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Kabbalistic Sources— Blake's and His Critics'

BY SHEILA SPECTOR

One of the most provocative, if poorly understood, statements from a poem replete with confusing and ambiguous passages is Blake's assertion in *Jerusalem* that the Jews "have a tradition, that Man anciently contain'd in his mighty limbs all things in Heaven & Earth," or, as he says later, "all Animals."¹ In attempting to discern Blake's true intent, critics have turned to the Kabbalah for help; yet, rather than clarify the problem, they have only added to our confusion. In 1920, Bernhard Fehr, assuming that like all men of his time, Blake knew Latin, Greek, French and Hebrew, concludes that Blake knew Kabbalah, the only problem being to decide which of the many recensions available the poet actually used.² For his study, Fehr relies on the seventeenth-century Latin compendium, the *Kabbala Denudata*. In contrast, four years later S. Foster Damon asserts that "It is very difficult to discover just what Blake knew of the Kabala, . . . But from [*To the Jews*] we must assume that he knew something."³ Then, three years later in 1927, Helen C. White, returning to Fehr, remarks that "Herr Fehr certainly presents a convincing case for Blake's having in some way got hold of cabalistic ideas," though she misreads Fehr to the extent of assuming that the *Kabbala Denudata* is a German kabbalistic text.⁴ And to finish the twenties, Denis Saurat declares: "We shall see that the Cabala explains much more of the detail of Blake's visions. Indeed the Cabalistic element is so closely woven into the very fabric of the *Prophetic Books* that it is only in studying Blake's system as a whole that we shall be able to judge of the influence of the Cabala upon him."⁵

For almost a decade after Saurat, there was silence upon the subject, until 1938 when Milton O. Percival, taking a different tack, places Kabbalah within the context of the "the Blakean heterodoxy," comprised of "The Orphic and Pythagorean tradition, Neoplatonism in the whole of its extent, the Hermetic, kabbalistic, Gnostic, and alchemical writings, Erigena, Paracelsus, Boehme, and Swedenborg," what he considers to be "a consistent body of tradition extending over nearly twenty-five hundred years. In the light of this tradition, not in the light of Christian orthodoxy, Blake read his Bible, weighing

and deciding for himself, formulating a 'Bible of Hell.' "⁶ Three years later, Joseph L. Blau, agreeing with Percival, states that "there exists a strong possibility that those elements in Blake which are Cabalistic may have entered his thought thus indirectly, through Swedenborg."⁷

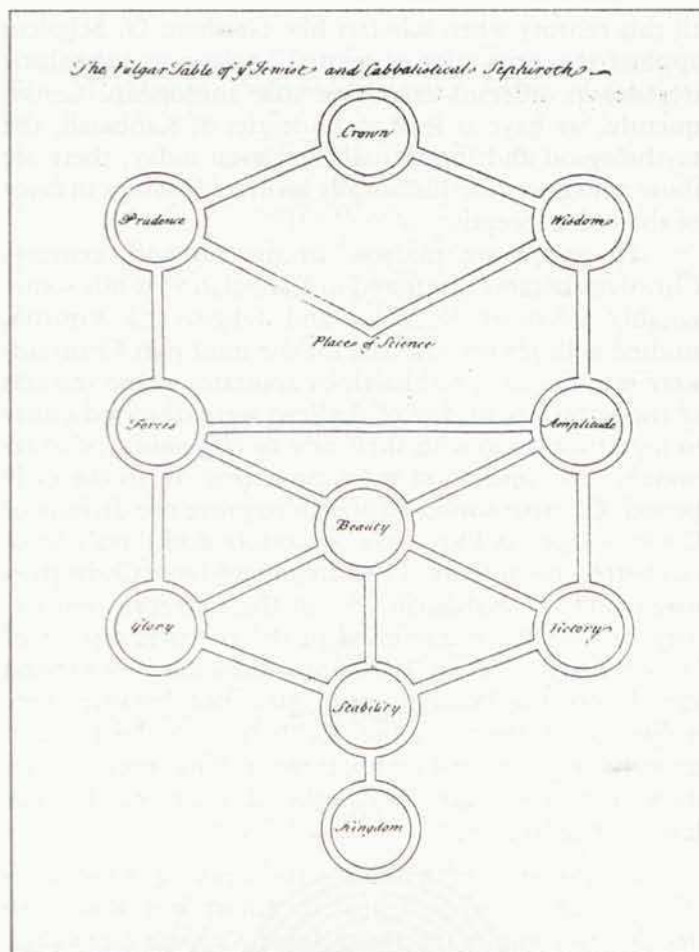
Fifteen years were to elapse before another scholar considered the question seriously. In 1956, Laura de Witt James uses several kabbalistic doctrines in order to interpret "one of Blake's most deftly hidden doctrines: The doctrine of the False Tongue beneath Beulah."⁸ In 1964, Desirée Hirst explores the influence of the Christian mystical tradition on Blake, as it derived "from the ancient world, by a kind of Neo-Platonism blended with Hebrew symbolism."⁹ The following year, Harold Bloom exclaims that "the actual cabalists would have been outraged at the humanistic 'impieties' of Blake's myth";¹⁰ and in the same year, Damon returns to the subject with the statement that "Apparently Blake took nothing directly from the Kabbalah, if he knew of it, although Denis Saurat . . . points out various parallels."¹¹ Three years later, referring to the use of Eden in the kabbalistic creation myth, Kathleen Raine says that "This name Blake could not have learned from the Christian cabalists Fludd and Agrippa, for they do not use it in their writings. He may have learned this venerable tradition from conversation with some rabbi," thus apparently picking up on Damon's suggestion that Blake studied Hebrew "probably with some local rabbi, who must have been a remarkable person, as the information he gave Blake was a tremendous stimulus."¹² The following year, Asloob Ahmad Ansari tells us that "Blake's interest in this tradition may have been stimulated by his reading of Swedenborg and the mystical doctrines of Jacob Böhme and the innumerable translations of the *Zohar* that were in vogue in the eighteenth century."¹³ And finally, in 1972, Harold H. Fisch, referring to Saurat and Hirst, explains that "Although he knew little or no Hebrew, and was not Jewish, Blake was also influenced by ideas which can be traced to the Kabbalah."¹⁴

While we generally assume that the problem of Blake's Kabbalah would be clarified if only we had his direct

source, actually, the question is much more fundamental, for as this survey of critical opinion suggests, there is no universal agreement about the material with which we are dealing. If Saurat insists that Blake was strongly influenced by Kabbalah, while Damon questions any influence at all; and if Bloom says that a real kabbalist would have been "outraged" by Blake's use of Kabbalah, while Raine posits rabbinic training for the nonconforming Christian; then, it is most likely that everyone is, in fact, talking about something different, that the word Kabbalah has a different meaning for each of these scholars and, as is quite likely, had still a different meaning for Blake. Therefore, before we can even begin to assess the relative influence of Kabbalah on Blake, much less seek his specific source, we must first consider the nature of Kabbalah in general, English Kabbalah in particular, and the history of kabbalistic scholarship in the twentieth century, for only then will we be able to place Blake and his critics in their proper perspectives.

Fittingly, the history of Kabbalah is reminiscent of the biblical story about the Tower of Babel, when the Lord did "confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech" (Gen. 11.7), for even though the word has been part of the English language for over four hundred years, beyond etymology there is no universally accepted definition of the field.¹⁵ Deriving from the Hebrew word *kabel*, to receive, Kabbalah denotes the secret knowledge of the Jews. Although the term specifically signifies the movement of Jewish mysticism begun around the twelfth century in Provence, it is usually generalized to include the entire history of Jewish mysticism, beginning around the time of Christ and extending to contemporary movements.

The key word of the definition is "secret." Mysticism is traditionally reserved strictly for those capable of assimilating what is believed to be "dangerous knowledge."¹⁶ Only those who were old enough and specially prepared were allowed to engage in mystical pursuits, the masses being told, in the words of Maimonides, that "There is a considerable difference between one person and another as regards these faculties, as is well known to philosophers. While one man can discover a certain thing by himself, another is never able to understand it, even if taught by means of all possible expressions and metaphors, and during a long period; his mind can in no way grasp it, his capacity is insufficient for it."¹⁷ Because of the secret nature of Kabbalah, Jewish mystics seldom record their visions for others to read, passing them down, instead, in an oral tradition.¹⁸ In conjunction with the secrecy is the tradition of pseudonymity, attribution of texts to eminent figures of earlier periods. Wishing to remain anonymous, authors deliberately wrote in archaic languages in order to disguise the true origins of their work, and as a result, a complicated mythological history of Kabbalah developed, one which was not disproved un-



The basis of all Kabbalah, both Jewish and Christian, is the theory of the *Sefirot*, the emanations through which *Ein-Sof*, the Godhead (the active manifestation of God), created the universe. Originally ten, in the thirteenth century, kabbalists added an eleventh *Sefirah*, *Da'at* (Knowledge), which in time became the focal point of the occult versions of Kabbalah.

1. Casway, inserted between pp. 358 and 359. Traditional picture of the Sefirotic Tree through which kabbalists portrayed the harmony of Creation. Vertically, the identical right and left columns (Pity—Male, and Wrath—Female) depict the fragmentation which occurred at the time of the Fall and suggest the unity to be achieved at the end of time when right and left merge with the Central Column. Horizontally, the four *Sefirot* of the Central Column correspond to the four worlds, as governed by the four souls, of the macrocosm and corresponding microcosm. This particular rendition is unusual in two respects. First, the title specifically distinguishes between "Jewish" and "Cabalistical" pursuits, thus suggesting that the occult use of Kabbalah was considered different from the traditional Jewish teachings. Also, the specification of the "Place of Science" is unique since the Tree usually depicts only the original ten *Sefirot*. According to Isaac Luria, the sixteenth-century kabbalist whose interpretation of Jewish mysticism radically altered the traditional myth, *Da'at*, the *Sefirah* of the Female Will, wished to draw all of the lights of creation into her vessel, and attempted to replace the *Sefirah* of the heart, which corresponds to the Spiritual Soul, thereby causing the Fall. The inclusion of the "Place of Science," which projects the action of Lurianic Kabbalah, could suggest parallels between *Da'at*, the Female Will, and the Spiritual Soul; and Vala, Blake's Female Will, and Luvah, his Heart. In addition, Blake's drawing on *Jerusalem* 54 could be an abbreviated inversion of the Sefirotic Tree, used to depict the fallen world, especially since in the first few lines of the plate, Blake alludes to the process of emanation (the *Sefirot*).

til this century when scholars like Gershom G. Scholem applied the principles of textual analysis to kabbalistic treatises in order to determine true authorship. Consequently, we have at least two histories of Kabbalah, the mythological and the factual, and even today, there are those who reject the historically accurate findings in favor of the older legends.

To complicate matters, in the fifteenth century, Christians became interested in Kabbalah.¹⁹ While some, notably Johannes Reuchlin and Edigius da Viturbo, studied with Jewish scholars, for the most part Christians were introduced to Kabbalah by apostates whose versions of the secret knowledge of the Jews were distorted either to ingratiate them with their new coreligionists, or to rationalize the wisdom of their converting. If, in the early period, Christians used Kabbalah to prove the divinity of Christ—since, as Pico della Mirandola said, “no science can better convince us of the divinity of Jesus Christ than magic and the Kabbalah,”²⁰—in the sixteenth century, they became more interested in the practical aspects of “white magic,” using kabbalistic principles to expand already existing hermetic principles. But because these mages called their practice Kabbalah, in the popular mind the word earned yet another meaning, even though these practices were specifically discouraged by the Jews themselves.

In the seventeenth century, the meaning of Kabbalah changed again, when Christian Knorr von Rosenroth decided to compile the two-volume *Kabbala Denudata*, still the most comprehensive compendium of Latin Kabbalah in existence.²¹ Von Rosenroth had a number of Jewish kabbalistic treatises translated for the *Denudata*, but at the same time, he censored the work, for his primary purpose was evangelical. When Henry More suggested that von Rosenroth affirm “nothing for true, but what the Christian as well as the Jew is agreed in,” von Rosenroth considered the suggestion “not only useful, but necessary.”²² Many of these treatises were translated by Franciscus Mercurius van Helmont, one of the few Christian kabbalists of the seventeenth century capable of reading Kabbalah in the original, and his own *Adumbratio Kabbalae Christianae* was appended to the second edition.²³ Von Rosenroth and van Helmont believed in a universal religion which could embrace Judaism and all forms of Christianity, and they used their own version of Kabbalah to foster that belief.

At the same time that Christian evangelists were promulgating their brand of Kabbalah, the Jews, responding to the disaster of the mystical messiah Sabbatai Sevi, became even more stringent than ever about discouraging kabbalistic pursuits among their own people, a tendency which culminated in the mid-nineteenth century when Heinrich Graetz, the foremost Jewish historian, called Kabbalah a “monstrosity” produced by “Discord,” and “a

daughter of embarrassment,” among other things.²⁴ Thus, having virtually abandoned the field, the Jews gave Christians free reign to establish yet another strand of Kabbalah—Theosophy. Although Mme. Blavatzky was herself not particularly attracted to Kabbalah, other Theosophists were, and by the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, a number of Theosophical treatises with the word “Qabbalah” in the title were produced, though frequently having very little to do with Jewish mysticism.²⁵ And rather than credit the Jews with the special knowledge, many Theosophists denied Jewish origins to the field altogether, claiming, as does Henry Burry Pullen-Burry, that “To speak therefore of the Qabalah of the Jews in the sense that they were the recipients of the Secret Arcane Wisdom is entirely misleading.”²⁶

By the twentieth century, then, we have a variety of kabbalisms from which to choose. Jewish Kabbalah from the standpoint of myth or modern scholarship, and Christian Kabbalah intended to demonstrate the divinity of Christ, permute matter, convert the Jews, or simply ignore the Jews. And the questions are: which Kabbalah did Blake have access to? and from the perspective of which Kabbalah do his critics measure him?

Assuming that Blake knew neither Hebrew nor Latin well enough to study the known kabbalistic texts, we must determine the kinds of material available to the eighteenth-century poet—Jewish or Christian—in English.²⁷ While it is tempting to assume that Blake studied with a local rabbi, a brief glance at eighteenth-century Anglo-Jewry is sufficient to indicate that English Jews were by and large incapable of teaching Blake the rudiments of Judaica, much less their esoteric doctrines.²⁸

The primary characteristic of English Jewry at the time was ignorance of Judaica. Throughout the century, the rabbis complained of having no one with whom to discuss religious matters and, according to Charles Duschinsky, the complaint of Rabbi David Tevele Schiff (d. 1792), that “I have no pupil and not even anyone to whom I could speak on Talmudic subjects,” echoes that of his predecessor Rabbi Hirschel Levin, made in the late 1750s.²⁹ Since one had to master Talmud before he could begin studying Kabbalah, few English Jews were qualified, apparently, to study mysticism in the England of Blake’s day. In addition, because the Anglo-Jewish community of the period placed so little emphasis on Jewish learning, the rabbinate had to be imported from abroad, and even if the rabbis knew Kabbalah (a questionable assumption since, by the eighteenth century, Kabbalah was no longer an integral part of the Jewish curriculum), they would have been incapable of teaching Blake: as immigrants, they knew little English and Blake had no significant background in Hebrew, Yiddish or the languages of the Continent.³⁰

It should also be noted that the Jews were not granted full emancipation until 1890. In practical terms, this meant that they were not permitted to study in the universities, hold political office or, more to the point, publish without restraint or censorship. Not until the second half of the eighteenth century were bilingual Jewish prayer books and Bibles permitted in England, and purely English works were usually confined either to prayers for the king, to demonstrate the patriotism of these non-citizens, or, towards the end of the century, polemics to defend the Jews against the anti-Semitic attacks of Priestley and others.³¹

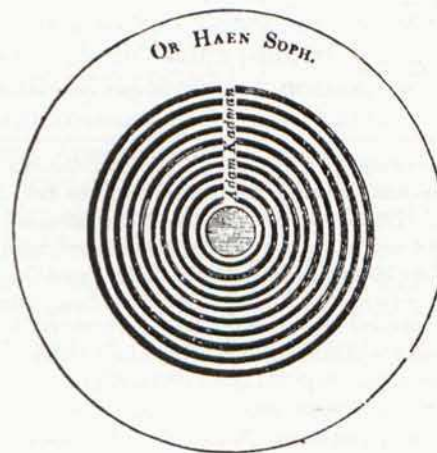
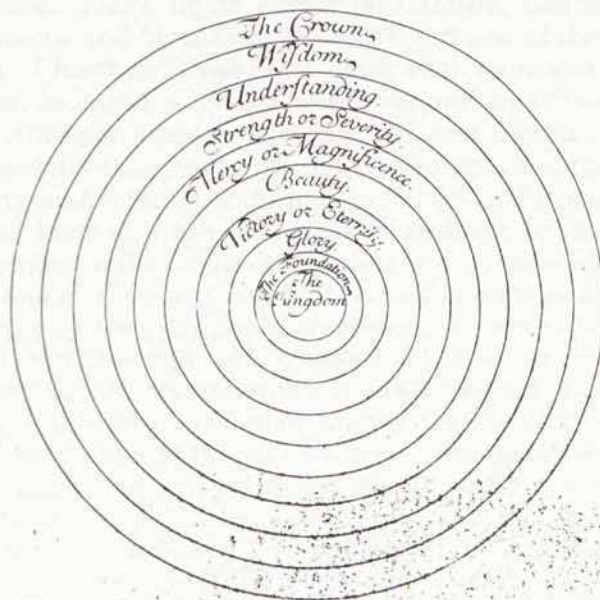
The only literate Anglo-Jewish kabbalist, Jacob Hart (1745–1814), wrote his treatises in Hebrew and published them on the Continent under his Hebrew name, Eliakim ben Abraham.³² Whether motivated by censorship or, as is quite likely, the absence of an audience at home, Hart reserved his English writing for polemics. A second so-called kabbalist, Samuel Jacob Hayyim Falk (c. 1710–1782), known as the "Ba'al Shem of London," was an adventurer who "achieved notoriety in both Jewish and non-Jewish circles for his kabbalistic practices based on the use of the mysterious name of God, hence becoming known as Ba'al Shem ('Master of the [Divine] Name')." If generally regarded as an alchemist and magician, Falk was also "denounced as a Shabbatean heretic and fraud."³³

Historically, the first kabbalistic work produced in English by an English Jew is *The Kabbalah: Its Doctrine, Development and Literature*, written in 1863 by Christian D. Ginsburg, an apostate who wrote because "with the exception of the notice in Basnage's *Histoire des Juifs* . . . and the defective descriptions given by Allen and Etheridge . . ., no Treatise exists in English on this esoteric doctrine." Ginsburg's work is intended "to be a guide for those who wish to be initiated into the mysteries of this theosophy."³⁴ This is clearly not a religious work intended for a religious audience.

Ginsburg was not quite correct in his assessment of English Kabbalah. In fact, up to the time of Blake's death, there were over fifteen sources of Kabbalah available to the poet, though none of them accurately reflects the mysticism of the Jews.³⁵ With one exception, all were written by Christians for Christians; all are based on the Latin recensions of the subject which are distorted to make Kabbalah conform with Christianity; and the one exception, John Peter Stehelin's *Traditions of the Jews*, distorts the Jewish sources in order to ridicule the secret knowledge of the people of the Book.

In the seventeenth century, Christian Kabbalists used their own versions of Jewish mysticism to buttress their own, non-Jewish attitudes towards the occult. Cornelius Agrippa, who refers to Kabbalah throughout his *Three Books of Occult Philosophy* (English translation, London 1651), devotes several chapters of the third book specif-

Table of the SEPHIROTHS in Circles.



2. Basnage, p. 195. The circular configuration of the *Sefirot* usually indicates *Adam Kadmon*, primordial man, the first completed being of Creation. As the culmination of the process of emanation, *Adam Kadmon* was to be a spiritual model for *Adam Rishon*, first man, the last completed being of Creation. In this configuration, *Adam Kadmon* was to be purely passive, but after the Fall, when *Adam Kadmon* had to assume an active role in restoration, he fragmented into physiognomies and assumed a new configuration, corresponding to the Sefirotic Tree (see illus. 4). The description of the Spectre as "A Circle in continual gyrations" (J 29.20) suggests the negation of *Adam Kadmon* in his circular form.

3. According to Luria, the first form which the lights of the Creator (Or Haen Soph) assumed was that of *Adam Kadmon*, who was to reflect the lights of the Godhead towards the world to come. In our post-lapsarian state, the chief medium of restoration is the lights issuing from *Adam Kadmon's* forehead, intended to reorganize the cosmos. Similarly, in *The Four Zoas*, Los reorganizes his cosmos "in his furious pride sparks issuing from his hair" (n. 4, 48.11).

Discourses of F.M. Van Helmont, Concerning the Macrocosm and Microcosm, or the Greater and Lesser World, and Their Union (London, 1685, pp. 105–61), contains a detailed exposition of *gilgul*. Finally, in *Seder Olam: or, the Order, Series, or Succession of All the Ages, Periods, and Times of the Whole World is Theologically, Philosophically, and Chronologically Explicated and Stated. Also the Hypothesis of the Pre-existancy and Revolution, of Humane Souls. Together with the Thousand Years Reign of Christ on the Earth, Probably Evinc'd, and Deliver'd in an Historical Enarration Thereof, According to the Holy Scriptures* (London, 1694), van Helmont establishes the basis for his theories about the succession of all ages through the use of his Christian interpretation of Kabbalah.

By the Age of Reason, the emphasis shifted, as Kabbalah was no longer presented as a serious pursuit, but an historical curiosity of the Jews. The first modern historian of the Jews, Jacques Basnage, includes an extensive 150-page discussion of Kabbalah in his *History of the Jews, from Jesus Christ to the Present Time: Containing their Antiquities, their Religion, their Rites, the Dispersion of the Ten Tribes in the East, and the Persecutions this Nation has Suffer'd in the West. Being a Supplement and Continuation of the History of Josephus* (English translation, London 1708, pp. 184–256). Unable to read Hebrew, Basnage relied on Latin sources, especially the *Kabbala Denudata*, for his discussion of Jewish mysticism, so he misrepresented a distorted version of Kabbalah as an accurate account of the subject.³⁶ Unfortunately, Basnage became the source of many English studies of Kabbalah which followed.

The next kabbalistic publication is an English translation of Aesch Mezareph, or Purifying Fire, a Chymico-Kabalistic Treatise Collected from the *Kabbala Denudata* of Knorr von Rosenroth (London, 1714), an alchemical text included in the *Denudata*. Historically interesting as an example of the popular notion of Kabbalah, the text, whose Hebrew original has been lost, represents the attempt to "harmonize" Kabbalah and alchemy, even though "there was a basic symbolic divergence between the two from the start."³⁷

During the course of the eighteenth century, several writers included sections on what they believed to be Kabbalah, not only in studies of Jewish traditions, but also in works with theses totally unrelated to the Jews. In 1724–1725, Thomas Lewis wrote *Origines Hebraeae: the Antiquities of the Hebrew Republick . . . Designed as an Explanation of Every Branch of the Levitical Law, and of all the Ceremonies and Usages of the Hebrews, both Civil and Sacred*, which contains five pages (IV.164–69) devoted to Kabbalah, discussing the pseudepigraphical history of Kabbalah, the kabbalistic explication of Scripture (mystical, allegorical, or analogical), practical Kab-

balah and Gematria (numerology). Roughly the same material is contained in Ephraim Chamber's *Cyclopaedia: or an Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences* (2 vols.; London, 1728), under entries on Cabbala, Cabbalists, Gematria and Notaricon. (During the course of the century, Chambers' *Cyclopaedia* underwent numerous editions, including a revision to five volumes in 1778–1788 by Abraham Rees. Finally, into the next century, Rees revised the *Cyclopaedia* entirely, expanding it to a total of thirty-nine volumes, including several devoted to illustrations, some of which were engraved by Blake.) Following Chambers is the English translation of Augustin Calmet's *Historical, Critical, Chronological and Etymological Dictionary of the Holy Bible*, translated by Samuel D'Oyly and John Colson (3 vols.; London, 1732). While the brief entry "Cabala" focuses primarily on Gematria, Calmet includes kabbalistic materials throughout the *Dictionary*. In 1736, Thomas Burnet's *Doctrina Antiqua de Rerum Originibus; or, an Inquiry into the Doctrine of the Philosophies of all Nations, concerning the Original of the World*, was translated into English. Much less objective than his predecessors, Burnet includes a chapter on "the Hebrews and their Cabala" in order to demonstrate that the Jews, "the most trifling of all the Barbarians," wasted their time on a subject "good for nothing but to be thrown away." Burnet relies primarily on the *Denudata* when describing kabbalistic theories of the *Sefirot* (emanations), cosmogony, Lurianic Kabbalah, the Zohar, Creation and Apocalypse (pp. 56–90).

John Peter Stehelin, a German divine residing in England, provides the only text not based on the Latin sources—*The Traditions of the Jews, or the Doctrines and Expositions contained in the Talmud and Other Rabbinical Writings. Translated from the High-Dutch. To which is Added, A Preliminary Preface: or, An Enquiry into the Origin, Progress, Authority, and Usefulness of Those Traditions, wherein the Mystical Sense of the Allegories in the Talmud and Other Writings of the Rabbins is Explained* (London, 1732–1734; 2nd ed. 1742–1743, II.142–66). Instead, he relies on Johann Eisenmenger's *Entdecktes Judenthum [Judaism Unmasked]* (1711), a flagrantly anti-Semitic text which, though based on 182 Hebrew books, thirteen Yiddish, and eight written by apostates, is deliberately distorted to dissuade Christians from converting to Judaism.³⁸ In his toned-down version of the work, Stehelin converts Eisenmenger's anti-Semitism to philo-Semitism, the belief that the Jews would of their own accord choose Christianity if only Christians would calmly and logically point out the absurdities of the older faith. Although Stehelin's section on Kabbalah is overlaid with his philo-Semitic attitude, he presents what in the eighteenth century was considered to be an historically accurate account of Kabbalah, including the only clear discussion of Jewish gematria available in English.

Stehelin was followed by an abridged translation of Henry More's essay "Expositio Mercavae," contemplation of Ezekiel's chariot, included as an appendix to R. Casway's *Miscellaneous Metaphysical Essay: Or, an Hypothesis Concerning the Formation and Generation of Spiritual Material Beings. With Their Several Characteristics and Properties, and How Far the Several Surrounding Beings Partake of Either Property. To Which is Added, Some Thoughts upon Creation in General, upon Pre-existence, the Cabalistic Account of the Mosaic Creation, the Formation of Adam, and Fall of Mankind; and upon the Nature of Noah's Deluge. As Also upon the Dormant State of the Soul, from the Creation to our Birth, and from Our Death to the Resurrection. The Whole Considered upon the Principles of Reason, and from the Tenor of the Revelations in the Holy Scriptures* (London, 1748). Casway's text is an eclectic compilation of various esoteric theories, but the "Expositio Mercavae" provides a Christianized version of the earliest form Jewish mysticism; unfortunately, More felt no need to be encumbered by either historical accuracy or Jewish scholarship, so his text reflects his own belief and not that of the Jews.³⁹

Towards the end of the century, interest shifted from Jewish history to philosophy, the primary recension being found in William Enfield's *The History of Philosophy from the Earliest Periods: Drawn up from Brucker's Historia Critica Philosophiae* (London: Joseph Johnson, 1792). Not an accurate translation of the Latin original, Enfield renders what he calls "the substance" of Brucker's work, including a hostile and inaccurate account of Kabbalah which relies on Basnage and the Latin kabbalists for information (pp. 408-18). In 1780, Blake engraved one illustration for Enfield's *The Speaker* (1780-1820?). While we have no way of knowing whether the two men actually knew each other, were one to speculate, it would be more realistic to assume that Blake learned his Kabbalah from Enfield than from a local rabbi.

Thomas Maurice, not interested in the Jews at all, uses the information found in Basnage for his *Indian Antiquities: or, Dissertations, Relative to the Ancient Geographical Divisions, the Pure System of Primeval Theology, the Grand Code of Civil Laws, the Original Form of Government, the Widely-Extended Commerce, and the Various and Profound Literature, of Hindostan: Compared, throughout, with the Religion, Laws, Government, and Literature, of Persia, Egypt, and Greece. The Whole Intended as Introductory to, and Illustrative of, The History of Hindostan, upon a Comprehensive Scale* (London, 1793-1800; IV.166-210), in order to demonstrate the primacy of Hindostan, discussing the oral transmission of doctrine, major kabbalistic texts, the *Sefirot*—as they relate to Mithraic and Eleusinian mysteries—and the names of God and numerology, as resembling Hinduism.

At the turn of the century, Francis Barrett's *The Magus, or Celestial Intelligencer; Being a Complete System of Occult Philosophy. In Three Books: Containing the Antient and Modern Practice of the Cabalistic Art, Natural and Celestial Magic, &c.; Shewing the Wonderful Effects that May be Performed by a Knowledge of the Celestial Influences, the Occult Properties of Metals, Herbs, and Stone, and the Application of Active to Passive Principles* (London, 1801), points the way to be taken by the Theosophists of the late nineteenth century. Attempting to unite all forms of the occult into a single system, Barrett intends his treatment of the Kabbalah, though he is both sloppy and far from the mysticism of the Jews, to be "a complete treatise on the mysteries of the Cabala and Ceremonial Magic; by the study of which, a man (who can separate himself from material objects, by the mortification of the Sensual appetite—abstinence from drunkenness, gluttony, and other bestial passions, and who lives pure and temperate, free from those actions which denigrate a man to a brute) may become a recipient of Divine light and knowledge" (pp. 33-72).

Finally, in *Modern Judaism: or, a Brief Account of the Opinions, Traditions, Rites, and Ceremonies, of the Jews in Modern Times* (London, 1816; pp. 65-94), John Allen, who cannot help but confess to finding his subject "an awful delusion," is fairminded enough "to describe things as they are," or rather, as he believes them to be, including a chapter on Kabbalah based on the Latin studies and Maurice's *Indian Antiquities*.

As is evident from this survey, Blake's possible sources of Kabbalah were inaccurate and distorted discussions of Jewish mysticism which had little to do with the Jews at all. Even if, as is quite possible, there are other sources of English Kabbalah which have yet to be located, in all likelihood they are like those just surveyed, quite far from the mysticism of the Jews. Thus when considering the influence of Kabbalah on Blake, it is, while true, tautological to note with Bloom that "actual cabalists would have been outraged" at Blake's use of Kabbalah—it would be impossible for things to be otherwise. But if we cannot apply Jewish scholarship to Blake's Kabbalah, we also should be wary about any other twentieth-century source of information as well, given the strange history of kabbalistic scholarship until the middle of this century.⁴⁰

The origin of scholarly interest in Kabbalah is closely linked to the Theosophical movement of the nineteenth century which promulgated a universal secret knowledge of which Jewish mysticism was considered only a part. In the nineteenth century, people like Eliphas Lévi (Alphonse Louis Constant, 1810-1875), Papus (Gérard Encausse, 1868-1916), and Frater Perdurabo (Aleister Crowley, 1875-1946), produced works purporting to be about Kabbalah but, as Scholem explains, these "supreme charlatan[s] . . . had an infinitesimal knowledge of Kab-

UNITS.			TENS.			HUNDREDS.		
Aleph	א	1	Yod	י	10	Koph	ק	100
Beth	ב	2	Caph	כ	20	Resh	ר	200
Gimel	ג	3	Lamed	ל	30	Shin	ש	300
Daleth	ד	4	Mem	מ	40	Tau	ת	400
He	ה	5	Nun	נ	50	Final Caph	ך	500
Vau	ו	6	Samech	ס	60	Final Mem	ם	600
Zain	ז	7	Ain	ע	70	Final Nun	ן	700
Cheth	ח	8	Pe	פ	80	Final Pe	ף	800
Teth	ט	9	Tsaddi	צ	90	Final Tsaddi	ץ	900



Historically, the most popular form of Kabbalah is Gematria, the science of permutations applied to the letters of the Hebrew alphabet in order to create new words for interpreting the Bible, devise magical charms for warding off evil, or fabricate alchemical formulae for permutating matter. Most English discussions of Kabbalah have sections on Gematria, and most of the sources contain illustrations of these magical processes. It is possible that some of Blake's anomalous use of Hebrew in his illustrations can be attributed to some form of Gematria.

8. Allen, p. 74. Common to virtually any discussion of Judaica, from Hebrew grammars through Kabbalah, is the alphabet chart with the numerical equivalents of the letters. Since Hebrew uses letters rather than Arabic numerals for counting, it was only natural that kabbalists would substitute words of equivalent values for each other, Gematria at its most basic level, and from there perform any number of mathematical computations to derive wholly ingenious interpretations of the Bible. Through Gematria, Christians were able to "prove" the divinity of Christ while Jews, of course, used Gematria to "prove" just the opposite.

9. Allen, p. 69. A magical charm in the form of the Star of David, based on an abbreviation of the Hebrew phrase meaning "Thou art strong for ever, O Lord! or, Thou art strong in the eternal God," as Allen notes. This kind of abbreviation, the formation of new words based on the initial letters of words in a phrase, is known as Notaricon.

material.⁴⁴ As a result, we now have a significant body of scholarship from which to draw when studying Kabbalah.⁴⁵

In view of the history of kabbalistic scholarship, we can make several broad assumptions concerning the English sources against which we measure Blake. Anything written before 1863 was most likely strongly influenced by the Latin kabbalists, and therefore is distorted to make Kabbalah conform to Christianity. Between 1863, the date of Ginsburg's *Kabbalah*, and 1902, that of Waite's *Doctrine and Literature of the Kabbalah*, works are probably more and more infected by the Theosophical movement. The first two decades of the twentieth century witness the vain attempt to sort out the material by scholars relying on flawed secondary sources; and from World War I on, we find more and more historically accurate texts appearing in English.

If Blake was likely influenced by the first trend, his critics all reflect their own historical milieus, and therefore, are interpreting from the perspectives of kinds of Kabbalah to which he could not have had access. In keeping with the occultists of his time, Fehr, writing in 1920, assumes that in addition to the Latin *Kabbala Denudata*, Blake's sources consisted of More's *Conjectura Cabalistica*, Joseph Glanville's *Sadducismus Triumphatus, or a Full and Plain Evidence Concerning Witches* (London, 1681), and Richard Baxter's *The Certainty of the World of Spirits fully Evidenced by the Unquestionable Histories of Apparitions, Witchcrafts, Voices &c.* (London, 1691). While it is true that these works were part of the broader occult movement of the seventeenth century, none reflects the mysticism of the Jews, not even the *Conjectura Cabalistica*. As More explains in his Preface, "That though I call this Interpretation of mine Cabbala, yet I must confesse I received it neither from Man nor Angel. . . . And I know nothing to the contrary, but that I have been so successful as to have light upon the old true Cabbala indeed."

Unlike Fehr, who makes no references to the nascent kabbalistic scholarship of his time, Damon uses Waite's *Doctrine and Literature of the Kabalah* for his 1924 pronouncement, unaware, as Scholem points out, that the book is "unfortunately of little value" (*Major Trends*, p. 400, n. 25); in contrast, White simply turns to Fehr for information. Saurat, using Mathers' *Kabbalah Unveiled*, contradicts his predecessors, but the Frenchman is clearly imbued with the Theosophists' approach and is incapable of distinguishing Kabbalah from the mass of Theosophy, according to Blau.⁴⁶

In 1938, Percival uses everything available to him, but with no indication that he can assess the relative value of his sources. He turns to Louis Ginzberg's historically accurate article in the *Jewish Encyclopedia* for information about *Adam Kadmon* (the kabbalistic Primordial Man);⁴⁷ Christian Ginsburg's early attempt at describing Jewish mysticism; as well as the Theosophical Mathers, and well-intentioned though inaccurate studies of

The Labala

Shaving at one View the Seventy-two Angels bearing the name of God, Shemhamphorah

⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Vehuiah	⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Leuiiah	⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Aniel	⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Mebahiah
⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Jehiel	⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Pahaliah	⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Haumiah	⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Poiel
⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Sitael	⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Nelchael	⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Rehael	⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Nemamah
⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Elemiah	⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Ieiael	⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Ihiael	⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Teilael
⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Mahasiah	⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Melael	⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Hahahel	⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Harahel
⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Lelael	⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Hahuiiah	⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Michael	⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Mizrael
⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Akhariah	⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Nithhaiah	⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Vealiah	⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Umabel
⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Cahethel	⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Haaiah	⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Ialahiah	⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Iahhel
⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Haniel	⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Ierathel	⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Saeliah	⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Annauel
⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Aladiiah	⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Seehiah	⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Ariel	⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Mochael
⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Lauiah	⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Reiel	⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Asaliah	⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Damabiah
⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Hahiah	⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Omael	⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Mihael	⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Menkel
⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Ielael	⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Leocabel	⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Vehuel	⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Eiael
⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Mebahel	⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Vasariah	⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Daniel	⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Habuiiah
⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Haniel	⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Iehuiiah	⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Hahaniah	⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Rochel
⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Hakamiah	⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Lehahiah	⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Imamiah	⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Ilbamiiah
⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Leviah	⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Chavakiah	⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Nanael	⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Haiaiel
⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Caliel	⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Monadel	⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Nithael	⌒	⌒	⌒	⌒	Nemamah

10. Barrett. Chart, possibly based on Temurah (the principle of substituting letters for each other according to magical formulae, like the first for the last, the second for the next-to-the-last, etc.). The English names of the angels are recognizable, as are the names of God, in the columns to the left of the angels, but the rest represent magical permutations of letters with hidden meanings.

The Cabala

Table 2: The Right Table of the Commutations.

א	ב	ג	ד	ה	ו	ז	ח	ט	י	כ	ל	מ	נ	ס	ע	פ	צ	ק	ר	ש	ה
ב	ג	ד	ה	ו	ז	ח	ט	י	כ	ל	מ	נ	ס	ע	פ	צ	ק	ר	ש	ה	א
ג	ד	ה	ו	ז	ח	ט	י	כ	ל	מ	נ	ס	ע	פ	צ	ק	ר	ש	ה	א	ב
ד	ה	ו	ז	ח	ט	י	כ	ל	מ	נ	ס	ע	פ	צ	ק	ר	ש	ה	א	ב	ג
ה	ו	ז	ח	ט	י	כ	ל	מ	נ	ס	ע	פ	צ	ק	ר	ש	ה	א	ב	ג	ד
ו	ז	ח	ט	י	כ	ל	מ	נ	ס	ע	פ	צ	ק	ר	ש	ה	א	ב	ג	ד	ה
ז	ח	ט	י	כ	ל	מ	נ	ס	ע	פ	צ	ק	ר	ש	ה	א	ב	ג	ד	ה	ו
ח	ט	י	כ	ל	מ	נ	ס	ע	פ	צ	ק	ר	ש	ה	א	ב	ג	ד	ה	ו	ז
ט	י	כ	ל	מ	נ	ס	ע	פ	צ	ק	ר	ש	ה	א	ב	ג	ד	ה	ו	ז	ח
י	כ	ל	מ	נ	ס	ע	פ	צ	ק	ר	ש	ה	א	ב	ג	ד	ה	ו	ז	ח	ט
כ	ל	מ	נ	ס	ע	פ	צ	ק	ר	ש	ה	א	ב	ג	ד	ה	ו	ז	ח	ט	י
ל	מ	נ	ס	ע	פ	צ	ק	ר	ש	ה	א	ב	ג	ד	ה	ו	ז	ח	ט	י	כ
מ	נ	ס	ע	פ	צ	ק	ר	ש	ה	א	ב	ג	ד	ה	ו	ז	ח	ט	י	כ	ל
נ	ס	ע	פ	צ	ק	ר	ש	ה	א	ב	ג	ד	ה	ו	ז	ח	ט	י	כ	ל	מ
ס	ע	פ	צ	ק	ר	ש	ה	א	ב	ג	ד	ה	ו	ז	ח	ט	י	כ	ל	מ	נ
ע	פ	צ	ק	ר	ש	ה	א	ב	ג	ד	ה	ו	ז	ח	ט	י	כ	ל	מ	נ	ס
פ	צ	ק	ר	ש	ה	א	ב	ג	ד	ה	ו	ז	ח	ט	י	כ	ל	מ	נ	ס	ע
צ	ק	ר	ש	ה	א	ב	ג	ד	ה	ו	ז	ח	ט	י	כ	ל	מ	נ	ס	ע	פ
ק	ר	ש	ה	א	ב	ג	ד	ה	ו	ז	ח	ט	י	כ	ל	מ	נ	ס	ע	פ	צ
ר	ש	ה	א	ב	ג	ד	ה	ו	ז	ח	ט	י	כ	ל	מ	נ	ס	ע	פ	צ	ק
ש	ה	א	ב	ג	ד	ה	ו	ז	ח	ט	י	כ	ל	מ	נ	ס	ע	פ	צ	ק	ר
ה	א	ב	ג	ד	ה	ו	ז	ח	ט	י	כ	ל	מ	נ	ס	ע	פ	צ	ק	ר	ש

11. Barrett. A chart of Temurah in which the Hebrew alphabet is written out both horizontally, from right to left, and vertically, along the right-hand column. Then, the letters of the rest of the chart are filled into their appropriate places to produce a basis for magical permutations.

The Cabala

Fig. A

א	י	ק
ב	כ	ר
ג	ל	ש
ד	מ	ת
ה	נ	ר
ו	ס	ם
ז	ע	ז
ח	פ	פ
ט	צ	ץ

Fig. B

רחזכסאנאל

Fig. C

א"ט ט"ז

Fig. D

א"ט ט"ז

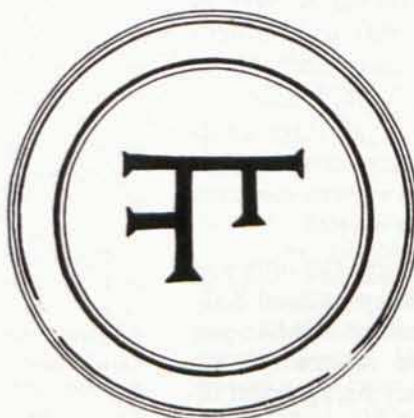
Fig. E

Fig. F The Cabalistic Character of the Spirit Michael as Composed out of the above Tables A B C D

12. Barrett. Figure A depicts an anagram of the Hebrew alphabet in which the twenty-seven characters are presented in a series on threes. Reading from right to left, the first letter of each block traces the progression of the first nine letters, the middle letter of each block, the second nine letters, and the last letter the last nine letters of the alphabet.

Adolph Franck and S. Karppe.⁴⁸ In the "Diffusion," Blau relies on Joshua Abelson's brief article "Swedenborg and the Zohar," written in 1924, to assert that "There exists a strong possibility that those elements in Blake which are Cabalistic may have entered his thought thus indirectly, through Swedenborg."⁴⁹ And James cites no authorities at all.

Hirst, whose approach is similar to Percival's, uses her sources in a comparable manner. While referring to van Helmont's historical impact on Kabbalah, she relies on a mixture of modern scholarship (Scholem, Secret and Blau), and inaccurate texts (Mathers), to draw parallels between Kabbalah and Blake. In contrast, Bloom is fully in line with modern scholarship. Given his background in Judaica and the criticism he has written since 1965, we can assume that Bloom's concept of Kabbalah is historically accurate; however, Blake's could not have been, so there is no point in measuring the poet against what a real kabbalist would have believed.

Damon apparently did not really consider the progress of kabbalistic scholarship in the forty years intervening between his *William Blake: His Philosophy and Symbols* and *Blake Dictionary*, for he simply denies influence while nodding at Saurat, crediting him with a degree of authority in the field. Ironically, while studying all of the other hermetic traditions in great depth, Raine begs the question when it comes to Blake's Kabbalah, attributing it to a local rabbi.

Ansari tends to be cavalier in handling the question of Blake's Kabbalah. In my research, I have been unable to locate any reference to a single of "the innumerable translations of the Zohar" which he asserts "were in vogue in the eighteenth century." And for information about the subject, Ansari relies on two historical surveys of Jewish mysticism—Scholem's *Major Trends* and Müller's *History of Jewish Mysticism*, and two inaccurate translations of the Zohar—Sperling and Simon's and Mathers'.⁵⁰ And Fisch sums up the field by relying on all three kinds of sources available to a twentieth-century scholar: well-intentioned though inaccurate—Damon's *Dictionary*; occultist—Saurat; and historically accurate—Hirst.

As is true with any study of influence, the only way to determine how—or even if—Blake knew or used Kabbalah is to go to his source of information. Unlike any other field, however, in this case we cannot rely on modern scholarship even for rudimentary background information, for the kind of Kabbalah available in eighteenth-century England was far different from that published at any time during the following two hundred years. Even to rely on the historically accurate studies currently available in English is misleading for Blake, who had no access to anything other than the distorted interpretations of the Latin kabbalists; so it is to them, or

English renditions of their works, that we must turn if we wish to determine the extent of kabbalistic influence on Blake.

¹ *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. David V. Erdman (1965; newly rev. ed. Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1982), pp. 171, 174. Blake's line seems to be a variation or combination of two statements found in William Enfield's *History of Philosophy* (see below): "All souls were produced at once, and pre-existed in Adam"; and "The En-Soph, or Deity, contains all things within himself" (p. 416). Interestingly, neither statement refers to *Adam Kadmon* (primordial man), the kabbalistic figure with whom Albion is usually associated.

² William Blake und die Kabbala," *Englische Studien*, 54 (1920), 139-48.

³ *William Blake: His Philosophy and Symbols* (1924; rpt. Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1958), p. 446.

⁴ *The Mysticism of William Blake* (1927; rpt. New York: Russell & Russell, 1964), p. 162.

⁵ *Blake and Modern Thought* (1929; rpt. London and New York: Russell & Russell, 1964), pp. 102-103.

⁶ *William Blake's Circle of Destiny* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1938), p. 1.

⁷ "The Diffusion of the Christian Interpretation of the Cabala in English Literature," *Review of Religion*, 6 (1941-1942), 166.

⁸ *William Blake: The Finger on the Furnace* (New York: Vantage Press, 1956), p. 13.

⁹ *Hidden Riches: Traditional Symbolism from the Renaissance to Blake* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1964), p. 3. Throughout her text, Hirst points out various kabbalistic parallels in Blake's work.

¹⁰ "Commentary" to the Erdman edition, p. 935.

¹¹ *A Blake Dictionary: The Ideas and Symbols of William Blake* (1965; rpt. Boulder: Shambhala, 1979), p. 215.

¹² *Blake and Tradition*, Bollingen Series XXV.11 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), II.202; Damon, *Dictionary*, p. 215. Raine also refers to Gershom G. Scholem's *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 3rd ed. (New York: Schocken Books, Inc., 1954).

¹³ "Blake and the Kabbalah," in *William Blake: Essays for S. Foster Damon*, Alvin H. Rosenfeld, ed. (Providence: Brown University Press, 1969), pp. 199-200.

¹⁴ "William Blake," *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1971).

¹⁵ In his *Dictionary*, Samuel Johnson glosses "Cabal" as "The secret science of the Hebrew rabbins"; "A body of men united in some close design"; and "Intrigue"; a "Cabalist" being "One skilled in the traditions of the Hebrews," but "Caballistical" or "Cabbalistical" meaning "Something that has an occult meaning." Similarly, in defining "Cabbala," the *OED* blurs the distinction between "The name given in post-biblical Hebrew to the oral tradition handed down from Moses to the Rabbis of the Mishnah and the Talmud," and "the pretended tradition of the mystical interpretation of the Old Testament"; and "An unwritten tradition" and "Mystery, secret or esoteric doctrine or art." The best general studies of Kabbalah are those of Gershom Scholem, primarily: *Major Trends* and *Kabbalah* (New York: Quadrangle, 1974), a compilation of all material on Kabbalah, by Scholem and others, in the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. An earlier study, though not as comprehensive as the studies of Scholem, is Ernst Müller's *The History of Jewish Mysticism*, tr. Maurice Simon, East and West Library (Oxford: Phaidon Press, 1946).

13-16. Very often, Kabbalah became the inspiration for original drawings, barely related to the Jewish origins. Here are some purely imaginative heads found in Barrett, presumably inspired by kabbalistic reading.

Fallen Angels' Notes

A. Diver



Apollyon



Spells of Iniquity

¹⁶ The oft-cited parable in the Talmud (Hag 14b) used to discourage mystical pursuits concerns "Four men [who] entered the 'Garden,' namely Ben 'Azzai and Ben Zoma, Aher [Lit., 'another,' by which term Elisha b. Abuyah is referred to after his apostasy], and R. Akiba said to them: When ye arrive at the stones of pure marble, say not, Water, water! For it is said: 'He that speaketh falsehood shall not be established before mine eyes.' [Ps. 101.7] Ben 'Azzai cast a look and died. Of him Scripture says: 'Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.' [Ps. 116.15] Ben Zoma looked and became demented. Of him Scripture says: 'Hast thou found Honey? Eat so much as is sufficient for thee, lest thou be filled therewith, and vomit it.' [Prov. 25.16] Aher mutilated the shoots. [i.e. apostasized]. R. Akiba departed unhurt." Thus, only one in four, and that one of the caliber of the great Rabbi Akiba, is capable of pursuing this dangerous knowledge.

¹⁷ Moses Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed*, M. Friedländer, tr., 2nd ed. (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1956), p. 41.

¹⁸ See Louis Jacobs, *Jewish Mystical Testimonies*, for examples of extant records of mystical experiences (New York: Schocken Books, 1976).

¹⁹ The only studies of Christian Kabbalah in English are Blau's *The Christian Interpretation of the Cabala in the Renaissance* (1944; rpt. Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, Inc., 1965) and Scholem's section on "The Christian Kabbalah" in *Kabbalah*, pp. 196-201. There are, however, several good sources available in German and French: Ernst Benz, *Die christliche Kabbala: Ein Stiefkind der Theologie* (Zürich: Rhein-Verlag, 1958); François Secret, *Les Kabbalistes chrétiens de la Renaissance* (Paris and The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1964); and most recently, the anthology *Kabbalistes Chrétiens* (Paris: Editions Albin Michel, 1979), which contains a French translation of Scholem's "Zur Geschichte der Anfänge des christlichen Kabbala," originally published in *Essays . . . Leo Baeck* (1954), pp. 158-93. In "Milton and the *Conjectura Cabbalistica*," R.J. Zwi Werblowsky provides a cogent analysis of the distinctions between Jewish and Christian Kabbalah (*Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 18 [1955], 91-94).

²⁰ As cited by Scholem (*Kabbalah*, p. 197).

²¹ *Kabbala Denudata*, 2 vols. (Sulzbach, 1677-84; facs. rpt. Hildesheim and New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 1974). On von Rosenroth and the *Kabbala Denudata*, see: Scholem, *Kabbalah*, pp. 416-19; and Ernst Benz, "La Kabbale chrétienne en Allemagne, du xvi^e au xviii^e siècle," in *Kabbalistes Chrétiens*, pp. 103-109.

²² More's letter is printed in English, while von Rosenroth's response is in Latin, *Kabbala Denudata*, part 2, pp. 176-77. In the light of More and von Rosenroth's correspondence, as well as, for example, the Christian adaptation of Isaac Luria's "De Revolutionibus Animarum" in the *Denudata*, Scholem's assertion that "there is no justification for the contemporary Jewish claims that the author misrepresented the Kabbalah" (*Kabbalah*, p. 416), is somewhat puzzling.

²³ The *Adumbratio*, not included in the 1974 facsimile of the *Kabbala Denudata*, was translated into French by Gilly de Givry (Paris: Bibliothèque Chacornac, 1899). The sixth chapter of Marjorie Hope Nicolson's *Conway Letters: The Correspondence of Anne, Viscountess Conway, Henry More, and their Friends, 1642-1684*, is devoted to van Helmont (New Haven: Yale University Press, and London: Oxford University Press, 1930, pp. 309-77). In addition, Allison Coudert has published two articles on van Helmont's influence on English Kabbalah: "A Cambridge Platonist's Kabbalist Nightmare," on Henry More's attitude towards van Helmont (*Journal of the History of Ideas*, 36 [1975], 633-52); and "A Quaker-Kabbalist Controversy: George Fox's Reaction to Francis Mercury van Helmont," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 39 (1976), 171-89.

²⁴ *History of the Jews*, tr. Bella Loewy (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1891-92), III.547, 549. To be more

specific, Kabbalah was tolerated among Jews until the seventeenth-century false messiah Sabbatai Sevi converted to Islam, taking with him a large number of Jewish followers (see Gershom Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah*, tr. R.J. Zwi Werblowsky, Bollingen Series XCIII [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973]). As a result, for the next two centuries, Kabbalah was perceived as a threat to the Jewish community. Influenced by German rationalism, Graetz denigrated the importance of Kabbalah entirely, reducing it to a historical embarrassment.

²⁵ For examples of Mme. Blavatzky's use of Kabbalah, see: "Mysteries of the Kabala," *Isis Unveiled: A Master Key to the Mysteries of Ancient and Modern Science and Theology* (New York: J.W. Bouton, 1877), II.212-50, rpt. in her *Collected Writings* (Wheaton, Ill.: Theosophical Publishing House, 1972); "The Kabala and the Kabbalists at the Close of the Nineteenth Century," *Lucifer*, 10 (May 1892), 185-96; rpt. in *Collected Writings*, VII.250-92; and "The Ten Sephiroth," *The Theosophist*, 47 (1925), 383-88, rpt. in *Collected Writings*, VI.315-21.

²⁶ *Qabalism* (Chicago: Yogi Publication Society, 1925), p. xiii.

²⁷ Although Blake claims in a letter to his brother James (30 January 1803) to "go on Merrily with my Greek & Latin: . . . am now learning my Hebrew" (Erdman edition, p. 727), we have no evidence that he was proficient enough in Latin to tackle this difficult material, and Arnold Cheskin claims that Blake's knowledge of Hebrew was at best rudimentary ("The Echoing Greenhorn: Blake as Hebraist," *Blake*, 12 [1978-79], 178-83).

²⁸ The standard Anglo-Jewish history is Cecil Roth's *History of the Jews in England*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964). Todd M. Endelman's *The Jews in Georgian England, 1714-1830: Tradition and Change in a Liberal Society* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979), focuses on Anglo-Jewish history in the time of Blake.

²⁹ *The Rabbinate of the Great Synagogue, London, from 1756-1842* (1921; rpt. London: Gregg International Publishers Limited, 1971), p. 94.

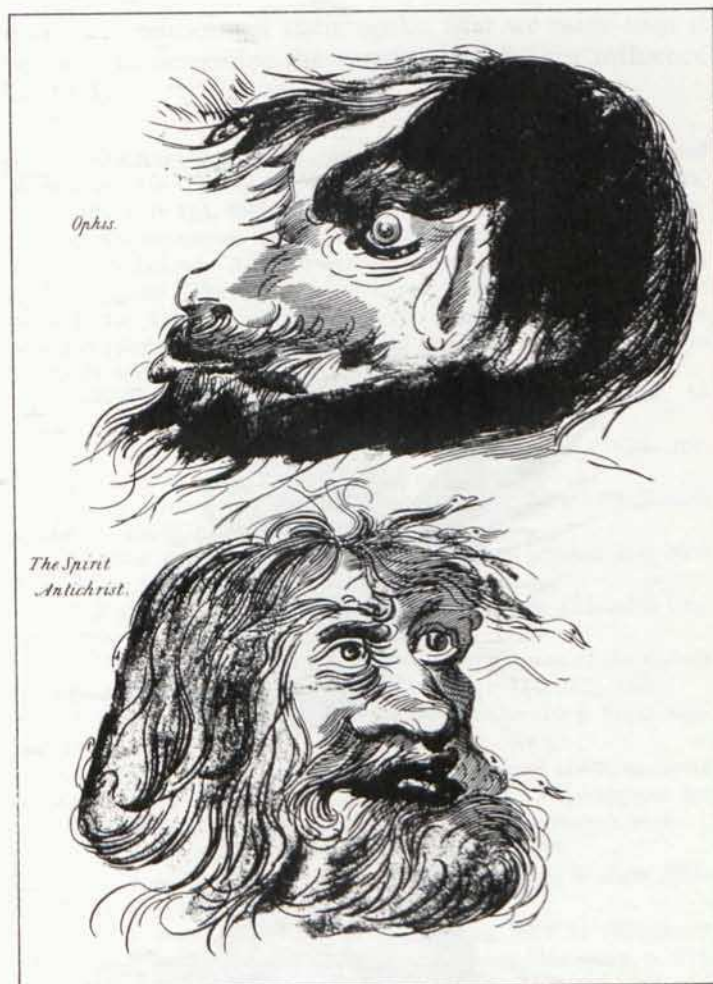
³⁰ Not even Rabbi Solomon Hirschel (1762-1842), who was born in England but raised on the Continent, knew English. Also, we should not overlook the likelihood that even if the rabbis had been able to teach Blake, the non-conforming Christian would probably have scorned their instruction. Chosen because they were scions of eminent families on the Continent, the rabbis were strict constructionists of Jewish law (this was before the age of Reform Judaism) and tried to impose rigorous control over the Jewish community. That London's Great Synagogue was unable to fill the post of chief rabbi for the decade before Rabbi Hirschel assumed office in 1802 was probably as much due to the populace's desire to remain free of such religious constraint as the inability to find a candidate with suitable credentials.

³¹ On Jewish publications in eighteenth and nineteenth century England, see: Cecil Roth, *Magna Bibliotheca Anglo-Judaica: A Bibliographical Guide to Anglo-Jewish History* (London: Jewish Historical Society of England, 1937).

³² See Roth's article on Hart in the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. It is interesting to note that in the *History of the Jews in England*, Roth omits any references to Hart's kabbalistic work, mentioning only "scientific brochures of high interest" (p. 242).

³³ Cecil Roth, "Samuel Jacob Hayyim Falk," *Encyclopaedia Judaica*.

³⁴ (1863; rpt. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1955), Preface. Originally a lecture delivered to the Literary and Philosophical Society of Liverpool, Ginsburg's *Kabbalah* was included in their *Proceedings*, no. 19, appendix (1863); and then reprinted in London by Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts & Green in 1866. Ginsburg's references are to Jacques Basnage's *History of the Jews* (see below); and John Allen's *Modern Judaism* (see below); and John Wesley Etheridge, *Jerusalem and Tiberias: Sora and Cordova: A Survey of the Religious and Scho-*



lastic Learning of the Jews (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longman, 1856), written too late to have influenced Blake.

³⁵ While this is only a bibliographic study, the literary sources contain illustrations which Blake may have found as interesting as the texts themselves; therefore, I have included a few of the more suggestive.

³⁶ Ben Zion Dinur, "Jacques Christian Basnage," *Encyclopaedia Judaica*.

³⁷ Scholem, *Kabbalah*, p. 187. An extremely popular treatise, the *Aesch Mezareph* has been reprinted several times: as the fourth volume of W. Wynn Westcott's series, *Collectanea Hermetica* (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1894); (New York: Occult Research Press, 1956); and (Mokelumne Hill, Calif.: Health Research, 1974).

³⁸ Zvi Avneri, "Johann Andreas Eisenmenger," *Encyclopaedia Judaica*.

³⁹ According to Blau, More's "first interest in the Cabala was that of a good Christian; he regarded Cabalism as a fitting instrument for the conversion of both Jews and Pagans" ("Diffusion," p. 159).

⁴⁰ See Scholem's "Scholarship and the Kabbalah," in *Kabbalah*, pp. 201-203.

⁴¹ Jean de Pauly, ed. and tr., *Sepher ha-Zohar (Le Livre de Splendeur) doctrine ésotériques des Hébreux* (Lyon: V. Achard, 1904); posthumous ed. rev. by Émile Lafuma-Giraud (Paris: E. Leroux, 1906-11).

⁴² Not, strictly speaking, a translation of the Zohar, Mathers' *Kabbalah Unveiled* is comprised of the three sections of the Zohar contained in von Rosenroth's *Kabbala Denudata*: "The Book of Concealed Mystery," "The Greater Holy Assembly" and "The Lesser Holy

Assembly" (1888; rpt. New York: Samuel Weiser, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968).

⁴³ For example, in 1957, Dagobert D. Runes used the Mathers translation to illustrate *The Wisdom of the Kabbalah, as Represented by Chapters Taken from the Book Zohar* (New York: Philosophical Library); and in the bilingual edition of 1977, *Idra Zuta Kadisha: The Lesser Holy Assembly*, Zev Zahary uses the Mathers translation to augment the Aramaic original (New York: Sage Books, Inc.).

⁴⁴ For a study of Scholem's approach to Jewish history, see David Biale's *Gershom Scholem: Kabbalah and Counter-History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979).

⁴⁵ The earliest bibliography of Kabbalah is Scholem's *Bibliographia Kabbalistica* (Leipzig: W. Drugulin, 1927). Jochanan H.A. Wijnhoven compiled a bibliography of "Medieval Jewish Mysticism" which contains an epilogue on contemporary Jewish mysticism (*Bibliographical Essays in Medieval Jewish Studies*, The Study of Judaism, vol. II [New York: Published for the Anti-Defamation League of B'Nai B'rith by Ktav Publishing House, Inc., 1976], pp. 269-330); and I have compiled *Jewish Mysticism: An Annotated Bibliography on the Kabbalah in English* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., forthcoming).

⁴⁶ "Professor Saurat gained his picture of the Cabala from modern occultism—from the Eliphas Levi type of Theosophy which takes all the astrological, Masonic, Rosicrucian, alchemical, and magical strains in European thought and bundles them all together in a package labeled Cabala" ("Diffusion," pp. 163-64).

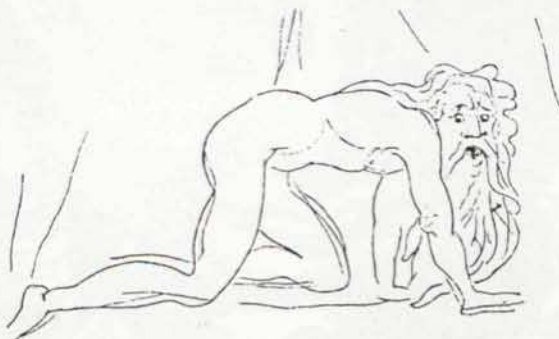
⁴⁷ "Adam Kadmon," *The Jewish Encyclopedia* (1901; new ed. New York and London: Funk and Wagnalls Co., 1925).

⁴⁸ Adolphe Franck, *La Kabbale; ou, La Philosophie religieuse des Hébreux* (Paris: L. Hachette, 1843); rev. and English tr. I. Sosnitz (New York: Kabbalah Publishing Company, 1926; rpt. New York: Arno Press, 1973). A shorter version of the translation, excluding the

notes, was published in 1967 (New Hyde Park, N.Y.: University Books). Sylv. Karppe, *Étude sur les origines et la nature du Zohar; précédée d'une étude sur l'histoire de la Kabbale* (Paris: F. Alcan, 1901).

⁴⁹ In "Swedenborg and the Zohar," Abelson explains that because it is difficult to separate different strands of mysticism, "it is not to be wondered at that a writer like Swedenborg should betray many an affinity of thought with a book like the Zohar. He may, of course, have been, as were many eminent Christian divines of his day, a student of the Zohar or other Kabbalistic writing. But there is a greater probability that he came to these conclusions as a result of his own independent thought" (*Jewish Chronicle Supplement*, no. 41 [30 May 1924], vii-viii). Blau supplements Abelson with a report from Marguerite Block "that there was a converted Jew who taught the Zohar at the University of Upsala at the time when Swedenborg was in attendance there" ("Diffusion," p. 166, n. 52), to draw his conclusion that Blake may have derived his Kabbalah through Swedenborg. But other than Blau, no one has contradicted Franck's earlier conclusion that "the Church of Swedenborg, or the 'New Jerusalem,' although represented by its adepts as one of the most important forms of Theosophy, can surely not join the Kabbalah simply because it leans upon an esoteric interpretation of sacred books. The results of this interpretation and the personal visions of the Swedish prophet resemble but little, barring a few exceptions, the teachings contained in the Kabbalistic books—the Zohar and the Sefer Yetzirah" (p. xxv).

⁵⁰ The Harry Sperling and Maurice Simon translation of *The Zohar* contains roughly half of the material included in the original (5 vols. [London and New York: Soncino Press, 1933-34]). Scholars universally accept Scholem's comment that "this translation is not always correct but it conveys a clear impression of what the Zohar is. It is to be regretted that too much has been omitted" (*Major Trends*, p. 387, n. 34).



*Heads of Evil
Demons
V.2.*



Theutus

Vesals of Wrath



Asmodeus

The Incubus



Heads of Evil Demons

Powers of Evil

Astaroth



Abaddon



Mammon