ANGELIC EMBODIMENT AND THE FEMININE REPRESENTATION OF JESUS: RECONSTRUCTING CARNALITY IN THE CHRISTIAN KABBALAH OF JOHANN KEMPER

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> When we were Hebrews we were
> orphans and had only our mother,
> but when we became Christians we
> had both father and mother.
>
> Gospel of Philip

In the long and variegated history of Judaism, ideas expressed regarding the nature of the body have been reflective of both internal and external considerations and perspectives. It should come as no surprise that the issue of embodiment has occupied a major role in the delineation of boundaries that stubbornly separate and bridges that flexibly connect Judaism and other liturgical-faith communities. Especially, though not exclusively, the complex and often acrimonious relationship between Judaism and Christianity has revolved about perceptions of the body. The Early Modern Period is no exception to this rule, but there is something unique that was underfoot at this time given the increased loosening of the borders between Jews and Christians and the consequent challenge to maintain assertions of separateness and inassimilability.[1] Conversion, in particular, is a phenomenon that can shed much light on the prevailing understanding of the body and the role the latter plays in shaping the identity of one's self and the other.[2]

One of the most fascinating Jewish converts to Christianity in the Early Modern Period was Moses ben Aaron ha-Kohen of Cracow (1670–1716), who received the name Johannes Christianus Jacobi when

[1] Particularly relevant to this study is the essay by Richard Popkin, "Christian Jews and Jewish Christians in the 17th Century," in *Jewish Christians and Christian Jews: From the Renaissance to the Enlightenment*, ed. Richard H. Popkin and Gordon M. Weiner (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1994), 57–72.

[2] See, for instance, Steven F. Kruger, *The Spectral Jew: Conversion and Embodiment in Medieval Europe* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005).

he was baptized by Johannes Friedrich Heunisch on July 25, 1696 in Schweinfurt, Germany. The manuscripts of his Hebrew works, written in the early part of the eighteenth century during his tenure as Hebrew tutor at Uppsala University in Sweden, indicate, moreover, that he adopted the new surname Kemper.[3] The story of Kemper's spiritual odyssey and the intricacies of his attempt to prove the truth of his new faith on the basis of kabbalistic, and especially zoharic, sources have been studied by a number of scholars.[4] In a previous study, I explored in great length the intricate effort of Kemper to demonstrate that the messianic faith of Christians was in fact the truly ancient esoteric tradition of Judaism.[5] Needless to say, the polemical strategy of Kemper yielded an interpretation of the Kabbalah that differs dramatically from the texts upon which he commented. Indeed, the utilization of Jewish mystical lore, specifically the *Zohar*, to substantiate the Jewish roots of Christianity, on the part of Kemper places him in close proximity to the Christian Kabbalists of the Renaissance. In a fundamental way, however, Kemper differs from the notable Christian humanists who availed themselves of kabbalistic doctrine. Kemper's rabbinic background imposed upon him the need to preserve the nomian framework of Kabbalah even as he sought to undermine that

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[3] The details of Kemper's conversion are narrated in the biographical account published on the occasion of his baptism under the title *Unterthäniger Bericht* (Altdorf, 1696). I am indebted to Joseph Eskhult for providing me with a copy of this invaluable document during my visit in January 2004 to the *Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study in the Social Sciences* on the campus of Uppsala University.

[4] Hans Joachim Schoeps, "Rabbi Johan Kemper in Uppsala," *Särtryck ur Kyrkohistorisk Arsskrift* (1945): 146–177; idem, *Barocke Juden, Christen, Judenchristen* (Bern and Munich: Francke, 1965), 60–67, translated into English by G.F. Dole, "Philosemitism in the Seventeenth Century," *Studia Swedenborgiana* 7 (1990): 10–17; idem, *Philosemitismus im Barock: religions- und geistesgeschichtliche Untersuchungen* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1952), 92–133; idem, "Philosemitism in the Baroque Period," *Jewish Quarterly Review* n.s. 47 (1956–1957): 139–144, esp. 143; Shifra Asulin, "Another Glance at Sabbatianism, Conversion, and Hebraism in Seventeenth-Century Europe: Scrutinizing the Character of Johan Kemper of Uppsala, or Moshe Son of Aharon of Krakow," *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 17 (2001): 423–470 (Hebrew). On the probable relationship of Kemper and Swedenborg, see Marsha K. Schuchard, "Emanuel Swedenborg: Deciphering the Codes of a Celestial and Terrestrial Intelligencer," in *Rending the Veil: Concealment and Secrecy in the History of Religions*, ed. Elliot R. Wolfson (New York and London: Seven Bridges Press, 1999), 181–182; idem, *Why Mrs Blake Cried: William Blake and the Sexual Basis of Spiritual Vision* (London: Century, 2006), 64–65.

[5] Elliot R. Wolfson, "Messianism in the Christian Kabbalah of Johann Kemper," in *Millenarianism and Messianism in the Early Modern European Culture: Jewish Messianism in the Early Modern World*, ed. Matt D. Goldish and Richard H. Popkin (Dordrecht and London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001), 139–187.

framework by arguing that belief in Jesus, which is attested in the mystical teachings and practices, surpasses Jewish ritual. In contrast to the typical profile of the Christian Kabbalist, including a figure like Guillaume Postel, who affirmed a form of Christian Judaism predicated on the belief that Christians must acknowledge the origins of their religion in Mosaic law,[6] Kemper upheld the theurgical import of the kabbalistic symbols that he appropriated. The literary works composed by Kemper display an astonishing blend of Jewish learning (including Halakhah, Aggadah, Kabbalah) and Christian doctrine, and the thread that ties these two together is the theosophic orientation derived primarily from the zoharic corpus. While the intricate weaving of these different strands fostered a worldview that deviated from the traditional Kabbalah, it is also true that Kemper's Christological readings on occasion illumine the site where the doctrinal lines thought to separate the two Abrahamic faiths begin to be blurred.

In this essay, I will elaborate on a theme that I discussed briefly in the aforementioned study, the feminine construction of Jesus in the writings of Kemper.[7] I will not only amplify my earlier analysis here, but I will draw out the implication of this imagery for Kemper's conception of the body.

The representation of Jesus in female images—and this is to be distinguished from the depiction of the masculinity of Christ in effeminate, emasculated, or asexual terms[8]—is much older in the history of Christian symbolism and most likely related to the appropriation of speculation on Sophia and the Holy Spirit from Jewish sources in an otherwise predominantly masculine Christology,[9] a tendency that is well-attested,

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[6] Marion L. Kuntz, *Guillaume Postel: Prophet of the Restitution of All Things: His Life and Thought* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1981), 130–133; Bernard McGinn, "Cabalists and Christians: Reflections on Cabala in Medieval and Renaissance Thought," in *Jewish Christians and Christian Jews*, 25. In the preface to the second translation of the *Zohar*, Postel declares his aim as showing that Christ is the "purpose of the law," *finis enim Legis est* (cited by McGinn, op. cit., 24).

[7] Wolfson, "Messianism," 148–150.

[8] See the trenchant discussion of this matter, including a lengthy response to Bynum, in Leo Steinberg, *The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and in Modern Oblivion*, second edition, revised and expanded (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 246–250, 364–389. See also David Morgan, *Visual Piety: A History and Theory of Popular Religious Images* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 97–123.

[9] A possible scriptural source for the maternal imagery is the description in Matthew 23:37 (with parallel in Luke 13:34) of Jesus as the "hen that gathers her brood under her wings," which should be read intertextually with Deuteronomy 22:6. See Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, *The Divine Feminine: The Biblical Imagery of God as Female*

for instance, in a number of documents from Late Antiquity that have been classified as exemplary of the multifaceted phenomenon known as Gnosticism.[10] I will refrain here from delineating the relevant textual and material sources that attest to this phenomenon as to do so responsibly would take us too far afield.[11] Without engaging the matter of historical precedent or influence, let me note that the relaxing of the gender/sex correlation implied by this symbolic identification can be

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(New York: Crossroad, 1983), 92–96; idem, *Women, Men, and the Bible*, revised edition (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 47; Elaine Guillemin, "Jesus/Holy Mother Wisdom (Mt. 23:37–39)," in *The Lost Coin: Parables of Women, Work and Wisdom*, ed. Mary Ann Beavis (London and New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003), 244–267.

[10] Numerous scholars have written on this dimension of Gnostic literature, and here I will make reference to two relevant studies: James M. Robinson, "Very Goddess and Very Man: Jesus' Better Self," in *Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism*, ed. Karen L. King (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 113–127, and in the same volume, Karen L. King, "Sophia and Christ in the *Apocryphon of John*," 158–176.

[11] On this theme in the late middle ages, especially among Cistercian monks in the twelfth century, see Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 110–169; idem, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 260–269; Jean Leclercq, *Women and St Bernard of Clairvaux*, trans. Marie-Bernard Saïd OSB (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1989), 109–114. See also Joan Gibson, "Could Christ Have Been Born a Woman? A Medieval Debate," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 8 (1992): 65–82. This theme continued to flower in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, as is attested, for example, in the theological imagination of Julian of Norwich, who depicted Jesus as the generative mother, as well as in the sermons of Meister Eckhart, who applied the expression "a motherly name" (*ein müeterlich name*) to the Father to designate the pure potentiality of the divine to conceive the Son, the Nothingness of the "natural power" (*nâtiurlîchen kraft*) for generation, as opposed to "fatherhood" (*vaterlicheit*), which is the primordial fullness of the "personal power" (*persônlichen kraft*), the active source of bearing. See *Julian of Norwich's Showings*, translated from the critical text with an introduction by Edmund Colledge, O.S.A. and James Walsh, S.J., Preface by Jean Leclercq (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), 293–299, 300–305, 340; Bynum, *Jesus as Mother*, 129–135, 140–141, 148 note 130, 151, 159 note 160, 168, 195; Sarah McNamer, "The Exploratory Image: God as Mother in Julian of Norwich's Revelations of Divine Love," *Mystics Quarterly* 15 (1989): 21–28; Denise Nowakowski Baker, *Julian of Norwich's Showings: From Vision to Book* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 108, 112–113,118–120, 124, 128–134, 166; Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt, *Julian of Norwich and the Mystical Body Politic of Christ* (Notre Dame and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), 59, 76, 89–95, 110–111, 155–156, 160; Grace Jantzen, *Julian of Norwich: Mystic and Theologian*, new edition (New York: Paulist Press, 2000), 104, 111, 115–124, 143, 158; Barbara Newman, *God and the Goddesses: Vision, Poetry, and Belief in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 222–234, 290, 302, 312; Bernard McGinn, *The Mystical Thought of Meister Eckhart: The Man From Whom God Hid Nothing* (New York: Crossroad, 2001), 84–86, 139–140.

seen as an important catalyst for the exegetical strategy employed by Kemper in his articulation of the female persona of Jesus. The uniqueness of Kemper's approach, however, is brought into sharp relief when one considers, for instance, the view of Postel that Mary and the female savior, who bore the name Joanna, were personifications of *Shekhinah* in the material world.[12] In spite of the longstanding tradition that allocated a maternal nature to Jesus, there is no attempt on Postel's part (or any other thinker, to the best of my knowledge) to render the male Savior in these terms. The approach of Kemper is closer to the deployment of female characteristics to describe the gender of Jesus that is attested in some of the radical Moravians, who flourished later in the eighteenth-century under the leadership of Count Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, a charismatic Protestant preacher whose teachings and practices began to take root in the Wetteravia area of Germany and then spread to other parts of Europe and eventually made their way to Lutheran and Calvinist colonies in North America. Adherents to this Moravian sect did not challenge the traditional view that the biological sex of Jesus was male, but they did avow that from a gender perspective it was feasible to use female images figuratively to describe the attributes and functions of Christ, such as the metaphor of the nursing mother or the portrayal of the side wound either in the form of the womb from which believers are spiritually reborn or as the vagina through which souls are erotically united with the deity.[13] The belief in a maternal Jesus, coupled with the symbolic representation of the Holy Spirit as mother,[14] and the practical bestowing of the right to preach and to hold other ecclesiastical offices on women,[15] put these Moravians in conflict with the more

[12] Yvonne Petry, *Gender, Kabbalah and the Reformation: The Mystical Theology of Guillaume Postel (1510–1581)* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 40, 91–93.

[13] Aaron S. Fogleman, "Jesus Is Female: The Moravian Challenge in the German Communities of British North America," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 60 (2003): 295–332; idem, *Jesus Is Female: Moravians and Radical Religion in Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 73–104. My summary account is indebted to the research of Fogleman, as is my knowledge of other relevant sources cited in the following two notes.

[14] Craig D. Atwood, "The Mother of God's People: The Adoration of the Holy Spirit in the Eighteenth-Century *Brüdergemeine*," *Church History* 68 (1999): 886–909; Steven Kinkel, *Our Dear Mother in the Spirit: An Investigation of Count Zinzendorf's Theology and Praxis* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1990), 83–197.

[15] Otto Uttendörfer, *Zinzendorf und die Frauen: Kirchliche Frauenrechte vor 200 Jahren* (Herrnhut: Verlag der Missionsbuchhandlung, 1919), 20–35; Beverly Prior Smaby, "Forming the Single Sisters' Choir in Bethlehem," *Transactions of the Moravian Historical Society* 28 (1994): 114; *Moravian Women's Memoirs: Their Related Lives, 1750–1820*, ed. and

mainstream Protestant clergymen, who were politically threatened by the possibility of a social egalitarianism, however limited it may have been, in their church communities.

Leaving aside the question regarding the possible influence of kabbalistic ideas on Zinzendorf,[16] it is noteworthy that the feminization of the suffering Christ proffered by this German pietist bears a striking affinity with Kemper's portrayal of Jesus in female topoi based on his Christological appropriation of zoharic symbolism informed by the eschatological standpoint of seventeenth-century Sabbatianism, and particularly the identification of a male messianic figure with feminine configurations of the divine.[17] When judged from this perspective, the views proffered by Kemper can be placed in a larger historical context that can shed light on his distinctive understanding of the body. What Kemper expressed reflects a much older polemical tactic employed by both Jews and Christians in their respective efforts to belittle the opposing faith by associating it with corporeality, typically engendered as feminine, in contrast to true spirituality, which is characterized as masculine. With his idiosyncratic amalgamation of Jewish esotericism and Christian piety, Kemper subtly undermines this line of attack by concomitantly ascribing a spiritual status to the somatic and a somatic status to the spiritual. The polemically-charged female characteristics are adopted by Kemper and transferred to the incarnate Christ. The ostensibly broken body, the humbling of the divine taking on the investiture

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trans. Katherine M. Faull (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1997), xxvii–xxxi; Peter Vogt, "A Voice for Themselves: Women as Participants in Congregational Discourse in the Eighteenth-Century Moravian Movement," in *Women Preachers and Prophets Through Two Millennia of Christianity*, ed. Beverly Mayne Kienzle and Pamela J. Walker (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 227–247.

[16] This point has been argued most forcefully by Marsha K. Schuchard, "Dr. Samuel Jacob Falk: A Sabbatian Adventurer in the Masonic Underground," in *Millenarianism and Messianism*, 209; idem, *Why Mrs Blake Cried*, 17–20, 23–24, 27–28, 33. For an alternative analysis of Zinzendorf's attitude toward Judaism, see Christiane Dithmar, *Zinzendorfs nonkonformistische Haltung zum Judentum* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2000).

[17] Regarding this theme, see Elliot R. Wolfson, "The Engenderment of Messianic Politics: Symbolic Significance of Sabbatai Ṣevi's Coronation," in *Toward the Millennium: Messianic Expectations from the Bible to Waco*, ed. Peter Schäfer and Mark R. Cohen (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 203–258; idem, "Constructions of the Shekhinah in the Messianic Theosophy of Abraham Cardoso With an Annotated Edition of *Derush ha-Shekhinah*," *Kabbalah: Journal for the Study of Jewish Mystical Texts* 3 (1998): 11–143. See also Bruce Rosenstock, "Messianism, Machismo, and 'Marranism': The Case of Abraham Miguel Cardoso," in *Queer Theory and the Jewish Question*, ed. Daniel Boyarin, Daniel Itzkovitz, and Ann Pellegrini (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 199–227, esp. 214–217.

of the material world, is thereby redeemed and upheld as an icon of a new form of textual embodiment, affording an opportunity to the one who accepts Jesus, and especially to the Jew whom Kemper is seeking to convert as part of his own messianic scheme, to transmute the flesh into word by patterning itself on the Word made flesh.[18] In treating the body as the text that is an image of the text that is a body, Kemper is greatly influenced by the kabbalistic notion of the hyperliteral body, that is, the presumption that the body in its most elemental form is composed of the Hebrew letters that are contained in the Tetragrammaton, the mystical essence of Torah.[19] A critical difference, of course, lies in the fact that, for Kemper, the textualization of body is fostered not by visually contemplating the divine name through exegetical study of and practical commitment to the Written Torah, the *guf elohi*, but by being incorporated through faith into the *corpus Christi*, the Logos (*memra*) that is the primordial Torah, but which is also identified as the "new Torah" (*torah ḥadashah*),[20] which is the Oral Torah composed of the dicta of Jesus conserved in the Gospels.[21]

We can speak, therefore, of reciprocity between Jesus and the human: just as the body of the former is the image that becomes text, so the body of the latter is an image of that text. According to Kemper, this is the correct interpretation of the scriptural notion that Adam was created in God's image (*ẓelem elohim*)—the image is indeed corporeal, but it refers specifically to the body of Christ. As he expressed it in *Beriaḥ ha-Tikhon*, "He created the world and Adam in his image and his likeness as the apostles discerned when Jesus broke the bread."[22] Or

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[18] Interestingly, the interpretation of incarnation as a textual embodiment that I have elicited from Kemper bears a striking affinity with the view proffered in the allegedly Valentinian *Gospel of Truth*. See Elliot R. Wolfson, "Inscribed in the Book of Living: *Gospel of Truth* and Jewish Christology," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 38 (2007): 234–271, esp. 264–268. Also relevant is the interpretation of Origen offered by Virginia Burrus, "*Creatio Ex Libidine*: Reading Ancient Logos Differently," in *Derrida and Religion: Other Testaments*, ed. Yvonne Sherwood and Kevin Hart (New York: Routledge, 2005), 141–156.

[19] Elliot R. Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being: Kabbalistic Hermeneutics and Poetic Imagination* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 190–260.

[20] *Matteh Mosheh*, MS Uppsala Heb. 24, fol. 152b: Metatron, which is the angelic name of Christ, is there identified as the "Oral Torah" on account of the "new Torah." See also *Beriaḥ ha-Tikhon*, MS Uppsala Heb. 25, fols. 53b, 223a.

[21] *Beriaḥ ha-Tikhon*, MS Uppsala Heb. 25, fols. 201b–202a; *Avodat ha-Kodesh*, MS Uppsala Heb. 25, fol. 139b. For citation and analysis of other passages in Kemper's compositions related to this theme, see Wolfson, "Messianism," 150–152.

[22] *Beriaḥ ha-Tikhon*, MS Uppsala Heb. 25, fols. 53a–b.

again, commenting in *Matteh Mosheh* on a statement in the *Zohar* that "Daniel's image [*diyokneih*] did not change even when he was he was in the lion's den and therefore he was saved,"[23] Kemper explained that this is because "he believed in the Messiah, who is the divine image and his semblance [*ẓelem elohim u-temunato*]. Therefore, Daniel had a proper human image [*ẓelem ha-adam ha-yashar*] like the one through which the holy One, blessed be he, created Adam, and Adam in his transgression destroyed that image, but the one who believes in Jesus Christ becomes a new man [*adam ḥadash*] and he receives the primordial image [*ha-ẓelem ha-kadmon*]."[24] Kemper is obviously influenced by the typological relationship between Adam and Jesus that had a profound influence on the history of Christianity based principally on the view set forth in the epistles by Paul or by those who amplified his approach.[25] In line with the Pauline anthropology, Kemper maintains that through Jesus the punishment of death incurred by humanity as a result of the fall is overcome. We can speak, accordingly, of Jesus rectifying the sin of Adam. Kemper departs from the more standard Christian perspective, however, by resisting the distinction between the "natural body" of the first Adam and the "spiritual body" of the last Adam. Being reborn in Christ does not mean, as it did for the author of Ephesians (4:22–23), that one puts on the "new man" by being renewed in spirit or mind; it entails rather that the divine image with which Adam was created, the image borne by Jesus in his physical embodiment, is restored to the person that proclaims faith in the Messiah. Remarkably, in the continuation of this discussion, Kemper writes that "when the Jews were circumcised, by means of this sign they received and were garbed in the new man."[26] That the divine image relates to the somatic and not to the pneumatic is made explicit by Kemper in another passage: "The corporeal human [*adam gufani*] is created in the image of the likeness of the icon of the man above [*ẓelem demut diyokna adam she-lemaʿalah*], and this is the Messiah."[27] I would suggest that this

[23] *Zohar* 1:191a. In the Lublin *Zohar* used by Kemper, which was published in 1623, the reference is to the section on Genesis, 427.

[24] *Matteh Mosheh*, MS Uppsala Heb. 24, fols. 81b–82a.

[25] Robin Scroggs, *The Last Adam: A Study in Pauline Anthropology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966); William D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 36–57, 120, 268, 304.

[26] *Matteh Mosheh*, MS Uppsala Heb. 24, fol. 82b.

[27] Ibid., fol. 95b. See ibid., fol. 99a, where the attribution of the term *ḥok* to the Messiah is explained by the fact that "his image was engraved with the face of a human, for he is the divine image" (*she-diyokno ḥakukah bifnei adam she-hu ẓelem elohim*).

orientation betrays the influence of rabbinic and kabbalistic sources on Kemper. Further evidence for this influence can be seen in the fact that Kemper perceived his own literary productions—explications of the oral text of the Gospel by way of interpreting the hidden Christological meaning embedded in zoharic passages—as a means to participate in the mystery of incarnation. The texts of Kemper embody, as it were, an alternate notion of transubstantiation whereby the body and blood of Christ are not bread and wine but parchment and ink.[28] This is not to deny that Kemper avails himself of the more standard Eucharistic symbolism.[29] He is particularly fond of decoding references in biblical, rabbinic, and zoharic sources to "bread" (*leḥem*) as denoting the "body of the Messiah" (*guf ha-mashiaḥ*).[30] My point is, however, that, in Kemper's thinking, the older symbolic identification of the body of Christ as bread assumes a textual connotation: the secret of the bread, which is the body, is the New Testament (*berit ḥadashah*) that is distributed to and consumed by the faithful.[31]

Sabbatianism and Kemper's Christian Kabbalah

Before proceeding to the main topic of this analysis, it is necessary to address the question of the influence of Sabbatianism on Kemper. I must admit forthrightly that there is no precise text that substantiates the claim for a direct impact of Sabbatianism on Kemper's feminine representations of Jesus. My methodological assumption, however, is that the bearing of a monumental historical event on occasion can be ascertained by the unspoken concealed in the background as much as by the spoken revealed in the foreground.[32] Moreover, as a number of scholars have noted, there is an undeniable link between Kemper's con-

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[28] The view I am attributing to Kemper has an interesting parallel to the fourteenth-century Rhenish Dominican mystic, Henry Suso. See Jeffrey F. Hamburger, *Nuns As Artists: The Visual Culture of a Medieval Convent* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 178–180, and idem, *The Visual and the Visionary: Art and Female Spirituality in Late Medieval Germany* (New York: Zone Books, 1998), 197–232, esp. 204.

[29] See, for instance, *Matteh Mosheh*, MS Uppsala Heb. 24, fols. 146b–147a.

[30] Ibid., fols. 102a, 113b–114a, 145b–146a.

[31] *Beriaḥ ha-Tikhon*, MS Uppsala Heb. 25, fol. 22b.

[32] For an elaboration of this methodological claim, see Elliot R. Wolfson, "Martyrdom, Eroticism, and Asceticism in Twelfth-Century Ashkenazi Piety," in *Jews and Christians in Twelfth-Century Europe*, ed. Michael Signer and John Van Engen (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), 171–175.

version and the heretical messianic movement.[33] The individual case of Kemper should be viewed as an exemplar of two opposing trends that ensued in the wake of the Sabbatian movement: on the one hand, the increased polemical exchange between Jews and Christians,[34] and, on the other hand, the apocalyptic hope for a reconciliation between Judaism and Christianity to be realized through baptism.[35] Indeed, as Kemper himself intimates, both in the German report of his conversion as well as in the introduction to his massive Hebrew commentary on select zoharic passages (the treatise, which was composed in 1711, was given two titles, *Matteh Mosheh* and *Makkel Yaʿakov*, reflecting respectively the author's Jewish and Christian names), his decision to convert was in some measure related to the disappointment that he, like many other Jews in Poland, felt over the failed prediction by the prophet Ẓadoq of Horodna concerning the return of Sabbatai Ẓevi in 1695.[36] The disenchantment with Sabbatianism should not be viewed as the single, or even the definitive, reason to explain Kemper's enchantment with Christianity, but there can be little doubt that it served as a catalyst as his own autobiographical recounting suggests.[37] The conversion afforded Kemper an opportunity to transfer and thereby sustain the messianic enthusiasm he discerned in kabbalistic lore, especially in the zoharic homilies refracted through the historical prism of Sabbatian eschatology.

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[33] Gershom Scholem, *Studies and Texts Concerning the History of Sabbateanism and Its Metamorphoses* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1982), 94 note 72 (Hebrew); Yehuda Liebes, *On Sabbateanism and Its Kabbalah: Collected Essays* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1995), 172 and 222 (Hebrew); idem, "A Profile of R. Naphtali Katz of Frankfort and His Attitude Towards Shabbateanism," *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 13 (1996): 301–302 (Hebrew); Elisheva Carlebach, *Divided Souls: Converts from Judaism in Germany, 1500–1750* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), 84.

[34] Elisheva Carlebach, "Sabbatianism and the Jewish-Christian Polemic," in *Proceedings of the Tenth World Congress of Jewish Studies*, Division C, Vol. II: Jewish Thought and Literature (1990): 1–7; and idem, "The Last Deception: Failed Messiahs and Jewish Conversion," in *Millenarianism and Messianism*, 125–138.

[35] Carlebach, *Divided Souls*, 123.

[36] *Unterthäniger Bericht*, 10–11; *Matteh Mosheh*, MS Uppsala Heb. 24, fol. 6b–7a. Kemper refers to the former reference in the latter as his "book of confession," *sefer hoda'ah*, which he composed in German. On the figure of Ẓadoq of Horodna, see Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1956), 303; Isaiah Tishby, "The Report of the Redemption of R. Zadoq of Grodno in 1695," *Ẓion* 12 (1947): 88 (Hebrew).

[37] In *Beriaḥ ha-Tikhon*, MS Uppsala Heb. 25, fols. 123b–124a, Kemper recounts the example of several Jewish children who sought to affirm their faith in Jesus prior to their death, one of them dated to 1681.

Support for my conjecture may be elicited from the following statement of Kemper in a section of the zoharic commentary called *Beriaḥ ha-Tikhon*: "The verse 'Through this Aaron shall enter into the shrine' [*be-zo't yavo aharon el ha-kodesh*] (Lev 16:3) also was a cause to mislead the Jews with respect to the Messiah … for they took the word *be-zo't* numerically as 408 [believing that] then Aaron, the anointed high priest [*mashiaḥ kohen gadol*], would enter the holy of holies … but in their confusion is support for the Christians, since the Jews themselves acknowledge that the Messiah is a high priest and this accords with the New Testament."[38] The messianic calculation to which Kemper alludes is the widespread date of 1648, which was endorsed by Kabbalists from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as the time of the eschaton based on a passage in the *Zohar* that set this year as the time of the final resurrection.[39] That 1648 was a year of great massacres against the Jews in Poland only added to the redemptive significance of this date, and it is thus not a surprise that some of the early Sabbatians linked the messianic calling of Sabbatai Ẓevi to this date.[40] In another passage from the same treatise, Kemper refers even more specifically to the murder of thousands of Jews in the Ukraine during 1648/49.[41] While he does not allude specifically to Sabbatian messianism tied to that date, the possibility for such an interpretation is enhanced by his further identification of the Messiah as the high priest, a theme that is implied as well in the well-attested identification of Sabbatai Ẓevi and Metatron.

The messianic task that Kemper set for himself was to articulate a religious philosophy that would simultaneously promote Christianity for Jews and Judaism for Christians. The execution of this charge was facilitated primarily by his conviction that the secrets encoded by the "hidden language" (*lashon nistar*) of the *Zohar*,[42] as well as allusions to esoteric knowledge found in other Jewish texts,[43] are to be inter-

[38] *Beriaḥ ha-Tikhon*, MS Uppsala Heb. 25, fol. 226b.

[39] *Zohar* 1:139b.

[40] Gershom Scholem, *Sabbatai Ẓevi: The Mystical Messiah*, trans. R.J. Zwi Werblowsky (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 88–93, 141.

[41] *Beriaḥ ha-Tikhon*, MS Uppsala Heb. 25, fols. 173b–174a.

[42] *Matteh Mosheh*, MS Uppsala Heb. 24, fol. 25b. See also ibid., fol. 92a. The inability on the part of Jews to discern the truths about Jesus from their own mystical sources indicates that "even the wisdom of kabbalah has been lost" (ibid., fol. 49a).

[43] See, for instance, *Matteh Mosheh*, MS Uppsala Heb. 24, fol. 29b, where reference to a "great secret" (*sod gadol*) in Abraham Ibn Ezra is explicated in a Christological

preted as references to Jesus. To insist on a Sabbatian context to explain Kemper's actions and teachings, then, is not to deny that his agenda fit in well with the larger cultural patterns of his time. Additionally, the blurring of rigid theological boundaries separating the two faiths is attested in older kabbalistic sources, including several key zoharic passages, which undoubtedly served as the textual ground in which Kemper anchored his spiritual hybridity. Notwithstanding the validity of both of these assertions, I think it reasonable to claim that he was beholden primarily to a subversive hermeneutic that pushed the halakhic tradition to its limit by narrowing the gap between transgression and piety, an orientation that resonated especially well with the characterization of Jesus as advocating the fulfillment rather than the destruction of the law. Kemper's approach to halakhah and the messianic dispensation accords with Sabbatian ideology, which I have labeled "hypernomian," in contrast to Scholem's taxonomy "antinomian," predicated on the presumption that overturning Jewish ritual is itself a ritualistic gesture.[44] Indeed, as Scholem himself observed in one context with regard to the Sabbatians, "It is by no means disobedience or apostasy which appears in this abrogation of the Torah, but rather a changed situation in the world."[45] The breaking of the law is not an end in and of itself nor is it the means to some greater end; it is reflective of a different ontic condition that is commensurate to an internal transformation of the spirit. Transgressing the edicts of Torah, however, yielded the invention of new forms of ceremonial behavior appropriate to the eschatological resolution of history.[46] Redemption is realized through keeping the faith, but it is a faith manifest in the piety of nonobservance. The logic of paradox, a logic that claims the middle excluded by Aristotle's excluded middle, is encapsulated in the identification of the messiah and the serpent, an idea expressed in embryonic form in kabbalistic sources from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, but articulated explicitly in Sabbatian sources

manner. See ibid., fol. 98a.

[44] See Elliot R. Wolfson, "Beyond Good and Evil: Hypernomianism, Transmorality, and Kabbalistic Ethics," in *Crossing Boundaries: Essays on the Ethical Status of Mysticism*, ed. William Barnard and Jeffrey J. Kripal (New York and London: Seven Bridges Press, 2002). 103–156, esp. 132–143, and the revised version in Elliot R. Wolfson, *Venturing Beyond: Law and Morality in Kabbalistic Mysticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 186–285, esp. 277–283.

[45] Scholem, *Messianic Idea*, 74.

[46] Scholem, *Major Trends*, 293–294; Wolfson, "Messianism," 164–165.

through the numerical equivalence of the Hebrew terms *mashiaḥ* and *naḥash* (both equal 358).[47]

I note, parenthetically, that Kemper employs this numerology in his own writings.[48] For example, in a passage in *Me'irat Enayim*, his commentary on Matthew, Kemper invokes the numerological correspondence of *mashiaḥ* and *naḥash* in an attempt to establish the "great mystery" (*sod gadol*) that Jesus had the potency to overpower Satan, the primordial serpent (*naḥash ha-kadmoni*), a belief exemplified typologically in the narrative (Exod 7:9–12) about the staff of Aaron[49] turning into the serpent that swallowed the serpents of the Egyptian sorcerers as well as the narrative (Num 21:6–9) about the copper serpent (*neḥash neḥoshet*), hoisted on a staff by Moses to heal the Israelites by fiery serpents (*ha-neḥashim ha-seraphim*).[50] From Kemper's standpoint, the mystery of Jesus conquering Satan entails recognition on the part of the faithful that Jesus and Satan are one, just as the rod of Moses could turn into a snake, a notion facilitated by the identification of Jesus as Metatron,[51] and the further depiction of the latter in zoharic sources as embodying the polarity of good and evil.[52] How more powerfully could the identity of opposites be expressed? When this breach with Aristotelian logic is applied to the question of ritual action, then it becomes clear that compliance to law is transgression, whereas transgression is compliance to law. The acceptance of this paradox should militate against the opinion that Sabbatian messianism entails a definitive departure from the nomian framework. To obliterate the halakhic world entirely would be

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[47] Scholem, *Major Trends*, 297; idem, *Sabbatai Ẓevi*, 227, 235–236, 391, 813; Liebes, *On Sabbateanism*, 172–182.

[48] For instance, see *Karsei ha-Mishkan*, MS Uppsala Heb. 26, fol. 5b.

[49] To be precise, Kemper conflates the scriptural narrative about the staff of Aaron being changed into a serpent (Exod 7:9–12) with the passages that describe the staff of Moses being turned into a serpent (ibid., 4:2–5).

[50] *Me'irat Enayim*, MS Uppsala Heb. 32, fol. 124b.

[51] Daniel Abrams, "The Boundaries of Divine Ontology: The Inclusion and Exclusion of Metatron in the Godhead," *Harvard Theological Review* 87 (1994): 318; Wolfson, "Messianism," 149; Asulin, "Another Glance," 452–458.

[52] For discussion of some relevant passages, see Wolfson, "Messianism," 186–187 note 236. See also Asulin, "Another Glance," 449–451. In *Beriaḥ ha-Tikhon*, MS Uppsala Heb. 25, fol. 6b, Kemper writes that, in his opinion, the serpent who seduced Eve was spiritual in nature "since his form was like the form of an angel … and, in particular, he was garbed in the form of the supernal angels that are beneath the throne of glory. Therefore, she surmised that he was divine." See, however, ibid., fol. 60a, where Kemper writes that Christian sages suppose that "Satan was garbed in a physical serpent."

to erase the very context that offers one an opportunity to realize the paradox of messianic spirituality by which one exceeds and extends the boundary of law.[53]

Oral Torah as Christ Incarnate

The scriptural image of the staff of Moses provides a key to unlocking the secret of Kemper's messianic self-understanding, as may be gathered from his comment explaining the titles he had chosen for the first part of the zoharic commentary: "It is called *Matteh Mosheh* on account of my previous name *mosheh* and *Makkel Ya'akov* on account of my current name, for I struggled against the Jews and I prevailed."[54] On the most basic level, as I noted above, the titles *matteh mosheh*, "staff of Moses" (Exod 4: 2–4), and *makkel ya'akov*, "rod of Jacob" (Gen 30:37), correspond to the author's Jewish and Christian names. An additional factor, however, is intimated in the gloss Kemper provides on the second title, a paraphrase of the scriptural narrative in which the angel says to Jacob "Your name shall no more be called 'Jacob' but 'Israel,' for you struggled with gods and people, and you prevailed" (ibid., 32:28). Kemper's paraphrase is noteworthy as he leaves out the reference to "gods" (*elohim*) and adds "Jewish" (*yehudim*) to "men" (*anashim*), signifying thereby that he was victorious in his battle with fellow Jews. The nature of the struggle is elucidated in the continuation where Kemper interprets God's command to Moses to strike the stone in order to bring water therefrom (Exod 17:6) as an order to discipline the "children of Israel who stand today on bitter waters, the holy of holies, that is, on Jesus Christ, who went before Israel in the desert to bring forth living water for them."[55] The rejection of Jesus on the part of the Jews turned the living water into bitter waters, but Kemper is charged with the mission of Moses to strike the "hard rock" to extract water, which he understands as the task of converting Jews, rendered in the archaic idiom *lekayyem nefashot me-yisra'el*, by demonstrating the truths of Christianity through heeding the obligation "to come and to

[53] See references above, note 44.

[54] *Matteh Mosheh*, MS Uppsala Heb. 24, title page. Compare *Me'irat Enayim*, MS Uppsala Heb. 32, fol. 93a, where Kemper, who is designated by the titles *rav* and *rabbi*, is also described as "one who returned to the faith in the Messiah" (*ba'al teshuvah el emunat ha-mashiah*). See ibid., fol. 98a, and *Leket he-Ani*, MS Uppsala Heb. 26, fol. 149a.

[55] *Matteh Mosheh*, MS Uppsala Heb. 24, fol. 1a.

enter into the chamber of chambers of the treatises of the ancient tradition [*lavo we-likkanes be-ḥadrei ḥadarim be-sifrei kabbalah ha-yeshenah*], which is *Sefer ha-Ẓohar*, the most ancient of all books that are found today amongst the community of Jews, who desire to be called by the name 'assembly of Israel' [*keneset yisra'el*]."[56] Kemper, no doubt, believed that his Christian faith demanded that he provide the mystical justification for Jews to recognize not only the validity of Christianity but to discern that the roots for Christianity spring from the soil of Judaism, especially the garden of kabbalistic mysteries. Indeed, as Kemper argues, the protracted exile for the Jewish people must be understood primarily as a pneumatic condition related to the fact that Satan closed the opening to faith for them. Redemption from the diasporic state, therefore, consists of unlocking the gate that has been bolted so that Jews will acknowledge the messianic standing of Jesus.[57] Kemper doubtlessly deemed the worth of his own existence in terms of this mission. His gathering passages from the zoharic corpus that disclose the Judaic basis for Christianity, therefore, has the same salvific power accorded the rod of Moses, which could transform water from bitter to sweet, a power that could facilitate the return of errant Jews who opposed Jesus and his teaching. The fulfillment of this duty binds Kemper directly to Moses, the "first redeemer" (*go'el ri'shon*) or the "corporeal redeemer" (*go'el gufani*), the typological paradigm for Jesus, "the final redeemer" (*go'el aḥaron*) or the "spiritual redeemer" (*go'el ruḥani*).[58] The centrality of this exegetical pattern, which is reminiscent of the connection made between Moses and Sabbatai Ẓevi in Sabbatian texts,[59] can be seen in Kemper's assertion that the angel of the Lord (*mal'akh yhwh*) that appeared to Moses in the epiphany of the burning bush (Exod 3:2) was Jesus, "the redeemer who was first and last" (*zeh ha-go'el ri'shon we-aḥaron*).[60] According to this text, it is not merely the symmetry between Moses and Jesus that is vital,[61] but that the latter, in virtue of his angelic glory, was both the first and last redeemer, bringing about the physical and spiritual liberation.

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[56] Ibid., fol. 1b.

[57] Ibid., fols. 78a–b.

[58] See *Beriaḥ ha-Tikhon*, MS Uppsala Heb. 25, fols. 36b, 74a.

[59] For references, see Wolfson, "Messianism," 176 note 100.

[60] *Matteh Mosheh*, MS Uppsala Heb. 24, fol. 105b. See ibid., fol. 150b.

[61] On occasion Kemper also notes the asymmetry between Moses and Jesus, and, in fact the superiority of the latter vis-à-vis the former. See, for instance, *Matteh Mosheh*, MS Uppsala Heb. 24, fol. 114a.

To treat the messianic pairing of Jesus and Moses in Kemper's thought adequately would require a separate analysis. I will here cite and analyze one passage from *Matteh Mosheh* in order to adduce the main points of this affinity. The zoharic passage that Kemper explicates reads as follows:

> "And the spirit of God" (Gen 1:2), this is the spirit of the Messiah.[62] Immediately, he was "hovering" on the face of the waters of Torah, and immediately there was redemption, as it said, "And God said, 'Let there be light'" (ibid., 3). "So the Lord God banished him" (ibid., 3:23), from the hand of the Messiah who was in the Garden of Eden. … And why? "To till the soil" (ibid.), which is the *Shekhinah*. … "And stationed east of the Garden of Eden the cherubim" (ibid., 24), these are the Messiah son of David and the Messiah son of Joseph, for he drew forth the spirit of Messiah [*de-mashkha ruḥa di-meshiḥa*] concerning whom it is said "and the spirit of God," and this is Shiloh about whom it is said "I will emanate the spirit" (Num 11:17), for *shiloh* is numerically equal to *mosheh*. "And stationed east" [*wa-yashken mi-kedem*], for he placed Shiloh before [*de-akdim*] both of them, so that he would be hovering over the face of Torah and the redemption would be dependent on him.[63]

This zoharic text, according to Kemper, proves clearly that "the Messiah is divine [*elohim*] because he is comprised in the expression 'spirit of God' [*ruaḥ elohim*], and this Messiah will be the redeemer [*go'el*]."[64] We are told, moreover, that the redemption is spiritual (*ruḥanit*) and not physical (*gufanit*),[65] a point that Kemper contends was recognized by the Jews themselves, for instance, in the midrashic interpretation of the light mentioned in Genesis 1:4 as a reference to the luminosity stored away for the righteous in the eschatological future.[66] Commenting on the zoharic author's assertion that the two cherubim mentioned in Genesis 3:24 can be decoded symbolically as alluding to the two messianic figures, the Messiah son of David and the Messiah son of Joseph, Kemper avers that "our Messiah is the son of David, but he also is called the son of Joseph, and he is the 'way to the Tree

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[62] The zoharic exegesis is based on earlier aggadic sources, for instance, *Genesis Rabbah* 2:4, ed. Julius Theodor and Chanoch Albeck (Jerusalem: Wahrmann Books, 1965), 17.

[63] *Zohar* 1:263a (*Hashmatot*). In the Lublin edition, the reference is to the section on Genesis, 82–83.

[64] *Matteh Mosheh*, MS Uppsala Heb. 24, fol. 94b.

[65] On the distinction between the spiritual redemption (*ge'ullah ruḥanit*) and physical redemption (*ge'ullah gufanit*), see *Beriaḥ ha-Tikhon*, MS Uppsala Heb. 25, fol. 29b.

[66] *Genesis Rabbah* 3:6, 21.

of Life' (Gen 3:24), as it says in the New Testament."[67] Kemper was critical of the Pharisaic tradition (*kabbalah*) that there are two distinct saviors, asserting instead that Jesus could be depicted as both the Messiah of David and the Messiah of Joseph.[68] To ascertain the identification of the two messiahs as the cherubim, one must recall the opinion transmitted in the name of R. Qatina that the cherubim were male and female.[69] The twofold messianic doctrine, therefore, reflects the assumption regarding the androgynous unity of the Godhead. If we assume, as I think we should, that Kemper had this idea in mind, then it can be argued plausibly that his description of Jesus is parallel to the belief proffered by some Sabbatians that Sabbatai Ẓevi was an amalgam of both messianic figures and hence he personified the divine androgyne in his own being.[70] Further support for this suggestion may be gathered from the continuation of the zoharic text where Moses is identified with Shiloh based on the fact that both names numerically equal 345.[71] Insofar as the name Shiloh (based on its usage in Gen 49:10) assumes messianic significance, we can surmise that Moses, too, is accorded such a role. This is the import of the zoharic claim that "he drew forth the spirit of Messiah" (*de-mashkha ruḥa di-meshiḥa*). Tellingly, Kemper glosses the passage, "He 'drew forth the spirit of Messiah,' that is, the Messiah was garbed in a body of skin and flesh, and this is the one called Shiloh, and it is easy to understand."[72] Notwithstanding Kemper's aside that this matter is "easy to understand," the passage is dense. Ostensibly, there is a shift from Moses to Jesus, as the name "Shiloh," which is a nickname for Moses, is applied to the incarnate form of Christ. In Kemper's scheme, Moses typologically foreshadows Jesus, and just as Moses exemplifies the divine agency configured in the

[67] *Matteh Mosheh*, MS Uppsala Heb. 24, fol. 95a. I assume that the reference to the New Testament is to the apocalyptic Tree of Life mentioned in Revelation 2:7, 22:2. For a useful survey, consider Robert Starke, "The Tree of Life: Protological to Eschatological," available at http://www.kerux.com/documents/ KeruxV11N2A3.asp.

[68] *Matteh Mosheh*, MS Uppsala Heb. 24, fols. 57b–58a, 100a–b; *Me'irat Enayim*, MS Uppsala Heb. 32, fol. 101a.

[69] Babylonian Talmud, Yoma 54a; Baba Batra 99a.

[70] Elliot R. Wolfson, "Engenderment of Messianic Politics," 203–258; and idem, "Constructions," 57–89.

[71] On this numerical equivalence, see also *Ẓohar* 1:25b. Based on the zoharic passages, this numerology appears in many later kabbalistic works.

[72] *Matteh Mosheh*, MS Uppsala Heb. 24, fol. 95a.

form of an anthropos, an idea enhanced by the fact that the letters of the name *mosheh* can be transposed into the word *ha-shem*, "the name,"[73] which alludes to the Tetragrammaton whose numerical value is forty-five (*yod* + *he* + *waw* + *he* = [10 + 6 + 4] + [5 + 1] + [6 + 1 + 6] + [5 + 1]), the same value of the word *adam* (*alef* + *dalet* + *mem* = 1 + 4 + 40),[74] so Jesus is the potency of God adorned in the corporeal body. As Kemper puts it in one context in *Matteh Mosheh*, "the letters of *mosheh* are a transposition of *ha-shem*, and the *shin* of *mosheh* is also the first letter of the word *shem*, and what remains [in the word *mosheh*] is *mah*, that is [the letters] *mem he*, which is the numerical value of *adam*, the fourth in the throne of the chariot, which consists of three creatures and the human who is the fourth, and all of them gaze upon him."[75] The fourth visage contemplated by Ezekiel is the human image, which complements the three angelic beasts, the ox, the eagle, and the lion. According to Kemper, the human form is to be identified with Moses, as the latter bears the name (*mosheh* = *ha-shem*), and the name is YHWH, the numerical value of the words *mah* (*mem he* = 40 + 5) and *adam* (*alef*, *dalet*, *mem* = 1 + 4 + 40). We may infer that Kemper tacitly assumed that remarks about Moses culled from zoharic homilies can be transferred easily to Jesus. It is plausible to presume, moreover, that Kemper saw himself as the bridge that connects the two redeemers and thus he believed he was in the unique position to complete the spiritual redemption (*ge'ullah ruḥanit*) inaugurated by Jesus as the consummation of the corporeal redemption (*ge'ullah gufanit*) initiated by Moses.[76] The former is surely higher than the latter, but the latter is indispensable to attain the former. The body is not to be discarded but liberated through the spirit of God that is embodied in the redeemer.

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[73] *Matteh Mosheh*, MS Uppsala Heb. 24, fols. 113b–114a. The decoding of the name *mosheh* as *ha-shem*, and the further claim that Moses is typologically related to Jesus, is repeated in *Beriaḥ ha-Tikhon*, MS Uppsala Heb. 25, fol. 270a.

[74] *Matteh Mosheh*, MS Uppsala Heb. 24, fols. 96b–97a. In that context, not only are the letters of *mosheh* transposed into *ha-shem*, but the word itself is broken down into its three constituent letters, *shin*, *mem*, and *he*, the first stands metonymically for the word *shem*, that is "name," and the remaining *mem* and *he* are an encoded reference to the Tetragrammaton, since the numerical value of the latter is forty-five (*mem* + *he* = 40 + 5), which is also the numerical value of *adam* (*alef* + *dalet* + *mem* = 1 + 4 + 40). Moses, consequently, is identified as the fourth beast in Ezekiel's chariot, which had the face of a human. If we further apply the zoharic interpretation, then we can conclude that the fourth beast should be identified as the *Shekhinah*, and hence Moses, like Jesus, symbolically embodies the divine presence.

[75] *Matteh Mosheh*, MS Uppsala Heb. 24, fols. 96b–97a.

[76] *Beriaḥ ha-Tikhon*, MS Uppsala Heb. 25, fol. 29b. See ibid., fol. 109b.

In another passage in *Matteh Mosheh*, Kemper develops this symbolic nexus in conjunction with a passage from the author of *Tikkunei Zohar*, "'And the Lord showed him a tree' (Exod 15:25), this is the Tree of Life, and by means of it 'the water became sweet' (ibid.), and this is Moses, the anointed one [*mashiaḥ*], concerning whom it is said 'the rod of God is in my hand' (ibid., 17:9). The 'rod' refers to Metatron, who is from the side of life and from the side of death. Thus he turns into a rod if he is an assistant [*ezer*] from the good side, but he turns into a serpent if he is in opposition to him [*kenegdo*]."[77] Commenting on this text, Kemper writes: "Jesus is the Tree of Life, and he is sweetened water to the one who has faith in him, and the rod of indignation to the one who denies him, for then he turns into the serpent, as he did before Pharaoh, as he was from the sect of unbelievers."[78] Kemper's interpretation of the zoharic passage leads him to identify Jesus and the serpent, which may be an echo of the aforementioned Sabbatian identification of *mashiaḥ* and *naḥash*, a possibility that is enhanced by the depiction of the savior as the Tree of Life that imparts blessing and comfort to all who cleave to it, spiritual sustenance that is expressed not in ritual obedience to the Pentateuch of Moses, the Written Torah, literally the "Torah of letters" (*torah shel otiyyot*), but in the declaration of faith, which is the Torah of the Tree of Life, the "teaching of the Gospel" (*torat even gillayon*), the "messianic Torah" (*torat ha-mashiaḥ*), the "just Oral Torah" (*torah she-be-al peh ha-yesherah*), the Word of God instantiated in the figure of Jesus.[79] The textual body suggested by the Prologue to John is here broadened to the Gospels more generally as they embody the dicta of Jesus. The measure of corporeality is thus displaced from the literal body, that is, the body made up of graphemes, or, in rabbinic nomenclature, the Written Torah, the "Torah of letters," the "Old Testament" (*berit yeshenah*), to the verbal body, that is, the body that is made up of phonemes, the *ipsissima verba*, the "teaching of the Gospel" that was actually spoken by Christ, which is identified further as the "just Oral Torah," the "New Testament" (*berit ḥadashah*).[80] One cannot fail to note the irony here—the apostate Kabbalist recasts the most distinctive symbol of rabbinic culture, the Oral Torah, in a Christological mold: the dicta of Jesus, rather than the legalistic and folkloristic sayings of

[77] *Zohar* 1:27a.
[78] *Matteh Mosheh*, MS Uppsala Heb. 24, fol. 69a.
[79] See above, note 21.
[80] *Beriaḥ ha-Tikhon*, MS Uppsala Heb. 25, fol. 22b.

the talmudic sages, constitute the Oral Torah in its most precise sense. More importantly for this particular analysis, the composition of bodiliness is directly related to this alternate conception of textuality. I hasten to add, however, that just as, rabbinically, the distinction between oral and written should not be treated in a dichotomous manner—the Oral Torah is itself written and the Written Torah must be read orally—so for Kemper, we must be on guard against rigidly bifurcating the two. Jesus is the Oral Torah, but he is also the embodiment of the inscripted text of Scripture when the latter is understood in its kabbalistic sense as being the name that is the Word. Commenting on a zoharic description of the Messiah as one who is sustained by the Written Torah and Oral Torah, which are symbolized by milk and wine, that is, the attributes of mercy and judgment,[81] Kemper notes that the "supernal Logos" (*ma'amar ila'ah*) comprises both kinds of Torah central to rabbinic lore, but the Oral Torah consists of the effort "to understand the new instruction [*ha-torah ḥadashah*], that is, the proclamation of Jesus [*keri'at yeshu'a*], which he uttered through the holy mouth, and he gladdened the heart of those who heeded him in perfect faith."[82] Insofar as the Logos contains both the Written Torah and Oral Torah, and the latter is identified more specifically as the interpretative explications of the former—the new Torah[83]—that issue directly from the mouth of Jesus, there is no basis to bifurcate sharply between the logocentric and grammatological. The Logos is not merely a text that is performatively spoken in contrast to one that is written; it is rather, positioned between and thus it is spoken as written, and written as spoken. The word of Jesus declaimed phonologically is the voice of God inscripted orthographically. In the simpler terms that Kemper employs, Jesus is called the "finger of God on account of the fact that he writes on the tablet of people's hearts and instructs them in the way."[84]

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[81] Zohar 1:240a (Lublin edition, 506).

[82] *Matteh Mosheh*, MS Uppsala Heb. 24, fol. 101b.

[83] Ibid., fol. 136a.

[84] Ibid., fol. 78b. On the inscribing of matters on the tablet of the heart, see ibid., 99b.

Jesus as Shekhinah

Perhaps one of the more innovative ways that Kemper expressed the reinscription of the body is in terms of the identification of Jesus and *Shekhinah*. To appreciate the originality of this approach, it would be beneficial to review some of the basic tenets associated with *Shekhinah* in the symbolism of zoharic Kabbalah, as the latter served as the basis for Kemper's own blend of Jewish esotericism and Christian piety. *Shekhinah*, the rabbinic term for the indwelling of God's presence in the world, is the designation of the last of the ten *sefirot*, the luminous emanations that collectively make up the pleroma of the divine. A plethora of symbols are associated with *Shekhinah*, but for the purposes of this analysis I would like to focus on the two-faced characterization of *Shekhinah*, which is expressive of an ontological principle affirmed by practitioners of the occult wisdom from the inception of Kabbalah as a literary-historical phenomenon: The divine configuration, both in its totality and in each of its constituent elements, displays the quality of androgyny: masculinity is aligned with mercy, the act of bestowing, and femininity with judgment, the act of constricting. Although it is commonly believed that *Shekhinah* is singularly associated with feminine images, sometimes even portrayed by scholarly enthusiasts and enthusiastic scholars alike as the kabbalistic analogue to the mythical goddess or great mother, in fact, this gradation is no exception to the rule I articulated; on the contrary, *Shekhinah* is emblematic of the androcentric conception of androgyny that informs the traditional Kabbalah. Hence, in relation to the upper nine *sefirot*, *Shekhinah* is engendered as feminine, as its function is to receive the overflow by way of the phallic *Yesod*, but, in relation to the realms of being outside the world of emanation, *Shekhinah* is engendered as masculine, as its function is to sustain existence below by channeling the overflow of blessings from above. The point is illustrated in a poignant way in a zoharic passage where the image of the redeeming angel, *ha-mal'akh ha-go'el* (Gen 48:16), is applied to *Shekhinah*, "the angel that is sometimes male and sometimes female. When it bestows blessings on the world, it is male, and it is called 'male,' like a male that bestows blessings on a female, but when it stands in judgment on the world, then it is called female like a female that is pregnant."[85] In the execution of judgment, *Shekhinah* restrains

[85] *Zohar* 1:232a.

the effluence pouring forth from above and she is thus compared to a pregnant woman that holds the fetus within the womb where gestation takes place. By contrast, in disseminating blessing to the worlds below, *Shekhinah* assumes a masculine persona, for she is like the man that fills the woman with seminal discharge.[86]

With this brief introduction, we can turn our attention back to Kemper. The first striking thing to note is Kemper's repeated identification of Jesus with *Shekhinah* or with terms and/or images that are often associated with this potency. The basic assumption undergirding this equation is summed up in the following remark in *Matteh Mosheh*: "The Messiah and *Shekhinah* are one thing, that is, the efflux [*ha-shefa*] that was in the earth prior to the incarnation of Jesus [*hitgashmut yeshuʿa*], which went with them in the desert, was called *Shekhinah*, but when he was embodied and became human, then he was called 'Messiah,' the 'central pillar,' the 'Son of the King,' and the like."[87] Secondly, in many of the relevant passages, the association of Jesus and *Shekhinah* is related to the question of androgyny. For instance, in *Beriaḥ ha-Tikhon*, Kemper writes that all those who believe in Jesus "are called Israel [*yisraʾel*], the just ones [*ha-yesharim*] who believe and have faith in the just God [*el yashar*], and he brought these ones out from the iron furnace, the side of impurity, and they ascended to the Son, which is the *Shekhinah*. This is alluded to in the commandments of circumcision and the paschal sacrifice."[88] The reference to these commandments indicates that the symbolic meaning of both biblical rites is that they are means to cleave to the name of God, which is identified with Jesus.[89] At play as well in Kemper's view is the rabbinic emphasis, based partially on some allusions in Scripture, on the sacrificial nature of circumcision. Both ritual acts point to Jesus, for, in his embodied state, he is "the sacrifice of the entire world" (*ki yeshuʿa hayah korban kol ha-olam*)[90] as well as the "sign of the holy inscription" (*ot reshima kaddisha*).[91] The "blood of circumcision" (*dam milah*) and the "blood of the paschal sacrifice" (*dam pesaḥ*) coalesce in the figure of Jesus, two forms of the "blood of the covenant" (*dam berit*) that are enacted symbolically in the four cups of red wine that Jews must drink at the Passover seder, the feast that commemorates

[86] For a more extensive discussion, see Wolfson, *Language*, 68–70.
[87] *Matteh Mosheh*, MS Uppsala Heb. 24, fol. 110a.
[88] *Beriaḥ ha-Tikhon*, MS Uppsala Heb. 25, fol. 20b.
[89] *Matteh Mosheh*, MS Uppsala Heb. 24, fols. 74b–75a.
[90] *Meʾirat Enayyim*, MS Uppsala Heb. 32, fol. 184a.
[91] *Matteh Mosheh*, MS Uppsala Heb. 24, fol. 112a.

the past redemption of Egypt and anticipates in this narrative retelling the future redemption.[92] Instead of viewing Jewish ritual negatively as embracing the corporeal and eschewing the spiritual, Kemper discerns the inner, symbolic intent of the ceremonial actions. To be sure, Kemper accepts the Pauline argument regarding justification by faith rather than by works, and hence he is critical of the rabbis (designated *ba'alei talmud*) for thinking that they could acquire the world-to-come solely through good actions and not by believing in the messianic calling of Jesus.[93] Kemper's approach, however, is more complex, since he looks upon Jesus as the concretization of the law, and, in that respect, the path beyond the law of the body is through the body of the law. As has often been the case in the long history of Jewish-Christian disputations, the particular example of circumcision illustrates the general point of discord. Following Paul and countless other Christian writers, Kemper maintains that circumcision of the flesh is replaced by circumcision of the heart, but he also insists that the original intent of the former, which is still operative for Jews, the people of the body that is the book, precludes any such bifurcation. As I noted above, Kemper even goes so far as to say that by means of the physical circumcision the sign, which is Christ, is inscribed on the male Jewish body, and as a consequence, the "old man" is removed and the "new man" put on (Ephesians 4:21–23). There is no reason to assume that Kemper would have thought that circumcision of the flesh had lost its spiritual meaning for the body politic of Israel. The Jewish rite, moreover, imparts to Gentile Christians as well the knowledge that the bodily circumcision of Jesus is not a trivial matter, as it is only in virtue of his having been circumcised in the flesh that he can become the sign of the covenant (*ot berit*) to transform the phallus (*milah*) into the mouth (*peh*) that is the signifier of divinity (*elohim*).[94] In *Avodat ha-Kodesh*, Kemper writes explicitly that the term *Shekhinah* is a generic noun (*shem kollel*) as it applies to the Father, "for he has produced a Son whom he has circumcised on the eighth day because Jesus is a branch from the Tree of Life."[95] The term *shekhinah* is one of the names of Jesus, but it can be expanded to denote the

[92] Ibid., fols. 186b–188a.

[93] See, for instance, *Avodat ha-Kodesh*, MS Uppsala Heb. 25, fols. 144a–b.

[94] *Matteh Mosheh*, MS Uppsala Heb. 24, fol. 117b. To understand the chain of associations made by Kemper, one must bear in mind that both *milah* and *peh* equal 85, and *elohim* is 86, the previous sum of 85 plus an extra one for the word itself, a common numerological technique.

[95] *Avodat ha-Kodesh*, MS Uppsala Heb. 25, fol. 93b.

Father, inasmuch as the latter engenders the former. The crucial point is that Kemper deviates from the traditional kabbalistic symbolism by applying this key symbol to the masculine hypostases.

In another passage from *Beriaḥ ha-Tikhon*, Kemper elaborates on the identification of Jesus as *Shekhinah* by commenting on the zoharic passage from the *Raʿaya Meheimna* stratum where *Shekhinah* is designated the "sign of the covenant" (*ot berit*) from the side of *Yesod*.[96] Kemper similarly notes in that context that the term *Shekhinah* is a *shem kollel* that is attributed to Jesus, for he "dwells with and amidst humanity" (*shokhen bein u-vetokh benei adam*). At the same time, however, Jesus is also identified as the "righteous one who is the foundation of the world" (*ẓaddik yesod olam*), for he is "the foundation stone, the principle and the foundation, first and last."[97] Insofar as Jesus is identified as the covenant—*berit kodesh* or *berit shalom*[98]—and the covenant, according to the kabbalistic understanding, is androgynous, it follows that Jesus must bear this quality. This is the import of Kemper's observation that Jesus is both *Yesod*, the phallic foundation, and *Shekhinah*, the indwelling presence. The association of Jesus and *Shekhinah* is enhanced by the attribution of other standard symbols of the latter culled from zoharic literature to the former, to wit, "kingship" (*malkhut*) or "heavenly kingship" (*malkhut shamayim*),[99] "angel of the presence" (*mal'akh ha-panim*),[100] or "archon of the presence" (*sar ha-panim*), also identified as Metatron,[101] "angel of the covenant" (*mal'akh ha-berit*),[102] "redeeming angel" (*mal'akh ha-go'el*),[103] "ark of the covenant, Lord of all the earth" (*aron ha-berit adon kol ha-arez*),[104] the "bread of affliction" (*leḥem oni*),[105] "wisdom" (*ḥokhmah*),[106]

[96] *Zohar* 1:166a.
[97] *Beriaḥ ha-Tikhon*, MS Uppsala Heb. 25, fol. 116a.
[98] Ibid., fol. 40b.
[99] Ibid., fol. 33a; *Me'irat Enayim*, MS Uppsala Heb. 32, fols. 119a, 133b, 135b, 146a.
[100] *Me'irat Enayim*, MS Uppsala Heb. 32, fols. 163b, 186a, 194a.
[101] Ibid., fols. 129b–130a, 146b, 202b.
[102] Ibid., fol. 179a–b, 186a.
[103] *Matteh Mosheh*, MS Uppsala Heb. 24, fol. 112a. On the identification of Jesus as the angel of God (as described especially in Exod 14:19–21, the verses whence the 72 letter name is derived), see *Avodat ha-Kodesh*, MS Uppsala Heb. 25, fols. 99b–100a.
[104] *Beriaḥ ha-Tikhon*, MS Uppsala Heb. 25, fol. 230b, based on Josh 3:11.
[105] *Matteh Mosheh*, MS Uppsala Heb. 24, fol. 26b.
[106] *Karsei ha-Mishkan*, MS Uppsala Heb. 26, fol. 1a. In some passages, the sophianic nature of Jesus is related to the second of the emanations rather than with the tenth. See, for example, *Matteh Mosheh*, MS Uppsala Heb. 24, fol. 88b. And ibid., fol. 149b: "The Messiah is called *Ḥokhmah* in the ten *sefirot*, and to him alone belongs the kingship." In line with this symbolic nuance, Jesus is on occasion designated by

"Matrona" (*matronita*),[107] "orchard of holy apples" (*ḥakal tapuḥin kaddishin*),[108] "opening" (*petaḥ*), or the "opening of the tent" (*petaḥ ha-ohel*),[109] and the curtain (*parokhet*) or veil (*yeri'ah*) through which one must go to enter before the holy of holies.[110]

Jesus as Mother

In addition to the identification of Jesus and *Shekhinah*, there is another aspect of Kemper's portrayal of Jesus that reflects an interesting appropriation and transformation of a standard zoharic symbol. I am referring to the ascription of the image of mother to Jesus.[111] The matter may be illumined from a passage in the introduction to *Matteh Mosheh.* Kemper begins the discussion by mentioning the zoharic idea that the four letters of the name YHWH correspond respectively to the quaternity of the divine persona, Father (*Ḥokhmah*), Mother (*Binah*), Son (*Tiferet*), and Daughter (*Malkhut*). Kemper insists, however, that "there is a hidden secret" (*sod nistar*) in the passage of the *Zohar.*[112] In the continuation, we learn that the secret of the secret entails the Christological interpretation:

> The Father refers to God the Father, the first gradation, the one to whom they pray in the morning prayers "Our Father in heaven" [*avinu she-ba-shamayim*] … the Mother refers certainly to the Son. Why is he called in the name of the mother? On account of the supernal Wisdom [*ḥokhmah ila'ah*] in the ten *sefirot*, which is the second of the *sefirot*, and also on account of the fact that he produced [*holid*] everything that was created "in the heavens above and upon the earth below" (Deut 4:39), for through him were they created, as in the [rendering of] Targum Yerushalmi [on the word *bere'shit*] "by wisdom" [*be-ḥukhma*] and [Targum] Jonathan referred to him several times as the "saying of the Lord" [*memra de-yhwh*], and concerning him John said "In the beginning was the word" (John 1:1) … Do not be concerned that the Holy Spirit is also called on occasion "mother" … because for the most part the

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the zoharic locution *ḥokhmah ila'ah*, the "supernal wisdom." See *Beriaḥ ha-Tikhon*, MS Uppsala Heb. 25, fols. 32a, 34a.

[107] *Matteh Mosheh*, MS Uppsala Heb. 24, fol. 27a; *Beriaḥ ha-Tikhon*, MS Uppsala Heb. 25, fols. 216a–b.

[108] *Beriaḥ ha-Tikhon*, MS Uppsala Heb. 25, fol. 179a.

[109] *Matteh Mosheh*, MS Uppsala Heb. 24, fols. 77b–78a.

[110] Ibid., fols. 64b–65a, 78a.

[111] Wolfson, "Messianism," 147–150. Some of the material analyzed there is repeated here.

[112] *Matteh Mosheh*, MS Uppsala Heb. 24, fols. 8b–9a.

> name "mother" applies to the Son. Moreover, "son" and "daughter" are said with respect to that supernal gradation. He is called "son" when he sits to the right of his Father, "[The Lord has established His throne in heaven] and His sovereign rule is over all" (Ps. 103:19), and before him "every knee will bend down" (Isa 45:23). Then he is the son who inherits the property of his father. … And do not wonder that he is contained in the names of both Mother and Son, for in the ten *sefirot* he is also contained in the right and left sides, *Ḥokhmah* to the right and *Binah* to the left. He is called "daughter" when he descends to earth, "humbled and riding on an ass" (Zech 9:9)[113] … and then his power is weakened like a female, and on account of this aspect he assumes the name "daughter." … And he is also called "daughter" on account of "all the glory of the princess is inward" (Ps. 45:14), for all his glory was by way of the inner and spiritual and not by the external, for externally he appeared to others like one of them. His glory was inward for he is the Father and he is in the Father. For that reason he is also called *Ze'eir Anpin*, for he diminished and lowered himself to endure suffering on account of humankind, to atone for their sins.[114]

The configurations (*parẓufim*) of the zoharic quaternity are reduced to two, viz., the Father and Son, as Mother and Daughter are treated as variant manifestations of the latter. The Son is called "Mother" on account of his demiurgical capacity, which is related exegetically to both the ancient wisdom tradition about the *memra* preserved in the Aramaic Targumim and the doctrine of the Logos promulgated in the prologue to John.[115] I note something of a discrepancy here with the zoharic symbolism according to which *Ḥokhmah*, the second emanation, is represented figuratively as the Father and *Binah*, the third emanation, as the Mother. There is some slippage in Kemper's account, for he affixes the maternal images to either the Holy Spirit[116]—and in this regard there is affinity between Kemper, the Christian Kabbalah of Postel, and the Moravian teaching of Zinzendorf—or to Jesus on account of his identification with *Binah*. Hence his remark that with respect to the *sefirot* Jesus is "also contained in the right and left sides, *Ḥokhmah* to the right and *Binah* to the left," correlated respectively with the Son and Mother. Kemper is not consistent, however, for in some passages he associates the hypostasis of the Son with either the supernal *Ḥokhmah*, the second emanation,[117] or with both it and the

[113] Compare *Beriaḥ ha-Tikhon*, MS Uppsala Heb. 25, fol. 49a.
[114] *Matteh Mosheh*, MS Uppsala Heb. 24, fols. 9a–10b.
[115] *Beriaḥ ha-Tikhon*, MS Uppsala Heb. 25, fols. 22b, 28b, 53b–54a.
[116] *Beriaḥ ha-Tikhon*, MS Uppsala Heb. 25, fol. 42b.
[117] See above, note 106.

lower *Ḥokhmah*, the tenth emanation. For example, in *Matteh Mosheh*, he writes: "This Messiah is *Ḥokhmah*, the second gradation of the ten *sefirot*. … 'And the spirit of the Lord rests upon him' (Isa 11:2), on this lower opening [*pitḥa tata'ah*], that is, the Messiah."[118] For the most part, however, Kemper deviates from the standard symbolism attested in zoharic and other kabbalistic literature. Thus, in another passage in *Matteh Mosheh*, the Trinity is described as consisting of *Ḥokhmah*, the Father, *Binah*, the Son (based on decoding the word as *ben yah*,[119] the son of *yod he*, the letters that signify *Ḥokhmah* and *Binah*), and the Holy Spirit is the vapor that comes out from their combination and overflows to the prophets.[120] In short, the zoharic idea of the heterosexual union of Father and Mother, *Ḥokhmah* and *Binah*, is transformed in Kemper's mind into the homoerotic (though, apparently, asexual) union of Father and Son. I note, parenthetically, that a similar explanation can be applied to the way Kemper appropriates the formula used by Kabbalists, *le-shem yiḥud kudsha berikh hu u-shekhinteih*, "For the sake of the unification of the holy One, blessed be He, and his *Shekhinah*."[121] In the conventional understanding, the words are uttered to unify the masculine and feminine dimensions of the divine, *Tiferet* and *Malkhut*, the King and the Matrona. However, since for Kemper the *Shekhinah* refers to Jesus, the intent of the liturgical saying is to unify Father and Son, and thus we can speak of a homoerotic reframing of the heterosexual imagery.[122]

The designation "son" denotes the exalted rank of Jesus as *synthronos*, a term used to mark the function of Jesus occupying a throne to the right of the Father.[123] By contrast, the designation "daughter" relates to the mystery of the incarnation, the humbling of Jesus when he takes on

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[118] *Matteh Mosheh*, MS Uppsala Heb. 24, fol. 78b.

[119] *Avodat ha-Kodesh*, MS Uppsala Heb. 25, fol. 144a.

[120] *Matteh Mosheh*, MS Uppsala Heb. 24, fol. 46b.

[121] Ibid., fol. 56b.

[122] By contrast, the heteroerotic symbolism seems to be preserved in the depiction of the Church as the bride (derived from Song of Songs) in relation to Jesus, obviously, a much older exegetical strategy in the history of Christian spirituality (for references to scholarly discussions, see Wolfson, *Language*, 577 note 30). See also *Matteh Mosheh*, MS Uppsala Heb. 24, fol. 118a. On the explicit characterization of Jesus as the Solomon of the Song, the "king to whom peace belongs," see ibid., fol. 104b, and *Beriaḥ ha-Tikhon*, MS Uppsala Heb. 25, fol. 24a.

[123] Ibid., 84b, 97a, 99a, 107a, 115a, 122a, 130b, 131b; *Beriaḥ ha-Tikhon*, MS Uppsala Heb. 25, fol. 142a.

the form of the material world, when he is "weakened like a female,"[124] and, as a consequence, all the glory of the divine is internalized and concentrated into a single point,[125] which is designated by the rabbinic locution *bat kol*, literally, "daughter of the voice."[126] I note, parenthetically, that during my visit to Uppsala University, I examined the *Zohar* that Kemper used when he wrote his various commentaries,[127] and much to my surprise, when I opened up the volume I found written on the inside cover opposite the title page "his power was weakened like a female" (*tashash koḥo ki-nekevah*), followed by a directive to look at the zoharic section on *Behaʿalotkha* in the book of Numbers.[128] Comparing the passages that were marked and annotated therein with the citations explicated by Kemper in his various works, I came to the conclusion that this comment was likely written by his own hand. If this supposition is correct, then we must marvel at the fact that of all possible comments, Kemper chose this one to inscribe as an epigraph in the *Zohar* from which he studied and that served as the foundation for his own exegetical excursions. As I have already indicated, the remark "his power was weakened like a female" is a signpost to the mystery of incarnation, and thus I would go so far as to hypothesize that this inscription suggests that Kemper thought of the *Zohar* as the textual instantiation of Christ's having humbled himself by donning the garment of corruptible flesh. In support of this conjecture, I note that in one place Kemper describes the *Zohar* as a "book that was amassed from manuscripts (which were found from the mouth) of Rabbi Simeon ben Yoḥai."[129] This language closely resembles his understanding of the Gospels as the written anthology of the oral teachings of Jesus, which I have discussed above. Be that as it may, the reference made to the

[124] *Matteh Mosheh*, MS Uppsala Heb. 24, fol. 33a.

[125] Reading the zoharic symbolism closely, Kemper describes both the supernal Wisdom, the second *sefirah*, and the lower Wisdom, the tenth *sefirah*, as points. For him, these refer respectively to Father and Son. See *Matteh Mosheh*, MS Uppsala Heb. 24, fol. 90a.

[126] Ibid., fol. 15a.

[127] Uppsala Universitets-Bibliotek obr. 53:99. In the introduction to *Matteh Mosheh*, MS Uppsala Heb. 24, fols. 6a–b, Kemper mentions a handwritten noted placed in the margin of the *Zohar* found in the Uppsala Library. The pagination corresponds to the Lublin edition, and I have little doubt that the copy of the Lublin Zohar that I examined at the library in Uppsala is the one used by Kemper. Mention of Jewish mystical texts that Kemper examined at the library in Uppsala is also found in *Beriaḥ ha-Tikhon*, MS Uppsala Heb. 25, fol. 86b.

[128] *Zohar* 3:156a (Lublin edition, 296).

[129] *Matteh Mosheh*, MS Uppsala Heb. 24, fol. 59b.

passage from the zoharic portion in Numbers is relevant as it contains the statement "I was considered to be a female," which is placed in the mouth of Moses. Again, we see the analogy that Kemper draws between Moses and Jesus, the redemptive power of both being aligned with the act of degradation that is rendered in gender terms as the powerful male being weakened like a female. The pietistic ideal that emerges from this transformation is for the male to become female, even if we readily acknowledge that the contours of femininity implied thereby reinforce the patriarchical hierarchy.

The weakened state justifies the metaphorical application of the term "daughter" to Jesus and it is also captured in the technical zoharic expression *Ze'eir Anpin*, which literally means the "small face," set in contrast to *Arikh Anpin*, literally, the "long face," and metaphorically, the "long-suffering one."[130] Elsewhere Kemper assigns the title *Ze'eir Anpin* to Metatron, the angelic name of Jesus, on account of the fact that "he diminished himself."[131] This act of diminution accounts for the attribution of the title "lesser wisdom," *ḥokhmah ze'ira*, to Jesus, a locution that situates Kemper's thinking in the trajectory of Sophianic Christology that can be traced back to Late Antiquity.[132] The theme is elaborated in *Karsei ha-Mishkan*, the third part of Kemper's zoharic commentary, in an interpretation of the distinction between the two forms of Israel found in *Zohar* 2:216a: "The elder Israel [*yisra'el sabba*] is the Father, the Ancient of Ancients, and the younger [*zuta*] is the Son, *Ze'eir Anpin*, for he diminished himself [*hiz'ir et azmo*] and descended to the earth, and he is the youthful [*na'ar*] Metatron".[133] This identification stems from the fact that in the kabbalistic texts themselves Metatron is characterized both as the glory of God and as the highest angel. This dual role is appropriated by Kemper to express an ancient Christian

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[130] Kemper also attributes the zoharic expression *Atika*, which is a synonym for *Arikh Anpin*, to the Father. See *Beriaḥ ha-Tikhon*, MS Uppsala Heb. 25, fol. 33b. In *Matteh Mosheh*, MS Uppsala Heb. 24, fol. 94a, the zoharic expression "head of the Infinite" (*resha de-ein sof*) is applied to the Father, and the spirit (*ruaḥ*) that comes out from there to the Son. The expression *Atik Yomin* (based on Dan 7:13, 22) is attributed to the Father in ibid., fol. 107a.

[131] *Matteh Mosheh*, MS Uppsala Heb. 24, fol. 116a; *Beriaḥ ha-Tikhon*, MS Uppsala Heb. 25, fol. 34a.

[132] *Beriaḥ ha-Tikhon*, MS Uppsala Heb. 25, fol. 34a.

[133] *Karsei ha-Mishkan*, MS Uppsala Heb. 26, fol. 68a. On Jesus diminishing his power, see also *Me'irat Enayim*, MS Uppsala Heb. 32, fol. 148a; *Beriaḥ ha-Tikhon*, MS Uppsala Heb. 25, fol. 80b.

belief regarding the angelmorphic Jesus and the hypostatized name.[134] From the Christological vantage point this implies that the glory is embodied in the form of an angel that is manifest in the world. The technical designation of God as *Ze'eir Anpin*, therefore, is another way of conveying the belief in Jesus humbling himself by assuming the corruptible form of a physical body. In the act of debasement, however, lies the secret of angelification, the mystery of the immaterial donning the garment of the material, of the male becoming female.

Kemper interprets the zoharic passage regarding the augmentation in the supernal world of the one who diminishes himself in this world[135] as a reference to the mystery of kenosis by means of which Jesus lowers himself into the material world, culminating in his being bound to the cross.[136] Interestingly, Kemper associates the words attributed to the head of the academy in the aforementioned zoharic text, "the one who is small is great, and the one who is great is small,"[137] with the words ascribed to Jesus, "whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted" (Matt 23:12).[138] The pietistic virtue of humility is thus tied to the incarnational theology, an idea that can be traced to Phil 2:3–8. For Kemper, moreover, this mystery entails the feminine transposition of Jesus, which is signified by the technical term *ze'eir anpin*, briefly discussed above. In recent years it has been suggested that this symbol in some kabbalistic sources from the period of the *Zohar* (late-thirteenth and early-fourteenth centuries) was a technical designation of the *Shekhinah* in her feminine comportment.[139] Curiously, it appears that Kemper's Christological orientation led him to recover what may have been the original intent of this symbolic

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[134] Jarl E. Fossum, *The Name of God and the Angel of the Lord: Samaritan and Jewish Concepts of Intermediation and the Origin of Gnosticism* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1985); Margaret Barker, *The Great Angel: A Study of Israel's Second God* (London: SPCK, 1992); idem, *The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy* (London and New York: T & T Clark, 2003), 103–145; Charles A. Gieschen, *Angelmorphic Christology: Antecedents and Early Evidence* (Leiden: Brill, 1998). It seems to me that the influence of Kemper can be detected in the discussion on the angelic nature of the divine Presence in the dissertation on the *Shekhinah* written in Uppsala University by Gabriel N. Mathesius (1734), 42–46.

[135] *Zohar* 1:122b.

[136] *Beriaḥ ha-Tikhon*, MS Uppsala Heb. 25, fol. 152a.

[137] See also *Matteh Mosheh*, MS Uppsala Heb. 24, fols. 20a–21a, 63b.

[138] See my discussion in *Venturing Beyond*, 288–289.

[139] Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 119 and 135; Yehuda Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, trans. Arnold Schwartz, Stephanie Nakache, and Penina Peli (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 110–114.

locution. In another context, Kemper explains this secret by reflecting on a distinction in *Zohar* between the name "Israel," which signifies the head and the masculine, and the name "Jacob," which signifies the heel and the feminine.[140] According to Kemper, both names refer to Jesus, the former to his elevated status as the Son seated to the right of the Father, and the latter to his diminished status as a human being in this world, which is depicted by the image of the daughter. As Kemper is quick to point out, the feminine depiction of Jesus does not mean that he was anatomically female, but it suggests that from the perspective of the hierarchy of gender values (relative to a specific cultural context) in his weakened state he can be referred to as female.[141]

In *Beriaḥ ha-Tikhon*, Kemper links the fact that Jesus is both son and mother to the passage from *Zohar* mentioned above where *Shekhinah* is described as both male and female.[142] It would seem that, in this context, as we find in several other passages, the symbol of mother applies to Jesus in his identity as *Shekhinah*, and in particular in executing judgment in the world[143] or weeping like the matriarch Rachel over the fate of Israel.[144] In several other contexts in his writings, Kemper reiterates and explains this symbolism in similar terms. For instance, in *Karsei ha-Mishkan*, Kemper cautions the reader "not to be astonished that in the Kabbalah the Messiah is called 'mother,' that is, like the bird that hovers over his fledglings, and he guards them beneath his wings so that the bat does not come to devour them, and thus Jesus behaved. … This is the way of the secret of 'Let the mother go' (Deut 22:7), that is, the Messiah, for he came for the purpose of guarding his fledglings from every trouble and evil affliction."[145] In another passage from this composition, Kemper remarks that the "great secret" of the masters of the tradition (*baʿalei kabbalah*) calling Jesus "mother" is related to the idea (derived exegetically from *Zohar* 2:213b) that he gives birth to new souls.[146]

By way of conclusion, we might say that in spite of the longstanding tradition to apply maternal tropes to Jesus, related especially to the image of the wounds of the suffering Christ, and in spite of the

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140 *Zohar* 1:266b (*Raʿaya Meheimna*).
141 *Beriaḥ ha-Tikhon*, MS Uppsala Heb. 25, fols. 176a–177b.
142 Ibid., fol. 232a.
143 Ibid., fol. 28b.
144 Ibid., fols. 213a–b; see *Matteh Mosheh*, MS Uppsala Heb. 24, fols. 33a–b.
145 *Karsei ha-Mishkan*, MS Uppsala Heb. 26, fols. 2b–3a.
146 Ibid., fol. 67b.

resurgence of that motif in the wake of some strands of Renaissance occultism and Reformation pietism, Kemper may be distinguished from those who preceded him and from contemporary expressions of this symbolism. Kemper's vast knowledge of the Kabbalah facilitated the utilization of the images of mother and daughter to express the foundational dogmas of Christian faith, the symbol of mother relates to the identification of Jesus as the demiurgical Logos, and the symbol of daughter bespeaks the incarnation of Jesus in the flesh of a mortal human being. Kemper's kabbalistic Christology in a nutshell can be delineated as follows: The way to comprehend the exaltation of the Mother is through the degradation of the Daughter. In terms of the theme of the body, the female images of Jesus indicate a subtle reappropriation on Kemper's part of the Christian barb regarding the carnal nature of the Jews. The Jewish body is problematized to the extent that the Jews reject Christ. Indeed, by stubbornly refusing to recognize and accept the messianic claims of Jesus, the divine presence abandoned the people of Israel, leaving them as beasts divested of their human deportment.[147] By returning to faith in Jesus, however, the Jews, who possess all the "keys of faith" (*mafteḥot emunah*) in spite of their failings,[148] can redeem their flesh and thereby reclaim the true angelic body to become the new human, which is the word incarnate,[149] the Oral Torah, the Son who bears the image of the Father by being both the Mother exalted above in heaven and the Daughter despoiled below on earth.

[147] *Matteh Mosheh*, MS Uppsala Heb. 24, fols. 16a–b.
[148] Ibid., fol. 111a.
[149] Ibid., fols. 80b–81a.