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Miller,

Laura Elizabeth Schmitt

1977

THE OCCULT TRADITION, BLAKE, AND THE KABBALAH:
A PRELIMINARY STUDY

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Master of Arts

by
Laura Elizabeth Schmitt Miller
August 1977

THE OCCULT TRADITION, BLAKE, AND THE KABBALAH:
A PRELIMINARY STUDY

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THE OCCULT TRADITION, BLAKE, AND THE KABBALAH: A PRELIMINARY STUDY

Laura Elizabeth Schmitt Miller   August 1975   70 pages

Directed by: Dr. William McMahan, Dr. George McCelvey, and
Dr. Dorothy McMahon

Department of English   Western Kentucky University

This study represents an attempt to explore the occult tradition, in particular the Kabbalah, in an effort to establish a relationship between this tradition and the prophetic poems of William Blake. The Kabbalah is examined to reveal similarities between the kabbalistic Adam Kadmon and Blake's sleeping giant Albion. In addition, a comparison is made of the sexual dichotomies in both sources. Once Blake is viewed as a part of the occult tradition and the kabbalistic similarities are explored, an important aspect of Blake's poetry is clarified, by considering the essential design of kabbalistic thought as it stands in close relation to the prophetic poems, which are his most ambitious projects.

INTRODUCTION

The key to understanding all of William Blake's poetry lies in the occult tradition; however, there seem to be a great many misconceptions about what the occult, hermetic, or mystic tradition is and is not. In general, many people conceive of the occult tradition all the way from the three witches in Macbeth to the kind of hysteria associated with St. Theresa as she experienced the stigmata. Evelyn Underhill in her definitive study Mysticism mentions that mysticism and magic are "two distinct and fundamental attitudes towards the unseen."[1] Actually, though confused with one another, mysticism and magic are "opposite poles," says Underhill, "of the same thing: the transcendental consciousness of humanity."[2] She elucidates as follows:

> In mysticism the will is united with the emotions in an impassioned desire to transcend the sense-world, in order that the self may be joined by love to the one eternal and Ultimate Object of love; whose existence is intuitively perceived by that which we used to call the soul, but now find it easier to refer to as the "cosmic" or "transcendental" sense. This is the poetic and religious temperament acting upon the plane of reality. In magic, the will unites with the intellect in an impassioned desire for supersensible knowledge. This is the intellectual, aggressive, and scientific temperament trying to extend its field of consciousness, until it

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[1] Evelyn Underhill, Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness (Woking, England: Unwin Brothers Limited, The Gresham Press, 1911; reprint ed. Strand: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1962), p. 70.

[2] Ibid.

> includes the supersensual world: obviously the antithesis of mysticism, though often adopting its title and style.[3]

The fundamental difference, then, is an inherent attitude: the "way of magic" wants to acquire supramundane knowledge for its own sake--an amoral world view; on the other hand the "way of mysticism" desires to share its knowledge and enhance morality in an upsurge of religious consciousness. According to Hershom Scholem in Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism, mystics are simply reinterpreting major religions in view of their own personal experience, thus charging the old values and giving them a more profound significance reflecting the mystic's Divine Vision.[4]

By viewing history one finds various upsurges of potent mysticism which show that under certain sets of circumstances mysticism is more prolific. According to Scholem, mysticism occurs most naturally in the romantic age of a religion--the third stage in the development of any religion. The first stage, says Scholem, would be similar to the Homeric period in Greek history which produced a pantheon of gods; the pantheon was simplistically accepted by an unsophisticated populace who viewed their gods in nature and did not desire mystic revelation. The second stage is what Scholem calls the "creative epoch." During this stage nature is no longer the scene for god but, rather, initiates see the presence of god in the vast drama of life where good and evil, explains Scholem, manifest god's finger on the lives of men. Sophocles portrays this stage in the Theban plays. The gods direct Oedipus's drama on earth. But the real rise of mysticism, says Scholem, comes when man realizes the great chasm that exists between the spiritual ultimate and the realistic immediate. Mysticism occurs when this realization causes an intense desire to bridge the gap: it is viewed metaphorically as a divine quest which ultimately ends in the marriage of the mundane soul and the supramundane Godhead. In Greek thought Plato is the fructification of this need.[5]

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[3] Ibid., p. 71.

[4] Gershom Scholem, Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism, 3rd revised ed. (New York: Schocken Books, 1954), p. 9.

In other words, according to Joseph Blau in The Christian Interpretation of the Cabbala in the Renaissance, mysticism occurs among sophisticates; it occurs when dogma is no longer satisfactory, and a personal construct evolves which sets mystics apart from their fellows: "they consider themselves to have penetrated more deeply into hidden mysteries; they believe they are elect."[6] But, says Underhill, it is essentially not snobbery. She explains as follows:

> It /mysticism/ is essentially a movement of the heart, seeking to transcend the limitations of the individual standpoint and to surrender itself to Ultimate Reality; for no personal gain, to satisfy no transcendental curiosity, to obtain no other-worldly joys, but purely from an instinct of love. By the word "heart," of course, we here mean not merely "the seat of the affections," "the organ of tender emotion," and the like: but rather the

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[5] Ibid., pp. 6-8.

[6] Joseph Blau, The Christian Interpretation of the Cabala in the Renaissance (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944; reprint ed. Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, Inc., 1965), p. 1.

> inmost sanctuary of personal being, the deep root of its love and will, the very source of its energy and life.[7]

As mystics, then, writers of the occult tradition deal with the art of living in order that the soul can live in eternity; they presuppose the existence of a transcendent Godhead; they postulate self-knowledge, to use a Platonic term, and through self-knowledge communication with God evolves. This communication is a step-by-step process, according to Underhill, whereby a mystic grows to total illumination: Step One is "the awakening of self to consciousness of Divine Reality"; Step Two is the realization of the soul's "own finiteness and imperfection, the manifold illusions in which it is immersed, the immense distance which separates it from the One"; Step Three involves "Purgation of the Self" when the body is detached from the sensual world; Step Four is "the final and complete purification of the self, which is called by some contemplatives the 'mystic pain' or 'mystic death'"; Step Five is "Union: the true goal of the mystic quest."[8] Any study of contemplatives pursuing the Mystic Way is difficult, however, because of the lengths to which rigid interpreters of any religion have gone to cover what they consider to be heresies. Blau says that "an occult formulation can develop in any religion; it can best be described as a distortion by exaggerated emphasis of the tradition within which it arose; thus, though occultism is not orthodox, it is seldom heretical; it vociferates rather than challenges the basic principles of the religion which gave it birth."[9] Regardless, many unsophisticates feared mystics because they could not make a distinction between mysticism and magic. There is also a difficulty inherent in translation of the symbolic language common to mystics. Scholem explains as follows: "how is it possible to give lingual expression to mystical knowledge, which by its very nature is related to a sphere where speech and expression are excluded."[10] The mystic then resorts to metaphor and paradox to impress the manifestation of his experience on his readers. "All kinds of symbolic language come naturally to the articulate mystic," explains Underhill, "who is often a literary artist as well: so naturally, that he sometimes forgets to explain that his utterance is but symbolic--a desperate attempt to translate the truth of that world into the beauty of this."[11] Mysticism is interwoven with music and poetry, and this realization should have stemmed many ludicrous criticisms of mystics. For example, Blake was considered mad because he said he had touched the sky with his finger, and St. Theresa has been called a sexual pervert because she described her experience in Catholic terminology: she became a bride of Christ. Mystics searched for an adequate mode of expression for the Universal Truth. It is possible then that the study of comparative religions--devoid of any religious bias--will eventually accumulate enough data to enable future generations to discover the Universal Truth in which all religions may ultimately recognize the essence of religion and the catholicity of faith.

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[7] Underhill, Mysticism, p. 71.

[8] Ibid., pp. 169-170.

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[9] Blau, Christian Interpretation of the Cabala, p. 1.

[10] Scholem, Major Trends, p. 15.

[11] Underhill, Mysticism, p. 80.

Milton O. Percival in William Blake's Circle of Destiny calls the occult tradition "a consistent body of tradition extending over nearly twenty-five hundred years" and including "the Orphic and Pythagorean tradition, Neoplatonism in the whole of its extent, the Hermetic, kabbalistic, Gnostic, and alchemical writings, Erigena, Paracelsus, Boehme, and Swedenborg."[12] However, the rituals and instructions included in The Egyptian Book of the Dead, although only written down in 1500 B.C., were, says E. A. Wallis-Budge, actually in practice for many hundreds of years before that time.[13] These rituals were deeply concerned with the plight of man's soul in its new state of existence: coptic mysticism assumed a belief in the hereafter and the soul, and it is in Egypt that one finds the beginnings of the occult tradition in Western thought. In the romantic age of the Egyptian religion, men--kings as well as peasants--sought a bridge between everyday life and the hereafter. The Egyptian soul was extremely complex according to Wallis-Budge: it consisted of the shadow, intelligence, form, and name. The parts alone existed in heaven which, apparently, was somewhere beyond Egypt to the west where a soul would live in the sight of God, become God and an angel of God; however, the pleasures of heaven, says Wallis-Budge, were corporeal; and a soul literally hunted, killed, roasted, and ate God. (This concept is not uncommon to primitive men who could not separate spirituality and corporeality, e.g., the American Indian belief that by devouring another warrior's heart one could acquire his courage.) The Egyptian pantheon, explains Wallis-Budge, consisted of mortal Gods--Neter--and the one God--Neteru--who could not be spoken of because of his sacred essence. Just as the Jews hid their one God within the label Jehovah, so the Egyptians hid the one God within a symbolic pantheon. Coptic mysticism was perhaps quite primitive but gave impetus to many trains of thought.[14]

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[12] Milton O. Percival, William Blake's Circle of Destiny (New York: Columbia University Press, 1938; reprint ed. New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1964), p. 1.

[13] The Book of the Dead: The Heiroglyphic Transcript of the Papyrus of Ani, the translation and introduction by E. A. Wallis-Budge (New York: University Books, 1960), p. 3.

Hermes Trismegisthus, the supposed author of a body of literature known as the Corpus Hermeticum, is usually mentioned in the Egyptian tradition despite the fact that he wrote mostly in Greek, says St. George Stock in his article in _The Hastings Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics_.[15] Stock explains that "the doctrines of Hermes are so many and so various as to make us doubt whether they all emanate from the same mind, notwithstanding the family likeness which runs through the works."[16] Nevertheless, Hermes presents a body of literature on many varied subjects, but of major concern to this study is the theory of the relationship of God to man. Hermes in the Poemander writes, "Thou art whatever I am, thou art whatever I do, Thou art whatever I say."[17] Because of this kind of statement, God becomes directly proportional to his product, man. Neither can exist without the other; God is, therefore, a dynamic principle and creating is judged as his most important task; however, it is very difficult to discuss creation and God in anthropomorphic terms. Putting man on a proportional scale with his creator, Hermes raised man's prospects to the levels that Plato wrote of in the Timeaus: he is no longer simply a soul lost in an illusory world but can claim hopes of arriving at communication. Whether Hermes Trismegisthus existed and wrote the works attributed to him is a moot point. Someone wrote the literature or someone collected it; whether his name was Hermes is immaterial. Plato was influenced by the works and in fact mentions Hermes twice.

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[14] Ibid., pp. 1-161.

[15] _Hastings Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics_, s.v. "Hermes Trismegisthus," by St. George Stock.

[16] Ibid.

There was no mysticism in the Greeks of the Homeric period, says William Inge in Mysticism in Religion: "It is not until the sixth century before Christ that Orphism, a spiritualizing and moralizing of the old Dionysian religion, first appears in Greece and her colonies."[18] Again the thread of mystic transcendance is woven into a purely pantheistic religion. According to Inge, the Orphic tradition did not promise eternal life to just anyone; in fact, he compares the Orphic Brotherhoods to modern nonconformist sects, and explains their beliefs as follows:

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[17] Ibid.

[18] William Inge, Mysticism in Religion (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1948), p. 9.

> The wheel of birth and death is governed by the same law /Nature/ which directs the circling of the stars. The soul in its nature belongs to the divine world, but as the penalty for some sin is condemned to enter the "sorrowful weary wheel" of births and deaths. Life on earth is a purgatory; the soul may at last expiate its fault. But the process is not endless in nature itself. At the end of the Great Year--ten thousand of our years--the present world order finishes its course, and a new world is born.[19]

The mysteries in the Orphic tradition were most probably concerned with salvation as a throwing off of "the fetters of human existence," claims Inge in Christian Mysticism.[20] Inge also discusses the fact that Orphism was much like Christian asceticism in that there were definite rules of behavior acceptable within the Brotherhood, particularly abstinence from the flesh as a means of "acquisition by man of Divine attributes," which is evidenced by the following inscription: "Thou art a god instead of a wretched man."[21] Thus, Greeks in the second stage of religion make an adjustment to thinking of man in terms of his spiritual body rather than his corporeal one: they actually became God instead of eating him and acquiring his attributes. However, Orphism had a weakness inherent in its system because of the realism exacted by its members. Soul and God were joined by a sacramental marriage which was actually consummated in the mysteries; consequently rumors started about the rites, and an overtone of magic swallowed them.

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[19] Ibid., p. 92.

[20] William Inge, Christian Mysticism Considered in Eight Lectures Delivered Before the University of Oxford (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1899), Appendix B, p. 352.

[21] Ibid.

These rumors of barbarism aroused the wrath of Plato, according to Inge in Mysticism in Religion,[22] although in fact he set out a system quite similar to Orphism. Actually, Platonism is a much more urbane philosophy. In his works the Timeaus and Symposium Plato produced a body of "speculative as distinguished from simple, implicit, unreflective mysticism," says Rufus Jones in Mystical Religion,[23] as he explained the reasons for his mythology. On earth Plato saw only a pattern of what really exists in heaven. The pattern or essence of any object is closely related to soul, and the soul of a chair--or a man--could exist only in the Real World. According to Jones, Plato automatically assumed "that the soul, even while an alien in 'this world,' is always within sight of the real, i.e. the eternal, world because it is unsevered from its source."[24] Duality is evident, unreal as opposed to real, mutability as opposed to permanence. Jones further explains Plato's singular approach to the world thus:

> Plato used the word "Ideas" not to indicate something conceived in the mind as we use the word, but to indicate those permanent realities which stay unchanged in all welter of mutation . . . like the law of gravitation

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[22] Inge, Mysticism in Religion, p. 91.

[23] Rufus Jones, Studies in Mystical Religion (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1909; reprint ed. 1919, 1923), p. 58.

[24] Ibid., p. 59.

> through all the flux of infinite particles of matter. "Ideas" are in short types or laws. . . . Where then did the mind get these permanent truths? It got them, Plato tells us in poetical and mythical language, from a suprasensuous world where before birth it lived and dwelt in the presence of "pure being," and where it contemplated every day these ultimate and unchanging realities.[25]

When a soul fails to nourish itself with thoughts of the truth, then it falls to earth where it always has a memory of the higher life, despite the fact that it is now immersed in the sensuous world: Plato utilized The Allegory of the Cave to symbolize his theory that, because man has only his senses at his disposal, the entire world appears to him as only a shadow of the infinite world. This theory is the final justification of the pursuit of the mystic way. Mysticism is viewed by many as a restatement of what Plato discovered. Catholic, Protestant, or Jewish world views were simply superimposed on the masterful pattern Plato had already created; obviously, then, Plato might be considered the most powerful influence on mystic thinking. Leonard Nathanson in The Strategy of Truth states that "whatever disparate notions have been incorporated into the Platonic tradition, the assumption of ontological and moral absolutes along with an unalterable opposition to any type of relativism has been constant down through the ages."[26]

Aristotle, because of the interpretation applied during the Medieval Ages, had always been considered the antithesis of Plato: he was considered a realist as opposed to Plato the idealist. In reality he thought himself to be amplifying the speculation of a much-revered teacher. Nathanson elaborates that he disagreed with Plato on "how unchanging universals caused the existence of particular sensibles."[27] Aristotle, says Nathanson, thought "the final cause does more than direct a process towards its preconceived end; it is also the source of energy, stimulating the object toward its own realization in material form."[28] Aristotle considered the Divine Spark in every man, according to Jones in Mystical Religion, and portrayed the mind's functions as two separate entities: active and passive reason.[29] Man's passive reason is wholly dependent on the senses, and only through the contemplative life can one rise to the god-like plane of active reason; by stating that there is a Divine Spark, says Jones, Aristotle must then have assumed it was created by a Divine Force which existed on the plane of active reason.[30] In other words the qualification for inclusion in the occult tradition--a belief in a suprasensuous godhead--exists in the writing of Aristotle.

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[25] Ibid., p. 60.

[26] Leonard Nathanson, The Strategy of Truth: A Study of Sir Thomas Browne (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1967), p. 15.

Plotinus considered himself as a divinely commissioned interpreter of Plato and Aristotle, and he did provide a synthesis of their thinking in Enneads: a new form which was later labelled Neoplatonism. According to Inge in Mysticism in Religion, most background material on Plotinus comes from a biography written by his student Porphyry.[31] Plotinus lived in the third century. While classical antiquity breathed its last, the Christian church raised its head from the ashes, absorbing a great deal of its predecessor's concepts and restating them in its own terminology. But, meanwhile, the "liberation of religion," notes Inge, occurred in Rome; it was to be quite a while before the Dark Ages descended on the world.[32] Plotinus' philosophy is truly religious. Through the dialectic in the Enneads he brought about a clear picture of his beliefs substantiated by his own mystical experience. Inge identifies two trinities within the system:

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[27] Ibid., p. 17.

[28] Ibid., pp. 17-18.

[29] Jones, Studies in Mystical Religion, pp. 68-69.

[30] Ibid., p. 68.

> There is the trinity of Divine principles--the Absolute, whom he calls the One, the First, or the Good; Spirit (that is the best English word for vous, which is usually rendered intellect or intelligence); and the Universal Soul. The other is the tripartite division of man in Spirit, Soul, and Body. . . . In their objective aspect, Body, Soul, and Spirit are respectively the world as perceived by the senses; the interpreted by the Soul as a spatial and temporal order; and the spiritual order. The organs which perceive the world under these three aspects are the bodily senses, the discursive reason or understanding, and spiritual perception or intuitive knowledge.[33]

All men possess this intuition, but it is only through meditation that the highest level can be reached by each man. Inge also observes that to Plotinus the spiritual world does not exist as a separate entity but, rather, is a correlative of a physical substance;[34] consequently, God is not, says Jones, external to anyone and is the Unity--the One--"with no contrasts of here or there, no oppositions to this or that, no separation into change or variation."[35] Plotinus outlined a "ladder" of emanations that a soul would climb in order to reach the epitome of its existence, but the final movement (explains Jones) is the secret. It is the true mystic who discovers this secret. The idea is very like what Underhill outlined as the Mystic Way, but according to Plotinus the final Union must be arrived at individually and manifests itself in an infinite variety of ways.

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[31] Inge, Mysticism in Religion, p. 107.

[32] Ibid., p. 106.

[33] Ibid., p. 110.

Another outgrowth of the occult tradition that had a great influence on Christianity was Gnosticism; in fact, for a great many years scholars believed Gnosticism to be an offshoot of Christianity. During the transition between the Greek philosophers and the firm rooting of Christianity, the world was ripe for a new religion, what Yeats called Leda's second egg, and Gnosticism could have won just as easily as Christianity except for its undemocratic attitude. Floyd Filson in "First John: Purpose and Message" claims that "any clear and simple statement of Gnostic views is a misrepresentation, because there were various forms of Gnosticism."[36] Robert Wilson in The Gnostic Problem also observes that "the characteristics of Gnosticism in all its forms is syncretism, blending together elements of every sort, and finding room for every type of thought, from the highest philosophical mysticism to the lowest forms of magic."[37] The world was open and waiting for this type of belief; Hans Jonas explains in The Gnostic Problem that the world view at the beginning of the Christian era was highly eschatological and the Christian message was not an isolated incident.[38] Jonas reiterates as follows:

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[34] Ibid.

[35] Jones, Studies in Mystical Religion, p. 72.

[36] Floyd Filson, "First John: Purpose and Message," Interpretation 23 (July 1969): 269.

> The name "Gnosticism" . . . is derived from gnosis, the Greek word for knowledge. . . . The Gnostic context "knowledge" has an emphatically religious or supranatural meaning and refers to objects which we nowadays should call those of faith rather than reason. . . . Gnosis meant pre-eminently knowledge of God, and from what we have said about the radical transcendence of the deity, it follows that "knowledge of God" is a knowledge of something naturally unknowable and therefore itself not a natural condition. . . . On the one hand, it is closely bound up with revelationary experience, so that reception of the truth either through sacred and secret lore or through inner illumination replaces rational argument and theory; on the other hand, being concerned with secrets of salvation, knowledge is not just theoretical information about certain things but is itself as a modification of the human condition, charged with performing a function in the bringing about of salvation.[39]

Between God and man are a series of intermediaries, says Wilson;[40] they are much like the emanations described by

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[37] Robert Wilson, The Gnostic Problem; A Study of the Relations between Hellenistic Judaism and the Gnostic Heresy (London: A. R. Mowbay & Co., Limited, 1958), p. 69.

[38] Hans Jonas, The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), p. 31.

[39] Ibid., pp. 34-35.

[40] Wilson, The Gnostic Problem, p. 183.

Plotinus; but according to the definition, only those who acquired gnosis would reach Union. Christianity offered a more democratic construct. Thus, the next two thousand years were almost totally Christian in outlook, and mysticism is seen in the shadow of Catholicity and finally Protestantism.

John Scotus Erigena, according to Rufus Jones in Mystical Religion, was a mystic of the ninth century and an Irish Catholic--a combination that had a direct bearing on his thinking.[41] Celtic monasteries were a stronghold of classical learning during the Dark Ages, explains Jones, and Celtic monks were possessed of a burning desire to plant Christianity in every neglected corner of the world; consequently, we find the learned Erigena discussing the controversial problems of predestination and transubstantiation in the court of Charlemagne by introducing the speculation of the Greeks--an idea with which no churchman could cope.[42] Erigena believed, comments Jones, "that the seat of religion is in the soul of man" and that "we know God . . . only through the procession of the universe, which is a theophany or Divine revelation and knowledge and not to be confused with things that appear."[43] The transfusion of Greek thought through Erigena represented a true Platonic idealism to a century chiefly concerned with reality: secularism was a major question of the period. Very few people could encompass the thinking of Erigena at this time.

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[41] Jones, Studies in Mystical Religion, pp. 113-114.

[42] Ibid., p. 119.

[43] Ibid., pp. 121 and 127.

In Percival's definition of the occult tradition there appears to be one particularly weak link--Paracelsus. Theophrastus Paracelsus of Hohenhiem (1493-1541) would have been appalled to be lumped into a tradition which owed much of its appeal to the Greek philosophers. Paul M. Allen quotes Rudolf Steiner in The Prophecies of Paracelsus as follows:

> With the vision of a genius, Paracelsus' gaze plunged into the structure of the earth, into the nature of man, and into the mysteries of the spiritual life as well. In his endeavor to grasp the essence of spiritual things, he confronts us as a personality of great originality and elemental power. For Paracelsus wished to return to the intuitive wisdom of the past; he wished to open the great book of Nature herself, and not read in the books written by man. . . . Most characteristic of Paracelsus is his vision of the world as a totality.[44]

Clearly not to be bound by the literature of the Greeks, Paracelsus explored medicine as a natural science; and, based on natural observation, he made prophecies about the macrocosm and the microcosm. Underhill in Mysticism calls him an "occult propagandist,"[45] because of his spurious relationship to Rosicrucian theosophy. He represents a type of mysticism which demeans itself in its marriage to magic and superstition, just as the Gnostics finally were subjugated to Christianity because of the same type of relationship.

It is Jacob Boehme who, devoid of the tendencies to magic, gives a satisfying picture of what is fine and good in the now modern occult tradition. Boehme was born in "the turbulent seventeenth century," says John J. Stoudt in Sunrise to Eternity, felt the impact of the "mathematically grounded rationalism" of Rene Descartes, and was introduced to the empirical method of Francis Bacon[46]; to a certain extent Boehme's theosophy is a reaction to rationalism and a re-emergence of a romantic age in Christianity. Nicolas Berdyaev, in an introductory essay to Six Theososphic Points and Other Writings, called "Unground and Freedom," explains Boehme's singular world view: "visible and sensible things are a form of being of the invisible; from the inapparent and the inconceivable are born the apparent and the conceivable."[47] This world is the visible manifestation of heaven, and man is a microcosmic representation where the same drama unfolds--not an astounding utterance. However, great importance is hung on Boehme's theory of resistance, explains Berdyaev; an idea or object is revealed only through its opposite--light by dark, good by evil, and heat by cold.[48] The empirical method was a necessary component in modern occultism, and a similarity is obvious between it and Sir Isaac Newton's First Law of Motion--for every action there is an opposite and equal reaction. Boehme

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[44] Franz Hartmann, M.D., The Prophecies of Paracelsus' Occult Symbols, and Magic Figures with Esoteric Explanations by Theophrastus Paracelsus of Hohenhiem and The Life and Teachings of Paracelsus, introduction by Paul M. Allen (Blauvelt & New York: Rudolf Steiner Publications, 1973), p. 22.

[45] Underhill, Mysticism, p. 150.

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[46] John J. Stoudt, Sunrise to Eternity: A Study in Jacob Boehme's Life and Thought (Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 1957), p. 17.

[47] Jacob Boehme, Six Theosophic Points and Other Writings, introduction by Nicolas Berdyaev, "Unground and Freedom," (Ann Arbor, Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 1958), p. viii.

[48] Ibid., p. xi.

Emmanuel Swedenborg: Scientist and Mystic, a genius of rare quality when, before the advent of minute specialization, it was possible to know a great deal about all branches of knowledge.[51] Toksvig also takes note of Swedenborg's uncanny ability to "fit all he knew and all he experienced into a consistent world picture, one that should be based on Law, physical and spiritual"; he accomplished this by the synthesis of three major factors: (1) "his scientific bent: to observe and to classify, to test theories by experience and then to systematize"; (2) his choice to include religion in his world picture, and this he accomplished by means of symbolic interpretation; (3) his astute adaption of his mystic experience in a total world view in just the same manner he would use in "classifying minerals and nerves."[52] Through a yoga-like trance, Swedenborg evolved a theory of man's inner life, and Wilson M. Van Dusen relates it in The Presence of Other Worlds as follows:

> Swedenborg's description of the multiplicity of worlds or levels of being represented by the concepts of heaven and hell is so fundamentally different from legend and myth that it takes some readjustment of thinking to understand his findings. Fundamentally, a man's life in these other worlds is based on what he really is. In the present world a person explores, develops, and forms himself. We are quite capable of deceiving ourselves and others. In the worlds beyond this one people are sorted out according to what they really are. They move toward

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[51] Signe Toksvig, Emmanueal Swedenborg: Scientist and Mystic (Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries, 1972), p. 1.

[52] Ibid., pp. 5-6.

also introduced the idea of a dynamic Godhead, in opposition to Greek philosophers and medieval scholasticism; Berdyaev elucidates as follows:

> Boehme was perhaps the first man in the history of human thought to recognize that the foundations of being, prior to being, are unfathomable freedom, the passionate desire of nothing to become something, the darkness in which fire and light are burning; in other words, he was the founder of an original metaphysical voluntarism that is unknown to medieval and classical thought.[49]

Boehme--as a mystic--realized an abyss existed between God and man but saw a definite ability within man, every man, to bridge that gap; according to Boehme, the bridge was psychological; and Boehme used the imagery of fire and light to get his point across. He was the first, Berdyaev notes, "to conceive cosmic life as an impassioned battle, as a movement, as a process, as an eternal genesis."[50] Boehme speaks of a soul's burning desire to return to the source. In this new mysticism--so to speak--one can see man raised to new levels; no longer is he doomed to existence in an illusory, sensory world but will realize redemption through examination of his microcosmic figure--thus establishing communication between product and maker.

As far as education is concerned, no two mystics could be more different as Jacob Boehme and Emmanuel Swedenborg. Boehme was a shoemaker's son with little or no formal training, while Swedenborg was a highly educated and articulate member of Stockholm society. He was, according to Signe Toksvig in

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[49] Ibid., p. xx.

[50] Ibid., p. xxiii.

> the essential reality of their existence. Thus the worlds beyond this one are even more essentially psychological and spiritual than this one.[53]

Swedenborg's philosophy is inherently even more psychological than Boehme's--the microcosm is represented in the mind. The spiritual world is an extension of psychological exegesis, and arrived at by contemplation. Van Dusen notes the lack of time/space relationships in the mind and correspondingly in heaven.[54] According to Van Dusen, Swedenborg held forth the very Christian ideal that a man's performance on earth would stipulate what kind of a position he enjoyed in heaven, or whether he got there at all, thus "man is the free space poised between these opposite possibilities /good and evil/."[55] Swedenborg's idealogy might best be called pragmatic Christianity: he would shout, "Do something about it," at the apathetic Christians in today's church. Man has free will and must choose one way or the other.

As can be seen, a spiraling effect manifests itself within what has now been described as the "occult tradition." The occult tradition is a super-structure which has evolved over many thousands of years, each layer supporting and sustaining the next. It is nearly an impossibility to examine justly the intertwinings. Basically, however, each mystic or school of thought has tried to maintain a picture of the "Divine Vision" in its particular century. This is the spiritual ancestry that William Blake felt during his lifetime--as most articulate mystics have felt. There is an important ommission in this introduction--the Kabbalah--which, once clarified, will reveal striking correlations between the concepts of Blake and those of the Jewish mystics.

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[53] Wilson M. Van Dusen, The Presence of Other Worlds: The Psychological/Spiritual Findings of Emmanueal Swedenborg (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1974), pp. 70-71.

[54] Ibid., p. 78.

[55] Ibid.

CHAPTER ONE

KABBALAH: MYTH AND REVELATION

The occult tradition as previously outlined is a dramatic effort to evolve a system whereby man can communicate with his maker. The symbolic mysticism sounds a chord in the primitive soul of mankind--a chord that has been suppressed over the ages as ignorance or superstition, though in reality it has constituted a high and valid center of a great human quest. The advent of true mysticism in a culture or religion is in part a reaction against the pure intellectualism of the philosophers, metaphysicians, and theologians: the mystic stands on the shoulders--so to speak--of the philosophers and begins to visualize where the philosopher has left off. He sees with the heart rather than the mind, and speaks through symbols, mythological beings, and cosmic landscapes. Jewish mysticism is no exception.

Most readers are surprised that within a rational and legal tradition such as Judaism the mystical strain exists as such a powerful influence; however, Jewish mysticism is a significant element within this religion and has had salience since early antiquity. This tradition continues to the present in the Hasidism of Jewish enclaves in Isreal, America, and Europe. Kabbalah is the general term applied to Jewish mysticism since the fourteenth century. Since the Kabbalah has had such a marked influence on occultism and literary figures, including Paracelsus, Milton, Boehme, Swedenborg, Coleridge, D. H. Lawrence, and W. B. Yeats, it is one of the major components of the occult tradition. Paracelsus dignifies the Kabbalah with praise in Liber prologi en vitam beatam:

> If you would discover the inner nature of man by means of studying his external nature, if you would comprehend the heaven within him by observing his outer appearance, if you would learn the inner nature of trees, plants, roots, and stones, you must begin your investigation of nature on the foundation of the kabbala. For the kabbala opens the way to the occult, to the esoteric mysteries: it enables man to read the inner nature of human beings. Therefore, all who seek to understand the past, present, and future of humanity must imbibe the teachings of the kabbala if they wish to succeed. For the kabbala builds upon a real foundation, because the art of the kabbala is in unity with God.[56]

Kabbalah succeeded in Jewish life where the rabbinical scholastics failed. It did not turn its back on man's primitive side which responds to a pattern of myths--what Yeats called "ancient salt." It must be clearly understood that the term Kabbalah does not designate a single mystical system or dogma, for the word is far-reaching and is best considered a general term for the ultimate search by mankind for spiritual knowledge. Gershom Scholem notes in Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism that Kabbalah is "the general term applied to a whole religious movement: this movement . . . has been going on from Talmudic times to the present day; its development has been uninterrupted, though by no means uniform, and often dramatic."[57] Scholem also observes in On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism that in Hebrew Kabbalah literally means "'tradition,' that is, the tradition of things divine. . . ."[58] The Kabbalah is on this point quite different from other forms of mysticism which are not clearly identified with a particular people's history. The relationship between intuition and rationality must be established by the Kabbalist: he must exist within the religion. On the surface this would appear to be impossible. However, Kabbalism merely transforms the historical event into a cosmic occurrence: in other words, an event like the Exodus becomes a movement within the soul. Each man's soul leaves its current position and through severe travail ultimately reaches transcendency. This process is very much like what Jung accomplished with the archetypal pattern--universal man moves macrocosmically and individual man moves microcosmically. The Jewish community as the Chosen People guards the mystical secrets and passes them on from generation to generation.

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[56] Hartmann, The Life and Teachings of Paracelsus, pp. 20-21.

[57] Scholem, Major Trends, p. 18.

Jewish mysticism also has the curious trait of being non-autobiographical. Scholem explains that very little is known about the personalities of these occult writers,[59] while in the traditions of other religions much valuable literature has been written describing experiences in revelation. As a result the Jew seems almost non-human, which is far from the truth. The Jewish mystic simply subjugates himself to the revelation he is transcribing, in part due to the nature of the Jew and to the fact that Kabbalism is a purely masculine and objective discipline--the authors and readers of the Kabbalah were men. This is not to say that women were put in a lowly position by the religion, but rather that femininity was often associated with the emanation of the stern Godhead in the system.

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[58] Gershom Scholem, On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York: Schocken Books, 1965), p. 1.

[59] Scholem, Major Trends, pp. 16-17.

Perhaps the most important single idea in Kabbalism is this doctrine of emanation. Mystical exegesis of biblical values has made intense headway in the interpretation of the Creation, Revelation, and Redemption. Scholem says that "the consensus of Kabbalistic opinion regards the mystical way to God as a reversal of the procession by which we have emanated from God. To know the stages of the creative process is also to know the stages of one's one return to the root of all existence. . . ."[60] The doctrine is outlined most clearly in the major storehouse of Kabbalistic literature The Zohar or "The Book of Splendor." The Zohar is the product of one Moses de Leon, a Castilian Jew who composed it in the years immediately following 1275. Its form is psuedo-epigraphic and almost novel-like in construction. It is Jewish theosophy at its finest and the culmination of Kabbalistic thought.

For the purpose of this study, it is necessary here to summarize briefly the major tenets of The Zohar. According to J. Abelson in an introduction to a translation of The Zohar, the transcendent nature of God is defined as En-Sof ("the limitless one"), and he "becomes immanent in the cosmos by a species of 'flowings forth' or emanations, which in their turn give rise to 'four universes,' viz. (a) Astiluth; (b) Beriah; (c) Yetsirah; (d) Asiah, i.e. Emanation, Creation, Formation, and Action, respectively."[61] In an article called "Blake and the Kabbalah" A. A. Ansari notes the similarity between these four universes and the four worlds of Blake's cosmology as follows:

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[60] Ibid., p. 20.

> These four universes of the Blakean cosmology find a near equivalent in the four kabbalistic worlds which are designated as Atzilouth, Beriah, Yetzirah, and Asiah. The first one, like Eden, is archetypal--perfect and immutable; the second one, like Beulah, is creative and is an emanation of the preceding one; the third one, like Generation, is Formative, where intelligent and uncorporeal beings exist; and the fourth one, like Ulro, is purely material. These four universes represent successive stages of the emanation of the Ain-Soph. They are all inhabited by the Sephiroth who represent degrees of Spirituality and refinement in a descending order of purity.[62]

"The 'four universes' /observes Abelson/ are apportioned among 'Ten Sefiroth,' which are named as follows: (a) Kether (The Crown); (b) Hokmah (Wisdom); (c) Binah (Understanding); (d) Hesed (Mercy); (e) Geburah (Force or Severity); (f) Tifereth (Beauty); (g) Nezeh (Victory); (h) Hod (Glory); (i) Yesod (Foundation); (j) Malkuth (Kingdom). . . ."[63] Malkuth is also called the Bride and as such is related to the community of Israel and the female principle--the Shekhinah. It is necessary to keep in mind that the Sefiroth are not a step by step structure but rather the protoplasm between the primary world and the world where _En-Soph_ manifests himself. _En-Soph_ pulsates back and forth. The Sefiroth are not the Neoplatonic emanations between the world of the senses and the Absolute.

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[61] J. Abelson, Introduction to The Zohar, trans. Harry Sperling and Maurice Simon (London: The Soncino Press, 1933), p. xvi.

[62] A. A. Ansari, "Blake and the Kabbalah," William Blake: Essays for S. Foster Damon ed. A. H. Rosenfeld (Providence: Brown University Press, 1969), p. 219.

[63] Abelson, introduction to The Zohar, p. xvii.

The world of the Sefiroth, notes Scholem, is described as a "mystical organism." The symbols used in the description are a man and a tree; the image of man is perhaps most satisfying and at the same time, most paradoxical. _Adam Kadmon_ (observes Scholem) is the primordial man of _The Zohar_. In order to understand man, one must know the Godhead; in order to know the Godhead, one must understand man--Adam Kadmon. In other words, the most magnificent qualities of God are existent in his creatures and obviously, the evil is there also. God equals man. The pronouns he, she, it, etc. are gone. Of prime importance is "I."[64]

The use of sexual imagery is quite common in mystical documents--_The Zohar_ is no exception. But the relationship is not between man and God but, instead, between God and himself; consequently, a feminine aspect of the Godhead is admitted. Scholem calls the Shekhinah (Malkuth) the "symbol of 'eternal womanhood'" and he writes that "the introduction of this idea . . . /is/ one of the most important and lasting innovations of Kabbalism." The idea had such immense popularity that it obviously struck a chord of some unconscious yearning in mankind, despite the apparent contradiction of the idea of the simple totality of the Godhead. One must assume that at a deeper level the female aspect does not constitute a genuine division.[65]

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[64] Scholem, _Major Trends_, pp. 205-215.

The Fall, according to Scholem, was caused by Sin, which destroyed the immediate relationship of God and the Shekhinah. He says that "in his original paradisical state, man had a direct relation to God" and "is a synthesis of all the spiritual forces which have gone into the work of creation." Man owes his corporeal existence to Adam's sin in the Garden of Eden, and with the Fall the works of the Kabbalah become necessary. Sin (as Scholem points out) brought about chaos and disorder--it is only through knowledge of the creative order that the original union can be reestablished. The nature of sin or evil is explained rationally in The Zohar as the misinterpretation of the whole order by Adam--Scholem suggests "that the Sefiroth were revealed to Adam in the shape of the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge, i.e. the middle and the last of the Sefirah; instead of preserving their original unity and thereby unifying the spheres of 'life' and 'knowledge' and bringing salvation to the world, he separated one from the other and set his mind to worship the Shekhinah only without recognizing its union with the other Sefiroth. Thus he interrupted the stream of life which flows from sphere to sphere and brought separation and isolation into the world." Only by redemption will the original harmony of the spheres be restored.[66]

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[65] Ibid., pp. 225-230.

Within the Jewish community, notes Scholem, the supreme value to be achieved is called devekuth--"continuous attachment or adhesion to God"--which can be realized by anyone in the society. It is a contemplative attribute and, together with "fear of God, love of God, purity of thought, chastity, charity, study of the Torah, penitence, and prayer," constitutes the way of the righteous man.[67] The Kabbalah attempts to penetrate and describe the mystery of the world as a reflection of the divine life.

Kabbalah fulfilled a definite need in the soul of men and, as part of the hermetic tradition, has influenced Jew and Christian alike. William Blake was a mystic. He had access to the Kabbalah and as a mystic would have desired to read the text; however, there is a problem because nowhere in his notebooks or letters does he actually say that he read into the lore of The Zohar. Because he was a mystic and a voluminous reader, it is, nevertheless, very likely.

Many critics are overly concerned with Blake's statement that he had to create a system rather than be enslaved by another man's. However, similarities exist--consciously or unconsciously--between Blake's long prophetic poems and several ideas originally stated in the Kabbalah. That Blake's works are original is proven by the fact that his system evolved gradually, but in essence the system has at its heart concepts as old as time. If the prophetic works are viewed in this light, if they are read with some knowledge of Kabbalah, there is hope for the average reader of poetry to assimilate Blake's vision and profit from its masterful grip on the soul: this is the end result Blake hoped for and spent his own life trying to achieve--unsuccessfully.

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[66] Ibid., pp. 226-232.

[67] Ibid., pp. 233-235.

Northrup Frye in A Fearful Symmetry, A Study of William Blake chose to deny Blake his position as mystic, and says:

> The usual label attached to Blake's poetry is "mystical," which is a word he never uses. Yet "mysticism," when the word is not simply an elegant varient of "misty" or "mysterious," means a certain kind of religious technique difficult to reconcile with anyone's poetry.[68]

In spite of Frye's remarks, it is nearly impossible to deny Blake his place as a religious poet; and, if mysticism is an inadequate subject for poetry, someone should have informed W. B. Yeats of this new restriction. Frye goes on to say that if a mystic chooses poetry as a medium, he ought to use the experience of another mystic, such as Cranshaw did with St. Theresa.[69] This kind of criticism indicates essentially where the problem lies in crediting Blake as a mystic and a poet influenced by the hermetic tradition--in particular the Kabbalah. Apparently, Frye feels that there is a discrepancy between the goals of poets and mystics. This is simply not so in many cases, for unity in the cosmos has concerned poets for generations. Poetry can be a more economic means of treating that unity. In any case the question of what Blake owes to the Kabbalah, as representative of a mystical body of literature, can be dealt with without settling forever the question of just how poets should work with mysticism.

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[68] Northrup Frye, A Fearful Symmetry, A Study of William Blake (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947), p. 7.

[69] Ibid., p. 8.

The Kabbalah is probably an indirect influence on the prophetic works of Blake second only to the Bible and Milton. As noted previously, that Blake actually read the Kabbalah has not been proven conclusively. This may be in part due to the fact that much of his writing was destroyed, either by himself in a fit of despair or by his heirs in an act of ignorance. That Blake read voraciously is observed by Milton O. Percival in William Blake's Circle of Destiny when he calls Blake a "mental prince." Percival says that "anyone who undertakes to do Blake's reading after him will respect his prowess as a reader."[70] Other critics, notably Harold Bloom, have gone too far in suggesting that Blake never read anything with care except the Bible and Milton. The case for Blake's reading in the Kabbalah is brought out by A. A. Ansari in "Blake and the Kabbalah," when Ansari comments:

> Blake's interest in this tradition Kabbalah may have been stimulated by his reading of Swedenborg and the mystical doctrines of Jacob Boehme and the innumerable translations of The Zohar that were in vogue in the eighteenth century. He had also started learning Hebrew, as is evident from a letter he wrote to James Blake (30 Jan. 1803).[71]

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[70] Percival, William Blake's Circle of Destiny, p. 2.

[71] Ansari, "Blake and the Kabbalah," pp. 199-200.

Denis Saurat also notes in Blake and Modern Thought that Blake could have read in Latin the Kabbala Denudata (The Kabbalah Unveiled) of Knorr von Rosenroth, published in 1677-1684--a book very popular among English scholars because Henry More had assisted in the writing of it.[72] Ansari and Saurat are both observing a phenomenon that has become known as The Christian Cabbala--these men worked from the late fifteenth century onward to harmonize the Kabbalah, and particularly The Zohar, with Christian doctrines, seeing Christ as the universal Adam Kadmon. By reading and understanding the Kabbalah they hoped to find a key to the universe supposedly hidden in the symbolism and to decipher the works of Pythagoras. There is an informative article on Blake and Pythagorean number symbolism called "The Divine Tetrad in Blake's Jerusalem" by George Mills Harper. Owing to this movement, the Kabbalah was translated many times and influenced mystical writers in many languages in studies that were available to Blake and most probably known by him. The most prolific and notorious of the Christian Cabbalists was Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494). Scholem explains in Kabbalah that Pico had kabbalistic literature translated for him and "when he displayed his 900 famous theses for public debate in Rome he included among them 47 propositions taken directly from Kabbalistic sources . . . and 72 more propositions that represented his own conclusions from his kabbalistic research."[73] There are many other relevant authors, claims Scholem, including Johannes Reuchlin (1455-1522) who was responsible for De Verbo Mirifico ("On the Miracle-working Name") and De Arte Cabalistica ("On the Science of the Kabbalah").[74] Pico's and Reuchlin's studies of the Kabbalah placed it at the center of Renaissance philosophical and literary schools, and brought it under the scrutiny of men of letters. A fuller realization of this tradition can be drawn from Joseph L. Blau's work The Christian Interpretation of the Cabala in the Renaissance.

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[72] Denis Saurat, Blake and Modern Thought (New York: Russell and Russell, Inc., 1964), p. 104.

Several critics believe that Blake not only read but carefully studied the Kabbalah. As early as 1920--a time when Blake criticism was just making headway under the auspices of S. Foster Damon and Sir Geoffrey Keynes--Bernard Fehr wrote in "William Blake und die Kabbala" that "it seems sure to me, that Blake often glanced in an old cabbalistical book," and "Blake continues to look through his cabbalistical books. . . ." Fehr states that Blake owned a copy of the four-volume Kabbala Denudata "from which he quoted continuously." It is indeed hard to imagine that a man of Blake's obvious inclinations--he also had acquired knowledge of Latin, Greek, French, and Hebrew to facilitate his reading of the Bible--would not have been totally absorbed in its content. It is also true, says Fehr, that Blake could have acquired knowledge from Boehme or Swedenborg, but in seventeenth century England many scholars and writers that Blake probably would have known about were intensely involved in study of this occult doctrine. Fehr elucidates as follows:

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[73] Gershom Scholem, Kabbalah (New York: Quandrangle/The New York Times Book Co., 1974), p. 197.

[74] Ibid., p. 198.

> Our work in the Pars Secunda of Apparatus in Librum Sohar (volume II) presents a critical essay in Latin, from the pen of the Cambridge scholar Henry More (1614-1687) about a cabbalistical treatise, the Liber Drushim of Isaak Loriensis. . . . At that time the English clergy did not frown upon the superstition of the people, because they recognized in it a worthwhile confederate ally against free-thinkerism [rationalism]. They welcomed the supernatural which is later expressed in the Romantic literature. . . . I am also mentioning another book of the clergyman Richard Baxter (1615-1691), The Certainty of the World of Spirits Fully Evidenced by the Unquestionable Histories of Apparitions, Operations, Witchcrafts, Voices, Etc., London 1691. . . . The survey of the occultism of the English Gothic Period can hardly demonstrate related characteristics with Blake's mysticism, even though it refers back in the end to the same origin.

Unlike Bloom, Fehr feels quite positively that Blake not only had access to but actually read cabbalistic sources. It seems then that we have not certain truth but very strong probability. Great strides were taken in the penetration of Blake's vision by Damon, Keynes, and Percival when they ultimately realized the importance of the Kabbalah and related sources. This truth cannot be denied. Perhaps when the correspondences between Blake and the Kabbalah are probed the proof will be heavy enough to convince some of the skeptical. The next step is to do just this.[75]

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[75] Bernard Fehr, "Blake Und die Kabbala," trans. Roswitha Furlong, Englische Studien, LIV (1920): 139-148.

CHAPTER TWO

ALBION AND ADAM KADMON

One chief similarity that can be found between the Kabbalah and the prophetic works of William Blake is the delineation of the archetypal figures of Albion and Adam Kadmon. In order to have a mental picture of either figure, it is best to view Blake's own engravings of Albion--in particular the engraving "Albion Rose." Blake presents the full blown figure of man standing with feet firmly planted on the earth and arms stretched out into the starry universe, backed by intense illumination emanating from his head. Albion is a near perfect specimen muscled and proportioned according to Renaissance tutors. He is nevertheless a man. Adam Kadmon is seen in much the same manner by the kabbalists; however since both Adam Kadmon and Albion are archetypal figures the same tendency is found in other occult sources, i.e. the Gnostic primordial man, Swedenborg's Grand Man, St. Paul's heavenly man. The same figure is carried to the present through Shelley's Prometheus and Stevens' major man. These are arbitrary examples and there are others. Blake dealt with varied visions of macrocosm and created Albion, who is also rooted in Druidic lore. Blake says in "Visionary History" that "the giant Albion was Patriarch of the Atlantic; he is the

Atlas of the Greeks, one of those the Greeks called Titans. The stories of Arthur are the acts of Albion, applied to a Prince of the fifth century, who conquered Europe, and held the Empire of the world in the dark age, which the Romans never again recovered."[76] Blake was influenced here by a group of antiquarians who thought England was the location of the beginnings of the civilized world.

Both Adam Kadmon and Albion are symbols for the psychological process whereby man comes to know his creator--they are manifestations of his divine love in the real world. It is particularly apt that the symbol be man himself, and the action be knowing. In order to introduce man to, and ultimately re-unite him with, the Creator, both the Kabbalah and Blake present the process in anthropomorphic terms. Blake was sharply opposed to the abstract deist construction of God; God was not to be sought, said Blake, in galaxies beyond the skies, but within man himself. In a like manner, Kabbalists were in direct opposition to the distances the rabbis put between God and man. These two universal man figures can be seen as a bridge spanning long reaches of culture. Fehr, observing Adam Kadmon, says that ". . . about at the head is the emanative world, at the arms the creative world, at the legs the formative world, and down at the feet the active world, all encompassing."[77] The four universes or worlds are essential in the movement from

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[76] William Blake, "Visionary History," The Modern Tradition, ed. Richard Ellman and Charles Feidelson, Jr. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 669.

[77] Fehr, "Blake und die Kabbala," p. 4.

God to man: four universes in the Kabbalah, four worlds and Zoas for Blake's mythological system. Four becomes a mysterious formative number for all occultists. Percival observes as follows:

> That unity should be fourfold is a tradition so ancient and solemn that it carried in Blake's mind a special authority. Ezekial had seen in a vision the Holy Chariot of the Almighty as fourfold. Pythagoras, who learned according to one tradition from the Egyptian priests and according to another from the Druids, had taught that the sacred quaternion was the source of eternal nature. Unity is fourfold in the Kabbalah, as witness its four worlds and the four letters of the sacred, ineffable name --the Tetragrammaton. Four is basic in the Tarot Cards, in Ptolemy's Gnostic system, in Rosicrucianism, and finally in Blake. The number itself is filled with mysterious potency, since its elements make ten, the complete and perfect number and the parent of all the numbers that follow.[78]

Blake's system not only contains the fourfold system of Zoas and Emanations, but their addition plus Albion and his Emanation Jerusalem makes ten.

Besides the numerical symbolism, light symbolism is of extreme importance in portraying the primordial man. According to Fehr, Adam Kadmon "absorbed into himself as much light of the infinity as he could endure, while the excess of the light was emitted from him again through five openings and then flooded into five lights or chambers of the souls. The light glows through the skull, the eyes, the ears, the nose, and the mouth, like the sun which shines through a window."[79] This is quite curious since Blake on numerous occasions called the senses the five windows, leaning most probably on the tradition that the eyes are the window to the soul--Blake simply expanded on the tradition and included all the senses. Fehr quotes from the "Eternal Go pel" and "Europe" as follows:

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[78] Percival, William Blake's Circle of Destiny, p. 16.

[79] Fehr, "Blake und die Kabbala," pp. 4-5.

> This life's Five Windows of the Soul
> Distorts the Heavens from Pole to Pole,
> And leads you to believe a Lie
> When you see with, not through, the Eye
> That was born in a night, to perish in a night,
> When the soul slept in the beams of light.
>
> Five windows light the cavern'd man; thro' one
> he breathes the air;
> Thro' one hears music of the spheres;
> thro' one can look
> And see small portions of the eternal world
> that ever groweth
> Thro' one himself pass out what time he please,
> but he will not,
> For stolen joys are sweet, and bread eaten in
> secret is pleasant.[80]

Adam Kadmon's head as the position of the "Five Windows" is the highest point literally and symbolically. The light is thrown out by En-Soph in emanations, says Ansari, which form the Sephirah:

> Kether, which is equivalent more or less to the First Cause, contains within itself two hypostases; the male one is called Chokmah (Productive Reason), and the female is called Binah (Discerning Intellect). Kether thus functions as the uniting intelligence for these two. At a lower point in the scale of emanation are to be Chesed (Mercy) and Geburah (Rigor), and both these find their point of convergence in Tiphereth (Beauty). Still another pair of entities, male and female, are designated as Netzach (Firmness) and Hod (Splendor), and these are brought together by Yesod (Regenerative Power), which has an explicit phallic signification. The tenth and last Sephirah at the bottom is Malkuth (Kingdom), also known as Shekhinah, or the Bride, and she receives the influx of all the other Sephiroth.[81]

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[80] Ibid., p. 5.

[81] Ansari, "Blake and the Kabbalah," p. 203.

As previously noted these Sephiroth are not manifested in a step-by-step process, but rather a protoplasmic movement between Sephiroth in which each one is related to the one below it actively, and passively related to the one above. Freedom, or rather efficient flowing from one to the next, constitutes the cosmic world before the Fall. As Scholem notes, "the Sefiroth of Jewish theosophy have an existence of their own; they form combinations, they illuminate each other, they ascend and descend. They are far from being static."[82] Scholem also observes the meditative man as he receives "intuitive flashes" of the mystical godhead "which illuminate the human heart, as sunbeams play on the surface of water--to use Moses de Leon's metaphor."[83]

Blake surely had such a kabbalistical drawing of Adam Kadmon and its interpretation in mind when he embarked on the great prophetical poem "Jerusalem." Blake has here created his universal man in Albion; he is essentially a British figure, and as noted previously, he owes his origins to Druidic legends: Albion has long been a term to designate England in general. Because of his name, Albion has often been confused with too mundane considerations; some critics went so far as to suggest that the prophetic works were an allegory outlining political movements in England during the eighteenth century. Considering Blake's disgust with allegory in general, this is highly unlikely. He is dealing with symbols, not the hollow framework of allegory. The most satisfying and lucid explanation of the powers within the giant Albion is found in Milton O. Percival's Circle of Destiny in a chapter entitled "The Characters." This explanation of Albion is the primary source for the comparison that follows. According to Percival, the term Zoas is adapted from the Greek word for "living creatures" of Ezekial with whom, as well as the four beasts of the Apocalypse, he identifies them, and mentions that Blake himself considered them quite mysterious:

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[82] Scholem, Major Trends, p. 225.

[83] Ibid., p. 221.

> What are the Natures of those Living Creatures
> the Heavenly Father only
> Knoweth: No Individual Knoweth, nor Can Know
> in all Eternity.
> The four Zoas, as the divine energies, embody the
> mystery of life itself.[84]

The heavenly Albion is a mighty creature to behold. His figure contains the four cardinal points in head, heart, loins, and body; he, in his unfallen state, is androgynous--above and beyond sex--containing the potencies for male and female principle within his frame because each of the four Zoas is again divided into its female emanation. Just as in the kabbalistic doctrine, before the Fall each one of the Zoas and its particular emanation functioned together harmoniously in an imaginative state--imagination is all important in Blake's theosophy, and vision and imagination are equated. He saw a world where the gifts of imagination were scoffed at mercilessly, and predicted judgement.

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[84] Percival, William Blake's Circle of Destiny, pp. 18-19.

The first of the Zoas is Urizen, a corruption of the phrase "your reason." Percival observes that each mortal man contains two types of reasoning powers: the first is what can be labelled inductive or deductive reasoning. This type of discrimination is best understood in the scientific process of elimination in data, hypothesis, experimentation, and ultimately scientific truth. The scientist must deal with what his senses alone can observe; there is no room for intuition. The opposite of this type of scientific reasoning is what the mystic hopes to achieve through "The Mystic Way" as outlined previously by Underhill. It is a means of illumination that is natural before the Fall. Whether the general tendency for man to be a logical thinker and woman an intuitive feeler of life is caused by the ancient delineation of active and passive, or vice versa, is a question to ponder at length. However, following the pattern, Blake calls Urizen's feminine counterpart Ahania--as her name implies, she is sexual in nature and a passive resting place for Urizen where his powers can be recouped, and according to Percival, "she is in this capacity the subconscious moods of revery and dream out of which psychologists now say, and artists have always known, the creations of the mind take shape; she is essential to Urizen's fullness of comprehension, for she is also his intuitive and visionary self." By not realizing her importance in the fullness of his life, Urizen relies more and more heavily on his senses and becomes for Blake the unwholesome rampant rationality displayed by deists and rationalists of Blake's time who scoffed at religion and philosophy in the imaginative and intuitive sense that Blake knew must exist for the salvation of mankind, for whom he wrote a new "Lord's Prayer." The interdependencies of male and female can be seen in Blake's own relationship with his wife, and the hope he held for elevating the sacrament of marriage in general--it is marriage in its sacramental rather than legal sense that Blake believed in. Blake has been criticized unduly for this belief, and many people have thought that he was an advocate of what has become known as free love; however this is not at all the idea he presents in the relationship of Urizen and Ahania.[85]

Critics are willing to see a definite correlation between the Sephiroth of the Kabbalah and Blake's Zoas, yet no one will venture to align them very clearly--a solid relationship does exist between several of the sefiroth (sephiroth) and particular Zoas. First of all, they are equal in number, ten, the mystical element of all things. Kether, as the Crown, is the initial manifestation of the godhead; in his infinite beatitude God chose to put his energy into the world in the First Cause, Adam Kadmon. In Blake's system he is renamed Albion in an ethnocentric thrust typical of the British at this time, yet Kether is the overseer and intermediary between Chokmah and Binah, just as Albion was created by God in the starry heavens to realize the potencies of the Lord in his own world. In "Jerusalem" Blake states his psychological formula for God as follows:

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[85] Ibid., pp. 20-26.

'Awake, awake, O sleeper of the land of shadows,
wake, expand!
I am in you and you in men, mutual in love divine;
Fibres of love from man to man through Albion's
pleasant land.
In all the dark Atlantic vale, down to the hills
of Surrey . . .
I am not a God afar off, I am a brother and friend;
Within your bosoms I reside, and you reside in me.
Lo! we are one, forgiving all evil, not seeking
recompense.
Ye are my members, O ye sleepers of Beulah, land
of shades!'[86]

Because Albion and Adam Kadmon are anthropomorphic figures, the vision is more readily understandable. Blake simply reinterpreted the Divine Vision of the Bible for a century that he thought could absorb Albion and his promise. Albion can perhaps be seen as the intermediary between Urizen and Ahania, and, therefore, quite similar to the relationship of Adam Kadmon, Chokmah, and Binah. Urizen and Ahania are the head and temple of Albion, just as Chokmah and Binah are located in the skull. Chokmah and Binah, productive reasoning and discerning intellect, are easily seen as modes of interpreting the manifestation of God in this world for the kabbalistic Jew. Often the personalities of Urizen and Ahania obscure their purpose, and the abstractions Chokmah and Binah are also not readily comprehended; however they are the same forces at work.

In Albion's heart is the location of Luvah. The root word "love" is evident in Luvah, and he is the manifestation of the emotional life as it is illuminated by the light of the moon. Percival observes as follows:

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[86] William Blake, The Poems of William Blake, ed. W. H. Stevenson, text by David V. Erdman (London: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1971), p. 630.

> For the moon of love signifies the forgiveness of sin, the constant fulfillment of the religion of Jesus. No matter how distraught the world may be, no matter what mistakes may be committed, the solution of the problem, though unapparent to the mind at present, will eventually be found if only the emotions remain forgiving. . . . But Luvah is more than forgiveness. He is the whole gamut of emotions, especially the active emotions as opposed to the passive ones personified in Vala, his emanation. Conspicuous among the active emotions is the "eternal delight" which Blake associated with energy. In his unfallen state, when energy has not yet been restrained, Luvah is that delight--the characteristic Blakean joy that springs from a believing head, a loving heart, a creative imagination, and open, vigorous senses.[87]

After the Fall Luvah becomes self-righteous, as opposed to the original Christ-like life he espoused. Luvah as he approaches the Fall wishes to usurp the position of Urizen and "ride the golden chariot of the sun." In the blood bath of Robespierre that followed the French Revolution, Blake saw Luvah taking over a position of ascendency in the world; previously Blake had been a staunch supporter of this revolution, going so far as wearing a tri-color in the streets, but he was horribly disillusioned and incorporated into the myth Orc, the arch-villain which Luvah becomes. It is Vala, Luvah's counterpart, who seduces Albion, says Percival, and Blake equated her with Lilith, Adam's second wife: "her conquest of Albion means," says Percival, "that he now defines the world in terms of the passive emotions. Mercy, pity--the passive emotional life in all its aspects--constitute the new ethical ideal."[88] Mercy and pity cease to be arrived at as logical, spontaneous outgrowth of the masculine tendencies. In other words, gentleness has been supplanted by sentimentality, and convulsive weeping becomes the order of the day. As Blake saw it, religion had come to a sad crisis when this occurs. Christianity now offered only a ceremonious allegorical heaven achieved by blind acquiesence to law, instead of the psychological transcendence Blake knew to be real heaven. For Blake feminine passivity of emotion only was a cardinal sin--to be incarnate evil was far superior to lying fallow. A little of this theory can be seen in the character of Orc. He is all evil personified, yet not parsimonious like his bride Vala.

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[87] Percival, William Blake's Circle of Destiny, p. 29.

[88] Ibid., p. 32.

As the comparison continues, it is perhaps more obvious that Chesed (or Hesed) and Geburah, as the Mercy and Rigor of God, respectively, are manifest in the personalities of Vala and Luvah. Scholem calls Hesed "the 'love' or mercy of God" and Geburah "the 'power' of God, chiefly manifested as the power of stern judgement and punishment."[89] Mediating between the two is Tefereth or Beauty, which is also interpreted as compassion. Mediation is what Blake and the kabbalists hoped for in redemption. Clearly the idea of equating Christ with this vision would be anathema to the Jew, but the concept is intrinsic to their system, despite the names employed.

Located in the loins in both systems are seminal principles Urothona--Los and Yesod. According to Percival, "Los . . . is fittingly identified with the loins, for he is the great creative and seminal principle of the myth. In this form he is the arbiter of the world of Generation seen as an image of regeneration. Without him there would have been no spiritual rebirth."[90] Yesod is also called regenerative power and has definite phallic symbolism inherent in its workings in the real world. Scholem notes that "the ninth sefirah, yesod, is the male potency, described with clearly phallic symbolism, the 'foundation' of life, which guarantees and consummates the hieros gamos, the holy union of male and female powers."[91] The two are quite similar in their purpose and intent, and such striking relations build the case for Blake's debt.

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[89] Scholem, Major Trends, p. 213.

Direct correlation between the remaining Zoas and Sephiroth is not so strong; however, as Ansari elucidates, the creation myth of both sources implies an imbalance of power: one specific emanation has gained power.[92] For Blake the Fall is the maladjustment of the Zoas when many are warring to bring about the others' downfall, i.e. Urizen's urge to defeat Urthona in the Northern Kingdom: all these are symbols for a mis-perception brought about by the Fall. This ideology is vastly different from the traditional Christian view that sin and punishment are man's due. In the Kabbalah and Blake, there is no sharp differentiation between good and evil; they are simply caused by mythic displacement, as symbolized in the sefiroth and Zoas. However, the cause of the Fall, as Ansari points out, is shrouded in mystery for both, "but there is one point that is explicit in both," and that is "that this catastrophe ensued when Adam contemplated only the later Sephirah-Shekhinah--and mistook it for the whole of the Godhead," and "this situation finds an exact parallel in Blake in the incestuous involvement of Albion with Vala, who is anyway not his genuine counterpart."[93] Vala as passion was not the entirety of sex, only a part of it. Thus, the Fall is basically caused by an imbalance. This same idea can be seen in the correspondence of "The Tyger" and "The Lamb"; when the lamb is destroyed by experience, it is necessary for the tiger's energy to restore the world. Christianity's turn-the-cheek attitude will not work in Blake's universe.

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[90] Percival, William Blake's Circle of Destiny, p. 36.

[91] Scholem, Kabbalah and Its Symbolism, p. 104.

[92] Ansari, "Blake and the Kabbalah," p. 207.

It is apparent, then, that there is an obvious dichotomy of male and female in both works. Both Blake and the Kabbalah recognize the female potency in all men and in the godhead. Both assume an ultimate four-fold paradigm in the spiritual universe. Both assume an emanation theory in which harmony and disharmony depend on balance or imbalance between the forces that sustain creation. While the names of these essential forces differ, the root ideas are strikingly similar. Both strike an anthropomorphic symolic center in the image of a splendid archetypal male. Both warn against passivity and any other weakening of desire in a spiritual order that is fiercely alive with flowing and tension. Both see human powers as analogous to cosmic powers. And both move beyond a simplistic division between good and evil.

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[93] Ibid., p. 208.

CHAPTER THREE

DICHOTOMY

Both William Blake and the writers of the Kabbalah symbolized a dichotomy in the cosmos by the division of the human race into sexes, the redemption of mankind depending on the harmonizing of these divergent elements--a marriage of contraries. The idea is not original, but the resolution of the problem is an about-face from usual mystical exegesis. According to Percival, "the attempt to find in sex the origin and solution of religious problems is widespread. Sex permeates the Mysteries, both Egyptian and Greek. It supplies the imagery for certain essential teachings of both the physical and spiritual alchemists":[94] "Swedenborg, Boehme, Hermes, the Gnostics, Philo, the Kabbala . . . all recognize but reconcile life's apparent duality by a mystical union of contraries."[95] The major difference lies not in the realization of the contraries but rather in the application of this knowledge to the living of every man in the real world. Scholem observes that "non-Jewish mysticism which glorified and propagated ascetism, ended sometimes by transplanting eroticism into the relation of man to God. Kabbalism, on the other hand, was tempted to discover the mystery of sex within

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[94] Percival, William Blake's Circle of Destiny, p. 107.

[95] Ibid., p. 91.

God himself. For the rest it rejected asceticism and continued to regard marriage not as a concession to the frailty of the flesh but as one of the most sacred mysteries. Every true marriage is a symbolical realization of the Union of God and the Shekhinah."[96] This idea is particularly evidenced in the real position of woman within a Jewish household. A Jewish wife holds a symbolic position at the Seder table and as the mother of children. The union of marriage, spiritual and physical, is very celebratory.

Blake's own theory of sex is quite similar. He lived an exemplary married life and believed he enjoyed the ministrations of the true wife. Mona Wilson gives specific evidence of Blake's relationship in her biography The Life of William Blake. She quotes Gilchrist (a nineteenth century biographer) as follows:

> She would get up in the night, when he was under his very fierce inspiration, which were as if they would tear him asunder, while he was yielding himself to the Muse, or whatever else it could be called, sketching and writing. And so terrible a task did this seem to be, that she had to sit motionless and silent; only to stay him mentally, without moving hand or foot; this for hours, and night after night.[97]

Blake equated the fifth sense, touch, with sex. He saw a distinct relationship between the euphoric state produced by coitus and the state of mind necessary for the artist--poet, painter, or musician--to produce his art successfully: to be literally

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[96] Scholem, Major Trends, p. 235.

[97] Mona Wilson, The Life of William Blake, ed. Geoffrey Keynes, 3rd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 70.

"drunk with vision." In other words the sex act itself might stimulate great art. S. Foster Damon elucidates in William Blake, His Philosophy and Symbols:

> I believe that Blake was not emphasizing the sexual act entirely for its own sake. I think he found that it also induced the proper mental state in which to write poetry or imagine pictures. The ideal conditions for this are a perfectly relaxed body and a stimulated mind. The trouble with drugs and alcohol is that they generally deaden the mind with the body. So I believe that Blake, in the dreamy post-coitional state, found an unusual effervescence of ideas; and this was what he meant by passing into the World of Poetic Imagination by the Fifth Window.[98]

Damon cites as proof of Blake's belief the thirty-eighth engraving he did for Milton: pictured are a man and woman embracing languidly on the rocky shore of the Sea of Time and Space. The man alone is observing the Eagle of Poetic Inspiration. Because of the correlation he found, Blake incorporated his theory of sex into his prophetic poems; it is perhaps one of the most important aspects of the entire mythology. Through sex mankind has a vision of Eternity through the Fifth Window. Because of his sexual beliefs, which people might use to rationalize illicit relationships, Blake has been accused of being a libertine. This was not so. Damon says that "the problem went far deeper than matters of social deportment. Sex, involving the profoundest instincts of man, is rooted in eternity; and the proper directing of it is a solution of more problems than the ethical one."[99] Blake was at once trying to resolve his own married life as well as to puzzle out the paradox of an illusory existence. Blake's theory of sex is well summarized in these terms:

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[98] S. Foster Damon, William Blake, His Philosophy and Symbols (Glouchester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1958), p. 102.

[99] Ibid., p. 98.

> . . . that everyone is entitled to the most ideal Union /explains Damon/ which he or she can find; that marriage should be no restriction; indeed that any restriction is very dangerous; and that such unions some day will be quite possible.[100]

The second item appears quite objectionable, but in actual practice need not be a very large problem. Blake attempted on one occasion to bring a concubine into his own home, but Catherine cried and he gave up the project. However, Blake succeeded within his own marriage in making his theories practical; and in an age marked by bad marriages, when a mistress or paramoor was the general rule, this was indeed noteworthy. Blake was among the very first in the modern era to celebrate the sacramental rite of marriage by including the physical as a value as ultimate as the spiritual. These ideas are incorporated in the prophetic works, and, observes Damon, owe a great debt to the feminine principle of the Shekhinah in the Kabbalah: Damon says unequivocably that "it is perhaps noteworthy that Blake had read Hermes, Dante, Paracelsus, Agrippa, the Kabalah, and Vaughan."[101]

The Kabbalah makes note of a distinct dichotomy in the potencies of the Godhead contained in the ten Sephiroth: there is a sexual relationship between several pairs of the Sephiroth but major intensity is reached in the last two--Yesod and Malkuth. Scholem notes that "the ninth sefirah, Yesod, is the male potency, described with clearly phallic symbolism, the 'foundation' of all life, which guarantees and consummates the hieros gamos, the holy union of male and female powers."[102] The tenth sefirah, Malkuth, the Bride, the Shekhinah, is the manifestation of God in his closest proximity to the world and the community of Israel--she becomes the most important because of the problem she caused in contemplating the rest of the sephiroth and ultimately reaching the Godhead: Kether the Crown. Adam's sin in the Garden of Eden, literally putting Eve's sexuality above his own relationship with the whole of creation, is interpolated in the Kabbalah as a misinterpretation of the significance of the Shekhinah. Scholem elucidates as follows:

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[100] Ibid., p. 101.

[101] Ibid., p. 104.

> Instead of penetrating the vast unity and totality of the sephiroth in his contemplation, Adam, when faced with the choice, took the easier course of contemplating only the last sefirah (since it seemed to represent everything else) separately from the other sefiroth, and of mistaking it for the whole of the Godhead. Instead of preserving the unity of God's action in all worlds, which were still pervaded and governed by the secret life of the Godhead, instead of consolidating this unity by his own action, he shattered it. Since then there has been, somewhere deep within, a cleavage between the upper and the lower, the masculine and feminine.[103]

This cleavage has caused a duality in the world represented by many symbols, but particularly by the Shekhinah in exile in the world, functioning as a psuedo-feminine and independent aspect of the Godhead. According to Scholem, she functions as a part of the whole and it is the responsibility of every person in the Jewish community to rejoin the divergent parts in prayer, contemplation, and a good life or a good marriage: ". . . the Shekhinah . . . becomes the 'daughter' who, although her home is the 'form of light,' must wander into far lands. . . . she was now identified with the 'Community of Israel,' a sort of Invisible Church, representing the mystical idea of Israel in its bond with God and in its bliss, but also in its suffering and its exile."[104] In this light the Messiah is represented by every member of the community, and it becomes much more clear why Jesus Christ was unacceptable as personal messiah to the Jews. They were (and are) waiting for a messianic vision of redemption in the reunion of the Shekhinah and God, not a celibate Jew working miracles for the poor--a new religion was anathema to them. As Scholem says, "the reunion of God and His Shekhinah constitutes the meaning of redemption. In this state, again seen in purely mythical terms, the masculine and feminine are carried back to their original unity, and in this uninterrupted union of the two powers of generation will once again flow unimpeded through all the worlds."[105] The sin of Adam is purged in the community of Israel through persecution and exile. The cogency of Jewish belief is evidenced in the perspicacity of their community:

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[102] Scholem, Kabbalah and Its Symbolism, p. 104.

[103] Ibid., p. 108.

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[104] Scholem, Major Trends, p. 230.

[105] Scholem, Kabbalah and Its Symbolism, p. 108.

despite thousands of years of pogroms, they remain whole and strong, knowing harmony is only a matter of time.

Blake's system in the prophetic poems The Four Zoas, Jerusalem, and Milton is essentially the same. Blake makes a statement in For the Sexes: The Gates of Paradise which sums up his theories of redemption through union. He says,

> The door of death I open found,
> And the worm weaving in the ground.
> Thou'rt my mother from the womb
> Wife, sister, daughter to the tomb,
> Weaving to dreams the sexual strife.
> And weeping over the web of life.
> To the Accuser who is
> the God of this World
> Truly, my Satan, thou art but a dunce
> And dost not know the garment from the man:
> Every harlot was a virgin once,
> Nor canst thou ever change Kate into Nan.
>
> Though thou art worshipped by the names divine
> Of Jesus and Jehovah, though art still
> The Son of Morn in weary night's decline,
> The lost traveller's dream under the hill.
> (ll. 54-68)[106]

Clearly, Blake saw in the enigma of sexual strife the root of all evil in the world and blamed much of the discord on the hermaphrodictic religions in the eighteenth century. Many of his early poems end in a plea for harmonious love--his solution is love. Albion, as the lost traveller in the four worlds Eden, Beulah, Generation, and Ulro (again, there is sexual Kabbalistic pairing in these states of existence) is constantly dealing with the strife caused by the male-female dichotomy of his Zoas and Emanations. Albion's fall is caused by a misinterpretation of the Emanation Vala, and it is for this reason that The Four Zoas is often called Vala. Albion has an incestuous mating with Vala instead of finding true union with his own emanation Jerusalem. And because Vala represents the passive aspects of the emotional life, she emits the sexual vibrations that Adam saw in Eve, Lilith, and the Shekhinah. Their beauty is thought to be the whole of life rather than a significant part of the whole.

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[106] Blake, The Poems of William Blake, pp. 844-845.

Blake's entire myth is extremely complicated and we as contemporary readers are at a loss because much of the tale is fragmented and disjointed: much of it was published long after Blake's death and he never had a chance to edit and rewrite the way he would have wished. The poems themselves should be read only in conjunction with his engravings. The problem is the inability of a reader to deal critically with a vast amount of poetry as well as an equal amount of engravings--he must be artist and poet. The main character in the myth is the androgynous Albion who represents all men in their psychological wanderings. The following explanation is of course an oversimplification, but is basically the story outline. Albion is originally "living" in Eden, and in this state he is a nonsexual being functioning in perfect harmony with all his Zoas and Emanations; however, the intensity of the existence is too extreme for him and he retreats to Beulah's passivity to recoup his powers. In Beulah the dichotomy of male and female is beginning to be realized as Albion's perceptual powers decline. His feminine power develops a selfish attitude and Albion makes the error which caused the fall. Percival reiterates as follows:

> This limitation of perceptual powers is the world of the Daughters of Albion, in whom Blake personifies the collective feminine life in a state of separation from man. As long as man's feminine powers remain selfless, his perceptual powers remain flexible; when his feminine powers develop a selfish will, his perceptions decline to an organic level. . . . The story of the Fall is therefore the story of Albion's surrender to woman. . . . Albion . . . turns to the woman in him, as she is personified in Vala, the feminine emotions as they function in Beulah. She is the Good in which he prides himself, for Albion's lust for the woman in him is his own self-righteousness. Proud of his passive feminine emotions, he makes of them an object of desire.[107]

Albion's powers further dim as he enters Generation and ultimately the chaos of Ulro--Blake's Hell--where the powers are deteriorated to their present state in the world. Redemption is harmony; the dichotomies must learn to live together and function as a whole, and Blake, being the pragmatic man he was, foretold a real Redemption, the first step toward which was a real union of man and woman in the sacrament of marriage: "Blake believed /says Percival/ with all the passion of his ardent nature that the sexual experience is noble, even divine, and that to look upon it as ignoble,

And render that a Lawless thing
On which the Soul Expands its wing,

is nothing less than blasphemy toward God. . . . Man and woman are not merely the separated halves of our sexually divided self, but they are already tending to become the separated contraries, in whose unity is the entire cosmos."[108] When men learn to put off the clothes of rationalism and objectivity and totally see through the Imagination, then they will see the divine pattern in all things.

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[107] Percival, William Blake's Circle of Destiny, pp. 111-114.

[108] Ibid., pp. 107-108.

For Blake and the kabbalists the sexual nature of the microcosm is quite clear. This idea is a long standing principle in the occult tradition, but the Kabbalah, and later Blake, took a turn away from traditional occult doctrine by strongly upholding the physical act of marriage as a starting point for obtaining harmony between God and man. The sex act alone can stimulate the highest as well as lowest functions in mankind. Copulation is relevant to redemption.

Because of the semantic problem inherent in dealing with microcosmic themes, it might be helpful to produce some new pronouns to designate the Godhead. "It" is wholly unacceptable because God is certainly not neuter. The Godhead is usually labelled by the capitalized pronoun "He." If mankind is controlled by the language he speaks, the labelling "He" has probably done much to make the rift between contraries larger; and since the translators of the Bible were all male, it is quite understandable why religion has functioned as an institution whereby male superiority is sanctioned. In "Women and the Language of Religion," Casey Miller and Kate Swift have analyzed the situation as follows:

> Since the major Western religions all originated in patriarchal societies and continue to defend a patriarchal world view, the metaphors used to express their insights are by tradition and habit overwhelmingly male-oriented. As apologists of these religions have insisted for tens of centuries, the male symbolization of God must not be taken to mean that God really is male. In fact it must be understood that God has no sex at all. But inevitably, when words like "father" and "king" are used to evoke the image of a personal God, at some level

> of consciousness it is a male image that takes hold. . . . female human beings are then perceived as less godlike, less perfect, different, "the other."[109]

It is obvious that, if a new designation for God were found, it would take hundreds of years to dissolve the hurt already done, but it would be a step in the right direction. The insights of Blake, which seem to be so close to those of the Kabbalah, constitute a valuable resource for the needed reconstructions, since Blake saw profoundly that male and female potencies must be united into a higher region of cosmic harmony. Exaggerating either male or female, for Blake, would yield a fallen condition. Blake, then, very probably influenced by the non-ascetic tenor of Jewish mysticism, introduces a new kind of dichotomy into English thought, a theory very strong both in carnal and spiritual value. These doctrines derived from occult sources are the key, of course, to poems such as "The Tyger" and "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell."

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[109] Casey Miller and Kate Swift, "Women and the Language of Religion," The Christian Century, No. 13, 93 (April, 1976): 353.

CONCLUSION

In recent years most critics agree that William Blake deserves a much higher place in the annals of English literature than he has heretofore been accorded. This general consensus does not, however, include an analysis of qualities that have suddenly--after over two hundred years of relative obscurity--earned him this acclaim. Early in the twentieth century when critics first began to realize Blake's great worth, S. Foster Damon and Milton O. Percival aligned Blake with the occult tradition and had no compunctions about calling him a mystic. Later in Blake criticism, Northrup Frye felt it necessary to undermine Blake's relation to the mystical. Frye writes in A Fearful Symmetry:

> Whatever may be thought of Blake's doctrine of the imagination, one thing should at least be abundantly clear by now. Any portrayal of Blake as a mystical snail who retreated from the hard world of reality into the refuge of his own mind, and evolved his obscurely beautiful visions there in contemplative loneliness, can hardly be very close to Blake.[110]

For some reason, Frye would divorce poetry, science, and mysticism; he calls the design of the universe a question solely for mystics, as in Plato's geometric patterns for deducing phenomena in the Timeaus.[111] Again, this is hardly the case, for scientists--as well as mystics--have searched for a pattern in the universe. Einstein was as much a mystic as Blake in that he was trying to name the ultimate cause for all things. Mystical writings differ because they are not the search for unity, but a record of it, while poetry--all art--is a more formal and immediate expression of the same principle. So there does exist an affinity, and Frye is wrong to judge Blake without giving him credit for treating the unity of the world. It is interesting that Frye would mention the Timeaus in his argument. It is here that one can find a distinct realization of man's proximity to the creator--man made in his exact image but of inferior materials. Blake, like Plato, aligned man with God and deserves a firm place in the occult tradition.

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[110] Frye, A Fearful Symmetry, p. 29.

[111] Ibid., p. 33.

Many twentieth-century critics are leary of romanticism in general because of the lack of aesthetic distance inherent in it. Blake, on the whole, is an extremely personal poet in his symbolism and vision, yet he struggles desperately in his poetry and vision to bring about a change in the rationalistic eighteenth century--Blake would be disappointed, to say the least, to see how confused modern man has become, and how little his life's work has influenced mankind. This may be in part due to the vast amount of his work that was destroyed after his death; it may also be due to the critic's failure to see Blake in light of the occult tradition that Blake was most assuredly familiar with--in particular the Kabbalah.

It may not be fair at this time to consider the Kabbalah as a certain source for Blake's prophetic poetry, but, since the correspondences do exist between Adam Kadmon and Albion and other key elements, these source studies are valuable. However, in order to investigate the Kabbalah adequately a critic would have to have a workable knowledge of Hebrew as well as the many languages that kabbalists wrote in, which are as numerous as the lands Jews inhabit. In English a student is especially dependent on the analyses of Gershom Scholem, for it is he who has at hand the most contemporary and best translations of The Zohar. There are investigations of the occult tradition done in German and French, but once again, this only adds to the almost insurmountable language problem. However, preliminary investigations are feasible, and Blake's mysticism establishes the matrix for them.

Blake was a mystic because he recorded the unity in the cosmos. Any approach to Blake which concerns itself with the beauty inherent in the verses--as A. E. Housman suggests--and ignores Blake's meaning is enfeebled. Blake is perhaps the first lyrical non-Christian mystic in the English language; therefore he is in a direct line of influence from the Greeks to Yeats and to the "new pagan" spiritual movements of the twentieth century. Many critics would argue that Milton should be credited as the first mystic in English, but Milton, despite his heretical tendencies about heaven and hell, was dealing with a dominantly traditional Christian ideology in Paradise

Lost. He does not restructure Christianity in the way Blake does, but rather restates it in classic terms. The mythology is that of the Bible because Milton felt strongly his responsibility to the world as a Christian poet, and his poetry is relevant to the main stream of Christian orthodoxy. Yet in a skeptical world it is necessary for poets to create a new revelation of the old mystery. Blake did just that--far in advance of his time. For this reason, he has had an influence on the works of Walt Whitman, D. H. Lawrence, W. B. Yeats, and James Joyce, and Blake's cabalistic side is the very center of this great impact; some further comments can justify this claim.

Blake almost certainly found a realization of his own visions in the Kabbalah; he was profoundly interested in harmonies and was naturally drawn to occult sources. Whitman's spirituality also turns on harmonies, and also tends to make God dependent on the imagination of man, and not vice-versa. Whitman was essentially trying to bring about a synthesis of body and soul. Blake, in a like manner, saw the sensual world as an important part of life, an idea strong in the Kabbalah. Albion fell because he failed to see the entirety of his potencies: he saw only lust in Vala and not the many aspects of sex and higher love. Man's urge to hide his sexuality under a blanket of guilt can thus be blamed on the Fall and the resulting imbalance, which could only be corrected by the reunification with all the parts. Until the union takes place, man will ignore one or the other side of his nature. According to Whitman, soul was not superior to body, and he chose to portray this idea in a new mythology created from the materials of his native America. Whitman's mythology is borrowed from the earth, unlike Blake's imaginative viewpoint; nevertheless, both poets portray their own synthesis in voluptuous images. Whitman deals with the gamut of sensuality from heterosexual to homosexual love, yet underlying it all is an intense almost Hinduistic spirituality, the idea of union with a transcendent power symbolized by the sex act. Blake, as noted previously, saw intercourse in much the same manner: it became for him a spiritual rite, not a duty, and a primary celebration of all life.

There is also a definite correlation between the novels of D. H. Lawrence and Blake's poetry. Lawrence shows a reaction to intellectualism in the same way that Blake objects to deism and rationalism in the eighteenth century. Also Lawrence's theory of "blood consciousness" was an attempt to correct this situation by calling attention to the aboriginal side of man--a side he knew to be of importance yet largely ignored by the Victorian mind. Lawrence did not mean to put the sensual world on a pedestal and leave it there, although it sometimes appears so, but to proclaim its existence and bring about a revitalized balance. The conflict between man and woman was realized by Lawrence, and he tried to live his own life to alleviate the situation, just as Blake did. Blake would have been pleased to see the novels, poetry, and art of Lawrence; they are another step in the right direction--a step toward joining the divided elements of the sensory-spiritual universe.

Of all the writers of the "new pagan" movement, it is W. B. Yeats who is most powerfully moved by Blake and his vision. Yeats wrote about Blake's poetry and art in "William Blake and the Imagination." He says,

> There have been men who loved the future like a mistress, and the future mixed her breath into their breath and shook her hair about them, and hid them from the understanding of their times. William Blake was one of these men, and if he spoke confusedly and obscurely it was because he spoke of things for whose speaking he could find no models in the world he knew.[112]

Since Blake could find no models, he created a mythology of his own based primarily on what he found pleasing in the Kabbalah, the Bible, and several occult sources, sources that fit well within Yeats's designation of "ancient salt." His symbols are most suitable to his vision, just as Yeats's are suitable within his own poetry, and many of their symbols are the same. Percival's criticism calls Blake's major symbol the circle of destiny, a cyclic progression in life from birth to death. Each man finds a thousand "deaths" as the circle turns and turns daily--and consequently "births"--in his marriage, the source of unity within his mundane life. Such a doctrine goes back to the occult Thoth, the Egyptian god-scribe called Hermes Trismegisthus, who urged men to die daily. In Yeats's vision the pervasive metaphor is also the circle in its many manifestations on earth--the sun, the moon, the cross, a rose, the wheel of life, a mask--to name but a few. Reality, according to Yeats, was the Great Memory in which each man is absorbed. Man is his imagination. Blake's view of the Fall, like the Kabbalah's, is the loss of the archetype, and as with Yeats, it is a psychological loss, not a moral or theological one as appears in the Bible. As C. M. Bowra notes in The Romantic Imagination, "Blake believed man does not exist apart from God, but says expressly: 'Man is all imagination, and God is man and exists in us and we in him. . . .'"[113] Yeats thus was clearly influenced by Blake and his occult contents.

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[112] W. B. Yeats, "William Blake and the Imagination," Essays and Introductions (New York: Collier Books, 1968), p. 111.

James Joyce was also strongly moved by the writings of Blake, and through him the Kabbalah and other mystical sources. The feminine principle, outlined in the sefiroth and the zoas, is epitomized in the character of Molly Bloom of Ulysses. Molly is feminine potency in every man. Depending on the perceiver (an idea reminiscent of Blake's Songs), she is mother, wife, sister, lover, and harlot, yet a synthesis of all five. Joyce also portrays Stephen Dedulus as a priest-poet-philosopher, an element supported by Blake's concept of God as imagination--Stephen is also Joyce's Irish conscience and at the same time a universal figure. Joyce credits the poet with the responsibility for revelation of the mystery in contemporary terms, exactly what Whitman, Lawrence, Yeats, and Blake have done--a positive corrective vision. Stephen often names occult and heretical thinkers who move in his imagination.

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[113] C. M. Bowra, The Romantic Imagination (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 34.

In addition to this, Joyce is credited as an innovator in experimental structure of the novel. Blake wrote a manifesto of sorts for the use of experimental forms in Jerusalem, when he says to the public:

> When this Verse was first dictated to me, I considered a Monotonous Cadence, like that used by Milton & Shakespeare & all writers of English Blank Verse, derived from the modern bondage of Rhyming, to be a necessary and indispensible part of Verse. But I soon found that in the mouth of a true orator such monotony was not only awkward, but as much bondage as rhyme itself. I therefore have produced a variety in every line, both in cadence & number of syllables. Every word and every letter is studied and put into its fit place; the terrific numbers are reserved for the terrific parts, the mild and gentle for the mild & gentle parts, and the prosaic for the inferior parts; all is necessary to each other. Poetry Fetter'd Fetters the Human Race. (ll. 36-47)[114]

Blake did not decide upon a form and then write poetry to fit that form; his poems assume organic growth, much in the same manner that Lawrence approves of and Joyce seeks. It is interesting to note here the concern with the placement of each word and letter, an idea Blake may have drawn in part from the Kabbalah in the form of the tetragrammaton: the fourfold quality of the unspeakable word for God. God's name was so sacred and potent that it could not be uttered; therefore the Jews created a name for God in everyday speech--Jehovah. The weight a word can carry, and its importance in the overall structure, is evident. Joyce struggled eighteen years to perfect Finnegans Wake; he tried to make sure the power of each word was in its significant and rightful place, and Blake's bold spirit of innovation lies in the background, both for content and form. These brief sketches of Blake's relation to major modern writers fill out the proper view of the authority and potency which must be credited to his occult vision. Blake picks up a great stream of thought from the Kabbalah tradition and gives it a new burst of power.

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[114] Blake, The Poems of William Blake, p. 629.

One of the main reasons Blake is slighted by anthologists is that he really falls into neither the category of Romanticism nor Rationalism. Even the critics cannot agree on a method of approach--he can be read purely from a musical point of view in which only the sheer beauty of his verse is acknowledged, ignoring the mystical vision of reality Blake propounded. This is clearly a mistake. However, the opposite pole of criticism involves so much source study that it has its limitations. The early critics of Blake--particularly Damon and Percival--were on the right path. Blake, artist and poet, defies any typical literary label because he belongs to a group of "mythy-minded" writers who are a continuation of the occult tradition in modern times. Any study of "new paganism" should include the occult tradition with an emphasis on Blake's contribution in relation to kabbalistical sources. Critics can ignore the problem, or they can continue the work of Damon and Percival by treating the group of occultist moderns in the light of that great tradition beginning in Egypt or perhaps farther east, coming into the western world through Pythogoras, Plato, and the Kabbalah, and still exerting its power in stubborn resistance to Christian stereotypes of the spiritual world.

Blake, then, cannot be seen fully and fairly until the student is able to perceive the light which falls on his work from the creations of the Jewish mystics and their European counterparts. As Blake manipulates in his own system the same archetypal presences which move in the Kabbalah, and as Blake creates his strikingly similar vision of what it means to fall and to regain paradise and to struggle in the dichotomies of the spiritual world, one begins to appreciate the two great Jewish traditions that Blake assimilates: one is the biblical material that the many have raised high, and one is that sophisticated mystical vision in a small number of Jewish seers, a vision which attempts to universalize and correct the overly rational, local, and institutional elements in popular religion. What Blake tries to do in England is exactly what the Kabbalists try to do for Zion. And so Blake is exactly right when he sees his mission as the building of a new Jerusalem. Damon and several German scholars are positive that Blake draws directly from the Kabbala, and the correspondencies between the Blakean and Kabbalistic universes are certainly deep enough to mark an important direction in Blake studies.

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