

Milonic Evil as Gnostic Cabala

Philip Beitchman



William Blake's "Milton"

Satan's Truth

Some of the most blatant heresy, dualism and/or unorthodoxy in Milton occurs, of course, in the irreverent, though very 'charming' discourse of Satan in *Paradise Lost*, which, at least until the early nineteenth century mysterious (re)discovery, translation (from Latin) and publication of Milton's antinomian theological treatise, *Christian Doctrine*, could be regarded - in spite of Blake's (and Shelley's) contrary notions - as representing, for the poet, the positions he opposed. However, since the dissemination of this 'theology' in print it has seemed likely that some of Satan's views, and not the least essential, were in fact Milton's own. Especially disturbing was an Arian (denying the divinity of Christ, who is regarded as merely the highest in the order of created matter) drift of the treatise, reminiscent of Satan's resentful defiance of Jesus, for him, someone simply who was better armed and prepared for the 'War in Heaven'. This resemblance between *Doctrine* and *Poem*, led the eminent Miltonist Maurice Kelley to even qualifying *Paradise Lost* as 'an Arian document'. [1] *Christian Doctrine* turns out to be a prodigiously antinomian tract. Basic here is the notion, reminiscent of the mood at once of Cabala and Spinoza's 'scientific' theology, that scripture is an unreliable and inconsistent guide, full of paradoxes and contradictions, and that it is up to each reader to use his own judgment in deciding which passages and interpretations would be authoritative, based rather on an internal, unwritten scripture, conveyed by the Holy Spirit, intrinsically less corruptible than any writing can possibly be. [2] Milton thereby implies that no priest or intermediary is necessary or desirable for an individual to come to an informed decision as to what he will regard as his own 'Christian Doctrine.' This doctrine never seems more individualized, or pertinent to Renaissance ChristianHebraism and Cabala, than when Milton suggests that Jews are more Christian

than Catholics are since it makes more sense to believe Christ was not divine at all than to think, with Rome, that he was coeval with the Deity! [3]

Underlying the Miltonic cosmogony would be a shattering, if logical notion that any deity we could conceive of, pray to, or who could affect us would be a radically compromised one. Jesus, followed by the Angels, fallen and unfallen, in this system, would represent this aspect of the lesser divine in Milton, one that could relate to corrupted humanity. A real God, as conceived of by Milton in *Christian Doctrine*, at once the concluding theological-political statement of his official career and the grounding one for the epistemology and teleology of the great sacred epics, *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*, that were to follow, would guard a quality of eternal and profound inscrutability, mystery and distance. Such a deity, reminiscent of Spinoza's, as well as being in tune with Gnostic-Lurianic notions, has withdrawn from the realm of existence, or was never really involved in it, leaving man "to his own desires and devices and to the ceaseless promptings of Satan." (334).

When, however, Milton considers the Manichean-dualistic 'abyss' into which these notions can lead he tends to fall back on a kind of intuitionist fideism, piling up the Gnostic evidence in citation after citation only to 'deny' it all with what I think is an unconvincing Tertullian

fideism: "Although in these quotations and in many others from both Testaments God openly confesses that it is he who incites the sinner, hardens his heart, blinds him and drives him into error, it must not be concluded that he is the originator even of the very smallest sin, for he is supremely holy." (332) Such reassurances were, in fact, insufficient for a dismayed British reviewer complaining pertinently, in 1826, when the work was first published, that Milton's apparent acceptance of the inextricability of existence and evil "...leaves the grand aboriginal

difficulty untouched; namely the existence of the perverse will, and the mischievous propensity in such persons as David and Absalom." [4] More cautiously than Maurice Kelley, who leant to Milton's great epics the full antinomian force of Christian Doctrine, but nevertheless coming down on the side of a 'demonic' or at least heretical Milton, William B. Hunter Jr. affirms: "If, that is, Milton were an Arian as many have argued, he is just as certainly of the devil's party as he depicts that party in *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*. Blake and Shelley were right about Milton's views in a deeper sense than has hitherto been realized." [5]



Milton as a young man

Constantinos Patrides defends against this assault on Milton's Christian orthodoxy on two fronts; first of all by questioning, in theological terms, the attribution of Arianism to the position of Milton's treatise, which he defines otherwise as a more familiar 'subordinationism' (making Christ a lower order of divinity rather than a higher earthly creation); and, secondly, by insisting on an epistemological dichotomy between two orders of truth, that is a poetic as distinct from a theological one. [6] It's interesting that for the sake of this latter argument Patrides seems ready to 'float the signifier', in a style so thoroughly consistent with what the structuralist religious historian, Michel de Certeau, has called 'mystics', or 'mystic discourse', [7] involving ineluctably a notion of language as merely a temporary, ephemeral and unreliable home for a numinous, but vagabond and nomadic Being. In effect, Patrides is relying, in this separation of Milton's poetic from his theological (and, ostensibly other) words, on a sophisticated, pluralistic attitude toward language, that in fact was the more-or-less hidden and occult subtext of those very heterodoxies of the nineteenth century he insists had nothing much to do with Milton! [8]

Coincidentally Milton's famous plea for toleration, and corresponding stand against censorship, in the prose tract, *Areopagitica*, alluded to a hermetic myth that recounts a primordial separation of truth from any absolute identification with any of its embodiments:

Truth, indeed came once into the world with her Divine Master, and was a perfect shape most glorious to look on: but when He ascended, and His Aposteles after Him were laid asleep, then straight arose a wicked race of deceivers, who, as that story goes of the Egyptian Typhon with his conspirators, how they dealt with the good Osiris, took the virgin Truth, hewed her lovely form into a thousand pieces, and scattered them to the four winds. From that time ever since, the sad friends of Truth, such as durst appear, imitating the careful search that Isis made for the mangled body of Osiris, went up and down gathering up limb by limb, still as they could find them. We have not found them all, Lords and Commons, nor ever shall do, till her Master's second coming.[9]

It is significant that the occult-Hermetic myth in the above is treated as a 'typology' that anticipates Christianity, as also commonly was suggested for Cabala, so frequently disseminated under the rationale of conversion; and as for Cabala, for which no Torah we can know is the Torah, so for Milton's Hermetic-Christianity, no single sign would be, enduringly, the signified. Interestingly, Milton chooses this occult myth of a truth that, within history, can only be sought, never found, to corroborate a position that he thought would obviously be less convincing on the basis of scripture alone; in much the same manner, for example, H.C. Agrippa found allusions to Cabala helpful in establishing a basis for positions (toleration, feminism, relativism), where literal scripture was insufficient. As for Sir Thomas Browne, the appeal is made to the heterodoxies regressively but for progressive purposes, as if to substantiate that which is most contemporary and advanced no evidence could be stronger than something taken from supposedly the oldest, pre- or para-Christian provenance.

In Milton's bold hermetic metaphor, Truth and Words are seen as, in human history, in a dialectical, impermanent and temporary relation; since no single text can be trusted indefinitely, the subject is thrown back on his own experience and judgment, and must remain open



William Blake's "Elohim and Adam"

to a plurality of interpretations, commentaries and further explorations. However repelled Milton may have been by the aberrations of seventeenth century Jewish Cabala, incarnated in the mass-following and catastrophic apostasy (conversion under threat of death to Islam) of the 'false messiah', Sabbatai Zevi, news of which may have been communicated to him directly, [10] I think he would have found support, corroboration, maybe even inspiration in the more traditional cabalistic notion, according to which no single written word, not even scripture itself, can be totally trusted.

Milton understood, however, that action, often urgently required by the teleological subordination of means to ends, must be based on a kind of 'suspension of disbelief'; nevertheless, here, the very excellence of the poet I think has opened him, especially in our century, to accusations of dogmatism, moralism and arrogance. What has been often thought of as the self-righteousness, vindictiveness, sadism[11] and complacency of the kind of discourse that Milton attributes to God and his agents, for example, have disturbed many, [12] who have been lured by the poet's eloquence into believing they were meant to embody the exact intentions and will of the divine, rather than being merely a version of it in words, meant only as an approximation. Many also have been disturbed by Satan's mastery over language; and

indeed it seems that no one in *Paradise Lost* can speak more charmingly, persuasively and compellingly. However, consistent with Milton's baroque (style-alternating) epistemology unquestionably certain elements of truth would be present in Satan's discourse, as well as certain elements of falsehood in God's. As in *The Zohar*, for Milton the devil must be somehow honored and recognized.[13] That left, instinctive, dark side of the human is all the more dangerous and influential for being totally neglected, which is not to say that the poet would ever have followed it, at least explicitly, into the Sabbatian temptation of embracing evil or 'seeing it through to the end'; and Milton seems to

66

reject such a literal, exponential escalation of 'the powers of darkness' clearly in *Paradise Regained*, wherein Christ-in-the-wilderness eschews Satan's offers from a vast range of demonic options that range, subtly, from earthly comfort, consolation and pleasure to spiritual glory [14] and messianic notoriety.

Although an attempt, like Denis Saurat's discredited one,[15] to link Milton definitely and directly to primary cabalistic texts, such as *The Zohar*, seems unrealizable, I think that, once the serious Hebraism of the poet is established, and given the Cabala-tinged quality of Hebrew studies in the Renaissance, especially that aspect of which was aimed at Christian students, there is no doubt that Milton knew about Cabala, that it must have had some impact, conscious or unconscious, direct or indirect, upon him, the problem being only how much, and at what points in his life and work. To the circumstances connected with the study of the Hebrew language should be added also a profound homology between the evolution of Cabala in the seventeenth century and the 'apocalypse now' direction taken by the English Puritan Revolution, with which it was coextensive. It seems reasonable to suppose that the conclusions that Milton seems to have drawn regarding adventures like that of Sabbatai's, as well as toward the messianic-revolutionary-utopianism of Diggers, Ranters and "The Fifth Monarchists,"[16] which was so much a part of his own political and cultural context, and that he gave voice to in the *Paradises, Lost and Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*, were related to his disillusion in and with England.

The Part of Evil

A strange aspect that has not I think been sufficiently acknowledged and accounted for is the sheer dimension of Milton's attention, in *Paradise Lost*, to the problematic of evil; and here I think the heterodoxies of the Renaissance supply an important explanatory context, source and inspiration.

67

I don't think it's enough to simply say, for instance, as some mischievous poets and radical critics have, that since Satan is the mainstay of the first two, supposedly best of the books of *Paradise Lost*, that he is the epic hero, which puts Milton in the 'devil's party', whether he

admits it or not. We need to recognize also that Satan, his cohorts, friends, lovers (Eve, notably, who he has no trouble seducing, she who already has fallen into a Narcissus-type love with her own image in the Edenic lake)[17] and relatives are very much in control of most of the rest of the epic. Everything, indeed, that starts up in Heaven or on Earth is in response to demonic initiatives; while the rationale that these are in the service of divine ends might compare in lameness to the effrontery of a similar apology for modern fascism, AIDS, and Rwanda-level decimations!

Additionally, in the central and very weird 'War in Heaven' episodes, as told and retold in *Paradise Lost* [centered, however, in Book VI], inescapably it is the demonic forces that, as courageous underdogs, must garner much of our sympathy. Such literal and titanic cosmic struggles of the forces of Good-and-Evil, Light-and-Darkness seem to be related more likely to a tradition of Dualism, reaching back, through Cabala, Hermeticism and Gnosticism, to Zoroastrian Manicheism, than to the more abstract unities and plenitudes of the Judeo-Christian style. Milton's source for this controversial episode is, indeed, the chapter of scripture, The Apocalypse or Revelation of St. John, that has been most often cited by religious dissidents, mystics, occultists and Christian cabalists. D.H. Lawrence mentions, in his fascinating little book on the subject that the entry of the Apocalypse into the canon was opposed by the eastern Fathers in the early days of Christianity, ostensibly because they were suspicious of a certain undercurrent, *elan vital*, or 'dragon' of paganism beneath the veneer of John of Patmos' neutralizing, emasculating text. For Lawrence the War in Heaven is exactly that place where the violent instinct of pagan inspiration, which granted its gods no exemption from a savage 'all - too-



William Blake, "Fall of the Angel"

human rule of desire for satisfaction, victory and control, boils closest to its Christian surface:

'And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.'

This fragment is really the pivot of the Apocalypse. It looks like late pagan myth suggested from various Greek, Egyptian, and Babylonian myths. Probably the first apocalypticist added it to the original pagan manuscript, many years before the birth of Christ. [18]

Even a modern critic who distances himself from Saurat's claims of Milton's cabalism, J.H. Adamson, will see occult traditions surfacing in these particular passages. [19] Equally provocative of wonder is the very noise and urgency with which Milton has to reassure us (directly, or through God, the Son or angels such as Raphael or Michael, 'explaining things' for Adam-and-us, or even through Satan's occasionally rueful regrets at his 'permanent exile' from the light) that everything is still under control of the 'highest'. Curious also is the amount of space, time and sheer majestic, charming and cunning eloquence Milton allows to Satan's heresies, unorthodoxies, temptations, justifications and imaginations. A 'free spirit' of the time cannot account for this, since the twenty-year lifting of censorship that allowed so much unprecedented radical rebellion, dissidence, provocation and just plain anomaly to appear, especially in the popular pamphlet form, is finished by the time Milton is composing such enormities. Milton has, additionally, barely and enigmatically (no one was more involved in the death of Charles I than he, except perhaps the executioner) escaped with his life under the restoration, another factor that might have led him to disguise his own views as Satan's. At any

event, this Age of Restoration is once more a time when religious dissidents tended rather to be silenced, or, more characteristically, to silence themselves. Milton, however, in his *Paradises, lost and regained*, is allowing Satan to speak, act, enjoin, cajole, and manifest himself and his ideology to an extent and a degree that is totally unprecedented.

Following Lucifer

The Italian Renaissance Lucifers of Marino and Tasso which played a part in Milton's daring invention, were flatter, more transparently dramatic or aesthetic creations in comparison. This 'eccentricity' of the Miltonic Lucifer is back-and-foregrounded very well by Mario Praz. [20] The immediate models for Milton's Lucifer were Tasso and Giambattista Marino, both evidently quite familiar to the poet. Tasso's Satan, as presented in *Jerusalem Liberated* "...keeps

his terrifying medieval mask, like that of a Japanese warrior." (53), as of a stock figure and stereotype, which, in the next century, Marino renders sad, pathetic and humanly sympathetic, adding also an aspect of beauty. Milton, according to Praz, certainly knew also Crashaw's translation into English of the first canto of Marino's posthumously published *Strage degli Innocenti* [*Massacre of the Innocents*], of 1632. There is a whole world, however, separating Marino's baroque and neo-pagan sensibility, for which Christianity is the merest veneer and pretext for games with language and rhetoric (as in 'marinism') from Milton's 'high seriousness'. Where Marino allows us 'sympathy for the devil' it is Milton who compounds this affect with a dimension of moral grandeur and 'infernal' sublimity that changed Satan, in literature at least, for all time. Milton's 'hero' then pushes on, according to Praz, to 'canonization' as the arch-rebel and resistor for the Gothic novel of such as Monk Lewis and Ann Radcliffe, then prominently into the Romantic

texts of such as Blake, Byron, Schiller, Goethe, straight into the perverse demonism of Baudelaire ("Fleurs du Mal"), the Symbolists and certainly Lautréamont ("Maldoror"). It requires no great insight to see 'satanic juices' still pumping madly in such 'underground' classics as Burroughs' *Naked Lunch*, Hugh Selby Jr.'s *Last Exit to Brooklyn*, Alexander Trocchi's *Cain's Book*, not to mention some more above-the-surface ones like Meyer Levin's *Compulsion*, Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* and Norman Mailer's *The Executioner's Song* (as well as through his acolyte's, the mournful Jack Abbott's *In the Belly of the Beast*, which turned out to be as legitimate a metaphor for the society at large as any section of it behind bars).

In consideration of the provocative and limitless iconoclasm of *Christian Doctrine*, from which I think a reasonable case can be made that Milton meant what Satan said, it might even be legitimate to 'transvalue' Paradise Lost so as to conceive of God as the Royal Villain (Charles I), his son, Jesus, as heir to the mantle of oppressor (Charles II), with Satan as the arch-rebel and resistor, combined type of the Puritan Revolutionary (Milton himself for the eloquence; Cromwell for the action), and the lesser devils as varieties of Levelers, Ranters, Fifth Monarchists and other 'heretic' fellow travelers on the road beyond Apocalypse to New Jerusalem, where they might even meet up with Sabbatians. As to where, finally, this Nietzschean-gnostic fantasy of a reading would place Adam and Eve, their eventual progeny, as well as other intermediate beings like Angels and suchlike, that would be, consistent with Milton's antinomian 'doctrine', up to each of us to decide, in terms of where we'd (like to) see ourselves.

What seems almost as appalling to me is that, considering the great volume of the commentary on Milton, this Satanic 'excess' of the poet has never really been frankly recognized and confronted, maybe because it was too blatant to believe! Even in his most extravagant demonism, Christopher Marlowe, whose specialty was the condignly evil protagonist, could never have gone so far. Marlowe, as well as his students and followers in this 'demonic' style, Shakespeare and Kyd,

and later, Webster, Shirley and Turner, were limited by the regime of the dramatic genre of tragedy, whereby order is disturbed only temporarily. This astounding innovation and escalation in the matter of evil in comparison to the manifold avatars and subtleties of the Machiavellian or Senecan protagonist of English Renaissance Theater should be measured against the daring of the poet in choosing the massive, permanent and respected epic form as opposed to (what was regarded) as the more incidental and transitory dramatic one. Finally shocking is Milton's choice of subject matter, none other than the most essential episode, Genesis, of our culture's most honored text, the Bible. Furthermore here he focused on the invasion of this 'paradise' by the very principle and personage of evil, allowing that evil every conceivable opportunity, eloquence, argument and quality, and this near the pristine center of creation's awesome beginning and purpose, indissolubly intermixed, through earth, apple and tree with the components of human composition.

Even if we try to allow for some space, modest as it might turn out to be, for the 'good' or at least non-or-not-yet totally satanic, in this epic, I think we can easily run into difficulty. Most glaring of all might be the question of Adam's choice: If indeed, theoretically he follows Eve in committing the sin of disobedience, and assuming, as Milton obviously wants us to, that She succumbed voluntarily, then what option really remained for Adam? Was his sin that of an incipient feminism, being unwilling to assert male authority in granting Eve's wish to be apart from him just before that fateful noon, especially since he initially didn't think it was such a good idea and had to be persuaded into it? Was man's fall, and that of the whole human race, as trivial as letting a woman decide to go out for a walk by herself? Or, later, was he to refuse to 'bite', thereby condemning her to isolation and perdition, insuring for himself a virtuous, if complacent immortality? Since he couldn't be expected to do without companionship, sexual-and-otherwise,



especially through no fault of his own, God would be obliged to fashion, from another rib, a suitable replacement, whom presumably he would supervise more closely. An important motivation for Milton's Eve, and one that doesn't exist in scripture, was jealousy of Adam's future mate:

I shall be no more,

And Adam, wedded to another Eve

Shall live with her enjoying, I extinct

A death to think. (IX, 827-30)

For Saurat this constituted proof of a direct influence of Cabala on Milton, since Eve's jealousy is mentioned in *The Zohar* (as is Satan's sexual desire for Eve, another 'passionate' element intimated by Milton that does not exist in scripture). Of Saurat's 'wild' surmises this one has weathered rather well; H. Fletcher, our major specialist in Milton's Hebraism thinks the Zohar-Milton connection possible, if not likely, but found another Hebrew, ostensibly non-Cabala, source for this motif, [21] a position which Werblowsky seconds. [22] The main drift, however, of Saurat's powerful argument, that of an occult, mystical, heterodox and 'inadmissible' provenance for Milton's inspirations, waters he 'drank from', in common with some other major English poets, like Blake, Shelley and Wordsworth, survives, I think, such fine distinctions as Fletcher, Werblowsky and many others so ably introduce. That the motifs of Eve's cunningly jealous sexuality, Satan's compelling lubricity, and Divine Incest might not all derive from the Zohar, as de Pauly's 'forgeries' [23] had inclined Saurat to think, but from an older, even non-cabalistic, midrashim or other texts and traditions would in no way abstract Milton from the 'occult tradition' in which Saurat situates him.

Additionally, apocryphal, gnostic, talmudic and cabalistic versions of the 'creation of woman',

which Milton certainly know about, however seriously he took them, suggest that a Lilith, made like Adam of earth, was his first mate put away, as a matter of fact for insubordination. [24] Sedition, clearly, is a feminine characteristic, rendering any substitution of one woman for another nugatory. Clearly he had only the choice, as in the world, between two evils and he tried, as we like to think we would, to choose the lesser.

Bibliography

Adamson, J. F. "Milton's Version of the War in Heaven." JEGP LVII (October, 1958): 690-703.

Beitchman, Philip. *Alchemy of the Word, Cabala of the Renaissance*. (Albany: SUNY Press, 1998).

Certeau, Michel de. *The Mystic Fable*. Trans. Michael B. Smith. Vol. 1. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

Fixler, Michael. *Milton and the Kingdoms of God*. (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1964).

Fletcher, Harris Francis. *The Intellectual Development of John Milton*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1956. 2 vol.

Milton's Rabbinical Readings. (N.Y.: Gordian, 1967). Orig. published in 1930

Milton's Semitic Studies. (N.Y.: Gordian, 1966). Orig. published in 1926.

Frye, Roland Mushat. *God, Man and Satan: Patterns of Christian Thought and Life in Paradise Lost, Pilgrim's Progress, and the Great Theologians*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960).

Hunter, William B. Jr. "The Heresies of Satan." *The Upright Heart and Pure*. Ed. A.P. Fiore. (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1967).

_____, *Visitation Unimplor'd: Milton and the Authorship of 'De Doctrina Christiana'*. (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1998).

Kelley, Maurice. *This Great Argument: A Study of Milton's 'De Doctrina Christiana' as a Gloss upon 'Paradise Lost'*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941).

Lawrence, D.H. *Apocalypse*. (New York: Penguin, 1966). Orig. published in 1931.

Martz, Louis L. *The Paradise Within*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964).

Milton, John. *Areopagitica, and Other Prose Works*. (London: Dent-Everyman, 1927).

Christian Doctrine. Vol. VI, Complete Prose Works of John Milton. Ed. Maurice Kelley, trans.

John Carey. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973).

The Poetical Works of John Milton. Ed. Helen Darbishire. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958).

Patrides, Constantinos. *Milton and the Christian Tradition*. (N.Y and London.: Oxford University Press, 1969).

Pauly, Jean de, trans. *Zohar, le livre de la splendeur*. (Paris: E. Leroux, 1906-11). 6 vol.

Praz, Mario *The Romantic Agony*. Trans. Angus Davidson. (London: Oxford, 1987).

Reuchlin, Johannes. *On the Art of the Kabbalah*. Trans. Martin and Sarah Goodman. Intr. (1983, Abaris Books) Lloyd Jones. Intr. Moshe Idel. (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1993). Originally published as *De Arte cabalistica*, 1517.

Saurat, Denis. *Literature and the Occult Tradition*. Trans. Dorothy Bolton. Fort Washington, N.Y.: Kennicut Press, 1966. Originally published, 1930.

Milton, Man and Thinker.(London: Archon, 1964). First published 1925

Werblowsky, R. Zvi. "Milton and the Conjectura Cabbalistica." *Journal of the Warburg Institute* XVIII (1955): 90-113.

The Zohar. Ed. Joshua Abelson. Trans. Maurice Simon and Harry Sperling. 5 vols. (London and N.Y.: Soncino Press, 1933). Rpt. 1984.

¹ Patrides, p. 15, citing Maurice Kelley's *This Great Argument: A Study of Milton's 'De Doctrina Christiana' as a Gloss upon 'Paradise Lost'*. See also R.M. Frye [*God, Man and Satan*, 75-76] who militantly opposes this interpretation, simply because, in his own judgment, it just could not be! A recent book by William Hunter, *Visitation Unimplored* attempts to 'distance' Milton more from the 'authorship' of *Christian Doctrine* than he had ever been before, calling it, for instance a 'composite ms.' [146] My position, however, I believe would come well within the parameters of Hunter's conclusions, which were that *Christian Doctrine* should no longer be taken as a totally reliable statement of Milton's ideas, so that notions about his 'heresy' need to be supported also by other elements in the poet's work. Hunter's ideas, announced much earlier in articles and conferences, were challenged very vigorously also, for instance in *Studies in English Literature* (Vol. 32, Winter 1992) in articles by Barbara Lewalski, Christopher Hill and the eminent editor of *Christian Doctrine*, Maurice Kelley.

² Kelley, "Introduction" to *Christian Doctrine*, 44.

³ *Christian Doctrine*, 455.

⁴ *Christian Doctrine*, 336n. 26, cited by Kelley.

⁵ "The Heresies of Satan," 32-33; see n. 1 above, since Hunter has reversed himself on the question of *Christian Doctrine*.

⁶ Patrides, 22-23.

⁷ Cf. *The Mystic Fable*.

⁸ Maurice Kelley, as a matter of fact, disparages Patrides' competence as a theologian in his "Reply to Hunter", SEL, 160. See n. 1 above.

⁹ *Areopagitica*, 30.

¹⁰ Through Henry Oldenburg, secretary of the Royal Society, who

had written to Spinoza about the Sabbatian episode, who visited Milton while he was composing *Paradise Regained*. See *Alchemy of the Word*, 282-83, and also Michael Fixler's *Milton and the Kingdoms of God*.

¹¹ This Tertullian mood, according to which a good portion of heavenly bliss is constituted by the joy seeing the torments of the damned below has been captured by one of our modern writers who had been the most persecuted by the 'moral majorities' of his time: "Brilliant glorious eternal heaven above: and brilliant torture-lake away below...They could not be happy in heaven unless they knew their enemies were unhappy in hell." [D.H. Lawrence, *Apocalypse*, 76.]

¹² Louis L. Martz, for instance, citing a tradition of critical disillusionment, will consider that Books XI and XII of *Paradise Lost*, where the 'divine word' is at its most unilateral, represent a drastic decline in the humanity, interest and inspiration of the epic. Significant for Martz is the fact that the epic was published originally in ten books, the last two having been added later by Milton. [*The Paradise Within*, 141-48.]

¹³ See, for instance, my *Alchemy of the Word*, 15, for citation from *The Zohar*, where Job's punishment is regarded as a result of the insufficient attention he gave to the powers of evil.

¹⁴ The Pope, or Antichrist, as the English Puritans called him, already would represent a yielding to this temptation; as, a fortiori, anyone who sought the office, glory and status of the messiah (a position, if it is one, which would be rather designated, than looked-for anyway!).

¹⁵ *Milton, Man and Thinker* (1925) and *Literature and the Occult Tradition* (1930); Saurat's 'theses' have been almost unanimously disapproved of.

¹⁶ The Fifth Monarchists, who were especially influential in the Puritan Army, were looking forward to, in fact, the imminent realization of God's kingdom -on-earth, supposedly the fifth-and-

final-one after the four 'fallen' ones of history.

¹⁷ Eve seems to me rather to glory in the miraculous efficacy of her sin, productive, indeed, of all human life on earth, rather than, in a more soberly repentant *felix culpa* mode, to have reluctantly admitted its ineluctability, accepting its consequences; instead she exults: "That I, who first brought Death on all, am graced/ The source of life..." [XI, 168-9]

¹⁸ *Apocalypse*, 85-86.

¹⁹ "The War in Heaven: Milton's Version of the Merkabah."

²⁰ "The Metamorphoses of Satan," in *The Romantic Agony*: 53-91.

²¹ *Milton's Semitic Studies*, 132-38.

²² "Milton and the Conjectura Cabbalistica," 99.

²³ De Pauly made the first comprehensive translation of *The Zohar* into any vernacular (French), but not very reliably, for he was not above a little invention ('forgeries' is Werblowsky's angry word for it, in article cited in n. 22).

²⁴ See *Alchemy of the Word*, 260ff. where I remark the casual introduction by John Lightfoot, one of the great names in semitic scholarship of the seventeenth century, of the Lilith legend, unlikely I think to have escaped the attention of so comprehensive a student of the arcane as Milton, one also so interested in gender and marital issues. The Lilith story was a subject that would have come up anyway in texts that touch on Cabala, if only to deny one or another annoying (feminism, demonism) aspect of it. One version, for instance, has Adam cohabiting with Lilith, for an extended period after the expulsion, during which time he was separated from Eve. Adam's progeny, a result of his intercourse with Lilith would have been a race of demons, still among us. One can see limned here, of course, more than the rudiments for a gnostic explication of the problem posed by the evident ineluctability of evil, a prospect that Reuchlin, for instance, is too much of a Christian to let the cabalist in him entertain for more than a moment: "...not that the other children were not in human form, they were men too, but except

for Abel, all the rest seemed more like a crop of devils than men, such was their malice and wickedness. I must add that he did not actually produce demons and changelings as some of the vulgar and irreverent have falsely claimed..." [*On the Art of the Kaballah*, 75].