessing itself and the other--distinct tho' indivisible!"¹⁷⁶ Coleridge's identification of the Imagination with the "true inward Creatrix,"¹⁷⁷ the "repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of Creation in the infinite I Am," is somewhat dependent in one instance in the use of Shekhinah. "A flash of lightning/struck terror into my Heart--yea--as if spiritual Things, Beings of Thought (Entia Rationis) could cloath themselves and make a space of light--the Shekhinah of the Conscience/--I seemed to see my actions in my mind seemed to have inclosed that light within its enlarged Circumference."¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁴CNB: III, Note on entry #3263.

¹⁷⁵On the Constitution...., p. 58.

¹⁷⁶CNB: II, #2999, 11.68.

¹⁷⁷CNB" III, #4046.

¹⁷⁸CNB: II, #2639, 18.191.

The Christian Kabbalistic misinterpretation of the term "Shekinah" extends the term to signify the Messiah as Christ, already discussed. Coleridge may well have been aware of the Kabbalistic readings of the Song of Songs as an Epithalamium for Shekhinah and the eternal Bridegroom and thus adds his own Christian Kabbalistic conjecture: "Is Solomon's Song a spiritual Allegory of Christ and his Church--or a mere Epithalamium?"¹⁷⁹ Coleridge's endeavor to demonstrate how closely the concepts of the Old Testament align with Christian dogma via Kabbalah in this instance destroys the identity of Shekhinah as the "daughter of Israel in Exile": "...but the Deity as manifested, as expanding in at least seven ways, they represented as the seven spirits or the seven Sephiroth. The last, which was to be the Messiah or the Shekinah, was to be the same as the second person of the triad, and to be in the Shekinah a concentration of all the seven spirits of the manifestation, a doctrine which must have been very early indeed in the Church, because we find a clear reference to it in the beginning of the Apocalypse."¹⁸⁰ Christ, as Shekhinah, is the pleroma of the Divine Creator, the consummation of the Old Covenant. "Jesus fulfilled the Law, which culminates in a pure religious morality in principles, affections, and acts; and this he consolidated and levelled into the ground-stead on which the new temple not made with hands, wherein Himself, even Christ the Lord, is the Shechinah, was to rise and be raised."¹⁸¹ Thus, Coleridge seems to be ignorant of the poetic rich-

¹⁷⁹ CNB: III, #3754, f 23v.

¹⁸⁰ Philosophical Lectures, p. 299.

¹⁸¹ Literary Remains, III, "On Jeremy Taylor," p. 211.

ness of the Kabbalistic contemplation of the Shekhinah "dressed in mourning," in the garment of the proscriptive Torah. Coleridge's misinformed identification of Shekhinah with the Messiah is actually a result of Christian interpreters' confusion of the traditional Kabbalistic identities of the superior Sephiroth. Traditionally Shekhinah is identified with the "third" Sephirah Binah-Aima; the Christian Kabbalists and Coleridge--instead of identifying Shekhinah with both "mother" Sephiroth, Binah and Malkuth--assign Shekhinah to the "male" Sephirah Hokhmah, the "second" superior Sephirah, to accommodate the "male" identity of the Logos or Christ.

"To return to the Question of Evil--woe to the man to whom it is an uninteresting Question." Needless to say, Coleridge never lost his appetite for "new spicy hot Gingerbread."¹⁸² The topic is considered in almost all of his major works and in a number of notebook citations and letters. Though Coleridge never formally commented on the Kabbalistic meditations on the Nature of Evil, we may draw inferences which will enable us to consider the parallels Coleridge draws between the Kabbalistic and Christian conceptions of the Messiah, the Holy One who consummates the process of "restoration," tikkun, the return to the Primal Unity of the Garden.

At the heart of his "Essay on Faith," Coleridge pronounces that "The will of God is the last ground and final aim of all our duties."¹⁸³ The "will" of the Divine for Coleridge is identical with His Self-Conscious knowledge, the perfect exercise of Man's highest faculty, Reason.

¹⁸²CNB: I, #1622, 71.379.

¹⁸³Literary Remains, IV, "Essay on Faith," p. 437.

For the Divine, to know is to beget.¹⁸⁴ Man's Will and Understanding, however, are limited in their bondage to the refractory Senses, condemned to the fragmentary dream of sublunary reality. In a Platonic sense, the limitation and disunity of the phenomenal world reflect Man's disorientation from the Ideal and Divine Unity.¹⁸⁵ Man's "conscience" is the consciousness of the subordination or insubordination, the harmony or discord, of the personal will of man to and with the representative Will of God.¹⁸⁶

However, it is Coleridge's arguments on the nature of the Original Sin and the Boehmean shadings of his conception of Evil that reflect the Kabbalistic teachings on Evil. As has been already discussed, the Kabbalistic tradition de Isaac de Luria represents Creation as the prismatic refraction of the pure light of the Eternal One into the Colors of the Spectral Universe: Creation as the necessary fragmentation of the Unity alone attributable to YHVH. Man, however, in his primal purity, possessed of pure Reason, perceived the Ideal Reality; but, after his Fall, Man encountered a universe of dialectical tensions, balanced by the Right and Left Hands of the Sephirothic Adam, constituting Judgment and Mercy. (The Sephirothic system is a post-lapsarian mythicizing of a divine process which can only be One.) Man's falling away from the center of the concentric Sephiroth affords him the choice of finding the true center once again or evolving a new "self" center, ever lost to self and world completion. Boehme in his reading of Genesis in The Aurora and The Three Principles sees Man as doomed to the "false" center of his Will and his

¹⁸⁴CNB: I, #1619, 21.377.

¹⁸⁵CL: I, "March 10, 1795."

¹⁸⁶Literary Remains, "Essay on Faith," p. 437. Also The Friend II, "Appendix A," p. 9.

regeneration through his subordination to the Divine Will and reunification with the Creation of that Will. In its bare mythical outlines, Kabbalah's teaching on the origin of Evil is not unique except that it professes to derive this dogma from a "living" revealed record rather than from mere human fancy or logic.

The reality of Original Sin was very immediate to Coleridge; it was not merely a theoretical article of faith but a living "symbol."¹⁸⁷ From his interpretation of Genesis, it is through the Fall that Man "was made naked of all his supernatural endowments."¹⁸⁸ The Evil that Man "generates" is not the result of the act of his first parents, Adam and Eve, nor is it a blasphemous miscarriage of Divine Omnipotence; rather, it is the product of his own limited vision of Good and Evil. Moreover, that Evil, too, is nothing more than the limited perception of only part of Divine Goodness. For as in Kabbalah, Evil for Coleridge necessarily partakes of the Eternal One's Being.¹⁸⁹ In tikkun, all comes to redemption, reunification. As in Boehme, Evil is represented by Coleridge as separation, discord, disharmony, number without order,¹⁹⁰ distinction, division: "Whatever seeks to separate itself from the divine principle, and proceeds from a false center in the agent's particular will is evil--a work of darkness and contradiction."¹⁹¹

In Kabbalah, Creation is the reflection of the Superior World; and

¹⁸⁷Aids, pp. 198-99, 224-26.

¹⁸⁸Ibid., 198-99.

¹⁸⁹CNB: II, #2744, 18.318. Also Aids, p. 207 and CL: I, "March 10, 1798."

¹⁹⁰CNB: I, #1619, 21.377; #1622, 21.379.

¹⁹¹Anima Poetae, p. 228.

Torah is the plan whereby Man reads the design of that superterrestrial world. Living in accord with the Torah is fulfillment of one's part in that plan: it is Man's only guide back to the true center in the One. "Every finite Being or only some that have the temptation to become intensely & wholly conscious of its distinctness, thence tempted to division--thence wretched/--some so gross by it as not even to acquire that sense of distinctness wholly swallowed up in stupid instinct of Selfishness, not even=self-love--to others Love the first step to re-union."¹⁹² It must be remembered that the Torah given at Mt. Sinai, however, is imperfect and proscriptive; and the determined Kabbalist must seek out its true meaning through faith, meditation, and wisdom not extracted from sense-knowledge. So also in Coleridge's desire to get at the "heart" of Holy Writ there is a striking affinity to Kabbalah's perception of Man's quest to reunification with the Eternal One, the Indescribable YHVH. "To the right understanding of the most awfully concerning declaration of Holy Writ there has been no greater obstacle than the want of insight into the nature of Life--what it is and what is is not. But in order to do this, the mind must have been raised to the contemplation of the Idea--the life celestial, to wit--or the distinctive essence and character of the Holy Spirit. Here Life is Love--communicative, outpouring love. Ergo, the terrestrial appetite....the natural life has two possible terminations--True Being and the falling back into the dark Will."¹⁹³

Thus in Kabbalah the advent of the Messiah signals the falling

¹⁹²CNB: II, #3154, 12.69.

¹⁹³Anima Poetae, "May 5, 1827," p. 305.

into "accord" of all Creation--Man and the Elements. "The doctrine of Original Sin concerns all men. But it concerns Christians in particular no otherwise than by its connexion with the doctrine of Redemption; and with the divinity and divine humanity of the Redeemer, as a corollary or necessary inference from both mysteries."¹⁹⁴ Coleridge was an avid student of the Messianic doctrine in Rabbinical Judaism and was determined to demonstrate the fulfillment of all the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament in Christ Jesus.¹⁹⁵

"You are not ignorant, with what Zeal I contend for the identity of the doctrines of the Old Testament and of our Gospel. Our church (would that I could say, our church men!) instructs us to believe in a coming of the Messiah, with a literal fulfillment of all the Messianic Prophecies, when the earthly Powers will be taken up into an identity with the Spiritual, and the Messiah appears in glory, as Conqueror and King of the World, having his throne on Mount Zion. And with this faith there is not one of the 13 Articles of your (Maimonidean) Creed, which a Christian is not bound to believe....Christianity in it's purity (understand me as speaking historically only) is the development and full growth of a Sect (I use the word in it's best and simplest sense) the germs of which existed in the Jewish Church at least 250 years before the birth of our Lord."¹⁹⁶ The "Sect" that Coleridge perhaps intended as the closest documented "missing

¹⁹⁴Aids, p. 225.

¹⁹⁵CL: IV, "January 16, 1818"; V, "January 6, 1823," "July 15, 1825"; Also Literary Remains, IV, "On the Book of Common Prayer," p. 14.

¹⁹⁶CL: V, "January 4, 1820," to Hyman Hurwitz, pp. 154-55. Also Literary Remains, III, "On Jeremy Taylor," p. 322, on the difficulty of the Jews to accept Jesus Christ as Messiah.

link" between Judaism and Christianity may very well have been the Kabbalists. "We may draw from this passage (I Thess. iv. 16, 17) the strongest support of the fact of the ascension of Christ, or at least of St. Paul's (and of course of the first generation of Christians') belief in it. For had they not believed his ascent, whence could they have derived the universal expectation of his descent, his bodily, personal descent? The only scruple is, that all these circumstances were part of the Jewish cabala or idea of the Messiah by the spiritualists before the Christian era, and therefore taken for granted with respect to Jesus as soon as he was admitted to be the Messiah."¹⁹⁷

The "spiritualized" conception of the Messiah as Christ Jesus and not the "historical" person most intrigues Coleridge; this perspective Coleridge shares with the Kabbalistic tradition in its identification of the Messiah with the abstract Sephiroth Hokhmah, Tifereth and finally in Malkuth (the Kingdom or Foundation)--the Sephirah closest to the Created Universe; this is not to say that Coleridge did not fervently believe that the Christ was "made flesh and dwelt amongst us." "It is not entirely necessary to salvation to know Christ according to the flesh; but we must think far otherwise of the eternal son of God, that is the eternal wisdom of God, which has manifested itself in all things; more especially in the human mind, and most of all in Christ Jesus."¹⁹⁸ Likewise in a note of April-June, 1810, Coleridge refers to the Shekhinah-like aspect of the Messiah Christ in a contemplation on the Eucharist: "the outward manifestation

¹⁹⁷Literary Remains, III, "On Henry More," p. 163.

¹⁹⁸Philosophical Lectures, xiii, "Note 27."

and life of Jesus the allegorical reality vouchsafed by God, and properly called revelation/it is manifested by the assumption of a double or [? clouted] Veil."¹⁹⁹ "But the Deity as manifested, as expanding <in at> least <seven> ways, they represented as the seven spirits or the seven Sephiroth. The last, which was to be the Messiah or the Shekinah a concentration of all the seven spirits of the manifestation, a doctrine which must have been very early indeed in the church because we find a clear reference to it in the beginning of the Apocalypse." The "clarity" of this reference may have been more evident to someone like Eichhorn who may likewise have suggested that Adam Kadmon, the perfect reconciliation of the dialectically antagonistic and mutually generating Sephiroth and thus of the elemental universe, constituted "the second Adam of St. Paul, the incarnate one in the Messiah."²⁰⁰ Moreover, it was most likely the striking parallel Coleridge noted between the Kabbalistic trinity and the Christian Trinity that convinced him that the Messiah of Kabbalah was identical "in spirit" with the Christ.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁹CNB: III, #3765, 17.163.

²⁰⁰Literary Remains, IV, "On Whitaker," p. 301

²⁰¹CL: IV, "January 10, 1818."

CHAPTER V

A "KABBALISTIC" READING OF THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

A number of twentieth-century studies, philosophical and critical, have attempted to illuminate shadowy Kabbalistic influences on a number of major Continental, British, and American literary figures; the general intent of this study is, therefore, not unique. In 1909, Harold Bayley noted Dante's use of notaricon in the Divina Commoedia.¹ Rufus M. Jones, after tracing the Kabbalistic influences in Boehme's work, reiterates the traditional remark that Sir Isaac Newton "ploughed with Boehme's heifer" with a Kabbalistic twist.² Likewise, Serge Hutin's study Les diciples anglais de Jakob Boehme aux xiiie et xviiiie siecles examined Boehme's "occult" influence on Blake, Coleridge, and Browning via William Law's work. Direct Kabbalistic influences on British poets were also early considered by B. Fehr in his 1920 study William Blake und die Kabbala; (1920). However, it is Denis Saurat's critical analyses Blake and Modern Thought, (1928)Literature and the Occult Tradition, (1930) and Milton et le materialisme chretien (1933) that have come to be regarded as the signal studies on the subject.

In Literature and the Occult Tradition, Saurat investigates Spenser, Milton, and Blake concentrating on the correspondences of the true Kabbalistic identity of Shekhinah with the poets' conceptions of "Sapience" or Wisdom,

¹A New Light on the Renaissance Displayed in Contemporary Emblems (London: J. M. Dent, 1909), p. 100.

²Spiritual Reformers, p. 181.

concluding that "each in his turn...borrows from these traditions. But they did not absorb the whole of the Cabala nor the whole of the hermetic doctrines. Each took from them only what was useful to him as nourishment.... For, in point of fact, they adopted only a fairly small number of occultist doctrines. From this small number they sometimes constructed their whole philosophies, and sometimes they amalgamated the doctrines more or less happily with their orthodoxies." Saurat posits four Zoharic themes but fails to trace them with much conclusiveness through the poets' work.³

With his article "The Diffusion of the Christian Interpretation of the Cabala in English Literature,"⁴ J. L. Blau initiated a new direction for such studies by attempting to locate the probable sources for the infiltration of Kabbalism into Christianity and English letters, using mostly derivative sources for his information. In this modern "systematic" vein but essentially basing his knowledge of Kabbalah on the conclusions of Franck, Henri Serouya in his La Kabbale, ses origines, sa psychologie mystique, sa métaphysique (1947) devotes a section to tracing Milton's access to Kabbala through Picus de Mirandula, Agrippa, Reuchlins, Voysin, Kircher, More, and Fludd, indicating also that Milton knew enough Aramaic to have read the Sepher ha-Zohar in the original.⁵ He concludes:

La Kabbale devient un des éléments constitués de l'évolution intellectuelle de l'Angleterre. Les relations inexplicables entre Blake et Milton s'éclairent à cette source commune; Blake lui-même devient moins inexplicable, si l'on rattache à la cabbale ses théories du

³Saurat, pp. 65-66, 75 ff.

⁴The Review of Religions, VI (1941-42), 146-69. See also The Christian Interpretation of the Cabala in the Renaissance (1944).

⁵Serouya, pp. 489 ff.

spectre et de l'émanations, ses idées sur la création et la constitution de l'homme; et cette influence se rationalise et s'étend à travers de xix^e siècle depuis Wordsworth jusqu'à Queen Mab et Prometheus Unbound de Shelley et jusqu'à la système incohérent mais si vaste de Walt Whitman. Il y a sans doute d'autres influences dans ces idées mais la Kabbala ne'en est pas moins un élément essentiel. C'est grâce à elle qui ce courant s'est élevé pour la première fois jusqu'à la grande littérature dans l'oeuvre de Milton.⁶

R. S. Z. Werblowsky draws closer to linking Milton and Henry More through the Conjectura Cabbalistica.⁷ The majority of these studies demonstrate, however, that the farther removed the literary correspondent is from the Renaissance efflorescence of Christian Kabbalism treatises the more difficult it is to prove Kabbalistic influences unless through an intermediary and highly individualistic source such as Boehme. Spenser and Milton fare best, and yet we know so little about their specific reading that the critic seems to engage in arguments based only on the probable. In the past, the attempts to draw correspondences between Kabbalah and the Romantic poets have been not merely specious but fanciful.

As in the instance of the recent study Kabbalah and Criticism (1975)-- which "metamythicizes" on Kabbalistic themes in terms of Nietzsche, Freud, and "the major American thinker, Peirce", Goffman, Tishby, and a number of other aestheticians and philosophers⁸--Harold Bloom resolves that Malcolm Lowry, Thomas Pynchon, Browning, Shelley, Merwin, Wilbur, Pater, Wordsworth, et alii., can be "read" according to his Kabbalistic critical matrix of "misprision." In one hundred and twenty-five pages,

⁶Ibid., p. 500.

⁷"Milton and the Conjectura Cabbalistica," Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute XVIII (1955), 90-113.

⁸Ibid., pp. 55, 81-85.

without index, bibliography, or notes, Bloom has stretched Kabbalah to generate a critical matrix that becomes valueless because of its "silly putty" plasticity. Yet one cannot deny that he is engaging in a "Kabbalistic" approach: a totally introverted, "fanatical" (in Coleridge's sense) vision of the literary universe.

While Samuel Taylor Coleridge does not significantly enter into Bloom's cabalistic considerations, there have been--however incomplete--some suggestive examinations of the Kabbalistic element in Coleridge's poems. The earliest and also the fullest study of Jewish mysticism and its influence on Coleridge's poetry was J. B. Beer's Coleridge the Visionary (1950). But the illumination of Coleridge's "cabbalistic lore" via Miranda and More's Conjectura Cabbalistica (!) is subordinated to Beer's anthropological fascination with demonstration Coleridge's interconnection of the Egyptian serpent mythology and "Celtic and Druidic lore."⁹ Beer comments on Coleridge's use of "Shechinah,"¹⁰ gives an accurate account of Shekinah and the Fall of Man, but passes by any detailed examination of its unique significance in Coleridge's work. The "cabbalistic lore" for Beer is but another element dropped into the melting-pot of the poetic Imagination. Nothing is said of the Sephirothic scheme. Both Arthur H. Nethercot and Maren-Sofei Røstvig nod to Kabbalistic elements that might be considered in an examination of the Christabel and The Rime of The Ancient Mariner. Nethercot is attracted to the savory legends of the Lilith via Rabbinical commentators, Purchas, and Michaelis¹¹ and even quotes

⁹Beer, pp. 58-75.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 59.

¹¹The Road to Tryermaine (New York: Russel and Russell, 1962), p. 24.

Purchas on the later Kabbalistic tales of the transmigration of souls, with which he is sure Coleridge was familiar.¹² Nethercot presents the "fables" as the genuine stuff of Kabbalah. Røstvig, on the other hand, finds the Hermetic and Kabbalistically tinged "cosmology of Fludd's Mosaicall Philosophy (1659)...a far better commentary on what happens in The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, than the more orthodox Neoplatonic sources."¹³ She endeavors to look at a larger pattern of significance that penetrates Kabbalah, Neoplatonism, and Hermeticism--"the idea of a conflict between sympathetic and antipathetic forces, the forces of light and the forces of darkness";¹⁴ but no detailed explication is given, and one fears that by Kabbalah Røstvig intends the alchemical and magical withered branch.

Indeed, the implementation of an isolated element from theoretical or practical Kabbalah as a critical focus in a poem is unthinkable because this approach both denies the integral nature of the tradition from which the element was taken as well as the organic wholeness of the poetic work in which the element is supposedly being examined. Likewise, the reduction of the Kabbalistic tradition, which becomes interchangeable with any Platonistic philosophy or mythology. The Kabbalistic tradition is both vast and intricate, demanding serious and circumspect attention.

James D. Boulger's article "Coleridge: the Marginalia, Myth-Making, and the Later Poetry"¹⁵ alone approaches the Kabbalistic element

¹²Ibid., p. 132.

¹³"'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' and The Cosmic System of Robert Fludd," Tennessee Studies in Literature, Xii (1967), p. 72.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 74.

¹⁵Studies in Romanticism, 11, (1968), 304-19.

in Coleridge's thought with critical forethought, basing his arguments on an exposition of probable sources for Coleridge's knowledge of Kabbalah from the Notebooks and comparing this knowledge with Coleridge's other philosophical and theological interests. Boulger attempts to demonstrate that Coleridge was familiar with Kabbalah during "the years of his greatest imaginative activity, 1795-1802,"¹⁶ and from the evidence of the marginalia to Edward Irving's Sermons hypothesizes that "Coleridge seems to be finding a poetic language for some of his thoughts on an epic subject in esoteric sources, but that the inadequacies of a poor science...and theological incertitude placed a double burden on his creative powers."¹⁷ Boulger goes no further than the presentation of a new source to be explored. On the significance of the Kabbalistic influence on Coleridge's poetry, Boulger only adumbrates:"...the fact that Coleridge read occult and Cabalistic literature early in his career is important for our purposes. It points out a permanent interest in mythology for poetry, and that Coleridge had hoped early in his career to write a long poem on the subject of original sin and the fall of man, and was looking about for poetic material."¹⁸

¹⁶Ibid., p. 310.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 316.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 311.

Coleridge prefaced the 1817 edition of The Rime of the Ancient Mariner with an excerpt from Thomas Burnet's Archaeologiae Philosophicae, already discussed in Chapter Two of this study. From the Burnet passage, Coleridge has excised the exempla or authorities which Burnet had cited as historical evidence contributing to his own speculations. Along with the philosophies of the "Ethical Theologians," the Neoplatonists, and the Gnostics, Burnet refers to the Kabbalists' doctrine of the "yetsiratic" world or mode of creation and the archangels Metatron and Sandalphon and their angelic cohorts, and remarks: "Sed ad quid valent haec omnia?" Both Burnet and Coleridge, as rational and orthodox critics examining these philosophies from the outside (exoterically), find them foolish and even dangerous conceits. But Burnet philosophically declines to place all his faith in the verifiable sciences and instead decides to pursue a modum servandum and admit "quae sciri non possunt" as part of the Wiseman's province of disquisition. And Coleridge, as James D. Boulger has suggested, found "a poetic language for some of his thoughts on a epic subject in esoteric sources" during the years of his greatest imaginative activity, when he was particularly impressed by the Boehmean and Kabbalistic theogonic vividness and concretion.

Following these premises, I will here offer a Kabbalistic reading of The Rime of the Ancient Mariner using the Kabbalistic divisions of creation, the "Four Worlds," with which Coleridge must have been familiar through even casual readings in secondary Kabbalah and appreciated as the basis of Burnet's allusion "Denique Cabalistsae, in suo mundo Jetzirathico...." The Rime because of its allusive greatness admits of a Kabbalistic

interpretation, among many others; however, it was certainly not intended as a Kabbalistic allegory.¹⁹ But despite the fact that the Burnet quotation only surfaced in the 1817 edition of The Rime, we cannot simply discount the possible significance of the Burnet work on the poem's conception. Therefore, this primary Kabbalistic reading will concern itself with a loose comparison of larger Kabbalistic themes and not a pointillistic scrutiny or comparison of the details of the poem with Kabbalistic doctrina.

The Four Worlds of the Kabbalistic tradition is only another exegetical trope to distinguish Hidden from Manifest God, Sephiroth from Creation, and Celestial from Terrestrial Man. The doctrine of the four worlds of atziluth (to make), beriah (to create), yetsirah (to form), and assiah (to finish) is expounded by many Kabbalists,²⁰ most notably in the Sepher Zohar's gloss on Isaiah xliii, 7 and Deuteronomy xxix, 29.²¹

The Holy One, blessed be He, has three words in which He is enshrouded. The first (Aziluth) is a supernal recondite one which is known only to Him who is concealed therein. The second one is linked with the first and is the one from which the Holy one, blessed be He, is known. The third (Yezirah) is a lower one in which is found separation, and in this abide the celestial angels, and the Holy One, blessed be He, is both in it and not in it (Shelah lecha, 159a).

Traditionally, the world of Atziluth consists of the One, undivided Divine Essence: God in His Hiddenness and in perfect union with Shekinah. Man experiences this world in terms of the Sephiroth Kether, Binah, and Hokhmah, irradiating the Ain Soph. The world of Beriah is

¹⁹Likewise, one might view the work of the Kabbalist as essentially "literary critical": systematically from peshat to sod (anagogy).

²⁰See the twelfth-century Masekut Aziluth.

²¹The Zohar, trans. Harry Sperling and Maurice Simon (London: Soncino Press, 1949). All following references to sections of The Zohar will be parenthesized immediately after the quotation.

that of the created Intelligences and the forms of Consciousness through which the Almighty manifests Himself via the Divine Utterances: in short, the realm from which the Sephiroth were carved and over which the great archangels have dominion. It is the realm of the first separation from the Godhead and is seen as the characteristic sphere of the Sephiroth Hesed, Geburah, and Tifereth. In the "mundo yetzirathico," noted by Burnet, all creatures undergo their first and subtle formation; it is situated beyond Time and Space, in the indefinite expansion and duration of the supra-terrestrial cosmos. Imperceptible to the senses, the world of Yetsirah serves as a dwelling place for souls before and after they pass through the earth and for the lower angels. From the world of Yet-sirah flow the four rivers of Eden. In this world of greater separation--the province of the Sephiroth Netzach, Hod, and Yesod--the archetypes of the visible and material cosmos were "formed." In this intermediary world, there also exist darkened inversions of the heavens, namely, the seven hells or abodes of the demons and the damned. The final world, at the other end of the spectrum traversing unity and hiddenness and separation and manifestation, the olam ha'assiah is that of the Sephirah Malkuth or the revealed universe. As is uniquely characteristic of all Kabbalah exegetics, the divine is mirrored in the human so that man's world of Malkuth mirrors the four worlds of divine creation and formation and exhibits a comparable retrograde progression from manifestation to hiddenness. Yet these worlds are not distinct and serial but interpenetrating, analogous to Einstein's simultaneous dimensions of Time and Space "inter-circular". The Rime, if Kabbalistically "read," quite naturally exemplifies

the simultaneity and continuity of Creation's cross-grains.

The olam ha'atziluth is of the Divine Oneness and Hiddenness (total isolation from the facere of Creation). The Divine self-consciousness precedes Intellection and Will and is most successfully described by the entity Ain Soph. "And if we perceive Him not under those manifestations, there is left neither attribute, nor similitude, nor form in Him; even as the sea, whose waters have neither form nor tangibility in themselves, but only when they are spread over a certain vessel which is the earth. On the basis of this fact we can calculate thus: the source of the sea is one..." (Bo,42b). In this stasis, YHVH is One with the Shekinah, the Celestial Bride; and All, Hidden and Manifest, is One in this Timeless, Spaceless state: the Kabbalist's ultimate contemplation on the anatomy of the Hidden God. Without this "still-point," actio and passio have no meaning. This unfathomable identity of God penetrates the "agony" (235) of the Mariner's experience:

O Wedding Guest! This soul hath been
 Alone on a wide wide sea:
 So lonely 'twas, that God himself
 Scarce seemed there to be (597-600).

This loneliness of the Mariner and his incapacity to discover both the secret of Creation and the approach to the Divine from his own sublunary "Ain Sophism"--to restore the balance of the upper and the lower heavens he has violated--is underscored by lines 232-35, the isolation of the Wedding Guest by "fate" (mazzal) at the opening and conclusion of the poem, the situation of the Mariner among his crewmates, and the

haunting image of the fiend-stalked voyager²² "that on a lonesome road/ Doth walk in fear and dread" (446-51). On such a solitary wayfarer, the Sepher Zohar comments in three places²³ according to the four senses of PRDS, particularly sod: "Hence a man should be careful not to go on the road alone, that is to say, he should diligently keep the precepts of the Law in order that he may not be deserted by the Shekinah, and so be forced to go alone without the accompaniment of the Shekinah. Hence before starting on a journey a man should first address his prayer to God in order that he may draw the Shekinah to himself, to be protected by it on the road and delivered from all harm" (Yayehi, 230b).

The Shekinah--the Indwelling of the Divine Presence, the Celestial Bride of Solomon's mystical epithalamion known also as the Song of the Sea by Kabbalists--is the keystone to a Kabbalistic interpretation of the song of the Ancient Mariner: "Heaven's Mother send us grace!" (178).²⁴ "It was the Matrona's rising to join the Most High King in hidden and supreme glory...this is an allusion to the sixty well-springs that feed the world and so are enjoined to come and bring with them from the treasury of life, by executing the commands of the Holy One, so as to benefit the world" (Vayaqhel, 198a). As depicted in the Zohar, her marriage (ziwwug) or unification with YHVH is the mainspring of all Creation's rejoicing.²⁵ The Shema is the great salutation of the Mystery of Faith at the moment of

²²Cf. Mishpatim, 106a

²³Cf. Vayishlah, 169a; Vayaqhel, 205a

²⁴See Raphael Patai, The Hebrew Goddess (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1967), for a full discussion of the continuity of the Ashtaroth/Matrona/Shekinah/Marian doctrine.

²⁵Cf. Prologue, 8a; Terumah, 169a; Emor, 95b.

this mystery-filled interpenetration of the Bride and Bridegroom: balance and unity are restored but only after the Sephiroth and lower worlds have been generated in all their separation. "At the time when Israel is proclaiming the unity with a perfect intention [kawwanah], a light comes forth from the hidden supernal world, which divides into seventy lights, and those seventy lights into the seventy luminous branches of the Tree of Life. Then the Tree and all the other trees of the Garden of Eden emit sweet odors and praise their Lord, for at that time the Matrona prepares Himself to enter under the shade of the canopy, and here to unite herself with her spouse; and all the supernal potencies unite in one longing and one will to be united in perfect union without any separation soever...She unites Herself below according to six other aspects, so that the oneness may be completed, both above and below..." (Terumah, 133a). This marriage in the upper heaven is paralleled in the lower worlds, particularly by husband and wife in the marital act on the Sabbath and by the Kabbalist's meditations on this mystery concealed in the Torah at the hour of midnight;²⁶ needless to say, the preservation of the sacredness of the sexual act by detailed restrictions and prescriptions is intended to ensure the blessings of the divine union and the assuagement of divine wrath.

The significance of the Wedding-Feast narrative frame deepens when regarded as the vital countersign and evocation of the restoration of the order of the universe. The urgency of the Wedding Guest's desire to join the bridal party despite the Mariner's hypnotic hold on him (11,31,37) in-

²⁶Cf. Vayaqhel, 204b; Prologue, 8a.

tensifies when considered in keeping with the Zohar's commentary on the forlorn plight of the bachelor, sharing much with Platonism's doctrine of transmigration:²⁷ "If he enters this world single, without offspring, not having previously desired the engendering of children, and even now leaving this world single, he departs even as a stone which is thrown from a sling, until it reaches the place which is called 'the mighty rock' into which he enters. AS soon as he is there, the breath of him who is the Single One (Samael), who had to be separated from his feminine counterpart (Lilith), and who walks after the manner of a serpent, breathes on him, and straightway he leaves that mighty rock and, wandering lonely forth, begins to roam the world until he shall find a 'redeemer' through whose agency he can return to the earth" (Mishpatim, 106a). Thus both the Wedding Guest and the Mariner (with a serpent-like hypnotic eye) voyage forth Cain-like (586-90) into a darker world, in spite of the Mariner's lesson (612-17), the mystical significance of which the Mariner is "unaware" (285-87), "O sweeter than the marriage-feast,..." (601-09).

As has been exaggerated by the practical and spurious cabala, the inversions of the holy mysteries of theogony and the union of YHVH and Shekinah surface as the omnipotent diabolical motive forces in the olam ha'assiah: Samael and Lilith. Lilith shares with the Matronit of true Kabbalah all the same traits but in a demonic, perverted way: queen, mother, and consort. Her one aim is to procreate with true divinity; but in her frustration, she haunts the marriage-bed and the moment of birth to upset the balance of the universe. As YHVH in his hiddenness has been

²⁷Cf. Vayigash, 297b-208a; Mishpatim, 99b; Vayikra, 6a, 7a.

described in terms of the limitless and "esemplastic" sea, so too are Samael and Lilith. "Samael...He is indeed great with the camps of the 'other side' and he steers all the ships of the sea in accusations with the evil breeze to sink them in the depths of the sea" (Balak, 197a). And of his consort, who is perhaps the most fascinating character of Genesis because of her "accidental" creation on the fifth day, the Zohar records: "Now in the depth of the great abyss there is a certain hot fiery female spirit named Lilith, who at first cohabited with man....When man arose, his female was affixed to his side, and the Holy Spirit in him spread to each side, thus perfecting itself. Afterwards God sawed the man in two and fashioned his female and brought her to him like a bride to the canopy. When Lilith saw this she fled, and she is still in the cities of the seacoast trying to snare mankind" (Vayikra, 19a). "...She still exists, having her abode among the waves of the great sea. She goes forth and makes sport with men and conceives from them through their lustful dreams. From that lust she becomes pregnant and brings forth further species in the world" (Ahare Moth 76b-77a).

"Life-in-Death" in the Rime (187-94) shares many common traits with Lilith (the mighty demon, the "wind," the "Desert Wife of Adam"-- 157-159) who at the moment of childbirth "gives the mother the sleep of death, takes her son and drinks his blood, sucks the marrow of the bones and eats his flesh" (204-205). Lilith's and Life-in Death's seductive ornaments are also similar: "her hair is long and red like the rose, her cheeks are white and red, and from her ears hang six ornaments.... She stands before him clothed in garments of flaming fire, inspiring

terror and making body and soul tremble."²⁸ Likewise, Life-in-Death is a creature of wind and fire (167--80); she "thicks man's blood with cold." Her physical appearance and her attitude are strikingly comparable: "Her lips were red, her locks were yellow as gold/Her skin was a white as leprosy" (190-92). "For from the side of gold there emerged the dross out of which spread in all directions all the forces of the left side. All these forces have the red colour of gold, and are under the influence of the sun. For when the sun reaches his full strength he generated gold in the earth; and the Chieftain ruling under the force of the sun has the appearance of a calf, and is described as 'the destruction that was at noonday'....The red side of the defiled spirits is the same as the Evil Serpent. On him there rides a male-female being, called eleh (these), so called for the reason that they appear everywhere in various guises" (P'Qude, 236b). The presence of a Lilith and a Samael-like pair casting for the Mariner's fate further underscores the desperate outcome of the Mariner's and the Wedding Guest's knowledge who have been "breathed" upon by the consorts of Chaos. "As soon as he is there, the breath of him who is the Single One (Samael), who had to be separated from his feminine counterpart (Lilith), and who walks after the manner of a serpent, breathes on him, and straightway he leaves that mighty rock, and wandering lonely forth, begins to roam the world until he shall find a 'redeemer'" (Mishpatim, 106a). "He'll shrieve my soul,/He'll wash away the Albatross's blood" (512-13). The Wedding-Feast narrative frame is further highlighted by the monstrous coupling of the demon consorts.

²⁸Patai, p. 222.

As shall be analyzed in relation to the olam ha'assiah, the blessing and prayer of the Mariner have a deep Kabbalistic significance. But it is the "still, small voice" of Jehovah that illumines and inspires the devotee to sing YHVH's praises.²⁹ The reciprocity between the divine world and the terrestrial world, so characteristic of Kabbalah down to the smallest letter of the alphabet, the Voice of God in Creation and the Voice of Man in prayer, has also its own diabolical inversion. As Lilith and Samael are the diabolical inversions of Shekinah and the Ancient One of Days, comparably the "still small voice" is inverted into the "wicked whisper" that prevents the Mariner from praying:

I looked to heaven, and tried to pray
But or ever a prayer had gusht,
A wicked whisper came, and made
My heart as dry as dust (244-47).

While the "still small voice" is often compared to Binah in cogitations on the theogonic expression of the higher Sephiroth, there is also a more elemental expression of the "still small voice" and its motive power in prayer. "'O Lord, thou art my God, I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name, for thou hast done wonderful things' (Isa. xxv, 1). 'This verse' he said, 'contains the mystery of faith. "Lord" is the supreme mystery, the beginning of the supernal Point, the recondite and unknowable, "My God" refers to the still small Voice which is the first subject of interrogation, and is also the supernal Priest... "For thou hast done wonderful things": this is the secondary light with which is invested the hidden primordial light, the supreme grade, the primordial Adam'" (Balak, 193b). This text

²⁹Cf. Vayigash, 209a; Zav, 30b; Vaethhanan, 261b.

from Isaiah is beautifully paraphrased by the Mariner's advice-blessing.

The "second" world, olam ha'beriah, is the plane of the Sephiroth, the creative utterances of YHVH; in Man's perspective from the olam ha' asiah, these Sephiroth are embodied in or attended by the great archangels.³⁰ The reference by Burnet to the two great archangels who stand at the termini of the spectrum of Creation--Metatron and Sandalphon--has been edited out by Coleridge, though Coleridge's gloss to lines 263-66 suggests the Kabbalistic identification of the Sephiroth with the pure and untouchable stars and their attendant "lords" or "archangels"³¹: "and everywhere the blue sky belongs to them, and is their appointed rest, and their native country and their own natural homes, which they enter unannounced, as lords that are certainly expected and yet there is a silent joy at their arrival." In some Kabbalistic exegesis, the "blue sky" is referred to as ye ri'ah (curtains), that is, the ten curtains of the Tabernacle emblematic of the ten Sephiroth. "He brought them together and harmonized them and He stretched them out like a curtain" (Terumah, 164b). The stars have been read by all ancient civilizations as the keys to the mysteries of the universe and Man's destiny in that universe; Kabbalah takes this interpretation of the Zodiac one step higher to consider Man's destiny in Heilsgeschichte, in anagogical salvation history.³² Even the profane Balak was able to read the Sephirothic mysteries through the stars: "He saw both through the windows of wisdom and with his physical eyes. The tails of the skirts of the stars are the windows of wisdom, and there is one window

³⁰Consult Dion Fortune's Mystical Qabalah (New York: Bantam, 1976) and Gareth Knight's A Practical Guide to Qabalistic Symbolism (London: Faber, 1960), *passim*.

³¹Cf. Jethro, 69a; Vayaqhel, 209b.

³²Cf. Noah, 72b-73a; Bo, 42a.

through which the very essence of wisdom can be seen. So Balak saw with his particular wisdom" (Balak, 184b). But the devout Kabbalist can discern the "essence of wisdom" without fear, unlike Balak: "I found also in the same book the rites and ceremonies pertaining to the worship of the stars, with the requisite formulas and the directions for concentrating the thought upon them, so as to draw them near the worshipper. The same principle applies to him who seeks to be attached to the sacred spirit on high" (Vayera, 99b). The regular and even joyous design³³ of the Sephiroth and the stars stands in vibrant contrast to the infernal, "curse" state of the ignorant Mariner.

The reference to "Demorum" by Burnet has also been eliminated from the prefatory quotation by Coleridge but perhaps later glossed and incorporated into the poem itself. "A Spirit had followed them, one of the invisible inhabitants of this planet, neither departed souls [131-34, 377-80, 410-29] , nor angels; concerning whom the learned Jew, Josephus, and the Platonic Constantinopolitan, Michael Psellus may be consulted. They are very numerous and there is no climate or element without one or more" (gloss to 131-34). Strictly speaking, these would be gross anthropomorphizations of the Sephiroth. But the olam ha'beriah is the sphere particularly of the Sephiroth Hesed and Geburah, Mercy and Severity;³⁴ and it is the concern of the Polar Spirit and "fellow demons" to "require

³³Cf. Vayishlah, 177a-b; Balak, 184b.

³⁴Hesed and Geburah also represent the upper waters (fluid) and the lower waters (fiery) respectively which unite in the great ziwwug of Matrona and King. See Vayehi, 244a. Kabbalah also dramatizes the angel or spirit of "the softer voice" as the angel of Severity--Vayehi, 232a and Vaethhanan, 262b. "The other was a softer voice,/As soft as honey-dew;/Quoth he, 'The man hath penance done,/And penance more will do'" (406-409).

vengeance" for the Mariner's misfortunate trespass and violation of "that silent sea" (106). The Sephirah that completes the "moral" triangle in the olam ha'beriah is Tipereth (Beauty); ironically, for the Christian Kabbalist, it is the point of Incarnation.³⁵ It is by the light of the Moon, the celestial emblem of Shekinah,³⁶ that the Mariner recognizes the Serpents' Beauty and blesses them and is released from "his horrible penance" (272-85).

It is the third dimension of creation that most concerns our "Kabbalistic" reading of elements and the theme of The Rime of the Ancient Mariner: the olam ha'yetsirah, the seven degrees of the "lower" Eden or earthly Paradise inhabited by the lesser angels and blessed souls. A "Kabbalistic" interpretation of the Rime, particularly of the "supernatural" element, obviates the necessity of drawing upon a "profane" theosophical tradition, e. g., the Neoplatonists, to understand the Judaeo-Christian significance of this element to the poem. The supernatural manifestations of the "seraph-band" and the blessed soul's flight are not an artificially superimposed mechanism, like the sylphs of Pope's The Rape of the Lock, but an organic part of the "intention" of the poem. The "diabolical crew" passages (330-44, 434-41) shall be excluded from this discussion because they are more indebted to the narrative traditions of Der Geisterseher, Gessner's Der erste Schiffer and Der Tod Abels, the Biblical story of Jonah (Jonah i. 5-13) and associated legends of Der Fliegende Hölländer.³⁷

According to Kabbalistic interpretations of the Holy Scripture, the

³⁵An Incarnation that occurs via the Sea.

³⁶Cf. Toldoth, 135b.

³⁷See Lowes, The Road to Xanadu, pp. 233-35, 512-15.

names and grades of the soul of man are three: nefesh (vital or animal soul), ruah (spirit), and neshamah (innermost or supersoul).³⁸ The three are comprehended one within the other, but each has its separate abode after death. Nefesh, the lowest grade, remains for one year with the corpse of an unjust man--hovering about in this world and learning the meaning of suffering and praying for evil to be averted from men. Without its counterparts--ruah and neshamah--it can reanimate the physical body but only as a will-less, blind force: this is the soul that brings the spectre crew to life in the aforementioned narrative segments:

They groaned, they stirred, they all uprose,
Nor spake, nor moved their eyes...
...All fixed on me their stony eyes,
That in the Moon did glitter.

The neshamah, the highest grade ascends to be joined with the Throne,³⁹ if Man has achieved this highest state of soul through a just life and study of the Torah; if he has not put on the Torah, he is doomed to a future life in a lower state of nefesh (metempsychosis), perhaps even as a watersnake. The ascent of the neshamah to judgment, represented by lines 220-23 in the Rime, is a great theme in the meditations of the Zoharic writer(s).⁴⁰ This ascent is also depicted in terms of a dance, a playful flitting about, an ecstatic approach to and retreat from each other beneath a firmament "like the colour of the terrible ice" (Vayaqhel, 211a), and the movements of a boatman "...without oars who is tossed up and down on the sea and makes no progress" (Vayehi, 245a).

³⁸Cf. Vayigash, 205b-206b.

³⁹Cf. Vayaqhel, 195b.

⁴⁰Cf. Haye Sarah, 130a-130b; Miqez, 197a-b; Terumah, 136a.

In lines 347-66, the "ghastly crew" who "raised their limbs like lifeless tools" have been relieved of their suffering momentarily by a "blessed troop of angelic spirits." These "angelic spirits," however, are not the traditional guardian angels or "tutelary" spirits but actually inhabit the bodies of the "many men, so beautiful." These spirits may be associated with the middle-grade of soul which most men achieve: ruah. At the moment of death, the ruah betakes itself into the earthly Garden of Eden. There, this spirit, desiring to enjoy the pleasures of the magnificent Garden, vests itself in a garment, as it were, of a likeness, a semblance of the body in which it had its abode in the world; this body is a body of light.⁴¹ Coleridge in his gloss is particular to note that these are "angelic spirits," but one should note that the angels and the souls of men commingle in the mundo yetzirathico in the lower Eden, sharing in the vision of the Shekinah: "We have learnt that there are three walls to the Garden of Eden, and between each pair many souls and spirits walk about and enjoy the perfumes from within, though they are not permitted to enter. On certain days of the year...those spirits assemble in a certain place on the walls of the garden, where they look like chirping birds every morning. This chirping is praise given to the Almighty and prayer for the life of human beings, because in those days Israel are all busy with performing the commandments and precepts of the Lord of the universe" (Balak, 196b). Coleridge's choice of images to depict the sweetness of the song--"little birds," "the skylark," and "angel's song"--are well represented in the Kabbalistic depictions of the universal aubade to the

⁴¹ Cf. Terumah, 127b.

Creator and Shekinah.⁴² Even the direction of the flight of the sound of the paeon in the Rime--

Around, around, flew each sweet sound,
Then darted to the Sun;
Slowly the sounds came back again,
Now mixed, now one by one (354-57).

--has a correspondent Kabbalistic parallel: "...until daybreak, when all the stars and constellations, and all the superior angels who rule over the day, break forth in song and praise to their Master, this being alluded to in the words of the Scripture: 'When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy' (Job xxxcviii. 7). Then when the sun appears in full daylight, Israel takes up the song below in unison with the sun above....For the sun, in commencing his course, breaks forth into sweet melody" (Vayaqhel, 196a).

And why this great paeon of Joy in the Universe? Simply to dispel the terrors of the night and the nightmare Life-in-Death experienced by the Ancient Mariner? In Kabbalah, the great song of joy is the Song of Solomon; it is the hymn of all four worlds experiencing the first flow of blessing resulting from the ziwwug of Shekinah and King. "Then the world was firmly established, and all the supernal casements were opened to pour forth light, and all the worlds experienced such joy as had never before been known to them, and celestial and terrestrial beings alike broke forth in song. And the song which they sang is the Song of Songs" (Terumah, 143a). The song of the spectre-crew/angelic troop follows the blessing of the watersnakes by the Mariner, his hymn of praise of the beauty of the least of the universe. It is Man's blessing that, as it

⁴²Cf. Vayesheb, 198a; Vayishlah, 127b; Vayaqhel, 213a; Vayikra, 22b.

were, primes the watersheds or fountains of blessing from above which the angelic cohorts then return to Man. "And when on earth we living terrestrial creatures raise up our hearts in song, then those supernal beings gain an accession of knowledge, wisdom, and understanding the supernal Sephiroth of olam ha'atziluth, so that they are enabled to perceive matters which even the Lord never before comprehended" (Shemoth, 18b).⁴³

Metatron, named by Burnet in the segment from Archaeologiae Philosophicae, is the angel of the Resurrection: "this servant was destined to bring to life again the dwellers in the dust, and to be made the messenger of the spirit from on high to restore the spirits and souls to their places to the bodies that were decomposed underneath the dust" (Vayesheb, 181b). The resurrection of the body, which Kabbalah teaches, is the return of Man and all creatures of the universe to the Divine Oneness; the body after having been purified in the "river of fire" ascends to the Divine Throne in its pure state--a body of fiery light.⁴⁴ The soul of Man, throughout his earthly sojourn, is accompanied by a companion soul or spirit which had come into existence at the same moment as the soul: "This is an allusion to the holy and imperishable covenant, to the perennially rushing stream, the waters of which continually swell and produce new swarms of souls for that 'living' (hayyah). Along with the souls as they arise there appear many winged beings who fly about all over the world, and whenever a soul descends into this world the winged being that issued together with it from that time accompanies it" (Prologue, 12b).⁴⁵

⁴³Cf. Vayikra, 8b.

⁴⁴Cf. Vayaqhel, 211b; Emor, 88b.

⁴⁵Vayigash, 209a.

In lines 488-97, the Ancient Mariner sees a silent "seraph-man" on each corpse of the dead crew. The gloss to the line is somewhat ambiguous as to the identities of the "seraph-band": either the tutelary spirit of each man's soul or the fiery expression of the ruah returned to each dead body. However, the important details are the fiery light of the bodies and the dumb "silence" that "sank like music on my heart" (498-99). The Mariner remarks with joy that the "seraph-band" was a "heavenly sight" as they signal for assistance from the shore in the Mariner's behalf; or so he reads the vision. Kabbalah explains that the body, having been purged of its evil taint or earthly dross, assumes a new and luminous body, a body that was transfigured by the heavenly vision on Mount Sinai⁴⁶ during the revelation to the Chosen People of the esoteric wisdom of the Universe: literally obliterated upon the worship of the Golden Calf and replaced by the prescriptive Decalogue. "At that hour all the mysteries of the Torah, all the hidden things of heaven and earth, were unfolded before them and revealed to their eyes, for they saw eye to eye the splendour of the glory of their Lord...For on this day all the earthly dross was removed from them and purged away, and their bodies became as lucent as the angels above when they are clothed in radiant garments for the accomplishment of their Master's errands: in which garments they penetrate fire without fear" (Jethro, 93b).

The Mariner alone has not shared in the transfiguration by Death. He is, however, from all indications in the poem neither morally inferior nor superior to his crewmates; he has been destined to accomplish his particular fate (mazzal) in life and not in Death (197). And though he has

⁴⁶Cf. Shelah Lecha, 162b.

stumbled on the mystery of the Universe in the blessing of the watersnakes, he has not consciously partaken of the "hidden things of heaven and earth." The luminous "seraph-band" or the ruah of the dead men, silent witness to the dumbfounding mystery of the voyage, leave him to journey on to re-discover the Kabbalistic significance of the simple rhyme he quotes to "the man that must hear me" who in turn must "pas, like night, from land to land," benighted by the conundrum of the simplistic commandment, ignorant of the depth of its mystery (sod).

One other element that repeatedly enters the journey of the Mariner with a yetsiratic dynamism is the "wind," an ambiguously natural phenomenon in the poem. At first, as the Storm-Blast (41-44), the wind is a powerful terrestrial force; but in segments following the blessing of the watersnakes, it becomes an obviously super-terrestrial force (309-320, 452-453). The Mariner characterizes this force as a "wind" but repeatedly remarks that it is no ordinary wind; for though this pentecostal-like, sonorous and fire-accompanied wind shakes the ship's sails and seems to move the ship, it is no physical wind (327, 336, 374, 453). In fact, the "wind," a mystical force, acts in concert with the Polar Spirits and angelic crew to guide the Mariner on his destiny-filled course.

This wind might be identified with the unseen angelic cohorts of the olam ha'yetsirah; Kabbalah reveals that each natural cause is essentially the reflection of a supernatural act, under the care of a creature of the yetsiratic world. "Facile credo, plures esse Natures invisibiles quam visibiles in rerum universitate: pluresque Angelorum ordines in caelo, quam sunt pisces in mari...." "Observe that whatever is engendered on earth grown through the stimulus of a celestial Chieftain who has

charge over it, and that all on earth is shaped after a celestial pattern" (Waera, 30b). These angelic but "elementally" disguised Chieftains (N. B. the appropriateness of the "warlike" Storm-Blast) operate as quite real presences in the natural world of the Mariner: "Observe the perfect balancing of the upper and lower worlds... 'who makest thy angels into winds' (Ps. civ. 4). For the angels in descending on earth put on themselves earthly garments, as otherwise they could not stay in this world, nor could the world endure them... how much more so it must be with the Torah" (Beha' Alotheekha, 152a). The Mariner is one of those "senseless people" who still only see the garments and not the body (gufe Torah) beneath the "hundred fire-flags" and the "wan stars" and the "roaring wind" (314, 317, 309). The character of the metaphor of the Storm-Blast "with his o'er-taking wings" (41-44) suggests that from the very start of the Mariner's Jonah-like voyage a spirit of the yetsiratic world drives the Mariner to restore the theogonic "balance" of the lower and upper heavens he is destined to disrupt. "The Flame of the Sword which turned Every Way: this refers to those beings who are ever in readiness to chastise the world, and who take all manner of shapes, being sometimes male, sometimes female, sometimes flaming fire and sometimes invisible winds.... In truth, a man by his actions is always drawing to himself some emissary from the other world, good or evil according to the path which he treads" (Bere-shith, 53b).

Exoteric religion goes no farther up the tree than the Sephirah Tiphereth. It has no understanding of the mysteries of creation as represented by the symbolism of Kether, Hokhmah, and Binah or of the modes of

operation of the dark and bright sides of the Sephirothic Tree. The world of manifestation, the olam ha'assiah, the province of Malkuth and the mysteries of the completed interaction of the upper and lower heavens in the incarnated Messiah,⁴⁷ is the impenetrable shell containing the remez, derash, and sod of the Torah. At once, it is the simplest and the most complex of the worlds through which esotericism must cut to extract the core of theogonic expression. The olam ha'assiah reflects all that passes in the olam ha'atizluth:⁴⁸ the body of the Supernal Adam and that of the sublunary adam are One with the Illimitable.⁴⁹ "But when a man does not walk in the ways of the Torah, that divine image is altered and the beasts of the field and the birds of the sky obtain power over him; because the divine image in him, the very form which makes him a man, is changed" (Vay-esheb, 191a). All the acts of adam in this mundus factionis et actionis prescribe the dominance of either the Mercy or the Justice halves of the Sephirothic Tree:⁵⁰ particularly, the acts of prayer and sacrifice,⁵¹ the study and the meditation of the Torah,⁵² and the sanctified sexual union of husband and wife.⁵³

This is the meaning of what we have learnt, that any activity below stimulates a corresponding activity above. If the activity below is one of holiness, it stimulates holiness above to rest upon the doer and sanctify him. And if the man defiles himself

⁴⁷Cf. Vaethhanan, 260b.

⁴⁸Cf. Haye Sarah, 129a.

⁴⁹Cf. Vayeze, 164a.

⁵⁰Cf. Bemidbar, 119a.

⁵¹Cf. Bereshith, 18b.

⁵²Cf. Mishpatim, 124a; Vayesheb, 189b-190a.

⁵³Cf. Vayaqhel, 204b-205a; Vayesheb, 181a-b.

below, a spirit of defilement is aroused above and comes and rests upon him, defiling him further. For there is no good or evil, holiness or defilement, which has not its root and source above. And just as action below stimulates action above, so words below stimulate words above--that is to say, decision couched in words. The word above is called 'the word of the Lord'; for so we have learnt, that the word from below ascends and cleaves the firmaments until it reaches the place where it sets in motion whether good or evil, according to its character (Zav, 31b).⁵⁴

Quite simply the one who prays with kawwanah (great and sincere mystical intensity) perfectly unifies all the Universe and the letters of the Great Name of God.⁵⁵ He causes the majesty of the Almighty (mazzal, the allotment of fortune) to ascend to the place from which the waters come forth, and from the depths of the well they flow. Thereafter the waters flow so that they descend from above to below, from the source of the waters, watering each and every divine grade to the lowermost; hence from above to below there comes a free gift for all. The Mariner, in gratuitously killing (82) the ambiguous Albatross, "received with great joy and hospitality" by the other mariners (gloss to 65-67), has disrupted the unity and balance of the spheres and has reversed the flow of beneficence to the crew. (One might note here, though such details will be glossed in the following "scherzo" Kabbalistic summary of a reading of the Rime, that the movement of the Sun from right to left [83-86] may be read as the new dominance of the Right Side of the Sephirothic Tree, that of Mercy Hesed).

The damning drought and silence that plague the Mariner following his action suffocate his power to pray (109-10, 135-38, 244-45, 441) and mirror the incapacity of his prayer which lacks the true kawwanah (285,

⁵⁴Cf. Emor, 92a-b.

⁵⁵Cf. Terumah, 160b; Jethro, 167a-b; Vayaqhel, 215b.

287) to deliver him forever from the "curse" of his act (438-41, 582-85). His blessing of the watersnakes is as gratuitous an action as his slaughter of the bird, but the blessing releases the wellspring of blessing on himself: rain and sleep. "One is to give the impulse from below, since if there is no impulse from below there is no stirring above;...When the soul ascends, the desire of the female is stirred towards the male, and then waters flow from below upwards, and the cistern becomes a well of flowing water, and then there is union and foundation and desire and friendship and harmony, since through the soul of the righteous that place has been completed, and the supernal love and affection has been stirred to form a union" (Vayehi, 235a).⁵⁶

However, as has been already emphasized, the Mariner's total awareness of the "upper world" significance of his prayer is lacking (285). Thus, the "spell" continues its hold on him and the "Polar Spirit" pursues him with a vengeance; and throughout his Cain-like existence (Gen. iv. 12-14), the Mariner is forced to repeat his "rime" with its proverb until he conceives of its mystical significance. "Because of these things the worshipper must concentrate his whole mind upon these thirteen attributes, and be careful not to disturb their sacred unity by conversing between the lines of the hymn. Anyone who should so disturb their sacred unity by secular talk causes a flame to emerge from under the wings of the Cherubim, which cries out with a mighty voice: 'Here is a man who has cut short the praise of the Holy One's majesty. Let him be himself cut short, so that he not behold the glorious majesty of the Holy King' (Terumah, 132a).⁵⁷

⁵⁶On rain, see also Bereshith, 35a; Vayehi, 244a; Terumah, 145b.

⁵⁷Cf. Vayishlah, 285b; Vayaqhel, 213a-b.

The pertinence of the "saw" that the Ancient Mariner offers as advice to the Wedding Guest (and which has confounded many readers with its seeming "triteness") is magnified if scrutinized from a Kabbalistic perspective on the unity of the olam ha'assiah and the Ain Soph.

He prayeth well, who loveth best
Both man and bird and beast.
He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all (612-17).

In the Sepher Zohar, there is a parallel passage which beautifully paraphrases the "folk" theology of the Mariner's proverb. The Kabbalistic passage emphasizes the unity of the olam ha'assiah with the other worlds through the love-union of the Almighty and his Queen-Shekinah. Man in his total--body and soul--contemplation of this mystery secures the overflow of blessing from the Divine Love for all Creation. The Mariner, however, has only penetrated the outer shells containing this mystical revelation--the peshat, remez, and derash of the pomegranate--and has not found release in the sod and total unity with his dimension of existence.⁵⁸ The Wedding-Guest departs "wiser" from having witnessed to the Mariner's dimmed epiphany but bereft of the joy of the wedding feast. "It behoves, then, a man to concentrate his thoughts and to focus his mind on these great effects and on this ordering of the prayer. His mouth, his heart, his thought must all work in unison. The Most High King and Matrona being then in close and joyful embrace, whosoever has a petition to offer let him do so now, as it is an opportune moment....Withal it should be his intention that the denizens of this world also should be blessed. The worshipper has next to

⁵⁸Cf. Vayigash, 205b.

fall on his face in token of surrender of his soul among all the souls and spirits which the Shekinah at that moment collects in the 'bundle of life'" (Vayaqhel, 200b).

In the Sifra di Seni'uta,⁵⁹ the most readily available portion of the Sepher Zohar in the age of Coleridge, the major theme in the narrator's meditations on selected verses from the first six chapters of Genesis is the prayerful approach of the sanua, the modest ("concealed") or reserved man, to the secret knowledge of the cosmogony and theogony of the Universe. Only the sanua can embark upon the study of the secret tradition and emerge from it without confusion of mind. Rabbi Simeon remarks several times in both the Greater Holy Assembly and the Lesser Holy Assembly: "He who is unable to both enter and depart, it would have been better for him had he never been created. The same is true for him who has no kawwanah when he responds 'amen.' However, whoever moves his lips in cleanliness of heart, in the waters which cleanse, there is written of him: 'God said, "let us make man"'" (102a).

The Book of Concealment repeatedly describes the mystical selflessness and yet totality of self that the sanua radiates to penetrate the divine mysteries of the grades of Kether, Hokhmah, and Binah to reach Ain Soph and to interfuse his total existence in the grades of Tiphereth and Malkuth with the primal function of the superior Sephiroth: the sanua unites theogony and cosmogony in his meditation and thus becomes capable of all. Sifra di Seni'uta says: "...for the sake of the man who knows how to unify the divine image and likeness in the proper manner; such shall have dominion over the fish of the sea" (p. 27). It is this mystery

⁵⁹The Anatomy of God: The Book of Concealment (Sifra di Seni'uta), trans. Roy A. Rosenberg (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1973).

of the sanua that is the gem of the Mariner's experience but still confounds both him and the Wedding-Guest, representatives of the "mens assuefacta hodiernae vitae minutiis se contrahat nimis, et tota subsidit in puscillas cogitationes." The Hermit, too, has heard the Mariner's visionary experience. But Coleridge's description of the "holy Hermit" in touch with the "darkness" of the lower physical universe (510, 522, 536-537) and sharing in the ecstatic paean of the highest empyrean (516) seems to imply that he alone (particularly in contrast to the Pilot and the Pilot's Boy) is equipped to "enter and depart in peace" from an encounter with the Mariner.

Coleridge's conception of the nature of the poet and the "synthetic and magical power" of the Imagination seems to share much in common with the Kabbalistic ideal of the sanua and his "prayer." "The poet, described in ideal perfection, brings the whole soul of man into activity with the subordination of its faculties to each other. He diffuses a tone and spirit of unity, and blends and (as it were) fuses, each into each, by that synthetic and magical...imagination...This power reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposites or discordant qualities" "The one who prays then seeks to bind everything in union," writes the narrator in the Sifra di Seni'uta.⁶⁰ "The Book of Concealment is the book describing that which is weighed in the balance....This balance keeps in the place where that which is no longer found was never weighed. The balance exists through itself; it cannot be grasped or confined. In it have been weighed, and in it are weighed that which never was, and that

⁶⁰Cf. Tol'doth, 134a.

which is, and that which will be."⁶¹ Likewise, Coleridge's theological discursus on the nature of the Imagination and a definition of the Imagination in terms of the vision of Ezekiel in the Statesman's Manual show a strong affinity with the meditative identification⁶² of the process of theogony in the dimension of Kether, Hokhmah, and Binah with the cosmogony of the lower Sephiroth by the sanua praying: "a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM."

Coleridge writes of the "living educts of the imagination...which give birth to a system of symbols, harmonious in themselves, and consubstantial with the truths of which they are the conductors." The Sifra di Seni'uta says of the sanua: "When one moves his lips in words of prayer, in worthiness and purity of knowledge, then, as a consequence, a living soul moves in the waters" (III, 25). For the sanua at that moment becomes a perfect reflection of the Hidden God of Ain Soph and, at the same time, of the Revealed God of Malkuth. "We know that God is called 'the living one.' But this verse indicates that the perfectly righteous man also is called the 'living one,' so that there is a righteous living one on high and correspondingly a righteous living one here on earth" (Vayeze, 164a).

Coleridge, as poet and as sanua, in the Rime breaks the "silence of the sea," giving birth to the universe of the Mariner, and "conceals" the sod of the Mariner's experience in the simple but delusive "garments" of the poem and its proverb. "What is more, the created Torah is a vestment of the Shekinah, and if man had not been created, the Shekinah would

⁶¹Sifra di Seni'uta, Preface, 15.

⁶²Never to be physically enacted by the true sanua.

have been without a vestment like a beggar. Hence when a man sins it is as though he strips the Shekinah of her vestments, and that is why he is punished; and when he carries out the precepts of the Law, it is as though he clothes the Shekinah in her vestments" (Bereshith, 23b). Granted the "clothes" of the poem are of a Christian mode, but these are as much a part of the surface of the Rime as was the antiquated language and orthography of the Lyrical Ballads version of 1798: the poem throughout hints at a powerful "mystical" symbology, numerology, and mystery of an anagogical cast that is more successfully glossed by a Kabbalistic, and even Christian Kabbalistic, rather than a Neo-Platonic matrix--though Coleridge, as poet, had not expressly admitted the viability of such a reading.

What shall now be offered is a critical scherzo of a Kabbalistic look at some of the narrative elements of the poem: reading the dimension of peshat of the olam ha'assiah of the Rime, at times shifting a bit from the purist attitude of a theoretical Kabbalist to that of the possibly practical, profane cabalist who is slightly overcome by the immensity of his subject matter.

It is the waters which nourish them. For when the wind blows from the South (Michael), the waters are released and flow to all sides, and ships pass to and fro, as it is written, "there go the ships, there is Leviathan whom thou hast formed to sport therein" (Ps. civ., 26). Every winged fowl after its kind: this refers, as already said, to the angels, as in the verse, "for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter" (Eccl. x, 20)

--Bereshith, 34a.

As has been repeatedly noted, the Kabbalist examines the very letter of the Torah to encounter the mysteries of the workings of the Sephiroth in cosmogony and particularly theogony: the outer reveals the inner. Basically, the study of physiognomy is the universal subject matter of "folk

wisdom"; but Kabbalah highly systematizes this matter with a salvific import. Man's very body⁶³ mirrors the prototypical Adam Kadmon, which in turn is a sorrowfully poor representation of the Hidden God of the superior Sephiroth. The "lower" Kabbalistic reading of the Torah "reveals the inner meaning of the features of man, so as to teach the knowledge of human nature. The character of man is revealed in the hair, the forehead, the eyes, the lips, the features of the face, the lines of the hands, and even the ears" (Jethro, 70b). Such a knowledge of the "impress of the inner face" (Jethro, 73b) enables the "just" man to distinguish men who walk in the Way of the Torah and are helpmates in his journey to Wisdom from their diabolical inversions. "When a man walks in the way of Truth, those who know the mysteries of the inner wisdom can recognize him, because the inner spirit is duly prepared in him and projects the full design of itself from within to without, from invisible to visible" (Jethro, 74a).

For the Kabbalist critic, the "glittering eye", the most outstanding feature of the Ancient Mariner, is a symbol of the universe in olam ha'assiah.⁶⁴ But the nature of that universe in which the Ancient Mariner has suffered is ambiguously diabolical and sacral. The "glittering eye" and the "long grey beard" may be emblematic of the countenance of the Ancient One of Days⁶⁵ or of the unspeakable inversion of all that is Holy. A man possessed of the "evil eye" "carries with him the eye of the destroying angel; hence he is called 'destroyer of the world,' and people should be on their guard against him and not come near him" (Noah, 68b). He is to be avoided because his "prayer" shall not bring about the

⁶³Cf. Jethro, 76a; Shemoth, 11a.

⁶⁴Cf. P'Qude, 222b.

⁶⁵Book of Concealment, I-III.

joy of the supernal world and thus prime the blessings of the fountains of the upper world but rather call down the Severity of the Right Side of the Sephirothic Tree. "The priest was able to tell such a man because he had one eye slightly lower than the other, the shaggy eyebrows, bluish eye, and a crooked glance" (Ahare Moth, 76a). "I fear thee and thy glittering eye" (228). This man, like Cain, is spared Death in this life but lives an eternity of Life in Death.⁶⁶ Recalling what has already been said about the Wedding-Guest and the Wedding-Feast frame, it is particularly appropriate to regard as significant the possibility that the Mariner's eye is not only "arresting" but that it also hints at an element of Evil disrupting the Joy of the wedding feast by delaying the "chosen" Wedding-Guest, "next of kin." "There are others, again, who are specifically fitted for the transmission of curses, and curses light wherever they cast their eyes....Hence as we have learnt, a man should turn aside a hundred times in order to avoid a man with an evil eye" (Ahare Moth, 63b).

The Zohar has much to say about encountering a lone wayfarer on a journey to a hallowed place. The Mariner, basically a Jonah-like creature,⁶⁷ ambivalently suggests three different types of Zoharic wayfarer: the evil one who stops at the doors of houses to gain admittance and eventual mastery over all in the household;⁶⁸ the spirit of a man in his seventh ordeal ("It has been affirmed that in quitting this world a man has to endure seven ordeals....The seventh ordeal is that his spirit is condemned to roam to and fro in the world, and is not able to find a

⁶⁶Cf. Vayera, 104a.

⁶⁷Cf. Vayaqhel, 199a.

⁶⁸Cf. Vaethhanan, 267b-268a.

resting-place until his appointed task has been completed" (Vayaqhel, 199b); or the beneficent bearer of Wisdom though outwardly seeming ignorant or unlettered and therefore darkly forbidding.⁶⁹ "'Who art thou?' they asked him. 'Do not ask,' he said, 'but let us proceed on our way and together let us discourse on the Torah. Let each one say some word of wisdom to illumine our way'" (Bereshith, 6aff). Coleridge suggests all three in the Wedding Guest's reactions to the Mariner (3-7, 31-32, 37-38, 224-25, 624-25) and the dialogue between the Hermit and the Mariner (576-90).

In passing, the Sepher Zohar has a very strong fatalistic bent that describes mazzal (the allotment of fortune) as being providential but designedly beneficent though evil befalls the innocent and good fortune the evil man. In both cases of the Mariner's crime and the Wedding-Guest's random selection by the Mariner, mazzal seems to be operating, more powerfully and mystically than conscious choice. Mazzal itself is indifferent. The universe, whether good or evil, in the end returns to the One; but it is within Man's province to regenerate the universe to this Oneness in spite of mazzal, either by walking in the ways of the Torah or patiently suffering the judgments that flow from the Right Side of the Sephirothic Tree. Thus, both Mariner and Wedding Guest start out on their journeys quite innocent but eventually end up arbitrarily singled out or set on a course for an experience that disrupts the "balance" of their lives and forces them to seek to reach the equilibrium of their universes through suffering and the wisdom that should--but in both cases doesn't--accrue. Their suffering does not turn to Joy. But the regular and "joyous" movement of the heavens implies that it will be--

⁶⁹Innumerable instances which spark the dialogues that the Zohar is built upon, e. g., Vaethanen, 268a-286bff.

perhaps only in Eternity-- in spite of all deflections from the true path.⁷⁰

The author(s) of the Zohar write(s): "The human eye represents the world with its various colours. The outer ring of white corresponds to the Sea of Oceanus which surrounds the whole world" (Vayehi, 226a). "His great bright eye most silently/Up to the moon is cast" (416-417). Needless to say, the great image of the Sea serves innumerable and diverse metaphorical purposes in Kabbalah; at times, it represents Shekinah, Torah, the Ancient of Days, the Sephiroth as supernals and as the Seven Pillars of the Universe.⁷¹ The seeming disparateness of the symbols for the Sea is resolved in one simple statement: "And He made the world corresponding to the world above and everything which is above its counterpart here below, and everything here below has its counterpart in the sea; and yet all constitutes a unity. He created angels in the upper worlds, human beings in this world, and the Leviathan in the Sea" (Shemoth, 20a).⁷² As Good and Evil (Mercy and Severity) are One in Eternity in the Illimitable Hiddenness, so also are the dynamically antithetical sides of all of the above Sea comparisons, Shekinah suffers in shameful exile and rejoices as Bride; Torah conceals and reveals; the Ancient of Days hides and manifests; and the Sephirothic Left and Right Sides need to be balanced by a central column of Sephiroth.

Just so is the Sea an ambivalent emblem in the Rime: it is the scene of the Mariner's blithe voyage, crime, trial, blessing of beauty, and penance. "And when the Holy One remembers His children, He drops them

⁷⁰The counterpoint of lines 257 and 266. According to Kabbalah, all things in Time are resolved in the Divine Unity in Eternity (tikkun).

⁷¹Cf. Vayehi, 236a; Beshalah, 60a, Prologue, 12b; Prologue, 6b; Bo, 42b-43a; Bayehi, 231a; Waera, 23a.

⁷²Cf. Haye Sarah, 121a-121b; Vayeze, 157b.

into the great Sea, which is the Sea of Wisdom, in order to sweeten them, and he turns the attribute of Justice into the attribute of Mercy" (She-moth, 19b). When the Sephiroth have been shaken in their eternal balance, when the equilibrium of the olam ha'assiah is upset by a trespass or by a wise deed, the character of the Sea changes.⁷³ Most often, however, the Zohar dwells on the nature of the Sea when the Left Side of the Sephirothic Tree is dominant; and even though the Sea "has many sweet rivers flowing into it" because it is One with the Divine One, universal Death is also attached to it. "When the Serpent injects into it its venom then its waters become bitter and accursed" (Naso 125a). At this moment the Divine Name is in Rigour. Into the hollows or the depths of the Great Sea, the dross of the Universe spills--sins of the righteous man, emissaries of punishment, of the created universe and his own sins; but when venturing forth on the Sea, he is subject to the fullness of Rigour and under the dominion of the inversions of the blessed inhabitants of the Supernal Sea.⁷⁴

Thus in the Rime, the Sea is the home of the "slimy things" (125) that "did crawl with legs/Upon the slimy sea" (126),⁷⁵ the dimension of the avenging Polar Spirit (132ff.), the realm of Death and Life-in-Death, the "great calm" of the cypher-like blessed watersnakes (272-281),⁷⁶ and the final resting-place of the troubled vessel and crew (556). The Sea is a fit stage for an anagogical drama.

A Kabbalistic examination of the ship in which the Mariner sails

⁷³Cf. Noah, 69b.

⁷⁴Cf. Vayehi, 243b; Waera, 30a-b; Beshalah, 65a.

⁷⁵See Vayehi, 243b for a close parallel. Also Ahare Moth, 60a; Emor, 101b.

⁷⁶The metaphor of "Sea" for Torah.

onto the sea exhibits an interesting continuity with the anagogical character of the poem: it conceals sod beneath peshat. The symbol of the boat has been strongly vital in all religious poetry, most often as the salvific means during rites of passage. In the poetry of the Kabbalistic poet Jehudah Halevi, particularly the collection known as The Journey to Zion, the boat of the pilgrim to the Promised Land, where he shall "make his couch/'Mid my fathers' graves/In the demesne of the pure,"⁷⁷ also navigates a Supernal Sea:

Go up, O ship!
And seek the region
Which hath for the Shekinah
Abodes within.
O hasten thy flight
And God's hand waft thee,
And bind thou thy wings
To the wings of the dawn--(53-60).

Likewise, in the Zohar, the boat is the vessel of the sanua who seeks to fathom the mysteries of the great "sea." "O, old man, old man! Thou canst not turn back. Yet let thy spirit or thy strength fail thee, for thou knowest that no other man in thy generations has ventured to sail in a little boat on the wide ocean as thou art doing....Sail to the right and to the left, to the length and to the breadth, down into the depths, and up into the heights" (Mishpatim, 100b-101a). (One notes the anagogical directions of the universe and the side issue of the search for the mechanics of the mystery of the "revolutions of souls" which some critics have cited as the key to the seriousness of the Mariner's trespass against the Albatross, "as if it had been a Christian soul," and the balancing blessing of the lowly watersnakes.) Also in the Zohar, the ship is the

⁷⁷Selected Poems, ed. and trans. Heinrich Brody (Philadelphia: the Jewish Publishing Society of America, 1974). "On Eagles' Wings" (50-52).

Ark of Noah and the Covenant (the salvation and the desperation of Jonah)-- "with six sides, and it contains and conceals in its interior the Written Law that reaches out into the six directions of the creation" (Vayaqhel, 214a).⁷⁸

In the Rime, the ship is no ordinary sailing vessel, having cleared the harbor (21). It is driven by an anthropomorphized Storm-Blast (already discussed in terms of the olam ha'yetsirah); it is crowned by the "gracious" Albatross (75-76); it sails into a mystical (esoteric) sea (105-106); it is followed and driven by supernal winds and spirits (e. g., 133-34, 327-38, 379-80); it is navigated and worked by a spectral crew; pentecostal fires burst into life above the vessel (309-15); and finally the vessel sinks into oblivion, its cursed cargo having been delivered (546-56). The ship too shares in the tortures of the drought and death that stalk the Mariner (120, 242), but navigates unharmed into and out of the mystical epiphany "to the right and to the left, to the length and to the breadth, down into the depths, and up into the heights."

The significance of the North Wind Storm-Blast that first blows the ship into the realm of anagogy may also be Kabbalistically glossed. Although the North Wind is "co-elemental" with Fire (all things in Kabbalah are ultimately allied or reduced to elements, numbers, or letters), it seeks a balance with Water, particularly Ice.⁷⁹ Ironically, the North Wind is a beneficent wind, bringing gold to the world and blessings from on high. "Then the north wind springs up, bringing joy in its train, and

⁷⁸"The six-sided ark and the Torah represent the inwardness of the nine grades that are summed up in the two Divine Names--YHVH and EHYM" (Vayaqhel, 214a).

⁷⁹Waera, 23b-24a.

it blows through the spice trees and wafts their perfumes and the righteous put on crowns and feast themselves in the brightness of the 'pellucid mirrors' Ice --happy are they to be vouchsafed that celestial light!" (Vayehi, 232a). So the Mariner's ship is driven into the realm of ice, graced by the presence of the Albatross. But when the South Wind rises (71), the Mariner shoots the blessed bird. The South Wind in Zohar is the source of the "powerful heat"⁸⁰ and dryness of the world and drives the ship into the "courts of the sun" (gloss to 200-201).

The movement of the vessel (199) into the realm of the emerald green ice by the North Wind signals the voyage of the Mariner into an extra-ordinary landscape inhabited by "Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken." In the vision of Ezekiel (1:22), over the Hayyoth⁸¹ and the ecstatic souls ascending to the Supreme Point through the heavenly portals hangs "the likeness of a firmament, like the colour of the terrible ice":⁸² "This is the first He beyond which it is impossible for the human mind to penetrate, because what is further is enveloped in the thought of God, which is elevated above the comprehension of Man" (Bereshith, 21a). Ice, in the Zohar, is associated with the rigorous side of Geburah: "When the north wind blows, the waters become frozen, they stop flowing, so that no one comes to drink of them. This is the time when judgment impends over the world, and the cold of the North freezes the water" (Vayeze, 161b). No blessings flow from the Supernal King. The "dialogue" of the ice flows

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹The "living" creatures who motivate the Supernal Chariot.

⁸²Cf. Vayigash, 211a-b; Vayaqhel, 211a.

(58-61) is complemented by the later dialogue of the Polar Spirit's fellow demons discussing the judgment of the Mariner: both are related to sounds not associated with "waking" life (61, 392) but, as if, remembered from a dream. The advent of the Bird and the joy-filled blessing of the Bird (65-67, 73-74) "split" the harsh judgment of the realm of "dismal sheen" (56), a landscape neither solid nor watery but a fusion of both like the earth in its primal state of creation (Bereshith, 30b), and rouse the benediction of the South Wind (71). "But when the south wind arises, the waters become warmer, and, the ice being melted, flow in their way, and all come to drink of them. For the southern warmth having caused the waters to thaw, all come to drink with relish the waters" (Vayeze, 161b). "...They thawed and began to flow, in order to water all the 'beasts of the field, '...as it is written...Through the streaming of this supernal energy all were in gladness" (Bereshith, 29a-b).⁸³

The appearance of the Albatross in the realm of ice, under the dominion of severe judgment, if examined Kabbalistically, is a powerfully rich symbolic scene: significant in a general sense in regard to the concluding motto of the Mariner and specifically in relation to the mystery of the Wedding-Feast frame and the ziwwug of Shekinah and the Supernal King. As the "bird" of the Mariner's proverb (613), it was blessed by the Mariner as a special messenger of the great mystery of the unity of all Creation with the Hidden One: "...it is forbidden to revile a ministrant of the Holy One, blessed be He, especially those loyal servants of his. They are appointed by Providence. It is written that 'God saw all that he had made, and behold it was very good' (Gen. i. 31) even serpents

⁸³Cf. Vayeze, 152a.

and scorpions, and fleas and all things that appear to be pests--all these are for the services of the world, though men know it not....Thus God makes all things His agents and we must not revile anything that He has made" (Emor, 107a). The significance of the blessing of the watersnakes is all the more evident in light of this passage. The arbitrary trespass of the Mariner and the ignorance of the crew (95-96, 101-102), perhaps symbolized by the fog of line 64, well exemplify the disastrous confusion of Man before the power of the mysteries of the Universe and the need for humility before the Unknown, as Burnet cautions: "Sed veritati interea invigilandum est, modusque servandus, ut certa ab incertis, diem a nocte, distinguamus."

The Zohar describes many passages in which birds are special messengers from the Supernal Garden, ordained by Providence to "sanctify the name of their Master everyday" (Shemini, 39b).⁸⁴ The birds of the Garden of Paradise, the souls of men and the angels, sing "praise to the Almighty" and "pray for the life of human beings" (Balak, 196b).⁸⁵ They also bear a special warning to men who voyage blindly through life, disregarding of the true foundation of the olam ha'assiah: "to you the warning is given....There are among you that see without receiving, that stand without knowing what supports them and regard not the glory of their Master" (Miqez, 203b-204a). Ignorant of the esoteric as well as exoteric sense of Torah and Creation, these men do not unify the Great Name of YHVH, thus consummating the joy-filled union of Shekinah and King--the worlds of manifestation and hiddenness. There is also a theme in the Zohar which identi-

⁸⁴Cf. Waera, 28a.

⁸⁵Cf. Vayishlah, 172a.

fies the glorious bird that nests in the Garden of Eden with Shekinah,⁸⁶ "which takes under its wings those who separate themselves into the impure 'unholy region' and come near unto her" (Prologue, 13a).

But there is also a dark side to the character of the Bird in Kabbalism, adumbrated by the machinations of practical cabalists of the tribe of Balak and Balaam, which brings down vengeance on the man who presumes he sees clearly with his physical eyes through "fog and mist" (100-102ff.).⁸⁷ "So Balak saw with his particular wisdom....He would perform his magic arts and the bird would chirp and fly away to the 'open of eye' and tell him, and then return. One day he performed his arts and took the bird, and it flew away but did not return. He was greatly distressed, until he saw it coming with a fiery flame following it and burning its wings. Then he saw strange things and became afraid of Israel" (Balak, 184b).

The "winged creature" of the Left Side is the Great Leviathan. Those who are not receptive to the mystery of the Shekinah wander into chaos and destruction under the wing of the castrated sea-monster: "So because of this, these monsters did not engender; therefore a man who does likewise--that is, who does not engender--if he comes be-gapo, with one wing--is brought under the domination of that wing of the castrated Leviathan...he will be thrust out from the other world and never enter within the curtain" (Mishpatim, 108b). The "great Leviathan" in the Rime may be suggested by a splintering of images: the oversized Albatross itself in a restricted sense, the flaccid sails of the becalmed vessel (106-- and the becalmed Wedding Guest), the "slimy things" that "did crawl with

⁸⁶Cf. Bo, 40a.

⁸⁷Cf. Vayehi, 218b; Balak, 192a.

legs" (125), and even the underwater "invisible" plaguing Spirit (132).

Now the act below stimulates a corresponding activity above. Thus if a man does kindness on earth, he awakens loving kindness above, and it rests upon that day which is crowned therewith through him. So, too, if he performs a cruel action, he has a corresponding effect on that day and impairs it, so that subsequently it becomes cruel to him and tries to destroy him, giving him measure for measure (Emor, 92 a-b).

The slaughter of the Albatross, if regarded in Kabbalistic light, upsets the balance of Justice and Mercy in Creation, particularly so when the Mariner had only to wish the bird health with his crewmates, and disorients the equilibrium of the upper and lower worlds: a corresponding act of some type must restore the balance, another "hailing."⁸⁸

The greeting of the Albatross by the group of mariners, from which the Mariner first distinguishes himself by his killing of the bird, is not a dramatic "spiritual" blessing but more of a genial good-daying to a welcome diversion from the ice floes: "And everyday, for food or play,/Came to the mariner's hollo!" (73-74). Although the Mariner participates in the "We hailed it in God's name," we need not presume that he is equally in accord with his fellows' innocent enthusiasm. For the crew shares in the "arbitrary" crime by reason of their own vacillation in judgment on the Mariner's deed; thus, they are all capable of the arbitrary act. The Mariner makes no response to his crewmates' contradictory "judgment." "Judgment" in itself is the act of deciding between innocence or culpability; it need not have a pejorative denotation. The Mariner's crewmates' arbitrarily willful ignorance (mirroring the Mariner's willfully ignorant murder) rather than their "right" or "wrong" judgment of the

⁸⁸Cf. Terumah, 128b; Vayaqhel, 201a; Bemid bar, 119a.

Mariner's deed, inculcates them in the Mariner's deed (gloss 97-102).

According to such reasoning, all Mankind justly inherited the chastisement for Adam's trespass. Moreover, the Mariner's crime is to be regarded as diminishing "the likeness and image of his Master" in Creation,⁸⁹ particularly since the Albatross is hailed "in God's name" (65-66). And each man must approach his relationship to Creation conscious of the overwhelming power of each of his acts:⁹⁰ "Man should always imagine that the fate of the world depends upon him" (Bo, 42a). The little world of the vessel depends for its salvation on the acts of each and every man.

As the little world of the vessel sails North, born along by the beneficent South Wind, the Sun rises on the right hand (83). The great luminaries are correlated by Kabbalah with YHVH and Shekinah. The Sun contains the mystery of the Divine Name:⁹¹ "Nor dim nor red, like God's own head,/The glorious Sun uprist" (97-98).⁹² The significance of the Sun rising on the right is the extension of God's Mercy on the vessel, despite the Mariner's offence. "Sometimes when they all three agree to condemn, there comes the right hand which is outstretched to receive those that repent; this is the Tetragrammaton, and it is also the Shekinah, which is called the 'right hand' from the side of Hesed. When a man repents, this hand saves him from punishment" (Bereshith, 22b-23a).⁹³ For by the

⁸⁹Cf Vayesheb, 191a.

⁹⁰See Vayishlah, 177a-b, for Kabbalah's "Great Chain of Being."

⁹¹Cf P'Qude, 224b.

⁹²In Kabbalah, the Sun is regarded as the source of all pure gold.

⁹³The triune columns of the Sephiroth. Also on God's overpowering mercy, see Balak, 185b.

Right Hand⁹⁴ Sephiroth God sustains the worlds of Creation which were generated by Rigour or essentially by the Left Hand Sephiroth, the column dominated by Matrona.

God's Mercy extends to the ship after the killing of the Albatross for perhaps as many days as the Albatross enjoyed the ship's hospitality, but the Mercy of YHVH is rejected by the unrepentant Mariner. The Mariner continues in his unresponsive state, and the crew (like the foolishly judgmental rabble in Dryden's Absalom and Achitophel) now shares in the Mariner's isolating culpability (the characteristic state of "sin"). There is not one man among them who attempts to really acquit or condemn the Mariner's act, to distinguish "certa ab incertis." God's Mercy has run its course. The beneficent South Wind dies; the ship is becalmed; and the "glorious" Sun now relinquishes its dominance to the Moon--emblem of Matrona and the archangel Metatron, as well as Shekinah in exile.⁹⁵ The Moon in its fullness is the symbol of Kindness because it reflects the fullness of the splendor of the Sun; but here in the equalization of the power of the Sun with that of the Moon at noontide (111-14), the "invisible" Moon takes predominance and Severity rules (Vayera, 114b).⁹⁶ Moreover, the significance of the Sun appearing like the Moon "at noon" (112) underscores the mystical phase of severe judgment the vessel has become becalmed in: "The afternoon prayer on weekdays is the time when severe judgment is in the ascendant, and is not a time of 'good will' (Terumah, 156a)...Noon is

⁹⁴Cf Vayehi, 230b; Beshalah, 64a; Vaethhanan, 262b.

⁹⁵Cf. Bereshith, 20a.

⁹⁶Cf. Vayera, 114b; Bereshith, 16b-17a, 33b.

symbolic of a place which should properly be called 'darkness' (129b).... There are three periods of a day during which the world is liable to chastisement, and at each of these periods it behoves a man to be specially on his guard...he should shut himself in after the example of Noah, who shut himself within the ark so that he should not be met by the destroying angel" (Vayesheb, 182b).⁹⁷

The Sea is now full of the bitter water which flows from the fountains not of Blessing and Mercy but of Justice: the water is unpalatable.⁹⁸ The mariners had foregone their chance to pray, to bless, to repent of their arbitrary folly, and now the supernal fountains have dried up and prayer, if desired, chokes in the throat (135-38). Instead of praying for a "blessing" or repenting, the crew and the Mariner "speak" to little purpose or only out of fear, "only to break/The silence of the sea!" (109-10), accentuating the forlornness of their condition: words neither rising to heaven nor communicating among themselves, words shattering the unspoken mystery of the sea like the "whizz" of the fateful crossbow. "O God, thou art my God: I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is, to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the Sanctuary." No "living spirit," as it did for King David, primes a song to the Almighty in these mariners' throats (Terumah, 140a); and the chance to bless the "slimy things" of the Sea passes by for the instant (121-26). Unable to speak their condemnation of the Mariner, their act bespeaks their

⁹⁷Cf. P'Qude, 236b.

⁹⁸Cf. Naso, 125a.

vengeful culpability in the trespass." The gloss on lines 139-42 emphasizes the crew's partial acknowledgement of their share in the Mariner's "hellish thing." "The shipmates in their sore distress, would fain throw the whole guilt on the Ancient Mariner...." I have emphasized in the discussion of mazzal that ordinary, human ethical choice is myopic, subject to higher laws Man can barely conceive of in interpreting Torah and crudely fashioning his often self-contradictory "true" path of conduct (93-102). The crew and the Mariner--he singled out by mazzal to bear the eternal burden of their crime against the order of the Universe, they not morally superior to him--represent Man's self-condemning judgment by superstitiously "reading" the acts of the Universe as "ethical," that is as a reliable parts of Man's Creation and not as parts of God's unknowable design. The bird "crucifix" about the Mariner's neck is like a cabalistic talisman (an infernal pentacle), the outcome of a misapplied reading of the design of Creation. The hanging of the Albatross, I believe to be not the actual "judgment" of the Mariner but the sign of their self-condemnation. The certitude of their boastful misjudgment (93-96, 101-02) fails them "in their sore distress." Man's judgment can be no true judgment (the theme of the Book of Proverbs): the ways of Providence are unknowable.

The insistence of Kabbalistic dogma on Man's blessing each and every and the least in Creation because all Creation reflect YHVH in His mystical hiddenness (passivity) and His union with Shekinah (activity) presumes that Man will be incapable of fulfilling this duty perfectly. He will fail--even if arbitrarily in the eyes of other men (95-100) under the

overwhelming power of mazzal--and his failure will bring down chastisement from the upper heavens (91-92), perhaps via an avenging angel "from the land of mist and snow" (132-34). But Kabbalah reminds Man that this "suffering" is to his benefit; Man's love for the Almighty is thus purified of all dross. Kabbalah, as usual, explicates this theme cosmogonically. "Perfect love is the kind which remains steadfast in both phases, whether of affliction or prosperity....It was for this reason that the light of creation which first emerged was afterwards withdrawn. When it was withdrawn, suffering emerged in order that there might be this perfect love.... the 'adverse influence' (sitra ahra) which brings suffering and chastisement is therefore necessary in the world, since it rouses in man fear" (Prologue, 12a).⁹⁹ But the "fearful" man must not lose his hope in divine Mercy and Wisdom and subsequently harden his heart, no matter the degree of punishment. "...And I looked to heaven, and tried to pray;/But or ever a prayer had gusht,/A wicked whisper came, and made/My heart as dry as dust" (244-247). "Though chastisement a man becomes filled with the true fear of God, and does not harden his heart; for if he does, then 'he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into evil' (Pro. xxviii. 14), to wit, into the hands of that 'adverse influence' which is called 'evil'" (Prologue, 12a). This man blesses and is blessed who combines fear and love. The Mariner and all who encounter the Mariner (e. g., 224-25) stumble into "loving" wisdom through fear (285); but perfect love of mind and heart seems to still elude him and them as he eternally relates his fearsome travail to "the man that must hear me," the cross of the Albatross shared with his hearer.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹Note the Lurianic emphasis.

¹⁰⁰Cf. Terumah, 162b.

The Sepher Zohar often refers to the "great fishes" of the sea and "every living creature that creepeth" of the Days of Creation as symbolizing the intermediated grades of supernal beings¹⁰¹ and sometimes of the fishes "that swim in the ocean" "wherein all things creeping innumerable" as "evil spirits,"¹⁰² inversions of the supernal grades. The important detail is the descriptive and oft-repeated modifier "creeping"; in the Rime, the watersnakes "crawl" (125) and "rear" (127). But what might these "slimy things," these "watersnakes," be but God's inscrutable living ciphers on the living page of Torah (the Sea): "and every track/Was a flash of golden fire" (280-281) on the waters that "like a witch's oils,/Burnt green, and blue and white" (129-130). One might examine the Kabbalistic significance of the color schema in these passages or the metallurgy, for the Zohar writes in relation to metals and the Brazen Serpent of Exodus: "It is fire which brings forth brass, and from this power emanate supernal mysterious serpents and Seraphim brought forth by fire" (Terumah, 147a).¹⁰³ More especially, one should note the "fiery" character of the scenes. All of YHVH's revelations to Moses were carried on through a fiery correspondence. The Decalogue was inscribed in black and white fire, and the design of the Tabernacle was etched in fire. "Observe that when Moses was commanded to make the Tabernacle, he could not comprehend its design until God showed him an exact replica of every single part, a replica in white

¹⁰¹Cf. Tol'doth, 138a.

¹⁰²Cf. Shemoth, 12a; Waera, 30b.

¹⁰³Also on color symbology: Bereshith, 16a, 39b; Vayehi, 238b; Vayeze, 161b; Waera, 23a-b; Terumah, 149b, 162b; Vayaqhel, 209b.

fire, black fire, in red fire, and in green fire" (P'Qude, 241a). "Within the shadow of the ship/I watched their rich attire: /Blue, glossy green, and velvet black" (279). The Torah spells out all of the design of Creation, and Man has only to read and contemplate to fathom the mystery of His Wisdom and Goodness and to unify and bless His Name through His creatures.

Verily, this is the time when the Holy One remembers His children and lets two drops fall into the Great Sea. As they fall they meet the fiery ray and sink with it in the Sea (Shemoth, 9a).

At sunset, the spectre-bark appears. The bitter Sea of Judgment offers no refreshment, and the Sun with "broad and burning face" (180) sets the "western wave...all a-flame" (171). Sky and sea (127-128, 270) unite, burning with a fiery chastisement. The mariners, unable to "bless," to "pray" with "black lips baked" (157), like the generations of Noah's time. (Gen. vi. 6), cannot re-create the unity of the supernal and the terrestrial. "As their sin consisted in not allowing the upper and lower waters to meet in conjunction, as they might, so were they punished with water. Further, the waters of the Deluge were burning hot, and caused their skins to peel off" (Noah, 62a). The waters of the heavens and the earth merge into one fiery vortex: "The punishments of Gehinnom, water and fire, were here let loose together. Rain descended upon them from above, and at the same time scalding waters, hot as fire, gushed up from below" (Noah, 68b). The wedlock of the upper and lower waters, the reunion of King and Shekinah, was reconstituted by Noah's preservation "Of fowls after their kind, and of cattle after their kind, of every creeping thing of the earth after his kind; two of every sort shall come unto thee, to keep them alive" (Gen. vi. 20). Again the Wedding-Feast frame reverberates.

From the "depths of the great Abyss," from the Left Side¹⁰⁴ of the ship, rises "a certain hot fiery female named Lilith" (Vayikra, 19a). Lilith, her mate Samael, and mazzal are the arbiters over the vessel's Fate (196). The Zohar has much to say about this pair who appear at sunset, negotium perambulans in tenebris. They are the inversions of the Shekinah and the Eternal King, the instruments of YHVH's Justice.¹⁰⁵ "There are here mentioned both 'death' and the 'shadow of death.' These are a pair, the one being the angel of death, the other his rider.' ...who also is his protecting shadow and strength, the two being linked together and forming but one being" (Haye Sarah, 125a-131a). "Samael...steers all the ships of the sea of accusations with the evil breeze to sink them in the depths of the sea. No when the Holy One, blessed be He, is in a merciful mood, He gives to him all the sins of Israel and he casts them into the depths of the Sea" (Balak, 197a).

The verdict given, night falls upon the vessel and the benign moon rises. The men's souls are released in a scene of great mystical import. The Ancient Mariner's simple, casual slaughter of the Albatross has initiated the migration of souls (neshamah) of "four times fifty living men" (216).

And every soul, it passed me by
Like the whizz of my crossbow (222-23).

Three elements, if Kabbalistically interpreted, combine to underscore the mystical significance of the scene: the steersman, the dew, and the rising

¹⁰⁴Cf. Bereshith, 22b; Beshalah, 65a.

¹⁰⁵Cf. Vayehi, 232a.

Moon--a scene of the Almighty's gratuitous mercy and the resurrection of men.

The detail of the Steersman, an apparition in the suffocating darkness of the night (206-07), recalls one of Coleridge's favorite mottos: "Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman of Israel waketh in vain" (Ps. cxxvii. 1). According to the Kabbalah of the Zohar, those who labour in the Torah preserve the Holy City from severe judgment and not the warriors and men of might.¹⁰⁶ The "Watchman" referred to here is traditionally named Metatron.¹⁰⁷ In Metatron's charge is the task of bringing to life again "the dwellers in the dust and to be the messenger of the spirit on high" (Vayesheb, 181b).¹⁰⁸ In the Rime, the steersman (watchman) appears at the rising of the Moon "with one bright star" (210) (the emblem of Metatron as well as Shekinah), and "two drops" of dew begin to drip from the ark's sails: two strong suggestions of the crescent ("horned moon" [210]) dominance of the Right Side of Mercy. This Mercy is entirely gratuitous in contradiction to the stern judgment of the infernal pair. The floodgates of grace, however, will not be opened until the Mariner's gratuitous blessing of the watersnakes.

The particular significance of the "dew" is integral in the release of the crew's souls with the rising of the newly crescent moon, and the apparition of Metatron guiding the ship of lost souls in the "long night of the Soul." "And at the time when the Holy One will raise the dead to life

¹⁰⁶Cf. Vayeze, 151b.

¹⁰⁷Cf. Terumah, 131a-b.

¹⁰⁸Cf. Terumah, 164a; Bereshith, 27a; Beshalah, 65b; Mishpatim, 94a.

He will cause dew to descend upon them from His head. By means of that dew all will rise from the dust, as it says, 'for thy dew is as the dew of lights' (is. xxvi, 19), these being the supernal lights through which the Almighty will in future pour forth life upon the world" (Haye Sarah, 130b). With the renewal of the Moon, all men's souls are restored "with the purity of the holy dew which descends upon their heads" (Shelah Lecha, 163a). The final restoration of the Moon's own light will signal that "the world will be restored to its primeval state" (Vayesheb, 182a), that is, perfect unity with Ain Soph.¹⁰⁹

"Tradition teaches us that when God created the world He created the lower world and made the two the counterparts of each other, so that His glory is both on high and below....it depends upon man to complete the organic unity of the whole" (Vayigash, 205b).

At the center of the Rime, the Mariner blesses the watersnakes and allows the fountainhead of grace to inundate the universe of the vessel (284-85). His attempts to pray beforehand--for himself as well as for "The many men, so beautiful"--have been stanchd by his own hardness of heart:

But or ever a prayer had gusht
A wicked whiper came, and made
My heart as dry as dust (245-47).

The "wicked whisper" is the dark inversion of the "still, small voice," the ideal voice of prayer and the vocal altar of sacrifice. The "still, small voice" is the yod from which all prayer flows to the Creator, the very in-

¹⁰⁹Cf. Vayehi, 225b; Jethro, 84b, 88a.

nermost point and source of illumination:¹¹⁰ "a flash of golden fire" (281), "a clear though tiny light which illumines all things, but a 'still voice' also because men must be filled with awe and silence to hear it" (Jethro, 81b). "The altar which is the innermost of all, the linking of faith, is called a 'still, silent voice,'....The inner one is called 'the altar of the Lord'....This is the inner Altar, the 'still silent voice,' and on this 'fire shall be burnt continually,' that is, the perpetual Fire, the Fire of Isaac. The prayer name for this is Adonai, but when the priest puts wood on the altar we call it by the name of Mercy, Jehovah" (Zav, 30b). All prayer flows from this supernal voice: "it thus behooves man to pray silently, to pray with that voice that is inaudible...proper concentration of the mind on the unity of God" (Vayigash, 209b-210a).¹¹¹

O happy living thing! no tongue
Their beauty might declare (282-83).

From the fiery inspiration of the watersnakes gushes the "spring of love" from the Mariner's heart. But heart must be joined by mind and will to perfectly unify sea, earth, and sky: a unity that the "unaware" (285-87) Mariner has been instinctively leading up to (236-47) or perhaps led by the Mercy of God:

For the sky and the sea, and the sea and the sky
Lay like a load on my weary eye,
And the dead were at my feet (250-252).

The Mariner's physical eye has grown "weary"; only now may he begin to see clearly. But he has not totally penetrated the mystery of the

¹¹⁰Cf. Vayigash, 209a.

¹¹¹Cf. P'Qude, 230a; Bereshith, 16a.

watersnakes' beauty and their "happiness" (282). "Happy is the portion of whoever can penetrate into the mysteries of his Master and become absorbed into Him, as it were. Especially does a man achieve this when he offers up his prayer to his Master in intense devotion, his will then becoming as the flame inseparable from the coal, and his mind concentrated on the unity of the lower firmaments, to unify them by means of a lower name, then on the unity of the higher firmaments, and finally on the absorption of them all into that most high firmament. Whilst a man's mouth and lips are moving, his heart and will must soar to the height of heights, so as to acknowledge the unity of the whole in virtue of the mystery of mysteries in which all ideas, all wills, and all thoughts find their goals, to wit, the mystery of the En Sof" (Vayaqhel, 123b).¹¹² Indeed, the Mariner momentarily soars in his prayer:

The self-same moment I could pray;
And from my neck so free
The Albatross fell off, and sank
Like lead into the sea (288-91).

Man must prayerfully reduce the duality of the universe into unity. Any other view of the universe is irreligious because it makes an alma de peruda (a world of division), an idea which, by the way, is paralleled by Blake's argument that the universe as we know it, i. e., the sheer material unspiritual universe, is the result of the fall of one life from unity into division. "For the Holy One has disposed all things in such a way that everything in this world should be a replica of something spread above and below. Happy the portion of the righteous in whom the Holy One finds

¹¹²Cf. Vayaqhel, 201a.

pleasure both in this world and in the world to come" (Haye Sarah, 129a).¹¹³
 The perfect organic unification of all is the blessing with the Great Name of God: "...this supreme Holy Name is altogether peace and altogether one, and paths diverge from it in all directions'" (Vayikra, 10b).

The Mercy of YHVH has gratuitously¹¹⁴ allowed the illumination to fill the Mariner well before the blessing of the watersnakes, as has been suggested by the images of the dripping dew and the horned Moon's rise and also by the cold "sweat" which "melted" from the corpses of the mariners who "nor rot nor reek did they" (233-34). For they have been judged and relieved of their complicity in the Mariner's trespass. "If he is judged favorably, he obtains ease and a sweat breaks out over his body, and his neshamah returns to its place and illumines the whole" (Vayehi, 227a): "A man all light, a seraph man,/On every corse there stood" (490-491). The "curse" (438-441) in the fellow mariners' eyes, however, haunts the Mariner, following him on his "lonesome road" (446); for his trespass, his splitting of the Universe of Creation, has been great: "'Observe,' he said, 'that if a man trespasses the precepts of the Law, the Torah itself goes up and down and makes marks on that man's face so that all both above and below look at him and heap curses on his head'" (Ahare Moth, 76a).

The vision of a Man is a reflection of a
 higher image, and this again of a still higher,
 the whole forming a series called 'visions of the
 night' (Miqez, 196a).¹¹⁵

In this Kabbalistic reading of The Rime, I have repeatedly em-

¹¹³Vayaqhel, 209a, 216b; Vayikra, 9b-11b.

¹¹⁴On Providence, see Lech Lecha, 79b; Miqez, 194a.

¹¹⁵Cf. Vayeze, 149a; Vayesheb, 183a-b.

phasized the importance of the working of mazzal, Divinely ordered Fate which operates beyond the petty rationalizings of men. The protagonist's title "Ancient Mariner" is generic: one with all the mariners only distinguished by his age. (We are not sure he was the "Ancient" Mariner when he undertook the voyage.) There can be no question of "moral" superiority or inferiority in a "mystical" reading of the actions of The Rime. The ways of God are not to be equated with those of Man. The Mariner has been "chosen" for no particularly analysable reason. He is not wiser than the other mariners nor more culpable. All men, righteous and wicked, are brought to purification and redemption in the final days according to Zoharic Kabbalism. He is Man given a special fate to work out from which he could have as easily been exempted. That the other mariners have been "redeemed" need not be explained according to orthodox interpretations of divine justice and mercy and the encoded Decalogue. Kabbalistically, perhaps the Mariner's working out of the ship's company's communal guilt would account for the release of his crewmates' neshamoth. "The divine visitation of harsh judgment in the world is to bring both the upright and the wicked to perfection. 'When God desires to give healing to the world, He smites one righteous Man among them with disease and suffering, and through him gives healing to all'" (Pinhas, 218a). The author of Zohar's "To'l'doth" offers quite a different explanation of Providence. "He is forbearing with the wicked in order that they may change in their ways in complete repentance and so establish themselves in this world and in the world to come....The Almighty is also forbearing with the wicked for the sake of the goodly seed which may spring from them for the benefit of the world"

(140a). The Ancient Mariner, as Man, represents both the "goodly seed" of wheat as well as the tares.

And the Mariner wakes from the "Nightmare Life-in-Death" to a beneficent dream of freedom and blessing; for the well-springs of Mercy, the floodgates of heaven, have been opened by his prayer. The dripping dew now fills the "silly buckets" (299). The Mariner is a man gifted with visions and dreams who from this point witnesses to the "Naturas invisibles...in rerum universitate" and is in turn redeemed by these visions. "A dream that is not remembered might as well as not have been dreamt, and therefore a dream forgotten and gone from mind is never fulfilled....Desire, which is Thought, is the beginning of all things, and Utterance is the completion; and so a deep symbolism will in this way have been effected, and will have been made good. Thus a man's friends should affirm this good interpretation, and so all will be well" (199b-200a). But not even the Wedding-Guest can affirm a "good" interpretation of the Mariner's visions. However, the Mariner's constant need to relate his "Nightmare Life-in-Death" and the blessed vision of the mystical world he has trespassed into actually relieves him of his "agony" and insures his momentary "sanity" if not eternal salvation. Moreover, the combination of the "sleep" and "dew" images has a deeper Kabbalistic significance betokening mazza and resurrection.

We have already discussed the general "mercy symbolism of "water" and "fountains,"¹¹⁶ but there is also a more particular Kabbalistic character to the images. The Sifra di Seni'uta is dominated by a detailed anthropomorphic description of the Ancient One of Days with a long white beard, down

¹¹⁶Cf. Vayeze, 163a-b; Vayesheb, 189b; Vayehi, 226b, 235a, 243b-244a.

which flow the precious oil of mazzal and the life-giving dew. One who dreams of this Supernal Beard and its thirteen streams watering the Garden is doubly blessed.¹¹⁷ The Beard itself is the emblem of the salvific revelation of Faith, the point of illumination of the mystery of Ain Soph. The Mariner's dream of the dew and his awakening to the rain is accompanied by a feeling of release from his mortal body and an ascent to the blinding "pentacostal" mystery of Life and Death (305-309). "And at the time when the Holy One will raise the dead to life, He will cause dew to descend upon them from His head. By means of that dew, all will rise from the dust, as it says, 'for Thy dew is as the dew of lights' (Is. xxvi, 19), these being the supernal lights through which the Almighty will in future pourforth life upon the world" (Haye Sarah, 130b). This dew first flows to the "sleeping" patriarchs who awaken and supplicate for mercy for their descendants.¹¹⁸

The fellow mariners, "a ghastly crew" (340), waken from their death-sleep, and "The body of my brother's son/Stood by me, knee to knee" (341). The significance of this isolated, and therefore underscored, detail of the Mariner's life is of marked importance, particularly as a reverberating echo of the mystical significance of the slaughter of the innocent Albatross: the slaughter of his nephew is as casual and as arbitrary and also horribly portentous of the end of the Mariner's own line of generation. The man who does not replicate the supernal ziwwug is doomed to wander expiating a "penance long and heavy" (400). "Now the

¹¹⁷Book of Concealment, III, 23.

¹¹⁸Cf. Vayehi, 225b.

spirit which has left this world without procreation and engendering of children undergoes constant transmigration, finding no rest, and rolling about 'like a stone inside a sling' until a 'redeemer' comes forward to... bring it back to the same 'vessel' which it formerly used and to which it clave with heart and soul" (Mishpatim, 99b).¹¹⁹ One recalls that the Wedding-Guest is also "next of kin" (6). "On the other hand, he who has taken a wife but has not been blessed with offspring can be redeemed by his near relative, that is, by his brother" (Vayesheb, 186b).

Perhaps in his characterization of the Ancient Mariner's "wanderings" (586),¹²⁰ Coleridge is alluding to the story of Cain and the eldest crime of fratricide. In the case of Cain, we find that it is written: "The bloods of your brother cry unto me" (Gen. iv. 10); not 'the blood of your brother,' but the 'bloods of your brother'--that is, his blood and the blood of his potential descendants. For this reason only one Adam was created, to teach Man that whenever a single soul is destroyed, Scripture imputes guilt to the destroyer as though he had destroyed a complete world. Whoever preserves a single soul in Israel is given merit by Scripture as if he had saved a whole world. 'It has been said that man should always imagine that the fate of the whole world depends upon him'" (Bo, 42a).¹²¹ Thus, the Mariner's trespass has indeed been a violation of the Unity of Creation as well as a genuine defilement of the Divine Image in himself and other men. The Mariner searches in vain for the "one man" who can restore the unity of heart, mind, and will for

¹¹⁹Cf. Vayigash, 207b-208a.

¹²⁰Genesis, iv, 12.

¹²¹Cf. Jethro, 90a.

him while revealing the Oneness of the Universe and the Almighty: Messiah who will lead him out of the dark night of exile.

The "redeemer" would, of course, be the Messiah whose coming would signal the regeneration and consummation of the Unity of all worlds in the perfect Unity of Man and Godhead; for the Christian Kabbalist this would be interpreted as the incarnated Christ. The many Christian apostrophes and attributions of the Mariner are of a sufficient ambiguity at times to allow the poem to be interpreted according to a "strict" Kabbalistic symbology, e. g., the use of "saint" is not exclusively Christian and the reference to "Mary Queen" is equated with the term "Holy Mother" in the gloss to allow the Christian Kabbalist exegetical leeway.¹²² In a Kabbalistic reading the Christian terminology would be better construed as part of the "antique" language of the poem, counterpointing a superstitious Mariner's perception of the spiritual underpinnings of the universe of Creation ("ne mens assuefacta hodiernae vitae minutiis") against the deeper mystical dogma (the sapientia of more ancient times) he is forced to experience if not to understand ("non tantum, ea quae sciri possunt, scire; sed etiam, quae sciri non possunt, discernere et discriminare").

Thus, in short, for the Kabbalistic interpreter, The Rime of The Ancient Mariner is another paradigm, along with the stories of Cain, Noah, and Jonah, of Man's voyage into the center of the mystery of the Ain Soph, the maelstrom of theogony and cosmogony: the failure to "read" with purest mind and heart the divine mysteries inscribed in the Torah (the "design book" of

¹²²Patai on the continuity of the "Hebrew Goddess" and the shape of the Marian dogma, e. g. 272-73.

Creation); his arbitrary, even blind, stumblings and trespasses despite the Unity of Godhead and Creation; the sustaining hand of Merciful Providence and the chastising "other hand" of Divine Justice; and Man's ever-renewing search to find the One who can respond to his "simplistic" encapsulations of not so "simple" Wisdom. He is doomed sorrowfully to journey farther and farther away from the joyful mystery and perfect "prayer" of the Marriage-Feast, equipped only with a confounding proverb capturing the essence of his voyage--physical, intellectual, or soulful.

But in the garden-bower the bride
And bride-maids singing are:
And hark the little vesper bell
Which biddeth me to prayer (593-596).

A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse;
a spring shut up, a fountain sealed...A
fountain of gardens, a well of living water,
and streams from Lebanon. Awake, O north
wind, and come, thou south; blow upon my
garden, that the spices thereof may flow
out. Let my beloved come into his garden
and eat his pleasant fruits (Song of Solomon: 4:12-16).

CHAPTER VI

"DIRECTIONS IN FURTHER KABBALISTIC READINGS OF COLERIDGE POEMS"

Essentially, three theses characterize the true Kabbalist's contemplation. First and foremost, the Torah, the spoken and written Word of YHVH, is the key to the resolution of the puzzle of the multitude of Creation and Man's isolation from the spiritual worlds of Yetsirah, Beriah, and Assiah. Secondly, each letter of the Torah literally conceals the identity of one or more of the ten holy creative "words" of YHVH in Ain Soph, the Sephiroth. The world of Malkuth is a literal, multivocal "translation" of the Inexpressible Tetragrammaton, the nefandum sacrosanctum. Finally, the true Kabbalist--through the humble and sincere penetration to the sod of the design of Creation via the Torah--reunites the "upper" and "lower" heavens and celebrates the marriage of Heaven and Earth, the ziwug of Shekinah and the High King on a mystical plane. For the true Kabbalist, the world of Malkuth thus becomes beatifically transparent, as he himself becomes One with the joyous hymn of all Creation.

Setting aside his eccentric definition of Kabbalah as a "vision of belatedness," one can wholeheartedly accord with Harold Bloom's approach to Kabbalah as a transcendental "theory of rhetoric," a theory comparable to Coleridge's conception of a "metaphysical Etymology."¹ These three elemental theses have already been discussed in connection with Col-

¹CNB II, #2784, 16.338.

eridge's "appreciation" of Kabbalah evidenced in his prose writings. In this final chapter, I would like to briefly survey these elements in Coleridge's other poetry and suggest some Kabbalistic themes for further study in reference to "Kubla Khan" and Christabel.

But to simply pluck from a poem an isolated element that seems characteristically Kabbalistic is to deny the integralness of the poem and, in turn, of the Kabbalistic tradition. For example, in the opening stanza of "The Destiny of Nations" (1-26)², the poet refers to the world of sense as "Symbolical, one mighty alphabet" (19), certainly evocative of the Sepher Yetsirah's dictum: "Twenty-two letters...He formed by means of them the whole creation and everything that should be created" (II, 2). But this line is followed by a Platonic metaphrase (20-23) indebted to the opening allegory of Book VII of The Republic. We might, thus, better interpret the "mighty alphabet" according to Platonic or neo-Platonic metaphysics, except that a number of other elements reinforce the possible Kabbalistic indebtedness of the "alphabet" allusion. The opening lines of the poem strongly establish the Triune God of the Judaeo-Christian tradition (most strongly in Drafts II and III of the poem): "The I AM, the Word, the Life, the Living God!" (6). This is very much unlike the abstract $\tau' \alpha \gamma \alpha \theta \omicron \upsilon$ of Platonism. Moreover, this world of sense is accorded a Shekinah-like aspect, much in keeping with Kabbalah's identification of Shekinah and the sense world of Malkuth: "Effulgent, as through clouds that veil his blaze" (17). Coleridge often referred to the Shekinah as the "Veil of the Divinity" and related Shekinah to the dispersed, cloudy

²S. T. Coleridge, Coleridge's Poems, ed. E. H. Coleridge, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1912).

light of the Sun.³ There is even a possible allusion to the Lurianic doctrine of Tsim-tsum of the YHVH of Ain Soph.

...Infinite Love,
Whose latence is the plentitude of All,
Thou with retracted beams, and self-eclipse
Veiling, revealest thine eternal Sun (23-26).

The following stanza, in a possible continuation of the Jewish mystical vein, distinguishes "mechanistic philosophies" from the monotheistic and mystical theology of the "Living God" of the Judaeo-Christian heritage--"automotive" Monads (47) from the vital, possibly Sephirothic "Properties" of God (36). Or perhaps, the archangelic, creative Sephiroth are alluded to in a later stanza: "If there be Beings of higher class than Man,/I deem no nobler province they possess,/Than by disposal of apt circumstance/To rear up kingdoms..." (127-30).

The theme of the "alphabets" of the sense world crops up a number of times in Coleridge's verse. Most beautifully, this "alphabet" is assembled into the "eternal language" of the Romantic's "torah," Nature:

The lovely shapes and sounds intelligible
Of that eternal language, which thy God
Utters, who from eternity doth teach
Himself in all, and all things in himself
("Frost at Midnight" --59-62).

In "Lines Written in the Album at Elbingerode" (1799), the "outward forms," without "man's sublimer spirit" (36) perceiving the "Life within," appear as only "Fair cyphers" (17-18). So does the author of the Sepher Zohar warn against reading the Torah as only peshat and not as the sod-concealing

³See Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit, p. 42; CNB II, #2677, 18.189, #2639, 18.191; CL III, "March 12, 1811."

plan of Creation. Reciprocally, the "Fair cyphers" of Creation bespeak their Creator and sing forth his praises for all men to hear and read in the "Hymn Before Sun-Rise, in the Vale of Chamouni" (1802). "Ye signs and wonders of the element!/Utter forth God, and fill the hills with praise!" (68-69).

In a verse formulation of his definition of the poet's "Primary Imagination," Coleridge could almost be drawing upon the fountain-head of all Kabbalistic theory contained in Genesis' rhetorical refrain, "And God said, Let there be....And God called," culminating in the most beautiful apotheosis of Man's imaginative powers of creation in tandem with the Divine's: "And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field....And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living" (Gen. ii. 20; iii.20). In "Ad Vilmum Axiologum" (? 1805), the poet enthuses over Wordsworth's Orphic power. "All have welcomed thy Voice, and receive and retain and prolong it! This is the word of the Lord! it is spoken, and Beings Eternal/Live and are borne as an Infant" (6-8). Even the heavens speak of the mysteries that the "groaning world" fails "to read alright." "Observe that stars and planets exist through a covenant which is the firmament of the heavens, in which they are inscribed and engraved....For when the moon is dominant and is illumed by that stream which flows and issues forth, all the lower heavens and their hosts receive increased light and the stars which have charge of the earth of the earth all function and cause plants and trees to grow, and enrich the earth, and even the waters and the fishes of the sea are more productive. Many emissaries of divine justice also traverse the world, because all are in good spirits and full of energy when there

is gladness in the king's palace" (Bereshith, 34a). But in "Coeli Enarrant" (? 1830): "No constellations alphabet the sky: /The Heavens one large Black Letter only shew" (6-7), and the earth groans beneath a heavy task.⁴

Concerning the seven Words of Creation, the Sephiroth of "construction," Kathleen Coburn was the first to remark on the probability of their identity with "the Lampads seven" (76) of Coleridge's "Ode to the Departing Year" (1796).⁵ Coburn, however, fails to note the possibility that the description which precedes the Notebook verse might actually be that of the Kabbalistic Microprosopus detailed in the Sifra di Tseniuta. "With scant grey white hairs, with fore-top bald and high/He gazes still, his eyeless Face all Eye--/...Revealed to none of all the Angelic State...."⁶ Though there is no actual evidence of the fact, Coleridge may have contemplated incorporating, in some form or other, the Sephirothic schema into his "Hymns to the Sun, the Moon, and the Elements--six hymns",⁷ which, in a letter of 1821, became seven in number.

However, the earliest possible poetic allusion to the Sephiroth may occur in the alternate lines (78-84) to the apocalyptic Religious Musings (1794-96) concerning the "Seven Spirits" who not only "shower" Judgment on the world but also Mercy. Granted, the "Seven Spirits" are clearly indebted to Revelations xvi. 1; but, in the Gospel of St. John, these "Angels" are totally rigorous and take no part in the merciful cleansing ("salutary wrath") of the earth. However, the lines seem to suggest the dual character of the Sephirothic tree of Geburah and Hesed, a post-lapsarian duality also expressed

⁴See CNB II, #3107, 19.58.

⁵See CNB III, #4073-74.

⁶Lines 20-26 from "Limbo" (1817).

⁷CNB I, #174.

in "The Two Founts" (9-10). Moreover, Coleridge and many other commentators have noted the possibility of demonstrating profound correspondences between the doctrine of Kabbalah and the Book of Revelations. Still, the reference in the "Ode to the Departing Year" (1796)--"the Lampads seven/(The mystic Words of Heaven)"(76-77)--more clearly reflects the symbology and the creative theosophy of the Sepher Zohar.

In two shorter poems, one might also read a Sephirothic indebtedness. In "Ad Vilmum Axiologum" (? , 1805), the "divinized" poet utters his imaginative "Fiat!" and "creates" a universe of Spirit: "...it is spoken, and Beings Eternal/Live and are borne as an Infant; the Eternal begets the Immortal...." (7-8). In the fascinating "Ne Plus Ultra" (? , 1826) which seems to anticipate "black hole" astronomy (5) as well as describe the Ain Soph (11-12) in its necessarily antipathetic state, the "Lampads seven" reappear in their special Sephirothic character, far removed above the angels. The Sephirothic "Lampads" hover above the Merkabah, the dynamically cataclysmic nucleus of the superior Sephiroth radiating from the hidden dark Ain Soph. The "Ne Plus Ultra" is evocatively Boehmean in its vivid metaphysical compression and released mystical energy.

The unrevealable
And hidden one, whose breath
Gives wind full to the fires of Hell!...
Save to the Lampads Seven
Reveal'd to none of all th'Angelic State
Save to the Lampads Seven
That watch the throne of Heaven! (11-21).⁸

As has already been discussed in Coleridge's "Appreciation" of the Kabbalah, Coleridge associated Shekinah, traditionally identified with the

⁸See also Sepher Yetsirah, vi. 6,8; and Patai's The Hebrew Goddess on the identity of the "Great Dragon," p. 237.

radiant pleroma of the Tabernacle (the earthly Merkabah), with the luminous Bride of the world of Malkuth: YHVH's glorious immanence in the world of Creation. Moreover, Coleridge, via Boehme's Jungfrau-Sophia (Einbildungskraft), in at least one instance identified Shekinah with the power of the Imagination, as an irradiating "inward Creatrix." One might "read" the beautiful lines 37-43 in "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison" (1797) as exemplifying this sensual and imaginative indwelling of the Almighty in Nature and in the Poet's soul.

...So my friend
 Struck with deep joy may stand, as I have stood,
 ...yea, gazing round
 On the wide landscape, gaze 'till all doth seem
 Less gross than bodily; and of such hues
 As veil the Almighty Spirit, when yet he makes
 Spirits perceive his presence.

The identification, however, seems to be a bit too arbitrary and the description interchangeable with other Romantic poets' "visionary gleam" of decorporealized Nature. The distinctive Kabbalistic note of bridal imagery in connection with Shekinah is totally lacking.

In the "Ode to the Departing Year" (1796), whose rhapsodist drifts in and out of Time discoursing on the tyrant "fiend-hag" and "Albion...my mother isle," the concluding four lines depict the rhapsodist sinking into a "mystical" state of contemplative self-consciousness, a respite from the turmoil of his visions. One may recall that earlier in the poem, before the "Vision" of the Year's Travails had seized the poet's voice, the Sephiroth-like "Lampads seven,/(The mystic Words of Heaven)" allow the "Planetary Angel of the Earth...to address the Supreme Being." The rhapsodist returns to his Ossianic rocky heights from which he had descended ("twas on no earthly shore/My soul beheld thy Vision!") and seeks to be reunited with what one may more surely identify as the Kabbalistic Shekinah.

Now I recentre my immortal mind
 In the deep Sabbath of meek self-content;
 Cleans'd from the vaporous passions that bedim
 God's Image, sister of the Seraphim (158-61).

"God's Image, sister of the Seraphim" occurs in the Notebooks (I: #272) in connection with other contemplative notations on the "Sanctuary" and "God's image the Soul."⁹ The feminine identity, the luminosity, and the association with the Sabbath-night of ziwwug between Shekinah and High King unite in these four lines to suggest the possible Kabbalistic indebtedness. But like the preceding possible Sephirothic allusion (76-77)--to what purpose? Both seem stray fragments in an already ecstatically fragmentary rhapsody. Plus, the note of joy that attends the contemplative unification with the ziwwug of Shekinah and High King is missing. In another poem in which the Spirit again "sweeps" the lutanist's strings, I believe one may see the profounder influence of Coleridge's familiarity with and personal shaping of the Kabbalistic Shekinah, though no implicit "hint" seems to occur as in the final line of the "Ode to the Departing Year."

"Dejection: An Ode" (1802), the peculiar epithalamion for William Wordsworth, in two stanzas evokes a fascinating portrait of Shekinah with a most characteristic Kabbalistic qualification. In stanza Four of "Dejection: An Ode", we encounter the traditional Shekinah light-filled immanence; "A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud/Enveloping the Earth" (54-55). But, as detailed in stanza Five, "this fair luminous mist" (62) actually proceeds from the soul itself as a "beauty-making power" (63). As does the sanua in his Sabbath night meditations on the mysteries concealed in the Torah, the soul bedecks Nature in a "wedding garment" (49). As al-

⁹Patai, on Cherubim, pp. 101-38, passim.

ready detailed in the "reading" of The Rime, all Nature joins in a "joyous" hymn of celebration when the ziwwug of Shekinah/Matrona and the High King is accomplished. Here too in "Dejection: An Ode," the soul is described as issuing forth "A sweet and potent voice, of its own birth,/Of all sweet sounds the life and element!" (57-58). Joy is the keynote of this "strong music in the soul" (60). Just as the Kabbalistic sanua ritually unites the upper and lower heavens in his joyous contemplations of the union of Shekinah and High King, so also "A new Earth and new Heaven" transpire for the "pure of heart" whose "joy" is returned a thousandfold, "Which wedding Nature to us gives in dower" (68). Thus, we have the characteristic "wedding" imagery associated with Shekinah, the "joyous" paean of the Universe, the luminous immanence, and the uniquely Kabbalistic note that the ziwwug is accomplished by the sanua (here as poet), and that the universe of Creation, via the "shaping spirit of Imagination" (86), comes to life and joyous fruition in the "sweet and potent voice" of the "pure, in their purest hour" (65). The Shekinah becomes the poet; and the hymn of praise fills his heart in an ecstatic rapture transforming the Universe, transfusing the Universe into the poet's voice.

Joy is the sweet voice, Joy the luminous cloud--
 We in ourselves rejoice!
 And thence flows all that charms or ear or sight,
 All melodies the echoes of that voice,
 All colours a suffusion from that light (71-75).

So also in the Sepher Zohar:

Then the world was firmly established, and all the supernal casements were opened to pour forth light, and all the worlds experienced such joy as had never been known to them before, and celestial and terrestrial beings alike broke forth in song. And the song which

they sang is the "Song of Songs"...This song comprises the whole Torah: it is a song in which those that are above and those that are below participate; a song formed in the likeness of the world above, which is the supernal Sabbath, a song through which the supernal Name is crowned. Therefore it is holy of holies. Why so? Because all its words are instinct with love and joy (Terumah, 143a-b).

The keynote of "Joy" in connection with Shekinah as the "Shaping spirit of Imagination" (Boehme's jubilant Sophia-Jungfrau) occurs in "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison" (1797) but here dramatized in the poet's mystical contemplation of Nature.

...So my friend
Struck with deep joy may stand, as I have stood,
Silent with swimming senses; yea, gazing round
On the wide landscape, gaze till all doth seem
Less gross than bodily; and of such hues
As veil the Almighty Spirit; when yet he makes
Spirits perceive his presence (37-43).

"Dejection: An Ode" (1802) concludes with a wish, perhaps an advice, that reflects the teaching of the Mariner (612-17) who like the persona of "Dejection" kept a long death watch "vigil."

To her may all things live, from pole to pole,
Their life the eddying of her living soul (135-36).

Considering the Mind of man as a faint reflex of the Universal Mind, which is God, it follows that any human idea is the vague image of a perfect idea, which is of God. Man endeavors to idealise this dim mind-picture, and the result is a symbol which, so far as human intelligence can reach, will be in the likeness of the perfect idea. Man cannot think without the use of symbol (Spurious excerpt from Sepher Yetsirah).

While a review of critical literature concerned with theological interpretations of "Kubla Khan" and the other poems would be appropriate in

a full-length Kabbalistic study of these poems, this chapter intends only brief sketches of possible Kabbalistic readings. Moreover, these sketches are proposed with a certain amount of scholarly skepticism as to the cogency of Kabbalistic interpretations of poems that, as far as documentary evidence exists, were not expressly written with a Kabbalistic intent. However, "Kubla Kahn" like The Rime of the Ancient Mariner is expressly connected with a prose work that discussed Kabbalistic doctrine with a modicum of scholarly sophistication: in this instance, Purchas: His Pilgrimage. Concerning this "Vision in a Dream," "Kubla Khan"--whose narrator is twice removed from the real, waking world--and transported to a "mystical" state which Coleridge described as characteristic of Divine Creation ("if that indeed can be called composition in which all the images rose up before him as things").¹⁰ I shall offer two complementary Kabbalistic perspectives: one flowing from the Sepher Yetsirah and the other from the Sepher Zohar. Basically, the critical intent of these Kabbalistic readings is not to trace sources of images or illuminate parallels of phraseology but rather to suggest the possible interpretation of the themes of the poems in a Kabbalistic light--however distant or modified by whatever other poetic intentions Coleridge may have had. In short, the emphasis is on "why" rather than "how," if the two questions can be separated.

Thomas McFarland has already remarked that the symbolism of "Kubla Khan" should be read anagogically. But rather than limit the anagogical interpretation to a translation of Genesis ii. 8-10--"A poem written by Coleridge that ends with the word 'paradise', and begins with the creation

¹⁰See CNB, I, #1619, 21.737.

of a garden, should be interpreted, I believe, as a poem about God and Eden" ¹¹--we might extend the province of the poem to include the predominant themes of the Book of Creation, which involves much more than the depiction of an anthropomorphic divinity and an earthly paradise though twice removed from the demi-god Kubla and his "stately pleasure dome."

The dominant theme of the Sepher Yetsirah is the "literal" creation of the Universe. Within the first four lines of "Kubla Kahn," the key mysteries of the Sepher Yetsirah are expressed: line two particularly encapsulates the essence of the Book of Formation. Kubla's mighty "decree" is the "Fiat!" wherewith the whole poem is created; Kubla's "Fiat!" will be complemented by the persona's own musical symphonious decree that imaginatively recreates "that dome in air" (46). In Sepher Yetsirah, one will recall: "He created His Universe by the three forms of expression: Numbers, Letters, and Words" (I. 1.), signifying the Creation by the ten Sephiroth and twenty-two basal letters of Hebrew and Chaldee. Moreover, the choice of a "dome" which floats "midway on the waves" (32) of a "lifeless" and a "sunless" ocean, a chaos of waters (Tohu and Bohu), suggests a basic Semitic cosmology to the poem in which the earth floats like a concave disk above the waters of Sheol, and the stars and planets are suspended in the dome of ether, punctuated by the floodgates of heaven. Continuous with the teaching of Genesis, all Creation is depicted as proceeding from the "Spirit of the living Elohim" who carved Creation from the Air, by "Voice, Spirit, and Word" (I. 10). "He created from the formless and made the non-existent exist; and He formed

¹¹Thomas McFarland, "The Origin and Significance of Coleridge's Theory of Secondary Imagination," in New Perspectives on Coleridge and Wordsworth, ed. G. H. Hartman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), p. 203.

large columns out of intangible air" (II. 6).

The "dome" is further qualified as one of "pleasure"--a "pleasure" quite innocent and Edenic in Coleridge's adaptation of the Purchas' passage. The greatest mystery of the Sepher Yetsirah, which has yet to be resolved, is contained in a conundrum: "Nothing excels ONG (pleasure) in good, and nothing excels NGO (plague) in evil" (II. 4). Eighteen hundred years ago, when Rabbi Akiba ben Joseph reduced into writing the secret tradition of the Kabbalists, he hesitated to unveil the Arcanum of the Great Symbol. For this reason he embodied it in the aforementioned riddle. The conundrum concerns the Creation of the universe by one perfect combination of letters, which the practical cabalist would discover for his selfish ends. "Twenty-two basal letters: they are placed together in a ring, as a wall with two hundred and thirty-one gates. The ring may be put in rotation forwards or backwards" (II. 4). The ring or wall consists of ten independently moveable concentric circles of combinations of letters. "How did He combine, weigh, and exchange them? A with all and all with A; B with all and all with B; G with all and all with G; and all of them turned around. Hence they go forth through 231 gates, and thus it comes about that the whole creation and all language proceed from one combination of letters" (II. 5). The "pleasure" indicated in the conundrum suggests, to some researchers, the harmony and beauty of the Universe consequent upon holy meditations on the ten Sephiroth and the overcoming of the estrangement from the perception of the Unity of the Universe. Thus in "Kubla Khan," the "stately pleasure dome" is surrounded by "twice five miles of fertile ground/With walls and towers...girdled round" (6-7).

The identity of "Alph, the sacred river" has long been debated. In Yetsirah, "Aleph"¹² is the first letter created, a "mother" letter; its signification is the Ox, which Coleridge was well aware of.¹³ Later, Aleph's fertilizing character springs forth in the fountain, like "chaffing grain beneath the thresher's flail" (22). Just as "twice five miles" are measured out for the province of the pleasure dome, so also the source of the sacred river is solemnly scored as "Five miles meandering with a mazy motion" (25). The persona notes that the river flows through caverns and subsides in "caverns measureless to man" (4, 27). The keynote "measureless" by the numerative power of humankind recalls the correlative character of the Sepher Yetsirah as a treatise in number and measurement by the Divine Architect of the Universe. "Ten ineffable Sephiroth, ten and not nine, ten and not eleven: understand with wisdom and apprehend with care; examine by means of them and search them out; know, count, and write" (I. 4). YHVH is depicted as "designing," "weighing," "measuring," and "equilibrating" throughout the Sepher Yetsirah. The Law of Equilibrium is the fundamental law of the Kabbalah. "Three mothers: A.M.Sh. Their foundation is the scale of Merit and the scale of Guilt, and the tongue (Aleph) is an equilibrating law between the two (Mem and Shin)" (III. 1). In this verse, the "Alph" is often regarded as a symbol of Man by whose Will Good and Evil are mastered and balanced. Man, according to Kabbalistic theosophy, was capable of all things on a minor scale; for each part of his body miniaturized in some way the larger plan of the universe of Creation, the ten Sephiroth, and the simulacrum of God. However, Man is kept from one contemplation by even the highest

¹² Masoretic vowel contraction to render Aleph--"Alph."

¹³ CNB II, #2450, 17.24.

powers of his Measurement, the source of all Measurement, the Illimitable One, the Ain Soph. "The Lord is One and the Formator is one and hath no second (beside Him): what number canst thou count before one?" (I. 7). The "sacred river," Alph, flows from the Immeasurable and returns to the numberless One. "...The Infinity of the Beginning and the Infinity of the End, the infinity of the Good and the infinity of the Evil, the infinity of the Height and the infinity of the Depth...and only one Lord God, the trust King rules them all from his holy dwelling in all eternity" (I. 5).

One note on the icy caves of the "sunny pleasure-dome" before proceeding to some comments on the "dark" side of "Kubla Khan." As has already been mentioned, the Sepher Yetsirah describes a dynamic tension-filled dialectic of opposites, equilibrated throughout the Universe by a third element. Air is carved from Spirit, water proceeds from air, fire flows from water: results of the "fusion" of the "mother" letters (III). The seven "double" letters equivocate Life and Death, Peace and Misfortune, Wisdom and Folly. And to the twelve "simple letters correspond the twelve opposing directions of the Universe, the Zodiac signs, and the physical members of Man. "He made them according to the order of a battle, even one against the other made God" (V. 6). The "miricle or rare device" is the equilibrated union of fire and water, earth and air in "That sunny dome! those caves of ice!" (47) which the persona would create in his "symphonious" song. Perhaps the Sepher Yetsirah can give us an even more specific and anagogical answer as to why the choice of "ice" and an interpretation of the construction of the "dome" as the Creation of the universe of manifestation. "He wrote and formed therein

twenty-two letters, from the formless and void--mire and clay; He designed them as a platband, He hewed them as a wall, He covered them as a building, He poured snow over them and it became earth...." (I. 11).

The central stanza of "Kubla Khan" (12-36) describes the fracture and fragmentation of the course of the sacred river by the "deep romantic chasm." The stanza is characterized by images of "ceaseless turmoil" and "tumult," culminating in the "Ancestral voices prophesying war!" However, "fragmentation" finally gives way to the "mingled measure" in the "shadow of the dome of pleasure." Foregoing a Lurianic interpretation of this unity dissolving into beneficial and creative multitude until the Zoharic glossing of this poem, I would like to note a correlative Yetsiratic axiom to the theme of the dynamic equilibrium of Creation: "He made them according to the order of a battle, even one against the other made God" (V. 6). The essence of equilibrium is opposition or the disharmony of forces. Atop the "fragmented" images of this stanza (20), of the mighty sacred river "at once and ever" (23) shattered and animated, floats "mid-way on the waves" the image of the dome of pleasure--an image of equilibrium. The locale of the chasm and the "cedar cover," moreover, is regarded as "holy and enchanted" but in a "romantic" sense. We cannot but interpret the "Ancestral voices prophesying war" as darkly threatening to the "sunny pleasure-dome"; but, if seen from a Yetsiratic perspective, these "voices" can be regarded as a supportive undercurrent, a sustaining bass treble to the creative "Fiat!" of the Khan. For the Khan hears the discord in the "tumult" of the "sacred river" which we may presume is enfolded by the "walls and towers" of his domain; in other words, under his extensive pur-

view and subject to his creative "decree" as well. "He made them according to the art of warfare, arranged them as a wall, and armed them as for battle" (V. 19). If we construe the ancient voices' prophecy in a Yetsiratic light, we have a description of the equilibrated character of Creation according to the "ancestral" tradition of the patriarchs and Kabbalists, for those initiated in the true reading of the Torah's design of Creation. For "prophecy" connotes primarily the declaration of divine purpose under the inspiration of the divine "Fiat!" The Sepher Yetsirah describes all Creation--the Universe, the Year, and Man (VI. 3)--as the balancing of dynamically opposing forces.

8. The dragon in the Universe is like a king on his throne; the celestial sphere in the Year is like a king in a province; the heart (in Man) is like a king in warfare. 9. God hath also set one thing against the other; the good against the evil and the evil against the good, good from good and evil from evil; the good marks out the evil and the evil marks out the good; good is reserved for the good ones and evil is reserved for the evil ones. 10. Three: each one stands alone for himself; one merited, one loaded with guilt, and one equilibrating between the two. 11. Seven are divided, three against three and one is equilibrating between the two groups. 12. Twelve are in warfare, three friends and three enemies, three life-givers, three destroyers...and God, a trusty King, ruleth them all from His holy place in all eternity (VI).

The "war" prophesied by the knowing ancestors is none other than the delimiting and illimitable Multeity of the Universe into which the Unity of Creation is always on the brink of dissolving. "Through word and dale the sacred river ran,/Then reached the caverns measureless to man,/And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean" (26-28). All Creation proceeds from

and returns to the Ain Soph

And the two women of the poem? One "wails" and the other "sings." The "wailing" of the women for the "demon-lover" is resolved, along with the "panting" of the earth and the "tumult" (confusion of voices) of the river, into a "mingled measure." The "Abyssinian maid" sings in a measured "symphony and song," in a kind of Appollonian Vision contrasting dynamically with her "Dionysiac" sister. Both are haunted by an experience which they strive to recall, arcana of the flesh and the soul. And the persona, may we call him sanua in the final stanza (37-54), too strives to recreate his visionary experience of a "knowledge" of Creation. The "poet" at two remove from the arcane experience attempts to salvage, to reunite, the images of the vision; "yet, with the exception of some eight or ten lines and images, all the rest had passed away like the images on the surface of a stream into which a stone had been cast...without the after restoration of the latter!" And Coleridge is thrice removed from the "vision."

What might the "experience" have been? Consistent with an "anagogical" interpretation of "Kubla Khan" as a Kabbalistic metaphrase of Biblical Creation, the women have been granted a knowledge of the hidden secrets of the Universe, however, as described in the apocryphal Book of Enoch. "Now there were two hundred angels who descended on Mount Armon, and it was from this time that the mountain, received its designation, which signifies Mount of the Oath....They took wives, with whom they had intercourse, to whom they also taught magia, the art of enchantment and the diverse properties of roots and trees."¹⁴

The persona equilibrates between the "one merited" and the "one

¹⁴Lowes construes Abora as "Amara." Why not as "Armon"?

loaded with guilt," attempting to utilize the "spell" to fashion a "creation" of his own, a creation propagated by "delight" as Khan's building of the "dome" is motivated by "pleasure." "And God saw that it was good." However, the "knowledge" of the sanua is a dangerous falsification of the methodical possession of the sod of Torah, gained through a visionary moment (50) and, perhaps, induced by the awareness heightening "properties of roots and trees" (53-54) granted by the fallen angels. But the sanua himself realizes the fatally seductive powers of a practical exercise of "divine creation," that would only bring down madness and estrangement from the Divine. Without the "covenant" with YHVH, the Wisdom to Create is merely vacuous tracery of shadows in air. "And when our father Abraham, peace be with him, had come, he beheld, contemplated, studied, and understood this; he formed and designed till he had reached it, then the Lord of the Universe, blessed be His name, appeared to him. He took him to His bosom and kissed him on the head and called Him Abraham his friend...." (VI. 16).

One final Yetsiratic note on "Kubla Kahn." The old mystics sought to harmonize the outer form of a book with its inward significance, and the number 54 is in perfect correspondence with the anagogical subject matter of "Kubla Kahn." When YHVH wrote a "Number," or a "Letter," in each of the thirty-two Paths of Wisdom, forces were created from which everything was formed. By means of their symbols--otherwise "Numbers" and "Letters"--these forces became apprehensible to the human mind. Thus, by means of their numbers and names (their symbols), they can be communicated "to holy men, after long toil, long experience of divine things, and long meditations thereon." To reach an absolute knowledge of only one of these mysti-

cal paths of divine wisdom is, however, impossible for the human mind alone. He who endeavors to climb to these supreme heights of wisdom must first pass through the "Fifty Gates of Understanding." In other words, he must acquire an encyclopaedic knowledge of all science before apprehending the perfect unifying pronunciation of Tetragrammaton (50 plus 4), the "Fiat!" of Creation. The Tetragrammaton in its letters sums up the whole doctrine of the grades, while as a name it is the pivot of the entire Holy Writ. But Tetragrammaton must never be pronounced by mortal man.

And all should cry, Beware! Beware!
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread, (49-52).¹⁵

Let us now turn to some passages in the Sepher Zohar to illuminate a number of the key images in "Kubla Khan" : the sacred river and garden, the chasm, "the woman wailing for her demon lover," the prophecy of war, and the "honey-dew" and "milk of Paradise."

...According to the lore of dreams a river seen in a dream is a presage of peace, for so it is written: "Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river" (Is. lxvi, 12)(Miqez, 193b).

Referring back to the "prayer" from the Idra Rabba quoted in the first chapter of this dissertation, one recalls that the Sephiroth have been symbolized as pouring forth Creation as mighty streams.¹⁶ All of the elements of the world of Malkuth, of the olam ha'assiah, are reflections of the processes of the Sephiroth, the Creative Utterances of YHVH. The assignment

¹⁵See Genesis xi. 4-8.

¹⁶See also Bo, 34b-35b.

of the name "Al(e)ph" to the "sacred river" carries a special anagogical significance, characterizing the seminal, unifying nature of the stream in the world of the poem. "Aleph, Aleph, although I will begin the creation of the world with the Beth, thou wilt remain the first of the letters. My unity shall not be expressed except through thee, on thee shall be based all calculations and operations of the world, and unity shall not be expressed save by the letter Aleph" (Bereshith, 3b). The mighty stream of the Sephiroth flows from a hidden source¹⁷ known only to the initiated:¹⁸ the Ain Soph.¹⁹ "...Where Alph, the sacred river, ran/Through caverns measureless to man" (3-4).²⁰ The flashing stream is the revelation of the splendor ("Zohar") of YHVH, the radiance of the supernal Wisdom.²¹

Particularly notable, in a Kabbalistic reading of "Kubla Khan," is the circular path of the "sacred river" through the poem's garden, back through the "caverns measureless to man," to the "sunless," "lifeless" sea-- "rendering the world complete and whole" (Bereshith, 29a-b). "'A river went forth from Eden' (Gen. ii. 10)...We have learnt that the river sends forth a deep stream with the oil of plentitude to water the Garden and feed the trees and the shoots. These streams flow on and unite in two pillars which are called Zaddik, and from hence they flow further till they are all gathered into the place called Sea, which is the Sea of Wisdom. But the current of that river never ceases, and therefore the streams flow back to the two pillars, Nezah and Hod, whence they traverse that Zaddik to find there blessings

¹⁷Bereshith, 29a.

¹⁸Vayaqhel, 210b.

¹⁹Bereshith, 26b.

²⁰See also Lech Lecha, 95b.

²¹Shemoth, 2a; Noah, 73a; Vayehi, 247b.

and joys....Whence these two are joined, all worlds have gladness and blessing, and there is peace among upper and lower beings" (Ahare Moth, 58a).

The realization of this Supernal River in the world of Assiah is the great river of Eden. The ever-flowing celestial river gathers within itself all things and is the repository of all riches. All blessing flows from it; all needs are satisfied.²² From it, all living things, all souls spring forth.²³ "It is this river which is the support upon which the world rests. It waters the Garden and causes it to bear fruits which spring up and blossom in the world, and which uphold the world and makes possible the study of the Torah" (Lech Lecha, 82b).

And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;
And here were forests ancient as the hills,
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery (8-11).

But the luminous Supernal River of Wisdom, proceeding from the olam ha-beriah, necessarily becomes fragmented in the earthly Eden of the lower heavens. The stream of light emanating from the yod of the first manifestation of YHVH shatters the kelipboth (shells) of Creation in a Lurianic "metamyth" of the process of Creation. "A mighty fountain momentarily was forced: /Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst/Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail" (19-21). "So Scripture says: 'And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became four heads' (Gen. II, 10). The term 'it was parted' signifies that the food and drink carried by that river is received in its entirety by the garden, and thence is scattered into the four corners of the world; and many are they that wait to receive the drink and

²²Cf. Vayehi, 244b; Miqez, 194a.

²³Cf. Vayesheb. 180a.

food from thence!" (Vayigash, 208a). In connection with this passage, one notes the appropriateness of the metaphor for the fertilizing power of the "mighty fountain": "Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail" (22).

The Sepher Zohar is particular in describing the release of the supernal river from the ziwwug of Matrona and the Holy King, activating and fertilizing all Creation.²⁴ Many critics have noted the "sexual" cosmography of "Kubla Kahn" which may be accounted for by a more detailed Kabalistic reading of the poem as describing the "mysteries" of sex.

The fragmentation of "Alph" is shadowed by the image of the "woman wailing for her demon-lover," an inversion of the holy ziwwug: "From the one on high there is a flowing out of upper waters, and from the one below there is a reciprocal welling up of water from the female principle towards the male principle in a perfect ecstasy" (Vayeze, 153b). Accordingly, the course of the river "flung up momentarily" is depicted as tumultuous and "seething"--hardly an image of peace and blessing. However, in spite of the infernal coupling which haunts the "romantic chasm," the mighty stream continues on its "Five miles meandering with a mazy motion" (25). The "sexual" relationship of the "fountain" to its river course is well-glossed by a passage from the Zohar, which underscores the anagogical character of the "Alph" and its connection with the all-pervasive key mystery of ziwwug--the emblem of Unity in the upper and lower heavens.

Hence: "And thou shalt be like a watered garden" (Is. LVIII, 11), that is like the celestial garden whose supernal waters never fail, but flow on for

²⁴Cf. Jethro, 90a; Emor, 97b.

ever and ever, "and like a spring of waters, whose waters fail not," alluding to the river, that issues from Eden and flows on for all eternity. Observe that the "well of living waters" is a symbol within a symbol for guiding faith. There is the well which is the very source of waters, and there is the well which is fed by the source of the waters. There are thus two grades, which are, however, really one with two aspects, male and female, in fitting unison. The well and the issue of waters are one, designated by the name of "well," it being at once the supernal never-ceasing fountain and the well that is filled by it. And whoever gazes at the well gazes at the true object of faith. This is the symbol which the patriarchs transmitted in digging the well, in such a way as to indicate that the source and the well are indissoluble (Tol'doth, 141a-b).

The paradoxical Time element used in describing the course of the river and the fountain's genesis--"momently" and "at once and ever"--perfectly captures the "symbolic" nature of the Alph's progress in anagogy.

"From the womb of Whom (Mi) came forth the ice" (Job, XXXVIII, 26) which has been explained to refer to the highest firmament over the other seven. At the bottom again there is a firmament, the lowest of all, which has no light; and on that account the highest firmament joins with it in such a way as to insert in it the two letters of its own name, so that it is called Yam (sea) being, as it were the sea of that highest firmament, because all the other firmaments serve as streams (to convey its light), and flow into this lowest one as into a sea" (Lech Lecha, 86a).

This passage suggests a number of Kabbalistic interpretations for the "miracle of rare device/A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!" (35-36). The Sepher Zohar appropriately describes the nature and origins of supernal phenomena with paradoxical combinations of natural phenomena. The supernal origin of the "sacred river" in the "caverns measureless to

man" is particularly Zoharic in its connection with the Garden of the Khan's domain. The "caverns" in Sepher Zohar are associated with the passages to the upper heavens: the descent into the abyss is the ascent into the firmament of Mi. The caverns of Zohar, like the Lurianic kellipoth or kelim, contain the supernal Light and become the sanctuary of Shekinah and the antechamber to eternity for the great patriarchs. The following passage from the Zohar suggests many "cave" visions of Jakob Boehme and also suggest the distant source of the "ancestral voices prophesying war" mingled with the "tumult" of the "sacred river." "I approached it and found that from the cavern issued a profusion of sweet odors. I plucked up courage and entered the cavern:" "And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,/Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree." "...In my sleep I saw crowds upon crowds arriving at that place....After going a little way they flew in the air and I did not know to where....Those were the spirits of the righteous who go by that way in order to reach Paradise, and what thou hast heard are the voices of those who stand in the Garden in that likeness they are to wear in this world" (Shemoth, 13a-b). The "cavern" referred to is the legendary Cave of Machpelah.²⁵

As in all Kabbalah teachings, the holy has an infernal inversion. For the "cavern" is also the locus of the spirits of the Other Side.²⁶ In Lurianic Kabbalah, however, the fracture of the kellipoth and the fracture of the supernal light proceeding from yod is a necessary part of "positive" Creation: correlated with the "warring" opposites of Yetsiratic equili-

²⁵See Haye Sarah, 127a; Vayehi, 219a.

²⁶Terumah, 141a; P'Qude, 242b.

brium. By the "deep romantic chasm" one might well expect a "woman wailing for her demon-lover." The dark fragmentation of the "sacred river" through the chasm ("And mid these dancing rocks at once and ever/It flung up momentarily the sacred river") may be glossed as a description of the supernal union of the opponent upper and lower waters of the terrestrial and celestial worlds (25-28). "The downward-coursing waters form caves in the Abysses and cleave them asunder, while the upward-coursing waters enter into the caverns of the stones and continue rising until they fill them" (P'Qude, 228b-229a).

And amid this "tumult" the "Ancestral voices prophesying war" are heard. While Sepher Yetsirah explicates the sod of Good and Evil commingling in Creation--delimiting each other in a productive dynamic tension, for manifest creation can only be through counter-pulling dimensions of Time and Space--Zohar may provide both a sod and a derasha gloss to the image. "Perdition take anyone who maintains that any narrative in the Torah comes merely to tell us a piece of history--nothing more" (Beha'Alotheka, 149b).

Consistent with an interpretation of the poem in the highest analogical sense, as the mystical manifestation of the Ain Soph in Creation (Unity expressing itself in Duality) and the sacrilegious but wondrous attempt of Man to imitate this mystery, a Lurianic-like passage from the Zohar describes the voices of war as an expression of the fragmentation of the One "still, small voice" that streams from the point of light, yod, and the contrary movement of the Other Side.

At the turn of the four seasons of the year a sound arises in the four quarters of the world through which the sinister side is stirred up, interposing between one sound and another, and at the same time obscuring the light that streams from on high. It is because the voice from above does not meet that from below that the left side is aroused and is able to insinuate itself between the two. That interposing sound is the sound or noise of war; the noise of the evil forces; and this

is the meaning of the word bera'ah (in evil). It was for that reason that only Joshua heard that noise but not Moses, for it proceeded from that evil power that impaired the light of the moon" (Vayaqhel, 195b).

The only "voice" which answers the "Fiat!" of the Khan from below (5, 13, 15) is the voice of the "woman wailing for her demon-lover" "beneath a waning moon." The complementary reading in derasha describes the prophecy of the downfall of an earthly kingdom, but the voices of prophecy proceed from the supernal world. For, in Kabbalah, all that transpires in the upper world has its counterpart in the lower world. The downfall of a terrestrial kingdom repercussively emblemizes the Tsim-tsum of Creation. "Thirty days before a nation rises to power or before its downfall in this world, the event is proclaimed in the other world. Sometimes it is revealed through the mouths of little children, sometimes through simple folk, and sometimes through a bird. These proclaim and yet no one notices them" (Shemoth, 6b). Kabbalah reveals that the ancestral patriarchs in the Cave of Machpelah pray and weep for their successors, attempting to spare them from the righteous sword of justice.

The shadow of the demonic "woman wailing" is transformed into the visionary "damsel with a dulcimer...singing of Mount Abora." The persona is transported from the "chasm" to the mountain in ecstasy. But, if we read the images of the poem according to a Zoharic matrix, we cannot presume the "Abyssinian maid" to be any less diabolical than the "woman wailing for her demon-lover." The "mountain," as already suggested in the Book of Enoch's description of Mount Armon, is the site of instruction in the dark arts. "Now when God saw that these fallen angels were seducing the world, He bound them in chains of iron to a mountain of darkness. Uzza He bound

at the bottom of the mountain and covered his face with the darkness because he struggled and resisted, but Azael, who did not resist, He set by the side of the mountain where a little light penetrated. Men who know where they are located seek them out, and they teach them enchantments and sorceries and divinations. These mountains of darkness are called the 'mountains of the East' (Balak, 208a).²⁷ Incidentally, Abyssinia would be located north-east of the Tigris-Euphrates valley, both directions associated with the dark powers. The Abyssinian maid's "symphony and song" might be associated with a wizard's chant, which the persona would use to recreate "That sunny dome! those caves of ice!" Yet, the Zohar warns: "Give up thy astrological speculations; this is not the way to acquire a knowledge of His Name" (Naso, 148a). "And all should cry, Beware! Beware!/ His flashing eyes, his floating hair!" (49-50).

According to the Zohar, the trespass of Adam was drunkenness, tasting of the vine of the left side of the Tree of Good and Evil.²⁸ In "Kubla Khan," the persona has drunken of "honey-dew" and the "milk of Paradise" to a state of ecstatic intoxication. The knowledge (scientia) the persona has imbibed represents the fullness of the mysteries of the Torah, according to the Zohar. The "dew" of heaven "is the supernal dew that flows from the Ancient of Days...through the grades of heaven, to fall on the 'field of consecrated apples'" (To'l'doth, 143b). The "honey" and the "milk of Paradise" represent the totality of the Written and Oral Laws.²⁹ But the Wisdom has been misappropriated in an attempt to utter the

²⁷See also Ahare Moth, 70a; Mishpatim, 112b.

²⁸See Naso, 127a; Noah, 73a.

²⁹Vayehi, 240a.

creative nefandum sacrosanctum. "Weave a circle round him thrice,/And close your eyes with holy dread" (51-52).

God was here like a king who had an unmarried daughter and also had a personal friend. When he wanted to say something to his friend, he used to send his daughter to him to speak for him. Then the daughter was married, and on the day of her marriage the king proclaimed: "Call my daughter from now 'the Mistress, the Matrona'" (Waera, 22b).

Christabel is the least accessible of Coleridge's major poems to an analogical interpretation via the Kabbalistic perspectives: it contains no remotely Kabbalistic allusions, nor is it connected with any work treating of the Kabbalistic tradition. The only apparently "mystical" element is Coleridge's 1816 prefatory description of the conception of the poem: "...I had the whole present to my mind, with the wholeness, no less than the liveliness of a vision." The poem is also only a fragment; and though there has been much speculation as to Coleridge's plans for its completion, we can only seriously deal with the fragmented images, characters, and narrative that exist. But because the work originates in a period in Coleridge's life when his attention appears to have often turned to the teachings of Kabbalah, I shall offer a brief discussion as to correspondences that might clarify the theme and the relationships between Christabel, Geraldine, and Sir Leoline. The following attempts to be only a fragmentary sketch underlining the mystery-filled "folk wisdom" element of the poem, of which the chief Kabbalistic writings are the "literary" fountainhead in Western civilization.

Christabel is a poem replete with superstition and magic, projected by the naive religiosity of the narrative persona. In the opening stanza,

the air is filled with the supernatural aura of midnight with the suggestion that the spirit of Christabel's mother walks the night (13). Christabel herself enters more like a gloomy spirit (31-32) than a bride-to-be and prays beneath "the huge oak tree," long associated with the sacred rites of occult religious sects. Likewise, Geraldine materializes as a shadowy apparition (58-61), having "crossed the shade of night" (88) on a ghostlike ("ghastly" --1. 216) courser (85-87). Christabel's escort of the mysterious Geraldine into the great hall of the castle and into her bedchamber is full of gothic "supernatural" touches: the admittance of an alien creature past the sacred lintel, the animal world's perception of the spirit dimension, the sympathy of terrestrial fire with the supernal fires, the herbal "potion," a "death-bed" legend with belfry (the ancient belief that blessed and besainted bells drive the fay and demonic away), an unexplained "spell" or "curse" (267) associated with a Cain-like mark (270), and the half-disclosed horror (252-53) with a strong sexual implication (262-63). And throughout, the narrative is interlaced with the "balladeer's" tentative ejaculations "That saints will aid if men will call...." (330). The second part of the tale is dominated by the revulsive vision of Geraldine and the subsequent contagion to Christabel (891). The serpent was long regarded as a creature of virtuous powers and as a symbol of wisdom by ancient cultures; but the Hebrew Biblical tradition, particularly in Genesis, regards the cunning serpent as an "unclean thing," in a verse with a particular foreshadowing significance for the Christian believer. "And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle...And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed;

it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Genesis iii. 14-15). Christabel, by her very name, unites the Jewish and Christian traditions.

All of the aforementioned "supernatural" elements that came to be used as Gothic narrative formulae find their roots in the Kabbalistic tradition, originally with "supernal" underpinnings in the true Kabbalah and later with "practical" considerations in the Ars Cabalae. At midnight, according to the Sepher Zohar, the ziwwug of the Holy One and the Matrona occurs, and all blessings should flow to the lower heavens if Man is receptive and prayerfully anticipative.³⁰ However, because of the holiness of the hour, the infernal powers are driven to a frenzy to extend the grade of rigour beyond its allotted time; they endeavor to find a welcome in the homes of the righteous. "It is, moreover, the night in which the 'evil power,' being supplanted by the 'beneficent power,' roams about the world, accompanied by his many hosts and legions, and pries into all the places where people perform their conjugal intercourse immodestly..." (Prologue, 14b). One should not go out alone into the middle of the night for fear of "attracting the unclean spirit" (Vayishlah, 169b),³¹ particularly when the fullness of the moon (emblem of the Shekinah) is impaired. "For as a result of the moon's diminution occasion was granted to all spirits and demons and hurricanes and devils to exercise away, so that all unclean spirits rise up and traverse the world seeking whom to seduce; they haunt ruined places, thick forests and deserts. These are all from the side of the unclean

³⁰Haye Sarah, 132b.

³¹Vayishlah, 169b. See also Bereshith, 53a; Tol'doth, 142a, 146a; Balak, 191a; Terumah, 144b.

spirit, which as has been said, issues from the crooked serpent, who is, indeed, the veritable unclean spirit and whose mission is to seduce man after him" (Vayishlah, 169b). "The moon is behind, and at the full;/And yet she looks both small and dull" (18-19). The image of "The one red leaf, the last of its clan" (49), lyrically underscores the aloneness of Christabel "...in the wood so late/A furlong from the castle gate" (25-26). The air is primed for an encounter with a glittery serpent-like creature³² that will disrupt Christabel's union with "her own betrothed knight" (28).

Unlike the "Tree of Life"³³ in the Supernal Garden of Eden "whose branches spread over all forms, and trees, and spices in fitting vessels. All the beasts of the fields and all the fowls of the air shelter beneath the branches of the Tree" (Shemoth, 2a)--"the huge, broad-breasted, old oak tree" is barren. Christabel "kneels beneath the huge oak tree," which is more like the shadowy "Nether-Tree." "When night falls, the Nether-Tree, from which death issues, spreads its branches so as to cover the whole of the universe. And so darkness prevails, and all the people of the world have a fore-taste of death" (Bemidbar, 120b). Sterile, its ponderous, broad breast betokens the lady Geraldine it shelters. "Behold! her bosom and half her side-- --/A sight to dream of, not to tell!" (252-53).

The literal transportation of Geraldine, borne on the wings of the night ("night-mares") (85-88), by Christabel over the threshold of the castle gate (130-33) anagogically denotes the innocently "ignorant" displacement of the predominance of the Great Name of YHVH who safeguards the Shekinah, as

³²Bereshith, 18a.

³³Emblem of the Torah, the true object of faith, the Holy One, YHVH. See Vayera, 102b; Mezora, 53b.

Israel, and the homes of the righteous men and women. The intrusion of the "evil one" into the home disrupts the unity of the household, ensures the seduction of the spouses, and denies the blessings accruing to holy wedlock to all the household. "Against all this God desired to protect Israel, and therefore a man should inscribe in the door of his house the Holy Name in which all faith is summed up. For wherever the Holy Name is, the evil species cannot come and are not able to accuse a man. The place of the door of the supernal House is called mezuzah, which is a necessary part of the house, and from it flee the emissaries of justice and punishment" (Vaeth-hanan, 265b). The "evil species," moreover, has "three hundred and sixty-five assistants, one for every day of the year, which accuse him above and below, trying to mislead him by day and troubling his dreams by night" (Vaeth-hanan, 267a).³⁴ "With open eyes (ah woe is me!)/Asleep, and dreaming fearfully,/Fearfully dreaming, yet, I wis,/Dreaming that alone, which is--/O sorrow and shame!" (292-96). The "mastiff bitch" immediately recognizes the trespass by the "other side" into Sir Leoline's home (148-50) and the subtle change in Christabel (151). "But when they sinned, their facial impress was changed from the supernal prototype, and through this transformation they became afraid of the beasts of the field. Whereas formerly all the creatures of the world, when looking up towards man, encountered the supernal sacred impress and thus were filled with fear and trembling. Now after they sinned their appearances were transformed, and it was men who feared and dreaded the rest of the animal world" (Noah, 71a).

The spirit of Christabel's mother appears throughout the poem fragment.³⁵ Ironically, we know more of her history than of Christabel's or

³⁴See also Noah, 67a.

³⁵Lines 13, 193, 197-213, 328, 335, 625-35.

Geraldine's. And we may presume (suggested by Dr. James Gillman's testimony) that she would have appeared at the conclusion of the poem, jubilant at the triumphant union of Christabel with her beloved: a fairy-tale triumph of Good over Evil. Unlike the familiars and demonic spirits associated with the black arts, summoned to serve the selfish ends of their equally ephemeral masters, she is a tutelary spirit. Her virtue extends beyond the confines of the grave. In Kabbalah, the souls of the dead are most often depicted as interceding for the living, attempting to soften the stern hand of Rigour on their descendants. "If it were not for us, the dead, who intercede before the angel of the grave for the living, they would not remain alive for half a day" (Shemoth, 16b). The dead hover over the living³⁶ to warn them of evil and to enable the living to fulfill the design of Creation via dreams and visions.³⁷ "One [abode] is for the souls of the righteous which have not yet left this world, and are still here, and when the world is in need of mercy and the living afflict themselves, these pray for mankind and go and inform those that sleep in Hebron (patriarchs), who being thus awakened go into the terrestrial paradise where are the souls of the righteous in their crown of light, and take counsel of them and decide what shall be and God carries out their decree and has pity on the world" (Ahare Moth, 70b). These souls of the righteous are in this world to protect the living and know their troubles, and these are they of whom the companions of the Zohar say that the dead know the sorrows of the world and the punishment of the wicked.

O by the pangs of her dear mother
 Think thou no evil of thy child!
 For her, and thee, and for no other

³⁶Mishpatim, 102b.

³⁷Vayesheb, 183a.

She prayed the moment ere she died:
 Prayed that the babe for whom she died,
 Might prove her dear lord's joy and pride!
 That prayer her deadly pangs beguiled,
 And wouldst thou wrong thy only child,
 Her child and thine? (626-35).

And yet the beneficence of Christabel's mother must give way momentarily before the "hour" (211) of Geraldine, Rigour ascendant over Mercy.³⁸ But Geraldine acts not as a formulaic Nemesis but shares in a mysterious relationship with the merciful mother. "And lo! the worker of these harms,/That holds the maiden in her arms,/Seems to slumber still and mild,/As a mother with her child" (298-301). Her "hour" of triumph is a "permitted" hour, this she knows; and we might infer that her "malificence" is not willful but conditioned by a divine scheme: she being merely an obedient instrument of a higher holy Will (256-59). Like the Matrona, the Great Mother, of the Sephirothic Tree, she administers the Sephirah Geburah to the world, balanced by the opponent Sephirah of the Right Side, Chesed, or Mercy. However, Matrona can be both Merciful and Retributive. However, a day will come when the Left Side of the Tree shall disappear and only Good will obtain, that is, when Creation expresses perfect ziwwug, lower and upper heavens consummating a transcendental wedlock in Jubilee. "I have heard the grey-haired friar tell/How on her death-bed she did lay,/ That she should hear the castle-bell/Strike twelve upon my wedding day" (198-201).

Geraldine, like Cain, is marked with a Life-Without-Death countersign (Gen. iv. 15): the "mark" protects Geraldine from any word of warning Christabel might utter against her (267-270). Moreover, the nature of the "mark" is obscured by the Gothic narrator's art, so that the audience's fo-

³⁸Job i. 12.

cus is not on the physical detail but rather on the "moral" significance of a "marking." The Bible fearfully proscribes people "marked" with a special blemish, categorically referred to as "leprous." The Zohar discusses this mark anagogically. "Leprosy means the shutting out from the world of the supernal light and goodness" (Ki Tazria, 49b)³⁹ The mark proceeds from the Left (Severe) Side of the Sephirothic Tree and attracts "serpents and idolaters and all who come from the side of the Left...to those who bear this mark" (Shemini, 36b). The mark is explained as surfacing in those who abuse the power of speech. Geraldine is notable for her cunning use of words (witness her tale alone), like the Serpent of the Garden. "'This shall be the law of the leper,' the word mezorah (leper) being interpreted as mazi shem ra' (slanderer). R. Hiya said: 'Whoever spreads false reports, all his limbs become defiled and he is meet for shutting up, because his evil speech rises aloft and calls down an unclean spirit on him'" (Mezora, 53a).

This mark of my shame,
 this seal of my sorrow;
 But vainly thou warrest,
 For this is alone in
 Thy power to declare,
 That in the dim forest
 Thou heardst a low moaning...(270-78).

"So when Balaam, who was rejected of men like a leper, called at the gate of the King, the latter, on hearing, said: The unclean leper shall not enter and defile my palace" (Balak, 200b).

The lady sank, belike through pain,
 And Christabel with might and main
 Lifted her up, a weary weight,
 Over the threshold of the gate:
 Then the lady rose again,
 And moved, as she were not in pain (129-34).

³⁹See also Ha'Azinu, 297b.

"For that soul which was vocal is reduced to silence on account of the evil words. Then, the serpent gets ready, and when that evil word finds its way to him, then many spirits bestir themselves, and one spirit comes down from that side and finds the man who uttered the evil word, and lights upon him and defiles him and he becomes leprous....He defiles it because the Divine Presence departs from thence and the mighty serpent takes up his abode there and casts filth there and causes defilement" (Ki Tazria', 46b-47b).

Geraldine's gestures are dramatically emphatic. The Zohar describes

And Geraldine in maiden wise
Casts down her large bright eyes,
With blushing cheek and courtesy fine
She turned her from Sir Leoline...
And folded her arms across her chest,
And couched her head upon her breast
And looked askance at Christabel...
A snake's small eye blinks dull and dry
And the lady's eyes they shrunk in her head,
Each shrunk up to a serpent's eye,
And with somewhat of malice, and more of dread...
(573-86).

many instances of sorcery by the use of serpents, the Zoharic term for sorcery, n'hashim, literally meaning serpents.⁴⁰ One would have expected the wine of "virtuous power" that Christabel's mother had distilled from "wild flowers" (192-93) to have been an effective antidote against the venom of Geraldine, but instead it restores the "lofty lady" (223). In so doing, Coleridge characterizes Geraldine not as a creature of the "unclean side," a Lilith, but an ambivalent messenger and instrument of those "who live in the upper sky" (226-34). However, we are more interested in the great overriding supernal mysteries underlying the simple narrative

⁴⁰Haye Sarah, 125b-126a. See also Balak, 198b; Vayishlah, 168a-b; Vayehi, 223a-b; Shemini, 41b; Ki Tazria', 43a.

(peshat) of Christabel's "vision."

Perhaps the deepest mystery (sod) explored by the author(s) of the Zohar was, why Evil blossomed from the six days of creative goodness, leading to the Fall of Mankind. The Sepher Zohar describes the existential dynamic tension between Good and Evil from the first moment of cosmogony. "When God...came to create the world and reveal what was hidden in the depths to disclose light out of darkness, they were all wrapped in one another, and therefore light emerged from darkness and from the impenetrable came forth the profound. So, too, from good issues evil and from mercy issues judgment, and all are intertwined, the good impulse and the evil impulse, right and left, Israel and other peoples, white and black--all depend on one another" (Kedoshim, 80b). From the sorrow at the death of the mother (139-140) issues the joy at the birth of the child (630-31). Geraldine's presumed "rape" motivates Christabel's charity. Christabel's charity shelter's Geraldine's malice (277-78). Geraldine exercises "power" over the beneficent shade of Christabel's mother (206). "The worker of these harms" appears Virgin-like, "...still and mild/As a mother with her child" (300-01). Even the "mercy peal" (361) of the "matin bell" intones death to the dreamer and recalls the dark world of the diabolical (350-59) in the light of dawn.

Images of intertwinement, entanglement, and enchantment are evident throughout, from the mixture of light and shadow in the opening midnight landscape and the gemmy coiffure of Geraldine to the "ropes of rock and bells of air" of the vale and Bard Bracy's "dream" of dove and intercoiling serpent (550). Even the characters of Christabel and Geraldine intermix and

and intermesh in the enchantment: dove becomes serpent and serpent dove.
(583-96).

Perhaps 'tis pretty to force together
Thoughts so all unlike each other;
To mutter and mock a broken charm,
To dally with wrong that does no harm.
Perhaps 'tis tender too and pretty
At each wild word to feel within
A sweet recoil of love and pity (666-72).

"Besides, the words of the Torah can best sink into the soul there in the desert, for there is no light except that which issues from darkness, for when that 'other side' is subdued the Holy One is exalted in glory. In fact, there can be no worship except it issue forth from darkness, and no true good except it proceed from evil...Hence the perfection of all things is attained when good and evil are commingled and then becomes all good, for there is no good so perfect as that which issues out of evil" (Tezawe, 184a).

The confused judgment of Man upon the intermingling of apparent Good and apparent Evil generates the pain of the "world of sin" (673). The divine visitation of harsh judgment on the world is to bring both the upright and the wicked to perfection. "When God desires to give healing to the world, He smites one righteous man among them with disease and suffering, and through him gives healing to all" (Pinhas, 218a). "He is forbearing with the wicked in order that they may change in their ways in complete repentance and so establish themselves in this world and in the world to come.... The Almighty is also forbearing with the wicked for the sake of the goodly seed which may spring from them for the benefit of the world" (Tol'doth, 140 a).⁴¹ Thus Geraldine, not totally capable of willful evil, is permitted to

⁴¹The parallel to the Christian parable of the wheat and the tares might be noted.

extend her spell over Christabel; and Christabel gives confidence to the enchantress, unknowingly allowing herself to fall under the sway of evil and ultimately to reap the attendant unjust punishment. "Quoth Christabel, So let it be!" (235). Sir Leoline confuses the identity of the "dove" in Bard Bracy's "vision" and his justice miscarries. "Dishonoured thus in his old age;/Dishonoured by his only child" (642-43). "God in creating the world, meant it to be based on justice, and all that is done in the world would be weighed in the scale of justice, were it not that to save the world from perishing God screened it with mercy, which tempers pure justice and prevents it from destroying the world. The world is thus preserved in mercy, and thereby is able to endure. But you may ask is not a man often punished by God undeservedly?" (Vayesheb, 180b).

"Intermingling" presupposes Unity dissolved into Duality and then an unsuccessful attempt to reform into Unity. If read according to a Kabbalistic critical matrix, Christabel must somehow conceal the great mystery of the supernal ziwwug, the regeneration of the duality of Creation by the mystical wedlock from which all blessings flow. The permission of Evil to hold sway over the righteous, even over the Shekinah-Bride, and to inflict unjustified suffering on the good is an expression of Divine Love for those who endure "sufferings in token of love" (Vayesheb, 181b). "... When suffering befalls a righteous man, it is on account of the love which God bears to him. He crushes his body in order to give more power to his soul, so that He may draw him nearer in love. For it is needful that the body should be weak and the soul strong, that so a man may be beloved of God" (Vayesheb, 180b).

The lady sank, belike through pain,
 And Christabel with might and main,
 Lifted her up, a weary weight,
 Over the threshold of the gate (129-32).

Between Christabel and the perfection of her love for her father and for her beloved stands Geraldine, who would usurp both--Lilith-like. Christabel and her relationship to the father and lover evidences many similarities to that of Shekinah and Shekinah's relationship to the Holy One YHVH who is alternately father and spouse. (It should be recalled that Christian Kabbalists often misconstrued Shekinah as Christ and prefiguratively as Abel).

Let us briefly conclude our discussion with some remarks on the appropriateness of viewing Christabel as representative of the Shekinah. The dominant relationship in Christabel is that between father and child, particularly underscored by the verse "Conclusion to Part II." If Kabbalistically interpreted, verses 660-65 suggest a cosmogonic expression of YHVH's love through Shekinah or his manifest "aura," an "aura" that is a Lurianic overspilling of His Light as well as Love: a Light and Love that His manifest expression can not contain and eventually produces a fracturing anti-pathetic dynamism.

A little child, a little elf, ...
 Makes such a vision to the sight
 As fills a father's eyes with light;
 And pleasures flow in so thick and fast
 Upon his heart, that he at last
 Must needs express his love's excess
 With words of unmeant bitterness.

We first encounter Christabel beneath the planetary emblem of Shekinah: the Moon, a dim reflection of YHVH's mighty light. The moon particularly represents Shekinah when it is waning or beclouded (18-19). In the first stanza describing Christabel's relationship in the poem, three circumstances

combine to suggest a parallel to the anthropomorphized identity of the Shekinah. First, she is the beloved daughter (23). In each human soul, the Shekinah is represented. "The Lord discovers each holy soul, and takes each in turn up unto Himself, fondling and caressing her, acting towards her after the manner of a daughter, 'even as a father treats his beloved daughter'" (Mishpatim, 97a). Secondly, she is the Bride of Brides, the Beloved of the Song of Songs, the Virgin of the celestial Epithalamium.⁴² "She is like unto a beautiful and stately damsel, who is hidden in a secluded chamber of a palace and who has a lover whom no one knows but she. Out of his love for her he constantly passes by her gate, turning his eyes towards all sides to find her" (Mishpatim, 99a).⁴³ Her union with her beloved, in ziwwug, is a sign of the Jubilee and the fountainhead of all blessings. Christabel's union with her beloved will free the castle of its suffocating sorrow (199-201). Christabel also prays for the "weal of her lover that's far away" (30) and aids the abandoned "lady of a far countree" (225): a standard situation for Shekinah as Mediatrix. Shekinah primes the pouring forth of blessings from above so that Man offers sacrifice below in thanksgiving and supplication. These three circumstances, however, depict the Shekinah in "glory" (Beshalah, 49b).

But it will be remembered that Shekinah is also poignantly depicted as emblematic of Israel in Exile. "The truth is that when the Sanctuary was destroyed and the Temple was burnt and the people driven into exile, the Shekinah left her home in order to accompany them into captivity" (Haye Sarah, 134a). We quite often see Christabel as a "lovely lady" of troubled tears

⁴²Haye Sarah, 122a.

⁴³See Mishpatim, 99a; Vayesheb, 188a.

or sorrow (32, 130, 196, 288-91, 314-16, 319, 329, 382-83, etc.). And in Part II, we see the unhappy rift caused by Geraldine between Christabel and Sir Leoline and her displacement in his affections by the exotic seductress (475-77), Lilith-like in her accession to the place of favor with the Baron (654-56). Shekinah is often described as a "youthful hermitess," ostracized wrongly from her place of honor with the King because of the unfaithfulness of the King's followers and advisors. "What is more the created Torah is a vestment for the Shekinah, and if man had not been created, the Shekinah would have been without a garment like a beggar. Hence when a man sins it is as though he strips the Shekinah of her vestments, and that is why He is punished; and when he carries out the precepts of the Law, it is as though he clothes the Shekinah in her vestments" (Bereshith, 23a-b). Christabel has been isolated from her father, and her protector-lover is far away. "'This verse,' he said, 'is spoken of the Community of Israel, who in the exile lies in the dust, in an alien unclean land, and therefore complains of her lord and beseeches "him whom her soul loveth" to deliver her from thence. She "seeks Him but finds Him not," for it is not His way to unite with her save in the Temple'" (Ki Tazria, 42a). Geraldine has profaned the "Temple," but her presence is necessary to render the triumph of Shekinah-Christabel over the "other side" even more glorious and thus catalyze the shower of blessings from above when the holy ziwwug is accomplished. "Similarly, if it were not for the accuser, the righteous would not possess the supernal treasures in the world to come" (Terumah, 163a). One notes that Sir Leoline's kingdom is replete with fracture and division: the estrangement from Roland de Vaux, the death of Christabel's mother, the im-

pending disowning of his daughter and bard, and what was projected as an environmental disaster leading to Geraldine's discovery, i. e., a catastrophic flood that had wiped out Roland de Vaux's castle (via Gillman on Coleridge's projected end of the poem).

Furthermore, it is altogether fitting that a "sexual trespass," an unholy coupling, (549-54) be hinted at as destroying Christabel's peace of mind (262-63, 292-93, 305-06, 381-82, 466) and disrupting the unity of father and daughter, lover and fiancée. The grand arcanum of Kabbalah has been regarded as essentially encoded in the Mystery of Sex: Man in his union with woman becomes a house in which the Divine Presence can dwell.

In view of the sanctity which the Zohar attributes to the sex-act under the obedience of purity--which is marriage--there was a prohibition respecting its performance in nuditate personarum. Those who ignore it are subject to the visitation of demons and will produce epileptic children possessed by Lilith.

And thus the lofty lady spoke--
 "But now unrobe yourself; for I
 Must pray, ere yet in bed I lie" (226-34)

Her silken robe, and inner vest
 Dropt to her feet, and full in view,
 Behold! her bosom and half her side-- --
 A sight to dream of, not to tell! (250-53).

"Woe to him who 'uncovers their nakedness'" (Terumah, 176a); this signifies the probing too deeply into the hidden mysteries of the inner aspects of the Divine Presence. The abuse of the sanctity of the conjugal union leaves the Divine Name incomplete and Creation remains ever in Tsim-tsum. If indeed, Geraldine's "mark" of her shame and "seal" of her sorrow is androgeneity, which some critics have deemed possible, this androgeneity is a

⁴⁴See also Vayeze, 155a, 158a.

blasphemous inversion of holy androgeneity.⁴⁵ "And when is a man called 'one'? When he is male with female and is sanctified with a high holiness and is bent upon sanctification; then alone he is called one without blemish" (Kedoshim, 81a-b).⁴⁶ Glossing Geraldine's possible sexual ambiguity, the Kabbalah comments: "As he refused to take his rightful place in the Masculine world, let him now belong to that of the Female. If he does not seek to fix himself therein, and refuses the redemption which it offers him... he descends still lower and joins the 'other side.' From now on he is finally severed both from the Masculine and the Feminic worlds, and is held fast by the 'servents' of the 'other side'" (Mishpatim, 105b-106a). The "other side" is the region of those "myriads of emissaries" of the "primal celestial serpent by whom Adam was seduced, to spy out the secret deeds of mankind" (Haye Sarah, 125a-b).⁴⁷

"My herald shall appoint a week,
And let the recreant traitors seek
My tourney court--that there and then
I may dislodge their reptile souls
From the bodies and forms of men!" (439-43).

Lilith, of course is the primal Naamah, the seminal seductress. If represented in this context as animating Geraldine as supplanter of Christabel-Shekinah, she is remembered as "she who would join with the Holy One in sexual union" (Bereshith, 19b).⁴⁸ And yet Lilith's presence is a necessary and beneficial part of the scheme of Creation. "And from this source im-

⁴⁵P'Qude, 231a.

⁴⁶See also Bereshith, 49b, 55b.

⁴⁷See Haye Sarah, 126b, on the greater susceptibility of women to magia, lasciviousness, and the "Serpent."

⁴⁸See Bereshith, 49a.

purity has been propagated in many grades through the universe. All this proceeds from the mystic power of the left, which disperses good and evil, thereby rendering the world habitable" (Bereshith, 18a).⁴⁹

"Even I in my degree will try
Fair maiden, to requite you well,
But now unrobe yourself; for I
Must pray, ere yet in bed I lie."

Quoth Christabel, So let is be! (231-35).

In the Zohar, it is by the very bite of the serpent that a child is born into a "world of sin" (673). The sad tale of death in childbirth resounds throughout Christabel. "From Bratha Head to Wyndemere" (344). "Herein is concealed sublime mystical teaching. 'In pain thou shalt bring forth children' is a mystical allusion to that Serpent, as it is with him that She brings forth souls, since he is responsible for the body and she for the soul, and the two are combined. The Serpent is destined in the future to bring about the birth of the whole of the bodies before its own time comes as Scripture says: "Before she travailed, she brought forth" (Isaiah lxvi, 7). The motherless child Christabel is at the mercy of the serpent-like Geraldine, likewise without a mother's pity.

And will your mother pity me
Who am a maiden most forlorn?
Christabel answered--Woe is me!
She died the hour that I was born (194-196).

⁴⁹See also Bereshith, 55a.

AFTERWARD

But al be that he was a philosophre,
Ye hadde he but litel gold in cofre;
But al that he myghte of his freendes hente,
On bookes and on lernynge he it spente,
And bisily gan for the soules preye
Of hem that yaf hym wherwith to scoleye.

This study, by no means, professes to be an exhaustive examination of the equally complex literary history of Kabbalah and of that "literary cormorant" Coleridge. Limitations on finances, time, and training have kept me from the completest resources for the authoritative statement on this topic. But, the amount of scholarship and documentation since J. L. Lowes' study--particularly the monumental contributions of Earl Leslie Griggs and Kathleen Coburn--has enabled me to construct a more comprehensive statement not heretofore possible. And, now, the work of George Whalley on the marginalia of Coleridge in the authoritative Bollingen Series must be added to that of Griggs and Coburn, a triumvirate of Coleridge scholars ever to be revered.

For instance, a scholar interested in pursuing this study to a satisfactory conclusion, if that is possible, will discover in Whalley's Marginalia: I that Coleridge did indeed interconnect Boehme with Kabbalah, in this instance with the exegetical device notaricon. The annotation is to Boehme's Signatura Rerum (a work I found most indebted to the doctrine of Kabbalah) on Boehme's interpretation of the "Unser Vatter in Himmel."

It would have been painfully amusing to have seen poor Jacob making faces, while he was trying this cabbalistic process, sounding the syllables...and again expanding them in fancies of height, depth, inwardness, outwardness & c...(#148. C.; p. 670).

Likewise, with the further release of volumes of the marginalia, I am sure that works that seemed irrelevant to my study or were unavailable at the time will surface as the missing links in Coleridge's "indoctrination" in the Kabbalistic tradition, his annotations to them revealing his critical understanding of the tradition. Whalley has traced Coleridge's probable access to Knorr von Rosenroth's Kabbala Denudata to Green's library and Coleridge's interest in Kabbalah to the works of Eichhorn. Coleridge's annotation to Edward Brerewood's A Second Treatise of the Sabbath, or an Explication of the fourth Commandment (Oxford, 1632) further confirms my hypothesis that Coleridge did distinguish between a genuine and a degenerate Kabbalah: admiring one and denouncing the other.

No!--The Divine Acts are popularly expressed by the emotions & appearances, with which such acts would have associated in human Agents--Still there is an analogy of the lower to the Higher, which enables the Lower to be used as Symbols of the Higher and this Analogy must be shewn, and not only the truths thus symbolized by displayed, but the Scripture Words proved to be fit and appropriate Symbols. The three first chapters of Genesis are instances throughout. Even the Cabbala is not all nonsense & mummerly--in its present state it is the maggoty Corse of a defunct Science & Philosophy; but here & there a Feature is still discernible (#1; p. 719).

This statement juxtaposed to the annotation to Boehme reveals that Coleridge discriminated between the semantic machinations of the Kabbalist and the philosophic purpose behind the seemingly ridiculous "sounding the syllables" of gematria, notaricon, and themurah. Coleridge states the core

theme of Kabbalistic exegesis, "Still there is an analogy of the lower to the Higher...the Scripture Words proved to be fit and appropriate Symbols." In the first verse of Sepher Yetsirah, the holy author reveals that "He created His Universe by the three forms of expression: Numbers, Letters, and Words"; in the first verse of Sepher Zohar, the commentator Rab Hamnuna the Venerable remarks that "When the Holy One, blessed be He, was about to make the world, all the letters of the Alphabet were still embryonic, and for two thousand years the Holy One, blessed be He, had contemplated them and toyed with them."

Throughout this first volume of marginalia, a number of allusions and references to authors and works I have already suggested as having probable Kabbalistic underpinnings in Coleridge's "coadunative" understanding would be worth pursuing in further Medici which interconnect Browne, Spinoza (a Kabbalist in Coleridge's estimation), and "almost [all] sincerely pious and generous minds." One eagerly anticipates the volume of marginalia to Hyman Hurwitz's Vindiciae Hebraicae and Elements of Hebrew Grammar, surely key links in Coleridge's understanding of the Kabbalistic dogma as well as orthodox Judaism.

Murray Roston's Prophet and Poet: The Bible and the Growth of Romanticism (London: Faber, 1965), in an essentially neo-Lowesian fashion, examined Coleridge's fascination with Judaism and Hebrew poetry with the hypothesis that, "The only romantic poet capable of reading the Old Testament in the original was Coleridge," concluding that, "Of all romantic poets, Coleridge's concept of God is the least Deistic and the closest to that of

the Bible." Roston's study sketchily demonstrates the importance of considering Coleridge's identity with the Hebraic tradition ("My namesake sprung from Jewish breeder"--CN 1104, 6.58). A complete understanding of Coleridge's lifelong, keen interest in Judaica would be of great value in casting his interest in Kabbalah in perspective and disentangling Talmudic and Mishnaic allusions from genuinely Kabbalistic considerations. Topics worth particularly thorough examination in this area would include:

- (1) Coleridge's etymological interest in the Hebrew language (particularly in connection with the cosmogony of Genesis) and an assessment of his differentiation of and ability to read dialects.
- (2) Coleridge's familiarity with orthodox Hebrew literature (apart from the Old Testament), including the Talmud, the Mishnah, apocryphal works (e. g. the Book of Tobit), "Rabbinical Wisdom," and commentaries by Maimonides, Josephus, Rabbi Hanina ben Dora (Pirke Aboth), Sadducee literati, and other "Hebrew Doctors" and "Sages" Coleridge often summarily alluded to.
- (3) Coleridge's distinctive use of Old Testament phrases and titles such as "Ancient of Days" throughout his works which might show a Kabbalistic indebtedness and his particular admiration for the Book of Psalms, the Song of Songs, the Wisdom of Solomon, and the prophetic books of Ezekiel and Isaiah.
- (4) Coleridge's knowledge of the work of Michael Lacunza (Juan Josafat ben Ezra), Abraham Meir ibn Ezra (Abenezra), H. F. W. Genesius' commentary on Isaiah, Surenhusius' edition of Mishnah, the works of Hugh Broughton, and a possible acquaintanceship with Isaac Lyon Goldsmid (1778-1859), friend to Southey and Crabb Robinson.

Associated with research into Coleridge's actual scholarship in Judaica, studies on Coleridge's theory of "Angelology," the Hebrew indebtedness of the "Platonic" Fathers and such exegetes as Theophilus and

Origen--pivotal in the assimilation or eradication of Judaic tradition in early Church Christianity and its dogma (N. B. the Trinity), the tradition of "anagogical" readings of the Scripture in connection with Patristic exegetical tradition would be of invaluable help: all were topics of marked concern to Coleridge. A study of the influence of the occult sciences and the pre-modern sciences, such as alchemy, on the scientific notables revered by Coleridge, such as Newton, Priestley, etc., would also demonstrate the third-hand currency of Kabbalistic writings in Coleridge's age. A systematic accounting of the collections of church, school (e. g., Dunstan), and private libraries (e. g., Green, Poole, Leckie, etc.)--particularly those visited in his Continental travels (e. g., Gottingen, Malta) where he encountered "obscure" or "strange old" books with "mystical schemes" and "paragraphs in which that System may have been anticipated" would be invaluable, and almost as hopelessly frustrating to complete. Time will fill in these, perhaps, inconsequential gaps in this study's research--but now an evaluation, I hope as honest as possible, of the limitations of formulating a "Kabbalistic" critical matrix in reading an author's work.

If I had somehow stumbled on the "philosopher's stone" (and I would not be surprised if today the search for it has not been revitalized in respectable scientific circles--under governmental control), I would have bought the leisure to undertake the dry-as-dust task of subject-indexing the Soncino Edition of The Zohar extracts: an invaluable reference work for further Kabbalistic studies possible in Spenser, Milton, Pope, Blake, Coleridge, American Transcendentals, W. B. Yeats, Eliot, Pynchon, Pearl

Epstein, Jose Luis Borges, etc.

A year before I formulated the proposal for this study, unbeknown to me, a short work was published professing a Kabbalistic critical matrix. The work did not include any bibliographic information nor even a helpful index to its contents. (It became quite exasperating as to how many scholarly works--antique and modern--are unindexed or inadequately indexed.) In short, my own bibliographic burden was not eased. Having laboriously compiled a bibliography of Kabbalistic books and commentaries and absorbed as much knowledge as I could on Kabbalah and its relationship to the English literary tradition, I read this study and was confounded by the reductionism and re-definition of key Kabbalistic terms to postulate a Kabbalistic critical matrix, recast in a literary critical jargon already codified in a number of this author's other works. This "Kabbalistic" critical matrix could be "formally" superimposed on practically any literary work. For example, this critic identifies Kabbalah with the tenets of Gnosticism in a fifty-page review of the definition of, dogma of, and documents of the Kabbalistic tradition. Kabbalah is further "mythicized" as interchangeable with "structuralism," "revisionism," and philosophical dualism (a collection of "labels" that in themselves require careful distinction). My first two chapters, tediously bogged down in seemingly irrelevant "authorities" and background historical details, were conditioned by this scholar's (and many other scholars') simplistic treatment of Kabbalah as just another critical "handle."

I was determined to piece together what fragments were available to me of the large body of Kabbalistic scholarship pertinent to an assessment of the extent of Coleridge's and his age's familiarity with its com-

complicated orthodox and Christianized development. I apologize for the, at times, patchwork character of the first two chapters: a heavily quoted examination of the basic "history" of Kabbalah and its primary documents. But a quilt of salvaged remnants is most serviceable to keep a feeble infant warm when no silken coverlet is forthcoming.

A Kabbalistic critical matrix cannot be superimposed on just any literary work. It is of the species of "biographical" literary criticism with powerful adaptability to "anthropological" and "patristic exegetical" interests. David Bakan has demonstrated some striking coincidences between Freud's "imagi" and Kabbalah's Aima-Abba, which the aforementioned "Kabbalistic" critic has appropriated as his own proven thesis. The Zohar regarded as a "folk" repository of elemental psychology excites much intellectual curiosity; but this would have to be methodically explored to enable the literary critic to posit a Kabbalistic critical matrix with a "psychological" emphasis, particularly suitable in examining the works of such a pioneer "psychologist" as Coleridge. In short, unless there is some substantial evidence that the dogma of Kabbalah had become an active element in the poet's thought and vocabulary, it would appear to me quite inappropriate to demonstrate a Kabbalistic perspective or plane of interpretation in the poet's work.

Elementally, the two distinctive and inextricably converse Kabbalistic theses which must be in evidence to some degree in the work under examination are the theory of the Sephiroth (the Creation by letter and number of the Universe by One God--distinct from that Universe) and the "mirror" mutuality of the upper heavens and the lower heavens: Man's power

to effect union with the Divine through prayer, meditation on the Scriptural Design of Creation, and the vision that terrestrial earth and the celestial dimension are in actuality one and the same. To apply a Kabbalistic critical matrix to a work which in no way acknowledges the Judaeo-Christian tradition (not simply the Christian) and spiritual perspective is merely a vacuous, intellectual jigsaw puzzle with no real whole design.

Truly, Kabbalah, a misleadingly all-encompassing term, can be defined as a species of "mysticism"; but its mysticism is bound to a highly specialized vocabulary derived from the most hieratically guarded documents of Western civilization: the Torah. Within strictly delimited confines, its mysticism is "personalistic"--but always humbly conceding to orthodoxy when in doubt of the genuineness and sincerity of its figurative contemplations: a model of intellectual and scholarly humility,

...A lasting inspiration, sanctified
By reason, blest by faith...

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The dissertation submitted by William Richard Ploolis has been read and approved by the following committee.

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The final copies have been examined by the director of the dissertation and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the dissertation is now given final approval by the Committee with reference to content and form.

The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

April 22, 1981.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John R. Nabholz". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a horizontal line.